How Do LGBT Voters Navigate the Political Landscape? An Analysis of Vote Choice and Public Opinion in 2016

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Abstract:

Exit polls reported by various news organizations provide a snapshot of LGBT voters, which indicates they are generally solid Democrats in the ballot box. However, exit polling does not provide the nuance necessary to describe the full range of how the LGBT community votes and how they perceive social and economic issues. Using the largest random sample survey of LGBT voters ever made publicly available, this research describes a group that is decidedly to the left of the political spectrum, but distinct from self-identified Democrats in several ways. Most notably, people who are both pro-life and LGBT were much more likely to vote for Donald Trump in 2016 than pro-life Democrats. These results indicate that there is a need to better understand the relationship between the LGBT community and abortion opinion, both theoretically and analytically.

Introduction

On July 21, 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump made history when he became the first Republican to include positive words about the LGBT community in his nomination acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, declaring: "As your president, I will do everything in my power to protect our LGBTQ citizens from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology" (Johnson 2016). Months later at an October campaign rally in Colorado, Trump held an upside-down LGBT pride flag with the words "LGBTs for Trump" written in permanent marker on it, with the Republican crowd applauding the gesture (Lambert 2016).

While Donald Trump's campaign for president was historic in many ways, for the LGBT community, it was complex and, at times, confounding. Despite Trump's favorable remarks, Mike Pence – who once suggested on the House floor that same-sex marriage would lead to a "societal collapse" (*Congressional Record* 2006, 14796) – was the Vice Presidential nominee. Moreover, the Republican National Committee at the 2016 Convention included in its platform support for marriage between only a man and a woman, and strongly endorsed so-called "religious freedom" legislation like the First Amendment Defense Act – legislation seen by LGBT advocates as discriminatory (Melling 2015; Republican National Committee 2016).

From the Stonewall Riots, to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, *Lawrence v. Texas*, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the legalization of same-sex marriage, LGBT rights debates have dominated social politics in the US for decades. However, despite growing research on LGBT politics and the political behavior of LGBT individuals, little is known to date about LGBT voting behavior or what the LGBT voting population looks like descriptively. Aside from Lewis et al.'s 2011 study on LGB voters in the 2000 presidential election, analyses of LGBT voting behavior have been few and far between. While some groups have conducted polling of LGBT voting patterns, they come mostly from think tanks and advocacy groups (Egan et al 2008; Gates and Newport 2012). Thus, this work moves beyond descriptives regarding the vote choice of LGBT voters to relate some causal mechanisms that drive the political ideology of this growing subgroup.

Past Trends and the 2016 Election

In the United States, the politics surrounding LGBT issues has experienced a tectonic shift in the last two decades. Issues such as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" dominated debates about military inclusion, the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* case struck down sodomy laws nationwide, and the fight for same-sex marriage changed the landscape and opinion of LGBT rights (Flores

2014). Additionally, public opinion has shifted dramatically on the same-sex marriage question. The Pew Research Center details that in just sixteen years, support for same-same sex marriage grew from 35% in 2001 to 62% in 2017 ("Changing Attitudes" 2017). With such a fast-moving change in public opinion on a controversial social issue, it is important to understand the role the LGBT community has played politically in these shifts.

There have been a few reports in the last few years from political scientists analyzing LGBT voting behavior. As Lewis et al. discuss, for nearly three decades, two-thirds or more of the LGB community have cast their vote for Democratic presidential candidates (2011). Other research such as Aronson and Smith (2013) and Black et al. (2000) has detailed nearly the same findings. Importantly, as LGBT issues have grown in prominence and coverage, the opinions and behavior of transgender individuals have been included in some reports (Perez 2014). Past exit-polling data confirms Lewis et al.'s findings, with the lowest percentage of LGBT individuals voting for a Democratic presidential nominee hitting 66% in 1996. Every other presidential election since 1992 shows 70 to 78 percent of the LGBT population voting for the Democratic nominee (Huang et al. 2016).

In one of the first wide-ranging polls interviewing the LGBT community, Gates and Newport (2012) in conjunction with Gallup detail 3.4% of Americans identified in 2012 as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Among this community, the authors note 44% identified as Democrats, 43% identified Independent, and 13% identified as Republican. When the poll asked about party identification on a 7-point party identification measure, Gates and Newport report that 65% of LGBT individuals identify Democratic, whereas 21% lean or identify with the Republican Party, leaving 13% of the LGBT population identifying as solidly Independent. While party identification does not always translate to voting behavior, the results from the

Gallup poll mesh with the 20-27% Republican LGBT vote share trend seen in exit-polling information (Huang et al. 2016).

As fluctuations in LGBT party turnout have been noted over the years, political science research has started to examine why these changes have occurred. For example, several scholars have looked at the extent to which the number of state-level marriage equality amendments on the ballot in the 2004 election played a role in driving LGBT and general turnout. As Lewis (2005) notes, 11 states held successful votes on constitutional amendments declaring marriage being between a man and a woman. Mulligan (2008) adds that in 2004 National Election Pool exit polls, "moral issues" was the most frequently selected important issue among voters, leading early analysts to believe the 2004 election was "a referendum on values" (108). However, these scholars and others determined after examining exit polling information more closely that gay marriage was not as consequential in the 2004 election as originally believed (Abramowitz 2004; Lewis 2005; Mulligan 2008). Despite political scientists debunking the "moral values" vote in the 2004 election, LGBT turnout in that election was one of the highest ever recorded (Huang et al. 2016), yet is a phenomenon less explored.

Previous research has largely examined only questions existing in state or local level politics, impacts of representation, or political issues within the LGBT community instead of LGBT voters specifically. To put it another way, research, while growing on LGBT issues, has used the LGBT community as a variable in analyses rather than as the central focus. For example, Smith et al. (2006) use the 2004 marriage equality amendments in Michigan and Ohio to examine voter turnout based on moral issues. Additionally, Haider-Markel (2007) has considered the representational impacts of LGBT state legislators on LGBT issues within their respective states. Black et al. (2000) provide an early descriptive overview of the LGBT

community, and Egan and Sherrill (2005) examined changing advocacy priorities within the LGBT community as fights for marriage equality were increasing.

Recent studies have both novel findings and an increased scope in sexuality politics. Jones et al. (2018) have explored public opinion towards transgender people, and Flores et al. (2018) have examined how exposure to transgender people impacts attitudes towards transgender rights and candidates. And Schnabel (2018) has found strong evidence for the impact of sexual orientation on social attitudes, and adds critical insights to the political socialization of LGBT people. Compounding on Schnabel's findings is Cravens' (2018) analysis of religiously affiliated LGBT people, noting that they may eschew traditionally held views that religious activity contributes to skills in the political arena. Additionally, Cravens' findings of lessened religious affiliation and activity add to insights presented later in this study. Yet, for all these works, LGBT voting behavior – due in part to data limitations – has been under observed. This extant research is important, but much of it fails to provide even a baseline understanding of LGBT voters themselves, especially after same-sex marriage legalization via *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

Understanding the LGBT community as voters is important not only because this gap exists in extant research; there is evidence to suggest that LGBT voters have proved critical as a voting bloc. As Gates (2012) explains in his report for the Williams Institute, the 2012 LGBT vote was likely enough to swing the election in favor of President Obama, as the LGBT vote in Ohio and Florida – key swing states – appeared enough to push those states into Obama's corner. Assuming all else equal, if the LGBT community had not voted in Ohio and Florida, or had the LGBT community gone for Romney in greater numbers, Romney's odds of winning the 2012 election would have been much greater. The importance of this effect is magnified considering

27% of the LGBT community voted for John McCain in the 2008 election (Huang et al 2016). There is ample evidence to suggest that the LGBT community is an impactful political group.

Therefore, when turning to the 2016 presidential election, the LGBT vote is equally as important to interpret. Donald Trump received only 14% of the LGBT vote – the lowest vote share among Republican nominees since 1992 – whereas Hillary Clinton received 78% of the LGBT vote, the highest ever reported for a Democratic nominee in exit-polling data (Huang et al. 2016). Yet, while the Democratic LGBT vote share increased only 2% to its peak in the 2016 election compared to the 2012 presidential election, the Republican LGBT vote share dropped by 8%. At face value, it appears Trump's historic inclusion of LGBT rights in his platform and campaign rhetoric helped him not at all among LGBT voters. Such a dramatic shift in LGBT voting behavior warrants a deeper exploration of this group.

Issue Preference and LGBT Voters

When seeking to explain the LGBT vote, one relevant area of voting behavior to explore is issue preference and saliency. Despite issue preference being a major focus in political science literature, this scholarship largely has not yet expanded to encompass single-issue voting within the LGBT community. Yet, single-issue voting and issue preferences are important lenses to employ. Egan and Sherrill (2005) note the changing issue preferences within the LGBT community, transitioning from workplace, housing, and general discrimination protections to fights for civil unions and same-sex marriage. With the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision legalizing same-sex marriage in 2015, Levit (2016) has looked to which issues may dominate the LGBT rights struggle in years to come. Primarily, she and other scholars identify religious freedom laws at the forefront of this agenda, as well as continued fights for transgender acceptance and equalityLewis 2017; Stern et al. 2018).

