

2020



ANNUAL WARRIOR
SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT®

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is a leading veterans service organization focused on transforming the way the post-9/11 generation and future generations of veterans are empowered, employed, and engaged in our communities. Our direct service programs, advocacy efforts, and collaboration among best-in-practice veteran and military organizations advance WWP's vision: to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.

★ **GIVING WARRIORS A VOICE:**



I KNOW THAT PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY LETS MY VOICE BE HEARD AND MY STORY GET TOLD. THIS IS MY CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT I NEED, WHAT HELPS, AND WHAT AREAS I STRUGGLE WITH. IF NOT US, THEN WHO?"

— WOUNDED WARRIOR

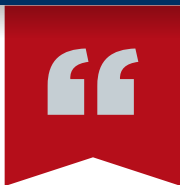
★ **PROTECTING VETERANS' RIGHTS:**



I FIND THAT THIS DATA IS NOT ONLY INVALUABLE IN ADVOCATING FOR THE WWP POPULATION TO CONGRESS, BUT ALSO HELPS US MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ON WHAT OUR ALUMNI WANT FROM CONGRESS."

— DEREK FRONABARGER
DIRECTOR, WWP GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

★ **INFORMING WWP'S LIFESAVING PROGRAMS:**



WITHOUT THE ANNUAL WARRIOR SURVEY, WE WOULD NOT HAVE OUR FINGER ON THE PULSE OF THE POST-9/11 GENERATION. IT'S INFORMED OUR LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS, OUR PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS, AND IT WILL HELP US FOR DECADES TO COME."

— JENNIFER SILVA
WWP CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER



★ SURVEY OBJECTIVE

The 2020 Wounded Warrior Project Annual Warrior Survey was the 11th annual administration of the survey. The first survey, in 2010, collected baseline data on WWP warriors. The subsequent surveys provide updates and allow WWP to identify changes and trends in the needs of the warriors they serve. WWP uses the annual survey data to build and improve programs that address those needs, and advocate for legislation that makes a difference.

★ SURVEY CONTENT

The survey measures a series of domains within the following general topics about WWP warriors: background information (military information and demographic data), physical and mental well-being, and economic empowerment. The 2020 survey also included a section about the impact of COVID-19 on warriors and their families.

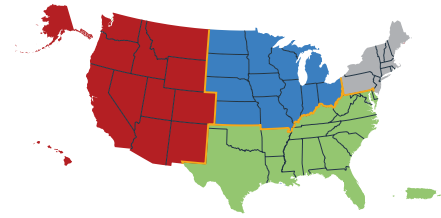
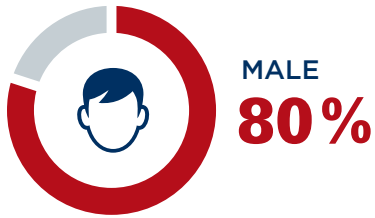
★ 2020 SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The web survey was fielded to 121,981 WWP warriors from May 5 to June 19, 2020, and 28,282 warriors completed the survey. Email communications included a prenotification, survey invitation, and nine reminders. Warriors who completed the survey were offered a choice between a phone wallet or 3-in-1 charging cable as a small token of appreciation for their participation in the survey.

The final unweighted response rate for the 2020 survey was 23 percent (28,282 completed surveys among 121,980 eligible warriors), which was almost 10 percentage points lower than the 2019 survey's 32 percent response rate. The lower response rate may be a result of the change in the field period, which was 12 days shorter than the 2019 fielding period and began in May instead of the typical March start. It could also be related to the survey launching during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn. After data collection, the survey data was weighted to allow the production of estimates that are representative of the 2020 WWP population of registered warriors.

★ WARRIOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION ★

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



AVERAGE AGE IS

★ **43** ★



★ **66%** ★

ARE CURRENTLY MARRIED



★ **42%** ★

HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

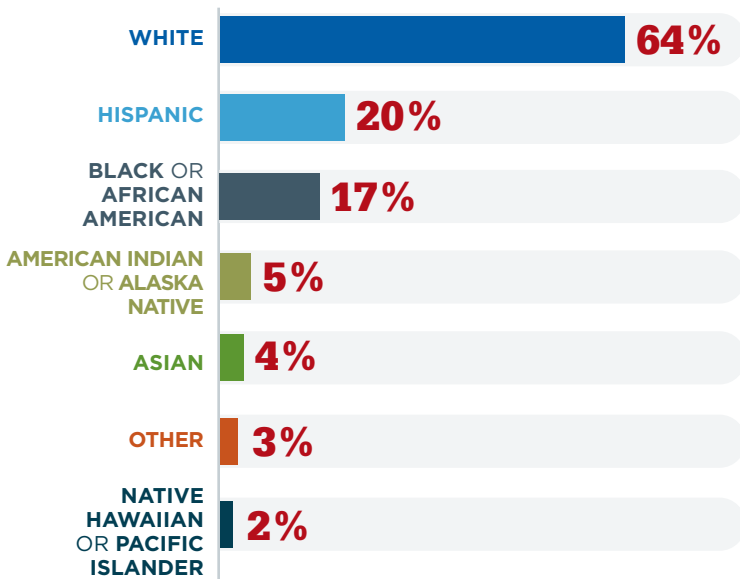
55% LIVE IN THE **SOUTH**

25% LIVE IN THE **WEST**

12% LIVE IN THE **MIDWEST**

9% LIVE IN THE **NORTHEAST**

RACE / ETHNICITY



MILITARY PROFILE

THE 2020 MILITARY PROFILE OF WARRIORS REPRESENTS ALL FOUR SERVICES, THE COAST GUARD, THE NATIONAL GUARD, AND RESERVE.



★ **24%** ★
OF WARRIORS SERVED IN MORE THAN ONE BRANCH

**This is why percentages do not sum to 100.*

64% ARMY

15% MARINE CORPS

13% NAVY

11% AIR FORCE

1% COAST GUARD

23% NATIONAL GUARD OR RESERVE



★ **6%** ★

ARE ACTIVE DUTY



★ **47%** ★

HAVE DEPLOYED THREE OR MORE TIMES



★ **92%** ★

OF WARRIORS WHO HAVE DEPLOYED SINCE 2001 DID SO AT LEAST ONCE TO A COMBAT AREA

SERVICE-CONNECTED INJURIES AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

★ **89%** ★ EXPERIENCED **MORE THAN THREE** INJURIES OR HEALTH PROBLEMS

THE TOP 5 MOST COMMONLY REPORTED INJURIES & HEALTH PROBLEMS

1	SLEEP PROBLEMS	84%
2	POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)	83%
3	ANXIETY	77%
4	BACK, NECK, OR SHOULDER PROBLEMS	74%
5	DEPRESSION	72%

NEARLY
★ **1 IN 3** ★

WARRIORS NEED THE AID AND ATTENDANCE OF ANOTHER PERSON BECAUSE OF THEIR INJURIES AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

22% OF THOSE WHO NEED AID REQUIRE **40+ HOURS PER WEEK**

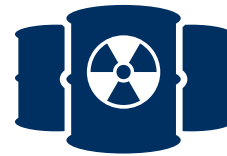
OF NON-ACTIVE DUTY WARRIORS



★ **95%** ★
ARE RECEIVING COMPENSATION BENEFITS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)



★ **72%** ★
HAVE A DISABILITY RATING OF **80% OR HIGHER** —
MORE THAN ONE-THIRD HAVE RATINGS OF 100%



TOXIC EXPOSURE

EXPOSURE TO TOXIC SUBSTANCES OR HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS DURING THEIR SERVICE:

71% OF WARRIORS REPORTED DEFINITE EXPOSURE

18% OF WARRIORS REPORTED PROBABLE EXPOSURE



OF THEM:

98%
HAVE EXPERIENCED SYMPTOMS AND/OR ILLNESSES RELATED TO TOXIC EXPOSURE

16%
HAVE RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR THEIR EXPOSURE AT THE VA



★ **93%** ★

LIVE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT ARE CONSIDERED **SEVERE** – MOST EXPERIENCING MORE THAN ONE

PTSD	83%
ANXIETY	77%
DEPRESSION	72%
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)	37%



