

OUR CARE

2019

A Report Evaluating Veterans Health Care

September 2019

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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2019 VFW Our Care

A Report on Veterans' Options, Preferences, and Experiences with VA Health Care

By the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.

September 25, 2019



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BACKGROUND:

In April 2014, whistleblowers brought to light instances of potential fraud and manipulation within the Department of Veterans Affairs that have since led to changes in executive leadership and a wide array of proposals to overhaul the VA health care system.

Since secret patient waiting lists at VA medical centers throughout the country came to light, the VFW has diligently worked to not only assist veterans affected by delays in accessing VA care, but worked to assess VA's ability to deliver timely, quality care to the veterans who have earned it and advocate for improvement that would ensure the VA health care system provider the care veterans have earned and deserve.

Through this work, the VFW has conducted eight surveys and published six reports on the state of VA health care as part of the VFW's "Our Care" series, outlining specific recommendations designed to improve the delivery of care to the veterans' community through improvements to customer service, consistency in care-delivery and access, and employment and accountability processes for VA employees. To read any of the VFW's prior reports and to monitor our efforts on health care reform, visit www.vfw.org/VAwatch.

The VFW is proud to have worked with Congress, VA and other veterans organizations for more than four years to analyze, improve, and build on lessons learned from the Veterans Choice Program and other veterans' health care innovations. To evaluate progress and the implementation of the VFW-supported *VA MISSION Act of 2018*, the VFW launched a survey this summer designed to evaluate veterans' options, experiences, and preferences of veterans who are eligible and use VA health care.

The survey was primarily distributed through the VFW's Action Corps, which is a grassroots network of VFW members and supporters who have opted to stay engaged on federal legislation, benefits, and programs that impact veterans, service members, and their families. The link to the Survey Monkey operated survey was also shared on the VFW's social media pages. The survey was logic based, which presented respondents questions based on their answers to previous questions. For example, respondents who reported having scheduled a VA health care appointment after June 6, 2019, were asked different questions regarding community care than those who reporting having used VA health care before the implementation of the *VA MISSION Act of 2018*.

The following report is the VFW's analysis of the veterans' health care landscape based on responses from a diverse cross-section of military veterans. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

OPTIONS:

As with previous “Our Care” reports following the VA health care crisis, the first step the VFW took in evaluating how veterans interact with the American health care system was to fully evaluate all of the options veterans have at their disposal to receive care by determining whether veterans were eligible for VA and other health care coverage, and whether or not they chose to utilize their VA benefits.

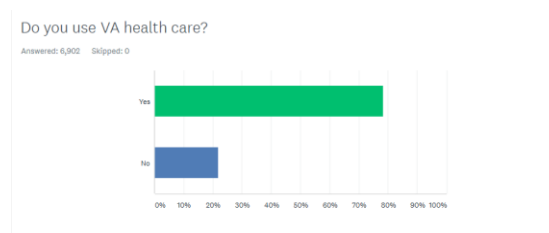
Are you eligible for VA health care?

Access to VA health care is influenced by many factors such as wait times, distance and availability of care within the VA health care system and through purchased community care. The use of VA’s eligibility criteria is uniquely applied to each veteran prior to enrollment and assignment to a priority group. For instance, combat veterans returning from Iraq receive enhanced eligibility enrollment, while veterans experiencing mental health or military sexual trauma issues are allowed an initial assessment and treatment prior to enrollment eligibility determination as a means to address the influx of mental health and suicide concerns. Other factors such as service-connected disability, receipt of specific awarded medals, or financial need are all examples of unique eligibility criteria used by VA to determine eligibility for VA health care.

Of the 6,902 veterans who participated in the survey, 96 percent responded that they were eligible for VA care.

Do you utilize VA health care?

Of the veterans who reported that they were eligible to receive VA care, more than 78 percent reported they utilize VA health care.



When asked why veterans chose to use VA care, the majority of respondents conveyed positive experiences related to the quality of VA care at their local facility. Others conveyed that VA health care is an earned benefit and that they turn to VA for service-connected conditions. Veterans also reported that VA is more affordable than other health care options.

For veterans who reported that they did not use VA health care, they reported that they either had additional options within their community; had a bad experience with the VA health care system; or were turned off from the benefit by the preponderance of bad stories related to delivery of VA care.

When comparing VA health care usage of eligible veterans by gender, female veterans were less likely to report they used VA health care (70 percent) than male veterans (82 percent).

Veterans between 60-79 years-old reported the highest rates of VA health care usage (82 percent for 60-69 and 84 percent for 70-79). Veterans between those ages were more likely to report using VA health care than younger or older veterans.

Q2

Do you use VA health care?

