

Americans can vote.

Wherever they are.

2016 Post-Election Report to Congress

YOU CAN VOTE
FROM HERE

AND HERE

AND HERE

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement under section 20308(b) of title 52, United States Code. The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,932,000 for the 2017 Fiscal Year. This includes \$1,894,000 in expenses and \$38,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2017Jun26 RefID: D-3BBEADD. Graphic elements prepared in-house by FVAP staff.



Executive Summary

This report fulfills FVAP's requirement for its annual report under section 20308(b) of title 52, United States Code. It includes findings from FVAP's post-election surveys and provides an assessment of activities supporting the 2016 elections for federal offices. It is important to remember that FVAP is an assistance agency — its mission is to inform voters of their right to vote and provide the tools and resources to help those who want to vote do so successfully from anywhere in the world.

In its 2014 report, FVAP recommended areas for action to further improve voting assistance efforts. Thanks to collaboration with its many stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, State and local election officials (LEO), the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP made solid progress in those initiatives. This year's report provides greater detail on those initiatives and introduces new efforts to support voters and stakeholders during the 2018 election cycle.

Post-Election Voting Data

FVAP completed its statistical analysis of active duty military (ADM) voter registration and participation rates, a process that included adjusting the demographic profile of the citizen voting age population (CVAP) to be similar to the military population. These adjustments enable greater insight into how ADM voter registration and participation rates compare with the rates of the CVAP that most closely resemble the military population.

- ADM registration and participation rates were lower in 2016 than in 2012:
 - 68 percent of ADM were registered to vote in 2016, versus 81 percent in 2012.
 - 46 percent of ADM voted in 2016, versus 59 percent in 2012.
- Unlike in 2012, registration among ADM in the 2016 election was lower than that of the CVAP.
- Similarly, the ADM voter participation rate was also lower than that of the CVAP.
- Fluctuation in voting rates typically correlates with interest in the election.
 - From 2012 to 2016 there was an 8 percentage point decline in ADM-reported interest in the election (77 percent to 69 percent).
 - More members in 2016 cited motivation-related reasons for not voting.
- Additionally, analysis identified demographic shifts in the ADM population as explaining about half of the decline in participation.
- The decline in registration and participation rates warrants further research. Forthcoming research will further examine the potential causes to inform FVAP's voting assistance efforts, including changes to ADM motivation and barriers to voting.
- FVAP's 2016 survey data showed that ADM who are married have higher overall participation and absentee voting rates than unmarried ADM.

FAST FACT

Since 2012, using a DoD resource increases the likelihood that military members will return their ballots.

FVAP's voting assistance activities are targeted to absent military members and overseas citizens (i.e., those who live outside their voting jurisdiction). Absentee voting findings include:

- The 2016 election represents the third general election that FVAP identified a statistically significant relationship between the use of the Department of Defense (DoD) network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAO), and Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices, and the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot.

- The rate of ADM absentee voting remained proportionate to previous years; further research is required to examine participation for those who voted locally (i.e., in-person) in their jurisdiction of residence.
- The rate of ADM who received their requested absentee ballots increased in 2016: 84 percent of ADM received their absentee ballot from their election office in 2016, versus 75 percent in 2012.
- The percent of ADM who reported using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to request their absentee ballot dropped from 2012 to 2016. FVAP's survey of State election officials indicates that many States only ensure full protections under federal law (i.e., 45-day ballot transmission requirement and electronic blank ballot delivery) through the use of the FPCA. With more ADM voters using State or local absentee ballot request forms in lieu of the FPCA, FVAP will monitor this closely for future ramifications and impact on voter success.

Assessment of FVAP Activities

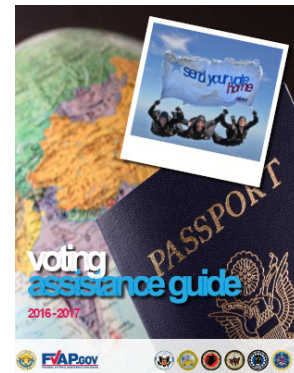
In fulfilling DoD's responsibilities under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*, FVAP is committed to two voting assistance tenets: promoting awareness of the right to vote and eliminating barriers for those who choose to exercise that right. FVAP made important advancements in 2016 to improve processes, programs, and tools, but there is still much to accomplish. In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended three functional areas to improve its effectiveness:

1. Reduce obstacles to ADM voting success;
2. Expand UOCAVA voter awareness and outreach initiatives; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Reduced Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, specifically the relationship between the use of DoD resources and the likelihood of returning absentee ballots, FVAP reduced obstacles by improving its resources throughout the Department. Initiatives to remove barriers included:

- Standardization of the *Voting Assistance Guide (Guide)* into plain language to better support Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) in the field and individual voters who visit FVAP.gov.
- Improved in-person and online training for VAOs and election officials.
- Collaboration with election officials to research factors that lead to ballot rejection.
- Conduct of the Military Ballot Tracking Pilot (MBTP) to offer full tracking of military ballots for overseas personnel and describe when to take action with FVAP's backup ballot, the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).
- Modernization of military mail systems to reduce the rate of undeliverable ballots.



One of the most immediate methods for removing obstacles from the absentee voting process is through the use of DoD voting assistance resources. By enhancing these resources, FVAP ensured support existed for its network of Voting Assistance Officers from the installation to the unit level. These resources, along with the FVAP website and outreach materials, operate together to increase the likelihood of active duty members returning their absentee ballots. FVAP will continue its efforts to improve awareness and enhance usage of available resources.

Expanded UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives

By leveraging the positive association between DoD resource use and voting, FVAP enhanced its marketing and outreach strategies for the 2016 election cycle to increase voter awareness of FVAP

resources. In addition, messaging shifted from a general awareness-raising strategy to a behavior-based strategy focused on helping UOCAVA voters overcome specific challenges at each step of the voting process. FVAP's multipronged campaign utilized research and demographic data to reach voters through myriad platforms, consistent messaging, and branding elements that saturated key audiences with multiple messaging opportunities. Key campaign results include:

- FVAP.gov achieved an overall conversion rate of 28 percent, which falls in the top 10 percent of conversion rate benchmarks for high-traffic sites.
- Social media provided a prime opportunity to both promote FVAP and engage directly with voters, offering unique features to tap underserved and hard-to-reach overseas audiences.
- Digital "I Voted From..." sticker generated high engagement, among overseas voters and influencers, particularly embassies and consulates.
- Direct mail campaign delivered almost 3 million mailers directly to military members, their spouses, and overseas citizens at key milestones in the election year, generating inquiries to FVAP's call center and voting-related actions on FVAP.gov.

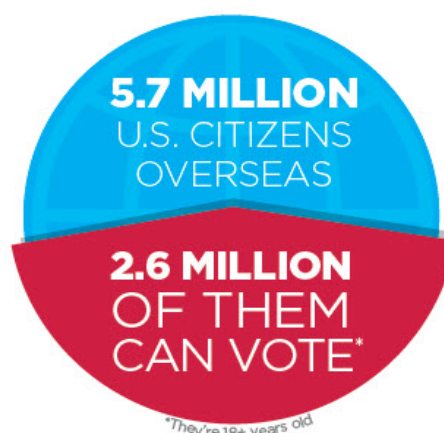


Post-election survey data showed increased awareness among segments of the military population and that 2016 efforts were more effective than previous campaigns, but also indicate that FVAP must further expand its efforts to increase awareness of resources – particularly among first-time voters. The data also show that receiving voting assistance from a DoD resource was positively associated with voters' increased knowledge of registering to vote, requesting and submitting an absentee ballot, and knowing key absentee ballot dates.

Enhanced Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

FVAP has made important progress in enhancing its research instruments for post-election analyses and ability to study overseas citizen voters. Advancements include:

- Identification of the full range of demographic factors that should be accounted for when comparing registration and participation rates to ensure a better level of comparison between the ADM and CVAP populations.
- Conduct of the Overseas Citizen Population Analysis (OCPA) study to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population, as well as estimate voting rates for the 2014 election.
- Innovative collaboration with Federal agencies and election officials from around the country resulting in a series of actionable recommendations to further improve the EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). The EAC implemented the recommendations, leading to an improved process that will save time and effort for election officials and will improve the quality and integrity of the overall EAVS data collected.



Recommendations

Based on 2016 election data and program activities, three themes continue as areas of focus that FVAP will undertake in support of the upcoming 2018 election cycle and beyond:

1. ***Reduce Obstacles to UOCAVA Citizen Voting Success.*** The Department's suite of voting assistance tools work together to support *UOCAVA* citizens' ability to participate in the electoral process. As with all U.S. citizens, the decision to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. While voter participation may be an indicator of program effectiveness, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles to voter success. In preparation for the 2018 cycle, FVAP is developing a direct-to-voter training video that teaches *UOCAVA* citizens how to register and request an absentee ballot, when and how to use a backup ballot, and where to go if they need additional assistance. FVAP is improving its prescribed absentee voting forms to enhance usability and clarify form completion and submission processes, and is conducting a comprehensive user experience audit of FVAP.gov to identify how the website can be improved to make it easier for *UOCAVA* voters, election officials, and VAOs to locate information and take action. FVAP plans to implement website improvements and updates for the 2018 election cycle.
2. ***Continue Expansion of UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives.*** FVAP is committed to building upon 2016's success and expanding *UOCAVA* citizens' awareness of voting assistance resources. The 2016 post-election data show that marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, underscoring the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in FVAP's education and awareness efforts. The data also continued to reveal a need to increase awareness among first-time voters. Though it is expected that first-time voters' awareness will be lower than experienced voters', the findings highlight the importance of targeting outreach efforts to this group and speak to the necessity of DoD voting assistance resources. FVAP will further target marketing and outreach campaigns especially for younger, first-time voters. In addition to working with the Military Services to ensure extensive promotion of the upcoming direct-to-voter training module, FVAP will utilize the new training to develop short, attention-grabbing videos and implement across social media and other digital platforms.
3. ***Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation.*** FVAP will build upon its progress in enhancing its research instruments for post-election analyses and ability to study overseas citizen voters. Later in 2017, FVAP will collect and analyze survey data of known overseas citizens' voting experiences during the 2016 election. It will also refine its overseas citizen population estimation prototype and utilize new methodologies to better understand registration, voting rates, and voting-related motivations and challenges among Americans residing abroad. Additionally, future research efforts will examine the decline in the estimated military registration and participation rates by exploring factors beyond the demographic and geographic variables currently used when comparing the ADM and CVAP populations. Most importantly, FVAP will position itself to better anticipate changes in demographics within the ADM population and adjust its communication strategies to anticipate these adjustments.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Message from the FVAP Director	6
Background	7
The Law and its Requirements	7
Post-Election Voting Surveys	8
The Active Duty Military Population	8
Statistical Significance: Use of DoD Resources and Voting Propensity	14
Overseas Citizen Voters	17
Election Administration and Voting Survey of Local Election Officials	17
Collection and Delivery of Ballots for Uniformed Services Voters Serving Overseas	21
Procedures for Handling Overseas Military Ballots	21
Ballots Collected and Delivered to Overseas Uniformed Services	21
Expediting and Tracking Overseas Uniformed Services Ballots	22
Assessment of FVAP Activities	24
Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success	24
Expand UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives	32
Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation	41
Military and Department of State Voting Assistance Programs	44
Military Voting Assistance Programs	44
Department of State Voting Assistance Program	52
Federal and State Cooperation	53
State and Local Relations	53
Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments	53
Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Program	54
UOCAVA Waivers and Cooperation with the Department of Justice	55
Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections Research Grant Program	55
Conclusions	57
Reduce Obstacles to UOCAVA Voting Success	57
Expand UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives	58
Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation	59
Glossary	61

Message from the FVAP Director

It is my distinct pleasure to present FVAP's 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress. This report includes findings from our post-election surveys and provides an assessment of our activities supporting the 2016 elections for federal office. It is important to remember that FVAP is an assistance agency — our mission is to inform citizens covered by *UOCAVA* of their right to vote and provide the tools and resources to help those who want to vote do so successfully from anywhere in the world.



In our 2014 report, we recommended areas for action to further improve voting assistance efforts. Thanks to collaboration with our many stakeholders, FVAP made important strides in fulfilling those initiatives along with new efforts for 2016:

- Conducted the MBTP to provide full lifecycle tracking of ballots throughout the domestic and military postal systems;
- Improved in-person and online training for Voting Assistance Officers and election officials;
- Leveraged behavior change principles to enhance marketing and outreach strategies;
- Facilitated innovative collaboration between Federal agencies and election officials to develop series of actionable recommendations to improve the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process; and
- Conducted groundbreaking research to develop a detailed analysis of American voters residing abroad.

I was pleased to learn from our post-election data that the rate of military members who received their requested absentee ballot increased in 2016. The data also indicate that FVAP's outreach activities in 2016 were more effective than in previous years; however, we must still do more to increase awareness of voting assistance resources — especially among first-time voters. This is particularly important since we know that when military members and overseas citizens use a DoD voting assistance resource, they are more likely to return their ballots.

A striking finding from our analyses is the reported drop in participation rate among military personnel in the 2016 election as compared to the general population. Fluctuation in voting rates is normal and typically correlated with interest in the election. The data showed that military members were less interested in the election in 2016 than in 2012. Similarly, more members in 2016 cited motivation-related reasons for not voting. Additional analysis is required to statistically test whether this decrease can be attributed more to a decline in motivation or to an increase in barriers to the absentee voting process. FVAP will release this research prior to initiating voting assistance efforts for the 2018 election cycle, and will share a report later this year on overseas citizens' participation and experiences in the 2016 election.

I look forward to the opportunities and accomplishments ahead, and I know that together, in partnership with the dedicated *UOCAVA* community, we can reach our shared vision: Military members, their families, and Americans living abroad can successfully exercise democracy's most important responsibility — the right to vote.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Beirne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "D" and "B".

David Beirne

Background

This report fulfills FVAP's requirement for its annual report under section 20308(b) of title 52, United States Code (U.S.C.).

The Law and its Requirements

UOCAVA (Chapter 203 of title 52, U.S.C.) and sections 1566 and 1566a of title 10, U.S.C., provide authority for establishment of voting assistance programs for members of the Uniformed Services, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens residing abroad.

Presidential Executive Order 12642, signed in 1988, names the Secretary of Defense as the Designee for administering *UOCAVA*. Further, Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04, "Federal Voting Assistance Program," directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to perform the responsibilities of the Presidential designee; the responsibilities are carried out by the Director of FVAP. Under these authorities, FVAP provides voter registration and voting information to those eligible to vote in U.S. elections for federal office.

In October 2009, *UOCAVA* was amended by the *Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act* Title V, Subtitle H of P.L. 111-84, National Defense Authorization Act Fiscal Year 2010. Among its provisions, the amended *UOCAVA*:

- Requires States to transmit ballots at least 45 days before federal elections;
- Requires States to offer electronic transmission of voting information and blank ballots;
- Expands the use of the FWAB for all federal elections;
- Prohibits notarization requirements;
- Requires the Services to establish voting assistance through Service IVA Offices, and authorizes the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Secretaries of the Military Departments to designate IVA offices as voter registration facilities under section 7(a)(3)(B)(ii) of the *National Voter Registration Act* of 1993, P.L. 103-31; and
- Requires DoD to field a number of online tools for FVAP-prescribed forms.

Section 20308(b) of title 52, U.S.C., requires an annual report by DoD to the President and Congress concerning:

- The effectiveness of FVAP activities carried out under section 20305 of the above title;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Uniformed Services voters;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by overseas citizens not members of the Uniformed Services;
- A description of cooperation between States and the Federal Government in carrying out the requirements of *UOCAVA*; and
- A description of the utilization of voter assistance under section 1566a of title 10, U.S.C.

Post-Election Voting Surveys

FVAP completed its statistical analysis of ADM voter registration and participation rates, a process that included adjusting the demographic profile of the CVAP to be similar to the military population. These adjustments enable greater insight into how ADM voter registration and participation rates compare with the rates of CVAP that most closely resembles the military population. The analysis showed that the ADM rates of registration and participation declined from 2012 to 2016, and were lower than those of the CVAP. Analysis identified demographic shifts in the ADM population as explaining about half of the decline in participation. Forthcoming research will further examine the potential causes to inform FVAP's voting assistance efforts, including changes to ADM motivation and barriers to voting.

Building upon 2012 and 2014 research, FVAP identified again in 2016 a statistically significant relationship between the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot and the use of the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, UVAOs, and IVA Offices.

In preparation for this report, FVAP analyzed survey data from key stakeholder populations following the 2016 General Election:¹

- 1) The State Election Officials (SEOs) Survey asked SEOs about their offices absentee voting procedures and use of FVAP products and services.
- 2) The Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) Survey asked military VAOs about their experiences providing assistance and their use of FVAP products and services.
- 3) The ADM Survey asked military members about their absentee voting experiences as well as their familiarity with DoD resources and their usefulness.
- 4) FVAP's Quantitative Survey of LEOs was integrated into the EAC's EAVS.
- 5) The Overseas Citizen Population Survey asked about these Americans' absentee voting experiences as well as their familiarity with DoD resources and their usefulness. FVAP will release supplemental analyses of the overseas citizen population later in 2017.

This report discusses the analysis for each surveyed stakeholder population. To the greatest extent possible, FVAP draws comparisons between the 2016 and 2012 general election cycles as both were presidential election years, which typically experience higher participation as compared to midterm election years. However, some aspects of this report may draw comparisons to 2014 when trend analysis for 2012 is unavailable. Sections throughout this report also show assessments of FVAP products and services across midterm and presidential years as they are not wholly dependent upon levels of voter participation, but reflect an assessment of FVAP program effectiveness.

FAST FACT

FVAP analyzed survey data from five key stakeholder groups to assess voter activity and experiences and evaluate program effectiveness.

The Active Duty Military Population

Many election observers make direct comparisons between ADM voter registration and participation rates and those of the CVAP. The ADM population differs from CVAP in a wide variety of ways, including age, sex, education, and mobility. Careful consideration of these differences is required in order to make useful comparisons of these two populations. Historically, FVAP made comparisons by adjusting the ADM survey data to match the relative CVAP estimates of age and sex. However, it did not adjust the ADM survey data to account for differences based on education and mobility.

¹ The statistical methodology reports for each of the surveys and the non-response bias study can be found at www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys.

Following the 2012 election, FVAP worked to identify a broader range of demographic factors that should be accounted for when comparing registration and participation rates to ensure a more equitable level of comparison between ADM and CVAP. This was done in response to criticisms regarding the manner in which FVAP adjusted its registration and participation rates. In 2014, FVAP released a research note that compared these demographic factors and provided the results of a statistical model used to adjust CVAP to reflect the demographic profile of the ADM population.² This approach, as documented in the research note, further validated FVAP's original findings on voter registration and participation rates, but also reflected a more realistic assessment of ADM registration and participation rates.

FVAP again leveraged this sophisticated modeling approach to analyze its 2016 survey data and provide greater insight into how ADM registration and participation rates compare with the rates of the CVAP that most closely resembles the military population.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the breakdown of the voter registration and participation rates for the following populations.³

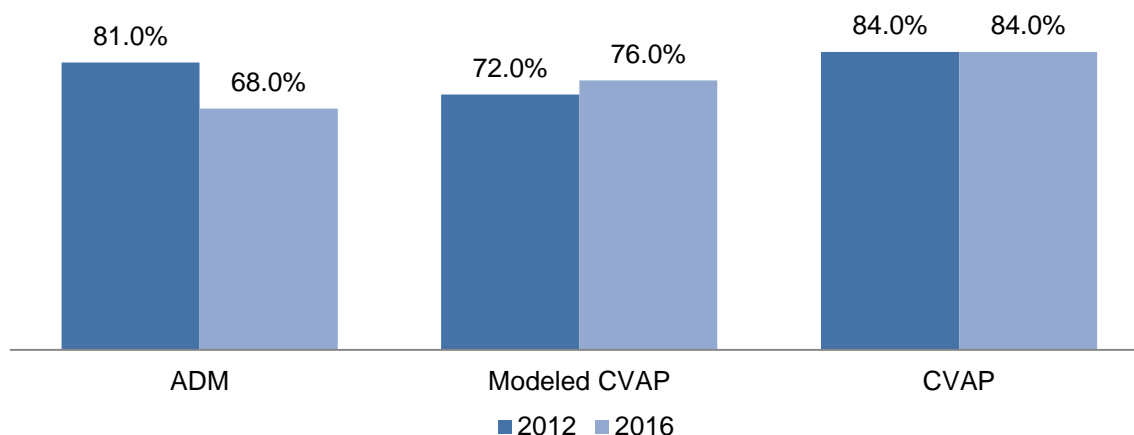
ADM:⁴ The ADM survey population includes active duty members of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

CVAP: The CVAP consists of native and naturalized U.S. citizens who are 18 years of age or older, which is the U.S. Census Bureau's standard baseline measurement used when comparing voting statistics.⁵

Modeled CVAP: The CVAP population adjusted to reflect greater demographic alignment with ADM.

