UCLA School of Law Williams Institute

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

LGBT Gen Z Adults and the 2026 Midterm Elections

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Executive Summary

Generation Z's (Gen Z) eldest members turn 29 years old in 2026. Nearly 50 million Gen Z Americans—20% of the electorate—will be eligible to vote in this year's midterm elections. Gen Z will make history as the most diverse generation in U.S. history to go to the polls, both in terms of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/gender identity.

In July 2026, the Williams Institute conducted a survey of Gen Z adults about their political priorities and motivators, focusing on points of convergence and divergence between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents. We found similarities across a range of topics—from the qualities they're looking for in a candidate to concerns about the rising cost of living. We also uncovered differences on important current issues and political engagement that may shape Gen Z adults' decisions as they head to the ballot box in November.

Key Findings

- **Gen Z respondents are politically engaged and plan to vote in the 2026 midterm elections.**
  - Nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of LGBT and non-LGBT Gen Z respondents reported that they will definitely or likely vote in the November 2026 elections for Congress.
- **Gen Z respondents favored Democrats in 2026, and LGBT Gen Z respondents strongly favored Democrats.**
  - About seven in 10 (70.7%) LGBT respondents said they would vote for the Democratic candidate for Congress in a generic ballot question. Among non-LGBT respondents, about five in 10 (48.9%) said they would vote for the Democratic candidate.
  - Fewer than one in 10 (9.5%) LGBT respondents said they would choose the Republican candidate in the generic congressional ballot question. About one in three (34.8%) non-LGBT respondents said they would choose the Republican candidate.
  - LGBT respondents were more liberal: about six in 10 (62.4%) identified as liberal compared to under three in 10 (29.0%) non-LGBT respondents. Just 5.1% of LGBT respondents identified as conservative. In contrast, 23.3% of non-LGBT respondents identified as conservative.
- **Gen Z respondents wanted candidates who share their values. Identity mattered less.**
  - Strong majorities of LGBT and non-LGBT respondents said their vote choices are motivated by a candidate who shares their values. Asked to select and rank up to three candidate qualities that would most make them vote for a candidate, two-thirds (67.4%) across the entire sample and three-quarters (76.2%) of LGBT respondents selected shared values.
  - No other candidate trait polled above 50% for either group. Across respondents, only a quarter or less of respondents ranked the following candidate qualities as a top motivator: a candidate who is under the age of 40, a candidate who shares the respondent's demographic background, and a candidate who is a political outsider.
- **Gen Z respondents said that rising costs are a top priority.**
  - Large majorities said that rising prices and inflation, the rising cost of housing, and access to affordable health care are either an urgent crisis or a serious issue.

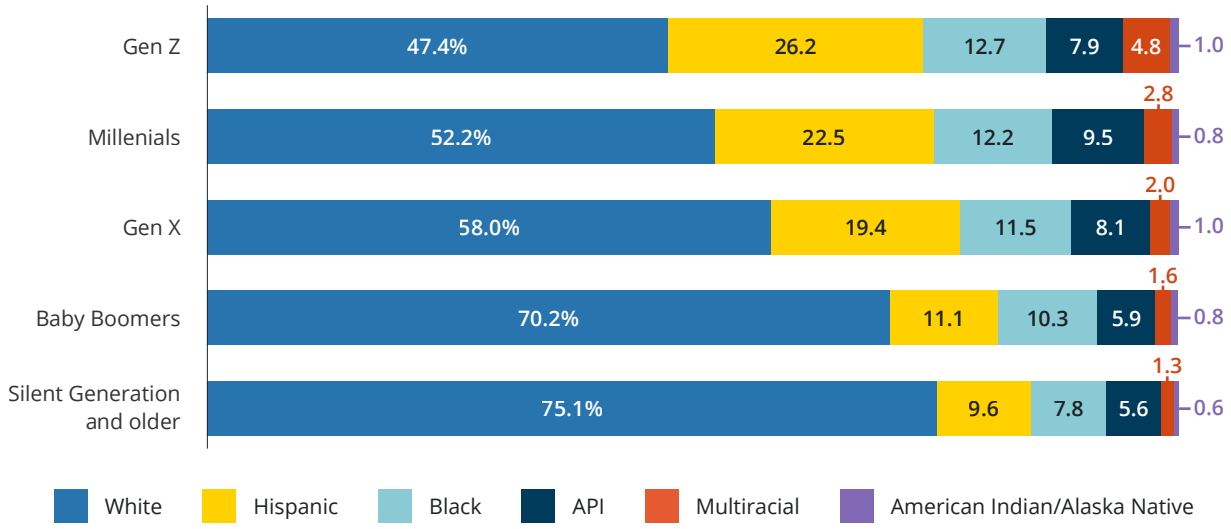
    - Over 90% of LGBT respondents said that rising prices (92.4%), the cost of housing (92.8%), and access to affordable healthcare (91.5%) are an urgent crisis or serious issue.
    - Non-LGBT respondents also rated these issues highly: 85.9% for rising prices, 85.8% for the cost of housing, and 78.4% for access to affordable healthcare.

- **Differences in priorities emerged on big policy issues between LGBT and non-LGBT Gen Z respondents.**
    - Climate change was ranked an urgent crisis or serious issue by 88.1% of LGBT respondents compared to 72.4% of non-LGBT respondents. There was a similar gap regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions: 87.2% of LGBT respondents reported this as an urgent crisis or serious issue compared to 68.1% of non-LGBT respondents. The gap was slightly smaller for the conflict in Gaza: 81.8% for LGBT respondents compared to 67.1% of non-LGBT respondents.
    - A higher percentage of LGBT respondents also rated passing laws to protect against LGBT discrimination (84.6%) as an urgent or serious issue compared to 49.5% of non-LGBT respondents. Overall, 55.4% of respondents said that this was an urgent crisis or serious issue.
    - Likewise, 69.9% of LGBT respondents said that laws restricting gender-affirming medical care to minors is an urgent crisis or serious issue, compared to 52.1% of non-LGBT respondents. For the overall sample, 55.1% indicated that this was an urgent crisis or serious issue.
- **LGBT Gen Z respondents were more likely to participate in politics.**
    - LGBT respondents were more likely to say they participated in diverse civic and political activities in the past year, such as volunteering for a political campaign or encouraging another to vote. For example, 69.6% of LGBT respondents reported encouraging others to vote compared to 54.2% of non-LGBT respondents; 36.0% of LGBT respondents reported contacting an elected official compared to 23.1% of non-LGBT respondents.
- **Gen Z respondents were interested in participating more in politics.**
    - Respondents said that a range of activities and outreach efforts would increase their likelihood of participating in politics, such as working alongside peers (56.0%) and a personal invitation from a friend, family member, or peer (57.1%).
        - LGBT respondents indicated even greater openness to increased political participation if given the opportunity to work alongside peers toward a common goal (68.4% compared to 54.6% for non-LGBT respondents) and hearing stories about civic engagement (52.2% compared to 39.0% for non-LGBT respondents).

Introduction

Generation Z (Gen Z) includes those born between 1997 and 2012. In 2026, the eldest of Gen Z turns 29 years old. An estimated 49 million people in the United States aged 18 to 29 will be eligible to vote in the 2026 midterm elections, an increase of nearly 10 million Gen Z voters from the 2024 general elections.[1] Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history.[2] Just over half (52.6%) of Gen Z adults identify as a racial or ethnic minority, compared with 39.0% of the overall adult U.S. population.[3] It is also the most diverse generation by sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI); about 16.6% of Gen Z identifies as LGBT[4]—compared to 6.9% of the overall U.S. adult population.[5]

Figure 1. Racial and ethnic composition of US adults by generation



Source: January 2026 Current Population Survey via IPUMS.
Note: Gen Z restricted to those 17 years old or older in January 2026.

