



**Canadian Deaf-Blind Collective  
(CDBC.VRS)**

**Survey Report**

**for**

**CRTC TNC 2021-102**

**May 16, 2022**

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**Land Acknowledgement:**

***“From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples that call this land home.”***

The Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind (CNSDB) and the Deaf-Blind Planning Committee (DBPC), operating as the Canada Deaf-Blind Collective (CDBC.VRS) wish to gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their contribution to the Deaf-Blind SRV Canada VRS Survey and this Report.

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## Executive Summary

1. In the TNC 2021-102 Intervention document, the Canada Deaf-Blind Collective (CDBC.VRS) members emphasized that the Deaf-Blind individuals in our country have often been denied access to everyday activities and social advantages that other members of their communities have enjoyed. Communication with family, friends, and service providers is one of these daily activities that most of us take for granted until some event prevents that interaction. Over the past two years, we witnessed this happen with the Covid-19 pandemic forcing the world to reduce and stop entirely human interaction and pivot to communicating, shopping, receiving services, and working mainly through technology. People who could not access the necessary internet or wireless networks were disadvantaged and became more isolated and frustrated. This is the everyday experience of Deaf-Blind people who cannot benefit from the ubiquitous video communication programs and networks because they are **not** accessible.
2. The Report is presented in a way to show the background of the Deaf-Blind Canadian community, their challenges and how they came together to prepare for their very first CRTC advocacy, through the process of research, promotion, data collection and working with Deaf collaborators in the final written work to present to the Commission and others in the telecom industry.
3. This is the Report format:
  - a. Purpose of the Survey
  - b. Introducing the Deaf-Blind Community
  - c. Survey Timeline and Methodology
  - d. Survey Analysis Highlights
  - e. Text Responses from Survey
  - f. Issues and Challenges
  - g. Conclusion and Recommendations
  - h. Appendix A - Text Comments
  - i. Appendix B Text Only Survey Questions
  - j. Appendix C - References and Resources
4. The CDBC.VRS team hopes this Report will provide the reader with insight into the Canadian Deaf-Blind Community members and their efforts to reach communication equity along with their Deaf peers.

## Purpose of the Survey

5. The Canada Deaf-Blind Survey on VRS was created to find out what Deaf-Blind Canadians have experienced with the Canada Video Relay Service (SRV Canada VRS), as this specific telecommunication network was designed to provide Deaf and hard of hearing sign language users with a way to interact with hearing family members, friends, and service providers. It would be THEIR access through visual means with their primary sign language being translated into spoken language by interpreters communicating in ASL (American Sign Language) or LSQ (La Langue des signes québécoise).

## Introducing the Deaf-Blind Community

6. This section includes descriptive material about Deaf-Blindness, Deaf-Blind Communication methods, and how Interpreters and Intervenors provide access to the world in which Deaf-Blind people live, work, and play. The in this section is taken from the Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind supplemental document as part of the record of CRTC 2020-178<sup>1</sup>, It provides background information and awareness to emphasize the difference between interpreters and intervenors related to accessibility for Deaf-Blind Canadians.

### About Deaf-Blindness

7. Deaf-Blindness is a dual sensory disability where the loss of hearing and vision is such that the individual cannot use either sense to compensate for the loss of the other. An individual is considered Deaf-Blind if they have both vision and hearing losses that limit their ability to independently communicate, access information, or travel on their own. Deaf-Blindness comes in a wide range of hearing and vision losses, from being hard of hearing or profoundly deaf combined with low vision or blindness.
8. This lack of or imbalance of senses causes a major barrier to accessing information, communicating with others, maintaining personal connections, and getting help in an emergency. Yet Deaf-Blind people have developed ways to communicate among themselves, their families, and others in their circles.

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<sup>1</sup> [Intervenors and SSPs Provided by Wireless Service Providers \(WSP\) Companies. CNSDB submission to TNC 2020-178, August 27, 2021.](#)

## Deaf-Blind Communications

9. Individuals who are Deaf-Blind use a wide range of communication methods, including visual and tactile sign languages, two-handed manual (fingerspelling), voice, lip-reading, large-print texts or electronic notes, Braille, and object cues. In this part, we share information about the first few communication methods, with reference to the more detailed descriptions in another document.

### Visual and tactile sign languages

10. Canadian Deaf Blind individuals use visual and tactile sign languages, primarily American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes du Québec (LSQ). However, there is the newer additional communication mode of ProTactile (PT) which supports access to the world that surrounds a Deaf-Blind person through touch. PT is a whole, rounded approach where both parties exchange information through specific touch-based signals. PT is based on a socio-cultural philosophy that reflects the Deaf-Blind world, which includes language (PT ASL), the Deaf-Blind culture, and their community. PT is not one way, PT is a reciprocal and immersive language, with two or more people communicating.

### Two-handed manual alphabet

11. Two-handed manual alphabet is a tactile form of fingerspelling. In this method, a person touches specific areas of another person's left hand to indicate letters of the alphabet to spell out words. This method is less common today than in the past and is mostly used by people who are blind or have very low vision who become deaf or hard of hearing after they have already acquired language.

### Voice and Lip Reading

12. For the individual who has some residual hearing, they may use hearing aids or cochlear implants and communicate with their voice. If they have some useful vision, they may also use lip reading. Some will combine speech, lip-reading, and signing. Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing persons with vision limitations or blindness face many barriers and as the digital age progresses, technology has created new issues and problems.

13. For example, there is the potential for sudden changes in a person's sensory abilities due to medical conditions or from side-effects due to required medications, which mean the person cannot utilize their residual hearing OR vision because they are not prepared and do not have adequate resources to mitigate these changes. There is more about such impacts in the Equipment section of the report.

### **Deaf Interpreters for Deaf-Blind Individuals**

14. In the past, members of the Deaf community start interpreting out of personal interest to ensure Deaf-Blind people are included in social events and groups, then over time and experience, they choose to do it as a career. The Deaf interpreters gain professional interpreting skills and training, become members of the professional interpreting associations, and must follow a strict code of ethics and professional standards. In Canada, the profession is fairly new and developing, Deaf Canadians in this field call themselves Deaf Interpreters or DIs. Some Deaf Interpreters have taken formal post-secondary interpreter training programs alongside their hearing peers and are members of the Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI), and their local or provincial interpreter association. A note of interest is that in some communities, Deaf-Blind prefer Deaf Interpreters and Deaf Intervenors/SSPs, while in other areas, the preference is for hearing interpreters and intervenors.



## Survey Timeline

### Survey Timeline

15. The Collective members have had numerous challenges, due to the combined effects of deafness and blindness, among other issues, in getting the survey launched, and our timeline had to be adjusted accordingly, and depending on the response numbers, the survey period will remain at **4 - 6 weeks** with an adjusted timeline as follows:
  - a. **July 12** - Survey launch with video message in ASL and LSQ
  - b. **July 12 - August 12** - Original survey period (1 month)
  - c. **August 20** - deadline for MAIL in Survey to the DBPC mailing address (allows for all mail to arrive before August 24th)
  - d. **August 24** - Extended survey deadline survey period to be 6 weeks, survey period is then officially closed.
  - e. **August 24 - 25** Data entry of paper surveys data into Survey Monkey
  - f. **August 27 - 30** - Data extraction from Survey Monkey
  - g. **August 31 - September 3** - Charts graphs created from quantitative data
  - h. **September 3 - 5** - Visual descriptions of each of the charts for all those who are Deaf-Blind and Blind (accessibility)
  - i. **September 6 - 10** - Deaf-Blind analysis of data and charts for each question
  - j. **September 11 - 29** - Team analysis and organization of qualitative text comments parts of the survey results.

## Methodology

16. The **Canadian Deaf-Blind Collective** - VRS team has a team of sighted allies assisting and guiding the Deaf-Blind with the writing and editing and required more time to perform the same tasks as non-Deaf-Blind people.
17. The CDBC.VRS team learned we must frequently wait for the availability of limited intervenor services, to read and communicate the contents of our documents to the team members who have increasingly limited vision.
18. First, the questions were developed and determined as referenced to video relay services, as referenced to TNC 2021-102, with the additions of questions that are pulled from recent experiences of CDBC.VRS members, may reveal accessibility discoveries in the results. There are a total of 53 survey questions
  - a. What are the Deaf-Blind Canadians current vision and communication accessibilities?
  - b. What are Deaf-Blind and low vision Canadian residents' experiences with using the current video relay services?
  - c. Is the current video relay service accessible for Deaf-Blind?
  - d. Is there an accessible communication service that should be provided to ensure that the Deaf-Blind can get access to SRV Canada VRS?
  - e. What specifically needs to be made accessible for Deaf-Blind and persons with low vision in terms of video interpreters, technical & generally and specifically the chat box in the application?
  - f. Is there specific feedback about the video interpreters in regard to the Deaf-Blind VRS user?
  - g. Are Deaf-Blind comfortable with the current SRV Canada VRS customer service?

- 19.** All the 53 questions are set out in Appendix B and the contents were split in the following sections and categories:

Part I: Consent

Part II: About the Respondents

Part III: Communication

Part IV: About Your Home Area

Part V. Employment

Part VI: VRS User Experience

Part VII: VRS Service Experience

Part VIII: Customer Support

PART IX: VRS Accessibility

a. Video Interpreters (VI)

b. Technical

c. VRS App Chat Text Box

PART X: Final Opportunity for Other Comments

- 20.** The team met and overcame many challenges and made sacrifices to ensure the survey was fully accessible to Deaf-Blind Canadians within the timelines for the proceeding.
- 21.** Once the survey questions were finalized, the questions were translated to French and both English and French survey questions were input into the online survey platform SurveyMonkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). There were two links created in regular design for the DDBHH Canadians, in English and French with one extra link created for each language as additional direct links for each language Deaf-Blind respondents' accessibility with high contrast and enlarged accessible versions.
- 22.** The finalized survey documents were next sent to the Sign Language translation and filming resources for production so the survey could be quadrilingual (English/ASL and French/LSQ) with ASL and LSQ translations of the survey geared toward Canadian American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) users.<sup>2</sup> ASL and LSQ videos were filmed, produced, edited, and sent to the team.

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<sup>2</sup> ASL and LSQ users refer to Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and late deafened people in a group using sign languages.

- 23.** The CDBC.VRS team members embedded both Sign Language videos into each of the English/French questions in Survey Monkey.
- 24.** The SurveyMonkey website allowed the storing of the responses, which was then exported to an Excel format for further analysis. Several tools within Excel spreadsheets were used to analyze the survey data.
- 25.** Next, finally the survey was prepared in an accessible document format with large font print, and upon request the surveys were emailed and sent out to Deaf-Blind who requested the Word documents in attachment. These survey responses received via email, in document format, were manually added to the online survey.
- 26.** Two videos were created separately in each sign language, one in ASL and one in LSQ. A bilingual campaign graphic was created for promotional purposes, and shared via social media, primarily Facebook. The promotion of the survey was also done through our Deaf-Blind network, and other non-profit Deaf-Blind organizations who then shared with their Deaf-Blind members.
- 27.** The final number as of August 24, 2022, was 55 responses. CNSDB and DBPC both agree that the size of the snapshot of the Deaf-Blind Canadians' experiences with VRS is sufficient, with the consideration of the limitations of the communication accessibility available to the Deaf-Blind Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 28.** The numerical data were extracted from Survey Monkey and organized in MS Excel, in multiple tabs, separated and cleaned up, one tab per question. Simplified tables were created and organized.
- 29.** Charts, graphs, and infographics were created to capture the survey results in a visual way to assist in the visual analysis of the data collected.
- 30.** For accessibility for all Deaf-Blind with an interest in the proceeding, further steps were taken to ensure the results were accessible to Deaf-Blind readers, providing text descriptions of both tables and graphs or charts for each of the responses.

31. All results have been extracted to be summarized, selected to use, or highlight in this report, is available in a few formats:
  - k. Bullet forms of snapshot survey respondent results.
  - l. Captured snapshots of these highlights in three types of visual data such as graphs or charts.
  - m. all the text comments have been captured in bullet list format where possible.
  
32. All the survey results were separated and presented in several Appendixes to provide choices for Deaf-Blind report readers:
  - a. Appendix A is Survey Analysis in Text only, without text and graphic descriptions
  - b. Appendix B is Survey Analysis in Text with text and graphic descriptions
  - c. Appendix C is Survey Analysis with Charts and graphs and text and graphic descriptions.
  
33. The entirety of the respondents' input is in a full survey analysis of the raw data and will be made available in the following weeks. The next three pages are selected survey analysis highlights of importance, followed by 22 pages

[**Please Note:** the paragraph numbering resumes on Page 39, as it is not possible to automatically number the Survey Analysis Highlights and the Survey Analysis with Graphics at this time.]

# Survey Analysis Highlights

## Summary Highlights of Survey Results

There was a total of **55** respondents, and these are the highlights of their responses for the reader's quick text reference.

### About the Deaf-Blind Respondents

- **56%** of respondents identified as Deaf-Blind, **16%** as Hard of hearing, **15%** as an ASL and LSQ user
- **44%** identified themselves as having Usher's Syndrome, **27%** Deaf-Blind, **10%** Other, **8%** had low vision, **6%** were completely blind.

### Communication

- **52%** use ASL, **33%** use English, **5%** use LSQ, **4%** use French
- **18%** use Tactile ASL or LSQ for communication, **7%** use Protactile, **7%** use Braille and **43%** use Sign Language (ASL or LSQ).
- **58%** use Deaf Interpreters.
- **69%** indicated that they use Intervenor/SSP services for communication
- **33%** received only 9 hours of Intervenor/SSP services every month, **11%** received 15 hours a month, while **8%** received 30 hours of services per month.
- **7%** use Intervenor/SSP services for VRS calls.
- **7%** use other assisted services, **13%** do not.

### Residence home area

- **19** respondents were from Ontario, **17** from Quebec, and **8** from British Columbia, **3** were from Alberta, **3** from Manitoba.
- **62%** originate from metropolitan cities
- **77%** of Deaf-Blind live by themselves, **21%** living with just 1 more person.

### Employment

- **60%** have paid employment, while **40%** did not.
- **21%** get their income from social assistance (disability) from the provincial government, **16%** from CPP, **15%** from OAS.
- **52%** of Deaf-Blind respondents earn less than \$25,000.00 annually

### VRS User Experience

- **75%** do use VRS, **25%** do not use VRS due to visual inaccessibility
- **77%** expressed a desire to use VRS. **23%** more would use it if their visual accessibility was met.
- **35%** said they would use VRS if there was a communication facilitator, **65%** said they don't need one.
- **21%** state that someone currently helps them use VRS, while **79%** do not.

