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Employment Data for Veterans with Disabilities

This factsheet provides data on employment rates for veterans with disabilities, which can be used to advocate for increased employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities.

Disability measurements and veterans:

There are two different measurements of disability for veterans in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS):

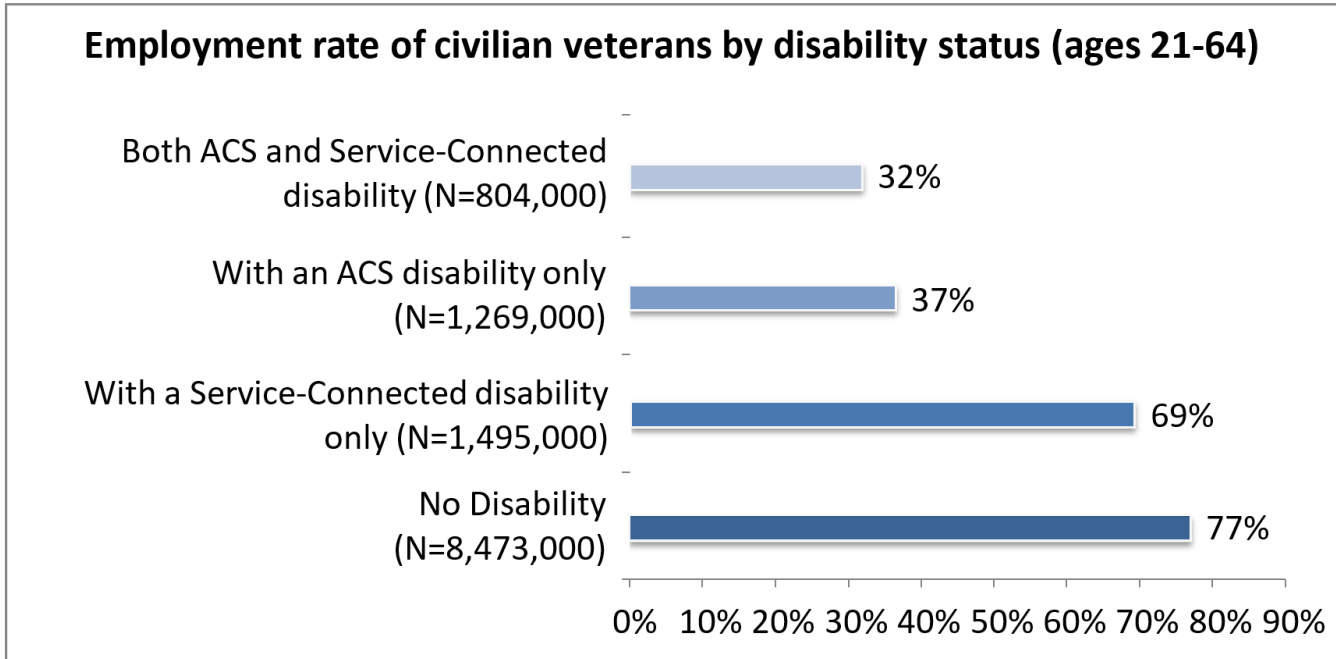
- **ACS disability:** A difficulty with one or more of the following: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care and independent living.ⁱ Please note that an ACS disability may or may not be acquired during military service.
- **Service-connected (SC) disability:** A disease or injury determined to have occurred during military service. The Veterans' Administration assigns a disability rating as a percentage from 0% -100% disabled.ⁱⁱ

Note: These two measures might not fully capture all veterans' disabilities. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or depression are called the "signature" disabilities because these impairments are so common among returning veterans. Because of the questions asked on the survey, some veterans with the signature disabilities might not have indicated they had disabilities. Also, many veterans with these impairments might not have been diagnosed. They may have acquired their disabilities at a time when the symptoms displayed were not thought to be related to a disability or they may not yet recognize that they have a disability. It is estimated that the number of OEF/OIF veterans with one or more of the signature disabilities is about 30%.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key statistics^{iv} on employment rate for veterans with disabilities^v:

