

December 18, 2000

POST-ELECTION SURVEY METHODOLOGY

As required by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act*, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) conducts a post-election survey after each Presidential election year. The survey covers five groups as follows: military personnel, unit voting assistance officers, overseas citizens, Federal civilians overseas, and local election officials. In 2000, the survey population had the choice of completing the standard paper survey or filling out the survey on-line.

Each survey has a different sample size and methodology. The following describes these characteristics for each survey.

MILITARY PERSONNEL. Sample size: 20,000. Methodology: The Defense Manpower Data Center selects the sample from their administrative files for each of the five service branches (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard). The sample is stratified to separate officers and enlisted personnel both outside the U.S. and within the continental U.S. Every “nth” record is selected. The contractor mails surveys to the selected participants.

Final survey results are weighted to bring the survey sample into proper balance relative to the actual population of military personnel. Without weighting, certain groups would be over-represented in the survey results, either because they were sampled disproportionately or they had a higher response rate. Most notably, military officers, who are found in smaller numbers than enlisted personnel in the overall population, but who tended to respond to the survey in disproportionate numbers, would be over-represented in the final survey sample without data weighting.

OVERSEAS CIVILIANS. Sample size: 10,000. Methodology: Working with the Department of State, 40 embassies and consulates throughout the world are selected to administer the post-election survey. Each post selected to participate is given a batch of survey packets for distribution. Batches consist of 100, 200, 300 survey packets, depending on the population of U.S. citizens served by the post. Voting officers at the 40 posts are asked to select survey participants at random from the list of U.S. citizens who are registered with that post as of the survey date. To determine participants, a sampling fraction is established by dividing the number of registered U.S. citizens by the required sample size at each post (100, 200, or 300) and then, beginning with the 12th name, selecting names at intervals that correspond to the post’s sampling fraction. Responses are gathered by posts and sent by pouch mail to the contractor for data collection.

OVERSEAS FEDERAL CIVILIANS. Sample size: 2,500. Methodology: The Office of Personnel Management selects the sample from their Central Personnel Data File. Certain individuals are excluded from the sample because they are not eligible for the survey, e.g., employees living in the U.S., non-citizens. Survey packets are distributed in

batches to personnel office installations (POIs) responsible for the specific Federal employees to be sampled. Batches include instructions for addressing the surveys. POIs distribute survey packets to individual respondents.

LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS. Sample size: 500. Methodology: The sample file is determined by a combination of contractor and Census Bureau data. The largest voting jurisdictions in each state and the District of Columbia are selected. Then, the next 449 largest jurisdictions from anywhere in the nation, regardless of state, are added to the sample. The contractor mails the survey to the jurisdictions at the addresses provided by FVAP.

UNIT VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICERS (UVAOs). Sample size: 2,500. Methodology: Five hundred UVAOs in each of the five services are sampled. The Coast Guard provides a list from which their sample is taken. The Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) for the other services selects 10 installations each from the largest and smallest installations in the continental U.S, and outside the continental U.S. Large installations consist of over 20 units; small installations contain at least 5 units. Twenty surveys are sent to the large installations and 5 to small activities to arrive at the sample size of 500. The Coast Guard surveys are mailed directly by the contractor. SVAOs mail batches of surveys to the Installation Voting Assistance Officer (IVAO) for the installation selected. The IVAO chooses the UVAOs within their installation to participate in the survey.