

Women 2014: An Examination of the Status of Women in California State and Local Government.

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THE LEADERSHIP CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE

The Leadership California Institute is a 501(c)4 non-profit, non-partisan catalyst for current and emerging leaders to address the critical challenges facing a changing California. Learn more at www.leadershipcaliforniainstitute.org.

Foreword | Leadership California Institute

The Leadership California Institute is proud to present Women 2014, its inaugural report on the status of women in California local government. Achieving political gender parity is essential to efforts to empower women as well as for strengthening California's civic and democratic institutions.

The opportunities created by enhancing women's political representation are multifold—and have the potential to positively impact the daily lives of Californians across the state. It is widely recognized that when women are engaged politically, their voices play a powerful role in shaping policies that prioritize the well-being of other women, the families they lead and the communities in which they live.

By actively participating in government, female political leaders help create and implement policies that are a closer reflection of the entire population's needs, and in this manner can also help governments to better serve constituents.

Despite these opportunities and decades of slow and steady progress, women remain underrepresented in California government. While there is abundant evidence documenting this underrepresentation in the state legislature, until now, there has been very little data on women's level of political participation at the local government level in California.

This report seeks to fill this void by presenting a comprehensive and current “snap shot” of the status of women at all levels of government with a specific focus on those women serving at the local level. If improving women's participation in elected government is a desired outcome, what role do women serving at the local government level play in efforts to build an effective and robust pipeline of future female leaders? What does the profile of a successful female candidate look like and what does it tell us about our political institutions?

The decision to run for public office is never an easy one but, as state and local female leaders have shared with us throughout the composition of this report, for women it is one that often is fraught with a specific set of challenges. Efforts to improve women's political representation must not only acknowledge these barriers but also work to break them down.

By taking a closer look at the profiles of successful female public officials—and examining who they are and where they come from—the Leadership California Institute hopes to help answer some of these critical questions and provide insight to those interested in improving women's political representation.

It is also our hope that the findings presented in this report can serve as a baseline for measuring the future progress of women in California local government.

Sincerely,
The Leadership California Institute



Paula Treat
President



Amy Brown
Board Member



Christy Bouma
Board Member



Bev Hansen
Board Member



Fran Mancina
Board Member

Executive Summary

Women's underrepresentation in California government has long been documented and attempts to achieve gender parity have yielded extensive efforts to identify barriers discouraging viable female candidates from seeking elected office. It has also prompted gender and civil rights advocates to seek ways to break down these barriers and increase the number of women in public office.

While these groups have been instrumental in giving this issue prominence as a core public policy dilemma and highlighting the challenges women face as political candidates and elected officials, the task of narrowing the gender gap persists.

While there is data that shows that when women run for office they win,¹ less research and information exists about the factors that compel women to run and the environments most supportive of their political ambitions.

Most critically, a holistic view of the status of women in local government has been missing. As such, no advocacy group or support network could comprehensively see where women are absent from the entry levels of government.

This report was commissioned by the Leadership California Institute (LCI) with the objective of assessing the current status of women in California local government. Specifically, the LCI intends to identify the political, geographic and demographic profiles of women currently serving in office in order to provide meaningful insight into the pathways taken by women successfully elected to represent California's cities, counties and schools.

This report focuses on California's local governments as they represent the pipeline to higher office. More than two-thirds of state legislators began their political careers in local government, and for women, this percentage is even higher. Consequently, as the "first level" of government, local governments present a critical opportunity for women to gain access to California's political arena.

¹ Jennifer L. Lawless, Richard L. Fox. Men Rule: The Continued Underrepresentation of Women in U.S. Politics. Washington D.C. Women and Politics Institute: American University, School of Public Affairs, 2012. web.

Key Findings

At the state, county and city level, **women comprise just under 30% of all elected officials**. At the school board level however, women fare far better, with 47% of all school board members being women.

The status of women in California local government can largely be characterized as a series of "peaks" and "valleys", with strong female representation in some municipalities and low to no female representation in others.

75% of all the women currently holding office in the California State Legislature first held an elected position on a county, city, school or community college board.

