Voice of the Veteran Line of Business Tracking Study
Pension Service

Fiscal Year 2015 Non-Response Bias Analysis

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Voice of the Veteran (VOV) Line of Business Tracking Satisfaction Research 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, two surveys were fielded in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) Pension Service. One survey was based on the access to the benefit and the other on the ongoing servicing of the benefit. The Access survey yielded a response rate of 26.31% (increase of 2.16% from FY14) and the Servicing survey yielded a response rate of 18.49% (decrease of 2.56% from FY14). These rates were 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 Pension Service's survey results for FY15.

The initial 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.

The analysis performed was done in consultation with Dr. Don Dillman, 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. More detail is provided in section 3.2, Missing Data Patterns and Mechanisms.

After adjusting for non-response bias in age, race, census region, and service era, the statistical tests performed on the survey responses for the Pension Service surveys collected illustrate that no differences were found in the Servicing Overall Satisfaction Index Score and Advocacy ratings (likelihood to inform others about VA benefits).

The sample for the Access population was defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for Pension benefits within the past 30 days. The Access Overall Satisfaction Index Score (652) and Advocacy ratings (likelihood to inform about VA benefits (Mail 3.41, on a rating scale of 1-4 points) are not impacted in any meaningful way by non-response bias.

The sample for the Servicing population was defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who have been receiving pension benefits for at least 6 months. The Servicing Overall Satisfaction Index score (716) and Advocacy ratings (likelihood to inform about VA benefits (Mail 3.37, also on a scale of 1-4 points) are not impacted in any meaningful way by non-response bias.

This analysis confirms that the data collected during Fiscal Year 2015 is valid for use by VBA.

Introduction

In an effort to achieve the highest possible level of 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:

- Reinstate 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

The VOV Line of Business Tracking Satisfaction Research 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 Pension program. The purpose of the Access and Servicing process surveys was to identify the factors critical to Veteran satisfaction with the access 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 Pension Service, 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. This study was fielded in FY14 and the FY15 fielding will be the third iteration.

Methodology

2.1 J.D. Power Index Model

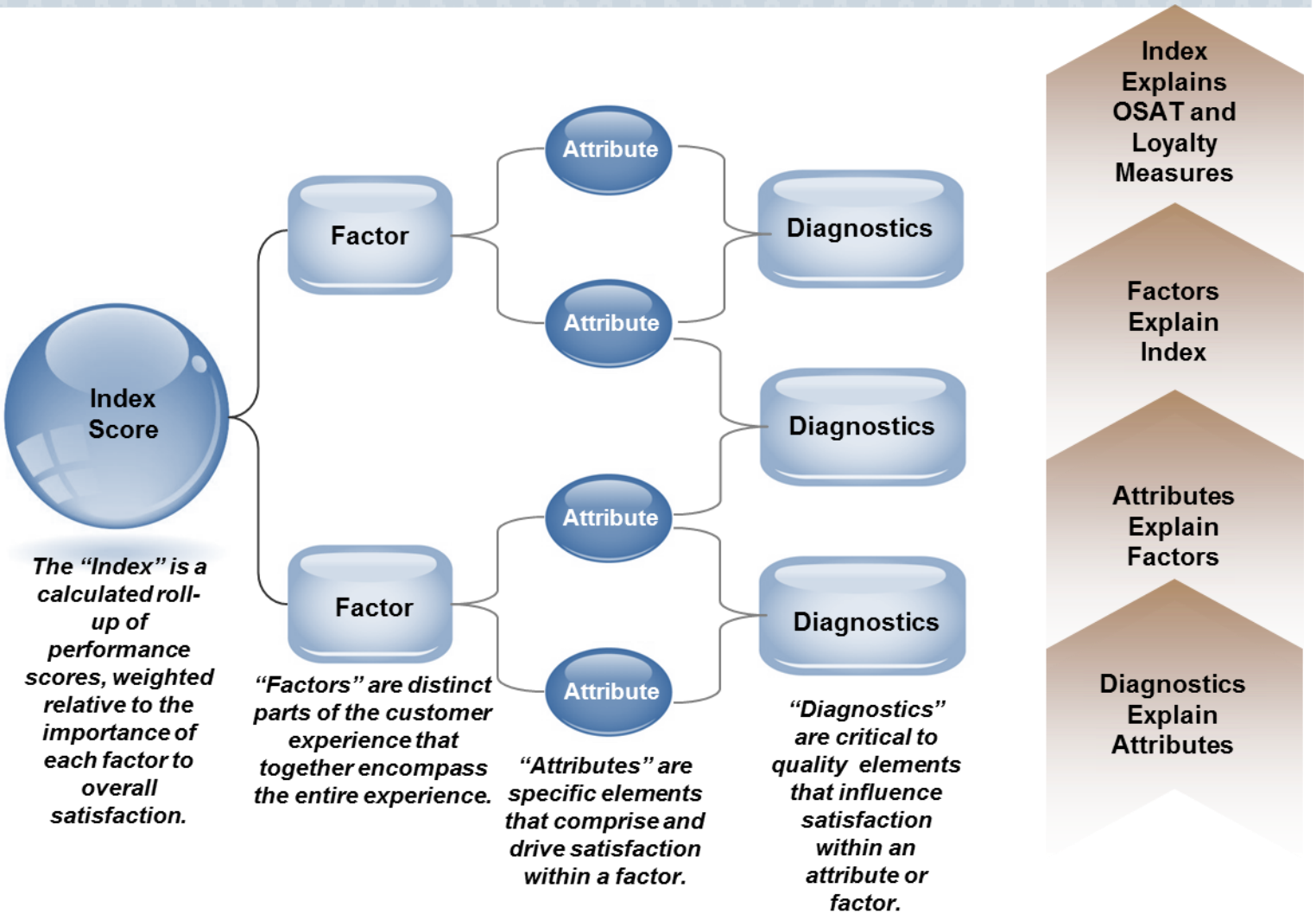
J.D. Power defines customer satisfaction as a measure of how well product or service experiences fit the expectations of customers. All JDP index models assume a two-tiered regression model involving factors and attributes. Each customer experience is influenced by several factors (i.e., first tier), 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 are 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 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, which are rescaled so that they add up to 1 point. Thus, the percentage of the total explained variation in the Overall Satisfaction rating 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 points 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.



