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Gender Parity on Civic Boards & Commissions in Missouri

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Gender Parity on Boards and Commissions in Missouri

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Executive Summary

Municipal boards and commissions enable citizen participation in local government, provide expertise, foster community engagement, and contribute to effective governance. Researchers have long noted that women and racial minorities are underrepresented at all levels of government. However, there is a dearth of reliable data about how many boards and commissions exist, who serves on them, how representation on these boards and commissions breaks down by gender and race.

We gathered data on boards and commissions for municipalities with a population of 1,000 or more in Missouri in spring 2023 and analyzed the data to determine levels of gender and racial parity. Our findings demonstrate that the membership of boards and commissions in Missouri does not reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the state. Women and people of color are underrepresented broadly on boards and commissions. In our sample, women comprise only 36.9% of members of boards and commissions, and white Missourians comprise 92.3% of members. While 11.7% of the state's population is Black, we find that Black Missourians hold only 5.4% of the seats on boards and commissions.

The gender disparity is especially glaring on "power boards" that have enormous impacts on public policy and the allocation of financial resources. We find that women in Missouri have the highest proportion of seats on boards and commissions focused on the arts, community development, human rights, and libraries–stereotypically feminine areas. Conversely, men in Missouri (predominantly white men) have the highest proportion of seats on "power boards"--planning and zoning, transportation, budget and finance, adjustments and appeals, and public works. Furthermore, men are more likely than women to be appointed to leadership positions on municipal boards and commissions. The voices of women and people of color are diminished on influential boards that influence critical issues, including home prices, segregation, and environmental justice. We seek to provide critical data to help inform policymakers, elected leaders, advocacy groups, and potential members of boards and commissions in their decisions about how to form and populate local boards and commissions in an equitable and transparent manner.

Introduction

Municipal boards and commissions play a crucial role in community functioning. They are instrumental in promoting citizen participation and effective governance at the local level. Boards and commissions provide opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making processes in their communities and to have a voice in shaping policies that affect their everyday lives (Baker 2006). Boards and commissions enable citizen participation in local government, provide expertise, foster community engagement, and contribute to effective governance (Banwart & Vietti 2021). These bodies can help disperse power in local government and encourage accountability and transparency. Boards and commissions play a role in policy development and can hold public hearings, allocate public resources, oversee the provision of services, draft ordinances, and recommend regulations, among other responsibilities (Office of the City Auditor 2019). They can also help to build trust by demonstrating to residents that their opinions are valued. If these bodies have diverse representation, they can contribute to more inclusive and representative governance. United WE's Appointments Project ® is working to address gender disparity on boards and commissions and is preparing women to navigate the appointment process (United WE 2020). Because of the critical role that boards and commissions play in local government, and the historic gender disparities on these boards, United WE has commissioned this study of gender parity for boards and commissions in Missouri.

The members of local boards and commissions are not elected; they are appointed (United WE 2020). These bodies focus on specific policy areas to address the needs of the community and provide opportunities for citizens to participate in government and to work with government employees to address areas of concern (McQueen 2021). Decisions on planning, housing, public health, economic development, public safety, and a myriad of other local issues are made with the advice and actions of staff and thousands of volunteers statewide on citizen boards and commissions. Many local boards and commissions seek individuals with specific

expertise in policy areas to help inform policies and initiatives. Their work can directly impact the well-being and quality of communities across the country. In addition to their immediate impact, boards and commissions can be launching pads for careers in elected office (Buansi 2019). Yet we know little about the demographic characteristics of those who serve in these roles relative to who lives in the communities being served. It is important that we understand the composition of these critical bodies to see whose voices are being heard and whose influence is being felt.

Researchers have long identified disparities in descriptive representation in all levels of government, especially as it relates to gender and race. However, there is a dearth of reliable data about how many boards and commissions exist, who serves on them, and importantly, how representation on these boards and commissions breaks down by gender and race. This study aims to help build information about service on municipal boards and commissions in Missouri by providing a snapshot of the number of boards and commissions, categorizing the array of policy areas addressed by boards and commissions, and analyzing the gender and racial composition of these bodies. To do that, we gathered data on boards and commissions for municipalities with a population of 1,000 or more in Missouri in spring 2023. We then analyzed the data to determine levels of gender and racial parity, also considering variables such as population, income, and educational attainment in the municipalities. We seek to provide critical data to help inform policymakers, elected leaders, advocacy groups, and potential members of boards and commissions in their decisions about how to form and populate local boards and commissions in an equitable and transparent manner.

Overview of Gender Disparity in Government

There are clear disparities in representation for women and people of color in the United States. Since the country's founding, only 3.3 percent of members of the United States Congress have been women. In the 118th Congress, a record high 124 women are serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, composing 28.5 percent of the chamber; 25 of the 100

senators are women (Center for American Women in Politics 2023). When we consider state and local politics, women are also underrepresented as governor (24%) and in state legislatures (32.7%). In U.S. towns with populations greater than 30,000 in 2022, only 26 percent had women serving as mayor and 33 of the 100 most populous cities had female mayors (Center for American Women in Politics 2023). Disparities exist by race in addition to gender. In the 118th Congress, non-Hispanic white Americans are overrepresented, making up 59 percent of the population and 75 percent of Congress (Schaeffer 2023), and throughout U.S. history, there have only been 11 Black senators (U.S. Senate n.d.).

