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CVN Veterans Day Survey 2021 Explores Civilian-Military Divide, Reveals What Veterans Want Civilians to Know This Veterans Day

Over three-fourths of Americans (77%) thank veterans for their service in public, yet over half of veterans and service members (58%) are uncomfortable being thanked

Stamford, CT, November 9, 2021 – This Veterans Day is the first following the end of America’s longest war. Now, a new survey is revealing the impact that the 20-year War in Afghanistan has had on how Americans plan to honor our nation’s veterans this year. The CVN Veterans Day Survey 2021 has found that, after watching the events unfold at the end of the War in Afghanistan, three-in-five Americans (63%) are motivated to show greater support for veterans this Veterans Day. The poll was commissioned by [Cohen Veterans Network](#) (CVN), a not-for-profit philanthropic organization that serves post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and military families through a nationwide system of mental health clinics.

“It’s encouraging that the majority of Americans plan to show greater support for veterans this Veterans Day,” said Cohen Veterans Network President and CEO Dr. Anthony Hassan. “While veterans do not serve for the recognition, commemorating the day that honors them can have a meaningful impact on those who have worn the uniform.”

While the majority of Americans plan to support veterans this Veterans Day, the survey revealed evidence of the civilian-military divide. It found that:

- ***Over three-fourths of Americans (77%) thank veterans for their service in public, yet over half of veterans and service members (58%) are uncomfortable being thanked***

“Sincerely connecting with veterans about their service is one way to help bridge the civilian-military divide,” said Hassan. “That could mean going beyond ‘thank you for your service.’ Instead, asking a simple question like, ‘What was your job while serving?’ Engaging with veterans in more thoughtful ways can lead to a better understanding of veterans and their military service. Ultimately, helping to move Americans toward greater continued support for those who sacrifice so much.”

For insight into what civilian actions would be most meaningful to veterans in acknowledgement of their service, the CVN Veterans Day Survey 2021 asked veterans about their preferences when it comes to being recognized on Veterans Day. Beyond “thank you for your service,” according to veterans, the top ways to honor veterans include:

- **Flying an American flag, donating to a veteran service organization, and buying a veteran a meal**



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Further exploring the civilian-military divide, the survey also captured what veterans think is important for civilians to understand about veterans and military service. It found:

- **8-in-10 veterans (80%) think it is important to understand that veterans/service members come from all walks of life/ are a diverse group**
- **Nearly three-fourths of veterans (70%) think it is important to understand that some service members do not deploy or see combat, but their service is just as significant**
- **Two-thirds of veterans (67%) think it is important to understand that military families serve, too**
- **Three-in-five veterans (62%) believe it is important to understand that not all veterans experience PTSD**
- **Over half of veterans (57%) think it is important to understand that being in the military is not how it's portrayed in the movies**

Some of the survey data was developed into an [infographic](#) titled, "This Veterans Day, Here's What Veterans Want You to Know...". Additionally, CVN captured anecdotes from veteran staff members across their Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinics, providing insight on survey topics that will be shared on social media this month. Highlights from veteran staff members, include:

- **Are you comfortable when being thanked for your service?**
"It can be uncomfortable being thanked for my service because I chose to serve and I'm passionate about it, but I was doing my job. I don't want it to be about me, and I know a lot of veterans feel that way. So, instead of generally thanking veterans, I would suggest making it more personal. Maybe talk about someone you know who served and give the veteran an opportunity to ask questions. This could make for a more meaningful connection and show of support." - Ben, Air Force Veteran, Cohen Clinic at Endeavors in El Paso, TX
- **What does it mean to you when you see a flag displayed?**
"When I see the American flag, I feel a great sense of pride and respect. Particularly when I think of the sacrifice of the many American service members who have lost their lives. I'm also reminded that as long as it waves, our work is never done as we continue to strive for freedom for all." - Natasha, Army Veteran, Cohen Clinic at Endeavors in San Antonio, TX
- **Why do you think it's important for people to understand that veterans/service members come from all walks of life/are a diverse group?**
"A lot of us don't fit the stereotype of the 'typical soldier.' There are so many types of jobs and people who serve in the military. There isn't just one story that captures 'the typical veteran experience.' By recognizing those differences, we can be better prepared to meet the unique needs of everyone who served in the military." - Anneke, Army Veteran, Cohen Clinic at Easterseals in Silver Spring, MD
- **In what ways do military families serve, too?**



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“The night before my husband deployed again, my son was very sad. He said to his dad, ‘I was used to you being gone, and then I was used to you being home. Now, I have to get used to you being gone again.’ He is just 10 years old, and his dad has been gone on and off for seven of those years. I like to tell people my son is on his 9th deployment. He has served every second of those deployments, just in a different capacity.” - Liz, Army Veteran, Cohen Clinic at Centerstone in Jacksonville, FL

CVN provides high-quality, accessible mental health services to post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and military family members through its 19 Cohen Clinics across the country. Treatment is available for a wide variety of mental health challenges including PTSD, depression, anxiety, adjustment issues, anger, grief and loss, family issues, transition challenges, relationship problems, and children’s behavioral problems. Care is available in person or via CVN Telehealth, face-to-face video therapy.

For more survey findings, go to cohenveteransnetwork.org/veteransday2021.

About the Survey

CVN Veterans Day Survey 2021 was conducted by The [Harris Poll](#) on behalf of Cohen Veterans Network and included 2,035 American adults aged 18 or older who participated in an online survey between October 26 - 28, 2021. Results were weighted to Census targets for education, age/gender, race/ethnicity, region, household income, and propensity to be online were adjusted where necessary to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

About Cohen Veterans Network

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN) is a 501(c)(3) national not-for-profit philanthropic organization for post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and their families. CVN focuses on improving mental health outcomes, operating a network of outpatient mental health clinics in high-need communities, in which trained clinicians deliver holistic evidence-based care to treat mental health conditions. It was established in 2016 by philanthropist Steven A. Cohen with a commitment of \$275 million to build the network. There are currently [19 Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinics](#) nationwide.

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