

Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Study Education Service

Fiscal Year 2015 Non-Response Bias Analysis



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction	6
Methodology.....	7
2.1 J.D. Power Index Model	8
2.2 Sampling.....	11
2.3 Data Collection.....	11
Non-Response Bias Analysis.....	12
3.1 Survey Yield.....	20
3.2 Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms.....	26
3.3 Margin of Error	27
3.3.1 Sampling Distribution	29
3.3.2 Distribution of Overall Satisfaction Index Scores.....	30
3.3.3 Analysis for Demographic Differences.....	31
3.3.4 Data Imputation Analysis for Demographic Differences	35
Findings	38
Conclusion.....	39
References	40
List of Appendices	
Appendix A Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms	42
Appendix B Item Response Rates	43
Appendix C Study Overview.....	49
1.1 Study Background	49
1.2 Methodology	50
1.3 Data Cleaning.....	51
1.4 Order generation and fulfillment process	51
1.5 Reporting	52
Sample Plan Overview	54
2.1 Sample Criteria	54
2.2 Fielding/Sampling Frequency	54
2.3 Data Transfer	54
2.4 Sample Cleaning Rules Glossary	56
2.5 Sample Selection.....	56
2.6 Data Collection.....	57
Appendix D Approaches to Effects of Non-Response Bias and Improving Response Rates.....	58

1.1 Approach 1: Strategies to Maximize Response Rates	58
1.2 Approach 2: Correcting Unit Non-response Bias with Sample Weighting and Survey Raking	59
Strategies to Improve Response Rate.....	60
Appendix E Impact of FAR 8.8.....	62
1.1 Impact.....	62
Appendix F Survey Questionnaire.....	63
Appendix G List of Acronyms.....	97

Executive Summary

The Voice of the Veteran (VOV) Line of Business Tracking Study was developed to establish continuous satisfaction measurement and incorporate direct Veteran feedback in the decision-making process in order to improve the level of service to Servicemembers, Veterans, and their beneficiaries.

As part of this study, a survey was fielded in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) Education Service (Education) Access (Access) and Education Servicing (Servicing) Program. The survey yielded a response rate of 4.91% for Access (decrease of 1.32% from FY14) and 5.86% for Servicing (decrease of 2.62% from FY14), which was lower than the estimated response rate submitted with the information collection request (ICR) as well as lower than the Office of Management and Budget's standard of 80% (at the overall unit response rate).


OMB's *"Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys,"* Section 3.2, Guideline 3.2.9, notes that a non-response analysis should be conducted for surveys with an overall unit response rate of less than 80%. Therefore, J.D. Power (JDP) conducted the necessary statistical tests in accordance with OMB's guidelines in order to verify the validity of the Access and Servicing survey results for FY15.

The initial 2015 analyses for these reports were done in consultation with Dr. Don Dillman, a professor at Washington State University. Dr. Dillman is regarded as a key survey method expert on non-response bias research and the report conforms to sound statistical research practices in accordance with OMB standards. The analysis performed also includes an iterative survey ranking procedure to derive sample weightings based on a simultaneous balancing analysis of the demographic differences.

After adjusting for demographic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents, the statistical tests performed on the responses for the Education surveys collected illustrate that no differences were found in the Overall Satisfaction Index score and Advocacy rating (likelihood to inform others about VA benefits).

The sample for the Access population was defined as individuals as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for education benefits within the past 90 days. These individuals may include those that have been accepted into the program and have either enrolled or have yet to enroll at a school.

The sample for the Servicing population was defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who are enrolled in a school institution/training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms in the past 9 months.



The analysis performed was done in consultation with Dr. Don Dillman, a professor at Washington State University, who is regarded as a key survey method expert on non-response research. The analysis also includes an iterative survey raking procedure to derive sample weightings based on a simultaneous balancing analysis of the demographic differences.

The Overall Satisfaction Index score for Access (718 on a 1,000-point scale) and Advocacy rating (3.55 on a scale of 1-4 points) are not impacted in any meaningful way by non-response bias. The Overall Satisfaction Index score for Servicing (790) and the Advocacy rating (3.60) are also not impacted in any meaningful way by non-response bias. This analysis confirms that data collected during FY15 is valid for use by VBA.

Introduction

In an effort to achieve the highest level customer service, VBA partnered with J.D. Power to conduct Veteran satisfaction research on its behalf. VBA's Voice of the Veteran (VOV) Satisfaction Initiative was established to continuously measure and improve the level of service to Servicemembers, Veterans, and their beneficiaries.

The intent of this initiative is to:

- Reinststate VBA's customer satisfaction research program in order to incorporate Veteran feedback into the decision-making process
- Identify the critical factors to Veterans' satisfaction with benefits and services provided by VBA
- Provide continuous feedback to validate effectiveness of new initiatives and process changes
- Provide decision-makers and stakeholders with timely and actionable feedback on a continuous basis
- Identify and document best practices, and act as a vehicle to celebrate successful interactions and experiences

VBA's VOV Line of Business Tracking Study was developed to continuously field customer satisfaction survey instruments to provide Veteran and beneficiary feedback on the following VBA lines of business and benefit programs: Compensation, Pension, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, and Loan Guaranty (including Specially Adapted Housing). In support of this effort, in FY15, JDP fielded a survey instrument regarding the Access and Servicing process on behalf of the Education program. The purpose of the Access and Servicing process surveys was to identify the factors critical to Veteran satisfaction with the enrollment and receipt of benefits issued by VBA and to improve the level of services provided.

The survey instruments for Servicing and the Access process were developed in collaboration with VA's Education's division, and in accordance with OMB's guidelines concerning statistical collection procedures and methods. After the initial survey instrument was designed, cognitive labs using the "think aloud" method were conducted to evaluate user experience when completing the survey. Prior to the FY15 fielding of the Servicing and Access process survey, a benchmark (pilot) study was conducted from October 2012 through January 2013 to further assess the effectiveness of the methodology and conformance to OMB's standards. The study was fielded in 2014 and the 2015 fielding is the third iteration.

Methodology

2.1 J.D. Power Index Model

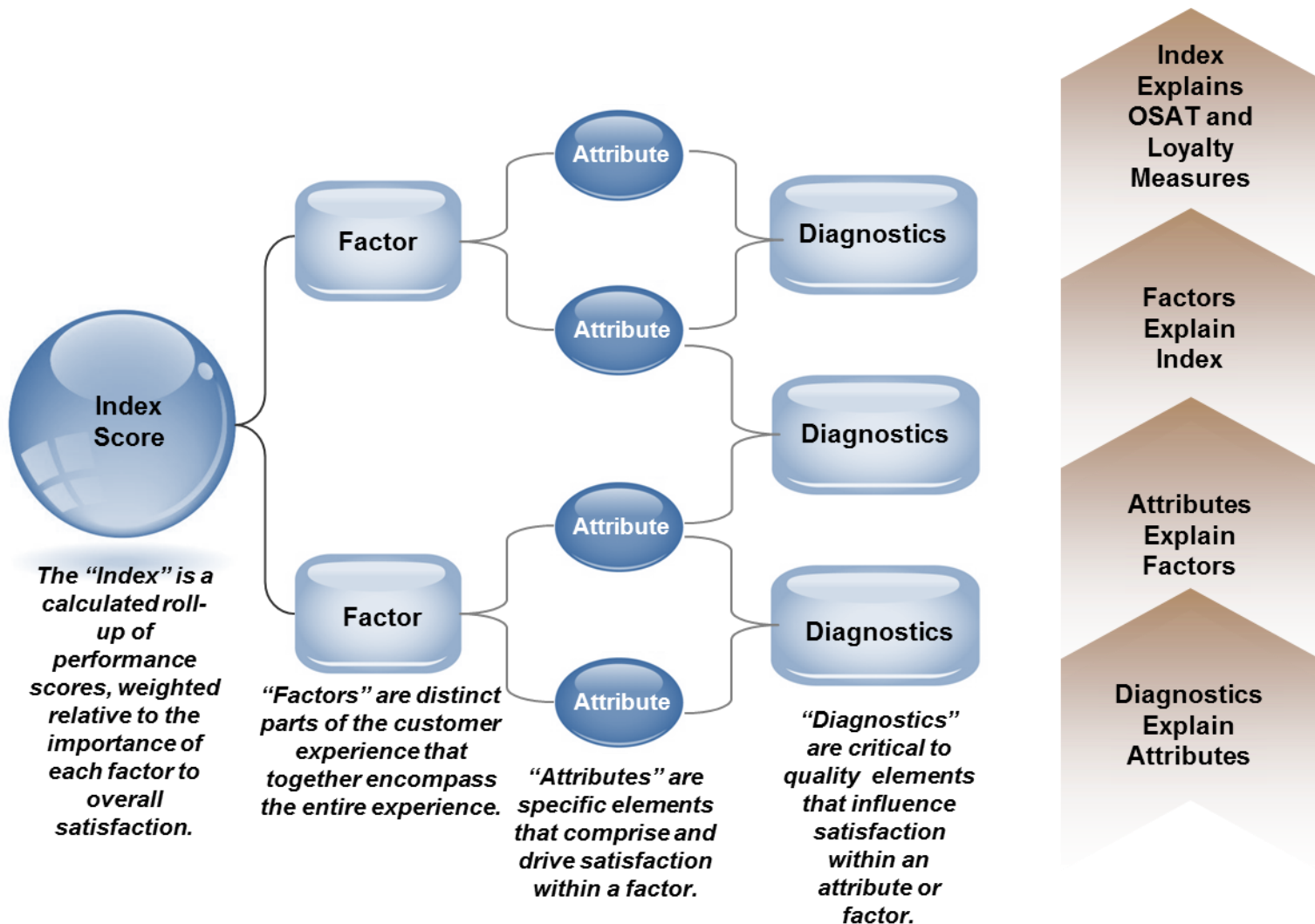
J.D. Power defines customer satisfaction as a measure of how well product or service experiences fit the expectations of customers. All JDP index models assume a two-tiered regression model involving factors and attributes. Each customer experience is influenced by several factors (i.e., first tier), which in turn, are influenced by several attributes or drivers (i.e., second tier). A diagram of the index model follows on the subsequent page.

In order to begin the index model calculation, each set of attributes within a factor is used to predict the Overall Satisfaction Index score (sub-OSAT) for that factor. An importance weight is assigned to each attribute, where the weight of “importance” of each attribute is defined as the ability of that attribute to predict Overall Satisfaction. A multiple regression model is used to estimate the attribute weights. This model produces the “bottom” level weights and is computed for each factor separately. The bottom-level weights are rescaled so that they add up to a score of 1 point within each subcategory. As a result, the percentage of total explained variation in the sub-OSAT that is due to a particular attribute constitutes that attribute’s importance weight within its respective factor.

Following the calculation of attribute (i.e., bottom-level) weights, the factor (i.e., top-level) weights are calculated. Factor scores are calculated by taking the sum of the product of the attribute rating scores and the attribute importance weights. This model produces the top-level weights and these weights are rescaled so that they add up to a score of 1 point. Thus, the percentage of the total explained variation in the Overall Satisfaction Index score that is due to a particular sub-OSAT constitutes that factor’s importance weight.

After all factor scores are computed, they are weighted so that some contribute more to Overall Satisfaction than others, based on the index importance weights. The index score is subsequently calculated by taking the sum of the product of all of the factor scores and the factor importance weights. Finally, both the index and factor scores are multiplied by 100 so that the range of each is 100 (if all attributes were rated 1 point) to 1,000 (if all attributes were rated 10 points).

By applying the importance weights derived from the two-tiered modeling approach, JDP creates a weighted index score that ranges from a low of 100 to a high of 1,000 points. This index approach has the benefit of being highly reliable and valid and provides increased ability to discriminate the performance levels of companies and organizations.



Education Access and Servicing Process Index Weights

In working with Education's subject matter experts and leadership, the design of its survey encompasses the factors and attributes as outlined in the following tables. The factors (such as Benefit Information, Contact with VA, Benefit Application, and Benefit Entitlement) and attributes (Ease of Accessing Information, Availability of Information, etc.) represent Access and Servicing index models in FY15. The corresponding weights for each factor and attribute are the weights based on the above index model calculation. The weights are derived from the relative importance of each factor or attribute to the respondents.

Table 2.0. Access: Index Model Weights

Education Access Index Model Weights	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	23.12%
Contact with VA	6.93%
Benefit Application	35.10%
Benefit Entitlement	34.86%

Table 2.1. Access: Weights by Attribute

Education Access Weights by Attribute	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	
Ease of accessing information	5.10%
Availability of information	3.25%
Clarity of information	4.18%
Usefulness of information	4.55%
Frequency of information	6.04%
Benefit Application	
Ease of completing the application	9.31%
Timeliness of eligibility notification	15.54%
Flexibility of application methods	10.25%
Benefit Entitlement	
Effectiveness of benefit/service	15.68%
Timeliness of receiving benefit/services	19.18%
Contact with VA	6.93%

Table 2.2. Servicing: Index Model Weights

Education Servicing Index Model Weights	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	28.80%
Contact with VA	14.31%
Benefit Entitlement	56.89%

Table 2.3. Servicing: Weights by Attribute

Education Servicing Weights by Attribute	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	
Ease of accessing information	6.58%
Availability of information	4.17%
Clarity of information	5.06%
Usefulness of information	5.53%
Frequency of information	7.46%
Benefit Entitlement	
Effectiveness of benefit/service	26.74%
Timeliness of receiving benefit/services	30.15%
Contact with VA	14.31%

2.2 Sampling

The Servicing survey was fielded to Veterans and beneficiaries who are enrolled in a school institution or training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms in the past 9 months. The Access survey is fielded to Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for education benefits within the past 90 days. These individuals may include those that have been accepted into the program and have either enrolled or have yet to enroll at a school institution/training program.

J.D. Power mailed approximately 10,000 surveys for Servicing and 16,000 for Access to Veterans across the nation in FY14. The target number of completed surveys for Servicing was 3,000 and 4,800 for Access. The actual number of completed surveys received for Access was 821 and for Servicing it was 603.

The samples used in this study, which were provided by Education, were a random sample from the available Veterans. See Appendix D, Sample Plan Overview for further detail on sampling.

Survey Instrument	Methodology	Fielding Frequency	Total Mail-outs in FY15
Access	Mail and Online	Quarterly	16,000
Servicing	Mail and Online	Annually	10,000

2.3 Data Collection

During the survey fielding period, both self-administered online survey returns and self-administered paper surveys were collected. While verbatim responses were recorded by a live survey processor, responses from paper surveys were scanned through automated imaging software. Survey returns underwent quality assurance to validate the accuracy of responses captured.

