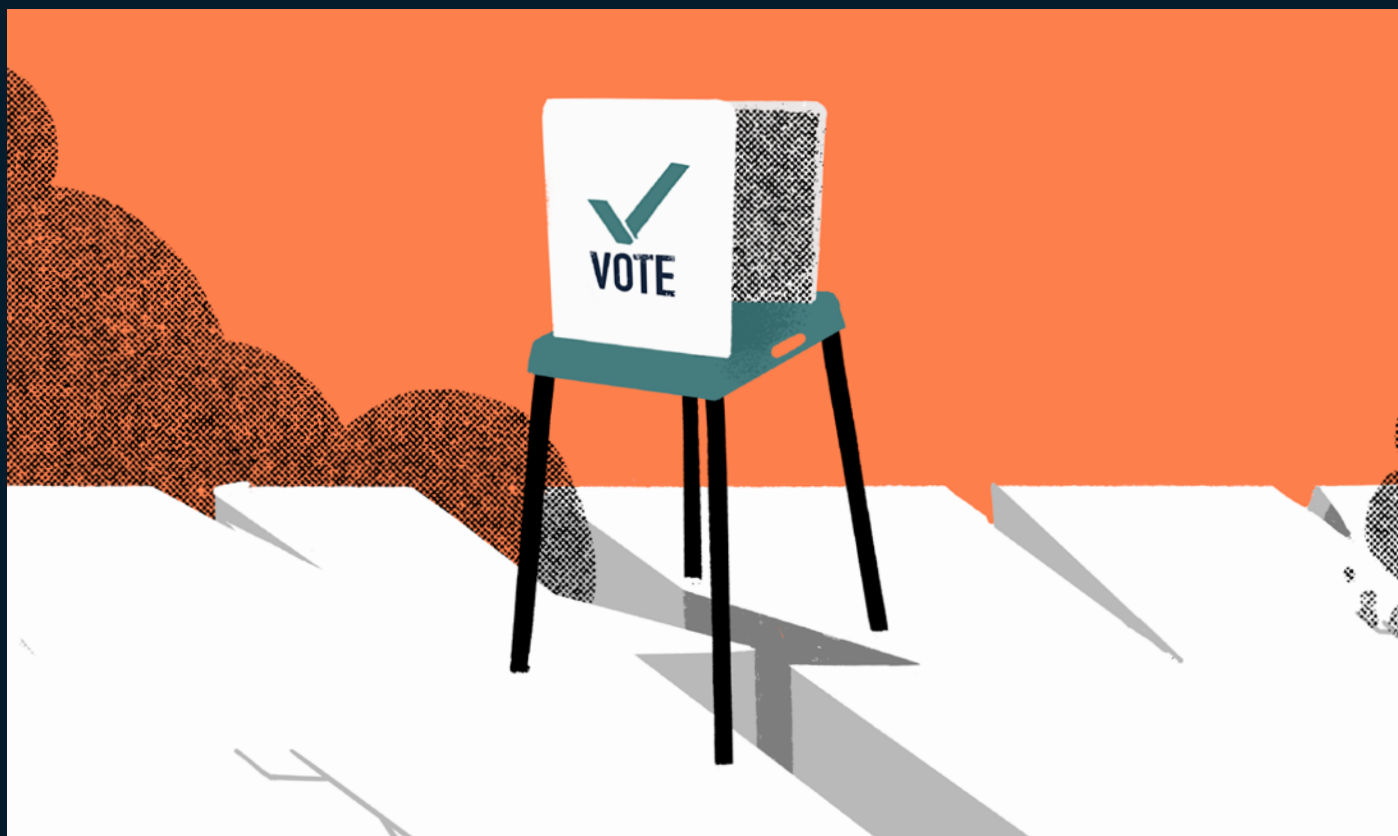


Confronting the Demographics of Power Mapping Black Representation During A Turbulent Era

February 2021



Tracking Trends in Black Elected Power

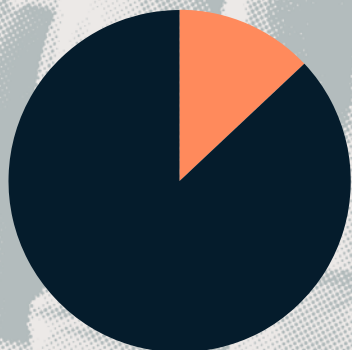
The American political system was crafted to preserve white men's dominance over women and Black people, and continues to exclude women and people of color from power. Structural barriers to reflective leadership could easily demoralize movements for racial justice and gender parity.

