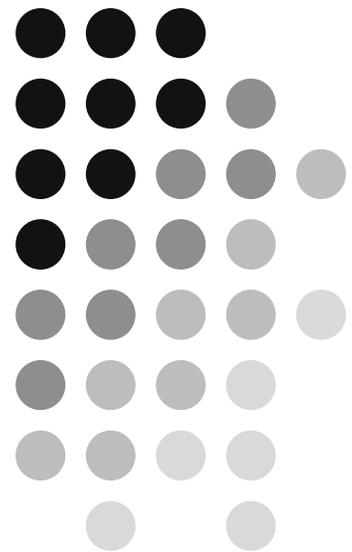


WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE IN WISCONSIN

2005 BENCHMARK STUDY

WI Women's Council
State of Wisconsin
April 2006



WI Women Facts and Figures

- WI is home to 2.8M women, about 51% of the state population, ranking 20th nationally among all states.¹
- 66% of WI women over age 16 are in the labor force, ranking 5th nationally. Women are 48% of the labor market, also above the US average.¹
- 71% of WI women with children under age 6 are in the labor force, compared to 64% nationally.¹
- 34% of WI women are employed in managerial and professional occupations, ranking WI 43rd nationally.¹
- WI women still earn considerably less than men at 71 cents on the dollar, compared to 76 cents nationally, and ranking WI 45th among all states.¹
- WI women have high levels of voter registration and are among the most likely in the country to vote, with WI ranking 5th nationally.¹
- Nationally, women are expected to earn 59% of bachelor's and 60% of master's degrees awarded during this school year.²
- Nationally, 55% of married women earn half or more of their families income.³

Sources: 1) Status of Women in WI, IWPR (2004); 2) US Census Bureau web site; 3) *The Time is Now*, Milwaukee Women Inc (see Resources below).

WOMEN AND PUBLIC OFFICE

"When women leaders bring their voices, vision and leadership to the table alongside men, the debate is more robust and the policy is more inclusive and sustainable."

The White House Project

The approaching election season, starting with the April 2006 local government elections, provides an opportunity to track and benchmark changes in women's representation in elected offices in Wisconsin.

For many people the heavy thud of the property tax bill on the doorstep is their most direct contact with a county or school board official. Instead, we often think of the major state and federal elected offices -- governor, senate, assembly and congress -- as the policy leaders that influence the taxes we pay, the public benefits and programs we receive and the social and economic climate of our state. It is, in fact, local government officials that make many of the policies and oversee programs and services that affect everything from property tax rates to public health protections to foster care programs to zoning and local residential and business development decisions to the numbers of teachers in classrooms.

Women currently hold some of Wisconsin's most visible public offices, including Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, as well as two seats in the U.S. Congressional delegation. Women hold about one-quarter of Wisconsin State Assembly and State Senate seats and make up nearly half of the State Supreme Court. We know little, however, about women's participation in local government and nothing of whether or not participation rates are growing, declining or unchanged.

To address this question, the Women's Council assembled data on more than 16,600 elected and appointed public sector offices across levels of government in 2005, including 426 school districts, 1,260 towns, 402 villages, 72 counties and 190 cities, as well as numerous state and federal elected offices. The Women's Council estimates that women held about 2,700 elected offices statewide -- about 20%.

Participation rates vary considerably, however, across levels of government. In 2005, women made up an estimated 37% of school boards but only 7% of town boards. Women's participation rates also decline markedly for leadership positions, with women accounting for only an estimated 10% of all local government leaders, including city mayors, county executives, and school board, town, village and county board presidents and chairs. By comparison, women accounted for more than 80% of the more administrative elected and appointed offices such as clerks and treasurers in town, village, and county governments.

STATEWIDE

In 2005/2006, women account for half of statewide elected offices – Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Women hold 26% of State Assembly seats and 24% of State Senate seats. Women also hold three of seven seats (43%) on the State Supreme Court, including the office of Chief Justice.

In 1998, Wisconsin elected its first female representative to Congress. Currently, two of eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are held by women. Wisconsin has never sent a woman to the U.S. Senate. Nationally, Wisconsin ranks 19th for the proportion of women holding state and federal elected offices.

Wisconsin's Tribal Governments fare somewhat better with women holding 36% of the 11 tribal chairs and presidencies. Similarly, the Governor's appointed cabinet is 35% female (6 of 17), making it the most diverse in state history and one of the most diverse in the nation.

COUNTIES

In 2005, women accounted for an estimated 19% of County Board members – about 2 women for every 10 county board members – but only about 10% of County Board leaders (chairs and vice chairs). Ten large Wisconsin counties are governed by elected County Executives, of which two are women. All of Wisconsin's 72 counties had at least one woman on the County Board in 2005.

