



# Gender Balanced Cabinets

Where we stand, why it matters

July 2022 | REPRESENTWOMEN

**A thriving democracy is within our reach,** but we must ensure that women across the racial, ideological, and geographic spectrum have equal opportunities to enter political office so that our nation's rich diversity is reflected in our government.

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**RepresentWomen** is a research-based advocacy group that promotes the use of systems strategies to advance women's representation and leadership in the U.S. and abroad.

To achieve our mission, RepresentWomen partners with allies across the country and political spectrum who help amplify our work by putting what we've researched into practice. By working in concert with our allies to address the barriers to office, we can ensure that more women RUN, WIN, SERVE & LEAD.

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# Why Cabinet Representation Matters

**More than 100 years** after women gained full citizenship rights through the 19th Amendment, women are still under-represented in government. While it is widely known that no woman has become president, it is not only the highest executive offices where women have not had access: women also face barriers at the state level.

Even in 2022, the vast majority of state cabinets are dominated by men. Cabinet members hold a vital position of power: running state agencies and serving as trusted advisors to the governor, helping them make important decisions. In nearly all states, most, if not all, cabinet members are appointed by the governor.

Cabinet members run departments and agencies ranging from law enforcement to the state's education system, to social services. From the DMV to the water out of the tap, cabinet members touch citizens' lives in countless ways everyday. States need the best and the brightest to tackle these issues, and cutting women out of the equation severely limits the candidate pool. In addition to the impressive qualifications many women bring to the table, they also bring a unique perspective shaped by their lived experiences as diverse women in those states. It is essential that women have a role in shaping these services from the lowest to the highest levels.

Furthermore, appointed positions are an important and viable pathway to party leadership and elected positions. Thus, the impact of increasing gender diversity in the cabinet not only increases women's representation in cabinets right now, but can increase gender balance in an even wider scope for decades to come.

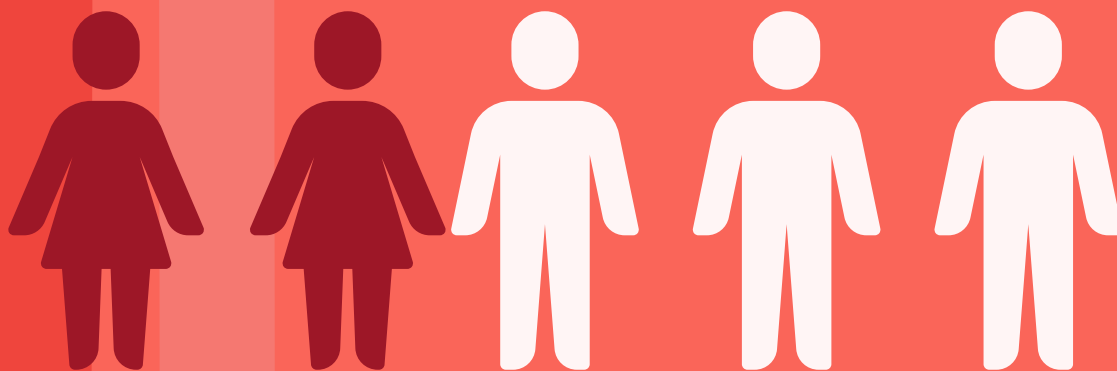
## Part One

# Gender Makeup of State Cabinets

**In January 2022**, RepresentWomen conducted an analysis of the demographic makeup of cabinets in all states. For all but one state analyzed (Florida), the governor appoints all or most cabinet members.

The average state cabinet has a membership of less than 40% women. Only 12 states have achieved gender balance in their cabinets. It should be noted that, in one of those states (Florida), the entire cabinet is elected by the people rather than appointed by the governor.

