

2023 CALIFORNIA CITY MANAGER SURVEY: A PROFILE OF THE PROFESSION

THE ROSE INSTITUTE OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
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I

INTRODUCTION

City managers serve as chief executive officers in hundreds of cities across California, making them the state's most important group of local government officials. Despite their importance, however, comparatively little study has been done of the men and women who fill these critical positions. What are the demographic characteristics of California's city managers? What are their educational backgrounds? What were their work experiences before their appointments? And, what do they see as the most important issues facing their cities? To find initial answers to these questions, the California City Management Foundation (CCMF), joined by Tripepi Smith Talent Solutions and the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority, commissioned the Rose Institute of State and Local Government, an academic research institute at Claremont McKenna College, to survey the state's city managers. This report presents the survey's findings and offers a profile of the city management profession in California.

The city manager system dates back to the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, critics of municipal government such as Lincoln Steffens, author of *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), decried corruption and bossism in cities across the country, and organizations such as the National Municipal League (1894) were established to promote urban reform. The reformers argued that cities could be redeemed through the introduction of non-partisan, professional management.

Proponents of the professionalization movement emerged in many parts of the United States, with Californians exerting early leadership. A notable example was Haven H. Mason, a prominent city official in Santa Clara and later San Francisco, founder in 1898 of the League of California Municipalities (later known as the League of California Cities), and editor of the magazine *California Municipalities*. In an 1899 editorial in that journal, Mason advocated for a "distinct profession of municipal man-

agers" that would have "sound business judgment" and apply "strict business principles." Mason noted that city administration is a "business peculiar to itself" with "no other business concern like it in the commercial world." As a result, he advocated that universities develop programs specially designed to prepare graduates "to enter the new profession of conducting municipal business." Mason concluded that "[i]t would be an interesting experiment for a city to employ a professional manager, and it would very likely prove a successful experiment. Then ambitious young men would fit themselves for municipal employment and before long our cities would be managed by professional municipal officers instead of by professional politicians."¹

Over the next two decades, several cities pursued these experiments. In 1904, the small city of Ukiah, in Northern California, became what seems to have been the first city in the nation to hire a chief executive, selected by the city council, although the office was not called "manager."² Other experiments followed in Staunton, Virginia (1908) and Sumter, South Carolina (1912). In 1914, Inglewood and Glendale became the first California cities to adopt the council-manager system, as it came to be known.³ That same year, the City Manager Association (later the International City/County Management Association, or ICMA) was established, providing an organizational structure for the new profession. In 1915, the National Municipal League adopted the manager plan in its Model City Charter, giving the concept widespread legitimacy and appeal.⁴

Unlike in "strong mayor" cities where the mayor wields executive authority, in a council-manager system, the city manager acts as the chief executive and is charged with administering the full range of municipal operations. In council-manager cities, elected representatives (council and mayor) are expected to set policies and the city manager implement them, although managers often share responsibility for policy formation. The role of a city

1 Haven A. Mason, "A Profession of Municipal Management," *California Municipalities*, August 1899, reprinted in Richard J. Stillman II, *The Rise of the City Manager: A Public Professional in Local Government*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974): 117-119.

2 Stillman, *The Rise of the City Manager*, 14; Randy H. Hamilton, "Ukiah, 1904: A Modest Footnote to the History of the Council-Manager Form of Municipal Government in the United States," Berkeley, CA: U.C. Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies Working Paper 89-2, March 1989: 1-8.

3 John C. Bollens, *Appointed Executive Local Government*, Los Angeles: Haynes Foundation, 1952, 1.

4 Stillman, *The Rise of the City Manager*, 19, 114.



manager is complex and requires a broad range of skills. City managers are expected to possess a high degree of education and training and to adhere to a set of professional values, norms, ethical standards, and practices. In 1985, the California City Managers Foundation (CCMF) was founded in part to strengthen these professional norms and promote city management education.

California has embraced the council-manager form of municipal government more completely than the rest of the nation. In a 2016 study published by Common Cause, researcher Nicolas Heidorn found that 468 California cities (or 97 percent) used this system. Only five major cities in the state — Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Fresno, and Oakland — used a “strong mayor” or mayor-council system in which the elected mayor is the chief administrative officer, assisted by an appointed administrative official.⁵ A few small cities in California have decentralized the administration of government, with department heads reporting directly to the city council or to individual council members.⁶ As of 2018, California cities used the council-manager system at more than double the national rate. According to the ICMA 2018 Municipal Form of Government Survey, 48.2% of American cities (n = 4,020 cities) reported they used the council-manager form of government, compared with 38.2% that used the mayor-council system.⁷

“City manager” is the most common title used for the chief administrative officer in the vast majority of California cities. Of the 482 cities in this study, 431 use a

city manager (we include the 417 current city managers, 11 interim city managers, two acting city managers, and one deputy city manager). “City administrator” is the next most common title (26 cities), followed by town manager (17 cities). With the exception of the five cities that have a strong mayor system of government, the city managers, city administrators, and town managers perform functionally equivalent jobs. For the balance of this report, we use the term “city manager” to include all of these positions.

Although the council-manager system has become the dominant form of municipal government in California, only limited research has focused on the state’s city managers as a group. One notable exception is the study of the status of women in the profession. ICMA has conducted research on the number and percentage of women chief administrative officers (including city managers and the highest-level county administrators) in California and across the nation. Those findings, presented in reports in 1976 and 2014 and in later updates, indicate that the number of women at the top level of local government management has increased over time, but that women remain underrepresented in those positions — 19% in the United States and 25% in California as of 2021.⁸ This report seeks to supplement this and other research on the city managers in California and provide a more robust profile of the profession.

5 “San Diego has a Chief Operating Officer, Los Angeles a Chief Administrative Officer, and Fresno a City Manager. Both San Francisco and Oakland have a City Administrator.”

6 Nicolas Heidorn, *California Municipal Democracy Index 2016*, Sacramento, CA: California Common Cause, 2016, 3, <https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/states/california/research-and-reports/california-municipal-key-findings.pdf>. California state law authorizes the use of the city manager system. See *Cal. Gov. Code § 34851* (2022). https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=2.&title=4.&part=1.&chapter=4.&article=1.

7 International City/County Management Association. *2018 Municipal Form of Government Survey – Summary of Survey Results*. Washington, DC: ICMA, 2019, 1, <https://icma.org/sites/default/files/2018%20Municipal%20Form%20of%20Government%20Survey%20Report.pdf>.

8 See Pamela W. Antil, Tamara Latourneau, and Amber Cameron, ICMA Task Force on Women in the Profession: Final Report on the Status of Women in the Profession, Washington, DC: ICMA, August 2014, (including the 1976 Report as an appendix), <https://icma.org/documents/final-report-status-women-profession>; International City/County Management Association, “Data on ICMA Women in the Profession: As of June 2021,” <https://icma.org/documents/data-icma-women-profession>.

II

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Rose Institute drafted the survey instrument in collaboration with CCMF and Tripepi Smith. See Appendix A. We collected survey data over the course of ten weeks beginning on Monday, January 10, 2023. We emailed a letter of introduction explaining the study to all city managers in California. The survey was conducted using Qualtrics software and took respondents less than five minutes to complete. Each week for the next five weeks we sent one follow-up email and made one phone call to each city that had not yet responded. This netted responses from a total of 321 cities, for a response rate of 67%. See Appendix B.

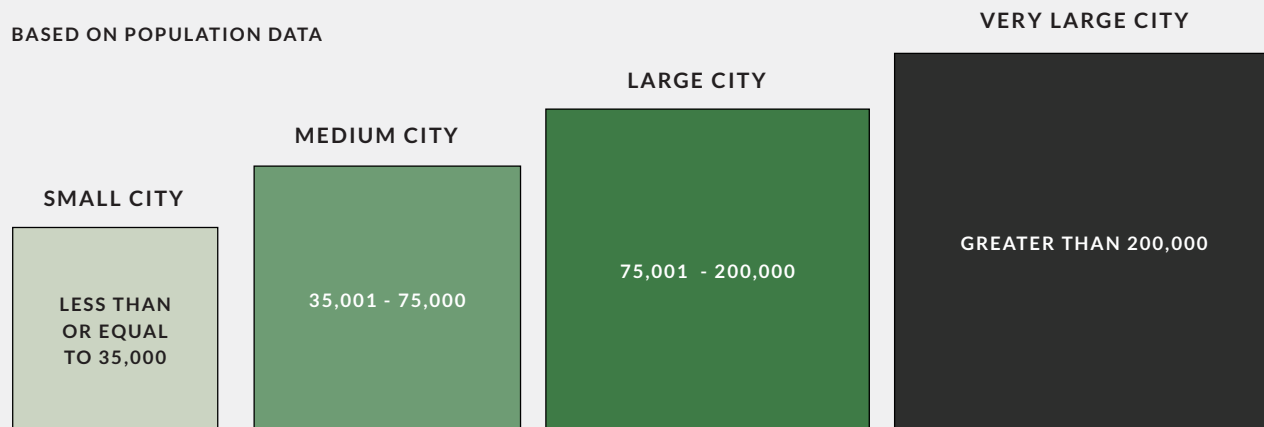
The research team supplemented the survey response data with information from publicly available sources such as city websites, newspaper articles, and LinkedIn. We gathered data on education, time in current position, prior position, major field of study, city council size and mode of election, and direct election of mayor. We were able to fill in data for many, but not all, of these variables for many, but not all, of the non-responding cities. We did not fill in data for age, gender or race; the data in those tables derives from survey responses only.

