

# FVAP UPDATE

## DECEMBER 2023



## FVAP'S 2022 REPORT TO CONGRESS PUBLISHED

After each federal general election, FVAP produces a required Report to Congress with data surrounding the experience of voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). In addition to voter registration and participation rates, the Report to Congress includes insights into the UOCAVA voting process and assistance provided to UOCAVA voters. These insights are compiled from FVAP's post-election surveys of active duty military members, overseas citizen voters, military voting assistance officers, and state election officials as well as other official sources.

The 2022 data showed:

- A voter registration rate for Active Duty Military (ADM) of 63 percent, a four-point increase over 2018.
- The voter participation rate for ADM of 23 percent, a three-point decrease from 2018.
- The estimated voter participation rate for all overseas citizens was 3.4 percent, which is lower than the estimated voter participation rate for the 2018 General Election (5.6 percent).
- ADM who received assistance from a DoD resource (e.g., FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers, and Installation Voter Assistance Offices) were significantly more likely to submit an absentee ballot than ADM who did not receive such assistance for the sixth straight federal office election period.
- UOCAVA voters requested their ballots slightly later than they did in 2018, and general election ballots were returned later than in the 2018 and 2020 General Elections. Of recent election cycles, 2020 had the earliest ballot return timeframe.

To see the full report for the 2022 Post-Election Report to Congress and learn about FVAP's activities supporting all UOCAVA voters, just go to FVAP.gov: [https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/rtc\\_20231113\\_V10\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/rtc_20231113_V10_FINAL.pdf). Previous reports and all data collections can be found here: <https://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys>. We are happy to respond to questions about this or past reports - just email [vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov).

## 2022 POST ELECTION VOTING SURVEYS PUBLISHED

In addition to the Report to Congress, FVAP released the full results from the Post Election Voting Surveys below in November:

State Election Official - a customer service-focused, census-type survey that is sent after every U.S. general election. The final technical report is available here: <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2022-PEVS-SEO-Tech-Report.pdf>

Overseas Citizen Population Survey allows FVAP to learn more about the U.S. overseas citizen population and the ways in which they navigate the voting process. The full technical report is located here: [https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2022-OCPA-Report\\_Combined\\_Final\\_20230925.pdf](https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2022-OCPA-Report_Combined_Final_20230925.pdf)

Active Duty Military - focuses on voting experience of military members stationed away from their voting

jurisdiction. The full technical report is located here: <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2022-PEVS-ADM-Tech-Report-Final-20230823.pdf>

Voting Assistance Officers - collects data on voting assistance provided and the work they do as part of their official duties. The full technical report is located here: <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2022-PEVS-VAO-Technical-Report-Final.pdf>

These surveys allow FVAP to accurately fulfill its reporting requirements under UOCAVA, focusing on individuals covered by UOCAVA and the network that supports them. Previous reports can be found here: <https://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys>. In the meantime, we are here to answer any of your questions about past reports and any data FVAP collects - just email [vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov) or reach out to Sara Hedlund ([sara.m.hedlund.civ@mail.mil](mailto:sara.m.hedlund.civ@mail.mil)).

## STATE LAW CHANGES? LET US KNOW

FVAP works closely with state and local election officials to improve the absentee voting process and experience for citizens covered under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). As states consider changes in this year's legislative sessions, please keep the impact on UOCAVA citizens in mind. If you are involved these decisions or are making legislative recommendations, and have any general questions or feedback, please contact the FVAP State Legislative Affairs Specialist, Heather Eudy at [heather.d.eudy.civ@mail.mil](mailto:heather.d.eudy.civ@mail.mil).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

In 2023, FVAP will continue to engage stakeholders to provide support, transparent communications, and opportunities to cooperate toward increased UOCAVA awareness and success. We ask that as you plan any in-person or virtual conferences, webinars, or events for the year that you include participation from FVAP as we continue to seek to increase UOCAVA education and awareness. If you are interested in FVAP's participation in your 2023 upcoming event, please contact FVAP State Legislative Affairs Specialist, Heather Eudy at [heather.d.eudy.civ@mail.mil](mailto:heather.d.eudy.civ@mail.mil).

