

Municipal Form of Government, 2001

The 2001 *Municipal Form of Government* surveys were mailed in summer 2001 and winter 2002 to the Municipal Clerks in municipalities with populations 2,500 and over and to those municipalities under 2,500 in population that are in ICMA's database. Of the 7,867 municipalities that received surveys, 4,244 responded (54.0%).

For more information on the ICMA's *Municipal Form of Government* survey, please contact [Survey Research](#).



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Following is the survey text with the aggregate results shown in bold next to each answer. Each answer represents the percentage reporting for that question, except where noted.

1. Indicate your current form of government as defined by your charter, ordinance, or state law.
 - 38.0 Mayor-Council**
 - 53.0 Council-Manager**
 - 1.2 Commission**
 - 5.6 Town Meeting**
 - 0.9 Representative Town Meeting**
 - 1.5 Did not respond**

2. How is your municipality's *structure or form of government* established?
 - 54.6** Charter
 - 27.9** State law
 - 14.4** Local ordinance
 - 1.1** Council resolution
 - 2.0** Other

3. Does your municipality have the position of chief appointed official? (*The chief appointed official of the local government is referred to as city manager, chief executive officer, city administrator, chief administrative officer, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.*)
 - 81.1** Yes
 - 18.9** No
 - A. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, what action established the position? (*This question refers only to the establishment of the position, not to the person or group that does the hiring.*)
 - 44.4 Charter
 - 7.5** State law
 - 38.1** Local ordinance
 - 5.5** Council resolution
 - 2.3** Chief elected official created position
 - 1.7** Other
 - 0.5** Town meeting vote

 - B. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, who appoints the chief appointed official?
 - 5.0** Chief elected official
 - 67.5** Council
 - 27.1** Combination of chief elected official and council
 - 0.4** Other

4. Who has the independent authority to develop and make recommendations for the budget submitted to the council? (*The term "develop" means that the person has responsibility for content of the budget.*)
 - 11.6** Chief elected official
 - 57.3** Chief appointed official
 - 7.1** Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official
 - 10.3** Chief financial officer
 - 13.7** Other

5. Are your department heads
 - 0.8** All elected
 - 86.1** All appointed
 - 13.1** Combination, some are elected and some appointed

- A. If any of your department heads are appointed, who appoints them?
- 16.7 Chief elected official
 - 37.2 Chief appointed official
 - 10.7 Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official
 - 24.9 Council/board of selectmen
 - 2.3 Other
 - 2.7 Chief appointed and council
 - 3.3 Chief elected official and council
 - 1.0 Appointed by chief elected official and approved by council
 - 0.3 Chief appointed official or council
 - 0.5 Chief appointed official with advise and consent of council
 - 0.4 Chief elected official, chief appointed official, and council

6. Does your municipality have a provision for

A. **Initiative?** 57.8 Yes 42.2 No

Initiative allows citizens to place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes on the ballot by collecting a required number of signatures on a petition.

1. If yes, which of the following initiative processes does your municipality provide?

47.3 Indirect: Requires that *before* any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by citizens through a petition process is placed on the ballot for vote, the council must consider it. Vote results are binding on the local government.

49.4 Direct: Requires that any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by the citizens through a petition process must be placed directly on the ballot for a vote. Vote results are binding on the local government.

17.6 Non-binding initiative: Allows citizens to place on the ballot a question for voter approval or rejection. The voter response is non-binding on the local government.

B. **Legislative referendum?** 72.2 Yes 25.9 No

Legislative referendum allows the council to place any question on the ballot for voter approval or rejection. The results may be binding or non-binding.

If yes, which of the following items must be placed on the ballot for voter approval

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 64.2 Local bond measures | 27.4 Proposed home rule changes |
| 55.4 Proposed charter amendments | 8.4 Other |
| 18.1 Proposed ordinances | 2.9 Tax related changes |

C. **Popular referendum** 46.7 Yes 53.3 No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot any charter, ordinance, or home rule change that has been adopted by the local government before the change can take effect.

D. **Recall** 60.9 Yes 39.1 No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot a question of whether an elected official should be removed from office before the expiration of his/her term.

7. **Since January 1, 1996**, have there been any attempts to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* (e.g., change from at-large to ward or district elections or add or eliminate the position of chief appointed official, etc.)?

