

Research Article

Diversity in U.S. Governments 1901-2021

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This letter aims to measure the degree of marginalization of minority groups (women, Catholics, Jews, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other races) in U.S. government administrations from 1901 to 2021. First, I assigned influence values to the government positions based on their relative importance. Then I determined the government officials, which belonged to minority groups. Based on this data a relative influence value for each minority group was calculated for each U.S. administration, which again was divided by the percentage of this subgroup in the total U.S. population in order to gain a measurement of over- and underrepresentation. The result of this study is that not all minorities were marginalized throughout the whole period and that the most underrepresented group in U.S. government administrations were women.

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The aim of this research report is to *measure* the influence of different marginalized groups in U.S. government administrations from 1901 to 2021. In the context of discussing diversity we usually *assume* that minorities are underrepresented in our governments and discriminated against in politics. Some studies have tested this assumption in relation to the salary gap of women and minorities employed by state and local governments (Moore & Mazey, 2016), the underrepresentation of minorities at the top levels of federal government jobs (Choi, 2011) or at state government jobs (Lewis, Boyd, & Pathak, 2022). However, the focus of this report is not on government employees but on the representation of women and minorities in the cabinet of the United States. The closest article to this study is Bucur's (2017) analysis of the French cabinets of Édouard Philippe in 2017 in comparison to the other governments in the Fifth Republic (1958-2017). The relevance of this research report is to fill this gap in the literature for the United States of America.

1. Methodology

In order to measure the influence of different groups throughout a substantial section of U.S. government history, I have assigned the following positions an influence value (IV) for each administration's four-year period, according to that position's relative importance: The President of the United States (IV 40), the Vice President of the United States (IV 20), 4 key Cabinet members (State, Treasury, War/Defense, and Attorney General; IV 16), 15 other Cabinet members (Navy [1901-49], Army [1947-49], Air Force [1947-49], Interior, Postmaster General [1901-71], Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health, Housing, Transportation, Energy, Education, Veteran Affairs, and Homeland Security; IV 12), 7 government positions that were at one point in time or another Cabinet-level (WH Chief of Staff, Director of CIA, Trade Representative, Counselor to the President [1969-93], National Security Advisor, Director of National Intelligence, and the Ambassador to the United Nations; IV 8), 17 ambassadors (to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Mexico, and Canada; IV 4). Whenever the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations was not a Cabinet-level position, I have treated it as a normal ambassador position with an IV of 4. And the U.S. Ambassadors to the Republic of China (Taiwan) from 1953 to 1979 received an IV of 2. The rationale for assigning different influence values to different positions is simply the fact that not all positions in the U.S. government are equally important, and I want to see, if marginalized groups would be only selected for unimportant positions. The U.S. constitution gives the President of the United States enormous power in the executive. However, the President has to rely on a large number of people to provide him/her with the necessary information in order to make the decisions. By assigning different IV scores to different positions according to their ability to impact the decisions of the President, I can take this point into consideration. I regarded the Departments of State, the Treasury, War/Defense, and Justice as more important than the other Cabinet positions, because they have a higher rank in the order of succession to the presidency. These are also the four Cabinet members which are listed highest among all Cabinet positions in the Order of Precedence of the United States of America. Furthermore, most of the lower level Departments did not exist during the whole time period under investigation. In the end, however, I cannot avoid a somewhat arbitrary assignment of weights.

In the next step, I determined whether a U.S. government official was a woman (Wo), Catholic (Ca), Jew (Je), African-American (Af), Hispanic (Hi), Asian-American (As), and/or other race (Or). If an official was a woman, Catholic, or belonged to another group, then I have counted the IV towards all of those groups. Then I divided the total IV of a group in an administration by the total IV of all positions in this

government in order to receive their relative influence value (RIV). I have excluded other marginalized groups as for example gays and lesbians, because this information was usually not available for most parts of the time period from 1901 to 2021, and I did not want to rely on rumors. In contrast, class affiliation was not included despite the fact that some information is available for this time period. The problem is that this kind of information taken from biographies is difficult to standardize (which professions should be classified as working-class?).

