

Finding your feet on civvy street: Navigating a second career after military service

March 14 2023, by David Bradley



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A nation's armed forces rely on personnel to defend that nation through their strength, determination, and ability to adapt to modern warfare whether their role is on land, sea, or in the air. In most countries, young recruits join the military willingly as a career choice. There are, of course, some countries that have national service, or conscription. This might also change in times of conflict. Those who sign up are generally well aware that their careers will have a duration that is far shorter than that of someone working in civilian life in general, unless of course, they rise through the ranks to the upper echelons of service, when retirement might come later.

Commonly military personnel will complete their service between the [ages](#) of 35 and 50, perhaps having joined when they reached adulthood or shortly thereafter. Civilian employment generally sees individuals reaching "retirement" age in their mid to late 60s, although that age varies considerably and in some places people tend to retire before they reach 60, in others, there is a push to raise the retirement age to 70 to ensure an active workforce in the face of an aging population.

Given the much younger [retirement age](#) of military personnel, there is generally a pressing need for those retiring from the [armed forces](#) to seek out a second career. These individuals are often highly skilled and disciplined and should be seen as a valuable, national asset with talents that can be used to allow them to earn a good living as well as play their part in society after their military service is complete. However, many veterans struggle to find appropriate second careers. This problem is often exacerbated by physical and [mental health problems](#) that may have arisen during active service, for example, in peacekeeping activities or war zones.

The issue of age at retirement can also be a problem for those leaving service later in life and hoping to jump into a new career when they may be many years older than others seeking training and employment in a

given sector, such as construction or commercial driving.

A study in the *International Journal of Society Systems Science* by a team from the Mittal School of Business at the Lovely Professional University in Phagwara, Punjab, India, has looked at how strategies and principles might be developed to help ex-military personnel, veterans, determine their need and desire for a second career after [military service](#) and to assess those aspirations realistically.

The team of Sarabjit Singh Walia and Rajesh Verma suggest that their findings are crucial for society as a whole but in particular for helping veterans who have dedicated their lives to serving their country. The team highlights many of the challenges veterans face when transitioning from the military and finding themselves back on what is colloquially known as "civvy street," in civilian life, in other words. They highlight the need for support and resources to assist with this transition.

The team points out that employers may need education so that they can learn to recognize the value of taking on military veterans and so open up new opportunities where unique skills and experience can be used. Conversely, training for ex-military personnel that focuses on [self-employment](#) and entrepreneurship could be a focus for those who see a second career outside the realm of conventional employment.

The work looks specifically at the armed forces of India and reveals the differences in transition needs for those leaving the army, the navy, and the air force. Although points out that, ultimately, all such [personnel](#), once they change out of their uniforms find themselves in a similar position on civvy street. There is a pressing need to address society's shortcomings in order to help retiring [military personnel](#) make a successful transition from service back into [civilian life](#).

More information: Sarabjit Singh Walia et al, Second

career—availability and aspirations of ex-servicemen, *International Journal of Society Systems Science* (2023). DOI: [10.1504/IJSSS.2022.10054494](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSSS.2022.10054494)

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