With many turning from same-sex marriage to religious freedom issues and transgender protections (Westbrook and Schilt 2014), a shift is occurring away from same-sex marriage being the single issue of the LGBT rights movement. Often, issue preference can be a greater explainer of presidential voting than party identification (Ansolabehere et al. 2008), and Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989) posit that one's general preference on policy direction and the intensity of those preferences drive voting behavior. Moreover, Lachat (2011) reveals that issue preference voting is often stronger in more competitive elections and that party identification is only stronger in less competitive elections. Finally, Bélanger and Meguid (2008) identify that issued-based voting is only strong when a voter believes those issues are particularly salient.

Applying the above literature to LGBT voters uncovers important questions this study tackles. With same-sex marriage arguably no longer the main issue of the LGBT community, are LGBT individuals still driven by LGBT issues, and if so, which issues? If they hold issue preferences for LGBT rights, have these preferences decreased in saliency or intensity? And perhaps most importantly, post-*Obergefell v. Hodges*, what do LGBT voters look like?

To answer these questions, we look to the 2016 CCES data set. This set is the largest of its kind to include a question about sexuality and gender identity, meaning, not only does it allow for rigorous quantitative analysis, it is the first with enough transgender respondents to allow meaningful analysis of this underexplored part of the LGBT community. Additionally, the 2016 CCES data set allows for an examination of the LGBT voter beyond just demographics and party identification with an exploration of predictive statistics.

Data

The 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study was conducted in October and November of 2016. One of the benefits of the CCES is its sheer sample size: 64,600 total

respondents. While the CCES has been conducted biannually beginning in 2006, only in the 2016 wave did the instrument ask every respondent a question regarding their sexual orientation. Recent studies of LGBT activity have used other datasets to assess the behavior of this subsample, but they have drawbacks, which can be improved upon by the 2016 CCES. For instance, the Social Justice Sexuality Survey has been widely used (Battle et al. 2015, Cravens 2018), but was collected from a convenience sampling method in 2010. While most public opinion has slowly changed over time, the perception and acceptance of an LGBT lifestyle has shifted dramatically in the last decade.[1] It seems likely that respondents may have displayed more reluctance to identify as LGBT in 2010 than they would be in more recent years. The other available survey was collected by Pew Research Center in 2013, however it was limited to 1197 LGBT adults living in the United States (Cravens 2018). This survey was also conducted pre-*Obergefell,* which could significantly shift both the size of the population and individuals' expression of opinions on topics supporting rights for LGBT people. Additionally, while a sample of 1,200 can provide reasonably powered statistical estimates of the entire population, margins of error quickly increase as one begins to subdivide the sample. The CCES overcomes both these problems because it was collected relatively recently and has a total LGBT sample of over 4,000 respondents that were collected using random sampling techniques.

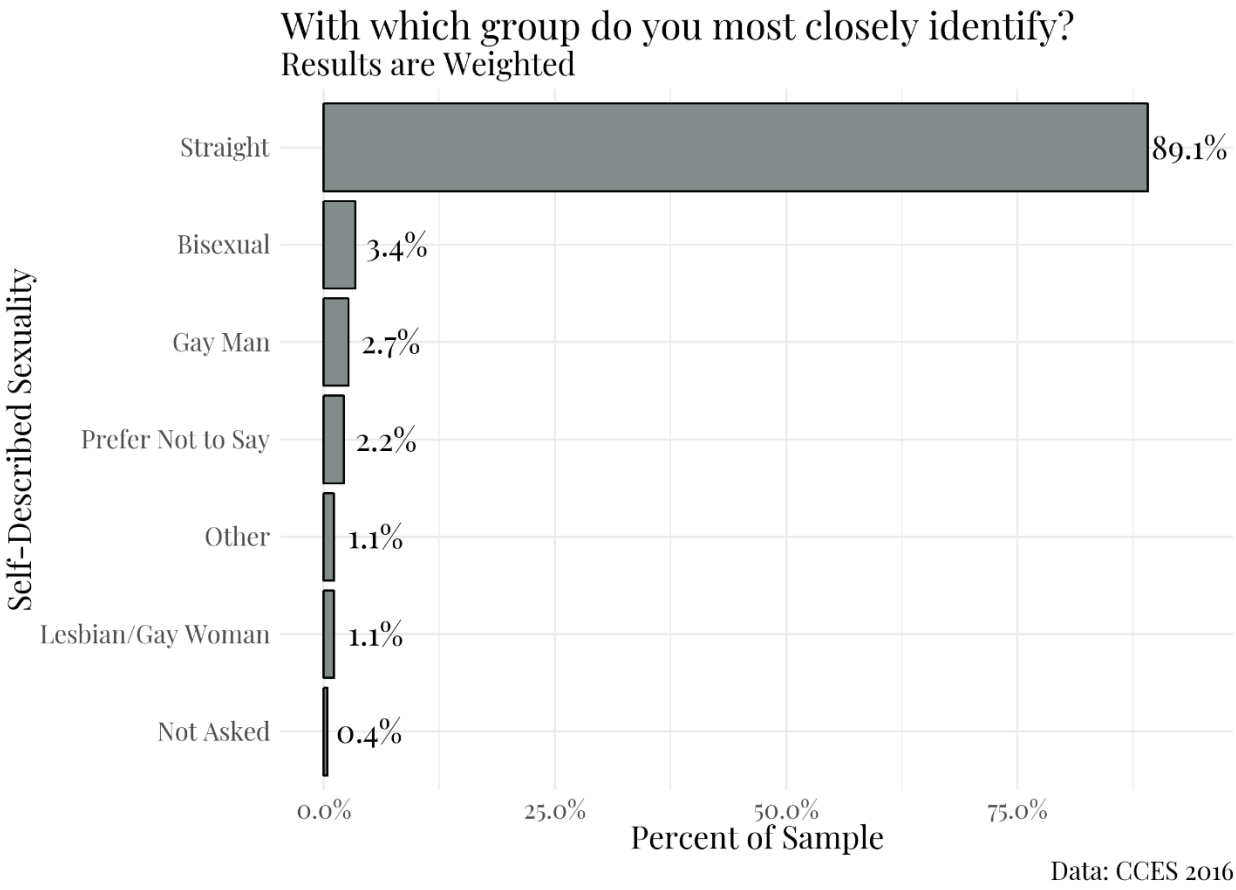
Measuring the LGBT Population

In the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, the question which assesses sexual orientation simply states: "With which group do you most closely identify?" and gives the

[1] Pew Research indicates that just 35% of Americans were in favor of same-sex marriage in 2006, in 2016 that number was 55% (Fingerhut 2016).

respondents several options including: straight, bisexual, gay man, or lesbian gay woman. Figure 1 displays the results of this question for the entire sample in the 2016 CCES.[2]

Figure 1



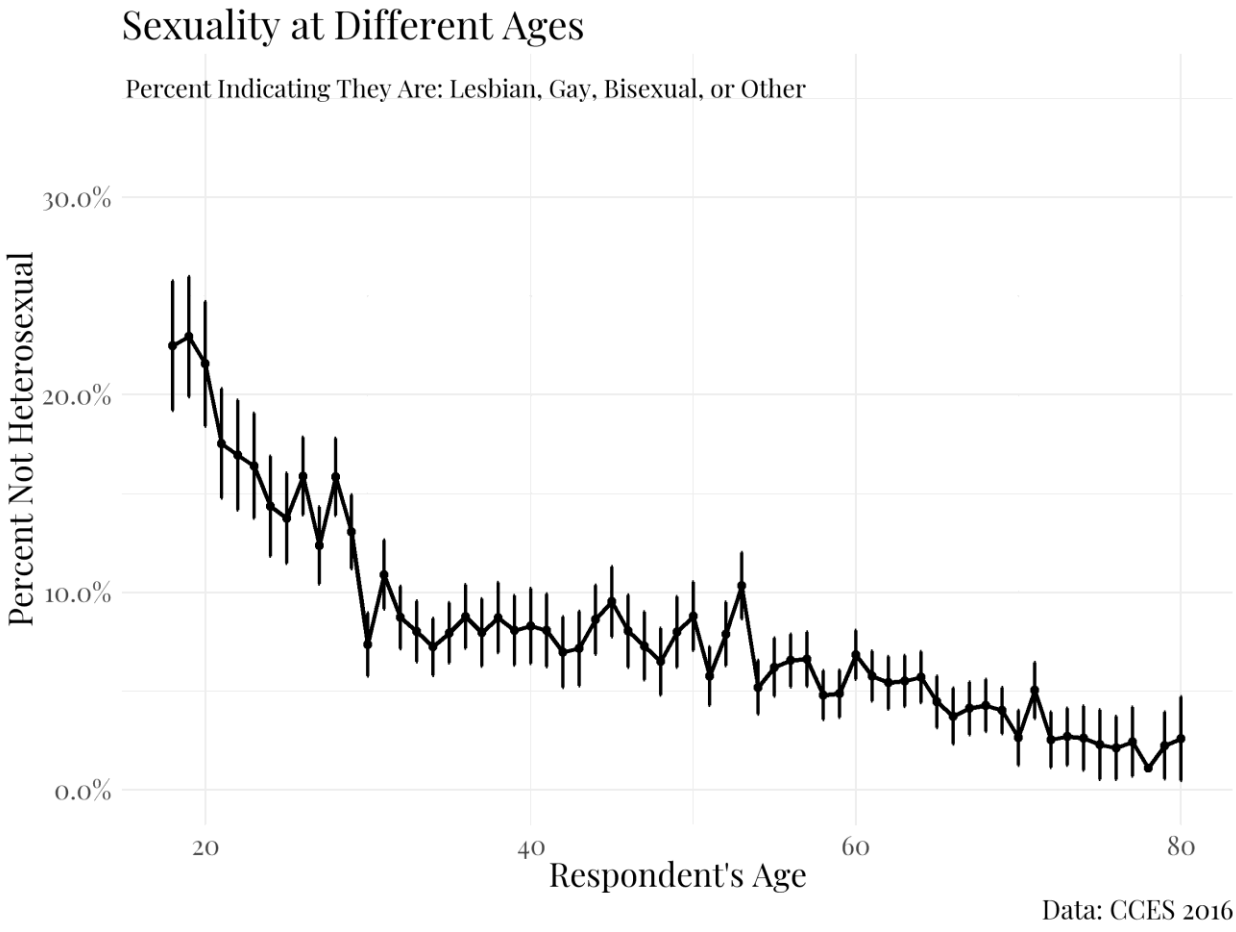
These results indicate that nearly 9 in 10 adults regard themselves as straight. However, for the remaining ten percent, there is a great deal of variety in their sexual orientation. Previous research has indicated that approximately 4% of the American population is lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Black et al. 2000; Gates 2017). These results are much higher, with 7.2% of respondents choosing one of those three categories. In addition to these three options, there are two other categories, "prefer not to say" and "other", that could potentially be added to the

