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## New Cohen Veterans Network Survey Reveals Civilian-Military Perception Gap Ahead of Veterans Day

*CVN Asks: “How Would You Describe Veterans in One Word?” and Encourages Americans to Think “Beyond Brave”*

**Stamford, CT., Nov. 7, 2024** – As Veterans Day approaches, a new survey reveals that civilians’ perceptions of veterans stand in stark contrast to how veterans view themselves. [The CVN Civilian-Military Divide Survey](#) finds that nearly one-third of civilians (27%) say the first word they would use to describe veterans is *courageous/brave*, while only a fraction of veterans (2%) would describe themselves that way. Similarly, 13% of civilians would use the word *hero/heroic*, compared to just 1% of veterans would use that term to describe themselves. The survey, released today, was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), a national not-for-profit network of mental health clinics for post-9/11 veterans, service members and their families.

"Veterans are often recognized for their bravery, yet they embody far more than courage alone; they reflect profound commitment, resilience, honor, and a deep sense of duty," says President and CEO of Cohen Veterans Network Dr. Anthony Hassan. "Recognizing a fuller spectrum of veterans’ qualities can help deepen our understanding of their experiences and promote more meaningful support."

In response to the survey findings, CVN has launched an awareness campaign, [Beyond Brave](#), which aims to promote broader views of the unique qualities and strengths of veterans. The initiative provides a variety of resources designed to help civilians better understand veterans, including myths vs. facts, a video on military service, and a Veterans 101 Pop Quiz to test their knowledge. After engaging with these materials, civilians are invited to then share a word they would use to describe veterans by contributing that term to the network’s Beyond Brave word cloud, a visual representation of how participants describe veterans.

The survey also reveals that while civilians primarily describe veterans with words centered around bravery and heroism, veterans use a wider range of words to describe themselves, opting for terms that emphasize deeper values. It found that:

- The first words that veterans would use to describe themselves as a veteran is *proud* (17%), *patriotic* (10%) and *honorable* (10%).

When asked how well civilians understand veterans, the survey discovered:

- Two-thirds (67%) of veterans said *not at all* or *a little*. While 45% of civilians believe they understand veterans *extremely/very/* or *somewhat well*.



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As part of *Beyond Brave*, the network is additionally sharing insights from Cohen Clinic and CVN veteran staff members. Highlights include:

- ***What's the first word that you would use to describe yourself as a veteran? And why?***  
*"Proud. I am a naturalized citizen who served the US honorably. I also carried on the legacy of my family by serving in the military." – Air Force Veteran*
- ***How do you feel about being called "brave" or "heroic"?***  
*"Honestly, it's something that is appreciated but not deserved. I believe those who are truly heroic are my brothers and sisters that gave their lives for this country." – Army Veteran*
- ***Would you say that you're proud of your service? If so, why?***  
*"Along with 'pride' is 'gratitude.' I always felt proud to wear the uniform but also grateful for the opportunity to serve. Service is both an honor and a privilege in the eyes of most military members."- Air Force Veteran*

Since its inception in 2016, CVN has treated more than 75,000 clients and provided over 650,000 clinical sessions. The network treats a wide variety of mental health challenges including depression, anxiety, adjustment issues, PTSD, anger, grief and loss, family issues, transition challenges, relationship problems, and children's behavioral problems. CVN also provides comprehensive case management services to help clients with potential stressors such as unemployment, finances, housing, and more. Care is available through the network's 22 Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinics, serving 20 states in-person and via CVN Telehealth, face-to-face video therapy.

Find more about The CVN Civilian-Military Divide Survey and the Beyond Brave campaign at [cohenveteransnetwork.org/VeteransDay](https://cohenveteransnetwork.org/VeteransDay). Cohen Clinics b-roll is available [here](#).

## **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. Learn more about CVN at [cohenveteransnetwork.org](https://cohenveteransnetwork.org).

## **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

The CVN Civilian-Military Divide Survey was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Cohen Veterans Network and included 3,059 American adults aged 18 or older who participated in an online survey between October 8 – 10, 2024. 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.

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