We know considerably less about local government, even though these systems are closest to the people and enact policies that directly affect residents' daily lives. One significant achievement was recently reached in mayoral politics. As of June 2023, the four of the largest cities in America have Black mayors; one is a woman (Los Angeles) and three are men (Chicago, New York, and Houston); 17 women of color serve as mayors of the 100 most populous cities in the U.S. (Center for American Women in Politics 2023). However, women are underrepresented in most appointed and elected offices in local government (Holman 2017).

According to the Center for American Women and Politics (2023), when examining municipal officeholders (such as mayors, city councils, boards of aldermen, and city commissions) of incorporated cities and towns with populations over 10,000, only 31.5% are women. Missouri ranks 36th among states in terms of gender parity for municipal officeholders; only 28.8% only of those serving as municipal officeholders are women. Even in those states who perform the best, Arizona and Alaska, only 45.1% of municipal officeholders are women (CAWP 2023). There is no state in which women make up the majority of these officeholders.

While limited studies have been conducted on the gender composition of boards and commissions, the extant research consistently shows underrepresentation of women as well as gender gaps on "power boards" that wield substantial influence and financial resources. A study examining city, county, and state organizations in Idaho in 2015 revealed that women only

made up 30 percent of appointees to boards and commissions (Grande, King & Bauges 2016). When considering gender parity, it is important to take into account both the number of women serving and the types of boards they serve on. In Idaho, Grande and colleagues (2016) also found gender imbalance based on the area of focus of the board or commission, with women disproportionately serving on those with "stereotypically feminine missions" and making up only 15 percent of the membership on state boards with "stereotypically masculine core functions" such as planning and zoning, economic development, and budget and finance, sometimes referred to as "power boards" (Grande, King & Bauges 2016). In 2022, women in Iowa were also more likely to serve on boards and commissions with stereotypically feminine missions. Women had the highest representation on boards focused on historic preservation, libraries, and human services and had the lowest representation on boards focused on airports and planning and zoning (Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics 2022).

Some studies focus on specific power boards. In North Carolina in 2019, a study of county planning boards, which would fall into the stereotypically masculine core function category, revealed that the boards have on average eight members, and 48 percent of the boards had no women (19%) or just one woman serving (29%). Overall, women comprised a majority of the members on less than five percent of the boards (Buansi 2019). The North Carolina study also considered the racial and ethnic composition of boards and found significant disparities. Two-thirds of the counties participating in the study had planning boards that were all white or had just one non-white member, and over 35 percent of the counties participating in the study had boards solely made up of white men (Buansi 2019). Land-use regulations influence a number of factors important to residents of municipalities, including home prices, segregation, and environmental justice (Lo et al. 2023). The Urban Institute commissioned a study of land-use boards (including zoning adjustment, and planning and zoning) in the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States and found that the people who draft and implement land-use laws differ from those they represent in terms of race, gender, and

homeownership (Loe et al. 2023). They found that on average non-Hispanic white members are overrepresented by 15 percentage points, men are overrepresented by more than 20 percentage points on land-use boards; and perhaps the most glaring disparity was that homeowners make up 97 percent of land-use board members (Lo et al 2023). These findings indicate that white, male, homeowners are making critical decisions for residents of metropolitan areas throughout the country, and that the voices of others are not being adequately represented.

We focus our study of gender and racial parity on boards and commissions in Missouri. Missouri is home to almost 1,000 cities, towns, and villages, nested within 115 counties. Approximately 341 of these municipalities have a population of at least 1,000, many of which have boards and commissions in some form. Parks and Recreation, Planning and Zoning, Adjustment and Appeals, Economic Development, and Budget and Finance boards are most common across the state. Several jurisdictions in Missouri are working to increase diversity on their boards and commissions. In St. Louis County, Missouri, County Executive Dr. Sam Page has made a commitment to appointing women to boards and commissions, and has partnered with United WE's Appointments Project ®. In 2022, 55% of his appointees were women (St. Louis County 2022). St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones has partnered with United WE to increase representation of women and people of color on boards and commissions in St. Louis City. The City of St. Louis, a separate jurisdiction, launched an online boards and commissions application portal in February 2022 that is intended to increase transparency; it allows the public to view vacancies and current board membership with the hope of increasing participation (United WE 2022). Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas has also partnered with the Appointments Project ® to encourage diverse representation on boards and commissions. These jurisdictions in Missouri are working with United WE to increase equity and transparency on boards and commissions. Our study seeks to understand how municipalities throughout the state measure up when it comes to these vital appointed positions.

