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*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

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1. REPORT DATE <b>2012</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2012 to 00-00-2012</b>			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Unemployment Among Post-9/11 Veterans and Military Spouses After the Economic Downturn</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>RAND Corporation, National Defense Research Institute, 1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA, 90407-2138</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>12</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

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# Unemployment Among Post-9/11 Veterans and Military Spouses After the Economic Downturn

Paul Heaton and Heather Krull

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Since the onset of the economic downturn, policymakers and the public have expressed renewed concern over veterans who have served honorably since 9/11—in some cases experiencing multiple overseas deployments—but have found it difficult to obtain civilian employment after completing their military service. In recent years, legislators and executive branch departments have proposed a variety of programs aimed at improving the jobs outlook for recent veterans.<sup>1</sup> These efforts have been motivated in part by a perception in some quarters that veterans face substantial obstacles to finding civilian employment after they leave military service. Policymakers have also expressed concern regarding high unemployment among spouses of currently serving military personnel, with a rate reported to be as high as 26 percent in some quarters.<sup>2</sup>

An important input into policymaking is a clear understanding of how successful military spouses are at finding employment and how veterans fare economically after they exit military service. One common approach for assessing the performance of these groups in the job market is to compare their unemployment rates to those of civilian spouses and nonveterans. Numerous recent media discussions of the employment situation of veterans and military spouses have included

such comparisons.<sup>3</sup> However, important differences in demographic characteristics between veterans, military spouses, and civilians counsel caution in comparing raw employment statistics across these populations.

## How Similar Are Post-9/11 Veterans and Their Spouses to the Civilian Population?

To illustrate these differences in demographic characteristics, we analyzed data from the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a nationally representative survey of approximately two million U.S. households conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. Designed to replace the decennial Census long form, the ACS collects information about basic demographics and housing and economic characteristics of the U.S. population. For this analysis, we obtained the ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files for 2010,<sup>4</sup> which include individual ACS survey responses that have been processed to preserve respondent confidentiality.

For those interested in employment issues for veterans and military dependents, the ACS offers several advantages over other surveys, such as the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is the monthly survey of approximately 50,000 U.S. households conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and used to produce headline unemployment numbers. The ACS's comparatively large sample size affords researchers the opportunity to consider not only the overall veteran or spouse population but also specific subpopulations, such as the recently discharged or

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The authors express their appreciation to Beth Asch, Jim Hosek, Carrie Farmer, Marco Angrisani, and Amalia Miller who provided helpful suggestions and comments on this draft.

<sup>1</sup> Included among these are the Veterans Employment Initiative initiated by Executive Order 13518 in 2009, the programs contained within the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (Public Law 112-56), and numerous programs run by individual agencies, such as the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service program and the Department of Veterans Affairs' VetSuccess program.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ourmilitary.mil, "Employment Resources for Our Military Community," undated; or Joining Forces, "Maintaining the Momentum—Helping Military Spouses Find Good Jobs in 2012," Washington, D.C.: The White House, January 20, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see "Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans Struggle to Find Jobs," *Washington Post*, March 11, 2011; "Unemployment Rate Higher for Veterans Than for Non-Veterans," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 29, 2011; "Making the Sale: How to Deal with Unemployment Among Veterans," *TIME*, August 18, 2011; and "Military Spouses Face Especially Grim Job Prospects," NPR, July 28, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of this writing, this was the most recent available year of ACS microdata.

**Relative to civilians, post-9/11 veterans are younger, more likely to be African American, and more likely to have college experience.**

the husbands of military wives. For example, there are nearly 5,000 military spouse respondents in the 2010 ACS, whereas the CPS typically contains only a few hundred military spouses in the monthly survey. Further, the ACS has a response rate of 98 percent and samples both household units and group quarters, including such places as college residence halls, correctional facilities, and military barracks,<sup>5</sup> so it is highly likely to be representative of the target population. This is less likely to be true of voluntary surveys conducted by the military or the federal government that have lower response rates and may suffer from nonresponse bias, where the answers of respondents may differ from the answers that would have been given by those who did not respond.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1 compares the demographic characteristics of post-9/11 veterans to those of the civilian

population at large. Post-9/11 veterans are defined as individuals who report having served in the military at some point after 9/11/2001 but who are no longer serving in any component of the U.S. military.<sup>7</sup> Relative to civilians, post-9/11 veterans are younger, more likely to be African American, and more likely to have college experience. Given that factors such as age, educational attainment, and race have been shown in prior research to be highly predictive of employment status, it seems plausible to expect differences in unemployment between veterans and nonveterans solely as a result of these demographics. In other words, even if veterans are just as likely as nonveterans to seek work and employers are equally willing to hire them, *ceteris paribus*, we would still expect to observe a different unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans and nonveterans because of dif-

