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For Many Injured Veterans, A Lifetime of Consequences

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For Many Injured Veterans, A Lifetime of Consequences

By Rich Morin

One out of every ten veterans alive today was seriously injured at some point while serving in the military, and three-quarters of those injuries occurred in combat. For many of these 2.2 million wounded warriors, the physical and emotional consequences of their wounds have endured long after they left the military, according to a Pew Research Center survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,853 veterans conducted from July 18 to Sept. 4, 2011.

Veterans who suffered major service-related injuries are more than twice as likely as their more fortunate comrades to say they had difficulties readjusting to civilian life. They are almost three times as likely as other veterans to report they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS). And they are less likely in later life to be in overall good health or to hold full-time jobs.

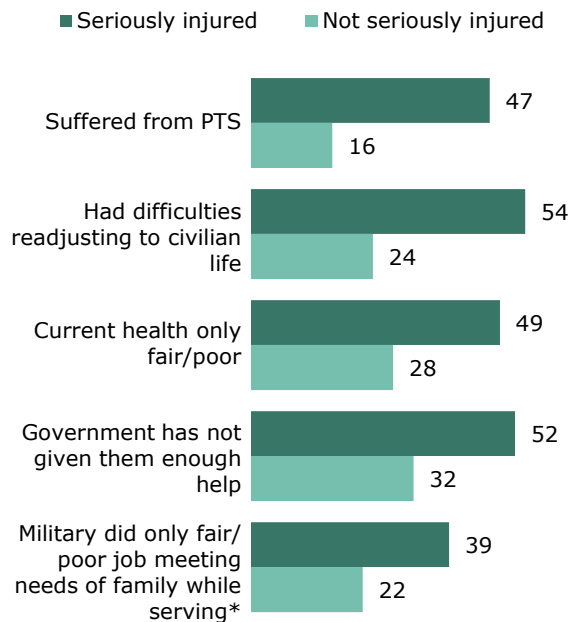
Government Not Doing Enough

The survey also finds that injured veterans are the most likely to say that they are not getting enough assistance from the government.

Fully half (52%) of all veterans badly injured while serving say the government has not given them, as a veteran, “all the help you think it should.” In contrast, of other veterans, only 32% are as critical of the government, while 63% say it has done enough to assist them.

The Impact of Military Injuries

% who say ...



*Asked only of those who were married or had children under 18 while serving, n=1,051.

Note: For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626.

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Overall, seven-in-ten injured veterans¹ rate the care that wounded soldiers receive in U.S. military hospitals as “excellent” or “good.” But this judgment varies dramatically by the era in which the veteran served. Among those who left the military prior to the decade of war that began just after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, seven-in-ten injured veterans (71%) rated medical care positively—a view shared by only 55% of those badly injured who served after 9/11.

At the same time, nearly all veterans are proud of their service, regardless of whether they suffered serious injuries. And more than seven-in-ten say they would advise a young person close to them to enlist.

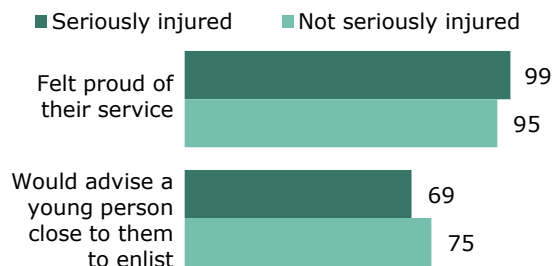
When They Served, Who They Are

While the decade since 9/11 constitutes the longest period of continuous fighting in the nation’s history, the largest share of today’s wounded warriors served during another era: the Vietnam War.

About a third (33%) of all injured veterans served during the Vietnam era (1964-73). In comparison, 18% have served in the post-9/11 era, about the same as the share of surviving veterans of World War II and Korean War. About a quarter (26%) served between 1974 and Sept. 11, 2001, a period that includes the 1990-91 Gulf War.

Injured Veterans Proud of Service, Would Advise Others to Enlist

% who say ...

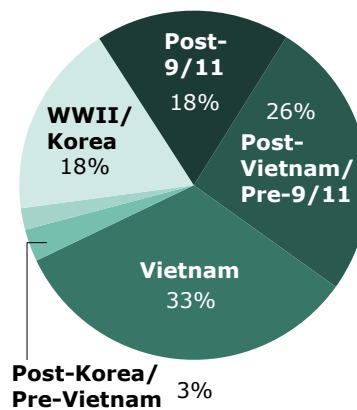


Note: For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626.

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When They Served

% of living veterans who were seriously injured in the military, by service era



Note: Unknown responses are shown but not labeled.

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¹ In this report, the term “injured veteran” refers to someone who suffered a serious service-connected injury while serving in the military.

Whether in war or peace, the military is a dangerous profession, and longer service brings greater risk of serious injury. According to the survey, those who served 10 years or more are twice as likely as those who served two years or less to suffer a service-related serious injury (16% vs. 7%).

Enlisted men and women are about as likely as officers to be badly hurt during their military careers (11% for officers and 8% for enlisted), as were 13% of noncommissioned officers, a group that includes sergeants, corporals, petty officers and warrant officers.