Pension Access and Servicing Process Index Weights

In working with Pension's subject matter experts and leadership, the design of its survey encompasses the factors and attributes as outlined in the tables on the next page. The factors (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

Access Index Model Weights	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	18.85%
Contact with VA	11.00%
Benefit Application	28.31%
Clarity of Info on Appeal	2.46%
Benefit Entitlement	39.38%

Table 2.2. Servicing: Index Model Weights

Access Weights by Attribute	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	
Ease of accessing information	3.61%
Availability of information	2.25%
Clarity of information	3.30%
Usefulness of information	4.18%
Frequency of information	5.51%
Benefit Application	
Ease of completing the application	8.37%
Timeliness of eligibility notification	11.63%
Flexibility of application methods	8.31%
Contact with VA	11.00%
Clarity of Info on Appeal	2.46%
Benefit Entitlement (Timeliness of receiving benefit)	39.38%

Table 2.2. Servicing: Index Model Weights

Servicing Index Model Weights	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	26.46%
Contact with VA	10.76%
Benefit Entitlement	62.78%

Table 2.3. Servicing: Weights by Attribute

Servicing Weights by Attribute	
	Effective Weight
Benefit Information	
Ease of accessing information	5.58%
Availability of information	2.99%
Clarity of information	4.52%
Usefulness of information	5.44%
Frequency of information	7.92%
Contact with VA	10.76%
Benefit Entitlement (Timeliness of receiving benefit)	62.78%

2.2 Sampling

The Access survey is fielded to Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for pension benefits within the past 30 days. These individuals may include those who were found ineligible on a new claim and those who have been denied and are not appealing the decision. The Servicing survey was fielded to Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision or are receiving benefit payments.

J.D. Power mailed approximately 10,000 surveys for the Access survey and 10,000 for the Servicing survey to Veterans (and surviving spouses) across the nation in FY15. The target number of completed surveys was 3,000 each for both the Access and Servicing surveys. The actual number of completed surveys received for Access was 2,987 and for Servicing was 2,164.

The samples used in this study were provided by the Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity (PA&I) on behalf of Pension and delivered to JDP on a monthly basis. They represent a random sample from the available records provided in the sample file. See Appendix D, Sample Plan Overview for further detail on sampling.

Survey Instrument	Methodology	Fielding Frequency	Total Mail-outs in FY15
Access	Mail Only	Monthly	10,000
Servicing	Mail Only	Annually	10,000

2.3 Data Collection

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

Respondents who completed each survey on paper received two separate mailings:

- 1st Mailing: Survey Package, which included a cover letter introducing the study to the respondent, a paper survey, and a business reply envelope

- 2nd Mailing: Survey Package, which included a cover letter, a paper survey, and a business reply envelope

Each time the surveys were deployed, the survey packages were subject to a proof approval process that utilized three levels of approvals by J.D. Power, Benefits Assistance Service (BAS), and VA Publications Services Division (VAPSD). After the print vendor mailed the 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 by 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 the 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 Pension Access survey had an overall unit response rate of approximately 26% and the Voice of the Veteran Pension Servicing survey had an overall unit response rate of 18% in FY 2015, 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, J.D. Power 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 (which was discussed in Dillman, D. A. (2014, pp. 22), detailing the efforts to attain an 80% response rate.

A survey instrument was fielded to600 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, they failed to achieve the 80% response rate garnering 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 USA census regions (Midwest, Northeast, South, and West) in order to aggregate the data and enhance regional comparisons.

J.D. Power research indicates that there is an absence of systematic statistical differences of respondents' overall satisfaction on 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, p. 2, for a review) and (b) that older respondents tend to respond by mail more often than online.

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.

The VA pension surveys for Access and Servicing were conducted by mail only. Therefore a comparison of mail vs. online methodology is not needed for these divisions.

For the Pension Access survey, there were considerable missing values (50% - 80%) for demographics values. As a consequence, JDP was only able to use those demographics where there were enough non-missing values to make legitimate statistical comparisons. Gender, Region, and Age Generation were used for an analysis of demographic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents.

For the Access sample, *no* significant gender differences were found between survey respondents and non-respondents.

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

Gender by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Female	49	48	49
Male	51	52	52

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.3598	0.5486

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 younger Veterans completed the survey. While the ages of respondents in each generational group are shown in this study by current age ranges, JDP further clarifies age by birth year, thus Pre-Boomer includes individuals born prior to 1946; Boomer is born 1946-1964; Generations X, Y and Z are born 1964-2004.

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

Age Generation by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Baby-Boomer (ages 50-68)	24	23	23
Generations XYZ (ages 18-49)	4	5	5
Pre-Boomer (ages 69+)	73	71	72

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	10.92	<.004

For the Access survey, significant differences were found with the population based on geographical census region such that there were more survey respondents from the Midwest and fewer from the South region:

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

U.S. Census Region by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Midwest	26	23	24
Northeast	11	10	11
South	41	45	44
West	22	22	22

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	16.56	<.001

For the Pension Servicing sample, there were also some missing values for demographics in the dataset–especially for race (87% missing). As a consequence, JDP was only able to use those demographics where there were enough non-missing values to make legitimate statistical comparisons. Gender, Age Generation, Region, Branch of Service, Service Discharge, Award Level, Benefit Type, and War Period were used for an analysis of demographic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents.

For the Pension Servicing sample, differences in Gender approached significance, as shown in Table 3a.s at probability of .097 such that there were more female respondents than non-respondents.

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

Gender by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	**Non-Respondents**	**Total**
Female	39	37	37
Male	61	63	63

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	2.75	.097

For the Servicing sample, age generation differences also approached significance at probability of .094 such that there were more baby-boomer respondents than non-respondents:

Table 3b.s. Access: Comparing Age Generation for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Age Generation by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	**Non-Respondents**	**Total**
Baby-Boomer (ages 50-68)	34	33	33
Generations XYZ (ages 18-49)	3	4	4
Pre-Boomer (ages 69+)	63	63	63

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	4.72	.094

For the Servicing survey, significant differences were found with the population based on geographical census region such that there were more survey respondents from the West and Midwest and fewer from the South region:

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

U.S. Census Region by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	**Non-Respondents**	**Total**
Midwest	30	28	29
Northeast	16	17	17
South	30	32	32
West	25	22	23

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	9.44	0.024

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

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

Military Service Branch by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Air Force	9	9	9
Army	58	60	60
Marines	8	8	8
Navy	24	21	21
Other	2	2	2

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	6.17	.187

For the Servicing survey, significant differences were found in Service Discharge with fewer surveys returned by Veterans who were discharged under "other than honorable" conditions:

Table 3e.s. Servicing: Comparing Service Discharge for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Service Discharge by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Honorable	98	95	96
Other	2	5	4

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	20.12	<.0001

For the Servicing sample, significant differences were found with the population based on Benefit Award. More surveys were completed by Veterans who receive a $1,001-$1,500 benefit and fewer by Veterans receiving $1,000 or less:

Table 3f.s. Servicing: Comparing Benefit Award for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Benefit Award by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
$1,000 or less	57	61	60
$1,001-$1,500	40	36	37
$1,501 or more	3	3	3

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	10.01	<.0007

For the Servicing survey, *no* differences were found in Benefit Type between Respondents and Non-Respondents:

Table 3g.s. Servicing: Comparing Benefit Type for Respondents and Non-Respondents

Benefit Type by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Death Pension	40	42	41
Pension	60	58	59

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	1.00	.316

For the Servicing sample, a Chi-square test showed war period differences such that a larger number of Vietnam Veterans and a fewer number of World War I and World War II Veterans completed the Servicing survey:

Table 3h.s. Servicing: Comparing War Period for Respondents and Non-Respondents

War Period by Respondent Type (%)			
	Survey Respondents	Non-Respondents	Total
Gulf War	2	3	3
Korean Conflict	18	17	17
Vietnam Era	39	37	38
World War I and II	41	43	43

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	10.6626	<.02

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 Pension'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).

