SOCIAL EXCLUSION AMONGST UK EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL BASED ON MEASURES OF EMPLOYMENT

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Objectives For some individuals leaving the Armed Forces, the return to civilian life can be problematic. Social exclusion describes a process of detachment from normal participation in the activities of society. This study aims to identify risk factors associated with social exclusion amongst ex-service personnel, using measures of employment.

Methods A telephone study of serving and ex-serving personnel (n=821) drawn from the King's cohort study of UK military personnel (n=10272), asked those who had left the military questions regarding their employment history and experiences since leaving the military. A composite variable was formed using employment measures, which identified a socially excluded group. These individuals were compared to a group in stable employment.

Results 215 ex-service personnel were included. 35 (7.5%) were unemployed at the time of interview. 78 (29.3%) were classified as socially excluded. Two groups were identified as being at highest risk of social exclusion: those leaving after a shorter period of service (adjusted OR 0.89, 95% CI 0.79-0.99), and those leaving after completing a full term of service (adjusted OR 14.05, 95% CI 2.78-71.06). Those with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were less likely to experience social exclusion (adjusted OR 0.20, 95% CI 0.06-0.67).

Conclusions Military service is a positive experience for the majority, however a small group of individuals who are compulsorily discharged for completing their term of service or for other reasons, fare worse in the context of social exclusion as measured by employment.