

*New Jersey
State Legislature:
A Demographic
Profile*

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The Legislature is older, less diverse, better educated, and more involved in professional or white collar occupations.

The New Jersey State Constitution provides for balanced geographic representation of the state's population in the New Jersey Legislature. After each decennial census, boundaries for 40 legislative districts are redrawn to each include approximately 220,000 people. "The purpose of legislative redistricting," the N.J. Division of Election's website says, "is to ensure that each person is equally represented in our democracy by the creation of districts that are as equal in population as practicable ... so as to achieve the principle of 'one person – one vote.'" But while the state Legislature provides equal geographic representation by one senator and two Assembly members, ensuring representation of all of the diverse demographic characteristics of the state's population cannot be achieved through a mathematical formula. New Jersey is historically a melting pot of races and ethnicities whose residents vary widely in occupations, income, and education levels. How closely does the New Jersey Legislature mirror the diversity in the state's population?

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University in the spring of 2015 created a database of a variety of demographic and biographical variables for all 120 members of the 215th state Legislature. The data included newly appointed or elected members as of May 18, 2015. The research aims to create a statistical profile of the Legislature to better understand the makeup of the state Senate and Assembly and to analyze how closely they resemble the population they represent. Hughes Center analysis shows that the Legislature is older, less diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and sex, better educated, and more involved in professional or white collar occupations than the general state population.

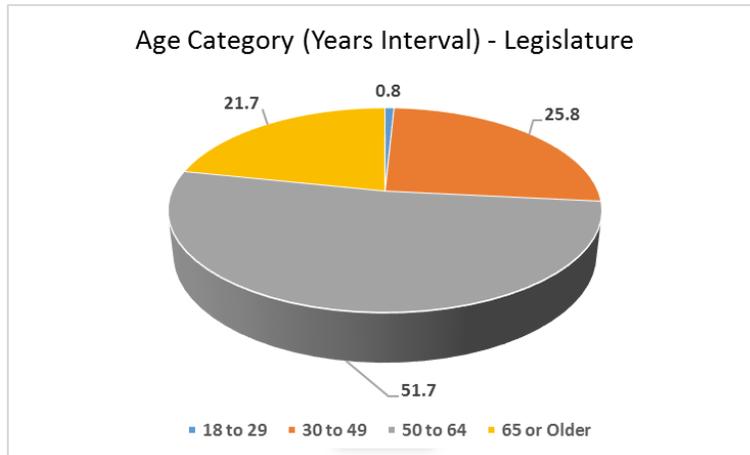
This report will present analysis of the data in three parts: the first will provide a demographic profile of the Legislature as a whole; a comparison of characteristics of the Legislature and the general population will follow; finally, this report will analyze differences in the statistical makeups of the Senate and Assembly. This data were researched from the state Legislature's website (www.njleg.state.nj.us/), from individual legislators' Web pages, from Fitzgerald's Legislative Manual (Skinder-Strauss Associates, Newark, N.J.) and in interviews with legislative staff. See Appendix A for frequency tables of variables.

Special acknowledgements to Michael Rodriguez, Stockton Associate Professor of Political Science, whose earlier paper with Jenny Zink ([Biographical Profiles, Political Ambition, and Legislative Professionalization](#)) included some of the data used in this report. Thanks also to Kevin Coopersmith, Graduate Assistant, and Michael Kelly, Class of 2014, who also participated in the data collection.

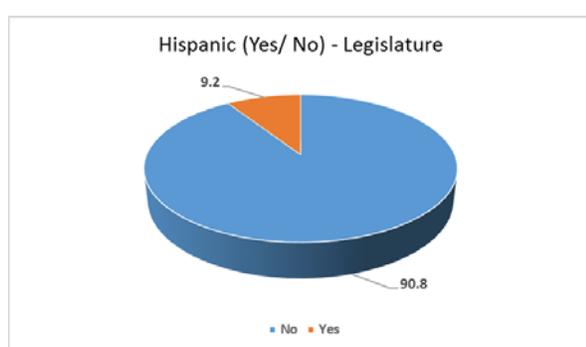
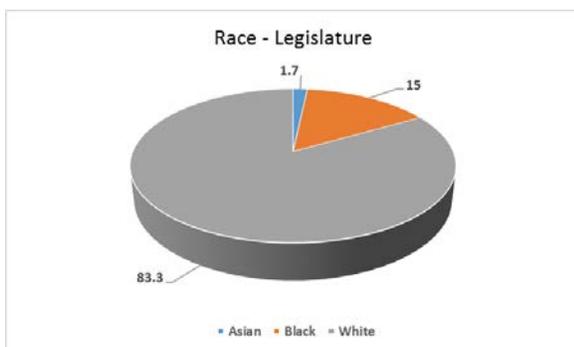
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PROFILE OF THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

The full Legislature is made up of 40 members in the state Senate and 80 in the state Assembly. The median age of state legislators is 56, with a majority of 52 percent between the ages of 50 and 64. Twenty-six percent are ages 30 to 49, and 22 percent are senior citizens aged 65 and older. Only one lawmaker is younger than 30, Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, D-1st, who turned 29 on May 1, 2015. The oldest legislator, Sen. Gerald Cardinale, R-39th, is 81.

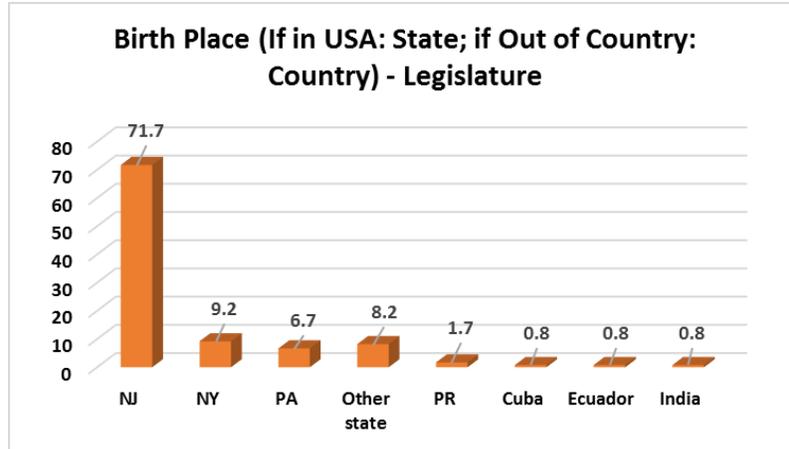


The New Jersey Legislature is mostly non-Hispanic (91 percent) and white (83 percent). Fifteen percent are black or African-American, and 2 percent are Asian. Nine percent are of Hispanic ethnicity.

