



Young combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have another challenge waiting for them when they return home: steep unemployment. More than 1 in 5 can't find work, according to data released Friday by the Labor Department. The unemployment rate last year for veterans ages 18 to 24 reached 21.1%, compared to 16.6% for that age group as a whole.

In addition to the recession, veterans groups attribute the high jobless rate to a lack of education, job experience and job training in the years before entering the service. Also, many return home with health and mental health problems that make it difficult to find work.

"When a person is deployed, it takes them out of their natural environment and they're not out there able to compete with the general public for jobs," said Joseph Sharpe, director of the economic division of the American Legion. "And when they return, they're not on an even playing field."

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