

# Snapshot t

## employment

**Snapshot** *Noun* [c] (UNDERSTANDING)

A piece of information or short description that gives an understanding of a situation at a particular time

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**A plain language summary of research and evidence relating to the UK Armed Forces and veteran community**

Produced by the FiMT Research Centre, supported by The Royal British Legion

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forces in mind trust  
Research Centre



## About Snapshots

Snapshots are designed to aid understanding of the complex issues at play in relation to the Armed Forces, and to support decision-making processes by bridging the gaps between academic research, government and charitable policy, Service provision and public opinion. Snapshots are aimed primarily at those working in policy-making and Service provision roles for the Armed Forces, and are also useful to those seeking facts, figures and informed comment to empower a more objective discussion among the wider population, including the Armed Forces community and the media. The purpose of Snapshots is to review and interpret research and policy and to set out concise, plain language summaries to facilitate understanding and perception. Hyperlinks are provided to relevant sources of information, including academic research and organisation websites. Hover over hyperlinks to see reference information for each source and click to access them.

The [Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre](#) will produce a range of Snapshots covering many of the main themes and topics relating to the Armed Forces and veteran community. Due to the constant process of research and policy changes, Snapshots will be updated regularly in order to maintain their relevance. They will be hosted on the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#). Contributions and comments are welcome via the [Veterans & Families Research Hub forum](#).

## Disclaimer

Whilst Snapshots are produced using recognised research processes, they are written for a lay audience. They are a collation and summary of available academic and quality grey literature (unpublished or non-commercial literature), to provide an overview of information on a particular theme or topic. Snapshots are written to inform and to disseminate a large body of literature in an accessible way to as wide an audience as possible. They are not intended to be, and should not be regarded as, rigorous searches or systematic reviews.

## About the authors of this Snapshot

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## About the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre

The [Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre](#) was established in October 2017 within [The Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research](#) (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University. The Centre curates the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#), which provides advice and guidance to stakeholders and produces targeted research and related outputs. The Centre is funded by the [Forces in Mind Trust](#), which commissions research to contribute to a solid evidence base from which to inform, influence and underpin policy making and service delivery.

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>About Snapshots</b> .....   | 1  |
| 1. <b>Introduction and definitions</b> .....                         | 1  |
| 2. <b>Key findings</b> .....   | 2  |
| <b>Employment support whilst in Service</b> .....                    | 2  |
| <b>Transition and resettlement</b> .....                             | 2  |
| 3. <b>Methods</b> .....  | 3  |
| 4. <b>Employment whilst in-Service</b> .....                         | 4  |
| <b>Demographics</b> .....  | 4  |
| <b>Information and advice</b> .....                                  | 4  |
| <b>Spouse Employment Support Trial (SEST)</b> .....                  | 4  |
| 5. <b>Transition and resettlement</b> .....                          | 5  |
| <b>Information and advice</b> .....                                  | 5  |
| 6. <b>Employment support for veterans</b> .....                      | 6  |
| <b>What does employment for veterans look like?</b> .....            | 6  |
| <b>Employment rates by gender</b> .....                              | 6  |
| <b>Employment rates by ethnicity</b> .....                           | 6  |
| <b>Employment following discharge by gender and profession</b> ..... | 7  |
| <b>Early Service Leavers</b> .....                                   | 7  |
| <b>Job seeking</b> .....   | 8  |
| <b>Support needs and vulnerabilities</b> .....                       | 9  |
| <b>Employer perceptions and stereotyping</b> .....                   | 10 |
| <b>Veterans' perceptions</b> .....                                   | 11 |
| <b>Veterans and economic benefits</b> .....                          | 11 |
| <b>Effect of Unemployment on the Economy</b> .....                   | 12 |
| 7. <b>Conclusion</b> .....   | 12 |
| 8. <b>Key sources and references</b> .....                           | 12 |

## 1. Introduction and definitions

This Snapshot summarises issues relating to employment among serving personnel, veterans and spouses. The Snapshot sets out policy responses and current structures of support, presenting research evidence where available.