Disabled Veterans

To fill out the portrait of wounded warriors, this report also relies on a data source with a much larger sample of injured veterans than our own national survey.

About the Survey

The attitudes of veterans reported in this study are based on a nationally representative sample of 1,853 men and women who served in the military and are no longer on active duty. The sample included 1,134 who were discharged from the military prior to Sept. 11, 2001, and 712 veterans who served after 9/11. (Seven veterans declined to answer when they served.)

Included in this group were 227 veterans who said that they were seriously injured while in the military and that their injuries were service-related. An additional 1,619 veterans sustained no injuries or injuries that were not serious. Seven veterans declined to answer the question.

The margin of sampling error for results based on the entire sample of veterans is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence; the margin of sampling error for the pre-9/11 sample is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points; and the margin of sampling error for those who served after 9/11 is plus or minus 5.7 percentage points. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 9.8 percentage points for the injured veteran sample and 3.7 percentage points for the sample of uninjured veterans.

Veterans were interviewed by telephone or via the internet. A total of 1,639 interviews were conducted over the telephone under the direction of Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). Respondents had been identified as veterans in earlier surveys conducted by SSRS and the Pew Research Center and were re-contacted for the veterans survey. Of the total sample, 1,307 telephone interviews were conducted on landline telephones and 332 on cell phones. Interviewing for the telephone survey was conducted from July 18 to Sept. 4, 2011. These interviews were supplemented by 214 interviews with veterans who served after 9/11 and are part of random sample panel of households maintained by the research firm Knowledge Networks. These online interviews were conducted Aug. 18-31, 2011.

The two data sets were combined and the entire sample weighted by SSRS to match known demographic characteristics of the veterans population as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, the post-9/11 oversample was weighted back to reflect its correct proportion of the overall veteran population.

In July 2010, the Census Bureau re-interviewed 9,739 veterans who had been questioned the previous year as part of the bureau's monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). The sample included 1,058 veterans who are partially or fully disabled as a result of a service-related injury or condition and had received an official disability rating² from the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs.

According to the CPS survey, women and minorities are somewhat more likely than whites or men to be disabled. Among the service branches, a larger proportion of Marines are disabled (17%) than veterans who served in the Army (14%), Air Force (14%) or Navy (12%). And veterans who served in combat are three times as likely to be disabled as those who did not (24% vs. 8%).

Census data also confirm Pew survey findings that show the difficulties that injured or disabled veterans face in the labor force.

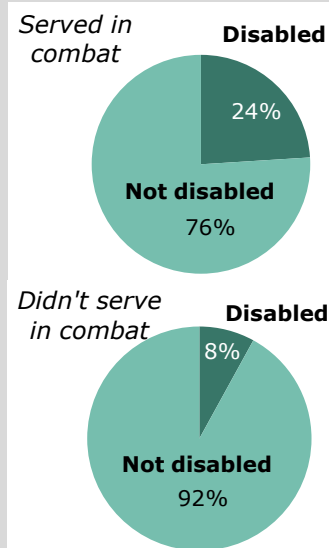
Nearly three-in-ten disabled veterans (28%) report that their disability kept them from getting or keeping a job at some point in their lives. Moreover, over four-in-ten (46%) disabled veterans who are not working say their impairment is keeping them from getting a job.³

About the Report

The remainder of this report is organized in the following manner. The first section provides a more detailed analysis of the distinctive ways that injured and uninjured veterans view their lives, their military service and their country. It also examines the negative impact of a service-related injury on employment and long-term health.

The second section focuses on the differences in attitudes and experiences of injured and uninjured veterans who have served in the post-9/11 era. It also reports on the differences

Disability by Combat Exposure



Source: Based on July 2010 Current Population Survey Veterans Supplement, n=9,739 veterans who had served on active duty.

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² The Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs determines the disability rating for military personnel who suffer a service-related injury, illness or condition. This rating, which ranges from zero for no impairment to 100% for completely disabled, is used to determine the size of the veteran's disability payment.

³ Being seriously injured and suffering a disabling injury, illness or condition are not necessarily equivalent. Not all serious injuries lead to permanent disabilities, and not all disabilities are the consequence of an injury. Also, veterans who lost a small amount of their physical capabilities due to a service-related injury, illness or other condition can qualify for disability assistance.

between these two groups on survey questions about their re-entry into civilian life that were asked of veterans who served during that time.

The final section presents a more detailed demographic portrait of disabled veterans and is based on an analysis of data from the July 2010 CPS Military Supplement survey.

SECTION 1: THE CONSEQUENCES OF SERIOUS INJURIES

The physical, emotional and economic toll of a serious service-related injury does not end when the service member leaves the military. Years and even decades after they were discharged, veterans who were badly hurt while serving are significantly more likely to be in poor health and somewhat less likely to be employed.

According to the Pew Research Center survey, about half of all veterans who suffered a serious service-related injury say their health status is “only fair” or “poor”—nearly double the proportion of non-injured veterans who offer a similarly downbeat assessment of their physical well-being (49% vs. 28%).

