



Veteran's Mental Health Journey: Survey Analysis & Insights to date*

*Share your experiences by visiting the survey [here](#)

Based on survey response data from June 2019 to November 2020

Background and key findings

In June 2019, PTSD Resolution launched a new survey (hosted on the charity's website) to look into the journey that a veteran takes when seeking mental health support. This followed a previous survey focused on how trauma affects Service personnel and their families, closed last year after 10 years of data gathering, with over 5,000 responses (see Appendix for key findings from this survey).

The insights from this first survey included reference to those who'd received a medical diagnosis of PTSD (25% of respondents) and prompted the idea for this current survey, created to give further understanding of the journey veterans take to access mental health support. [This second survey](#) has received over 500 responses to date. This report looks at these in more detail.

Key findings

- People experience a diverse range of traumatic stress symptoms, as illustrated in the word cloud shown which shows just some of the terms used by respondents
- 46% of respondents are using alcohol and / or drugs to manage their problems
- Half of those seeking help went to their GP first. Within that group, 4 in 5 (80%) were prescribed medication
- Just over three-quarters (78%) of those who sought medical help were diagnosed with PTSD
- 75% of those who received counselling and 83% of those receiving CBT were asked to re-tell or re-live their trauma
- Just over three-quarters (77%) of those who've sought help have sought it on more than one occasion

How do you feel when experiencing traumatic stress?



“Disjointed provision of services. Let down on several occasions. Passed from one service to another with no warning, felt I was a nuisance.”

“Rarely seeing the same person twice means retelling story over and over again, which is just grim.”

“I feel that the local GP do not have the qualifications to help me for what I am going through. They turned me away the first time and can't go through that embarrassment again.”

Contents

Section	Page number
▪ About the respondents	4-7
▪ The veteran's journey	8-13
▪ Looking at their symptoms	14-18
▪ Managing feelings of traumatic stress	19-21
▪ Further feedback & testimonials	22-25
▪ Appendix	27-29

About the respondents

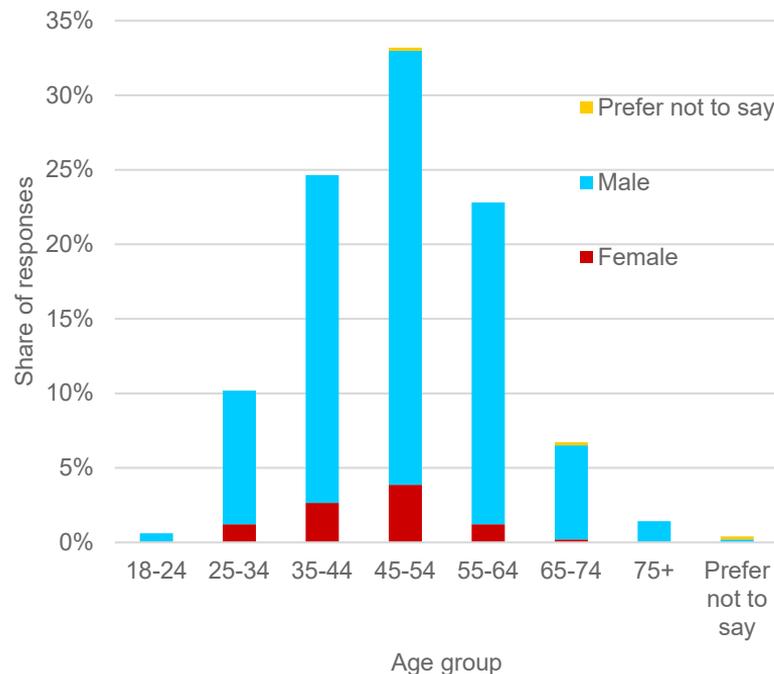
Responses and respondents

Responses

- 548 people accessed the survey between June 2019 and November 2020, but once cleaned, the following results are based on 491 responses
- Looking at engagement, roughly half the responses were gathered in the 6 months of 2019 (last 6 months), so engagement in 2020 has been lower on average
- January 2020 saw the highest number of responses in any month
- Look to increase engagement through new round of social media links?

Respondents

- 90% of respondents are men
- 81% of respondents are between 35 and 64 years old (combining the top 3 age groups)
- 43% of respondents served in one tour
- The highest share (47%) of those who responded served in Northern Ireland
- 6% are currently in the criminal justice system
- 15% have previously been in the criminal justice system



Home life

We asked respondents about their current living situations – and broadly speaking over half are married, and living in owned or rented accommodation. A small handful are homeless or in a hostel, with 2 respondents in prison. The ‘comments’ provided insight into people’s situations – a selection have been pulled out here:

“Generally happily married but my wife does struggle with my symptoms, and the ‘change’ not who I used to be etc.”

