

U.S. Overseas Voters

WHAT WE KNOW

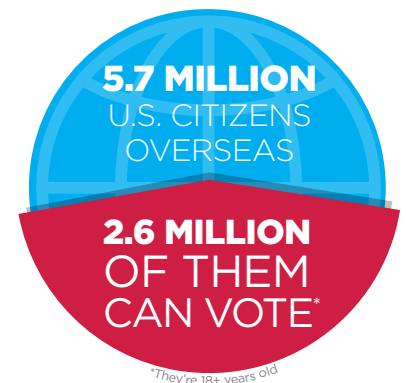
The right to vote in U.S. federal elections is determined by citizenship, not residence. Yet little is known about the population of Americans abroad who are eligible to vote. It is a challenging group to study, largely because there is no comprehensive list of all U.S. citizens living overseas. Researchers have estimated this group's size and characteristics using various methods, including census, surveys and model estimation.

To better reach overseas citizens and help those who want to vote do so successfully, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) conducted a multipart study called the Overseas Citizen Population Analysis (the full report is available at FVAP.gov). It includes:

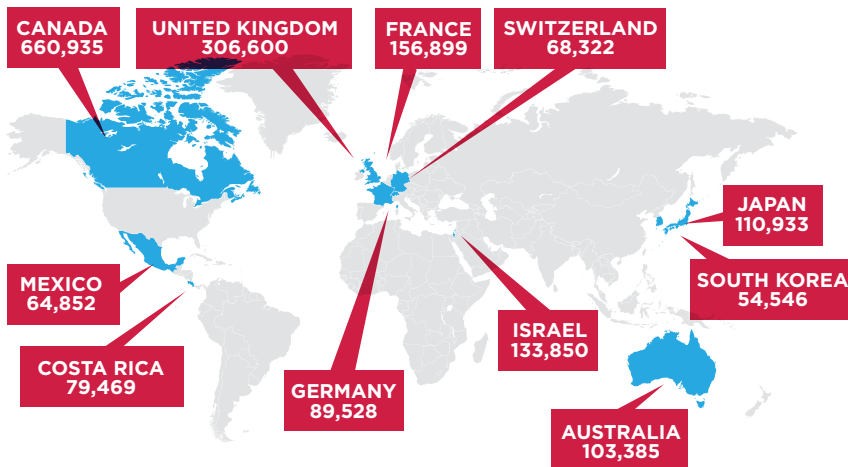
- Estimates of who can vote. New data and statistical modeling better estimate the size and distribution of the U.S. voting-age population by country.
- Portraits of overseas registered voters. FVAP commissioned the first-ever representative survey of registered overseas voters, which provides insights into the characteristics and experiences of overseas voters.
- Estimates of who does vote. FVAP calculated overseas voter turnout rates by country using the eligible-voter estimates and the States' ballot request and submission data.

OVERSEAS CITIZENS WHO CAN VOTE

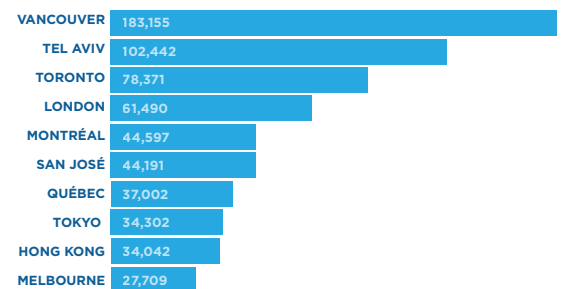
FVAP's population estimates are drawn from foreign government estimates of U.S. citizens living in a country; administrative data on overseas citizens from the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration; and country-level data that can predict the decision to live in a given country.



