

U.S. CITIZENS ABROAD AND THEIR VOTING BEHAVIORS IN 2018

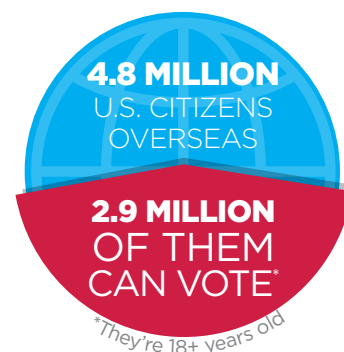
OVERSEAS CITIZEN POPULATION ANALYSIS SUMMARY BRIEF

U.S. citizens can vote even when living abroad. To learn more about this group and help its members navigate the absentee voting process, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) sponsors the multipart Overseas Citizen Population Analysis (OCPA) biennially in conjunction with each federal election cycle and in response to its federal requirement for conducting a statistical analysis on overseas citizen participation rates.

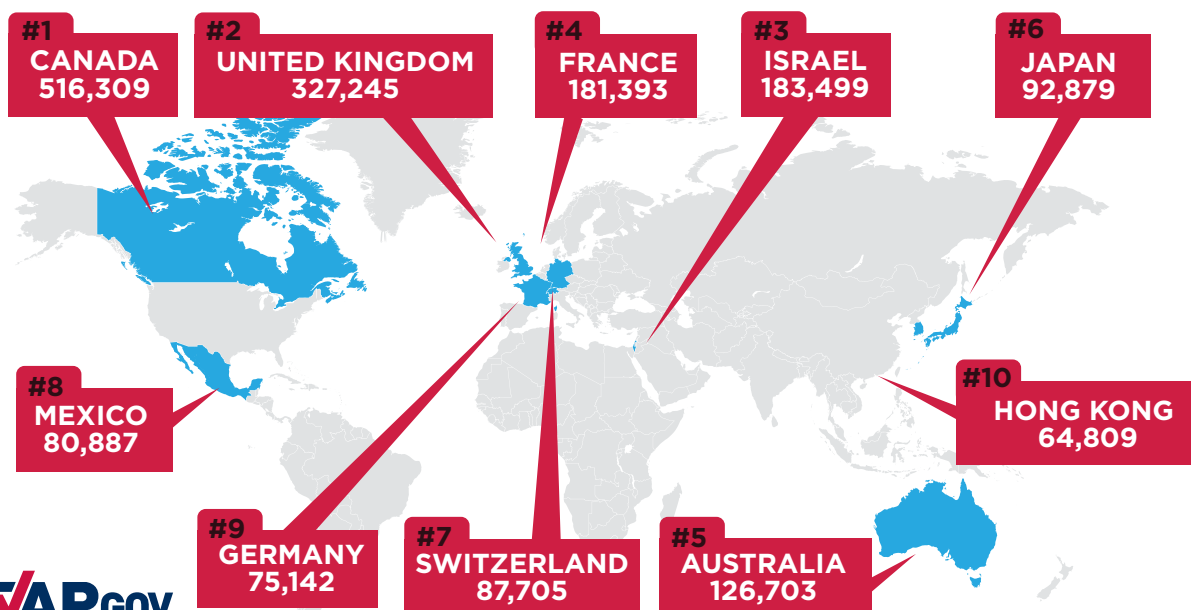
Using 2018 data, this edition of the OCPA estimates the voting rate of the overseas citizen voting-age population in the 2018 General Election; compares the rate to that of the voting-age population living in the United States; determines how much of the difference in participation is due to obstacles unique to the overseas voting process; and assesses how FVAP can help mitigate these obstacles. The full report is available at [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov).

OVERSEAS CITIZENS WHO CAN VOTE

To estimate how many overseas citizens there are, where they are located, and the number who are eligible to vote, FVAP models data combined from foreign government estimates of residents who are U.S.-born or U.S. citizens, U.S. administrative data on particular groups of overseas citizens (e.g., those who have declared foreign income to the IRS or receive Social Security benefits at an overseas address), and multiple sets of predictors from the academic literature on migration.



COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST NUMBERS OF ADULT U.S. CITIZENS

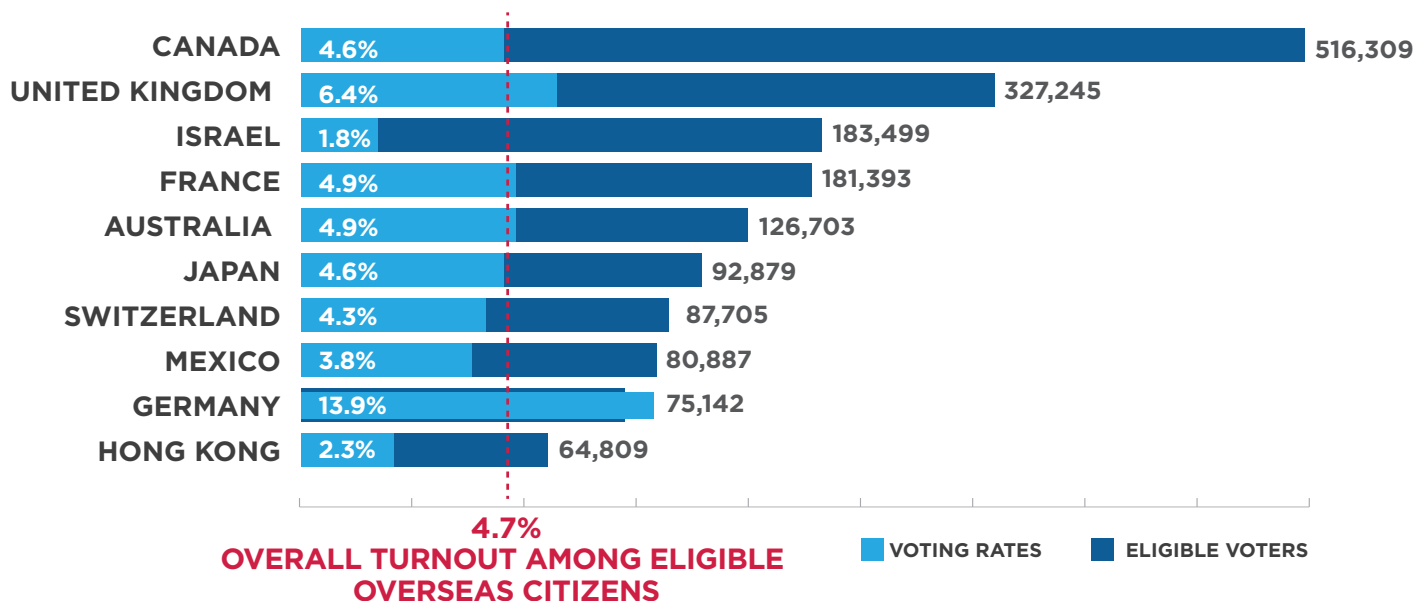


OVERSEAS VOTER TURNOUT

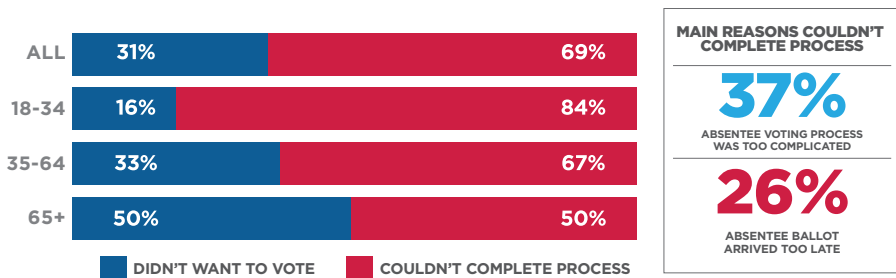
FVAP combined state data on the number of ballots requested and submitted by voters with the estimates of eligible voters to calculate overseas voter turnout overall and by country.

135,507 BALLOTS FROM OVERSEAS CITIZENS WERE RECEIVED IN 2018

TURNOUT VARIES GREATLY BY COUNTRY, EVEN AMONG THOSE WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS.

