

Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for Improving Customer Experience (OMB Circular A-11, Section 280 Implementation)” (OMB Control Number: 2900-0876)

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Board of Veterans Appeals Surveys

PURPOSE

The *Board of Veteran’s Appeals Survey* is designed to measure Veterans’ (or their Beneficiary’s) satisfaction with the appeals process regarding their benefit claims, as reviewed by the Board of Veterans Appeals. The Board passes final judgement on cases of denied or diminished benefits originating within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). The goal of the VEO survey operation is to continuously provide highly reliable monthly overall estimates.

Those recently completing one of three aspects of the appeals process are eligible for the survey:

1. *Initial Filing Survey*
2. *Hearing Proceeds Survey*
3. *Survey on the Reporting of the Board’s Decision*

A portion of the Veterans recently engaging the Board in the three stages listed above will be contacted by email to complete a brief online survey. This survey is conducted weekly, with reporting also available weekly, monthly, and quarterly. The questions aim to measure Veterans’ experience with the general process, including their interactions with Board systems, staff, and judges, as well as their clarity and understanding of the Board’s procedures and decisions. The measurement scale is a 5-point Likert, and is based on a short list of multiple-choice questions that effectively solicit Veterans’ feedback. Once the invitation is collected, it is immediately available in VSignals, the Medallia-based platform used by the Veterans Experience Office for CX data storage and analysis. Participants will have two weeks to complete the survey at their convenience. Once data collection is completed, a series of internal quality checks are implemented. The participant responses in the online survey are weighted so the samples will more closely resemble the overall population. Sample weighting will be applied using Age Group.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:

The target population of the Board Survey is all Veterans who have completed a Board of Veterans’ appeals process items **within the past week**. Those recently completing one of three aspects of the appeals process are eligible for the survey:

1. *Initial Filing Survey*

2. *Hearing Proceeds Survey*
3. *Survey on the Reporting of the Board's Decision*

The survey frame, a listing of all appellants, is provided to VEO directly by the Board. This listing is then reconciled with an email database from the Veteran's Health Administration, and the survey is offered to appellants with a recent interaction for whom an email address is listed within VHA. This will correspond to roughly 30% of the true underlying population.

TYPE OF COLLECTION: (Check one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Satisfaction Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software) | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Discussion Group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

CERTIFICATION:

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. Personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained.
5. Information gathered is intended to be used for general service improvement and program management purposes.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.
7. All or a subset of information may be released as part of A-11, Section 280 requirements on performance.gov. Additionally, summaries of the data may be released to the public in communications to Congress, the media and other releases disseminated by VEO, consistent with the Information Quality Act.

Name: Evan Albert, Director of Measurement and Data Analytics , Veterans Experience Office Evan.Albert@va.gov (202) 875-478

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

Personally Identifiable Information:



1. Will this survey use individualized links, through which VA can identify particular respondents even if they do not provide their name or other personally identifiable information on the survey? Yes No
2. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? Yes No
3. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? Yes No [N/A]
4. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published? Yes No [N/A]

Gifts or Payments:

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? Yes No

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time (X minutes =)	Burden (÷ 60 =)
Individuals & Households	54,360 annually	2	1,812
VA Form <i>(if applicable)</i>			
Totals	54,360 annually	2	1,812

Please answer the following questions.

1. **Are you conducting a focus group, a survey that does not employ random sampling, user testing or any data collection method that does not employ statistical methods?**

Yes ___
 No X

If Yes, please answer questions 1a-1c, 2 and 3.

If No, please answer or attach supporting documentation that answers questions 2-8.

- a. Please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them.

b. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)

Web-based or other forms of Social Media

Telephone

In-person

Mail

Other- E-mail-based surveys

c. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? Yes No

2. Please provide an estimated annual cost to the Federal government to conduct this data collection: ___\$13,000_____

3. Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request. This includes questionnaires, interviewer manuals (if using interviewers or facilitators), all response options for questions that require respondents to select a response from a group of options, invitations given to potential respondents, instructions for completing the data collection or additional follow-up requests for the data collection.

-Done

4. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection methods to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.

- Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

5. Describe the procedures for the collection of information, including:

a. Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection.

b. Estimation procedure.

c. Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification.

d. Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.

e. Any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.



- Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

6. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of nonresponse. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

7. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.

Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

8. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractors, grantees, or other person(s) who will actually collect or analyze the information for the agency.