Answered: 5,776 Skipped: 0

	YES	NO
Q41: 17 or younger (A)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q41: 18-20 (B)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q41: 21-29 (C)	88.89% 8	11.11% 1
Q41: 30-39 (D)	74.11% 83 GH	25.89% 29 GH
Q41: 40-49 (E)	78.83% 257 H	21.17% 69 H
Q41: 50-59 (F)	73.83% 553 GH	26.17% 196 GH
Q41: 60-69 (G)	81.73% 1318 DFHJ	18.27% 250 DFHJ
Q41: 70-79 (H)	84.20% 2,392 DEFGJ	15.80% 447 DEFGJ
Q41: 80-89 (I)	74.93% 250 GH	25.07% 87 GH
Q41: 90 or older (J)	66.67% 24 GH	33.33% 12 GH
Total Respondents	4,685	1,091

The sample size for ages 21-29 (n=9) was too small to be representative

Concurrently, Vietnam War veterans were more likely to report using VA health care (84 percent) compared to veterans of other service eras (75 percent for GWOT, 73 for Post-Gulf War, 75 percent for Desert Storm/Shield, 74 percent for Cold War, 76 for Korean War, and 80 percent for WWII).

What forms of health care coverage are available to you?

To gauge which health care options veterans have at their disposal, we asked if they were

eligible for care through the Military Health System (MHS), including TRICARE; private health insurance, including Federal Employee Health Benefits and other forms of employee sponsored insurance; Medicare or Medicaid; or Other, which includes smaller programs like the Indian Health Service.

The VFW’s survey showed that 98 percent of respondents reported having at least one other health care option.

The survey also revealed that most veterans who are eligible for VA care have more than one coverage option at their disposal. Of the 6,762 total respondents who reported having other forms of health coverage, 70 percent were from veterans who had access to Medicare/Medicaid, while 37 percent were eligible under the military health system, and 30 percent had private health insurance as an option.

Most veterans who completed the survey (94 percent) are eligible for both VA care and other health care coverage, including Tricare, Medicare and Medicaid, and private health insurance.

EXPERIENCES:

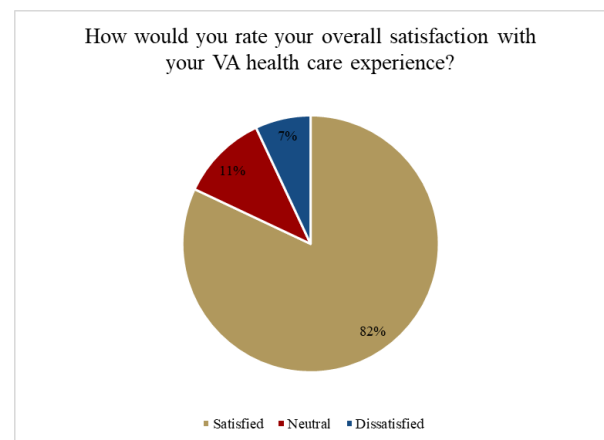
After asking veterans about their health care options, participants who reported using VA health care were asked questions regarding their VA health care experience. Those who reported using VA community care were also asked about their experience using VA's community care programs.

Veterans rely on VA health care to receive a broad range of services. Nearly 86 percent of veterans reported using VA health benefits to receive primary care, while 75 percent reported using VA specialty care. Additionally, 31 percent of veterans use VA health benefits to receive mental health care, 27 percent of veterans use VA health benefits to receive emergency care, and 17 percent use VA urgent care benefits. Furthermore, 77 percent of veterans reported using VA pharmacies to receive prescription medication.

Female veterans were more likely to report receiving VA mental health care than male veterans. Nearly 44 percent of female veterans report using VA mental health care whereas nearly 31 percent of male veterans report using VA mental health care. Female veterans were also more likely than male veterans to report using urgent care from VA (26 percent vs. 17 percent).

Overall, 82 percent of veterans reported being at least somewhat satisfied with their VA health care experience and only seven percent reported being dissatisfied. An additional 11 percent reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their VA health care experience. Furthermore, 91 percent of veterans responded that they

would recommend VA health care to other veterans, while only 9 percent responded that they would not. However, only 74 percent of veterans from Alabama stated that they would recommend VA health care to other veterans.



When asked if they have noticed an improvement, 74 percent of respondents reported that they have seen improvements at their VA medical center within the past year or that no improvements were needed. This is a 10 percentage point increase from the 2018 survey where 64 percent of veterans reported seeking improvements or that none are needed. Twenty-six percent reported that they had not seen any improvements, but improvements are needed.

Most veterans, 84 percent, also reported that they received care in a timely manner, while only 16 percent of veterans reported that they did not. A majority of veterans, 54 percent were able to receive an appointment within 14 days for their most recent VA health care visit. Furthermore, 80 percent of veterans were able to receive an

appointment within 30 days. Finally, only 20 percent of veterans experienced wait times in excess of 30 days: 11 percent waited between 31 and 60 days for an appointment, 5 percent waited between 61 and 90 days, and 4 percent waited longer than 90 days.

VA-Coordinated Community Care

Approximately 2,800 veterans who responded to the survey were offered the option to receive community care. Of those veterans, 55 percent chose community care over VA care.

Just over 450 veterans received community care prior to the implementation of the MISSION Act. As with those who receive care at VA health facilities, veterans used community care to receive a broad range of health services. Most veterans, 87 percent, received specialty care, while 19 percent received primary care. Additionally, 10 percent used community care for prescription medication, 10 percent received emergency room care, and 6 percent received urgent care. Finally, 6 percent received mental health care.