[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

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

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

Total Pension Access Population FY2015	
Total Records Received	**134,694**
Duplicate records in sample file	10,497
Duplicate record history	2,286
Invalid address	19,997
Invalid values	0
Blanks	0
Do not contact	863
Total Records Available after Cleaning[2]	**101,071**
Total Records Selected	**10,000**
Undeliverable addresses	28
Total Mailed (excludes undeliverable)	**9,972**
Total completed mail surveys	2,987
Total completed online surveys	N/A
Total Completed Surveys	**2,987**
Total Completed Surveys with Overall Index Score[3]	**2,631**
Total Sample Response Rate[4]	**26.31%**
Eligible Sample Response Rate[5]	**29.95%**

[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=2,631).
[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 Pension Servicing target population:

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

Total Pension Servicing Population FY2015	
Total Records Received	**245,214**
Duplicate records in sample file	893
Duplicate record history	2,948
Invalid address	25,858
Invalid values	0
Blanks	0
Do not contact	7
Total Records Available after Cleaning[6]	**215,508**
Total Records Selected	**10,000**
Undeliverable addresses	1,001
Total Mailed (excludes undeliverable)	**8,999**
Total completed mail surveys	2,164
Total completed online surveys	N/A
Total Completed Surveys	**2,164**
Total Completed Surveys with Overall Index Score[7]	**1,849**
Total Sample Response Rate[8]	**18.49%**
Eligible Sample Response Rate[9]	**24.05%**

Of the 134,694 total records received from Access, 33,623 records were purged from the sample due to cleaning rules such as duplicate records, invalid addresses and values, blanks, and opt outs for do not contact. From the 33,632 records purged, 2,286 records were cleaned out due to duplicate records across VBA's other business line surveys (i.e., duplicate record history).

[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=1,849).
[8] 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).
[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).

In Servicing, a total of 245,214 records were received but 29,706 records were purged from the sample due to cleaning rules such as duplicate records, invalid addresses and values, blanks, and opt outs for do not contact. Also, from the 29,706 records that were purged, 2,948 records were cleaned due to duplicate records across other business lines.

The purpose of the cleaning rules 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. About 25% of the total records provided for Access and about 12% of the total records provided for Servicing were removed from the sample due to these cleaning rules. It is unlikely that the cleaning rules impacted the unit non-response and we were able to secure the designated number (10,000) of records for both Servicing and Access.

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

Completed Surveys	Pension Access 2015 Population	Weight/Person
2,987	134,694	45

In Table 3.1b.e the 45 in the Weight/Person column means that every survey completed and returned represents the views of 45 Veterans using Pension Access benefits, which is an acceptable sampling representativeness. This was calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys into the population number.

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

Completed Surveys	Pension Access 2015 Population	Weight/Person
2,164	245,214	113

In Table 3.1b.s the 113 in the Weight/Person column means that every survey completed and returned represents the views of 113 Veterans using Pension Servicing 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.

To confirm the sample's representativeness, 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 Generation, and Geographical Region are similar among the total records provided and the records available after cleaning. Regional comparisons by state yield differences that are mostly less than 1.5% points. 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.e. Access: Comparing Gender, Age Generation, and U.S. States to Total Population

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
Gender			
Female	53.48	52.15	-1.33
Male	46.52	47.85	1.33
Generation			
Pre-Boomer	70.49	70.42	-0.08
Baby-Boomer	23.96	24.35	0.39
Generations XYZ	5.55	5.24	-0.31
U.S. State			
AK	0.10	0.11	0
AL	3.80	4.05	0.25
AR	1.28	1.27	-0.01
AZ	2.49	2.55	0.06
CA	10.92	11.59	0.68
CO	1.50	1.56	0.06
CT	0.54	0.46	-0.07
DC	0.07	0.07	0
DE	0.19	0.18	-0.01
FL	5.97	5.67	-0.3
GA	2.82	2.8	-0.02
HI	0.16	0.18	0.02
IA	1.58	1.58	0
ID	0.68	0.71	0.02
IL	3.44	3.5	0.06
IN	2.33	2.39	0.06
KS	1.22	1.25	0.03
KY	1.66	1.72	0.06
LA	2.21	2.31	0.1
MA	0.95	0.83	-0.12
MD	0.98	0.94	-0.04
ME	0.23	0.22	-0.01
MI	3.95	3.96	0.02
MN	1.60	1.5	-0.09

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

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
MO	2.85	2.76	-0.09
MS	1.49	1.53	0.05
MT	0.43	0.47	0.04
NC	2.65	2.48	-0.17
ND	0.21	0.21	0
NE	0.51	0.52	0.01
NH	0.25	0.22	-0.03
NJ	1.17	1.11	-0.06
NM	0.79	0.83	0.05
NV	1.10	1.12	0.02
NY	2.91	2.42	-0.49
OH	4.73	4.71	-0.01
OK	1.70	1.71	0.01
OR	1.61	1.72	0.11
PA	3.72	3.62	-0.1
RI	0.18	0.16	-0.02
SC	1.81	1.78	-0.02
SD	0.36	0.36	0.01
TN	3.41	3.49	0.08
TX	8.46	9.12	0.66
UT	0.96	0.96	-0.01
VA	1.61	1.52	-0.09
VT	0.06	0.06	0
WA	2.56	2.63	0.07
WI	1.85	1.53	-0.31
WV	0.46	0.45	-0.01
WY	0.20	0.22	0.02

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

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
Gender			
Female	38.82	37.71	-1.1
Male	61.18	62.29	1.1
Generation			
Pre-Boomer	64.68	63.30	-1.38
Baby-Boomer	31.84	33.26	1.42
Generations XYZ	3.48	3.44	-0.05
U.S. State			
AK	0.11	0.11	0
AL	5.88	5.98	0.09
AR	2.03	2.08	0.04
AZ	2.59	2.62	0.03
CA	13.12	13.27	0.15
CO	1.73	1.72	-0.01
CT	0.04	0.04	-0.01
DC	0.01	0.01	0
DE	0.01	0.01	0
FL	0.72	0.7	-0.03
GA	0.36	0.35	-0.01
HI	0.26	0.27	0.01
IA	1.78	1.7	-0.09
ID	0.66	0.66	0
IL	4.33	4.3	-0.03
IN	2.36	2.25	-0.11
KS	1.38	1.34	-0.04
KY	2.81	2.83	0.01
LA	3.79	3.89	0.1
MA	0.06	0.05	-0.01
MD	0.09	0.08	-0.01
ME	0.02	0.02	0
MI	5.38	5.35	-0.03
MN	2.3	2.19	-0.11
MO	4.2	4.08	-0.12
MS	2.4	2.43	0.03
MT	0.64	0.65	0.02
NC	0.21	0.21	0
ND	0.32	0.32	0
NE	0.69	0.69	0
NH	0.02	0.02	0

