

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE VETERAN EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

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Executive Summary

According to the 2021 Census, 581,139 individuals have served or are currently serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). Ensuring military veterans make a successful transition to civilian life is a concern for many; the Australian Defence Force (ADF), policy makers, organisations, communities, veterans, and their families.

This report presents the findings of a systematic review of current research relating to veteran employment. Four of the most widely used databases of peer reviewed articles internationally were systematically searched, as well as research from trusted industry sources. To recognise advancements in approaches to veteran transition, only research published between January 2010 and May 2022 was considered. In addition, the scope of the review was limited to those conducted in the Five Eyes countries (USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) to ensure the research is appropriate for consideration in an Australian context. However, even between these countries, differences do exist between these countries in terms of their populations and Defence service models. After appropriate filtering, 118 journal articles and 19 reports relating to veteran employment were analysed.

The aim of this review was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current status of research into veteran employment and unemployment. Whilst there is much focus on veteran issues, this debate and any resultant policy and practice must be underpinned by an evidence base to ensure actions are taken that address the most significant issues. By understanding the current state of research in the field, it is then possible to not only inform new policy and practice, but also to point to the areas requiring further research.

The analysis of the papers identified themes in the current research that could be grouped into four factors relating to veteran employment:

- Personal Factors (including age, sex, education, ethnicity, physical and mental health)
- Service Factors (including branch/service arm, length of service, deployments, rank on separation, type of separation)
- Transition Experience and Challenges (including adjusting, employer misconceptions, finances, identity, government support, support of family and friends)
- Civilian Work Factors (including workforce types and occupations, employer support, transferable military skills)

Overall, it was clear that current research has focused on addressing perceived issues during transition (particularly relating to mental and physical health of veterans), and evaluating current programs in place to support veteran employment. However, this review highlights the opportunity to move away from a deficit perspective that dominates current research to take a strengths-based approach and identify the positive attributes and potential contributions to be made by veterans in civilian workplaces. Doing so will still address some of the employment challenges for veterans by identifying areas of potential focus to strengthen during their transition out of a defence environment. There also is an opportunity to expand current approaches to researching veteran employment to complement the heavy reliance on cross-sectional surveys and interviews as data collection methods. From an Australian perspective, the dominance of US research to date and the possibility of cultural nuances being overlooked should encourage researchers to address this dearth of research in an Australian veteran context.



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Introduction

According to 2021 Australian Census data, almost 500,000 individuals have previously served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021), representing approximately 2% of the population. This is a significant group in the Australian population; many of whom are of working age and seeking employment in a civilian workplace post-service. However, the transition from military to civilian life poses many challenges to former defence personnel, not least of which relates to the ability to shift to civilian employment (Becker, Bish, Abell, McCormack & Smidt, 2022a; Turner & Moran, 2021). Leaving a military career and joining the civilian workforce is a major part of the transition experience and ensuring it is a successful one is critical for the overall welfare of the veterans transitioning (Keeling, Ozuna, Kintzle & Castro, 2019). For this reason, understanding the factors that aid and hinder a successful work transition is crucial.

To enhance understanding of the challenges of employment in the transition process, with the ultimate goal of improving decision making relating to support and future research directions, the Australian Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) commissioned a research project to analyse the existing evidence relating to veteran employment. The objective of the project was to provide an in-depth insight into the state of research on veteran employment matters by identifying the factors that have been studied in relation to employment and unemployment. As such, the aim of this report was to summarise the key themes and areas of focus in the literature to date that relates to veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce. It is important to recognise that this report is not a meta-analysis of data from previous

research and the results of each of the papers making up this review will not be covered in detail individually. Rather the intent is to provide an overall picture of what has been explored to date as well as highlight future research directions. When considering the findings from the analysis it is important to keep in mind the dominance of research from certain countries. For the academic papers approx. 83% were from the US, 8% percent from the UK, 5% from Canada, and only two studies were from Australia. Furthermore, the non-academic literature was mainly from the UK (68%), and the US (26%), while only one report was from Australia.

The review undertaken applied the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach, a systematic methodology for undertaking reviews. The PRISMA guidelines ensure a transparent and rigorous process is applied that delivers high quality and reliable results. Further details on the methodology as it was applied to this project can be found in Appendix 1. The final list of journal articles and reports analysed as the basis of this report can be found in Appendix 2.

This report first summarises the key themes from the analysis conducted, and then highlights the methodological approaches that have been taken to study veteran employment and unemployment. Finally, the report identifies gaps in current knowledge and opportunities for future research to ensure that veteran employment policy and strategy continues to be informed by sound evidence. Overall, this report provides insights to inform future veteran policy and practice in relation to facilitating successful transition to employment for veterans.



Findings

The analysis of the 118 journal articles and 19 non-academic reports identified a range of themes that have been explored by previous research. These themes have been grouped into four key areas of focus; personal factors, service factors, transition experience and challenges, and civilian work factors (shown in Figure 1).

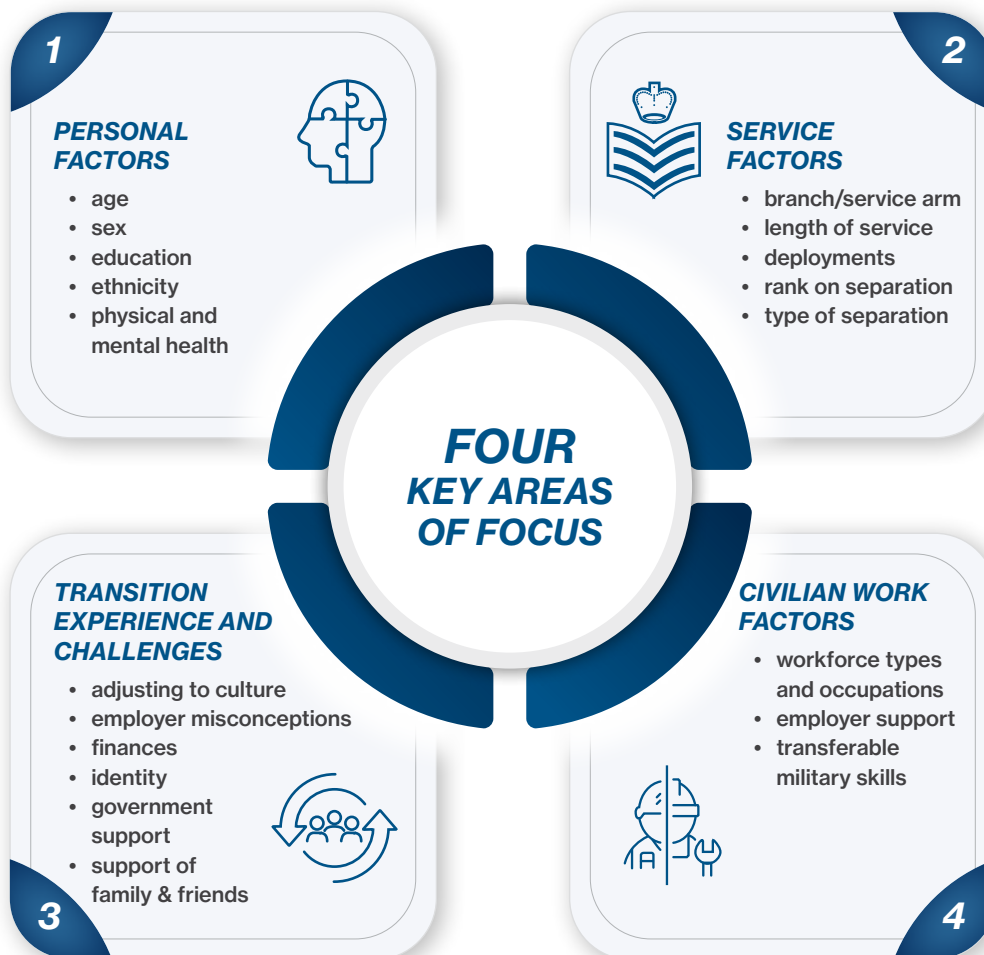


Figure 1. Factors and themes from thematic review

Each of these groups of factors will be summarised to identify the key findings of the research conducted. It is important to note that each theme is not separate and mutually exclusive, and some papers may have covered several of the themes presented in this report. The majority of findings relate to the peer-reviewed articles, however, the findings of the grey literature (mostly reports) are drawn in and highlighted where relevant.







Personal factors

The analysis identified several factors related to the individual that were categorised into the larger theme of personal factors. These factors were linked to personal aspects of the veteran explored to determine the extent to which these might influence employment or unemployment. It is important to note that whilst in many studies, demographics and background of veterans are collected as part of the research, this does not necessarily mean the researchers explore these demographics in terms of links with employment or unemployment. For many, these variables were not related to the overall purpose of the study but offered as background on their sample. Factors within this theme related to age, sex, education, and physical and mental health with key observations for each of these presented.