The research team then checked the data for accuracy and consistency. We also coded responses for Major Subject of Study and Most Pressing Issues. See Appendix C and Appendix D.

It is important to note that not every survey respondent answered every question. For example, 319 of the 321 respondents filled in the question on age, 318 of the 321 filled in the question on education, 312 of the 321 filled in the question on race or ethnicity, and 285 of the 321 filled in the question on prior government experience. Similarly, with respect to the non-responding cities, we were able to fill in data for a varying number of cities for each variable. The number of data points for each variable is noted under each table (N=___).

Figure 1. City Size Categories

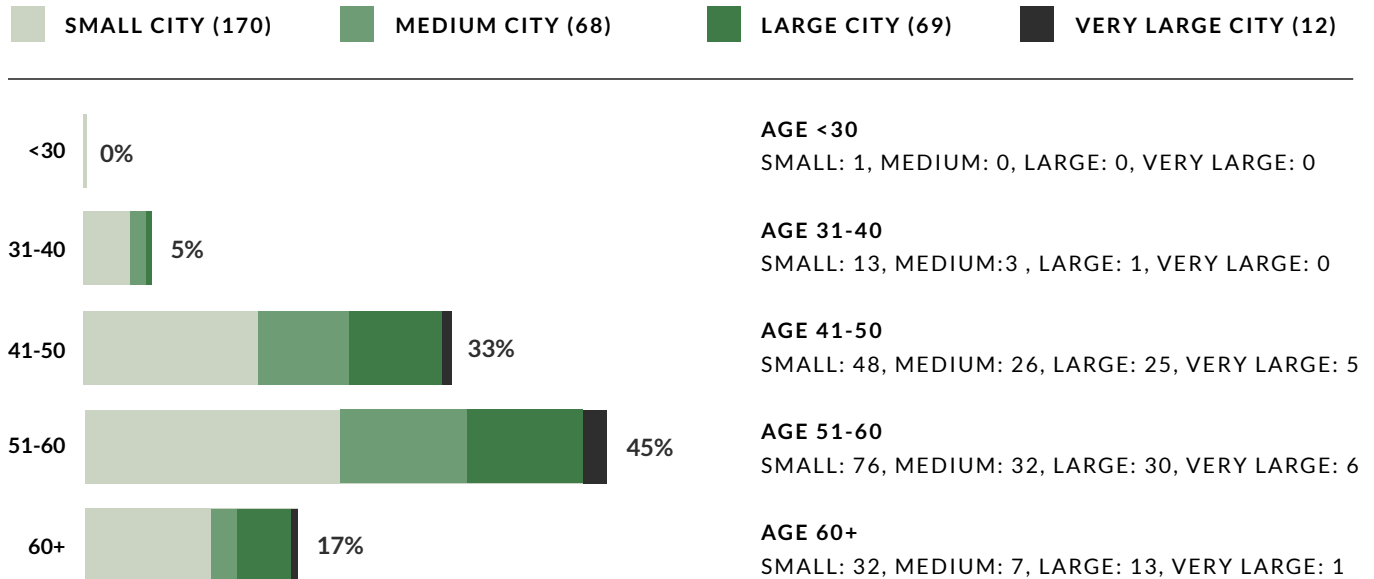
BASED ON POPULATION DATA



The research team also gathered population data for each city from the United States Census Bureau and coded the cities into four size categories (small, medium, large, and very large) for purposes of this study. Assigning a size code to each city is a useful analytic tool to see how city manager characteristics differ for cities of varying size.

III DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Figure 2. Age and City Size



Q: What is your age? N=319.

Note: City size based on 2021 population estimates from United States Census Bureau.

The vast majority of California city managers for whom we have age data are in their forties or fifties. Forty-five percent of respondents are age 51-60 and another 33% are age 41-50. Those who are younger mostly serve in Small or Medium Cities (17 of the 18 age less than 30 or 31-40). On the opposite end of the spectrum, managers in the 60+ age bracket also largely serve in Small or Medium Cities (39 of the 53 in that age group). Managers in Large Cities and Very Large Cities are largely in the 41-50 and 51-60 groups. Of the 69 managers of Large Cities, 25 are 41-50 and 30 are 51-60 years of age. Similarly, the 12 managers of Very Large Cities who answered this question are split with five 41-50 and six 51-60.

Figure 3. Gender

MALE: 242 (76%) FEMALE: 78 (24%)

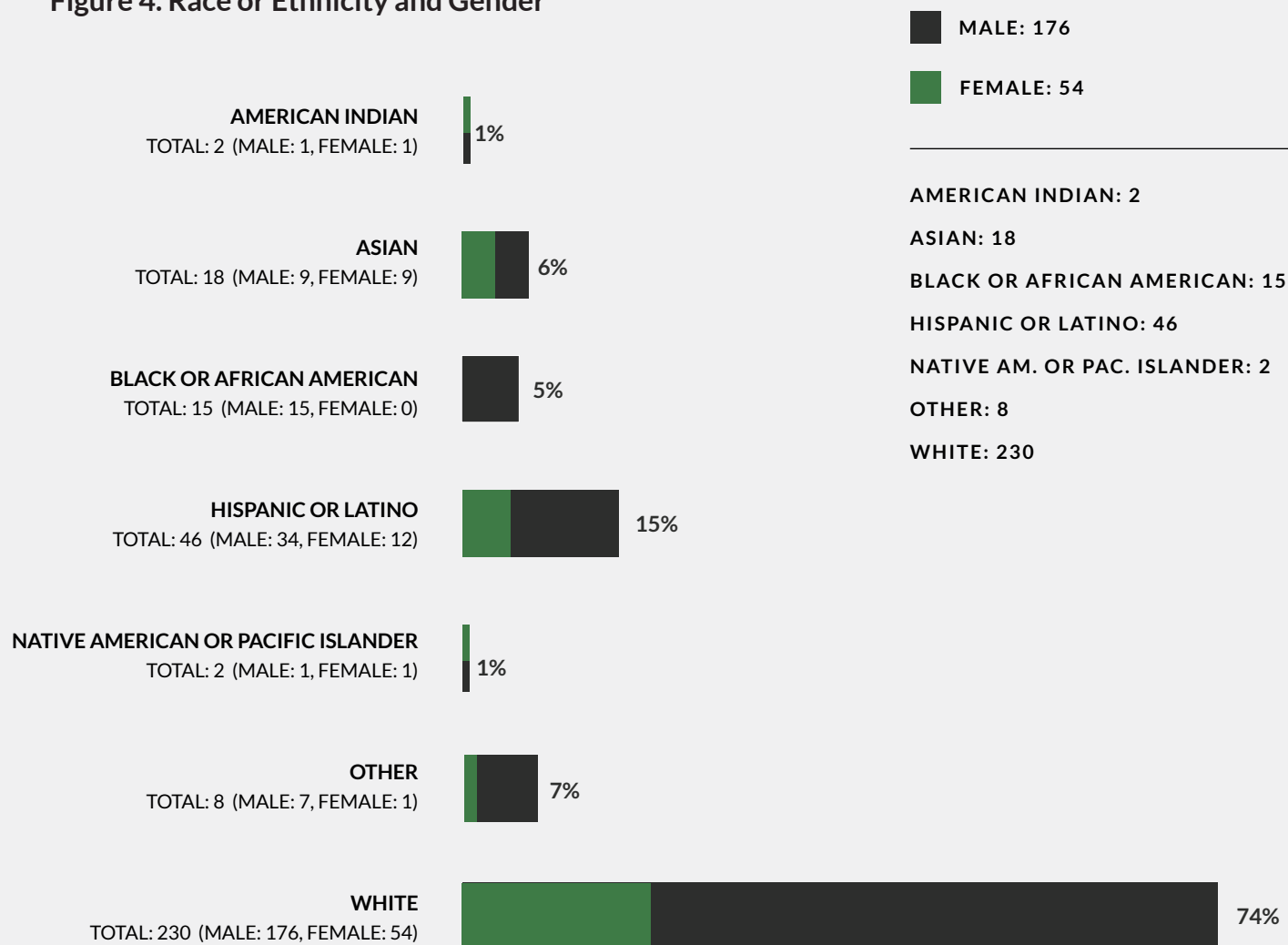
76%

24%

Q: What is your gender? N=320.

One-quarter of city managers responding to the survey are women and three-quarters are men.

Figure 4. Race or Ethnicity and Gender



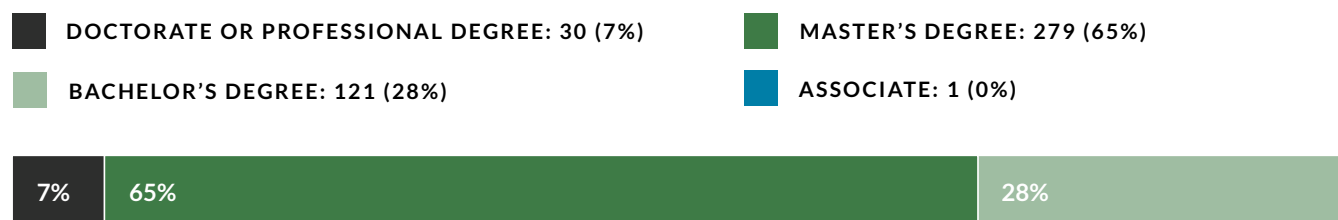
Q: What is your gender? Q: Based on these U.S. Census Bureau categories, with what race and ethnicity do you most identify yourself? (Check all that apply.) N=312.

Note: Total percentage sums to more than 100% because some respondents checked more than one race or ethnicity.

