

For the voting and election process to run smoothly, local election jurisdictions need a sufficient number of poll workers. The 2006 Election Assistance Commission (EAC) survey focused on the average and total number of poll workers per precinct and polling place, along with the number of precincts that reported an insufficient number of poll workers.

States vary in their definitions of what constitutes a poll worker, polling place, or precinct. The survey defined poll workers as persons who served in all polling places as poll workers, election judges, wardens, commissioners, or similar terms and who verified the identity of a voter, assisted the voter with signing the register, affidavits or other documents required to cast a ballot, assisted the voter by providing a ballot or setting up the voting machine, or served other functions dictated by State law on Nov. 7, 2006. Most States require poll workers to be at the polling place all day, but a small number allow people to work in shifts. Consequently, the number of poll workers across States is not necessarily comparable.

In general, a precinct is defined as an administrative division of a county or municipality to which voters have been assigned by their residing address for voting. Polling places are facilities staffed by workers and equipped with voting equipment at which persons cast ballots in person on election day. Most jurisdictions have a one-to-one relationship between precincts and polling places, but a number of States allow multiple precincts to be served in a single polling place. This provides flexibility for staffing resources and for elections in which low turnout is anticipated.

The need for staffing polling places on election day can vary. For example, because Oregon conducts elections by mail, it has just one polling place in each county's administrative offices. As noted above, States with substantial numbers of absentee voters may be able to staff polling places with fewer workers, and States with extensive in-person early voting may require fewer poll workers on election day.

Table H
Poll Workers

Average number of poll workers per precinct	6.1
Average number of poll workers per polling place	3.8
The percentage of polling places reporting an insufficient number of poll workers	3.0%

Use of Poll Workers

The EAC survey found that in the nearly two-thirds of the jurisdictions that reported data, 691,349 poll workers were employed on election day 2006. In addition, there were nearly 180,000 precincts located in nearly 113,000 polling places across the nation.

- 21 States require three poll workers per precinct.
- 11 States require four poll workers per precinct.
- 3 States require five poll workers per precinct.
- 2 States require six poll workers per precinct.
- 2 States require seven poll workers per precinct.
- 1 State required two poll workers per precinct.
- 1 State required eight poll workers per precinct.

The State of Texas reported 22 poll workers per precinct but this referred mostly to the early vote sites that are heavily used in the State.

Jurisdictions reported an average of 6.1 poll workers per polling place and 3.8 poll workers per precinct. The nearly 700,000 poll workers at polling places on election day in reporting jurisdictions would constitute one poll worker for every 326 citizens of voting age. States reported a total of 5,422 precincts (three percent of the nearly 180,000 precincts nationwide) were undermanned for poll workers. Detailed data on poll workers and polling places can be found by State in table 32 in appendix B.