Statistical Aspects: Mark Andrews, Statistician, Veterans Experience Office, VA. (703) 483-5305

Collection and Analysis: Evan Albert, Dir. of Measurement and Data Analytics, Veterans Experience Office, VA (202) 875-9478

Steven Ginski, Associate Counsel of the Board of Veterans Appeals (202) 632-4894





*Service Level Measurements – Boards of Veterans
Appeals Survey
Sampling Methodology Report*

Prepared by

Veteran Experience Office

Version 1.1



VETERANS
EXPERIENCE
OFFICE

September 2018

Contents

Executive Summary.....	8
Part I – Introduction.....	9
A. Background	9
B. Basic Definitions	9
C. Application to Veterans Affairs.....	10
Part II – Methodology	10
A. Target Population and Frame	10
B. Sample Size Determination.....	10
C. Data Collection Methods	12
D. Reporting.....	13
E. Quality Control	13
F. Sample Weighting, Coverage Bias, and Non-Response Bias	14
G. Quarantine Rules.....	15
Part III – Assumptions and Limitations	15
A. Respondent Satisfaction Bias	15
B. Coverage Bias.....	16
Appendix 1. List of Data Extraction Variables	16
Appendix 2. Survey Questions	17
Appendix 3. References	24



Executive Summary

The *Board of Veteran's Appeals Survey* is designed to measure Veterans' (or their Beneficiary's) satisfaction with the appeals process regarding their benefit claims, as reviewed by the Board of Veterans Appeals. The Board passes final judgement on cases of denied or diminished benefits originating within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). The goal of the VEO survey operation is to continuously provide highly reliable monthly overall estimates.

Those recently completing one of three aspects of the appeals process are eligible for the survey:

4. *Initial Filing Survey*
5. *Hearing Proceeds Survey*
6. *Survey on the Reporting of the Board's Decision*

A portion of the Veterans recently engaging the Board in the three stages listed above will be contacted by email to complete a brief online survey. This survey is conducted weekly, with reporting also available weekly, monthly, and quarterly. The questions aim to measure Veterans' experience with the general process, including their interactions with Board systems, staff, and judges, as well as their clarity and understanding of the Board's procedures and decisions. The measurement scale is a 5-point Likert, and is based on a short list of multiple-choice questions that effectively solicit Veterans' feedback. Once the invitation is received, participants will have two weeks to complete the survey at their convenience. Once data collection is completed, a series of internal quality checks are implemented. The participant responses in the online survey are weighted so the samples will more closely resemble the overall population. Sample weighting will be applied using Age Group.

This report describes the methodology used to collect and disseminate the Board of Veterans Appeals Survey. Information about quality assurance protocols as well as limitations of the survey methodology is also included in this report.



Part I – Introduction

A. Background

The **Enterprise Measurement and Design** team (EMD) is part of the **Insights and Analytics** (I&A) division within the **Veterans Experience Office** (VEO). The EMD team is tasked with conducting transactional surveys of the Veteran population to measure their satisfaction with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) numerous benefit services. Thus, their mission is to empower Veterans by rapidly and discreetly collecting feedback on their interactions with such VA entities as NCA, VHA, and VBA. VEO surveys generally entail *probability* samples which only contact minimal numbers of Veterans necessary to obtain reliable estimates. This information is subsequently used by internal stakeholders to monitor, evaluate, and improve beneficiary processes. Veterans are always able to decline participation, and have the ability to opt out of future invitations. A *quarantine* protocol is maintained to limit the number of times a Veteran may be contacted, in order to prevent survey fatigue, across all VEO surveys.

The Board of Veterans Appeals administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determines whether Veterans are entitled to claimed benefits which have initially been denied or reduced. Its mission is to conduct hearings and pass proper judgement on appeals in a timely manner. The vast majority of appeals involve claims for disability compensation, in addition to other veteran benefits. the Board allows Veterans to submit medial and lay evidence at any point during the appeals process. Veterans Law Judges will eventually review benefit claims determinations made by local VA offices and issue decisions on appeals.

In order to continue to provide quality services to Veterans, the Veteran Experience Office (VEO) has been solicited to measure the satisfaction of Veterans regarding the Board appeals and hearing procedures for their benefit claims. VEO proposed to conduct a brief survey on Veterans who recently completed various aspects of the appeals process.

