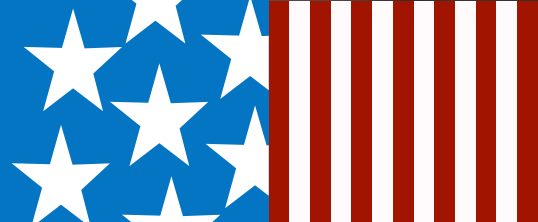




2024 LEO SURVEY



Today's Election Administration Landscape

Findings from the 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center
Local Election Official Survey

February, 2025

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The views shared in this report are solely those of the authors.

About EVIC

This report is a publication of the Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC), a non-partisan academic research center based in Portland, Oregon. EVIC searches for common sense, non-partisan solutions to identified problems in election administration backed by solid empirical evidence. The 2024 EVIC LEO Survey has been conducted by EVIC in conjunction with Portland State University (PSU).

For more information, please visit: evic.reed.edu.

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The 2024 LEO Survey included four research teams that participated with a series of questions that will be released by their teams at a later date. These teams are comprised of researchers from the California State University, Fresno, University of Missouri-St. Louis, University of Florida, and the Election Reformers Network.

We are thankful for the LEOs who donated their time and expertise to participate in this survey. We hope we faithfully share their concerns and experiences. We appreciate the service of all LEOs across the US and their dedication to serving voters and assuring free, fair, equitable, and efficient elections.

Image credits: Vilius Kukanauskas from Pixabay

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Executive Summary

Local Election Officials (LEOs) are “stewards of democracy” who are positioned at the frontline of elections in the United States. They ensure fair, free, accessible, and secure elections. The annual Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official (LEO) Survey captures the challenges and successes facing election officials each year. In 2024, we heard from over 650 LEOs nationwide.

LEOs continue to manage the new obstacles that come with each election. They have endured challenges from political forces, local finance and budget changes, and shifting state election policy. As stewards of democracy, they continue to serve voters with dedication. However, we are concerned that ongoing stressors will result in accelerated departures from election offices. Hiring difficulties also suggest that these pressures are not limited to the chief local election official and create challenges at all levels of election offices.

The 2024 election administration experience was relatively uneventful compared to past elections. While the election results were rapid and clear, we wish to share a note of caution. Since 2020, key measures indicate that job stress remains high.

Job satisfaction has fallen and is not recovering; the number of reported retirement plans remains high, and LEOs continue to share experiencing threats and harassment.

We begin our report on the challenges LEOs face themselves, including job satisfaction and experience with threats and harassment. The next section describes the policy and organizational challenges offices confront, including hiring staff and funding operations. Finally, we close with LEOs’ perspectives on the performance of US elections and their role in voter education and engagement.

Job Satisfaction

- LEO job satisfaction has stabilized at 77% after declining from 91% in 2020.
- Increasing workloads, ongoing threats and harassment, and shifting policy requirements are continuing concerns.
- Job satisfaction is highest among those serving the largest jurisdictions.

Threats and Harassments

- Over half of LEOs have faced personal insults, and one-third report harassment, with higher rates in larger jurisdictions.
- 14% of LEOs have considered leaving their roles due to safety concerns, and nearly half know a colleague who has departed due to safety concerns.
- Threats and harassment have led to LEOs decreasing engagement with the public.

Misinformation and Voter Engagement

- Misinformation continues to create challenges for election offices, with 68% of LEOs identifying it as an issue.
- Larger jurisdictions are disproportionately impacted by misinformation, with officials three times more likely to report misinformation as a “serious problem” compared to smaller offices.
- LEOs remain committed to engaging voters; almost two-thirds view increasing turnout as part of their job, and 40% believe reducing demographic disparities is also part of their work.
- After a decline in 2022, LEOs have improved their own assessment of how elections are conducted across the US.

Office Workload and Election Funding

- Election workloads spike significantly during election periods, with smaller offices experiencing a nine-fold increase in effort.
- Hiring challenges persist, with applicant pools limited by experience as well as soft skills.
- Election offices rely on a diverse mix of public revenue sources; local taxes and government reimbursements are the primary sources.
- Top investment priorities include building and physical space improvements, staffing, and training.

Who Serves - and will Continue to Serve - as a Local Election Official

- The typical LEO is a mid-50s woman earning just over \$50,000 annually.
- 40% of LEOs are eligible for retirement by 2028, raising concerns about succession planning.
- Only 32% of offices have a succession plan in place.
- Despite the turnover, the average experience remains strong, with LEOs bringing 7 years of experience in their current role and 11 years overall in election administration.

As policymakers consider how to respond to election administration challenges, we recommend focusing on three key areas: funding, addressing staffing challenges, and developing policy solutions in collaboration with local officials. LEOs report the need for increased funding for physical facility improvements, staffing, and training. Hiring challenges remain a key concern, as there is a lack of experience and skills in candidate pools. Finally, changes in election law and policy require more cooperation with LEOs to better understand the impacts of implementation. As policy and funding options are evaluated, solutions must be evaluated in the varied contexts of election offices, notably the challenges they face based on their size and geography. We believe that particular attention needs to be paid to mid-sized jurisdictions that are not able to make the next leap in staffing or technology.

How are Election Officials Doing?

Job Satisfaction

- Overall, 77% of local election officials are satisfied with their jobs.
- Overwhelmingly, LEOs share a sense of empowerment and confidence in their work.
- Job satisfaction has dropped 20 percentage points since the 2020 election and has not shown much sign of recovery.
- Key measures of aspects of job satisfaction show more significant declines.
- Following the 2020 election, the percentage of LEOs who would recommend that a child pursue election work dropped in half, from 40% to 20%.
- Respect from other county officials shows a positive return to 2020 levels.

Beginning in 2020, the LEO Survey asked local election officials to share their overall satisfaction with their jobs. We also asked about particular aspects of their jobs to probe more deeply into the sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Levels of job satisfaction among LEOs are critical because these officials are the backbone of the electoral process in the United States. Their roles involve managing complex administrative tasks, ensuring voter access, and maintaining the integrity of elections.

In 2024, we find that overall **job satisfaction remains high with 77%** of LEOs reporting being very satisfied or satisfied with their job. Just over a quarter of local election officials are very satisfied. The levels of job satisfaction are mainly uniform across offices, though smaller offices that serve fewer voters are more likely to share lower job satisfaction. The

largest offices have leadership reporting the highest level of job satisfaction.

When we first asked about job satisfaction in 2020, we learned that 91% of officials were satisfied with their work. The decrease from 2020 is among those who shared that they were very satisfied. Over the past four years, more and more respondents have shared that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. During this period, those reporting dissatisfaction have remained low but have grown from 3% to 8%.

2020 was a remarkable year and a difficult one to use as a reference. The response to the global pandemic, a turbulent election cycle with rapidly changing rules and practices, and a close Presidential election all placed new stresses on election offices. However, this call to service during trying times buoyed a sense of satisfaction with work.

These patterns are being detected in other sectors. The Conference Board found in 2023 that US workers reported high levels of job satisfaction but with some signs of weakness looking ahead.¹ Over the same period of our study, the federal Office of Personnel Management has also tracked federal employee satisfaction, which has declined from 2020, but not as starkly as we find among election offices.²

We will continue to monitor the growing segment of LEOs sharing their uncertainty about job satisfaction.

Diving deeper into job satisfaction, we also ask our respondents about other satisfaction

¹ Conference Board. 2024. "Job Satisfaction 2024: Is US Job Satisfaction at Risk?" New York, NY.

² Office of Personnel Management. 2024. "Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results". Washington, DC.