[1] The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) estimated that 41 million Gen Z American were eligible to vote in 2024. *See* Medina, A., & Suzuki, S. (2023, October 18). *41 million members of Gen Z will be eligible to vote in 2024.* Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University. https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/41-million-members-gen-z-will-be-eligible-vote-2024. To calculate the number of Gen Z Americans eligible to vote in November 2026 we estimated the number of Gen Z U.S. citizens aged 17 to 28 years old in the January 2026 Current Population Survey and projected at forward a year. That method produces an estimate of 49.1 million. *See* Flood, S., King, M., Rodgers, R., Ruggles, S., Warren, J. R., Backman, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Schouweiler, M., & Westberry, M. (2025). *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 13.0* [Data set]. IPUMS. https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V13.0. The underlying CPS data come from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[2] Flood, S., King, M., Rodgers, R., Ruggles, S., Warren, J. R., Backman, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Schouweiler, M., & Westberry, M. (2025). *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 13.0* [Data set]. IPUMS. https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V13.0. The underlying CPS data come from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[3] Calculated from January 2026 Current Population Survey of all US adults aged 17 and older. Flood, S., King, M., Rodgers, R., Ruggles, S., Warren, J. R., Backman, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Schouweiler, M., & Westberry, M. (2025). *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 13.0* [Data set]. IPUMS. https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V13.0. The underlying CPS data come from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[4] In this study we analyze responses of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Gen Z U.S. adults. We use the acronym LGBT to reflect this full group. See the Data and Methods section below for more details on inclusion criteria and the Appendix for a breakdown of responses by sexual orientation and gender identity.

[5] Estimates derived from an original Williams Institute analysis of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data from 2021 to 2023 estimated a 16.6% LGBT population share for Gen Z US residents aged 18-29, and a 6.9% share for the overall adult US population. *See also* Herman, J. L., Flores, A. R., & Kopparam, R. (2026). *How many adults and youth identify as LGBT in the United States?* The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law (forthcoming).

Although national polls increasingly ask about LGBT status,[6] there is a lack of published surveys designed to explicitly examine the political attitudes of LGBT Gen Z adults in the U.S.[7] Other research has found that, on the whole, LGBT adults in the U.S. are more likely to identify as Democrats and more likely to identify as politically liberal.[8] LGBT adults are also more likely to be registered to vote, although differences exist within the population, especially between cisgender and transgender Americans.[9] Likewise, research has shown that Gen Z leans Democratic, although the Democratic vote share among young voters aged 18 to 29 declined in the 2024 election.[10]

Some recent research indicates that Gen Z as a cohort may be less politically motivated and less civically engaged than older adults. A 2025 AP-NORC poll reported that only 66% of those aged 18 to 29 said voting was extremely or very important, compared with 88% of those aged 45 to 59.[11] The report described Gen Z as "more apathetic on many political issues."[12] Other research, however, has found that Gen Z voted in greater shares in their first midterm than previous cohorts.[13] Neither study examined differences in voting or political enthusiasm that might exist based on sexual orientation and gender identity, although a 2024 report found that queer youth were more likely to be politically engaged than their non-queer counterparts.[14]

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[6] For example, *see* Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School. (2026). *Harvard Youth Poll: 52nd edition, spring 2026*. https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/52nd-edition-spring-2026; Yale Youth Poll. (2026). *Young voters vehemently oppose Trump, ICE; see big risks and some benefits to AI: Spring 2026 results.* https://youthpoll.yale.edu/spring-2026-results; CIRCLE Team, & When We All Vote Team. (2026, April 23). *The 50 million: Gen Z's power, priorities, and participation.* Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2026-04/50_million_genz_power_priorities_participation.pdf; Gallup. (2026, June 1). *What percentage of Americans are LGBTQ+?* https://news.gallup.com/poll/332522/percentage-americans-lgbt.aspx; PRRI Staff. (2026, March 19). *Mapping support for LGBTQ rights across the 50 states: Insights from PRRI's 2025 American Values Atlas.* PRRI. https://prri.org/research/mapping-support-for-lgbtq-rights-across-the-50-states-insights-from-prris-2025-american-values-atlas/.

[7] Some overall Gen Z surveys also ask about SOGI status and also provide an analysis by SOGI. For example, *see* Hilton, K., & Siegel-Stechler, K. (2024, June 1). *Queer youth are powerful, diverse, and engaged—but struggling with mental health.* Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University. https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/queer-youth-are-powerful-diverse-and-engaged-struggling-mental-health. Some LGBTQ+-focused surveys also provide a breakout by age cohort which also provides insights into Gen Z respondents. For example, *see* Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (2024, September 16). *LGBTQ+ Americans and the 2024 election: Results from the HRC Foundation 2024 LGBTQ+ Climate Survey.* https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/documents/2024-Climate-Survey_election.pdf. National studies with publicly available datasets can also be used to analyze responses by SOGI and age. For example, *see* Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. (n.d.). *Cooperative Election Study.* Tufts University. https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/research-faculty/research-centers/cooperative-election-study. For a discussion of SOGI data collection in large surveys with an example in the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Postelection Survey, *see* Flores, A. R. (2025). Rainbow voices: LGBTQ respondents in the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Postelection Survey. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 58*(2), 335–337. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096524000325.

[8] Mallory, C. (2019, October). The 2020 LGBT vote: Preferences and characteristics of LGBT voters. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020-LGBT-Vote-Oct-2019.pdf; Newport, F. (2014, July 30). LGBT Americans continue to skew Democratic and liberal. Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/174230/lgbt-americans-continue-skew-democratic-liberal.aspx

[9] Strode, D., & Flores, A. R. (2021). Voter registration rates and traits by sexual orientation and gender expression. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 85*(3), 913–928. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfab042. For an analysis by gender identity, see Advocates for Trans Equality Education Fund. (2024, August). *Civic engagement in the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey.* https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/USTS_2022CivicEngagementReport_Final.pdf. For a discussion of barriers to voter registration and voting among transgender Americans, see Tentindo, W., Cisneros, N., Herman, J. L., & Kopparam, R. (2026, September). *The potential impact of voter identification laws on transgender voters in the 2026 general election.* The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Voter-ID-Sep-2026.pdf.

[10] Hartig, H., Keeter, S., Daniller, A., & Van Green, T. (2025, June 26). *Voting patterns in the 2024 election.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/voting-patterns-in-the-2024-election/.

[11] AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (2025, July). *Younger adults are less engaged with U.S. politics.* https://apnorc.org/projects/younger-adults-are-less-engaged-with-u-s-politics/.

[12] AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (2025, July). *Younger adults are less engaged with U.S. politics.* https://apnorc.org/projects/younger-adults-are-less-engaged-with-u-s-politics/.

[13] Medina, A. (2023, August 7). *Gen Z voted at a higher rate in 2022 than previous generations in their first midterm election*. Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/gen-z-voted-higher-rate-2022-previous-generations-their-first-midterm-election.

[14] Hilton, K., & Siegel-Stechler, K. (2024, June 1). *Queer youth are powerful, diverse, and engaged—but struggling with mental health.* Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University. https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/queer-youth-are-powerful-

Across different studies conducted from 2025 to 2026, Gen Z's policy priorities show broad alignment. Economic issues and affordability consistently top the list of young people's concerns. In July 2025, approximately three-quarters of young people noted the economy (77%) and health care (72%) as extremely or very important to them personally.[15] In March and April 2026, Harvard University and Yale University conducted separate polls to identify the political priorities, perceptions, and intentions of young Americans, including for the 2026 midterm elections. Results continued to highlight Gen Z's economic concerns. In the Harvard study, nearly half of 18 to 29-year-olds said inflation (46%) and rising housing costs (40%) were urgent crises to address, and 38% felt health care was similarly urgent.[16] The Yale study reported that 81% of 18 to 34-year-olds selected the "economy" as the top issue determining their vote.[17]

These studies also find a decided Democratic advantage among Gen Z voters. The Harvard survey found a 14-percentage point Democratic advantage over Republicans (36% vs. 22%) in a generic congressional ballot among Gen Z adults.[18] Yale likewise found majorities of young Americans planning to vote for Democrats (52% of 18 to 22-year-olds and 58% of 23 to 29-year-olds).[19]

These analyses provide a coherent view of Gen Z's political motivators and priorities in 2026, but this overall picture fails to capture differences by sexual orientation and gender identity, leaving a distinct knowledge gap.[20] In this report, we present findings from a survey of Gen Z adults fielded in July 2026 with the goal of exploring the preferences and priorities of LGBT and non-LGBT Gen Z adults ahead of the 2026 general elections, the last election before the members of Gen Z begin to enter their thirties.

diverse-and-engaged-struggling-mental-health.

