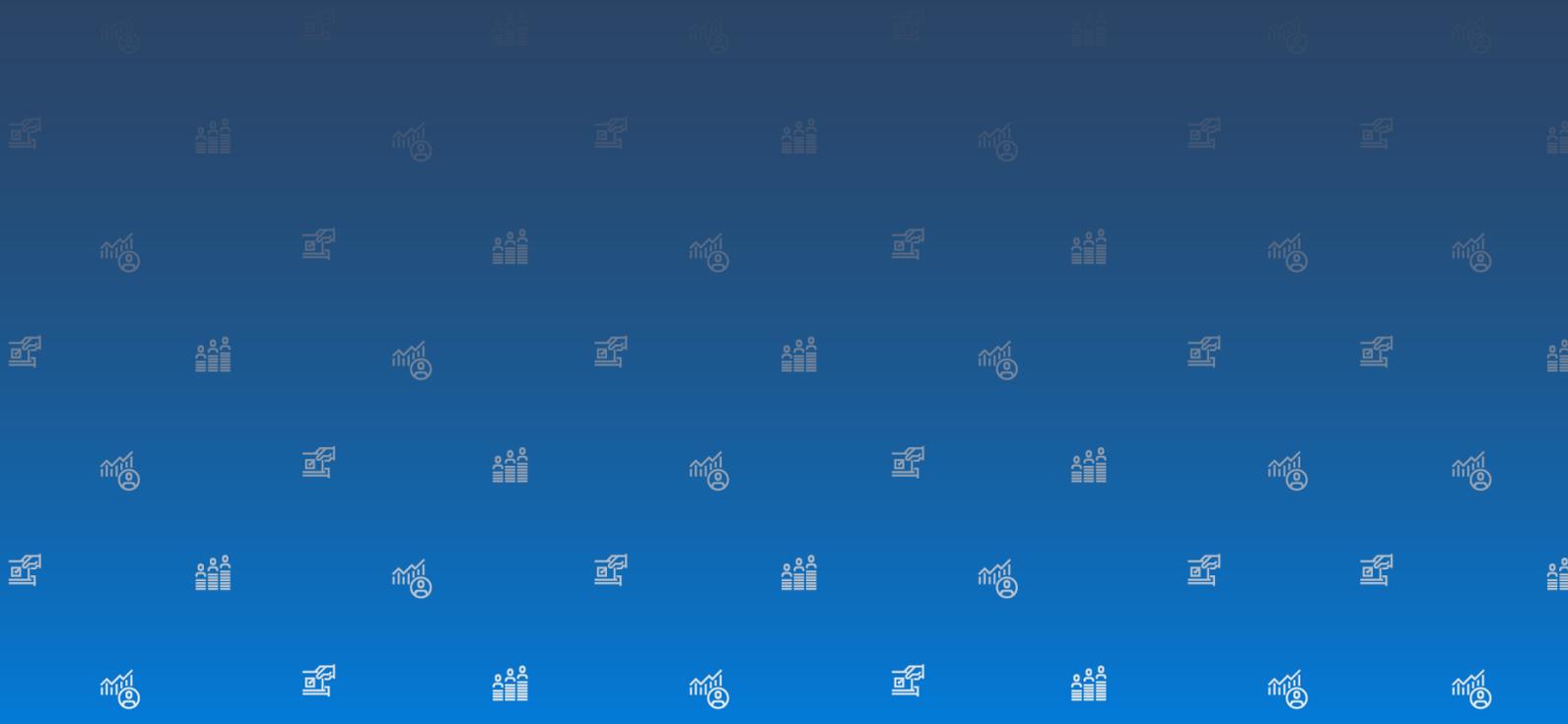


Election Official Turnover Rates from 2000–2024

By Joshua Ferrer, Daniel M. Thompson, and Rachel Orey



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Table of Contents

4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6 INTRODUCTION

8 METHODOLOGY

**12 HOW HAS ELECTION OFFICIAL TURNOVER
CHANGED RECENTLY?**

**19 WHY IS LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIAL TURNOVER
HIGHER THAN IN THE PAST?**

24 TURNOVER BY STATE

26 WHAT DOES TURNOVER MEAN FOR 2024?

27 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A RESILIENT WORKFORCE

27 Responding to Turnover in 2024

29 Promoting Stable Turnover in the Long Term

31 CONCLUSION

32 APPENDICES

32 Appendix 1

34 Appendix 2: Additional Analysis of Increasing Turnover

38 Appendix 3: Calculating Deviations from the Previous
Turnover Rate Trend

Executive Summary

A growing chorus of government officials, media, and election observers are concerned that high turnover among election administrators might undermine smooth election operations and lead to lower confidence in the electoral process. Until now, however, we have not had sufficient understanding of just how high turnover rates are and how they have changed over time. To answer these questions, the Bipartisan Policy Center partnered with Joshua Ferrer and Daniel M. Thompson of the University of California, Los Angeles, to explore election official turnover from 2000–2024. Our analysis draws on an original dataset of 18,644 local chief election officials across 6,290 jurisdictions in all 50 states.

How much turnover has there been, how has it changed over time, and where is it most severe?

- **Election official turnover has been increasing steadily and might be rising more today.** Turnover has roots in both long-standing and contemporary challenges. Heightened turnover is not new, indicating that election administration might be better equipped to respond to it than previously speculated.
- **Turnover has increased across geographic regions,** across counties and municipalities, and in small and large jurisdictions for both elected and appointed election officials. It has also increased in politically competitive and uncompetitive areas, in conservative and liberal jurisdictions, and across most individual states. Increasing turnover is a nationwide issue requiring broad-based solutions.
- **The increase in turnover is not as dramatic as may be feared based on previous news headlines and recent reports.** We find that turnover has grown from 28% in 2004 to 39% in 2022, a 38% increase. Although significant, the upward trend is slow. Most election officials continue to serve for more than four years and are prepared to successfully administer the 2024 presidential election.

What does turnover mean for the experience levels of election officials?

- **Increasing turnover means less time in the role,** reducing the average tenure of election officials and potentially affecting institutional knowledge and effectiveness.
- **Despite reduced time in their role, many new election officials have prior experience in election administration,** for example as a deputy official in the department or an election worker in a different jurisdiction. This means

that while turnover might be higher than in the past, a majority of incoming officials are not new to the field.

- **Long-term increases in turnover have been limited to small jurisdictions, while recent increases are mostly in large jurisdictions.** This indicates a shift in where turnover pressures are felt most acutely.
- **New election officials in large jurisdictions have substantial prior experience,** which might mitigate some of the negative effects of turnover in these critical areas.

Why is turnover higher today than in the past?

- **Increased hostility could be contributing to recent increases in turnover,** with election officials and administration facing heightened scrutiny, threats, and harassment.
- **Increased complexity of the role might also contribute to increased turnover,** as technological, legislative, and societal changes have made the job of election administration more demanding.
- **An aging workforce might be a factor in the steady increases in turnover,** with growing shares of the workforce at or approaching retirement age.

Increasing turnover is not confined to one geographic region or due to a state or region-specific cause, but rather is happening across all parts of the country. This situation calls for nationwide solutions that focus on addressing both the chronic and emerging roots of turnover to build a resilient workforce in the long term. Recommendations made in this report focus on:

- **Strengthening support and resources for new and experienced election officials,** including competitive compensation, professional pathways into election administration, adequate training, and enhanced security measures to protect against harassment and threats.
- **Enhancing institutional knowledge and experience** through professionalization, succession planning, mentorship programs, and the creation of comprehensive election procedure manuals.
- **Fostering collaboration and communication** between state associations of election officials, federal entities, and other stakeholders to share best practices and address common challenges.
- **Securing stable funding from both state and federal sources** to support the ongoing needs of election administration, recruitment, and workforce development.

The methodology, content, and recommendations of this report have been informed by BPC's [Election Workforce Advisory Council](#) and [Task Force on Elections](#). This research was supported by the [Election Trust Initiative](#), a nonpartisan grant-making organization working to strengthen the field of election administration.

Introduction

The roles of election officials are increasingly complex and demanding. As threats proliferate and elections modernize, election officials must manage everything from cybersecurity risks posed by foreign adversaries to public communications, information technology, legal interpretations, political pressures, logistics, operations, and human resources.

Recruitment challenges and the underfunding of elections mean that existing staff face ever-increasing workloads, with little opportunity for election officials to expand or improve their teams. Increasing demands have coincided with widespread reports of [threats and harassment](#) that put the physical and psychological safety of election officials at risk.

It has been widely reported that these challenges have contributed to a tsunami of election officials departing their roles ahead of the 2024 presidential election.¹ The departure of seasoned election professionals could threaten the smooth operation of elections and public confidence in their outcomes. Experienced officials driven out by threats, harassment, and burnout may result in openings being filled by less experienced officials who are more likely to make mistakes.

Isolated issues—such as running out of ballot paper at select voting locations, technological glitches, and typos on ballots or unofficial results—are a [normal part of any large, logistical operation](#) and do not affect the integrity of official results. But in our current environment, any irregularity can be quickly exploited to claim fraud. Such accusations will further exacerbate the stressors already facing the election workforce.

A growing number of government officials, media, and election observers are concerned that high turnover among election administrators might undermine smooth election operations and lead to lower confidence in the electoral process. Yet until now, we have not had a sufficient understanding of just how severe turnover rates are and how they have changed over time. To answer these questions, the Bipartisan Policy Center partnered with Joshua Ferrer and Daniel Thompson of the University of California, Los Angeles, to explore election official turnover from 2000-2024. Our analysis draws upon an original dataset of 18,644 local chief election officials across 6,290 jurisdictions in all 50 states.

¹ Christina A. Cassidy, “Turnover has plagued local election offices since 2020. One swing state county is trying to recover,” Associated Press, 2023. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/election-workers-turnover-threats-trump-2024-8497130b5bbeae503d8f675e3b809d4f>. Julia Mueller, “Alarms sound over high turnover among election workers,” *The Hill*, 2023. Available at: <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/4254685-alarms-sound-over-high-turnover-among-election-workers/>.

While our findings confirm that election official turnover was higher in 2022 than at any point over the past two decades, the increase is an extension of a long-running trend. This suggests that turnover has roots in both long-standing and contemporary challenges, and that the field of election administration might be better equipped to respond to heightened turnover than previously believed. Reforms must address both the recent stressors in election administration and enduring challenges, such as low compensation and inadequate resources.

This report explores how turnover rates have changed over time; the experience levels of current and incoming election officials; and variations in turnover by region, jurisdiction size, and other jurisdiction and office characteristics. It also offers a series of recommendations for state and federal policymakers and election officials on how to mitigate the effects of turnover today and promote a resilient workforce in the long term.

The methodology, content, and recommendations of this report have been informed by BPC's Election Workforce Advisory Council and Task Force on Elections. The [Election Workforce Advisory Council](#), co-administered by [The Elections Group](#), is an interdisciplinary group of election officials, academics, and workforce experts focused on enhancing and innovating recruitment, retention, and training within election administration. The [Task Force on Elections](#), first convened by BPC in 2019, is a geographically and politically diverse group of state and local election officials devoted to creating durable, pragmatic policies that advance secure, accessible, and trustworthy elections. Both groups were consulted extensively in the creation and publication of this report.