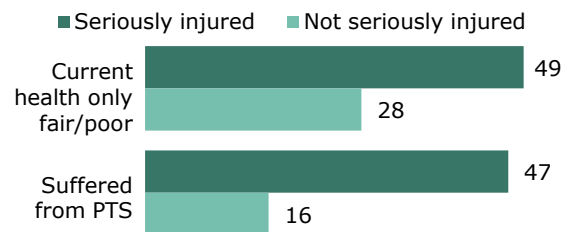
The relationship between a service-related injury and current health status remains strong even when the age of a veteran is taken into account. Among veterans ages 60 or older, nearly half (45%) of those who were seriously injured while serving say their current health is fair or poor, compared with 27% of other veterans of a comparable age.

The impact of a major service-related injury may be even greater among veterans younger than 60, a group that includes most of those who have served since 9/11: More than half of this group who were injured rate their current health as only fair or poor (54%), compared with 30% of those who were not seriously hurt while serving.

Not all of the wounds suffered by members of the armed forces are physical. Seriously wounded veterans are about three times as likely as others who served to say they suffered from post-traumatic stress (47% vs. 16%). Similarly, four-in-ten injured veterans (40%) say they have had flashbacks, distressing memories or recurring nightmares about an emotionally traumatic experience they had in the military. In comparison, only 15% of those who were not injured while serving are similarly troubled.

Impact of Serious Injuries on Physical, Emotional Health

% who say ...



Notes: For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626

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While comparative data are difficult to obtain, a 2008 study by the RAND Corp. found that 13.8% of those who had served in Iraq or Afghanistan in the post-9/11 period suffered from PTS. That compares with 10.1% among those who served in the 1990-91 Gulf War and, depending on the study, about four times the estimated current rate of PTS in the population as a whole. A Department of Veterans Affairs study conducted in the late 1980s estimated the lifetime incidence of PTS among Vietnam-era veterans at 31% for men and 27% for women.

Employment

Among all veterans, those who were seriously injured while serving are less likely than other veterans to be employed full time and more likely not to have a job.

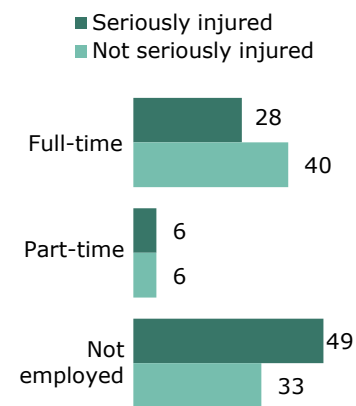
Overall, less than three-in-ten veterans (28%) who had been seriously injured are currently employed full time, compared with 40% of those who were not badly hurt while serving.

About half (49%) of seriously injured veterans are not employed, a group that includes veterans who are disabled and out of the workforce. In contrast, a third of veterans who were not seriously injured while serving are not working. An equal proportion of both groups are employed part time (6%), while 17% of injured veterans and 21% of non-injured veterans are retired.

Among those injured veterans who are working, nearly two-thirds are employed by a private company or business, compared with 55% of other veterans. At the same time, only 6% of injured veterans are self-employed, compared with 12% of other former service members.

Serious Injury and Current Employment

Current employment status of veterans who were ...



Notes: Percent retired not shown. For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626

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Attitudes toward their Service and their Country

Compared with their comrades who were not seriously hurt, injured veterans are more likely to say they are more patriotic than the average American and are more supportive of a military draft. More than two-thirds also would recommend enlisting to a young person who was close to them.

Overall, two-thirds of all veterans who were badly hurt while serving say they are “more patriotic” than the average person. In contrast, a little over half of veterans who were not badly hurt (54%) and 37% of the general public say they are similarly patriotic.

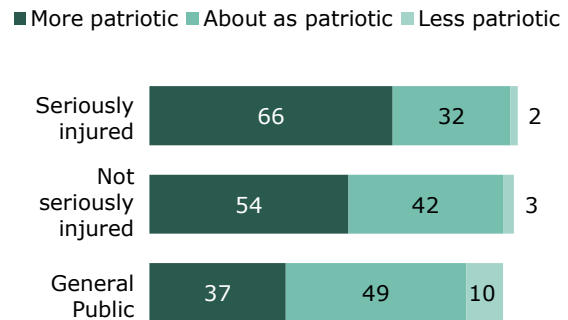
On issues of public policy, veterans who were badly hurt while serving are more likely than uninjured veterans (42% vs. 29%) to support a return to conscription, which ended in 1973 when the military went to an all-volunteer force.

But on other issues, the differences between injured and uninjured veterans are small or nonexistent. Nearly half of both groups say using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism (48% for injured veterans and 46% of other veterans). And the same proportion believes that the United States should pay less attention to problems overseas (61%).

Their views of President Obama are likewise similar: 41% of injured veterans and 40% of other service members say they approve of the way Obama is handling his duties as commander in chief.