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

	Total Population (%)	Records Available (%)	% Point Difference
NJ	0.06	0.05	0
NM	1.08	1.13	0.05
NV	1.27	1.32	0.04
NY	0.19	0.16	-0.03
OH	7.72	7.58	-0.14
OK	2.34	2.42	0.08
OR	2.26	2.35	0.09
PA	0.97	0.95	-0.02
RI	0.01	0.01	0
SC	0.13	0.13	0
SD	0.58	0.58	0
TN	4.47	4.54	0.07
TX	11.42	11.76	0.34
UT	0.82	0.81	-0.01
VA	0.16	0.16	0
VT	0.01	0.01	0
WA	2.64	2.66	0.02
WI	3.21	2.86	-0.35
WV	0.08	0.08	0
WY	0.18	0.19	0.01

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 2,987 total surveys received for Access and the 2,164 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 Means		
Group	**Overall Satisfaction**	**Likelihood to Inform Others**	**Freq**	**Percent**	**OSAT Index**	**Age**	**% Male**
1	0	0	60	2%	630	78	44%
2	0	1	143	6%	646	80	42%
3	1	0	32	1%	578	73	48%
4	1	1	2287	91%	655	78	52%

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

					Group Means		
Group	**Overall Satisfaction**	**Likelihood to inform others**	**Freq**	**Percent**	**OSAT Index**	**Age**	**% Male**
1	0	0	11	1%	692	80	45%
2	0	1	60	3%	750	83	43%
3	1	0	33	2%	686	74	77%
4	1	1	1745	94%	716	77	61%

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 around 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 2,987 Veterans, the Overall Satisfaction Index for the Access study is 652 index points on a 1,000 point scale and has a margin of error of 8 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 8 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 (1,994 completes) would be associated with a margin of error of 10 index points, similar to the margin of error for a 30% response rate (2,992 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)
9,972	**29.95%**	**2,987**	**652**	**217**	**4.0**	**8**
9,972	20%	1,994	652	217	4.9	10
9,972	30%	2,992	652	217	4.0	8
9,972	40%	3,989	652	217	3.4	7
9,972	50%	4,986	652	217	3.1	6
9,972	60%	5,983	652	217	2.8	6
9,972	80%	7,978	652	217	2.4	5

Based on a sample of 8,999 Veterans, the Overall Satisfaction Index for the Servicing study is 716 and has a margin of error of 9 index points, on a 1,000 point scale, 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 9 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 30% response rate (2,700 completes) would be associated with a margin of error of 8 index points, similar to the margin of error for a 40% response rate (3,600 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)
8,999	**24.05%**	**2,164**	**716**	**209**	**4.5**	**9**
8,999	20%	1,800	716	209	4.9	10
8,999	30%	2,700	716	209	4.0	8
8,999	40%	3,600	716	209	3.5	7
8,999	50%	4,500	716	209	3.1	6
8,999	60%	5,399	716	209	2.8	6
8,999	80%	7,199	716	209	2.5	5

In the margin of error analysis noted above and in subsequent analyses included in this report, 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. It is the primary measurement in all JDP 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 report.

3.3.1 Sampling Distribution

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

Compared with the population of all eligible respondents (Access 10,000, Servicing 10,000), survey respondents demonstrate the same gender characteristics. For Access, Table 3.3.1.e below illustrates 49% of survey respondents were female and 51% 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	49	1284	49	4386	0
Male	51	1328	51	4643	0
Age Generation					
Baby-Boomer	23	663	23	2339	0
Generations XYZ	3	95	5	462	2
Pre-Boomer	74	2105	72	7199	-2

For Servicing, Table 3.3.1.s below illustrates 40% of survey respondents were female and 60% 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	40	770	37	3242	-3
Male	60	1167	63	5411	3
Age Generation					
Baby-Boomer	33	712	33	3304	0
Generations XYZ	3	71	4	412	-1
Pre-Boomer	64	1381	63	6284	1

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 no differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores between gender groups (654 vs. 655). Comparing age groups reveals that Generations XYZ had lower overall satisfaction compared with Pre- and Baby Boomers, although the sample size is small for Generations XYZ (N=89) and may not be as representative.

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

Characteristics	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Gender			
Female	654	219	1132
Male	655	212	1175
Age Generation			
Baby-Boomer	652	227	593
Generations XYZ	606	204	89
Pre-Boomer	655	213	1840

For Servicing, Table 3.3.2.s below indicates differences in Overall Satisfaction Index scores are notable between genders. On average, females tend to rate their experience 29 index points higher than males (735 vs. 706). Comparing age groups reveals that Pre-Boomers had the highest overall satisfaction, with Baby-Boomers having much lower satisfaction.

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

Characteristics	OSAT (mean)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Gender			
Female	735	202	649
Male	706	216	1015
Age Generation			
Baby-Boomer	682	225	626
Generations XYZ	725	196	60
Pre-Boomer	734	198	1163

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 (OSAT) scores. T-tests are typically used to determine whether or not the difference between two groups' averages most likely reflect a meaningful difference in the population from which the groups were sampled.

For Access, gender differences were not statistically significantly different. Demographics with too many missing values were excluded because they could not be used to conduct a meaningful statistical analysis (e.g., service discharge - 51%, benefit type - 59%).

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	-0.05	No

For Servicing, the differences for gender and benefit type were both statistically significant such that females and pension type had higher satisfaction, whereas Service Discharge showed no differences:

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	2.76	Yes
Service Discharge		
Honorable vs. Other	0.59	No
Benefit Type		
Pension vs. Death Pension	2.55	Yes

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

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by age generation were *not* significant (F = 2.24, p-value < .11).

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

Generation	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Pre-Boomer	655	1840
Baby Boomer	652	593
Generations XYZ	606	89

For Access, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by region were significant (F = 4.25, p-value < .006), such that Northeast satisfaction was lower than the other regions.

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

Regions	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Midwest	667	660
Northeast	615	269
South	647	1014
West	661	552

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by age generation were significant (F = 13.21, p-value = .0001) such that Baby-Boomer respondents had the lowest satisfaction:

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

Generation	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Pre-Boomer	734	1163
Baby Boomer	682	626
Generations XYZ	725	60

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by region were significant (F = 4.38, p-value < .005) such that Midwest Veterans had the highest satisfaction.

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

Regions	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Midwest	742	562
Northeast	713	287
South	707	547
West	698	452

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by branch of service were *not* significant (F = 1.58, p-value = .178).

