

A 5

Municipal Form of Government: Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition

Evelina R. Moulder
ICMA

ICMA has been conducting a survey on municipal form of government for many years. The longitudinal data that emerge allow researchers to compare over time the changes in the form and structure of city government. Sometimes the changes are noticeable, such as the increase in chief appointed official (CAO) positions in all forms of government, and sometimes they are more nuanced, such as the characteristics that point to a loosening of the boundaries of traditional forms of government. This year ICMA adds another set of data to extend the picture of these and other developing trends.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The *Municipal Form of Government, 2006* survey was mailed in August 2006 to all municipalities with a population of 2,500 and over and to those under 2,500 that are in the ICMA database (there are thousands of municipalities under 2,500 in population). A second mail was sent to those municipalities that did not respond to the first mail. The final response rate was 47% (Table 5/1), which is lower than in previous years. Anecdotal information suggests that local governments are inundated with surveys and have become less likely to respond.

DEFINITIONS AND FINDINGS

The *Municipal Form of Government, 2006* survey used the following definitions for the five forms of government:

- **Mayor-council:** An elected council or board serves as the legislative body. The chief elected official (CEO) is the head of government, with significant administrative authority, generally elected separately from the council.
- **Council-manager:** An elected council or board and CEO (e.g., mayor) are responsible for making policy with advice of the CAO. A professional administrator appointed by the board or council has full responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the government.
- **Commission:** Members of a board of elected commissioners serve as heads of specific departments and collectively sit as the legislative body of the government.

Table 5/1 SURVEY RESPONSE

Classification	No. of municipalities surveyed (A)	No. responding	
		No.	% of (A)
Total	8,278	3,864	47
Population group			
Over 1,000,000	9	2	22
500,000–1,000,000	23	9	39
250,000–499,999	36	17	47
100,000–249,999	179	100	56
50,000–99,999	408	227	56
25,000–49,999	780	424	54
10,000–24,999	1,826	883	48
5,000–9,999	1,889	868	46
2,500–4,999	2,011	839	42
Under 2,500	1,117	495	44
Geographic region			
Northeast	2,155	807	37
North-Central	2,463	1,227	50
South	2,415	1,120	46
West	1,245	710	57
Geographic division			
New England	845	401	48
Mid-Atlantic	1,310	406	31
East North-Central	1,573	748	48
West North-Central	890	479	54
South Atlantic	1,099	575	52
East South-Central	494	170	34
West South-Central	823	376	46
Mountain	470	266	57
Pacific Coast	774	443	57
Metro status			
Central	540	283	52
Suburban	4,949	2,361	48
Independent	2,789	1,220	44

¹For a definition of terms, please see "Inside the Year Book," x.

- **Town meeting:** Qualified voters convene to make basic policy and to choose a board of selectmen. The selectmen and elected officers carry out the policies established by the government.
- **Representative town meeting:** Voters select citizens to represent them at the town meeting. All citizens may attend and participate in debate, but only representatives may vote.

Among municipalities, the council-manager and mayor-council forms of government are the most prevalent, reported by 55% and 34% of respondents, respectively (Table 5/2). The town meeting, a form of government found especially in New England, was reported by 5% overall and by

Selected Findings

The current survey results show a slight increase since 2001 in the percentage reporting the council-manager form, as well as a slight decrease in the percentage reporting the mayor-council form.

The percentage of municipalities that reported a position for a CAO, often titled "city manager" or "chief administrative officer," has increased four percentage points since 2001.

Only larger cities, those with a population of 250,000 and above, show a majority of cities reporting term limits for council members.

49% of New England municipalities. Less than 1% reported the commission or representative town meeting form of government.

Included on Table 5/2 is a column for those local governments that did not report their form of government. Although their answers to some of the other questions on the survey may suggest a particular form of government, any assumptions that might be drawn would be unreliable.

When compared with the forms of government reported in the 2001 survey, the current results show a slight increase in the percentage reporting the council-manager form, as well as a slight decrease in the percentage reporting the mayor-council form. In 2001, 53% reported the council-manager form and 38%, the mayor-council form of government.¹

Only 11 of the 32 municipalities with a population of 500,000 and over responded to the survey, and one of them did not answer the form-of-government question, so for larger cities, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the relationship between population size and form of government. Among cities with a population of 5,000–249,999, however, the majority reported the council-manager form of government, as did a bare majority of those under 2,500 in population. As previously noted, there are thousands of municipalities with a population below 2,500; because ICMA's database contains only a small proportion of those jurisdictions, the data on them cannot be considered reflective of that cohort.

According to a majority of respondents overall (57%) and all cities with a population of 500,000 and above, their form of government is established in the charter (Figure 5/1).

Position of Chief Appointed Official

The percentage of municipalities that reported a position for a CAO, often titled "city manager" or "chief administrative officer," has increased four percentage points since 2001.² As shown in Table 5/3, there are some variations by population, geographic division, and form of government.

