

SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT FOR VETERANS: BEYOND THE FIRST JOB

March 2025

Understanding the challenges and opportunities veterans face when building long-term civilian careers.



Don't Get Lost

Survey Demographics	02
Chapter 1 – Why Veterans Hang Up the Uniform: Breaking Down the Decision to Transition	03
Chapter 2 – Discovery Phase: Job Exploration and Career Guidance	06
Chapter 3 – First Civilian Roles: Staying in Your Lane or Charting a New Course?	11
Chapter 4 – Industry Trends: Which Sectors Retain Veterans, And Which Don't	16
Chapter 5 – First Job Turnover: The Individual Factors That Drive Career Moves	20
Chapter 6 – What Keeps Veterans in Their Jobs? Purpose, Alignment, and Growth.	23
Chapter 7 – Surprising Findings	30
Chapter 8 – Hard-Earned Wisdom: What Veterans Wish They Knew Before Transitioning	38
Chapter 9 – Conclusion: The Future of Military-to-Civilian Careers	41

Executive Summary

Leaving the military isn't just about changing jobs, it's a full-blown identity shift.

And let's be honest, most transition support doesn't cut it. Too many veterans land in jobs that don't fit their skills, leadership abilities, or ambitions.

The result? Many leave their first civilian job quickly – not because they can't hack it, but because they're underutilised, undervalued, or simply in the wrong place. Employers who understand these dynamics can retain veteran talent longer, while veterans who plan their transition strategically can secure roles that fit their experience and long-term goals.

This report, based on data from 285 veterans, dives into what makes or breaks a sustainable civilian career.

Key findings? High job movement in the first few years, employers failing to make use of veteran skill sets, and structured transition support are the difference between job-hopping and long-term success.

Veterans who plan ahead and secure roles that match their expertise and aspirations have far better retention and job satisfaction. Employers that get this right don't just retain veteran talent, they unlock an untapped powerhouse of leadership, adaptability, and problem-solving.

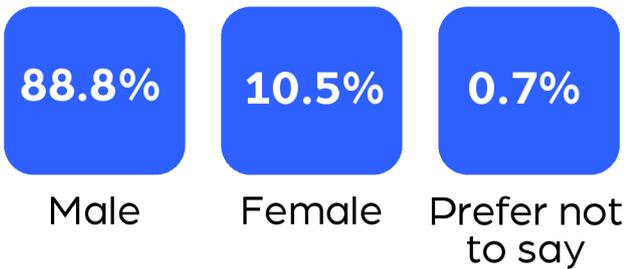
Survey Demographics

A total of 285 veterans participated in the survey, representing a broad range of experiences across military branches and career paths.

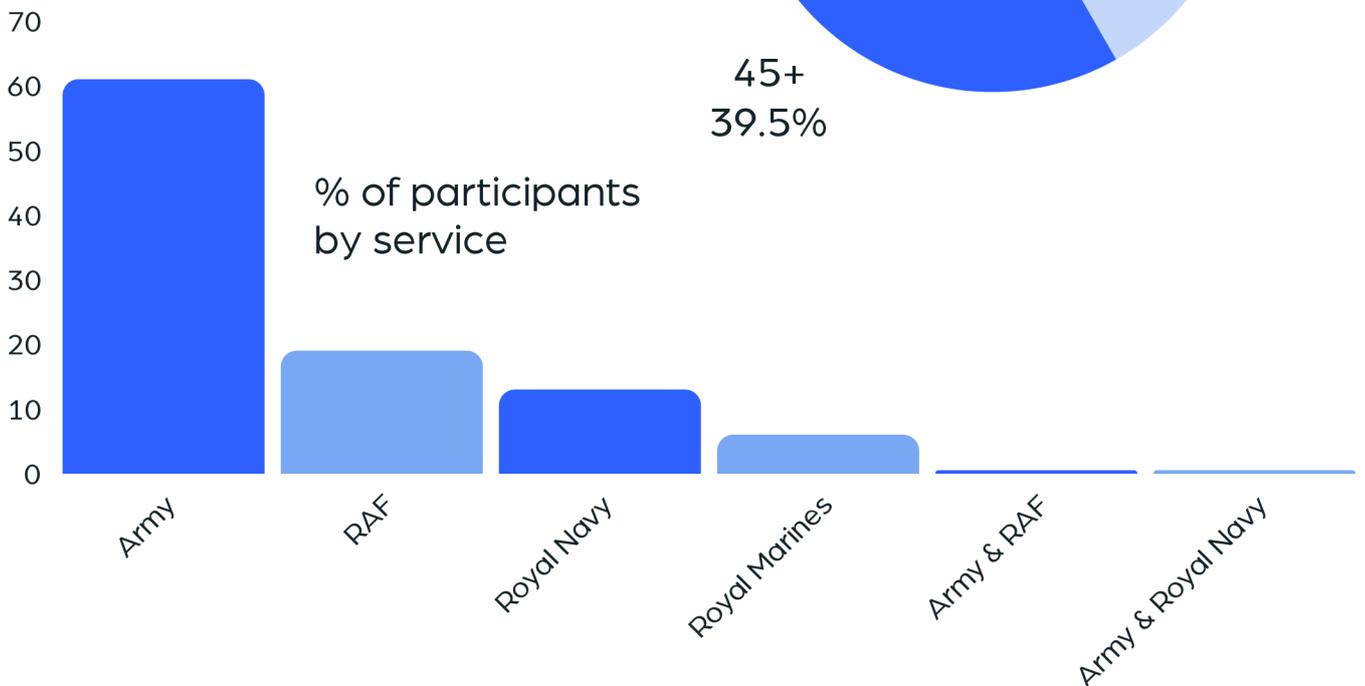
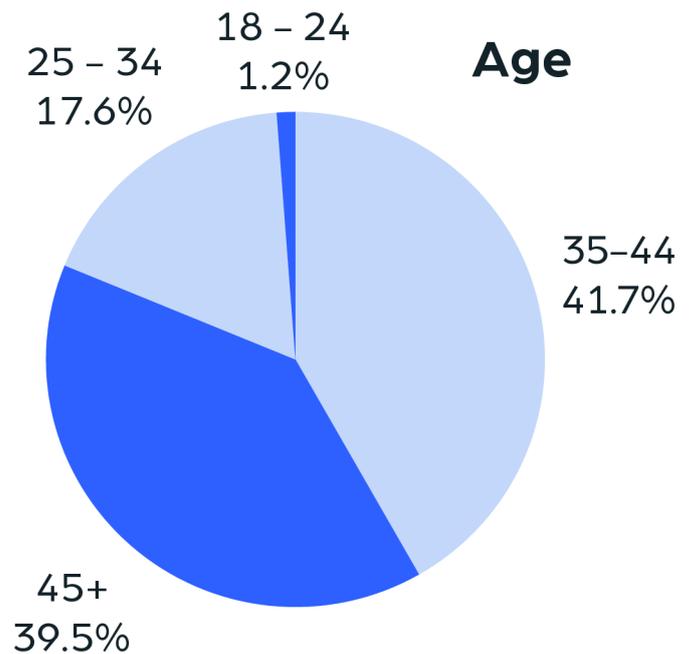
Service Duration



