

WHAT VETERANS KNOW ABOUT THEIR BENEFITS AND SERVICES

An Ipsos Point of View

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GAME CHANGERS



KEY FINDINGS:

- 80% of Veterans who receive all or some VA benefits rate their healthcare as good or very good compared to only 70% of the general public.
- Majorities of Veterans aren't sure how to rate VA's financial counseling or fiduciary services (63%), and career and employment services (54%), indicating an overall lack of familiarity with these benefits.
- The majority of Veterans who say they were likely exposed to environmental hazards (75%) report knowing little to nothing about the PACT Act, a piece of legislation designed to expand benefits to Veterans exposed to burn pits. Respondents who said they experienced health problems related to exposure to open burn pits were more likely to know about the PACT Act, though half (51%) still know little to nothing about it.

Ipsos research finds that U.S. Veterans are widely satisfied with the healthcare they receive from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA). However, many Veterans are unaware of some of the other services that may be available to them, elevating concerns about how well Veterans are able to make use of these resources when they need them.

The lack of awareness of VA services extends to a new VA initiative: the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, signed into law in mid-2022. While on the surface, the PACT Act focuses on Operation New Dawn, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OND/OEF/OIF) Veterans in its provisions to improve access to care for Veterans who have been exposed to burn pits, the legislation also expands access for millions of Veterans outside of these campaigns, regardless of whether they saw combat.

While in recent years VA has taken measures to educate qualified Veterans and their families about VA benefits through marketing campaigns like ChooseVA, research shows some more work may be needed.

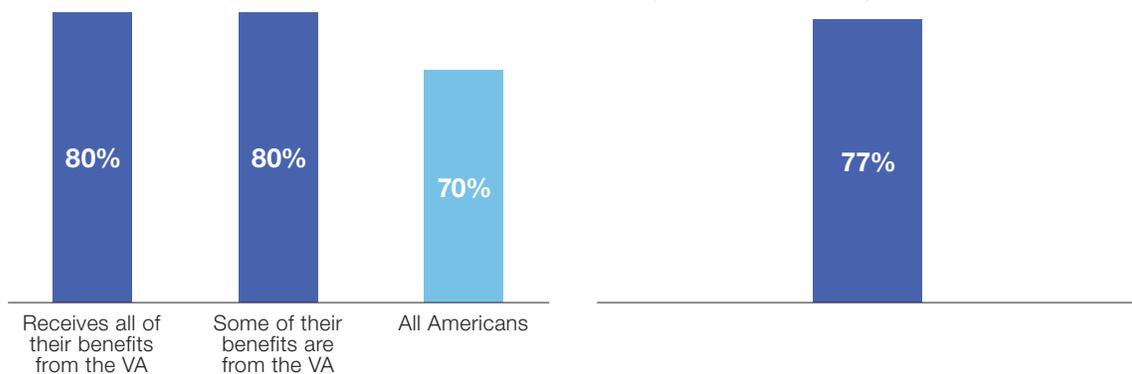
VA healthcare recipients satisfied with their healthcare

The quality of healthcare the VA provides is well-regarded among Veterans who use VA benefits. Veterans with VA benefits are much more likely to be satisfied with their healthcare compared to the general public—80% of Veterans who receive all or some VA benefits rate their healthcare as good or very good compared to only 70% of the general public. For context, nearly 90% of Veterans receiving all or some of their benefits from the VA currently use or have previously used healthcare benefits from the VA in the past. That’s a high utilization rate and a ringing endorsement on quality.

Veterans with VA benefits are more likely to be satisfied with their healthcare compared to the general public

Q: Thinking about your own personal healthcare encounters in the past 12 months, how would you rate your overall experience? Percent “Very good” or “Good”

Percent of Veterans receiving VA benefits who rate VA healthcare benefits and services as ‘excellent,’ ‘very good,’ or ‘good’ based on their personal experience or what they’ve seen read or heard



Source: Ipsos polling of 518 veterans or their caregivers and 1,021 U.S. adults 18+ conducted between October 11–19, 2022

The quality and accessibility of their healthcare are among the most important issues to VA healthcare recipients. Veterans who receive all benefits from VA rate access to quality hospitals (64%), the ability to get care when needed (60%), quality of care or treatment for people living with chronic conditions (59%), and how people are treated by the healthcare system (45%) as the most important healthcare issues to them.



