

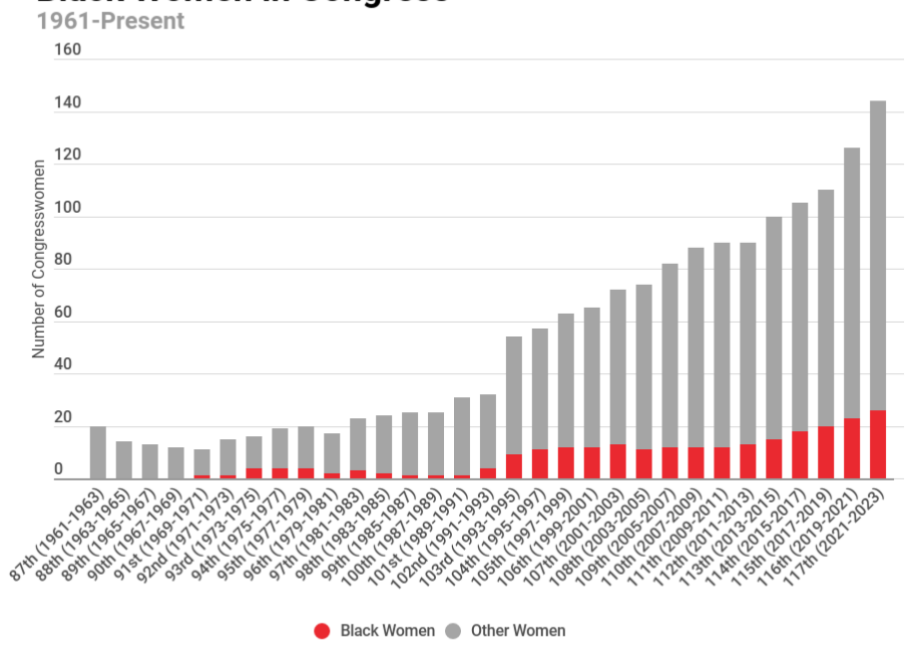
By the Numbers: Black Women in the 117th Congress



A record number of Black women will serve in the 117th Congress (2021-2023) as a result of the 2020 election, in which Black women made history as nominees and winners. Black women were elected to Congress for the first time from two states in election 2020, and one of three freshman Black women members of the 117th Congress was elected in a majority-white district. Despite an increase in Republican Black women candidates and nominees, Black women’s congressional representation remains entirely Democratic. More specifically, in a year where Republican women made up the majority of women newcomers to Congress, no Republican women winners were Black.

Consistent with past elections, 2020 revealed the persistent underrepresentation of Black women as U.S. Senate candidates and officeholders, something that will be made especially stark with the ascension of the only Black woman in the U.S. Senate – Kamala Harris (D-CA) – to the vice presidency on January 20, 2021. Black women’s congressional representation might also change as a result of appointments by the Biden-Harris administration. As of January 3, 2021, at least one Black congresswoman – Marcia Fudge (D-OH) – has been tapped by the new administration to serve in the cabinet.

Black Women in Congress



Data do not include non-voting delegates and represent officeholders in the 117th Congress as of January 3, 2021.