Female local elected officials tend to lean slightly Democrat in comparison to their male counterparts who lean slightly Republican.

California's local governments lack ethnic diversity; of all female city officials, only 14% are Hispanic, 3% API and 3% African American. These figures are even lower at the County level.

Female and male city and county officials share similarities in terms of professional backgrounds, with the exception of a notable number of female city officials coming from the education and non-profit sector.

Methodology

This report draws on data 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, including cities, counties and schools, as well as information surrounding their governance structures and jurisdictions. GrassrootsLab maintains data on local government governing boards, including the names of their elected officials, gender, political affiliations and professional and ethnic backgrounds.

The city and county data featured in this report contains the most current information following the June 3, 2014 elections and does not take into account any seats that are currently vacant.

The data contains information on:

- 482 California Cities²
- 58 California Counties
- 965 California School Boards

For the purposes of this report this data was also supplemented by data obtained from the sources below and used to determine and confirm local elected officials' ethnic backgrounds.

- NALEO Directory, 2013
National Association of Latino Elected Officials
- National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac, 2014-2015
UCLA Asian American Studies Center
- Ethnic data on African American elected officials could not be confirmed via a third party organization and, therefore, may contain discrepancies.

² San Francisco is both a city and county government but for the purposes of this report, is included only in city figures.

Acknowledgments

The data was also informed by anecdotal information obtained from interviews with the following public officials and political leaders:

- The Honorable Kristen Olsen, 12th Assembly District
- The Honorable Connie Conway, 26th Assembly District
- The Honorable Bonnie Lowenthal, 70th Assembly District and Chair of the CA Legislative Women's Caucus
- The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, 80th Assembly District
- The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson, 19th Senate District and Vice Chair of CA Legislative Women's Caucus
- The Honorable Loni Hancock, 9th Senate District
- The Honorable Mimi Walters, 37th Senate District
- Cynthia Bryant, Chief Operating Officer, California Republican Party
- Carol Dahmen, Board Member, American Association of Political Consultants
- Lisa Gasperoni, Consultant, Senate Democratic Caucus
- Amber Maltbie, General Counsel, Fem Dems of Sacramento
- Roseann Slonsky-Breault, President, California Federation of Republican Women
- Rose Herrera, Councilwoman, City of San Jose



In Their Own Words

The findings in this report were supplemented by qualitative data obtained from interviews with 13 female legislators and political leaders from diverse parts of the state. The anecdotal information they provided was valuable in informing research efforts, and in helping to identify salient barriers and opportunities facing female candidates in California. While we do not directly quote any of these women leaders in the report, the word cloud below illustrates common themes on the pathways and barriers facing women running for public office in California.

The "Old Boys Club" is real

You make mistakes during your first race, but then you learn from them

Campaign was very grassroots

We have to mentor each other so that succession occurs. "Why are you doing this?"

Being policy driven and politically driven are two different things.

Fundraising matters, especially for women. Being active in my community came natural.

Its difficult to raise a family, have a career and run for office. Women are held to a different set of standards

The talent pool is deep but reaching out is essential. **Had to be asked to several times before I decided to run.**

A lot of us just need to be pushed

Women dont have access to the same pools of money as male candidates

First Elected Experience on a City Council

We try to plan it all out first, while men tend to just jump in. Got Involved as a Community Volunteer first.

Others question my ability to be a mother and an elected.

Having children at that are school age is a barrier

We tend to be more polite when we should be more aggressive

My family was supportive of my campaign.

People will always question what you are doing.



The Status of Women in California Local Government

In California, women make up 50.3% of the population³ and 46% of the labor force⁴ but continue to be underrepresented in state, county and city government.

A lack of access to financial resources, the absence of a robust political network and the challenges associated with raising a family and having a career are just several-often cited barriers to the initial decision for women to run for public office.

While decades of legislative, political and cultural changes have gradually empowered and supported women to assume positions of influence, achieving substantial political gains continues to prove a slow and arduous process.

In a recent report released by Representation 2020, an organization dedicated to raising awareness of women's under-representation in government, California was ranked 4th in the nation for its level of gender parity within its elected offices. This ranking, which is calculated based on a gender parity index, is positive news and can largely be attributed to the number of women representing California at the national and state level.

