New Report Highlights Unique Challenges Female Veterans Face After Service

~ Wounded Warrior Project 2023 Women Warriors Report highlights ongoing disparities and offers policy and research solutions ~

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Today Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) released the 2023 Women Warriors Report, which highlights the unique experiences and challenges women veterans face after service, including accessing health care and undergoing a harder time transitioning back into civilian life than their male counterparts.

WWP, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for wounded service members, released the report to help policymakers better support female veterans. The findings contained in the report are derived from qualitative data from nine focus group discussions with women warriors and quantitative data from the WWP's 2022 Annual Warrior Survey.

The report, which paints a comprehensive picture of the current environment that women must navigate when they leave the service, including the continued disparities between men and women veterans, focuses on five key areas:

- Access to care
- Financial wellness
- Mental health
- Military transition
- Social health

The report also includes data from other sources about challenges that women must address and overcome, including military sexual trauma, exposure to toxins, physical health, and chronic pain.

"There's not one specific issue where we need to focus our efforts — women warriors are facing unique challenges across the board with regards to overall health and wellness, and these issues are all interconnected," said WWP Chief Program Officer Jen Silva. "The findings are especially concerning because women veterans are the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population, and we as a country still have a long way to go to ensure their needs are met."

A critical part of the report is a series of recommendations for additional research and new policies for Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), volunteer service organizations, and others to undertake to support women veterans further. "WWP did not want to simply publish this data without also offering solutions," added Silva. "This report points the way forward in a comprehensive and holistic manner, underscoring the need for greater partnerships and unified action to support the women veteran community."

"Wounded Warrior Project's 2023 Women Warriors Report sheds light on the significant challenges faced by women veterans after their service," said Representative Nancy Mace (R-SC). "These brave women, who have sacrificed so much for our country, often encounter unique obstacles as they transition into civilian life. It is our duty to ensure they receive the support they deserve. By providing comprehensive support systems, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and career resources, we can empower these remarkable individuals to thrive beyond their military service. Over the next few months, we are committed to working closely with Wounded Warrior Project and other stakeholders to develop effective policies and programs that uplift and empower our women veterans. It is time we honor their sacrifice by ensuring they receive the care, resources, and opportunities they deserve."

Despite the challenges noted in the report, women warriors had many reasons why they would recommend joining the military, including the benefits packages, such as the GI Bill for education; a more robust social network built on shared experiences and connections with other service members; the ability to develop independent skills while having financial stability; and being able to travel and move around the country and sometimes internationally.

"The study shows that women warriors are as resilient and react better to trauma than their male counterparts and want to have a strong sense of identity and community," said Silva. "We look forward to working with members of Congress, like Rep. Mace, the VA, and others to push forward policy proposals and legislation based on the recommendations in the report."

KEY FINDINGS

Access to Care

- Women warriors face barriers to care within VA. More than half (55.2%) use non-VA providers. The most common reasons reported include "easier access to care," "appointments at more convenient times," and "better-quality care."
- More than half (53%) of WWP women warriors indicated they had difficulty or put off getting needed care for physical injuries or problems, a higher proportion than male warriors (42%).

Financial Wellness

- Despite seeking higher education at higher rates, women warriors have a higher unemployment rate (10%) than male warriors (6%).
- 65% of women warriors did not possess sufficient funds to make ends meet in the past 12 months.

Mental Health

- WWP women warriors are more likely to present with moderate to severe symptoms of PTSD (50.7%), depression (58.7%), and anxiety (49.3%) than male warriors.
- The rates of suicidal ideation (29.1%) and the prevalence of at least one attempted suicide (33.2%) are higher among women warriors than male warriors.

Military Transition

- In focus groups, women talked about: Discrepancies in perceptions of women and male veterans, lack of support and preparation for transition, and impact of a military career on mental/physical readiness and preparation for civilian life.
- Compared to their male peers, WWP women warriors felt they faced negative perceptions. For instance, sometimes others would assume that because they're women, they are not the veteran in the household.

Social Health

- Women warriors report significantly higher levels of loneliness (73%) than males (64.9%).
- Women warriors report that their identity as a veteran significantly affects their social health, often keeping military and civilian friends separate and not talking about military experiences with civilian friends.

The data for the 2023 Women Warriors Report came from the WWP 2022 Annual Warrior Survey, which was administered from June to August 2022, of wounded, ill, and injured post-9/11 veterans registered with WWP (referred to as "warriors"). More information on the methodology is available here.

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.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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Additional assets available online: Photos (2)

https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2023-09-19-New-Report-Highlights-Unique-Challenges-Female-Veterans-Face-After-Service