



RESEARCH



# City Elected Demographics Survey Report

MAY 2022

# **2022 City Electeds Demographics Survey Report**

## *Technical Report*

*Aljets Consulting*

*April 2022*

LOC research on the demographics of city elected officials in Oregon has produced the first collection of statewide statistics on this topic. Overall, the elected officials in Oregon cities tend to be white, over 60 years old, middle to upper-middle class, and transplants to the state who are politically moderate. However, since the 2018 survey respondents have become more educated, racially diverse, and include a higher number of females. On average, elected officials have lived in their city for 21 years and have served on the council, commission, or as mayor for six years. City officials are often called upon to work an average of 31 hours per month on city business, and have previously served on city boards and commissions. Additionally, the majority of city elected officials strongly favor a balance between home rule and city-directed public policies.

## 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 League received 296 responses, which is more than a typical survey. This is less than the 358 respondents in the 2018 survey. However, a majority of the results from 2018 are mirrored below.

## Results

### Age

Not surprisingly, city elected officials tend to be older than the average city resident. However, this survey revealed the specific proportion of age breakdown. Fifty-five percent of the elected respondents are over 60 years old. The regions with the oldest respondents (highest proportion of respondents age 60 or more) are North Coast and the North Willamette Valley.

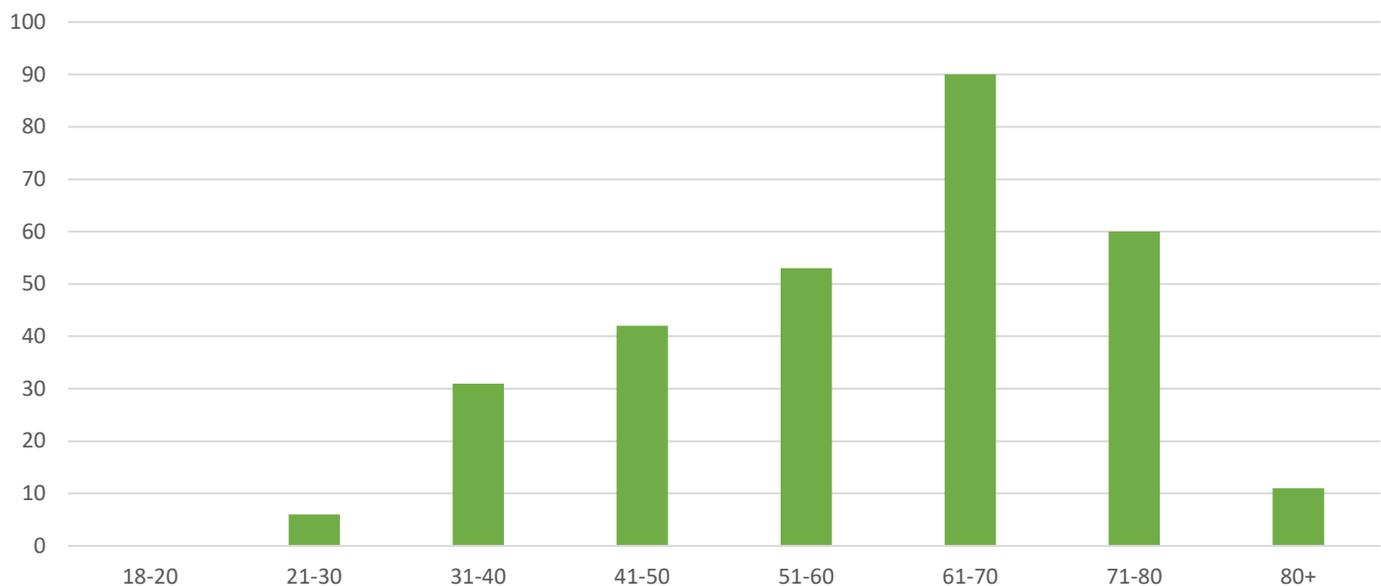


Figure 1: Age Ranges of City Electeds

These numbers are also consistent with the proportion of retirees among elected city officials. Figure 2 shows that roughly one-half of all city councilors and mayors are retired.

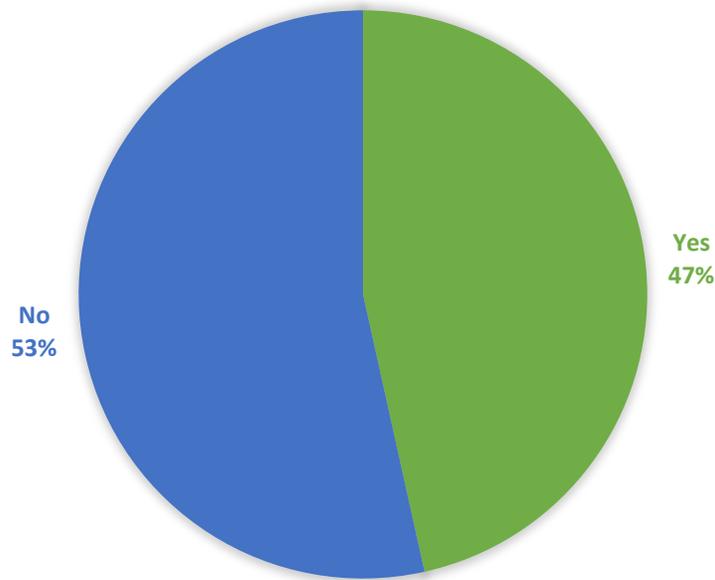


Figure 2: Are You Retired?

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: Northeastern Oregon (21.4%), Gorge and Central Coast (both 16.6%). The total number of respondents in these categories, however, is 37 people. As a result, these numbers are not statistically significant and should be evaluated with caution. It should also be noted that none of these regions had a significant number of elected officials under age 40 in the last survey; and all those regions with a significant number in 2018 no longer do. This could be due to “aging-out” of elected officials into older categories. It also could be a shorter tenure for younger elected officials in these positions.

### Gender

Men outnumber women as elected officials, but only slightly. Figure 3 shows that respondents identifying as male make up 53% of elected officials, whereas respondents identifying as female comprises 47%.<sup>1</sup> The number of male elected officials declined in the last four years by 3%. However, with only two survey datapoints, it is unclear whether this is a trend. As seen in 2018, the smaller cities in Oregon tend to have an elected official makeup in favor of women over men. In 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile cities (cities between 1,326 and 3,275 population), women outnumber men by 18.9%. While it remains true, as a city increases in size, the number of elected men increases, the findings from this survey are not as imbalanced as was seen in the previous survey. For example, elected officials in cities larger than 10,000 population, were 1.57 times more likely to be male in 2018. This year, electeds were 1.22 times more likely to be male in large cities.

<sup>1</sup> No respondents identified as another gender however five respondent declined to respond.

