

## EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF VETERANS — 2016<sup>1</sup>

### Overview:

- In 2016, the unemployment rate for male veterans overall was not statistically different from the rate for female veterans.
- Among the 453,000 unemployed veterans in 2016, more than half were over the age of 45.
- Nearly 1 in 3 employed veterans with a service-connected disability worked in the public sector in August 2016, compared with about 1 in 5 veterans with no disability.
- Veterans with less than a 30 percent disability rating were much more likely to be in the labor market than those with a 60 percent or higher ranking.

### Study:

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly sample survey of 60,000 American households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics to gather general employment and unemployment data, with specific questions on veteran employment. The authors aggregated all monthly data from 2016. Surveyors asked questions regarding prior service of individuals aged 17 and older, and data was tabulated for those aged 18 and over. The months following August 2015 included a change in the weighted methodology to increase the estimates of the numbers of veterans with service-connected disability, those who served as Reservists or National Guard, and veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This shift impacts year to year comparisons. In August 2016, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) co-sponsored a supplemental report to the monthly to dive deeper into disability status and Reserve or National Guard status.

For data gathering purposes, veterans were defined as “men and women who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who were civilians at the time they were surveyed.” Members of the Reserve and National Guard were only included in the veteran count if they had been called to active duty at some point. Veterans of other service periods were defined as “men and women who served in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time other than World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam era, or the Gulf War era.” Any individual who served in both wartime and another service period was classified under the wartime service period. Those who served in multiple wartime periods were classified under the most recent service period.

### NVTAC Insights:

This survey of veteran employment numbers for 2016 unpacks some useful information for your HVRP grant team to keep in mind. First, you already know that a high percentage of the veterans experiencing homelessness with whom you work have a disabling condition. The data from this survey show that, while veterans with disabilities have comparable unemployment rates with veterans who do not have a documented service connected disability, those with documented disabilities have a much lower labor force participation rate.

Second, you can assume that some veterans coming into HVRP with a service-connected disability and a 60 percent rating or higher are less likely to be in the active labor force prior to entering HVRP. They may have limited work histories or large gaps of time out of the labor force, likely impacting their self-confidence and knowledge of current career options.

Third, this survey only included veterans with VA-determined service-connected disabilities in their disability employment figures. This means that some veterans with disabling conditions who have not yet received their disability determination from the VA may not be included in the service connected disabled category. Your team can work with veterans with pending claims through partnerships with local VSOs, and you can also work with SOAR-certified staff members in your agency or other community partners to help veterans who already have service connected disability apply for SSA benefits.

### **Findings:**

The CPS and supplement include several useful findings and demographic data points related to employment, specifically when viewed by period of service and disability status. The unemployment rate for veterans with a service-connected disability and those without a disability were comparable, at 4.8 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. However, the labor force participation rate for veterans with a service-connected disability was much lower than for veterans without a disability, at 46.4 percent and 50.7 percent, respectively. Additionally, veterans with less than a 30 percent disability rating were much more likely to be in the labor market than those with a 60 percent or higher ranking, at 54.7 percent and 29.9 percent, respectively, even though their unemployment rates were comparable.

Of the 3.9 million Gulf War era II veterans, 71 percent were between the ages of 25 and 44 and 18 percent were women. Unemployment rates for this subset of veterans was comparable between men and women (5.0 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively). Overall this subset had comparable unemployment rates with their civilian counterparts, except for veterans aged 25 to 34, who had a higher unemployment rate compared to nonveterans (6.6 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively). These veterans were more than twice as likely to work in the public sector workforce, compared to their nonveteran counterparts (28 percent and 13 percent, respectively); this include 16 percent of employed veterans from this group who work for the Federal government. Gulf War era I veterans had lower than average unemployment rates compared to nonveterans, and women in this subset had comparable unemployment with their nonveteran counterparts.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Labor (2017, March 22). Employment Situation of Veterans - 2016. Retrieved July 10, 2017, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.