



Veterans' Media Preferences and Awareness of VAC Programs and Services

Final Integrated Report

Prepared for Veteran's Affairs Canada

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone and online survey, as well as 14 online focus groups conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). The research study was conducted with 2,621 Canadian Veterans including former RCMP, family members, and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) reservists between February and March 2022.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	5
List of Charts	5
Executive Summary	7
A. Background and Objectives	7
B. Methodology	7
C. Key Findings	9
D. Note to Readers	12
E. Contract Value	13
F. Political Neutrality Certification	14
Detailed Findings	15
A. Profile of Respondents	15
B. Sources Used When Looking for Information with From the Government of Canada	22
C. VAC Programs and Services	31
D. VAC Website and Other Electronic Communications	47
E. Connecting Through Other Veterans Organizations	58
Appendices	72
A. Additional Sample Characteristics	72
B. Survey Questionnaire	75
C. Moderators Guide	91

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1: Sample Profile
- Table 2: VAC Programs & Services Used (Client), Of Interest & Needed (Non-client)
- Table 3: Future Need for VAC Programs & Services
- Table 4: Sources of Information about Government of Canada Programs & Services
- Table 5: Familiarity with Programs for Veterans and Families
- Table 6: Source of Information about VAC Programs & Services
- Table 7: Source of Problems Finding Information
- Table 8: Best Method of Finding Out About VAC Programs & Services
- Table 9: Social Media Used
- Table 10: Social Media Connections
- Table 11: Changes Needed for Program Access
- Table 12: Response Rates
- Table 13: Additional Sample Characteristics

LIST OF CHARTS

- Chart 1: General Topics of Interest
- Chart 2: Language Most Often Used
- Chart 3: Familiarity with Programs & Services for Veterans
- Chart 4: Interest in Programs & Services for Veterans
- Chart 5: Frequency of Looking for Information
- Chart 6: Familiarity with VAC Programs & Services
- Chart 7: Incidence of Looking for Information about VAC Programs & Services
- Chart 8: Reasons for Not Seeking Out Information
- Chart 9: Degree of Success in Finding Information
- Chart 10: Impact of Unsuccessful Search
- Chart 11: Need for Assistance in Finding Information
- Chart 12: Satisfaction with Information
- Chart 13: Reasons for Use of VAC Website
- Chart 14: Uses for the Website
- Chart 15: Preferred Method of Applying for Service
- Chart 16: Satisfaction with Social Media as an Information Source
- Chart 17: Other Veteran Organizations Used to Gather Information

Chart 18: Best Organizations to Share Information

Chart 19: Preferred Timing for Information

Chart 20: Ease of Obtaining Programs and Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) supports Veterans and their families and promotes recognition and remembrance of Veterans’ achievements and sacrifices during times of war, military conflict and peace. At the time the report was released, the total population of Veterans in Canada is estimated to be 629,300¹. This includes 32,100 War Service Veterans and 597,200 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans; however, this population is expected to decline through the next five years. In addition, VAC administers benefits of 15,306 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members or former members and their survivors. It is estimated that VAC serves 19% of the Veteran population in Canada. In 2019-20, the proportion of clients increased by 0.5% and is forecasted to increase by about 1% each year over the next five years. In support of the development of strategic marketing campaigns to support clients, VAC is commissioning research to better understand the Veteran community in terms of awareness of services and benefits offered by VAC and media consumption habits.

B. METHODOLOGY

Survey

The survey component of this study was focused on former CAF members and RCMP members, and their families and caregivers, who have accessed VAC services (“clients”), as well as those not currently receiving VAC services and benefits (“non-clients”). The survey is comprised of 1,020 cases completed with clients, and 1,601 completed with Veterans’ who are non-clients.

Former CAF and RCMP members and their families or caregivers who have accessed services (clients) were surveyed by telephone from a randomly drawn list provided by VAC, including name, and telephone number as well as region, gender and language for the purposes of post-survey weighting. From a randomly selected list of roughly 14,000 clients, a total of 1,020 were included in the survey sample. Clients were screened at the time of the survey to ensure they met study criteria (i.e., are former CAF/RCMP members or family or caregivers, and have accessed VAC services or benefits). The interview length averaged 22 minutes by telephone, and was collected between January 31 and February 24, 2022, following pre-testing online and by

¹ Veterans Affairs Canada. *Facts and Figures Summary*. Online: [Summary - Facts and Figures - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

telephone, in both languages. The response rate for the client sample is 11%. The margin of error for the overall client sample is +/-3.1% at a 95% confidence interval, ranging from 4% to 10% for sub-groups. Survey results for clients are weighted by age, region and gender. Table 1 and Appendix A present the method of calculation of the response rate, sample characteristics of both the client and non-client sample, as well as discussion of the potential for non-response bias.

A sample of 1,601 Veterans who have not accessed programs or services from VAC (non-clients) was also collected, using an open link because no exhaustive list is currently available to VAC. The link was initially circulated through e-mail to VAC stakeholders, a feature on the VAC website, and announcements distributed through VAC social media sites. When this approach did not generate sufficient traffic, the survey was announced, with the open link, in an e-newsletter from the National Association of Federal Retirees (NAFR), which was where most of the sample of 1,601 non-clients was generated from. As a consequence, the sample of non-clients represents older Veterans than the sample of VAC clients. Because the sample of non-clients was not collected in a random fashion there is no way of determining its representativeness of the population and no margin of error can be applied.

Focus Groups

Fourteen focus groups were also conducted. The sample of participants was obtained through an opt-in question in the surveys completed by clients and non-clients. Eight discussions with non-client Veterans and six discussions with client Veterans were conducted online between March 15th and 23rd, 2022. Each discussion lasted roughly 90 minutes for which participants received \$100. Each discussion involved four to seven participants for a total of 85 participants from across the country. Recruitment included Veterans representing one of several key equity groups: visible minority, women, Indigenous, and members of the LGBTQ2+ community.

Discussions touched on definitions of a “Veteran”, sources of information used, preferred methods for finding out about VAC programs and services, experiences with VAC communication channels to gather information, and need for changes related to accessing information on programs and services from VAC. The discussion guide can be found in Appendix C.

C. KEY FINDINGS

Below is a selected summary of findings. For further information, please refer to the Detailed Findings section of this report.

- Respondents consisted mostly of Veterans, with a small proportion of family members of Veterans. Over four in five respondents represented former CAF members, while 19% of non-clients and 13% of clients were former members of the RCMP.
- Non-clients responding to the survey were older, on average, than that of the client sample. This was likely due to the method of soliciting participation in the open survey through public channels, including the e-newsletter from the NAFR.
- Almost half of clients and one in three non-clients said they needed, or were interested in, Disability Benefits in the year prior to the survey. One in four non-clients were also interested in the Veterans Independence Program (VIP), Long-Term Care (LTC), Treatment Benefits and VAC Assistance Services Line.

Looking for Information on Government of Canada Programs and Services

- Sources used by Veterans to obtain information about programs and services from the Government of Canada were identified. Internet was at the top of the list for the majority of non-clients and clients (61% and 60%, respectively). Mail from the Government of Canada was the second most popular source among non-clients (57%), followed by general mentions of Government of Canada websites (40%) which was the second most popular source among clients (51%) who relied somewhat less on mail (41%).
- Topics recently of interest to the majority of respondents were pension or benefit information, followed by information about taxes. One in three looked for health-related information. Programs and services specifically for former members of the military or RCMP were of interest to 30% of non-clients, and half of clients.

Awareness of Programs and Services for Veterans

- Nearly three in four clients said they were familiar or aware of programs and services available for Veterans and their families. Among non-clients, half said they were not familiar with programs and services available for Veterans and their families. Two in three (69%) non-clients were unable to name any programs and services for Veterans and their families.
- Interest was high with 75% of non-clients indicating interest in learning more about programs and services for Veterans.
- Only 7% of non-clients said they were familiar with the VAC services and benefits. By contrast, 38% of clients were familiar with the services and benefits offered by VAC and another 38% were moderately aware. Results were similar in focus group discussions, with many non-clients describing a complete lack of awareness of VAC programs and services.

Looking for Information on VAC Programs and Services

- Only a minority of non-clients have tried to find out about VAC programs and services. For about half of those who have not looked for information, they said it is because they have no interest or need for VAC programs at the moment. Another one in three said they had no idea they could ask for support from VAC.
- When trying to find out about VAC programs and services, the majority went to a Government of Canada website or mention the Internet generally. Various other sources were mentioned by one in five or less, including mail from the Government of Canada or a Service Canada office. Fewer than one in ten sourced magazines, social media, online news outlets, cable / satellite TV, local print newspapers, and neighbourhood or community newsletters.
- Problems most often experienced when trying to look for information relate to inability to find the information needed, followed at a distance by not knowing where to look or who to call, or not understanding the information. Some also pointed to inability to speak with someone at VAC. Results were similar among clients and non-clients.

Experiences with the VAC Website and Other Electronic Communications

- Among those preferring the VAC website to find information about VAC programs and services, ease of access was the most predominant reason, particularly among clients (68%), but also among non-clients (45%). Trust and reliability of the source was another key reason according to 54% of clients, although less so among the non-client sample (23%).
- A high proportion of clients said they used the website because it was likely the most up-to-date source (45%), the easiest to understand (42%) or they were familiar with it (40%). Among those who use the VAC website, both clients and non-clients used it to get information (70% and 77%, respectively). To a lesser extent, clients also tended to use the VAC website to access their My VAC Account, download or print an application or to access services.
- Focus group participants described the website as difficult to navigate to find information they were looking for, and difficult to understand what was relevant for their own situation. Many said they needed the assistance of someone with greater knowledge of VAC programs and services and the VAC website in order to be successful in their search.
- Just over one in ten Veterans said they used social media specifically for VAC programs and services. Among those who did, Facebook was the most popular platform, cited by three in four social media users. Clients were more likely to be more satisfied than non-clients with the information they receive on VAC social media channels, although satisfaction was predominately “moderate”.
- In the focus groups, a similar level of use was presented, with discussion about ex-service groups they were connected to as useful opportunities to increase awareness and connection to VAC. A few expressed concerns about trust of information presented on social media.
- In focus groups, some participants expressed an interest in receiving e-newsletters in order to increase their awareness of programs and services, as well as eligibility criteria. There was almost no awareness among clients or non-clients of Salute.

Connecting with VAC

In the survey results, there were mixed view about the best time to learn about the services for Veterans.

- 29% of non-clients and 43% of clients would have been interested in learning about programs and services within a year to several years before leaving the military.
- 12% of non-clients and 14% clients would have liked this information as they were leaving.
- 5% of non-clients and 9% of clients would have been interested just after leaving
- 26% of non-clients and 27% of clients believed the best time would have been several years after their service.
- In the focus groups, most participants felt the best time to learn about these services was before leaving the CAF/RCMP. While most believed awareness should be generated early and throughout the service career, others suggested the last few years as one begins the transition to release is the best time.
- According to survey results, the best method for finding out about VAC programs and services is through the website, or by talking to a VAC agent, as well as by word of mouth, the Legion or Service Canada.
- Focus group participants focused mostly on the website, in conjunction with assistance from someone at VAC or the Legion.

Nearly three in four non-clients and half of clients said they have not connected with any Veterans organizations to find out about programs and services for Veterans and their families. Of those who suggested groups for VAC to work with to help share information, the Royal Canadian Legion (the Legion) was mentioned by one in five respondents, although the large majority said they did not know which groups VAC should work with.

Among focus group participants, the Legion was also described most frequently as another, or even best, source for information about VAC programs and services because they are knowledgeable and can provide guidance. Some, particularly younger participants, said that the Legion is typically seen as an organization for older Veterans and not one that is relevant for them. A few other sources suggested were former service groups where one can find Veterans with experience with VAC.

- About two in three clients were at least moderately satisfied with how VAC informs them about relevant programs and services. By comparison, nearly half of non-clients said they were not satisfied with how VAC informs them about relevant programs and services. Focus group participants were, by and large, not satisfied.

Need for Changes in Connecting with VAC

- One in three clients and non-clients said their impression is that it is difficult to access programs and services offered by VAC. Only 29% of clients and 6% of non-clients said it is easy.

- Focus group participants described a similarly negative impression, pointing to a difficult and convoluted website, and application process, long wait times, lack of transparency and limited successful applicants.
- According to two in five non-clients, VAC needs to make it easier to find the information about programs and services and make the eligibility criteria for programs and services more straight forward. Roughly one in four mentioned changes needed in processing times for applications (25%), relevance of the information provided (22%), and clarity of the information (22%). A notable proportion (28%) was unsure.
- Clients expressed different priorities for suggested changes than non-clients. Half of clients said VAC needs to change processing times for applications for programs and services (50%). About one in three felt that the ability to find information (36%) or eligibility criteria (35%) needs to change. As with non-clients, just under one in four clients (23%) felt the clarity of the information needs to improve.
- Focus groups participants also emphasized the need to:
 - increase coordination of information with CAF and RCMP to introduce information about VAC programs and services earlier; partner more with other organizations and service/community groups; proactively reach Veterans where opportunities present themselves (e.g., pension communications, NAFR newsletter); and advertise;
 - increase resources to reduce backlog;
 - streamline and clarify the application process;
 - provide greater access to information and support to successfully negotiate the application process and access VAC programs and services.

D. NOTE TO READERS

Detailed findings are presented in the sections that follow. Overall results are presented in the main portion of the narrative and are typically supported by graphic or tabular presentation of results. Results for the proportion of respondents in the sample who either said “don’t know” or did not provide a response may not be indicated in the graphic representation of the results in all cases, particularly where they are not sizable (e.g., 10% or less). Results may also not total to 100% due to rounding.

Bulleted text is also used to point out any statistically and substantively significant differences between sub-groups of respondents. Key demographic patterns of interest are described throughout the report under specific headings: Veteran or their family, Region, Urban versus Rural, Age, Gender, Education, Income, and Disability. Only differences that are statistically and substantively different (i.e., typically five percentage points from the overall mean) are presented. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Overall themes are also described for focus group responses by anonymized, illustrative quotes. It should be noted that the results of the discussions are qualitative in nature. These results should not be assumed to be representative of the experiences of the wider population of Veterans in Canada. Responses from the discussions are meant to provide more detailed illustrations of experiences and perspectives. For this reason, terms such as “a few,” “some” and “most” are used to broadly indicate views, rather than using specific percentages. To ensure a common understanding of the terms used in the analysis, the following guidelines were used in analysing and reporting on participant results:

- “A few participants” = less than 25 per cent;
- “Some participants” = 25 to 49 per cent;
- “Many participants” = 50 to 75 per cent; and
- “Most participants” = over 75 per cent.

It should also be understood that the information provided by participants is subjective in nature, based on their own recollection, and perceptions and should not be interpreted as factual in nature.

E. CONTRACT VALUE

Contract Number: 51019-207004/001/CY

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Award Date: May 17, 2021

F. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by:



Susan Galley (Vice President)

DETAILED FINDINGS

A. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Fairly similar proportions of the non-client and client samples were former members of CAF and RCMP. There was a somewhat higher proportion of family members of Veterans in the client sample (16% versus only 6% in the non-client sample). This was, however, to be expected given the sampling method used in reaching these two groups.

Non-clients in the sample were older than the sample of client, given that only 4% were under 55, whereas this was true for 31% of the client sample. A much higher proportion of the non-client sample were 65 or older (73%) compared with 33% among clients. This was due to the outreach methodology as most non-clients were responding to an announcement about the survey in an e-newsletter from the NAFR. Table 1 presents the unweighted proportion of clients by age².

In terms of gender representation there was a higher proportion of women among clients (21% compared with 13% in the non-client sample). The gender distribution is also presented unweighted in Table 1³. As described in the summary, client results described throughout the report are weighted by age, gender and region.

² The final client sample underrepresents Veterans over 65 years of age (39% versus 55% in the initial sample provided by VAC).