Most veterans were pleased with their experiences with VA community care. Overall, 52 percent of veterans reported being very satisfied with their VA health care experience, 28 percent reported being satisfied, and 7 percent reported being somewhat satisfied. An additional 5 percent reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Furthermore, only 7 percent reported being dissatisfied with their experiences with VA community care.

Most veterans, 83 percent, also reported that they received community care in a timely manner, while only 17 percent of veterans reported that they did not. A majority of veterans, 60 percent were able to receive a community care appointment within 14 days. Furthermore, 84 percent of veterans were able to receive an appointment within

30 days. Finally, only 16 percent of veterans experienced wait times in excess of 30 days: 7 percent waited between 31 and 60 days for an appointment, 4 percent waited between 61 and 90 days, and 4 percent waited longer than 90 days. These figures were only a modest improvement from the appointment wait times veterans experienced for their most recent VA health care appointments.

The VFW has heard from veterans who have received bills for care received through the VA community care. The survey found that 21 percent of respondents who reported receiving community care, also reported receiving a bill from VA. Of the veterans who did receive a bill, 62 percent reported that the bill was paid by VA whereas 38 percent reported that the VA had not paid the bill. Indeed, 10 percent of veterans who used community care responded that VA could improve the billing issues related to this program. An additional 14 percent responded that VA could improve the process through which community care is authorized, including initial referrals and follow-up care. Another 11 percent of veterans responded that improvements were needed regarding VA and community care provider communication, and 18 percent stated that patients should be offered a larger selection of providers. Finally, 8 percent of veterans responded that improvements could be made with customer service and 4 percent stated that VA could improve patient or provider outreach regarding community care program requirements and procedures.

MISSION Act Care

On June 6, 2019, the VA implemented new changes to veteran healthcare under the MISSION Act, including changes to operations and eligibility for community care. To gauge the difference between vets who used community care before VA MISSION Act and those who used community care after VA MISSION Act implementation, we asked if veterans

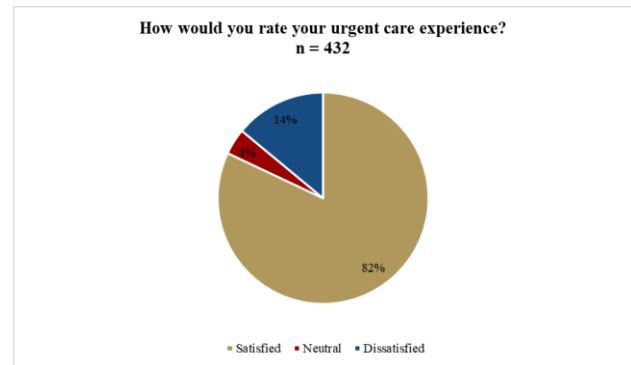
scheduled an appointment after June 6, 2019.

Since the new changes were enacted, 45 percent of veterans chose community care over VA care. Some of those veterans reported experiencing issues related to MISSION Act community care. Of the 609 veterans who reported issues, 23 percent had difficulties accessing community or follow-up care, including problems with authorizations, request approvals, or communication between community-based and VA providers. Veterans aged fifty and up tended to experience difficulty accessing community care at a greater rate than other veterans. Furthermore, roughly 23 percent of veterans experienced issues related to long wait times for community care appointments. Other complaints in order of frequency included issues with provider availability, billing, customer service, quality of care received, distance to eligible providers, and out-of-pocket cost.

Urgent Care Benefit

More than 400 of the VFW's respondents reported that they have used VA's new community urgent care benefit. An overwhelming majority of veterans, 89 percent, indicated that they would recommend community urgent care to other

veterans. Furthermore, most veterans, 82 percent of those who used this benefit, responded that they were satisfied with the urgent care benefit. Additionally, 4 percent reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Only 14 percent reported being dissatisfied with the community urgent care benefit.



Most veterans who used the community urgent care benefit did not incur any out-of-pocket expenses. Only 20 percent of veterans reported paying a copay for their urgent care visit. Additionally, of the veterans who received a prescription during their urgent care visit, 42 percent of veterans either paid a copay or full price at a pharmacy to fill a prescription they received at an urgent care facility. Furthermore, the average price veterans paid to fill prescriptions was less than \$25.

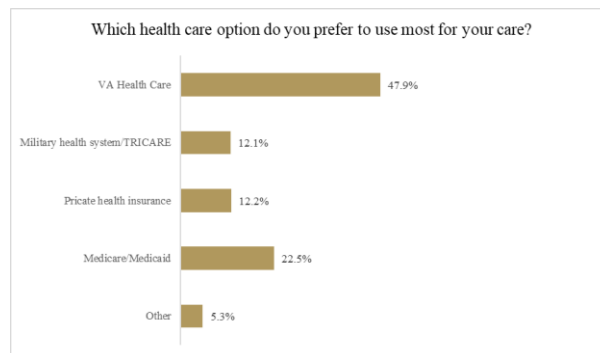
PREFERENCES:

After the VA implemented the Mission Act, the VFW wanted to reevaluate veterans preferences related to their health care to determine if there has been any change. We decided to revisit the same criteria as we did in our September 22, 2015 OUR CARE report in order to contrast and compare the results to determine if The Mission Act has made any impact on how veterans choose to interact in the health care marketplace and which factors drive their health care decision-making. This information is critical to understanding the way veterans actually receive their care in the marketplace as it exists since the implementation of The Mission Act, and ways to build a health care infrastructure that meets the needs of the veterans' community.