B. Basic Definitions

Coverage	The percentage of the population of interest that is included in the sampling frame.
Measurement Error	The difference between the response coded and the true value of the characteristic being studied for a respondent.
Non-Response	Failure of some respondents in the sample to provide responses in the survey.
Transaction	A <i>transaction</i> refers to the specific time a Veteran interacts with the VA that impacts the Veteran’s journey and their perception of VA’s effectiveness in caring for Veterans.
Response Rate	The ratio of participating persons to the number of contacted persons. This is one of the basic indicators of survey quality.
Sample	In statistics, a data sample is a set of data collected and/or selected from a statistical population by a defined procedure.
Sampling Error	Error due to taking a particular sample instead of measuring every unit in the population.
Sampling Frame	A list of units in the population from which a sample may be selected.

Reliability	The consistency or dependability of a measure. Also referred to as <i>standard error</i> .
--------------------	--

C. Application to Veterans Affairs

In general, customer experience and satisfaction are usually measured at three levels: the enterprise level, the service level patterns, and point-of-service feedback. This measurement may bring insights and value to all stakeholders at VA. Front-line VA leaders can resolve individual feedback from Veterans and take steps to improve the customer experience; meanwhile VA executives can receive real-time updates on systematic trends that allow them to make changes.

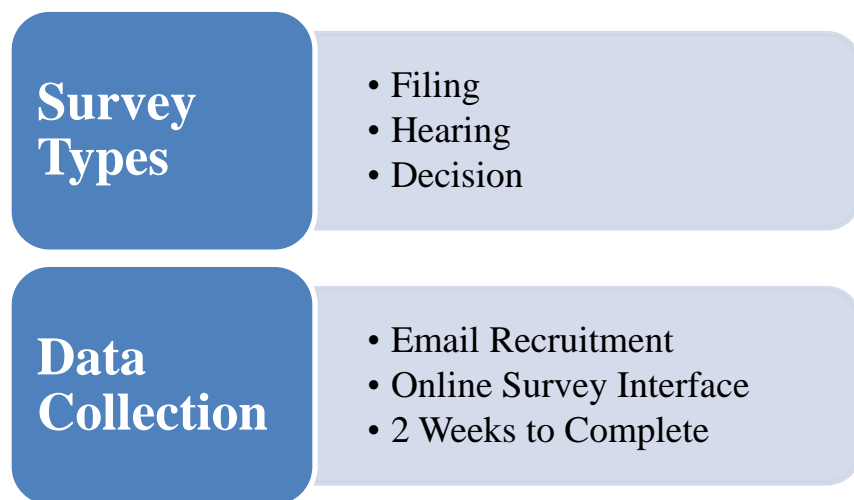
- 1) To collect continuous customer experience data that make or break the service experience.
- 2) To help field staff and the national office identify areas of improvement.
- 3) To understand emerging drivers and detractors of customer experience.

Part II – Methodology

A. Target Population and Frame

The target population of the Board Survey is all Veterans who have completed a Board of Veterans’ appeals process items **within the past week**. The survey frame, a listing of all appellants, is provided to VEO directly by the Board. This listing is then reconciled with an email database from the Veteran’s Health Administration, and the survey is offered to appellants with a recent interaction for whom an email address is listed within VHA. This will correspond to roughly 30% of the true underlying population.

Figure 1. Measurement Goals and Survey Mode



B. Sample Size Determination

To achieve a certain level of reliability, a sufficiently large sample is required. The sample size for a given level of reliability is calculated below (Lohr, 1999). Note that the

reliability of the survey estimates is restricted by the amount of available sample. Due to limitations on the number of Veterans that have shared an email address with VA, coupled with the expected non-response, the the Board Survey may require to contact all eligible Veterans who also have an email address. We proceed to depict the expected level of precision (i.e., reliability) against various standards.

For a population that is *large*, the equation below is used to yield a representative sample for proportions:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where

- $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$, which is the critical Z score value under the normal distribution when using a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$).
- p = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, with $q=1-p$.
 - Note that pq attains its maximum when value $p=0.5$, and this is sometimes used for a conservative sample size (i.e., large enough for any proportion).
- e = the desired level of precision; in the current case, the margin of error $e = 0.03$, or 3%. Also referred to as **MOE**.

For a population that is relatively *small*, the finite population correction is used to yield a representative sample for proportions:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}}$$

Where

- n_0 = Representative sample for proportions when the population is large.
- N = Population size.