After all, California boasts a female Speaker of the Assembly, a female Secretary of State, a female Attorney General, two long standing and highly influential female U.S. Senators as well as the first female speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. A woman, Ashley Swearingin, is also the Mayor of Fresno, one of California's five largest cities and Mayor Jean Quan, also a woman, leads the City of Oakland, the city with the largest number of women serving on any one city council in the state.

Indeed, California has come a long way and the successes achieved by women in the political arena are not to be discounted.

1911—Women win the right to vote in California

1918—First set of women elected to the California State Assembly

1976—First woman elected to the California State Senate

1978—Women's representation in the California State Legislature jumps to 9%

1990—Women's representation in the California State Legislature jumps to 21%

2004—Women's representation in the California State Legislature reaches an all-time high at 31%

2014—Women's status in government remains largely unchanged at 28%

Source- "California's Women State Legislators: Historical Trends (1918-2012)": California's Research Bureau, California State Library

Representation 2020 reveals that although California currently ranks 4th on its gender parity index, just 10 years ago, California led the rest of the nation holding rank at 1st.

This plateau effect, coupled with an overall imbalance in the ratio of women to men serving within our political institutions, is indicative of a political reality that continues to prove tenuous for women.

³ United States Census Bureau. State and County Quick Facts. 8 July 2014. web.

⁴ California State Library. California Women and Employment: An Overview. Sacramento: The California Research Bureau, 2013. web.



While women in California have covered notable ground, across the board—in almost every level of California government women comprise under 30% of all elected representatives.

Currently at the state level, California ranks 19th in the nation⁵ for the number of women serving in the state legislature: 20 women in the state assembly and 12 in the state senate. With a total of 120 state legislators in both houses, these female legislators comprise 28% of the California’s state representatives.

Representation Levels of Women in California State and Local Government

Elected Officials	State Legislature	Counties	Cities	Schools
Women	32 (28%)	71 (25%)	717 (28%)	2378 (47%) ⁶
Men	84 (72%)	213 (75%)	1814 (72%)	2673 (53%)

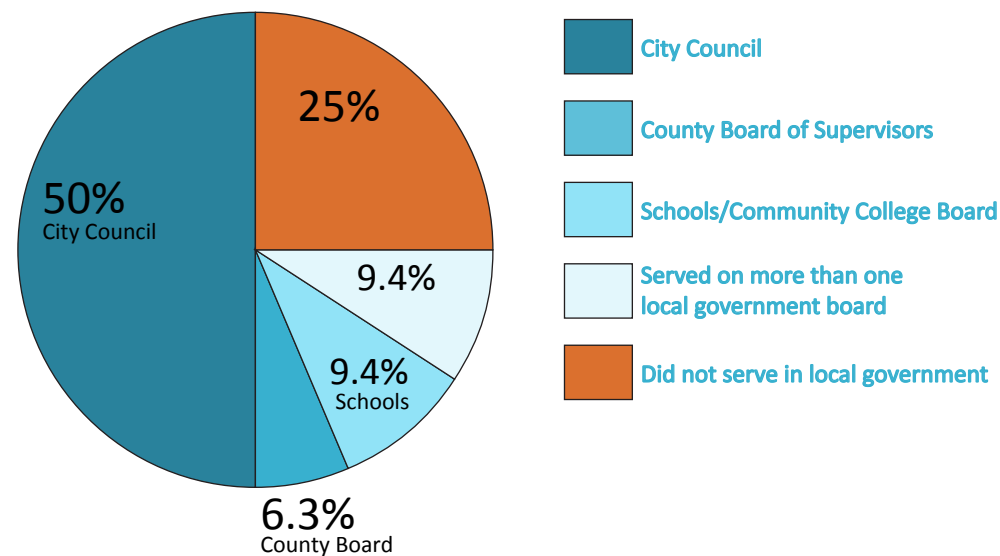
At the local level, women hold a similar percentage of seats. In California’s 58 counties, women comprise just 25% of all county board supervisors and in its 482 cities women hold 28% of all city council seats — identical to their levels in the state legislature.

