

**DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION IN MARYLAND STATE GOVERNMENT:  
CANDIDATES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS IN 2006**

Oznur Alturk  
Heather M. Creek  
Paul S. Herrnson

**A report by**

**The Center for American Politics and Citizenship**

**University of Maryland**

3102 Morrill Hall  
College Park, MD 20742

(301) 314-2736 tel  
(301) 314-2532 fax

[www.capc.umd.edu](http://www.capc.umd.edu)

April 22, 2009

## Executive Summary

This report is divided into four parts that describe the demographic background of Maryland candidates and elected officials by gender, race, education and age. Each section assesses the representativeness of Maryland candidates and officeholders compared to the population of Maryland. Part one discusses the demographic representativeness of all candidates in the 2006 primary and general elections as well as all officeholders in the state. Part two examines the representativeness of the Maryland State Senate and State House of Delegates. Part three focuses on the demographic differences between Democratic and Republican officeholders in Maryland. Part four examines the demographics of Maryland judges.

### Major Findings:

- Women make up a small percentage of all primary election candidates but they tend to be successful in elections. As a result, women are better represented among officeholders than among candidates.
- The percentage of Black candidates in the 2006 primary elections is smaller than the percentage of Blacks in the population. Black politicians tend to enjoy a disproportionate level of success in elections, resulting in Blacks being better represented among officeholders than candidates.
- Individuals without any college education are unlikely to run for public office. Individuals that have some college education or hold undergraduate or post-graduate degrees make up 95 percent of the candidate pool.
- The House of Delegates is more demographically representative of women than men.
- The Courts are the least representative branch of the state government in terms of race, education, gender, and age.
- Democratic officeholders in Maryland are more representative of the state's population in terms of gender and race than Republican officeholders, all of whom were white in 2006.

## Introduction

This report examines the demographic characteristics of candidates and elected officials in Maryland State government during and after the 2006 election cycle. The study compares the characteristics of candidates and elected officials to the demographics of the Maryland public. See the Appendix for information about the methodology of the study.

Maryland has a unique political identity. Its proximity to Washington D.C. and the high percent of its population employed by the federal government means that it is tightly connected to national politics. The majority of Maryland's population lives within the Baltimore-Washington corridor that extends from the D.C. suburbs in Prince George's and Montgomery counties to the areas in and around Baltimore City. These individuals vote overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates both at the state and national levels. This has a profound influence on the partisan make-up of the state government as well as the regional conflicts arising between the interests of voters and officials from the Baltimore-Washington corridor and those in more rural areas of the state, especially the Eastern Shore.

Maryland's elected members of the executive branch consist of a Governor and Lieutenant Governor, who run for office together, and the state Comptroller and Attorney General. Each of these positions is elected for a four-year term and the governor is limited to serving two terms. All other executive branch positions are appointed by the governor. Maryland has a very strong executive branch and its governor is considered one of the most powerful in the country because of extensive appointment, removal, veto, and budgetary powers.

The Maryland General Assembly is distinctive from both the U.S. Congress and many other state legislatures in terms of the length of its legislative terms. Members of the Maryland House of Delegates and the State Senate are elected to four year terms (as opposed to two year House terms in the U.S. House and most other state houses). All members of both chambers are up for election every four years (as opposed to rotating elections in the U.S. Senate where only one-third of the body is up for election in any election year).

Maryland's judicial branch consists of a four-tiered system. The lowest tier is made up of the 12 district court judges who are appointed by the governor and serve ten-year terms. These individuals never come up for election and, thus, are not included in this study. The next tier is made up of eight Judges from the Circuit Court. They are also appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. However, during the next scheduled election they are placed on the ballot, unopposed, for the voters to accept or remove them from office. Judges in the next two tiers, the Court of Special Appeals and the Court of Appeals are also appointed by the Governor, approved by the Senate, and run unopposed in a retention election. If the voters choose to retain them, they then serve a ten-year term. All Maryland state judges must retire at the age of 70.

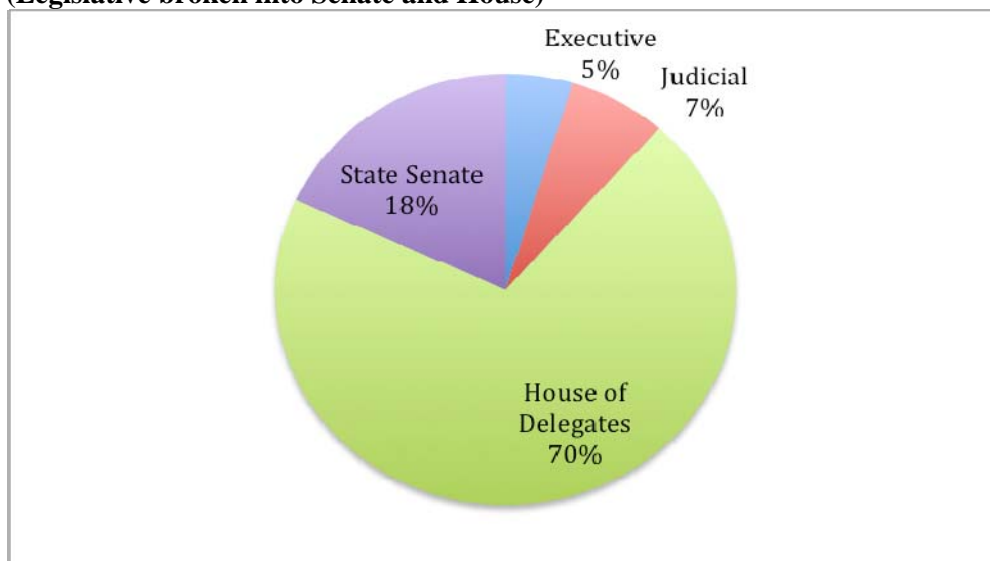
## Part 1. The Representativeness of Candidates for Maryland State Offices

The vast majority of candidates in Maryland’s 2006 elections were running for a seat in the state legislature. Taken together, the two chambers of the legislative branch made up 88.4 percent of all candidates for state office. The following analysis of demographic representativeness of candidates includes the candidates in all three branches of government.

**Table 1. Number of Seats and Candidates for Elective Office in the 2006 Maryland Elections**

|                                       | Number of Seats | Candidates in Primary Election | Candidates In General Election |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Executive Branch</b>               |                 |                                |                                |
| Governor                              | 1               | 5                              | 7                              |
| Lt. Governor                          | 1               | 4                              | 7                              |
| Attorney General                      | 1               | 2                              | 4                              |
| Comptroller                           | 1               | 8                              | 3                              |
| <b>Legislative Branch</b>             |                 |                                |                                |
| House of Delegates                    | 141             | 440                            | 269                            |
| State Senate                          | 47              | 117                            | 80                             |
| <b>Judicial Branch</b>                |                 |                                |                                |
| Judge of the Circuit Court            | 8               | 38                             | 27                             |
| Judge of the Court of Appeals         | 2               | 2                              | 2                              |
| Judge of the Court of Special Appeals | 5               | 5                              | 5                              |

**Figure 1. Percent of Maryland Candidates Running for Each Branch of the Government in 2006 (Legislative broken into Senate and House)**

