

INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters Pasadena Area (LWV-PA) serves ten communities in Los Angeles County. Of these, nine are cities, each with a variety of commissions on which citizens serve their city. LWV-PA seeks to promote gender balance on these commissions so that women and men in our communities have an equal opportunity to serve and represent their cities. To this end, we have collected baseline data on gender representation on city commissions in our service area. We present those data, along with recommendations, in this report.

BACKGROUND

The League of Women Voters has long worked to promote opportunities for citizen participation in government at every level. In our country, all citizens — regardless of gender — have both the right and responsibility to pursue opportunities to participate in government. For democracy to work, government must be representative, accountable, and responsive. To achieve that, women and men alike must participate in all levels of government.

The role of women in government in America has evolved over our nation’s history but is not yet at a point of gender equity. The first women were elected to a mayoralty, a state legislature, and Congress in 1887, 1894, and 1916, respectively¹. In 1869, the Wyoming Territory passed the first legislation granting women the right to vote², and women’s suffrage became constitutional law in 1920³. Today, women are 51.3% of America’s adult population⁴ and 53% of the national electorate⁵. However, women comprise only 20% of mayors of America’s 100 largest cities, 24.9% of state legislators (1,840 of 7,383 positions), 24.0% of statewide elected executive officers (75 of 312 positions), and 19.4% of Congress (104 of 535 positions)⁶. Locally, women comprise 25.0% of city council positions including mayors (12 of 48 positions) (Figure 1).

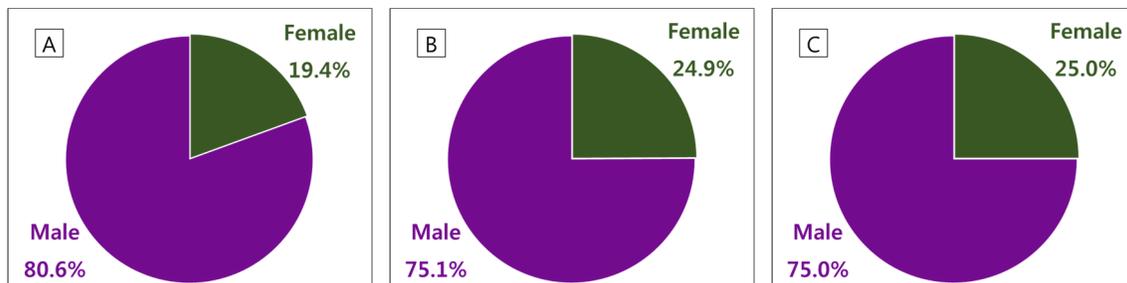


Figure 1. Women and men in Congress (A), state legislatures (B), and local city councils (C).

City commissions play an essential role in city governance. Commission members are charged with a variable combination of advisory, executive, legislative, and judicial roles. Typically, commission members are nominated and appointed by the mayor and/or city council, serve for a term of office (often with limits to reappointment), and receive little or no direct compensation for their service. These citizens can wield considerable power and authority within the jurisdiction of their commission.

SCOPE OF REPORT

The LWV-PA service area includes the nine cities of Alhambra, La Cañada Flintridge, Monrovia, Monterey Park, Pasadena, San Gabriel, Sierra Madre, San Marino, and South Pasadena. We examined all standing commissions subject to the Maddy Act⁷ in these nine cities. For this report, we investigated the diversity of representation on city commissions only with respect to gender. Other aspects of diversity — such as race, ethnicity, nationality, age, education, religion, income level, languages spoken, geographic residency, and sexual orientation — were not investigated in this report.

METHODS

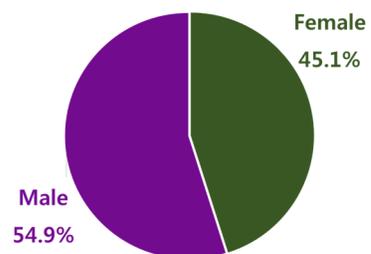
For each city, we acquired a list of commissions and commission members initially through the city website. These data were augmented by information from the city clerk’s office as necessary. Commission members who were *ex officio* members (for example, commission positions reserved for city councilmembers or members of separate commissions) were not counted. Any individual serving independently on more than one commission was counted independently for each commission position held. Commission membership varies as vacancies occur and are filled. Commission members were counted as of the time we contacted the city clerks to identify the gender of commission members, regardless of recent or upcoming vacancies or appointments.

