



2018 ANNUAL SURVEY

THE MISSION CONTINUES

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HIGHLIGHTS

- TMC program participants had significantly higher sense of purpose, resilience, and positive relations with others compared to non-TMC program participants.
- Fellows who become involved with other TMC programs have significantly higher rates in their sense of purpose and positive relations with others compared to fellows who were involved with not involved with other TMC programs
- Fellows who have been involved with TMC for more than a year have significantly higher rates of their sense of purpose and positive relations with others compared to Fellows who had not been involved with TMC for more than a year.
- Service platoon members had significantly higher rates in their sense of purpose and levels of resiliency compared to non-TMC program participants.

The Mission Continues (TMC) empowers veterans to grow personally and connect with others through community impact and continued service. Today, The Mission Continues works with over 10,000 volunteers across the country. We connect veterans to the heart of community improvement efforts by tapping into their unique leadership abilities and hard and soft skills they developed in the military, in the spirit of service to make a positive difference in their communities.

In January 2018, The Mission Continues launched their second annual survey to see the impact of their combined service efforts on program participants. 71,426 TMC affiliates were invited to take part in this survey, with over 10,000 of these considered active volunteers. The Mission Continues affiliates included program participants like fellows, service platoon participants, and national event participants (Mass Deployment and Women Veterans Leadership Summit) and non-program participants like organizational partners, individual donors, and community members. Of those affiliates 2,081 completed the survey, giving a 2.9% response rate overall. All data presented in this document reflects only those who responded to our survey.

WHY THE MISSION CONTINUES

In the past 10 years, The Mission Continues has seen a dramatic increase in participation rates. At inception, TMC had 3 fellows where today they serve over 10,000 individuals per year. Veterans have cited a multitude of reasons that they are attracted to The Mission Continues. It is important that The Mission Continues understands why veterans come to TMC programs so we can continue to best serve them. This year the annual survey found that the majority of participants are attracted to continued service, to connecting with others and to their own opportunities for personal growth. See table 1 below.

Table 1.

REASONS VETERANS PARTICIPATE IN TMC PROGRAMS

| | |
|---|---|
| 64.5% joined to serve others | 23% joined to expand professional network |
| 57.3% joined to connect with veterans | 22.8% joined to find a challenge |
| 43.7% joined for personal growth | 18.6% joined for professional development |
| 43.6% joined to continue service to their country | 16.9% joined to connect with civilians |
| 32.7% joined to develop friendships | 10.9% joined to pursue a new career opportunity |
| 28.8% joined to find purpose | |



Satisfaction and perceptions of the experience participants have in TMC programming is positive. Through the work at TMC, veterans are building new skills and networks that help them in their adjustment to life after the military while they contribute to making long-term, sustainable transformations in communities.

- 68.8% are able to achieve goals they set for themselves
- 58.1% feel their achievements while volunteering with The Mission Continues have been acknowledged
- 81.1% feel friends and/or family support their participation with The Mission Continues
- 64.3% feel the more they are involved with The Mission Continues, the greater the positive impact TMC has on their life
- 90.2% would help a fellow TMC member in need under most circumstances
- 54.9% feel the relationships they have developed with The Mission Continues members are unique compared to other relationships in their life
- 76.9% would recommend The Mission Continues to other veterans

DEMOGRAPHICS AND MILITARY SERVICE OF TMC VOLUNTEERS

The table below reflects the demographic diversity of the program participants who responded to our survey. Program participants include anyone who has participated in any of our programs, including the Service Platoon, Fellowship or Mass Deployment Programs, and/or individuals who have participated in at least one of our national events, such as Women Veterans’ Leadership Summit. Diversity among our participants continues to increase. For example, approximately 45% of our respondents identify as female (compared to women comprising 15% of the population that is serving in the military). Additionally, 52% of our participants identify as being minorities. See table 2 below for other demographic data.

