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## **FIVE-YEAR ANALYSIS:**

# **ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF LGBTQ CANDIDATES BY GENDER IDENTITY**

*2016 - 2020 Election Cycles*





# VICTORY INSTITUTE

*LGBTQ Victory Institute works to achieve and sustain global equality through leadership development, training, and convening to increase the number, expand the diversity, and ensure the success of openly LGBTQ elected and appointed officials at all levels of government.*

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## **Five-Year Analysis: Electoral Success of LGBTQ Candidates by Gender Identity**

*2016 - 2020 Election Cycles*

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# Summary

While queer<sup>1</sup> cisgender women run for office at significantly lower rates than queer cisgender men, queer cisgender women candidates consistently outperform their counterparts on Election Day. An analysis of LGBTQ Victory Fund electoral data from 2016 through 2020 finds queer cisgender women candidates endorsed by Victory Fund won their elections at significantly higher rates than queer cisgender men candidates.

Across the five election cycles, queer cisgender women's win rate was 10 percent higher than the win rate for queer cisgender men endorsed by Victory Fund, and in no year did cisgender men surpass the win rate of cisgender women. The findings are remarkably consistent with a similar [2017 Victory Institute analysis](#)<sup>2</sup> that compared win rates for endorsed candidates from 2007 to 2016. It found queer cisgender women candidates' win rate was nine percent higher than queer cisgender men and in only two of the 10 years did cisgender men outperform cisgender women.

Among trans-identified endorsed candidates, trans women significantly outperform trans men candidates, although the number of trans candidates who ran is limited and therefore broad conclusions should be avoided. Candidates who identified as non-binary or gender non-conforming outperformed all other gender identities except queer cisgender women, however the sample size is again limited and broad conclusions cannot be made.

While queer cisgender women and trans women claim an electoral advantage over their men counterparts, both are underrepresented among LGBTQ elected officials because of the rates at which they run for office. [Queer cisgender women](#) make up 37 percent of LGBTQ elected officials and [trans women](#) just four percent. Approximately 2 percent of LGBTQ elected officials are [non-binary or gender non-conforming \(GNC\)](#), just 0.5 percent are [trans men](#) and only one of the 980 currently serving LGBTQ elected officials is [two-spirit](#).<sup>3</sup> While [queer cisgender men](#) are overrepresented among LGBTQ elected officials – at 56 percent – they, like all LGBTQ people, are severely underrepresented among elected officials overall.

A recent Victory Institute report – [The Decision to Run](#)<sup>4</sup> – conducted surveys and focus groups with hundreds of LGBTQ women to understand the barriers LGBTQ women face when considering a run for office and when running for office. They cited external perceptions of qualifications, a lack of financial resources and connections, fear of anti-LGBTQ, sexist and racist attacks, and a lack of encouragement from party officials or party structures, among other reasons for delaying a run.

If queer cisgender women began to run at a rate equal to queer cisgender men, queer cisgender women elected officials would outnumber queer cisgender men in the year 2037 because of their higher win rate.

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1 In this report, “queer” is used as an umbrella term to encompass the sexual orientations lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and others that are not heterosexual.

2. View the report at [victoryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/VictoryInstitute\\_GenderAnalysisBriefing\\_080117.pdf](https://victoryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/VictoryInstitute_GenderAnalysisBriefing_080117.pdf).

3. View the current number of elected officials by gender identity at [outforamerica.org](http://outforamerica.org).

4. View the report at [victoryinstitute.org/resource/decisiontorun](https://victoryinstitute.org/resource/decisiontorun).

# Findings

Victory Institute reviewed the win/loss records and gender identities of all 1,088 Victory Fund-endorsed candidates who ran between 2016 and 2020.

## WIN/LOSS RATE FINDINGS

- Queer cisgender women candidates endorsed by Victory Fund won their elections 69 percent of the time, compared to 59 percent for queer cisgender men candidates endorsed by Victory Fund.
- Endorsed trans women candidates won their races 54 percent of the time, while trans men candidates won their races just 18 percent of the time. However, the sample sizes for both – and especially trans men – are small.
- Non-binary/gender non-conforming candidates won 64 percent of the time, however the sample size is also small for these candidates.