This research was supported by the [Election Trust Initiative](#), a nonpartisan grant-making organization working to strengthen the field of election administration, guided by the principle that America's election systems must be secure, transparent, accurate, and convenient.

The academic paper from which this report draws data and analysis was also supported by the University of California Society of Hellman Fellows and relies on excellent research assistance by Victor Chung, Nicholas Hsieh, Julianne Lempert, Jessica Persano, and Georgia Wyess. Paul Gronke and Paul Manson of the [Elections and Voting Information Center](#) at Reed College also provided invaluable advice and critical access to their original survey of local election officials. [Verified Voting](#) provided hard-to-find data on election officials in Massachusetts. We especially thank Megan Maier at Verified Voting for facilitating access to its data.

Methodology

Who is captured by our data?

Our data contains the name of every local election official who ran each general midterm and presidential election in the United States between 2000 and 2024. In some counties and municipalities, multiple officials work in concert to administer that jurisdiction's elections. In these cases, our data captures the individual who is primarily in charge of administering voting on Election Day.² In places where boards composed of multiple individuals oversee election administration, we include the individual who handles the day-to-day responsibilities of running elections, which is typically an official appointed by that board or occasionally the board chairperson. In Appendix Table A.1, we provide a summary of every official included in our data, as well as their selection method and whether they are the sole or primary local election authority in that state.

We only use jurisdictions for which we have a complete panel of data, meaning we know the name of the election official in that jurisdiction in every even-numbered election year from 2000–2024. This excludes Massachusetts from most of our analysis, as we were only able to obtain data from 2012 onwards. It also excludes a handful of jurisdictions in Colorado, Virginia, Wisconsin, and the New England states that were created or disappeared since 2000. We aim to code the individual in charge of the majority of election administration duties for each jurisdiction. In two states, data constraints forced us to code a different election official: In Michigan we code the county clerk instead of the municipal clerk, and in New Hampshire we code the municipal clerk instead of the moderator. In jurisdictions where the elections board is the chief authority and no single officer on the board or an appointee of the board can be identified as the chief election official, we code the individual we are able to identify who carries out the most election duties.³

In total, our data encompasses 18,644 local chief election officials across 6,290 jurisdictions. This is by far the largest collection of data on election officials ever undertaken.

² Joshua Ferrer, Igor Geyn, and Daniel M. Thompson, "How Partisan Is Local Election Administration?" *American Political Science Review*, 1-16, 2023. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000631>.
Joshua Ferrer and Igor Geyn, "Electing America's Election Official," in *The Frontline Workers of Democracy: How Local Election Administrators Support, Staff, and Defend American Elections*, ed. Paul Gronke, David Kimball, et al. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024).

³ In Mississippi, this leads us to code the circuit clerk rather than the county elections board. In Connecticut, this leads us to code the municipal clerk rather than the registrar of voters. We do not include the five Missouri counties with four-member boards, as we are unable to identify a single election official. For New York, we are unable to identify a single official in charge of running elections. Instead, we code the Republican and Democratic co-chairs of each county election board.

Where does the data come from?

In most states, the Secretary of State or another state agency in charge of elections maintains a directory of its local election officials. We use archived versions of these lists or state “Blue Book” publications (listing all state and local officials) where they are produced. We also use election results for directly elected local election officials in several states, which identify who oversaw the election following the one in which the chief official was elected.⁴ Infrequently, we use additional sources: independent state associations of election officials, direct communication with state and local officials, local jurisdiction websites, and news articles. All data for the state of Massachusetts comes from Verified Voting, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting the responsible use of technology in elections.⁵

How do we identify when turnover occurs?

Our data comes from diverse sources and often records different variations of an official’s name. Additionally, some election officials change their names during their service tenure. This is more common for female local election officials, who make up the vast majority of the profession. These variations in the same name create a problem for accurately identifying when one official leaves and another takes their place. Therefore, we extensively clean the dataset to ensure that we are not overestimating the amount of turnover that is occurring. When two officials serving in the same jurisdiction share a last or first name, we investigate whether this is the same official with multiple names or two different officials. We also compare officials with similar names in the same state and in large-population jurisdictions across the United States to estimate how often chief local election officials move between jurisdictions. Finally, we examine rare first and last names in our dataset and conduct character string distance matching to correct spelling errors. We then create a single standardized version of the official’s name to use for the purpose of tracing their service tenure.

How is turnover measured?

We define turnover as a change in a jurisdiction’s chief election official since the November general election held four years prior. This definition captures the fact that most directly elected election officials serve on a four-year cycle.⁶ It also reflects the fact that our data captures snapshots of local election officials every two years, and that four years is the span between presidential elections and most gubernatorial elections. Measuring turnover over four years also

⁴ Joshua Ferrer, Igor Geyn, and Daniel M. Thompson, “How Partisan Is Local Election Administration?” *American Political Science Review*, 2023, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000631>.

⁵ “The Verifier—Election Day Equipment—November 2024,” Verified Voting. Available at: <https://verifiedvoting.org/verifier/#mode/navigate/map/ppEquip/mapType/normal/year/2024>.

⁶ Alabama and West Virginia officials serve on a six-year cycle. There is more variation among municipal officials, who serve anywhere from one-year terms to terms of indefinite length.

indicates whether election officials have experience conducting a presidential election, which typically has the highest turnout and profile in an election cycle. The turnover rates we report for presidential election years measure the percentage of jurisdictions who experience a change in election administration leadership from the previous presidential election.

The one exception to this definition is our turnover measure for 2024. Although we typically collect snapshots of local officials as close to that year's November general election as possible, our 2024 snapshot was collected between January 22 and January 29 of 2024, and in some cases reflected data that had not been updated for several months. Because this snapshot covers a shorter period than our other snapshots and additional turnover could occur before the November 2024 election, we are very cautious in our interpretation of turnover rates using the most recent data. Our 2024 turnover rates are likely an undercount of the actual turnover rates of chief election officials since the 2020 presidential election. Our most recent snapshot of data covering a four-year time span is 2022, which captures the percentage of election officials who left between 2018 and 2022.

Why might our turnover rates differ from other publicized measures?

The rates publicized in this report might differ from other sources for a number of reasons. First, some previous studies have derived turnover rates from survey data asking local election officials about their retirement intentions. For instance, the 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials, which interviewed 886 local election officials across the country, found that 40% of respondents said they planned to retire before the 2026 election.⁷ The Brennan Center/Benenson Strategy Group interviewed 596 local election officials in 2022.⁸ About 20% of respondents stated an intention to leave their job before the 2024 presidential election. Our data reflects the actual record of election official turnover over the past 24 years rather than the reported intentions of these officials.

Second, our turnover rates are unparalleled in their geographic and temporal scope. Previous reports that analyzed service records of election officials surveyed specific geographies over much shorter time spans. In one widely cited report, Issue One studied turnover of election officials in 11 Western states between 2020 and 2023.⁹ It found that 40% of counties experienced turnover in their chief election official over these three years. Similarly, the Boston Globe

⁷ Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, "Today's Election Administration Landscape," EVIC, November 16, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/2023_leo_survey_report/.

⁸ Brennan Center for Justice and the Bipartisan Policy Center, "Election Officials Under Attack: How to Protect Administrators and Safeguard Democracy," June 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/election-officials-under-attack>.

⁹ Michael Beckel, Amelia Minkin, et al., "The High Cost of High Turnover," Issue One, September 2023. Available at: <https://issueone.org/articles/the-high-cost-of-high-turnover/>.

examined election official turnover in nine states across the country between 2016 and 2022.¹⁰ It found that turnover rates ranged from 24% to 59% across these states.¹¹ In comparison, our data consists of all election jurisdictions throughout the United States, both county and municipal, and measures turnover between 2000 and 2024. We have also undertaken extensive quality checks of our data to ensure an accurate measurement of election officials' service tenures.

Third, the time period over which turnover is calculated varies across reports. Turnover calculated over a four-year period will be higher than that calculated over a two-year period. We use a four-year scale throughout this report, with the exception of 2024 data, which roughly reflects a three-year time span.

Fourth, the numerator used in the calculation of turnover varies as well. Turnover is calculated by counting instances of turnover (the numerator) and dividing by the total number of jurisdictions studied (the denominator). But what counts as an instance of turnover? Some turnover numbers reported by state election officials count every single election official who has served in the position, regardless of how long they have served and whether they oversaw a general election. If four different election officials serve between 2018 and 2022, each is counted as an instance of turnover using this method. Because we have a snapshot of who served every two years around the November general election of that year, we are unable to make this calculation. Rather, we count one instance of turnover for when the official who administered elections in a jurisdiction in 2022 is different from the one who administered elections there in 2018. Our measure undercounts the total number of chief election officials who have served but captures the essential fact of whether the official running a jurisdiction's presidential elections has experience doing so previously.

Finally, previous reports have emphasized state-specific turnover rates. Here we focus on turnover of chief local election officials in the country as a whole and then examine whether turnover is higher in jurisdictions with specific characteristics, such as by region and population. We leave state-by-state measures to the end of the report (Figures 12 and 13). Looking at cross-country characteristics of turnover gives us a much better picture of the state of election administration in the United States rather than potentially idiosyncratic factors facing administrators in certain states. Additionally, roughly one in five states has fewer than 20 jurisdictions, and about 40% of states have fewer than 50 jurisdictions. Small denominators lead to noisy turnover data. For instance, Hawaii experienced 25% chief election official turnover between 2004 and

¹⁰ Jess Bidgood, Jim Puzanghera, Tal Kopan, and Daigo Fujiwara, "Under Siege: Democracy's front lines in crisis," *The Boston Globe*, 2022, <https://apps.bostonglobe.com/nation/politics/2022/10/democracy-under-siege/turnover-data-hear-elections-officials/>.

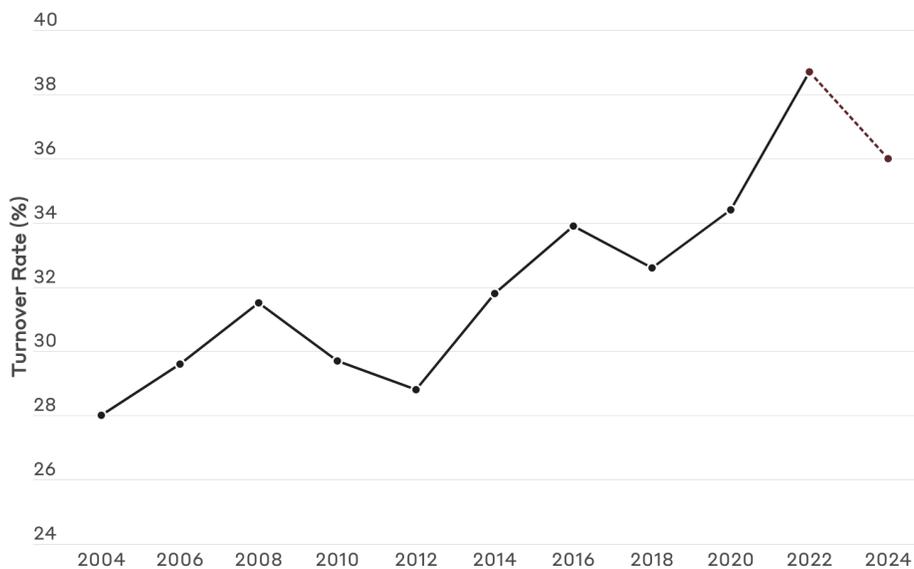
¹¹ The Center for Tech and Civic Life and the Institute for Responsive Government released a [report](#) in March measuring turnover rates since 2019 across 28 states. They calculated a 21% turnover rate in 2021 and a 26% turnover rate in 2023, both measured over a two-year period.