[2] Note that these, and all subsequent appropriate analysis will include the weight including by the survey authors when using the sexuality question. That weight is: commonweight_vv_lgbt

aforementioned sample, which would drive the share of the “not heterosexual” population to over 10%.

This result warrants further inquiry. Because the CCES has such a large total sample size there is an opportunity to assess individuals’ sexual orientations at various ages. Figure 2 below displays the mean percent (denoted by the black dot) that indicate that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other by age. The bars extending vertically from the point are 95% confidence intervals. The analysis was limited to those aged 80 years and younger due to small sample sizes at the top end of the age range.

Figure 2



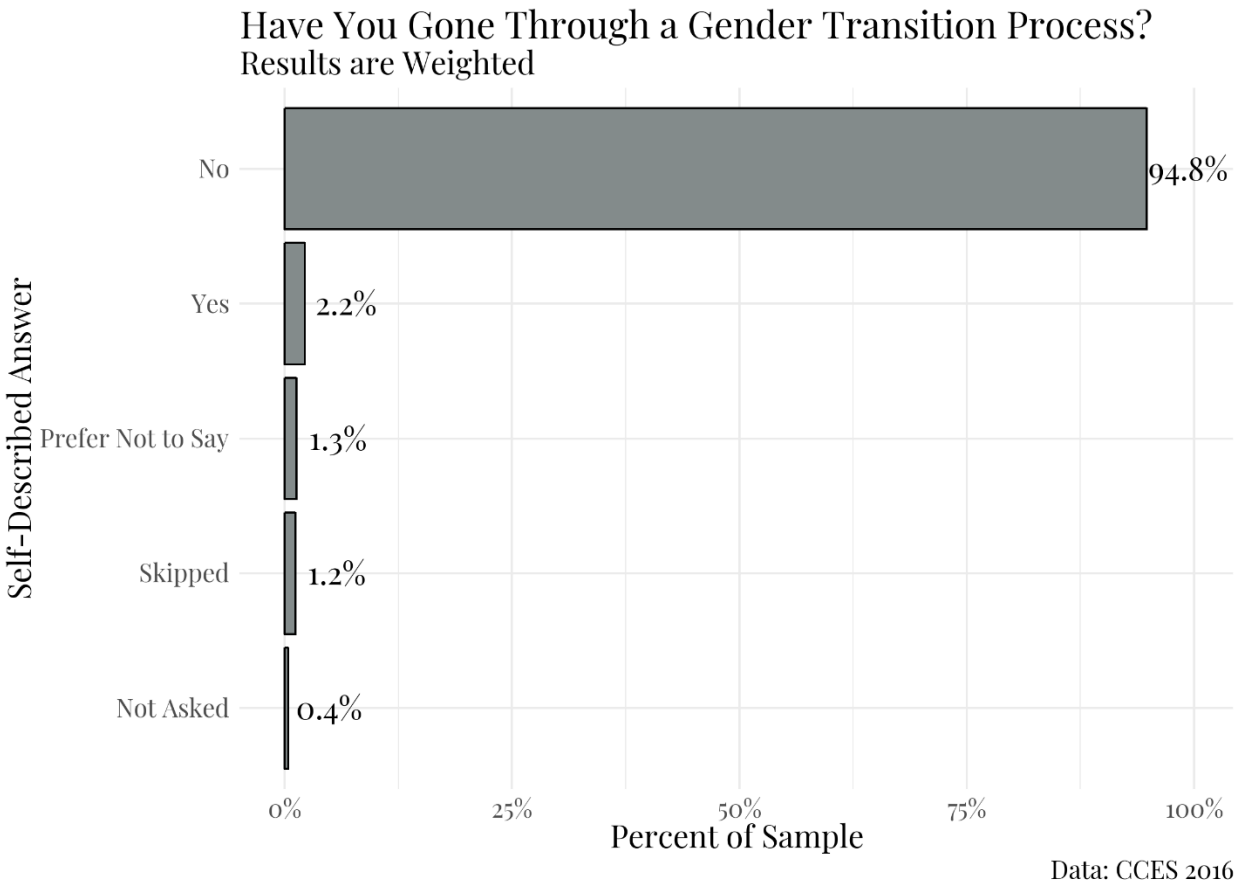
What is most striking about these results are the sheer number of young people who do not identify as heterosexual. For instance, approximately one in four people under the age of 20 say that they are not straight in their sexual orientation. These above previously reported levels persist even into a respondent's late twenties and early thirties with approximately 10% identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other. From this point on the x-axis, there is a slow and steady drop in the population share, declining to 5% around age sixty, and finally 2-3% for those above the age of seventy. If previous estimates of LGB demography approximate the share at roughly 5%, then these results foreshadow a dramatic increase in this population in the coming decades. However, that conclusion is predicated on the assumption that these young people will maintain their sexual orientation into mid-life. On the other hand, there may be a life-cycle effect occurring: as young people settle down, engage in gainful employment, and begin to put down roots with a spouse and children, their likelihood of declaring a heterosexual orientation will increase. Unfortunately, this possibility cannot be tested at present because of the lack of historical data tracking the LGB population.

The other sub-group included in this analysis are those who identified as transgender. The question wording posed in the CCES is as follows:

"Have you ever undergone any part of a process (including any thought or action) to change your gender / perceived gender from the one you were assigned at birth? This may include steps such as changing the type of clothes you wear, name you are known by or undergoing surgery."

Respondents were given the choice of "yes", "no" and "prefer not to say." The frequency of respondents is displayed visually in Figure 3.

Figure 3



The share of those who have not attempted to change their gender is large. In fact, just one in fifty respondents answered the question in an affirmative. However, on the flip side, if 2% of the adult population has gone through a portion of the gender transition process, that translates to roughly 5 million adults in the United States who identify as transgender. Of those who

indicated that they have gone through a gender transition process, 60% indicated that they were male and 40% were female. It is not possible to know how many of these individuals responded as the gender they were assigned at birth versus the gender that they transitioned to later in life.

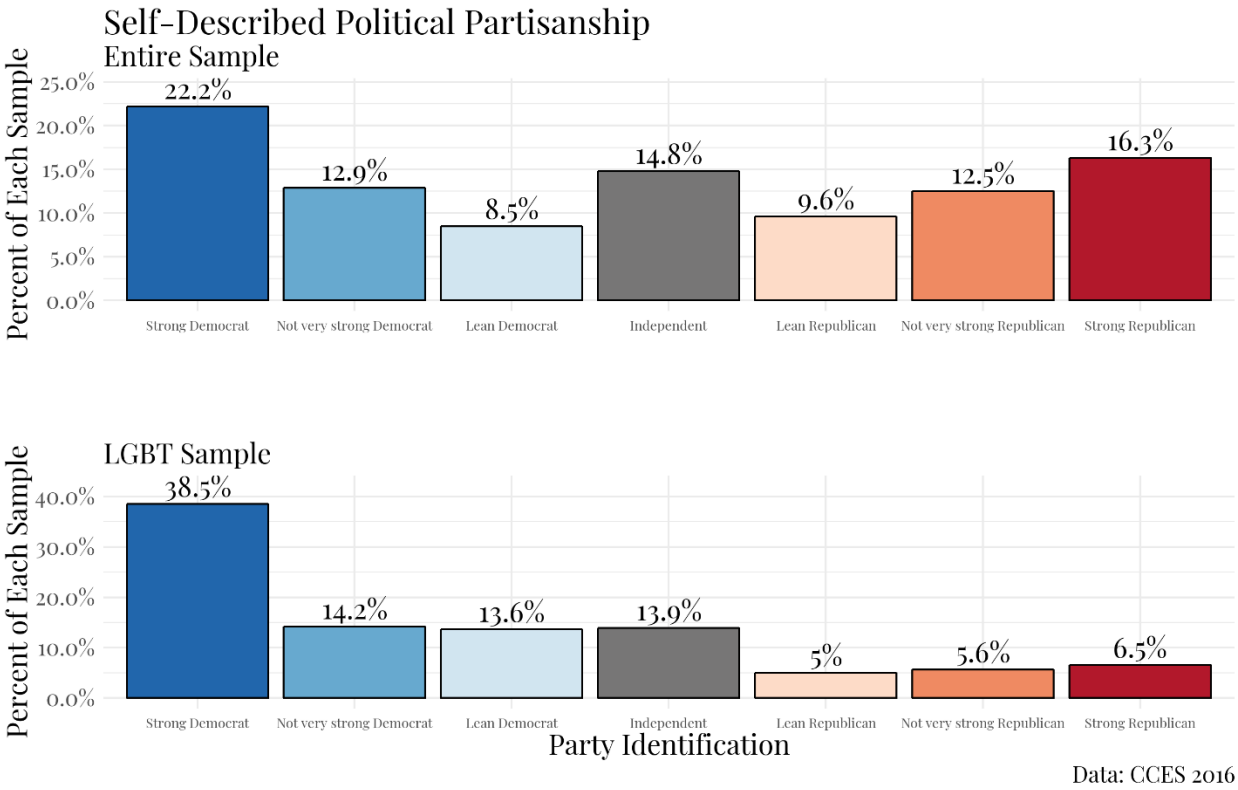
To define the LGBT population for the remainder of the analysis, those included in the sample were those who responded: "lesbian/gay woman", "gay man", "bisexual", or "other" to the sexuality question as well as those who responded affirmatively to the gender transition question. In total, this yields a weighted sample size of 5,563, or 8.61% of the total respondents in the 2016 CCES.

