Loyola Marymount University

LGBTQ+ VICTORY INSTITUTE

WHEN WE RUN

THE MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF LGBTQ+ CANDIDATES IN THE UNITED STATES

PREFACE

Just three decades ago, only a handful of out LGBTQ+ candidates ran every election cycle. To be an out candidate in the United States, even in a local campaign for city council, could mean national attention and scrutiny, with media and opponents using the vilest of terms. While the landscape for LGBTQ+ candidates is dramatically changed and more LGBTQ+ people are running than ever before, they are doing so in a super-charged political environment where LGBTQ+ people are frequent targets of hateful legislation and political attacks.

This *When We Run* report is an unprecedented look at what motivates LGBTQ+ people to run in this political environment – to raise their hands despite the risks. It also reveals the realities and obstacles of being an LGBTQ+ candidate in America today. *When We Run* is the largest survey of LGBTQ+ candidates ever conducted in the United States, with nearly one in five LGBTQ+ candidates from the last five years sharing their experiences and insights.

While the takeaways from this report are many, perhaps most salient is the selflessness of LGBTQ+ candidates who see public service as the means for America's betterment. They run because they want to make positive change in their communities – and they do so understanding what it entails. They fear anti-LGBTQ harassment, but they run. Some will go into personal debt, but they run. A large majority will face anti-LGBTQ attacks – homophobic and transphobic slurs, threats on social media and hateful email – but they run. And the mental health of more than half of LGBTQ+ candidates will suffer because of it.

But they run. **And they win.**

When We Run presents a mixed narrative – the harsh realities of the campaign trail, but with reasons for optimism. Many LGBTQ+ candidates are earning votes because of, not despite, who they are from Americans demanding a government more reflective of America. LGBTQ+ candidates have confidence in themselves – believing the struggles of coming out and experiencing discrimination make them better, more empathetic candidates.

In midterm and presidential election years, more than 1000 LGBTQ+ candidates run and hundreds win[1], but we remain a long way from equitable representation. Mitigating the challenges and exploiting the opportunities outlined in this report will be essential for narrowing – and eventually closing – that representation gap.

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[1] Out on the Trail 2022. LGBTQ+ Victory Fund. October 2022. https://victoryfund.org/out-on-the-trail-2022/

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

A record-breaking 1,065 out LGBTQ+ people ran for office in the United States in 2022 – from school board seats in rural towns to toss-up districts for the US Congress to gubernatorial races in the nation's most progressive states.[2] While more than 430 LGBTQ+ candidates were successful on Election Day,[3] LGBTQ+ candidates continue to face unique experiences and challenges many other candidates do not. From fear of harassment on the campaign trail to voters questioning an LGBTQ person's electability to frequent anti-LGBTQ attacks, LGBTQ+ candidates must navigate a constellation of obstacles in making the choice to run and in securing the most votes at the ballot box. This first-of-its-kind report examines those realities.

For this report, more than 470 LGBTQ+ people who ran for office between 2018 and 2022 responded to an extensive survey conducted by Loyola Marymount University's LGBTQ+ Politics Research Initiative and LGBTQ+ Victory Institute during April and May of 2023. The survey – the largest conducted of LGBTQ+ candidates in American history – asked about the influences on their decision to run for office and their experiences while on the campaign trail.

While more LGBTQ+ candidates are running than ever before, the findings reveal the challenges – and some opportunities – in encouraging more LGBTQ+ leaders to run for public office. And the need is great. Although more than 1,200 LGBTQ+ people serve in elected office as of August 2023,[4] America still needs to elect 36,000 more to achieve equitable representation in government.[5] These voices are essential, especially at this moment, as the legislative and political attacks on LGBTQ+ people continue to grow in legislatures around the country.

Key Findings

The Decision to Run

Motivations to Run

- Nearly four out of five LGBTQ+ candidates said a desire to make change in their local community was a top motivation to run for office (79.3%). Comparatively, just one in four said working on issues important for the LGBTQ+ community was a top motivation (25.1%), contradicting opponents who portray LGBTQ+ candidates as "one-issue" candidates.
- Almost half of LGBTQ+ candidates said a desire to increase LGBTQ+ representation in elected office was a top motivation (45.8%).
- Trans women (14.3%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (10.3%) were the most likely to cite anti-LGBTQ legislation as a top motivation to run, a finding possibly related to them being the primary targets of recent anti-LGBTQ bills.

Fears About Running

- Approximately eight in 10 respondents feared running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate would increase the likelihood of harassment or attacks against them (79.6%) – potentially a major deterrent for LGBTQ+ people considering a run.
- Approximately three in 10 trans women (28.6%) and four in 10 gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (38.2%) worried a lot about harassment or attacks – the highest among sexual orientations and gender identities.

[2] Out on the Trail 2022. LGBTQ+ Victory Fund. October 2022. https://victoryfund.org/out-on-the-trail-2022/

[3] "436 LGBTQ Candidates Won in the 2022 General Election, 100 More than in 2020; 60% Win Rate." LGBTQ+ Victory Fund. November 10, 2022. https://victoryfund.org/news/436-lgbtq-candidates-won-in-the-2022-general-election-100-more-than-in-2020-60-win-rate/

[4] Out for America Map. LGBTQ+ Victory Institute. August 17, 2023. https://outforamerica.org/

[5] Out for America Report 2023. LGBTQ+ Victory Institute. May 2023. https://victoryinstitute.org/out-for-america-2023/

Discouragement From Running

- About a third of LGBTQ+ candidates (35.9%) were discouraged to run because of their sexual orientation, while almost one in five was discouraged because of their gender identity (17.5%).
- Trans women (35.7%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary people (47.1%) were discouraged to run for office at significantly higher rates than cisgender women and men (25% and 7.1%, respectively), a possible combination of concerned friends and family or party officials who question their viability.

Role of Candidate Identity on the Campaign Trail

Importance of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Race & Ethnicity

- One in four LGBTQ+ candidates said their sexual orientation was important or very important to their campaigns (25.3%).
- 44.1% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates said their gender identity was important or very important.
- LGBTQ+ candidates of color – and especially Asian LGBTQ+ candidates (52.4%) – said their race or ethnicity was important or very important for them in their campaigns.

Impact of Candidate Identity on Candidate Ability

- More than eight in 10 LGBTQ+ candidates (84%) thought being LGBTQ+ made them a better candidate – with nearly three in five (59.5%) believing they were more empathetic toward the struggles of others because of their identity.

Voter Reactions to LGBTQ+ Candidates

Perceptions of Electability & Viability

- More than two out of three LGBTQ+ candidates (67.2%) believed voters questioned their electability and viability because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- LGBTQ+ candidates running in red districts (84.8%) and toss-up districts (82.7%) were significantly more likely to believe voters

questioned their electability and viability than candidates running in blue districts (59.9%).
- Bisexual candidates (84.3%) and trans women candidates (75%) were the most likely to believe that some voters questioned their electability and viability.

Voter Support Related to Candidate Identity

- About three in four respondents (74.7%) felt that being an out LGBTQ+ candidate made them lose the support of some voters. Yet just 5.7% said it made many voters less likely to support them.
- An overwhelming 91.1% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates reported lost support because of their gender identity – the most of any sexual orientation or gender identity group – and likely a result of widespread public misunderstanding of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary.
- Conversely, almost nine in 10 candidates believed they gained some support for being LGBTQ+ (87.8%), an indication that LGBTQ+ candidates are an important asset for their party especially in some districts.
- More than six in 10 trans women candidates (64.3%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (64.7%) reported that some or many voters were more likely to support them because of their gender identity, a reflection that some voters seek more diverse government representation.

Challenges on the Campaign Trail

Fundraising & Personal Finances

- Nearly half of LGBTQ+ candidates reported raising money as a top challenge during their campaigns (44.5%) and more than four in 10 said a lack of personal finances was a top challenge (41.8%).
- More than four in 10 LGBTQ+ candidates incurred personal debt to pay for campaign expenses, which is perhaps related to LGBTQ+ adults having less savings and lower household incomes than straight cisgender people and households.[6]

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[6] New Analysis Finds LGBTQ+ Households Trail in Income and Wealth. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, December 1, 2022. https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2022/dec/new-analysis-finds-lgbtq-households-trail-income-wealth

Prejudice on the Campaign Trail
- More than one in four LGBTQ+ candidates reported prejudice because of their sexual orientation as a top challenge during their campaigns (26.4%).
- Candidates running in red or toss-up districts[7] experienced prejudice because of their sexual orientation at higher rates (32.3% and 34.6%, respectively) than those running in blue districts (24.5%).
- 32.1% of trans women and 35.3% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates said prejudice based on gender identity was a top challenge.
- Almost four in 10 Black LGBTQ+ candidates said prejudice based on their race and ethnicity was a top challenge during the campaign (36.2%).