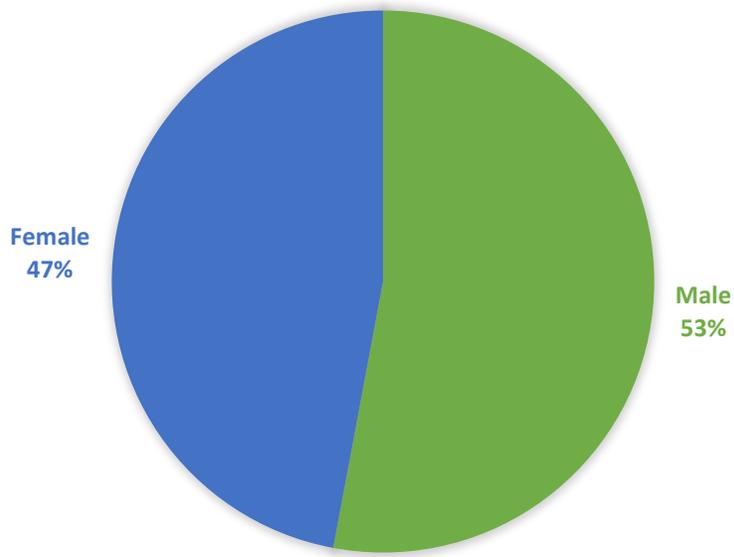


Figure 3: Gender of Elected Officials

The two regions most likely to have a female elected official are Central and Eastern Oregon. The most likely to have a male majority are North Coast, South-Central Oregon and Northeastern Oregon.

When an age component is included in this analysis, the overwhelming majority of male elected officials is age 60 or higher. This contrasts with the demographics under 40, where female respondents outnumber male counterparts.

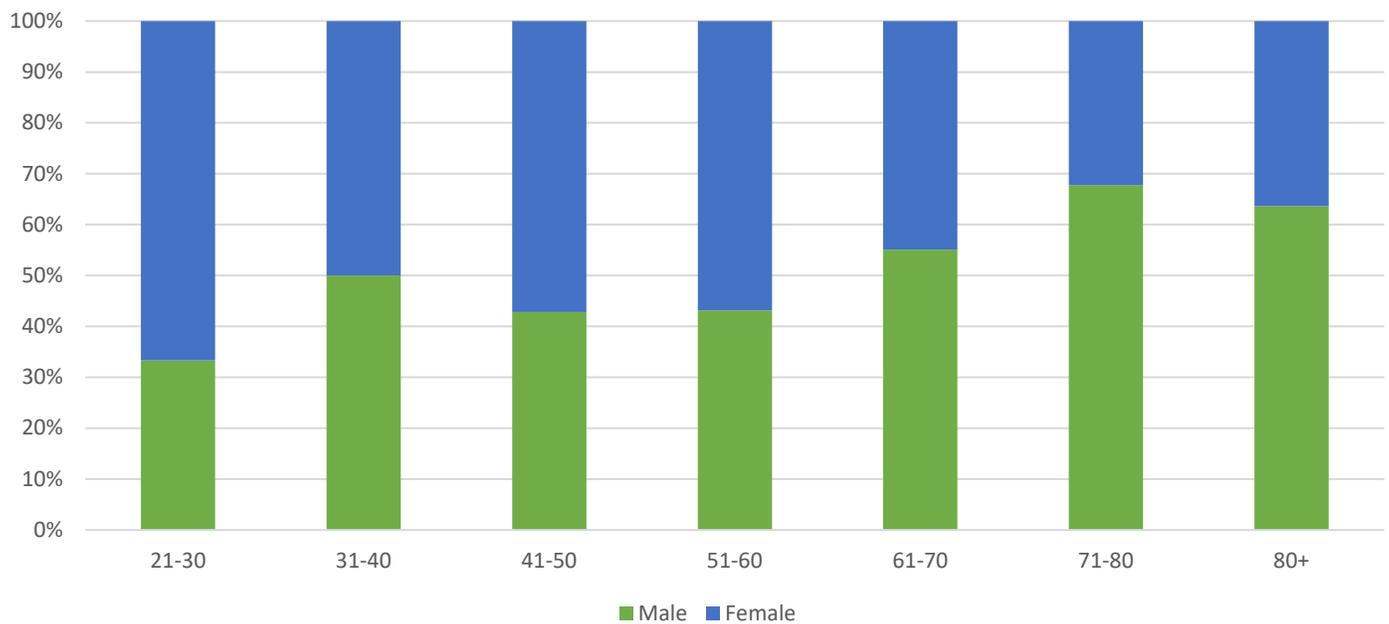


Figure 4: Gender and Age of Elected Officials

## Race/Ethnicity

According to the U.S. Census for 2020<sup>2</sup>, 83.2% of Oregon’s population is white. This LOC survey finds that 86.8% of city elected officials identify as white, which is close to what would be expected in a random sample of citizens in Oregon. This is a decline from the 95% white response in the 2018 survey. Non-white Hispanic or Latinos represent 13.9% of Oregon, but constitute only 3.21% of the elected respondents.<sup>3</sup> Figure 5 and Table 1 further demonstrate these statistics. As there were few non-white respondents, there were not statistically significant results along population or regional descriptors.