- **44%** say a family member assists with their calls
- **80%** are the only DDBHH who use VRS in their home.
- **44%** have been using VRS since 2016.
- **18%** do use VRS daily, **14%** use it 5-6 times a week, **16%** use it 2 or 3 times a week, **32%** seldom use VRS every month, **20%** rarely use it.
- **56%** either use PC Windows computers or an Apple iPad, **20%** use Apple iPhone, **10%** use Mac computers, **10%** use Android smartphones.

### **VRS Service Experience**

- **76%** of Deaf-Blind respondents agree that VRS improved their lives, **13%** were undecided.
- **73%** of Deaf-Blind respondents have not used VRS 9-1-1.

### **VRS Customer Support**

- **42%** are uncertain where to call Customer Support 9050 on the App, while **58%** of Deaf-Blind respondents do.
- **64%** wished there was in-person one-on-one tech support for set up and tech issues

### **VRS Accessibility**

#### **Video Interpreters**

- **59%** had a comment on the colours and styles of the shirts that the video interpreters wore.
- **55%** needed the video interpreters to change their signing for their visual accessibility needs.
- **96%** respondents stated that video interpreters should be required to take Deaf-Blind sensitivity training.

#### **Technical**

- **29%** respondents expressed frustration that the app is not user friendly,
- **44%** did not find the app easy to see visually, wanting more options for font size and background colours for their visual accessibility needs,
- **93%** of Deaf-Blind respondents wished for the ability to adjust the text size and colour in the VRS app to meet their visual accessibility needs.

#### **VRS App Chat box**

- **93%** of Deaf-Blind respondents wish for the ability to change the chat box text size, text, and background colour.
- **77%** of Deaf-Blind respondents are interested in being able to read the chat box using a Braille display.

## **Other Comments**

- **27** Deaf-Blind left comments with further input and comments about Canada's VRS system.

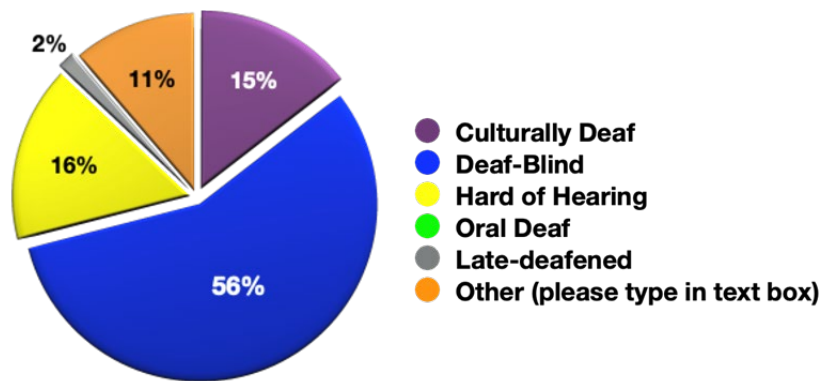
The summary with selected highlights of 55 survey respondents' experiences is as follows in visual formats with charts and graphs.



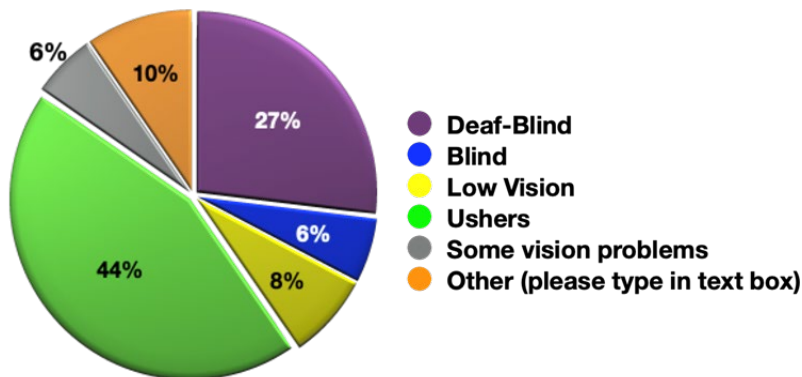
## Survey Analysis Highlights - with Graphics

### About the Deaf-Blind Respondents

**Question 2:** The self-identification of the Deaf-Blind respondents participating in the survey had the largest bulk of people who were Deaf-Blind at **56%**, with **16%** being Hard of Hearing, followed by **15%** being Culturally Deaf where they are an ASL and/or LSQ user, and **11%** had chose “Other”. A small percentage, at **2%**, identify as late-deafened.

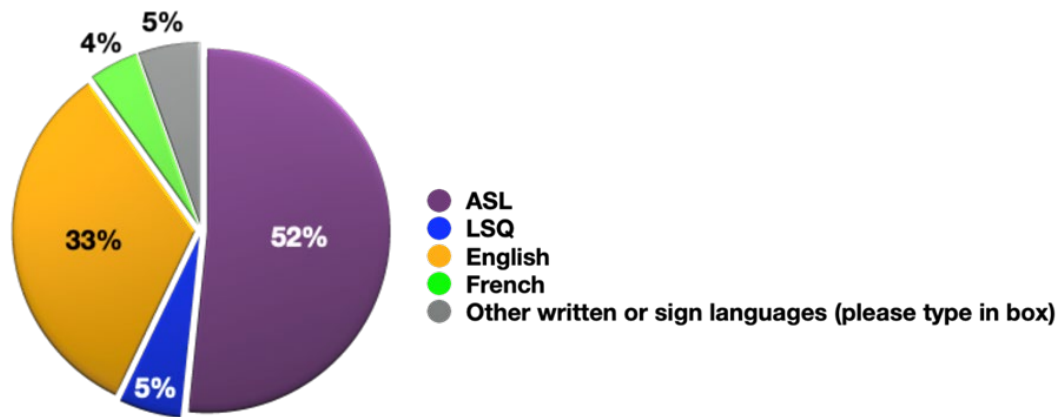


**Question 3:** Nearly half, at **44%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents described themselves relating to their vision as having Usher's syndrome with the next largest number of respondents, at **27%**, related to as being Deaf-Blind, followed by **10%** choosing “Other”, followed by **8%** as having Low Vision, and at **6%** each for Blind and having Some vision problems.

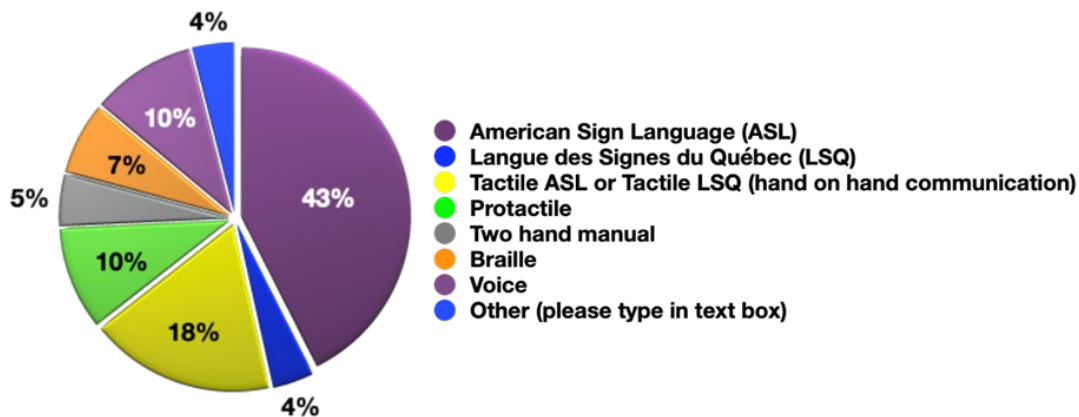


### Communication

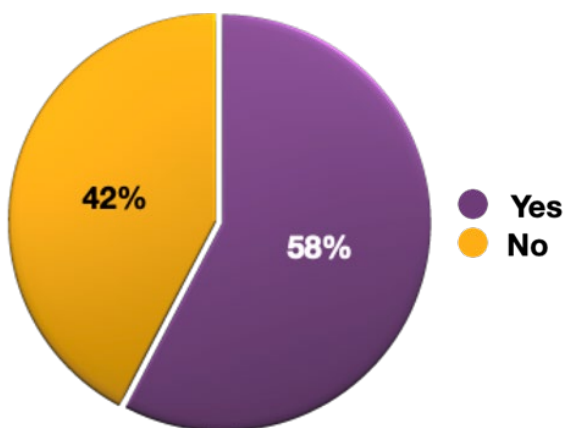
**Question 6:** For the languages that Deaf-Blind respondents use most often, the highest percentage of respondents use ASL at **52%** and English at **33%** while **5%** use LSQ and French at **4%**, and **5%** identified that they use other written or sign languages.



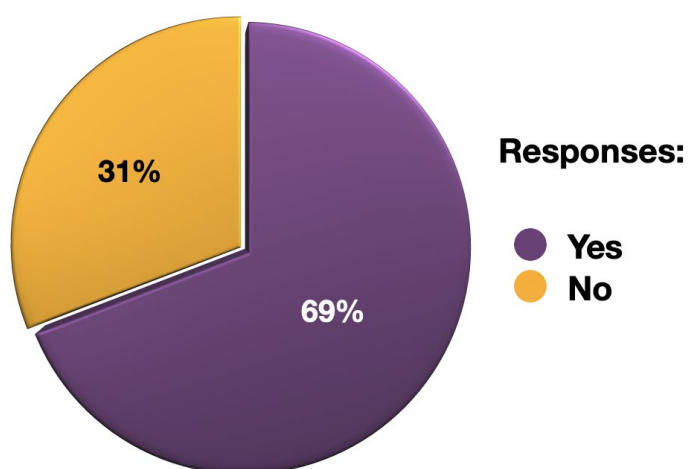
**Analysis:** Of the 52% Deaf-Blind respondents from Question 6,, we learned the communication they use the most is Sign Language (ASL or LSQ) at **47%**, with **18%** of these respondents using Tactile ASL or LSQ for communication, and a smaller percentage of them using Protactile or Voice, at **10%** each as well as **7%** using Braille. The smallest breakdown of respondents used two-hand communication, which is likened to the two-hand British Sign Language but in a tactile style.



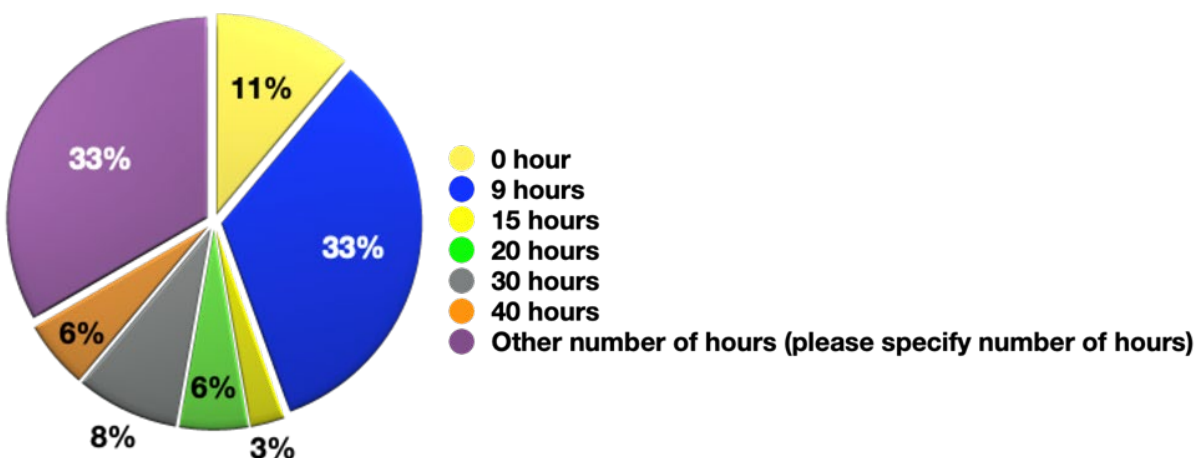
**58%** of Deaf-Blind respondents indicated that they use Deaf Interpreters where they receive interpretation in either ASL or LSQ as these interpreters are more fluent in those sign languages as well as other visual and tactual communication forms. **42%** respondents said they do not use Deaf Interpreters.



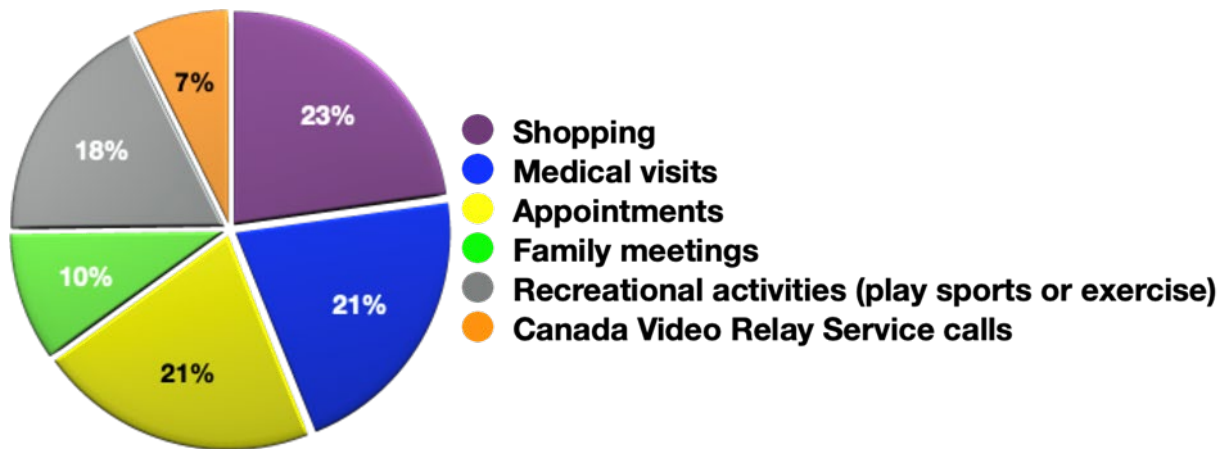
**Analysis:** A majority, at **69%**, of Deaf-respondents do utilise intervenors/support service providers (SSP) for communication while **31%** do not receive any support.