Served for 6-10 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

“3 marriages all ended in divorce last one 6 months ago, well into double figures on jobs, have severe hyper vigilance, social issues etc.”

Served for 11-15 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

“If it wasn’t for my wife who has supported and loved me through all the mood swings and anger, I don’t know where I’d be now.”

Served for 11-15 years;
 GP suggested counselling, not taken it up

“Plenty to add about my situation - but since a mental health crisis team made suggestions I was feeling sorry for myself, I won’t talk.”

Served for 6-10 years;
 No PTSD diagnosis received

“PTSD caused the break down of a 25 year marriage and has resulted me not seeing my kids for 4 years.”

Served for 11-15 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

“I live in housing association and was homeless for 18 months. I am still having difficulties with PTSD and would like to find help for those around me to understand how difficult it can be on just a normal day and when things are difficult.”

Served for 11-15 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

“I wouldn’t necessarily have chosen to live alone, but mental ill health, PTSD and a few other events forced the issue.”

Served for 16-20 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

“Finding it hard to adjust to civvie life after 18 years in the Army, it’s making my relationship very strained.”

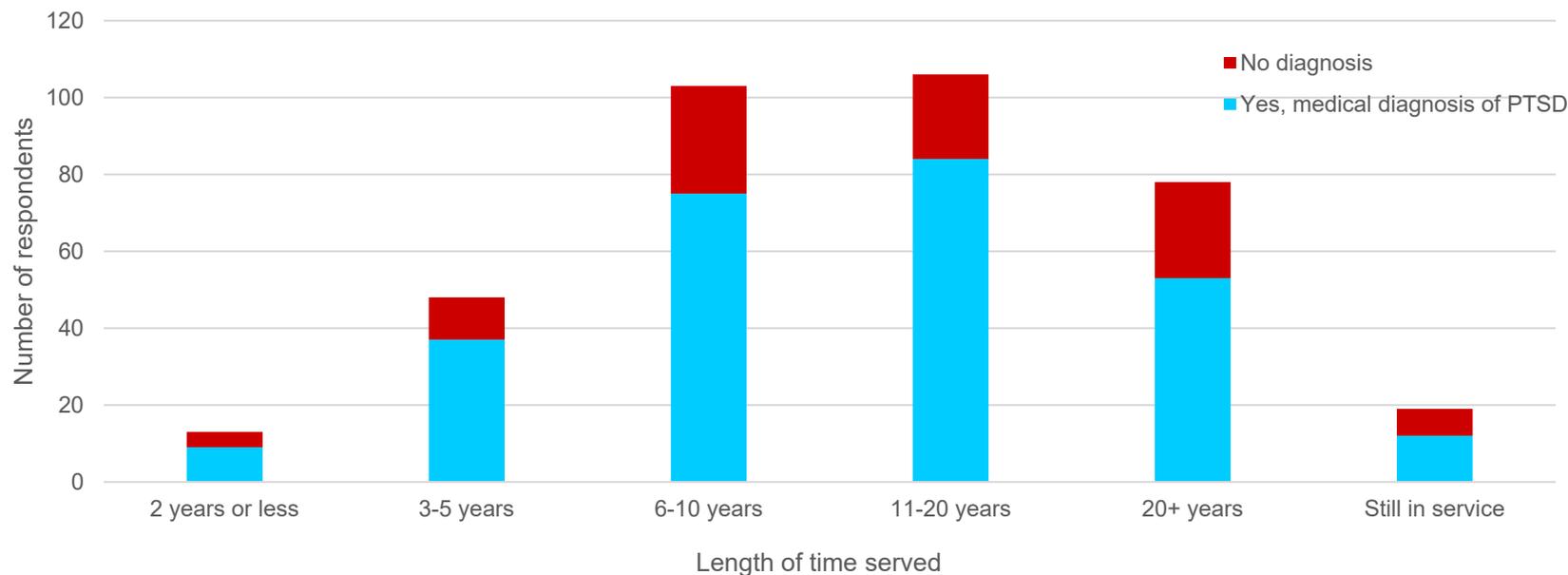
Served for 16-20 years

“PTSD lead to marriage breakdown.”

