



# WAR PENSIONS APPEALS SURVEY

2007



# APPEALS SURVEY 2007

## Issued by:

### Service Personnel and Veterans Agency

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## 1. Introduction

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) is an executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). SPVA formed on 1 April 07, bringing together the former Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency and Veterans Agency to provide services to both serving personnel and veterans. Combining the resources and expertise of these two Agencies paves the way for a more integrated and efficient service to both serving personnel and veterans, providing a through-life service.

The mission of SPVA is **'To deliver reliable, trusted and efficient personnel services to the serving and veteran communities'**. For the first time, personnel will be supported throughout their relationship with the MOD by a single organisation, SPVA.

The mission is underpinned by the following key principles:

- Customer Focus - understanding and responding to their needs.
- Efficiency - cohesion, coherence and optimal use of resources.
- Business Excellence - continually seeking improvement.
- Employer of choice - well trained, valued and fully engaged staff.

## 2. Objective

The objective of this survey is to assist SPVA in establishing the current and future needs of a distinct customer group. This survey focuses on War Disablement Appellants within the Veterans Directorate and aims to identify:

- The level of satisfaction with the services SPVA provide
- The cause(s) of any dissatisfaction
- Customer choices
- Customer preferences
- Customer priorities
- Customer ideas for improvement

It will also allow us to identify how this particular customer group views our performance in relation to our mission statement and the underpinning key principles.

## 3. Approach

By conducting regular surveys we are able to draw comparisons on services and identify trends. This report details results from this years survey and provides comparisons with the results from the previous surveys conducted in 2004 and 2005.

Questionnaires were issued in April 2007 to 498 randomly selected customers who received notification of an outcome to their appeal between August 2006 and January 2007. Of these, 43% of recipients received a favourable decision and the remaining 57% non-favourable.

## 4. Management Summary

### Response Rates

Overall	205	(41%)
Favourable	106	(52%)
Non-favourable	99	(48%)

### Access and Contact

- 68% found it easy or very easy to obtain information regarding the appeals process.
- 62% of respondents found completion of the appeal form very easy or easy. This is a decrease of 10% from 2005.
- 52% of respondents were aware SPVA had a Welfare Service to assist them when completing forms.
- 82% found the standard of communication with SPVA very satisfactory or satisfactory.

### Service Quality

- 78% of respondents said their queries were answered to their satisfaction.
- 85% said they were dealt with in a professional manner throughout the process of their appeal.
- 81% of respondents rated the 'Statement of Case' as excellent, good or acceptable.
- 78% rated the overall service provided as very satisfactory or satisfactory. A decrease of 13% from 2005.

### The Internet

- 18% of respondents accessed the Veterans UK website, of whom 33% found the content of information relating to appeals as excellent or good, 45% found the information to be adequate.
- 86% of respondents accessing the website rated the design as excellent, good or adequate.

**5. Recommendations**

- 1) Consider providing more detailed reason for rejection of a claim to enable easier completion of an appeal form.

**Key Comments:**

*“When informing a claimant of the decision a reason for rejection should be given. This would make the 'reason for appeal' section easy to complete”.*

*“Reasons for decision should be given when result is communicated to claimant”.*

*“Provide further information on rejection criteria and basis for decision”.*

- 2) Highlight the availability of the Welfare Service to assist claimants when completing appeals forms.

**Evidence:**

**Q4.** *Are you aware that the SPVA has a Welfare Service to assist you with completing claim forms?*

**Response:** *48% unaware*

**6. Next Steps**

Hard copies of this report will be issued to Key Stakeholders. An electronic copy will also be placed on the Veterans UK website and SPVA infoCentre.