Respondents from each study had the option of completing the survey on paper or online, and received two separate mailings:

- 1st Mailing: Postcard introducing the study to the respondent, which included an online survey link and a unique access code login for the online survey.
- 2nd Mailing: Survey Package, which included a cover letter, with the online survey link and login, a paper survey, and a business reply envelope.

Each time the surveys were deployed, the postcards and survey packages were subject to a proof approval process that utilized three levels of approvals by JDP, Benefits Assistance Service (BAS), and VA Publications Services Division (VAPSD). After the print vendor mailed the postcards and survey packages, mail receipts were sent to VBA.

During the survey fielding period, JDP provided a toll-free survey hotline and dedicated e-mail address to answer survey-related inquiries and to provide assistance to respondents for completing the surveys. The telephone and e-mail helpdesk was staffed with three JDP employees who answered inquiries during regular business hours (8:00am-5:00pm PST, Monday thru Friday). A voice message system was available to receive phone messages so after-hours calls could be responded to the following business day. An automatically generated e-mail response was sent to all e-mail inquiries informing respondents that their e-mail was received and they would receive a response within 24 hours. JDP helpdesk representatives logged each survey-related inquiry in a password protected spreadsheet documenting the reason for the inquiry, the resolution provided, and the contact information of each caller. At the end of each month, a log containing all inquiries was provided to the Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for review. If non-survey related high-severity benefit inquiries were received, J.D. Power contacted the COR immediately with the respondent's contact information. Throughout the course of the program, weekly status meetings were held between JDP and BAS to discuss survey administration. Biweekly status meetings were held between the Government Printing Office print vendor, JDP, BAS and VAPSD to discuss the printing and mailing of the survey materials.

Non-Response Bias Analysis

The purpose of the non-response bias analysis is to ascertain the possible causes of variance in response rates among different respondent demographics and/or determine if any bias has been introduced with a low response rate. Given that the Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Education Access Process Study had an overall unit response rate of 4.91% and the Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Education Servicing Process Study had an overall unit response rate of 5.86% in FY15, the following section examines whether a low response rate or other factors may have caused respondent bias to occur.

The Office of Management and Budget's Questions and Answers, *"When Designing Surveys for Information Collections"* dated January 2006, and *"Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys"* dated September 2006 (see References) provide guidelines on acceptable survey design and response rates. OMB guidelines recommend a non-response bias evaluation for surveys with an overall unit response rate of less than 80%.

In addition to the above referenced documents prepared by OMB, JDP assessed other source documents that were written and published by the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology, “Statistical Policy Working Paper 17, Survey Coverage” (1990) and “Statistical Policy Working Paper 31, Measuring and Reporting Sources of Error in Surveys” (2001).

While high response rates are always desirable in surveys, JDP finds an 80% response rate is not achievable for most voluntary, satisfaction-based, survey research studies (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In particular, survey research studies that do not provide an incentive are subject to not achieving an 80% response rate. To better illustrate this point, the Dillman Method for survey fielding was discussed in Dillman, D. A. (2014, pp. 22), detailing the efforts to attain an 80% response rate

A survey instrument was fielded to 600 students at the University of Washington, the same institution that sponsored the study. After five attempts to solicit a response in a closed university setting, as well as offering a monetary incentive to complete the survey, the 80% response rate was not achieved, and instead garnered only a 77% response rate. The JDP team met with the VA Contracting Officer Representative to discuss current trends and realistic response rates. As noted JDP does not believe that an 80% response rate is achievable and this concern was shared with the Benefits Assistance Service team.

JDP conducted the following non-response bias analysis to determine if the respondents (i.e., those who completed the survey) were different in a meaningful way from the non-respondents (i.e., those who were sent a survey, but did not complete it). Chi-squared analyses consist of comparisons between respondents and non-respondents on available demographic variables such as gender, age, race, geographical region, war participation (service era), and military service branch. The U.S. states were converted to standard U.S. census regions (Midwest, Northeast, South, and West) in order to aggregate the data and enhance regional comparisons.

JDP research indicates that there is an absence of systematic statistical differences of respondents’ overall satisfaction in the mail and online survey results. Research does suggest differences can occur between mixed-mode survey methodologies (mail, online, and phone), but these are primarily related to (a) social desirability and interviewer bias associated with phone surveys (see Baum, Chandonnet, Fentress, and Rasinowich, 2012), and (b) that older respondents tend to respond by mail more often than online.

The non-response bias analysis was conducted across both mail and online survey collection modes. However, as a verification check, JDP examined potential differences in mail vs. online survey responses by utilizing a t-test analysis on the Overall Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings that serve as measures of Veterans’ overall satisfaction and benefits advocacy. The Overall Satisfaction Index is defined in the Methodology section of this study. The Advocacy rating is defined as Veterans’ likelihood to inform others about VA benefits.

Throughout this report, we are conducting statistical analyses to compare survey respondents and non-respondents. Frequently used statistical tests can include the T-Test, Chi-Square, or Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). These tests generate relevant t-statistics, Chi-Squares, or F statistics that are reported. The magnitude of the statistic’s value (either positive or negative) measures the size of the difference relative to the variation in the data. If the statistic is not large enough to generate a probability (p-value) less than .05, then it falls below the accepted standard probability cut-off level that indicates whether a statistical difference is significant. If a difference is not significant, statisticians regard these results as part of the normal sample variation that occurs within the same population. Throughout this report, the probability p-value standard of “must be less than .05 to be significant” is used for all statistics reported.

Table 3a.e shows there were no statistical differences found for Education Access between the mail and online methodologies on Overall Satisfaction or Advocacy.

Table 3a.e. Education Access: T-Test Analysis of Mail vs. Online Survey Results

Rating Measure	Mail	Online	t-statistic	p-value
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 - 1000 range)	719	717	0.12	.908
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.53	3.59	-1.14	.254

For the Access sample, significant differences were found with the population based on gender such that the Access sample had a higher percentage of females than males.

Table 3b.e. Access: Comparing Gender for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Gender by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	1	16.75	<.0001
Female	32	26	26				
Male	68	74	74				

For the Access sample, significant differences were found with the population based on age generation, such that a larger number of older Veterans and a fewer number of Generations X, Y and Z Veterans completed the survey.

Table 3c.e. Access: Comparing Age Generation for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Age Generation by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	2	263	<.0001
Baby-Boomer (ages 50-68)	15	4	5				
Generation X (ages 37-49)	27	16	16				
Gens Y and Z (ages 18-36)	59	80	79				

For the Access sample, significant differences were found with the population based on race. Results showed that there were fewer Black and more White survey respondents:

Table 3d.e. Access: Comparing Race for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Race by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	3	11.24	<.01
Asian	5	5	5				
Black	18	23	23				
White	69	66	66				
Other	8	7	7				

For the Access survey, *no* significant differences were found with the population based on geographical region:

Table 3e.e. Access: Comparing Census Region for Respondents and Non-Respondents

U.S. Census Region by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	3	3.78	.286
Midwest	14	16	16				
Northeast	13	12	12				
South	55	56	56				
West	18	16	16				

For the Access sample, *no* significant differences were found with the population based on branch of service:

Table 3f.e. Access: Comparing Military Service Branch for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Military Service Branch by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Air Force	13	14	14
Army	35	36	36
Marines	11	13	13
Navy	14	12	12
Other	27	25	25

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	6.29	.179

For the Access survey, significant differences were found in war service era, with more surveys returned by OEF/OIF veterans than by all other war service era Veterans:

Table 3g.e. Access: Comparing War Participation in OIF and OEF for Respondents and Non-Respondents

OIF and OEF War Service by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
All others	63	69	68
OEF/OIF	37	31	32

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	13.06	<.0003

Note: OIF is Operation Iraqi Freedom and OEF is Operation Enduring Freedom.

For the Access sample, significant differences were found with the population based on days of active service, such that survey respondents were more likely to have served 4,001 or more days and less likely to have served 1,001 to 4,000 days, compared with the population:

Table 3h.e. Access: Comparing Days of Active Service for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Days of Active Service by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
1000 days or less	31	38	38
1001-2000 days	22	27	27
2001-4000 days	17	19	19
4001 days or more	30	16	17

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	101	<.0001

For Education Servicing, there were *no* significant differences between mail and online survey respondents:

Table 3a.s. Education Servicing: T-Test Analysis of Mail vs. Online Survey Results

Rating Measure	Mail	Online	t-statistic	p-value
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 - 1000 range)	790	794	-0.21	0.833
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.60	3.58	0.30	0.767

For the Servicing sample, *no* significant differences were found based on gender:

Table 3b.s. Servicing: Comparing Gender for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Gender by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	1	3.48	.062
Female	32	28	28				
Male	68	72	72				

For the Servicing sample, significant differences were found in the population based on age generation, such that a larger number of older Veterans and a fewer number of Generation Y and Z Veterans completed the survey:

Table 3c.s. Servicing: Comparing Age Generation for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Age Generation by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	2	325	<.0001
Baby-Boomer (ages 50-68)	18	4	5				
Generation X (ages 37-49)	25	15	15				
Gens Y and Z (ages 18-36)	57	82	80				

For the Servicing sample, *no* significant differences were found in the population based on race:

Table 3d.s. Servicing: Comparing Race for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Race by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	3	3.30	.347
Asian	6	5	5				
Black	23	26	26				
White	63	60	60				
Other	9	9	9				

For the Servicing survey, *no* significant differences were found in the population based on geographical region:

Table 3e.s. Servicing: Comparing Census Region for Respondents and Non-Respondents

U.S. Census Region by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	3	2.46	.483
Midwest	15	15	15				
Northeast	17	16	16				
South	54	54	54				
West	14	16	16				

For the Servicing sample, *no* significant differences were found with the population based on branch of service:

Table 3f.s. Servicing: Comparing Military Service Branch for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Military Service Branch by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	4	7.48	.1126
Air Force	13	11	11				
Army	27	29	29				
Marines	11	12	12				
Navy	17	15	15				
Other	32	33	33				

For the Servicing survey, *no* significant differences were found in war service:

Table 3g.s. Servicing: Comparing War Participation in OIF and OEF for Respondents and Non-Respondents

OIF and OEF War Service by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	1	.388	.533
All others	49	51	51				
OEF/OIF	51	49	49				

Note: OIF is Operation Iraqi Freedom and OEF is Operation Enduring Freedom.

For the Servicing sample, significant differences were found in the population based on days of active service, such that survey respondents were more likely to have served 4,001 or more days and less likely to have served fewer days, compared with the population:

Table 3j.s. Servicing: Comparing Days of Active Service for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Days of Active Service by Respondent Type (%)				Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total	Chi-Square	3	176	<.0001
1000 days or less	22	32	32				
1001-2000 days	23	31	31				
2001-4000 days	19	22	22				
4001 days or more	35	15	16				

3.1 Survey Yield

In accordance with OMB “*Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys*,” an agency must appropriately measure, adjust for, report, and analyze unit and item non-response when the intended response for a targeted population is not met.¹ In assessing Education’s data in accordance with Section 3.2, and Guidelines 3.2.1-3.2.3, the unweighted unit response rate was calculated as the ratio of the number of completed cases to the number of in-scope sample cases (Ellis, 2000; AAPOR, 2000).

Table 3.1a.e below shows the sample distribution and response rate for the Education Access target population:

Table 3.1a.e. Sample Distribution and Response Rates for Education Access Population

Total Education Access Population FY2015	
Total records received	249,395
Duplicate records in sample file	15,077
Duplicate record history	10,284
Invalid address	9,253
Invalid values	2,303
Blanks	367
Do not contact	53
Total records available after cleaning²	212,058
Total records selected	16,000
Undeliverable addresses	632
Total mailed (excludes undeliverable)	15,368
Total completed mail surveys	578
Total completed online surveys	243
Total completed surveys	821
Total completed surveys with Overall Index Score³	786
Total Sample Response Rate⁴	4.91%
Eligible Sample Response Rate⁵	5.34%

¹ As defined by OMB and FCSM, unit non-response occurs when a respondent fails to respond to all required response items (i.e., fails to fill out or return a data collection instrument); item non-response occurs when a respondent fails to respond to one or more relevant item(s) on a survey.

² Glossary of sample cleaning rules included in Appendix E.

³ Findings in the report are based on the “Total completed surveys with Overall Index Score” (N=786).

⁴ Response rate calculation per OMB *Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys*, Section 3.2, Guideline 3.2.9 (includes undeliverables as number of non-contacted sample units known to be eligible).

⁵ Response rate calculation per Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) (includes number of completed interviews with reporting units/number of eligible reporting units in sample). The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) also uses this method for calculation and cites CASRO (AAPOR Standard Definitions, 2008, pp. 34).

Table 3.1a.s below shows the sample distribution and response rate for Education Servicing target population:

Table 3.1a.s. Sample Distribution and Response Rates for Education Servicing Population

Total Education Servicing Population FY2015	
Total records received	717,921
Duplicate records in sample file	607,805
Duplicate record history	7,317
Invalid address	24,559
Invalid values	220
Blanks	7
Do not contact	26
Total records available after cleaning⁶	77,987
Total records selected	10,000
Undeliverable addresses	400
Total mailed (excludes undeliverable)	9,600
Total completed mail surveys	514
Total completed online surveys	89
Total completed surveys	603
Total completed surveys with Overall Index Score⁷	586
Total Sample Response Rate⁸	5.86%
Eligible Sample Response Rate⁹	6.28%

Of the 249,395 total records received for Access, 37,337 records were purged from the sample due to cleaning rules such as duplicate records, invalid addresses and values, blanks, and do not contact opt outs. From the 249,395 records purged, 10,284 records were cleaned due to duplicate records across VBA's other business line surveys (i.e., duplicate record history). For Servicing, 717,921 records were received but 639,934 records were purged from the sample due to cleaning rules such as duplicate records, invalid addresses and values, blanks, and do not contact opt outs. Also, from the 717,921 records that were purged, 7,317 records were cleaned due to duplicate records across other business lines.

⁶ Glossary of sample cleaning rules included in Appendix E.

⁷ Findings in the report are based on the "Total completed surveys with Overall Index Score" (N=586).

⁸ Response rate calculation per *OMB Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys, Section 3.2, guideline 3.* (includes undeliverables as number of non-contacted sample units known to be eligible).

⁹ Response rate calculation per Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) (includes number of completed interviews with reporting units/number of eligible reporting units in sample). The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) also uses this method for calculation and cites CASRO (AAPOR Standard Definitions, 2008, pp.34).