In some studies, age was combined with other factors such as mental or physical health. For example, veterans who had experienced trauma and were under the age of 50 were found to have the highest risk of unemployment...

Age

Age was addressed in fourteen of the papers, with findings specifically related to employment of veterans; looking at either employment or unemployment rates for different age groups. The observations and results varied (and in fact were sometimes contradictory), often due to the nature of the sample being researched and how age was used in the analysis. Some of the research determined that older veterans have the lowest employment rates (Carra, Curtin, Fortune, & Gordon, 2021; Davis, Resnick, Maieritsch, Weber, Erbes, Strom, McCall & Kyriakides, 2019; Hendrixx, Ross, Armour & Murphy, 2022; Smith, 2018; Smith, 2015; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013), whereas others found that younger veterans have lower employment rates (Carra et al., 2021). Specifically, one study showed that veterans 40 years or older were more likely to have employment (Cohen, Suri, Amick & Yan, 2013) and another showed that veterans above 40 years were reported to have higher job satisfaction than those below 40 (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019). In some studies, age was combined with other factors such as mental or physical health. For example, veterans who had experienced trauma and were under the age of 50 were found to have the highest risk of unemployment (Amick, Meterko, Fortier, Fonda, Milberg & McGlinchey, 2018). In another study, those in younger age groups with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were also more likely to not be working due to poor health (Hendrixx et al., 2022).

In addition to the academic papers, five reports included findings relating to age. Findings suggest that older veterans face greater transition challenges and are more likely to have worse employment outcomes (Fisher, Newell, Barnes, Owen & Lyonette, 2021), older veterans face discrimination and find translating military skills challenging (Flynn & Ball, 2020), employers are more hesitant to hire older veterans (Lyonette, Barnes, Owen, Poole, Fisher & Newell, 2020), and the percentage of self-employed veterans increases with age (Lyonette, Barnes, Owen, Fisher, Newell, Kapur & Wing, 2018). However, some studies found younger veterans are more likely to be unemployed and find transition challenging (Lyonette et al., 2020) and have higher unemployment rates than young non-veterans (Loughran, 2014).



Sex

Ten papers were identified that addressed differences between women and men in the research. Most of these papers found that female veterans face greater challenges during transition (McCuaig Edge, Lee & Dursun, 2022), with more females being unemployed (Kleypamp, 2013; Prokos & Cabage, 2017; Smith, 2014), facing larger declines in income post transition (MacLean, Keough, Poirier, McKinnon & Sweet, 2019), expressing lower job satisfaction (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019), and are less likely to work in STEM jobs than their male veteran counterparts (Werum, Steidl, Harcey & Absalon, 2020). Unlike age, there appeared less contradictory evidence that women veterans are at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

Eight reports also documented observation regarding sex and employment transition. Findings made in this group of literature echo those in the academic sources. Again, males were found to be more likely to be employed, economically active, or have successful longer-term employment outcomes (Deloitte & Forces in Mind Trust, 2018; Fisher et al., 2021; Goldman, Boback, Bozick & Anderson, 2021; Lyonette et al., 2020; Parry, Battista, Williams, Robinson & Takala, 2018; Recchia, Buton, Lewis, Stevens & Forces in Mind Trust, 2016). Females were also reported to be less proficient in conveying their skills to employers and have lower self-confidence and greater issues with mental health (Lyonette et al., 2020). As one report noted, female veterans face challenges of both being veterans and female when seeking work (Parry et al., 2018).



Education

Education was a theme that appeared across the literature, typically in relation to how levels of education do or do not affect work transition and outcomes for veterans. At least twenty-eight papers included some focus on education, with one for example identifying that education levels for veterans have improved since 1983 (Cater & Young, 2020). Overall, the findings within this theme tend to show that education levels are connected to employment, and higher levels of education protect against unemployment (e.g. Smith, 2014; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). Interestingly, when comparing to the wider population, some findings suggest that apart from those with doctoral and professional degree levels, veterans see greater financial benefits of education than non-veterans (Kogut, Short, & Wall, 2011).

Aspects related to education was evident in five reports, and aligned with the peer-reviewed literature. These reports suggest that veterans may face obstacles due to their level of qualifications (Kantar Futures, 2017), and often have lower levels of education than their civilian counterparts (Lyonette et al., 2018; Recchia et al., 2016). Some reports also found that veterans with lower levels of education

or qualifications struggle more to gain employment, with higher education increasing likelihood of being employed (Lyonette et al., 2020) and of higher earnings (Goldman et al., 2021).

Ethnicity

Although many of the studies included demographics related to race and ethnicity (mostly studies from the USA), of the thirty papers found to include such details very few presented findings related to the impact of ethnicity when transitioning to the civilian workplace. Within the studies that did report findings, results were varied. For example, some studies found that being a black veteran (US terminology) was predictive of unemployment (Horton, Jacobson, Wong, Wells, Boyko, Smith, Ryan & Smith, 2013), as well as being non-white and having poor to fair health (Smith, 2014). However, another study found that both white and black veterans had higher salaries than their non-veteran counterparts (Kogut et al., 2011). It is important to highlight that the term 'black' is from the US based studies and is not the term

that would be used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples in Australia. Race and ethnicity were also covered in two reports, finding that ethnic minorities were less likely to have successful employment outcomes (Fisher et al., 2021; Recchia et al., 2016).

Physical and mental health

By far the largest theme in personal factors was that of physical and mental health and the impact this has on employment of veterans. This is to be expected given the extensive public conversation relating to the health and welfare of veterans returning to a civilian life. Within this theme a wide range of aspects of physical and mental health were identified.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was the most commonly researched condition (found in 16 papers), however findings were not consistent. Of the papers including PTSD some found it to be associated with unemployment and a barrier to work success (Amick et al., 2018; Burdett, Fear, Wessely, Greenberg, & Rona, 2021a; Harrod, Miller, Henry & Zivin, 2017; Hendrikx et al., 2022; Kukla, Bonfils, & Salyers, 2015), while other papers found no significant statistical connection between PTSD and employment (Cohen et al., 2013; Twamley, Baker, Norman, Pittman, Lohr & Resnick, 2013). Importantly, while PTSD was the most widely discussed topic in relation to physical and mental health, it should be noted that this frequency does not indicate the relative impact on employment for veterans. For example, one paper included a range of mental and physical health topics and found that “(a)fter stratifying for reason for military separation, mental disorders like depression or panic/ anxiety and poor physical health may have greater impact than prior deployment experiences or PTSD on the ability to find or maintain employment postservice.” (Horton et al., 2013, p. 408). This quote suggests that other mental health disorders apart from PTSD might affect transition to civilian employment and illustrates that studies have investigated various aspects of mental health (e.g., general mental ill health, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, moral injury, and PTSD).

In addition to PTSD, other physical and mental health characteristics or issues covered in the literature include:

- Substance use (Bond, Al-Abdulmunem, Drake, Davis, Meyer, Gade, Frueh, Dickman & Ressler, 2022a; Burdett, Fear, Wessely & Rona, 2021b; Burdett et al., 2021a; Humensky, Jordan, Stroupe & Hynes, 2013a; Kintzle, Oh, Wilcox, Hassan, Eil, & Castro, 2015; Kukla, McGuire & Salyers, 2016),
- Physical health including spinal cord injury (Sutton, Ottomanelli, Njoh, Barnett & Goetz, 2020)
- Anxiety and depression (Amick et al., 2018; Horton, et al., 2013; Jones, Bhui & Engelbrecht, 2019; McGarity, Barnett, Lamberty, Kretzmer, Powell-Cope, Patel, & Nakase-Richardson, 2017; Sienkiewicz, Iverson, Smith & Mitchell, 2021; Twamley et al., 2013; Zivin, Yosef, Levine, Abraham, Miller, Henry, Nelson, Pfeiffer, Sripada, Harrod & Valenstein, 2016),
- Traumatic brain injury (Amick et al., 2018; Dillahunt-Aspillaga, Pugh, Cotner, Silva, Haskin, Tang, Salyers & Nakase-Richardson, 2018; McGarity et al., 2017; Pogoda Stolzmann, Iverson, Baker, Krenzel, Lew, Amara & Meterko, 2016; Smith, 2015; Szelwach, Steinkogler, Badger & Muttukumar, 2011; Twamley et al., 2013),
- Combat trauma (Amick et al., 2018; Stone, Lengnick-Hall & Muldoon, 2018; Szelwach et al., 2011; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013),
- Disability - Cognitive and social disabilities (Smith, 2014; Smith 2015).

Overall, when mentioned in the papers, physical and mental health is found to be a challenge not just to finding and maintaining employment and succeeding in a civilian workplace but also for living life outside of military service.

The non-academic sources displayed similar results relating to this theme. Five reports provided information about the effects of physical and mental health on transition to civilian employment. Overall, the results showed that mental and physical issues are barriers to employment (Carolan, 2016; Fisher et al., 2021; Lyonette et al., 2018; Lyonette et al., 2020) and that veterans with such issues are more likely to face unemployment or have unsuccessful longer-term employment outcomes (Deloitte & Forces in Mind Trust, 2018; Fisher et al., 2021).



