

STATE ADMINISTERED *UOCAVA* SURVEY PILOT

State and jurisdictions successfully fielded their own UOCAVA post-election survey.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) designed the State Administered *UOCAVA* Survey (SAUS) pilot with the goal of reinforcing partnerships with local election offices and supporting independent data collection by states and jurisdictions. The pilot focused on assisting participating states and jurisdictions in fielding a customer satisfaction survey among their *UOCAVA* voters so they could better understand the experiences of this population during the 2022 General Election voting process. The SAUS pilot survey was sent to all registered *UOCAVA* voters who opted to provide an email address to their local jurisdiction.

The participating state and jurisdictions reported that the SAUS pilot was overall a positive experience, and they would repeat it in the future if available. They reported the data collected by the SAUS survey was useful, providing “hard data” and quotes from their *UOCAVA* voters on topics like ballot return methods and ballot tracking, which are useful for election officials to have available during discussions with their legislatures and lawmakers and when considering potential improvements to their processes. Additionally, participating election officials noted that the overall time burden was low for them and for survey respondents.

Background. FVAP partnered with The Council of State Governments (CSG), Marketing for Change, and Fors Marsh to conduct this pilot, in a collaboration named the “SAUS pilot working group.” CSG recruited Colorado, Escambia County (FL), Ingham County (MI), and Okaloosa County (FL) through the Overseas Voting Initiative (OVI) to participate in the pilot. CSG also provided continued support in communications with election officials throughout the pilot, hosted the SAUS survey through their SurveyMonkey corporate account, and provided help desk support for the participants. Fors Marsh created a project plan, developed and programmed the survey instrument, and created technical support materials for election officials to aid them in fielding the pilot survey. Marketing for Change was in charge of coordination efforts and providing feedback and oversight for the duration of the project.

Results. The state of Colorado and the jurisdictions of Escambia County (FL), Ingham County (MI), and Okaloosa County (FL) successfully fielded the SAUS survey after the November 2022 General Election. The SAUS pilot working group provided the participating state and jurisdictions all necessary materials and resources (e.g., step-by-step guides, invitation templates, programmed survey) to ensure the time burden of fielding the survey was low.

The SAUS survey focused mostly on customer satisfaction items to learn about the experiences of *UOCAVA* voters when looking for information about the voting process, and their interactions with information resources offered by their election officials, FVAP, and other entities that support the *UOCAVA* population. Some of the survey items were tailored for the participating state and jurisdictions to ensure the questions were relevant to them. The survey was fielded for six to nine weeks and all participants, except for one jurisdiction, started fielding in early December 2022. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of surveys sent by each participating state and jurisdiction, the response rates, the number of surveys completed, and the median time that respondents spent completing the survey.

Table 1. Survey Completion Rates and Times. Over 90% of Respondents That Started the Survey Completed It.

| SAUS Pilot Participant | Total Number of Survey Invitations Sent | Total Started Surveys | Survey Response Rate | Total Completed Surveys | Percent of Started Surveys Completed | Median Survey Completion Time |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Colorado | 36,771 | 5,912 | 16.1% | 5,489 | 92.8% | 7 min. |
| Escambia County (FL) | Not Available | 575 | Not Available | 537 | 93.4% | 7 min. |
| Ingham County (MI) | 413 | 122 | 29.5% | 121 | 99.2% | 8 min. |
| Okaloosa County (FL) | 6,695 | 785 | 11.7% | 741 | 94.4% | 6 min. |

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The survey response rates for the SAUS pilot were above 10%, which was slightly higher than other FVAP-fielded post-election surveys like the Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military (8.0%) and the Overseas Citizen Population Survey (9.4%). Additionally, over 90% of respondents that started the survey completed it, and the median time of completion was less than 10 minutes. Overall, most respondents started the survey right after receiving the survey invitation or any of the reminder emails.

Over 80% of the respondents reported voting in the 2022 General Election, whereas the *UOCAVA* voting rates for Colorado, Escambia County (FL), and Okaloosa County (FL) were less than 50%, suggesting that voters were overrepresented in the survey. To address the overrepresentation of voters, and potential overrepresentation of respondents in other categories (e.g., age, gender), the SAUS pilot working group created weights based on each of the participants' *UOCAVA* population characteristics. These weights made it possible to calculate survey results that more accurately reflected the actual *UOCAVA* population in each state/jurisdiction.

The SAUS pilot working group met with the participating state and jurisdictions after the survey fielding was closed to obtain feedback on their experience with the pilot. Overall, the feedback was positive, and they noted that they would field the survey in the future if this effort was repeated. Among the advantages of this survey, they noted the following:

- The SAUS pilot covered spouses and eligible dependents of active duty military, a population that is rarely covered in other surveys.
- The survey was sent to all *UOCAVA* voters with an email on file. The census-type nature of the survey provided a more comprehensive picture of their *UOCAVA* voters than other surveys that use samples of the population.
- Some of the items in the SAUS pilot survey were tailored for each of the participants, making results more relevant for the needs of the election officials.
- The SAUS pilot had multiple follow-up open-ended questions that enabled participants to go beyond the percentage of respondents that selected an option and learn the reason for it from actual quotes from respondents.
- The SAUS pilot survey provided the participating state and jurisdictions with hard data and quotes from their *UOCAVA* voters on topics like ballot return methods and ballot tracking, which are useful for election officials to have during discussions with their legislatures and lawmakers.
- The survey platform provided visualization tools which made results easy to interpret and share with legislators and other stakeholders.
- The overall time-burden for election officials was low and the supporting materials were thorough.

Conclusions. Overall, the SAUS pilot survey was a success. Participating states and jurisdictions offered positive feedback about their experiences and reported that they would participate again if the survey was conducted in the future. They noted that the survey results were useful to them for confirming some perceptions they had about their *UOCAVA* population's voting preferences (e.g., desire to be able to track ballots and to return ballots electronically). It also provided them with "hard data" and actual quotes to back those preferences from their voters. They mentioned that these results can help them support conversations when discussing these topics with their legislatures and lawmakers. Additionally, the survey was focused on customer satisfaction, and had personalized items that provided localities with greater insight about potential improvements in their processes to help their *UOCAVA* voters in their voting journey.

The support of the SAUS pilot working group was successful in reducing the burden for the participating state and jurisdictions. The SAUS pilot working group created multiple guides and materials in addition to a draft of the survey, so participating states and jurisdictions did not have to invest much time during a period where they needed their full focus on preparing, conducting, and closing a general election. The results of this pilot suggest that it would be feasible to conduct this project in the future with additional states and jurisdictions interested in receiving feedback from their *UOCAVA* voters about the voting process in their localities. With the help of the SAUS pilot working group in creating supporting materials, programming the survey, and providing survey platform credentials when needed, participants can obtain a large amount of information with a relatively low associated time burden.