This Snapshot begins from the principle that employment choices made before and whilst in-Service, as well as during the processes of transition and resettlement, are important in determining post-discharge vulnerability and/or security regarding future employment. The paper is organised around three stages of military life: in-Service, transition and resettlement, and post-Service; and the following terms are relevant (further terms and their definitions are here):

- The term **'transition'** is used to describe the period of (re)integration into civilian life from the Armed Forces. For the purposes of this report, it is taken to start with the point in-Service at which personnel start active consideration and preparation for leaving the Armed Forces, and continues for varied periods of time depending on personal circumstances.
- **'Resettlement'** describes the processes and procedures by which one leaves the Armed Forces, and the formal support provided. It starts from the notification of/election to discharge and continues until the end of Resettlement provision.
- The term **'Early Service Leaver'** ([ESL](#)) covers those who receive the minimum statutory resettlement support. ESLs are those "who are discharged (a) compulsorily from the trained strength or untrained strength and lose entitlement to resettlement provision ... they would otherwise have because of the circumstances of their discharge; (b) at their own request from the trained strength or untrained strength, having completed less than four years' Service."
- The terms **veteran** and **ex-Service personnel** are used interchangeably; the Ministry of Defence's 2014 policy definition of a 'veteran' is an individual who has "served for at least a day in HM Armed Forces, whether as a Regular or a Reservist." This includes Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy personnel who have served in support of the Armed Forces.

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) states there is an obligation to serving personnel, veterans and their families that they should face no disadvantage due to their military Service. Employment among veterans remains a key concern in public consciousness; it is [estimated](#) that there are 925,000 working age veterans currently living in the UK. Numbers [leaving each year](#) have reduced from 20,000 in 2015 to under 17,000 in 2017.

UK employment has reached its [joint highest level](#) since 1975, with 2018 marking the [lowest levels of unemployment](#) at 4.2%, down from 4.6% in 2017. [Data](#) from the [Ministry of Defence](#) suggests that there is no significant difference in employment status between veterans and the general population. Conversely, [research](#) undertaken by The RBL suggests that working age veterans in the UK are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their civilian contemporaries. The MOD data is a much larger sample size, however, it does not account for detail included in the RBL report, such as the number of people in full time employment vs part time employment. This suggests an overall lack of clarity and understanding of the realities of veteran employment in the UK. Furthermore, there are differences in opportunities and employment outcomes between the three Armed Services and their various branches, and reasons for these variances require exploration.

Published data shows Army Service Leavers are 12% more likely to be unemployed (not including those who are economically inactive) than Naval Service (7%) and RAF (7%) Service Leavers. In determining reasons for differing employment outcomes there are educational and demographic factors to consider, such as the age, gender, ethnicity and rank of Service Leavers, their pre-Service educational achievements and their qualifications and skills accrued during Service. In addition to personal preference and opportunities, all of these will impact upon the type of employment secured or level of economic activity. For example, Service Leavers of officer rank are significantly more likely than other ranks (28% to 8% respectively) to find employment in professional occupations.

## 2. Key findings

### Employment support whilst in Service

It is important that those in Service have the opportunity to obtain transferrable skills and further qualifications, in order to give themselves the best chance of securing relevant and fulfilling employment after they leave the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces are the largest apprenticeship provider in the UK; in 2018 the Royal Navy was rated as a 'Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer'. All of the Armed Forces provide courses, qualifications and access to academic qualifications that provide serving personnel transferable skills during their careers and beyond into the civilian workplace following transition. Learning credits and other funding opportunities are available to serving personnel and veterans, subject to eligibility.

Once serving personnel have made the decision to leave the Armed Forces, they are offered resettlement support, information and advice from the Directorate of Training, Education, Skills and Resettlement (TESR). Under the Tri-Service Resettlement Policy, JSP534, TESR directs the provision of support workshops, training and job finding services, based on length of Service or medical grounds and, where necessary, the individual needs of Service personnel with particular requirements.

### Transition and resettlement

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) is the official provider of Armed Forces resettlement services for those leaving or planning to leave any of the Services. CTP provides support from two years before discharge (or from age 50), through to two years after, via a range of resettlement services; including advice, career skills, one-to-one guidance, training and job opportunities. However, CTP is accessed on a voluntary basis, so although it is widely available, there will be a number of Service Leavers who do not receive support.