Political Party Support
- About one in three of all LGBTQ+ candidates felt their local political party was not supportive of their candidacy (37.1%).
- Yet, more than half of trans women (55.5%) and nearly half of Black LGBTQ+ candidates (46.8%) said the same. This could be related to political party officials' perceptions of electability for these groups.

Concerns on Qualifications and Viability
- About one in four candidates reported difficulty being taken seriously as a candidate as a top challenge they faced (24.3%), including nearly one in three candidates running in red districts (32.3%). One in five candidates also said demonstrating their viability was a top challenge (21.3%), including one in three candidates in red districts (34.4%).

Anti-LGBTQ Attacks and Their Impact

Frequency of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks
- More than seven in ten LGBTQ+ candidates (71.3%) experienced anti-LGBTQ attacks during their campaign and more than one in ten candidates (13.9%) faced attacks at

least once a week.
- LGBTQ+ candidates running in red districts experienced attacks at least once a week at a greater rate (23.6%) than those running in toss-up (13.5%) or blue (10.3%) districts.
- Nearly one in three gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates faced attacks at least once a week (29.4%) as did about one in five queer candidates (22%). About one in five Black and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates also faced anti-LGBTQ attacks at least once a week (21.3% and 19.1%, respectively).

Origin of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks
- Almost one in three candidates said anti-LGBTQ attacks came from conservative groups (32.9%), the most of any source. About one in five said attacks came from religious groups (19.2%).
- LGBTQ+ candidates were almost as likely to say they were the recipient of anti-LGBTQ attacks from Democratic primary opponents (8.4%) as they were from Republican general election opponents (11.2%).

Types of Attacks
- While attacks via social media were most common, more than one in three faced verbal anti-LGBTQ attacks during their campaigns (36.3%) and almost two in 10 received hate email (18.6%).
- Almost one in four gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates faced physical anti-LGBTQ threats during the campaign (23.5%) – the most by far of any sexual orientation or gender identity group.
- More than half of queer candidates (55.9%) faced attacks on their personal appearance or way of dressing as did 49% of bisexual candidates and more than two in three gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (67.6%).
- Black LGBTQ+ candidates were most likely to experience attacks against their families (31.9%). Almost one in three bisexual candidates also experienced attacks against their families (29.6%).

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[7] Respondent were asked to self-describe the partisanship of the districts they ran in as: safe Democratic districts, Democratic-leaning districts, toss-up districts, Republican-leaning districts, safe Republican districts or as non-partisan districts. For the purposes of this report, safe Democratic and Democratic-leaning districts will be described as "blue districts" and safe Republican and Republican-leaning districts will be described as "red districts."

Effect of Attacks on Voter Support

- About one in three LGBTQ+ candidates (34.1%) thought anti-LGBTQ attacks did alter the perception that voters had of them, however the effect was not always negative. While 22.6% believe that they lost some support because of the attacks, 11.5% believed they actually gained some support following the attacks.

Effect of Attacks on Mental Health

- More than half of LGBTQ+ candidates reported that anti-LGBTQ attacks on the campaign trail affected their personal mental health (55.2%) – with more than one in ten saying it affected their mental health a lot (10.4%).
- More than three in four bisexual candidates (76.5%) and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates (76.2%) said the attacks affected their mental health – the two most of any sexual orientation, gender identity or race or ethnicity group.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Survey Respondents Demographic, Socio-Economic and Political Charactertistics

A survey designed by Loyola Marymount University's LGBTQ+ Politics Research Initiative and LGBTQ+ Victory Institute was sent via email to all known LGBTQ+ candidates who ran between 2018 and 2022 in the United States. The survey, conducted between April 3 and May 17, 2023, received 474 unique responses from candidates who ran at every level of government.

The following is the analysis of the demographic, socio-economic and political characteristics of the 474 respondents.

Demographics Characteristics

State of Residence
The sample included candidates from 49 states (all except Delaware), as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The state with the highest representation of candidates in the sample was California (14.4% of all candidates), followed by Pennsylvania (4.6%), Florida (4.6%), New York (4%), Texas (4%), New Jersey (3.8%) and Arizona (3.6%).

Sexual Orientation
Respondents could select multiple options to describe their sexual orientation. About half of the candidates identify as gay (52.5%), almost one in five as lesbian (17.1%), 6.5% as bisexual, 5.3% as queer, 3.2% as pansexual, 3% as gay and queer, 1.5% as lesbian and queer, and 1.1% as asexual. The remaining candidates selected a combination of options.

Gender Identity
Respondents could select multiple options to describe their gender identity and expression. Slightly more than half of the candidates (55.3%) identify as cisgender men, almost one quarter (24.7%) as cisgender women, 5.3% as trans women, 1.5% as trans men, 2.3% as genderqueer/non-binary, 1.5% as gender non-conforming and genderqueer/non-binary, and 0.8% as gender non-conforming. The remaining candidates selected a combination of options.

Race & Ethnicity
Respondents could select multiple options to describe their race and/or ethnicity. About two thirds of the candidates (68.6%) identify as white, 9.5% as Latinx or Hispanic (and an additional 2.7% as Latinx and white), 8.2% as Black (an additional 0.2% as Black and white and an additional 0.6% Black and Latinx), 2.7% as Asian (and an additional 0.8% as Asian and white), 0.8% as Middle Eastern or Arab American (and an additional 0.8% as Middle Eastern or Arab American and white), 0.4% as Native American or Alaska Native (and an additional 0.8% as Native American or Alaska Native and white), and 0.2% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (and an additional 0.4% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and white). The remaining candidates selected a combination of options.

Disability
More than two in ten respondents have a disability (22.2%).

Immigrant Status & Background
Almost two in ten respondents (16.4%) have at least one parent born outside the United States, with 8.2% of the respondents having one migrant parent and another 8.2% having two parents who migrated to the United States from abroad.

Of the respondents, 3.4% were born outside the United States.

Age
More than two in five respondents (42.9%) are millennial (27-42 years old), 31.9% are Gen X (43-58 years old), 20.9% are Baby Boomers (59-77 years old), 3.8% are Gen Z (18-26 years old) and 0.4% are Silent generation (78+ years old).

Socio-Economic Characteristics

Education
Almost nine in ten respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher (88.8%). Specifically, 31.6% have a bachelor's degree, 30.3% a master's degree, 13.8% a JD, 6.6% a PhD, 5.9% an MBA, and 0.6% an MD.

Household Income
Almost one in five of the respondents (16.6%) reported a household income of less than $50,000, with 6% reporting a household income of less than $25,000 and 10.7% an income between $25,000 and $49,999. Additionally, 27.5% indicated an income between $50,000 and $99,999, 21.8% indicated an income between $100,000 and $149,999, 19.6% indicated an income between $150,000 and $249,999, and 14.5% indicated an income greater than $250,000.

Family Status
About two in five respondents are married (41.6%), an additional fifth are partnered (18.6%), about three in ten are single (29.3%), and almost one in ten are either separated (1.5%), divorced (4.9%) or widowed (2.7%).

Almost seven in ten respondents are without children (68.4%) and about three in ten have children, either one child (11.2%), two children (12.7%) or three or more children (7.8%).

Professional Background & Veteran Status
Respondents come from a variety of professional experiences, with 36.8% having experience in education, 27.5% having been members of a labor union, 18.2% having experience in STEM and 10.7% having a background in public safety.

Additionally, 6.9% were veterans.

Religiosity
About three in five respondents are not religious (59.2%), while about two in five are religious (40.8%).

Political Characteristics

Party Identification & Ideology
More than eight in ten candidates (84.6%) ran as Democrats, 4% ran as Independents, 3.2% as Republicans, 1.3% as Green Party candidates, and 6.1% of the candidates ran in non-partisan races.