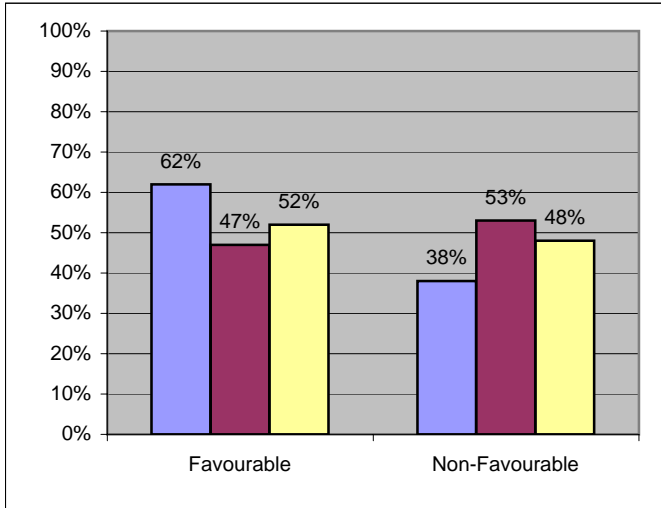
Recommendations for improvement will be considered and taken forward where appropriate.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Outcome of Appeal

**Total Respondents**

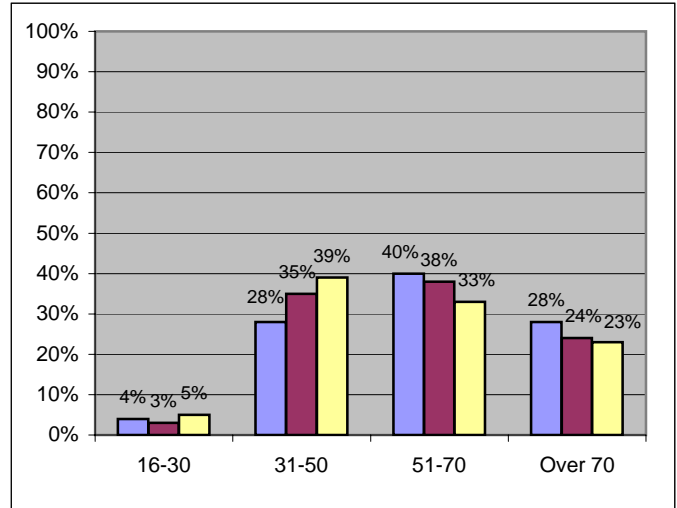
2004	2005	2007
237	260	205



### What age group are you?

**Total Respondents**

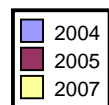
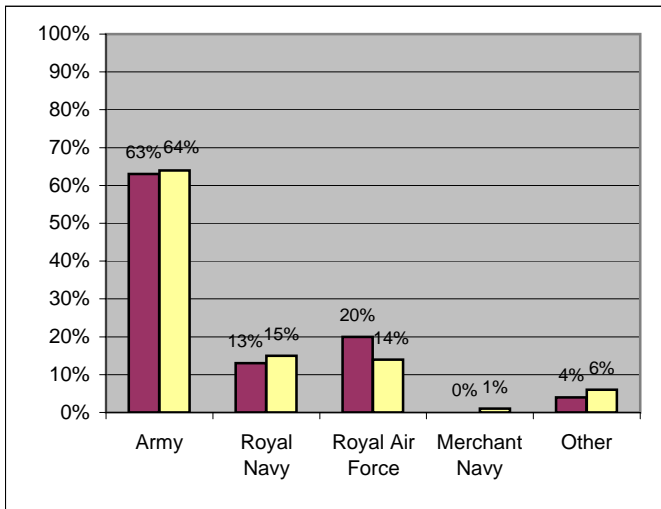
2004	2005	2007
232	259	204



