

Representation of Women in Local Government Financial Leadership

New data release of the gender composition of the top finance officials in over 21,000 local governments shows women are well represented in this important leadership position.



Contributing Authors: Christine Dean, Ayenna Cagaanan, Nathan Lee

Press Contact: Nathan Lee, (618) 319-3404, nathanlee@civicpulse.org

While efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are underway at all levels of government, tracking the progress of these efforts in local government has been uniquely hampered by the absence of standardized data. This is because the United States has historically lacked centralized information on the hundreds of thousands of individuals leading our township, municipal, and county governments.

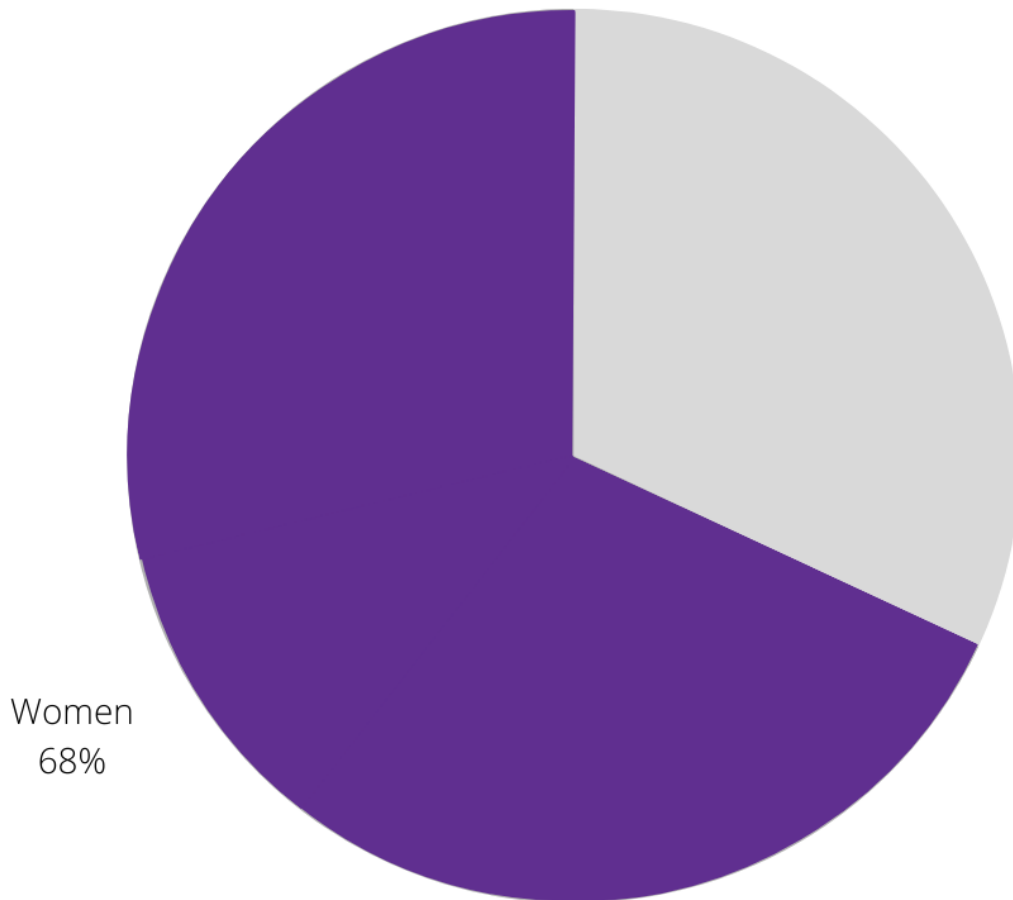
CivicPulse, Engaging Local Government Leaders, and Government Finance Officers Association have taken a major step toward resolving this issue. Taking advantage of recent developments in administrative data collection and probabilistic name-based gender coding, the [Local Government Diversity Dashboard](#) provides comprehensive benchmarks on the gender composition of local government officials for all municipalities, townships, and counties with populations of 1,000 or more.

