HEARTS AND MINDS: Misperceptions and the Military
Welcome
Sir Simon Wessely
Perils of Perception

Bobby Duffy
Unique survey…

• …on perceptions of the military compared with “reality”
• …in 5 countries: Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain and the US
• 5,010 interviews conducted 24 April-8 May 2015
• Online, so only representative up to 65 years
• Misperceptions, and shifts between mental image of “Hero, Victim, Villain” seen throughout
• But in more accurate than expected on some aspects…
Extraordinary misperceptions on other issues... in UK we think...

- **16%** of teenagers give birth each year (actual 3%)
- **21%** of the population is Muslim (actual 5%)
- **24%**...US think (actual 3%)
- **31%**...French think (actual 8%)
3 themes…

1. All countries overestimate the proportion of government budgets that go to the armed forces…
Out of every 100 [...] spent by [...] government, how many [...] do you think goes to funding the military?

...but there are some big differences between them...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual spend (% total spend)</th>
<th>Public average estimate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The US</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

£83bn v £33bn...

Base: 1,000 French people, Canadians, Americans, and Australians, and 1,010 Britons

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor and World Bank database 2012
And many still see Britain as a relatively big spender...
We see ourselves as spending proportionally more than Canada and Australia…

Q. Still thinking about how many Pounds out of 100 spent by the British government go towards funding the Armed Forces, do you think the governments in the following countries currently spend more, less or about the same as Britain on their Armed Forces?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>About the same</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Country minus British spending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>+12.3pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+10pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>+9.7pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-0.5pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>+1.1pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>+1.2pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-1.1pp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1,010 Britons

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor and World Bank Database 2012
...mirrored in external image:

36% of Australians think we spend more than them...

37% of Canadians think we spend more than them...

...even 38% of Americans think we spend same as or more than them...
People more accurate on trends in numbers of armed forces personnel...
Q. I'd like you to think about the number of active duty personnel, not including reserve forces, currently serving in [...] Armed Forces, compared to that of 10 years ago. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? The total number of personnel in the Armed Forces has...

Actual change: -19.6%
Average guess: -13.4%

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor and World Bank Database 2012
2. British public significantly overestimate some negative outcomes for personnel…
For example, PTSD…
We think PTSD it is MUCH more common among service personnel than general public…

Q. How common do you think Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is, an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events, within those currently serving in the Armed Forces when compared to the general population?

...although higher for reservists and those in combat

- Much less common in the armed forces: 1%
- Slightly less common in the armed forces: 2%
- About the same in both the armed forces and general public: 6%
- Slightly more common in the armed forces: 21%
- Much more common in the armed forces: 65%
- 6% Don’t know

Base: 1,010 Britons

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor and The King's Centre for Military Health Research: A fifteen year report (2010)
And this is a common perception internationally:

% thinking MUCH more common…

- **US**: 62%
- **Canada**: 59%
- **Australia**: 56%
- **France**: 32%
Q. Do you think the rate of suicide amongst those within the Armed Forces is higher, lower or about the same when compared to those in the general public?

...although higher among 16-19 year old males

- Lower: 8%
- About the same: 26%
- Higher: 53%

13% Don’t know

Base: 1,010 Britons

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor and Ministry of Defence (2015)
Q. Thinking about people who are homeless, meaning those living on the streets, do you think that former members of the Armed Forces are more likely, less likely or about as likely to be homeless as the population in general?

- 15% Lower
- 32% About the same
- 40% Higher
- 13% Don’t know

Base: 1,010 Britons
Source: Ipsos MORI and British Legion (2010)
But the public are more accurate or even underestimate the challenges facing personnel on other issues… For example, anxiety and depression…
Q. How common do you think Common Mental Disorder is, such as depression and anxiety, within those who currently serve in the Armed Forces when compared to the general public?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much less common in the armed forces</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly less common in the armed forces</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same in both the armed forces and general public</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly more common in the armed forces</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more common in the armed forces</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8% Don’t know

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor; Goodwin, L, et al. Are common mental disorder more prevalent in the UK serving military compared to the general working population, Psychological Medicine, 45 (9), pp 1881-1891

Base: 1,010 Britons
Q. How common do you think high risk drinking is among individuals within the Armed Forces when compared to the general public?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen population:</th>
<th>Military:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38% of Males; 16% of Females</td>
<td>67% of Males; 49% of Females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Much less common in the armed forces: 5%
- Slightly less common in the armed forces: 11%
- About the same in both the armed forces and general public: 23%
- Slightly more common in the armed forces: 34%
- Much more common in the armed forces: 17%

11% Don’t know


Base: 1,010 Britons
3. But overall our views of the armed forces and soldiers are still positive...
Not quite as high as fire fighters and healthcare professionals, but above many others…

Q. How favourable or unfavourable is your overall opinion of the following…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Somewhat favourable</th>
<th>Very favourable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire Fighters</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Brigade</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare system</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policemen/women</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Force</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Split sample: 493 Britons answered the question about institutions and another 517 answered the question about individuals

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor
Q. How favourable or unfavourable is your overall opinion of the following…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Somewhat favourable</th>
<th>Very favourable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankers</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Split sample: 493 Britons answered the question about institutions and another 517 answered the question about individuals.

Source: Ipsos Global Advisor

…and much higher than a number of other professions
British Armed Forces mid-table compared with the other countries…

Q. How favourable or unfavourable is your overall opinion of the following…

Base: Split sample: 520 Australians, 495 Canadians, 497 French people, 493 Britons and 497 Americans answered the question about institutions, and another 408 Australians, 505 Canadians, 503 French people, 517 Britons and 503 Americans answered the question about individuals.

Source: Ipsos Global @dvisor
Overall…

- Nuanced picture of armed forces – Hero, Victim, Villain played out in perceptions vs “reality”
- Not really contradictions: mental image not fixed
- What causes misperceptions?
  - Maths
  - Heuristics/biases – including emotional innumeracy: we overestimate what worries us, as much as we worry because we overestimate
  - Media/entertainment/campaigns have important role: but international basis shows not a British tabloid effect – more how we remember information
- Difficult balance to get right: misperceptions stick
Response

Christopher Dandeker
Response
Laura Goodwin
Response

Helen McCartney