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Today the Labor Department started breaking out data on how veterans are faring in its monthly employment report. The picture isn't pretty for those who participated in the most recent Gulf War: Their unemployment rate stood at 12.6% in January, compared to 9.7% for the general population.

A large part of the divergence could be explained by the age of veterans of the second Gulf War: They tend to be in their late teens and early twenties, a group in which unemployment rates are relatively high. For people aged 20 to 24 in the general population, for example, the unemployment rate was 15.8% in January. Also, for all veterans, the unemployment rate stood at 9.6%, not too different from the national rate.

Still, certain categories of veterans — particularly women — fared worse. The unemployment rate among female veterans jumped to 11.2% in January from 6.6% a year earlier, compared to a jump to 9.4% from 7.5% for men. In the general population, the trend was much different. Over the same period, the unemployment rate for women went to 8.4% from 6.9%. For men, it rose to 10.8% from 8.5%.