

Alyssa Langmeyer

Intro to Women and Gender Studies

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Professor Orman

Discussion On How Gender, Race, Sexuality, Age, Education and Religious Differences Between the Democratic and Republican Members-Elect and Those Who Voted For Them Are a Reflection Of The Policies Of Each Party.

116th Congress Members-Elect



Republican Members-Elect



Democratic Members-Elect



On November 6th, 2018, Americans headed to the polls for the midterm elections, voting in local, state, and federal elections. This was an eventful election, with the 116th Congress Members-Elect being younger, more female and more racially diverse, the embodiment of a coalition that helped Barack Obama win the White House in 2008. The new members include several firsts for Congress — the first Muslim women, the first Native American women and the first African American women from several states. More than 100 women have been elected to the House, with 29-year-old Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) the youngest woman to enter Congress. Many lawmakers of Latino or Asian heritage were elected or won fresh terms. If one is to compare the two parties based on the image of the Members-Elect, it is obvious that there is a fundamental difference between the Democrats and Republican. The incoming Democratic party is younger and more diverse, representing the young, diverse population of Americans they represent. They are made up of many races, genders, sexualities, religions, and educational backgrounds. The Republicans, however, are made up of thirty men and only one woman, all of which are white. This too can be seen as a reflection of the politics of their party. The gender, race, sexuality, age, education and religious differences between the Democratic and Republican freshmen House members and those who voted for them are a reflection of the policies of each party, emphasizing how the Democratic party is becoming the party that is most reflective of a more diverse, younger generation while the Republican party is startlingly white and male-dominated.

The past two years have been rough for women. A misogynist, serial sexual assaulter was elected to office, a man accused of assaulting a respected professor was confirmed to the highest court of the land, and many of the nation's favorite actors, comedians, and politicians, as well as many others, were brought to light for their crimes against women during the MeToo movement. A white woman still makes, on average nationwide, about 86 cents on the dollar to a white male, a gap Netflix's *Explained: Why Women Are Paid Less* explains as still being so large as what's seen as the 'motherhood penalty', a penalty many of the incoming Members-Elect hope to fight. On November 26th, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the United Nations released a report stating that 238 women across the globe were killed every day and that of all the women murdered last year, 58 percent of them by an intimate partner or

relative¹. This world we live in that still largely subjects women is growing old, leading to a rise in women participating in politics in an effort to make a change, to make the next U.N. report less horrific. Women and people of color feel more and more that those in power do not represent them and their interests, and as such, are attempting to win ground in the political landscape. In 1848, *The Declaration of Sentiments* stated that “we [in reference to women] shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf”². Women today are continuing the mission set forth 170 years by Elizabeth Cady Stanton to work in the government to make a change and create a government that is truly equal and representative for them.

Before election night for the 2018 midterms even started, women candidates broke the record for the number of candidates for governor and congress³. Then on November 6th, women smashed records to elect 124 women to the 116th Congress⁴. More than 100 women have been elected to the House, and Dave Wasserman, the House editor for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report, recently calculated that the percentage of white men as a share of House Democrats is “set to decline from 41 percent to 38 percent as a result of the 2018 election” and that “the percentage of white men as a share of House Republicans is on track to rise from 86 percent to 90 percent”⁵.

There were many firsts in this election, especially for women and people of color. Marsha Blackburn is the first woman elected senator from Tennessee⁶, Sharice Davids (KS-03) and

¹Paul, Deanna. "The U.N. Finds the Deadliest Place for Women Is Their Home." The Washington Post. November 26, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

² Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls: Stanton and Anthony Papers Online. Accessed November 29, 2018.

³ "Potential Candidate Summary - 2018." Women in the U.S. Senate 2018 | CAWP. November 14, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

⁴ Jin, Beatrice. "Congress's Incoming Class Is Younger, Bluer, and More Diverse than Ever." POLITICO. November 23, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

⁵ Viebeck, Elise. "Diversity on Stark Display as House's Incoming Freshmen Gather in Washington." The Washington Post. November 13, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

⁶ Abramson, Alana. "Marsha Blackburn Is Tennessee's Newest Senator." Time. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