Data and Methods

Between January and June of 2023, we collected original data on the composition of boards and commissions at the municipal level across Missouri. Missouri is home to 958 municipalities. To hone in on towns and cities that were most likely to have boards and commissions, we looked exclusively at those with a population of 1,000 or more. In Missouri, 341 municipalities met this criteria. We also used existing data from the American Community Survey to measure population, median household income, and educational attainment (percent of population that is 25 and older with a bachelor's degree) for each city. We used 5-year estimates from 2021 for each municipality.

For each of the 341 municipalities with a population of 1,000 or more, we worked to identify the number of boards and commissions within the municipality, the number of members on each board and commission, the name of each member, and, when available, the position each member holds on the board or commission. Examples include chairwoman, secretary, and treasurer. We began by first identifying whether a municipality had a website with board and commission information listed. If all of the information was not available on the municipality's webpage, we then searched for an email address, most often for the city clerk, and sent an email requesting the information. For those that did not reply to our email inquiries and for municipalities with no webpage or missing information, we placed calls to the city hall, most often speaking to the city clerk. There was a noticeable correlation between municipality population and availability of data. For example, larger cities were more likely to list board and commission memberships on their websites or to respond to email requests.

The result of these efforts is complete information for 273 of the 341 municipalities (80.06%) with a population of 1,000 or more. There are 12,210[1] named board members serving on 1,723 distinct boards and commissions in our dataset. Our dataset excludes 523 vacant

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[1]We were able to estimate the gender for a total of 12,014 named board members.

board seats or unnamed board members from our sample of Missouri boards and commissions[2]. In our data, 30% of municipalities have a population of 1,000-2,999 while 18.8% of municipalities had populations between 3,000 and 4,999. Municipalities with populations of 5,000 and 9,999 comprise 19.2% of our dataset, while 18.3% of municipalities lie between 10,000 and 19,999. Finally, 13% of municipalities have a population of 20,000 or more. Municipalities with a population below 10,000 residents make up the majority of our sample. Figure 1 displays the spread of municipality populations by category. Average population for all municipalities is 15,335 with a standard deviation of 42,797. Population ranges from 691 to 502,597 and the median population is 5,336.

Figure 1. Percentage of Municipalities by Population Category

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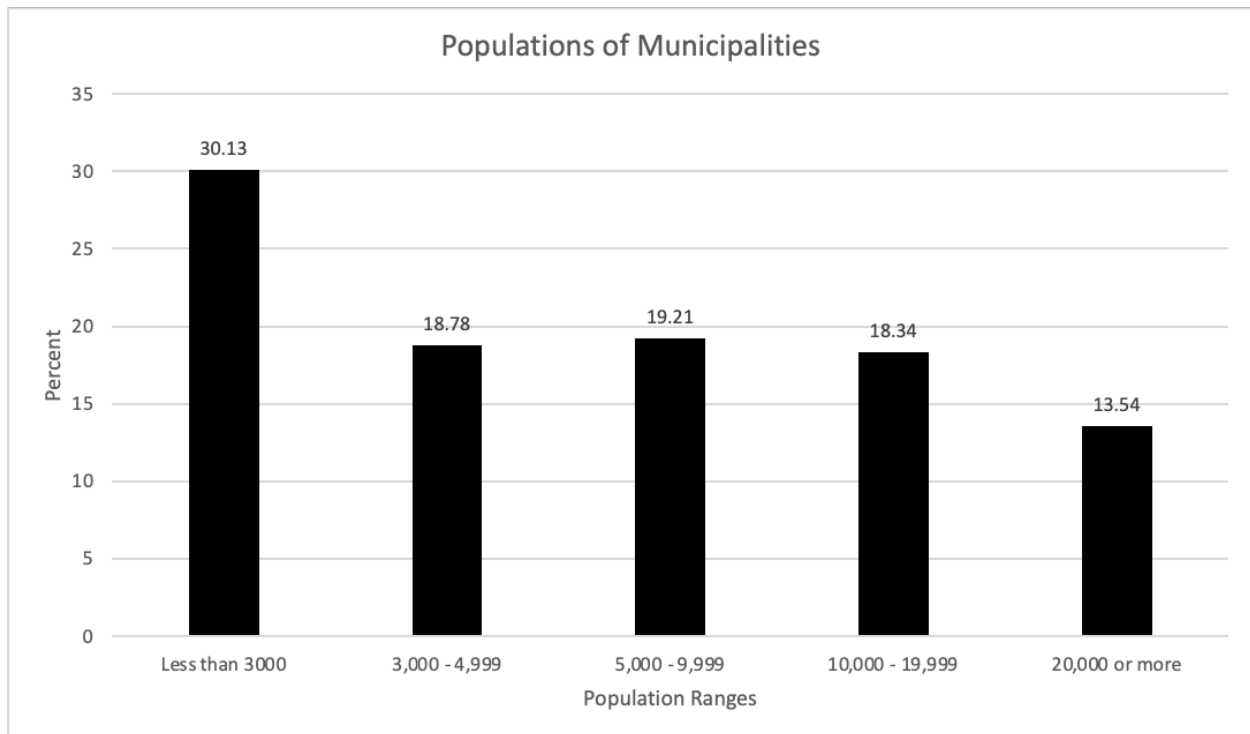
[2] This number was calculated by excluding the municipalities with zero boards (46) and by subtracting all of the unnamed and vacant observations (523 of those)

Of the 273 Missouri municipalities in our dataset, only 229 have one or more boards or commissions. The mean number of boards and commissions per municipality is eight. In the sample, the minimum number of boards and commissions is one, the median is five, and the maximum is 91. A majority of municipalities in our sample (almost 58%) have five boards or fewer, while 24.5% have 6 to 10 boards and commissions, and 17.9% have 11 or more boards and commissions (see Figure 2). Each board or commission is composed of seven members on average.

Figure 2. Number of Boards and Commissions per Municipality, Missouri Cities - 2023
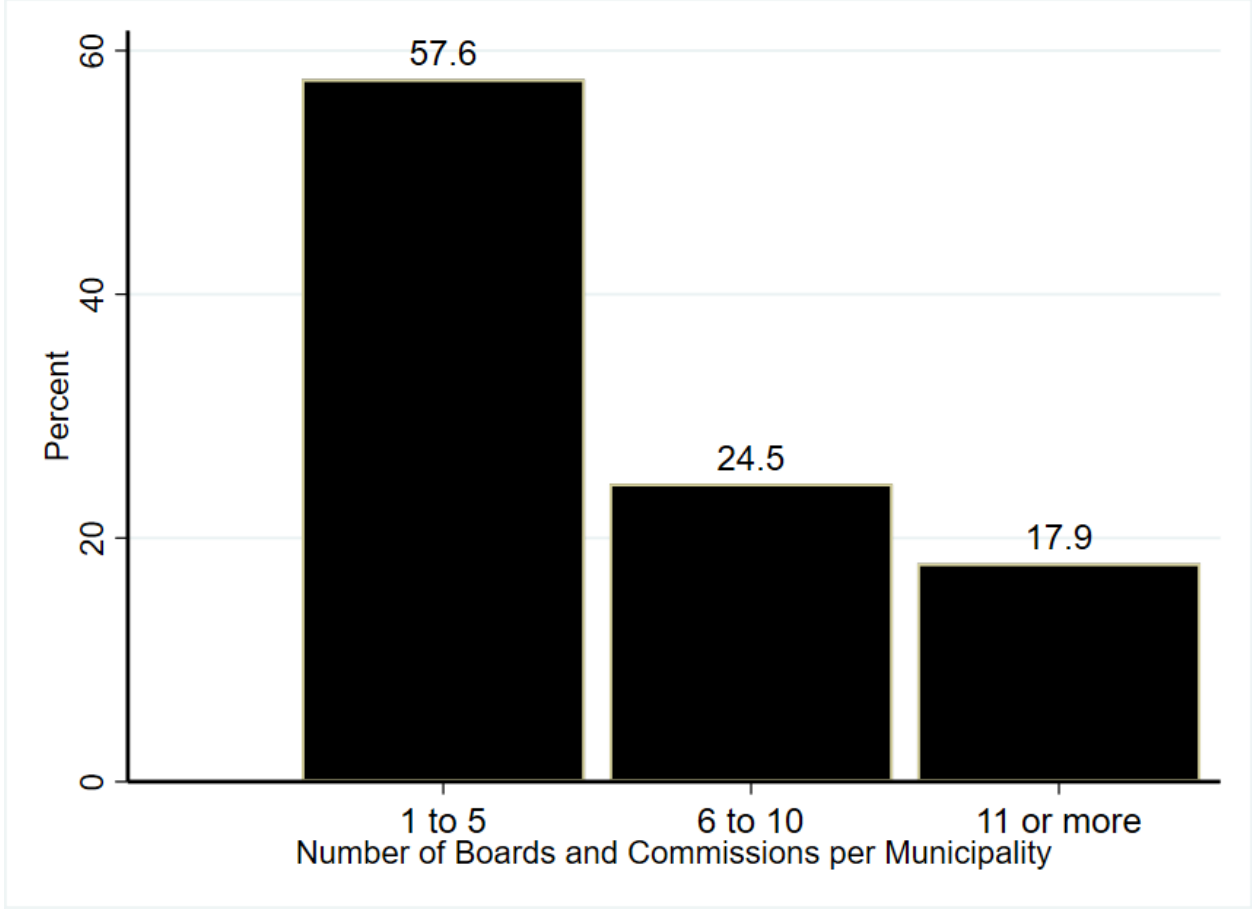
We use the name and city to estimate the gender and race of each board member in our dataset. We use the *gender* package in the *R* programming language (Blevins and Mullen 2015) to infer the gender of each board and commission member. The package uses large historical datasets of primary names and associated gender from several sources, including the Social Security Administration and Census Bureau, to make the inferences. In our dataset of Missouri boards and commissions, we have already verified the gender of 1,154 appointments (roughly 10 percent of the sample), based on information provided by municipalities and photographs from web-based searches, such as LinkedIn. The *gender* package correctly inferred the gender of these board members in 98 percent of the cases (with 98.4% accuracy for men and 97.2% accuracy for women). Therefore, we are confident that this method provides a reliable estimate of the number of men and women appointed to municipal boards and commissions in Missouri.

We employ a widely used method in academic research to predict the race of the members of boards and commissions, extrapolation from the geographic distribution of names and ethnoracial groups in the U.S. Census (Grumbach & Sahn 2019). This is done by utilizing the *wru* package in *R* (Imai and Khanna 2016), which calculates the probability of a person's race based on the Census Bureau's surname list and residence (Grumbach & Sahn 2019). We used the board members' first name, last name, and the county in which the municipal board is located, and the *wru* package predicted the probability that a board member was white, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other/mixed based on demographic geolocation data from the 2020 U.S. Census. We infer that a board member is white in cases where the probability that a person is white is higher than all other race probabilities. Similarly, we infer a board member is Black in cases where the predicted probability of being Black is the highest. To sharpen our focus on white and Black donors, we combined the predicted probability that a donor was Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other/mixed into the other race donor variable. We then created three dummy variables to signify the racial category with the highest predicted probability for each contributor. Other researchers have found that the *wru* package,

along with local Census data, infers individual race with high accuracy, particularly for Black and non-Hispanic white residents (Clark, Curiel, and Steelman 2022; Grumbach and Sahn 2019). In a previous study focused on Missouri, our research team also verified the accuracy of these predictions by manually searching our data for people for whom we could verify their race; we found only one person to be misidentified. This procedure verified the high level of precision of the wru package's ethnorace predictions. Of the 12,014 names we examined for gender, 11,125 last names were able to be matched with the *wru* package to predict race.

There is great variance in the number of boards and commissions, the types of boards and commissions, and the composition of boards and commissions. The number of boards and commissions is strongly correlated with a municipality's population (see Table 1). For example, municipalities with a population of 20,000 or more have, on average, almost 20 boards and commissions. At the other extreme, municipalities with populations from 1,000 to 2,999 have 3.4 boards and commissions, on average.

Table 1. Average Number of Boards and Commissions in Missouri Cities

City Population	Mean # of Boards	Number of Cities
20,000 or more	19.7	31
10,000 - 19,999	9.1	42
5,000 - 9,999	6.3	44
3,000 - 4,999	5.2	43
1,000 - 2,999	3.4	69

Gender Parity on Boards and Commissions in Missouri Results

Across the dataset of 12,210 named individual board members, the gender prediction package was able to identify the gender of 12,014 board members. In our dataset, 63.1% (7,583) of board members are men and 36.9% (4,431) are women. An overwhelming 92.3% (11,089) of members are white, 5.4% (651) are Black, and 2.3% (274) are categorized as another race. Looking at both gender and race, 33.2% (3,992) of board members are white women, 59.1% (7,097) are white men, 2.7% (324) are Black women, 2.7% (327) are Black men, 1.0% (115) are other race women, and 1.3% (159) are other race men. For comparison, Missouri is home to more women than men (50.6% women), and 11.7% of Missourians are Black, while 82.5% are white (US Census 2023).

In addition to looking broadly at all boards and commissions across the state, we endeavored to categorize the 1,723 boards and commissions in our study into related categories. Our research team created 19 categories that allowed us to group similar boards and commissions in order to better understand and analyze the data. These categories are explained in Appendix A. For the next set of results we focus on four common categories of municipal boards in Missouri, two "power boards" that are stereotypically masculine (Economic Development and Planning and Zoning) and two that are stereotypically feminine (Historic Preservation and Parks and Recreation).

Table 2. Gender Representation on Common Municipal Boards

Common Boards	Number of Municipal Boards in Missouri	Avg. % Women Appointed	Avg. % Men Appointed
Economic Development	207	33.15%	66.85%
Planning and Zoning	251	25.18%	74.82%
Parks and Recreation	261	46.57%	53.43%
Historic Preservation	75	48.68%	51.32%

Our results become even more pronounced when focusing on these boards and commissions with purview over economic development, planning, parks, and historic preservation. Boards and commissions focusing on economic development, for example, see an even wider disparity between men and women than the entire dataset (see Table 2). On average, Economic Development boards and commissions are 33.2% women, and are overwhelmingly white (91.5%), with only 6.4% and 2.2% of members being Black and other race, respectively (see Table 3). Planning and Zoning boards and commissions see even greater inequality of appointments, with women occupying only 25.2% of seats (see Table 2).

Table 3. Race Representation on Common Municipal Boards

Common Boards	Avg. % White Appointees	Avg. % Black Appointees	Avg. % Other Race Appointees
Economic Development	91.45%	6.39%	2.16%
Planning and Zoning	95.30%	3.44%	1.26%
Parks and Recreation	95.96%	3.55%	1.49%
Historic Preservation	97.01%	2.43%	0.56%

These boards are likewise very white, with 95.3%, 3.4%, and 1.3% of members being white, Black, and other race, respectively (see Table 3). Some boards and commissions do see higher representation of women. Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation are made up of 46.6% and 48.7% of women, respectively. When it comes to race, however, representation is still abysmal. Parks and Recreation sees memberships that are 3.6% Black and 1.5% other race, while Historic Preservation is comprised of 2.4% and 0.6% Black and other race, respectively.