2008, but 100% turnover between 2008 and 2012 and between 2012 and 2016. But Hawaii only has four election jurisdictions, making it plausible that such variability is simply due to chance departures. Pooling all election jurisdictions across the United States allows us to see the forest for the trees and leaves us confident that any jumps in turnover are real trends worthy of investigation.

How Has Election Official Turnover Changed Recently?

Election Official Turnover Is Increasing Steadily and May Be Increasing More Today

Figure 1: Local Election Official Turnover, 2004–Present



Election official turnover has increased substantially over the past 20 years, and it increased at a faster pace between 2018 and 2022 than in previous cycles. Between 2004 and 2020, an average of 31% of local election offices changed hands every four years. But this has not been constant over time. Between 2000 and 2004, approximately 28% of election offices changed hands. This turnover rate increased to 31% in 2008 and 34% in 2020. Although the turnover rate has not increased smoothly in every cycle, the broad pattern is of rising turnover. As illustrated by Figure 1, election official turnover has increased by an average of 1.6 percentage points every four years between 2004 and 2020.

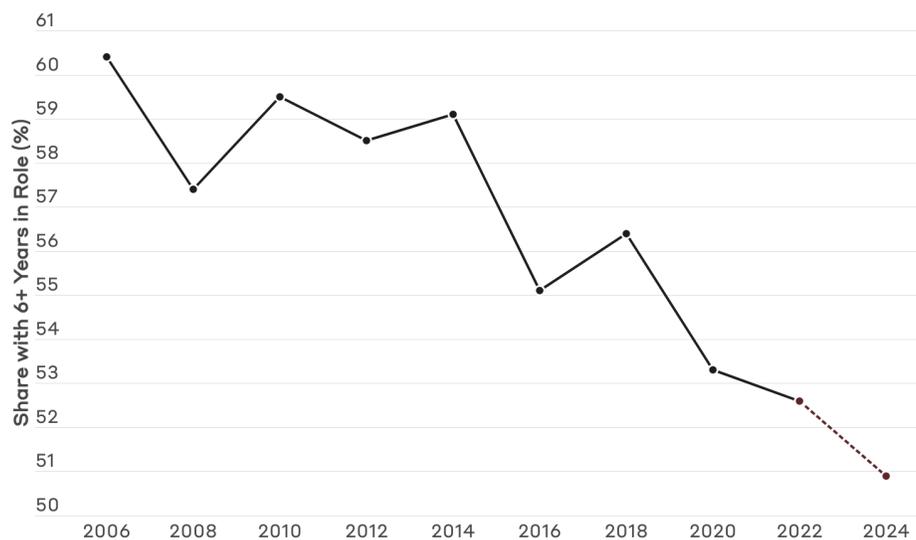
Election official turnover since 2020 is higher than pre-2020 trends predicted: 39% of local election officials left their post between 2018 and 2022. Based

on long-term trends, we would have expected approximately 35% of offices to change hands. Idiosyncratic increases and decreases in turnover are typical from one cycle to the next. However, the 4-percentage-point deviation from the trend in 2022 was larger than previous deviations, which range from -0.6 percentage points to 2.6 percentage points (see Appendix 3 for details on this analysis).

Using data collected in January 2024, three-quarters of the way through our standard four-year cycle, election official turnover has declined from its peak in 2022. But this decline in turnover rates might simply reflect the fact that we collected this data early, and might not indicate a substantial break in the trend toward higher turnover.¹²

Increasing Turnover Means Less Time in Role

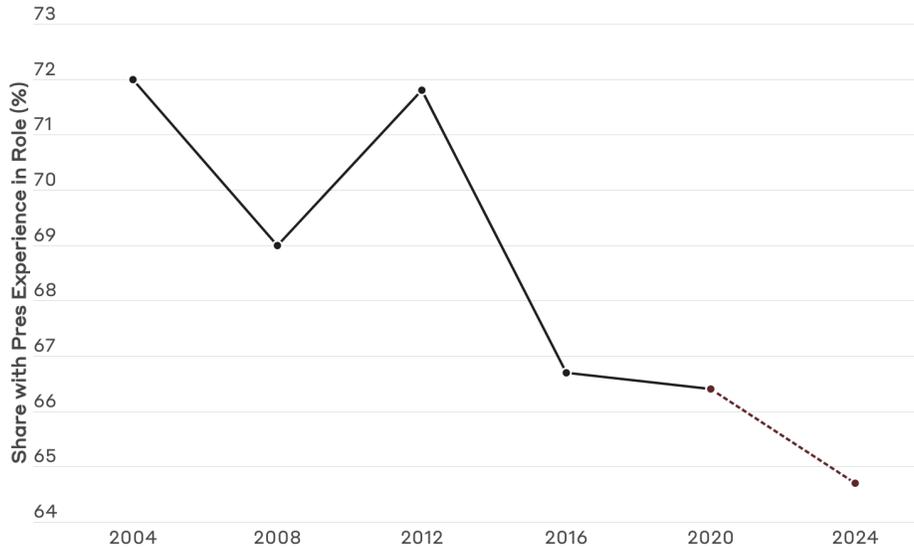
Figure 2: Share of Chief Local Election Officials with Six or More Years in Role over Time



In 2022, 53% of chief local election officials had been in their role for six or more years. This means that a majority of election administrators have administered at least three federal general elections, an encouraging sign that America’s democracy is in good hands. However, increased turnover has translated into a decrease in the number of highly experienced election officials over time. In 2006, 60% of chief local election officials had been in their role for six or more years, and by 2016 this number had fallen to 55%. As shown in Figure 2, increasing turnover over the past two decades has translated into a steady decline in the share of chief election administrators with long tenures.

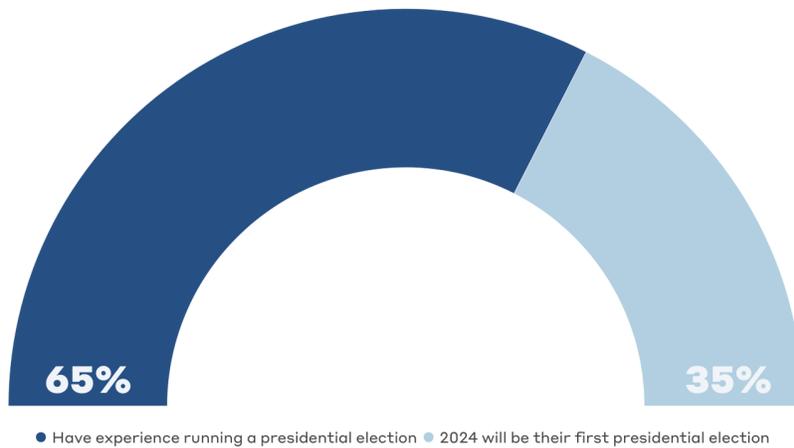
¹² For instance, our January capture of data from South Carolina’s State Election Commission, which listed its county directors of voter registration and elections, reflects data last updated in November 2023. In the intervening months, at least seven of the state’s 46 directors left office. We do not account for these intervening changes in the data to maintain methodological consistency across our 2024 data capture.

Figure 3: Share of Chief Local Election Officials with Presidential Experience over Time



Despite increasing turnover, a large share of chief election officials still have experience running at least one presidential election cycle. This is important because presidential elections typically see the highest turnout and are the most visible elections administered. Figure 3 depicts this finding. In 2020, 66% of chief local election officials had previously run a presidential election in their jurisdiction. This figure has declined somewhat from the 2000s when it was above 70%, but it still means that two out of every three chief election officials were *not* new to running a presidential election that year. Although our 2024 data is likely an overestimate given that some additional turnover will occur before November, as of January 2024, 65% of chief election officials who oversaw a presidential election are still on the job.

Figure 4: 65% of Local Election Officials Have Experience Running a Presidential Election (as of January 2024)



Despite Less Time in Role, Many New Election Officials Have Prior Experience in Election Administration

Although recent turnover has led to a decline in the share of officials in the same role for many cycles, this does not necessarily imply that the new officials do not have substantial relevant experience. When local election officials leave their role, they are often replaced by people with relevant experience either as a prior holder of the role, a deputy or staff member, or a local election official elsewhere, limiting the loss of experience. About 3.5% of the time that leadership of an election office changes hands (a total of 417 cases in our dataset), the official taking over has previously held the role. On the other hand, it is relatively uncommon for election officials to move from one jurisdiction to another. We find only 127 cases of election officials leaving one role and starting a similar leadership role in a different county or municipality in the same state.¹³ That said, the EVIC survey of local election officials reveals that new chief election officials often take the role after gaining years of relevant experience as deputies or staff, which our data would not capture because it is limited to chief officials. The 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials found that the average official has served seven years in their current position but possesses 11 years of service in the field.¹⁴ This means that officials have typically served in election administration roles before assuming the chief position, gaining valuable on-the-job experience that prepares them for the role. Furthermore, the 2020 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials found that 15% of election officials have previously worked in election administration in a different jurisdiction.¹⁵ Linking the 2023 EVIC survey to jurisdictions in which the election official has left since 2022, we find that the average new official has worked in the elections field for more than eight years.

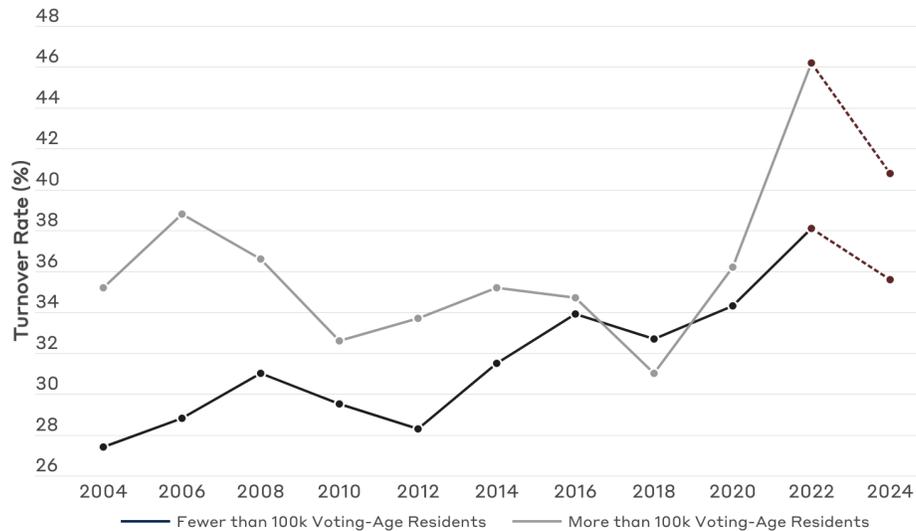
¹³ This count may underestimate the frequency of chief election officials switching jurisdictions if officials change their last names around the time that they switch jurisdictions. However, this bias is unlikely to fundamentally alter the fact that it is rare for chief election officials to take over a similar job in a different area.