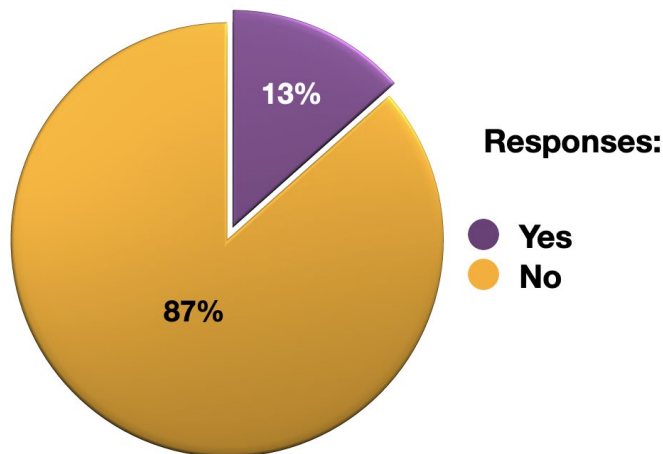
Two of the highest number, at **33%** each, of Deaf-Blind respondents receive **9 hours a month of Intervenor/SSP services** and an unspecified number of hours that ranges between 2 and 160 hours while **11%** received zero hours, followed by **8%** who received 30 hours, and at **6%** each received 20 hours and 40 hours. A small percentage, at **3%**, received 15 hours of services a month.



For the CRTC to see whether Deaf-Blind people were using their intervenor/SSP services for their VRS calls, it was necessary to inquire Deaf-Blind respondents if they did so. The result showed **7%** of Deaf-Blind respondents were using some of their allocated time with their intervenor/SSP on VRS calls.

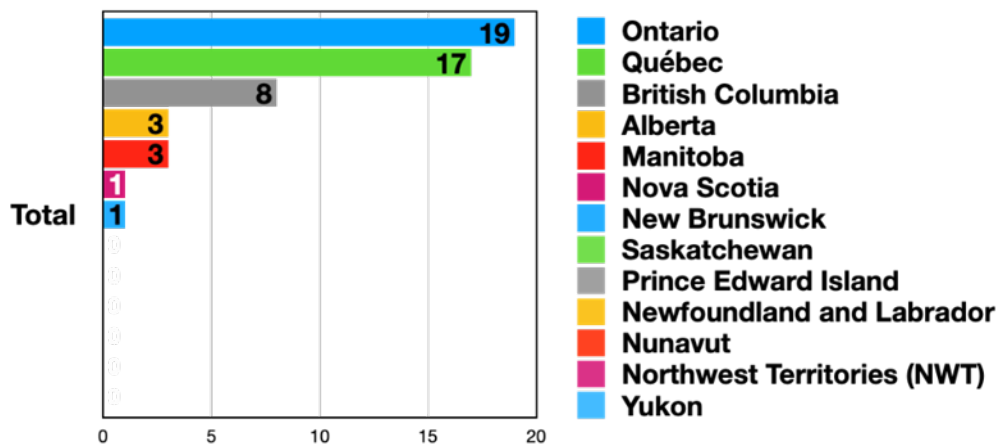


CDBC.VRS wanted to see whether Deaf-Blind respondents were using any other assisted services other than their intervenor/SSP and found that an overwhelming majority, at **87%**, said, no they do not and just **13%** said yes, they do.



### About Your Home Area

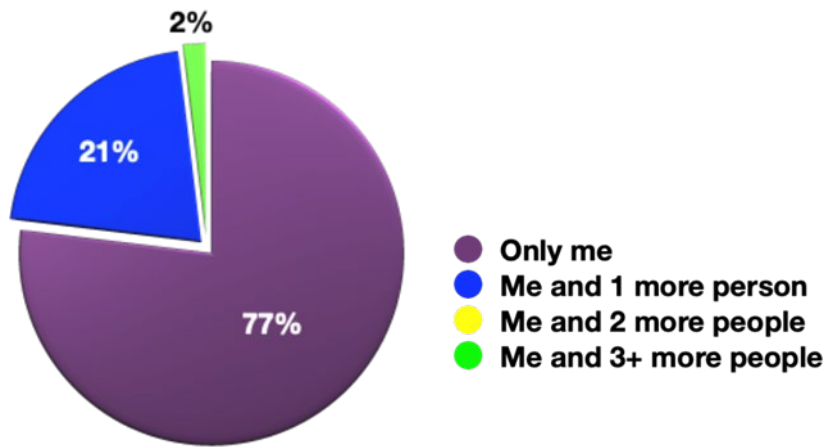
According to our study, the largest concentration of Deaf-Blind respondents resides in Ontario at **19**, followed by Quebec at **17**, followed by **8** from British Columbia, followed by Alberta and Manitoba at **3**. The rest originated from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick while there were no respondents from Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, or Yukon.



The highest number of respondents at **62%** originate from metropolitan cities with 50,000 or more people. The result was not surprising considering Deaf service agencies, and job opportunities for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of hearing are located and usually found in metropolitan areas. **29%** live in smaller cities or towns with a population of 2,500 to 50,000 people. **6%** live in a small city or town with a population of between 1,000 to 2,500 people. The rest, at **4%**, live in an isolated area. Major cities are usually where DDDHH Canadians gravitate toward due to accessible services provided in these cities and larger community social circles.

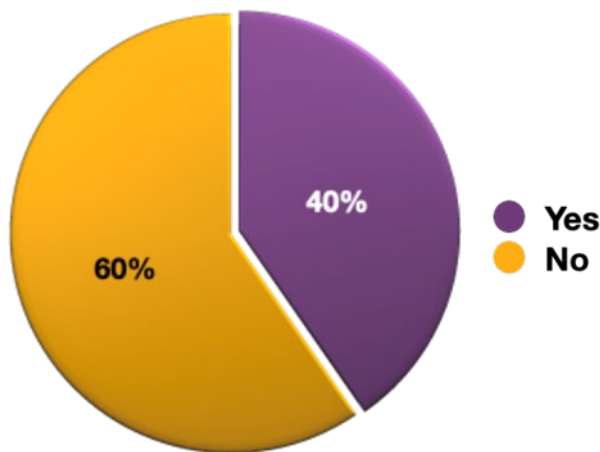


For the CRTC to see the picture of the number of Deaf-Blind people living alone vs with others that are also DDBHH in the same residence, it was surprising to see the results where a bulk percentage of Deaf-Blind respondents live alone, at **77%**, with two people living together at **21%**, and more than 3 people was considerably less, at **2%**.

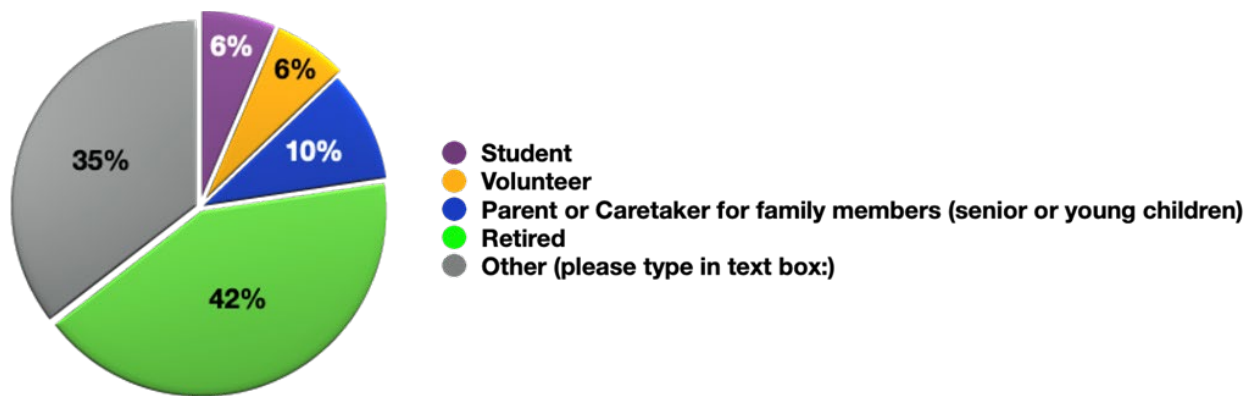


### Employment

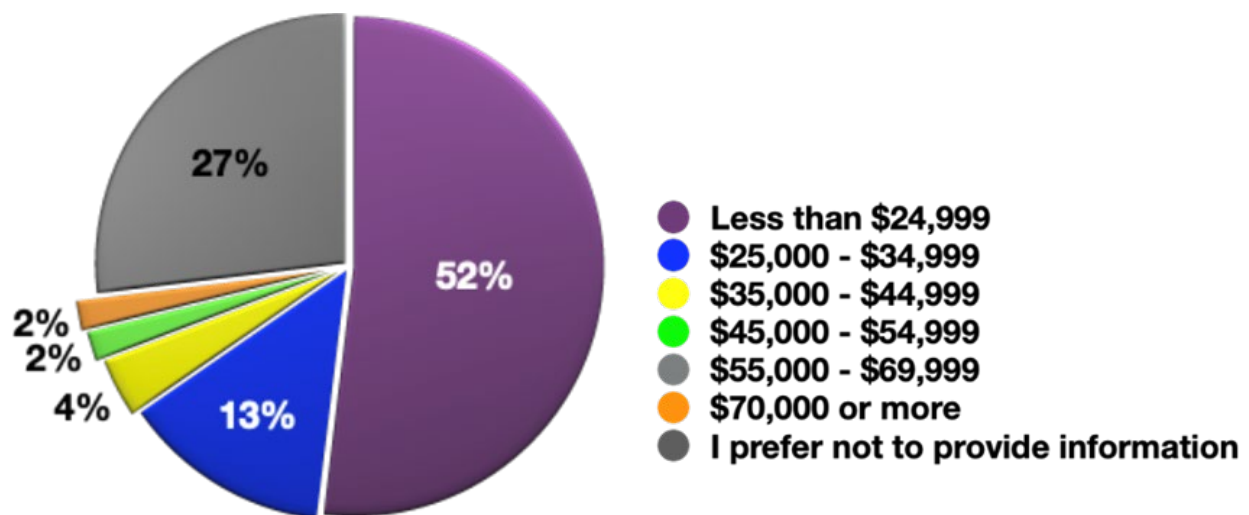
To understand the employment and salary profile of Deaf-Blind respondents, CDBC.VRS et al. asked employment-related questions, and asked respondents if they had a paid job, and **60%** did say yes, they did, while **40%**, with a total of **31** respondents, said no, they did not.



Of the **31** Deaf-Blind respondents who said they do not have paid work, to understand further, the query specifically asked what they do if they don't have paid work. The highest number of respondents chose "Retired" at **42%**, while the other greatest number of respondents chose "Other" meaning they were neither students, volunteers, caretakers, parents or retired, at **35%** while a combined **12%** were students or volunteers, and **10%** were either a parent or a caretaker for their own family members. Once again, the largest grouping of respondents seems to be from the retired bracket.



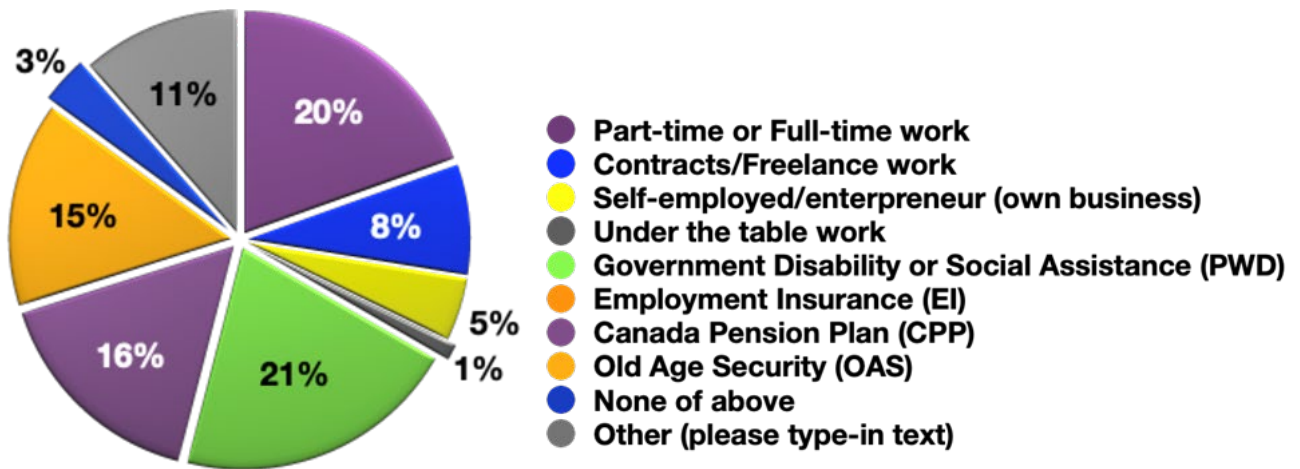
Over half, at **52%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents earned less than \$24,999 annually, while the next grouping of respondents at **27%** did not want to provide their information. **13%** earned \$25,000 to \$34,999 annually and very few Deaf-Blind respondents make more than \$35,000/year, evident by **4%** for \$35,000 to \$44,999, and **2%** each for \$45,000 to \$54,999 and \$70,000 plus. Full data breakdown is available at Question 21.



To envision the profile of income source(s) the Deaf-Blind respondents received, the responses were all over the place. The largest source of income was social assistance such as disability from the provincial government at **21%**. Using the largest number of residents from Ontario as an example, the equivalent of that province’s government assistance would be the Ontario Disability Program (ODSP).

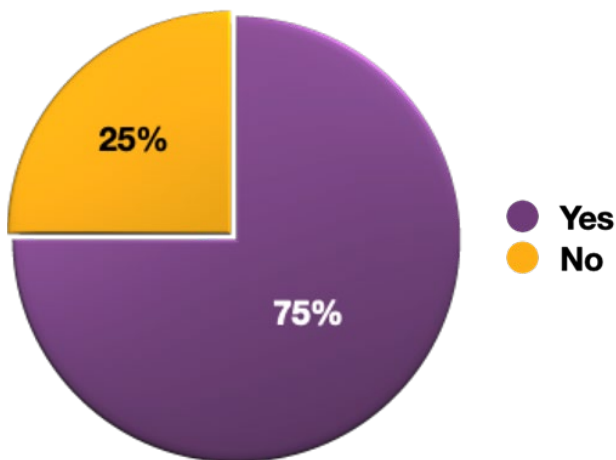
The next largest respondent group, at **20%**, were from either Part-time or Full-time work, followed by **16%** from Canada Pension Plan (CPP), while **15%** who received the Old Age Security (OAS) stipend. **14%** chose either “Other” or “None of above” while **8%** from received income from contracts or freelance work. The smallest groups received theirs from self-employment at **5%**, and **1%** did under the table work. The largest income source(s) were social assistance and either Part-time or Full-time work.





