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Women's Political Leadership in Boston

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Fact Sheet

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%).

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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

Pathways to Political Leadership for Women of Color
www.umb.edu/pipeline

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