New Jersey State Legislature: A Demographic Profile, 2016 Update

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Introduction

The typical New Jersey legislator is a middle-aged, white, non-veteran, Democratic man who is college-educated (mostly from an out-of-state, private institution), often a lawyer, and who uses Facebook and Twitter.

In the spring of 2015, the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University created a database of a variety of demographic and biographical variables for all 120 members of the 215th state Legislature. This report builds upon that previous research, updating the database to reflect the 216th State Legislature and 12 new Assembly members who assumed office after the previous report was issued. The data now covers newly appointed and elected members as of February 24, 2016. 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.

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?

This report will present analysis of the data in four 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; an analysis of the 12 new Assembly members in comparison to their predecessors will be provided next; 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.

Chart totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
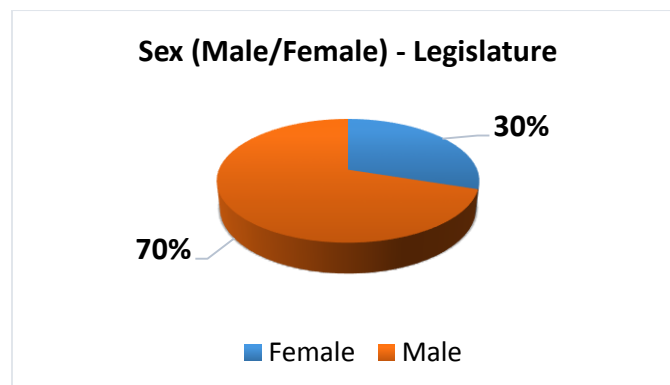
Profile of the New Jersey Legislature

Demographics

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 57, with 48 percent between the ages of 50 and 64. This was the most prevalent age range for the 215th Legislature as well (52 percent for the 215th compared to 48 percent currently). Twenty-four percent are ages 30 to 49, and 27 percent are senior citizens aged 65 and older.

Only one lawmaker is 30 years old or younger, Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, D-1st, who turned 30 on May 1, 2016. The oldest legislator, Sen. Gerald Cardinale, R-39th, is 82. The shift from the 215th Legislature to the 216th has brought with it relative stability in each age group.

Age Category (Years Interval) - Legislature

1% — 24% — 48% — 27%
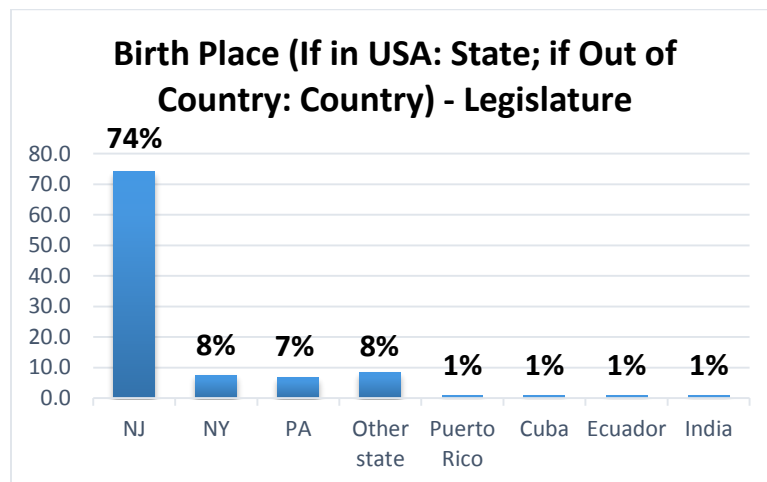
■ 18 to 29 ■ 30 to 49 ■ 50 to 64 ■ 65 or Older
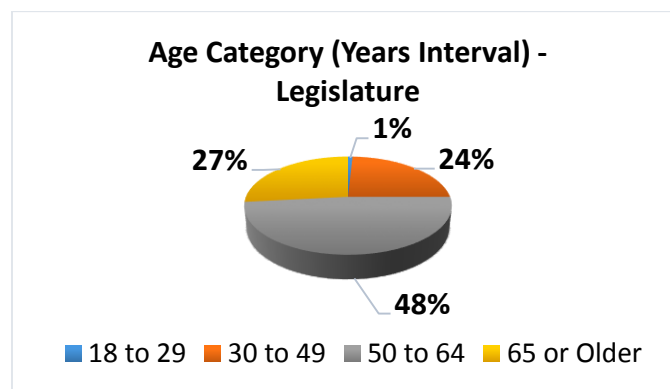
A strong majority, 70 percent, of state legislators are men, with 30 percent being women, the same percentile split from the 215th Legislature. This is somewhat higher than the national average. According to the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, just more than 24 percent of legislators across the United States are women.

Sex (Male/Female) - Legislature

30% — 70%

■ Female ■ Male

The New Jersey Legislature is mostly non-Hispanic (92 percent) and white (83 percent). Fifteen percent are African-American, a percentage consistent with the overall demographic breakdown of the general population of New Jersey. Two percent of legislators are Asian. Eight percent are of Hispanic ethnicity, down from the 215th Legislature, where 9 percent were Hispanic.

Race - Legislature

2% 15%

83%

■ Asian ■ Black ■ White

Hispanic - Legislature

8%

92%

■ No ■ Yes
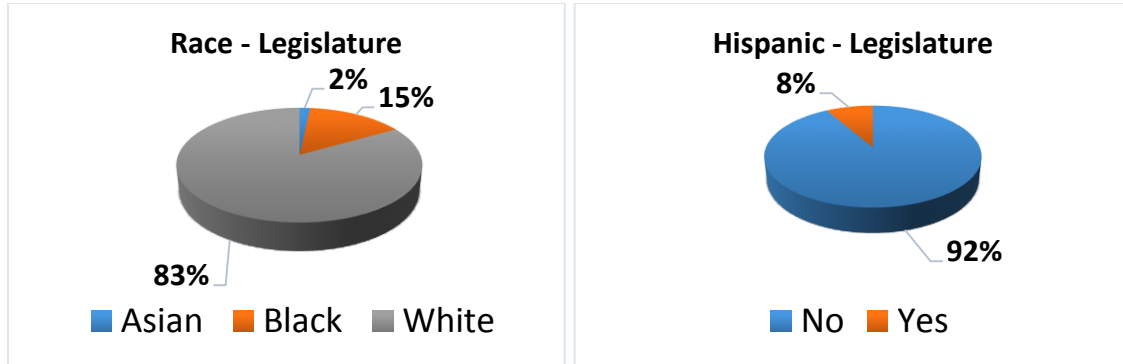
A majority, 74 percent, of state legislators were born in New Jersey, up from 72 percent for the 215th Legislature. Nearly one in four (23 percent) were born in another state or in Puerto Rico. Eight percent were born in New York and 7 percent were born in Pennsylvania. Three legislators were born in another country (Cuba, Ecuador and India). New Jersey's constitution requires all Senate members to have been a citizen or resident of the state for four years, while Assembly members are required to be a New Jersey citizen or resident for at least two years.