## Women's Representation in State Cabinets

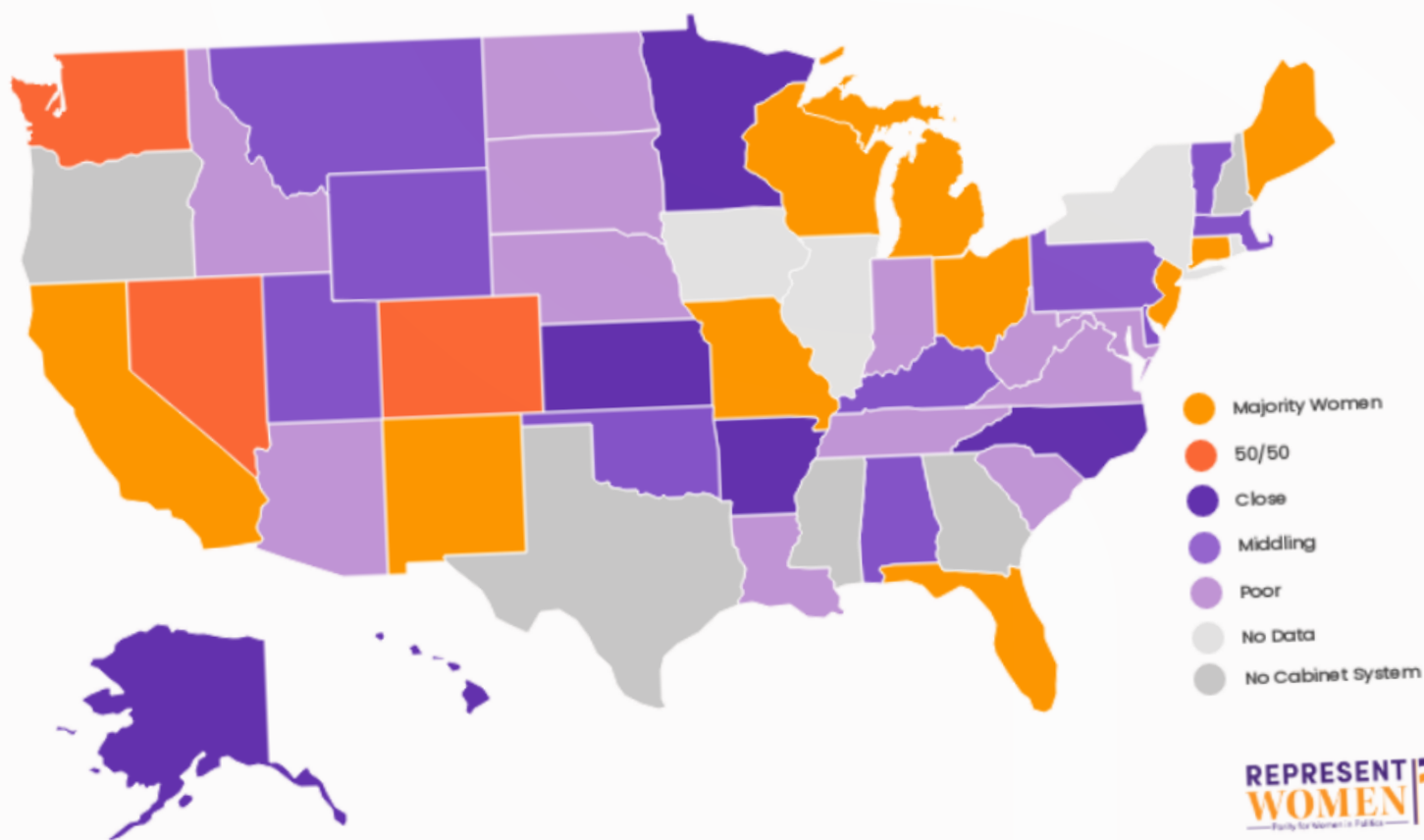


On average, women make up **less than 40%** of state cabinets

Source: RepresentWomen January 2022

**As seen in the map below,** geographic location doesn't seem to impact whether a cabinet is gender balanced or not – states from the Rockies, the coasts, to the heartland all have a wide range of gender representation. **Party does make a significant difference,** with Republicans appointing more male-dominated cabinets. However, that's not to say none appoint gender-balanced cabinets: for example, the Republican governors (both men) of Missouri and Ohio appointed cabinets that weren't just equal, but majority women.