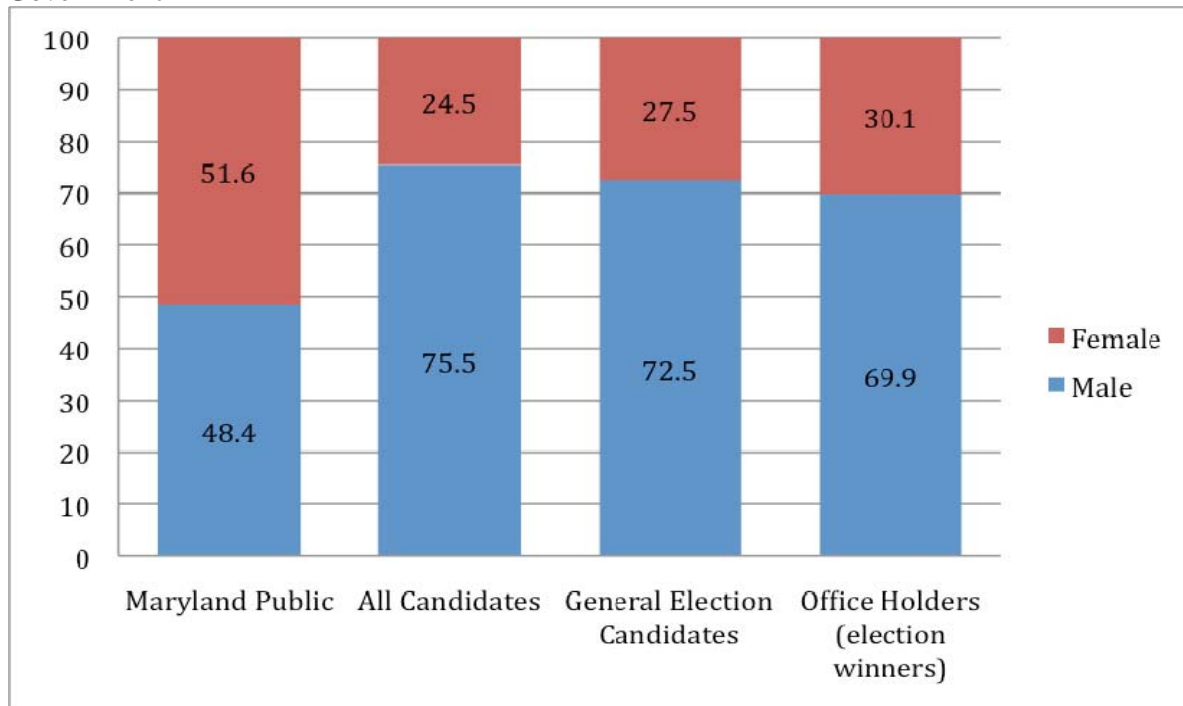


## Gender

The population of Maryland is split almost evenly between men and women with a slightly higher percentage of women. The initial pool of candidates who ran in the 2006 primary elections does not reflect the state's population. Approximately three-fourths of all candidates were men. Women made up a slightly larger proportion of the candidates in the general election at 27.5 percent. Women made up a little over 30 percent of the state officeholders after Maryland's 2006 elections.

Although women make up a relatively small proportion of all primary election candidates, they do well in their elections, enjoying success rates that increase as they progress through each stage of the electoral process.

**Figure 2. The Gender Representativeness of Candidates and Officeholders in Maryland State Government**

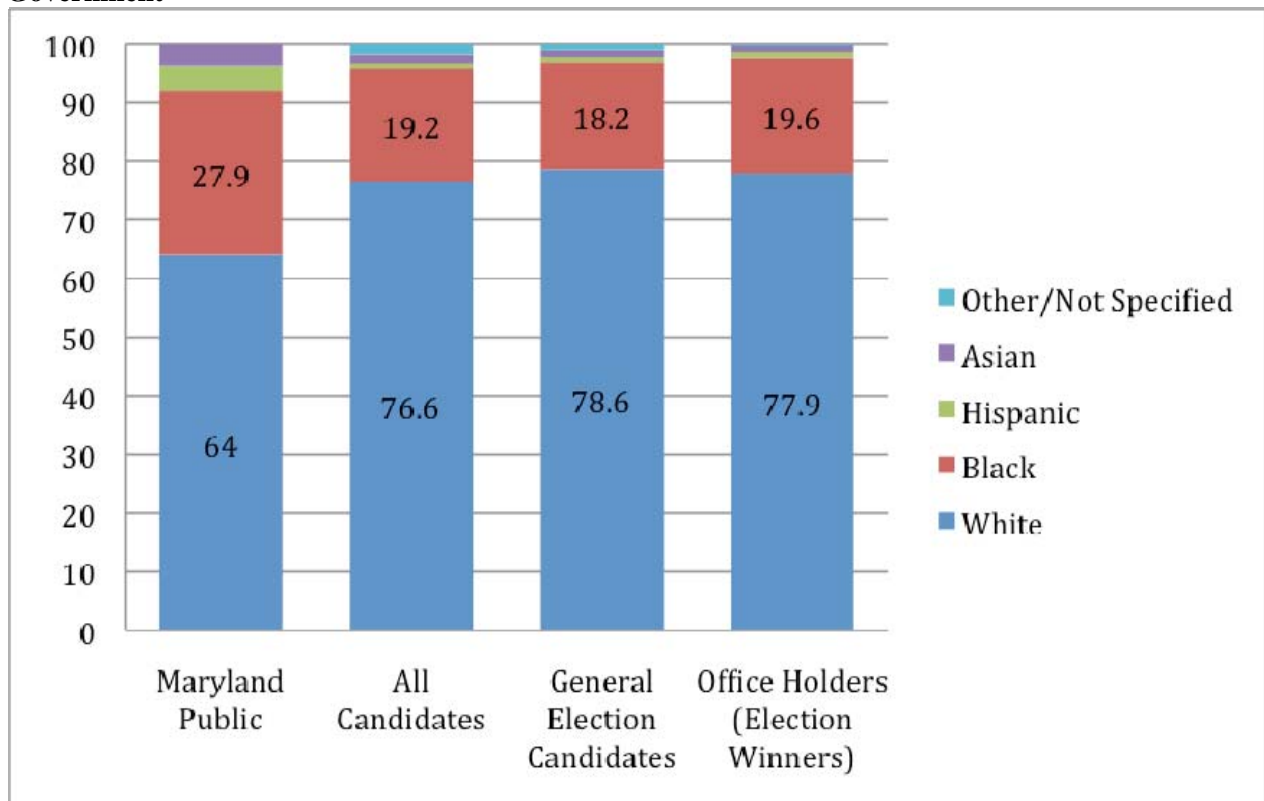


## Race

In Maryland, 64 percent of the population are white and 27.9 percent are Black. Hispanics make up 4.3 percent and Asians make up about 3.9 percent of the public. The number of white candidates in the initial election candidate pool is 13.6 percentage points greater than the number of whites in the population. The percentage of Black candidates in the 2006 primary elections is somewhat smaller than the size of Maryland's Black population. However, like women, when Black candidates run in the primary election they tend to be successful. Comprising 19.2 percent of all candidates, Blacks made up 19.6 percent of those who won in the general election and become officeholders.

Hispanics made up 1.2 percent of the officeholders after Maryland's 2006 elections, which indicates slight underrepresentation of Hispanics in Maryland. Candidates who identified their race as Asian made up 1.7 percent of the initial pool of candidates, compared to 3.9 percent of the general public that is Asian. After the election, Asians made up 1.2 percent of officeholders in Maryland.

**Figure 3. The Racial Representativeness of Candidates and Officeholders in Maryland State Government**

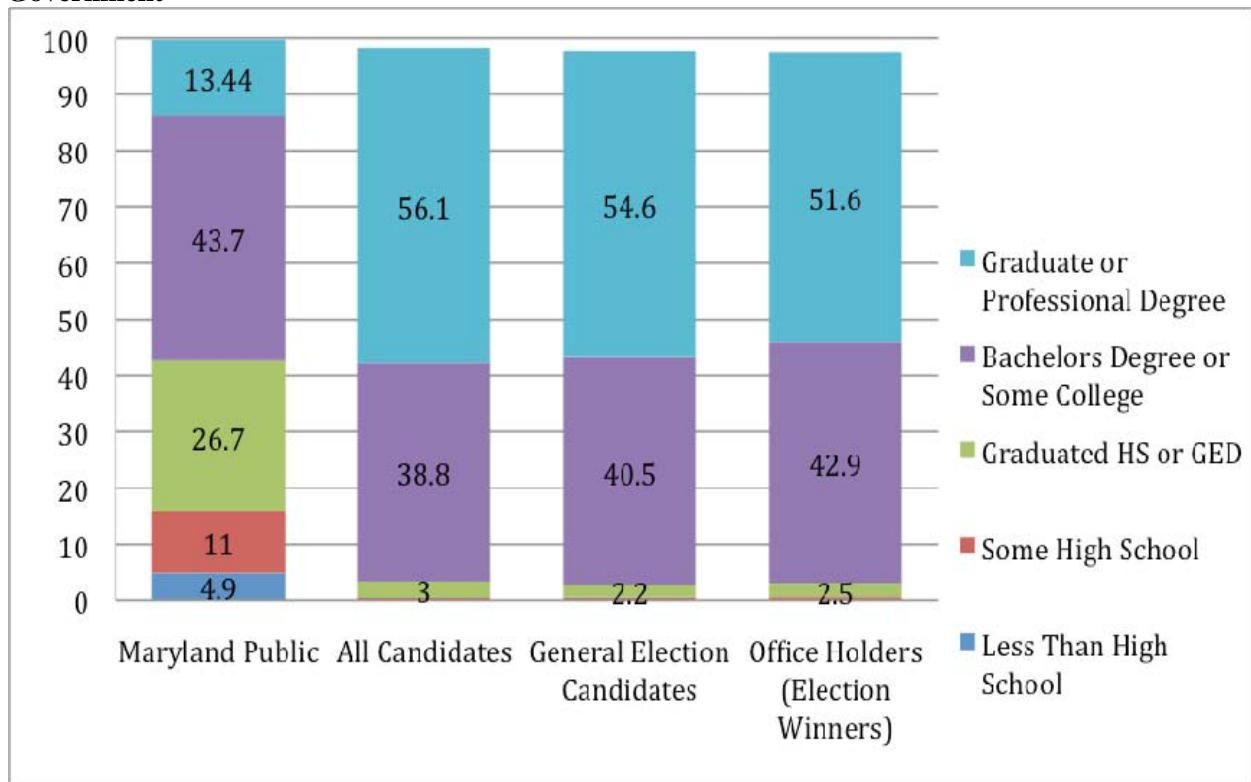


*Education*

Roughly half of the population in Maryland has at least an undergraduate degree or some college education. About 13.4 percent hold a graduate or professional degree (Master’s, PhD, MD, or JD). Maryland’s population is highly educated compared to the nation as a whole. Only eight percent of the U.S. population holds an advanced degree. The vast majority of candidates for public office in Maryland in 2006 had at least some college education. More than 50 percent hold a graduate or professional degree. Similar patterns exist for officeholders in Maryland’s government. One noteworthy observation is that candidates with the highest level of education enjoy more political success than those whose formal education included pursuing an undergraduate education. Indeed, members of the latter group performed better in primaries and the general election than those in the former group.

