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### Women's Political Leadership in Boston

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston

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#### Recommended Citation

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston, "Women's Political Leadership in Boston" (2013). *Publications from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy*. 23. [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp\\_pubs/23](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cwppp_pubs/23)

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# Fact Sheet

UMASS  
BOSTON Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

## Women's Political Leadership in Boston

### Election 2013 Highlights\*

- The first Asian American woman was elected to the Boston City Council (Michelle Wu).
- The only female candidate for mayor (Charlotte Golar Richie) came within 4,000 votes of earning a spot in the general election.
- The two women elected to at-large council seats are women of color and came in first and second respectively (Ayanna Pressley and Michelle Wu); Table 1 provides additional information about 2013 City Council candidates by district.

### The Historical Context

- A total of 98 women have run for Boston City Council between 1921 and 2013 in a total of 167 campaigns.\*\*
- Only 10 women have ever served on the Boston City Council (see Table 2).
- From 2011 through 2013, only 1 woman served on the 13-member Boston City Council.
- Over the last two decades (1993-2013) there have been 21 female candidates for Boston City Council and only 6 have been elected.\*\*\*
- Currently, Boston—the largest capital city in New England—ranks fifth out of six in terms of the percent of city councilors who are women.
- The high points of women's election to the Boston City Council were in 1993 and 1995, when 4 (31%) of the councilors elected were women.

\* *Unofficial results*

\*\* *Preliminary and general elections, not including write-in candidates*

\*\*\* *General election only, not including write-in candidates*

**Table 1. Breakdown of Boston City Council Candidates by Sex and Outcome, General Election, 2013**

| District | Candidates |        | Elected |        |
|----------|------------|--------|---------|--------|
|          | Male       | Female | Male    | Female |
| 1        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 2        | 1          | 1      | 1       | 0      |
| 3        | 1          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 4        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 5        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 6        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 7        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 8        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| 9        | 2          | 0      | 1       | 0      |
| At-Large | 5          | 3      | 2       | 2      |

**Table 2. Women City Councilors, Boston, 1937-2013**

| Councilor          | Year(s) Elected  |
|--------------------|--|
| Mildred M. Harris  | 1937   |
| Katherine Craven   | 1963, 1965   |
| Louise Day Hicks   | 1969, 1973, 1975   |
| Rosemarie Sansone  | 1977, 1979   |
| Maura Hennigan     | 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003 |
| Rosaria Salerno    | 1987, 1989, 1991   |
| Diane Modica       | 1993, 1995   |
| Peggy Davis-Mullen | 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999   |
| Maureen Feeney     | 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009                   |
| Ayanna Pressley    | 2009, 2011, 2013   |
| Michelle Wu        | 2013   |

## Women of Color

- In 2009, the first woman of color, Ayanna Pressley, was elected to the Boston City Council.
- In 2013, 6 women of color ran for Boston City Council in the preliminary and 3 in the general election.
- Two women of color topped the ticket in the at-large council race in 2013 (Ayanna Pressley and Michelle Wu).

**Table 3. Women of Color Candidates, Boston City Council, 1973-2013**

| Candidate   | Year(s)                         |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Lena Saunders   | 1973                            |
| Jacqueline LeBeau   | 1975                            |
| Barbara Ware  | 1979                            |
| Jeanette Tracey   | 1979                            |
| Althea Garrison   | 1981-1991, 1995-1999, 2003-2013 |
| Willie Mae Allen  | 1983, 1985                      |
| Natalie Carithers   | 1991, 2001                      |
| Hattie Dudley   | 1991                            |
| Vikki Middleton   | 1995, 1997, 1999                |
| Carmen Torres   | 2003                            |
| Jacqueline Payne-Thompson   | 2003                            |
| Laura Garza   | 2003                            |
| Ayanna Pressley   | 2009-2013                       |
| Danielle Renee Williams   | 2011                            |
| Mary-dith E. Tuitt  | 2011                            |
| Sheneal Parker  | 2011                            |
| Stephanie Everett   | 2011                            |
| Suzanne Lee   | 2011, 2013                      |
| Ava Callender   | 2013                            |
| Gloria Murray   | 2013                            |
| Michelle Wu   | 2013                            |
| <i>This table includes special election, preliminary election, and general election data.</i> |                                 |

## Mayoral Bids

- The city of Boston has yet to have a female mayor.
- Over the last 20 years, there have been 6 female candidates for mayor and 2 have made it to the general election.
- The only woman in the 2013 Boston mayoral race, Charlotte Golar Richie, finished third in the preliminary election. She received 13.8% of the vote, behind Marty Walsh (18.5%) and John Connolly (17.2%).

## Sources

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### About This Fact Sheet

The center tracks the status of women at all levels of government in the New England states. It also provides dynamic web resources to inform and support public leadership of women of color.

For more information and resources, visit:

Political Progress for New England Women  
[www.umb.edu/cwppp](http://www.umb.edu/cwppp)

Pathways to Political Leadership for Women of Color  
[www.umb.edu/pipeline](http://www.umb.edu/pipeline)

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