Yet throughout the country, women and people of color are winning elections at historic levels, and Black women specifically have been gaining federal, state, and local positions at double-digit rates of increase.

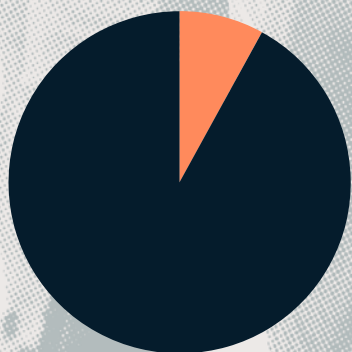
This year, we celebrate Black History Month by tracking the status of Black elected leadership from the launch of the Trump presidency to its final year. We also share a 2021 snapshot of Black leadership in Congress & statewide office.

How did Black candidates fare from mid-2016 to mid-2020, as white nationalism exploded, and Black Americans and their allies took to the streets? We ran the numbers to measure what happened to Black political power during this turbulent time.

Black Elected Leadership – By the Numbers



The overall Black population is 13%.



As of May 2020, Black leaders held 7.6% of elected offices at the federal, state, county, and city levels.

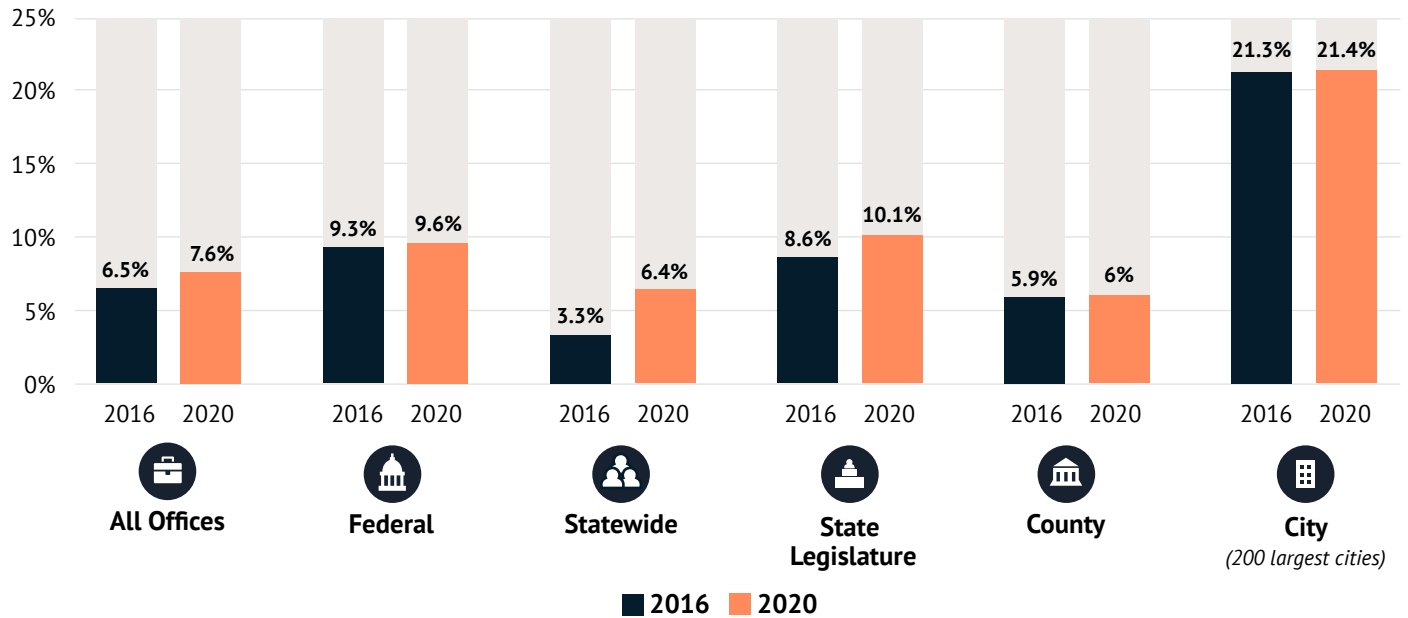
(200 largest cities)

