



Study Reveals Illinois' Youngest Veterans from Lowest Ranks Have Most Employment Challenges

by Yolanda Y. Harris

Illinois' youngest veterans with the lowest military ranks have the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest-paying jobs, according to a recent study released by the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

The study examines the transition of Illinois veterans to stable civilian employment up to three years after they were discharged from active duty military service. Included in the study are commissioned and warrant officers and enlisted soldiers from all military branches who were discharged from active duty between 2001 and 2010.

One conclusion of the study is that younger, lower-ranked soldiers could benefit from workforce development resources and services that are more tailored toward their employment challenges.

“Our research shows that the lowest-ranking veterans have the largest barriers to overcome while transitioning into civilian employment,” said Dave Bieneman, the study’s author and Manager of Economic Analysis for the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

Here are some of the study’s findings that support that conclusion:

■ A significantly larger proportion of Illinois veterans from low military ranks received unemployment insurance benefits than those with higher ranks between 2005 and 2009. For example in 2009, 49.2 percent of 18-24-year-old veterans with ranks ranging from E4 to E6 in regular military service collected unemployment insurance benefits, compared to 5.3 percent of 18- to 34-year-old veterans with higher ranks of E7 to E9 and 12.5 percent of officers ages 18-34. Similar trends were evident in the National Guards and Reserves.

■ Nationally, veterans aged 18-24 had the highest unemployment rates of all veterans from 2007 to 2010. For example, in 2010, veterans aged 18-24 had an unemployment rate of 20.9 percent, but veterans aged 35-44 had an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent.

■ Lower-ranked Illinois veterans were employed in what are typically lower-paying industries compared to higher-ranked veterans. For example, the top four employing industries for the lowest-ranked veterans (E1 to E3) were: retail trade, administrative and support and waste management, accommodation and food services and manufacturing. However, the

top four employing industries for officers were: professional, scientific and technical services, public administration, healthcare and social assistance and educational services.

■ The wages for lower-ranked Illinois veterans were disproportionately smaller than higher-ranked veterans in industries where they are commonly employed. For example, the average quarterly wages for veterans employed in manufacturing were \$24,281 for officers and \$6,522 for veterans with ranks of E1 to E3.

■ Senior-ranking veterans (E7 to E9) had the highest share of employment in all government and private sector jobs. Although the lowest-ranked veterans (E1 to E3) have the highest proportion of civilian jobs in state and local government and private sectors in Illinois, senior-ranking veterans (E7 to E9) have the highest share of employment when federal government jobs are included.

■ The lowest-ranking Illinois veterans had the greatest representation in an educational program as well as in remedial math or language programs after discharge. Of the veterans discharged between 2003 and 2005, 87 percent of Reserve and Guard

veterans with ranks of E1 to E3 were enrolled in an education program. In contrast, only 31.6 percent of Reserve and Guard veterans who were officers were enrolled in an education program. Also, 38.2 percent of regular veterans with the lowest ranks were enrolled in remedial math, while 14.9 percent were enrolled in remedial language. This indicates that some of the lowest-ranking veterans might use up some of their educational benefits on remedial classes that do not count toward a degree.

“This study shows the large disparity between the employment outcomes of young discharges from the lower ranks and older discharges from the higher ranks,” said Bieneman. “The highest-ranking discharges are able to transition into management or professional positions upon discharge, while many of the younger discharges require additional training to prosper in the civilian workforce.”

Note: The full veterans’ study, “The Transition of Illinois Veterans from Military Discharge to Stable Civilian Employment,” can be found on IDES’ website at <http://lmidev/vets.htm>.

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About the U.S. Military

Types of military service:

- Regular Service (*in Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard*)
- National Guard
- Military Reserves

Military ranks (in ranking order):

1. **Officers** (*commissioned and warrant officers*)
2. **Enlisted Personnel** [*with pay categories E1 (lowest grade) to E9 (highest grade)*]

Source: About.com Guide (usmilitary.about.com)