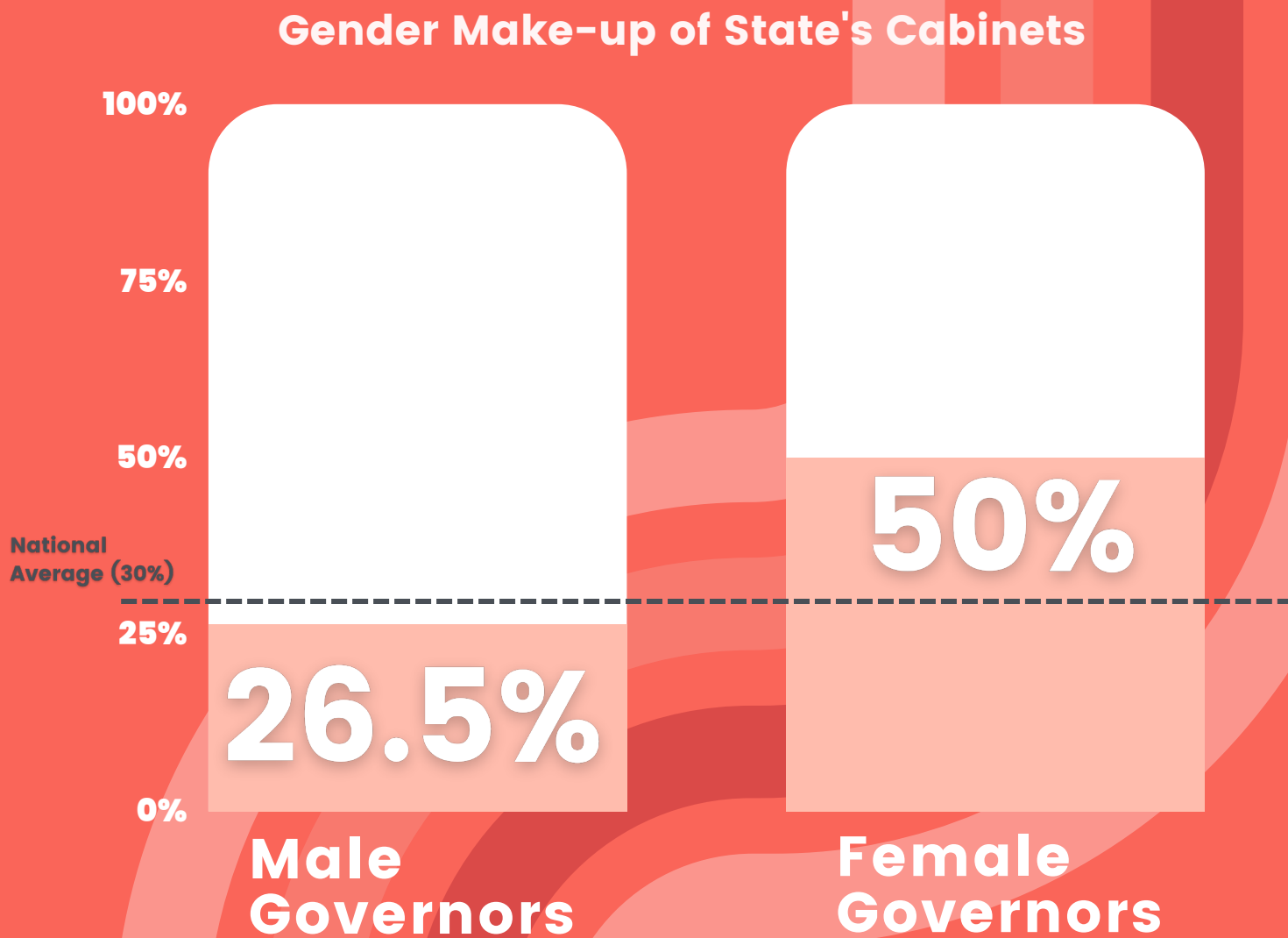
## Gender Makeup of Cabinets, 2022



Last Updated: January 2022

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# Women governors are more likely to create gender balanced cabinets.



