

Elected and Appointed Officials in Oregon: A Report on Race, Ethnicity and Gender Parity

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

Racial and Ethnic Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Unweighted) 2

Racial and Ethnic Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Weighted) 3

Racial and Ethnic Parity Among State Elected and Appointed Officials..... 4

Gender Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Unweighted)..... 5

Gender Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Weighted)..... 6

Gender Parity Among State Elected and Appointed Officials..... 7

Summary of Findings..... 8

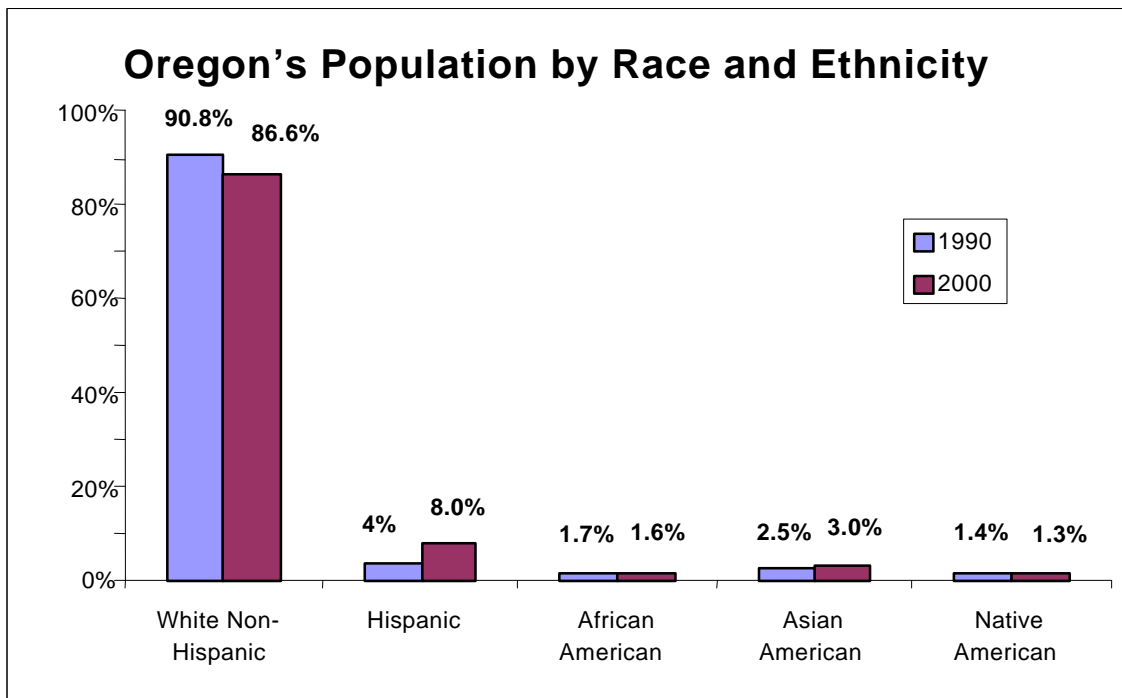
Endnotes..... 9

Elected and Appointed Officials in Oregon: A Report on Race, Ethnicity and Gender Parity

Introduction

Every two years, the Oregon Progress Board conducts a survey of state and local elected and appointed officials to determine how closely the race, ethnicity and gender of Oregon's public officials mirrors the population as a whole. The survey was conducted in February and March of 2002. It polled city councilors, mayors and county commissioners.ⁱ Statewide elected officials, legislators and appointed officials were also tallied.

