Women’s Voices in American Democracy

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How are women’s voices heard in American politics?

Women in Public Office

- U.S. Supreme Court: 3 (Ginsburg, Kagan, Sotomayor) out of 9
- U.S. Cabinet: 7 (Interior, Commerce, DOJ, HHS, EPA, SBA, UN) out of 23
- U.S. Congress:
  - Senate: 20 (14 D, 6 R) out of 100
  - House: 84 (62 D, 22 R) out of 435 – 19%
- Governors: 6 (3 D [NH, OR, RI], 3 R [NM, OK, SC]) out of 50
- State Legislators: 1814 (1,086 D, 709 R, 19 other) out of 7383 – 25%
- Mayors: 19 out of the 100 largest cities
Share of Elected Officials Who Are Women Has Increased but Remains Low

Women as % of Political Offices Over Time

- Governors (Percentage)
- Senators (Percentage)
- Representatives (Percentage)
- State Legislators (Percentage)
The Share of Americans Who Are Represented by a Woman in a Visible Public Office (US House, Senate or Governor) Has Risen
How are women’s voices heard in American politics?
Organizations Representing (or Composed of) Women

Examples include:

American Association of University Women
American Society of Women Accountants
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Daughters of the American Revolution
Emily’s List
Feminist Majority PAC
Girl Scouts of the USA
Independent Women’s Forum
International Association of Junior Leagues
National Alliance of Sexual Assault Coalitions
National Association of Black Attorneys
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women
National Council of Catholic Women
National Network to End Domestic Violence

NOW-National Organization for Women
National Women’s Law Center
National Women’s Political Caucus
National Women’s Prison Project
OWL – Older Women’s League
Organization of Chinese American Women
Society for Military Widows
Society of Women Geographers
White House Project
Women in Communications
Women’s College Coalition
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
Women’s National Basketball Association
How are women’s voices heard in American politics? Through their political activity as citizens.

- Voting
- Getting Involved in Elections
  - Attending meetings and rallies
  - Volunteering in campaigns
  - Making contributions
- Communicating Preferences Directly
  - Contacting public officials
  - Taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration
  - Working with members of the community on a local problem
  - Serving as a member of a local board (e.g., school board or zoning board) or attending meetings of such a board
  - Being a member of an organization that takes stands in politics
Explaining the Historical Gender Gap in Political Participation

Women’s Deficits with Regard to the Factors that Facilitate Participation:

- Education
- Income
- Psychological engagement with politics (e.g., political interest, knowledge, and efficacy)
Since the Late 1980s, Women Have Been More Likely Than Men to Graduate from College

Figure 6: Percent of Population 25 Years and older, and 25 to 29 Years old, with Bachelor's Degree or higher by Sex: 1947-2012

The Gender Gap in Education Has Closed
In the 1970s & 1980s, the Gender Gap in Labor Force Participation Narrowed Substantially

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
But a Wide Income Gap Has Not Closed

Median Income in 2010 dollars

- Men
- Women
The Gender Gap in Political Activity Has More or Less Closed

Rates of Political Participation over Time

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voted / is registered to vote</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worked in a campaign</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Made a campaign contribution</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%**</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacted a government official</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%**</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended a protest</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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* Significant at <.05, ** Significant at <.01
The Gender Gap in Campaign Participation Has Narrowed

Average level of Campaign Participation over Time

- **Mean**
- **1976**
- **1980**
- **1984**
- **1988**
- **1992**
- **1996**
- **2000**
- **2004**
- **2008**
- **2012**

- **Male**
- **Female**
But the Gender Gap in Major Contributions Is Enormous: Political Contributions from the 100 Biggest Donors in 2016

Source: OpenSecrets, Center for Responsive Politics