

This information summarizes major findings from the empirical research literature examining the effects of (1) form of government and (2) use of council districts on various measures of political and civic engagement, role emphases of elected officials and management, and the performance of city council and the city administration. While not exhaustive of the research on this topic, this summary includes most of the studies examining large numbers of cities and using statistical analysis to examine relationships among key variables. This information was compiled for the August 26, 2013, meeting of the Kansas City, Missouri Charter Review Commission and revised on September 23, 2013.

Studies Examining the Effect of Form of Government on Cities' Use of Public Participation Strategies

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2010	Nelson and Wood	Cities' use of the following strategies to encourage citizen participation: newsletters, other informational mailings, regular press conferences, website, government access television channel, public hearings beyond those required by law, focus groups, resident surveys, advisory referenda, citizen academies, Community Watch Programs, Community Policing Programs, town hall meetings during past year, open house meetings during the past year, citizen comment section on city council agenda, and public image campaign to portray positive image.	Study uses five-category "adapted cities" measure of municipal structure. Administrative and adapted administrative cities are largely similar to council-manager cities. Political and adapted political cities are similar to mayor-council cities. Conciliated cities are a blending of the two forms. Administrative cities used more participation strategies than cities in political or two adapted groups. Furthermore, study found strong correlation between the number of citizen participation strategies used and the more "administrative" municipal structures in cities over 50,000. As city structures become more administrative, the number of citizen participations strategies increase, controlling for education and population.	Responses from 91 senior administrators from 53 cities in 32 U.S. states to survey of public participation strategies.

Studies Examining Effects of Form of Government on the Performance of City Council

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2002	Ihrke	Council members' perceptions of representational effectiveness, measured on a scale of 0 to 100.	No difference in perceived effectiveness of representing interests of constituents by city council members in council-manager and mayor-council cities. Perceived representational effectiveness was also shown to decrease as the size of the council increased.	Survey of city council members from New York (51 cities and 242 council members) and Wisconsin (57 cities and 179 council members) in cities greater than 10,000 in population.
2002a	Svara	Council members' perceptions of effectiveness on six governmental functions (establishing a vision for the city, establishing long-term goals, establishing objectives and priorities, revising and preparing the budget, overseeing program effectiveness, and overseeing administrative performance) and three representational functions (addressing real problems in city, resolving citizen complaints with city government, and responding to citizen demands). Effectiveness is measured on a five-point scale ranging from Very Poor to Very Good.	Council members in council-manager cities rated their effectiveness higher than council members in mayor-council cities regarding functions such as establishing a vision for the city, establishing long-term goals, establishing objectives and priorities, reviewing and approving the budget, overseeing program effectiveness, and overseeing administrative performance. Administrators in mayor-council cities reported council members attach great importance to making specific decisions, providing services to citizens, handling citizen complaints, and keeping campaign promises. Administrators in council-manager cities reported council members are somewhat more likely to be highly involved in establishing policy principles and keeping informed about citizen views than in mayor-council cities. These findings were more pronounced in cities with a population greater than 25,000.	Responses from 696 city administrators to a 1997 survey of cities larger than 2,500 in population and responses from 664 council members to a 2001 National League of Cities survey of council members from cities over 25,000 in population were combined for this study.

Studies Examining Effects of Form of Government on the Performance of City Council (cont'd)

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2002b	Svara	Self assessment of level of conflict among city council members and relationship with executive (mayor or city manager), and perceptions of mayor's performance.	Respondents from council-manager cities reported less conflict among council members than council members in mayor-council cities. Council members' rating of mayor's performance markedly lower in mayor-council cities (about 40%) than council-manager cities (about 70%). In mayor-council cities, only about 40% of council members thought mayor was helping council make well-informed policy choices, seeking to accomplish the council's goals (as opposed to the mayor's goals), or giving them the information needed to fully assess programs versus about 70% in council-manager cities. Less than 60 percent reported a good working relationship with the mayor. In council-manager cities, about 90% of council members reported a good working relationship with the city manager and 80% reported a positive relationship between the council and the mayor.	Responses from 696 city administrators to a 1997 survey of cities larger than 2,500 in population and responses from 664 council members to a 2001 National League of Cities survey of council members from cities over 25,000 in population were combined for this study.
2011	Nelson and Nollenberger	Self-assessment of levels of conflict and cooperation among city council members and between executive (mayor or city manager).	Study uses seven-category measure of municipal structure. Levels of perceived conflict in communities with the council—manager form of government is lower than conflicted reported in cities with the mayor—administrator—council and mayor—council forms of government. Cities where the council was involved in hiring city manager/CAO reported lower conflict in decision—making process than those where mayor appoints city manager. Mayor-council cities where mayor and council jointly appoint the senior administrator manager reported lower conflict. Respondents from the mayor—council—administrator municipalities reported lower levels of reported cooperation than their counterparts in the council—manager governments.	Responses from 265 mayors and 266 city managers/CAOs and 745 council members in 158 U.S. cities with populations between 50,000 and 250,000 in 2000 to a survey in 2006.

