

THE GENDER GAP

Voting Choices In Presidential Elections¹

A gender gap in voting refers to a difference between the percentage of women and the percentage of men voting for a given candidate, generally the winning candidate. Even when women and men favor the same candidate, they may do so by different margins, resulting in a gender gap. In every presidential election since 1980, a gender gap has been apparent, with a greater proportion of women than men preferring the Democrat in each case.

A gender gap was evident in the 2008 presidential election, with women favoring Barack Obama by 7 percentage points over John McCain. The gender gaps in 2008 and 2004 were equal in size (7 percentage points), while the gender gap in 2000 was slightly larger (10 percentage points.)

In 2008 majorities of both women and men favored the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama, although by different margins. In contrast, in 2004 and 2008 women and men preferred different candidates. In 2004 a majority of female voters supported Democrat John Kerry, while a majority of male voters favored Republican George W. Bush. In 2000 a majority of women voted for the Democrat Al Gore, while a majority of male voters supported Republican George W. Bush.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Presidential Candidates</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Gender Gap (Percentage Pts.)</u>	<u>Source</u>
2008	Barack Obama (D)	56%	49%	7 pts.	Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International
	John McCain (R)	43%	48%		
2004	George W. Bush (R)	48%	55%	7 pts.	Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International
	John Kerry (D)	51%	41%		
2000	George W. Bush (R)	43%	53%	10 pts.	Voter News Service ²
	Al Gore (D)	54%	42%		
	Ralph Nader (Green)	2%	3%		
1996	Bill Clinton (D)	54%	43%	11 pts.	Voter News Service
	Bob Dole (R)	38%	44%		
	Ross Perot (Reform)	7%	10%		
1992	Bill Clinton (D)	45%	41%	4 pts.	Voter News Service
	George Bush (R)	37%	38%		
	Ross Perot (Reform)	17%	21%		
1988	George H. W. Bush (R)	50%	57%	7 pts.	CBS News/ <i>New York Times</i> ³
	Michael Dukakis (D)	49%	41%		
1984	Ronald Reagan (R)	56%	62%	6 pts.	CBS News/ <i>New York Times</i>
	Walter Mondale (D)	44%	37%		
1980	Ronald Reagan (R)	46%	54%	8 pts.	CBS News/ <i>New York Times</i>
	Jimmy Carter (D)	45%	37%		
	John Anderson (I)	7%	7%		

¹ For information on the gender gap on public policy issues, see CAWP's fact sheet "The Gender Gap: Attitudes Toward Public Policy Issues."

² *Voter News Service* is the service which was known as *Voter Research and Surveys* until 1993. It is referred to on this fact sheet by the newer name.

³ From 1980 to 1988 major media outlets conducted separate exit polls. While not presented here, exit polls conducted by ABC News/Washington Post and NBC News showed gender gaps of similar magnitude to those evident in the CBS/*New York Times* poll results.

A note to users of our fact sheets: Please credit the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.