

Today the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported a slight increase in the month-to-month unemployment rate of job seekers in the U.S. For the period ending May 2012, 7.7% of all those looking for work were unemployed, as compared to 7.5% of job seekers in April 2012 (not seasonally adjusted percentages, population 18 and over).

As to the employment situation of veterans, 7.8% of the nation's veterans were unemployed in May. This represents a slight increase from April 2012 (7.1%). The unemployment situation of the post-9/11 generation of veterans generally worsened in May. Of those veterans who have served since 2001, 12.7% were unemployed in May 2012, up from 9.2% in April. The youngest post-9/11 veterans continue to experience the highest unemployment; those 18-24 years of age are unemployed at a rate of 23.5% (compared to 15.2% for nonveterans), up from 18.6% in April 2012. Post-9/11 veterans ages 25-34 are unemployed at a rate of 14.7%, up from 11.5% in April. The overall unemployment rate for female, post-9/11 veterans is 12.7%, and is equal to that of post-9/11 male veterans. Both female and male post-9/11 veterans have higher unemployment rates than female and male nonveterans (7.5% and 7.9% respectively). Unemployment rates increased significantly for both Hispanic and African-American post-9/11 veterans. From April to May 2012, unemployment rates increased from 11.5% to 18.9% for Hispanic post-9/11 veterans, and increased from 13.6% to 19.1% for African-American post-9/11 veterans.

Demographics & Trends

The following tables summarize the employment situation of veterans in America, based on BLS data released on June 1, 2012. These are unpublished data from the Current Population Survey, not seasonally adjusted, and represent the period ending May 2012.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR:	MAY 2012	APRIL 2012	CHANGE (+/-)	ANNUAL AVERAGES 2011
All Americans	7.70	7.50	0.20	8.70
All Veterans	7.80	7.10	0.70	8.30
Gulf War era II (Post-9/11) Veterans	12.70	9.20	3.50	12.10
Gulf War era I Veterans	6.30	5.20	1.10	7.00
WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Veterans	6.90	6.70	0.20	7.60
All Nonveterans	7.70	7.60	0.10	8.70

NOTE: Population is 18 and over; Gulf War era II (September 2001-present), Gulf War era I (August 1990-August 2001), Vietnam era (August 1964-April 1975), Korean War (July 1950-January 1955), World War II (December 1941-December 1946), and other service periods (all other time periods). Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified only in the most recent one. Veterans who served during one of the selected wartime periods and another period are classified only in the wartime period. (1) Rates are not shown where base is less than 35,000.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR GULF WAR ERA II (POST-9/11) VETERANS				
Category	May 2012	April 2012	Change (+/-)	Annual Averages 2011
18-24	23.50	18.60	4.90	30.20
25-34	14.70	11.50	3.20	13.00
35-44	8.50	4.80	3.70	6.00
45-54	7.50	4.60	2.90	4.10
55-64	3.30	4.70	-1.40	7.80
65 years and older	(1)	(1)	-	6.70
Male	12.70	9.00	3.70	12.00
Female	12.70	9.90	2.80	12.40
White	11.60	8.50	3.10	11.40
Hispanic or Latino	18.90	11.50	7.40	17.00
African-American	19.10	13.60	5.50	14.30

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR NONVETERANS				
Category	May 2012	April 2012	Change (+/-)	Annual Averages 2011
18-24	15.20	14.50	0.70	16.10
25-34	7.80	7.80	0.00	9.30
35-44	6.40	6.40	0.00	7.30
45-54	5.90	6.00	-0.10	7.00
55-64	5.80	5.90	-0.10	6.50
65 years and older	6.70	5.60	1.10	6.40
Male	7.90	7.90	0.00	9.30
Female	7.50	7.30	0.20	8.20
White	6.90	6.90	0.00	7.70
Hispanic or Latino	10.10	9.60	0.50	11.20
African-American	13.20	12.40	0.80	15.80

Related Policy, Legislation and Initiatives

The following policies, programs, and initiatives have been proposed or enacted within the past 30 days. This list is not all-inclusive, but instead is designed to offer a ‘snapshot’ of recently announced government, industry, and community-based efforts positioned to positively impact the employment situation of veterans in America.