A large majority of LGBTQ+ candidates considered themselves to be left of center, with 25.9% identifying as extremely liberal, 52% liberal, and 11.3% slightly liberal. Of the remaining, 8.5% of the candidates described themselves as moderate, and less than 3% considered themselves right of center (1.1% slightly conservative, 1% conservative, and 0.2% extremely conservative).

District Makeup
The respondents were asked to self-describe the partisanship of the districts they ran in. More than one-third (35.7%) reported running in safe Democratic districts, 13.5% in Democratic-leaning districts, 11% in toss-up districts, 9.5% in Republican-leaning districts, and 10.1% in safe Republican districts. About two in ten respondents (20.3%) ran in non-partisan districts. For the purposes of this report, safe Democratic and Democratic-leaning districts will be described as "blue districts" (49.2%) and safe Republican and Republican-leaning districts will be described as "red districts" (19.6%).

LGBTQ+ candidates were almost as likely to run in urban districts (42%) as they were to run in suburban districts (40.9%). A sizeable minority ran in rural districts (17.1%).

Office Sought

The respondents ran at every level of office, including federal, state and local office. Of the respondents, 5.3% ran for US Congress, more than two in ten ran for state houses (21.3%), 5.5% for state senates, 0.6% for governor and 0.2% for state attorney general. Almost three in ten respondents ran for City Council (29.8%), 9.9% for school board, 3.4% for mayor and 24% for other local offices.

The Decision to Run

Motivations to Run

LGBTQ+ candidates were asked to choose up to three reasons they decided to run for office. Nearly four out of five said the desire to make change in their local community was a primary motivation (79.3%), with about half citing frustration with current elected officials (49.6%) and 45.8% citing a desire to increase LGBTQ+ representation in elected office. About one in four chose working on issues important for the LGBTQ+ community as a top motivation (25.1%) and one in 20 said reaction to anti-LGBTQ bills was a motivation to run (5.27%). One in five said external encouragement from a group or political party was a primary reason they ran (21.3%).

Motivations by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The desire to make change in the local community was the most cited motivation across all sexual orientations, although it was chosen relatively more by gay (80.7%) and bisexual (86.3%) candidates than queer candidates (75%) and lesbian candidates (72.7%). Across gender identities, making change in the local community was also the most cited motivation, even though it was relatively more important for cis men (82.7%) and cis women (78.2%) than trans women (67.9%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals (38.2%).

Lesbian candidates were the most likely to say external encouragement was a primary motivation (26.3%), a finding consistent with the perception that cis women candidates typically need more encouragement than cis men to make the leap to run. Conversely, fewer trans women (14.3%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals (4.4%) reported external encouragement as a motivation to run when compared to cis men (21%) and cis women (27%).

The respondents ran at every level of office, including federal, state and local office. Of the respondents, 5.3% ran for US Congress, more than two in ten ran for state houses (21.3%), 5.5% for state senates, 0.6% for governor and

#	ANSWER	%	COUNT
1	To increase LGBTQ+ representation in office	45.78%	217
2	To work on issues imporant to the LGBTQ+ community	25.11%	119
3	Because of external encouragement by group or political party	21.31%	101
4	Because of frustration with current elected officials	49.58%	235
5	As a reaction to anti-LGBTQ bills	5.27%	25
6	As a reaction to the election of Donald Trump	10.76%	51
7	Other	13.29%	63
8	To make change in my local community	79.32%	376

Figure 1. Why did you decide to run for office?

0.2% for state attorney general. Almost three in ten respondents ran for City Council (29.8%), 9.9% for school board, 3.4% for mayor and 24% for other local offices.

A relatively higher number of trans women as well as gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals were motivated to run as a reaction to anti-LGBTQ bills (14.3% and 10.3%, respectively) as opposed to 2.5% of cis men and 4% of cis women. Trans women were also highly motivated to run to increase LGBTQ+ representation (60.7%), when compared to cis women (40.3%) and cis men (46.2%).

Gay candidates were the least likely to run in reaction to the election of Donald Trump (7.6%), compared to lesbian (14.1%), bisexual (13.7%) and queer candidates (14.7%). Similarly, more cisgender and trans women decided to run in reaction to the election of Donald Trump (16.8% and 17.9%, respectively) than cisgender men (7.9%).

See **Table 1** *and* **Table 2** *in the appendix for additional information.*

Motivations by Race and Ethnicity
The desire to make change in the local community was the most cited motivation across all races and ethnicities, although Latinx and white LGBTQ+ candidates cited it most frequently (85.5% and 78.9%, respectively) compared to Asian and Black LGBTQ+ candidates (76.2% and 70.2%, respectively). Asian and Black LGBTQ+ candidates cited frustration with current elected officials as a motivation in higher numbers (61.9% and 59.6%, respectively) than Latinx and white LGBTQ+ candidates (56.5% and 47.5%, respectively).

Relatively more Latinx and white LGBTQ+ candidates reported external encouragement as a primary reason to run (23.2% and 22.2%, respectively), when compared to Black (14.9%) and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates (14.3%). Additionally, 14.3% of Asian LGBTQ+ candidates decided to run in reaction to the election of Donald Trump, compared to 10.6% of Black, 10.4% of white and 7.2% of Latinx LGBTQ+ candidates.

See **Table 3** *in the appendix for additional information.*

Fears About Running As An Out Candidate

Approximately eight in 10 respondents feared that running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate would increase the likelihood of harassment or attacks against them (79.6%). The degree of fear varied, with 18.4% who worried a lot, 24.3% worried moderately and 36.9% worried a little.

Fears by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
Bisexual and queer candidates worried the most about harassment or attacks, with 92.2% of bisexual candidates worried (and 23.5% worried a lot) and 91.2% of queer candidates worried (and 33.8% worried a lot). Across gender identities, 84.2% of cis women, 82.2% of trans women and 91.2% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals worried, but at varying degrees. 12.5% of cis women were worried a lot about harassment or attacks, compared to 28.6% of trans women and 38.2% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals.
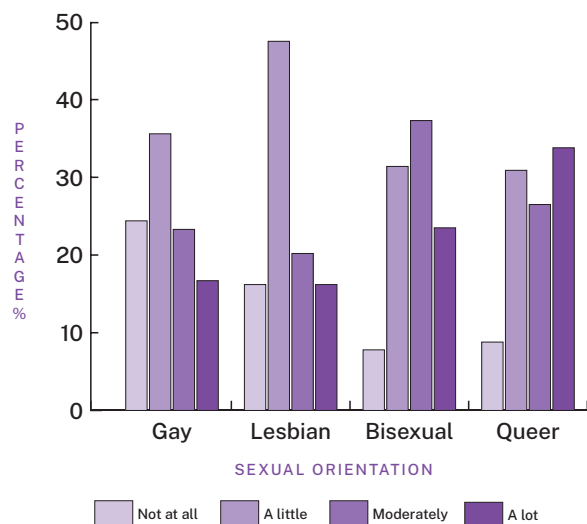

Figure 2. Did you worry that running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate could increase the likelihood of harrassment or attacks against you? (by sexual orientation)

Figure 3. Did you worry that running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate could increase the likelihood of harrassment or attacks against you? (by gender identity)

Fears by Race and Ethnicity

Asian, Latinx and white respondents were worried about running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate in higher rates than Black LGBTQ+ candidates (95.2%, 82.6%, 79.3% and 70.2%, respectively), however 21.3% of Black LGBTQ+ candidates worried a lot, the most of any ethnic or racial group. Comparatively, one in five white candidates (19.1%), 13% of Latinx candidates and just one in 10 Asian candidates (9.5%) reported worrying a lot about running as an out candidate.
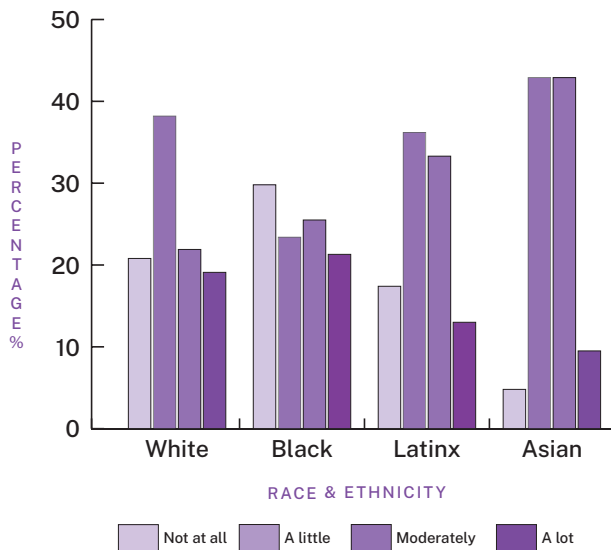

Figure 4. Did you worry that running as an out LGBTQ+ candidate could increase the likelihood of harrassment or attacks against you? (by race and ethnicity)

Discouragement from Running

Almost two in three (64.1%) LGBTQ+ candidates said they were not discouraged to run for office because of their sexual orientation, while more than eight in 10 (82.5%) candidates said they were not discouraged to run because of their gender identity. While the level of reported discouragement was relatively consistent across sexual orientations, perhaps unsurprisingly, large differences emerged among gender identities.

