

Military Veterans Survey Report



Employer Perceptions and Attitudes Towards the Employment of Military Veterans

2013



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The following Executive Summary report details the findings of a business survey of the KIX Region examining the attitudes, perceptions, and practices of local businesses with regards to the employment of military veterans. The KIX region consists of the Lincoln Trail Workforce Investment Area (WIA), KentuckianaWorks Workforce Investment Area and three counties of the Lake Cumberland Workforce Investment Area (Adair, Green and Taylor). The military veteran questions examined in this report were asked as part of a larger region-wide business survey that took place August 2013 through January 2013.

SURVEY SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The survey targeted employers with 5 or more employees in the Lincoln Trail and Lake Cumberland WIA, and employers with 20 or more employees in the Kentuckianaworks WIA. ERISS Corporation conducted the survey using its proprietary Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. A stratified census style survey methodology was employed whereby an attempt was made to contact every business within the survey parameters, with the final surveyed sample representative by industry. The contact database comprised 7,901 employers. During the survey process 1,083 of these businesses were found to be out of scope¹, resulting in a net employer base of 6,818. Of these employers 1,702 participated in the survey (a 25% response rate).

A summary of the survey questions is provided in the sidebar to the right. The first 6 questions were multiple choice and were intended to collect employer attitudes, practices, and perceptions regarding the employment of military veterans. The 7th question provided a chance for employers to provide an open-ended response regarding why some local employers may not be hiring military veterans. The complete set of questions and answer choices is provided in Appendix A.

Military Veteran Survey Questions:

1. *Does your company work with any of the following Veteran Organizations? (list provided)*
2. *Are you aware of the number of military veterans in your company?*
3. *Does your company have a program for hiring military veterans?*
4. *Does your company translate military background and experience into terms relevant to your company's needs?*
5. *Would you be interested in participating on a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans?*
6. *Would you consider hiring qualified candidates military veteran candidates?*
7. *What would you say are some of the reasons local employers are not hiring Veterans? (open-ended)*

¹ Employers with wrong phone number and no new number, no answer on repeated attempts, employers with less than the minimum required number of employees specified by the survey.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The sections below summarize the main findings of the analysis of responses from participating employers. The detailed survey response breakdown for each question is provided in the pages following this summary.

- ▶ Overall, employers indicated a general willingness to consider hiring qualified candidates who were military veterans, were aware of the number of veterans in their company, and attempted to translate military background and experience into terms that could be applied to the company's needs.
- ▶ There was not a general trend of specific programs for hiring military veterans and little interest in participation in a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans.
- ▶ Very few businesses reported that they worked with any of a list of Veteran Organizations. When they did report working with an organization, the most commonly reported were the Office of Employment and Training and Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ▶ The Transportation/Utilities and Business Services industries seemed to be the most 'military veteran friendly,' at least with regard to the questions asked in the survey. Other veteran friendly industries included Manufacturing and Wholesale.
- ▶ The Education, Retail, and Finance industries did not tend to have businesses that were military veteran friendly relative to other industries.
- ▶ Larger businesses tended to be more likely to respond favorably to the military veteran survey questions

Qualitative analysis of the open-ended question revealed some emergent themes:

- ▶ Most employers either could not think of any reason local employers were not hiring military veterans, or were surprised that there was even a problem in this area.
- ▶ Many employers reported their reasons for not hiring military veterans had more to do with the economy or lack of experience on behalf of the company with regard to hiring military veterans as opposed to a problem with military veterans themselves.

Some of the most commonly reported reasons employers gave for local firms not hiring military veterans were:²

- ▶ Lack of qualifications or education
- ▶ Losing the employee due to a military required move or redeployment
- ▶ Lack of experience
- ▶ Expectations of higher pay or position for veterans
- ▶ Lack of access to military veterans (military veterans have simply not applied to their jobs)
- ▶ Possible emotional or psychological issues
- ▶ A perception of rigidness or inflexibility
- ▶ Lack of job fit

² See page 13 for a complete analysis and listing of themes.