In the majority of cities that have a CAO (68%), the official is appointed by the council (Table 5/4), although again there are variations by geographic division and form of government. In particular, mayor-council and commission localities show the

Table 5/2 MUNICIPAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Mayor-council % of (A)	Council-manager % of (A)	Commission % of (A)	Town meeting % of (A)	Representative town meeting % of (A)	Did not report % of (A)
Total	3,864	34	55	1	5	1	4
Population group							
Over 1,000,000	2	0	100	0	0	0	0
500,000–1,000,000	9	44	44	0	0	0	11
250,000–499,999	17	65	35	0	0	0	0
100,000–249,999	100	27	70	0	0	0	3
50,000–99,999	227	26	67	1	*	1	5
25,000–49,999	424	31	63	1	1	1	4
10,000–24,999	883	29	59	1	5	1	4
5,000–9,999	868	33	54	1	7	1	4
2,500–4,999	839	43	44	1	7	1	5
Under 2,500	495	39	50	*	5	0	6
Geographic division							
New England	401	11	29	*	49	4	7
Mid-Atlantic	406	46	42	4	0	1	8
East North-Central	748	42	50	1	0	1	5
West North-Central	479	52	44	1	*	0	3
South Atlantic	575	23	73	1	0	0	4
East South-Central	170	67	28	1	0	0	5
West South-Central	376	29	69	*	0	0	2
Mountain	266	40	58	0	0	0	3
Pacific Coast	443	17	80	0	0	0	3
Metro status							
Central	283	35	60	*	0	0	4
Suburban	2,360	32	55	1	5	1	5
Independent	1,220	38	52	1	6	*	3

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

Table 5/3 POSITION OF CHIEF APPOINTED OFFICIAL

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Yes	
		No.	% of (A)
Total	3,788	3,216	85
Population group			
Over 1,000,000	2	2	100
500,000–1,000,000	9	6	67
250,000–499,999	17	12	71
100,000–249,999	99	89	90
50,000–99,999	223	192	86
25,000–49,999	418	358	86
10,000–24,999	866	758	88
5,000–9,999	851	725	85
2,500–4,999	824	661	80
Under 2,500	479	413	86
Geographic division			
New England	398	319	80
Mid-Atlantic	393	314	80
East North-Central	731	571	78
West North-Central	469	422	90
South Atlantic	565	540	96
East South-Central	165	94	57
West South-Central	371	313	84
Mountain	262	224	86
Pacific Coast	434	419	97
Metro status			
Central	277	222	80
Suburban	2,310	2,005	87
Independent	1,201	989	82
Form of government			
Did not report	106	86	81
Mayor-council	1,319	834	63
Council-manager	2,106	2,099	100
Commission	35	22	63
Town meeting	194	154	79
Representative town meeting	28	21	75

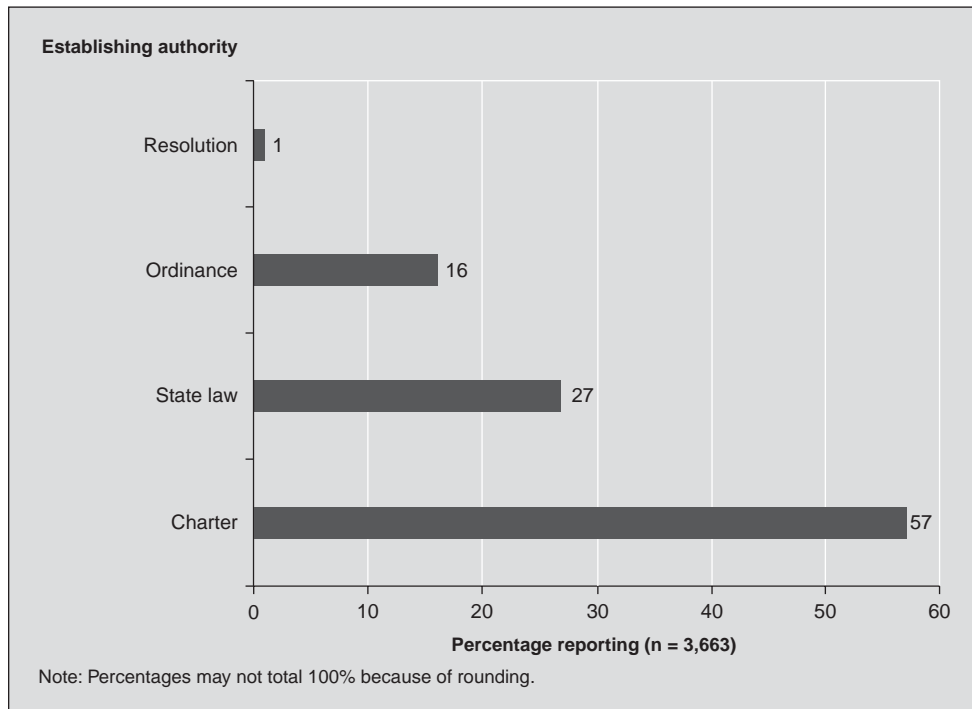


Figure 5/1 Authority for establishing form of government

lowest percentages reporting appointment solely by the council and the highest percentages showing appointment involving the elected official.

Provision for Initiative, Referenda, and Recall

There are various provisions that allow citizens or the council to introduce items on a ballot. These

provisions are initiative, referenda, and recall (Table 5/5).