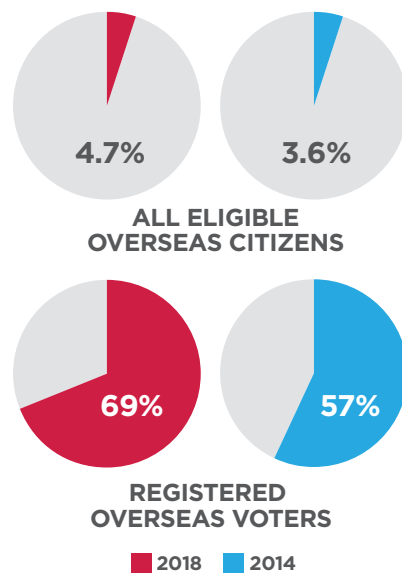


REASONS FOR NOT RETURNING BALLOT



Among overseas citizens who ultimately did not return their voted ballot, some didn't want to and others had difficulty completing the process. The oldest overseas voters were evenly split between not wanting to vote and having difficulties doing so. In contrast, voters age 35 to 64 were twice as likely to have trouble completing the process as not wanting to vote, and the youngest voters, those age 18 to 34, were five times as likely.

HIGHER VOTING RATES COMPARED TO PRIOR MIDTERM



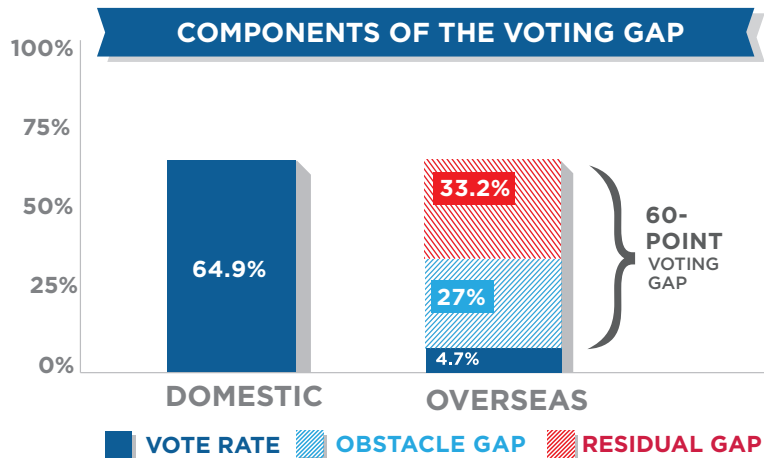
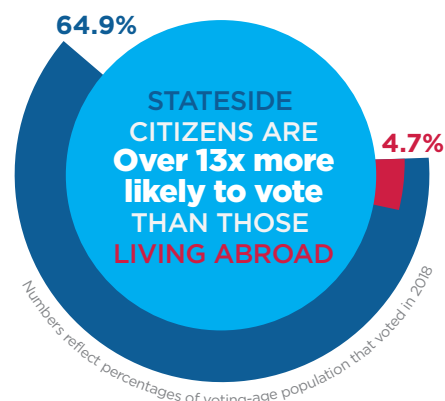
The 4.7% turnout among overseas citizens in 2018 is about 30% higher than turnout for the previous midterm in 2014, which was 3.6%. Stateside voter turnout showed a similar increase

THE 2018 VOTING GAP: DOMESTIC VS. OVERSEAS

Studies consistently show that a much smaller proportion of U.S. citizens who live overseas vote in each election compared to the proportion living stateside who vote. In 2018, about 5% of U.S. citizens living abroad who were old enough to vote cast a ballot, versus nearly 65% of those stateside.*

To ensure U.S. citizens abroad who want to vote can do so successfully, FVAP uses its Overseas Citizen Population Survey to divide the voting gap into an obstacles gap and a residual gap. The obstacles gap includes overseas citizens who wanted to vote or tried to vote but were unsuccessful due to factors that might be resolved through voter education, state legislative changes, or improved communication with election offices. The residual gap is voters who did not vote due to factors, such as lack of interest, that cannot be resolved through these methods.