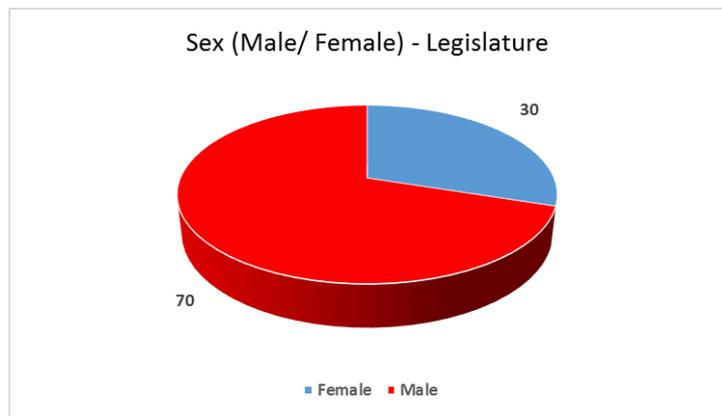


A majority of 72 percent of state legislators were born in New Jersey. More than one in four (26 percent) were born in another state or in Puerto Rico. Nine percent were born in New York and 7 percent in Pennsylvania. Three legislators (2 percent) were born in another country.

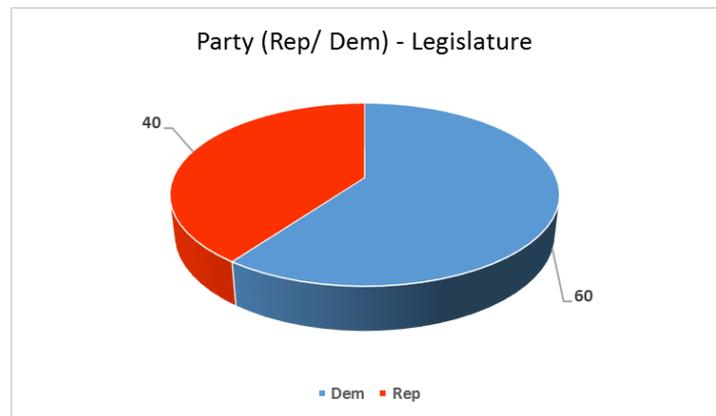
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A strong majority of 70 percent of state legislators are men, with 30 percent being women. This is somewhat higher than the national average. According to the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute, 24 percent of legislators across the United States are women.



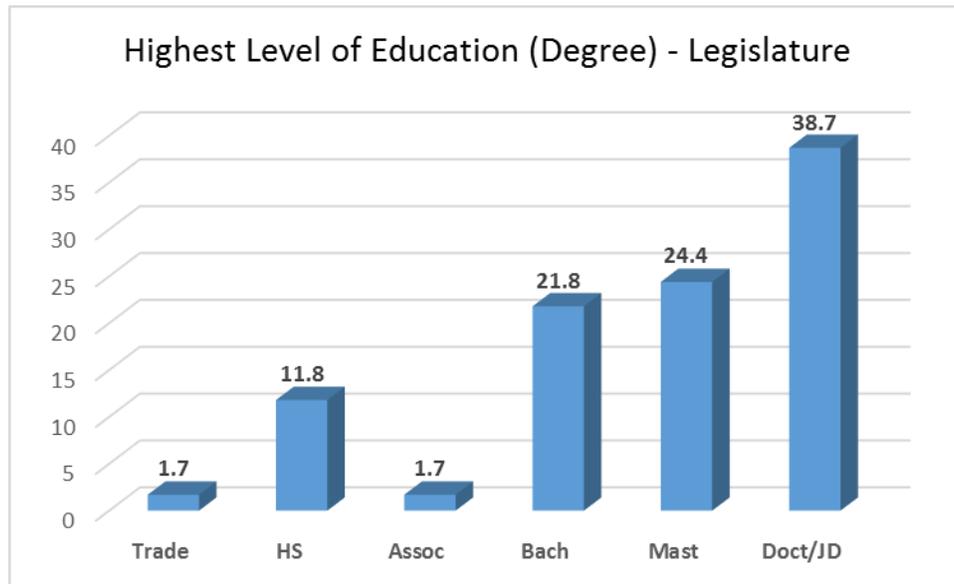
With Democrats in control of both houses of the Legislature, the party holds a majority of 60 percent of seats, while Republicans hold 40 percent.



The "typical" New Jersey legislator, statistically speaking, is a middle aged, white, non-veteran, Democratic man who is college educated (mostly out of state), often a lawyer, and who uses Facebook and twitter.

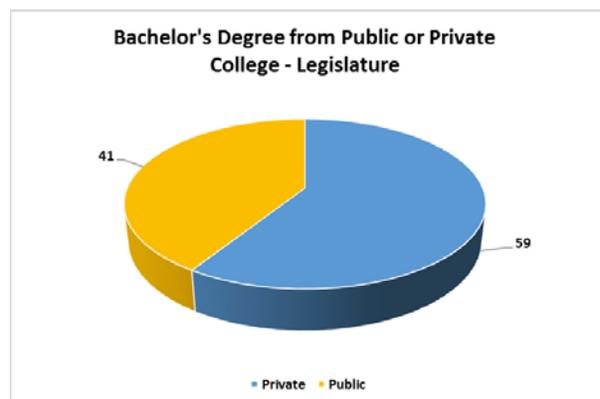
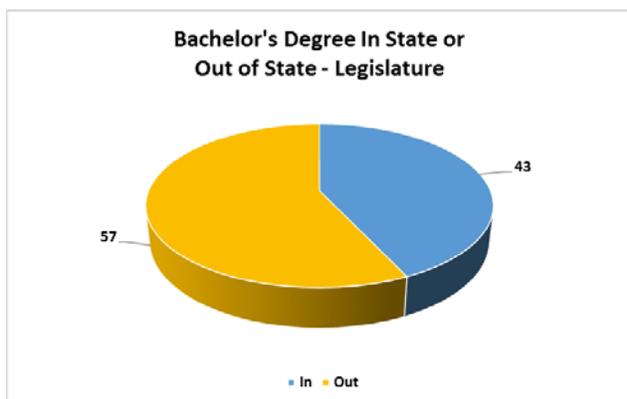
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New Jersey's legislators are highly educated as a group. An overwhelming 85 percent have attained at least a bachelor's degree, including 24 percent with a master's and 39 percent with a doctorate or law degree. Another 2 percent went to county college. Fourteen percent did not attend school beyond high school or trade school.



