

Focus Group Guide

Civilians: Online

Time available: 90 min.

Current time: 90 min.

I. Standard Introductions (10 min.)

- a. Greet each respondent by name as they enter

- b. Standard Moderator Introduction and Ground Rules.

- c. Participation is voluntary; refusal to participate carries no penalty.
 - i. Due to limited time, keep comments short and to the point.
 - ii. Don't worry about misspelling or typos
 - iii. Icons, emoticons and "chatspeak" are fine
 - iv. Comments will be used for research and will be viewed by research professionals and discussed with the client
 - v. You may see comments from fellow moderators who are helping and there are others who are viewing the group but not participating
 - vi. If you lose your internet connection for some reason, please try to enter the room again following the direction you used to get here. If you can't get back, either click the tech support button or call tech support at 888-XXX-XXXX for more help.
 - vii. Please do not share discussion with others after the session is over

- d. Self-Introductions (including a little bit about how long you've been living abroad and why you are living in [COUNTRY NAME])

II. Mood (5 min)

- a. Generally speaking, how do you feel about voting and elections in the U.S. today?

III. Perceptions of the Voting Process (20 min.)

- A. Today we are going to talk a bit about how voting and elections work for people like you who are American citizens that live and work abroad. But instead of focusing on candidates and political issues, we are going to talk about the process of voting and how the system works.
1. Thinking about the election this past November, how easy or difficult was the process of voting?
 - a. What parts of the process were more or less difficult?
 - b. What parts of the process did you use technology for, like the internet, fax machines, or scanners?
 - c. Do you get an absentee ballot automatically or do you have to request one for each election?
 - i. Have you ever used a Federal Post Card Application to request a ballot?
[IF NO]: Have you heard of it?
 - d. How did you receive or print the ballot?
 - i. Did it arrive on time?
 - ii. Did you encounter any problems with that?
 - ii. Have you ever used a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot?
[IF NO]: Have you heard of it?
 - e. How easy or hard was it to fill out the ballot?
 - i. How clear were the instructions?
 - f. How did you return the ballot?
 - i. Did you experience any problems with that?
 - ii. Did you feel you had enough time to fill it out and send it back by the deadline?
 - g. Did you know what the deadline was for sending the ballot? How did you find out?
 - i. And how did you actually send the ballot?
 - h. Overall, did you feel like you had enough time to complete the voting process before the deadline was up?
 - i. Did you encounter any difficulties in the voting process in this last election?

PROBE: How did you solve that problem?

j. How about in previous elections when you were overseas?

2. How easy or hard is voting for other Americans living where you do? Is voting more or less difficult for some people?
3. Is there anything about the elections and voting processes or procedures that make you feel discouraged about voting?
 - a. Do you or people you know ever worry about the tax implications of voting?
4. If you could change one thing about the voting process, what would that be?

IV. Voting Values (5 min.)

A. Thinking about all the challenges you have living and working overseas, where does voting fit in? How high a priority is it really?

DISCUSS.

1. What is the most important reason to vote for you personally?
2. Has voting become more or less important to you since you've been living abroad?

V. Voting Assistance/Resources (20 min.)

A. When you have questions about the voting process, how do you go about getting information?

B. When you have questions about the voting process, who would you ask?

PROBE:

-Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)?

-Local Election Officials in your state?

-Voting Assistance Officers?

PROBE: Do you know what they are?

-U.S. Embassy officials?

1. When you have a question, are you generally able to get that question answered or not really?
 - a. How accurate is that information?

2. Who do you trust to give you the information you need about voting?
 - a. Who is most likely to be knowledgeable about the voting process?

- C. Thinking about Voting Assistance Officers again, what have you heard about VAOs as far as how helpful or not helpful they are?
 1. How helpful is your VAO to you personally?

- C. Have you ever interacted with the U.S. Embassy to get information on voting?
 1. Was that helpful?
 2. Could you easily visit the embassy if you needed to get information?

- D. **COUNT:** Write down your answer to the following question: Have you heard of FVAP? Now type in your answer.

[POST DESCRIPTION IF NECESSARY]

- E. Have you ever used the FVAP Voting Assistance Guide? **POST:** Here's what it looks like.
 1. How useful was it?
 - a. Did it include information that was useful to you as a civilian living abroad?
 2. Have you or would you share it with others in your family?
 3. Was there anything confusing or unclear about the guide?

- F. Have you ever visited the FVAP website to get information about the voting process?
 1. What was your general impression of the website?
 2. Was there any information you needed that you couldn't find?
 3. Did it include information that was useful to you as a civilian living abroad?

G. Are there any other websites or online resources you might use to get information?

1. How helpful are they?

2. What is missing?

H. What kind of additional information do you wish you had about the voting process?

VI. Voting Assistance/Resources: Examining Online and Print Resources (15 min.)

[Respondents will be shown FVAP communication material as well as resources from non-FVAP organizations who serve UOACAVA voters. Respondents will be asked to rate and react to these resources. Note that specific resources used in focus groups will be determined at a later date, after the communications media audit]

Now I want you to look at some different resources about the voting process for overseas voters like you. For each one, give it a rating from 1 to 5 on how helpful it is for people like you by entering the number in the rating box. 5 means it's very helpful and 1 means it's not helpful at all. Write the rating down first but don't type it in yet.

A. [RESOURCE 1]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**

2. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] stands out as helpful?

3. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] is unclear or confusing?

4. What information is missing from this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] that you would want to know?

5. What would you change?

B. [RESOURCE 2]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**
2. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] stands out as helpful?
3. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] is unclear or confusing?
4. What information is missing from this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] that you would want to know?
5. What would you change?

C. [RESOURCE 3]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**
2. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] stands out as helpful?
3. Which parts of this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] is unclear or confusing?
4. What information is missing from this [brochure/pamphlet/webpage] that you would want to know?
5. What would you change?

D. If you could design your own resource for the voting process, what else would you include that you haven't seen in these materials?

VII. Communication/Vote Motivators (15 min.)

[Respondents will be read a series of statements intended to simplify parts of the voting process that are complex and/or difficult and motivate them to complete the process. Respondents will be asked to rate and react to these statements. Note that statements will be developed based on findings from previous phases of research (i.e. in-depth interviews and ethnographies).]

Now I want to read you some statements about the overseas voting process. For each one, give it a rating from 1 to 5 on how helpful it is for people like you by typing it in the rating box. 5 means it's very helpful and 1 means it's not helpful at all. Write down the rating first but don't type it in yet.

A. [STATEMENT 1]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**
2. What stood out to you—either because you thought it was helpful and liked it or because it jumped out to you in some other way?
3. What was confusing or unclear?
4. What information is missing from this statement that would make it more clear or helpful?

B. [STATEMENT 2]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**
2. What stood out to you—either because you thought it was helpful and liked it or because it jumped out to you in some other way?
3. What was confusing or unclear?
4. What information is missing from this statement that would make it more clear or helpful?

C. [STATEMENT 3]

1. **COUNT:** Write down your rating. [PAUSE]. Now type it in. **DISCUSS.**
2. What stood out to you—either because you thought it was helpful and liked it or because it jumped out to you in some other way?

3. What was confusing or unclear?

4. What information is missing from this statement that would make it more clear or helpful?

VIII. Wrap-Up (5 min.)

A. If you could only do one thing to make the voting process easier for people like you, what would that be?

DISCUSS.

B. Out of everything we talked about today, what stands out most?