

Women's Representation in Massachusetts

Parity Ranking: 16th of 50

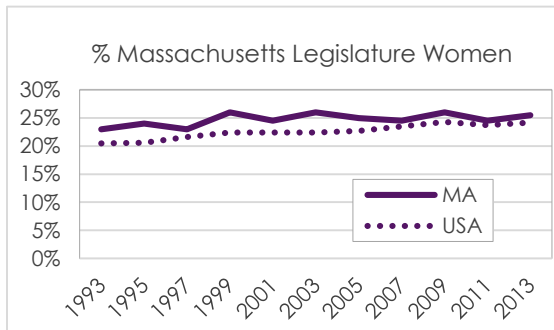
Score of 21: Five points for the attorney general and auditor, 5 for the recent election of Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2 points for the percentage of U.S. House members that are women, 8 points for the percentage of state legislators who are women, and 1 for senate president.

Quick Fact

Massachusetts Republican Edith Nourse Rogers holds the record for longest service in the U.S. House of Representatives by a woman. She served from June 25, 1925, when she was elected to fill a vacancy caused by the death of her husband, until her death on September 10, 1960. She held the record for the longest serving women in Congress until 2012, when she was surpassed by Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski.

Trending

The percentage of women in the state legislature has not significantly changed in the last 20 years, mirroring the slow pace of advancement for women's representation nationally.



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

Words of Wisdom

"Let's get serious here. This is 2012, and we're talking about 20 percent of the United States Senate is female. That's not an overwhelming number yet."— Elizabeth Warren, U.S. senator from Massachusetts

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: Jane Swift (2001-2003)

Current female statewide elected executives: 2 of 5 (attorney general and state auditor). The position of lieutenant governor is currently vacant.

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: 6

Congress

U.S. Senate: 1 of 2 seats is held by a woman, Elizabeth Warren (2013-present)

U.S. House: 1 of 9 seats is held by a woman

In its history, Massachusetts has elected four women to the U.S. House, and one to the U.S. Senate

State Legislature

Percentage women: 26.0%

Rankings: 20th of 50

Senate: 13 of 40 (32.5%) are women

House: 39 of 160 (24.4%) are women

Method of election: single-member districts

Local

None of Massachusetts five largest cities with elected mayors has a woman mayor.

Combating Gender Stereotypes in Massachusetts

Women cannot become leaders if they do not see themselves as leaders, which is why early mentorship programs are so important. Strong Women, Strong Girls is a multi-generational mentorship program that started in Boston, but has expanded to Philadelphia and Miami. SWSG provides mentoring to girls in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades by college-aged women who are themselves mentored by professional women. The cycle of mentoring helps all the women involved develop leadership skills and encourages the younger girls to develop positive female relationships along with higher self-esteem.



Amy Kingman, the Boston Executive Director, identified the changing of gender stereotypes as one of the largest impacts of SWSG. The mentorship program, which meets once a week after school in 55 elementary schools in the greater Boston area and caters largely to lower-income girls who are on free and subsidized lunch programs, encourages the girls to be “loud and proud.” She describes the elementary school program’s impact as not only changing the girls’ perceptions of themselves, but also changing the attitudes of school administrators, parents, and male students.

SWSG is a skills-based mentoring program, and every week it focuses on an example of a strong woman and her life story. The girls are surveyed at the beginning and end of the year to assess the overall impact of the program. The changes are evident in their evaluations of their self-esteem, leadership qualities, and future aspirations. Developing leadership skills early on, along with developing a network of female mentorship, is essential to changing and

encouraging more women to see politics as an option and elected office as a goal.

Notable Recent Election

In 2012, Elizabeth Warren unseated incumbent Senator Scott Brown, becoming Massachusetts’ first female U.S. Senator.

In 2013, several Massachusetts cities held elections for mayor. In Boston’s 12 candidate primary election for the city’s open mayoral seat, only one woman ran: former State Representative and Senior Vice President of YouthBuild USA Charlotte Golar Richie. Richie came in third place, and therefore did not qualify for November’s general election.

Elections to Watch

Governor Deval Patrick will not seek re-election in 2014. Martha Coakley, who became the state’s first female attorney general in 2006, is seen as the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination. Another woman, Julliette Kayyem, is also running. Meanwhile, Republicans seem to be rallying around a male nominee.

Sen. Ed Markey is heavily favored in his re-election bid. The state’s U.S. House seats are all held by Democrats in heavily Democratic districts, meaning that the delegation’s one woman (Niki Tsongas) and eight men are likely to be re-elected, absent retirements or primary challenges. Controversial incumbent John Tierney has already drawn a primary challenge from Marisa DeFranco.