The guidance available through CTP varies according to length of Service and personal circumstances. For example, for wounded, injured or sick (WIS) personnel, the resettlement timeline can be longer than two years post-discharge, usually until the condition responsible for their discharge is stabilised and cannot be remedied further.

Alongside statutory support, there are a wide range of initiatives to support ex-Service personnel into employment, both from the charity and private sectors. Armed Forces charities are an integral source of support to both Armed Forces and veteran families; these charities provide support to Service-personnel and their families whilst serving, during transition to, and throughout, civilian life. Since 2011, the Government has encouraged businesses, charitable and public sector organisations to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, to demonstrate their commitment to supporting the Armed Forces Community and provide employment and other opportunities to veterans. To date, more than 1,500

organisations have signed the Covenant. However, only a limited number of these organisations have made specific provision for veterans; a 2017 follow-up report to the 2014 The Veterans' Transition Review suggests that the Covenant and its purpose need increased public awareness and understanding.

There are key factors that differentiate leaving a career in the Armed Forces from leaving other careers. Namely, according to research, that many people leaving the Armed Forces will be young in comparison to those leaving other professions. Most people serve for less than 10 years, but this differs between Service branches.

It is widely accepted that the majority of working age veterans go on to have successful and diverse civilian careers. CTP statistics state that of the Service personnel who left the UK Armed Forces in 2016/17, and used a CTP service, 82% were employed six months after leaving. Moreover, the same statistics record the employment rate for Service Leavers as being higher than the employment rate for the UK population.

Few data sources exist that report on the quality and security of employment, in terms of whether job roles suit the skill level, interests and experience of the veteran, the type of job roles that veterans access, or longer-term permanent employment status post-Service. Whilst there is significant support and advice to assist Service Leavers in the transition process, there are limitations. For example, the Veterans' Transition Review highlights the difficulties of veterans with Curricula Vitae (CVs) that require an adjustment from the use of specialist, military terminology, in order to make them transferable for the civilian job market. Communicating military skills to civilian expectations can be problematic, for example, when a veteran does not have the civilian equivalent in qualifications; this is a particular issue in nursing and healthcare. The Review also acknowledges that there is a need to be more proactive in countering negative media misconceptions and stereotypes that can create an extra barrier to Service Leavers finding work.

### **3. Methods**

A review was undertaken of the available UK evidence relating to employment among Serving personnel and veterans using standard reviewing techniques such as searching electronic databases, hand searching of references from relevant articles and reports and a review of websites from government and relevant organisations. The review was limited to studies undertaken since the release of the first FiMT Transition Mapping Study and drew upon existing literature reviews for pre-2013 studies. There is a dearth of academic research on veteran employment in the UK. There are a significant number of peer-reviewed articles from the US, but these have been discounted for the purposes of this Snapshot. The Veterans & Families Research Hub has been an invaluable source of relevant literature.

Discussion and comment on the implication of employment issues and considerations for veterans can be found in a range of reviews and reports. This Snapshot draws significantly on the findings of reports with the greatest evidence, including RBL's Deployment to Employment report, the UK Household Survey of the ex-Service Community, the FiMT Transition Mapping Study and the 2014 Veterans' Transition Review and its related follow-up reports in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## 4. Employment whilst in-Service

### Demographics

Based on [MOD data](#), the typical recruit is likely to be 16-18 at age of entry into the Armed, of white ethnicity and predominantly male. For the Army, recruits are likely to be from a low socio-economic background.

Up to 50% of Army recruits have literacy and numeracy skills below Entry Level 3, equivalent to the standard expected of primary school leavers at age 11. Low literacy and numeracy skills can constitute a serious barrier to wider employment as acknowledged in the [Wolf Report on Vocational Education](#). This report places significant emphasis on the need for these skills, stating “English and Maths GCSE (at grades A\*-C) are fundamental to young people’s employment and education prospects.”

### Information and advice

The Armed Forces provide specialist training and continuing professional development opportunities, for those in the [Army](#), [Royal Air Force](#) and [Royal Navy/Royal Marines](#), and promote the chance to gain practical and leadership workplace skills, as well as academic and vocational qualifications. The Army is the largest apprenticeship provider in the UK.