Global Distribution of Voting-Age Americans

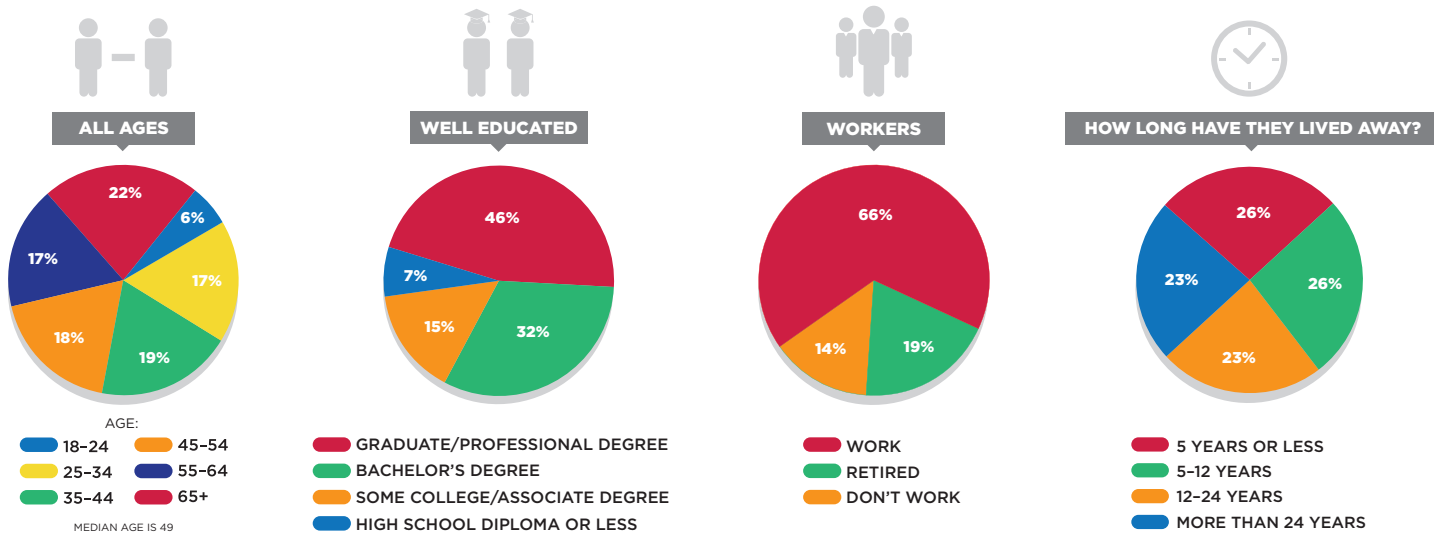


Top International Cities

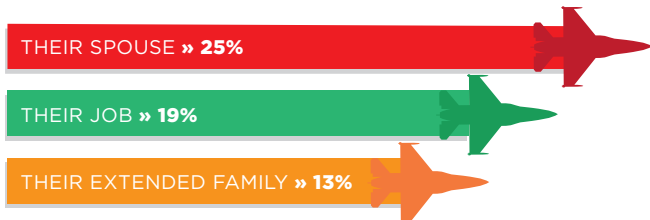


PROFILE OF OVERSEAS REGISTERED VOTERS

The survey of registered voters who requested a ballot in 2014 provides the first portrait of this diverse group and reveals factors affecting their voting behaviors. While overseas voters can be any age, most likely they hold a bachelor's degree (or more) and are working. They last lived in the U.S. an average of 13.6 years ago. Many have ties of time and family to their current homeland. Twenty-seven percent have been located there for 5 years or less, 23% for 5+ to 13 years, 26% for 13+ to 25 years, and 22% for more than 25 years.



Top Reasons for Living Abroad



Younger voters were more likely to be overseas to attend school or because they were dual citizens of that country and the United States. The middle-aged were more likely to have moved abroad for a job or because their spouse was a citizen of the destination country. Those 65 and older were more likely to move overseas to be with extended family or to retire.

Men were more likely than women to say they were overseas for job-related reasons or to retire. Women were more likely to be overseas for school, so their spouse could obtain a job, or because their spouse was a citizen of the destination country.

Many Have Ties to Other Countries

Nearly half of overseas voters hold citizenship in the country where they live as well as the United

States. Among those who are married, just over a third of their spouses hold U.S. citizenship. Among those who have children, nearly two-thirds of those children are dual citizens of their current country and the United States.

43% are dual citizens

64% of their children are citizens of the country where they live

38% of their spouses are U.S. citizens

And U.S. Friends in That Country

The majority of overseas voters know at least 5 U.S. citizens in their foreign country.