### Which of the following did you serve in?

**Total Respondents**

2004	2005	2007
NA	258	201

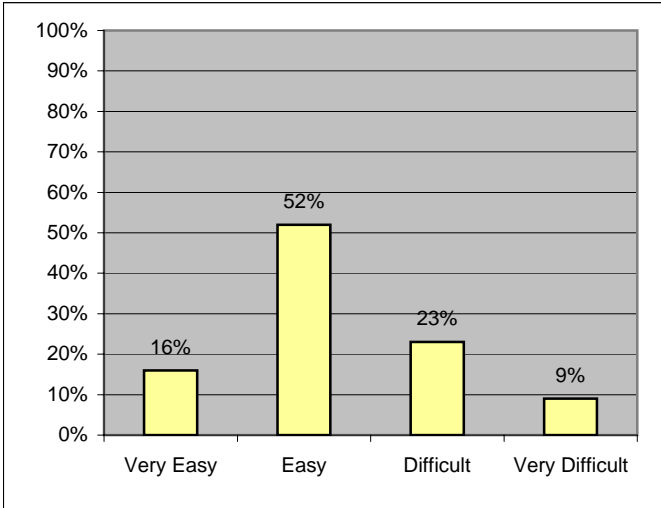


## ACCESS AND CONTACT

**1. How did you find obtaining information on making an appeal?**

**Total Respondents**

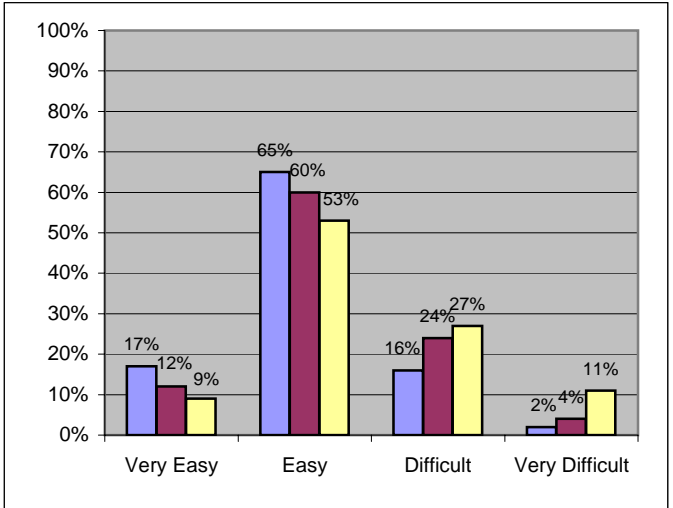
2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	201



**2. How did you find completing the appeal form?**

**Total Respondents**

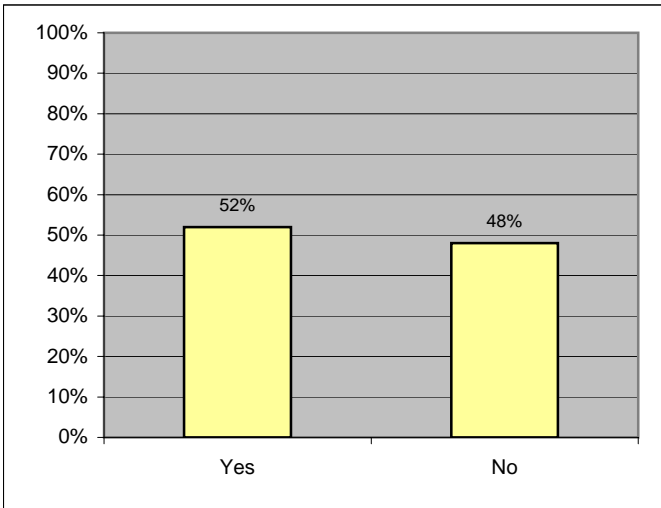
2004	2005	2007
231	257	199



**3. Are you aware that the SPVA has a Welfare Service to assist you with completing claim forms?**

**Total Respondents**

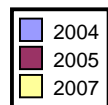
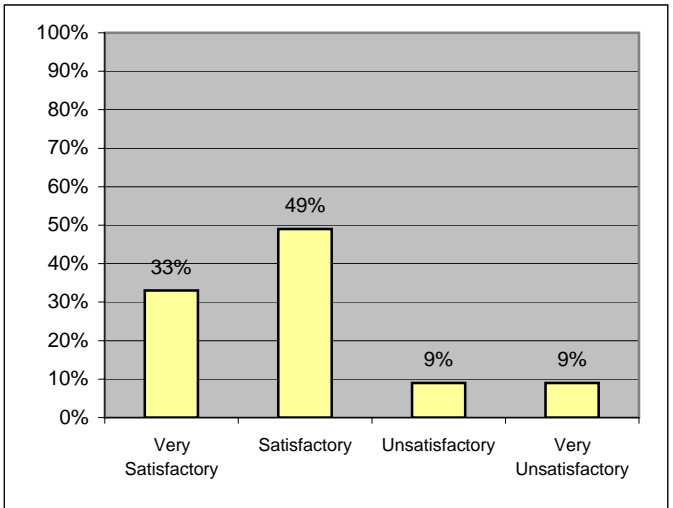
2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	203