Figure 1

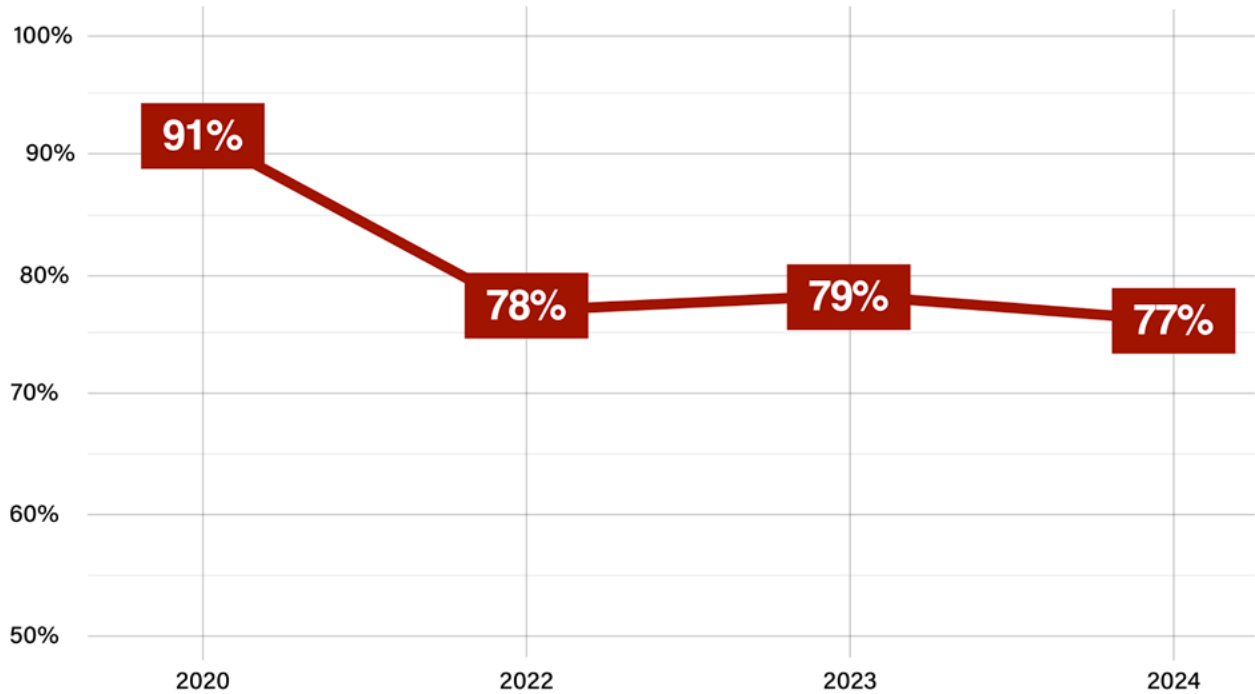
LEO Job Satisfaction: The Positives



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Figure 2

Decline in Overall LEO Job Satisfaction Since 2020



Source: 2020-2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Surveys

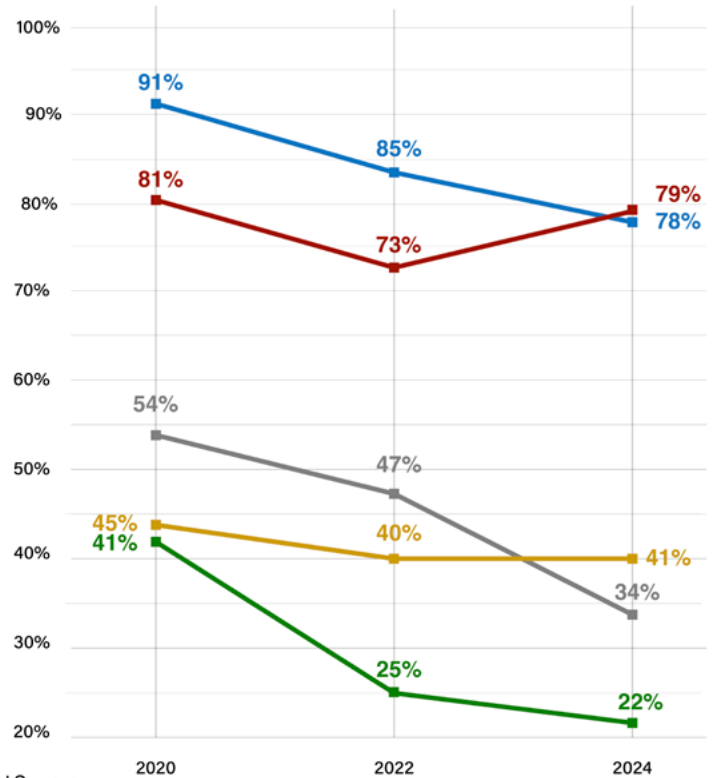
Figure 3

LEO Job Satisfaction Change Since 2020

- I am proud to tell people that I work for my department (Decrease)
- My work is respected by other county or local officials (Flat)
- I feel I can balance my work and home priorities (Decrease)*
- I am able to leave problems at work (Flat)
- I would encourage my own child to pursue a career in local election administration (Decrease)

*Survey item asked if respondents "can not balance" and has been reversed in this figure.

Source: 2020-2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Surveys



measures. Notable among these are three measures that have declined from 2020. Increasingly, local election officials are not as comfortable publicly sharing what they do for work. They also report having a more challenging time balancing work and home priorities. To make job satisfaction questions a little more personal, we ask officials if they would encourage their children to go into their line of work. Since 2020, those who would encourage their child to enter election administration have dropped almost 50%. On a positive note, LEOs share that they feel respected by their peers in local and county government, a measure that dipped in 2022 but rebounded in 2024.

We track job satisfaction because it is a leading indicator of workforce stability. High job satisfaction contributes to effective performance, stability, and resilience in the face of growing challenges such as misinformation, political pressures, and increasing workloads during election periods. Understanding and improving LEO job satisfaction can help address issues like retention, workload management, and training gaps, ensuring the sustainability of election administration in a rapidly evolving political and technological environment.

Local election officials and their staff have increasingly faced threats and harassment,

In their own words

“I’m new to the field and am amazed at all [LEOs] know, do, and how they support each other. I’m in this role for democracy and for my town. It’s been an honor and also a great personal sacrifice.”

Threats and Harassment: An Enduring Legacy of 2020?

- Over half of LEOs nationwide have experienced personal insults, and over a third say they experienced personal harassment.
- Insults and harassment are more commonly experienced among LEOs in larger jurisdictions: more than 75% of LEOs in jurisdictions with greater than 100,000 registered voters report experiencing personal threats.
- 7 out of 10 LEOs in the largest jurisdictions report experiencing personal harassment.
- Responses to threats and harassment include:
 - ◇ Reducing contact with the public (30%)
 - ◇ Changing policies and procedures (42%)
 - ◇ Considering departing their job (14%)
- Nearly half of all LEOs know a colleague who has left their position due to safety concerns, and this rises to 67% among LEOs in larger jurisdictions.

particularly in the aftermath of contentious elections. This hostile environment includes verbal abuse, doxxing, and even physical threats, which have escalated to unprecedented levels in recent years.

The sustained pressure has prompted many election officials to consider leaving the profession, citing concerns for their safety and well-being. These challenges have also

driven changes in administrative practices, with officials prioritizing enhanced security measures, adopting more restrictive communication policies, and seeking legal protections to safeguard themselves and their teams. This climate of intimidation not only impacts their personal lives but also poses significant risks to the stability and integrity of election administration nationwide.

Understanding the demographics of LEOs

Figure 4

14% LEOs have Considered Leaving
their Jobs due to **Safety Concerns**



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Figure 5

LEOs: Response to Threats in the Last Year

Types of Threats within the Last Year



30%

LEOs Say they are Less Likely to Engage with the Public

42%

LEOs Say they have Changed Policies and Procedures

Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

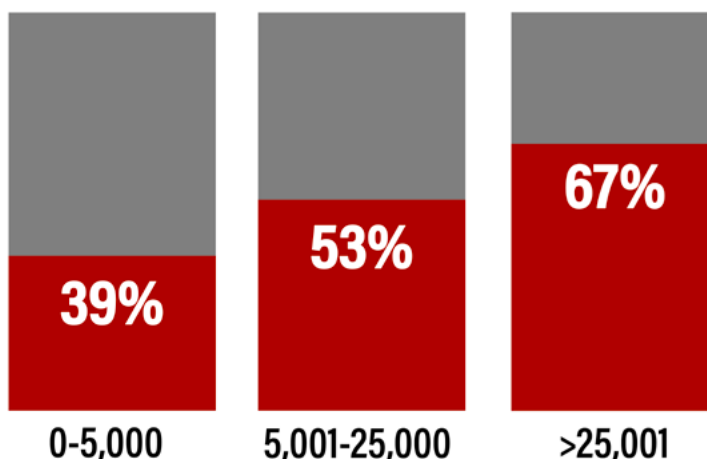
Figure 6

48% LEOs Know of Others Who've Left in Part Because of **Fear for their Safety**

Overall



By Jurisdiction Size



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Figure 7

Threats to and Harassment of LEOs Across Jurisdictions

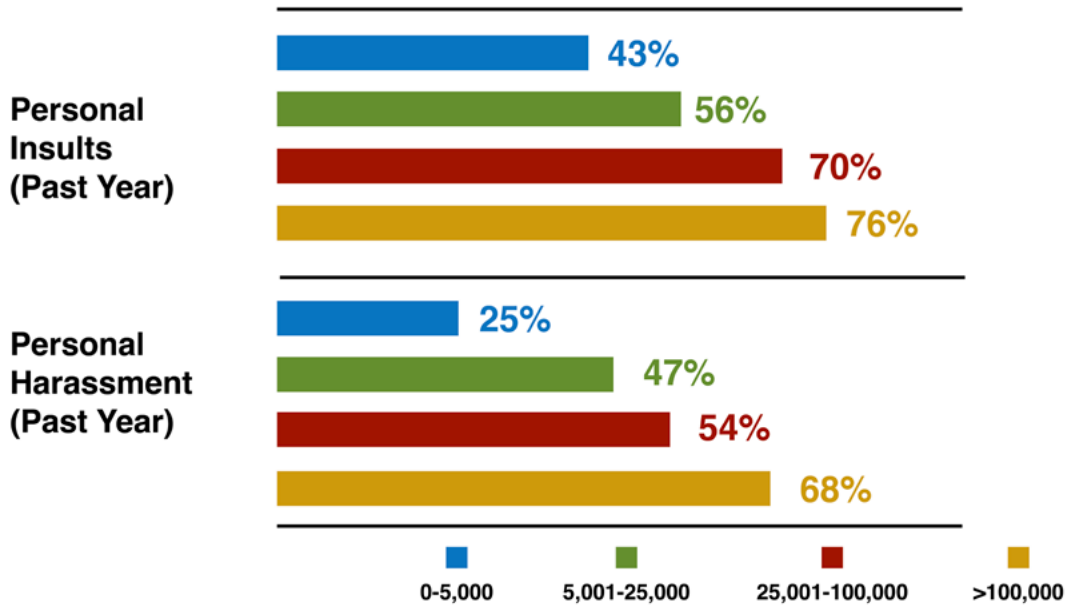
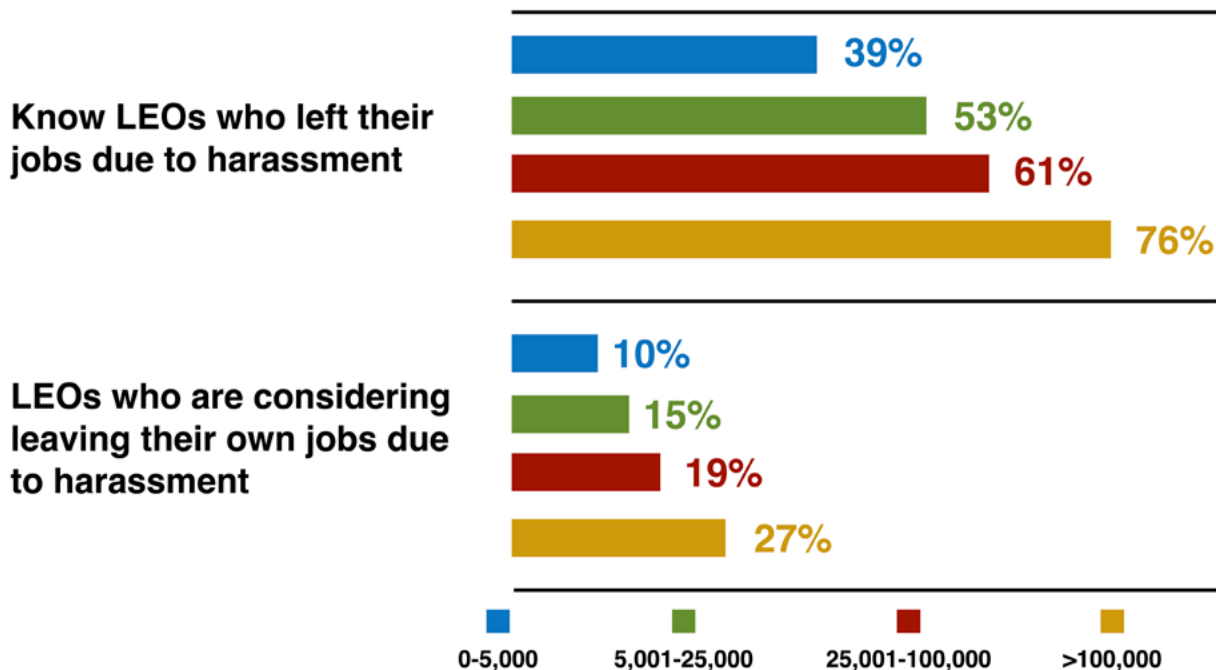