³ The client sample underrepresents women (21% versus 33% in the initial sample provided).

Table 1: Sample Profile

Total	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>Are you...?</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Someone who has served in the Canadian Armed Forces, including the reserves, or RCMP in the past	96%	90%
A family member of someone who has served	6%	16%
Someone who is currently serving in the CAF or RCMP	2%	0%
<i>Did you/your family member serve in ...?</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1016</i>
The CAF	81% ⁴	83%
The RCMP	19%	13%
Don't know/ No response	0%	4%
<i>Age (unweighted)</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
18 to 34 years	0%	4%
35 to 54 years	4%	27%
55 to 64 years	23%	30%
65 to 74 years	43%	18%
75 to 84 years	25%	15%
85 years or older	5%	6%
<i>Gender (unweighted)</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Male	86%	78%
Female	13%	21%
I prefer not to say	1%	0%

At the time of the survey, Disability Benefits were of interest to the largest proportion of non-clients (37%) or believed to be needed in the 12 months prior the survey (32%). By comparison, close to half (46%) of clients were already accessing this program. Significant interest was also indicated in the VIP and LTC (27% in each case) programs, as well as Treatment Benefits (25%) and the VAC Assistance Services Line (23%). Close to one in five (18%) expressed an interest in the Caregiver Recognition program. Most of these, however, are not programs or services that members of this sample felt were relevant to them specifically during the 12 months prior to the survey. Eighteen percent believed that Treatment Benefits would have been useful and 15% noted VIP as a service they would have needed. Among clients, 24% said they received assistance through Treatment Benefits and 16% accessed VIP. Fourteen percent used rehabilitation services

⁴ This is an estimate based on an extrapolation of the last third of the sample collected.

and 12% used the VAC Assistance Services Line or Case Management Services. Two out of three non-clients indicated a type of program or service they felt they would have needed in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Table 2: VAC Programs & Services Used (Client), Of Interest & Needed (Non-client)

Q16. Which of the following programs and services offered by VAC interest you? (Non-client) Q32. What types of programs and services would have most suited your needs over the last year? (Non-client) Q37. Which type of services are you or your family member currently receiving from VAC? (Client)	Of Interest (Non-client)	Needed in Last 12 months (Non-client)	Using/ Have used (Client)
<i>n=</i>	1601	1601	1020
Disability Benefits (Pain and Suffering Compensation or Disability Pension)	37%	32%	46%
Veterans Independence Program	27%	15%	16%
Long-term Care	27%	9%	2%
Treatment Benefits	25%	18%	24%
VAC Assistance Services Line	23%	7%	12%
Caregiver Recognition Benefit	18%	7%	2%
Education and Training Benefit	9%	7%	4%
Veterans Emergency Fund	9%	4%	1%
Income Replacement Benefit	8%	4%	9%
Cannabis for medical purposes	8%	5%	10%
Rehabilitation Services	7%	5%	14%
Case Management Services	5%	4%	12%
War Veterans Allowance	5%	2%	6%
Critical Injury Benefit	4%	2%	9%
Career Transition Services	4%	3%	2%
None	--	33%	--
Not currently receiving any VAC services	21% ⁵	--	19%
Don't know/ No response	8%	9%	13%

- Among non-clients, younger Veterans were more interested in education and career transition than those 65 or older (25% and 12%, respectively). Those 65 or older were more interested in VIP (29%) and LTC (29%).

⁵ The 21% not receiving services are largely family members of Veterans.

- Former RCMPs were more likely to express an interest in Treatment Benefits (37%) compared with former CAF (22%). They were less likely to be interested in VIP (22% versus 29% among CAF Veterans).
- Among clients, those under 65 and men were more likely than their counterparts to be receiving most of the benefits.

Among clients, Disability Benefits were most frequently noted as the benefit likely needed in the next year (53% of clients, but only 33% of non-clients). There is little difference between needs expressed among non-clients in the 12-months prior to the survey and those needed in the coming 12 months (See Table 2). Among clients, future needs are similar to programs and services being accessed. The exceptions are an increased concentration in future need for Treatment Benefits (36% versus 24% accessing this program), and VAC Assistance Services Line (20% versus 12% accessing this program).

Table 3: Future Need for VAC Programs & Services

Q33. What types of programs and services are most likely to suit your needs over the next year?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Disability Benefits (Pain and Suffering Compensation or Disability Pension)	33%	53%
Treatment Benefits	19%	36%
Veterans Independence Program	17%	18%
Long-term Care	11%	5%
VAC Assistance Services Line	10%	20%
Caregiver Recognition Benefit	8%	7%
Rehabilitation Services	7%	23%
Education and Training Benefit	7%	12%
Case Management Services	6%	21%
Cannabis for medical purposes	6%	15%
Veterans Emergency Fund	4%	9%
Income Replacement Benefit	4%	17%
Career Transition Services	3%	7%
War Veterans Allowance	2%	9%
Critical Injury Benefit	1%	16%
Other	3%	2%
None	22%	14%
Don't know/ No response	16%	8%

- Among non-clients, those under 65 were more interested in education (18%) and Career Transition Services (10%), while those who are 65 or older were more apt to see the need for VIP (20%) or LTC (13%). Need for VIP stands out prominently in Atlantic Canada (28%).
- Among clients, those under 65 were most likely to require most programs compared with those 65 or older. The pattern is the same for men compared with women. Need for VIP was more concentrated in Ontario (25%) compared with other parts of the country.
- Among both non-clients and clients, former RCMP members were more likely than CAF members to need Disability Benefits (non-clients: 40% versus 31% among CAF, clients: 56% versus 48% among CAF). This is also true of Treatment Benefits (non-clients: 26% versus 17% among CAF, clients: 38% versus 28%).
- Former CAF were more likely to need VIP (non-clients: 19% versus 12% among RCMP, clients: 20% versus 8%). Among non-clients there was a greater need for LTC (12% versus 7% among RCMP). Among clients there was also a greater need for IRB (16% versus 10%) and Cannabis for Medical Purposes (14% versus 7%).

Defining a Veteran - Focus Group Findings

In the focus groups, most client and non-client participants perceived a “Veteran” to be someone who has served their country. Many clients said that in the past or perhaps even until the point of their own release from the CAF or the RCMP, they thought of a Veteran as someone who served in the Second World War or the Korean war. A Veteran was someone who “sold poppies for Remembrance Day”, or “spent time at a Legion with other Veterans”, according to some. Some clients said that, more recently, their perception of a Veteran had changed to someone who was deployed overseas, in a “shooting war”, extending it to include Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo or those engaged in the cold war. Many participants said they did not consider what it would be like to be a Veteran after their release. Nor did they think of themselves in a category of individuals labelled as a “Veteran”.

“I only considered older males with a chest full of metals to be a Veteran. Now, I know that Veterans can be any make, size, shape, ability, or disability. Anybody can be a Veteran who has served.” (Client)

“They don’t recognize you as a Veteran if you don’t look old enough to have served in WWII.” (Client, translated from French)

Most clients said that, at this point in time, they understand a Veteran to be any former CAF or RCMP member. Many clients felt that anyone who has completed basic training should be considered a Veteran upon release, primarily because some CAF or RCMP members could be injured as a result of training or shortly after training while in service. Conversely, some participants stipulated that someone should have served for a more substantial period of time,

such as 10 or 20 years, to be considered a Veteran. A few participants said that there should still be an operational component to service to be a Veteran.

“A lot of people only visualize those who have gone into Theatre. You can serve for many years [within Canada, such as with RCMP], and that makes you a Veteran just as much.” (Client)

“I think of a Veteran as someone who served in theatre of war, but from benefits perspective Vets are anyone who served long enough to get past basic training and served and made the commitment, whether called upon for that contract or not.” (Non-client)

Despite differences in opinion on the length or type of service to qualify as a Veteran, almost all agreed that anyone who has served honourably and been released from service should be considered a Veteran. Many clients also stipulated that anyone who has taken an oath and made a commitment to serve Canada should be considered a Veteran upon release.

“Anyone who has served their country honourably is a Veteran.” (Non-client)

“It’s all about commitment. There are definitions, but for me, I was signing on the bottom line to make a commitment to serve and defend your country.” (Client)

A few CAF participants said that, prior to participating in the study, they had not been aware that RCMP members were considered to be Veterans. Likewise, a few former RCMP members said they did not understand at the time of release that they would be considered a Veteran. A few former members of the reserves also said they did not think of themselves as a Veteran following their release.

“Generally, in the military, we look at a Veteran as a military member but we tend to forget the RCMP. A Veteran is anyone who signed on the dotted line to uphold the rule of law at the federal government level.” (Client)

Medical Release for VAC Services - Focus Group Findings

Focus group participants were asked if there is a medical release requirement in order to engage with VAC. Most participants felt that anyone who has served should be able to access programs and services from VAC, based on individual needs. A few said that they were aware of active members who were accessing VAC services, therefore, a medical release must not be needed.

“Absolutely not. All Veterans should have VAC services. There is transition services to go from military to civilian life. It took me three years to realize I wasn’t in the military anymore.” (Client)

“Hope not, there are lots of needs that Vets have. Medical needs, but also others.”
(Non-client)

Many participants believed that anyone medically released would be connected with VAC immediately for support. In terms of support for medical needs, however, most participants said that these needs are not always obvious on release. These participants spoke of injuries incurred during service that may result in the need for either physical or mental health support or therapy. Many also talked about a culture within the service of reported injuries being seen as a weakness. Therefore, some argued, former members may not identify injuries inflicted during service until after release. They also may only realize the need for support much later (i.e., post-release), some said. Some participants also pointed out that some Veterans are released from service while at a relatively young age, and as a consequence, may not recognize their need for physical or mental support until much later.

“Most people in the past, released from the military weren’t medically released. For many years, it was frowned upon to be injured and seek therapy. You withhold that over years, and then your family pays for that when you come home with trauma. We often don’t complain and just accept it.” (Client)

“When you join up, you have a medical [examination] done. If it deteriorates as time goes on, you should be entitled to some sort of a pension. Back problems, knee problems, if it started when you were in the military and got worse as you went on, that should be covered.” (Non-client)

B. SOURCES USED WHEN LOOKING FOR INFORMATION WITH FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Veterans were asked about the sources of information they used to obtain information about Government of Canada programs and services. The Internet topped the list for both non-clients and clients (61% and 60%, respectively). Mail from the Government of Canada was the second most popular source among non-clients (57%), followed by GC websites specifically (40%) which was the second most popular source among clients (51%) who relied somewhat less on mail (41%).

Television was also a fairly popular choice, although more so among non-clients (36% compared with 27% among clients). Online news outlets were used by roughly one in four non-clients (28%) and clients (26%). Social media was also popular among non-clients (21%) and clients (25%). Local newspapers were a source used by 21%, although fewer clients relied on newspapers (15%). Magazines, local radio and Service Canada offices were sources relied on by about one in six non-client and clients.

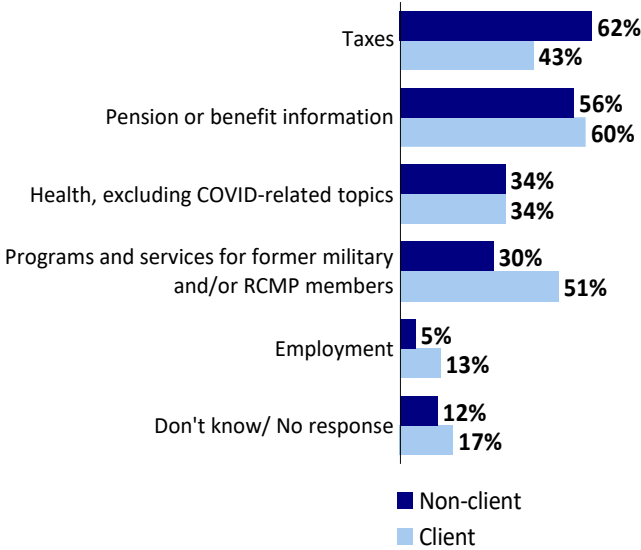
Table 4: Sources of Information about Government of Canada Programs & Services

Q3. What sources do you rely on to receive information about programs and services from the Government of Canada?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Internet	61%	60%
Mail from the Government of Canada	57%	41%
Government of Canada web site	40%	51%
Cable or satellite TV	36%	27%
Online news outlets	28%	26%
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	22%	25%
Local print newspapers	21%	15%
Magazines	17%	12%
Local AM/FM radio	15%	15%
Service Canada office	14%	17%
Neighbourhood or community newsletters	6%	9%
Streamed TV	4%	6%
Streamed radio	2%	2%

- Among non-clients, men were more apt to prefer a website (63% compared with 51% among women). This was also the case among those with a university level of education (64%).
- Cable/satellite TV were more often preferred in Ontario (39%), among those over 65 years of age (39%) and men (38%) compared with their counterparts. This was also true among clients (37% and 34%, respectively).
- Local print newspapers followed a similar pattern among those 65 or older (25%), men (23%), and those with higher education (25%). Among clients there was also a higher concentration among those 65 or older (23%)
- Government of Canada websites (48%) were more often preferred among those under 65. This was also the case among non-client RCMP members compared with CAF Veterans (46% compared with 39%). Among clients it was also the case for those under 65 (67%) and men (57%).
- Social media was more often preferred by those under 65 (29%) and women (31% versus 20% among men). This was also the case among non-client RCMP members compared with CAF members (26% vs. 20%). The pattern was the same among younger clients (67%).
- Mail from the Government of Canada was more likely to be preferred among women (60%), and those with higher levels of education (65%) and income (62%). Among clients it was also true for those under age 65 (57%) and men (49%).

Topics that had been researched among non-clients and clients were pension or benefit information (56% and 60%, respectively), although a slightly higher proportion of non-clients looked for information about taxes (62%) which is considerably higher than reported by clients (43%)⁶. About one-third of both groups looked for health-related information (34%). Programs and services for former members of the CAF or the RCMP were of interest to 30% of non-clients, and 51% of clients.

Chart 1: General Topics of Interest



Q5NEW. In the past year, which of the following topics have you looked for information about from the Government of Canada?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

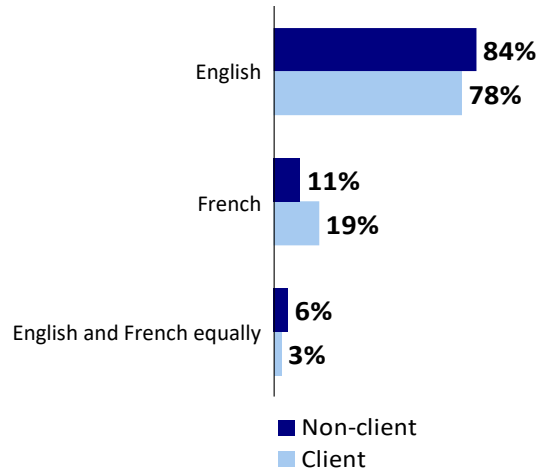
- Those under 65 were more likely to have looked for information about programs and services for Veterans (36% compared with 28% who are under 65 among non-clients: 56% of clients over 65 compared with 35% under 65).
- The same was true of non-clients with a disability (38% compared with 28% among those without a disability). Non-client former RCMP members were also more likely to have looked for information about programs and services for Veterans (37% versus 29% among former CAF members).
- Male clients were also more likely to have looked for this type of information (50% compared with 34% of female clients).

⁶ Although the two samples were collected in a similar time frame, most of the client interviews were conducted in February, whereas considerably more of the non-client sample was collected in March which is more typically considered “tax season”.

Language Most Often Used

Overall, 84% of non-clients indicated English as their preferred language at home, while 78% of clients said the same. Eleven percent of non-clients and 19% of clients indicated French and a small proportion of each said they use both equally.