The margin of error surrounding the baseline proportion is calculated as:

$$\text{Margin of Error} = z_{\alpha/2} \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1}} \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}$$

Where

- $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$, which is the critical Z score value under the normal distribution when using a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$).
- N = Population size.
- n = Representative sample.
- p = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, with $q=1-p$.

Table 2A depicts the approximate monthly population for the the Board appeals, as well as the sample size determination with Confidence Level (CL) and Margin of Error (MOE) at various levels. The sample size numbers listed indicate the number of responses from Veterans required to attain the stated level of precision.

Based on the estimated number of appellants filing with the Board each month (6,000), the email availability rate (30%), and the expected survey response rate (20%), the expected number of responses from contacted Veterans would be approximately 360. This number would represent the number of responses if every qualified Veteran/Beneficiary were sent a survey invitation. However, this number is still much smaller (360 vs. 907) than the desired level of precision corresponding to a 95% CL and 3% MOE (Lohr, 1999). Therefore, it is reasonable to sample all available Veterans to produce the most reliable estimates possible – this would correspond to reliability levels at the 90% CL and 5% MOE. A similar situation holds for the Decision population: 7,400 monthly decisions will result in . In the Board appeals hearing population, the expected respondents with 100% sampling rate are still below any of the sample sizes at proposed CL and MOE, due to the small hearing population size. Therefore, all Veterans in this population will also be sampled.

Table 2B provides the weekly and monthly sample targets for the appellant and hearing populations, presuming a return rate of 20%. The current method obviates the need for any stratification or formal probability sampling.

Table 2A. Target Population Figures

Population Type	Approximate Monthly Population	Approximate Monthly Email Population	Precision Sample: 95% CL, 3% MOE	Precision Sample: 90% CL, 5% MOE	Precision Sample: 90% CL, 8% MOE
Filing	6,000	1,800	907	258	N/A
Hearing	1,700	510	656	233	100
Decision	7,400	2,220	933	260	N/A

Table 2B. Proposed Sample Targets by Time Period

Population Type	Weekly Target	Weekly Contact	Monthly Target	Monthly Contact
Filing	75	375	300	1,500
Hearing	25	125	100	500
Decision	100	500	400	2,000
Total	200	1,000	800	4,000

C. Data Collection Methods

At the beginning of every weekly measurement period, the Board will review records and send participant information to VEO for the survey distribution and data collection. Given that Veteran’s email address is not available to the Board, these Veteran records will be mapped using social security number to the VHA Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) to collect email addresses. This will permit VEO to share the online survey link to appellants who have shared

their email address with VHA. Note that Veterans with private or other health care providers who do not access VHA for health benefits will *not* be contacted. Thus, the email population may differ somewhat from the true underlying population, possibly introducing coverage-bias into the survey estimates (see section below).

After the Board participants have their email address appended to their records, an invitation file is created and stored. Emails are immediately delivered to all selected Veterans. Respondents will have 14 days to complete the survey. A reminder email will be sent after one week to those who have yet to complete the survey. Estimates will be accessible to data users instantly within the Veteran Signals (VSignals).

D. Reporting

Researchers will be able to use the Veteran Signals (VSignals) system for interactive reporting and data visualization. VA employees with a PIV card may access the system at <https://va.voice.medallia.com/sso/va/>. The scores may be viewed by Age Group, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity in various charts for different perspective. They are also depicted within time series plots to investigate trends. Finally, filter options are available to assess scores at varying time periods and within the context of other collected variable information.

Recruitment is continuous (weekly) but the results should be combined into a *monthly* estimate for more precise estimates, which is the recommended reporting level. Weekly estimates are less reliable for small domains, (i.e., VAMC-level) and should only be considered for aggregated populations. Monthly estimates will have larger sample sizes, and therefore higher reliability. Quarterly estimates are the most precise, but will take the greatest amount of time to obtain (12 weeks of collection). However, Quarterly estimates are the most suitable for the analysis of small populations.

E. Quality Control

To ensure the prevention of errors and inconsistencies in the data and the analysis, quality control procedures will be instituted in several steps of the survey process. Records will undergo a cleaning during the population file creation. The quality control steps are as follows.

