



Understanding Vocational Outcomes for Service Members & Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury: A Scoping Review

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More information

For details about this project including references, visit us at: <https://tinyurl.com/y522drb8>
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Introduction

Nearly 414,000 United States Service Members involved in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn were diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI). During these operations, Service Members aged 18-24 had the greatest risk of TBI. Even without traumatic brain injury, Veterans experience lower employment rates than their civilian counterparts. Among 18-24 years old, Veterans were unemployed at 21.6% compared to 13.5% among civilians. This poster synthesizes the literature about vocational outcomes for Service Members and Veterans with TBI.

Methods

Included studies focused on U.S. Service Members and Veterans who sustained TBIs and their vocational outcomes. Conference abstracts, systematic reviews, literature reviews, editorials, consensus reports, commentaries, dissertations and qualitative studies were excluded. Two rounds of independent reviews were performed. Details of study design, intervention, and vocational outcomes were recorded.

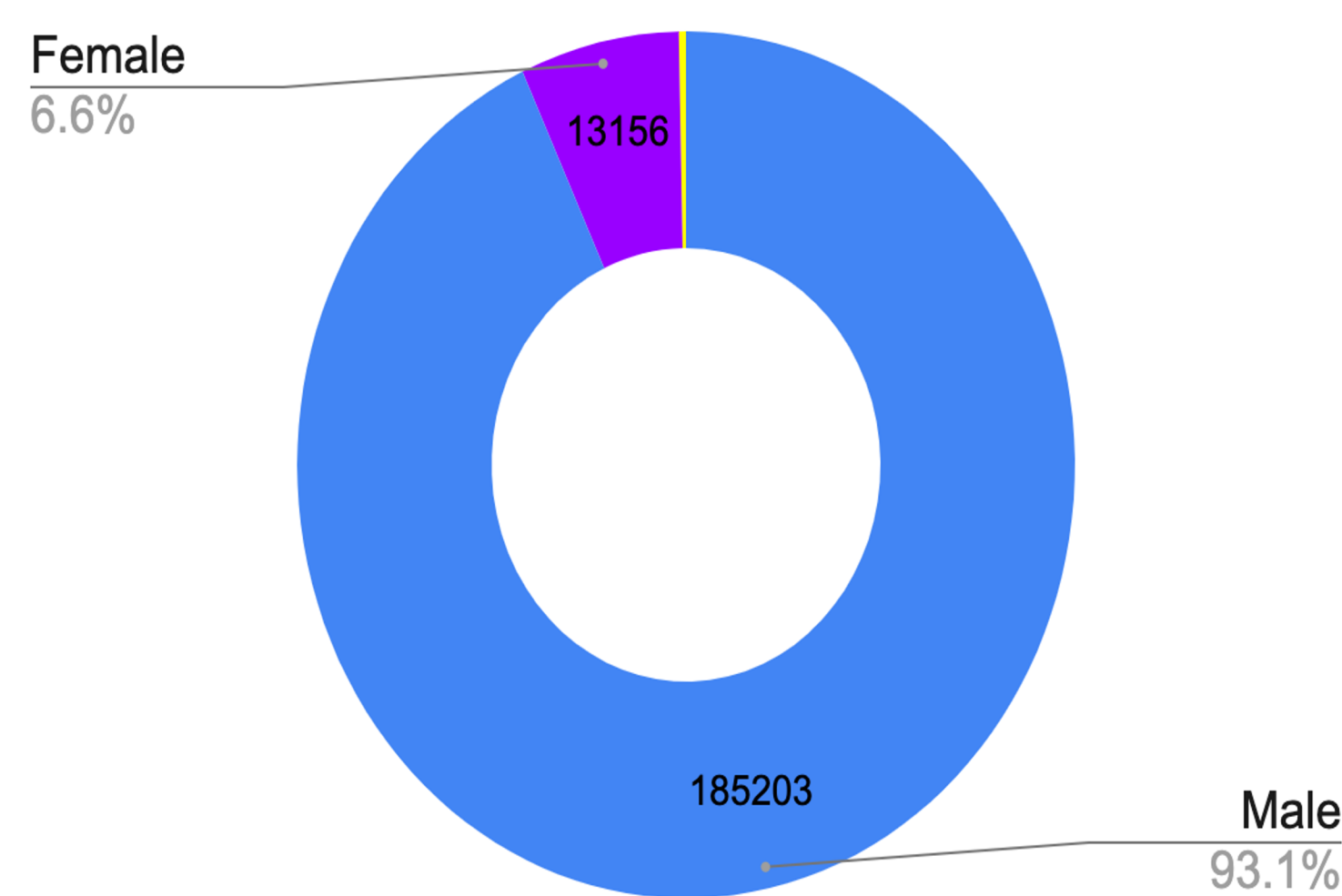


Figure 1: Gender

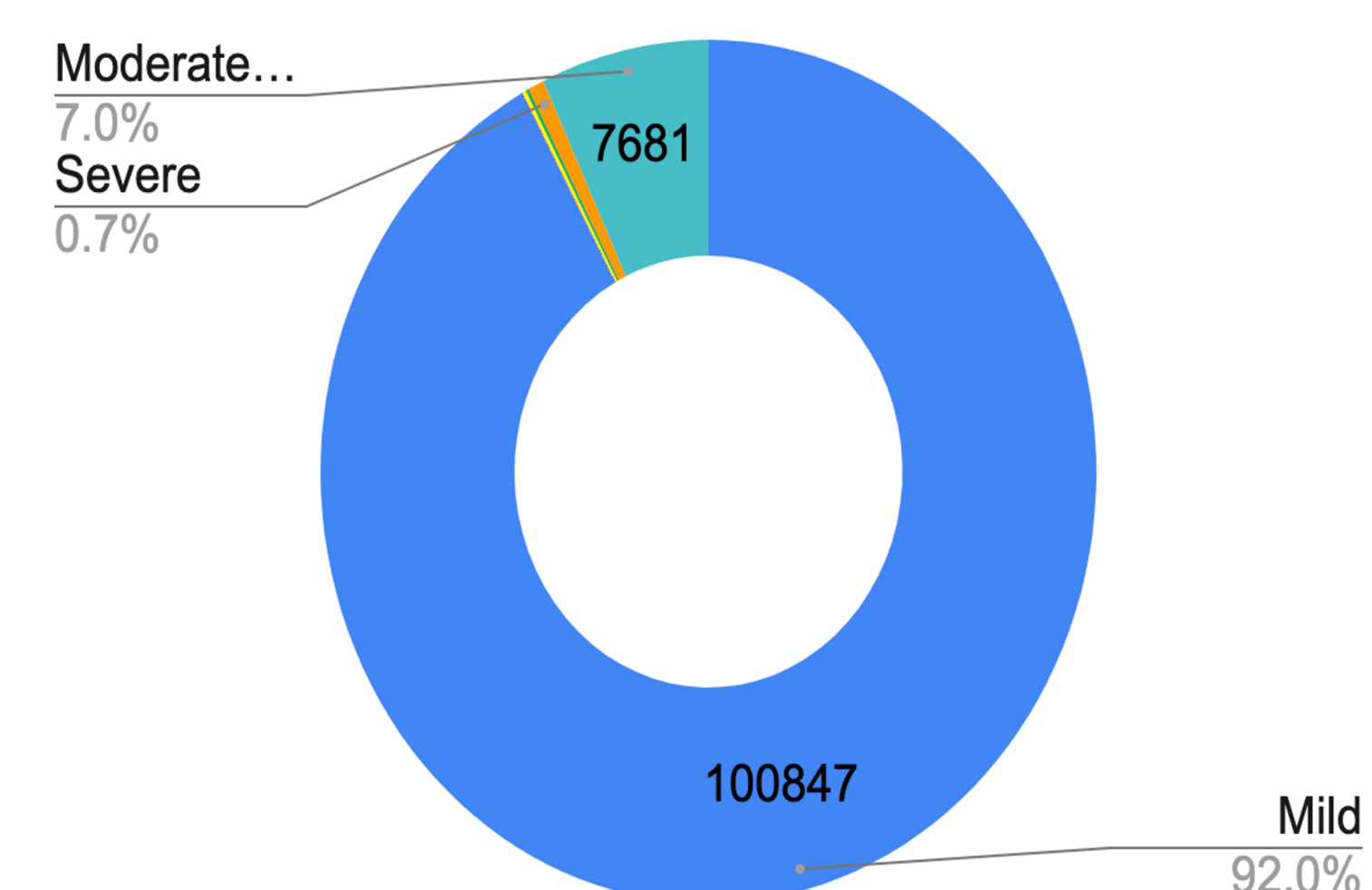


Figure 2: TBI Severity

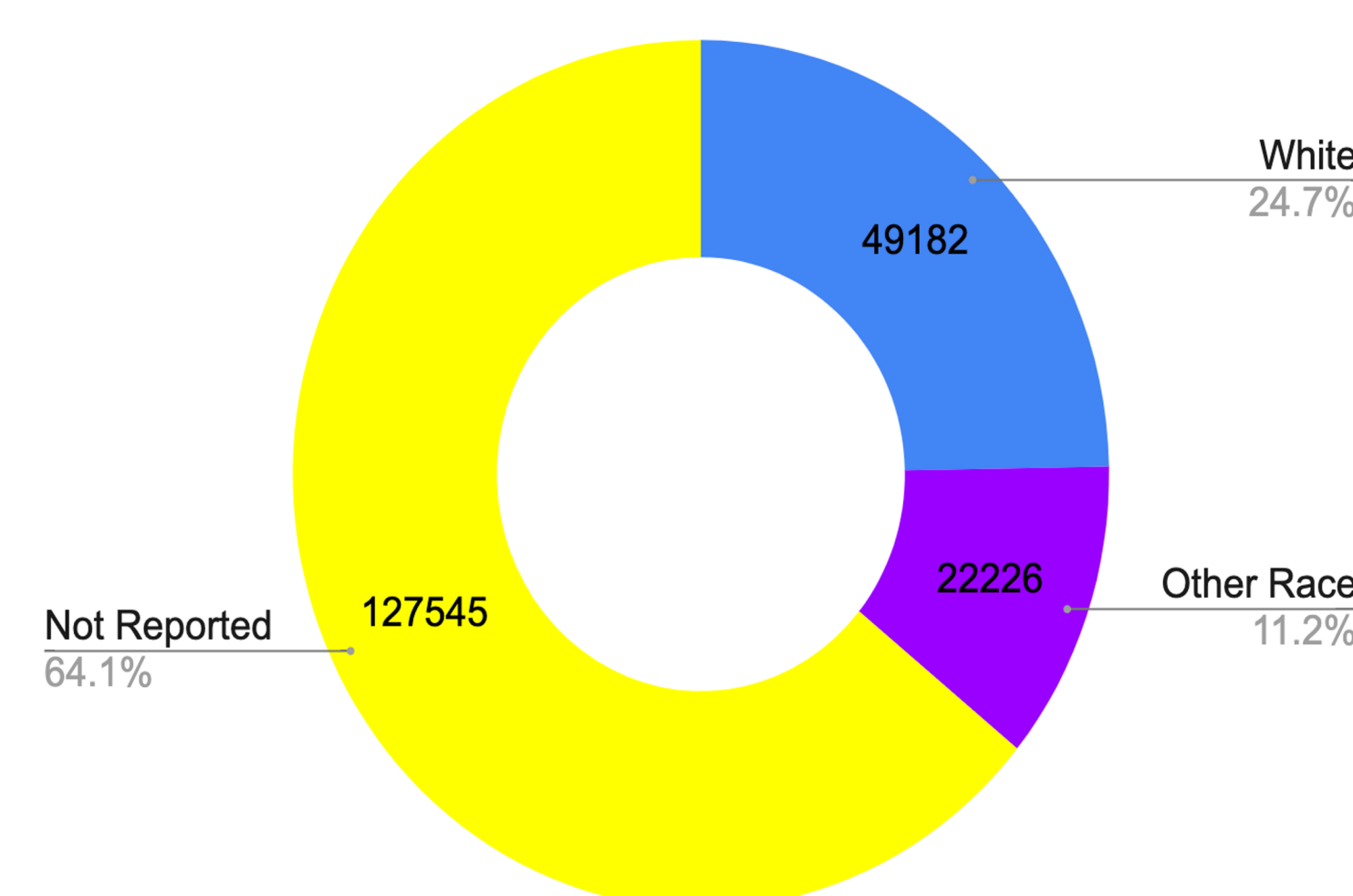


Figure 3: Race

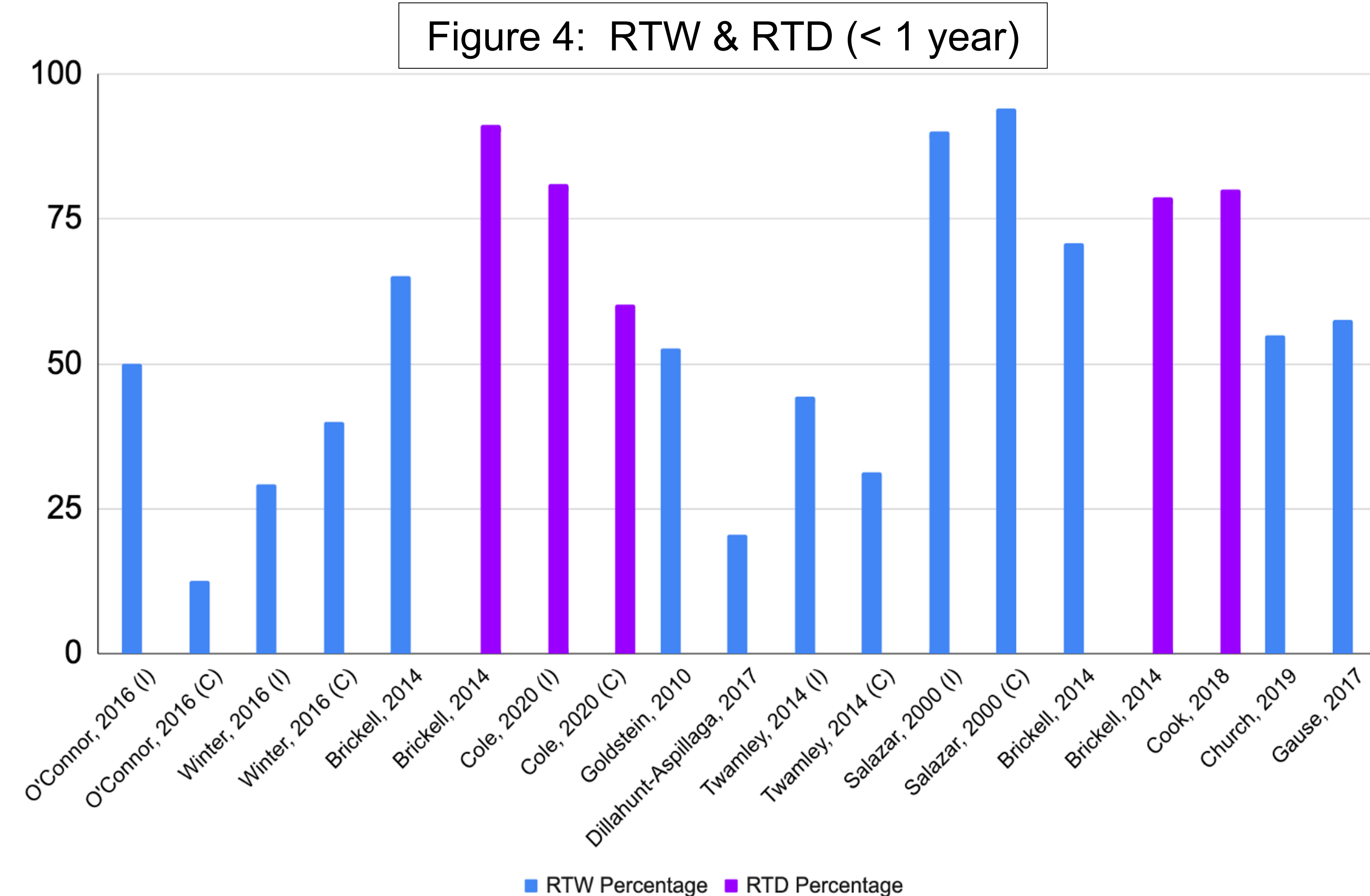


Figure 4: RTW & RTD (< 1 year)