Served for 11-15 years;
 Diagnosed with PTSD

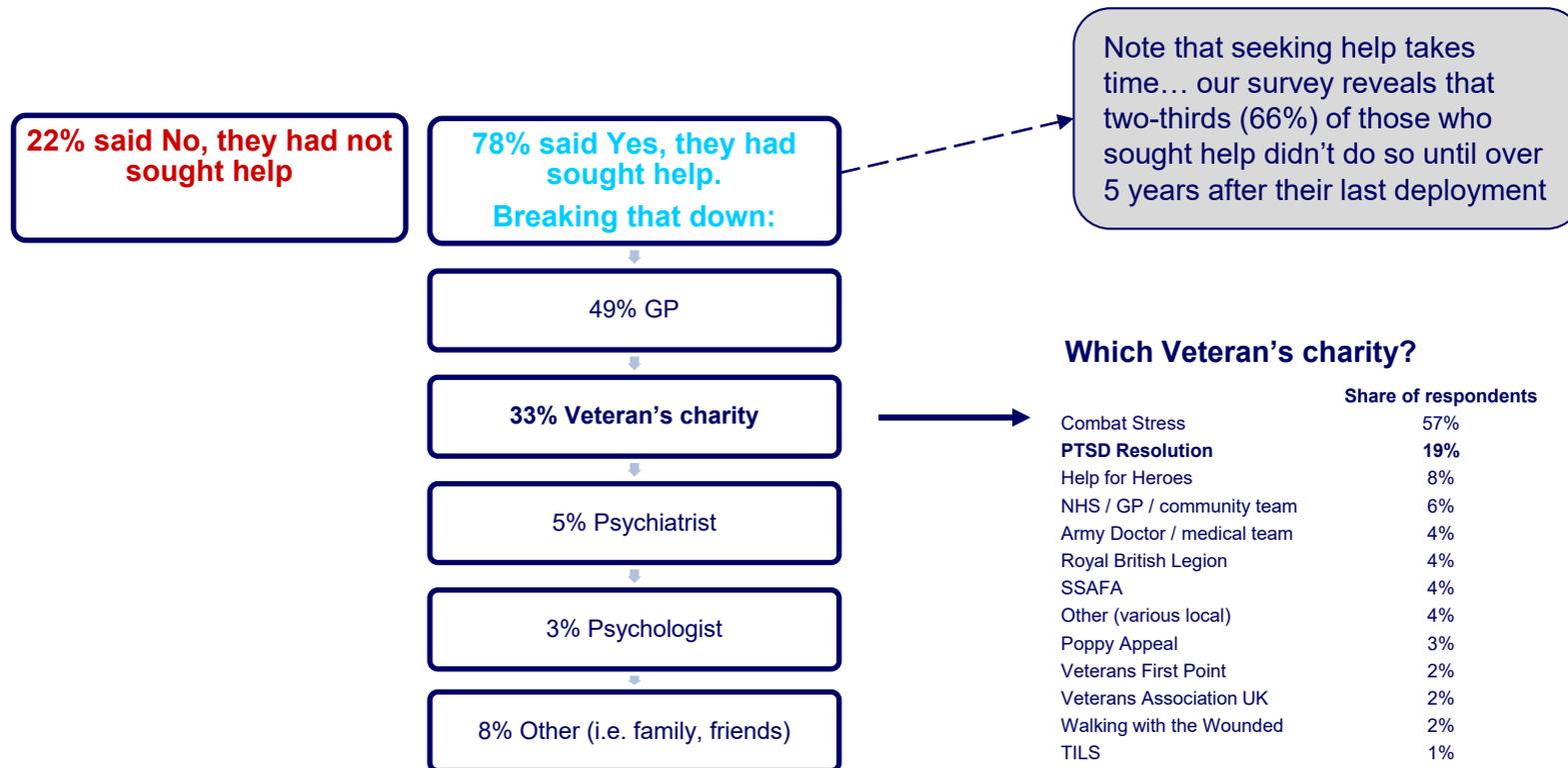
Time served and medical diagnoses

We asked participants how long they'd served for and overlaid the response with whether or not they'd received a medical diagnosis of PTSD. Within each group, at least two-thirds of respondents have received a PTSD diagnosis.

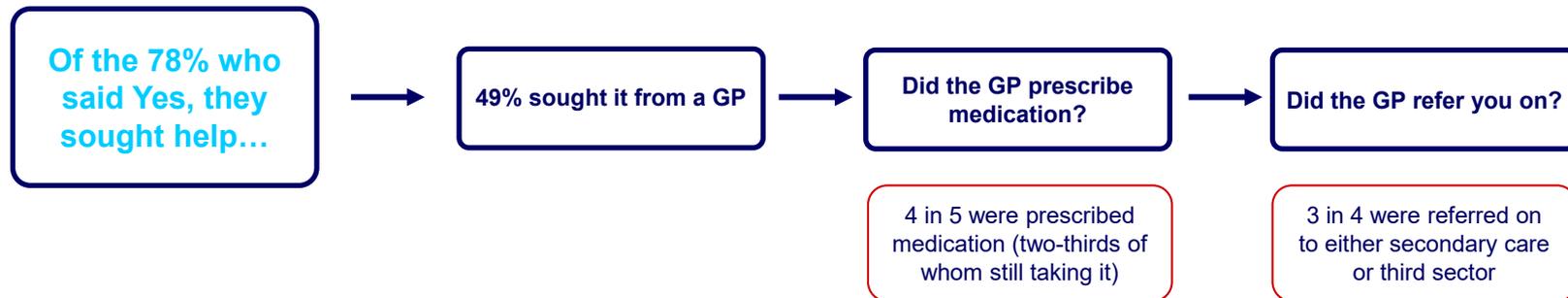


The veteran's journey

Have you sought medical help, and if so, where from?