With exception to the number of women represented on California’s school boards, where women have achieved substantial gains and make up almost half (47%) of all school board members, women’s political representation in California state, county and city government can be characterized by this 28% ceiling.

In fact, at the state level, the number of women represented in elected positions remains largely unchanged since 2004 when the number of women serving in the state legislature peaked at 31%. While past data of this nature for California’s local governments is sparse, today, the status of women at the county and city level falls just under this 30% benchmark.

Women also seem to struggle to attain leadership roles in local government policymaking bodies. Of 42 elected officials serving on the League of California Cities Board of Directors, just 10 are women. At just under 24%, this does not even reflect the overall representation of women on city councils.

Local Government Experience of Female Legislators in California.



⁵ Representation 2020. The State of Women’s Representation. Maryland: Representation 2020, 2014.

⁶ School Board figures are for current as of January 2014 and do not reflect individuals who may serve on two boards as a result of an election.



Women's under-representation in state, county and city seats raises interesting questions about women's political pipeline. Does the number of viable female candidates for state level seats rise as the number of women serving at the local government level grows? Or are the barriers faced by women at all levels of government assuaged as the number of state level female public officials grows?

The profiles of California's legislative members show that 75% of the women currently serving in the legislature first served as an elected official of a local government body, a majority of them on either a county board of supervisors or on a city council.

A similar trend can be seen with male legislators, with 67% having served in on a local government body prior to being elected to the state legislature.

This important because it points to a political pathway that has not only proven successful for women currently holding office but one that must also be acknowledged by future efforts to successfully break through the 30% ceiling we see today.

What's Behind the 30% Ceiling?

California's political landscape can be largely characterized as a series of sharp "peaks and valleys" of political representation, with a handful of counties and cities demonstrating high levels of female political representation and others where women are almost wholly absent from government.

For example, while women represent 28% of all city council members in the state, there are actually 69 cities in the entire state with zero female council members.

In other words, 14% of California's cities are completely without female representation. These cities are geographically diverse and in both urban and rural areas and do not exhibit any notable characteristics that might easily explain this trend.

While there are no cities in the state with all female city councils⁷, there are however 51 California cities (11% of all cities) with female majority city councils. These cities are also located throughout various parts of the state and tend to be from California's more urban areas although there are some cities from rural areas present as well.

While it is difficult to explain the causes of such varied levels of political representation throughout the state, the data does demonstrate that women, despite being absent in certain geographies, can and do win elections in almost every part of the state, whether in rural, urban, inland or coastal municipalities.

⁷ While there are currently no cities in California with all female city councils, in the past there have been several, with a recent example being the City of Novato, who had an all female city council in 2009. There are also currently 9 California cities with 4 women and 1 man on their city councils.



The Political Breakdown: Women by Party Identification

In California there are currently 717 women serving on city councils throughout the state. These women hail from all parts of the state and from a diverse set of backgrounds. When examined as a group however, these women's profiles reveal several noteworthy trends.

First, when examined according to their party affiliation, close to 52% of all female city council members are Democrat vs. 33% who are Republican, 8% No Party Preference (NPP) and 7% who either belong to another political party such as the Green or Libertarian parties, and/or whose political affiliation is unknown.

In a Blue State like California, where a majority of legislative members and voters are Democrat, this is not particularly surprising. However when compared to their male counterparts, the percent of female city officials who identify as Democrat is noteworthy.

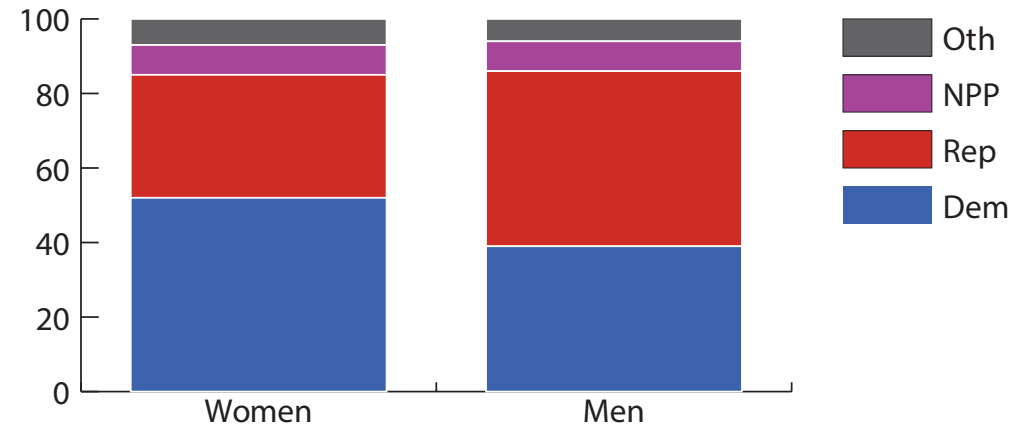
This is because 1/3 of all city council members in California are Republican men. Of all 1,814 male city council members in the state, 47% identify as Republican, 39% as Democrat, 8% are No Party Preference and 6% belong to another party or their party identification is unknown.

A similar trend can be seen within California's counties. Of the 71 women serving as county board supervisors, 47% are Democrat vs. 41% Republican, 4% declined to state and 7% other. As seen with California's city councils, male county supervisors in California also tend to lean conservative, with 53% identifying as Republican, 33% Democrat, 9% No Party Preference and 5% other.

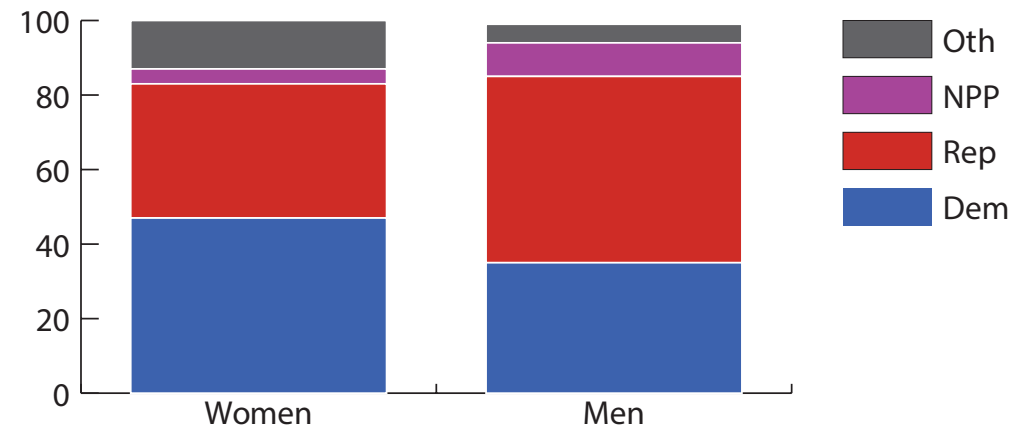
This trend—women elected officials leaning more Democrat than Republican, continues to be seen at the state level, albeit with a much higher margin. 72% of all female legislators identified as Democrat and 28% as Republican. 68% of all male state legislators also identify as Democrat vs. 31% Republican.

So that while both male and female government officials trend more as Democrats at the state level, the party identification for male representatives changes much more drastically than it does for women in higher office.

California City Officials by Gender and Party Affiliation



California County Officials by Gender and Party Affiliation



The Political Breakdown: Women by Ethnic Background

California's local government landscape is relatively homogenous and efforts at electing women to public office should include efforts to increase the ethnic diversity of our elected officials.

At the city level, the largest ethnic minority are Hispanics. This is true both among both female and male city officials, with Hispanic women comprising close to 14% of all female city officials and Hispanic comprising 11% of all male city officials.

Asian Pacific Islander (API) and African American women comprise 3% each of all female elected officials. Their representation is just slightly higher on the male side with 4% of all male city officials being API and with African Americans representing just 2% of all male city officials.

California's Hispanic and African American female city officials are geographically dispersed but one-third of them are concentrated in Los Angeles County.

