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Race and Ethnicity in American Politics
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Issue Brief
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The Intersection Between the LGBT Population and Party Affiliation

Key Words

LGBT, Party Affiliation, Voting, Demographics, Organizations

Description

This issue brief discusses how the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender population aligns with each major political party. It also outlines the main LGBT organizations of the Democratic and Republican parties and LGBT voting trends in the most recent elections.

Key Points

- Most of the LGBT population aligns with the Democratic Party, although a critical mass aligns with the Republican Party.
- Two major LGBT Republican organizations are the Log Cabin Republicans and GOProud. These organizations focus on issues not related to LGBT rights.
- The main LGBT Democratic organization is Stonewall Democrats. It emphasizes its grassroots nature and LGBT rights.
- Even though the LGBT population only makes up 3.4% of the US population, it played a significant role in the 2012 election.

Issue Brief

According to a Gallup poll conducted in 2012, 3.4% of Americans self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. 44% of this population identifies as strictly Democratic, 43% as Independent, and 13% as strictly Republican. This compares to the non-LGBT population, of which 32% identify as Democratic, 39% as Independent, and 30% as Republican. The poll also reports that 65% of the LGBT population identifies with or leans* toward Democratic, 21% identify with or lean towards Republican, leaving 13% as Independents who do not lean one way or the other. This data indicates that

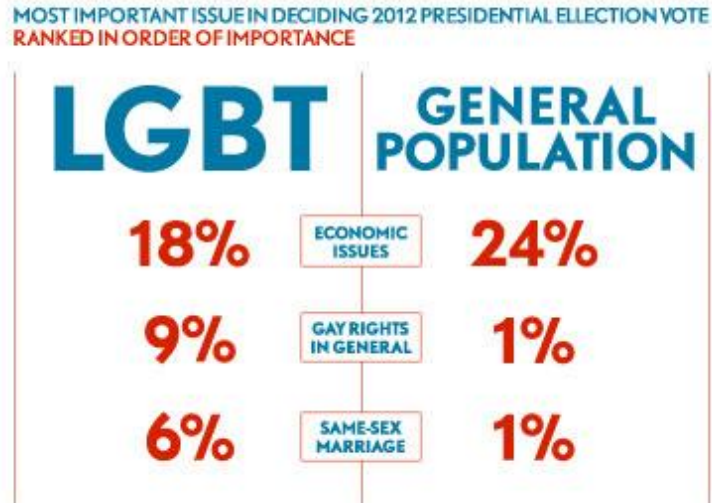
* "Leaning" indicates someone who identifies as Independent but tends to vote along Democratic lines.

LGBT voters tend to align with the Democratic party, but that there is a significant portion of the population that votes along Republican lines.

Between 2004 and 2010, there was an increase in the percentage of LGB* voters who voted for Republicans. According to CNN exit polls, 23% of the LGB population voted Republican in 2004, 24% voted Republican in 2006, 27% voted Republican in 2008, and 29% voted Republican in 2010. 2012 saw a drop in this trend, with only 22% of the LGB population voting Republican.

There are two major LGBT Republican organizations: the Log Cabin Republicans and GOProud. Log Cabin Republicans, founded in the late 1970s, “works to build a stronger, more inclusive Republican Party by promoting the core values of limited government, individual liberty, personal responsibility, free markets and a strong national defense while advocating for the freedom and equality of gay and lesbian Americans.” The organization works from within the Republican party as a self-proclaimed grassroots organization. GOProud, founded in 2009 by two former Log Cabin members, seeks “to promote freedom by supporting free markets, limited government, and a respect for individual rights.” The organization contrasts itself with the so-called “gay left” by emphasizing conservative and libertarian principles. The focus that these organizations place on issues not related to LGBT rights indicates that LGBT rights are not a priority for this LGBT Republican population. Rather, the economy and maintaining a limited government play a central role in influencing this population’s vote.

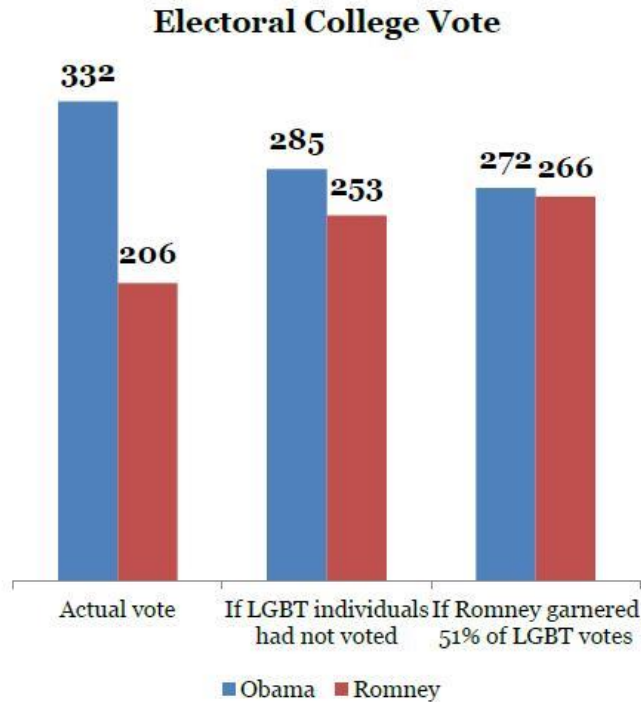
* The transgender population is not included in this data.



Logo TV 2012 Presidential Election Poll. <<http://www.newnownext.com/new-logo-tv-harris-poll-lgbt-issues-see-historic-political-shift/08/2012/>>.

The most prominent LGBT Democratic organization is the Stonewall Democrats. This organization “is a grassroots network connecting LGBT Democratic activists from Seattle, Washington to Austin, Texas to Little Rock, Arkansas to Atlanta, Georgia. With more than 90 chapters across the country, Stonewall is a grassroots force for social change within our movement and within our party.” Stonewall emphasizes education, mobilization on Election Day, and defending against Republican attacks. This organization stresses its true grassroots nature. For Stonewall, LGBT rights seem to play a more central role than they do for the Republican organizations.

In the 2012 election, the demographics of the LGBT constituency that voted for Romney aligned with the demographics of his other voters. Overall, LGBT Romney supporters tended to be white, older, more religious, and more likely to be married than Obama supporters. According to the Gallup poll, 49% of LGBT Romney supporters are married or living with a partner, compared to 39% of LGBT Obama supporters.



"Electoral College Vote." Chart. *Williams Institute*. <<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/lgbt-vote-2012/>>.

This raises a question that is often asked: why would people vote for a party that, as a whole, does not believe in their right to marry? Unfortunately there is no clear answer to this. As the Log Cabin Republicans and GOProud suggest, many other factors impact how a person votes. What is clear is that the LGBT population, though small, carries a lot of power in its vote.

Relevant Websites

CNN Election Center: <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president>

GOProud: <http://www.goproud.org/site/c.evKXIaONiIjCH/b.8476981/k.BE33/Home.htm>

Log Cabin Republicans:

<http://www.logcabin.org/site/c.nsKSL7PMLpF/b.5468093/k.BE4C/Home.htm>

Stonewall Democrats: <http://www.stonewalldemocrats.org/>

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