

Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)

Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services Focus Group Report

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Prepared for:
DMDC

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Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services Focus Group Report

Executive Summary

This study was conducted to assess the reaction of uniformed service personnel to the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services; specifically, to ensure user friendliness of the survey.

Participants in separate enlisted and officer groups, completed a paper version of the FVAP Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services. They were asked to note whether the question was clear, if they (and others) would understand the terms used, if they (and others) would be able to answer the question with the response options provided, and to note any other concerns. A group discussion was held examining each question. Several alternative question wordings and formats were presented and evaluated by the participants.

Taken together, focus group input indicates that the survey is already at a good level of usability. Widespread changes (beyond those already suggested in the cognitive appraisal) are not necessary to ensure a good level of usability. Participant consensus is that the survey is user friendly and that they believe uniformed military respondents would be able to understand and answer the questions posed.

Although the overall consensus about survey usability was favorable, there were a number of specific points (detailed in the following report) that should be reviewed and considered moving forward. In particular, there were three areas that have the potential to affect a number of survey questions:

1. Spell out acronyms once within a question – Several modifications (spelling out acronyms) were suggested by the cognitive appraisal report that resulted in longer questions. Overall, participants tended to prefer shorter questions. Participants contend that it is sufficient to spell out an acronym when it first occurs within a question, and then simply list the acronym after that within the same question.
2. Addition of “neutral” response option preferred – The survey uses several four-point response scales. One suggestion from the cognitive appraisal report was to change these to a five-point scale (essentially offering a “neutral” option where none existed before). Participants were in favor of this change.
3. Most alternative phrasing or formatting preferred – A number of other modifications were suggested by the cognitive appraisal report that preceded the focus groups. Each one of these alternatives (or an example of the alternative when it occurs in multiple places) was presented and evaluated. Overall, participants tended to prefer the alternatives or have no preference between the original and the alternative. Specific findings are in the following report.

It should be remembered that the results of these focus groups are one information source that can be used to guide modifications to future surveys. Best practice is to use multiple information sources when contemplating changes. The reactions and suggestions of end users (the focus group participants) are certainly an important perspective. However, this perspective needs to be considered within the broader context of other information sources (e.g., the cognitive appraisal report, past experience with the population in question, survey purpose). Consequently, content and format decisions should be carried out by experienced survey professionals who can consider all input and apply it within established survey design practices and principles.

Focus Group Methodology

Participant recruiting

Participants were invited to join the focus groups via a call list of reserve and National Guard service members located in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota. The list (provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center – DMDC) provided a pool of potential participants who met the following criteria: From one of six service groups (Army Reserve or National Guard, Air Force Reserve or Air Guard, Marine Reserve, or Navy Reserve); were deployed and out of the country during one of the last two national elections; still in reserves or guard but not presently on active status.

A participant recruiting screener script was developed and used to recruit participants via outbound phone calls. The screener included a brief introduction, an explanation of the purpose of the focus groups, and several demographic questions that were used to confirm the qualifications of potential participants. The screener also explained confidentiality and logistical matters (e.g., location of the focus group facility). The screener script was reviewed and approved by DMDC before use. A copy of the screener is in Appendix A. To maximize active participation in discussions, the groups were structured so that enlisted and officer groups were held separately.

At the close of recruiting, 10 enlisted personnel and eight (8) officers confirmed their intent to participate. On the evening of the focus group six (6) enlisted and four (4) officers attended. These no show rates were higher than the typical range of about 10% - 20%. However, DRC believes that the aggregate N size (across the two groups) is sufficient for the purposes of the usability focus groups. Usability testing literature widely indicates that the vast majority of usability issues can be identified with the participation of about 8-10 individuals who reflect the major characteristics of the sample in question. The primary characteristic of concern for generalization to the population in question is that of uniformed service members who had been overseas during the 2004 or 2006 U.S. elections. All 10 participants met that criterion.

All ten participants were non-activated reservists or National Guard members. The enlisted group consisted of six personnel, five male and one female. Two participants were in the Army Reserves, two in the Navy Reserves, one in the Air Force Reserves, and one in the Air National Guard. Their pay grades ranged from E-5 to E-7. The officer group consisted of four personnel, three male and one female. Three participants were in the Army Reserves and one in the Air National Guard. Their pay grade was either O-4 or O-5.

Focus group setting and process

Both focus groups were held at a professional focus group facility located in Edina, Minnesota on the evening of August 14th, 2007. The enlisted group began at 5:30 pm and concluded at 7:25 pm. The officer's group began at 7:40 pm and concluded at 9:30 pm. Audio tapes and a DVD were made for research reference purposes. These are maintained at DRC in accordance with the confidentiality agreement made with the focus group participants.

A professional focus group facilitator who had prior military population experience was employed to conduct the focus groups. Two researchers from DRC were in attendance in the facility's observation room. The focus group facilitator utilized a prepared protocol to conduct the groups. The protocol was constructed by DRC and the facilitator and had undergone prior review and approval by DMDC (see Appendix B).

Both groups followed the same sequence of events outlined in the protocol (see Appendix B). In brief, the sessions consisted of four segments: 1 – Introduction of the task, 2 – Participant completion of the mock up survey, 3 – Group discussion of each question and, 4 – Open discussion of other issues that might affect voting behavior or response to the survey.

Participants were encouraged to make notes and write comments about the survey as they completed it. They were encouraged to keep four key usability questions in mind as they carried out this task:

- Is the question clear?
- Are you familiar with the terms?
- Could you or others you know, be able to answer the question with the options provided?
- Do you have any other comments?

During the group discussion segment, participants were asked to share their observations and opinions about these four key questions. Where scripted or as necessary, the facilitator asked follow-up questions to clarify responses and poll for consensus. In particular, the facilitator presented (via a series of PowerPoint slides) several instances in which recommendations were made to modify the original wording of a question. The groups were presented with each of the alternative formatting options or question phrasing (as suggested in a previous report based on a cognitive appraisal of the survey). The protocol was constructed to present and explore all of the questions on the FVAP Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services.

Overall Perceptions of the Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services

Overall the survey was well put together, easy to answer, covered all the aspects of absentee voting for uniformed personnel, and had familiar terms. The cover page was typical and what the focus group participants expected. The groups indicated that other military personnel will have no problem with the survey, even those who are new to the service.

There was also general consensus about wanting to add a write-in box for every question with an “Other” option. Participants had the desire to explain their “other” response in more detail.

A majority of the survey items include terms with acronyms (Questions 14, 15, 20-42, 44, 46, and 49). Most of the focus group participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses. Any subsequent occurrences of the term within an item should be the acronym only. Participants expressed that spelling out the term in every instance makes the question too long and using acronyms was clear and understandable. They also indicated that the use of acronyms was acceptable because they are a part of the military culture.

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups:

Comments about the survey overall

- “Well put together”
- “Straight-forward”
- “All inclusive”
- “Easy compared to other surveys”
- “Others in the military would also react favorably, regardless of amount of experience in military, although younger people don’t always care about voting.”