Those in Service are able to study to obtain GCSE and A Level qualifications, or their equivalents. Resources are available to encourage learning to take place, but the commitments of Service life can make this difficult to undertake in practice. Furthermore, the Army’s target is for recruits to attain at least Entry Level 3 (equivalent to a reading age of 9-11), after up to 12 months, then for soldiers to have reached the next level after three years, but the [Army does not record what proportion achieve this level of ability](#).

However, whilst providing an advantage, academic qualifications are not the only route to securing employment in the civilian world. The UK Armed Forces provide a learning environment with a wide range of [qualifications available](#) that not only enhance a military career, but that civilian employers should find desirable in potential employees. [The Veterans’ Transition Review](#) encouraged personnel to, “take ownership of their future from day one ... prompting individuals to think about their career development within the Forces, and their longer-term aims.”

In addition to statutory provision, certain military charities offer assistance to Service personnel, as well as veterans and their dependants; for example, the RBL offers mentoring, referrals and an online training and employment resource, [Civvy Street](#).

### Spouse Employment Support Trial (SEST)

The employment prospects of spouses and others related to the Serving family member, and the impact that serving in the military has on the whole family’s employment opportunities, are also important factors. Spouses of Armed Forces personnel experience unique challenges in both gaining and maintaining employment, with frequent relocation often cited as a barrier to long-term employment and pension accrual. In response to this, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) launched the SEST initiative in 2015. The primary purpose of the SEST is to help the spouses of Armed Forces personnel to optimise their access to employment, and to help them find employment at a level that is commensurate with their skills, knowledge and experience.

The [Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research](#) worked with the [Forces in Mind Trust](#) to complete an evaluation of the MOD's SEST. The [report](#) finds that receiving employment support has a largely positive effect on military spouses, in terms of providing them with training, opportunities for personal enhancement and career development, and in making them feel more valued. Findings will be used to inform MOD decision making regarding future programmes of employment support for spouses.

## 5. Transition and resettlement

### Information and advice

[Research](#) suggests that concern for the civilian future, including finding employment, is a prominent factor during the resettlement process. Preparation for future employment is a key aspect of transition and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides statutory support via the [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP). The CTP assists personnel leaving the Armed Forces to make a successful transition to civilian employment and achieve wider vocational outcomes. CTP offer an [ex-Service Personnel Employment Guide](#) and advise that preparation is key to understanding the jobs that will be on offer, options available and setting career objectives. Again, it needs to be noted that CTP services are not compulsory and subsequently there will be Service Leavers who will discharge having never accessed this form of support.

A key research report, [Continue to Work: the FiMT Transition Mapping Study](#), recommends a re-articulation and realignment of the transition process within the Armed Forces, to enable Service Leavers to gain a clear idea of their intended future and the skills required for them to reach that goal. According to the research, this would require more effective transition planning and preparation as accepted practice within the Armed Forces, as well as a commitment to training and learning skills, and greater exposure to the civilian workplace through short personal attachments prior to transition.

A [2017 report](#) from the [Directory of Social Change](#) (DSC) focuses specifically on those charities providing employment support, giving useful insight into the charitable help and support individuals and families can access. The report finds that 5% of Armed Forces charities provide employment support. The most popular employment-support service delivered by charities is employment advice, which is offered by 61% of charities. 39% offer recruitment services, such as access to recruitment consultants and job-seeking support.

The following are examples of charitably provided resources and programmes:

- [RFEA The Forces Employment Charity Ex-Forces Employment Programme](#) aims to support ex-Service personnel to find employment for the rest of their working lives, through providing career opportunities.
- The Royal British Legion Industries' (RBLI) [LifeWorks](#) Programme is a 5-day course, which aims to equip ex-Service personnel with the tools to find and maintain appropriate civilian employment.
- The [Poppy Factory](#) offers an employability service to veterans, including specialised support to veterans with mental or physical health challenges.
- The [White Ensign Association](#) provides employment support to Serving members and veterans of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, reservists and their families.