10.0 Yes 90.0 No

A. If yes, approximately how many attempts have been made to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* since January 1, 1996? **1 Average**

Check each item that describes the proposed change(s) and indicate whether the change(s) was approved.

Attempted change	Not approved	Approved	Year approved (Average)
1. <i>Change</i> from at-large to ward or district elections	56.1	34.8	1998
2. <i>Change</i> to a mixed system with some at-large and some ward or district elections	40.0	34.3	2000
3. <i>Change</i> the mix between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by ward or district	33.3	42.9	1999
4. <i>Increase</i> the number of council or board members	28.3	58.3	1999
5. <i>Decrease</i> the number of council or board members	34.4	50.0	1999
6. <i>Change</i> the method of election of the chief elected official	39.5	39.5	1999
7. <i>Increase</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	33.3	41.7	1999
8. <i>Decrease</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	28.1	43.8	1999
9. <i>Add</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	19.4	71.8	1998
10. <i>Eliminate</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	50.0	28.1	1999
11. <i>Change</i> who appoints the chief appointed official from (the previous appointment authority)	58.3	16.7	1999
12. <i>Change</i> the form of government	42.2	45.0	1998

CHIEF ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL/MAYOR/BOARD CHAIR

The chief elected official of the local government may have the title of mayor, president, board chair, etc.

8. Is the position of chief elected official in your local government *officially* full-time or part-time? **15.7** Full-time **84.3** Part-time
9. How is your chief elected official selected?
75.8 Voters elect directly **1.5** Council members rotate into the position of chief elected official
21.9 Council selects from among its members **0.1** Other
0.7 The council member receiving the most votes in the general election becomes the chief elected official
10. How long is the chief elected official's term of office? (*Important: If the chief elected official is a member of the council, specify the term for the position of chief elected official, not of council member.*)
14.0 1 year **34.7** 2 years **6.1** 3 years **44.2** 4 years **1.1** Other
11. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms allowed for the position of chief elected official?
8.7 Yes **91.3** No
 If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law?
2.6. 1 term **54.7** 2 terms **29.8** 3 terms 8.6 4 terms **4.3** Other
 A. If yes, when was the term limitation for the position of chief elected official enacted? **1989** Average
 B. If yes, what authority limits the number of terms for the position of chief elected official?
9.3 Ordinance **66.4** Charter **22.5** State law **1.8** Other
12. Is the chief elected official a member of council, that is, does the chief elected official serve on the council? **69.1** Yes **30.9** No
 A. If yes, does the chief elected official receive supplemental compensation for these additional duties? **49.4** Yes **50.6** No
13. Under what circumstances does the chief elected official have the authority to vote in council meetings?
54.9 On all issues **34.6** Only to break a tie **7.8** Never **0.7** Other **2.1** Break a tie and other reasons
14. Does the chief elected official have the authority to veto council-passed measures? **29.0** Yes **71.0** No
 A. If yes, is a "super majority" vote of the council required to overturn the mayoral veto? **90.2** Yes **9.8** No

15. Does the chief elected official have the authority to
- 77.5** Assign council members to chair or serve on committees and make assignments to those committees
 - 81.5** Appoint citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions
 - 46.9** Receive the annual budget developed by the chief appointed official and present the budget with comments and suggestions to the council for consideration
 - 50.8** Make an annual report to the council and citizens on the state of the community
 - 46.3** Initiate the hiring and/or involuntary termination of the chief appointed official
16. Since 1996 have any recall initiatives been filed against the chief elected official? **4.1** Yes **95.9** No
 A. If yes, were any successful? **17.6** Yes **82.4** No
17. How many staff work directly for the chief elected official? **Average** Full-time staff **7** Part-time staff **2**

COUNCIL/BOARD OF SELECTMEN/TRUSTEES

The term **council** refers to the elected governing body of the local government. The elected body may be called the board of selectmen, trustees, aldermen, etc.