Note: The Survey's options for race and ethnicity included "Native American or Other Pacific Islander," which inadvertently differed from the U.S. Census Bureau category "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander." This report summarizes responses to the categories as presented in the Survey.

In terms of race or ethnicity, 74% are White, 15% Hispanic or Latino, 6% Asian, 5% Black or African American, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1% Native American or Pacific Islander. Another 3% identify as Other. Seven respondents identify with two races or ethnicities and one respondent with three.

Figure 5. Education

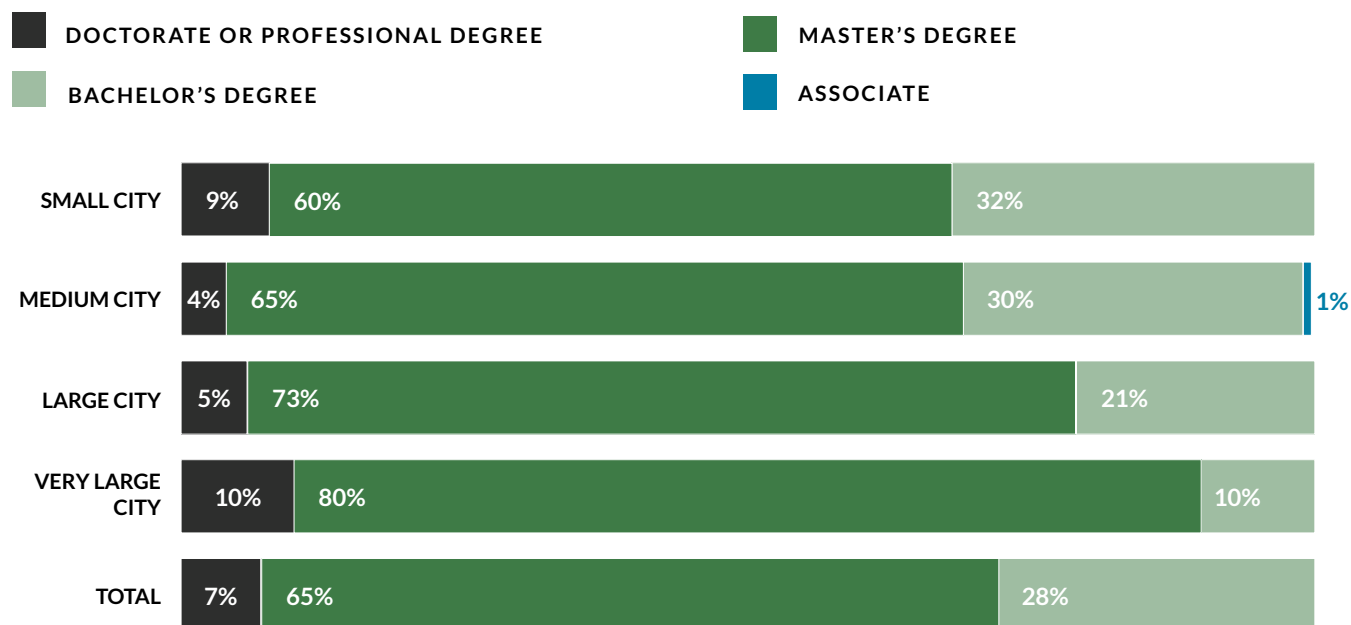


Q: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? N=431. Note: 318 responded to this question on the survey. The remaining 113 are taken from publicly available sources such as city websites, newspaper articles, and LinkedIn.

Almost all city managers for whom we were able to get education data have a Bachelor's degree and almost three-quarters have some form of post-graduate degree. The terminal degree for just over one quarter (28%) is a Bachelor's degree. The share of city managers with a Master's-level degree is almost double that, 65%. Another 7% have some form of doctorate-level degree (PhD or JD).

Public policy, public administration, and business administration are the most common fields for Master's degree holders. A law degree (JD) is the most common at the doctorate-level.

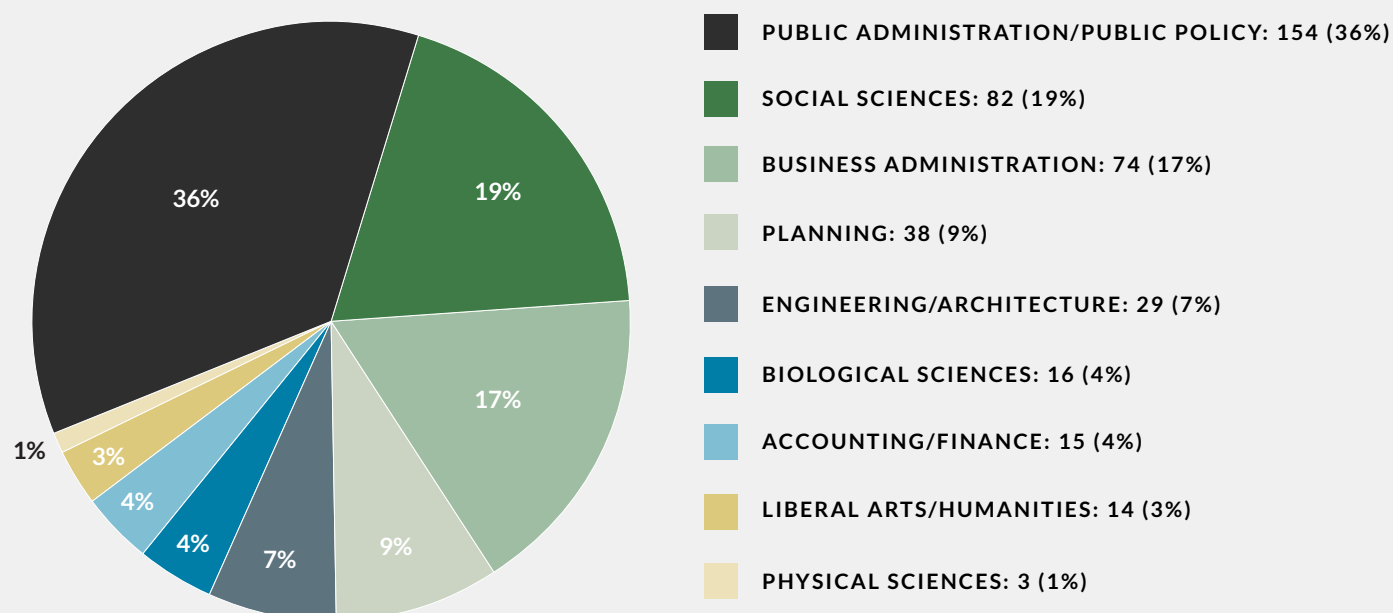
Figure 6. Education and City Size



Q: Major subject studied? N=425. Note: 312 responded to this question on the survey. The remaining 113 are taken from publicly available sources such as city websites, newspaper articles, and LinkedIn.

The proportion of managers with graduate-level degrees increases with the size of the city. That is, larger cities have more city managers with graduate degrees. For Small cities, 69% have a graduate degree (60% Master's and 9% PhD or JD). For Medium Cities, the total remains the same at 69%, but the distribution is slightly different with 65% with Master's and 4% PhD or JD. For Large Cities, 78% have graduate degrees (73% Master's and 5% PhD or JD). For Very Large Cities, 90% have graduate degrees (80% Master's and 10% PhD or JD).

Figure 7. Major Subject Studied



Q: Major subject studied? N=425.

Note: 312 responded to this question on the survey. The remaining 113 are taken from publicly available sources such as city websites, newspaper articles, and LinkedIn.

Public administration and public policy are the most common subjects of study, accounting for just over one-third (36%) of all majors. Other social science subjects account for 19%; this category includes political science, history, and law. Business administration follows closely with 17%. Planning, generally urban or regional, makes up 9%. Engineering and architecture comprise 7%, with civil engineering being the most common specialty. See Appendix C for a list of fields included in each category.

Figure 8. California Native

YES: 202 (64%) **NO: 116 (36%)**



Q: Are you originally from California? N=318.

Two-thirds (64%) of responding city managers report that they are originally from California.

IV

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

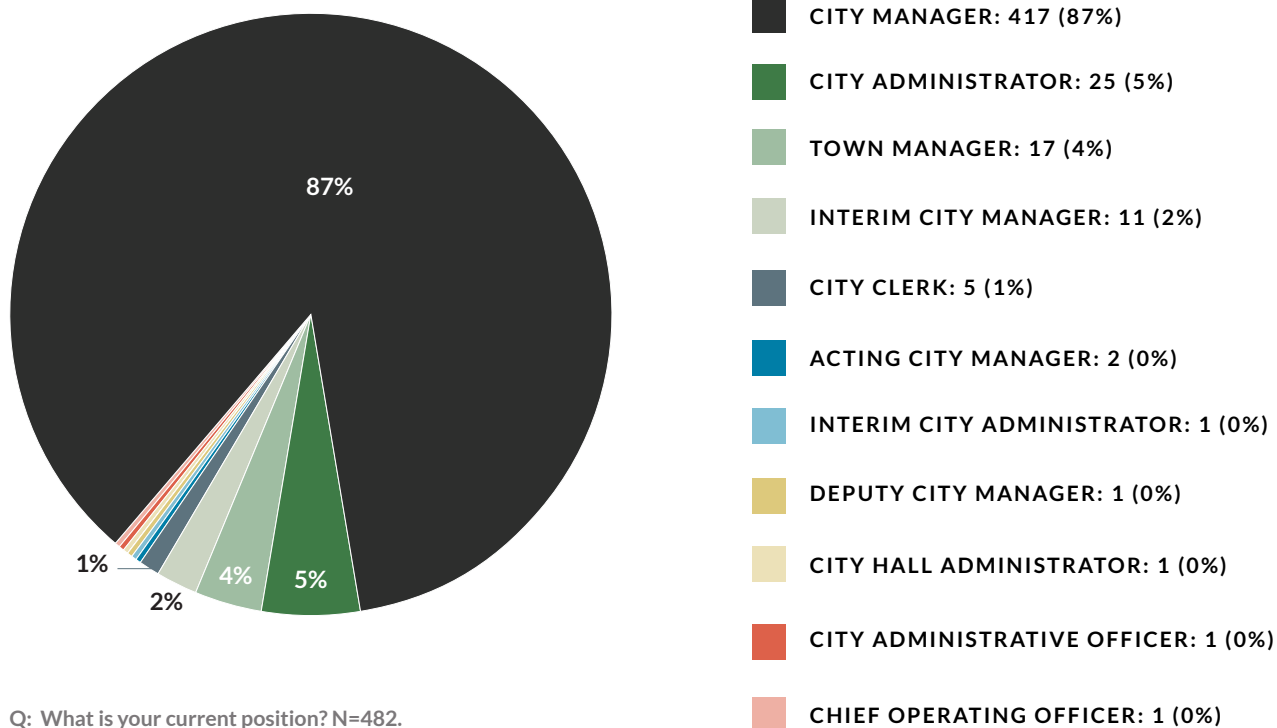
Figure 9. Local Government Career Start in California



