Veteran Feedback Questionnaire

Improving VA's Communications Products

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Office of Strategic Engagement (OSE)

Aptive Resources

Agenda

- **Overview**
- **Promotion**
- **Responses**

Overview

Veteran Feedback Questionnaire

In April and May 2021, OSE shared a customer satisfaction questionnaire with Veterans who are either subscribed to VBA's GovDelivery email bulletins or follow VBA's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).

Using the SurveyMonkey platform, OSE collected **35,050** voluntary responses from Veterans and their beneficiaries. The results provide OSE with data that will be used to inform outreach decisions, improve existing communication materials, and enhance how VBA communicates with Veterans, service members, and their families.

The feedback questionnaire consisted of **16 questions** and took about **5 minutes** to complete.

Questionnaire Promotion

Questionnaire Promotion

GovDelivery – Email Marketing

Using GovDelivery, a digital email marketing platform, OSE emailed the voluntary questionnaire to VBA's **4.9 million subscribers**. Prior to this questionnaire, OSE had little to no information about these recipients since receiving their email addresses from VA in March 2018.

81% Completion Rate

Veterans Benefits Newsletter

OSE featured the feedback questionnaire in the footer at the end of the Veterans Benefits Newsletter in April and May 2021.

4,957 Recipients

849 Responses

Questionnaire Bulletin

On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, OSE sent a special bulletin that featured only the questionnaire link.
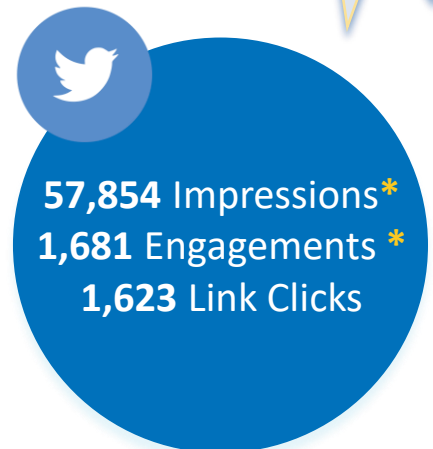
111,557 Recipients

33,657 Responses

Questionnaire Promotion

Social Media – Instagram, Facebook, Twitter

Using VBA's social media accounts, OSE shared the voluntary questionnaire with VBA's **744,514 followers,** which resulted in **544 responses.**

76% Completion Rate

40,448 Reach*
2,031 Engagements*
343 Link Clicks

22,846 Reach*
28,036 Impressions*
330 Link Clicks

57,854 Impressions*
1,681 Engagements *
1,623 Link Clicks

* **Engagements** – Number of engaged individuals who have clicked anywhere on a post.
* **Impressions** – Number of times a user is served a post in their timeline or search results.
* **Link Clicks** – Number of times individuals use a promoted link.
* **Reach** – Number of people who had any content from or about the page enter their screen.

Feedback Questions and Responses

Question #1

Would you like to voluntarily provide your demographic information to help improve VA communications materials?

GovDelivery

- I volunteer to provide my demographic information to help improve VA communication materials.

- I do not volunteer to provide my demographic information to help improve VA communication materials.

17.78%

82.22%
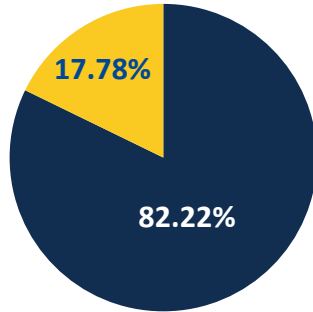
Social Media

- I volunteer to provide my demographic information to help improve VA communication materials.

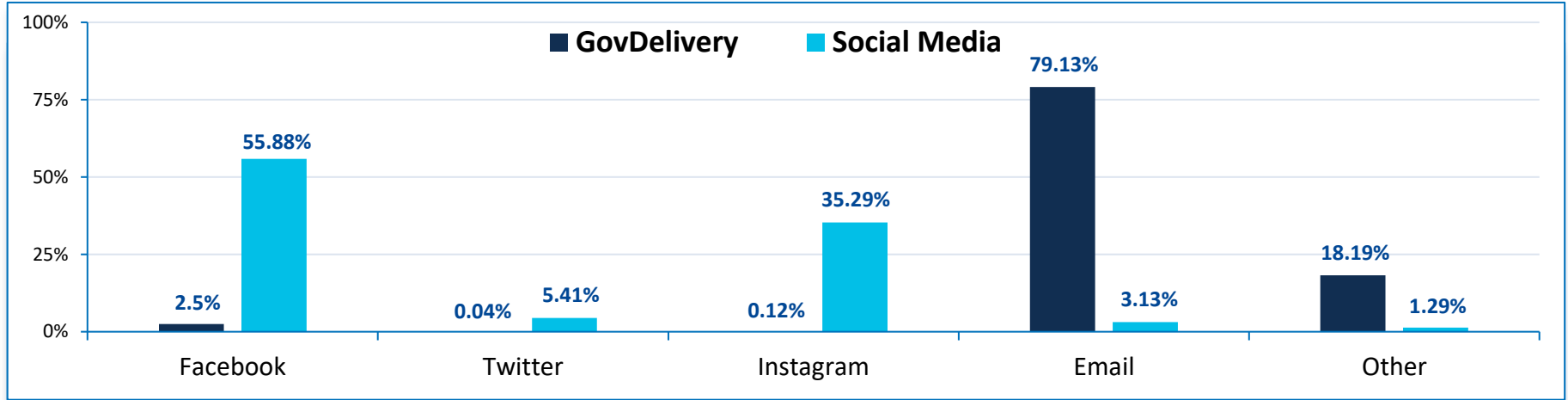- I do not volunteer to provide my demographic information to help improve VA communication materials.

15.81%

84.19%
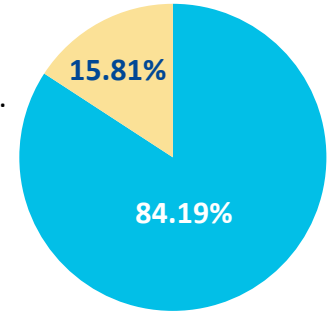
Key Takeaway: Most participants volunteered to share their demographic information.

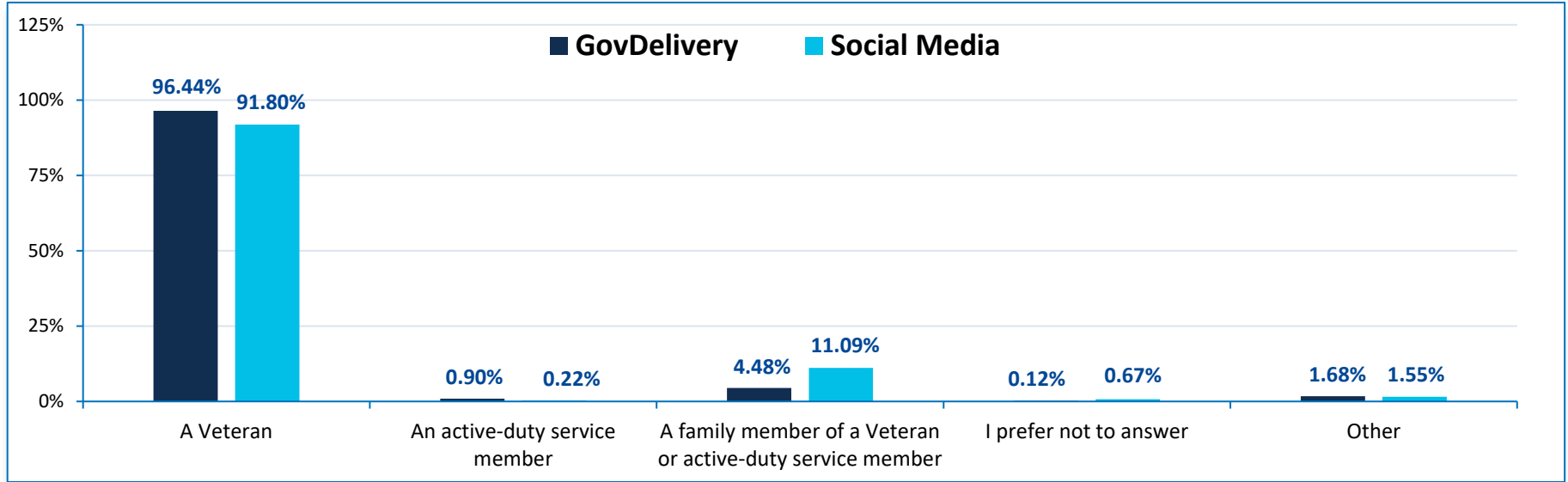# Question #2

How did you hear about this questionnaire?