Chart 2: Language Most Often Used



Q6. Of Canada's two official languages, English and French, which one do you use most often at home?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

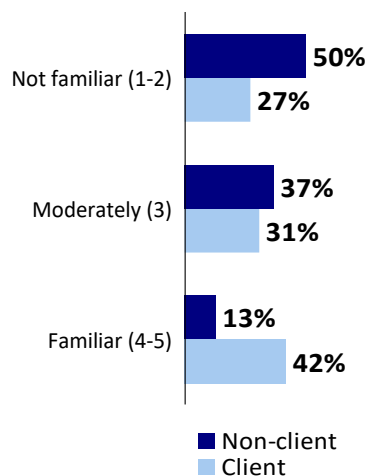
- Among Anglophones living in Quebec most said they access information in their own language, while some said they access information in both official languages. Among Francophones living in the rest of Canada, however, only a small proportion reported they access information in French. About half said they access it in both languages and one-third access it in English.
- Only a small number of clients and non-clients across the two samples said they use the majority language. Among this small sample, most said this is the language they prefer to use, but a few said it is because it is the language most people in their community use.

Familiarity with Programs & Services for Veterans

Half (50%) of non-clients said they were not familiar with programs and services available for Veterans and their families. About one in three (37%) were moderately familiar, and 13% indicated they were familiar with programs and services.

Clients were generally more familiar than non-clients with four in ten (42%) reporting that they were familiar with programs and services available for Veterans and their families. Another 31% were moderately aware. One-quarter (27%) of clients said they were not familiar with programs and services.

Chart 3: Familiarity with Programs & Services for Veterans



Q11. How familiar are you with programs and services available for Veterans and their families?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Non-clients with a disability (9%) were less likely than those without a disability (15%) to be familiar.
- Regionally, clients in Quebec (51%) were more likely than those in other regions, particularly Alberta (31%) to indicate familiarity with available programs and services.
- Clients with a university education (51%) were more likely than those with high school (37%) or college (41%) education to be familiar.
- Former members of the RCMP (33%) were less familiar compared with former CAF members (43%).

Two in three (69%) non-clients were unable to name any programs and services for Veterans and their families. Just over one in ten (13%) cited medical or mental health services and coverage. Fewer could name housing and home services or maintenance and the VIP program (6%); disability pensions (6%); financial and income assistance, including cost of living adjustment (2%); general mentions of VAC (2%); CF1 card and CF appreciation (2%); or other programs (8%).

Table 5: Familiarity with Programs for Veterans and Families

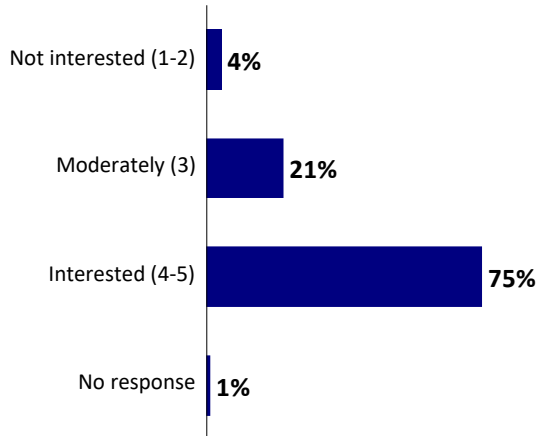
Q14. Can you name any programs and services for Veterans and their families?	NON-CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>1601</i>
Medical/mental health services/coverage	13%
Housing and home services/maintenance, VIP program	6%
Disability pensions/pensions	6%
Financial assistance, income assistance, cost of living adjustment	2%
Veteran's Affairs Canada	2%
CF1 card, CF appreciation	2%
Other	8%
Don't know/ No response	69%

- Non-clients with a disability (17%) were more likely than those without a disability (11%) to name medical or mental health coverage.
- Families of non-clients (15%) were apt to name housing and maintenance services.
- Regionally, non-clients in Alberta (22%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (20%) were apt to list medical or mental health coverage.

Interest in Programs & Services for Veterans

The vast majority (75%) of non-clients indicated interest in programs and services available for Veterans and their families and another 21% were moderately interested. Only 4% were not interested in available programs and services.

Chart 4: Interest in Programs & Services for Veterans



Q12. To what extent are you interested in programs and services that are available for Veterans and their families?

Base: Non-client n=1601

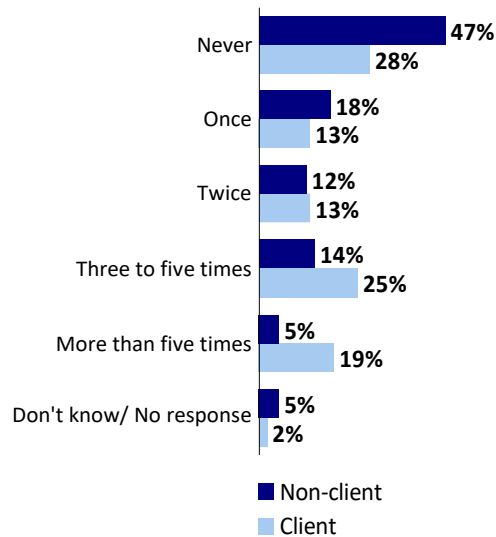
- Non-clients with a disability (85%) were more likely than those without a disability (71%) to be interested in programs and services for Veterans and their families.
- Regionally, non-clients in Atlantic Canada (82%) and British Columbia (79%) were apt to be quite interested, while those in Quebec were least interested (58%).

Looking for Information

Nearly half (47%) of non-clients had never looked for information about programs and services for Veterans and their families. Another three in ten had looked for information once (18%) or twice (12%). Nearly one in five had looked for information three to five times (14%) or more than five times (5%).

Clients had looked for information much more frequently in the past year. Nearly one in five (19%) had looked for information more than five times and another one in four (25%) had looked three to five times. Still, over half of clients had looked for information once (13%), twice (13%) or never (28%) in the past year.

Chart 5: Frequency of Looking for Information



Q13. In the past year, how often have you looked for information about programs and services for Veterans and their families?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Non-clients and clients with a disability were more likely to say they looked more often (8% and 18% respectively, say they looked more than five times) compared with those without a disability.
- Younger clients tended to have looked more often. Non-clients under age 65 (8%) and clients under age 65 (25%) are more likely to say they looked more than five times than those under age 65 (49% and 45%, respectively said “never”).
- Among clients, Veterans were likely to have looked more often (25% three to five times, 18% more than five times) than family members of clients (45% say never).
- Female clients (43%), along with those with a high school education (42%), or under \$40,000 in household income (53%) were apt to say they had never looked for information in the past year.

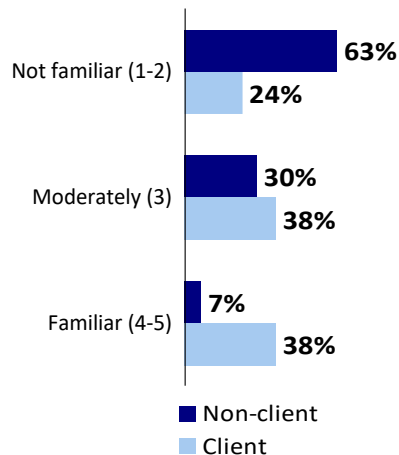
C. VAC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Familiarity with VAC Programs & Services

Most (63%) non-clients said they were **not** familiar with the services and benefits offered by VAC. Only 7% said they were.

By comparison, close to four in ten (38%) clients said they **were** familiar with the services and benefits offered by VAC and the same proportion said they were moderately familiar. One in four (24%) clients said they were not familiar.

Chart 6: Familiarity with VAC Programs & Services



Q19NEW. How familiar would you say you are with the services and benefits offered by Veterans Affairs Canada or VAC?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Families of non-clients (14%) were more likely than non-clients (7%) to say they were familiar with VAC services and benefits.
- Clients under age 65 (41%) were more likely than those over age 65 (34%) to say they were familiar. This was also true of clients with a university education (48%) compared with those with high school (33%) or college (36%) education.

Familiarity – Focus Group Findings

Reflecting survey results, most non-client focus group participants said they were not familiar with VAC programs and services and had never looked for information in this area. A few said they did not realize there was a VAC website. Among non-clients who had looked for information, few suggested they were quite familiar VAC programs and services. Clients were generally more familiar with some of the programs and services offered by VAC, however, many said they lack a detailed understanding of what is offered or how the programs work (e.g., eligibility criteria).

“I didn’t even know there were programs. I thought the only thing was the Legion.”

(Non-client)

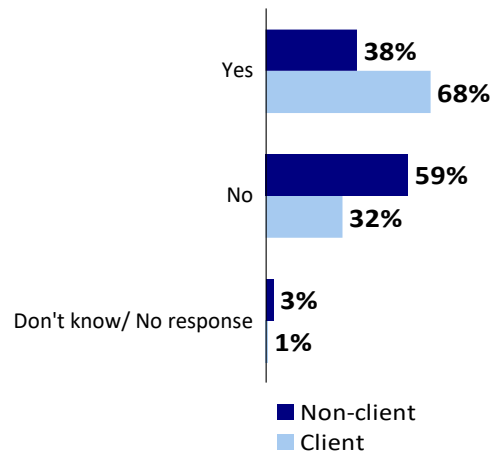
Among participants with some familiarity, the focus was largely on programs supporting Veterans with an injury or support as Veterans age. Discussion of other programs and services, such as those supporting transitions to a civilian career or education support were raised by only a few client participants. A few clarified that they considered mental health issues to be as valid as physical injury, although most focused on physical injury.

“I feel a bit left out. I didn’t get broken therefore I won, but I lost because there are no benefits for me moving forward.” (Non-client)

Looking for Information about VAC Programs & Services

Among non-clients, 38% had tried to find out about VAC programs and services. Congruently, the incidence was much higher for VAC clients, with 68% reporting that they had tried to find out about VAC programs and services.

Chart 7: Incidence of Looking for Information about VAC Programs & Services



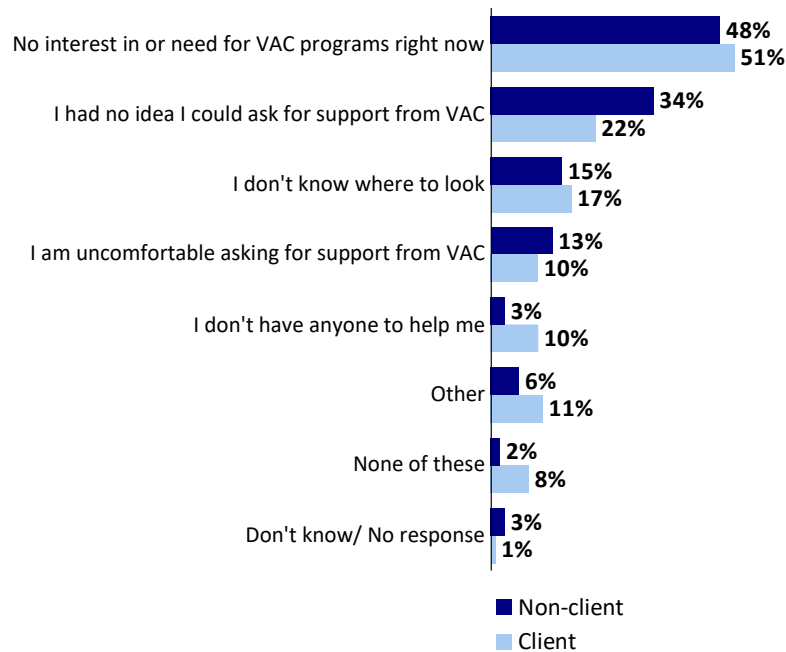
Q17. Have you ever tried to find out about VAC programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Those non-clients with a disability (55%) were more likely than those without a disability (32%) to say they had looked for information about VAC programs and services. Those with a university education (42%) were also more likely to have looked.
- Veteran clients (68%) were more likely than their family members (44%) to have tried to find out about programs and services. Younger clients (76%) were also more likely than those over age 65 (48%) to have tried to find out about VAC programs and services. Men (68%) were similarly more likely than women (48%) to have tried to find out about programs and services.
- The propensity of clients looking for information increases with income and education.

About half (48% of non-clients and 51% of clients) of those who had not tried to find out about VAC programs and services said this was because they had no interest or need for VAC programs right now. One in three (34%) non-clients and 22% of clients said they had no idea they could ask for support from VAC. Over one in ten did not know where to look (15% of non-clients and 17% of clients) or were uncomfortable asking for support from VAC (13% of non-clients and 10% of clients). A lack of support was the reason for not seeking support among only 3% of non-clients, but 10% of clients.

Chart 8: Reasons for Not Seeking Out Information



Q22. Why haven't you tried to find out about VAC programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=951; Client n=323

- Non-clients living in Atlantic Canada were more likely than those in other regions to say they are uncomfortable asking for support from VAC (25%). Those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were apt to say they do not have anyone to help (12%).
- Among non-clients, men were more likely to say they have no interest or need for VAC programs right now (50%), while women were apt to say they had no idea they could ask for support from VAC.
- Those non-clients with a disability were more likely than those without a disability to say they had no idea they could ask for support (45%), did not know where to look (25%), or were uncomfortable asking for support from VAC (27%). Those without a disability tended to say they have no current interest or need (54% of non-clients and 52% of clients).

- As with non-clients, clients living in Atlantic Canada were more likely than those in other regions to say they are uncomfortable asking for support from VAC (20%). Clients in Quebec were apt to say they have no current interest or need (59%), and those in British Columbia were apt to say they did not know they could ask for support (39%).
- Clients with a disability (20%) were more likely than those without (6%) to say have not tried because they do not have anyone to help them.

Looking for Information – Focus Group Findings

All clients participating in the focus groups said they had looked for information about programs and services for Veterans. The experience was more mixed among non-clients. While many had looked for information, some had not. According to these participants, this was primarily because they were not generally aware of the programs and services offered by VAC or they did not feel the need to contact VAC because they were not experiencing a health issue. Among non-clients who had looked for programs and services for Veterans, this was often because of a health issue they had either researched or applied for benefits. Some said it was a result of talking to another Veteran who was receiving support.

“No, I really feel I don’t need them at this time, so I haven’t looked into it. Maybe I need to see a more comprehensive list of the things they do.” (Non-client)

“People I knew got me interested. I went to the Legion, went online to look up Veterans Affairs and what they do.” (Non-client)

Sources of Information about VAC Programs and Services

When trying to find out about VAC programs and services, the majority said they go to a Government of Canada website (60% of non-clients and 52% of clients) or mentioned the Internet generally (57% of non-clients and 63% of clients). Non-clients were less likely to indicate mail from the Government of Canada (13%) compared with clients (24%). Fewer than one in five pointed to a Service Canada office (17% of non-clients and 14% of clients). Other sources included magazines (8% of non-client and 5% of clients); social media (8% of non-clients and 10% of clients); online news outlets (5% of non-clients and 10% of clients); cable/satellite TV (4% of non-client and 3% of clients); local print newspapers (3% of non-clients and 4% of clients); and neighbourhood or community newsletters (2% of non-clients and 4% of clients).

Table 6: Source of Information about VAC Programs & Services

Q14NEW. What sources did you use when you tried to find out about VAC programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n</i> =	605	691
Government of Canada web site	60%	52%
Internet	57%	63%
Service Canada office	17%	14%
Mail from the Government of Canada	13%	24%
Magazines	8%	5%
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	8%	10%
Online news outlets	5%	10%
Cable or satellite TV	4%	3%
Local print newspapers	3%	4%
Neighbourhood or community newsletters	2%	4%
Don't know/ No response	7%	9%

Responses with 2% or more shown

- Non-clients under age 65 (13%) were more likely to cite social media as a source for information than those over age 65 (5%).
- Clients under age 65 were more likely than older counterparts to point to the Internet (69%), Government of Canada website (56%) or social media (13%). Those over 65 were more likely to have used a Service Canada office (22%).
- Those with a disability (28%) were more likely than those without (19%) to indicate mail from the Government of Canada as a source.