Q: Did you start your local government career in California? N=317.

The vast majority of California city managers began their local government careers in California. Eighty-three percent got their start here and 17% began outside of California.

Figure 10. Current Position



Q: What is your current position? N=482.

Note: 321 responded to this question on the survey. The remaining 161 are taken from city websites.

City manager is the most common title used for the chief administrative officer in the vast majority of California cities. Of the 482 cities in this study, 431 use a city manager (we include the 417 current city managers, 11 interim city managers, 2 acting city managers, and 1 deputy city manager). City administrator is the next most common title (26 cities, 5% of the total), followed by town manager (17 cities, 4% of the total).

With the exception of the five cities that have a strong mayor system of government, the city managers, city administrators, and town managers perform functionally equivalent jobs.

Table 1. Current Position and City Size

	SMALL CITY	MEDIUM CITY	LARGE CITY	VERY LARGE CITY	TOTAL
CITY MANAGER	209	98	93	17	417
CITY ADMINISTRATOR	21	2	1	1	25
TOWN MANAGER	15	1	1		17
INTERIM CITY MANAGER	8		3		11
CITY CLERK	5				5
ACTING CITY MANAGER	1		1		2
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER				1	1
CITY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER				1	1
CITY HALL ADMINISTRATOR	1				1
DEPUTY CITY MANAGER	1				1
INTERIM CITY MANAGER				1	1
TOTAL	261	101	99	21	482

Q: What is your current position? N=482.

Note: 321 responded to this question on the survey. The remaining 161 are taken from city websites.

Note: City size based on 2021 population estimates from the United States Census Bureau.

In some small cities the city clerk acts as the administrative officer. For the five strong mayor cities in California, the elected mayor is the chief executive officer, nominally responsible for running all city departments. In all five of those cities, the mayor is, however, assisted by an appointed administrative officer. San Diego has a Chief Operating Officer, Los Angeles a Chief Administrative Officer, and Fresno a City Manager. Both San Francisco and Oakland have a City Administrator.

Table 2. Time in Current Position

MONTHS IN CURRENT POSITION: AVERAGE	55
YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION: AVERAGE	4 YEARS 7 MONTHS

Q: Start date in current position. N=472. Note: Time in current position is calculated from the start date to March 1, 2023 (the mid-point of the data collection period for this study).

We were able to identify start dates for 472 city managers. They have been in their current positions an average of 55 months or just over 4.5 years.

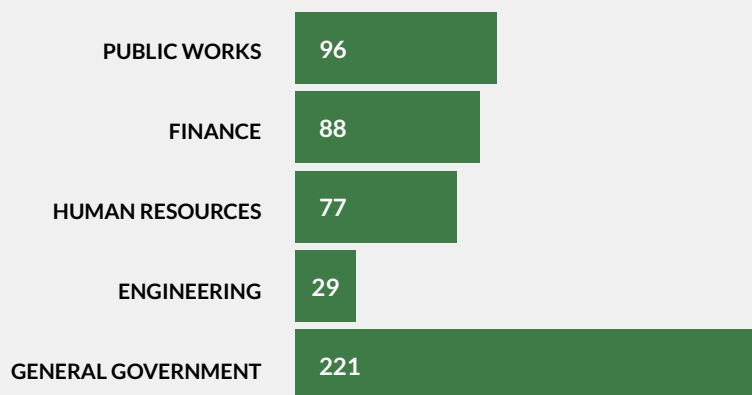
Table 3. Prior Position and Same or Different City

	DIFFERENT CITY	SAME CITY	(BLANK)	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
ASSISTANT OR DEPUTY CITY MANAGER	84	110	3	197	45%
CITY MANAGER	75	0		75	17%
OTHER	38	12	2	52	12%
FINANCE/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	12	18	1	31	7%
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/SERVICES	5	18		23	5%
PUBLIC WORKS	6	13		19	4%
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	10	7		17	4%
POLICE/FIRE	3	6	2	11	3%
PLANNING/ENGINEERING	5	5		10	2%
TOTAL	238	189	8	435	100%
PERCENTAGE	54%	44%	2%	100%	

Q: What was your position prior to becoming a city manager? N=435.

Almost half (45%) of the city managers for whom we were able to collect data, served as an assistant or deputy city manager prior to their current position. Of the 197 in that category, 110 (56%) were assistants in the same city and were promoted internally. The other 84 (44%) were assistants or deputy city managers in other cities.

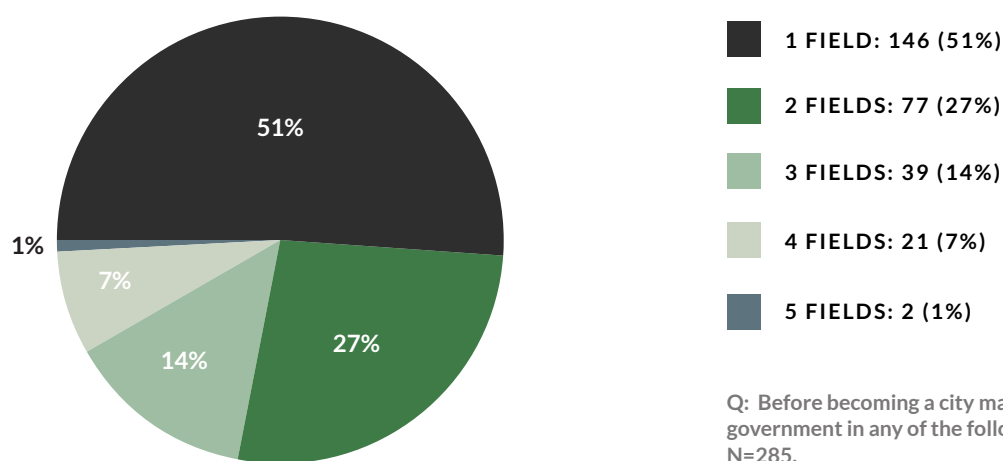
Another 17% moved into their current city manager position having served as city manager for a different city. Another 12% moved to the city manager position from other municipal offices and 7% from city finance or economic development positions.

Figure 11. Prior Local Government Experience

Q: Before becoming a city manager, did you work in local government in any of the following areas? (Check all that apply.) N=285.

City managers bring a broad range of experience to the position. Almost one-third of respondents (96 of the 285) report having prior experience in public works, 88 of the 285 in finance, and 77 of the 285 in human resources. Approximately 10% (29 of the 285) have prior experience in engineering.

Figure 12. Prior Local Government Experience: Number of Fields



Almost half of respondents report prior experience in two or more fields (27% in 2 fields, 14% in 3 fields, and 7% in 4 fields). The remaining 51% have prior experience in one field.

Table 4. Total Years as a City Manager in Any City Agency

AVERAGE	7.0
HIGH	57

Q: How long have you worked as a city manager in any city agency (total number of years)?

City managers responding to this question have worked an average of seven years as city managers of any city agency. Carolyn Steffan of Tehama is the longest serving, with a tenure as city clerk and city administrator that spans 57 years.⁹

Survey respondents report an average of 25 years of experience in the public sector, with Ms. Steffan having the most experience at 61 years. Respondents report an average of 5.7 years of experience in the private sector.

Table 5. Total Years in Public Sector and Private Sector

	PUBLIC SECTOR	PRIVATE SECTOR
AVERAGE	25	5.7
LOW	0	0
HIGH	61	40

Q: In total, how many years of experience do you have in the public sector? Q: In total, how many years of experience do you have in the private sector?

⁹ Rich Greene. "Carolyn Steffan Honored for 50 Years of Dedicated Service." *Red Bluff Daily News*, April 11, 2015, updated May 16, 2018. <https://www.redbluffdailynews.com/2015/04/11/carolyn-steffan-honored-for-50-years-of-dedicated-service/>.

Table 6. City Population

LOW	201
HIGH	3,849,297
AVERAGE	68,622
MEDIAN	30,865

Source: United States Census Bureau Quick Facts, City Population Estimates for 2021.

California's 482 cities range in population from 201 (Amador) to 3,849,297 (Los Angeles). The average population is 68,822. The median population is 30,865, meaning that half of all the cities are smaller and half are larger.