2016 Active Duty Military Voter Registration Rates

Figure 1: Comparison of 2012 and 2016 Voter Registration Rates⁶



When comparing the last two presidential election years, Figure 1 shows that the ADM registration rate decreased from 2012 to 2016. The data show that 68 percent of the ADM were registered to vote in 2016. The decrease in registration does not correspond with that of the CVAP. Unlike in 2012, registration among ADM in the 2016 election was lower than that of the CVAP. This is a key observation

² FVAP, Registration and Voting Participation Differences Between the Active Duty Military And Citizen Voting Age Population, www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2014_FVAP_Research_Note_1_Final_April_11_2014.pdf.

³ This report uses the 2012 ADM and CVAP rates provided in FVAP's research note "Registration and Voting Participation Differences Between the Active Duty Military And Citizen Voting Age Population."

⁴ Although the 2012 ADM survey included members of the Reserve component population in the Active Guard/Reserve or who were activated on Election Day, only active duty members were included in the 2016 survey. Where applicable in this report, 2012 ADM data have been limited to active duty military only in order to compare the 2012 ADM survey results to the 2016 ADM survey results.

⁵ Available at https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html?intcmp=s2_voting

⁶ 2012 PEVS of ADM, Q15; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q7

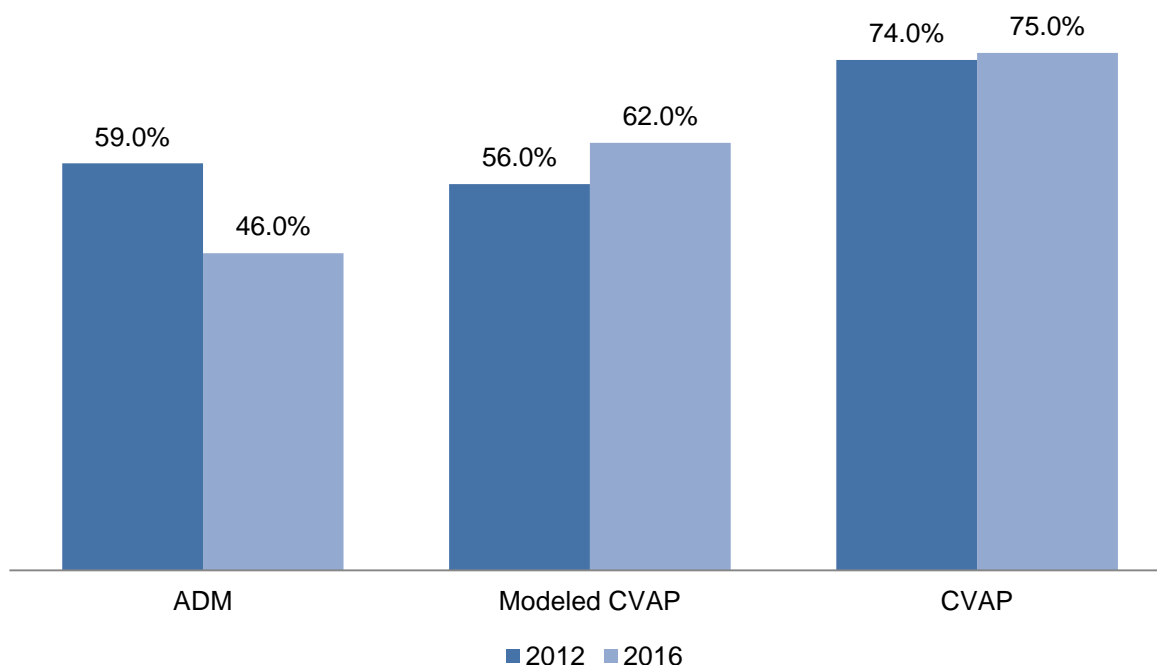
and one that FVAP will be focused on in its preparations for the 2018 election cycle and in future releases of supporting research.

When CVAP is adjusted to match the observed demographics (i.e., age, sex, mobility, education) of ADM, the modeled CVAP registration rate increases between 2012 and 2016. The relative decline in the ADM registration rate is thus unlikely to be due simply to differences in demographic trends between the ADM and CVAP populations, but rather by a combination of differences in registration behavior among demographic groups in the two populations, as well as by some population-level demographic composition changes in the ADM population since 2012,⁷ which are discussed in the following section.

Active Duty Military Voter Participation Rates

Figure 2 compares the population groups based on overall participation rates. Voter participation is traditionally reported simply on voting, regardless of method of voting (e.g., in-person on Election Day, early voting or absentee). Participation rates are reported this way historically since comparable data sources do not adequately isolate voting methods.

Figure 2: Comparison of 2012 and 2016 Voter Participation Rates⁸



As shown in Figure 2, ADM participation decreased from 2012 to 2016. The data show that 46 percent of ADM voted in 2016. The decrease in participation does not correspond with that of the CVAP.

When CVAP is adjusted to match the observed demographics (i.e., age, sex, mobility, education) of ADM, the modeled CVAP participation rate increases between 2012 and 2016. The relative decline in the ADM participation rate is thus unlikely to be due simply to differences in demographic trends between the ADM and CVAP populations, but rather by a combination of differences in participation behavior among demographic groups in the two populations, as well as by some population-level

⁷ The 2012 ADM population was also adjusted to match the demographics of the 2016 ADM population. The gap between the 2016 and adjusted 2012 ADM registration and participation rates is smaller than those using the unadjusted 2012 rates, consistent with changing ADM demographics explaining some part of the declining registration and participation rates.

⁸ 2012 PEVS of ADM, Q40; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q32

demographic composition changes in the ADM population since 2012.⁹

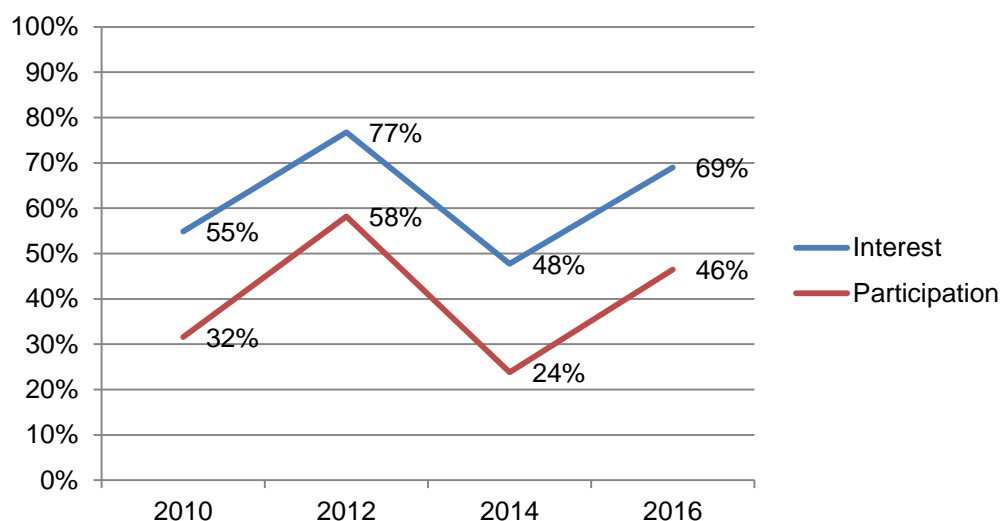
The overall decline in registration and participation rates is partially explained by some population-level demographic composition changes since 2012. Between 2012 and 2016, the ADM population became slightly less male, white, non-college educated, and married.¹⁰ The percent of the total ADM population that was white declined from 65 percent to 61 percent, mostly due to an increase in the Hispanic percentage. The percentage of ADM without a college degree declined six percentage points while the married ADM population fell by three percentage points. Voting research has shown that white, married, and college educated individuals are all more likely to vote.¹¹

The decline in ADM participation is of particular interest to FVAP; while the ADM participation rate was also lower than that of CVAP in 2012, the gap between the two populations is considerably larger in 2016.

The decline in ADM participation was unexpected; however, it is not necessarily uncommon. Voter turnout in the U.S. has not been generally stable over time. From the 1964 election (post-1964 *Voting Rights Act*) to 2016, CVAP participation has also exhibited considerable variability, fluctuating between 63 percent to less than 53 percent over time.¹²

Further, fluctuation in voting rates typically correlates with interest in the election. As depicted in Figure 3, from 2012 to 2016 there was an 8 percentage point decline in ADM-reported interest in the election (77 percent to 69 percent), and the trend for interest generally aligns with participation.¹³

Figure 3: ADM Interest versus Participation¹⁴



⁹ The 2012 ADM population was also adjusted to match the demographics of the 2016 ADM population. The gap between the 2016 and adjusted 2012 ADM registration and participation rates is smaller than those using the unadjusted 2012 rates, consistent with changing ADM demographics explaining some part of the declining registration and participation rates.

¹⁰ ADM Technical Report available at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/PEVS_ADM_TechReport_Final.pdf.

¹¹ Wolfinger, R. E., & Rosenstone, S. J. (1980). *Who votes?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Leighley, J. E., & Nagler, J. (2013). *Who votes now? Demographics, issues, inequality, and turnout in the United States.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). "Table 397. Participation in Elections for President and U.S. Representatives: 1932 to 2010" (PDF). U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

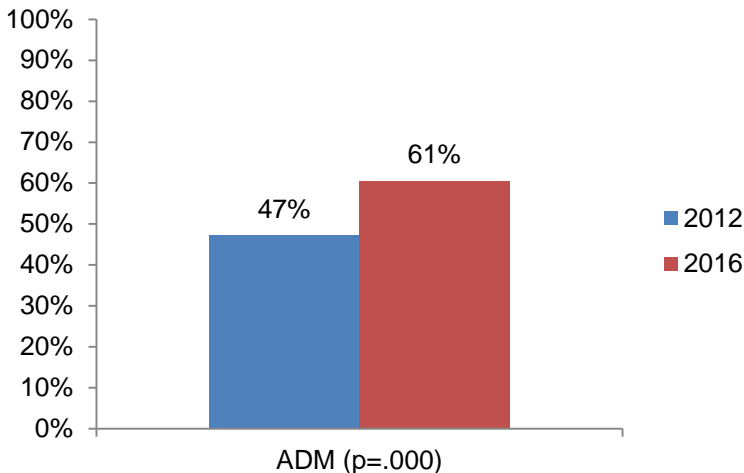
(2017). "Voter Turnout Database." Retrieved from <http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout>.

¹³ 2010-2016 PEVS-ADM data, limited to active duty respondents in each year. Interest defined as respondents who were "very interested" or "interested" in the U.S. elections. Participation defined as if a respondent self-reported voting by any mode in that election.

¹⁴ Participation rates in Figure 3 may differ slightly from those provided in Figure 2; Figure 3 uses weighted descriptive statistics, and Figure 2 uses modeled data that censors some cases.

Additionally, as shown in Figure 4, compared to 2012, more ADM in 2016 gave motivation-related reasons for not having voted. In 2016, 61 percent of ADM who did not vote said it was because of lack of motivation, such as saying “I did not want to vote.”¹⁵

Figure 4: ADM Motivation-Related Reasons for Not Voting Among Non-Voters, 2012-2016



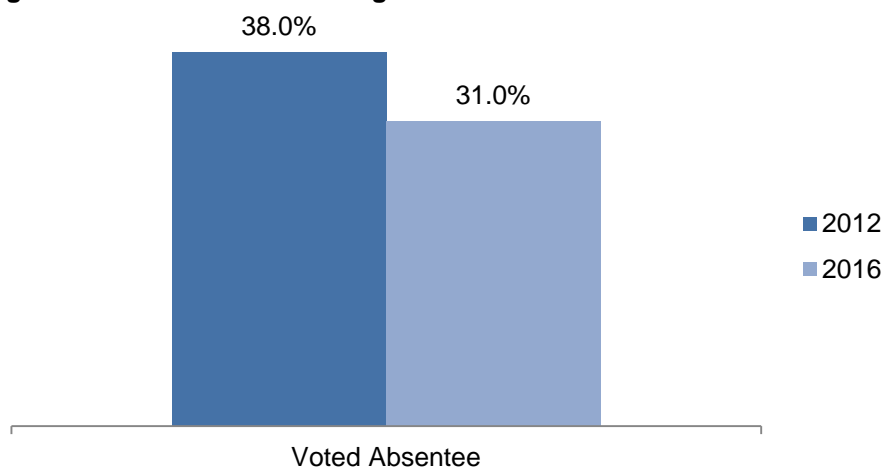
While these motivation-related findings provide descriptive context to the decline in ADM participation, FVAP is committed to gaining a full understanding of the issue with more sophisticated statistical tests. FVAP’s forthcoming research will examine the decline in the ADM registration and participation rates by exploring factors beyond the observed demographic and geographic variables currently used when comparing the ADM and CVAP populations, such as differences in motivation or barriers to voting.

The Active Duty Military Absentee Voter

The above participation rates are based on actual participation regardless of voting method (e.g., in-person or absentee). Because FVAP program activities are intended for absent military members, FVAP narrowed its analysis of survey data to ADM who reported voting absentee, as shown in Figure 5. Proportionally the absentee voting rate stayed consistent from 2012 to 2016 with about three quarters of voting ADM members doing so via absentee ballot. Although overall participation decreased from 2012, the majority of ADM who voted once again did so by absentee ballot in 2016.

¹⁵ Of the percent of ADM who reported not voting, the figure presents percent of ADM said they did not vote due to a motivation-related reason in 2012 and 2016. P-values for a t-test of differences between 2012 and 2016 rates provided in parenthesis. For 2012, motivation related reasons include: “I was not interested in voting,” “I had no candidate preference,” “I did not think my vote would matter,” “I felt out of touch with the issues in the election,” and “I do not think it is appropriate for me to vote.” For 2016, this includes ADM who said “I did not want to vote.”

Figure 5: ADM Absentee Voting Rates¹⁶



Active Duty Ballot Request, Receipt, and Return Rates

The survey data show an increase in the rate of ADM receiving their ballots in 2016. In 2012, 75 percent of ADM received their requested ballot from their election office; the rate increased to 84 percent in 2016. However, the data show that fewer ADM reported returning their ballot in 2016 than in 2012, which aligns with the overall decrease in ADM participation rates for the 2016 General Election.

FAST FACT

ADM ballot receipt rates increased from 2012 to 2016. In 2012, 75% of ADM received their ballot; in 2016, 84% of ADM received their ballot.

Figure 6: Absentee Ballot Rates¹⁷

	2012	2016
Requested an absentee ballot	41%	33%
Received an absentee ballot	75%	84%
Returned an absentee ballot	84%	79%

As shown in Figure 7, ADM who are married have higher participation and absentee voting rates. Married ADM also report higher rates of requesting and returning absentee ballots compared to unmarried ADM in 2016.

Figure 7: 2016 Voting Rates by Marital Status¹⁸

	Married ADM	Unmarried ADM
Registration Rate	72%	58%
Participation Rate	55%	35%
Absentee Voting Rate	37%	23%
Requested an absentee ballot	38%	26%
Received an absentee ballot	86%	79%
Returned an absentee ballot	83%	74%

¹⁶ 2012 PEVS of ADM, Q40; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q32; voted rate include all methods of voting. Percentages are the weighted by 2012 and 2016 survey weights. 2012 PEVS-ADM data is limited to active duty respondents

¹⁷ Percent of the ADM who received an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who requested an absentee ballot; percent who returned an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who received an absentee ballot and those who automatically received an absentee ballot from a local election official; 2012 PEVS of ADM, Q17, 24, 28; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q12, 19, 22

¹⁸ Percent of the ADM who received an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who requested an absentee ballot; percent who returned an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who received an absentee ballot and those who automatically received an absentee ballot from a local election official; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q12, 19, 22

The overall voting participation rate for ADM was 46 percent; but for unmarried members, the voting participation rate was 35 percent, and the rate for married ADM members was higher at 55 percent. Absentee ballot return statistics mirror this trend. Of unmarried members who received an absentee ballot, 74 percent completed and returned their ballots; comparatively, 83 percent of married members completed and returned their ballots.¹⁹ These findings point to the need for greater awareness of DoD resources for unmarried ADM members as part of a network of resources.

Statistical Significance: Use of DoD Resources and Voting Propensity

Following the 2016 election, FVAP built upon its findings from 2012 and 2014 to determine if there is a continued statistically significant and positive relationship between DoD activities and the likelihood of an active duty member actually voting and returning his or her absentee ballot.

FAST FACT
Using a DoD resource increases the likelihood that military members will return their ballots.

To evaluate the overall statistical impact of the DoD suite of voting assistance resources — those provided by FVAP, UVAOs, and IVA Offices — on voting participation rates, FVAP conducted additional analysis to identify the extent to which these resources continue to contribute positively to a voter's experience.

During the 2016 election cycle, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking information or assistance from a DoD resource (FVAP, UVAOs or IVA Offices), 93 percent returned their absentee ballot. In comparison, of those ADM who needed assistance but did not report seeking information or assistance from FVAP, UVAOs, or IVA Offices, 69 percent returned their absentee ballot. This statistically significant difference²⁰ indicates that ADM who needed assistance and sought it from a DoD resource were more likely to report returning their absentee ballot compared to ADM who needed assistance but did not seek it from a DoD resource.²¹

Of ADM who reported they needed assistance:²²

- 38 percent sought assistance from FVAP;
- 13 percent sought assistance from UVAOs; and
- 8 percent sought assistance from IVA Offices.

As depicted in Figure 8, the difference in reported ballot return rates for those who sought assistance from a DoD resource compared to those who needed assistance but did not seek it from a DoD resource is more pronounced for 18- to 29-year-olds compared to older ADM.

Figure 8: Percentage of ADM Who Sought Assistance and Reported Returning Absentee Ballots by Age²³

	Sought Assistance from DoD Resource and Returned Ballot	Did not Seek Assistance from DoD Resource and Returned Ballot
Total ADM	93%	69%
18 to 29 years old	93%	60%
30 years old or more	93%	79%

¹⁹ This difference is statistically significant ($p < .01$) when conducting a chi-square test using weighted cross-sectional data. This does not control for other demographic confounding variables that more complex models may account for to test significance.

²⁰ Statistically significant at $p < .0001$

²¹ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q22, 47 & 49

²² 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q47 & 49

²³ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q22, 47 & 49

For example, of ADM age 18 to 29 years old who needed and sought assistance from a DoD resource, 93 percent reported returning their absentee ballot. Of those same 18- to 29-year-old ADM who did not seek assistance from a DoD resource, 60 percent reported returning their absentee ballot. In comparison, of those ADM age 30-years old or more who needed assistance and sought assistance from a DoD resource, 93 percent reported returning their absentee ballot. Of those same ADM age 30-years or older who did not seek assistance from a DoD resource, 79 percent reported returning their absentee ballot.

FVAP first reported a statistically significant positive relationship between using DoD resources and returning a ballot in its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress. Additional analysis led to the release of a supplemental research note explaining the influence of the various DoD voting assistance resources.²⁴ The analysis below updates the relationship between specific DoD resources and return rates for 2016.

As depicted in Figure 9, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking assistance from FVAP, 93 percent returned their ballot. Of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking assistance from UVAOs or IVA Offices, 94 percent returned their ballot. In comparison, of those ADM who needed assistance, but did not seek it from a DoD resource, 69 percent reported returning their absentee ballot.

Figure 9: Percentage of ADM Who Reported Returning Absentee Ballot By Type of Assistance Requested²⁵

	Returned Absentee Ballot
Needed, but did not seek, assistance from DoD Resource	69%
Sought Assistance from DoD Resource (FVAP/UVAOs/IVA Offices)	93%
Sought assistance from FVAP	93%
Sought assistance from UVAOs or IVA Offices	94%

As shown in Figure 10, the difference between Military Services in what percent used each resource was marginal. About a third of all ADM who were aware of FVAP, across each Service, reported seeking assistance from FVAP. Eighteen percent of Army members who were aware of UVAOs reported seeking assistance from UVAOs, compared to 14 percent for those in the Navy and 9 percent for Coast Guard members. Fourteen percent of Army members who were aware of IVA Offices reported seeking assistance from this resource, compared to between 8-9 percent for all other Services.

Figure 10: Percentage of ADM Who Sought Assistance from DoD Resources by Service

	FVAP	UVAO	IVA Office
Army	33%	18%	14%
Marine Corps	36%	15%	8%
Navy	39%	14%	9%
Air Force	34%	16%	9%
Coast Guard	34%	9%	8%

There were also marginal differences in the percent who reported returning an absentee ballot. Figure 11 shows 76 percent of Army, 79 percent of Marine Corps, 82 percent of Navy, 80 percent of Air Force, and 87 percent of Coast Guard members said they returned an absentee ballot in the 2016 General Election.²⁶

²⁴ FVAP, Assessing the Impact of FVAP Resources, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2014_FVAP_Research-Note-2_Final_Approved.pdf

²⁵ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q22, 47 & 49

²⁶ Limited to ADM who received an absentee ballot.