Service factors

The second group of themes identified in existing research, related to elements of the military service undertaken by veterans. These themes included: service branch, length of service, deployments, rank, and type of separation. Key issues addressed in each of these themes are summarised below. Again, given the large percentage of studies from the US, some of these findings should be considered with caution as they may not apply directly to the Australian context.

...some findings suggest that those having served for more than 20 years may battle with a loss of identity and status...

Branch / Service arm

The basic structure of a defence force can vary according to country of focus but typically will involve some combination of functions relating to Army, Navy, Marines and Air Defence; each referred to as a branch, force or service within the defence force. Information related to branch of service was included in at least forty-seven papers. These papers usually stated the composition of participants and whether they were from Army, Navy, Marines or Airforce (or a combination of these). However, very few papers included findings related to branch of service. Amongst these papers, some were very narrow in focus. For example, in a study of employment in prison settings, findings show that despite some suggestions otherwise, employment in this setting does not favour hiring from certain branches of the military nor do specific branches seek prison employment (Turner & Moran, 2021).

Some research identified that military branches such as Army and Marines (bearing in mind the predominance of studies from the USA) show a greater knowledge of some project management technical skill areas, processes and personal competencies (Richardson, Marion, Earnhardt & Anantatmula, 2020). Other studies focusing on Army found that service in the Army increased the risk of unemployment (Burdett et al., 2021b) and the likelihood of not looking for work (Pogoda et al., 2016), as well as increased odds of finding financial preparedness a challenge (Lee, Dursun, Skomorovsky & Thompson, 2020). Overall, while the number of findings related to branch of service are limited, the papers tend to demonstrate most unfavourable outcomes associated with serving in the Army service branch (a finding potentially related to the relative size of Army compared with other services).

The non-academic sources documented findings related to type of service in three reports. Some findings suggest that those serving in the Airforce made better transitions, while Army veterans struggled with interviewing and negative employer perceptions, and Navy veterans had difficulty explaining their value to potential employers (Lyonette et al., 2020). Finally, being an Army and Navy veteran was associated with lower earnings post separation from the military (Goldman et al., 2021).



In regard to findings relating to type of service it must be noted that the results from the academic sources represent predominantly USA research while the non-academic sources are primarily from the UK. Therefore, application of findings to the Australian context is yet to be determined.

Length of service

Length of service was mentioned in seventeen papers and was evidently a typical question to ask of research participants. However, despite collecting and reporting this information very few used this data further in their analysis or differentiated findings in this way, nor sought to explore how the number of years served in Defence is related to employment (or unemployment) once separated. Of interest, one paper exploring the use of transitional assistance programs showed that for those who served four years or less these programs are associated with an increase in full-time work status (Li, 2020).

Years of service came up in six reports with mixed results, showing longer periods of service were associated with favourable and unfavourable transition. For example, some findings suggest that those having served for more than 20 years may battle with a loss of identity and status (Lyonette et al., 2020) but that 20 years of service or more was associated with higher earnings (Goldman et al., 2021).

Deployments

Deployment was mentioned and captured by at least twenty papers in relation to transitioning out of the military, however a smaller number of papers specifically investigated deployment and any impacts this has on transitioning to civilian work. Some findings show that deployment during times of war is associated with poor employment outcomes (Faberman & Foster, 2013), however others found no significant relationships between civilian employment and deployment status (Burdett et al., 2021b). Within these papers some papers focused on deployment to combat zones (e.g., Burnett-Zeigler, Valenstein, Ilgen, Blow, Gorman & Zivin, 2011; Horton et al., 2013). The findings regarding deployment and combat experience have been mixed. For example, some found evidence that veterans who deployed more than once and with combat experience had higher employment rates than those who deployed once and had no combat experience (Burnett-Zeigler et al., 2011). However, other research did not find any significant statistical association between employment and deployment or combat experience (Horton et al., 2013).

Two non-academic reports covered deployment with one suggesting veterans who were in combat have challenges explaining their role and experience to civilian employers (Kantar Futures, 2017) and another report finding that for male Army and Navy veterans having been deployed for less than 2 years is associated with lower earnings (Goldman et al., 2021).

Rank on separation

Whilst twenty papers captured data related to rank on separation, only some reported results related to the impact on employment. Given the many ways ranks can be grouped (and differing between countries), findings in this theme were relatively specific. Just a few examples include:

- those from higher ranks were found to experience less financial hardship (Burdett et al., 2021b),
- lower ranks were associated with higher postservice benefits usage (Burdett, Fear, MacManus, Wessely, Rona & Greenberg, 2019),
- higher rank related to increased odds of being employed but less work satisfaction (Nelson, Zivin, Walters, Ganoczy, Wadsworth & Valenstein, 2015),
- lower rank associated with experiencing more transition challenges for those with medical release from the military (McCuaig Edge et al., 2022),
- junior listed ranks are less likely to use employment programs (Perkins, Davenport, Morgan, Aronson, Bleser, McCarthy, Vogt, Finley, Copeland & Gilman, 2022).

However, in contrast to the specific findings outlined, another study found no evidence of a relationship between service rank and employment (Burdett et al., 2021b).

Rank was included in five reports and was not perceived by veterans to impact on their employment outcomes (Fisher et al., 2021), while other reports suggested that more senior veterans had worse employment outcomes compared to more junior veterans (Lyonette et al., 2020). One report also suggested that employers were more hesitant to hire highly ranked veterans due to lack of adaptability and high salary expectations (Futures 4 Forces, 2015).

Type of separation

Individuals can leave a defence force (referred to in this report with the Australian terminology of “separation”) for many reasons, and the terminology used to describe types of separation can vary (e.g., honorable, dishonorable, medical, voluntary etc). However, reasons can most easily be classified according to whether the separation is voluntary or involuntary, planned or unplanned. The type of separation was mentioned in at least nineteen papers but of these only a few presented findings directly linking type of separation to employment outcomes.

Overall, medical separation appears to be linked to worse employment outcomes than those who separate for other reasons. For example, one paper found that those leaving due to medical reasons were the most at risk of unemployment, financial difficulty, ill mental health and PTSD (Burdett et al., 2021b). Similarly, other papers found that medical separation was positively associated with use of disability benefits (Burdett et al., 2019), loss of identity and lack of financial preparedness (Lee et al., 2020), as well as more transition challenges generally (McCuaig Edge et al., 2022). Those who separate on medical grounds are also more likely to face a drop in income after separating from the defence force (MacLean et al., 2019).

In comparison, other findings show that voluntary separation was associated with higher employment rates (Carra et al., 2021), and that those who do not have honourable separations may have greater support needs, yet support is perceived to be lacking (Keeling, Kintzle & Castro, 2018). Overall, these findings suggest that separating from the military in a planned and voluntary way might be linked to better outcomes when making the transition to civilian employment.

Four reports were identified with findings relating to type of separation from the military. Some observations here suggested that medical separation is linked to poorer employment outcomes (Recchia et al., 2016) and similarly that unfavourable separation was associated with lower post-separation earnings (Goldman et al., 2021).





Transition experience and challenges

The third group of factors found in the literature covered a range of issues related to the experience of transitioning; both the challenges faced and, to a lesser extent, the factors that assisted the transition. These themes related to the reported experience of adjusting to a new way of life and work, the misconceptions of employers, issues with finances, challenges to identity, government support and support of family and friends.

For veterans, clashing with civilian colleagues, having difficulty communicating, and a sense of cultural dissonance can at times be a hindrance to maintaining employment, as well as being satisfied with one's job...

Adjusting to new structures, culture, and way of living

In the papers, a small subset covered aspects related to adjustment to civilian work structures and culture. Some research found that veterans have difficulty understanding and successfully navigating the new and, to them, unfamiliar structures and ways of operating in the civilian world of work. For example, understanding recruitment and selection processes of civilian employers (Dexter, 2020), navigating work ethics and work hour expectations (Dirani, 2017; Keeling et al., 2019), having less structure and more time to focus on issues and ailments (Shue, Matthias, Watson, Miller, & Munk, 2021), and less clear division of responsibilities and roles (Szelwach et al., 2011) were highlighted as challenges for veterans making the transition.

Specifically, becoming accustomed to the new cultural aspects of civilian workplaces was a theme that was explored. For veterans, clashing with civilian colleagues, having difficulty communicating, and a sense of cultural dissonance can at times be a hindrance to maintaining employment, as well as being satisfied with one's job (Keeling et al., 2018; Keeling et al., 2019; Szelwach et al., 2011).

Challenges related to adjustment also featured in eight of the non-academic reports. On the whole, the challenges identified mirror those covered by the academic literature. For example, issues identified concerned using a different communication style and non-military language, adjusting to less structure, different leadership styles, and a new culture (Carolan, 2016; Curry Hall, Harrell, Bicksler, Stewart & Fisher, 2014); Hynes, Scullion, Lawler, Steel & Boland, 2022; Fisher et al., 2021; Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2018; Lyonette et al., 2020; Parry et al., 2018).

