



# City Electeds Demographics Survey Report

June 2025

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Technical Report

Aljets Consulting
June 2025

The 2025 City Electeds Demographics Survey reveals that Oregon's city officials are predominantly older, well-educated, and more affluent than the general population, with a growing representation of women in elected roles. While most officials are over 60 and nearly one-half are retired, some regions, like Northeastern Oregon, show notable involvement of younger residents. Female officials now slightly outnumber males, particularly in smaller cities, marking a continued shift since 2018. The majority of elected officials statewide identify as White/Caucasian, and most hold at least a bachelor's degree, though educational attainment has slightly declined since 2022. Politically, elected officials trend liberal overall, especially in larger cities, while smaller cities remain more conservative. Support for local autonomy remains strong, though slightly diminished compared to previous surveys.

### Introduction

Every two years, the LOC sends a survey out to its elected officials to better understand the demographic profile of those individuals that represent their communities. The survey asks mayors, commissioners, and city councilors questions about their background, length of residency in Oregon and in their city, their tenure on their city council, and their opinions about home rule. If a respondent was uncomfortable with any of the questions, they had the option to leave that question blank or marked with "decline to respond."

While most LOC surveys focus on cities as a single unit, this research instead focused on the individuals who have chosen to represent their cities. For this reason, the LOC received 224 responses, which is more than a typical survey. This is less than the record 358 respondents in the 2018 survey and less than the 296 in the 2022 survey as well.

### Results

### Age

The figure below shows that over the last seven years of LOC demographic reports, relative age range of elected officials has remained similar. Though it should be noted that there have been declines in the number of respondents that are in their 30's and 50's. Why this would be the case is unclear and could be a product of incumbent officials aging into higher age brackets.

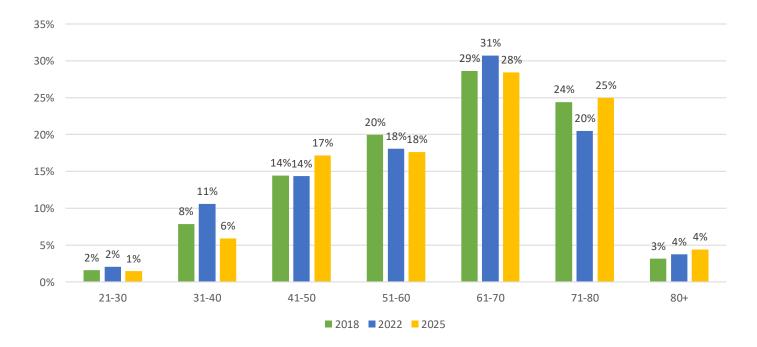


Figure 1: Elected Officials by Age

As has been noted in previous reports, the majority of elected officials are near retirement or past the age of retirement. This can be seen in the figure below. Cities with a population above 10,800 are significantly less likely to have retirees as elected officials. Roughly 34% of respondents in this population quintile reported being retired. Contrast this to the smallest cities in the first quintile (less than 490 population), where 64% of elected respondents reported they were retired.

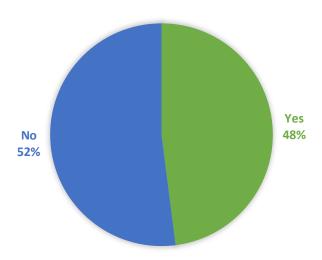


Figure 2: Are You Retired?

While the number of elected officials over age 60 is the majority, there are several regions in which a significant number of elected officials are under the age of 40. These regions include: Metro (21.2%), Southern Oregon (20%) and Northeastern Oregon (31.3%). It should also be noted that only Northestern Oregon had a significant number of elected officials under age 40 in the last two surveys. It is unclear why this particular region has a signifiant number of young electeds, especially considering average age of residents in those counties is far higher than the Oregon average.

### Gender

In 2022, male elected officials outnumbered female elected officials<sup>1</sup>. In the last three years, men as a proportion of respondents have shifted from 53% of elected officials to 47%. This decline in male elected officials also appeared in 2018, where men constituted 56% of the total elected respondents in Oregon cities. As was seen in previous surveys, women are more likely to be elected officials in cities with a population less than 10,800.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Five respondents delined to respond to the gender identity question and one elected official identified as non-binary.