Studies Examining Effect of Form of Government on Voter Turnout

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1968	Alford and Lee	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections	Council-manager governments had lower voter turnout than mayor-council governments. Study controlled for effects of education, ethnic diversity, and percentage of foreign born, and community factors like stability-mobility and age of community.	Voter turnout data in municipal elections in 676 cities above 25,000 in population (80 percent of the total 729 cities) in 1962. The missing cities tended disproportionately to be partisan, mayor-council and Eastern, all characteristics noted as being associated with high voting turnout.
1983	Karnig and Walter	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections	Council-manager cities had lower voter turnout.	Voter turnout data from municipal elections in 310 cities in the 1930s, 1962, and 1975.
1997	Bridges	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections	Council-manager cities had lower voter turnout than mayor-council cities. Analysis aggregates several institutions into a single measure called a "reformed" government. Reformed cities included a professional manager, atlarge, off-cycle, and non-partisan elections, and unity of political powers between the mayor and city council. Non-reformed cities included a strong mayor who was the chief executive officer, district, concurrent, and partisan elections, and the separation of political powers between the mayor and city council. Study included controls for proportion of population who were foreign born, minority, and less educated.	Case study of election returns of seven big-city reformed cities (council-manager) in the southwest (Phoenix, Albuquerque, Austin, Dallas, San Jose, San Antonio, and San Diego) and three big-city eastern political (mayor-council) cities (New York, Chicago, and New Haven) from 1946 to 1975.
2001	Oliver	If (yes/no) the respondent reported voted in municipal elections during last five years	Respondents from council-manager cities were less likely to report voting. Study also included common statistical controls for differences in respondents' education, age, income, length of residence, marital status, home ownership, race, gender, city-level characteristics (median household income and racial composition), and geographic region.	Data from the follow-up interview portion of 2,500 participants from 800 cities in the 1990 American Citizen Participation Study combined with city-level measures from the U.S. Census.
2002	Wood	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections	Study uses five-category "adapted cities" measure of municipal structure Lowest turnout was in administrative cities; highest was in political cities. Administrative cities have structure highly similar to council-manager form and political cities very similar to mayor-council form.	1998 survey of 57 American cities with a population between 25,000 and 1,000,000.

Studies Examining Effect of Form of Government on the Civic and Community Engagement of Residents (Forms other than Voting)

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2001	Oliver	If (yes/no) respondents reported contacting public officials, attending local meetings, attending meetings of civic organizations, and informally engaging in community activities in last year.	Study did not find any difference in the likelihood that residents in council-manager and mayor-council cities reported contacting public officials, attending local government meetings, attending meetings of civic organizations or informally engaging in community activities Study also included common statistical controls for differences in respondents' education, age, income, length of residence, marital status, home ownership, race, gender, city-level characteristics (median household income and racial composition), and geographic region.	Data from the follow-up interview portion of 2,500 participants from 800 cities in the 1990 American Citizen Participation Study combined with city-level measures from the U.S. Census.
2009	Kelleher and Lowery	If (yes/no) respondents reported they were registered to vote and had volunteered with a neighborhood or civic group in last year.	Respondents from council-manager cities were more likely to report registering to vote, but form of government had no effect on the likelihood that respondents reported volunteering in civic organizations.	Telephone survey in 2002 of a sample of residents in 25 U.S. cities in which a Knight Ridder newspaper was located; 7,500 respondents included in the analysis; 500-800 from each city.