With the launch of the open-source tool in March 2022, we started with the gender composition of top appointed officials (e.g., manager, administrator). Our reporting showed a widespread gender gap in this key position (currently 29% of all top appointed officials are women). With this current release of data focused on the top finance official in local government, we fill in what turns out to be a more complex picture of the representation of women in local government leadership. Below we preview five key findings:

1. 68% of people occupying the top finance role in local government are women (p. 2).
2. This percentage has increased slightly since 2013 (p. 3).
3. Almost all states have reached gender parity in this role (p. 4).
4. However, local governments with larger populations are far less likely to have women in the top finance role (p. 5).
5. Despite being seen as a pipeline to the top appointed role in local government, the percentage of women in the top finance role is more than double that of top appointed officials (p. 6).

Finding 1: The percentage of women in the top finance role in local government is 68%.

In June 2022, women make up more than two-thirds of the top finance officials in local governments with populations of 1,000 or more. The representation of women in top finance roles in local government reflects their representation in similar jobs outside of local government. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women hold 55% of financial management jobs.

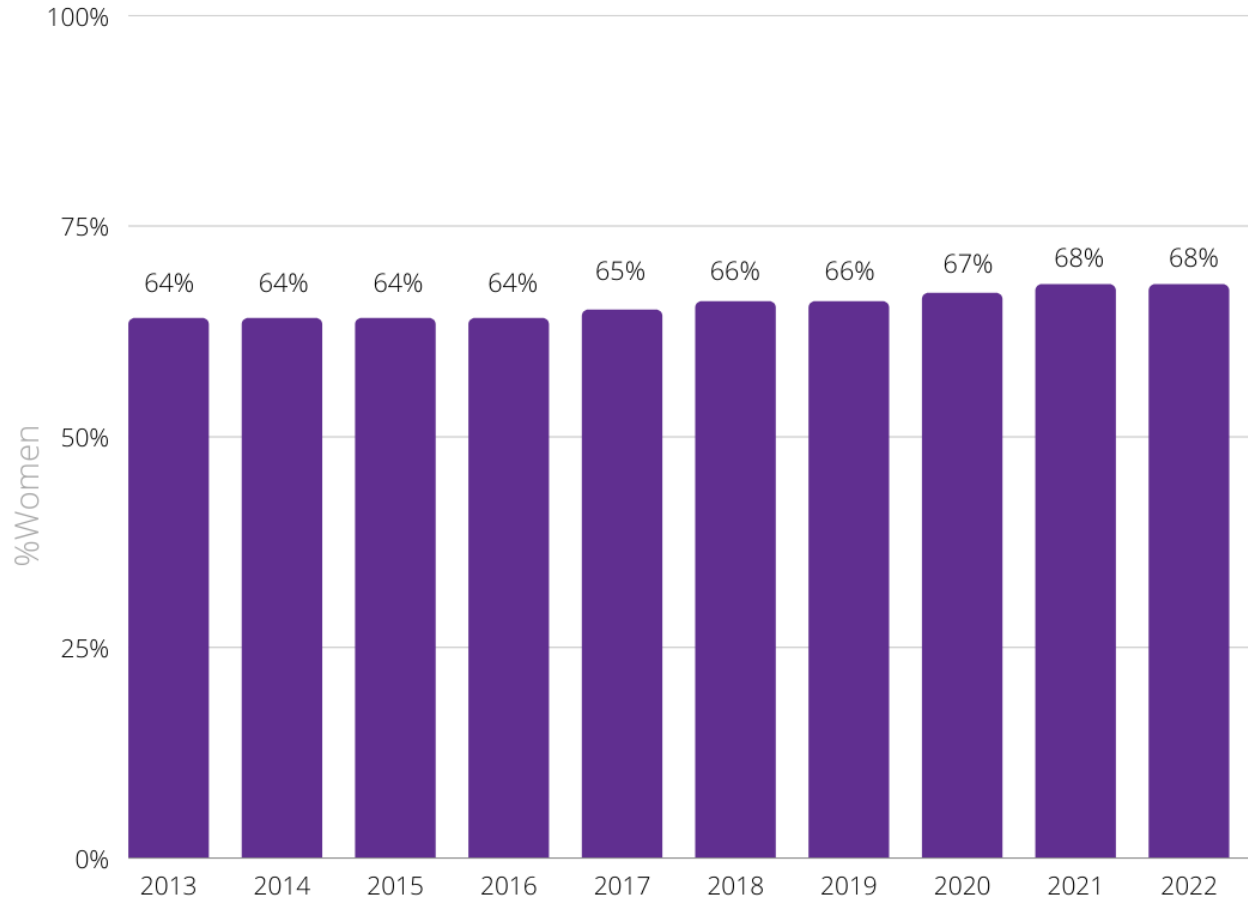


Percentage of Women in the Top Finance Role in Local Government. 68% of all top finance officials serving local governments are women. This estimate is based on the gender coding of officials in the more than 21,000 local governments serving communities of 1,000 or more.

Source: [CivicPulse](#) (June 2022)

Finding 2: The percentage of women top finance officials has increased slightly over time.

Compared to the 68% of top finance officials who are women in 2022, 64% were women in 2013 (the year our data begins). In other words, even though women were already well represented in this position ten years ago, their numbers continue to slowly but steadily increase.



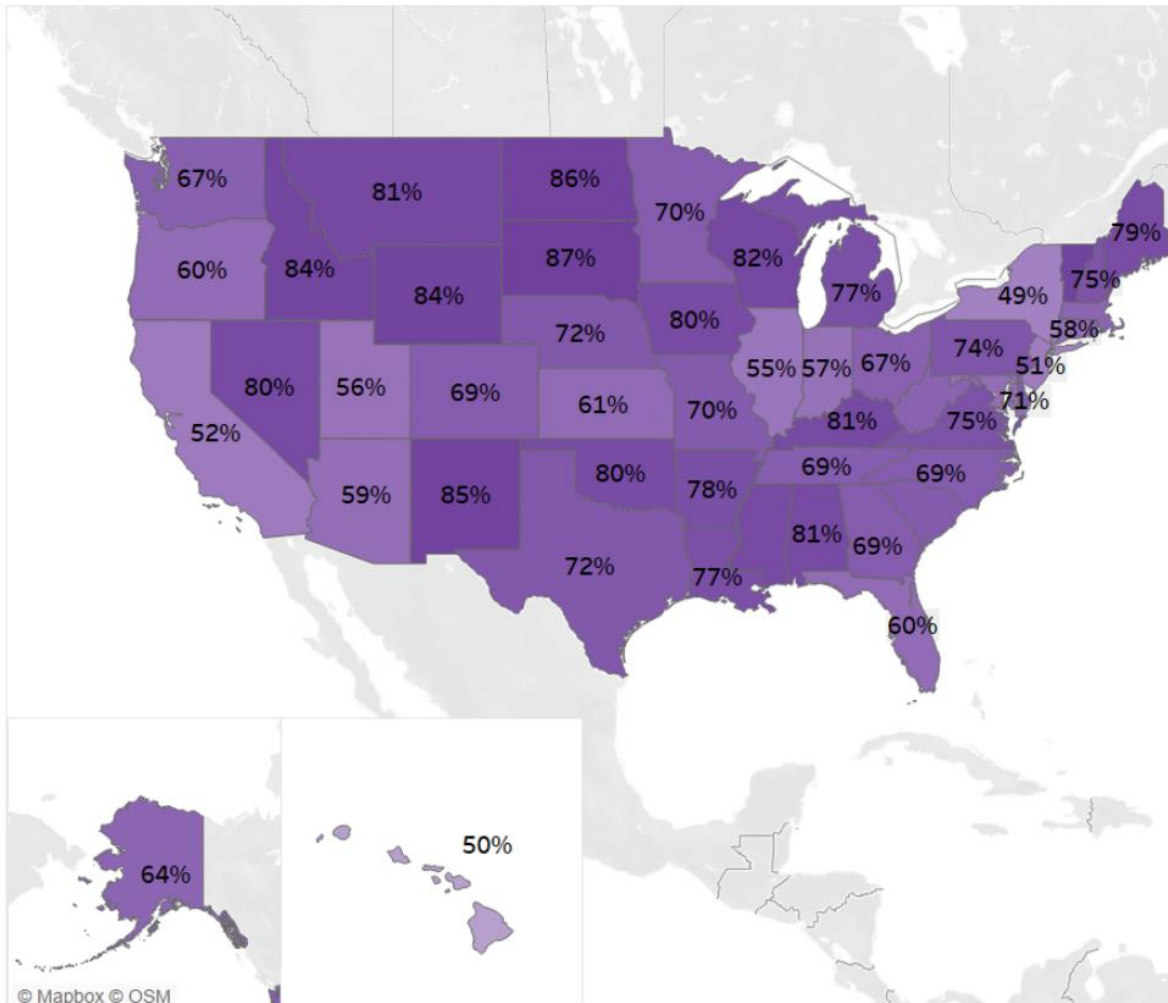
Representation of Women in the Top Finance Role in Local Government Over Time.

