

Perceived Underemployment among Post-9/11 Veterans



Data regarding perceived underemployment were collected through The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI) and Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey. The analyses were conducted with a sample of post-9/11 veterans who separated from the United States military in 2016 and participated in 7 waves of data collection; almost 10,000 veterans participated in Wave 1. At Wave 6, approximately 33 months post-separation, a perceived underemployment measure was included in the survey. Survey responses were collected from 5,258 veterans. Veterans were surveyed about factors such as job turnover, work satisfaction, and salary from Waves 1 to 7.

Demographics of Veterans Working for Pay at Wave 6:



Average age of
~ 36 years with a range
of 20 to 66 years



71%
White non-Hispanic



85% male



73% E1-E9
25% O1-O7+

Perceived Underemployment is defined as the involuntary discrepancy between a worker's education, skills, pay, or time and a worker's desired employment. The TVMI and VETS survey items asked about perceived underemployment in three domains: **skills, education, and leadership experience.**

Prevalence of Perceived Underemployment in the Three Domains:



Skills: 47%



Education: 41%



Leadership Experience: 55%

Predictors of Perceived Underemployment

Education



Veterans who had not completed a bachelor's degree by Wave 6 reported higher levels of perceived underemployment in relation to skills and leadership experience and significantly lower levels of perceived underemployment in relation to education.

Race/Ethnicity



Black non-Hispanic veterans reported the highest levels of perceived underemployment.

Paygrade



Veterans in lower, enlisted paygrades reported higher levels of perceived underemployment.

Disability Rating and PTSD



Veterans who had a disability rating of 90-100% reported significantly higher levels of perceived underemployment in relation to skills and education.



Veterans who had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at Wave 1 and/or Wave 6 reported higher levels of perceived underemployment.



Job Turnover

- Veterans who were dissatisfied with their job were more likely to report leaving that job for a better opportunity.
- Veterans who reported leaving their job in Wave 2 reported increases in work satisfaction over time (see Figures 1-2).

Figure 1
Satisfaction with Ability to Advance Vocational Goals by Job Turnover

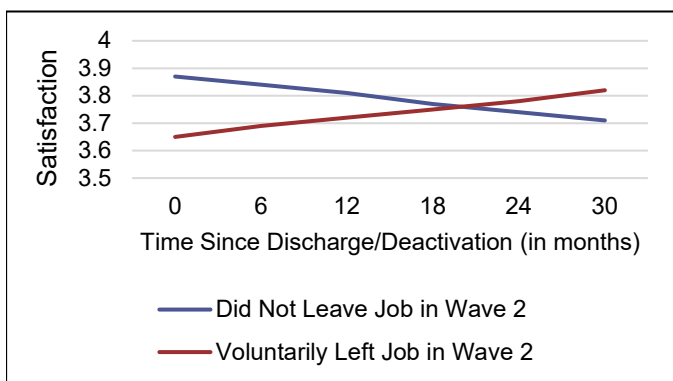
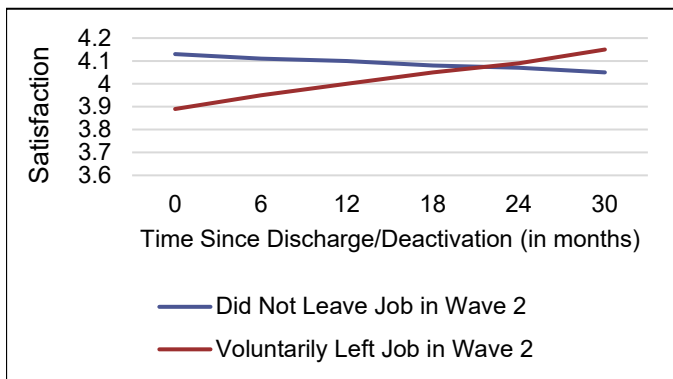


Figure 2
Satisfaction with Ability to Apply Skills and Knowledge to Work



Overall, 29% of veterans were dissatisfied with at least one aspect of their work.

Notable Reasons for Leaving a Job:

- Quality of the work (27%)
- Lack of career development (27%)
- Inadequate compensation (23%)
- Mismatch between job and skills/education (15%)



Salary

- Veterans who felt they were underemployed in relation to their skills, education, and leadership experience reported lower salaries at Wave 6.
- All veterans had increases in salary over time.
- Veterans who were dissatisfied with their pay and benefits and left to pursue a better opportunity reported a significant increase in salary compared to veterans who were dissatisfied and did not leave their job or those who were neutral or satisfied with their pay (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Change in Salary and Veterans' Satisfaction with Pay and Benefits