Birth Place (If in USA: State; if Out of Country: Country) - Legislature

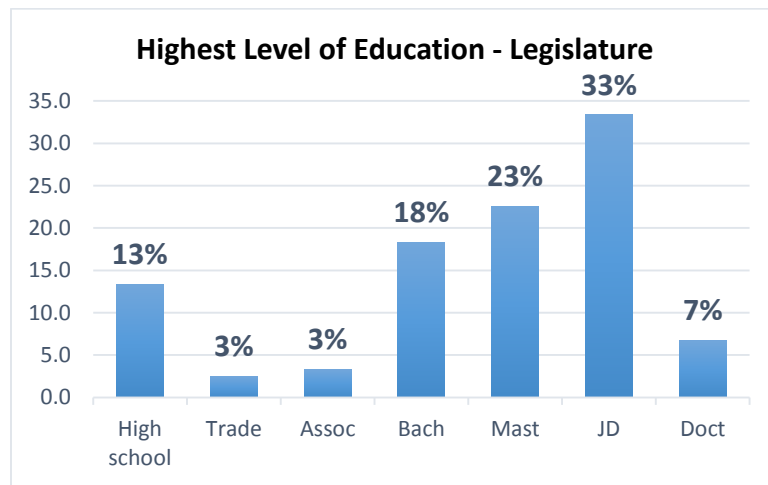|	NJ	NY	PA	Other state	Puerto Rico	Cuba	Ecuador	India
	74%	8%	7%	8%	1%	1%	1%	1%

With Democrats in control of both houses of the Legislature, the party holds 63 percent of seats, while Republicans hold 37 percent. Democratic representation in the Legislature is up three percentage points since the recently elected legislators took office.
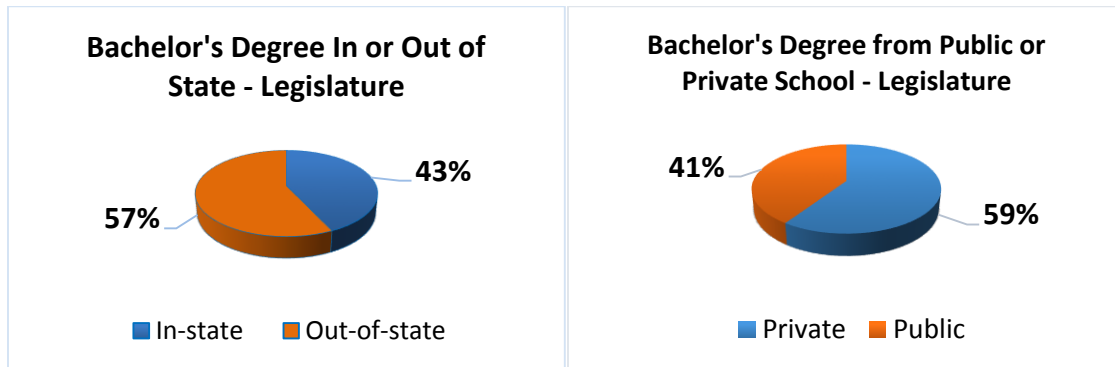
Party (Rep/Dem) - Legislature

37% 63%

■ Democratic   ■ Republican
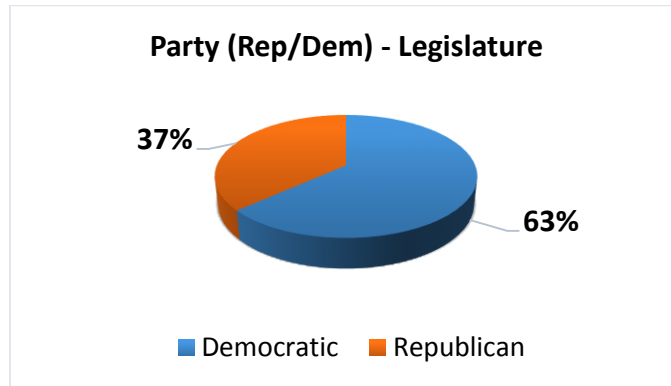
Education

New Jersey's legislators are highly educated overall. Eighty-one percent have attained at least a bachelor's degree, including 23 percent with a master's, 33 percent with a Juris Doctor degree, and 7 percent with a doctoral degree. The Juris Doctor degree is the most common higher education degree pursuit, with one in three legislators earning law degrees. Another 3 percent received their associate's degree. Sixteen percent did not pursue academic programs beyond trade or high school.

Highest Level of Education - Legislature

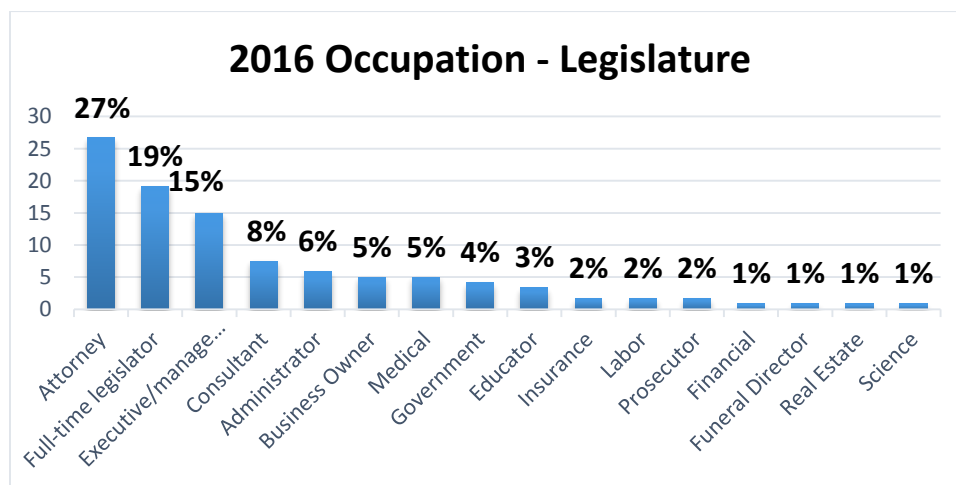|					33%	
				23%		
			18%			
13%						7%
	3%	3%				
High school	Trade	Assoc	Bach	Mast	JD	Doct

The majority of legislators who completed their baccalaureate degree did so outside of New Jersey. Fifty-seven percent of legislators received their bachelor's at an out-of-state institution, with 43 percent graduating from New Jersey institutions.

Most legislators who completed their bachelor's, both in and out of state, attended a private college or university. Fifty-nine percent attended private institutions, while only 41 percent attended public colleges. These numbers are consistent with the findings for the 215th Legislature.
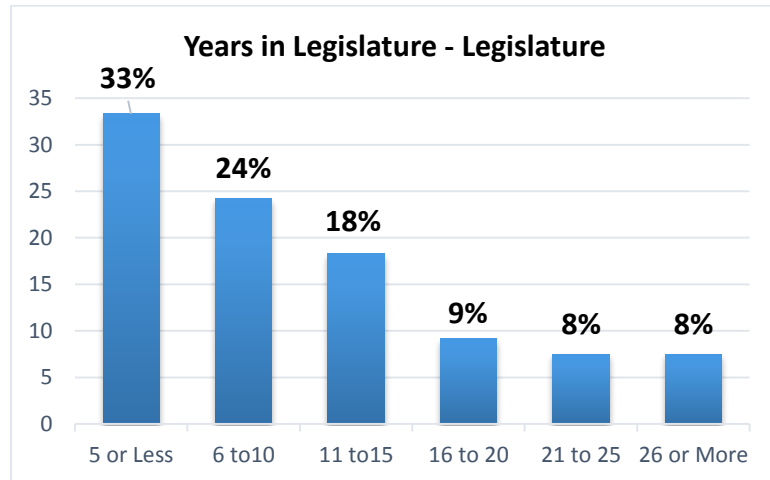
Bachelor's Degree In or Out of State - Legislature

43%
57%

■ In-state ■ Out-of-state

Bachelor's Degree from Public or Private School - Legislature

41%
59%

■ Private ■ Public

Experience

Attorneys account for the largest occupation category of legislators at nearly 27 percent. Another 19 percent list their position as a legislator as their primary occupation, a title which has decreased 4 percent in occupation frequency compared to the 215th Legislature. Fifteen percent are executives or upper management in business ventures, while 8 percent are consultants. Administrators, business owners and medical positions make up another 16 percent of the Legislature. With the recent changes to the Assembly, the consultant career path has risen almost 2 percent.

2016 Occupation - Legislature

27%
19%
15%
8%
6%
5%
5%
4%
3%
2%
2%
2%
1%
1%
1%
1%

Attorney, Full-time legislator, Executive/manage..., Consultant, Administrator, Business Owner, Medical, Government, Educator, Insurance, Labor, Prosecutor, Financial, Funeral Director, Real Estate, Science

More than half (57 percent) of legislators have been in office for 10 years or less. Thirty three percent have served for five years or less, while 24 percent have been in office for somewhere between six to 10 years. The median number of years served in the Legislature is 11 years, an increase of 1.7 years on since last year's legislative database review. Eighteen percent have served for 11 to 15 years, while 16 percent have served longer than 21 years. Sen. Richard Codey, D-27th, is the longest serving legislator in New Jersey, having entered the legislature 42 years ago on January 8, 1974.

Years in Legislature - Legislature

| Category	Percent
5 or Less	33%
6 to10	24%
11 to15	18%
16 to 20	9%
21 to 25	8%
26 or More	8%

Most New Jersey legislators have not served in the military. Nearly 13 percent served in one of the branches of the military, while 87 percent have not. This ratio is consistent even with the changes to the Legislature.

Military - Legislature

Yes	13%
No	87%
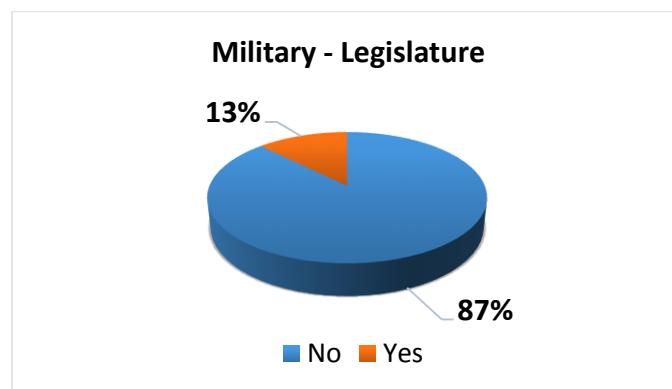
Service in local government at the municipal level provides an opportunity for legislators to gain government experience. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of all legislators had previous leadership experience at the municipal level. Thirty-eight percent of legislators also served at the county level before assuming office in the New Jersey state Legislature. Further analysis reveals that 77 percent of the Legislature had some form of county or municipality experience, while 25 percent of the Legislature served on both the county and municipal levels before taking office at the state level.

Municipality Experience - Legislature

35%

65%

■ No ■ Yes

County Experience - Legislature

38%

62%

■ No ■ Yes
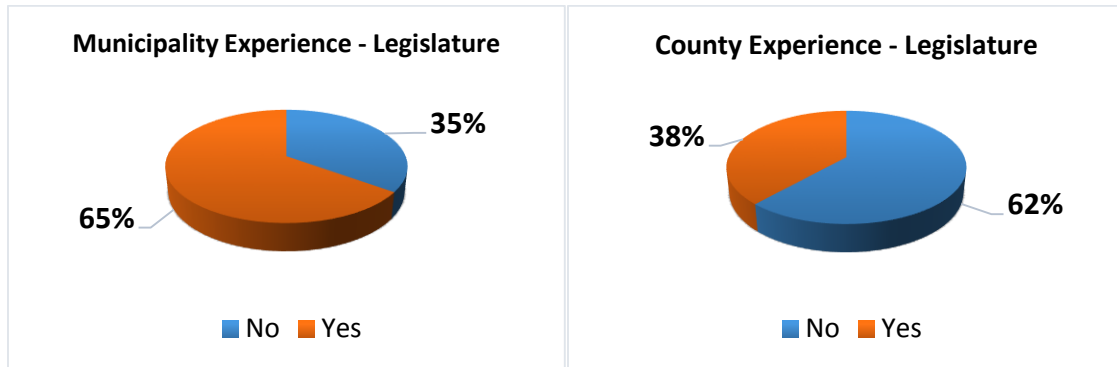
Looking at the state Senate's 40 members, 68 percent had served in the state Assembly before advancing to the Senate. Nearly 33 percent did not have previous experience in elective office in the lower house.

Previous Assembly Office (Yes/No) - Senate

32%

68%

■ No ■ Yes
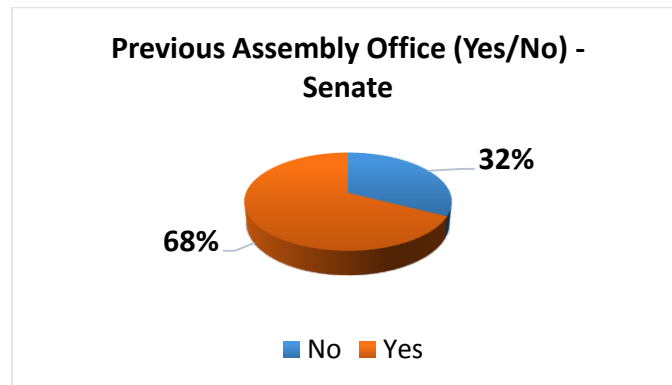
Social Media Presence

A vast majority of legislators have embraced social media. Ninety percent of all legislators have a Facebook page. This is a seven-point increase in Facebook activity from last year's report, suggesting that Facebook adoption is on the rise within the Legislature.

Facebook - Legislature

10%

90%

■ No ■ Yes
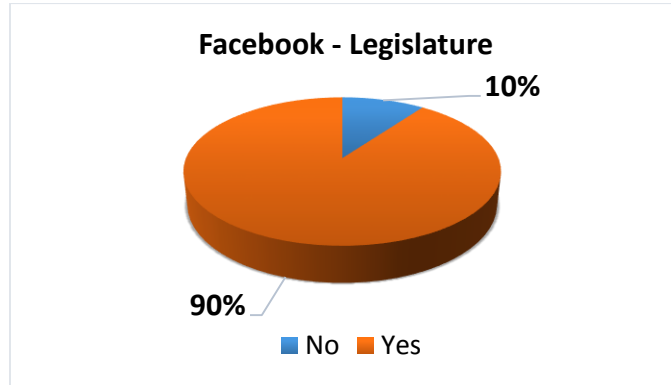
Twitter is also an increasingly popular medium for New Jersey legislators to interact with their constituents. Nearly three in four (74 percent) have Twitter accounts. This is a 14-point increase from last year's report, reaffirming that social media presence is on the upswing in the state Legislature.

Twitter - Legislature

26%

74%

■ No ■ Yes
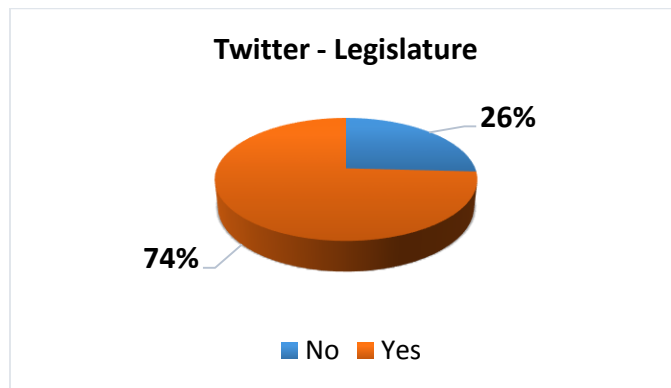
Analyzing Former and New Assembly Members

The transition from the 215th New Jersey State Legislature to the 216th saw the turnover of 12 Assembly seats. All state senators retained their seats from the 215th to the 216th. The following analyzes noteworthy differences between the new 12 Assembly members compared to those who held their position previously.

The most notable difference between the previous and new Assembly is based on party affiliation. While the previous Assembly members were evenly split between Republican and Democrat, 10 out of 12 of the new Assembly members are Democrats. The Democrats picking up four previously Republican seats contributes to an overall shift in Republican/Democratic split in the state Legislature.
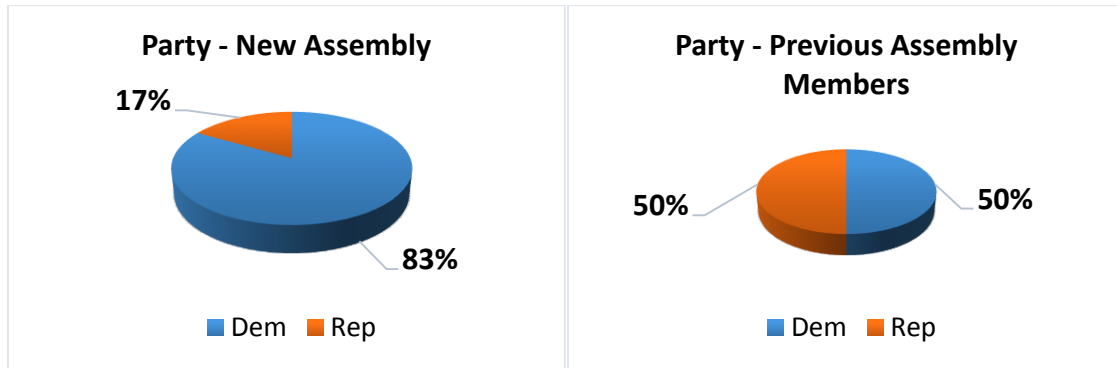

The median age for the 12 new Assembly members is 55, compared to 53 for their predecessors. This age gap is mostly due to three (25 percent) of the new Assembly members being over the age of 65, compared to just one of the previous Assembly members being a senior citizen.
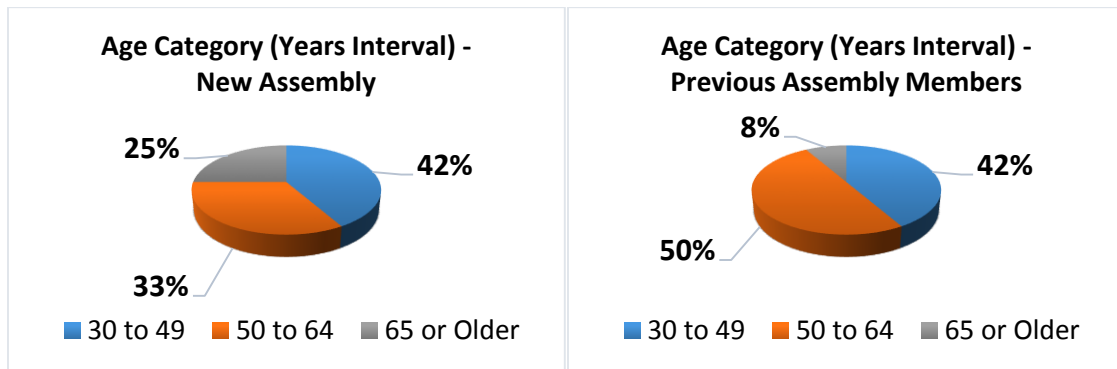
There is a lot of consistency in race and ethnicity across both sets of Assembly members. Ten out of 12 (83 percent) of the new and previous Assembly were white, with 17 percent black and none Asian. The majority of Assembly members in both sets were not Hispanic (only two among the original members and one among the current).

Race - New Assembly

17%

83%

■ Black ■ White

Race - Previous Assembly Members

17%

83%

■ Black ■ White
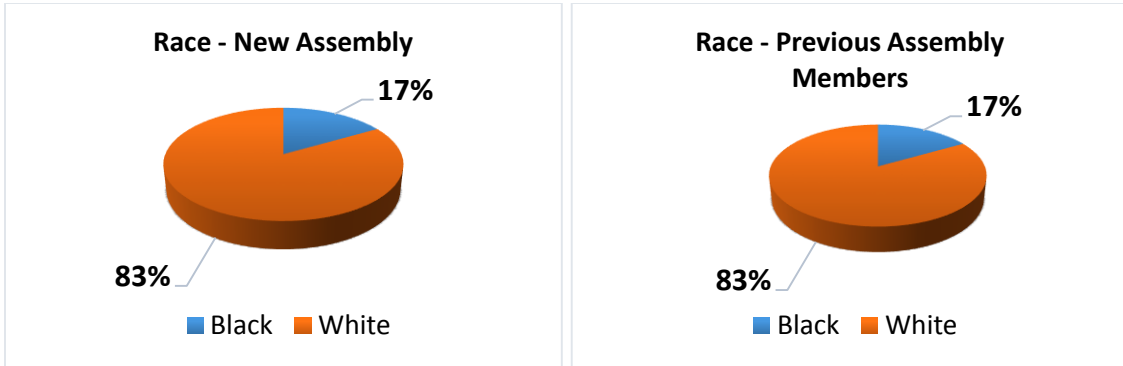
The addition of one Hispanic member to the set of 12 increases the percentage among the group from 8 percent to 17 percent.