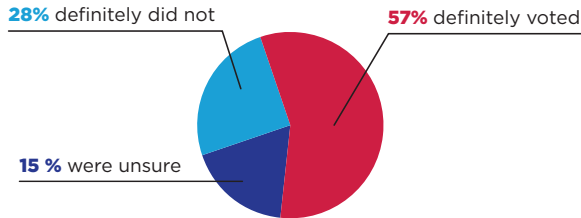
28% know 1-4

35% know 5-20

28% know 20+

VOTING: BEHAVIORS OF OVERSEAS CITIZENS REGISTERED TO VOTE

How Many Voted



Top 3 Reasons for Not Voting



Over half of respondents reported they definitely voted in 2014. A fourth said they definitely did not vote, and nearly a fifth were unsure whether they voted. Of those who did not vote, respondents aged 18 to 24 were more likely to say they didn't because they were not registered or forgot; those aged 25 to 34 because they had an absentee ballot issue or were too busy; and those aged 45 to 64 because they had no candidate preference or were out of touch with the local community. Men more often said that they did not vote because they had no candidate preference or faced an absentee ballot issue. Women more often said they felt out of touch with their local community or forgot to vote.

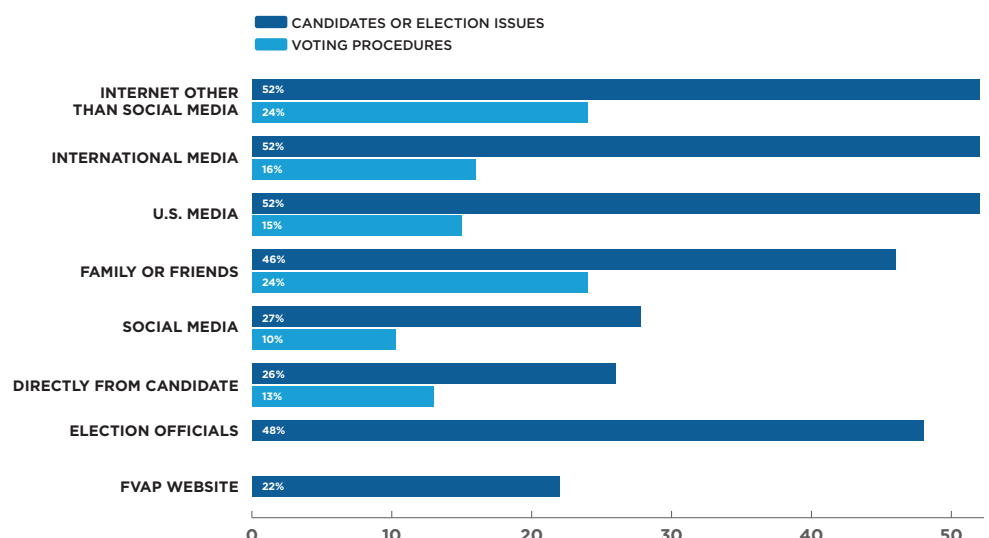
Reported voting was higher in the 2012 presidential election, with 72% of those surveyed saying they had definitely voted by some means.

Mail Reliability

Overseas mail reliability can impact citizens' ability to successfully vote. Most of those surveyed who voted in U.S. general elections in 2010, 2012 and 2014 said they mailed their ballots. Two-thirds characterized the postal service in their resident country as reliable or very reliable; 17% said it was somewhat reliable; and 15% said their resident country's postal service had very low or low reliability. Those in Africa, the Near East, South Asia and the Western Hemisphere were more likely to rate their postal service reliability as very low or low compared to those in Europe or East Asia.

Election and Voting Information Sources

Overseas voters commonly turn to family, friends, the media and the internet for information on U.S. elections and voting procedures. For voting procedures, the most common resource was an election official, with nearly half of overseas voters reporting they received information from their State or local election officials. Over half (58%) never visited their State or local election website before the 2014 election; about a third (31%) visited it at least once.

