

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

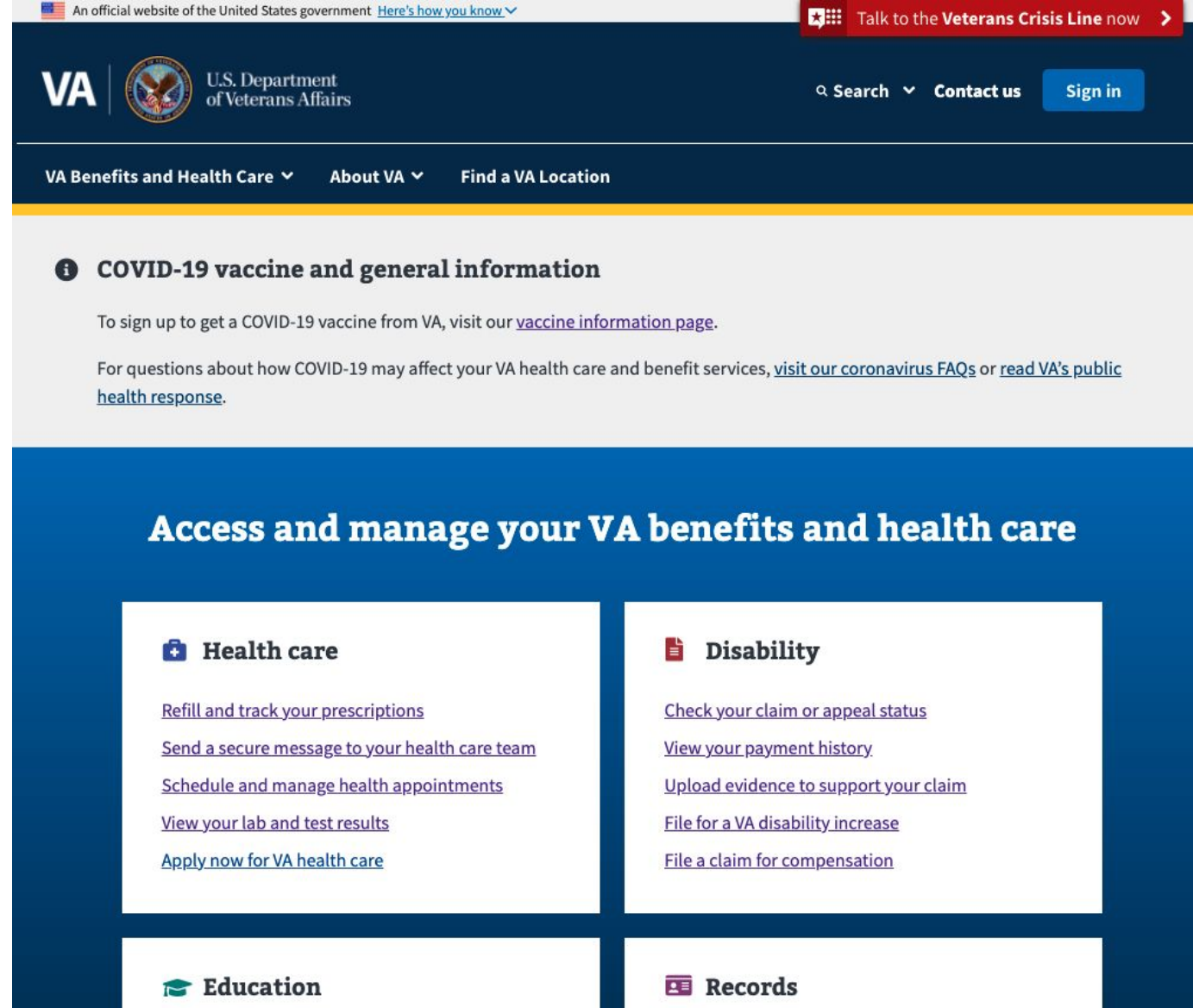
Baseline Wayfinding on VA.gov

Research Readout

Background

User Research across
Public Websites, Decision Tools,
and Search teams

*Not much user research on the
VA.gov home page since 2018
when it was designed and
launched*



Research Goals

Wanted to understand more about the **current home page**:

- How is it being used by Veterans?
- What works well?
- What pain points are there?

