



Latina Representation in New York Government

2024

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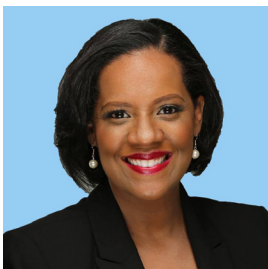
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Foreword

01



Helen Torres
CEO of HOPE



Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Former New York City Councilmember

As the Latina population continues to grow both nationally and within the state of New York, home to the fourth largest Latino Population in the nation, it becomes imperative to examine the representation of Latinas in civil society. This report shines a light on Latina leadership in government at a critical moment for our diverse communities.

Similar to California and other states with a significant Latino presence, New York has witnessed a flourishing of Latina leadership. Remarkable strides have been made at various levels, yet with Latinas comprising 10% of the population, true parity remains distant. While Latinas are 12% of New York's congressional delegation and comprise 17% of the City Council seats for New York City, Latinas represent only 6% of the state legislature and account for less than 1% of local government leaders across counties, cities, and towns.

This report serves as a reflective tool, highlighting significant progress while pinpointing areas where representation falls short. HOPE's call to action for leadership parity transcends mere quotas or checkboxes; it advocates for building enduring and robust leadership pipelines where Latinas are represented in all decision-making spheres affecting them.

HOPE is steadfast in its commitment to nurturing a future where the "first Latina" paves the way for subsequent generations, creating a long line of leaders that transcends numerical count. Latinas have long been at the forefront of the region's leadership, and as our educational achievements soar, more Latinas are poised to assume leadership roles. We envision this report as a cornerstone for measuring our expanding leadership landscape and the ongoing progress within our community.

Overview

The State of New York is home to roughly 20 million people where nearly 1 in 5 identify as Latino. Latinos are the second largest ethnic group in the State and close to 10% of all New Yorkers are Latina, according to latest U.S. Census data. The power of Latino and Latina voters has grown significantly in the last several decades with politicians frequently courting the Latino vote.

According to the NALEO Educational Fund, about 17.5 million Latinos across the nation will vote in the 2024 Presidential Election, a 6.5% increase in Latino voter turnout since 2020. Nearly 1 million of those voters will be New Yorkers. As Latinos continue to grow their voting power, it's important to note whether that has been reflected in the demographic representation of the elected officials enacting policy that affect them.

Several recent systematic changes at the federal and state level could help increase gender and ethnic parity in political representation. The U.S. Government is set to change

how they track ethnicity and race, specifically for those identifying as Hispanic or Latino. This reclassification could alter the number of reported self-identifying Latinos and Hispanics across the nation and is expected to provide a more accurate count and further emphasize the potential voting power of the Latino electorate. In 2022, the New York Legislature passed the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York intended to ensure voting access for minority voters across the state.

The following report analyzes more than 6,000 elected leaders at a federal, state, county and municipal level highlighting the status of Latina political representation across the State of New York. With a lens focused on analyzing the gender and ethnic parity of elected representatives and their constituents, we hope this report shows not only the success Latina candidates have had in politics, but also show where there is room for increased representation of one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States.