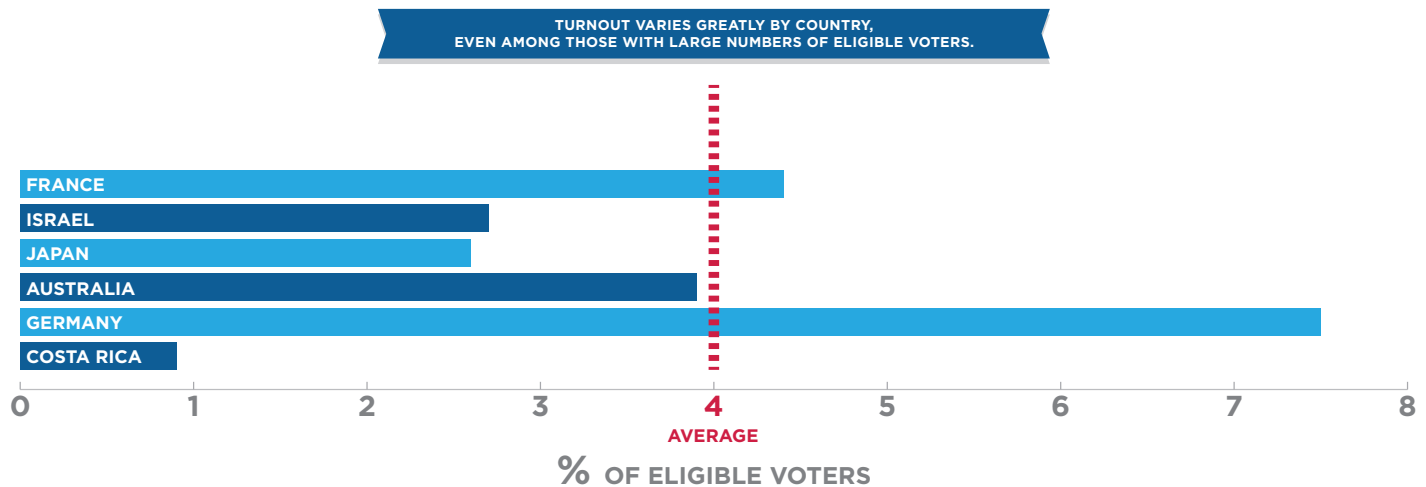


OVERSEAS CITIZENS WHO DO VOTE

Combining ballot request and submission data from States with the new estimates of eligible voters, FVAP calculated overseas voter turnout overall and by country. While 57% of registered voters who requested a ballot in 2014 said they voted, turnout among all eligible voters (not just those who registered and requested a ballot) is markedly lower.

93,000 BALLOTS FROM OVERSEAS CITIZENS WERE RECEIVED IN 2014.

THAT'S A 4% TURNOUT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS.



Overseas Voter Turnout: Some Pieces of the Puzzle

When attempting to interpret overall or country-specific turnout among overseas citizens, it is important to keep in mind what this research does and does not tell us about overseas voters.

We know:

- An estimated 4% of all Americans abroad who could vote did so in 2014; 5% did so in 2012.
- How the turnout rate varies by voters' country of residence.
- A great deal about one narrow segment of overseas citizens: those who registered to vote and requested a ballot.
- Overseas voter turnout follows the same pattern as stateside, in that it was higher for 2012's presidential election year than 2014's midterm election.

However, for the vast majority of overseas citizens—those who did not register to vote and request a ballot—we don't know:

- What percentage have any interest in voting in American elections. This proportion would help us assess whether the actual turnout rate is lower or higher than might be expected.
- What percentage want to vote but don't know how.
- What percentage have tried to vote but were thwarted by hurdles including: not knowing what State they should vote in, not being able to produce an address for that State, losing track of their State's registration or election deadlines, mail delay, etc.

FVAP's goal is that every overseas citizen who wants to vote can successfully do so. We will continue to leverage new methodologies to better understand registration, voting rates, and voting-related motivations and challenges among Americans abroad.

ABOUT FVAP AND UOCAVA

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (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.

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. States and territories may have supplementary laws and requirements, which are available at FVAP.gov.

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

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

Survey Method

Researchers obtained a complete data set of overseas citizens who asked for an absentee ballot in the 2014 General Election from State voter files. A probability-based sample of 36,000 registered voters was drawn from the data set, and 8,078 (26%) responded. Eligible respondents were civilian citizens of the United States who resided overseas for the last federal election on November 4, 2014.*

Sample members were mailed (or emailed, where available) an invitation to participate in the survey. They could submit responses online from September to December 2015, and initial nonrespondents received a paper option that could be mailed back. The sample was weighted to account for selection probabilities, mitigate the risk of nonresponse bias, and ensure that weighted estimates of demographic characteristics conformed with known population totals from the sampling frame.

The margin of sampling error is +1.51% at a 95% confidence level. As with all surveys there is a potential for additional non-sampling error, such as nonresponse error and measurement. The study design aimed to minimize the risks of such errors.

*Active duty military and their spouses are surveyed separately.