Injured Veterans More Patriotic

% of each group who say they are ... than the average person

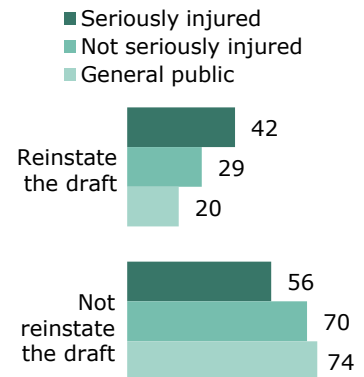


Notes: Don't know/Refused not shown. For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626; for general public, n=2,003.

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Injured Veterans More Supportive of a Draft

% in each group who would ...



Notes: Don't know/Refused not shown. For injured veterans, n=227; for veterans who were not injured, n=1,626; for general public n=2,003.

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SECTION 2: INJURED POST-9/11 VETERANS

Among wounded warriors, those who served since 9/11 are more likely than veterans from earlier eras to say their transition to the civilian world has been difficult; to report they have suffered from PTS as a consequence of their military service; and to say that the government has not done enough to help them.⁴

Veterans badly hurt in the post-9/11 era also are more likely than other veterans, regardless of era or whether they were injured, to say the government has not given them all the help it should. These recent veterans also are far more critical than older veterans of the Veterans Administration⁵ and the quality of medical care that injured soldiers have received from military hospitals in the United States.

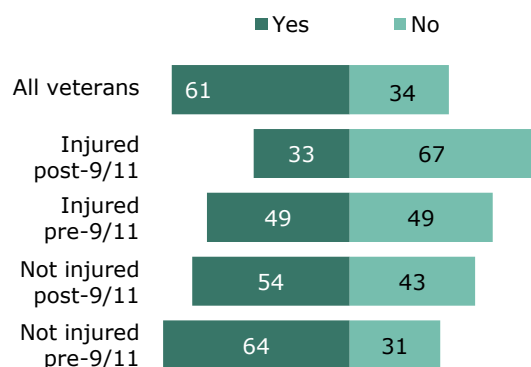
Less Satisfaction with Family Life

According to the survey, only about half (49%) of all injured recent veterans say they are “very satisfied” with the quality of their family lives. In contrast, about two-thirds of older injured veterans (66%) expressed satisfaction with things at home, as do similar shares of uninjured veterans, regardless of era.

This dissatisfaction is echoed by another finding among veterans who were married or had young children while serving. Among this group, a majority of injured post-9/11 veterans but

Has the Government Given You All the Help It Should?

% of each group who say ...



Notes: Don't know/Refused not shown. For injured post-9/11 veterans, n=106; for injured pre-9/11, n=120; for non-injured post-9/11, n=606; for non-injured pre-9/11, n=1,014.

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⁴ Caution should be exercised when comparing survey results between eras. Those in the post-9/11 era were interviewed relatively soon after they left the military, and their views could reflect the immediacy of their experience and could change over time. For earlier generations of veterans, their views could have changed from what their views were at a similar point in their post-military lives. Also, the overall view of veterans of earlier eras could change as members of this generation died and the composition of the cohort changed. As a consequence, these results are best interpreted as the views and experiences of current living veterans from each era, and not necessarily the views each generation held in the years soon after leaving the service.

⁵ When the Veterans Administration was established as a Cabinet-level position in 1989, the name was changed to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Survey respondents were asked to rate the “Veterans Administration.”

only a third of older injured veterans say the military did an “only fair” or “poor” job of meeting the needs of their families while they were deployed (54% vs. 34%). Only about three-in-ten (30%) of uninjured post-9/11 veterans and 21% of uninjured veterans from previous eras are similarly critical of the military’s treatment of their families while on deployment.

The difficulties that many post-9/11 veterans have faced transitioning from the military to civilian life likely explain some of their current dissatisfaction with their family life. According to the survey, three-in-four (75%) injured post-9/11 veterans say their transition to life after the military was difficult, compared with 49% of older injured veterans and smaller proportions of those who were not badly hurt in the post-9/11 or pre-9/11 eras (38% and 23%, respectively).

Post-9/11 veterans who were badly hurt while serving are far more likely than other injured veterans to report they suffered from post-traumatic stress (66% vs. 43%). They also are significantly more likely to say they experienced an emotionally traumatic event while serving (81% vs. 51% for veterans seriously injured in earlier eras)—a difference that persists even when the analysis focuses only on veterans of both eras who were badly hurt in combat.

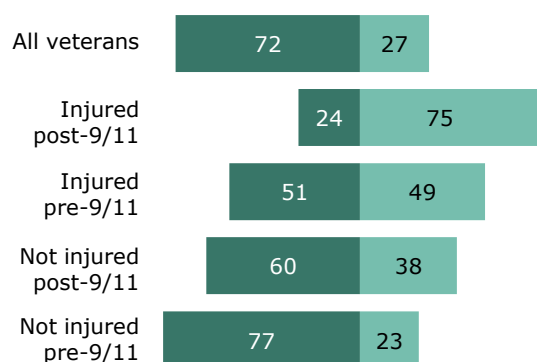
While the sample size is small, the wounded warriors of the post-9/11 era also are more likely than other veterans, regardless of era or experience with injuries, to say the government has failed to provide them with all the help it should (67% vs. 49% for injured pre-9/11 veterans and 43% of uninjured post-9/11 veterans). The newest generation of wounded warriors also is far more critical of the Veterans Administration and the medical care that veterans receive in stateside military hospitals.