Which factors drive your health care decision-making?

To solidify our understanding of why veterans believe they make certain choices in the health care marketplace the VFW survey asked veterans to select three factors that drove their health care decision-making out of the following twelve options: Quality of care; availability of appointments; distance to health care facility; cost to receive care; provider reputation or expertise; customer service; convenience; relationship to provider; waiting room wait times; patient/personal safety; family care needs; and a catch-all category of "other."

Based on the responses from our survey, it was again shown that every cohort of veterans, whether young or old; male or female; urban or rural, reported that similar factors drove their health care decision-making.



The top five factors that veterans reported drove their health care decision-making overall were: Quality of care (86 percent); availability of appointments (44 percent); distance to health care facility (38 percent); cost to receive care (37 percent); and provider reputation or expertise (25 percent).

There was a slight shift in the percentages compared to the 2015 survey; however, the same top five factors were reported. This time there were no differences reported when evaluating the responses by gender; however, there were significant differences based on service era. Post 9/11 veterans were significantly more concerned with availability of appointments, and customer service, while Vietnam/Cold War era veterans were considered Quality of Care and Provider Reputation or Expertise to be more significant.

In comparison to our last report, the driving factors for veterans to decide where to get their health care hasn't changed. Simply put, the veterans' community at large basically all want the same things: Quality, cost effective, timely, accessible medical care.

Where do you receive most of your care?

After understanding what veterans sought in the health care marketplace, we asked veterans where they chose to receive most of their health care. As a total population, veterans who reported that they are eligible to receive health care from VA reported that they choose to receive most of their health care from VA.

Again, the VFW further broke down the data to understand how veterans with different kinds of health care coverage behaved in the marketplace. What the VFW learned is that a veteran's behavior was based largely on the amount of health care coverage options they had at their disposal, which dictated the availability of providers in their communities.

Veterans who were eligible for VA health care, but who also reported that they were eligible for TRICARE, Medicare/Medicaid, and private insurance have the most options for care providers in the community, whether it is through VA facilities, military treatment facilities, or private health care facilities who may or may not accept certain types of health coverage.

Of veterans who reported that they have access to every health care coverage option, 34 percent reported that they prefer to receive their care from private community providers. This was the smallest pool of respondents (222 veterans), which makes it difficult to validate the finding.

For veterans who reported that their only options for care were private medical insurance and VA health care, there was no significant difference in the results.

Veterans' preference on where to receive care was split, with 47 percent reporting that they prefer to receive care from VA and 49

percent reporting that they prefer to receive care from private health care providers.

When presented with the government-funded health care options of VA health care, Medicare/Medicaid, or TRICARE, 36 percent of veterans report a preference to use their Medicare/Medicaid benefits, followed closely by 35 percent preferring VA providers and 24 percent military treatment facilities. However, veterans with only VA and Medicare/Medicaid, the biggest cohort, reported overwhelmingly (67 percent) that they prefer to receive care from VA providers.

When presented with the options of either VA care or TRICARE, 52 percent of veterans reported that they preferred to receive care from Tricare, and 43 percent preferring to receive care from VA.

When asked why they made this decision, once again convenience and distance were the primary factors.

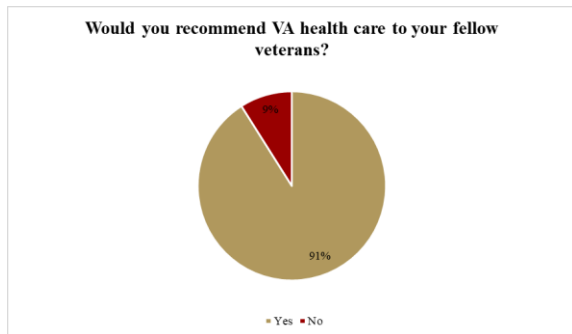
Would you recommend VA care to your fellow veterans?

The final question VFW posted to veterans on their health care preferences actually focused on their overall perceptions of VA health care and its suitability to serve America's veterans. While most veterans in all cohorts reported that they would recommend VA care to their fellow veterans, the ratio of veterans who would recommend VA care varied drastically based on each cohort.

Overall, 91 percent of veterans who use VA care said that they would recommend it to their fellow veterans. And 83 percent stated that they would recommend the new community urgent care benefit to other veterans as well.

The fastest-growing patient bases for VA, GWOT-era veterans and female veterans,

also reported that they would recommend VA to their fellow veterans, with 85 percent of those who use VA care making the recommendation.



Statistics also show that 37 percent of females and 32 percent of male veterans who use VA health care were offered the option to receive their care in the community. Of those who were given that option both male and female veterans chose VA over community care by 62 percent.