Hispanic - New Assembly

8%

92%

■ No ■ Yes

Hispanic - Previous Assembly Members

17%

83%

■ No ■ Yes
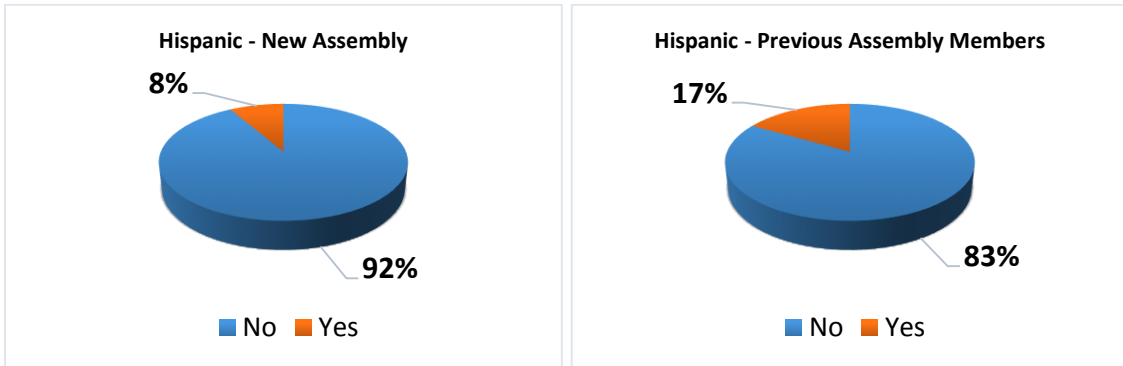
Demographic consistency across new and previous members is present in gender as well, as both instances demonstrated a seven-male, five-female split.

Sex - New Assembly

42%

58%

■ Female ■ Male

Sex - Previous Assembly Members

42%

58%

■ Female ■ Male
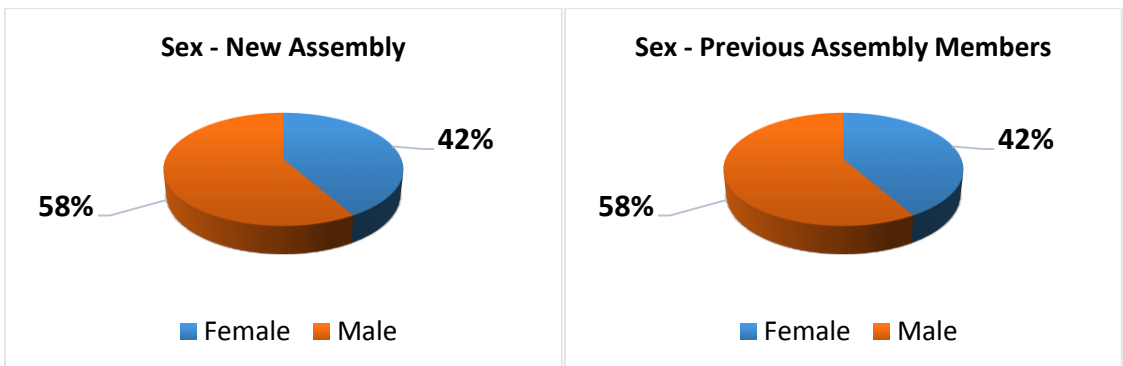
Forty-two percent of the new Assembly members (five out of 12) did not complete their baccalaureate degree, compared to 8 percent (one out of 12) from the previous Assembly members. However, 17 percent (two out of 12) of the new Assembly pursued a juris doctorate or traditional doctorate degree, compared to 8 percent (one out of 12) of the previous Assembly members. None of the new Assembly members had high school or an associate's degree as their highest level of education, so those categories aren't represented in the second chart below.

2016 Highest Level of Education - New Assembly Members

Category	Percent
HS	17%
Trade	8%
Assoc	17%
Bach	33%
JD	17%
Doct	8%

Highest Level of Education - Previous Assembly Members

Category	Percent
Trade	8%
Bach	67%
Mast	17%
JD	8%
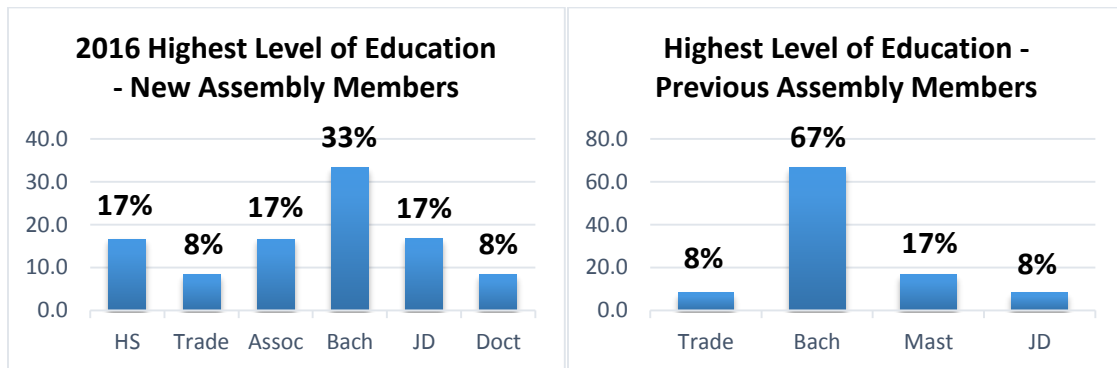
Comparing Legislative and Public Characteristics

In many ways, the demographic characteristics of members of the New Jersey Legislature are different than those of the general public they represent.

The requirements to hold legislative office in New Jersey are: Senators must be at least 30 years old and residents of the state for four years prior to election. Assembly members must be at least 21 and state residents for two years. All legislators must live in the districts they represent.

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 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.

* Three-year data used; 2013 is the latest three-year data available for New Jersey

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE AND THE GENERAL POPULATION			
Characteristic	**Legislature**	**N.J. population**	**Difference**
Median age	57.2	39.3	17.9
% male	70.0	48.8	21.2
% female	30.0	51.2	-21.2
% white	83.3	69.2	14.1
% black/African American	15.0	13.6	1.4
% Asian	1.7	8.6	-6.9
% Hispanic	8.3	18.2	-9.9
% foreign born	2.4	21.4	-19.0
% with BA degree or higher	80.8	36.1	44.7
% with graduate degree *	35.5	13.7	21.8
% with juris doctor degree	33.3	>1.0	>32.3
% white collar/professional **	**56.6**	**21.4**	**35.2**
% military vets	12.5	6.2	6.3
% Democratic	63.3	32.6	30.7
% Republican	36.7	19.7	17.0
% unaffiliated	0	47.7	-47.7
* Not including law degrees			
** Includes professional, scientific, management, administrative, finance, real estate			
Sources: Stockton University research, American Community Survey 2013 (3-year estimates), N.J. Division of Elections			

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 81 percent of legislators have. Only 14 percent in the population have attained a graduate degree at any level. Among legislators, 23 percent have attained a master's degree, 7 percent have a doctorate and 33 percent have a juris doctorate, or law degree. Only 16 percent of legislators did not attend school beyond trade or high school, while 29 percent of the population have only a high school

diploma. 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-seven 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, 75 percent are 50 years old or older, while the general public is younger. The median age for all New Jersey residents is 39, but it is 57 for the Legislature. Only one legislator (1 percent) is younger than 30, but 38 percent of the general population is younger than 30. Twenty-seven 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 the number found in New Jersey's general population (7 percent). Thirteen percent of adult men in New Jersey are veterans. Among New Jersey veterans, 95 percent are men.

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 8 percent of the Legislature. New Jersey, long considered a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, is a gateway state to 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. African Americans make up 14 percent of the New Jersey population, and 15 percent of the Legislature.

Sixty-three percent of New Jersey legislators are Democrats, and 37 percent are Republicans. Those percentages mirror statewide breakdowns for voters registered to either party in data provided by the N.J. Division of Elections. However, 49 percent of registered voters are not affiliated with any party.