Civilian employer views and misconceptions

At least eleven papers highlighted the challenges concerning perceptions of civilian employers and their biases and misconceptions about veterans; in worst cases reporting discrimination. Reported in these papers were misperceptions, misunderstandings and/or lack of knowledge about the skills of veterans as military responsibilities, experience and achievements making it hard for non-defence workplaces to translate (Dexter, 2020; Szelwach et al., 2011). A sense of discrimination was also raised in two papers relating specifically to veterans with combat experience (Keeling et al., 2018; Keeling et al., 2019). Lack of knowledge about resources for workplaces to recruit veterans also features within this theme (eg. Rudstam, Strobel Gower, & Cook, 2012).

On a positive note however, of the eleven papers identified, one paper studied the biases of hiring managers and found that hiring managers rated veterans higher for leadership, teamwork, and emotional stability skills compared to non-veterans yet lower on social skills (Stone et al., 2018). These ratings for leadership, social skills, and emotional stability in turn positively affected the perceived job fit rating.

Like the academic sources, eleven of the nineteen reports analysed also reported evidence concerning employer misconceptions as well as favourable views of veterans. The reports that mentioned misconceptions found that veterans felt employers had negative views of them (Carolan, 2016; Futures 4 Forces, 2015; Lyonette et al., 2020; Recchia et al., 2016) or that veterans reported discrimination (Flynn & Ball, 2020; Parry et al., 2018). Seven of the eleven reports also suggested that employers struggle to understand the skills and qualifications that veterans possess. For example, one report noted that employers recruiting veterans say they know little about the Armed Forces and have difficulty understanding jargon and comparing military skills to civilian equivalents (Fisher et al., 2021; Futures 4 Forces, 2015; Recchia et al., 2016).

At the same time, seven reports also noted some positive views held by employers in relation to the qualities and skills veterans bring to the workplace. The reports mentioned skills such as active listening, time management, critical thinking, speaking, problem solving (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Fellows, Hunt & Tyrie, 2020; Recchia et al., 2016). Specifically, one report found that female veterans had great skills in “forward planning and preparation, administration and organisation, and gathering evidence and pulling it together in a coherent way” (Parry et al., 2018, p. 6). Moreover, veterans were seen to possess the positive qualities of work ethic, self-discipline and motivation, resilience, loyalty, adaptability, and communication (Carolan, 2016; Flynn & Ball, 2020; Curry Hall et al., 2014; Parry et al., 2018).

Moreover, veterans were seen to possess the positive qualities of work ethic, self-discipline and motivation, resilience, loyalty, adaptability, and communication...

Finances

The topic of financial concerns and earnings of veterans during transition was another theme that was evident in at least twenty-one papers. While some papers within this theme presented evidence of financial hardship and distress of veterans (e.g., Bond et al., 2022a; Burdett et al., 2021b; Dexter, 2020; Johnson & Walker, 2018), other papers have found that, in some instances, veterans outearn their non-veteran counterparts (e.g., Kleylamp, 2013; Kogut et al., 2011; Makridis & Hirsch, 2021).

Depending on the method and aim, papers vary as to the level of details they provide. For example, some papers examined earnings by age, medical conditions, and education (e.g., Humensky, Jordan, Stroupe, & Hynes, 2013a, 2013b), while other research simply suggests that financial matters is an area of concern and dissatisfaction for veterans (e.g., MacLean et al., 2019; Shue et al., 2021) without exploring further.

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Identity

Aspects related to identity were the focus of at least seventeen papers. One paper suggests that social identity and being able to establish a new identity after leaving the military is strongly connected to a successful transition (Lee et al., 2020). Other findings highlight the adjustment and, at times, challenges related to creating a new sense of self that is not connected as strongly to the military and the role individuals held during the time they served. As an example, some studies found that joining the defence force shaped their identity (Becker, Bish, McCormack & Abell, 2022b) and that the military identity consequently became the main sense of self (Binks & Cambridge, 2018). The military identity was often reported to be linked to a sense of belonging to a group (Becker et al., 2022b; Binks & Cambridge, 2018; Lee et al., 2020). Moreover, one study found that veterans with poor mental or physical health or those who were medically separated were more likely to feel a sense of loss of identity (Lee et al., 2020). Similar findings were made for other veteran cohorts including between 30-39 years of age, female veterans, junior non-commissioned members, army veterans, Afghanistan deployed veterans, and those serving between six and nineteen years (Lee et al., 2020).

Predominantly, the papers reported that veterans faced a sense a loss when leaving their military career behind (Dirani, 2017; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011; Jones et al., 2019; Shue et al., 2021), that they felt they had to start over again in the civilian world (Keeling, 2018) and that this impacted their level of confidence in the civilian workplace (McCann & Heber, 2017). As part of the loss of identity, a lack of purpose was also mentioned by some papers. For example, studies reported that veterans faced challenges regaining a similar sense of purpose in their work and life to what they had felt during their time in the defence force (Keeling et al., 2019; Matthieu, Meissen, Scheinberg & Dunn, 2021; Shue et al., 2021).

In the non-academic sources, the theme of identity was covered in five reports. These reports demonstrated similar findings to the academic papers, reporting a sense of loss post separation both in relation to identity, status, and purpose (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2021; Flynn & Ball, 2020; Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2020). One report noted that regaining a new civilian identity assists the transition to civilian life and work (Fisher et al., 2021).

One report noted that regaining a new civilian identity assists the transition to civilian life and work...



Support provided by government

Previous research has explored a range of support mechanisms that might be adopted by government agencies to support veterans when transitioning from military service. At least thirty-nine papers included mention of some element of government, although only some of these studies covered outcomes or impacts of this support; with some simply referencing them as context without any form of evaluation, or such programs were mentioned as a recommendation based on their findings.

In the papers that covered government or military support, some evaluated which types of services and support had positive outcomes for veterans in terms of employment. For example, digital tutors were found to help prepare veterans for employment (Fletcher, 2017), apprentice programs can assist to upgrade skills and help veterans transition to civilian employment (Hanson & Lerman, 2016), and entrepreneurship training has positive results for military veterans' networking activity and entrepreneurial passion (Kerrick, Cumberland & Choi, 2016). There was also research showing that veterans who use interview coaching, resume writing, receive help with translation of military skills, or undergo entrepreneurship mentoring were more likely to be successful in gaining a job after leaving defence (Perkins et al., 2022).

There were also studies into the use of supported employment; employment where specific and additional measures are put in place to meet the needs of the veteran. Research has found that such approaches were effective in helping to subsequently secure competitive employment (Twamley et al., 2013). Much of this research took an evaluation perspective and reported on specific programs or interventions and their approach; for example, evaluation of a group-based program for formerly incarcerated veterans (LePage, Crawford, CIPHER, Anderson, Rock, Johnson, Washinton & Ottomanelli, 2020; LePage, Lewis, Crawford, Washington, Parish-Johnson, CIPHER & Bradshaw, 2018; LePage, Lewis, Washington, Davis & Glasgow, 2013).

Another group of papers in this theme focused on specific veteran cohorts, their needs and the effectiveness of interventions. Findings from this research indicates that veterans with military sexual trauma are a high-risk group within those seeking employment services (Gross, Kaczynski & Resnick, 2022), and that veterans with traumatic brain injury and other mental health conditions are more likely to use vocational assistance (Twamley et al., 2013). Another study indicated that service and support needs differ depending on whether veterans have college training or not (Boutin, 2011). In relation to effective interventions, exit counselling and transition assistance programs were reported to facilitate improved transition for military nurses (Elliott, Chargualaf & Patterson, 2017), and community-based employment services had higher odds of attaining competitive employment for veterans with mental illness (Abraham, Yosef, Resnick & Zivin, 2017). Moreover, for veterans with spinal cord injury, supported employment was found to be more effective than unsupported approaches to obtaining employment (Ottomanelli, Barnett & Goetz, 2014; Sutton et al., 2020). However, one study showed that transitional work intervention is not associated with better employment outcomes for veterans with PTSD compared to those that do not participate in transitional work (Davis et al., 2019).

Moreover, individual placement and support was found to be helpful for veterans with spinal cord injury, substance misuse or poor mental health...

In addition to looking at the effectiveness of various support programs and initiatives, studies also reported that some veterans have negative experiences with the support available or feel that there is a lack of support. For example, some found that veterans felt unsupported after leaving and that vocational rehabilitation services might be more effective for those without college training (Binks & Cambridge, 2018). It was also reported that transitional assistance programs are seen as a bureaucratic requirement and not useful unless participants are ready and have started thinking about the future (Keeling et al., 2019), and homeless veterans face many challenges in accessing assistance (Metraux, Cusack, Byrne, Hunt-Johnson & True, 2017). Lack of support from military leaders was also found to be a challenge when transitioning (Shue et al., 2021), as was lack of information about support services available (Keeling et al., 2019).

