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Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week 2022: Survey of Canadians

Executive Summary

Prepared for Veterans Affairs Canada

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone survey of 1,002 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. Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department's remembrance programming. The objectives of this research were to measure 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 research results 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. Key Findings

Canadians' awareness of Veterans' Week and the importance attributed remain unchanged from 2020.

Awareness of Veterans' Week has not changed since the last iteration of this survey in 2020, when 57% of Canadians said they had heard of Veterans' Week. Consistent with previous years, close to nine in 10 Canadians (87%) think it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year, with two-thirds (67%) saying that it is very important. Among those who said it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year, the top reason offered, mentioned by 74%, was to honour and show respect for Canadian Veterans and those who died in service. Following this, approximately one-third of Canadians (36%) of those who think it is important that Veterans' Week be held each year provided reasons pertaining to history or remembrance. Relatively few (9%) 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 for over a decade.

Participation in Veterans' Week has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.

More than eight in 10 Canadians (86%) said they or members of their immediate family participated in Veterans' Week this year. This represents an increase of 14 percentage points since 2020, when remembrance activities were affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the start of a return to pre-pandemic participation levels. Between 2016 and 2019, highs of 88% to 92% of Canadians reported participation in Veterans' Week. Among Canadians who did participate in Veterans' Week this year, nearly half (47%) said they participated to honour and respect Canadian Veterans and those who died in service and approximately one-third (36%) said they participated for personal connections. This is consistent with previous years. In addition, 23% participated to focus on history and remembrance, an increase of 11% from 2020, and 8% participated because they believe in it/feel it is important.

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

Like previous years, wearing a poppy, mentioned by 76% of surveyed Canadians, remains the most popular way to recognize Veterans and participate in Veterans' Week activities. This is closely

followed by observing a moment of silence at 72%. In addition, 43% watched a Remembrance Day 2022 ceremony on TV, while smaller proportions participated on social media (31%; up from 22% in 2020) or attended a remembrance ceremony in their community (30%; up from 15% in 2020, a year in which participation was likely affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic).

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

Nine in 10 Canadians (90%) attributed importance to providing educational materials for schools, with 72% saying this is very important. Eight in 10 Canadians (82%) attributed importance to supporting and leading commemorative events in Canada, with just over half (58%) saying this is very important. Support for this initiative drops significantly when events are to be held outside of Canada, with only 50% attributing importance. Following this, similar proportions attributed importance to providing funding for commemorative projects (74%), posting remembrance content on social media (72%), and creating remembrance related ads (71%). Two-thirds of Canadians (65%) attributed importance to providing promotional materials, such as posters and pins, while the creation of virtual or online ceremonies for Veterans' Week was considered important by 62% of Canadians. Support for these remembrance initiatives remains stable among Canadians, with changes of three percent or less recorded between 2020 and 2022.

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

The results suggest that Canadians hold positive attitudes towards Veterans and the role played by Canada's military. More than nine in 10 Canadians agreed that Veterans and those who died in service should be recognized for their service to Canada (96%) and have made major contributions to our country (93%). Following this, more than eight in 10 Canadians agreed that participating in commemorative activities increases awareness of, and appreciation for, the contributions of Veterans and those who died in service (87%) and are proud of the role Canada's military played in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War (86%). Pride in Canada's military role declines somewhat when the focus is activities since the Korean War (79% indicated that they are proud of Canada's military role post-Korea). In addition, eight in 10 surveyed Canadians (82%) feel they demonstrate their appreciation of those who served our country and approximately three-quarters (76%) agreed that VAC effectively honours Veterans and preserves the memory of their achievements. Over time, Canadians' attitudes towards commemoration, Veterans and those who died in service have remained strong.

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 by presenting and looking after care of memorials, cemeteries, and grave markers (92%) and by providing funeral and burial assistance (92%). Smaller majorities agreed that they are satisfied with how VAC recognizes and honours Canadian Veterans and those who died in service by presenting and looking after care of memorials, cemeteries, and grave markers (67%) and by providing funeral and burial assistance (61%).

Most Canadians believe it is important for Canada to mark key military anniversaries and to recognize the contributions of Veterans and those who served Canada in more recent operations.

In total, 94% of surveyed Canadians attributed importance to marking anniversaries related to military conflicts, such as the 80th anniversary of the Second World War's Dieppe Raid, and 86%

attributed importance to marking anniversaries related to military efforts in Canada, such as the 25th anniversary of the Red River floods in Manitoba. Additionally, more than nine in 10 Canadians (95%) said it is important to recognize the contributions of Veterans and military personnel who served Canada in more recent operations, such as Canada's Mission in Afghanistan, humanitarian efforts and peace support operations around the world.

Subgroup differences were evident across most issues explored in the survey.

Subgroup variations were most consistent when looking at region, personal connections to Veterans, and immigration status. Respondents from Quebec were less likely to believe it is very important that Veterans' Week be held each year, less likely to have participated in Veterans' Week activities, and less likely to have attributed importance to most remembrance initiatives and to marking key anniversaries related to military conflicts. Compared to other Canadians, Veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and those who know a Veteran were more likely to be aware of, and to have participated in, Veterans' Week, and to have view as important remembrance and commemoration. Finally, those who immigrated to Canada were less likely to be aware of Veterans' Week and to have engaged in remembrance-related activities. However, after living in Canada for six or more years, awareness and engagement levels of those who immigrated to Canada became more similar to those born in Canada.

3. Methodology

A 14-minute random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was administered to 1,002 Canadian residents, 16 years of age or older, between November 14 and 24, 2022. The results of the survey can be considered representative of the population of Canadians aged 16 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.

4. Statement of Political Neutrality

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 *Communications Policy* 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.



Alethea Woods
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5. Contract Value

The contract value was \$59,015.15 (including HST).