Gender



Age



CHAPTER ONE

Why Veterans Hang Up the Uniform: Breaking Down the Decision to Transition

Leaving the military is big, and the decision to transition is rarely made on a whim; it's driven by a mix of career ambition, family needs, and practical realities. Some leave to chase new opportunities, others for stability, and a few because their service has simply run its course.

Key Reasons for Transitioning

Interest in Career Change (21.4%)

Many service members leave because they want to explore civilian career paths, apply their skills in a new environment, or pursue further education and certifications.

Personal and Family Needs (20.9%)

The impact of military life extends beyond the individual – frequent relocations, time away from loved ones, and family health concerns push many to seek more stability.

Retirement Eligibility (11.4%)

Some veterans transition after reaching pension eligibility, securing financial stability while exploring civilian career opportunities.

Health and Wellbeing (9.5%)

Physical injuries, service-related stress, and mental health challenges such as PTSD, anxiety, and burnout make continued military service unsustainable for some.

Work-Life Balance (5.9%)

Deployments, unpredictable schedules, and operational demands lead some veterans to seek a civilian career with more predictable hours and a better work-life balance.

Financial Considerations (5.5%)

Opportunities for higher salaries or better benefits in the private sector attract some service members to transition earlier than planned.

Relocation and Deployment Fatigue (3.6%)

Constant moves and time away from home can take their toll, leading some to seek a more geographically stable career.

Interest in a New Industry (2.3%)

Some veterans leave specifically to pursue a passion in an entirely new field outside of the military.

Other Factors (<2%)

A small number of veterans cited organisational restructuring, dissatisfaction with promotion opportunities, redundancy, and involuntary medical discharge as reasons for leaving.

The Bigger Picture: It's Never Just One Reason

For most veterans, the decision to leave is a mix of personal, professional, and financial factors. It's about more than just getting a new job – it's about shaping the next phase of their life.

Employers and career transition services that understand these motivations can provide more effective support. That means offering tailored career pathways, structured transition programs, and flexible working arrangements that help veterans not just find jobs – but build meaningful careers.



CHAPTER TWO



Discovery Phase: Job Exploration and Career Guidance

How Veterans Land Their First Civvy Job

Veterans don't just pick jobs, they choose missions. Whether they're looking for stability, a fresh challenge, or something that actually makes use of their skills, their first civilian role is rarely chosen at random.

Some stick close to what they know, others dive into something new, and a fair few realise too late that their first choice was the wrong one. This section breaks down what drives those early career moves – and why some veterans get it right faster than others.

What Drives Veterans' First Career Moves?

Job Boards or Online Listings (24.1%)

Websites like Indeed and LinkedIn were a key channel for job seekers with strong digital literacy.

Aligned with Military Skills (35.0%)

Veterans sought jobs that matched their military experience, making the transition smoother.

Interest or Passion (29.1%)

Many pursued fields they were personally interested in, which correlated with higher job satisfaction.

Salary and Benefits (29.5%)

Competitive pay and benefits packages were a significant motivator.

Location and Work-Life Balance (24.5%)

Predictable hours, reduced travel, and proximity to home were key considerations.

Career Growth Opportunities (20.5%)

A clear path for advancement was highly valued, especially for those accustomed to structured military career progression.

Job Stability (20.9%)

Veterans looked for roles that provided financial security and long-term employment prospects.

Ease of Transition (18.2%)

Some veterans chose jobs that felt like a natural extension of their military experience

Training and Development Opportunities (8.6%)

A smaller percentage prioritised jobs that allowed them to gain new skills or qualifications.

Recommendation or Guidance (7.3%)

Some veterans entered a field based on recommendations from career advisors, mentors, or colleagues.

The balance of immediate needs (salary, stability) and long-term career potential shaped these decisions. But as we'll see next, not everyone enters civilian life with a watertight plan.