- The **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** and the **Department of Labor (DOL)** opened up the **Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP)** for applications in order to retrain 99,000 veterans to meet and qualify for job demands. VRAP is the cornerstone of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, and program funding will cover up to 12 months of educational programs for qualifying veterans. This is equal to the monthly full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently at \$1,473 per month. Upon completion of the program, DOL will offer employment assistance to every veteran who participated. To learn more, visit: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm> or <http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/>.
- **Senators Mike Johanns (R-Neb.)** and **Mark Pryor (D-Ark.)** introduced the **Helping Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Return to Employment (HIRE) at Home Act (S 3225)**, designed to improve the cooperation between military and state agencies to more closely align specialized military training and state licensing and certification requirements. The legislation applies to individuals seeking employment as a commercial truck driver, certified nursing assistant or emergency medical technician, and it encourages states to consider the skills and training that service members acquire on active duty when determining their eligibility for state licenses and certifications. The act was referred to the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. To learn more, visit: http://www.johanns.senate.gov/public/?p=PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=808c6eb1-8c80-4ae0-bdcb-65a60f4dd260&ContentTypeId=bc82adff-27b4-4832-8fd6-aece3e7d8e3.
- The **Service Member Employment Protection Act (S 3236)** introduced by **Senator Mark Pryor (D-Ark.)**, would strengthen employment rights for service members and veterans. First, this bill would allow veterans to take “time off without pay” from their jobs to receive medical treatment for service-related injuries. Second, the bill would suspend or bar companies from receiving current or future government contracts if they have repeatedly violated military discrimination laws. Finally, it would allow service members with discrimination complaints to sue their employer in federal court instead of being forced into arbitration, even if they signed an arbitration agreement when they were hired. To learn more, visit: <http://www.pryor.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=b5d9d807-eb94-4163-94e7-32e35b968ca7>.
- In **Chicago**, **Mayor Rahm Emanuel** is launching a **Returning Veterans Initiative** to help find jobs for soldiers who are coming home to Chicago after being deployed, drive down unemployment rates, and to smooth the troops’ transition to civilian life. To accomplish these goals, the city will open a new Veterans’ Employment Center to offer job placement services, career counseling, and training resources to returning veterans. The city will also work with potential employers to “help them understand the unique challenges” that returning veterans face when attempting to re-enter the workforce, and the Department of Family and Support Services will offer similar services at every community center it operates. To read more, visit: <http://www.suntimes.com/news/cityhall/12773113-418/rahm-emanuels-new-plan-for-chicagos-returning-vets.html>.
- The **Department of Labor and Employment** is launching a website that is devoted to assisting **Colorado** veterans in finding a job. The website enables veterans to post their résumés, do a self-directed job search and learn about new job postings before the general public. Employers can visit the same site to post job openings or search for qualified applicants. To learn more about the website, visit: <http://www.hireacoloradovet.gov>.

NOTE: The above is provided for information only. The listing of a given policy initiative or program does not imply an endorsement from the IVMF, or Syracuse University.

Outlook

Tracking veterans in the workplace is essential to gaining an understanding of the effectiveness of veteran employment initiatives and the contributions of veteran employees. Lack of identification may result in missed opportunities for firms to effectively train, retrain, and empower veterans. Yet, many firms have concerns regarding the possible liability of questioning previous military service, and veteran applicants are sometimes hesitant to self-identify, fearing bias, stigma, and discrimination. Another reason frequently cited for not collecting or retaining veteran-specific data is the perception related to the use of the data. These forces combine to pose a significant challenge for employers looking to track their veteran hires.

Despite the evident obstacles, it is in the best interest of both employers and employees to maintain data on former military in the workplace. Identifying those with military experience and unique related skill sets allows firms to make the most effective use of veteran employees in the business, and pinpoint their workplace contributions that differentiate them from their civilian colleagues. Companies can use this data to leverage existing skills and to grow veteran employees’ talents. Another benefit of tracking military hires is that firms are able to measure veteran productivity within the company, indicating the return on investment of veteran-employment initiatives. This also provides evidence of the business benefits from hiring veterans and their workplace value.

To overcome challenges of tracking veterans in the workplace, employers should demonstrate positive uses of the data. Such applications for tracking data could include support for veterans or their family members related to deployments, or for use in mentoring, sponsorship, career advancement, affinity groups, and other similar initiatives. Other tracking strategies include providing incentives, such as social events or cocktail hours, developing a veteran-loving culture by providing company-wide recognition, and making screening for veteran status mandatory.