Employers also reported many positive aspects regarding hiring military veterans. The most commonly reported were:

- ▶ Dependability/reliability
- ▶ Disciplined/Structured
- ▶ Work ethic
- ▶ Experience

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Further interviews may be desirable to determine why certain industries are less veteran accessible than others. Although it may be the nature of the industry in some cases (e.g., the Education industry requiring special credentials), in other cases it may be that there is a need to expose businesses to the current realities regarding military veterans, or work on changing the industry culture to be more inclusive.
- ▶ It may be useful to work with local businesses who indicated they would be willing to hire military veterans, but none apply for their jobs. These could be targeted for contact using the survey database. This could result in a matching program whereby qualified veteran candidates could be sent their way.
- ▶ Some industries demonstrated a culture of resistance regarding hiring military veterans. These industries tended to have employers who were less willing to consider qualified military veteran candidates, have no programs for hiring veterans, and were resistant to the idea of participating in a region-wide initiative. Key employers in these industries could be targeted for an information campaign, or exposed to available resources.
- ▶ There are some general misconceptions regarding the nature of the typical current military veteran. Employers are uncertain of the stability, skills, and even age and experience of military veterans. Additionally, they may be unwilling to commit if they feel they may lose these employees to a military-required move. A general information campaign introducing employers to the truer picture of these veterans might be beneficial.
- ▶ Smaller firms were less likely to have responded in a positive fashion to the survey questions than larger ones. It may be that available programs and information do not scale down to smaller companies, or that these employers are not exposed to them in a consistent fashion, possibly due to the lower likelihood of having a dedicated human resources department or person. Ways should be explored to get information and opportunities regarding hiring military veterans to these smaller firms. For example, smaller firms may be willing, but not know how to start a hiring program for veterans, or may feel it will involve resources they do not have.
- ▶ There was a general lack of a cooperative relationship between surveyed business and local veteran organizations. This lack of communication, cooperation, and awareness could critically hamstring any efforts to increase opportunities for military veterans. Liaisons between these organizations and local businesses could help establish missing linkages.

RESULTS OF MILITARY VETERAN QUESTIONS

SUMMARY OF INDUSTRY DIFFERENCES FOR ALL QUESTIONS³

In order to illustrate the relative ‘military veteran friendliness’ of each industry as compared to other industries the table below provides a summary of the ranked performance of each of the 11 surveyed industries for each military veteran question. A smaller ranking number represents better performance (a higher proportion of employers who agreed with each question relative to the lower ranking industries). A larger ranking number represents poorer relative performance. The top 3 ranked industries for each question are color coded **GREEN**, and the bottom 3 ranked industries for each question are color coded **RED**.

For example, the Business Services industry had the 3rd highest (out of 11 industries) percentage of employers saying ‘yes’ to the first question, the 2nd highest percentage saying ‘yes’ to the second question and 2nd highest percentage saying ‘yes’ to the third listed question.

Overall, employers in the Business Services and Transportation/Utilities industries consistently ranked highly in terms of percentage of surveyed businesses that responded ‘yes’ to any specific survey question. Other veteran friendly industries included Manufacturing and Wholesale. The Finance, Education, and Retail industries did not tend to have businesses that were relatively military veteran friendly. This could be the result of a lack of transferability of skills.

Between Industry Comparison Summary Over All Survey Questions.

The top 3 ranked industries for each question are shaded **GREEN**. The bottom 3 ranked industries are shaded **RED**.

