

Women's Representation in Vermont

Parity Ranking: 39th of 50

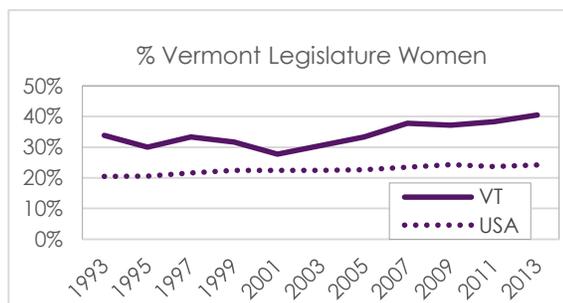
Score of 11: One point for treasurer and 10 points for the percentage of state legislative seats held by women.

Quick Facts

Vermont has a mixed record on women's representation. While it ranks second in the country in its proportion of state legislative seats held by women, Vermont has yet to elect a woman to any of its three seats in Congress, and only a handful of women have ever been on a major party ticket for House or Senate.

Trending

Vermont has consistently outperformed the nation in women's representation in its state legislature, and the trend since 2001 has been positive.



Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University.

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: Madeleine M. Kunin (1985-1991). Kunin is the only woman in U.S. history to have been elected to serve three terms as governor.

Current female statewide elected executives: 1 of 6 (treasurer).

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: Nine, two of whom were appointed to fill vacancies.

Congress

Vermont is one of four states that have never elected a woman to Congress.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 40.6%

Rankings: 2nd of 50

Senate: 9 of 30 (36.7%) are women

House: 64 of 150 (42.7%) are women

Method of election: The State House of Representatives has some single-member districts and some two-member districts. The Senate has districts varying in magnitude from one to six members.

Local

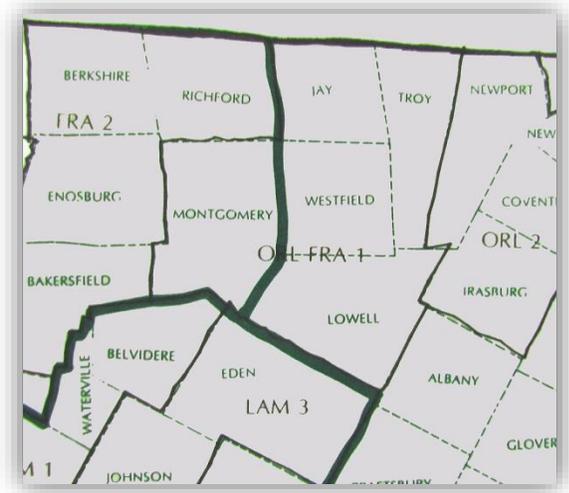
None of Vermont's five largest cities with elected mayors has a woman mayor.

Words of Wisdom

"We really have to be very broad in our building a constituency for implementing the changes I'm talking about, and I think there's a little glimmer of hope, that younger women are beginning to realize that what they took for granted may be taken away." – Madeleine Kunin, former governor of Vermont

The Use of Multi-Seat Districts in Vermont

Vermont ranks second in the country for its percentage of state legislators who are women (40.6%), and is also one of two states that use a form of multi-member districts to elect both chambers of its legislature. Multi-member districts are an electoral structure that has been consistently shown to improve women's chances of running for and winning elected office. In multi-member districts, constituents elect multiple legislators from a single district to represent them, as opposed to the more commonly-used single-member district system, in which constituents elect only one.



Vermont elects its House of Representatives from 66 single-member districts and 42 two-member districts and its Senate from 3 single-member districts, 6 two-member districts, 3 three-member districts, and 1 six-member district. Constituents have as many votes as there are seats in the districts, and the elections are conducted on a plurality basis.

Nine of the 30 members of the Vermont State Senate and 64 of the 150 members of the Vermont House of Representatives are female. Research suggests that the use of MMDs encourages the election of female candidates because they provide constituents with the option to vote for both male and female candidates instead of having to choose one.

Women's representation in Vermont might improve even further if the number and size of multi-member districts were increased in its

House, which currently uses only one- and two-member districts.

Elections to Watch

No women are likely to challenge Peter Welch for Vermont's lone House seat in 2014. Gov. Peter Shumlin is also favored in his bid for a third two-year term. There are five additional statewide executive offices up for election in 2014, including treasurer, an office currently held by Beth Pearce.