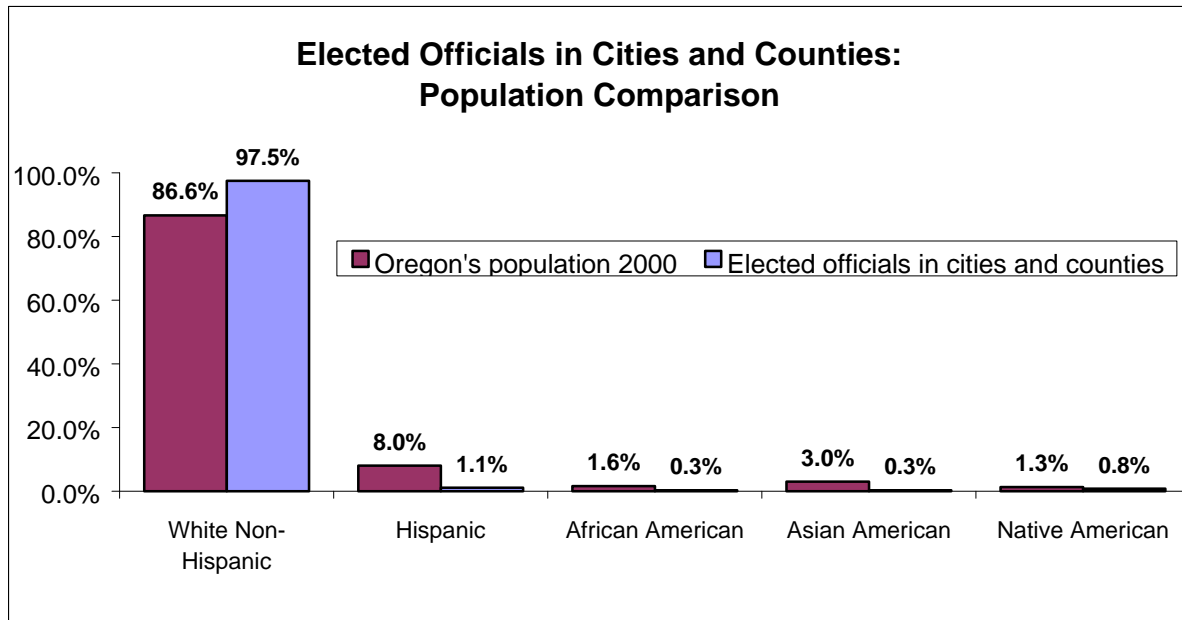
The 2000 Census shows that Oregon population changed dramatically over the last decade. The percentage of Hispanics living in Oregon doubled. The white non-Hispanicⁱⁱ population fell from 90.9 percent to 86.7 percent. Asian Americans increased slightly from 2.5 percent to 3.0 percent. The percentage of African-Americans and Native Americans did not change significantly.



For local elected officials, this paper examines both unweighted and weighted percentages by race, ethnicity and gender, and compares this to the general population. "Weighted" means that local elected officials from municipalities and counties with larger populations received greater weight in calculating statewide percentages, while those from municipalities and counties with smaller populations received smaller weight.ⁱⁱⁱ

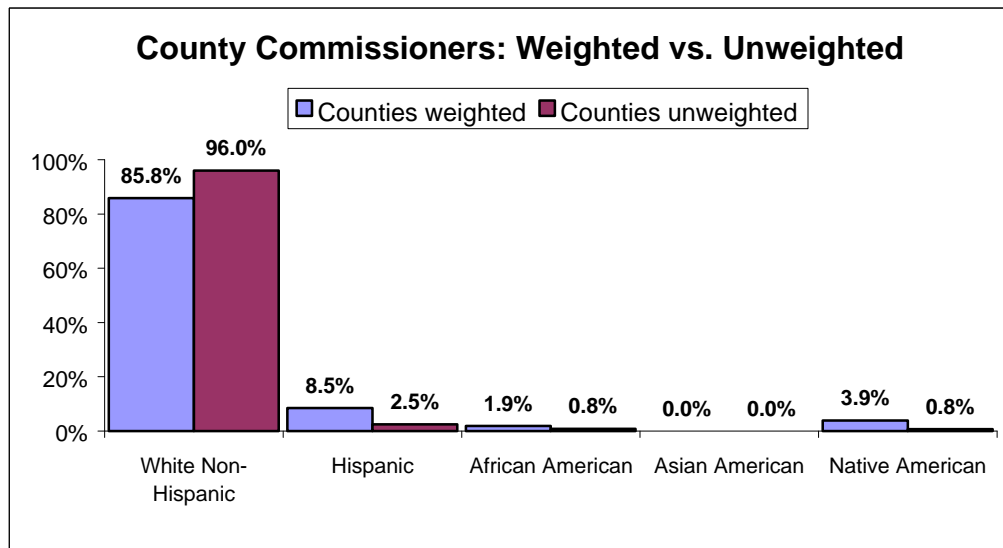
Racial and Ethnic Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Unweighted)^{iv}

All racial and ethnic minorities are under-represented by local elected officials in Oregon, defined in this study as city council members, mayors and county commissioners. White non-Hispanic Oregonians account for 97.5 percent of all elected officials at county and at city levels. In contrast to the general population, which is eight percent Hispanic, only 1.1 percent of Oregon’s local elected officials are Hispanic. Three-tenths of a percent of all local elected officials are African Americans and another .3 percent are Asian Americans. Eight-tenths are Native Americans.