More than one-third (35.7%) of trans women were discouraged from running for office because of their gender identity and almost half (47.1%) of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals were discouraged. This compares to one in four cis women respondents and just 7.1% of cis men respondents who reported being discouraged because of their gender identity.

Role of Identity on the Campaign Trail

Importance of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Race & Ethnicity

Sexual orientation
Almost half of LGBTQ+ candidates said sexual orientation was at least moderately important to their campaigns (46.4%), with one in four saying it was important or very important (25.3%). More bisexual and queer candidates (31.4% and 32.4%, respectively) found it important or very important than gay and lesbian candidates (26.7% and 25%, respectively), while Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ candidates considered sexual orientation important or very important at higher rates (36.1% and 32.4%, respectively) than white and Asian candidates (22.6% and 19%, respectively).

Additionally, Democratic candidates (26.9%) considered sexual orientation to be important or very important at higher rates than Republican candidates (13.3%). Of those in toss-up districts, only 17.3% said their sexual orientation was important or very important to

their campaigns, compared with 27.5% in blue districts and 26.9% in red districts.

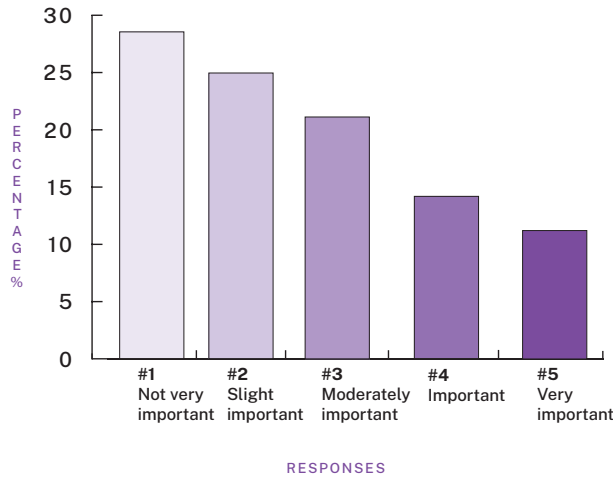*See **Table 4** in the appendix for additional information.*

Figure 5. How important was your sexual orientation to you in your campaign?
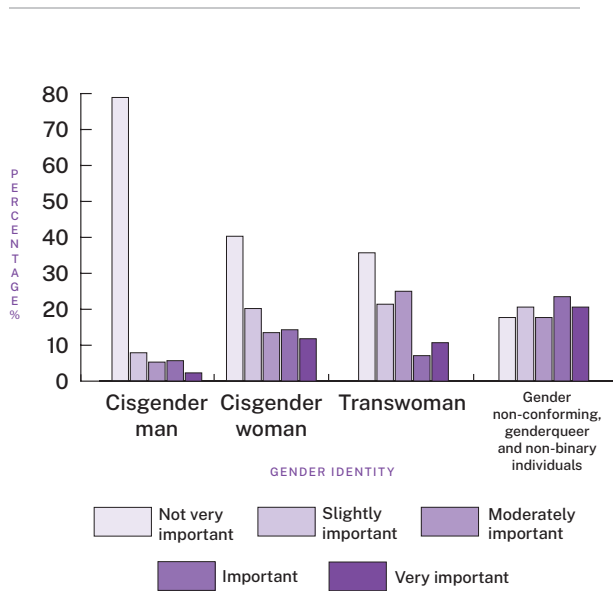

Figure 6. How important was your gender identity to you in your campaign?

"LGBTQ+ candidates of color – and especially Asian LGBTQ+ candidates – said their race or ethnicity was important for them in their campaigns."

Gender Identity

More than three in five candidates said their gender identity was not very important on the campaign trail (60.7%) – although substantive differences emerged by gender identity. While just 17.9% of trans women considered their gender identity important or very important, 44.1% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals considered it important or very important. Just over one in four cis women considered it to be important or very important (25.9%), compared to 8% of cis men.

Nearly three in four candidates in toss-up districts said gender identity was not very important to their campaigns (73.1%), compared to 58.8% in blue districts and 57% in red districts.

*See **Table 5** in the appendix for additional information.*

Race & Ethnicity

LGBTQ+ candidates of color – and especially Asian LGBTQ+ candidates – said their race or ethnicity was important for them in their campaigns. More than half (52.4%) of Asian respondents said it was important, while 44.9% of Latinx and 42.6% of Black candidates reported it as important.

Impact of Identity on Candidate Ability

More than eight in 10 LGBTQ+ candidates thought being LGBTQ+ made them a better candidate (84%) – with nearly three in five believing they were more empathetic toward the struggles of others because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (59.5%). Nearly two in five said their history of activism as an LGBTQ+ person made them better candidates (36.5%) and 34.4% said overcoming challenges as an LGBTQ+ person is what makes them better candidates. Additionally, 15.6% said their identity made them closer to the community they wanted to represent and 13.3% said they had to work harder than straight and cisgender

people to achieve what they have.

*See **Table 6** and **Table 7** in the appendix for additional information.*

Support and Opposition From the LGBTQ+ Community

LGBTQ+ Community Support
About eight in ten candidates felt the LGBTQ+ community was at least moderately supportive of their race (79.3%) and about one in two candidates felt it was very supportive (47.6%). Just over one in 20 felt the LGBTQ+ community was not supportive at all (6.1%).

While differences in LGBTQ+ community support were minor across gender identities, bisexual and queer candidates reported in higher numbers that the community was at least moderately supportive of their candidacies (84.3% and 83.3%, respectively). Among gay and lesbian candidates, 78.9% and 78%, respectively, said they had at least moderate support.

However, only about seven in 10 Black and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates felt the LGBTQ+ community was at least moderately supportive of their candidacies (73.3% and 71.4%,

respectively). That compares to 85.5% of Latinx LGBTQ+ candidates and 79% of white candidates.

LGBTQ+ Community Opposition
While just 27.1% of LGBTQ+ candidates reported opposition to their candidacy from within the LGBTQ+ community, great variations existed among gender identities. Almost four in 10 gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates faced at least some level of opposition from within the LGBTQ+ community (38.2%), although just 14.3% of trans women reported opposition. Among cis candidates, 30.4% of cis men reported some level of opposition from within the community as did 20.8% of cis women.

About one in three gay candidates (31.6%) and one in four bisexual and queer candidates (25.5% and 26.5%, respectively) reported opposition, as did one in five lesbian candidates (21.2%).