The purpose of this cleaning rule is to prevent respondents from being re-contacted if they were previously selected to participate in any of VBA’s business line surveys in the past 12 months. The cleaning rule is a JDP and survey research best practice and is intended to promote proper conduct in market research. From the total records provided, about 89% were removed from Servicing and about 15% were removed from Access due to this cleaning rule. It is unlikely that the cleaning rules impacted the unit non-response, and JDP was able to secure the designated number of records for both Servicing and Access for the survey.

Table 3.1b.e. Access: Weight/Person for Completed Surveys per Population

Completed Surveys	Access 2015 Population	Weight/Person
821	212,058	258

In table 3.1b.e., the 258 in the Weight/Person column means that every survey completed and returned represents the views of 258 Veterans using Education Access benefits. This was calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys into the population number.

Table 3.1b.s. Servicing: Weight/Person for Completed Surveys per Population

Completed Surveys	Servicing 2015 Population	Weight/Person
603	77,987	129

In table 3.1b.s., the 129 in the Weight/Person column means that every survey completed and returned represents the views of 129 Veterans using Education benefits, which is an acceptable sampling representativeness. This was calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys into the population number

To confirm the sample’s representativeness for both Access and Servicing, a comparison was conducted among the total records provided and the records available after cleaning. The intent of this analysis was to determine whether the cleaning rules caused the remaining sample to vary in a meaningful way from the original sampling frame.

Table 3.1c.e (Access) and Table 3.1c.s (Servicing) indicate characteristics such as gender, age, and geographical region are similar among the total records provided and the records available after cleaning. Comparisons by state yield differences that are mostly less than 3% points, with a few exceptions in Servicing, where a few differences were wider. Overall, these comparisons suggest the cleaning rules did not significantly alter the proportion of respondent characteristics provided in the original sampling frame.

Table 3.1c. Access: Comparing Gender, Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
Gender			
Female	24.79	24.90	0.1
Male	75.21	75.10	-0.1
Generation			
Baby Boomer	4.91	4.85	-0.06
Generation X	16.19	16.40	0.21
Gens Y and Z	78.90	78.74	-0.16
U.S. State			
AK	0.75	0.74	-0.01
AL	2.03	2.04	0.01
AR	1.01	0.99	-0.03
AZ	2.22	2.25	0.02
CA	9.65	9.85	0.2
CO	2.43	2.44	0.01
CT	0.60	0.59	-0.01
DC	0.15	0.15	0
DE	0.29	0.29	0
FL	6.58	6.74	0.16
GA	4.32	4.29	-0.03
HI	1.27	1.28	0.01
IA	0.70	0.69	-0.01
ID	0.56	0.55	-0.01
IL	2.37	2.41	0.04
IN	1.42	1.39	-0.03
KS	1.21	1.23	0.01
KY	1.32	1.29	-0.02
LA	1.57	1.54	-0.03
MA	1.15	1.12	-0.04
MD	2.30	2.33	0.03
ME	0.37	0.36	-0.01
MI	1.55	1.55	0
MN	1.02	1.01	-0.01
MO	1.72	1.74	0.02
MS	1.22	1.21	-0.01
MT	0.34	0.34	0
NC	4.46	4.5	0.04
ND	0.33	0.34	0.01

Table 3.1c.Access: Comparing Gender, Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population (Continued)

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
NE	0.62	0.63	0.01
NH	0.34	0.35	0.01
NJ	1.36	1.36	-0.01
NM	0.78	0.76	-0.01
NV	1.01	1.02	0.01
NY	2.96	2.88	-0.07
OH	2.42	2.41	-0.02
OK	1.70	1.64	-0.05
OR	0.96	0.96	0
PA	2.48	2.44	-0.04
RI	0.26	0.25	-0.01
SC	2.31	2.28	-0.02
SD	0.31	0.31	0
TN	2.24	2.23	-0.01
TX	10.91	10.75	-0.17
UT	0.87	0.86	-0.01
VA	5.80	6.08	0.28
VT	0.12	0.12	0
WA	3.39	3.4	0.01
WI	1.14	1.15	0.01
WV	0.39	0.39	-0.01
WY	0.20	0.2	0

Table 3.1c.s. Servicing: Comparing Gender, Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
Gender			
Female	24.37	26.70	2.33
Male	75.63	73.30	-2.33
Generation			
Baby Boomer	6.65	5.00	-1.64
Generation X	19.08	16.41	-2.67

Table 3.1c.s.Servicing: Comparing Gender, Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population (Continued)

Gens Y and Z	74.28	78.59	4.31
U.S. State			
AK	0.34	0.38	0.03
AL	1.37	1.74	0.37
AR	0.42	0.82	0.4
AZ	4.95	3.67	-1.28
CA	20.27	13.88	-6.39
CO	2.31	2.06	-0.25
CT	0.35	0.6	0.25
DC	0.11	0.1	-0.01
DE	0.12	0.14	0.02
FL	6.5	6.27	-0.23
GA	3.9	4.31	0.41
HI	1.8	1.36	-0.44
IA	0.54	1.06	0.53
ID	0.44	0.55	0.11
IL	1.45	2.8	1.35
IN	1.16	1.56	0.4
KS	0.74	1.01	0.27
KY	0.78	1.1	0.32
LA	1.17	1.51	0.34
MA	0.79	0.92	0.13
MD	1.82	1.65	-0.17
ME	0.24	0.32	0.08
MI	1.04	1.41	0.37
MN	0.47	0.98	0.51
MO	1.23	1.73	0.49
MS	0.71	1.06	0.35
MT	0.18	0.29	0.11
NC	2.96	3.76	0.8
ND	0.1	0.22	0.12
NE	0.75	1.11	0.36
NH	0.21	0.28	0.07
NJ	0.83	1.08	0.25
NM	0.61	0.74	0.12
NV	1.67	1.37	-0.3

Table 3.1c.s.Servicing: Comparing Gender, Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population (Continued)

NY	1.52	2.11	0.59
OH	1.72	2.78	1.06
OK	1.22	1.57	0.35
OR	0.6	0.68	0.09
PA	2.01	2.74	0.73
RI	0.14	0.16	0.02
SC	1.84	1.99	0.15
SD	0.16	0.37	0.22
TN	2.27	2.45	0.18
TX	11.52	11.35	-0.17
UT	0.68	0.84	0.16
VA	6.85	5.73	-1.12
VT	0.06	0.11	0.05
WA	1.91	2.18	0.27
WI	0.7	1.18	0.48
WV	0.28	0.49	0.22
WY	0.11	0.22	0.11

3.2 Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms

In accordance with the OMB “Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys” Guidelines 3.2.9 and 3.2.11, an investigation of missing data patterns was performed on the 1,677 total surveys received for Access and the 5,898 total surveys received for Servicing. In order to assess the distribution of missing data, a procedure was performed to process missing values involving iterative multiple imputation chains using expectation–maximization (MCMC) algorithms and dividing these into distribution interval groupings (Pierchala, Carl E. (2001)). This was done on the key measures of the Overall Satisfaction Index (see Appendix A for calculation) and Advocacy ratings related to Veterans’ likelihood to recommend VA benefits.

As shown in Tables 3.2.e and 3.2.s for Access and Servicing, respectively, there were no indications of unusual patterns for missing data. For more discussion of missing data mechanisms (MCAR, MAR, and MNAR), please see Appendix A.

Table 3.2.e. Access: Missing Data Patterns in Satisfaction and Advocacy (0 = missing, 1 = data)

Group	Overall Satisfaction	Likelihood to inform others	Freq	Percent	Group Means		
					OSAT Index	Age	% Male
1	0	0	6	1%	679	28	50%
2	0	1	3	0%	513	52	100%
3	1	0	5	1%	688	46	80%
4	1	1	772	98%	720	36	67%

Table 3.2.s. Servicing: Missing Data Patterns in Satisfaction and Advocacy (0 = missing, 1 = data)

Group	Overall Satisfaction	Likelihood to inform others	Freq	Percent	Group Means		
					OSAT Index	Age	% Male
1	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
2	0	1	2	.3%	785	40	100%
3	1	0	12	2%	655	34	83%
4	1	1	572	98%	793	38	70%

3.3 Margin of Error

The margin of error expresses the maximum expected difference between the true population parameter and a sample estimate of that parameter. It is often used to indicate the accuracy of survey results. The larger the margin of error regarding an estimated value, the less accurate the estimated value will be. Larger samples are more likely to yield results close to the true population quantity and thus have smaller margins of error than smaller samples.

Based on a sample of 15,368 Veterans, the Overall Satisfaction Index for the Access study is 718 index points on a 1,000-point scale and has a margin of error of 15 index points at the 95% confidence level. This indicates that if the survey were repeated many times with different samples, the true mean Overall Satisfaction Index would fall within 15 index points 95% of the time.

Table 3.3.e below demonstrates relative decreases in margin of error as the study sample size increases. A 20% response rate (3,074 completes) would be associated with a margin of error of 8 index points, similar to the margin of error for a 30% response rate (4,610 completes). Results from this analysis indicate the Overall Satisfaction Index (OSAT) calculated from the Access study is an accurate measurement of the true population mean.

Table 3.3.e. Access: Margin of Error for Larger Sample Sizes

Sample	Response Rate	Completes (N)	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Margin of Error (95% confidence interval)
15,368	5.34%	821	718	221	7.7	15
15,368	20%	3,074	718	221	4.0	8
15,368	30%	4,610	718	221	3.3	6
15,368	40%	6,147	718	221	2.8	6
15,368	50%	7,684	718	221	2.5	5
15,368	60%	9,221	718	221	2.3	5
15,368	80%	12,294	718	221	2.0	4

Based on a sample of 9,600 Veterans, the Overall Satisfaction Index for Servicing is 790 on a 1,000-point scale and has a margin of error of 15 index points at the 95% confidence level. This indicates that if the survey were repeated many times with different samples, the true mean Overall Satisfaction Index would fall within 15 index points 95% of the time.

Table 3.3.s below demonstrates relative decreases in margin of error as the study sample size increases. A 20% response rate (1,920 completes) would be associated with a margin of error of 8 index points, similar to the margin of error for a 30% response rate (2,880 completes). Results from this analysis indicate the Overall Satisfaction Index (OSAT) calculated from the Servicing study is an accurate measurement of the true population mean.

Table 3.3.s. Servicing: Margin of Error for Larger Sample Sizes

Sample	Response Rate	Completes (N)	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Margin of Error (95% confidence interval)
9,600	6.28%	603	790	182	7.4	15
9,600	20%	1,920	790	182	4.2	8
9,600	30%	2,880	790	182	3.4	7
9,600	40%	3,840	790	182	2.9	6
9,600	50%	4,800	790	182	2.6	5
9,600	60%	5,760	790	182	2.4	5
9,600	80%	7,680	790	182	2.1	4

In the margin of error analysis noted in previous page and in subsequent analyses included in this study, the Overall Satisfaction Index score is the main dependent variable and is the basis for the analysis. The Overall Satisfaction Index score is the survey metric that VBA utilizes to measure customer satisfaction and benchmark performance against other industries and organizations. It is the primary measurement in all studies. The Overall Satisfaction Index encompasses all aspects of the customer experience,¹⁰ and can therefore be used as a reliable indicator for the presence or absence of respondent bias in the survey results as a whole. For these reasons, the Overall Satisfaction Index score is used as the main dependent variable in the margin of error analysis and subsequent t-test analyses included in this study.

3.3.1 Sampling Distribution

Respondent characteristics such as gender and age were compared to the total sample to determine whether respondents and non-respondents differed on key variables of interest.

Compared with the population of all eligible respondents (Access 16,000, Servicing 10,000), survey respondents demonstrate the same gender characteristics. For Access, Table 3.3.1.e below illustrates 33% of survey respondents were female and 67% were male, similar to the total sample population. The distribution of age shows that survey respondents tend to be older.

Table 3.3.1.e. Access: Comparing Gender and Age of Survey Respondents to Total Sample

	Respondents (%)	Sample Size (N)	Total Sample (%)	Sample Size (N)	% Point Difference
Gender					
Female	33	266	26	4144	-7
Male	67	546	74	11690	7
Age Generation					
Baby Boomer	14	119	5	764	-10
Generation X	26	217	16	2611	-10
Generation YZ	59	485	79	12625	20

For Servicing, Table 3.3.1.s below illustrates 32% of survey respondents were female and 68% were male, similar to the total sample population. The distribution of age shows that survey respondents tend to be older.

¹⁰ Explanation of J.D. Power Index Model Calculation included in Methodology.

Table 3.3.1.s. Servicing: Comparing Gender and Age of Survey Respondents to the Total Sample

	Respondents (%)	Sample Size (N)	Total Sample (%)	Sample Size (N)	% Point Difference
Gender					
Female	32	191	28	2,837	-3.0
Male	68	412	72	7,163	3.0
Age Generation					
Baby Boomer	18	110	5	469	-14
Generation X	26	154	15	1,526	-10
Gens Y and Z	56	339	80	8,005	24

3.3.2 Distribution of Overall Satisfaction Index Scores

Following the comparison of sampling distributions, a comparison of Overall Satisfaction Index scores was conducted to determine whether differences in age and gender among respondents correlate with differences in overall satisfaction.

For Access, Table 3.3.2.e below indicates differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores are notable between gender groups. On average, females tend to rate their experience higher than males (743 vs. 706, respectively). Comparing age groups indicates that Generation X has the highest overall satisfaction, and that satisfaction among Baby Boomers is much lower.

Table 3.3.2.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction Scores for Gender and Age Groups

Characteristics	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Gender			
Female	743	183	252
Male	706	209	525
Age Generation			
Baby Boomer	704	246	114
Generation X	734	185	210
Gens Y and Z	715	196	462

For Servicing, Table 3.3.2.s below indicates differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores are notable between gender groups. On average, females tend to rate their experience higher than males (811 vs. 780, respectively). Comparing age groups indicates that Baby Boomers have the highest overall satisfaction, compared with other age groups.

Table 3.3.2.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction Scores for Gender and Age Groups

Characteristics	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Gender			
Female	811	165	186
Male	780	189	400
Age Generation			
Baby Boomer	851	150	106
Generation X	817	157	148
Gens Y and Z	759	195	332

3.3.3 Analysis for Demographic Differences

T-test analyses were conducted to determine whether differences in demographic groups produced statistical differences in Overall Satisfaction Index (OSAT) scores. T-tests are typically used to determine whether or not the difference between the averages of two groups most likely reflects a meaningful difference in the population from which the groups were sampled.