A VETERANS RAND 12-ITEM HEALTH SURVEY SHOWS WARRIORS SCORE 28% BELOW THE NATIONAL NORM IN PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES HAVE A NOTABLE IMPACT ON WARRIORS' QUALITY OF LIFE. SCORES BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE ARE ASSOCIATED WITH GREATER CLINICAL AND SOCIAL COSTS. *(Kazis et al., 2006)*



★ **29%** ★

HAD DIFFICULTY GETTING MENTAL HEALTH CARE, PUT OFF GETTING SUCH CARE, OR DID NOT GET THE CARE THEY NEEDED

THE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED BARRIERS INCLUDE:

- ★ **PERSONAL SCHEDULE** (WORK, SCHOOL, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES) CONFLICTED WITH THE HOURS OF OPERATION OF VA HEALTH CARE
- ★ **FEAR** THAT TREATMENT MIGHT BRING UP PAINFUL OR TRAUMATIC MEMORIES
- ★ **INCONSISTENT TREATMENT** DUE TO CANCELED APPOINTMENTS, HAVING TO SWITCH PROVIDERS, ETC.
- ★ **UNCOMFORTABLE WITH EXISTING RESOURCES** WITHIN THE DOD OR VA
- ★ **FELT THEY WOULD BE CONSIDERED WEAK** FOR SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

THE PROMINENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND CONTINUED BARRIERS TO CARE HAVE CREATED A CONCERNING REALITY FOR MANY WARRIORS.



★ **30%** ★
OF WARRIORS REPORTED HAVING THOUGHTS RELATED TO SUICIDE IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS

If you or a veteran you know is in need of mental health resources, please reach out to the WWP Resource Center at 888.WWP.ALUM.

THE TOP 3 RESOURCES USED FOR ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS:



67% VA MEDICAL CENTER



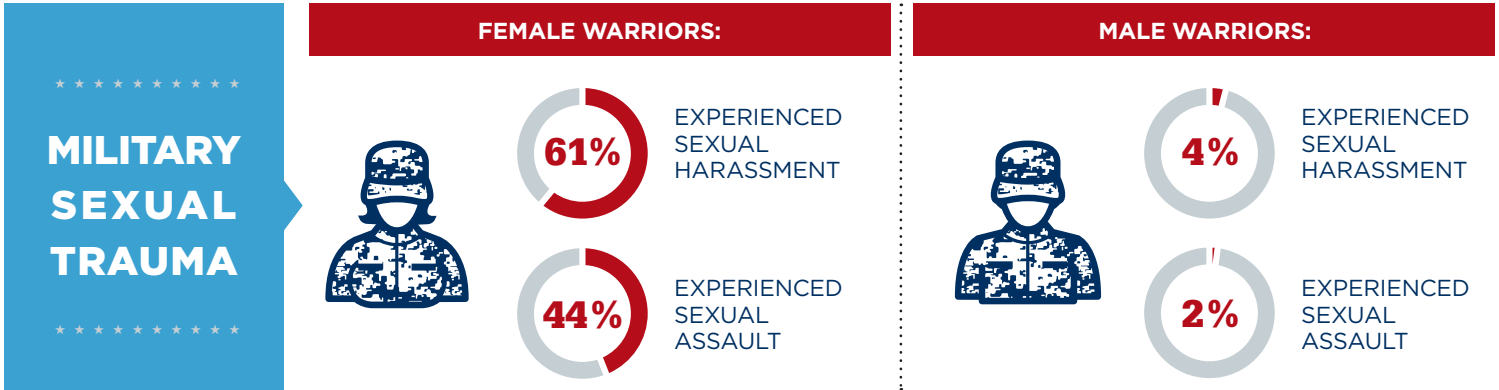
37% TALKING WITH ANOTHER POST-9/11 VETERAN