Sources of Information – Focus Group Findings

Focus group participants who looked for information described a variety of sources, including generally “Googling” the word Veteran online, going directly to the VAC website, or accessing their My VAC Account. Others said they had gone to the Legion, called VAC, visited a VAC office, or asked other Veterans they know for information. A few mentioned learning about programs and services through social media sites of Veterans groups. A few clients said they had gone to their Case Manager for any additional information about programs and services.

“Hands down, I would go to Veterans Affairs. That makes the most logical sense, I would type in Veterans Affairs Canada and do a google search.” (Client)

“There are ways within the Legion that you can get help.” (Client)

“I went to the local VAC office to enquire about programs and opened a file to start the process for a claim. Then COVID happened, offices closed, and that’s as far as I got.” (Non-client)

When asked where they would go today to look for information about programs and services for Veterans, most noted the same sources of information. There was a particular emphasis by many participants, however, on starting their search for information online, followed by contacting a representative of VAC or a Veterans’ organization for more detailed information.

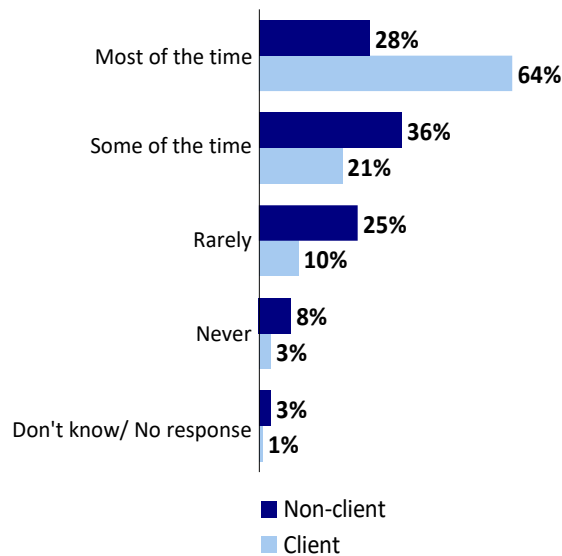
“I have a My VAC Account, and that was from getting released and my case manager. I get emails to go into My VAC Account and gives you directions to do certain things. I find that the easiest way is to go on to the My VAC Account.” (Client)

“If I wasn’t satisfied with the website, (I) would go to the Legion.” (Non-client)

Difficulties Finding Information

Only 28% of non-clients indicated they were able to find the information they were looking for about VAC programs and services most of the time. This is in stark contrast to the 64% clients who said this. Non-clients were more likely to struggle to find information with one in three reporting that they rarely (25%) or never (8%) found the information they were looking for.

Chart 9: Degree of Success in Finding Information



Q19. How often were you able to find the information you were looking for about VAC programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=605, Client n=691

- Among non-clients, those without a disability (32%) were more likely than those with a disability (21%) to say that they found what they were looking for most of the time.

One in five (21%) non-clients and one in three (34%) clients said they did not experience any problems finding information. Among the difficulties experienced, Veterans most often said they could not find exactly what they were looking for (43% of non-clients and 35% of clients). One in five could not find any relevant information (20% of non-clients and 21% of clients). Fewer than one in five did not know where to search or who to call (17% of non-clients and 15% of clients); did not understand the information (15% of non-clients and 17% of clients); could not get through to VAC on the telephone (13%); could not see anyone from VAC in person because the offices were closed due to the pandemic (10% of non-clients and 13% of clients); or could not get through to Service Canada on the telephone (8% of non-clients and 10% of clients). Fewer than one in ten pointed to other types of problems.

Table 7: Source of Problems Finding Information

Q20. What (if any) types of problems did you experience in trying to find information?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>605</i>	<i>691</i>
Couldn't find exactly the information wanted	43%	35%
Couldn't find any relevant information	20%	21%
Did not know where to search or who to call	17%	15%
Didn't understand the information	15%	17%
Could not get through to VAC on the telephone	13%	13%
Couldn't see anyone from VAC in person because officers are closed (pandemic)	10%	13%
Could not get through to Service Canada on the telephone	8%	10%
Don't like to go online for information	3%	6%
Information didn't seem to be from a reliable source	3%	8%
My Internet is too slow	2%	4%
Don't have access to the Internet	0%	4%
Other	8%	6%
Did not experience any problems	21%	34%
Don't know/ No response	8%	3%

- Non-clients from British Columbia (33%) were more likely than those in other regions to say they could not find any relevant information. Those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were more likely to say they did not know where to search or call (33%), or that they could not see anyone in person because offices were closed due to pandemic (24%).
- Among both groups, younger Veterans were more likely than those over age 65 to say they could not find the exact information they wanted (54% of non-clients and 39% of clients) or could not find any relevant information (27% of non-clients and 25% of clients).
- Those non-clients with a disability were apt to say they could not find the exact information they wanted (49%), did not understand the information (21%), or could not see anyone from VAC because the offices were closed (16%).
- Clients with a disability were more likely than those without a disability to say they could not find relevant information (25%), could not get through to VAC on the telephone (20%), or do not like to go online for information (12%).
- Among both groups, those with a disability were apt to say they did not know where to search or who to call (22% of non-clients and 21% of clients), or their Internet is too slow (4% of non-clients and 8% of clients).

Issues with the VAC Website or My VAC Account – Focus Group Findings

Both client and non-client participants in the focus groups said that they do not know where to look for specific information on the VAC website and generally find it hard to navigate the site. A few described wading through “layers” and “many clicks” or “going down rabbit holes” to find specific information that they were looking for. A few said there is too much to wade through on the website, while others said that, as far as they were able to tell, the information they were looking for is “not there”.

“The information wasn’t there on the website. My background is an analyst, I’m used to digging down for information, so found it frustrating that I couldn’t find the information on the website.” (Non-client)

“Sometimes it can be overwhelming looking through [the website]. It’s giving you information, then click here, and go to information, then click here and go to information. Sometimes the information is there, but under a lot of layers.” (Client)

“I rarely found the right information I needed unless I was dealing directly with my case manager. I think parts of the website aren’t translated correctly.” (Client, translated)

A few clients said they were not able to find specific forms required for their applications or annual submissions on the VAC website. One in particular said that if “you don’t (either have or know) the specific form number, you won’t find it”, describing the site as too specific and not user-friendly for someone searching for forms. A few clients suggested that having a follow-up email with links to specific required forms would be a helpful addition to any conversations with applicants, whether on the chat function or by telephone.

“You need to know the correct form number to get the right document. It’s almost like doing your taxes. You should be able to find documents by searching for a general theme or looking through a list, like ‘Going Back to School’, or ‘General Information’.” (Client)

“It wasn’t an easy website to navigate [...] on virtually on every level, it wasn’t set up to be user friendly.” (Non-client)

A few spoke of the website as the primary vehicle for obtaining information, but that older Veterans often “don’t use computers” or “have trouble with computers”, making this an unfriendly way of having to search for answers for this segment of the population.

“My dad doesn’t have a computer and he has had no end of difficulty in trying to access programs and services. Even on the phone, he is hard of hearing and it is challenging. Reaching out for help is very difficult.” (Non-client)

Ease or Difficulty Finding Information – Focus Group Findings

A few clients and non-client participants described the process of obtaining information on VAC programs and services as impersonal. Descriptions included a likelihood that you would have trouble reaching someone to speak with, that you would reach a different representative each time you called, or getting a different explanation or answer each time. Some also spoke of “getting the runaround” and being told quite quickly that they “did not qualify” or to “drop it”.

[Y]ou email four times and get four different people, with different answers.” (Client)

“It’s rather impersonal, when really, it’s a personal matter. It’s challenging and people are struggling.” (Client)

Many client and non-client participants described the process of finding forms and completing applications as unnecessarily convoluted and difficult to understand or achieve. A few said that it is “just too hard” or “harder than it needs to be”. A few said they considered making an

application to access services but decided that “it just wasn’t worth it.”, or would be “too frustrating” to try to find what they needed. (This is discussed in further detail in the section on *impressions of accessing programs and services from VAC.*)

“I have found what I need about programs available but finding out about qualifications is a whole different ball of wax, much harder and [the information is] not always there.” (Non-client)

Ease or Difficulty Understanding Information – Focus Group Findings

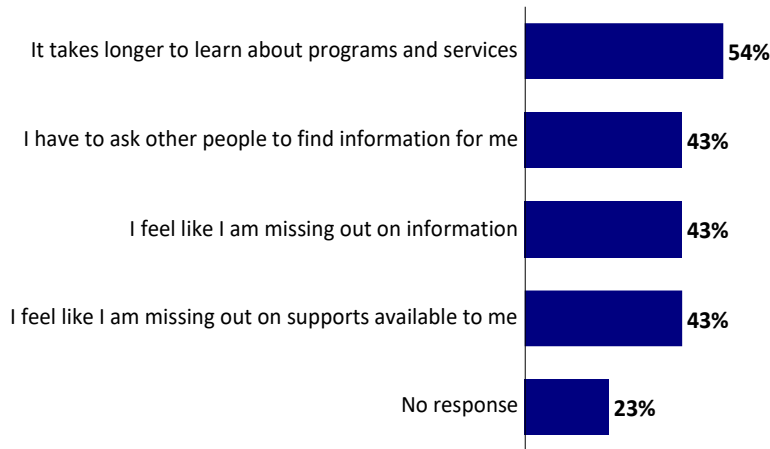
When asked about the ease or difficulty of understanding information presented on the website, many participants said the actual text presented is fairly straightforward and easy to understand. The terminology used in forms and applications, however, is often not clear or easy to understand. Many clients and non-clients specified that the difficulty is in trying to understand what is being asked for, or how best to respond to it accurately and adequately. A number of participants explained that, if your questions or need for information are basic and straightforward, the information presented on the website is largely easy to understand. If, however, your questions or information needs are more complex (e.g., related to an injury or specific circumstance) then it can be quite difficult to understand what is needed.

“The language could be dumbed down a little bit. [It is] written in a ‘cover your butt’ way, to give information but not give anyone any false hope.” (Non-client)

“There are so many layers, is it hard to find someone to determine partial injury. Those things are not clear at all. My issue is the medical side. I don’t know how these forms are supposed to be filled out. [I] don’t know medical jargon or the key words needed. I finally found a new family doctor and put in a pension request to VAC.” (Client)

Various impacts were noted by clients without reliable access to the Internet. Over half (54%), indicated that it takes longer to learn about programs and services. Over four in ten (43% each) said they have had to ask other people to find information, they felt like they were missing out on information, or available supports. About one in four (23%) were not sure.

Chart 10: Impact of Unsuccessful Search



Q21. How does not being able to fully access the Internet impact your ability to find out about VAC programs and services?

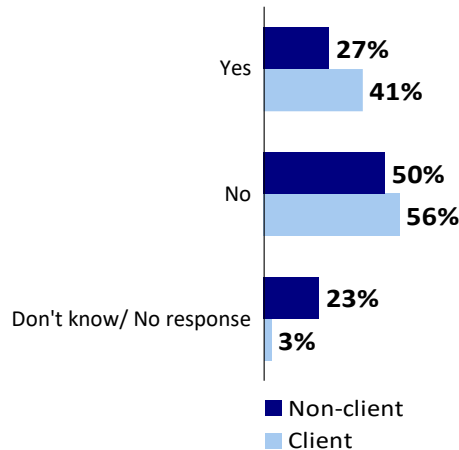
Base: Client n=69

- Clients under age 65 (66%) were more likely than those older (43%) to say not having access to the Internet made it take longer to learn about programs and services.

Assistance in Finding Information

Half or more (50% of non-client and 56% of clients) said they did not need someone from VAC or another Veteran's organization to help find or go through information about programs and services. Significantly fewer non-clients felt they need assistance finding information (27%) when compared with clients (41%).

Chart 11: Need for Assistance in Finding Information



Q22b. Do you find that you need someone from VAC or another Veteran's organization to help you find or go through information about programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=1133, Client n=400

- Non-clients in Quebec (36%) were more likely to say they need someone to help find information; non-clients in Ontario were least likely (23%) to do so.
- The likelihood that someone needed to help find information decreases with education and income. Non-clients with a university education (57%) or income over \$80,000 (55%) were more likely to say they do not need assistance.
- Non-clients with a disability (44%) were more likely than those without a disability (23%) to say they need someone to help find or go through information about programs and services.
- Among clients, men (46%), younger clients (49%), and those in rural areas (49%) were each more likely to say they need someone to help.

Preference for Having Someone to Assist – Focus Group Findings

As previously described, almost all focus group participants said that they would like the opportunity to speak with someone when looking for information or making an application for VAC programs and services. This included obtaining answers to specific questions, as well as to generally go over programs, eligibility criteria, the application process and other elements of engaging with VAC. They said that either the website is too complicated; they do not feel they get the information they need from the site; they do not understand what they are reading on the site; or it does not adequately describe their specific situation. Therefore, they prefer to have a direct conversation with someone.

“I would go in-person to the office. I haven’t looked at the website. I get frustrated easily.” (Non-client)

“I prefer dealing directly with people. I don’t like social media or automated telephone systems. It’s hard to get questions answered without speaking with an actual human. There are questions that are unique to the individual that [are not] covered on a broad-spectrum website. (Client)

Some client participants said that they have, or would like to have, a case manager to explain things to them, answer specific questions and tell them about programs and services they would be eligible for, and assist them through the application process to ensure they were on the right track. Some clients and non-clients talked about the Legion as a good place to get information about VAC programs and also how to successfully complete application forms. Some participants also suggested other groups that advocate for Veterans such as the NAFR or former military groups such as CF1 or Wounded Warriors, as good places to access information, support and advice when exploring VAC programs. Some non-client participants and a few client participants said that they do not have any connections to any Veterans’ groups, and they feel somewhat left out in terms of having someone to turn to for information and advice.

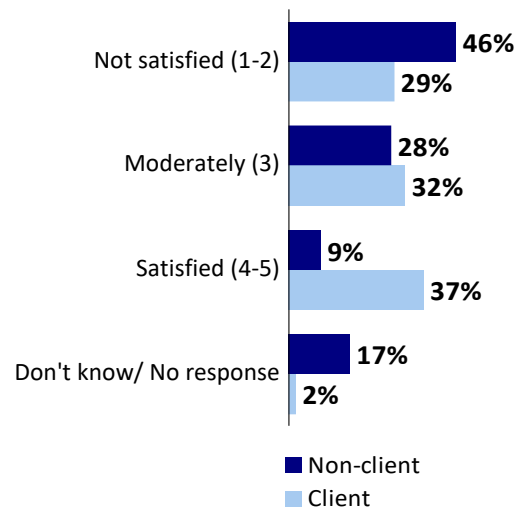
“I had no idea how to find the information I was looking for, but thankfully VAC had a case worker who was able to help me out.” (Client)

“I would reach out first to the NAFR and they can point you to other places to go. The Legion would be a possible one. Going to other Vets who can point me in direction.” (Non-client)

Satisfaction with Information

Over one in three (37%) clients were satisfied with how VAC informs them about relevant programs and services, and another 32% were moderately satisfied. By comparison, nearly half of non-clients (46%) said they were not satisfied with how VAC informs them about relevant programs and services.

Chart 12: Satisfaction with Information



Q25. How satisfied are you with how VAC informs you about relevant programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=605; Client n=691

- Among both groups, those who are under age 65 (53% of non-clients and 33% of clients) tended to be dissatisfied with how VAC informs them about relevant programs.
- Non-clients with a disability (53%) were apt to say they were dissatisfied.
- Former CAF clients were more often satisfied (39%) compared with former RCMP (30%).

D. VAC WEBSITE AND OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Among both non-clients and clients, the VAC website was more often noted as the best way to find out about VAC programs and services (58% of non-clients and 53% of clients). Calling VAC was a preferred approach for one-third (33%) of non-clients and half (49%) of clients. My VAC Account was not often noted by non-clients as a preferred channel for information (16%) but was among the top three for clients (43%). Other fairly popular choices were word of mouth (25% of non-clients and 33% of clients), working through the Legion (21% and 18%, respectively) and going into a VAC office (16% of non-clients and 24% of clients). Other options were cited less often.