Compared to the 68% of top finance officials who are women in 2022, 64% were women in 2013. These estimates are based on the gender coding of officials in the more than 21,000 local governments serving communities of 1,000 or more.

Source: [CivicPulse](#) (June 2022)

Finding 3: Almost all states have surpassed gender parity in the top finance role in local government.

Although all states have effectively reached or exceeded gender parity in the role of the top finance official in local government, there exists substantial geographic variation. The states with the highest percentages of women top finance officials are South Dakota (87%), Vermont (86%), North Dakota (86%), New Mexico (85%), and Wyoming (84%). The states with the lowest percentages are New York (49%), Hawaii (50%), New Jersey (51%), California (52%), and Illinois (55%).

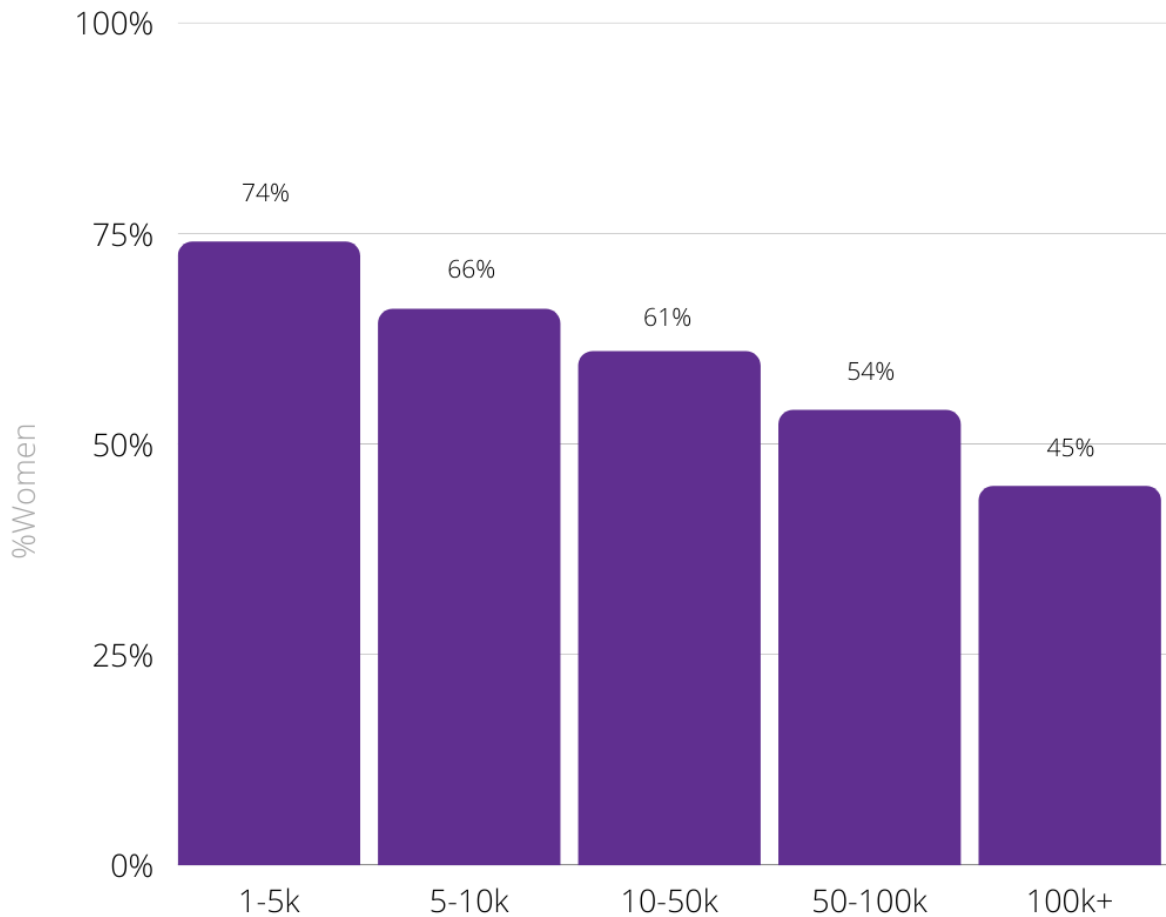