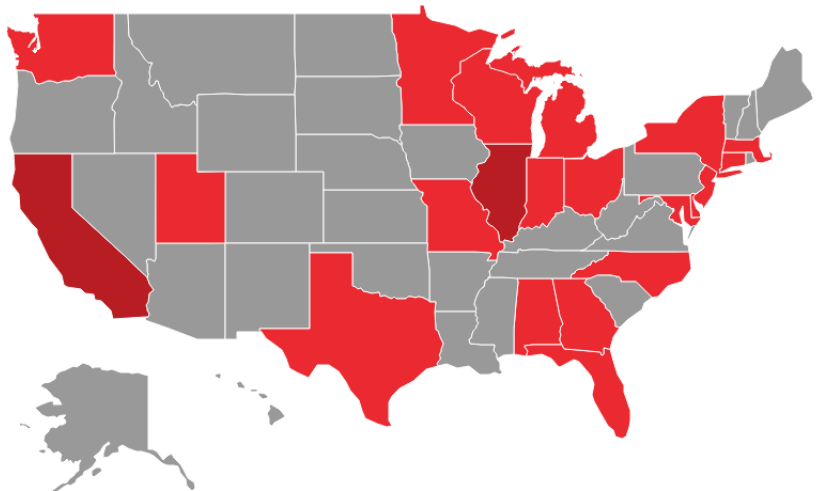
Black Women in the 117th Congress

- 26 Black women – all Democrats – serve at the start of the 117th Congress. Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) will serve until ascending to the vice presidency on January 20th, at which point no Black women will serve in the U.S. Senate. In the U.S. House, 25 Black women serve as U.S. Representatives.¹ In addition, two Black women – both Democrats – serve as non-voting delegates.
- As of January 3, 2021, Black women are 4.9% of all members of Congress, 9.7% of all Democrats in Congress, 18.1% of all women in Congress, and 43.3% of Black members of Congress. They are 5.7% of all members of the House, 21.2% of all women in the House, 11.3% of Democrats in the House, and 45.6% of Black members of the House.² Finally, until Harris' ascendance to the vice presidency, she – as the sole Black woman senator – represents 1% of all members of the Senate, 3.8% of all women in the Senate, 2.2% of all Democrats in the Senate, and 33.3% of all Black members of the Senate. Results in three congressional contests – one House and two Senate contests – are outstanding as of January 3, 2020; no contests include Black women, but results in these contests will alter the percentages presented here.
- From when Shirley Chisholm (D-NY) became the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968 to the start of the 117th Congress, 47 Black women have served in Congress from 21 states; 45 (44D, 1R) Black women have served in the House and 2 (2D) Black women have served in the Senate. The only Black Republican woman to serve in Congress was Mia Love (R, UT-04), who served in the U.S. House from 2015 to 2019.

Black Women in Congress

Congressional Representation by State

* States in red indicate states where at least one Black woman has served in Congress, whether at present or historically.



- Black Woman/Women Served in House ● No Black Women Have Served in Congress
- Black Woman/Women Served in House & Senate

Data include women serving in the 117th Congress (January 3, 2021-January 3, 2023).

¹ Representative Marilyn Strickland (D-WA) identifies as multi-racial, both Black and Korean-American.

² These data do not include non-voting delegates. Total counts for women do not include results from New York's 22nd congressional district, where the contest remains undecided, but do include Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), who is provisionally seated in the U.S. House while her contest is under House review.

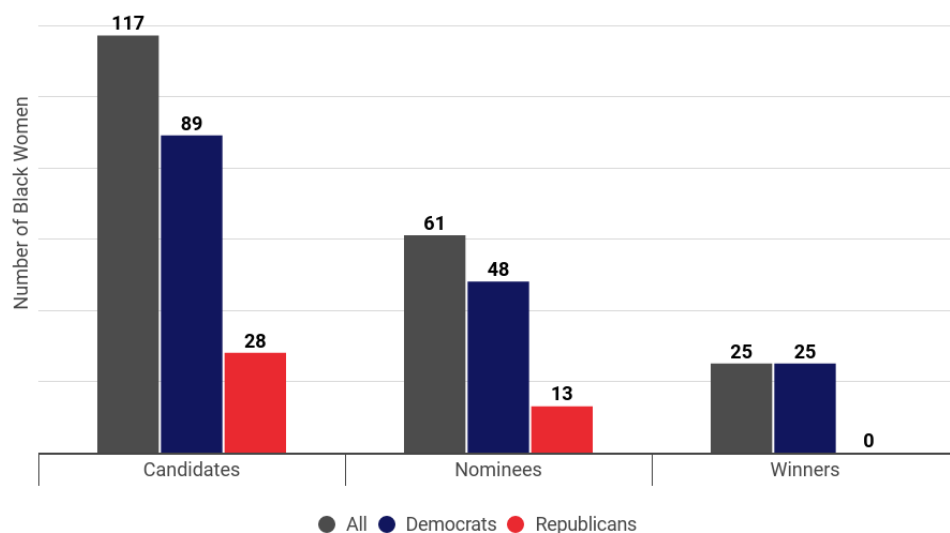
Black Women as Congressional Candidates in 2020