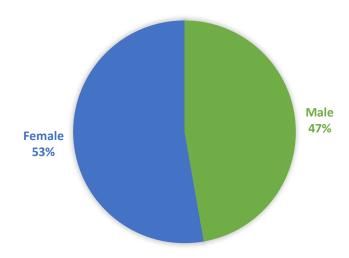


Figure 3: Proportions of Male and Female Elected Officials

Regionally, Central Coast, Southern Oregon, Central Oregon and Eastern Oregon all had more than 60% of their respondent elected identify as female.

Finally, if we were to combine our results for age and gender across all Oregon cities, we find in the figure below that only in the age bracket 51-60 is there a male majority. This result indicates the decline in male participation in local government as an elected official is not a product of "aging out" a cohort of older male elected. Instead it is a trend that transcends age and generational difference.

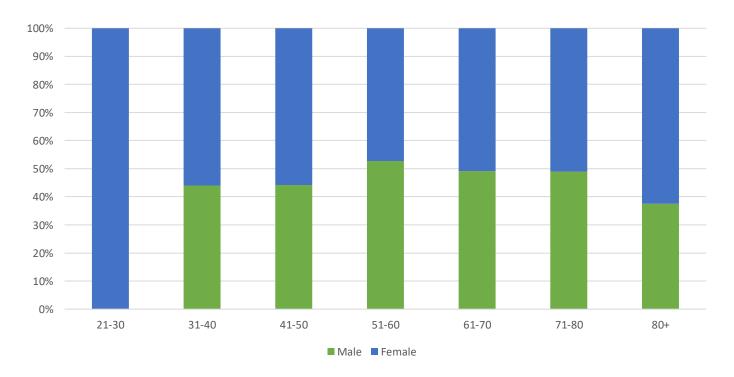


Figure 4: Age of Elected Officials by Gender

### Race/Ethnicity

The 2024 demographcis survey has readjusted the questions related to race and ethnicity to more align with the question design used by the U.S. Census. While this allows for greater comparison across that state, it does mean that comparison with previous iteraton of the LOC survey is limited. With that said, the results from 2025 do not appear to be a significant departure from previous results.

When asked about ethnicity, 94% of respondents (that responded to the question) identified as non-hispanic or latino. In terms of population quintile, the cities sizes with the highest proportion of Hispanic or latino is in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> quintile (or cities with a population of more than 3,276). Regionally, North Coast, Metro, and Central Oregon had the largest proportions of hispanic and latino elected officials. However, these respondents in each area were never more than three people, so further analysis is not possible.

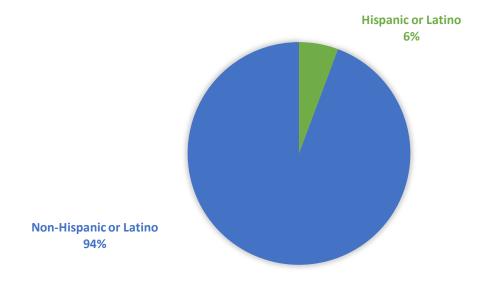


Figure 5: Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic Elected Officials

When asked about race, the figure below shows that 89% of elected officials (who chose to respond to the survey) identified as White/Caucasian<sup>2</sup>. This makeup is relatively consistent across city population categories. Regionally, the presence of elected officials denoting "decline to respond" to this question confounds analysis of the regional differences. However, it appears that North Coast, Metro, and South Central Oregon *may* have higher proportions of elected officials that do not identify as White/ Caucasian.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2022 US Census estimates for Oregon show White Caucasian (Both Hispanic and Non-Hispanic) as 85.9% of the population statewide.

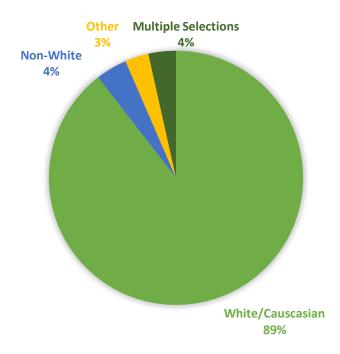


Figure 6: Elected Officials by Race

### Education

Elected city officials tend to be well educated compared the to the rest of Oregon's populations. The majority (59.6%) of respondents had at least a bachelor's degree if not additional graduate or professional degrees. This is a decline from the nearly 68% of electeds with a bachelor's or higher degree in 2022. This could be an artifact of who respondended to the survey in those years. It also could indicate a return to an average as indicated by the fact that a similar amount of education was seen in 2018 (58% with bachelor's or higher) as was captured in the 2025 data.