Geographic Variation in Representation of Women in Top Finance Role in Local Government. Although almost all states have at least 50% women, there is substantial variation by state. These estimates are based on the gender coding of officials in the more than 21,000 local governments serving communities of 1,000 or more.

Source: [CivicPulse](#) (June 2022)

Finding 4: Local governments with larger populations are far less likely to have women in the top finance role.

Below we explore how the representation of women in the top finance role in local government varies by population size. We segment the more than 21k local governments into five different population sizes. The largest group—the 11,631 local governments with populations between 1,000 and 5,000—also has the highest percentage of women (74%). However, each increase in population size is associated with a decrease in the percentage of women. For the largest local governments—the 890 governments serving populations above 100,000—women make up less than half of these positions (45%).



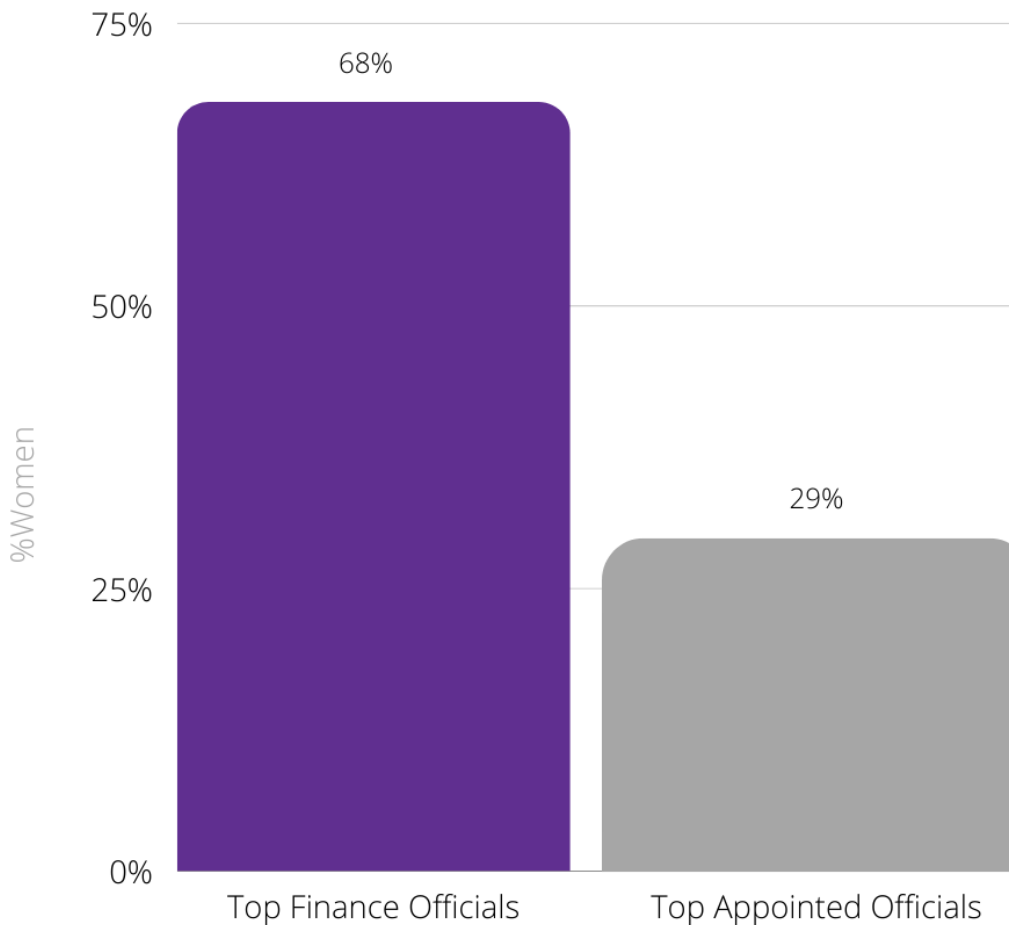
Percentage of Women Top Finance Officials in Local Government by Population Size.