**4. How did you find your communication with the SPVA?**

**Total Respondents**

2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	203

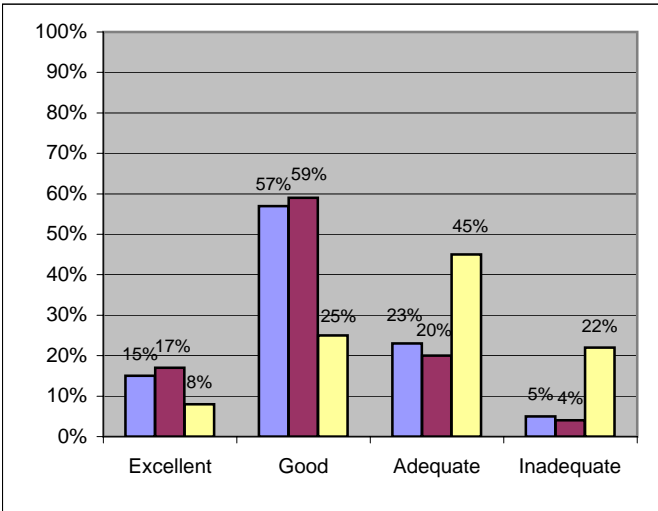


## THE INTERNET

**5. If you use the Veterans UK website, how do you rate the content of the information relating to the appeals process?**