**Table 1  
Demographic Comparisons Between Post-9/11 Veterans and Nonveterans Using the ACS**

Characteristic	Average for:			
	Male		Female	
	Nonveterans	Post-9/11 Veterans	Nonveterans	Post-9/11 Veterans
<b>Race</b>				
White	0.627 (0.001)	0.683 (0.005)	0.638 (0.001)	0.572 (0.010)
Black	0.117 (0.000)	0.148 (0.004)	0.128 (0.000)	0.230 (0.009)
Hispanic	0.178 (0.001)	0.112 (0.003)	0.154 (0.000)	0.124 (0.007)
Other	0.079 (0.000)	0.057 (0.002)	0.080 (0.000)	0.075 (0.005)
<b>Age</b>				
Age	38.5 (0.02)	34.4 (0.09)	40.5 (0.02)	32.4 (0.18)
< age 21	0.106 (0.000)	0.027 (0.002)	0.088 (0.000)	0.044 (0.005)
Ages 21–25	0.119 (0.000)	0.167 (0.004)	0.103 (0.000)	0.197 (0.008)
Ages 26–30	0.113 (0.000)	0.272 (0.004)	0.103 (0.000)	0.302 (0.009)
Ages 31–35	0.105 (0.000)	0.151 (0.003)	0.097 (0.000)	0.161 (0.007)
Ages 36–40	0.107 (0.000)	0.100 (0.003)	0.103 (0.000)	0.091 (0.006)
Ages 41 and over	0.451 (0.001)	0.283 (0.004)	0.506 (0.001)	0.204 (0.008)

<sup>5</sup> For more information on sampling methodology, see American Community Survey, “Survey Methodology Main,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, undated.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, if individuals who are unemployed have more time to respond to surveys, the set of responses may overrepresent the incidence

of unemployment (and overreflect the responses of those who are unemployed) in the population.

<sup>7</sup> Individuals who served in the National Guard or Reserves are classified in the ACS as veterans only if they were ever called or ordered to active duty.

**Table 1 (continued)**  
**Demographic Comparisons Between Post-9/11 Veterans and Nonveterans Using the ACS**

Characteristic	Average for:			
	Male		Female	
	Nonveterans	Post-9/11 Veterans	Nonveterans	Post-9/11 Veterans
<b>Educational attainment</b>				
Less than high school	0.185 (0.001)	0.016 (0.001)	0.135 (0.000)	0.013 (0.002)
High school graduate	0.241 (0.001)	0.212 (0.004)	0.223 (0.001)	0.131 (0.007)
General Equivalency Diploma	0.043 (0.000)	0.033 (0.002)	0.033 (0.000)	0.016 (0.002)
1 year of college	0.060 (0.000)	0.110 (0.003)	0.073 (0.000)	0.109 (0.006)
>1 year of college, no degree	0.161 (0.001)	0.281 (0.004)	0.179 (0.000)	0.279 (0.009)
Associate's degree	0.061 (0.000)	0.111 (0.003)	0.085 (0.000)	0.150 (0.007)
Bachelor's degree	0.164 (0.000)	0.149 (0.003)	0.180 (0.000)	0.188 (0.008)
Advanced degree	0.086 (0.000)	0.087 (0.002)	0.093 (0.000)	0.114 (0.006)
<b>Region</b>				
Midwest	0.216 (0.001)	0.175 (0.004)	0.215 (0.001)	0.149 (0.007)
Northeast	0.186 (0.001)	0.109 (0.003)	0.184 (0.000)	0.099 (0.006)
South	0.359 (0.001)	0.478 (0.005)	0.370 (0.001)	0.520 (0.010)
West	0.239 (0.001)	0.238 (0.004)	0.231 (0.001)	0.232 (0.008)
Noncitizen	0.116 (0.000)	0.008 (0.001)	0.092 (0.000)	0.009 (0.002)
Number of children	0.712 (0.002)	0.768 (0.010)	0.748 (0.001)	0.841 (0.022)
Married in past year	0.035 (0.000)	0.068 (0.003)	0.030 (0.000)	0.078 (0.007)
Moved in past year	0.151 (0.001)	0.257 (0.004)	0.151 (0.000)	0.321 (0.010)
Number of observations	810,647	16,783	975,434	3,652
<p>SOURCE: Authors' calculations from 2010 ACS data.  NOTES: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. For all characteristics except age and number of children, reported values in the table reflect the fraction of the population with a particular characteristic. Except for the share residing in the West, for all of these demographic characteristics there is a statistically significant difference between the veteran average and the nonveteran average.</p>				

**Spouses of service members tend to be younger and more likely than their civilian counterparts to have had college experience.**

ferences in the demographic composition of the two populations.