U.S. House

- 117 (89D, 28R) Black women ran for the U.S. House in 2020, representing 20.1% of all women House candidates and 5.8% of all House candidates (women and men) in 2020.
 - This marks the highest number of Black women U.S. House candidates since CAWP has kept this data (from 2004 to present); the next highest number of Black women nominees was 80 in 2018.
 - Black women were 25% of Democratic women candidates and 9.4% of all Democratic candidates for the U.S. House in 2020. They were 12.3% of Republican women candidates, but just 2.6% of all Republicans who ran for the U.S. House in 2020.
- 61 (48D, 13R) Black women won nominations for the U.S. House in 2020, representing 20.5% of all women nominees and 7.2% of all nominees (women and men) who made it to the general election for House seats in 2020.
 - This also marks the highest number of Black women U.S. House nominees since CAWP has kept this data (from 2004 to present); the next highest number of Black women nominees was 41 in 2018.
 - Black women were 23.5% of Democratic women nominees and 11.2% of all Democratic nominees for the U.S. House in 2020. They were 13.8% of Republican women House nominees, but just 3.1% of all Republican House nominees in 2018.
- 25 Black women – all Democrats – won full terms for U.S. House seats in the 2020 election, including three non-incumbents. The new Black women members of Congress include:
 - **Cori Bush (D, MO-01)**, who will be the first Black woman and the first woman of color in Congress from Missouri. Bush is a registered nurse and pastor, and she has been active in Black Lives Matter activism since 2014. After losing her primary bid against incumbent Representative William “Lacy” Clay for the same seat in 2018, Bush defeated Clay by about three points in the 2020 Democratic primary.
 - **Marilyn Strickland (D, WA-10)**, who will be the first Black woman in Congress from Washington. Strickland identifies as multi-racial — both Black and Korean-American. Prior to serving in Congress, Strickland served as Mayor of Tacoma, Washington (2010-2018). Strickland will also be one of the first three Korean-American women to serve in the U.S. Congress.
 - **Nikema Williams (D, GA-05)**, will replace long-time congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis in the U.S. House. Upon Lewis’ death in July 2020, Williams was selected to replace him on the general election ballot. Prior to serving in Congress, Williams served as a member of the Georgia State Senate (2017-2020) and Chair of the Georgia Democratic Party (2013, 2019-Present).

- Black women were 21.2% of all women House winners and 5.8% of all House winners (women and men) in election 2020. They were 28.1% of Democratic women and 11.3% of all Democrats who won House seats in 2020 but 0% of Republican winners.
- One of three non-incumbent Black women to win U.S. House seats – Marilyn Strickland (D, WA-10) – won in a majority-white district, challenging doubts about Black women’s viability outside of majority-minority electorates. In 2020 overall, 6 of 25 Black women winners were successful in majority-white districts. These data should encourage candidates and practitioners alike to expand perceptions of opportune sites for Black women’s electoral success.

Black Women Candidates, Nominees, and Winners U.S. House, 2020



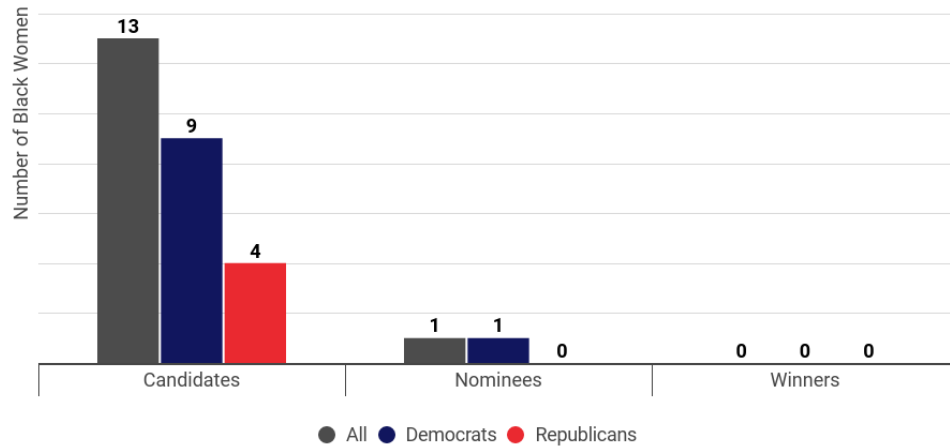
Counts include only major-party candidates and do not include candidates for non-voting positions in the U.S. House.

U.S. Senate

- 13 (9D, 4R) Black women ran for the U.S. Senate in 2020, representing 21.7% of all women Senate candidates and 5.2% of all Senate candidates (women and men) in 2020.
 - Black women were 24.3% of Democratic women candidates and 7.6% of all Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate in 2020. They were 17.4% of Republican women candidates, but just 3% of all Republicans who ran for the U.S. Senate in 2020.
- There was just one Black women nominee for the U.S. Senate in 2020: Marquita Bradshaw (D-TN) was the Democratic nominee in Tennessee’s open-seat contest for the U.S. Senate. She was defeated in the general election.

- Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), the only Black woman senator, was not up for re-election last year. However, due to her ascension to the vice presidency, no Black woman will serve in the U.S. Senate after January 20, 2021.

Black Women Candidates, Nominees, and Winners U.S. Senate, 2020



Counts include only major-party candidates.

About Higher Heights

Higher Heights Leadership Fund (Higher Heights) is a 501(c)(3) organization investing in a long-term strategy to analyze, expand and support Black women’s leadership. It is the only national organization exclusively dedicated to harnessing Black women’s political power and expanding Black women’s elected representation and voting participation. For additional information please visit <https://www.higherheightsleadershipfund.org/>.

About the Center for American Women and Politics

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women’s political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. For additional information, please visit <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>.