

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Summary of Findings in Collaboration with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families



Assessing Positive Mental and Physical Health Outcomes for Veterans

The work of Travis Manion Foundation (TMF) is rooted in the belief that veterans and families of the fallen are among America's greatest civic assets, and that the path toward bridging the civilian-military divide and uniting our communities begins by empowering our military community. Their vision is to create a unified and supportive community, inspired by our nation's service-members, where individuals hone their character to serve a purpose higher than themselves.

To achieve this, TMF trains, develops, and highlights the role models that lead these communities. They design programs, training opportunities, and events that invest in and empower veterans and families of the fallen by helping them to identify their personal character strengths. Armed with this knowledge, they pass on their values to the next generation, and serve and connect with the greater community.

"TMF improves my sense of well-being. TMF empowers me to take initiative to be innovative and collaborate with my community to make it a better place for me, my family, and future generations."

—Military Veteran





PRIMARY FINDING: Participants of Multiple TMF Initiative Types have Increased Positive Mental and Physical Health Outcomes

Programs Grounded in Evidence-Based Research

TMF's programs are grounded in the field of Positive Psychology, which studies the attributes and characteristics that lead individuals and communities to improve their well-being and thrive. Three areas that enable individuals and communities to thrive are meaning, relationships, and engagement. Thriving and well-being improves when people are able to identify what gives their lives meaning and purpose; develop and deepen relationships; and fully engage in activities in an effort to capture and communicate impact.

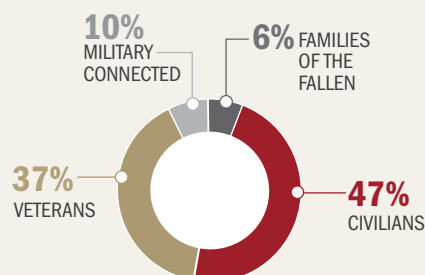
This report evaluates the effectiveness of TMF initiatives on improving the level of thriving and well-being among participating veterans, families of the fallen, and civilian members. We use the Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT)¹ scale to determine the effect that program participation may have on individual thriving and well-being. **Our evaluation shows that those who participate in more types of TMF initiatives have better outcomes.**

TOTAL RESPONDENTS

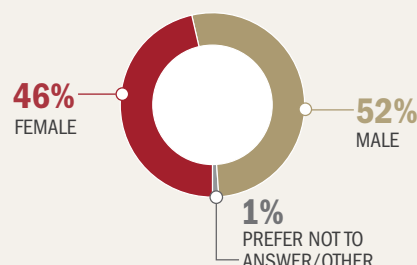
OCTOBER 2019
4,918

Survey design, methods, and detailed results are explained in the companion technical report.

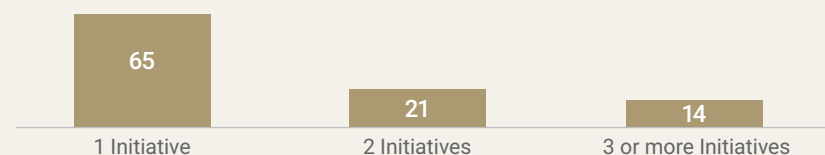
MILITARY CONNECTION



GENDER



Participants of Multiple TMF Initiative Types



Percentage of survey respondents who ever participated in 1, 2, or 3 or more different types of TMF initiatives.

NOTE: The number of initiatives does not reflect the number of activities in which an individual participated. For example, if an individual participated in multiple Operation Legacy service projects that would only reflect one initiative (Operation Legacy service projects).



TMF INITIATIVES

Character & Leadership Training

Character Does Matter (CDM) aims to empower veterans and families of the fallen to draw on their own personal experiences to mentor youth aged 12-18 in a wide range of settings. Mentors then deliver proprietary character development curriculum focused on helping youth adopt the "If Not Me, Then Who..." mantra.