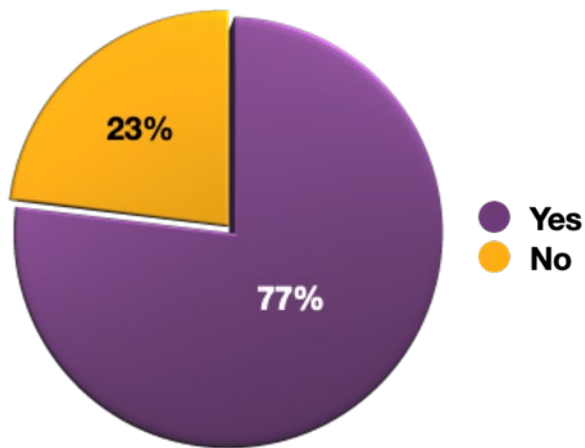
### VRS User Experience

CDBC.VRS wanted to gain insight of what percentage of Deaf-Blind respondents were using Video Relay Services (VRS) so it was necessary to query the respondents. Astonishingly, a majority, at **75%**, of respondents said yes, they do use VRS if the VRS interpreter meets their visual accessibility needs while **25%**, with a total of **13** respondents, said no, they did not, mainly because of visual inaccessibility reasons.

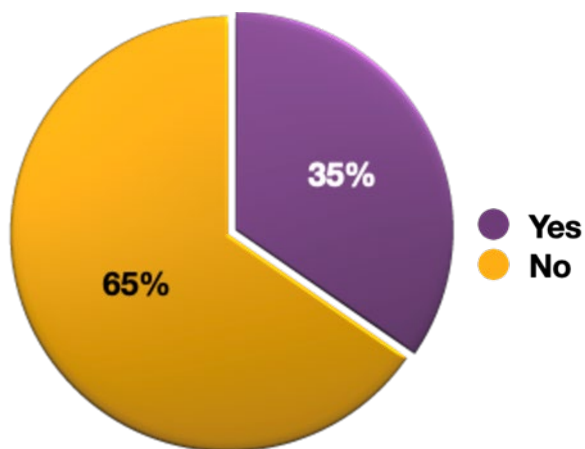


To understand this specific demographic better, it was necessary explore further to see whether more Deaf-Blind respondents would use VRS if the conditions were suitable. Of the **13** respondents who said they do not use VRS, **77%** expressed a desire in using VRS while **23%** did not. The respondents throughout the survey did indicate that they would use VRS if their visual accessibility needs are accommodated.

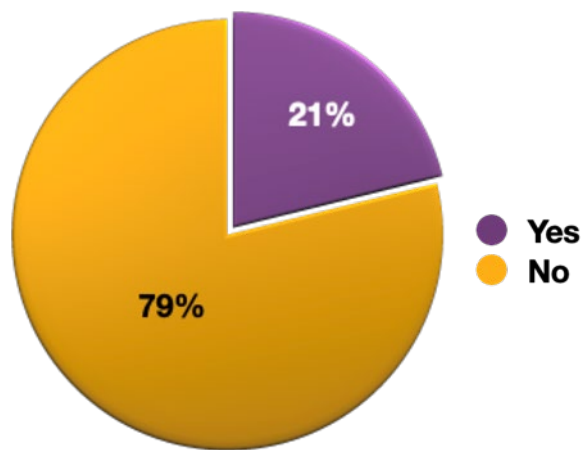




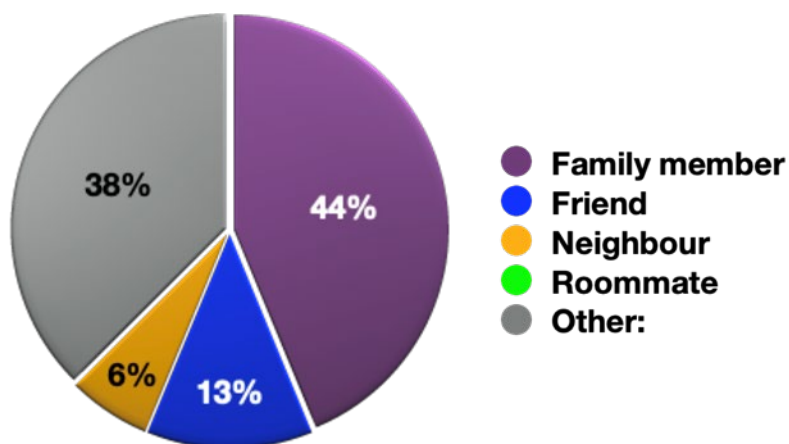
CDBC.VRS also wanted to identify whether if Deaf-Blind respondents required tactile hand-on-hand communication between a respondent and the VRS interpreter. We discovered that **35%** of respondents would use VRS if there was a communication facilitator while **65%** did not require one. Many of these respondents are fearful of using tactile hand-on-hand communication due to potential misunderstandings that may occur during the VRS call due to lack of experience in using VRS.



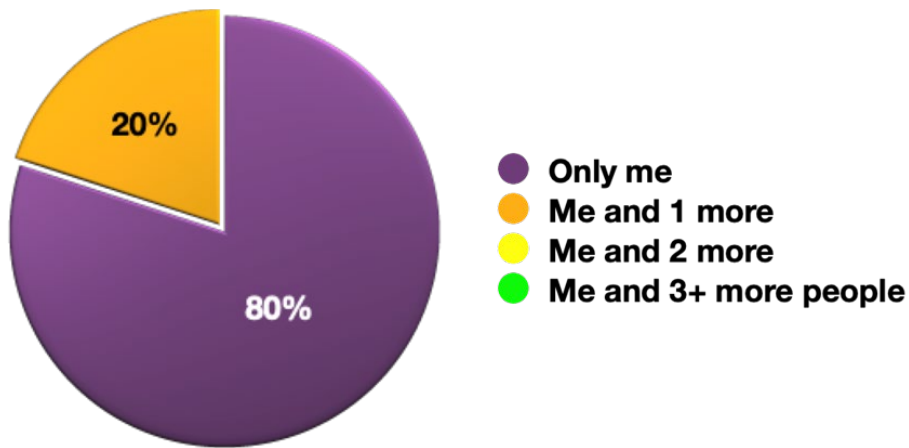
While exploring further on how Deaf-Blind respondents use VRS, we found **21%** of respondents have someone assist them in using VRS while **79%** did not.



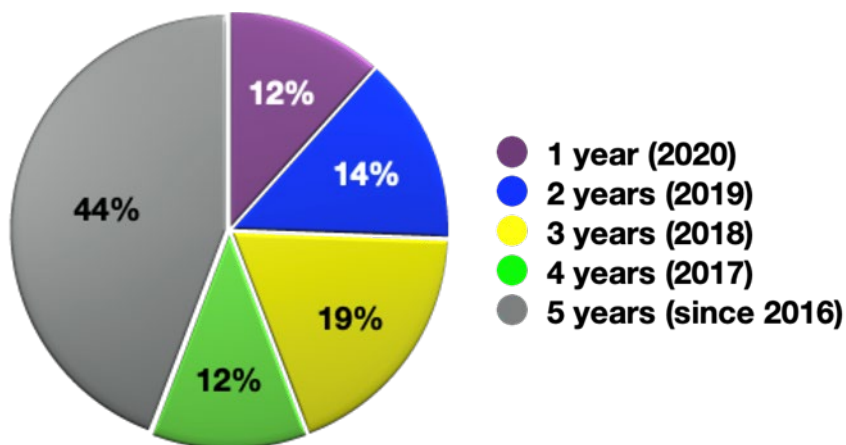
The **11** respondents who said they have someone assist them in using VRS, **44%** said a family member does this, with the next highest grouping of respondents at **38%** chose the “Other” option, and **13%** said a friend helped out. The smallest percentage at **6%** was a neighbour.



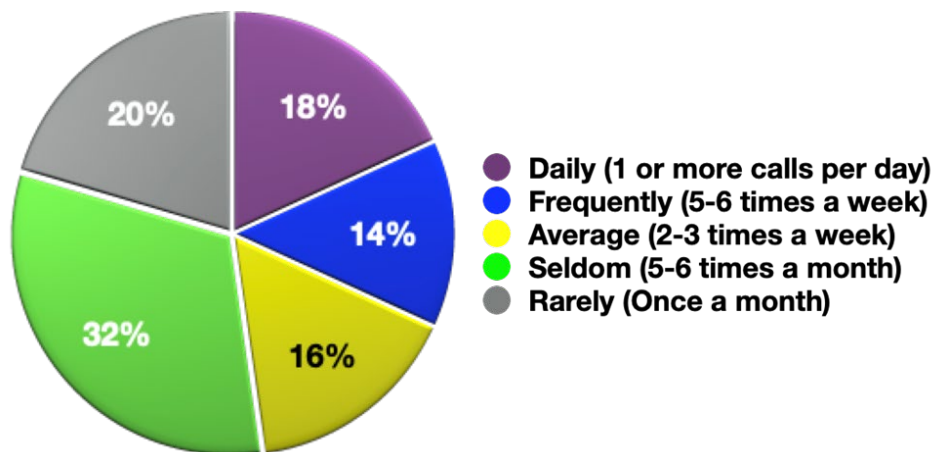
The largest chunk, at **80%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents indicated they were the only DDBHH who uses VRS in their household while the remaining **20%** lived with another person in the household who was also DDBHH.



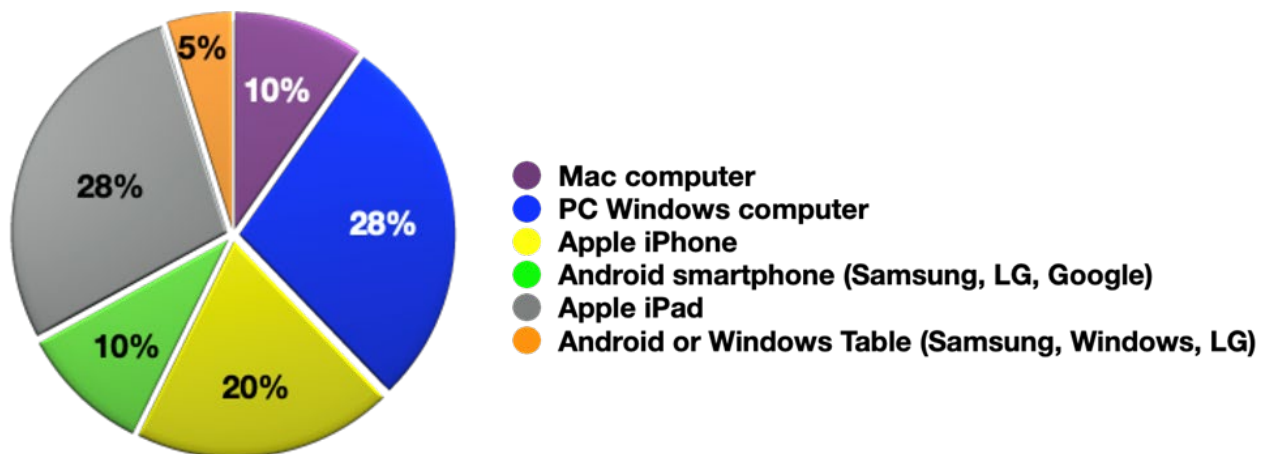
SRV Canada VRS was established in 2016. To get a picture of Deaf-Blind respondents' length of time in using VRS since its inception, it was found nearly half, at **44%**, of respondents have been using VRS for since 2016, followed by **19%** since 2018, followed by **14%** since 2019, and at **12%** each for those who have since 2017 and 2020. It was determined that Deaf-Blind people need to take their time to learn about VRS and feel comfortable in seeing clearly on the screen before being confident in using it. Thus, the number of registered Deaf-Blind individuals is likely growing annually.



To determine the frequency Deaf-Blind respondents were using VRS, CDBC.VRS learned that **18%** respondents use it daily, **14%** use it between 5 and 6 times a month, **16%** use it on average of 2 to 3 times a week while **32%** seldomly use VRS every month and **20%** rarely use it.

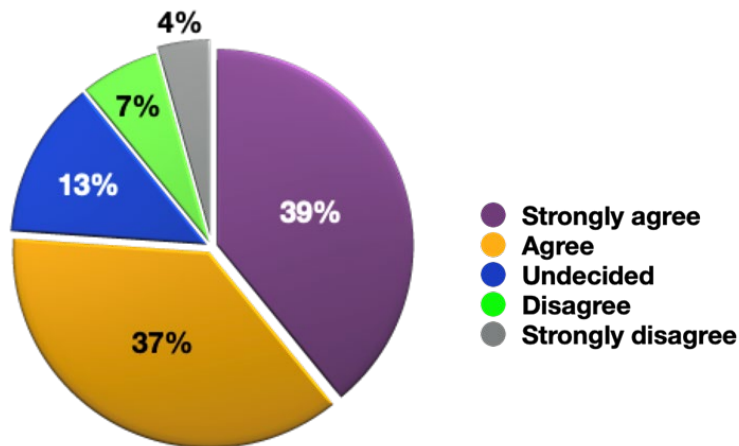


As for the type of device Deaf-Blind respondents use for the SRV Canada VRS app, at **56%** respondents preferred either an Apple iPad or PC Windows computer while **20%** the Apple iPhone, followed by **10%** each for Android smartphone and Mac computer. A smaller percentage of respondents at **5%** use Android or Windows Table.