For Access, gender differences were statistically significantly different with females higher in satisfaction than males, whereas war participation was *not* statistically significant:

Table 3.3.3a.e. Access: T-Test Analysis for Pairs of Characteristics in Veterans' Satisfaction

Characteristics	T-Test Statistic	Statistical Difference (95% confidence level)
Gender		
Female vs. Male	2.52	Yes
War Participation		
OEF/OIF vs. All Others	-0.78	No

For Servicing, the differences for gender and war participation were *not* statistically significant:

Table 3.3.3a.s. Servicing: T-Test Analysis for Pairs of Characteristics in Veterans' Satisfaction

Characteristics	T-Test Statistic	Statistical Difference (95% confidence level)
Gender		
Female vs. Male	1.90	No
War Participation		
OEF/OIF vs. All Others	-0.61	No

Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine whether differences in demographic groups produced statistical differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores. These analyses are typically used to determine whether or not the difference among the average of three or more groups most likely reflects a meaningful difference in the population from which the groups were sampled.

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by age generation were *not* significant ($F = .95$, $p\text{-value} = .385$).

Table 3.3.3b.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction for Age Generation

Generation	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Baby Boomer	704	114
Generation X	734	210
Gens Y and Z	715	462

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by region were *not* significant ($F = 1.37$, $p\text{-value} = .251$).

Table 3.3.3c.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction by Region

Regions	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Midwest	700	107
Northeast	721	98
South	727	415
West	691	135

For Access, racial differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores were significant ($F = 3.64$, $p\text{-value} < .01$). Results showed that Black and Other respondents had the highest satisfaction levels:

Table 3.3.3d.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction for Race

Race	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Asian	715	35
Black	764	124
White	702	475
Other	749	58

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by branch of service were *not* significant ($F = 2.10$, $p\text{-value} = .08$).

Table 3.3.3e.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction for Military Service Branch

Military Service Branches	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Air Force	750	105
Army	730	274
Marines	723	85
Navy	712	107
Other	689	215

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by days of active service were significant ($F = 2.61$, $p\text{-value} < .05$). Results showed that respondents with 4001 days or more over active service had the highest satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3f.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction for Days of Active Service

Days of Active Service	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
1000 days or less	699	244
1001-2000 days	704	172
2001-4000 days	722	136
4001 days or more	747	234

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by generation were significant ($F = 12.80$, $p\text{-value} < .001$) such that Baby Boomers had the highest level of satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3b.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction for Generation

Generation	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Baby Boomer	851	106
Generation X	817	148
Gens Y and Z	759	332

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by region were significant ($F = 3.17$, $p\text{-value} < .02$) such that respondents from the Northeast and South had the highest satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3c.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction by Region

Regions	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Midwest	746	90
Northeast	791	99
South	808	317
West	769	80

For Servicing, racial differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores were significant ($F = 3.44$, p -value $< .02$) such that Black and Other respondents had the highest satisfaction levels:

Table 3.3.3d.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction for Race

Race	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Asian	759	32
Black	824	135
White	775	367
Other	826	52

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by branch of service were significant ($F = 5.87$, p -value $< .0001$) such that Air Force respondents had the highest satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3e.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction for Military Service Branch

Military Service	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Air Force	860	79
Army	786	157
Marines	749	65
Navy	822	98
Other	762	187

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores by days of active service were significant ($F = 5.60$, p -value $< .0001$). Results showed that respondents with 4001 days or more over active service had the highest satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3f.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction for Days of Active Service

Days of Active Service	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
1,000 days or less	751	134
1,001-2,000 days	769	133
2,001-4,000 days	795	113
4,001 days or more	827	206

3.3.4 Data Imputation Analysis for Demographic Differences

A pairwise comparison t-test analysis was done to evaluate whether data imputation for missing values across significant demographic differences shown in Section 3.3.3 would impact Overall Satisfaction Index scores. This analysis included survey raking across demographic differences as one level of comparison.

These results (Tables 3.3.4a.e and 3.3.4a.s) show that there were no significant differences between the non-imputed mean and the imputed mean of the Overall Satisfaction Index across demographics, sample sizes, or survey ranked values. We want to highlight that after statistical adjustment for the differences found between respondents and non-respondents reported earlier, there were no differences in overall satisfaction levels. These results support the conclusion that the findings for Veterans’ Overall Satisfaction ratings are accurate.

Table 3.3.4a.e. Access: Comparison of Imputed vs. Non-Imputed on Veterans’ Satisfaction

T-Tests on Imputed vs. Non-Imputed Raked for Demographic Differences				
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 – 1000-point range)	Mean (imputed)	Mean (non-imputed)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Imputed demographics (786 final sample size)	718.25	718.26	0.001	0.99
Imputed survey-raked demographics (786 final sample size)	711.85	712.51	0.064	0.95
Imputed survey-raked demographics (821 total respondents)	711.79	713.80	0.200	0.84

Note: Non-imputed is based on the 786 final cleaned sample size used in this study.

Table 3.3.4a.s. Servicing: Comparison of Imputed vs. Non-Imputed on Veterans' Satisfaction

T-Tests on Imputed vs. Non-Imputed Raked for Demographic Differences				
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 – 1000-point range)	Mean (imputed)	Mean (non- imputed)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Imputed demographics (586 final sample size)	790.27	790.17	-0.01	0.99
Imputed survey-raked demographics (586 final sample size)	779.83	780.28	0.04	0.97
Imputed survey-raked demographics (603 total respondents)	780.62	779.86	-0.07	0.94

Note: Non-imputed is based on the 586 final cleaned sample size used in this study.

Survey Raking for Sample Weights to Adjust for Differences and Compare Overall Satisfaction Index Scores and Advocacy Ratings

The procedure known as “raking” adjusts a set of data so that its marginal totals match specified control totals on a specified set of variables. The term suggests an analogy with the process of smoothing the soil in a garden plot by alternately working it back and forth with a rake in two perpendicular directions (Izrael and Battaglia (2004)).

Survey raking is an iterative sample-balancing algorithm-based technique that provides sample weighting convergence across multiple variables and multiple categories (see Battaglia, Izrael, Hoaglin, and Frankel (2009)).

In keeping with OMB “Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys” Guidelines 3.2.12 and 3.2.13, JDP selected the best statistical method to simultaneously adjust for multiple differences between groups by applying a survey raking procedure (see Anderson, L., and R.D. Fricker, Jr. (2015)).

The JDP raking procedure is a proprietary improved version based on the excellent methods initially developed by Izrael and Battaglia (2000, 2004) and Battaglia, Izrael, Hoaglin, and Frankel (2004). JDP raking improvements are primarily related to better handling of low cell values during iterative convergence processing. For this analysis, 50 iterations were set (although fewer were needed) to converge on the best sample weights (.2 estimation margin) to simultaneously adjust for non-response bias in age, race, region, and war (service era) demographic categories. For additional background about survey raking methodologies, see Wallace and Rust (1996).

The estimated population distributions are used as convergence targets. In this case, the data set of all eligible respondents for Access (16,000) and Servicing (10,000) were used as the estimated population to derive sample weightings for the Access survey respondents (821) and the Servicing survey respondents (603).

In accordance with OMB “Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys” Guideline 3.2.13, a series of t-tests were conducted to determine whether non-response bias in demographic areas produced statistical differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings. Typically, t-tests are used to determine whether differences in average between two groups and variances reflect a meaningful difference in the population. The sample weightings derived from the survey raking procedure were included in the t-tests to equalize the survey respondent differences with those of non-respondents.

For Access, there were no significant differences in Overall Satisfaction or Advocacy levels when the data was adjusted for demographic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents. These results support the conclusion that the survey findings for Veterans’ Overall Satisfaction ratings are accurate:

Table 3.3.4b.e. Access: Overall Satisfaction and Advocacy for Survey Respondents Unweighted and Weighted

Analysis of Survey Respondent Scores with Weighted Adjustment for Non-Response Bias						
Rating Measure	Mean (Unweighted)	Mean (Weighted)	Standard Deviation (Unweighted)	Standard Deviation (Weighted)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 - 1000 range)	718	713	201	203	0.56	0.57
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.55	3.54	0.61	0.60	0.41	0.68

For Servicing, there were no significant differences in Overall Satisfaction or Advocacy levels when the data was adjusted for demographic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents. These results support the conclusion that the survey findings for Veterans’ Overall Satisfaction ratings are accurate:

Table 3.3.4b.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction and Advocacy for Survey Respondents Unweighted and Weighted

Analysis of Survey Respondent Scores with Weighted Adjustment for Non-Response Bias						
Rating Measure	Mean (Unweighted)	Mean (Weighted)	Standard Deviation (Unweighted)	Standard Deviation (Weighted)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Overall Satisfaction Index (100 - 1000 range)	790	780	182	184	0.92	0.36
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.60	3.58	0.62	0.63	0.49	0.62

Findings

Results from the non-response bias analysis indicate that the Overall Satisfaction Index score and the Advocacy ratings for the Education Access and Servicing studies reflects the experience of all Veterans who received a decision for their application for education or who have been enrolled in a school institution or training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms during the past 9 months.

Sample Cleaning: Initial comparisons on age, gender, and geographical characteristics between the total records provided and the records available after cleaning (see Survey Yield, Section 3.1) suggest the sample utilized in the study exhibits similar characteristics as the total sample. Additional comparisons (see Margin of Error and Sampling Distribution, Section 3.3) suggest the sample cleaning rules did not impact the sample’s representativeness and the results are conclusive.

Non-Response Bias Analysis: Results from the non-response bias analysis did show group differences for age, gender, race, days of service, and war participation between survey respondents and non-respondents. After correcting for these differences using a recommended sample-balancing survey raking method to derive sample weights (see Margin of Error, Section 3.3.4, Data Imputation Analysis for Demographic Variables), there were no differences found in Veterans’ Overall Satisfaction and Advocacy (likelihood inform others about VA benefits) between weighted and unweighted survey respondents.

Item Response Rate Calculations: Results from the survey item response rate calculations indicate high item response rates, with none falling below OMB guidelines (see Appendix B for Item Response Rates). According to OMB Guideline 3.2.10, given that neither study had a response rate lower than 70%, a non-response bias analysis was not necessary at the item level.

The research and approach taken by JDP are in accordance with sound market research and current best practices from the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) regarding response rate recommendations: “Results that show the least bias have turned out, in some cases, to come from surveys with less than optimal response rates. Experimental comparisons have also revealed few significant differences between estimates from surveys with low response rates and short field periods and surveys with high response rates and long field periods.” See AAPOR “Response Rates – An Overview” (2015) and Special Issue of Public Opinion Quarterly “Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys” (Singer, 2006).

Conclusion

The Overall Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings (likelihood to inform others about VA benefits) are not impacted in any meaningful way by non-response bias. This analysis confirms that the data collected during FY15 is valid.

The FY15 Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Study data for the Education Access and Servicing surveys can be used to infer reliable Overall Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings. The Overall Satisfaction Index scores reflect the experience of all Veterans who received a decision for their application for education or who have been enrolled in a school institution or training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms during the past 9 months.

The sample utilized in the study exhibits similar characteristics for age, gender, and geography as the total sample provided. This indicates the sample cleaning rules did not impact the sample’s representativeness.

While the results from the non-response bias analysis did show group differences on demographic characteristics between survey respondents and non-respondents, there were no differences found in Veterans’ Overall Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings between weighted and unweighted survey respondents. This conclusion was reached after correcting for these differences using a recommended sample-balancing survey raking method to derive sample weights. JDP conducted all necessary statistical tests in accordance with OMB standards.

J.D. Power certifies the results contained within this study.

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Appendix A

Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms

An excellent discussion of missing data patterns, mechanisms, and research analysis methods is provided in Vogt, W. Paul, Vogt, Elaine R., Gardner, Dianne C., and Haeffele, Lynne M. (2014). An overview of the missing data types and issues is described below.

Understanding the reasons why data is missing can be useful in analyzing the remaining data. If values are missing at random, the data sample may still be representative of the population; however, if the values are missing systematically, analysis may be harder.

- **Missing completely at random.** Values in a data set are missing completely at random (MCAR) if the events that lead to any particular data item being missing are independent both of observable variables and of unobservable parameters of interest, and occur entirely at random. When data are MCAR, the analyses performed on the data are unbiased; however, data are rarely MCAR.
- **Missing at random.** Missing at random (MAR) is an alternative, and occurs when the missingness is related to a particular variable, but is not related to the value of the variable that has missing data. An example of this is accidentally omitting an answer on a questionnaire.
- **Missing not at random.** Missing not at random (MNAR) is data that is missing for a specific reason (i.e., the value of the variable that is missing is related to the reason it is missing). An example of this is if a certain question on a questionnaire tends to be skipped deliberately by participants with certain characteristics. Graphical models can be used to describe the missing data mechanism in detail.

While it is clear that MNAR can introduce statistical bias, there is no definitive test (see Vogt et al, (2014)). It is also clear that MCAR is rarely evident in research data and most tests of it will fail. However, MAR is fully acceptable for valid statistical analyses (Vogt et al, 2014). MAR is essentially “missing partially at random,” whereby the intra-group missingness remains random despite some differences between group tendencies. Graphical data representations are the typical tool used in assessment as described above and in Pierchala, Carl E. (2001).

See Section 3.2 Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms for findings specific to Education’s data.

Appendix B

Item Response Rates

In accordance with OMB “Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys,” Section 3.2, Guidelines 3.2.6-3.2.7, the item response rate was calculated as the ratio of the number of respondents for whom an in-scope response was obtained to the number of respondents who were asked to answer that item. The number asked to answer an item is the number of unit-level respondents minus the number of respondents with a valid skip pattern. In addition to item response rate, total item response rate was calculated as the product of the overall unit response rate and the item response rate for each item. The purpose of these calculations is to assess the item non-response, which occurs when one or more survey items are left blank in an otherwise completed questionnaire. Tables B1.e and B1.s display the item and total item response rates for these surveys.

The OMB “Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys” Guideline 3.2.10 states an item non-response analysis should be conducted for items with an item response rate of less than 70%. Since none of the survey item response rates falls below 70% for Access or Servicing, an item-level analysis of non-response bias was not necessary. The Access item response rates range from 75% to 100% with a 97% average, while Servicing response rates range from 70% to 100% with a 98% average.