Not surprisingly, few Marylanders who terminated their education with a high school diploma ran for state government. These individuals made up only 3 percent of the candidate pool and 0.6 percent of all state officeholders in 2006.

**Figure 4. The Educational Representativeness of Candidates and Officeholders in Maryland State Government**

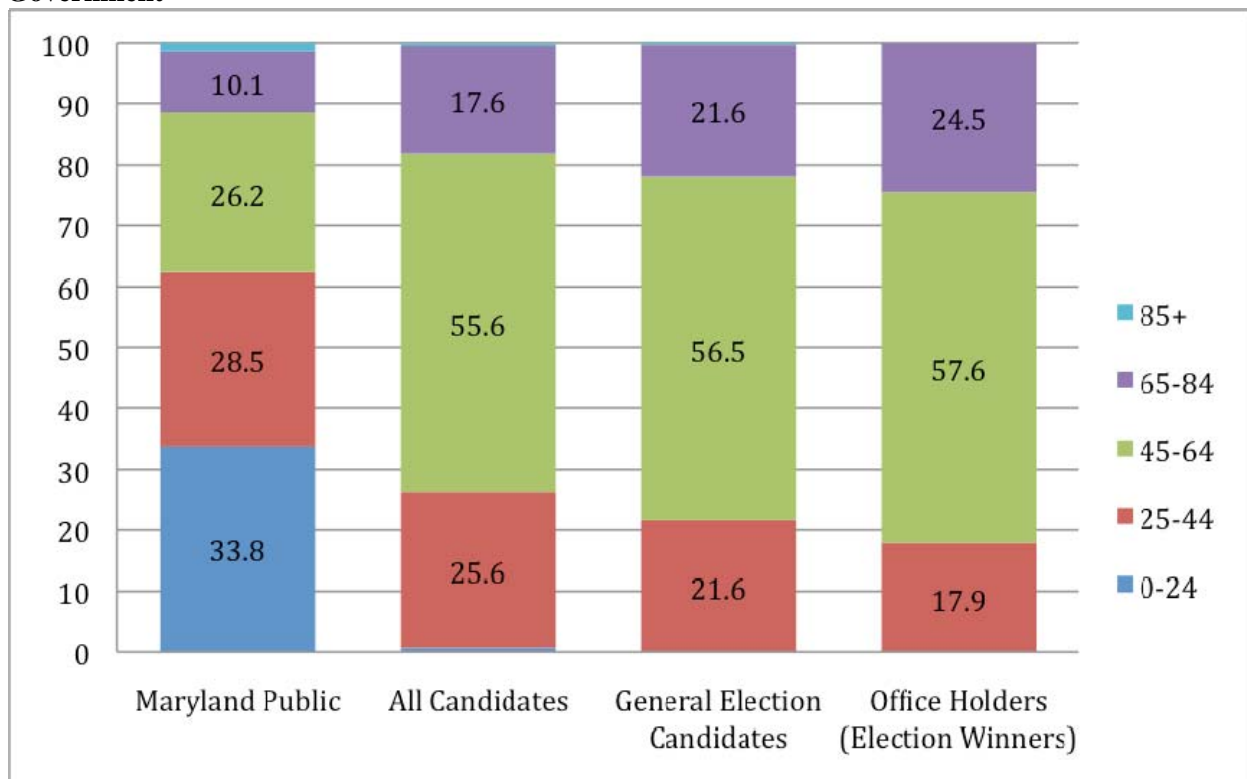


## Age

Maryland's population is slightly older than the U.S. population. Almost half of the state's population is under 45 years of age; well over 60 percent of the U.S. population falls in the same category. The majority of the candidates participating in the primary elections were between the ages of 45 and 64. People in this age bracket did very well in the 2006 elections. They comprised 55.6 percent of all candidates and 57.6 percent of the elected officials. Candidates between the ages 65 and 84 also did relatively well. Although they made up 17.6 percent of the initial candidate population, they won 21.6 percent of all primaries and 24.5 percent of all general elections.

All of the offices in Maryland's government, with the exception of Comptroller and Attorney General, have a minimum or maximum age restriction. This makes it nearly impossible for any candidates or elected officials to fall into the lowest and highest age brackets in this study. This is reflected in the fact that there were no candidates under the age of 24 and only two candidates over the age of 85 who participated in the general election.

**Figure 5. The Age Representativeness of Candidates and Officeholders in Maryland State Government**



## Part 2. Differences in Representativeness of Senators and Delegates in the Maryland General Assembly

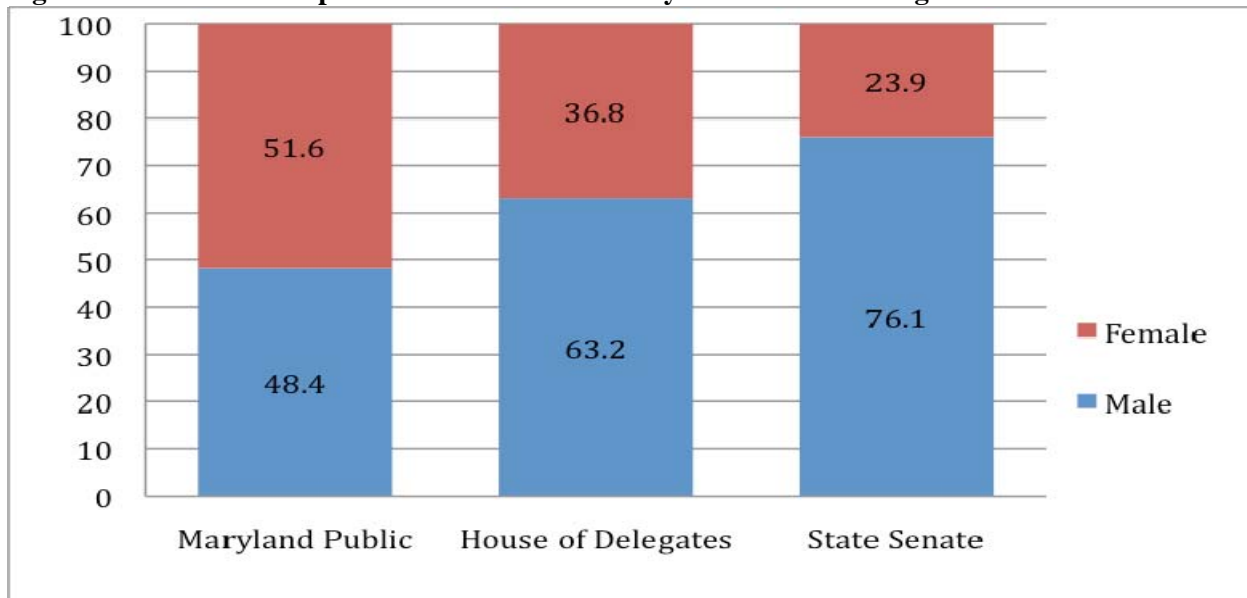
Like the U.S. Congress, Maryland's legislative branch is divided into two chambers. The larger chamber of the legislature is the House of Delegates, with 141 members; the smaller house is the State Senate with 47 members. Members of the Maryland House of Delegates and State Senate both serve four-year terms of office. Elections for the House of Delegates use multi-member districts (for much of the state) which differ from the U.S. House of Representatives and most other state legislatures. This means that in most of the state delegate districts there are three at-large seats which are filled by the top three vote-getters in each district. Thus, candidates of the same party often run against each other as well as candidates of the opposition in every election, something that rarely happens in single-member districts at the state or federal level.

### *Gender*

The House of Delegates is more representative in terms of gender than is the State Senate. While women only make up 23.9 percent of the Senate's membership, they comprise 36.8 percent of the House of Delegates. This number is still significantly lower than the population of the state, which is 51.6 percent female.

Women legislative candidates are more successful than their counterparts in the rest of the country. Following the 2006 elections, Maryland had the nation's highest proportion of women state legislators. Compared to the U.S. Congress, Maryland is also exceptionally representative of women. In 2006, women made up only 17 percent of the federal legislative branch.