Table 7. City Size by Category

	NUMBER OF CITIES	NUMBER OF CITIES	TOTAL POPULATION
SMALL CITIES (<= 35,000)	261	54%	3,739,881
MEDIUM CITIES (35,001-75,000)	101	21%	5,877,670
LARGE CITIES (75,001-200,000)	99	21%	11,001,801
VERY LARGE CITIES (200,000+)	21	4%	12,250,473
TOTAL	482	100%	

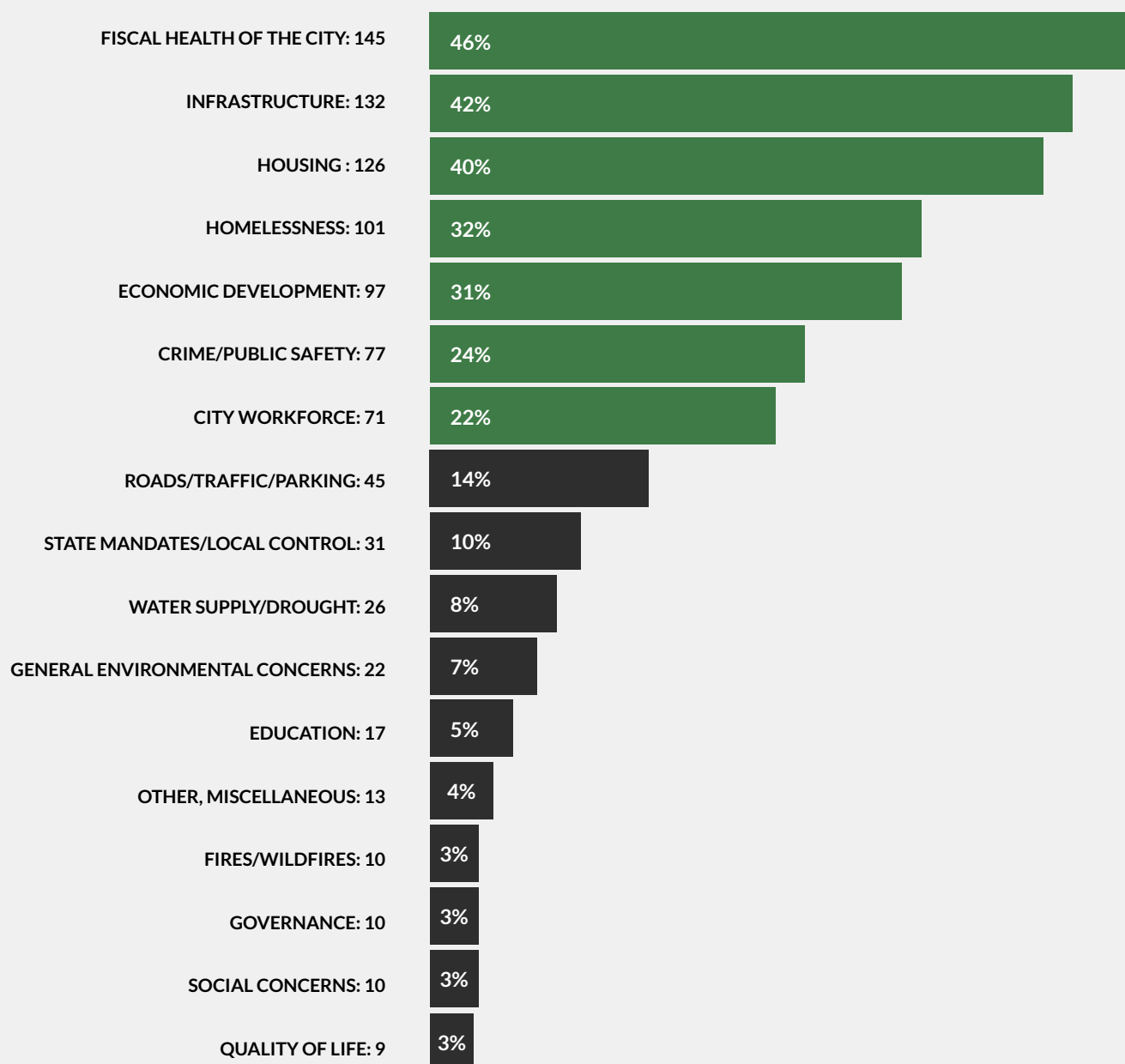
Source: United States Census Bureau Quick Facts, City Population Estimates for 2021.

Note: Vernon is not included in this total because the Census Bureau does not show a 2021 population estimate for it.

More than half (54%) of California cities are Small, with population equal to or less than 35,000. Medium Cities, population 35,001 to 75,000, make up 21% and the average for California cities (68,622) falls within this category. Large Cities, population 75,001 to 200,000, account for another 21%. Finally, there are 21 Very Large Cities in California, with population greater than 200,000. Although Very Large Cities are only 4% of the total number of cities in the state, they are home to 31% of California's 39 million residents.¹⁰

¹⁰ 39,029,342, U.S. Census Bureau. "Population Estimates, July 1, 2022 (V2022)." Quick Facts. Accessed May 23, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,US/PST045222>.

Figure 13. Most Pressing Issues



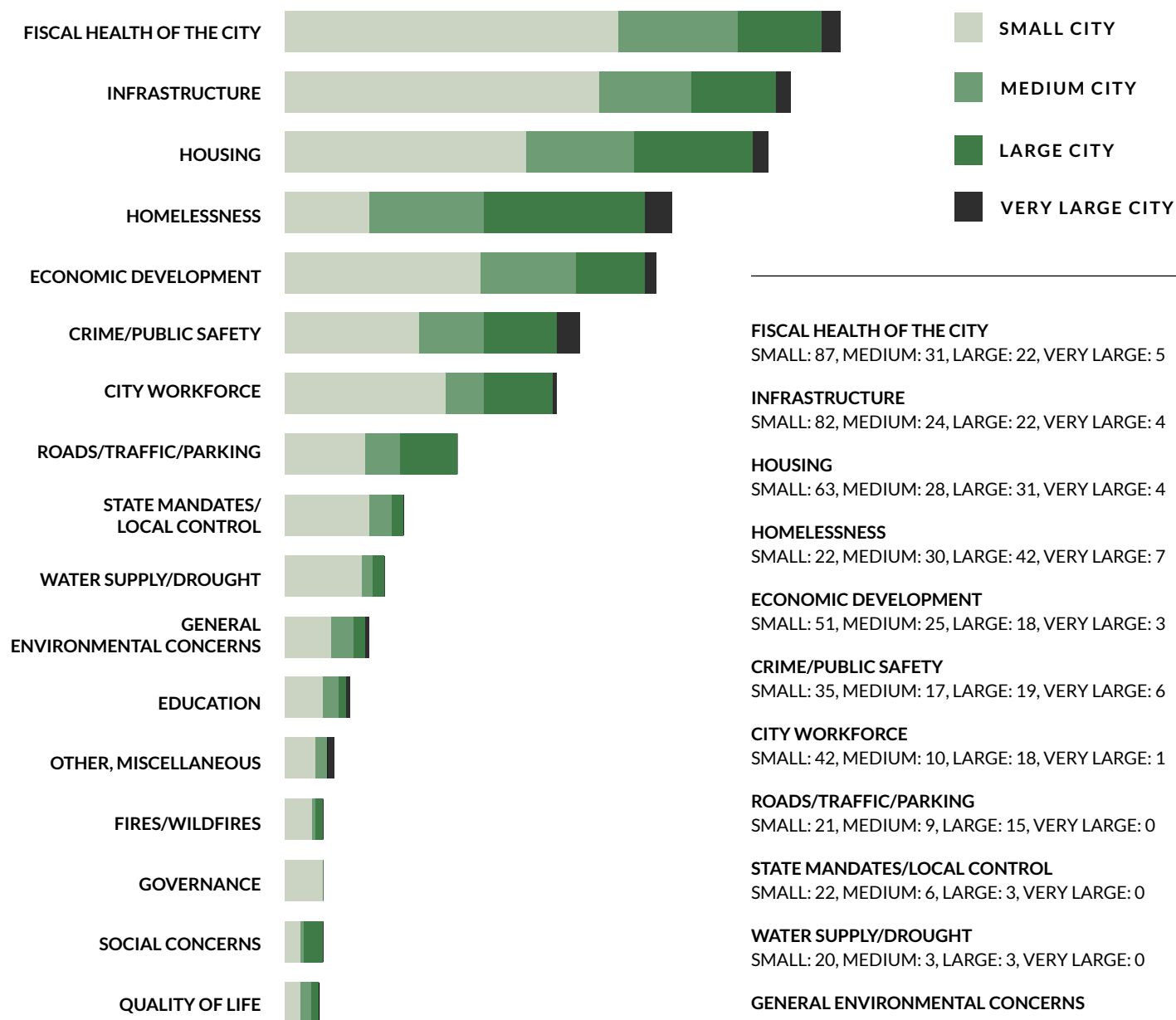
Q: What are the three most pressing issues for your city?

Note: 318 cities responded to this question. Each respondent could enter three issues.

The percentages are calculated using 318 as the denominator.

We asked city managers to identify the three most pressing issues facing their cities. Of the 318 responding to this question, almost half (46%) identified the Fiscal Health of the city as a concern. The next two highest concerns are Infrastructure (42%) and Housing (40%). Homelessness (32%) and Economic Development (31%) are the next most pressing concerns. They are followed by Crime and Public Safety (24%) and City Workforce issues (22%).

