

WOMEN IN STATE LEGISLATURES 2008

In 2008, 1,751, or 23.7% of the 7,382 state legislators in the United States are women. Women currently hold 425, or 21.6% of the 1,971 state senate seats and 1,326, or 24.5%, of the 5,411 state house or assembly seats. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than quintupled.

Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators	Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators	Year	Women Legislators	% of Total Legislators
1971	344	4.5	1987	1,170	15.7	2000	1,670	22.5
1973	424	5.6	1989	1,270	17.0	2001	1,666	22.4
1975	604	8.0	1991	1,368	18.3	2002	1,682	22.7
1977	688	9.1	1993	1,524	20.5	2003	1,654	22.4
1979	770	10.3	1995	1,532	20.6	2004	1,659	22.5
1981	908	12.1	1997	1,605	21.6	2005	1,674	22.7
1983	991	13.3	1998	1,617	21.8	2006	1,681	22.8
1985	1,103	14.8	1999	1,664	22.4	2007	1,732	23.5
						2008	1,751	23.7

The party breakdown for women serving in state legislatures in 2008 is:

	Total Legislators		State Senators		State Reps.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Democrats	1,201	68.6	295	69.4	906	68.3
Republicans	536	30.6	120	28.2	416	31.4
Nonpartisans*	9	0.5	9	2.1	---	---
Progressives	3	0.2	---	---	3	0.2
Independents	2	0.1	1	0.2	1	0.1
Total	1,751	100.0	425	99.9	1,326	100.0

The states with the highest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
Vermont	38.3	Arizona	34.4
Colorado	36.0	Hawaii	32.9
Washington	35.4	Oregon	32.2
New Hampshire	35.4	Maryland	31.4
Minnesota	34.8	Maine	31.2

The states with the lowest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
South Carolina	8.8	Mississippi	14.4
Oklahoma	12.8	Pennsylvania	14.6
Alabama	12.9	Louisiana	14.6
Kentucky	13.0	Virginia	16.4
West Virginia	14.2	North Dakota	17.0

Women in State Legislative Leadership

Five women serve as presidents of senates: Lyda Green (R-AK), Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI), Beth Edmonds (D-ME), Therese Murray (D-MA), and Sylvia Larsen (D-NH). Four women serve as speakers of state houses: Karen Bass (D-CA), Margaret Anderson Kelliher (D-MN), Barbara Buckley (D-NV), and Terie Norelli (D-NH).

Women of Color in State Legislatures

Of the 1,751 women legislators serving nationwide, 361 or 20.6% are women of color. They include 99 senators and 262 representatives; 336 are Democrats, 24 are Republicans and one is an independent. Women of color constitute 4.9% of the total 7,382 state legislators.

The First Women Legislators

In 1894, the first women state legislators were elected to serve in the United States. Three Republican women were elected to the Colorado House of Representatives: Clara Cressingham; Carrie C. Holly; Frances Klock. The first woman state senator, Democrat Martha Hughes Cannon, was elected to the Utah State Senate in 1896.[†]

* In Nebraska, where the legislature is unicameral, legislators are elected on a nonpartisan basis.

† Source: Utah Governor's Commission for Women.

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WOMEN IN STATE LEGISLATURES 2008

STATE	STATE	SENATE		TOTAL WOMEN/ TOTAL SENATE	HOUSE		TOTAL WOMEN/ TOTAL HOUSE	TOTAL WOM./ TOTAL LEGIS.	% WOMEN OVERALL
	RANK	D	R		D	R			
AL	48	3	1	4/35	11	3	14/105	18/140	12.9
AK	28	1	2	3/20	6	4	10/40	13/60	21.7
AZ	6	8	6	14/30	9	8	17/60	31/90	34.4
AR	29	4	2	6/35	18	4	22/100	28/135	20.7
CA	17	10	0	10/40	17	6	23/80	33/120	27.5
CO	2	9	1	10/35	21	5	26/65	36/100	36.0
CT	16	7	1	8/36	31	14	45/151	53/187	28.3
DE	11	4	3	7/21	7	5	12/41	19/62	30.6
FL	25	6	4	10/40	16	11	27/120	37/160	23.1
GA	31	6	2	8/56	29	10	39/180	47/236	19.9
HI	7	7	0	7/25	11	7	18/51	25/76	32.9
ID	22	2	4	6/35	12	7	19/70	25/105	23.8
IL	18	10	3	13/59	23	12	35/118	48/177	27.1
IN	36	6	6	12/50	10	6	16/100	28/150	18.7
IA	26	3	3	6/50	19	9	28/100	34/150	22.7
KS	15	4	9	13/40	19	16	35/125	48/165	29.1
KY	47	1	4	5/38	10	3	13/100	18/138	13.0
LA	43	6	2	8/39	10	4	14/105	22/144	15.3
ME ⁺	10	7	5	12/35	35	11	46/151	58/186	31.2
MD	9	9	2	11/47	38	10	48/141	59/188	31.4
MA	20	12	0	12/40	34	4	38/160	50/200	25.0
MI	32	6	3	9/38	16	4	20/110	29/148	19.6
MN	5	19	8	27/67	35	8	43/134	70/201	34.8
MS	45	3	1	4/52	17	4	21/122	25/174	14.4
MO	30	5	2	7/34	23	10	33/163	40/197	20.3
MT	21	8	1	9/50	20	8	28/100	37/150	24.7
NE	37	NONPARTISAN		9/49	UNICAMERAL		9/49		18.4
NV	13	5	1	6/21	10	3	13/42	19/63	30.2
NH*	3	9	1	10/24	99	40 (1 Ind)	140/400	150/424	35.4
NJ	14	7	2	9/40	18	8	26/80	35/120	29.2
NM	12	8	4	12/42	10	12	22/70	34/112	30.4
NY	23	8	3	11/62	34	5	39/150	50/212	23.6
NC	19	6	1	7/50	26	12	38/120	45/170	26.5
ND	41	4	2	6/47	7	11	18/94	24/141	17.0
OH	38	5	1	6/33	12	6	18/99	24/132	18.2
OK	49	6	1	7/48	3	9	12/101	19/149	12.8
OR	8	8	1 (1 Ind)	10/30	11	8	19/60	29/90	32.2
PA	44	5	5	10/50	11	16	27/203	37/253	14.6
RI	33	6	1	7/38	13	2	15/75	22/113	19.5
SC	50	1	1	2/46	8	5	13/124	15/170	8.8
SD	40	4	1	5/35	3	10	13/70	18/105	17.1
TN	39	5	3	8/33	10	5	15/99	23/132	17.4
TX	35	2	2	4/31	18	12	30/150	34/181	18.8
UT	34	2	2	4/29	9	7	16/75	20/104	19.2
VT	1	9	1	10/30	41	15 (3 Prg)	59/150	69/180	38.3
VA	42	7	1	8/40	10	5	15/100	23/140	16.4
WA*	3	15	5	20/49	23	9	32/98	52/147	35.4
WV	46	0	2	2/34	12	5	17/100	19/134	14.2
WI	27	4	3	7/33	13	9	22/99	29/132	22.0
WY	24	3	1	4/30	8	9	17/60	21/90	23.3
		295	120	425/1,971	906	416	1,326/5,411	1,751/7,382	23.7
		(9 nonpartisans 1 Independent)			(3 Progressives 1 Independent)				

* States share the same rank if their proportions of women legislators are exactly equal or round off to be equal (NH, WA).

+ In addition, one woman in Maine was elected in November, 2006 as a non-voting member representing the Penobscot Nation.