[15] AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (2025, July). *Younger adults are less engaged with U.S. politics.* https://apnorc.org/projects/younger-adults-are-less-engaged-with-u-s-politics/.

[16] Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School. (2026). *Harvard Youth Poll: 52nd edition, spring 2026*. https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/52nd-edition-spring-2026.

[17] Yale Youth Poll. (2026). *Young voters vehemently oppose Trump, ICE; see big risks and some benefits to AI*. Yale University. https://youthpoll.yale.edu/spring-2026-results.

[18] Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School. (2026). *Harvard Youth Poll: 52nd edition, spring 2026*. https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/52nd-edition-spring-2026.

[19] Yale Youth Poll. (2026). *Young voters vehemently oppose Trump, ICE; see big risks and some benefits to AI*. Yale University. https://youthpoll.yale.edu/spring-2026-results.

[20] However, *see* Hilton, K., & Siegel-Stechler, K. (2024, June 1). *Queer youth are powerful, diverse, and engaged—but struggling with mental health.* Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University. https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/queer-youth-are-powerful-diverse-and-engaged-struggling-mental-health. Both the Harvard Youth Poll and Yale Youth Poll ask about SOGI, and the 2026 age cohort for the Harvard Youth poll is Gen Z adults. CIRLE at Tufts University also asks SOGI in their youth poll. Like the Harvard Youth Poll, CIRCLE's 2026 poll overlaps with Gen Z adults. None of these polls was designed to compare political attitudes of LGBT and non-LGBT respondents. For a discussion of research design for analyzing by SOGI, *see* Flores, A. R. (2025). Rainbow voices: LGBTQ respondents in the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Postelection Survey. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 58*(2), 335–337. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096524000325.

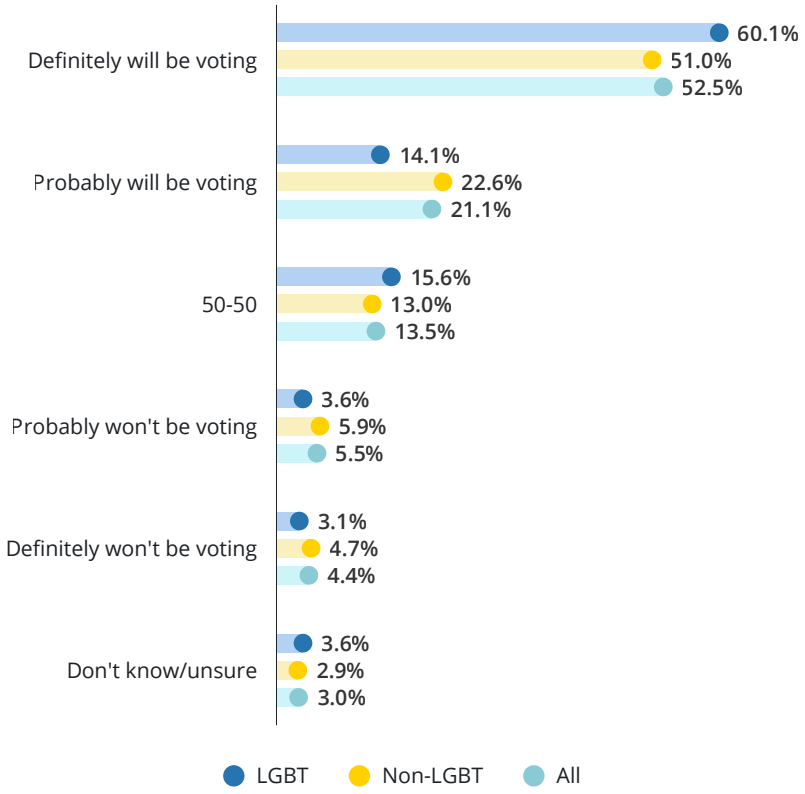
Results

Vote Intention, Party Preferences, and Ideological Leanings

Gen Z respondents are motivated to vote in the 2026 midterm elections. Over half (52.5%) of all respondents said that they definitely will be voting in the November 2026 congressional elections. This number rises to nearly three-quarters (73.6%) when those who say they will probably vote are added. LGBT Gen Z respondents were slightly more likely to say they will definitely vote: 60.1% compared with 51.0% for non-LGBT respondents, though the difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 2. Gen Z likelihood of voting in the 2026 midterm elections

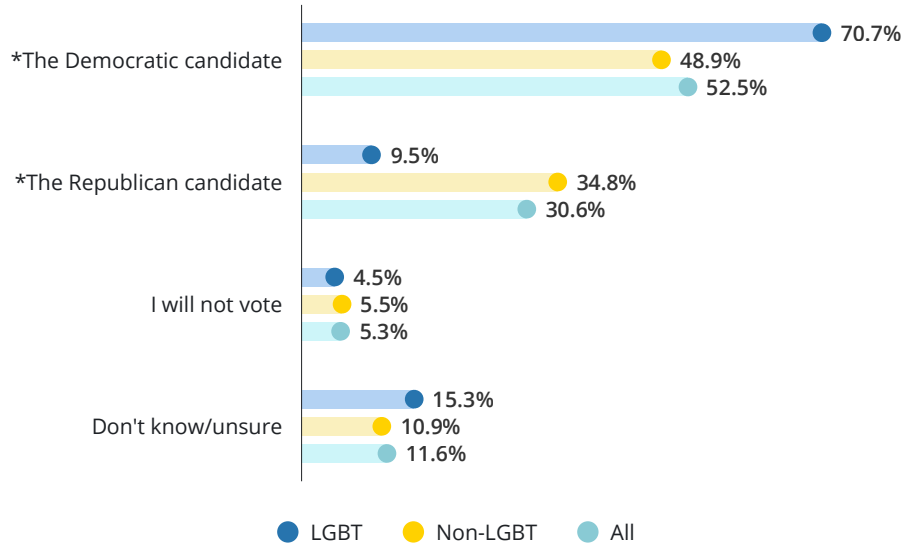
Question: "How likely is it that you will vote in the 2026 elections for Congress this November?"



Democrats are the clear party choice for Gen Z respondents. Over half (52.5%) of all respondents said they would vote for the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives if the election were held today. In contrast, less than one-third (30.3%) would vote for the Republican candidate. LGBT Gen Z respondents were much more likely to choose the Democratic candidate (70.7%) over the Republican candidate (9.5%)—a partisan preference gap of 61.2 percentage points. For non-LGBT respondents, the partisan preference gap was smaller: 14.1 percentage points in favor of Democrats. Just under half (48.9%) of non-LGBT respondents would vote for the Democratic candidate, and 34.8% would vote for the Republican candidate. A little over one in 10 respondents (11.6%) overall were unsure of their vote choice.

Figure 3. Gen Z party preference in the 2026 midterm elections

Question: "If the 2026 election for the U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, would you vote for?"



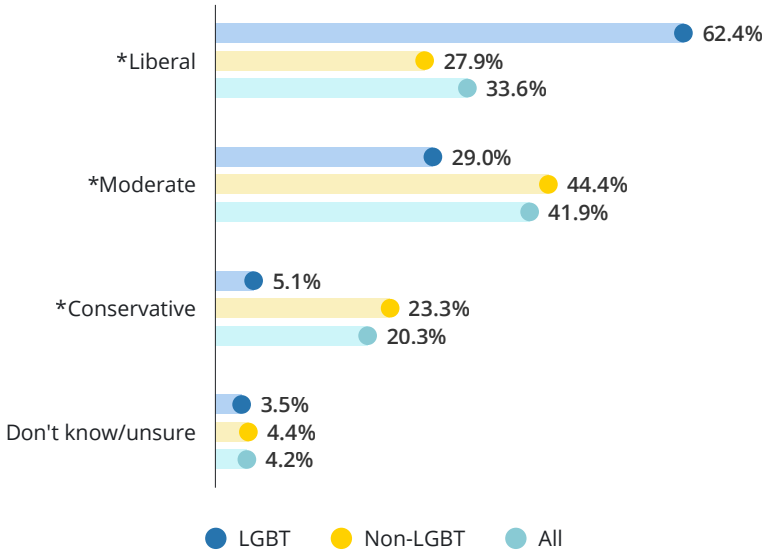
Note: *Indicates statistically significant differences between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents at the 95% confidence level.

LGBT Gen Z respondents are much more likely to identify as liberal than their non-LGBT counterparts. Overall, 62.4% of LGBT respondents reported that when it comes to political issues they think of themselves as liberal.[21] Only 5.1% of LGBT respondents described themselves as conservative; another 29.0% described themselves as moderate. In contrast, a plurality (44.4%) of non-LGBT respondents identified as moderate; 29.7% identified as liberal, and 23.3% identified as conservative. Overall, a plurality of Gen Z respondents (41.9%) described their political views as moderate, but respondents leaned liberal (33.6%) compared with 20.3% conservative—a difference of 13.3 percentage points.

[21] Original response options were: extremely liberal, liberal, moderate leaning liberal, moderate; middle of the road, moderate leaning conservative, conservative, extremely conservative, and don't know / unsure. Respondents who chose extremely liberal or liberal were coded as liberal. Moderate leaning liberal, moderate; middle of the road, and moderate leaning conservative were coded as moderate. Conservative and extremely conservative were coded as conservative.

Figure 4. Gen Z political leanings (three-point scale)

Question: "When it comes to most political issues, do you think of yourself as…?"



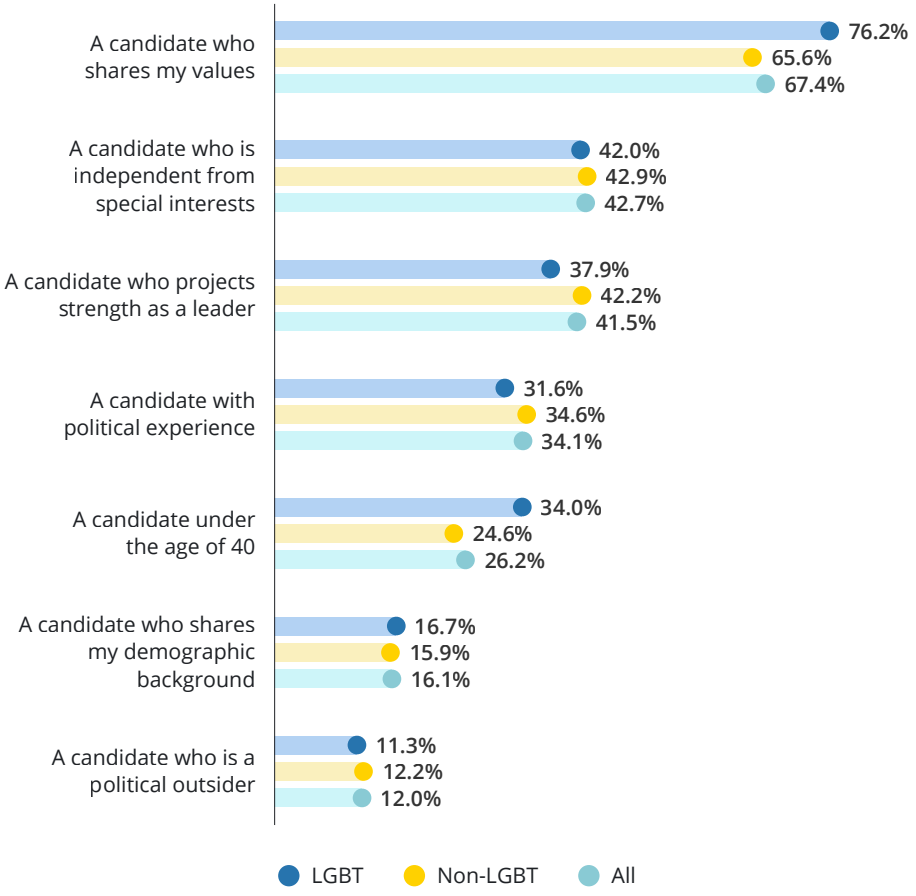
Note: *Indicates statistically significant differences between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents at the 95% confidence level.

Candidate Qualities

Gen Z respondents want candidates who share their values. Candidate identity matters less. Survey respondents were asked to select up to three choices from a list of qualities of a congressional candidate that would make respondents most likely to vote for the candidate. About two-thirds (67.4%) of respondents said that a candidate who shares their values would make them most likely to vote for the candidate. LGBT Gen Z respondents were more likely (76.2%) to select a candidate who shares their values than their non-LGBT counterparts (65.6%), but the difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 5. Gen Z choice of congressional candidate qualities which would increase chances of respondents voting for the candidate (percent chosen as a top three quality)

Question: "In general, which of the following qualities of a congressional candidate would make you MOST likely to vote for them? Select up to 3 responses."



No other candidate quality was selected by 50% or more of respondents in their ranking of top three candidate qualities, and LGBT respondents and non-LGBT respondents responded similarly across nearly all candidate qualities. A candidate who is independent from special interests was selected by 42.7% of respondents, followed by a candidate who projects strength as a leader (41.5%). In contrast, a candidate who is under the age of 40, a candidate who shares my demographic background, and a candidate who is a political outsider were all selected by less than 30% of respondents in their ranking of top three candidate qualities.

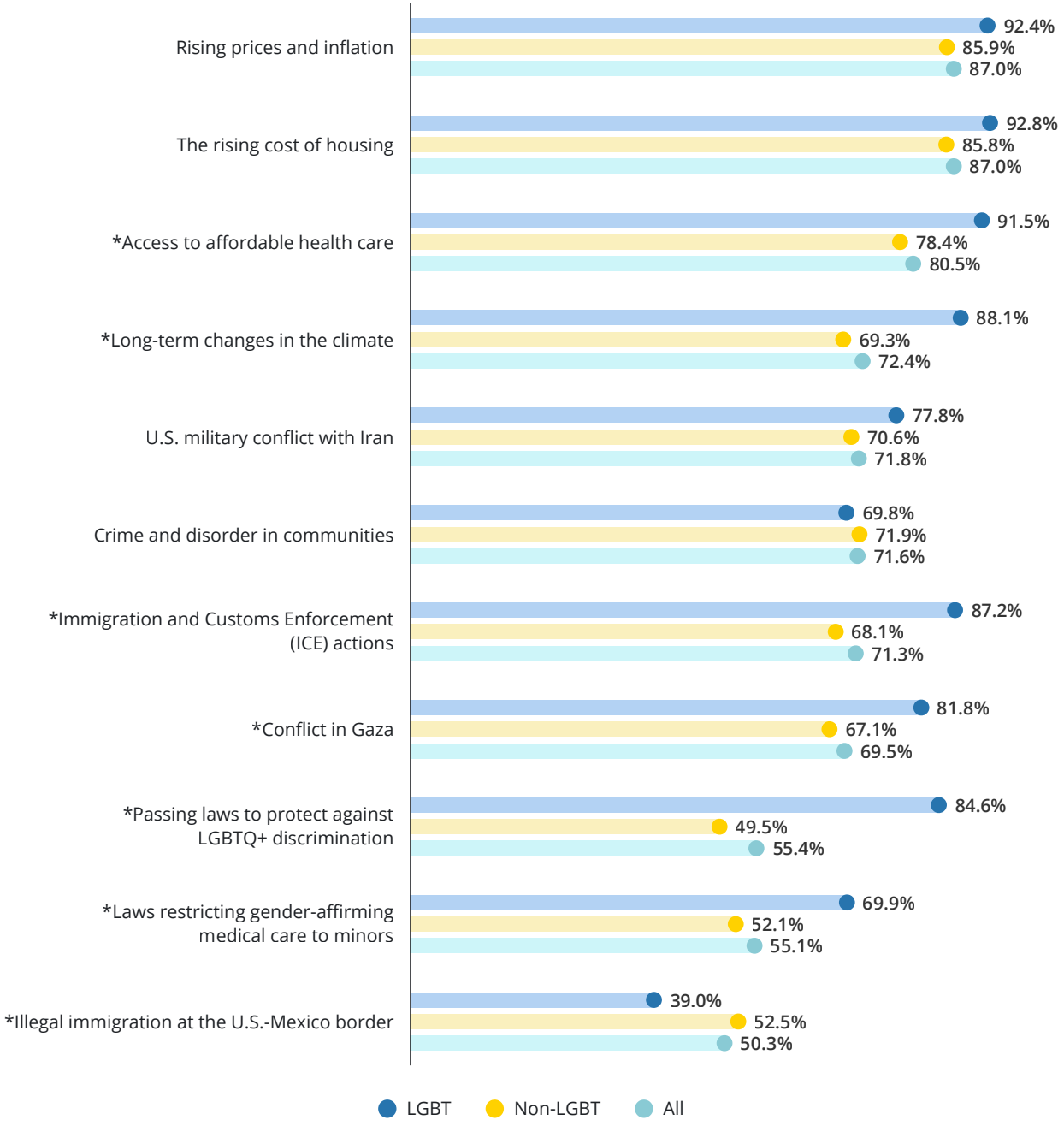
Top Issues

Rising costs and affordability are major concerns for Gen Z respondents. When asked what comes closest to their view, overwhelming majorities (87.0%) said that both rising prices and inflation and the rising cost of housing are an urgent crisis requiring immediate action or a serious issue but not necessarily an emergency. For LGBT Gen Z respondents, these economic issues rated even higher (92.4% and 92.8%, respectively), although the difference was not statistically significant (85.9% and 85.8%,

respectively, for non-LGBT respondents). LGBT Gen Z respondents also expressed concern about access to affordable health care, with 91.5% saying that affordable access is an urgent crisis or serious issue. There was a noticeable (and statistically significant) gap compared with non-LGBT respondents (78.4%).

Figure 6. Gen Z issues rated an urgent crisis or serious issue

Question: "Thinking about the following issues, which come closest to your own view?" Those who chose "An urgent crisis requiring immediate action" or "A serious issue, but not necessarily an emergency."



Note: *Indicates statistically significant differences between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents at the 95% confidence level.

While the three affordability issues were the top issues marked as urgent crisis or serious issues for both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, the two groups diverged across several other topics. Long-term changes in the climate came as the fourth highest ranked issue for LGBT respondents, with 88.1% saying it was an urgent crisis or serious issue compared to 69.3% for non-LGBT respondents. There was a similar gap regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions, with 87.2% of LGBT respondents reporting this as an urgent crisis or serious issue compared to 68.1% for non-LGBT respondents. The gap was slightly smaller for the conflict in Gaza: 81.8% of LGBT respondents reported this was an urgent crisis or serious crisis compared to 67.1% for non-LGBT respondents.

A higher percentage of LGBT respondents also rated passing laws to protect against LGBT discrimination (84.6%) as an urgent crisis or serious issue compared with 49.5% of non-LGBT respondents. Overall, 55.4% of respondents said that this was urgent or serious. Likewise, 69.9% of LGBT respondents said that laws restricting gender-affirming medical care to minors is an urgent crisis or serious issue, compared with 52.1% of non-LGBT respondents and 55.1% of the overall sample.

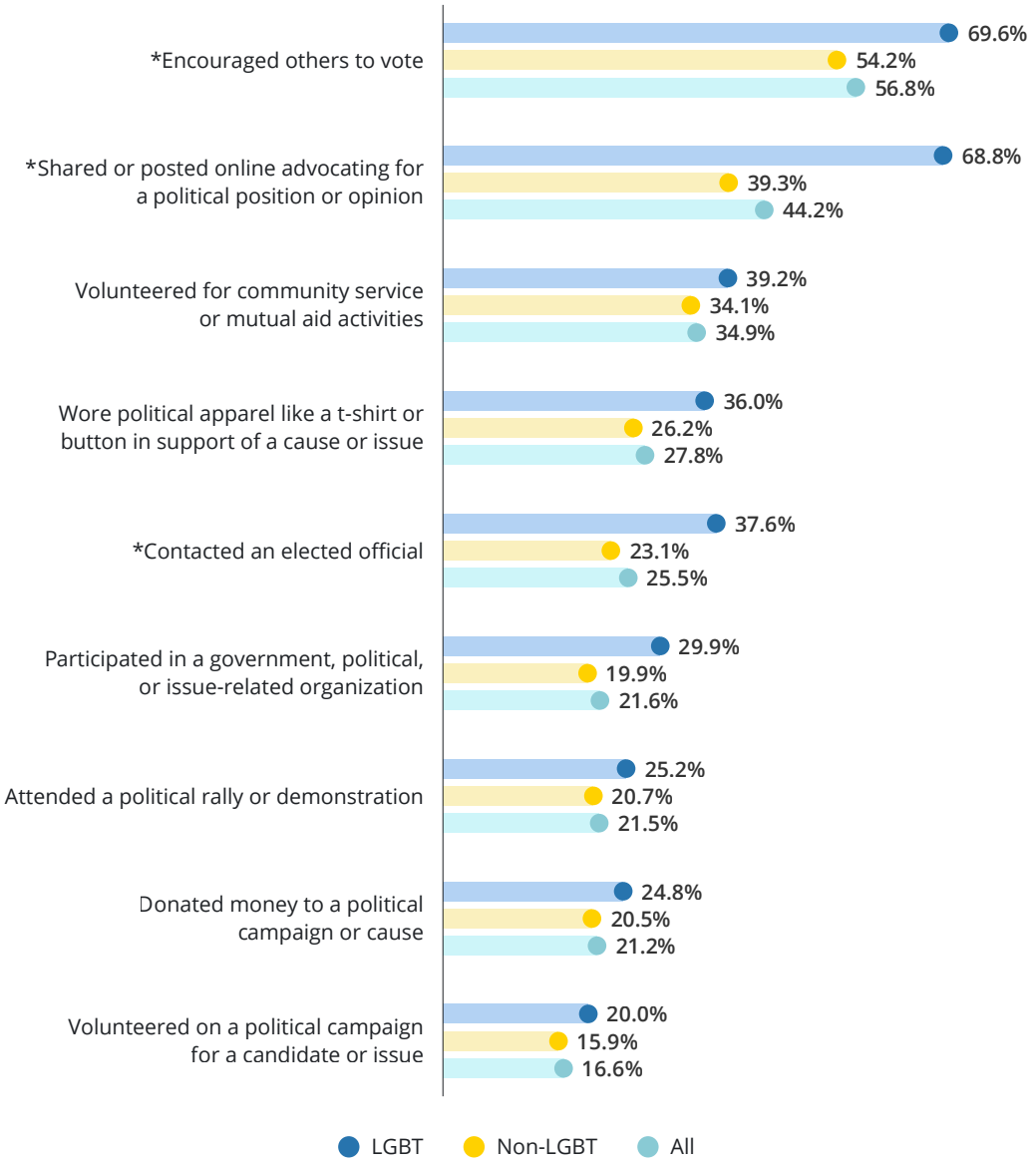
The U.S. military conflict with Iran (ranked as urgent or serious by 71.8% of respondents overall) and crime and disorder in our communities (ranked as urgent or serious by 71.6% of respondents overall) scored similarly between LGBT respondents and non-LGBT respondents. While illegal migration at the U.S.-Mexico border was ranked lower as an urgent or serious concern by LGBT respondents than non-LGBT respondents (39.0% versus 52.5%), the difference was not statistically significant.