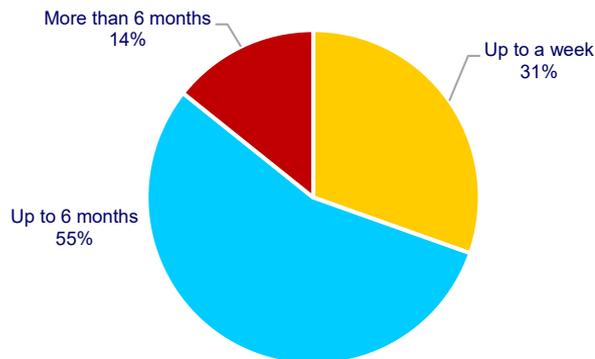
Looking at GP support route...



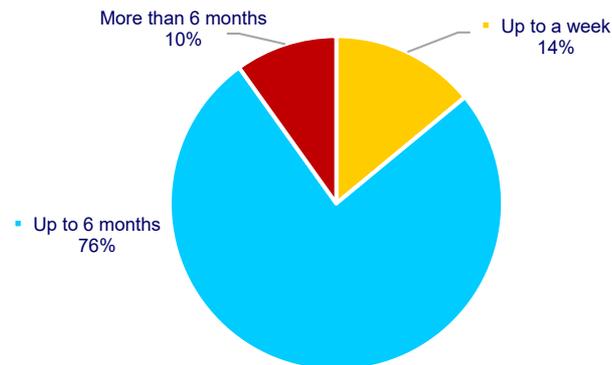
If you sought help, how long did you have to wait for an appointment?

- The overriding message is that both routes are too long to wait
- For those seeking help from a GP / Psychiatrist / Psychologist, 69% had to wait up to 6 months or more for an appointment
- 86% of those seeking help from a Veteran's Charity had to wait up to 6 months or more

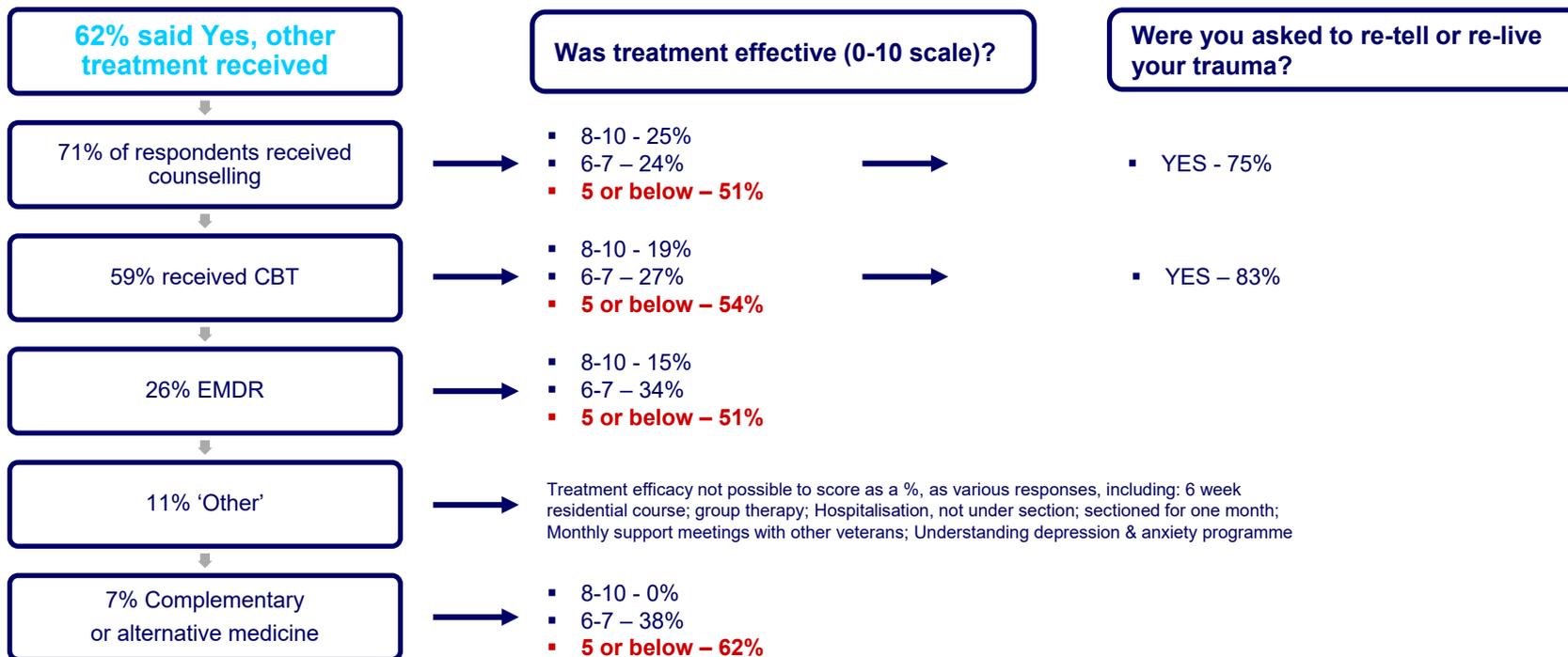
Seeking help via GP / Psychiatrist / Psychologist