¹⁴ Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, "Today's Election Administration Landscape," EVIC, November 16, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/2023_leo_survey_report/.

¹⁵ Early Voting Information Center, "2020 LEO Survey Codebook," January 25, 2021. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/leo2020_codebook.pdf.

Long-Term Increase in Turnover Limited to Small Jurisdictions, Recent Increase Mostly in Large Jurisdictions

Figure 5: Local Election Official Turnover in Large and Small Jurisdictions over Time



While the average local election office has seen turnover increase steadily over the past 20 years with a modest but noticeable increase in 2022, this overall pattern masks two distinct trends in small and large jurisdictions: a gradual increase in turnover in small jurisdictions, and a more sudden spike in large jurisdictions.

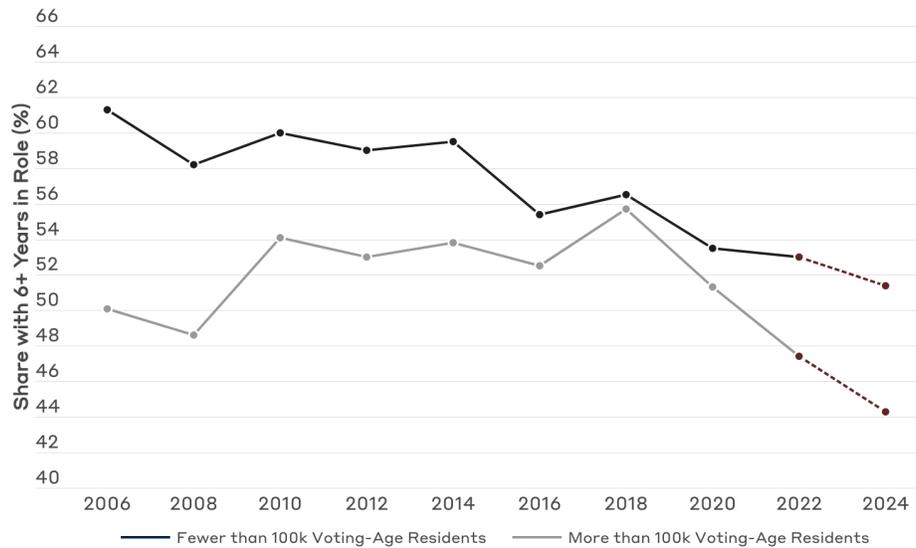
Ninety-three percent of jurisdictions have fewer than 100,000 voting-age residents. The turnover trend in these jurisdictions is similar to the overall trend, with gradually increasing turnover rates over time, but they have seen a slightly smaller increase in turnover in 2022.

Meanwhile, turnover in large jurisdictions did not increase significantly between 2004 and 2020, averaging around 35%. Starting in 2020, turnover in populous jurisdictions has risen dramatically, resulting in a 46% turnover rate between 2018 and 2022. In general, turnover rates in jurisdictions with at least 100,000 voting-age residents are higher than turnover rates in less populous jurisdictions.

This difference between large and small jurisdictions leads to differences in the share of officials who have been in the role for four or more federal general elections. Turnover has gradually increased in small jurisdictions since 2004, leading to a steady decline in long-tenured chief election officials. Meanwhile, turnover was mostly stable in large jurisdictions between 2004 and 2020 before increasing steeply, leading to a constant share of long-tenured officials until recently. This means that only in the past few years have we

seen a large drop-off in long-tenured election officials in the nation's most populous jurisdictions.

Figure 6: Share of Chief Local Election Officials with Six or More Years in Role in Large vs. Small Jurisdictions



New Election Officials in Large Jurisdictions Have Substantial Prior Experience

Approximately 80% of Americans live in a jurisdiction with at least 100,000 residents. Therefore, our finding on turnover—that turnover increases and experience declines among local election officials have been concentrated in these populous jurisdictions over the past few years—might be particularly concerning. We present two pieces of evidence that assuage concerns about the departure of so many chief election officials in America's largest counties and cities. First, a handful of local election officials with experience heading an elections department replaces those leaving in large jurisdictions. We identify seven cases of local election officials moving from one populous jurisdiction to another across the United States out of the roughly 600 jurisdictions with at least 100,000 residents. Most of these cross-state transfers have occurred in the 47 jurisdictions with over 1 million residents, and thus represent an important case of experienced officials taking the helm in the largest election jurisdictions in the country.

More significantly, survey data from Reed College reveals that officials serving large jurisdictions typically enter with relevant prior experience. According to the 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials, chief local election officials in jurisdictions with at least 100,000 residents have been in their position for five years on average but possess 16 years of election administration

experience.¹⁶ Linking the 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials to our data on turnover, we find that officials who have taken the chief election official position since 2022 in jurisdictions with more than 100,000 voting-age residents have 11 years of experience in the elections field before they started their current position. This means the average official enters leadership in high population jurisdictions with more than a decade of previous experience in election administration. It is relatively uncommon for an official to assume leadership of election administration in a populous county or municipality without any prior experience running elections.

Figure 7: New Chief Local Election Officials Have Extensive Previous Experience Administering Elections



Source: 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials and BPC analysis of original data

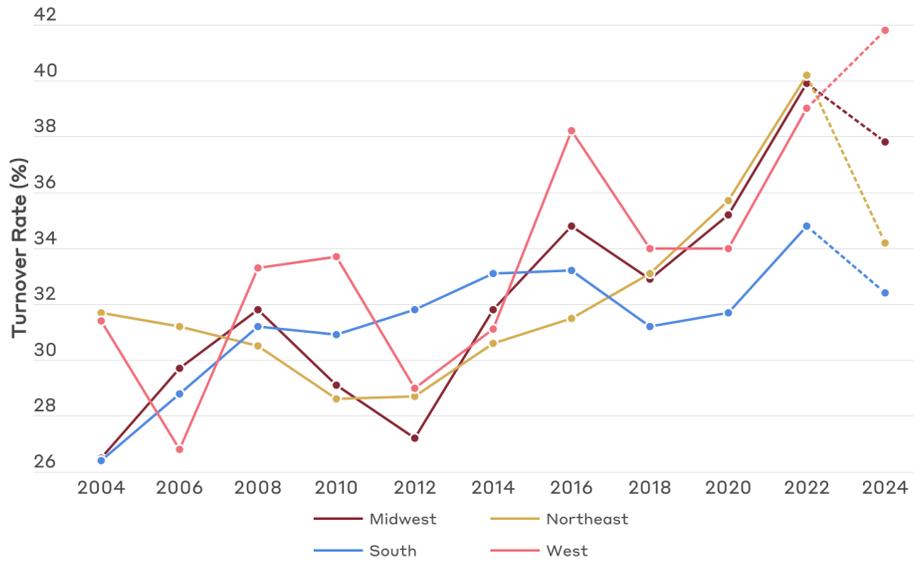
Note: New chief local election officials are defined as those entering the field since the 2022 presidential election.

Turnover Has Increased across Geographic Regions of the Country

Increasing turnover is not limited to one geographic region or due to a state- or region-specific cause, but rather is happening across the country. This suggests we need nationwide solutions to reduce turnover rates and to increase retention of high quality election administrators. Although turnover increased steadily in small jurisdictions and only recently in large ones, turnover has risen at relatively similar rates across regions. Turnover has increased over the past 20 years in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West, with each region also seeing a spike since 2018. In other words, the trends are widespread and not isolated to one or two regions. Even this broad geographic analysis reveals idiosyncratic rises and falls over time, which are likely due to statistical noise with smaller sample sizes. This underscores the importance of looking at big-picture, cross-country trends rather than limiting analysis to a few years or any single state.

¹⁶ Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, "Today's Election Administration Landscape," EVIC, November 16, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EVIC_2023_LEO_Survey_Report.pdf.

Figure 8: Election Official Turnover Has Increased Similarly Across Regions of Country



Additional Appendix Analysis of Turnover

In the Appendix to this report, we conduct additional analysis identifying where and when turnover has increased among chief local election officials. Overall, turnover has increased across jurisdictions no matter their specific characteristics. We find that turnover of local election officials has risen across both county and municipal-administered jurisdictions, for both elected and appointed officials, in Trump-won and Biden-won jurisdictions, and in swing-state and safe-state jurisdictions.

Why Is Local Election Official Turnover Higher than in the Past?

Three broad explanations account for the recent increase in local election official turnover. First, the political climate around election administration has become more challenging over the past four to eight years, and this might have led more election officials to leave the field in the past few cycles. Second, the job of being a local election official has become more complex and challenging since 2000, and the new burdens placed on election officials might have led to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover. Finally, the demographics of an aging election administration workforce could be at play. These explanations

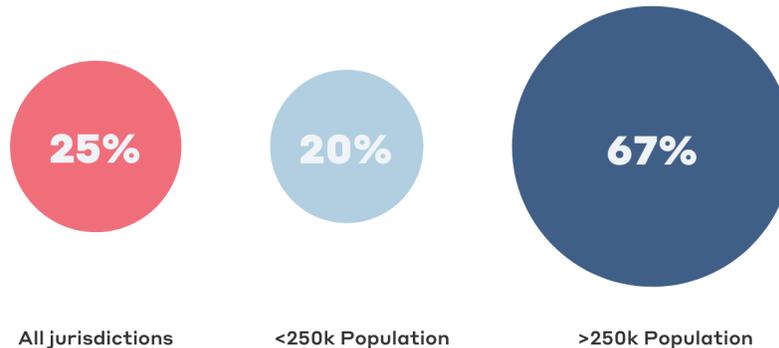
are not mutually exhaustive—all of them may work in tandem to increase turnover. In this section, we explore the evidence for each.

Increased Hostility May Contribute to Recent Increase in Turnover

Over the past four to eight years, local election officials have experienced intense levels of scrutiny and hostility. According to the 2022 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials, approximately 25% of local election officials reported being abused, harassed, or threatened in the previous two years.¹⁷ Election officials in the largest jurisdictions are substantially more likely to report being abused, harassed, or threatened. Twenty percent of respondents from jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 residents reported being harassed, while 67% of officials serving jurisdictions with more than 250,000 residents reported being harassed. Additionally, election workers in battleground states are disproportionately targeted. The FBI has received more than 1,000 tips concerning threats to election workers since June 2021, 11% of which were serious enough to merit opening an FBI investigation.¹⁸ The agency reported an especially unusual level of threats to election workers in seven states: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Wisconsin—all narrowly won by President Biden in the 2020 presidential election and whose election results were questioned.

Figure 9: Local Election Officials Are Facing an Environment of Pervasive Harassment

Percent Who Report Being Abused, Harassed, or Threatened by Jurisdiction Size



Source: 2020 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials

These reports of pervasive hostility are in line with our findings that turnover of local election officials has increased recently, especially in populous jurisdictions and in battleground states (Figure A.4 in the Appendix).