### VRS Service Experience

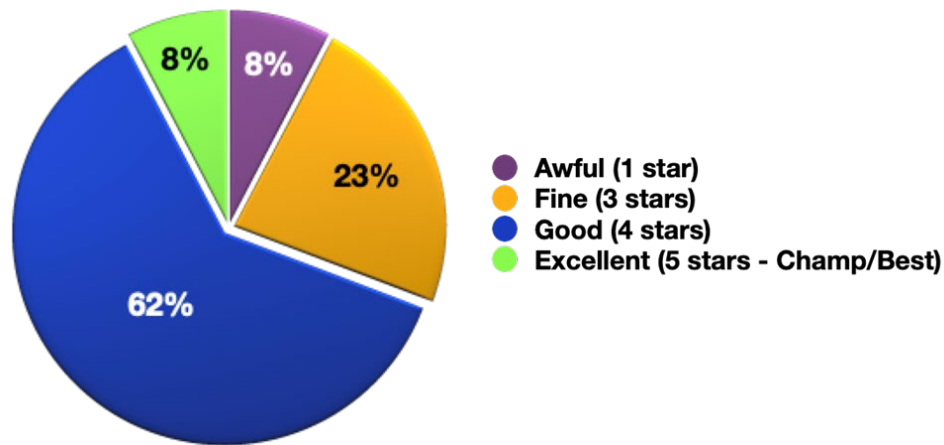
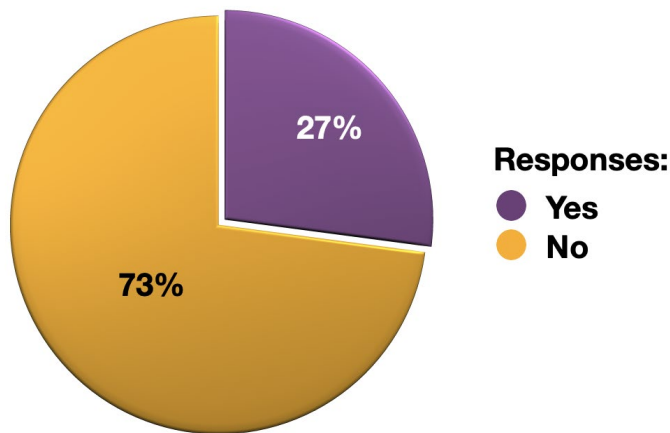
A sizable, at **76%**, of Deaf-respondents agreed that VRS have improved their lives while **13%** were undecided. Respondents expressed that VRS gives them their independence while using their first language, ASL, to communicate. They said they could shop online, order prescriptions, keep them connected to medical professionals, access services they need, and make appointments easily. In addition, they could have smooth barrier-free conversations with family and friends and not have to arrange their schedule to match with untrained family members with limited ASL skills to interpret. **11%** of respondents disagreed that VRS improved their lives. The main reason seems to be the inability of hearing people calling the respondents and a lack of ring signal to alert of an incoming call.



## TEXT RESPONSES

- “I like using my first language, ASL, to communicate.”
- “The VRS enables me to shop online, order prescriptions, and make appointments more easily.”
- “It kept me connected to medical professionals.”
- “The biggest difference is the ability for hearing callers to call me personally via ASL/English interpreter.”
- “Family and friends are happier to have smooth conversations with no barriers.”
- “I could call for and have access to services that I need.”
- “It improved my skills since I began to use it as I am Deaf-Blind.”
- “I can now make calls independently without having to set up my schedule to match with an untrained hearing family member with limited ASL skills who may or may not know what I want out of the call.”
- “I find USA VRS more accessible than Canada VRS. If Canada VRS improves to be more like it then it will be better. Right now, hearing people cannot really phone Deaf people on the VRS and can only leave messages. That means Deaf people are in charge of making calls which at times can be challenging to reach hearing people in the government, a business, or a doctor’s office simply because they could not get ahold of me. It seems that there is no ring signal on the phone that tells me someone is calling me via VRS. Compared to the USA, I am able to receive calls from hearing people, but why not with Canada VRS? There is a lot of improvement needed in Canada VRS.”

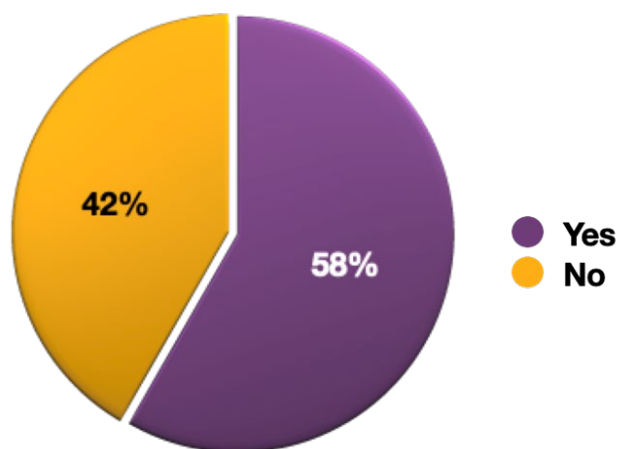
27% of Deaf-Blind respondents have used VRS 9-1-1. Of the respondents that used this service, an overwhelming majority, at 93% thought the service was either Fine, Good, or Excellent while just 8% thought it was Awful. There is a mixture of positive and negative experiences with VRS 9-1-1. One respondent said they were connected with SRV Canada VRS until they gave the BC dispatcher their cell phone number to text and remain in touch until the ambulance arrived where they connected with the Medical Interpreting Service line. On the other hand, another respondent was frustrated with the numerous transfers within SRV Canada VRS that took 30 minutes, all of that while in extreme pain. Another respondent shared a positive experience where the police showed up at their doorstep while another respondent expressed there was confusion on their exact location.

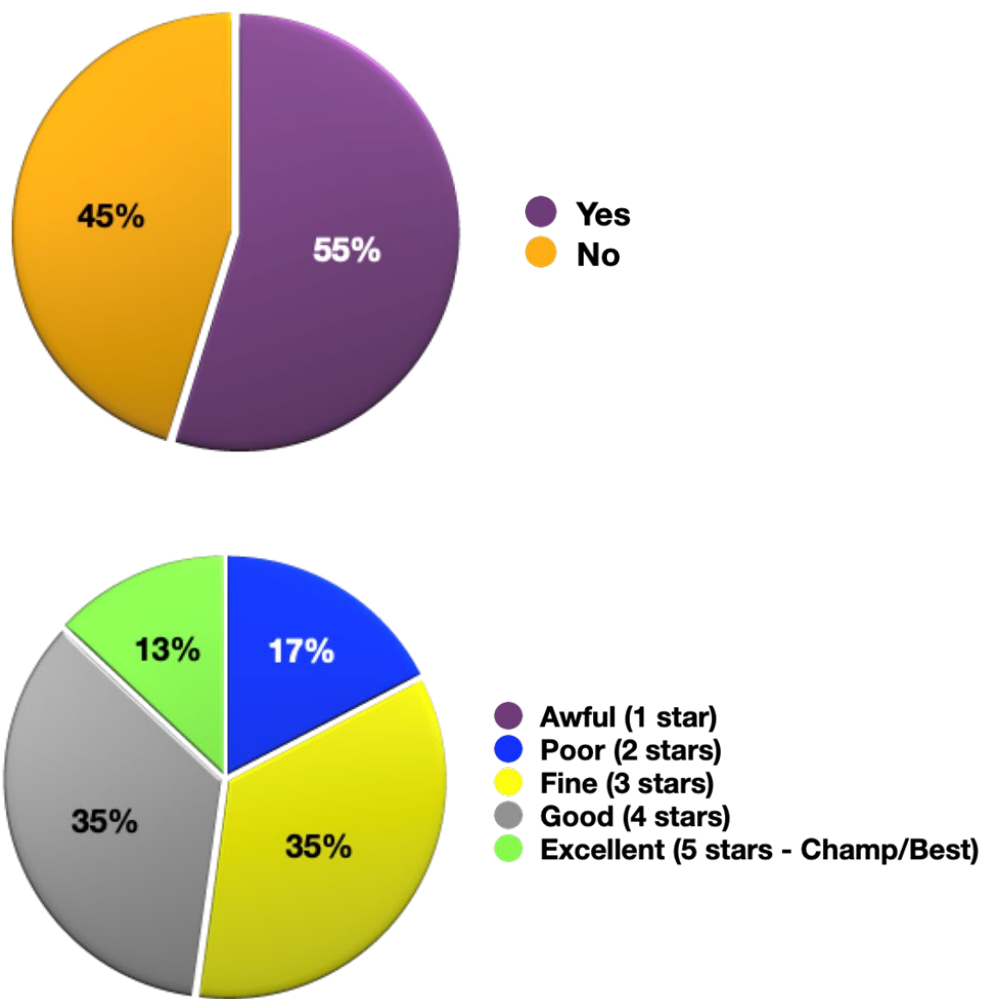


## TEXT RESPONSES:

- “It was my first and so far, my only VRS 9-1-1 call. The interpreter stayed on the line until we connected to the BC Ambulance dispatcher where I gave my cell phone number to text me when the ambulance arrived. The BC dispatcher stayed with me so I could sign off with the VRS operator and connect with our Medical Interpreting Service line.”
- “When my ankle was badly broken, I had to call VRS 9-1-1, but VRS had to transfer 4 times to the right one which took 30 minutes and while I was in real awful pain!”
- “I’ve used VRS 9-1-1 twice. The first time there was a slow connection to EMT and confusion of my exact location. The second time was extremely frustrating due to the interpreter not communicating clearly.”
- “It was a good experience and the police showed up at my doorstep after I had called them.”

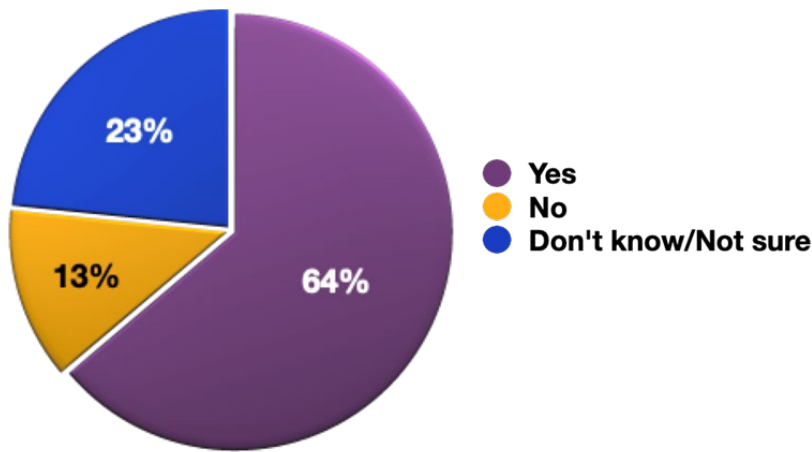
Almost half, at **42%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents mentioned that they are uncertain where on the SRV Canada VRS app to call Customer 9050. Of the **58%** of respondents who knew where it was, **55%** have used it. **83%** thought the service was Fine, Good, or Excellent while **17%** thought it was Poor.





**64%** of Deaf-Blind respondents expressed a wish for in-person one-on-one tech support for setup and tech issues for their visual accessibility needs while **23%** were uncertain if they wanted it and **13%** said they do not need it.

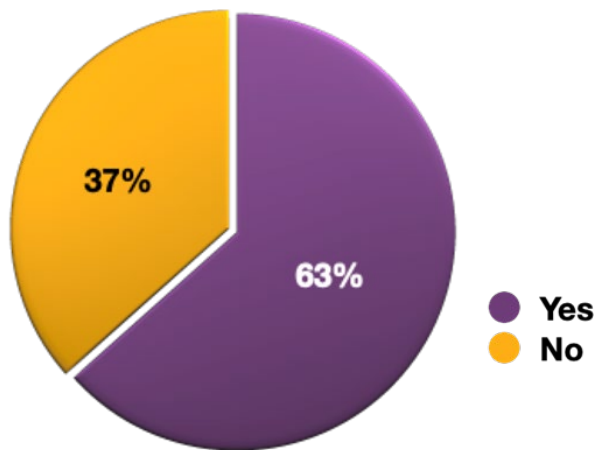




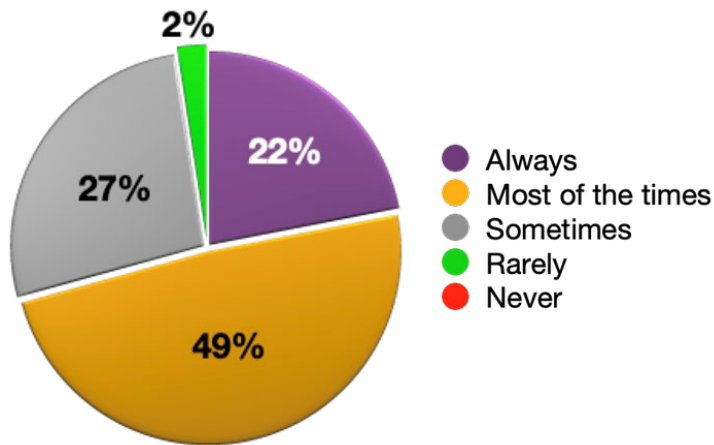
## VRS Accessibility

### 1. Video Interpreters

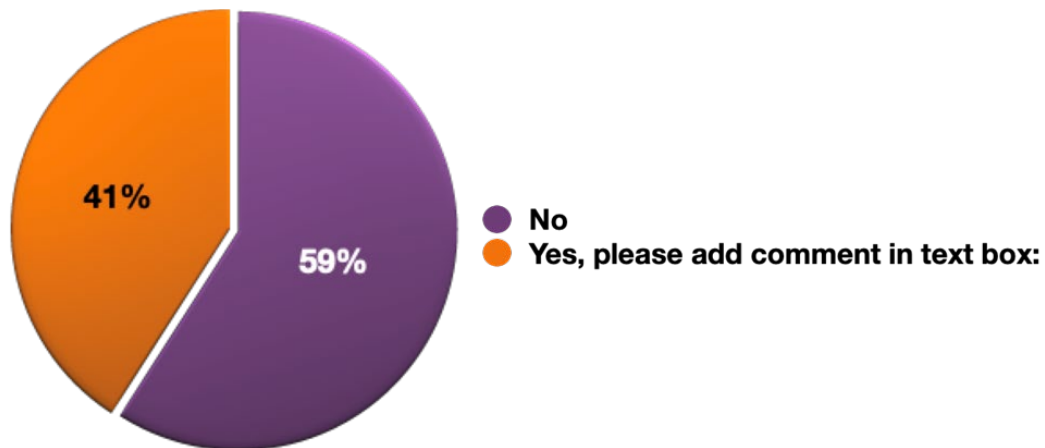
Currently, the standardised colour behind the video interpreter at SRV Canada VRS is cobalt blue. CDBC.VRS wanted to investigate and see whether it is satisfactory for the Deaf-Blind respondents. Over half, at **63%**, of respondents thought it as acceptable while **37%** did not as the colour may not meet their visual accessibility needs.



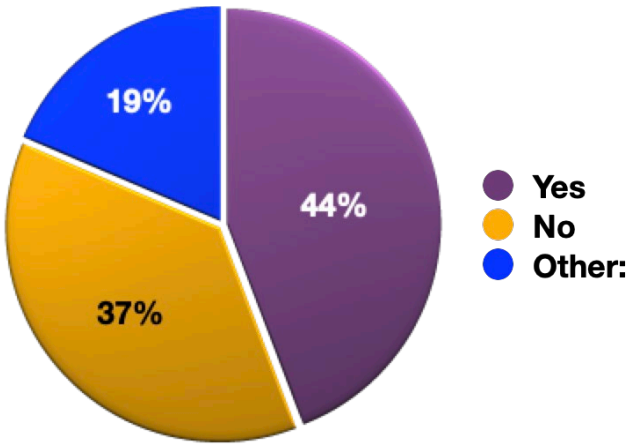
To determine whether the colours and styles of the shirts worn by video interpreters were comfortable to see for the Deaf-Blind respondents, **71%** indicated it was at least most of the time while **27%** said it was sometimes.