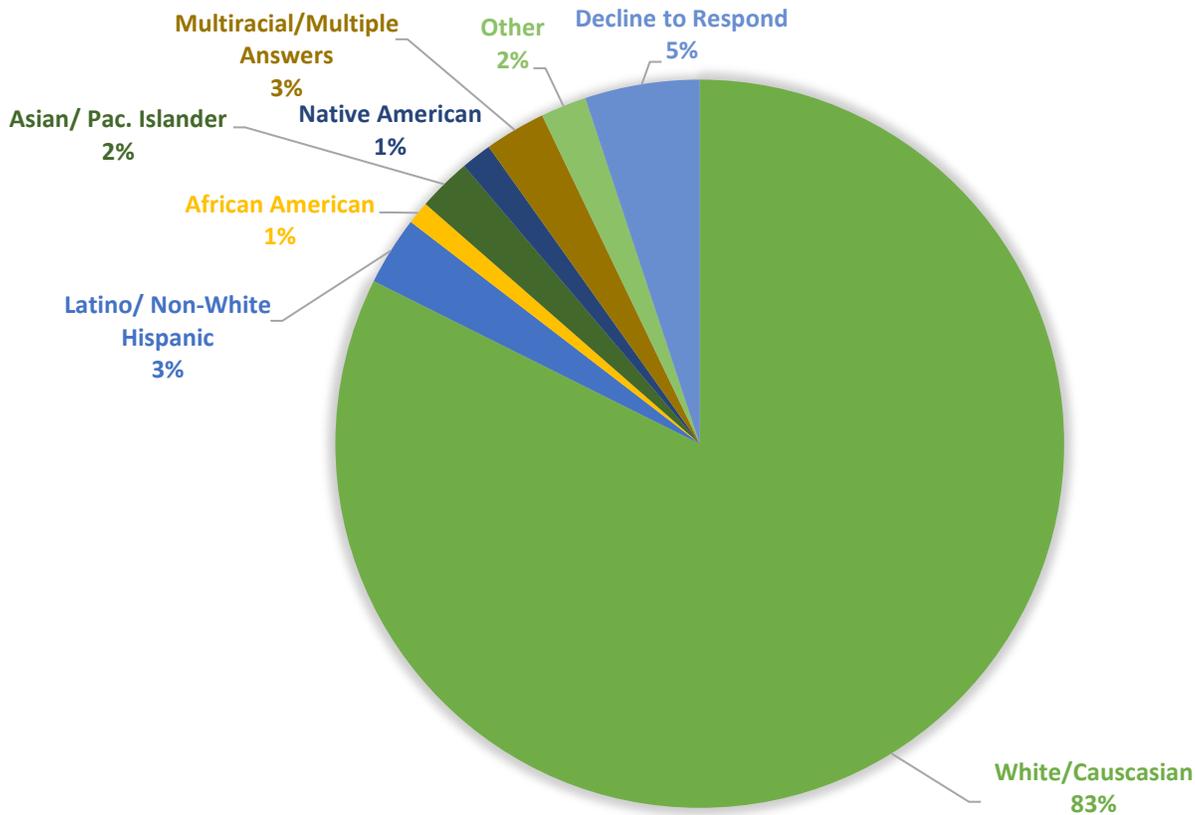


Figure 5: Race/Ethnicity of City Electeds

	White/ Caucasian	Latino/ Non- White Hispanic	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American/ Alaskan Native	Multiracial	Other
<b>LOC Survey</b>	86.79%	3.21%	1.07%	2.50%	1.43%	2.86%	2.14%
<b>US Census</b>	83.20%	13.90%	2.20%	5.30%	1.80%	7.1%	NA
<b>Difference</b>	3.59%	-10.69%	-1.13%	-2.80%	-0.37%	-4.24%	

Table 1: LOC Survey Results and US Census Oregon Racial/Ethnic Composition

## Education

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>

<sup>3</sup> The survey figures here and in table 1 do not add up to 100% due in large part to the fact an individual can identify as multiple racial/ethnic categories.

Elected city officials tend to be well educated compared to the rest of Oregon's populations. The majority (67.6%) of respondents had at least a bachelor's degree if not additional graduate or professional degrees, a 10% increase in education from 2018.

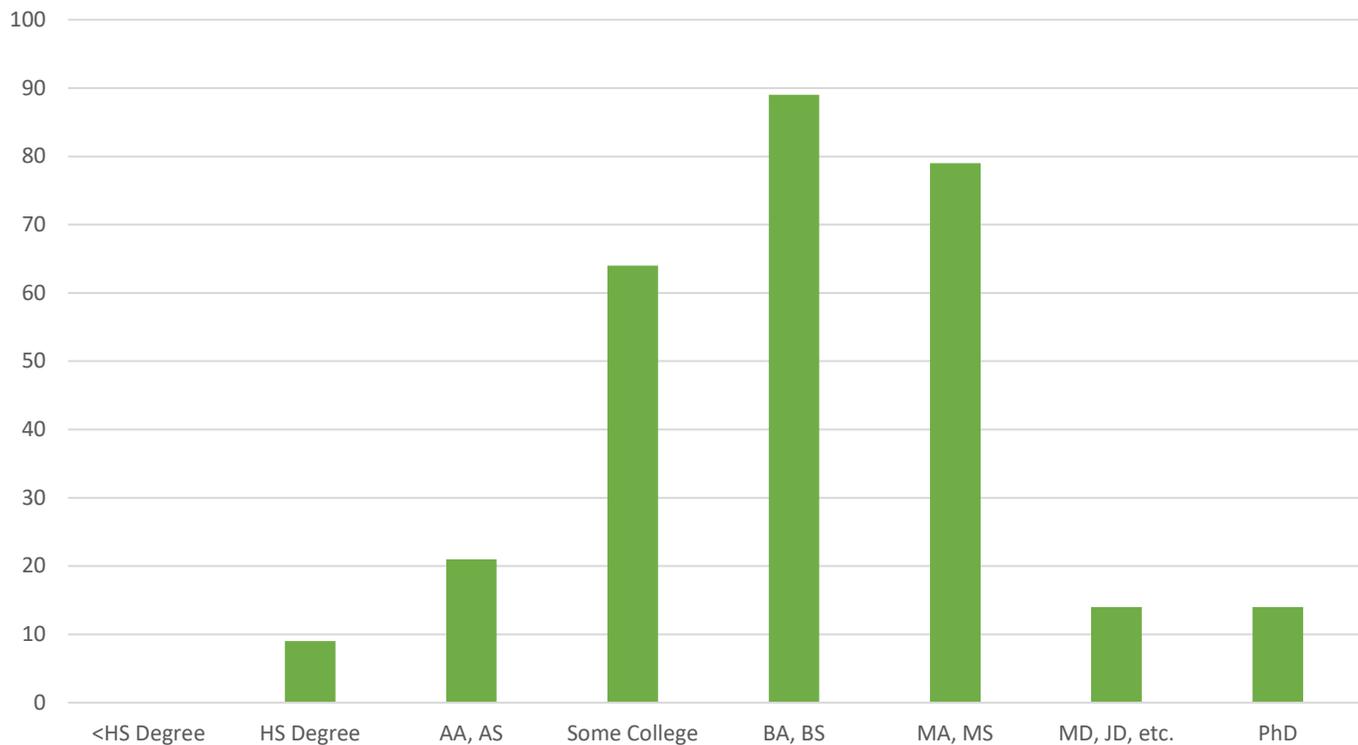


Figure 6: City Electeds by Education

Elected officials with only a high school degree or less are most likely to come from cities with a population less than 500, and from small cities regions of Southern Oregon and Eastern Oregon. In contrast, elected officials with master's degrees, professional degrees and Doctors of Philosophy are significantly more likely to occur in larger cities. Fifty percent of elected officials in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile cities have graduate degrees compared to 25.8% of electeds in cities under 500. Both however, are as or far more educated than the US population, in which 28.7% of the population over 25 had a graduate degree in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

### Household Income

The results show that elected officials are also wealthier than the average Oregonian. Figure 7 below shows that while the average Oregonian household income is around \$76,554 (shown on the graph in orange), most electeds meet or exceed this standard.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/02/number-of-people-with-masters-and-phd-degrees-double-since-2000.html>

