

Overcoming Defence Recruitment Challenges through Strategic Analysis



Butterfly Data helped a UK Defence Department forecast workforce trends and shape proactive recruitment strategies through evidence-based analysis.

Challenge

Defence organisations face growing pressure to have the right people with the right skills, as demographic shifts, changing work patterns, and competition from other sectors make recruitment and retention increasingly difficult.

Butterfly Data was commissioned by a UK Defence Department that needed a clear, evidence-based understanding of the factors shaping the future workforce pipeline. Without this, resourcing plans risked being reactive, fragmented, or misaligned with long-term needs. The goal was to assess trends in eligibility, skills, and public attitudes, and to translate these into actionable recommendations for recruitment strategy.

Solution

Butterfly Data carried out a strategic resourcing analysis that brought together multiple data sources, including demographic statistics, labour market data, and educational outcomes. Using advanced statistical modelling, the team explored how eligibility and potential recruitment pools were likely to change over time, and what this meant for the Department's long-term workforce sustainability.

The analysis examined:

- The projected proportion of the UK population eligible for recruitment, based on health, education, and demographic factors
- Employment and educational trends, including the rising share of the population with higher-level qualifications
- Public perceptions of the Department and barriers to recruitment

These insights were combined into a set of practical, forward-looking recommendations, designed to ensure the Department could respond proactively rather than reactively to labour market pressures.

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Impact

The analysis showed that the pool of eligible recruits is likely to decline in coming years, driven by demographic changes and evolving employment preferences. At the same time, rising educational attainment presents opportunities to diversify and strengthen recruitment pipelines.

Crucially, the study identified a lack of data on both current recruits and public perceptions of the Department, highlighting the importance of better engagement and outreach. Recommendations included focusing recruitment on younger age cohorts, broadening subject focus beyond STEM, and investing in modern recruitment systems that keep pace with technological change.

As a result, the Department now has a stronger evidence base for resourcing decisions. This enables more strategic workforce planning and positions the organisation to adapt more effectively to future recruitment challenges.



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