Figure 14. Most Pressing Issues and City Size



Q: What are the three most pressing issues for your city? **Note:** 318 cities responded to this question. Each respondent could enter three issues. **Note:** City size based on 2021 population estimate from United States Census Bureau.

It is interesting to note that there is some variation on the three most pressing issues based on city size. The 145 cities reporting pressing concern about the Fiscal Health of the city is dominated by the 87 Small Cities and 31 Medium Cities. Only 22 Large Cities and 5 Very Large Cities list Fiscal Health as one of their three most pressing concerns.

Among Large Cities, Homelessness is the top concern (cited by 42 cities), followed by Housing (31), Fiscal Health (22) and Infrastructure (22). Homelessness was also the top concern for Very Large Cities (7), followed by Crime/Public Safety (6) and Fiscal Health (5).

FISCAL HEALTH OF THE CITY
SMALL: 87, MEDIUM: 31, LARGE: 22, VERY LARGE: 5

INFRASTRUCTURE
SMALL: 82, MEDIUM: 24, LARGE: 22, VERY LARGE: 4

HOUSING
SMALL: 63, MEDIUM: 28, LARGE: 31, VERY LARGE: 4

HOMELESSNESS
SMALL: 22, MEDIUM: 30, LARGE: 42, VERY LARGE: 7

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SMALL: 51, MEDIUM: 25, LARGE: 18, VERY LARGE: 3

CRIME/PUBLIC SAFETY
SMALL: 35, MEDIUM: 17, LARGE: 19, VERY LARGE: 6

CITY WORKFORCE
SMALL: 42, MEDIUM: 10, LARGE: 18, VERY LARGE: 1

ROADS/TRAFFIC/PARKING
SMALL: 21, MEDIUM: 9, LARGE: 15, VERY LARGE: 0

STATE MANDATES/LOCAL CONTROL
SMALL: 22, MEDIUM: 6, LARGE: 3, VERY LARGE: 0

WATER SUPPLY/DROUGHT
SMALL: 20, MEDIUM: 3, LARGE: 3, VERY LARGE: 0

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
SMALL: 12, MEDIUM: 6, LARGE: 3, VERY LARGE: 1

EDUCATION
SMALL: 10, MEDIUM: 4, LARGE: 2, VERY LARGE: 1

OTHER, MISCELLANEOUS
SMALL: 8, MEDIUM: 3, LARGE: 0, VERY LARGE: 2

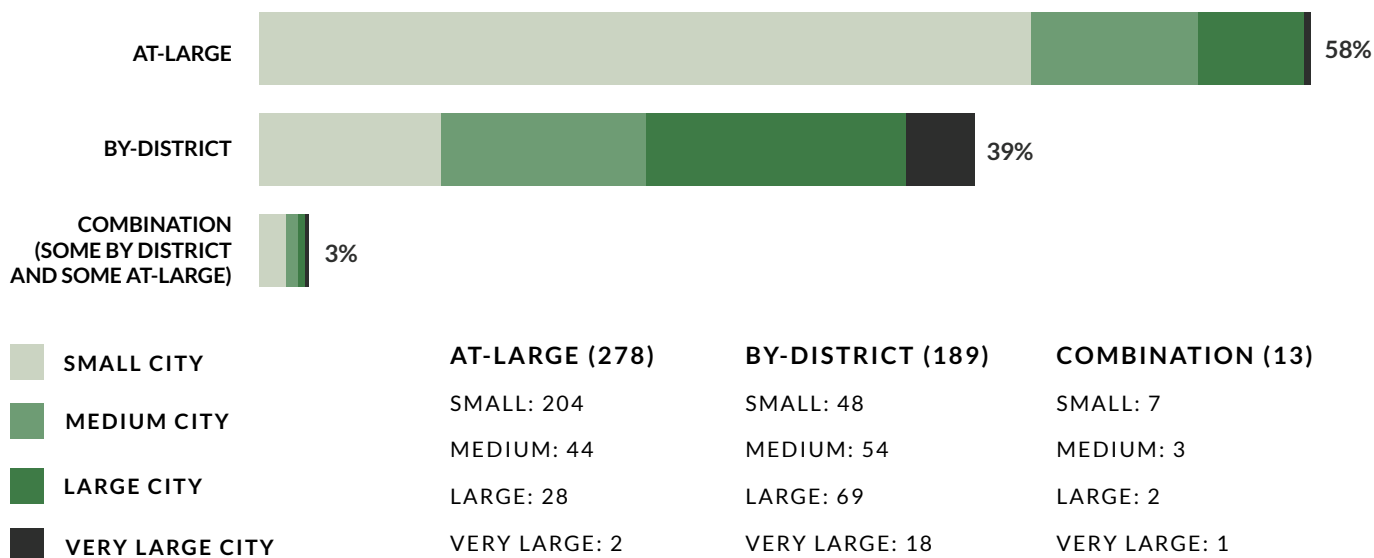
FIRES/WILDFIRES
SMALL: 7, MEDIUM: 1, LARGE: 2, VERY LARGE: 0

GOVERNANCE
SMALL: 10, MEDIUM: 0, LARGE: 0, VERY LARGE: 0

SOCIAL CONCERNS
SMALL: 4, MEDIUM: 1, LARGE: 5, VERY LARGE: 0

QUALITY OF LIFE
SMALL: 4, MEDIUM: 3, LARGE: 2, VERY LARGE: 0

Figure 15. Mode of Council Election



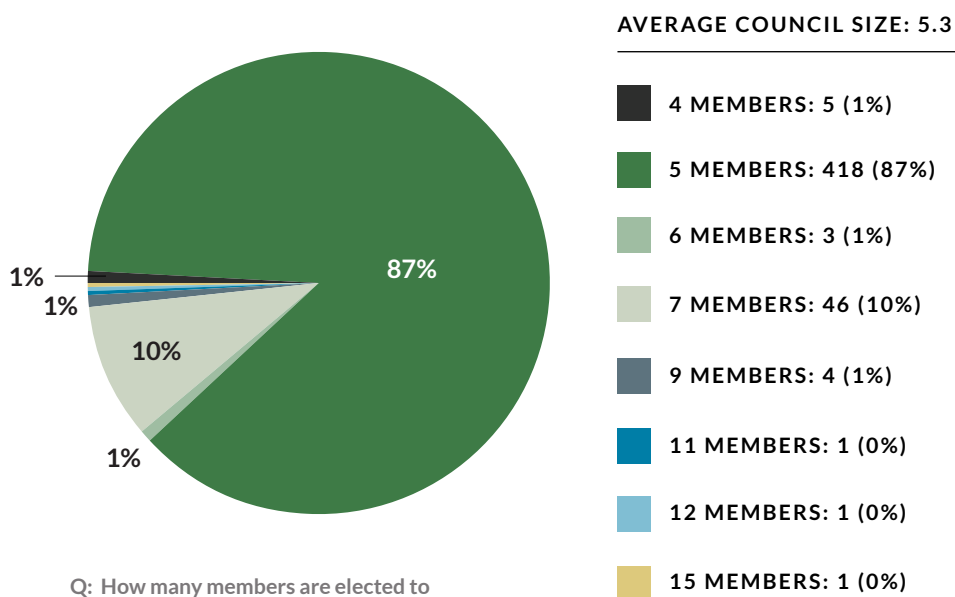
Q: How are your city council members elected? N=480.

Note: City size based on 2021 population estimates from United States Census Bureau.

Almost two-thirds of California cities elect councils with representatives chosen at-large (that is, representing the entire city). For 39% of California cities councils are elected to represent individual districts. Another 3% use a mixed system with some members elected by-districts and some at-large. However, 11 of the 13 cities currently using a combination system are doing so as part of the process of transitioning from at-large systems to by-district. All 11 will be fully by-district in the 2024 election cycle.

By-district or combination councils are increasingly common in larger cities. Among Small Cities, only 48 of the 258 have by-district or combination councils. In contrast, all the other categories have more cities that elect councils by-district than at-large. Fifty-seven of the 101 Medium Cities elect councils by-district or using a combination system, as do 71 of the 99 Large Cities. Eighteen of the 21 Very Large Cities use a by-district system to elect their city councils.

Figure 16. Size of City Council

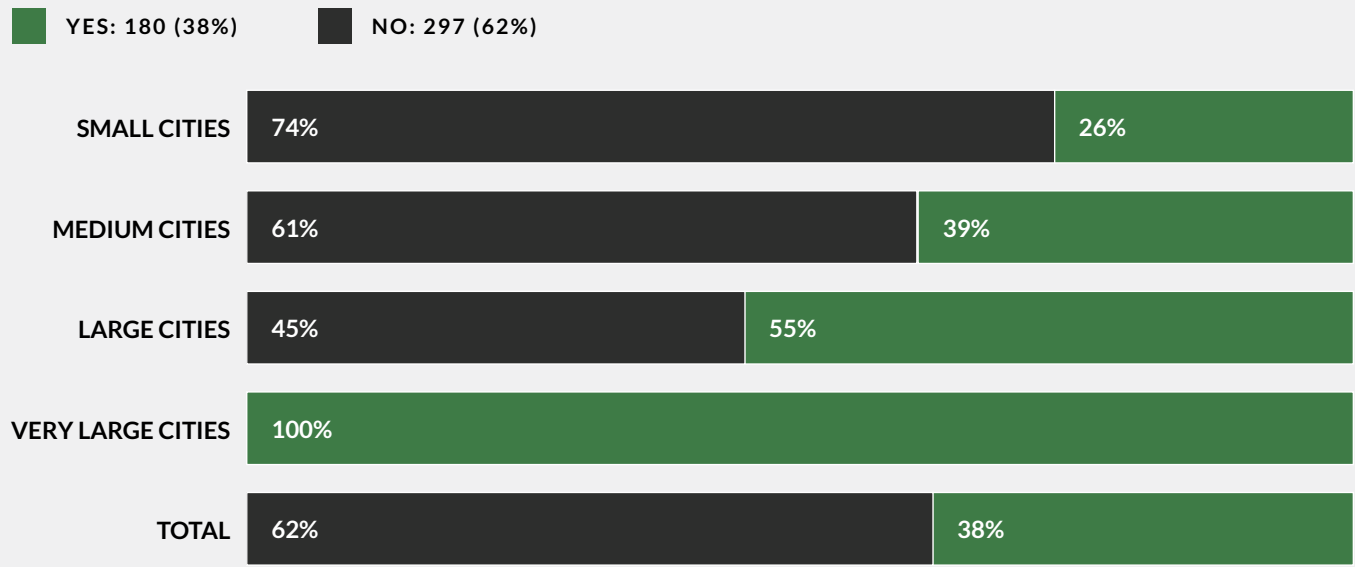


Q: How many members are elected to your city council? N=479.