Initiative Through an initiative, citizens can place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes on the ballot by collecting the required number of signatures on a petition. There are three types of initiatives: indirect, direct, and nonbinding. The *indirect* provision requires that before any charter,

ordinance, or home rule change that has been proposed by citizens through a petition process can be placed on the ballot, the council must consider it. Vote results are then binding on the local government. In contrast, the *direct* initiative requires that any change proposed by the citizens through a petition process be placed directly on the ballot for a vote. The direct initiative can be nonbinding, in which case citizens can place a question on the ballot for voter approval or rejection, but implementation of the initiative is not binding on the local government.

A majority of municipalities (58%) reported providing for initiatives, although population size seems to influence the prevalence of this option (Table 5/6). The cities with a population of 500,000 and above all offer citizens this opportunity, but among cities reporting with a population under 5,000, less than 50% do. The percentages vary even more by geographic division, as the highest percentages providing for initiatives are cities in the New England (81%) and Pacific Coast (79%) divisions, and the lowest are East South-Central division cities (26%), followed by cities in the South Atlantic and West North-Central divisions (38% and 39%, respectively).

Among forms of government, the town meeting municipalities show the highest percentage providing for initiatives (85%), followed by the representative town meeting (65%) and council-manager cities (62%).

Legislative Referendum Legislative referendum allows the council to place any question on the

Table 5/4 APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF APPOINTED OFFICIAL

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Appointed by			Nominated by			Other % of (A)
		Chief elected official % of (A)	Council % of (A)	Chief elected official and council combined % of (A)	Chief elected official and approved by council % of (A)	Council and approved by chief elected official % of (A)		
Total	3,159	4	68	19	9	*	1	
Population group								
Over 1,000,000	2	0	50	50	0	0	0	
500,000–1,000,000	5	20	40	40	0	0	0	
250,000–499,999	12	25	42	8	25	0	0	
100,000–249,999	89	6	63	27	3	0	1	
50,000–99,999	188	3	67	23	6	0	0	
25,000–49,999	351	3	69	19	9	*	*	
10,000–24,999	748	4	70	16	10	*	1	
5,000–9,999	709	5	69	16	9	*	1	
2,500–4,999	651	3	65	21	9	0	1	
Under 2,500	404	3	68	22	7	*	*	
Geographic division								
New England	314	7	85	5	1	0	2	
Mid-Atlantic	300	6	65	14	14	0	1	
East North-Central	565	5	54	24	16	*	1	
West North-Central	414	2	62	24	11	1	1	
South Atlantic	527	1	74	21	3	*	*	
East South-Central	96	8	51	25	15	0	1	
West South-Central	305	2	71	23	4	0	1	
Mountain	225	4	58	24	13	0	1	
Pacific Coast	413	3	80	12	4	0	*	
Metro status								
Central	216	7	64	22	7	0	1	
Suburban	1,963	4	67	19	10	*	1	
Independent	980	3	71	19	7	*	1	
Form of government								
Mayor-council	833	10	43	23	21	*	2	
Council-manager	2,049	1	77	19	4	0	*	
Commission	22	0	50	27	9	0	14	
Town meeting	150	12	79	6	0	0	3	
Representative town meeting	21	0	86	0	10	5	0	
Did not report	84	7	73	10	10	0	1	

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

Table 5/6 PROVISION FOR INITIATIVE AND INITIATIVE PROCESS

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Has provision for initiative		Type of initiative process			
		No.	% of (A)	No. reporting (B)	Indirect % of (B)	Direct % of (B)	Nonbinding % of (B)
Total	3,603	2,073	58	1,902	49	49	15
Population group							
Over 1,000,000	2	2	100	2	50	50	0
500,000–1,000,000	9	9	100	9	44	56	22
250,000–499,999	17	15	88	15	33	73	13
100,000–249,999	97	83	86	71	59	45	13
50,000–99,999	214	161	75	147	63	44	14
25,000–49,999	404	284	70	260	50	50	14
10,000–24,999	823	501	61	462	52	49	15
5,000–9,999	810	466	58	435	46	48	16
2,500–4,999	773	368	48	333	43	54	14
Under 2,500	454	184	41	168	49	48	15
Geographic division							
New England	385	313	81	297	45	52	22
Mid-Atlantic	363	153	42	134	42	42	38
East North-Central	692	433	63	401	41	53	21
West North-Central	446	174	39	161	58	42	6
South Atlantic	543	204	38	190	58	38	10
East South-Central	149	38	26	35	37	54	14
West South-Central	350	233	67	210	54	49	6
Mountain	252	190	75	175	57	50	8
Pacific Coast	423	335	79	299	53	57	8
Form of government							
Mayor-council	1,222	566	46	516	46	48	21
Council-manager	2,034	1,263	62	1,163	54	48	10
Commission	34	17	50	15	27	60	27
Town meeting	188	159	85	148	36	57	26
Representative town meeting	26	17	65	14	7	43	57
Did not report	99	51	52	46	37	61	20

Table 5/5 PROVISION FOR INITIATIVE, REFERENDA, AND RECALL

Provision	No. reporting (A)	Has provision % of (A)
Initiative	3,603	58
Legislative referendum	3,497	76
Popular referendum	3,189	45
Recall	3,311	60

ballot for voter approval or rejection. The results may be binding or nonbinding. Slightly more than 75% of municipalities reported a provision for legislative referenda, with population size seeming to influence the responses. Among population groups, for example, the larger the group, the higher the percentage reporting this provision. All cities reporting with a population of 500,000 and above offer legislative referenda compared with 68% of those with a population under 2,500 (not shown). Among geographic divisions, close to 60% of cities in the East South-Central division do not have legislative referenda, compared with 24% overall. Among forms of government, the town meeting and council-manager forms show the highest percentages offering this type of provision (88% and 79%, respectively).

