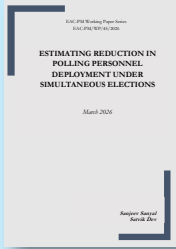


Simultaneous Elections & Polling Personnel Deployment

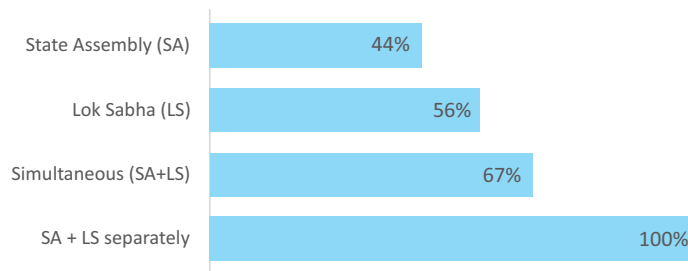
Ten Key Insights from EAC-PM Working Paper 45/2026



The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) released Working Paper 45/2026 in March 2026, providing the first systematic quantitative estimate of polling personnel savings under the ‘One Nation One Election’ framework as proposed in the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024. The paper by Sanjeev Sanyal and Satvik Dev employs ECI deployment benchmarks and 25 years of election data (1999–2024) to derive evidence-based projections. The IJES Research Desk distils ten critical insights below.

1. The 33% Gross Baseline: ECI benchmarks prescribe 4 PP (PRO+3) for State Assembly, 5 PP (PRO+4) for Lok Sabha and 6 PP (PRO+5) for simultaneous elections per polling station. Conducting both separately therefore requires 9 PP versus 6 under simultaneity — a 33% gross saving. This benchmark was empirically validated against actual deployment data from West Bengal 2016, Odisha 2019 and Tamil Nadu 2019, with deviations below 0.55%. Details are illustrated (below) in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Figure 1: Polling Personnel (PP) Required per Polling Station



SA: PRO+3 = 4 | LS: PRO+4 = 5 | Simultaneous: PRO+5 = 6 | Separate: 9 total

Table 1: Headline figures at a glance

Indicator	Estimate
Gross baseline PP reduction	33%
Net adjusted PP reduction	28%
PP saved per 5-yr cycle	~26 lakh
Personnel-days saved	1.04 crore
Total PSs (GE 2024)	10,51,016
Average PS per State/UT	33,904
Premature dissolutions (1999–2024)	10 (avg. 2/cycle)
Already-sync'd States	3 (AP, Odisha, Sikkim)

Source: EAC-PM WP 45/2026; ECI Statistical Reports 2024.

2. Historical Validation of ECI Norms: The paper’s most methodologically rigorous contribution is its validation of ECI benchmarks against real CEO narrative reports. West Bengal 2016 (77,411 PSs): estimated 3,09,644 vs. actual 3,10,726 — a gap of just –0.35%. Odisha 2019 simultaneous (37,754 PSs): 2,26,524 vs. 2,25,636 (+0.39%). Tamil Nadu 2019 LS (67,720 PSs): 3,38,600 vs. 3,40,334 (–0.51%). The near-perfect fit lends strong credibility to the projection model.

3. Net Reduction: 28%, Not 33%: Three downward adjustments reduce the gross 33% to a net 28%: (i) premature dissolutions requiring fresh elections to truncated terms, adding PP deployment instead of saving it; (ii) three States already synchronised with LS (AP, Odisha, Sikkim) yield zero incremental saving; and (iii) six UTs without legislatures see no State Assembly polls regardless. The 5-percentage-point gap between gross and net estimates is analytically important — it represents the structural friction of India’s federal democratic reality.

4. The Premature Dissolution Problem: Ten politically-driven premature dissolutions occurred across 1999–2024 — averaging 2 per five-year cycle. These states (Haryana 2000, Goa 2002, Gujarat 2002, Manipur 2002, Bihar 2005, Karnataka 2008, Haryana 2009, Jharkhand 2009, Delhi 2015, Telangana 2018) must hold fresh elections for a truncated unexpired term, then be re-elected again at the next simultaneous cycle. This generates additional PP deployment, partially offsetting savings. The paper correctly excludes logistical dissolutions (e.g., Himachal Pradesh 2007 — snowbound constituencies) from this count.

