



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Military and Mental Health Correlates of Unemployment in a National Sample of Women Veterans” Alison Hamilton, Lindsay Williams, Donna L. Washington | [Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways:

- Women veterans who screened positive for depression were five times more likely to be unemployed than those who screened negative.
- Perceived lack of respect for or understanding of their military experience was associated with unemployment for post-active duty women veterans.

Study:

This study used data from the National Survey of Women Veterans, a cross-sectional national telephone survey of 1,605 women veterans conducted in 2008-2009 to identify factors impacting unemployment. Researchers compared employed and unemployed women veterans based on a variety of demographic, social, health, and economic factors (e.g. race, marital status, education level, and household income) as well as military service-related issues (e.g. length and type of service and combat exposure). Only women who were veterans of the regular Armed Forces or members of the National Guards or Reserves called to active duty were included.

Findings:

While the majority (89.7 percent) of respondents were employed, a significant number (10.3 percent) were unemployed. Unemployed women veterans were more likely to be single, have less than a college education, be uninsured, and live below the poverty level. Other factors associated with unemployment were depression, type of military service, and post-duty perceptions. A positive depression screening increased the likelihood of being unemployed by five times. Women who served during wartime or in the regular military versus in the National Guards or Reserves were also more likely to be unemployed as were those who felt that their military experience was not understood or that their veteran status was not respected.

Conclusion:

The military experiences of women veterans are unique and require a specialized service-delivery approach. Offering improved mental health services for women veterans, especially around depression screening and treatment could have long-term benefits on employment and quality of life. Education around the important contributions of women veterans could improve perceptions of status, respect, and understanding. Successful techniques including the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) employment model and mentorship programs could be adapted to meet the needs of women veterans during their job search.