Source: RepresentWomen January 2022

## One way to achieve gender balance is to elect more women as governors.

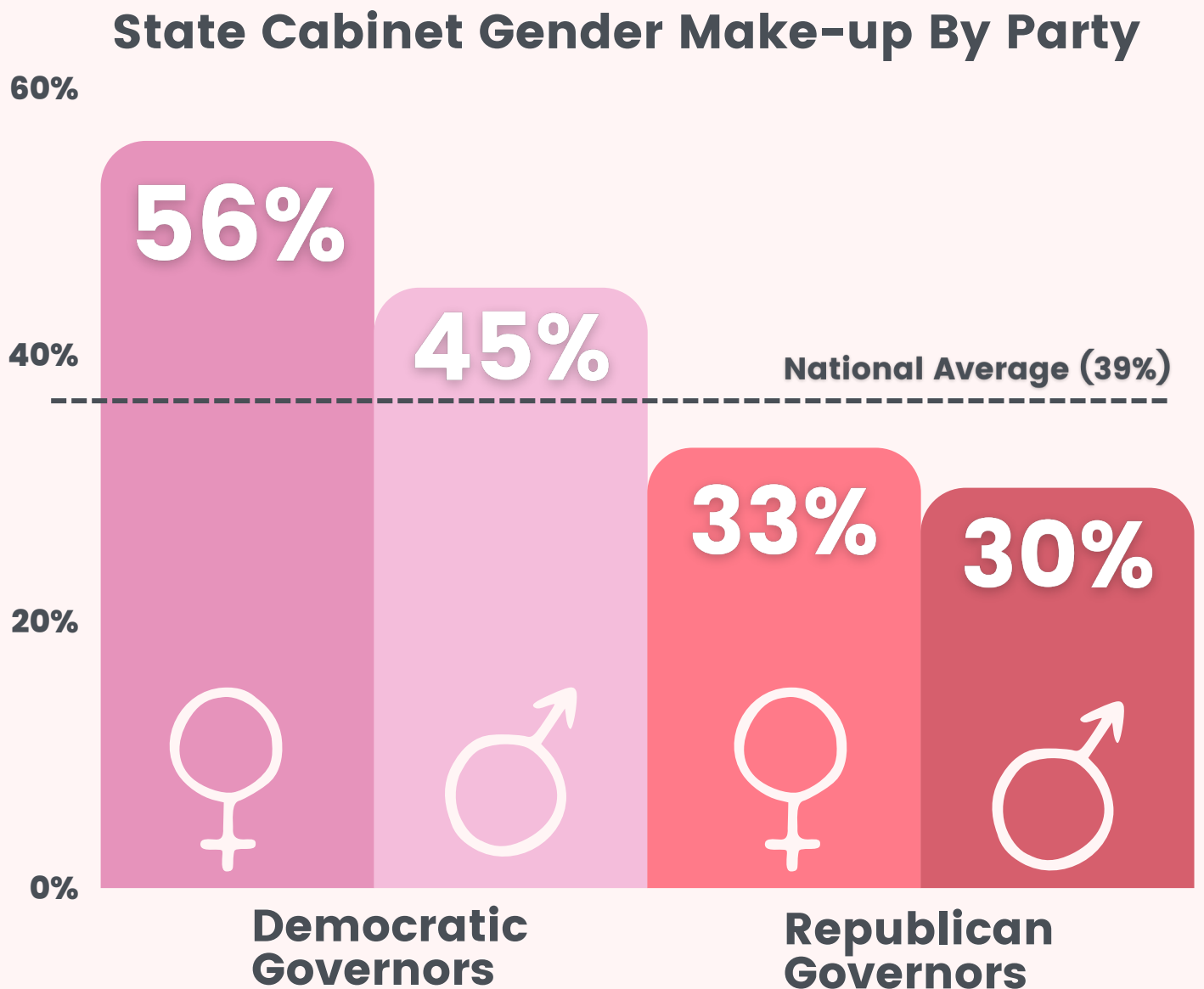
In our analysis, women governors tended to be more mindful of gender equity: half of all women governors had gender balanced cabinets, compared to less than a third of male governors.

# POLITICAL PARTIES

**Party also plays a role, but a more nuanced one than at first glance.**

When both gender and party are analyzed, it becomes clear that the gender of the governor appears only to have an impact on gender balance in the cabinet for Democratic governors. An interesting thing to note is that Republican women governors tended to have slightly lower shares of women in their cabinets than Republican men. While we can't draw broad conclusions from this, considering the small effect size and very small sample size due to the scarcity of female Republican governors, it is an interesting consideration. If this effect exists, it may be due to an attempt to not appear like she is favoring her own gender by ensuring men have a supermajority in her cabinet.

# Party and gender affect gender balance of cabinets.



Source: RepresentWomen January 2022

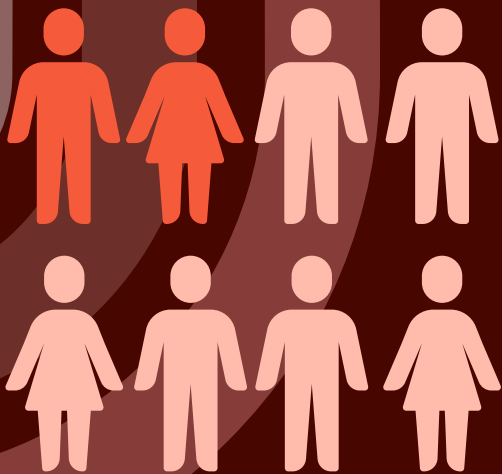


## Part Two

# Representation of People of Color in State Cabinets

**The picture** for racial diversity in state leadership at first glance appears bleak. The national average of racial minority membership in state cabinets is less than 20%. Fortunately, this metric is flawed for making an analysis. This lower number is likely due to the large number of small, not-racially diverse states with equally non-diverse cabinets. We go into deeper analysis on the next page.

