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Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week 2020: Survey of Canadians

Executive Summary

Prepared for Veterans Affairs Canada

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February 2021

This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone survey of 1,005 Canadians conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to conduct a telephone survey of Canadians regarding Veterans' Week and VAC's remembrance programming.

1. Background and Objectives

One of VAC's core responsibilities is post-Confederation military commemoration. VAC ensures (1) that Veterans and those who died in service are honoured and (2) that Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service. The Canada Remembers Program and the Funeral and Burial Program support these departmental results for commemoration and promote the following:

- Veterans and those who died in service are publicly acknowledged through ceremonies and events, honours and awards, and the presentation and perpetual care of memorials, cemeteries and grave markers;
- Canadians are aware of, and value, the contributions of those who served through a suite of resources that tell the story of our military history and through the provision of funding for community-led commemorative initiatives;
- the memory of the achievements and sacrifices of Canadian Veterans and those who died in service is preserved; and
- the estates of eligible Veterans have access to financial assistance toward a dignified funeral and burial.

The Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week survey measures Canadians' level of participation in remembrance activities, their attitudes toward those who served in Canada's military, and their level of support for VAC's work related to remembrance. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department's overall remembrance programming.

The research results obtained through the Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week survey allow VAC to continue to determine the impact and effectiveness of its remembrance activities, adapt activities to be relevant to Canadians, improve the methods used to inform Canadians about remembrance initiatives, and help to guide the planning of future remembrance-related programming.

2. Methodology

A random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was administered to 1,005 Canadian residents, 18 years of age or older, between November 12 and 27, 2020. Interviewing was conducted by Elemental Data Collection Inc. (EDCI) using Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. The survey averaged 12 minutes to complete.

An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used in order to minimize coverage error.¹ The same random selection process was used for both the landline and cell phone sample to ensure

¹ Coverage error occurs when not all segments of the target population are included in the sample frame. If only landlines were included in the sample frame for this survey, Canadians who only have a cellphone would not have an opportunity to participate in the survey. The survey results, therefore, would only reflect the views of Canadians who have a landline in their household.

the integrity of the probability sample. The sample frame was geographically disproportionate in an effort to improve the accuracy of regional results.

The results of the survey can be considered representative of the population of Canadians aged 18 and older. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate within $\pm 3.3\%$, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted to reflect the geographically disproportionate sampling). The margins of error are greater for results pertaining to subgroups of the total sample and split samples.

For a more complete description of the methodology, refer to the Appendix: 1. Technical Specifications, in the final report.

3. Key Findings

AWARENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF VETERANS' WEEK

Canadians' awareness of Veterans' Week and the importance attributed to it remain virtually unchanged from 2019.

Similar to last year, slightly more than half of Canadians (57%) said they had heard of Veterans' Week. This represents virtually no change in awareness year-over-year, as 54% of Canadians claimed to have heard of Veterans' Week in 2019. Awareness of Veterans' Week remains lower now than it was a decade ago, when 65% of Canadians had heard of it. Consistent with previous years, the majority of Canadians (87%) think it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year, with 66% saying that it is *very* important.

Canadians who said they think it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year were asked why they think so. Approximately three-quarters (76%) said it is important to honour and show respect for Canadian Veterans and those who died in service. Following this, 39% of those who think it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year provided reasons pertaining to history or remembrance. Relatively few (8%) said that Veterans' Week is important because of a personal connection, such as having a family member who is a Veteran or in the military. These same themes have been Canadians' top reasons for attributing importance to Veterans' Week over time.

PARTICIPATION IN VETERANS' WEEK AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Participation in Veterans' Week decreased in 2020.

Approximately seven in 10 Canadians (72%) said they or members of their immediate family participated in Veterans' Week this year. This marks a significant decline from previous years (19 percentage points since 2019), which was expected given the COVID-19 global pandemic. Among those who did not participate in Veterans' Week this year, almost half (49%) attributed their lack of participation to COVID-19—to either the specific restrictions in place in their community or to their lack of comfort participating in person due to COVID-19. Among Canadians who did participate in Veterans' Week this year, nearly half (48%) said they participated as a way to honour and respect Canadian Veterans and those who died in service. This is consistent with previous years.

Wearing a poppy continues to be the most prevalent way to commemorate Veterans and those who died in service.