1. Records will be reviewed for missing sampling and weighting variable data. When records with missing data are discovered, they will be either excluded from the population file or put into separate strata upon discussion with subject matter experts.
2. Any duplicate records will be removed from the population file to both maintain the probabilities of selection and prevent the double sampling of the same Veteran.
3. Invalid emails will be removed.

The survey sample loading and administration processes will have quality control measures built into them.

1. The survey load process will be rigorously tested prior to the induction of the the Board Survey to ensure that sampled customers is not inadvertently dropped or sent multiple emails.
2. The email delivery process is monitored to ensure that bounce-back records will not hold up the email delivery process.

The weighting and data management quality control checks are as follows:

1. The sum of the weighted respondents will be compared to the overall population count to confirm that the records are being properly weighted. When the sum does not match the population count, weighting classes will be collapsed to correct this issue.
2. The unequal weighting effect will be used to identify potential issues in the weighting process. Large unequal weighting effects indicate a problem with the weighting classes, such as a record receiving a large weight to compensate for nonresponse or coverage bias.

F. Sample Weighting, Coverage Bias, and Non-Response Bias

Weighting is commonly applied in surveys to adjust for **nonresponse bias** and **coverage bias**. Nonresponse is defined as failure of selected persons in the sample to provide responses. This is observed virtually in all surveys, in that some groups are more or less prone to complete the survey. The nonresponse issue may cause some groups to be over or under represented. Under-coverage is another common survey problem, in which certain group of interest in the population is not included in the sampling frame. The reason that these people cannot participate is because they cannot be contacted. For instance, individuals without a valid email address cannot be reached via email recruitment. In both cases, no reliable conclusions can be drawn from the survey data, due to nonresponse and coverage bias.

Survey practitioners recommend the use of sampling weighting to improve inference on the population, so that the final respondent sample is closely resemble the full population. Although all available Veterans from the appellant and hearing population are surveyed, differential response rates may still be observed across different age groups. Weighting can help adjust for the demographic representation by assigning larger weights to under-represented age group and smaller weights to over represented age group. Also, because the email population will have different demographics than the overall population, the initial sample will be selected in a manner from the frame so that the final respondent sample resembles the overall population. In both ways of adjustments, weighting may result in substantial correction in the final survey estimates when compared to direct estimates in the presence of non-negligible sample error.

In summary, the Board Survey is weighted by respondent's age, and the final respondent sample is representative of the full population. The population values will be collected and recorded by VEO for every data collection period. Sample weights are generated for all estimates: weekly, monthly, and quarterly.

It was reported earlier that the email population comprises 30% of the full population. Since 85% of older Americans utilize email (Choi & Dinitto, 2013), we can presume that most Veterans choose not to share their email address with the VA or are simply unaware of that option. It is assumed that the level of patient satisfaction is not directly related to their email status (Missing at Random). Since age has been observed to be a strong predictor of Veteran satisfaction in other VA surveys, the weighting methodology outlined above will adequately compensate for any bias introduced by the incomplete frame of population.

If we let w_{ij} denote the sample weight for the i^{th} person in age group j ($j=1, 2, \text{ and } 3$), then the CW formula is:

$$w_{ij} = \frac{\# \text{Veterans in age group } j \text{ in the population}}{\# \text{Veterans in age group } j \text{ in the sample}}$$

As part of the weighting validation process, the weights of persons in an age group is summed and verified that it matches the universe estimates (i.e., population totals). Additionally, we calculate the *unequal weighting effect*, or UWE (see Kish, 1992; Liu et al., 2002). This statistic is an indication of the amount of variation that may be expected due to the inclusion of weighting. The unequal weighting effect estimates the percent increase in the variance of the final estimate due to the presence of weights and is calculated as:

$$UWE = 1 + cv_{weights}^2 = \left(\frac{s}{\bar{w}}\right)^2$$

where

- **cv** = coefficient of variation for all weights w_{ij} .
- **s** = sample standard deviation of weights.
- \bar{w} = sample mean of weights, $\bar{w} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{ij} w_{ij}$.

G. Quarantine Rules

VEO seeks to limit contact with Veterans as much as possible, and only as needed to achieve measurement goals. These rules are enacted to prevent excessive recruitment attempts upon Veteran inpatients. VEO also monitors Veteran participation within other surveys, to ensure Veterans do not experience survey fatigue. All VEO surveys offer options for respondents to opt out, and ensure they are no longer contacted for a specific survey.