Finally, some studies included findings suggesting way to improve support services for veterans. For example, a study from New Zealand reported that a longer transition period and pre-departure training to prepare for civilian life and employment would be helpful (Cardow, Imbeau, Apiata & Martin, 2021), while another study reported the need for more individualised assistance (Shue et al., 2021) including for women (Hamilton, Williams & Washington, 2015) and women in rural areas (Szelwach et al., 2011). Additionally, a paper reported that for veterans with service-connected disabilities, vocational rehabilitation and education programs may improve employment outcomes (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013).

In addition to the findings from the academic papers, a handful of reports included content related to government support. The findings suggest that veterans would like to receive more tailored support (Parry et al., 2018), support with skills transferability and CV writing (Hynes et al., 2022), and financial support (Lyonette et al., 2018). Moreover,

individual placement and support was found to be helpful for veterans with spinal cord injury, substance misuse or poor mental health (Carolan, 2016). Apart from government support, a handful of reports noted that veterans were satisfied with the support from the military (Flynn & Ball, 2020; Hynes et al., 2022; Kantar Futures, 2017) while the same and other reports found that veterans felt a lack of support (Fisher et al., 2021; Hynes et al., 2022; Lyonette et al., 2020). In particular some reports suggested some room for improvement in the support received from the military. For example, more assistance with obtaining skills and qualifications while in the military that are useful post separation (Fisher et al., 2021; Kantar Futures, 2017), as well as more clear communication and personalised support (Hynes et al., 2022).

Support of family and friends

A small subset of eight studies featured findings related to support from family and friends. These papers covered the extent to which veterans felt supported by those close to them (Cotner, Keleher, O'Connor, Trainor & Ottomanelli, 2013; Gonzalez, Henriquez & McKennon, 2014; Keeling, 2018), as well as how the support received helped veterans stay focused and assisted the transition (Keeling et al., 2019; Mael, Wyatt & Iyer, 2022; Shue et al., 2021). Three non-academic reports noted the use of assistance or support from friends and family. For example, support included help with CV and interview preparation (Kantar Futures, 2017) and was reported to assist successful transition to civilian work (Fisher et al., 2021). In addition to support from family and friends, networks were mentioned more broadly in six reports. A good network was reported to be effective in the job search process and in getting veterans into a job with good fit (Fellows et al., 2020; Flynn & Ball, 2020; Kantar Futures, 2017) and to secure and sustain employment in the long term (Fisher et al., 2021).



Civilian work factors

Some themes identified through this review were about factors related to the civilian workplace encountered by veterans. These themes included observations about the types of work and occupations, employer support offered and the transferable skills that can be applied in a civilian workplace.

...while some papers and reports have focused on and captured specific occupations this has not been the focus of their research. Many papers instead captured employment more broadly such as whether study participants were simply employed or unemployed.

Civilian workforce types and occupations

When covering transition from defence to civilian work, the papers and reports in this review mentioned transition to various types of civilian work. These included:

- executives and managers (Dexter, 2020; Ford, 2017),
- health related services e.g., ambulatory health assistant (Watts, Lawrence, Schaub, Lea, Hasenstaub, Slivka, Smith & Kirsh, 2016) and pharmacists (Bennett, Wellman, Mahmood, Freye, Remund, & Samples, 2015),
- leisure and recreation (Carra et al., 2021),
- education related professions (Gordon & Parham, 2019; Schulker, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2020),
- private military (Carter and Young, 2020; White, 2018),
- IT (Fletcher, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2020),
- corporate sector jobs (e.g., risk, engineering, executive assistant) (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019; Lyonette et al., 2020),
- private sector employment (Winters, 2018),
- protective service occupation (e.g., border security, police, prison workforce, fire services (Turner & Moran, 2021; White, 2018; Lyonette et al, 2020),
- government (Makridis & Hirsch, 2021; Tao & Campbell, 2020; Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019; Winters, 2018),
- STEM employment (Werum et al., 2020),
- self-employment (Carter and Young, 2020; Coile, Duggan, & Guo, 2021; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011; Jones et al., 2019; Lyonette et al., 2018; McDermott & Jackson, 2020; Winters, 2018)
- voluntary work (Carra et al., 2021),
- operational roles in transport and logistics or complex service organisations (Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2020).

These workforce types represent only some of the roles that veterans transition into after leaving the defence force. In fact, while some papers and reports have focused on and captured specific occupations this has not been the focus of their research. Many papers instead captured employment more broadly such as whether study participants were simply employed or unemployed. Thus, the types and occupations presented here are not necessarily representing where veterans most typically go after separating but provides insight into where some research on veteran civilian work transition have been conducted.

Employer support

In relation to the potential support that could be provided by employers, there were a few papers with recommendations as to appropriate ways to maximise opportunities for veterans, but this was limited. Some research showed that reconsidering job design and focusing on opportunities for flexible work arrangements and telecommuting will be of benefit to both employer and employee. Szelwach, Steinkogler, Badger and Mattukumar (2011) identified this as particularly relevant to employers who may be seeking to employ female veterans in regional areas; meaning they do not need to be residing in large urban centres in order to have employment. Other findings showed that having supportive managers or another support person was beneficial when adjusting to the civilian workplace (Cotner et al., 2013; Dirani, 2017). Similarly, mentors were reported to be a great source of support (Gordon & Parham, 2019) and more broadly having supportive employers with established veterans groups assisted with the transition (Keeling et al., 2019). Moreover, programs to support veterans with post-separation disabilities both for recruitment and retention were recommended (Gonzalez, Tillman & Holmes, 2020), as were programs targeted at women veterans (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019). However, one study suggested that veterans can be sceptical of employers who claim to be supportive of veterans and who use veteran hiring programs (Keeling et al., 2018).

While the evidence suggests that employer support is beneficial, one study found that many organisations do not have veteran specific programs to attract and retain, and those that do tailor these initiatives for their specific business goals and allocate resources as they would for any other business initiative (Ford, 2017). Similar findings were reported by another study that found many organisations did not have formal veteran mentoring programs (Mael et al., 2022).

Support by employers was discussed in eleven of the nineteen non-academic reports. A couple of these reports noted that veterans felt a lack of support from employers (Fisher et al., 2021; Lyonette et al., 2020), while others took the perspective of employers and demonstrated employers' interest and existing efforts in supporting veterans (Fellows et al., 2020). For example, some showed that employers have veteran specific recruitment processes but less support to retain veterans once hired (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Parry et al., 2018) and that organisations with military support programs often have senior management support (Recchia et al., 2016). Amongst these reports some also suggested that veteran specific support from employers were not always commonplace or tailored enough to various veteran cohorts (Hynes et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2018). A couple of reports also suggested that employers find it difficult or confusing to engage with veteran service providers or charities (Fellows et al., 2020; Futures 4 Forces, 2015) and while aware of military support specialist agencies many medium and large employers did not engage with them, as the following quote suggests; "(i)n total, 87 per cent of medium and large organisations are aware of at least one provider whereas just 24 per cent are working with one" (Recchia et al., 2016, p. 41).



Transferable military skills

While many papers looked at veteran employment as an issue to be solved, some papers did include strength-based elements and highlighted the benefits of veterans and the skills they bring. This review identified at least seven papers that reported on the value of skills and experiences gained during military service for civilian employment. For example, veterans were reported to have gained useful leadership skills (Dexter, 2020; McDermott & Jackson, 2020), resilience and flexibility (Elliott et al., 2017; Mael et al., 2022; McDermott & Jackson, 2020), discipline and responsibility (Mael et al., 2022; McDermott & Jackson, 2020; Shue et al., 2021), and planning and public speaking skills (Dirani, 2017). These papers illustrate the capabilities veterans have gained through their service and highlight transferable skills that are of benefit when transitioning into a civilian organisation.

Thirteen reports included findings related to translation of skills and consistently highlighted the difficulty veteran face when it comes to effectively translating and communicating skills to civilian employers (Fellows et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2021; Futures 4 Forces, 2015; Hynes et al., 2022; Kantar Futures, 2017; Parry et al., 2018). Additionally, some reports covered the efforts made to match skills from the military to civilian jobs in order to assist transition for veterans (Fellows et al., 2020; Hardison, Krueger, Shanley, Saavedra, Martin, Wong, Clague, Crowley, 2017; Wenger, Pint, Piquado, Shanley, Beleche, Bradley, Welch, Werber, Yoon, Duckworth, Curtis, 2017).

Interestingly, helpful skills gained while serving in the military was emphasised in ten reports. Some of these skills included listening, time management, problem solving, organisational and engagement, team working, decision making (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Fellows et al., 2020; Hardison et al., 2017; Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2018; Recchia et al., 2016; Wenger et al., 2017). Beneficial qualities from serving were also mentioned such as loyalty, resilience, adaptability, and communication (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Hardison et al., 2017; Lyonette et al., 2020; Parry et al., 2018).

