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# Women's Municipal Leadership in Massachusetts

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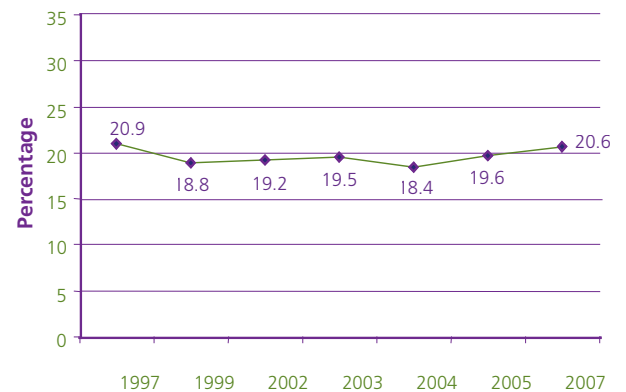
## Women's Municipal Leadership in Massachusetts

### Significance

- Representation and decision-making at the local level are increasingly important given that many Massachusetts communities are facing declining revenues and the need to ensure the delivery of essential services to their residents.
- Research suggests that women in municipal decision-making positions can increase the delivery of services to more women and families, engage in more collaborative ways of working, and encourage other women to run.<sup>1</sup>
- When cities and towns have few (or no) women serving as elected officials<sup>2</sup> on their governing bodies, the voices and perspectives of women are not fully realized.
- Women's public service at the local level is often a pipeline to higher offices, including state legislative or statewide executive office as well as congressional office.

**FIGURE 1**

**FEMALE MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1997 TO 2007**



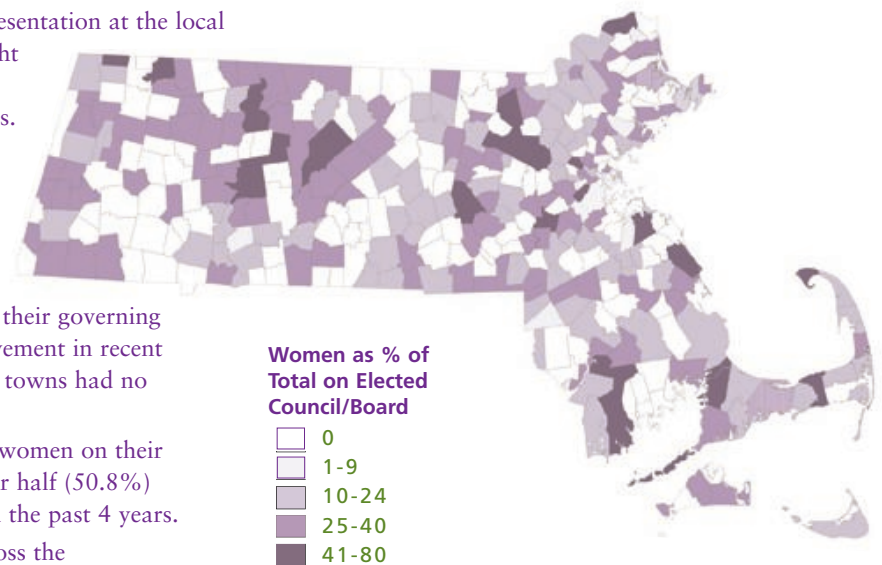
Source: Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy analysis of data gathered from Massachusetts Municipal Association's Massachusetts Municipal 2007/2008 Directory.

### The Facts

- Women make up more than half (52%) of the population of Massachusetts yet still comprise only one-fifth of those serving on elected governing bodies (i.e. city/town councils or boards of selectmen/aldermen).
- The current rate of women's representation at the local level (20.6%) demonstrates a slight increase from 2005 when women comprised 19.6% of local officials. However, as Figure 1 shows, the current rate is virtually identical to that of 1997.
- In 2007, about one in three Massachusetts communities (37%) had no women serving on their governing bodies. This represents an improvement in recent years: in 2004, 42% of cities and towns had no women serving at this level.
- Of the 130 communities with no women on their elected governing bodies, just over half (50.8%) have not had any women serve in the past 4 years.
- Only 25 communities (7.1%) across the Commonwealth have reached gender parity at the local level.
- As illustrated in Figure 2, 16% of cities and towns in Massachusetts currently have 40% or more women on their governing boards.