**Total Respondents**

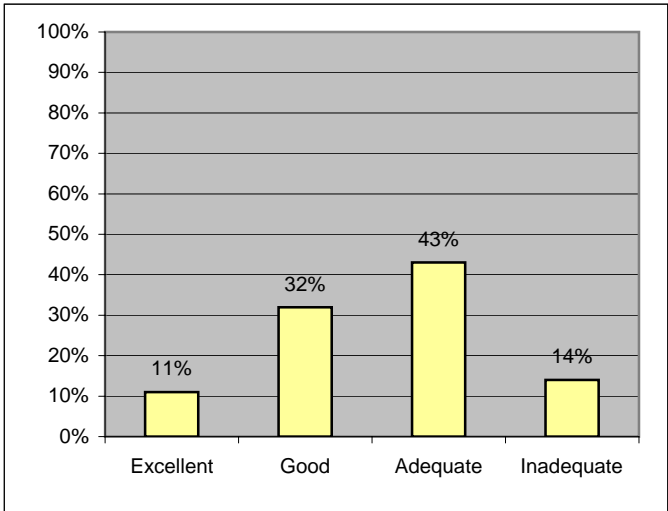
2004	2005	2007
40	46	36



**6. If you use the Veterans UK website, how do you rate the design?**

**Total Respondents**

2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	35

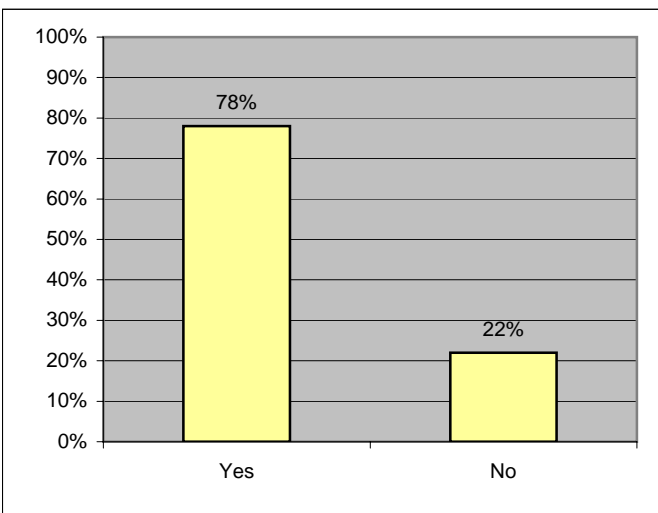


## SERVICE QUALITY

**7. If you had any queries did we answer them to your satisfaction?**

**Total Respondents**

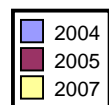
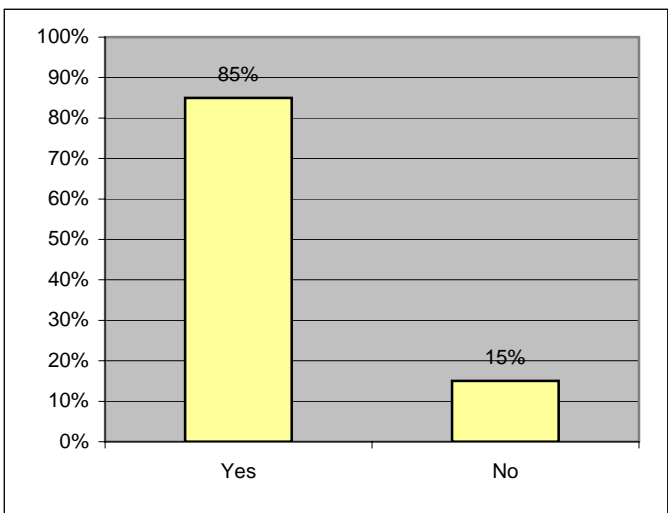
2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	166



**8. Were you dealt with in a professional manner throughout the process of your appeal?**

**Total Respondents**

2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	197

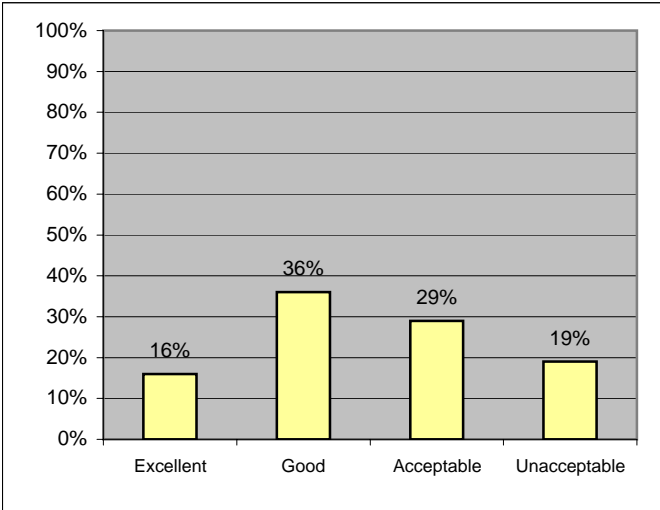


## SERVICE QUALITY

**9. How do you rate the content of the 'Statement of Case' issued to you?**

**Total Respondents**

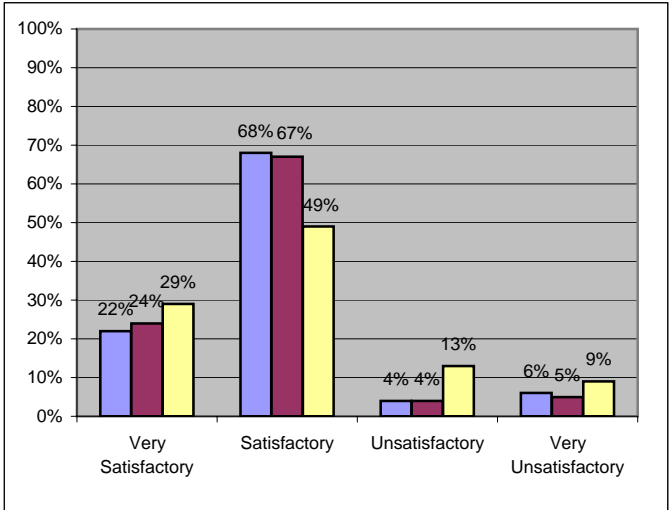
2004	2005	2007
NA	NA	193



**10. How do you rate the overall service provided?**

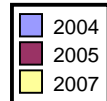
**Total Respondents**

2004	2005	2007
235	254	197



**10. How do you rate the overall service provided?**

	Favourable	Un-favourable
Very Satisfactory	30%	27%
Satisfactory	55%	42%
Unsatisfactory	11%	15%
Very Unsatisfactory	4%	16%



## FURTHER COMMENTS

The following is a list of additional comments completed by individuals in the free text area provided on the questionnaire. Where numerous similar comments were received they have been collated and summarised. Any further one-off comments of relevance or suggesting potential improvements to the service have also been included.