Finally, I calculated the relative influence value per population size (RIVP) by dividing the RIV (a value between 0 and 1) by the percentage (as a value between 0 and 1) of this group in the population of the United States during this period. The RIVP tells us how much a group is overrepresented ($\text{RIVP} > 1$) or underrepresented ($\text{RIVP} < 1$) in a specific administration. The RIVP allows me to standardize the relative influence of a group and therefore makes it possible to compare the power or lack of power of those groups. This, by the way, is another reason why several marginalized groups were ignored in this study, because no data is available about the percentage of lesbians, gays, or working-class people in the United States.

I have relied on NNDB (<https://www.nndb.com/>) and other online sources, such as Wikipedia, for personal information (race, sex, and religion) about the government officials. For the population size of the different groups I used the World Almanac and Book of Facts 2011 (Janssen 2011) and 2021 (Janssen 2020) as well as data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Gibson and Jung 2002). The percentage of the Catholic population in the United States I have taken from the book *The First Measured Century* (Caplow et al. 2001) and the Wall Street Journal (McGill 2015). For information about the Jewish population the Jewish Virtual Library was consulted.

2. Results

Table 1 shows the relative influence (RIV) of diverse groups in U.S. Governments from 1901 to 2021. Table 2 provides the estimated percentages of those groups in the U.S. population from the 1900s to the 2010s. No official census data is available for religious groups (Catholics and Jews), and also for the Hispanics the census data is missing for the 1960s. Furthermore, until the 1990s the Pacific Islanders were grouped together with the Asians. However, from the 2000 census Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were counted independently, and therefore I have added them to the other races. Since the relative influence per population size (RIVP) reacts very sensitive to the estimated percentages of the diverse groups, I have added these two tables, so that somebody who has better estimates can easily recalculate the RIVP.

		Wo	Ca	Je	Af	Hi	As	Or
1901	McKinley II	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1901	T. Roosevelt I	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1905	T. Roosevelt II	0.0	5.4	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1909	Taft	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1913	Wilson I	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1917	Wilson II	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1921	Harding	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1923	Coolidge I	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1925	Coolidge II	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1929	Hoover	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1933	FD Roosevelt I	4.8	4.8	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1937	FD Roosevelt II	4.9	9.9	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1941	FD Roosevelt III	5.1	2.8	8.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1945	Truman I	0.0	7.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1949	Truman II	0.0	11.4	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1953	Eisenhower I	4.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1957	Eisenhower II	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1961	Kennedy	0.0	23.6	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1963	Johnson I	0.0	13.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1965	Johnson II	0.0	3.9	2.4	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
1969	Nixon I	0.0	10.0	5.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
1973	Nixon II	1.7	7.2	10.1	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.3
1974	Ford	4.0	10.8	10.5	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1977	Carter	7.4	10.4	11.9	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
1981	Reagan I	5.9	23.0	1.0	4.3	0.3	0.0	0.0
1985	Reagan II	4.4	22.1	3.0	4.1	1.8	0.0	0.0
1989	GHW Bush	6.7	15.2	3.8	0.3	5.3	0.0	1.8
1993	Clinton I	15.3	13.2	8.2	11.5	7.1	0.0	3.5
1997	Clinton II	19.0	18.0	15.5	5.8	5.3	0.4	3.6
2001	GW Bush I	13.4	9.1	1.0	11.4	3.2	7.0	3.5
2005	GW Bush II	15.8	7.8	7.2	7.4	8.2	4.6	0.6
2009	Obama I	17.5	23.4	2.6	19.9	7.2	9.0	0.0
2013	Obama II	19.0	20.8	8.5	27.0	5.4	2.6	0.0
2017	Trump	13.9	11.0	10.1	3.6	1.8	3.9	2.3

Table 1. The relative influence (RIV) of diverse groups in U.S. Governments, 1901-2021