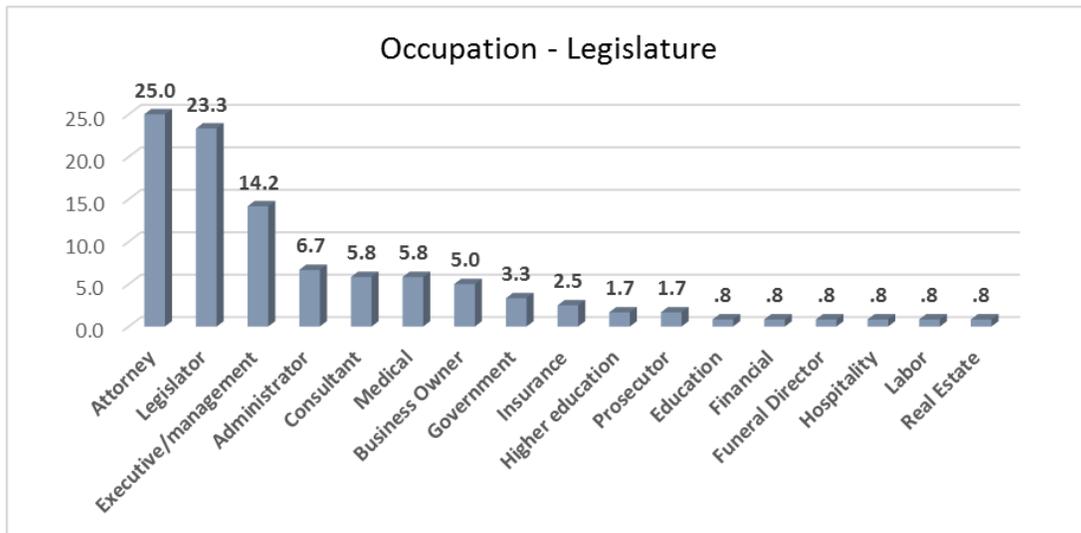
The majority of state lawmakers who have a college degree did not attend undergraduate college in New Jersey. Fifty-seven percent received their bachelor's degrees at out-of-state colleges or universities, while 43 percent received their undergraduate degrees from New Jersey institutions.

Similar percentages of legislators attended private colleges for their bachelor's degrees: 59 percent went to private colleges or universities, and only 41 percent attended public colleges.

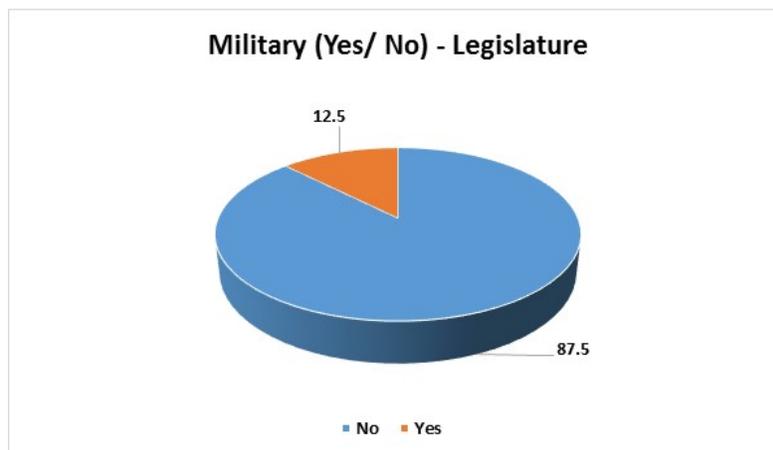


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One explanation for the high percentage of lawmakers who hold doctorates is that one in four legislators are attorneys who have juris doctorate degrees. Attorneys account for the largest single occupation category, followed closely at 23 percent by those who list their occupations as “legislator.” Fourteen percent are executives or are in upper management, and 7 percent are administrators. Consultants and people in the medical field each make up 6 percent of the Legislature, and 5 percent are business owners.

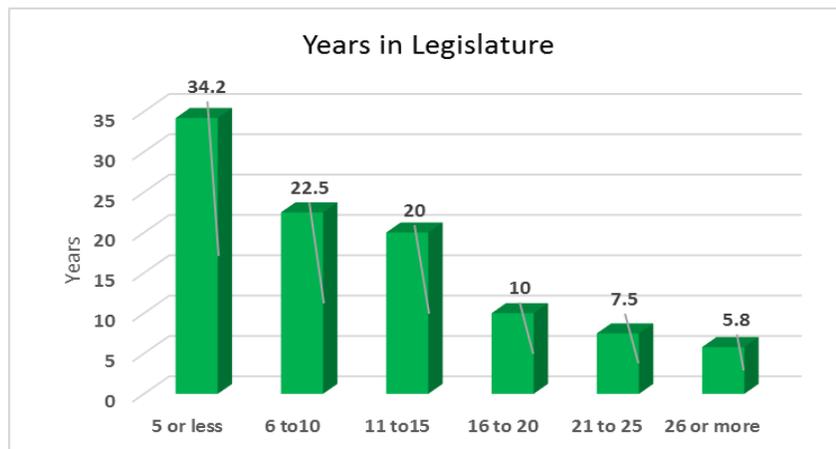


For most New Jersey legislators, public service has not included service in the military. Nearly 13 percent served in one of the military branches, while about 88 percent have not been in the military.

