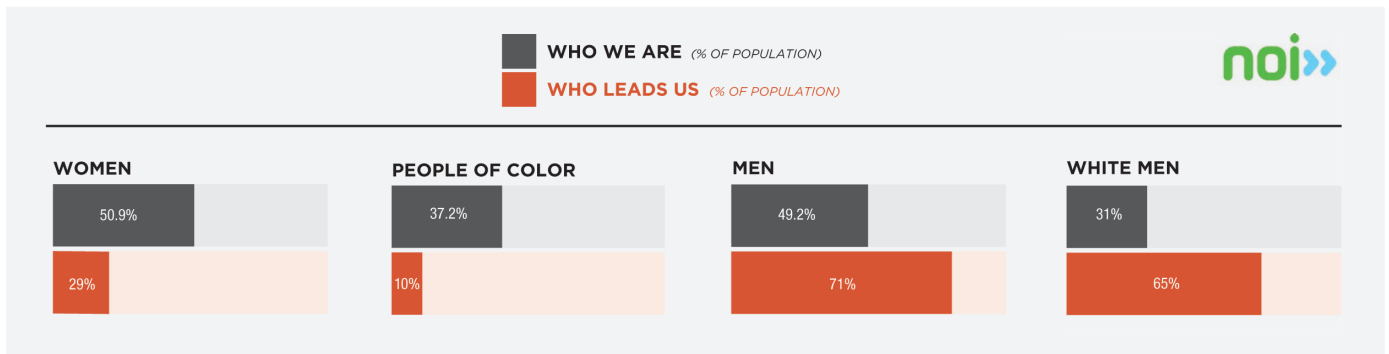


## Who Leads Us?

America is built on the ideal that all people are equal and have a stake in how our nation is governed. While we may not always succeed, ours is a history of pursuing this vision. It’s not enough that women and citizens of all races can vote—every American must have equal access to lead.

New research commissioned by the Women Donors Network (WDN) reveals that despite our country’s changing demographics, the face of America’s leadership does not reflect who we are. At all levels, white Americans and men maintain a powerful hold on political representation. We analyzed the 42,000 people who make up our elected political leadership, from the President down to the county level. We found:

- 90% of officeholders are white, compared to only 63% of the population.
- Men hold 71% of elected offices, even though they are just 49% of the population.
- White men hold 65% of elected seats, although they are only 31% of the population—effectively constituting a “veto-proof minority” in our political system.



- The pattern of de-facto exclusion of women and people of color from elected office begins far below the national level, with state- and county-level offices also showing stark disparities.

WOMEN		MEN		PEOPLE OF COLOR		WHITE	
OFFICE LEVEL		OFFICE LEVEL		OFFICE LEVEL		OFFICE LEVEL	
FEDERAL	19%	FEDERAL	81%	FEDERAL	17%	FEDERAL	83%
STATEWIDE	21%	STATEWIDE	71%	STATEWIDE	7%	STATEWIDE	93%
STATE LEGISLATURE	25%	STATE LEGISLATURE	75%	STATE LEGISLATURE	15%	STATE LEGISLATURE	85%
COUNTY	30%	COUNTY	70%	COUNTY	9%	COUNTY	91%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>90%</b>



WOMEN DONORS NETWORK  
Generosity Multiplied



**This imbalance is unsustainable.** Our history has shown us that when power is not shared, things break down. We need look no farther than places like Ferguson, Missouri, to see that in order to successfully govern us, our elected leaders must look like us and live like us. We need a reflective democracy.

**Americans know there's a problem, and they want to do something about it.**

We surveyed 800 voters nationwide, and found:

- A majority of voters we polled are concerned about the lack of women and people of color in office.
- When asked what phrase best describes who our elected leaders should be, a majority of voters chose “the best and the brightest.” But when asked what best describes who our current elected leaders actually are, most chose “an old boys’ club.”
- Voters overwhelmingly support policies that help elect more women and people of color, *regardless of party affiliation.*

**Americans recognize that the political system puts roadblocks in front of women and people of color interested in running for office.**

A majority of voters cited lack of access to political relationships and networks, the political parties’ recruitment practices, and lack of access to donors as significant barriers faced by women and people of color.

**The data suggest that a more reflective democracy correlates with policy outcomes in key areas.**

**Minimum Wage:** In the 10 states with the greatest representation of women in the state legislature, the average state-enacted minimum wage is \$8.11/hour. In the 10 states with the lowest representation of women, the average minimum wage is over a dollar an hour lower: \$6.90/hour.

**Immigration:** New Mexico, whose elected representatives are among the most reflective of its diverse population, issues drivers’ licenses to non-citizens and guarantees in-state tuition rates to college students regardless of their immigration status. In contrast, Arizona, which is one of the least reflective states, explicitly denies the issuing of drivers’ licenses to non-citizens and bars undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates.

**Stand Your Ground Laws:** Of the 15 states with the least gender-balanced state legislatures 11 have implemented “stand your ground”-style laws. In the 15 most gender-balanced states, only two have implemented such laws.

**We’re strongest when our leadership reflects the full range of talent and lived experience that America has to offer. That’s why we’re working for change.**

Together with other advocates and funders, the Reflective Democracy Campaign is working to level the playing field for all who wish to represent their communities in elected office.

**Let’s build a democracy that reflects all of us.**

Learn more at [www.WhoLeads.us](http://www.WhoLeads.us)