

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Work-Related Disability, Veteran Status, and Poverty: Implications for Family Well-Being

London, A., Heflin, C., & Wilmoth, J. (2011). Work-related disability, veteran status, and poverty: Implications for family well-being. *Journal of Poverty*, 15(3), 330-349. doi:10.1080/10875549.2011.589259

**SUMMARY:** The associations between work-limiting disability, Veteran status, and household poverty were examined. The study used data from the 1992 to 2004 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation survey collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. Overall, Veteran households had considerably lower odds of poverty than disabled non-Veteran households.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Households that include a person with a work-limiting disability are more likely to be living in poverty (27%) compared to those that do not (11%), and households that do not include a Veteran are more likely to be living in poverty (15%) than households that include a Veteran (7%).
- Veterans with a disability are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as nondisabled Veterans (13% vs. 6%), which is nearly equal to the poverty ratio of disabled to non-disabled non-Veterans (33% to 12%).
- Being a Veteran served as a protective factor for those with a disability: 13.19% of households with a Veteran who has a work-limiting disability are at the poverty level, compared to 33% of households with a non-Veteran who has a disability.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Include curricula and/or services for disabled Service members and their families, particularly to help address financial well-being
- Make workshops, seminars, and resources readily available to professionals who work with military families to educate them about the challenges faced by disabled Service members and their families
- Offer support groups for Service members who have a work-limiting disability

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage collaboration among DoD programs and community-based organizations to support a smooth transition for departing Service members who are disabled
- Recommend integrating financial counseling into existing service delivery systems for military families
- Promote reintegration programs that include attention to assisting Service members' family in adjusting to the Service member's return

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## METHODS

- This study provided data predicting poverty for 58,686 U.S. households. Over five waves of data (1992 to 2004) were collected by the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the Survey of Income and Program Participation.
- Participants were interviewed every four months and each panel was interviewed 9 times over 3 years (1992, 1993, and 1996) or 12 times over 4 years (2001, 2004).
- Each interview consisted of a core interview, with standard questions on demographics, labor force participation, and income, as well as a topical module interview, which includes questions on topics that change within a panel from one interview to the next.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (N = 58,686 households) were all under the age of 65; 2.72% of households included a disabled Veteran; 13.67% included nondisabled Veteran.
- Seventy-two percent of households were White, 12% were Black; 9% were Latino/Latina (regardless of race), 2% were Asian-American, and 5% were multicultural.
- No information on Veterans' rank or time period they served were provided.

## LIMITATIONS

- Untested variables may be influencing results; that is, the households including Veterans vs. non-Veterans may differ on factors that were unobserved and/or not measured in this study.
- Constructs may be confounded by the fact that “work-limiting disabilities” does not capture the full range of specific functional limitations and disabilities that could be experienced by Veterans or influence the likelihood of poverty.
- The data in this study were descriptive therefore conclusions about causation cannot be determined.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine how participation in different disability programs is associated with poverty and the well-being of Service members with disabilities and their family members
- Identify specific characteristics of disabled Veterans that might help explain why the poverty rate in their households is substantially lower than non-Veterans with disabilities
- Explore how the interaction of Veteran and disability status affects spouses and children

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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