¹⁷ Early Voting Information Center, “The New Environment of Threats, Harassment, and Abuse,” *EVIC*, 2022, https://evic.reed.edu/2022_leo_survey_threatenvironment/.

¹⁸ Jeff Pegues, “Seven states continue to see unusual levels of threats to election workers,” *CBS News*, October 3, 2023. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/election-worker-threats-7-states/>.

On the other hand, in surveys of local election officials, we cannot find a clear pattern of higher turnover in places with more reports of threats and harassment. Linking our turnover data to the 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials, we are able to see jurisdictions where the local official reports having been harassed or threatened themselves, or have heard about harassment and threats causing someone they know to retire. If harassment and threats are causing more people to leave the job, we would expect to see more turnover in jurisdictions where the local official reports hearing about or experiencing harassment. Instead, we find that turnover rates are similar in places with more and less harassment. We do not take this as the final word on the subject—the survey was not designed to answer this exact question—but we take it as a counterweight to the prevailing view that harassment is a leading contributor to higher turnover.

Increased Complexity of the Role Might Also Contribute to Increased Turnover

The role of election administrator has grown more complex over the past few decades in a way that could also contribute to increased turnover in the profession. Several federal election laws designed to expand access and prevent voter fraud have added to the workload of election officials. The National Voter Registration Act (1993) created federal requirements for registering voters and maintaining accurate voter registration rolls. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) implemented requirements to provide accessible polling places and voting equipment, create computerized statewide voter registration lists, require first-time voters to present a form of voter identification, and require voters to be given the option of casting a provisional ballot if their eligibility cannot otherwise be confirmed on Election Day. Polling conducted by the Congressional Research Service and Texas A&M in the wake of HAVA found that election administrators widely agreed that the legislation increased their workload and time spent on the job.¹⁹ This polling also detected an uptick in turnover rates between 2004 and 2006 that could be due to the increasing workload (we identify the same uptick in our data, shown in Figure 1). Another source of complexity due to federal legislation is the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009, which established a requirement that ballots be distributed to overseas voters at least 45 days before Election Day.

Additionally, new technologies have transformed what was once a low-tech affair in many jurisdictions into a highly advanced process throughout the election cycle.²⁰ Computerized registration lists, online voter registration, electronic poll books, voting and tabulation machines, and mathematically based audit procedures have all increased the difficulty of the job. Social media

¹⁹ E. A. Fischer, *Election Reform and Local Election Officials*, Nova Science Publishers, 2008.

²⁰ Kathleen Hale and Mitchell Brown, *How We Vote: Innovation in American Elections*, Georgetown University Press, 2020.

and the internet provide an opportunity to engage with constituents but also a space for misinformation, disinformation, and harassment to spread.

Cybersecurity concerns have also emerged. In 2017, the Department of Homeland Security designated election infrastructure as “critical infrastructure,” recognizing its vital importance to the country as well as the potential for malicious foreign and domestic actors to disrupt the democratic process. Now, election officials must act like cybersecurity experts, implementing a host of new procedures to harden the system against attacks. This includes everything from chain-of-custody rules and dual-authentication practices to securing online registration systems and training workers to identify phishing scams. It also means election workers must prepare for new emergencies—such as a denial-of-service attack disrupting e-poll books on Election Day, a cybersecurity attack leaving officials unable to post election results in a timely manner, or a global pandemic disrupting in-person activities.

Finally, population growth across the country has created more voters and therefore more duties for election workers, in many cases without the necessary staffing and resource increases to compensate for the greater workload. Most jurisdictions can no longer get by with short-term planning for Election Day or handwritten results tallies. Instead, administering free and fair elections has become a professionalized, year-round affair. Yet, according to the 2020 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials, 34% of jurisdictions have no full-time election administrators, and an additional 17% have only one full-time equivalent election worker.²¹

States have also played a role in affecting the complexity of election administration.²² State election codes have grown dramatically in size over the past few decades. The frequency of law changes has increased as well, and jurisdictions often [lack funding to cover their implementation](#). Both the size and frequency of law changes increase the demands placed on election offices. Finally, some states have passed laws adding burdens and liability to local election official roles. These laws include eliminating external funding for election administration, limiting the use of voting machines, expanding the risk of frivolous records requests, or imposing new criminal and civil penalties on election officials for unintentional errors in administration.²³

²¹ Early Voting Information Center, “2020 LEO Survey Codebook,” January 25, 2021. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/leo2020_codebook.pdf.

²² Lorraine C. Minnite, *The Myth of Voter Fraud*, Cornell University Press, 2010.

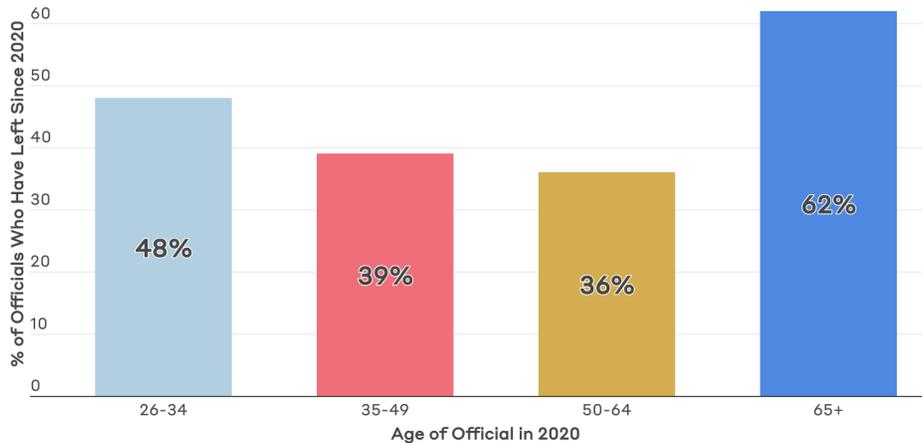
²³ States United Democracy Center, Protect Democracy, and Law Forward, “A Democracy Crisis in the Making,” 2023 edition. Available at: <https://statesuniteddemocracy.org/resources/democracy-crisis-june-2023/>.

Aging Workforce Might Contribute to Higher Turnover

One final alternative explanation for the steadily increasing turnover of local election officials is an aging population of administrators. Election administrators tend to be older than other public administrators.²⁴ Survey research also suggests that growing shares of the election workforce are at or approaching retirement age over time. According to three surveys of local election officials conducted by the Congressional Research Service in 2004, 2006, and 2008, approximately 63% of officials were 50 years old or older. By 2020, the EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials found that 74% of officials were 50 years old or older.

We investigate how this contributes to turnover by linking our turnover data to the 2020 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials. We find that 62% of officials 65 years old and older have left their role since 2020. This is substantially higher than the 36% of 50- to 65-year-olds who have left recently.

Figure 10: Local Election Official Turnover Since 2020 by Age



Source: 2020 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials and BPC analysis of original data

We do not have sufficient data on the age of election officials to estimate how much aging contributes to higher turnover, but we take this information as suggestive evidence that demographics can partially explain the increase in turnover.

²⁴ Kathleen Hale, Mitchell Brown, et al., “Election Official and Poll Worker Recruitment, Training, and Retention: Best Practices and New Areas for Research,” Election Lab, MIT, 2023. Available at: https://electionlab.mit.edu/sites/default/files/2023-10/election-officials-poll-workers_MEAES.pdf.

Turnover by State

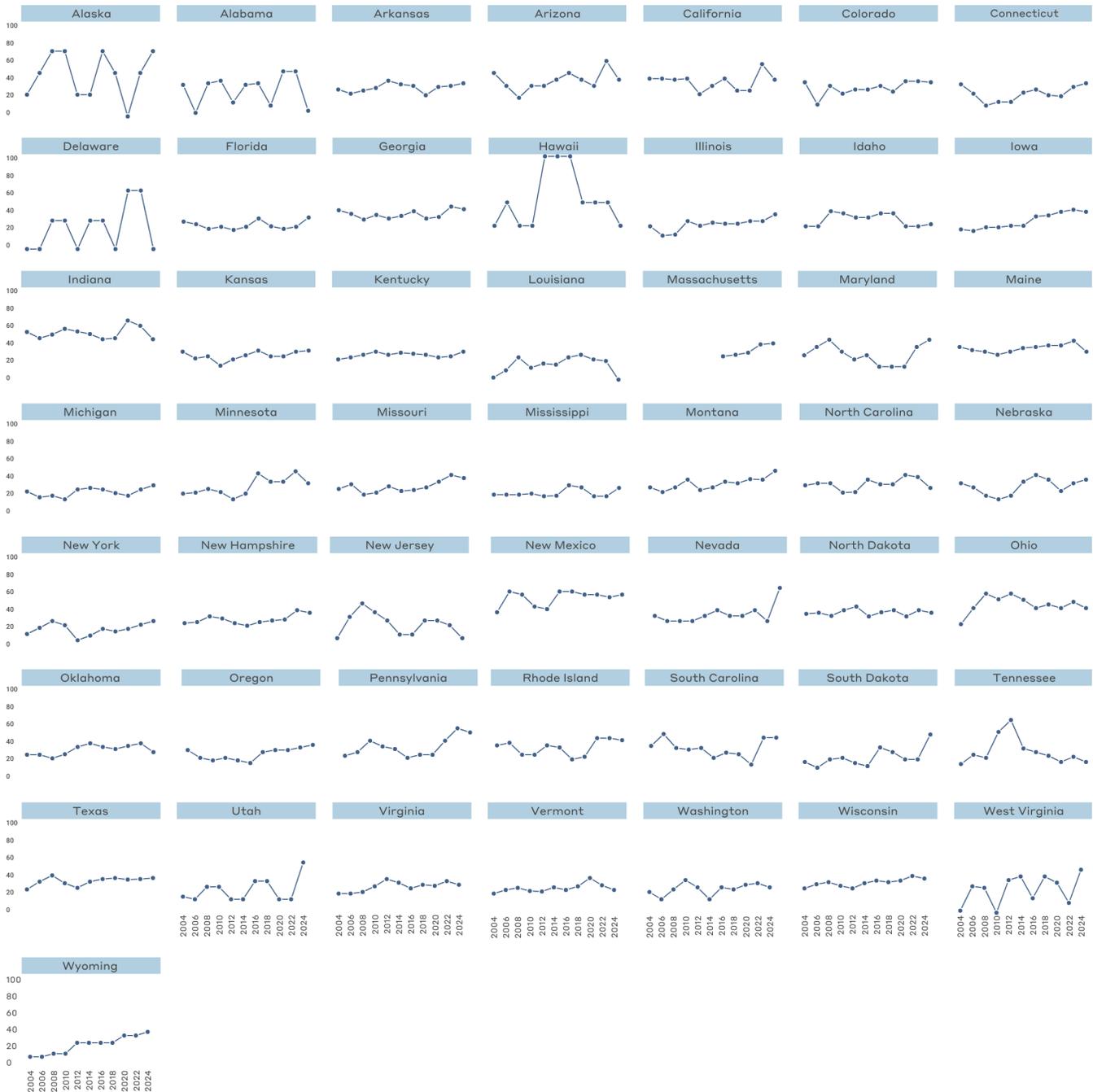
As discussed earlier in this report, we focus on national turnover rates and trends because state-level turnover rates are much more variable due to the smaller number of jurisdictions in each state, making it easy to mistakenly attribute year-to-year swings in turnover to specific factors rather than simply statistical randomness. Additionally, turnover has increased over time across all regions of the country, as well as across both county-administered and municipal-administered election jurisdictions and among both elected and appointed officials (Appendix 2). This means that addressing increasing turnover requires national solutions rather than a state-by-state approach.