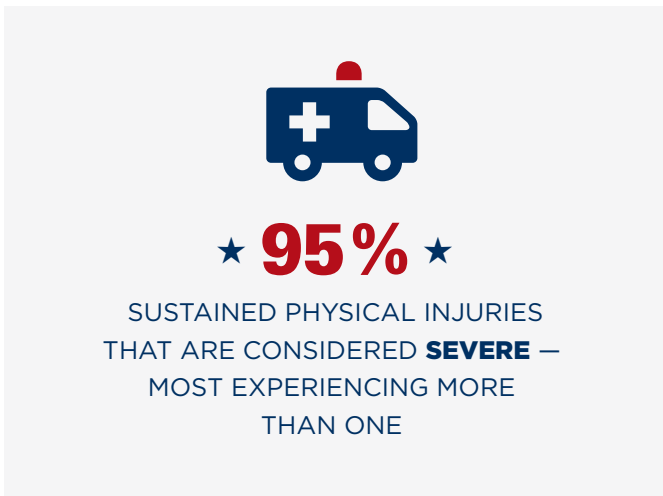
36% PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

11% OF ALL WARRIORS SELF-IDENTIFIED AS HAVING EXPERIENCED MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST)

EVEN MORE WARRIORS ACKNOWLEDGED SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES OFTEN RELATED TO MST:

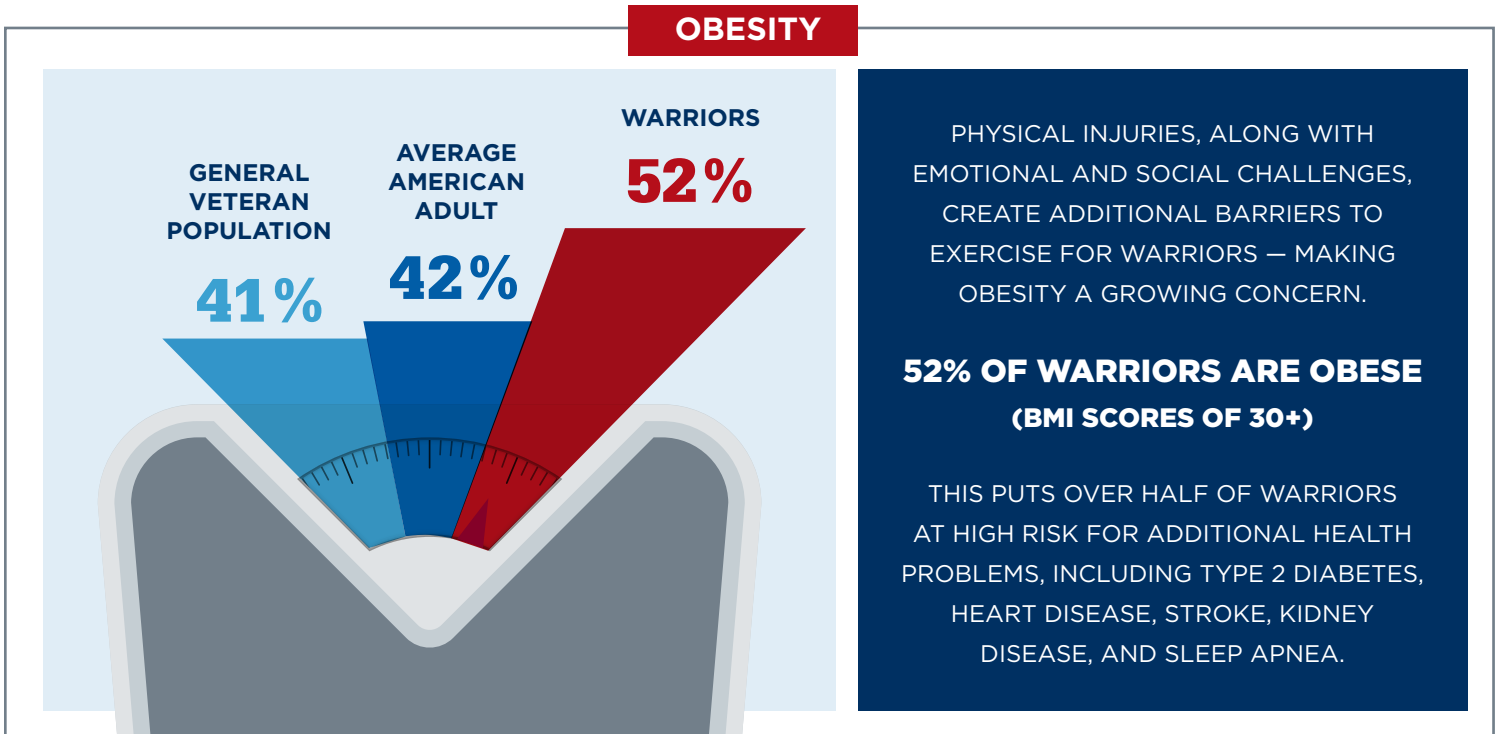


★ **PHYSICAL HEALTH** ★



MOST COMMONLY REPORTED SEVERE PHYSICAL INJURIES:

1	BACK, NECK, OR SHOULDER PROBLEMS	74%
2	TINNITUS	59%
3	KNEE INJURIES OR PROBLEMS	52%
4	MIGRAINES	50%
5	SEVERE HEARING LOSS	49%

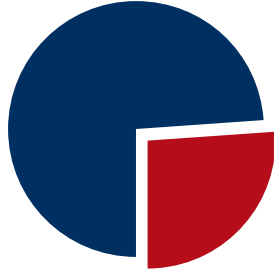


★ CURRENT HEALTH CARE COVERAGE ★

72% OF WARRIORS HAVE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE THROUGH THE VA

OF THOSE WITH VA COVERAGE AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER OPTION:

74%
CHOOSE THE VA AS THEIR PRIMARY PROVIDER



26%
CHOOSE A PRIMARY PROVIDER OTHER THAN THE VA

TOP THREE REASONS WARRIORS CHOOSE THE VA:

- CAN GET CARE FOR A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY
- THEY FEEL ENTITLED TO IT
- PRESCRIPTION BENEFITS

TOP THREE REASONS WARRIORS CHOOSE A DIFFERENT PROVIDER:

- BAD PRIOR EXPERIENCE AT THE VA
- BELIEVE THE CARE ELSEWHERE WOULD BE BETTER
- VA CARE IS DIFFICULT TO ACCESS

★ HOMELESSNESS ★



★ **4%** ★

OF WARRIORS HAVE BEEN HOMELESS OR LIVED IN A HOMELESS SHELTER DURING THE PAST 24 MONTHS

AMONG WARRIORS WHO EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS:

★ **74%** ★
WERE HOMELESS FOR OVER 30 DAYS

★ **20%** ★
RECEIVED GOVERNMENT HOUSING ASSISTANCE

WARRIORS WHO WERE HOMELESS FOR OVER 30 DAYS SPENT **AN AVERAGE OF 226 DAYS — MORE THAN 7 MONTHS — WITHOUT A HOME.**

★ EDUCATION ★

42% OF WARRIORS HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER



NATIONAL AVERAGES:



37%
ALL VETERANS



35%
NON-VETERANS

NEARLY

★ **1 IN 5** ★



WARRIORS ARE NOW ENROLLED IN SCHOOL TO PURSUE THE FOLLOWING CREDENTIALS:

71%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

17%
ASSOCIATE DEGREE

9%
BUSINESS, TECHNICAL, OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL TRAINING LEADING TO A CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA

OF THOSE ENROLLED:

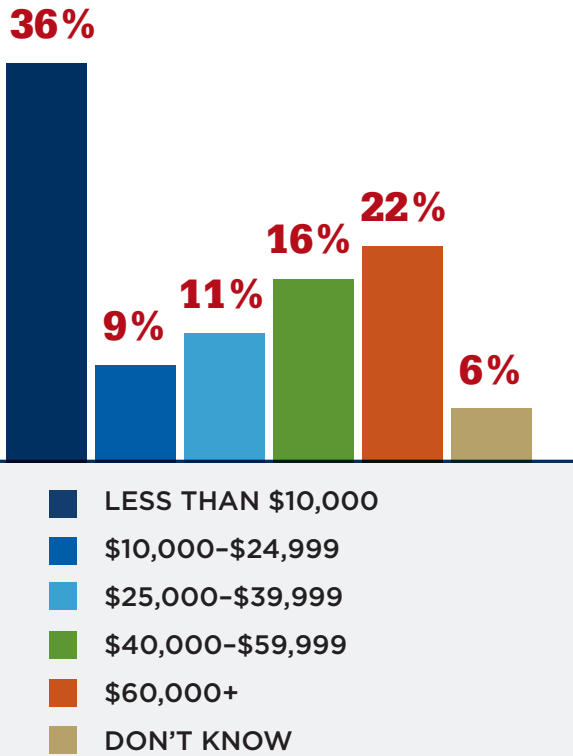
50% ARE USING THE POST-9/11 GI BILL

28% ARE USING THE VR&E (VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT) SERVICE