For veterans who reported that they were not eligible for VA care, 67 percent would still recommend it to their fellow veterans, indicating that it is an earned benefit.

Of the veterans who are eligible for other health care, 47 percent still prefer VA care while 53 percent prefer to use other health care. Roughly 21 percent of veterans responded that they prefer other care because they have more freedom to choose their own provider, or that other health care options are closer or more convenient to access. Nearly 6 percent of veterans said that they receive better quality care with their other health care coverage while 4 percent stated that they have shorter wait times.

Several veterans indicated that they prefer to use other health care because it is provided to them for free or at a low cost or that they

are already paying for outside coverage. Some veterans even stated that although they are eligible for VA care they prefer to use other health care options to reduce the strain on the VA health care system and to allow other veterans with more serious health concerns to receive priority treatment.

Preference for VA Care

Even when veterans are presented with more choices about where they may receive health care, an overwhelming number still prefer VA care. Overall, 64 percent of respondents prefer VA care and 36 percent prefer community care. This preference for VA care is even stronger among veterans who have scheduled care after the implementation of the MISSION Act. Of the veterans who have scheduled care with VA after the MISSION Act was implemented, nearly 70 prefer VA care over community care.

However, fewer veterans who have received community care prefer VA health care. Out of the veterans who received community care prior to the implementation of the MISSION Act, only 51 percent prefer VA care over community care. In contrast, 64 percent of all veterans, including those who have not received community care, prefer VA care over community care. This discrepancy is even greater among veterans who have received care under the MISSION Act. For veterans who received community care under the MISSION Act, 56 percent prefer community care and only 44 percent prefer to receive VA care.

Additionally, fewer veterans (roughly 40 percent) from Georgia and Hawaii prefer VA health care over community care.

CONCLUSIONS:

Options: The VFW believes appropriate quality health care should be promoted throughout VA for all veterans, and VA should want all eligible veterans to have access to health care that improves their health and well-being. The implementation of programs to address access, collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and acquiring the best leadership and management tool in the industry can help improve its progress in becoming a better managed care system. But with the influx of additional veterans coming into the VA health care system over the past decade, coupled with inadequate funding, investment in capital infrastructure, and staffing, the VFW believes that the system has quickly become overwhelmed.

VA's ongoing transformation has it committed to streamlining and improving how veterans can access and utilize VA health care. Some of the noted improvements were increasing the number of available facilities, maintaining its ability to purchase community care, and the modernization of multiple facets within the Veterans Health Administration. This included consolidating several of its community care programs for better access to care under the *Mission Act*.

Veterans have a variety of health care coverage options. The challenge of providing care and support to veterans, to include recovery and transition, is coordinating those different health care resources.

For of veterans with multiple coverage options, this means that they have access to other providers in the community through other means. However, these veterans still by and large reported that they choose to enroll in VA health care and utilize their benefits.

The VFW has long held that VA's core competencies related to service-connected health care conditions cannot be duplicated in the civilian health care marketplace. By evaluating the options veterans report to the VFW alongside the usage rates for VA care, the VFW believes that our survey data reinforces the notion that VA's health care competencies remain critical to delivering the quality care that veterans have earned.

Experiences: Based on the VFW's survey data, veterans' experiences with VA continue to improve. While we have been able to track consistent improvement since the veterans' health care crisis of 2014, our recent data indicates that reforms like the MISSION Act are succeeding in improving veteran experiences across VA.

Though our data indicates outliers across the system, in aggregate, veterans report that wait times are shorter and that expanded community care options are resulting in improved health care outcomes.

The VFW has long championed the VA health care system as an earned benefit that must meet the unique needs of the veterans' population. By adapting the ways in which VA is capable of delivering care, VFW data indicates that the VA health system is headed in the right direction.

Interestingly, VFW's data indicates that internal improvements to VA's direct care facilities have driven much of the positive experiences reported in this survey, as most veterans chose to receive care from VA, and most veterans report seeing improvements in their facilities.

Moreover, by expanding non-VA care options, more veterans have chosen to enroll in VA care and take advantage of these services.

Preferences: The VFW recognizes that quality community health care options must be available to veterans, as the veterans' population is undergoing a monumental demographic shift. The largest cohort of America's veterans – Korea and Vietnam-era veterans – are at the age where they require more care than younger cohorts. Meanwhile, the newest cohort of veterans – Global War on Terrorism-era veterans – are surviving war time injuries at higher rates, and thus presenting with more health care conditions than prior generations of veterans due to advances in battlefield medicine. This means that in the future VA will need to be more nimble in its care delivery models, while simultaneously sustaining its role as a first-line provider, coordinator, and guarantor of care.

The VFW was pleased to learn that since our last report, more veterans report that they would recommend VA care to their fellow veterans. This demonstrates that through significant innovations, VA has managed to repair its reputation among veterans who utilize VA. Unfortunately, this sentiment is not shared by veterans across the board. VFW's data indicates that veterans who are disconnected from the VA health care system still have negative perceptions of it.

