

MUNICIPAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT (2018-19)

ICMA Form of Government Data and Definitions

According to the 2018 U.S. Census population estimates, there are 10,969 local governments with at least 2,500 residents. As of September 2019, this is how ICMA classifies their forms of government:

Form of Government	Number	Percent
Council-Manager	4,386	40.0%
Mayor-Council	4,166	38.0%
Commission	1,302	11.9%
Town Meeting	1,056	9.6%
Representative Town Meeting	59	0.5%
TOTAL	10,969	100.0%

Data are based on extensive research and verification conducted by ICMA staff. Sources consulted include the ICMA Form of Government Survey, state association directories, historical data published in *The Municipal Year Book*, and state and local statutes.

Municipal Form of Government Definitions*:

Mayor-Council Form of Government: Elected council or board serves as the legislative body. The chief elected official (e.g., mayor) is the head of government, with significant administrative authority, and generally elected separately from the council.

Council-Manager Form of Government: Elected council or board and chief elected official are responsible for making policy with advice of the chief appointed official (e.g., administrator/manager). A professional administrator appointed by the board or council has full responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the government.

Commission Form of Government: Members of a board of elected commissioners serve as heads of specific departments while also collectively sitting as the legislative body of the government.

Town Meeting Form of Government: Qualified voters convene and act as a legislative body that makes basic policy, votes on the budget, and chooses a board. These elected officials may carry out the policies established by town meeting or may delegate the day-to-day management of the municipality to an appointed manager/administrator.

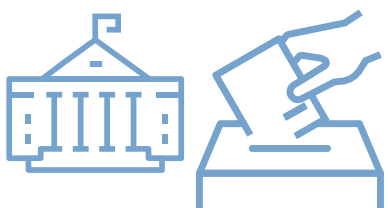
Representative Town Meeting Form of Government: Similar to town meeting except that voters select residents to represent them at the town meeting. All residents may attend and participate in debate, but only the selected representatives may vote.

**Note: ICMA classifies townships according to the definition that most closely matches how the government functions, which may differ from the statutory form.*

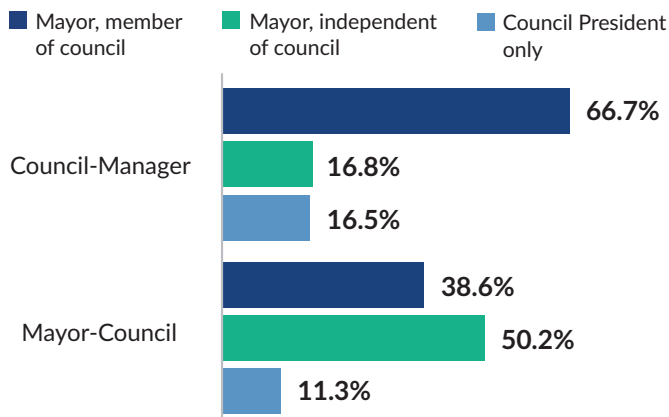
2018 Municipal Form of Government Survey

Chief Elected Officials

Mayors are the most common chief elected official across all forms of government. In council-manager governments, the mayor is most often a member of the council with largely equal powers. In mayor-council governments, the mayor is more likely to operate independent of the council with additional authority.



Chief Elected Official Structure by Form of Government



Compensation of Elected Officials

85.9% of municipalities pay their elected officials through salary, per diem, or other methods. Full-time and part-time elected positions have a wide disparity in compensation levels. Form of government also influences how elected officials are compensated for their service.



Elected Official Median Annual Compensation by Form of Government

Form of Government	Status	Chief Elected Official	Council Member
Mayor-Council	Full-time	\$69,322	*
	Part-time	\$7,200	\$3,600
Council-Manager	Full-time	\$6,876	*
	Part-time	\$5,400	\$3,500
Other	Full-time	\$60,500	*
	Part-time	\$5,000	\$3,000

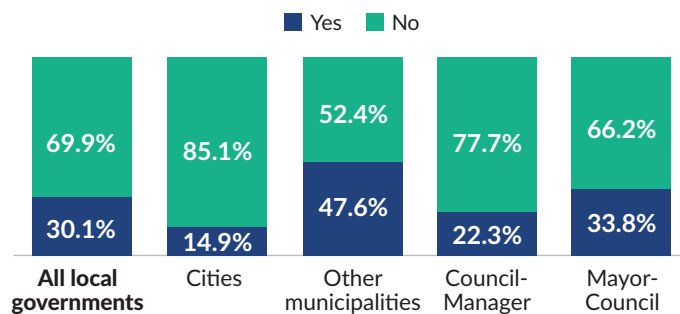
*Insufficient data

Election of Council Members

Political Affiliation

The majority of municipal general elections are nonpartisan with no political affiliation listed for council candidates. This is especially true in cities and for council-manager governments. Townships are a notable exception, where partisan elections are the norm.

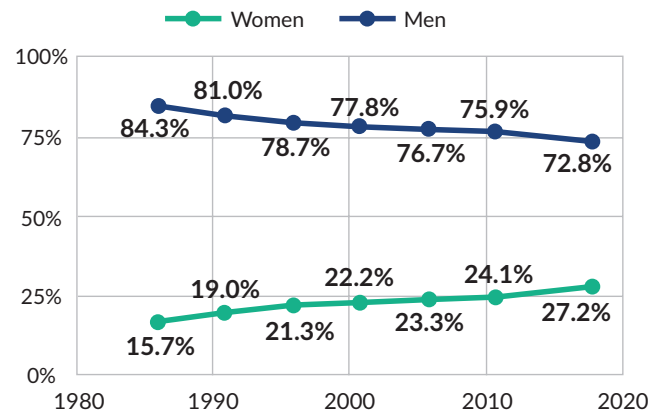
Does the political party affiliation of council candidates appear on the ballot in a local general election?



Gender Composition of Municipal Councils

The percentage of council seats filled by women has steadily increased since 1985, though as of 2018 women still occupy 1 seat to nearly every 3 held by men.

Share of U.S. Municipal Council Positions Filled by Women, Men

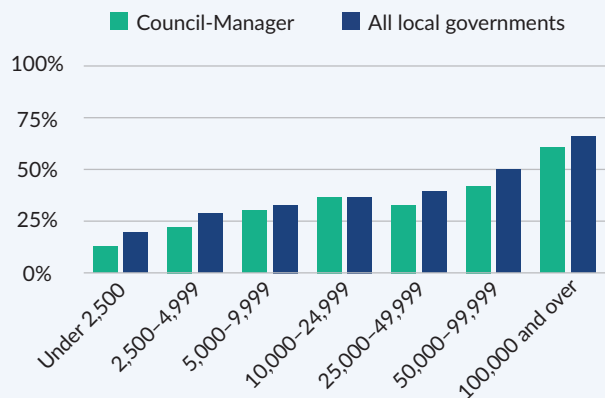


Use of Wards/Districts

32.0% of municipalities elect some or all of their council members by ward/district rather than at large, with council-manager governments doing so slightly less frequently. Larger municipalities are more likely to use wards to select council members.



Percent of Municipalities with Council Wards/Districts by Population



To learn more, visit icma.org/research or contact surveyresearch@icma.org.
To download the full summary of the 2018 Municipal Form of Government Survey, visit icma.org/2018-municipal-fog-survey.