Figure 11: Percentage of ADM Who Returned Ballot by Service

	Returned Ballot
Army	76%
Marine Corps	79%
Navy	82%
Air Force	80%
Coast Guard	87%

Of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking information or assistance from a DoD resource:²⁷

- 27 percent reported seeking assistance from FVAP only;
- 3 percent reported seeking assistance from UVAOs only;
- 1 percent reported seeking assistance from IVA Offices only; and
- 12 percent reported seeking assistance from some combination of the three resources.

This demonstrates that while some ADM use the variety of resources available to them, few seek assistance from only their UVAO or IVA Office. Conversely, if ADM seek assistance from just one DoD resource, the majority turn to FVAP. While FVAP remains a primary method for assistance, the value of the extended network of VAOs is of particular interest for refining future training efforts at military installations across the world. For example, as depicted in Figure 12, the data show that UVAO assistance is particularly beneficial for unmarried ADM. Unmarried ADM who sought assistance from a UVAO were 17 percentage points more likely to return their absentee ballot than those who did not seek help from a UVAO. FVAP will continue to review its research findings and develop targeted outreach recommendations and best practices for VAOs.

Figure 12: Unmarried ADM Use of UVAO and Returned Ballot

	Sought Assistance from UVAO Returned Ballot	Did not Seek Assistance from UVAO and Returned Ballot
Unmarried ADM	87%	70%

First-Time Voters

In 2016, 19 percent of ADM were first-time voters – and 67 percent of them voted absentee.²⁸ Of ADM who were first-time voters:²⁹

- 70 percent reported seeking assistance from FVAP;
- 43 percent reported seeking assistance from UVAOs; and
- 41 percent reported seeking assistance from IVA Offices.

DoD resource usage is also beneficial for first-time voters. As shown in Figure 13, during the 2016 election cycle, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote, and who sought assistance from a DoD resource, 94 percent returned their absentee ballot. Of those same ADM who needed assistance but did not seek information or assistance from a DoD resource, only 56 percent returned their absentee ballot.

²⁷ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q22, 47 & 49

²⁸ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q35 & 36

²⁹ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q35,36, 47 & 49

Figure 13: ADM First-Time Voters Who Reported Returning Absentee Ballot³⁰

	Returned Absentee Ballot
Needed, but did not seek, assistance from DoD Resource	56%
Sought Assistance from DoD resource (FVAP/UVAOs/IVA Offices)	94%

The positive relationship between DoD resource usage and the likelihood of voters returning their ballots continues to be a significant finding for FVAP, the rest of DoD, and UOCAVA voters.

Overseas Citizen Voters

Historically, FVAP has been unable to provide voter behavior data for Americans residing abroad due to challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population. To tackle these issues, following the 2014 election FVAP conducted the OCPA to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population as well as estimate voter registration and participation rates.³¹ The resulting report provides a detailed analysis of American voters overseas that estimates the population of eligible voters and includes results of the first-ever representative survey of registered overseas voters who requested an absentee ballot for the 2014 General Election. The OCPA findings and 2014 participation data are provided later in this report (section titled “Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation”).

FVAP is conducting this survey again and will release a supplemental research note discussing overseas citizens’ participation in the 2016 General Election later this year. The forthcoming research will represent the most complete effort to report on the registration and participation rates for overseas citizens. In the interim, some elements of overseas citizen voting behavior can be determined through the EAC’s EAVS data.³²

Election Administration and Voting Survey of Local Election Officials

In 2013, the EAC and FVAP entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a joint survey effort for 2014 that enables both agencies to meet their core requirements while reducing the overall burden on election officials. This effort completed a goal that was recognized when FVAP, the EAC, and the National Association of State Election Directors agreed in 2011 to work toward a single survey instrument.

As a result of this successful interagency initiative, FVAP and the EAC now issue a single survey which includes FVAP’s UOCAVA-related survey questions as part of Section B in the EAC’s EAVS, which is a post-election survey of election officials. The EAC collects the survey data and shares it with DoD; FVAP serves as the lead for analyzing these data.

- The EAC and FVAP both report data on UOCAVA voters and their ballots. Per the MOU between FVAP and the EAC, FVAP serves as the lead agency for reporting official statistics regarding UOCAVA data (Section B of the EAVS).
- The EAC administers the survey and transmits to FVAP unedited UOCAVA data as reported by election officials.

³⁰ First-time voters include those ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q35

³¹ Federal Voting Assistance Program. (2016). Overseas Citizen Population Analysis Volume 1: Participation and Voting Rates Estimation Prototype. Retrieved from https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/FVAP-OCPA_201609_final.pdf.

³² Though both the EAC-EAVS and the OCPS collect data on the overseas citizen population, they are not directly comparable. The OCPS is limited to survey respondents from a highly motivated sample of known absentee ballot requesters living at an overseas address. EAVS data is a collection of counts from State and local election officials.

- The data presented in this report will differ slightly from EAC's reporting of *UOCAVA* data because FVAP performs statistical adjustments to the data, including editing, imputation, and survey weighting.

Due to the substantial changes in the EAC/FVAP data collection process and methodology, comparing data from 2016 and 2012 is difficult.³³ In addition, some of the estimates have large margins of error which limit the use of EAVS data in terms of any statistical relevancies and limit FVAP's ability to infer too many conclusions; all associated findings reported here should be seen as representative of the 2016 *UOCAVA* population, though constrained to the imputation methodology developed by FVAP.

These survey data, though limited in their ability to make comparisons across elections, enable FVAP to focus on areas of high *UOCAVA* voter concentration and understand more about State challenges. Ultimately, FVAP plans to identify lessons learned and share these observations with States. The value of these data lies in its ability to provide an overview and allow FVAP to engage in productive dialogues with the States.

Key observations from the 2016 EAVS data³⁴ on the use of the FPCA include:

- Of the total number of registered voters in the U.S., less than 1 percent were covered by *UOCAVA*,³⁵
- An estimated 137,793 FPCAs were received from Uniformed Services voters;³⁶
- An estimated 238,488 FPCAs were received from overseas citizen voters;³⁷
- Approximately 4 percent of all FPCAs were rejected;³⁸ and
- Of all FPCAs received from Uniformed Services voters, approximately 4 percent were rejected; similarly, approximately 4 percent of FPCAs were rejected from overseas citizens.³⁹

The causes of the rejections are unclear. As discussed in previous reports, it is possible voters are confused about their overall eligibility for voting absentee. For example, some States may permit "no excuse" absentee voting in which all voters may choose to vote absentee; however, other States may only permit voters to vote absentee when they are away from their home address. For those ADM who have returned home and can vote locally, submitting an application for an absentee ballot may result in a rejection based on a review of their eligibility. FVAP is working to improve voter form comprehension and will continue to research potential causes of FPCA rejections across and within each of the States to understand the context of these data.

Key observations on absentee ballot processing include:

- An estimated 950,836 absentee ballots were transmitted to *UOCAVA* voters;⁴⁰
- Of the total absentee ballots received from *UOCAVA* voters, approximately 3 percent were rejected;⁴¹

³³ EAVS Technical Report available at

https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/PEVS_EAVS_TechReport_Final.pdf. In 2016, the EAVS instrument was not modified, but respondents were advised not to complete some redundant questions, specifically in Section B, to help reduce burden.

³⁴ All values are estimates which include margins of error. Estimates for the subparts of a question often sum to a value that does not exactly match the total estimate for that question. Similarly, groups of questions may not have expected relationships. For example, ballots counted and ballots rejected do not always sum perfectly to ballots received. Three main reasons contribute to these differences between totals. First, State election officials may have misinterpreted a question or may have incorrectly entered values when responding to the survey. Second, the complex relationships between survey items create difficulty in maintaining all logical relationships. Finally, data for some questions required imputation due to item missing data rates and it is difficult to maintain all logical relationships when imputing for missing data.

³⁵ All percentages are rounded. 2016 EAVS, Q B19a & A1a

³⁶ Uniformed Service voters are members of a Uniformed Service, members of the merchant marine, and spouses or dependents of a member who are qualified to vote. 2016 EAVS, Q B20b

³⁷ 2016 EAVS, Q B20c

³⁸ 2016 EAVS, Q B20a, B21e

³⁹ 2016 EAVS, Q B20b, B20c, B21a & B21b

⁴⁰ 2016 EAVS, Q B1a

- Of the absentee ballots received from Uniformed Services voters, approximately 2 percent were rejected; similarly, 3 percent of absentee ballots rejected from overseas citizens;⁴² The primary reason reported for ballot rejection was receipt of the ballot after the statutory election deadline.⁴³

Previous reports provided data on the transmission mode of ballots sent to voters (e.g., by mail, email, or fax). Due to changes to the instructions for the 2016 survey, many jurisdictions did not report the transmission mode for the ballots they transmitted to *UOCAVA* voters. The low response rates to these questions prevent FVAP from making accurate observations about 2016 *UOCAVA* ballot transmission modes. As such, the data are not provided in this report; however, as detailed later in this section, FVAP's data standardization effort will work to identify the factors that prevent rejection or increase the opportunity for success, including the examination of transmission mode of ballots.

The FWAB is a backup ballot for voters if they do not receive their official ballot from their election office.

Key observations on the use of the FWAB include:

- Of the estimated 24,313 FWABs received from *UOCAVA* voters, 73 percent were counted with a 17 percent rejection rate;⁴⁴
 - Approximately 29 percent of the rejected FWABs were rejected because they were received after the absentee ballot receipt deadline (5 percent of total FWABs received were rejected for this reason);⁴⁵
 - Approximately 28 percent of the rejected FWABs were rejected because the regular absentee ballot was received and counted; this indicates that the FWAB served its purpose as a backup ballot (5 percent of total FWABs received were rejected for this reason);⁴⁶ and
 - When removing the reported FWAB rejections because the regular absentee ballot was received and counted, approximately 13 percent of FWABs received were rejected.⁴⁷

LEOs rejected FWABs submitted from Uniformed Services voters at a higher rate than those submitted by overseas citizens.⁴⁸ Additional research on the specific causes of FWAB rejections is needed in order to understand if the various *UOCAVA* populations differ in usage and timeliness of submitting FWABs.

High rejection rates for the FWAB are expected given its backup role. However, this is likely another area where voter confusion is a contributing factor. For example, some States require a potential FWAB user to have submitted a ballot application 30 days prior to the election, mirroring the State-prescribed deadline for voter registration, which is the minimum requirement under federal law. If voters do not fully understand these particular requirements, it may lead to high instances of FWAB rejections. As detailed in the section titled "Assessment of FVAP Activities," FVAP needs to continue improving voter comprehension of the form's proper usage and adherence to State requirements for acceptance.

Data Standardization

The EAVS data provide a general accounting of *UOCAVA* absentee balloting materials from LEOs. While the data provide an overall picture of nationwide trends, the individual voter's experience is lost and points to the need for more transactional levels of data. The use of EAVS data is valuable from a comparative analysis standpoint for how States create and apply election administration policies and the

⁴¹ 2016 EAVS, Q B16a-B16c, B26a; this rate is calculated using only regular *UOCAVA* ballots, excluding FWABs and ballots labeled as "other".

⁴² 2016 EAVS, Q B16a, B16b, B26b & B26c

⁴³ 2016 EAVS, Q B14a

⁴⁴ The outcomes of the remaining 10 percent of FWABs is unknown; 2016 EAVS, Q B11a, B11b, B11c, B17a, B17b, B17c, B31a, B31b, B31c & B31d

⁴⁵ 2016 EAVS, Q B17a, B17b, B17c, B31a, B31b, B31c, B31d & B33a

⁴⁶ 2016 EAVS, Q B17a, B17b, B17c, B31a, B31b, B31c, B31d & B34a

⁴⁷ 2016 EAVS, Q B17a, B17b, B17c, B31a, B31b, B31c, B31d & B34a

⁴⁸ 2016 EAVS, Q B17a, B17b, B31a, & B31b

identification of potential best practices, but FVAP recognizes the need for a more detailed dataset that can isolate the impact on voter behavior. For example, is the frequency of ballot rejections tied to a voter applying for a ballot too late in the process, which results in the receipt of the ballot after a statutory deadline? FVAP acknowledged the limitations of EAVS data in its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress and took action through its cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG).

FVAP and CSG considered the benefits that would be achieved from having a single standard for collecting and reporting *UOCAVA*-specific voter data at the transaction level – each critical interaction between the voter and State or local election office. CSG created a Technology Working Group that examined how the data currently reported in Section B of EAVS could be standardized.

The group's effort resulted in the EAVS Section B Data Standard. The standardized dataset has already enabled FVAP to better assess voters' experiences and the impacts of the *MOVE Act* provisions requiring ballots to be transmitted to voters at least 45 days prior to the election and offering electronic transmission of blank ballots.

Preliminary findings from the first iteration of the resulting EAVS Section B Data Standard are based on data provided from the States of Colorado, Washington, Oregon, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, and several counties: Orange County, CA; Cook County, IL; Bexar County, TX; and Okaloosa County, FL:

- 4.8 percent of all absentee ballots that were submitted were rejected. However, of ballots transmitted 45 days before the election and returned by voters, only 3.9 percent were rejected. In comparison, 6.3 percent of ballots that were transmitted after the 45-day deadline (and returned by voters) were rejected.
- Postal mail return of ballots performed slightly below the overall average return rate of 62.9 percent. Online transmission garnered the highest successful return rate at 96 percent, and was used by approximately 1,500 voters. Email transmission had the second highest successful return rate at 72.1 percent, which is an increase of 10.7 percentage points compared to regular postal mail.⁴⁹

Both of these findings provide an improved assessment of reforms enacted by Congress with the *MOVE Act* of 2009 and a deeper level of analysis that will permit FVAP to identify best practices.

FVAP remains focused on the individual voter's experience and the factors that will prevent rejection or increase the opportunity for success to isolate program effectiveness and engage military and overseas voters to offset any negative trends in voter behavior. A full report on the success of this effort and more detailed analysis will be forthcoming at the end of 2017 through the publication of a final report from CSG.

⁴⁹ Of the 336 ballots transmitted by "other" means, 94.6 percent were returned, however jurisdictions were not consistent in what the "other" transmission category included.

Collection and Delivery of Ballots for Uniformed Services Voters Serving Overseas

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and DoD Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) facilitate the delivery of election materials between overseas military voters and election offices. Pursuant to section 20304 of title 52, U.S.C., these agencies provide expedited mail delivery service for overseas Uniformed Services voters' absentee ballots in general elections, which are processed before other classes of mail. For the 2016 General Election, the overall average transit time of voted ballots from the absentee voter to election offices was 5.1 days — more than a day faster than *UOCAVA*'s 7-day requirement. Of the ballots sent by election offices and received at overseas Military Post Offices (MPO), 7 percent of ballots were deemed “undeliverable as addressed.” This represents considerable improvement as there was a decline of 26 percentage points from the 2014 election when the rate was 33 percent.

Procedures for Handling Overseas Military Ballots

Details regarding inbound ballots during the 2016 General Election are described below:

- Inbound blank absentee ballots from election offices are initially sorted at a USPS International Service Center prior to dispatching them to overseas military postal activities.
- Military postal clerks process and deliver ballots through post office boxes or unit delivery.
- For ballots that cannot be delivered as addressed:
 - A directory clerk attempts to locate addressees via change-of-address cards on file, local personnel management systems, or global address listings.
 - If a new address is found, the absentee ballot is then dispatched (forwarded) and delivered to the current address on file, either overseas or domestic.
 - If no new address information is found, the absentee ballot is returned to the election official marked “undeliverable as addressed.”

Ballots Collected and Delivered to Overseas Uniformed Services

Between September 1, 2016, and December 10, 2016,⁵⁰ the Military Postal Service (MPS) postmarked and dispatched 51,757 voted absentee ballots from military voters to election offices using Priority Mail Express Military Service. The average transit time of ballots to election offices was 5.1 days. MPOs received 3,649 (7 percent) that were undeliverable as addressed (UAA) from election offices with 2,445 (4.7 percent) redirected to current addresses while 1,204 (2.3 percent) were returned to sender. The 7 percent rate of UAA ballots represents a decline of 26 percentage points from the 2014 election when the rate was 33 percent and a decrease of eight percentage points from the 2012 election when the rate was 15 percent.

The UAA ballots may be attributed to three factors:

- Election offices did not validate current addresses of voters;
- Extended periods of *UOCAVA* eligibility under State law; or
- Absentee voters did not update mailing addresses with election offices.⁵¹

The top five States for UAA ballots in 2016 were States with large *UOCAVA* populations: California, Florida, Washington, New York, and Colorado. The UAA ballots in these States may be attributed to

⁵⁰ MPS continues to deliver voted ballots after Election Day; several States accept and count ballots from *UOCAVA* voters after Election Day.

⁵¹ MPS Postal Support of the 2016 Election

extended periods of time of eligibility for the FPCA in which voters automatically receive ballots for elections as all five States have periods of eligibility for the FPCA ranging from two to eight years.

The issue of undeliverable ballots is a point of concern as the additional time for redirecting a ballot increases the likelihood of the voter not receiving a full ballot in a timely manner — resulting in the need for casting a FWAB, or worse, jeopardizing a voter's ability to successfully cast a ballot at all. However, the significant decrease in UAA ballots for the 2016 election demonstrates the effectiveness of recent improvements made by DoD and USPS.

USPS and MPSA took steps in 2014 to modernize military mail systems and now provide a proactive way to encourage military members to update their mailing address with election offices. In the past, MPS may have had a separate listing of address changes that would result in delays as ballots were sent overseas before being redirected. Now, when standard-sized ballot envelopes are processed through USPS, the integration of MPS and USPS address-change information will process a ballot for forwarding before transmitting it overseas.

FAST FACT

Thanks to MPSA and USPS improvements to mail systems, the rate of undeliverable-as-addressed ballots decreased from 33% in 2014 to 7% in 2016.

SEOs and LEOs often use the National Change of Address (NCOA) database to conduct maintenance on lists of registered voters. In the past, the NCOA database excluded overseas/APO and FPO address changes. The new system consolidated all address change information for MPO addresses into the overall NCOA list maintenance service — meaning that LEOs can now leverage one source of data for the most current address information registered with either USPS or MPS. As expected, the overall rate of undeliverable ballots sent to MPOs from election offices in 2016 decreased significantly compared to previous election years.

Expediting and Tracking Overseas Uniformed Services Ballots

Section 20304 of title 52, U.S.C., requires expedited mail delivery service for marked absentee ballots of overseas military personnel in federal general elections. The voted ballots of overseas military members are processed using the Express Mail Service Label 11-DoD. Upon receipt from the military voter, Military Postal Clerks applied the label to each ballot, ensuring expedited delivery to the election office. The label provides voters and MPSA the ability to track ballots from acceptance through delivery using scans at the initial intake point, en route, upon arrival at the U.S. International Gateways of Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Miami, and a final delivery scan conducted by USPS demonstrating delivery at the election office address.

The Label 11-DoD is applied to marked absentee ballots of overseas military members, ensuring expedited delivery to local election offices in the U.S.



Voters were made aware of this process in part via FVAP's voter notification emails to military members. MPSA also highlighted the Label 11-DoD in its Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, which provided policy,

guidance, and clarification to the Services and MPOs to ensure military postal activities were in compliance with voting laws. The Services' implementing guidance included procedures for addressing unique missions and intermittent transportation networks to support absentee voting.

MPSA worked with FVAP and USPS to conduct the MBTP program to provide full lifecycle tracking of ballots throughout the domestic and military postal systems. The pilot is discussed in in the section titled "Federal and State Cooperation."

Assessment of FVAP Activities

Recognizing that military and overseas voters face unique challenges when participating in elections, Congress enacted a set of protections to make voting in federal elections easier and more accessible. These protections are set forth in *UOCAVA*.

In fulfilling DoD's responsibilities under the law, FVAP is committed to two voting assistance tenets: promoting awareness of the right to vote, and eliminating barriers for those who choose to exercise that right. While FVAP made great strides in 2016 to improve processes, programs and tools, there is still much ahead. In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended three areas for action to improve its effectiveness:

1. Reduce obstacles to ADM voting success;
2. Expand *UOCAVA* voter awareness and outreach initiatives; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters. This section examines FVAP's progress on these initiatives.

In 2013, FVAP commissioned a research effort with RAND, a Federally Funded Research & Development Center, to align its strategy and operations to better reflect its core mission. FVAP implemented these initiatives that align with RAND's recommendations, such as the utilization of adult learning methodologies and the incorporation of evaluations to revamp training modules for voters, election officials and Voting Assistance Officers.⁵²

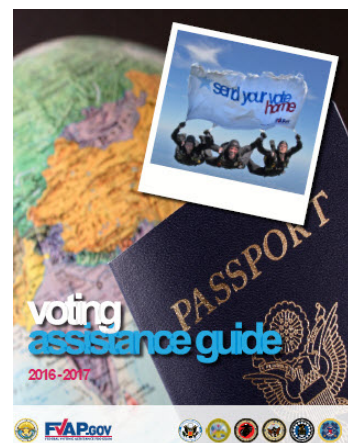
Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

This section describes efforts to reduce obstacles faced by *UOCAVA* voters. One of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process continues to be through the use of DoD voting assistance resources, which increases the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot. FVAP will continue its efforts to improve awareness to enhance usage of the available resources.

Updated Voting Assistance Guide

The *UOCAVA* absentee voting process is different than the process for individuals voting in-person or using a State's absentee process and requires acquiring different knowledge and skills. The States administer U.S. elections; while the basic process is the same, each State and territory may have different rules and deadlines for the processing of registration applications, ballot requests, and ballots. Given this complexity, FVAP has made great strides with standardizing and adopting plain language in its publications to reconcile federal law with State law as part of its effort to make the absentee voting process more welcoming and easy to navigate.

FVAP publishes the *Guide* for use by voters, military and State Department Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), overseas citizen organizations and election officials. The *Guide*, printed every two years and continually updated online, is a compilation of absentee voting regulations, laws, and deadlines



⁵² RAND, The Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Road Ahead, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR882.html

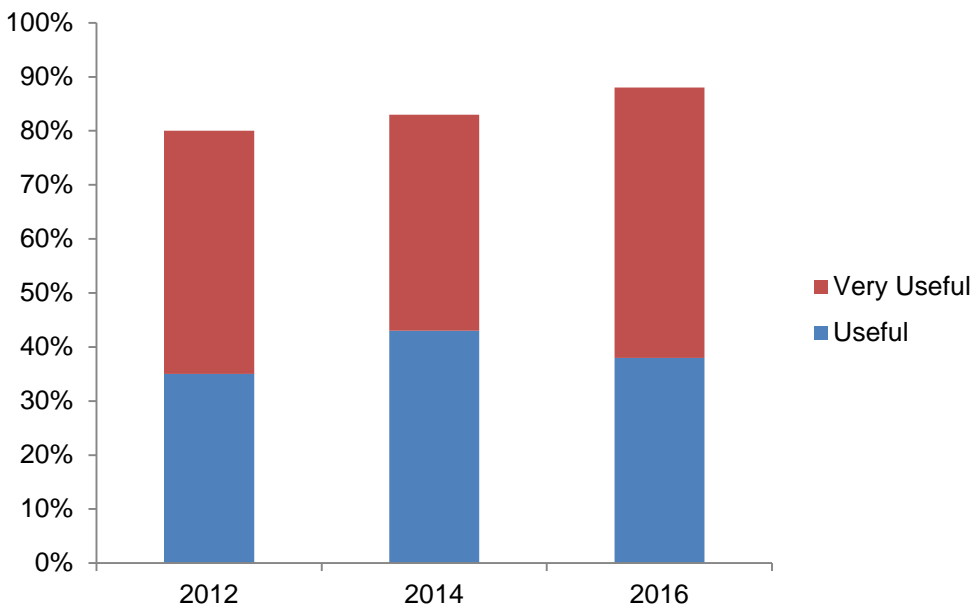
across all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the four U.S. territories covered under *UOCAVA*. It provides the procedures military and overseas voters need to follow to successfully register to vote and cast a ballot using the FPCA and FWAB.

This important resource often serves as a single source of information for both VAOs and individual voters alike. In making it more usable, FVAP worked closely with election officials to update the *Guide* by standardizing the language across each State's section. FVAP established a Quality Assurance Board to ensure content was accurate and embraced plain language principles.

FVAP continues to distribute the *Guide* in multiple formats to accommodate the various environments and levels of available infrastructure in which U.S. citizens reside. Whether it is in hardcopy format, the FVAP website, or a PDF downloaded on to a tablet or phone, this material is a resource available for people across a wide spectrum of conditions ranging from domestic Installation VAOs, students studying abroad, personnel on ships at sea, Peace Corps volunteers, and military members deployed at Forward Operating Bases.

As depicted in Figure 14, for the 2016 election, 89 percent of military Unit VAOs found it useful, showing a steady increase since the 2012 election.⁵³

Figure 14: Usefulness of *Guide* for UVAOs



FVAP is currently updating the *Guide* for the 2018 election cycle based on input from the States and survey feedback provided from UVAOs in the field.

Provided Key Absentee Voting Forms

Two federal forms are prescribed by FVAP and accepted by all States. The FPCA (SF-76) can be used by military members and overseas citizens to register to vote, request an absentee ballot for federal elections, or update contact information. The FWAB (SF-186) can be used by military and overseas voters who have not received their requested State ballot in time to return it by their State's deadline. The FVAP.gov website provides an online assistant that helps the voter complete each form based on specific State requirements and provides instructions on how and where to send their completed form. Voters

⁵³ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q29 (controlled for UVAO satisfaction to match 2014 population); 2014 PEVS of UVAOs, Q29; 2012 PEVS of UVAOs, Q25

can complete both forms using the online assistant, the fillable PDF versions, or pick up hardcopy versions from their Voting Assistance Officer or nearest U.S. Embassy or Consular Office.

In an effort to continue to provide the most user friendly forms possible, FVAP evaluates the forms every two years. In November 2014, FVAP published a Federal Register notice opening the forms (last updated in 2013) for review and public comment at the regulations.gov website. Based on the desire for continuity going into the 2016 election cycle, FVAP determined it should keep the forms unchanged and then reexamine them for possible design, usability, and content changes following the 2016 General Election.

In late 2016, FVAP leveraged an iterative process of expert design input, information gathering and testing with election officials, stakeholders, and voters to develop new versions of the forms. In early 2017, FVAP began the public review and comment process and is currently adjudicating stakeholder feedback. The revised forms will be used in 2018 and incorporated into FVAP's materials and resources.

Enhanced FVAP.gov Website and Portal

FVAP.gov is an information-rich site with an intuitive online assistant that guides the user through completing the FPCA and FWAB to print, sign, and send to their election office. It also offers educational materials that help simplify the UOCAVA voting process, directs users to State websites offering online voter registration and ballot request, and provides election news, State-specific voting deadlines, requirements, and contact information.

The Military Services are required to report data on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To help streamline the Services' data collection processes, FVAP developed a single source for their metrics collection via the FVAP.gov portal. All of the Services may now leverage one system, decreasing the resources needed to run their respective programs. In 2016, 96 percent of VAOs were aware of the portal, and of those VAOs aware of the new resource, 92 percent used it, and 86 percent found it useful.⁵⁴

FAST FACT

Military members, Voting Assistance Officers, and State election officials reported that FVAP.gov is a valuable resource.

Additional information regarding the metrics is provided in the "Military Voting Assistance Programs" section of this report. FVAP continues to work with each of the Services to ensure the portal can be leveraged as an effective management tool for all of their requirements under DoDI 1000.04.

FVAP.gov Utilization

Of all ADM who voted absentee, 52 percent used FVAP.gov. Of those ADM who said they needed information or assistance for the election, 44 percent used the website. Of the ADM who used FVAP.gov, 74 percent were satisfied when they visited the site.⁵⁵

The website is an important resource for VAOs, as well. Of the VAOs who used FVAP.gov, 94 percent found the site useful and 91 percent found the online assistant useful in fulfilling their duties.⁵⁶

Of the 96 percent of State-level election officials who visited FVAP.gov, 94 percent were satisfied with the resource, and their offices primarily recommended the site to LEOs over other FVAP resources.⁵⁷

The website metrics showing traffic to FVAP.gov and use of the online assistant provide a glimpse of absentee voter activity. Figure 15 illustrates the monthly totals of users visiting FVAP.gov.

⁵⁴ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q 26, 28 & 29

⁵⁵ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q46, 50 & 55

⁵⁶ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q29

⁵⁷ 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q2-4

Figure 15: FVAP.gov Users by Month⁵⁸

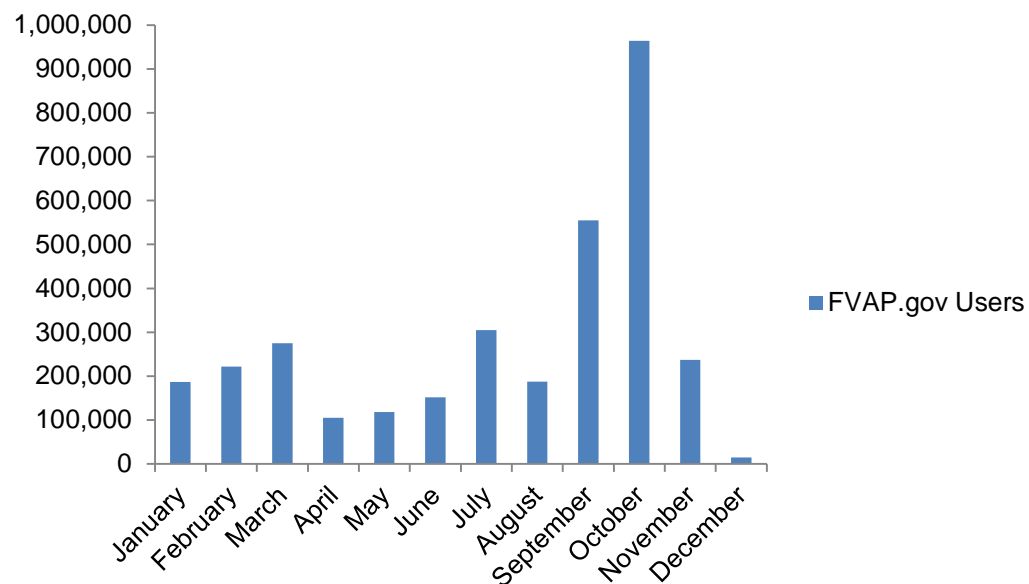
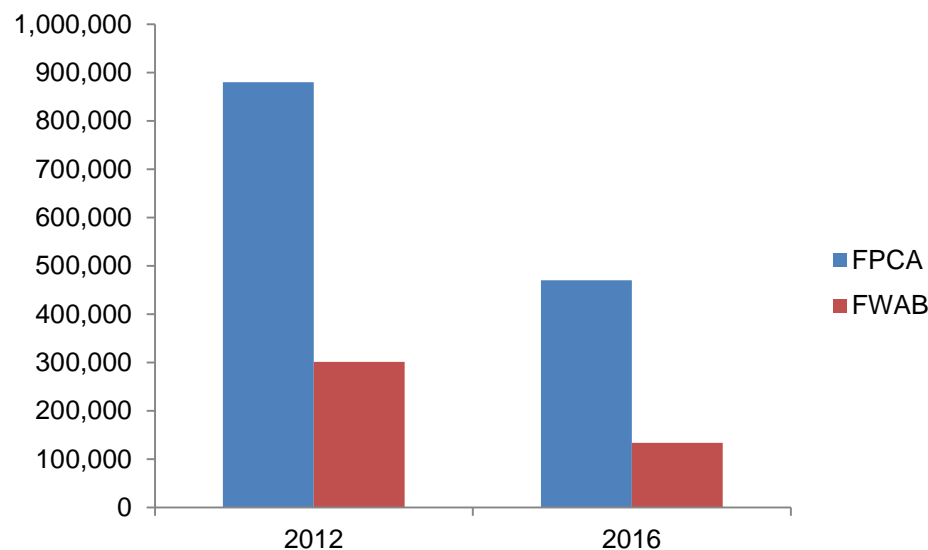


Figure 16: FPCA & FWAB Transactions from FVAP.gov



As shown in Figure 16, the frequency of FPCA downloads decreased significantly from the last presidential election. While there was an overall decline in ADM registration and participation from 2012 to 2016, the drop in FPCA downloads is disproportionate and potentially troubling.

The decrease aligns with a finding from the survey of ADM who reported more of a reliance on State and local registration forms. The 2012 survey of ADM showed that the FPCA was the primary means by which they applied for an absentee ballot. In 2014 and again in 2016, this was no longer the case and points to a potential trend. Between

FAST FACT

More ADM use State or local absentee ballot request forms. FVAP to identify whether forms maximize eligibility under UOCAVA.

⁵⁸ Figure shows total number of unique visitors to the website within the date range.

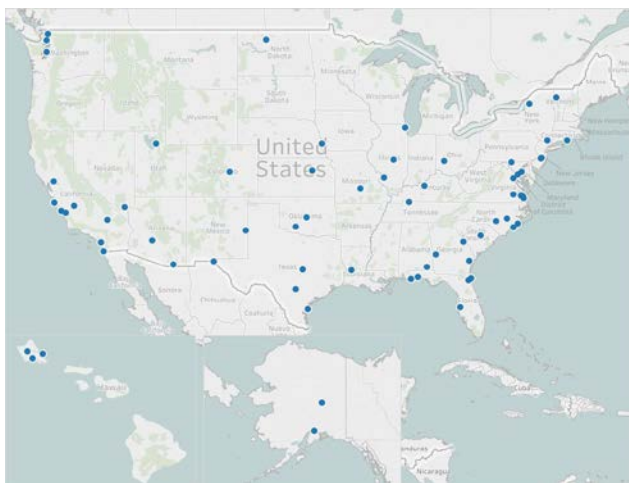
2012 and 2016, the percent of ADM who reported using an FPCA to request their absentee ballot dropped from 47 percent to 39 percent.⁵⁹

This finding coupled with the significant decrease in FPCAs downloaded from FVAP.gov is a point of concern, as the FPCA is the only standardized instrument that maximizes a voter's eligibility for voting in all federal elections under *UOCAVA*. FVAP's survey of State election officials indicate that many States only ensure *UOCAVA* protections (i.e., 45-day ballot transmission requirement and electronic blank ballot delivery) through the use of the FPCA. With more ADM voters using State or local absentee ballot request forms in lieu of the FPCA, FVAP will monitor this closely to help ensure voters covered by *UOCAVA* are afforded its full protections.

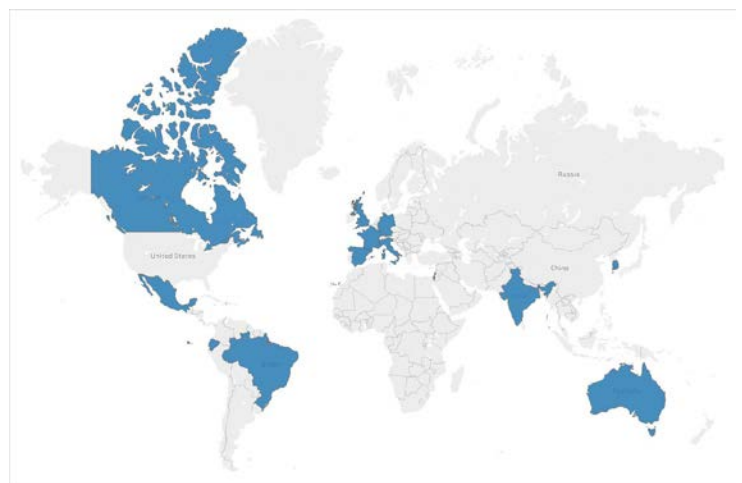
Revamped Training for Voting Assistance Officers

Ensuring that VAOs understand their responsibilities in carrying out the law and the State-specific rules and deadlines is critical to voter success.

In response to recommendations from RAND, FVAP revamped its training for VAOs by applying adult learning standards. FVAP staff members attended a training certificate program to learn how to best facilitate the workshops and deliver the improved content. FVAP then teamed with the Military Services and the State Department to visit military installations, embassies, and consulates around the world to provide that training in-person. Training sessions were conducted at more than 90 locations to more than 3,700 VAOs, and post-election data show that attending an in-person FVAP training is the largest predictor of VAO job confidence.⁶⁰ FVAP also updated its interactive online VAO training course, resulting in an improved module that provides a more in-depth background on *UOCAVA* and the VAO's role in assisting voters. In 2016, more than 13,000 VAOs completed the improved online training. Additional VAO training findings are detailed later in this report (section titled "Military Voting Assistance Programs").



Domestic Workshop Locations



International Workshop Locations

Implemented Installation Voting Assistance Officer Workshops

To help address concerns regarding the implementation of IVA Offices, FVAP designed a workshop series specifically for Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs). In 2016, FVAP hosted a series of regional workshops for IVAOs that provided critical information on the voting process and resources and tools needed for the successful performance of IVAO duties.

⁵⁹ The percentage of the ADM who reported using an FPCA to request their absentee ballot in 2012 was limited to active duty only in order to make it comparable to the 2016 survey; 2012 PEVS of ADM, Q19; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q15

⁶⁰ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q15

FVAP designed the workshops to be interactive, hands-on training sessions involving participants in discussions about program requirements for a successful IVA Office and Installation Voting Program. Given the unique nature of the services offered by IVA Offices, the workshops provided an opportunity for colleagues within and across each of the Services to collaborate and identify best practices and areas of improvement. More than 90 installation-level VAOs attended these workshops.

Provided Voting Assistance Center

FVAP continued to provide its full service Voting Assistance Center operated in-house by FVAP staff members. FVAP provided continuous business-hours phone coverage throughout the election cycle with expanded coverage leading up to Election Day. In 2016, FVAP responded to nearly 40,000 inquiries, representing nearly 800 percent greater phone call and email volume since the Center was internalized for the 2014 election. The Center achieved a customer satisfaction survey rate of 4.3 out of 5; the customer service survey response rate was 13 percent. Further, post-election survey data indicate that of the ADM who needed assistance and who sought voting information or assistance from FVAP, 10 percent used this resource.⁶¹ Of the VAOs who contacted the call center, 82 percent found the service useful.⁶²

The Voting Assistance Center proved to be a great resource to identify trends, complex issues, and areas for improvement. Election officials who contacted the Center keyed FVAP into an issue about difficulties emailing election materials to .mil addresses due to network and IT security restrictions. FVAP is taking this for action and will investigate further to refine guidance to election officials.

FVAP continued to hear concerns from overseas citizens who have children of voting age that never established a residency in the U.S. Eighteen States and territories currently do not provide voting rights for these individuals. Following the 2016 election, FVAP prepared a policy brief on this topic to educate the States on how this unique group of Americans is impacted by their residence status.⁶³

FVAP also learned that capturing and explaining the multitude of State requirements for *UOCAVA* voting privileges versus those extended under the *National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)* is an important area of distinction for SEOs and LEOs. FVAP will look to share more of these insights and explore how to incorporate active communications to ensure consistency in application by election officials and set expectations for voter eligibility.

Provided Electronic Transmission Service

FVAP provides the Electronic Transmission Service (ETS) for voters who face the real prospect of losing their right to vote (and whose State permits the fax or email return of election materials). ETS was implemented in 1990 to support military personnel deployed for Operation DESERT SHIELD because the roundtrip transit time required for mail delivery of election materials exceeded the time available to vote absentee. When permitted by State law, deployed personnel could request, receive, and return their blank absentee ballots via fax. An email-to-fax conversion capability was added in 2003 in response to personnel stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan who had limited access to fax machines.

Post-election survey data indicate that the majority of ADM members did not use the ETS. Only 1 percent of all ADM used the service. Of those ADM who voted absentee, only 2 percent used ETS either to submit their FPCA or return their ballot.⁶⁴

FVAP experienced a high volume of ETS requests in 2016, especially from overseas citizens. Given the improvements facilitated by the *MOVE Act*, FVAP is conducting an analysis of the service and the original intent of providing ETS for active duty personnel in remote areas. FVAP anticipates it will change the scope of ETS to provide the service only for those who specifically need to use it due to a lack of an available fax machine as some States only permit balloting materials returned by mail or fax. FVAP will

⁶¹ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q47, Q49, Q50

⁶² 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q28 & 29

⁶³ View at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/EO/FVAPNeverResidedPolicyBrief_20170222_FINAL.pdf

⁶⁴ PEVS of ADM, Q15, 17, 22, 23

communicate any changes with stakeholders before the next election cycle in conjunction with the launch of its 2018 voting assistance program elements.

Conducted Efforts to Improve Postal Mail

Postal mail is a critical component of the absentee voting process for UOCAVA citizens. FVAP is committed to working with the MPSA, USPS, and EAC to offer guidance, communicate trends reported from the election community, and ultimately help ensure the successful delivery of ballots to and from voters.

To learn more about postal mail challenges, FVAP worked with CSG, MPSA, USPS, and six local jurisdictions to pilot a ballot tracking system for the November 2016 General Election.

The pilot program was the first of its kind to provide full tracking of a voter's blank ballot and voted ballot throughout the domestic and military postal systems. It increased customer service for voters and provided valuable research data to help identify areas for improvement. More information on this effort is provided in the section titled "Federal and State Cooperation."

Additionally, FVAP and the EAC conducted outreach to USPS resulting in the creation of votebymail.gov – a one-stop shop of information for election officials to help ensure that ballots are received and returned on time to be counted. Interagency collaboration also led to the development and sharing of UOCAVA address maintenance guidance for election officials, demonstrating FVAP's continued commitment to provide excellent customer service to voters and those who support them.

Worked with Election Officials

Effective relationships between FVAP and election officials are essential to FVAP's ability to accurately inform and serve absent military and overseas citizen voters. The products and services targeted to election officials include the FVAP.gov website, Voting Assistance Call Center, FVAP's State Affairs Specialists, military address look-up service, and in-person and interactive online training.

As part of its ongoing effort to raise awareness of election official requirements under UOCAVA and the particular challenges military and overseas voters face in the absentee voting process, FVAP participated at State, local, and national conferences hosted by election officials across the country. Discussions with this critical stakeholder group focused on preparations for the 2016 election and prompted discussions that cover current procedures and trends for assisting UOCAVA voters. As part of a comprehensive customer service approach, FVAP stressed the benefits of communication between election officials and the voter, including updates and confirmations on voters' progress during the absentee voting process.

LOOKING AHEAD

FVAP will increase outreach to election officials to improve awareness of resources.

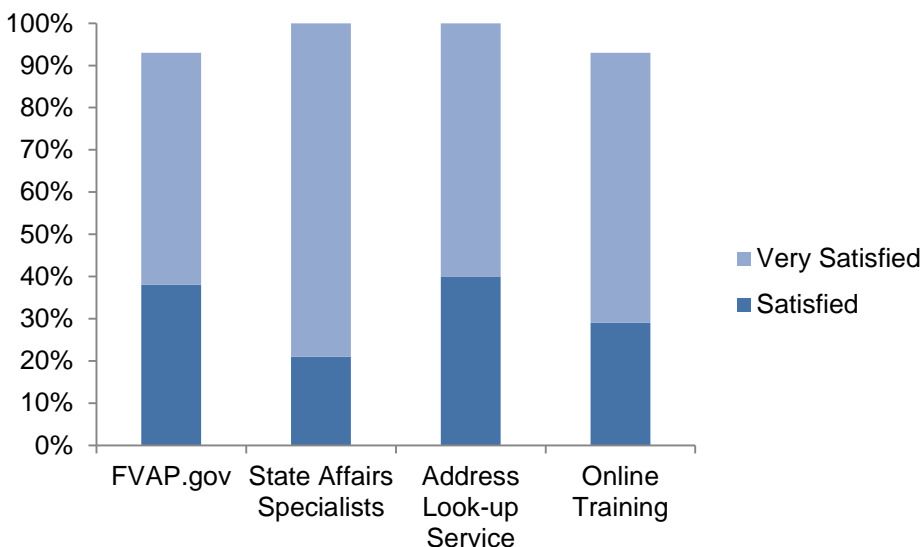
From its 2014 post-election qualitative survey of LEOs, FVAP confirmed that LEOs rely heavily on their State election officials and State election conferences for assistance with UOCAVA-related questions and to learn about FVAP products and services. For that reason, FVAP worked to expand its outreach and communication with State election officials for the 2016 cycle through FVAP's State Affairs Specialists. To gauge the reach and efficacy of the services and support offered to election officials, FVAP conducted a survey of SEOs following the 2016 election.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Previously, FVAP conducted this qualitative survey for local election officials. For the 2016 election, FVAP determined a survey of SEOs would provide greater insight; SEOs are one FVAP's primary customer groups as each State office is an active user of the FVAP.gov portal and assists with content coordination for the *Guide*, a compendium of absentee voting rules and deadlines for each State and territory. FVAP's level of engagement and direct interactions with them as customers pointed to the ongoing need to engage SEOs as part of a customer satisfaction survey and improve FVAP products and services.

Of the SEOs who reported using FVAP products or services, the vast majority indicated they were satisfied with the resources. Satisfaction ratings of FVAP products and services ranged between 93 percent and 100 percent and are noted below and in Figure 17.⁶⁶

- FVAP.gov: 94 percent satisfied
- State Affairs Specialists: 100 percent satisfied
- Address Look-up Service: 100 percent useful
- Online Training: 93 percent useful

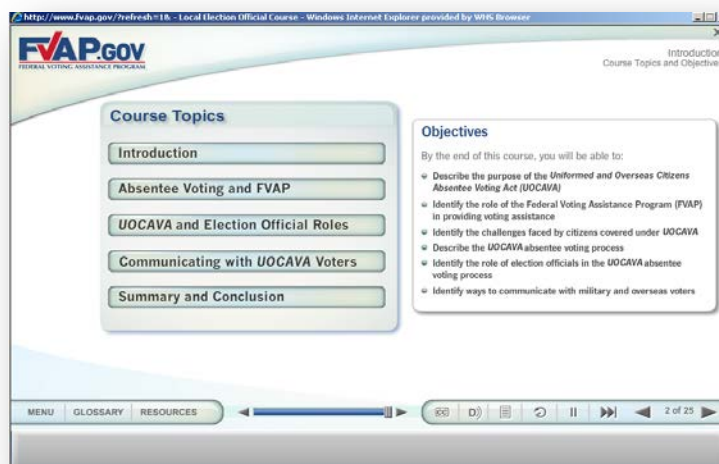
Figure 17: SEO Satisfaction with FVAP Resources



The FVAP online training course for election officials is beneficial for both new and seasoned officials. It introduces State requirements under UOCAVA, explains how to process the FPCA and FWAB forms, and provides a sense of the challenges faced by military and overseas citizen voters, and how election officials can help them through the process. Of the SEOs who used the online training, 93 percent were satisfied with the resource.⁶⁷

While the vast majority of SEOs were aware of FVAP's website, Voting Assistance Center, and State Affairs Specialists, 27 percent reported they were not aware FVAP offered online training and 37 percent were unaware of the address look-up service. Further,

only 24 percent of SEOs referred their LEOs to the online training.⁶⁸ FVAP plans to address this through more aggressive promotion of its products and services for election officials.



⁶⁶ 'Satisfied' percentages include both 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied' responses; 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q2&3

⁶⁷ 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q2&3

⁶⁸ 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q1 & 4

Expand *UOCAVA* Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives

FVAP embraced best practices to enhance its marketing and outreach strategies for the 2016 election cycle. FVAP's multipronged campaign leveraged research and demographic data to saturate audiences through myriad platforms using consistent messaging and branding elements. Post-election survey data indicate that 2016 efforts were more effective than previous campaigns and that awareness of resources has increased, but also show that further improvement is needed.

Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns

FVAP's 2014 post-election research identified a need to increase awareness of resources. As recommended in the 2014 report, FVAP looked to make several improvements to its outreach methods to help address the issue. FVAP's marketing and outreach goals were to help *UOCAVA* voters successfully navigate the absentee voting process and ensure that every interaction a prospective voter has with FVAP, directly or indirectly, delivers a consistent experience – whether that interaction is exposure to communication, engagement on social media, use of the website, participation in a training, or interaction with FVAP staff.

To reach its goals, FVAP made substantial shifts in its *UOCAVA* marketing and outreach strategies and tactics. In general, these included:

- Shifting from a general awareness-raising strategy to a behavior-based strategy focused on overcoming voting challenges;
- Developing targeted voting assistance messaging;
- Encouraging *UOCAVA* voters to complete steps in the absentee voting process earlier in the election cycle;
- Expanding the proportion of ADM, spouses of ADM, overseas citizens, Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), and election officials that were reached;
- Expanding the modes of contact for each population; and
- Leveraging big data and research to improve marketing methodologies, such as shifting to more digital advertising and focusing on the most successful types of media.

Across all marketing and outreach strategies, FVAP identified subgroups, such as young, potential first-time voters (ADM age 18-24) versus experienced ADM (age 25+), and influential populations, such as commanders and other military leaders. By identifying these populations, FVAP was able to design and target voting assistance materials to specific audiences. Targeted messages sought to reach *UOCAVA* voters, address their unique barriers to voting, and leverage their motivations at each step of the voting process (i.e., learning how to vote absentee, registering to vote, obtaining a ballot, returning a ballot, and ensuring the ballot was received). Additionally, FVAP timed the multiple marketing and outreach activities to encourage *UOCAVA* voters to complete each step of the process earlier to reduce the number of unsuccessful votes due to missed deadlines.

FVAP's 2016 campaign included five major components: (1) owned media (e.g., FVAP.gov and social media accounts), (2) paid media, (3) earned media, (4) shared media and organizational engagement, and (5) direct marketing.



Tailor guidance at each step of the voting process and spur earlier action



Encourage voters to act earlier with advance warning and recommended deadlines



Use research and data to increase reach, address barriers and leverage motivators



Develop and implement a strategic communication plan following IMC



Expand breadth and depth of marketing communications tactics

Campaign Component – Owned Media

Owned media improvements focused on increasing web traffic to FVAP.gov and FVAP social media accounts, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. Messages encouraged voters to “Go to FVAP.gov and select your State” and to use the online assistant or downloadable forms to complete the FPCA and FWAB.

FVAP.gov: The 2016 campaign achieved its goals of increasing traffic and driving action on FVAP.gov.

During the campaign run dates of January 4 – November 9, web analytics show:

3,893,465 TOTAL SESSIONS

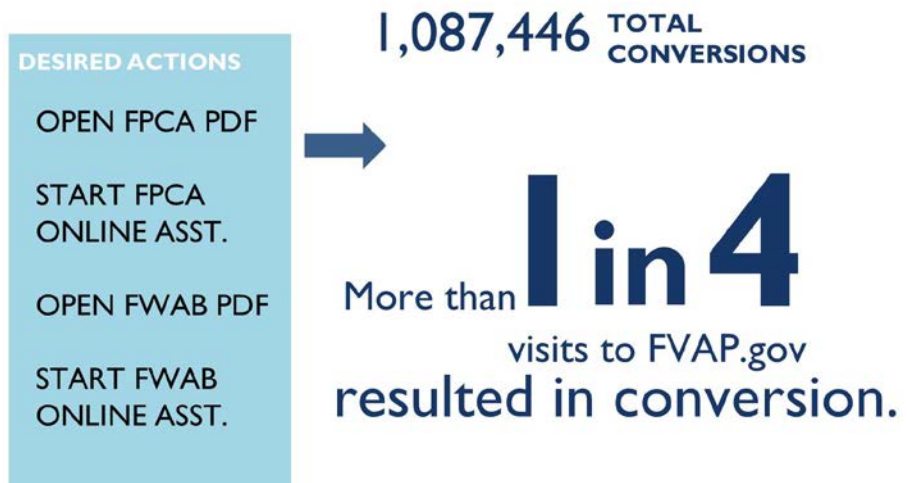
2,779,751 TOTAL USERS

Throughout the campaign, FVAP tracked a number of desired actions. A person who took a desired action represented a “conversion” (i.e., opened PDF of form and/or used FVAP.gov online assistant). These conversions represented a first step to offline target behaviors — registering and requesting a ballot, and returning the ballot.

The results were an overall conversion rate of 28 percent, which falls in the top 10 percent of conversion rate benchmarks for high-traffic sites.

Organic Social Media:

In addition to the paid media presence below, FVAP implemented a strategic social media plan on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. The content and timing of posts were designed to ensure these platforms were fully integrated into the campaign and being used to maximize FVAP’s engagement with prospective voters and influential organizations.



The organic social media campaign was successful in meeting specific communication goals by amplifying sponsored messages, further engaging with captured audiences, providing custom help to narrowly-defined subgroups, and building relationships with partners and influencers — all of which ultimately served UOCAVA voters.

Virtual “I Voted” Sticker: To provide UOCAVA citizens a more traditional voting experience, FVAP created a digital “I Voted” sticker, which could be customized by country and shared on social platforms, and conducted a mini campaign resulting in:

- 35.4K webtool visits
- 7,000+ shares on Facebook
- 500+ shares on Twitter

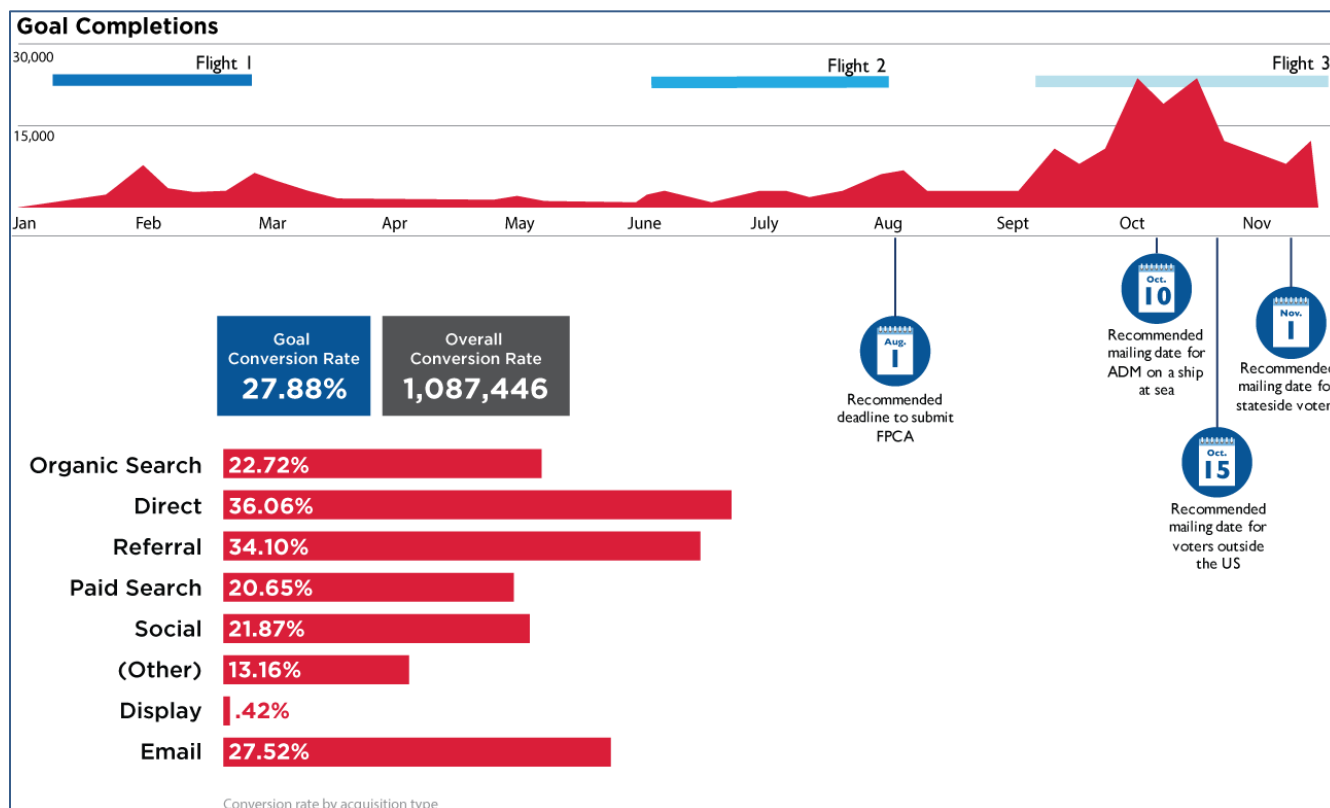
Campaign Component – Paid Media

The 2016 media buy largely focused on digital platforms (e.g., social media, search engine marketing, online radio,



sponsored content, digital, and mobile ads) supplemented with targeted placements in traditional print outlets. Shifts from previous election campaigns included greater investment in social media and search engine marketing and reduced use of online display and print advertising.

As depicted in the graphic below, the digital-heavy approach and use of different platforms to reach narrowly defined audiences successfully increased exposure to and accessibility of FVAP resources, as well as driving action.



- **Conversion:** A person took a desired action.
- **Flight:** Time period when advertising was running.
- **Organic Search:** Traffic from keyword queries that are typed into search engines such as Google, Yahoo! or Bing.
- **Paid Search:** Traffic from Google AdWords or other search engine marketing.
- **Direct:** Traffic without a traceable referral source, such as typing the URL into the address bar, using a bookmark on the browser, desktop applications and other untagged sources (more aptly referred to as Direct/Unknown).
- **Referral:** Traffic from a link click on another verified website.
- **Social:** Traffic from a social network, which is mostly organic if tagged links are used in social media ads.
- **Other:** Traffic from tagged links used for custom campaign tracking.
- **Display:** Traffic from digital display ads without tagged links.
- **Email:** Traffic from emails without tagged links.

Campaign Component – Earned Media

In 2016, FVAP increased earned media's role in the campaign by expanding proactive media relations, distribution strategies, the types of content offered, and social media support. The new strategies outperformed past reliance on wire releases in terms of generating original coverage and reaching target audiences. Successful placements helped position FVAP as an expert source on UOCAVA voting and shared FVAP's resources with UOCAVA voters, as well as influencers.



Campaign Component – Shared Media and Organizational Outreach

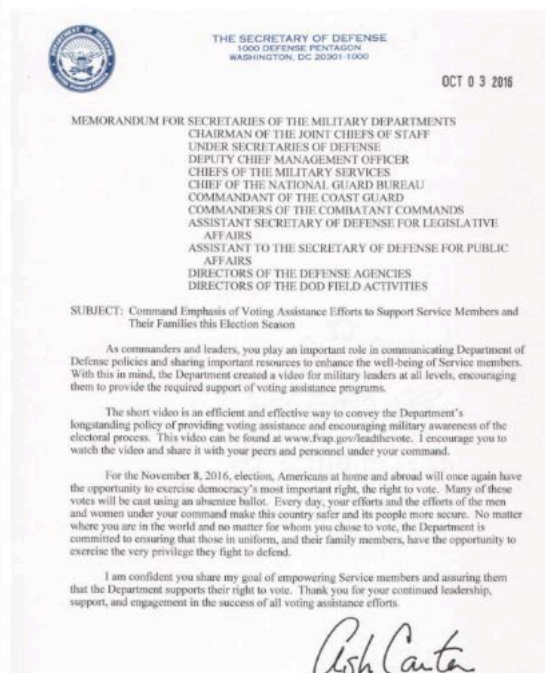
Shared media focused on expanding FVAP outreach to larger, more diverse, and more influential secondary audiences, meaning other organizations and individuals that interact with UOCAVA voters. A wide range of organizations and information sources touch various segments of UOCAVA voters, including the Military Services, voting advocacy groups, affinity groups, embassies and consulates, Federal and private-sector employers, State and local election offices, and online channels focused on military or overseas citizens.



Collateral materials: The campaign included development and distribution of thousands of hanging banners, brochures, and posters to Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) at all domestic and overseas military bases and installations, as well as all embassies and consulates. These materials emphasized simple facts about the UOCAVA voting process and clear calls to action. FVAP's 2016 post-election data show that military VAOs found FVAP's print and digital materials useful and shared them with military members.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ PEVS of VAOs, Q46-48

Videos: In addition to short social sharing videos tailored for military members, military families, and overseas citizens, FVAP developed a video aimed at military leaders to stress the importance of supporting voting assistance programs. The Secretary of Defense sent a memo to military leaders encouraging them to watch the video and share it with their peers and personnel throughout their commands.



Digital toolkits: FVAP adapted campaign materials and packaged them into the following digital toolkits for organizations supporting UOCAVA citizens:

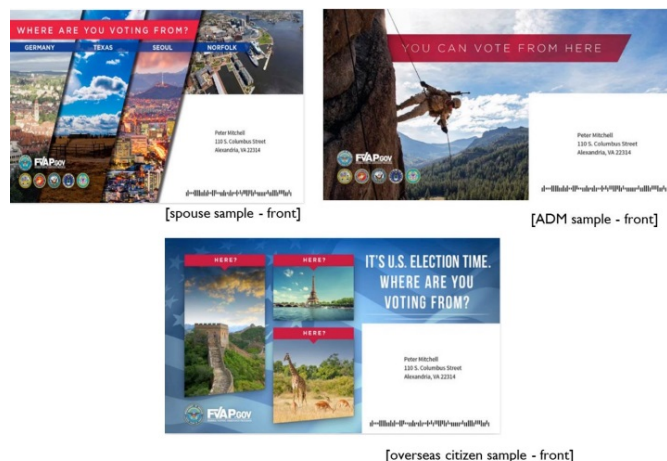
- **Embassies and Consulates:** Content targeting overseas citizens was disseminated to State Department VAOs working with UOCAVA voter populations.
- **Military Services:** Two toolkits, one addressing military members and the other for military spouses/families, were developed and distributed.
- **Nonprofits:** In addition to developing a toolkit for human resource professionals working with overseas citizens, FVAP developed relationships and activities with the Society for Human Resource Management and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that allowed the campaign to indirectly reach global professionals and HR managers who support Americans overseas or are UOCAVA voters themselves.
- **Election Offices:** A toolkit included website content and visuals, social media posts, and email copy that election offices could use to communicate with all UOCAVA voters (military members, their families, and overseas citizens) during each step of the UOCAVA voting process (i.e., register to vote and request a ballot, submit the ballot, check to see that it was received).