Table 4. Race and Gender Representation on Common Municipal Boards

Common Boards	Avg. % White Women	Avg. % White Men	Avg. % Black Women	Avg. % Black Men	Avg. % Other Women	Avg. % Other Men
Economic Development	29.54%	61.91%	3.30%	3.09%	0.31%	1.86%
Planning and Zoning	24.08%	71.22%	0.87%	2.56%	0.22%	1.03%
Parks and Recreation	43.82%	51.14%	2.00%	1.56%	0.75%	0.73%
Historic Preservation	47.12%	49.91%	1.35%	1.07%	0.21%	0.34%

When looking at the intersection of race and gender on these power boards, it is clear that white men are overwhelmingly represented. Economic Development and Planning and Zoning are 61.9% and 71.2% white men, respectively (see Table 4). For all four of our boards of interest, other race women make up less than 1% of members and Black men and women never surpass 3% representation. White women are, however, better represented on Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation (43.82 and 47.1%), respectively, but they are never in the majority like white men are (see Table 4). These findings pose serious questions about who is involved in the decision making process, especially when it comes to a city's economic development. Moreover, these findings are troubling for boards like Historic Preservation, because they cast doubt on the validity of historical accounts if those that have been historically disadvantaged do not have a seat at the table.

Many of these trends are consistent when looking at all 19 of our board and commission categories. Appendix D shows these results. Only Arts, Community Development, Human Rights, Library, and Specialized (charter review and audits) boards and commissions are on average majority women. For all 19 categories of boards and commissions, whites are overwhelmingly in the majority. Boards focused on Community Development, Health, Human

Rights, and Public Safety have some of the highest representation of Black members; other race members are underrepresented across the board. Black women are most represented on Community Development boards (7.5%), while Black men are most represented on Health boards (7.2%). Other race women are best represented on Human Rights boards (3.1%), while other race men are best represented on Health boards (3.1%). (For more details on intersectional member representation by category, see Appendix D) Even so, these levels of representation are very low. Taken together, municipal boards and commissions across Missouri are exceedingly white and in most cases dominated by men, even though Missouri is made up of a majority of women. In almost every case, white representation far exceeds the proportion of whites in Missouri (82.5%).

Table 5. Number of Boards and Commissions with 50% Female Representation by Population Category

Population categories	Female representation less than 50%	Female representation greater than 50%	Total
Less than 3000	135	97	*232*
	58.2%	*41.8%*	
3,000 - 4,999	151	72	*223*
	67.7%	*32.3%*	
5,000 - 9,999	192	83	*275*
	69.8%	*30.18%*	
10,000 - 19,999	268	114	*382*
	70.16%	*29.8%*	
20,000 or more	405	206	*611*
	66.3%	*33.7%*	
Total	*1,151*	*572*	*1,723*

Table 5 outlines how female representation differs in municipalities with different population levels. The categories included in this table align with the population categories used in Figure 1. The first row shows that the municipalities with the fewest number of people have better gender parity than all other population categories. More specifically, municipalities with fewer than 3,000 people have at least 50% female representation on 41.8% of their boards. This finding is surprising as the assumption is that larger municipalities will have better representation given the larger pool of members available to serve. Larger municipalities, the four other larger population categories, have at least 50% female representation for approximately 30% of their boards. We also looked at how female representation on boards differed based on levels of income and educational attainment. Overall, female representation based on different levels of income and education hovered around 30-40% with male representation ranging from 60-70%. Our findings indicate that average municipal household income and educational attainment are largely unrelated to gender and racial parity on boards and commissions in Missouri. Results from these analyses are shown in Appendices B and C.

Table 6 lists the categories of boards and commissions in Missouri, identifies the number of boards and commissions in each category, and identifies the percentage of members in each category by race/ethnicity and gender. In only five of the 19 categories is there more than 50 percent of women serving on average. Those categories are consistent with previous studies in that they are stereotypically feminine: Arts, Community Development, Human Rights, Libraries, and Special. Men comprise the majority on all other boards and commissions, and the disparity is particularly pronounced on stereotypically masculine "power boards" such as Adjustments and Appeals, Budget and Finance, Economic Development, Planning and Zoning, Public Works, and Transportation. There is also a glaring disparity by race, with white board members overrepresented based on their proportion of the population in Missouri (82.5%) in all categories except Health (81.5%). Conversely, Health is the only category where Black Missourians' representation (13.1%) exceeds their proportion of the population (11.7%).