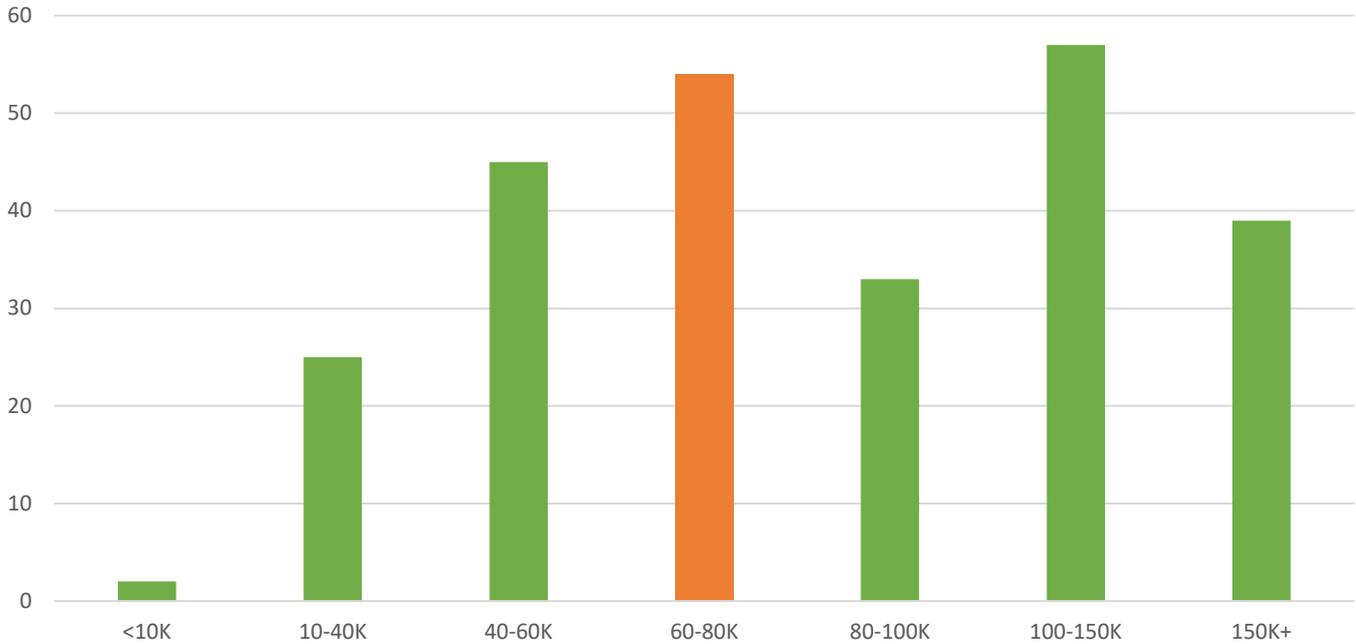


Figure 7: Household Income of Elected Officials

While most income brackets are proportionately represented in cities regardless of population, 67% of city electeds with incomes greater than \$150,000 come from cities with a population of 10,000 or more. In contrast, only 7.6% of electeds with this same income level come from cities with less than 1,325 population.

#### Veteran Status

While about 10% of the Oregon adult population are veterans of the armed services, elected officials are significantly more likely to be veterans. For this survey, 17% 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 3,276-10,600) as well as from the Willamette Valley regions and Southern Oregon region.

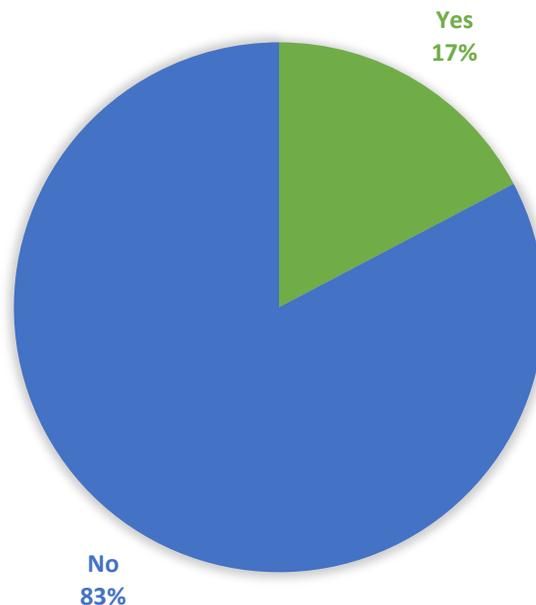


Figure 8: Are you a Veteran?

## Residency

Roughly 59% of city officials were born in another state or country. Overall, electeds have lived in the state for 29 years and in their current city for 21 years. The lowest average residency in Oregon comes from the Central Oregon (23-year average) and Metro (25 years) regions. The longest average residency is in Eastern Oregon (42 years). On average, the larger cities have electeds that have lived in their city longer (17-year average in 1<sup>st</sup> quintile as opposed to 25 years in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile).



Figure 9: Were you born in Oregon?

## Elected Tenure

On average, responding city officials have served on their city council for six years. This increases in accordance with city population (5-year average in 1<sup>st</sup> quintile as opposed to 7 years in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile). The Gorge region had the shortest average tenure (3 years), whereas the longest average tenure is in the South Coast region with 9.3 years.

Twenty-seven percent of city elected officials are, or have previously been, a mayor. The average term of service for a mayor is 5.9 years. Interestingly, while cities with larger populations typically have elected officials with longer tenures; this appears to be not true for mayors in this survey (7.8-year average in 1<sup>st</sup> quintile as opposed to 6 years in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile). The South-Central region had the longest average regional tenure for mayors at 12.5 years; the Gorge had the lowest average of 2 years.

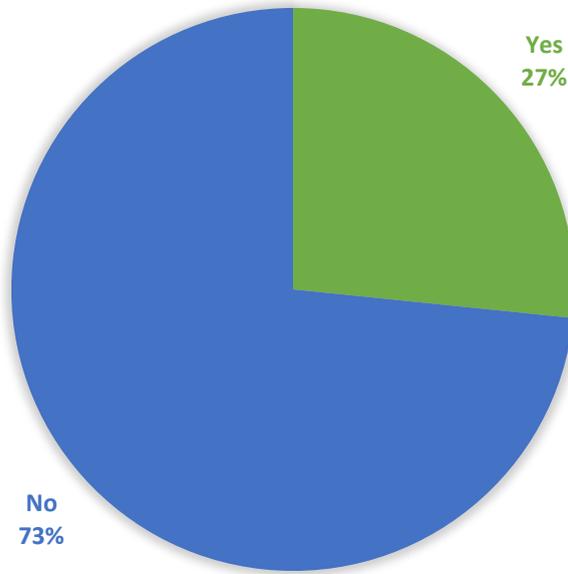


Figure 10: Are You or Have You Ever Been Mayor?

*Other Government Involvement*

City elected officials are commonly employed or formally employed by a government entity. A full 44% 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 larger than 3,275 population, as well as in the North Wilamette, Central Coast, and Gorge small cities regions.