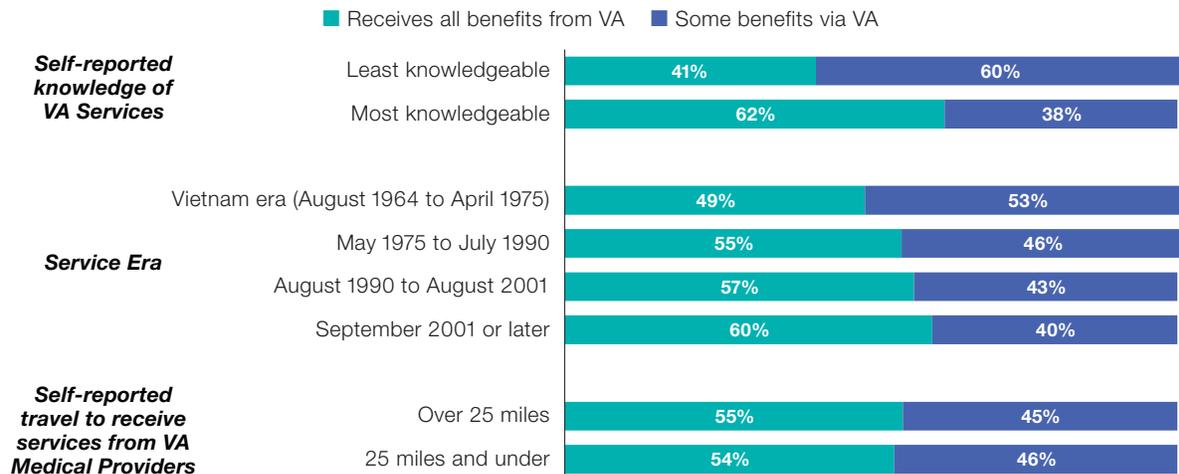
Who is using VA benefits? Who isn't?

Among eligible Veterans, some are more likely to use their VA benefits than others. Here, Ipsos asked Veterans whether they receive benefits from VA, and how often they turn to the VA for their benefits and services. This research finds that usage of benefits is strongly related to reported knowledge about them.

On average, 61% of those who say they are most knowledgeable about VA's benefits and services say they receive all their benefits from VA versus only 41% of those who say they are the least knowledgeable about VA benefits. This underlying relationship suggests that many Veterans are not accessing VA benefits and services in part because they don't know about them and points to the need to raise awareness among those who are least engaged with the agency.

Who receives all their benefits from VA?

Demographic breakdown of who receives all their benefits from VA and who receives some benefits from VA



Source: Ipsos polling of 518 veterans or their caregivers and 1,021 U.S. adults 18+ conducted between October 11–19, 2022

Additionally, Veterans who served more recently are also more likely than Veterans who served in conflicts like Vietnam to turn to the VA for all their benefits.

Interestingly, how far Veterans must travel to receive services from VA medical providers has no bearing on the likelihood of using VA services, indicating that physical distance to VA services does not necessarily discourage use among Veterans. This finding could be a lagging indicator of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic but likely also reflects a positive outcome of VA's significant capital investments in Telehealth technology in recent years.

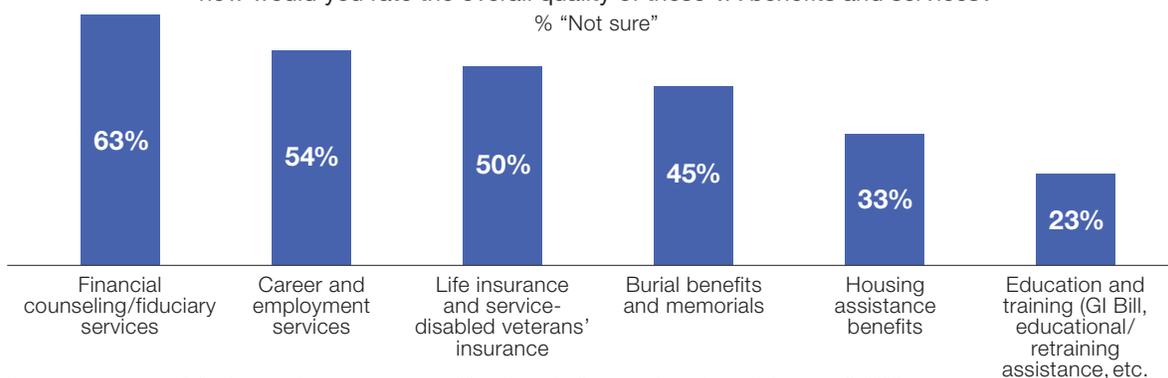


Why are Veterans unsure how to rate the quality of their services?

Even though most Veterans are satisfied with their healthcare services, there are many non-healthcare benefits that Veterans know little about. Majorities of Veterans aren't sure how to rate VA's financial counseling or fiduciary services (63%), and career and employment services (54%), indicating an overall lack of familiarity with these benefits. Pluralities of Veterans also report not being sure how to rate VA's life insurance and service-disabled Veterans' insurance (50%), and burial and memorial benefits (45%). Additionally, significant minorities are not sure how to rate VA's housing assistance benefits (33%) or education training (23%).

Veterans largely satisfied with healthcare, though some VA services have little visibility among veterans

Q: Based on your personal experience or what you have seen or heard, how would you rate the overall quality of these VA benefits and services?