Civic Engagement and Political Participation

LGBT Gen Z respondents are more likely to say they engaged in civic and political activities over the past year. Examples of participation include volunteering for community service or a political campaign or issue or attending a political rally. Across all nine activities listed, LGBT respondents were more likely than their non-LGBT peers to report engagement. Three of these differences were statistically significant: encouraging others to vote (69.6% versus 54.2%), sharing or posting online advocating for a political position or opinion (68.8% versus 39.3%), and contacting an elected official (37.6% versus 23.1%). Indeed, over two-thirds of LGBT respondents reported encouraging others to vote and posting online in the past 12 months.

Figure 7. Gen Z participation in civic and political activities over the past year

Question: "Have you participated in any of the following activities in the past 12 months?"



Note: *Indicates statistically significant differences between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents at the 95% confidence level.

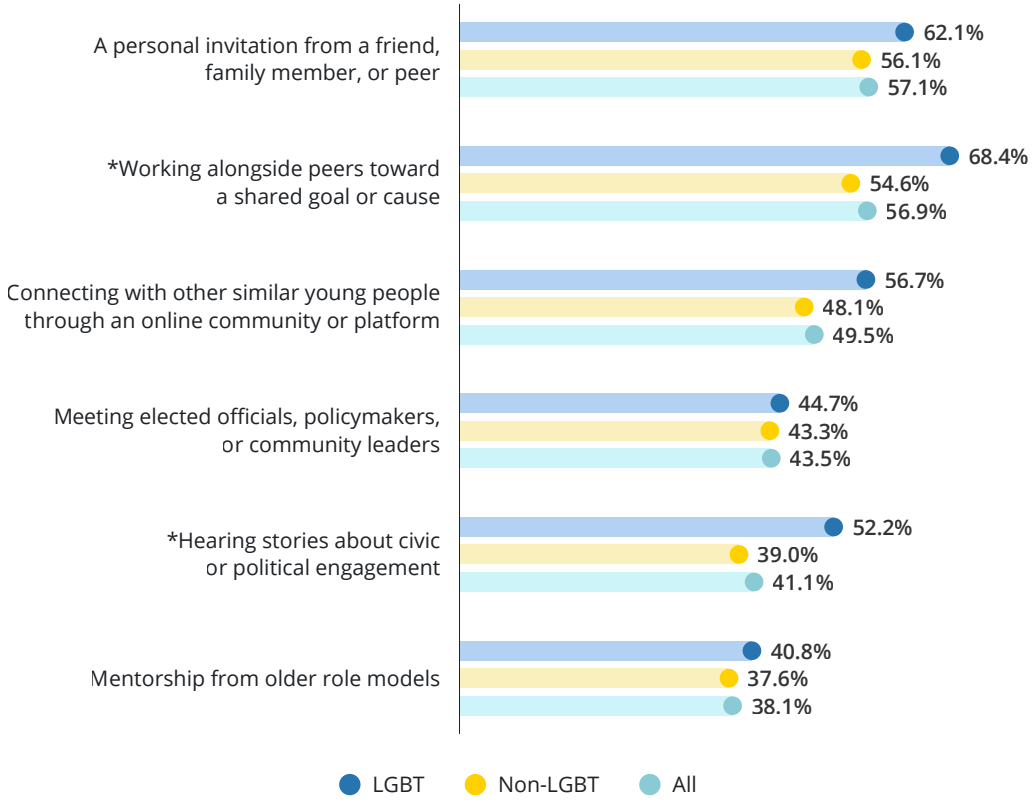
Motivators to Engage More in Politics

Gen Z respondents respond favorably to invitations to engage in politics. Overall, 57.1% of respondents said that a personal invitation from a friend, family member, or peer would increase their likelihood of participating in politics. A similar share, 56.9%, said that working alongside peers toward a shared goal would entice them to participate more. Nearly half (49.5%) of respondents also said that connecting with similar people on an online platform would increase their likelihood of participating in politics.

Across a menu of six options, LGBT Gen Z respondents' responses mirrored their non-LGBT counterparts on pathways toward more political engagement. LGBT respondents trended more positively across all six activities. For two of the proposed activities, LGBT respondents were significantly more likely to say engagement would increase their likelihood of political participation than non-LGBT respondents. In total, 68.4% of LGBT-respondents indicated that they would be more likely to engage in political activities if they could work alongside peers toward a shared goal (versus 54.6% of non-LGBT respondents). In addition, LGBT respondents scored hearing stories about civic or political engagement more highly than non-LGBT respondents (52.2% versus 32.2%).

Figure 8. Activities that would increase likelihood of Gen Z political engagement

Question: "Which of the following activities would increase your likelihood of participating in politics?"



Note: *Indicates statistically significant differences between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents at the 95% confidence interval.

Conclusion

Close to 50 million members of Gen Z will be eligible to vote in the 2026 midterm elections. Gen Z will be the most diverse generation in the most diverse electorate in United States history in the November 2026 election. Gen Z's diversity extends to sexual orientation and gender identity. One in six Gen Z adults is a member of the LGBT community. Examining similarities and differences in political preferences by LGBT status among Gen Z respondents improves our overall understanding of this increasingly important electoral cohort.

Gen Z respondents as a whole are politically engaged heading into 2026 midterm elections. Nearly three-quarters of both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents reported a greater than 50% chance of voting, and six in 10 LGBT respondents said that they will definitely be voting in November. Gen Z respondents favor Democrats for Congress, and that partisan advantage increases among LGBT Gen Z respondents. Democrats led Republicans by 61.2 percentage points in a generic congressional ballot among this group. This gap is repeated in political leanings. LGBT respondents were more likely to identify as liberal than conservative by 51.2 percentage points. More non-LGBT Gen Z respondents also identified as liberal than as conservative; however, a plurality identified as moderates.

Gen Z respondents are motivated more by candidates who share their values than by candidates' background traits. This is true across Gen Z respondents regardless of LGBT status. Respondents also reported affordability and rising prices as top of mind regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Beyond economic issues, LGBT Gen Z respondents were concerned about a range of social issues, from ICE raids to climate change, and expressed these issues as more salient than did their non-LGBT peers. LGBT Gen Z respondents also described more political and civic engagement than their non-LGBT peers, but, across the board, Gen Z respondents expressed interest in invitations and peer-led activities to get even more engaged in politics.

Taken together, these findings suggest that LGBT Gen Z shares its generation's economic concerns and appetite for civic engagement. They also hint at a greater intensity of party preference, political orientation, and the salience of certain social issues. As Gen Z's share of the electorate increases in the coming years, the qualities expressed by LGBT voters within Gen Z that these findings point to—their heightened values orientation, increased political engagement, and stronger commitment to voting—position them to influence political discourse and electoral outcomes.

Data and Methods

In 2026, the Williams Institute developed a brief survey on political attitudes and preferences among U.S. Gen Z adults aged 18 to 29 in the run-up to the 2026 midterm elections in collaboration with members of OutVote, a youth LGBT civic engagement organization. The survey design included an LGBT oversample. Verasight, an online survey administrator, fielded the survey. Respondents were recruited via email from Verasight's online panel, which Verasight describes as "composed of individuals recruited via random address-based sampling, random person-to-person text messaging, and dynamic online targeting."[22]

For the final survey analysis, we identified respondents' sexual orientation and gender identity using two sexual orientation and two gender identity questions. For sexual orientation, we first asked an open question in which respondents were allowed to select all response options that applied from a list of sexual orientation identities, including a write-in response.[23] We then asked, "To help categorize responses for research, which option best represents you?" Respondents were asked to choose one of 1) "Lesbian or gay," 2) "Straight, that is not lesbian or gay," or 3) "Bisexual or pansexual." Individuals who selected "Lesbian or gay" or "Bisexual or pansexual" were classified as sexual minorities. For gender identity, we asked,[24] "What is your current gender identity? Select all that apply." Individuals who chose "Transgender Male / Trans Man" or "Transgender Female / Trans Woman" were classified as gender minorities. We additionally asked, "What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?" Individuals who selected a discordant gender identity and sex assigned at birth were similarly classified as gender minorities. We considered all respondents classified as a sexual minority or gender minority to be LGBT for the analysis presented here. The final sample included 485 LGBT respondents and 439 non-LGBT respondents.