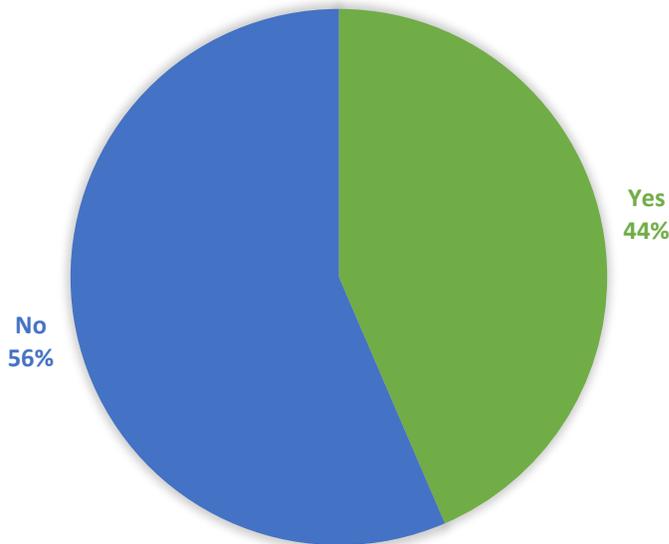


Figure 11: Have You Ever Been a Government Employee?

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. This form of city participation is more likely to occur in larger cities, as well as in North Coast and Metro small cities regions.

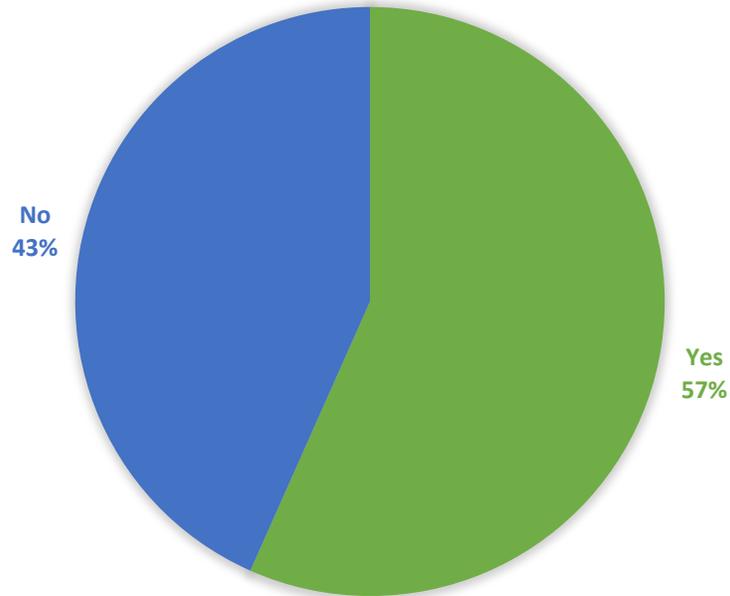


Figure 12: Have You Served on City Boards and Commission?

Roughly 11% of the responding city elected officials indicated they have also tried for other offices. This is far more likely to occur in cities with a population greater than 10,200 and in the South Coast region. While the majority of these campaigns were for the Oregon Legislature, several were also for county, federal, and special district positions. Only one of the 32 noted respondent attempts were successful.

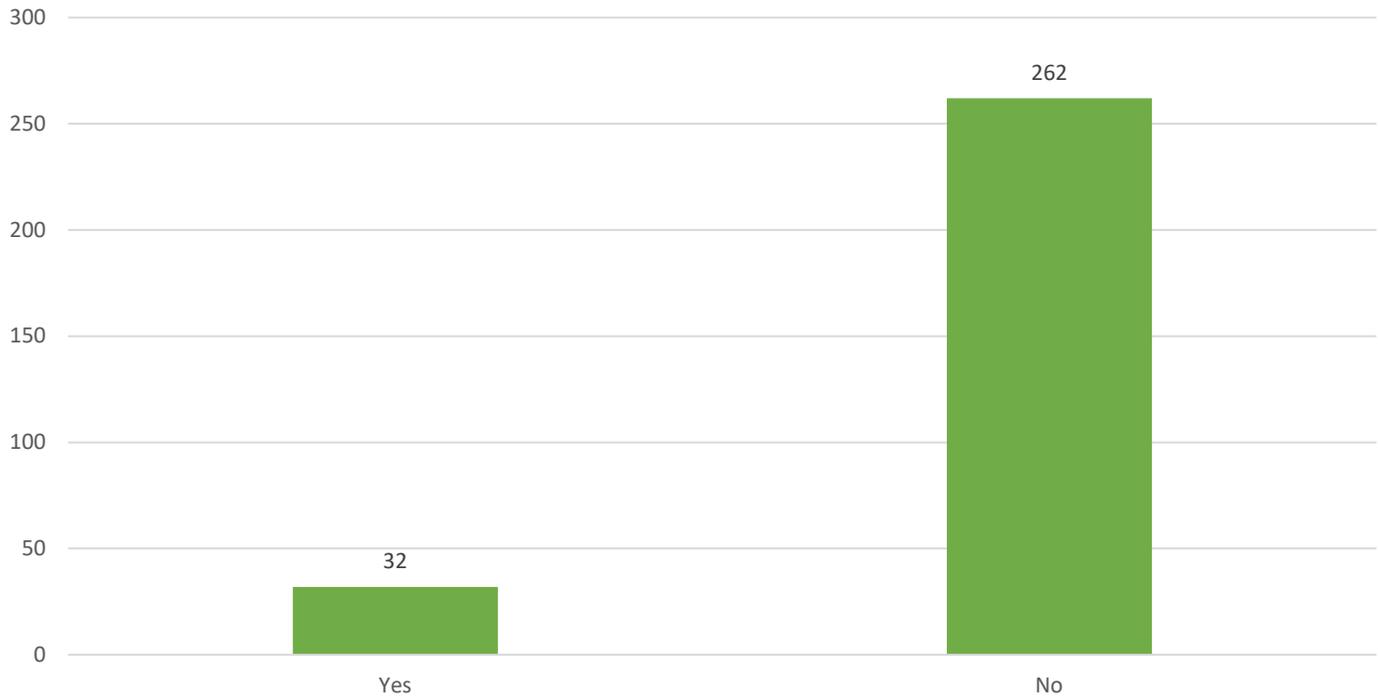


Figure 13: Have You Ever Ran for State or Federal Office?

### Hours on City Business

City elected officials spend much of their free time on city business. On average, city elected officials spend 31.1 hours per month (or 7.8 hours per week) on city business. This is a decline from the 40 hours reported in 2018 and appears to be a consistent reduction in all populations and regions. While city elected officials in population quintiles less than 10,000 spend about 6.5 hours a week on city business, those in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile cities spend on average 10.1 hours per week (or 40.6 hours per month) on city business. The region with the highest average time spent on city business is Metro (45.8 hours monthly); the Northeastern Oregon region has the least average time (16.4 hours).

### Political Ideology

A plurality of city councilors and mayors identify as moderate. Almost equal proportions of electeds identify as leaning or solid liberals and conservatives. This indicates an overall balance in political beliefs. However, much like age, this overlays more findings on population and region. To measure the political beliefs of electeds on a spectrum, an index was constructed to assign a measure for each political position.