Asian LGBTQ+ candidates reported the most opposition from within the LGBTQ+ community for their candidacies – at 28.6% – with Black LGBTQ+ candidates close behind at 27.7%. One in five white candidates (21%) and 14.5% of Latinx candidates reported opposition.
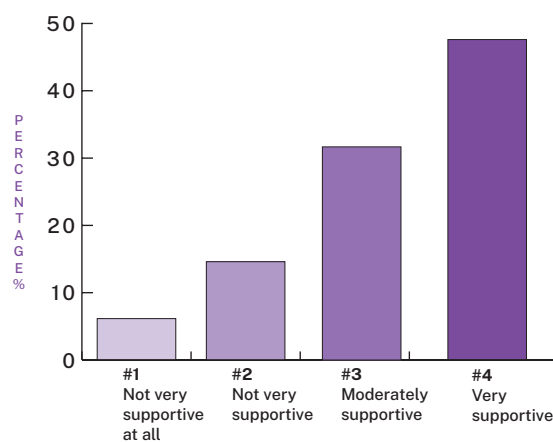

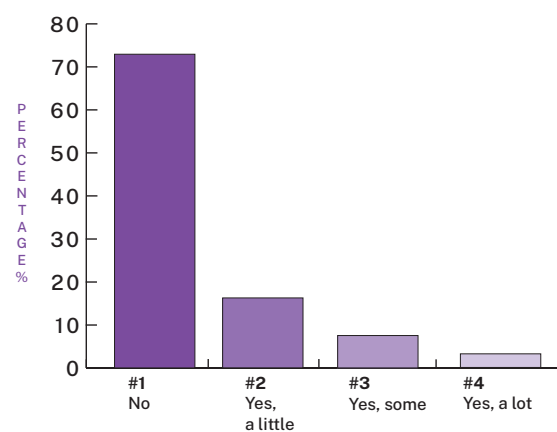*Figure 7. How supportive was the LGBTQ+ community of your candidacy?*

Figure 8. Did you face opposition from within the LGBTQ+ community?

Voter Reactions to LGBTQ+ Candidates

Perception of Electability & Viability

More than two out of three LGBTQ+ candidates believed some voters questioned their electability and viability because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Thirty-two percent of respondents said only a few voters doubted that other voters would support an LGBTQ+ candidate, yet 26.5% said some voters had that concern and 8.7% said many voters were concerned.

More than eight in 10 bisexual candidates believed voters had electability concerns about them (84.3%), compared to 70.6% of queer candidates, 66.7% of lesbian candidates and 65.3% of gay candidates. Three in four trans women believed voters questioned whether other voters would vote for them, compared to 67.6% gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates, 67.5% of cis women and 65.8% of cis men.

Of candidates who ran in blue districts, six in ten said at least a few voters questioned whether other voters would support an LGBTQ+ candidate (59.9%). Yet in red districts, 84.8% said at least some voters questioned it, as did 82.7% in toss-up districts.

*See **Table 8** in the appendix for additional information.*

Lost Support Because of Identity

About three in four respondents felt that being an out LGBTQ+ candidate made them lose the support of some voters (74.7%). While two out of five felt their sexual orientation and/or gender identity made only a few voters less likely to support them (41.7%), more than one quarter felt it made some voters less likely (27.3%) and 5.7% said it made many voters less likely to support them.

Queer and bisexual candidates reported the highest perceptions of lost support because of their identity (85.3% and 80.4%, respectively). Three in four gay candidates (75.2%) and 71% of lesbian candidates felt they lost support because they are LGBTQ+. More than nine in 10 gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates reported lost support (91.1%), compared to 75.2% of cis men, 71.4% of trans women and seven in 10 cis women.

Of candidates who ran in red districts, 88% said at least a few voters were less likely to support them because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, compared to 79.8% in toss-up districts and 69.5% in blue districts. Nearly one in ten LGBTQ+ candidates in red districts said many voters were less likely to support them (9.8%), compared to 7.7% in toss-up districts and just 3% in blue districts.

Increased Support Because of Identity

Conversely, almost nine in 10 candidates believed they gained some support for being LGBTQ (87.8%), and more than one in ten felt that being LGBTQ+ made many voters more likely to support them (10.6%). About three in 10 said it made only a few voters more likely to support them (32.4%) and 44.8% said some voters.
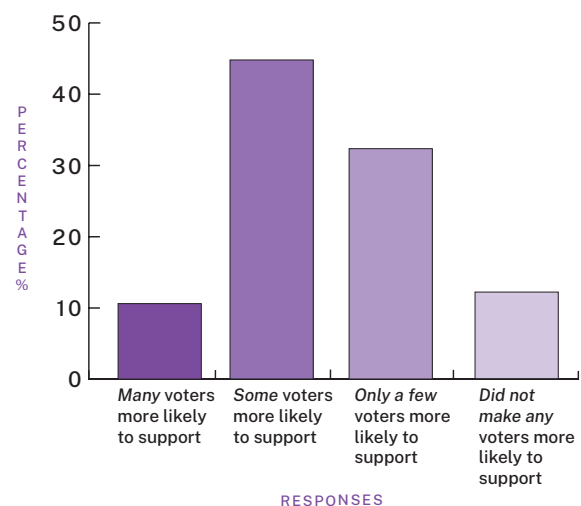

Figure 9. Do you feel that being openly LGBTQ+ made some voters more likely to support you?

Among queer candidates, 63.2% said either some or many voters were more likely to support them because they were LGBTQ+, compared to 60.8% of bisexual candidates, 53.6% of gay candidates and 53% of lesbian candidates. More than six in 10 trans women candidates (64.3%) and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (64.7%) reported some or many voters were more likely to support them because they were LGBTQ+, compared to 55.8% of cis women and 53.4% of cis men candidates.

*See **Table 9** and **Table 10** in the appendix for additional information.*

Challenges on the Campaign Trail

Top Challenges During Campaigns

LGBTQ+ candidates were asked to choose the top challenges they faced during their campaigns, with the most reported challenges falling into four categories:

Difficulty Fundraising and Lack of Personal Finances
Nearly half of LGBTQ+ candidates reported raising money as a top challenge during their campaigns (44.5%) and more than four in 10 said a lack of personal finances was a top challenge (41.8%).

Lack of Role Models and Campaign Experience
Nearly three in 10 respondents said a lack of LGBTQ+ elected officials as role models was a top challenge faced during the campaign (28.5%), while 23.4% said a lack of knowledge on how to run a campaign was a top challenge.

Prejudice, Negative Media Coverage, and Invasion of Privacy
More than one in four LGBTQ+ candidates reported prejudice because of their sexual orientation as a top challenge (26.4%) – with 32.1% of trans women and 35.3% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates reporting prejudice based on gender identity as a top challenge. Almost four in ten

Black LGBTQ+ candidates and Asian candidates reported prejudice based on their race and/or ethnicity as a top challenge (36.2% and 38.1%, respectively), as did 14.5% of Latinx candidates.

Those running in red or toss-up districts experienced relatively more prejudice because of their sexual orientation (32.3% and 34.6%, respectively) than those running in blue districts (24.5%).

About one in four LGBTQ+ candidates reported negative advertising against them as a top challenge (24.5%) and about one in five reported invasions of privacy as a top challenge (18.1%).

Concerns on Qualifications and Viability
About one in four candidates reported difficulty being taken seriously as a candidate as a top challenge they faced (24.3%), including nearly one in three candidates running in red districts (32.3%). One in four candidates in toss-up districts and 23.6% of candidates in blue districts reported being taken seriously as a top challenge.

One in five candidates said demonstrating their viability was a top challenge (21.3%), including one in three candidates in red districts (34.4%). Only about one in five candidates in blue districts (21.5%) and 15.4% in toss-up districts reported demonstrating viability as a top challenge.

Additionally, 12.2% of candidates reported the media challenging their qualifications as a top challenge.

*See **Table 11** and **Table 12** in the appendix for additional information.*

Fundraising and Personal Debt

Raising Money for the Campaign
More than eight in 10 LGBTQ+ candidates reported raising money for the campaign as challenging (85.6%), with 27.9% calling it moderately challenging, 23.6% very challenging and 12.5% extremely challenging.

Across sexual orientations, candidates overall found fundraising challenging at similar

rates, however queer and bisexual candidates reported it to be extremely challenging at higher rates (17.7% and 15.7%, respectively), when compared to gay and lesbian candidates (12.7% and 10%, respectively). One in five gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates found raising money to be extremely challenging (20.6%), compared to 14.3% of trans women, 11.7% of cis men and 9.2% of cis women.

Across race and ethnicities, nearly one in five Latinx LGBTQ+ candidates found raising money for the campaign extremely challenging (18.8%), compared to 14.3% of Asian candidates, 12.8% of Black candidates and 11.2% of white candidates.

Personal Finances
More than four in 10 LGBTQ+ candidates incurred personal debt to pay for campaign expenses, including about half of bisexual candidates (51%), 43.3% of gay candidates, 38% of queer candidates and 34% of lesbian candidates. Exactly half of trans women incurred personal debt to pay for their campaigns, as did 45.9% of cis men, one-third of cis women and 20.6% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates.