## PoC Representation in State Cabinets

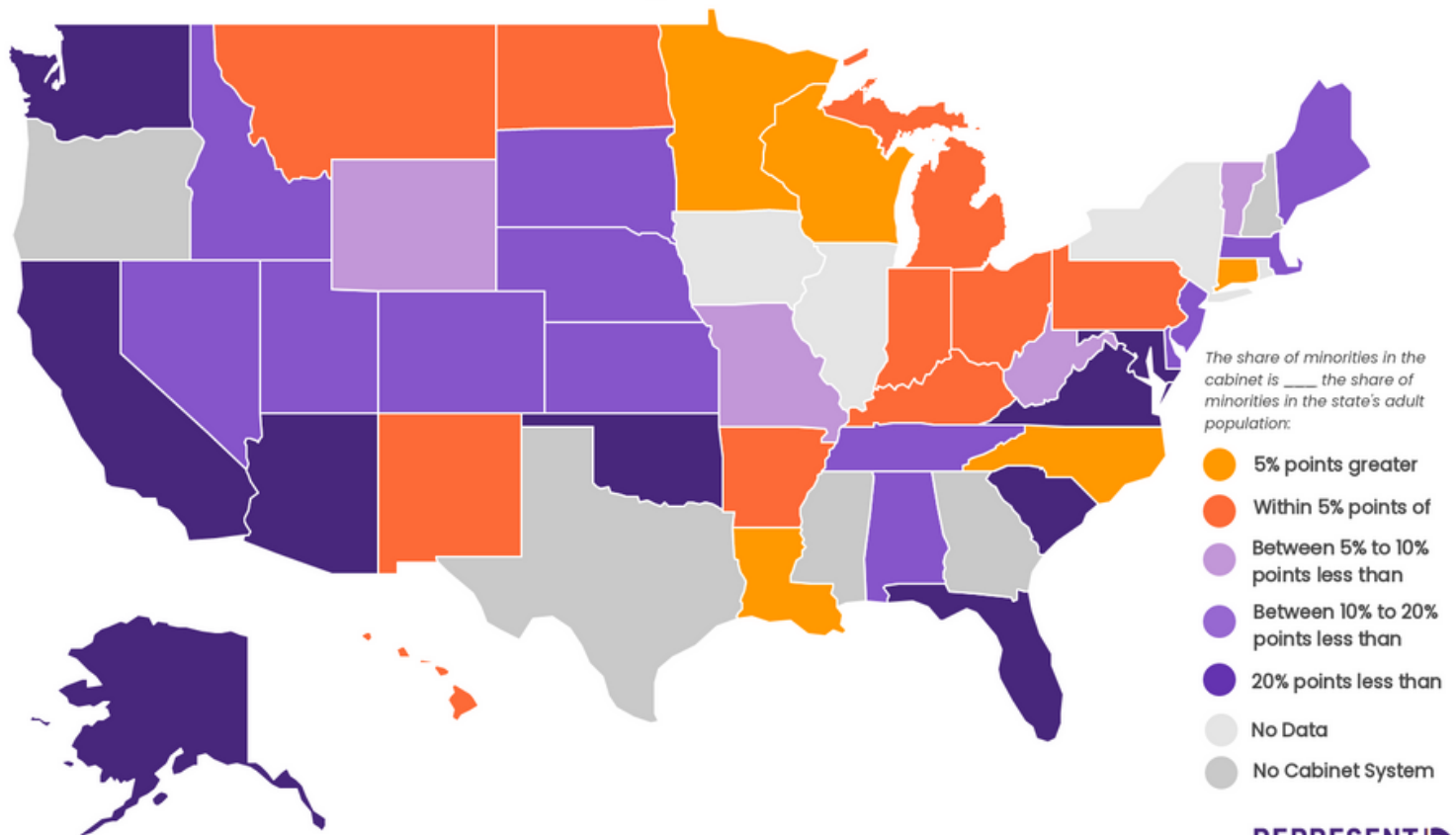


On average, people of color make up less than 20% of state cabinets.