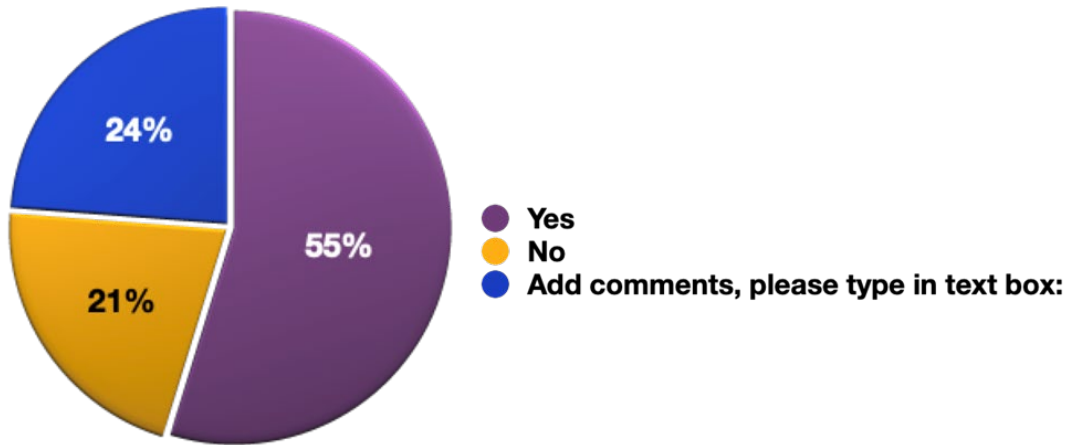
**59%** of Deaf-Blind respondents provided comments on the colours and styles that video interpreters wore. The respondents typed in the text box that interpreters' tops need to be plain and dark with zero visual distractions on it so they could focus better on the interpreter's hands. In addition, the interpreters need to reduce visual distractions such as wearing V-necks, tank tops, and scoops as well as using jewellery and having long nails.



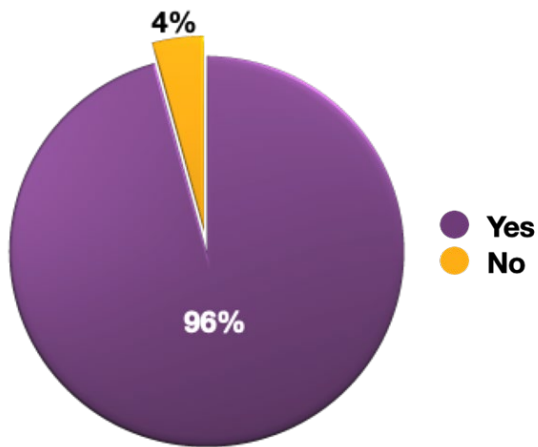
**44%** of respondents want interpreters to have different coloured shirts or tops available upon request so they could see them better. There are a variety of degrees of deafblindness so each Deaf-Blind individual's visual accessibility needs vary. They require personal preference to be able to see the video interpreters clearly and comfortably as well as to reduce eye strain or blurriness.



More than half, at **55%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents need the video interpreters to adjust their signing style to meet their visual accessibility needs. They may require an interpreter to either speed up/slow down or sign in a smaller space to be able to follow.

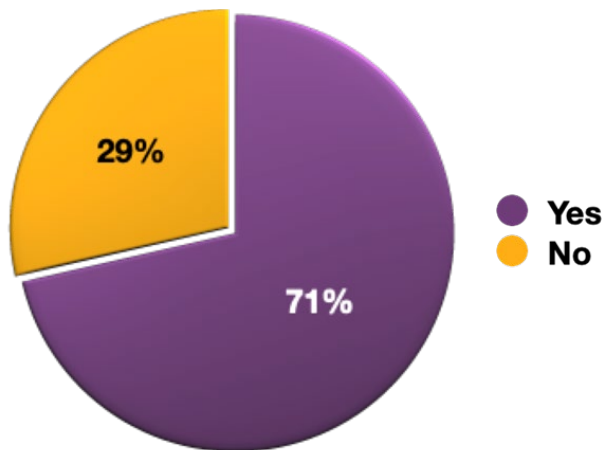


Almost all, at **96%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents felt video interpreters should be required take Deaf-Blind sensitivity training to assist them in understanding the visual accessibility needs of Deaf-Blind people to minimise hurt feelings and needless problems from arising.

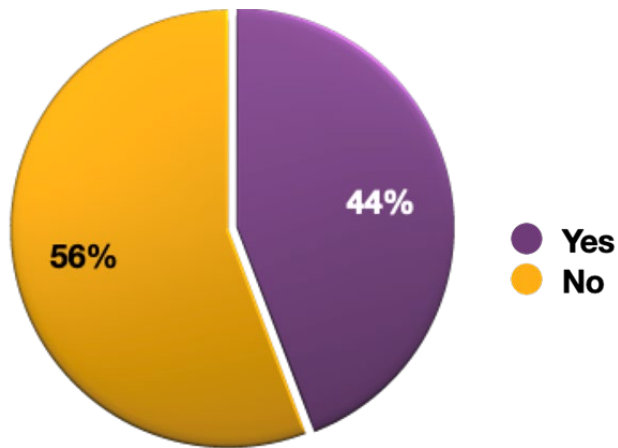


## 2. Technical

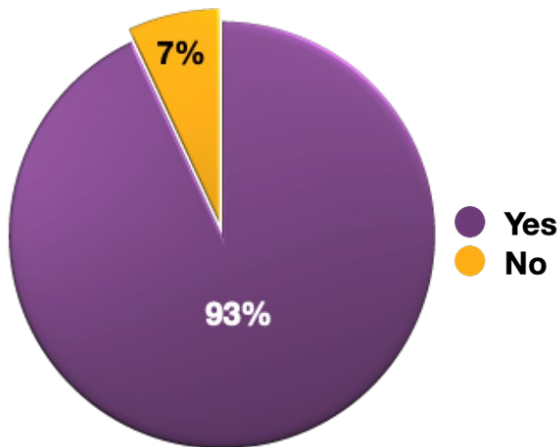
**29%** of Deaf-Blind respondents reported that the SRV Canada VRS app is not user friendly. They were frustrated with finding certain features in the menu or uncertain of where to find them on the screen.



Almost half, **at 44%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents did not find the app easy to see visually and wanted more options for font size, and background colours for their visual accessibility needs.

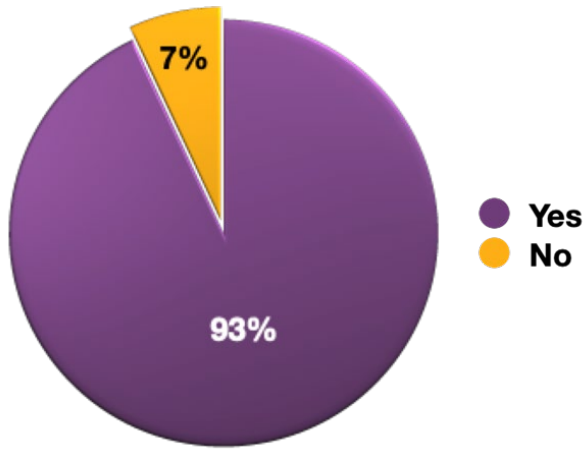


An overwhelming majority, at **93%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents wish for the ability to customise the text size and text and background colours in the SRV Canada VRS app. This would empower them to have their individual visual accessibility needs met.

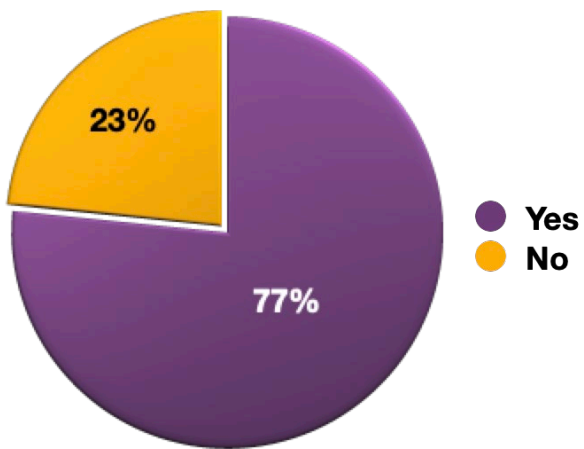


### 3. VRS app Chat box

Almost all, at **93%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents wish for the ability to customise the text size and text and background colours in the Chat box. This would empower them to have their individual visual accessibility needs met.



More than three quarters, at **77%**, of Deaf-Blind respondents are interested in being able to read the Chat box using a Braille display should there be an emerging technology that permits them to do that.



## Issues and Challenges

### Independence

34. Deaf-Blind and low-vision Canadians value their independence; many made comments about how they were relying on their family members or roommates to make VRS calls. They are limiting themselves by having untrained people make their phone calls. It is time to look at the systematic flaws within Canada with limitations in the intervenor service provisions and look proactively at solutions to ensure that they have access to information and communication.

### Intervenors

35. Some provinces limit intervenor services to 6 hours, the highest average number of hours that Deaf-Blind use an intervenor/SSP service is 9 hours. In some places in Canada, no intervenor services exist. In relation to VRS, with the intervenor services being limited, the Deaf-Blind cannot rely on using intervenors for VRS when they have to pick and choose specific hours to have intervenors for important life activities such as errands and chores, such as shopping and medical appointments.
36. While the funding system is different in the States, in Canada, when it comes to telecommunications and technology, with it resting on the federal government rather than the provincial government, programs and services certainly need to be created.
37. Research shows a solution to this problem is to provide trained Communication Facilitators (CF) to work with Deaf-Blind, in roles where they are trained professionally facilitating information from the VRS screen tactile or close-up to the Deaf-Blind person. These CF services provisions are available with funding provided by the government through local service agencies and programs.
38. These service agencies in the metropolitan areas would have a place for the Deaf-Blind to come in and have CF's assist with their VRS callers. Or the CFs would be professionally trained to also go into the Deaf-Blind person's residence to assist them in the comfort and access of their familiar, accessible space. It would be the Deaf-Blind person's choice. They will be empowered to make these decisions with the support of a local funded program.
39. Funding would need to become available from the government through these agencies for training, staffing, and operations.

## **Equipment**

- 40.** With such high numbers, more than half, of the survey respondents on a fixed income, with lack of accessible equipment, it becomes even more difficult to have access to communication and receive information at an equitable level as those who are sighted. Deaf-Blind have indicated it is more accessible for them to use devices with a large screen, or perhaps a larger smartphone, such as iPads, iPhone Max to give examples. None can use a Macbook because of the expensive cost but usually Apple products have the best range of accessibility features. Some prefer large television screens and would benefit from having the VRS app mirrored or projected onto the large television screens to have their VRS conversations. This equipment is extremely expensive beyond the means of the Deaf-Blind individual's fixed income yet is essential for the well-being and everyday life of Deaf-Blind people's access to communication and information.
- 41.** The current system for equipment distribution for those that need it is flawed because we present to you a case in example where the President of CNSDB has been waiting for computer and accessible equipment for up to five months while facing declining vision challenges. This individual is now relying on a "small" smartphone screen and using screen reader technology to access the information on the handheld device. This is abhorrent and unacceptable for Canada to have such a detrimental impediment and barrier limiting the communication as well as information-gathering and gaining knowledge on what is going on around them.
- 42.** The Ministry of Industry Science and Economic Development and CRTC should have the means and power to change the lives of Deaf-Blind and others who are on a fixed income, with the provisions of accessible devices and equipment they need. In the States, FCC provides and manages the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. Now the onus is on the CRTC to do its duty to ensure they are adhering to the Accessible Canada Act and create programs that are a lifeline for these Deaf-Blind individuals. Make history, make it possible!

## **One to one customer support**

- 43.** It will be a great benefit for these Deaf-Blind to have tech support in person to do hands-on support and training, actually physically in person showing them how to install, set up (create email address, etc.) account, and actually use VRS. With limited vision challenges accessing information, the instruction manuals for using VRS, need to be in a large enough font, in MS Word, not in PDF, and available on the website.



## **Interpreters**

- 44.** While a number of Deaf-Blind respondents commented on the current background and clothing of the interpreters on screen being somewhat accessible, it was the type of clothing there was an issue with. Scoop, lace, or V-neck showed too much skin and therefore became inaccessible for Deaf-Blind VRS callers.
- 45.** One VRS customer, a Deaf senior with vision limitations, did remind the interpreter that the lace at the top of the neckline was a distraction, due to contrasting colours, and asked that the interpreter remember to wear a solid black top in the future. The interpreter thanked the customer and said they would make a note for their supervisor. This is a positive instance of customer-interpreter cooperation, which should be the norm.
- 46.** All of the interpreters must have in-depth sensitivity training on Deaf-Blind issues, among other customer-service provider techniques and standards. A Deaf-Blind person should be training or facilitating information sessions for interpreters and Communication Facilitators.
- 47.** Deaf-Blind would appreciate easier to reference VI# identification recording system with saved chat history with the VI# and some reference number information in the chat transcript.
- 48.** Deaf-Blind people prefer to communicate their feedback about interpreters in a safe space, to a separate line for complaints related to the interpreters, and not be talking about them to the regular tech support and customer services.

## **Current Platform and Application**

- 49.** The current platform design is not accessible for the Deaf-Blind caller, the 9-1-1 button is missing on some devices and is not an accessible colour for them to see, red is not a colour that they can comfortably see. More text colours and background options need to be made for the application as a whole, and not just the chat box. The chat box needs to be configurable with screen readers and braille devices to be fully accessible. Other countries have platforms designed for Deaf-Blind accessibility, such as provided by nWise, and Global VRS in the States is an example, and it should be a consideration to have this configured as a part of the system.

## **Representation**

- 50.** Finally, with the Accessible Canada Act in effect, it would be conducive to have a Deaf-Blind person as a Director on the Board of Directors. Research shows that other administrative models in Canada have four accessibility directors, thus why not for the CAV board restructure to have representation from the other type of customer.