Table 2 provides similar descriptives of military and civilian spouses. Again, we observe important demographic differences between the military population and the corresponding civilian comparison group. Spouses of service members tend to be younger and more likely than their civilian

counterparts to have had college experience. These differences counsel considerable caution in directly comparing military spouses to civilian spouses across economic outcome measures.

The final column of Table 2 reports the characteristics of the military spouse population in 2010 as calculated by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) using administrative rather than survey data.<sup>8</sup> The high

**Table 2  
Demographic Comparisons Between Military and Civilian Spouses Using the ACS**

Characteristic	Civilian Spouse (ACS)	Military Spouse (ACS)	Military Spouse (DMDC)
Male	0.491 (0.001)	0.099 (0.005)	0.05
Race			
White	0.722 (0.001)	0.698 (0.008)	0.68
African American	0.070 (0.000)	0.095 (0.005)	0.09
Hispanic	0.132 (0.000)	0.127 (0.006)	0.12
Other	0.076 (0.000)	0.080 (0.005)	0.11
Age			
< age 26	0.029 (0.000)	0.232 (0.007)	0.23
Ages 26–30	0.077 (0.000)	0.241 (0.007)	0.26
Ages 31–35	0.108 (0.000)	0.198 (0.007)	0.19
Ages 36–40	0.128 (0.000)	0.146 (0.006)	0.15
Ages 41 and over	0.659 (0.001)	0.183 (0.006)	0.15
Educational attainment			
No college	0.351 (0.001)	0.212 (0.007)	0.16
Some college	0.304 (0.001)	0.462 (0.008)	0.49
Bachelor's degree	0.214 (0.000)	0.220 (0.007)	0.25
Advanced degree	0.130 (0.000)	0.106 (0.005)	0.10
Has children	0.492 (0.001)	0.696 (0.008)	0.72
Number of observations	994,772	5,062	
SOURCE: Authors' calculations from 2010 ACS data. NOTES: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Reported table values reflect the fraction of the population with a particular characteristic.			

<sup>8</sup> DMDC, 2010 Military Family Life Project: Tabulations of Responses, DMDC Report No. 2010-29, Arlington, Va., 2011.

degree of similarity between the demographics of military spouses as recorded in the ACS and DMDC's tabulations suggests that the ACS does a good job of capturing a representative sample of this population.

### What Do ACS Data Reveal About Post-9/11 Veteran Employment Patterns?

In addition to providing demographic information, the ACS includes questions about current work and job availability that can be used to measure employment patterns among survey respondents. For this analysis, we have divided respondents into four mutually exclusive categories—not in the labor force, unemployed, employed part-time, and employed full-time.<sup>9</sup> We also present estimates of the unemployment rate for each population subgroup (post-9/11 veterans and nonveteran civilians), which can be calculated by dividing the unemployment share by the share in the labor force.<sup>10</sup>

Table 3 reports our tabulation of post-9/11 veteran employment characteristics using the ACS. Column I reports employment patterns for the overall civilian adult U.S. population—the population typically used as a reference in media discussions of “headline” unemployment. As a comparison, unemployment

rates calculated using the CPS suggest that unemployment averaged roughly 9.6 percent over the entire year.<sup>11</sup> Column II restricts the sample to civilians without prior military service—a common reference group in discussions of veteran unemployment and the population shown above in Table 1. Among nonveterans, roughly one in four is not in the labor force, and unemployment rates are 10.7 percent.

Column III, which confines the sample to post-9/11 veterans, shows that unemployment rates are slightly lower for this population than for the comparison civilian population (10.4 percent versus 10.7 percent), although this difference is not statistically significant. However, for each of the individual employment categories and the overall unemployment rate, there are statistically significant differences across the nonveteran civilian population and post-9/11 veteran population. For example, post-9/11 veterans are more likely to be in the labor force and more likely to be employed full-time than are civilians with no prior military service.