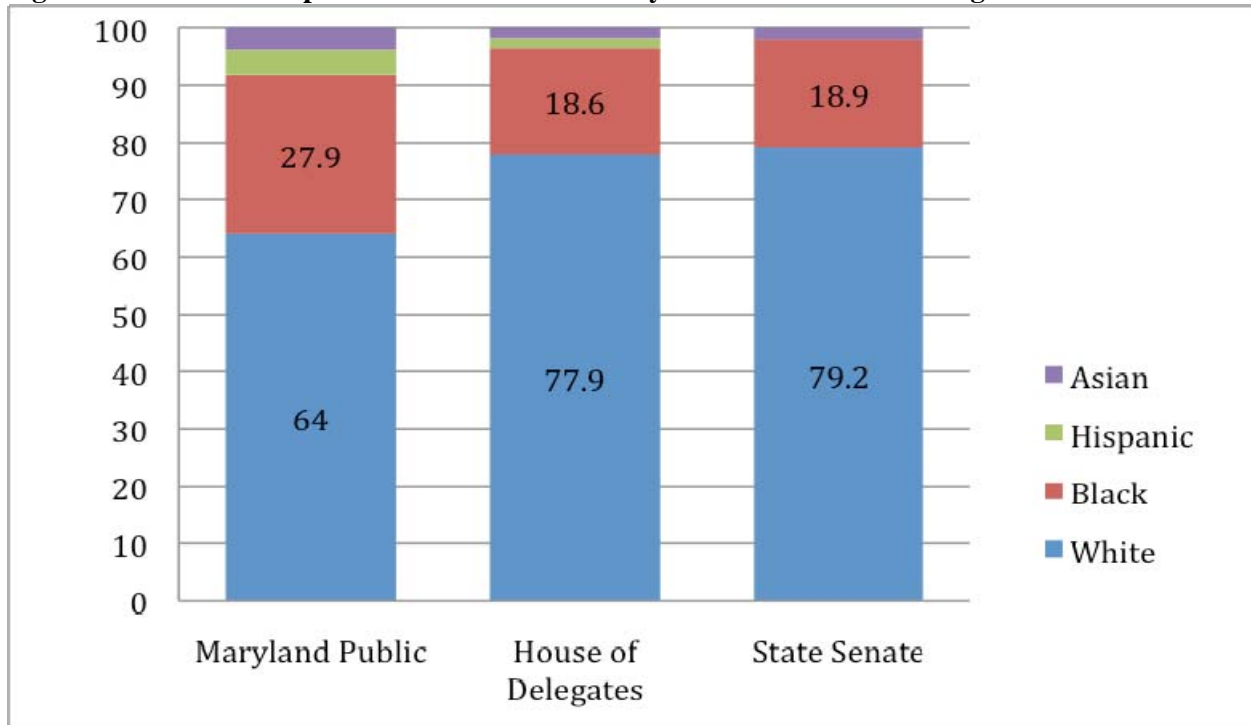
**Figure 6. The Gender Representativeness of the Maryland House of Delegates and Senate**



*Race*

Most members of both chambers of the Maryland State legislature are white. The chambers have nearly identical proportions of Black representatives. The primary difference between the two chambers concerns Hispanics and Asians. These two racial groups compose a very small proportion of the Maryland population and they are underrepresented in both chambers of the legislature. The House of Delegates has two (1.8 percent) Hispanic members and two (1.8 percent) Asian members. The State Senate does not have any Hispanic members and one member (1.9 percent) is Asian. Despite the underrepresentation of Hispanics and Asians, Maryland’s legislative branch is considered one of the most diverse in the nation.

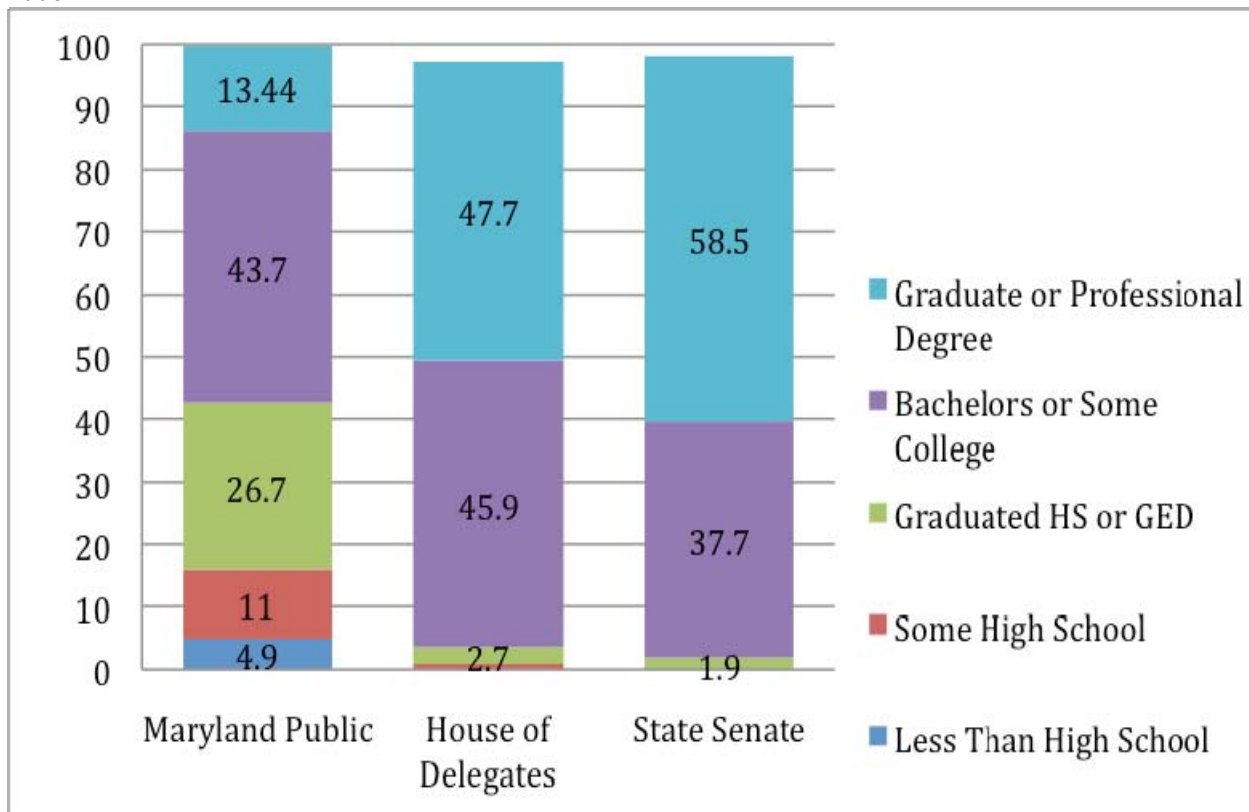
**Figure 7. The Racial Representativeness of the Maryland State House of Delegates and Senate**



*Education*

Over half of the Maryland Senate and nearly half of the members in the House of Delegates have received a graduate or professional degree compared to 13.4 percent of the public. The proportion of individuals who have attended some college or earned their undergraduate degree is quite similar in both chambers of the legislature and the general public. However, 26.7 percent of the Maryland population has a high school diploma as their highest level of education while that number is only 2.7 percent of the House of Delegates (three members) and 1.9 percent (one member) of the Senate.

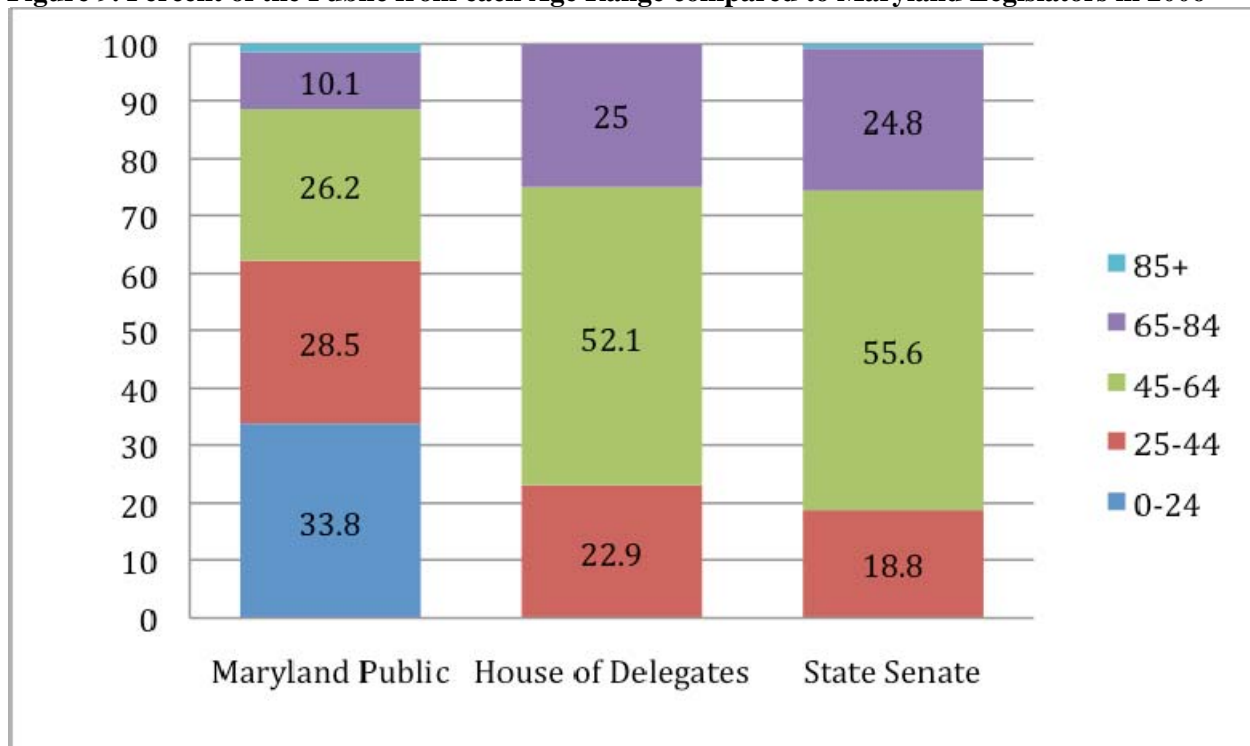
**Figure 8. Percent of the Public from each Education Level compared to Maryland Legislators in 2006**