The 5-member city council is the default under California law¹¹ and the vast majority (87%) of city councils in California are that size. Charter cities have the authority to deviate from the default as part of their charter. Los Angeles has the largest city council with 15 members.

11 CA Govt Code § 36501 (2022). https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=36501&lawCode=GOV.

Figure 17. Direct Election of Mayor



Q: Is the mayor elected directly? N=477. Note: City size based on 2021 population estimate from United States Census Bureau.

Just over one-third (38%) of the cities in California elect a mayor directly; 62% do not. Direct election is more common in larger cities. Among Small Cities, only 26% directly elect their mayor. This rises to 39% for Medium Cities and 55% for Large Cities. All Very Large Cities in California directly elect mayors.

VI

CONCLUSION

California's city managers are a highly accomplished group. All of those in our study have some level of college education and over 70% have post-graduate degrees. They bring a wealth of experience to their work, an average of 25 years of experience in the public sector and 5.7 in the private sector. Almost half were promoted to their current city manager position after serving as the assistant or deputy city manager.

VII

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A

APPENDIX A - SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Rose Institute of State and Local Government
California City Management Foundation
City Managers Profiles**

Thank you for participating in this study of California city managers. It is the goal of this survey to create a "profile of the profession."

City Name _____

What is your name? _____

What is your age?

- ☐ <30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 60+

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Based on these U.S. Census Bureau categories, with what race and ethnicity do you most identify yourself?
(Check all the apply)

- ☐ While
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native American or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ White

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- ☐ Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)
- ☐ Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)
- ☐ Doctorate or professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, PhD, JD)

Major subject studied _____

Are you originally from California?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

APPENDIX A - SURVEY INSTRUMENT, CONTINUED.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Did you start your local government career in California?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Current Position (Title) _____

Current Position start date (Month/Year) _____

What was your position prior to becoming a city manager?

- Title _____
- Employer _____
- Length of time in service (years, months) _____

How long have you worked as a city manager in any city agency? (total number of years) _____

Before becoming a city manager, did you work in local government in any of the following areas? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Public Works
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ General Government

In total, how many years of experience do you have:

- in the public sector? _____
- in the private sector? _____

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CITY

What are the three most pressing issues for your city?

- _____
- _____
- _____

How many members are elected to your city council? _____

How are your city council members elected?

- ☐ By district
- ☐ At-large
- ☐ Combination (some by district and some at-large)

Is the mayor elected directly?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

B

APPENDIX B - LIST OF CITIES

CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?
Adelanto	No	Bishop	Yes	Coachella	Yes	El Cajon	Yes
Agoura Hills	Yes	Blue Lake	Yes	Coalinga	Yes	El Centro	No
Alameda	No	Blythe	Yes	Colfax	No	El Cerrito	Yes
Albany	Yes	Bradbury	No	Colma	No	El Monte	Yes
Alhambra	Yes	Brawley	Yes	Colton	Yes	El Segundo	Yes
Aliso Viejo	Yes	Brea	No	Colusa	Yes	Elk Grove	Yes
Alturas	Yes	Brentwood	Yes	Commerce	Yes	Emeryville	No
Amador City	No	Brisbane	Yes	Compton	No	Encinitas	Yes
American Canyon	Yes	Buellton	Yes	Concord	Yes	Escalon	Yes
Anaheim	Yes	Buena Park	Yes	Corcoran	No	Escondido	Yes
Anderson	Yes	Burbank	Yes	Corning	Yes	Etna	No
Angels Camp	Yes	Burlingame	Yes	Corona	Yes	Eureka	Yes
Antioch	Yes	Calabasas	Yes	Coronado	No	Exeter	No
Apple Valley	Yes	Calexico	No	Corte Madera	Yes	Fairfax	Yes
Arcadia	Yes	California City	Yes	Costa Mesa	No	Fairfield	No
Arcata	Yes	Calimesa	Yes	Cotati	Yes	Farmersville	No
Arroyo Grande	Yes	Calipatria	Yes	Covina	Yes	Ferndale	No
Artesia	Yes	Calistoga	Yes	Crescent City	No	Fillmore	Yes
Arvin	Yes	Camarillo	Yes	Cudahy	Yes	Firebaugh	No
Atascadero	Yes	Campbell	No	Culver City	Yes	Folsom	No
Atherton	Yes	Canyon Lake	No	Cupertino	Yes	Fontana	Yes
Atwater	Yes	Capitola	Yes	Cypress	Yes	Fort Bragg	No
Auburn	Yes	Carlsbad	Yes	Daly City	No	Fort Jones	No
Avalon	No	Carmel-by-the-Sea	Yes	Dana Point	No	Fortuna	Yes
Avenal	Yes	Carpinteria	No	Danville	No	Foster City	No
Azusa	Yes	Carson	Yes	Davis	No	Fountain Valley	Yes
Bakersfield	Yes	Cathedral City	Yes	Del Mar	No	Fowler	No
Baldwin Park	Yes	Ceres	Yes	Del Rey Oaks	Yes	Fremont	No
Banning	Yes	Cerritos	No	Delano	No	Fresno	No
Barstow	Yes	Chico	Yes	Desert Hot Springs	No	Fullerton	Yes
Beaumont	Yes	Chino	Yes	Diamond Bar	Yes	Galt	No
Bell	Yes	Chino Hills	Yes	Dinuba	Yes	Garden Grove	No
Bell Gardens	Yes	Chowchilla	No	Dixon	Yes	Gardena	Yes
Bellflower	Yes	Chula Vista	Yes	Dorris	No	Gilroy	Yes
Belmont	Yes	Citrus Heights	Yes	Dos Palos	No	Glendale	Yes
Belvedere	Yes	City of Industry	Yes	Downey	Yes	Glendora	Yes
Benicia	Yes	Claremont	Yes	Duarte	No	Goleta	No
Berkeley	No	Clayton	Yes	Dublin	Yes	Gonzales	No
Beverly Hills	Yes	Clearlake	No	Dunsmuir	Yes	Grand Terrace	Yes
Big Bear Lake	Yes	Cloverdale	Yes	East Palo Alto	Yes	Grass Valley	No
Biggs	No	Clovis	Yes	Eastvale	Yes	Greenfield	No

APPENDIX B - LIST OF CITIES, CONTINUED.

CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?
Gridley	No	La Palma	Yes	Manteca	No	Oakland	No
Grover Beach	Yes	La Puente	Yes	Maricopa	Yes	Oakley	Yes
Guadalupe	No	La Quinta	No	Marina	Yes	Oceanside	Yes
Gustine	Yes	La Verne	Yes	Martinez	No	Ojai	No
Half Moon Bay	Yes	Lafayette	Yes	Marysville	Yes	Ontario	Yes
Hanford	Yes	Laguna Beach	No	Maywood	Yes	Orange	No
Hawaiian Gardens	No	Laguna Hills	Yes	McFarland	No	Orange Cove	No
Hawthorne	Yes	Laguna Niguel	Yes	Mendota	No	Orinda	Yes
Hayward	Yes	Laguna Woods	No	Menifee	No	Orland	Yes
Healdsburg	Yes	Lake Elsinore	Yes	Menlo Park	No	Oroville	No
Hemet	No	Lake Forest	Yes	Merced	No	Oxnard	Yes
Hercules	Yes	Lakeport	No	Mill Valley	Yes	Pacific Grove	Yes
Hermosa Beach	Yes	Lakewood	Yes	Millbrae	No	Pacifica	Yes
Hesperia	Yes	Lancaster	Yes	Milpitas	Yes	Palm Desert	Yes
Hidden Hills	Yes	Larkspur	Yes	Mission Viejo	Yes	Palm Springs	No
Highland	No	Lathrop	Yes	Modesto	Yes	Palmdale	No
Hillsborough	Yes	Lawndale	No	Monrovia	Yes	Palo Alto	Yes
Hollister	No	Lemon Grove	Yes	Montague	No	Palos Verdes Estates	No
Holtville	No	Lemoore	Yes	Montclair	Yes	Paradise	No
Hughson	No	Lincoln	Yes	Monte Sereno	No	Paramount	Yes
Huntington Beach	Yes	Lindsay	Yes	Montebello	Yes	Parlier	Yes
Huntington Park	No	Live Oak	Yes	Monterey	Yes	Pasadena	Yes
Huron	Yes	Livermore	Yes	Monterey Park	Yes	Paso Robles	No
Imperial	No	Livingston	No	Moorpark	Yes	Patterson	No
Imperial Beach	No	Lodi	Yes	Moraga	Yes	Perris	No
Indian Wells	Yes	Loma Linda	No	Moreno Valley	Yes	Petaluma	No
Indio	Yes	Lomita	Yes	Morgan Hill	Yes	Pico Rivera	No
Inglewood	Yes	Lompoc	No	Morro Bay	No	Piedmont	Yes
Ione	Yes	Long Beach	Yes	Mount Shasta	Yes	Pinole	Yes
Irvine	No	Loomis	Yes	Mountain View	Yes	Pismo Beach	Yes
Irwindale	No	Los Alamitos	Yes	Murrieta	Yes	Pittsburg	Yes
Isleton	Yes	Los Altos	Yes	Napa	Yes	Placentia	Yes
Jackson	Yes	Los Altos Hills	Yes	National City	No	Placerville	Yes
Jurupa Valley	Yes	Los Angeles	No	Needles	Yes	Pleasant Hill	No
Kerman	Yes	Los Banos	No	Nevada City	No	Pleasanton	Yes
King City	Yes	Los Gatos	Yes	Newark	No	Plymouth	Yes
Kingsburg	Yes	Loyalton	No	Newman	No	Point Arena	Yes
La Cañada Flintridge	Yes	Lynwood	No	Newport Beach	Yes	Pomona	Yes
La Habra	Yes	Madera	Yes	Norco	Yes	Port Hueneme	No
La Habra Heights	Yes	Malibu	Yes	Norwalk	Yes	Porterville	Yes
La Mesa	Yes	Mammoth Lakes	Yes	Novato	Yes	Portola	Yes
La Mirada	Yes	Manhattan Beach	Yes	Oakdale	Yes	Portola Valley	Yes