Seeking help via Veterans' charities



Still isolating those who sought treatment, did you receive any other treatment, besides medication?



Have you sought treatment on more than one occasion?

- 77% have sought treatment on more than one occasion

Comments include:

- that they have sought help on and off over the years
- they feel failed by the system
- they aren't understood by those they first speak to
- It's a waste of time...

"Tried to get help from the NHS crisis team to no avail."

"All the doctors do is increase my medication strength and nothing else."

"10 years ago I was sent to a councillor but he was a complete waste of time."

"Asked [another charity] - told I was only a cook."

"Have been waiting for support from NHS TILS and consistently let down."

Looking at the symptoms

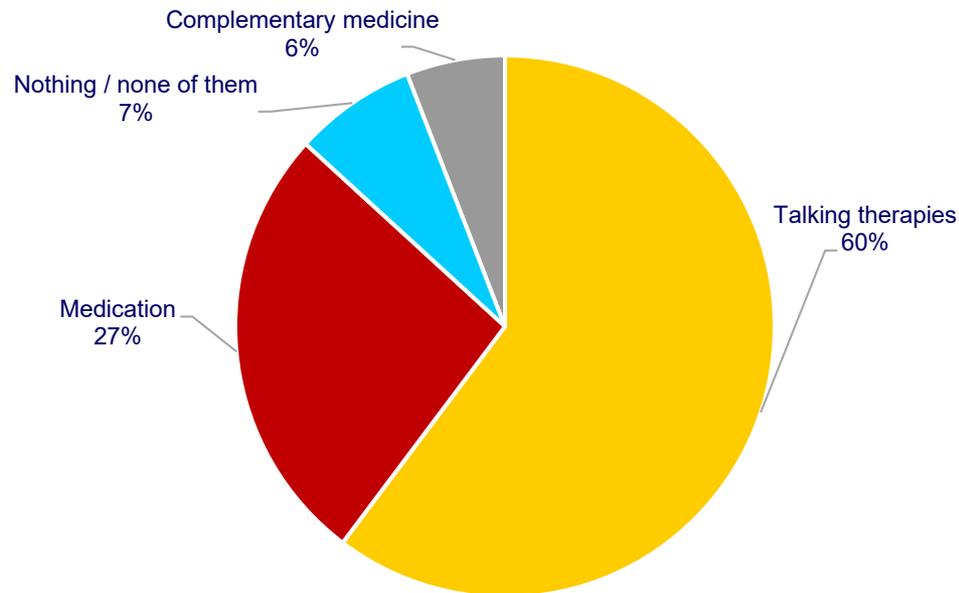
What would best describe how you feel when you are experiencing traumatic stress?

The word cloud attempts to illustrate the number and variety of feelings experienced.



Which sort of treatment, if any, has been the most beneficial?

Almost two-thirds indicated that talking therapies have been the most beneficial form of treatment, with one-quarter saying that medication had helped them the most. Disappointingly, 7% haven't found any treatment sought so far to be beneficial.



Comments relating to treatment received and the challenges faced

"Counselling was good to start with but I don't seem to be progressing and I feel I'm getting worse."

"Always the one hour appointment not enough time. Also every 2 weeks in between is too long time periods to wait."

"Disjointed provision of services. Let down on several occasions. Passed from one service to another with no warning, felt I was a nuisance."

"EMDR & acupuncture really helped."

"Treatment in service was terrible/ non existent - NHS were brilliant."

"Had to go private as the army system has let me down."

"Had EMDR many times which is now too traumatic to do again."

"Rarely seeing the same person twice means retelling story over and over again, which is just grim."