	Wo ¹	Ca ²	Je ³	Af ⁴	Hi ⁵	As ⁶	Or ⁶
1900s	-	13.0%	1.3%	-	-	-	-
1910s	-	-	2.1%	-	-	-	-
1920s	-	-	3.3%	-	-	-	-
1930s	49.3%	16.2%	3.8%	-	-	-	-
1940s	49.8%	16.3%	3.7%	-	-	-	-
1950s	50.4%	18.4%	3.1%	-	-	-	-
1960s	-	23.8%	3.0%	10.5%	3.5%	-	0.7%
1970s	51.3%	23.4%	2.8%	11.1%	4.7%	-	0.7%
1980s	51.4%	22.3%	2.5%	11.8%	6.4%	-	3.6%
1990s	51.2%	22.3%	2.3%	12.3%	9.0%	2.9%	4.7%
2000s	50.9%	21.2%	2.3%	12.3%	12.5%	4.2%	8.4%
2010s	50.8%	21.2%	2.1%	12.6%	16.3%	5.6%	9.1%

Table 2. The estimated percentage of diverse groups in U.S. population, 1900s-2010s

References: ¹ Janssen 2020: 617. ² 1900s-1950s: Caplow *et al.* 2001 (<http://www.pbs.org/fmc/book/6religion3.htm>); 1960s-2010s: McGill 2015 (<https://graphics.wsj.com/catholics-us/>). ³ Jewish Virtual Library (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-in-the-united-states-nationally>). ⁴ Janssen 2020: 617. ⁵ 1960s: Pew Research Center (<https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2017/09/18/2015-statistical-information-on-hispanics-in-united-states/>); 1970s-1990s: Gibson and Jung 2002: 29; 2000s-2010s: Janssen 2020: 617. ⁶ 1960s-1990s: Gibson and Jung 2002: 29 (Pacific Islanders are counted as Asians); 2000s-2010s: Janssen 2020: 617 (Pacific Islanders are counted as other races).

The first result is that until 1933 only two of the analyzed groups were present in U.S. governments: white male Catholics and Jews (see Table 3). In 1933 Frances Perkins became the first woman to be appointed to a cabinet-level position in Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. The first African-American who held a

cabinet post was Robert C. Weaver in 1966, under Lyndon B. Johnson. Hispanics and other races started to get recognized in Nixon's first government, whereas Asian-Americans had to wait until Clinton's second administration.

Catholics achieved in five governments (Kennedy, Reagan I and II, Obama I and II) a representation ratio equivalent to their percentage in the total population. African-Americans achieved this in two administrations (Clinton I and GW Bush I) and were overrepresented under Obama (I and II). Hispanics came close to an equivalent representation in two governments in the early 90s (GHW Bush and Clinton I), but never reached it. Asians were overrepresented in three administrations (GW Bush I and II, Obama I). Other races appeared overrepresented one time during the various administrations, but this was the result of their relatively low population sizes in the United States. Women, on the other hand, were the victims of the opposite phenomenon. Because of their large population size, they were severely underrepresented in all U.S. governments. Women did not even once reach a level of 40% influence, which would be expected for equal presentation. The only minority group that fared actually quite well was that of the Jews. In half of the 34 studied governments they were overrepresented, and from 1969 onward this happened regularly (in 12 out of 14 administrations).

Over the entire period, from 1901 to 2021, women were the most marginalized group (averaging 0.10 in all administrations), closely followed by Hispanics (0.14), other races (0.16), Asian-Americans (0.18), African-Americans (0.26) and Catholics (0.41). The only group to achieve on average a representation equivalent to their population size was the Jews. In the period, from 1901 to 1969, all covered groups were underrepresented. However, from 1969 several groups could improve their position dramatically. Jews could even achieve an overrepresentation. But not all groups could benefit from this trend. The influence of women in the U.S. governments stayed marginal.