For those municipalities that reported providing for a legislative referendum, the survey included a follow-up question to determine which items must be placed on the ballot. Figure 5/2 shows the percentage reporting each item. Bond measures and charter amendments were reported by the highest percentages (67% and 56%, respectively), with the percentage reporting bond measures increasing among the smaller local governments (not shown). The East South-Central and Mid-Atlantic divisions show the lowest percentages indicating that bond measures must be placed on the ballot for voter approval; the council-manager and town meeting forms of government show the highest percentages, followed by mayor-council cities. There is more variation by population and geographic division regarding charter amendments, with no discernable pattern emerging.

Popular Referendum Popular referendum allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot any charter, ordinance, or home rule change that has been adopted by the local government *before* the change can take effect. Approximately 45% of municipalities reported this option for citizens, with cities in larger population groups showing higher percentages than smaller cities. Among geographic divisions, there seems to be a greater tendency in the East and West to make this option available than in the central part of the country, although the Mid-Atlantic division cities show a relatively low percentage reporting it (Figure 5/3). Among forms of government, the town meeting cities show the highest percentage reporting popular referendum (67%), followed by council-manager cities (48%) (not shown).

Recall Recall allows citizens to collect signatures for a petition to place on the ballot a question of whether an elected official should be removed

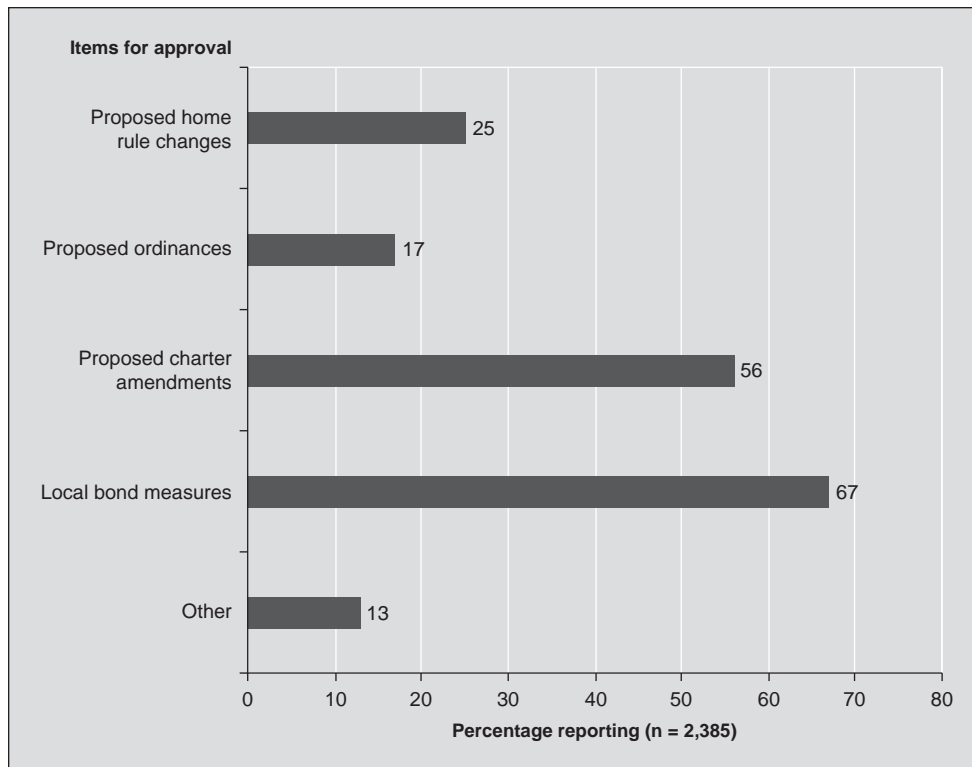


Figure 5/2 Items that must be placed on the ballot for voter approval or rejection