Canadians were asked about their participation in various Veterans' Week activities. The most frequently cited activities were wearing a poppy (72%) and observing a moment of silence (69%). In addition, 43% watched a Remembrance Day 2020 ceremony on TV, while 40% watched a virtual Remembrance Day ceremony. Approximately one in five (22%) participated in a remembrance activity on social media, and 15% reported that they participated in a remembrance ceremony in their community (down from 37% in 2019). As noted above, COVID-19 affected participation in Veterans' Week this year. The decline in participation in community-based ceremonies, therefore, is likely the result of COVID-19 restrictions and the trend of events migrating online to respect public health directives.

PRIORITIZING VETERANS' WEEK ACTIVITIES

Many Canadians attribute at least some importance to all remembrance initiatives.

Nine in 10 Canadians (91%) attributed at least some importance to providing educational materials for schools, 72% who said it is *very* important to do this. Following this, 85% believe that supporting and leading commemorative events in Canada is important. Support for this type of initiative drops significantly for events to be held outside of Canada, with only 43% attributing importance to this. In addition, smaller proportions, but still strong majorities, think it is important that the Government of Canada post remembrance-related content on social media (74%), provide funding for commemorative projects (73%), create remembrance-related ads (70%), and develop virtual remembrance ceremonies (69%). The provision of promotional materials, such as posters and pins, is considered important by 62% of Canadians. Support for these remembrance initiatives remains stable among Canadians, with changes of four percent or less recorded between 2019 and 2020.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS VETERANS AND CANADA'S MILITARY

Canadians' attitudes towards Veterans and Canada's military role remain strongly positive.

Over time, Canadians' attitudes towards Veterans and commemoration have remained positive. In 2020, a large majority of Canadians agreed that Canada's Veterans and those who died in service should be recognized for their service to Canada (95%) and that they have made major contributions to our country (92%). Following this, more than four in five Canadians (84%) agreed that participating in commemorative activities increases awareness of, and appreciation for, the contributions of Veterans and those who died in service. In addition, approximately seven in 10 (73%) agreed that VAC effectively honours Veterans and those who died in service and preserves the memory of their achievements and sacrifices. About the same proportion (71%) indicated that they make an effort to demonstrate their appreciation to those who served our country.

Canadians are more likely to have said they are proud of Canada's military role than to think of themselves as knowledgeable about it. Four in five Canadians (81%) agreed that they are proud of the role that Canada's military has played in peacekeeping missions and conflicts like the World Wars, the Korean War, and the war in Afghanistan. Fewer, but still a majority of 71%, agreed that they are knowledgeable about the role that Canada's military has played in peacekeeping missions and conflicts. Overall, pride in Canada's military role and self-assessed knowledge of Canada's peacekeeping missions and conflicts have remained stable over time.

RECOGNIZING CANADIAN VETERANS AND THOSE WHO DIED IN SERVICE

There is widespread agreement among Canadians on the importance of recognizing Veterans and those who died in service.

Consistent with previous years, a strong majority of Canadians agreed that it is important for VAC to recognize and honour Canadian Veterans and those who died in service through the presentation and care of memorials, cemeteries, and grave markers (92%) and that it is important that VAC recognize and honour deceased Canadian Veterans by providing funeral and burial assistance (91%). Smaller majorities agreed that they are satisfied with how VAC recognizes and honours Canadian Veterans and those who died in service through the presentation and care of memorials, cemeteries, and grave markers (64%) and with how VAC recognizes and honours Canadian Veterans through the provision of funeral and burial assistance (55%).

4. Notes to Reader

- All results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted.
- Percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding.
- In graphs:
 - “DK” stands for “Don’t know” and “NR” for “No response.”
 - Tracking data are presented where available. This survey was not conducted in 2009, 2013, or 2015.
 - Unless otherwise noted, all values are labelled in the stacked bar graphs.
- The number of respondents changes throughout the report because some questions were asked of sub-samples of survey respondents. Readers should be aware of this and exercise caution when interpreting results based on smaller numbers of respondents because the margins of error are higher. The higher the margins of error, the less reliable the survey results.
- Demographic differences are identified in the report. Only differences that are significant at the 95% confidence level and pertain to a sub-group sample size of more than n=30 are discussed in the report.
 - When regional differences are discussed in the report, note that the territories are grouped as follows: respondents from the Yukon Territory are grouped with British Columbia and respondents from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are grouped with the Prairies.
- The tabulated data is available under separate cover.

5. Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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