## Age

Maryland legislators in both chambers are much older than the state's population. Maryland law requires that candidates for the House of Delegates be 21 years old by the time of the election and that candidates for the State Senate be 25 years old by election day. There are no members of either chamber who are under 24 years of age even though that range makes up 33.8 percent of the general public. There is very little difference between the ages of State Senators and State Delegates. Slightly over half of the membership in each chamber is age 45 to 64 and one quarter of the membership is age 65 to 84. There are no members of the House of Delegates who are over 85 years old.

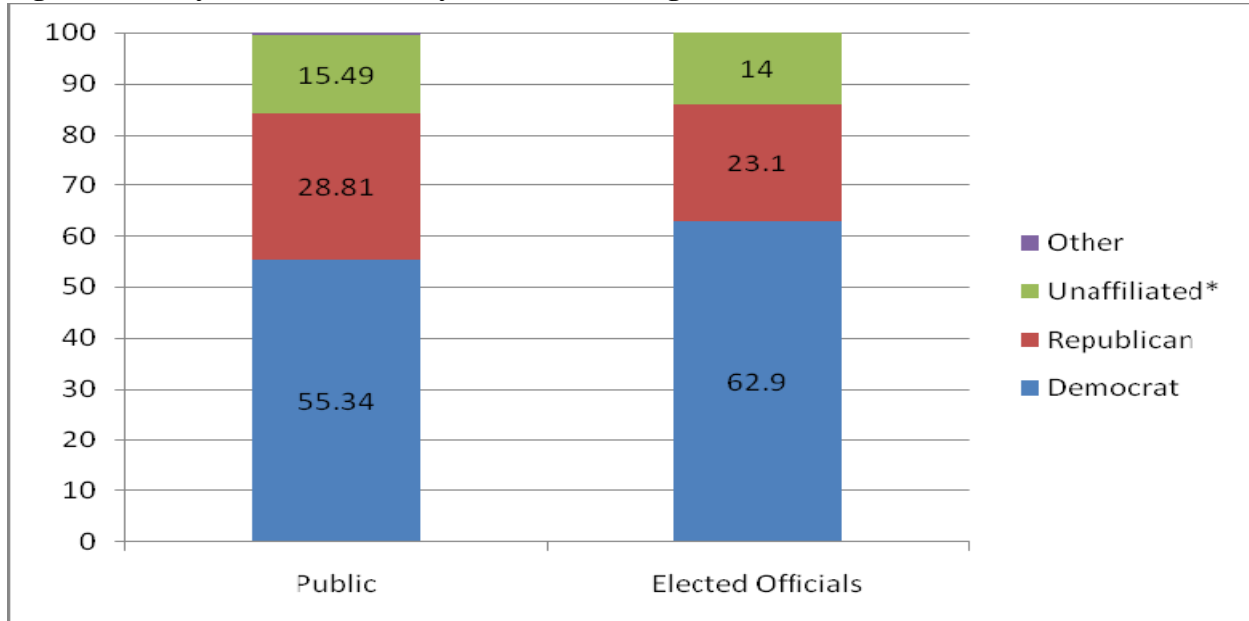
**Figure 9. Percent of the Public from each Age Range compared to Maryland Legislators in 2006**



### Part 3. The Partisanship of Maryland Candidates and Officeholders

Maryland is considered a Democratic stronghold in presidential elections so it is no surprise that their state elected officials are also overwhelmingly Democrat. Of Maryland's election winners in 2006, 62.9 percent were members of the Democratic Party and 23.1 percent were part of the Republican Party. A little over 55 percent of the public registers to vote with the Democratic Party and 28.8 percent registers with the Republican Party. The public differs from the elected officials in that about 15 percent of the public register to vote without a party affiliation and it is very unusual for individuals to get elected to either branches of the government without being under the banner of one of the two major parties. All of the unaffiliated elected officials in 2006 were members of the non-partisan judicial branch.

**Figure 10. Maryland Political Party Affiliation during the 2006 Election**

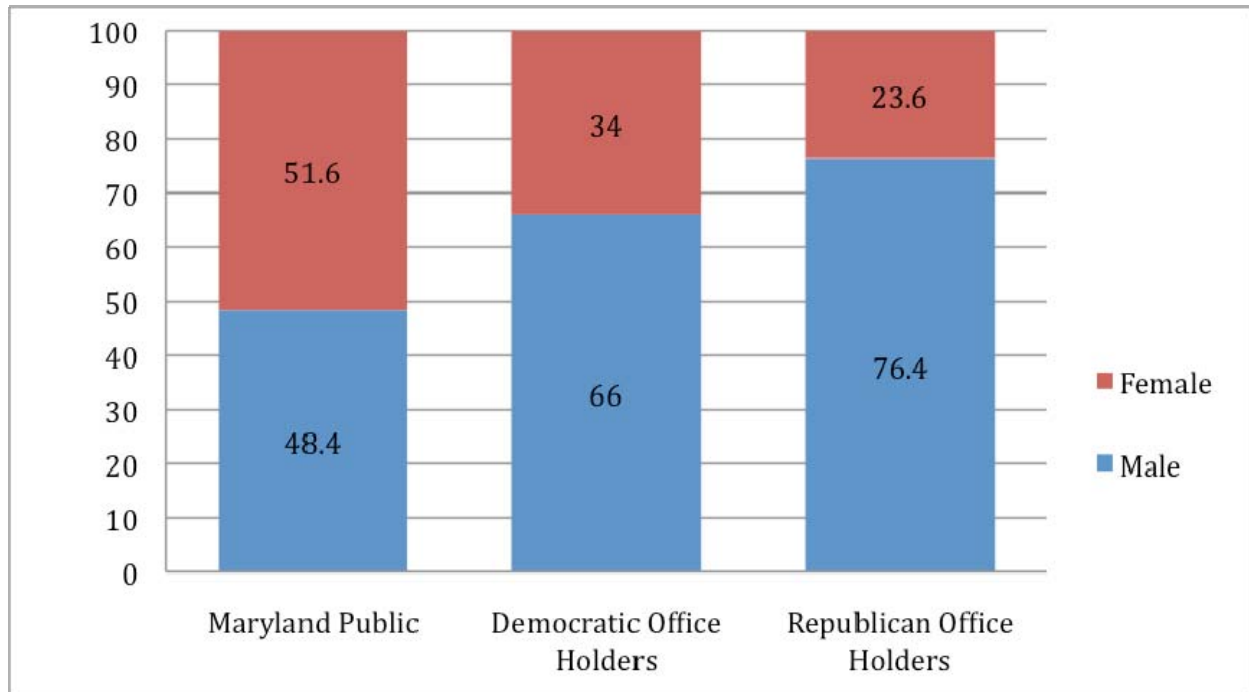


\*For elected officials, the unaffiliated category is made up of all judicial candidates. In the general public, it is made up of those who do not register to vote with a political party.

## Gender

When the major parties are closely analyzed, women make up a greater proportion of Democratic officeholders than Republican officeholders. Following the 2006 elections, 34 percent of all the Democratic officeholders were women while the percentage of Republican female officeholders was 23.6 percent. This is similar to the pattern in the federal government where more women are found within the Democratic Party than the Republican Party in the U.S. Congress.