## 6. Employment support for veterans

### What does employment for veterans look like?

Veterans participating in one 2012 [research study](#) were found to be looking for high-status employment, had strong ideas about how their skillset might translate into civilian employment and had the attitude of wanting to 'get it done' in terms of finding suitable employment. However, the research also found some veterans had unrealistic expectations and lacked practical understanding of how their military identity and achievements would translate into civilian life, a key aspect of which was found to be securing employment.

The [Armed Services Advice Project \(ASAP\)](#) supports the Armed Forces Community across Scotland. A [report](#) on the work of ASAP shows employment as being one of three main issues for which clients seek help. Moreover, employment advice is regarded as being important by around a third of clients in the 45-59 age bracket.

MOD data derived from the CTP [provides](#) statistics on the employment outcomes among Service Leavers with attention to demographic groups. Of the Service personnel who left the UK Armed Forces in 2016/17 and used a billable CTP service, 82% were employed, 8% were unemployed and 10% were economically inactive, up to six months after leaving Service. For full details and statistics, please access the link [here](#):

### Employment rates by gender

| Gender | Estimated employment rate (% 6 months post discharge) |
|--------|---|
| Male   | 81  |
| Female | 69  |

### Employment rates by ethnicity

| Ethnicity                          | Estimated employment rate (% 6 months post discharge) |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) | 65  |
| White                              | 81  |

The MOD's [Annual Population Survey](#) provides the following information on the position of veterans' employment, in comparison to civilian employment. The highest proportion of veterans work in 'Associate Professional and Technical' roles (19%), compared to the highest proportion of civilians working in 'Professional Occupations' (21%). Veterans are significantly more likely to work in 'Public Admin and Defence' (12% vs 6%). This includes civilian roles within the [MOD](#), [Prison Service](#), [NHS](#), [Police](#) and [Fire Services](#).

## Employment following discharge by gender and profession

| Profession                           | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Manufacturing                        | 15       | 7          |
| Construction                         | 11       | 1          |
| Transport and storage                | 14       | 3          |
| Skilled trade                        | 17       | 4          |
| Process, plant and machine operative | 18       | 1          |
| Health and social care               | 7        | 30         |
| Education                            | 4        | 13         |
| Administrative and secretarial       | 3        | 17         |
| Caring, leisure and other            | 4        | 13         |

There are a number of [reasons for economic inactivity](#) by Service branch and gender including education, training and volunteering opportunities, as well as retirement and looking after family.

Of those who were part of the MOD's Redundancy Programme 2011 to 2014 and who used CTP services, research shows 79% were employed 6 months after leaving, 11% were unemployed and 10% were economically inactive. Those who chose redundancy (applicants) were more likely to be employed than non-applicants (81% vs 75%).

While veterans are to be found all across the employment landscape, a 2015 [report](#) details the sectors typically seen to offer employment to ex-Service personnel as being Security (including high-risk security opportunities in the Sahara and sub-Saharan Africa); Marine Protection and, specifically for those with medical training, the Health Sector. Other sectors that are growing in popularity for veteran employment include communications, IT, the utility sector including oil and gas, retail and the supply chain. The same report also identifies the potential for recruitment of ex-Service personnel into roles within industries that have ambitious growth plans, for example online retail. Report findings explain that some employers have simply not considered ex-Service personnel through a lack of familiarity with their skills and traits. Recruiters also "struggled to match the skills they believed were necessary for military life to those needed in their organisations," suggesting that in some cases it may simply be a case of ex-Service personnel being overlooked, due to lack of understanding of the transferable skills gained from service in the Armed Forces.

### Early Service Leavers

Those who leave the Armed Forces before completing the minimum term of their contract, who are dishonourably discharged, or who have fewer than four years' service (depending on Service branch) are known as [Early Service Leavers](#) (ESLs). This group has been reported as having a higher risk of poor transition outcomes, due in part to their poor achievements and perceived lack of commitment to long term roles.

As a result of this recognition, the MOD has put into place the [Future Horizons Programme](#) to improve resettlement provision for ESLs. In terms of the programme of transition delivered by the RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity, support is available across all three Services, regardless of how long the individual has served or their reason for leaving. A [report](#) on the Programme shows evidence of high

levels of engagement with the ESLs participating, low attrition rates, regular contact via social media and positive employment outcomes.