- Nearly a third (29.6%, 3.5 million) of the 12 million veterans ages 21-64 report having a disability:
 - 12.4% (1,495,000) report only a SC disability
 - 10.5% report an ACS disability only
 - 6.7% report both an ACS and a SC disability
- The employment rate of veterans with disabilities is significantly lower than that of veterans without disabilities. Only about a third of veterans who report both an ACS and SC disability (32%) and only 37% of those reporting only an ACS disability are employed, compared with over three-quarters of veterans without disabilities.
- As a comparison, the overall employment rate of the civilian population is 71%.
- 69% of veterans with only a SC disability are employed, a number only eight percent lower than for those with no disability. This number includes veterans across a wide age span. Other data sets indicate the unemployment rate among younger, recently-returned veterans is much higher than the civilian population.^{vi} This might indicate that veterans do over time tend to heal or cope with their SC disabilities in ways that enable them to return to work.

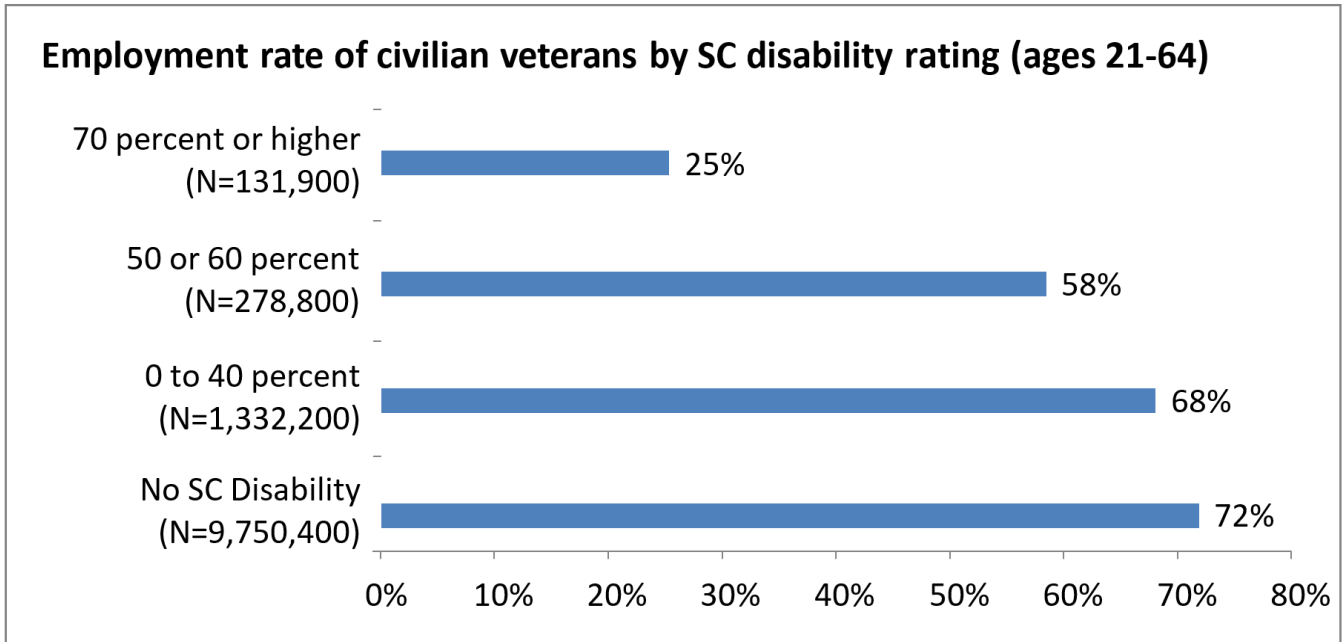
See chart on next page.



Key statistics on employment rate for veterans with a service-connected (SC) disability rating:

- The SC disability rating is issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs based on the percent an injury or illness acquired as a result of service impacts the veteran’s lifetime earning capacity. This rating is given in ten percent increments, with 0% indicating a disability that does not impact earning capacity and 100% indicating a severe disability that renders the veteran totally unable to work.
- 35.1% of veterans with a SC disability have a disability rating of 50% or higher (410,700).
- Veterans with a SC disability rating of 50% or higher have significantly lower rates of employment than those with ratings of 0 to 40%.
- Only 25% of the 131,900 veterans with a SC rating of 70% or higher are employed.