Political Ideology and Partisanship

Having created a sample of LGBT individuals, an assessment of this subgroup's political partisanship, ideology, and voting behavior is warranted. As prior exit polls note (Huang at al. 2016), the LGBT population tends to lean left in their political partisanship, and this finding is largely confirmed using the 2016 CCES sample. Figure 4 below visualizes the distribution of responses to the survey question related to the political partisanship of respondents ranging from "strong Democrat" to "strong Republican" with "independents" in the middle of the scale.[3] Clearly, LGBT individuals are more Democratic than the general population. While 43.6% of the entire sample identifies with the Democrat party, fully two thirds (66.3%) of LGBT voters align with Democrats. Conversely, 38.4% of all Americans identify with the Republican party, while just 17.1% of the LGBT population side with the GOP. It is also noteworthy that the percentage of individuals who identify as "independents" is roughly the same in both samples.

[3] Those who responded "not sure" were excluded from this analysis.

Figure 4

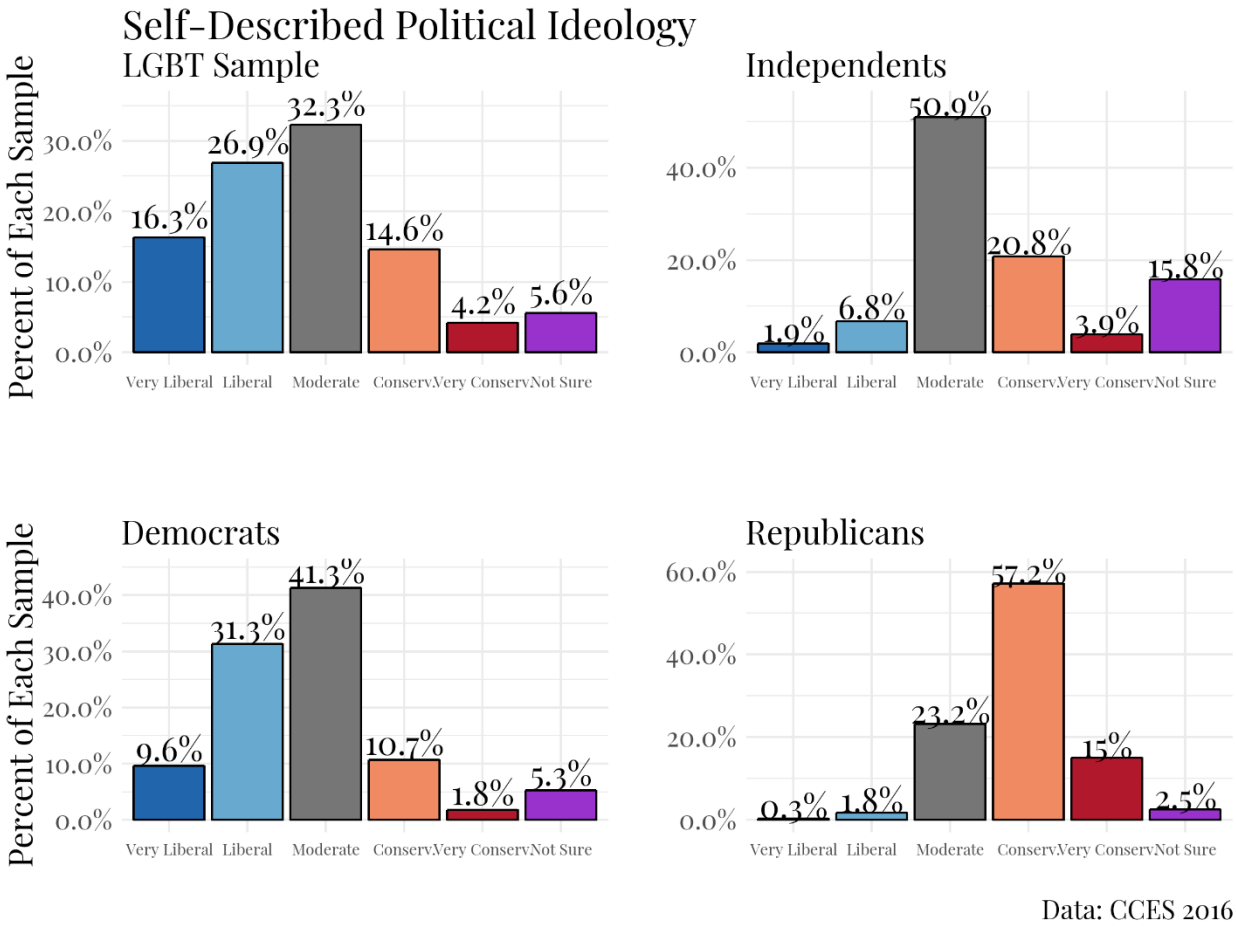


Another dimension to assess a group's political orientation is through the lens of political ideology. The CCES asks, "In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?" with response options including: "very liberal" to "very conservative" with "moderate" in the middle. Figure 5 displays how four different groups respond to this question.[4] Obviously,

[4] Democrats were defined by those who responded to the party identification question as: "strong Democrat", "not very strong Democrat", and "lean Democrat." Republicans were "strong Republicans", "not very strong Republicans", and "lean Republican." Independents were those who used that response option to the party identification question.

Democrats are more likely to identify themselves as liberals than Republicans but there are significant differences between these partisan groups. For instance, note that 41.3% of Democrats identify as "moderate" on the political ideology question compared to just 23.2% of Republicans. When comparing the LGBT sample to the other three groups, it is clear they are more akin to Democrats than any other group. For the LGBT sample, 43.2% identify as liberal or very liberal, compared to 40.9% of Democrats. However, 18.8% of LGBT respondents identify as conservative, while just 12.5% of Democrats respond the same way. It seems that, from this view, LGBT individuals are similar to Democrats more generally. However, there are larger numbers of LGBT respondents who see themselves as having a conservative political ideology.