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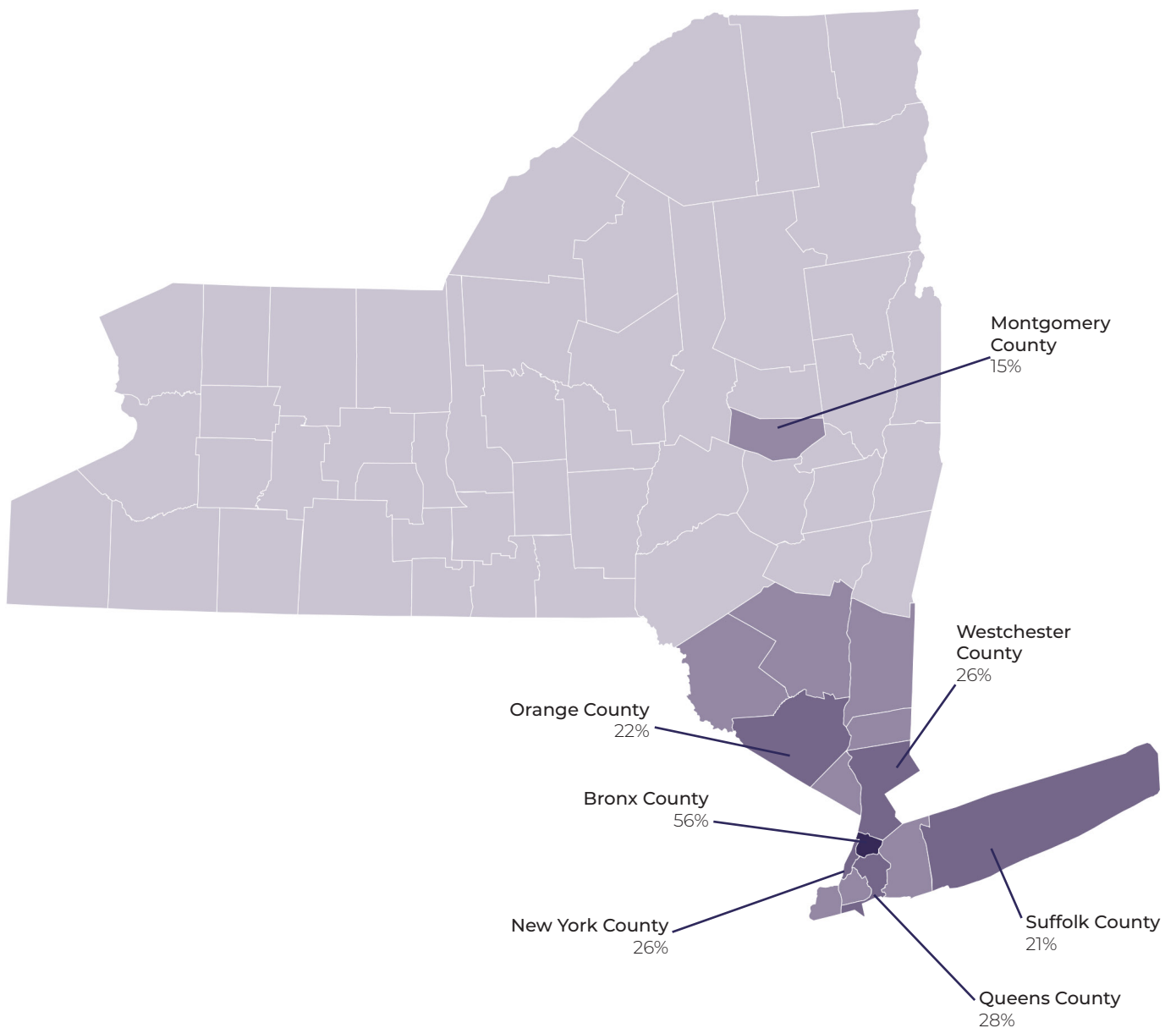


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Perspective: Latinos in New York

Latino Population by County

■ 0-10% ■ 10-20% ■ 20-30% ■ >50%



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Latino Share of the Electorate by County

County Name	% of Latino Voters	County Name	% of Latino Voters
Albany	5%	Niagara	3%
Allegany	1%	Oneida	5%
Bronx	47%	Onondaga	4%
Broome	4%	Ontario	4%
Cattaraugus	2%	Orange	15%
Cayuga	2%	Orleans	3%
Chautauqua	7%	Oswego	2%
Chemung	2%	Otsego	3%
Chenango	2%	Putnam	11%
Clinton	2%	Queens	22%
Columbia	4%	Rensselaer	4%
Cortland	2%	Richmond (Staten Island)	15%
Delaware	3%	Rockland	12%
Dutchess	9%	Saratoga	3%
Erie	5%	Schenectady	6%
Essex	2%	Schoharie	3%
Franklin	1%	Schuyler	1%
Fulton	3%	Seneca	3%
Genesee	2%	St. Lawrence	2%
Greene	4%	Steuben	2%
Hamilton	2%	Suffolk	11%
Herkimer	2%	Sullivan	10%
Jefferson	4%	Tioga	2%
Kings (Brooklyn)	16%	Tompkins	4%
Lewis	1%	Ulster	7%
Livingston	3%	Warren	2%
Madison	2%	Washington	2%
Monroe	7%	Wayne	3%
Montgomery	12%	Westchester	16%
Nassau	11%	Wyoming	1%
New York (Manhattan)	21%	Yates	2%

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As of 2024, New York has the most diverse elected leaders in statewide office in its history. However, there has yet to be a Latina elected to any of these four statewide offices: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller.