While only about one in four Asian LGBTQ+ candidates incurred personal debt (23.8%), 44.9% of Latinx candidates, 42.6% of Black candidates and 40.9% of white candidates reported personal debt related to the campaign.

Political Party Support

More than six in ten LGBTQ+ candidates felt their local political party was at least moderately supportive of their candidacy (63%) – with 35.2% saying it was very supportive. However, about one in five candidates felt their local political party was not supportive at all of their candidacy (19.5%) and 17.6% felt it was not very supportive.

While differences across sexual orientations were minimal, more than half (55.5%) of trans women said the party was not supportive at all or not very supportive, as did 44.1% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates. This compares to 35.4% of cis men

and 33.7% of cis women.

Nearly half of Black LGBTQ+ candidates felt the party was not supportive at all or not very supportive (46.8%), as did 40.6% of Latinx candidates, 38.1% of Asian candidates and 35.8% of white candidates.
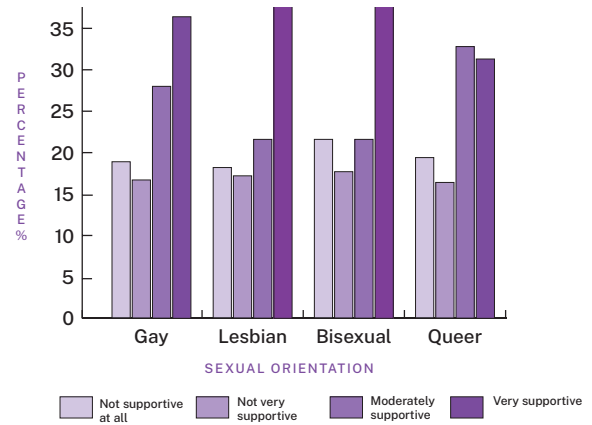

Figure 10. How supportive was your local political party of your candidacy? (by sexual orientation)
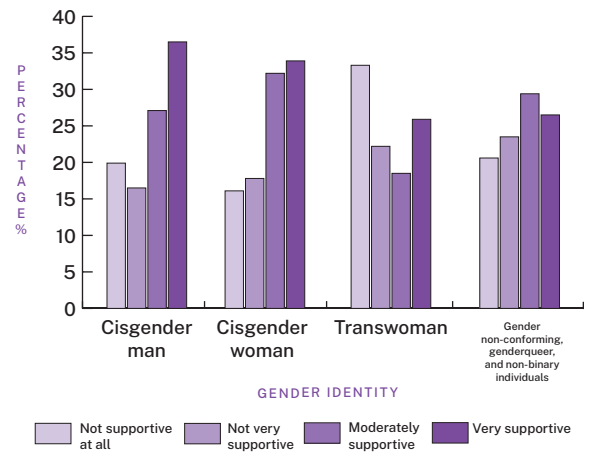

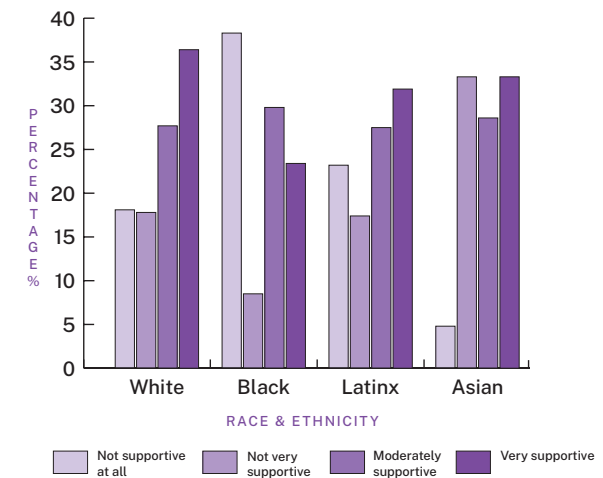*Figure 11.* How supportive was your local political party of your candidacy? (by gender identity)

Figure 12. Do you feel that being openly LGBTQ+ made some voters more likely to support you?

Fairness of Media Coverage

More than one in four LGBTQ+ candidates felt media coverage of their campaign was at least somewhat unfair (27%), with differences that emerged across sexual orientations and gender identities.
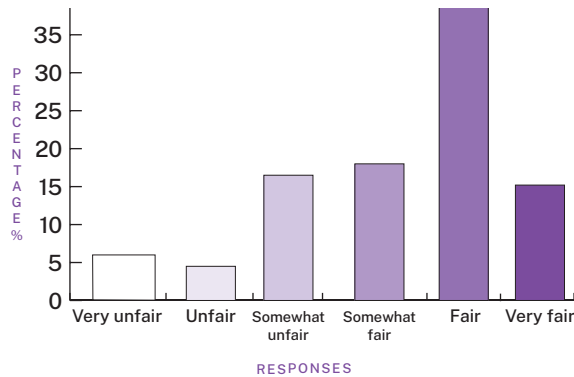

Figure 13. In your opinion, how fair was the media's coverage of your campaign?

Four in ten bisexual candidates found the media coverage to be at least somewhat unfair, compared to 32.4% of queer candidates, 28% of gay candidates and 17.6% of lesbian candidates. Nearly half of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates found coverage to be at least somewhat unfair (47%), as did 27.4% of cis men, one quarter of trans women and about two in ten cis women (19%).

Black and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates found media coverage to be unfair in the greatest numbers (46.8% and 45%, respectively), whereas 32.9% of Latinx candidates and just 24.2% of white candidates found media coverage to be at least somewhat unfair.

Additionally, more than one third of LGBTQ+ candidates noticed double standards in their coverage compared to media coverage of straight and cisgender candidates (35.7%). Of those, 20.3% said the double standard was related to coverage of their viability and chances of winning the election, while 15.4% said it was related to coverage of their qualifications.

Anti-LGBTQ Attacks and Their Impact

Frequency of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks

More than seven in ten LGBTQ+ candidates experienced anti-LGBTQ attacks during their campaign (71.3%) and more than one in ten candidates faced attacks at least once a week (13.9%).
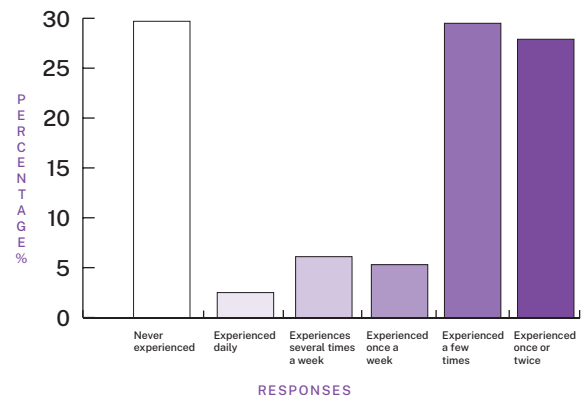
Figure 14. How often did you encounter homophobic or transphobic hate and harrassment during your campaign?

More than one in five queer candidates faced anti-LGBTQ attacks at least once a week (22%), compared to 17.7% of bisexual candidates, 14.3% of gay candidates and 11% of lesbian candidates. Nearly one in three gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates faced attacks at least once a week (29.4%), as did 13.1% of cis men, 10.7% of trans women and 9.2% of cis women candidates.

About two in 10 Black and Asian LGBTQ+ candidates (21.3% and 19.1%, respectively) faced anti-LGBTQ attacks at least once a week, compared to 14.6% of Latinx candidates and 13.1% of white candidates.

Almost one in four candidates running in red districts said they experienced anti-LGBTQ attacks at least once a week (23.6%), compared to 13.5% of candidates in toss-up districts and about one in ten in blue districts (10.3%).

*See **Table 13** in the appendix for additional information.*

Origin of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks

The anti-LGBTQ attacks candidates faced came from a variety of sources, according to respondents. Almost one in three candidates said the anti-LGBTQ attacks came from conservative groups (32.9%) and about two in ten from religious groups (19.2%). More than one in 10 reported anti-LGBTQ attacks came from Republican opponents in the general election (11.2%) and 10.8% from other Republican politicians. Almost one in 10 said attacks came from Democratic primary opponents (8.4%) and 8.9% from other Democratic politicians. About one in 10 (10.3%) said religious leaders were the source of the anti-LGBTQ attacks.