Counties are also home to eight countywide "constitutional offices" for which women held the following percentages: Clerk of the Courts (89%); County Treasurer (82%); County Clerk (74%); Register of Deeds (74%); District Attorney (18%); and Sheriff (3%). Once again, women office holders are more, by great majority, clustered in the offices related to administrative and program management versus policy management (such as county board) or specialized professional fields (such as district attorney or sheriff).

Women and Elected Office

- The majority of young people believe that having more young people (62%), more women (59%), and more people of color (55%) in office would make government and politics better.
- Nationally, the proportion of women in state legislatures has increased little in the past eight years – from 20.8% in 1996 to 22.5% in 2004.
- Of the 11,744 members of Congress, there have only been 223 women elected in the history of the U.S.
- Half of all of today's top elected officials – from big city mayors to president – were elected BEFORE they were age 35!
- 2 strong reasons why women don't run for office in the same numbers as men: we need to be invited in to the political system and we downplay our own qualifications!
- Women public officials do have a gender-related impact on public policy, the political process and the way business is conducted.
- 37% of men self identify with politics, while many women need to be invited in.

Source: The White House Project: Run, Vote, Lead. (see Resources below)

Wisconsin Firsts

1919: WI become the first state to ratify national women's suffrage (only just edging out Illinois).

1925: Three women elected to WI's Legislature as "Assemblymen."

1956: First woman and first African American alder in Milwaukee (given the title "Madam Alderman").

1974: First woman elected to WI's State Senate.

1978: First woman and first African American woman elected WI's Secretary of State. Also the first African American woman in the country elected statewide to an executive post.

1998: First woman elected from WI to U.S. Congress (WI was the 41st state to elect a woman to the U.S. Congress).

2002 First women elected WI's Attorney General.

2002 First woman elected WI's Lieutenant Governor.

2004 First African American woman elected from WI to U.S. Congress.

The largest number of women to serve in the WI State Senate in a single session was 11 in 1999 and 2001.

The largest number of women to serve in the WI State Assembly in a single session was 33 in 1989.

Source: See, *Wisconsin Women Legislators – A Historical List*, Legislative Reference Bureau, 2005.

CITIES

Wisconsin has 190 cities that are home to over three million people – more than half of the state population. In 2005, women made up an estimated 20% of city council seats and 10% of mayoral seats. Among the appointed offices that oversee city government operations, there were no female city managers and only an estimated 13% of city administrators were women (among cities assessed in this review), compared with 68% percent of city clerks and treasurers.

An estimated 31 Wisconsin cities had no women on the city council in 2005, including three of Wisconsin's 10 largest cities: Milwaukee, Green Bay and Janesville. The 31 cities combined account for more than one million residents – about one-third of Wisconsin residents living in cities. By comparison, women made up more than one-third of city council members in only 20 Wisconsin cities, with a combined population of 158,000.

VILLAGES

In 2005, women made up an estimated 21% of village board trustees, but only about 9% of village board presidents. By comparison, women accounted for 83% of elected and appointed village clerks and treasurers. Statewide, an estimated 112 of the 402 villages assessed in this review (28%) had no women serving on the village board.

TOWNS

Women are least represented in town government in Wisconsin. In 2005, women made up only an estimated 8% of town board trustees and 4% of town board presidents. As with other levels of government, women made up the vast majority of town clerks and treasurers (81%). An estimated 930 of the 1,260 town boards assessed in this review (about 75%) had no women board members.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Wisconsin women are most widely represented in elected office at the school district level. It is estimated that women accounted for more than half (53%) of non-officer school board members, but a smaller percent of leadership positions such as president (30%) and vice-president (28%). In total, women accounted for just over one-third (37%) of the nearly 2,200 school board members (officers and non-officers) assessed in this review. An estimated 25 Wisconsin school boards (6%) had no women members.

DOES GEOGRAPHY MATTER?

In the coming weeks the Women's Council will map the location of women office holders around the state to gain insights into where in Wisconsin women hold elected office.

IMPROVING DIVERSITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Learn More, Demand More

Do you live in one of the 31 cities, 112 villages, 930 towns or 25 school districts with no women represented on the local governing board? County Clerk offices often publish directories of county and municipal officials and also provide information about local elections and filing for candidacy. Increasingly, local governments offer web sites, including information about governing boards and the current roster of elected officials. In most cases, however, such information is limited. In addition, a surprising number of local government web sites do not list elected officials. For example, an estimated 25% of school districts do not list school board members on their web site.

Encourage local governments in your community to prominently display information about governing bodies, elected officials and terms of office, along with information about the many (non-elected) appointment opportunities made by local officials to public boards and commissions. Open government is a critical tool for bringing diversity of all kinds to government leadership and public dialogue about the wide variety of issues affecting communities.