This can likely be attributed to Los Angeles County's large Hispanic and African American population, though it can also be indicative of an environment that has become accustomed to seeing Hispanic and African American women pursuing office. This is notable because while Los Angeles County is home to one-third of all Hispanic and African American city officials, Los Angeles ranks rather poorly for its percent of women overall, with only 17% of all the female city officials in the state being from Los Angeles.

When coupled with the counties of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino, Los Angeles County, this Southern California metropolitan area is home to almost half of all Hispanic female city officials in the state.

California's Hispanic female city officials are also overwhelmingly Democrat (76%).

Like their Hispanic peers, California's API female city officials also represent varying parts of the state but unlike Hispanics, a majority of API female city officials are concentrated in Northern California, with 57% of all female Asian city officials residing in the counties of Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara County.

Latinas
are 14% of all female
city officials.



Asian/Pacific Islander
Women are 3% of all female
city officials.



African American
Women are 3% of all female
city officials.



Outside of Northern California, the county of Los Angeles has the largest concentration of female API city officials with 26% of all Asian female city officials residing there.

They too, are overwhelmingly Democrat, with close to 60% of all female Asian city officials being Democrat and approximately 35% being Republican.

African Americans comprise the smallest ethnic group with all African American city officials comprising close to 2% of all city officials in the state. African American women make up slightly over one-third of all African American city officials and less than 1% of all city officials in the state of California.

Latinas
are 6% of all female
county officials.



Like their Hispanic and Asian counterparts, African American female city officials lean Democrat and do so by the largest margin amongst the three ethnic groups, with almost 81% identifying as Democrat and 19% as Republican.

Asian/Pacific Islander Women
are 3% of all female
county officials.



At the county government level, Hispanic officials fare poorly, with Hispanic women comprising just 6% of all female county supervisors and Hispanic men comprising 8%.

African American Women
are 0% of all female
county officials.



In fact, there are only four Hispanic female county supervisors in the entire state and they come from the counties of Los Angeles, San Benito, San Bernardino and El Dorado.

Three of the Hispanic female county supervisors are Democrats (one is No party Preference), which means there are zero female Hispanic Republican county supervisors in the state. This compares to just two male Hispanic county supervisors in the state who are Republican.

The number of African American county supervisors in the state is also low. There are a total of four African American county supervisors in the state of California, all male. All of California's African American county officials are also Democrat.

* Note, for the purposes of this report, San Francisco was treated as a city.

The number of API female county supervisors is also extremely low, with one male API county supervisor from Tulare County and two female API supervisors representing the counties of Alameda and Orange.

To reduce duplication, this report treats San Francisco as a city although it is also a county. If San Francisco is treated as a county, the number of API and African American county supervisors in the state does increase. There are two African American women on the San Francisco Board, as well as two API women. These figures help demonstrate how the Bay Area, and the City/County of San Francisco specifically, drive ethnic representation.



The Political Breakdown: Women by Professional Background

Top 20 Professional Backgrounds for California City Officials

When examined by professional background, data on California’s city officials shows that female and male city officials share much in common. In fact, a significant percent of female and male city officials come from a professional background in business, which is a broad ballot designation that includes business owners, private sector managers and entrepreneurs. While a “business” ballot designation is perceived to resonate well with voters, its prevalence as a professional background amongst female and male city officials may indicate an environment in which the barriers to seek elected office are lower than that of other professions.

Professions: Female City Officials		Professions: Male City Officials	
Business	25.8%	Business	22.3%
Education	17.0%	Public Safety	9.0%
Attorney	7.0%	Attorney	7.2%
Government	6.6%	Education	7.0%
Nonprofit	5.9%	Banking/Finance	3.3%
Medical	4.3%	Government	2.8%
Consultant	2.6%	Real Estate	2.4%
Public Safety	2.2%	Engineer	2.3%
Real Estate	2.1%	Consultant	2.0%
Banking/Finance	2.0%	Medical	1.9%
Accountant	1.8%	Contractor	1.5%
Community Volunteer	1.7%	Science	1.4%
Realtor	1.3%	Nonprofit	1.3%
Legal	1.1%	Realtor	1.3%
Science	1.0%	Insurance	1.2%
Journalist	1.0%	Accountant	1.2%
Insurance	1.0%	Architect	1.2%
Engineer	0.8%	Technology	1.2%
Environmental	0.8%	Restauranteur	0.8%
Unknown	9.9%	Unknown	23.8%

Outside of the business category, the second largest category for a female city officials’ professional background is education. Given the success women have had being elected to California’s school boards, it can easily be inferred that many of these female city officials may have also previously served on a school board and/or that a profession in teaching is also effective at demonstrating a candidate’s viability.

