

## **Introduction**

The research that I was primarily interested in this project was about peoples' behavior, in terms of how they acted based on other traits that they had. As a person interested in identity politics and how certain groups may act based on their intersectionality, I decided to do my project based on how LGBTQ+ people would behave in terms of voter registration. The reason why I believe this topic is important is because a lot of transgender people in particular have been targeted with hostility by many politicians recently, which, in my thinking, could dissuade them from voting or even registering in the first place. Thus, my research question is: Does identifying as LGBTQ+ cause lower voter registration and ability to vote in elections overall? My research findings concluded that, yes, identifying as LGBTQ+ can have an effect on the frequency of voter registration. This question is extremely important to ask in terms of how politicians and political candidates, whether it be presidential, governmental, congressional, or local candidates, target LGBTQ+ voters and whether targeting them or not would make a difference in their election results.

## **Background**

Another limitation that may come up related to how someone's gender identity or sexuality can affect voting behavior is how voter-ID laws can impact voter registration. In this case, someone being transgender could hinder them from wanting to register because of a state's ID laws. A study done by the UCLA School of Law states that "[a] sizable proportion of transgender people may also not have photo ID or any ID that accurately reflects their gender identity" and that "findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS) suggest that 27% of transgender citizens who have transitioned have no forms of ID that accurately reflect their gender" (Brown & Herman 3). This could make voter registration more difficult in certain states because their outward appearance often does not match their ID picture, which could result in certain conflicts and even harassment. The study additionally finds that "strict photo ID requirements may have led to additional barriers and disenfranchisement for over 24,000 transgender people in the 2014 general election" (Brown & Herman 3). The barriers for

transgender people regarding voter registration are unique to them and can hinder them from exercising what is a political right.

Additionally, the hypothesis I planned to test in combination with my research question was that LGBTQ+ people overall register to vote less on average compared to the rest of the general population. An additional hypothesis I wanted to test was that transgender people registered to vote less compared to the rest of the general population, regardless of sexuality. The reason for this can correlate to many things. According to another study, “LGBT people have had heightened importance in electoral politics in recent years,” which is why their participation in politics and voting can be extremely important (Strode & Flores 924). The efforts to suppress queer and transgender people overall can serve very damaging effects on American politics as the true population is not represented, which is why it is essential, in my opinion, to research this topic.

### **Data and Approach**

The dataset I used to conduct my research was the CES 2020 (Cooperative Election Study). The dataset includes 61,000 rows, and the data consists of survey respondents across the United States. The key variables I chose out of this dataset were as follows: gender, trans, sexuality, and votereg. Included here is a table that describes each of the variables.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
gender	Variable describing whether someone is male or female. 1 = male, 2 = female
trans	Asking respondents whether they have undergone any part of a process or any thought/action to change their gender from the one they were assigned at birth. 1 = yes, 2 = no
sexuality	Asking respondent what term describes their sexuality best. 1 = heterosexual/straight, 2 = lesbian/gay woman, 3 = gay man, 4 = bisexual, 5 = other, 6 = prefer not to say
votereg	Asking respondents whether they have registered to vote prior to the 2020 election. 1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = don't know