Career Exploration: Planning vs Pivoting

Not every veteran steps out of uniform with a rock-solid career plan:

- 49% explored multiple career paths before leaving the military.
- 31% were open to options but didn't actively research them.
- 20% knew exactly what they wanted to do from the start.

Even after landing their first job, career evolution continues. 71% of veterans we spoke to have considered switching roles in the past year, proving that career discovery doesn't stop at transition, it's an ongoing process.

Who's in Their Corner? Navigating Career Moves

Some veterans forge ahead solo, while others tap into networks for guidance. Here's where they turned for career advice, and how valuable it was:

No Guidance (40.9%)

A significant portion of veterans made career decisions independently, often leading to misalignment and lower retention rates.

Friends and Family (Various responses)

Personal connections played a role, but the effectiveness varied based on the individual's civilian workforce experience.

Colleagues and Former Service Members (Various responses)

Advice from peers who had already transitioned was often highly valuable.

Online Resources (9.1%)

Some relied on career websites, job boards, and professional forums for information.

Mentors (4.5%)

Veterans with a mentor, either military or civilian, reported better job satisfaction and engagement.

Military Career Advisors or Transition Programmes (4.5%)

Those who leveraged structured career transition resources had higher confidence and longer job tenure.

Veterans who prioritised career growth and skill alignment had a higher chance of sticking with their first job. Those who took a role purely for quick stability – without a long-term plan – were more likely to move on within the first year.

This gap in structured career guidance highlights a major issue: Without mentorship, transition programs, and proper career planning, too many veterans end up in jobs that don't fit, leading to unnecessary churn.

Key Takeaways

Veterans balance practical needs (pay, stability) with long-term goals when choosing their first job.

Nearly half actively explore different paths before settling on a direction.

A lack of career guidance is a major problem, and those who navigate transition solo struggle with alignment and retention.

Mentorship, transition programmes, and structured career planning significantly improve career fit and job satisfaction.

For veterans, career success isn't just about landing the first job, it's about finding the right one. And that takes planning, support, and a network that actually knows what they're doing.

CHAPTER THREE

First Civilian Roles: Staying in Your Lane or Charting a New Course?

The first civilian job is a major milestone – but for many veterans, it's just the first stop on a longer journey. Some take roles that closely match their military experience, while others make a complete career pivot. Neither path guarantees success on its own, it's all about the right fit, strategy, and support.

Where Do Veterans Land First?

- 37.7% Landed in roles directly tied to their military experience.
- 34.1% Jumped into a completely different field.
- 28.2% Landed somewhere in between; roles with some overlap but requiring new training.

The key takeaway? There's no 'one size fits all' transition. Whether sticking to familiar ground or exploring new terrain, having the right plan makes all the difference.

Most Common First Civilian Roles:

- Project Manager
- Service Technician
- Defence Consultant
- Senior Business Change Consultant
- Business Development Director
- Veterans Employment Advisor
- Health & Safety Advisor

Those who stayed in roles aligned with their military background often found smoother transitions, particularly in project management, logistics, and defence consultancy.

Those making a full career switch moved into areas like business development, employment services, and corporate strategy, proving that military experience is highly transferable when positioned correctly.

How Veterans Land Their First Civvy Job

Getting a foot in the door isn't just about having the right skills, it's about knowing where to look. Veterans reported the following job search methods:

Referral or Networking (33.6%)

Friends, former colleagues, and professional networks were the top job sources.

Job Boards or Online Listings (24.1%)

Websites like Indeed and LinkedIn were key channels for job seekers with strong digital literacy.

Direct Application on Company Website (11.4%)

Some veterans found roles by researching and applying directly to employer websites.

Recruiter or Staffing Agency (8.6%)

A smaller percentage found roles through recruitment firms, particularly in specialised fields.

Veteran Employment Programmes (7.7%)

Programmes designed specifically for veterans, such as transition assistance programs and veteran job fairs, provided key employment opportunities.

Military Transition Programmes (2.7%)

A smaller but still relevant group discovered their jobs through formal military transition programmes.

Social Media (1.4%)

LinkedIn and Facebook played a minor role in job discovery.

Career Services from an Educational Institution (1.4%)

Some veterans leveraged university or training programme career services.

The Takeaway?

Veterans who landed roles through networking or veteran employment programmes had the highest retention rates. Those relying on job boards or cold applications were more likely to move on quickly, reinforcing the power of targeted job searches and personal connections.

First Job vs. Staying Power: What Drives Retention?

Some veterans stick with their first civilian role, but many don't:

- 21.8% stayed for 6–12 months.
- 20.9% remained for 1–2 years.
- 18.6% stayed between 2–5 years.
- 17.3% left within 6 months.
- 12.3% are still in their first job today.
- 9.1% stayed 5+ years.

With 40% leaving within the first year and only 12% still in their first role today, it's clear that most veterans see their first job as a stepping stone, not a destination. This trial and error phase is crucial, veterans use it to gauge industry fit, workplace culture, and their long-term career goals.

Key Takeaways

First jobs aren't forever: Many veterans see them as a launchpad, not a long-term career.

Roles that align with military experience provide smoother transitions but aren't always the best fit: Veterans in these jobs had the highest retention, but career growth still played a major role in satisfaction.

Veterans who pivot into new industries are more likely to change jobs within two years: This isn't necessarily a bad thing, career exploration helps fine tune long-term fit.

Workplace culture and career growth opportunities impact retention: Veterans who land in structured, development focused roles stay longer, regardless of industry.