In the 2018 General Election, if obstacles to voting had been resolved, the overseas voting rate would have been 31.7%, reducing the gap from 60.2 to 33.2 percentage points.



SOURCE: FVAP OVERSEAS CITIZEN POPULATION ANALYSIS

Obstacles gap: The percentage of overseas citizens who wanted to vote or tried to vote but were unsuccessful. They may have been helped by voter education, state legislative changes, or improved communication with election offices.

Residual gap: The percentage of overseas citizens who did not vote because of factors that cannot be resolved within the voting process, such as lack of interest or motivation.

Obstacles: Factors that impede the speed at which voters receive and transmit election materials — voter registration forms, ballot requests, and ballots themselves.

The voting rate would be over **5x HIGHER** at 31.7% turnout without obstacles.

Voters* who received their ballot electronically were **more than 3x** as likely to vote successfully.

*in high obstacle countries

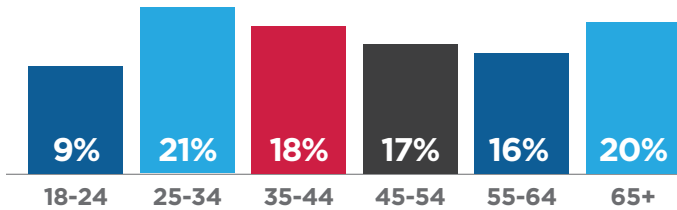
Electronic request, receipt, and return options gave voters in high-obstacles countries a **60% higher probability** of voting success

Voter awareness and use of federally required electronic transmission options (email, fax, or website) can reduce obstacles to voting: In countries with the highest obstacles, voters who received their ballot electronically (rather than mailed) were more than three times as likely to vote successfully.

* The domestic vote rate is based on respondents to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey who answered "yes" or "no" when asked if they voted in the election held on November 8, 2018. This rate differs from the Census Bureau's estimate of 53.4% participation. Census Bureau calculations combine people who did not know if they voted or did not answer the question with those who said they did not vote, leading to a larger percentage of nonvoters. Those two groups are excluded from the domestic vote rate reported here because it is unknown if they voted. The overseas citizen vote rate is the percentage of the voting age population that submitted a ballot and had a vote recorded in state vote history records.

WHO ARE OVERSEAS REGISTERED VOTERS?