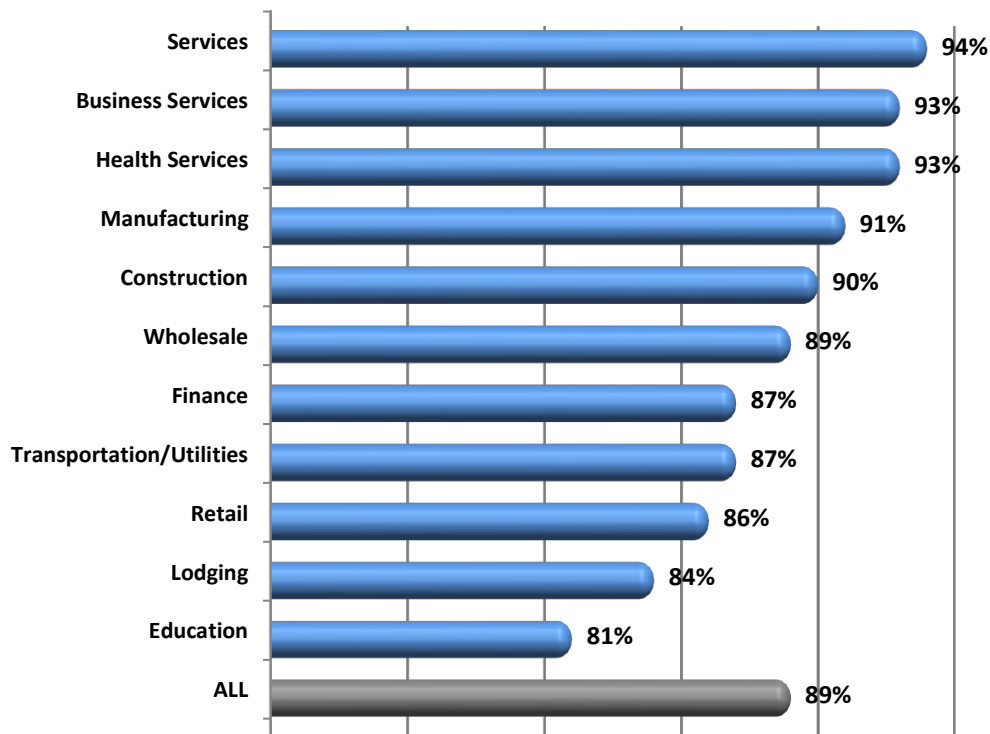
QUESTION	INDUSTRY RANKING OVER 11 INDUSTRIES										
	Business Services	Construction	Education	Finance	Health Services	Lodging	Manufacturing	Retail	Services	Transportation/Utilities	Wholesale
Are you aware of the number of military veterans in your company?	3	6	11	9	8	7	2	10	4	1	5
Would you consider hiring job candidates who are military veterans?	2	5	11	7	3	10	4	9	1	8	6
Does your company have a program for hiring military veterans?	2	6	11	10	9	3	5	7	8	1	4
Would you be interested in participating on a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans?	5	8	11	9	10	1	4	6	7	3	2
Does your company translate military background and experience into terms relevant to your company's needs?	2	8	11	6	7	9	3	10	4	1	5
Average	2.8	6.6	11	8.2	7.4	6	3.6	8.4	4.8	2.8	4.4

³ There were insufficient responses to report at the industry level for the Agriculture and Mining industries.

HIRING OF QUALIFIED MILITARY VETERAN JOB CANDIDATES

Surveyed employers were asked to report if they would consider hiring job candidates who are military veterans. Region-wide, 89% of employers reported they would consider hiring veteran candidates. Employers in the Services, Business Services, and Health Services industries were most likely to indicate willingness to consider veteran candidates, while employers in the Lodging and Education industries were least likely to report they would consider hiring qualified candidates who were military veterans.

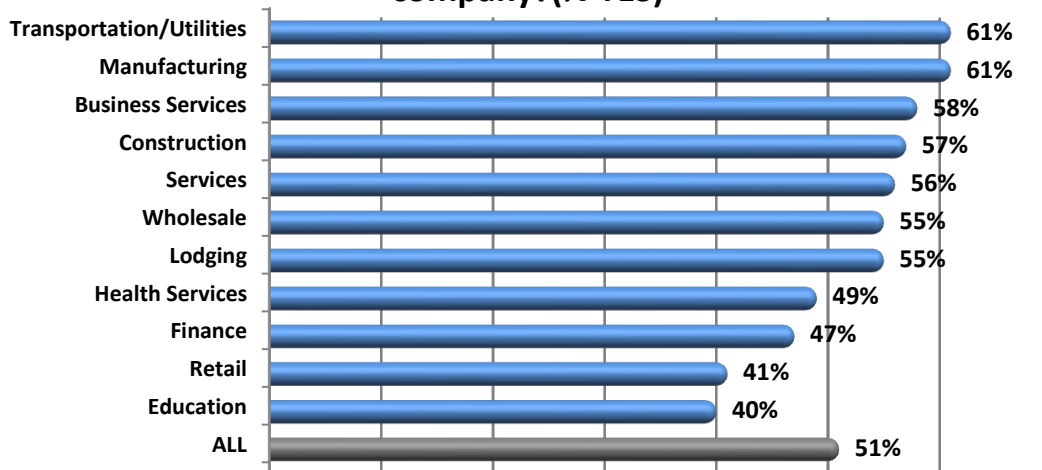
Would you consider hiring qualified job candidates who are military veterans? (% YES)