Networking and veteran employment programmes lead to better retention than job boards or cold applications: Having the right support from day one makes all the difference.

Finding the right fit, whether in a familiar field or a new industry, makes all the difference in career staying power. Veterans who align their roles with their long-term goals, rather than just taking the first available job, are far more likely to thrive.





CHAPTER FOUR

Industry Trends: Which Sectors Retain Veterans, And Which Don't

Veteran retention in civilian careers isn't one size fits all. Some industries offer clear career pathways, structured progression, and long-term stability, making it easier for veterans to stay. Others see high turnover, as veterans struggle with career fit, workplace culture, or a lack of professional growth.

Understanding these patterns can help veterans make smarter career moves, and help employers build stronger veteran talent pipelines.

Industry Breakdown for First Civilian Jobs:

Veterans transition into a broad range of industries, but some attract more than others:

- Aerospace & Defence – 14.1%
- Information Technology – 11.8%
- Transportation & Logistics – 8.6%
- Banking & Financial Services – 8.2%
- Construction & Real Estate – 7.3%
- Education – 5.5%
- Telecommunications – 4.5%
- Retail & E-commerce – 4.1%
- Energy & Utilities – 3.6%
- Manufacturing – 2.7%
- Healthcare – 2.3%
- Other industries (Legal services, insurance, hospitality, pharmaceuticals) – Smaller percentages

These figures highlight a preference for industries where leadership, technical expertise, and problem solving skills are valued. But getting in is one thing, staying is another.

Retention by Industry:

Not all industries provide the same level of career stability for veterans:

Aerospace & Defence (Highest Retention)

Clear career pathways, structured roles, and a culture that values military experience make this industry a natural fit.

Banking & Financial Services (Strong Retention)

Veterans thrive here due to structured training programmes and the demand for leadership and risk management skills.

IT & Technology (Moderate Retention)

While many veterans enter the tech sector, those without certifications or struggling with cultural shifts experience higher turnover.

Transportation & Logistics (Lowest Retention)

Despite transferable operational skills, career progression is often slow, leading to dissatisfaction and frequent job changes.

The trend is clear: Industries with structured onboarding, defined career growth, and military aligned skills tend to retain veterans longer. In contrast, industries that lack progression opportunities or have stark cultural mismatches see higher turnover.

Key Takeaways

Industries with structured onboarding and professional development tend to retain veterans longer: Veterans who enter fields with clear career pathways, such as aerospace, banking, and IT, are more likely to stay.

Military skill alignment matters, but it's not everything: While industries like aerospace and defence naturally attract veterans, structured career growth and workplace culture have a bigger impact on long-term retention.

Slow career progression leads to high turnover. Fields like transportation and logistics, where career advancement is limited, see veterans move on quickly.

Cultural fit plays a major role in retention. Some industries embrace military experience, while others require a bigger adjustment, veterans who struggle with civilian workplace expectations are more likely to leave.

Employers who actively support veteran hires see better retention: Companies that invest in onboarding, skills translation, and mentorship programmes keep veteran talent longer.

CHAPTER FIVE

First Job Turnover: The Individual Factors That Drive Career Moves

In the previous section, we looked at which industries retain veterans and which see high turnover. But industry trends only tell part of the story. Veterans don't leave their first civilian job just because of the sector they're in, they leave because of career stagnation, cultural mismatches, and a lack of support.

For many, the first civilian job isn't the final destination, it's a testing ground. Some quickly realise they're in the wrong field, others find themselves in a dead end role, and many struggle with workplace culture shifts. The result? High turnover in the first two years.

This section explores the individual reasons behind first job turnover, how career support (or the lack of it) plays a role, and what employers are getting wrong.

What Drives Veterans' First Career Moves

Veterans don't just pick jobs, they choose missions that fit their skills, priorities, and future goals. When selecting their first civilian role, the biggest factors were:

Aligned with Military Skills (35.0%)

Veterans sought jobs that matched their military experience, making the transition smoother.

Interest or Passion (29.1%)