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

Military Service	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Army	704	158
Air Force	723	1078
Marines	728	143
Navy	698	435
Other	749	35

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by benefit award level were significant (F = 10.59, p-value < .0001), such that those earning $1,000 or less had the lowest satisfaction:

Table 3.3.3b.s. *Servicing: Overall Satisfaction for Benefit Award Level*

Benefit Award	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
$1,000 or less	697	1053
$1,001-$1,500	742	734
$1,501 or more	744	62

For Servicing, differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score by war period were significant (F = 10.12, p-value < .0001), such that Vietnam Era Veterans had the lowest satisfaction level:

Table 3.3.3d.s. Servicing: Overall Satisfaction by War Period

War Period	OSAT (mean)	Sample Size (N)
Gulf War	702	33
Korean Conflict	722	329
Vietnam Era	685	722
World War I & II	744	765

3.3.4 Data Imputation Analysis for Demographic Differences

A pairwise comparison t-test analysis was conducted 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.

The 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, and 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 survey 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 for Age, Gender, and Region				
Overall Satisfaction Index ***(100 - 1000 range)***	**mean** ***(imputed)***	**mean** ***(non-imputed)***	**t-statistic**	**p-value**
Imputed demographics (2,522 final sample size)	652.63	652.55	-0.01	0.99
Imputed survey-raked demographics (2,522 final sample size)	649.69	649.79	-0. 02	0.99
Imputed survey-raked demographics (2,987total *respondents*)	652.46	649.68	-0.47	0.63

Note: *Non-imputed is based on the 2,522 final cleaned sample size used in this report.*

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

T-Tests on Imputed vs. Non-Imputed for Age, Gender, Region, War Service, Benefit Award and Type				
Overall Satisfaction Index ***(100 - 1000 range)***	**mean** ***(imputed)***	**mean** ***(non-imputed)***	**t-statistic**	**p-value**
Imputed demographics *(1,849 final sample size)*	715.59	716.26	0. 10	0. 92
Imputed survey-raked demographics *(1,849 final sample size)*	712.61	713.45	0.12	0.90
Imputed survey-raked demographics *(2,164 total respondents)*	715.44	713.30	-0.33	0.74

Note: *Non-imputed is based on the 1,849 final cleaned sample size used in this report.*

Survey Raking for Sample Weights to Adjust for Differences and Compare Overall Satisfaction 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 proprietary, representing an 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 on survey raking methodologies, see Wallace and Rust (1996).

The estimated population distributions are used as convergence targets. In this case, the dataset of all eligible respondents for Access (10,000) and Servicing (10,000) were used as the estimated population to derive sample weightings for the Access survey respondents (2,987) and the Servicing survey respondents (1,849).

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 scores and advocacy ratings. Typically, t-tests are used to determine whether differences between the averages and variances of two groups 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 non-respondents.

For Access, there were no significant differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score 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)	653	650	216	218	0.45	0.65
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.41	3.42	0.70	0.69	-0.54	0.59

For Servicing, there were no significant differences in Overall Satisfaction Index score 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)	716	713	209	209	.41	.68
Likelihood to inform others about VA benefits (rating 1 - 4)	3.37	3.38	.72	.70	-.84	.40

Findings

Results of the non-response bias analysis indicate that the Overall Customer Satisfaction Index score and the Advocacy ratings in the Pension Access and Pension Servicing studies reflect the experience of all Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for pension benefits and those who have been receiving pension benefits.

Sample Cleaning: Initial comparisons on Age, Gender, and Region 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 thus the results are conclusive.

Non-Response Bias Analysis: Results of the non-response bias analysis did show group differences for Age, Gender, Region, War Service, Benefit Award and Type 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 Customer Satisfaction Index score and Advocacy rating (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 Satisfaction Study data for both the Pension Access survey and the Pension Servicing survey can be used to infer reliable Overall Customer Satisfaction Index scores and Advocacy ratings. The Overall Customer Satisfaction Index score reflects the experience of all Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision for their application for pension benefits and those who have been receiving pension benefits.

The sample utilized in the study exhibits similar characteristics for Age, Gender, and Region as the total sample provided by Pension Service. 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 in demographic characteristics between survey respondents and non-respondents, there were no differences found in Veterans' overall satisfaction and advocacy ratings between weighted and unweighted survey respondents. This was evaluated 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 report.

References

Anderson, L., and R.D. Fricker, Jr. (2015). *"Raking: An Important and Often Overlooked Survey Analysis Tool,"* Phalanx,: http://faculty.nps.edu/rdfricke/docs/Analysis%20process_v4.pdf

American Association for Public Opinion Research (2008). "Standard Definitions: Final Disposition of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys." Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR. (http://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/Standard_Definitions_07_08_Final.pdf)

American Association for Public Opinion Research (2015). "*Response Rates – An Overview.*" http://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/Education-Resources/For-Researchers/Poll-Survey-FAQ/Response-Rates-An-Overview.aspx

Battaglia, Michael P., Izrael, David, Hoaglin, David C., and Frankel, Martin R. (2004). "*To Rake or Not To Rake Is Not the Question Anymore with the Enhanced Raking Macro*." Proceedings of the 29th Annual SAS Users Group International Conference, Paper 207.

Battaglia, Michael P., Izrael, David, Hoaglin, David C., and Frankel, Martin R. (2009). *"Practical Considerations in Raking Survey Data."* Survey Practice, Vol 2, No. 5.

Baum, Herbert M., Ph.D.; Chandonnet, Anna M.A., Fentress, Jack M.S., M.B.A., and Rasinowich, Colleen, B.A. (2012). *"Mixed-Mode Methods for Conducting Survey Research."* Data Recognition Corporation. http://www.datarecognitioncorp.com/survey-services/Documents/Mixed-Mode-Methods-for-Conducting-Survey-Research.pdf

Dillman, D. A. and J.D. Power (2015). Conference call discussion on non-response bias, avoidance methods, and post-hoc sample weighting. Conference call between Dr. Dillman and JDP (Greg Truex, Jay Meyers, Ph.D., Lee Quintanar, Ph.D.), May 20, 2015 (2pm PDT).

Dillman, D. A. (2014). *Internet, Phone, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method.* Fourth Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc: New York.

Ellis, J. M. (2000). *"Estimating the Number of Eligible Respondents for a Telephone Survey of Low-Incidence Households."* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Portland, OR, May 21, 2000

Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology. "*Statistical Policy Working Paper 31, Measuring and Reporting Sources of Error in Surveys"* (2001). Washington, D.C.

Izrael, David, Hoaglin, David C., and Battaglia, Michael P. (2000). "*A SAS Macro for Balancing a Weighted Sample.*" Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual SAS Users Group International Conference, Cary, NC. Paper 275.