Figure 8

LEO Departures due to Harassment Across Jurisdictions



Who Are The Stewards? Stability in the Face of Change

- The typical LEO is a woman in her mid-50s, with a college degree, earning just over \$50,000.
- Half of all LEOS are appointed or hired positions, and half are elected.
- Despite enormous changes in nearly all aspects of election administration, the profile of the “average” LEO has remained remarkably stable.
- It is important to keep in mind that these categories shift substantially between the smallest, medium-sized, and largest jurisdictions.

is essential for ensuring the effectiveness and equity of election administration in the United States. Stability within this workforce is vital; longer tenure allows LEOs to accumulate expertise, which enhances their ability to manage complex election processes and adapt to challenges like technological advancements and misinformation.

election offices needs to be understood in the context of the changing nature of election administration. As explored in other research by our team, the long-standing role of women in local election offices may have been based on the job being flexible and allowing women to meet the multiple jobs society asks of them in and outside of the workplace.³

The strong representation of women in leading

Figure 9

On average, racial representation lags in

Demographics: Stability in an Environment of Change

	2004	2006	2008	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024
Elected	65%	58%	53%	—	58%	57%	57%	49%	50%
Women	75%	77%	76%	85%	83%	81%	82%	84%	87%
White	94%	95%	94%	96%	96%	94%	92%	92%	92%
Hispanic				1%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%
College Degree	40%	41%	44%	44%	51%	49%	58%	55%	57%
Salary over \$50,000*	53%	61%	63%	43%	46%	45%	57%	59%	63%
Older than 50 Years	63%	62%	62%	77%	74%	74%	76%	74%	71%

2004-2008 Data (CRS)2008-2024 Data EVIC

³The 2006-2008 CRS report used a cut value of \$40,000, while the EVIC surveys used \$50,000.

Source: 2018-2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey Fischer, Eric A., and Kevin J Coleman. 2011. "How Local Election Officials View Election Reform: The Results From Three National Surveys." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

³Gordon, Grace, Bridgett A. King, and Paul Manson. 2024. "Expanding the Pipeline: Turnover, Diversity, and a Representative Local Election Official Bureaucracy." In Local Election Administrators in the United States, eds. Paul Gronke, David Kimball, Thessalia Merivaki, Mara Suttman-Lea, Christian R. Grose, Bridgett A. King. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan

Manson, Paul. 2024. "Women on the Frontlines of Democracy: Gender Dynamics That Structure Local Election Administration in the United States." In Street-Level Public Servants, ed. Sara Rinfret. New York, N.Y.: Routledge

An Experienced Workforce: New Election Officials Bring Deep Experience

- 4 out of 10 LEOs are eligible for and are considering retirement.
- 60% of those considering retirement – nearly 25% of all LEOs – are considering departing before 2028.
- Our survey shows that the LEO workforce is experienced and capable even in the face of retirements and departures.
- Years of experience in their current position is 7, but years of election experience is almost 50% more, at 11 years.
- Departures are a concern, but replacements come from election administration and bringing experience. This is even more pronounced for larger jurisdictions.

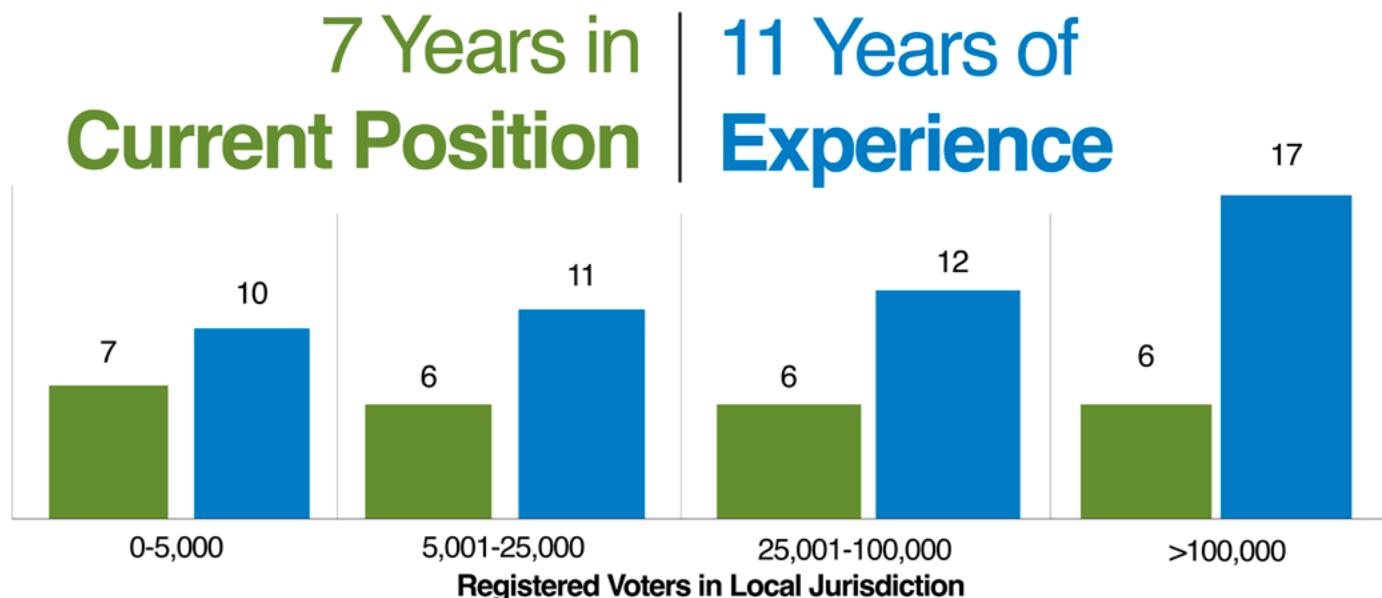
our data when compared to national-level numbers. However, this is driven heavily by the political geography of local election offices. These jurisdictions are more numerous in rural areas, where the local racial composition is less diverse. When we examine larger and urban jurisdictions, we find LEO representation is more likely to match the diversity of these jurisdictions. These LEOs are more diverse compared to their rural counterparts. Representative bureaucracy theory suggests that the composition of public officials can influence how policies are implemented, particularly when officials' demographics align with those of the communities they serve. Diverse representation among LEOs can help build trust and improve voter engagement across various groups.

As shown in Figure 9 infographic, we compare the demographics of individuals who hold the chief administrative role in counties and sub-jurisdictions such as townships and municipalities.

Figure 10

An Experienced LEO Workforce:

Comparison of Median Years in Current Position vs. Median Years of Election Experience



Source: 2024 Election & Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

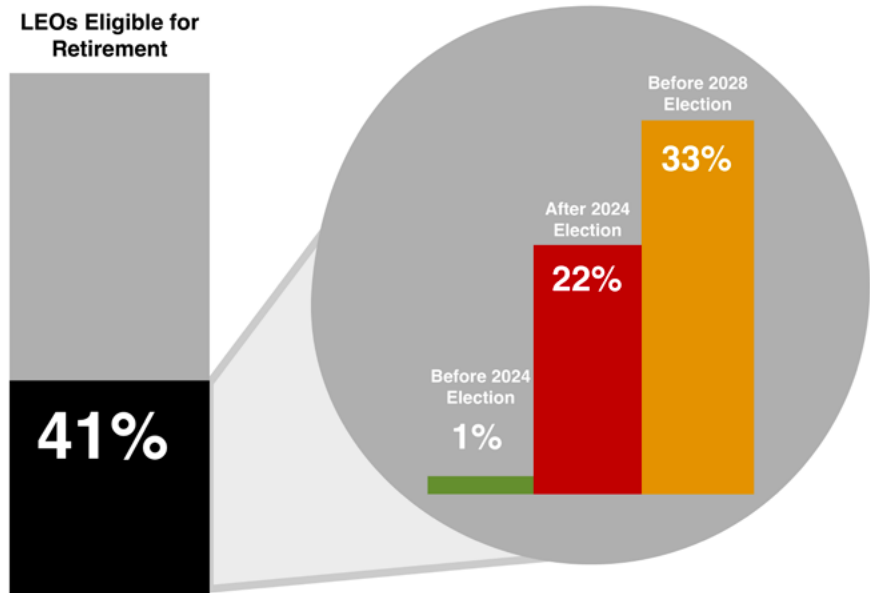
These data are drawn from innovative surveys of LEOs conducted by the Congressional Research Service in 2004, 2006, and 2008, as well as the EVIC LEO Surveys from 2018-2024.

