

FEMALE AND FRANCOPHONE VETERANS

- Veterans Affairs Canada has made significant progress in addressing the turnaround times for applications from female and Francophone Veterans.
- Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused us to get behind in processing applications, including French and female applications.
- In the first two quarters of this fiscal year, the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for female and 19.4 weeks for male. In the same timeframe, the averages are 19.5 weeks for Anglophone and 19.1 weeks for Francophone. It is important to note that the gap will continue to fluctuate.
- On November 3, 2023, the Government announced additional funding of \$164.4 million. Part of this investment will ensure that we are able to retain existing temporary employees for an additional two years until March 2026. This will allow us to continue making progress towards parity.

WHEN PRESSED:

Q1 – What are recent statistics on male and female applications?

Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including applications from female Veterans.

We continue to reduce the overall average turnaround times for applications, including those from female Veterans/members. In the first two quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for female and 19.4 weeks for male. For 2023-2024, the average turnaround times for first applications were 22.3 weeks for female and 19.8 weeks for male compared to 54.1 weeks and 47.9 weeks in 2020-2021. It is important to note that the gap will continue to fluctuate as we work on older applications in the backlog which impacts the turnaround times when processed.

In 2023-2024, 16% of our completed applications belong to female Veterans/members. This is equal to the percentage of applications received from female applicants (16%). Due to their relatively smaller number (compared to the number of applications from males), each one has a larger impact on the average turnaround time for female applications (i.e., a larger impact than one male application would have on the average turnaround time for male applications).

Q2 – What is data on Francophone applicants?

Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including French applications.

For 2023-2024, the average turnaround times for first applications were 20.3 weeks for Anglophone applicants and 19.3 weeks for Francophone applicants. This one week gap in average processing time between Francophone and Anglophone first applications was reduced from 15 weeks in 2019-2020.

In the first two quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for Anglophone and 19.1 weeks for Francophone. However, it is important to note these results will continue to fluctuate as we work on older applications in the backlog.

Female and Francophone Veterans
Source: Service Delivery Date: 2024/11/22

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, an average of 320 French first applications were completed per month. In comparison, in 2023-2024, the average increased to 470 per month.

In 2023-2024, about 16% of the disability benefit applications received by the Department were French. Because of their relatively smaller number (compared to the number of English applications), each one has a larger impact on the average French turnaround time (i.e., a larger impact than one English application would have on the average English turnaround time).

Q3 – Regarding treatment of Female Veterans, any solution to decrease/eliminate the backlog?

- Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including applications from female Veterans.
- We hired a dedicated manager who is responsible for workload management and will monitor the completion times for applications from female Veterans.
- In September 2021, the Department added a team dedicated to processing claims from female applicants/Veterans. This team has assisted us in closing the gap in processing times for female and male applicants.
- On November 3, 2023, the Government announced additional funding of \$164.4 million. Part of this investment will ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada is able to retain existing temporary employees, dedicated to processing disability benefit applications, for an additional two years until March 2026.
- In 2023-2024, 16% of our completed applications belong to female Veterans/members. This is equal to the percentage of applications received from female applicants (16%).
- Additionally, the Department has established an Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans. This office will help the Department fulfill its responsibility to provide all Veterans the care and support they deserve.

Q4 – What is the difference today between Francophone and Anglophone applications? It used to be a 21 week discrepancy.

This fiscal year, with approximately 30% of our decision-making staff who are either French-speaking or bilingual, we have made even further improvement in reducing the processing times for French language applications. For 2023-2024, the average turnaround time for first applications were 20.3 weeks for Anglophone applicants and 19.3 weeks for Francophone applicants, representing a gap of one week. In the first two

quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for Anglophone and 19.1 weeks for Francophone. However, it is important to note these results will continue to fluctuate as we work on older applications in the backlog. It's also important to recognize that French applications represent about 16% of all applications. As such, each application has a greater impact on the average French turnaround time.

Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including French applications.

Q5 – Is it hard to recruit Francophone staff?

In the past, the Department did not have enough French or bilingual capacity. However, in recent years we have made progress, and approximately 30% of the Department's staff that make disability benefit decisions are either French or bilingual. The Department hired more bilingual and Francophone Disability Adjudicators to supplement our capacity to process French applications and bring the average processing times for English and French applications closer to parity. With the help of these additional resources, we have reduced the processing times for French applications. In the first two quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for Anglophone and 19.1 weeks for Francophone compared to 27.2 weeks for Anglophone and 32.4 weeks for Francophone in 2022-2023.

Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including French applications.

It can be challenging to retain bilingual decision-making staff given that many have been hired as temporary employees and they often leave for permanent employment opportunities elsewhere.

BACKGROUND - FEMALE AND FRANCOPHONE VETERANS

In September 2018, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman released a report noting both female and Francophone Veterans experienced longer disability benefits processing times.

Veterans Affairs Canada Action – Female Veterans:

- We hired a dedicated manager who is responsible for workload management and monitors the completion times for applications from female Veterans.
- In September 2021, the Department added a team dedicated to processing claims from female applicants/Veterans. This team has assisted us in closing the gap in processing times for female and male applicants.
- In 2023-2024, 16% of our completed applications belong to female Veterans/members. This is equal to the percentage of applications received from female applicants (16%).
- Additionally, the Department established an Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans. This office will help the Department fulfill its responsibility to provide all Veterans the care and support they deserve.
- Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including applications from female Veterans.
- In the first two quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for female and 19.4 weeks for male. For 2023-2024, the average turnaround times for first applications were 22.3 weeks for female and 19.8 weeks for male. It is important to note that the gap will continue to fluctuate as we work on older applications in the backlog which impacts the turnaround times when processed.

Veterans Affairs Canada Action – Francophone Veterans:

- Approximately 30% of the Department's staff that make disability benefit decisions are either French or bilingual. The Department hired more bilingual and Francophone Disability Adjudicators to supplement our capacity to process French applications and bring the average processing times for English and French applications closer to parity. With the help of these additional resources, we have reduced the processing times for French applications and are processing on par with English applications.
- In the first two quarters of the 2024-2025 fiscal year (April to September), the average turnaround times for first applications are 19.5 weeks for Anglophone and 19.1 weeks for Francophone compared to 20.3 weeks for Anglophone and 19.3 weeks for Francophone in 2023-2024. However, it is important to note these results will continue to fluctuate as we work on older applications in the backlog.

Female and Francophone Veterans

Source: Service Delivery Date: 2024/11/22

- We also hired a dedicated manager who is responsible for workload management and monitors the French applications processing times.
- Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits, which caused the Department to get behind in processing applications, including French applications.
- In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, an average of 320 French first applications were completed per month. In comparison, in 2023-2024, the average increased to 470 per month.