However, as argued above, because veterans are demographically different from nonveterans, we would not necessarily expect these two groups to

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**Among nonveterans, roughly one in four is not in the labor force, and unemployment rates are 10.7 percent.**

**Table 3**  
**Comparison of Unemployment Between Post-9/11 Veterans and Civilians Using the ACS**

	Overall U.S. Civilian Adult Population	Nonveteran Civilian (Unadjusted)	Post-9/11 Veteran	Nonveteran Civilian (Adjusted)
Employment Category	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Not in labor force	24.40% (0.038)	24.29% (0.040)	15.04% (0.306)	14.98% (0.258)
Unemployed	8.01% (0.025)	8.07% (0.026)	8.84% (0.248)	8.44% (0.175)
Part-time worker	13.97% (0.031)	14.49% (0.032)	7.82% (0.232)	12.08% (0.222)
Full-time worker	53.61% (0.044)	53.15% (0.046)	68.30% (0.401)	64.50% (0.301)
Unemployment rate	10.60% (0.032)	10.66% (0.033)	10.40% (0.289)	9.92% (0.203)

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from 2010 ACS data.

NOTES: Sample limited to individuals ages 18–65. Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

<sup>9</sup> The ACS does not include the full suite of labor force participation questions found in the CPS. This means that we unfortunately cannot use ACS data to identify some subgroups that may be of interest to policymakers, such as “discouraged workers.” See Nelson Lim and Daniela Golinelli, *Monitoring Employment Conditions of Military Spouses*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-324-OSD, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> This definition is comparable to the BLS “unemployment rate” commonly referred to in the media, and computed as unemployment rate = (number unemployed)/(number employed + number unemployed).

<sup>11</sup> Holder and Raglin discuss why ACS unemployment questions yield slightly higher unemployment rates than the BLS questions. Explanations include differences in the wording of employment questions across the two surveys and inconsistencies in the way respondents answer some questions. See Kelly Holder and Dave Raglin, “Evaluation Report Covering Employment Status,” 2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, p. 6a.

have the same employment patterns. A different and perhaps more intuitive way to compare the two groups would be to consider how a typical post-9/11 veteran would fare in the labor market compared to someone of similar age, educational attainment, gender, etc., who had no prior military service.

In Column IV, we present estimates of the employment distribution for a civilian population that have been adjusted to match the demographic composition of the post-9/11 veterans. To accomplish this adjustment, we estimated a series of regression models where the unit of observation was an individual, the outcome variable was an indicator for a particular type of employment, and the primary explanatory variable was an indicator for whether the respondent was a post-9/11 veteran. The sample was limited to post-9/11 veterans and civilians with no prior military service ( $N = 1,710,326$ ), and the regressions also controlled for respondent race/ethnicity, state of residence, citizenship status, recent marriage, number of children, mobility, and a full set of gender/marital status/age/educational attainment/presence of children by age/Census division/race<sup>12</sup> interactions. Each employment category was analyzed using a separate regression.<sup>13</sup>

Our approach is conceptually similar to matching each veteran to each of the nonveterans in the sample who have identical gender, marital status, age, educational attainment, household presence of children at different ages, race, and region of residence and then comparing the employment status across each of these pairs.<sup>14</sup> In conducting such comparisons, we further adjust statistically for the possibility that the veterans and matched nonveterans may still differ across some characteristics that affect employment, such as citizenship or recent marriage. Column IV thus allows us to consider a civilian comparison group with demographic characteristics that are largely equivalent to those of post-9/11 veterans.

Once we adjust for demographic differences across these populations, we observe that unemployment among post-9/11 veterans is similar to that of demo-

graphically comparable nonveterans (10.4 percent versus 9.9 percent). Labor force participation is similar across the two groups, and post-9/11 veterans are actually more likely than similarly situated civilians to be employed full- rather than part-time. These patterns suggest that, on average, recent veterans may not be faring substantially worse in the labor market than similar nonveterans.<sup>15</sup> These results also highlight the importance of considering demographic differences across veteran and nonveteran populations in formulating policies designed to meet the economic needs of veterans.