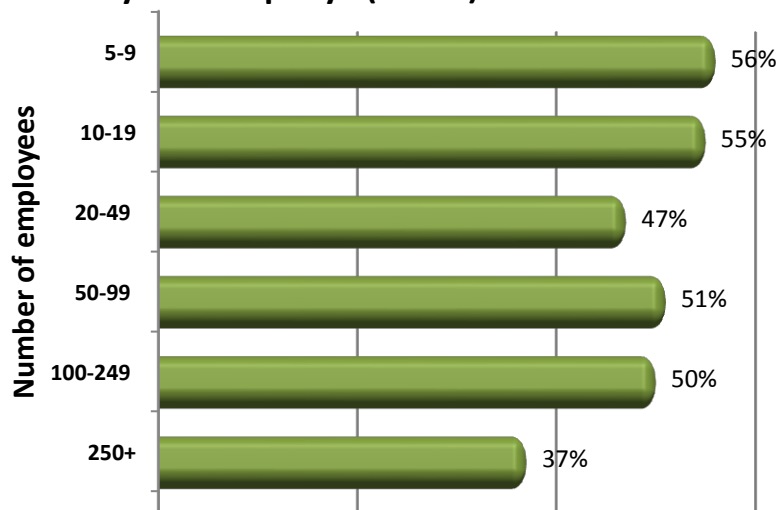
AWARENESS OF MILITARY VETERANS WITHIN THE COMPANY

Surveyed employers were asked if they were aware of the number of military veterans within their company. Region-wide, 51% of employers reported they were aware of the number of veterans within their company. Employers in the Transportation/Utilities and Manufacturing industries were most likely to indicate knowledge of the number of veteran employees, and employers in the Education industry were least likely to report such knowledge. With regard to company size there was no clear trend, although firms with more than 250 employees were less likely to be aware of the number of military veterans within their company as compared with smaller firms.

Are you aware of the number of military veterans in your company?(% YES)



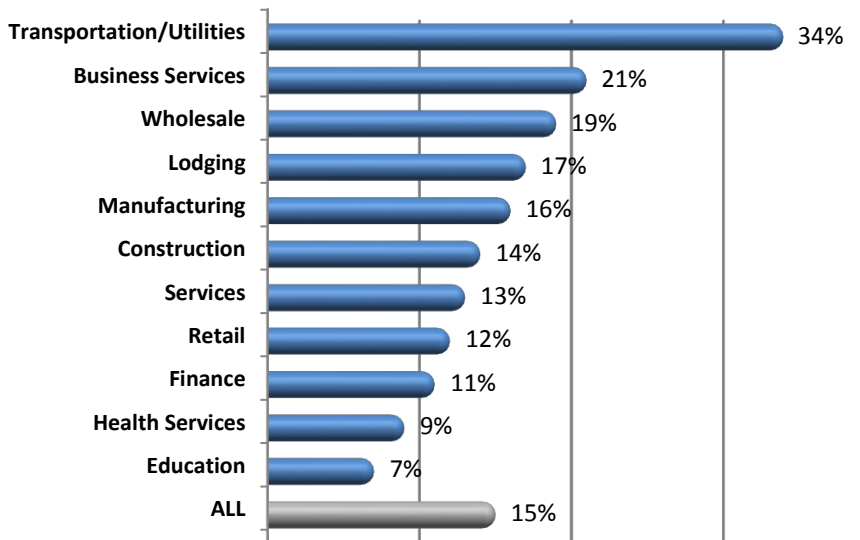
Are you aware of the number of military veterans in your company? (% YES)