Izrael, David, Hoaglin, David C., and Battaglia, Michael P. (2004). "*Tips and Tricks for Raking Survey Data (a.k.a. Sample Balancing).*" Proceedings of the 2004 American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Conference, Cambridge, MA.

Malhotra, N.K, and Birks, D.F. (2007). *"Marketing Research: An Applied Approach,"* 3rd edition. Prentice Hall/Financial Times: England.

Pierchala, Carl E. (2001). "*PROC MI® as the Basis for a Macro for the Study of Patterns of Missing Data."* Northeast SAS Users Group. http://www.lexjansen.com/nesug/nesug03/st/st009.pdf

Singer, E. (2006). *"Special Issue: Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys."* Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol 70, Issue 5.

U.S. Office of Management and Budget (1990), *"Survey Coverage."* Statistical Policy Working Paper 17, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Office of Management and Budget Publication (January 2006). "*When Designing Surveys for Information Collections.*" The Office of Management and Budget, 725 17th Street, NW. Washington, D.C. 20503.

U.S. Office of Management and Budget Publication (September 2006). "*Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys.*" The Office of Management and Budget, 725 17th Street, NW. Washington, D.C. 20503.

U.S. Office of Management and Budget Publication (2008). VBA Pension OMB - Part B Supporting statement for "*Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods.*" Washington, D.C.

Vogt, W. Paul, Vogt, Elaine R., Gardner, Dianne C., and Haeffele, Lynne M. (2014). *"Selecting the Right Analyses for Your Data-Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Method."* Guilford Press, New York, NY.

Wallace, Leslie and Rust, Keith (1996). *"A Comparison of Raking and Poststratification Using 1994 NAEP Data."* Leslie Wallace, West Inc., 584-589.

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 help with 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 it 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 when 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 Pension’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 either Access or Servicing, an item-level analysis of non-response bias was not necessary. The Access item response rates range from 84% to 100%, with a 95% average, while Servicing response rates range from 83% to 100%, with a 96% average.

Table B1.e. Access Item and Total Item Response Rate[11]

Question Number	Item Response Rate	Unit Response Rate
1	85%	22%
2	100%	26%
3	98%	26%
4	99%	26%
5a	98%	26%
5b	98%	26%
5c	97%	26%
5d	96%	25%
5e	94%	25%
5f	97%	25%
6	100%	26%

[11] *Open capture question for additional comments about 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)

7	94%	25%
8	98%	26%
9	92%	24%
10	100%	26%
11	93%	24%
12	96%	25%
13	100%	26%
14	96%	25%
15	87%	23%
16	100%	26%
17	99%	26%
18	100%	26%
19	100%	26%
20	96%	25%
21	97%	26%
22	100%	26%
23	100%	26%
24	89%	23%
25a	95%	25%
25b	94%	25%
25c	90%	24%
25d	96%	25%
26	N/A	N/A
27	100%	26%
28	95%	25%
29a	85%	22%
29b	84%	22%
29c	87%	23%
30	96%	25%
31	92%	24%
32	96%	25%
33	N/A	N/A
34	N/A	N/A
35	N/A	N/A

Table B1.s *Servicing Item and Total Item Response Rate*[12]

Question Number	Item Response Rate	Unit Response Rate
1	83%	15%
2	99%	18%
3	99%	18%
4	98%	18%
5a	99%	18%
5b	99%	18%
5c	98%	18%
5d	97%	18%
5e	97%	18%
5f	98%	18%
6	100%	18%
7	93%	17%
8	97%	18%
9	93%	17%
10	96%	18%
11	98%	18%
12	95%	18%
13	99%	18%
14	93%	17%
15	92%	17%
16	94%	17%
17	97%	18%
18	100%	18%
19	N/A	N/A
20	N/A	N/A
21	94%	17%
22	98%	18%
23	96%	18%
24a	94%	17%
24b	85%	16%
24c	93%	17%
25	98%	18%
26	96%	18%
27	98%	18%
28	N/A	N/A

[12] *Open capture questions for additional comments about experience and items unclear in letter and e-mail opt in questions display "N/A" and were not included in item and total item response rate calculations.*

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

29	N/A	N/A
30	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 the online survey.

Similarly, “N/A” responses were also included as non-response for rating questions in online returns. Respondents taking the survey online must answer each question before proceeding to the next question in the survey, thus “Not Applicable” or “N/A” could either mean that the respondent was answering “N/A” to the question or did not wish to answer it. Therefore, this response option was included as 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 VOV Line of Business Tracking Satisfaction Research Study is ongoing survey research that tracks Veteran satisfaction with the following VBA 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 to continuously measure performance outcomes.

The Pension survey instrument measures Veteran satisfaction with access 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 Only	Monthly	10,000	3,000
Servicing	Mail Only	Annually	10,000	3,000

1.2 Methodology

Respondents had the option to complete the survey via paper instrument. Respondents were sent a survey packet containing a cover letter, survey, and a business reply envelope. Approximately 3 weeks after deployment of the first survey packet, a second survey packet was mailed that was cleaned to exclude anyone who completed the survey at least 1 week prior to the second survey packet mailing.

Sample Population Definition

The targeted populations were identified by Pension Service. For Access, the target population is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision on a pension benefit claim within the past 30 days. These individuals may include those who were found ineligible on a new claim and those who had been denied and are not appealing the decision.

For Servicing, the target population is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision or are receiving benefit payments.

Sample File Generation

- Pension generates the sample files based upon 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 survey packages.
- Sample is transferred in accordance with the following schedule: 

VOV_LOB Tracking_Production S

1.3 Data Cleaning

JDP processed the sample according to the following cleaning rules:

1. Eliminate 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), eliminate 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 records for 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 12 months to ensure no respondent is mailed surveys more than once in a 12-month time frame. 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 Government Printing Office (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 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 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 greatly, and could range from 3 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; then BAS reviews and approves; then VAPSD reviews and approves.
- 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 is loaded to the VOV reporting site
- Open-ended comments (verbatims)

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 is loaded to the VOV reporting site
- Open-ended comments (verbatims)
- 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 is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision on a pension benefit claim within the past 30 days. These individuals may include those who were found ineligible on a new claim and those who have been denied and are not appealing the decision.	Monthly
Servicing Survey	For Servicing, the target population is defined as Veterans and beneficiaries who received a decision or are receiving benefit payments.	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 Only	10,000	3,000	N/A	10,000	Monthly
Servicing Survey	Mail Only	10,000	3,000	N/A	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 was provided in a file layout consistent with the file layout provided for the study as outlined below.