Table 6. Gender and Race Representation on Missouri Boards and Commissions

Board	Number of B&C	Avg. % Women	Avg. % Men	Avg. % White	Avg. % Black	Avg. % Other
Adjustments and Appeals	245	21.15%	78.85%	94.91%	3.39%	1.70%
Arts	34	60.07%	39.93%	91.06%	5.60%	3.34%
Budget and Finance	130	27.26%	72.74%	92.60%	6.15%	1.25%
Communications	4	34.54%	65.46%	97.06%	1.47%	1.47%
Community Development	16	52.95%	47.05%	89.22%	10.35%	0.43%
Economic Development	213	33.15%	66.85%	91.45%	6.39%	2.16%
Environment and Animal	23	45.94%	54.06%	94.53%	2.20%	3.27%
Health	35	40.61%	59.39%	81.49%	13.06%	5.45%
Historic Preservation	78	48.68%	51.32%	97.01%	2.43%	0.56%
Housing	59	46.83%	53.17%	92.33%	6.34%	1.33%
Human Rights	84	57.07%	42.93%	83.81%	11.47%	4.72%
Human Resources	44	39.67%	60.33%	87.69%	6.97%	5.35%
Library	43	71.55%	28.45%	95.18%	3.82%	1.01%
Parks	268	46.57%	53.43%	94.96%	3.55%	1.49%
Planning and Zoning	266	25.18%	74.82%	95.30%	3.44%	1.26%
Public Safety	62	32.43%	67.57%	91.19%	7.40%	1.41%
Public Works	71	23.59%	76.41%	97.71%	1.47%	0.81%
Special	10	51.88%	48.12%	96.59%	1.25%	2.16%
Transportation	80	18.16%	81.84%	91.92%	6.75%	1.33%

Note: Boards composed of a majority of women are highlighted in green.

In Appendix D we further look at the effects of intersectionality, with similar results to Table 6. Arts and Libraries are the only categories where white women make up a majority of board members. Black women have their highest representation on Community Development (7.48%) and Human Rights (7.38%), and Black men have their highest representation on Health (7.17%) and Transportation (4.66%).

<u>Leadership Positions</u>

We also examine appointments to leadership positions on municipal boards and commissions in Missouri. These positions tend to come with more authority and responsibility than the typical board or commission appointment. We find that gender inequity tends to be even more pronounced among these leadership appointments (see Table 7 below). For example, there are 691 instances of boards or commissions in the Missouri data with an appointed Chair or President. The most common boards with a Chair or President position at Adjustment/Appeals, Budget/Finance, Planning/Zoning, and Parks/Recreation. We find that women hold just 28 percent of these leadership positions.

Table 7. Gender Equity of Leadership Positions on Missouri Boards and Commissions

Position Title	%Women Appointed	Number of Positions
Chair/ President	28.2%	691
Vice Chair/ Vice President	27.6%	286
Treasurer	46.4%	69
Secretary	57.8%	187

Similarly, women hold just 28 percent of Vice Chair or Vice President positions on Missouri municipal boards and commissions. There is more parity in Treasure positions, where men (53.6%) are slightly more likely than women (46.4%) to be appointed. Finally, women are more likely than men to be appointed to Secretary positions on municipal boards and commissions in Missouri. These results are similar to findings in Iowa in which women made up 32.3% of Chairs and 32.4% of Vice Chairs (Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics 2022).

Conclusion

Our findings clearly demonstrate that the membership of boards and commissions in Missouri does not reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the state. Women and people of color are underrepresented broadly on boards and commissions. In our sample, women comprise only 36.9% of members and white Missourians comprise 92.3% of members. While 11.7% of the state's population is Black, in our study we find that Black Missourians hold only 5.4% of the seats on boards and commissions. If these bodies have diverse representation that is reflective of the state's residents, they can contribute to more inclusive and representative governance and help to build trust by demonstrating to residents that their opinions are valued. However, Missouri is falling short of that ideal.

The gender disparity is especially glaring on "power boards" that have enormous impacts on public policy and the allocation of financial resources. Consistent with previous studies, we find that women in Missouri have the highest proportion of seats on boards and commissions focused on the arts, community development, human rights, and libraries– stereotypically feminine areas. Conversely, men in Missouri (predominantly white men) have the highest proportion of seats on "power boards"--planning and zoning, transportation, budget and finance, adjustments and appeals, and public works. Furthermore, men are more likely than women to be appointed to leadership positions on municipal boards and commissions in

Missouri. That means the voices of women and people of color are largely missing from these influential boards that impact issues that are critical to residents of municipalities, including home prices, segregation, and environmental justice (Lo et al. 2023).

In examining these disparities we ran analyses to determine if factors such as municipal population, average household income, and average educational attainment impacted gender or racial parity on boards and commissions. Our findings indicate that these factors are largely unrelated to gender and racial parity on boards and commissions in Missouri. Future research could explore other factors such as a city's political orientation, the gender of the city executive, or the availability of information on the municipality's website to determine if those characteristics influence gender or racial parity. Other avenues for future research include assessing what practices are effective for recruiting more women and people of color onto boards and commissions and gaining insight into the impact of diverse boards and commissions on municipal outcomes and the everyday lives of residents.

There are a number of barriers to service on boards and commissions. Service can be time-consuming, positions are generally uncompensated, and there is a lack of access to transportation and child care for many community members (Lo et al 2023). To encourage participation from a more diverse population, municipalities might consider access to public transportation, offering compensation for service, flexible meeting times, hybrid or virtual meetings, and safe, walkable locations (Kerr et al 2014; Lo et al 2023). Accessible websites with full information about the municipality's boards and commissions, their mission, vacancies, and the appointment process can also help to recruit members from underrepresented communities. Partnering with the United WE Appointments Project is one way that communities can determine and implement best practices.