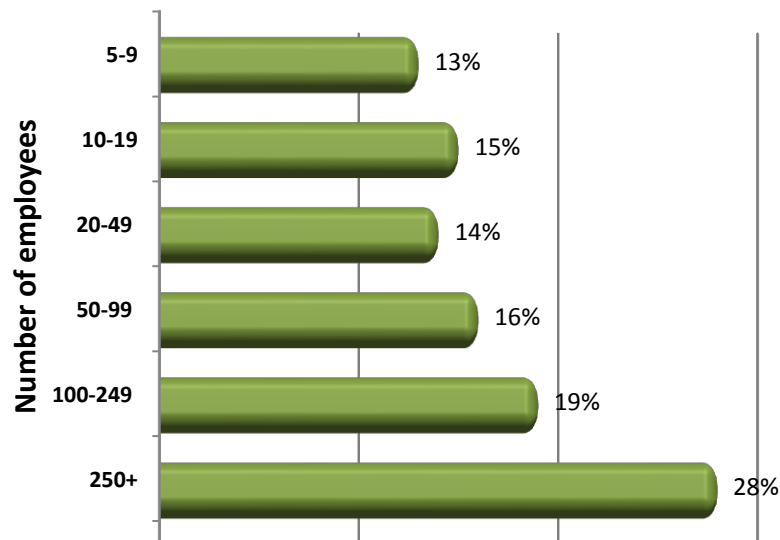
PROGRAM FOR HIRING MILITARY VETERANS

Surveyed employers were asked if their company had a program for hiring military veterans. Region-wide, 15% of employers reported they had such a program. Employers in the Transportation/Utilities industry were by far the most likely to indicate they had such a program, while employers in the Health Services and Education industries were least likely to report they had a program. With regard to company size, employers with more than 250 employees were more likely to report having a program for hiring military veterans.

Does your company have a program for hiring military veterans? (% YES)



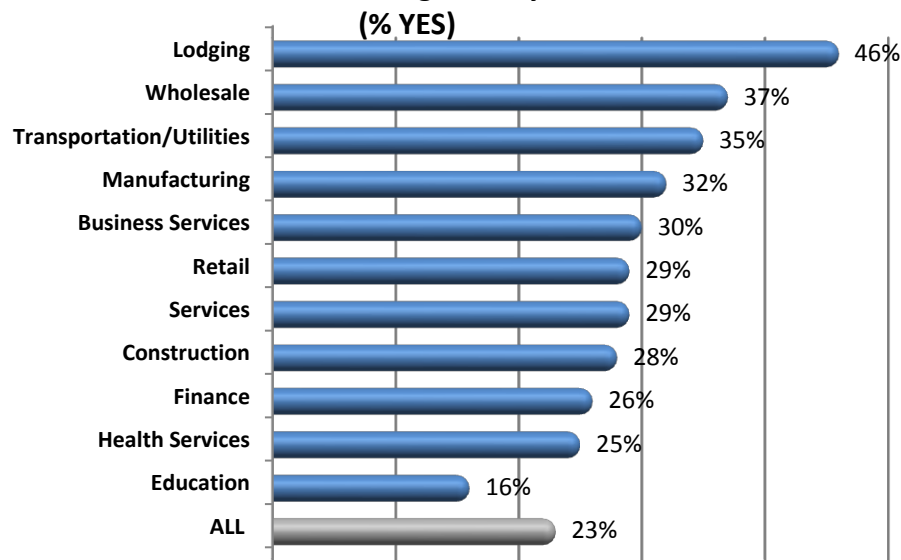
Does your company have a program for hiring military veterans? (% YES)