Studies Examining the Effect of Form of Government on the Time Allocation and Role Emphases of Mayors, City Managers, and Council Members

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1987	Newell and Ammons	Percentage of time devoted by city managers, assistant city managers, mayors, and mayoral assistants to the following three role categories: management, policy, and political.	All four groups of city officials reported spending more time on management than on policy or politics. City managers spend significantly more of their time on both the management role (50.8%) and the policy role (32.2%) than do mayors (44.2% and 25.6%, respectively), who spend twice as much time on the political role (30.2 % compared to 17% for the city managers).	1985 survey of 839 chief executives and principal assistants (i.e., city managers, mayors, assistant managers, and mayoral assistants) in the 418 U.S. cities larger than 50,000 in 1980; analysis based on 527 responses.
2012	Eskridge	Study focused on several dependent variables, including: (1) the percent of total working time devoted by CAOs (mayors or city managers) to administration, management, policy, and political activities and (2) differences in the time CAOs and council members devote to these activities. Both measures come from assessments provided by the CAOs along this six-point scale: none (0), very low, low, average, high, very high (5). For the purposes of these studies, administration includes implementing and evaluating programs, delivering services, and addressing complaints from residents, Management activities include staffing, budgeting, coordination of departments, directing etc. Policy activities include meetings with council members, agenda setting, policy development, policy proposals, and policy advice. Political activities include attending ceremonies, public relations, meetings with officials from other governments, making speeches, etc. Analyses are based on average involvement scores for two or more activities.	One set of analysis focused on how these CAOs spend their time. Respondents from council-manager cities reported spending more of their time on management activities and less on political activities than did their counterparts in mayor-council cities. There was no difference in the time the CAOs from the two forms of governments reported devoting to policy activities. These analyses also controlled for these other city-level factors: population, median household income, urban character, and U.S. region. A second set of analyses focused on differences in the time CAOs and members of city council devote to these same activities. CAOs from council-manager cities reported spending a larger percentage of their time than the city council members from their city on all four activities than did the CAOs from mayor-council cities. These analyses also controlled for these other city-level factors: if mayor completed survey, population, urban character, and U.S. region.	Survey of chief administrative officers in 800 U.S. cities with populations between 10,000 and 250,000 in 2010. Responses were received for 266 cities. 171 (64.3%) were council-manager, and 95 (35.7%) were mayor-council.

Studies Examining the Effects of Form of Government on Perceptions of the Quality and Effectiveness of Public Services

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2012	Eskridge	Perceptions by CAOs of the quality of public services in their city. Respondents were asked to rate individual services on a three-point scale moving from low quality to exceeding expectations of residents. Outcome measure is the average of all the individual ratings for each city.	No difference in ratings of service quality between CAOs in mayor-council cities and those in councilmanager cities. Analysis also controlled for these other city-level factors: population, median household income, percent living in poverty, urban character, and U.S. region.	Survey of chief administrative officers in 800 U.S. cities with populations between 10,000 and 250,000 in 2010. Responses were received for 266 cities. 171 (64.3%) were council-manager, and 95 (35.7%) were mayor-council.
2008	Wood and Fan	Frequency of residents to rate quality of city services in the top category.	Study uses five-category "adapted cities" measure of municipal structure. Administrative and adapted administrative cities are largely similar to council-manager cities. Political and adapted political cities are similar to mayor-council cities. Conciliated cities are a blending of the two forms. Residents from administrative cities were more likely to rate the quality of city services in the top category than were residents in adapted administrative cities. No difference between residents in administrative cities and cities resembling mayor-council form. Analysis also controlled for per capita personal income in 1999 and city AA population (%) in 2000.	Review of surveys of resident satisfaction with city services from 74 U.S. cities in 30 states obtained from city manager or other city official in 2005 and 2006.
2002	Ihrke	City council members' perceptions of service delivery effectiveness.	Council members from council-manager cities in New York reported statistically higher service delivery effectiveness scores than did council members from the state's mayor-council cities. Perceived service delivery effectiveness scores also decrease as the size of the council increases for both Wisconsin and New York.	Surveys of city council members from New York (51 cities and 242 council members) and Wisconsin (57 cities and 179 council members) in cities greater than 10,000 in population.

Studies Examining the Effects of Form of Government on the Use of Innovative Administrative Practices

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2010	Krebs and Pelissero	Index developed from 12 questions asking if the chief administrative officer included the following administrative practices commonly associated with "Reinventing Government" in the city government's budget proposal. These elements include: Operational efficiency: Approved money for customer service training of city employees; approved funds to train employees in developing better decision-making skills so they can respond more effectively to citizen complaints; and approved recommendation of programs that would make the municipal government more entrepreneurial and then included funds to carry out those programs. Service delivery: Approved recommendation to contract out a municipal service to a third-party vendor; approved recommendation to partner with a private business or nonprofit agency to provide a program or service; and approved recommendation to fund citizen surveys to determine expectations and levels of satisfaction. Fiscal policy: Approved recommendation of a fee increase instead of a tax increase to fund certain services; and approved recommendation for the use of enterprise funds.	City administrative officers are less likely to propose innovations in cities where mayors are "strong." Mayoral power is measured as a six-point (0-5) scale indicating if the mayor has the power to (1) prepare the budget, (2) appoint department heads, (3) veto council decisions, (4) is directly elected by voters, and (5) is a full-time position. The study also controlled for several city-level variables, including population, population growth, economic health, level of homeownership, and the presence of municipal unions.	1997 survey by the ICMA of chief administrative officers (city manager or CAO) in all U.S. cities with populations greater than 10,000. Analysis is based on data provided by 888 respondents.