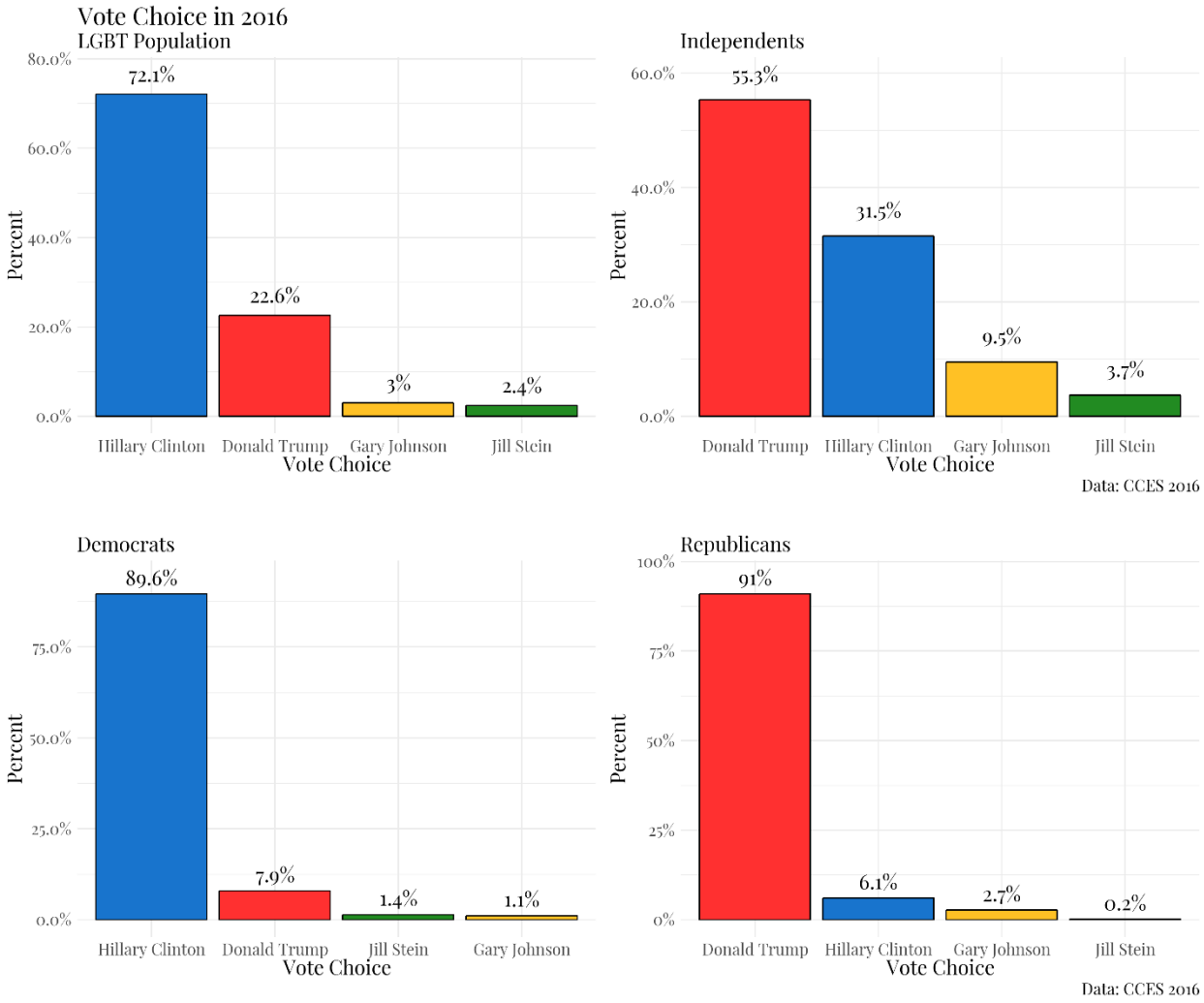
Figure 5



Vote Choice in 2016

As previously noted, the 2016 exit polls indicated that Hillary Clinton received 78% of the vote, while Donald Trump garnered 14%. When the *New York Times* compared these results to the 2012 exit polls, they report that Clinton enjoyed ten more points of support from than the LGBT community than Obama received in 2012 (Huang et al. 2016). The result from the CCES data are slightly different than these exit polls. Figure 6 displays the vote share for the top four candidates in the 2016 election, with the sample being divided into those who identify as a Democrat, Republican, and Independent analyzed separately alongside those who were LGBT in the sample. In the top left panel, the data indicate that Hillary Clinton garnered 72.1% of the LGBT vote, which is slightly lower than that reported by the *New York Times*. In the same manner, the CCES data indicate that Donald Trump received 22.6% of LGBT vote, which is six points higher than that reported by *Times*. There could be a myriad of explanations for this discrepancy including survey method, survey sample size, and the time frame in which each

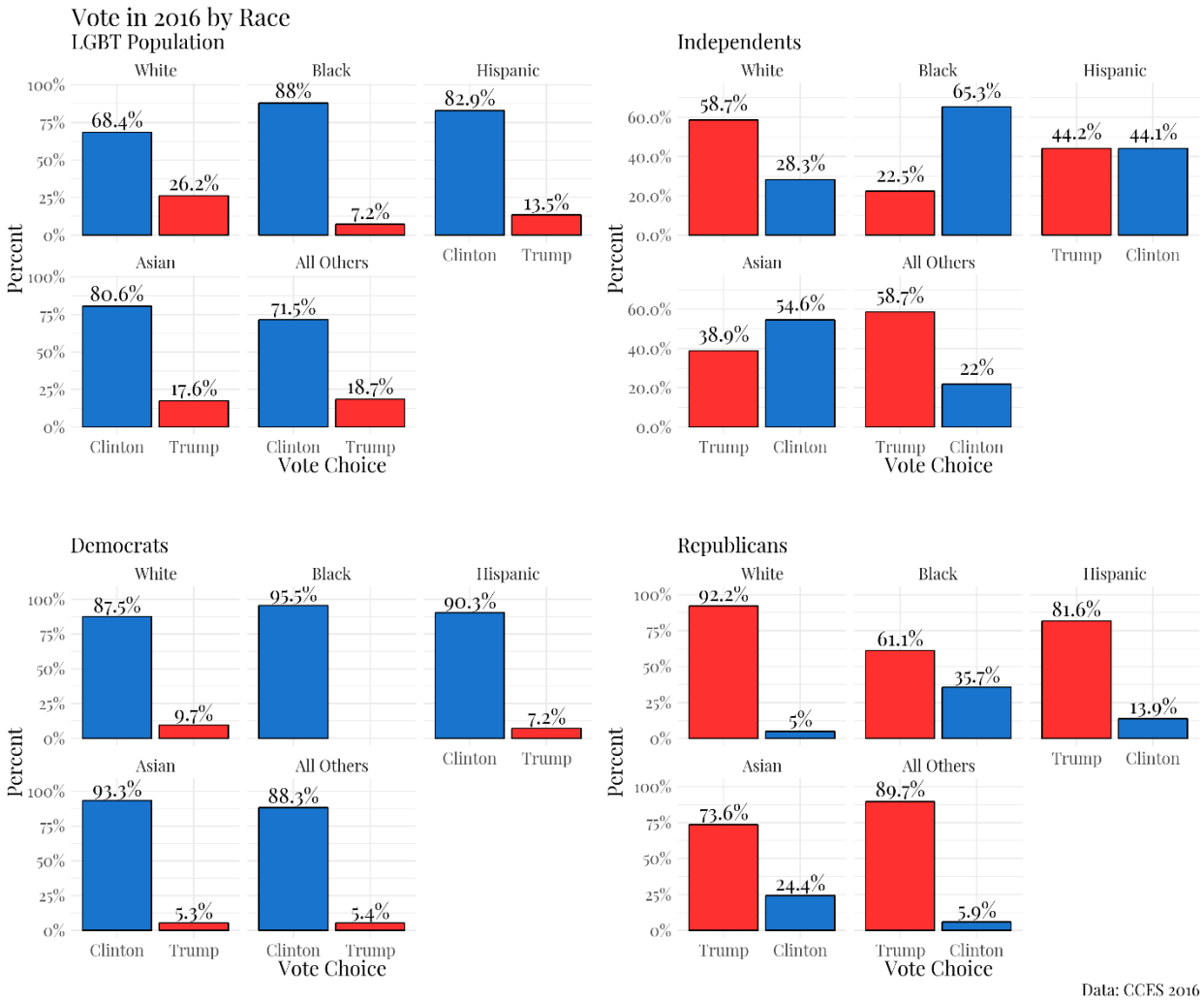
sample was collected. **Figure 6**



Another important result from this analysis is the comparison between LGBT voters and the result of the electorate. In Figure 5, the data indicates that LGBT voters were slightly more likely to identify themselves as liberal compared to Democrats as a whole. One could hypothesize this would translate into stronger support for Hillary Clinton in 2016, but that is not the case here, as displayed in Figure 6. In fact, there is a 17 point gap in support for the Democrat candidate between the LGBT vote and those of self-identified Democrats. Seen from another angle: LGBT voters were fifteen points stronger for the GOP candidate Donald Trump

than were Democrats as a whole. It would seem possible that some of these liberal LGBT voters would have cast their votes for a more liberal candidate, such as Jill Stein, but again, the data does not bear that out as LGBT voters were statistically no more likely to support third party candidates than Democrats. It is also clear that LGBT voters did not look like Independents or Republicans at the ballot box, but they did not look like Democrats, either.

Figure 7



One of the most prominent predictors of a vote for Donald Trump in 2016 was racial resentment, specifically among white Americans (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018, Mutz 2018). Therefore, it seems worthwhile to explore the variations in vote by LGBT individuals broken down on racial lines. Figure 7 above follows the same scheme employed previously by comparing LGBT voters to Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The results for white respondents are striking. While Hillary Clinton enjoyed 87.5% of the white Democrat vote, she only received 68.4% of the vote among white LGBT voters. That gap among white voters is the largest of any racial group when comparing the LGBT community and Democrats. Note that black and Hispanic LGBT voters were between 7-8% less supportive of Trump than those same racial groups among Democrats. As previously described, it is clear that, at the ballot box, LGBT voters are not Independents. For instance, black LGBT voters were twenty-three points stronger for Hillary Clinton than were black Independents. The differences are noteworthy among Hispanics as well, with the top two candidates in a statistical dead heat among Independents while Clinton garnered a seventy-point advantage among LGBT voters who identify as Hispanic.

