



California City Managers

2015 Report by **GrassrootsLab**

Chief Administrative Structures in California's Municipalities

In California, 473 cities hire and operate under the guidance of a city manager, an appointed official that is selected by the elected members of a city council. Managers are tasked with a wide array of crucial government duties, such as preparing a budget as well as hiring and supervising city staff. Overall, managers are ultimately charged with providing guidance and oversight to ensure all departments are responding to the council's goals and the community's needs by managing a city's day-to-day operations as well as its public relations with the community they serve.

Although generally charged with the same duties, managerial titles and positions vary slightly depending on the size and structure of a given council. A majority of cities operate under what is called a "council-manager" structure, where city council members work with an appointed manager to run the city. In this system, the mayor's position is largely ceremonial and has no executive duties. However, eight of California's 10 largest cities, including Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, and Stockton, operate under a "mayor-council" structure. Also known as "strong mayor" cities, this form of government gives the mayor administrative authority over city operations such as the power to hire and fire department heads and to prepare and administer the budget. Strong mayors appoint a chief administrative officer, an equivalent to a city manager, who supervises day-to-day operations. However, these individuals are accountable to the mayor alone, and often are allotted a restricted scope of operations.

In 9 of California's smallest cities, there is far less demand for a separate employee to handle day to day administrative duties. Instead, these city councils relegate administrative oversight largely to the city clerk. For the sake of this report, we will focus exclusively on the 473 cities that have a city manager.

Although much has been written recently on the topic of city managers, our research intends to bring an essential perspective on how city managers in California fare with respect to their professional field, and to highlight significant trends. In the short term, this report seeks to offer a snapshot of the city manager pool in California, to illustrate their common backgrounds, and to highlight significant statewide trends as they pertain to educational and professional background, salary, and gender diversity.

Methodology

This report draws on data compiled and maintained by GrassrootsLab, LLC, a California based consulting firm specializing in local government, advocacy, data, and technology.

GrassrootsLab's proprietary database contains unique data on local governments in California, and tracks key city and county personnel, which lays the foundation for this report on city managers. Members of the GrassrootsLab team compiled biographies on each of the city managers in California from a number of sources made available by the individual manager, the city, or other local news outlets. Specifically, our researchers focused on collecting data on gender, tenure, education, and salary for each Californian city manager in order to produce insights into statewide trends. The data featured in this report were compiled in December of 2014, and may not include any personnel changes since that date.

This report is further supplemented by national data on gender representation, salary, and tenure from sources including the ICMA, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the California State Controller.

Educational & Professional Background

Professionally, more than half of city managers in California have backgrounds in public administration and policy. A remaining quarter of city managers come from either business administration or city and regional planning backgrounds. About 5% of managers had professional experience in engineering and another 5% worked in finance before delving into city management. Additional previous careers include community and economic development, law, law enforcement, and education, each of which are representative of only about 2-3% of California's city managers.

Professional Backgrounds

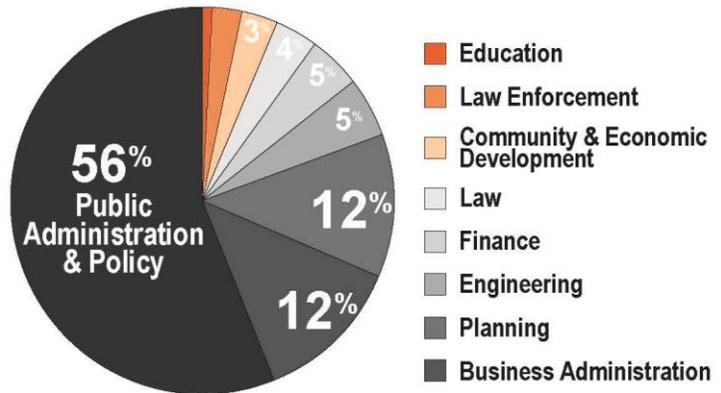


Figure 1. Public Policy and Administration ranks as the most common professional background for California's city managers.