Table B1.e. Access Item and Total Item Response Rate¹¹

Question Number	Item Response Rate	Unit Response Rate
1	94%	5%
2	99%	5%
3	100%	5%
4	97%	5%
5	98%	5%
6a	100%	5%
6b	99%	5%
6c	99%	5%
6d	99%	5%
6e	95%	5%
6f	98%	5%
7	100%	5%

¹¹ Open capture question for additional comments about your experience and e-mail opt in questions display “N/A” and were not included in item and total item response rate calculations.

Table B1.e. Access Item and Total Item Response Rate (continued)

8	97%	5%
9	99%	5%
10	94%	5%
11	100%	5%
12	89%	4%
13	97%	5%
14	82%	4%
15	99%	5%
16	98%	5%
17	98%	5%
18	97%	5%
19	97%	5%
20	92%	5%
21a	99%	5%
21b	99%	5%
21c	96%	5%
21d	98%	5%
22	92%	5%
23	98%	5%
24a	92%	5%
24b	92%	5%
24c	83%	4%
24d	94%	5%
25	99%	5%
26	99%	5%
27	99%	5%
28	98%	5%
29	93%	5%
30	95%	5%
31	N/A	N/A
32	N/A	N/A
33	N/A	N/A
34	100%	5%
35	100%	5%
36	100%	5%
37	100%	5%
38	100%	5%
39	100%	5%
40	100%	5%
41	89%	4%

Table B1.e. Access Item and Total Item Response Rate (continued)

42	100%	5%
43	100%	5%
44	100%	5%
45	100%	5%
46	N/A	N/A
47	100%	5%
48	100%	5%
49	100%	5%
50	100%	5%
51	97%	5%
52	100%	5%
53	92%	5%
54	100%	5%
55	75%	4%
56	100%	5%
57	85%	4%
58	100%	5%
59	100%	5%
60	100%	5%
61	100%	5%
62	100%	5%
63	84%	4%
64	100%	5%
65	100%	5%
66	100%	5%
67	N/A	N/A

Table B1.s Servicing Item and Total Item Response Rate¹²


Question Number	Item Response Rate	Unit Response Rate
1	93%	5%
2	99%	6%
3	98%	6%
4	98%	6%
5a	99%	6%
5b	100%	6%
5c	99%	6%
5d	99%	6%
5e	97%	6%
5f	98%	6%
6	100%	6%
7	97%	6%
8	99%	6%
9	97%	6%
10	98%	6%
11	91%	5%
12	96%	6%
13	99%	6%
14	99%	6%
15	98%	6%
16	98%	6%
17a	99%	6%
17b	97%	6%
17c	97%	6%
17d	98%	6%
18	100%	6%
19	100%	6%
20	98%	6%
21	98%	6%
22	96%	6%
23	98%	6%
24	N/A	N/A
25	N/A	N/A
26	N/A	N/A

¹² Open capture questions for additional comments about your experience and items unclear in letter and email opt in questions display “N/A” and were not included in item and total item response rate calculations.

Table B1.s Servicing Item and Total Item Response Rate (Continued)

27	98%	6%
28	100%	6%
29	100%	6%
30	100%	6%
31	100%	6%
32	100%	6%
33	100%	6%
34	100%	6%
35	100%	6%
36	100%	6%
37	100%	6%
38	N/A	N/A
39	93%	5%
40	100%	6%
41	100%	6%
42	100%	6%
43	100%	6%
44	100%	6%
45	100%	6%
46	94%	6%
47	100%	6%
48	70%	4%
49	100%	6%
50	100%	6%
51	100%	6%
52	100%	6%
53	100%	6%
54	100%	6%
55	100%	6%
56	100%	6%
57	100%	6%
58	100%	6%
59	100%	6%
60	N/A	N/A

In the item response rate calculations above, JDP considered blanks as non-response for mail returns and “don’t know” selections in addition to blanks as non-response for online returns. “Don’t know” selections are included as non-response for online returns since respondents are forced to select a response in order to continue the online survey.



Similarly, “N/A” responses were also included as non-response for rating questions in online returns. For the online survey, respondents must answer each question before proceeding to the next question in the survey. “Not Applicable” or “N/A” could either mean that a respondent was answering “N/A” to the question or did not wish to answer it. Therefore, this response option was included as a non-response.

Appendix C

Study Overview

1.1 Study Background

The Voice of the Veteran Satisfaction Initiative tracks Veteran satisfaction with the benefits and services received from VBA. The Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Study provides ongoing survey research tracking for Veteran satisfaction with VBA’s lines of business: Compensation, Pension, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E), and Loan Guaranty (LGY).

As part of Executive Order 13571 Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service, agencies that provide significant services directly to the public to identify and survey customers, establish service standards and track performance against those standards, and benchmark customer service against the best in business. This program enables VBA to understand what is important to Veterans relative to benefits received and services provided. This program provides timely and actionable Veteran feedback on how well VBA is providing services. Insights from this program identify opportunities for improvement and measure the impact of improvement initiatives, as well as continuously measure performance outcomes.

The survey instrument measures Veteran satisfaction with enrollment and receipt of benefits issued by VBA. In FY15, fielding occurred continuously on a monthly basis for Access and annually for Servicing. Surveys remained open in field until the end of each quarter. If any surveys were received after a quarter closed field, then those returns were counted in the next quarter’s number of returns.

Survey	Methodology	Fielding Frequency	Total Mailouts Per Year	Target Number of Completes
Access	Mail and Online	Quarterly	16,000	4,800
Servicing	Mail and Online	Annually	10,000	3,000

1.2 Methodology

Respondents for both studies had the option of completing the survey on paper or online, and received two separate mailings. In the first mailing, a postcard was sent introducing the study to respondents, which included an online survey link and a unique access code login for the online survey. In the second mailing, respondents were sent a Survey Package, which included a cover letter with the online survey link and login, a paper survey, and a business reply envelope. The second survey is cleaned to exclude anyone who completed the survey at least one week prior to the second mailing.

Sample Population Definition

The targeted populations were identified by Education. For Access, the target population is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision on their application for education benefits within the past 90 days. This may include individuals who have been accepted into the program and have either enrolled or have yet to enroll at a school institution/training program.

For Servicing, the target population is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who are enrolled in a school institution/training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms during the past 9 months.

Sample File Generation

- Education generates the sample files based on the sampling definitions and submits sample files directly to BAS.
- BAS receives the sample files and sends to VADIR for processing.
- VADIR processes sample files (to remove SSN and append demographics/EDIPI) and returns to BAS.
- BAS transfers sample files (via EDX platform) to JDP and notifies JDP via email that sample files are ready for deployment.
- JDP cleans the sample file and selects the sample.
- Sample is transferred to Government Printing Office (GPO) print vendor (via EDX platform) for printing and mailing of the postcards and survey packages.



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- Sample is transferred in accordance with the following schedule:

1.3 Data Cleaning

JDP processed the sample according to the following cleaning rules:

1. Remove duplicate records within each business line and across surveys based on the unique identifier (EDI_PI or VA_ID) for each record. *Note: EDIPI is Electronic Data Interchange Personal Identifier.*
 - a) *Exception:* For Pension Access (v1) and Pension Servicing (v8), de-duplicate records based on EDI_PI and Claim Number.
 - b) When each new sample file is received, JDP cleans it against all sample selected from every sample batch that has been delivered 12 months prior to ensure a respondent does not receive a VA line of business survey more than once in a 12 month-period. In the case of duplicates occurring within the same sample month, priority is assigned to business lines with the lowest number of sample records.
2. Clean out records present on the JDP Do Not Contact list and clean against the National Change of Address (NCOA) list.
3. Clean out any respondents who do not have any EDI_PI or VA_ID included in their sample record.
 - a) *Exception:* For Pension Access (v1) and Pension Servicing (v8), clean out records with blank EDI_PI and Claim Number.
4. Clean out any respondents not specified as a dependent/spouse who have a date of death (DOD) in their sample record.
5. Clean out any respondents who do not have any address included in their sample record.
6. Assign and maintain unique sampling identifiers to each sample record in order to track history of sampling. Exclude records that have been sampled in the past twelve months to ensure no respondent is mailed surveys more than once in a 12-month period. This rule may not apply to those who completed a survey.

1.4 Order generation and fulfillment process

Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR 8.8) mandate government agencies solicit all printing requirements through the GPO. GPO utilizes print vendors to fulfill orders. A Data Transfer Agreement (DTA) must be in place with print vendor and contractor before BAS can obligate funds or transfer sample files to the print vendor and contractor.

Prior to mailing the postcards and mail surveys, print orders must be generated for each survey. The entire process may take up to 2-4 weeks from inception of the print order to the mailing of the survey package or postcard. Below are the steps involved in order generation and order fulfillment.

Order generation

- After sample is received by JDP, the sample files are cleaned and selected. Letter Work Orders (LWOs) are then created to provide the print vendor with the necessary information to match the sample files to the correct survey instrument. (1 day)
- JDP creates the print order and sends to BAS Contractor Officer's Representative (COR). (Same day as above step)
- The COR then reviews, authorizes, and submits the print order. (1 day)
- The BAS Publication Officer and/or COR submits the orders to the VA Publications Services Division (VAPSD). (Same day as above step)
- The order is issued a control number by a VBA Management Analyst, Publications. (Variable timing)
- Once the control number is assigned, the order goes to VA Publication Services Division liaison to forward to GPO Contracting Officer. (Variable timing) *Note: the amount of time an order is with VAPSD varies from 3 days up to 20 days.*
- The GPO Contracting Officer sends the printing and mailing order to the print vendor.

Order fulfillment

- Once the order is placed, the GPO print vendor is allotted 9 business days to fulfill the order (2 days to generate proofs, 2 days for proof review/correction, and 5 days to print and mail).
- Upon receipt of the proofs from print vendor, JDP reviews and approves; BAS then reviews and approves and, finally, VAPSD reviews and approves.
- The GPO Print Vendor then conducts the printing of the instruments and prepares to mail. The print vendor uses envelopes that were subcontracted.
- The GPO Print Vendor mails the postcards and/or survey packages.
- After the orders have been mailed, the print vendor provides the mail receipts to contractor, BAS and VAPSD.
- Upon order completion, VAPSD provides actual costs to BAS.

1.5 Reporting

Reporting occurs four times yearly for the Access Process survey.

On a quarterly basis, the following deliverables are provided:

- Scorecard

- Data Matrices
- Data (loaded to the VOV reporting site)
- Open-Ended Comments (verbatim)

On a semiannual (twice yearly) basis, the following deliverable is provided:

- Data and Analysis Presentation

Reporting occurs once annually for the Servicing Process survey.

On an annual basis, the following deliverables are provided:

- Scorecard
- Data Matrices
- Data (loaded to the VOV reporting site)
- Open-Ended Comments (verbatim)
- Data and Analysis Presentation

Sample Plan Overview

2.1 Sample Criteria

VBA was responsible for providing sample to JDP that meets the following sampling criteria:

Sample Population	Inclusion Criteria	Frequency of Data Request
Access Survey	For Access the target population includes Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision on their application for education benefits within the past 90 days. This may include individuals who have been accepted into the program and have either enrolled or have yet to enroll at a school institution/training program.	Quarterly
Servicing Survey	For Servicing the target population includes Veterans and beneficiaries who are enrolled in a school institution/training program and have been receiving benefit payments for at least two consecutive school terms during the past 9 months.	Annually

2.2 Fielding/Sampling Frequency

Survey Instrument	Methodology	Total Survey Instruments	Targeted Number of Completes	Number of Postcards (eSurvey)	Number of Mail Packages	Fielding Frequency
Access Survey	Mail and Online	16,000	4,800	16,000	16,000	Quarterly
Servicing Survey	Mail and Online	10,000	3,000	10,000	10,000	Annually

2.3 Data Transfer

The sample was posted by BAS once a month within the sampling folder on the VOV EDX site. Sample should be provided in a file layout consistent with the file layout provided for the study as outlined below.

Education File Layout
Address_1
Address_2
Award_End_Reason
BRANCH_OF_SERVICE
City
COEPending
CurrentEnrollmentStatus
DATE_OF_APPLICATION
Date_of_Birth
DATE_OF_DEATH
DateCOEIssued
DateofEnrollment
EDU_NAME_ADDRESS
Email_Address
First_Name
FirstBookStipend
FirstHousingAllowance
FirstOtherBenefit
FirstPayDate
Gender
Last_Name
LastBookStipend
LastHousingAllowance
LastOtherBenefit
LastPayDate
LATEST_END_PRODUCT
Master_Status
OriginalEndProduct
ProgramEnrolledIn
REGIONAL_OFFICE_CODE
SchoolDocumentReceived
SchoolEnrolledIn
State
TrainingTime
TransferofEntitlement
TypeofTraining

Education File Layout (Continued.)

Zip
ZIP_CODE
Master Record Status
TIMS Application
Payments Sent to Schools
Housing Allowance Sent to Claimant
Book Stipend Sent to Claimant
Benefit Sent to Claimant
eBenefits Account

2.4 Sample Cleaning Rules Glossary

Duplicate records in sample file – The record is cleaned out if there is more than one record within the same sample file for the same respondent

Duplicate record history – The record is cleaned out if the record has been selected within the past 12 months for any of VBA’s business line surveys (i.e., Compensation, Pension, Education, Home Loan Guaranty, and Vocational Rehabilitation) regardless of whether the respondent completed the survey

Invalid address – The record is cleaned out if JDP’s address verification software indicates an invalid address code

Invalid values – The record is cleaned out if the “VA_ID” field is blank

Blanks – The record is cleaned out if the “Name” field corresponding to the record is blank

Do not contact – The record is cleaned out if the individual is listed on JDP’s Do Not Contact list

2.5 Sample Selection

JDP selected sample records following the completion of the sample cleaning process. The following guidelines are referenced when selecting sample.

1. **Total Sampling Targets:** The table below summarizes the total sampling target per an RO per a fielding period. The “Sampling Target per RO” column indicates the minimum number of sample records that should be selected per an RO for each survey. If this minimum target number cannot be reached for a particular RO, sample from a different RO will be selected to make up the difference.

	Frequency	Total Sampling Target	Sampling Target Per Time Period	Sampling Target Per RO	Number of ROs
Access Survey	Quarterly	16,000	4,000	1,000	4
Servicing Survey	Annually	10,000	10,000	2,500	4

2. The same record cannot be selected for multiple surveys during the same wave. Respondents who have completed a survey within the past 12 months cannot be selected. Survey priority is based on the number of records in each sample file. The survey with the smallest number of records is given first priority.
3. Following sample selection, the JDP project teams receives an automated report confirming the number of records selected for each survey version. The JDP project team verifies that the sample selection quantities reflect the sample targets and approves the sample file for fielding.

