

Wisconsin Women's Council: Releases 20-year report on women's representation in government

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New data show measurable progress since 2005, but women remain underrepresented across most levels of elected office

MADISON, WI — The Wisconsin Women's Council today released a comprehensive new report, [*Women's Representation in Wisconsin Government: Twenty Years of Progress and Persistent Gaps \(2005-2025\)*](#), documenting two decades of trends in women's political leadership across federal, statewide, legislative, judicial, county, and local offices.

The report finds that while Wisconsin has made meaningful gains in some areas, particularly in the judiciary, women remain underrepresented in most elected roles. In 2025, women held just 27% of elected offices statewide, despite comprising half of Wisconsin's population.

"For purposes of this analysis, parity is defined as women holding 50% of seats, reflecting their share of the population," said Denise Gaumer Hutchison, Chair of the Wisconsin Women's Council. "By that measure, Wisconsin has not yet achieved equal representation at any level of elected office."

The Council also emphasizes the importance of examining leadership attrition, noting that understanding why women leave leadership positions at higher rates than men will be essential to sustaining gains and achieving long-term equity.

"Representation shapes policy priorities, public trust, and the legitimacy of democratic institutions," said Jeanne Duffy, Executive Director of the Wisconsin

Women's Council. "This report is both a record of progress and a call to action. Achieving gender parity will require sustained commitment and systemic change."

Key Findings from [the Report](#)

State Legislature

- In 2025, women hold 45 of 132 legislative seats (34%)—the highest number in state history.
- Wisconsin now exceeds the national average of 32.8% women state legislators, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP).
- Progress has been steady but incremental over the past 20 years.

Tribal Leadership

- In 2025, women hold 44% of Tribal leadership positions across Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations, reflecting sustained progress toward gender balance in sovereign governance.

Judiciary

- The judiciary shows the most substantial gains toward parity.
- The number of women judges increased from 39 in 2005 to 106 in 2025.
- Women now comprise 37% of Wisconsin judges.
- Wisconsin has the highest percentage of female state Supreme Court justices in the nation, with six of the seven justices, 86%, currently women.

County Government

- Women hold 25% of county board seats statewide.
- Just two counties, Menominee and Milwaukee, have met or exceeded parity on their county boards.
- Women remain significantly underrepresented in county board leadership roles.

District Attorneys

- Women hold 34% of District Attorney positions, up from 8 officeholders in 2015 to 25 in 2025.
- While progress has accelerated in recent years, most counties have never

elected a woman district attorney.

Sheriffs

- 6 of Wisconsin's 72 counties (8%) have a woman serving as sheriff.
- For much of the past two decades, one or two women held sheriff positions statewide.

Local Government (Cities, Villages & Towns)

- Women's representation in local government has increased from 13% 2005 to 20% in 2025, but remains gradual.
- The percentage of women mayors has remained largely flat over the past 20 years, 10% in 2005 to 15% in 2025.

School Boards

- School boards represent the clearest example of sustained progress.
- In 2005, women held 37% board seats statewide; by 2025, women are nearing parity at 47%.

The report concludes that structural reforms, not simply encouraging women to "run," are necessary to accelerate progress towards gender parity in Wisconsin. Policy and practical strategies are available to address parity challenges in the state, which could include:

- Ranked-choice voting
- Provide childcare
- Gender-balanced appointments
- Intentional recruitment and funding pipelines

The full report, charts, and additional data are available on the Wisconsin Women's Council website at: <https://womenscouncil.wi.gov>

About the Wisconsin Women's Council

The Wisconsin Women's Council is Wisconsin's statutory commission on the status of women and girls, working to advance women's economic security, leadership, and well-being.

- [Women in Elected Office 2005-2025.pdf](#)