There is, however, a lack of research into the specific needs of those leaving the Service early and a lack of understanding of what constitutes an Early Service Leaver (ESL). The Future Horizons [Report](#) calls for greater consideration of the heterogeneity of the ESL population and their future employment needs. ESL length of Service can vary greatly, with the [same report](#) suggesting four categories of ESL; untrained, untrained outliers (who have served longer than the 182 days basic training), trained but leaving before four years of Service, and those trained and serving over four years. This variance in Service length indicates a possibility that ESLs may have different needs and seek different post-Service employment opportunities especially where training and education has been undertaken by the individual whilst in-Service.

### Job seeking

A gap exists between some veterans' understanding of how to prepare for civilian employment and many civilian employers' understanding of what skills veterans can offer. [Research](#) has found that, at least to some extent, there is a barrier in not being able to translate skills acquired in-Service into an effective application for civilian employment.

UK [research](#) reports on veteran employment highlight the lack of parity between training received in the Armed Forces and recognised UK qualifications, which disadvantages some veterans as they transition into civilian work and face employers who are unwilling to consider training or qualifications 'outside the civilian norm'. This has prompted several calls for action, including: improvement in opportunities to obtain educational qualifications whilst in-Service that relate to accepted civilian qualifications; greater preparation throughout the career of a Service person for [transition to civilian working life](#); better co-operation between the Armed Forces and military charities in dealing with employment issues; and, more accessible services to assist those veterans suffering from medical conditions.

[FiMT's Transition Mapping Study](#) (2013) drew on findings that "some ex-Service personnel find that despite having Service related qualifications, these are often invalid in the civilian employment market or are not recognised outside the Service." This statement is echoed elsewhere, including in [The Veterans' Transition Review](#) recommendation that the Government should, "reinforce the strategy for translating and accrediting skills, experience and qualifications gained in the Forces for the civilian world."

Recently, [The Poppy Factory](#) and the [Centre for Mental Health's](#) 2016 report [Employment in Mind](#) quotes a similar sentiment from a client:

*"There's certain things you don't have a qualification for. For instance being in charge of between 200 and 600 men as an HR office manager. I don't have a qualification, so I'd go to a company and say, 'well I've just been in charge of 600 men, I've been in charge of pay documentation, passports, deployments, bombs, bullets, you name it'...It didn't mean a thing because I don't have qualifications."*

Despite the availability of support through, for example, the CTP, stakeholders and employers highlight poor applications and CVs as a barrier to employment. [The Veterans' Transition Review](#) found

that “employers reported a common set of problems that exist despite the considerable effort that goes into preparing Service Leavers for transition. These included ... poor CVs that do not do justice to the Service Leaver.” This echoes research by the [Forces in Mind Trust](#) that concluded that “lack of transferability of qualifications and licences to the civilian employment market” was a barrier to Service Leavers seeking jobs, with some former personnel having to retake qualifications at considerable personal expense to make them employable in civilian life.

Qualitative interviews with employers carried out by [Futures 4 Forces](#) similarly found that employers, “admitted to being confused by military jargon that sometimes litters Service Leavers’ CVs and to finding it difficult to match ex-military personnel’s skill sets to their company’s specific skill requirements.”

### [Support needs and vulnerabilities](#)

Despite the securing of employment opportunities by the majority, [survey data](#) suggests there are veterans who either find themselves without full or part-time work, or who are in employment that does not fully utilise the skills and education they acquired whilst serving. [Data collected by RBL](#) suggests that around 120,000 veterans are unemployed and looking for work; 130,000 veterans are unemployed and not looking for work; and 160,000 veterans have taken early retirement or are in some form of further education. Further data collected for [RBL’s Survey](#) found that an estimated 60,000 members of the ex-Service community reported having to take a job for which they felt overqualified or underpaid.

As the vast majority of the UK veteran population are male, RBL used statistics for working age men from the first quarter of the [2014 Labour Force Survey](#) as a comparator for employment rates, and [found that](#) veterans are less likely to be in full time work than the general population (57% vs 68%); less likely to be in part time work (6% vs 9%); and nearly twice as likely to be unemployed (11% vs 6%). It is worth mentioning that this data is in contrast to the [CTP data](#) above and reflects the need to be consistently aware of the changing labour market.