Comments about the cover message

- “Good overview”
- “Typical government form”

Comments about other voting or survey issues

- Participants indicated that willingness to complete survey may be low because people in the military are heavily surveyed already.
- Participants indicated that active duty personnel tend to be more complacent about voting than reserves. Although it should be noted that this may have more to do with age differences and the lack of an established history of participating in elections among younger service members who are perceived as predominantly active duty service members.
- Military personnel may be more interested in voting when there is a close election and their vote can make a difference.

Participant Comments about Individual Questions

The following feedback is a compilation of suggestions and feedback given by respondents in both focus groups. A copy of the survey questions is included in Appendix C.

Question 1

The participants would like to see more response options (e.g., Army Reserves, Army National Guard, etc.). There is currently no place to specify National Guard and/or Reserves.

Question 2

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 3

A majority of the focus group participants preferred the Question 3 alternative version (Table 1).

Table 1: Question 3

Original	Alternative
On November 2, 2004, where were you stationed or if you were stationed on board a ship, where was your homeport country?	On November 2, 2004, where were you stationed (if you were stationed on board a ship, where was your homeport country)?

Question 4

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 5

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 6

There were some questions where the groups' preference was divided between the original question format and the alternative. Though, while there was disagreement, it should be noted that no one had any major objections to the alternative wordings.

For Question 6, five participants preferred the original version because it was shorter, concise, and easier to read. They also stated that the alternative was too wordy. They believe that the definition of “family members” in the alternative version is repetitive and unnecessary (Table 2).

Table 2: Question 6

Original	Alternative
<p>Not counting yourself, how many family members, <u>who were at least 18 years old</u>, lived with you at your duty station as of November 2, 2004?</p> <p>NOTE: Include your spouse and anyone related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption, who depends on you for more than half of their support.</p>	<p>Not counting yourself, how many family members <u>who were at least 18 years old</u> lived with you at your duty station as of November 2, 2004?</p> <p>By family members, we mean your spouse and anyone of voting age (18 years and older) who is related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption <u>and</u> depends on you for more than half of their support.</p>

Question 7

The focus group respondents thought the addition “Unsure” as a response option might be necessary as a younger person may not know if they are registered.

Question 8

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 9

Nine out of ten focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey questions that currently have 4-point response scales (see Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

Table 3: Question 9

Original	Alternative
<p>How interested were you in the U.S. elections held on November 2, 2004?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Very interested o Somewhat interested o Not that interested o Not interested at all 	<p>How interested were you in the U.S. elections held on November 2, 2004?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Very interested o Somewhat interested o Neither interested nor uninterested o Somewhat uninterested o Very uninterested

Question 10

There were some questions that the majority of the focus group participants did not prefer the alternative version provided. All of the participants preferred the original Question 10 more than the alternative (Table 4). Participants indicated the alternative was too wordy and that the additional text was not needed.

Table 4: Question 10

Original	Alternative
Did you vote in the November 2004 election and if so, did you vote in person or by absentee ballot?	A lot of people do not get to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Did you vote in the November 2004 election and if so, did you vote in person or by absentee ballot?

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 10:

- Alternative version is “too much,” “not necessary,” and “causes respondents to lose focus.”
- “No one is concerned that respondents would feel pressured to say they voted when they really didn't because the survey is confidential.”

Question 11

Almost all of the participants disliked the first response option of Question 11 “I was not interested in voting, too busy, forgot.” They indicated that combining lack of interest and forgetting to vote with being too busy to vote was not appropriate. They said that “too busy to vote” indicated that the person was unable to (i.e., wanted to vote but couldn't), while the other two terms indicated unwillingness to vote.

The alternative version for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) also applies to multiple questions within the survey. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

Table 5: Question 11

Original	Alternative																					
<p>Which of the following were reasons why you did not vote in the November 2004 election? <i>Mark all that apply</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o I was not interested in voting, too busy, forgot o I could not register to vote o I had no candidate preference o I did not think my vote would matter o I did not know how to get an absentee ballot o My absentee ballot arrived too late o My absentee ballot did not arrive at all o The absentee voting process was too complicated o Other 	<p>Did you not vote in the November 2004 election for the following reasons? <i>Mark ONE answer for each</i></p>																					
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	My absentee ballot arrived too late																					
	My absentee ballot did not arrive at all																					
	The absentee voting process was too complicated																					
	Other																					

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 11:

- “I did not know how to register to vote” could be added as a response option
- Could add another answer to show that voting was not talked about or emphasized in their unit, like “My unit was not interested.”
- “Other” category should include a space for respondents to write out their answer.
- Those who preferred the alternate format think it would force respondents to consider each reason more carefully. Those who like the original version think it is less complicated than the alternate format.
- If the alternate format is used, one respondent suggests adding “NA” response

Question 12

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 13

There were some questions on which group preference was divided between the original question format and the alternative. While there was disagreement, it should be noted that no one had any major objections to the alternative wordings. There was no strong preference expressed for either version for Question 13 (Table 6). Those who liked the original version were uncomfortable with the word “first” because it implies that there is a second or third request, and it would not seem right not to ask about them as well.

Table 6: Question 13

Original	Alternative
In what month did you request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?	In what month did you first request an absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?

Question 14

A majority of the survey items include terms with acronyms (Questions 14, 15, 20-42, 44, 46, and 49). Most of the focus group participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses. Any subsequent occurrences of the term within an item should be the acronym only. Participants expressed that spelling out the term in every instance makes the question too long and using acronyms was clear and understandable because they are a part of the military culture. Most of the participants preferred the original Question 14 (Table 7).

Table 7: Question 14

Original	Alternative
The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, is a request for registration and absentee ballot. Did you use the FPCA to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election or did you use another method? <input type="radio"/> I used the FPCA <i>Continue with Q15</i> <input type="radio"/> I used another method <i>Skip to Q16</i>	The Federal Post Card Application (Standard Form 76) is a request for registration and absentee ballot. Did you use the Federal Post Card Application to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election or did you use another method? <input type="radio"/> I used the Federal Post Card Application <i>Continue with Q15</i> <input type="radio"/> I used another method <i>Skip to Q16</i>

There was a suggestion made to put images of the forms next to their terms in order to aid respondents in remembering if they used a given form.

Question 15

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 15:

- There was some confusion as to whether “military channels” could include the internet because they have access to military internet and civilian internet. Should define “military channels.”
- One group says: “Mark all that apply” is better than “Mark only one” because source of FPCA could fall into two categories – a military website could also be considered a military channel.
- The other group says: “Mark only one” is appropriate because only one source actually delivers the ballot.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 16

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 17

An option could be added to the possible responses “Yes, but not in time to vote.”

Question 18

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 19

The majority preferred the alternative version for this question (Table 8).

