

New Data Reaffirms Veteran Struggles — Wounded Warrior Project Lays Out Solutions for Change

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Feb. 26, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- More than 20 years after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, new data from the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) [Warrior Survey Wave 3](#) reveals that financial strain and mental health struggles remain significant for post-9/11 wounded veterans. The survey, representing more than 185,000 registered WWP warriors, highlights critical quality-of-life challenges, including a sleep crisis that fuels PTSD, suicide risk, chronic illness, and economic instability.

"Our commitment to helping warriors rebuild their lives following war and military service remains as strong as ever," said WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Walt Piatt. "But too many veterans continue to struggle. Together, we can find innovative and impactful solutions to keep the promise we made — to be there no matter what and bring them back to a life of hope and purpose."

Piatt will discuss the survey findings today during his testimony to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs. He will discuss the state of wounded warriors across the U.S., provide insight into [WWP's legislative priorities](#), and make recommendations on how Congress can better support the veteran community.

The Mental Health Crisis Deepens

The survey found that sleep quality is the strongest indicator of a good quality of life. Yet 82% of warriors experience sleep problems, which then intensifies other mental health challenges. For the third consecutive year, the survey found mental health challenges — particularly anxiety (80%), post-traumatic stress disorder (77%), and depression (77%) — remain at critical levels. Suicidal ideation also remains high, with more than 1 in 4 warriors experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months.

Encouragingly, 60% of warriors used mental health support groups in the last year, a small increase from 2022. WWP's mental health programs, including [Warrior Care Network®](#) and [WWP Talk](#), are expanding to meet demand, providing:

- Over 68,600 hours of PTSD and TBI treatment.
- Nearly 13,000 emotional support calls to warriors and their families.
- More than 6,490 connection events to combat isolation and foster community.

Financial Instability Puts Warriors at Risk

Wounded warriors face an unemployment rate three times higher than the general veteran population, meaning their jobs do not match their skills and experience, or opportunities are limited due to service-connected injuries.

Two out of three warriors who reported financial struggles in the past year noted rising costs as the biggest financial burden. In response:

- WWP helped secure 1,280 job placements for warriors and family members in the past year.
- WWP helped more than 15,500 warriors through education, development, or filing their benefits claims and secured over \$223 million in economic impact.
- Over \$2.8 million in financial assistance was distributed to almost 1,650 households — five times more than just three years ago.

Bolster Health Care and Support Systems

Ongoing gaps in health care and support access for wounded veterans continue. The top barriers to care that warriors noted included long wait times, difficulty scheduling appointments, and limited options in certain geographic areas. Other warriors find it difficult to get treatment for chronic pain and service-connected injuries, while women warriors report gaps in gender-specific

care.

WWP is working to close these gaps by driving policy change and expanding programs and services for warriors. Over the past year, WWP has:

- Advanced legislative priorities that improve health care access and strengthen support systems for wounded veterans.
- Launched the Women Warriors Initiative to address the unique challenges faced by the fastest-growing segment of the veteran community.

Turning Data into Action

While progress has been made in these areas, the new report lists several key recommendations, based on the survey data, for policy makers and the community to pursue to improve the lives of veterans:

- Advance policies that improve access to mental health resources and remove barriers like long wait times and provider shortages, including the Veterans' Assuring Critical Care Expansions to Support Servicemembers (ACCESS) Act (H.R. 740, S. 275), which would expand access to community care.
- Provide whole-health solutions to enhance care and treatment for co-occurring conditions, addressing mental health, substance use, chronic pain, and sleep disorders. WWP calls on Congress to pass the Precision Brain Health Research Act, which would require VA to create a 10-year research plan to establish the effects of repetitive low-level blast injuries.
- Develop early financial management training and stronger employment resources for veterans to achieve stability and long-term success, and ensure Congress passes the Major Richard Star Act, which allows more than 54,000 veterans to collect their full retirement benefits that they have earned.

"The greatest casualty is being forgotten," said Piatt. "This survey ensures that doesn't happen by identifying warriors' challenges and highlighting the solutions needed. We are committed to turning these findings into action, working hand-in-hand with policymakers, veterans' organizations, and the American public to keep the promise to those who served."

About the Survey

The Warrior Survey is the most extensive study of post-9/11 wounded veterans, conducted biannually to track long-term trends. Focusing on financial wellness, mental health, access to care, and quality of life, the survey provides data that drives WWP's programs and advocacy — ensuring warriors get the support they need when they need it. For more information, click [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 about Wounded Warrior Project.](#)

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