

## VETERANS SAY FINDING A JOB HARDEST PART OF RETURNING TO CIVILIAN LIFE



Even though the unemployment rate has dropped a bit for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, a brand new survey shows that over two-thirds of the post-9/11 generation feels that acquiring a job is the most difficult challenge in their lives while transitioning back to being a civilian. The study, called the Veterans' Employment Challenges Study, said that 44 percent of the respondents said they are not prepared to transition to life as a civilian, according to the Washington Post. The study also found that those veterans who face mental-health or physical problems are twice as likely as other veterans to indicate that they are not prepared to transition to a civilian. Of those who said they were not prepared for the transition, half of them said they need more technical training or education. In conjunction with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the study was operated by Prudential Financial. In July, the unemployment rate for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan fell to 8.9 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate was 12.4 percent in July of 2011 and has dropped for six straight months. The unemployment rate is not too much higher than the country's unemployment rate of 8.3 percent. The chief policy officer for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Tom Tarantino, said that unemployment is still a problem for veterans post-9/11. "We are noting a positive trend, but the underlying problems haven't yet been fixed," he said. The study took place on the internet and it questioned 2,453 veterans and occurred in December of January. The survey took place prior to the drop in the unemployment rate for veterans. "We don't train people very well in how to be civilians again," Tarantino said. The respondents in the study said that their second largest issue is telling employers how their military experiences can be used in employment in the civilian sector. In 2011, a new law called The Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act was signed. It requires a study by the Labor Department to find out how military skills can be translated into civilian skills. It also requires processes for civilian licenses and certification for military skills to be made quicker. Of the respondents, 58 percent said that they worry when it comes to translating their skills to the business world. Half of the respondents said that they are concerned that supervisors who are not veterans might not understand the military. "Among the challenges this research confirms for employers and veterans is the need to bridge the perception gap between the skills veterans offer and what employers are looking for," Raymond Weeks said. Weeks is the vice president for veterans initiative at Prudential Financial.