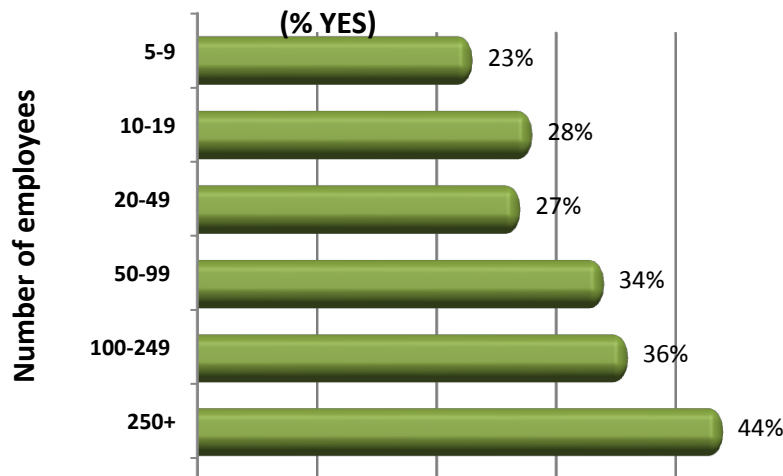
INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN A REGION-WIDE MILITARY VETERANS INITIATIVE

Surveyed employers were asked if they were interested in participating in a region-wide initiative focused on hiring military veterans. Region-wide, 23% of employers reported they would be interested in participating in an initiative. Employers in the Lodging, Wholesale, and Transportation/Utilities industries were the most likely to indicate interest, and employers in the Education industry were least likely to report interest. With regard to company size, there was a definite trend for firms with more than 50 employees to express interest in participation in a region-wide initiative.

Would you be interested in participating on a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans?



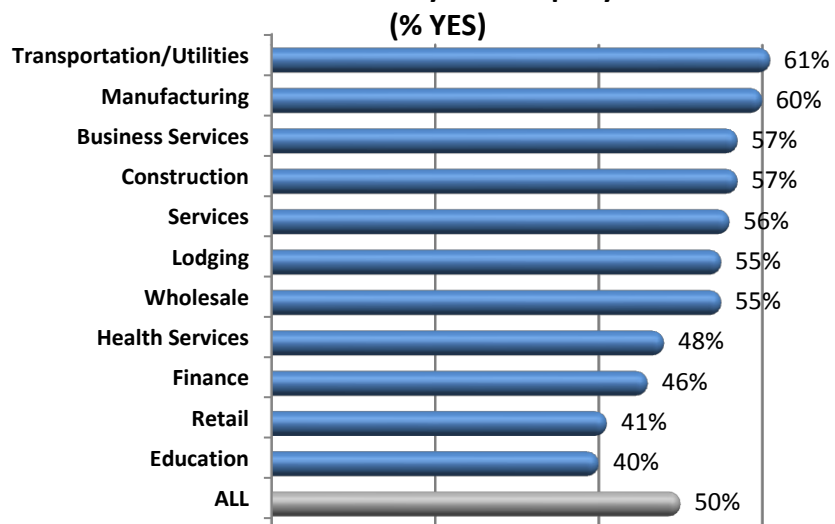
Would you be interested in participating on a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans?



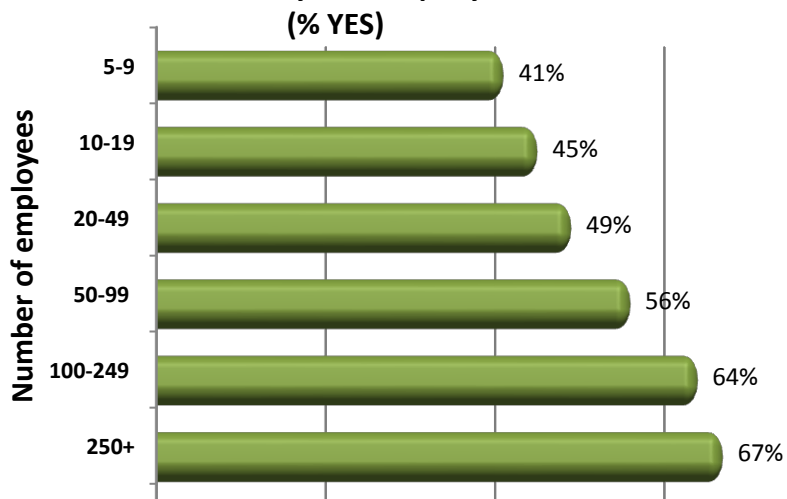
TRANSLATION OF MILITARY BACKGROUND TO ADDRESS COMPANY NEEDS

Surveyed employers were asked if their company translates military background and experience into terms relevant to their company’s needs. Region-wide, 50% of employers reported they practiced this type of skill and experience translation. Employers in the Transportation/Utilities and Manufacturing industries were the most likely to practice this, and employers in the Retail and Education industries were least likely to leverage military background. With regard to company size, the trend was for firms with more than 100 employees to be more likely to translate military background and experience into terms relevant to company needs.