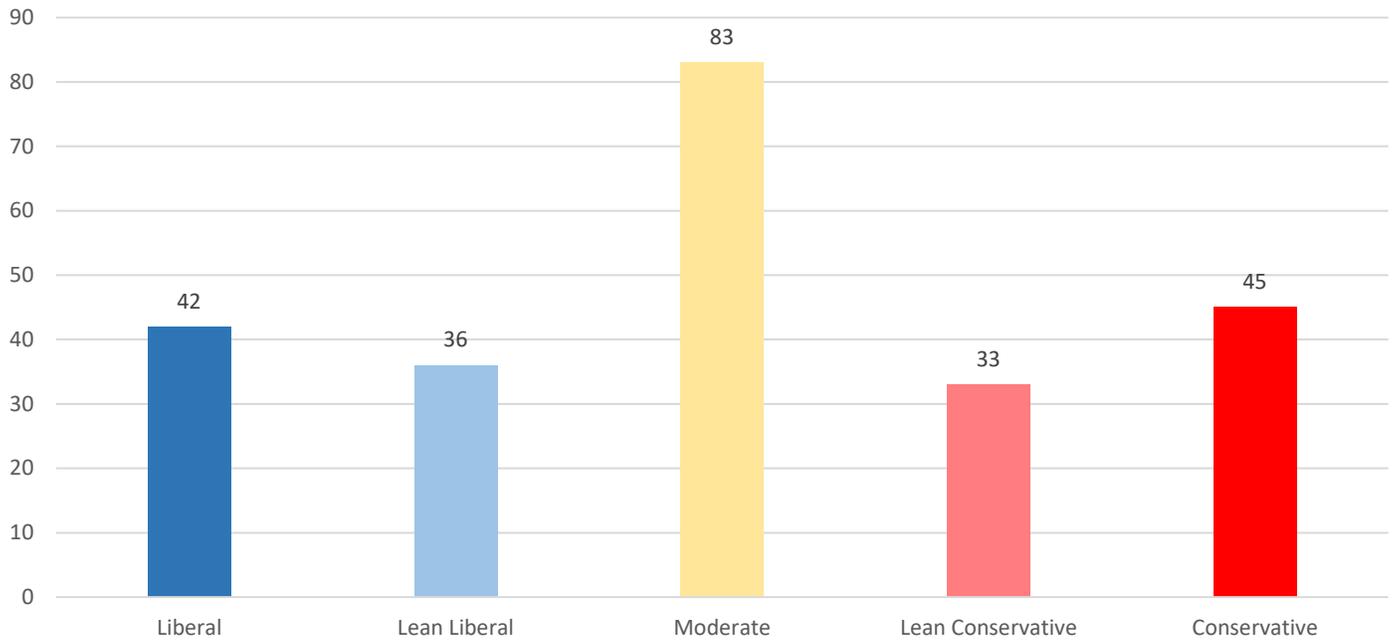


Figure 14: Political Ideology of Elected Officials

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.

Quintile	Index
1st Quintile	-0.42
2nd Quintile	-0.19
3rd Quintile	-0.19
4th Quintile	0.15
5th Quintile	0.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-0.65</b>

Table 2: Political Index by Quintiles

Region	Index
N. Coast	0.15
Metro	0.32
N. Willamette	-0.01
S. Willamette	0.06
C. Coast	0.30
S. Coast	-0.25
S. Oregon	-0.08
Gorge	0.00
C. Oregon	-0.22
SC Oregon	-0.67
NE Oregon	-0.30
E. Oregon	-0.64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-0.65</b>

Table 3: Political Index by Region

The index data 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 6.58 times more likely to have a liberal or liberal-leaning elected official than the average; cities with a population less than 500 are 3.94 times more likely to have conservative or lean conservative electeds. Regionally, (as is consistent with state voting

trends) North Coast (0.15), Metro (0.32), South Valley (0.06), and Central Coast (0.30) lean liberal. It should be noted that North Willamette Valley region leans conservative but only by 0.01 and the Gorge region’s average is exactly moderate. Interestingly, Northeastern Oregon also leans liberal in our survey’s results. Metro (0.32) leans mostly liberal, while South-Central Oregon (-0.67) leans mostly conservative.

Since 2018, smaller cities have become dramatically more conservative and cities with a population greater than 3,275 have become dramatically more liberal. With the near identical overall composition of political ideology in both surveys, this would indicate a significant shift in the political culture of cities in Oregon over the last four years. Regionally, Metro and Central Oregon have become significantly more liberal whereas Central Coast, South-Central, Northeastern and Eastern Oregon have become significantly more Conservative.

*Home Rule*

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 6.3 out of 9, identical to the average in 2018. This varied only slightly across population sizes and regions. Additionally, the data shows some correlation between political position and favor for home rule.

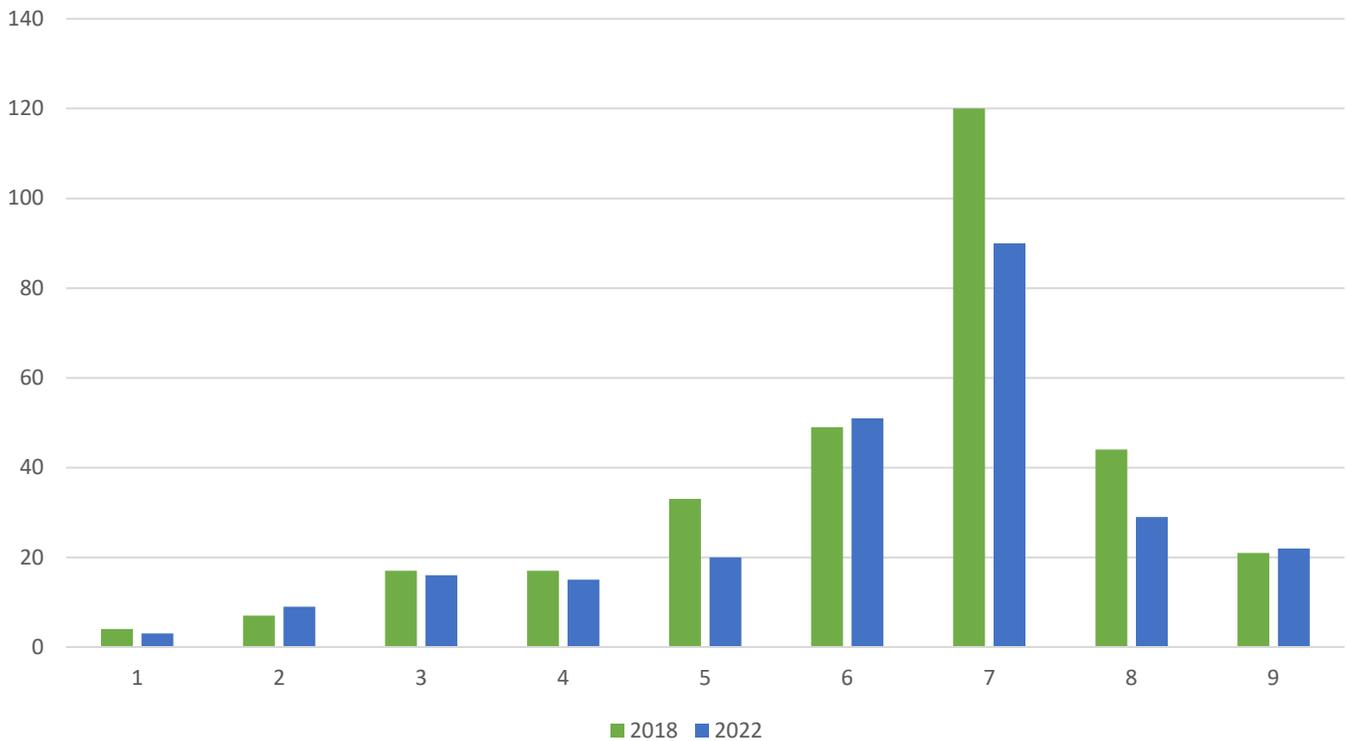


Figure 15: Scale of Desired State and Local Control (1=Complete State Control, 9=Complete City Control)