Source: Ipsos polling of 518 veterans or their caregivers and 1,021 U.S. adults 18+ conducted between October 11–19, 2022

This may, in part, be because few Veterans feel they need these services. The majority of Veterans report not having any need for financial services (78%), burial benefits (74%), career and training services (65%), housing assistance (62%), education or training services (60%), and life insurance benefits (57%). Still, given the low levels of familiarity with these benefits, many may be missing out on them if they need them in the future.

Taken together, this points to areas where VA could enhance its outreach and awareness to Veterans about the benefits that are available to them.



PACT Act has low visibility among Veterans, but most think it's important

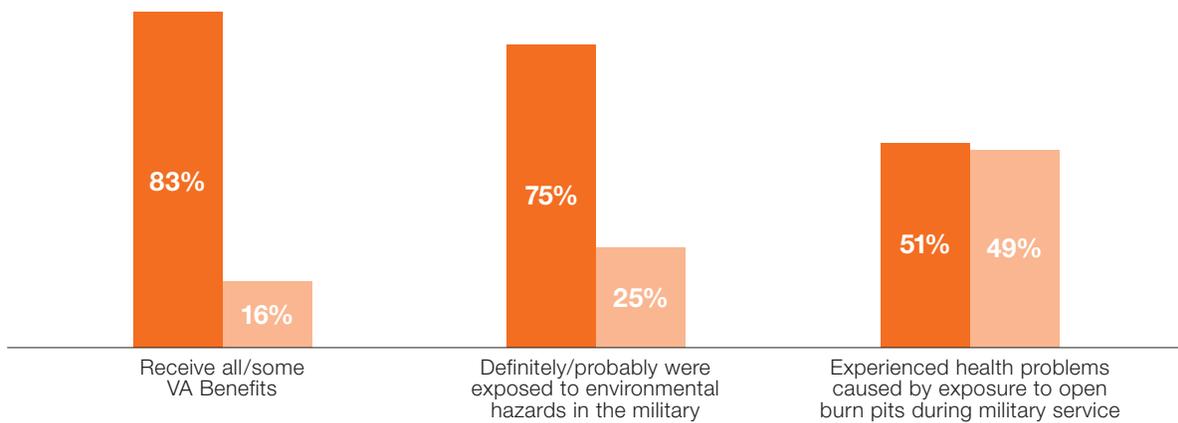
The PACT Act primarily expanded healthcare benefits to Veterans who face health problems related to environmental hazards they were exposed to while serving in the military. However, Ipsos polling shows that most Veterans, including VA healthcare users, know little about the act or the benefits it provides.

The majority of people who receive VA benefits (83%) and people who say they were likely exposed to environmental hazards (75%) report knowing little to nothing about the PACT Act. Respondents who said they experienced health problems related to exposure to open burn pits were more likely to know about the PACT Act than the two previous groups, though half (51%) still know little to nothing about it. The general lack of knowledge surrounding the PACT Act suggests that VA could improve messaging on what it is and what it can do for Veterans, particularly among those that could be eligible for its benefits.

Most Veterans know little to nothing about the PACT Act, even those exposed to environmental hazards in the military

Q: How much do you know about the recently passed PACT Act, the new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances?

■ Knows little to nothing about the PACT Act ■ Knows at least a fair deal about the PACT Act



Source: Ipsos polling of 518 veterans or their caregivers and 1,021 U.S. adults 18+ conducted between October 11–19, 2022

Despite the low levels of familiarity with the PACT Act, when asked about its component parts, many Veterans see streamlining bureaucracy and removing proof of service as the most significant parts of the legislation. Improved VA claims processing for presumptive respiratory conditions ranks as the most important piece of the PACT Act among Veterans. Over one in three Veterans (37%) who use VA benefits feel this way, along with nearly half (47%) of Veterans who report experiencing health problems caused by exposure to smoke or fumes from open burn pits while serving in the military.

Veterans with health problems related to open burn pits are also particularly interested in the PACT Act's removal of proof of service if diagnosed with certain conditions, including 11 respiratory-related conditions and several cancers. About one in three (30%) who fall in this group say that it is among the most important aspects of the PACT Act.



Wrapping it up

A decisive majority of Veterans are happy with the healthcare they receive through VA. Yet not all Veterans may be making use of all the benefits available to them. New polling from Ipsos indicates this may be because these Veterans aren't aware of the services on offer, raising questions about how well Veterans are able to utilize these resources when they need them.

These gaps in communication between Veterans and VA are illustrated most recently with the PACT Act. Very few Veterans are familiar with this new piece of important legislation, which expands benefits to Veterans exposed to burn pits or environmental hazards, regardless of whether they served in combat. Alarming, even among people who may qualify to receive benefits under the expanded legislation, many aren't familiar with the initiative.

Taken together, this polling suggests that VA has room to expand its outreach, engagement and awareness-raising campaigns with Veterans, so those who served their country can fully use all the benefits available to them.

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