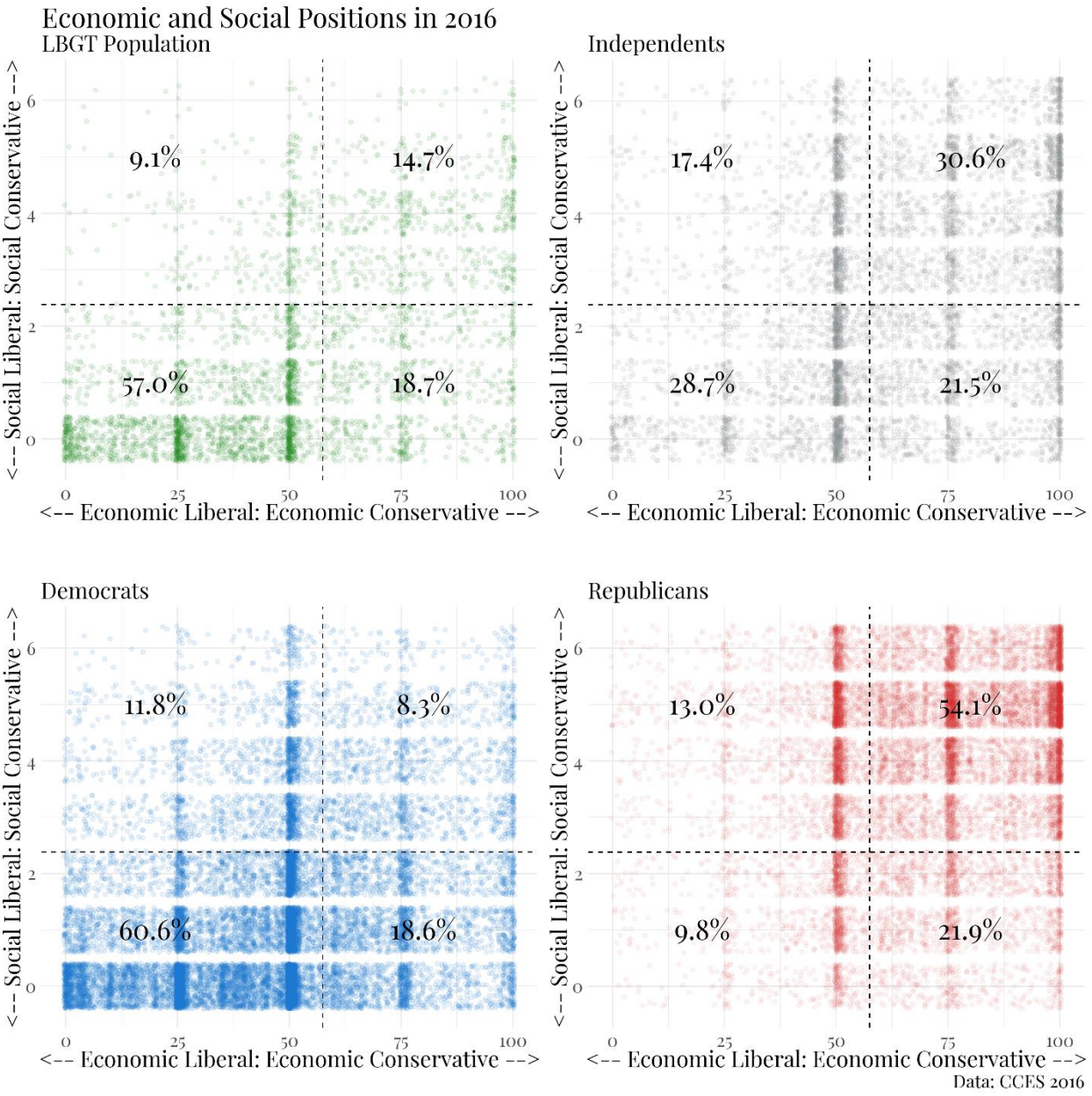
Issue Positions

Having described who LGBT voters supported in the 2016 election, it seems helpful to try to understand what drove LBGT voters to make these choices in the presidential election. The CCES asks a number of questions which assess what issues respondents found important as well as their opinion about many of these issues. A simplified look at the economic and social positions of the four groups is displayed graphically in Figure 8. The economic dimension (x-axis) is defined by a single question from the CCES which asks voters, “If your state were to have a budget deficit this year it would have to raise taxes on income and sales or cut spending, such as on education, health care, welfare, and road construction. What would you prefer more,

raising taxes or cutting spending?" Responses ranged from 0 (raising taxes alone) to 100 (through spending cuts alone). The social dimension is an additive scale of five abortion scenarios along with a question regarding support same-sex marriages. Lower numbers indicate more socially liberal attitudes, while higher number are more conservative.[5] The horizontal and vertical dashed lines indicate the average scores on each dimension for the entire sample.

Figure 8

[5] Full question wording and variable coding is available in the appendix.

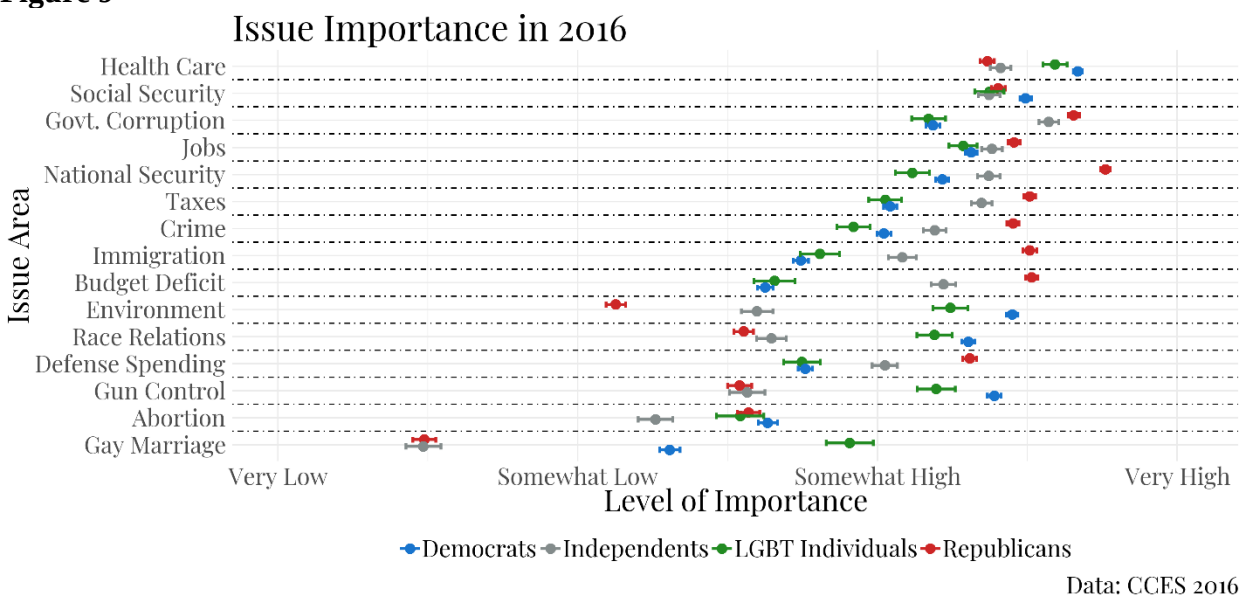


As could likely be assumed from the graph, huge portions of Democrats fall in the social and economically liberal quadrant, while the same is largely evident for Republicans with 54.1% being socially and economically conservative. From this perspective, it would appear that LGBT voters are very similar to Democrats. In fact, the largest deviation between the two groups is just 6.4% in the social and economic conservative quadrant. It is noteworthy, however, that in each of the four groups, roughly one in five respondents identifies as economically conservative and

socially liberal. This bottom right quadrant is incredibly consistent compared to the other three. When comparing LGBT voters to Independents, they are half as likely to be in the top right (socially and economic conservative) as well as in the top left (socially conservative, but economically liberal).

To further elucidate this finding, Figure 9 below displays the importance that voters place on fifteen different issues ranging from taxes to immigration to gay marriage. The structure of the question was: "How important are each of these issues to you?" Response options ranged from "Very High Importance" to "No Importance at All." The point estimate represents the mean response for each group and the capped lines visualize 95% confidence intervals for each estimate. It is important to note that approximately 20% of the sample was asked the issue importance battery which lends slightly less statistical power to this analysis compared to prior results.[6]

Figure 9



[6] However, because the total sample size of the 2016 CCES was 64,600, that means that the total sample size for this portion was still quite large at just over 13,000.

For many of the issue areas in the survey, LGBT voters strongly resemble the mean response from Democrats. For instance, both groups are not statistically distinguishable on issues such as taxes, immigration, and the budget deficit. In each case they expressed less concern than Republicans or Independents. On other issues such as gun control, health care, and the environment, LBGT individuals are statistically distinct from Democrats, but their preferences are clearly much more similar to Democrats than even to Independents.

The two "culture war" issues of abortion and gay marriage are worth some further consideration, however. Looking comparatively, it is quite stunning to note that the two issues registering the lowest level of importance for this sample (as a whole) are social issues. For gay marriage, it is noteworthy how little overall importance both Independents and Republicans place on this issue. This could be reflective of the fact that the *Obergefell* decision has made the issue one that is unlikely to change and, therefore, has receded from political discourse. Even LGBT voters placed less importance on this issue than they do other topics such as national security or healthcare.

Turning to the issue of abortion, of the fifteen total issues in the survey, there are only two in which LGBT voters express the same level of importance as Republicans. One of those is social security (however all four groups are tightly clustered) and the other is abortion. It is striking to note that Republicans, Democrats, and LGBT voters all indicate very similar levels of importance on the issue of a woman's right to choose. However, while these groups all place the same amount of relative importance on the issue of abortion, that does mean it motivates those respondents to vote in the same way on election day. Clearly, level of importance does not always translate into the ballot box in the same way.