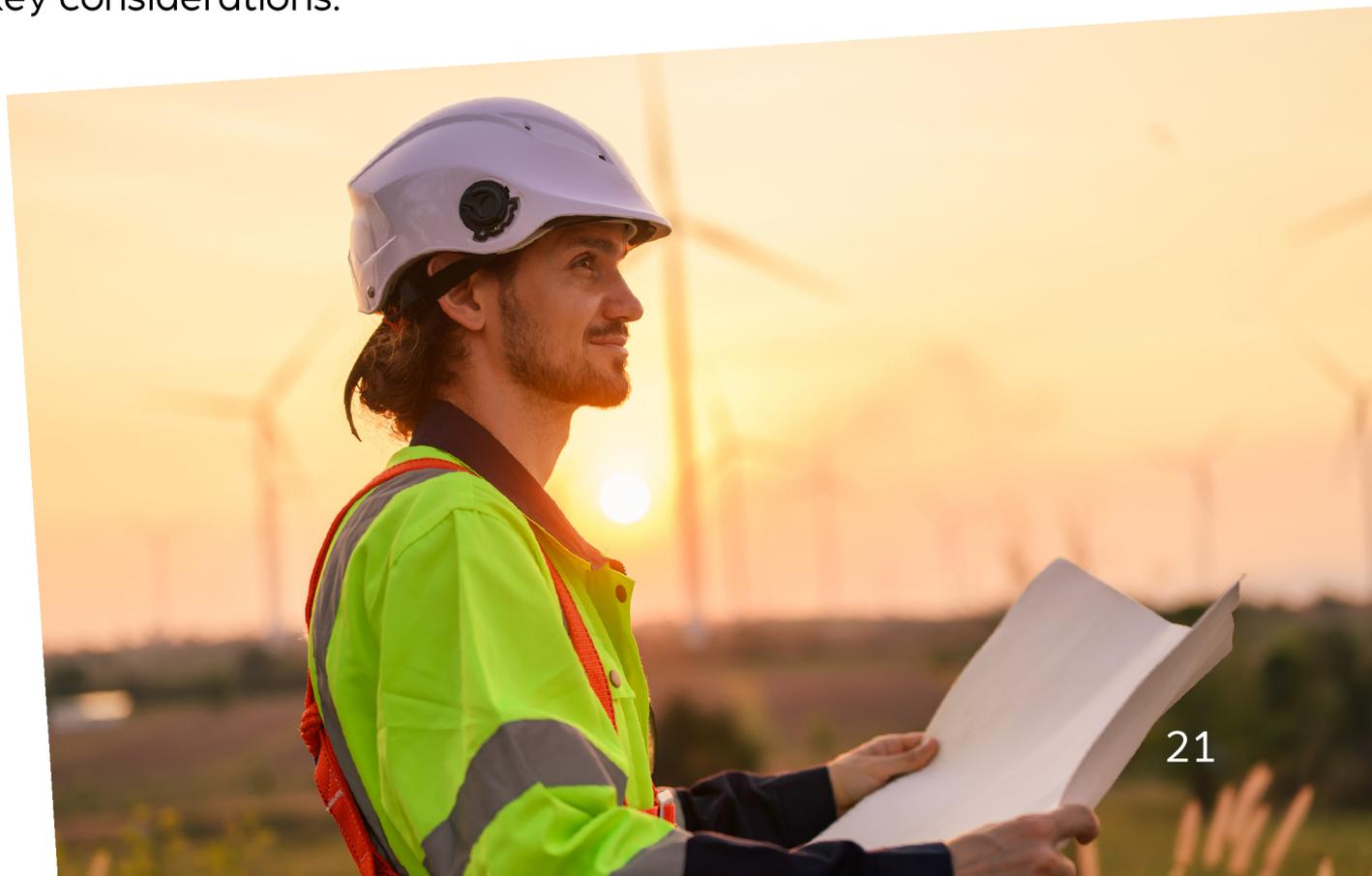
Many pursued fields they were personally interested in, which correlated with higher job satisfaction.

Salary and Benefits (29.5%)

Competitive pay and benefits packages were a significant motivator.

Location and Work-Life Balance (24.5%)

Predictable hours, reduced travel, and proximity to home were key considerations.



Career Growth Opportunities (20.5%)

A clear path for advancement was highly valued, especially for those accustomed to structured military career progression.

Job Stability (20.9%)

Veterans looked for roles that provided financial security and long-term employment prospects.

Ease of Transition (18.2%)

Some veterans chose jobs that felt like a natural extension of their military experience.

Training and Development Opportunities (8.6%)

A smaller percentage prioritised jobs that allowed them to gain new skills or qualifications.

Recommendation or Guidance (7.3%)

Some veterans entered a field based on recommendations from career advisors, mentors, or colleagues.

These findings suggest that veterans balance immediate needs (income, stability) with long-term career growth and skill alignment when choosing their first civilian job.



CHAPTER SIX

What Keeps Veterans in Their Jobs? Purpose, Alignment, and Growth.

In the previous section, we explored why veterans leave their first civilian job – career stagnation, cultural mismatches, and a lack of structured support. But what about those who stay? What keeps veterans engaged, motivated, and committed to a long-term civilian career?

For many veterans, staying in a job isn't just about salary, it's about purpose, alignment, and growth. The right job offers more than just a paycheck; it provides a challenge, a sense of impact, and a clear career trajectory.

This section explores the factors that drive long-term job satisfaction and retention, the challenges that still cause veterans to leave good roles, and what employers can do to ensure they're not just hiring veterans, but keeping them.

What Drives Job Satisfaction and Retention?

On the whole, veterans seem reasonably satisfied with their roles.

- 61.8% rated their job satisfaction as 4 or 5 (Satisfied/Very Satisfied)
- 22.3% felt neutral about their role.
- 14.5% reported dissatisfaction

But what is the reason for this?

Work-Life Balance (65.5%)

Having a healthy balance between work and personal life was the most cited reason for job satisfaction.

Challenging and Engaging Work (56.8%)

Many veterans found satisfaction in intellectually or technically demanding roles.

Competitive Compensation & Benefits (51.8%)

Salary and financial incentives played a significant role in retention.

Company Culture & Values (40.0%)

Veterans were more likely to stay if their employer's values aligned with their own.

Purpose and Impact (41.8%)

Making a meaningful contribution was an important motivator.

Career Growth Opportunities (38.2%)

Veterans value clear paths for advancement.

Supportive Leadership & Team (38.6%)

A strong team environment and leadership were crucial to job satisfaction.

Job Stability (31.4%)

Feeling secure in their role influenced retention.

The Takeaway?

Veterans don't just want a job; they want a career that challenges them, supports their growth, and provides a sense of purpose.

Why Some Stay Longer than Others:

Veterans who landed in well structured environments with clear growth paths reported higher satisfaction and longer retention.

- Veterans whose civilian roles matched their military experience had 40% higher retention rates.
- Structured onboarding increased satisfaction by 42%.
- Industries with strong career pathways saw higher retention:
 - Aerospace & Defence – 55% retention
 - Banking/Finance – 50% retention
 - Technology – 45% retention
- Access to mentorship and career development increased retention by up to 55%.