The Census does not provide data about the number of people holding juris doctorate degrees, and that statistic for New Jersey could not readily be found in other demographic or legal resources. However, data from the American Bar Association and the Census Bureau show the number of active lawyers residing in New Jersey to be about 41,500. If retired attorneys were included, the total number could be estimated at 50,000. The percentage of adults in the New Jersey population holding law degrees is estimated at slightly less than 1 percent.

Comparison of New Jersey Assembly and Senate
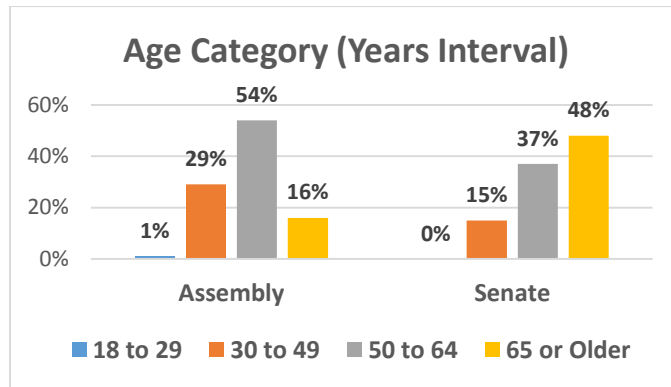
Social Media Presence

In both houses, social media adoption has become a large component of how legislators communicate with their constituents. Most of the Legislature is active on Facebook: roughly 88 percent of the Assembly and 95 percent of senators are. The vast majority of legislators use Twitter as well, with 70 percent of the Assembly and nearly 83 percent of the Senate active on Twitter. In both houses, social media activity has increased over the past year. In 2015, only about 79 percent of the Assembly used Facebook, compared to 88 percent this year. Senate Facebook activity increased by nearly three percentage points as well. Twitter usage has seen large gains in both houses, increasing by nearly 17 percentage points in the Assembly and roughly eight percentage points in the Senate.
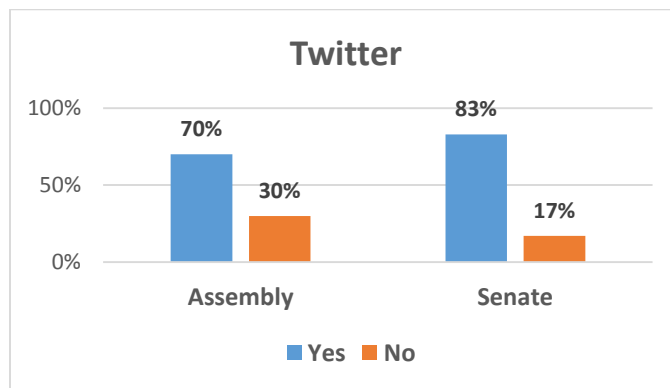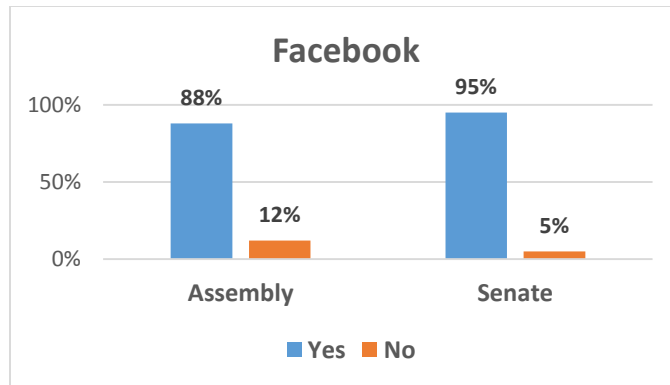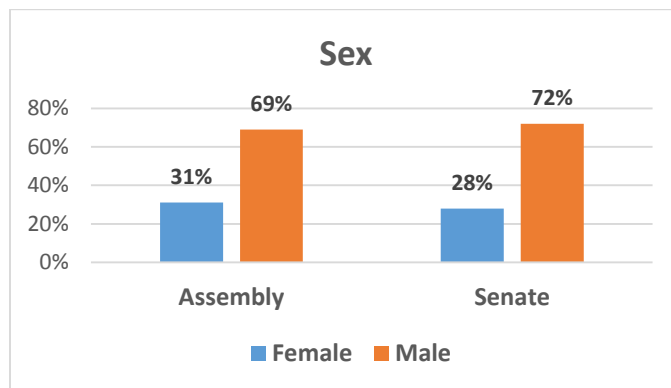
Demographics

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. Democrats hold the majority in both houses. 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 for members of the Assembly is 54, nearly seven years younger than the Senate's median age of roughly 63. Nearly half (48 percent) of senators are senior citizens (65 or older), whereas only 16 percent of Assembly members fit in that age group. The most prevalent age range of Assembly members is between 30 and 49, where 54 percent of the Assembly is represented.

Age Category (Years Interval)

|	18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 or Older
Assembly	1%	29%	54%	16%
Senate	0%	15%	37%	48%

While both the Assembly and the Senate are predominantly male, the Assembly has a slightly larger representation of women. Thirty-one percent of Assembly members are female, compared to 28 percent of the Senate.

Sex

|	Female	Male
Assembly	31%	69%
Senate	28%	72%

While white, non-Hispanics are the most widely represented demographic in the Legislature, the Assembly displays more racial and ethnic diversity than the Senate. Eighty-one percent of Assembly members are white, compared to 88 percent of senators. Eighteen percent of the Assembly is non-white, compared to roughly 13 percent in the Senate. The Assembly also displays a higher percentage of Hispanic members (9 percent compared to 8 percent in the Senate).
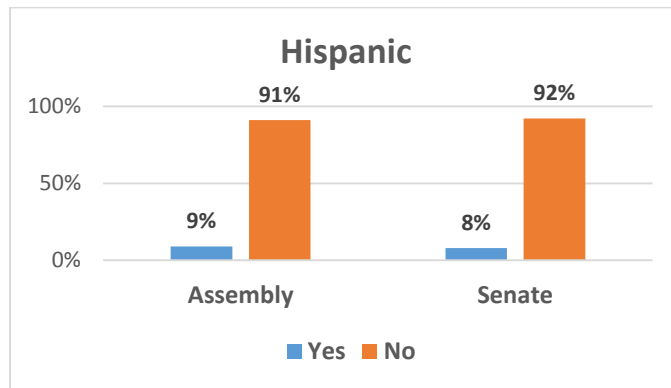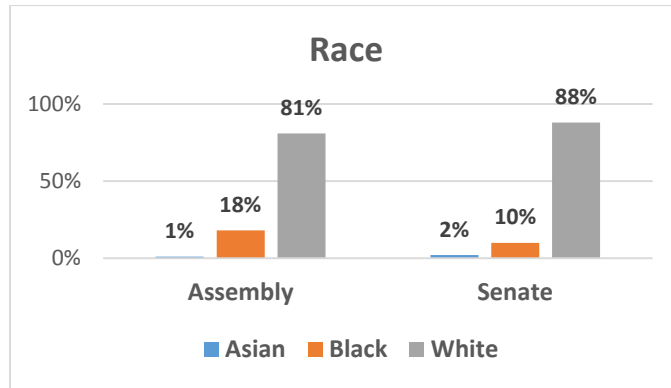
While all members of the Senate were born in the United States, three members of the Assembly were born outside the U.S. (Cuba, Ecuador, and India). Seventy-eight percent of the Assembly was born in New Jersey, compared to 68 percent in the Senate.

