Confronting the Demographics of Power:
AMERICA’S CITIES 2020

August, 2020
America’s cities are facing epic battles, largely shaped by the demographics of political power: who gets to set policy, and who must live - or die – with the outcome.
In Atlanta, a Black woman mayor seeks to protect her majority-Black constituents from the pandemic, and Georgia’s white male governor sues her.

In Portland, people protest racist policing. The White House responds with paramilitary violence.

Meanwhile in Minneapolis, a city council whose race and gender reflect the city’s population votes to replace its police force with a Department of Community Safety & Violence Prevention.
Are America’s cities governed by leaders who reflect the people they serve?

We studied the race and gender of elected leaders in America’s 100 largest cities as of May, 2020, and found unprecedented momentum for reflective democracy.
A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

Compared to 2016, city leaders are less likely to be white men.

At just 19 percent of the total population in America’s largest 100 cities, white men currently hold 36 percent of city elected offices – down from 42 percent in 2016.

City elected officials include mayors, legislative bodies like city councils, and a varying array of other officials from Assessor to Treasurer.

August, 2020 | Learn more at WhoLeads.us
A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

Compared to 2016, women and people of color are more likely to hold elected office in America’s largest 100 cities.

CHANGES IN ELECTED LEADERSHIP SINCE 2016: People of Color and Women on the Rise

- All Women: 17% increase
- People of Color: 17% increase
- All Men: 8% decrease
- White People: 11% decrease

This chart shows increases and decreases in elected positions by demographic group.
A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

Women of color are driving this change, increasing their share of elected offices by 46%.

This chart shows increases and decreases in elected positions by demographic group.

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A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

Since 2016, people of color increased their share of elected offices in 58 of the 100 largest cities across the US.

In 15 of these cities, the rate of increase was 100% or more.
A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

Since 2016, women increased their share of elected offices in 49 of our 100 largest cities.

In 12 of these cities, the rate of increase was 100% or more.

- Fayetteville, NC: 10% → 50%
- St. Petersburg, FL: 33% → 67%
- Oklahoma City, OK: 11% → 22%
- Las Vegas, NV: 29% → 71%
- Fremont, CA: 20% → 43%
- Gilbert, AZ: 29% → 57%
- Tulsa, OK: 11% → 19%
- Detroit, MI: 13% → 27%
- Milwaukee, WI: 13% → 32%
- Fort Wayne, IN: 9% → 27%
- Fayetteville, NC: 10% → 50%
- Boston, MA: 29% → 57%
- San Antonio, TX: 27% → 55%
- Houston, TX: 22% → 44%
- Dallas, TX: 13% → 27%
A POWER SHIFT IS HAPPENING

The face of America’s mayors is changing

In 2016, women and people of color served as mayors in 39 of the largest 100 cities.

By 2020, that number had increased to 54.

As of 2020, 54 of our largest cities have reflective mayors
While the demographics of power are shifting, grave imbalances persist. In most American cities, women and people of color still are not reflected in government.
**IMBALANCE PERSISTS**

**White over-representation remains the norm in most major cities**

In 79 of the 100 largest cities, the percentage of white people in office exceeds the percentage of white people in the population.

Of the ten largest cities in America, only Philadelphia, San Antonio, and San Jose have elected leaders who reflect the racial makeup of their cities.

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**PLOTTING THE RACIAL BALANCE OF POWER:**

**Ten Largest Cities**

- San Antonio, TX
- Philadelphia, PA
- San Jose, CA
- Los Angeles, CA
- Chicago, IL
- New York, NY
- Houston, TX
- Phoenix, AZ
- Dallas, TX
- San Diego, CA

*We plotted the percentage differential between people of color in the population, and people of color in elected office in America’s largest 100 cities*
**IMBALANCE PERSISTS**

**White over-representation can be extreme**

In some cities, the degree of white over-representation essentially locks people of color out of power.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>White officials</th>
<th>White population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garland, TX</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glendale, AZ</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa, OK</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving, TX</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora, CO</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockton, CA</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We plotted the percentage differential between people of color in the population, and people of color in elected office in America’s largest 100 cities.
IMBALANCE PERSISTS

Men control more than half of America’s major cities

At 51% of the population, women are fairly reflected in the governments of 23 of America’s largest cities.

In 77 of these cities, men dominate government.

We plotted the percentage differential between women in the population, and women in elected office in America’s largest cities.

August, 2020 | Learn more at WhoLeads.Us
IMBALANCE PERSISTS

Some cities have all-male governments

In 45 of America’s largest cities, men hold 2/3rds of seats, or more. These cities include Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.

In four cities -- including Miami, FL -- our research shows zero women in elected office.

We plotted the percentage differential between women in the population, and women in elected office in America’s 100 largest cities.
People of color and women are gaining political power in the cities where they live.

As city governments change, will policies change? Will right-wing demonization of cities escalate?

Do demographic power shifts in cities signal momentum for reflective change in the 2020 national election?
The Reflective Democracy Campaign’s groundbreaking research and analysis help shape the national conversation about race, gender, and politics, shining a light on both the stark imbalances distorting our democracy and the current wave of victories by candidates who reflect the American people.

Sparking activism against the structural barriers that keep people of color and women from the halls of power, our data, reports, infographic toolkit, and other resources are freely available at WhoLeads.Us.

For detailed summary reports, methodology, and the complete data set visit: WhoLeads.Us/citydata