INCOME

WARRIORS REPORTED ON TWO SOURCES OF INCOME THEY RECEIVED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS:

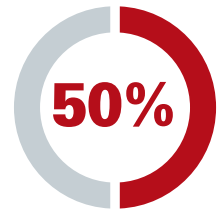
1 INCOME FROM WORK:



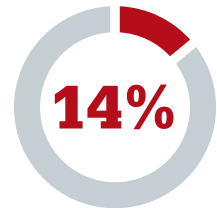
2 INCOME FROM VARIOUS BENEFIT, CASH ASSISTANCE, AND DISABILITY PROGRAMS:



RECEIVED \$20,000 OR MORE IN INCOME FROM THOSE SOURCES



RECEIVED NO INCOME FROM THOSE SOURCES



DEBT



ONLY **3%** OF WARRIORS ARE DEBT-FREE

MORE THAN HALF OF WARRIORS WITH DEBT OWE \$20,000 OR MORE, EXCLUDING MORTGAGES.

THE MOST COMMON FORMS OF DEBT ARE CAR LOANS AND CREDIT CARD DEBT.

HOMEOWNERSHIP



HOMEOWNERSHIP AMONG WARRIORS REACHED AN 11-YEAR HIGH IN 2020, AT 65%.

The 2020 Annual Warrior Survey represents a challenging time for the warrior population. The survey was administered from May to June 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing measures. The pandemic environment has created additional mental health, physical health, and financial challenges – particularly for populations like warriors who already face disparities.



★ **41%** ★

OF WARRIORS SAY THEY'VE EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES RELATED TO THEIR EMPLOYMENT AS A RESULT OF COVID-19

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



11.5%
2019



16%
2020

The warrior unemployment rate is calculated in a way comparable to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



★ **34%** ★

SAY THEY EITHER HAVE OR EXPECT TO RUN OUT OF MONEY FOR THEIR OR THEIR FAMILY'S NECESSITIES

WARRIORS' FINANCES COMPARED WITH A YEAR AGO:

44%
SAME

25%
BETTER

27%
WORSE

4%

DON'T KNOW



AMONG WARRIORS WITH **MENTAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS,**

★ **51%** ★

INDICATED THEY HAD APPOINTMENTS **CANCELED OR POSTPONED**

AMONG WARRIORS WITH **PHYSICAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS,**

★ **70%** ★

INDICATED THEY HAD APPOINTMENTS **CANCELED OR POSTPONED**



SINCE SOCIAL DISTANCING THEMSELVES:



OF WARRIORS SAID THEIR MENTAL HEALTH IS WORSE



OF WARRIORS SAID THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH IS WORSE



3+ HOURS PER DAY

AVERAGE TIME WARRIORS SPENT GAMING OVER THE LAST 30 DAYS

OF THOSE WHO GAME:

48%

SAY IT HELPS THEM FORGET THEIR PROBLEMS

38%

SAY IT HELPS CALM THEM WHEN THEY ARE ANGRY



WHILE THESE ARE UNPRECEDENTED AND UNPREDICTABLE TIMES, **MOST WARRIORS HAVE A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM TO LEAN ON** AS THEY DEAL WITH AND NAVIGATE THESE CHALLENGES:



★ **80%** ★

SAY THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THEIR LIVES THEY CAN DEPEND ON IF THEY REALLY NEED IT



★ **69%** ★

SAY THEY KNOW WHERE TO TURN TO FOR HELP WITH CHALLENGES RELATED TO COVID-19



DOWNLOAD THE COMPLETE SURVEY REPORT AT

AnnualWarriorSurvey.com

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