## **Conclusion**

- 51.** Even if CRTC did not include Deaf-Blind people in the first VRS policy of TNC 2014-187, and despite the CAV not taking them fully into consideration when making decisions, a handful of Deaf-Blind individuals were and have been VRS users since 2016. These Deaf-Blind will not likely forget that they weren't included. In 2022, considering the Accessible Canada Act, and the 2019 Policy Direction, there needs to be a policy decision that includes them!
- 52.** It is time to design a VRS architecture and service provision that includes Deaf-Blind Canadians from the top down, from the Board level, trainer level, to the customer level with service provisions with one-on-one technical support.
- 53.** It is a reality that Deaf-Blind are on fixed incomes; it is time that the government step in to ensure that Deaf-Blind have access to communication and information as enshrined by the federal government in its Accessible Act. How? By creating a fund that allows for coordination and distribution of such accessible equipment to certified service agencies approved by the CAV and CRTC. Change Deaf-Blind Canadians' lives!

## Recommendations

### 54. VRS is Accessible to Deaf-Blind Canadians

- a. CRTC's resulting Policy to include Deaf-Blind accessibility
- b. To bring in Deaf-Blind consumers to advise on accessibility.

### 55. Increased funding that ensures Deaf-Blind have VRS access.

- a. System established for allocating funding for Deaf-Blind customer accessibility

### 56. Deaf-Blind technical platform

- a. Perhaps partner with nWise to have a tethered platform interfaced to the main CAV platform that is accessible for Deaf-Blind and Low vision VRS users
- b. This separate platform has its own accessible application (app) to use
- c. Technically compatible with braille devices for the application and chat area
- d. A wide range of options for colours, backgrounds, text sizes, screen magnification, screen reading software, page view and dark mode.
- e. Make the application available on browser so Deaf-Blind can access it even if moving to a new location, i.e.. the service agency to use VRS.
- f. Make sure the platform offers all options for Deaf-Blind to choose modern browsers: Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Edge

### 57. Equipment Distribution Program

- a. Deploy and fund a pilot project annual 5-million-dollar program provided by the government to distribute through certified service agencies that are approved by CAV and/or CRTC to support fixed income Deaf-Blind Canadians.
- b. Includes alert systems for when incoming VRS calls come in, including emerging technologies such as smartwatches
- c. Other equipment that would qualify for the Deaf-Blind to requisition through applications would include iPhones, iPads, Macbooks, large televisions, webcams.

### 58. One-to-one tech support

- a. One-to-one in-person customer product tech support assistance for the Deaf-Blind.
- b. Tech support will help set up the equipment for the Deaf-Blind to use for VRS.
- c. Deaf-Blind will greatly benefit from someone in person orienting to install and set up the VRS.

### 59. Communication Facilitators (CF)

- a. To avoid reliance on the extremely limited intervenor funded services, establish a separate service of CF's.

- b. These specifically-trained CF's watch the VRS on the screen and transfer the information from the screen through tactile sign language to the Deaf-Blind consumers.
- c. The role of the CF includes taking steps to ensure that the individual receives information in an accessible format and any communication support which they need.
- d. CF would need training to comprehend the different service level requirements in a range of different combinations of sight and hearing loss and be able to adapt to the specific need accordingly
- e. Funded through government agencies to service agencies in metropolitan centres to provide equipment, training and employ CF's

## **60. Interpreter Training**

- a. Deaf-Blind sensitivity training provided by a Deaf-Blind trainer or facilitator
- b. Training to a recognised standard and familiarization with the diverse individual situations is critical to the effective use of any service for deafblind people<sup>3</sup>
- c. Accommodations and role of the VRS interpreters and raise awareness about Deaf-Blind culture.

## **61. Separate complaint mechanism for interpreter feedback**

- a. Deaf-Blind does not wish to give regular tech support staff feedback on interpreters as they respect their professional code of ethics, prefer to keep separate lines of communication.

## **62. CAV's website**

- a. Updated to make it accessible and easier for navigation by Deaf-Blind who visit the website, ensuring there are text size adjustment options and MS Word docs.
- b. Note that PDFs are not accessible to Deaf-Blind, as these documents won't work on screen readers or with braille machines.
- c. the instruction manuals for using VRS, need to be in a large enough font, in MS Word, not in PDF, and available on the website.
- d. Consult with Deaf-Blind to make the website more accessible.

## **63. Deaf-Blind Director on the CAV Board**

- a. Elections are run by Deaf-Blind stakeholder groups in Canada including CNSDB, CNIB, CHKC, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Helen Keller National Centre - VRS Training: [Role and VRS interpreter](#)

## **APPENDIX A - TEXT COMMENTS**

### **CDBC.VRS Survey Response Comments for Questions Number 51 and 52**

### **QUESTION 51:**

**What other change would you like to see in the VRS app for your accessibility? (please type in text box)**

#### **TEXT RESPONSES:**

1. "I would think the VRS app needs to have customised screen brightness, font size, and size display on the computer for the ASL user."
2. "I want Deaf-Blind people to be consulted and provide feedback when the app is being developed and changed to make it more accessible."
3. "Different colour background options and being able to have a high contrast option if needed. Also, ASK Deaf-Blind for their design choice in future changes."
4. "Really need low-cost data to use VRS outside if in an emergency or need to call a taxi or something very important."
5. "2 things: Develop technology with big screen touch screen on television, and the ability to have tactile sign language with touch and feel sign language or two hand manual. Thank you."
6. "VRS should be accessible for people who are profoundly blind."
7. "I want to change my own font size and own colour."
8. "I have no hearing and sight at all and need to read in braille in the chat box. All the other questions seem to be for people who do still have partial sight. I feel left out of relay services. I would like every interpreter to know how to note take because that is what I need to read in a chat box. I need to type, voice, and sign, depending on the situation. But if the interpreter speaks or signs I can't see or hear it."
9. "The font is too small, so I need a larger font size. I prefer dark mode, not full white background as it is easier on my eyes and white is too bright for me."
10. "Allow beta testers to pay to test before launching new products for the VRS app."
11. "I am Deaf-Blind, so I would like to see braille in the future for my accessibility needs."
12. "A switch or button to indicate to the interpreter that a user has low vision, or is using a SSP."
13. "I don't use braille so I said no, but I feel that it is important for others who use braille to have access to BRS by having VRS chat in Braille."

14. "Maybe have a connection to a big screen or TV for some DeafBlind because the iPhone or iPad might be small for some Deaf-Blind to be able to see. It'll be nice to be able to connect with a Deaf-Blind friend in the USA."
15. "Some video features are not fully accessible for Deaf-Blind like with FaceTime or Skype as some Deaf-Blind will use videophones to connect to a big TV. Will be nice to be able to connect with them with the larger screens."
16. "There must be good light on the VR interpreter with black top clothing and black background."
17. "Yes, I can see the background black but I'd like half for VRS and half for me to see than a big and small iPhone. That is one problem, it is too small. Thank you."

#### **QUESTION 52:**

**Are there any more concerns, comments that you have and want to share with us or the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)? (please type in text box, write on the lines or on the back of last page of this survey)**

#### **TEXT RESPONSES:**

18. "Prioritise connecting the ASL interpreter for employment interviews and other good reasons. This is important because of the current reality of the virtual world as a result of COVID-19. This means it is necessary for virtual meetings and employment interviews."
19. "I have not used VRS 9-1-1 and we need SRV Canada VRS to be more accessible for Deaf-Blind people now."
20. "Please listen to every Deaf-Blind individual when they are frustrated or have made a complaint. Please focus on Deaf-Blind community FIRST because we are ALWAYS last to get information or whatever. Please let Deaf-Blind be FIRST and Deaf people LATER. Thank you for taking this into consideration."
21. "I would say that the CAV board should include Deaf-Blind representatives from both the ASL and the LSQ communities. There should be community liaisons in each province that are trained to work with a diverse Deaf, Deaf-Blind and signing hard of hearing persons as well as their agencies and organisations. CRTC MUST be fully accessible as well - mandating all communications - especially written attachments to be in both Word and PDF."

22. "Thank you for doing this survey. Good job to all!"
23. "I would like to request that all TVs, IPTV boxes, and PVRs must have closed captioned text sizes customised up to 500% or XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL, and 5XL, etc. up to 500%. The bigger text sizes of CC are necessary for Deaf with low vision, Ushers, and Deaf seniors for better visual accessibility. Do it NOW!"
24. "Please for Deaf-Blind, can VRS I want that goal and also same phone as iPhone for Samsung. Same thing half for VRS and half for me who see sign ASL like that? Thanks."
25. "CRTC... LISTEN to what Deaf-Blind people need. Reduce the monthly price by 90% because the technical equipment is expensive that they struggle to get. Deaf-Blind have a hard time receiving accessible services they need such as calling their doctor or family, for an emergency, etc. Why do we, Deaf-Blind, have to pay for voice on our cell phones? We NEVER use the voice plan and do not let any hearing people use our cell phones to make calls. No way!"
26. "The questions in this survey were not geared toward people who are blind. Any responses would be appreciated."
27. "I want to see CAV to change and improve its visual accessibility for Deaf-Blind."
28. "I don't know how VRS interpreters are but I know in the regular relay, operators are bilingual. I am fine with this but in practice many of them do not write English well or are slow typers. I have to deal with both the caller and the operator. It should be transparent. I should not notice I am using a relay or VRS. I don't know if this is a problem with VRS but I wonder if people more fluent in LSQ but considered bilingual may misunderstand my ASL. I don't know a word of LSQ. French isn't a problem since I can read it and understand it if the operator uses a wrong word in English but if the interpreter used the wrong English word for my ASL sign because of confusion with LSQ that could be a problem because I would be unaware of that."
29. "After I told the operator that I'm Deaf-Blind, she signed more clearly for me by taking her time in using ASL. I'm very happy with his/her service."
30. "Please make SRV Canada VRS more accessible for Deaf-Blind. I want to be able to use it. The font is too small and I don't have the option to switch to dark mode. I cannot use VRS. Thank you."



## From Person #1:

31. Limited hours - "Customer Support 9050 hours are limited as it is based on Eastern Standard Time. I would like to see this improve by setting up 9050 tech support in every province so that we don't need to worry about the limited hours. It would be nice to have tech support 12 hours per day in every province."
32. Connect to a bigger TV - "VRS to connect with a bigger TV or to be able to connect with another Deaf-Blind person who uses videophone which is accessible to them in the USA because FaceTime and other video features seems inaccessible for them unless they have access to a big screen TV."
33. Visual accessibility - "Ability to customise in the VRS app like dark and bright mode as well as changing text size and colours so the Deaf-Blind person can have the choice that is comfortable based on their vision."
34. Ringing alert - "For hearing people to be able to connect with Deaf people without the Deaf person missing the call from hearing people. I did inform 9050 about this and requested them to fix the VRS app for people to call me, but it seems like they are unable to do anything or fix this problem. FaceTime, Facebook, and Skype all do have a ringtone that lets me know someone is trying to reach me, but why not VRS?"
35. Improvement - "If VRS improves then I will use VRS more."
36. Braille - "It will be great to have Braille connected to VRS for those who are a Braille user."
37. Disconnection - "The waiting time with VRS needs to improve and sometimes the phone gets cut off so I have to reconnect again as the VRS interpreter is unable to reach me if we get disconnected. That means I will have to start all over again which is very annoying because there is only one way to connect with VRS and that is me and there is no ring signal when someone tries to reach me on VRS."
38. Interpreter transferring - "When there is an interpreter I like I find myself furious when interpreters are changed in the middle of a chat, for example, chatting with someone at the bank for hours, and such transfer can have a negative impact. The phone call has disconnected and that means I have to go through everything again and have wasted my hours or found the background a bit blurry and I'm stuck with it as I don't want to keep on changing interpreters while in the middle of chatting."
39. Interpreter - "Some interpreters sign very clearly while some are okay or will require to repeat what was being said and check for clarity."

40. Customer support - "Background needs to be improved to be darker. It will be nice if they have shirts they can change upon a Deaf-Blind person's request to make it more visually accessible."
41. Light and background - "Light and background might be a challenge for some Deaf-Blind to use the VRS. I sometimes will request a transfer to another interpreter due to poor lighting and background."

**From Person #2:**

42. Low cost - "I am Deaf with one legal blind eye. I really need low-cost data like 10GB or 30GB on outside LTE or G for an emergency or other important reasons to be able to use VRS. I am unable to use VRS outside of my home because having data is too expensive or I run out of GB too fast. Also, sometimes there is very weak Wi-Fi when I access it outside of my home."
43. Visual accessibility - "I really prefer black or dark blue backgrounds when using VRS. Some video interpreters use a V-neck shirt and this is inaccessible to me. I want my choice to choose colours and font sizes in the VRS app. I don't use my iPhone much for VRS because it is too small to see VRS and the text on its app. My iPad is better, but the VRS app really needs to improve with its choices of font size and colours."
44. Interpreters - "I feel that VRS really needs to hire interpreters who have experience working with Deaf-Blind people like me. Too many times I see VRS interpreters who don't understand or have experience with Deaf-Blind people. They either sign ASL too fast or the text on my iPad or iPhone is too small. Sometimes they don't understand that I need them to use a paper to write bigger in a larger font using a black marker."

**QUESTION 53:**

45. **I would prefer an interview to give my comments or concerns in ASL or LSQ. Please contact me: [enter your name and e-mail]**
46. A total of 16 Deaf-Blind respondents said they were willing to give their comments or concerns in ASL or LSQ, 9 were in ASL and 7 were in LSQ.

**[Paragraph Numbering stops here. The remaining pages in the following two Appendices are designed in a particular way and not suitable for paragraph numbering.]**

## **APPENDIX B - TEXT ONLY**

### **CDBC.VRS Survey Questions in English**

## CDBC.VRS Survey Questions in English without any logos

This section of the Appendix includes all the questions that were included in the survey CDBC.VRS conducted of Deaf-Blind Canadians, without the CDBC.VRS logos at the top of the page, so that any person with a screen reader or a braille machine can read through these pages. This also includes the Background, Purpose, and Consent sections introducing the survey.

### Deaf-Blind Video Relay Services Survey Questions for CRTC 2021-102

#### Background:

[Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind \(CNSDB\)](#) and the Deaf-Blind Planning Committee (DBPC), together as the Canadian Deaf-Blind Collective or [CDBC], are conducting a national survey about how accessible and appropriate Canadian Video Relay Services (SRV Canada VRS) is for Deaf-Blind residents of Canada. **The CDBC's sole mission is to make sure that Video Relay Service includes Deaf-Blind Canadians in the future. Your participation in this survey is valued.**

#### Purpose:

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commissions (CRTC) launched a proceeding ([Telecom Notice of Consultation \(TNC\) 2021-102](#)) to study how the Video Relay Services have been functioning since its launch in 2016. The CRTC will determine what VRS has to do to improve the user experience, including the platform, customer service, education, awareness, CAV structure, funding, and the timing of the next review. Some questions we address in this survey include:

- What are Deaf-Blind Canadian residents' experiences with the current Video Relay Service (VRS) telecommunications platform?
- Is the VRS application accessible or not accessible?
- How can the Canadian Video Relay Services application be more user-friendly for Deaf-Blind Canadians?
- Suggestions for a Deaf-Blind accessible Video Relay Services in Canada.