Roughly 71% of Californian city managers earned their graduate degrees within California. The majority (38%) of these individuals studied at California State Universities. While another 11% of all managers studied at one of the University of California Campuses and about 21% studied at private California universities. The most popular schools attended by city managers for their graduate degrees in California were the University of Southern California and California State University Long Beach. Less than 30% of city managers earned their graduate degrees outside of California.

University Choice

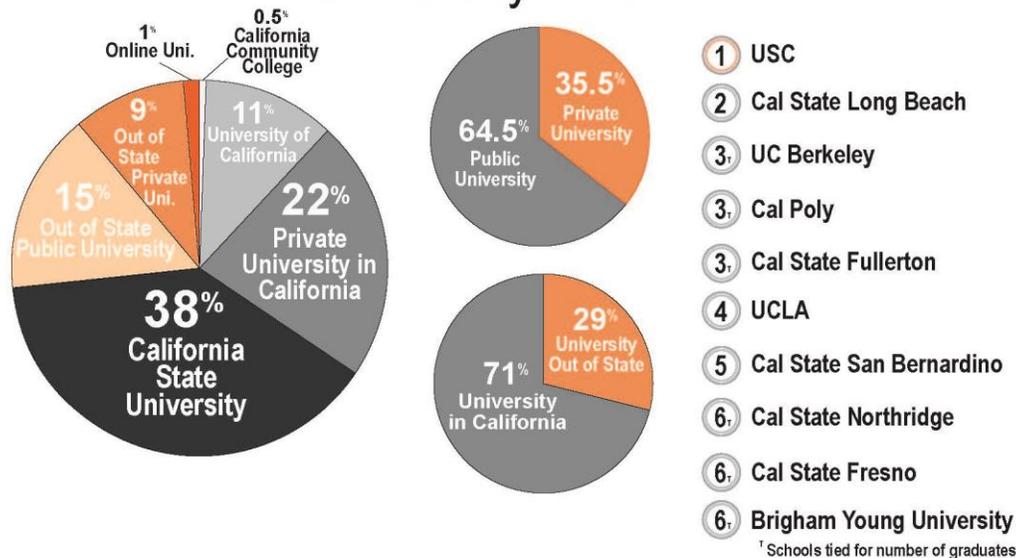


Figure 2. While the majority of California's city managers obtained their degrees from in-state public universities in either the California State University or University of California system, USC is the most popular university among California's city managers.

Gender Gap in City Management

Women 2014: An Examination of the Status of Women in California State and Local Government, released in September of 2014, estimated that women account for merely 28% of all elected officials at the city level.¹ This discrepancy is only exacerbated when one looks at the gender gap in these cities' executive management.

Current estimates show that **81% of the 473 cities with city managers are led by male city managers and only 19% (76 cities) are led by female city managers.** This gap is even more evident when examining the make-up of California's 50 largest cities by population, where only 6 are led by women and the remaining 88% are led by men. Remarkably, the only city in CA's top 20 largest cities lead by a woman is San Francisco.

At the county level, **23 (40%) of California's counties have no cities with female city managers.** San Bernardino County, for example, has the fourth largest number of cities per county in California but, **of the 24 possible city manager positions available, none are filled by women.** As noted in Figure 5, Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties have the most city manager positions and none have filled more than 15% of these with women. On the other hand, only 4 counties (Lake, San Francisco, Mendocino, and El Dorado) have over 50% female city managers; however each of these counties does not have more than 4 city manager positions available. Overall, the quantity of women serving as chief executive officers in cities is extremely low though the state.



Figure 3. Gender disparities are exacerbated when examining California's largest cities, where only 12% of the top 50 largest cities are managed by women.