* Due to unanticipated user and/or technical errors, some respondents may have selected an inaccurate distribution channel.

* For the GovDelivery questionnaire, most comments associated with "Other" were "email," indicating respondents were unclear about the differences between the Veterans Benefits Newsletter email and a more traditional email from VBA.

Key Takeaway: The two main sources for participation were **GovDelivery** and **Facebook**.
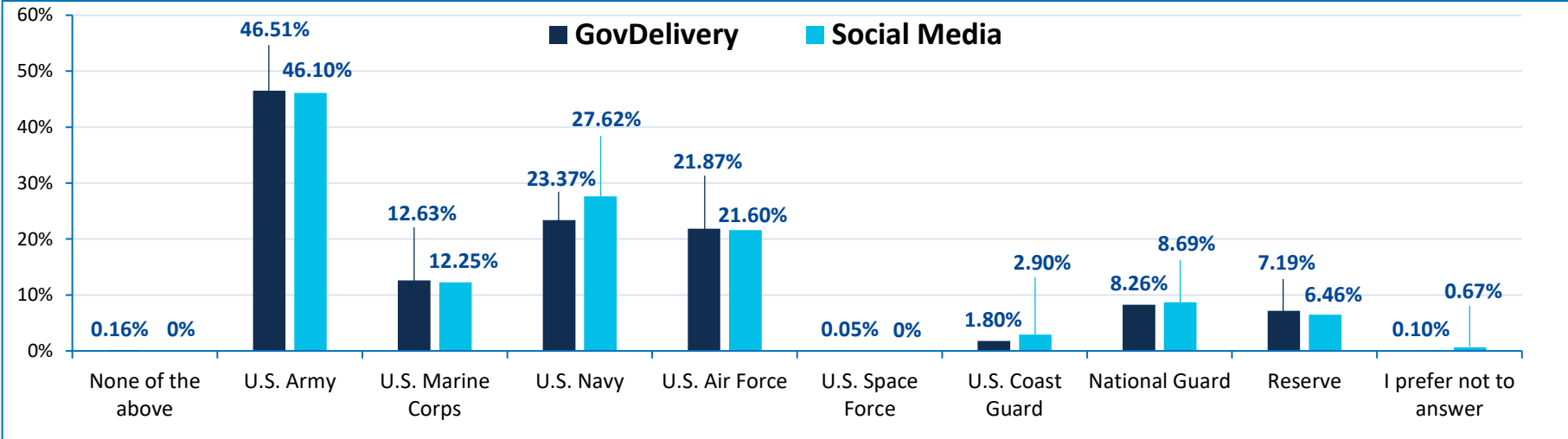
Question #3

I am (select all that apply):

Key Takeaway: Most participants were **Veterans** themselves or **family members** of a Veteran or service member.

Question #4

Please indicate in which branch(es) you or your family member currently serve or previously served (select all that apply).
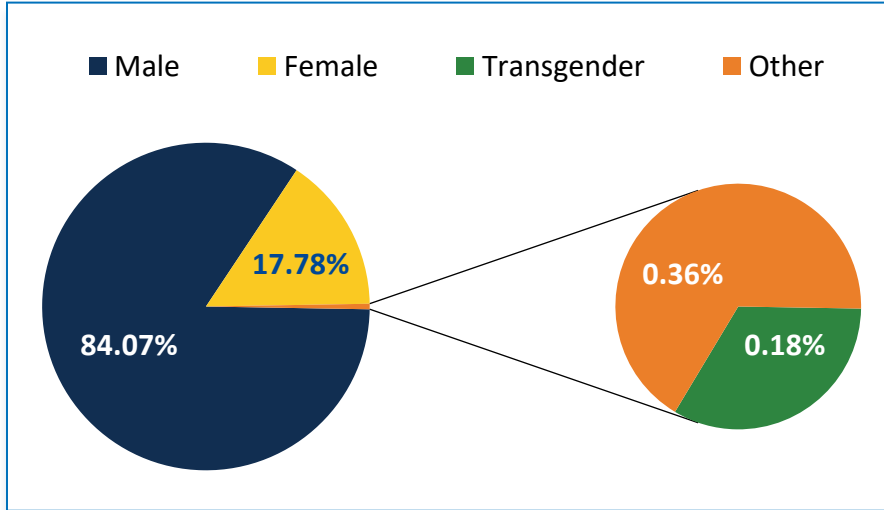

Key Takeaways: Almost half of participants serve(d) in the **U.S. Army**, which is the largest military branch. Participants who serve(d) in the **U.S. Navy** were the next largest group, followed by the U.S. Air Force.

Question #5

What is your gender?

GovDelivery

Legend: ■ Male ■ Female ■ Transgender ■ Other

84.07% Male
17.78% Female
0.36% Other
0.18% Transgender

Social Media

Legend: ■ Male ■ Female ■ Transgender ■ Other
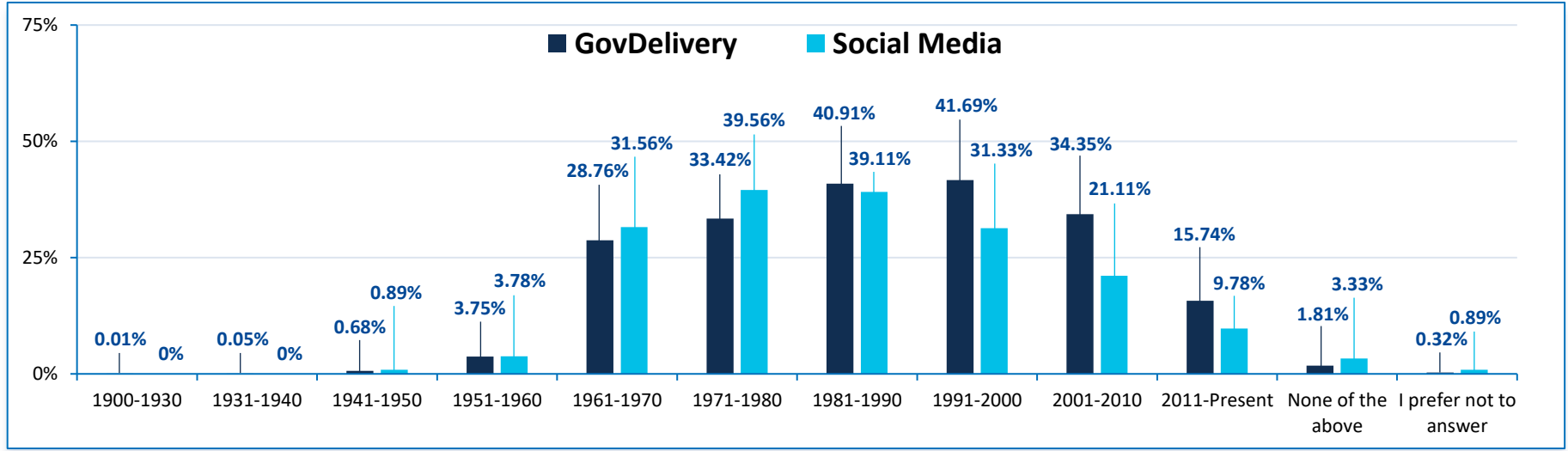
75.28% Male
23.61% Female
0.89% Other
0.22% Transgender
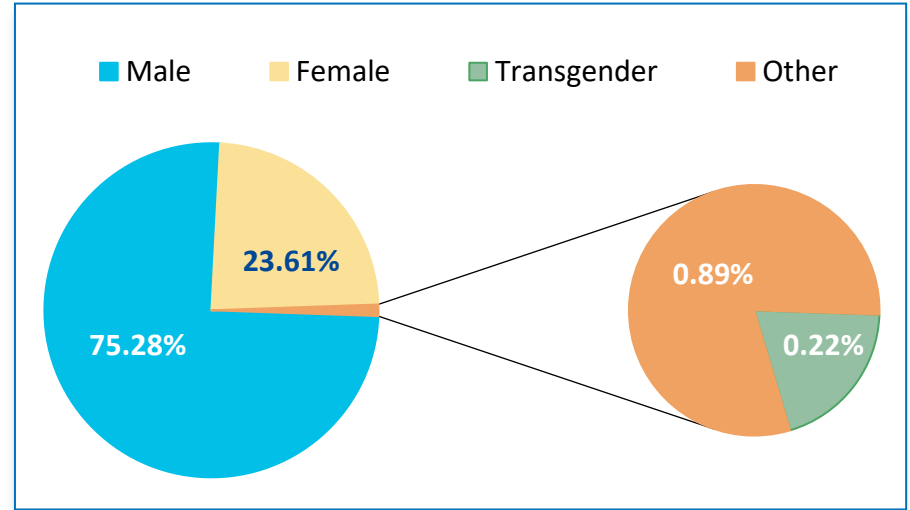
Key Takeaway: Males made up more than **75%** of the participants.