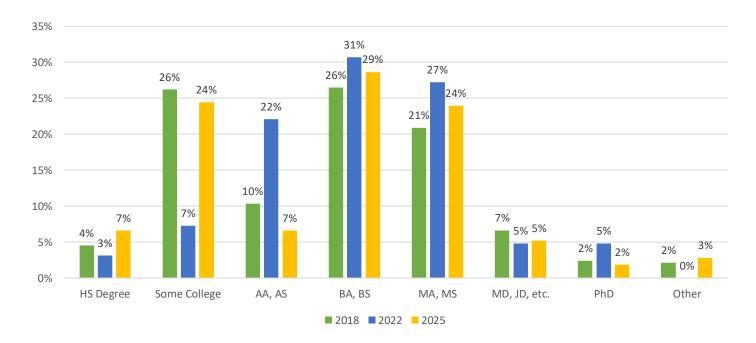


Figure 7: Educational Attainment by Elected Officials

Larger cities are significantly more likely to have elected officials with a bachelor's or higher degree. Nearly 80% of electeds in cities with a population greater than 10,800 population reported at least a bachelor's degree. Contrast this with first quintile cities, where 32% of elected had such degrees. Interestingly, when we look regionally at education attainment, we see Centrral Oregon as the highest rate of degrees for elected officials (85.7% with a bachelor's or higher). In terms of graduate or professional degrees, Central Oregon is also highest (57%) followed by the Gorge region (46%).

### Household Income

The results show that elected officials are also wealthier than the average Oregonian. In fact, since 2018, elected officials have become significantly more likely to be in a high household income category. In 2018, 28% of elected officials who responded to that survey had household incomes greater than \$100,000. This proportion has increased to 40% in 2025.

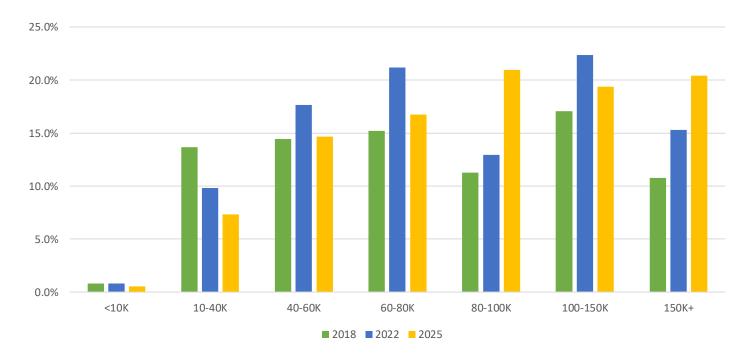


Figure 8: Household Income Over Time

In terms of population and region, we see significant differences in income by city size location in Oregon. While 5.3% of respondents in the first quintile identified as from households with income greater than \$150,000, more than 36% percent of elected in cities with a population greater than 10,600 population fell into this income category. The highest average income by region appears to be Metro, where 41.4% of elected officials have income greater than \$150K. Contrast this to South Central Oregon and Eastern Oregon, where *no* elected official reported housegold income of more than \$100K in either region.

### Veteran Status

While about 7.4% of the Oregon adult population are veterans of the armed services, elected officials are significantly more likely to be veterans. For this survey, 13.8% of respondents indicated they are veterans. These elected officials

are statistically more likely to come from cities in the 4<sup>th</sup> quintile (population 3,276-10,800) as well as from the North Coast, North Willamette, and South Coast regions.

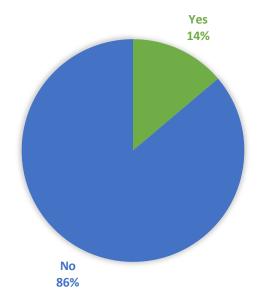


Figure 9: Veteran Status for Elected Officials

### Residency

Roughly 59% of city officials were born in another state or country. This is consistent with previous findings in the 2022 survey. Overall, electeds have lived in the state for 31 years and in their current city for 22.9 years. The lowest average residency in Oregon comes from Southern Oregon and South Central Oregon regions (both 23-year average). The longest average residency is in the North Willamette region (39 years).

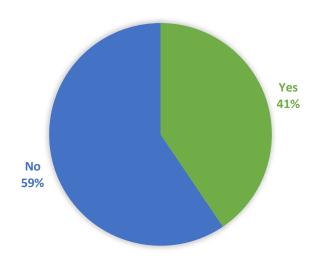


Figure 10: Where You Born in Oregon?

