



**Veterans Work: Moving On**  
Executive summary

Central themes explored within the report include, where service leavers are located, why they choose to live there, their priorities, how realistic their salary expectations are and how they evaluate their experience of finding the right job.



As part of  
One Million Futures

# Introduction

'Veterans Work: Moving On' is the second report commissioned by Deloitte, the Officers' Association and Forces in Mind Trust. The first report, published in 2016 entitled 'Veterans Work', highlighted the wealth of potential and skills in the ex-service personnel talent pool and the commercial benefits to the organisations who hire them. It also pinpointed the challenges faced by UK veterans entering civilian employment.

The 2016 report found that, on average, 30% of businesses nationally did not consider veterans when developing their recruitment strategies. Although the majority claimed to be more open minded, 60% of businesses still ruled out recruiting someone if they had no industry experience.

The aim of this second study – Veterans Work: Moving On – is to examine the factors that motivate veterans when making the transition from the military to the civilian job market. In addition, it aims to alert Corporate UK to these factors, so that ultimately they can do more to positively impact veteran transition support and recruitment. Central themes explored within the report include, where service leavers are located, why they choose to live there, their priorities, how realistic their salary expectations are and how they evaluate their experience of finding the right job.

Where appropriate and possible, this latest report has segmented these experiences by service of the Armed Forces, rank, gender, age and those identifying as having a disability.

For the vast majority of armed forces personnel, the decision to leave is always going to be a challenging one to make. For most, it is the only career they have ever known. The research conducted over the past few months greatly assists in providing evidence into the decision making process which all service personnel have to go through at some point. The results provide firm evidence on some commonly held beliefs and importantly, also highlight some previously hidden and unknown issues. It is difficult to summarise the average service leaver, after all, they are all individuals who have had unique military careers, yet despite this, some common and illuminating factors can be clearly identified; not least of which is their ambitious nature and will to succeed in their second career.

The research reveals that when veterans do leave the Armed Forces, the factors they are considering ahead of their transition are dominated by a desire to address 'quality of life' issues. Moving to find work, a readiness to commit to long daily commutes or finding the highest paid job roles, will often be of less importance than settling down in an area near family or where they grew up – often away from cities. It further shows that employment rates for veterans are better than those without a service history. Veterans who identified as living with a mental health problem are twice as likely to be in employment as those who have never served, but identify as having a mental health issue.

The statistics indicate that from an employment perspective, military service is of benefit to the individual.

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# Key findings

## 01. High levels of employment

The general outlook for those who have entered the civilian job market following transition from the military is encouraging. Taken as a whole, the level of employment for veterans is very high, with more than 8 out of 10 (81%) in paid employment. This is higher than the current UK employment rate of 75.5% and clearly an indication that there is much to be positive about when examining current transition processes.

## 02. The majority of veterans choose not to consider moving for a job opportunity

More than half (51%) of veterans said they were 'very unlikely' to consider moving, or would 'definitely not' consider moving, even if the right job opportunity arose. Compounded by a desire to live in rural locations, many veterans could be ruling themselves out of potential job opportunities.

Only 23% of veterans cited 'work' as the reason they chose to move to their current location. Family ties such as already owning a home; wanting to be near parents/children/relatives; in the same area where they grew up or their children's education, as a whole, are more important in the decision making process.

## 03. Finding the right job can be difficult, particularly for veterans living in regions with fewer skilled job opportunities

Whilst higher numbers of veterans are employed, challenges in finding the right job opportunity (a fulfilling, sustainable role that maximises potential) differ significantly depending on where veterans live. More than a quarter (26%) of veterans living in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland said they had found the process of finding the right job 'very difficult' and in the North 23% said the same. It was a different story for veterans who had located in the South East however, with less than 1 in 10 (9%) in London describing the experience as 'very difficult'.

Half (50%) of those veterans who live in London, describe their experience of finding the right job as 'easy'. This compares to just 34% in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and 39% living in the North.

This report reveals that where veterans choose to live, has a major impact on finding the right job post transition.

## 04. Veterans must consider 'where is the right place for the right job?'

With the UK job market predominately based in cities and the South East in particular, a key finding of the report indicates that veterans are not prioritising living close to these areas of employment. This could impact maximising chances of securing jobs and definitely has implications for journey time to work.

Only 45% of veterans describe themselves as living in an urban city or urban town. The majority (54%) live in countryside, rural villages or suburban areas. This figure is even higher for officers, with 64% choosing to locate in suburban areas, villages or the countryside.

The most popular place for veterans to live is in the South West, with nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents living there. This reflects the fact that the region is home to some of the most populated military bases. Despite the relative ease of finding jobs in the capital, just 8% of veterans are now living in London. London is less popular than the North West, and East Midlands, but is equal to the South East.

This finding highlights the issue of flexibility and agile working for UK plc and the fact that there is a highly skilled work force who prefer to locate themselves outside large cities and towns. For any companies looking to tap into talent pools away from expensive city locations, promote agile working and virtual teams, this is a very positive finding.

## 05. The choice of where to live impacts veterans' earning potential

Veterans living in the North of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are more likely to find their earning potential is lower than expected. Nearly a third (30%) of veterans from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland said they were earning 'less' or 'considerably less' than they had hoped. In the North, this figure rises to 31%, while in London just 16% said they had found their earning potential was lower than hoped. In contrast, nearly half (48%) of veterans living in London found their salary goals were actually higher than expected. This finding reveals that London is by far the best location to earn higher than expected salaries. However, are veterans aware of this given that just 8% said they had chosen to locate in the capital?