Types of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks

More than half of LGBTQ+ candidates reported anti-LGBTQ attacks against them on social media (50.6%) and almost two in 10 received hate email (18.6%). More than one in three faced verbal anti-LGBTQ attacks (36.3%), 8.7% experienced physical threats and 1.7% faced physical violence based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity during the campaign.

Almost one in four gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates faced physical anti-LGBTQ threats during the campaign (23.5%), compared to 8.3% of cis men, 7.1% of trans women and 5% of cis women. Across sexual orientations, queer candidates reported experience with physical threats at the highest rate (11.8%), compared to 9.8% of bisexual, 9.1% of gay and 4% of lesbian candidates.

"Nearly one in three Black LGBTQ+ candidates (31.9%), 25.6% of Latinx and white candidates and 14.3% of Asian candidates reported attacks on their families."

Anti-LGBTQ Attacks on Candidates' Families

About one in four LGBTQ+ candidates experienced attacks against their family while on the campaign trail (24.6%), with about one in 10 reporting attacks a few times on their family during the campaign (9.5%) and 4.1% reporting it happened at least once a week.

Almost three in 10 bisexual candidates faced attacks against their family (29.6%) as did more than a quarter of gay candidates (26.2%). One in four queer candidates and 19% of lesbian candidates reported attacks on their families. More than one quarter of cis men faced attacks on their family, as did 26.5% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates, 22.5% of cis women and 7.1% of trans women.

Nearly one in three Black LGBTQ+ candidates (31.9%), 25.6% of Latinx and white candidates and 14.3% of Asian candidates reported attacks on their families.

Attacks on Personal Appearance and Dress

More than one in three LGBTQ+ candidates were attacked because of their personal appearance or way of dressing (34.4%), with 12.7% experiencing a few attacks and 7.8% facing attacks at least once a week during the campaign.

Experiences around personal appearance attacks varied greatly across sexual orientations and gender identities. More than half of queer candidates faced attacks on their personal appearance or way of dressing (55.9%) as did 49% of bisexual candidates. About one in four lesbian candidates (39%) and just over a quarter of gay candidates (27.6%) also experienced this type of attack. More than two in three gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates (67.6%) faced attacks based on personal appearance or way of dress – the most of any sexual orientation or gender identity group – compared to 41.7% of cis women, 32.1% of trans women and 27.8% of cis men.

Effect of Attacks on Voter Support

About one in three LGBTQ+ candidates thought anti-LGBTQ attacks did alter the perception that voters had of them (34.1%), however the effect was not always negative. While 22.6% believe that they lost some support because of the attacks, 11.5% believed they actually gained some support following the attacks.

Regardless of district partisanship, a large majority said anti-LGBTQ attacks did not affect how voters perceived them. Almost seven in 10 respondents in toss-up districts said it did not have an effect (69.2%), compared to 63.9% in blue districts and 62.4% in red districts. Yet 28% of respondents in red districts said they did lose support because of the attacks, compared to 23.1% in toss-up districts and about one in five candidates in blue districts (21%). About one in ten candidates in red districts said the attacks actually led to them gaining support (9.7%), as did 7.7% in toss-up districts and 13.3% in blue districts.

Effect of Attacks on Personal Mental Health

More than half of LGBTQ+ candidates reported that anti-LGBTQ attacks on the campaign trail affected their personal mental health (55.2%). While one in three reported the attacks affected their personal mental health a little (33.6%), 11.3% said they affected their mental health a moderate amount and more than one in ten said they affected their mental health a lot (10.4%).

More than three in four bisexual candidates said the attacks affected their mental health (76.5%) – more than any other sexual orientation or gender identity group. About two in three queer candidates (66.2%), 53% of lesbian candidates and 52.2% of gay candidates said their mental health was affected. Less variation existed among gender identities, with 58.8% of gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates, 58.3% of cis women, 57.1% of trans women and 54.4% of cis men candidates saying anti-LGBTQ attacks affected their mental health.

More than three in four Asian LGBTQ+ candidates (76.2%), 62.3% of Latinx, 61.7% of Black and 53.1% of white candidates reported anti-LGBTQ attacks having a negative impact on their mental health.

CONCLUSION

A record number of LGBTQ+ elected officials are now serving in the United States, with more than 1200 in elected positions at every level of government as of August 2023.[8] These LGBTQ+ leaders are on the frontlines in the movement for equality: changing the hearts and minds of their constituents and legislative colleagues, leading the charge against anti-LGBTQ bills, and ensuring policies are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people. Their impact is undeniable, making clear the necessity of encouraging more LGBTQ+ people to run for office and ensuring they are successful on Election Day.

This report reveals several major hurdles to getting more LGBTQ+ leaders to run for office. The harassment and attacks LGBTQ+ candidates fear when deciding to run, along with the considerable number who go into personal debt, inevitably harms recruitment. That LGBTQ+ leaders – and especially trans women and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary people – are actively discouraged from running also lowers the candidate pool and makes it less diverse. Mitigating these factors in a meaningful way, while emphasizing the opportunities to make change in the community and increase LGBTQ+ representation, is critical to more LGBTQ+ people running.

When on the campaign trail, LGBTQ+ candidates, like many candidates, find fundraising is a significant challenge and therefore should remain a focus for training opportunities. Yet questions around the viability and electability of LGBTQ+ candidates

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[8] Out for America Map. LGBTQ+ Victory Institute. August 17, 2023. https://outforamerica.org/

– from voters, political parties and the media – are a peculiar challenge that can undermine both fundraising and political support. The perception that LGBTQ+ people are riskier candidates can be partially undermined by emphasizing another finding in this report: that LGBTQ+ people believe their sexual orientation and gender identity make them better candidates and that a vast majority say they gained voter support because of their identity. The belief that anti-LGBTQ attacks backfired a third of the time and led to increased voter support can further counter this narrative.

Yet the realities of the campaign trail – both the prejudice faced and the extraordinary number and frequency of anti-LGBTQ attacks – can take a toll on a campaign and candidate. Strategies for increasing candidate safety on the campaign trail – as well as their sense of safety – while also acknowledging and providing support for mental health are a vital next step for political organizations supporting these candidates. Action is also essential to ensure the diversity of LGBTQ+ candidates, given Black, Asian, queer and gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary candidates are the most frequent targets of anti-LGBTQ attacks.

The challenges LGBTQ+ candidates face are many, but these candidates are winning elections in unprecedented numbers. In the past five years alone, LGBTQ+ representation in elected positions increased by 68 percent[9], and this report uncovers potential reasons for that increase. Candidates who believe some voters preferred an LGBTQ+ leader, who felt supported by their local political parties, and felt supported by the LGBTQ+ community are all reasons for optimism. As this is a first-of-its-kind survey, trends over time are not available, but it is safe to assume voters and parties have grown more supportive of LGBTQ+ candidates generally, although whether anti-LGBTQ attacks are more or fewer is uncertain.

It takes courage to run as an out LGBTQ+ candidate in America today – and the courage required only multiplies for LGBTQ+ women, people who are not cisgender, and people of color. But they continue to find it. Once in the halls of power, their contributions are often public and clear, other times behind-the-scenes and unquantifiable. Yet their importance is certain. The mission ahead is to increase their number, so together they can help build a more equitable America.

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[9] Leading Out Loud: Growing LGBTQ+ Political Representation. LGBTQ+ Victory Institute, April 2023. https://victoryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Leading-Out-Loud-Report-2023.pdf

APPENDIX

Methodology

Loyola Marymount University's LGBTQ+ Politics Research Initiative and LGBTQ+ Victory Institute conducted a survey of 474 LGBTQ+ candidates between April 3 and May 17, 2023.

The survey was administered online. Respondents were defined as candidates who self-identified as LGBTQ+ and who ran for political office at any level of government in the United States between 2018 and 2022. All LGBTQ+ candidates who ran for office between 2018 and 2022 (N=2,779) received an invitation to participate in the survey. Of those, 474 LGBTQ+ candidates (17%) responded and participated in the survey. The sample of respondents is representative of the universe of LGBTQ+ candidates on key socio-demographic indicators.

