

Veterans in San Diego's private security industry^{1,1}



Executive Summary

San Diego County is home to one of the largest concentrations of Veterans in the country. More than a quarter million veterans reside in the county, with half actively in the labor force. After serving their country, these brave men and women often struggle to transition back into civilian life. For many veterans, in San Diego County finding a decent job is one of their greatest challenges. Recent Census Bureau estimates show that veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, "Post 9/11" have a higher unemployment rate compared to San Diego residents, with a quarter living at or near San Diego County's poverty line. One industry where veterans do find work, however, is in the private security industry. In San Diego County alone there are approximately 2,000 privately-contracted veteran security officers who protect the area's most prestigious commercial real estate, life sciences, and technology companies. Veterans bring years of specialized training and discipline to the private security industry, yet many earn poverty wages, have little or no paid sick leave and vacation time, and have no access to reliable, affordable healthcare.²

The exponential rise in the cost of living, coupled with low standards within the private security industry, hold back veterans and their families. With a median hourly rate of \$11.53, many veteran security officer households are finding themselves in economic hardship, commonly relying on social service programs to supplement their needs. This report highlights the plight of veteran security officers in San Diego's private security industry and calls for business owners and local officials to raise industry standards in the private security industry. As the largest representative for contracted private sector service workers throughout the state, SEIU-USWW envisions a California where all working families can prosper and a California that is committed in lifting the standards for all security officers in the region's private security industry.

MAIN FINDINGS

- One quarter of the county's private security officers are veterans;
- Post 9/11 veterans have a higher unemployment rate compared to a San Diego County residents;
- Veteran households have a higher percentage rate of living at or near the poverty line than San Diego County households;
- Post 9/11 veteran households have a higher food stamp recipient rate than San Diego County households;
- African-American and Latino Post 9/11 veterans have more difficulty finding employment; and,
- Approximately 30% of married Post 9/11 veterans with at least 1 own child in household live at or near the poverty line.

¹All San Diego County Veteran estimates produced using the 2009-2013 American Community Survey PUMS, unless noted otherwise.

²Report does not analyze monetary benefits certain veterans may be eligible for depending on their classification.

Introduction

San Diego has the largest concentration of military presence worldwide, with over 100,000 active-duty Navy and Marine Corps personnel assigned in the region.¹¹ More than a quarter million of military men and women call San Diego home after their service; and, as United States' military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan decreases, many of these "Post 9/11" veterans in San Diego are transitioning back to civilian life. Government programs such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) were created to support and streamline job opportunities for veterans by offering employers' economic incentives for each hire, yet many employers in low-wage industries have profited from the program. For instance, in 2014, employers were getting up to \$9,600 in federal tax cuts for each veteran they hired¹¹ even if the recent hire earned just above minimum wage. As supply and demand for veterans in the region's private security industry increases, many veterans who view the industry as a natural fit to their military experience face a new challenge: poverty wages and low industry standards. These brave men and women who served and protected our country in times of need, and who now protect our communities, should have the good, family-supporting jobs that they deserve.

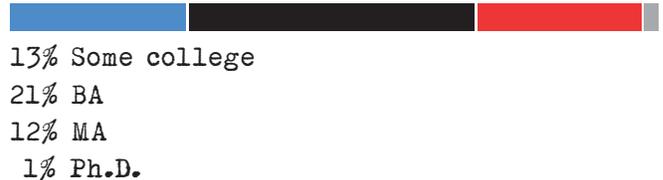
Veterans in San Diego County

Many veterans retire in the county after their service, but thousands each year enter the region's job market searching for a second career. This influx of skilled labor helps strengthen the county's overall workforce. For example, almost half of veterans in the labor force have at least some college experience, with many achieving graduate degrees; yet, despite their impeccable qualifications, many veterans - particularly younger veterans - are having difficulty finding decent jobs in the region.