Raw responses were weighted to match the June 2026 Current Population Survey on race/ethnicity, sex, income, education, region, and metropolitan status. We also weighted for LGBT status, using a final population target of 16.6%.[25] Weights were generated with the 'anesrake' package (version 0.80) in R. All analyses were carried out in R. The overall sample had an approximate margin of error of 5.29%.[26]

Table 1. Sample SOGI characteristics

Characteristic	LGBT Respondents	Non-LGBT Respondents	Full Sample
Sexual minority	440	-	440
Sexual and gender minority	40	-	40
Gender minority	5	-	5
Total	**485**	**439**	**924**

[22] Communication with Verasight, August 2026. Verasight includes a number of quality control measures, including SMS verification from a mobile phone registered with a major U.S. carrier, and within-survey methods such as reCAPTCHA v3. Participants with low response quality are removed from the panel, and Verasight structures its survey invitations to minimize strategic responses on screener questions. Verasight participants receive points for taking surveys that can be redeemed for cash, gift cards, or charitable donations.

[23] Response options included gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, "straight, that is, not gay or lesbian," asexual, queer, questioning, "something else" with a text box, and a don't know / unsure option.

[24] Response options included transgender man / trans man, transgender woman / trans woman, non-binary, genderqueer / genderfluid, and agender.

[25] Estimates derived from an original Williams Institute analysis of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data from 2021 to 2023.

[26] American Association for Public Opinion Research. (2016). *AAPOR guidance on reporting precision for nonprobability samples.* https://demoskop.se/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/AAPOR_Guidance_Nonprob_Precision_042216.pdf.

Limitations

The analysis presented here draws on a non-probability sample of the target population (Gen Z U.S. adults aged 18 to 29). We raked responses to align with demographic benchmarks, including for sexual orientation and gender identity (See the Data and Methods section above). We calculated weighted estimates and approximate 95% confidence intervals using the 'survey' (version 4.4-8) and 'sryvr' (version 1.3.1) packages. To generate confidence intervals, we treated responses as independent and the final weights as fixed. We calculated confidence intervals using a logit transformation; intervals can be non-symmetrical, especially near extreme values (0 and 1). Confidence intervals presented here do not account for weight-construction uncertainty, recruitment bias, or nonresponse.

Despite these limitations, we observed alignment on key responses with other recent high-quality national polls, including the Harvard Youth Poll and Yale Youth Poll, which gives us confidence in the estimates provided here. For example, our two-party vote share split is within a point of Harvard Youth Poll's spring 2026 estimate (63% Democratic versus 62%).[27] Yale's Youth Poll has the Democratic two-party share at 64% and 67% for 18 to 22 year-olds and 24 to 29 year-olds.[28]

Sample sizes were not large enough to allow us to disaggregate sexual minority responses from gender minority responses in this report. Indeed, almost all gender minority respondents in this sample also identified as sexual minorities. Similarly, we were not able to analyze responses by racial or ethnic identity in this report. However, we recognize that important intersections exist between SOGI and racial and ethnic minority status. A larger sample could allow more precise identification of possible differences between all of these groups.

[27] Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School. (2026). *Harvard Youth Poll: 52nd edition, spring 2026*. https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/52nd-edition-spring-2026.

[28] Yale Youth Poll. (2026). *Young voters vehemently oppose Trump, ICE; see big risks and some benefits to AI*. Yale University. https://youthpoll.yale.edu/spring-2026-results.

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The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

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Appendix

Survey Characteristics

Table A1. Selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents

Demographic	Characteristic	Unweighted n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender* (n = 872)	Female	586	67.2%	49.8%
	Male	286	32.8%	50.2%
LGBT status* (n = 924)	LGBT	485	52.5%	16.6%
	Non-LGBT	439	47.5%	83.4%
Race / ethnicity* (n = 924)	Black / African American	142	15.4%	12.4%
	Hispanic / Latino	168	18.2%	26.2%
	Other race / ethnicity	151	16.3%	13.3%
	White	463	50.1%	48.1%
Education* (n = 924)	High school or less	220	23.8%	46.1%
	2-year degree / some college	277	30.0%	28.7%
	4-year degree / post graduate	427	46.2%	25.2%
Census region* (n = 920)	Northeast	182	19.8%	16.3%
	Midwest	203	22.1%	20.4%
	South	296	32.2%	39.8%
	West	239	26.0%	23.5%
Metro type* (n = 920)	Non-metropolitan	79	8.6%	12.3%
	Metropolitan	841	91.4%	87.7%
Income* (n = 923)	Less than $50,000 / year	390	42.3%	74.0%
	$50,000 or more / year	533	57.7%	26.0%
Age (n = 924)	18	24	2.6%	3.1%
	19	40	4.3%	5.9%
	20	39	4.2%	5.0%
	21	61	6.6%	8.5%
	22	59	6.4%	5.8%
	23	79	8.5%	5.7%
	24	88	9.5%	6.2%
	25	98	10.6%	11.7%
	26	117	12.7%	13.2%
	27	101	10.9%	9.7%
	28	107	11.6%	13.7%
	29	111	12.0%	11.4%

Note: *Weighting variable. Missing data are allowed in the weighting method. Verasight provided data for its own gender question, as well as race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metro type, income bracket, and age, which were used for survey weighting.

Questions, Response Options, Estimated Proportions, and Uncertainty Estimates

For each of the below questions we report the exact question wording and response options. Several questions included randomized response options. Randomizations are excluded here. We also report the estimated weighted proportion of responses for the overall sample, the LGBT sub-population, and the non-LGBT sub-population. Proportions and confidence intervals were calculated using survey weighted standard errors and logit transformation (for force bounds between zero and one). P-values for LGBT versus non-LGBT differences were obtained from survey-weighted logistic regressions. Adjusted p-values were calculated using the Holm method across response categories within each question. Confidence intervals were not adjusted for multiple comparisons. Responses marked significant in the report figures use the adjusted p-value with a cutoff of 0.05.

Because this was a non-probability sample, confidence intervals and uncertainty tests (p-value cut-offs) capture uncertainty under the weighted survey model, not probability-sampling margins of error.

Table A2. "How likely is it that you will vote in the 2026 elections for Congress this November?"

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
Definitely will be voting	52.5%	[47.2%, 57.7%]	60.1%	[52.4%, 67.3%]	51.0%	[44.8%, 57.1%]	0.0683	0.342
Probably will be voting	21.1%	[17.0%, 26.0%]	14.1%	[10.0%, 19.4%]	22.6%	[17.7%, 28.3%]	0.0211	0.127
50-50	13.5%	[10.3%, 17.4%]	15.6%	[10.9%, 21.9%]	13.0%	[9.5%, 17.7%]	0.4551	1
Probably won't be voting	5.5%	[3.5%, 8.4%]	3.6%	[2.0%, 6.4%]	5.9%	[3.6%, 9.4%]	0.2028	0.811
Definitely won't be voting	4.4%	[2.6%, 7.5%]	3.1%	[1.3%, 7.1%]	4.7%	[2.6%, 8.4%]	0.4266	1
Don't know / unsure	3.0%	[1.7%, 5.1%]	3.6%	[1.5%, 8.1%]	2.9%	[1.5%, 5.4%]	0.681	1

Table A3. "If the 2026 election for the U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, would you vote for?"

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
The Democratic candidate	52.5%	[47.1%, 57.8%]	70.7%	[62.5%, 77.7%]	48.9%	[42.8%, 55.0%]	<0.001	<0.001
The Republican candidate	30.6%	[25.6%, 36.1%]	9.5%	[4.9%, 17.5%]	34.8%	[29.0%, 41.2%]	<0.001	<0.001
I will not vote	5.3%	[3.4%, 8.1%]	4.5%	[2.4%, 8.6%]	5.5%	[3.3%, 8.8%]	0.655	0.655
Don't know / unsure	11.6%	[8.8%, 15.2%]	15.3%	[10.5%, 21.7%]	10.9%	[7.7%, 15.1%]	0.174	0.349

Table A4. "When it comes to most political issues, do you think of yourself as...?"