2.6 Data Collection

During the survey fielding period, both online survey returns and paper surveys are collected as they are received and posted on a secure EDX site. Responses from paper surveys are scanned through automated imaging software while verbatim responses are recorded by a live survey processor. Survey returns must have all pages intact in order to be processed and counted as a return. Surveys with missing pages are counted as unusable. Returns are also considered unusable if there is an indication that the individual completing the survey is not the individual selected from the sample file (i.e., the respondent name and/or address on the survey is replaced with a different name and/or address). During each day of fielding, a subset of survey returns undergo quality assurance to validate the accuracy of responses captured. If duplicate surveys are returned (as identified by the unique sampling identifier assigned to each sample record), the original survey return is processed, and the duplicate survey is removed. In the case of duplicate survey returns from mixed methodology surveys, the date the survey was received is used to identify the original return while the subsequent return is removed post-fielding.

Appendix D

Approaches to Mitigating the Effect of Non-Response Bias and Strategies to Improve the Response Rate

The following section outlines two approaches used in FY15 to mitigate the potential of non-response bias. As mentioned earlier in this study, JDP affirms that while high response rates are always desirable in surveys, an 80% response rate is typically not achievable for a voluntary, customer-satisfaction survey instrument (Malhotra & Birks, 2007), particularly those that do not provide an incentive (not recommended for this program). To illustrate this point, the Dillman Method for survey fielding (Dillman, D. A. (2014)) discusses a survey instrument that was fielded to 600 students at the University of Washington. After five attempts to solicit a response in a university setting, as well as offering a monetary incentive to complete the survey, only a 77% response rate was garnered.

The first approach to minimize non-response occurs *before and during* data collection and involves introducing measures to maximize survey response rates. The second approach is to make statistical adjustments *after* the data is collected.

1.1 Approach 1: Strategies to Maximize Response Rates

Prior to, and during, fielding of the survey, JDP implemented the following measures to reduce the chances of non-response:

- Respondents were provided with the promise of confidentiality in the survey cover letter and postcard, and assured that their survey responses would not impact their current or future eligibility for benefits.
- Following the first mailing, non-respondents were sent an additional survey mailing.
- Respondents were provided with a toll-free telephone number and dedicated e-mail address to contact JDP about survey-related inquiries (e.g., how to interpret questions and response items, the purpose of the survey, how to get another copy of the survey if their copy had been lost/damaged, etc.). Telephone calls and emails were responded to within 24 hours and answered during regular business hours (8:00-5:00pm PT Monday-Friday).
- JDP ensured the Web-based surveys were accessible to individuals with disabilities by maintaining 508 compliant standards. These standards include:
 - Keyboard navigation rather than mouse or other pointing devices
 - Customization options for color, size, and style of text displayed

- Compatibility with screen-readers to translate items displayed on the survey in audible output and/or Braille displays
- Customer support and technical support through JDP Help Desk toll-free phone number and email address
- Exclusion of non-text elements, image maps, animation, flashing or blinking text
- The survey fielding period was extended to offer opportunities to respond for subgroups having a propensity to respond late (e.g., males, young, full-time employed)
- The survey was developed and reviewed in order to enhance respondent understanding of the survey materials and to improve the relevancy of the data collected:
 - Prior to fielding the Benchmark study, a series of cognitive labs was conducted with test users to ensure the survey questions were easily understood and correctly interpreted. Revisions were made to the survey based on test user feedback. (As per OMB Guideline 1.4.1)
 - After the Benchmark study and prior to fielding the first year of the Tracking study, Compensation Service and JDP conducted a review of the survey instruments and modified the surveys to improve the relevancy of data collected. (As per OMB Guideline 1.4.2)

1.2 Approach 2: Correcting Unit Non-response Bias with Sample Weighting and Survey Raking

As stated above, the two approaches to tackling non-response bias include implementing measures to maximize response rates during the fielding period and making post hoc statistical adjustments to the survey results afterward. The following section discusses the statistical adjustments approach, which include weighting the data or imputing scores to correct the amount of non-response bias. An example of this approach would be the survey raking procedure described earlier in this study. See the associated references in the “Survey Raking Procedure for Sample Weightings” section for more information.

The procedure known as raking adjusts a set of data so that its marginal totals match specified control totals on a specified set of variables. The term suggests an analogy with the process of smoothing the soil in a garden plot by alternately working it back and forth with a rake in two perpendicular directions (Izrael and Battaglia (2004)).

If non-response bias was identified in the survey data, the non-response bias could be corrected mathematically with a post-stratification survey weight. JDP would weigh the survey data based on certain demographics (such as age, gender, region) of the total sample so that the weighted survey data would conform more to the demographics of the total sample. The implicit assumption in this approach is the distributions of characteristics of the non-respondents within an adjustment class (such as an age group) are the same, on average, as those of the respondents within the same adjustment class.

See Appendix B for the item response rate for each question in the survey. If the item response rate was not lower than 70%, as per OMB standards, the imputation of data is not necessary.

In the case that a particular item-level response was less than 70%, JDP would recommend conducting additional analysis to determine the potential for other factors (i.e., missing or skip patterns in the survey instrument) to be the cause of non-response.

Strategies to Improve Response Rate

In addition to the strategies listed above, JDP recommends considering the following strategies to improve response rates going forward:

- Issue ongoing public communications (e.g., press releases, post information on the VA website) to spread awareness and confirm the legitimacy of the VA Education Study.
- Educate VA employees and VSOs about the survey to encourage participation. Provide a list of frequently asked questions and answers to VSOs and VA employees to equip them with the ability to answer respondents' questions regarding the survey.
- Send email invitations to respondents rather than mailing postcards to make it easier for them to complete the survey online.
- Reduce the length of the survey to improve respondents' willingness to respond
 - Reduce overall number of questions and number of response options for each question.
- To encourage participation, increase the number of contacts available to respondents, with additional reminders about the survey.
 - Provide respondents with an additional paper survey questionnaire.
- Reduce the frequency of mailings to reduce the opportunities for delays and errors in the GPO printing process.
- Revise the cover letter and postcard to express the importance of participation in the survey.

- Provide sample from the 30-day period immediately prior to the mailing rather than sample from 90 days prior to improve the recency of respondents' experience with the Education benefit (which improves both participation and recollection).
- Change the location of sequence number to directly follow survey link on postcard and cover letter.
- To increase participation, revise formatting on postcard and cover letter to include color print to make materials more readable.
- Revise the responsibility of sample generation from Education to PA&I. A data pull by PA&I will increase consistency.

Appendix E

Impact of FAR 8.8

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 8.8 requires that printing must be conducted through the Government Printing Office (GPO). The following section outlines limiting factors of the Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Study that occurred as a result of the FAR requirement.

Through the utilization of the GPO Print Vendor, the following occurred in FY15:

- Quality issues included:
 - Survey instruments were printed and mailed:
 - Utilizing the sample population from one survey, but receiving a different survey (e.g., potential respondents from the pool of one business line received the survey for a different business line)
 - Using a version of the instrument that was outdated; this version did not contain the current questions or responses that were being fielded
 - Mixing content between survey versions
 - Using shells from one survey printed with a different survey
- Ongoing timeliness delays occurred with each set of orders placed, as the order fulfillment process took a minimum of 2-4 weeks

1.1 Impact

The project experienced ongoing delays in the printing and mailing of postcards and survey packets for VBA's lines of business. The delays affected the critical processes required to execute the VOV Program to its fullest potential.

A multitude of quality issues were experienced throughout FY15 that negatively impacted the VOV Program response rates. The issues that occurred impacted: access to the online survey; readability of mail materials; level of effort required by respondents to take the survey; relevancy of survey; and the diminishment of brands (VA/JDP) associated with poor quality materials.

Appendix F

NOTE: Questionnaire is not shown in the formatted version that respondents used to fill out survey.

Survey Questionnaires

[DO NOT DISPLAY/IDENTIFY SECTION HEADERS. DISPLAY SINGLE QUESTION PER PAGE.]

[RESPONSE CODES APPEAR IN BRACKETS AT THE END OF EACH RESPONSE FOR SINGLE RESPONSES AND IN THE PROGRAMMING INSTRUCTIONS FOR MULTIPLE RESPONSES.]

Servicing Questionnaire

Benefit Information

1. How did you FIRST learn about the education benefit programs? (Mark only one) *If you are unsure, please indicate the first way you remember learning about the education benefit programs.* [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

[1]

[2]

- a. eBenefits.va.gov [3]
- b. benefits.va.gov/GIBill
- c. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) [12]
- d. Internet (excluding VA and social media sites) [15]
- e. Mail (from VA) [4]
- f. VA phone number (888-442-4551) [5]
- g. VA Representative [6]
- h. VA School Certifying Official
- i. VA medical center [9]
- j. VA Vet Center [10]
- k. In person at a Regional Office [11]
- l. Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefings [7]
- m. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [8]
- n. Other Veterans [14]
- o. Other Servicemembers
- p. Friends or family [16]
- [18]
- q. Military recruiter

- r. School recruiter
 - s. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]
 - t. Don't know or not sure [99]
2. What method(s) do you MOST FREQUENTLY use to obtain general information about VA's education benefits or services? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. eBenefits.va.gov
 - b. benefits.va.gov/GIBill
 - c. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - d. Phone
 - e. Mail
 - f. E-mail
 - g. In person at a Regional Office
 - h. VA Representative
 - i. VA School Certifying Official
 - j. VA medical center
 - k. VA Vet Center
 - l. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
 - m. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program
 - n. Friends or family
 - o. Other Servicemembers
 - p. Other Publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.)
 - q. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
 - r. Don't know or not sure [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]
 - s. None of the above [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]
3. How frequently would you like to receive communications (e.g., e-mails, letters, newsletters, etc.) from VA about education benefits or services? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS, SINGLE RESPONSE]
- a. Weekly [1]
 - b. Monthly [2]
 - c. Quarterly (every 3 months) [3]
 - d. Semiannually (twice per year) [4]
 - e. Annually (once per year) [5]
 - f. Never [6]
 - g. Don't know or not sure [99]

4. How would you like to receive information from VA about education benefits or services? **(Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES, MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. Phone
 - b. Mail
 - c. Email
 - d. eBenefits.va.gov
 - e. benefits.va.gov/GIBill
 - f. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - g. In person at a Regional Office
 - h. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - i. Other **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - j. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with Education, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. **[SHOW ON SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS]**

5. When thinking about your most frequently used methods of communication, please rate your experience obtaining information about your VA Education Benefits on the following items: **(Mark only one per row) [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND ATTRIBUTES/RESPONSES IN ROWS (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, ALTERNATE SHADES IN ROWS. SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW. RANDOMIZE ALL ATTRIBUTES EXCEPT THE LAST ONE.]**
- a. Ease of accessing information **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
 - b. Availability of information **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
 - c. Clarity of information **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
 - d. Usefulness of information **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
 - e. Frequency of information provided by VA **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
 - f. **Overall rating of information [1-10]**

Contact with VA

6. During the past 6 months, did you contact anyone from VA (not including a VA School Certifying Official) about your education benefit? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
 - b. No **[0]**

(Ask Q7-Q12 if Q6 is Yes, otherwise go to Q13)

7. Which of the following best describes the reason for your most recent contact? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
- a. Resolve a problem [1]
 - b. Ask a question [2]
 - c. Request a change to your records/provide information [3]
8. Can you briefly describe the nature of your most recent contact? **(Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. Change your address or direct deposit information
 - b. Report that you did not receive your monthly stipend or book allowance
 - c. Submit monthly verification of enrollment
 - d. Check on the status of your claim
 - e. Report a problem with a VA customer service representative
 - f. Ask a general question
 - g. Obtain information about submitting a claim
 - h. Question about a payment amount
 - i. Provide an expected graduation date
 - j. Report a change in school institution/program
 - k. Other **(Specify)** _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
9. Thinking about your most recent contact, how did you contact VA? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
- a. Phone [1]
 - b. Fax [8]
 - c. Website [6]
 - d. Email [7]
 - e. Mail [9]
 - f. In person [3]
 - g. Online Chat
10. Was your most recent issue resolved? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]

(Ask Q11 if Q10 is No, otherwise go to Q12)

11. Why wasn't your most recent issue resolved? **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**

- a. Did not receive all of the information required
- b. Received incorrect information
- c. Was referred to the incorrect office/person
- d. Waiting for follow-up from VA
- e. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
- f. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**

12. Thinking of your most recent contact with VA, how would you rate your overall customer service experience with VA or VA representatives, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average? **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.]**

Benefit Entitlement

13. What type of program are you currently using your education benefit for? **(Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**

- a. College/University
- b. NCD (Non-College Degree Programs)
- c. On-the-job and apprenticeship training
- d. Flight training
- e. Independent training
- f. Correspondence training
- g. National Testing Program
- h. Licensing and Certification Program
- i. Entrepreneurship training
- j. Work-Study Program
- k. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**

14. What is the format of the program you are currently enrolled in? (Mark only one)
[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Traditional (classes in classroom/school facility) [1]
- b. Online (classes on the Internet) [2]
- c. Mixed (classroom and online) [3]
- d. Not applicable

15. Has the stipend you received for books and supplies in the past two terms been incorrect/differed from what was communicated to you by VA? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. **Not applicable**
- d. Don't know or not sure [99]

16. Has the tuition payment you or your school received in the past two terms been incorrect/differed from what was communicated to you by VA? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. **Not applicable**
- d. Don't know or not sure [99]

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with Education, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. **[SHOW ON SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS]**

17. Please rate your education benefit payment on the following items: (Mark only one per row) **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND ATTRIBUTES/RESPONSES IN ROWS (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, ALTERNATE SHADES IN ROWS. SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW. RANDOMIZE ALL ATTRIBUTES EXCEPT THE LAST ONE.]**

- a. Amount of financial assistance **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
- b. Effectiveness of benefit in helping you achieve your educational or vocational goal **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
- c. Timeliness of receiving benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
- d. **Overall rating of benefit payment [1-10]**

Overall Experience with Benefit Program

18. Thinking about ALL aspects of your experience with your education benefits, please rate VA overall, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. (Mark only one) **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**

Overall Experience with VA

19. Taking into consideration all of the non-medical benefits (e.g., education, compensation, pension, home loan guaranty, vocational rehabilitation and employment, insurance, etc.) you have applied for or currently receive, please rate your experience with VA overall, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. (Mark only one) **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**
20. How likely are you to inform other Veterans and beneficiaries about your experience with VA benefits or services? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- Definitely will not **[1]**
 - Probably will not **[2]**
 - Probably will **[3]**
 - Definitely will **[4]**

School Marketing/Recruiter

21. How did the marketing materials or recruiter at the school/university you are enrolled at influence your decision to enroll in that program? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- Definitely did not influence my decision **[1]**
 - Somewhat influenced my decision **[2]**
 - Absolutely influenced my decision **[3]**

22. To what degree was your experience consistent with what was presented to you in any marketing materials or by a recruiter? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Not at all consistent [1]
- b. Somewhat consistent [2]
- c. Very consistent [3]

23. Was your experience with the program you enrolled in... (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Harder than you expected [1]
- b. What you expected [2]
- c. Easier than you expected [3]

24. Do you have any comments you would like to add regarding the marketing efforts or recruiter from the school/university you enrolled in? (Open Capture) [OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]

As a reminder, your responses will be kept completely confidential and your email address will not be sent to VA with any responses on this survey. [SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS.]