Debra Haaland (NM-01) are the first two Native American women elected to Congress⁷. Veronica Escobar (TX-16) and Sylvia Garcia (TX-29) are the first two Latinas elected to Congress from Texas⁸. Ilhan Omar (MN-05) and Rashida Tlaib (MI-13) are the first two Muslim American women elected to Congress. Omar will also be the first member of Congress to wear a headscarf and first woman of color elected to Congress from Minnesota⁹. Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) is the first black woman elected to Congress from Massachusetts after running unopposed in the general election¹⁰. Jahana Hayes (CT-05) is the first black Democratic woman elected to Congress from Connecticut¹¹. Kyrsten Sinema is the first woman elected senator from Arizona¹². Some trailblazing candidates fell short like Democratic Vermont gubernatorial candidate Christine Hallquist, the first transgender woman to receive a major party's nomination for governor, who would have become the nation's first openly transgender governor.

In terms of candidates that identify as non-heterosexual, Sharice Davids (KS-03) is the first openly LGBTQ elected to Congress from Kansas¹³. Kyrsten Sinema is the first openly bisexual person elected to the Senate¹⁴. In Colorado, Democratic Rep. Jared Polis, the openly gay member of Congress, will become the first openly gay man elected governor¹⁵.

⁷ Reilly, Katie. "First Native Women Elected to Congress in Kansas, New Mexico." Time. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

⁸ Aguilar, Julián. "Texas Sending Its First Latinas to Congress: Veronica Escobar and Sylvia Garcia." The Texas Tribune. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

⁹ Connley, Courtney. "Meet Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, the First Muslim Women Elected to Congress." CNBC. November 07, 2018.

¹⁰ Smyth, Sean. "Ayanna Pressley Officially Massachusetts' 1st Black Congresswoman - The Boston Globe." BostonGlobe.com. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹¹ Connley, Courtney. "Former National Teacher of the Year Becomes Connecticut's First Black Woman Elected to Congress." CNBC. November 07, 2018.

¹² Gardner, Abby. "Kyrsten Sinema Becomes First Female Senator from Arizona." Glamour. November 13, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹³ Reilly, Katie. "First Native Women Elected to Congress in Kansas, New Mexico." Time. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁴ Gardner, Abby. "Kyrsten Sinema Becomes First Female Senator from Arizona." Glamour. November 13, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁵ Watkins, Eli. "Women and LGBT Candidates Make History in 2018 Midterms." CNN. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.



Members-Elect Class Photo To The 116th Congress¹⁶

This congress is one of the most racially diverse. At least 24 of the new members elected to the House this cycle are Hispanic, Native American and people of color. All of the newly elected senators are white. Twenty-one percent of the Congress is Hispanic, Native American and people of color, another record.

_____ This congress also contains the youngest woman ever elected, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York who was elected at the age of twenty-nine. Of the 100 non-incumbent winners, Politico has found that their average age is 49. Even though this is the youngest freshman class since 2011, the 116th Congress will be, on average, 58.5 years old, the same as the last Congress, and about a year older than the 114th.



Rep.-Elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D) of New York walks and talks with Rep.-Elect Ilhan Omar (D) of Minnesota between briefings on Capitol Hill¹⁷

¹⁶ "First Photo: See the New Congress' History-making Members." NBCNews.com. Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁷ "From Hiring Staff to Locating Bathrooms: New Members of Congress Get Ready." The Christian Science Monitor. November 20, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

It is a highly educated group with a range of experience. More than 70 percent of the freshman class went to graduate school. A third of them have law degrees and 12 have MBAs. Seven freshmen earned at least two graduate degrees. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) has three. At least 19 members of the incoming class have served in the military. Six served in the Army, 11 in the Navy, and two in the Air Force. The newest members of the 116th Congress have a diverse résumé. There are at least four former professional athletes: two NFL football players, one professional hockey player, and one mixed martial arts fighter. There are at least five medical professionals: three doctors, one dentist, and one nurse. Five worked in education or were teachers.¹⁸

All of these things are fantastic for the further development of a Congress that is reflective of the American population, what matters, even more, is that their policies match what is important to their constituents that they are representing. The Democratic Party enjoys a 27-percentage-point advantage among Millennial voters (59% are Democrats or lean Democratic, 32% are Republican or lean Republican). A large majority of Millennial women (70%) identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, compared with 49% of Millennial men¹⁹. According to the Washington Post, millennial (ages 18-34) likely voters, while they care about issues like education, are much more interested in such social issues as immigration, the potential overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and racism.²⁰