APPENDIX B - LIST OF CITIES, CONTINUED.

CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?	CITY/ TOWN NAME	FILLED OUT SURVEY?
Poway	Yes	San Juan Bautista	Yes	South Lake Tahoe	Yes	Weed	No
Rancho Cordova	Yes	San Juan Capistrano	Yes	South Pasadena	Yes	West Covina	No
Rancho Cucamonga	Yes	San Leandro	Yes	South San Francisco	No	West Hollywood	Yes
Rancho Mirage	Yes	San Luis Obispo	No	St. Helena	Yes	West Sacramento	No
Rancho Palos Verdes	Yes	San Marcos	No	Stanton	Yes	Westlake Village	No
Rancho Santa Margarita	Yes	San Marino	No	Stockton	Yes	Westminster	No
Red Bluff	Yes	San Mateo	Yes	Suisun City	Yes	Westmorland	No
Redding	Yes	San Pablo	Yes	Sunnyvale	Yes	Wheatland	No
Redlands	Yes	San Rafael	Yes	Susanville	Yes	Whittier	Yes
Redondo Beach	No	San Ramon	No	Sutter Creek	Yes	Wildomar	Yes
Redwood City	Yes	Sand City	Yes	Taft	No	Williams	Yes
Reedley	Yes	Sanger	No	Tehachapi	No	Willits	Yes
Rialto	No	Santa Ana	No	Tehama	Yes	Willows	Yes
Richmond	No	Santa Barbara	Yes	Temecula	Yes	Windsor	No
Ridgecrest	Yes	Santa Clara	No	Temple City	Yes	Winters	Yes
Rio Dell	Yes	Santa Clarita	Yes	Thousand Oaks	Yes	Woodlake	Yes
Rio Vista	No	Santa Cruz	No	Tiburon	Yes	Woodland	Yes
Ripon	Yes	Santa Fe Springs	No	Torrance	Yes	Woodside	Yes
Riverbank	Yes	Santa Maria	Yes	Tracy	Yes	Yorba Linda	Yes
Riverside	No	Santa Monica	No	Trinidad	Yes	Yountville	Yes
Rocklin	Yes	Santa Paula	No	Truckee	Yes	Yreka	Yes
Rohnert Park	Yes	Santa Rosa	No	Tulare	Yes	Yuba City	Yes
Rolling Hills	Yes	Santee	No	Tulelake	Yes	Yucaipa	No
Rolling Hills Estates	No	Saratoga	Yes	Turlock	Yes	Yucca Valley	Yes
Rosemead	Yes	Sausalito	No	Tustin	No		
Roseville	Yes	Scotts Valley	Yes	Twentynine Palms	Yes		
Ross	Yes	Seal Beach	No	Ukiah	Yes		
Sacramento	Yes	Seaside	No	Union City	Yes		
Salinas	Yes	Sebastopol	No	Upland	No		
San Anselmo	Yes	Selma	Yes	Vacaville	No		
San Bernardino	No	Shafter	Yes	Vallejo	Yes		
San Bruno	No	Shasta Lake	Yes	Ventura	Yes		
San Carlos	No	Sierra Madre	No	Vernon	No		
San Clemente	Yes	Signal Hill	Yes	Victorville	Yes		
San Diego	Yes	Simi Valley	No	Villa Park	Yes		
San Dimas	Yes	Solana Beach	No	Visalia	Yes		
San Fernando	Yes	Soledad	Yes	Vista	Yes		
San Francisco	Yes	Solvang	Yes	Walnut	Yes		
San Gabriel	No	Sonoma	Yes	Walnut Creek	No		
San Jacinto	No	Sonora	No	Wasco	No		
San Joaquin	Yes	South El Monte	Yes	Waterford	Yes		
San Jose	No	South Gate	No	Watsonville	Yes		

C

APPENDIX C - MAJOR SUBJECT STUDIED

MAJOR SUBJECT STUDIED CATEGORY	INCLUDES
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION/ PUBLIC POLICY	Public administration Public policy Public affairs
SOCIAL SCIENCES	Political Science Government History Economics Law Geography Psychology International relations Journalism Native American studies Social sciences Social work Social ecology
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	Business Business administration Marketing Management Quality Management Human Resources Organizational leadership Recreation leadership

MAJOR SUBJECT STUDIED CATEGORY	INCLUDES
PLANNING	Planning City and regional planning Urban planning Regional planning Community planning Natural resource planning
ENGINEERING/ ARCHITECTURE	Electrical engineering Civil engineering Architecture Environmental engineering Landscape architecture
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES	Biology Agriculture Environmental Management Environmental science Environmental studies
ACCOUNTING/FINANCE	Accounting Finance
LIBERAL ARTS/ HUMANITIES	English Literature Film studies Liberal studies
PHYSICAL SCIENCES	Physics Math Biochemistry Bioresource and agriculture Chemistry Natural resource sciences

D

APPENDIX D - PRESSING ISSUES CATEGORIES

ISSUE CATEGORY	INCLUDES
FISCAL HEALTH OF THE CITY	Balancing budget Tax revenues Debt management Unfunded pension obligations Public Employees Retirement System Budget management Financial stability
INFRASTRUCTURE	Infrastructure Utilities Connectivity Public works Sewage, wastewater Parks Funding for Infrastructure
HOUSING	Housing Lack of housing Price of housing Housing availability Housing development Affordable housing Housing Element Rent stabilization Just cause eviction

ISSUE CATEGORY	INCLUDES
HOMELESSNESS	Homelessness Homelessness and affordable housing Homelessness/community image Homelessness/vagrancy Homelessness/wealth disparity Increasing homelessness
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Economic development Jobs Businesses Economic recovery Economic diversification Development of downtown Downtown revitalization
CITY WORKFORCE	Hiring Retaining talent Maintaining workforce Insufficient staffing levels
CRIME/PUBLIC SAFETY	Crime Public Safety Funding for public safety Increasing public safety costs Public safety/crime reduction Recruiting police officers Retaining police officers

APPENDIX D - PRESSING ISSUES CATEGORIES, CONTINUED.

ISSUE CATEGORY	INCLUDES
ROADS/TRAFFIC/ PARKING	Roads Traffic Parking Funding for street maintenance Roadway maintenance and repair Traffic mitigation
STATE MANDATES/ LOCAL CONTROL	State mandates Loss of local control Compliance with state mandates Housing mandates State over-regulation Unfunded state mandates
WATER SUPPLY/ DROUGHT	Flooding Water Water quality Water security Drought
GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS	Environmental Climate change Climate adaption
EDUCATION	Education
OTHER, MISCELLANEOUS	

ISSUE CATEGORY	INCLUDES
FIRES/WILDFIRES	Wildfires Wildfire and emergency safety Wildfire prevention
GOVERNANCE	Difficult council Council disfunction
SOCIAL CONCERNS	Social equity
QUALITY OF LIFE	Healthcare Covid recovery Cost of living

ABOUT THE ROSE INSTITUTE

The **Rose Institute of State and Local Government** is a leading source of objective, non-partisan information on California state and local governments. Founded at Claremont McKenna College in 1973, the Institute's mission is to enhance the education of students at CMC, produce high quality research, and promote public understanding on issues of state and local government, politics, and policy, with an emphasis on California. The Institute conducts research projects on elections, government institutions, public opinion, and policy. It also maintains extensive state and local demographic, economic, and political databases.

ABOUT CCMF

The **California City Management Foundation** is the premier advocacy and support organization for City Managers. Its mission is to promote and encourage excellence in City Management in all of California's 480+ incorporated cities and towns. Through its extensive peer network, it offers guidance, support and advice for City Managers in all stages of their careers. Working with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), CCMF helps establish ethical standards in the industry. It sponsors luncheons and conferences, provides legal advice and maintains a library of resources for its members. CCMF does a lot of things, above all, fostering a community of City Managers both online and off.

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