

Ranked Choice Voting and Women's Representation



The Challenge

The United States lags behind 102 nations in the percentage of women's representation at the national level, marking a steep decline from two decades ago. Women in those nations are not smarter, more prepared, or more eager to run for office than women in the US, but those nations have voting systems that function like Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) to create opportunities for women to run and win in significantly higher numbers.

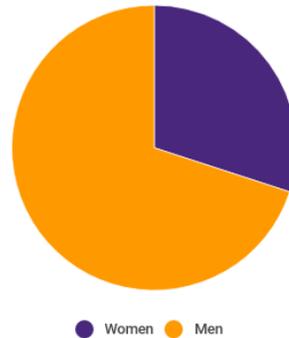
Good News

Ranked Choice Voting works for women. In the twelve American cities that use RCV, including nine for their city council elections, women's representation in both executive and legislative positions is higher in these cities than the national average.

56% of cities with RCV have women mayors versus the average of 20% in the 100 most populous cities in the US, according to the Center for American Women and Politics.

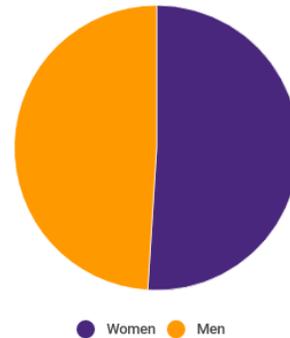
50% is the average share of women on city councils in RCV cities versus an average of 25% in the 100 most populous cities in the US, according to data collected by RepresentWomen.

Women's Representation on City Councils Pre-RCV



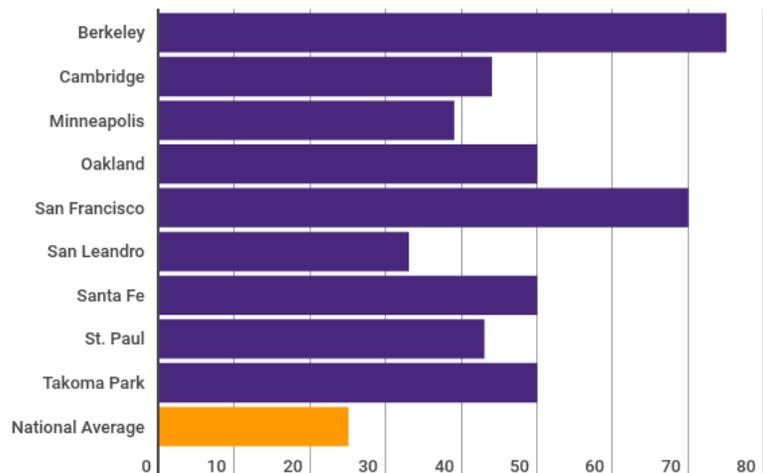
*Numbers from last elections before RCV was implemented

Current Women's Representation on City Councils with RCV



*Numbers from latest elections using RCV (as of 2018)

Women's Representation on City Councils Using RCV



*Data current as of June 2018

How does Ranked Choice Voting help women run and win in elections?

Women prefer civil campaigns

Studies show Ranked Choice Voting increases the civility of campaigns and reduces negative attacks. Rather than engage in mudslinging, candidates in RCV elections reach out to supporters of their *opponents* to earn second or third choice spots on those voters' ballots. Women candidates often prefer running on a positive message. Such civil campaigns reward grassroots organizing over expensive negative advertising, putting victory within reach of less well-funded candidates.

Vote splitting eliminated

By giving voters backup choices, Ranked Choice Voting allows everyone to support their true favorite candidate without throwing their vote away. This also means candidates can run without concern about unfairly undermining, or conversely being harmed by, another candidate with similar views or a shared base of support. Multiple women candidates can run under RCV without hurting each other's chances, and voters are freed to support women candidates without fear they will split the vote.



"Ranked choice voting allowed voters to take a chance on a candidate like me, on other candidates like me, to say listen, I will vote for this person, because my values are aligned with what this person is saying and what they will do, but if they do not prevail in the race then I can vote the next best person in the race."

-Nekima Levy Pounds, 2017 Minneapolis Mayoral Candidate

Benefits of consolidating elections

Ranked Choice Voting allows cities to replace primary elections, including preliminaries, with a single RCV general election. This saves cities money and also:

- Yields a shorter campaign season that's both less expensive and allows women to campaign without jeopardizing work and family commitments. This is very important in local elections because they are the first rungs of the electoral ladder, where candidates can begin building their political resume and career.
- Addresses participation problems that plague primary elections. Turnout tends to be very low and the voters tend to be disproportionately older, whiter, and wealthier when compared with the electorate as a whole. Cities with RCV are experiencing more representative outcomes for women and people of color.