When the Members-Elect were asked what their most important issues are, there were a variety of options. Rep.-elect Mary Gay Scanlon (Pa.) told reporters that “helping children and families, working on voting rights issues, working on criminal justice issues,” was important to her. “Climate change and renewable energy,” said Rep.-elect Deb Haaland (N.M.), who is one of the first Native American women elected to Congress. According to the Pew Research Center,

¹⁸ Jin, Beatrice. "Congress's Incoming Class Is Younger, Bluer, and More Diverse than Ever." POLITICO. November 23, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

¹⁹ Jones, Bradley. "1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 18, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

²⁰ Medenica, Vladimir E., Matthew Fowler, and Cathy J. Cohen. "Here Are the Issues That Will Get Millennials to the Polls in November." The Washington Post. October 01, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

"majorities of Americans say the federal government is doing too little to protect key aspects of the environment including water (69%) and air quality (64%). And two-thirds of Americans (67%) say the government is doing too little to reduce the effects of climate change". "Health care and education," Oklahoma's Horn said²¹. An overwhelming majority of registered voters who support Democratic candidates for Congress this November (85%) say that it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have health care coverage²².

Other newly elected Democratic members will arrive in Congress already associated with certain policies. Rep.-elect Lucy McBath (Ga.), a gun-control activist whose son was fatally shot six years ago, flipped a longtime Republican congressional seat outside Atlanta last week. Despite the power the NRA has in Congress, Overwhelming majorities of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and Democrats and Democratic leaners (89% each) say mentally ill people should be barred from buying guns. Nearly as many in both parties (86% of Democrats, 83% of Republicans) favor barring gun purchases by people on federal watch lists. And sizable majorities also favor making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks (91% of Democrats, 79% of Republicans)²³. The younger bent of the incoming class was also on display, as Rep.-elect Joe Cunningham (D-S.C.) arrived at the hotel carrying his infant son. Ocasio-Cortez drew attention for joining a protest in the office of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) over climate change²⁴.

²¹ Viebeck, Elise. "Diversity on Stark Display as House's Incoming Freshmen Gather in Washington." The Washington Post. November 13, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

²² LaLoggia, John. "2018 Midterm Voters: Issues and Political Values." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. October 10, 2018.

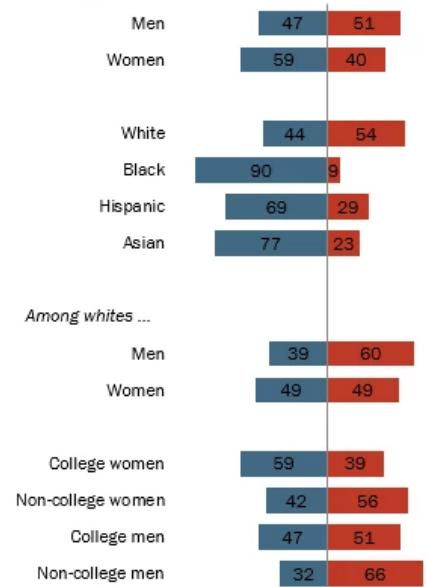
²³ Dunn, Amina. "Gun Policy Remains Divisive, But Several Proposals Still Draw Bipartisan Support." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. October 18, 2018

²⁴ Viebeck, Elise. "Diversity on Stark Display as House's Incoming Freshmen Gather in Washington." The Washington Post. November 13, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2018.

In 2018 vote, sizable gender, race and educational divides

% who say they voted for the ___ in the election for House of Representatives

■ Democratic candidate ■ Republican candidate



Source: Based on exit polls conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, as reported by CNN.

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When it comes to the question of how the two parties represented various voting groups in America, the data supports the idea that the Republican Party is primarily supported by straight white men, while the Democratic Party has a large base in women and people of color. Women favored the Democratic candidate in their district by 19 percentage points (59% to 40%) while men voted for the Republican 51% to 47%. Blacks voted overwhelmingly (90%) for the Democratic candidate, including comparable shares of black men (88%) and black women (92%). When gender, race, and education are considered together, women college graduates stand out for their strong preference for the Democratic candidate (59% favored the Democrat while just 39% voted Republican). Whites with less education – particularly men – supported the

²⁵ Jones, Bradley. "1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 18, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

