



Life After Service Study (LASS): How are Canadian Forces Members doing after Transition to Civilian Life?

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Outline

- **Dimensions of re-establishment**
- **Previous research**
- **What we know about today's CF veterans**
- **Life After Service Study**
 - **Purpose**
 - **Theoretical framework**
 - **Research areas**
 - **Methodology**
- **Summary**



Military-Civilian Transition: Dimensions of Re-establishment

- **Employment**
- **Physical health**
- **Mental health**
- **Social support**
- **Mitigation of disabilities**
- **Income**
- **etc...**



Previous Research on CF Veterans

The 1970s and 1980s

- 1970s: smooth transition to civilian life can have a positive impact on the CF's ability to recruit, motivate and retain military personnel.
 - focus of re-establishment was civilian employment and return to work
- 1980s: broader framework for transition including social, psychological and economic determinants of successful transition



Previous Research on CF Veterans : The 1990s

- 1999 VAC CF client survey found that disability pensioners suffered multiple problems affecting transition to civilian life
- Studies:
 - among Veterans not employed, the majority were not seeking employment
 - many VAC clients were poorly educated
 - medically released were less likely to report having ever worked in civilian jobs after release
 - little readiness/planning for post-release civilian life

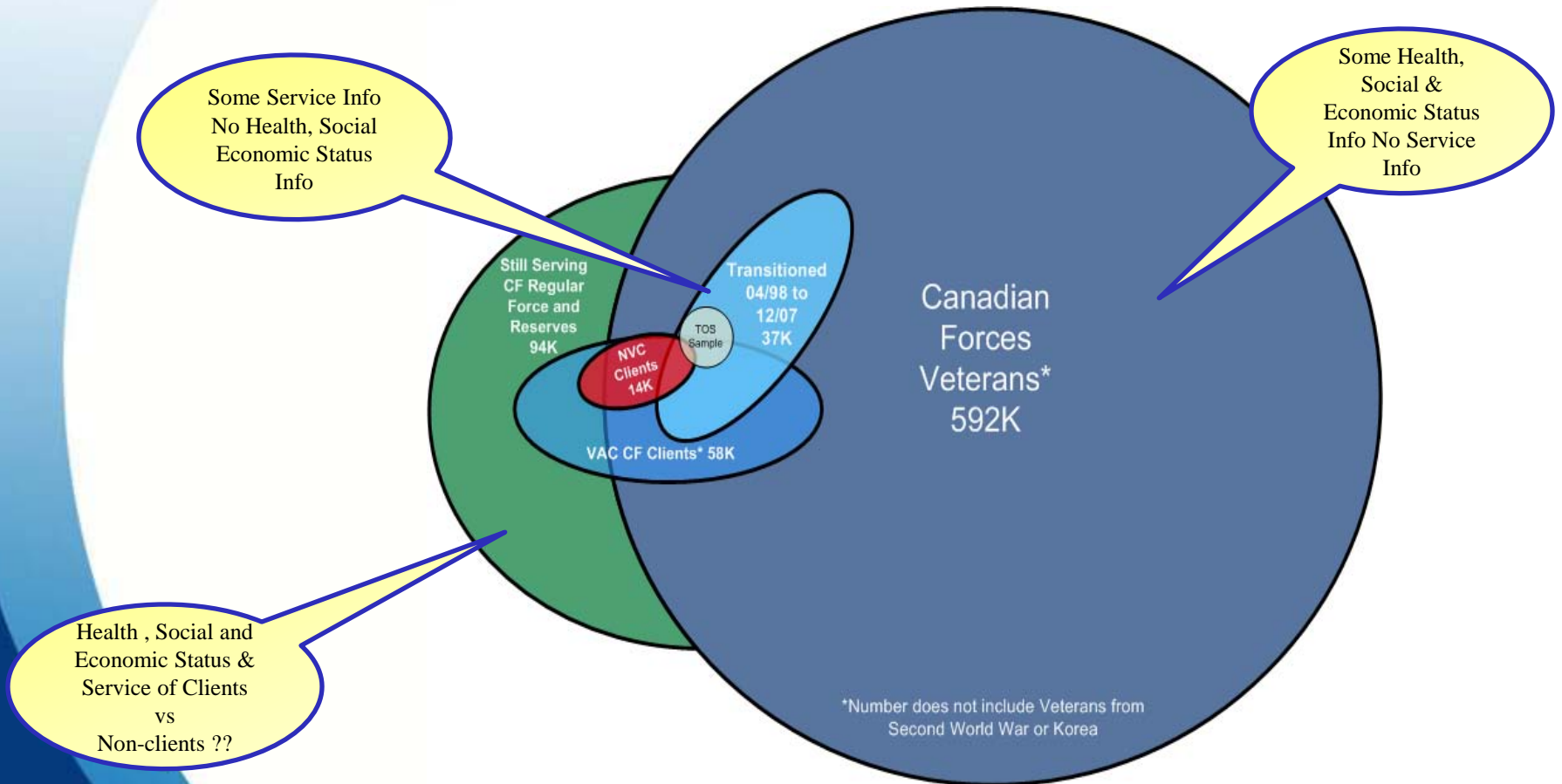


Today's CF Veterans

- Past 10 years: improvements in benefits and services: pre-retirement planning, transition to civilian life, re-establishment
- Veteran identifier questions on 2003 CCHS
- 2006: implementation of New Veterans Charter
- 2009: Re-establishment survey of NVC clients
- Limited information on composition, quality of life, and needs of today's veterans
 - Information is outdated
 - Only VAC clients were surveyed in previous research



We Need to Know More





How Will VAC and DND Study Transition?

