Survey of Local Election Officials

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Background

- Purpose: To hear from the election administrators themselves, about what is happening, where we are headed, and what we need to do to improve elections.

Relationship to Cincinnati presentation

- Cincinnati:
  - 1,400 responses
  - Exploration of open-ended responses
- Today:
  - 3,191 responses
  - Exploration of close-ended responses

Survey Design

- Survey of all local election officials in the U.S.
- Conducted by Sentis Research, using a variety of modes
- Research team: Stephen Ansolabehere, Daron Shaw, and Charles Stewart III
- Data and reports will be made available through the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Web site
- Research support provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Democracy Fund

Response rate

- 3,191/7,779 responses (41%)
  - From every state except Wyoming
- Slight skew to Southern states
- Slight skew to medium-sized jurisdictions

Variety of contexts

- Nearly 8,000 local election jurisdictions in the United States

- Approximately 3,300 counties in the United States

- 50% of voters are in the 163 largest election jurisdictions (break at 241,213)

Topics

- Spending and staffing
  - (Disaster planning)
- Organization of precincts
  - Allocation of poll workers
- Training of poll workers
- Things that went well
- Things that were a challenge
  - Lines
- Things that will *be* a challenge

SPENDING AND STAFFING

Spending and Staffing

- Total spending in 2012
  - $2.6b
    - Census of Government comparisons:
      - 17/1000% of $1.5T local government spending
      - 10% of general government spending
      - A little larger than running parking facilities
  - 26,300 central staff
    - ¼% of local government employees
  - (Roughly 500,000 precinct staff)
    - Equivalent to fire department or public hospital employment

DISASTER PLANNING

Q6. Does your office have an explicit plan for running the election in the event of natural disasters or other emergencies that may disrupt elections?

- 1. Yes, we have an explicit plan
- 2. No, but we have a planning process under way
- 3. No, and we have no planning process currently under way

- 98. Don't know

Size	Yes	No, but planning on one	No, and not planning on one	Don't know
Smaller	46.2%	21.1%	25.0%	7.7%
Larger	66.7%	31.1%	2.2%	0.0%
All	46.6%	21.3%	24.6%	7.6%

ORGANIZATION OF PRECINCTS

Organization of precincts

- How are poll workers allocated?
- How are voting machines allocated?

How Are Poll Workers Allocated?
State Constraints

Q18. Does your state have any rules regarding the number of poll workers that must be allocated to each polling place or is that left entirely up to your office?

How Are Poll Workers Allocated? State Constraints

- 41% State rules determine the number of poll workers per precinct

- 41% My state imposes some rules on the number of poll workers, but the local office has discretion

- 13% The number of poll workers at each precinct is entirely up to the local offices

- 5% Don't know

How are poll workers allocated?

Q19. How do you determine how many poll workers there will be in each polling place?

The allocation of poll workers

- 23% I allocate poll workers in proportion to the number of people who voted in each precinct in the last similar election.
- 19% I allocate poll workers in proportion to the number of registered voters
- 17% I allocate poll workers based on a formula that is determined by state law or regulation.
- 12% I allocate the same number of poll workers to each polling place.
- 6% I allocate poll workers based on problems at polling places such as long lines at the last election.
- 7% I allocate based on the amount of voting equipment assigned to the polling place to support the turnout
- 2% I allocate based on language needs at the polling place
- 12% Other (specify)

Allocation rules vary by size

	Larger	Smaller
Number of reg. voters	31%	21%
Number of actual voters	23%	17%
Same number	0%	14%
Problems (like long lines)	12%	6%
Formula dictated by state	14%	24%
Number of machines	18%	9%
Language needs	9%	2%

TRAINING OF POLL WORKERS

The Training of Poll Workers

- Q21. How much training did the typical first-time poll-worker receive prior to the November, 2012, election? [An estimate is fine.]

- Q22. How much training did the typical poll-workers with the most responsibility (for example, polling place supervisors) receive prior to the November, 2012, election? [An estimate is fine.]