Table 2: ECI Benchmark Verification Against Actual Deployment

Election	PSs	Est. (ECI)	Actual	Diff %
W. Bengal 2016 (SA)	77,411	3,09,644	3,10,726	–0.35%
Odisha 2019 (Sim.)	37,754	2,26,524	2,25,636	+0.39%
Tamil Nadu 2019 (LS)	67,720	3,38,600	3,40,334	–0.51%

Source: EAC-PM WP 45/2026, Table 1. All figures exclude reserve personnel.

5. 1.04 Crore Personnel-Days: The Education Dividend: Multiplying the 26 lakh PP saved per cycle by 4 days (2 training + 1 pre-poll deployment + 1 poll day) yields 1.04 crore personnel-days saved over five years. The paper’s most impactful observation is that the majority of polling personnel are school teachers and most polling stations are located in school buildings. This reduction therefore directly translates into teaching days recovered and learning outcomes improved — a substantial but rarely quantified co-benefit of electoral reform.

6. Security Personnel: The 50% Paradox: ECI’s own submission to the Ministry of Law and Justice (17.03.2023) estimates a 50% increase in CAPF company deployment for simultaneous versus standalone Lok Sabha elections. This is because simultaneous elections amplify requirements for law and order maintenance, VVIP security, vulnerable hamlet coverage and EVM/VVPAT strong room protection. Yet, separate State Assembly security deployments would reduce. The net effect on security personnel-days is indeterminate — and the paper rightly declines to offer a single-point estimate.

7. EVM Doubling and FLC Personnel: First Level Check (FLC) and EVM commissioning personnel face an offsetting dynamic: the number of deployment instances declines under simultaneity, but each instance requires double the personnel because two EVMs (one for LS, one for SA) are commissioned per polling station. The paper correctly identifies this as creating an analytically intractable trade-off — an important caveat for those who assume all personnel categories benefit equally from simultaneous elections.

8. Counting Personnel: No Saving: ECI Handbook for Returning Officers mandates that State Assembly and Lok Sabha votes be counted on separate counting tables with separate staff, even under simultaneous elections. This is a firm institutional constraint — making the 28% PP saving strictly limited to the polling phase. Policy advocates must be careful not to extrapolate polling savings to total election workforce reduction.

Table 3: Gross-to-Net PP Reduction — Adjustment Calculations (5-yr Cycle)

Adjustment Category	States	PSs	Non-Sim PP	Sim PP	Change
Premature dissolutions (2 states)	2	67,807	6,10,267	6,78,075	-67,807
Already synchronised (3 states)	3	1,01,711	6,10,267	6,10,267	Nil
Remaining States/UTs (26)	26	8,81,497	79,33,476	52,88,984	+26,44,492 (33%)
TOTAL	31	10,51,016	91,54,010	65,77,326	25,76,684 (28%)

Source: EAC-PM WP 45/2026, Annexure. PP = Polling Personnel; PS = Polling Stations.

9. The Transition Period Caveat: The 28% saving applies only to the steady state — after full synchronisation. During the transition period, State Assemblies whose terms expire within the first five-year window must hold elections twice: once on normal expiry for a truncated term and again at the simultaneous election. This temporarily inflates PP deployment. The paper appropriately declines to model the transition, noting that doing so would require too many assumptions about phasing. This is a significant gap that future research should address, particularly given legislative debates on the transition mechanism.

10. Scope Boundaries and Research Agenda: The paper explicitly excludes: local body elections (Panchayati Raj and urban local bodies), which could generate additional savings if co-synchronised; the macroeconomic benefits of simultaneity, covered separately by Singh et al. (2024); and any analysis of voter behaviour, turnout effects or political representation consequences. For IJES readers, these exclusions define a productive research frontier — particularly the interaction between simultaneous elections and subnational fiscal cycles, state-level governance continuity and representation of regional parties under consolidated electoral calendars.

Observation: EAC-PM WP 45/2026 is the most rigorous quantitative contribution yet to India’s simultaneous elections debate. Its validation of ECI benchmarks against actual deployment data is methodologically exemplary. The finding that 1.04 crore teacher-days could be recovered per election cycle reframes ‘One Nation One Election’ from a purely political-constitutional question into an education policy imperative.

— IJES Research Desk

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