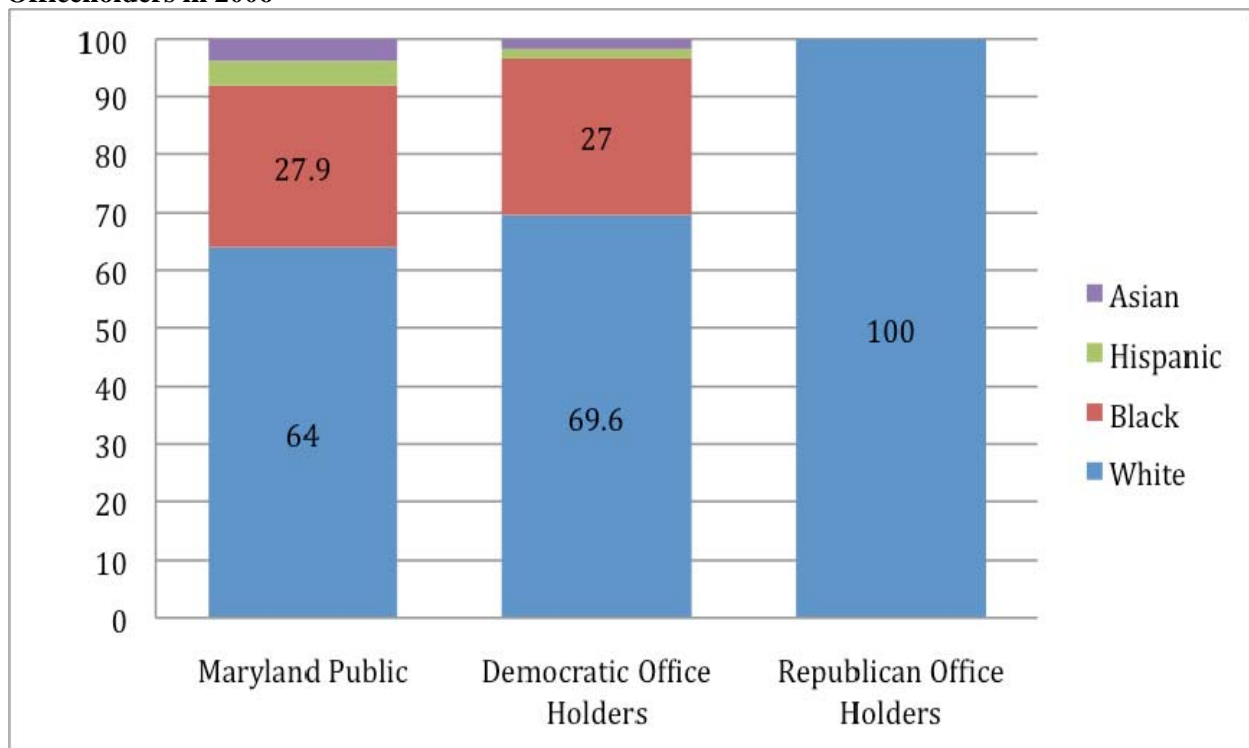
**Figure 11. Percent of the Public from each Gender compared to Maryland Partisan Officeholders in 2006**



*Race*

Examining the racial make-up of partisan officeholders reveals dramatic differences between the political parties. The percent of Black officeholders affiliated with the Democratic party is almost identical to the percent of the state population that is Black. Hispanic and Asian officeholders each made up about 1.7 percent of all the Democratic officeholders compared to 4.3 and 3.9 percent of the population, respectively. All Republican officeholders in Maryland identified themselves as white, the party provided no demographic representation to any other racial groups.

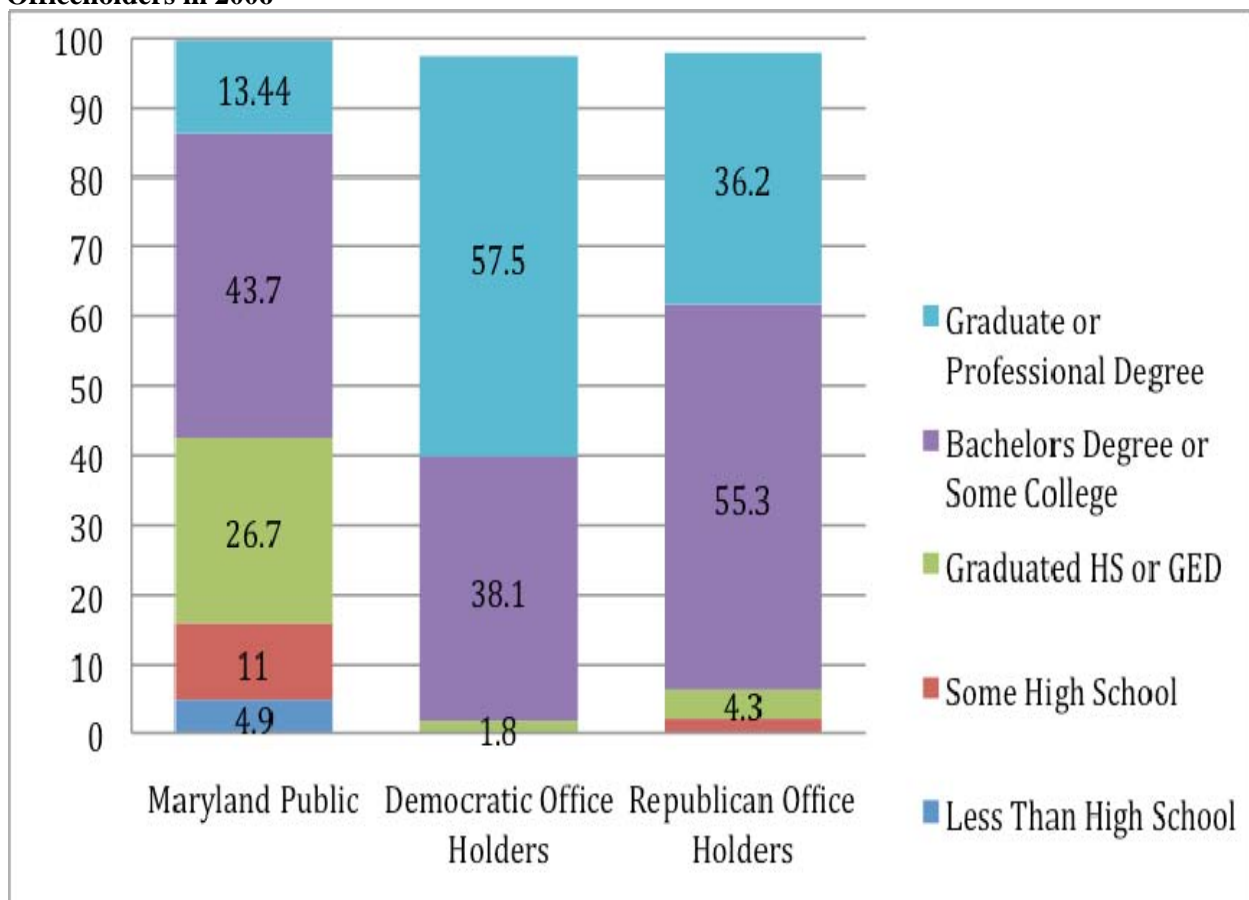
**Figure 12. Percent of the General Public from each Racial Group compared to Maryland Partisan Officeholders in 2006**



*Education*

There are some substantial differences between the each of the parties and the public with regard to education. The majority of the Democratic officeholders have attained a higher level of education than the majority of Republican officials. When compared to the general public, the education level of the Republican officeholders is closer to that of the Maryland population. Republicans were more representative of the public in the lower education levels as well, with 2.1 percent having completed some high school and 4.3 earning a high school degree or GED. All of Maryland’s Democratic officeholders had at least high school diploma or GED.