		Wo	Ca	Je	Af	Hi	As	Or
1901	McKinley II	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1901	T. Roosevelt I	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1905	T. Roosevelt II	0.00	0.42	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1909	Taft	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1913	Wilson I	0.00	0.00	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1917	Wilson II	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1921	Harding	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1923	Coolidge I	0.00	0.00	0.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1925	Coolidge II	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1929	Hoover	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1933	FD Roosevelt I	0.10	0.31	1.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1937	FD Roosevelt II	0.10	0.61	1.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1941	FD Roosevelt III	0.10	0.17	2.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1945	Truman I	0.00	0.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1949	Truman II	0.00	0.70	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1953	Eisenhower I	0.08	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1957	Eisenhower II	0.00	0.00	0.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1961	Kennedy	0.00	0.99	1.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1963	Johnson I	0.00	0.55	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1965	Johnson II	0.00	0.16	0.80	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.00
1969	Nixon I	0.00	0.42	1.70	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.71
1973	Nixon II	0.03	0.31	3.61	0.00	0.28	0.00	1.86
1974	Ford	0.08	0.46	3.75	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.00
1977	Carter	0.14	0.44	4.25	0.64	0.00	0.00	0.00
1981	Reagan I	0.11	1.03	0.40	0.36	0.05	0.00	0.00
1985	Reagan II	0.09	0.99	1.20	0.35	0.28	0.00	0.00
1989	GHW Bush	0.13	0.68	1.52	0.03	0.83	0.00	0.50
1993	Clinton I	0.30	0.59	3.57	0.93	0.79	0.00	0.74
1997	Clinton II	0.37	0.81	6.74	0.47	0.59	0.14	0.77
2001	GW Bush I	0.26	0.43	0.43	0.93	0.26	1.67	0.42
2005	GW Bush II	0.31	0.37	3.13	0.60	0.66	1.10	0.07
2009	Obama I	0.34	1.10	1.13	1.62	0.58	2.14	0.00
2013	Obama II	0.37	0.98	4.05	2.14	0.33	0.46	0.00
2017	Trump	0.27	0.52	4.81	0.29	0.11	0.70	0.25
<i>Average in all governments</i>		0.10	0.41	1.57	0.26	0.14	0.18	0.16
<i>Average 1901-1969</i>		0.02	0.23	0.65	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Average 1969-2017</i>		0.21	0.65	2.88	0.62	0.34	0.44	0.38
<i>Average Democratic 1969-2017</i>		0.31	0.79	3.95	1.16	0.46	0.55	0.30
<i>Average Republican 1969-2017</i>		0.15	0.58	2.28	0.31	0.28	0.38	0.42

Table 3. The relative influence per population size (RIVP) of diverse groups in U.S. Governments, 1901-2021

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in average Democratic governments were more diverse than Republican governments from 1969 to 2017, which is, of course, the expected result.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

Was the representation of marginalized groups in the U.S. governments in the last 100 years improving? Certainly yes, although the progress was slow and nearly non-existent until the late 1960s. Is the issue solved? Definitely not.

Are the current approaches to increase the representation of diverse groups in the U.S. government working? No, they are not for two reasons. First of all, U.S. presidents seem to select a few members of each marginalized group in order to create a “diverse” government. However, they are ignoring the population size of those groups. This leads to an overrepresentation of small minorities (Jews) and to a massive underrepresentation of large “minorities” (women). Secondly, there is a tendency in U.S. governments to assign members of marginalized groups to less important ministries. This strategy leads to “diverse” group photos, but it does not change the power dynamics in the U.S. governments, which are still controlled by white Protestant men.

Of course, it could be questioned whether the U.S. political system requires an adequate representation of all groups. After all, the Founding Fathers chose an electoral system based on the majority criterion. This system is simply not designed to guarantee a fair representation of all the different interests of a diverse electorate. If the inclusion of marginalized groups is the aim in politics, should not also the electoral system be changed to a proportional representation?

Is the proposed methodology useful for the analysis of the inclusion of diverse groups into governments? Yes, it is. By considering not only the population size of marginalized groups, but also the degrees of importance of different government positions, this approach can reveal that our governments are much less diverse than they appear to be.

I conclude from this study that not all minority groups are necessarily underrepresented in U.S. politics, although all of them have been discriminated against, historically. Likewise, not all marginalized groups are minorities. In fact, the most marginalized group (women) is the majority.

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Declarations

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