[GitHub Research Folder: plan, convo guide, and notes](#)

The screenshot shows the top of the VA website. At the very top, there is a red banner with a star icon and the text "Talk to the Veterans Crisis Line now". Below this is a dark blue header with the VA logo, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs seal, and the text "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs". To the right of the header are links for "Search", "Contact us", and a "Sign in" button. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "VA Benefits and Health Care", "About VA", and "Find a VA Location". The main content area has a light gray background and features a section titled "COVID-19 vaccine and general information" with an information icon. This section contains text about signing up for a COVID-19 vaccine and links to vaccine information, coronavirus FAQs, and VA's public health response. Below this is a large blue section titled "Access and manage your VA benefits and health care". This section contains four white boxes with icons and titles: "Health care" (with a plus icon), "Disability" (with a document icon), "Education" (with a graduation cap icon), and "Records" (with a document icon). Each box contains a list of links related to that category.

COVID-19 vaccine and general information

To sign up to get a COVID-19 vaccine from VA, visit our [vaccine information page](#).

For questions about how COVID-19 may affect your VA health care and benefit services, [visit our coronavirus FAQs](#) or [read VA's public health response](#).

Access and manage your VA benefits and health care

Health care

- [Refill and track your prescriptions](#)
- [Send a secure message to your health care team](#)
- [Schedule and manage health appointments](#)
- [View your lab and test results](#)
- [Apply now for VA health care](#)

Disability

- [Check your claim or appeal status](#)
- [View your payment history](#)
- [Upload evidence to support your claim](#)
- [File for a VA disability increase](#)
- [File a claim for compensation](#)

Education

Records

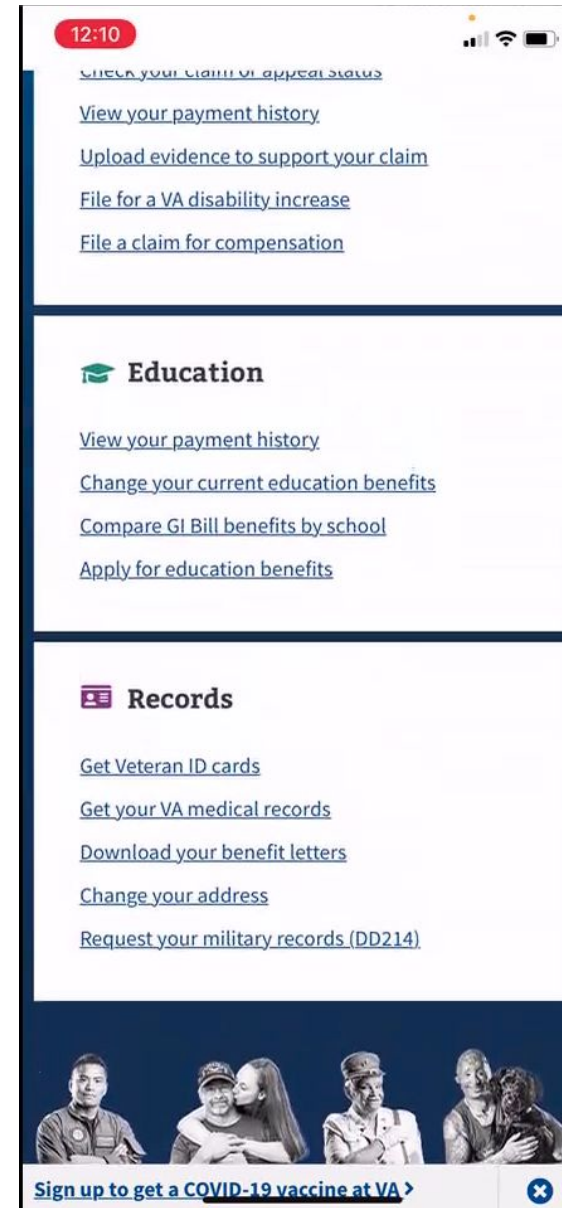
Methodology

Remote moderated 1-hour sessions over Zoom

- Asked about past usage of VA.gov
- 9 wayfinding tasks (Veteran top tasks)