### **Elected Tenure**

On average, responding city officials have served on their city council for 5.6 years. This is only slightly different from the six-year average tenure seen in the 2022 survey. The South Willamette region had the shortest average tenure (4.3 years), whereas the longest average tenure is in the South Coast region with 9.5 years.

Thirty-two percent of city elected offcials are, or have previously been, a mayor. The average term of service for a mayor is 3.7 years. This is far shorter than the 5.9 years seen in 2022's survey and could indicate a seachange in the mayoral leadership in Oregon. Much if this short tenure comes from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile cities. Other city size categories average between four and five years for mayoral tenure. The South Coast region had the longest average regional tenure for mayors at 9.3 years.

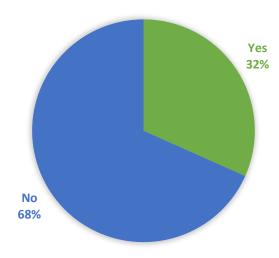


Figure 11: Are you or have you ever been Mayor of your city?

### Other Government Involvement

City elected officials are commonly employed or formally employed by a government entity. A full 41% of the elected officials surveyed responded that they have worked for a government body. These positions ranged from city staff, to teacher, to state analyst. This was more common in cities with a population of more than 490. It was most common in

Central Oregon, where 71.4% of respondent elected had previously worked in government positions.

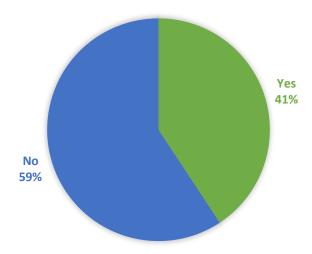


Figure 12: Have you ever been a government employee?

Electeds were also asked if they had served previously on city boards or commissions. This is often seen as the gateway to serving on a city council, and the data confirms this. Fifty-seven percent of respondents had previously served on such boards and commissions. These proportions are identical to the findings from 2022. This form of city participation is more likely to occur in larger cities, as well as in North Coast, Central Coast, and Central Oregon small cities regions.

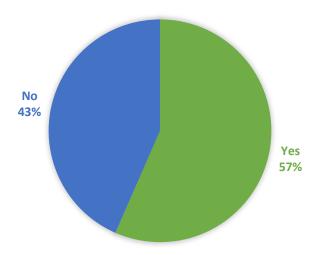


Figure 13: Have you previously served on city boards and/or commissions?

Roughly 10% of the responding city elected officials indicated they have also tried for other offices. This is far more likely to occur in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> quintile regions. It is unclear why this would be the case and not the 4<sup>th</sup> quintile as well and is likely an artifact of who responded this year to this survey. While the majority of these campaigns by elected officials were for the Oregon Legislature, several were also for county, federal, and special district positions. Some were for elected positions in states where the elected previously resided.

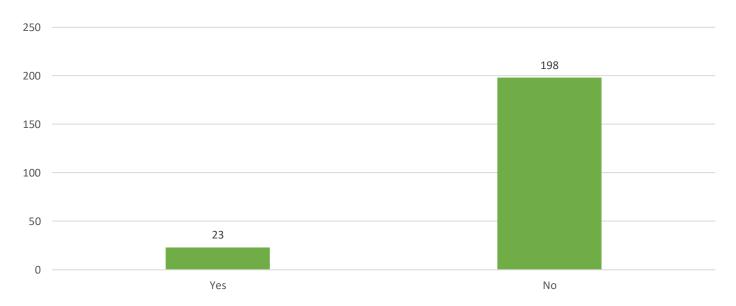


Figure 14: Have you ever run for county, state or federal office?

### Hours on City Business

City elected officials spend much of their free time on city business. On average, city elected officials spend 36 hours per month (or 9 hours per week) on city business. This is a partial return to the 40 hours reported in 2018 (31 hours was the reported average in 2022). It should also be noted that the median, which smooths much of the outsized effect of very large and small responses, was 22.5 hours. This indicates some respondents spend a much larger amount of time on city business than their peers. While elected officials in cities with a population greater than 10,800 historically have spent more time on average than in smaller cities, this year that is not completely accurate. First quintile city respondents reported more than 50 hours per month spent on city business, this compared to the 47 monthly hours in cities with a population of more than 10,800. Cities in the middle size categories reported far less time spent (between 21 and 33 hours).

