

SURVEY OF LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the Survey of Local Election Officials. What follows is a brief description of the survey methodology, including questionnaire design, the survey sample, distribution, response rate, and data weighting.

In succeeding sections of this chapter, the reader will find:

- detailed findings for the survey, including a question-by-question analysis of the survey data;
- 12 data tables, providing survey results cross-tabulated by important respondent characteristics; and
- a copy of the survey questionnaire used to administer the Post-Election Survey of Local Election Officials.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire

The instrument used for data collection was the “Official Federal Survey of Local Election Officials,” which is attached at the conclusion of this chapter. The questionnaire contained 41 questions and an optional section allowing the respondent to make comments.

The first 3 questions ask about the characteristics of the respondent’s jurisdiction, such as size and number of votes cast. Questions 4 through 13 ask the respondent about absentee voting in the jurisdiction, including absentee ballots received from military personnel and overseas civilians, and experience with the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Questions 14 through 19 ask about experience with the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). Questions 20 through 34 address electronic transmission of election materials, including FPCAs received, ballots transmitted and received, and the LEO’s access to electronic transmission equipment. Finally, Questions 35 through 41 ask about three voting information resources provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP): the Voting Assistance Guide 1996-97, the Voting Information News newsletter, and the toll-free telephone service.

Sample

The sample file of Local Election Officials to be surveyed was provided by the Federal Election Commission. In order to assure a national distribution among the of survey sample, the Local

Election Official from the largest voting jurisdictions in each state, plus the District of Columbia, was selected to be sampled.

Registrars from the next 449 largest jurisdictions across the nation, regardless of state, were added to the sample, yielding a total of 500 respondents.

Distribution

Individual survey packets were mailed directly to each Local Election Official selected to participate in the survey. The survey packets were mailed on Election Day, November 5, 1996 to assure that they would arrive soon after the general election.

The survey packets contained the questionnaire, a cover letter from the Secretary of Defense, and a postage-paid return envelope.

Approximately 8 weeks later, a duplicate mailing package was sent to a representative sampling of those who had not yet responded to the survey, in order to increase the overall survey response.

Responses were accepted until April 4, 1997.

Response Rate

The response rate is the ratio of completed and returned surveys to the number receiving a questionnaire, less postal non-deliverables. The response rate for the 1996 Survey of Local Election Officials was 67%. [328 completed survey forms received ÷ (500 survey packages distributed, less 14 packages returned as non-deliverable)].

Weighting

Consistent with past post-election survey practice, survey results have not been weighted.

Conclusion

The following section presents the detailed findings of the Survey of Local Election Officials.