Gender Disparities by County

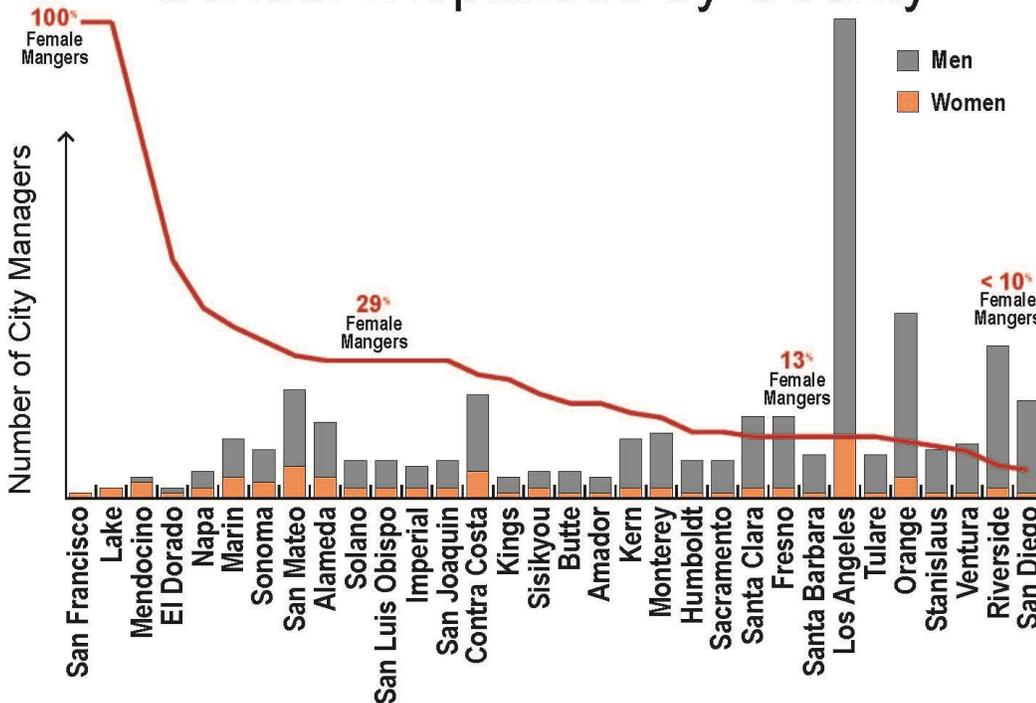


Figure 4. While percentage of female city managers may be high, overall quantity of women is extremely low. This graph excludes the 23 counties that do not have any female city managers as well as the 3 counties without cities.

¹ The Leadership California Institute, "Women 2014: The Status of Women in California Government," 2014.

It is important to note that there is no determinable correlation between counties that have a higher proportion of female local elected officials, and their propensity to hire female city managers. Of the 65 cities in California with female majority city councils, only 12 (19%) have female city managers. Although these may not necessarily be the same council members that initially hired the city manager, it is significant to note that these councils hire female managers at the same rate as California as a whole. Furthermore, of the 11 counties with more than 39% women serving in local

Gender Disparity in Counties with Most Cities

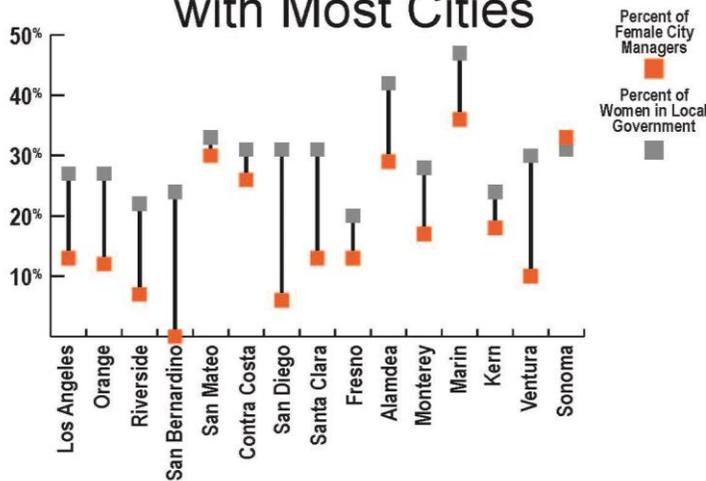


Figure 5. In the 15 counties with the most cities, localities with more women serving in local government do not necessarily have female city managers.

government, only 4 have at least one female city manager within their jurisdiction. Still, of the 21 counties where less than a quarter of local elected officials are women, 13 also have no female city managers. The absence of female managers in both counties with councils that seat many female representatives as well as those that seat very few highlights the lack of intention to hire female city managers. This report does not track the exact composition of councils that hire female city managers rather than their male counterparts. The scope of this report focuses on current management and aims to provide a snapshot into California's city management at this time.