See chart on next page.



Employment data in context

Several laws protect the employment rights of veterans with disabilities.

- Like all Americans with disabilities, they are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- In addition, the United Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) requires the reinstatement of returning veterans to the same civilian job they left when deployed.
- Veterans with disabilities (called “Special Disabled Veterans”) are covered under the new rules of the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA)
- Veterans with and without disabilities may also be eligible for hiring preferences.^{vii}

Veterans included in these estimates could have served as long ago as the Vietnam era or as recently as the Gulf War era II.

- Gulf War Era II veterans have a higher prevalence of the “signature disabilities” of the Gulf War (PTSD, TBI and/or depression).

Employment Data for Veterans with Disabilities

- An estimated 30% of recently returned veterans screen positive for one or more of these impairments.^{viii}
- For these recently returned veterans, delays and barriers in accessing treatment could significantly impact employment outcomes.

A survey of veterans with both ACS and SC disabilities^{ix} found that:

- 57% feared they would be discriminated against in hiring because of their disabilities.
- 36% intended to disclose their disabilities to an employer.
- 27% intended to request an accommodation when employed.

A survey of employers^x found that many employers:

- Struggle with accommodating veterans with the signature disabilities of PTSD, TBI and depression.
- Are confused about resources related to recruiting or accommodating veterans with disabilities and therefore are not using these effectively.
- Do not understand the disability disclosure rights of veterans with disabilities.

To get more ideas about turning this information into actions and strategies, go to the following ADA National Network resources:

Ten Tips for Employers: Tapping into Talents of Veterans with Disabilities.
Available at:

<https://adata.org/factsheet/ten-tips-employers-tapping-talents-veterans-disabilities>

Ten Tips for Families: Supporting a Veteran with a Disability Returning to Work. Available at:

<https://adata.org/factsheet/ten-tips-families-supporting-veteran-disability-returning-work>

Employment Data for Veterans with Disabilities

You Have a Lot to Offer: Ten Points for Veterans to Consider When Returning to Work with a Disability. Available at:

<https://adata.org/factsheet/you-have-lot-offer-ten-points-veterans-consider-when-returning-work-disability>

New Rules: Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act. Available at: <http://adata.org/factsheet/new-rules-vietnam-era-veterans-readjustment-assistance-act>.

- i. For more information regarding the ACS and the disability categories see: Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2012). 2011 Disability Status Report: United States. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (EDI).
www.DisabilityStatistics.org
- ii. For more on SC disability compensation: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/va-disability-compensation-rates.html>
- iii. Tanielan T, Jaycox, L, (Eds.) (2008). Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Center for Military Health Policy. Accessed April 29, 2013 at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>.
- iv. Estimates are based on analysis of the 2011 ACS Public Use Microdata (PUMS) and limited to the non-institutionalized working age (21-64) civilian population. The U.S Census Bureau defines veterans as persons who have served on active duty in the US armed forces, military Reserves or National Guard. It excludes the persons in the Reserves or National Guard who only received training and have not been on active duty.
- v. This only includes people who are non-institutionalized and does not include people who are, for example, in nursing homes or prisons.
- vi. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014) Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.
- vii. For more information, go to <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref>.

Employment Data for Veterans with Disabilities

- viii. Tanielan T, Jaycox, L, (Eds.) (2008). Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Center for Military Health Policy. Accessed April 29, 2013 at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>.
- ix. Rudstam, H., Wilson, J. & Gower. (2011). Beyond Goodwill: Are Employers Prepared to Hire, Accommodate and Retain Returning Veterans with Disabilities? Paper presented at the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE) Annual Spring Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- x. Rudstam, H. H., Strobel Gower, W., Cook, L. (2012) Beyond Yellow Ribbons: Are Employers Prepared to Hire, Accommodate and Retain Returning Veterans with Disabilities? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 36(1), 87-95.

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Northeast ADA Center

<http://www.northeastada.org/>

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