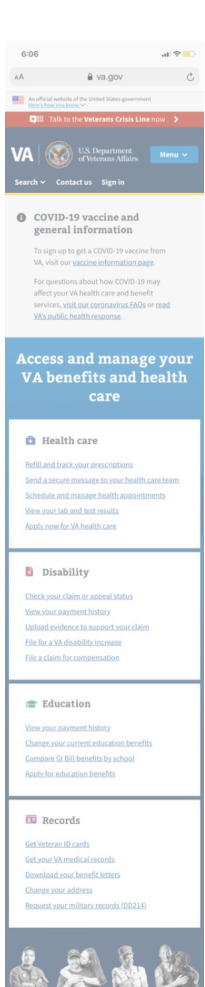
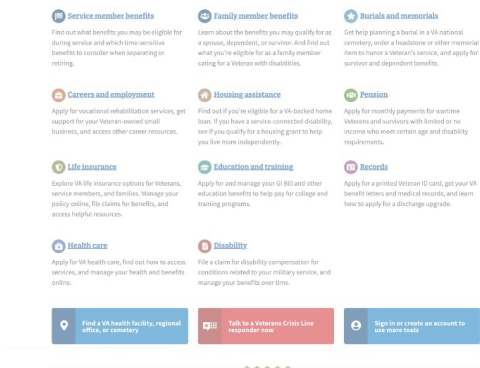
13 participants

- 12 Veterans (1 also a caregiver)
- 1 family member of Veterans
- **8 desktop, 5 mobile** users



Key Findings Summary

1. Some Veteran top tasks were difficult to do on VA.gov, while others were easy
2. People tended to focus on only one part of the home page
3. Search was used as a last resort, or not found at all



Key Finding #1

All participants were able to successfully complete 3 of the 9 tasks, most completed 3 more of the tasks, but the other 3 tasks had *lower success rates* because navigation paths weren't straightforward

		Successfully completed task w/o assistance	Participant Ratings (1 = difficult, 5 = easy)			
Task #	Task Description	% Success	Avg	Min	Max	
2	Track claim status	100%	4.8	4.0	5.0	
1	Message doctor	100%	4.5	3.0	5.0	
4	Change direct deposit	100%	4.3	3.0	5.0	
6	Find VA location	83%	4.3	2.0	5.0	
7	Get proof of income	82%	4.1	2.0	5.0	
9	Add dependent	78%	3.1	1.0	5.0	
8	Get VA medical records	67%	4.0	2.0	5.0	
5	Travel reimbursement direct deposit	55%	2.9	1.0	5.0	
3	Form to appoint representative	8%	2.4	1.0	4.0	

