



Veterans on appreciation and policy

Fact Sheet

Introduction

With the Dutch veterans' policy the Ministry of Defence seeks, among other things, to increase public appreciation for veterans. Based on the public opinion figures on veterans (see the Public Opinion on Veterans fact sheet) and reporting on veterans in the media (see Veterans and the Media fact sheet) it could be argued that the policy has succeeded on this point. However, the situation as regards veterans' sense of appreciation and what their feelings are about the veterans' policy is not yet clear.

Research

In 2010, Ms J. Motshagen of Utrecht University conducted a study into the appreciation felt by veterans and their views on the veterans' policy to complete her 'Issues of policy and organisation' programme. A representative sample of 1,244 veterans was drawn from the Veterans' Registration System. 441 veterans (35%) then returned a fully completed questionnaire.

In 2013, the Veterans Institute repeated that study in a slightly different form. Since the majority (84%) of the respondents from 2010 had a veterans' card, it was decided in 2013 to limit the study to veterans' card holders. This group forms nearly 70% of all retired veterans and is the pre-eminent user of services and facilities generated by the veterans' policy. The sample comprised 825 veterans, half of whom responded.

Sense of appreciation

A key objective of both studies was to obtain a reliable indication of the extent to which veterans feel appreciated for their deployment as service personnel during wars or peacekeeping missions. The following tables show the results.

Table 1: 'I feel appreciated as a veteran by' (2010)

	(Strongly) agree	Neutral	(Strongly) disagree
My immediate circle	32%	50%	18%
The government/Ministry of Defence	38%	39%	23%
Media reporting	25%	47%	28%
Society	21%	53%	26%
The average person	29%	47%	24%

Table 2: 'I feel appreciated as a veteran by' (2013)

	(Strongly) agree	Neutral	(Strongly) disagree
My immediate circle	34%	52%	15%
The government/Ministry of Defence	51%	37%	13%
Media reporting	43%	44%	14%
Society	35%	48%	17%
The average person	41%	45%	15%

All in all, in 2013, more than 40% of respondents felt appreciated and 15% felt unappreciated. A comparison with results from 2010 – notwithstanding the fact that a different sample was used in each study – suggests gains have been made. The fact is, in 2010, only 29% of respondents felt valued and no less than 24% of respondents felt unappreciated.

Veterans policy

In the 2010 study the veterans were asked to give an opinion on parts of the veterans' policy based on fourteen statements. The responses showed that roughly 43% of the respondents were satisfied with the policy and 7% were dissatisfied. 50% did not hold a strong view. The Checkpoint magazine, the Veterans' Institute and remembrance ceremonies scored the highest of all elements queried in that survey.

In the 2013 study, the veterans were again presented with numerous questions on the veterans' policy. In nearly all of the questions they were asked to state the importance they attached to a specific component and for their opinions on the way in which that policy component was put into practice. The key results are summarised in table 3.

Table 3: Importance of an opinion on (parts of) the veterans' policy (2013)

	IMPORTANCE	OPINION		
	(Very) important	Positive	Neutral/No opinion	Negative
Veterans' policy (general)	94%	73%	23%	5%
Provision of after-care	91%	43%	51%	7%
Propagating/stimulating appreciation	92%	65%	29%	6%
Netherlands Veterans' Day	66%	49%	50%	2%
Local/regional veterans' days	57%	42%	48%	10%
Veterans' days organised by branches of the armed forces	66%	52%	44%	5%
Remembrance ceremonies for fallen military personnel	92%	72%	26%	1%
(Services provided by the) Veterans' Institute	93%	68%	31%	2%
Checkpoint	-	90%	9%	1%
Veterans' Act	92%	-	-	-

This table shows that the vast majority of veterans' card holders up to the age of 78 attach (great) importance to the veterans' policy and its key components. The various veterans' days score less well as far as importance is concerned. On the other hand, it is precisely those days - and primarily the publicity surrounding and provided by the Netherlands Veterans' Day - that has undoubtedly contributed to awareness and appreciation within society and to the rise in the number of veterans who feel appreciated.

The positive opinion as regards the veterans' policy expressed by 73% of the respondents confirms that there is broad support among veterans for today's veterans' policy. The number of veterans expressing satisfaction with all the components surveyed averages 62%, with 4% of veterans expressing dissatisfaction.

Compared with the 2010 results, satisfaction among veterans has increased substantially. It should be noted here that in terms of the samples and survey methods, the studies are not wholly comparable. A subsequent measurement should clarify whether satisfaction with the policy is in fact increasing.

Wishes and needs

In the 2010 study the respondents were also able to mark with a cross any (additional) wishes or needs they identified. This produced the following top five:

1. The public should be more aware of veterans and their missions (39%).
2. Greater use should be made of veterans to provide information to schools or companies (26%).
3. There should be more personal contact between the government and veterans (24%).
4. The government and the *Vi* should be more proactive in approaching veterans (20%).
5. A job placement service should be organised for veterans (17%).

The 2013 study did not offer an options menu. Veterans were able to state in an open question whether there was room for improvement in the veterans' policy. Roughly one-sixth of respondents stated they could see possibilities for improvement. No specific wishes stood out in the wide range of suggestions made.

Further information

This fact sheet provides general information. For further information on the studies discussed, go to the website www.veteraneninstituut.nl, or contact us by telephone (088334 00 50) or by email (info@veteraneninstituut.nl).

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