Table 2.

| DEMOGRAPHICS | TOTAL % | DEMOGRAPHICS | TOTAL % |
|--------------------------------|------------|--|------------|
| Age | | Employment Status | |
| 18-35 Years | 211 (32.3) | Full time | 336 (51.8) |
| 36-45 | 200 (30.6) | Part-time | 84 (12.9) |
| 46-66+ | 242 (37.1) | Unemployed | 85 (13.1) |
| | | Disabled | 81 (12.5) |
| Gender | | Retired | 63 (9.7) |
| Male | 364 (55.9) | Education | |
| Female | 287 (44.1) | High School | 31 (4.8) |
| Race^a | | Some College | 131 (20.3) |
| White/Caucasian | 304 (47.7) | Trade, technical, or vocational school | 21 (3.3) |
| Black/African American | 120 (18.8) | Associates degree | 71 (11) |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 27 (4.2) | Undergraduate degree | 195 (30.1) |
| Native American/Alaskan Native | 5 (.8) | Graduate degree | 198 (30.6) |
| Multi-racial/Bi-racial | 28 (4.4) | Traumatic Brain Injury History | 106 (16.7) |
| Other | 23 (3.6) | Currently Seeking Mental Health Treatment | 228 (36) |
| Hispanic/Latino | 130 (20.4) | Positive PC-PTSD Screen | 189 (32.6) |
| Marital Status | | Positive PHQ-2 Depression Screen | 125 (20.5) |
| Married | 316 (48.6) | | |
| Divorced | 159 (24.5) | | |
| Single, never been married | 170 (26.2) | | |
| Widowed | 5 (.8) | | |



Understanding the military history of individuals who participate in TMC programming is important to gain a fuller understanding of their experience and needs. Eighty-seven percent of survey participants who are also program participants indicated some military affiliation (active duty or veteran). See table 3 for more information on military background of TMC volunteers.

Table 3.

| MILITARY HISTORY | TOTAL % | MILITARY HISTORY | TOTAL % |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---|------------|
| Military Status | | Overseas Deployments | |
| Active Duty | 21 (3.3) | None | 173 (32.2) |
| Reserves/National Guard | 40 (6.3) | OEF | 85 (15.8) |
| Veteran | 487 (76.7) | OIF | 92 (17.1) |
| Civilian | 80 (12.6) | Both | 135 (25.1) |
| Individual Ready Reserves | 7 (1.1) | Other | 52 (9.7) |
| Branch of Service | | Number of Deployments Since 9/11 | |
| Army | 271 (49.5) | None | 177 (32.6) |
| Air Force | 75 (13.7) | One | 138 (25.4) |
| Marines | 84 (15.3) | Two | 116 (21.4) |
| Navy | 114 (20.8) | Three | 56 (10.3) |
| Coast Guard | 4 (.7) | Four or more | 56 (10.3) |
| Highest Military Pay Grade | | VA Disability Rating | |
| Enlisted (E1-E4) | 167(31.3) | None | 133 (26.8) |
| Non-commissioned Officer (E5-E9) | 258 (48.3) | Application Pending | 22 (4.4) |
| Warrant Officer (WO1-WO5) | 4 (.8) | 0% | 9 (1.8) |
| Officer (O1-O10) | 102 (19.1) | 10-50% | 89 (18) |
| | | 60-100% | 243 (49) |

EMPOWERED VETERAN OUTCOMES

In addressing the needs of veterans, TMC employs a theoretical framework, the Empowered Veteran Index (EVI); and in 2017, The Mission Continues began using the Empowered Veteran Index to guide programming. The goal of the EVI is to unify all of our programs and to measure our success against their outcomes. The EVI was developed to examine outcomes related to personal growth, connectedness and community impact. All programming and events are intended to provide opportunities for participants in these three areas.

Personal Growth:

Through participation in The Mission Continues' programming and services, veterans develop and grow both professionally and personally in ways that help them successfully reintegrate to their respective communities, post-military. Areas of growth as found by TMC include skill competency, leadership, sense of purpose, self-confidence, communication and well-being. In examining personal growth, initial findings indicate a positive trend among TMC veterans overall:

- 41.5% reported friends and/or family have noticed a positive change since they joined The Mission Continues.
- 51.5% feel more equipped to work in the civilian world.
- 59.5% have access to more resources.
- 59.9% of TMC volunteers scored in the top quartile of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale.
- 60.2% have a more positive outlook on their future because of The Mission Continues.
- 83.6% of TMC volunteers feel a stronger sense of fulfillment.

While TMC does not specialize in job placement, it appears that a byproduct of our programs have helped 4.1% of participants find jobs as a direct result of their service with TMC; and they have helped 2.7% of participants find jobs as an indirect result.