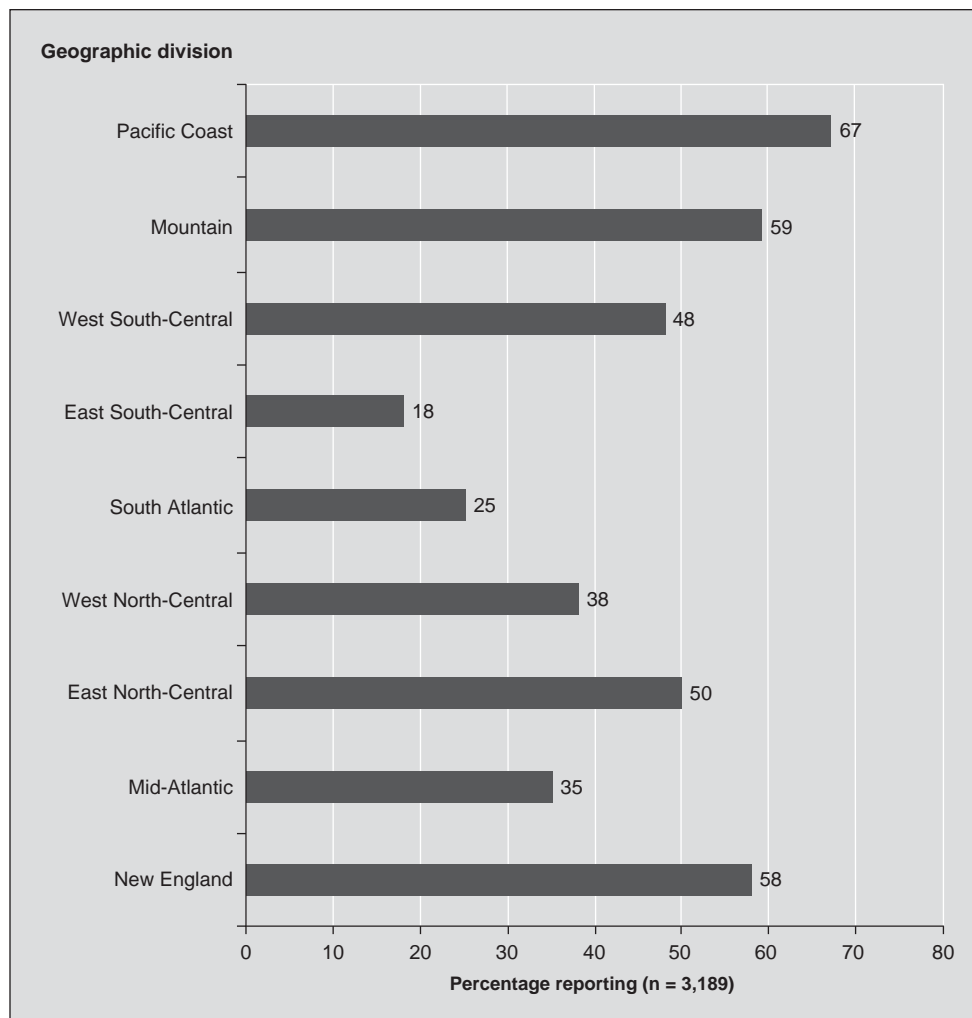


Figure 5/3 Popular referendum provided on the ballot, by geographic division

from office before his or her term has expired. Sixty percent of municipalities reported a provision for recall, with the highest percentages seen among larger local governments. Among the geographic divisions, Pacific Coast cities show the highest percentage by far reporting this provision (90%), followed by the Mountain and West South-Central divisions at 78% (not shown).

Among forms of government, the council-manager localities show the highest percentage with a provision for recall at 67%, followed by cities with the commission form (55%); however, only 31 cities with the commission form answered the question (not shown). Mayor-council cities show 52% with a provision for recall.

Change in Structure or Form of Government

With the various opportunities for citizens to place items on the ballot, it is not surprising that some changes in either the structure or form of local government were introduced between January 2001 and when the survey was conducted in 2006. Table 5/7 shows the attempted changes in structure or form of government reported on the survey and results of the attempt. Among the proposed changes, 50% or more respondents reported that approval was obtained to increase or decrease the number of council or board members, to change the method of electing the CEO, to decrease the power/authority of the CEO, and to add the position of CAO.

As might be anticipated, the changes in form of government typically involve mayor-council and council-manager localities because these represent the largest proportion of local governments. Overall, 23 cities reported a proposed change in form of government to mayor-council, 5 of which (5%) reported that the proposals were approved (Table 5/8).

The highest number of municipalities proposing a change in form of government (70) reported a proposed change to the council-manager form; of those, 35 (50%) reported that the proposals were approved.

The Chief Elected Official

Some local governments, primarily mayor-council cities (31%), have positions for both a mayor and a council president or board chair (not shown). At least 92% of all survey respondents with the town meeting and representative town meeting forms of government reported a council president or board chair position, but no more than 8% reported the position of mayor. Survey respondents were instructed to answer the questions that followed based on the position of mayor if they have one, or on the position of council president or chair if they do not have a mayor.

Election Although in the majority of cities (76%), voters elect the mayor or council president/board chair directly, there are some variations by population, geographic division, and form of government (Table 5/9). For instance, in all cities with a population of 250,000 and above, the voters directly elect the CEO. Below that population cutoff, there is not a great deal of variation in the percentages reporting direct election.