## TIPS: UOCAVA WEBSITE INFORMATION

FVAP's latest research note shows that simple improvements can enhance your State website's UOCAVA absentee voting information for use by voters. In most instances, voters can locate a state's UOCAVA information quickly though this information is more difficult to find in a few states. The research demonstrated that finding and understanding UOCAVA specific information was the most difficult of the tasks presented during the testing. To improve your website(s) usability for military and overseas voters, FVAP identified the following best practices:

1. Implement search engine optimization strategies specific to UOCAVA information;
2. Make it easy to find UOCAVA information on election homepages and through menus;
3. Include all UOCAVA information on one page where possible;
4. Organize information by how a voter would go through the process;
5. Use lists or tables to organize information, especially dates and deadlines; and
6. Avoid election professional specific jargon and remove unnecessary content.

The complete study can be found here: <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/Assessing-State-UOCAVA-Web-Pages-FINAL.pdf>. Please contact us directly with any questions or requests for additional information.

### FVAP | Assessing State UOCAVA RESEARCH NOTE | Web Pages

#### Executive Summary

**Background:** This research note explores the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) specific web page of U.S. states and territories. These web pages are targeted to UOCAVA voters and assist them in learning how to properly cast ballots in a federal general election. Because states and territories design and maintain their own web pages, states vary widely with respect to the findability, completeness of procedural information, and user friendliness of their UOCAVA web pages.

**Methodology:** The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) evaluated the UOCAVA specific web pages for each state and territory using a content coding methodology. Each web page was examined by two trained content coders and rated on Likert scales according to the ease of finding the web page (both through a web search engine and from the state election home page), the procedural information on the web page and the overall ease of understanding the information, and the user friendliness of the web page. Likert scales were averaged between the two coders and a subject matter expert (SME) resolved differences in ratings for procedural information.

**Results:** The average state UOCAVA web page could be located by coders in less than a minute of searching and only a few clicks, however, it took coders longer than 1.5 minutes to locate a few web pages, and these web pages tended to receive low ratings from coders on findability. The average state UOCAVA web page had none of the 11 key pieces of procedural information that coders searched for, with the most common missing pieces of procedural information being a link to FVAP's online assistant for completing the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), a link to the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), and a free-access registration tracking tool. However, approximately one-fifth of the information on state UOCAVA web pages was marked by coders as being confusing, indicating that it lacked clarity or context or was located several clicks away from the state's primary UOCAVA web page. Coders found the registration tracking tools, information on returning voted ballots, the state's voter registration form, and ballot tracking tools the most confusing.

**Assessments of web pages:** User friendliness found significant issues with the readability of the text used on the web pages, with the average state UOCAVA web page requiring a college degree to understand and all but one state's page scoring below readability benchmarks.

**Conclusion:** To make UOCAVA voting information easier for voters to find and understand, FVAP recommends that states and territories use search engine optimization (SEO) practices that include incorporating key words into site metadata, reviewing web rankings and traffic, and keeping content up to date. FVAP recommends including key procedural information directly on the state's web page so that voters have easy access to reliable, accurate information in one location. To make web pages more user friendly, FVAP recommends designing web pages according to best practices in the user experience (UX) field, including designing for how people scan, organizing information by how a voter would go through the UOCAVA voting process, putting all UOCAVA information on one page, including links to supplemental information, and providing clear guideposts to UOCAVA information.

#### Introduction

FVAP is charged, pursuant to UOCAVA, with facilitating absentee voting by members of the active duty military (ADM), their families, and U.S. citizens living abroad.

FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
Voting Assistance for Service Members, Their Families & Overseas Citizens

## SERVICE VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICER SPOTLIGHT: FVAP WELCOMES A NEW DEPARTMENT OF STATE SVAO

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