For employers, this highlights a simple truth: structured onboarding, skill recognition, and career progression aren't just "nice to have" they're mission-critical for veteran retention.

Negative Factors Leading to Churn and Dissatisfaction

Not all veterans who leave do so because they're unhappy. Even those in decent roles with good pay and benefits sometimes walk away because of career misalignment, leadership challenges, or cultural differences.

Challenges That Led to Lower Job Satisfaction and Retention

Communication Styles (66.5%)

Veterans found civilian workplace communication different from the military, affecting satisfaction.

Lack of Purpose (50.0%)

Many struggled to find meaning in their work.

Team Dynamics & Leadership Differences (49.5%)

Adjusting to civilian team structures was challenging.

Pace of Work (48.6%)

The slower or less urgent pace in some workplaces was frustrating.

Workplace Structure & Hierarchy (45.0%)

Many found civilian work environments less structured than they were accustomed to.

Limited Career Progression (38.2%)

A lack of clear advancement paths lowered retention.

Underutilisation of Military Skills

Veterans whose leadership skills were underused had 52% lower retention rates.

What Predicts Long-Term Retention?

Some veterans stay longer than others – but why? The data shows clear predictors of who stays and who moves on.

Confidence at Transition (64% correlation with retention)

Veterans who entered their first role confidently were 2.5x more likely to stay beyond two years.

Career Growth Opportunities (55% correlation)

Those without a clear path forward were more likely to leave.

Recognition of Military Experience (52% correlation)

Veterans who felt valued for their military skills had much higher retention rates.

Work-Life Balance (48% correlation)

A manageable schedule significantly improved long-term retention.

The message here is simple: Confidence, career growth, skill recognition, and work-life balance all determine whether a veteran stays or moves on.



Key Takeaways

Veterans stay in jobs that offer clear career progression and skill development: Without opportunities to grow, even satisfied veterans will look elsewhere.

Work-life balance is the biggest driver of long-term job satisfaction: Veterans value structured work schedules, predictable demands, and personal time as much as salary.

Strong leadership and a mission-driven culture increase retention: Veterans thrive in environments where expectations are clear, leadership is competent, and teamwork is strong.

Recognition of military skills keeps veterans engaged: Employers who actively translate and utilise veteran skill sets – especially leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability – see higher retention.

Structured onboarding, mentorship, and career support improve long-term retention: Veterans who feel supported in their transition are more likely to stay and grow within an organisation.

Veterans don't just stay in jobs, they stay in careers where they feel valued, challenged, and have a clear path forward.

Employers who create structured career pathways and recognise veteran talent aren't just keeping employees, they're building future leaders.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Surprising Findings

Veterans hear a lot of advice about their career transition: stick to what you know, chase the highest salary, don't leave a job too soon. But does any of it actually hold up? Our data tells a different story.

It turns out that some of the most commonly held assumptions about veteran career success don't match reality. From skill underutilisation to industry mismatches, salary satisfaction, and even the best time to leave a job, the truth about veteran employment is more complex than it seems.

This section breaks down the unexpected patterns in veteran career transitions – what actually works, what doesn't, and what veterans should rethink.

The 'Too Qualified' Paradox

Decades of leadership, strategic planning, and problem-solving experience should make veterans highly sought after in civilian roles. So why do so many veterans feel underutilised?

Our data reveals a disconnect between seniority, job satisfaction, and retention:

Junior Ranks

35% report skill underutilisation, with an early leave rate of 54%

SNCOs

48% feel their expertise is gathering dust, but satisfaction sits at 3.78/5 with a 41% early leave rate.

Officers

62% struggle with underutilisation but maintain better retention, with a satisfaction rating of 3.70/5 and an early leave rate of just 25%.

The Paradox?

- Officers report lower job satisfaction than SNCOs but they stay in their jobs longer.
- Junior ranks struggle the most with underutilisation and career fit.
- Despite feeling underused, officers are less likely to leave, likely due to greater job security, higher pay, and fewer equivalent-level opportunities outside the military.

For many veterans, the challenge isn't finding a job, it's finding one that actually uses their skills.

Industry Switcher Vs Aligner

A direct match between military and civilian roles doesn't always guarantee better outcomes.

While it seems logical that transitioning into a field closely related to military experience would lead to better satisfaction and retention, our data suggests a mixed result:

- Direct Match: Satisfaction 3.89/5, retention 42%
- Partial Match: Satisfaction 3.56/5, retention 35%
- New Industry: Satisfaction 3.68/5, retention 41%

Surprisingly, those who completely switch industries often outperform partial match cases in both satisfaction and retention. This suggests that while familiarity with an industry might provide an initial advantage, a fresh start in a new field may be more rewarding in the long run.

The Salary–Satisfaction Inverse

One of the biggest assumptions about career transitions is that higher salaries lead to greater job satisfaction. However, our data challenges this assumption by showing that some of the highest-paying industries report lower satisfaction scores:

Banking (highest pay)

Satisfaction 3.83/5

Technology

Satisfaction 3.69/5

Healthcare (lower pay)

Satisfaction 4.20/5

Education (lowest pay)

Satisfaction 3.50/5

The exception?

Insurance sector

Where veterans reported both high pay and the highest satisfaction rating

4.50/5

The takeaway?

Chasing the highest salary doesn't always lead to greater job satisfaction. Veterans should prioritise job alignment, purpose, and work–life balance over pay alone.