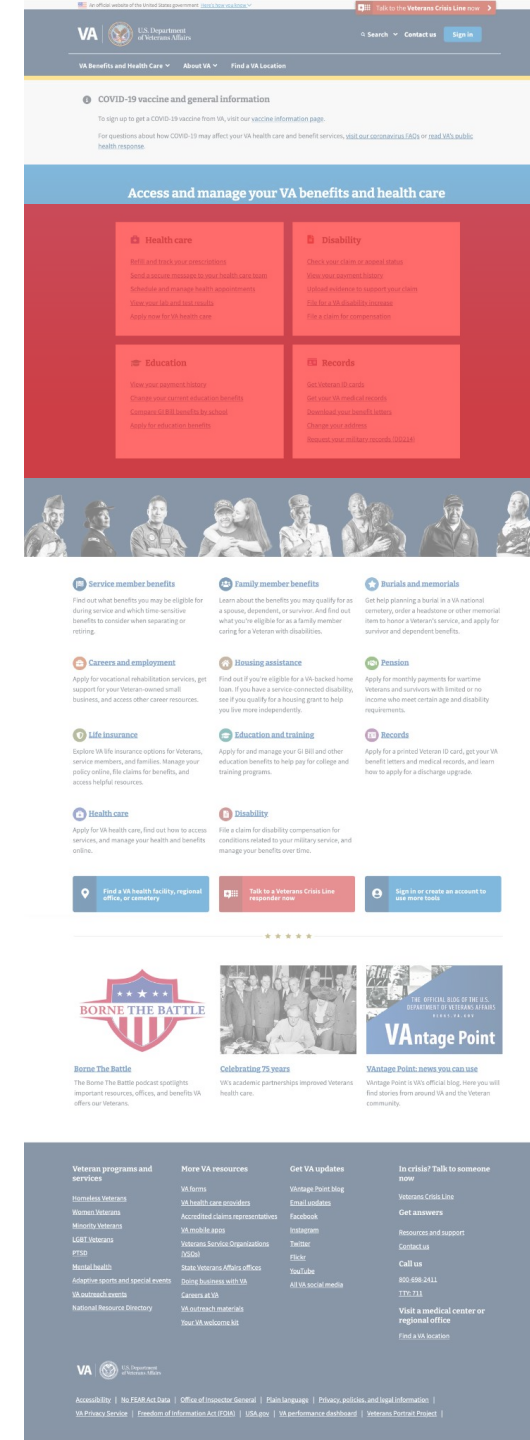
Key Finding #2

A majority of participants focused on only one part of the VA.gov home page

- Usually the "top 4" boxes
- Mostly didn't look at anything else on the page

❖ Both mobile and desktop users

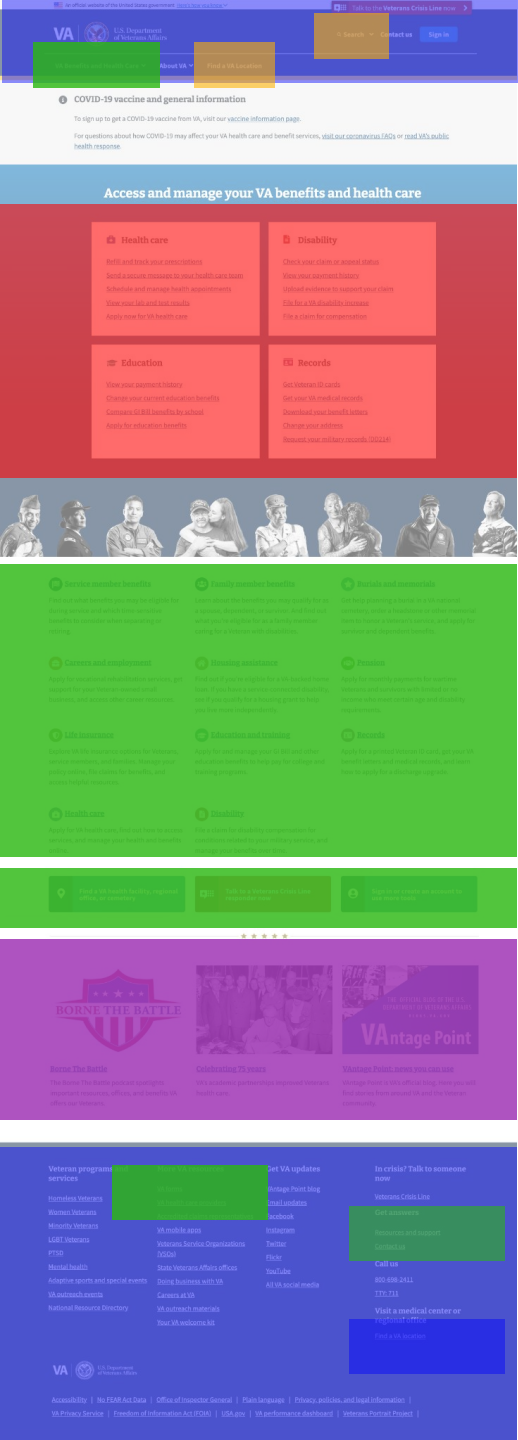
❖ Findings consistent with analytics data



Compare home page usage per research and analytics (Desktop)

Research

- Similarly high usage in “top 4” boxes and header
- Lower usage farther down the page, except for VA Forms in the footer