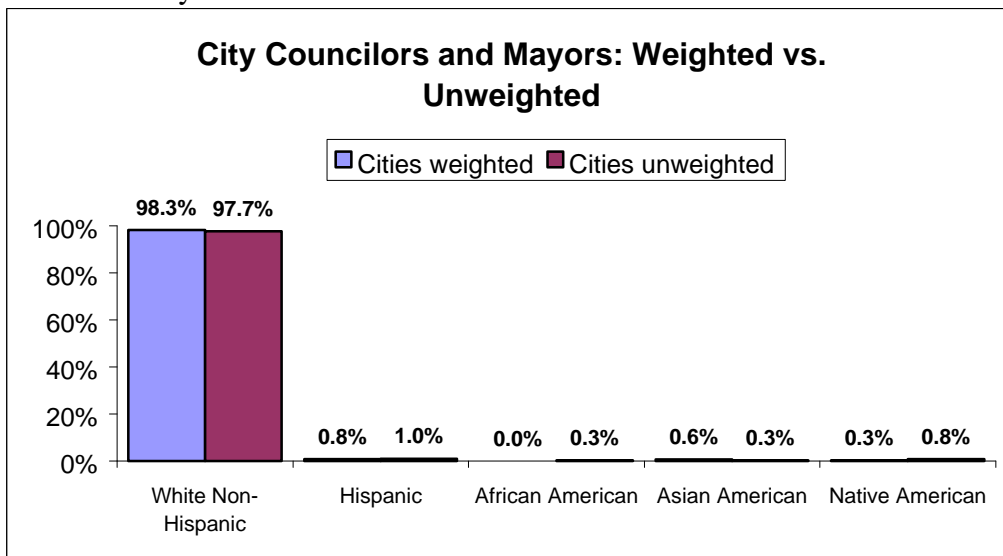


Racial and Ethnic Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Weighted)

When county officials are weighted in proportion to their county’s percent of the state’s overall population, the racial and ethnic picture changes considerably. White non-Hispanic representation falls from 96 percent to 85.8 percent. Hispanic representation jumps from 2.5 percent to 8.5 percent, and Native American representation increases from .8 percent to 3.9 percent. This is because the weighting assigns greater importance to larger urban counties with more diverse populations and, in two instances, more diverse county commissions.