Question #6

What years did you serve in the military?

Bar chart comparing GovDelivery (dark blue) and Social Media (light blue) responses by service year range:

| Time Period	GovDelivery	Social Media
1900-1930	0.01%	0%
1931-1940	0.05%	0%
1941-1950	0.68%	0.89%
1951-1960	3.75%	3.78%
1961-1970	28.76%	31.56%
1971-1980	33.42%	39.56%
1981-1990	40.91%	39.11%
1991-2000	41.69%	31.33%
2001-2010	34.35%	21.11%
2011-Present	15.74%	9.78%
None of the above	1.81%	3.33%
I prefer not to answer	0.32%	0.89%

* Participants were able to select more time period, if applicable, which accounts for why the total percentage is greater than 100.

Key Takeaway: Over **70%** of participants served between **1971 and 2000**.
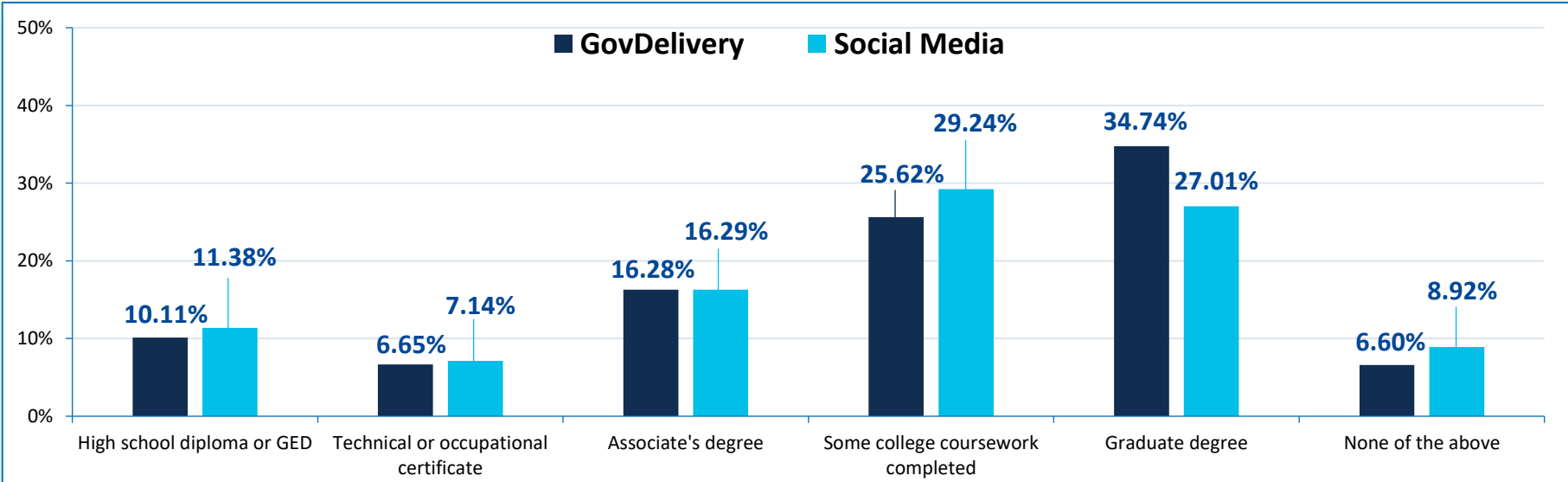
Question #7

How old are you?
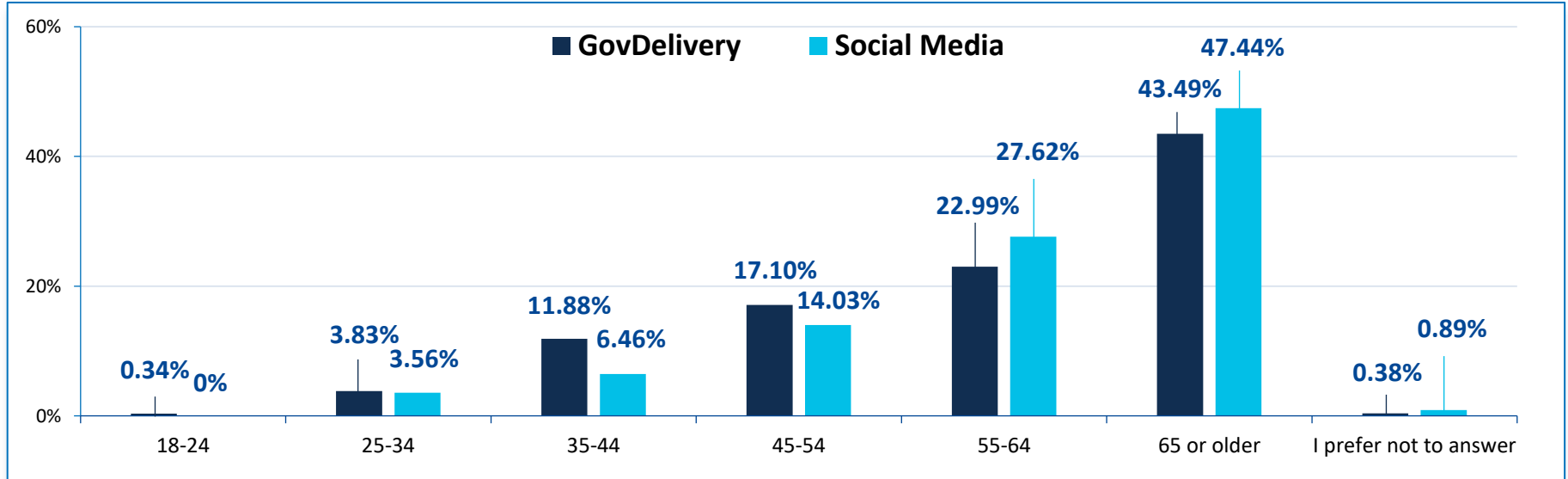
Key Takeaways: More than **40%** of participants are **over the age of 65.** The next largest age group was **55- to 64-year-olds** who made up more than **20%** of responses.

Question #8

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

GovDelivery ■ **Social Media**

| Category	GovDelivery	Social Media
High school diploma or GED	10.11%	11.38%
Technical or occupational certificate	6.65%	7.14%
Associate's degree	16.28%	16.29%
Some college coursework completed	25.62%	29.24%
Graduate degree	34.74%	27.01%
None of the above	6.60%	8.92%

Key Takeaways: At least **25%** of participants have completed some college coursework, and more than **25%** have obtained a graduate degree.
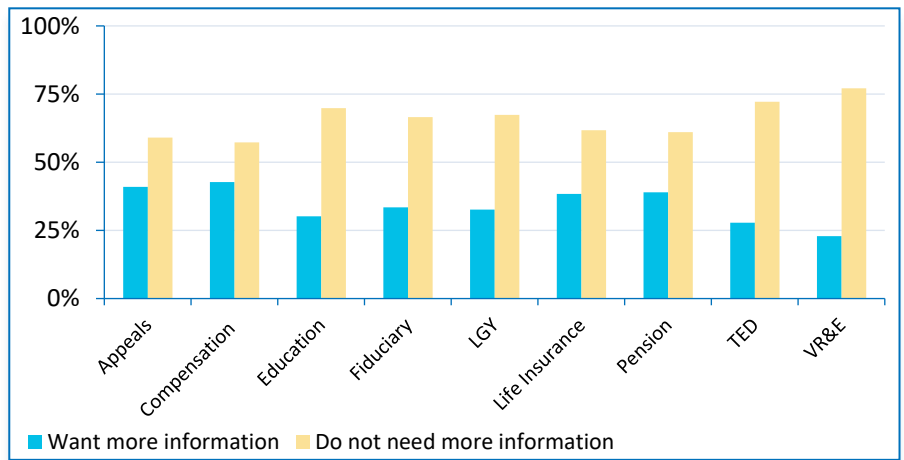
Question #9