Statewide Government

New York's executive branch of government has 4 statewide offices in which citizens can elect their leaders: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller. In 2019 Letitia James became the first African American and first woman to be elected New York Attorney General. Two years later, Kathy

Hochul made history as New York's first female Governor. Both women were re-elected to their respective posts in 2022 with 3.1 million votes. In 2022, Antonio Delgado became the first Latino to hold statewide office in New York when he was appointed and then subsequently elected to serve as Lieutenant Governor.

Gubernatorial Appointments

The Governor appoints the heads of all the state departments and agencies, except for the Commissioner of the State Education Department and the Chancellors of the State University and City University of New York. Shortly after becoming the head of the State of New York in 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul promised to diversify her Cabinet and staff to reflect the population of New York by increasing Latino representation and retaining Latino leaders from previous administrations. Governor Hochul has continued this commitment by nominating and reappointing several Latinas to lead critical departments and offices across the state. Keeping track of these appointments is crucial, as they provide another level of decision-making and access that Latinas should be a part of to ensure a representative government. The list of appointees that follows includes a recent historical account of some, but not all, Latina appointments made by past Governors and the current one.

In 2017, **Clarissa M. Rodriguez, Esq.** became the first Latina appointed Chair of the New York State Workers' Compensation Board. In 2019, **Marie Therese Dominguez** was confirmed as Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation, also the first Latina in this position. Since 2020 **Julissa Gutierrez** has served as the state's Chief Diversity Officer.

In 2021, **Dr. Betty A. Rosa** became the Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York. She is the first Latina to serve in the position where she oversees more than 700 school districts, 7,000 libraries, 900 museums, and more than 50 professions encompassing nearly 900,000 licensees. That same year, **Dr. Minosca Alcantara** was appointed Executive Director for the New York State Bridge Authority, also the first Latina to serve in this role. Also in 2021 **Rossana Rosado** was appointed as Acting Commissioner of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services She is the third woman, second person of color and first Latina to lead the agency since its creation in 1972.

Prior to this role, Rosado served as the Secretary of State of New York for 5 years starting in 2016. She is the third Latina to have been Secretary of State of New York. The first was **Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez** who served from 2007 to 2010. She was followed by **Ruth Noemi Colón** who served for a little less than a year.

In 2023, **Maria Fernandez** was appointed to serve as Deputy Secretary for Education, while **Rose Rodriguez** was appointed to serve as Appointments Secretary. In March 2024 **Denise Miranda** was appointed to serve as the Acting Commissioner of the Division of Human Rights.



Despite its diverse population, New York has yet to send a Latina or any person of color to the U.S. Senate.

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U.S. Congress

Three Latinas are members of the New York congressional delegation.

The changing population of New York has seen the State consistently lose seats in Congress since the 1950s when the delegation consisted of 45 members. As of 2023, the New York delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives has dropped to 26 members.

With just 6 Latino members of Congress representing New York, Latinos see ethnic parity at this level of government. Of those 6 Latino Congressmembers exactly half are women, meaning Latinas also have gender parity for their ethnic composition holding 12% of seats in New York's delegation to Congress. All 3 Latinas represent parts of New York City.

In 1993, **Nydia Velázquez** made history when she became the first Puerto Rican woman to serve in Congress and the first Latina to be part of the New York delegation of Congress. In 2006, Rep. Velázquez' historic appointment to chair of the Small Business Committee made her the first Latina in the nation to chair a House committee.

It would take 26 years since Rep. Velázquez won her congressional seat before another Latina from New York would join Velázquez. The youngest woman ever to serve in Congress, **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** was elected in 2019. Two years later, **Nicole Malliotakis** would join these New York Latinas in Congress.

In 2000 Hillary Clinton made history becoming the first woman elected from New York to the U.S. Senate. When Clinton became the U.S Secretary of State in 2009, Kirsten Gillibrand was appointed to the vacant U.S. Senate seat and has retained that seat ever since. While this is great progress for women in New York, the state has yet to send a Latina or any person of color to the U.S. Senate.

State Legislature

Latinas comprise 13 members of the State Legislature — 5 in the Senate and 8 in the Assembly.

There are 213 members of the bicameral New York State Legislature – the upper house has 63 members and the lower house has 150 members. Each member is elected for two-year terms without term limits.