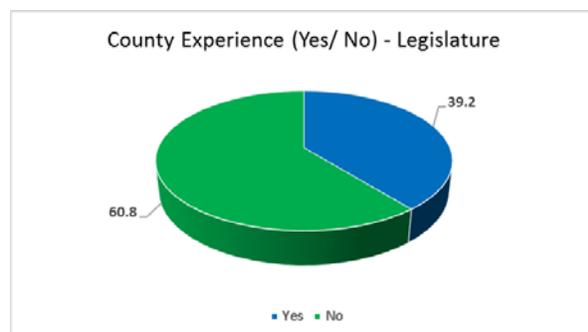
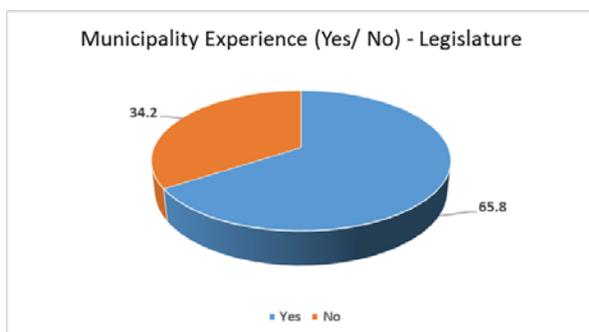


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Only a minority of lawmakers have thus far made a career of serving in the state Legislature for more than a decade. More than half (57 percent) have been in office for 10 years or less. The largest plurality, 34 percent, have served for five years or less, and 23 percent have served for between six and 10 years. The median number of years of legislative tenure is 9.3 years. One in five legislators have served for between 11 and 15 years, and one in 10 have served for 16 to 20 years. Thirteen percent have served for more than 20 years. Sen. Richard Codey, D-27th, is the longest serving New Jersey legislator, having entered the Legislature 41 years ago on Jan. 8, 1974.

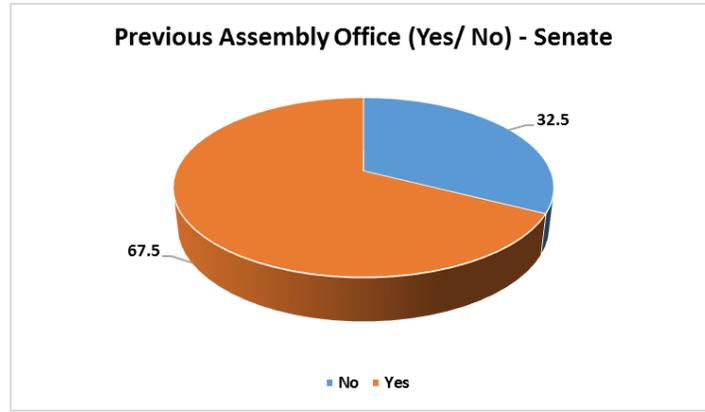


Local government appears to be a major training ground in which state legislators gain governmental experience. Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of legislators had experience at the municipal level. A smaller percentage (39 percent) had experience at the county government level. Detailed analysis of the results show that a strong majority of 82 percent of lawmakers had municipal experience, county experience, or experience at both levels of government.

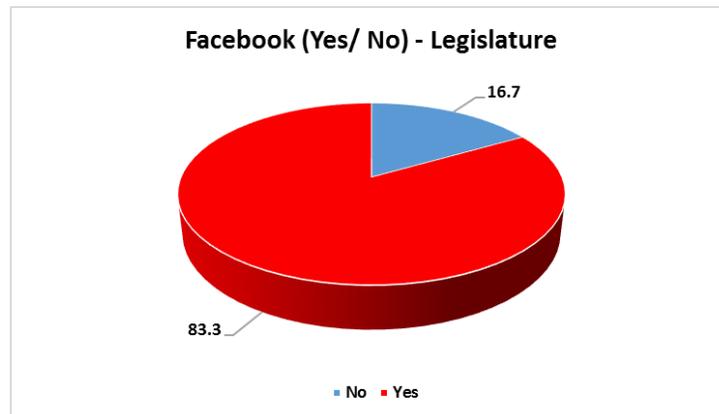


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Looking only at the state Senate's 40 members, 68 percent had served in the state Assembly before advancing to the Senate. Nearly 33 percent did not have previous experience in the lower house.

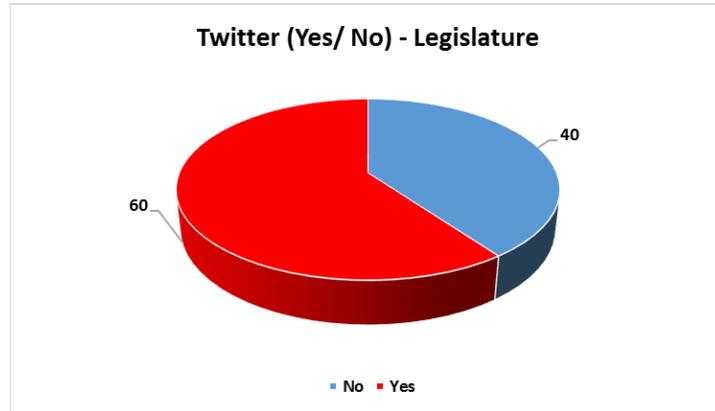


Finally, most members of the Legislature have embraced social media, especially the Facebook social networking site. Eighty-three percent of legislators have a Facebook page, while 17 percent do not.



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A smaller percentage but still a majority of the Legislature also use twitter to communicate with followers. Sixty 60 percent have a twitter account, and 40 percent do not.



COMPARING LEGISLATIVE AND PUBLIC CHARACTERISTICS

In many ways, the demographic characteristics of members of the New Jersey Legislature are different than those of the general public it represents. Comparison of the legislative data with data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey shows that the Legislature is older, more male, less racially and ethnically diverse, better educated, more professional or white collar, and more likely to have served in the military than the general population. The Legislature statistically matched the general population in only one characteristic that was measured, and that was in the percentage of blacks and African Americans. In comparing the Legislature's party affiliations to N.J. Division of Election records of registered voters statewide, the breakdown of Democrats to Republicans in the Legislature do accurately reflect ratios among registered voters. However, the data show that the public is much less aligned with the major political parties than are candidates and state office holders in a two-party system and is more likely to be not formally affiliated with a political party.

This analysis, as it compares demographics of the Legislature and the general population, presents the results dispassionately and makes no positive or negative judgments about the appropriateness of the results. Note that the public votes on candidates from 40 separate legislative districts, not for the Legislature as a whole. Arguments could be made about whether certain variations are "good" or "bad" for representative democracy. Some could argue that segments of the population that are under-represented in the Legislature – women or Hispanics, for example – are not being adequately served in the state Capitol. In other cases, some could argue that the public is better served with legislators who are older or better educated, for example, than the general population. This analysis leaves those kinds of interpretations to others, and strives simply to show factually whether and how the Legislature differs demographically from the population it represents.