Please indicate whether or not you would like more information on any of the following non-health benefits and services.
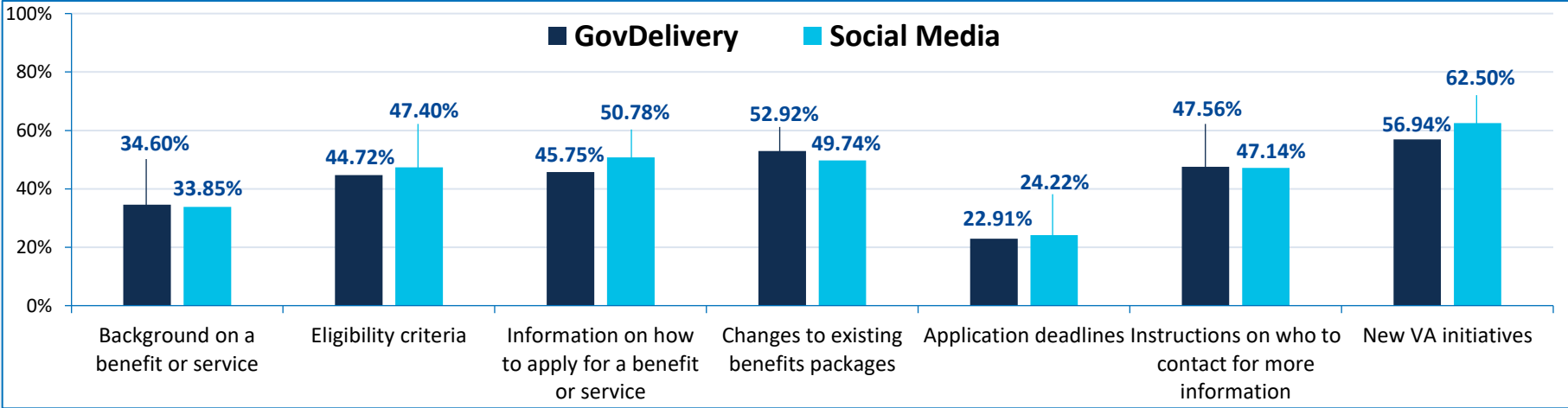

GovDelivery
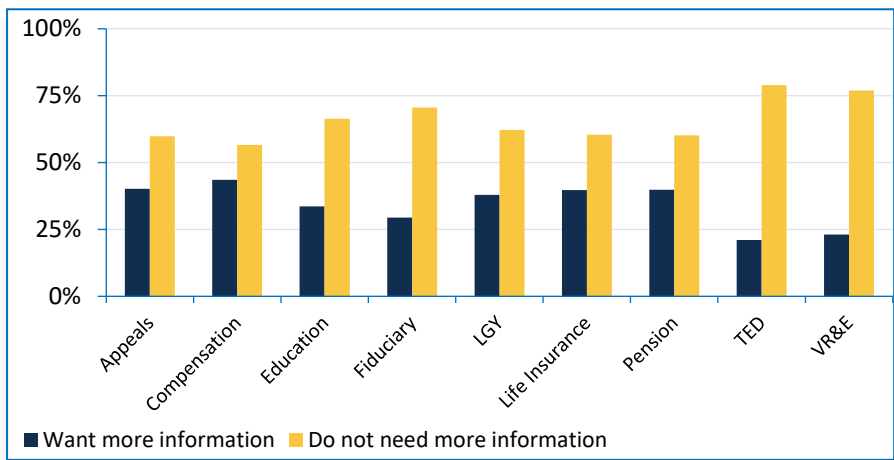
Social Media

Key Takeaways: Over **50%** of participants would like more information on **appeals**, **compensation, life insurance**, and **pension** benefits. Participants who answered they don't need additional information may feel they have enough information on specific benefits already.

Question #10

Please indicate which non-health benefits information is important to you. Select all that apply.*

Chart legend: GovDelivery (dark blue), Social Media (light blue)

Category	GovDelivery	Social Media
Background on a benefit or service	34.60%	33.85%
Eligibility criteria	44.72%	47.40%
Information on how to apply for a benefit or service	45.75%	50.78%
Changes to existing benefits packages	52.92%	49.74%
Application deadlines	22.91%	24.22%
Instructions on who to contact for more information	47.56%	47.14%
New VA initiatives	56.94%	62.50%

* This question included an open-ended option that allowed respondents to voluntarily provide additional information.

Key Takeaway: Participants are most interested in new **VA initiatives**, **benefit updates**, and **application information**.
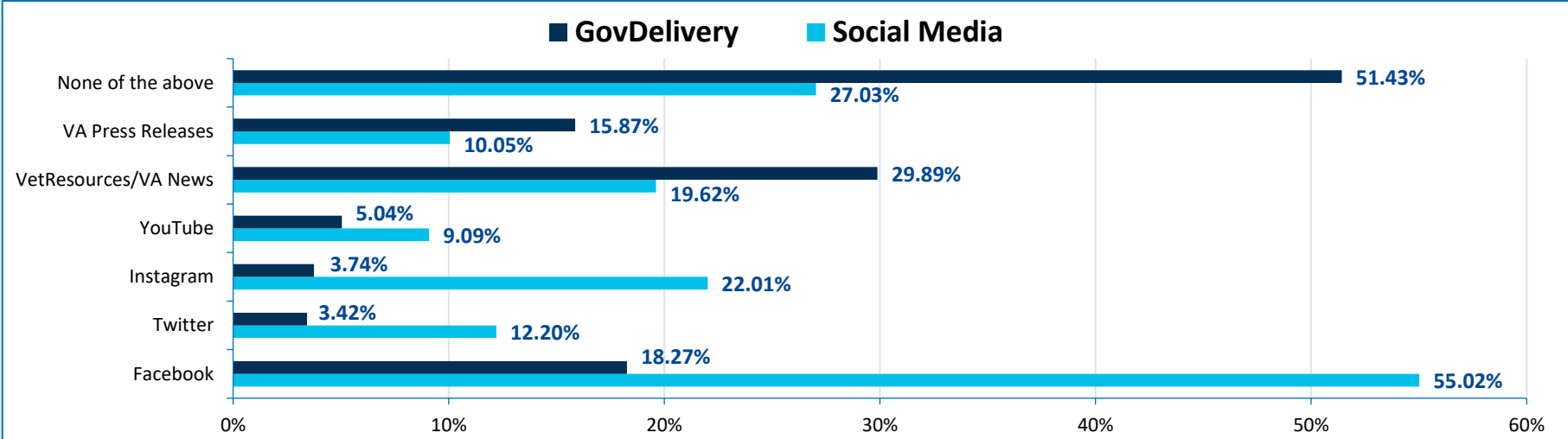
Question #11

Please indicate which of the following channels you would use to obtain information about VA's non-health benefits and services. Select all that apply.