Personal Growth: Sense of Purpose Overall

One aspect of personal growth that the EVI prioritizes is sense of purpose. Having a sense of purpose is defined as being an individual who has goals in life and a sense of directedness; more specifically, it means that an individual feel like there is meaning in their present and future life. At The Mission Continues, we strive to create opportunities for participants to improve their sense of purpose. Research shows that having purpose helps improve one's overall well-being through reduced stress, adaptive coping, and greater engagement in health promoting behaviors.¹ Using the Ryff Sense of Purpose Scale we compared our participants' sense of purpose to that of non-participants and found that our participants' sense of purpose ($M = 43.3, SD = 8.8$) is significantly² higher than those who are not TMC participants ($M = 41.9, SD = 8.8$). Non TMC participants include individual donors, external volunteers and organizational partners. Further, organizational partners are individuals who have careers doing meaningful work; we would expect these individuals to have high sense of purpose scores. While our group of non-participants group may only include a very small portion of organizational partners, the results are nevertheless impressive because the difference in sense of purpose between participants and non-participants is a large one.

Sense of Purpose and the Fellowship Program

The Fellowship Program is a six-month opportunity in which fellows work with a host site of their choosing (a nonprofit organization or government agency), to address community issues that are important to the fellow. Fellows are further acquainted with The Mission Continues, as well as their host site by volunteering for at least 20 hours per week in support of the community partners' mission. During this time, fellows get the opportunity to become change agents for their community; this service also has an impact on the fellows. One of our goals is that fellowship participants experience increased sense of purpose, as they dedicate their work to improving communities.

When examining the impact of length of participation in the fellowship program in relation to participants sense of purpose, findings indicate that program participants who participated only in the Fellowship Program⁴ for one year or less at TMC ($M = 45.1, SD = 6.9$) had a significantly higher⁵ sense of purpose score than those who were involved with TMC for at least two years ($M = 41.2, SD = 9.4$). This indicates participants who were either currently partaking in a fellowship or had recently completed a fellowship had a higher sense of purpose score. Alternatively, as time passed, the impact of the program on former fellows' sense of purpose diminished, signifying there was not a long-term impact of the program on fellowship participants.

Further, when looking only at fellows who were involved with TMC for two years or more a marginal difference⁶ occurred; specifically, fellows who were involved with service platoons ($M = 44.1, SD = 8$) had a higher sense of purpose score than fellows who were not involved with service platoons at some point ($M = 41.2, SD = 9.4$). Together, these scores suggest that fellows' sense of purpose scores drop over the years when they are not continuously involved with other TMC programs (i.e. the service platoons). See Figure 1 for a visual representation.

¹ Stephanie A. Hooker, Kevin S. Masters, and Crystal L. Park, "A Meaningful Life Is a Healthy Life: A Conceptual Model Linking Meaning and Meaning Salience to Health," *Review of General Psychology* (2017).