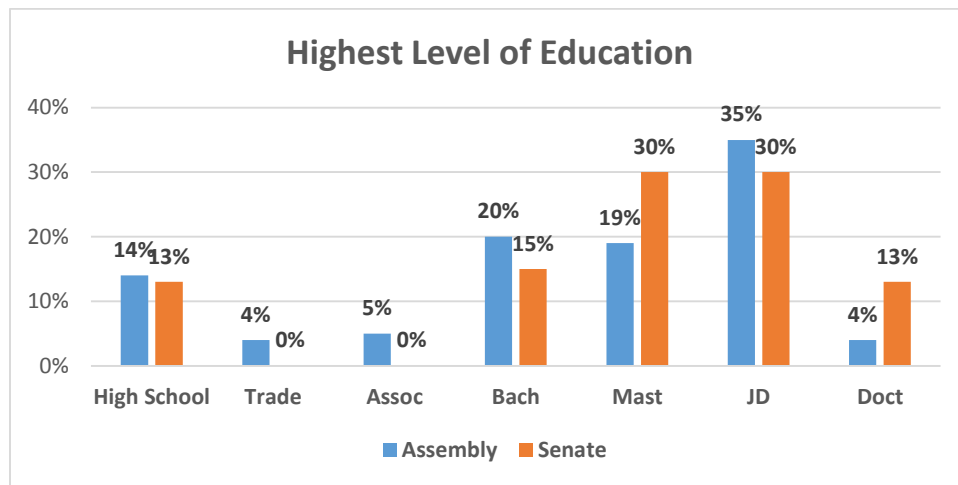**Birth Place (If in USA: State, if Out of Country: Country)**
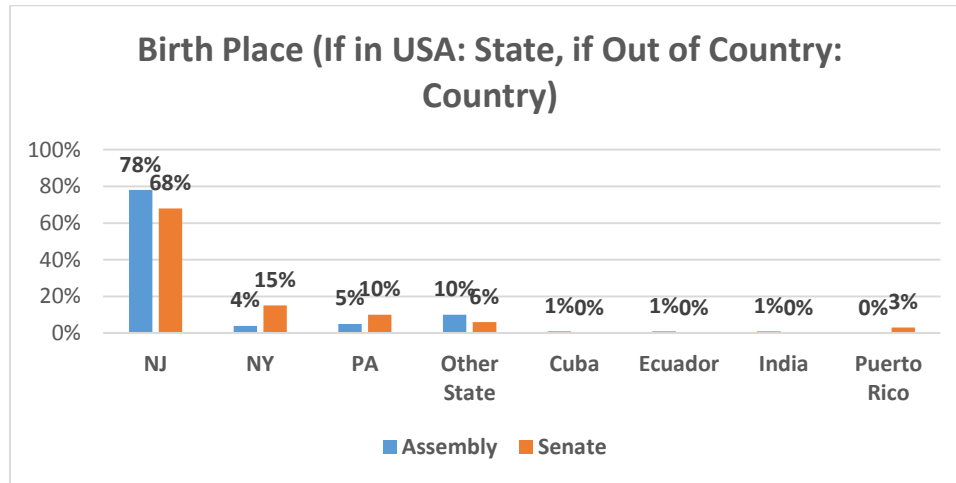
While the majority of both houses are Democrat, Republicans are more strongly represented in the Senate. Forty percent of all senators are Republicans, whereas 35 percent of the Assembly are Republican Party members. In the 2015 report, both the Senate and Assembly displayed a 60/40 split between Democrats and Republicans. The shift is due to the Democrats picking up four seats previously held by Republicans in the November 2015 elections.

Party
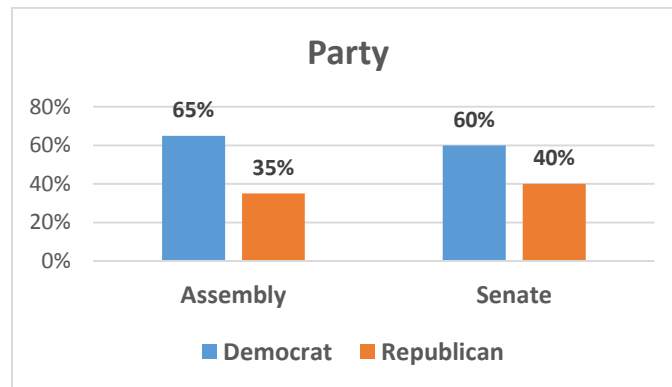
Education

Members of both houses are college educated at percentages much higher than the general population. In both the Senate and the Assembly, juris doctorate degrees are most common, with 35 percent of the Assembly holding JD degrees compared to 30 percent in the Senate and less than 1 percent in New Jersey's general population. Traditional doctoral degrees were more common in the Senate however, with 13 percent achieving doctoral degrees compared to 4 percent in the Assembly. Twenty-three percent of the Assembly did not obtain a college degree, compared to 13 percent in the Senate. About 73 percent of the Senate completed a graduate degree (either master's or higher), compared to 58 percent of the Assembly. Because trade school and an associate's degree was not the highest level of education for any senators, those categories are not represented in the second chart below.

Highest Level of Education

	Assembly	Senate
High School	14%	13%
Trade	4%	0%
Assoc	5%	0%
Bach	20%	15%
Mast	19%	30%
JD	35%	30%
Doct	4%	13%

Majorities in both houses attended out-of-state colleges. Sixty-two percent of the Senate received their bachelor's degree out of state, while 55 percent of the Assembly did the same. The Assembly displayed a higher rate of attendance to New Jersey baccalaureate institutions (45 percent) compared to the Senate (38 percent).

Bachelor's Degree In State or Out of State

	In	Out
Assembly	45%	55%
Senate	62%	38%
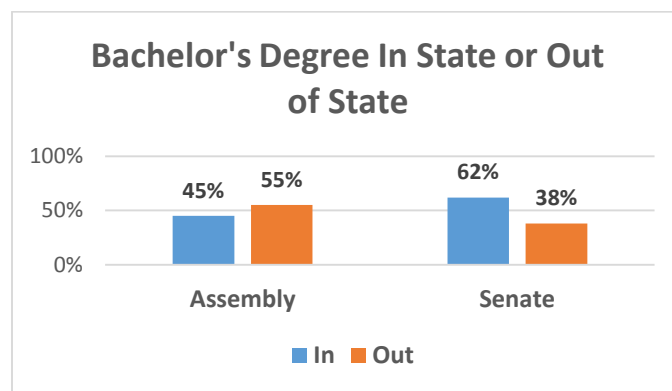
The majority of the Legislature attended private institutions for their bachelor's degrees. This number is higher in the Assembly, where 62 percent of members attended private colleges and universities compared to 55 percent in the Senate. Forty-five percent of senators attended public institutions, compared to roughly 38 percent in the Assembly.