While this could be due to the respondents, and possibly respondent error, there is another potential factor. The size of first quintile cities (cities less than 490 populaiton) often results in an inability to hire staff. This may lead to more need for volunteer hours from elected officials to maintain and improve operations in the city. Mid-size cities have the ability to staff some of the city's needs. And when a city reaches a certain size (greater than 10,000 population) the complex nature of the city's operations means City Councils are needed to volunteer more often and therefore are required to put in more hours. This however, cannot be confirmed with the information currently available.

### Political Ideology

A plurality of city councilors and mayors identify as "Liberal" or "Lean Liberal." Additionally, in the past almost equal proportions of electeds identify as leaning or solid liberals and conservatives. This indicated an overall balance in political beliefs. However, this has shown not to be the case among elected officials in this survey. Instead we see a decline in the number identified as moderate and a close to proportionate increase in the number of people identifying as "Lean Liberal."

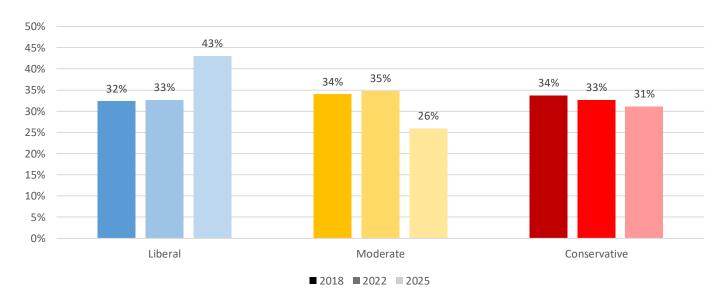


Figure 15: Political Ideology of Elected Officials Over Time

Each respondent that provided a response besides "Other" had their response recoded into the following scheme:

Liberal = 1 Lean Liberal = 0.5 Moderate = 0 Lean Conservative = -0.5 Conservative = -1

This will allow for an average to be derived across populations and region. This index average also reduces the effect of moderates in the analysis of quintile and regional trends. So, if a region had an elected official makeup of all solid liberals, the index would be 1, all solid conservative would be -1, and 0 would be exactly moderate.

Population	2018	2022	2025	Average
1st Quintile	-0.11	-0.42	-0.29	-0.27
2nd Quintile	-0.11	-0.19	0.17	-0.05
<b>3rd Quintile</b>	-0.14	-0.19	-0.08	-0.14
4th Quintile	0.03	0.15	0.08	0.08
5th Quintile	0.08	0.17	0.13	0.13
OVERALL AVG	-0.02	-0.65	0.04	-0.21

Table 1: Change in Elected Official Average Ideology by Population

Region	2018	2022	2025	Average	
N. Coast	0.11	0.15	0.22	0.16	
Metro	0.13	0.32	0.20	0.22	
N. Willamette	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	
S. Willamette	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.08	
C. Coast	0.45	0.30	0.63	0.46	
S. Coast	-0.13	-0.25	0.04	-0.11	
S. Oregon	-0.09	-0.08	-0.05	-0.07	
Gorge	-0.06	0.00	-0.19	-0.08	
C. Oregon	-0.27	-0.22	0.17	-0.11	
SC Oregon	-0.56	-0.67	-0.10	-0.44	
NE Oregon	0.10	-0.30	-0.43	-0.21	
E. Oregon	-0.29	-0.64	-0.44	-0.46	
<b>OVERALL AVG</b>	-0.02	-0.65	0.04	-0.21	

Table 2: Change in Elected Official Average Ideology by Region

The index data above shows trends that are not only common in the study of Oregon politics, but also in voting trends. The larger cities tend have elected officials that lean more liberal than smaller cities. Cities in the 5<sup>th</sup> quintile are 3.3 times more likely to have a liberal or liberal-leaning elected official than the average; cities with a population less than 490 are 7.4 times more likely to have conservative or lean conservative electeds. Regionally, (as is consistent with state voting trends) the North Coast (0.22), Metro (0.20), South Valley (0.11), and Central Coast (0.63) all lean liberal in 2025. Since the first LOC Elected Demographic survey in 2018, Central Oregon elected official's average political affiliation has become far more liberal. Other regions have trended more conservative, including North Willamette, Gorge, Northeastern Oregon and Eastern Oregon.

Since 2018, smaller cities have become dramatically more conservative, and cities with a population greater than 3,275 have become more liberal. There is an unusual outlier in this year's data that shows a large increase in the number of people identifying as "Liberal" or "Lean Liberal" in 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile (491-1,350 population). It will be interesting to see if this is a lasting trend in the 2027 version of this survey. However, this may simply be an artifact of who responded to this survey.

