



# Employer Perceptions, Preferences, and Hiring Practices Related to U.S. Military Personnel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



University of Phoenix Research Institute<sup>SM</sup>

## STUDY OVERVIEW

**Purpose:** To better understand employer perceptions, preferences, and hiring practices regarding military personnel, and to provide useful information to those helping service personnel transition into civilian work.

**Sample:** 831 participants, employed as managers or higher and regularly involved in employee recruiting and hiring.

**Methodology:** Online survey with closed-ended questions.

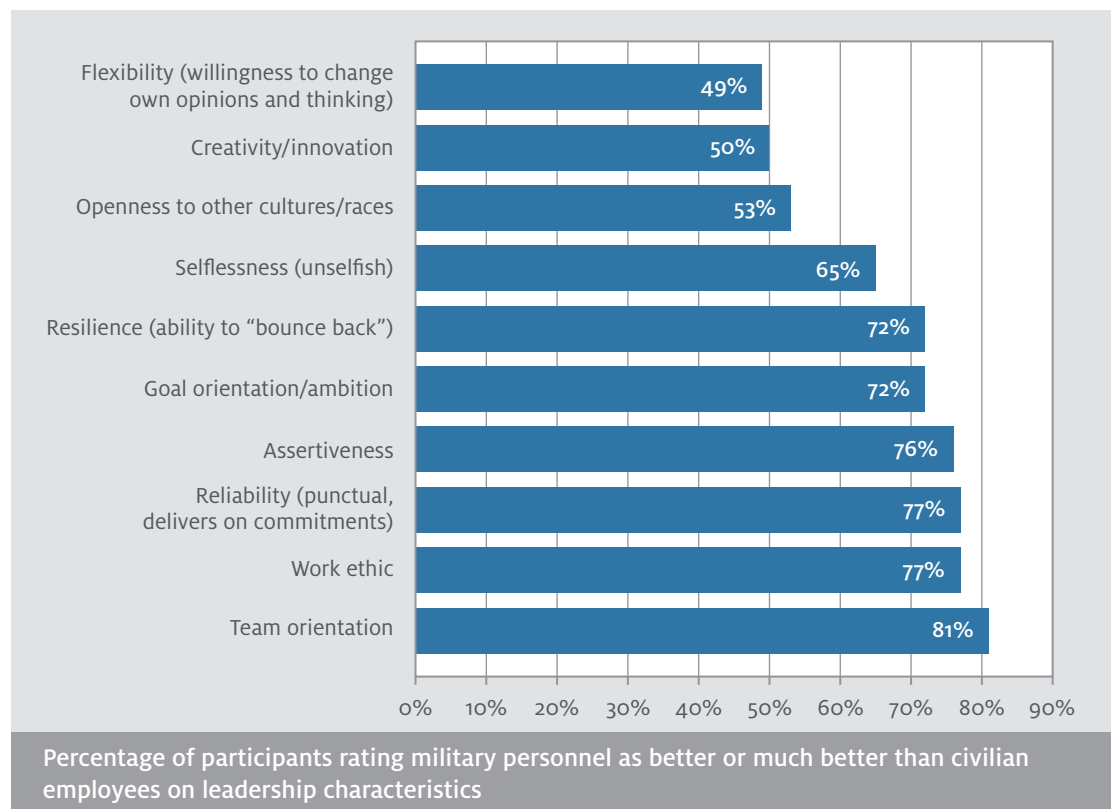
## Easing veterans' entry into the workforce

Military personnel face many barriers when competing for and transitioning into civilian jobs. **Unemployment rates for recent veterans are significantly higher than rates for other veterans and the civilian population.** Reasons for the disparity are diverse: battlefield injuries, difficulty translating military experience to employers, insufficient transition assistance, employer concerns about job absences and calls to duty, and negative stereotypes about veterans. As veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come home, they will need considerable amounts of career guidance and training. **To ensure that such coaching guidance and training succeed, advisers to service members who seek employment will need a better understanding of employers' criteria for success.**

## The challenge of reducing military joblessness

**Limited empirical research exists on specific success criteria for military personnel transitioning into a civilian career,** and most literature on how employers perceive military applicants is anecdotal. Data are needed regarding (a) the positive and negative beliefs employers have about military personnel that could affect hiring, (b) critical work characteristics/skills that returning service personnel can use to distinguish themselves from other potential hires, and (c) the value and impact of higher-level education. **Educators and those providing educational and career guidance to military personnel need current information to better help military personnel understand the perceptions, preferences, and hiring practices of civilian employers.**

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## Read the Full Report

Download **Employer Perceptions, Preferences, and Hiring Practices Related to U.S. Military Personnel**, by Michael Zia Mian, Ph.D., at [www.phoenix.edu/institute](http://www.phoenix.edu/institute).

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## Method

An online survey was sent to a random sample of more than 20,000 employers across multiple industries. To narrow the sample to only those who met the population criteria, screening questions were included at the beginning of the survey. **Completed surveys were received from 831 individuals who were employed as managers or in higher-level positions, and who were regularly involved in employee recruiting and hiring across a broad range of industries.**

Survey questions focused on five themes: the affective/emotional response of employers toward the military, their concerns about hiring military personnel, how valuable and transferable military leadership experience is to civilian leadership jobs, how employees with military backgrounds compare with civilian employees on critical work characteristics and attributes, and how higher-level education is perceived by employers of military personnel.

## Results

- **Employers value military experience highly and view it positively.**
- The leadership skills of military personnel are highly valued and transferable to civilian leadership jobs.
- **When compared with civilian employees, veterans, Reservists, and National Guard members were frequently perceived as being better able to demonstrate a wide variety of work-related characteristics** (e.g., teamwork, reliability, work ethic).
- A college degree is perceived to add significant value to applicants with military experience; however, majoring in a specific area is not critical for career success.
- Although civilian employers greatly value military character, **having transferable skills and higher education could be critical to military personnel in overcoming concerns employers have during the hiring process.**

## Next Steps for Stakeholders

- In a highly competitive labor market, **military personnel need to become adept at effectively translating and communicating their experience, training, and leadership skills, as well as other qualities, to potential employers.** They should also be strongly encouraged to pursue a college degree.
- Service members' job search efforts should focus on industries and companies that have pro-military hiring policies and a direct need for military-trained personnel.
- **For organizations competing for high-caliber talent and seeking a competitive edge, military-trained personnel offer character and personal traits that can reduce labor-related overhead and boost productivity.**

**The takeaway:** The literature on leadership continuously cites the urgent need on the part of U.S. companies and organizations to find talented employees who will successfully guide them into the future. This study's findings on the value of military leadership experience support the literature and indicate the need for civilian entities to capitalize on the skills that armed forces personnel can offer. Leadership skills learned in training and on the battlefield can equip military personnel with a significant ability to lead, execute under pressure, and rapidly adapt and innovate in response to the challenges of the 21st-century workplace.

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