A professional background in education is followed by a professional background in law, which 7% of all female city officials possess, followed by a background in government.

5.9% of female city officials come to elected office with a professional background in non-profits, which is a category much less relevant for male city officials. In fact, only 1.3% of male city officials come from the non-profit sector.



Top Professions: Female County Officials		Top Professions: Male County Officials	
Business	22.5%	Business	16.4%
Government	12.7%	Agriculture	12.2%
Attorney	8.5%	Public Safety	7.5%
Education	8.5%	Government	6.1%
Non-Profit	5.6%	Education	5.2%
Agriculture	5.6%	Attorney	3.8%
Consultant	4.2%	Non-profit	3.3%
Real Estate	4.2%	Consultant	1.4%
Medical	4.2%	Banking/Finance	1.4%
Unknown	11.3%	Unknown	33.8%

A small percentage of California’s female city officials also tend to come to public office with a background as a community volunteer, a professional category that is virtually unseen with male city officials.

Male city officials display similar results to their female counterparts with a few exceptions, public safety notable among these.

Like their city council peers, California’s female and male county officials share several similar professional profiles. Of the top ten professional categories identified for county officials, women and men share six in common. The most prominent

professional category for both genders is a background in business, with 22.5% of female county officials and 16.4% of male county officials showing it as their ballot designation.

For female county officials, a background in business is followed by 12.7% of county female elected officials coming from a professional background in government and another 8.5% with a background as an attorney.

For male county officials, the professional category of business is followed by agriculture: with a total of 12.2% of all male county officials compared to 5.6% of female county officials in the state with a background in agriculture.

Agriculture is followed by public safety, with 7.5% of male county officials coming to county government with a background in law enforcement. This percent is also quite high particularly considering that few to no female board of supervisors currently in office come with a background in public safety.



Women's participation in California's Most Liberal and Conservative Cities

Ranking	Top 10 Liberal Cities ⁸	% of Women on City Council
1	Berkeley	22%
2	Inglewood	0%
3	Compton	60%
4	Oakland	66%
5	Richmond	29%
6	Santa Cruz	57%
7	Southgate	20%
8	Hayward	43%
9	Hawthorne	40%
10	Daly City	20%

Ranking	Top 10 Conservative Cities ⁸	% of Women on City Council
1	Newport Beach	29%
2	Yorba Linda	0%
3	San Clemente	20%
4	Temecula	20%
5	Murrieta	20%
6	Poway	0%
7	Mission Viejo	60%
8	Rocklin	20%
9	Laguna Niguel	40%
10	Redding	40%

⁸ List of California's most conservative and liberal cities taken from the following source, and based on voter registration figures. Reese, Phillip. "California's most conservative and liberal cities: Where's yours?" Sacramento Bee 17 August 2014.



Looking Ahead

In addition to informing existing efforts to improve the status of women, it is the Leadership California Institute's hope that the findings presented in this report will also serve as a baseline for measuring the future progress of women in California local government.

In the interim, the Leadership California Institute will be working across the state to host regional forums that will serve as venues for continuing this important dialogue. As part of this outreach, LCI will examine and engage Californians around three findings in this report.

- Improving political representation at the local level requires not only electing more women to public office, but targeting geographic areas where there are few or no female elected officials.
- California's local governments lack ethnic diversity among their elected officials. Efforts to elect women to public office should consider simultaneous efforts increase the ethnic diversity of our elected officials.
- While data demonstrates that female public officials come from a range of professional backgrounds, future research would benefit from exploring why certain professions tend to produce more successful female candidates versus others.

For more information on this and other efforts of the LCI visit:

www.LeadershipCaliforniaInstitute.org



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