Table 8: Question 19

Original	Alternative
When did you complete and return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)? <input type="radio"/> July 2004 or earlier <input type="radio"/> August 2004 <input type="radio"/> September 2004 <input type="radio"/> October 2004 <input type="radio"/> November 2004 <input type="radio"/> I did not return it <input type="radio"/> Do not recall	19a. Did you complete and return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election? <input type="radio"/> Yes <i>Continue with Q19b</i> <input type="radio"/> No <i>Skip to Q20</i> <hr/> 19b. When did you return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)? <input type="radio"/> July 2004 or earlier <input type="radio"/> August 2004 <input type="radio"/> September 2004 <input type="radio"/> October 2004 <input type="radio"/> November 2004 <input type="radio"/> Do not recall

Participants indicated that if the original version is used, then the response option “I did not return it” should be moved to the top and changed to “I did not complete and return it.”

Question 20

The majority of the participants believe that the word “use” should be changed to “complete and return” for Question 20 (Table 9).

Table 9: Question 20

Original	Alternative
The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), Standard Form 186, is a back-up ballot used if you are overseas and you do not receive your regular absentee ballot. Did you use the FWAB in the November 2, 2004 election?	The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (Standard Form 186) is a back-up ballot used if you are overseas and you do not receive your regular absentee ballot. Did you complete and return the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in the November 2, 2004 election?

The original version of Question 20 follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail). However the participants preferred the grammatical text change displayed in the Question 20 alternative.

Question 21

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 22

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 22:

- Move “I already returned a regular absentee ballot” at the top of the list so the survey respondent does not have to read the rest of the list.
- The response directions “Mark all that apply” may be appropriate for this question.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 23

The group estimated that between 20% to 50% or more of the military population would know about the UVAO.

Question 23 already follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 24

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 24:

- Seems like too many answer options.
- Possibly combine “Obtain the FPCA” with “Complete the FPCA” and combine “Obtain the FWAB” with “Complete the FWAB”

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 25

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 26

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

Some focus group participants suggested moving “Did not need any voting information or assistance” to top of list because it is the most common response and respondents won’t have to read all the other responses

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 27

There was unanimous agreement that the alternative, in which the word “use” was changed to “visit,” was the preferred version for this question (Table 10).

Table 10: Question 27

Original	Alternative
The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) web site, www.fvap.gov , provides voting-related information and resources. During 2004, did you use this web site?	The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) web site, www.fvap.gov , provides voting-related information and resources. During 2004, did you visit this web site?

The original version of Question 27 follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail). However the participants preferred the grammatical text change displayed in the Question 27 alternative.

Question 28

A majority of the participants agreed that the word “use” should be changed to “visit.”

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 29

The participants agreed that the word “used” should be changed to “visited.”

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 30

The participants agreed that the word “use” should be changed to “visit.”

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 31

The participants agreed (for Question 31) that the second occurrence of VAG should not be spelled out. They also indicated that the year should be moved after the acronym (see Table 11).

Table 11: Question 31

Original	Alternative	Participant preferred version
The Department of Defense <i>Voting Assistance Guide 2004-05 (VAG)</i> provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the <i>VAG</i> for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?	The Department of Defense Voting Assistance Guide (VAG) 2004-05 provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the Voting Assistance Guide for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?	The Department of Defense Voting Assistance Guide (VAG) 2004-05 provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the VAG for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?

The original version of Question 31 follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail). However the participants preferred the year placement change displayed in the Question 20 “Participant preferred version”.

Question 32

Other possible answer categories may be “Post office,” “Someone in my unit,” or “Library.”

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 33

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 34

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 35

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 36

A majority of the focus group participants preferred the original version of Question 36 (Table 12). The participants indicated the original was worded well enough as to not be confused with the toll-free number in Question 40. While the group was not opposed to the emphasis on the word “automated,” they indicated the repeated words “automated telephone system” were not necessary.

Note: italics or bold should be considered instead of underlining for emphasis. An underline generally indicates a link to a web site (especially in web surveys).

Table 12: Question 36

Original	Alternative
The Department of Defense Voting Information Center (VIC) is an automated telephone system that provides citizens with information about candidates. It is toll-free from over 64 countries. During 2004, did you use the VIC?	The Department of Defense Voting Information Center (VIC) is an <u>automated</u> telephone system that provides citizens with information about candidates. It is toll-free from over 64 countries. During 2004, did you use the Voting Information Center’s <u>automated</u> telephone service?

Question 36 already follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 37

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 38

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 39

Of the participants who expressed a preference (“I could not get through” versus “I could not get through when I called”), most preferred the alternative – “I could not get through when I called” (5 vs. 3, with 2 expressing no preference) see Table 13.

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

Table 13: Question 39

Original	Alternative
<p>During 2004, which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the VIC? <i>Mark all that apply</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I did not know about it <input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for <input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number <input type="radio"/> I got all the information I needed from other sources <input type="radio"/> I did not need it <input type="radio"/> It was a long distance call <input type="radio"/> I could not get through <input type="radio"/> A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence <input type="radio"/> Other 	<p>During 2004, which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the VIC? <i>Mark all that apply</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I did not know about it <input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for <input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number <input type="radio"/> I got all the information I needed from other sources <input type="radio"/> I did not need it <input type="radio"/> It was a long distance call <input type="radio"/> I could not get through when I called <input type="radio"/> A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence <input type="radio"/> Other

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 40

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 40:

- No concern about confusing the FVAP toll-free number with the VIC – wording of each question makes it clear the difference between the two. No confusion between this question and VIC question (36).
- One participant suggested moving this question next to the Web site questions (30 & 31) because they both deal with aspects of the FVAP.

Question 40 already follows the preferred acronym guidelines suggested by the focus groups in which the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 41

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 42

There was agreement that the alternative was the preferred version for this question (“I could not get through” versus “I could not get through when I called”).

Table 14: Question 42

Original	Alternative
Which of the following explains why you did not use the FVAP toll-free telephone service in 2004? Mark all that apply	Which of the following explains why you did not use the FVAP toll-free telephone service in 2004? Mark all that apply
<input type="radio"/> I did not know about it	<input type="radio"/> I did not know about it
<input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for	<input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for
<input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number	<input type="radio"/> I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number
<input type="radio"/> I got all the information I needed from other sources	<input type="radio"/> I got all the information I needed from other sources
<input type="radio"/> I did not need it	<input type="radio"/> I did not need it
<input type="radio"/> It was a long distance call	<input type="radio"/> It was a long-distance call
<input type="radio"/> I could not get through	<input type="radio"/> I could not get through when I called
<input type="radio"/> A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence	<input type="radio"/> A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence
<input type="radio"/> Other	<input type="radio"/> Other

The suggested alternative for Question 11 (changing the “mark all that apply” questions to “mark yes or no”) can be applied to this question. The focus group participants had split opinions about the two question formats (see Question 11, Table 5). However, they agreed that they would be able to complete the question either way it was presented. The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 11, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, and 42.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 43

Participants preferred the original Question 43 to the alternative (Table 15). While both groups approved the suggested insertion of a neutral response option, they indicated that the added instructional text was superfluous. Everyone was clear on how to use the last column of responses without the additional instruction.