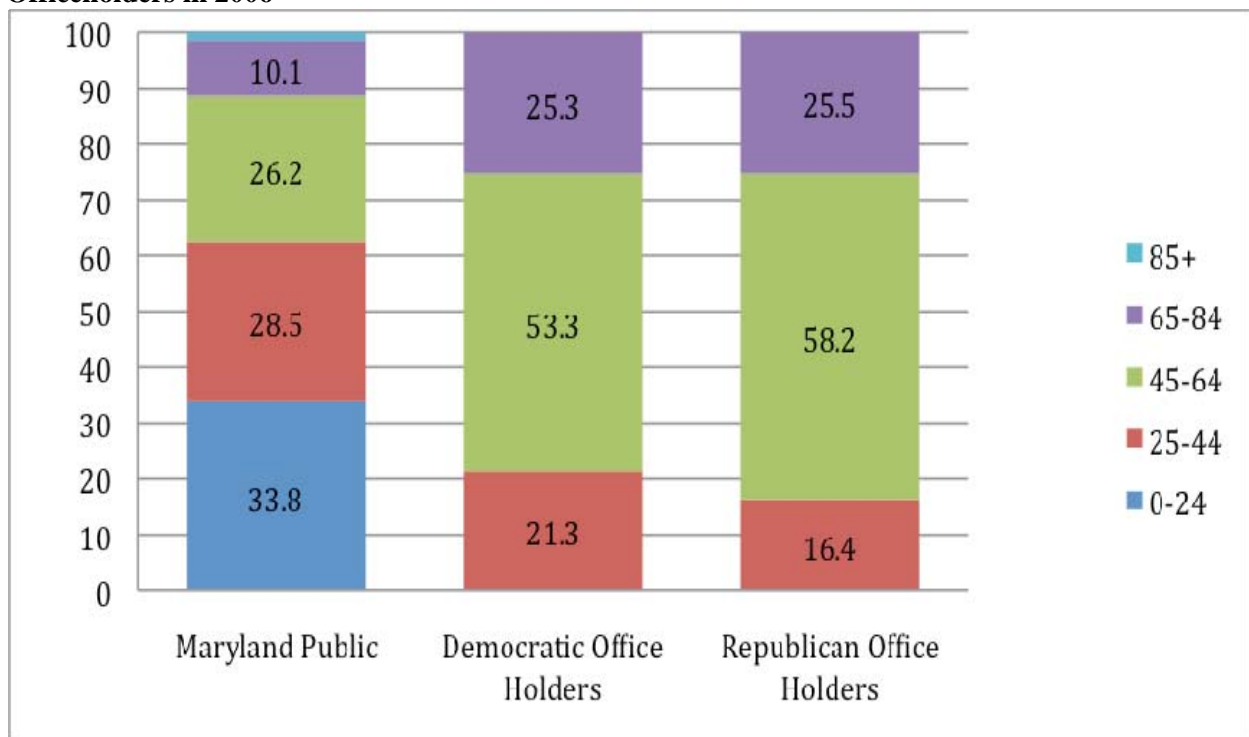
**Figure 13. Percent of the Public from each Education Level compared to Maryland Partisan Officeholders in 2006**



## Age

As stated in Part 1 of this report, there are no Maryland officeholders who are over 85 years old or less than 25 years old. The percentage of officeholders in both major parties in the 64 to 84 age bracket are almost identical. Only 21.3 percent of Democratic officeholders are between ages 25 to 44 and the percentage for this age bracket was even lower for the Republican officeholders. In the Republican party 16.4 percent of elected officials are between the ages 25 and 44. Across the age ranges both parties were very similar in their membership and neither was highly representative of the age breakdown in the public.

**Figure 14. Percent of the General Public from each Age Range compared to Maryland Partisan Officeholders in 2006**



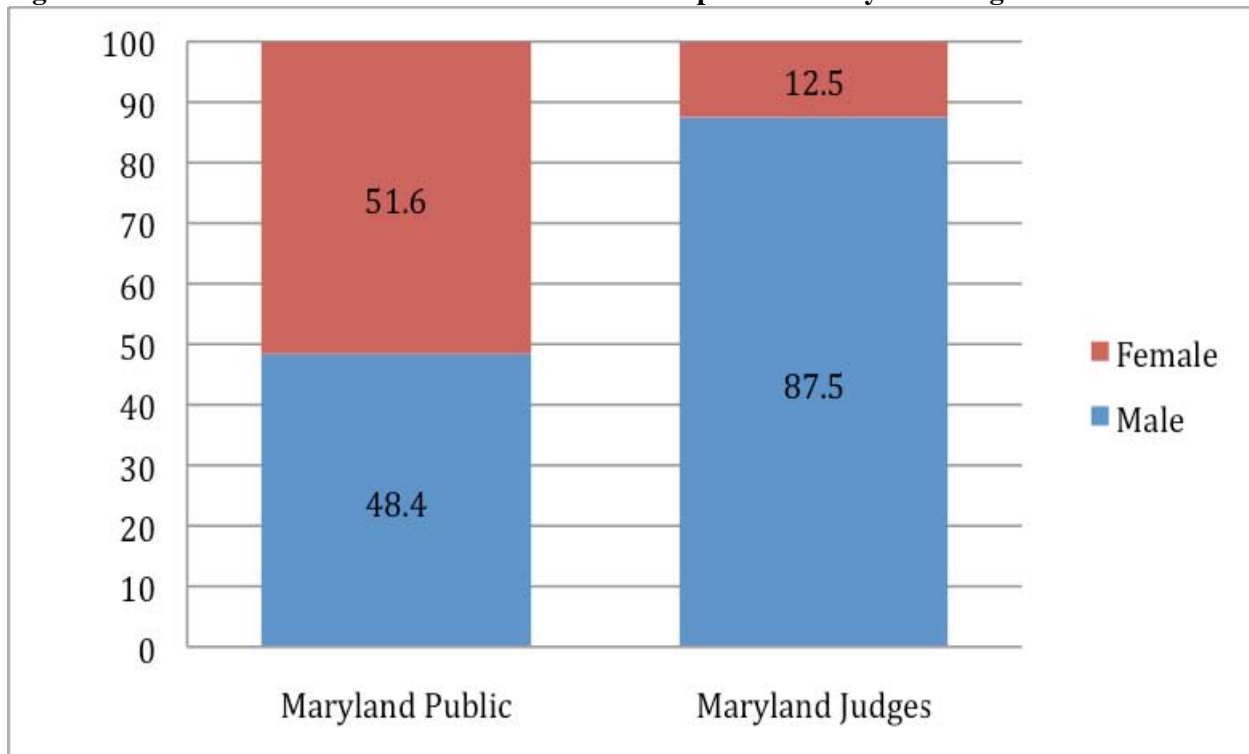
## Part 4. The Representativeness of Maryland Judges

The judicial branch of Maryland government is very distinctive from the other branches due to the unique system of judicial elections. The three types of judges included in this study are those on the Circuit Court, the Court of Special Appeals, and the Court of Appeals. These officials are all appointed by the governor, approved by the State Senate, and then placed unopposed on the ballot during the next scheduled election for approval by the voters. The public will only vote once to retain a judge during that judge's term in office. The judicial branch is also unique in that retirement from office is required at age 70.

### *Gender*

Women are as dramatically underrepresented in Maryland's judicial branch as they are in the federal judiciary. Women make up about 51.6 percent of Maryland's population, however, only 12.5 percent of Maryland judges are women.

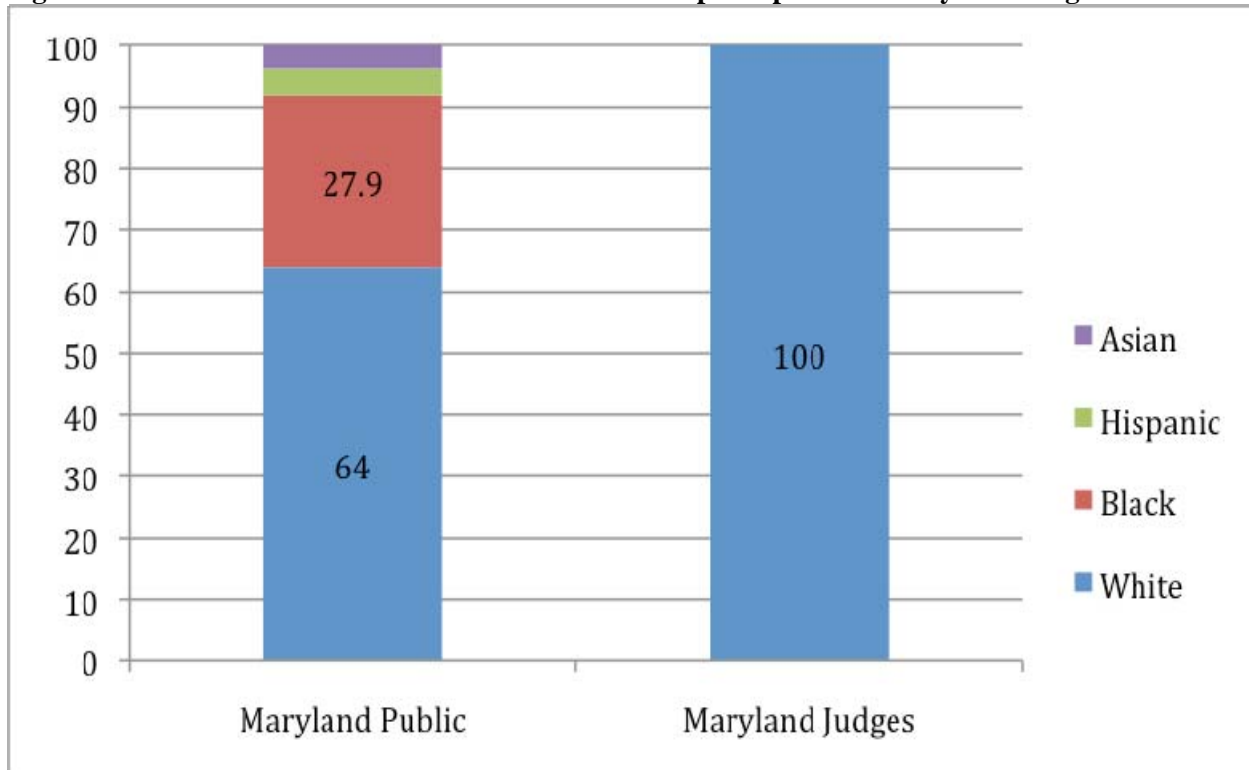
**Figure 15. Percent of the Public from each Gender compared to Maryland Judges in 2006**



*Race*

Maryland's judicial branch is highly unrepresentative of the racial make-up of the general public. All of the Maryland judges who identified themselves with a specific race are white. This is especially surprising due to the high proportion of minorities in the legislative branch of Maryland's government.