Table 8: Best Method of Finding Out About VAC Programs & Services

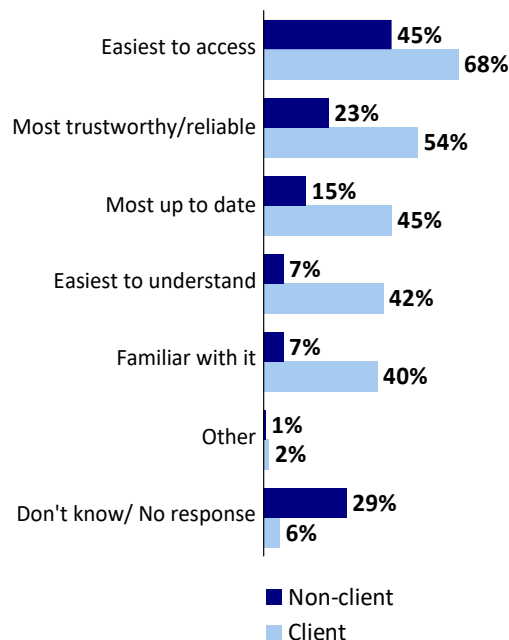
Q26. In your opinion, what is the best way for you to find out about VAC programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
From the VAC website	58%	53%
By calling VAC/ Talking to a VAC agent	33%	49%
Word of mouth (friends, family, former colleagues, etc.)	25%	33%
Through a Legion	21%	18%
Through Service Canada	20%	10%
My VAC Account	16%	43%
By going to the VAC office in-person (when reopened)	16%	24%
Online communities, such as social media, blogs or chatrooms	8%	15%
In-person meetings, roundtables	5%	15%
Online newsletter	1%	0%
None of these	1%	2%
Other	5%	11%
Don't know/ No response	9%	2%

- Among non-clients, residents of Ontario were more likely than others across the country to go to the VAC website (61%). This was also true of those reporting the highest education (65%) and income (64%).
- Quebec residents were more likely than others across the country to use My VAC Account (27%), as were those under 65 (21% versus 14% among those 65 or older), and those with a disability (20% versus 15% among others), as well former RCMP (21% vs. 15% among former CAF).
- Calling VAC was more often the preferred approach among family members (45%) and those with a university level of education (38%).
- Going through the Legion was preferred among more of non-clients who are 65 or older 23% and those with the lowest household income (under \$40,000: 34%), as well as among former CAF members (23% versus 12% among former RCMP).
- Among clients, the website (49%) and My VAC Account (42%) were preferred more often among Veterans compared with family members. This was also found among older versus younger respondents, as well as among men compared with women.
- CAF Veteran clients were more likely to prefer calling VAC (50% versus 36% among former RCMP), word of mouth (35% versus 25%), going into a VAC office (24% versus 17%), and going through a Legion (21% versus 11%).

Reasons for Use of VAC Website

Among those who selected the VAC website as a preferred method of finding information about VAC programs and services, ease of access was the most predominant reason, particularly among clients (68%), but also with non-clients (45%). Trust and reliability of the source was another key reason according to 54% of clients, although this was only the case for 23% of the non-client sample. A high proportion of clients used the website because it was likely the most up-to-date source (45%), the easiest to understand (42%) or they were simply familiar with it (40%). By comparison, very few of non-clients pointed to these as reasons for using the website. In fact, 29% said they “don’t know” why they use the website.

Chart 13: Reasons for Use of VAC Website



Q27. What makes the VAC website a preferred source?

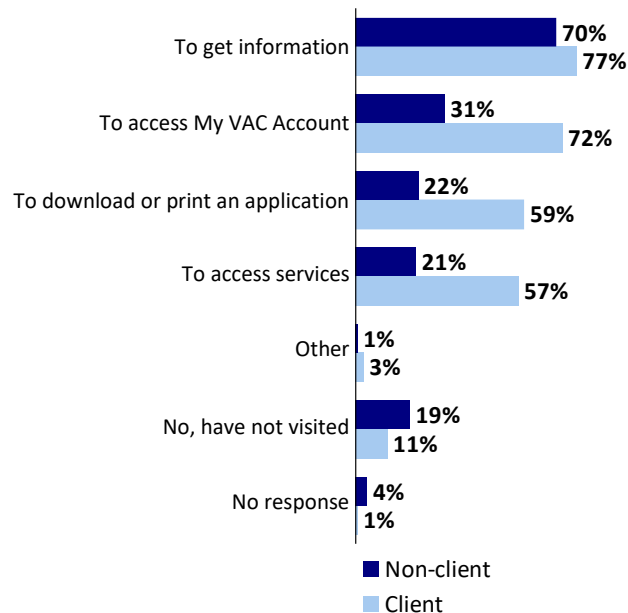
Base: Non-client n=924; Client n=535

- Among non-clients, men (47%) were more likely than women (33%) to say it was the easiest to access. This was also true more often among those with a university education (49%) and higher household income (49% among those reporting \$120,000 or more) compared with those with less education and/or income.
- Ontario residents (27%) were more apt to say it is the most reliable compared with others across the country. This was also more often true among former RCMP members (30%) compared with former CAF members (21%).
- Among clients, ease of access (71%) and reliability (56%) were more often noted among those under 65 compared with older clients (61% and 46%, respectively).

Uses for the Website

Among those indicating use of the VAC website, both non-clients and clients used it to get information (70% and 77%, respectively). Non-client users of the website, however, were much less likely than clients to use it to access My VAC Account (31% compared with 72% of clients), or to download or print an application (22% versus 59% of clients), or to access services (21% versus 57% of clients).

Chart 14: Uses for the Website



Q32. Have you ever visited the VAC website, veterans.gc.ca, for any of the following reasons?

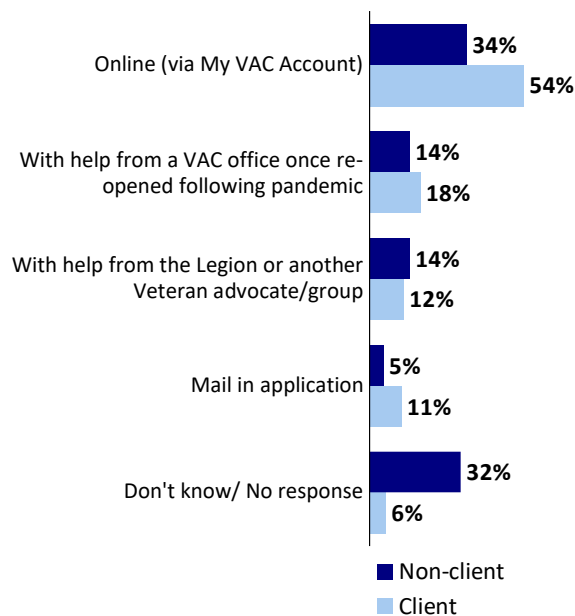
Base: Non-client n=650; Client n=697

- Among non-clients, those under 65 were more likely than other Veterans to have used it to access My VAC Account (43%). Former RCMP members were more likely than their CAF counterparts to have used it to access services (31% versus 19%).
- Among clients those under 65, men and Veterans reporting the highest household incomes were the most likely have gone to the website to get information, access My VAC Account, download or print an application and access services than those under 65, women and individuals reporting less than \$80,000 in household income.

Preferred Method of Applying for Service

When asked about the preferred method for applying for programs and services, one in three non-clients (34%) said they prefer to do this online, although the proportion was considerably higher among clients (54%). Fourteen percent of non-clients preferred to go to a VAC office or get help from the Legion, and proportions were similar among clients (18% and 12%, respectively). Relatively few non-clients (5%) preferred a mail in application, although this was true of 11% of clients.

Chart 15: Preferred Method of Applying for Service



Q31NEW. What is your preferred method to apply for programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Among non-clients, those under 65 were more likely to say applying online through My VAC Account (47%) compared with 30% among older Veterans, who were more likely to prefer assistance through the Legion or other group (17% versus 9% among those under 65). Those with a disability were also more apt to prefer to go through the Legion or another group (20%) compared with other clients.
- The Legion or other groups were also more often preferred in Alberta (24%) compared with others across the country, as well as among those with less education (19% among those with high school) and income (31% among those with \$40,000 or less).

- Among clients, the age pattern was similar: those under 65 more often prefer online (68% versus 28% among those who are older).
- Men also preferred to go online (53% versus 32% among women), as did those with higher levels of education (60%) and household income (69%). This was also the case among former RCMP clients (58% versus 45% among former CAF members).
- Clients 65 or older more often preferred a mail in application (21%) or going through a Veterans group (19%) compared with those who are younger. This was also true of former CAF clients (16% versus 10% among former RCMP members).

Social Media

Roughly equal proportions of non-clients (12%) and clients (15%) used social media. Among those who did, Facebook was by far the leading platform with roughly three in four social media users (74% of non-clients and 79% of clients) citing it as their choice for information about VAC programs and services. Relative to clients, a higher proportion of non-clients used LinkedIn (14%) or Twitter (12%), but usage was still low.

Table 9: Social Media Used

Q28. Do you ever use social media to find out about VAC programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	1601	1020
Yes	12%	15%
Q29. Which social media platforms have you used to find out about VAC programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	197	155
Facebook	74%	79%
LinkedIn	14%	5%
Twitter	12%	8%
YouTube	10%	7%
Instagram	4%	6%
Other	16%	15%
Don't know/ No response	6%	5%

- Those under 65 were more likely those who are older to say they used social media (19% among non-clients and 21% among clients). As a consequence, those reporting higher incomes were also more likely to report using it.
- Among non-clients, former RCMP members were also more likely to have used it (18% versus 11% among former CAF members).

Among the 12% of non-clients and 15% of clients using social media, just over one-third have been to a social media page belonging to a Veterans organization (35% of non-client users and 39% of client users). Just over half of clients (55%), however, have been to a VAC social media page compared with 27% of non-client social media users. The same proportion has been to a CAF page (27%) or RCMP page (26%). Visits to a CAF page was slightly higher among clients (32%), although few had been to a page belonging to the RCMP (8%). A Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) page was also used by some (14% of non-client users and 23% of client users). Close to one in five (17% of non-clients and 19% of clients) had not visited any of these.

Again, social media users pointed overwhelmingly to Facebook as the source among both non-clients (53%) and clients (78%). Few other sources were reported across any of the other platforms.

Table 10: Social Media Connections

Q30. Have you visited a social media page belonging to any of the following organizations to look for information about VAC programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	197	155
A Veterans organization	35%	39%
VAC	27%	55%
CAF	27%	32%
RCMP	26%	8%
Military Family Resource Centre	14%	23%
Other	4%	3%
None of these	17%	19%
Don't know/ No response	8%	1%
Q31. Which VAC social media channels have you visited most frequently to find out about VAC's programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	99	80
Facebook	53%	78%
LinkedIn	13%	8%
Twitter	10%	9%
YouTube	10%	4%
Instagram	2%	8%
Other	13%	9%
Don't know/ No response	26%	11%

Use of Social Media - Focus Group Findings

Consistent with the low reported usage in the survey of social media by Veterans for Government of Canada information, few focus group participants said they use social media for these purposes. Also consistent with survey findings, there was little difference between clients and non-clients.

“No. I just don’t use social media. I have a distrust of using social media.” (Non-client)

The majority of focus group participants said they do not use social media at all, particularly older participants, while some younger participants said they use it. Among those who said they use social media, this is typically for social purposes; keeping in touch with friends and family. A few participants said they use it as a tool to engage with the broader Veteran community, such as participating in Facebook groups linked to their own career or areas of interest.

“I have gone through social media. It’s a place where I feel safe in asking questions. I belong to at least four different social media groups.” (Client)

A few participants said they follow VAC on social media or would have done so had they known about it. Those who were interested in following VAC on social media said that it could help them build their awareness of programs and services from VAC, promote any changes to programs and services, or prompt Veterans to look for more information on the website or create a My VAC Account.

“VAC, quite a while ago, [social media] that’s where I first saw the help line number and that resonated with me and I thought maybe I will make a call. It provides a link, but not the information.” (Client)

“I would like to see a VAC social media page with policy changes and referral to details.” (Non-client)

A few cautioned that they would like to use social media as a source of information related to VAC programs and services, but that the information needs to be useful, directed towards helping simplify the process for Veterans, and not appear to be self-promoting or “propaganda”.

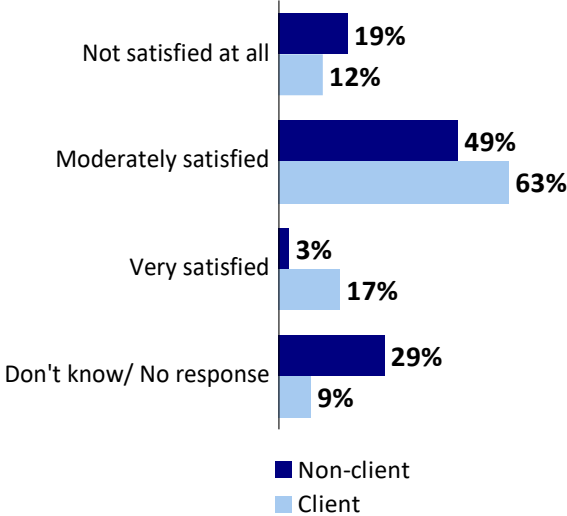
“They do claim they are on social media. I am on Facebook. They have their Canada Remembers. They are a bit on Instagram. And LinkedIn is like a corporate webpage, I’m not sure what you are supposed to do on there. It’s just pushed propaganda.”
(Non-client)

Conversely, a few said that they find social media to be an unreliable source generally and would not trust information provided through this avenue. These participants felt it is too easy to hack into accounts to produce fraudulent information or that it is generally difficult to distinguish what is an authorized or authentic account. A few participants shared that they are members of Facebook Veterans groups that became too political, untrustworthy, or stimulated difficult emotions for them, and as a result, they removed themselves from the group.

“I have been on Facebook groups, but had to leave them because it was challenging [hearing problems of other Veterans].” (Clients)

Satisfaction among social media users with information received through social media channels was moderate at 49% among non-clients, although higher (63%) among clients. A higher proportion of the non-clients using social media were not at all satisfied (19%), or said that they “don’t know” (29%). Only 3% were satisfied. By comparison, while still low, 17% of client social media users rated themselves as satisfied.

Chart 16: Satisfaction with Social Media as an Information Source



Q37NEW. How satisfied are you with the information you receive on VAC social media channels?

Base: Non-client n=197; Client n=155

- There are no significant differences among segments within non-clients or clients when it comes to satisfaction about information shared on social media.

Use of E-Newsletters - Focus Group Findings

Very few focus group participants said that they have received or were aware of the VAC e-newsletter, *Salute*. Some said that they receive e-newsletters from other sources, including from the Government of Canada, the NAFR, the RCMP, and the Legion. These participants indicated that they have opted in to receive these other e-newsletters, find them useful in learning about the related topic area. Further, these participants said that the benefit of e-newsletters is that you can archive them in your email inbox for future reference. A few said they generally do not like e-newsletters and felt that they needlessly add to email clutter or do not typically read them.

“E-newsletters are good for me personally. I get a lot of them and they have links to things of interest. I haven’t heard of Salute.” (Non-client)

“Yes, I love e-newsletters with headlines so I can see the organization and delve in when I want more information.” (Non-client)

“No. I get so much email that I can’t be bothered.” (Client)

Most focus group participants, however, said they would be interested in receiving an e-newsletter from VAC to communicate information regarding programs and services. These participants said that the e-newsletter would ideally highlight any changes to programs and services. A few said it would be beneficial to feature one VAC program in each e-newsletter and give an example of who is eligible and how to apply, perhaps featuring a real example of a Veteran.