"I feel that the local GP do not have the qualifications to help me for what I am going through. They turned me away the first time and can't go through that embarrassment again."

"The medication effects are horrible."

"The Armed Forces Covenant is DEAD IN THE WATER. It isn't worth the paper it was originally printed on. The NHS is not good at helping veterans. It is not their fault - they don't have the expertise."

"I wish there were more ex- servicemen in counselling roles, as I found it hard to explain operational circumstances to civilians."

"First series of CBT was paid for personally by me and was far superior to subsequent NHS sessions. To use my own GP's expression - the NHS Talking Therapies provide what they can, not what is needed."

Comments describing how PTSD Resolution has been 'the most beneficial treatment' for them

"Following the Human Givens therapy I received via PTSD Resolution, I was then introduced to three principles approach to mental well-being. The approach resonated with me and has significantly improved my long term mental well being and outlook. I was able to come off all medication and to begin building a normal and productive life again."

"I've had many forms of treatment and the only one that has worked is the Human Givens method."

"Human Givens via PTSD Resolution was excellent."

"Alex from PTSD Resolution was very good and helped me identify the route problems of my illness."

"I have had other counselling in the past, for other issues, but they were no where near as effective as PTSD Resolution."

"PTSD Resolution were fantastic, they arranged therapy very quickly and Jasvinder (based in Birmingham) was such a thorough and pragmatic professional that my symptoms disappeared quickly. Thank you for all your hard work."

"PTSD Resolution were the catalyst to my recovery. So grateful to them. I had previously tried traditional therapy and it caused significant mental distress. I would only ever recommend treatment to other veterans that did not require revisiting the cause of the trauma."

"Beth Hamilton has done more to help me and manage my PTSD than anyone ever."

"Hannah was a life saver, this charity does a tremendous and essential role."

"PTSD Resolution helped me understand and get my head in the right place so I could seek further help from Oxford mind to deal with anger issues and help with parenting."

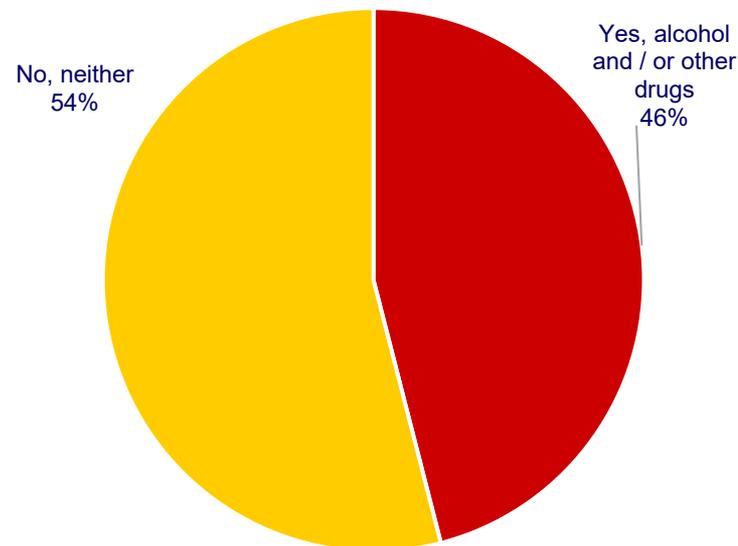
"My treatment from Emma following your referral has been first rate. Though I still have troubles she has shown me various strategies to help deal with episodes of PTSD and Depression and outlook on life. I feel like the world is a increasingly lighter shade of grey rather than the deep darkness previously and though I have bad times I am more positive for the future and my own confidence and seem to be in more control during episodes without despair. I am no longer afraid to hide my condition and seek help from the Doctor or even work in terms of time off to deal with it."

**How are you managing your
feelings of traumatic stress?**

Do you tend to use alcohol or other recreational drugs to help with managing your problems?

Almost half of all respondents are using alcohol and / or other drugs as a way to manage their problems.

