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County Form of Government, 1997

The *County Form of Government* surveys were mailed in winter and spring of 1997 to the County Clerks in all U.S. counties. Of the 3,052 counties that received surveys, 1,069 responded (35.0%).

For more information on the ICMA's *County Form of Government* survey, please contact [Survey Research](#).



[Click here to buy the complete dataset from bookstore.icma.org.](#)

Following is the survey text with the aggregate results shown in bold next to each answer. Each answer represents the percentage reporting for that question, except where noted.

1. Please indicate which of the following best describes your current legal form of government, as defined by your charter or ordinance or by state law.

27.8 Commission

28.9 Council-administrator (manager)

14.1 Council-elected executive

27.8 Did not respond

2. Does your county have the position of CAO?

74.1 No **25.9** Yes

A. If yes, by which of the following methods was the position established?

12.2 Charter **33.7** State law **30.6** Ordinance **23.5** Other

3. How is your presiding officer selected?

26.1 Voters elect directly

61.5 Commission selects from among its members

1.3 The commission member receiving the most votes in the general election becomes the presiding officer

9.3 Commission members rotate into the position of presiding officer

1.8 Other

4. How long is the presiding officer's term of office?

52.8 1 year **14.5** 2 years **28.5** 4 years **4.2** Other

5. Is the presiding officer a member of commission? **8.0** No **92.0** Yes

6. Does the presiding officer have the authority to veto commission-passed measures?

93.1 No **6.9** Yes

A. If yes, in what cases may the presiding officer exercise veto power?

69.5 Over ordinances **49.2** Over appropriations

33.9 Over specific sections of ordinances **25.4** Over specific items of appropriations

67.8 Over resolutions **59.0** Other

7. Since 1991, have any recall initiatives been filed against the presiding officer?
97.8 No **2.2** Yes
 A. If yes, were any successful? **75.0** No **25.0** Yes
8. How many members sit on your commission? **7** **Average**
9. What is the gender of the commission members? **Average** Male **6** Female **2**
10. Does your county have a provision for any of the following?
36.4 *Initiative* Permits citizens to place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes directly on a ballot for approval or disapproval by the voters.
34.0 *Binding referendum* Allows voters to determine the outcome on public issues by binding the governing body to act on voters' opinions.
38.6 *Non-binding referendum* Allows voters to express an opinion on a specific topic without binding the governing body to act on voters' opinions.
63.0 *Recall* A vote by the citizens to remove an elected official from office before the expiration of that official's term.
24.8 *Petition or Protest Referendum* Allows voters to delay enactment of local ordinance or bylaw until a referendum is held.
11. Indicate the number of commission members selected by each of the following methods. **Average**
 Elected at large **3** Elected by ward or district **7**
12. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms a commission member may serve?
91.6 No **8.4** Yes
 A. If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law? **Average 2**
 B. When was the term limitation enacted? **Average 1994**
 C. By what authority is the number of terms limited?
4.7 Ordinance **9.3** Charter **73.3** State law **12.8** Other
13. How many incumbents ran for reelection to commission in the last general election? **Average 4**
 A. How many of those incumbents were reelected? **Average 3**
14. How is a commission member's seat filled if it is vacated before the term has expired?
13.3 Special election
32.2 Appointed by commission
15.0 Method depends on length of term remaining
6.7 Appointed by presiding officer
0.8 Position left vacant until next regular election
32.0 Other
15. When does your fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/96)? **January (1)**