² M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; z = significance score

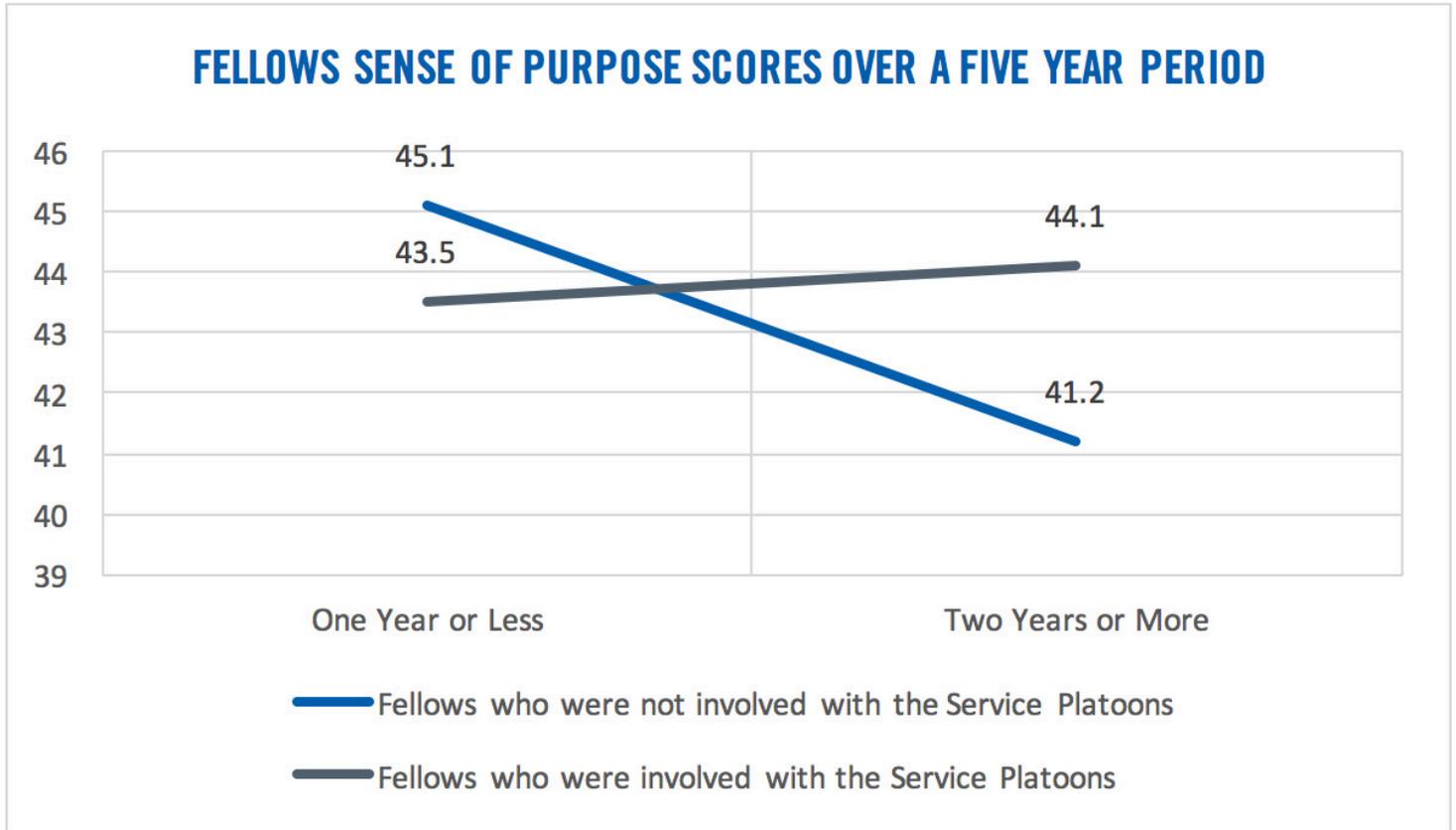
³ Statistical significance for sense of purpose $z = 2.9, p = .0001$

⁴ This includes those Fellows who had no affiliation with the Service Platoons

⁵ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.2, p = .028$

⁶ $z = 1.7, p = .083$; Fellows who were involved with the service platoons for one year or less had a sense of purpose score of 43.5.

Figure 1.



Sense of Purpose and Service Platoons

Platoon Leadership Team

A core group of volunteers known as the platoon leadership team leads service platoons in completing service projects in their respective communities. These individuals work to successfully lead their platoons to pursue transformational change in communities. Sense of purpose scores do not change much from year-to-year for platoon leaders; however, slightly higher scores can be seen during platoon leaders' first two years of service ($M = 44.9, SD = 7.9$) compared to three years or more ($M = 43.5, SD = 8.9$).⁷ The trend in the scores could be indicative of Platoon Leadership Team Members (PLTMs) having a service commitment of one year (with an option to extend). Additionally, those who reported two years or less of service are more likely to be currently serving on a platoon leadership team than those who have been serving for three or more years with The Mission Continues. The non-significance of the scores indicates that long-term impact would likely hold steady regardless of how or when individuals served as Platoon Leadership Team members; however more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the sense of purpose amongst these program participants.

Platoon Members

Platoon members are the team of volunteers led by Platoon Leaders that complete the work at service projects and help create transformational change in communities. They participate in service projects and/or social gatherings in the attempt to make an impact in their communities, and to grow personally and to connect with others. Sense of purpose is an important focus of personal growth that is also emphasized in the Service Platoon Program.

By comparing sense of purpose scores for platoon members to those who do not volunteer with TMC we see that platoon members have a significantly higher sense of purpose score ($M = 43.3, SD = 8.8$) than non-TMC program participants ($M = 41.8, SD = 9.7$).⁸ Non-program participants include anyone who reported they were not participants of the fellowship or the service platoon programs. Although the analysis shows that there is a difference for platoon members and non-program volunteers, based on the nature of the analysis we cannot determine whether the difference in scores is based on programmatic effects.