The sample includes candidates from 49 states (all except Delaware) as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Regarding sexual orientation, candidates could identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, pansexual, asexual, demisexual, same-gender loving, or could specify their orientation or select a combination of options. Regarding gender identity, candidates could identify as cisgender man, cisgender woman, transgender man, transgender woman, gender non-conforming, genderqueer / non-binary, intersex, Two-spirit, or could specify their identity or select a combination of options.

For the purposes of this report, safe Democratic and Democratic-leaning districts are described as "blue districts" and safe Republican and Republican-leaning districts are described as "red districts."

N.B. We chose not to display separate results for subgroups whose size was too small to have statistical significance. N = 474 unless otherwise specified.

Authors

Gabriele Magni is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and the Founding Director of the LGBTQ+ Politics Research Initiative at Loyola Marymount University.

Elliot Imse is the Executive Director of LGBTQ+ Victory Institute.

Tables

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer
Motivation 1	Make change in local community (80.7%)	Make change in local community (72.7%)	Make change in local community (86.3%)	Make change in local community (75%)
Motivation 2	Frustration with elected officials (50.2%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (44.4%)	Frustration with elected officials (56.7%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (54.4%)
Motivation 3	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (45.8%)	Frustration with elected officials (39.4%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (45.1%)	Frustration with elected officials (54.4%)
Motivation 4	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (26.9%)	External encouragement (26.3%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (29.4%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (25%)

Table 1. Top Motivations to Run for Office by Sexual Orientation

	Cisgender men	Cisgender women	Trans women	Gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals
Motivation 1	Make change in local community (82.7%)	Make change in local community (78.2%)	Make change in local community (67.9%)	Make change in local community (38.2%)
Motivation 2	Frustration with elected officials (50.4%)	Frustration with elected officials (43.7%)	Increase LGBTQ+ represenation (60.7%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (30.9%)
Motivation 3	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (46.2%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (40.3%)	Frustration with elected officials (50%)	Frustration with elected officials (30.9%)
Motivation 4	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (27.8%)	External encouragement (26.9%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (32.1%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (11.8%)

Table 2. Top Motivations to Run for Office by Gender Identity

Tables *continued*

	White	Black	Latinx	Asian
Motivation 1	Make change in local community (78.9%)	Make change in local community (70.2%)	Make change in local community (85.5%)	Make change in local community (76.2%)
Motivation 2	Frustration with elected officials (47.5%)	Frustration with elected officials (59.6%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (56.5%)	Frustration with elected officials (61.9%)
Motivation 3	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (46.1%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (42.6%)	Frustration with elected officials (55.1%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (47.6%)
Motivation 4	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (24.2%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (31.9%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (27.5%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (33.3%)

Table 3. Top Motivations to Run for Office by Race & Ethnicity

	Blue district	Red district	Toss-up district
Not very important	27.5%	30.1%	28.9%
Slight important	24%	21.5%	28.9%
Moderately important	21%	21.5%	25%
Important	16.3%	14%	9.6%
Very important	11.2%	12.9%	7.7%

Table 4. Importance of Candidates' Sexual Orientation to the Campaign, by Partisanship of District

Tables *continued*

	Blue district	Red district	Toss-up district
Not very important	58.8%	57%	73.1%
Slight important	15%	14%	9.6%
Moderately important	9.9%	11.8%	5.8%
Important	9.9%	10.8%	5.8%
Very important	6.4%	6.5%	5.8%

Table 5. Importance of Candidates' Gender Identity to the Campaign, by Partisanship of District

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer	*All*
Greater empathy	62.5%	53.5%	56.9%	60.3%	*59.5%*
History of activism	32.7%	34.3%	51%	54.5%	*36.5%*
Overcame challenges	40.7%	26.3%	23.5%	23.5%	*34.4%*
Connected to community	16.7%	12.1%	21.6%	20.6%	*15.6%*
Worked harder than straight/cis	15.3%	12.1%	3.9%	8.8%	*13.3%*

Table 6. Reasons Why Being LGBTQ+ Made Them Better Candidates, By Sexual Orientation

Tables *continued*

	Cisgender men	Cisgender women	Trans women	Gender non-conforming genderqueer non-binary	*All*
Greater empathy	63.9%	59.7%	53.6%	64.7%	59.5%
History of activism	33.5%	39.5%	39.3%	47.1%	36.5%
Overcame challenges	41%	26.1%	32.1%	17.6%	34.4%
Connected to community	17.7%	14.3%	10.7%	11.8%	15.6%
Worked harder than straight/cis	15.4%	6.7%	17.9%	17.6%	13.3%

Table 7. Reasons Why Being LGBTQ+ Made Them Better Candidates, By Gender Identity

	Blue district	Red district	Toss-up district
No	40.1%	15.2%	17.3%
Yes, but only a few voters	29.3%	35.9%	32.7%
Yes, some voters	25.4%	31.5%	38.5%
Yes, many voters	5.2%	17.4%	11.5%

Table 8. Belief That Voters Questioned Whether Other Voters Would Support an LGBTQ+ Candidate, By Partisanship of District

Tables *continued*

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer
No, it did not make a difference	12.8%	14%	5.9%	7.4%
Yes, but only a few voters	33.6%	33%	33.3%	29.4%
Yes, some voters	41.2%	45%	51%	48.5%
Yes, many voters	12.4%	8%	9.8%	14.7%

Table 9. Candidate Belief That More Voters Supported Them Because of Their LGBTQ+ Status, by Sexual Orientation

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer
No, it did not make a difference	12.8%	14%	5.9%	7.4%
Yes, but only a few voters	33.6%	33%	33.3%	29.4%
Yes, some voters	41.2%	45%	51%	48.5%
Yes, many voters	12.4%	8%	9.8%	14.7%

Table 10. Candidate Belief That More Voters Supported Them Because of Their LGBTQ+ Status, by Sexual Orientation

Tables *continued*

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer
Challenge 1	Difficulty raising money (41.1%)	Difficulty raising money (46.5%)	Difficulty raising money (62.7%)	Make change in local community (75%)
Challenge 2	Lack of personal finances (36.7%)	Lack of personal finances (44.4%)	Lack of personal finances (58.8%)	Increase LGBTQ+ representation (54.4%)
Challenge 3	Prejudice based on sexual orientation (29.5%)	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (29.3%)	Difficulty being taken seriously (43.1%)	Frustration with elected officials (54.4%)
Challenge 4	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (27.3%)	Negative advertising (28.3%)	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (31.4%)	Work on LGBTQ+ issues (25%)
Challenge 5	Negative advertising (24.7%)	Lack knowledge on how to run a campaign (27.3%)	Demostrating viability (25.5%) Prejudice based on sexual orientation (25.5%) Invasion of privacy (25.5%)	Demonstrating viability (29.4%)

Table 11. Top Five Challenges for LGBTQ+ Candidates During the Campaign, by Sexual Orientation

Tables *continued*

	Cisgender men	Cisgender women	Trans women	Gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and non-binary individuals
Challenge 1	Difficulty raising money (42.5%)	Difficulty raising money (46.5%)	Lack of personal finances (50%)	Lack of personal finances (64.7%)
Challenge 2	Lack of personal finances (38.3%)	Lack of personal finances (39.5%)	Difficulty raising money (39.3%)	Difficulty raising money (47.1%)
Challenge 3	Prejudice based on sexual orientation (28.9%)	Negative advertising (28.6%)	Prejudice based on gender identity (32.1%)	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (35.3%)
Challenge 4	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (27.3%)	Dificulty being taken seriously (27.7%)	Dificulty being taken seriously (32.1%)	Prejudice based on gender identity (35.3%)
Challenge 5	Negative advertising (24.7%)	Demostrating viability (24.4%)	Lack of LGBTQ+ role models (28.6%)	Demostrating viability (29.4%)

Table 12. Top Five Challenges for LGBTQ+ Candidates During the Campaign, by Gender Identity

	Blue district	Red district	Toss-up district
Never	27.9%	24.7%	21.2%
Once or twice	30.9%	23.7%	28.9%
A few times	30.9%	28%	36.5%
Once a week	4.7%	7.5%	1.9%
Several times a week	4.3%	11.8%	3.9%
Daily	1.3%	4.3%	7.7%

Table 13. Frequency of Anti-LGBTQ Attacks During the Campaign