CENSUS DATA ON VETERANS

- The 2021 Census was the first time since 1971 that a question on military service was included in the census.

- Census data will fill key gaps in our understanding of the Veteran population, such as the number of aging Veterans, the number of Indigenous Veterans, and information on Veteran family composition.

- Veterans Affairs Canada worked with Statistics Canada to develop a contemporary portrait of Canadian Veterans to enhance the impact of programs and services, particularly for Veterans who have previously been under-represented.

<u>WHEN PRESSED:</u>

Q1 – Why was VAC's estimated number of Veterans higher than the census?

The 2021 Census counted 461,240 Veterans. This is lower than VAC's 2021 estimate of 617,800 Veterans. VAC has relied for many years on historical counts originating from the 1971 census, in conjunction with annual counts of releasing members from National Defence and annual mortality rates from Statistics Canada. VAC asked Statistics Canada to count Veterans again in 2021, so that we could obtain a clearer picture of the broader population of Canadian Veterans.

Q2 – How are VAC programs impacted by the data from the census?

VAC does not generally use broader Veteran population figures for operational planning. We rely on actual program intake and service utilization data to develop forecasts and plans. This means that the difference between Census counts and VAC's population estimates does not have a direct impact on VAC operations. At the same time, when we consider new programs and policies, we will have more clarity on which Veterans may benefit.

BACKGROUND

The 2021 Census was the first time since 1971 that a question on military service was included.
Question: Has this person ever served in the Canadian military?
- Yes, currently serving in the Regular Force or the Primary Reserve Force
- Yes, but no longer serving in the Regular Force or the Primary Reserve Force
- No

The 2021 military service question was asked on the short form census, which was sent to every household in Canada. The short form also collected primary demographic information, such as age, sex, gender, geography, language, and family status. Other questions about race, Indigenous status, and socioeconomic situation were sent to 25% of households in the long form questionnaire.

The 2021 Census counted 461,240 Canadian Veterans, as of May 11, 2021. This is lower than VAC's 2021 estimate of 617,800 Veterans published in VAC's yearly Facts and Figures. This discrepancy in population numbers was not entirely unexpected because VAC's Veteran estimates were based on data from the 1971 Census and other national surveys, in conjunction with annual military release counts from DND and mortality rates from Statistics Canada.

What we know so far about Veterans from the census data:
- 16.2% of Veterans were women; 83.8% were men.
- Average age of Women Veterans was 59.1 vs 61.7 for men.
- 33,420 were age 85 or older.
- 67.0% were married or common-law
- 22.1% had a university degree or higher
- Unemployment rate of 8.9%
- 11.5% had income that fell below the low-income measure (LIM)
- 28.1% reported "always having difficulties" with their activities of daily living
- 5.4% were in core housing need
- 23,075 Veterans were Indigenous, including 10,950 First Nations, 10,440 Métis, and 755 Inuk (Inuit), as well as 930 with other/multiple affiliations.
- Indigenous Veterans accounted for 5.2% of Veterans in private households.
- The majority of Indigenous Veterans live off reserve (93.3%) with only 6.7% living on reserve.
- The majority of Veterans were cisgender (99.7%) while 0.2% were transgender and 0.1% were non-binary (this is comparable to the broader Canadian population).
- Higher concentrations of Veterans are found in the following cities:
  - Belleville (4.5%), Halifax (4.4%), Kingston (4.0%), Fredericton (3.8%), Saint John (3.5%).