Table 15: Question 43

Original	Alternative
Overall, if you received voting information from any of the following sources in 2004, how satisfied were you with the voting information you received? <i>Mark ONE answer for each source</i>	Overall, if you received voting information from any of the following sources in 2004, how satisfied were you with the voting information you received? Also indicate those services you did not use. <i>Mark ONE answer for each source</i>

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

Question 44

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail). Note: In this case, due to space considerations, it may be appropriate to display the acronym only, not all of the words spelled out. At this point in the survey, the acronym FVAP would have been seen numerous times and should be well understood.

Question 45

A majority of the focus group participants prefer the addition of a neutral response option to the survey items that currently have 4-point response scales (see Question 9, Table 3). The survey items that would be affected by a change are: 9, 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, and 45.

The following are some illustrative comments from the focus groups about Question 10:

- Add “Marine Times” to “Army, Navy, Air Force, or Federal Times” category
- Add “Foreign News Network” as possible source

Question 46

This question contains acronyms. Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Question 47

There was some disagreement among the focus group participants about the original and alternative versions of Question 47 (Table 16). Half of the participants preferred the alternative and the other half indicated the new wording was inappropriate because the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives elections are not exclusively held in non-presidential election years.

Table 6: Question 47

Original	Alternative
Did you vote in the November 2002 election (non-Presidential election for Federal offices) to the best of your recollection?	Elections for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives were held in <u>2002</u> . Did you vote in that election?

Question 48

There were no concerns raised about this survey question.

Question 49

This question should contain an acronym (FVAP). Participants preferred that the first time a term appears in a question it should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses with subsequent references in the same question using the acronym only (see Question 14 for more detail).

Appendices

Appendix A – Screener Script

Appendix B – Focus Group Protocol

Appendix C – Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services (Survey Mockup Used in the Focus Groups)

Appendix A – Screener Script

FVAP Focus Groups Survey Content SCREENER FINAL

Service person's name:

Phone number:

Date of call:

Hello, I'm [REDACTED], calling on behalf of Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), a research company. This is not a sales call of any kind.

Is this [REDACTED] (service member name)? *[If not, ask for the service member. You can proceed on to the following paragraphs if the family member wants to know what the call is about.]*

We are conducting focus groups for a client within the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). The focus groups are about whether service members have been given adequate support in voting in national elections while service members are deployed overseas.

You were identified as a possible focus group participant because you live in the Twin Cities area and were OCONUS during one of the recent election cycles. We want to gather service members like you for a discussion about a new survey that will look at how well the absentee voting process works for service members.

Your feedback will help improve this survey, so that future survey-takers will find it more convenient and easy to use.

We are seeking service members who would be willing to participate in a two-hour focus group that will take place on Tuesday, August 14th. I need to let you know that while we cannot give you service credit for your time, we will reimburse you for your expenses.

Because we are trying to recruit a diverse group of participants, I would like to take a couple of minutes to ask you a few questions to see if you fit the criteria for our small group discussion.

Is now a good time to talk?

____ YES [PROCEED to QUESTION 1]

____ NO [ASK:]

Would another time be better? *[If "no," thank and terminate. If "yes", set appointment time.]*

Good. Then I'll call you back on _____ at _____ am/pm.

IF VOICES OBJECTIONS/CONCERNS OR WANTS MORE INFO

"I certainly understand your concerns. I would appreciate the opportunity to tell you a bit more about the project before you decide whether or not to participate." [Pause briefly then]

IF WILLING TO LISTEN FURTHER / WANTS MORE INFO THEN → Our client, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) is supporting the Federal Voter Assistance Program in evaluating how well the overseas voting process is working and how it might be improved. A survey will be sent to all military members after the Presidential elections in 2008. DMDC's mission is to make sure that this survey is easy to understand, and covers the critical issues.

The focus groups are one part of this effort to ensure that the survey is "user friendly." We believe that your views and input can help ensure that fellow service members will find the survey convenient and easy to use. Your input can help to shape this survey process for tens or hundreds of thousands of fellow service members.

CONFIDENTIALITY INFORMATION

Your input at the group will be kept confidential. No one from the Defense Department will be present at the focus groups. We will be recording the sessions, but these are used for research purposes only. DVDs of the sessions will be used to review opinions, views and suggestions made for the final report. It is important that you know that your input will be combined with that of other service members present and will be presented in a report that does not identify individuals. Your name will not appear anywhere in the final report nor in the official archive materials for the project.

IF NO, OR STILL VOICES CONCERNS OR OBJECTION – THEN "Thank you very much for the time you have taken to listen to me today. Have a good day."

QUALIFYING QUESTIONS:

1. Are you currently active duty, reserve components, or National Guard?

[recruit ONLY Reserves or National Guard]

___ Reserves

___ National Guard

[If one of the above, continue with question 2]

___ Active duty **[go to exit paragraph 1]**

___ Other **[go to exit paragraph 1]**

2. As a reservist or National Guard member – are you currently activated?

___ NOT activated

[continue with question 3]

___ Activated **[go to exit paragraph 2]**

___ Other **[go to exit paragraph 2]**

3. Can I confirm which service you are in? **[please recruit an equal mix of services]**

Army National Guard, or Army Reserve

Navy Reserve

Air Guard, or Air Force Reserve

Marine Corps Reserve

None of the above. **[Ask which service. Go to exit paragraph 3]**

4. Also, can I verify whether you are an officer or enlisted member?

Enlisted **[if enlisted continue with question 5, recruiting for Group 1 - Tuesday, August 14th at 5:30 p.m.]**

Officer **[if officer continue with question 5, recruiting for Group 2 - Tuesday, August 14th at 7:30 p.m.]**

None of the above. **[Go to exit paragraph 4]**

5. We are primarily seeking service members who were deployed overseas during at least one of the last voting cycles. Can you please tell me if you were overseas:

During the last Presidential election – This would cover from about August 2004 to November 2004.

[continue to Invitation if they were overseas at any time during this period (does not have to be all four months)]

During the last mid-term election – This would cover from about August 2006 to November 2006.

[continue to Invitation if they were overseas at any time during this period (does not have to be all four months)]

During some other time period. [If neither of the above, note the overseas service period
_____] **[go to exit paragraph 5]**

INVITATION:

"Mr./Ms. _____ we would like to offer an invitation to you to participate in this focus group discussion. During this session, you will be asked to complete a brief survey and participate with other service members in a discussion about the survey experience and content.

The group session is held in the evening, and we will be offering a light meal. The session takes about 2 hours from beginning to end.

We will be reimbursing participants for expenses.

I do need to let you know that your travel time and your time in the group will NOT be considered creditable toward your active service time.

[If they question why] – Reaching out to so many different chains-of-command would create an administrative bottleneck. For example, activated service members may not be reimbursed, under the dual compensation statutes.

Would you be available to participate in the group we have scheduled for Tuesday, August 14th at [5:30 p.m. – for enlisted or 7:30p.m. for officers]

As I said, the discussion session will take approximately two hours and will be held at a professional focus group facility (Cook Research) located [please describe location to participant.]