The Second Job Success Rate

Leaving a job quickly is often seen as a failure. But what if it's actually a smart move?

Our analysis suggests that early career shifts often lead to greater long-term satisfaction:

- Left within 6 months? Current satisfaction 3.74/5
- Left within 1–2 years? Current satisfaction 3.96/5
- Still in first job? Current satisfaction 3.30/5

The takeaway?

Veterans who leave their first job early often end up more satisfied in the long run. The first job isn't the destination, it's the first waypoint. Moving on quickly can help veterans refine their career path and find the right long-term fit.

The Culture Shock Spectrum by Branch

Military branch plays a significant role in how well veterans adapt to civilian workplace culture. Some branches experience a steeper transition curve than others:

Royal Marines

Report the highest cultural challenge (72%) but those who persist report better long-term career outcomes.

RAF

Find the transition easier (58% cultural adaptation rate) but report lower satisfaction scores overall.

These findings suggest that the intensity of culture shock does not necessarily predict lower long-term satisfaction. Instead, it appears that veterans from highly structured environments (e.g., the Marines) develop resilience that benefits them over time.

The 'Sweet Spot' Theory

Does timing matter when it comes to career satisfaction? Our data says yes.

6–10 years of service:

Satisfaction 4.03/5 (the golden zone for transition)

0–5 years:

Satisfaction 3.68/5 (still adapting to civilian expectations)

20+ years:

Satisfaction 3.65/5 (difficulty adapting to non-hierarchical environments)

The Takeaway?

Veterans who transition mid-career (6–10 years of service) report the highest job satisfaction. Early leavers (0–5 years) are still adapting to civilian expectations, while longer-serving veterans (20+ years) often struggle with adapting to non-hierarchical environments.

The Network Effect

The biggest career advantage for veterans isn't just their skill set—it's their network.

Veterans who transition into companies with established veteran populations experience significantly better outcomes:

- 45% higher satisfaction rates
- 58% better retention
- Fewer "in the military, we used to..." moments in meetings

These findings highlight the importance of leveraging veteran networks and communities when transitioning to civilian employment.



Employer Support Makes a Difference

Veterans who had structured transition support reported significantly better outcomes:

- 40% higher retention rates
- 45% greater job satisfaction
- 58% of veterans who received employer support recommended their company to other veterans

Companies that provide mentorship, networking, and professional development resources retain veteran employees at much higher rates.

The takeaway?

Employer support isn't optional, it's a retention multiplier. The companies that invest in onboarding, career progression, and structured veteran programmes don't just attract veterans, they keep them.

CHAPTER EIGHT



Hard-Earned Wisdom: What Veterans Wish They Knew Before Transitioning

Veterans who've successfully navigated the transition from military to civilian careers shared key lessons and advice for those preparing to make the leap. Across the board, a few themes stood out.

1. Start Planning Early

The veterans who transitioned most smoothly were the ones who prepared ahead of time. Their advice:

- Research industries and roles before leaving service.

- Gain civilian work experience through networking or internships before transitioning.
- Take full advantage of transition assistance programmes and military career support services.

2. Be Clear on Career Goals

Many emphasised the need for career direction before hitting the job market.

Key Advice:

- Identify industries or roles that align with both military skills and personal interests.
- Set realistic expectations, starting positions may not match previous rank, but long-term growth is possible.
- Understand that civilian career paths are often less structured than military promotions.

3. Leverage Your Network

Networking was one of the most recommended career strategies.

Veterans advised:

- Connecting with veteran employment groups, LinkedIn networks, and industry professionals.
- Seeking out mentors, veteran alumni, or career coaches for guidance.
- Looking for veteran-friendly employers and organisations that actively support ex-military personnel.

4. Upskill and Certify Early

Bridging the gap between military experience and civilian job requirements often requires additional training or certifications. Veterans recommended:

- Earning professional certifications relevant to the chosen career (e.g., project management, cybersecurity, technical trades).
- Taking civilian courses to better understand workplace culture and expectations.
- Building soft skills like communication, leadership in non-military settings, and business acumen.

5. Be Prepared for Culture Shifts

Adjusting to civilian workplace culture was one of the biggest challenges. Veterans suggested:

- Expecting differences in communication, leadership styles, and work pace.
- Avoiding frustration when encountering different work ethics or hierarchies.
- Learning to self-promote and advocate for career progression, as opportunities are often not handed out the way they are in military structures.

CHAPTER NINE



Conclusion: The Future of Military-to-Civilian Careers

Key Takeaways

Early career planning and networking improve long-term success. Veterans who plan ahead, leverage professional networks, and seek mentorship experience a smoother transition and higher retention.

Career alignment significantly impacts retention. Veterans in roles that match their military experience stay 2.5x longer than those in unrelated fields. Finding the right fit from the start is crucial.

Mentorship, coaching, and structured career support are game-changers. Veterans with access to mentors, career development programmes, and strong peer networks report higher job satisfaction and retention.

Employers play a critical role in veteran retention. Structured onboarding, leadership pathways, and cultural adaptation support reduce turnover and improve job engagement

Leaving early isn't failure, it's career refinement. Veterans who switch roles within the first two years often report higher long-term satisfaction than those who stay in the wrong fit.

Veterans thrive in workplaces that recognise and utilise their skills. Leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability are core strengths, but many veterans feel underutilised. Employers that actively translate military skills into meaningful roles see the best retention outcomes.

Veteran networks improve job success. Veterans who join companies with established veteran communities experience higher satisfaction, retention, and cultural fit.