The city clerk’s office verified the gender of each commission member. Total numbers of commission members by gender were calculated for each individual commission, categories of commissions across cities, all commissions within each city, and all commissions in all nine cities collectively. Data were collected during January and February of 2017.

Likelihood of gender bias was calculated based on a confidence interval of the number of commission members that would be found if no gender bias were present. Our calculations assume a binary 50%/50% likelihood of a female or male candidate being selected for a commission⁸. A gender balance outside of the 80% confidence interval was flagged as *possible* gender bias (indicated in tables with yellow); a gender balance outside of the 95% confidence interval was flagged as *likely* gender bias (indicated in tables with red).

RESULTS

There are 81 standing commissions in the nine cities in the LWV-PA service area with 557 commission positions. At the time of data collection, there were 530 commissioners serving (27 vacancies). All commission members were identified as female or male. Of the 530 commissioners, 239 (45.1%) were female. If no gender bias were present, the 95% confidence interval of expected female commission members would be between 242 and 288 (45.7% and 54.3%). This is evidence of likely gender bias collectively across all commissions in all cities.



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The percentage of female commission members varies considerably across the nine cities in the LWV-PA service area (Table 1). For example, Sierra Madre has the highest percentage (60.6%) of women on city commissions with 20 female commission members. Given the number of total commission members (33), in the absence of gender bias the 80% confidence interval is between 13 and 20 women on commissions (and, conversely, between 20 and 13 men). Therefore, there is no evidence of overall gender bias in the appointment of commission members in Sierra Madre.

City	Commissions	Females	Males	% Female
Sierra Madre	5	20	13	60.6%
Pasadena	17	84	74	53.2%
Monrovia	7	17	19	47.2%
Alhambra	10	34	38	47.2%
San Gabriel	4	7	9	43.8%
Monterey Park	11	24	36	40.0%
San Marino	6	13	22	37.1%
South Pasadena	14	29	52	35.8%
La Cañada Flintridge	7	11	28	28.2%
Total	81	239	291	45.1%

green indicates no gender bias — in range expected in 80% of circumstances

yellow indicates possible gender bias — in range expected in 80% to 95% of circumstances

red indicates likely gender bias — beyond range expected in 95% of circumstances

Table 1. Number of commissions, females, males, and percent female by city. There is no evidence of overall gender bias in the cities of Alhambra, Monrovia, Pasadena, San Gabriel, or Sierra Madre. There is evidence of possible overall gender bias in the cities of Monterey Park and San Marino. There is evidence of likely overall gender bias in the cities of South Pasadena and La Cañada Flintridge.

Similarly, there is no evidence of overall gender bias in the cities of Alhambra, Monrovia, Pasadena, or San Gabriel. There is evidence of possible overall gender bias in the cities of Monterey Park and San Marino. There is evidence of likely overall gender bias in the cities of La Cañada Flintridge and South Pasadena. In the case of La Cañada Flintridge, in 95% of unbiased circumstances, at least 13 women would be expected to serve on commissions. The city has only 11 female commission members.

Patterns of gender bias emerge across all cities when commissions are categorized (Table 2). Of 17 categories of commissions, there is evidence of gender bias in eight categories. In cities with Senior and Youth commissions, there is evidence of gender bias in favor of women. The commissions average 70.6% and 64.9% female, respectively. Even considering the disproportionate fraction of senior citizens (age 65 and older) who are women (56.9%⁹), there is evidence of gender bias on Senior commissions.

Many categories of commissions skew significantly male. The low percentages of women on Investment, Parks & Recreation, and Personnel commissions indicates possible gender bias on these commissions. On Design, Planning, and Transportation commissions, there is evidence of likely gender bias. For example, in the six cities with Transportation commissions, there are 36

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commission members, but astonishingly only four are female. At least 12 of the 36 members would be expected to be women in 95% of unbiased circumstances.

Most remarkable — and perhaps most consequential — is the category of Planning commissions. This is the only category where there is a commission in every city, and Planning commissions are among the most powerful of all commissions. Within this ubiquitous and powerful category, only 16 women serve alongside 43 men. At least 25 women would be expected in 80% of unbiased circumstances, and at least 22 women would be expected in 95% of unbiased circumstances. A mere 16 women on Planning commissions is truly extraordinary.