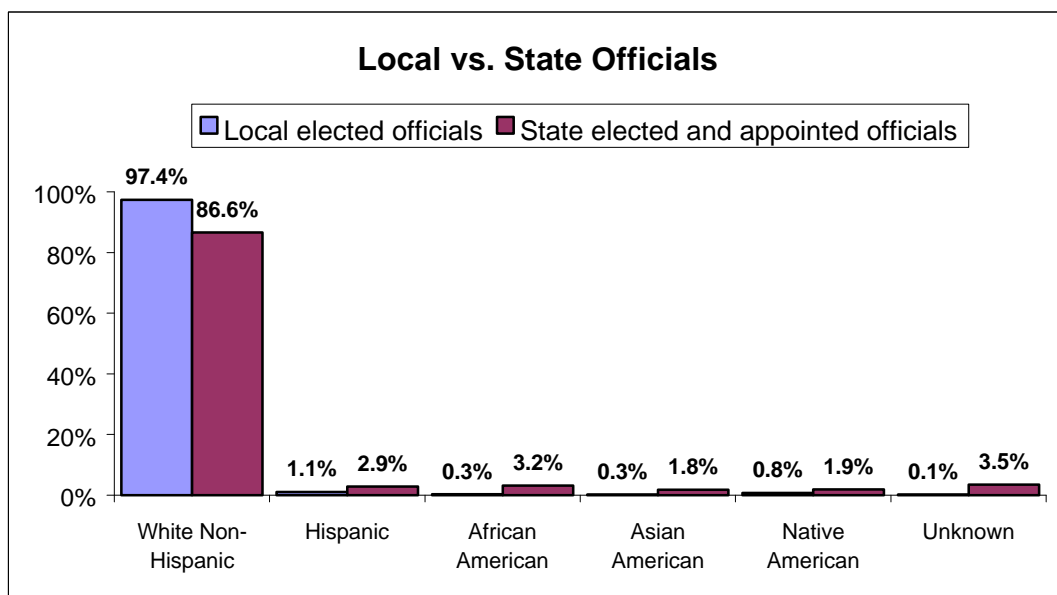
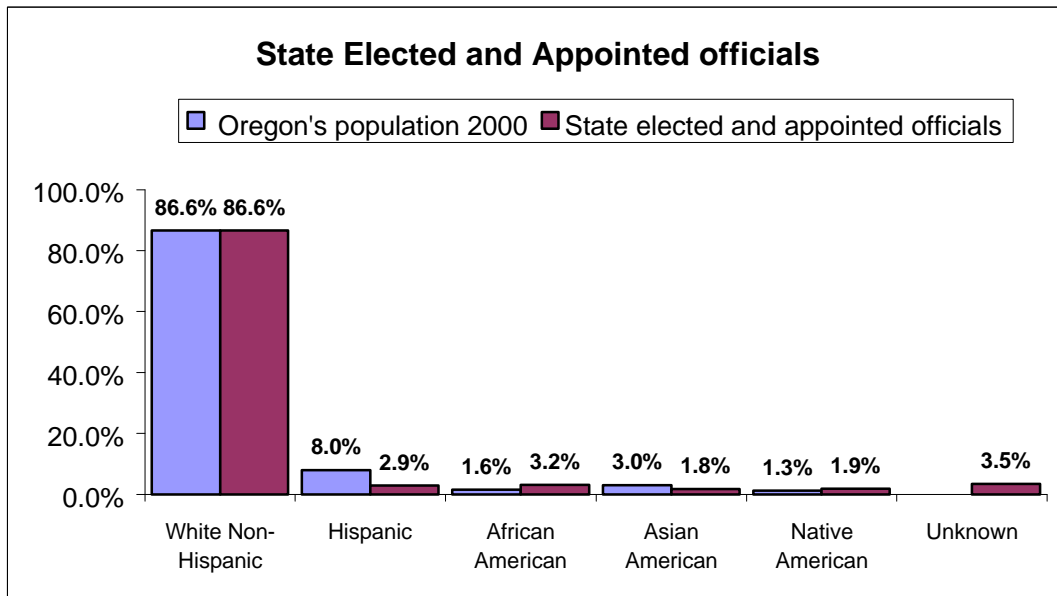


Cities, on the other hand, show little change. Weighting yields results similar to the unweighted percentages. By either method of analysis, minorities are substantially under-represented among city councilors and mayors.



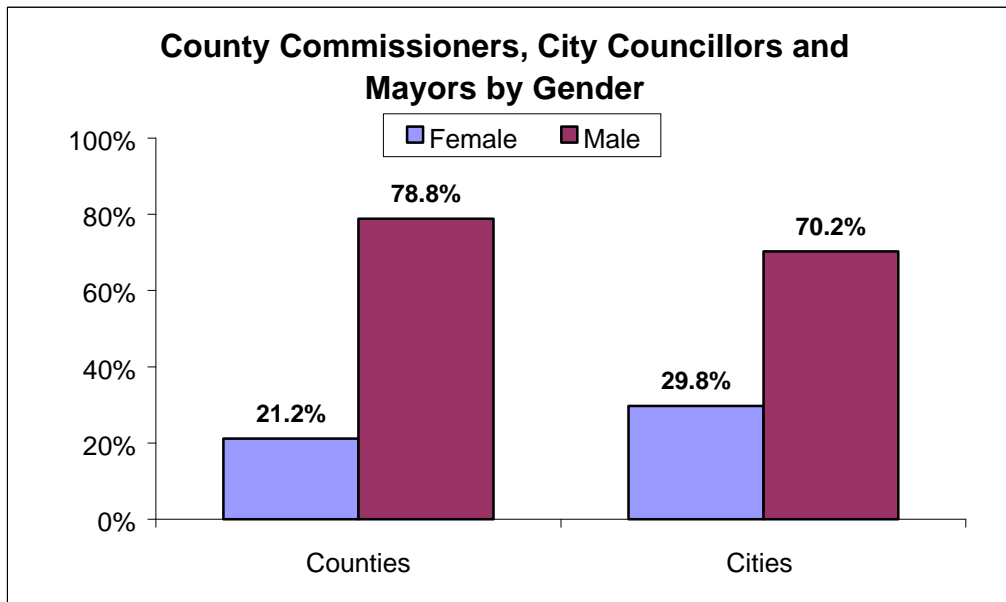
Racial and Ethnic Parity Among State Elected and Appointed Officials^v

