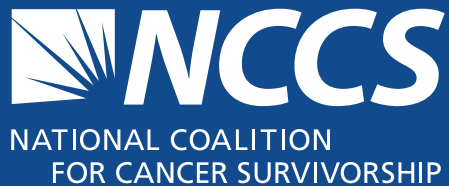


# STATE OF SURVIVORSHIP

SURVEY: 2021

## MEANING OF SURVIVORSHIP



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In 1986, the founders of NCCS brought about a different notion of the cancer experience. No longer would those diagnosed be looked at as passive victims, unable to do anything but hope for the best and wait until it was their time to succumb to a terrible disease.

These 23 men and women were a diverse representation of some of the most recognized experts on medical oncology, employment and disability law, health care consumerism, and psychosocial and behavioral research. Their vision was built around empowering and educating people on the full spectrum of issues related to living with, through, and beyond a cancer diagnosis.

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**The founders of NCCS did not see victims—they saw *survivors*.**



**Our definition of a survivor—from the time of diagnosis for the balance of life—has been the norm in and beyond the cancer community for 35 years.**

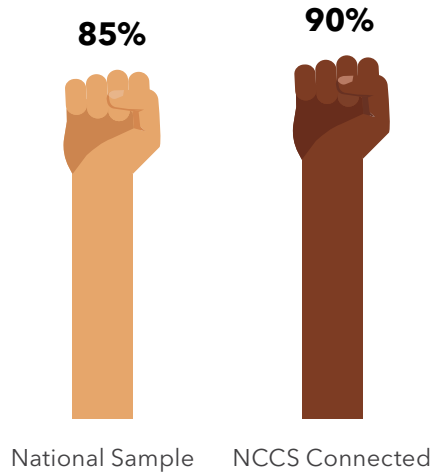
**Over those three and a half decades we have seen a wide spectrum of sentiment about what it means to be a survivor. We know that some people with a cancer diagnosis do not feel comfortable thinking about themselves as a survivor. So, in our 2021 State of Survivorship Survey, we decided to ask how respondents felt about the word survivor.**



**Our data show two main takeaways:**

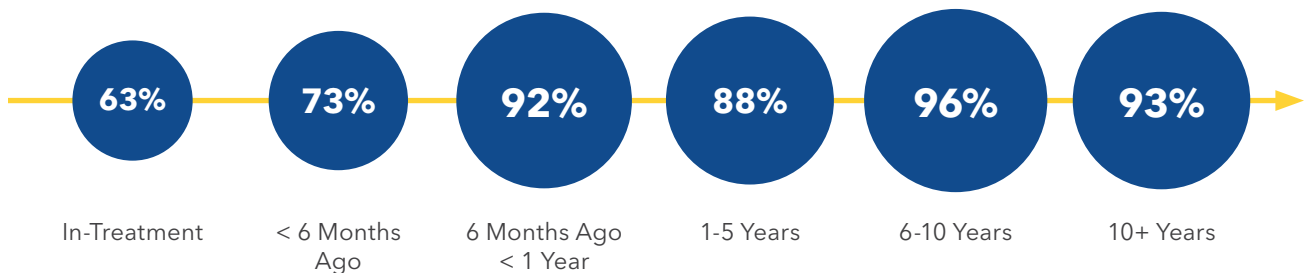
The term “survivor” remains highly resonant with 85% of the national sample saying they consider themselves a survivor and 90% of the NCCS-connected respondents saying the same.

**The Term “Survivor” Continues to Resonate**



Respondents’ comfort level with the term survivor increases over time. For those in treatment, 63% say they considered themselves survivors, while 93% of those 10+ years beyond treatment consider themselves survivors.

**Identification with the Term “Survivor” Grows Over Time**



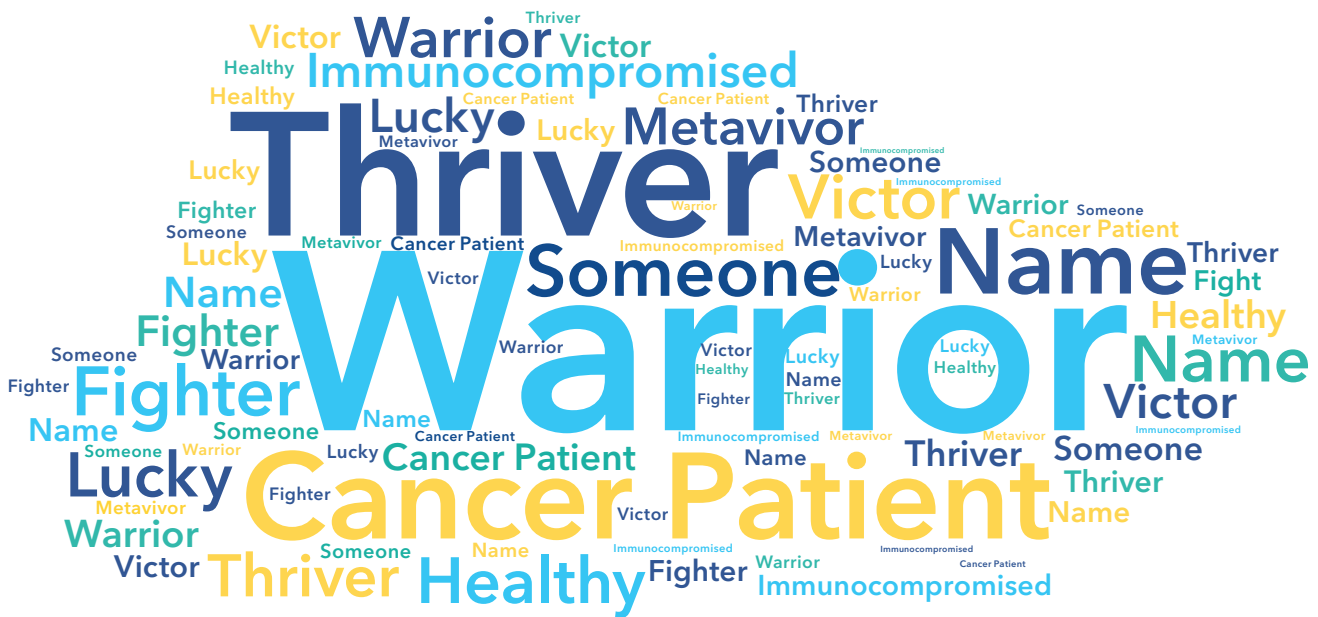
The data also show that a few feel the term survivor is not strong enough, as though just getting by is the goal instead of thriving. Others are uncomfortable using the term while in treatment or even after treatment as they face regular well-checks, perhaps fearful their cancer will return.



**It seems past tense, but I don't feel like I will ever be done with it.** Manage, live with it, keep getting tested, would rather use another word but don't know what it is.

- Male, 39, Stage 2

When asked about alternative words, the sentiment of thriving and battling shone through in responses.



When asked what the term “cancer survivor” means to you, the vast majority of respondents resonated with exactly what our founders envisioned 35 years ago—empowering people on the full spectrum of issues related to living with, through and beyond a cancer diagnosis.

I feel like anyone is a survivor once they receive a cancer diagnosis.


- Male, 59, Stage Not Discussed

I feel that anyone that fights cancer is a survivor... whether they win or lose the battle.

- Female, 60, Stage IV

Being able to live my life peacefully surrounded by family.

- Female, 75, Stage IV



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**“ Being a cancer survivor is like getting a second chance at life. It makes you feel differently about every decision you make. It also makes you feel incredibly lucky and gives you a new look on life.**

- Female, 66, Stage III



NATIONAL COALITION  
FOR CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

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