With those caveats in mind, here we provide a chart of all 50 states' local election official turnover rates over the past 20 years and a map of each state's turnover rate between 2018 and 2022, our most recent complete data capture. As expected, turnover trends in individual states are much more variable than when averaged across all election jurisdictions. We see especially high variability in states with the fewest number of election jurisdictions, such as Alaska (5), Delaware (3), and Hawaii (4). We also see a six-year pattern of higher and lower turnover in Alabama and West Virginia, the two states where all jurisdictions elect local election officials for six-year terms. Overall, this figure reinforces our aggregate findings: Local election official turnover has increased steadily over time, with a modest above-trend jump in recent years.

Figure 11: Turnover of Local Election Officials by State

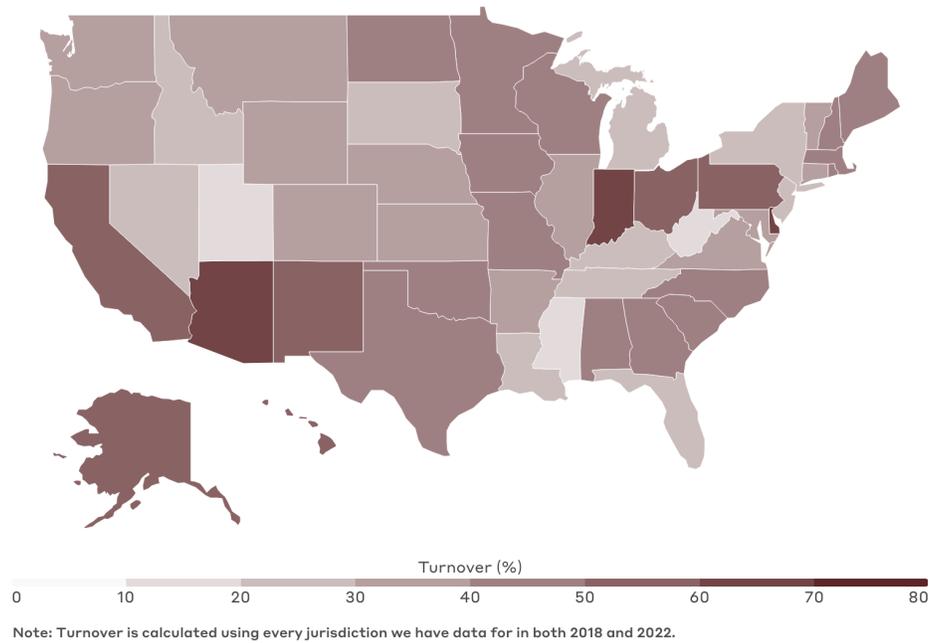
Charts depict percentage of jurisdictions in a state that have had their chief local election official change over within the prior four years. For example, the 2018 turnover rate indicates the percent of jurisdictions that have experienced turnover since 2014.

The 2024 rates are likely an underestimate, as 2024 data was collected in January of 2024.



Note: Turnover is calculated using jurisdictions for which we have a complete panel of data between 2000 and 2024, except for Massachusetts jurisdictions, which we include if we have a full panel of data between 2014 and 2024.

Figure 12: Local Election Official Turnover by State 2018–2022



What Does Turnover Mean for 2024?

From our analysis of chief local election official turnover rates, two core takeaways emerge. First, and most important, these officials are prepared to administer free and fair elections this year. Although some chief election officials will be new to the job, most will not. And, at present, 65% of chief local election officials have experience administering a presidential election. Those who are new possess several years of relevant election administration experience on average, frequently in the same jurisdiction they now serve as chief. Additionally, our preliminary analysis of the effects of turnover has found that election performance is remarkably resilient in the face of leadership changes, with no discernable decrease in voter participation in jurisdictions experiencing turnover.

Furthermore, faced with heightened turnover, election administrators are investing in training for new officials. Forty-three states currently have statewide training available to election administrators. Two more states—Rhode Island and Nevada—are developing training programs, and at least six states have created or reinstated statewide training in the last five years. Election officials are required by law to attend training in about half of the 43

states, and about half of the statewide trainings include training specifically for new officials.²⁵

All of this is cause for optimism for the continued resiliency of our electoral system.

Our second takeaway is more cautionary. It is clear that election official turnover has increased over the past two decades—by roughly 11 percentage points, or 36%—and that the increase in turnover has accelerated somewhat over the past few years. This means we need new policies and strategies to address both the long-term increase and the recent spike.

The increasing rate of turnover among election officials raises concerns beyond immediate election administration. Persistent turnover can be indicative of deepening challenges within the role itself, which may deter highly qualified candidates from entering the field and degrade the overall quality of officials over time. As seasoned professionals depart, they take with them experience and institutional knowledge that are not easily replaced. This attrition can lead to a gradual erosion in the caliber of election administration over time. Furthermore, for those who remain, the intensifying demands and stresses of the job could diminish job satisfaction and well-being, despite their dedication and competent performance. Therefore, it is essential to view increasing turnover not just as a hurdle to conducting elections, but as a symptom of an increasingly untenable role that must be addressed holistically to attract and retain election professionals.

Recommendations for a Resilient Workforce

RESPONDING TO TURNOVER IN 2024

The experience levels of current and incoming election officials and the wide availability of training indicate that election officials are well prepared to administer free and fair elections this year. Election officials looking to take further precautions ahead of the presidential election should consider the following actions:

²⁵ BPC conducted interviews with election officials in all 50 states to create an original dataset of state election training offerings. Detailed findings are slated for release in a report by May of this year but are previewed here.

Recommendations for Election Officials

- **Invest in Training and Mentorship:** Where not already required by law, state election offices or state associations should provide robust training and mentorship options for new and returning election officials.*
- **Evaluate Training Programs:** States should regularly evaluate the efficacy of their training programs, ensuring that content and delivery are meeting officials' current and evolving needs.*
- **Capture Institutional Knowledge:** Develop comprehensive systems for documenting processes, decisions, and learnings to ease the transition for incoming officials and preserve the integrity of election administration practices.
- **Consider a Succession Plan:** Implement comprehensive succession planning strategies to ensure a seamless transition of knowledge and responsibilities. This involves identifying potential leadership within the office early, providing mentorship, and creating detailed handover plans that include critical information on election processes, key contacts, and emergency protocols. By preparing for turnover proactively, election offices can maintain continuity and expertise, minimizing disruptions in election administration and enhancing overall resilience.
- **Develop a Crisis Communications Plan:** Establish protocols for transparent and timely communication with the public and stakeholders to maintain trust and manage expectations effectively, especially when things do not go as planned. The Elections Group's [Crisis Communications Toolkit](#) offers "straightforward strategies and tools for building goodwill with your community and the media, countering misinformation and dealing with unexpected problems that could throw an election into chaos if mishandled."
- **Support Election Officials in Other Jurisdictions:** Americans are [more confident](#) that votes in their community and state will be counted accurately than votes across the country. While voters may look to their local or state officials for information that affects their community, they turn to other messengers for information about elections at large.
- Local election officials should leverage the trust they have in their local communities to build confidence in national vote counts. They can do this by focusing on the security practices that all states have in common. BPC, R Street, and Issue One detailed 13 of those shared security practices in a recent infographic, [United in Security: How Every State Protects Your Vote](#).

Recommendations for State and Federal Legislatures

While we [discourage](#) state or federal legislatures from making significant statutory changes in an election year, one area where they can still make a positive impact is in allocating adequate resources. State legislatures should work with their state and local election officials to identify and fill resource

gaps, and the U.S. Congress should consider additional [election security grants](#) ahead of November. Additional funding should be paired with supplementary compensation for state and local election officials, likely requiring action by both local and state governments.

PROMOTING STABLE TURNOVER IN THE LONG TERM

Workforce policy discussions tend to focus disproportionately on how to respond to the turnover we are seeing today. Less often discussed but equally important is how to protect the workforce from turnover to begin with. Turnover, when stable, is a healthy part of any profession. Furthermore, election administration should be equipped to withstand periods of high turnover without atrophying from the loss of experienced staff.

Recommendations for Election Officials

- *Form State Associations of Election Officials:* Robust state associations bring together election administrators to promote community, foster consensus, and promote election officials' perspectives in state legislatures. State associations have the potential to address burnout by providing community, reducing confusion amid unclear or shifting legislative mandates, and advocating on officials' behalf to legislators.*
- *Continue to perform the best practices noted above, including* investing in training and mentorship; capturing institutional knowledge; engaging in succession planning; undertaking crisis communication planning; and supporting election officials in other jurisdictions.

Recommendations for State and Federal Legislatures

Recruitment, Retention, and Training

- *States should incentivize and, where possible, require training for new election officials and continuing education for returning officials.* Strong training programs are the linchpin of strong election administration. When designed and administered effectively, training programs bolster the effectiveness of election administration and increase job satisfaction among participating officials through strengthened job performance, earned incentives, and community-building.*
- *States should require the state election office to produce an election procedures manual every two years.* Without clear communication from the state on how to interpret and execute election laws and guidance, election officials are left to their own devices to trudge through an increasingly complex statutory environment, which is further muddled by court rulings that can render existing laws obsolete. The lack of a procedures manual can result in jurisdictions within a state interpreting the same law differently. Election officials, particularly new ones, need clarity to do their jobs well. A statewide

election procedures manual ensures that someone running an election, whether for the first time or the hundredth time, has the information they need from Day One. It can also help fill information gaps when training programs take months or years to complete.*

- *State and local governments should compensate election administrators and their staff at competitive rates commensurate with their responsibilities and experience.* Low pay negatively impacts both the retention of current officials and the recruitment of new, high skilled employees. State and local governments should explore base salaries, overtime eligibility, retirement benefits, and position classifications to bolster the compensation levels of election officials.*

Funding

- *States should work with election officials to identify and allocate the level of funding necessary to close resource gaps.* State executive and legislative branches should work in concert with their state's election officials to create a tailored funding solution that responds to the unique considerations of their state. Due to the patchwork of state and local laws governing how elections are run, no two elections cost exactly the same, and no single funding solution can work for all jurisdictions. Consulting election offices, as well as budgetary offices that tend to be more adept at monitoring long-term state fiscal needs than the legislative branch, can help create more informed levels of funding for elections.*
- *Local, state, and federal governments should provide additional short-term funding to implement policy and administrative reforms.* Election reforms are onerous to implement given the complex, interconnected nature of administration and the need to communicate changes to voters. To prevent voter confusion, administrative mistakes, and burnout after the introduction of a new policy, the local, state, or federal government mandating the change must provide short-term transition funding in addition to long-term support.*
- *Congress should create a regular and predictable stream of federal funding for elections that supports state and local election administration. The executive branch should prioritize consistent elections funding in its annual budget request.* Election offices need time to plan investments thoughtfully, and the erratic nature of federal funding has routinely limited its effectiveness. When timelines are short, election offices are forced to make quick decisions. Plus, one-time funding makes it nearly impossible for election offices to direct it toward full-time staff, which is especially necessary given the increasing demands election offices are facing.*

Personal Safety

- *States should pass new laws and appropriate funds to provide greater personal security for election officials and workers.* Such measures should include providing greater protection of personally identifiable information, grants

to purchase home intrusion detection systems, and funds for training and education related to maintaining greater personal security.**

- *States should prioritize implementing processes to coordinate swift investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of those responsible for threats to election workers.***
- *States should ensure that election officials have adequate legal representation to defend against politically motivated lawsuits and investigations, and election official associations should cultivate and organize pro bono legal assistance to the extent that states fail to do so.***

* This recommendation was unanimously endorsed by BPC's Task Force on Elections in its 2023 report, *Policy to Carry Us Beyond the Next Election*.