We would like you to arrive at [5:15p.m. for enlisted or 7:15 p.m. for officers] to sign in and enjoy some refreshments. **Will your schedule allow you to participate?"**

___ YES [continue]

___ NO [Terminate call → "I am sorry to hear that. Thank you for your time and attention today."]

"We will call to remind you the day before the discussion is to be held. What is the best number to reach you during the ...

DAY: _____

EVENING: _____

We can also send an e-mail reminder or send a reminder via postal mail. Would you like us to send you an e-mail reminder? [If so get or confirm email address they want to use.]

EMAIL: _____

[If postal mail] To what address should I send this letter?"

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, AND ZIP: _____

Thank you very much for your time. We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, August 14th at [5:15 p.m. for enlisted or 7:15 p.m. for officers] Have a good day.

EXIT PARAGRAPH 1

I'm sorry [NAME]. While you fit the criteria for our group discussion, we already have enough Active duty personnel. If an opening occurs may we call you back?

EXIT PARAGRAPH 2

I'm sorry [NAME]. While you fit the criteria for our group discussion, we already have enough Activated reservists or National Guard members. If an opening occurs may we call you back?

EXIT PARAGRAPH 3

I'm sorry [NAME]. While you fit the criteria for our group discussion, we already have enough personnel in your branch of service. If an opening occurs may we call you back?

EXIT PARAGRAPH 4

I'm sorry [NAME]. There may be a problem with our call list. We are recruiting for service personnel who are officers or enlisted members and you do not seem to fit in either category. Thank you for your time.

EXIT PARAGRAPH 5

I'm sorry [NAME]. While you fit the criteria for our group discussion, we already have enough personnel who were overseas during the same time that you were. If an opening occurs may we call you back?

Focus Group participant requirements

– Both Groups must only be non-activated Reservists or National Guard – NO ACTIVE DUTY or activated Guard and Reserves.

Group 1 – Enlisted 10 – 12 total participants August 14, 2007 5:30 pm	Group 2 – Officers 10 – 12 total participants August 14, 2007 7:30 pm
Hard criteria	Hard criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>Enlisted</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>Officers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Approximately equal numbers from the four service branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Approximately equal numbers from the four service branches
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Overseas during August – November 2004 or August – November 2006.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Overseas during August – November 2004 or August – November 2006.
Soft criteria (Can fall between ranges given)	Soft criteria (Can fall between ranges given)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mixed gender/sex group – Between 50% – 50% and 80% - 20% male/female	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mixed gender/sex group – Between 50% – 50% and 80% - 20% male/female

Appendix B – Focus Group Protocol

FVAP FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

I. MODERATOR INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

- My name is Jeanne Kalien. I am working for Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), an independent research company that specializes in designing and conducting surveys for our client companies.
- This particular project is for a client within the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). They have asked DRC to review the Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services.
- Today I will be asking you your opinions about the survey that you are about to complete. Your feedback will help improve this survey, so that other service members will find it convenient and easy to use.
- I want to assure you that the information you provide on the survey and everything we discuss today will remain confidential. Whatever information we obtain from you will **not** be shared with anyone in any way that identifies who you are (for example, we won't use your names in the report of the findings that we'll be writing). Do you have any questions about this?
- There is a camera that will be recording our conversation as well as observers that will be taking notes. Again, this is for research reference purposes only. [If asked about this...The recording of this group will only be shown to approved researchers. No one in your chain of command will be able to see it.]
- Another important piece of information. The restroom facilities are located _____ . There are also refreshments _____. So please use that door if you have to leave the room for a few minutes.

B. Focus group format

- Our session today will be conducted in two phases: First, we will ask you to complete the sample survey I'm going to pass out to you, and, after you have completed it, we will discuss your impressions of the survey.

C. Focus Group process

Before we go on, let me tell you how a discussion group like this works.

- 1) My role is to facilitate the discussion and make sure we cover all of our agenda. I will also serve as timekeeper.
- 2) I want to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll be asking of you. We want to obtain your reactions to the survey and we are interested in both positive and negative opinion.

- 3) We have quite a bit of material to cover in about an hour and a half. I want all of you to get a chance to speak. I would like to encourage every one to contribute to the discussion. So that we can clearly understand your thought, please express your responses by speaking, not just by shaking your head or gesturing.
- 4) Also, I ask you in advance to understand that sometimes I may have to stop the discussion if we get off the topic so that I can make sure we cover everything we are supposed to cover. So there may be times when I ask you to keep your comments brief and related to the issue at hand. I'd also be very grateful if you speak one at a time so I can hear everyone's comments.

Are there any questions about what I have just covered? If there are no other questions, then let's begin.

II. GROUP INTRODUCTIONS

To help me get to know you better, I'd like to go around the table and have each of you tell me a few things about yourselves.

Could you each tell me your first name and your service branch?

Now that we have had a minute to get acquainted, I would like to shift our focus to completing the survey.

III. POST-ELECTION VOTING SURVEY

We will start by having you take the survey. I would like you to take note of a couple of things as you answer the questions.

- Are they clear?
- Are you familiar with the terms in the questions?
- Could you or others you know, be able to answer the questions with the options provided?
- Other comments

I want to encourage you to write down any questions, comments, or concerns you have while taking the survey. We prefer that you write your notes, questions, or comments directly on the survey form. In addition, a pad of paper and pen or pencil has been provided. We will discuss these issues later in session.

Keep in mind while taking the questionnaire that most of the questions on the survey relate to the November 2004 election. If you were overseas at this time please answer accordingly.

If you were overseas during the November 2006 election (U.S. Senate and House of Representatives elections), please answer the questions for this time period. That is, when a question asks about November 2004, answer for 2006 instead.

If you were not overseas during an election please imagine what it would have been like to vote in an election while stationed overseas and answer to the best of your ability.

Do you have any questions before we start?

IV. OVERALL SURVEY PERCEPTIONS

[Note: General opening questions are in **bold type**. The specific points that may come up in discussion are addressed through the potential prompts listed as bullets.]

A. Overall reaction/ice breaker

To start off the discussion, I'd like to hear your general impression and reaction to completing this survey.

- ease of answering
- favorable, unfavorable
- impressions of the cover message
- General impressions of the survey (e.g., flow, feel, etc.)

B. Reactions of others

Let's speculate on how you feel others in the military would react to this survey.

- ease of answering
- reaction of those who have significant experience in the military
- reaction of those new to the military

V. **INDIVIDUAL ITEM DISCUSSION**

Now I would like to go through each question on the survey. I would like us to review each question as a group. For each question we would like to know if it was easy to understand, if the text should be changed in any way, and whether all military personnel would understand it. I will also show some alternative questions to some items.

For each question

- Review of current phrasing and possible changes
- Ask about their understanding of the question (terms, grammar, meaning).
- Check for respondent understanding of question, terms, ability to answer question (e.g., would they have the knowledge to answer),
- Are the necessary response alternatives included
- Any other comments?

For questions with alternatives

- Ask which is preferred - the original phrasing or alternate phrasing
- Which is clearer? More concise?

1. What is your Branch of Service?
2. What is your pay grade?
3. On November 2, 2004, where were you stationed or if you were stationed on board a ship, where was your homeport country?