This survey is available in English, ASL, French, and LSQ.

This survey is an internet questionnaire hosted by SurveyMonkey. This survey has 50 multiple choice questions and opportunities to add written or typed additional comments and should take approx. 30 minutes to complete. Do not feel you have to rush through the survey. Take your time to read carefully and answer the questions. **There is no time limit.**

A large print "paper" version or alternative format of this questionnaire is also available by request, please contact us at: [cdbc.vrs@gmail.com](mailto:cdbc.vrs@gmail.com)

No names or e-mail addresses are collected or stored. All responses are anonymous, and your identity will not be tracked in any manner. Therefore, all survey responses are confidential.

If you have any concerns or questions, you may contact Megan McHugh, President, Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind (CNSDB) or Terri Nolt, Chair, Deaf-Blind Planning Committee (DBPC) at their shared e-mail address: [cdbc.vrs@gmail.com](mailto:cdbc.vrs@gmail.com)

To take this survey, you must be:

1. At least 18 years old; and
2. A Canadian resident; and
3. Deaf-Blind, or Deaf + Ushers, or have low-vision or age-related vision loss.
4. Deaf or Hard of Hearing and not yet identified as having vision loss or
5. Answering on behalf of a person who is Deaf-Blind or with vision limitations.
6. Currently an SRV Canada VRS customer or wish to be one if it was more accessible to you.

Please remember in the survey, you will see “Other” in many questions, you can either type in those spaces after each of the questions, or you can give more information about these at the end of the survey.

Data collected from this survey will be collected, anonymized, and analysed to produce a report to be filed with the CRTC. If you want a copy of this report when it is ready in September 2021, please email [cdbc.vrs@gmail.com](mailto:cdbc.vrs@gmail.com)

Thank you for participating in this survey. The survey starts now.

## **PART I: CONSENT - PERMISSION**

### **QUALIFYING QUESTIONS**

**1. I give permission for my responses to be used to present the information to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) for the Review of Video Relay Services proceeding of Telecom Notice of Consultation 2021-102.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

## **PART II: ABOUT YOU**

### **ABOUT THE DEAF-BLIND RESPONDENTS**

#### **2. How do you socially self-identify?**

- a. Deaf (a sign language user – for example: ASL or LSQ)
- b. Deaf-Blind (low vision, Usher Syndrome)
- c. Hard of Hearing/Oral Deaf
- d. Late-deafened
- e. Other

#### **3. How do you describe yourself as related to vision?**

- a. Deaf-Blind
- b. Blind
- c. Low Vision
- d. Ushers
- e. Some vision problems
- f. Other (please type in text box)

#### **4. How old are you?**

- a. 18 to 24 years
- b. 25 to 34 years
- c. 35 to 44 years
- d. 45 to 54 years
- e. 55 to 64 years
- f. 65 years or older
- g. I prefer not to say

#### **5. What is your gender?**

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Non-binary
- d. I prefer not to provide information

## COMMUNICATION

- 6. What languages do you use? Can choose 2 or more options.**
- ASL
  - LSQ
  - English
  - French
  - Other written or sign languages (please type in box)
- 7. Which primary ways of communication do you use? (Can choose more than one)**
- American Sign Language (ASL)
  - Langue des Signes du Québec (LSQ)
  - Tactile ASL or Tactile LSQ (hand on hand communication)
  - Protactile
  - Two hand manual
  - Braille
  - Voice
  - Other (please type in text box)
- 8. Do you use Deaf interpreters for communication?**
- Yes
  - No
- 9. Do you use intervenors/support service providers (SSP) for communication?**
- Yes
  - No
- 10. How many hours of intervenor/SSP services do you use each month?**
- 0 hour
  - 9 hours
  - 15 hours
  - 20 hours
  - 30 hours
  - 40 hours
  - other number of hours (please specific number of hours)

**11. My intervenor/SSP services include: [multiple choices allowed]**

- a. Shopping
- b. Medical visits
- c. Appointments
- d. Family meetings
- e. Recreational activities (play sports or exercise)
- f. Canada Video Relay Service calls

**12. Are there any other assisted services (example, support workers) you use?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**13. Please describe or explain the other assisted services in the text space.**

**RESIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

**14. Which Canadian province or territory do you live in?**

- a. Ontario
- b. Québec
- c. British Columbia
- d. Alberta
- e. Manitoba
- f. Nova Scotia
- g. New Brunswick
- h. Saskatchewan
- i. Prince Edward Island
- j. Newfoundland and Labrador
- k. Nunavut
- l. Northwest Territories (NWT)
- m. Yukon

**15. Where do you live (metropolitan vs. rural)?**

- a. Large city (50,000 or more people)
- b. Medium City (between 2,500 – 50,000 people)
- c. Small city/town (between 1,000 - 2,500 people)
- d. Rural area more than 25km. away from a city (fewer than 1,000 people)
- e. Isolated area (fewer people, no transportation)



**16. Do you live in a:**

- a. House
- b. Apartment or condo
- c. Government Housing
- d. Deaf-Blind Housing
- e. Shared housing (group home, seniors)
- f. Other (please type in text box)

**17. How many Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing people live at your residence?**

- a. 1 (just me)
- b. 2 people
- c. 3 people or more people

**EMPLOYMENT**

**18. Do you have a job?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**19. If you do not have a job, what do you do?**

- a. Student
- b. Volunteer
- c. Parent or Caretaker for family members (senior or young children)
- d. Retired
- e. Other (please type in text box:)

**20. From where do you get your income? [multiple choices allowed]**

- a. Part-time or Full-time work
- b. Contracts/Freelance work
- c. Self-employed/entrepreneur (own business)
- d. Under the table work
- e. Government Disability or Social Assistance (PWD)
- f. Employment Insurance (EI)
- g. Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- h. Old Age Security (OAS)
- i. None of above
- j. Other (please type-in text)

**21. What is your total personal gross income, before taxes?**

- a. Less than \$24,999
- b. \$25,000 - \$34,999
- c. \$35,000 - \$44,999
- d. \$45,000 - \$54,999
- e. \$55,000 - \$69,999
- f. \$70,000 or more
- g. I prefer not to provide information

**VRS USER EXPERIENCE**

**22. Do you use Video Relay Service (VRS)?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**23. Do you want to use Video Relay Service (VRS)?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**24. Do you require tactile hand-on-hand communication (Communication Facilitator) between you and the VRS interpreter?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**25. Does another person currently help you use Video Relay Service (VRS)?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**26. If you answered yes, who uses VRS for you?**

- a. Family member
- b. Friend
- c. Neighbour
- d. Roommate
- e. Other

**27. How many DDBHH people in your house use VRS?**

- a. Only me
- b. Me and 1 more
- c. Me and 2 more
- d. Me and 3+ more people

**28. When did you start using VRS, how many years ago?**

- a. 1 year (2020)
- b. 2 years (2019)
- c. 3 years (2018)
- d. 4 years (2017)
- e. 5 years (since 2016)

**29. How often do you use VRS?**

- a. Daily (1 or more calls per day)
- b. Frequently (5-6 times a week)
- c. Average (2-3 times a week)
- d. Seldom (5-6 times a month)
- e. Rarely (Once a month)

**30. Which device do you often use the SRV Canada VRS app? Check all that you use.**

- a. Mac computer
- b. PC Windows computer
- c. Apple iPhone
- d. Android smartphone (Samsung, LG, Google)
- e. Apple iPad
- f. Android or Windows Table (Samsung, Windows, LG)

**VRS SERVICE EXPERIENCE**

**31. You feel Canada VRS improved your life since you used the service?**

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

**32. Explain how your experience with the service has changed or remained the same since you began using it:**

- a. I prefer to be interviewed to give my answer in ASL or LSQ
- b. Add text comments in [text box]

**33. Have you used VRS 9-1-1 (for emergency calls)?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**34. What has your experience been with VRS 9-1-1?**

- a. Awful (1 star)
- b. Poor (2 stars)
- c. Fine (3 stars)
- d. Good (4 stars)
- e. Excellent (5 stars)

**35. Please describe your experience with VRS 9-1-1:**

- a. I prefer to be interviewed to give my answer in ASL or LSQ
- b. Add text comments, please type in text box:

## **VRS CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

**36. You know where to find Customer 9050 on the App?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**37. Have you used Customer Support before?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**38. Please rate the SRV Canada VRS 9050 Customer Service**

- a. Awful (1 star)
- b. Poor (2 stars)
- c. Fine (3 stars)
- d. Good (4 stars)
- e. Excellent (5 stars)

**39. Do you wish there is in-person one-on-one tech support for setup and tech issues?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know/Not sure

## VRS ACCESSIBILITY

### 1. Video Interpreters

**40. The current standard for the background colour behind the video interpreters is cobalt blue. Do you find it satisfactory?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**41. Choose if you think the video interpreter's clothing, such as the shirt colour and style, is currently comfortable to see?**

- a. Always
- b. Most of the times
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

**42. Do you have any comments about the colours and styles of the shirts that the video interpreters wear?**

- a. No
- b. Yes, please add comment in text box

**43. Do you want interpreters to have different colour shirts or tops available so you can see them better?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Other

**44. Do you need interpreters to change their signing so you can see them better (speed up/slow down or signing in a smaller space)? Can choose more than one.**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Add comments, please type in text box

**45. Should interpreters be required to have the training to help them understand Deaf-Blind needs?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

## 2. Technical

**46. Is it hard to find or use some features or menu items in the VRS app? For example, Contact List, Video Mail messages, DialPad, 9-1-1 button.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**47. Are the VRS app screen and text size and background colours easy for you to see?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**48. Should the VRS app have the ability to adjust text size/colour and background colour?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

## 3. VRS App Chat box

**49. Do you want choices to change the chat box text size, text colour, and background colour so it's easier to see?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**50. Do you want to be able to read the chat box using a Braille display? (This could be now or in the future if needed)**

- a. Yes
- b. No

## OTHER COMMENTS

**51. What other change would you like to see in the VRS app for your accessibility? (please type in text box)**

**52. Are there any more concerns, comments that you have and want to share with us or the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)? (please type in text box, write on the lines or on the back of last page of this survey)**

**53. I would prefer an interview to give my comments or concerns in ASL or LSQ. Please contact me: [enter your name and E-mail]**

# **APPENDIX C**

## References & Resources



## CNSDB REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

CNSDB Intervenors and SSPs Provided by WSP Companies for TNC 2020-178 - <https://www.deafwireless.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CNSDB-Intervenors-SSPs-Provided-by-WSP-Companies-CRTC-2020-178-Supplementary-27-August-2021.pdf>

## VIDEO RELAY SERVICE REPORTS

### United States - Federal Communications Commission

[FCC PDF](#) - National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)  
Every 2 years certificated -  
[NDBEDP FCC 2022 \(most recently\)](#)

[FCC 16-69 PDF](#) - Video Accessibility Act Relay Services for Deaf-Blind

### Canada - Other VRS Reports

[Eviance - VRS International Report PDF p.58](#) - nWise promotes MMX as the “most-widely used platform for communication and interpreting services between hearing and deaf people, people with impaired hearing and the deaf blind” (nWise, 2020b). In Tess, MMX requires installation of the myMMXclient to run on PCs with the Windows operating system

[Cavanagh Report](#) CONNECTUS Evolution Alternative Tech - **PDF p. 22** One participant commented that a person who is blind calling an institution does not have to reveal the fact they are blind, and the participant felt VRS should extend the same option to sign language users

[Cavanagh Report](#) The colour scheme is not user friendly for individuals who are deafblind. **PDF p.14**

[Cavanagh Report](#) *Colour scheme*: It was suggested the app’s colour scheme is not good for VRS users who are deafblind. **PDF p.26**

[Sage Report](#)- The colour scheme is not user friendly for individuals who are deafblind  
**PDF p. 22**

### United Kingdom VRS Resources

[Royal National Institute for the Deaf](#) - Policy and Procedures for accessibility, information, and communication - Accessible Information Standards

[England Accessible Information Standard \(AIS\)](#) - **Accessible Communications of RNID** - -..”deafblind and have additional needs such as a learning disability, mental health.”

[Sense for deafblind people PDF](#) - **2.2** Mobility & Broadband p.3

“Sense would agree that industry would be best placed to effectively develop the platform and flexible methods of implementation that meet functional requirements but would encourage Ofcom to assure relevant and competent services are delivered through participation of deaf and deafblind people in any service definition to be agreed.”

[OFCOM for Emergency Video Relay PDF](#) - 2.7 Background p. 5

OFCOM - CSMG Report - [International Deployments of Video Relay Services](#) - 2.3 p. 9

## **DEAF-BLIND Technical VRS Resources**

**AFB - American Foundation for the Blind** - [Unique Technologies Presented at First Deaf-Blind International Conference](#)

**Deaf-Blind Service Centre Communication Facilitators with VRS calls** - [CF Program | Deaf-Blind Service Center](#)

**GlobalVRS for Deaf-Blind and Deaf Low-Vision users** - <https://globalvrs.com/db/#yellow>

**nWise - MMX for Deaf-Blind VRS users (BSL)** - <https://nwise.se/mmx-enables-phone-calls-for-deafblind-bsl-users-in-scotland/>

**Helen Keller National Centre: VRS Training for Deaf-Blind** - <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/class/vrs-training-working-individuals-who-are-deaf-blind>

**General Disability Resources with Technology**

**Disability Studies Quarterly DSQ - [Visually Experiencing a Phone Call: The Calculated Consumer Labor Deaf People Perform to gain Access through Video Relay Service](#)**

**Deaf-Blindness Help, New York : How do Deaf-Blind Use Technology - <https://deafblindness-help.org/how-do-deaf-blind-use-technology>**

[nWise link](#)- The new EU directive, the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC 2018/1972) 288,, will come into force on January 1, 2023. Among other things, this means that Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing people will be able to make emergency calls on the same terms as anyone else

**Other interesting resources**

**Interpreting and VRS with Emotions :**

<https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1041&context=joi>

**Creating Accessible Documents for the Blind**

<https://brailleworks.com/creating-accessible-documents-brief/>