

New survey finds significant number of veterans with PTSD and TBI

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A new survey of 23,000 injured service members finds post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are two of the biggest mental health issues facing veterans right now.

Wounded Warrior Project says their 2015 annual Alumni Survey is the “largest collection of data on this generation of injured veterans ever collected.” An “alumnus” is defined as an injured veteran who participates with the Wounded Warrior Project.

Perhaps the most significant finding is more than three in four wounded veterans are dealing with PTSD. Wounded Warrior Project estimates at least 400,000 service members are dealing with PTSD, and another 320,000 are estimated to suffer from TBI.

“Access to care for mental health and physical health appointments is still a struggle,” says Jennifer Silva, strategy and innovations executive vice president at Wounded Warrior Project.

Silva says their survey finds that more than one in three veterans, or 35 percent, say they had difficulty getting mental health care, or put off getting such care, or did not get the care they needed.

Thirty-five percent said they have a hard time scheduling appointments with the VA, which is reportedly working to improve wait times across the nation.

The unemployment rate for non-active WWP alumni is sixteen percent, while the national unemployment rate fell to five percent in October.

The survey did find two positive points: more than two in three WWP alumni are seeking a bachelor’s degree (67.5 percent in 2015 compared to 65.6 percent in 2014).

“And we find over sixty-five percent are in the labor force, which I think is amazing,” Silva says. “Although they have some struggles adjusting with PTSD and TBI, they are still in the work force and are being really valuable members of society.”

Wounded Warrior Project is also launching its Warrior Care Network in early 2016. The \$100 million investment connects four medical centers across the country in an effort to provide better mental care for injured veterans. The four founding medical center partners are: Emory’s Veterans Program at Emory University in Atlanta; Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program in Boston; Operation Mend Program at UCLA Health in Los Angeles; and Road Home Program at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.