But, this doesn't explain the whole story...

Source: RepresentWomen January 2022

## Racial Makeup of Cabinets, 2022



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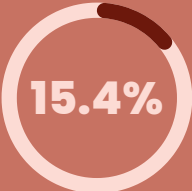
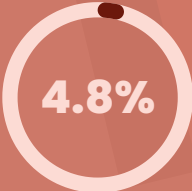
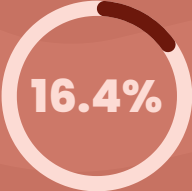

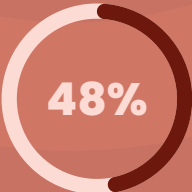
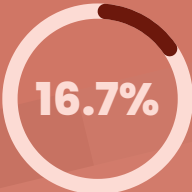
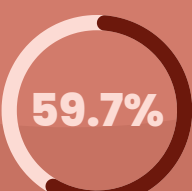
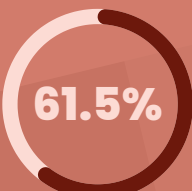
**Unsurprisingly,** we found that states with the highest shares of racial and ethnic minorities had more diverse cabinets. However, this does not explain the whole story since, unlike gender, race varies significantly from state to state.

For example, a state with 15% of its cabinet made up of people of color would be inexcusable in a minority-majority state like Hawaii, but that same racial composition would be an over-representation in a state like Maine, which has a population that's more than 93% white.

In the interest of comparing apples to apples, we compared states' level of diversity in their cabinets to that of their states themselves, utilizing the 2020 census estimates for the racial makeup of the adult population in each state. As seen in the map above and the table on the next page, the picture is complicated.

# States Comparison

Source: RepresentWomen, U.S. Census, January 2022

State	Minority Share in Adult Population	Minority Share in Cabinet	Minority Cabinet Representation Relative to State Population
South Dakota	 15.4%	 4.8%	Underrepresented by 10.7% points
Wisconsin	 16.4%	 25%	Overrepresented by 8.6% points
Maryland	 48%	 16.7%	Underrepresented by 31.3% points
New Mexico	 59.7%	 61.5%	Overrepresented by 1.9% points

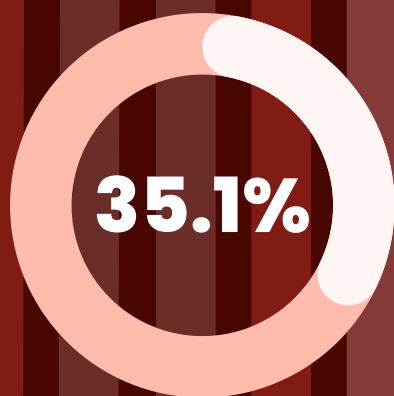
*Numbers do not subtract perfectly due to rounding*

**Some states have a relatively high minority share in their cabinets, but actually severely underrepresent people of color when compared to their population level in the state. Others demonstrate the opposite: they have low minority shares, but minorities are actually overrepresented based on state demographic data.**

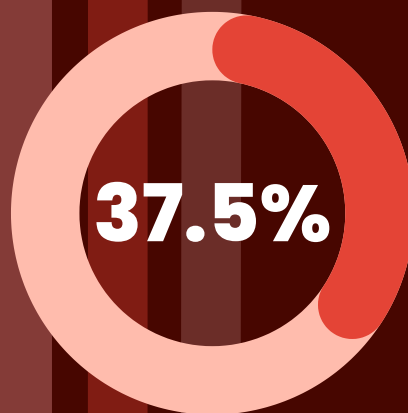
# APPOINTMENTS

**The gender of the governor seems to have little impact on whether they'll choose a cabinet that will accurately reflect their state's racial demographics, but the race and party of the governor do.**

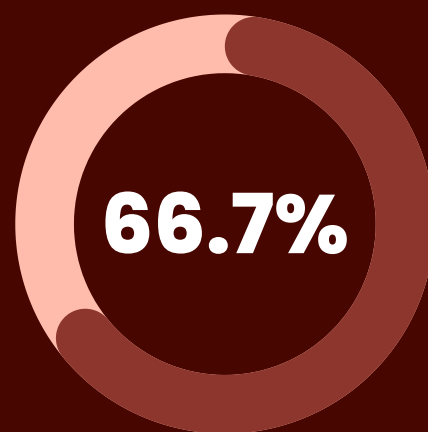
Governors of color are more likely than white governors to have cabinets at least as diverse as their state. Party also appears to have an impact, with the majority of Democratic governors appointing cabinets that were at least as diverse as their states, as opposed to less than 30% of Republican governors. Due to the extremely limited number of governors of color (three), breaking the data down further by both party and gender would not reliably demonstrate relationships between the different factors and outcomes.