Except for Hispanics (eight percent of the population but only 2.9 percent of state officials), elected and appointed officials at the state level more closely reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the general population. State officials are more representative of minorities than are local officials overall.



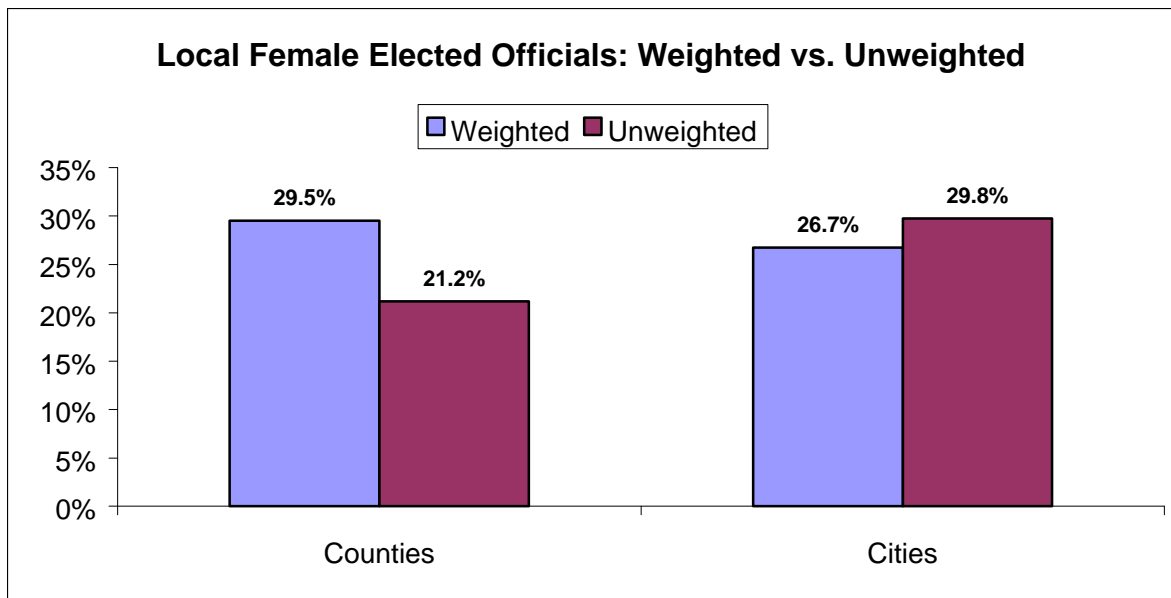
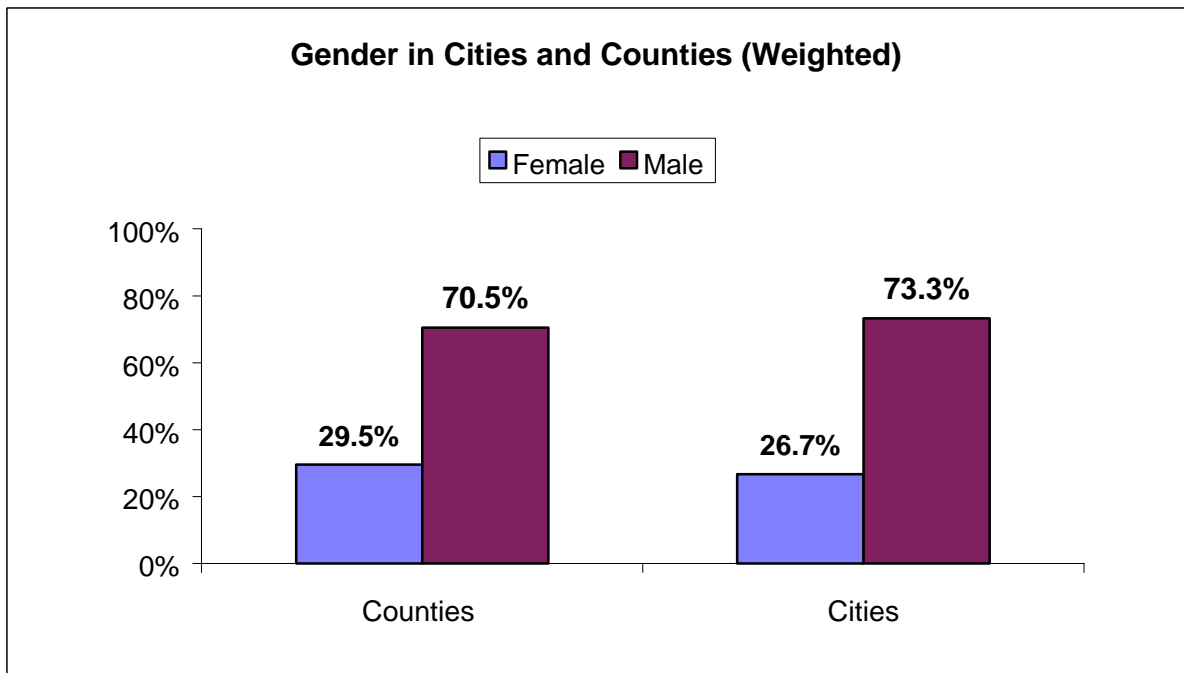
Gender Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Unweighted)

