The Stewards of Democracy in 2022: Insights from the Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of American Local Election Officials

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Motivations for the Surveys

Document the LEO Community
- Demography, experience levels, career trajectories, impending retirements
- Professional norms, values, and service orientations

Amplify and Elevate the Voice of LEOs in Policy Debate
- National and state level discussions of election policies often neglect the perspective “street level” experts

Explore Election Preparedness and Continuing Pain Points
- How officials respond to a rapidly changing environment with new demands
- Areas with adequate staff and resources; areas of need and “pain points”

Evaluate the Threat Environment (New for 2022!)
- More threats reported:
  - In Larger Jurisdictions
  - By Male LEOs
  - On the West Coast

Who Takes Threats Most Seriously?

Threats, Abuse, & Harassment

Threats have become “just part of the job” for far too many LEOs.

Threat Environment Varies by Region & Jurisdiction Size

The 2022 LEO Survey is the fourth survey from Democracy Fund/Reed College building upon our surveys from 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Methodology
- EVIC partnered with SSRS on the survey administration
- Questionnaire developed by EVIC, in consultation with an advisory group of academic researchers, election officials, Democracy Fund, and SSRS
- Sample of n=3118 drawn from a national list of LEOs by EVIC included an oversample of all LEOs serving in majority-minority jurisdictions
- Fielded 6/21/22-9/22/22 using a web survey with hard copy backup
- 912 completed surveys were received for a 30% response rate with little variation in response rate by jurisdiction size
- Poster Graphics: Democracy Fund & The Williams Group

A Stable Workforce & the Diversity Challenge

The “Typical” LEO has Remained Stable Over 20 Years

- Typical LEO:
  - Over Age 50
  - Female
  - White
  - Over Age 50
  - $50K+Annual Salary
  - Elected

Current LEO Workforce:
- Higher Levels of Education
- More Male LEOs
- More LEOs of Color
- LEOs have Higher Incomes in Larger Jurisdictions

The Diversity Challenge: LEOs Reflect Racial Distributions Across Counties, Cities, and Townships

- Diversifying the LEO community faces the same challenge of federalism and localism that may impede change in other areas.
- Most LEOs rise via localism that may impede change in other areas.
- Half of LEOs serve in jurisdictions with 5K or fewer registered voters & operate with little to no staff support.

- 63% of LEOs think that encouraging voter turnout is part of their job
- 78% of LEOs are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs’
- 82% of LEOs say their jobs give them a “feeling of personal accomplishment”
- 82% of LEOs “enjoy educating citizens about rules and procedures”
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The Good: Job Satisfaction Remains High

The Good: Customer Service and Voter Access are Core Professional Values

The Bad: Increasing Workloads, Loss of Experience Due to Exits and Retirements

The Bad: Election Rule are Changed Without Consultation, and Changes Often Don’t Help

The Good: Customer Service and Voter Access are Core Professional Values

About the 2022 LEO Survey

A Community United Serving Voters & Delivering Democracy While Struggling with Workload, Low Pay, and Disinformation

A Community with Enormous Disparities in Size, Staff, and Resources
- Geography, federalism, and decentralization are pervasive features in American election administration.
- The largest 2% of jurisdictions serve half of the nation’s voters.
- Half of LEOs serve in jurisdictions with 5K or fewer registered voters & operate with little to no staff support.

- 78% of LEOs said that state legislatures don’t consult the elections community when changing laws
- 30% of LEOs are eligible to retire before 2024, and 40% of those LEOs said they will retire
- 46% said that new laws passed between 2020 and 2022 did not improve election administration
- 82% of LEOs say their jobs give them a “feeling of personal accomplishment”
- 63% of LEOs think that encouraging voter turnout is part of their job

Learn More:
- “The State of Local Election Administration in 2022”
- “Staffing the Stewards: Gender, Race, and Representative Bureaucracy”
- Find Research Reports, Codebooks, Crosstabs, and more at https://evic.reed.edu/leo-survey or QR Code.