Pension File Layout
ADDRESS_1
ADDRESS_2
AGE
AID_ATTENDANCE_HOUSEBOUND
AMOUNT_AWARDED
BENEFICIARY_TYPE
BENEFIT_TYPE
BRANCH_OF_SERVICE
CHARACTER_OF_DISCHARGE
City
CLAIM_NUMBER
CLOTHING_ALLOWANCE
CURRENT_CLAIM_STATUS
DATE_OF_APPLICATION
DATE_OF_BIRTH
DATE_OF_DEATH
EMAIL_ADDRS_TXT
ENTITLEMENT_CODE
ENTITLEMENT_DATE
EOD
EVALUATION
FIRST_NAME
GENDER
HOMELESS
INDIVIDUAL_UNEMPLOYABILITY
LAST NAME
LATEST_END_PRODUCT
NUM_DISABILITIES_CLAIMED
NUMBER_OF_DEPENDENTS
PAYEE_CODE
PERIOD_OF_SERVICE
PHONE
RAD
REASON_CODE
REGIONAL_OFFICE_CODE
SERVICE_REPRESENTATIVE
SSN
STATE
ZIP

Pension File Layout (Continued.)

DATE AWARD
METHOD OF APPLICATIONS
NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INITIATED
NUMBER OF APPEALS
COMPENSATION AWARDED
PENSION AWARDED
PRIOR EDUCATION LEVEL
SVC_CD
OEF_OIF_IND
RACE_CD
CHAR_SVC_CD
DPV_Code

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	Monthly	10,000	833	278	3
Servicing Survey	Annually	10,000	10,000	3,333	3

Note: JDP did not receive Regional Office information in the Compensation sample files.

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 team 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 while 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 the report, J.D. Power 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, discussed in Dillman, D. A. (2014) , utilized a survey instrument that was fielded to 600 students at the University of Washington. After five attempts to solicit a response in a closed university setting, as well as offering a monetary incentive to complete the survey, only able a 77% response rate was achieved.

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 the survey, JDP implemented the following measures to reduce the chances of non-response:

- Respondents were provided with the promise of confidentiality on 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 has been lost/damaged, etc.). Telephone calls and emails are responded to within 24 hours and answered during regular business hours (8:00-5:00pm PT Monday through Friday).
- JDP ensured the online surveys were accessible to Veterans 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. 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 paper. 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, etc.) 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 Pension 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 answering Veterans' questions regarding the survey.
- Send email invitations to Veterans rather than mailing postcards to make it easier for them to complete the survey online.
- Reduce the length of the survey to improve Veterans' willingness to respond
  - Reduce overall number of questions and number of response options for each question.
- Increase the number of contacts available to respondents with additional reminders about the survey to encourage participation.
  - Provide respondents with an additional paper survey questionnaire.
- Reduce the frequency of mailings to reduce the opportunities for delays and errors in the GPO Print 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 experience with the Pension benefit (which improves both participation and recollection).
- Change location of sequence number to directly follow survey link on postcard and cover letter.
- Alter the responsibility of sample file generations from Pension to PA&I. A PA&I data pull will increase consistency.
- Alter formatting on postcard and cover letter to include color print to make materials more readable, which may increase participation.

Appendix E

Impact of FAR 8.8

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 8.8 requires that printing must be conducted through Government Printing Office (GPO). The following section outlines limiting factors of the VOV Line of Business Tracking Satisfaction Research 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 to include:
  - 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 VA benefit programs? (Mark only one) *If you are unsure, please indicate the first way you remember learning about VA benefit programs.* **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
   a. VA website **[1]**
   b. VetSuccess.gov **[2]**
   c. eBenefits.va.gov **[3]**
   d. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) [11]
   e. Internet (excluding VA and social media sites) [14]
   f. Mail (from VA) **[4]**
   g. VA phone number (800-827-1000) **[5]**
   h. In person with a VA representative (e.g., VA medical center, VA Vet center, Regional Office, etc.)[8]
   i. Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefings **[6]**
   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.] [7]**

   k. Other Veterans **[13]**
   l. Friends or family **[15]**
   m. Other publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.) **[16]**
   n. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
   o. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

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

b. VetSuccess.gov
c. eBenefits.va.gov
d. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
e. Other websites (excluding VA or social media sites)
f. Phone
g. Mail
h. E-mail
i. In person with a VA representative (e.g., VA medical center, VA Vet center, Regional Office, etc.)
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. Friends or family
m. Other publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.)
n. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
o. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**
p. None of the above **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE]**

3. How frequently would you like to receive communications (e.g., emails, letters, newsletters, etc.) about VA 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 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 **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.]**

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with Pension 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. Please rate your experience in obtaining information about your benefit 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 JDP 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 about your 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. Update your dependency status
   b. Change your address or direct deposit information
   c. Provide verification documents required for payment (e.g., income verification, medical records, etc.)
   d. Report the death of an individual who received VA benefits
   e. Report that you did not receive your VA check or direct deposit
   f. Resolve a problem with your benefits
   g. Find out about a late benefit payment
   h. Report a problem with a VA customer service representative
   i. Ask a general question

j. Obtain information about submitting/re-opening a claim
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. eBenefits.va.gov **[10]**
   h. 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 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.][1-10]**

Benefit Entitlement

13. Have you submitted a claim for an Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefit in the past 6 months? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q14-18 if Q13 is Yes, otherwise go to Q19)

14. What is your preferred method to submit a claim? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
    a. Mail **[1]**
    b. In person at a Regional Office **[2]**
    c. In person at a Veterans Service Organization(e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) **[3]**
    d. Online **[5] (SKIP TO Q16)**
    e. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX, FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED, 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
    f. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q15 if Q14 ≠ Online, otherwise go to Q16

15. Would you be willing and able to submit your claim online if the VA was able to process your claim quicker (possibly within 2-14 days)?
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. I do not have access to a computer/Internet **[96]**
    d. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

16. Did VA require you to provide additional medical evidence after you submitted your claim? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or unsure **[99]**

(Ask Q17 if Q16 is Yes, otherwise go to Q19)

17. Were you required to undergo a VA medical evaluation as a result of your claim? (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]**

(Ask Q18 if Q17 is Yes, otherwise go to Q19)

18. Did the exam seem appropriate and/or address your claimed condition(s)? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

19. If you were previously found ineligible for VA pension benefits, did you understand why you were found ineligible? (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]**

(Ask Q20 if Q19 is "No", otherwise go to Q21)

20. What did you find unclear/didn't understand about your ineligibility decision? (Open Capture) **[OPEN-END. TEXT BOX. 1000 CHARACTERS MAX. ALLOW NO COMMENT, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CHECK BOX. CODE NO COMMENT AS 0 IF UNCHECKED AND 1 IF CHECKED.]**

21. In the past 6 months, have you submitted any documentation required to verify your eligibility for benefits (e.g., income verification, marriage certificate, medical records, dependent information, etc.)? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q22 if Q21 is Yes, otherwise go to Q24)

22. Was there any change (increase or decrease) to your pension benefits based on the verification of the documents submitted? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q23 if Yes to Q22, otherwise go to Q24)

23. Were you informed as to the reason why your benefit payment changed? (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 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]**

24. Please rate your pension benefit 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 pension benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
b. Timeliness of receiving benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
c. **Overall rating of your benefit [1-10]**

Overall Experience with Benefit

25. Thinking about ALL aspects of your experience with your pension 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]**

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

Additional Questions

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.