“I think it would be useful to have a newsletter to connect people to the website. I would subscribe to a newsletter from VAC.” (Non-client)

“If they are communicating a change in a program, or it’s something that would affect you, a short, concise thing with ‘here is what you might want to look at.’” (Client)

A few cautioned that the e-newsletter should be concise and contain only relevant information for Veterans, and avoid any self-promotional material regarding VAC. These participants said that they would tend to ignore any publication that is too long or not relevant or practical to them. A few participants perceive that “with technology today”, e-newsletters can be customized to be relevant for the recipient.

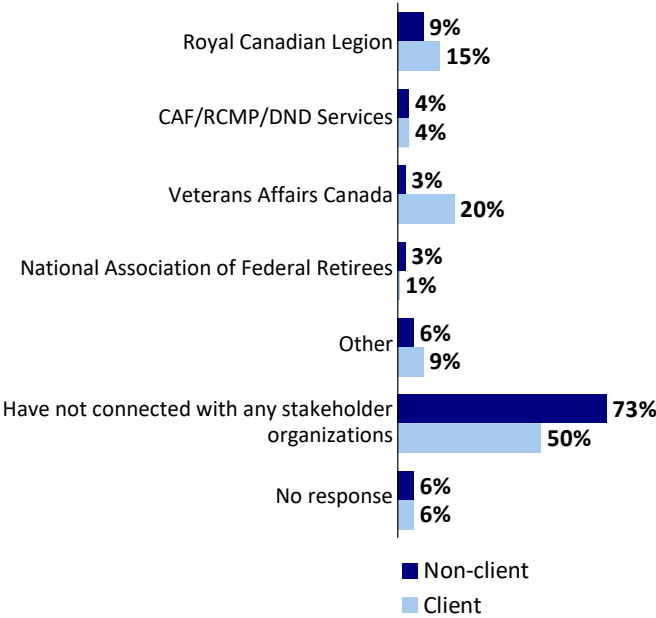
“I would like to get one from VAC if useful and just limited to new info, but if it becomes too heavy content and too frequent I would delete. It gets overwhelming and you delete it.” (Non-client)

“I have read Salute but it’s not personalized. It doesn’t mean anything to me [personally], it’s just reading.” (Client)

E. CONNECTING THROUGH OTHER VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS

Both clients and non-clients were asked about other Veterans organizations that they had connected with to find out about programs and services for Veterans and their families. Only 21% of non-clients pointed to an organization that they had connected with, most often the Legion (9%). Just under half of clients (44%) said they had worked with an organization, most often pointing to VAC (20%) or the Legion (15%).

Chart 17: Other Veteran Organizations Used to Gather Information



Q34. Which organizations (if any) have you connected with to find out about programs and services for Veterans and their families?

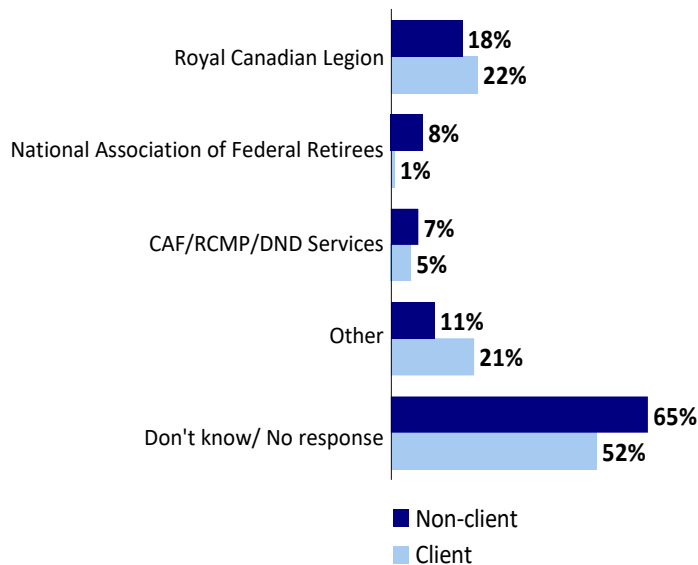
Base: Non-client n=1601; Client n=1020

- There are no significant differences among segments of non-clients when it comes to organizations they have connected with; however, the Legion was more popular among clients in Ontario (22%) and those over 65 years of age (19%) compared with other clients.

Best Organizations to Share Information

The Legion was also described as the best organization for VAC to work with to help share information about programs and services (18% of non-clients and 22% of clients). The large majority of both groups, however, were unsure who to connect with (65% of non-clients and 52% of clients). The NAFR (8%) and CAF, RCMP or Department of National Defence (DND) Services (7%) were also noted by small proportions of non-clients.

Chart 18: Best Organizations to Share Information



Q35. In your opinion, what groups are the best for VAC to work with to help share information about VAC programs and services?

Base: Non-client n=1601, Client n=1020

- Among clients, men (23%) were more likely than women (15%) to cite Legions. This was also true of non-clients (19% among men and 13% among women).
- Clients with a disability (24%) were also more likely to suggest the Legion than other clients (18%).
- Among non-clients, is it those over 65 (19%) versus those under 65 (14%) where the Legion was noted more often.

Best Ways to Reach Veterans with Information - Focus Group Findings

Following discussions about the importance of having information, preferred sources and approaches, as well as timing for receiving the information, participants were asked about the best way they could be reached with this information. One common theme was to receive the information through the assistance of a person or group, including a VAC Case Manager, Legion Service Officer or some other Veterans' group, or through peer-to-peer groups. Also commonly raised was the timing of having the information presented early, and a relationship established by VAC before members are released. Ideally, Veterans would be presented with detailed information and given the opportunity to ask questions and present their own situations through these two approaches.

“The best is peer-to-peer support. It’s another Veteran that helped me with a disability claim. I belong to several Veterans’ groups, and they all say they prefer peer-to-peer support.” (Client)

“Legions are across Canada. Every Legion has a bulletin board. That’s a good place to reach Veterans.” (Clients)

A few participants spoke of the possibility of VAC proactively reaching out to them with useful information about programs and services of greatest relevance to them based on information in their service file. A few said they believe that all of the pertinent information for service and benefit eligibility would be in their personnel file. These participants said that, with member consent, VAC should have access to this information to establish a relationship and push information out to them so they would be aware of and could access the benefits to which they are entitled. A number of participants also suggested pension statements in the mail would be a good opportunity for outreach.

“There should be something going out to say here is something you are eligible for. And have it passively on websites is not enough. People need a push notification in the first place to say you a Veteran and need to sign up for this.” (Non-client)

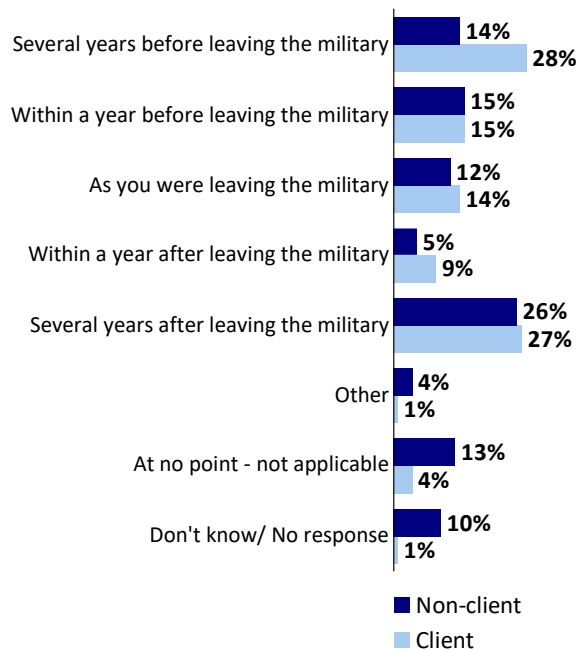
“Establish a relationship with them (before/as leaving). At least make people leaving now aware that there is a VAC and how to get information when it becomes relevant.” (Non-client)

Some participants spoke of multi-pronged advertising campaigns and outreach, through media, social media, local communities (e.g., town halls, Remembrance Day services), Veterans' groups, and through local Members of Parliament. Wide outreach was emphasized, with the goal of driving Veterans to the website or call-in numbers. Some emphasized, however, that both the website and call-in access would need to be significantly revised to ensure that information is clear, well-organized and easily accessed.

Preferred Timing for Information

There was a divergence of views among clients and non-clients about the timing for learning about these programs and services. A sizable proportion of non-clients and even larger percentage of clients said that they would have been interested in learning about programs and services within a year and even several years before leaving the military (29% of non-clients and 43% of clients). Another 12% and 14% of non-clients and clients respectively, would have liked this information as they were leaving. Relatively few felt they would have been interested just after leaving (5% and 9%), but more than one in four believed the best timing would have been several years after their service. Another 23% of non-clients said they did not feel they would be interested at any point or they “don’t know”.

Chart 19: Preferred Timing for Information



Q36. At what point in your career did/would you become interested in learning about the services available to Veterans?

Base: Non-client n=1562; Client n=925

- Among both non-clients and clients, preference for timing is split along age lines. In both populations those under 65 were considerably more likely to lean to information being provided before release; while those who are 65 or older were comparatively more likely to lean toward information after release. For example, 40% of non-clients felt it should be several years (21%) or the year before (19%) release. This was also true of 51% of clients

under 65 who believed information is needed several years (34%) or one year before (17%) release. Significantly fewer who are over 65 said the same (25% of non-clients and 20% of clients). Among non-clients, 27% believed information should be provided several years after release which was also true of 45% of clients over 65.

- Among clients, former RCMP members were more likely than CAF members to prefer information several years before leaving (34% versus 24%) while former CAF clients more often pointed to the need for information several years after release (31% versus 21%). The latter was also true among non-client former CAF members (28% compared with 15% among former RCMP members).

Preferred Timing of the Information – Focus Group Findings

When asked if it would be better to know about VAC programs and services before or after release, there was almost unanimous agreement among focus group participants that it makes the most sense for members to have this information while still serving. Many participants also said that opportunities should be created for VAC to connect with members and establish a relationship before they are released. This would include presentations, with opportunity for questions and answers, as well as the creation of a My VAC Account before release. Many argued that “once you are released communications with the military/RCMP are severed”, so connections should be established before this to prevent this disconnection.

“If we get people involved in the whole process when they are currently serving, there is this whole transition. You lose communication once they leave, you don’t know their email or phone number or anyway to contact them.” (Non-client)

Many also argued that decisions about exiting the military or RCMP may be influenced by information about VAC programs and services, and that successful access to injury-related support depends on having accurate and complete medical information. This is most likely to be achieved when members are aware of the programs and services, the eligibility criteria and the application requirements early on. Only a few focus group participants said that they had any understanding of VAC programs and services before their release. One client in particular, said that he was medically released with a significant injury but was never told about VAC programs and services at the time. Those arguing for introducing information about VAC programs and services during service said that making it available very early and throughout a member’s career allows them to prepare because, “you don’t know, what you don’t know”, and, by then, it may be too late, or you are “left scrambling to get paperwork in order”. Some said that this information should be integrated with DND/RCMP and passed along through the chain of command while in service so that it is given attention. A few also said that there should be

multiple touch points along the way, with graduated levels of detail from a high-level early in one's career, and reintroduced with increasing detail in later stages.

“When preparing to retire, you don't necessarily take in all the information, so it would be good to have this integrated throughout our entire career so we aren't chasing after it at the very end.” (Client) “[You need to] change content based on age, something for someone 60 years old, it's different than someone who is 20. At the early stages, [you only] need an overview and that's it. When retiring, [you] should be automatically signed up [for My VAC Account or to receive information].” (Non-client)

“There will be a point in time when you need it and that is different for everyone. If you don't know about it, it will significantly impact your ability to access the service.” (Non-client)

One caveat noted in a few group discussions with both clients and non-clients is the military culture of not reporting injuries for fear of being singled out or triggering early/medical release.

“At the beginning of your career, you are gung-ho, but I wasn't told to fill out [the form about injuries]. I had a supervisor tell me, you don't want to be one of 'those' people.” (Client)

Many participants said that information on VAC programs and services may not seem relevant or be given attention among members who are early in their career. Therefore, information on VAC programs and services should be provided in at least the last few years before release, as one is preparing for the transition out of the military/RCMP. Many said that there are multiple information and planning sessions that already take place to prepare for retirement, such as transition sessions and interviews or SCAN presentations, where a wide variety of topics are covered and questions can be answered. A number of participants said that they attended these types of sessions, and were/would have been receptive to hearing about VAC at that time. A few participants said that this should be part of the hand-off from military/RCMP to VAC and not doing so is a missed opportunity because that is when members are focusing on transition and necessary steps in the planning process. A few participants also said that there is a “fire hose” of information presented at these sessions, so including spouses and other partners would be beneficial to retain the information and manage documentation. Many participants said that this point of transition is the best time for VAC to establish a relationship with members, just before they become “Veterans”. Some participants said this information should be presented in the few months leading up to release when it would be the most relevant and of interest. Most, however,

said the information should be made available one to two years prior to release, suggesting that the last few months is already “too late”.

“I got seminars when transitioning about all kinds of things but not about VAC. It was never covered. For sure, I would have been receptive to that information at that time.” (Non-client)

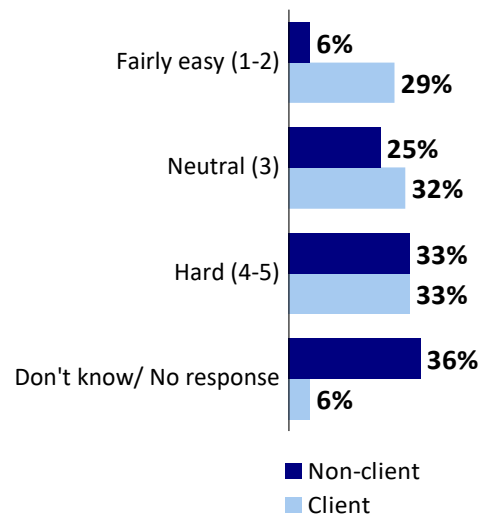
“When you are retiring you are offered the SCAN program and it was a two-day seminar. SCAN went over pension benefits, and Sunlife, but didn’t say VAC is here to support you after your service. Proactive would have been beneficial for so many members.” (Client)

A few participants said that having the information before their release, particularly if released when younger, may be ignored. These participants said that it would be better to provide this information later in life, through sources such as pension documents, at a time when they would be more receptive to the information.

Impressions of Access to Programs and Services

Respondents were divided on the ease of obtaining programs and services offered by VAC. One in three Veterans (33%) said it is hard to obtain programs and services. Non-client clients were more likely to say they “don’t know” (36%, compared with 6% of clients). About three in ten clients reported it is either fairly easy (29%) or neutral (32%).

Chart 20: Ease of Obtaining Programs and Services



Q23. From what you know, how easy or difficult is it to obtain programs and services offered by VAC?

Base: Non-client n=1601; Client n=1020

- Non-clients with a disability (47%) tended to say it is hard to obtain programs and services offered by VAC, compared with those without a disability (29%). Those non-clients with lower income (49%) were also more likely to say it is hard.
- Younger clients (36%) were more likely than those over age 65 (28%) to say it is hard to obtain programs and services by VAC.

Impressions of Dealing with VAC – Focus Group Findings

When asked about their impressions of dealing with VAC and how it connects Veterans with programs and services, five primary themes emerged. These are VAC:

- As a poor communicator/connector with Veterans;
- As a gatekeeper intent on minimizing successful claims;
- Having an unnecessarily convoluted and bureaucratic process;
- Having significant wait times; and,
- Not being transparent.

The most often noted was that VAC does not do an adequate job of making (future) Veterans aware of the available programs and services or the eligibility criteria to access them. Many non-clients said that they have not looked for information, did not know these programs existed or “have no idea who qualifies for them”. A few said that they do not know any Veterans who are familiar with their programs or have accessed them. While this impression was noted among both clients and non-clients, it was more prominent among non-clients.