Personal Development Seminars

Through Leading With Your Strengths, a series of best-in-class personal development and leadership training workshops, veterans learn to identify their strengths, uncover their purpose, and tell their stories. Rooted in the evidence-based field of Positive Psychology, curriculum seeks to help attendees thrive individually and create impact at home, at work, and in the community.

Expeditions

Service-based trips that provide opportunities for veterans and families of the fallen to connect, build relationships, and work together domestically and abroad. Alongside others who have experienced loss or are seeking leadership development, participants continue their journeys of healing while receiving training and empowerment resources, and continuing the legacies of fallen heroes through meaningful projects.

9/11 Heroes Run 5Ks

Annual collective of more than 90 volunteer-led 5Ks that take place domestically and abroad to honor the legacy of heroes of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and the wars since. Runners, walkers, and ruckers of all levels and ages unite on or around 9/11 to pay tribute and answer the call of "If Not Me, Then Who..." and honor America's heroes.

Community Service Projects

Through a national movement called Operation Legacy, TMF leverages the servant leadership of veterans, families of the fallen and TMF members to address critical needs in communities worldwide. Volunteers lead service projects that include park clean-ups, tree plantings in honor of fallen heroes, home rehabilitations, and more.

Increase in Veteran Health and Well-Being

CONNECTEDNESS

Veterans and families of the fallen show an increased connectedness score with increased participation*



Several studies have investigated the association between mental health and community connectedness. Overall, much of the existing research suggests there are relationships between aspects of community connection (e.g. sense of community, social support, etc.) and facets of well-being (e.g. self-esteem, mental illness, physical health, etc.). While the research and evidence related to community variables and mental health is still growing, it is likely that addressing multiple components of community connectedness and social relationships could be an effective approach in increasing positive psychosocial outcome^{2,9}.

HEALTH

Veterans and families of the fallen show a significant increase in emotional/mental health score with increased initiative participation*



“[TMF impacts me in that] I feel better physically which helps me mentally feel better as well.”
—Active Duty Service Member

*Scores represent the sum of the 2 highest positive categories. For example, satisfied and extremely satisfied were combined to include both responses in the scoring.

CHARACTER DOES MATTER (CDM) MENTORSHIP

- **87%** of Veteran CDM Mentors, compared to **60%** of Veteran non-CDM Mentors agreed or strongly agreed that their involvement with TMF has provided them with a sense of community.
- **82%** of Veteran CDM Mentors were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their emotional/mental health in the last 3 months, compared to **67%** of Veteran non-CDM Mentors.

THRIVING

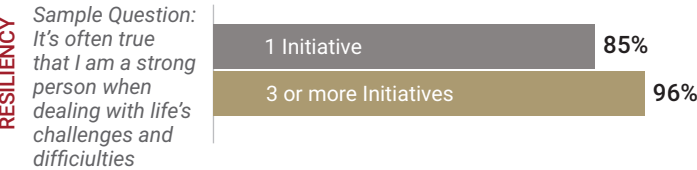
Veterans and families of the fallen show a significant increase in score with increased initiative participation*



Brief Inventory of Thriving Questions:		
	1 Initiative (%)	3 or more Initiative (%)
My life has a clear sense of purpose	71	83
I am optimistic about my future	88	93
My life is going well	85	92
I feel good most of the time	78	88
What I do in life is valuable and worthwhile	85	93
I can succeed if I put my mind to it	93	97
I am achieving most of my goals	76	85
In most activities I do, I feel energized	81	92
There are people who appreciate me as a person	91	95
I feel a sense of belonging in my community	69	82

RESILIENCY

Veterans and families of the fallen show a significant increase in their overall resiliency score with increased initiative participation*




- Significant difference in score with increased initiative participation.
- The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 10 (CD-RISC-10) was used to assess participant resiliency. CD-RISC-10 scores are out of a total of 40 points, where higher scores represent greater resiliency.¹⁰



“TMF has helped me look at hardship or suffering in a different light. None of the problems I have seem so big when I consider the stories of heroes such as Travis and the families that those heroes leave behind. TMF has made me more resilient.”