- ✓ Between May 2016 and May 2020, **Black elected officials increased at a rate of 17%, from 6.5% to 7.6%.**
- ✓ **This increase was driven by Black state legislators**, who rose from 8.6% to 10.1%.
- ✓ While Black statewide elected officials (e.g., Governor, State Attorney, State Treasurer, etc.) are rare, their numbers tripled between 2016 and 2020 from **just 6 to 18.**

By contrast, between 2014 and 2016, we found no measurable rate of increase in Black elected officials at the federal, state, and county levels.

Black Elected Leadership in the United States, 2016-2020

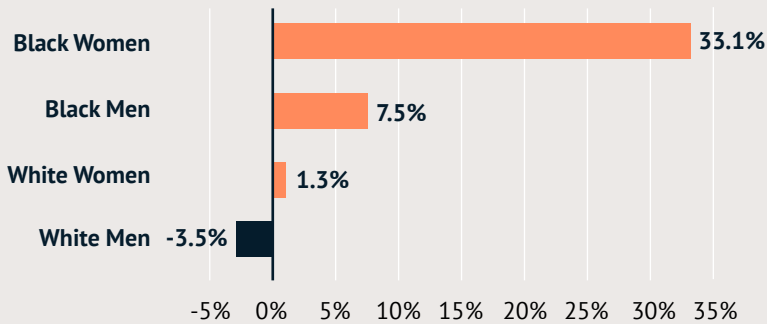
Percentage of Elected Officials by Office Level



Black Women Drive Progress

From 2016 to 2020, **Black women increased in all offices at a rate of 33%**, from 2.3% to 3.1%.

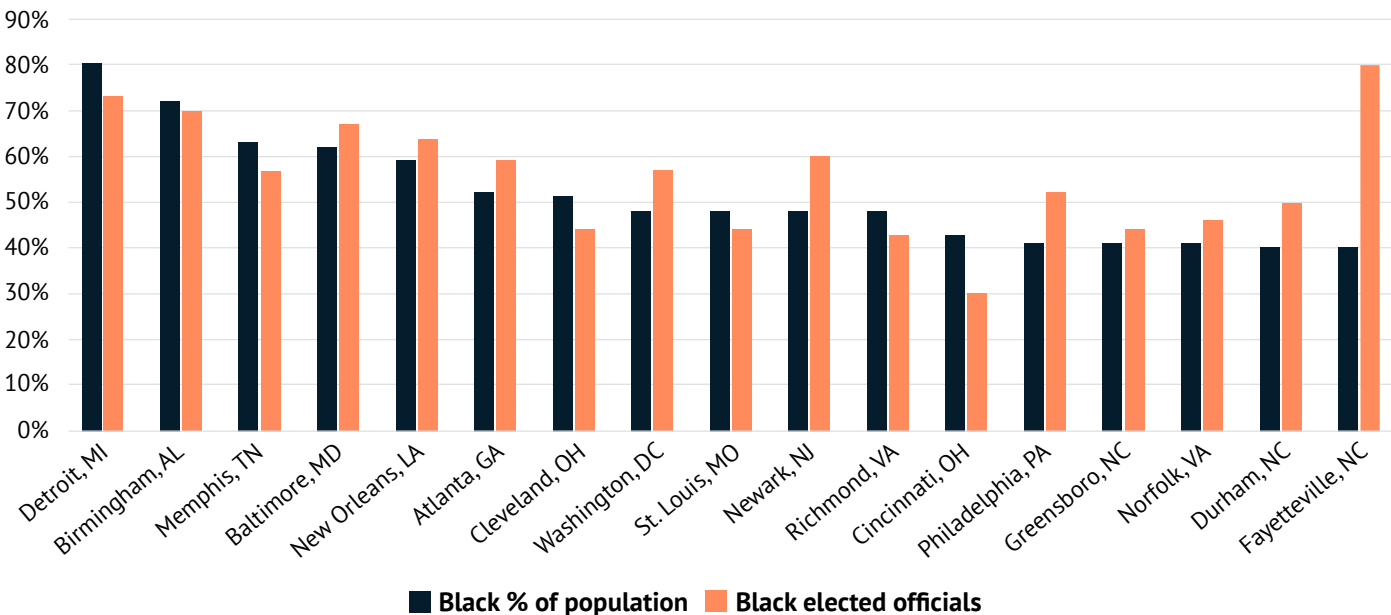
Rate of Change 2016-2020, All Office Levels