The following table summarizes the major demographic comparisons between the Legislature and statewide New Jersey population.

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE AND THE GENERAL POPULATION		
Characteristic	Legislature	N.J. population
Median age	56.3	39.3
% male	70.0	48.8
% female	30.0	51.2
% white	83.3	69.2
% black/African American	15.0	13.6
% Asian	1.7	8.6
% Hispanic	9.2	18.2
% foreign born	2.4	21.4
% with BA degree or higher	84.9	36.1
% with graduate degree	63.1	13.7
% white collar/professional *	55.8	21.4
% military vets	12.5	6.2
% Democratic	60.0	32.6
% Republican	40.0	19.7
% unaffiliated	0	47.7
* Includes professional, scientific, management, administrative, finance, real estate		
<i>Sources: Stockton University research, American Community Survey 2013, N.J. Division of Elections</i>		

One of the starkest differences is found in the highest level of education attained. The Legislature is much better educated than the general public. In the population, only 36 percent of adults ages 25 and older have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 85 percent of legislators have. Only 14 percent in the population have attained a graduate degree at any level. Among legislators, 24 percent have attained a master’s degree, and 39 percent have a doctorate. Only 12 percent of legislators did not attend school beyond high school, while 29 percent of the population have only a high school diploma. One factor in the high number of legislative graduate degrees is the fact that 25 percent of legislators are attorneys who have a law degree. Consistent with high education levels, lawmakers are more than twice as likely to

be in a white collar or professional occupation. According to the American Community Survey, 21 percent of the population work in an occupation classification that includes professional, scientific, management, administrative, finance and real estate. Fifty-six percent of the Legislature fit that category.

Another significant difference is found in the age distribution of the Legislature and general population. In the Legislature, 73 percent are 50 years old or older. Among the general public, the percentage (34 percent) is less than half that level. The median age for all New Jersey residents is 39, but it is 53 for the Legislature. Only one legislator (1 percent) is younger than 30, but 38 percent of the general population is younger than 30. Twenty-two percent of legislators are aged 65 and older, compared to 14 percent of the population.

Men are significantly over-represented in the Legislature. The breakdown by sex is fairly even in the general population, with men at 49 percent and women at 51 percent. However, 70 percent of all legislators are men, and 30 percent are women. The over-representation of men in the Legislature could help explain why a higher percentage of legislators are military veterans (13 percent) than is found in the general population (7 percent). Ninety-five percent of veterans in New Jersey are men, and 13 percent of adult men in New Jersey are veterans.

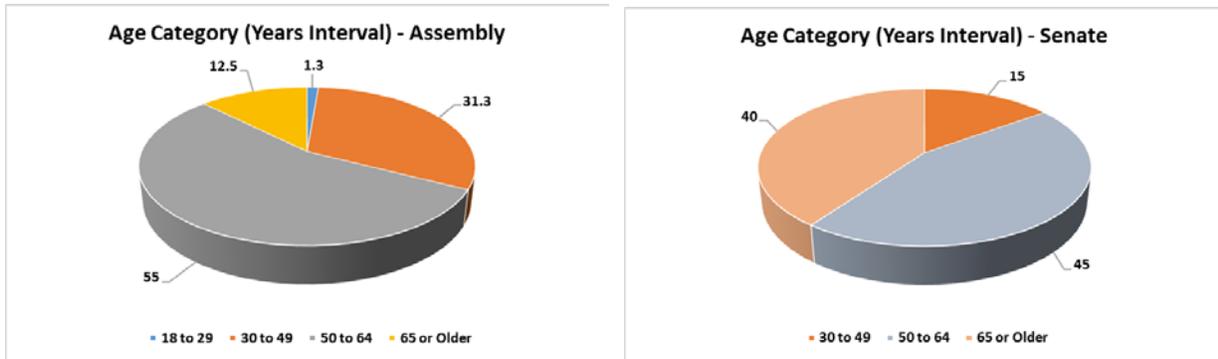
The general population is more racially and ethnically diverse than the Legislature. Whites are over-represented in the Legislature, at 83 percent compared to 69 percent of the population. Asians and Hispanics are under-represented. Asians make up 9 percent of the population, but only 2 percent of the Legislature. Hispanics make up 19 percent of the population, but only 9 percent of the Legislature. New Jersey, long considered a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, is a gateway state in which immigrants from all over the world arrive. More than one in five (21 percent) New Jersey residents were born in a foreign country. Only 2 percent of state legislators are foreign born. However, one group is represented in the Legislature in close proportion to its percentage in the general population. Blacks and African Americans make up 14 percent of the New Jersey population, and are 15 percent of the Legislature.

Sixty percent of New Jersey legislators are Democrats, and 40 percent are Republicans. That 3-to-2 ratio mirrors party registration data provided by the N.J. Division of Elections. That data show 33 percent of the state's registered voters are Democrats, and 20 percent are Republicans. However, 48 percent of registered voters are not affiliated with any party.