The bottom line?

Transitioning is a mission that requires preparation, strategy, and adaptability. The veterans who succeed are the ones who plan ahead, lean on their network, and actively shape their next career move.

Closing Remarks

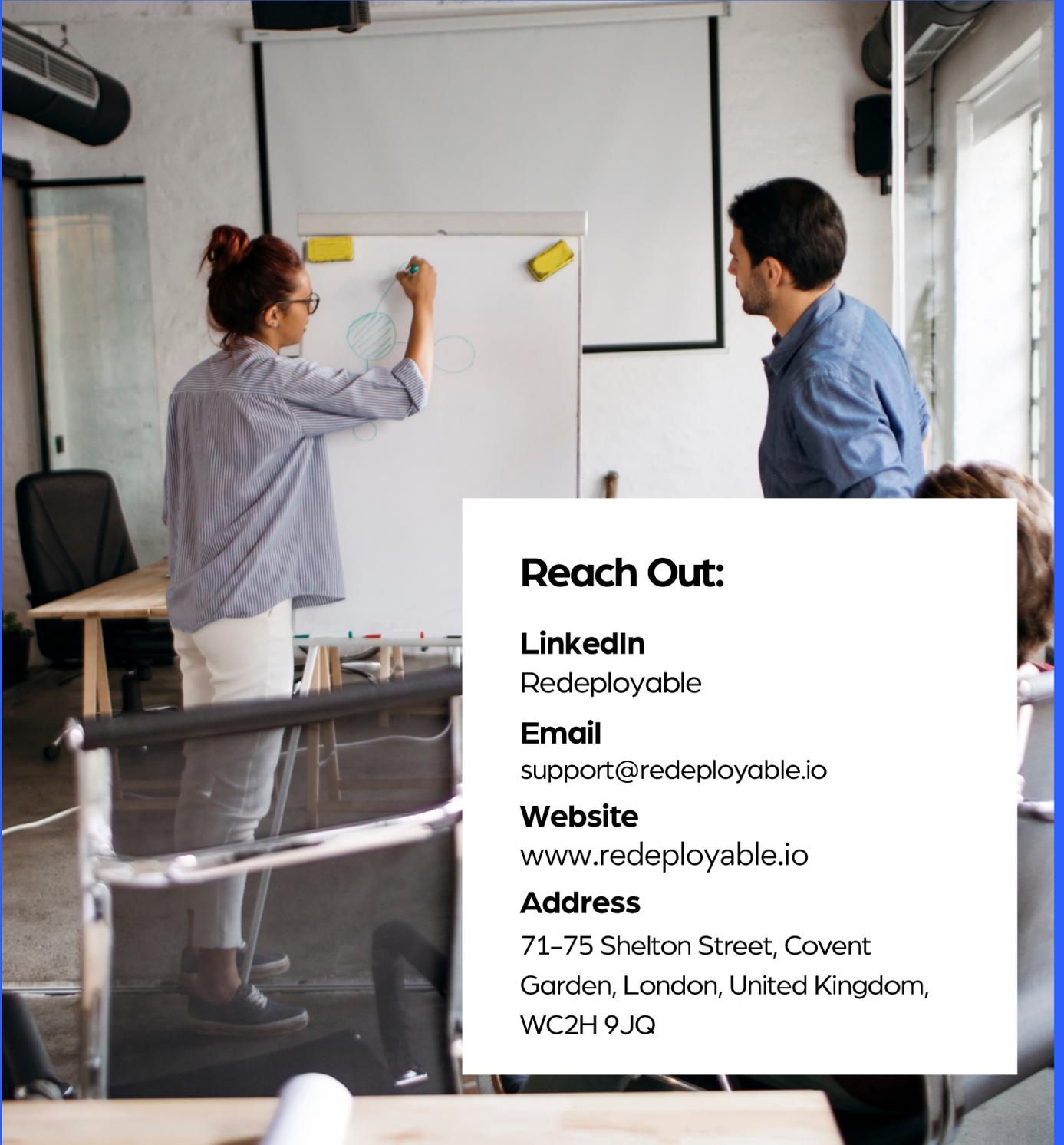
At Redeployable, we believe that transitioning out of the military isn't just about landing a job, it's about building a career that lasts. Too many veterans step into roles that don't fully utilise their skills, leading to frustration, job-hopping, and untapped potential. But it doesn't have to be this way.

The data is clear: career success for veterans isn't just about what they bring to the table, it's about how well employers and support systems help them translate their skills into meaningful careers. Veterans who align their career paths with their experience, seek mentorship, and enter structured workplaces with clear growth pathways are far more likely to thrive.

Similarly, employers that actively invest in veteran talent don't just improve retention, they gain highly capable, adaptable employees. The most successful organisations are those that go beyond just hiring veterans. They recognise their leadership potential, provide structured onboarding, create career progression pathways, and foster veteran communities within their workforce.

The future of military-to-civilian employment needs to move beyond basic job placement. Veterans don't need just any job; they need the right job. We must build a system where veterans are strategically guided toward careers that utilise their expertise, provide clear advancement paths, and offer meaningful work. By bridging the gap between veteran potential and employer readiness, we don't just improve career transitions, we create stronger businesses, a more engaged workforce, and a future where veterans don't just survive in civilian careers, they excel.

Surprised by anything you've read? Get in touch.



Reach Out:

LinkedIn

Redeployable

Email

support@redeployable.io

Website

www.redeployable.io

Address

71-75 Shelton Street, Covent
Garden, London, United Kingdom,
WC2H 9JQ