Given that many LEOs are approaching retirement, understanding these demographic dynamics is also crucial for succession planning, workforce diversification, and addressing disparities in recruitment and retention across jurisdictions of different sizes.

Figure 11

LEO Retirement Plans

Percentage of LEOs compared to their departure date

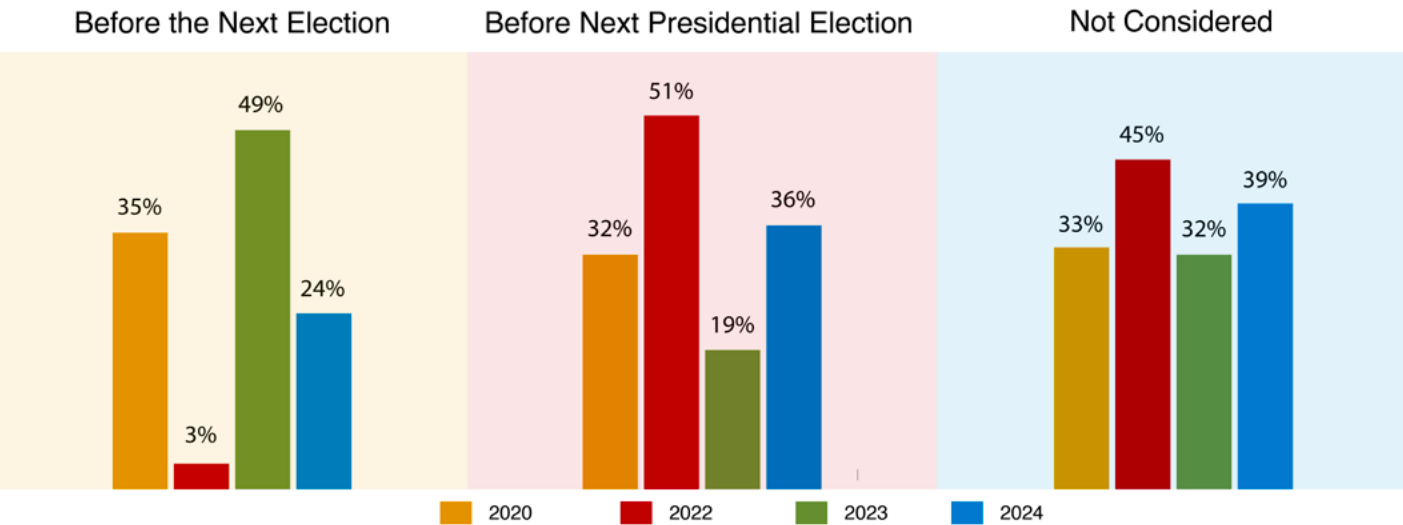


Source: 2024 Election & Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Figure 12

LEOs and Their Planned Retirement Timing or Departure Dates

Percentage of LEOs and Retirement Timing



Source: 2024 Election & Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Organizational Challenges of Election Administration

Election administration across the United States faces significant organizational challenges in small, medium-sized, or large-sized jurisdictions. Some challenges are shared while others vary across jurisdiction size. One of the primary difficulties is managing workloads that spike dramatically during election periods, often overburdening officials with complex logistical, legal, and operational tasks. Hiring and retaining full-time staff is another persistent issue, as many jurisdictions struggle to offer competitive

wages or long-term job stability. Additionally, election administrators must navigate funding limitations, relying on diverse revenue sources that vary in reliability, including local government budgets, state appropriations, and occasional federal grants.

These constraints collectively create an environment where ensuring efficient, secure, and equitable elections requires navigating systemic hurdles with limited resources.

Workloads: The Change from Non-Election Periods to Election Periods

- In the smallest jurisdictions, LEOs are not full-time, have very limited staff, and spend most of their time on recording and title duties. During the peak election period, these officials experience a 9x increase in election work.
- LEOs tend to have larger staff teams dedicated full-time to election work in medium-sized and larger jurisdictions. Nonetheless, LEOs in these categories also report a substantial increase in maximum workload during election periods.
- Reported workloads over 40 hours per week are routine. For some election offices, these peak periods can last 8-12 weeks.

In their own words

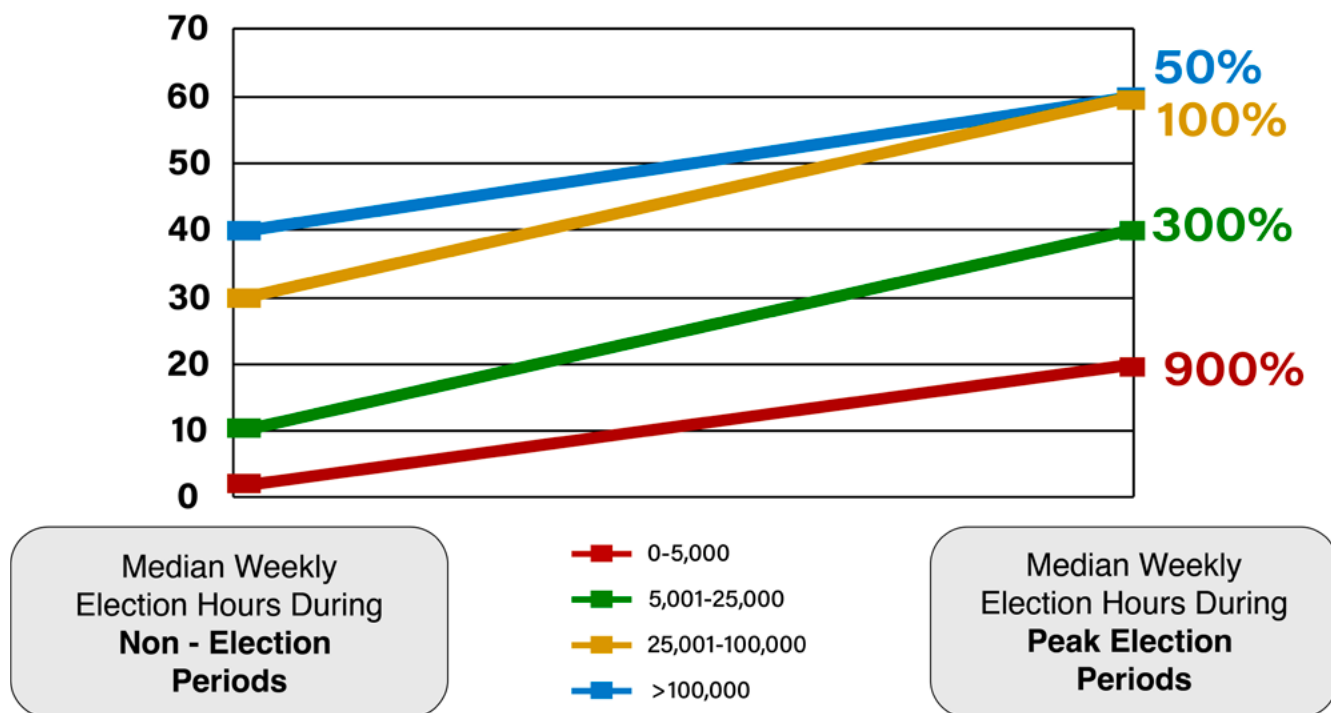
“If you’re going to increase the workload, such as vote by mail and expanding various voting methods, then you need to accommodate with appropriate compensation, increased hours... [M]ore importantly, the right kind of staff who can appreciate the work behind this....”

We ask local election officials to estimate the hours they work on election tasks during and outside of when elections are occurring. As shown in Figure 13, all larger jurisdictions and many middle-sized ones are full-time election offices. For large jurisdictions, the election period peak workload exceeds 40 hours a week by 50%. Because many medium-sized jurisdictions have lower non-election period effort, their reported increases are 100% or more. In smaller offices, the non-election periods are about four hours, which ramps up

to 20 hours per week during election periods. When the election season peaks, these LEOs report a 50% increase in their work, reaching a reported median of 60 hours a week. In smaller offices, the non-election periods are about four hours per week, which ramps up to 20 hours per week during election periods. In other research, we have learned that in these smaller offices, this sudden increase can cause some other office functions to be paused until the election is completed.²

Figure 13

Workload Increases in Election Periods



Source 2024 Election and Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Officials Survey

²Manson, Paul, and Paul Gronke. 2024. "Policy Stability and Policy Change: Understanding Staffing Challenges in Oregon's Local Elections Offices." Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy: In press.