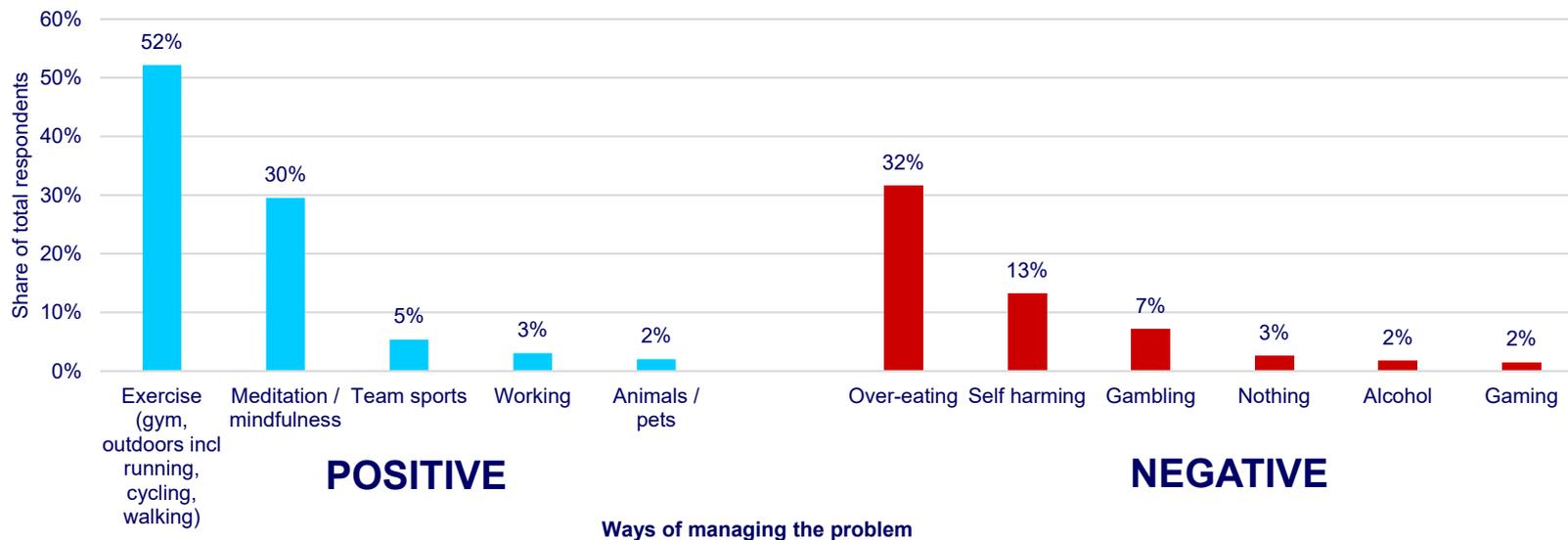
Looking into the data it showed that of those who did use alcohol, nearly three-quarters of them had waited over 5 years since their last deployment until they sought help for their PTSD.



Do you use other ways of managing your problems?

(e.g. exercise, sport, eating, self harming or any other means?)

- Respondents could select more than one option to this question, and responses varied between more positive and negative ways of managing their problems, as shown below
- On the positive side, more than half of respondents use exercise to manage their problems (including going to the gym, or exercising outdoors), with nearly a third practicing meditation or mindfulness
- On the more negative / destructive side, over-eating showed the highest share (nearly one third)



**Is there anything else
you'd like to add or share?**

Open comments about their situation

"Although I have a firm and solid Family around me I have a decent job decent house I never feel happy etc always snapping and nit picking at every one."

"I just need someone to help me and give me direction. It's affecting my life and partners immensely."

"I was on the brink of suicide. An ambulance crew attended my home after a friend became concerned and I realised how far I'd gone. I still struggle but unsure of how to reach out. I'm scared to."

"Many groups said that they couldn't help reservists due to prioritising regular forces."

"Being a volunteer worker in a Charity Shop a few hours a week etc at your own choice. Good to back into mix with other people and the public."

"Veterans seem to be treated like second class citizens. Benefits system increases problems. Assessments for war pensions are brutal and feel like interrogations. Hard to access services. It's a mess."

"Ask about the impact applying for benefits has on PTSD, the interrogations that these agencies feel is necessary to get to 'the truth' and 'pass' whatever threshold they think is necessary to prove the existence of PTSD. It's not necessary and increases problems."

"I find it difficult, as do most ex service personnel, to offload my personal issues into complete strangers, but I've got to the point where I am no longer able to deal with them in my own way, so require assistance please."

"Got sectioned because I was suicidal however have not had any real or meaningful treatment, long term effects of untreated PTSD really effecting me now."

Ask how wives/partners/families are impacted by PTSD. Stop agencies passing the buck and opting out if they think the PTSD is too complex for them to treat, leaving the veteran and their families in limbo."

"I am on the waiting list for triage by TILS and have been told the earliest I can be assessed is October but have been told I will not be treated if I am suicidal. Conversely community mental health have today told me that I have should not expect treatment for suicidal ideation as I'm on the list for triage but TILS. I don't know how I'm going to get through the next week. I'm being denied NHS support because I'm a veteran. "

More respect for those who have served, and stop treating them so badly, making them jump through hoops that makes the problem worse. Get the Government to address the problems. It's a total mess at the moment. "

Open comments about PTSD Resolution

"I was given the PTSD Resolution link by a fellow veteran, which I have found totally brilliant and helped me receive much more valuable tools and counselling that has made my life easier to cope with, and have also been working with Help for Heroes so my journey has made me a more resilient person. For me and my family."