COMPARISON OF NEW JERSEY ASSEMBLY AND SENATE CHARACTERISTICS

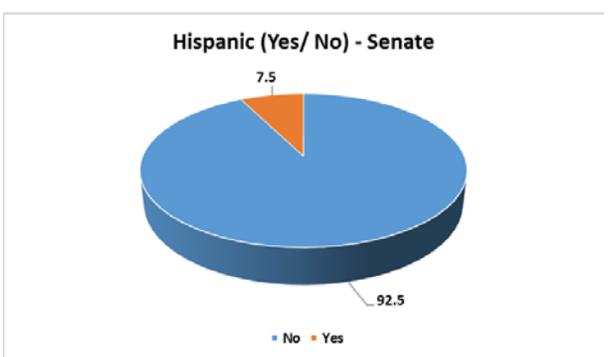
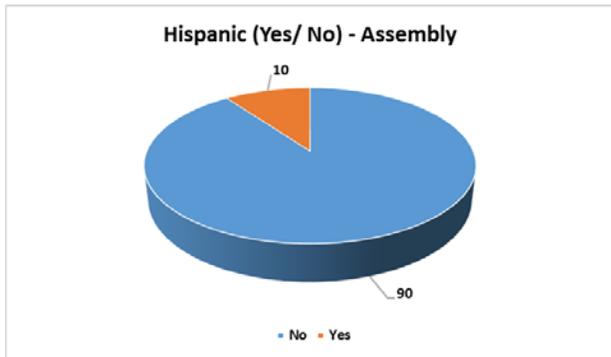
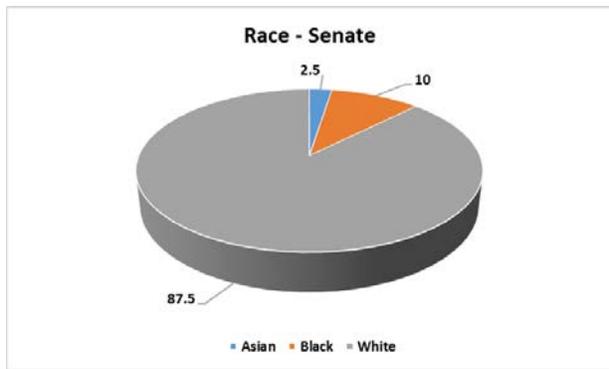
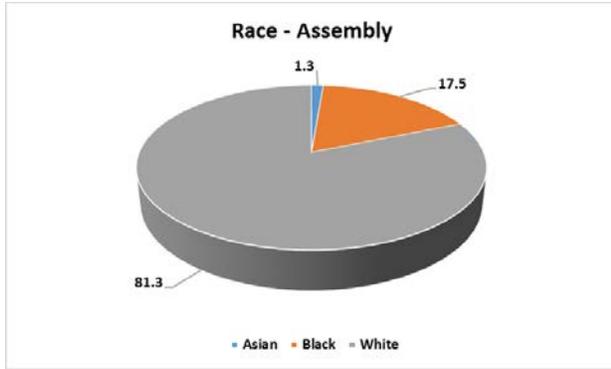
The New Jersey Legislature is comprised of two houses, the 80-member lower house, or the Assembly, and the 40-member upper chamber, the Senate. In some ways, the demographics of the two houses are similar. The party breakdowns are identical. Members of both houses are highly educated and older than the population at large. Whites and men are over-represented in both. However, there are differences between the legislative houses, and those differences result in the Assembly’s demographics reflecting those of the general population a bit more closely. The Assembly is younger and somewhat more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and sex.

The median age in the Assembly is 53, more than eight years younger than the Senate’s median age of nearly 62. Only 15 percent of senators are between the ages of 30 and 49, but 31 percent of Assembly members fall into that category. Forty percent of the Senate is age 65 or older, but only 13 percent in the Assembly are senior citizens.

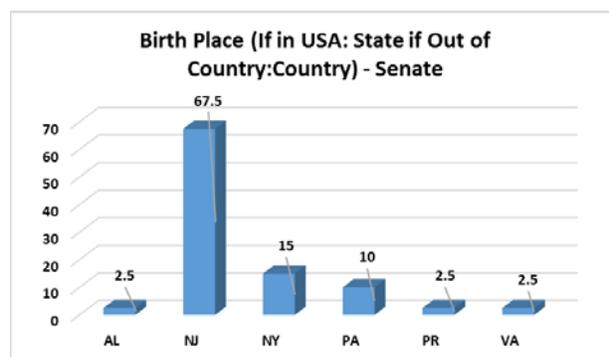
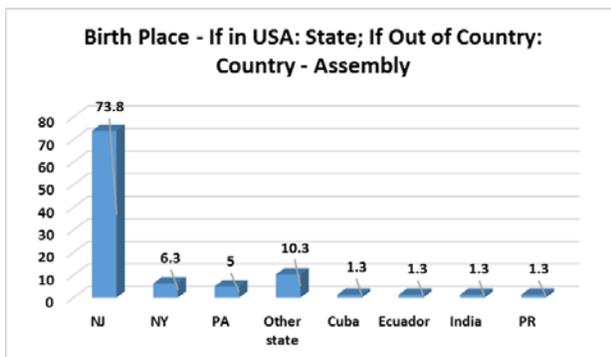


While whites predominate in both legislative houses at percentages higher than the 69 percent found in the general population, the Assembly is a little more racially and ethnically mixed. Whites make up 88 percent of the Senate and 81 percent of the Assembly. Nearly 18 percent of Assembly members are black or African American, compared to 10 percent of the Senate. There is one Asian member in each house, with the Senate having a slightly higher percentage, having half the members of the Assembly. The percentage of Hispanics is slightly higher in the Assembly, with 10 percent versus 8 percent in the Senate.

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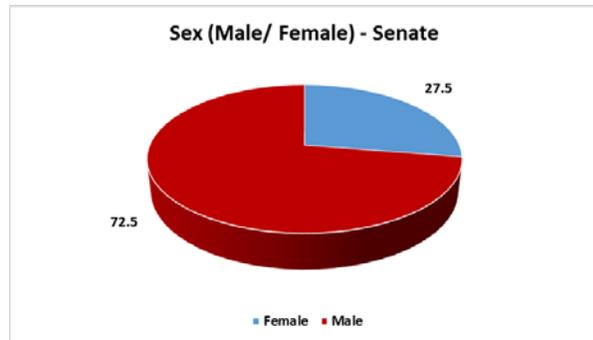
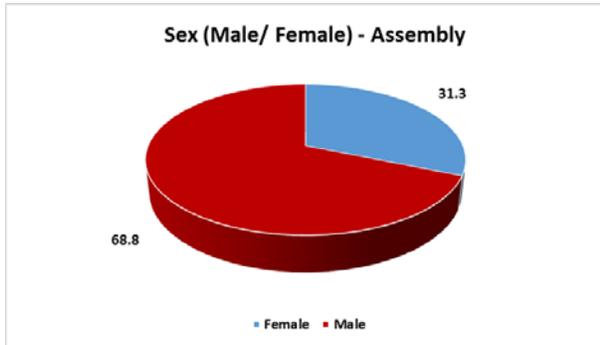


The Assembly is a bit more of a melting pot than the Senate, with 4 percent of its members having been born in a foreign country. All senators are native born to the United States. Seventy-four percent in the Assembly were born in New Jersey, and 68 percent were in the Senate.

