

2022 ANNUAL WARRIOR SURVEY

KEY TOPIC FACT SHEET: SOCIAL CONNECTION



Data from the Annual Warrior Survey (AWS) is representative of the 165,967 wounded warriors who were registered with Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) as of April 2022 — referred to as “WWP warriors” throughout this document.



SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Research has shown that a feeling of community can help individuals have a sense of identity, feel supported through social connection, and improve well-being and quality of life.¹ As WWP takes a holistic approach to quality of life, a sense of community is something WWP strives to foster among warriors. A new area explored in the 2022 AWS was the sense of community warriors feel being an Alumni (member) of WWP, measured using the Sense of Community Index scale.²



50%

of WWP warriors reported that it's important or very important to feel a sense of community with other WWP community members.



AT A GLANCE:

SENSE OF
COMMUNITY
TOWARDS
WWP

16% of WWP warriors indicated a high sense of community towards WWP (65% indicated a moderate to high sense of community).*

AGE: As the age of WWP warriors increases, their sense of community scores towards WWP tend to increase.

SEX: Female warriors tend to report (on average) a higher sense of community score towards WWP than male warriors.

RACE: White warriors tend to report (on average) a lower sense of community score towards WWP than other races.

EDUCATION: There is no difference between the mean sense of community scores for WWP warriors with or without a bachelor's degree (or higher).

RURAL WARRIORS: Rural warriors tend to report (on average) a lower sense of community score towards WWP than those living in more urban settings.



CHARACTERISTICS OF WWP WARRIORS WITH A MODERATE-HIGH SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Of WWP warriors who reported a moderate-high sense of community towards WWP (65%):

ANXIETY[†]

45% presented with moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.

DEPRESSION[†]

52% presented with moderate to severe depressive symptoms.

PTSD[§]

47% presented with PTSD symptoms.

LONELINESS^{**}

64% reported being lonely.

QUALITY OF LIFE⁺⁺ (VR-12)

PCS: 38.9
MCS: 36.5

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH[‡]

29% reported a positive perspective.



CHARACTERISTICS OF WWP WARRIORS WITH A LOW SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Of WWP warriors who reported a low sense of community towards WWP (35%):

ANXIETY[†]

50% presented with moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.

DEPRESSION[†]

60% presented with moderate to severe depressive symptoms.

PTSD[§]

51% presented with PTSD symptoms.

LONELINESS^{**}

71% reported being lonely.

QUALITY OF LIFE⁺⁺ (VR-12)

PCS: 39.0
MCS: 34.2

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH[‡]

15% reported a positive perspective.

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★ AT A GLANCE:

WWP WARRIOR LONELINESS

66% of WWP warriors reported being lonely.

AGE: As the age of WWP warriors increases, their loneliness scores tend to decrease.

GENDER: Female warriors are more likely to report being lonely than male warriors.

RACE: White warriors are less likely to report being lonely than other races.

EDUCATION: WWP warriors with a bachelor's degree or higher are less likely to report being lonely.

RURAL WARRIORS: There is no difference between rural and urban warriors and the likelihood of being lonely.



CHARACTERISTICS OF WWP WARRIORS WHO ARE LONELY

Of WWP warriors who reported being lonely:

DEPRESSION[†]

69% presented with moderate to severe depressive symptoms.

PTSD[§]

63% presented with PTSD symptoms.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

36% reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. Of those, 75% reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past two weeks.

SEEKING HELP

74% visited a professional at least once in the past 12 months to help with issues such as stress, emotional, alcohol, drug, or family problems.

PAIN^{§§}

The average PEG score was 5.7 (range from 0-10), indicating moderate pain and interference with activities and enjoyment of life.

FINANCIAL STRAIN^{***}

72% reported being unable to make ends meet at some point in the past 12 months.

HOW IS WWP ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE?

WWP PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

WWP has three programs focused on social connection: Alumni, Peer Support, and Soldier Ride®. Each of these three programs are designed to support and empower wounded warriors and their families by providing opportunities to connect and engage with each other and their communities.

Data provided in "FY22 highlights" is based on events and services from October 2021 through September 2022.

ALUMNI PROGRAM

WWP's Alumni program creates meaningful opportunities through face-to-face and virtual programming for warriors and families to meet peers within and outside their local communities.

FY22 highlights:

- 6,400+ virtual and in-person events, keeping warriors and their families connected and out of isolation.
- 97% of connection event participants reported feeling socially connected to their peers.

PEER SUPPORT

WWP's Peer Support groups offer warriors a safe, judgment-free environment to regularly meet, share experiences, and build relationships with other warriors.

FY22 highlight: 1,200+ Peer Support group meetings held.

SOLDIER RIDE

WWP's Soldier Ride program is a multiday inclusive cycling event that promotes physical activity and building camaraderie while riding alongside fellow veterans.

FY22 highlight: 93% of Soldier Ride participants say they have greater self-confidence after participating in the event.

WWP ADVOCACY

The Government Affairs team at WWP provides a voice for warriors, family members, and caregivers by highlighting the challenges they face and advocating for change through veteran policies and initiatives. Here are some of our current legislative priorities that support social connection through advocacy:

Provide ongoing support and community for military to civilian transitions (for women warriors)

Ensure service members receive adequate preparation and support before separation. Strengthen community and mental health support during the first transition year to minimize challenges and help veterans navigate a successful transition with emphasis on peer connection, mentorship, professional networks, and streamlined connections to VA benefits and care.

WWP PARTNERSHIPS

WWP believes that no one organization can meet the needs of all wounded, injured, or ill veterans alone. By collaborating with other military and veteran support organizations, we amplify the effects of our efforts. Our investments and unfunded partnerships in the military and veteran community fill gaps in our programs and reinforce our existing efforts. Our current partnerships addressing social connection among veterans include:

- American Red Cross Military & Veteran Caregiver Network
- America's Warrior Partnership
- Armed Services YMCA
- Combined Arms
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation
- Gold Star Peak
- Kids Rank
- Military Child Education Coalition
- National Military Family Association
- Our Military Kids
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers
- Student Veterans of America
- Team Red, White, and Blue
- The Mission Continues
- Travis Manion Foundation
- Vail Veterans Program
- Vets' Community Connections
- Warrior Reunion Foundation

FOOTNOTES

* For the purposes of this analysis, high sense of community were scores 49-72, moderate sense of community were scores 24-48, low sense of community were scores 0-23.

† Anxiety was measured using the General Anxiety Disorder 7-Item (GAD-7) scale.³ Scores of ≥ 10 categorized as moderate to severe anxiety symptoms present.

‡ Depression was measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9).⁴ Scores ≥ 10 categorized as moderate to severe depressive symptoms present.

§ PTSD was measured using the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)⁵ and scores ≥ 31 denoting presence of PTSD symptoms.

** Loneliness was measured using the Three-Item Loneliness Scale.⁷ Higher scores indicate greater loneliness, where final scores can be grouped as not lonely (scores 3 to 5) or lonely (score 6 to 9).

†† Quality of life was measured using the Veterans RAND 12-Item Health Survey (VR-12).⁶ Overall, a higher PCS and MCS score indicates better health.

‡‡ Post-traumatic growth was measured using the post-traumatic growth index (PTGI).⁸ For the purposes of this analysis, a positive perspective were scores ≥ 30 .

§§ Pain was measured using the Pain, Enjoyment of Life and General Activity scale (PEG scale).⁹ This screening tool is best used to detect changes over time in the same individual, but in general, a higher score indicates more severe pain and pain-related interference with life and activities.

*** Financial strain was measured as not having enough money to make ends meet at some point in the past 12 months.

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