Table 4. Proposed Quarantine Protocol

Quarantine Rule	Description	Elapsed Time
Repeated Sampling for the Board Survey	Number of days between completing online survey, and receiving another online survey related to another complaint.	3 Months or 90 Days
Other Surveys	Veterans engaged that have recently completed other VEO surveys will not be selected for 30 days.	1 Month or 30 Days
Anonymous	Callers explicitly wishing to remain anonymous will not be contacted.	N/A
Opt Outs	Persons indicating their wish to opt out of either phone or online survey will no longer be contacted.	N/A

Part III – Assumptions and Limitations

A. Respondent Satisfaction Bias

According to the survey design, all qualified Veterans will be surveyed to understand their satisfaction with the overall appeals/hearing process. There is possibility that Veterans' satisfaction may be interacted with the appeals decisions they received. In other words, Veterans who received an approval or positive review on their claim submissions may perceive higher

general satisfaction with the Board services than those who did not receive an approval, regardless of the services per se. This hypothesis needs to be examined once the survey is implemented. VEO is aware of this potential bias and will carefully review the survey results once the data collection is completed.

B. Coverage Bias

The Veterans' contact information provided by the Board does not contain participants' email address, which is the primary point of contact for most VEO surveys. Social security numbers are collected by the Board, however, and this may be used to obtain a valid email address by accessing email records within CDW, the VHA database system. However, not all Veterans have provided their email address to VHA. Indeed, if there is a substantial difference in customer satisfaction between appellants who frequent VA hospitals and those who do not, the final estimates will suffer from coverage bias. Although we may assume that a Veteran's satisfaction with the appeals process is independent of whether they frequented a VA hospital in the past, there may be differences in the socio-demographic composition between those utilizing VA services and those accessing private (or other) healthcare sources. Coverage bias will be mitigated through the use of sample weighting to ensure the VHA population is modified to greater reflect the Board population, with respect to demographic variables such as Age Group, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity.

Additionally, there is thought to be bias from the use of email addresses as the singular method of contact with survey respondents. Choi and Dinitto (2013) showed that 86% of older adults use the internet for email purposes. Therefore, older Veterans that lack access to the internet cannot be reached by the survey, and it is plausible that such Veterans may be in a socio-demographic class with differing attitudes of the appeals process. Moreover, only 25% of VHA beneficiaries with a valid email address elect to share it for future contact. In all, approximately 30% of all appellants utilizing VHA services will be matched to a valid email address. It is possible that Veterans withholding their email address do not share similar perspectives, which may also lead to coverage bias.

It is assumed that the coverage bias from these two sources is negligible, and will not significantly alter customer experience estimates. In order to assess this impact VEO will plan to conduct a study to examine customer satisfaction differences between online surveys (w/ email recruitment) and automated telephone surveys (w/ phone recruitment).

Appendix 1. List of Data Extraction Variables

Survey Person ID
Veteran First Name
Veteran Last Name
Appellant First Name
Appellant Last Name
Date of Birth
Certification Date
Form 9 Date
Disposition
Regional Office
Home Phone

SSOC
Hearing Type
Work Phone
Decision Date
Trigger Date
Appeal Date
Program Type
VLJ
Appeal ID
Representative
Period of Service
Survey Type
MVI
Age
Gender
Race

Appendix 2. Survey Questions

Summary

This copy document provides email and survey copy for 2 distinct surveys measuring customer experience during the Board of Veterans' Appeal process. These surveys are triggered within 1-4 weeks after the completion of the following events:

[8.1] Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing Experience Survey: Email survey sent after the hearing has occurred.

[8.2] Board of Veterans' Appeals Appellant Experience Survey: Email survey sent after appellant process occurs.

Target Audiences

To be included in the survey sample, respondents must be:
Veterans who have gone through the Board of Veterans' Appeals process.

Notes

Text with <carets> in the copy indicates a string from a database.

Text with [brackets] indicates notes, comments, options, dummy text or annotates browser behaviors. [or] separates conditionals when there are choices. <NULL> indicates data does not exist.

Margin comments call out details or issues that may require follow up or a discussion with a designer, developer, or writer.