## RUNNING RATE FINDINGS

- Queer cisgender women run for office at lower rates than queer cisgender men, accounting for just 380 (35 percent) of the 1,088 endorsed candidates across the five years, compared to 646 (59 percent) who were queer cisgender men.<sup>4</sup>
- Thirty-nine (4 percent) of the 1,088 endorsed candidates were trans women, 11 (1 percent) were trans men and 11 (1 percent) were non-binary or gender non-conforming, with 2020 seeing the largest number of trans women, non-binary and gender non-conforming candidates running.

## EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION FINDINGS

- If queer cisgender women began running at a rate equal to queer cisgender men – assuming the number of LGBTQ candidates who run annually and their win rates remain static<sup>5</sup> – queer cisgender women elected officials would outnumber queer cisgender men elected officials for the first time in the year 2037.
- If queer cisgender women and men continue to run at the same rates as in the last five years – assuming the number of LGBTQ candidates who run annually and their win rates remain static – queer cisgender men elected officials will always outnumber queer cisgender women elected officials.

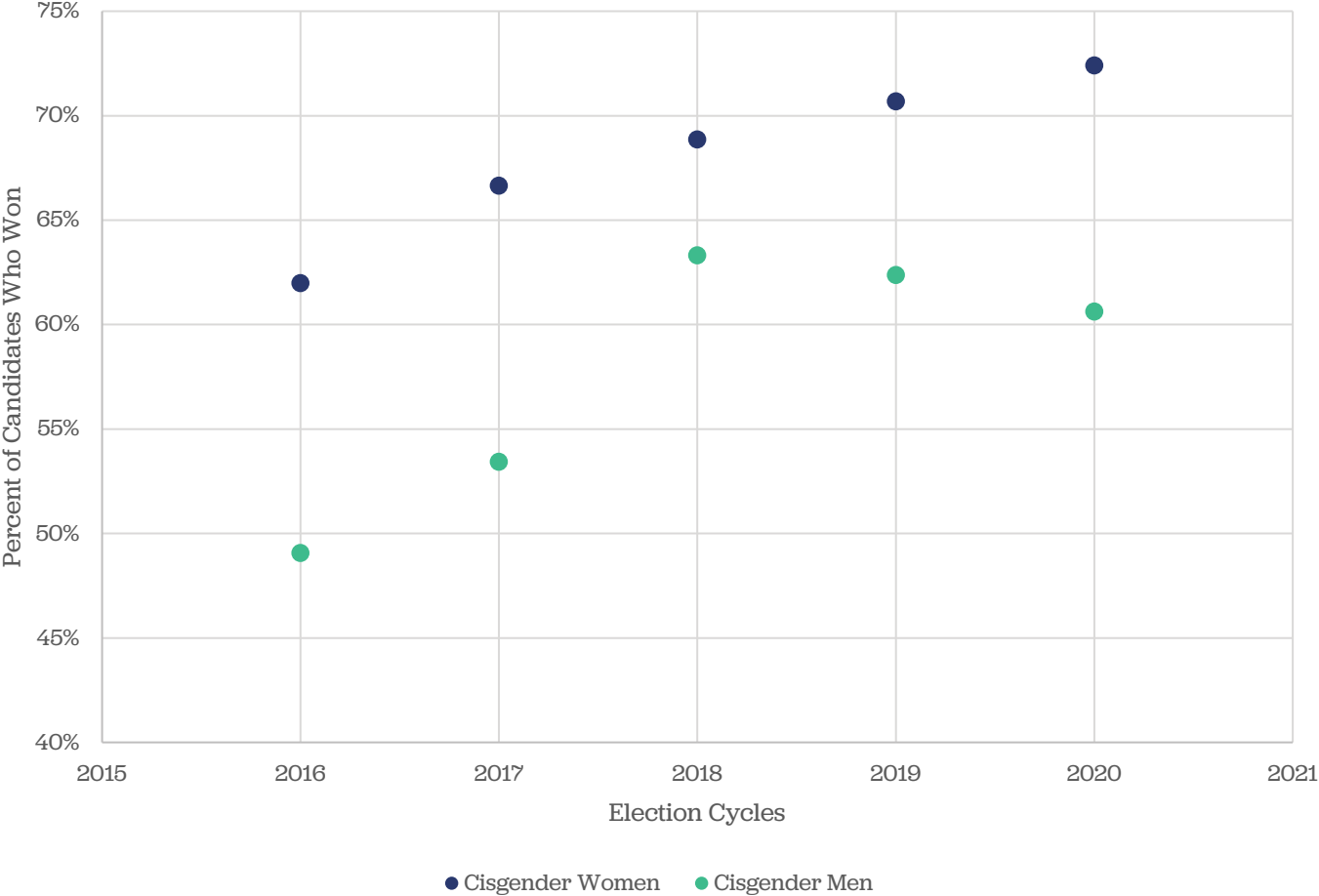
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4. The disparity in run rates is especially notable given [Williams Institute estimates](#) women make up 58 percent of the LGBTQ population.