Nearly two-thirds of all injured post-9/11 veterans say the Veterans Administration is doing an only fair or poor job of meeting the needs of those who have served. In contrast, only 37% of veterans seriously hurt while serving in earlier eras rate the Veterans Administration as low.

Transition to Civilian life

% of each group who say their transition to civilian life was ...

■ Very/somewhat easy ■ Very/somewhat difficult



Notes: Don't know/Refused not shown. For injured post-9/11 veterans, n=106; for injured pre-9/11, n=120; for non-injured post-9/11, n=606; for non-injured pre-9/11, n=1,014.

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Veterans who were seriously injured in the post-9/11 period also are more than twice as likely as other injured service members to be critical of the care that injured veterans are receiving in U.S. military hospitals (44% judge the care to be only fair or poor, compared with a similar rating by 17% of those who were not injured).

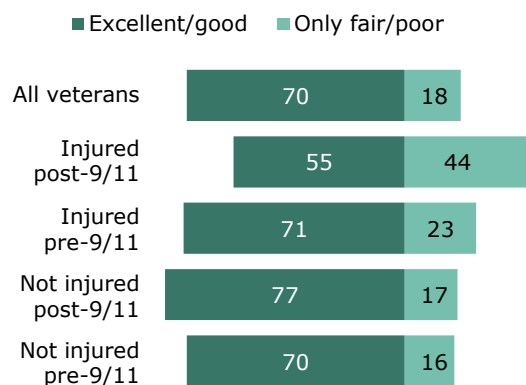
It should be noted that service members who experienced the worst of earlier wars and survived may already have died in the years or decades since they were discharged. For surviving injured veterans of these previous conflicts, the memory of the burdens they bore also may have faded, while the struggles of recent wounded veterans remain vivid and fresh.

At the same time, war in the post-9/11 period has changed. Combat has become less lethal than in the earlier wars. Proportionately more soldiers now survive shattering injuries that would have killed their predecessors. However, they are often left to deal with the emotional and physical consequences of their injuries for the rest of their lives—and these experiences can color their attitudes toward the military.

According to Department of Defense casualty data compiled for each major U.S. war, troops fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan survive 88% of all combat injuries, compared with 72% in Vietnam, 63% in World War II and 44% in the Civil War.

Rate Medical Care at U.S. Military Hospitals

% of each group who say ...

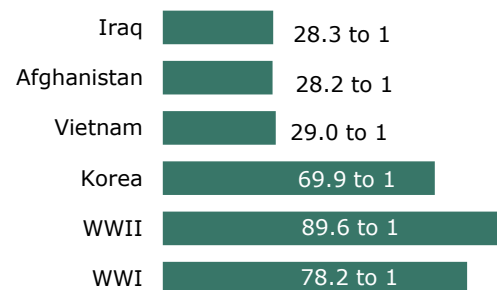


Notes: Don't know/Refused not shown. For injured post-9/11 veterans, n=106; for injured pre-9/11, n=120; for non-injured post-9/11, n=606; for non-injured pre-9/11, n=1,014.

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Proportionally More Disabling Injuries in the Post-9/11 Era

The ratio of wounded who did not require amputation to those who did, by conflict



Source: Congressional Research Service

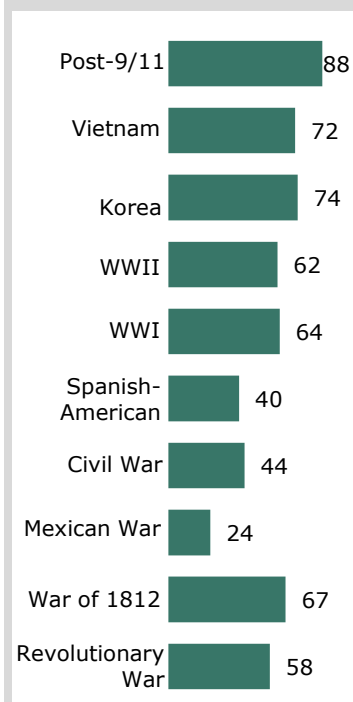
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However, these medical miracles go only so far. Wounds that are not fatal can often be disabling. The ratio of wounded but not amputated-to-amputations in post-9/11 combat is virtually unchanged from Vietnam. Significantly fewer wounded soldiers underwent amputations in World War II because more died of their battlefield injuries, according to researchers Anne Leland and Mari-Jana Oboroceanu of the Congressional Research Service in a 2010 report to Congress.⁶

Citing data from the Office of the Surgeon General, Leland and Oboroceanu reported that the ratio of wounded-to-amputations stood at 28.3 to 1 in Iraq and Afghanistan. That means that for every 29 service members wounded in combat, one required amputation. In Vietnam, that ratio was slightly higher (29.0 to 1), while in World War II, it stood at 69.9 to 1.

An inevitable consequence of these successful efforts to save the lives of wounded service members has been to swell the ranks of disabled veterans. Today, about three-in-ten post-9/11 veterans have been determined by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs to have some level of disability from service-related injuries, illnesses or psychological conditions such as PTS. Among these disabled veterans, nearly six-in-ten are at least 30% disabled and four-in-ten have lost at least half of their normal ability to function.