Studies Examining the Effects of Form of Government on the Use of Innovative Administrative Practices (cont'd)

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2012	Nelson and Svara	Three 10-item indices measuring the adoption of innovations in e-government, reinventing government, and strategic practices.	Council-manager governments—both with and without an elected mayor, higher population, greater growth, lower unemployment, sunbelt location, and higher population density—show higher innovation rates. The highest rates are for the council-manager form with a mayor elected at-large, followed by the council-manager form with a mayor selected by the council. Cities are less likely to innovate when there is a greater distinction between the mayor and the council and less professional independence for the administrator in their form of government. Cities with city managers, no matter how they are selected, have higher scores on the three innovation indices than cities without one. Mayor-council cities with no professional administrator are least likely to innovate, and the stronger the mayor's separate role and the less sharing between the mayor and the council in selecting the CAO, the lower the rate of innovation.	Three nationwide surveys of the same 490 U.S. municipalities conducted by ICMA measuring innovative practices in three areas: reinventing government (2003), electronic government (2004), and professional practices (2006) and form and structure of municipal governments with populations ranging between 10,000 and 540,828.

Studies Examining the Effect of Form of Government on the Use of Analysis in Decision-Making

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2012	Ha and Feiock	Self-reported use of cost-benefit or fiscal impact analysis prior to granting requests for development incentives.	50% of respondents indicated their cities always used cost-benefit or fiscal impact analysis, just under 10% indicated they never used them, about 24% indicated they applied them sometimes, and 19% indicated they usually did. Respondents from council-manager cities were more likely to report using these two analytical techniques than respondents from mayor-council cities.	2004 survey of administrative officials in 274 Florida cities in 12 metropolitan areas.

Studies Examining the Effect of Form of Government on the Implementation of Economic Development Policies

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1995	Clingermayer and Feiock	Cities' adoption (yes/no) of the following economic development policies: industrial development bonds (IDBs), Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), national advertising, business assistance centers, and tax abatements.	Cities with mayor-council governments were more likely to adopt all the policies analyzed than cities with council-manager governments. Each policy was examined in a separate model. Analyses did not include controls, but instead examined groups of variables in three separate models intended to examine factors indicating the need for the policies, the effect of interest groups on their adoption, and the impact of institutional arrangements on the adoption of these policies. Form of government was included in the institutional model only.	226 survey responses from a survey of economic development officials in 397 cities with populations greater than 50,000 in 1980.

Studies Examining the Effects of District Council Elections on Voter Registration, Voter Turnout, and Council Members' Perceptions of Role

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
2009	Kelleher and Lowery	If (yes/no) respondents reported they were registered to vote and had volunteered with a neighborhood or civic group in last year.	Respondents from cities using only at-large elections for city council members were more likely to report registering to vote. The use of district elections was unrelated to the likelihood that respondents reported volunteering in civic organizations.	Telephone survey in 2002 of a sample of residents in 25 U.S. cities in which a Knight Ridder newspaper was located; 7,500 respondents included in the analysis; 500-800 from each city.
1984	Heilig and Mundt	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections.	Temporary increase in turnout after change from at-large to district elections or a reduction in districts in first or primary election, likely due to the novelty of a new electoral system; however, turnout returned to prior levels in the subsequent elections. Voter turnout for members of an ethnic minority did not increase over levels found for at-large elections while there was some positive effect on less affluent voters.	Voter turnout data for 11 cities that changed from at-large to district elections (Richmond, San Antonio, Charlotte, Dallas, Fort Worth, Memphis, Montgomery, Raleigh, Sacramento, Peoria, and Des Moines).