Campaign Component – Direct Marketing

Direct Mail: A notable addition to the 2016 plan was FVAP's first direct mail campaign. FVAP sent two mailers to each military member and distributed almost another 1 million pieces to military spouses and overseas citizens combined.

The mailers included basic awareness messages, step-by-step process instructions for UOCAVA voters, recommended deadlines to spur action, and contact information.

The campaign was effective and sparked voter action to FVAP's website and call center.



Email: Section 20305 of title 52, U.S.C., requires that FVAP send notifications to military members 90, 60 and 30 days prior to each federal election. FVAP distributed monthly email notifications to all ADM members from December 2015 to October 2016. FVAP sent more than 13 million emails with simple, concise messages that provided the date of the election and upcoming deadlines.

FVAP also sent voter alerts, news releases, and other absentee voting information to subscribers of its email lists, such as election officials and VAOs. Post-election data show that 91 percent of military VAOs used FVAP's alerts, and of those VAOs who used the alerts, 89 percent found them useful in performing their duties.⁷⁰

Active Duty Military Awareness

In 2016, FVAP made large strides to increase ADM awareness of resources. ADM were exposed to targeted FVAP advertisements on social media and music streaming sites like Pandora and Spotify. They were also exposed to digital, social, and print advertisements displayed in sources frequently read by military members like the Military Times, Stars and Stripes, and RallyPoint. They were also mailed postcards in June and September about the absentee voting process in addition to monthly email notifications.

The 2016 survey data show that 58 percent of ADM, and 67 percent of those who voted absentee, reported they heard, saw, or received messages from FVAP.⁷¹ FVAP redesigned its survey measures in 2016 to systematically track marketing effectiveness moving forward and it is not known whether this is an improvement from the 2012

FAST FACT
2016 outreach initiatives
more effective than
previous campaigns.

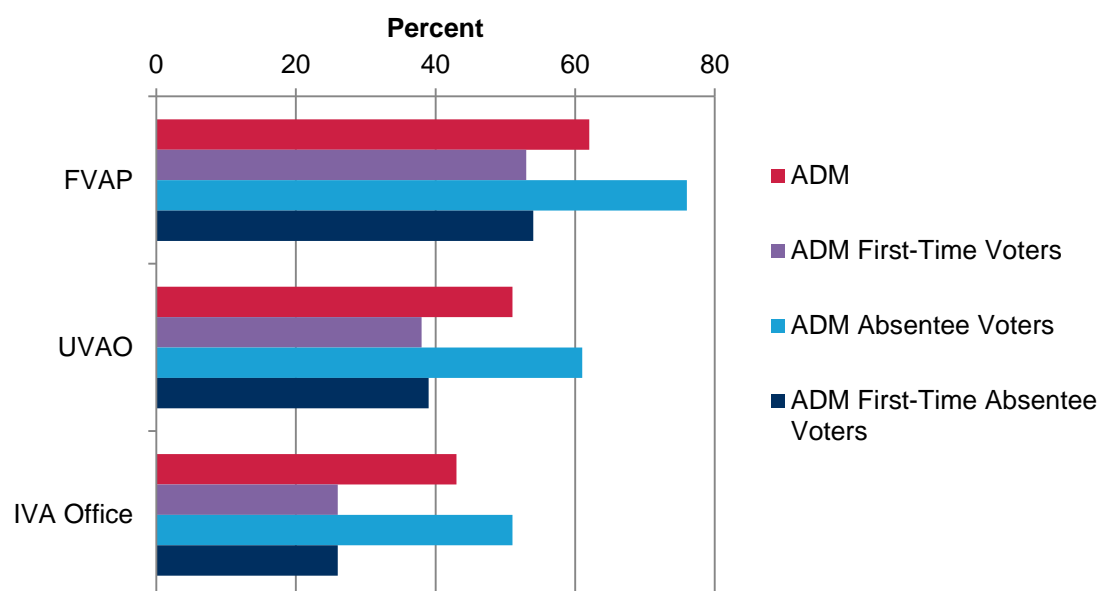
⁷⁰ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q28&29

⁷¹ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q60

election. However, the post-election data does reflect a significant improvement from the 2014 election when 36 percent of all ADM reported receiving FVAP email reminders about upcoming elections and 17 percent reported receiving materials from FVAP.⁷²

Figure 18 shows 2016 ADM awareness of DoD voting assistance resources: FVAP, UVAOs, and Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices. The figure also highlights the awareness levels for ADM who reported voting absentee and includes rates for first-time voters.

Figure 18: ADM Awareness of DoD Voting Assistance Resources⁷³



As depicted in Figure 19, members of the Air Force had the highest levels of awareness for all DoD resources, with 68 percent aware of FVAP, 62 percent aware of UVAOs, and 54 percent aware of IVA Offices. Navy and Coast Guard members tended to have the lowest levels of awareness across these three resources. For example, only 38 percent of Navy members said they were aware of UVAOs.

Figure 19: ADM Awareness of DoD Voting Assistance Resources by Service

	FVAP	UVAO	IVA Office
Army	63%	51%	46%
Marine Corps	62%	55%	35%
Navy	57%	38%	34%
Air Force	68%	62%	54%
Coast Guard	59%	40%	31%

Prior to 2016, some conservative comparisons about awareness of DoD resources can be made. Across multiple measures, the data show there have been general increases in the awareness of FVAP among multiple segments of the ADM population.

⁷² 2014 PEVS of ADM, Q55

⁷³ ADM first-time voters include the ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee in an election; ADM first-time absentee voters include the ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote absentee in an election and voted absentee; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q32, 35, 36

ADM awareness of FVAP increased from 2014 to 2016:⁷⁴

- Of ADM who reported needing voting assistance, the percent that were aware of FVAP rose from 37 percent in 2014 to 60 percent in 2016.
- Of ADM absentee voters who reported needing assistance, the percentage of those aware of FVAP rose from 73 percent in 2014 to 82 percent in 2016.

Though awareness of FVAP was not asked about in 2012,⁷⁵ there is some tenuous evidence to show awareness has increased across Presidential years: In 2012, 50 percent of ADM who voted absentee reported being aware of FVAP's email support and 49 percent reported being aware of telephone support.

FAST FACT

The majority of military members who use a DoD resource are successful in receiving the assistance they need.

Of the ADM who reported seeking voting information or assistance from a DoD resource, the vast majority reported they were successful in receiving the assistance they needed:⁷⁶

- FVAP: 87 percent were successful
- UVAO: 84 percent were successful
- IVA Office: 83 percent were successful

Successfully receiving voting assistance from FVAP, UVAOs, or an IVA Office was positively associated with higher levels of knowledge of registering to vote, requesting and submitting an absentee ballot, and knowing key absentee ballot dates, but not significantly related to understanding the FWAB. Further, receiving FVAP marketing materials had an across-the-board positive and significant relationship on voting knowledge, especially as related to FPCA and FWAB knowledge. This suggests it would be beneficial for FVAP to continue focusing voter materials on completing steps in the absentee ballot process.

FVAP is leveraging these findings to develop a direct-to-voter training video to augment the existing modules at FVAP.gov and improve voting knowledge among ADM. FVAP's goal is to create a ubiquitous video that shows ADM members how to register and request an absentee ballot and when and how to use the backup ballot. While the training is intended for all military members, FVAP is developing the content and user experience with first-time voters in mind. FVAP will work with the Services to ensure extensive promotion and implementation of the training. Further, FVAP will work to promote the training to Americans residing abroad so that all UOCAVA voters can benefit from the new resource.

LOOKING AHEAD

FVAP will develop direct-to-voter training and increase targeting of younger, potential first-time voters to increase awareness of voting assistance resources.

VAO Awareness of Outreach Materials

FVAP asked VAOs whether they heard or saw any FVAP advertising or outreach materials such as radio, print, or online ads: 66 percent of all VAOs, 65 percent of UVAOs, and 77 percent of IVAOs and IVA Office staff were aware of these materials. When compared to 2014 data for UVAOs, 16 percentage points more UVAOs said they were aware of FVAP materials in 2016.

⁷⁴ Presidential election years generate more interest and attention than midterm election years; it is not known whether this heightened interest contributed to the observed increases in awareness of FVAP.

⁷⁵ FVAP periodically updates PEV survey instruments based on previous data to better answer voting assistance questions about ADM, VAOs, SEOs, and LEOs. FVAP attempts to preserve questions for trending purposes, but balancing methodological improvements to surveys and limiting respondent burden requires eliminating so previous questions.

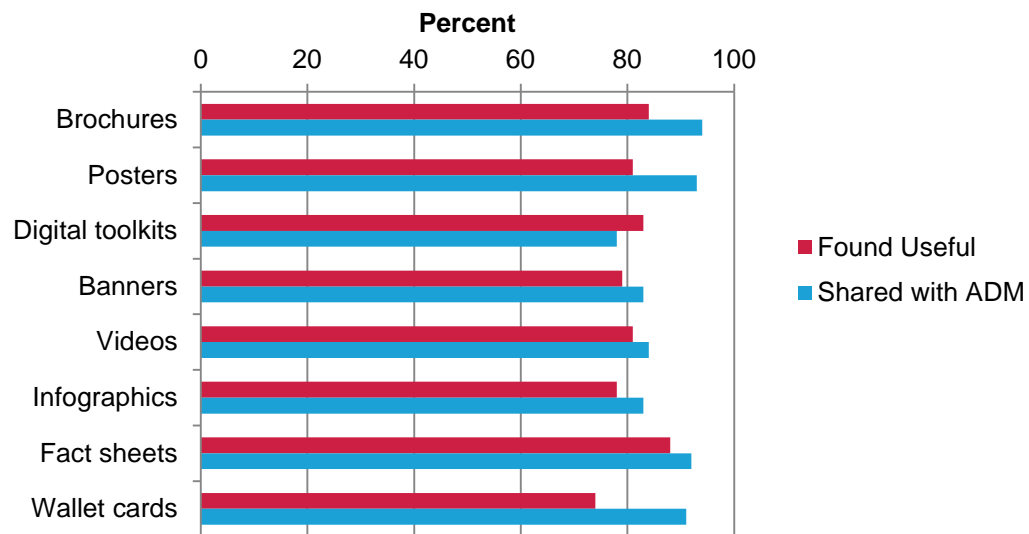
⁷⁶ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q53&49

Figure 20: UVAO Percent FVAP Outreach Materials Awareness

	2014	2016	Difference
UVAO Awareness	49%	65%	+16

By and large most VAOs who obtained FVAP's marketing materials had a positive view of them and shared them with others. Figure 21 presents the percentage of VAOs who deemed outreach materials useful and shared them with ADM.⁷⁷

Figure 21: FVAP Outreach Materials for VAOs

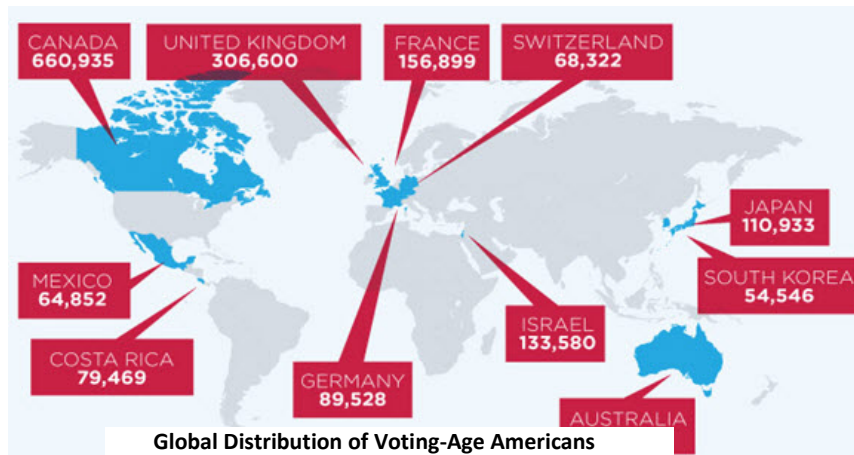


⁷⁷ PEVS of VAOs, Q46-48

Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a need to continue to improve the Department's ability to evaluate program effectiveness. FVAP has made important progress in enhancing its research instruments for post-election analyses and ability to study overseas citizen voters.

Historically, FVAP has been unable to report on overseas citizens' voting behavior due to challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population. In order to increase its knowledge of and ability to support overseas citizens, FVAP conducted groundbreaking research to develop a detailed analysis of American voters residing abroad and estimate the total population of eligible voters.



The multipart OCPA study determined the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population as well as estimate voting rates. The resulting report estimates the population of eligible voters and includes results of the first-ever representative survey of registered overseas voters who requested an absentee ballot for the 2014 General Election.⁷⁸ FVAP is currently surveying overseas citizens about the 2016 election and will release a supplemental research note summarizing the findings later this year.

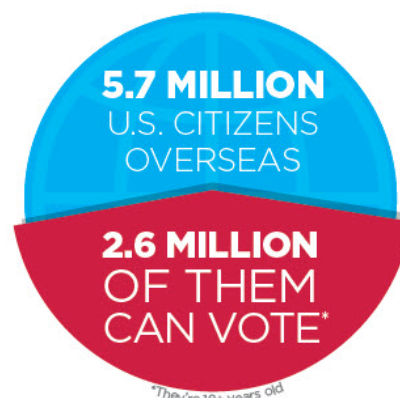
FVAP used data from foreign countries, U.S. Government administrative sources, and academic studies to estimate the number of Americans eligible to vote in countries around the world. Countries with the largest numbers of eligible U.S. voters (age 18 and older) are Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, Japan, and Australia.

OCPA Estimates:

- 5.7 million U.S. citizens overseas
- 2.6 million eligible to vote
- 4 percent of eligible overseas voters participated in the 2014 election
- 57 percent of registered overseas voters who requested a ballot in 2014 voted

All Eligible Overseas Voters

FVAP estimates there are 2.6 million U.S. citizens who live abroad and are eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Based on this research, the voting rate for all eligible overseas voters in 2014



⁷⁸ Federal Voting Assistance Program. (2016). Overseas Citizen Population Analysis Volume 1: Participation and Voting Rates Estimation Prototype. Retrieved from https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/FVAP-OCPA_201609_final.pdf.

was 4 percent. A 4 percent overall turnout rate is low compared to the voting rates estimated for other populations, including the ADM population whose participation rate was 24 percent in 2014.⁷⁹ While FVAP expects to see an increase in the overall voting rates for the 2016 Presidential Election, it needs to understand whether the overall rate for 2014 is due to low awareness of how to vote or if it is related to other factors such as interest in voting, obstacles in the process, or lack of engagement.

LOOKING AHEAD

FVAP will survey known overseas citizens on their 2016 voting experiences and will release findings in a subsequent research note.

Comparing OCPA Estimates

It is important to note that FVAP's estimates differ from estimates released by the State Department. In conducting the OCPA study, FVAP engaged with the State Department to understand its methodology and estimates. The State Department's data are based on the sum total of individual country estimates of potential evacuees. These include citizens on short-term travel as well as long-term relocation, and there is no process to remove duplicates if individuals register at more than one embassy or to remove people from the list who have returned to the U.S.

FVAP's methodology and approach is a prototype in its capacity to serve as a viable denominator for calculating overall registration and participation rates for overseas citizens. FVAP will continue to refine this prototype and the statistical modeling as more data points can be incorporated and will continue to work with other agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau to see exactly how these data can be improved over time.

FVAP will continue to refine its estimation prototype and leverage new methodologies to better understand registration, voting rates, and voting-related motivations and challenges among Americans abroad.

As part of its pursuit of enhanced metrics for effectiveness, FVAP remains committed to applying its research efforts and findings to highlight new initiatives and focus areas. During 2016, FVAP applied OCPA survey findings to improve its understanding of the Americans living and voting overseas and published the following research notes:

International Mailing Systems and Voting by Overseas Citizens

The reliability of international mail systems remains a challenge for many U.S. citizens attempting to vote from overseas. Overseas citizens in countries with the most reliable postal systems are 65 percent more likely to have a vote recorded compared to those in countries with the lowest observed levels of postal reliability.⁸⁰

FVAP Resource Use and Experience among Overseas Citizens in the 2014 Election

Citizens living outside the U.S. are more likely to return absentee ballots when they use an FVAP assistance resource. During the 2014 election, inexperienced voters particularly benefitted from the use of FVAP resources; their likelihood to return ballots increased by nearly 50 percent.⁸¹

Overseas Social Connectivity and Voting in the 2014 General Election

While domestic voting research indicates that having more social connections (friends and family) is associated with a greater likelihood of voting in-person on Election Day, for overseas citizens it is the quality – not quantity – of social connections that increases voting success. Social connections with other

⁷⁹ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 34

⁸⁰ FVAP, International Mailing Systems and Voting by Overseas Citizens, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/ResearchNoteInternationalMail_20161128_final.pdf

⁸¹ FVAP, FVAP Resource Use and Experience Among Overseas Citizens in the 2014 Election, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/ResourceUseResearchNote_20161031.pdf

Americans in their country of residence facilitate voting through the transfer of information about the absentee voting process.⁸²

Beyond research of overseas citizens, FVAP worked with CSG to formalize a standardized dataset that would provide greater awareness on individual contributors to *UOCAVA* voter success. This initiative is broadly defined as the EAVS data standardization effort previously described in this report. By standardizing a transactional record of *UOCAVA* voter interactions with election officials, FVAP will be able to better understand how to encourage *UOCAVA* voters to take action earlier and educate election officials on how best to engage this unique voter population. Furthermore, the potential for assessing the effectiveness of *UOCAVA* policies (i.e., electronic transmission of blank balloting materials and mandatory 45-day transmission requirements) since the passage of the *MOVE Act* is notable. The completed research and findings will be released by CSG and FVAP in late 2017.

In 2017, FVAP will also continue to examine how best to quantify compliance for the Department's implementation of its broader voting assistance programs (i.e., Military Service programs). FVAP initiated this effort in response to recommendations from the DoD Inspector General to isolate and apply Voting Assistance Officer metrics into a larger story and assessment.

⁸² FVAP, Overseas Social Connectivity and Voting in the 2014 General Election, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/SocialConnectivityResearchNote_20161025.pdf

Military and Department of State Voting Assistance Programs

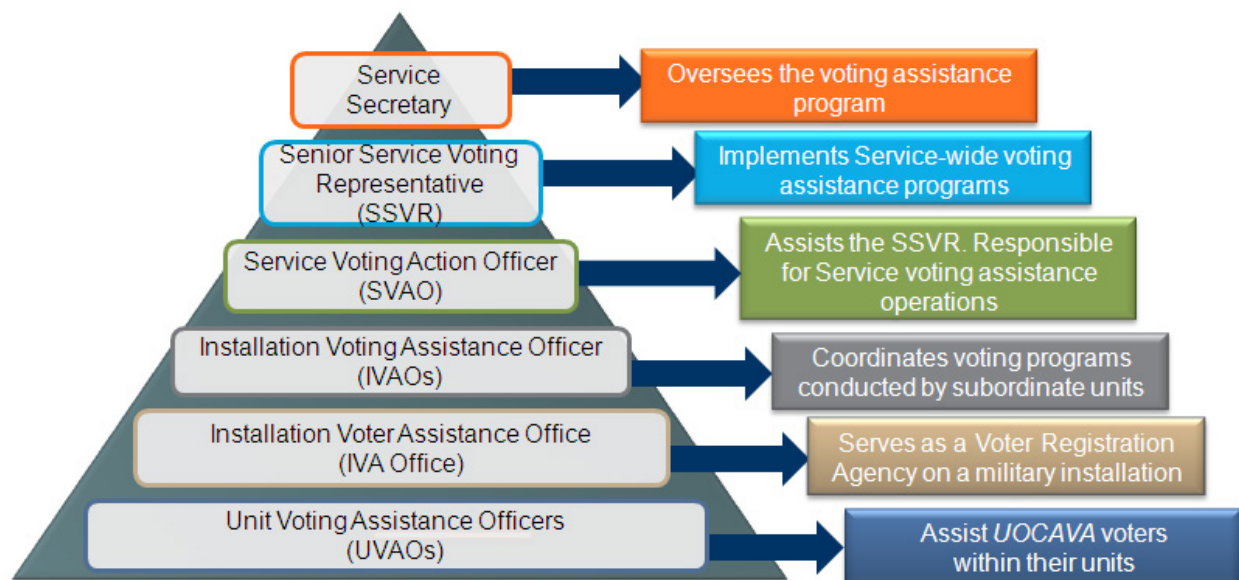
FVAP works closely with the Military Services and State Department to carry out the federal requirements under *UOCAVA*. DoDI 1000.04 provides DoD policy, requirements, and procedures for the Services in establishing and maintaining voting assistance programs.