San Diego County is home to approximately 30,000 veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. With an average age of 29, these brave men and women are currently the youngest U.S. combat veterans. Many of these Post-9/11 veterans return home to face a multitude of challenges, including quality employment. In San Diego County, about 12% of Post-9/11 veterans in the labor force are

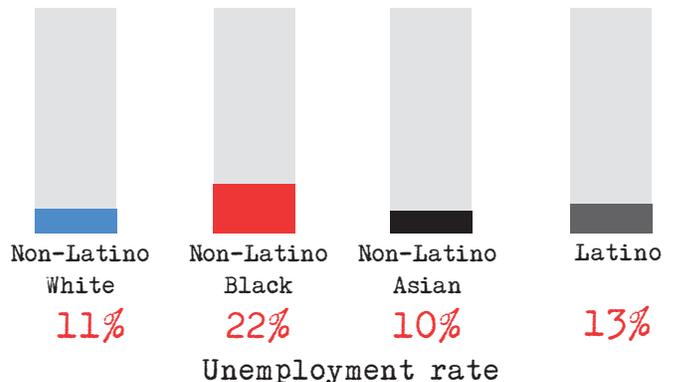
Mean average age: **48**

Almost half (**47%**) of Veterans in the labor force have at least some college, B.A. degree or higher



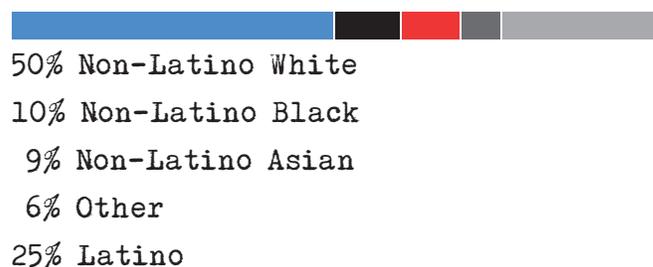
60% of Veterans are married

Unemployment by race/ethnic
for post 9/11 veterans

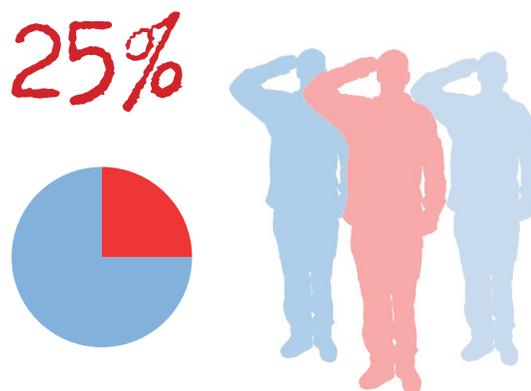


currently unemployed. Unemployment statistics San Diego County is home to approximately 30,000 veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. With an average age of 29, these brave men and women are currently the youngest U.S. combat veterans. Many of these Post-9/11 veterans return home to face a multitude of challenges, including quality employment. In San Diego County, about 12% of Post-9/11 veterans in the labor force are currently unemployed. Unemployment statistics for minority Post 9/11 veterans are even worse. To illustrate, African-American and Latino Post 9/11 veterans are less likely to find employment compared to other groups. While many veterans view the security industry as a stepping stone into law enforcement, limited job opportunities prompt some veterans to seek work in the private security industry, where military experience and training are transferable skills for employment. But many are finding that the industry's low standards are holding them back.

Post 9/11 veterans: Racial Breakdown



Number of Post 9/11 veteran households with at least one person in security industry living at or near poverty



Private Security Industry in San Diego

Security officers in the private security industry protect some of the most prestigious buildings in San Diego County. From biotech companies in the region's Golden Triangle to high-rise commercial real estate office buildings in downtown, security officers are the first responders to property and public safety emergencies. Nonetheless, privately-contracted security officers are some of the lowest paid workers in the state. On average, security officers in San Diego's private security industry make less than \$11 per hour, with little to no benefits. Low industry standards hold many security officers back from enjoying the growing prosperity in many of San Diego's economic industry drivers. For example, 30% of private security officers live at or near the poverty line. Moreover, almost a third of households with at least one person employed in the private security industry endure similar economic hardships. While many of the biotech and communication sites that officers protect are considered regional "economic drivers," many privately-contracted officers who contribute to the success of these companies are denied that prosperity.