It should be noted that whilst sample-based survey data can provide an estimated overview of the employment status of the veteran community at a specific point in time, these surveys are unable to provide data on whether the employment gained is sustainable or fulfilling for the veteran concerned. This reflects that the picture of employment for veterans remains somewhat unclear and not fully quantified.

Researchers have conducted quantitative analysis and considered factors related to employment outcomes for UK veterans, including the impact of the veteran’s mental health. This [research](#) did not find that Military Service itself has a negative impact on future employment. However, there was some suggestion that poor mental health could make individuals more vulnerable to hardship such as unemployment. There is a paucity of research in the UK around supporting veterans back into employment following physical and mental health difficulties. However, a programme known as Individual Placement and Support ([IPS](#)) appears to be regarded as a suitable method by which all people with mental and physical health problems can be supported into employment.

A report by Poppy Scotland, [The Lines Between](#), which reviewed veteran employment in Scotland, showed that most veterans (77% of those surveyed) were able to secure work in the civilian labour market, but that employment undertaken did not necessarily lead to progression or stability, and that

pay levels were not always improved on transition. Six percent of those surveyed had not gained work, with financial problems, relationship issues, lack of relevant training or skills and health difficulties, were identified as the most common issues that had made it difficult to find or keep a job.

RBL's 2016 report, *Deployment to Employment*, finds that female and black, Asian, and minority ethnic veterans have slightly worse employment prospects than white males and under-employment is prevalent, with veterans unable to utilise their skills to their full potential in the civilian workplace. Veterans with health problems face significant barriers in the civilian workforce and ESLs also appear to be at a disadvantage, the latter due to low attainment in civilian qualifications. The 55-64 year old age group is also reported to struggle to find work owing to their lower levels of computer literacy. The report recommends that educational attainment in the Armed Forces needs to be raised to ensure parity of qualifications, that improved training is required to enable veterans to sell their skills to employers via CVs and applications, and that negative stereotyping of military applicants by employers needs to be addressed.

A 2016 [report](#) from the [Centre for Mental Health](#), on behalf of [The Poppy Factory](#), draws attention to mental health as a potential major barrier to employment, but conversely, findings from this report suggest that being in work is good for health and is an important part of recovery for many people with mental health conditions.

#### Employer perceptions and stereotyping

As well as the health of the individual itself, the report above points out that negative stereotypes of veterans with mental health issues, such as being prone to PTSD and issues with anger management, are a concern to employers considering hiring veterans. The report determines that these concerns are alleviated when employers experience taking on veterans, but the challenge is how to engage employers in the first place. It is recognised that there is a need to change some employers' attitudes towards employing veterans, as well as assisting veterans to better present their skills and strengths through CVs, applications and interviews.

Futures 4 Forces, in their *'UK employers' perceptions on the employment and employability of ex-Service personnel'*, [identified employer preconceptions](#) of veterans in a series of qualitative interviews with employers. This report highlights the need for the MOD and military charities to value and maintain the interest of those employers who regularly recruit Service Leavers, and to inform those employers who do not, that Service Leavers can add real value and competitive advantage to an organisation through evidence-based success stories. A [report](#) by the [Directory of Social Change](#), on education and employment provision by military charities highlighted the need for military charities to collaborate, evaluate and employ best practice to serve better the veteran community, specifically in terms of offering educational training and employment opportunities.

A [report](#) from Deloitte, *Veterans work: recognising the potential of ex-Service personnel*, considers the value and skills that ex-Service personnel bring to the workplace. This report asserts that the majority of veterans transition successfully into employment and those organisations that have employed veterans are positive about the valuable skills veterans bring, including the fact that veterans appear to take fewer sick days. The report also asks employers how many would employ a veteran again and looks at those offering veteran specific employment programmes. However, the report also finds that employers possess a lack of understanding about the key skills veterans have and, therefore,

employers could do more to invest in veteran recruitment and match veterans with roles that complement their skillset.