**WHITE GOVERNORS**



**AVERAGE**



**POC GOVERNORS**

Source: RepresentWomen, U.S. Census, January 2022

# How Other Organizations are Advocating

**To inform** our own programming on advancing gender balanced appointments and to establish a scalable, replicable, and transformative model for advancing gender balanced appointments, we gathered learnings from similar initiatives around the country.



**The Victory Institute's Presidential Appointment Initiative**



**United WE's Appointment Project**

**CAWP** CENTER FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND POLITICS

**New Jersey Bipartisan Coalition for Women's Appointments (NJBCWA)**



**Some organizations** have advocated for greater representation at the state cabinet level primarily through **public pressure** on the campaign trail. For example, the **New Jersey Bipartisan Coalition for Women's Appointments**(NJBCWA) was able to get both candidates for governor in 2017 to promise to appoint a “significant” number of women, and a Connecticut campaign in the 2018 gubernatorial race accomplished the same. Both initiatives relied heavily on publicly pressuring candidates using media, while NJBCWA supplied candidates with shortlists of potential women appointees customized for each party.



Republican nominee Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, right, answers a question during the Oct. 18 gubernatorial debate against Democratic nominee Phil Murphy ( AP Photo/Julio Cortez, Pool / AP Images )

**Initiatives** like United WE's Appointment Project, which focuses on providing training to help women get appointed at the local level, are working on supplying a pipeline of candidates for future state cabinet positions.





**At the national level,** organizations of all types help promote appointments. Initiatives like the **Presidential Appointment Initiative** of the LGBTQ Victory Institute have resume banks full of qualified LGBTQ candidates for appointments, and hand-pick ones that they believe may be of particular interest to executives. Similarly, initiatives across a wide variety of groups provide training and education on what positions are available and how to get appointed.





# Take Aways

**Women governors** and governors of color are more likely to ensure their cabinets represent their groups, respectively.

**Key strategies** used to promote greater representation in cabinet appointments have been public pressure, providing shortlists to candidates, creating training for potential appointees, and creating a pipeline for women to become qualified.

**Removing** systemic barriers for more women, and especially women of color, to become governors is a critical pathway to increase women's appointments.

**It's been over a century** since women were allowed to fully participate in governance, but the promise of equality has still not been met. While state cabinet positions often lack the press coverage and glamor of national office, the decisions made by people in these positions impact our daily lives.

**Appointments** are also an important pathway to greater positions of power, including elected positions and party leadership. Increasing representation in appointed positions has powerful downstream effects by increasing the supply of experienced, viable, and recognizable women candidates in the years and decades that follow. In the next century, let's ensure that women have an equal seat in the room where these decisions happen.

# Footnotes

For analyses on the relationship between governor gender / race / party and cabinet gender / race makeup we excluded the one state where the majority of all cabinet members are not appointed by the governor. Similarly, in our analyses we excluded states that did not have cabinets (five: GA, MS, NH, OR, TX) or for which we did not have cabinet data (four: IL, IA, NY, RI).

\*Note: Of the three women Republican governors, we were only able to obtain data for two (SD and AL), so only that data is used.

# Sources

- All data on cabinet makeup collected in Jan 2022 from official state government websites and official correspondence
- Interview with Patti Russo of the Campaign School at Yale on January 11 2022
- Interview with Mario Beovides, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs at NALEO on January 7 2022
- Interview with Robert Glenski of the Appointments Project by United WE on January 7 2022
- “Presidential Appointment Initiative FAQ.” LGBTQ Victory Institute, ([2022](#))
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- “Gubernatorial Candidates Respond to Group’s Call for Equity in Government, Promise to Appoint More Women.” Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University, ([2017](#))
- “New Jersey Bipartisan Coalition for Women's Appointments.” Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University, ([2022](#))



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