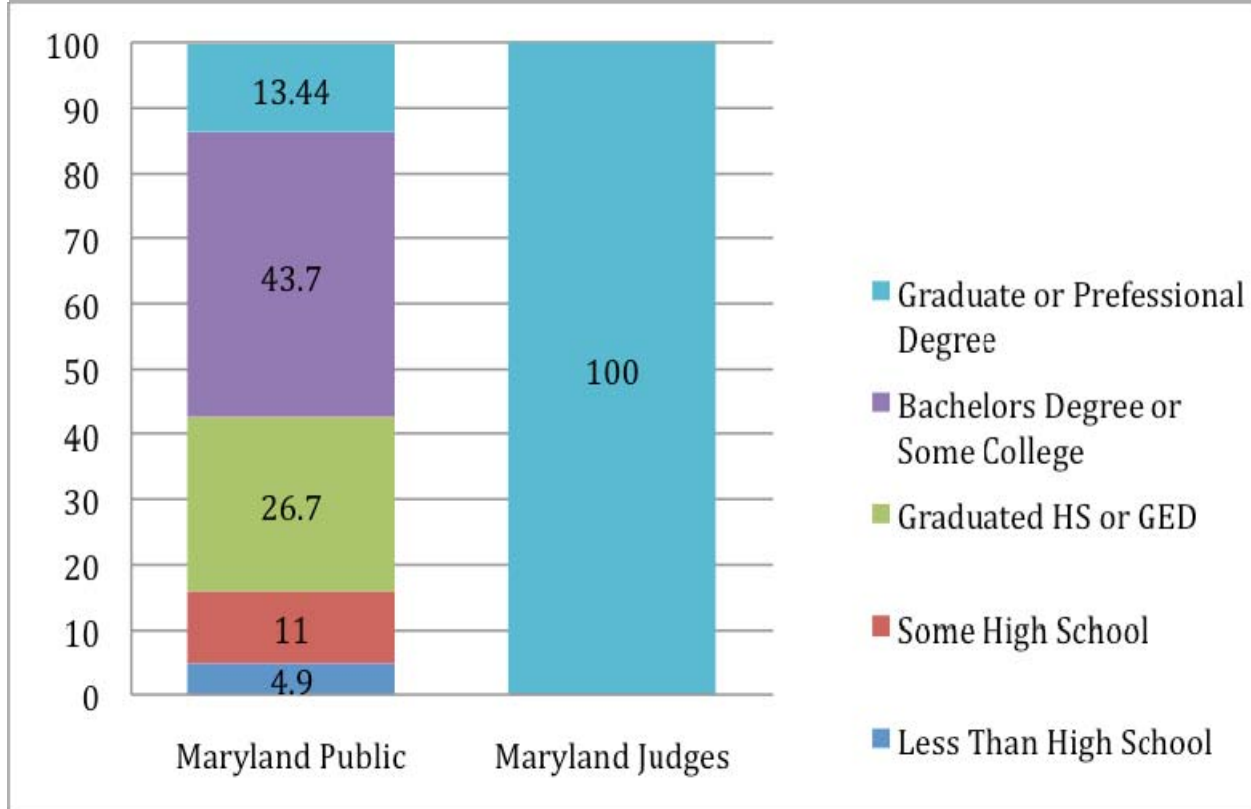
**Figure 16. Percent of the Public from each Racial Group compared to Maryland Judges in 2006**



*Education*

Maryland law requires judicial appointees to be members of the Maryland Bar. Therefore it is not surprising that all of Maryland's judges have received a graduate or professional degree because of their background in the legal profession. This sets the judicial branch apart from the composition of the legislative branch since Maryland legislators are more representative of the education levels in the public.

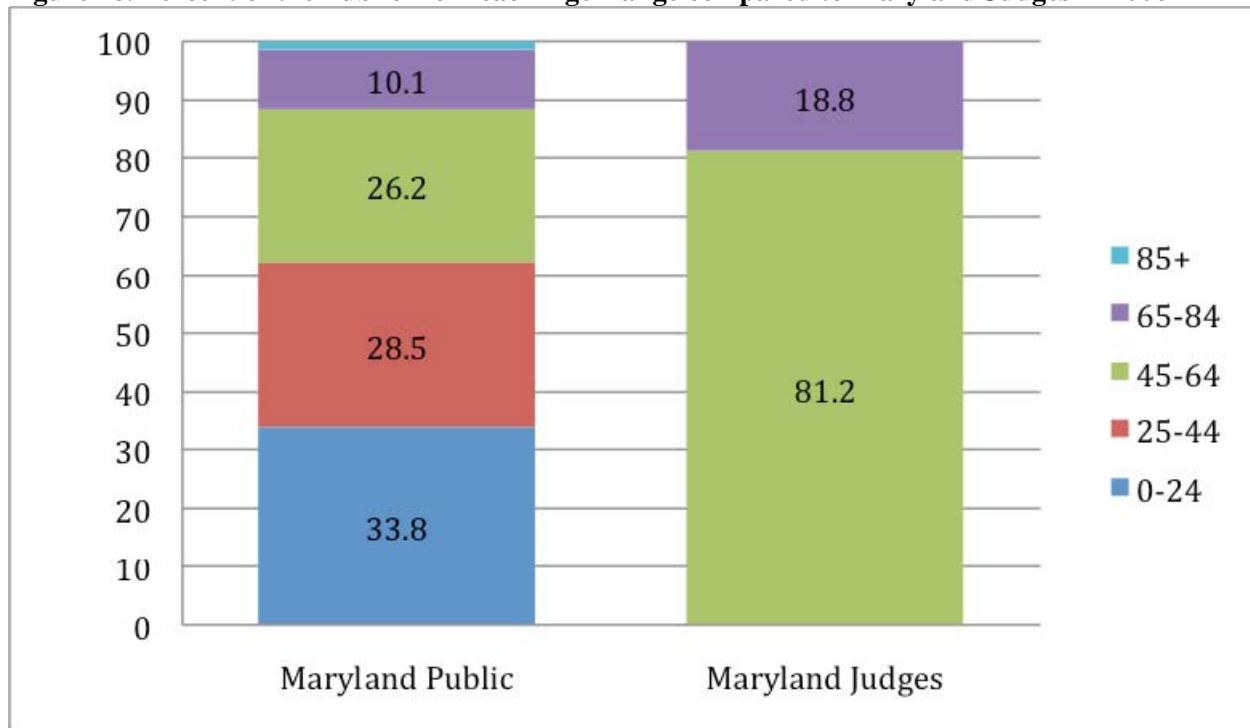
**Figure 17. Percent of the Public from each Education Level compared to Maryland Judges in 2006**



## Age

Maryland law requires that judges be at least 30 years old at the time of their appointment and they must retire by at 70. This restricts the age ranges to which judges can belong. (In 2006 there were no judges over 85 years old or less than 44 years old. The vast majority of judges, about 81 percent, were between the ages 45 to 64)

**Figure 18. Percent of the Public from each Age Range compared to Maryland Judges in 2006**



## **Appendix**

### **The Study**

The data in this study came from several sources. These include the 2006 edition of the Maryland Manual, the Maryland State Board of Elections official candidate and officeholders information file, candidates' and officeholders' websites, and a candidate survey conducted by the Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

### **About the Authors**

Oznur Alturk is an undergraduate research assistant at the Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland.

Heather M. Creek is a graduate research assistant at the Center for American Politics and Citizenship and a Ph.D. candidate in Government and Politics at the University of Maryland.

Paul S. Herrnson is Director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship, Professor of Government and Politics, and Distinguished Scholar-Teacher at the University of Maryland.

### **About the Center for American Politics and Citizenship**

The Center for American Politics and Citizenship (CAPC) is a nonpartisan, non-profit research institution within the Department of Government and Politics of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland. CAPC provides citizens and policy-makers with research on critical issues related to the nation's political institutions, processes, and policies. For more information see <http://www.capc.umd.edu> or write the Center for American Politics and Citizenship, University of Maryland, 3102 Morrill Hall, College Park, MD 20742.

### **Recommended Citation**

Oznur Alturk, Heather M. Creek, Paul S. Herrnson. 2009. "Demographic Representation in Maryland State Government: Candidates and Elected Officials in 2006" College Park, Md. Center for American Politics and Citizenship, University of Maryland.

< [http://www.capc.umd.edu/mdelection/reports/md06\\_demographics.pdf](http://www.capc.umd.edu/mdelection/reports/md06_demographics.pdf) >