As part of their Transition, Employment and Resettlement Programme, Barclays ran a survey of veterans in the civilian workplace, which found, “a quarter (25%) of veterans felt that an interviewer had preconceptions about them because of their time in the Armed Forces.” The survey further found that “one in six (15%) veterans [had] been asked an inappropriate or invasive question when interviewing for a civilian job, one of the most common being whether they had killed anyone during combat.”

As the ‘Employment in Mind’ report found, the negative stereotyping of ex-Servicemen and women can be acutely felt by veteran job seekers. The Veterans’ Transition Review included the recommendation that the Government should “be more proactive in countering negative misconceptions and stereotypes that can create an extra barrier to Service Leavers finding work.” It further suggested the need for greater co-ordination in the relationship between the MOD and industry, to promote Service Leaver recruitment, to encourage the creation of transition work placements, and to help deliver the Corporate Covenant.

#### **Veterans’ perceptions**

Civilian employers may, in some instances, lack understanding of veterans’ capabilities, but Futures 4 Forces noted that employers judged that high-ranking Service Leavers had “unrealistic salary expectations,” hampering smooth transition into civilian employment. Many Service personnel leave the Armed Forces with an expectation that they will be able to command a similar salary in the civilian sector to that which they received in Service. The 2017 FiMT Transition Mapping Study noted that, “there is scope for some expectation management around what personnel can expect in terms of how many applications/interviews they may need to make to secure a job, at what level of seniority they can expect to work, and a realistic idea of likely salary range.” The study further suggests that a competitive civilian job market, along with difficulties in translating skillsets and qualifications can lead to an expectations gap.

#### **Veterans and economic benefits**

Skill shortages are a cost to the UK in productivity and to individual employers financially. The Employer Skills Survey reports that, “over two-thirds of employers that had difficulty filling their vacancies solely as a result of skill shortages had experienced a direct financial impact through either loss of business to competitors, or increased operating costs.” The survey stated that veterans are seen as highly trained and experienced in a range of skills, which could be utilised to help meet this current shortage of skills. Furthermore, there is an overlap between the areas of highest skill shortages and the training programme and roles within the Armed Forces, including, “chefs (17% of all Skilled Trades skill-shortage vacancies), Metal Working Production and Maintenance Fitters (13%) and Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians (13%). As Business in the Community point out, “with over 200 trades in the Army alone, Armed Forces personnel receive advanced training in a number of technical roles, including engineering, project management, communications, logistics and IT – all transferable to the civilian workplace.”

## Effect of Unemployment on the Economy

*The FiMT Transition Mapping Study* (2017) sought to estimate the cost of poor transition out of the UK Armed Forces for all ages:

*“In the base line year, 2012, with 19,950 Service Leavers, the model assesses the costs of poor transition as being £113.8 million. Alcohol misuse has the largest single effect, with costs of £35m, followed by mental health issues (“common neurotic disorders” together with PTSD) at £26m. Unemployment costs are £21m and family breakdown at £16m.”*

## 7. Conclusion

For the key findings of this Snapshot, please see [Section 2](#), summarised below:

There are numerous vocational and academic qualifications to be undertaken whilst in the Services and during the period of transition. However, the individual Service person is required to instigate the training and complete the course. Many vocational qualifications are specific to the specialist needs of the Armed Forces and as such are taught ‘on the job’, but these skillsets must be translated for the civilian job market following military-to-civilian transition.

Statutory support back into employment following transition is offered by CTP and TESR, including information, support and advice. The support offered to personnel leaving Service differs according to length of Service and personal circumstances (e.g. WIS veterans), but it is recognised that as voluntary provision, the take-up of support will not reach all Service Leavers. As the leaving age for joining the Armed Forces is young, it is likely that a significant number of personnel who leave will still be young people upon discharge. Conflicting evidence still exists about veteran vs general population employment and unemployment rates. The existence of Army recruits with low educational attainment is being addressed through policy to increase these skills in Service, however, the take-up currently remains unmonitored.

Although a number of organisations have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, to support the Armed Forces Community back into civilian work, only a minor number have made provision for veterans. Armed Forces charities therefore remain a significant source of support following transition.

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