Olga Méndez was the first Latina elected to a State Legislature in the mainland, when she was elected to the New York State Senate in 1978. She served in that capacity until 2004, making Méndez the longest serving Latina in the history of the New York State Legislature.

Since Méndez' historic win, more and more Latinas continue to be elected to the New York State Legislature, including **Carmen Arroyo** who in 1994 became the first Latina elected to the State Assembly. Latinas now hold more than a dozen legislative seats, or 6% of the Legislature.

Women are 32% of New York's State Senators while Hispanic women make up 25% of all female State Senators. In the State Assembly, women fare better holding 35% of the 150 seats. However, comparatively, Hispanic women are only 15% of all women in the State Assembly. All the Latina State Legislators are Democrats and all but one, Senator **Monica Martinez**, represent a part of New York City.



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34%

Share of women in the
State Legislature

13%

Share of Latinos in the
State Legislature

6%

Share of Latinas in the
State Legislature

Local Government

Latinas are less than 1% of all local leaders.

Local government in New York State comprises 62 counties, including the 5 boroughs of New York City; 62 cities; more than 900 towns; and more than 550 villages.



Counties

Of the more than 900 County Legislators and Supervisors in the State, only 1% identify as Latino, and less than half of those are Latina.



Cities

Latinas hold less than 20 seats across the 62 City Councils. However, Latinas have achieved parity in New York City, where they represent 17% of the Council.



Towns

Our research identified less than a dozen Latinas serving on the 932 Town Boards. Women overall make up less than 25% of all Town seats.

This report analyzed nearly 6,000 county, city and town elected leaders. At each of these three levels of local government we analyzed, Latinas made up less than 1% of all representatives. However, most of the Latino representation occurs in the City of New York where Latinas hold 9 of the 51 Council seats.

Despite those gains for Latinas on the City Council, none of the five New York borough presidents are Latina, but one is Latino. Since 2022, Antonio Reynoso has served as Brooklyn Borough President – the first Latino to hold this position.

Latinas are still making gains in other parts of the State. In Monroe County, where Latinos are less than 10% of the population, **Mercedes Vazquez Simmons** and **Yversha Roman** serve as County Legislators. Roman also holds the title of President of the County Legislature.

In the City of New Rochelle, where Latinos are 31% of residents, Mayor **Yadira Ramos-Herbert** is the first Latina elected mayor of a top ten city in New York. The City of Newburgh in the County of Orange has the highest percentage of Latinos. Nearly 1 in 2 of its more than 28,000 residents identify as Latino. Two Latinas, **Giselle Martinez** and **Ramona Monteverde** sit on the City's 7-member Council – the only Latinos on the dais.

A Look at Long Island

More than 2.9 million people call Long Island home. Latinos comprise 20%, or nearly 590,000, of those residents. This is an estimated 34% increase of the Latino population since 2010, according to U.S. Census Data.

As the Latino population in Nassau and Suffolk counties continues to rise, the number of elected leaders who identify as Latino is still not at parity with the constituents they represent.

However, there have been some gains. In 2002, Assemblymember Phil Ramos became the first Latino elected from Suffolk County to the State Legislature. Senator **Monica Martinez**, elected in 2022, is the only other Latino member of the Legislature that represents Suffolk County. She previously served on the Suffolk County Legislature for five years. The first Latina to serve as a Suffolk County Legislator, **Vivian Viloria-Fisher**, served from 1999 to 2011. Samuel Gonzalez is currently the only Latino member of the Suffolk County Legislature. The Nassau County Legislature has never had a Latino member.



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Long Island Commissioners

Latinos and Latinas are also making progress in appointed seats on Long Island.

In January 2024, **Dr. Sylvia Diaz** was appointed to serve as Deputy County Executive for Health, Human Services and Education in Suffolk County. Dr. Diaz is the first Latina to serve in this capacity and the highest-ranking Hispanic official in Suffolk County government.

In 2019, **Lynda Perdomo-Ayala** was appointed Chair of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission. She's served on the commission since 2002.



New York City

“The Big Apple” is the only city in the state where Latinas see representative parity.