Best Practices in Publicizing Boards and Commissions

In 2004, Governor Jim Doyle launched a web site publicizing appointment opportunities on state boards and commission, including information about each board, requirements for membership and application materials. See: www.wisgov.state.wi.us/ (click the link for "Boards and Commissions"). The City of Madison also offers a web site with a wide range of information about city boards and commissions and lists current appointment vacancies along with information about how to apply. See: www.ci.madison.wi.us/mayor/committee.html.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin
 "How to Run for Local Elected Office in WI"
<http://www.lwvwi.org/>

University of Wisconsin-Extension
 Local Government Center
<http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/elections.htm>

Wisconsin State Elections Board
<http://elections.state.wi.us/>

Milwaukee Women Inc
 "The Time is Now for Gender Diversity
 in Corporate Leadership"
<http://www.milwaukeewomeninc.org>

The White House Project
www.thewhitehouseproject.org/

Center for Women and American Politics
www.cawp.rutgers.edu/

WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE IN WISCONSIN: FINDINGS

	Percent of Seats Held by Women	Seats Held by Women	Total Seats
School Districts (426)			
<u>Governing Bodies</u>	37%	1,036	2,812
School Board President	30%	125	413
School Board Vice-Pres	28%	97	341
School Board Clerk	59%	232	391
School Board Treasurer	36%	139	389
School Board Member ¹	53%	443	1,278
Towns (1,260)			
<u>Governing Bodies</u>	7%	283	4,119
Town Board Chair ²	4%	45	1,260
Town Board Trustee ²	8%	238	2,859
<u>Other Town Offices (elected & appointed)</u>			
Town Clerk/Treasurer ³	81%	1,894	2,347
Villages (402)			
<u>Governing Bodies</u>	19%	457	2,402
Village Board President	9%	38	402
Village Board Trustee	21%	419	2,000
<u>Other Villages Offices (elected & appointed)</u>			
Village Clerk/Treasurer ³	83%	444	537
Cities (190)			
<u>Governing Bodies</u>	19%	311	1,632
Mayor	10%	18	181
City Council Member	20%	293	1,451
<u>Other city appointed positions (selected)</u>			
City Manager	0%	0	10
City Administrator	13%	12	91
City Clerk/Treasurer ³	68%	186	274
Counties (72)			
<u>Governing Bodies</u>	19%	336	1799
County Executive	20%	2	10
County Board Chair	11%	8	72
County Board Vice Chair	8%	3	40
County Board 2 nd Vice Chair	25%	4	16
County Board Supervisor ¹	19%	319	1,661

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	Percent of Seats Held by Women	Seats Held by Women	Total Seats
Countywide Elected			
<u>Constitutional Offices</u>	56%	244	432
Clerk of the Courts	89%	64	72
County Clerk	74%	53	72
District Attorney	18%	13	72
Register of Deeds	74%	53	72
Sheriff	3%	2	72
Treasurer	82%	59	72
State & Federal			
<u>Elected Offices</u>	27%	42	155
Statewide ⁴	50%	3	6
State Supreme Court	43%	3	7
State Senate	24%	8	33
State Assembly	26%	26	99
US Senate	0%	0	2
US House	25%	2	8
Governor Jim Doyle's			
<u>Cabinet (appointed)</u>			
Cabinet Officials	35%	6	17
Wisconsin's Tribal Leaders			
<u>Chair or President</u>	36%	4	11
TOTAL			
<u>Governing Bodies, Constitutional Offices and Statewide Elected Offices Only</u>	20%	2,709	13,351
<u>All Elected & Appointed Offices</u>	32%	5,255	16,638

Footnotes: 1. Refers to general members that do not serve as officer members of the Board. 2. Town President and Clerk/Treasurers are 2% gender unknown; Town Trustee are 3% gender unknown. 3. In many, but not all, local governments the same individual serves as both clerk and treasurer. The data for these offices have been combined for ease of presentation. 4. Statewide Offices: Governor; Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Secretary of State; State Treasurer; and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Methodology and notes on the data: Figures represent an estimate of seats held by women as of December 2005. Lists were compiled using purchased lists of Wisconsin officials along with information off of official locality web sites, where available. These compiled data were then verified, where possible, and coded for gender based on the first names of individuals. Gender for common gender neutral names or other questions that arose was verified by phone, email or web search where possible. *Some margin of error is inevitable.* The margin of error is estimated at about +/- 1%, except as provided in the footnotes where rates may be higher for some offices. "Total seats" refers to the total number of seats for which the Women's Council was able to collect information about office holders, but may not represent all possible seats in Wisconsin.

WISCONSIN WOMEN'S COUNCIL

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