29. 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 Q30 if Q29 is Yes)

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

Access Questionnaire

Benefit Information

1. How did you FIRST learn about VA benefit programs? (Mark only one) *If you are unsure, please indicate the first way you remember learning about VA benefit programs.* **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE.]**
   a. VA website **[1]**
   b. VetSuccess.gov [2]
   c. eBenefits.va.gov [3]
   d. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) [11]
   e. Internet (excluding VA and social media sites) [14]
   f. Mail (from VA) **[4]**
   g. VA phone number (800-827-1000) **[5]**
   h. In person with a VA representative (e.g., VA medical center, VA Vet center, Regional Office, etc.)
   i. Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefings **[6]**
   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.] [7]**
[8]
   [9]
   [10]
   [12]
   k. Other Veterans **[13]**
   l. Friends or family **[15]**
   m. Other publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.) **[16]**
   n. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
   o. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

2. What method(s) do you MOST FREQUENTLY use to obtain general information about VA's benefits or services? (Mark all that apply) **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
   a. VA website
   b. VetSuccess.gov
   c. eBenefits.va.gov
   d. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
   e. Other websites (excluding VA or social media sites)
   f. Phone
   g. Mail
   h. Email
   i. In person with a VA representative (e.g., VA medical center, VA Vet center, Regional Office, etc.)

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. Friends or family
m. Other publications (e.g., Army Times, local newspaper, etc.)
n. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
o. Don't know or not sure **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.]**
p. None of the above **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.]**

3. How frequently would you like to receive communications (e.g., emails, letters, newsletters, etc.) about VA 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 applying for VA 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 **[MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE RESPONSE.]**

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with Pension, 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 in obtaining information about your 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

6. During the past 6 months, did you contact anyone from VA about the benefit application process? (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 the death of an individual who received VA benefits
   c. Report that you did not receive your VA check or direct deposit
   d. Report a problem with a VA customer service representative
   e. Ask a general question
   f. Obtain information about submitting/re-opening a claim
   g. Check on the status of a claim
   h. 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. eBenefits.va.gov **[10]**

d. Website **[6]**
e. Email **[7]**
f. Mail **[9]**
g. In person [3]
h. 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

12. 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 JDP CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.][1-10]**

Benefit Eligibility and Application Process

13. Thinking about your most recent application, did someone from VA (e.g., call center representative, regional office representative, etc.) provide you with information about the benefit application process? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

14. Thinking about your most recent benefit application, what method did you use to apply for your benefit? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**

a. **Online (SKIP TO Q16)**
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.) **[4]**
e. Other (Specify) _____ **[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
f. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q15 if Q14 ≠ Online, otherwise go to Q16

15. Would you be willing and able to submit applications online if the VA was able to process your claim quicker (possibly within 2-14 days)?
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. I do not have access to a computer/Internet **[96]**
    d. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

16. After you submitted your application, did you receive a notification/confirmation from VA that your claim was received? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q17-22 if Q16 is Yes, otherwise go to Q23)

17. Thinking about the notification/confirmation from VA, was it clear and easy to understand? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Not at all clear **[1]**
    b. Somewhat clear **[2]**
    c. Completely clear **[3]**
    d. Don't know or not sure **[99]**
    e. I did not read the letter **[96]**

18. Did you contact VA to obtain clarification about any of the notification(s)/confirmation(s) you received? **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

19. Did you provide VA with the documentation that was requested in the notification(s)/confirmations(s)? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Nothing was requested **[96]**

d. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q20-Q21 if Q19 is yes, otherwise go to Q22)

20. How did you submit the documentation to VA that was requested in the notification/confirmation? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. **Online**
    b. In person at a Regional Office **[2]**
    c. Mail **[5]**
    d. Through a Veterans Service Organization (e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) **[3]**
    e. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
    f. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

21. What is your preferred method to submit the documentation to VA that was requested in the notification/confirmation? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. **Online**
    b. In person at a Regional Office **[2]**
    c. **Mail [3]**
    d. Through a Veterans Service Organization(e.g., Amer. Legion, DAV, VFW, PVA, MOPH, etc.) **[4]**
    e. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.] [97]**
    f. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

22. Did you receive a subsequent notification requesting information in support of your claim from VA? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

23. During the application process, did you have to provide the same information more than once? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE REPONSE.]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

(Ask Q24 if Q23 is Yes, otherwise go to Q25)

24. What information did you have to provide more than once? (Mark all that apply) **[CHECK BOXES. MULTIPLE RESPONSE. CODE EACH RESPONSE AS 0 IF UNCHECKED OR 1 IF CHECKED]**
    a. Discharge papers (DD214)
    b. Service treatment records
    c. Private medical records
    d. Proof of dependency (e.g., marriage license, birth certificate, etc.)

e. Other (Specify) _____**[TEXT BOX. FORCE TEXT IF RESPONSE IS SELECTED. 50 CHARACTER MAX.]**
f. Don't know or not sure

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with your benefit application, 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]**

25. Please rate your experience with the 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 JDP 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/entitlement 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]**

(Paper Only Instruction: Ask Q26-Q28 if previously found ineligible for VA benefit payments, otherwise go to Q29)

26. If you were previously found ineligible for VA benefit payments, did you understand why you were found ineligible? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**
    d. Not applicable, never been found ineligible (Online Only Response) **[96]**

(Online Instruction: Ask Q27-Q28 if Q26 is yes, otherwise go to Q29)

27. Were you provided information about how to appeal your decision? (Mark only one) **[RADIO BUTTONS. SINGLE RESPONSE]**
    a. Yes **[1]**
    b. No **[0]**
    c. Don't know or not sure **[99]**

28. Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is Unacceptable, 10 is Outstanding, and 5 is Average, please rate the clarity of the information you were provided about appealing your decision. **[SHOW RESPONSES IN GRID WITH 10-POINT SCALE IN COLUMNS AND SINGLE ROW (SEE JDP CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.][1-10]**

Benefit Entitlement

The following question asks you to rate various aspects of your experience with your benefit payment, 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]**

29. Please rate your 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 JDP 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 benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE][1-10, N/A=99]**
    b. Timeliness of receiving initial benefit payment **[ALLOW N/A RESPONSE] [1-10, N/A=99]**
    c. **Overall rating of your benefit payment [1-10]**

Overall Application Experience

30. Thinking about ALL aspects of your experience applying for your pension benefit, 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 JDP CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**

Overall Experience with VA

31. 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 JDP CONVENTIONS DOCUMENT PG. 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS OF LAYOUT). EVENLY SPACED RADIO BUTTONS/COLUMNS, SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW.] [1-10]**

32. 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]**

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

Additional Questions

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

34. 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 **[98]**

(Ask Q35 if Yes in Q34)

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

Appendix G
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