While Oregon county commissions have a higher percentage of minorities than city councils and mayors, the advantage is reversed for gender. Women hold a significantly higher percentage of seats in city councils (29.8 percent) than county commissions (21.2 percent). Both, however, are far below the 50.4 percent share of the population held by women.



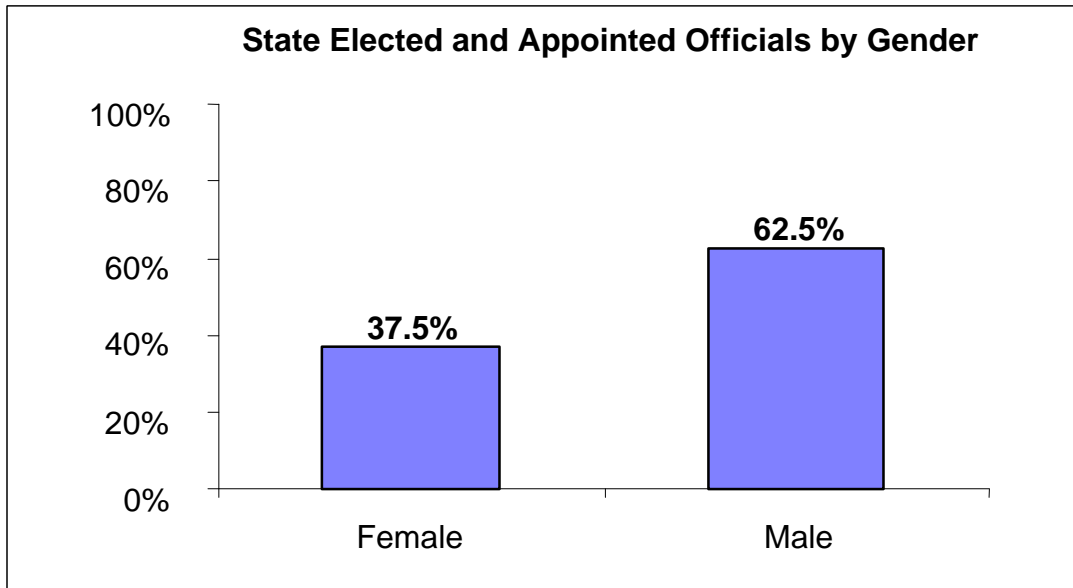
Gender Parity Among Local Elected Officials (Weighted)

Like the race and ethnicity analysis, county commissioners when weighted by the populations they represent, have a higher proportion of gender parity than do cities. Female representation jumps from 21.2 percent to 29.5 percent. Among city councilors and mayors, the weighted percentage goes down, dropping from 29.8 percent to 26.7 percent.