3 Alternative

On November 2, 2004, where were you stationed (if you were stationed on board a ship, where was your homeport country)?

4. On November 2, 2004, how long had you been stationed at your location in Question 3?
5. What was your age on November 2, 2004?
6. Not counting yourself, how many family members, who were at least 18 years old, lived with you at your duty station as of November 2, 2004?

NOTE: Include your spouse and anyone related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption, who depends on you for more than half of their support.

6 Alternative

Not counting yourself, how many family members who were at least 18 years old lived with you at your duty station as of November 2, 2004?

By family members, we mean your spouse and anyone of voting age (18 years and older) who is related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption and depends on you for more than half of their support.

7. In 2004, were you registered to vote in the United States?
8. As of the November 2, 2004 election, what state or territory was your legal voting residence?
9. How interested were you in the U.S. elections held on November 2, 2004?

9 Alternative response options

"Very interested"

"Somewhat interested"

"Neither interested nor uninterested"

"Somewhat uninterested"

"Very uninterested"

Explore the addition of the 5th option – what are some reactions to the neutral response option. Is it a needed/appropriate addition?

The neutral response option could be added to other questions as well (e.g., Questions 25, 29, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45) but we only need to discuss it this once.

10. Did you vote in the November 2004 election and if so, did you vote in person or by absentee ballot?

10 Alternative

A lot of people do not get to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Did you vote in the November 2004 election and if so, did you vote in person or by absentee ballot?

11. Which of the following were reasons why you did not vote in the November 2004 election?

11 wording Alternative

Which of the following reasons explain why you did not vote in the November 2004 election?

Explore the "Other" option – Did anyone mark this response option? Why would other service members mark this response? Does there need to be a fill in the blank option after other?

11 response option and wording Alternative

Did you not vote in the November 2004 election for the following reasons? **Mark ONE answer for each**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
I was not interested in voting, too busy, forgot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could not register to vote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had no candidate preference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not think my vote would matter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to get an absentee ballot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My absentee ballot arrived too late	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My absentee ballot did not arrive at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The absentee voting process was too complicated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The yes/no response option could be added to other questions as well (e.g., Questions 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 39, 42) but we only need to discuss it this once.

12. Even though you did not vote, did you request an absentee ballot for the November 2004 election?
13. In what month did you request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?

13 Alternative

In what month did you **first** request **an** absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?

14. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, is a request for registration and absentee ballot. Did you use the FPCA to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election or did you use another method?

14 Alternative

The Federal Post Card Application (Standard Form 76) is a request for registration and absentee ballot. Did you use the Federal Post Card Application to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election or did you use another method?

15. Where did you obtain your FPCA to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election?

Should question 15 be a “mark only one” or a “mark all that apply?”

16. During 2004, did you receive notification from your local election official that your absentee ballot had been received?
17. Did you receive the absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election?
18. When did you receive your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?
19. When did you complete and return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?

**Is the response “I did not return it” easy to find? Will people see it? Does it need to be called out by putting it at the top of the responses or as a separate question?
For example - “Did you complete and return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?”**

20. The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), Standard Form 186, is a back-up ballot used if you are overseas and you do not receive your regular absentee ballot. Did you use the FWAB in the November 2, 2004 election?

20 Alternative

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (Standard Form 186) is a back-up ballot used if you are overseas and you do not receive your regular absentee ballot. Did you **complete and return** the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in the November 2, 2004 election?

21. When did you complete and return the FWAB for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?
22. What is the ONE MAIN REASON you did not use the FWAB for the November 2, 2004 election?
23. Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs), or Counselors, are designated individuals who provide accurate, non-partisan voting information and assistance to citizens who wish to vote. During 2004, did you receive voting information or assistance from your UVAO?

Is the UVAO someone a few, most, or all service members would know about?

24. During 2004, which of the following kinds of information or assistance did you receive from your UVAO?
25. Overall, in 2004, how satisfied were you with the information or assistance you received from your UVAO?
26. Which of the following reasons explain why you did not receive voting information or assistance from your UVAO in 2004?
27. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) web site, www.fvap.gov, provides voting-related information and resources. During 2004, did you use this web site?

27 Alternative

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) web site, www.fvap.gov, provides voting-related information and resources. During 2004, did you **visit** this web site?

28. During 2004, how many times did you use the FVAP web site (to the best of your recollection)?
29. Overall, how satisfied were you with the FVAP web site when you used it in 2004?
30. Which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the FVAP web site in 2004?
31. The Department of Defense *Voting Assistance Guide 2004-05 (VAG)* provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the *VAG* for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?

31 Alternative

The Department of Defense *Voting Assistance Guide (VAG) 2004-05* provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the *Voting Assistance Guide* for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?

32. Where did you obtain the *VAG* in 2004?

Explore the “Other” option – Did anyone mark this response option? Why would other service members mark this response? Does there need to be a fill in the blank option after other?

- 33. During 2004, what kind of information were you looking for in the VAG?
- 34. Overall, how would you rate the VAG as a reference on absentee voting procedures when you used it in 2004?
- 35. What is the main reason you did not use the VAG in 2004?
- 36. The Department of Defense Voting Information Center (VIC) is an automated telephone system that provides citizens with information about candidates. It is toll-free from over 64 countries. During 2004, did you use the VIC?

36 Alternative

The Department of Defense Voting Information Center (VIC) is an automated telephone system that provides citizens with information about candidates. It is toll-free from over 64 countries. During 2004, did you use the Voting Information Center's automated telephone service?

Explore the VIC if the focus group participants appear to be unfamiliar with it.

- 37. During 2004, about how many times did you use the VIC (to the best of your recollection)?
- 38. Overall, how satisfied were you with the VIC in 2004?
- 39. During 2004, which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the VIC?

39 Alternative response option

"I could not get through when I called"

- 40. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) provides a toll-free telephone service that allows a caller to ask FVAP staff for voting information or assistance. Did you use this service to talk with a FVAP staff member in 2004?

Could the FVAP toll-free telephone service be confused with the Voting Information Center (VIC)? (see question 36)

- 41. Overall, how satisfied were you with the assistance you received in 2004 when you called the FVAP toll-free telephone service?
- 42. Which of the following explains why you did not use the FVAP toll-free telephone service in 2004?

42 Alternative response options

"I could not get through when I called"

"It was a long-distance call"

- 43. Overall, if you received voting information from any of the following sources in 2004, how satisfied were you with the voting information you received?

43 Alternative

Overall, if you received voting information from any of the following sources in 2004, how satisfied were you with the voting information or assistance you received? Also indicate those services you did not use.

Respondents may not notice the last response option – Does the addition of the statement “Also indicate those services you did not use” suffice or should the option be highlighted in some other way?

This issue comes up for questions 44 and 45, also. – If there doesn’t seem to be an issue, then it does not need to be discussed for questions 44 and 45.

