

Women's Representation in California

Parity Ranking: 4th of 50

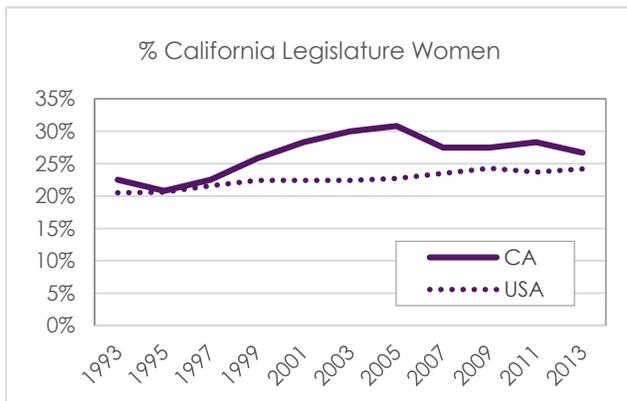
Score of 34 Five points for secretary of state and attorney general, 15 for Senators Feinstein and Boxer, 5 points for the percentage of the state's House delegation that is female, 7 points for the percentage the state legislature that is female, and 2 points for the mayor of Fresno.

Quick Facts

In 1993, California became the first state to be represented simultaneously by two women in the U.S. Senate. All of California's 20 current women senators and House members are Democrats.

Trending

The percentage of women in California's state legislature peaked in 2005 and is only 3 percentage points higher today than it was 20 years ago.



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

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: None

Current female statewide elected executives: 2 of 8 executives (secretary of state and attorney general).

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: Nine, one of whom were appointed to fill a vacancy.

Congress

U.S. Senate: 2 of 2 seats are held by women: Dianne Feinstein (1992-present) and Barbara Boxer (1993-present)

U.S. House: 18 of 53 seats are held by women

In its history, California has elected 36 women to the House and two to the Senate. Barbara Box has served in both chambers.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 26.7%

Rankings: 19th of 50

Senate: 11 of 40 (27.5%) are women

House: 21 of 80 (26%) are women

Method of election: single-member districts

Local

Only one of California's five largest cities has a woman mayor: Fresno. Ashley Swearingin was first elected mayor of Fresno in 2008 and was re-elected in 2012. Additionally, Oakland (the state's 8th largest city) elected Jean Quan, its first female mayor, in 2010 with ranked choice voting.

Words of Wisdom

"Never losing faith, we worked to redeem the promise of America, that all men and women are created equal. For our daughters and our granddaughters today we have broken the marble ceiling. For our daughters and our granddaughters now the sky is the limit." – Nancy Pelosi, U.S. representative from California, and first female Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

Combating Gender Stereotypes in California

In 2011, California-based Jennifer Siebel Newsom released a documentary called *Miss Representation*, which exposed how sexist portrayals of women in mainstream media contribute to underrepresentation of women in positions of power. The film shows that in movies, television, advertisements, and music, women are often objectified or portrayed as being of lesser intelligence than their male counterparts. Additionally, women in high-profile positions are scrutinized by the news media in ways that men usually are not—for their appearance, fashion choices, and family life.



MissRepresentation.org, a social action group associated with the documentary and based in California, seeks to raise widespread awareness of these harmful stereotypes. To that end, it has recently launched the California Public School Campaign, which aims to give every public middle school and high school in the state access to *Miss Representation* and its corresponding curriculum. This way, both girls and boys will be conscious of the issues associated with gender stereotyping from a young age, and will be given the tools to correct it.

This work may ultimately result in more women running for and winning elected office. As Newsom said: "We have an opportunity, by using this film, its education modules and curriculum, to help girls and young women think differently about themselves and their value in the world."

Elections to Watch

All 18 women serving in the U.S. House are favored in 2014, though Reps. Lois Capps and Julia Brownley may face competitive general elections in the 24th and 26th districts. Statewide, term-limited Secretary of State Debra Bowen will likely be replaced by a man, and all other incumbents (including Attorney General Kamala Harris) are favored in expected re-election bids.

Oakland mayor Jean Quan will face a competitive ranked choice voting election against male challengers in 2014.

Notable Recent Elections

In 2012, Sen. Dianne Feinstein was re-elected with 7.75 million votes, the most popular votes a U.S. Senate candidate has ever received.

In May 2013, former Los Angeles comptroller and city councilor Wendy Greuel lost with 46% of the vote in a runoff election against Eric Garcetti for mayor of Los Angeles. If elected, she would have been the city's first female mayor. Elected by single-member districts, the Los Angeles city council currently has 14 men and only a single woman.