Does your company translate military background and experience into terms relevant to your company’s needs?



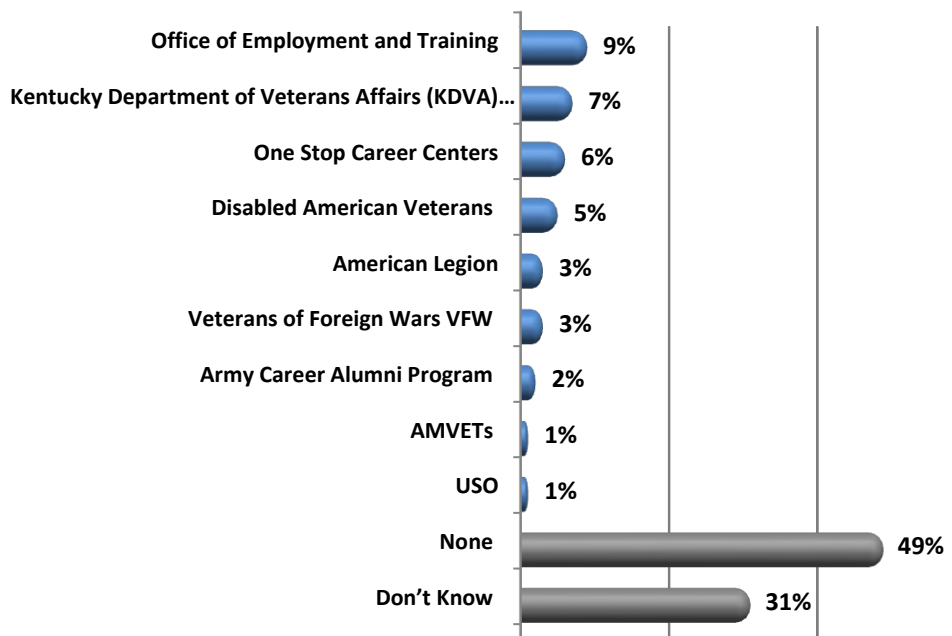
Does your company translate military background and experience into terms relevant to your company’s needs?



WORKING WITH VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

Employers were asked to report if they worked with any of a list of Veteran's Organizations. Employers most commonly reported working with the 'Office of Employment and Training' (9%) or 'Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs' (7%). 49% of surveyed employers reported working with none of the listed organizations, and 31% did not know if their firm worked with any of them.

Does your company work with any of the following Veteran Organizations? (select all that apply)



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES REGARDING HIRING MILITARY VETERANS

In order to gauge the attitude of local employers towards the hiring of veterans in a more unrestricted, qualitative manner, an open ended question was asked. Specifically, surveyed employers were asked the question:

“What would you say are some of the reasons local employers are not hiring military veterans?”

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE THEMES

933 surveyed employers provided responses. These included those that fell into the ‘no comment/no opinion’ category. The majority of interviewed employers (657) could think of no negatives to hiring military veterans, provided only positives, or said they did not know why employers would not be hiring veterans. 231 employers (25%) did provide a response indicating why they or other employers might not be hiring veterans. The most common themes resulting from the qualitative analysis are provided below listed in order starting from the most commonly mentioned.

Top Themes Involving Issues NOT Specific to Characteristics of the Military Veterans

- 1. Lack of applicants or employer experience with military veterans:** Employers indicated they had no experience in hiring veterans or indicated they get few or none military veteran applicants.
- 2. Current (down) economy or job market:** Employers felt it was more due to the job market and economy that veterans were not getting jobs, and not due to employer reluctance. Specific comments included “Not many people hiring right now in general,” and “There are just no jobs available (for anyone).”
- 3. Lack of places to find military veteran applicants:** Employers indicated they are not sure where to find veteran applicants. Specific comments included: “No one stop shop to get Vets” and “No proactive way to seek them out.”