“No one knows much about VAC at all, which is kind of shocking when you think about it. When they retire or leave, there needs to be an effort made to capture those people.” (Non-client)

“Communication is the big issue. They need to improve how they get out to the Veterans and the people they are serving.” (Non-client)

The second, and more prevalent, impression is of VAC as a gatekeeper tasked with limiting the number of Veterans who access their services. Both clients and non-clients said that the process of applying for programs and services is unnecessarily complicated and convoluted, perhaps by design to limit successful applicants. Although some said it is understandable that VAC needs to be accountable for public funds and on alert for fraudulent claims, many countered that the money spent checking claims would be better spent supporting wider and quicker access, given the limited likelihood of false claims. Some argued that one needs a “lawyer” or other equally informed advocate to be successful in accessing services. A few also described the organization as impersonal, and not very supportive of Veterans who are in need of assistance. This sentiment was more prevalent among clients.

“There is a perception that VAC doesn’t want to approve claims. So, why would they put out really good explanations on how to go about accessing services?” (Non-Client)

A third, related impression is that the process required to access programs from VAC is overly complex and difficult to negotiate. A few also described significant red tape such as having to “re-prove” each year that the circumstances are still the same, particularly in the case of permanent injury or loss. A few clients, but more non-clients were left with the impression of a frustrating process, and that it was “not worth bothering” to attempt a claim. One participant said dealing with VAC “is harder than it needs to be”. A few participants pointed to lack of access to clear and complete information and the complex requirements in the application as reasons why it is “not worth it”.

“If you need an advocate to help you through the system, that’s an indication that there is a problem.” (Client)

A fourth, related theme centres on the backlog of cases in processing with VAC, resulting in very long wait times for a decision on one’s claim. A few said that it is critical to get advice to ensure the application is accurate and complete because it may take years to have the application processed. Others talked about the stress of waiting to hear about an application outcome, or that it is “disheartening” to have to wait so long and that this can dissuade Veterans who are entitled to, and need, services from applying. One participant said that VAC should be accountable for the amount of time a Veteran has to wait to hear a decision.

“There is such a back log that they get frustrated with the system.” (Client)

Also related to the previous themes is the impression of VAC as a “faceless organization”. These participants said that VAC is not transparent about the status of applications, or whether required information has been provided correctly and completely. A few participants said that once the application goes in, it is “like it is submitted into a void” and you are unable to get any further information, nor is there any follow-up provided.

“It is a large faceless organization. Decisions are made somewhere else, and they have very strict [eligibility requirements]. They are saying that what they say shouldn’t be questioned.” (Client)

Few participants were positive in their impressions of dealing with VAC, however, a few clients said that they had very positive dealings with VAC, that they felt very “lucky,” and were satisfied with the services. A number of clients also said that “once you get service from VAC, the floodgates open” and you are able to access the services for which you are eligible. A few participants also said that having access to VAC programs is very much appreciated. A few others

also said that they felt that access to VAC programs and services is “getting better with time”. Those who had access to an assigned Case Manager appeared to be more satisfied with their relationship with VAC.

“VAC is trying very hard to change quite a few things. The reception you received a few years ago might be different than the reception you would have now. The fact they are sponsoring this and asking the end users how to connect with them, they are taking things more seriously than before.” (Non-client)

“I could be the poster child for the positive of dealing with VAC. I have had two outstanding case managers. (Client)

Changes Needed to Improve Access

According to non-clients, the main two areas VAC needs to change to help people access their programs and services are putting the information about programs and services where it can be found (42%) and the complex and convoluted eligibility criteria for the programs and services (41%). Roughly one in four mentioned improving processing times for applications (25%), improving relevance of the information provided (22%), and improving clarity of the information (22%). A notable proportion (28%) were unsure.

Clients expressed different views than non-clients. Half of clients (50%) felt VAC needs to change processing times for applications. About one in three felt that the ability to find information (36%) or eligibility criteria (35%) needs to also change. As with non-clients, just under one in four clients (23%) said the clarity of the information needs to improve. Relevance was less of an issue for clients (10%).

Table 11 Changes Needed for Program Access

Q24. What are the main areas where you feel VAC needs to make changes to help you access their programs and services?	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>n=</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Finding the information about the programs and services	42%	36%
Eligibility criteria for the programs and services	41%	35%
Processing times for applications for programs and services	25%	50%
Relevance of the information (i.e., tell you what you need to know)	22%	10%
Clarity of the information	22%	23%
Completeness of the information	8%	10%
I am satisfied, no changes needed	0%	2%
Other	3%	8%
Don't know/ No response	28%	17%

- Younger non-clients were more likely than older to say VAC needs to make changes to processing times for applications (29%) or to clarify the information (27%).
- Non-clients with a disability (49%) were more likely than others (38%) to feel VAC needs to make changes to eligibility criteria for programs and services.

- Like non-clients, younger clients were more likely than those over age 65 to say VAC needs to improve processing times for applications (61%), eligibility criteria (38%), finding the information (38%), and clarity of the information (27%).
- Among clients, men (49%) were more likely than women (34%) to say VAC needs to improve processing times.
- Clients who are former CAF members were more likely to feel that clarity of information is an area that needs improvement (21% compared with 16% among former RCMP clients).

Communications changes to Improve Access to Programs and Services - Focus Group Findings

Participants were asked in the focus groups about main areas where VAC needs to implement changes in how/where they present information to help Veterans access programs and services. Since this followed the discussion about impressions of dealing with VAC, it is not surprising that most recommendations for changes echoed sentiments rooted in their previously described impressions. About half of participants described changes meant to increase the distribution of information and bolster their connection with VAC. Some re-iterated the need for a connection established before release, as well as a more seamless coordination of information between the DND, the RCMP, and VAC to facilitate a smoother transition for releasing members. A few spoke of the need to make changes to reduce privacy barriers to facilitate better communications. A number of comments related partnering with more Veterans and Veterans' organizations to inform and support other released members (CAF and RCMP), their families and caregivers (i.e., acting as advocates in their application process). They also continued to emphasize that Veterans understand Veterans and are able to communicate clearly, comfortably, and with compassion. Others spoke again of the need for VAC to proactively reach out, through the DND/CAF and RCMP records or pension records, to all Veterans about programs and services that may be of use to them. Related to this, some suggested the need for multiple methods of outreach that included traditional advertising to working with Veterans' groups and community groups to help Veterans learn about VAC programs and services.

“The shocking lack of communication between the CAF and VAC. Informing people early, but also informing CAOs [about] what paperwork you need to support a VAC application should the need arise in 10-15 years. That sets you up for success.”
(Client)

“They don't know our situation. VAC should employ Veterans so they can better understand what we've been through.” (Client)

“... pension is a place where they can send mail to outreach or email. Find those organizations that are already in touch with you and use them.” (Non-client)

APPENDICES

A. ADDITIONAL SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Details of the sample sources and approach to data collection are presented in the Executive Summary (Methodology). The response rate for the client survey is 11%. Details of the call outcomes are presented in the table below. The response rate is calculated based on the number of responding units (ineligible/quota filled and completed) out of the total sample accessed, minus those records considered invalid.

Table 12: Response Rate

Outcome	VAC Client Sample
Total same accessed	12,496
Invalid (not a live line, person does not live there, etc.)	1,374
Valid Sample	11,122
Non-responding (no answer, answering machine, etc.)	6,340
Refusal	3,550
Partial complete	10
Total non-response	9,900
Ineligible/quota filled (reported not to be VAC client)	202
Complete	1,020
Response rate	11.0%

As previously described, the client data have been weighted by age, gender and region in order to restore the final sample to the representativeness of the initial sample. Table 1, presented early in the report, provides some of the key sample characteristics, where client age and gender are displayed unweighted. Following are other key characteristics of the client and non-client samples, with the region distribution of the client sample presented unweighted⁷.

⁷ The final client sample over represents Veterans living in Quebec (20% versus 13% in the initial sample provided by VAC) and slightly underrepresents residents those in Ontario (27% versus 31% in the initial sample provided).

Table 13: Additional Sample Characteristics

Total	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>Member of a minority</i>	1601	1020
A person with a disability	25%	37%
A member of a visible minority	2%	5%
Indigenous (First nations, Métis or Inuit)	2%	4%
A member of the LGBTQ2 community	1%	2%
None of the above	67%	54%
Don't know/ No response	2%	1%
I prefer not to say	3%	2%
<i>Region (unweighted)</i>	1601	1020
British Columbia	20%	15%
Alberta	7%	12%
Saskatchewan	3%	2%
Manitoba	4%	4%
Ontario	41%	27%
Quebec	10%	20%
New Brunswick	3%	6%
Nova Scotia	7%	10%
Prince Edward Island	1%	2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	2%	2%
<i>Rural / Urban</i>	1594	1017
Urban/suburban	80%	72%
Rural	19%	26%
<i>Education</i>	1601	1020
Less than a high school diploma or equivalent	3%	8%
High school diploma or equivalent	26%	34%
Registered apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma	6%	4%
College, CEGEP or other non university certificate or diploma	19%	25%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level	8%	8%
Bachelor's degree	21%	11%
Postgraduate degree above bachelor's level	16%	9%
I prefer not to say	2%	1%

Total	NON-CLIENT	CLIENT
<i>Total household income</i>	<i>1601</i>	<i>1020</i>
Under \$20,000	1%	2%
\$20,000 to just under \$40,000	6%	11%
\$40,000 to just under \$60,000	15%	15%
\$60,000 to just under \$80,000	18%	15%
\$80,000 to just under \$100,000	17%	12%
\$100,000 or above	28%	29%
I prefer not to say	16%	13%
Don't know/ No response	0%	3%

In terms of known potential non-response bias, as previously described, the client sample over represents residents of Quebec, and underrepresents those who are 65 or older, women and residents of Ontario. Although the non-client sample undoubtedly over represents those Veterans who are 65 or older, no known population figures were available for comparison to understand the extent of the oversample of seniors.

B. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

CINTRO

Hello, may I speak with _____ ?

Hello, my name is ... and I'm calling from EKOS Research Associates to invite you to participate in a survey about accessing programs and services for former military, RCMP members, and their families. Your participation is voluntary and your responses are confidential.

This survey is being conducted on behalf of the Government of Canada by EKOS Research. It is administered according to the requirements of the Privacy Act.

Your participation is voluntary and your responses are confidential. Results will not be reported on an individual basis, but rolled into groups of 20 or more to preserve confidentiality. This survey is registered with the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC) Research Verification Service.

Would you be able to help us out?

IF ASKED LENGTH: The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete

IF ASKED CLIENT: The survey is being sponsored by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC).

IF ASKED HOW EKOS OBTAINED THEIR NAME & PHONE NUMBER: Interviews are being conducted with 1,000 former military, RCMP members, or their families, who are receiving programs or services from Veterans Affairs Canada or VAC. Your name and telephone number was provided to us by VAC for the sole purpose of this confidential survey.

IF ASKED ABOUT CRIC REGISTRATION: Please visit [Canadian research insights council. ca / rvs](https://canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/rvs/) (<https://canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/rvs/home/>) and enter registration # 20220113-EK046 to verify this survey's legitimacy.

- Continue 1
- (VOLUNTEERED) Prefer to complete it online 2
- Refuse (THANK & TERMINATE) 9

INTRORF1

The survey takes between 20 and 25 minutes to complete by telephone, but can take about 15 minutes to complete online, if you would prefer to complete the survey online on your own? I can send you an email invitation to complete the survey right now. May I have your email address? We will not use it for any other purpose than this survey and we will not share it with anyone.

IF YES: Please provide us with your email address.

IF NO: Continue on telephone

- Yes (record email) : 1
- No Continue 2

INTRORF2

An invitation email has been sent, you should receive it shortly. Please complete the survey as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

MUST ALWAYS CLICK "CONTINUE" TO RETURN TO INTRODUCTION 1

PRIV

This call may be recorded for quality control or training purposes.

Q38 [1,3]

Are you:

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: If they have served, don't bother to read other categories.

Someone who has served in the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP in the past	1
A family member of someone who has served	2
Someone who is currently serving in the CAF or RCMP	3
A family member of someone who is currently serving in the CAF or RCMP	4
None of the above	8
Don't know/ No response	9

Q3 [1,13]

What sources do you rely on to receive information about programs and services from the Government of Canada? (Select all that apply)

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Cable or satellite TV	1
Streamed TV	2
Local AM/FM radio	3
Streamed radio	4
Local print newspapers	5
Online news outlets	6
Neighbourhood or community newsletters	7
Magazines	8
Internet	9
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	10
Government of Canada web site	11
Mail from the Government of Canada	12
Service Canada office	13
Don't know/ No response	99

Q4

Do you ever go to Government of Canada websites for information?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q5NEW [1,6]

In the past year, which of the following topics have you looked for information about from the Government of Canada?

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Taxes	1
Health, excluding COVID-related topics	2
Employment	3
Pension or benefit information	4
Programs and services for former military and/or RCMP members	5
Don't know/ No response	9

Q6

Of Canada's two official languages, English and French, which one do you use most often at home?

English	1
French	2
English and French equally	3
Other	77
No response	99

Q7

OLMC respondents only

Do you generally look for information from the Government of Canada in <[Q6 = 1 QUEBEC]English or in French[ELSE]French or in English> or both equally?

English	1
French	2
Both equally	3
Don't know/ No response	9

Q8 [1,7]

Why do you usually look for information about the Government of Canada in &Q7? (Select all that apply)

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

This is the language I prefer to use	1
This is the language most people use in my neighbourhood or community use	2
I can't get information in &Q6	3
I don't trust the information available in &Q6	4
The information in it is not detailed or up to date enough	5
I would have to travel too far to get the service in &Q6	6
Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q9

OLMC respondents only

Do you typically access programs and services from the Government of Canada in <[Q6 = 1]French[ELSE]English>?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q10

Why do you typically access programs and services from the Government of Canada in &Q6?

77	77
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Q11

For the purposes of this survey, a Veteran refers to any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP.

How familiar are you with programs and services available for Veterans and their families?

Please use a scale where 1 means "not at all familiar", 5 means "very familiar" and the mid-point 3 means "moderately familiar".

Not at all familiar 1	1
2	2
Moderately familiar 3	3
4	4
Very familiar 5	5
No response	99

Q13

In the past year, how often have you looked for information about programs and services for Veterans and their families?

READ LIST

Never	1
Once	2
Twice	3
Three to five times	4
More than five times	5
Don't know/ No response	9

Q19NEW

How familiar would you say you are with the services and benefits offered by Veterans Affairs Canada or VAC? Please use a scale where 1 means "not at all familiar", 5 means "very familiar" and the mid-point 3 means "moderately familiar".

Not at all familiar 1	1
2	2
Moderately familiar 3	3
4	4
Very familiar 5	5
No response	99

Q37PRE [1,4]

Which type of services are you or your family member currently receiving from VAC?

Select all that apply

Physical and mental health services	1
Education and jobs services	9
Housing and home life services	12
Financial programs and services	16
Not currently receiving any VAC services	98
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	97

Q37A [1,7]

Which physical and mental health programs and services are you receiving?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Disability Benefits (Pain and Suffering Compensation or Disability Pension) (Compensation to recognize that your injury or illness is a result of your service.)	2
VAC Assistance Services Line	3
Rehabilitation Services (Treatment and therapies to overcome or cope with a service-related illness or injury.)	4
Case Management Services (One-on-one support to help with a significant challenge in your life .)	5
Cannabis for Medical Purposes	6
Treatment Benefits (Coverage for a variety of benefits and services to help you get—and stay—healthy.)	7
Critical Injury Benefit (A lump-sum payment that recognizes the immediate impact of the most severe and traumatic service-related injuries or diseases)	8
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	97

Q37B [1,2]

Which education and jobs programs and services are you receiving?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Education and Training Benefit (Financial support to help you achieve your education and career goals.)	10
Career Transition Services (Career counselling, help with resume writing, interview preparation, and finding a job.)	11
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	97

Q37C [1,3]

Which housing and home life programs and services are you receiving?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Veterans Independence Program (Payments for home and healthcare services to help you remain independent and self-sufficient in your home and your community.)	13
Long-term Care (Financial support for the costs of long-term care.)	14
Caregiver Recognition Benefit (A monthly payment to an informal caregiver who provides you with daily personal care support.)	15
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	97

Q37D [1,3]

Which financial programs and services are you receiving?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Veterans Emergency Fund (Quick access to funds for urgent needs such as food, shelter or medical expenses.)	17
Income Replacement Benefit (A monthly payment to maintain your income while you are taking part in the VAC rehabilitation program.)	18
War Veterans Allowance (A monthly payment to Second World War or Korean War Veterans who have a low household income.)	19
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	97

Q39

Were these services received by you or by a family member?