■ GovDelivery ■ Social Media
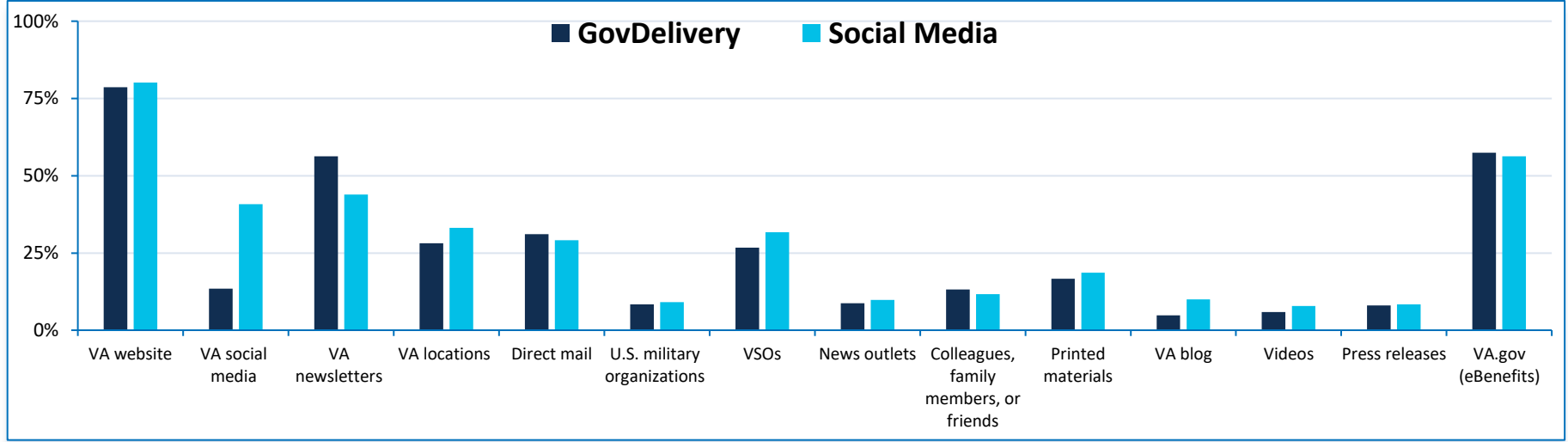
Key Takeaway: Most participants obtain information from **VA websites** and **newsletters**.

Question #12

Please indicate if you follow or are subscribed to the following accounts. Select all that apply.


■ GovDelivery ■ Social Media

Category	GovDelivery	Social Media
None of the above	51.43%	27.03%
VA Press Releases	15.87%	10.05%
VetResources/VA News	29.89%	19.62%
YouTube	5.04%	9.09%
Instagram	3.74%	22.01%
Twitter	3.42%	12.20%
Facebook	18.27%	55.02%

Key Takeaways: The most popular channel among participants is **Facebook**, followed by **VetResources/VA News**.
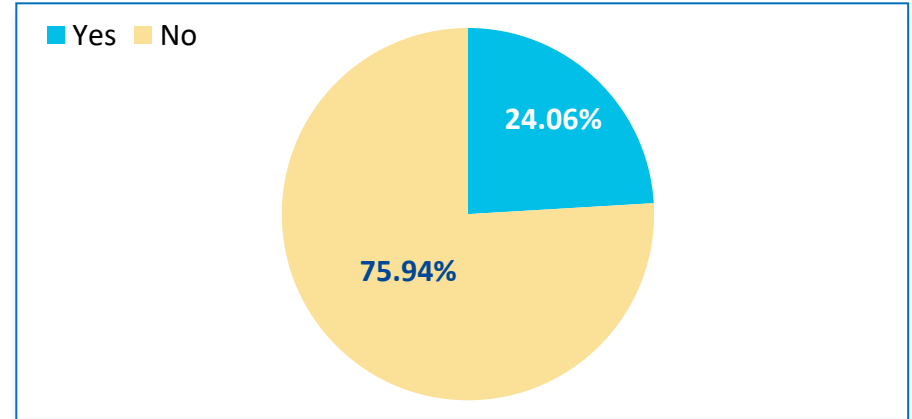
Question #13

Have you experienced any challenges that prevent you from getting the information you need about VA's non-health benefits and services?*

GovDelivery

■ Yes ■ No

17.62%

82.38%

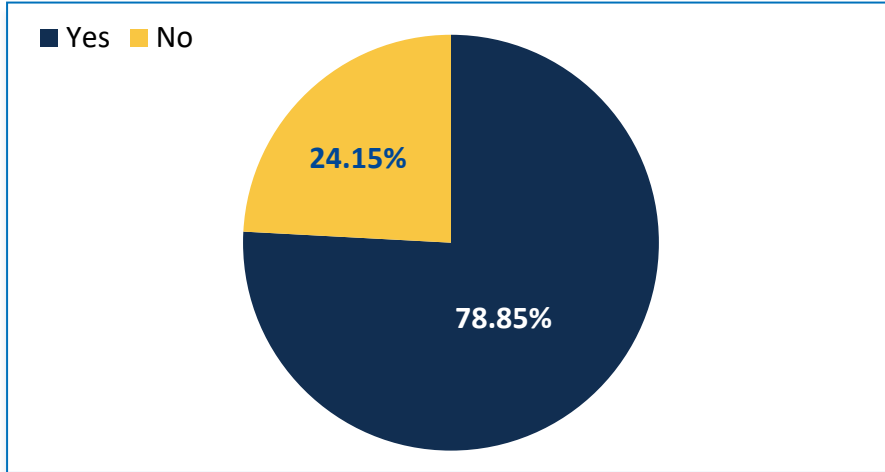### Social Media

■ Yes ■ No

24.06%

75.94%
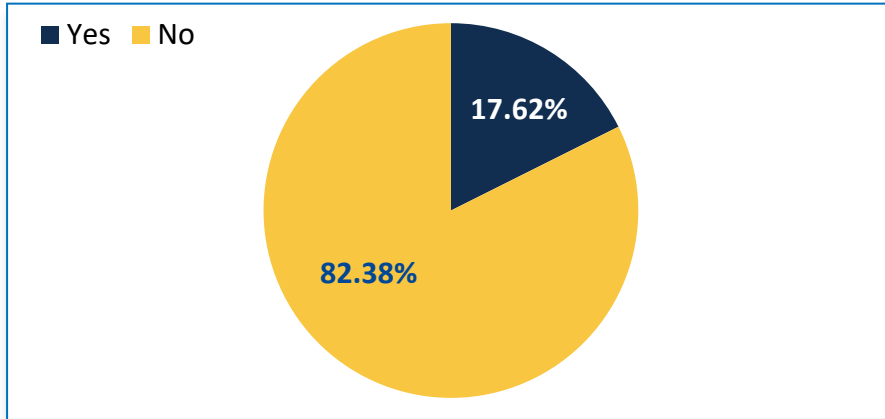
* This question included an open-ended option that allowed respondents to voluntarily provide additional information.

Key Takeaway: Over **75%** of participants have **not** had difficulty learning about VA's non-health benefits and services.
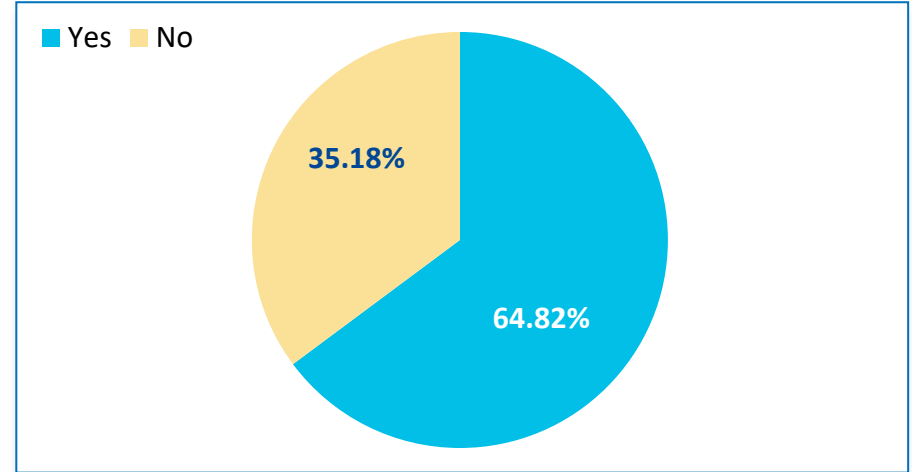
Question #14

Do you trust VA to give you accurate information about your benefits and services?*

GovDelivery

■ Yes ■ No

24.15%

78.85%

Social Media

■ Yes ■ No

35.18%

64.82%

* This question included an open-ended option that allowed respondents to voluntarily provide additional information.

Key Takeaways: Most participants **expressed trust in VA** to provide accurate information on benefits and services.