Top Themes Involving Issues Specific to Characteristics of the Military Veterans

- 1. Lack of qualifications, specific experience or education:** Specific concerns were “They may not have the required education and training for the jobs” or “They would have to have a teaching degree.”
- 2. Losing the employee due to a need to move:** Employers expressed concern that a military veteran employee would need to relocate or move shortly after being hired. Specific comments included: “They transfer in and out,” “May get called out for duty,” “...scared of deployment.”
- 3. Age of military veterans:** Although only mentioned by a small number of employers, it is worth bringing up a possible misconception regarding the age of current military veterans. One employer said it would be a problem that “...most must be seniors,” and another mentioned

there may be a “reluctance to hire older workers.” The reality of the young and energetic returning military veteran does not seem to be the image conjured by some employers, which could be a roadblock in terms of willingness to consider them as potential employees.

4. **Translation of skills into the current job market:** Employers mentioned that it may be hard to translate military skills into job market. A specific comment was “Sometimes difficult to translate military experience to relevant manufacturing experience.”
5. **Emotional or psychological issues:** Employers were wary of emotional and/or psychological problems such as PTSD, anger management problems, or more generally that there are “...too many emotional issues.”
6. **Expectations of pay or position:** Employers expressed a concern that veterans may have unrealistic expectations as to position and pay, or would not perform menial work. Examples are “In my experience they want a higher pay to support family” or “Veterans may not apply to lower paid positions.”
7. **Lack of job fit:** Employers mentioned that there was a lack of job fit for military veteran applicants. Examples include: “They don’t like the work we have available” and “Would not have many applicants in our line of business.”
8. **Character or work ethic:** Employers mentioned issues in this area, including a mention of employers who mentioned a perceived “lack of commitment.”

Positive Comments Regarding Hiring Military Veterans

Although the open ended question asked of employers was worded in terms of reasons employers are not hiring veterans, a large number of employers provided positive comments about military veterans. As a matter of fact, the perception of employers was overwhelmingly positive, and most employers were enthusiastic in their praise of the benefits of hiring military veterans. This information could potentially be used in a campaign to educate employers regarding the benefits of hiring military veterans. A summary of the main positive themes is provided below.

- **Dependability/Reliable**
- **Disciplined/Structured**
- **Good Work Ethic**
- **Experienced**
- **Good Team Players**
- **Intelligence**
- **Leadership Skills**
- May have supplemental or alternative **health and other benefits**

ABOUT ERISS

ERISS Corporation is an award-winning company and a national leader in employer outreach, employer surveys and workforce technology since 1992. We have served Workforce Investment Boards and economic development organizations across the nation conducting large-scale survey and outreach projects, as well as targeted industry sector surveys, interviewing over 2,000,000 employers in the last ten years. ERISS's projects capture employer-specific information such as brand awareness, knowledge of service offerings, services needed, and satisfaction rankings, current and forecasted hiring, planned layoffs, barriers to growth and preferences towards hiring special populations. For more information visit www.eriss.com or contact Barbara Nyegaard, CEO at bjn@eriss.com.



APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Does your company work with any of the following Veteran Organizations?
Please answer Yes or No as I read the options.
 - Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA) Office
 - Office of Employment and Training
 - American Legion
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Army Career Alumni Program
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars VFW
 - One Stop Career Centers
 - AMVETS
 - USO
 - None
 - Don't Know

2. Are you aware of the number of military veterans in your company?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know

4. Does your company have a program for hiring military veterans?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know

4. Does your company translate military background and experience into terms relevant to your company's needs?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know

5. Would you be interested in participating on a region-wide initiative around hiring military veterans?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know

6. Would you consider hiring qualified candidates in any of the following categories?

- Veterans
- Former Offenders
- Persons with Disabilities

7. What would you say are some of the reasons local employers are not hiring Veterans?