The VFW noticed in this survey that veterans who received VA-coordinated community care reported that they preferred to receive care through these providers. This is not necessarily surprising, as many who qualify for non-VA care do so because VA is unable to reasonably satisfy their health care need – in many instance because of geographic hurdles. This is reinforced by the reported improved wait times through this survey. The VFW was encouraged to see this trend as it indicates that the veterans who were most in need of innovative community care options finally have this at their disposal. Though the VFW data indicated that billing and authorization problems have improved, these remain concerns for veterans who utilized community care options.

While VA health care is trending in the right direction, the VFW knows that this is why we need to continue the momentum. Veterans continue to tell the VFW that they view VA care as an earned benefit designed for their unique needs. The innovations to VA care over the past year may have expanded non-VA care delivery options, but veterans have responded by only enrolling in VA for more care – with many choosing to receive that care through VA. Now more than ever, it is clear to the VFW that the binary choice of VA care or privatized care remains a false choice, as VA must continue to have the ability to deliver direct care and contract for community care options guaranteed by VA.

The VFW will continue to monitor the health care needs of veterans and we will continue to report on our findings in an effort to ensure that VA continues to deliver on its obligation to provide veterans with high quality health care.

APPENDIX:

Charts of the responses for the 2019 VFW State of VA Health Care survey.

Question 1: Are you eligible to use VA health care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	96%	6,584
No	4%	271
		Total: 6,855
Question 2: Do you use VA health care?		
Answer Choices	Average	Number of Respondents
Yes	78%	5,401
No	22%	1,501
		Total: 6,902
Question 3: Why?		
Answer choice	Number of respondents	
Open-ended	5,296	
Top three responses:		
1. To receive treatment for service-connected disabilities		
2. Satisfaction with quality of care		
3. Low cost		
<p>cost see disability primary veteran one use facility service aids care clinic good much health care appointment connected close insurance provider</p>		
Question 4: Are you eligible to use VA health care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	92%	1,682
No	3%	62
I don't know	4%	78
		Total: 1,822
Question 4: What other forms of health care coverage are available to you? (Please select ALL that apply)		

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Military health system / TRICARE	36.82%	2,490
Private health insurance (including Federal Employees Health Benefits program, or FEHB)	29.56%	1,999
Medicare / Medicaid	70.13%	4,742
N/A	5.68%	384
Other (please specify)	7.31%	494
		Total: 6,762
Question 5: What health care option do you prefer to use for most of your care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
VA health care	47.94%	3,273
Military health system / TRICARE	12.06%	823
Private health insurance (including Federal Employees Health Benefits program, or FEHB)	12.20%	833
Medicare / Medicaid	22.50%	1,536
Other (please specify)	5.30%	362
		Total: 6,827
Question 6: Why?		
Answer choice	Number of respondents	
Open-ended	4,895	
Top three responses:		
1. Convenience		

2. Distance to provider		
3. Quality of care		
<p>great civilian available drive one disability quality many go live veterans military providers feel private treated convenient faster medical s appointments afford Medicare</p>		
		Total: 4,895
Question 7: What factors are most important to you when choosing a health care provider? (Select at least one, but not more than three answers)		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Quality of care	86.02%	5,912
Availability of appointments	44.25%	3,041
Distance to health care facility	37.54%	2,580
Cost to receive care	37.44%	2,573
Provider reputation or expertise	25.27%	1,737
Convenience	17.72%	1,218
Customer service	17.10%	1,175
Relationship to provider	14.70%	1,010
Choice	12.15%	835
Waiting room wait times	10.88%	748
Patient/personal safety	7.20%	495
Other (please specify)	2.60%	179
		Total: 6,873
Question 8: What type of health care do you receive from VA? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Primary care	84.42%	4,363
Specialty care (i.e., physical therapy, audiology, optometry, etc.)	72.99%	3,772
Mental health care	30.82%	1,593
Pharmacy	77.01%	3,980
Urgent care	17.28%	893

Emergency room care	20.61%	1,065
Other (please specify)	8.73%	451
		Total: 5,168
Question 9: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your VA health care experience?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Satisfied	81.58%	4,216
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11.26%	582
Dissatisfied	7.16%	370
		Total: 5,168
Question 10: Would you recommend VA health care to your fellow veterans?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	91.07%	4,652
No	8.93%	456
		Total: 5,108
Question 11: How long did you wait for your most recent VA appointment?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
0 – 7 days	31.25%	1,584
8 – 14 days	20.07%	1,017
15 – 19 days	8.13%	412
20 – 27 days	6.77%	343
28 – 30 days	8.92%	452
31 – 60 days	10.06%	510
61 – 90 days	4.95%	251
More than 90 days (please specify)	9.85%	499
		Total: 5,068
Question 12: Did you receive care in a timely manner?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	84.04%	4,276
No	15.96%	812
		Total: 5,088
Question 13: Have you been offered the option to receive community care (non-VA care through the Veterans Community Care Program, Veterans Choice Program, or other type of referral to a private sector doctor)?		