Hiring and Succession

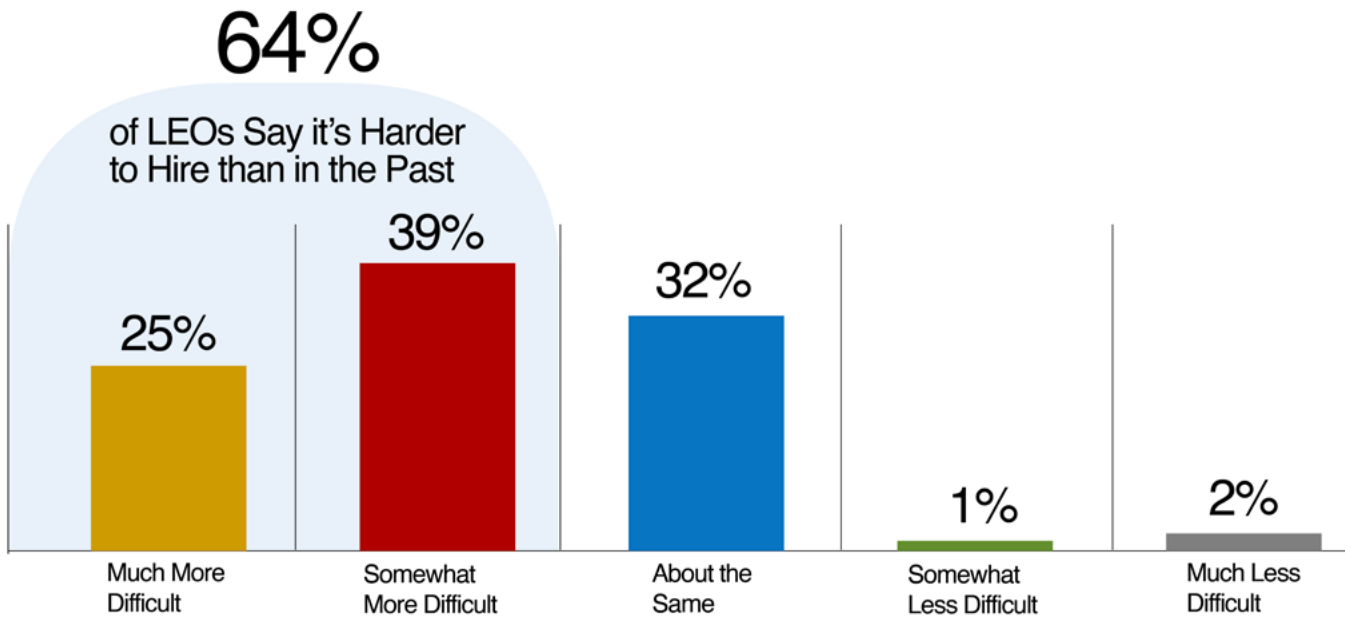
- Almost two-thirds of LEOs share that hiring is more difficult now.
- Lack of experience or lack of skills among candidates are the biggest barriers in hiring.
- Soft skills are also challenging, including a lack of social or interpersonal skills and time management skills.
- LEOs are generally not planning for their own succession. Only 32% report having a plan.

Hiring is difficult in many sectors of the US economy. Election offices have not been spared these headwinds. In our survey, we ask LEOs about hiring challenges both for permanent and temporary positions. As shown in the two infographics below, hiring

is challenging for most offices, and the applicant pools are limited in experience and skills. When asked about temporary positions, LEOs share a generally easier recruitment experience

Figure 14

Local Election Officials Express Increasing Difficulty in Hiring Permanent Employees



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Figure 15

Local Election Official Recruitment of Permanent Staff: Barriers to Hiring

Thinking about recent hirings, which items, if any, represent a barrier to good candidate application pools?	
Little or no experience in election administration	28%
Lack of practical or applied skills important for these positions	17%
Lack of social or interpersonal skills	14%
Lack of time management or commitment	13%
Our office has not had any recent hires	12%
Lack of appropriate certifications	6%
Applicants generally qualified	8%

Source 2024 Election and Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Officials Survey

On the other side of the career trajectory, we also ask LEOs about their succession planning. Generally, LEOs are not preparing for their replacement - only 32% have a plan in place. This low number is in line with other local government offices based on broader surveys. LEOs may even be potentially more

proactive when compared to peers in local government. When asked why they do not have a plan, a third shared that it is too soon to plan, while another third reported that it is not their role to plan. 15% share that they do not have time to prepare a plan.

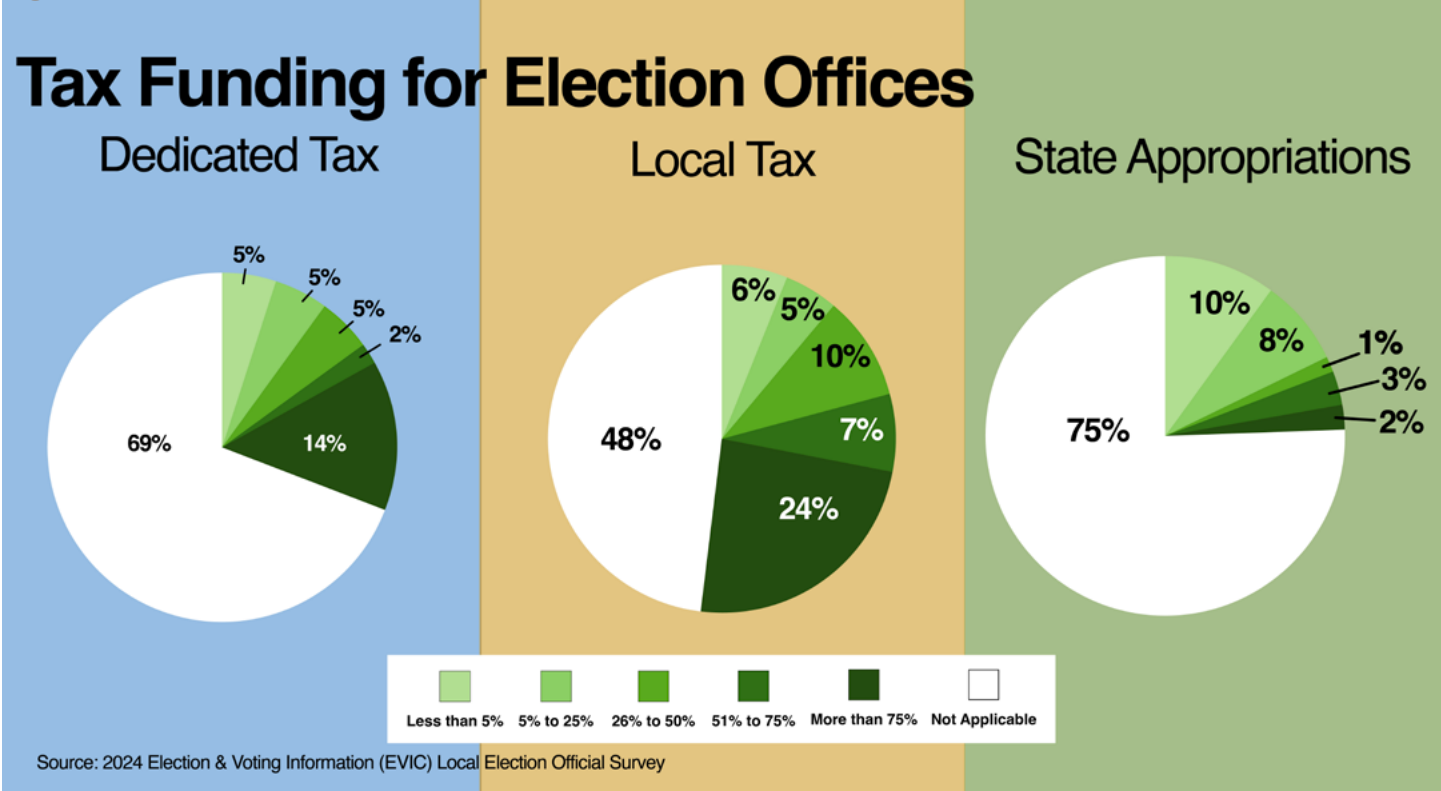
Funding and Investments Priorities

- Local taxes and local government reimbursements for the costs of elections are the primary sources of election office funding.
- Public funding for local election administration is a diverse mix of sources and total contributions to local offices.
- The top priority for future investments is building or refurbishing buildings.
- Expanding training and professional development and increasing staffing are the following top priorities.

In 2024, the LEO Survey added a new series of questions to explore sources of funding and priorities for investments. These questions build on lessons learned in a case study of Oregon election offices, which revealed that public funding can be tied to highly variable sources, presenting challenges for offices.

To explore this, we asked about ten general sources of possible revenue and the degree to which the office relied on these sources. Various tax sources as well as reimbursement of election costs were the top categories of funding.

Figure 16



Almost a quarter of jurisdictions shared that they are primarily dependent on county or local taxes, and another 14% reported using a dedicated local or county tax for elections. Almost another quarter of election offices rely extensively on local governments reimbursing them for the administration of elections. State support for elections, both in terms of appropriations and reimbursement, is a less common funding source. Reimbursements and local taxes play a dominant role in funding elections, composing some part of the funding mix in over half the jurisdictions in the US. Larger jurisdictions are more likely to rely solely on local taxes than smaller jurisdictions, which rely on a mix of sources.

Grants and fees play a smaller role in supporting election offices. While a third of offices state that they rely on grant funding from their state, most of these responses indicated the total share of these funds in their budget played a minor role. Private grants play the smallest role of any funding source and likely reflect a decrease in activity along with local prohibitions on accepting private funding sources.

Office fees also play a smaller role in election offices. Filing fees and other office fees were used by only 25% to 20% of offices, respectively. Most shared that these fees comprised a smaller percentage of their total revenues.

