

FAST FACTS: The Marriage Gap

- The Voter Participation Center discovered the marriage gap as a key dynamic in American politics today, with marital status being a strong predictor of whether one registers and votes.
- The marriage gap predicts a difference in voter participation and voting behavior between unmarried and married women.
- Married women are more likely to register and to vote than unmarried women. However, unmarried women are narrowing the gap, registering to vote and voting in increasing numbers.
- In 2010, unmarried women lagged 11 percentage points below married women in voter registration, which translated into lower turnout¹ by 15 percentage points.
 - In 2010, 72% of married women were registered to vote (40.5 million), compared to 61% of unmarried women (32.4 million).
 - In 2010, 54% of married women voted (30.2 million), compared to 38% of unmarried women (20.3 million).
 - Had unmarried women voted at the same rate as married women in 2010, an additional 7.8 million voters would have participated.
- In 2008, unmarried women trailed married women by 8 percentage points in registration, and by 11 percentage points in actual voting.
 - In 2008, married women registered at a rate of 77% (43.2 million), while unmarried women registered at a rate of 69% (34.9 million).
 - In 2008, married women voted at a rate of 71% (40.0 million), while unmarried women voted at a rate of 60% (30.5 million).
 - Had unmarried women voted at the same rate as married women in 2008, an additional 5.6 million voters would have participated.
- In 2004, unmarried women trailed married women by 9.4 percentage points in voter registration and by 13 percentage points in actual voting.
 - In 2004, married women registered at 78% (43.1 million), while unmarried women registered at 69% (32.6 million).

¹ Voter Participation Center and Lake Research Partners analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, November supplements (2004, 2008, 2010).

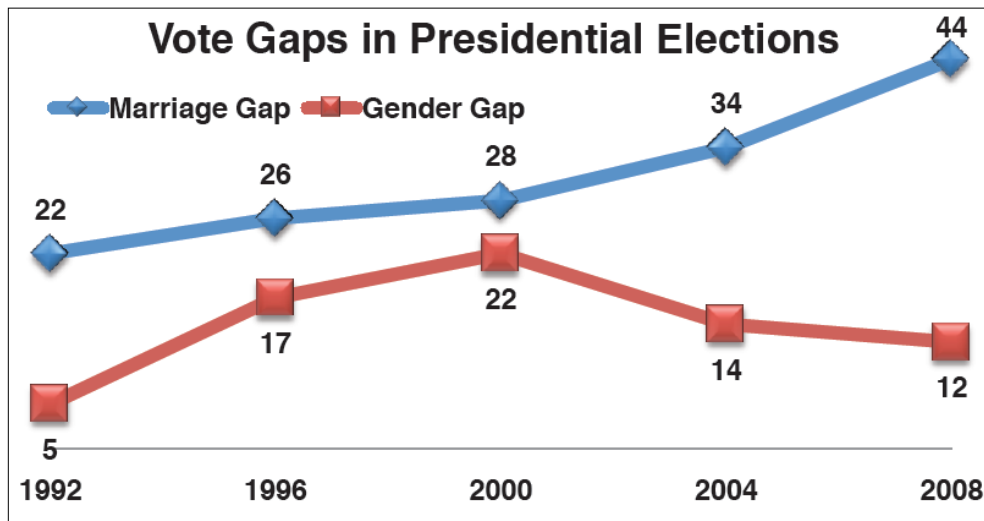
- In 2004, married women voted at 71% (39.4 million), while unmarried women voted at 59% (27.9 million).

Marriage Gap vs. the Gender Gap

- Despite the numerous differences among unmarried women -- unmarried women come from all walks of life, across a broad range of ethnic, racial, religious, age, and economic backgrounds – election results show that they vote as a cohort, and that they tend to prefer progressive policies and candidates.
- In presidential elections since 2000, the gender gap has been decreasing while the marriage gap has been increasing.

Election Results

- In 2010, unmarried women voted +16 percentage points for Democrats, while married women voted +14 percentage points for Republicans.²
- In 2008, unmarried women voted for Obama over McCain 70-29.
- In 2004, unmarried women voted for Kerry over Bush 62-37.



² Voter Participation Center and Democracy Corps post-election survey used for 2010 results. Results for other elections come from Edison/Mitosfky/CNN exit polls.