** This recommendation was made by BPC and the Brennan Center for Justice in our 2021 report, [Election Officials Under Attack](#).

Conclusion

The findings of this report underscore the remarkable resilience and dedication of election officials across the country, even as they face increasing pressures. However, without concerted efforts to address the root causes of attrition, turnover is likely to continue rising.

We are at a critical inflection point for the election workforce. Election officials can and will meet the moment and administer a safe, secure, and trustworthy 2024 election, but the long-term sustainability of election administration requires policymakers to act now.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Table A.1: Local Election Officials Captured in the Dataset

State	Jurisdictions	Jurisdictions Used	Geography	Election Official	Selection Method	Sole Authority	Primary Authority	Data Source	Data Start	Data End
Alabama	67	67	County	Probate Judge	Elected	No	Yes	Elections and State	1996	2024
Alaska	5	4	Region	Regional Election Supervisor	Appointed	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Arizona	15	15	County	County Election Administrator/ County Recorder	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Arkansas	75	75	County	Clerk	Elected	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
California	58	58	County	Clerk/Registrar of Voters/Auditor/ Director of Elections	Mixed	Yes	Yes	State	1996	2024
Colorado	64	63	County	Clerk and Recorder	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024
Connecticut	178	171	Municipal	Clerk	Mixed	No	No	State	2000	2024
Delaware	3	3	County	Director of Elections	Appointed	No	No	State	1996	2024
Florida	67	67	County	Supervisor of Elections	Mixed	No	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024
Georgia	159	159	County	Elections Director/ Probate Judge	Mixed	No	Yes	Elections and State	1996	2024
Hawaii	5	4	County	Clerk	Appointed	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Idaho	44	44	County	Clerk	Elected	Yes	Yes	Elections	2000	2024
Illinois	102	102	County	Clerk/Executive Director	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
Indiana	92	92	County	Clerk	Elected	No	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024
Iowa	99	99	County	Auditor	Elected	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
Kansas	105	105	County	Clerk	Elected	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Kentucky	120	120	County	Clerk	Elected	No	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024
Louisiana	64	64	Parish	Clerk of Court	Elected	No	Yes	State	1998	2024
Maine	504	502	Municipal	Clerk	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Maryland	24	24	County	Election Director	Appointed	No	No	State	2000	2024
Massachusetts	351	0	Municipal	Clerk/Elections Commissioner	Mixed	No	Yes	Verified Voting	2012	2024
Michigan	83	83	County	Clerk	Elected	No	No	State and NGO	2000	2024
Minnesota	87	87	County	Auditor/Election Director	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Mississippi	82	82	County	Circuit Clerk	Elected	No	No	State	2000	2024
Missouri	115	110	County	Clerk/Director of Elections	Elected	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Montana	56	56	County	Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	1996	2024
Nebraska	93	93	County	Clerk/Election Commissioner	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
Nevada	17	17	County	Clerk/Registrar of Voters	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
New Hampshire	234	234	Municipal	Clerk	Mixed	No	No	State and NGO	2000	2024
New Jersey	21	21	County	Clerk	Elected	No	No	State	2000	2024
New Mexico	33	33	County	Clerk	Elected	No	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024

State	Jurisdictions	Jurisdictions Used	Geography	Election Official	Selection Method	Sole Authority	Primary Authority	Data Source	Data Start	Data End
New York	62	58	County	Election Commissioner	Appointed	No	No	State	2000	2024
North Carolina	100	100	County	Election Director	Appointed	No	No	State	2000	2024
North Dakota	53	53	County	Auditor	Elected	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Ohio	88	88	County	County Election Director	Appointed	No	No	State and Local	2000	2024
Oklahoma	77	77	County	Election Board Secretary	Appointed	No	No	State	1996	2024
Oregon	36	36	County	Clerk/Elections Director	Mixed	Yes	Yes	State	2000	2024
Pennsylvania	67	67	County	Director of Elections	Appointed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Rhode Island	39	39	Municipal	Clerk/Registrar/Election Director	Mixed	No	Yes	State and Local	2000	2024
South Carolina	46	46	County	Director of Voter Registration and Elections	Appointed	No	No	State	2000	2024
South Dakota	66	64	County	Auditor	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
Tennessee	95	95	County	Administrator of Elections	Appointed	No	No	State	2000	2024
Texas	254	254	County	Elections Administrator/Clerk/Tax Assessor	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Utah	29	29	County	Clerk	Elected	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024
Vermont	246	246	Municipal	Clerk	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Virginia	133	133	County	General Registrar	Appointed	No	Yes	State and Local	1998	2024
Washington	39	39	County	Auditor/Elections Director	Elected	Yes	Yes	Elections, State, and NGO	2000	2024
West Virginia	55	55	County	Clerk/Elections Coordinator	Mixed	No	Yes	Elections and State	2000	2024
Wisconsin	1851	1779	Municipal	Clerk	Mixed	No	Yes	State	2000	2024
Wyoming	23	23	County	Clerk	Elected	Yes	Yes	Elections and State	1998	2024

Number of jurisdictions are total number of jurisdictions in that state.

Jurisdictions used are the number of jurisdictions with a full panel of data between 2000 and 2024 and used in the main analysis.

In states where multiple officials are coded, a '/' separates each distinct official and they are listed in order by frequency. We aim to code the official in each jurisdiction with primary authority to administer elections, especially those who oversee voting administration on Election Day. In jurisdictions with boards, we identify the single official with the most responsibility in running elections. In New York, no single individual could be identified so we code the two election commissioners in each jurisdiction. We exclude jurisdictions in other states where no single individual could be identified. We were unable to collect municipal-level data in Michigan, so we code the most important county-level official. We are unable to collect data on the municipal moderators in New Hampshire, so we code the municipal clerk.

Selection method indicates whether all officials coded in each state are elected, appointed, or a mix of both.

Sole authority designates whether the official is the only election authority in that jurisdiction, excepting local legislative bodies that determine election administration budgets and appointing bodies whose sole purpose is to select a chief election official.

Primary authority indicates whether the official coded is in charge of the majority of election administration responsibilities in the jurisdiction. For both columns, the modal coded official in the state is classified.

For data source, 'State' indicates the data derives from the state election authority, 'Elections' indicates the data derives from election results, and 'NGO' indicates the data derives from a state-level independent organization, typically a state association of election officials.

The date ranges indicate the maximal amount of data captured for each state, although only data from 2000 onwards is used in the analysis.

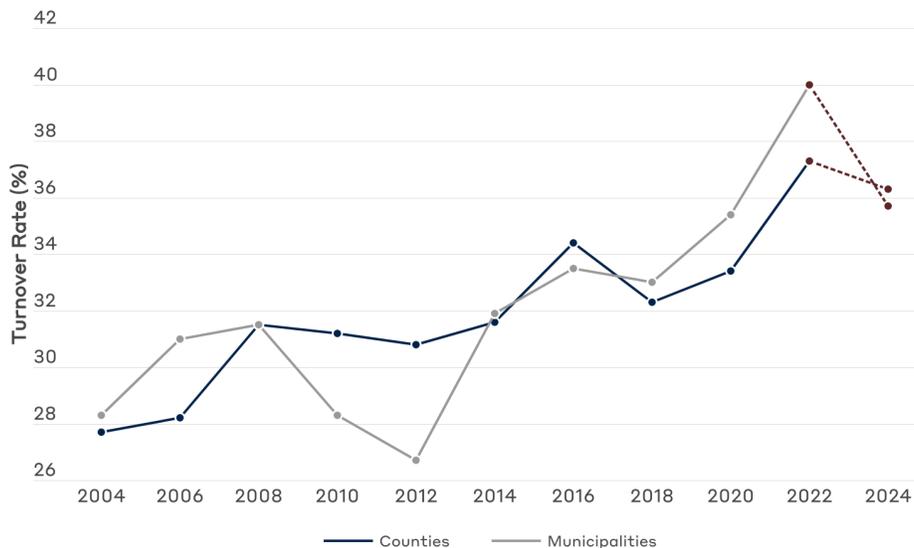
APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS OF INCREASING TURNOVER

In Figure 8 of the report, we show that turnover of chief local election officials has increased across all four geographic regions of the country. In Figure 5, we show that turnover has also increased in both small and large jurisdictions, although less populous jurisdictions have seen increasing turnover rates over a longer period of time and more populous jurisdictions have seen a bigger jump in turnover recently. Here we examine several additional cuts of the data, including county versus municipality, elected versus appointed, Biden-won versus Trump-won, and 2020 battleground versus safe-state comparisons. Overall, turnover has increased across jurisdictions no matter their specific characteristics. It appears that increasing turnover is more of a longer-term trend in elected, Trump-won, and safe-state jurisdictions and that turnover has spiked more recently in appointed, Biden-won, and swing-state jurisdictions.

Turnover Has Increased in Both County and Municipal Jurisdictions over Time

As shown in Figure A.1, chief local election official turnover has increased in both county- and municipal-administered jurisdictions over time. Our data captures municipal-administered elections in seven states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Although these states account for less than 10% of the U.S. population, combined they total roughly half of all election jurisdictions. Although there has been more year-to-year variation in election official turnover in municipal-administered jurisdictions, in general the picture is the same regardless of jurisdiction type.