New York City is home to 2.5 million Latinos. Nearly two-thirds of all Latinos in the State reside in the city. Latinos are 29% of the city's 8.6 million residents. With Latinos holding 27% of New York's City Council seats, they are just one seat from parity in the nation's largest city

In 1984, **Nydia Velázquez** became the first Latina to serve on the New York City Council. Forty years after her historic win, Latinas see parity on the dais, where they represent 17% of the seats, and are 15% of the population. Latinas hold nearly double the number of seats on the council as their male counterparts. Comparatively, in the nation's second largest city, Los Angeles, Latinas hold 1.5 times the number of City Council seats as male Latinos. Additionally, Latinas hold leadership positions within the Council. **Diana Ayala** is the City's Deputy Speaker. And in 2024, **Amanda Farias** made history when she was appointed majority leader of the New York City Council – the first Latina to ever hold the position. In 2014, **Melissa Mark-Viverito** was named Speaker of the City Council, the first Puerto Rican and Latina to hold a citywide elected position. **Julissa Ferreras** served on the City Council from 2009 to 2017, and was the first Latina and youngest member ever elected to chair the Finance Committee.



NYC Mayoral Appointments

New York City has more than 200 boards and commissions vital to the city's operation and growth. They are key components of local government, making critical policy decisions while advising the mayor and agencies on a wide range of pressing issues.

In 2022, **Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez** was appointed Commissioner to the Department for the Aging. She is perhaps most notably recognized as New York's first Latina to serve as Secretary of State.

Beginning in 2022, **Lisa M. Flores** serves as Chief City Procurement Officer and Director of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services.

Also in 2022, **Vilda Vera Mayuga** was appointed as the Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. She previously served as Chair of the New York State Industrial Board of Appeals for four years – the first Latina to hold the position.

In 2021, **Annabel Palma** was appointed Chair of the New York City Commission on Human Rights. She previously served on the New York City Council for 14 years.

By the Numbers

0%

Statewide

There has yet to be a Latina elected to any of the four statewide offices.

12%

U.S. Congress

Latinas are 12% of the congressional delegation with 3 members.

8%

State Senate

Latinas are 8% of the State Senate, and are capable of achieving parity by gaining one additional Senate seat.

5%

State Assembly

Latinas comprise 5% of the State Assembly. This number would need to nearly double in order to achieve parity.

1%

Local Gov

Latinas are less than 1% of all county leaders, city leaders and town leaders.

17%

New York City

Latinas are nearly 15% of New York City's population but comprise 17% of the City Council seats.

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Conclusions

New York Latinas are faring well in elected office, but leadership in higher office is not fully reflective of the State's diversity.

Latinas have made significant progress in New York to increase representation. However, there is still plenty of work to be had at every level of government for the State's second largest ethnic group. Although Latinas have achieved parity in some levels of government, the effort to maintain representation that reflects the population is constant.

Appointments to leadership positions highlight an understanding that Latinas deserve to be making important decisions regarding policy. Appointments are also key to building pathways to leadership for Latinas. Recent systemic changes to the U.S Census and statewide voting laws give hope that New Yorkers will continue to elect more women and people of color in public office.



Latinas Have Never Been Elected Statewide

Women are breaking barriers in statewide office, however Latinas have yet to be elected to any of these seats.



U.S. Senate Still Lacks Latinas

Although New York Latinas see parity in the House of Representatives with 3 Congresswomen, voters have yet to elect a Latina U.S. Senator.



Diversity and Parity is Greatest in NYC

Nearly all Latina representation occurs in New York City. All the Latina Congresswomen serve constituents in the City, as do more than half of all the Latina City Councilmembers.

Notes & Methodology

This report analyzed more than 6,300 elected officeholders across New York government. The data focuses on elected officials who affect federal, state and local policy and does not include school board members, sheriffs, district attorneys, court justices, or other elected leaders across the State of New York. Only the following elected positions are included in the datasets: 26 congressional seats, 2 U.S. senate seats, 4 statewide offices, 213 state legislative seats, 937 county supervisor and legislature seats, more than 500 city councilmembers, and nearly 4,700 town members.

The report also includes information about appointed leadership positions as stated.

The data is current as of March 2024.

We refer to parity in representation throughout this report to describe when a governmental body is composed of members that reflect the larger populations' demographic makeup. I.e. leadership is representative of the population it serves.

Analysis and conclusions on voting and representation trends were contributed by GrassrootsLab, who also completed the visualizations and design of the final report.

Voter registration and turnout data was provided by L2 Data. www.L2-data.com. Population data was provided by U.S. Census Bureau.





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Contributors:
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Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)

634 South Spring Street, Ste 920
Los Angeles, CA 90014
latinas@latinas.org
www.latinas.org

