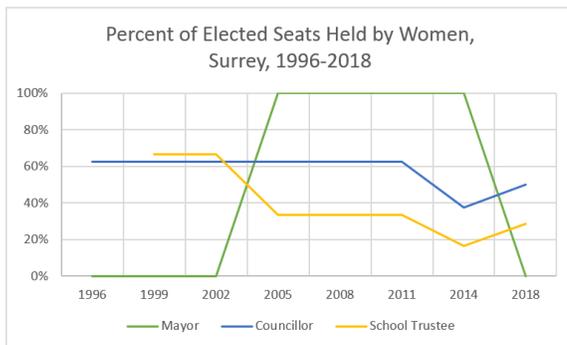
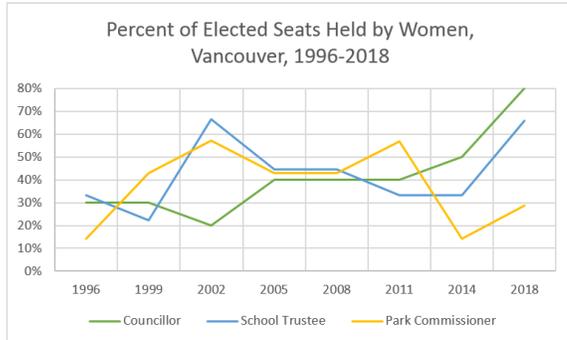


# WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: VANCOUVER AND SURREY

## Diversity and Representation in City Hall

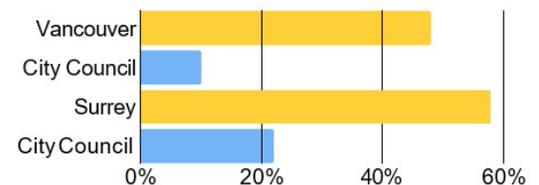


- ✓ In 2018, Vancouver elected a record high of eight women to City Council (80%).
- ✓ The percentage of women elected to all three positions increased in 2018, but it is too early to tell if this will continue in the next election.
- ✓ Vancouver has never had a woman mayor.
- ✓ In 2018, four of the Councillors elected in Surrey were women (50%).
- ✓ Surrey had two women mayors from 2005 to 2014.
- ✓ Even with more women being elected, councils and mayors in Vancouver and Surrey do not look like the cities that they represent. The majority of elected officials are white, even though both cities are very diverse.

*"It's not that [racially diverse and Indigenous] candidates aren't running... The issue is that voters aren't choosing them. Strategies to increase voter turnout among [racially diverse and Indigenous people] must be a part of any effort to address the persistent Whiteness of municipal politics."*

- Erin Tolley, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

% of racially diverse and Indigenous people in the population and on City Council



## Why are we seeing this lack of diversity?



### At-large voting system

In 2018, there were **48 people** running just for council in Surrey. In Vancouver, there were **71 candidates** from neighbourhoods all across the city. Voters who face a large number of names on a ballot may fall back on biases. They might question women's ability to hold office, or if people from a certain ethnic group are qualified.

**Recommendation:** Move towards a ward system. In many cities in Canada, people run only in their ward which is like a riding. Voters only choose among people running in the ward where they live. There are far fewer candidates on the ballot, and people's choices would be based less on their biases and more on the candidates and what they stand for.

## Continued:



### Low voter turnout and lack of voter diversity

In 2018, only 39% of people in Vancouver voted. In Surrey, that number was 33%. While women tend to vote in greater numbers than men, they also make up the biggest group of non-voters because of family care duties, work, and language barriers. Studies tell us that women tend not to vote if they feel they do not know enough about the issues and the people running to make wise choices.

**Recommendation:** Cities should reach out to people who tend not to vote. These groups include women in all their diversity, including women of colour, Indigenous women, and young women. Work with community or neighbourhood groups to educate people about how to vote, how to get signed up to vote, where to go, and when they can vote.

## Women face unique challenges when they run for office.



### Not feeling like they know enough

Women tend to believe that they do not know enough or do not have enough background to run for office. A former candidate said: “Women... doubt themselves and their qualifications and skills. Men seem to have that problem less.”



### Lack of time and money

Running for office takes time and money. Women play many important roles — as mothers, partners, workers, and caregivers. Because women are often underpaid, they often cannot afford to take time away from work to run for office.



### Sexism and racism

Men and women both have to face racism and other types of bigotry when running for office. But women also have to deal with sexism. Women may also face bias because of their age, culture, appearance, or race, in addition to their gender.

## What can you do?

1

### Help reach out to women and racially diverse and Indigenous voters

If your city does not already have an outreach strategy, make it clear to your councilors that you think it is important. Work with your neighbourhood groups, place of worship, and friends and family to reach out to people who may need some extra help to learn about voting.

2

### Talk to political parties

Since both Surrey and Vancouver have political parties at the city level, ask them where they stand on putting women on their slates, particularly diverse women.

3

### Volunteer for a woman candidate

You can stuff envelopes, answer phones and make calls, put out signs, fundraise, and canvas on behalf of the candidate. Women who run often inspire other women to run, too.

4

### Mentor a woman running for office

If you are a woman who has run for, or served in, an elected office, share your story, wisdom, advice, and support.

5

### Consider running for office

Women who have run for, or served in, elected office often say that it was one of the most rewarding things they ever did.

6

### Most importantly, vote!

Educate yourself about the candidates and the issues. Support the candidates and parties who will fight for gender equity and diversity at City Hall.



CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN  
INSTITUT CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES SUR LES FEMMES



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

ISBN 978-1-894876-87-2