Furthermore, a comparison between platoon members and platoon leadership members may shed light on possible reasons for differential outcomes scores. A comparison between these yielded no significantly different scores between platoon members ($M = 43.3, SD = 8.8$) and platoon leadership team members ($M = 44.3, SD = 8.3$)⁹ in sense of purpose scores; specifically, the direction of the scores were such that platoon leadership team members had higher sense of purpose scores than platoon members. All three results are can be found in table 4.

Table 4.

| SERVICE PLATOON RESULTS | GROUP 1 MEAN (SD) | GROUP 2 MEAN (SD) |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Platoon Leadership Team | PLT involved 2 years or less 44.9 (7.9) | PLT involved 3 years or more 43.5 (8.9) |
| Platoon Members | Platoon Members 43.3 (8.8) | Non TMC Participants 41.8 (9.7) |
| Platoon Comparison | Platoon Members 43.3 (8.8) | Platoon Leadership 44.3 (8.3) |



⁷ $z = .66, p = .51$

⁸ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.30, p = .022$

⁹ $z = -.91, p = .364$

PERSONAL GROWTH: RESILIENCY

Being able to bounce back from adversities is an important human characteristic and one we work to develop or strengthen in our participants at The Mission Continues. While we still have room to grow to intentionally improve resilience in participants, initial data shows that many participants are experiencing positive levels of resiliency. Specifically, when we compare program participants to non-program participants we see a significant difference, such that those who are program participants have a higher resilience score ($M = 30.6, SD = 7.4$) as measured by CD-Risk,¹⁰ compared to non-program participants ($M = 29.4, SD = 8.1$).¹¹

Resiliency and the Fellowship Program

A comparison of fellows' resilience scores does not yield big differences between fellows with differing years of involvement with TMC. Regarding fellows' resilience scores we see that fellows who have been involved with The Mission Continues for one year or less ($M = 29.9, SD = 8$) have relatively the same scores as those who have been involved for two years or longer ($M = 29.4, SD = 8.3$). Based on this data, the fellowship program is not having an effect in resiliency scores, as was intended.

Resiliency and Service Platoons

Platoon Leadership Team

Resilience scores for platoon leadership team members do not vary much for volunteers when looking at length of program involvement. Comparing platoon leadership team members with two years or less ($M = 32.7, SD = 7.5$) to those with three years or more ($M = 31.1, SD = 7.1$) we see no statistically significant difference in levels of resiliency. Similar to the fellowship program, being a part of the platoon leadership team does not seem to have an effect on participants' resiliency scores.

It is worth noting that platoon participants' resiliency scores are significantly higher than fellowship program participants' resiliency scores. (Service platoon participants include platoon members and leadership team members.) A comparison of resiliency scores between fellows and service platoon participants shows a trend in favor of service platoon participants. Specifically, service platoon participants ($M = 31.2, SD = 7$) had a marginally significantly higher resiliency score than fellows ($M = 29.6, SD = 8.1$).¹² These results, while significant, do not tell us whether the difference is due to programmatic effects or participant characteristics. More research is needed to understand the impact of the programs on resiliency.

Platoon Members

When looking at resilience scores for platoon members we see that our platoon members are significantly more resilient ($M = 31, SD = 7.1$) than non-TMC participants ($M = 29.9, SD = 7.8$).¹³ When we compare platoon members to platoon leadership team members we see a non-significant difference, such that platoon leadership team members had a higher resiliency score ($M = 32, SD = 7.4$) compared to platoon members ($M = 31, SD = 7.1$).¹⁴ Based on the analyses we cannot determine the cause of these results, only that there is a difference between the groups being compared. Still, this result is encouraging because program participation does seem to have a positive impact on resiliency scores. See table 5 for a summary of the results.

¹⁰ Connor, JRT., & Connor, KM. (2016). Unpublished. www.cd-risk.com.