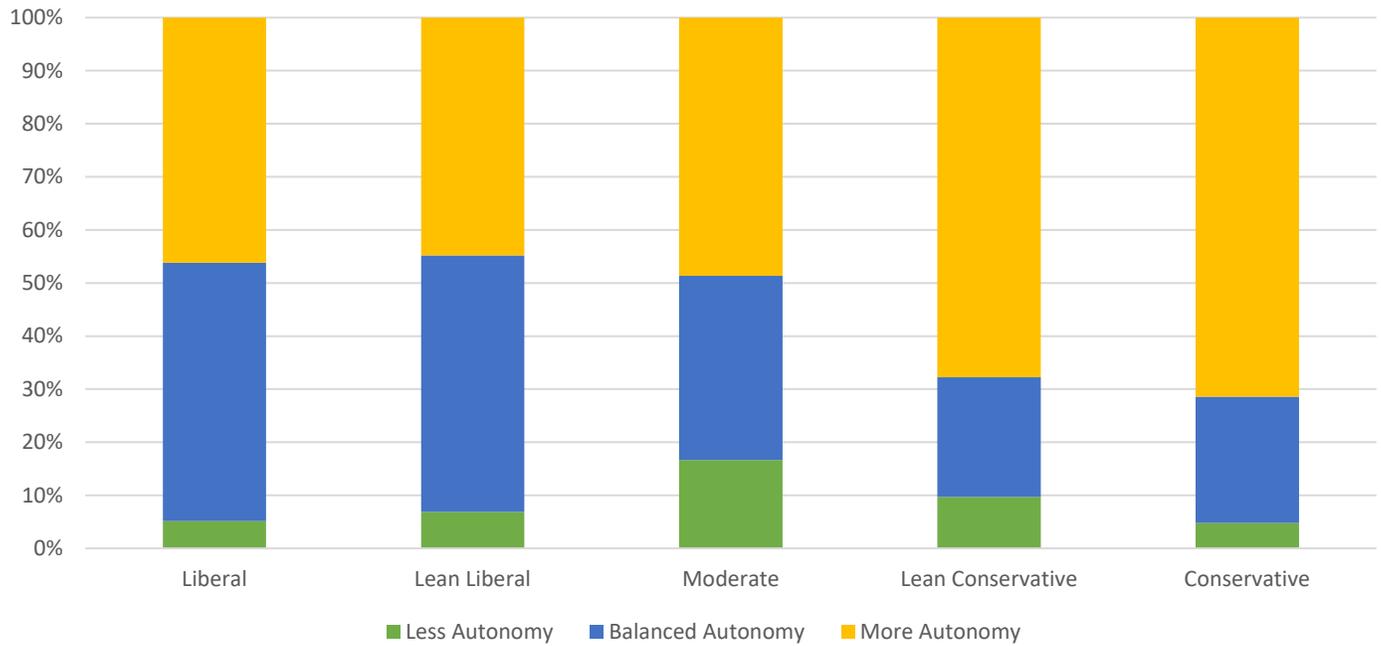
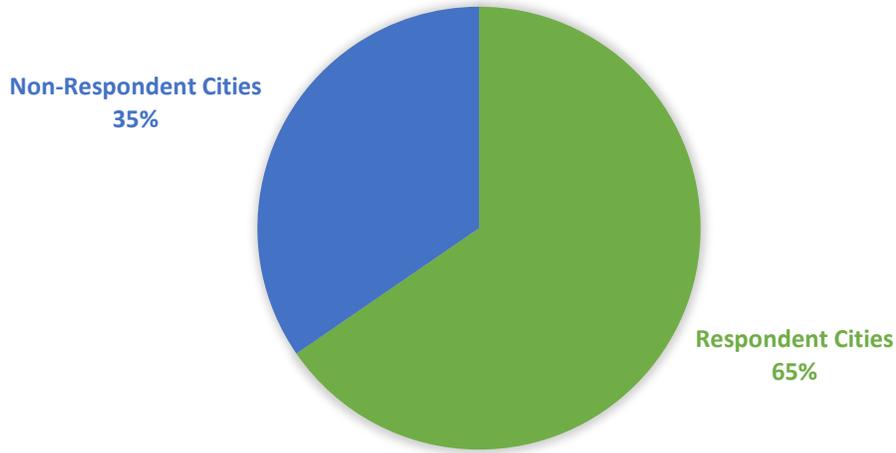


Figure 16: Scale of Desired State and Local Control (1-3=Less Autonomy, 4-6=Balanced Autonomy 7-9=More Autonomy)

## Methods

This survey was conducted from February 8 to March 4, 2022, and responses were received from 296 elected officials from 155 cities. These cities represent 1,978,052 residents, or 65% of the population residing in Oregon cities. The LOC created the survey with Qualtrics and distributed it to city mayors and city councilors and commissioners.



*Figure 17: 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 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, South Coast and Central Oregon regions. Further, the survey had an underrepresentation of cities in the Gorge, Central Coast, and all regions East of Central 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, March 4.**

Every two years, LOC sends a survey out to its elected officials to better understand the makeup of those individuals that represent their communities. The survey linked below asks city officials questions about their demographic background. Given the sensitive nature of some 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 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 frequent media inquiries 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.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6J7pcEvetio8jQ2](https://orcities.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6J7pcEvetio8jQ2)

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the survey at [research@orcities.org](mailto:research@orcities.org) or 503-588-6550.