Figure 17

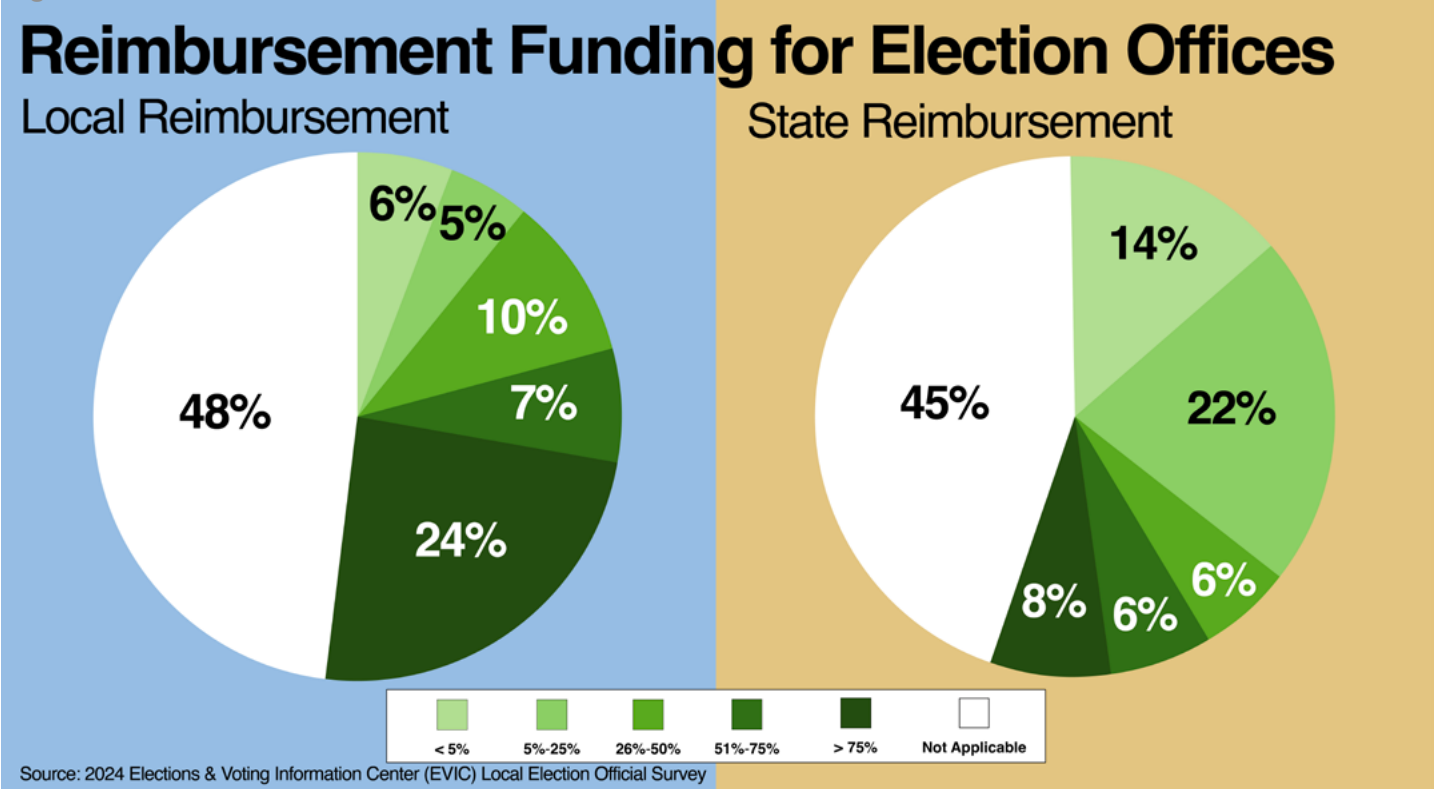


Figure 18

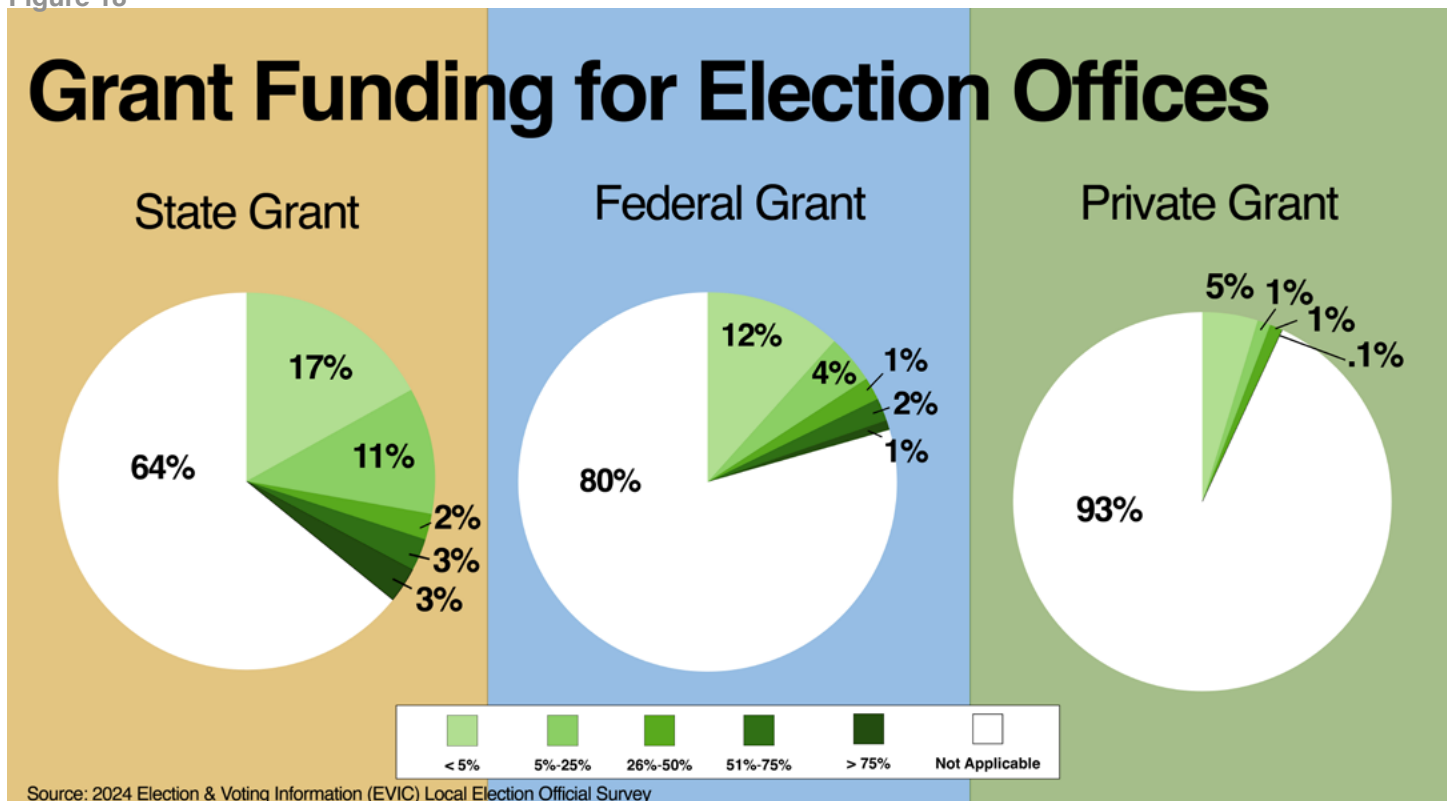
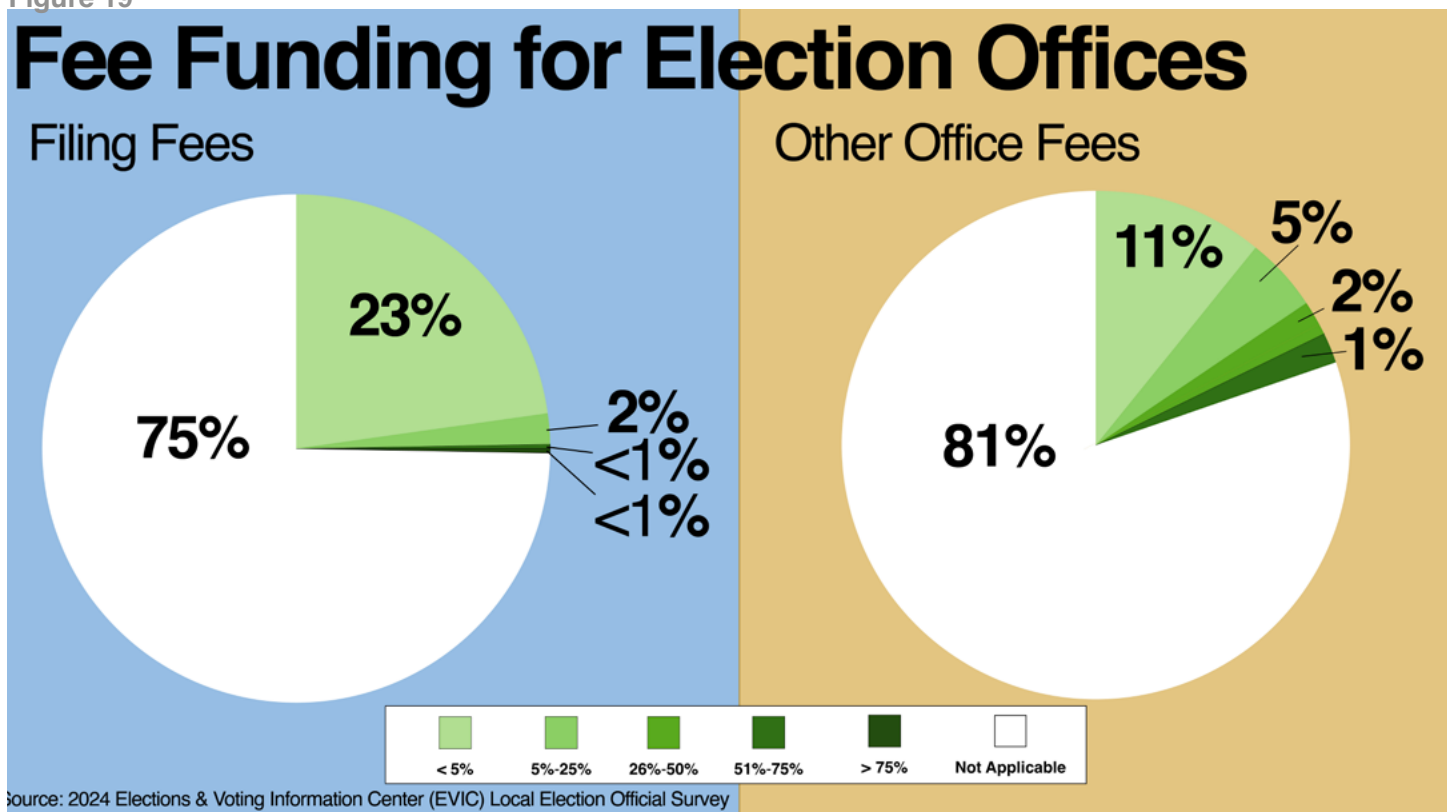