Headings label and demarcate sections of the experiences and separate surveys.

the Board APPELLANT SURVEY the Board Experience Survey Email Copy

[From:] Veterans Experience Office

[Subject 8.1] Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing Experience Survey – 2 minutes

[Subject 8.2] Board of Veterans' Appeals Appellant Experience Survey – 2 minutes

[Header]



<h1> Help us serve your better </h1>

[Heading]

OMB Number: XXXX-XXXX

Expiration: MM/DD/YYYY

Estimated Burden: 2 minutes

Your feedback is important to us. Please take two minutes to let us know how we are doing by answering this short survey about

[8.1] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing process >.

[8.2] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals appellant process>.

If you provide feedback, you may be contacted by VA. Serving you is our top priority.

[Take Survey]

Thank you,
Veterans Experience Office
Department of Veterans Affairs

[Footer]

If you wish to share your feedback, please do so by <date>.

You received this email because you provided your email address to VA.

The Veterans Crisis Line provides free, confidential support for Veterans in crisis and their families and friends. Dial 1 (800) 273-8255 (Press 1), or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24/7, (System of Records Notice VA158VA10NC5) Visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> for more information.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) provides free, confidential support for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—and their family members, friends and supporters. Veterans can make the call to or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dial 1 (877) 424-3838 or visit <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/> to receive confidential support. If you would like to opt out from receiving future surveys, please click [here](#).

Unsubscribe from this VA Survey | [VA Privacy Policy](#)

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Experience Office (30)
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

the Board Experience Survey Reminder Email Copy

[SENT 1 WEEK AFTER INITIAL EMAIL IF THERE IS NO RESPONSE]

[From:] Veterans Experience Office

[Subject 8.1] Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing Experience Survey Reminder – 2 minutes

[Subject 8.2] Board of Veterans' Appeals Appellant Experience Survey Reminder – 2 minutes

the Board Experience Survey Reminder Pre-Header

[8.1] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing process >.

[8.2] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals appellant process>.

[Header]



<h1> Help us serve you better </h1>

[Heading]

OMB Number: XXXX-XXXX

Expiration: MM/DD/YYYY

Estimated Burden: 2 minutes

We are waiting for your response about your experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Your feedback is important for identifying areas that need improvement.

Please take two minutes to let us know how we are doing by answering this short survey about

[8.1] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing process >.

[8.2] < your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' appellant process >.

If you provide feedback, you may be contacted by VA. Serving you is our top priority.

[Take Survey]

Thank you,
Veterans Experience Office
Department of Veterans Affairs

[Footer]

If you wish to share your feedback, please do so by <date>.

You received this email because you provided your email address to VA.

The Veterans Crisis Line provides free, confidential support for Veterans in crisis and their families and friends. Dial 1 (800) 273-8255 (Press 1), or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24/7, (System of Records Notice VA158VA10NC5) Visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> for more information.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) provides free, confidential support for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—and their family members, friends and supporters. Veterans can make the call to or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dial 1 (877) 424-3838 or visit <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/> to receive confidential support. If you would like to opt out

from receiving future surveys, please click [here](#).

Unsubscribe from this VA Survey | [VA Privacy Policy](#)

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Experience Office (30)
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

the Board Services Survey Rating Scale Questions

The Veterans Crisis Line provides free, confidential support for Veterans in crisis and their families and friends. Dial 1 (800) 273-8255 (Press 1), or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24/7. Visit veteranscrisisline.net for more information.

8.1 Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing Experience Survey

Tell us about your recent experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing process.

1. Why did you request a Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing? (Mark all that apply)
 - I thought it would help the outcome of my appeal
 - I thought it was required
 - I wanted to speak to someone in person
 - It's my right to have a Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing
 - It was recommended by a friend, family member, or other Veteran
 - It was recommended by a Veteran Service Organization representative
 - It was recommended by a personal representative
 - Other (specify)
 - Don't know or not sure

2. Was your hearing held as initially scheduled? (Mark only one)
 - Yes (if selected, move to question #5)
 - No (if selected, move to question #5)
 - No, my hearing was cancelled at least once (if selected, move to question #3)
 - No, my hearing was rescheduled at least once (if selected, move to question #4)

3. Why was your hearing cancelled? (Mark all that apply) (OPTIONAL)
 - I canceled the hearing based on the advice of my representative.
 - I was advised that I could submit a statement in writing instead of having the hearing.
 - I was unable to travel to the hearing location.
 - I felt like it was delaying my appeal decision.
 - My request to reschedule my hearing was denied.
 - None of the above.