Average Hours Training

	Smaller jurisdictions	Larger jurisdictions	Total
First-time worker	2.5	3.6	2.5
Chief worker	3.4	4.3	3.4

THINGS THAT WENT WELL

Q9.… thinking about the 2012 elections, which of the following aspects of election administration worked especially well in your jurisdiction? (Choose up to 3)

- Voting Technology and voting machine capacity
- Availability of Polling Places
- Management, Operation, and Design of Polling Places
- Availability of Poll Workers
- Training and Management of Poll workers
- Ballot Simplicity and Ballot design
- Voter education
- Management and processing of provisional ballots
- Management and processing of Absentee Voting
- Management and processing of Early Voting

- Accessibility for Uniformed and Overseas Voters
- Accessibility for people with disabilities or other special needs
- Ballot design, signage, and communications for people who do not speak English or with limited English proficiency
- Quality of Voter Registration Lists and Management of Poll Books
- Staffing of the Election Office on Election Night
- Keeping Lines to a Minimum
- Preparedness for natural disasters or other emergencies
- Other (specify)
- Nothing in particular/Don't know

Things that Went Well

	All	Smaller jurisdictions	Larger jurisdictions
1. Voting tech/machines	**31.0%**	**30.9%**	**35.4%**
2. Management/processing of absentee ballots	**22.8%**	**22.9%**	**20.0%**
3. Training/management of poll workers	**21.8%**	**21.8%**	**24.6%**
4. Availability of polling places	**19.0%**	**19.2%**	9.2%
5. Management/operation, design of polling places	**17.7%**	**17.8%**	10.8%
6. Quality of voter registration lists/poll books	15.5%	15.4%	**20.0%**
…			
10. Management/processing of early voting	9.2%	8.9%	**21.5%**

CONCERNS

Concerns

Q10. What were the biggest concerns or problems in 2012?

Concerns

	All	Smaller jurisdictions	Larger jurisdictions
1. Nothing in particular	**22.9%**	**23.2%**	6.2%
2. Availability of poll workers	**18.0%**	**18.0%**	**20.0%**
3. Voter education	**12.6%**	**12.6%**	**12.3%**
4. Lack of funding/resources	**10.6%**	**10.7%**	7.7%
5. Postal Service issues	**9.0%**	**8.9%**	**13.8%**
...			
9. Keeping lines to a minimum	5.6%	5.5%	**12.3%**
...			
12. Management/processing of provisional ballots	4.2%	4.0%	**13.8%**

Did Someone Say "Lines?"

Q26. Did your jurisdiction experience long lines (approximately one hour or more) at any precincts or early voting sites in the 2012 general election?

- 1. Yes, long lines were common and widespread
- 2. Yes, but only at some locations
- 3. Yes, but only at one or two locations
- 4. There were no appreciable lines in my jurisdiction
- 98. Don't know

Size	Long lines common	Long lines @ some	Long lines @ 1 or 2	No long lines	Don't know
Smaller	1.9%	3.5%	7.3%	84.2%	3.1%
Larger	2.7%	40.5%	27.0%	27.0%	2.7%
All	1.9%	4.1%	7.6%	83.3%	3.1%
All (weighted by eligible voters)	1.9%	26.2%	21.3%	48.0%	2.6%

What Caused the Lines?

Q27. Which factors do you believe contributed most to those lines? [Please check all that apply]

1. Registration problems
2. Insufficient numbers of poll books
3. Inadequate space at the polling place
4. Insufficient numbers of voting machines or ballots
5. Insufficient numbers of poll workers at the location
6. Overly long or complicated ballots
7. Limited English proficiency of many voters
8. Inadequate education of Voters on How to Vote
9. People in the Wrong Precincts
10. Too many people showed up at the same time
11. Not enough early voting days/Increase in voters in last few days of early voting
Other (specify) _____
98. Don't know

	All	Smaller jurisdictions	Larger jurisdictions
1. Too many people showed up at the same time	**56.6%**	**56.9%**	**53.8%**
2. Overly long/complicated ballots	**35.8%**	**34.4%**	**50.0%**
3. People in wrong precinct	**21.2%**	**22.1%**	11.5%
4. Inadequate space @ polling place	**16.9%**	**16.7%**	**19.2%**
5. Registration problems	**13.9%**	**14.5%**	7.7%
...			
7. Insufficient # of poll books	7.6%	6.9%	**15.4%**
...			
9. Not enough early voting days	7.3%	6.5%	**15.4%**

LOOKING FORWARD

- Q16. Looking forward, over the next 5 to 10 years what areas of election administration are in significant need of improvement or an upgrade? (Choose 3)

	All	Smaller jurisdictions	Larger jurisdictions
1. Voting tech. & voting machine capacity	**24.3%**	**24.1%**	**36.9%**
2. Availability of poll workers	**21.9%**	**22.2%**	**9.2%**
3. Voter education	**17.9%**	**18.1%**	7.7%
4. Training/management of poll workers	**11.4%**	**11.4%**	**12.3%**
5. Postal service issues	**10.2%**	**10.2%**	**12.3%**
...			
10. Availability of polling places	6.5%	6.4%	**15.4%**

CONCLUSION