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



Jayne Hafner, *Interim General Counsel*  
503-588-6550 direct: 503-540-6570  
1201 Court St. NE, Suite 200, Salem, OR 97301-4194  
[www.orcities.org](http://www.orcities.org)



# City Electeds Demographics Survey 2022

## Q1 City Electeds Demographics Survey 2022

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Q2 Please answer the following questions

- City Name: (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Your Name: (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Your Title: (3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Email Address: (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q3 Please select your age range

- 18-20 (1)
  - 21-30 (2)
  - 31-40 (3)
  - 41-50 (4)
  - 51-60 (5)
  - 61-70 (6)
  - 71-80 (7)
  - 80+ (9)
  - Decline to Respond (8)
- 

Q4 Please select your gender

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Other (Please Specify) (3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Decline to Respond (4)
- 

Q5 Please select your race/ethnicity

- White/ Caucasian (1)
- Latino/ Non-White Hispanic (2)
- African American (3)
- Asian/ Pacific Islander (4)
- Native American/ Alaskan Native (5)
- Multiracial (6)
- Other (Please Specify) (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- Decline to Respond (8)

---

Q6 Please 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)

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Q7 Please select your annual household income category

- 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)

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Q8 Are you retired?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

Q9 Please list your current occupation. If retired, please list your last occupation before retirement.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q10 Are you a veteran of the armed services?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

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Q11 Are you a native Oregonian?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

Q12 Are there children (minors under 18) currently living with you?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

Display This Question:

If Are you a native Oregonian? = No

Q13 How long have you lived in Oregon (in years)?

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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)
  - 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?

- Yes (1)
  - 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?

- Yes (1)
- 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

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Q22 Have you ever run for county, state or federal office?

- Yes (1)
- 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

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Q24 How many hours per month do you spend on city business?

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Q25 How would you describe your political beliefs?

- Liberal (1)
  - Lean Liberal (2)
  - Moderate (3)
  - Lean Conservative (4)
  - Conservative (5)
  - Other (Please Specify) (6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Decline to Respond (7)
- 

Q26 On a 9-point scale, please describe your opinion regarding the ideal balance between a city's ability to implement desired policies versus the state directing which policies a city may implement (1 = Complete State Control; 9 = Complete City Control)



- 1 (1)
  - 2 (2)
  - 3 (3)
  - 4 (4)
  - 5 (5)
  - 6 (6)
  - 7 (7)
  - 8 (8)
  - 9 (9)
- 

Q27 Do you have any additional comments about this survey?

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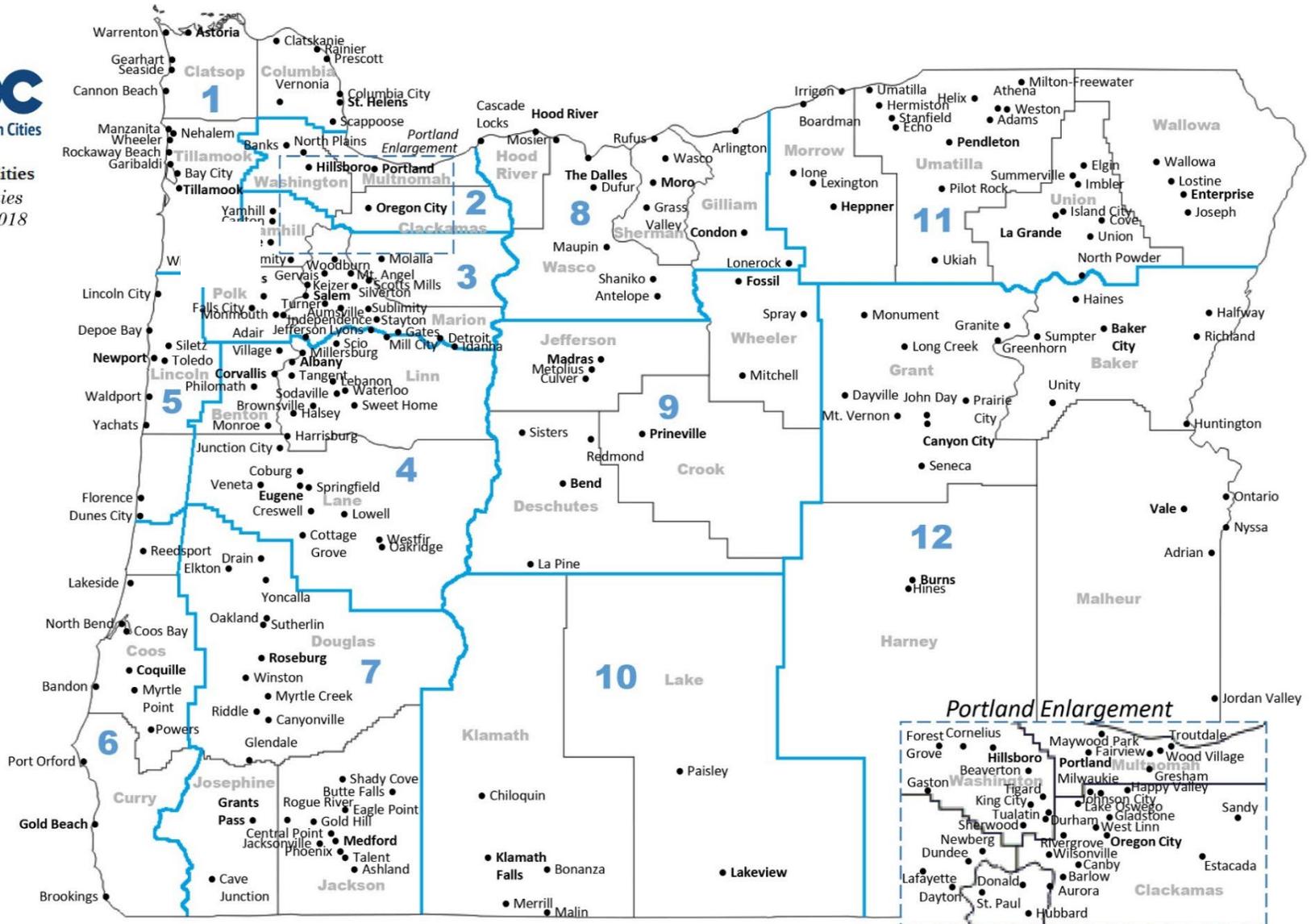
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# Appendix C: Map of Small Cities Regions



Member Cities  
Small Cities  
Regions 2018



## Appendix D: Population Quintile and Regional Breakdowns

Quintile Ranges	# Cities	% Cities
1st Quintile <470	48	19.8%
2nd Quintile 471-1300	48	19.8%
3rd Quintile 1301-3250	48	19.8%
4th Quintile 3251-10200	49	20.2%
5th Quintile >10200	48	19.8%
Small Cities <5000	165	68.2%
Top 5 % >40000	12	5.0%

	Region 1 N. Coast	Region 2 Metro	Region 3 N. Willamette	Region 4 S. Willamette	Region 5 C. Coast	Region 6 S. Coast	Region 7 S. Oregon	Region 8 Gorge	Region 9 C. Oregon	Region 10 SC Oregon	Region 11 NE Oregon	Region 12 E. Oregon	TOTALS
1st Quintile	3	1	4	3	0	0	2	8	2	2	9	14	48
2nd Quintile	2	4	5	7	2	2	6	4	2	3	8	3	48
3rd Quintile	8	2	8	3	3	4	5	1	3	1	6	4	48
4th Quintile	5	5	11	8	3	4	6	1	1	0	3	2	49
5th Quintile	1	19	7	5	1	1	5	1	3	1	3	1	48
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%