

Women in Elected Office | Wisconsin 2021

CITY GOVERNMENT

2021 was a Year of Record Growth*
for Women Serving on City Councils.**

Women hold 29% of seats (+90)
in 2021, up 23% in 2015.

29% of WI
City Council
Members are
Women

*Based on reports issued in 2005, 2010, 2015. **City Council and Common Council are used interchangeably.

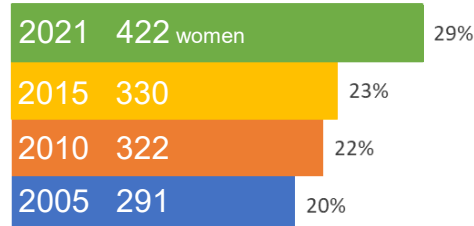
THE POWER OF THREE¹

One woman on
a board is a token,
two is a presence,
three is a voice.

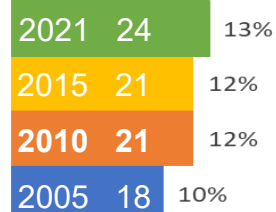
About one-third of WI City Councils (68) have three or more women members. Statewide, the number of seats on a City Council ranges from 4 to 20. Overall, the median number is 7; the median number of seats held by women is 2.

Number and Percentage of Women City Council Members and Mayors, by Year

City Council



Mayor



13% of Mayors are Women

Women hold 24 of Wisconsin's Mayoral seats (13%)—the first increase in a decade, up from 21 (12%) in both 2015 and 2010.

40 Cities have Gender Parity

Cities where women account for half or more of the Council Members has nearly doubled, up from 22 cities in 2015.

23 Cities have No Women Council Members

23 Cities (12%) have no women on the City Councils, down by one-third, from 31 (16%) in 2015.

Nationally

Women hold 30.5% of municipal offices (city and village combined).³

HERSTORY: Wisconsin's First Women Alders (1924)

Clintonville • Libbie Hyde,
Janesville • Emma H. Manning
Marshfield • Anna Lathrop
Mellen • Mrs. C.F. Peterson
Phillips • Mary Bieberstein
Platteville • Mrs. V.M. Russell
Waukesha • Elsie McFarlane
Wausau • Helen Ohm
Whitewater • Matilda Fowler

The 1921 Wisconsin Equal Right Act affirmed women's new right to hold any public office. In 1924, UW Extension Municipal Information Bureau surveyed municipalities, identifying over 400 women in elected and appointed office—including nine female City Council members.²

More factsheets in this series are available at:
<https://womenscouncil.wi.gov/publications>.

What women need to know about running for office at:
<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/elections/>

Wisconsin Women in Public Life Report
<https://www.alverno.edu/Research>



FOOTNOTES

1. *The Power of Three*, Milwaukee Women Inc <https://milwaukeewomeninc.org/>
2. University of Wisconsin Extension Division, Municipal Information Bureau, "Women Officials in Wisconsin Municipalities," Compiled by Gladys D. West, Information Report No. 33, September 1923 and No. 36, January 1924.
3. Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, "Levels of Office" data, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-municipal-office> (accessed 10/10/21).

CITIES WITH NO WOMEN ON THE CITY COUNCIL		
BLOOMER	MANITOWOC	SEYMOUR
CHETEK	MERRILL	SHEBOYGAN FALLS
CHIPPEWA FALLS	MOSINEE	SPARTA
DURAND	NEKOOSA	ST. CROIX FALLS
GLENWOOD CITY	NEW LISBON	THORP
HARTFORD	OAK CREEK	WAUTOMA
HORICON	OSSEO	WISCONSIN DELLS
LODI	PORTAGE	

as of November 1, 2021



The Wisconsin Women's Council is the state's statutory commission on the status of women and girls. Founded in 1983, the 15-member Board is appointed by the Governor and legislative leadership.

Since 2005, the Women's Council has tracked and published statistics on women elected officials in state and local government in Wisconsin.

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Chair Executive Director

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Local Government Education
women in government

For over 20 years UW-Extension's Local Government Education has been helping local government officials build their capacity to govern.

We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting local governments with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

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Founded in 1970, the Research Center for Women and Girls (RCWG) generates and applies research, develops curricula, prepares evaluation tools, facilitates programming and conversations, and conducts outreach for the purpose of supporting and inspiring community initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls locally and nationally.

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Madelyn Adler, Research Assistant

Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the views of other listed organizations. No endorsement by such organizations is given or implied.