Commission Type	Commissions	Cities	Females	Males	% Female
Senior	4	4	24	10	70.6%
Youth	3	3	24	13	64.9%
Arts & Culture	4	4	12	7	63.2%
All others	5	4	17	11	60.7%
Community Services	6	5	28	19	59.6%
Regional	4	2	16	11	59.3%
Library	7	7	23	18	56.1%
Historic Preservation	2	2	14	12	53.8%
Environmental	6	5	17	20	45.9%
Business	4	3	9	15	37.5%
Public Safety	2	2	4	7	36.4%
Parks & Recreation	6	6	13	26	33.3%
Personnel	4	4	7	15	31.8%
Investment	2	2	2	8	20.0%
Design	7	7	9	24	27.3%
Planning	9	9	16	43	27.1%
Transportation	6	6	4	32	11.1%
Total	81	9	239	291	45.1%

green indicates no gender bias — in range expected in 80% of circumstances
yellow indicates possible gender bias — in range expected in 80% to 95% of circumstances
red indicates likely gender bias — beyond range expected in 95% of circumstances

Table 2. Number of commissions, cities, females, males, and percent female by category of commission. There is evidence of possible gender bias on Investment, Parks & Recreation, Personnel, and Youth commissions. There is evidence of likely gender bias on Design, Planning, Senior, and Transportation commissions.

Details for individual cities are on pages X-X of this report. Full data on all commission members on each commission in each city, as well as which commissions are assigned to which categories, may be accessed at <http://lww-pa.org/advocacy/>.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

There is widespread, though not universal, evidence of gender bias on city commissions. The overall proportion of women on city commissions is much higher than the proportion of women in elected offices — both in local cities and in the United States overall. However, at 45.1%, there is strong evidence that the proportion of women on city commissions is less than equitable. Five of the nine cities examined in this report show overall levels of equitable gender representation. Nevertheless, many categories of commissions are dominated by either women or men. This evidence of gender bias extends to every city examined in this report.

Gender bias is insidious. With regard to city commissions, gender bias may be conscious or unintended, overt or subtle, and introduced at any stage in the appointment process by city officials and staff, existing commission members, and eligible citizens. All people who play active or advisory roles have opportunities to introduce, perpetuate, or attenuate bias during the recruitment, nomination, and appointment of commission members.

For all cities, we recommend:

1. Equitable gender representation on city commissions overall.
2. Equitable gender representation on individual commissions over the long term, except on commissions where gender is an explicit and justified qualification.
3. Active outreach to qualified individuals to establish and maintain an equitable gender representation on commissions that reflects the diversity of the population being served by the commission.
4. Assessment and publication of the demographics of commission members.

Recommendations specific to individual cities can be found under the individual city reports on pages X-X.

This report may serve as a baseline for comparison between cities and within cities over time. Every city has many citizens who are capable of contributing to their community through service on a city commission. In his August 26, 2015 Executive Directive¹⁰ on Gender Equity in City Operations, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti stated:

Gender equity requires recognizing and providing equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to all people no matter their sex or gender. Gender equity is not an issue relevant to just one gender or sex; rather, it is an issue of fundamental human rights.

As the nine cities covered in this report work to achieve gender balance on city commissions, their commissions will better represent their cities. It is an issue of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. The time to address this fundamental human right is now.

DATA ARCHIVE

This report, an accompanying slide presentation, and the complete data collected for this report may be accessed online at <http://lwv-pa.org/advocacy/>.

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ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www.takepart.com/photos/famous-firsts-women-politics/hillary-rodham-clinton-famous-firsts>

² <http://www.wyo.gov/about-wyoming/wyoming-history>

³ http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/amendment_19/

⁴ 2015 data from

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2015_PEPAGESEX&prodType=table

⁵ 2016 Presidential election data from <http://www.cnn.com/election/results>

⁶ <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-elective-office-2017>

⁷ California Government Code §54970

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=2.&title=5.&part=1.&chapter=11

⁸ The BINOM.INV function in Microsoft Excel 2013 (version 15.0.4867.1003) was used to calculate the confidence intervals based on the binomial distribution. The probability of a commissioner position being held by a woman or a man was 50%. For example, the 80% confidence interval (from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile) was calculated using BINOM.INV([number_of_commissioners],0.5,0.1) and BINOM.INV([number_of_commissioners],0.5,0.9).

⁹ From 2015 (latest available) data

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/PEP/2015/PEPAGESEX/0400000US06.05000>

¹⁰ https://www.lacity.org/sites/g/files/wph281/f/Mayor_Garcetti_File_Executive_Directive_11_Gender_Equity.pdf