### **What Do Other Surveys Indicate Regarding Veteran Unemployment?**

We used the ACS for this analysis because the ACS provides a large sample of post-9/11 veterans and the best ability to match veterans to otherwise similar nonveterans. The unemployment patterns we observe for recent veterans in the ACS appear similar to unemployment patterns revealed in other surveys. For example, a BLS report drawing data from a different survey—the CPS—placed the unemployment rate among post-9/11 veterans in 2010 at 11.5 percent, similar to what we observed in the ACS.<sup>16</sup>

One measure of veteran unemployment that has received considerable attention from policymakers is the unemployment rate among recent male veterans ages 18–24, which stood at almost 22 percent in 2010 according to the BLS. The ACS data confirm an elevated level of unemployment for this population, although in the ACS, this group's unemployment rate is a bit lower at 17.4 percent. However, one reason for this high unemployment rate among this segment of the veteran population is that unemployment in general tends to be high among young adults. For male nonveterans ages 18–24, the ACS unemployment rate in 2010 was 21.6 percent. However, if we use the matching procedure described above to compute unemployment among civilians who are demographically similar to veterans ages 18–24, we obtain an

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**... on average, recent veterans may not be faring substantially worse in the labor market than similar nonveterans.**

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<sup>12</sup> Census divisions are grouping of states into nine areas that are slightly smaller than regions, e.g., New England and South Atlantic.

<sup>13</sup> In theory, one could conduct this analysis using a multinomial model, but this would be computationally difficult in our case because we have millions of observations and thousands of fixed effects. Moreover, we would expect the two approaches to yield similar results.

<sup>14</sup> This is because the inclusion of a full set of dummy variables capturing all possible gender/marital status/age/educational attainment/presence of children by age/Census division/race combinations means that these combined factors are held constant in our regression. So, for example, when we estimate employment differences, married 25-year-old African American female college graduates with no children who live in the South Atlantic states who are veterans are compared to nonveterans who have that exact combination of demographic characteristics.

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<sup>15</sup> Some past studies of veteran unemployment have found that veterans actually have lower unemployment rates than observationally similar nonveterans. See D. Black et al., "The Labor Market Outcomes of Young Veterans," Chicago II.: University of Chicago/National Opinion Research Center Report, September 2008. In addition to using different data covering earlier years, Black et al. (2008) consider unemployment rates over a longer time horizon, and some evidence suggests the relative position of veterans improves over time. See David S. Loughran et al., *The Effect of Military Enlistment on Earnings and Education*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-995-A, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> See Economic News Release, "Employment Situation of Veterans Summary," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, March 20, 2012.

unemployment rate of 15.3 percent.<sup>17</sup> These patterns suggest that young veterans may indeed face additional hurdles in the labor market relative to similar civilians, but high unemployment among this population is largely a reflection of the fact that they are young, not that they are veterans.

### What Is the Unemployment Rate Among Military Spouses?

The ACS also permits us to examine employment patterns among military spouses, furnishing an independent measure of unemployment for this key population. Military spouses have typically not been a focus of BLS studies because relatively few of them were interviewed in the CPS. Table 4 reports tabulations analogous to those in Table 3 but focusing on the population of military spouses.

We would expect a lower unemployment rate among those who are married than in the overall population,<sup>18</sup> and indeed we observe an unemployment rate of only 6.4 percent among those married

to civilian spouses, several points below the general adult rate. Nevertheless, among military spouses, unemployment is actually above that of the civilian population, at 12.0 percent. The higher observed unemployment rate among military spouses persists after adjusting for demographic differences between military and civilian spouses, although the gap narrows somewhat. In addition to experiencing higher unemployment, labor force participation among military spouses is substantially below that of their civilian counterparts.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the ACS data do support the notion that military spouses may face hurdles in obtaining employment beyond those experienced by similar spouses of civilians.

A number of recent commentaries have cited a 26 percent unemployment rate among military spouses; this number comes from the 2010 Military Family Life Project (MFLP), a DoD-sponsored survey of military families.<sup>20</sup> The ACS data suggest that the unemployment problem for spouses, although not insignificant, is much less acute. In particular, the

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**. . . among military spouses, unemployment is actually above that of the civilian population, at 12.0 percent.**

**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Unemployment Between Military Spouses and Civilian Spouses Using the ACS**

	Overall U.S. Civilian Adult Population	Married to Civilian Spouse (Unadjusted)	Married to Military Spouse	Married to Civilian Spouse (Adjusted)
Employment Category	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Not in labor force	24.40% (0.038)	20.91% (0.048)	42.44% (0.829)	25.53% (0.385)
Unemployed	8.01% (0.025)	5.09% (0.027)	6.93% (0.407)	5.76% (0.230)
Part-time worker	13.97% (0.031)	11.63% (0.038)	11.82% (0.526)	16.21% (0.298)
Full-time worker	53.61% (0.044)	62.37% (0.058)	38.81% (0.822)	52.49% (0.454)
Unemployment rate	10.60% (0.032)	6.44% (0.034)	12.04% (0.689)	7.74% (0.303)

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from 2010 ACS data.