25. Would you like to provide an e-mail address so VA can contact you with general information about VA benefits and services? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. I do not have an email address [96]
- d. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q26 if Yes in Q25)

26. Please enter your preferred email address where you would like to be contacted: (Open Capture)

- a. Email: [TEXT BOX. 100 CHARACTER MAX.]

About You

Questions below will only be asked by respondents completing the online survey, these questions will not be included in the paper (mail) version. [DO NOT SHOW]

Please answer the following questions about the person who is receiving the education benefit (yourself or a dependent).

27. Are you a ... **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]** (Mark only one)
- a. Part-time student [1]
 - b. Full-time student [2]
 - c. Not currently enrolled [3]
 - d. Don't know or not sure [99]

(Ask Q28-46 if a or b, otherwise go to Q47)

28. (Online only) What is the format of the program you are enrolled in? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Traditional (classes in classroom/school facility)[1]
 - b. Online (classes on the Internet) [2]
 - c. Mixed (classroom and online) [3]

29. What type of degree/training program are you currently pursuing? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. On-the-job training or apprenticeship [1]
 - b. Certificate/license [2]
 - c. Associate degree [3]
 - d. Bachelor's degree [4]
 - e. Master's degree [5]
 - f. Doctorate [6]

30. What type of academic institution or training facility are you enrolled in? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. 2-year college (e.g., community college) [1]
 - b. 4-year college (e.g., university) [2]
 - c. Postgraduate program [3]
 - d. Technical or trade school [4]
 - e. Flight school [5]
 - f. Job training site [6]
 - g. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]** [97]

(Ask Q31 if enrolled in a 2-year college in Q30, otherwise go to Q32)

31. Do you plan on attending a 4-year college in the future? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- (Mark only one)
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to state [98]

32. Prior to the current program, what was the last year of school you completed?

(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. High school graduate or equivalent [1]
- b. Trade/technical school [2]
- c. Some college (2-year program) [3]
- d. Some college (4-year program) [4]
- e. 2-year college degree [5]
- f. 4-year college degree [6]
- g. Some graduate courses [7]
- h. Advanced degree (i.e., master's degree/Ph.D.) [8]
- i. Prefer not to answer [98]

33. **(Online only)** Why did you select your current school/training facility? **(Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**

- a. Lower tuition/program costs
- b. Good counselors
- c. Convenient location
- d. Easy initial application process
- e. Convenient course/program enrollment process
- f. Variety of course/training offerings
- g. Variety of available student support
- h. School specialization in subject of interest
- i. Reputation of school/training facility
- j. Reputation of instructors
- k. Past experience
- l. Recommendation from friends/relatives
- m. Availability of online classes
- n. Flexibility of course/training scheduling
- o. Financial aid
- p. Other **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**

34. When did you first enter into your current degree/training program? **(Open Capture)**

- a. Please enter the month and year: mm ____ yy _____ **[TWO NUMERICTEXT BOXES; ONE FOR MONTHS [ACCEPTABLE RANGE 1-12) AND ONE FOR TWO-DIGIT YEAR (ACCEPTABLE RANGE 00-99)]**
- b. Prefer not to answer **[CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**

35. How many years have you completed in your current degree/training program?
(Open Capture) If you have completed less than 1 year, enter 0.

- a. Number of years _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99]
- b. Prefer not to answer [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

36. Why did you select your current degree/training program? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Preparation for career
- b. Salary/wages in associated careers
- c. Status/esteem associated with type of degree/program
- d. Personal growth/development
- e. Interested in subject matter
- f. Number of course requirements
- g. Preparation for advanced degree
- h. Ease of completion requirements
- i. Reputation of instructors
- j. Recommendation from friends/relatives
- k. Availability of online classes
- l. Flexibility of course/training scheduling
- m. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]

37. Have you ever taken any time off from your current degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q38-39 if Q37 is yes, otherwise go to Q40)

38. Why did you take time off? (Open Capture) [OPEN END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAXIMUM. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]

39. How much time have you taken off from your current degree/training program? (Open Capture) Please respond using any or all of the following categories.

- a. Days (0-99 days) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- b. Months (0-99 months) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]

- c. Years (0-99 years) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- d. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

40. Have you been called to active duty at any point during your current degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q41 if Q40 is yes, otherwise go to Q42)

41. How long was your call to active duty? (Open Capture)
- a. Months (0-99 months) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
 - b. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

42. Have you ever been on academic probation or had less than satisfactory standing with your school/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to answer [98]

43. Do you plan to obtain a degree or completion certificate in your current field of study/training? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes, from the degree/training program at my current school/facility [1]
 - b. Yes, from a degree/training program at another school/facility [2]
 - c. No [0]
 - d. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q44-Q45 if Q43 is yes, otherwise go to Q46)

44. When do you expect to complete or graduate with a degree or completion certificate in your current field of study/training? (Open Capture)
- a. Please enter the month and year: mm _____ yy _____ [TWO NUMERIC TEXT BOXES; ONE FOR MONTHS [ACCEPTABLE RANGE 1-12] AND ONE FOR TWO-DIGIT YEAR (ACCEPTABLE RANGE 12-99)]
 - b. Prefer not to answer [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

45. Do you plan to continue your enrollment as a full-time student until you complete or graduate your degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to answer [98]

46. Which of the following services are available from your current school/training facility? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Academic counseling
- b. Tutoring
- c. Financial counseling
- d. Dependent care services (e.g., babysitting, elder care)
- e. Employment counseling
- f. Financial aid
- g. Technology assistance (e.g., Internet access, computer, etc.)
- h. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- i. Don't know [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]

47. What concerns, if any, do you have about achieving your educational goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Academic requirements
- b. Difficulty of subject matter
- c. Financial requirements
- d. Family obligations
- e. Employment obligations
- f. Course scheduling
- g. Time commitment (i.e., amount of time required)
- h. Availability of technology (e.g., access to internet/computer)
- i. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- j. Do not have concerns [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]

48. Which of the following services would you like or expect in order to achieve your educational goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Academic counseling
- b. Tutoring
- c. Financial counseling
- d. Dependent care services (e.g., babysitting, elder care)
- e. Employment counseling

- f. Financial aid
 - g. Technology assistance (e.g., Internet access, computer, etc.)
 - h. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
 - i. Don't know [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]
49. Are you... (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Married [1]
 - b. Single (never married) [2]
 - c. Widowed [3]
 - d. Divorced/separated [4]
 - e. Living with domestic partner [5]
 - f. Prefer not to answer [98]
50. How many children under the age of 18 live in your household? (Open Capture)
- a. Number of children (0-99) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
 - b. Prefer not to answer [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
51. What are your personal career goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Obtain financial security
 - b. Achieve work-life balance
 - c. Become an independent business owner
 - d. Become a manager
 - e. Become an executive
 - f. Work internationally
 - g. Contribute to society
 - h. Work in a specialized field (e.g., technology, medicine, etc.)
 - i. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
52. Are you currently employed? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to state [98]

(Ask Q53-54 if currently employed, otherwise go to Q55)

53. How many hours do you currently work in a typical week? (Open Capture)

- a. Hours (0-40 hours) _____ **[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-40.]**
 - b. Don't know or not sure **[CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
54. Are you currently employed in a field related to your current degree/training program? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
 - b. No **[0]**
 - c. Prefer not to answer **[98]**
55. Are you pursuing employment in your current field of study? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
 - b. No **[0]**
 - c. Prefer not to answer **[98]**

(Ask Q56 if Q55 is yes, otherwise go to Q57)

56. Upon completion of your current degree/training program, what will be your primary method of obtaining employment information? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. VA counselor **[1]**
 - b. Recommendations of friends/family **[2]**
 - c. Student career/employment center **[3]**
 - d. Local or state job services **[4]**
 - e. Federal job services **[5]**
 - f. Newspaper **[6]**
 - g. Online job site **[7]**
 - h. Private employment agency **[8]**
 - i. Other **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
 - j. Don't know **[99]**

57. Are you currently on active duty in the US Armed Forces? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
 - b. No **[0]**

(Ask Q58 if Q57 is yes, otherwise go to Q59)

58. What branch? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Air Force **[1]**
 - b. Army **[2]**

- c. Coast Guard [3]
- d. Marine Corps [4]
- e. Navy [5]

(Ask Q59 if Q57 is no, otherwise go to Q60)

59. When you left the military, what branch of service were you in? (Mark only one)

[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Air Force [1]
- b. Army [2]
- c. Coast Guard [3]
- d. Marine Corps [4]
- e. Navy [5]

60. Do you have any other comments or concerns about your experience? (Open Capture) [OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]

Access Questionnaire

Benefit Information

1. How did you FIRST learn about the education benefit programs? *(Mark only one)*
If you are unsure, please indicate the first way you remember learning about the education benefit program **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**

[1]

[2]

- a. eBenefits.va.gov [3]
 - b. benefits.va.gov/GIBill [19]
 - c. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - d. Internet (excluding VA and social media sites) [15]
 - e. Mail (from VA) [4]
 - f. VA phone number (888-442-4551) [5]
 - g. VA Representative [6]
 - h. VA School Certifying Official
 - i. VA medical center [9]
 - j. VA Vet Center [10]
 - k. In person at a Regional Office [11]
 - l. Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefings [7]
 - m. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]** [8]
 - n. Other Veterans [14]
 - o. Other Servicemembers
 - p. Friends or family [16]
- [17]
- q. Military recruiter
 - r. School recruiter
- [18]
- s. Other *(Specify)* _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]** [97]
 - t. Don't know or not sure [99]

2. What method(s) do you MOST FREQUENTLY use to obtain general information about VA's education benefits or services? *(Mark all that apply)* **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. eBenefits.va.gov
 - b. benefits.va.gov/GIBill

- c. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - d. Phone
 - e. Mail
 - f. Email
 - g. In person at a Regional Office
 - h. VA Representative
 - i. VA School Certifying Official
 - j. VA medical center
 - k. VA Vet Center
 - l. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) (Specify): _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - m. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program

 - n. Friends or family
 - o. Other Servicemembers
 - p. Other Publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.)
 - q. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - r. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
 - s. None of the above **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
3. How did the VA provide you information about the application process for your most recent education benefit application? (Mark all that apply) **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefings
 - b. Phone
 - c. Mail
 - d. Email
 - e. Pamphlets/brochures
 - f. eBenefits.va.gov
 - g. benefits.va.gov/GIBill
 - h. VA medical center
 - i. In person at a Regional Office
 - j. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.)(Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - k. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program
 - l. VA School Certifying Official
 - m. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**

- n. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
 - o. Did not receive information about application process **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
4. How frequently would you like to receive communications (e.g., emails, letters, newsletters, etc.) from VA about education benefits or services? **(Mark only one)**
[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Weekly **[1]**
 - b. Monthly **[2]**
 - c. Quarterly (every 3 months) **[3]**
 - d. Semiannually (twice per year) **[4]**
 - e. Annually (once per year) **[5]**
 - f. Never **[6]**
 - g. Don't know or not sure **[99]**
5. How would you like to receive information from VA about applying for education benefits or services? **(Mark all that apply)** **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. Phone
 - b. Mail
 - c. Email
 - d. VA website
 - e. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - f. In person at a Regional Office
 - g. Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH etc.) **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - h. Other **(Specify)** _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - i. Don't know or not sure

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with VA Education Benefits, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. **[SHOW ON SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS]**

6. When thinking about your most frequently used methods of communication, please rate your experience in obtaining information about your education benefit application on the following items: **(Mark only one per row)** **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND ATTRIBUTES/RESPONSES IN ROWS (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED]**

RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, ALTERNATE SHADES IN ROWS. SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW. RANDOMIZE ALL ATTRIBUTES EXCEPT THE LAST ONE.]