Republican. Majorities of voters ages 18 to 29 (67%) and 30 to 44 (58%) favored the Democratic candidate. Voters ages 45 and older were divided (50% Republican, 49% Democrat).²⁶

The Republican party has become the party of the older generations statistically. Baby Boomer voters (born 1946 to 1964) are nearly evenly divided (48% identify as or lean Democratic, 46% Republican). The Silent Generation (born 1928 to 1945) is the only generational group that has more GOP leaners and identifying voters than Democratic-oriented voters. About half (52%) of Silent Generation voters identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, a larger share than a decade ago; 43% identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party²⁷. Republican candidates ran their campaigns focused on issues of illegal immigration, the economy, abortion, lowering taxes, and increasing jobs.²⁸

Views of the seriousness of the problem of sexual harassment, a major problem in the news in the past few years, also were closely tied to midterm preferences: 72% of those who said it is a very serious problem supported Democratic candidates. Among those who said it was a somewhat serious problem, Republican candidates held a slim edge (50% vs. 48%). And while relatively few voters said sexual harassment is not too serious a problem (11%), this group voted overwhelmingly Republican (79% vs. 20%).²⁹

Democrats lead by 22 points (57%-35%) in party identification among adults with postgraduate degrees. The Democrats' edge is thinner between those with college degrees or some post-graduate experience (49%-42%) and those with less education (47%-39%). Across all educational categories, women are more likely than men to affiliate with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic. The Democrats' advantage is 35 points (64%-29%) among women with post-graduate degrees, but only eight points (50%-42%) among post-grad men.

There are differences between how various religious groups voted in 2018. White evangelical or born-again Christians backed Republican candidates for the U.S. House of

²⁶ Jones, Bradley. "1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 18, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

²⁷ Jones, Bradley. "1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 18, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

²⁸ Jones, Bradley. "1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 18, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

²⁹ Geiger, Abigail. "The 2018 Midterm Vote: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education." Pew Research Center. November 08, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

Representatives at about the same rate they did in 2014. Meanwhile, religiously unaffiliated voters (also known as religious “nones”) and Jewish voters once again backed Democratic candidates by large margins. Voters who say they attend religious services at least once a week backed Republican candidates over Democrats in their congressional districts by an 18-point margin. Those who attend services less often tilted in favor of the Democratic Party, including two-thirds (68%) of those who say they never attend worship services. Analysis of the religious composition of the 2018 midterm electorate shows that 17% of voters were religiously unaffiliated, up from 12% in 2014 and 2010.³⁰

In U.S. congressional races nationwide, an estimated 69% of Latinos voted for the Democratic candidate and 29% backed the Republican candidate. Hispanics had a gender gap in voting preference, with 73% of Hispanic women and 63% of Hispanic men backing the Democratic congressional candidates – a reflection of the election’s broad gender differences. Hispanic women were significantly more dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country today than Hispanic men. A gender gap also existed among white voters, with 49% of white women backing the Democratic congressional candidate compared with 39% of white men. By contrast, few gender differences existed among black voters, with about nine-in-ten black voters of both genders backing Democratic candidates.³¹

LGBT people made up 6 percent of the electorate in the midterms, and 82 percent of them cast their ballot for their district’s Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives, versus 17 percent for their district’s Republican House candidate. The exit poll also found LGBT voters supporting Democratic Senate and gubernatorial candidates in strong numbers.³²

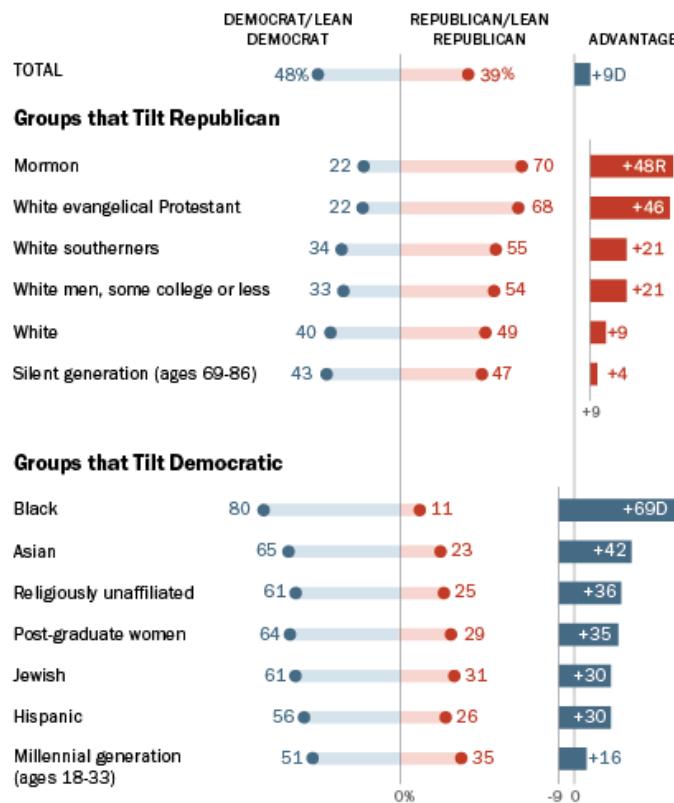
³⁰ Geiger, Abigail. "How Religious Groups Voted in the Midterm Elections." Pew Research Center. November 07, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018