Percentage of Wounded Who Survived, by War



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Military Casualty Information, Department of Defense Personnel & Procurement Statistics

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⁶ "American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics," by Anne Leland and Mari-Jana Oboroceanu, Congressional Research Service, Feb. 26, 2010. Amputation information provided by Dr. Michael Carino of the Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army.

Views on the Military, the Post-9/11 Wars and Their Service

Veterans seriously injured while serving in the post-9/11 era are more critical of the military than are recent veterans who were not seriously injured while serving.

According to the survey, four-in-ten (40%) injured veterans who served after 9/11 say the military operates “inefficiently,” compared with only 27% who were not injured. Among veterans who served in earlier periods, there is no difference in the views of those who were injured and uninjured: About a quarter say the military operates inefficiently (25% injured, 28% not injured).

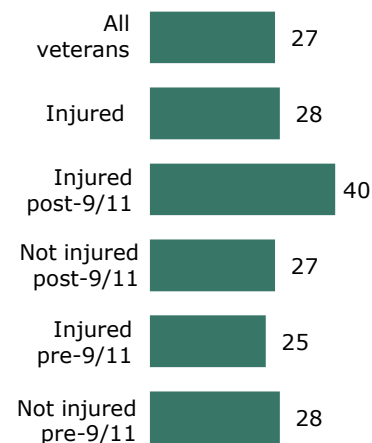
At the same time, more than six-in-ten injured post-9/11 veterans (62%) are critical of the war in Iraq, compared with 48% of recent veterans who were not injured.

In their judgment of the Iraq War, these injured veterans appear to be more like veterans from earlier eras: 57% of injured and 58% of uninjured pre-9/11 veterans say Iraq has not been worth it.

Attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan reflect a similar pattern. Among all recent veterans, those who were seriously injured are more likely than other veterans to say this war was not worth the cost (52% vs. 40%), a finding that falls just short of being statistically significant because of the relatively small size of the samples.

Injuries and Military Efficiency

% who say the military is inefficient

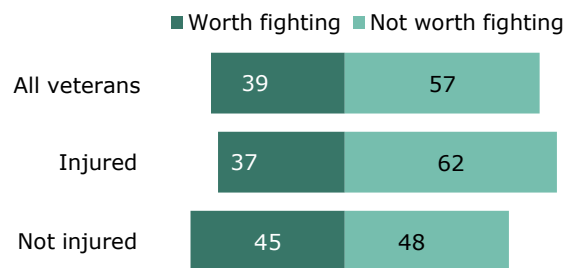


Notes: For injured veterans, n=227; for injured post-9/11 veterans, n=106; for injured pre-9/11, n=120; for non-injured post-9/11, n=606; for non-injured pre-9/11, n=1,014.

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Injuries While Serving and Attitudes Toward Iraq War

% of post-9/11 veterans who say Iraq War was ...



Notes: Based on veterans who served after 9/11, n=712; for injured, n=106; for not injured, n=606.

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Injuries and the Rewards and Burdens of Service

Injured and uninjured veterans have shared equally in the rewards that military service brings to those who fought in the post-9/11 era. At the same time, recent veterans who were seriously hurt and their families bear more burdens of service than their uninjured comrades once they leave the military, according to a series of questions asked only of those who served since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Regardless of whether they had been injured, more than nine-in-ten post-9/11 veterans are proud of their service. Nearly as many report that they have been thanked for their service since their discharge. More than three-quarters of both groups say they have appreciated life more since they left active duty (77% for injured veterans vs. 83% for uninjured).

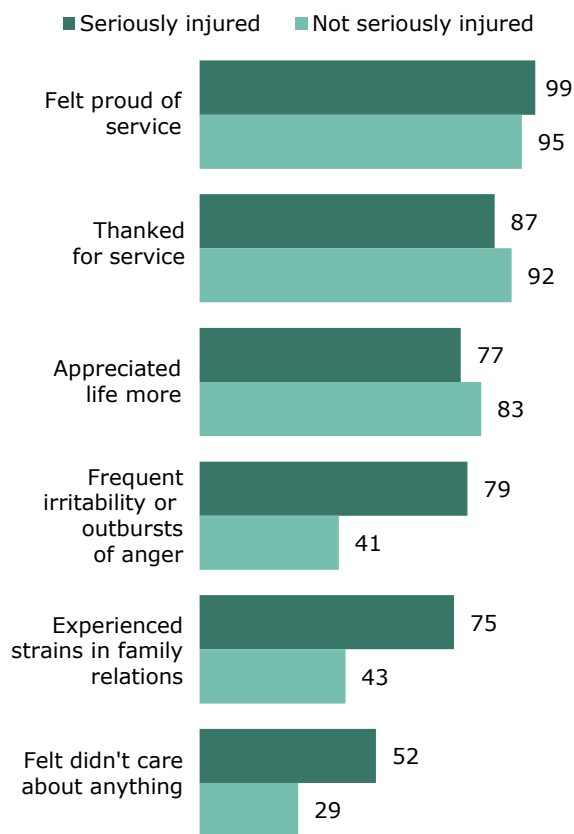
But injured veterans and their families must deal with problems that other veterans are far less likely to face. For example, three-quarters of injured post 9/11 veterans say they have experienced strains in family relations since leaving the military. In contrast, slightly more than four-in-ten (43%) uninjured post-9/11 veterans say they have had difficulties at home since they were discharged.