ALL AGES



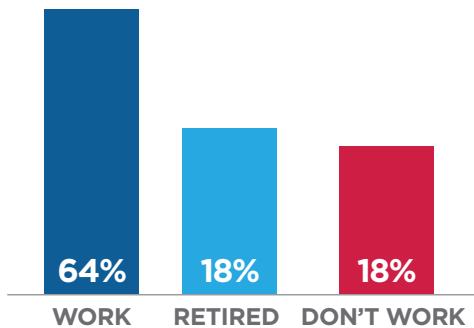
LIVED IN CURRENT COUNTRY

6 YEARS OR LESS 31%

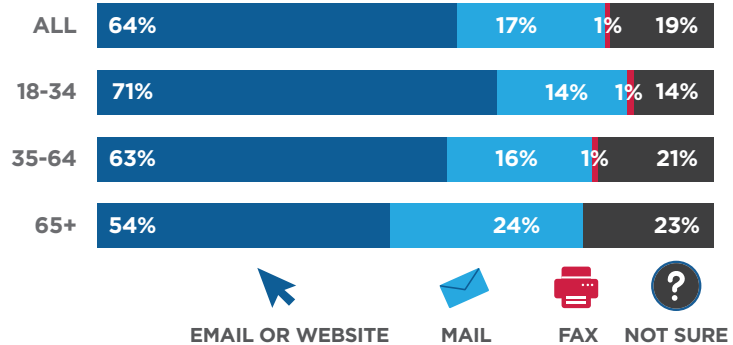
6-12 YEARS 22%

12+ YEARS 47%

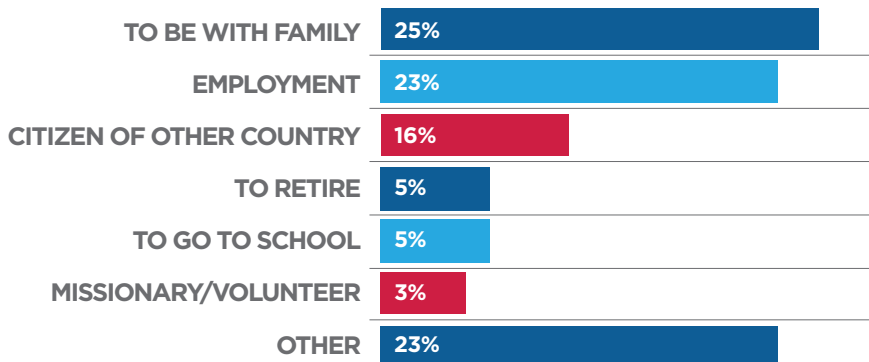
WORKERS



BALLOT REQUEST METHODS



REASONS FOR LIVING ABROAD



42% ARE CITIZENS IN COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

WELL EDUCATED

LESS THAN BACHELOR'S DEGREE 18%

BACHELOR'S DEGREE 36%

MORE THAN BACHELOR'S DEGREE 46%

Data from FVAP's Overseas Citizen Population Survey, conducted among a representative sample of 6,923 overseas registered voters who requested a ballot in 2018.

ABOUT THE OVERSEAS CITIZEN POPULATION ANALYSIS

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) first conducted the Overseas Citizen Population Analysis (OCPA) following the 2014 election to learn more about this population and how its members navigate the absentee voting process. The OCPA fulfills Section 20308(b) of Title 52, U.S.C., which requires an annual report by the Department of Defense to the President and Congress, including an assessment of voter registration and participation by overseas civilians. The current analysis of data collected following the 2018 election was a four-step process:

1. Estimate the voting rate of the overseas citizen voting-age population in the 2018 General Election;
2. Compare the level of participation to that of the voting-age population living in the U.S.;
3. Determine to what degree that estimated difference in participation between the two populations is due to voting obstacles unique to overseas citizens; and
4. Assess the extent to which policies designed to mitigate these obstacles are successful.

The OCPA combines data from these sources to provide insights on the voting behaviors of U.S. citizens living abroad that are unavailable elsewhere: foreign government estimates and U.S. government records of citizens abroad; administrative records of absentee ballot requests and vote histories from the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia; and FVAP's 2018 Overseas Citizen Population Survey. Conducted among a representative sample of 6,923 overseas registered voters* who requested a ballot for the 2018 General Election, it details the demographic characteristics and voting experiences of this group. Each time the OCPA is conducted, the estimating methodology is updated with newly available data. As a result, the population estimates become more accurate over time. The 2018 report incorporated new data sources for foreign government estimates and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as updated records of U.S. citizens living overseas that filed taxes using a foreign address. Because the data changed, the models changed, and thus the final estimates for the 2000 - 2016 period differ from those in previous OCPA reports.

*Active duty military and their spouses are surveyed separately.

ABOUT FVAP AND UOCAVA

FVAP works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so—from anywhere in the world. The Director of FVAP administers the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* on behalf of the Secretary of Defense.

Citizens whose voting rights are protected under *UOCAVA* include:

- Active duty members of the Armed Forces, Merchant Marine, Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps
- Eligible family members of Uniformed Services personnel
- U.S. citizens residing outside the United States

UOCAVA requires that the 50 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia allow protected voters to register and vote absentee in general, special, primary and runoff elections for federal offices. Federal protections include:

- Requiring all states to allow a citizen covered under *UOCAVA* to register to vote and request an absentee ballot using a single form, the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).
- Requiring states to send absentee ballots to *UOCAVA* voters no later than 45 days before a federal election.
- Requiring states to offer voters a way to receive their ballots electronically as stipulated in the 2009 *Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act*.
- Allowing citizens covered by *UOCAVA* to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) as a back-up ballot to vote in any federal election if they do not receive their regular absentee ballot in time to return it before deadlines.

States and territories may have supplementary laws and requirements, which are available at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov).