

Most veterans experience good quality of life after military service

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With a few notable exceptions, the majority of post-9/11 U.S. veterans appear to do well in regards to work and family quality of life after departing from military service despite their exposure to the war zone.

These findings appear in the *Journal of Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.

More than 2.4 million service members have left the military since the Afghanistan and Iraq wars began, and over one million more are expected to separate from service in the next six years. Although many veterans successfully navigate the transition to civilian life, some may find it difficult to secure financially rewarding and personally satisfying jobs. Others may experience strained personal relationships as they and their families negotiate the many changes that come with the transition and reintegration process.

A national sample of 524 post-9/11 veterans (282 [women](#), 240 men) were surveyed to evaluate their quality of work and home life as well as their experience of [mental health conditions](#) including PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) since leaving the service.

Only 3 percent of men reported being unemployed and seeking work. Among employed men, 90 percent reported working full-time with a median income of \$50,000-75,000, and more than 80 percent of men reporting that they were somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs. Although about a quarter of men reported some impairment in their

occupational functioning, only two percent reported that it occurred often or always. Women were more likely than men to report being unemployed (6%) and somewhat less likely to report working full-time if they were employed (83 percent) and reported a median salary range of \$35,000-50,000. Like men, most women reported never or only rarely experiencing impairments in occupational functioning, although about a quarter reported sometimes experiencing impairments. Also similar to men, over three-quarters of women reported that they were somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs.

When it came to family quality of life, nearly three quarters of men were somewhat or very satisfied with their intimate relationships and slightly more than 80 percent reported being satisfied with their parenting experiences. About three-quarters of women reported that they were somewhat or very satisfied with their intimate relationships and nearly 90 percent of women reported being satisfied with their parenting experiences, proportions that were similar to those observed for men.

"Despite well-documented [mental health](#) problems for a small subset of veterans, the majority appear to be doing well on most indicators of work and family quality of life despite their war-time experiences," explained corresponding author Dawne S. Vogt, PhD, associate professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine and research psychologist in the Women's Health Sciences Division, National Center for PTSD at the VA Boston Healthcare System. "These findings speak to the resilience of our service members, a topic that has received too little attention in the broader national conversation about veteran readjustment."

Although most post-9/11 veterans reported relatively high quality of life overall, findings also demonstrated the negative impact that PTSD has on veterans' quality of life. Although PTSD did not erode veterans' participation in the workforce or their marital and parenting status, it did

impair their work and relationship functioning and was associated with reduced job and family satisfaction. Notably, PTSD was associated with relatively greater impairments in family functioning and satisfaction than work experiences for both men and women.

Together these findings support the need for interventions that can mitigate the negative effect of PTSD and other associated mental health conditions on several aspects of work and family quality of [life](#). "Our findings contribute to research suggesting both similarities and differences in the post-military readjustment of male and female post-9/11 veterans and underscore the need for additional consideration of the unique work-related challenges women experience following [military service](#)," added Vogt.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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