Military Voting Assistance Programs

Each Military Service has a Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) to act as the voting program manager. Working directly with FVAP, SVAOs provide IVAOs, IVA Offices, and UVAOs with Service-specific support to develop programs and policies for their respective programs. The Services are responsible for execution and compliance and are required to submit annual reports outlining the effectiveness of their programs.

Figure 22 depicts a breakdown of the key members in each Service voting assistance program.

Figure 22: Service Voting Assistance Program Key Members



Voting Assistance Officers

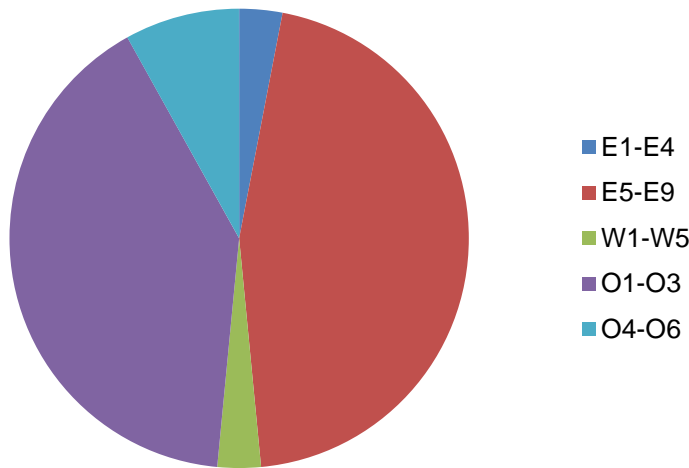
VAOs are designated individuals who provide nonpartisan voting information and assistance to military voters, their spouses, and eligible dependents on installations or in units. DoDI 1000.04 prescribes that a UVAO at the O-2/E-7 level or above be designated within each unit of 25 or more permanently assigned members. However, those of a lower grade who are enthusiastic volunteers and desire the job may be designated as the UVAO if they have enough authority to carry out the responsibilities. Survey data show that in 2016, 69 percent of VAOs were assigned to their position while 31 percent volunteered.⁸³

Forty-nine percent of VAOs are enlisted members and 49 percent are officers.⁸⁴ Figure 23 illustrates a breakdown of VAOs by paygrade.

⁸³ PEVS of VAOs, Q5

⁸⁴ PEVS of VAOs, Q49; remaining 2 percent is unknown and represent those who did not answer the survey question.

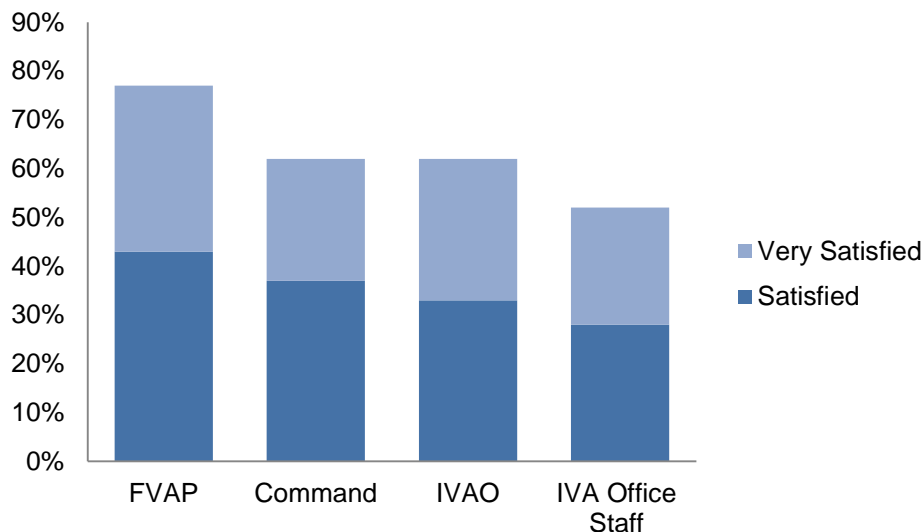
Figure 23: 2016 Paygrades of VAOs



UVAO duties are collateral to the assigned member's full-time duties. It is important that resources are readily available for VAOs so they can quickly and efficiently provide voting assistance. To support Unit and Installation VAOs in providing the best possible assistance, FVAP offers in-person workshops and online training, a VAO-dedicated section at FVAP.gov, and voting assistance materials such as posters, banners, forms, outreach materials, and the *Guide*. Post-election data show that VAOs found FVAP's materials useful and shared them with military members.⁸⁵

As shown in Figure 24, UVAOs were largely satisfied with the level of support received from FVAP, their command, IVAO, and IVA Office staff.⁸⁶

Figure 24: UVAO Satisfaction with Support



In 2016, ADM members most frequently reported seeking assistance from a UVAO for help in understanding the absentee voting process and finding information on deadlines.⁸⁷ Of ADM who sought

⁸⁵ PEVS of VAOs, Q46-48

⁸⁶ PEVS of VAOs, Q23

information or assistance from a UVAO, 83 percent were successful in receiving what they needed.⁸⁸ Of those ADM who needed assistance, 39 percent stated they were aware of UVAOs, and 61 percent of those who voted absentee were aware.⁸⁹ This indicates that those who are unsure of how to vote are less likely to be aware of UVAOs and reflects a need for increased promotion of the availability of UVAOs.

Installation Voter Assistance Offices

Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense, section 1566a of title 10, U.S.C., directs the Secretaries of the Military Departments to designate offices on military installations as IVA Offices. The *MOVE Act* amendments to *UOCAVA* require these offices to provide information and direct assistance on voter registration and absentee ballot procedures to Uniformed Services members and their family members when a Service member:

- Undergoes a permanent change of duty station (i.e., in-processes at new duty station);
- Deploys overseas for at least six months or returns from such a deployment; or,
- Requests such assistance.

Under that same statute, the Secretary of Defense authorized the Secretaries of the Military Departments to designate IVA Offices as voter registration agencies under the *National Voter Registration Act*. DoDI 1000.04 enhances Department policy by outlining specific IVA Office requirements in greater detail.

IVA Offices may leverage UVAOs to meet staffing requirements or directly assist with meeting processing milestones. However, it is the responsibility of the individual in charge of the IVA Office to require that UVAOs be in full compliance with the voter assistance responsibilities, if delegated.

Since the 2012 election when the Department initially experienced difficulty in providing updated IVA Office contact information, FVAP has continued to monitor the accuracy of contact information for IVA Offices and conducts regular outreach to all offices both directly and via SVAOs. Additionally, FVAP visits IVA Offices in conjunction with FVAP training workshops. FVAP began its non-election year visits to IVA Offices in January 2017 to provide guidance, best practices, and identify areas for improvement.

FAST FACT
DoD Inspector General confirms Services' Voting Assistance Programs are compliant

The most recent DoD Inspector General report, "Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2016," released in March 2017, concurred with the Services' Inspectors General determination that their respective Services' Voting Assistance Programs were compliant with federal statutes and DoD policies, and were effective for 2016.⁹⁰ FVAP is continuing its work with the Services' Inspectors General and Senior Service Voting Representatives to establish a standard DoD definition of Voting Assistance Programs and the associated metrics for compliance.

Figure 25 shows that 24 percent of IVAOs and IVA Office staff reported that 25-99 people visited the office specifically for voting assistance, while 26 percent reported that 100 or more people visited the office (excluding those individuals who visited for routine processing activities).⁹¹

⁸⁷ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q49&52

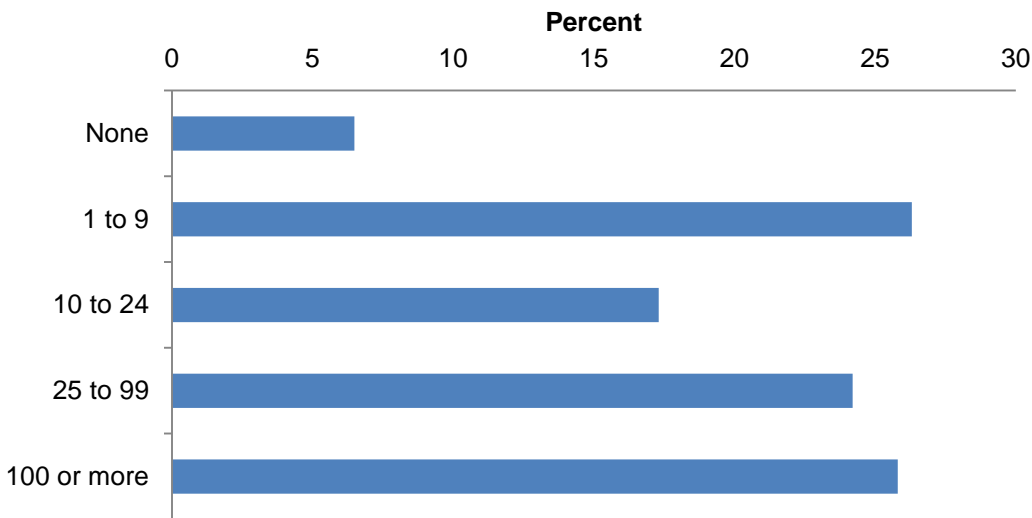
⁸⁸ These data reflect those ADM who sought assistance from UVAOs and does not account for the instances in which UVAOs proactively provided assistance (as required by Department policy).; 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q49 & 53

⁸⁹ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Question 48

⁹⁰ DoD IG, Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2016, <http://www.dodig.mil/pubs/documents/DODIG-2017-071.pdf>

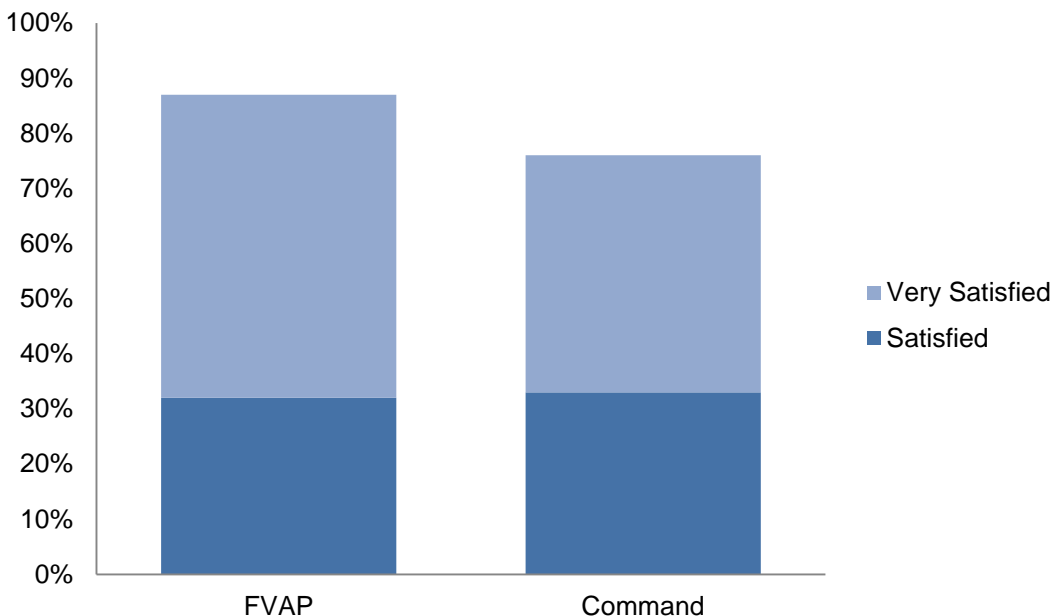
⁹¹ 2016 PEVs of VAOs, Q2&21

Figure 25: Number of Individuals Who Visited IVA Office



As shown in Figure 26, IVAOs and IVA Office staff were largely satisfied with the level of support received from FVAP and their command.⁹²

Figure 26: IVAO and IVA Office Staff Satisfaction with Support



ADM members most frequently reported seeking assistance from an IVA Office for help in understanding the absentee voting process and seeking assistance with websites (e.g., Federal, State, local).⁹³ The 2016 survey data also show that of ADM who consulted an IVA Office, 82 percent were successful in receiving the voting information they needed.⁹⁴

⁹² PEVS of VAOs, Q23

⁹³ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Q49&52

⁹⁴ 2016 PEVs of ADM, Q49&53

Of those ADM who needed assistance, 26 percent reported they were aware of the IVA Office, and 51 percent of those who voted absentee were aware.⁹⁵ This reflects a need for increased installation-level promotion of the availability of IVA Offices.

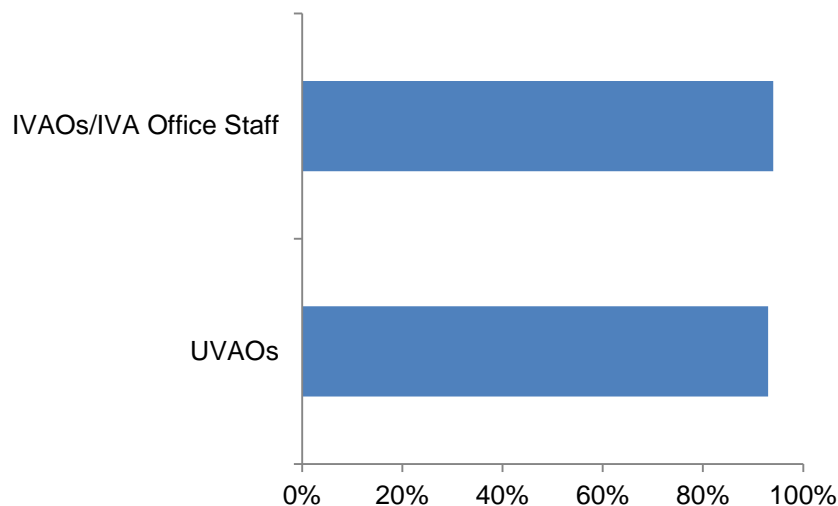
Voting Assistance Officer Training

Ensuring that VAOs understand their responsibilities in carrying out the law and State-specific rules and deadlines is critical to voter success.

FVAP provided multi-modal voting assistance training for the 2016 election cycle. This flexible approach allowed VAOs to receive training when it best fit their individual schedules and preferences. Voting assistance training was offered online via the Services' learning management systems and in-person by FVAP employees. FVAP updated the interactive online VAO training course, resulting in an improved module that provides a more in-depth background on *UOCAVA* and the VAO's role in assisting voters. In-person training allowed FVAP to provide direct guidance, conduct on-site assistance visits to voting programs and IVA Offices, and answer questions in an interactive environment.

The 2016 post-election data show that 93 percent of all UVAOs reported they received either the FVAP in-person workshop training, the FVAP online training module, or training provided by their Service.⁹⁶ Previous surveys were limited to UVAOs; however, in order to gain a better understanding of IVAOs and IVA Office staff experiences, FVAP included these key stakeholders in its 2016 Post-Election Survey of VAOs. The survey data show that 94 percent of IVA Office staff and IVAOs reported receiving training.⁹⁷

Figure 27: Trained VAOs



⁹⁵ 2016 PEVS of ADM, Question 48

⁹⁶ Due to improvements in survey sampling methods in 2014, some considerations should be made when comparing the 2016 PEVS of VAOs and 2014 PEVS of UVAOs to the 2010 or 2012 UVAO surveys. For the previous iterations of this survey, the sampling frame consisted of a list of all units requiring a UVAO. For 2014, in order to create a frame that more closely matched the population of UVAOs, the sampling frame consisted of all known UVAOs in each Service. In order to develop the frame, Service Voting Action Officers for the Navy and Marine Corps provided a list of all known UVAOs for their respective Services. For Army, Air Force and Coast Guard, the list of UVAOs who provided their information using FVAP's data portal was used. Please see the PEVS Statistical Methods Report for a more detailed explanation of the sampling methods used for each survey at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys>.

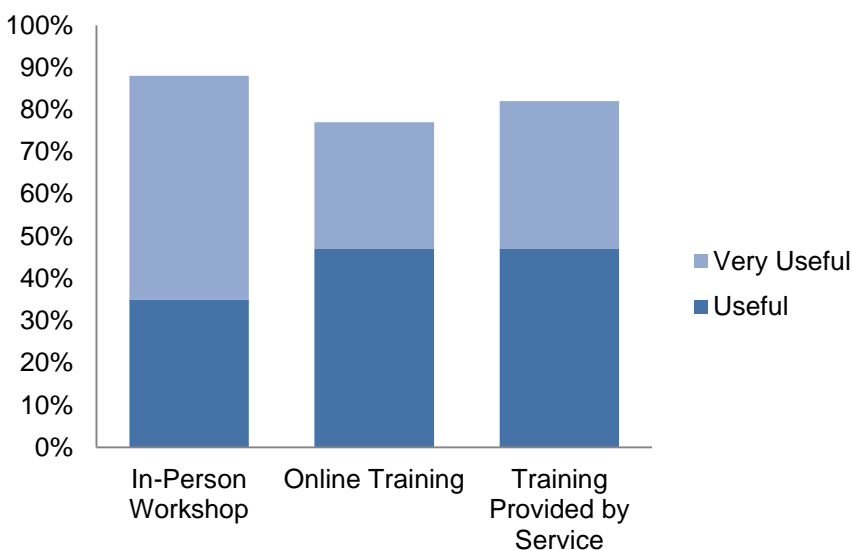
⁹⁷ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q6&7

As shown in Figure 28, FVAP's 2016 post-election survey findings indicate that most VAOs found the various modes of training useful.⁹⁸ For the 2016 election, 88 percent of VAOs reported they were confident in their ability to effectively carry out their duties; further, analyses show that attending an in-person FVAP training is the largest predictor of VAO job confidence.⁹⁹ This finding is an important validation of FVAP's efforts to improve its training content for in-person workshops and maximize attendance and participation. FVAP recognizes the time commitments required for the execution of the in-person workshops, but also the value with creating uniform content between its in-person and online training content. Going forward, FVAP aims to address the differing needs of adult learning styles by offering standardized content regardless of training mode.

FAST FACT

Attending FVAP's in-person training is the largest predictor of VAO job confidence.

Figure 28: Usefulness of VAO Training



Service-Reported Metrics

The Military Services are required to report on the voting assistance they provide to military members throughout the year. To do so, metrics are collected every time a military member goes to an IVA Office or UVAO for help or additional information.

FVAP identified new metrics in an effort to improve and enhance the measures of effectiveness for VAOs. The new guidance, disseminated in September 2014, eliminated duplicative data points and explained more concisely and concretely the data that VAOs should collect and report.¹⁰⁰ The resulting standardized metrics provide a comprehensive overview and help enable the Department to better assess the voting assistance provided across the Services.

Figure 29 provides the Military Services' metrics regarding distribution of the FPCA, FWAB, and National Voter Registration Form (NVRF) for calendar year 2016. The data show aggregates of the forms distributed to military members, family members, and civilians/contractors; breakout by population for form distribution is unavailable.

⁹⁸ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q7&11

⁹⁹ 2016 PEVS of VAOs, Q15

¹⁰⁰ View at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/2015-Metrics-Memo_20141015.pdf

Figure 29: Military Services Voting Assistance Metrics: Form Distribution

	Distributed FPCA	Distributed FWAB	Distributed NVRF	Total 2016
Forms Distributed (all groups)	1,775,095	774,818	72,171	2,622,084

Figure 30 provides a breakout of the type of assistance provided to military members, family members, and civilians/contractors for calendar year 2016.

Figure 30: Military Services Voting Assistance Metrics: Additional Assistance

	Assisted FPCA	Assisted FWAB	Assisted NVRF	General Assistance	Total 2016
# of Military Members Assisted	70,854	13,238	6,379	356,459	446,930
# of Family Members Assisted	8,711	1,853	1,916	44,422	56,902
# of Civilians/Contractors Assisted	5,943	1,854	2,969	101,014	111,780
Total Assisted	85,508	16,945	11,264	501,895	615,612

Service Assessment of Voting Assistance Programs

Per *UOCAVA*, this section provides a description of voter registration assistance under section 1566a of title 10. The most recent DoD Inspector General report, “Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2016,” released in March 2017, concurred with the Services’ Inspectors General determination that their respective Services’ Voting Assistance Programs were compliant with federal statutes and DoD policies, and were effective for 2016.¹⁰¹

Service-wide Activities:

- All Services made forms available electronically and in hard copy format throughout the year – and specifically in January and July to meet the required distribution of the FPCA. Forms were also made available for eligible family members.
- The Services used multiple opportunities and approaches to increase awareness of *UOCAVA* voting rights and the absentee voting process (e.g., public service announcements (PSA), articles).