4. Why was your hearing rescheduled? (Mark all that apply) (OPTIONAL)
 - I requested a different type of hearing.
 - I had a conflict with my initially scheduled date.
 - My representative was unable to attend my initially scheduled date.

- Illness, transportation, or weather issues on the day of the hearing.
 - I didn't receive adequate notice of the date/time that the hearing was scheduled.
 - None of the above.
5. Please rate your overall experience in requesting a hearing
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive
6. Please rate your Overall experience with the hearing staff.
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive
7. Please rate your Overall experience with the Judge.
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive
8. Please rate your overall experience with the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing process.
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive

8.2 Board of Veterans' Appeals Appellant Experience Survey

The Veterans Crisis Line provides free, confidential support for Veterans in crisis and their families and friends. Dial 1 (800) 273-8255 (Press 1), or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24/7, (System of Records Notice VA158VA10NC5) Visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> for more information.

Tell us about your recent experience regarding your Board of Veterans' Appeals appellant process.

1. Did you receive an initial letter from the Board of Veterans' Appeals notifying you that your appeal was received by the Board?
 - Yes

- No
 - Don't know or not sure
2. Thinking about the initial Board of Veterans' Appeals notification letter, was the purpose of the letter clear and easy to understand?
- Not at all clear
 - Somewhat clear
 - Completely clear
 - Don't know or not sure
 - I did not read the letter
3. Which of the following online resources do you use to check the status of your appeal?
- eBenefits
 - Vets.gov
 - Inquiry submitted via the Board's Customer Service website
 - Other
 - I do not use any online resources to check the status of my appeal
4. Please rate your experience using the Veteran websites for appeal status. **(OPTIONAL)**
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive
 - Not Applicable
5. In the past 6 months (excluding any contact with your local VA field office), did you contact anyone at the Board of Veterans' Appeals about the appeal process?
- Yes
 - No
6. Which of the following best describes the reason for your most recent contact?
- Request a status update
 - Ask a question
 - Request a change to your contact information
 - Provide additional evidence/arguments in support of your appeal
 - Resolve a concern
 - None of the above
 - Not applicable
7. Please rate your experience regarding the communication and information about your appeal.
- Very Negative
 - Negative
 - Average
 - Positive
 - Very Positive
8. My most recent contact was resolved to my satisfaction?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Applicable

9. Please Rate your experience with the customer service provided by the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Average
- Positive
- Very Positive

10. The Board's decision was clear and understandable (whether I agree with it or not).

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. Please Rate your overall experience with your appeal process

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Average
- Positive
- Very Positive

Please check this box if you would like to volunteer your demographic information to help VA better serve you, otherwise just click "Next" to submit your survey.

[Next]

[OMB Burden Response Copy]

We are asking for this information so that you can provide compliments, recommendations, or concerns to VA. This information is collected in accordance with section 3507 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Title 38, United States Code, allows us to ask for this information. We estimate that you will need an average of two minutes to review the instructions and complete this survey. The results of this survey will be used to inform opportunities for program improvement in the quality of VA services. Participation in this survey is voluntary and your decision not to respond will have no impact on VA benefits or services to which you may currently be receiving. By filling out this survey, you are authorizing VA database access to retrieve veteran contact information, to follow up with you accordingly for purposes of service recovery, potential crisis, or to learn more about feedback you have shared regarding your experience with VA. VA cannot conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless a valid OMB control number is displayed. You are not required to respond to a collection of information if this number is not displayed. Valid OMB control numbers can be located on the OMB Internet Page at

www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain.

[Footer]
[Privacy Policy](#)

Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Questions

Help VA Improve its Services

We are working to better understand our customers. The following questions are **voluntary**. By providing your data, your responses can help us improve VA care and services. Thank you for your participation.

1. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
 - Yes
 - No

2. What is your race? Select one or more.
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White

3. How do you describe your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-Binary / Third Gender
 - Prefer not to say

[Submit]

Appendix 3. References

- Choi, N.G. & Dinitto, D.M. (2013). Internet Use Among Older Adults: Association with Health Needs, Psychological Capital, and Social Capital. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(5), e97
- Kish, L. (1992). Weighting for unequal P. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 8(2), 183-200.
- Lohr, S. (1999). *Sampling: Design and Analysis* (Ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Liu, J., Iannacchione, V., & Byron, M. (2002). Decomposing design effects for stratified sampling. *Proceedings of the American Statistical Association's Section on Survey Research Methods*.