Appendix A

Board Categories

Category (number)	Responsibilities
Adjustment/Appeals	Zoning adjustments, building code appeals
Arts	Culture, museums, and other arts
Budget/Finance	Budget, financing, tax oversight
Communications	Public relations, city image
Community Development	Community/neighborhood improvement and growth
Economic Development	Industrial development, growth, enterprise zones, tourism
Environment/Animal	Sustainability, air/water quality, wildlife, animal shelters
Health	Health services, hospitals, liquor control
Historic Preservation	Historic districts, landmarks, cemeteries
Housing	Affordable, fair, or public housing authority
Human Resources	Personnel, civil service, or ethics review
Human Rights	Civil rights, disabilities, elderly, veterans, youth
Library	Public library
Parks & Recreation	Parks, pools, golf, waterways, trees, recreation centers
Planning & Zoning	City planning, zoning, redevelopment, architecture review
Public Safety	Police, fire, emergency services, citizen review
Public Works	Public works, sewer, solid waste, stormwater, utilities, IT
Specialized	Charter review, audits
Transportation	Airport, transit, traffic/parking, railroad, bicycle/pedestrian

Appendix B

Number of Boards and Commissions with 50% female representation by quartile of income

Income quartiles	Female representation less than 50%	Female representation greater than 50%	Total
25th	293	140	*433*
	67.7%	*32.3%*	
50th	306	148	*454*
	67.4%	*32.6%*	
75th	248	159	*407*
	60.9%	*39.1%*	
100th	304	125	*429*
	70.9%	*29.1%*	
Total	*1,151*	*572*	*1,723*

The table above shows female representation based on each percentile of household income ranging from 25th to 100th. Average income for all municipalities is $65,570 with a standard deviation of $35,529. Income ranges from $22,786 to $250,000 and the median income is $53,729. The table shows a similar proportion of female representation among each income category. Municipalities in the 75th percentile, had the highest percentage, 39.1%, of municipalities with at least 50% female representation on boards. All other municipalities had approximately 31% female representation on their boards (ranging specifically from 29.1% to 32.6%).

Appendix C

Number of Boards and Commissions with 50% female representation by educational attainment

Bachelor's quartiles	Female representation less than 50%	Female representation greater than 50%	Total
25th	301	142	*443*
	68.0%	*32.0%*	
50th	319	150	*469*
	68%	*32%*	
75th	243	142	*385*
	63.1%	*36.9%*	
100th	288	138	*426*
	67.6%	*32.4%*	
Total	*1,151*	*572*	*1,723*

The table above shows female representation based on each percentile of the population, twenty-five and older, that holds a bachelors degree ranging from 25th to 100th. Average percent of the population twenty-five and older with bachelors degree is 17.8% with a standard deviation of 9.35%. Bachelors educational attainment ranges from 3% to 46% with a median of 15%. The table shows a similar proportion of female representation among each educational attainment category. Female representation ranged from 32% to 36% throughout each level of educational attainment.

Appendix D
Intersectional Representation on Municipal Boards and Commissions

Board	Avg. % White Women	Avg. % White Men	Avg. % Black Women	Avg. % Black Men	Avg. % Other Women	Avg. % Other Men
Adjustments and Appeals	19.80%	75.11%	1.02%	2.37%	0.33%	1.37%
Arts	54.52%	36.54%	3.36%	2.24%	2.19%	1.15%
Budget and Finance	24.08%	68.52%	2.82%	3.33%	0.35%	0.90%
Communications	34.54%	62.52%	0.00%	1.47%	0.00%	1.47%
Community Development	45.04%	44.18%	7.48%	2.87%	0.43%	0.00%
Economic Development	29.54%	61.91%	3.30%	3.09%	0.31%	1.86%
Environment and Animal	43.12%	51.41%	0.79%	1.41%	2.03%	1.24%
Health	32.28%	49.21%	5.89%	7.17%	2.44%	3.02%
Historic Preservation	47.12%	49.91%	1.35%	1.07%	0.21%	0.34%
Housing	42.00%	50.33%	4.45%	1.89%	0.38%	0.96%
Human Rights	46.63%	37.18%	7.38%	4.09%	3.06%	1.66%
Human Resources	32.79%	54.90%	3.88%	3.09%	3.01%	2.34%
Library	68.26%	26.92%	2.52%	1.30%	0.78%	0.23%
Parks	43.82%	51.14%	2.00%	1.56%	0.75%	0.73%
Planning and Zoning	24.08%	71.22%	0.87%	2.56%	0.22%	1.03%
Public Safety	29.09%	62.10%	2.98%	4.42%	0.36%	1.05%
Public Works	22.85%	74.86%	0.56%	0.91%	0.18%	0.64%
Special	48.47%	48.12%	1.25%	0.00%	2.16%	0.00%
Transportation	15.71%	76.21%	2.09%	4.66%	0.36%	0.97%

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