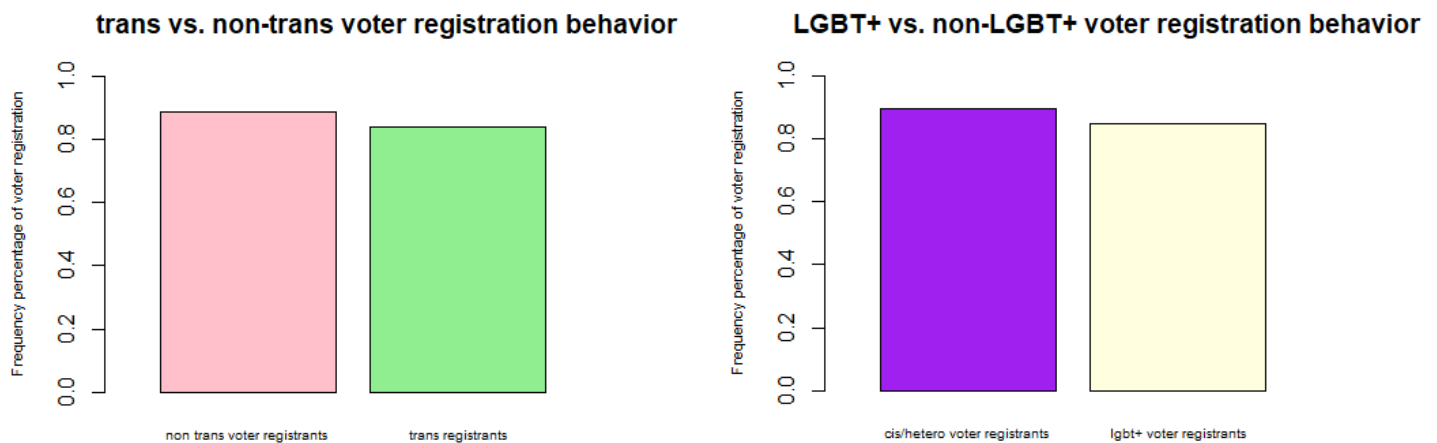
My analysis consisted of recoding the variables to create a subset featuring people who only identified as something other than straight. Although transgender was separated from the variable sexuality, I combined it with the sexuality variable, naming the subset “lgbtvotereg.” This combined people who identified as something other than straight with people who also identified as transgender (9,266 people). Additionally, I decided to isolate just the trans variable to see how people who identified as transgender (1,402 people), regardless of sexuality, registered and who did not. Furthermore, I decided in my analysis to compare the average means of people who were transgender and did register compared to people who were not transgender and also registered. I did the same with people who identified with any other sexuality other than straight and with people who identified as straight. This comparison was a suitable approach because it would be easy to measure the outcome of how many people in certain groups acted or behaved in comparison with another group. In this sense, the “trans” variable was the treatment group, while non-trans people were the control. The same applies to the LGBT+ group, as they were the treatment group, while straight people were the control. Considering special limitations for transgender people compared to any other group, this was my approach to analysis. I measured the mean of each group and compared them against one another with a t-test. A t-test was a good approach to take because it could help me determine whether the relationship between voter registration and transgender/LGBT+ people was statistically significant or not.

## **Results**

The overall mean of people who identified as transgender who were also registered to vote was 84.2%. In comparison, people who were not transgender who were also registered to vote had a mean of 88.9%. In another vein, people who were non-LGBT+ or straight and registered to vote had a mean of 89.5%, while people who were LGBT+ and registered to vote had a mean of 84.7%. I conducted a t-test with these means and found that for the trans and non-trans groups, the p-value was less than 0.05. Additionally, for the LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ groups, the p-value was also less than 0.05.

According to the hypothesis I made, there is significant evidence to demonstrate that transgender and LGB people, on average, register at less of a rate compared to non-trans and non-LGB people.

Additionally, there is a significant relationship between voter registration and identifying with a minority group, such as identifying as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or being transgender, or gender non-conforming, regardless of sexuality. I made a table to compare the means between trans and non-trans people and another table to compare the means between LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ people with their behavior in voter registration, as illustrated below.



My question initially asked about whether identifying as LGBTQ+ reduced the ability to vote via voter registration. In a sense, the research I conducted concluded that there is a difference between registering to vote as LGBTQ+ versus being non-LGBTQ+. My hypothesis that I strived to test was that LGBTQ+ people, on average, registered less compared to cisgender and straight people. With the research I conducted, I found that my hypothesis was correct and that LGBTQ+ people registered at a lower rate compared to straight and cisgender people, aligning with my expectations. However, one potential limitation when it comes to my research is that the sample size was extremely small. There were only 1,402 people out of 61,000 respondents who identified as transgender, and only 9,266 people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Unfortunately, many people in the survey also did not know their voter registration status, which could make some potential data unaccounted for.

I believe this research is important to consider when looking at whether certain political candidates represent the total population of the state or even the country. Because of potential backlash against LGB, and especially transgender people, there can be certain limitations set against them from simply registering. It should be alarming that so many people of a minority group are deterred from registering to vote or unable to because they feel threatened by certain laws and even politicians. One important thing to consider with this is whether we as a country are accurately represented by the people we elect, which can only be determined by voting for them.

#### Works Cited

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