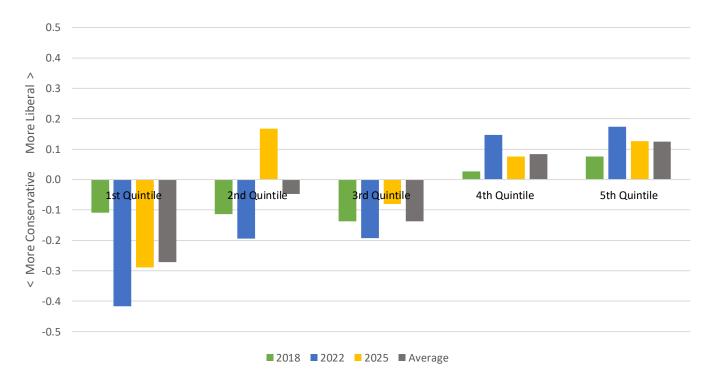


Figure 16: Change in Political Affiliation by Population Quintile Over Time

### Home Rule

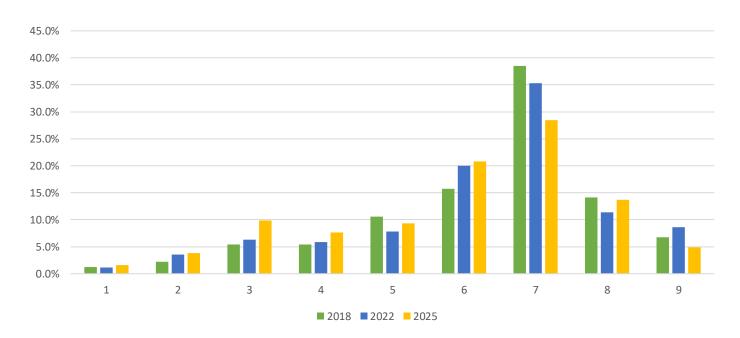


Figure 17: Response to 9-Point Home Rule Question Over Time

The League of Oregon Cities' (LOC) mission is to preserve home rule. This survey asked elected officials to scale their opinion of local control from 1 (complete state control) to 9 (complete city control). Overwhelmingly, the elected

officials favor moderate to strong city control of government policy. The average rating on this scale was 5.9 out of 9, which is a significant decline from the 6.3 average in 2018 and 2022. This is likely due to the shift in the respondents identified as more liberal. The 2022 survey showed a relationship between more right-leaning politics and more desire for greater city autonomy.

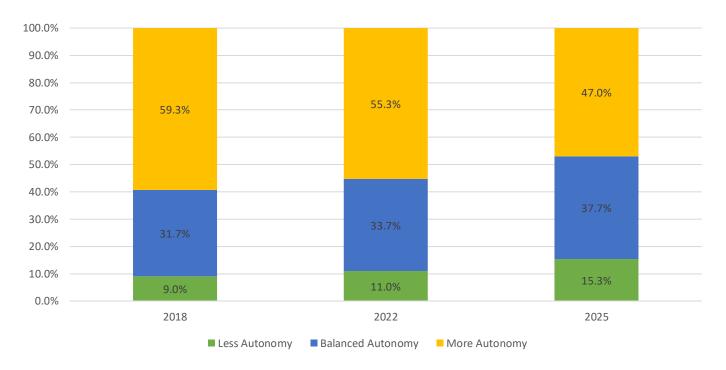


Figure 18: Proptionate Home Role Responses Over Time (1-3 = Less Autonomy, 4-6 = Balanced Autonomy, 7-9 = More Autonomy)

### Methods

This survey was conducted from April 7 to May 2, 2025 and responses were received from 224 elected officials from 135 cities. These cities represent 2,554,970 residents, or 84% of the population residing in Oregon cities. The LOC created the survey with Qualtrics and distributed it to city mayors and city councilors.

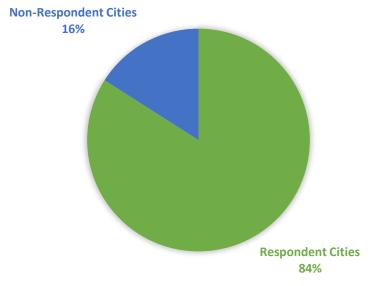


Figure 19: Respondent Population Proportionate to Oregon City Population

Cities statewide are divided into population quintiles, or groups that each represent roughly one-fifth of the 241 total cities. This is done to provide more accurate comparison of differences among city populations. If the LOC randomly selected cities from each quintile, we would expect 20% to come from each of the five quintiles. Furthermore, it is assumed that while city councils vary in size, regions and populations average the same amount of city councilors (about five). Among responding elected officials, there was overrepresentation in the Metro, Southern Willamette and South Coast regions. Further, the survey had an underrepresentation of cities in the Central Oregon, Central Coast, Northestern Oregon and Eastern Oregon. The survey had a common overrepresentation of cities in the 5<sup>th</sup> quintile as well as underrepresentation in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quintiles.