Veterans' Struggle in the Private Security Industry

Many veterans view the security industry as a lateral transition into the civilian work force. Veterans can streamline their transferable military experience and training through the California's Bureau of Security and Investigation Services' (BSIS), Veterans Come First program to meet all or part of the Bureau's licensing qualifications for employment.^{iv} These incentives, along with the industry's overlapping similarities, have attracted many veterans to consider the private security industry. For instance, roughly 25% of all security officers in San Diego's private security industry are veterans. But many veteran security officers endure challenges induced by the industry's low standard practice.

The annual median earning salary for a full-time veteran security officer is \$30,000, thousands below from the estimated \$34,253 budget needed to barely get by in the region.^v While these wages are insufficient for an individual's need, the reality of unsustainable wages becomes most prevalent when trying to raise a family. For instance, a quarter of veteran households with at least one person employed in the private security industry live at or near the poverty level. Moreover, veteran officers in households with dependents are finding it difficult to meet daily needs. Approximately 6% of Post 9/11 veteran households with at least one person employed in the private security industry receive food assistance from the county - a rate higher than the average county household. Wages that hover near the poverty threshold cannot sustain a family in San Diego.

Food Stamp Recipients



6%

Vet households in security industry

30% of married Post 9/11 veterans in a household with at least one child living at or near poverty.

Veteran Security officer annual income: \$30,000

Budget needed to raise a family in San Diego: \$60,848

Veterans security officer households working full-time with only one working parent and with at least two children fall well below the estimated family budget needed for San Diego County^v

Veteran Officer, Albert Aparicio

Alberto Aparicio, a veteran security officer in San Diego, knows all too well the daily struggles that officers must go through. Albert Aparicio served in the U.S. Navy for 5 years and entered the private security industry in 2011. As a father of 3, Aparicio's hourly rate of \$10.50 makes it virtually impossible to raise a family in San Diego. In order to provide the daily needs for his family, Aparicio moved his family from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico, where his daily commute can take up to three hours. Aparicio wants to move back to the country he protected and served, but the reality of his low pay keeps him and his family in Mexico. Until industry standards improve, veteran officer Aparicio will spend up to six hours driving to and from his low-paying job, instead of spending quality time with his family.^{vi}

San Diego Can Do Better

San Diego must commit to ensure that all veterans are supported with good paying jobs that can help officers provide for themselves and their families. Veteran officers who protect some of the county's most prestigious buildings are being denied a chance at the American Dream. Veterans should not be returning home only to fight a new battle - one against poverty wages and low industry standards. San Diego leaders and businesses should ensure that the men and women protecting their buildings have decent jobs that put them on a path to prosperity. A region that prides itself on its military legacy and community should not stand by while thousands of veterans are being left behind.

About SEIU-USWW

Service Employees International Union-United Service Workers West ("SEIU-USWW") represents over 40,000 property service workers across the state of California, including approximately 20,000 janitors from San Diego to Sacramento, as well as 8,500 security officers in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and the San Francisco Bay Area. SEIU-USWW also represents stadium workers, window washers, and airport cabin cleaners throughout the state. SEIU-USWW is committed to transforming low-wage jobs into good, family-supporting jobs that drive our local economies.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Analysis of 2009-2013 American Community Survey PUMS, San Diego County

ⁱⁱ San Diego Military Economic Impact Study, 2011. Available at: http://www.public.navy.mil/spawar/Press/Documents/Publications/2011_SDMAC.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of Labor-Work Opportunity Tax Credit

^{iv} Bureau of Security & Investigate Services-Veterans Come First Program. Available at: <http://www.bsis.ca.gov/consumers/faqs/veterans.shtml>

^v Making Ends Meet: How Much Does it Cost to Raise a Family in California? 2013. Available at: http://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/131212_Making_Ends_Meet.pdf

^{vi} USWW Security Officer Testimony, Alberto Aparicio, October, 5, 2015



SEIU United Service Workers West
4001 El Cajon Boulevard, Suite 211, San Diego, CA 92105 | 619.727.5703