Figure 19



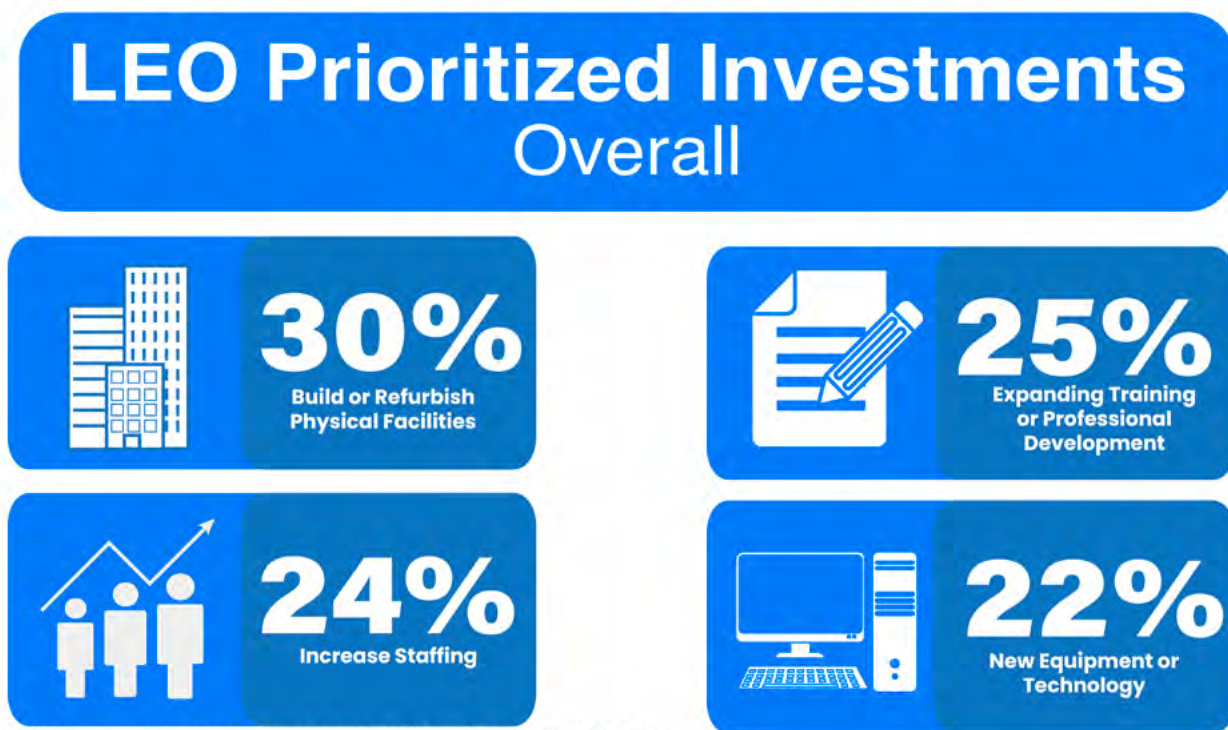
Prioritized Investments: How to Use One-Time Funding

Moving from the revenue side to the expenditure side, we asked LEOs what their one top priority would be if they received a long-term and stable increase in public funding. Building or refurbishing physical spaces, such as offices and storage, was the top choice. Expanding training and professional development, along with increasing staffing, were close second choices. The acquisition of new equipment or technology was the least frequent choice. We only offered these four options in the survey to explore their relative importance.

We did find variations in these priorities across jurisdiction sizes. The largest jurisdictions overwhelmingly prioritized buildings and facilities. The smallest jurisdictions prioritized training and professional development.

The middle-sized jurisdictions focused on new equipment and technology. These variations in size remind us that one-size-fits-all policy and budget proposals for LEOs will likely not match local priorities.

Figure 20



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

External Pressures: Legislative Changes and Public Records Requests

- Over 72% of LEOs report that new legislation in their state has impacted how they do their work since 2022.
- Only 27% of LEOs report that these changes helped improve election administration.

Legislative changes can sometimes come quickly and without the input of local officials. We asked respondents about legislative changes in their state and learned that 72% have had some legislative change since 2022 that impacted how they do their work. These changes were largely not seen as positive. Almost 47% reported the new laws did not improve election administration. Only 27% report improvements from these changes. Despite these concerns, when asked just before the election if they would be prepared to administer the election, 98.5% reported being confident to very confident in their office's ability.

Voter-centered election administration emphasizes local election officials' critical role in fostering a more inclusive, informed, and participatory democratic process. While their primary responsibility is to ensure that elections are conducted smoothly and results are certified accurately, the voter-centered view recognizes that elections are about more than technical execution. By prioritizing voter education, outreach, and engagement, election officials can help demystify the voting process, reduce barriers to participation, and build trust in electoral systems. This proactive approach acknowledges that a well-informed and supported electorate is essential to the legitimacy of elections and strengthens the bond between voters and the institutions that serve them. It reflects a commitment to the idea that the success of an election is not just measured by its completion but by the confidence and access it provides to every voter.

In their own words

“Add seasoned elections official to the [state election office] for rule-making, convince legislators to consult elections officials for potential unintended consequences of legislation before it is passed.”

The Voter Experience

Voter Centered Election Administration

- Election officials continue to show a deep commitment to voter education and outreach.
- More than 6 out of 10 officials endorse a statement that encouraging voter turnout is part of their job, and 4 out of 10 agree that reducing demographic disparities is also part of their job.
- Only one-quarter agree that they “need not worry” about voter education or voter satisfaction.

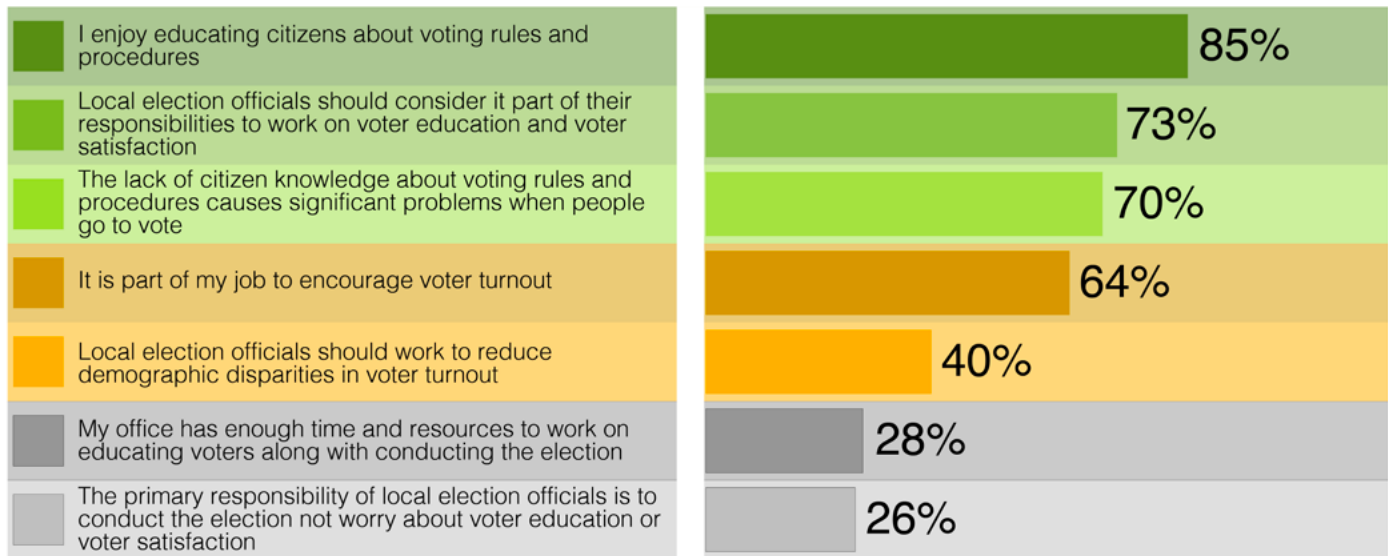
In their own words

“If I could give everyone my confidence in the election process, I would!”

Figure 21

Voter-Centric Attitudes

LEOs Continue to Endorse Voter-Centered Election Administration



Source: 2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Election Confidence and Election Integrity A Return to Normality?

- The EVIC LEO Survey asked about election integrity at four different points:
 - ◊ Summer 2020, **looking forward** to the upcoming 2020 election
 - ◊ Summer 2022, **looking backward** to the 2020 election
 - ◊ Summer 2023, **looking forward** to the upcoming 2024 election
 - ◊ Fall 2024, **looking forward** to the upcoming 2024 election
- LEO confidence in the national and the state vote declined substantially after the 2020 election – over 10 percentage points on average in the national vote and 20 percentage points in the state vote.
- These declines were concentrated among LEOs who identified as Republicans or declined to provide a party affiliation. These patterns mirror opinion changes in the mass public.
- Encouragingly, LEO views on election integrity have mostly recovered for the national vote but remain below the 2020 level for the state vote.