About eight-in-ten (79%) injured post-9/11 veterans say they have experienced frequent incidents of irritability or outbursts of anger since leaving the military, nearly double the proportion of non-injured recent veterans who have experienced these things (41%).

About half (52%) say they have felt that they “didn’t care about anything” since leaving the service, compared with 29% of other recent veterans.

Equal Rewards, Unequal Burdens

% of post-9/11 veterans in each group who had each experience



Notes: Based on veterans who served after 9/11, n=712; for injured, n=106; for not injured, n=606.

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Other Differences

Post-9/11 veterans who were injured also differ in other ways from other recent veterans. Perhaps predictably, they are in significantly worse health: about six-in-ten say their current health is only fair or poor, nearly triple the proportion of uninjured recent veterans (59% vs. 21%) who give the same response. Results among veterans from previous eras reflect the same pattern, though the difference between the two groups is smaller: 47% of those who were injured reported that they were in only fair or poor health, compared with 29% of those who were not injured.

And while the sample size is small, only 18% of post-9/11 veterans who were seriously injured say they are “very happy” with their lives overall, compared with 31% of their uninjured comrades.

SECTION 3: THE DISABLED VETERAN

To broaden and deepen the analysis of America's wounded warriors, Pew researchers turned to another data source with a larger sample of veterans who had been physically or emotionally harmed while serving in the military.

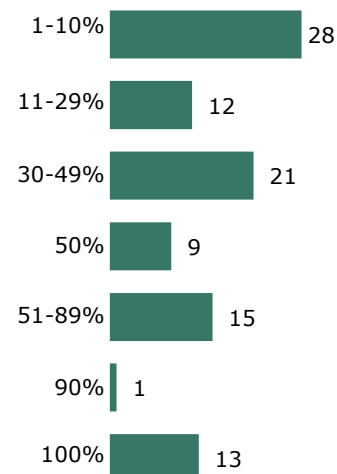
In July 2010, the Census Bureau re-interviewed 9,739 veterans who had been questioned the previous year as part of the bureau's monthly Current Population Survey. The sample included 1,058 veterans who had suffered a service-related disabling injury or condition and had received an official disability rating from the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs. This rating, which ranges from zero to 100% depending on the degree of permanent impairment, is used to determine the size of the veteran's disability payment.⁷

This larger sample of disabled veterans was then used to create a demographic profile of veterans who had been adversely affected physically or emotionally by their time in the military.

A word of caution is in order. Suffering a disabling injury or condition and being seriously injured are not necessarily equivalent conditions. A service member could break an arm while serving but have it heal completely and suffer no lasting ill effects. Meanwhile, other service members might become partially disabled from a disease contracted while serving abroad but not consider themselves to have been seriously injured. And as the percentage rating scale suggests, a veteran can lose very little functionality and still be classified as disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Defense Department.

Levels of Disability

% of living disabled veterans with each level of impairment



Notes: An individual's permanent disability rating is assigned by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense. The rating reflects the percentage of functionality an individual has lost due to a service-related injury, condition or illness. Figures do not total to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Based on July 2010 Current Population Survey Veterans Supplement, n=9,739 veterans who had served on active duty.

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⁷ For purposes of this study, the term "disabled veteran" refers to any veteran with a disability rating of 1% or more. The few respondents with a disability rating of zero were excluded from the analysis.

But a comparison of the two surveys suggests that the samples of disabled and seriously injured veterans closely resemble each other in terms of key demographic characteristics, including gender, race and branch of service.

The Demographic Composition of Disabled Veterans

The CPS survey found that about 13% of all current veterans have a service-related disability, similar to the 10% of veterans in the Pew survey who report they had suffered a serious injury while serving.

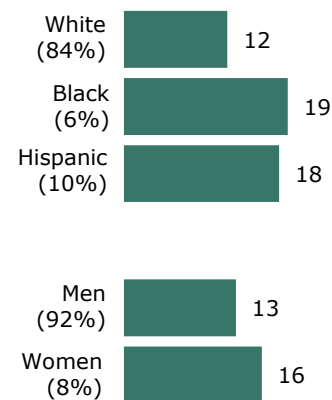
Among all disabled veterans, about three-in-ten (28%) are slightly impaired, having lost less than 10% of their physical functioning. Nearly six-in-ten disabled veterans are at least 30% disabled, meaning that their service-related injury or condition has permanently reduced their overall functionality by 30% or more. About one-in-eight (13%) are 100% disabled.

Minorities and women are disproportionately represented among disabled veterans, according to the CPS survey. Among those who are veterans, about one-in-eight whites have some degree of disability, compared with 19% of black veterans and 18% of Hispanics. Overall, about one-in-eight male (13%) and one-in-six (16%) female veterans are disabled.