18. Does the political party affiliation of council candidates appear on the ballot in a local general election? **22.7** Yes **77.3** No
19. What is the current filing fee for running for a seat on the council? **Average** **\$14**
20. How many council positions are there on your council? **Average** **6**
21. Are all of these council positions filled? **97.7** Yes **2.3** No
 A. If no, how many council positions are filled? **Average** **6**
22. How many current council members are: **Average** Male **5** Female **1**
23. How many current council members fall into the following age groups? **Average**
- | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------------|----------|
| a. Under 22 | 1 | c. 30-39 | 2 | e. 50-59 | 2 |
| b. 22-29 | 1 | d. 40-49 | 2 | f. 60 and over | 2 |
24. How many current council members are: **Average**
- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| a. Native American | 5 | d. White, not of Hispanic origin | 6 |
| b. Hispanic | 2 | e. Black, not of Hispanic origin | 2 |
| c. Asian or Pacific Islander | 1 | | |
25. How many current council members are in each of these occupational categories? **Average**
- | | | | |
|---|----------|--|----------|
| Lawyers | 1 | Homemakers | 1 |
| Other professionals (medicine, engineering, etc.) | 2 | Teachers and other educational personnel | 1 |
| Business executives/managers | 2 | Clergy | 1 |
| Business/industry employees | 2 | Retired persons | 2 |
| Service industry employees | 2 | Other | 2 |
| Farmers or ranchers | 1 | | |
26. How many council members are selected by the following methods. **Average**
- | | | | |
|------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Elected at large | 4 | Elected by ward or district | 2 |
|------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
27. Indicate the length of term for council members.
- A. Council members elected *at large*
- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 21.6 2 years | 15.3 3 years | 59.2 4 years | 1.2 6 years | 2.8 Other |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
- B. Council members elected *by ward or district*
- | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 30.8 2 years | 7.0 3 years | 6.1 4 years | 0.3 6 years | 0.8 Other |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
28. Terms of office are: **82.6** Staggered **17.4** Concurrent

29. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms a council member may serve? **8.9** Yes **91.1** No
 A. If *yes*, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law? **Average 3**
 B. When was the term limitation enacted? **Average 1989**
 C. By what authority is the number of terms limited?
10.4 Ordinance **66.2** Charter **19.0** State law **4.4** Other
30. How many incumbents ran for reelection to council in the last general election? **Average 3**
 a. How many of those incumbents were reelected? **Average 2**
31. How is a council member's seat filled if it is vacated before the term has expired?
24.0 Method depends on length of term remaining **1.1** Special election or appointed by council
8.8 Special election
48.7 Appointed by council
10.7 Appointed by chief elected official
0.9 Position left vacant until next regular election
5.8 Other
32. Since 1996, have any recall initiatives been filed against council members? **5.3** Yes **94.7** No
 A. If *yes*, were any successful? **29.2** Yes **70.8** No
33. Are any council members (*excluding the chief elected official*) paid an annual salary or stipend for any of their services?
84.6 Yes **15.4** No
 A. If *yes*, please indicate the approximate annual dollar amount that your council members receive. **Average**
 Full-time council member **\$4,659** Part-time council member **\$ 4,201**
34. How often does the council meet in formal session?
0.2 More than once a week **20.0** Once a month
5.7 Once a week **0.0** Less than once a month
3.6 Three times a month **1.8** Other
68.7 Twice a month
35. Does the council have standing committees (*permanent bodies with set memberships and regularly scheduled meeting times*) that consider specific policy matters? **57.9** Yes **42.1** No
 A. If *yes*, approximately how many standing committees did the council have as of January 2001?
15.0 1-2 standing committees **5.9** 11-15 standing committees
40.3 3-5 standing committees **5.0** More than 15 standing committees
33.7 6-10 standing committees
36. Does the council use citizen authorities, boards, or commissions? **92.5** Yes **7.5** No
 A. If *yes*, are members **3.7** Elected **99.7** Appointed
 B. If *yes*, in what capacity do they serve?
90.3 Advisory **36.6** Decision/policy making **25.6** Quasi-judicial
 C. If *yes*, in which areas are they used?
28.3 Growth **17.5** Civil service **17.7** Architectural review
20.2 Transportation **41.0** Libraries **24.4** Code enforcement
86.9 Zoning **31.8** Housing **68.3** Parks and recreation
18.8 Finance **15.1** Community-police relations **6.5** Ethics
19.5 Airports **42.5** Economic development **12.6** Charter review commissions
13.9 Art **82.9** Planning **15.7** Other
28.1 Beautification **21.4** Environmental issues
20.5 Cable TV **38.6** Historic preservation
37. How many staff are employed by the council to work exclusively on council business? **Average**
 Full-time staff **2** Part-time staff **1**
38. When does your next fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/2001)? **07/2002**