

Changing the Agenda: How Shifting Demographics Results in Different Leaders

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Introduction

Since 1950, Los Angeles County has seen a demographic shift that expanded the representation of minorities in political offices. Over the next four decades, the U.S. Census Bureau projects an increase in Black, Latina/o, and Asian individuals as a percentage of the population of the United States.

Methodology

The Top 100 Running Roster collected by Loyola Marymount University's Center for the Study of Los Angeles tracks elected officials holding the 100 most influential offices in LA County by race/ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation. The Top 100 offices are defined by budget, perceived prestige, and number of constituents.

Legend for Data Visualizations

= Top 100 elected officials in 2020

= population estimates for 2019

= voter registration as of October 2020

Note: the total number of elected officials fluctuates due to factors such as restricting and vacancies.

Results

Trends show a decrease in the percent of White elected officials and increases in the percent of Black, Latina/o, Asian, and Jewish elected officials part of the Top 100: White individuals held 90% of offices in 1950, compared to less than 20% of offices in 2020. Regarding gender, men still hold more than 70% of the offices in the Top 100; women marched closest to parity in 2005 with 39%. Democratic representation was at its highest in 2018 (72%), growing since 1957, when the percentage of Democrats surpassed that of Republicans in the Top 100.

Conclusion

The trends in LA County show how a demographic shift, like the one projected for the U.S., can result in wider political representation. From the LA County data, it is suggested that we will see more representation of race/ethnicity, gender, and individuals who identify as democrats in office across the country.

References

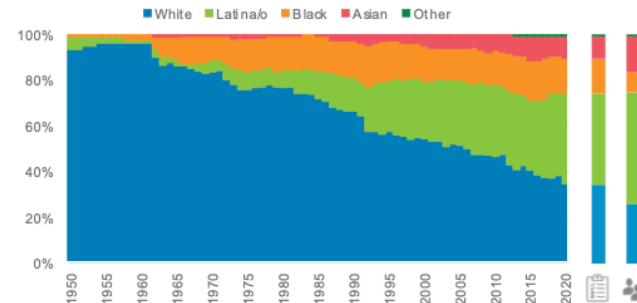
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California Secretary of State. Elections and Voter Information.

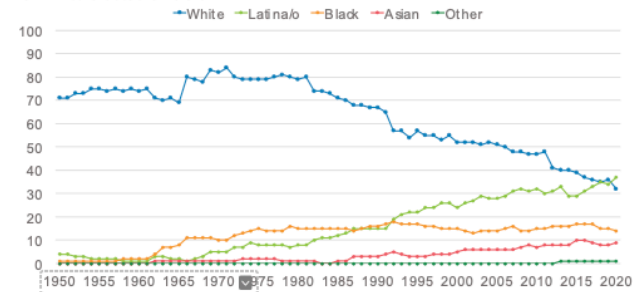
Race/Ethnicity

In 1950, White individuals held 90% of offices. Today, they hold less than 40%.



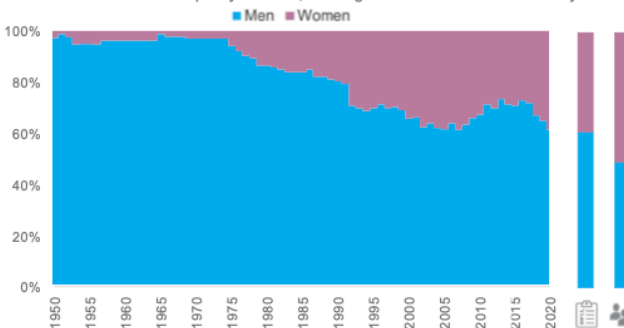
Race/Ethnicity

In 2019, the number of Latina/o elected officials in office surpassed the number of White elected officials.



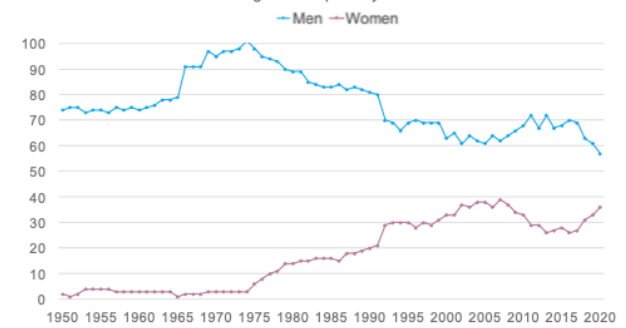
Gender

Women were closest to parity in 2007, holding 39% of offices in LA County.



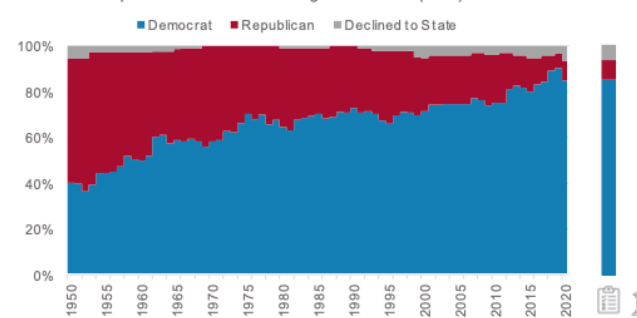
Gender

Women were elected into the greatest quantity of offices in 2007.



Political Party

Democratic representation was at its highest in 2018 (72%).



Political Party

Democratic representation surpassed Republican representation in 1957.