An article published in January of this year estimates that nationally, 12.6% of city managers are women.²

This means that female city managers in California fare nearly 7 percentage points above the national average of city managers. However, women make up

40% of support staff in city management offices nationwide, which means that only a fraction of these women climb the ladder to become the chief manager of her city.³ Furthermore, female representation in California city management lags over 12% behind the percentage of female CEO's across all other industries, which the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates to be 26.8%.⁴

There is also an evident difference in the length of time men and women serve as city manager. In California, city managers spend on average over 4 years in office. **Male city managers serve on average one year longer than women**, working for one city for an average of 4 years while women serve for about 3 years. California's manager tenure is much lower than the national tenure which was approximately 7 years in 2012.⁵ However, the difference between the genders in California is less than the national average. According to the ICMA 2013 *Task Force on Women in the Profession*, female managers at the national scale have worked 5 years at their current job where men have served for 7.1 years.⁶

On Average, city managers in California earn an annual salary of approximately \$181,000,⁷ which is significantly greater than an ICMA national figure, which averaged around \$111,000 in 2012.⁸ In equivalent roles, women in this position earn roughly \$0.90 for every male salaried dollar, making salary relatively equal among men and women managers. **However, women earn about 15% less in benefits and expenses.** Male managers earn about \$51,000 on average in

² Voorhees, Heidi, and Rachel Lange-Skaggs. "Women Leading Government: Why So Little Progress in 30 Years?" *PM Magazine*, January 1, 2015.

³ "Women Leading Government."

⁴ "Household Data, 2013 Annual Averages," Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed December 31, 2014. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>.

⁵ "ICMA: Leaders at the Core of Better Communities," Statistics and Data, Accessed December 31, 2014.

http://icma.org/en/icma/career_network/education/data.

⁶ International City/County Management Association, "ICMA Task Force on Women in the Profession 2014", By Pamela W. Antil, Tamara Letourneau, and Amber Cameron, 2014.

⁷ "Government Compensation in California, 2013 City Data," California State Controller's Office, accessed December 16, 2014.

http://www.publicpay.ca.gov/Reports/RawExport.aspx#2013_1.

⁸ "Leaders at the Core of Better Communities."

benefits and other expenses annually while women earn \$43,000 respectively. This suggests that women are earning over \$77,000 less their male counterparts over the course of their tenure with one city.

Conclusion

At the end of 2014, ICMA released a report discussing the overall status of women in the profession and outlined steps to overcome obstacles that have prevented the percentage of women serving as city managers from increasing over time. Their data revealed that while women have become more involved in city management at all levels, women in the CAO position has never exceeded 13% nationally.⁹ The Leadership California Institute has also researched and acknowledged the lack of women serving in local government, which serves as a direct avenue to serve at statewide and federal offices.¹⁰ As broader insights are gained into the disparity of women leaders at the local management and legislative level, we expect more resources allocated toward the recruitment, training, and retention of women in these positions. These conversations are essential as attempts are made to improve the abysmal percentage of women managers across California.

Furthermore, the underlying issue of an insufficient standard of government transparency – particularly as it relates to publishing financial data – serves to mask the discrepancies between salary and benefits offered to men and women in city management positions. Ambiguous titles and unclear methods of reporting financial data further hinder the ability to pin a salary to a specific person or to compare salaries side by side.

While local governments have taken small steps to increase transparency and embrace open data, there is still a long road ahead. Smaller cities could stand to benefit from the use of newer and clearer websites to make data more accessible to the public. Additionally, cities who abstain from reporting income data fall under the radar of researchers and watchdog groups. Information that is less ambiguous will not only help the public hold their governments accountable, it can also make city management more inclusive to women and other groups that often must overcome barriers to fill these top public management positions.

Research by Chloe Kachscovsky and Ashley Underlee

⁹ "Women Leading Government."

¹⁰ "Women 2014: The Status of Women in California Government."