Question #15

How would you describe your experience with VA when accessing information about your non-health related benefits and services?
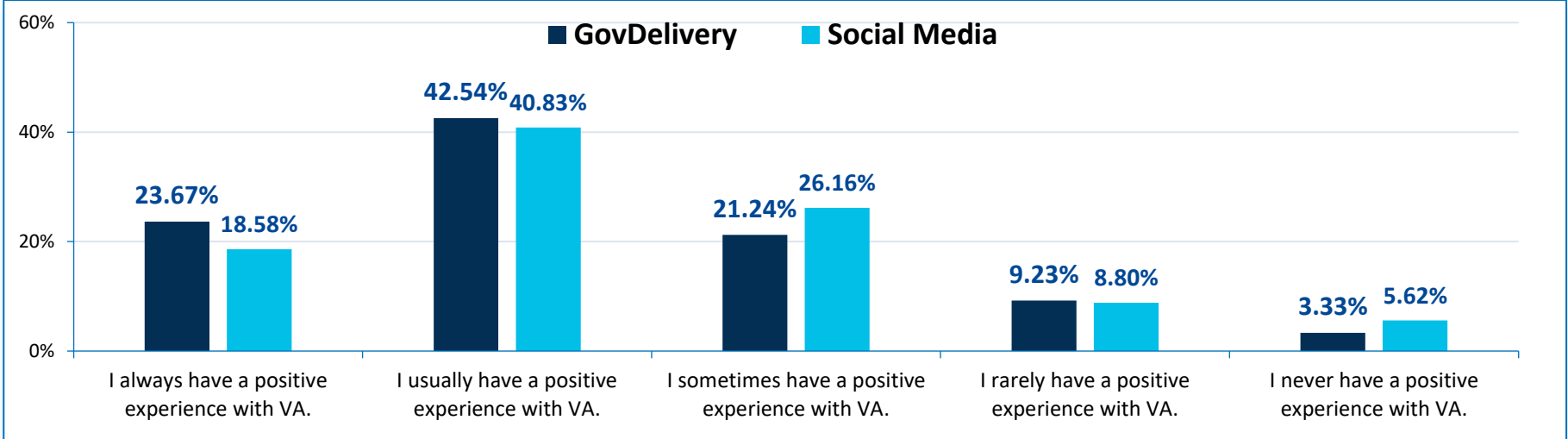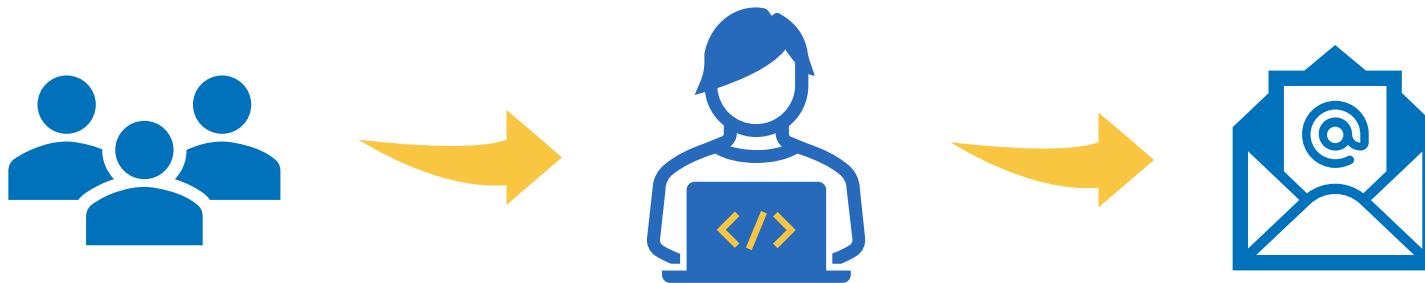

Key Takeaway: Over **55%** of participants **always** or **usually** have positive experiences with VA.
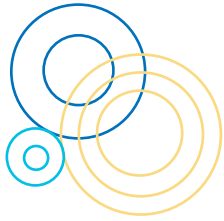
Question #16

Can we contact you directly to discuss future communications materials that are produced?*

* This was an open-ended question that allowed respondents to voluntarily provide their email address if they wished to be added to the Veterans Benefits Newsletter subscription list.
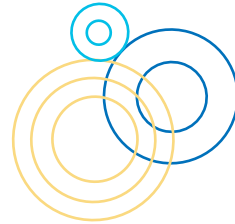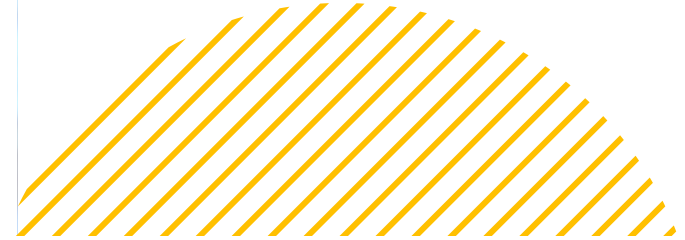
Thank You!
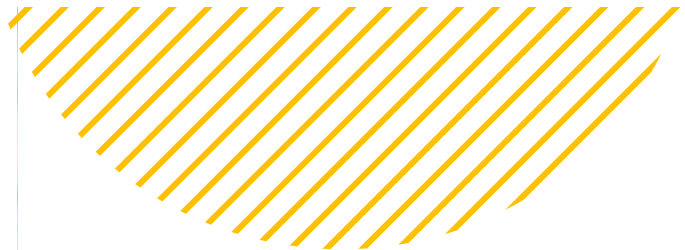
Methodology

Methodology

Survey Overview

In April and May 2021, SE shared a customer satisfaction questionnaire with Veterans who are either subscribed to VBA's GovDelivery email bulletins or follow VBA's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).

Using the SurveyMonkey platform, SE collected **35,050** voluntary responses from Veterans and their beneficiaries. The results provide SE with data that will be used to inform outreach decisions, improve existing communication materials, and enhance how VBA communicates with Veterans, service members, and their families.

The feedback questionnaire consisted of **16 questions** and took about **5 minutes** to complete.

Methodology

Open-Ended Comments

As part of VBA's customer satisfaction questionnaire, recipients could provide open-ended comments on questions 10, 13, and 14.

Question #10	Question #13	Question #14
Please indicate which non-health benefits information is important to you. Select all that apply.	**Have you experienced any challenges that prevent you from getting the information you need about VA's non-health benefits and services?**	**Do you trust VA to give you accurate information about your benefits and services?**

SE digitally and manually coded **9,735** open-ended comments on these questions to determine their **aim**, **meaning**, and relevant **VA benefit program** (if applicable). More information on the aims is described on later slides.

Methodology

Analyzing Responses

Open-ended responses were digitally analyzed through **identifying keywords** and sorted into main categories, including:

- **Desired outcome or aim**: Processes, Functionality, and Distribution.
- **Benefit focus**: Disability, Education, Housing, Pension, Career, Insurance, Burial, and Financial Support were all main focus areas or categories.
- **Other**: Comments that did not fit into a specific benefit category, but were more general in nature.

With the aims and topics identified, open-ended comments were then deeply analyzed to determine reoccurring themes and trending topic areas or audience concerns.
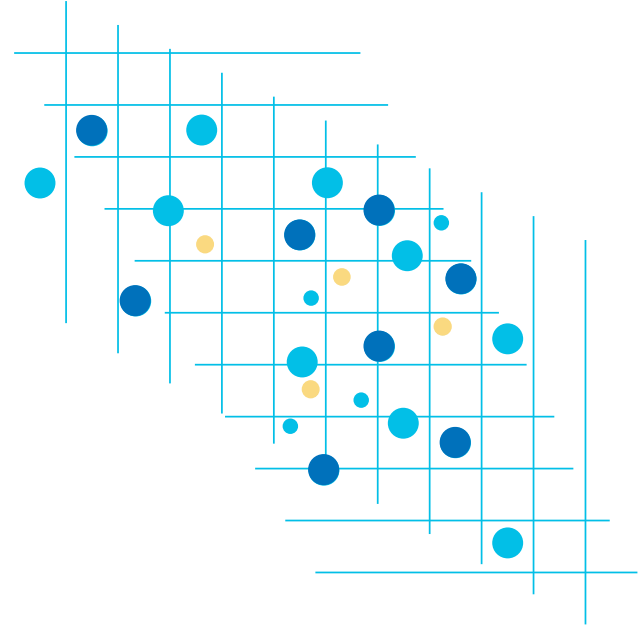
High-Level Trends
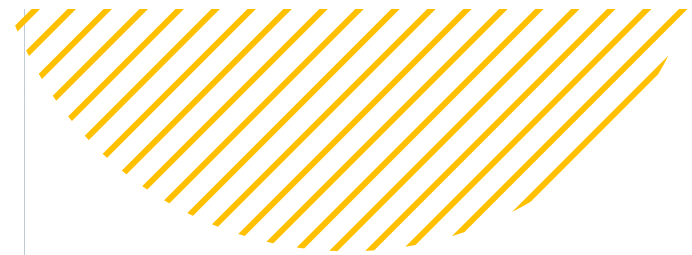
High-Level Trends

Overall Themes

Overall, there were several reoccurring themes found throughout the analysis process, including a:

- **General distrust** for VA due to the **lack of information** they are provided.
- **Frustration with their ability to speak directly to employees** who can provide **accurate** and **helpful** information regarding **benefits and processes**.