44. If you used any of the following sources of voting information in 2004, how useful was each one for voting information?
45. If you used any of the following sources to obtain any kind of voting information in 2004, how useful was each one for voting information?
46. Some states allow you to fax voting materials such as your absentee ballot request or the completed ballot itself. During 2004, did you fax any of the following voting materials?
47. Did you vote in the November 2002 election (non-Presidential election for Federal offices) to the best of your recollection?

47 Alternative

Elections for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives were held in 2002. Did you vote in that election?

48. How did you vote in the November 2002 election?
 - I voted in person
 - I voted by absentee ballot
 - Do not recall
49. In the space below, please provide any comments you have about this questionnaire, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or the absentee voting process in 2004.

VI. OTHER VOTING/SURVEY ISSUES

A. Discuss additional voting factors

- That completes our discussion of the specific questions in the survey. I’d like to take a few minutes to ask if there are other factors that, in your opinion, that can affect service member’s opportunity to cast an absentee ballot or get information about the overseas voting process.
 - Issues involved in deployment that might affect the ability, willingness, and/or opportunity to vote
 - Is there anything else you can think of that should be considered for inclusion?
 - Any other comments about what was it like at their post getting voting information and carrying out absentee voting?

B. Other issues:

- Are there any other voting related issues you think are important that we have not yet taken into account?

VII. CLOSING

I'm going to check with those in the back to see if they have any quick follow-up questions.

That is all we have to talk about today. I'd like to thank you for your time and valuable input on this survey.

Appendix C – Post-Election Voting Survey of the Uniformed Services (Survey Mockup Used in the Focus Groups)

You have been randomly selected to participate in this survey. Your answers to these questions, along with your comments or opinions, can help change the absentee voting process to make it easier to vote.

This survey is conducted by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) whose mission is to inform and educate U.S. citizens of their right to vote and to foster participation in the democratic process. The FVAP has retained the services of ABC Consulting to assist in developing, conducting, and analyzing the survey.

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey in the enclosed return envelope. **You may also complete this questionnaire using the Internet.** We strongly encourage you to use the Internet version because it is the fastest and most efficient way to take the survey. To access the Internet version, go to:

<https://survey.com/usfvap2004>

Your access code is printed in the shaded area at the bottom of this page.

PRIVACY NOTICE:

AUTHORITY: The authority to solicit the information requested in this survey is contained in the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (42 U.S.C. 1973 ff).

PURPOSE: The information obtained is used to evaluate and improve the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

USES: This information will be used for research and analysis purposes only. No identifying information will be retained after completion and return of the survey. ABC Consulting is conducting this survey for the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

DISCLOSURE: Voluntary. Failure to respond will not result in any penalty to you. However, maximum participation is encouraged so that the data will be complete and representative.

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

- Please use a blue or black ink pen when marking your responses.
- Mark your responses the “right way” according to the following example.

Right Wrong

ABOUT YOU

1. What is your Branch of Service?

- Army
- Navy
- Marine Corps
- Air Force
- Coast Guard

2. What is your pay grade?

**Warrant
Officer**

- W-1
- W-2
- W-3
- W-4
- W-5

Commissioned Officer

- O-1
- O-2
- O-3
- O-4
- O-5
- O-6
- O-7 or above

Enlisted Member

- E-1
- E-2
- E-3
- E-4
- E-5
- E-6
- E-7
- E-8
- E-9

3. On November 2, 2004, where were you stationed or if you were stationed on board a ship, where was your homeport country?

- United States
- Overseas *Please enter country in box below*

4. On November 2, 2004, how long had you been stationed at your location in Question 3?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to less than 1 year
- 1 year to less than 2 years
- 2 years to less than 3 years
- 3 years or more

5. What was your age on November 2, 2004?

- 18 to 24 years old
- 25 to 29 years old
- 30 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 years old and above

6. Not counting yourself, how many family members, who were at least 18 years old, lived with you at your duty station as of November 2, 2004?

NOTE: Include your spouse and anyone related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption, who depends on you for more than half of their support.

- None
 One
 Two
 Three
 Four
 Five or more

7. In 2004, were you registered to vote in the United States?

- Yes
 No

8. As of the November 2, 2004 election, what state or territory was your legal voting residence? **Please enter state in box below**

NOTE: Your legal voting residence is the state where you resided prior to entering military service or have since claimed as your legal residence through physical presence and intent to return to that location as your primary residence.

2004 ELECTION

9. How interested were you in the U.S. elections held on November 2, 2004?

- Very interested
 Somewhat interested
 Not that interested
 Not interested at all

10. Did you vote in the November 2004 election and if so, did you vote in person or by absentee ballot?

- Yes, I voted in person **Skip to Q23**
 Yes, I voted by absentee ballot **Skip to Q13**
 No, I did not vote **Continue with Q11**

11. Which of the following were reasons why you did not vote in the November 2004 election? **Mark all that apply**

- I was not interested in voting, too busy, forgot
 I could not register to vote
 I had no candidate preference
 I did not think my vote would matter
 I did not know how to get an absentee ballot
 My absentee ballot arrived too late
 My absentee ballot did not arrive at all
 The absentee voting process was too complicated
 Other

12. Even though you did not vote, did you request an absentee ballot for the November 2004 election?

Yes *Continue with Q13*

No *Skip to Q23*

ABSENTEE VOTING

13. In what month did you request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?

July 2004 or earlier

August 2004

September 2004

October 2004

November 2004

Do not recall

14. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, is a request for registration and absentee ballot. Did you use the FPCA to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election or did you use another method?

I used the FPCA *Continue with Q15*

I used another method *Skip to Q16*

15. Where did you obtain your FPCA to request your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election? **Mark only one**

From the Federal Voting Assistance Program

Through military channels

From a U.S. Embassy or Consulate

From an overseas organization or company

From a state or local election official

Online from the Internet

Other

Do not recall

16. During 2004, did you receive notification from your local election official that your absentee ballot had been received?

Yes

No

Do not recall

17. Did you receive the absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election?

Yes *Continue with Q18*

No, I never received it *Skip to Q20*

18. When did you receive your absentee ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?
- July 2004 or earlier
 - August 2004
 - September 2004
 - October 2004
 - November 2004
 - Do not recall
19. When did you complete and return your ballot for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?
- July 2004 or earlier
 - August 2004
 - September 2004
 - October 2004
 - November 2004
 - I did not return it
 - Do not recall
20. The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), Standard Form 186, is a back-up ballot used if you are overseas and you do not receive your regular absentee ballot. Did you use the FWAB in the November 2, 2004 election?
- Yes *Continue with Q21*
 - No *Skip to Q22*
21. When did you complete and return the FWAB for the November 2, 2004 election (to the best of your recollection)?
- September 2004 *Skip to Q23*
 - October 2004 *Skip to Q23*
 - November 2004 *Skip to Q23*
 - Do not recall *Skip to Q23*
22. What is the ONE MAIN REASON you did not use the FWAB for the November 2, 2004 election? *Mark only one*
- I did not know about the FWAB
 - I knew about it, but didn't know how to get one
 - I knew about it, but could not get one
 - I had difficulty filling it out
 - I was living in the U.S.
 - I already returned a regular absentee ballot
 - Other