¹¹ Statistically significant at $z = 2.5, p = .01$

¹² Statistically Significant at $z = 1.94, p = .053$

¹³ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.16, p = .030$

¹⁴ $z = -1.4, p = .155$

Table 5.

| SERVICE PLATOON RESULTS | GROUP 1 MEAN (SD) | GROUP 2 MEAN (SD) |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Platoon Leadership Team | PLT involved 2 years or less 32.7 (7.5) | PLT involved 3 years or more 31.1 (7.1) |
| Platoon Participants | Platoon Participants 31.2 (7) | Fellows 29.6 (8.1) |
| Platoon Members | Platoon Members 31 (7.1) | Non TMC Participants 29.9 (7.8) |
| Platoon Comparison | Platoon Members 31 (7.1) | Platoon Leadership 32 (7.4) |

CONNECTEDNESS

Another pillar of the Empowered Veteran Index is connectedness. Through participation in The Mission Continues, veterans feel a deeper sense of connection—to other veterans, to their own community or social network, to The Mission Continues and/or to professional networks. In our efforts to connect veterans to TMC, each other and communities, we provide a supportive and inviting environment for veterans. In order to see the effects of our efforts, we measure the quality of positive relationships our participants have with others by using the Ryff Positive Relations with Others Scale. When we compare the quality of relationships our participants have compared to non-participants we see that our participants ($M = 39.7, SD = 9.3$) have relationships that are significantly¹⁵ more positive in nature than non-participants ($M = 38.5, SD = 10.1$). This positive indicator shows that individuals who participate in our programs are more likely than non-participants to have positive relationships with others. Overall, TMC participants indicate high levels of connectedness:

- 65% of TMC volunteers feel more connected to the non-veteran community.
- 75.6% feel more connected with other veterans.
- 82.4% feel a sense of community with The Mission Continues.

Connectedness and the Fellowship Program

Fellows who had one year or less with The Mission Continues ($M = 41.1, SD = 8.9$) had a statistically significant¹⁶ higher positive relationships score than those who had participated with the organization for two or more years ($M = 37.9, SD = 10.2$). A possible reason for this disparity is that while Fellows are in their fellowships they have opportunities to build positive relationships with individuals at their host sites and with The Mission Continues' participants and staff. When the fellowship concludes those opportunities shrink in number. Similar to sense of purpose scores, as fellows move on from the Fellowship Program, they may also experience fewer opportunities to build positive relationships.

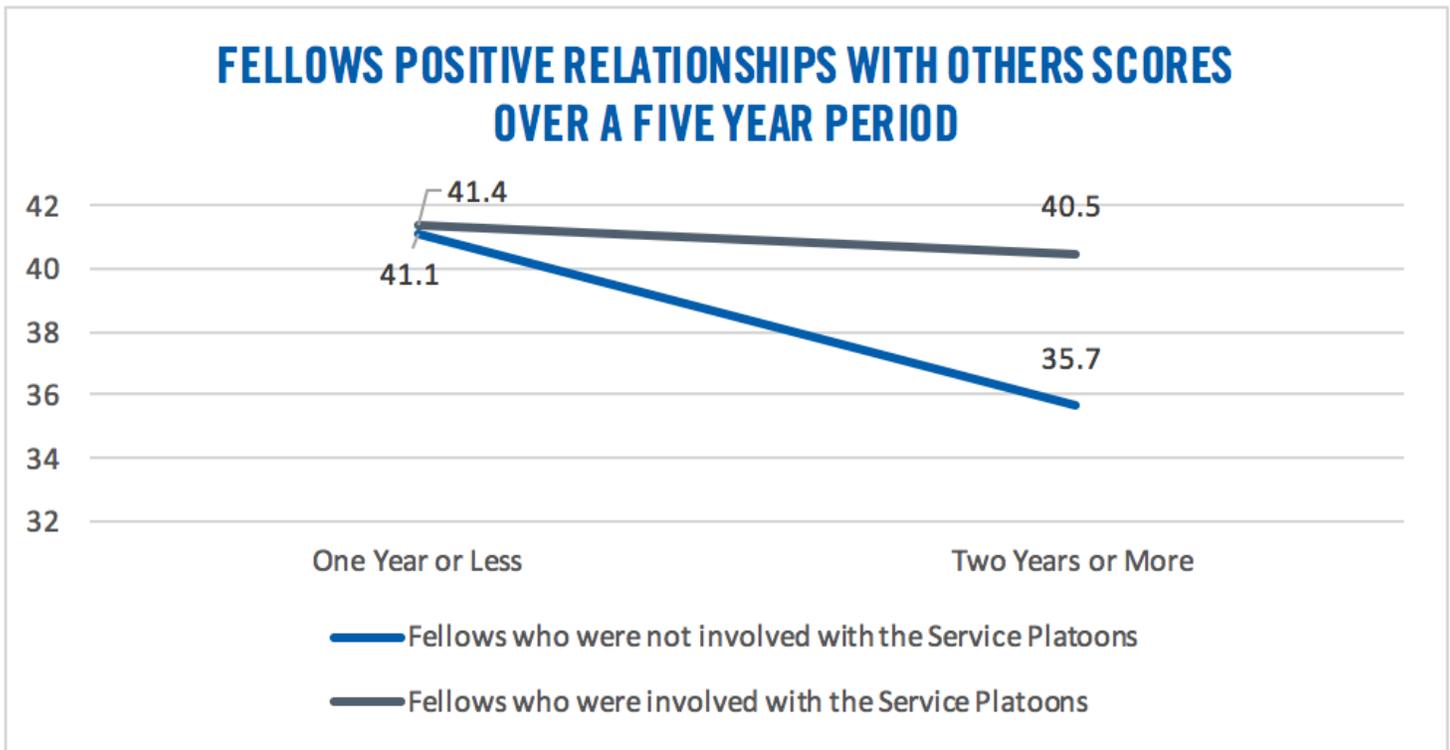
¹⁵ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.25, p = .02$