*See slides 9-13 for more information on these trends.

High-Level Trends

Takeaways

Common responses to VBA's customer satisfaction questionnaire identified the following trends:

Many Veterans are **unaware of the non-health benefits** available to them. **More than 1,000** comments related solely to health care benefits.

67% of open-ended comments had to do with general topics and frustrations around **receiving information or contacting VA**.

63% of participants had concerns, comments, and questions regarding **VA benefits processes**, with **over 800 comments** directly mentioning the **claims process**.

VBA should better consider the **needs of all Veterans**, including those who **do not have access to a computer, reliable internet, or social media**.

High-Level Trends

Keywords

The following keywords were commonly seen across the entire grouping of open-ended comments.

High-Level Trends

Comment Breakdown

Comments applied to two high-level topic areas: **benefits** and **other**. Benefits-related comments included responses that directly addressed specific benefit topics. These results were further analyzed and broken down into specific sub-topics to identify benefit area.

Comments marked as "other" included responses that did not specifically include a benefit, but rather, high-level, generic commentary on topics such as communication issues, website functionality, and simple language (e.g., "I don't trust VA").

Benefits 33%

Other 67%
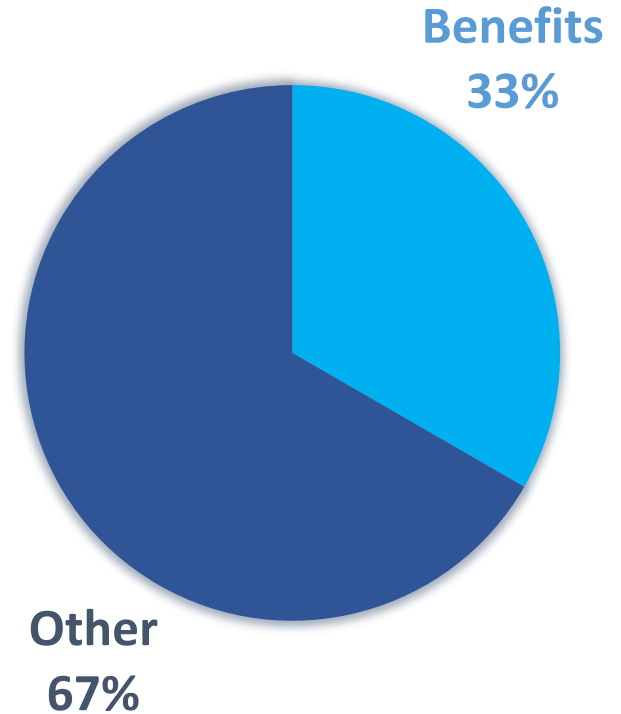
High-Level Trends

Benefits Comments

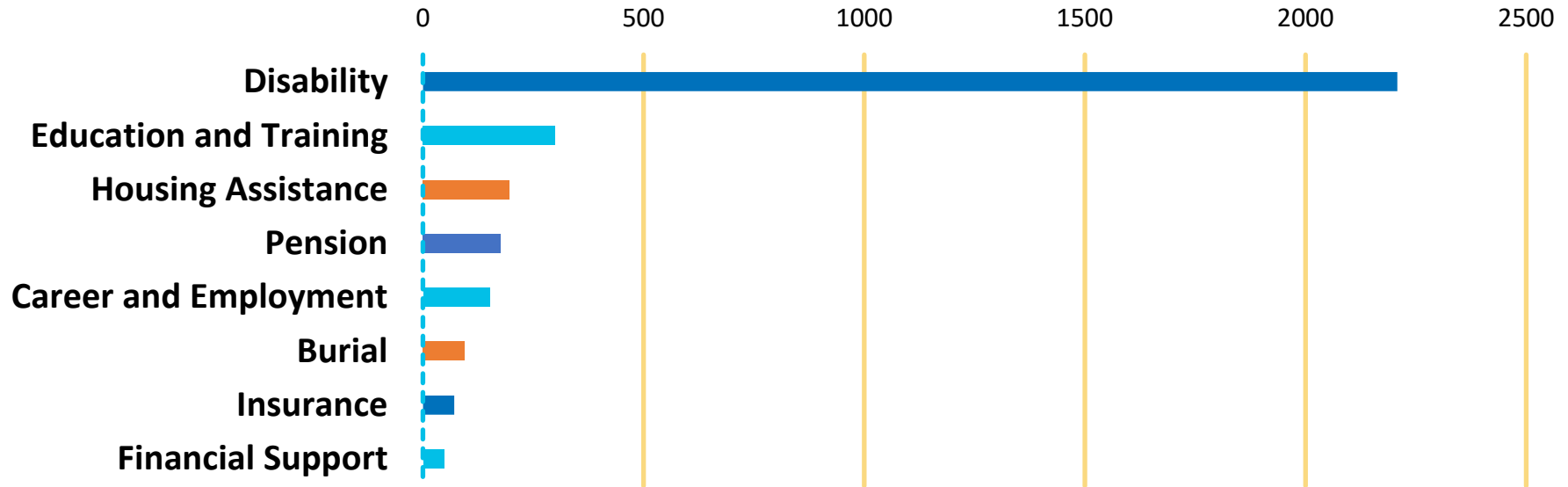The following chart provides a look at which benefits were mentioned most across the **3,245** comments related to benefits.

Benefit Topic Breakdown

Benefit	Value
Disability	~2200
Education and Training	~320
Housing Assistance	~200
Pension	~180
Career and Employment	~160
Burial	~90
Insurance	~70
Financial Support	~40

High-Level Trends

Benefit Topic Trends

Benefit-related responses to VBA's customer satisfaction questionnaire identified the following trends:

33% or 3,245 comments specifically mentioned benefits topics and access to or communication of information, process confusion, beneficiary eligibility, and more.

Disability benefits made up **68%** of comments. Within disability comments, the words "**claim**," "**caregiver**," and "**process**" were mentioned most.

Exposure-related benefits made up **8%** of comments related to disability benefits, with the words "**contaminated water**" and "**Agent Orange**" mentioned most.

300 comments focused on education, with **33%** mentioning the GI Bill and needing a **better understanding of their GI Bill** benefits or application process.

Findings and Recommendations

Findings and Recommendations

Identifying Aims

To identify the direction or desired outcome of the comments, further analyze trends, and develop recommendations, comments were sorted into several aim categories: **Processes**, **Functionality**, and **Distribution**.

Processes

Comments that address back-end VBA processes that are not necessarily related to communications.

Distribution

Comments that specifically address how information is shared with audiences.

**Functionality**

Comments that specifically address the user experience of a platform or tool.

Findings and Recommendations

Aims Breakdown

Each comment was assigned a primary aim or desired outcome. This approach provides a high-level breakdown of the topic areas VBA communication products should prioritize and address.

