

# Facility Staffing Levels: Maintenance, Custodial, and Grounds Care

*National survey provides benchmarks for FTEs per square foot.*

## Facilities Management

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<http://www.facilitiesnet.com/resources/editorial/2018/a17471-CollegeCampus.jpg>

One way to evaluate whether a facility management department is understaffed is to look at the staffing practices of comparable organizations. To provide one data point for that analysis, we asked facility managers to tell us staffing levels for maintenance, custodial, and grounds care workers in terms of square feet or square acres per full time equivalent (FTE) employees.

That information was drawn from answers to three staffing questions in Building Operating Management's annual FM Pulse survey. Those three questions were:

- What is your staffing level for maintenance in square foot per full time equivalent employees (sq.ft./FTE)?

- What is your staffing level for custodians in square foot per full time equivalent employees (sq.ft./FTE)?
- What is your staffing level for grounds care in acres per full time equivalent employees (sq.ft./FTE)?

Nationally, the median number of square feet per FTE for the maintenance staff is 50,000; 22 percent of respondents reported that they outsourced the function. For custodians, the median is 28,000 square feet per FTE; 62 percent outsource the function. For grounds care, the median is 30,000 acres per FTE; 82 percent said they used outsourcing for to handle grounds care. (The median is the middle point in a set of data; half of the responses are above it and half are below it.)

The responses revealed very wide variations in the practices of different facility management departments. There are many reasons that staffing levels differ from one organization to another. One is the level of cleaning that is acceptable in the space; the definition of “clean” varies among different organizations. Another has to do with the nature of the space involved. For example, custodial services can be provided more efficiently, in terms of square feet covered by a single FTE, in a 500,000 square foot high rise than in a K-12 system that offers pre-kindergarten in a variety of small spaces.

To help facility managers zero in on practices of comparable buildings, this report breaks down the responses by ten different types of facilities: owner-occupied commercial office, multitenant commercial office, higher education, K-12 systems, health care, hospitality, federal government, state government, municipal government, and retail. Even within those segments, however, there are significant variations in staffing levels. Once again, the variations are explained in part by the different ways that the facilities are used and the different expectations that organizations have for their facilities.

Thus, in reviewing the data from the survey, it's important to pay at least as much attention to the range of responses as to the medians.

The FM Pulse survey was conducted by email by Facilitiesnet.com, the online home of Building Operating Management and Facility Maintenance Decisions magazines. We received 1,925 responses to the survey from August through October 2017.