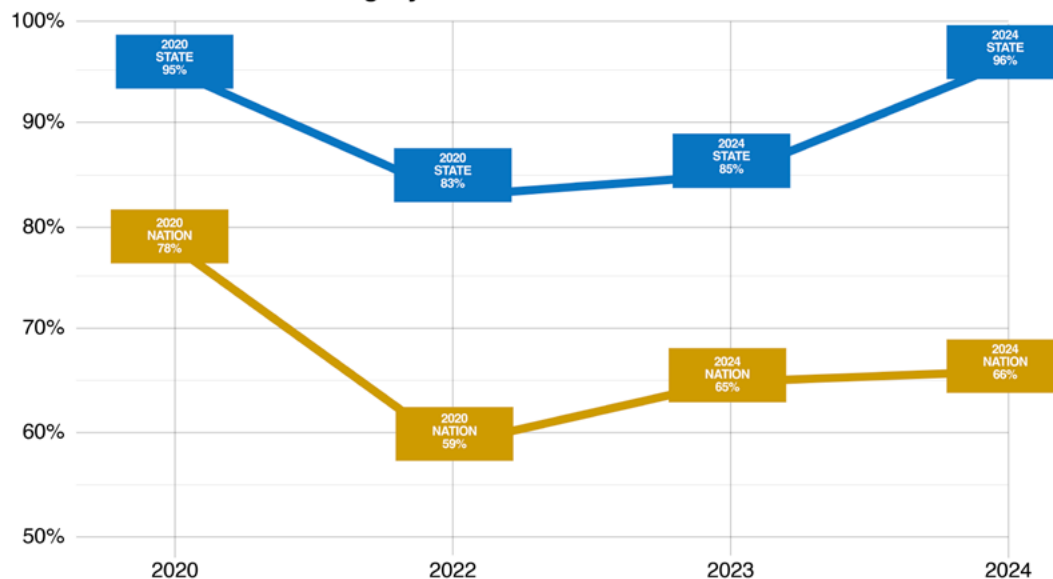
Voter confidence refers to the degree of trust and belief that individuals or groups, such as voters or election officials, have in the fairness, accuracy, and integrity of the electoral process. It encompasses confidence in the proper administration of elections, the security

of voting systems, the accurate counting of ballots, and the overall legitimacy of election outcomes. High voter confidence is essential for fostering public trust in democratic institutions and ensuring participation in the electoral process.

Figure 22

Views on Election Integrity: A Return to Normality?

LEO Confidence in the Integrity of the Vote has Returned to Pre-2020 Levels



Source: 2020-2024 Elections & Voting Information Center (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

Since 2020, the EVIC LEO Survey has fielded a set of questions about “Voter confidence” among local election officials, asking them about their confidence levels in the national and state election process. Innovative research compares mass opinion and LEO opinion on these questions.

Voter confidence and election integrity beliefs among local election officials show notable variation across different contexts and demographics. Confidence tends to be higher in state elections compared to national elections, although both experienced substantial declines following the 2020 election.

While confidence levels among LEOs have largely rebounded from the post-2020 drop, the declines were most pronounced among officials in the smallest jurisdictions and those who identify as Republican or who decline to disclose a party affiliation. This recovery highlights resilience in some areas, but lingering disparities in confidence

suggest ongoing challenges tied to political polarization and jurisdictional resources.

Local election officials face significant challenges in countering misinformation and protecting the integrity of elections. The widespread dissemination of false claims—such as those alleging voter fraud, vote manipulation by machines, or misconduct by election officials—erodes public confidence in the electoral process. These narratives, often amplified through social media and foreign interference, create a volatile environment that heightens the risk of political violence and intimidation against election workers.

Officials must also contend with rapidly evolving threats, including using artificial intelligence to produce convincing disinformation and amplifying baseless narratives about election fraud after polls close. This hostile landscape not only jeopardizes the safety of election workers but also undermines trust in democratic systems.

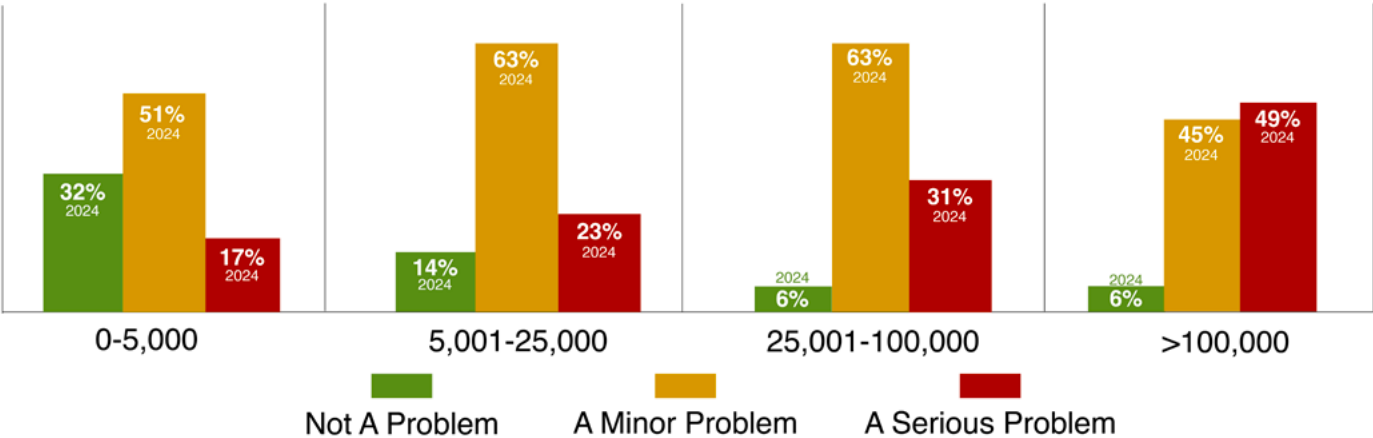
The Continuing Challenge of Misinformation

- 68% of all LEOs in our 2024 survey say that misinformation is a minor problem (48%) or a serious problem (19%) – nearly identical to the responses in 2023.
- Misinformation impacts vary based on the size of the jurisdiction. LEOs from the largest jurisdictions are nearly three times more likely to say that misinformation is a “serious problem” than are LEOs from the smallest jurisdictions.
- LEOs in the smallest jurisdictions are five times more likely to say misinformation is “not a problem.”
- The massively different experiences across jurisdictions make crafting a “one size fits all” approach to misinformation a challenge.

Figure 23

Misinformation by Jurisdiction Size:

The Challenge for LEOs Continues



Source: 2024 Election & Voting Information (EVIC) Local Election Official Survey

In their own words

“Give Election Administrators an opportunity to do their jobs without interference from special interest groups who are looking for ways to disparage them.”

Conclusion

Local election officials continue to deliver democracy to hundreds of millions of voters in every election. Over the past four years, they have weathered storms from political forces, changes to local finance and budgets, and shifting state election policy. While these stewards of democracy continue to serve voters, we are concerned that ongoing stressors and reported decreases in job satisfaction will result in accelerated departures from election offices. Hiring challenges also suggest that these headwinds are not limited to the chief local election official and create barriers down through staff to temporary and Election Day workers.

The 2024 election results were relatively rapid and clear, and this provided a sense that any problems in election administration since 2020 have been resolved. Our survey does not support this position of complacency.

Since 2020, key measures of stress remain. Job satisfaction has fallen and is not recovering; the number of impending retirements remains high; and threats and harassment are too high and continue to drive LEOs out of the profession.

In the coming policy cycles, increasing resources to support election officials must be a high priority. These resources must include

funding to improve physical facilities and staff training resources. Furthermore, changes in election law and policy will be more successful if they are developed with LEO consultation and cooperation. LEOs are the experts who best understand how changes will impact election administration performance at the local level.

Finally, as policy and funding options are evaluated, attention must be paid to the different needs across offices. We shared in this report how much the experience of election administration varies by the size of the jurisdiction. In particular, policymakers need to focus on middle-sized jurisdictions, which often face unique challenges. While they can deliver democracy by pushing existing resources to the limit, this approach often leads to significant problems and inefficiencies over time. They are too small to make the next leap in staffing or technology but too large to continue to manage elections as they have traditionally done.

We are thankful for the LEOs who donated their time and expertise to participate in this survey. We hope we faithfully share their concerns and experiences. We appreciate the service of all LEOs across the US and their dedication to serving voters and assuring free, fair, equitable, and efficient elections.

Methodology

The Local Election Official Survey was initiated in 2018 by the Elections & Voting Information Center as a way to understand how local administrators responded to new administrative challenges that emerged after 2016. What has developed in the six years since that initial survey is the EVIC LEO Survey Project.

Annually since 2018, except in 2021, EVIC has administered and reported the results from a nationally generalizable survey of approximately 8,000 local election officials. The Stewards of Democracy are distributed across 3,007 counties in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and nearly 5,000 sub-jurisdictional units (municipalities and townships). These dedicated public servants work to administer a safe, secure, and accessible election to 244,666,890 eligible citizens.

The 2024 EVIC LEO Survey was administered at the Center for Public Service at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University. As in most previous years, we allowed respondents to complete the survey online or by returning a print survey. This multiple-method approach increases the survey response rate and increases the generalizability of the results.

The total number of responses for the 2024 LEO Survey is 659 out of 3105 sampled, resulting in a response rate of 21.2%. The margin of error for estimates is 3.8%, but this will be higher for subgroups and for some survey items with lower response rates.

The Election Trust Initiative and Democracy Fund generously supported the 2024 EVIC LEO Survey. The survey was in the field from August 6 until October 15.



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