Local governments with larger populations are less likely to have women in the role of top finance official. These estimates are based on the gender coding of officials in the more than 21,000 local governments serving communities of 1,000 or more.

Source: [CivicPulse](#) (June 2022)

Finding 5: The percentage of women top finance officials is significantly higher than the percentage of women top appointed officials.

The comparison of the representation of women between the two roles we have covered so far is striking. Women have a far greater chance of serving their community as a top finance official than as a top appointed official (e.g. manager or administrator). Compared with the 68% of women serving in the top finance role, only 29% serve in the top appointed role. Notably, the difference between the representation of women in these local government roles mirrors the difference in the workforce outside of local government. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 55% of financial managers are women, while only 29% of chief executives are women.



Comparison of the Representation of Women in Top Finance vs. Top Appointed Roles in Local Government. The percentage of women top finance officials is 68%, while women make up only 29% of top appointed officials. These estimates are based on the gender coding of officials in the more than 21,000 local governments serving communities of 1,000 or more.

Source: [CivicPulse](#) (June 2022)

Implications

On the one hand, the robust representation of women in the top finance role in local government suggests great promise for women in local government leadership more generally. On the other hand, the fact that women are disproportionately well represented in smaller communities—and that their numbers fall below parity for the largest communities—suggests a far from uniform storyline.

Moreover, bringing our previous findings around the gender gap in the top appointed role into conversation with this new analysis, we see still further reasons for concern. Traditionally, the top finance position has been seen as a pipeline to the top appointed position (where such a position exists). However, the robust representation of women in the finance role does not appear to translate to the top appointed role. This suggests further investigation is needed to see where this pipeline may be failing.

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. (2021). <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm#:~:text=1%2C669-,29.3,-88.0>

Methodology

The data underlying this report and the associated tools is derived from a comprehensive list of local government leaders developed by Power Almanac. Power Almanac covers eighteen leadership roles for the more than 21,000 local governments with populations of 1,000 or more.

The gender coding was completed by comparing the first name of each official to historical records from the Social Security Administration baby name data. In this probabilistic name-based gender coding, if the probability is greater than 97% that a name is associated with a specific gender, then that gender is assigned to that record. This methodology is then independently verified against self-reported survey data for select officials.

CivicPulse and ELGL both recognize that gender is a spectrum. To address our gender coding limitations, community members can review individual gender-coded records through our [lookup table](#) and submit a request to update individual records.

Acknowledgements

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