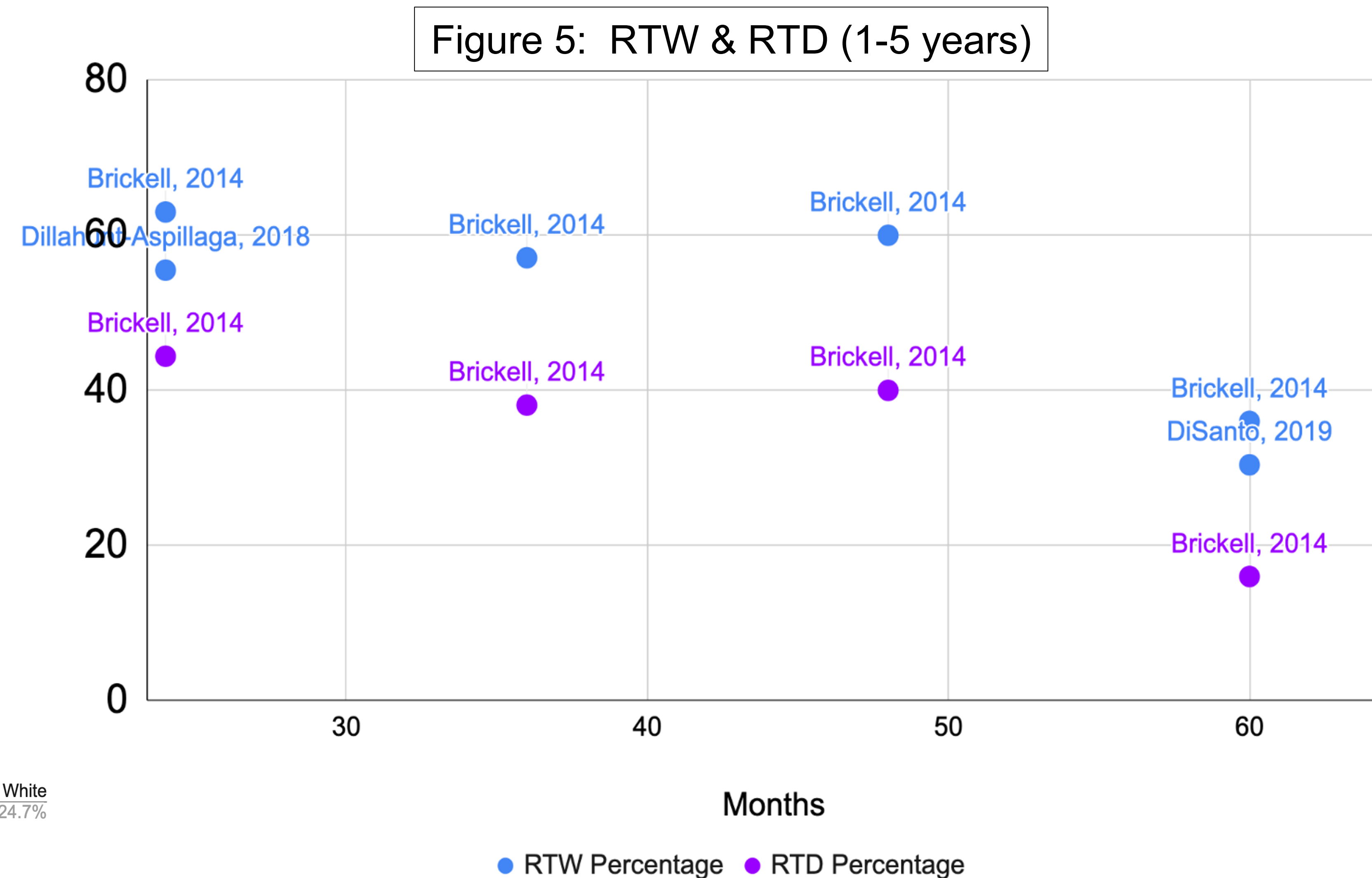


Figure 5: RTW & RTD (1-5 years)

Results

We identified a total of 5,667 papers in total. After deduplicating, the titles and abstracts of 4,659 papers were screened against the exclusion criteria, leaving 85 papers for full-text screening. Forty-one papers did not meet the inclusion criteria, leaving 54 articles to be included. This poster focuses on 42 articles related to return to work or duty. Of these, 32 of articles addressed RTW or RTD and 10 addressed predictors or risk factors.

The majority of participants were male (93.1%, Figure 1), sustained mild TBI (92.0%, Figure 2), and were White (24.7%, Figure 3).

Overall, the articles report RTW within the first year ranging from 12.5-94%; the articles report RTD within the first year ranging from 60.3-91.3% (Figure 4). Overall, the articles report RTW after the first year ranging from 30.4-60%; the articles report RTD after the first year ranging from 16.0-44.4% (Figure 5).

Discussion

Vocational outcomes among Service Members and Veterans with TBI varies widely. Given study samples are largely, male, White, and sustain mTBI, the evidence suggests lower than expected RTW or RTD. In general, there is limited evidence addressing RTD among Service Members with TBI, especially in terms of assessing long-term outcomes. While RTW is consistent with non-veteran populations with TBI, stroke, and spinal cord injury, the rehabilitation services and vocational services availability to Veterans suggest either under-utilization or limit effectiveness at sustaining employment beyond a year post-injury. Among the few studies that address long-term vocational outcomes (1-5 years), the trend suggests lower RTW with time.

Conclusion

This scoping review identifies that many Service members and Veterans with TBI experience challenges obtaining and sustaining employment. Future research should explore interventions aimed at improving long-term vocational outcomes.