Studies Examining the Effects of District Council Elections on Voter Turnout and Council Members' Perceptions of Role (cont'd)

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1997	Bridges	Percentage of voters turning out in municipal elections.	Cities with at-large elections of council members have lower turnout in elections. Analysis aggregates several institutions into a single measure called a "reformed" government. Reformed cities included a council-manager government, at-large, off-cycle, and non-partisan elections. The Nonreformed cities in this study included a strong mayor who was the chief executive officer, district, concurrent, and partisan elections, and the separation of political powers between the mayor and city council created by a mayor-council form of government.	Case study of election returns of seven big-city reformed cities (council-manager) in the southwest (Phoenix, Albuquerque, Austin, Dallas, San Jose, San Antonio, and San Diego) and three big-city eastern political (mayor-council) cities (New York, Chicago, and New Haven) from 1946 to 1975.
1988	Welch and Bledsoe	Council members' assessment of the importance to them of representing the following seven different constituencies: (1) the city as a whole, (2) a single-issue group, (3) racial or ethnic groups, (4) labor unions or public employees, (5) a partisan or ideological constituency, (6) business groups, (7) a geographic area of the city or a neighborhood. Respondents were asked to answer in terms of this scale: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important.	Council members elected by district are statistically more likely than those elected at-large to report representing neighborhoods as an important focus. Council members elected by district are also less likely to report the city as a whole is an important focus for them than are members elected at-large. There was no statistical difference in the importance placed on representing business groups, racial or ethnic interests, labor unions or public employees, and partisan or ideological groups reported by the council members. Also, council members elected at-large are statistically more likely to report that the entire city or business groups is their primary constituency. Members elected through districts are statistically more likely to report that they see their neighborhood as their primary constituent. This analysis also controlled for various personal and city characteristics, such as: council members' race, age, ideology, party identity, income, education, membership in labor union or public employee, occupation, and median income of city and percent of the city population that is African-American.	1982 survey of 1,600 city council members in U.S. cities between 50,000 and one million population. Responses received from 975 city council members in 218 communities in 42 states.

Studies Examining the Effects of District Council Elections on Voter Turnout and Council Members' Perceptions of Role (cont'd)

Year
Year 1984

Studies Examining Effects of District Elections on Conflict among Council Members

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1984	Heilig and Mundt	Split votes: measured as the percentage of council votes over the period that were not unanimous.	Split votes increased in only two of the cities (Des Moines and Montgomery) after council districts were introduced.	Voting records of councils in seven cities that changed from at-large to district elections (Charlotte, Des Moines, Fort Worth, Memphis, Montgomery, Raleigh, and Richmond) in previous decade.
2011	Nelson and Nollenberger	Self-assessment of levels of conflict and cooperation among city council members and between executive (mayor or city manager).	Cities that have higher percentages of council members elected by district have lower levels of cooperation.	2006 survey responses of 265 mayors and 266 city managers/CAOs and 745 council members in 158 U.S. cities with populations. between 50,000 and 250,000 in 2000.

Studies Examining Effects of District Elections on Representational Equity of Council

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1984	Heilig and Mundt	Representational equity scores measured as percentage of blacks on council divided by the percentage of blacks in a city. A value of 1 indicates full representational equity.	Analysis indicates that cities using only districts to elect council members had higher equity scores for African-American populations than mixed or at-large only system, regardless of region. Analysis also focused on the change in equity scores following the adoption of district elections. Equity scores of southern cities in the 1970s that changed from at-large elections to mixed systems increased by .61 and from at-large to using solely district elections increased by .73, indicating that the use of districts substantial increased in the representational equity for African-American residents of these cities. They did not provide a similar analysis of Latino representational equity in these cities.	Survey of political newspaper editors and city clerks in 209 southern cities in 1980.

Studies Examining the Effect of District Elections on the Implementation of Economic Development Policies

Year	Authors	Outcome Analyzed	Major Findings	Description/Source of Data
1995	Clingermayer and Feiock	Cities' adoption (yes/no) of economic development policies, including industrial development bonds (IDBs), Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), national advertising, business assistance centers, and tax abatements.	Cities using district elections (or some mix of district and at-large elections) were more likely to adopt these economic development policies, with one exception. Cities using district elections were less likely to adopt national advertising strategies. The authors concluded from these findings that district representation encouraged the adoption of policies that provided "geographically-concentrated" benefits. Each policy was examined in a separate model. Analyses did not include controls, but instead examined groups of variables in three separate models intended to examine factors indicating the need for the policies, the effect of interest groups on their adoption, and the impact of institutional arrangements on the adoption of these policies. The measure indicating the use of district elections was included in the institutional model only.	226 survey responses from a survey of economic development officials in 397 cities with populations greater than 50,000 in 1980.

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