**FIGURE 2**

**PERCENT OF ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS WHO ARE WOMEN, BY CITY/TOWN, 2007**

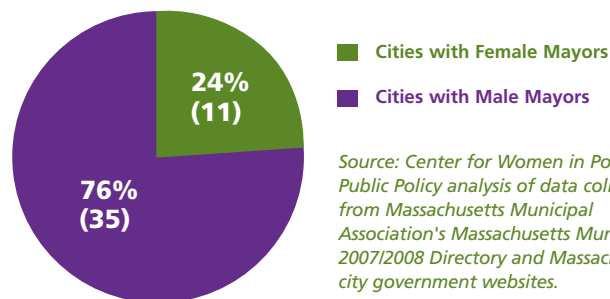


Source: Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy analysis of data gathered from Massachusetts Municipal Association's Massachusetts Municipal 2007/2008 Directory.

# Women Serving as Mayors in Massachusetts

- Of 46 cities with a mayor-council system of municipal government, 24% (11 cities) have a female mayor; this is the highest rate of women serving as mayors in the history of the Commonwealth.
- In November 2007, the first Asian American woman to serve as mayor in a Massachusetts community was elected (Lisa Wong in Fitchburg); in January 2008, the first African American woman was elected as mayor in the Commonwealth (Denise Simmons in Cambridge).
- Of the ten largest cities in Massachusetts, five have never elected a female mayor: Boston, Brockton, Quincy, Fall River, and Lynn.
- Women have fared better in cities with mayors elected from within the city councils: Lowell has had three women and Cambridge has had four, including incumbent Denise Simmons.
- Other cities that have elected women to serve as mayors include Worcester, Springfield, and New Bedford.

**FIGURE 3**  
MASSACHUSETTS MAYORS 2008, BY SEX



Source: Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy analysis of data collected from Massachusetts Municipal Association's Massachusetts Municipal 2007/2008 Directory and Massachusetts city government websites.

## ABOUT THE NEW ENGLAND TRACKING PROJECT

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP) at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies has been tracking the election of women at the municipal level in Massachusetts since 1996. In 2003, the Project expanded to include all New England states. CWPPP remains the only research center in the United States that regularly tracks women's political representation at the local level.

**TABLE 1**

FEMALE MAYORS IN MASSACHUSETTS, 2008

City	Mayor	First Elected Mayor	Elected Offices Held
Agawam	Susan R. Dawson	2007	School Committee (1999-2003)
Cambridge*	Denise Simmons	2008	City Council (2002-Present) School Committee (1992-2001)
Fitchburg	Lisa Wong	2007	No prior elected office
Gloucester	Carolyn Kirk	2007	School Committee (2003-2007)
Greenfield	Christine Forgey	2003	No prior elected office
Marlborough	Nancy Stevens	2005	School Committee (1999-2002) City Council (2003-2005)
Northampton	Clare Higgins	1999	City Council (1994-1999)
Salem	Kimberley Driscoll	2005	City Council (2002-2006)
Waltham	Jeannette McCarthy	2003	School Committee (1986-1991) City Council (2002-2004)
Weymouth	Susan M. Kay	2007	City Council (2002-2007) Board of Selectmen (1992-2000)
Worcester	Konstantina Lukes	2007	School Committee (1980-1988) City Council (1990-2006)

\*Mayor elected from within City Council

Source: Data collected by the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy from official city websites, 2008.

## NOTES:

1. Source: Ransford, Paige, Carol Hardy-Fanta, and Anne Marie Camissa. "Women in New England Politics." *New England Journal of Public Policy* Vol. 23, Nos. 1 and 2 (Spring 2007): 17-36.

2. As used here, the terms "Elected Officials" and "Municipal Elected Officials" include City/Town Councilors and Members of Boards of Selectmen/Aldermen; these terms do not refer to Mayors, School Board/School Committee members, or other officials. Therefore, all analyses presented refer to the elected governing bodies of cities and towns.

## FACT SHEET PRODUCED BY

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