Myself	1
A family member	2
Both	3
Don't know/ No response	9

Q40

Did <[Q39 = 1]you[Q39 = 2]your family member[ELSE]you/your family member> serve in:

The CAF	1
The RCMP	2

Don't know/ No response	9
-------------------------	---

Q17

Have you ever tried to find out about VAC programs and services?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q14NEW [1,13]

YES

What sources did you use when you tried to find out about VAC programs and services? (Select all that apply)

Cable or satellite TV	1
Streamed TV	2
Local AM/FM radio	3
Streamed radio	4
Local print newspapers	5
Online news outlets	6
Neighbourhood or community newsletters	7
Magazines	8
Internet	9
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	10
Government of Canada web site	11
Mail from the Government of Canada	12
Service Canada office	13
Don't know/ No response	99

Q18

Does someone usually help you search for information about programs and services?

Yes, someone else helps me to find information (specify relationship)	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q19

How often were you able to find the information you were looking for about VAC programs and services?

Most of the time	1
Some of the time	3
Rarely	4
Never	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q20 [1,12]

What (if any) types of problems did you experience in trying to find information? (Select all that apply)

Don't have access to the internet	1
My internet is too slow	2
Don't like to go online for information	3
Couldn't find any relevant information	4
Couldn't find exactly the information wanted	5
Didn't understand the information	6
Information didn't seem to be from a reliable source	7
Did not know where to search or who to call	8
Could not get through to VAC on the telephone	9
Could not get through to Service Canada on the telephone	10
Couldn't see anyone from VAC in-person because officers are closed (pandemic)	11
Did not experience any problems	98

Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q21 [1,5]

How does not being able to fully access the internet impact your ability to find out about VAC programs and services?

Select all that apply

I have to ask other people to find information for me	1
I feel like I am missing out on information	2
I feel like I am missing out on supports available to me	3
It takes longer to learn about programs and services	4
Other (specify)	77
No response	99

Q22 [1,6]

Why haven't you tried to find out about VAC programs and services? (Select all that apply)

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

I don't know where to look	1
I don't have anyone to help me	2
I had no idea I could ask for support from VAC	3
I am uncomfortable asking for support from VAC	4
No interest in or need for VAC programs right now	5
Other (specify)	77
None of these	98
Don't know/ No response	99

Q22B

Do you find that you need someone from VAC or another Veteran's organization to help you find or go through information about programs and services?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q23

From what you know, how easy or difficult is it to obtain programs and services offered by VAC? Please use a scale where 1 means "easy", 5 means "difficult" and the mid-point 3 means "neutral".

Easy 1	1
2	2
Neutral 3	3
4	4
Difficult 5	5
Don't know/ No response	9

Q24 [1,3]

What are the main areas where you feel VAC needs to make changes to help you access their programs and services?

Select up to 3

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Processing times for applications for programs and services	1
Eligibility criteria for the programs and services	2
Finding the information about the programs and services	3
Clarity of the information	4
Completeness of the information	5
Relevance of the information (i.e., tell you what you need to know)	6
Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q25

How satisfied are you with how VAC informs you about relevant programs and services? Please use a scale where 1 means "not at all satisfied", 5 means "very satisfied" and the mid-point 3 means "moderately satisfied".

Not at all satisfied 1	1
2	2
Moderately satisfied 3	3
4	4
Very satisfied 5	5
Don't know/ No response	99

Q26 [1,14]

In your opinion, what is the best way for you to find out about VAC programs and services?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

From the VAC website	1
My VAC Account	3
By calling VAC/ Talking to a VAC agent	5
Through Service Canada	6
Through a Legion	7
Word of mouth (friends, family, former colleagues, etc.)	10
Online communities, such as social media, blogs or chatrooms	11
In-person meetings, roundtables	13
By going to the VAC office in-person (when re-opened)	14
None of these	76
Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q27 [1,6]

VAC WEBSITE

What makes the VAC website a preferred source?

Easiest to access	1
Easiest to understand	2
Most trustworthy/reliable	3
Familiar with it	4
Most up to date	5
Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q31NEW

What is your preferred method to apply for programs and services?

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Online (via My VAC Account)	1
With help from a VAC office once re-opened following pandemic	2
Mail in application	3
With help from the Legion or another Veteran advocate/group	4
Don't know/ No response	99

Q32NEW [1,5]

Have you ever visited the VAC website, veterans.gc.ca, for any of the following reasons? (Select all that apply)

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

To get information	1
To access services	2
To download or print an application	3
To access My VAC Account	4
No, have not visited	9
Other	5
No response	99

Q28

Do you ever use social media to find out about VAC programs and services?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ No response	9

Q29 [1,6]

YES

Which social media platforms have you used to find out about VAC programs and services?

Select all that apply

Twitter	1
Facebook	2
YouTube	3
LinkedIn	4
Instagram	5
Other	77

Don't know/ No response 99

Q30 [1,6]

YES

Have you visited a social media page belonging to any of the following organizations to look for information about VAC programs and services?

Select all that apply

VAC	1
CAF	2
RCMP	3
Military Family Resource Centre	4
A Veterans organization	5
None of these	98
Other (specify)	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q31 [1,6]

Which VAC social media channels have you visited most frequently to find out about VAC's programs and services?

Select all that apply

Twitter	1
Facebook	2
YouTube	3
LinkedIn	4
Instagram	5
Other	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q37NEW

YES

How satisfied are you with the information you receive on VAC social media channels?

READ LIST

Not satisfied at all	1
Moderately satisfied	2
Very satisfied	3
Don't know/ No response	99

Q33PRE [1,5]

What types of programs and services are most likely to suit your needs over the next year?
(Select all that apply)

Physical and mental health	1
Education and jobs	9
Housing and home life	12
Financial programs and services	16
Other (specify)	77
None	98
Don't know/ No response	99

Q33A [1,7]

Which physical and mental health programs and services would suit your needs?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Disability Benefits (Pain and Suffering Compensation or Disability Pension) (Compensation to recognize that your injury or illness is a result of your service.)	2
VAC Assistance Services Line	3
Rehabilitation Services (Treatment and therapies to overcome or cope with a service-related illness or injury.)	4
Case Management Services (One-on-one support to help with a significant challenge in your life.)	5
Cannabis for Medical Purposes	6
Treatment Benefits (Coverage for a variety of benefits and services to help you get—and stay—healthy.)	7
Critical Injury Benefit (A lump-sum payment that recognizes the immediate impact of the most severe and traumatic service-related injuries or diseases)	8
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	98

Q33B [1,2]

Which education and jobs programs and services would suit your needs?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Education and Training Benefit (Financial support to help you achieve your education and career goals.)	10
Career Transition Services (Career counselling, help with resume writing, interview preparation, and finding a job.)	11
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	98

Q33C [1,3]

Which housing and home life programs and services would suit your needs?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Veterans Independence Program (Payments for home and healthcare services to help you remain independent and self-sufficient in your home and your community.)	13
Long-term Care (Financial support for the costs of long-term care.)	14

Caregiver Recognition Benefit (A monthly payment to an informal caregiver who provides you with daily personal care support.)	15
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	98

Q33D [1,3]

Which financial programs and services would suit your needs?

Select all that apply

READ LIST. ACCEPT YES/NO FOR EACH ONE

Veterans Emergency Fund (Quick access to funds for urgent needs such as food, shelter or medical expenses.)	17
Income Replacement Benefit (A monthly payment to maintain your income while you are taking part in the VAC rehabilitation program.)	18
War Veterans Allowance (A monthly payment to Second World War or Korean War Veterans who have a low household income.)	19
Don't know/ No response	99
Prefer not to say	98

Q34 [1,14]

Which organizations (if any) have you connected with to find out about programs and services for Veterans and their families?

DO NOT READ Royal Canadian Legion	2
Specify	77
Have not connected with any stakeholder organizations	99
No response	98

Q35 [1,14]

In your opinion, what groups are the best for VAC to work with to help share information about VAC programs and services?

Specify	77
Don't know/ No response	99

Q36

At what point in your career did you become interested in learning about the services available to Veterans?

Several years before leaving the military	1
Within a year before leaving the military	2
As you were leaving the military	3
Within a year after leaving the military	4
Several years after leaving the military	5
Other (specify)	77
At no point – not applicable	98
Don't know/ No response	99

DEMIN

The following questions will be used in the analysis of the survey responses. All information is strictly confidential and will not be tied to identities or used for any other purpose

QAGEB

What age category do you fit in?

Under 18 years	98
18-24 years	1
25-34 years	2
35-44 years	3
45-54 years	4
55-64 years	5
65-74 years	6
75-84 years	7
85 years or older	8
I prefer not to say	99

QGENDR

Record gender of respondent (DO NOT ASK)

Male	1
Female	2
Prefer to self-describe:	77
I prefer not to say	99

QMINOR [1,4]

Do you consider yourself to be any of the following?

Select all that apply

A member of a visible minority (i.e., non-Caucasian)	1
Indigenous (First nations, Métis or Inuit)	2
A person with a disability (long-term or recurring impairment such as vision, hearing, mobility, learning, developmental, memory or mental health-related that limits daily activities)	3
A member of the LGBTQ2+ community	4
None of the above	97
Don't know/ No response	98
I prefer not to say	99

QPOSTC

What are the first 3 characters of your postal code?

	77
No response	99

QREGION

NO RESPONSE

In which province or territory do you live?

British Columbia	1
Alberta	2
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	4
Ontario	5
Quebec	6
New Brunswick	7
Nova Scotia	8

Prince Edward Island	9
Newfoundland and Labrador	10
Yukon	11
Northwest Territories	12
Nunavut	13
I prefer not to say	99

QURBRUR

Do you live in an area that is considered:

Urban/suburban	1
Rural	2
Remote	3
Don't know/ No response	9

QEDUC

What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed?

Less than a high school diploma or equivalent	1
High school diploma or equivalent	2
Registered apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma	3
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	4
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level	5
Bachelor's degree	6
Post-graduate degree above bachelor's level	7
Don't know/ No response	99
I prefer not to say	9

QINC

Which of the following categories best describes your total household income last year before taxes from all sources for all household members?

Under \$20,000	1
\$20,000 to just under \$40,000	2
\$40,000 to just under \$60,000	3
\$60,000 to just under \$80,000	4
\$80,000 to just under \$100,000	5
\$100,000 or above	6
Don't know/ No response	99
I prefer not to say	9

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey!

C. MODERATORS GUIDE

Introduction (5 minutes)

- I represent EKOS Research and these groups are being conducted for Veterans Affairs Canada. The focus groups are designed to understand what your awareness is of the programs and services offered by Veterans Affairs Canada and also to explore media and information preferences of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans, former RCMP members and their family members. This research will help Veterans Affairs Canada communicate more effectively and also more broadly about the services and benefits.
- It's important to emphasize that the purpose here today is to talk about the types of communication that could be used to tell people about these services and benefits more effectively, and not to concentrate on the programs themselves. Our objective is to focus only on the act of communication.
- This group is part of a series of focus groups taking place across Canada. This session will last about an hour and a half, and we will start by going over the format and "ground rules":
 - The discussion is being audio recorded so that I can listen closely to what you are saying and not be distracted by having to write things down. After I review them, all the recordings will be destroyed.
 - There are observers on the line from the Government of Canada so they can hear your opinions first-hand.
 - All comments are confidential.
 - Please respect the privacy of your fellow participants. Do not take any screen shots of the groups, and we will use first names only.
 - Please try to speak one at a time and be respectful of one another's opinions.
 - No one is expected to be an expert. There are no right or wrong answers to the things we'll be talking about. We're looking for your honest opinions.
 - It's okay to disagree. Please speak up even if you think you're the only one who feels a certain way about an issue. Everyone may have different experiences and different points of view. We want to hear everyone's opinions.
- Moderator's role: raise issues for discussion, watch for time and make sure everyone has a chance to participate. We have been hired to conduct the research, but we do not work directly for Veterans Affairs.
- Please make sure that you are in a quiet place, free from distractions. We ask for your full attention for this time.

Warm-up (5 minutes)

1. What makes a “Veteran” in your view?
 - a. Do you consider yourself a ‘Veteran’?
2. Do you think a person needs to have been medically released to engage with VAC? [probe for education and training, mental health services for family]

Sources of Information (15 min)

3. Have you looked for information about programs and services for Veterans? If not, why not (interest, overwhelmed, intimidated, belief about eligibility criteria, no need now)?
4. **Clients:** How did you first learn of the programs or services you are receiving / have received related to your (or your loved one’s) service?
5. If you were to look for information about programs and services for Veterans **today**, where would you go for information?
[probe for: social media, online (VAC, CAF, RCMP, Military Family Resource Centre, friendship centre if Indigenous and remote?)
Why is that? What is it about this source that works for you?
 - a. Have you ever used the VAC website before?
 - b. Have you ever used the My VAC Account page before? [If they say they thought MVA was the website, probe why].
6. Do you usually prefer to look for information about programs or services you need through these electronic methods or do you prefer speaking with someone (in-person? On the phone?) Why?
7. What do you think of signing up to receive e-newsletters as a way to get information?
 - a. Do you use or know of with any government electronic newsletters? How about Salute!

Finding Out About Programs and Services (50 minutes)

8. What is your experience of finding information about programs and services for Veterans? Is it easy or difficult and why?
 - a. Was there a past situation where you looked for information on programs and services for Veterans and had trouble? (What were you looking for and why was it a problem?)
9. What ways have worked well for you in the past to find out about programs and services for Veterans, and why is this?
 - a. Where can VAC place information, or who can they leave the information with so that you are most likely to get it or find help with it, if needed?
10. What do you think of social media as a channel for government communications about programs and services? What is your experience, if any?
 - a. Do you have any other recommendations for channels that would be more appealing than social media? Why?
11. Does anyone help you find information about programs and services for Veterans?
 - a. Are there any Veteran organizations or groups that VAC should work with to help share information about VAC programs and services? Why?
 - b. Do you belong to any organizations where you get information?
12. Do you think it would be best to know about VAC programs and services before you release or after? Why?
 - a. When do you think it would be best for VAC to share this information? Why?
 - b. Where was the best place to put this information that you'll find it several years before you released? Where is the best place several years after your release?
13. Do you feel that information about VAC programs and services is straightforward and easy to understand? Are there terms used or ways of phrasing things that you find difficult to understand?
 - a. In what way does VAC do a good or poor job of informing you about relevant programs and services?
14. Do you feel that you are familiar with how the programs and services you've looked into work? If haven't looked: Do you understand the VAC programs and services that VAC offers?

Impressions About Accessing Programs and Services (5-10 minutes)

15. What is your general impression of dealing with VAC? Are there areas where you think VAC needs to change the way it does things to help you connect with programs and services? Why?
16. What are the main areas you feel VAC needs to change to help you access their programs and services? [Probe: Processing times, eligibility criteria, information, ways of applying]

Wrap Up (2 minutes)

17. Is there anything that we haven't talked about or that you would like to add before we go?

THANK YOU