

Survey Highlights Challenges for Post-9/11 Warriors During Pandemic

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Sept. 24, 2020) — One-third of post-9/11 wounded veterans who responded to a recent Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) survey noted they have or expect to run out of money due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, over 40% noted employment difficulties, and the unemployment rate among this warrior population has reached 16% (12% unemployment rate in 2019).

Conducted from early May to late June, WWP's [latest survey](#) of the wounded veterans registered with the organization illustrates the challenges for warriors amid this health crisis. Nearly 30,000 veterans participated in the survey. In addition to financial difficulties, the 11th annual survey revealed the following:

- Since socially distancing themselves, more than half of warriors (52%) agreed their mental health is worse, and almost half (49%) agreed their physical health is worse.
- 61% of warriors feel more disconnected from their family, friends, or community.
- Physical and mental health care was delayed for warriors with appointments, with 70% having in-person physical health appointments canceled or postponed and about half (51%) having mental health appointments canceled or postponed.

Fortunately, WWP warriors also reported they have a good support system as they deal with these challenges. Specific to the pandemic, most warriors (69%) noted they know where to turn to for help if they need it. In general, 80% of warriors said there are people in their lives they can depend on to help them when they really need it.

This support system includes WWP's programs and services offered to warriors and their families.

"The difficulties of the pandemic are exacerbated for those we serve," said WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington. "That is why we are doubling down on our mission to honor and empower warriors no matter the challenge."

During the pandemic, WWP has awarded over \$11 million to warriors through the organization's [COVID-19 relief fund](#) and \$7.25 million to support caregivers of warriors through the organization's [caregiver relief initiative](#).

From April 1 to Aug. 31, WWP has also:

- [Helped place over 800 warriors and family members in new careers](#), with combined first-year salaries totaling over \$38 million.
- Hosted more than 2,400 virtual events for warriors and family members – with more than 34,000 participants.
- Held more than 13,000 telephonic and virtual sessions for emotional support and mental health workshop follow-ups.

Other Findings

In addition to findings around the pandemic, the survey revealed that a majority (71%) of WWP warriors reported they were exposed to hazardous chemicals during their military service, which aligns with the results of last year's survey. This year's survey, however, shows an increasing number of warriors are receiving treatment from the VA for their toxic exposure (16% in 2020, 9% in 2019). Slightly less than one-third (32%) have not received treatment but are enrolled in the [VA Burn Pit Registry](#). Among warriors who definitely or

probably experienced toxic exposure, the majority were exposed to burn pits (86%) or sand, dust, and particulates (76%).

The [Toxic Exposures in the American Military \(TEAM\) coalition](#) is a group of over 30 military and veteran service organizations and experts collectively gathering data, raising awareness, promoting research, and drafting legislation on the impact of toxic exposures on those who have been made ill as the result of their military service. Among the several other involved organizations, WWP has supported this effort to find solutions on behalf of the thousands of affected veterans.

The survey also provides compelling findings concerning Military Sexual Trauma (MST). For example, 11% of WWP warriors reported experiencing MST during their service. Even more WWP warriors acknowledged specific experiences often related to MST. About 61% of female warriors and 4% of male warriors experienced sexual harassment, and about 44% of female warriors and 2% of male warriors experienced sexual assault.

WWP is conducting a separate report on women veterans' issues that will be shared in 2021.

Read the [full results](#) of WWP's survey.

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About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more](#).

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