Figure 10

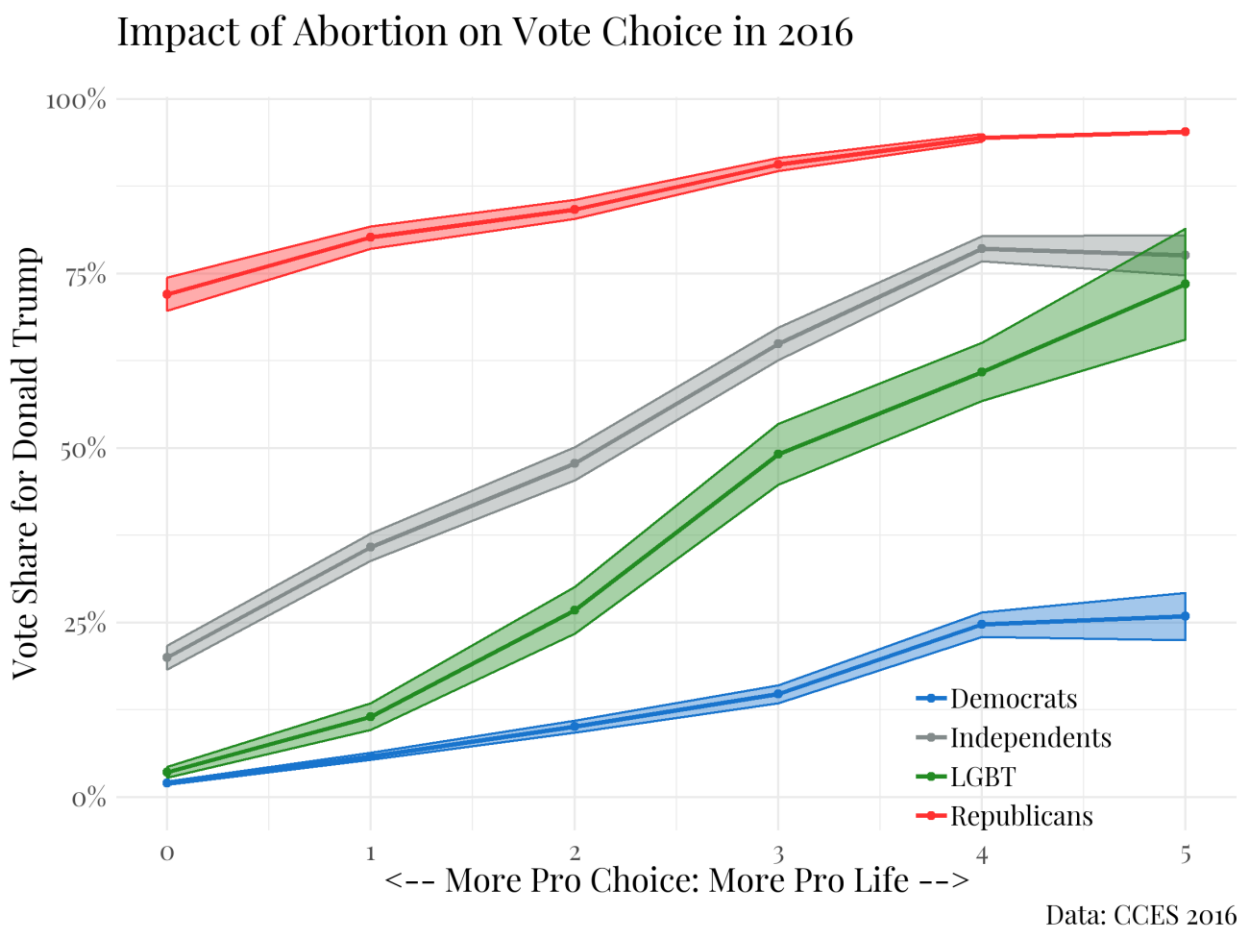


Figure 10 tries to untangle the difficult relationship between abortion opinion and vote choice in the 2016 Presidential election. The x-axis is an abortion scale which assesses a respondent's permissiveness to abortion in five different scenarios. A score of five indicates a stance that is completely opposed to offering women access to abortion services, while a score of zero is completely permissive to abortion rights.[7] The y-axis is the vote share that the Republican Donald Trump received in the 2016 presidential election. Each group's results are indicated by a solid line with points which is surrounded by a darkened area which represents 95% confidence intervals.

[7] The full list of abortion questions are available in the appendix

For each of the four groups it is worthwhile to note that stronger opposition to abortion access leads to stronger support for the GOP candidate; however, the rate of increase in support varies dramatically for each of the four. Note that Donald Trump received nearly three quarters of the vote from Republicans who are completely pro-choice, and this rose to 95% among pro-life Republicans. For pro-choice Democrats, 2% supported Donald Trump, but a quarter of pro-life Democrats voted for the GOP candidate. This rate of increase was statistically the same for both Republicans and Democrats (~23%).

However, the other two groups, Independents and LGBT voters, are much more responsive to abortion politics than strong partisans. For instance, 20% of pro-choice Independents supported Donald Trump versus 78% of pro-life Independents, an increase of nearly sixty percent. For pro-choice LGBT voters, 3% supported Trump – a number that is nearly the same as Democrats. Yet, as one moves from the left of the scale to the right, a dramatic increase in support for Donald Trump is observed. In fact, 73.5% of pro-life LGBT respondents cast their ballot for the GOP. That represents a seventy-point increase in support for Donald Trump among LGBT voters. Examined from this angle, LGBT voters look much closer to Independents than Democrats.

One must wonder how many LGBT voters are distributed on the spectrum of support for abortion. The lowest two values of the scale, zero and one, represent just over half of LGBT individuals (57%). However, one quarter of LGBT individuals scored a three or greater on this scale. This distribution of abortion opinions looks very similar to Democrats in the 2016 CCES.[8] Support for abortion among LGBT voters is not strongly gender dependent, either. For instance, the mean difference in abortion support is 1% higher for LGBT women compared to their male

[8] A graph of this distribution is available in the appendix.

counterparts.[9] What is puzzling, however, is why these LGBT voters are seemingly so impacted by abortion politics compared to self-identified Democrats.

Discussion

While gay marriage and abortion are often used in tandem to describe the core issues of the "culture war," it is worthwhile to note that there has been surprisingly little written about how those two issues relate to each other. More specifically, there has been little, if any scholarly work devoted to how LGBT individuals feel about a woman's right to choose an abortion. As previously described, LGBT individuals look somewhat similar to Democrats in both voting preferences as well as public opinion, but abortion seems to be an issue where the LGBT community has more heterogeneity than is seen among those who identify as Democrats.

One of the most instructive justifications for the linkage between LGBT rights and abortion access comes in an op-ed in the San Francisco Bay-Times. The authors argue that "LGBT people should care about a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because our two movements depend on each other" (2016). The authors contend that when the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws in the *Lawrence vs. Texas*, the majority opinion included language from the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, which was squarely focused on a woman's right to receive an abortion. Specifically, the *Lawrence* decision echoed *Casey* when the Court stated, "It is a promise of the Constitution that there is a realm of personal liberty which the government may not enter." The authors note that one of the most compelling arguments for both abortion and LGBT rights emerge when average citizens are willing to speak up about their experiences.

[9] This distribution is visualized in the appendix.

However, that fails to provide justification for why pro-life LGBT voters were much more likely to vote for Donald Trump in 2016 than pro-life Democrats. One possible answer lies in likelihood of same-sex couples to be sensitive to the realities of the availability of adoptable children, both in the United States and abroad (Raleigh 2012). If abortion remains legal and easily accessible, it could potentially lead to fewer babies being made available for adoption by the LGBT community (Bracken et al. 1978). However, what may dampen that theory is the lack of a statistically significant difference in support for abortion between genders in the LGBT community. Prior scholars have noted that the need for adoption is lower among lesbian couples than it is for gay men in a relationship (Weston 1997). One would assume that gay men would be more likely to oppose abortion access, however the data does not bear this conclusion out.

Pro-life arguments from self-identifying conservative LGBT people are also varied. The Log Cabin Republicans (LCRs) is the original and largest Republican LGBT organization, focusing almost entirely on LGBT rights, economic and national defense issues, and small-government reforms (Chibbaro 2017; "Issues"). Yet, besides LGBT rights, the LCRs generally do not touch social issues. In 1999, the organization adopted a position of "full neutrality" in the abortion debate and largely have kept that position since ("Log Cabin Republicans" 1999). Additionally, in 2009, two leaders of the LCRs, Jimmy LaSalvia and Christopher R. Barron, split from their former organization to establish GOProud, in large part because they believed the LCRs to be too centrist (Shapiro 2012). While GOProud never took a stance on abortion, Barron is openly pro-life, advocating in 2011 that defunding Planned Parenthood was more important than taking on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and in 2009 opining that pro-life gays would find a home in GOProud (Weigel 2011; McGurn 2009). Despite folding in 2014 (Browning 2014),

GOProud's work represents the more socially conservative thought among conservative LGBT people – especially when compared to the LCRs.

However, two organizations representing what has often been mainstream American conservatism do not provide the whole picture among LGBT people on the right. The LGBT community has not been immune to the rise of far-right nationalistic politics in the United States. While the LGBT people among the so-called "alt-right" are a small subset of LGBT conservatives, the extremity of their views highlights the myriad political beliefs among the LGBT community (Falvey 2016; O'Connor 2017). Regarding abortion, former-Breitbart editor and figurehead of far-right LGBT provocateurs Milo Yiannopoulos has said he is pro-life out of a concern that, if the so-called "gay gene" is ever discovered and can be detected during pregnancy, some parents will have selective abortions from a place of real or perceived homophobia either personally or in society (Mitchell 2016). Debates regarding the ethics of determining the "gay gene" have been well documented (Saxton 2000; Schüklenk et al. 2008; Stein 1998), and the complexity of first discovering and then being able to test for something like one's sexual orientation gives pause to claims like Yiannopoulos' (Ball 2017).