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	54.26%	2,777
No	45.74%	2,341
		Total: 5,118
Question 14: If yes, did you choose VA care or community care (non-VA care through the Veterans Community Care Program, Veterans Choice Program, or other type of VA referral to a private sector doctor)?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
VA care	45.10%	1,368
Community care	51.70%	1,568
		Total: 3,033
Question 15: Where would you prefer to get your care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
VA care	63.50%	2,665
Community Care	36.50%	1,532
		Total: 4,197
Question 16: Have you noticed an improvement at your local VA health care facility?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	54.63%	2,749
No, but improvements are needed	26.43%	1,330
No, but no improvements are needed	18.94%	953
		Total: 5,032
Question 17: Have you scheduled a VA health care appointment since June 6, 2019?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	65.42%	3,354
No	34.58%	1,773
		Total: 5,127
Question 18: How would you improve the VA health care system to better serve veterans?		
Answer Choice	Number of Respondents	
Open-ended	3,379	
Top three responses:		
1. More facilities and providers		

2. Improve customer service		
3. Shorter wait times		
<p>seems work rid take treat vets now local say provide will patients program facilities Stop go Also community schedule system help staff less wait sure appointments many need health veterans nurses VA us care</p>		
Question 19: What type of health care did you receive from community care providers through a VA referral?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Primary care	18.50%	89
Specialty care (i.e., physical therapy, audiology, optometry, etc.)	66.32%	319
Mental health care	5.41%	26
Pharmacy	9.98%	48
Urgent care	5.61%	27
Emergency room care	9.15%	44
I do not use private sector health care	3.12%	15
Other (please specify)	21.83%	105
		Total: 481
Question 20: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your community care experience?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Very satisfied	52.42%	249
Satisfied	28.21%	134
Somewhat satisfied	6.95%	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4.84%	23
Somewhat dissatisfied	3.37%	16
Dissatisfied	1.05%	5
Very dissatisfied	3.16%	15
		Total: 475
Question 21: How long did you wait for most recent community care health care appointment?		

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
0 – 7 days	35.52%	168
8 – 14 days	23.47%	111
15 – 19 days	11.21%	53
20 – 27 days	4.44%	21
28 – 30 days	7.82%	37
31 – 60 days	6.98%	33
61 – 90 days	3.81%	18
More than 90 days (please specify)	6.77%	32
		Total: 473
Question 22: Did you receive care in a timely manner?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	83.19%	391
No	16.81%	79
		Total: 470
Question 23: Did you receive a bill from the community care provider?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	20.55%	97
No	79.45%	375
		Total: 472
Question 24: If yes, has the bill been paid by VA?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	61.90%	104
No	38.10%	64
		Total: 168
Question 25: How would you improve VA community care?		
Answer Choice	Number of Respondents	
Open-ended	277	
Top three responses:		
1. More streamlined process for authorization of community care		
2. Better communication between VA and community provider		
3. Prevent and correct billing errors		

<p>community care provider ^{give} call wait time ^{pay} specialist ^{will} availability ^{local} TriWest timely manner ^{sent} referrals ^{visits} comment answer question ^{available} setting ^{medical} experience process ^{continued} two ^{knew} go ^{ones} approved ^{Vets} request</p>		
Question 26: How long were you asked to wait for the appointment you scheduled on or after June 6, 2019?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
0 – 7 days	28.75%	864
8 – 14 days	20.47%	615
15 – 19 days	7.95%	239
20 – 27 days	7.42%	223
28 – 30 days	10.38%	312
31 – 60 days	12.38%	372
61 – 90 days	5.66%	170
More than 90 days (please specify)	6.99%	210
		Total:
Question 27: Were you offered the option to receive community care (non-VA care through the Veterans Community Care Program, Veterans Choice Program, or other type of referral to a private sector doctor)?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	32.01%	1,019
No	67.99%	2,164
		Total: 3,183
Question 28: If yes, did you choose community care or VA care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
VA care	36.54%	
Community care	22.18%	
N/A	41.28%	914
		Total: 2,214
Question 29: Where would you prefer to get your care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
VA care	69.71%	1,885
Community Care	30.29%	819

		Total: 2,704
Question 30: Did you experience issues accessing community care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	37.56%	613
No	62.44%	1,019
Top three comments:		
1. Long wait times		
2. Too much complexity with accessing care or communicating with providers		
3. Billing errors		
<p>schedule appointment choice make paid payment referral also months later wait work go visit need Long wait time doctor local care send</p>		
		Total: 1,632
Question 31: Have you used the new community urgent care benefit?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	6.57%	406
No	93.43%	5,775
		Total: 6,181
Question 32: If yes, how would you rate your urgent care experience?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Very satisfied	43.06%	186
Satisfied	30.56%	132
Somewhat satisfied	8.80%	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4.63%	20
Somewhat dissatisfied	3.94%	17
Dissatisfied	3.47%	15
Very dissatisfied	5.56%	24
		Total: 432
Question 33: How many community urgent care visits have you received?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	47.48%	264
2	22.48%	125