When the data are arrayed by geographic division, however, it is noticeable that almost half of the New England cities reported that the council

Table 5/7 PROPOSED CHANGES IN STRUCTURE OR FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Proposed changes	No. reporting change was proposed (A)	Change was not approved % of (A)	Change was approved % of (A)
Change . . .			
From at-large to ward or district elections	38	40	42
From ward or district to at-large elections	23	39	48
To a mixed system with some at-large and some ward or district elections	20	45	45
The mix between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by ward or district	19	47	37
The method of election of the chief elected official	33	29	56
Who appoints the chief appointed official	4	1	0
The form of government	118	44	45
Increase . . .			
The number of council or board members	58	35	59
The powers/authorities of the chief elected official	24	50	42
Decrease . . .			
The number of council or board members	22	36	55
The power/authority of the chief elected official	27	30	56
Add the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	71	21	72
Eliminate the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	17	53	29

Note: Not all who reported that the change was proposed answered whether it was approved, which explains why the percentages do not total 100%.

Table 5/8 CHANGES IN FORM OF GOVERNMENT: NUMBER OF PROPOSALS ATTEMPTED AND APPROVED

Change from	No. reporting	Change to									
		Mayor-council		Council-manager		Commission		Town meeting		Representative town meeting	
		Att.	App.	Att.	App.	Att.	App.	Att.	App.	Att.	App.
Mayor-council	55			55	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council-manager	20	19	2			0	0	1	0	0	0
Commission	7	1	1	6	5			0	0	0	0
Town meeting	8	1	1	7	3	0	0			0	0
Representative town meeting	5	2	1	2	2	0	0	1	0		

Note: Att. = attempted, app. = approved.

Table 5/9 SELECTION OF CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Voters elect directly % of (A)	Council selects from among its members	Council member receiving the most votes	Council members rotate into the position % of (A)	Other % of (A)
Total	3,629	76	22	1	2	*
Population group						
Over 1,000,000	2	100	0	0	0	0
500,000–1,000,000	8	100	0	0	0	0
250,000–499,999	17	100	0	0	0	0
100,000–249,999	99	87	11	0	2	0
50,000–99,999	218	75	23	1	1	0
25,000–49,999	400	73	25	1	2	0
10,000–24,999	819	71	27	*	2	*
5,000–9,999	816	77	22	*	1	*
2,500–4,999	778	79	18	*	2	1
Under 2,500	472	79	19	1	1	*
Geographic division						
New England	340	44	49	1	5	1
Mid-Atlantic	384	66	32	1	1	*
East North-Central	706	83	16	1	*	*
West North-Central	463	90	10	*	*	0
South Atlantic	550	83	15	1	1	*
East South-Central	159	87	13	0	0	0
West South-Central	353	89	10	*	0	1
Mountain	259	88	12	0	0	*
Pacific Coast	415	54	40	1	6	0
Form of government						
Mayor-council	1,262	96	3	*	*	*
Council-manager	1,999	67	30	1	2	*
Commission	34	56	41	3	0	0
Town meeting	158	46	46	0	8	1
Representative town meeting	25	44	44	0	12	0
Did not report	151	70	27	2	1	1

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

selects the CEO from among its members, as did 40% of cities in the Pacific Coast division.

In cities with a mayor-council form of government, 96% reported that voters directly elect the mayor. By contrast, in council-manager cities, 67% reported that voters directly elect the mayor, while 30% reported that the council selects the CEO from among its members.

Almost 86% of local governments reported that the position of CEO is officially part time, although a majority of larger local governments (those with a population of 250,000 and above) indicated that the position is full time (not shown). Ninety-five percent of respondents in council-manager cities reported that the CEO's position is part time, compared with 72% of respondents in mayor-council cities.

Terms of Office A four-year term was reported by the highest percentage of respondents, followed by a two-year term (Table 5/10). Four-year terms were generally reported by higher percentages of larger cities than smaller cities and by 87% of cities in the East South-Central division (not shown). Council-manager cities show the highest percentage reporting two-year terms (41%), and mayor-council cities show the highest percentage reporting four-year terms (68%). The town meeting and representative town meeting local governments show percentages way above the average reporting a one-year term (44% and 52%, respectively).

The vast majority (91%) of cities do not have legal limits on the number of terms allowed for the position of CEO (not shown); generally, those cities that do have term limits are larger. Where term limits are imposed, the majority (54%) of cities show a limit of two terms, followed by 28% reporting three terms.

Responsibilities and Authority of the Chief Elected Official

Although the distinctions are not consistent across local governments, typically CEOs have varying degrees of responsibility and authority, depending on the form of government.

Serving on the Council and Voting in Meetings The CEO serves on the council in 72% of reporting cities overall, but noticeably in only 44% of mayor-council cities (not shown). A slim majority of those cities in which the CEO is on the council reported that the official receives supplemental compensation for the additional duties involved (not shown).

Although 72% of council-manager and approximately 90% of commission, town meeting, and representative town meeting local government respondents reported that the CEO can vote on all issues before the council, in only 26% of mayor-

Table 5/10 LENGTH OF TERM FOR CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL

Length of term	Percentage reporting (n = 3,361)
1 year	14
2 years	35
3 years	6
4 years	45
Other	1

council cities does the CEO have this authority (Table 5/11). Among mayor-council cities, however, 55% reported that the CEO is permitted to vote to break a tie while 17% reported that the CEO is never permitted to vote.