In contrast, skills and experience gaps were noted to affect the transition into the civilian workforce in seven reports (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2021; Flynn & Ball, 2020). For example, veterans were said to lack commercial experience (Parry et al., 2018), as well as life and financial skills (Lyonette et al., 2018).

Nature of the research

In addition to an analysis of the key factors identified, it is also important to understand the approaches taken to researching veteran employment and unemployment issues to date. In particular, a summary of the setting of the research, the methodology employed and the approach to sampling identifies some clear trends.

Academic literature observations

For the academic literature 118 papers were included that covered transition to employment for veterans. These papers were published between 2011 and 2022 and were predominantly from the US. Studies on this topic appear to trend upwards over the years as illustrated in Figure 2, which shows that most papers were published in 2020 and 2021.

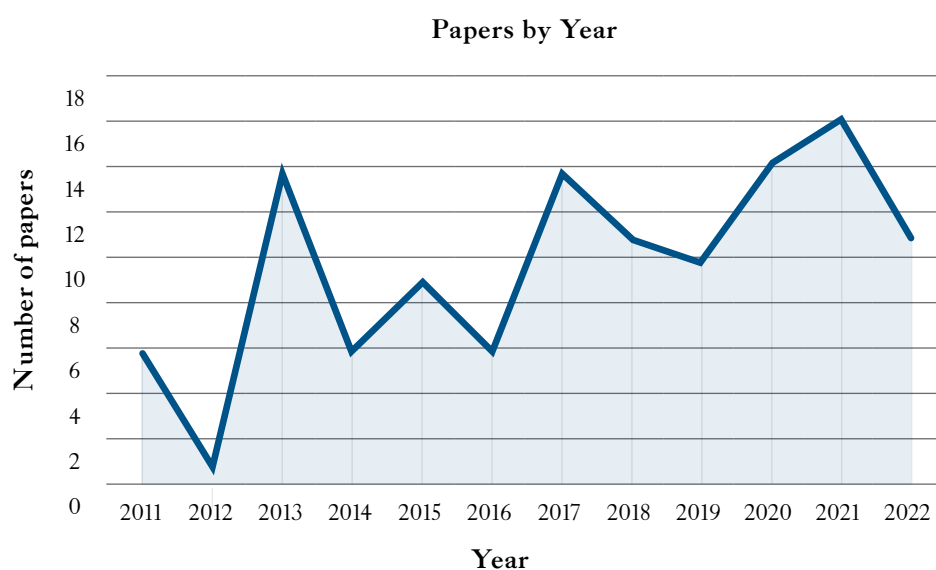


Figure 2. Papers published by year

Location of research

The first consideration was the location in which the research was conducted, bearing in mind that the scope of this review was limited to the research conducted in the Five Eyes countries (US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada). The spread of study locations is shown in Table 1.

Location of study	Number of studies
USA	98
UK	11
Canada	6
Australia	2
New Zealand	1

Table 1. Location of academic studies

As would be expected, due to sheer population size (and therefore quantum of both veterans and researchers), a significant portion of the published peer reviewed research has been undertaken in the USA (98 papers). The UK (11 papers) and Canada (6 papers) were the location for significantly less of the reported research, but these countries were still well ahead of Australian with only two papers and New Zealand with one paper.

Methodology and methods

The methodologies reported within the papers were categorised as qualitative (38 papers), quantitative (76) or mixed methods (4) in their approach to the research. Overall, there were more quantitative than qualitative studies reported which is not surprising given the number of veterans available to be studied, particularly in the US context, and the existence of established measures relating to many of the research topics. In the peer reviewed literature there was a limited number of mixed methods studies reported however this should be interpreted with caution. Often mixed methods studies may not be reported in a single manuscript due to space limitations and may be reported as separate, discrete studies even though part of a larger program of research. Within each of these methodologies, the methods employed to collect data were also identified and are show in Table 2.

Methodology	Data collection method	Number of studies
Mixed methods	Interview and survey	4
Qualitative	Interviews	22
	Focus groups	5
	Open ended survey questions/ qualitative survey	4
	Case study	3
	Other - Thematic analysis of written essays, statements or other records	3
	Interviews and focus groups	1
Quantitative	Cross sectional survey	38
	Secondary data	26
	Longitudinal	8
	Interventions	3
	Archival data	1

Table 2. Methods used in studies reviewed

In the qualitative methodologies, overwhelmingly, the research utilised an interview method to collect data, and in quantitative studies there was a predominance of cross-sectional surveys. Whilst both these methods are appropriate and reliable when applied with appropriate procedures, it does highlight the heavy dependence on these two methods and raises the question as to whether there is a need for more variety in the research applied to veteran employment and unemployment.

Sampling (including comparison groups)

Finally, the issues of sampling strategy and sample size were considered. As quantitative studies require larger samples in order to make generalisations, it is not surprising that the median sample size for all those with a quantitative methodology was 1,294. However, discounting those quantitative studies that drew on extremely large samples from large national studies including census data (one with over 9,000,000), the median for cross-sectional surveys was 548 (but ranged from 30 to 48,821). Alternately, qualitative studies rely less on size of sample and more on the interpretation of individual experiences and therefore the sample size ranged from 2 to 1400 (mediam of 17.5). Discounting the larger qualitative surveys, the interview studies ranged from sample sizes of 2 to 288 with a median of 15. Beyond the raw numbers, we also noted the different sampling strategies and comparison groups used by the researchers. It is perhaps not surprising that the main comparison groups in the body of peer-reviewed literature analysed were those of veteran vs non-veteran (24 papers) and employed vs unemployed (11 papers) or veterans with a disability vs no disability (5 papers).

Grey literature observations

For the grey literature, the sample of reports included in this review totalled 19. Most of the reports identified for inclusion were produced and/or funded by Forces in Mind Trust (12 reports), Rand (5 reports), and Deloitte (1 report) which was a joint report between Deloitte and Forces in Mind Trust. One report was found via apo.org.au, which was a report produced by the Australian Government Productivity Commission (2019). All nineteen reports were included, however since some reports focused broadly on transition to civilian life, only sections that specifically dealt with work transition were analysed. The reports were produced between 2014 and 2022, with most reports being published in 2017 (4 reports), see Figure 3.

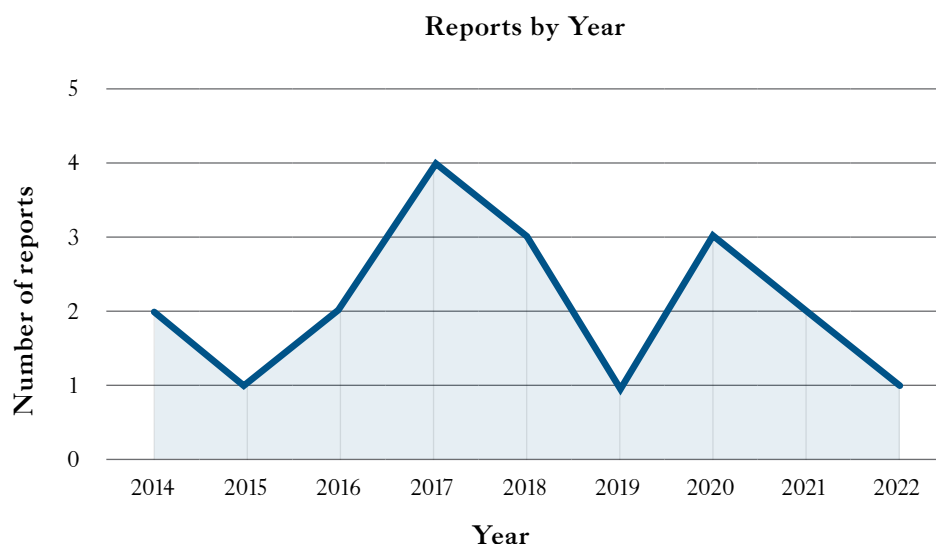


Figure 3. Reports by year

Location of research

In contrast to the academic literature, the reports included in this review were primarily from the UK (13 reports) while a handful were from USA (5 reports). Only one report was from Australia and was from the Australian Government.

Methodology and methods

The methods employed by the reports were classified similarly to the academic papers. For the reports, mixed method methodologies were the most frequent method (11 reports), while others used qualitative (4 reports) and quantitative methodologies (4 reports). More details about the methods used to collect data are identified in Table 3.

Methodology	Data collection method	Number of studies
Mixed methods	Interview and survey	4
	Secondary data, interviews, survey	2
	Interview, survey, case studies	1
	Focus group, interview, survey, case studies	1
	Focus group, interview, SME panels, survey	1
	Focus group, interview, survey	1
Qualitative	Interviews	4
	Cross sectional survey	3
Quantitative	Secondary data	2

Table 3. Methods used in reports reviewed

Sampling (including comparison groups)

Many of the reports focused primarily on veterans alone or specific cohorts of veterans such as those over 50 years of age or those with physical and mental health issues. Only three reports were found to compare veterans to non-veterans.



Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

Whilst the findings from this review demonstrate a breadth of research that has been undertaken with implications for veteran employment, it also highlights areas that are lacking or, at the least, under-researched. These areas present opportunities to continue to build the evidence base for veteran employment into the future.



Strengths based view of veteran employment

Overall, it was clear that current research has focused on addressing perceived issues during transition (particularly relating to mental and physical health of veterans), and evaluating current programs in place to support veteran employment. However, this review highlights the opportunity to move away from a deficit perspective in the current research to take a strengths-based view of veterans and the positive attributes and potential contributions they can make in civilian workplaces. If research can compare veterans to non-veterans to identify the many benefits of having veteran talent, civilian employers may be more likely to take the steps necessary to attract this talent pool. This may still address some of the employment challenges for veterans by identifying areas of potential focus to strengthen during their transition out of a defence environment.



Treating veterans as a heterogeneous group

Although a range of the papers reviewed did use comparison groups, there is still a propensity to treat veterans as a homogenous group when in fact their characteristics can vary substantially depending on a range of factors both personal and service related. This variety became evident when comparing research in this review and finding contradictory results; this could be anticipated given the significant differences in participants being studied and the nature of their service. There is therefore a continuing need to study a range of demographic, personal, and service-related variables and the extent to which these variables impact on employment outcomes (and other possible outcomes such as engagement, satisfaction). Whilst many studies collected data relating to these variables, this information often was not used as a part of the analysis.



Expansion of methodologies applied

In terms of methodology of existing research, there is also a heavy reliance on traditional cross-sectional surveys and interviews as data collection methods. Whilst these methods are reliable when applied appropriately there seems room to explore other methods of collecting data; both large scale and more targeted to ensure methodological variety is applied to this issue. Advances in research methodologies has meant a much wider suite of available techniques (many harnessing the potential of advanced technologies) that could be applied to veteran employment research in the future.



Using a wider range of measures

As this review set out to explore veteran employment and unemployment, the obvious “outcome variable” of interest is relatively obvious; the ability to secure employment. However, looking beyond simply whether a veteran is employed or not may hold the key to advancing our understanding of the ways to truly address veteran employment issues. Considering whether a veteran is employed or unemployed does not address the deeper questions relating to whether they are underemployed, whether they are fulfilled by the work they are undertaking, and whether their employment status has an impact on the veteran's wider wellbeing and life satisfaction. Broader human resource management and psychology literature abounds with measures that could be applied to veterans in this context such as engagement, personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, intention to stay/leave, and job satisfaction. However, to date there has been limited use of such measures to gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes of the employment transition process for veterans.



Focus on more sources of veteran support

Much of the research focused on evaluating the support for veteran employment provided by either government or, to a lesser extent, employers. Informal support from family, friends, and networks was also highlighted. However, there was far less focus on the evaluation or discussion of veteran employment support that is provided by non-profit organisations, and very little that focused on how the defence force itself might contribute to the employability and positive outcomes of veterans once they leave military service. Further research of all sources of potential veteran employment support on offer would provide a better understanding of the most effective sources of support.



Australian research context

Finally, and potentially most obvious is the dominance of research undertaken in the US context. Whilst there is much to learn from the experience in the USA given the significant size of their Defence forces and the long history of addressing veteran issues, these must be applied with caution. Even though the Five Eyes alliance is based on shared mutual interests and approaches, there are nonetheless important nuances and differences between these countries to be considered when dealing with veteran issues. Therefore, it is imperative that Australia continues to champion research in this area with Australian veterans.

Conclusion

This review set out to provide a status on the current research into veteran employment and unemployment. Whilst it is clear there is growing interest in this field and much work has been done, it is also clear there remains further work that can be done. This report does not provide a definitive answer as to the key factors impacting on veteran employment or unemployment; indeed, this was not the intention. What it does reveal is the complexity of veteran employment and the range of possible factors that can play a role in the level of success or otherwise experienced by veterans seeking employment in a civilian workforce. However, in presenting what has been done to date, and recommending areas of potential future focus, it is hoped that this report will provide a basis for further research and informed decision making around veteran employment policy and practice in Australia into the future.





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APPENDIX 1. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)

The PRISMA 2020 Statement includes a checklist that details aspects to cover when conducting systematic literature reviews and provides reporting guidance. PRISMA also includes a flow diagram to visually present the process undertaken to identify and select studies. While the PRISMA was designed for reviews of literature on health interventions, its use has been applied to systematic reviews on other topics and it is now widely accepted and endorsed by journals, disciplines, and systematic review organisations (Page et al., 2021). For this project, we applied the PRISMA guidelines to ensure a transparent and rigorous process and consequently to deliver high quality and reliable results. Specifically, we provide a full rationale for the motives behind the review, account of the steps taken, and description of the findings.

Search process and inclusion criteria – Academic sources

To identify academic research relevant to the review, search parameters were chosen that were specific yet broad enough to capture any potentially important studies. Specifically, the search terms used were: Veteran(s), employment, unemployment, underemployment, self-employment/entrepreneurs, transition. The search string for the database searches was (“Veteran?” AND (employment OR unemployment OR underemployment OR self-employment OR entrepreneur OR transition)) with some modifications depending on the individual database search settings. Self-employment and entrepreneur were included to ensure that research relating to those who chose not to work for an organisation but run their own business were also captured.

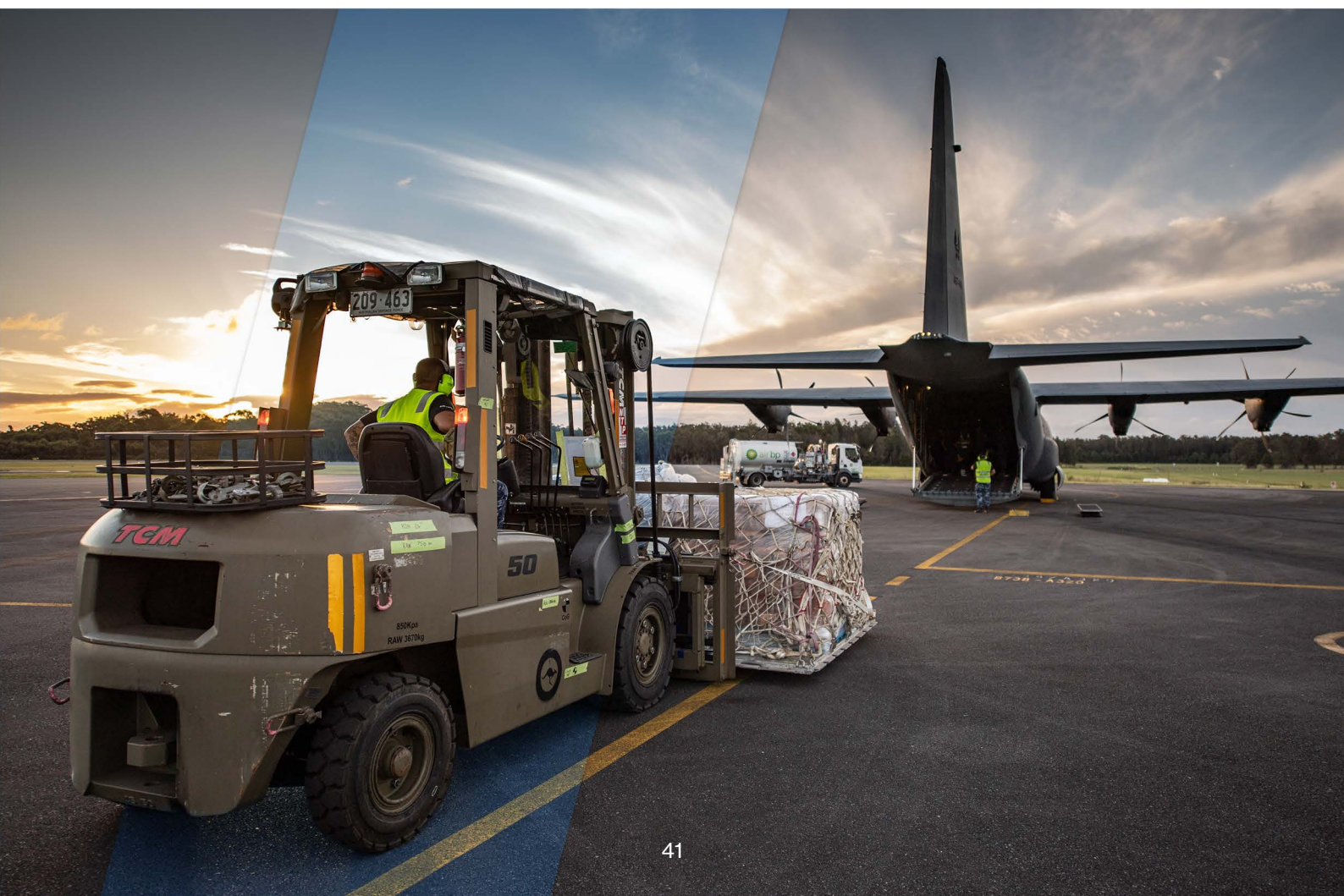
The initial database searches included a review of the keywords used in the identified papers to ensure no additional search terms had been overlooked. As a result, ‘re-employment’ was added as a further search term and searches were conducted again in each database. Because this project was interested in findings from empirical research our search excluded theoretical and conceptual papers (i.e., papers not reporting on primary data). This decision was made as the inclusion of such papers could overemphasise factors in the final analysis as these papers usually report on findings from empirical papers. Additionally, our search was limited to articles published from 1st January 2010 to 11th of May 2022, to ensure our findings captured most recent developments and findings related to veteran employment issues and experiences.