NOTES: Sample limited to individuals ages 18–65. Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

<sup>17</sup> The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is 13.1 percent – 17.5 percent.

<sup>18</sup> For data on unemployment rates by marital status, see “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Household Data Not Seasonally Adjusted,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, June 1, 2012, (where among those ages 16+ in the general population, married men (women) faced an unemployment rate of 5.0 (5.0) percent in April 2012, versus 9.2 and 13.1 (9.1 and 11.4) percent among widowed/divorced/separated and never married individuals, respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Lim and Schulker document a similar pattern with regard to labor force participation using the 2006 Survey of Active-Duty Spouses (ADSS) and CPS data. See Nelson Lim and David Schulker, *Measuring Underemployment Among Military Spouses*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-918-OSD, 2010. However, they find a smaller gap in unemployment between military and civilian spouses, which is likely due to the earlier time period they studied, when unemployment rates were generally lower.

<sup>20</sup> DMDC, 2011.

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**High unemployment rates among young post-9/11 veterans can be largely attributed to weakness in the labor market for young adults rather than for veterans.**

estimated unemployment rate for spouses using the ACS is only about half the MFLP estimate.<sup>21</sup>

**Conclusions**

This paper has provided a snapshot of unemployment among post-9/11 veterans and military spouses

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<sup>21</sup> There are several potential explanations for this discrepancy. We offer a couple of suggestions, one of which seems a more plausible explanation than the other, but more research may be needed to determine the exact cause for the discrepancy. (1) There are slight differences between the MFLP and the ACS in the questions used to determine employment status, but it seems unlikely that these differences in wording could explain the large differences across surveys in calculated unemployment rate. (2) Because the ACS response rate is 98 percent, differential response patterns by employment status are not likely to affect this survey, but if unemployed military spouses are more likely than those who are working to respond to the MFLP, this would explain that survey's higher calculated unemployment rate. Although DMDC is careful to reweight its MFLP survey tabulations to the extent possible to account for survey nonresponse, such reweighting corrections guarantee representativeness only across dimensions such as age or rank that can be calibrated to an external benchmark, and not necessarily for other characteristics such as employment status for which no nonsurvey estimates exist. Since the ACS has almost no survey nonresponse, and, as shown in Table 2, is already reflective of the military spouse population, it does not require reweighting corrections.

taken from the 2010 American Community Survey. Because veterans and military spouses differ from the civilian population in important ways, comparisons that adjust for demographic differences across populations may be more informative for policymakers than raw comparisons of unemployment rates would be. When we make such adjustments using the ACS, we observe unemployment rates among post-9/11 veterans that are similar to those of their civilian counterparts. High unemployment rates among young post-9/11 veterans can be largely attributed to weakness in the labor market for young adults rather than for veterans. For military spouses, we observe unemployment rates in the ACS that are appreciably above rates for comparable civilians but appreciably below other published estimates of the unemployment rate for this population. This snapshot look at the data suggests that veterans and military spouses may face important employment obstacles deserving of policymakers' attention but also that the situation may not be as extreme as some headline numbers would seem to suggest. ■

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## About This Paper

This research was conducted jointly by RAND Health's Center for Military Health Policy Research and the Forces and Resources Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), and was sponsored by the Office of the Director—Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Office of the Secretary of Defense. The Center for Military Health Policy Research taps RAND expertise in both defense and health policy to conduct research for the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, and nonprofit organizations. NDRI is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community. For more information on the Center for Military Health Policy Research, see <http://www.rand.org/multi/military.html> or contact the co-directors (contact information is provided on the web page). For more information on the Forces and Resources Policy Center, see <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/frp.html> or contact the director (contact information is provided on the web page). The authors can be contacted by mail at the RAND Corporation, 1776 Main St., Santa Monica, CA 90405-2138; or by email at [pheaton@rand.org](mailto:pheaton@rand.org) and [hkrull@rand.org](mailto:hkrull@rand.org).

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