Budget Responsibility Since 1996, there has been a small but steady drop in the percentage of cities reporting that the CEO has the authority to develop and make recommendations for the budget submitted to council—from 13% in 1996³ to 12% in 2001⁴ and 11% in 2006. At the same time, the percentage reporting that the authority lies with the CAO has increased noticeably—from 57% in 2001 to 65% in 2006. As Table 5/12 shows, even among mayor-council and commission forms of government, the CAO has this responsibility more often than the CEO.

The survey also covered several areas of authority of the CEO, including

- Assigning council members to chair or serve on committees
- Appointing citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions
- Receiving the annual budget developed by the CAO
- Preparing the annual budget
- Making an annual report to the council.

Approximately 75% of respondents reported that the CEO has the authority to assign council members to chair or serve on committees, and slightly more reported the authority to appoint citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions (not shown). However, just 50% reported that the CEO has the authority to make an annual report to council, and less than a majority (42%) reported that the CEO is authorized to receive the annual budget.

Election and Terms of Council Members

Among the questions that ICMA staff are often asked are whether the political party of a candidate for the council is placed on the ballot and whether council members have term limits. The survey results show that while political party is on the ballot in only 20% of cities reporting overall, it is on the ballot in 87% of cities in the Mid-Atlantic geographic division—an anomaly that was reflected in the 2001 survey results as well (not shown).

Elections: At Large and Ward/District Although two-thirds of local government respondents (66%) reported that council members are elected at large, cities with a population of 250,000 and above tend to show election by ward, or district, or by a combination of the two methods. Another interesting variation is that cities on the coasts show higher percentages reporting at-large elections than do those in the middle of the country. For example, only 45% in the West North-Central geographic division reported at-large elections compared with 81% and 89% in the New England and Pacific Coast divisions, respectively (not shown).

Approximately 17% of those reporting indicated that they use of elections by ward/district, and 17% show a combination of at-large and ward/district elections. The highest percentages reporting elections by ward/district alone are in the West North-

Table 5/11 VOTING AUTHORITY OF CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL

Classification	No. reporting (A)	On all issues % of (A)	Only to break a tie % of (A)	Never % of (A)	Other % of (A)
Total	3,564	57	34	7	2
Population group					
Over 1,000,000	2	100	0	0	0
500,000–1,000,000	8	50	0	50	0
250,000–499,999	17	35	6	59	0
100,000–249,999	99	74	10	14	2
50,000–99,999	215	71	16	11	2
25,000–49,999	392	63	23	10	4
10,000–24,999	807	62	28	9	2
5,000–9,999	793	56	38	4	1
2,500–4,999	769	45	49	5	1
Under 2,500	462	54	41	5	1
Geographic division					
New England	320	78	10	10	2
Mid-Atlantic	374	57	32	9	2
East North-Central	685	52	37	9	3
West North-Central	452	41	41	16	2
South Atlantic	548	57	39	4	*
East South-Central	159	47	40	11	3
West South-Central	347	46	50	2	1
Mountain	262	54	42	3	1
Pacific Coast	417	81	17	1	1
Form of government					
Mayor-council	1,231	26	55	17	3
Council-manager	1,986	72	25	2	1
Commission	33	88	9	3	0
Town meeting	143	91	6	2	1
Representative town meeting	22	91	5	5	0
Did not respond	149	62	33	5	1

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

Table 5/12 AUTHORITY TO DEVELOP AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BUDGET SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL

Classification	No. reporting (A)	Chief elected official % of (A)	Chief appointed official % of (A)	Chief elected and chief appointed officials, combined % of (A)	Chief financial officer % of (A)	Finance committee % of (A)	Other % of (A)
Total	3,549	11	65	8	10	1	5
Population group							
Over 1,000,000	1	0	100	0	0	0	0
500,000–1,000,000	8	50	38	0	0	0	13
250,000–499,999	16	31	44	6	19	0	0
100,000–249,999	96	14	79	5	2	0	0
50,000–99,999	210	12	73	5	7	0	3
25,000–49,999	395	14	71	4	9	0	2
10,000–24,999	807	12	67	8	10	1	4
5,000–9,999	793	10	63	7	12	1	6
2,500–4,999	766	11	57	11	11	2	8
Under 2,500	457	7	69	7	8	1	8
Geographic division							
New England	363	15	58	8	5	4	10
Mid-Atlantic	362	12	50	12	18	2	6
East North-Central	675	13	55	10	15	1	7
West North-Central	451	4	74	7	9	1	6
South Atlantic	540	6	83	4	5	0	1
East South-Central	157	34	36	12	10	1	8
West South-Central	350	17	71	7	3	*	1
Mountain	244	8	62	5	14	*	11
Pacific Coast	407	6	79	4	10	0	2
Form of government							
Mayor-council	1,212	26	34	13	17	2	9
Council-manager	2,007	2	87	3	6	*	2
Commission	33	3	33	12	30	3	18
Town meeting	176	10	47	14	7	7	16
Representative town meeting	26	4	58	12	8	0	19
Did not respond	95	12	56	7	13	0	13

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

Table 5/13 NUMBER OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Classification	No. reporting (A)	1-2 % of (A)	3-5 % of (A)	6-10 % of (A)	11-15 % of (A)	More than 15 % of (A)
Total	1,968	17	43	30	6	4
Population group						
Over 1,000,000	2	0	50	50	0	0
500,000-1,000,000	7	0	14	43	29	14
250,000-499,999	10	10	30	40	10	10
100,000-249,999	59	7	39	34	12	9
50,000-99,999	128	13	34	38	9	6
25,000-49,999	232	13	36	35	9	7
10,000-24,999	441	15	40	34	7	4
5,000-9,999	445	16	47	27	6	4
2,500-4,999	413	22	46	26	2	3
Under 2,500	231	22	52	22	4	*

Note: Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
* = Less than 0.5%.