- a. Ease of accessing information [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- b. Availability of information [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- c. Clarity of information [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- d. Usefulness of information [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- e. Frequency of information provided by VA [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- f. Overall rating of information [1-10]

Contact with VA

7. During the past 6 months, did you contact anyone from VA (not including a VA School Certifying Official) about the education benefit application process? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]

(Ask Q8-Q13 if Q7 is yes, otherwise go to Q14)

8. Which of the following best describes the reason for your most recent contact? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Resolve a problem [1]
 - b. Ask a question [2]
 - c. Request a change to your records/provide information [3]
9. Can you briefly describe the nature of your most recent contact? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Change your address or direct deposit information
 - b. Report that you did not receive your monthly stipend or book allowance
 - c. Submit monthly verification of enrollment
 - d. Check on the status of your claim
 - e. Report a problem with a VA customer service representative
 - f. Ask a general question
 - g. Obtain information about submitting a claim
 - h. Question about a payment amount
 - i. Provide an expected graduation date
 - j. Report a change in school institution/program
 - k. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]

10. Thinking about your most recent contact, how did you contact VA? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Phone [1]
- b. Fax [8]
- c. Website [6]
- d. Email [7]
- e. Mail [9]
- f. In person [3]
- g. Online Chat

11. Was your most recent issue resolved? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]

(Ask Q12 if Q11 is No, otherwise go to Q13)

12. Why wasn't your most recent issue resolved? [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Did not receive all of the information required
- b. Received incorrect information
- c. Was referred to the incorrect office/person
- d. Waiting for follow-up from VA
- e. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- f. Don't know or not sure [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]

13. Thinking of your most recent contact with the VA, how would you rate your overall customer service experience with the VA or VA representatives, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [0-10]

14. Relative to your separation from active duty, when did you begin to think about or plan the use of your education benefit? *(Open Capture) Please respond using one of the following categories.* **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Prior to separation (Specify months: 0-24 months) _____
[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-24.] [1]
 - b. After separation (Specify months: 0-24 months) _____
[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-24.] [2]
 - c. After separation (Specify years: 2 -10 years) _____ **[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 2-10.] [3]**
 - d. Don't know or not sure **[99]**
15. Thinking about your most recent application for education benefits, which of the following benefits were you applying for? *(Mark all that apply)* **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
- a. Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33 of Title 38, U.S. Code)
 - b. Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (Chapter 30 of Title 38, U.S. Code)
 - c. Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606 of Title 10, U.S. Code)
 - d. Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 1607 of Title 10, U.S. Code)
 - e. National Call to Service Program (Section 510 of Chapter 31 of Title 10, U.S. Code)
 - f. Other *(Specify)* _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
 - g. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
16. For your most recent application, did someone from VA (e.g., call center representative, office staff, etc.) provide you with information about the education benefit application process? *(Mark only one)* **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
 - b. No **[0]**
 - c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**
 - d. Not applicable **[96]**
17. Thinking about your most recent education benefit application, what method did you use to apply for your benefit? *(Mark only one)* **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Veterans Online Application **[1]**

- b. Mail [2]
- c. In person at a Regional Office [3]
- d. In person at a Veterans Service Organization (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [4]
- e. In person at school through a certifying official [5]
- f. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]
- g. Don't know or not sure [99]

18. Prior to receiving this survey, were you aware that your school's certifying official is not an employee of the VA? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- Don't know or not sure [99]

19. Did VA confirm receipt of your application? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Don't know or not sure [99]

20. From the time you submitted your application, how long did it take to receive a letter explaining your eligibility for education benefits? (Open Capture) Please respond using any or all of the following categories

- a. Days (0-99 days) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- b. Months (0-99 months) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- c. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with education benefits, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. [SHOW ON SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS]

21. Please rate your experience with the education benefit application process on the following items: (Mark only one per row) [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND ATTRIBUTES/RESPONSES IN ROWS (SEE JCPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF

LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, ALTERNATE SHADES IN ROWS. SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW. RANDOMIZE ALL ATTRIBUTES EXCEPT THE LAST ONE.]

- a. Ease of completing the application [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- b. Timeliness of eligibility notification [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- c. Flexibility of application methods [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
- d. Overall rating of application process [1-10]

Benefit Entitlement

22. Are you eligible to transfer your benefits to a spouse and/or dependent child? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Don't know or not sure [99]

(Ask Q23 if Q22 is yes, otherwise go to Q24)

23. Have you already or do you intend to transfer your benefits to a spouse and/or dependent child? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Don't know or not sure [99]

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with the Education program, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. [SHOW ON SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS]

24. Please rate your education benefit entitlement on the following items: (Mark only one per row) [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND ATTRIBUTES/RESPONSES IN ROWS (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, ALTERNATE SHADES IN ROWS. SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW. RANDOMIZE ALL ATTRIBUTES EXCEPT THE LAST ONE.]
- a. Amount of financial assistance [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]
 - b. Effectiveness of benefit in helping you achieve your educational or vocational goal [ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]

- c. Timeliness of receiving benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
- d. **Overall rating of benefit payment [1-10]**

Overall Application Experience

25. Thinking about ALL aspects of your application experience applying for your education benefits, please rate VA overall, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. **(Mark only one) [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**

Overall Experience with VA

26. Taking into consideration all of the non-medical benefits (e.g., education, compensation, pension, home loan guaranty, vocational rehabilitation and employment, insurance, etc.) you have applied for or currently receive, please rate your experience with VA overall, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average. **(Mark only one) [SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDPA CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**

27. How likely are you to inform other Veterans or beneficiaries about your experience with VA benefits or services? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Definitely will not **[1]**
 - b. Probably will not **[2]**
 - c. Probably will **[3]**
 - d. Definitely will **[4]**

School Marketing/Recruiter

28. How did the marketing materials or recruiter at the school/university in which you are enrolled influence your decision to enroll in that program? **(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**

- a. Definitely did not influence my decision [1]
 - b. Somewhat influenced my decision [2]
 - c. Absolutely influenced my decision [3]
29. To what degree was your experience consistent with what was presented to you in any marketing materials or by a recruiter? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Not at all consistent [1]
 - b. Somewhat consistent [2]
 - c. Very consistent [3]
30. Was your experience with the program you enrolled in... (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Harder than you expected [1]
 - b. What you expected [2]
 - c. Easier than you expected [3]
31. Do you have any comments you would like to add regarding the marketing efforts or recruiter from the school/university you enrolled in? (Open Capture) [OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]

As a reminder, your responses will be kept completely confidential and your email address will not be sent to VA with any responses on this survey. [SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS.]

32. Would you like to provide an email address so VA can contact you with general information about VA benefits and services? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. I do not have an email address [96]
 - d. Prefer not to answer [99]

(Ask Q33 if Yes in Q32)

33. Please enter your preferred email address where you would like to be contacted: (Open Capture)
- a. Email: [TEXT BOX. 100 CHARACTER MAX.]

About You

Questions below will only be asked by respondents completing the online survey, these questions will not be included in the paper (mail) version. **[DO NOT SHOW]**

Please answer the following questions about the person who is receiving the education benefit (yourself or a dependent).

34. Are you a ... (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- e. Part-time student [1]
 - f. Full-time student [2]
 - g. Not currently enrolled [96]
 - h. Don't know or not sure [99]

(Ask Q35-53 if Q34 is a or b, otherwise go to Q54)

35. What is the format of the program you are enrolled in? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Traditional (classes in classroom/school facility) [1]
 - b. Online (classes on the Internet) [2]
 - c. Mixed (classroom and online) [3]

36. What type of degree/training program are you currently pursuing? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. On-the-job training or apprenticeship [1]
 - b. Certificate/license [2]
 - c. Associate degree [3]
 - d. Bachelor's degree [4]
 - e. Master's degree [5]
 - f. Doctorate [6]

37. What type of academic institution or training facility are you enrolled in? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. 2-year college (e.g., community college) [1]
 - b. 4-year college (e.g., university) [2]
 - c. Postgraduate program [3]
 - d. Technical or trade school [4]
 - e. Flight school [5]
 - f. Job training site [6]
 - g. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]** [97]

(Ask Q38 if enrolled in a 2-year college in Q37, otherwise go to Q39)

38. Do you plan on attending a 4-year college in the future? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes [1]

- b. No [0]
- c. Not Sure/Prefer not to state [98]

39. Prior to the current program, what was the last year of school you completed?

(Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. High school graduate or equivalent [1]
 - b. Trade/technical school [2]
 - c. Some college (2-year program) [3]
 - d. Some college (4-year program) [4]
 - e. 2-year college degree [5]
 - f. 4-year college degree [6]
 - g. Some graduate courses [7]
 - h. Advanced degree [8]
 - i. Prefer not to answer [98]
40. Why did you select your current school/training facility? (Mark all that apply)
[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Lower tuition/program costs
 - b. Good counselors
 - c. Convenient location
 - d. Easy initial application process
 - e. Convenient course/program enrollment process
 - f. Variety of course/training offerings
 - g. Variety of available student support
 - h. School specialization in subject of interest
 - i. Reputation of school/training facility
 - j. Reputation of instructors
 - k. Past experience
 - l. Recommendation from friends/relatives
 - m. Availability of online classes
 - n. Flexibility of course/training scheduling
 - o. Financial aid
 - p. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
41. When did you first enter into your current degree/training program? (Open Capture)
- a. Please enter the month and year: mm _____ yy _____ [TWO NUMERICTEXT BOXES; ONE FOR MONTHS [ACCEPTABLE RANGE 1-12] AND ONE FOR TWO-DIGIT YEAR (ACCEPTABLE RANGE 00-99)]

- b. Prefer not to answer **[CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
42. How many years have you completed in your current degree/training program?
(Open Capture) If you have completed less than 1 year, enter 0.
- a. Number of years _____ **[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99]**
- b. Prefer not to answer **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
43. Why did you select your current degree/training program? *(Mark all that apply)*
[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Preparation for career
- b. Salary/wages in associated careers
- c. Status/esteem associated with type of degree/program
- d. Personal growth/development
- e. Interested in subject matter
- f. Number of course requirements
- g. Preparation for advanced degree
- h. Ease of completion requirements
- i. Reputation of instructors
- j. Recommendation from friends/relatives
- k. Availability of online classes
- l. Flexibility of course/training scheduling
- m. Other *(Specify)* _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
44. Have you ever taken any time off from your current degree/training program?
(Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
- a. Yes **[1]**
- b. No **[0]**
- c. Prefer not to answer **[98]**

(Ask Q45-46 if Q44 is yes, otherwise go to Q47)

45. How much time have you taken off from your current degree/training program?
(Open Capture) Please respond using any or all of the following categories
- a. Days (0-99 days) _____ **[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]**
- b. Months (0-99 months) _____ **[NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]**

- c. Years (0-99 years) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- d. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOXES. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

46. Why did you take time off? (Open Capture) [OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]

47. Have you been called to active duty at any point during your current degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q48 if Q47 is yes, otherwise go to Q49)

48. How long was your call to active duty? (Open Capture)
- a. Months (0-99 months) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
 - b. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOXES. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

49. Have you ever been on academic probation or had less than satisfactory standing with your school/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
 - b. No [0]
 - c. Prefer not to answer [98]

50. Do you plan to obtain a degree or completion certificate in your current field of study/training? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes, from the degree/training program at my current school/facility [1]
 - b. Yes, from a degree/training program at another school/facility [2]
 - c. No [0]
 - d. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q51-Q52 if Q50 is yes, otherwise go to Q53)

51. When do you expect to complete or graduate with a degree or completion certificate in your current field of study/training? (Open Capture)

- a. Please enter the month and year: mm _____ yy _____ [TWO NUMERIC TEXT BOXES; ONE FOR MONTHS [ACCEPTABLE RANGE 1-12) AND ONE FOR TWO-DIGIT YEAR (ACCEPTABLE RANGE 12-99)]
- b. Prefer not to answer [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED].
52. Do you plan to continue your enrollment as a full-time student until you complete or graduate your degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to answer [98]
53. Which of the following services are available from your current school/training facility? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Academic counseling
- b. Tutoring
- c. Financial counseling
- d. Dependent care services (e.g., babysitting, elder care)
- e. Employment counseling
- f. Financial aid
- g. Technology assistance (e.g., internet access, computer, etc.)
- h. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- i. Don't know [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]
54. What concerns, if any, do you have about achieving your educational goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]
- a. Academic requirements
- b. Difficulty of subject matter
- c. Financial requirements
- d. Family obligations
- e. Employment obligations
- f. Course scheduling
- g. Time commitment (i.e., amount of time required)
- h. Availability of technology (e.g., access to internet/computer)
- i. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- j. Do not have concerns [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]

55. Which of the following services would you like or expect in order to achieve your educational goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Academic counseling
- b. Tutoring
- c. Financial counseling
- d. Dependent care services (e.g., babysitting, elder care)
- e. Employment counseling
- f. Financial aid
- g. Technology assistance (e.g., internet access, computer, etc.)
- h. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]
- i. Don't know [MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]

56. Are you... (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Married [1]
- b. Single (never married) [2]
- c. Widowed [3]
- d. Divorced/separated [4]
- e. Living with domestic partner [5]
- f. Prefer not to answer [98]

57. How many children under the age of 18 live in your household? (Open Capture)

- a. Number of children (0-99) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-99.]
- b. Prefer not to answer [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED].

58. What are your personal career goals? (Mark all that apply) [CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]

- a. Obtain financial security
- b. Achieve work-life balance
- c. Become an independent business owner
- d. Become a manager
- e. Become an executive
- f. Work internationally
- g. Contribute to society
- h. Work in a specialized field (e.g., technology, medicine, etc.)
- i. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]

59. Are you currently employed? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to state [98]

(Ask Q60 if Q61 Yes, otherwise go to Q62)

60. How many hours do you currently work in a typical week? (Open Capture)

- a. Hours (0-40 hours) _____ [NUMERIC TEXT BOX. ACCEPTABLE RANGE 0-40.]
- b. Don't know or not sure [CHECK BOX. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.] [CODE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED].

61. Are you currently employed in a field related to your current degree/training program? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to answer [98]

62. Are you pursuing employment in your current field of study? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]
- c. Prefer not to answer [98]

(Ask Q63 if Q62 is yes, otherwise go to Q64)

63. Upon completion of your current degree/training program, what will be your primary method of obtaining employment information? [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. VA counselor [1]
- b. Recommendations of friends/family [2]
- c. Student career/employment center [3]
- d. Local or state job services [4]
- e. Federal job services [5]
- f. Newspaper [6]
- g. Online job site [7]
- h. Private employment agency [8]
- i. Other (Specify) _____ [TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]
- j. Don't know [99]

64. Are you currently on active-duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]

- a. Yes [1]
- b. No [0]

(Ask Q65 if Q64 is yes, otherwise go to Q66)

65. What branch? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Air Force [1]
 - b. Army [2]
 - c. Coast Guard [3]
 - d. Marine Corps [4]
 - e. Navy [5]

(Ask Q66 if Q64 is no, otherwise go to Q67)

66. When you left the military, what branch of service were you in? (Mark only one) [RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]
- a. Air Force [1]
 - b. Army [2]
 - c. Coast Guard [3]
 - d. Marine Corps [4]
 - e. Navy [5]

67. Do you have any other comments or concerns about your experience? (Open Capture) [OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTER MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED]
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Appendix H

List of Acronyms

AAPOR	American Association for Public Opinion Research
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BAS	Benefits Assistance Service
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
BRE	Business Reply Envelope
CAPS	Centralized Account Processing System
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DTA	Data Transfer Agreement
EDIPI	Electronic Data Interchange Personal Identifier
EDX	Enterprise Data Exchange
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulations
FY	Fiscal Year
GPO	Government Printing Office
ICR	Information Collection Request
JDP	J.D. Power
LGY	Loan Guaranty Service
LWO	Letter Work Order
MAR	Missing At Random
MCAR	Missing Completely At Random
MCMC	Markov chain Monte Carlo algorithm
MNAR	Missing Not At Random
NPC	NPC, Inc. Integrated Print and Digital Solutions
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSAT	Overall Satisfaction Index
RO	Regional Office
SSN	Social Security Number
US	United States
USA	United States of America
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VADIR	VA DoD Identity Repository
VAPSD	VA Publications Services Division
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VOV	Voice of the Veteran
VR&E	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service
VSO	Veterans Service Organizations