—Active Duty Service Member

Brief Inventory of Thriving Questions:		
	Veteran non-CDM Mentors (%)	Veteran CDM Mentors (%)
My life has a clear sense of purpose	74	87
My life is going well	86	95
I am achieving most of my goals	78	89
In most activities I do, I feel energized	84	92
I feel a sense of belonging in my community	62	83



"TMF helps build necessary - and often rare - bridges between veteran and civilian communities."

—Military Veteran

Civilian Health and Well-Being

TMF Bridging the Civilian-Military Divide

As the size of the military shrinks relative to the U.S. population and fewer people have personal connections to those who have served, there is a perception of a growing disconnect between civilians and the military-connected population.

- Although TMF is a Veteran Serving Organization, 60% of their offerings are open to civilians.
- Civilians experienced similar positive outcomes to veterans and families of the fallen with increased participation across initiatives. For example, **91%** of veterans and **84%** of civilians who participated in 3 or more TMF initiatives either agreed or strongly agreed that their involvement in TMF has encouraged them to become more involved in their community.
- **47%** of survey respondents indicated that they were civilian and did not select any other form of military connection (i.e. Military Spouse, Military Caregiver, Military Child).

The diverse demographic makeup of TMF participants, along with their comments, suggest that TMF, as a Veteran Serving Organization, is succeeding in creating a rare and unique connection between civilians and those who are military connected.

Thriving, Health, and Resiliency

- Those with increased participation across TMF initiatives were healthier, more likely to be thriving, and had greater resiliency.
- **Over 90%** of veterans, families of the fallen, and civilians who were involved in 3 or more initiatives agree or strongly agree that their involvement with TMF has had a positive impact on their life and that they have been inspired to serve others more.

"[TMF] has given a great sense of community and has motivated me to be of service."

—Military Child

"Life changing. TMF has given me a sense of purpose and inspired me to serve in all aspects of my life."

—Civilian



¹ Su, R., Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2014). The development and validation of Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT) and Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT). *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*. Published online before print. doi: 10.1111/aphw.12027

² De Silva, M. J., McKenzie, K., Harpham, T., & Huttly, S. R. A. (2005). Social capital and mental illness: A systematic review. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59, 619-627. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2004.029678>

³ Hare-Duke, L., Denning, T., de Oliveira, D., Milner, K., & Slade, M. (2019). Conceptual framework for social connectedness in mental disorders: Systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 245, 188-199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.10.359>

⁴ House, J. R., Landis, K. R., & Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. *Science*, 241, 540-545.

⁵ Kobau, R., Seligman, M. E. P., Peterson, C., Diener, E., Zack, M. M., Chapman, D., & Thompson, W. (2011). Mental health promotion in public health: Perspectives and strategies from positive psychology. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(8), e1-e9.

⁶ Palis, H., Marchand, K., & Oviedo-Joekes, E. (2018). The relationship between sense of community belonging and self-rated mental health among Canadians with mental or substance use disorders. *Journal of Mental Health*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2018.1437602>

⁷ Stone, D. M., Holland, K. M., Bathrolo, B., Crosby, A. E., Davis, S., & Williams, N. (2017). Preventing suicide: A technical package of policies, programs, and practices. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicideTechnicalPackage.pdf>

⁸ Terry, R., Townley, G., Brusilovskiy, E., & Salzer, M. S. (2018). The influence of sense of community on the relationship between community participation and mental health for individuals with serious mental illnesses. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47, 163-175. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22115>

⁹ Thoits, P. A. (2011). Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52(2), 145-161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146510395592>

¹⁰ Davidson JRT. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRISC) Manual. Unpublished. 08-19-2018, accessible at www.cdrisc.com.

The annual survey was designed to understand the relationship between TMF initiatives and participant outcomes, not to determine causality.

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