VOTING ASSISTANCE

23. Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs), or Counselors, are designated individuals who provide accurate, non-partisan voting information and assistance to citizens who wish to vote. During 2004, did you receive voting information or assistance from your UVAO?
- Yes *Continue with Q24*
- No *Skip to Q26*
24. During 2004, which of the following kinds of information or assistance did you receive from your UVAO? **Mark all that apply**
- Determining my eligibility to vote
- Understanding the absentee voting process
- Obtaining the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)
- Completing the FPCA
- Obtaining the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)
- Completing the FWAB
- Finding information on candidates/issues
- Electronic transmission of election materials (faxing)
- Other
25. Overall, in 2004, how satisfied were you with the information or assistance you received from your UVAO?
- Very satisfied *Skip to Q27*
- Satisfied *Skip to Q27*
- Dissatisfied *Skip to Q27*
- Very dissatisfied *Skip to Q27*
26. Which of the following reasons explain why you did not receive voting information or assistance from your UVAO in 2004? **Mark all that apply**
- I did not know I could get information or assistance from the UVAO
- I did not have a UVAO
- I did not know who my UVAO was
- I did not know how to contact my UVAO
- My UVAO was not available when I needed assistance
- My UVAO was not helpful when I needed assistance
- My UVAO did not have the materials or information I needed.
- I did not need any voting information or assistance
- Other
27. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) web site, www.fvap.gov, provides voting-related information and resources. During 2004, did you use this web site?
- Yes *Continue with Q28*
- No *Skip to Q30*

28. During 2004, how many times did you use the FVAP web site (to the best of your recollection)?
- One
 - Two to four
 - Five to ten
 - Eleven or more
 - Do not recall
29. Overall, how satisfied were you with the FVAP web site when you used it in 2004?
- Very satisfied *Skip to Q31*
 - Satisfied *Skip to Q31*
 - Dissatisfied *Skip to Q31*
 - Very dissatisfied *Skip to Q31*
30. Which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the FVAP web site in 2004? *Mark all that apply*
- I did not know about it
 - I did not have Internet access
 - I knew about it, but did not know the web site address
 - I got all the information I needed from other sources
 - I did not think it would be useful
 - Other
31. The Department of Defense *Voting Assistance Guide 2004-05 (VAG)* provides state-by-state information about registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot. During 2004, did you refer to the *VAG* for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot?
- Yes *Continue with Q32*
 - No *Skip to Q35*
32. Where did you obtain the *VAG* in 2004? *Mark all that apply*
- From the Voting Assistance Officer
 - From the Internet
 - From a CD ROM
 - Other
33. During 2004, what kind of information were you looking for in the *VAG*? *Mark all that apply*
- How to register and vote absentee
 - Dates of elections and deadlines
 - How to fill out the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) for your state
 - Mailing address for FPCA or ballot
 - How to transmit the FPCA or voted ballot by fax
 - How to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot
 - Web site addresses
 - Where to go for help
 - Other

34. Overall, how would you rate the VAG as a reference on absentee voting procedures when you used it in 2004?
- Excellent *Skip to Q36*
 - Good *Skip to Q36*
 - Fair *Skip to Q36*
 - Poor *Skip to Q36*
35. What is the main reason you did not use the VAG in 2004? *Mark only one*
- I did not know about it
 - I knew about it, but could not get a copy
 - I got all the information I needed from other sources
 - Other
36. The Department of Defense Voting Information Center (VIC) is an automated telephone system that provides citizens with information about candidates. It is toll-free from over 64 countries. During 2004, did you use the VIC?
- Yes *Continue with Q37*
 - No *Skip to Q39*
37. During 2004, about how many times did you use the VIC (to the best of your recollection)?
- One
 - Two to four
 - Five to ten
 - Eleven or more
 - Do not recall
38. Overall, how satisfied were you with the VIC in 2004?
- Very satisfied *Skip to Q40*
 - Satisfied *Skip to Q40*
 - Dissatisfied *Skip to Q40*
 - Very dissatisfied *Skip to Q40*
39. During 2004, which of the following reasons explain why you did not use the VIC? *Mark all that apply*
- I did not know about it
 - I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for
 - I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number
 - I got all the information I needed from other sources
 - I did not need it
 - It was a long distance call
 - I could not get through
 - A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence
 - Other

40. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) provides a toll-free telephone service that allows a caller to ask FVAP staff for voting information or assistance. Did you use this service to talk with a FVAP staff member in 2004?

- Yes *Continue with Q41*
- No *Skip to Q42*

41. Overall, how satisfied were you with the assistance you received in 2004 when you called the FVAP toll-free telephone service?

- Very satisfied *Skip to Q43*
- Satisfied *Skip to Q43*
- Dissatisfied *Skip to Q43*
- Very dissatisfied *Skip to Q43*

42. Which of the following explains why you did not use the FVAP toll-free telephone service in 2004? **Mark all that apply**

- I did not know about it
- I knew about it, but I did not know what it was for
- I knew about it, but did not know the telephone number
- I got all the information I needed from other sources
- I did not need it
- It was a long distance call
- I could not get through
- A toll-free number is not available in my country of residence
- Other

OTHER SOURCES OF VOTING INFORMATION

43. Overall, if you received voting information from any of the following sources in 2004, how satisfied were you with the voting information you received?

Mark ONE answer for each source

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Did not Use or Not Available to Me
U.S. Embassy or consulate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Federal agency/agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Political organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other private organization or company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State or local election official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

44. If you used any of the following sources of voting information in 2004, how useful was each one for voting information?

Mark ONE answer for each source

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful At All	Did not Use or Not Available to Me
Voting Information News newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voting News Releases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“It’s your Future. VOTE for it!” or “Road Sign” motivational posters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Election Dates chart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How To Do It! Absentee Voting Frequently Asked Questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FVAP web site/CD Rom training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Get Out the Vote” public service ad campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voting workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

45. If you used any of the following sources to obtain any kind of voting information in 2004, how useful was each one for voting information?

Mark ONE answer for each source

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful At All	Did not Use or Not Available to Me
Base or unit newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Military magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Armed Forces Radio/TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Army, Navy, Air Force, or Federal Times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stars and Stripes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
U.S. civilian newspapers, magazines, radio, TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family/Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF VOTING MATERIALS

46. Some states allow you to fax voting materials such as your absentee ballot request or the completed ballot itself. During 2004, did you fax any of the following voting materials? *Mark ONE answer for each*

	Yes	No
Federal Post Card Application	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-FPCA request for absentee ballot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ballot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other voting materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2002 ELECTION

47. Did you vote in the November 2002 election (non-Presidential election for Federal offices) to the best of your recollection?

- Yes *Continue to Q48*
- No *Skip to Q49*
- Do not recall

48. How did you vote in the November 2002 election?

- I voted in person
- I voted by absentee ballot
- Do not recall

COMMENTS

49. In the space below, please provide any comments you have about this questionnaire, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or the absentee voting process in 2004.

**Thank you for participating in this survey.
Please return your completed survey in the enclosed envelope.**