¹⁶ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.5, p = .01$

Connectedness and the Fellowship Program (Continued)

We see notable findings when comparing fellows who were involved with the service platoons to those who were not involved with the service platoons. Those who have been involved with TMC for a year or less ($M = 41.1, SD = 9$) have significantly higher¹⁷ positive relationships with others compared to those who have been involved with TMC for two years or more ($M = 35.7, SD = 10.4$). When examining further, a comparison between those fellows who were involved with the service platoon and those who were not also resulted in significant results, in relation to time. Those fellows who had been involved with TMC for two years or more and were involved with service platoons have significantly higher¹⁸ positive relationships with others ($M = 40.5, SD = 9.2$) scores compared to those who were not involved with the service platoons ($M = 35.7, SD = 10.4$). Together, these scores may indicate that fellows who have continued engagement with TMC see higher levels of positive relationships with others over time. See Figure 2 for more information on this.

Figure 2.



Connectedness and Service Platoons

Platoon Leadership Team

Platoon Leadership Team Members (who are currently serving as PLTM) benefit from being able to build positive relationships with others. In this analysis, PLTM who had served for two years or less ($M = 43, SD = 8.6$) had a statistically significant¹⁹ higher positive relationships score than those who had participated with the organization for three or more years ($M = 37.9, SD = 8.8$). This indicates that more engagement amongst long-term program participants is needed to ensure connectedness is lasting.

¹⁷ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.76, p = .006$

¹⁸ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.52, p = .011$

¹⁹ Statistically Significant at $z = 2.4, p = .015$

Platoon Members

Participation in the service platoon program at service projects and socials allows platoon members to meet and work alongside like-minded individuals dedicated to service. Through the present analysis we see that platoon members scored higher on positive relationships with others ($M = 40.1, SD = 9$) than non-TMC participants ($M = 39.3, SD = 10$).²⁰ From this, we are able to infer that participating in the service platoon program may lead to increased connectedness (through an increase in positive relationships with others); however, this result was not statistically significant. Please see table 6 for a summary of the findings.

Table 6.

| SERVICE PLATOON RESULTS | GROUP 1 MEAN (SD) | GROUP 2 MEAN (SD) |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Platoon Leadership Team | PLT involved 2 years or less 43 (8.6) | PLT involved 3 years or more 37.9 (8.8) |
| Platoon Members | Platoon Members 40.1 (9) | Non TMC Participants 39.3 (10) |

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The community impact component of the Empowered Veteran Index relates to the work veterans engage in an effort to improve and have an impact on under-resourced communities. In order to continually improve our efforts to help veterans impact their communities, we track and measure different outcomes around this component. One of the ways we track this work is by asking participants about their perception regarding their service in communities:

- 93.8% of TMC volunteers feel they have the ability to make a difference in their community.
- 89.4% believe they are pursuing a meaningful mission with The Mission Continues.
- 91% feel like they are part of a cause larger than themselves.
- 81.1% of TMC volunteers have a greater sense of purpose.

OVERALL SUMMARY

As a whole, the results of the EVI outcomes presented in this document show that The Mission Continues is making a positive difference for program volunteers. At the same time, there are clear areas where we need to be more intentional in order to improve programming, to better meet the needs of our participants. Further, while the present results show positive trends, more work still needs to be done (including successfully integrating the Empowered Veteran Index into our programming) in order to see a greater impact on results.

²⁰ $z = 1.14, p = .256$

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