"Of all the various treatments and charities I've dealt with PTSD resolutions approach has been by far the best."

"Just very grateful to PTSD Resolution. They helped me when I needed it. And it has been the start of a much better, happier period in my life and long may it last. "

"Very very happy person THANKS TO PTSD RESOLUTION. 🤗👍"

"Would recommend PTSD Resolutions to any suffering veterans and their families. "

"There is only one effective charity for PTSD: PTSD RESOLUTION. Unpaid volunteers."

"My husband has been diagnosed with Complex PTSD and you helped save his life last year. Thank you "

"Wish I'd heard of you and looked into what you do before now. Could have saved me my job."

Background

- PTSD Resolution is a registered charity (No. 1133188) offering counselling to UK armed forces' Veterans, Reservists and families to relieve mental health problems resulting from military service, to ease reintegration into a normal work & family life
- The charity's website hosts an online survey accessible from the homepage (<https://ptsdresolution.org/>) which has been live since June 2019, gathering data from visitors to the site who opt to complete it
- The survey is anonymous and completing it does not automatically connect the respondent to the support system at PTSD Resolution. No personal data is requested
- The survey is intended to provide insight into how veterans go about accessing mental health support and the journey they take to receiving it

APPENDIX

Survey questions for reference

1. I am over 18, I have served in the UK Armed Forces, I have read the survey information and I consent to my taking part in the survey and the information I give being included in the survey results.
2. What is your gender?
3. How old are you?
4. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
5. Tell us about your living circumstances. Do you live...?
6. Where do you live?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to add about you/your family situation that feels relevant to include?
8. Please type the year in which you entered the Services
9. How long did you serve for?
10. Which, if any, of the following conflicts did you serve in?
11. Are you currently in the criminal justice system?
12. Have you previously been in the criminal justice system?
13. Have you sought help for your problems?
14. If yes, when did you first seek help?
15. How long was this since your last deployment?
16. Where did you go to seek help?
17. Did your GP prescribe medication?
18. If yes, what medication were you prescribed? (please leave blank if not known)
19. Are you still taking medication now?
20. Did the GP refer you on?
21. If yes, to where?
22. How long did you have to wait for an appointment?
23. Did you receive a diagnosis of PTSD?
24. From whom did you receive the diagnosis?
25. Did you receive any other sort of treatment (besides medication)?
26. If yes, what was it?
27. If counselling or CBT, were you ever asked to re-tell your story?
28. On a scale of 1-10, do you feel the treatment you received was effective? (with 0 being not effective at all, and 10 being extremely effective)
29. Have you sought help on more than one occasion for your problems?
30. What would best describe how you feel when you are experiencing traumatic stress?
31. Which sort of help, if any, has been the most beneficial?
32. Is there anything else you'd like to add about any treatment you've received?
33. Do you tend to use alcohol or other recreational drugs to help with managing your problems?
34. Do you use other ways of managing your problems? (e.g. exercise, sport, eating, self harming or any other means?)
35. Is there anything else you'd like to add in general? (about yourself, or any further comments about what could be included in this survey)

Background: headlines from first survey

“How trauma affects Service personnel and families” (published May 2019)

- Between 2010 and 2019, more than 5,000 people completed PTSDR's first website-hosted survey - “How trauma affects Service personnel and families”.
- Just over 3,000 of those respondents completed the IES-E trauma scale section of the survey, with 83% scoring 50 or over (i.e. requiring clinical attention).
- However, within that 50+ scoring group, less than half (42%) have a medical diagnosis of PTSD – which means by contrast that more than half (1,500+ respondents) clearly require clinical attention but do not have a diagnosis
- Northern Ireland reports the highest number of respondents medically diagnosed with PTSD, with over 1,200 having served and 43% of those reporting a PTSD diagnosis, highlighting the longevity of this illness
- Isolating those who reported as serving in one of more conflicts, at least 80% of those who served in each of the theatres scored 50 or above on the IES-E trauma scale
- The number of those reporting some thoughts of suicide (sometimes, fairly often and very often) was equally split between those with a reported PTSD diagnosis and those without a diagnosis (1,414 respondents combined)
- Looking at those who never or almost never thought about suicide, 25% had a medical diagnosis of PTSD
- Almost twice as many respondents without a PTSD diagnosis (483) drank 21-60+ units per week as those with a PTSD diagnosis (251)
- Looking at those with an IES-E score of 50 and above, almost as many respondents drank 21-60+ units per week (631) as never drank at all (681)

You can get better.

Nearly 8 out of 10 veterans report improvement after therapy,
where no further therapy was required.

For further information please visit www.ptsdresolution.org
or email contact@ptsdresolution.org