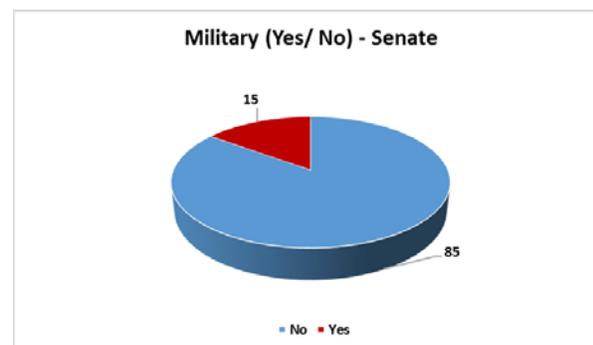
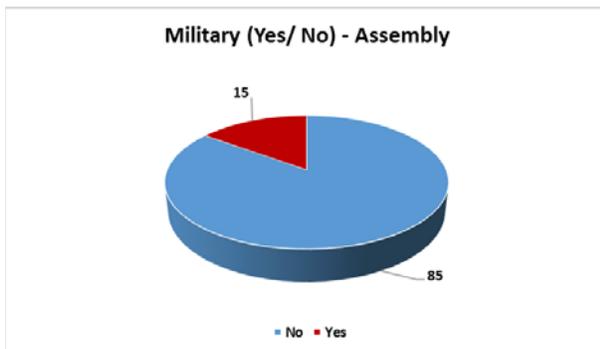


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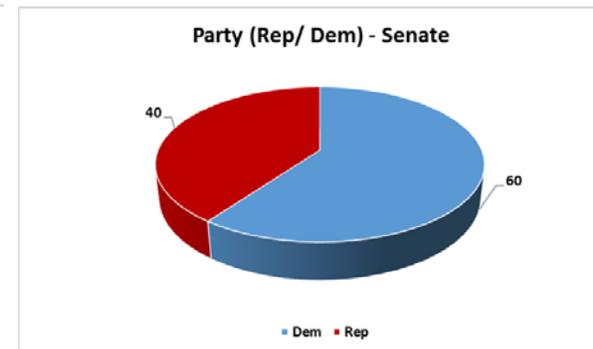
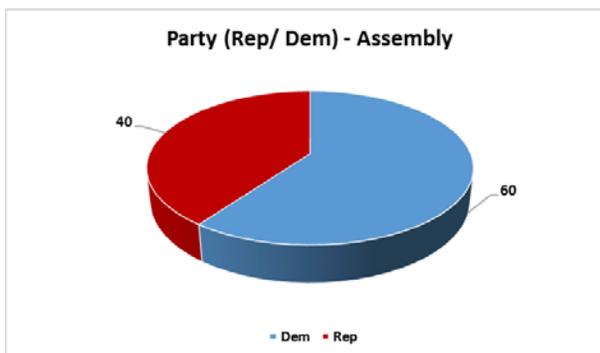
Both houses have very strong majorities of men, but the percentage of women in the Assembly is a little higher. Men make up 73 percent of the Senate and 69 percent of the Assembly. Women make up 28 percent of the Senate and 31 percent of the Assembly.



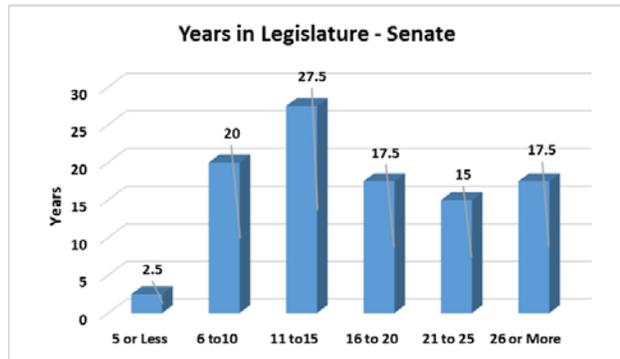
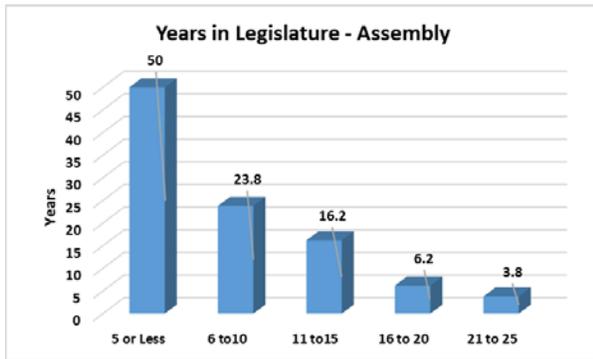
There is no difference between the houses in the percentage of members who have served in the military. Fifteen percent in the Assembly and the Senate are military veterans.



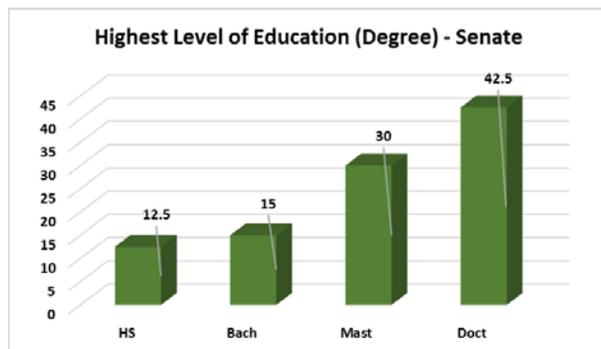
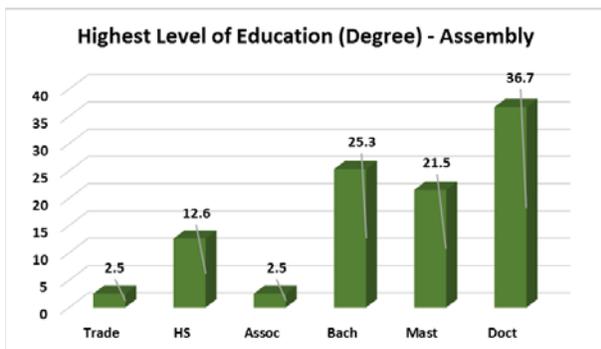
Party breakdowns are identical in both houses, with 60 percent Democrats and 40 percent Republicans.