3	9.89%	55
More than 3	20.14%	112
		Total: 556
Question 34: Did you pay a copayment for your visit?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	22.16%	240
No	77.84%	843
		Total: 1,083
Question 35: Did the urgent care facility send you a bill?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	26.30%	217
No	73.70%	608
		Total: 825
Question 36: Would you recommend the new community urgent care benefit to other veterans?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	82.29%	1,064
No	17.71%	229
		Total: 1,293
Question 37: Did you receive a prescription?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	62.68%	754
No	37.32%	449
		Total: 1,203
Question 38: If yes, how did you fill the prescription?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Urgent Care Network pharmacy and did not pay a copay to the pharmacy	8.88%	61
Urgent Care Network pharmacy, but paid a copay/out-of-pocket	12.81%	88
VA pharmacy	62.15%	427
Paid full price at an out-of-	13.25%	91

network pharmacy		
Did not fill my prescription	2.91%	20
		Total: 687
Question 39: How much did you pay to fill your prescription?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
\$0	40.62%	236
more than \$0 but less than or equal to \$10	11.36%	66
more than \$10 but less than or equal to \$25	5.34%	31
more than \$25 but less than or equal to \$50	16.70%	97
more than \$50	4.65%	27
indiscernible response	21.51%	125
		Total: 581
Question 40: Do you have a VA service-connected disability rating for the issue for which you used urgent care?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	48.01%	905
No	51.99%	980
		Total: 1,885
Question 41: What is your age?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
17 or younger	0	0
18-20	0	0
21-29	0.17%	10
30-39	2.03%	123
40-49	5.83%	353
50-59	13.12%	794
60-69	23.90%	1,446
70-79	48.23%	2,918
80-89	6.07%	367
90 or older	0.64%	39
		Total: 6,050
Question 42: What is your gender?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Female	7.06%	427

Male	92.08%	5,571
Choose not to answer	0.69%	42
Other (please specify)	0.17%	10
		Total: 6,050
Question 43: In what country do you currently reside?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
United States	95.19%	5,721
Other (please specify)	4.81%	289
		Total: 6,010
Question 44: In what state or U.S. territory do you currently reside? (Please select other if you do not reside in the United States)		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Alabama	1.12%	68
Alaska	0.30%	18
American Samoa	0.02%	1
Arizona	4.05%	245
Arkansas	0.96%	58
California	6.15%	372
Colorado	2.17%	131
Connecticut	1.04%	63
Delaware	0.71%	43
District of Columbia (DC)	0.07%	4
Florida	7.87%	476
Georgia	2.31%	140
Guam	0.12%	7
Hawaii	0.69%	42
Idaho	1.11%	67
Illinois	3.49%	211
Indiana	1.92%	116
Iowa	0.88%	53
Kansas	1.19%	72
Kentucky	0.94%	57
Louisiana	1.06%	64
Maine	0.73%	44
Maryland	1.60%	97
Massachusetts	1.60%	97
Michigan	2.83%	171

Minnesota	2.30%	139
Mississippi	0.86%	52
Missouri	2.31%	140
Montana	0.74%	45
Nebraska	0.64%	39
Nevada	1.70%	103
New Hampshire	0.58%	35
New Jersey	1.88%	114
New Mexico	0.86%	52
New York	3.21%	194
North Carolina	3.02%	183
North Dakota	0.26%	16
Northern Marianas Islands	0.00%	0
Ohio	3.12%	189
Oklahoma	0.98%	59
Oregon	2.05%	124
Pennsylvania	5.11%	309
Puerto Rico	0.10%	6
Rhode Island	0.35%	21
South Carolina	1.59%	96
South Dakota	0.53%	32
Tennessee	2.17%	131
Texas	7.14%	432
Utah	0.84%	51
Vermont	0.35%	21
Virginia	4.30%	260
Virgin Islands	0.00%	0
Washington	3.36%	203
West Virginia	0.69%	42
Wisconsin	2.58%	156
Wyoming	0.45%	27
Other (please specify)	1.02%	62
		Total: 5,809
Question 45: In what ZIP code is your home located? (enter 5-digit ZIP code or other if you do not reside in the United States)		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Responses not included		

		Total: 5,809
Question 46: Service Status:		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Active duty (including USPHS and NOAA)	0.35%	21
Guard/Reservist (including IRR)	0.75%	45
Veteran (non-retiree)	56.67%	3,411
Military retiree	38.46%	2,315
Family (including surviving spouse)	1.41%	85
Other (please specify)	2.36%	142
		Total: 6,019
Question 47: Service Era (Please select any that apply):		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Global War on Terrorism (all post-9/11 service to include service in Iraq or Afghanistan)	20.12%	1,217
Post-Gulf War (service to include Peacetime, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and other campaigns before the Global War on Terrorism)	17.50%	1,059
Desert Shield/Storm (to include Korean Service)	24.26%	1,468
Post-Vietnam/Cold War (service to include Peacetime, Lebanon,	23.27%	1,408
Vietnam War (to include Korea, Thailand, and Cambodia)	65.24%	3,947

Korean War	2.83%	171
World War II (to include post-war)	0.89%	54

occupation forces)		
Other (please specify)	3.85%	233
		Total: 6,050



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