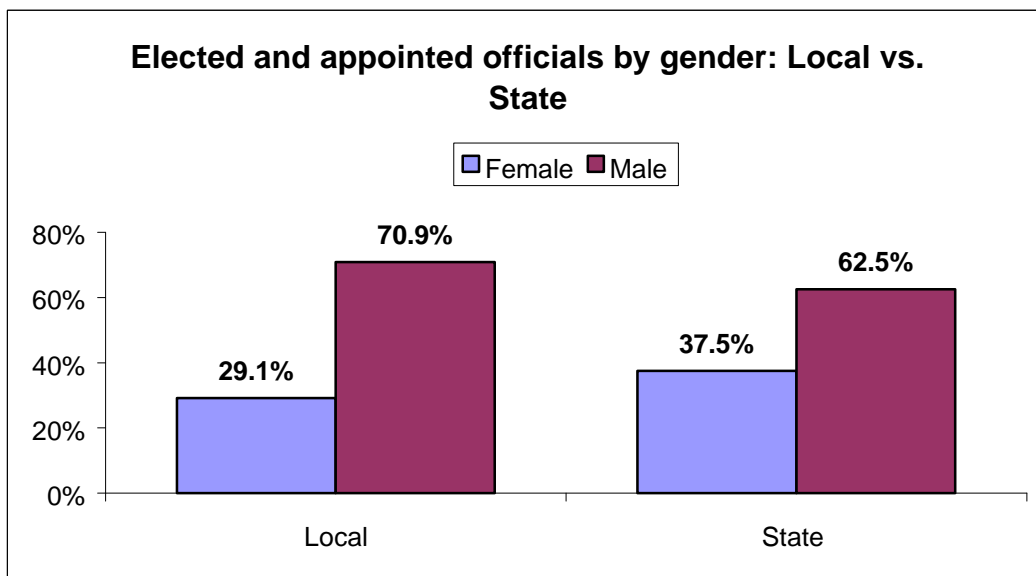


Gender Parity Among State Elected and Appointed Officials

Women hold 37.5 percent of state level policy making positions. While women are more represented at state level than at county and city levels, their numbers are still significantly lower than male elected and appointed officials at the state level.



Under-representation of women is not unique to Oregon. Compared to the other states, Oregon ranks 5th in percentage of state legislators who are women. Thirty of Oregon's 90 legislators are women.



Summary of Findings

1. When adjusted for size of population that they represent and when taken as a whole statewide, county commissions reflect some degree of racial and ethnic parity with the general population, primarily because of two large urban counties. However, the remaining urban counties and all rural counties lack minority representation.
2. Minorities are significantly under-represented among city councils and mayors in Oregon.
3. With the exception of Hispanics, state elected and appointed officials more closely reflect the racial and gender makeup of the population, showing significantly greater parity than do local elected officials.
4. Women are significantly under-represented at both state and local levels, although less severely at the state level.

Endnotes

ⁱ This study provides a statewide perspective of the parity of local officials only. It aggregates race, ethnic and gender information received from local elected officials across counties to the state level. It does not compare the racial and ethnic makeup of each county to the racial and ethnic makeup of its elected officials.

ⁱⁱ The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes citizens by both race and ethnicity. White non-Hispanic is all respondents who designated their race as white and did not designate their ethnicity as Hispanic.

ⁱⁱⁱ Weighted calculations assume that all local officials represent the entire population of their jurisdictions. This tends to give greater weight to larger municipalities and counties. The calculations for counties also account for those with larger commission members.

^{iv} Nine out of 234 cities (about 4%) were not included, primarily because they could not be reached. One city was unwilling to disclose the information. The cities not included are: Adrian, Barlow, Chiloquin, Greenhorn, Lonerock, Maywood Park, Prescott, Rainier, and West Linn. Data from all 36 counties are included in the report.

^v At the state level, 271 elected officials and 1600 appointed officials were included in this report. Appointed officials included executive appointments, agency directors and other appointments. The race and ethnicity of seven appointed officials was other. Fifty-nine officials were designated “unknown.”