5. This finding is an approximation that averages the total number of endorsed queer cisgender candidates per year from 2016 through 2020 (206 candidates) and assumes half are queer cisgender women (103) and half are queer cisgender men (103). It then assumes the win rates for queer cisgender women and men remain the same as in this report (69 percent for queer cisgender women and 59 percent for queer cisgender men).

# Figures & Tables

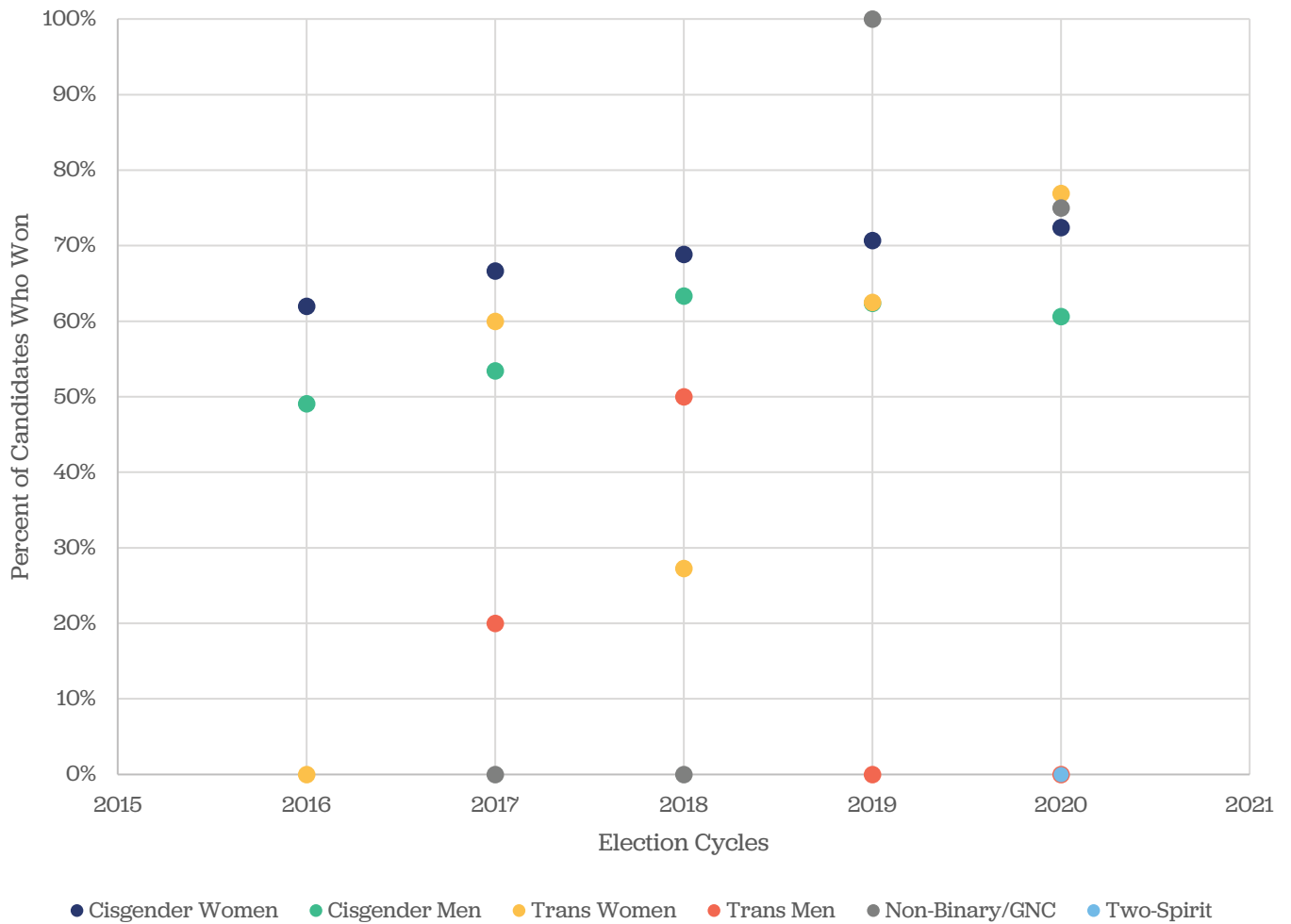
**FIGURE 1: WIN RATE FOR QUEER CISGENDER ENDORSED CANDIDATES**



**FIGURE 2: WIN RATE FOR ENDORSED CANDIDATES BY YEAR & GENDER IDENTITY**

Year	Cisgender Women	Cisgender Men	Trans Women	Trans Men	Non-Binary / GNC	Two-Spirit
2016	62%	49%	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2017	67%	53%	60%	20%	0%	n/a
2018	69%	63%	27%	50%	0%	n/a
2019	71%	62%	63%	0%	100%	n/a
2020	72%	61%	77%	0%	75%	0%

**FIGURE 3: WIN RATE FOR ENDORSED CANDIDATES BY GENDER IDENTITY**



**FIGURE 4: TOTAL ENDORSED CANDIDATES BY GENDER IDENTITY**

Year	Cisgender Women	Cisgender Men	Trans Women	Trans Men	Non-Binary / GNC	Two-Spirit	Total Candidates
2016	50	108	2	0	0	0	160
2017	21	58	5	5	1	0	90
2018	106	150	11	2	3	0	272
2019	58	109	8	1	2	0	178
2020	145	221	13	3	5	1	388

## FIGURE 5: ESTIMATED CISGENDER ELECTED OFFICIALS BY YEAR WITH EQUAL RUN RATES

The following table estimates the number of queer cisgender women elected officials and number of queer cisgender men elected officials by year *if queer cisgender women and men ran at equal rates*. It makes several assumptions to create the approximation.

It averages the total number of endorsed queer cisgender candidates per year from 2016 through 2020 (206 candidates per year) and assumes half are queer cisgender women (103) and half are queer cisgender men (103). It then assumes win rates for queer cisgender women and men remain the same as in this report (69 percent for queer cisgender women and 59 percent for queer cisgender men). In that scenario, queer cisgender women elected officials grow by 72 each year and queer cisgender men elected officials by 61.

Because of the higher win rates for queer cisgender women candidates (and again, assuming queer cisgender men and women ran in identical numbers), the number of queer cisgender women elected officials would surpass the number of queer cisgender men elected officials in the year 2037.

As of July 2021, there are 364 queer cisgender women elected officials and 547 queer cisgender men.

Year	Nov. 2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Estimated Cis Women Elected Officials	436	508	580	652	724	796
Estimated Cis Men Elected Officials	608	669	730	791	852	913
Year	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Estimated Cis Women Elected Officials	940	1012	1084	1156	1228	1300
Estimated Cis Men Elected Officials	1035	1096	1157	1218	1279	1340
Year	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
Estimated Cis Women Elected Officials	1372	1444	1516	1588	1660	1732
Estimated Cis Men Elected Officials	1401	1462	1523	1584	1645	1706

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