A majority of disabled veterans (52%) served in the Army, not surprising because about half of all veterans were in the Army. Much smaller shares served in the Air Force (18%), Navy (17%) or Marines (12%).

Gender and Race

% of each group who suffered a disabling injury while serving



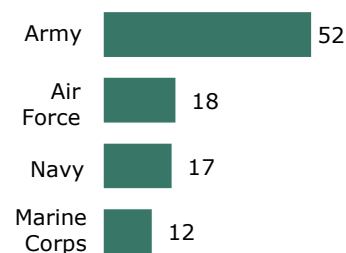
*Numbers in parentheses are the percent of all living veterans who are members of that group.

Notes: Based on July 2010 Current Population Survey Veterans Supplement, n=9,739 veterans who had served on active duty.

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Disability and Branch of Service

% of disabled who served in the ...



Notes: Coast Guard not shown because sample is too small.

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But these overall percentages mask an important difference. Marines are significantly overrepresented among the ranks of disabled veterans. While Marines make up about 10% of all veterans, they comprise a disproportionately large share of the disabled. Overall, more than one-in-six Marines (17%) are disabled, compared with 14% of all Army and Air Force veterans and 11% of Navy veterans.

Two factors largely explain this difference: Marines are more likely than other service members to have served in a combat zone during the post-9/11, Vietnam and World War II eras (54% for Marines vs. 43% for other branches). Predictably, those who were in combat are more than three times as likely to be disabled as those who never saw combat (24% vs. 8%).

Disabilities and Employment

On the surface, disabled veterans have fared about as well in the post-recession employment market as other veterans and the non-veteran population. Among all veterans, those with a service-connected disability had an unemployment rate of 9.5% in July 2010, about the same as the rate for veterans with no disability (8.6%) or non-veterans (9.7%).

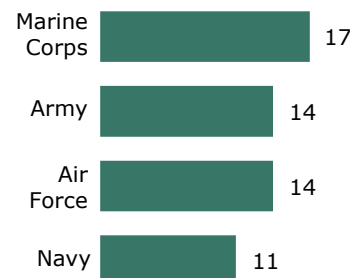
But these figures may paint an overly positive picture of the employment situation for disabled veterans. About 14% of all disabled veterans are classified as too disabled to work and are therefore not included in government calculations of the unemployment rate.

In addition, nearly three-in-ten disabled veterans (29%) are classified as being full-time retirees and also not included in the official unemployment calculation.

In fact, many of these veterans may be reluctant retirees. In answer to another CPS question, nearly a third (32%) of disabled veterans who are retired say their service-connected disability currently keeps them from “getting or holding a job.”

Disability by Branch of Service

% who served in each branch who are now disabled

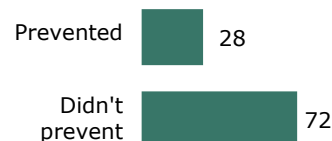


Note: Coast Guard not shown because sample too small.

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Disabilities and Employment

% of disabled veterans who say their impairment prevented them from getting or keeping a job



Source: Based on July 2010 Current Population Survey Veterans Supplement, n=9,739 veterans who had served on active duty.

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The job market also is considerably less welcoming for veterans with significant disabilities who are willing to work than it is for veterans whose disabilities are less severe. According to the CPS survey, the unemployment rate was significantly higher for the 37% of disabled veterans in the workforce who had a disability rating of 50% or more compared with those with a lower rating (13% vs. 8%).

When Being Disabled Is a Disability

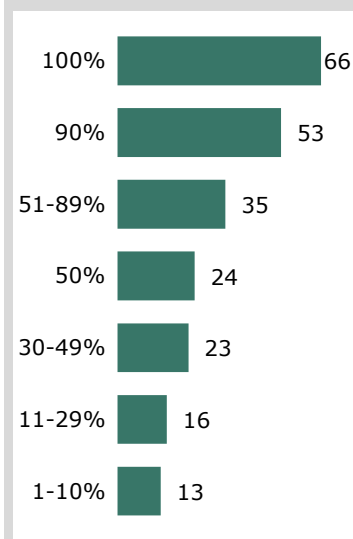
Getting a job is hard for many disabled veterans. And even when they find work, their disability sometimes makes it difficult for them to stay on the job. Nearly three-in-ten disabled veterans say their impairment prevented them from getting or keeping a job at some point in their working lives.

Those with the greatest degree of disability encountered the most obstacles in the workplace. Two-thirds of those who are 100% disabled say their impairment has prevented them from getting a job. In contrast, only about 15% of those who had a disability rating of less than 30% experienced similar problems.

Regardless of when they served, many veterans with a service-connected disability work in the public sector, where they get an advantage when applying for a job. According to the CPS, more than a third (35%) of employed veterans with a disability worked in federal, state or local government, compared with 21% of veterans with no disability and 14% of non-veterans. Still, a majority of employed disabled veterans (57%) are in the private sector.

Level of Impairment and Employment

% who say their service-related disability prevented them from getting or holding a job, by degree of impairment



Note: Based on July 2010 Current Population Survey Veterans Supplement, n=9,739 veterans who had served on active duty.

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