Central (34%) and East South-Central (33%) divisions.

Terms of Office Regardless of whether council members are elected at large or by ward/district, the majority of respondents reported four-year terms (62% and 65%, respectively) (not shown). Noticeable variation occurs in the New England and the West South-Central divisions, where percentages reporting four-year terms for both at-large and ward/district elections are much lower than those in other divisions. Both of these divisions show the highest percentages reporting two- or three-year terms.

Only 9% of respondents overall reported a limit on the number of terms that a council member may serve (not shown). Only larger cities—those with a population of 250,000 and above—show a majority of cities reporting term limits for council members. Cities with the council-manager form of government were more likely to report term limits (13%) than were cities with other forms of government (not shown).

Almost 85% of those reporting indicated that terms of office are staggered, a practice that provides some continuity. Yet among larger local governments—those with a population of 500,000 and above—the percentage reporting staggered terms is much lower: 46% (not shown).

Committees and Citizen Boards

Fifty-four percent of councils often use standing committees—permanent bodies with set memberships and regularly scheduled meetings—to

consider specific policy matters. Population size seems to be a factor in the number of standing committees used, with the number generally increasing among the larger local governments (Table 5/13).

Ninety-five percent of municipalities reported using citizen authorities, boards, or commissions. Virtually all local governments that provided information about the process—whether the members are elected or appointed—indicated that the members are appointed. When the data are viewed by demographic classifications, however, interesting variations emerge: in the population group 500,000-1,000,000, three of the eight cities reporting indicated that the members are elected, as did 41% of municipalities in the New England geographic division (not shown). In New England, that may be a function of the town meeting and representative town meetings forms of government, which are more prevalent there. In fact, when the data are presented by form of government, the town meeting and representative town meeting forms show much higher percentages with elected members of citizen groups (56% and 46%, respectively).

The citizen boards or commissions typically serve several functions: the majority of local governments reported that they serve an advisory role (89%), but 41% of respondents reported a decision-making role for them and 31% reported a quasi-judicial role (not shown). Respondents with the town meeting and representative town meeting forms of government show percentages

Table 5/14 AREAS OF COMMITTEE USE

Areas of committee use	Percentage reporting (n = 3,523)
Zoning	86
Planning	84
Parks and recreation	66
Economic development	41
Libraries	41
Historic preservation	39
Housing	30
Growth	29
Beautification	27
Code enforcement	25
Environmental issues	22
Transportation	21
Finance	20
Architectural review	19
Airports	18
Civil service	17
Cable TV	17
Art	15
Community-police relations	14
Charter review commissions	12
Ethics	8

well above average reporting a decision-making role for these groups.

Table 5/14 shows the functional areas in which citizen groups are used, with planning and zoning reflecting the highest percentages of municipalities reporting use.

SUMMARY

The 2006 survey results show an increase in the percentage of municipalities reporting a position for a CAO, and the number of proposed and approved changes in form of government from mayor-council to council-manager is noteworthy. Local governments will continue to adapt to community needs, retaining and expanding upon structures that have proven to be successful.

¹Susan A. MacManus and Charles S. Bullock, III, "The Form, Structure, and Composition of America's Municipalities in the New Millennium," in *The Municipal Year Book 2003* (Washington, D.C.: ICMA, 2003), 6.

²Ibid., 13.

³Tari Renner and Victor S. DeSantis, "Municipal Forms of Government: Issues and Trends," in *The Municipal Year Book 1998* (Washington, D.C.: ICMA, 1998), 30-41.

⁴MacManus and Bullock, "America's Municipalities in the New Millennium," 11.

Current Trends. Recent examinations of government structure indicate that these forms of government are less distinct than they once were. This is due, in part, to the common practice of incorporating structural features from other forms into one's current form. This mixing is also attributed to local responses to socioeconomic, demographic, and political changes. The most common mixing occurs across the two most prevalent forms, mayor-council and the council-manager. Moulder, Evelina. "Municipal Form of Government: Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition." In *The Municipal Year Book 2008*. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association, 2008. Council-manager government is a common form of municipal government, especially in cities with populations between 10,000 and 500,000 citizens. Based on data gathered by the International City/County Management Association, approximately 59 percent of cities in the United States utilized the council-manager system as of 2011 (see Figure 1). Moulder, E. "Municipal Form of Government: Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition," in *The Municipal Year Book 2008*. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association, 2008 (pages 27-28).