### **Appendix A: Invitation to Participate**

### The League needs your help - please complete this survey by Friday, May 2nd

Every two-three years, LOC sends a survey to its elected officials to better understand the makeup of those individuals that represent their communities. The survey linked below asks elected city officials questions about their demographic background. Given the sensitive nature of the of the questions, no question is required to be answered and as such, if uncomfortable, any question may be left blank. Your name and email are only asked to ensure that there are no duplicate responses and individual responses will not be published in any final report. The information collected from the survey will be used to better understand potential barriers to participation in local government and to accurately respond to inquires about such demographic data.

This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

NOTE: Please submit all answers using the online form. Please use the attached PDF only for information and guidance.

Survey Link Below:

https://orcities.co1.gualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV 8die3PpnUdAzy7Q

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the survey at <u>jpierce@orcities.org</u> or 503-588-6550.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to fill out this survey.



## **Appendix B: Survey Instrument**

# **City Electeds Demographics Survey 2025**

Q2 Please answer the following questions	
O City Name: (1) O Your Name: (2) O Your Title: (3) O Email Address: (4)	-
Q3 Please select your age range	
<ul> <li>18-20 (1)</li> <li>21-30 (2)</li> <li>31-40 (3)</li> <li>41-50 (4)</li> <li>51-60 (5)</li> <li>61-70 (6)</li> <li>71-80 (7)</li> <li>80+ (9)</li> <li>Decline to Respond (8)</li> </ul>	
Q4 Please select your gender	
<ul> <li>Male (1)</li> <li>Female (2)</li> <li>Other (Please Specify) (3)</li> <li>Decline to Respond (4)</li> </ul>	
Q31 Please select your ethnicity	
<ul> <li>Hispanic or Latino (1)</li> <li>Non-Hispanic or Latino (2)</li> <li>Decline to Respond (3)</li> </ul>	

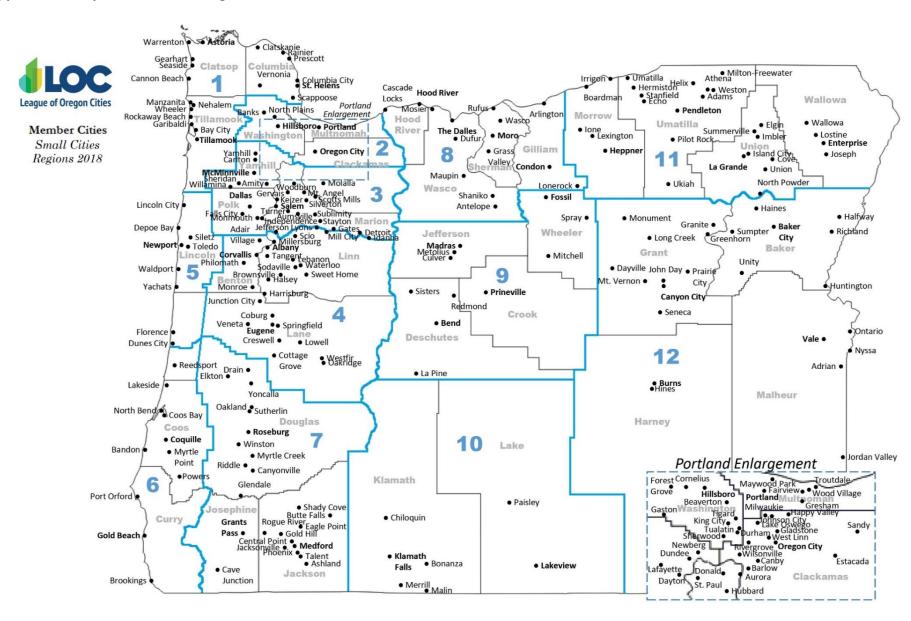
Q5 Please select your race						
	White/ Caucasian (1) Black or African American (3) Asian (4) American Indian or Alaska Native (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (6) Other (Please Specify) (7) Decline to Respond (8)					
Q6 Plea	ase select your highest level of education					
	Less than High School Degree (1) High School Degree (HS) (2) Some College (3) Associates Degree (AA, AS) (4) Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS) (5) Masters Degree (MA, MS) (6) Professional Degree (i.e. MD, JD, etc.) (7) Doctorate (PhD) (8) Other (Please Specify) (9) Decline to Respond (10)					
Q7 Plea	ase select your annual household income category					
0 0 0	Less than \$10,000 (1) \$10,000-\$40,000 (2) \$40,000-\$60,000 (3) \$60,000-\$80,000 (4) \$80,000-\$100,000 (5) \$100,000-\$150,000 (6) \$150,000+ (7) Decline to Respond (8)					
Q8 Are	you retired?					
<b>O</b>	Yes (1) No (2)					
Q9 Plea	ase list your current occupation. If retired, please list your last occupation before retirement.					