Processes 63%

Distribution 30%

Functionality 7%
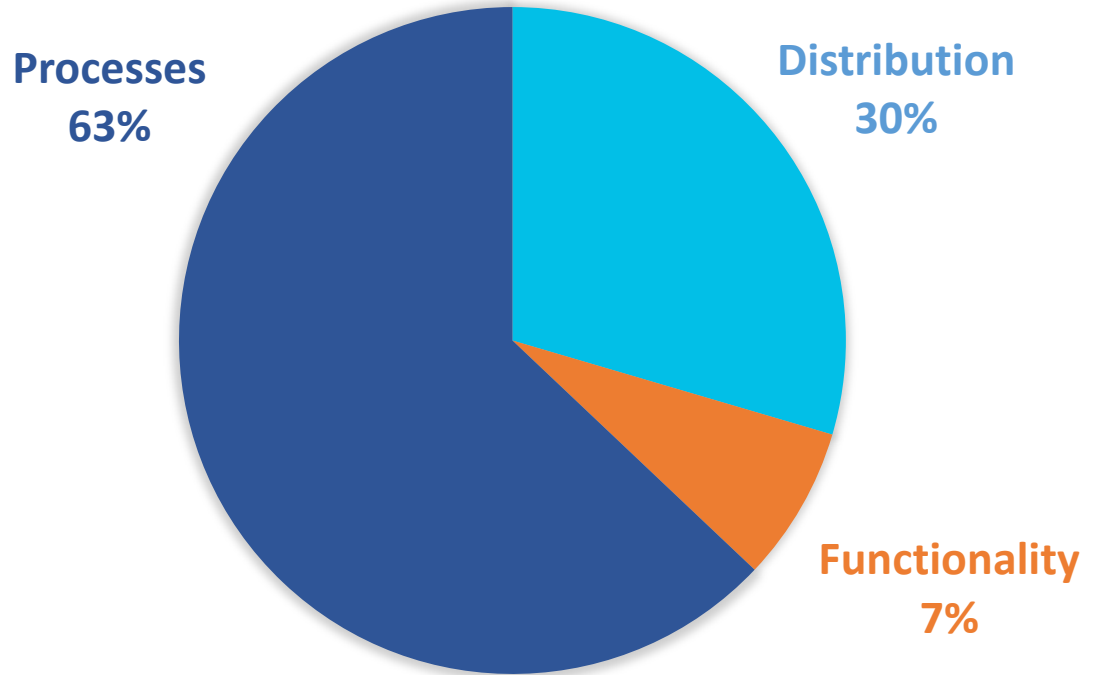
Findings and Recommendations

Processes

Of our Veteran audience, **63%** do not understand VBA or benefit processes and need more information specifically addressing the claims process.

Trends	Recommendations
Respondents requested more information on VA's claims and appeals processes. The claims process was mentioned more than 800 times (24%) out of the 3,245 benefits-related comments.	• Develop fact sheets with a process map explaining the claims process step-by-step. • Create external and internal blog posts clearly detailing the claims process and how to get assistance. • Ensure a communications plan is developed by SE to tackle messaging and plan of action for addressing claims process. • Continue to promote resources through social media channels and the Veterans Benefits Newsletter while supplementing promotion of newly developed products in special newsletter bulletins. • Collaborate with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and other VA-approved agents to establish effective messaging and develop fresh ideas for engaging with and guiding our Veteran audience throughout the claims process.
Over 150 comments (4%) expressed confusion surrounding eligibility requirements for VA benefit programs.	• Develop fact sheets, infographics, or videos to clearly explain eligibility requirements for each VA benefit program and list all materials Veterans and their beneficiaries need to apply (if applicable). • Facilitate live events on social media channels (e.g., Facebook Live, Twitter Live) to explain eligibility for specific benefits.

*Unless otherwise noted, these trends are based off an analysis of all comments.

Findings and Recommendations

Processes (continued)

Trends	Recommendations
More than 2,200 (68%) of benefits-comments were related to Disability, with over 200 comments (6%) indicating confusion how disability ratings are determined and how to get it increased.	• Publish external blogs and an op-ed from VBA executive leadership explaining how Veterans' disability ratings are determined. • Produce an infographic and a video that explains the steps Veterans need to complete in order to upgrade a disability rating.
Respondents requested information on VA processes related to burial benefits, with 235 comments (7%) expressing confusion about how to access burial and memorial benefits as well as what is needed from surviving family.	• Create external blogs explaining burial and memorial benefits with an in-depth overview of what military family members can expect from the process. • Promote VA recommended memorial or funeral arrangement resources, possibly through partnering with VSOs. • Share relevant information and materials through social media channels and the Veterans Benefits Newsletter to increase awareness of burial benefits.
Over 250 comments (7%) mentioned records, with many suggesting a lack of understanding regarding how to request, find, replace, or update records to include how to update personal information (e.g., address change, name change, contact information).	• Create a video to share on social media channels and in a special bulletin of the Veterans Benefits Newsletter to explain how to request, find, replace, or update records. • Partner with Transition Assistance Program (TAP) leadership to develop an online TAP module that explains how Veterans can manage their records. Promote the course on social media, through blogs, and in the Veterans Benefits Newsletter when complete. • Develop a simple fact sheet solely focused on records management and personal information updates that clearly provides the correct links to manage, update, view, or pull information as needed.

*Unless otherwise noted, these trends are based off an analysis of all comments.

Findings and Recommendations

Distribution

Of our Veteran audience, **30%** specifically addressed distribution issues in their comments, suggesting there are several areas of improvement related to communicating more effectively.

Trend	Recommendation
VBA must better consider underserved Veteran populations (e.g., those with posttraumatic stress disorder, overseas Veterans, or elderly Veterans) who may not be tech-savvy or do not have regular access to VA websites, U.S. communications, or social media. Over 100 comments mentioned various reasons for lack of access to non-health benefits information online.	• Develop communications materials that VBA can share with VA regional offices and medical centers to increase awareness within this demographic and help with the application process offline or in-person. • Develop communications materials (such as fact sheets or direct mail postcards) designed to be physically mailed to underserved Veteran populations that not only provide benefits information, but also describe how Veterans can apply offline or receive help applying.
Many Veterans are unaware of the non-health benefits available to them. Over 1,000 comments related solely to health care benefits.	• Collaborate with VA partners and continue cross-promoting social media channels in the Veterans Benefits Newsletter to ensure Veterans who are online are aware of all the resources available to learn more about non-heath benefits. • Work with VSOs and other community partners to share non-health benefit resources. • Coordinate with VA Digital Media Team to ensure promotion of non-health benefits and newsletter subscription throughout VA social media channels and digital products.

*Unless otherwise noted, these trends are based off an analysis of all comments.

Findings and Recommendations

Distribution (continued)

Trends	Recommendations
There were 300 education-focused comments (9%), 33% of which mentioned the GI Bill. Overall, education was the second most mentioned benefit topic.	• Partner with different GI Bill-approved schools across the country to promote VA education resources and materials both online and on campus. • Develop external blogs and videos that focus on the student Veteran experience and assistance programs available both from VA and partnering VSOs. • Continue to focus social media messaging on GI Bill messaging and processes.
Over 500 comments (16%) mentioned difficulty understanding the content on the website and needing benefits information explained to them in simpler terms and plain language.	• Complete federal plain language trainings (e.g., from plainlanguage.gov) to ensure all content is written in a way that can be clearly understood by all audiences. • Run readability statistics on all content to ensure it is as close as possible to VA's content principles. • Develop benefits 101 videos (e.g., such as the Compensation 101 series) to be shared through blog posts, VBA's social media channels, and the Veterans Benefits Newsletter.

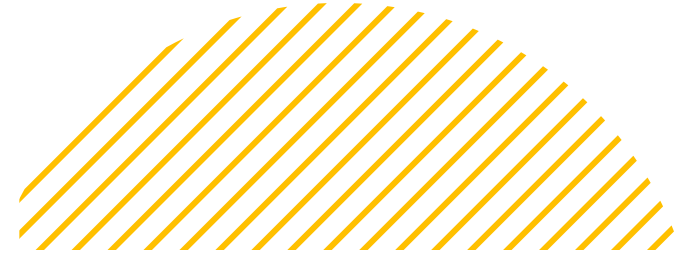*Unless otherwise noted, these trends are based off an analysis of all comments.

Findings and Recommendations

Functionality

Of our Veteran audience, **7%** specifically mentioned functionality issues, mainly addressing frustration navigating the different VA websites.

Trend	Recommendation
The keyword "website" was mentioned over 300 times, with comments specifically indicating confusion about VA websites information not being up-to-date or that links are broken.	• Strengthen internal partnerships with website content managers for VA websites (e.g., VA.gov, benefits.va.gov, ebenefits.va.gov) to maintain up-to-date information and resource links for external audiences.
Participants expressed difficulty contacting VA representatives in 145 comments. Comments also suggest that there is a common frustration with contacting VA and receiving accurate information.	• Promote VA contact and outreach resources available through VBA's social media channels and Veterans Benefits Newsletter to increase awareness. • Develop internal blogs to guide VA employees on how to help Veterans get their personalized questions answered.

*Unless otherwise noted, these trends are based off an analysis of all comments.

Thank You!