- Partnership between VAC/DND with Statistics Canada on a four-part research program to understand:
 - transition from service to Veteran civilian status
 - the short- and long-term quality of life of Veterans over the life course following military service

Part 1 (March 2010)

- Income Changes

Part 2 (July 2010)

- Health, Social and Economic Status & Determinants

Part 3 (Aug 2010)

- Mortality (including suicide)

Part 4 (2011-12)

- Cancer



Purpose

- To support
 - VAC/DND's transition, re-establishment and disability programs/mandate and:
 - 2006 VAC launched the New Veterans Charter (NVC);
 - 2010 Treasury Board requires a comprehensive evaluation of the NVC.
 - DND's recruitment, personnel support, motivation and retention efforts.
- To fill the gap in research on transition outcomes in Canada and other countries



Theoretical Framework

- **Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948)
- **Disability:** the impact of physical or mental health impairments on functioning
- **Determinants of quality of life:** the range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine the health status and quality of life of individuals or populations
- **Life course:** changes that take place in health, disability and the determinants of quality of life over time



Research Topics

1. Transition & Re-establishment
2. Program Reach
3. Unmet Needs
4. Program Effectiveness



1. Transition & Re-establishment

- How are Canadian Forces members doing after transition to civilian life in terms of income, health-related quality of life, well-being and disability?
 - Are the incomes of the medically released significantly different from the non-medically released?
 - What is the disability level of VAC clients compared to non-clients?
 - Do Veterans with longer service have a better quality of life after service? Do they have higher incomes relative to other groups and are they more satisfied with their finances?



2. Program Reach

- Are VAC's existing transition/re-establishment programs reaching those in need?
 - Is there a need for targeted outreach for some groups of Veterans?
 - How many Veterans with disabilities* (service and non-service) are not in receipt of VAC disability benefits?
 - How many disabled* Veterans experiencing barriers to re-establishment are not in receipt of VAC rehabilitation?

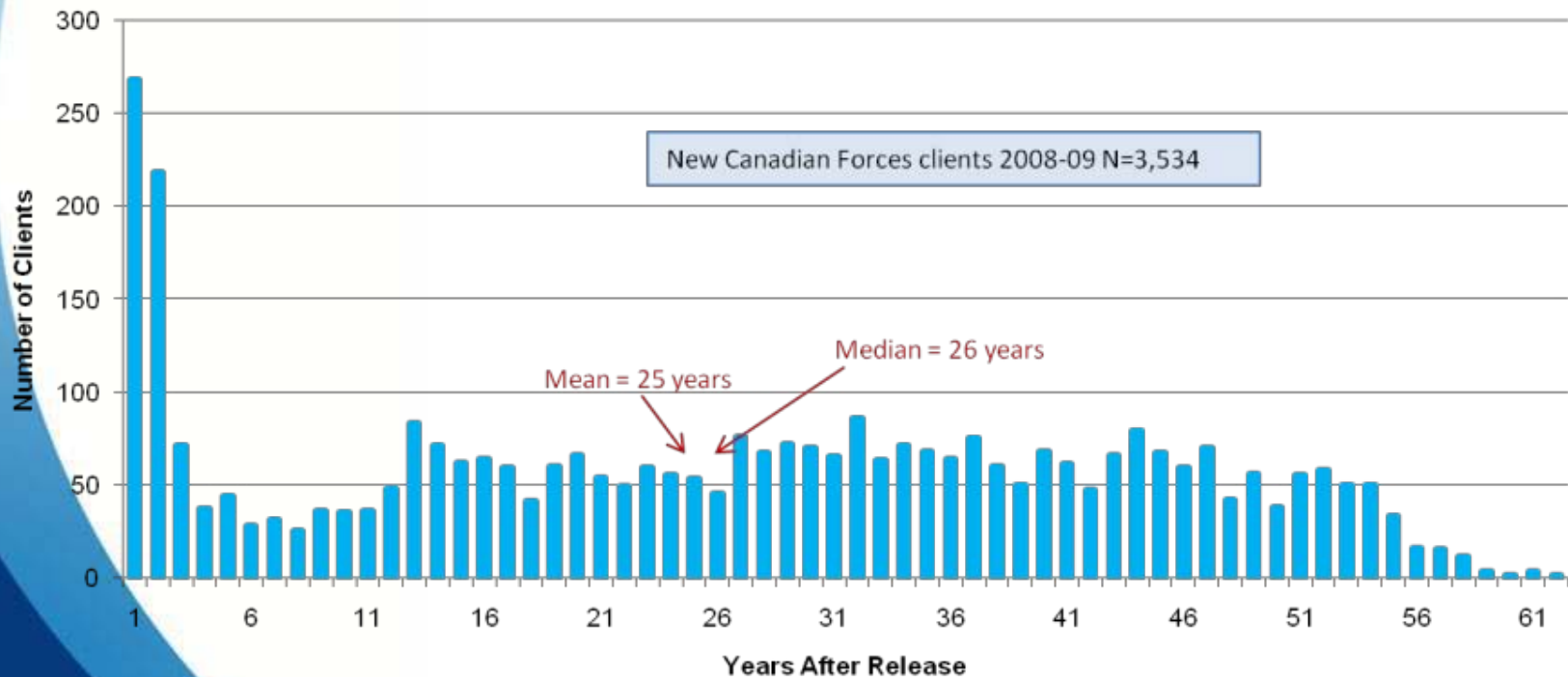
* Disability = impact of a physical or mental impairment on functioning, not specific to VAC programs