- From 2016 to 2020, **Black women increased in the US House of Representatives at a rate of 12%** from 3.4% to 4.1%.
- Black women increased in State Legislatures at a rate of 28%**, from 3.3% to 4.3%.
- Black women increased in elected city positions at a rate of 23%**, from 7.9% to 9.8%.
- Black men hold roughly 50% more elected positions than Black women** (4.5% vs. 3.1%). By contrast, there are more than twice as many white men in office as white women (61.6% vs. 25.9%)

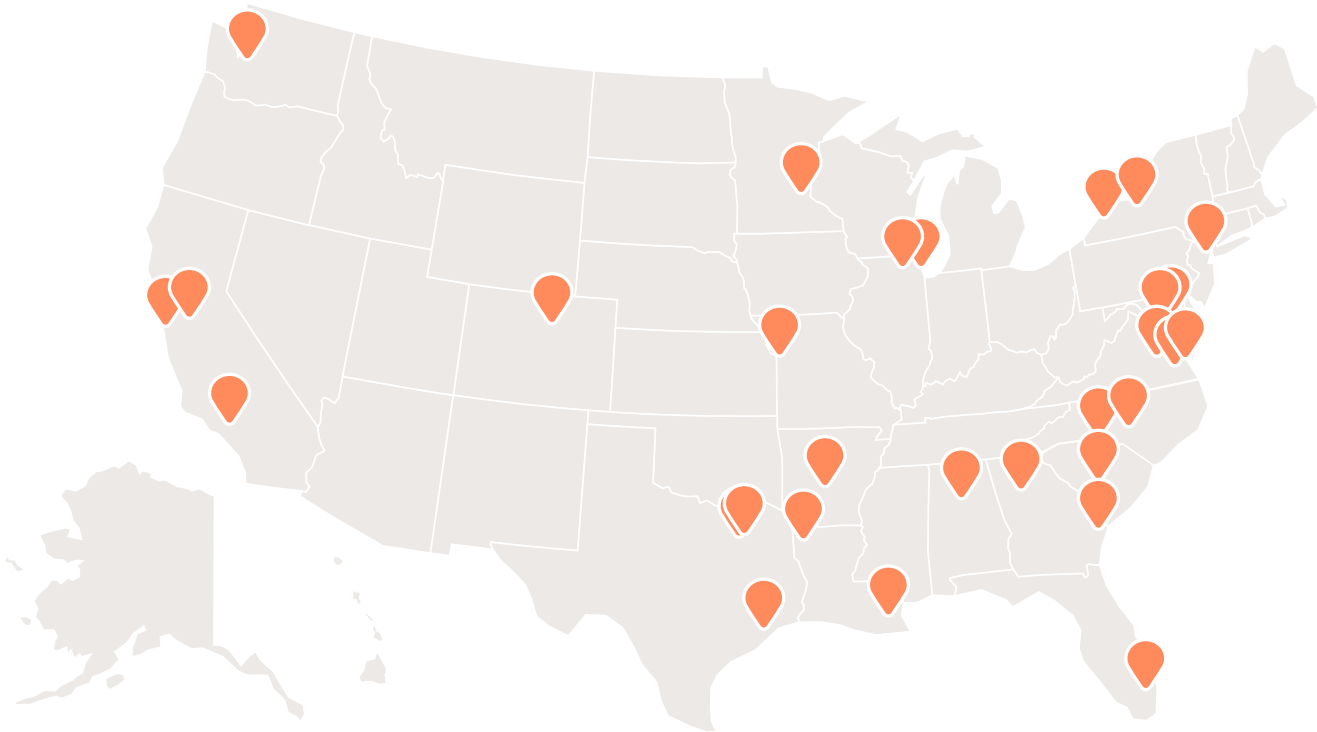
Major Cities Are a Center of Black Elected Power