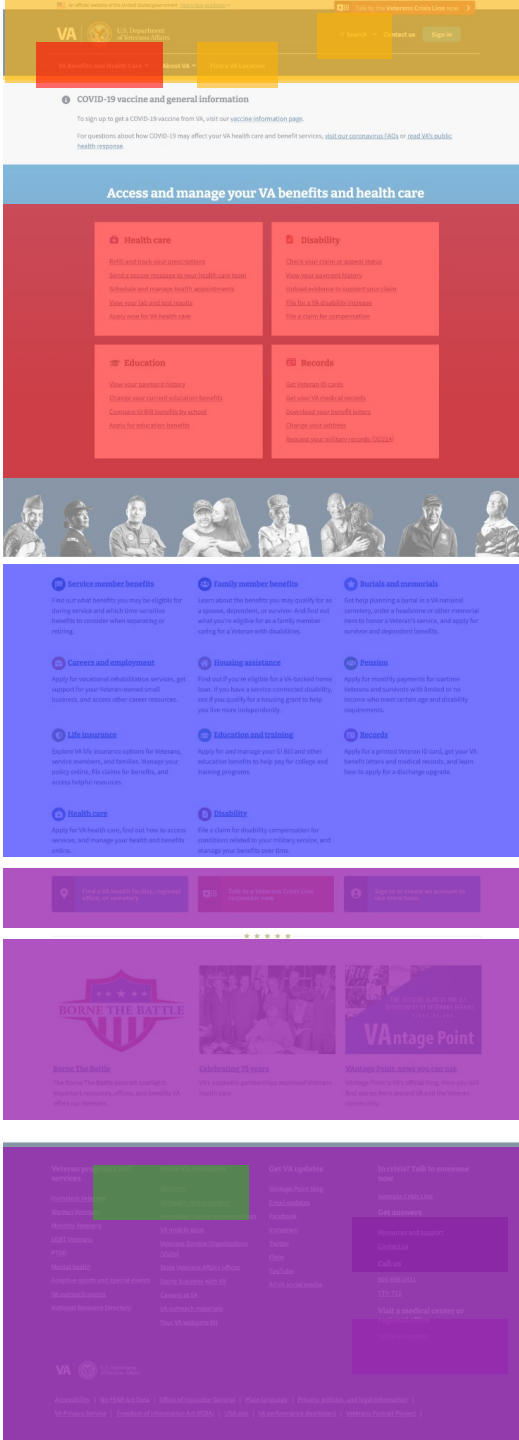


Analytics

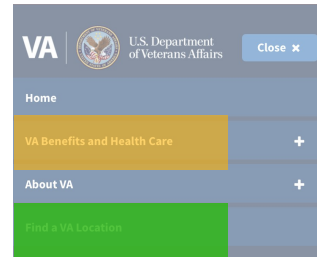
Key:

High

Low

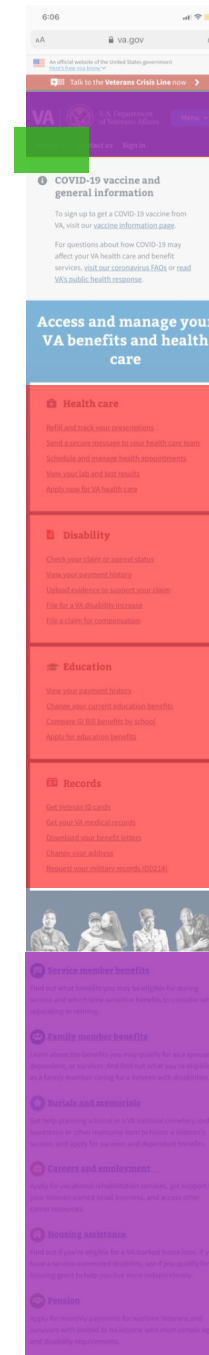
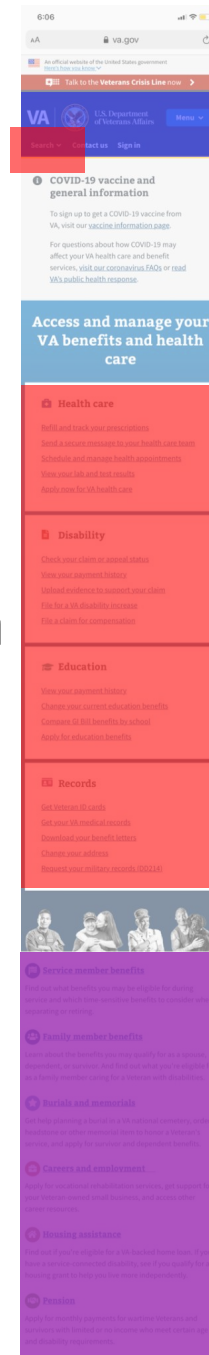


Compare home page usage per research and analytics (Mobile)



Research

- Similarly high usage in “top 4” boxes, VA Benefits and Health Care megamenu, and Search
- Lower usage elsewhere



Analytics

Key:

High

Low



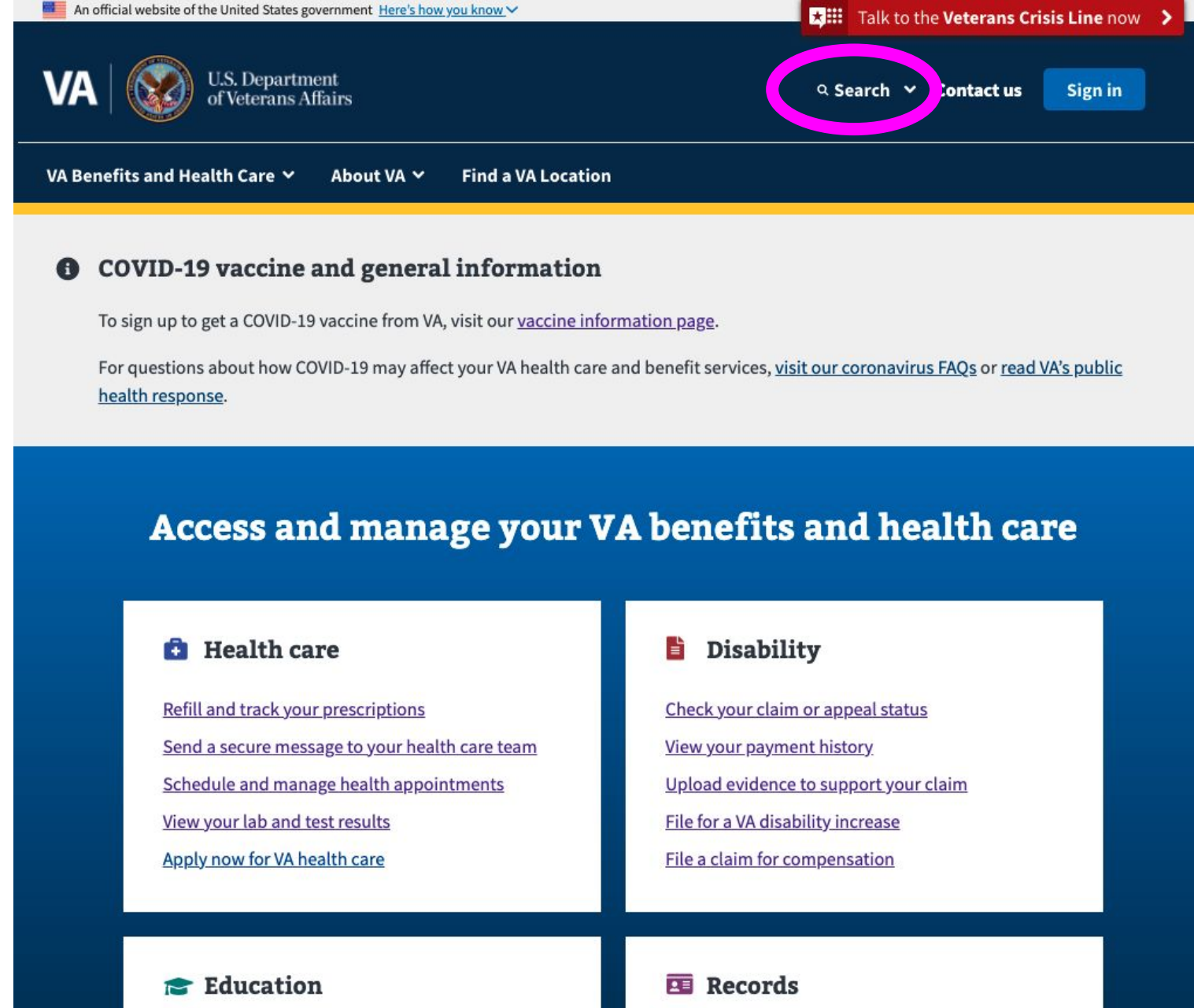
Key Finding #3

No participants started with site search

- About half went there when they were unable to find any relevant links elsewhere on the home page

*"It is an **option of last resort**. When all else fails, use the search function."*
(p16)

- Many **didn't notice Search** in the header at first, or at all (31%)



Next Steps

Discuss findings and preliminary recommendations with relevant teams

Some high-level preliminary recommendations:

- Consider design changes to increase visibility of some tools on the home page and sitewide navigation
- Consider additional links for the “top 4” boxes, and maybe remove some not being used (per analytics)

Questions?