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Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week 2019: Survey of Canadians

Executive Summary

Prepared for Veterans Affairs Canada

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to conduct a telephone survey of Canadians regarding Veterans' Week and the Department's remembrance programming.

Background and Objectives

One of VAC's core responsibilities is post-Confederation military commemoration. VAC ensures that Veterans and those who died in service are honoured and that Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service. The Canada Remembers Program and the Funeral and Burial Program support the departmental results for commemoration and promote the following:

- Veterans and those who died in service are publicly acknowledged through ceremonies and events, honours and awards, and the presentation and perpetual care of memorials, cemeteries and grave markers;
- Canadians are aware of, and value, the contributions of those who served through a suite of resources that tell the story of our military history and through the provision of funding for community-led commemorative initiatives;
- the memory of the achievements and sacrifices of Canadian Veterans and those who died in service is preserved; and
- the estates of eligible Veterans have access to financial assistance toward a dignified funeral and burial.

The Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week survey measures Canadians' level of participation in remembrance activities, their attitudes toward those who served in Canada's military and their level of support for VAC's work related to remembrance. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department's overall remembrance programming. More specifically, the research was designed to:

- Understand Canadians' attitudes towards and acceptance of the commemoration of Veterans and their sacrifices and achievements;
- Assess Canadians' level of participation (active and passive) in remembrance;
- Monitor changes in Canadians' behaviour related to remembrance;
- Assess Canadians' awareness of and pride in Canadian military contributions and the sacrifices of Canadian Veterans; and
- Provide VAC with concrete data to assist in performance measurement.

The research results obtained through the Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week survey allow VAC to continue to determine the impact and effectiveness of its remembrance activities, adapt activities to be relevant to Canadians, improve the methods used to inform Canadians about remembrance initiatives, and help to guide the planning of future remembrance-related programming.

Methodology

A random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was administered to 1,000 Canadian residents, 18 years of age or older, between November 13 and 25, 2019. Interviewing was conducted by Elemental Data Collection Inc. (EDCI) using Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. Since this was a tracking survey, no pre-test was conducted in advance of the fieldwork. The survey averaged 12 minutes to complete.

An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used to minimize coverage error: 50% of the sample frame were landline telephone numbers and 50% were cellphone numbers. The sample frame was geographically disproportionate so as to improve the accuracy of regional results. The results of the

survey can be considered representative of the population of Canadians aged 18 and older. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered to be accurate within $\pm 3.3\%$, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted to reflect the geographically disproportionate sampling). The margin of error is greater for results pertaining to subgroups of the total sample.

The survey data has been weighted by region, age and gender to ensure results that are representative of the Canadian population. Population figures from Statistics Canada's 2016 census data were used to construct the weights.

The table in the Appendix presents information about the final call dispositions for this survey, as well as the associated response rates. The overall response rate was 7% (8% for the landline sample and 5% for the cell phone sample).

The potential for non-response bias was assessed by comparing the characteristics of respondents through unweighted and weighted data. As is typically the case for general population telephone surveys, older Canadians (those aged 65 and older) were overrepresented in the final survey sample and younger Canadians (those under 30 years of age) were underrepresented. This was corrected with weighting.

Key Findings

AWARENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF VETERANS' WEEK

Canadians' awareness of Veterans' Week and the importance attributed to it has remained relatively stable since 2016.

Just over half (54%) of Canadians have heard of Veterans' Week. Although this figure remains largely unchanged since 2016, awareness of Veterans' Week is lower now than it was almost a decade ago (65% had heard of Veterans' Week in 2010 versus 54% in 2019). Consistent with previous years, the majority (87%) of Canadians believe it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year.

PARTICIPATION IN VETERANS' WEEK AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Participation in Veterans' Week remains largely unchanged since 2017.

Just over nine in ten Canadians (91%) say they, or members of their immediate family, participated in Veterans' Week in 2019.¹ Participation in Veterans' Week has increased over time, from 73% in 2011 to over 90% starting in 2017. Similar to previous years, practical constraints are the most common barriers to participating in Veterans' Week.

Wearing a poppy continues to be the most popular way to commemorate Veterans and those who died in service.

The most popular way for Canadians to commemorate Veterans and those who died in service during Veterans' Week is by wearing a poppy—nearly eight in 10 Canadians (78%) say they wore a poppy this year. Following this, 71% of Canadians say they observed a moment of silence, 43% watched a Remembrance Day ceremony on TV, and 37% participated in a remembrance ceremony in their community. Remembrance-related activities on social media had the lowest participation rate of Veterans' Week activities this year, with 22% of Canadians reporting they took part.

¹ This includes those who indicated that they, or members of their immediate family, participated in Veterans' Week this year **and** those who initially said they had not but later reported that they or their family had taken part in a remembrance activity, such as wearing a poppy (see Q4, Figure 19).

PRIORITIZING VETERANS' WEEK ACTIVITIES

Most Canadians feel the Government of Canada should prioritize all remembrance initiatives.

Canadians were asked to indicate what level of importance they feel the Government of Canada should place on various initiatives that recognize the achievements and sacrifices of Canadians during wartime and in peacetime operations. Providing educational materials for schools was the top priority for Canadians, with 89% saying it is important. This was closely followed by 85% saying the Government should prioritize supporting and leading commemorative events in Canada. Conversely, supporting and leading commemorative events **outside** of Canada received the lowest support among respondents (52%).

ATTITUDES TOWARDS VETERANS AND CANADA'S MILITARY

Canadians' attitudes towards Veterans and Canada's military role remain strongly positive.

The vast majority of Canadians think that Canada's Veterans and those who died in service should be recognized for their service (95%) and that Veterans and those who died in service have made major contributions to our country (93%). Following this, more than four in five (86%) agree that participation in commemorative activities increases awareness of, and appreciation for, the contributions of Veterans and those who died in service. With respect to Canada's military role, 84% are proud of the role that Canada's military has played in peacekeeping missions and conflicts, while 71% say they are knowledgeable about this role. Canadians' attitudes towards Veterans and Canada's military remain strong and virtually unchanged since 2016.

RECOGNIZING CANADIAN VETERANS AND THOSE WHO DIED IN SERVICE

Widespread agreement among Canadians on importance of recognizing Veterans – many are satisfied with VAC's performance in this area.

Consistent with previous years, more than nine in 10 Canadians agreed that it is important that Veterans Affairs Canada recognize and honour Canadian Veterans and those who died in service through the presentation and care of memorials, cemeteries and grave markers (93%) and by providing funeral and burial assistance (92%). In addition, 61% are satisfied with VAC's performance in recognizing and honouring Veterans and those who died in service through the presentation and care of memorials, cemeteries and grave markers, and 56% felt this way about how VAC recognizes and honours deceased Canadian Veterans through the provision of funeral and burial assistance.

Notes to Readers

- All results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted.
- Percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding.
- In graphs:
 - "DK" stands for "Don't know" and "NR" for "No response."
 - Tracking data are presented where available. This survey was not conducted in 2009, 2013, or 2015.
 - Unless otherwise noted, all values are labelled in the stacked bar graphs.
- The number of respondents changes throughout the report because questions were asked of sub-samples of survey respondents. Readers should be aware of this and exercise caution when interpreting results based on smaller numbers of respondents.
- Demographic differences are identified in the report. Only differences that are significant at the 95% confidence level and pertain to a sub-group sample size of more than n=30 are discussed in the report.
- The tabulated data is available under separate cover.

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