¹⁰¹ DoD IG, Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2016, <http://www.dodig.mil/pubs/documents/DODIG-2017-071.pdf>

Installation-wide Activities and Specials Events:

- Installations used multiple opportunities and approaches to increase awareness of UOCAVA voting rights and the absentee voting process:
 - Conducted awareness and participation events hosted by the IVAO;
 - Supported FVAP workshop training at installations;
 - Set up tables in high-traffic areas (e.g., exchange, commissary);
 - Participated in several installation events, to include:
 - Installation job fairs;
 - In- and out-process briefs; and
 - Voting Emphasis Weeks events
 - Published articles in installation newspapers and on local media websites; and
 - Shared absentee voting information via Commander Calls and social media.



Service-wide Communication:

- PSAs promoted on websites across the Services;
- Dissemination of FVAP educational materials (e.g., brochures, wallet cards, posters, banners, fact sheets);
- Voting information dissemination via:
 - Leave and earnings statements;
 - Installation marquees;
 - Social media; and
 - Print media
- Service memorandums and Service-wide messages;
- Online Portals;
- Monthly newsletters to the field;
- Published articles via eBulletin; and
- Promulgated guidance and information via the FVAP portal to VAOs.



Command Emphasis by Flag and General Officers:

- PSAs featuring senior leadership including the Sergeant Major of the Army, SGM Dailey;
- Participation in and dissemination of FVAP's "Lead the Vote" video;
- Memorandums from senior leadership; and
- All-hands calls and town halls open to military members, their families, and civilians.



Department of State Voting Assistance Program

Similar to military VAOs, State Department VAOs assist overseas U.S. citizens who wish to participate in U.S. elections for federal office. The State Department administers its program through a network of VAOs at 238 U.S. embassies and consulates around the world.

The State Department conducted voter outreach efforts and provided extensive guidance on the absentee voting process through consular officers at U.S. embassies and consulates. For the 2016 election cycle, the State Department partnered with FVAP to host 15 workshops at embassies and consulates. The agency issued guidance on collaborating with private U.S. citizens groups and nonpartisan political organizations, and provided recommendations for hosting successful voter outreach events.



U.S. embassies and consulates shared FVAP resources and information from digital toolkits via their websites, email, and social media accounts. A popular component of this outreach effort was the “I Voted” digital sticker, which was heavily shared by U.S. ambassadors and consulates.



The State Department also produced its own motivational voting posters and graphics, and provided them to consular sections globally. U.S. embassy and consulate websites and Facebook pages shared absentee voting information, and many U.S. Chiefs of Mission created outreach videos regarding the importance of absentee voting, which were posted on their homepages and social media outlets.



Federal and State Cooperation

FVAP works with the States to improve the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process and provide election officials with the information and tools needed to assist eligible voters. Much of FVAP's efforts with States are described in the "Assessment of FVAP Activities" section of this report. This section provides information regarding FVAP's State and Local Relations program, cooperative agreement with CSG, the MBTP, Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program, and its cooperative relationship with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

State and Local Relations

FVAP reinforced its commitment to support public policy that improves the voting experience for military and overseas voters and serve as a critical information source for policymakers through its State and Local Relations program. In 2015 and 2016, FVAP State Affairs Specialists fostered and strengthened relationships with State and local government officials to identify and assess areas for improvement to the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process.

To support this mission, FVAP tracks and researches policy developments that may have implications for military and overseas voters. In December 2016, FVAP released its first policy brief to inform State election officials and legislators about the potential impacts of automatic voter registration systems on *UOCAVA* voters. The brief provides a background on automatic voter registration, the status of State and Federal legislation and the potential implications for *UOCAVA* voters concerning their residency, *UOCAVA* status, and taxes. FVAP also offers steps that States should consider before implementing automatic voter registration systems.¹⁰²

FVAP's second policy brief discussed "never resided" citizens to inform policymakers how State laws affect the voting eligibility of U.S. citizens who were born abroad but have never resided in the U.S.¹⁰³ By having a better understanding of who these Americans are and to what extent current State law covers them, States can make better decisions as to exactly how, and to what extent, they want to capture these potential voters in future elections.

Post-election data from State election officials indicate FVAP's policy-related products are useful.¹⁰⁴ FVAP is continuing its work with State- and local-level stakeholders and plans to release additional policy research on the topics of dual citizenship, FPCA validity, and permanent registration.

Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments

In late 2013, FVAP entered into a four-year cooperative agreement with CSG in an effort to build State election administrators' and policymakers' awareness and understanding of the Department's voting assistance mission, as well as learn ways to improve the absentee voting process.

CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative created policy and technology working groups that have resulted in recommendations for improvement in the *UOCAVA* voting process and provide real-world examples that will serve as a model for legislators and election officials throughout the country.

Policy Working Group: Composed of SEOs and LEOs from across the country, as well as election administration experts. Recommendations released in December 2015¹⁰⁵ include:

- using plain language and providing more information to the voter throughout the absentee voting process;
- creating more user-friendly electronic ballot return envelopes;

¹⁰² View at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/EO/AutoVoterRegistrationPolicyBrief_20161207_FINAL.pdf

¹⁰³ View at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/EO/FVAPNeverResidedPolicyBrief_20170222_FINAL.pdf

¹⁰⁴ 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q10

¹⁰⁵ View at <http://www.csg.org/ovi/SpecialReport2016.aspx>

- treating the FPCA as a permanent request for voter registration; and
- establishing partnerships between SEOs and LEOs and local military installations.

FVAP's survey of State election officials indicate that at least 60 percent of officials were aware of each policy group recommendation, and most States have already implemented or plan to implement recommendations.¹⁰⁶

Technology Working Group: Comprised of SEOs and LEOs who came together to determine how technology can be used to improve the UOCAVA voting process. This group released its recommendations in December 2016¹⁰⁷ after more than two years of research and collaboration in three areas:

- *Unreadable/Damaged Ballot Duplication:* Examined how to streamline the time-consuming process of ballot duplication to ensure all ballots – including ballots unreadable by scanners and damaged ballots – can be tabulated as the voters intended.
- *Common Access Card/Digital Signature Verification:* Examined the use of Common Access Card digital signatures to aid military personnel with registration and absentee ballot request process and to provide an option for them to designate their UOCAVA voting status using a State's online election portal.
- *Data Standardization/Performance Metrics:* Considered the benefits that would be achieved from having a single standard for collecting and reporting UOCAVA-specific voter data at the transaction level – each critical interaction between the voter and State or local election office.

Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Program

FVAP facilitated the conduct of the MBTP with CSG and direct support from USPS and MPSA to provide full ballot tracking through the mail stream for the 2016 General Election. The pilot program was the first of its kind to provide full tracking of a voter's blank ballot and voted ballot throughout the domestic and military postal systems.

The broader focus for the MBTP was improving customer service by providing a mechanism for military personnel stationed overseas to anticipate the arrival of blank ballots by mail while leveraging the existing expedited mail delivery and tracking provided by the MPS. Preliminary findings are discussed here.

Three key objectives drove the consideration and execution of the MBTP:

- Confirmation on the current level of ballot delivery success to overseas ADM to fill the existing gap with scanning data for overseas ADM.
- Baseline the existing ability and value of scan data to facilitate full tracking of outbound blank ballots and returning voted ballots to support a comprehensive customer service approach.
- Assess the existing level of success of ballot delivery for overseas personnel.

Six local election jurisdictions participated in the pilot on a volunteer basis: Orange County (CA); San Diego County (CA); City and County of Denver (CO); Escambia County (FL); Okaloosa County (FL); and Harris County (TX). A total of 1,588 ballots were processed through the MBTP program elements.

Evaluation of the MBTP leveraged transactional data provided by participating local election jurisdictions, parcel scan data provided by MPSA and USPS, technical feedback from stakeholders, and a customer satisfaction survey of voters who used the tracking service. Military personnel who received materials through the MBTP were asked about their overall satisfaction with the pilot. Preliminary findings from the MBTP include:

¹⁰⁶ 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q31-35

¹⁰⁷ View at <http://www.csg.org/oiv/documents/KKOVITechRecs.pdf>

1. An estimated 85-90 percent of all ballots were successfully delivered to destination MPOs; however, additional analysis is required to provide a more definitive assessment.
2. Variability with the application of parcel scans for balloting materials led to less definitive conclusions, and identifies the need for greater business processing improvement.
3. 98 percent of participating overseas ADM voters were satisfied or very satisfied with the MBTP.
4. There was no statistically significant difference in the average period for ballots transmitted and returned from theaters of operation (i.e., Europe, Asia). However, units in Europe were slightly more likely to receive final delivery scans.

Based on the success of the MBTP, USPS is examining the development of new products to enable LEOs to offer this level of service to military personnel overseas for the 2018 General Election with continued enhancements in time for the 2020 Presidential Election. In fact, a valuable byproduct of the MBTP was the level of interagency cooperation between FVAP, USPS, and MPSA to communicate any reported incidents from the election community within the larger absentee voting environment. The agencies intend to formalize the resulting structure of this quasi-task force for future election cycles.

A final report will be released by CSG later this year which will provide details regarding the planning and implementation of the MBTP, and share technical findings and results from stakeholder and voter surveys.

UOCAVA Waivers and Coordination with the Department of Justice

Under *UOCAVA*, DOJ is the federal agency assigned to enforce the provisions of the statute. During the 2016 election cycle, FVAP and the Voting Section of DOJ continued to work cooperatively and coordinate when issues arose related to FVAP's role in administering *UOCAVA*.

In 2016, the State of New York applied for a waiver from *UOCAVA*'s 45-day advance transmission requirement following a Federal court order mandating a new Republican primary election for New York's Third Congressional District on October 6, 2016.

FVAP spoke with New York election officials and consulted closely with DOJ when considering the State's waiver request and comprehensive plan.

After careful review and consultation with DOJ, FVAP and other DoD officials determined:

- New York faced an undue hardship prohibiting it from complying with the 45-day advance transmission requirement as a result of a Federal court order mandating a new Republican primary election for New York's Third Congressional District on October 6, 2016.
- Given the totality of circumstances, New York's comprehensive plan provided absent *UOCAVA* voters sufficient time to receive and submit absentee ballots they have requested in time to be counted in the November 8, 2016, election.
- The waiver determination letter stated that the waiver was based in part on the understanding that the State would seek an order from the court for an eight-day extension of the State's ballot receipt deadline for *UOCAVA* ballots.

FVAP notified New York of DoD's decision to approve its waiver request on Aug. 29, 2016.

Ultimately, the waiver was unnecessary due to a subsequent court decision.

Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections Research Grant Program

In 2011 and 2013, FVAP offered 5-year grants to States and localities to research improving services to military and overseas voters. The EASE research grant program in 2011 funded programs including online blank ballot delivery, online voter registration, online ballot requests, automated ballot duplication, and online ballot tracking.

In 2013, FVAP facilitated a second round of EASE research grants that focused on two specific areas: online blank ballot delivery tools and the establishment of a single point of contact for the transmission of voters' election materials to State election offices. The single-point-of-contact concept was introduced in the *Help America Vote Act* in which Congress recommended that States adopt such a system.

The EASE research grant program was created to fulfill two primary goals: to examine tools that can effectively make the *UOCAVA* voting process simpler and more accessible, and to assist State and local election administrators improve services to military and overseas citizen voters.

Many of the research grants were funded through the 2016 General Election, with the remaining grants coming to a close in December 2018. The resulting data and analysis from the research grant program will help identify barriers and improve the voting experience for military and overseas voters. Once the grants are completed, FVAP will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the State-reported data and provide a full report of its findings and recommendations.

The electronic transmission of voted ballots is strictly prohibited through the terms and conditions of the research grant program.

This is a high-level overview of the EASE research grant program. Information regarding grant authority and evaluation criteria can be found at FVAP.gov. FVAP has no immediate plans to award new grants.

Conclusions

FVAP made important advancements in the myriad of resources it makes available to its stakeholders – and post-election survey data indicate that FVAP's outreach efforts in 2016 were more effective than in previous years. However, increasing awareness of DoD voting assistance resources remains one of FVAP's top priorities.

In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified three themes it took for action:

1. Reduce obstacles to ADM voting success;
2. Expand *UOCAVA* voter awareness and outreach initiatives; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Based on 2016 election data and program activities, these three themes continue as areas of focus that FVAP will undertake in support of the upcoming 2018 election cycle. However, with FVAP's new ability to survey known overseas citizen voters, FVAP can expand its first goal to: Reduce obstacles to *UOCAVA* voting success. Additionally, the decline in military registration and participation rates warrants further research. Analysis identified demographic shifts in the ADM population as explaining about half of the decline in participation. Forthcoming research will further examine the potential causes to inform FVAP's voting assistance efforts, including changes to ADM motivation and barriers to voting.

Reduce Obstacles to *UOCAVA* Voting Success

From developing and implementing a myriad of online resources to leveraging its network of Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) across the world, the Department's voting assistance toolbox has never been stronger. Initiatives to reduce obstacles included: the standardization of the *Guide* into plain language to better support VAOs in the field and individual voters who visit FVAP.gov; improved in-person and online training for VAOs and election officials; development of a data standard for the EAC's post-election survey of election officials; collaboration with election officials to research improvements to the *UOCAVA* voting process; the conduct of the MBTP; and the modernization of military mail systems to reduce the rate of undeliverable ballots. However, one of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process is through the use of a DoD voting assistance resource, which increases the likelihood of voters returning their absentee ballot.

FVAP continued to identify a statistically significant relationship between the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot and the use of the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, UVAOs, and IVA Offices. Whether a military member uses the FVAP website, speaks with a VAO or visits an IVA Office, the resources work together to support the military voter's ability to participate in the electoral process. This finding builds upon multiple FVAP studies of resource use among the military and overseas citizen populations showing a positive association between DoD resource use and voting.

As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. And while participation may be an indicator of program success, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles.

Based on the 2016 election, FVAP will undertake the following activities to improve *UOCAVA* voting success:

- Continue development of the direct-to-the-voter training module – designed with first-time voters in mind – to improve voter comprehension of the absentee voting process and the steps required to register and request absentee ballots using the FPCA and how to vote and return their ballot or the backup FWAB.

- Improve FVAP-prescribed forms (FPCA and FWAB) to enhance usability and clarify form completion and submission processes.
- Improve voters' comprehension of new absentee voting forms through the use of outreach education materials.
- Conduct comprehensive user experience audit of FVAP.gov to identify how the website can be improved to make it easier for *UOCAVA* voters, election officials, and VAOs to locate information and take action; implement improvements and updates for the 2018 election cycle.
- Work with election officials to identify whether State and local absentee ballot request forms maximize military voter eligibility under *UOCAVA*.
- Continue focus on the individual voter's experience and the factors that will prevent rejection or increase the opportunity for success; collaborate with the EAC, and election officials to make further improvements to the EAVS Section B Data Standard.
- Encourage State election officials adoption of CSG Working Groups' policy and technology recommendations.
- Refine guidance for election officials regarding requirements under various federal voting laws. (e.g., *UOCAVA* vs. *NVRA*) and best practices for emailing election materials to military members

FVAP believes these initiatives will support a voter's ability to successfully receive, cast, and have his or her ballot counted.

Expand *UOCAVA* Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives

Post-election survey data indicate that FVAP's 2016 efforts were more effective than previous campaigns; FVAP is committed to building upon this success and expanding *UOCAVA* citizens' awareness of the voting assistance resources available. To leverage the positive association between DoD resource use and voting, FVAP embraced behavior change principles and best practices to enhance its marketing and outreach strategies for the 2016 election cycle. FVAP's multipronged campaign utilized research and demographics to reach audiences multiple times through myriad platforms using consistent messaging and branding elements.

The 2016 post-election data show that receiving voting assistance from a DoD resource was positively associated with voters' increased knowledge of registering to vote, requesting and submitting an absentee ballot, and knowing key absentee ballot dates, but not significantly related to understanding the FWAB. In addition, receiving FVAP outreach materials had an across-the-board positive and significant relationship on voting. However, the data also indicate that FVAP must expand its efforts further to increase awareness of resources among the military population.

Marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, underscoring the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in FVAP's education and awareness efforts. This also points to a continued need for FVAP to target potential first-time voters to help ensure they are informed of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so from anywhere in the world.

FVAP will focus on the following improvements:

- Further target marketing and outreach campaigns especially for younger potential first-time voters; encourage SVAOs to tailor outreach efforts for younger military members.
- Work with the Military Services to ensure extensive promotion of new direct-to-voter training video.
- Utilize new and updated training resources to develop a short, attention-grabbing video series to introduce specific topics such as the use of the FPCA and FWAB and how absentee voting works; implement across social media and other digital platforms.
- Include "I Voted" digital sticker and other customized or customizable content for future elections.
- Refine informational and training materials to improve voter comprehension of FPCA and FWAB usage and the varying State requirements.

- Continue to build relationships with organizations reaching target audiences; develop and share customizable digital toolkits for military, military spouse/family, overseas citizen voters, and election officials.
- Encourage unit- and installation-level VAOs to target military family readiness groups/programs to inform spouses of their absentee voting rights and leverage the statistically significant marital influence on voting behavior.
- Work with State election officials to disseminate research findings from 2016 to raise their level of awareness on how best to serve the *UOCAVA* population; encourage State election officials to refer resources beyond FVAP.gov, particularly the election official online training, to their local offices.
- Target direct outreach efforts to election officials to increase awareness of resources and use as opportunities for training on the challenges faced by the *UOCAVA* voter, share lessons learned, and create a dialogue on how best to improve the overall process from an election administrator's viewpoint.

FVAP believes these targeted improvements to marketing and outreach activities will improve awareness and enhance resource utilization.

Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a need to continue to improve the Department's ability to evaluate program effectiveness. FVAP has made progress enhancing its research instruments for post-election analyses and ability to study overseas citizen voters.

FVAP identified the full range of demographic factors that should be accounted for when comparing registration and participation rates to ensure a better level of comparison between ADM and CVAP. In preparation for this report, FVAP used a sophisticated model to adjust CVAP to reflect the demographic profile of ADM in order to provide greater insight into how registration and participation rates of the ADM compare with the rates of the CVAP that most closely resembles the military population.

FVAP conducted the OCPA study to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population as well as estimate voting rates for the 2014 election. FVAP conducted additional analyses on the OCPA data to investigate the unique conditions this understudied population faces and released additional research notes.

In addition to the development of a data standard for the *UOCAVA* section of the EAC's EAVS, FVAP facilitated innovative collaboration between Federal agencies and election officials from around the country that resulted in actionable recommendations to further improve the survey.

FVAP will continue work to improve its ability to evaluate program effectiveness:

- Conduct additional analysis on the 2016 post-election survey data of ADM and release subsequent research note.
- Examine the decline in the estimated ADM registration and participation rates by exploring factors beyond the demographic and geographic variables currently used when comparing the ADM and CVAP populations.
- Collect and analyze survey data of known overseas citizens' voting experiences during the 2016 election; release subsequent research along with projected registration and participation rates for overseas citizens.
- Refine OCPA estimation prototype and utilize new methodologies to better understand registration, voting rates, and voting-related motivations and challenges among Americans abroad.
- Support CSG on its final report of the MBTP in collaboration with USPS and MPSA.
- Work with Services to apply standard voting assistance metrics to assess compliance to DoDI 1000.04.

- Continue to foster collaborative relationships with election officials and the EAC to make further improvements to EAVS Section B and related Data Standards to better assess the impact of *UOCAVA*'s administration, including the 2009 amendments; especially those related to electronic blank ballot delivery, as well as the time required to transmit and return a ballot by mail – on the *UOCAVA* voting population.

Glossary

ADM	active duty military
CSG	Council of State Governments
CVAP	citizen voting age population
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
DOJ	Department of Justice
EAC	Election Assistance Commission
EASE	Electronic Absentee System for Elections (research grant program)
EAVS	Election Administration and Voting Survey
ETS	Electronic Transmission Service
FPCA	Federal Post Card Application
FVAP	Federal Voting Assistance Program
FWAB	Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot
Guide	<i>Voting Assistance Guide</i>
IVA Office	Installation Voter Assistance Office
IVAO	Installation Voting Assistance Officer
LEO	local election official
MBTP	Military Ballot Tracking Pilot
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOVE Act	<i>Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act</i>
MPO	Military Post Office
MPS	Military Postal Service
MPSA	Military Postal Service Agency
NCOA	National Change of Address
NVRA	National Voter Registration Act
NVRF	National Voter Registration Form
OCPA	Overseas Citizen Population Analysis
PEVS	Post-Election Voting Survey
PSA	public service announcement
SEO	State election official
SVAO	Service Voting Action Officer
UAA	undeliverable as addressed
UOCAVA	<i>Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act</i>
U.S.C.	United States Code
USPS	U.S. Postal Service
UVAO	Unit Voting Assistance Officer
VAO	Voting Assistance Officer