

Wounded Warrior Project Survey Highlights Veterans Mental Health, Toxic Exposure Concerns

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Feb. 22, 2022 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- The latest Annual Warrior Survey from Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) demonstrates that the effects of war and military operations on wounded, ill, and injured veterans can last a lifetime.

Specifically, the new survey reinforces that mental health is a critical concern for post-9/11 wounded warriors. The research revealed that nearly 1 in 4 post-9/11 wounded veterans registered with WWP had suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. Of the WWP warriors who reported these suicidal thoughts, most (70%) had them in the last two weeks. Overall, the survey concluded mental health issues are more than twice as common as physical ones among WWP warriors.

Adding to concern, the survey found about 1 in 5 WWP warriors have experienced difficulty or delays in receiving or continuing professional mental health care. Of these warriors, 2 in 3 say they feel embarrassed or ashamed about receiving such care, and nearly 3 in 5 (59%) don't know where to find it.

The survey also points to the crucial need for continued advocacy on toxic exposure. Nearly all WWP warriors (98%) reported exposure to hazardous or toxic substances during military service, and more than 7 in 10 were exposed to burn pits.

Read the [full results](#) of WWP's Annual Warrior Survey.

WWP reached these findings via the 12th administration of its Annual Warrior Survey – the largest, most comprehensive survey of post-9/11 wounded veterans. It was conducted in summer 2021 and represents more than 152,000 WWP warriors. The research helps shape WWP's programs and services for wounded warriors, as well as offers valuable insights for public officials, Department of Veterans Affairs, and other veterans service organizations. This survey was made possible through the generous support of CSX, the first-ever sponsor of the Annual Warrior Survey. Through its [Pride in Service](#) initiative, CSX empowers our nation's heroes with the support they deserve.

"The greatest casualty is being forgotten – and the Annual Warrior Survey reminds us to never forget the service and sacrifice of our veterans," WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington said. "We must act on the survey's findings to support their needs."

WWP's Actions to Address the Issues

WWP is using the survey findings to help increase access to mental health care for wounded veterans. For example, [new investments](#) in WWP's [Warrior Care Network](#)® now fund treatment for substance use disorder alongside post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while also improving efforts to diagnose and address traumatic brain injury (TBI). Including this latest round of investments, WWP and its partner academic medical centers have invested nearly \$290 million into treating PTSD and TBI through Warrior Care Network.

"After my first engagement with Wounded Warrior Project, I got a sense that I belonged," said Bill Thomas, a wounded warrior who attempted suicide in 2009. "I got the support that I needed. PTSD is still there, but I manage it, and I'm not as isolated as I used to be. So, I am a lot different and a lot better."

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Warriors like Bill Thomas are available to share their stories that illustrate findings of the Annual Warrior Survey

WWP has also been a leader in raising awareness about the effects of toxic exposures in the military. Supported by survey findings, the veterans nonprofit testified before Congress three times in 2021 to address the issue. Moving forward, WWP proudly champions the passage of critical pieces of legislation in both the Senate and the House of Representatives: S. 3003, the Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021, and H.R. 3967, the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2021. Both would establish the government's responsibility to provide health care and disability compensation to veterans fighting illnesses connected to military toxic exposures. WWP is asking Congress to pass these [comprehensive pieces of legislation](#) by the end of 2022.

"A fellow service member connected me with Wounded Warrior Project, and they stepped in and helped get me through the door at my local VA medical center," said Scott Evans, a wounded warrior who [shared his toxic exposure story](#) in 2021. "Without this, I have no doubt that I would have already passed away."

Survey Findings Help Businesses Support Veterans' Needs

Employers also use insights from the survey to support veterans' needs as well as tailor programs for their veteran workforce. For example, the survey found that warriors employed by companies offering a resource group or veteran mentorship program are more likely to be professionally fulfilled than warriors without such support. Nearly 20% of CSX employees are veterans, so survey findings like this guide the company's continued investment in its military business resource group.

The Annual Warrior Survey additionally informs collaboration between WWP and CSX to train the company's employees and other nonprofit partners on suicide prevention.

"Shining a light on veterans mental health is a mirrored priority between CSX and WWP, and data from this survey guides that effort," said Bryan Tucker, CSX vice president of corporate communications. "We encourage other companies to leverage this research and collaborate with their communities to support veterans across the nation."

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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