³¹ Geiger, Abigail. "Key Takeaways about Latino Voters in the 2018 Midterm Elections." Pew Research Center. November 09, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

³² "Record LGBT Support for Democrats in Midterms, NBC News Exit Poll Shows." NBCNews.com. Accessed November 27, 2018.

Strong Groups for the Democratic and Republican Parties

% of each group that identifies as ...



Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Asians are non-Hispanic and English-speaking only.

Source: All Pew Research Center political surveys from 2014. Based on the general public.

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In summary, the Republican party is largely supported by older generations, straight white people - especially men- and Christians. The Democrats, however, can be seen as having a more diverse voter makeup. A majority of Blacks, Asians, non-Christians, LGBT people, Latinos, and the younger generation vote Democrat. For the first time in decades, the Democratic party leads in terms of strength of education over the Republicans.

The Members-Elect to the 116th Congress of the United States shows a dramatic split between the demographics of the two parties. It's clear from the freshman class photo of the

³³ Smith, Samantha. "A Deep Dive Into Party Affiliation." Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. September 24, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

116th Congress that the members-elect are set to change the composition of both chambers quite visibly they head to Washington in January. Among the most notable changes, given the recent cultural shifts in the wake of the #MeToo movement and the Kavanaugh hearings, is the addition of 35 female lawmakers, bringing the total number of women in the 116th Congress to a record (of at least) 124, up from 107 in the current Congress. "It brings a different perspective to the table," Rep.-elect Kendra Horn, from Oklahoma, told the *Washington Post*, adding: "I'm very excited to be part of this new class that looks a lot more like our communities"³⁴.

It is clear that each parties Congressmen and women-Elect are reflective of each parties politics and are representative of their voters. The Democrats, have a majority of women voters and they are the party in support of abortion, equal rights and pay for women, reproductive rights, and increasing punishment for sexual assault and harassment. 90% of the Republican Party in this Congress will be white, while 54% of the Republican voters are white. The Republican party is the ones pushing for stricter immigration regulations, a major issue for white males, as well as fighting against gun control. The new Congress will be twenty-one percent Hispanic, Native American and people of color. 36.15% of the nation contains this group, so this Congress is getting closer to truly representing the racial makeup of America. The Democrats-Elect have Muslims, Native Americans, Latinos, people of color, and people of various ages, educations, sexualities. The Republicans-Elect are all white, and nearly all men.

One does not even need the party labels on the image of the two parties Members-Elect to know which party is which, as long as one knows the politics of each party. The Democratic Party is reinventing itself to fit its voters; younger, more diverse, more inclusive, more accepting. The Republican Party, however, is often considered to be in crisis with the sharp shift to the far-right that the President activated in his base that now has a large voice in the party. Democratic voters care about climate change, gun control, civil rights, reproductive rights, accessible healthcare and education, and inclusiveness for all people.

The question for the future becomes which party will thrive in the next few election cycles. The Democrats secured large victories in the House this November, but will their

³⁴ Johnson, Stephen. "Here's How Diverse the 116th Congress Is Set to Become." Big Think. November 16, 2018. Accessed November 27, 2018.

message continue to be effective in 2020 and beyond? Will the divisiveness that seems to have taken hold of the nation continue to drive a wedge between people or can the newly elected members of Congress work together despite their differences to create actual change that Americans want and need? Americans can only hope that they can.