### 1. How did you find obtaining information on making an appeal?

A rep should be available to go through the case before it happens. i.e. pointing out the good and bad possibilities.

At no time was I told that at the appeal they could take away my pension. This only came to light on the day.

I found it difficult researching in detail all my injuries and the dates when they occurred. Would have been easier if I had access to my medical records earlier.

It would help if you could speak to a person originally allocated to your case. I had to go over the same ground every time I called with different people.

On leaving the forces the army were not very forthcoming about claim entitlement. I had to find out a lot of information myself and the whole process took years to come to any kind of a result.

### 2. How did you find completing the appeal form?

11 people stated the form was laid out poorly and was too complicated.

It seems a waste of time and resources having to recollect all pensions information that had already been given to you on the initial claims form.

Difficult to remember events from years ago. Surely medical records will contain this information.

When informing a claimant of the decision a reason for rejection should be given. This would make the 'reason for appeal' section easy to complete.

### 4. How did you find your communication with SPVA?

16 individuals stated their communication with SPVA was excellent/good

15 people were unsatisfied with the standard and speed of communication with SPVA.

I asked how my appeal was going and I received 3 standard letters from the same person saying nothing.

I've had 3 appeals running at the same time and found serious errors in the information that is held by SPVA.

Never notified of delays that were due to reports from my Doctors.

### 6. How do you rate the design of the website?

I have submitted questions via the website yet a response always arrives via post several weeks later.

Limited information downloading forms. I think there should be more information such as travel expenses etc.

Should be more information on levels of benefits available.

### 7. If you had any queries did we answer them to your satisfaction?

No response to queries, even after repeated correspondence and chasing up.

Too many different people dealing with my case due to staff absences.

I was given misleading information on timeframes relating to case. This happened on many occasions. It would help to have had a dedicated team for each stage of the process.

## FURTHER COMMENTS

### **8. Were you dealt with in a professional manner throughout the process of your appeal?**

9 people said they received a good professional service.

At my hearing your representative was extremely courteous and understanding.

The expert manner and speed when dealing with correspondence was a positive experience. The negative aspect was that there is too much paperwork.

### **9. How do you rate the content of the 'Statement of Case' issued to you?**

A lot of information was left out which would have benefited the result. They even lost my GPs report that was sent to them. They then decided to make the Statement of Case without the report and didn't even tell me.

A photocopied bundle of cases are hardly a summary of a case.

Hand written notes should be read and typed up correctly and information should be looked at in its context.

I found it very difficult to understand. The different angles of correspondence should be clearly labelled and timeline of events would help.

The reasons for decision should be given when the result is communicated to claimant. The full medical record should only be sent if requested by the appellant or pertinent to claim, as some of it can be very embarrassing.

Comments should be collected from client before the statement is completed. I personally disagree with several points and the statement contained inaccuracies. Could be provided much earlier in the process.

I have suffered injuries that were not in the paperwork and that I could not remember.

My whole experience of trying to get information included in the statement of case was a battle from start to finish. I was made to feel 'second rate' and a scrounger. I eventually won my appeal.

### **10. How do you rate the overall service provided?**

11 people stated that they felt the service provided was too slow.

From my first contact with SPVA I was treated with the highest courtesy. During my appeal I was given the opportunity to speak on my own behalf.

Overly complicated. Very stressful. Paperwork duplicated and whole process took around 20 months to get my appeal.

Special mention to Miss S Ash, Mrs Kay Harvey and Carolyn Bridge for their help and patience.

I feel I should be informed immediately by letter if someone different is taking over my case.

I have been to 3 tribunals and each time information has not been obtained and presented to the tribunal regarding medical information.