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
Liberal	33.6%	[29.1%, 38.5%]	62.4%	[54.3%, 69.9%]	27.9%	[22.9%, 33.5%]	< 0.001	< 0.001
Moderate	41.9%	[36.7%, 47.2%]	29.0%	[22.0%, 37.0%]	44.4%	[38.4%, 50.6%]	0.00286	0.00571
Conservative	20.3%	[15.9%, 25.5%]	5.1%	[2.6%, 9.9%]	23.3%	[18.1%, 29.4%]	< 0.001	< 0.001
Don't know / unsure	4.2%	[2.7%, 6.5%]	3.5%	[1.6%, 7.5%]	4.4%	[2.7%, 7.1%]	0.63052	0.63052

Note: Seven point scale re-coded to three point scale. (Extremely liberal, Liberal = "Liberal." Moderate leaning liberal, Moderate; middle of the road, Moderate leaning conservative = "Moderate." Conservative, Extremely conservative = "Conservative.")

Table A5. "In general, which of the following qualities of a congressional candidate would make you MOST likely to vote for them? Select up to 3 responses."

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
A candidate who shares my values	67.4%	[62.1%, 72.3%]	76.2%	[67.7%, 83.0%]	65.6%	[59.5%, 71.3%]	0.043	0.0859
A candidate who is independent from special interests	42.7%	[37.6%, 48.0%]	42.0%	[34.5%, 49.8%]	42.9%	[36.9%, 49.1%]	0.856	1
A candidate who projects strength as a leader	41.5%	[36.4%, 46.8%]	37.9%	[30.3%, 46.2%]	42.2%	[36.3%, 48.4%]	0.408	0.816
A candidate with political experience	34.1%	[29.3%, 39.3%]	31.6%	[24.4%, 39.8%]	34.6%	[29.0%, 40.7%]	0.546	1
A candidate under the age of 40	26.2%	[21.7%, 31.1%]	34.0%	[27.0%, 41.8%]	24.6%	[19.6%, 30.4%]	0.0428	0.0855
A candidate who shares my demographic background	16.1%	[12.6%, 20.3%]	16.7%	[11.0%, 24.5%]	15.9%	[12.0%, 20.8%]	0.851	1
A candidate who is a political outsider	12.0%	[8.9%, 16.1%]	11.3%	[7.2%, 17.3%]	12.2%	[8.6%, 17.0%]	0.785	1

Note: Proportion of respondents who selected an option among their top three.

Table A6. "Thinking about the following issues, which come closest to your own view?" Urgent crisis or serious issue

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
The rising cost of housing	87.0%	[82.7%, 90.4%]	92.8%	[87.7%, 95.8%]	85.8%	[80.7%, 89.8%]	0.0344	0.137
Rising prices and inflation	87.0%	[82.8%, 90.3%]	92.4%	[86.9%, 95.7%]	85.9%	[81.0%, 89.7%]	0.054	0.216
Access to affordable health care	80.5%	[75.6%, 84.7%]	91.5%	[86.7%, 94.7%]	78.4%	[72.5%, 83.2%]	< 0.001	0.00128
Long-term changes in the climate	72.4%	[67.2%, 77.1%]	88.1%	[81.8%, 92.4%]	69.3%	[63.2%, 74.8%]	< 0.001	< 0.001
US military conflict with Iran	71.8%	[66.7%, 76.4%]	77.8%	[70.2%, 83.9%]	70.6%	[64.6%, 75.9%]	0.1233	0.3698
Crime and disorder in communities	71.6%	[66.7%, 76.0%]	69.8%	[62.3%, 76.3%]	71.9%	[66.2%, 77.1%]	0.6319	0.632
Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions	71.3%	[66.0%, 76.1%]	87.2%	[81.3%, 91.5%]	68.1%	[61.9%, 73.7%]	< 0.001	< 0.001
Conflict in Gaza	69.5%	[64.3%, 74.3%]	81.8%	[74.7%, 87.2%]	67.1%	[61.0%, 72.6%]	0.00175	0.00526
Passing laws to protect against LGBTQ+ discrimination	55.4%	[50.0%, 60.6%]	84.6%	[77.1%, 90.0%]	49.5%	[43.4%, 55.6%]	<0.001	<0.001
Laws restricting gender-affirming medical care to minors	55.1%	[49.7%, 60.3%]	69.9%	[62.4%, 76.4%]	52.1%	[46.0%, 58.2%]	<0.001	0.00145
Illegal immigration at the US-Mexico border	50.3%	[45.0%, 55.6%]	39.0%	[31.3%, 47.3%]	52.5%	[46.4%, 58.6%]	0.0101	0.0405

Note: Proportion of respondents who selected "An urgent crisis requiring immediate action" or "A serious issue, but not necessarily an emergency."

Table A7. "Have you participated in any of the following activities in the past 12 months?"

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
Encouraged others to vote	56.8%	[51.4%, 62.0%]	69.6%	[62.3%, 76.1%]	54.2%	[48.0%, 60.3%]	0.00162	0.00485
Shared or posted online advocating for a political position or opinion	44.2%	[39.0%, 49.5%]	68.8%	[61.5%, 75.3%]	39.3%	[33.4%, 45.4%]	<0.001	<0.001
Volunteered for community service or mutual aid activities	34.9%	[30.1%, 40.1%]	39.2%	[31.9%, 47.1%]	34.1%	[28.5%, 40.1%]	0.2899	0.58
Wore political apparel like a t-shirt or button in support of a cause or issue	27.8%	[23.4%, 32.7%]	36.0%	[28.5%, 44.2%]	26.2%	[21.3%, 31.9%]	0.0404	0.121
Contacted an elected official	25.5%	[21.4%, 30.2%]	37.6%	[30.0%, 45.9%]	23.1%	[18.5%, 28.5%]	0.0021	0.00631
Participated in a government, political, or issue-related organization	21.6%	[17.7%, 26.1%]	29.9%	[22.9%, 38.0%]	19.9%	[15.6%, 25.1%]	0.0236	0.0707
Attended a political rally or demonstration	21.5%	[17.5%, 26.0%]	25.2%	[19.3%, 32.1%]	20.7%	[16.3%, 26.0%]	0.2766	0.553
Donated money to a political campaign or cause	21.2%	[17.2%, 25.9%]	24.8%	[18.1%, 32.9%]	20.5%	[16.0%, 25.9%]	0.34	1
Volunteered on a political campaign for a candidate or an issue	16.6%	[13.0%, 20.9%]	20.0%	[13.3%, 29.0%]	15.9%	[11.9%, 20.8%]	0.346	0.692

Table A8. "Which of the following activities would increase your likelihood of in participating in politics?"

Response	All		LGBT		Non-LGBT		LGBT v. non-LGBT	
	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	Proportion	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted p-value
A personal invitation from a friend, family member, or peer	57.1%	[51.8%, 62.3%]	62.1%	[54.1%, 69.5%]	56.1%	[49.9%, 62.1%]	0.2401	0.48
Working alongside peers toward a shared goal or cause	56.9%	[51.5%, 62.1%]	68.4%	[60.4%, 75.4%]	54.6%	[48.4%, 60.7%]	0.00757	0.0227
Connecting with other similar young people through an online community or platform	49.5%	[44.3%, 54.8%]	56.7%	[48.7%, 64.4%]	48.1%	[42.0%, 54.2%]	0.09508	0.1902
Meeting elected officials, policymakers, or community leaders	43.5%	[38.4%, 48.8%]	44.7%	[37.0%, 52.6%]	43.3%	[37.3%, 49.4%]	0.78	1
Hearing stories about civic or political engagement	41.1%	[36.1%, 46.4%]	52.2%	[44.2%, 60.0%]	39.0%	[33.2%, 45.0%]	0.00945	0.0189
Mentorship from older role models	38.1%	[33.2%, 43.4%]	40.8%	[33.2%, 48.8%]	37.6%	[31.9%, 43.7%]	0.5303	0.53