One difference between the upper and lower houses is the length of time spent in the state Legislature. But it is not surprising that senators would have longer tenures because 68 percent of them started out in the Assembly. Even so, the differences are stark. Seventy-four percent of Assembly members have been legislators for 10 years or less. Only 23 percent of the Senate have been in the Legislature for 10 years or less. One-third (33 percent) of the Senate has been in the Legislature for more than 20 years. Only 11 percent of the Assembly has such long tenure.

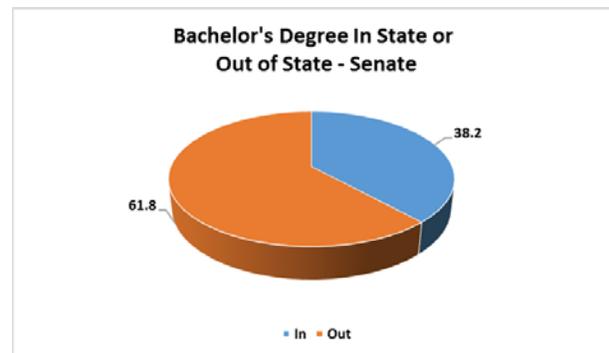
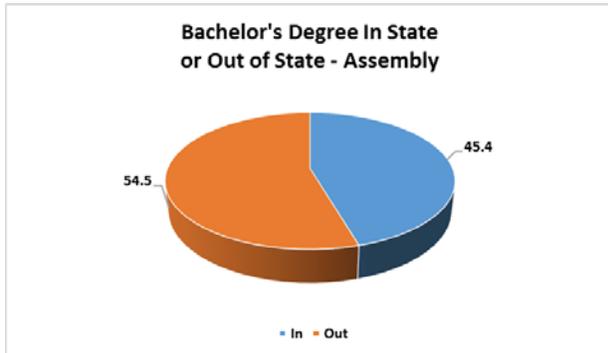


Members of both houses are college educated at percentages much higher than of the general population. But a greater percentage of the Senate has higher-level degrees, and a greater percentage of the Assembly did not complete undergraduate college. Nearly 18 percent in the Assembly did not graduate beyond community college, while 13 percent in the Senate did not get as far as attaining a four-year degree. Twenty-two percent in the Assembly earned a master’s degree, compared with 30 percent in the Senate. And while 37 percent of the Assembly has a doctorate degree, 43 percent of state senators have their doctorate.

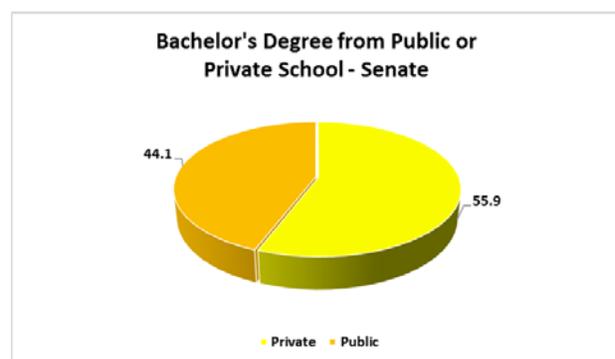
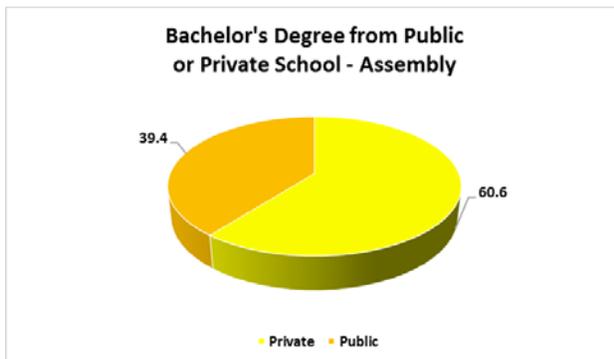


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Majorities of members who went to college in both legislative houses earned their bachelor's degree outside of New Jersey. But a greater percentage of Assembly members attended New Jersey colleges and universities than did senators. Forty-five percent of Assembly college graduates attended school in New Jersey, while 38 percent in the Senate attended New Jersey colleges. Fifty-four percent of Assembly college graduates attended out-of-state institutions, while 62 percent in the Senate attended college in other states.

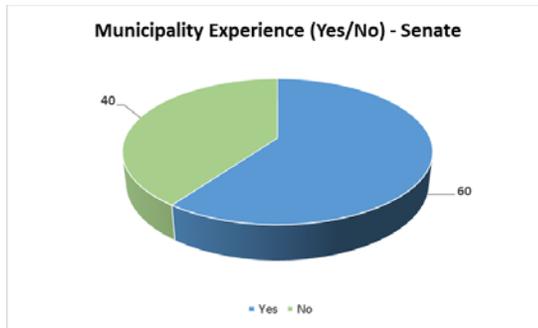
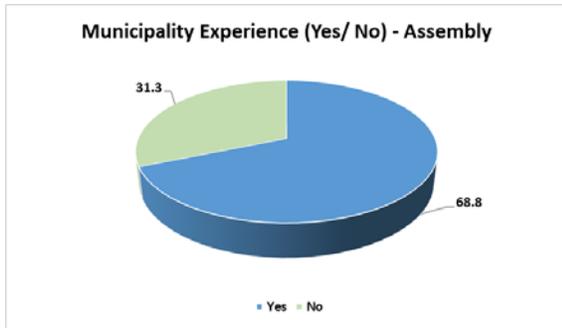


Majorities in both houses also attended private colleges and universities, although a somewhat higher percentage in the Senate went to public institutions. Fifty-six percent of college graduates in the Senate attained their bachelor's degree at private institutions, compared to 61 percent in the Assembly. Forty-four percent in the Senate went to public colleges, while 39 percent in the Assembly attended public colleges or universities.



Gaining experience at the municipal level is a common precursor to service in the state Legislature in both houses, but more so in the Assembly. Sixty-nine percent of Assembly members had previously served in a municipality, compared to 60 percent in the Senate.

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Senators use social media in greater percentages than Assembly members, although strong majorities in both houses have a presence on the Facebook social network and the short-message service, twitter. In the Assembly, 79 percent have their own Facebook page, while 93 percent in the Senate are on Facebook. The numbers are somewhat less with twitter. Fifty-three percent in the Assembly use a twitter account, while 75 percent in the Senate do.

