



UK Veterans' Survey: Situation of Veterans in the Workforce Post Military Service

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The **Veterans' Survey 2022**, published by the **Office for National Statistics (ONS)** on **April 23, 2025**, provides an in-depth overview of the employment condition of British veterans. According to the collected data, less than half of the veterans (46.9%) were employed or self-employed, while an almost equal number (46.1%) were retired. Most of those working were employed in the private sector (62%), followed by the public sector (29.7%) and, to a lesser extent, the non-profit sector (5.7%).

The survey also highlighted that more than one in five veterans (20.9%) had actively sought to change jobs in the four weeks preceding the interview, driven by the desire to improve salary, work-life balance, or advance professionally.

A significant finding is that over half of the veterans (52.5%) reported having accepted, at least once, a job at a lower level of experience or skills compared to

their last military assignment. The main reasons? The scarcity of job opportunities and the lack of recognition by employers of the transferable skills acquired during service.

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In terms of economic activity, 48.3% of veterans were considered economically active, a figure higher than that recorded in the 2021 Census for England and Wales (42.4%). However, caution is necessary when making direct comparisons with the general population, given the different age and gender distribution.

The challenges in transition were further explored through qualitative analyses: unemployed veterans and those discharged less than five years ago reported deficiencies in career support services, in managing health issues, especially mental health, and in integration into civilian life.

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Transferable Skills and Underemployment: A Persistent Challenge

A central aspect emerging from the study concerns the use of skills acquired in the Armed Forces in the civilian labor market. 85.4% of veterans stated they were aware of possessing transferable skills, and 81.4% reported having effectively used them in the civilian sphere. However, the full valorization of these capabilities remains a challenge.

In fact, more than half of the respondents admitted having to accept jobs below their professional qualifications. The main reasons are the lack of alternatives (cited as the primary cause) and employers' inability to recognize the value of military skills.

Some segments of the veteran population are more vulnerable to this form of underemployment:

- Veterans with annual incomes below £20,799 are more subject to skill-related underemployment (59.4%) compared to those with incomes over £51,950 (44.7%);
- Disabled veterans show higher percentages of skill underutilization (56.5%) compared to non-disabled veterans (47.8%);

- Those who felt unprepared for civilian life after discharge were twice as likely to experience underemployment compared to those who felt prepared (68.5% versus 39.3%).

The data also reveals a significant difference depending on the branch of origin: veterans of the Royal Air Force are less subject to underemployment compared to those of the British Army and the Royal Navy.

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Volunteering and Sense of Community Belonging

Despite difficulties in the job market, many veterans continue to actively contribute to society. More than half (53.5%) have voluntarily offered their time to organizations, clubs, or charities in the past twelve months, a percentage higher than the general population (37.2%).

The main reasons given by those who did not engage in volunteer activities include:

- Work commitments;
- Other leisure interests;
- Health problems or disabilities preventing activity.

It is interesting to note how volunteering is closely linked to the sense of community belonging: veterans who felt an integral part of their local community were more inclined to volunteer (62.8%) compared to those who did not feel this sense of belonging (44.2%).

Moreover, the data on volunteer participation remained almost unchanged between disabled and non-disabled veterans, highlighting a resilience and a rooted willingness for social commitment, despite any physical or psychological limitations.

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Towards the Future: Improved Support and Opportunities to Develop

In light of the critical issues that emerged, new programs have been launched in recent years to improve support for veterans, such as the renewed Career Transition Partnership (CTP)

operational from October 2024 and the "Op ASCEND" initiative launched in March 2025. These programs aim to offer:

- **Greater continuity in career support;**
- **Access to high-level technical qualifications;**
- **Greater focus on mental health;**
- **Targeted support for specific categories, such as female veterans.**

Qualitative analysis also highlights some concrete requests from veterans:

- Easier access to professional conversion courses;
- Mentoring by successfully reintegrated ex-military personnel into civilian life;
- More networking and job placement opportunities during the transition period;
- Better coordination between government agencies, employers, and veterans' associations.

While it is clear that much has been done, it remains evident the need for a constant commitment to transform gratitude towards veterans into concrete opportunities. The Veterans' Survey 2022 reminds us that, beyond the statistics, each data point represents stories of commitment, sacrifice, and resilience that deserve full recognition and support in civilian life.

News link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-analysis-of-uk-armed-forces-veterans>