In line with best practice for systematic literature reviews and the PRISMA guidelines, four databases were used to capture academic peer-reviewed research. These databases included Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Proquest and Scopus. As DVA requested inclusion of The Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies, this journal was searched directly via the website since the journal, established in 2019, is not currently available in the four above mentioned databases used for the search.

The bibliometric information (title, authors, year, abstract) of all identified sources from the databases were imported into Endnote software, and duplicate records were removed using the ‘find duplicates’ function in Endnote. As an added step, the remaining sources were reviewed manually by one of the research members and additional duplicates, as well as sources outside scope (reviews, conference papers, editorials etc.) were identified and removed.

The remaining sources were imported from Endnote into the Covidence platform. Covidence enables a fast and easy process for multiple individuals to conduct the selection of sources in systematic literature reviews. Two researchers independently reviewed all sources in Covidence and voted on whether to include or exclude each. Any conflicts that emerged, where conflicting votes had been given, were again reviewed by one research member and a final decision was made regarding inclusion or exclusion.

To be included for full analysis the papers had to substantially cover the topic pertaining to veteran employment, unemployment, underemployment and preferably be reporting on primary research data collected in one of the Five Eyes countries (US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada). The full text record was found for each source, and the final selection of sources were imported into NVivo software for analysis.



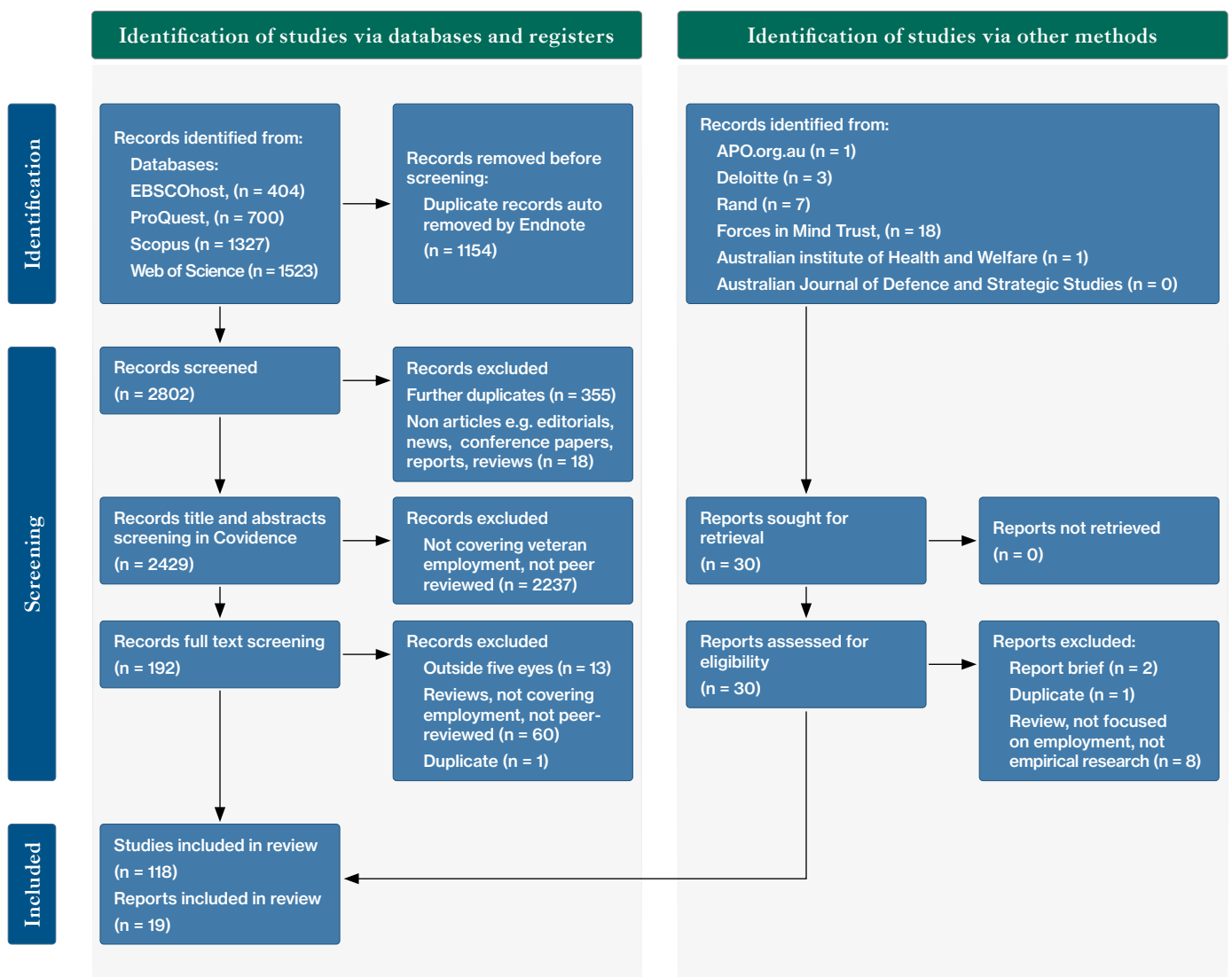
Search process and inclusion criteria – Other sources

To locate grey literature, we searched for industry reports and other reputable reports on the Google search engine as well as via the following websites: Deloitte, Rand, Forces in Mind Trust, APO.org.au, Australia Institute of Health and Welfare. The search terms used were 'veteran' and 'employment'.

To be included for full analysis the reports, similar to the academic papers, had to substantially cover a topic pertaining to veteran employment, unemployment, underemployment and preferably be reporting on primary research data collected in one of the Five Eyes countries (US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada). The full text record was found for each of the grey literature sources, and these were imported into the NVivo software for further analysis.

The process flow for the analysis is shown in Figure 4.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources



From: Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71 doi:10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: <http://www.prisma-statement.org/>

Figure 4. PRISMA flow diagram

Analysis details

The analysis of academic and non-academic sources was organised in NVivo such that discoveries were coded into separate themes to be able to report on and compare findings between the two types of sources.

To conduct the in-depth analysis of the identified academic and non-academic papers and reports, the full text PDFs were imported into NVivo software. Analysis was undertaken independently by two members of the research team with one member analysing most of the texts. Regular checking and discussion with other research team members took place to ensure consistent interpretation and analysis of the data.

Thematic content analysis was conducted on all sources in two stages. In the first stage content was coded into pre-determined themes of interest to this research based on the aims of this project. These themes included:

- Demographics: age, gender
- Employment prior to ADF
- Expectations
- Time to employment
- Length of employment
- Time since transition
- Quality of job/employment
- Civilian workforce type
- Service attributions: rank on separation, service in army/ navy/air force, length of service
- Type of separation: honourable/dishonourable, medical, administrative, voluntary/involuntary
- Support by employers: mentoring, buddy system, targeted recruitment
- Social aspect of work – impact on retention
- Type/service of employer- still serving the community

As part of the first stage any additional content relating to veteran employment not captured in pre-determined themes was found in the sources and coded into new themes.

In the second stage of analysis, the emergent themes were reviewed, and patterns identified in the data. Themes were further organised into main and sub themes in an iterative process. As part of this step and being familiar with the data, the research team noted any knowledge gaps in the developing findings. In particular, any areas relating to veteran employment that were under researched, yet to be researched, or which remain unknown were identified.

In addition to the thematic analysis, sources were categorised using cases in NVivo. Here various attributes were documented for each paper and report including:

- Country: location of research
- Method: interview, case study, survey etc.
- Methodology: quantitative, qualitative
- Date of publication
- Sample size

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF SOURCES ANALYSED

Journal Articles

- Abraham, K. M., Yosef, M., Resnick, S. G., & Zivin, K. (2017). Competitive employment outcomes among veterans in VHA therapeutic and supported employment services programs. *Psychiatric Services, 68*(9), 938-946. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201600412>
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- Bond, G. R., Al-Abdulmunem, M., Ressler, D. R., Drake, R. E., Davis, L. L., Meyer, T., Gade, D. M., Frueh, B. C., & Dickman, R. B. (2022b). Evaluation of an employment intervention for veterans transitioning from the military. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 210*(5), 321-329. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000001472>
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