Taken with other stances like the LCRs' neutrality and GOProud's more socially-conservative lean, far-right views on abortion like Yiannopolous' hint at both the range of abortion positions in LGBT conservatism and the intensity of these beliefs. The LCRs represent a strain of conservatism focused primarily on fiscal conservatism and states' rights, whereas GOProud adds social issues to the mix, and far-right leanings provide still more intensity to the issue. Put another way, different segments of the LGBT right appear to feel differently about the importance of abortion. Given the notable shift in presidential vote as LGBT individuals identify

as more pro-life, the question remains if there is a similar change in LGBT Democrats due to different levels of issue importance within the Democratic platform?

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Appendix

Abortion Scenarios:
Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice
1 = Support, 0 = Oppose
Permit abortion only in case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger
1 = Support, 0 = Oppose
Prohibit all abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy
1 = Oppose, 0 = Support
Allow employers to decline coverage of abortions in insurance plans
1 = Oppose, 0 = Support
Prohibit the expenditure of funds authorized or appropriated by federal law for any abortion
1 = Oppose, 0 = Support
Make abortions illegal in all circumstances
1 = Support; 0 = Oppose

Same Sex Marriage:

Do you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?
1 = Oppose; 0 = Favor

Figure A1

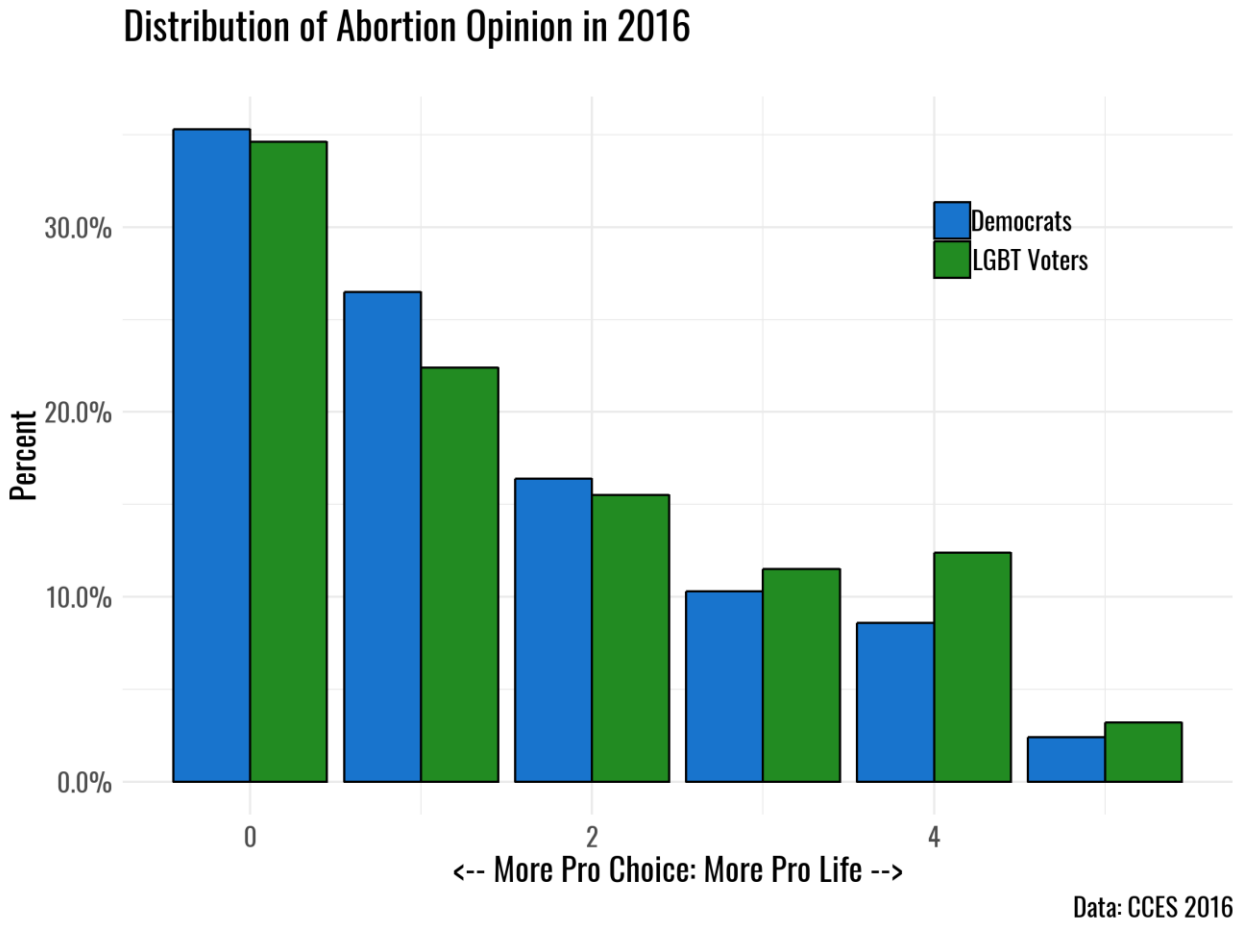
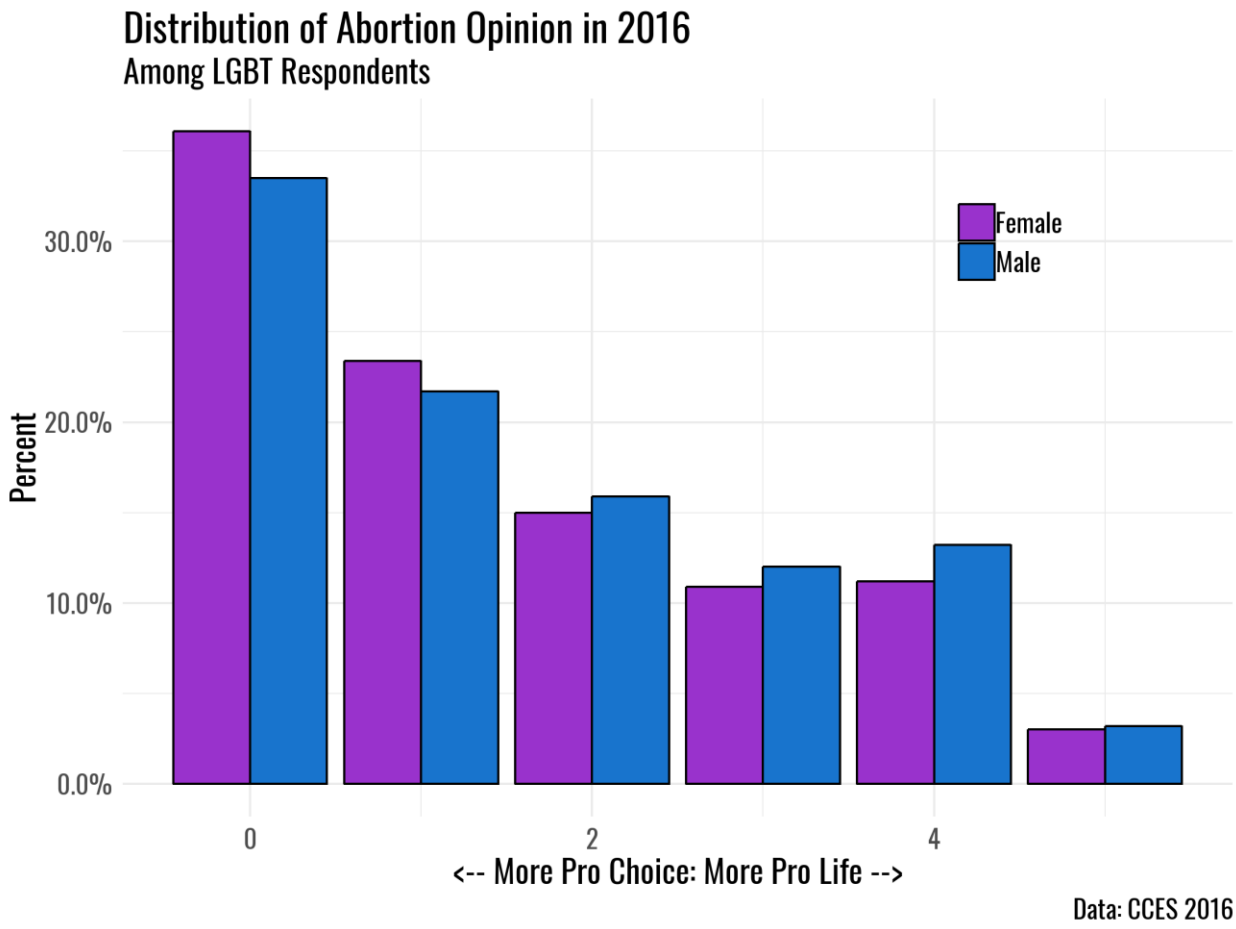

Distribution of Abortion Opinion in 2016
Democrats
LGBT Voters
Percent
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
0
2
4
<-- More Pro Choice: More Pro Life -->
Data: CCES 2016

Figure A2


Distribution of Abortion Opinion in 2016
Among LGBT Respondents
Female
Male
Percent
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
0
2
4
<-- More Pro Choice: More Pro Life -->
Data: CCES 2016