## 06. 78% of veterans would not commute over 60 minutes, a journey time which is significantly less than the commute of the average London worker

The average one way commute for workers in London is 75 minutes according to Trades Union Congress figures derived from the Labour Force Survey. However, the research found that veterans were reluctant to commit to a job that involved such a long commute. In fact, from their responses, 78% of those questioned said the maximum time they would consider commuting to work was below 60 minutes. Explained another way, 78% of veterans are ruling themselves out of taking a job in London unless their journey time was considerably below this average.

This compounds Findings 3 and 4. If veterans living in rural and suburban areas are not willing to relocate to find work, and are not prepared to commit to long daily commutes, their chances of securing the right jobs are dramatically reduced.

## 07. More than half of veterans found their actual salaries differed from pre-transition expectations

Trying to estimate salary earning potential before changing careers is a difficult, but essential task for any employee. Decisions such as how much you might be able to afford for a mortgage, rent, travel, food, holidays and savings will all be relevant when trying to consider a change in jobs. In the case of those veterans surveyed however, less than half found their salary predictions were accurate.

Overall, almost 1 in 3 veterans (29%) said their salaries had either 'increased' or had 'increased a lot'. A quarter (25%) said they were earning either 'less' or a 'lot less' than anticipated before leaving the military. Whilst this is a positive outcome for those earning more, the evidence shows that salary expectations for the majority were inaccurate and for many, much less than anticipated.

It could reasonably be surmised that without an accurate understanding of earnings potential, life choices such as deciding where to settle during the transition process could be negatively impacted.

## 08. Female veterans are far more likely to describe their experience of finding the right job as 'very difficult' compared to their male counterparts. And they are more likely to find their earning potential in the civilian job market is lower than they expected

The report found that 27% of female respondents described the experience of finding the right job as 'very difficult', but for male respondents, this was just 17%.

Nearly a third (29%) of female veterans are earning less than they had hoped, while 24% of male veterans were earning less. Only 19% of females found they were earning more, compared to 30% for males. It is worth noting that these figures do not include how much veterans earn and therefore it is impossible to conclude that female veterans earn less than men. However, it raises the question as to whether potential employers could be doing more to ensure the gender pay-gap is being addressed.

## 09. Officers are more likely to underestimate their earning potential while enlisted personnel are more likely to overestimate their earning potential

The research showed that in the case of officers, more than a third (35%) found they had underestimated their earning potential once they joined the civilian job market. Just 17% said they were earning 'less' or 'a lot less' than they had predicted. For enlisted personnel, a larger proportion found they were earning less compared to those who said they were earning more. This could have serious consequences for their financial planning after leaving the military.

## 10. Finding employment

Overall, 17% of respondents now in work, scored the difficulty of finding the right job as 10, on a scale of difficulty where 10 was 'very difficult'. Split by rank, it should be noted that only 9% of officers gave the same score, while 20% of non-commissioned officers, scored 10 out of 10. Enlisted personnel therefore were more than twice as likely to say finding the right job was 'very difficult'.

## **11. Veterans place great value on a job that offers work/life balance in the right location, with good opportunities for career progression, above all other factors, including salary**

The majority of veterans do not simply chase the highest paid jobs when leaving the military. Other factors such as flexible working hours, right location and good career prospects are more important considerations. This is probably unsurprising, given the fact that as service personnel they have 'lived the job', having to be exceptionally mobile (often involving numerous moves of house and school for families), and had extended and prolonged periods away from home.

This may help explain why although veterans could earn higher salaries working in urban cities, many choose work/life balance over not having a long commute and instead choose to reside in suburban, rural or countryside areas.

## **12. Veterans are prepared to work hard to progress their careers and to try entirely new careers**

Only 22% of veterans ranked the level of seniority in their civilian roles as 'important' while nearly half (47%) were neutral. When coupled with the desire to find a role with good promotion prospects, this indicates service personnel are open-minded and prepared to 'climb the ranks' in a new working environment. A factor that is likely to appeal to potential employers. In addition, just 29% of those questioned said they felt finding a job with a similar skillset was an 'important' factor, an indication of a willingness to try a new career.

## **13. Veterans under 30 are ambitious, flexible and willing to chase better paid jobs where they can apply their transferable skills**

An overwhelming 70% of veterans under 30 said the most important factor for them when searching for a civilian job was 'career progression'. They are less likely to cite location as a primary concern. More than a third (34%) would like to work in a specific sector for the highest possible salary. A similar conclusion can be drawn in relation to veterans aged between 30 and 39. This, while at odds with some of the findings, can probably be explained by age and having fewer 'family ties', such as children or a spouse's career to consider.

## **14. Veterans who indicated they have a mental health disability are more likely to be unemployed**

For veterans without a disability, the employment rate is high and above the national average at 85%. However, the survey revealed veterans with mental health problems are more likely to be out of work, with just 62% in jobs. It should be noted however, that figures cited by the TUC in their Mental Health & Employment Research Report of May 2017 estimate employment rates within the UK population for those with a mental health issue to be as low as 25%. While more investigation in this area is required to draw any significant conclusions, it should be noted that veterans with a mental health issue are more likely to be in employment than those who have not served.

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