Figure A.1: Turnover of Election Officials in County vs. Municipal Jurisdictions

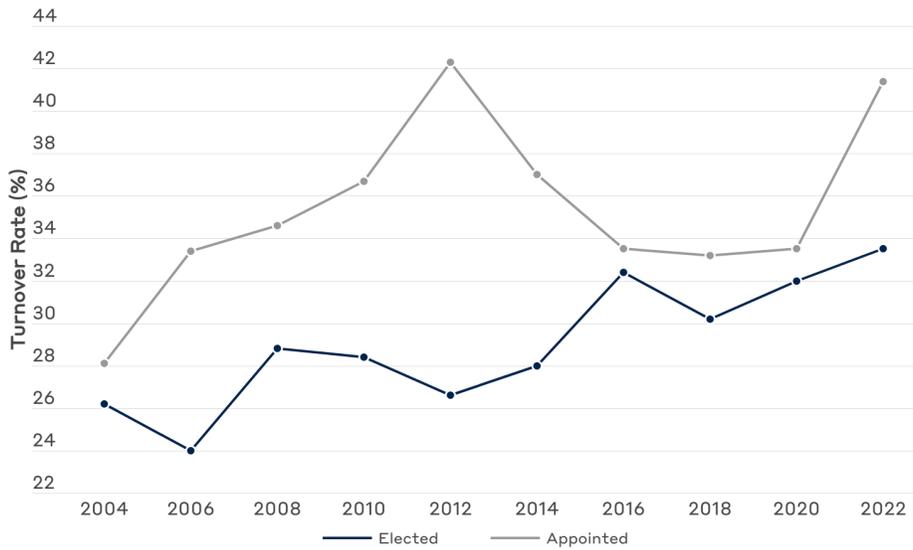


Note: For Michigan, county clerks are used for this analysis even though municipal clerks handle the majority of election administration duties.

Long-Term Increase in Turnover Limited to Elected Jurisdictions, Recent Increase Mostly in Appointed Jurisdictions

The turnover of local election officials has increased over the past two decades regardless of the selection method. However, we see different long- and short-term trends across elected and appointed officials.²⁶ The turnover of local election officials selected via direct elections has been steady over the long term. In contrast, the turnover of appointed election officials has seen more ups and downs, although turnover spiked significantly over the past few years.

Figure A.2: Turnover of Election Officials in Elected vs. Appointed Jurisdictions

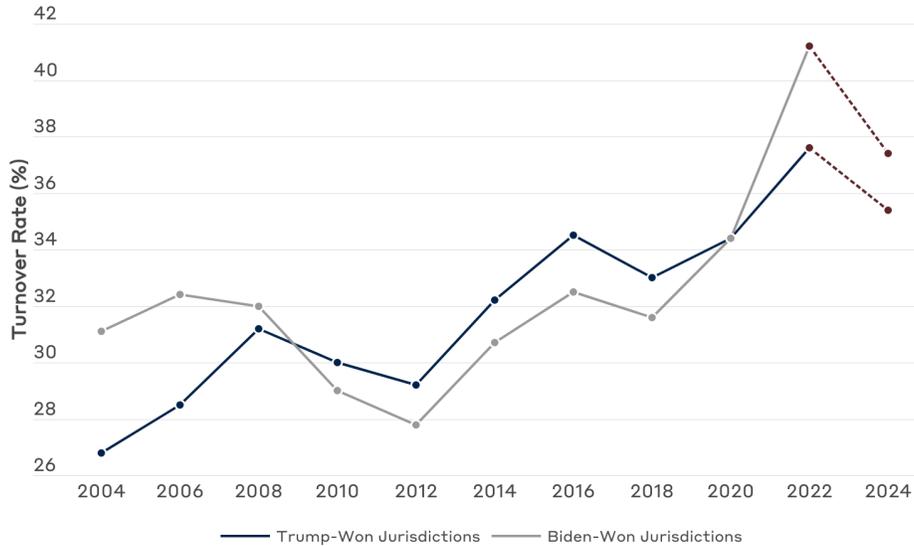


Note: We only have selection method data for counties prior to 2024. Therefore, this graph excludes municipalities and our 2024 data capture. Counties that have switched between electing and appointing their chief local election official over the past 20 years are also excluded.

²⁶ Selection method data is from the following two sources: Joshua Ferrer and Igor Geyn, “Electing America’s Election Official,” in *The Frontline Workers of Democracy: How Local Election Administrators Support, Staff, and Defend American Elections*, ed. Paul Gronke, David Kimball, et al. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024). Joshua Ferrer, “To Elect or Appoint? Evidence from Local Election Administration,” working paper, 2023. Available at: https://www.joshuaferer.com/publication/electing_leos/electing_leos.pdf.

Turnover Has Increased Faster in Jurisdictions Biden Won and in Battleground States

Figure A.3: Election Official Turnover Has Increased Steadily in Trump-Won Jurisdictions, Increased Rapidly Recently in Biden-Won Jurisdictions



How much has turnover changed in more-conservative or more-liberal communities? Breaking jurisdictions into those that Donald Trump carried in 2020 versus those that Joe Biden carried that year, we find that Trump-won jurisdictions have seen steady increases in turnover since 2004 while Biden-won jurisdictions saw a much larger spike in the past few even-year general elections.

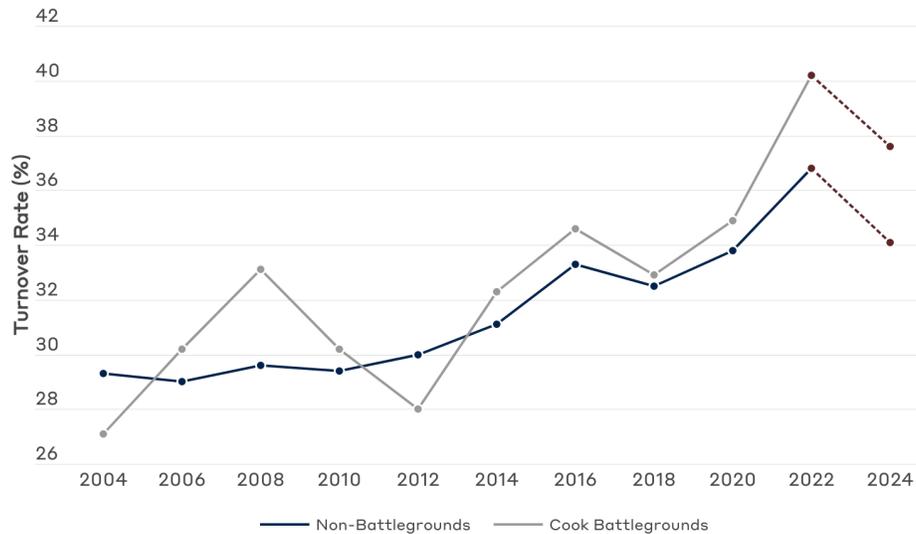
Because Biden won more-populous jurisdictions on average and Trump won smaller jurisdictions on average, we might worry that these differences in the trajectories of Biden-won and Trump-won areas arise due to population differences. We match Trump-won jurisdictions with Biden-won jurisdictions based on population to disentangle the effects of partisanship and population of election official turnover. We find that even after accounting for population, the same pattern shown in Figure A.3 remains: a long-term increase in turnover among Trump-won jurisdictions, and a shorter-term but steeper increase in turnover in Biden-won counties.

We also find that turnover increased more in jurisdictions in states that were closely contested in the 2020 presidential election, according to the *Cook Political Report*.²⁷ Turnover in *Cook* battleground states increased from 33% in 2018 to 40% in 2022. In comparison, turnover in states that were not closely contested in the 2020 presidential election increased from 32% in 2018 to 37% in 2022. Although this difference could be attributed to the

²⁷ We use the *Cook Political Report*, as it combines polling, demographics, and the political environment with expert horse-race analysis to make this determination.

fact that jurisdictions in battleground states tend to be more populous than jurisdictions in safe states or due to random chance, it is consistent with media reports that turnover has been higher in swing states.²⁸

Figure A.4: Election Official Turnover Has Increased More Rapidly in Battleground States



These findings suggest that the partisan and political environment of the jurisdiction plays a role in shaping the decisions of local election officials to stay or to leave the profession. Officials in Biden-won and swing-state jurisdictions might have received disproportionate attention and harassment from those who believed the election results were fraudulent. This speculation is supported by the finding that Republicans' lack of confidence was [greatest](#) in states that Trump lost by narrow margins, and that threats and harassment have been [concentrated](#) in battleground states.

²⁸ Neil Vigdor, "Turnover of Election Officials in Swing States Adds Strain for 2024, Report Says," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2023. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/05/us/politics/election-officials-threats.html>.

APPENDIX 3: CALCULATING DEVIATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS TURNOVER RATE TREND

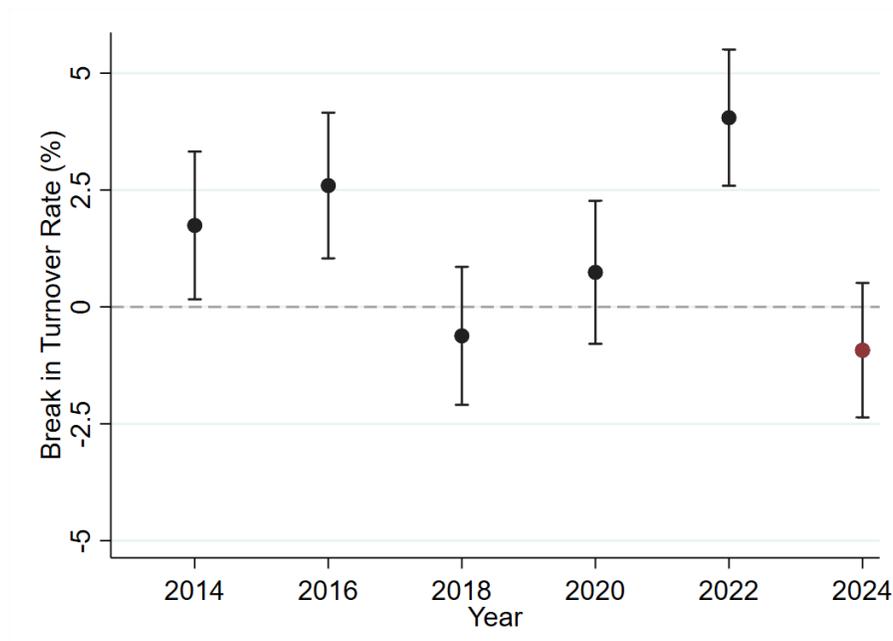
In the main text, we noted that election official turnover since 2020 is higher than pre-2020 trends. We also quantified the extent of that deviation as a 4-percentage-point jump. In this section, we visualize changes in turnover rate from the previous trend and provide more details on the calculation.

To assess whether the trend break we observe in 2022 is out of the ordinary, we conduct two analyses. First, we use a simple linear regression to predict the turnover rate in 2022 using data from 2004 to 2020 and ask whether observed turnover in 2022 is statistically distinguishable from the turnover rate predicted by the observed trend. Second, we extend this analysis back in time, asking whether observed turnover in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 is noticeably higher or lower than the trend in turnover prior to that year would predict.

Figure A.5 presents the results of our analysis of trend breaks. Each point reports a break in the turnover rate in a given election from the pre-existing trend estimated using linear regression. The lines extending from the points are 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered by jurisdiction.

We find that, among the last six election cycles from 2014 to 2024, 2022 is the largest break in election official turnover, and it is statistically distinguishable from the existing trend. However, it is only modestly larger than other recent breaks in the trend. For example, while turnover was 4 percentage points higher in 2022 than expected, turnover was also 2.6 percentage points higher than expected in 2016 based on existing trends, and the observed turnover in both 2014 and 2016 is also statistically distinguishable from the trend.

Figure A.5: Change in Turnover Rate from Previous Trend





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