Q10 Are you a veteran of the armed services?
O Yes (1) O No (2)
Q11 Were you born in Oregon?
O Yes (1) O No (2)
Q12 Are there children (minors under 18) currently living with you?
O Yes (1) O No (2)
Display this question:  If Were you born in Oregon? = No
Q13 How long have you lived in Oregon (in years)?
Q14 How long have you lived in your city?
Q15 How long have you served on City Council?
Q16 Are you or have you ever been Mayor of your city?  • Yes (1)
O No (2)
Display this question:  If Are you or have you ever been Mayor of your city? = Yes
Q17 How long were you Mayor of your city (in years)?

Q18 Have you ever been a government employee?
O Yes (1) O No (2)
Display this question:  If Have you ever been a government employee? = Yes
Q19 Please list the name of the government, agency, and your position title
Q20 Have you previously served on city boards and/or commissions?  O Yes (1) O No (2)
Display this question:  If Have you previously served on city boards and/or commissions? = Yes
Q21 Please list the boards or commissions for which you have been a member
Q22 Have you ever run for county, state or federal office?  O Yes (1) O No (2)
Display this question:  If Have you ever run for county, state or federal office? = Yes
Q23 Please list the county, state or federal offices for which you were a candidate and if you successfully held these seats

Q24 How many hours per month do you spend on city bu	usiness?
Q25 Please describe barriers you have experienced servi	ng on City Council.
Q26 How would you describe you political beliefs?	
<ul> <li>Liberal (1)</li> <li>Lean Liberal (2)</li> <li>Moderate (3)</li> <li>Lean Conservative (4)</li> <li>Conservative (5)</li> <li>Other (Please Specify) (6)</li> <li>Decline to Respond (7)</li> </ul>	
Q27 On a 9-point scale, please describe your opinion reg desired policies versus the state directing which policies Complete City Control)	arding the ideal balance between a city's ability to implement a city may implement (1 = Complete State Control; 9 =
	1 (1) 2 (2) 3 (3) 4 (4) 5 (5) 6 (6) 7 (7) 8 (8) 9 (9)
Q28 Do you have any additional comments about this su	rvey?

### **Appendix C: Map of Small Cities Regions**



**Appendix D: Population Quintile and Regional Breakdowns** 

Quintile	Ranges	# Cities	% Cities
1st Quintile	<490	48	19.8%
2nd Quintile	491-1,350	48	19.8%
3rd Quintile	1,351-3,275	48	19.8%
4th Quintile	3,276-10,800	48	19.8%
5th Quintile	>10,800	49	20.2%
Small Cities	<5,000	161	66.5%
Top 5 %	>45,000	12	5.0%

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Region 11	Region 12	
	N. Coast	Metro	N. Willamette	S. Willamette	C. Coast	S. Coast	S. Oregon	Gorge	C. Oregon	SC Oregon	NE Oregon	E. Oregon	TOTALS
1st Quintile	3	1	4	3	0	0	2	9	3	2	8	13	48
2nd Quintile	2	. 4	5	6	2	2	6	3	1	3	10	4	48
3rd Quintile	8	2	9	5	3	3	5	1	2	1	5	4	48
4th Quintile	5	5	9	6	4	5	6	1	2	0	3	2	48
5th Quintile	1	. 19	8	6	0	1	5	1	3	1	3	1	49
TOTALS	19	31	35	26	9	11	24	15	11	7	29	24	241
	8%	13%	15%	11%	4%	5%	10%	6%	5%	3%	12%	10%	100%