In large cities with Black populations of 40% or more, Black people are well-represented in city-level office.



Black Mayors From Coast to Coast

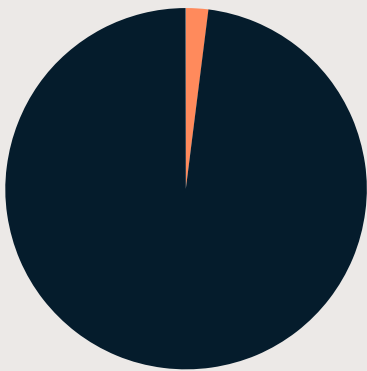
While the overall percentage of Black city officials remained constant from 2016 to 2020, the number of Black mayors in America’s 200 largest cities increased from 24 to 32. Notably, half of these Black mayors lead large cities in the South, where suppression of Black leadership has a long and violent history.



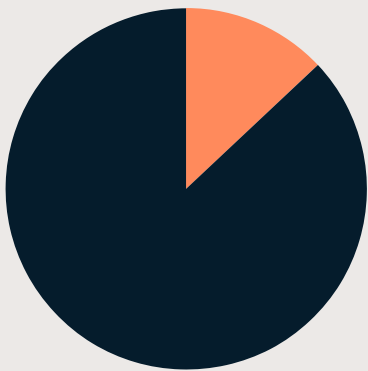
Black Members of Congress

As of February 2021, the US Senate has just 2 Black senators (both male). Meanwhile, with 53 Black members, the House of Representatives is 13% Black.

Black Representation in the US Senate

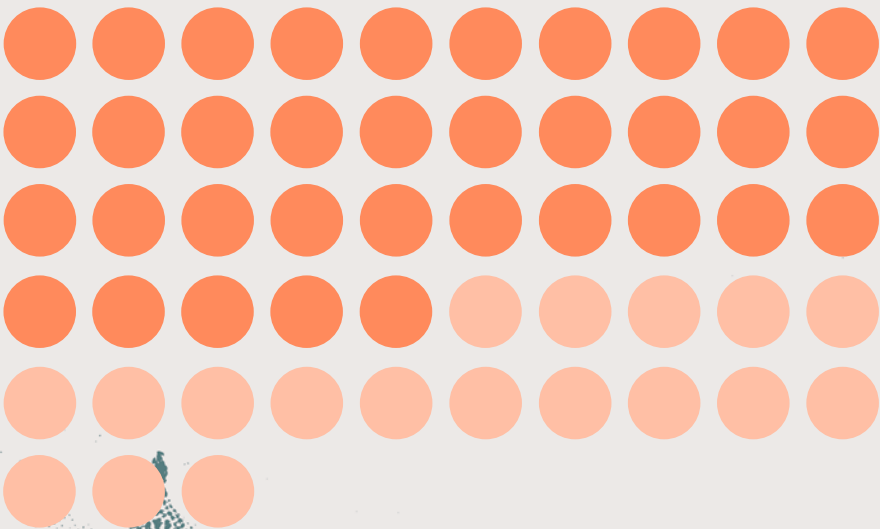


Black Representation in the US House of Representatives



Black members Non-Black members

Of the 53 Black House members, 35 represent districts where less than half the population is Black, busting the myth that Black candidates can only win elections in Black-majority areas.



Districts with less than 50% Black population Districts with more than 50% Black population

Black Statewide Office Holders

As of February 2021, there are 18 Black statewide officials – three times more than in 2016.