2. Program Reach

- The majority of Canadian Forces Veterans claim for and are approved for service-related disabilities long after leaving service.

First Entitlements for Disability Programs





3. Unmet Needs

- Are there unmet needs that call for new/revised programs and services?
 - Is there a need for income-support programs beyond existing programs for some groups of Veterans?
 - Are there access to health care issues that could be addressed through changes in eligibility?
 - Could transition interviews, which are now voluntary, target those most at risk?



4. Program Effectiveness

- Is the quality of life of VAC clients greater than that of non-clients despite higher disability levels?
 - How do the incomes of New Veterans Charter (NVC) clients compare to that of non-NVC clients and other Veterans?
 - Do NVC clients have greater quality of life than non-NVC clients?
 - Are those who released over the most recent five years, when there was a greater VAC/DND focus on transition, better off than those released longer ago?



Part 1: Income Changes

- Linkage of recently released Veterans to historical tax files
- Income and sources of income 1995-2007
- Analysis to include
 - Average pre and post release income
 - % with employment insurance or social assistance since exit
 - % self employed;
 - % earning wages; and
 - low income
- Relationship of income to demographic and service characteristics (age, gender, length of service, release reason, VAC client type)



Part 2: Transition to Civilian Life Survey

- Well-being (physical, mental and social), disability, and determinants of quality of life of CF Regular Force Veterans released from 1998-2007
- *Quality of life*: General health, chronic conditions, mental health, education, smoking, alcohol use, stress, social support, satisfaction with life, measures of disability
- *Military context*: Service characteristics (length of service, type of release, number of deployments, rank, education, era, occupation, combat exposure, environment), skills transferability, adjustment to civilian life



Summary of Study Parts

	Part 1 Income Data Linkage	Part 2 Transition to Civilian Life Survey	Part 3 – Mortality Data Linkage	Part 4 – Cancer Data Linkage
Study Population	~90% of 43,000 Regular Force & 21,000 Primary Reserves released 1998 to 2007	4,800 Regular Force of 37,000 released from 1998 to 2007 (excludes 6,000 that re-entered the CF)	Regular Force since 1972 and Primary Reserve since at least 1998*	Regular Force since 1972 and Primary Reserve since at least 1998*
Method	Linkage to StatsCan tax files 1995 to 2007	Transition to Civilian Life Survey conducted by phone (30-35min) Feb - March 2010	Linkage to Stats Can mortality registries	Linkage to Stats Can cancer registries
Content	Household and personal income, sources of income, low income	Health status (mental, physical and social) determinants of health, and disability	Mortality by cause of death including suicide	Incidences of diagnosed cancers
Results	March 2010	July 2010	August 2010	2011-12

•Work underway to expand nominal roll back to releases since 1972.



Population Comparisons

- Canadian General Population
- CF Veterans
 - NVC Clients in Re-establishment Survey
 - CCHS 2003 CF Veterans
 - Gulf War Mortality and Cancer Study
 - 1999 CF Client Survey
- CF Still Serving
 - CCHS 2003 Mental Health Component Serving CF
 - Health & Lifestyle Information Survey (HLIS)
 - Your Say Quality of Life Survey
 - Recruit Health Questionnaire (RHQ)
- Military Populations of Other Countries



Limitations

- Most data will be cross-sectional and not longitudinal, limiting analysis over the life course
- Reliance on self-report for health status, disability, and determinants of quality of life
- Survey component does not include Reserves
- Does not provide data on War Service population
- Potential for limits on analysis at sub-population level (example those who completed the VAC Rehabilitation Program)
- Family issues are not included in this study



Strengths

- Quality of data and methodology
- Provides VAC with previously unknown information on both clients and non-clients
- Data measures program reach and program effectiveness
- Enables VAC to respond to queries and inform program design/development
- Contributes to research at a population level
- Research fills a current void nationally and internationally – allows VAC/DND to contribute internationally



Summary

- No consistent, measurable definition of successful military to civilian transition
- LASS will help fill gaps in research on transition and re-establishment
- Will be able to answer the question of how CF members are doing after transition to civilian life, in terms of income and quality of life, and will help improve VAC/DND programs and services
- Part of the larger *Population Health Strategy*

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