Bachelor's Degree from Public or Private School
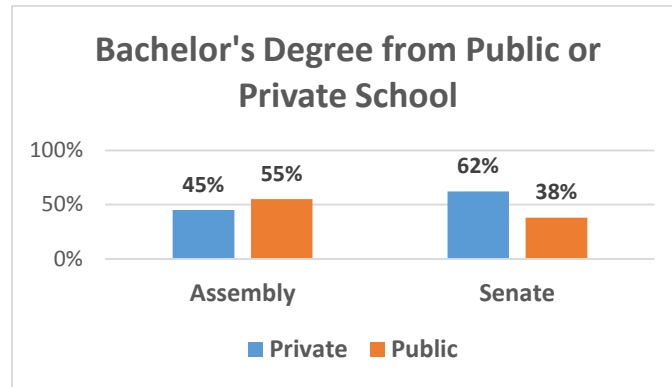
Experience

One of the largest areas of variance between the Assembly and Senate is experience in the Legislature. More than 75 percent of the Senate has been in the Legislature for more than 10 years, whereas 25 percent of the Assembly has had the same level of experience. This can be attributed to the fact that 68 percent of senators started out in the Legislature in the Assembly before moving on to the Senate. Twenty percent of senators have served in the Legislature for 26 or more years, whereas only 1 percent of the Assembly have done the same.

Years in Legislature
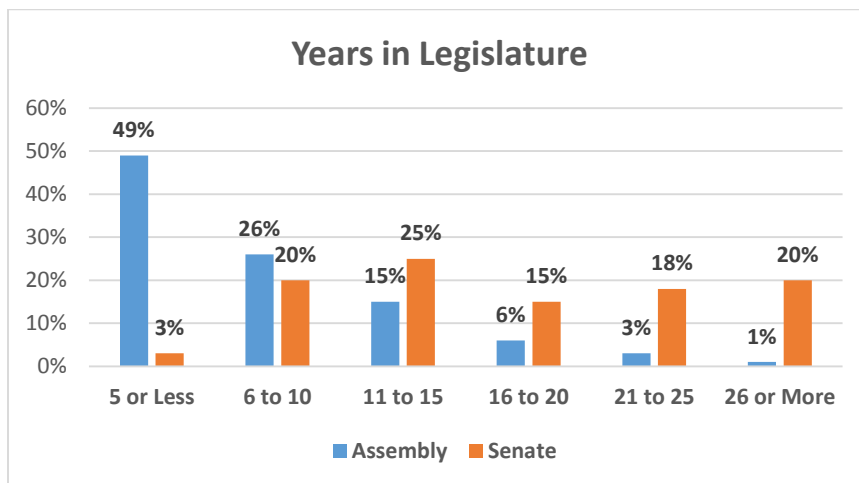
A greater percentage of senators has served in branches of the military compared to the Assembly. Fifteen percent of all senators have served, compared to 11 percent in the Assembly. Last year, this percentage was tied across both the Senate and Assembly, meaning that the new legislators in the Assembly are less likely to have served in the military in comparison to their predecessors.

Military
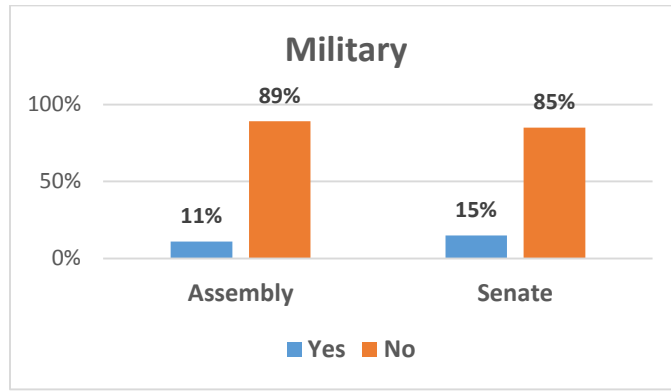
In both houses, municipal experience serves as a significant opportunity for pre-Legislature experience. More than two out of three Assembly members (68 percent) had experience at the municipal level, while three out of five senators (60 percent) have done the same.

Across both houses, a majority of legislators did not have county experience prior to assuming their current position. Forty percent of Senators had county experience, whereas 38 percent of the Assembly did the same.

Municipal Experience

County Experience
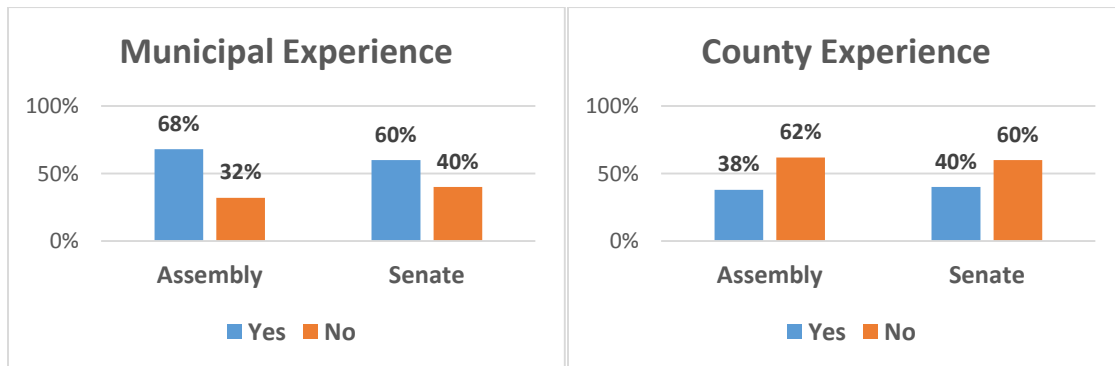
Conclusion

Despite the recent transition in assembly chairs, the New Jersey State Legislature remains distinctly different than New Jersey's general population. The State Legislature is older, less diverse, better educated, and more involved in professional or white-collar occupations when compared to the general population. New Jerseyans must be mindful of these trends if they aspire to have a state Legislature which is more representative of their own demographics.

In monitoring the database from year-to-year, two of the most significant trends carried from the 215th state Legislature to the 216th are the prevalence of social media usage and the increased Democratic representation. Both of these trends are steps forward in a better represented state Legislature.

The more likely a legislator is to use social media, the more interactive he or she is able to be with constituents. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow for a "hands-on" experience with state legislators that would not be otherwise possible, and allow for more of an exchange between legislators and the general public. These social media platforms open the door for a more interactive and accountable relationship between New Jersey's legislature and its general public.

From 2015 to 2016, the state Legislature's demographic representation increased 3 percent, resulting in the Legislature consisting of a 63 percent/37 percent Democrat/Republican split (compared to 60 percent /40 percent in 2015). This shift is in line with the New Jersey general population, as 32.6 percent of New Jerseyans identify themselves as Democrat (compared to 19.7 percent Republican). Analyzing a "valid" percentile of these statistics (since 47.7 percent of New Jerseyans did not identify with either party), reveals that 62.3 percent of New Jerseyans who did identify with a political party listed their affiliation as "Democrat" (compared to 37.7 percent Republicans). Thie 62.3 percent /37.7 percent split of New Jerseyans who identify with either party is largely in line with the 63 percent /37 percent split in the state Legislature, and a sign that the Legislature's party affiliation is largely representative of New Jersey as a whole.

The findings detailed in this report ideally help to establish a framework of discussion regarding the relationship between the state Legislature and New Jersey's general population. Ideally, the trends outlined in this report allow New Jerseyans to have a better understanding of their legislature and its ongoing direction, and allow for a better informed political perspective overall. The more informed New Jersey's public is, the better the state Legislature can operate in a manner that best represents public interest in regard to policy change.

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