These 12 men and 4 women include 7 lieutenant governors, and executive leaders managing law enforcement, state finances, public education, and voting systems.

State	Office	Official
Arizona	Corporation Commissioner	Sandra Kennedy
California	State Superintendent of Public Instruction	Tony Thurmond
Connecticut	State Treasurer	Shawn T. Wooden
Illinois	Attorney General	Kwame Raoul
Illinois	Lieutenant Governor	Juliana Stratton
Illinois	Secretary of State	Jesse White
Kentucky	Attorney General	Daniel Cameron
Maryland	Lieutenant Governor	Boyd Rutherford
Michigan	Lieutenant Governor	Garlin Gilchrist II

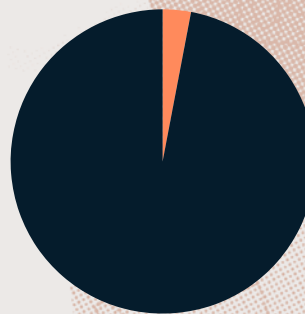
State	Office	Official
Minnesota	Attorney General	Keith Ellison
Nevada	Attorney General	Aaron Ford
New Jersey	Lieutenant Governor	Sheila Oliver
New York	Attorney General	Letitia James
North Carolina	Lieutenant Governor	Mark Robinson
Pennsylvania	Auditor General	Timothy DeFoor
Virginia	Lieutenant Governor	Justin E. Fairfax
Wisconsin	Lieutenant Governor	Mandela Barnes
Wisconsin	Superintendent of Public Instruction	Carolyn Stanford Taylor

The Criminal Justice System: Extremely White and Resistant to Change

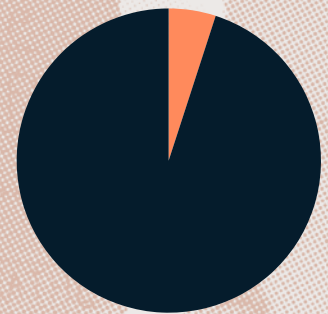
Although the criminal justice system targets Black Americans with over-policing, harsher sentences, and other unfair treatment, Black people make up a scant 2.6% of elected prosecutors. This number has remained static since 2016. Black county sheriffs are found in slightly higher numbers – 4.8% in 2020, with virtually no increase since 2016.

During the Trump era, Black reformers like Cook County, IL State’s Attorney Kim Foxx, and Buncombe County, NC Sheriff Quentin Miller won elections, signaling change is not impossible. **But the face of criminal justice is largely white and male, and the road to racial justice is long.**

Elected Prosecutors



Elected Sheriffs



Black Non-Black

Seeking additional demographic data about the political landscape?

The Campaign is available to generate custom data and analyses on the demographics of power focused on specific ethnicities, levels of office, and/or geographies.

We can also provide the context, offering an overview of structural barriers within the political system, why power is shifting, and how women and people of color are sparking change.

For more information, please write to hello@wholeads.us and follow us on Twitter [@WhoLeadsUs](https://twitter.com/WhoLeadsUs) for daily insights on the demographics of power across the country.

About the Reflective Democracy Campaign

The [Reflective Democracy Campaign](#) reports on, funds, and organizes the movement for a democracy whose leaders fully reflect the diversity of the American people. We are the only resource for comprehensive data and analysis on the race and gender of elected officials and candidates at the federal, state, county, and city levels. Sparking activism to open the halls of power to people of color and women, our data, reports, and other resources are freely available at [WhoLeadsUs](https://WhoLeadsUs.com).

Our recent investigations include:

- [Power Shift in America's Cities](#): Dramatic gains by women and people of color are changing the face of power in America's largest cities.
- [Exposing the Criminal Justice System](#): Our reports on America's [sheriffs](#) and [elected prosecutors](#) explore the broken demographics of a system foundationally biased against people of color, and harmful to women and families in crisis.
- [The Myth of White Male Electability](#): Are white men really more electable than other candidates? We ran the numbers and exposed the "superior electability" of white men as a myth.

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