

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18749-8 — A Century of Votes for Women
Christina Wolbrecht, J. Kevin Corder
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

A CENTURY OF VOTES FOR WOMEN

How have American women voted in the first 100 years since the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment? How have popular understandings of women as voters both persisted and changed over time? In *A Century of Votes for Women*, Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder offer the first comprehensive account of women voters in American politics over the last ten decades. Bringing together a wide range of data, the book provides unique insight into women's (and men's) voting behavior and traces how women's turnout and vote choice evolved over a century of enormous transformation overall and for women in particular. Wolbrecht and Corder show that there is no such thing as "the woman voter;" instead they reveal considerable variation in how different groups of women voted in response to changing political, social, and economic realities. The book also demonstrates how assumptions about women as voters influenced politicians, the press, and scholars.

Christina Wolbrecht is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Rooney Center for the Study of American Democracy at the University of Notre Dame. She is author of the award-winning books *Counting Women's Ballots* (with J. Kevin Corder) and *The Politics of Women's Rights*.

J. Kevin Corder is Professor of Political Science at Western Michigan University. His books include *Counting Women's Ballots* (with Christina Wolbrecht), which received the 2017 Victoria Schuck Award, and *The Fed and the Credit Crisis*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18749-8 — A Century of Votes for Women
Christina Wolbrecht , J. Kevin Corder
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

**A CENTURY OF VOTES
FOR WOMEN**

American Elections since Suffrage

Christina Wolbrecht

University of Notre Dame

J. Kevin Corder

Western Michigan University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18749-8 — A Century of Votes for Women
Christina Wolbrecht, J. Kevin Corder
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107187498
DOI: 10.1017/9781316941331

© Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd., Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-18749-8 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-63807-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy
of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
1 Women at the Polls	1
2 Women Without the Vote	27
3 Explaining Women Voters	45
4 Enter the Women Voters	60
5 Feminine Mystique and the American Voter	88
6 Feminism Resurgent	125
7 The Discovery of the Gender Gap	159
8 Women Voters in the New Millennium	191
9 A Century of Votes for Women	234
<i>Notes</i>	251
<i>Index</i>	303

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18749-8 — A Century of Votes for Women
Christina Wolbrecht , J. Kevin Corder
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Figures

1.1	Racial composition of US voters shows women of color generally lacked access to the ballot until the 1960s (ANES and US Census), 1948–2016	<i>page</i> 12
1.2	Women catch up to men in college attainment by 2015 (US Census), 1940–2016	20
1.3	Women’s labor force participation grows sharply, while men’s declines, in the postwar era (Bureau of Labor Statistics), 1948–2016	20
1.4	Baby boom and bust across the twentieth century (National Center for Health Statistics), 1920–2016	21
1.5	Fewer women marry in the second half of the twentieth century (US Census), 1920–2016	22
1.6	Women’s turnout initially lags, but eventually exceeds, men’s turnout (ANES), 1948–2016	24
1.7	Women and men vote similarly, but gender gaps emerge after 1980 (ANES), 1948–2016	24
4.1	Women’s turnout lags behind men’s in the first elections after suffrage, but the turnout gender gap slowly narrows over time, 1920–36	70
4.2	By 1936, men’s turnout was at or near levels not seen before 1900 (US Census, CQ Press), 1880–1948	71
4.3	Turnout of women and the size of the turnout gender gap vary considerably across states, 1920	72
4.4	Men and especially women are most likely to turn out in competitive states, 1920	74

LIST OF FIGURES

4.5	Men and women are more likely to turn out in states without legal barriers to voting, 1920	76
4.6	Women and men voted in similar ways, 1920–36	79
4.7	Women more likely to support Democrats in Democratic-leaning states, more likely to support Republicans in Republican-leaning states, 1920.	81
4.8	Men, not women, were more likely to support Progressive La Follette in Illinois and Kansas, 1924	83
5.1	Women marry, have children, and enter the labor force in the 1940s and 1950s	92
5.2	Women less likely to turn out than men, but typically the gap is less than 10 percentage points, 1940–60.	98
5.3	Self-reported turnout appears slightly lower for women among both whites and African Americans (Gallup), 1940–60	100
5.4	The turnout gap is smaller for younger women and larger for women born before 1900 (Gallup), 1940–60	102
5.5	Gender gap in turnout largest among those with no more than a grade school education (ANES), 1948–60.	103
5.6	Women with children at home are the least likely to turn out (ANES), 1956–60	105
5.7	Women who work are as likely to vote as those who stay home – same as men (ANES), 1952–60	106
5.8	Substantial turnout gender gap in the South, smaller or nonexistent gaps elsewhere (ANES), 1952–60	107
5.9	Women and men favor same candidates, only a slight Republican lean among women, 1940–60	111
5.10	White women are the most likely to vote Republican, but race matters far more than gender (Gallup), 1940–60	112
5.11	Older women slightly more Republican, but partisan advantage among younger women may be reversing (Gallup), 1940–60	113
5.12	Educational attainment associated with voting Republican for both women and men (ANES), 1948–60	114
5.13	Women who don't work are the most Republican (ANES), 1952–60	115
5.14	Single women are the most Republican (ANES), 1956–60	115

LIST OF FIGURES

5.15	Men in different regions favor different parties, but less regional variation in women's vote (ANES), 1952–60	117
6.1	Women are less likely to marry or have children, but more likely to work in the 1960s and 1970s	131
6.2	The turnout gender gap narrows and disappears, 1964–76	139
6.3	African American women and men turn out at roughly similar rates after 1960 (Gallup), 1964–76	141
6.4	Turnout gender gaps found only among the oldest voters (Gallup), 1964–76	142
6.5	Small gender gaps among those with similar educational attainment (ANES), 1964–76	143
6.6	Women who work as likely to turn out as men who work (ANES), 1964–76	144
6.7	Single parents the least likely to vote, having children no longer dampens turnout among married women (ANES), 1964–76	145
6.8	Turnout remains distinctively low in the South, especially among women (ANES), 1964–76	145
6.9	No difference in the vote choice of women and men, 1964–76	148
6.10	Racial differences are profound and there is no difference in Republican support between African American women and men (Gallup), 1964–76	149
6.11	Republican advantage among women disappears among all but the oldest women (Gallup), 1964–76	150
6.12	Women who work are more likely to vote Democratic (ANES), 1964–76	152
6.13	Single parents are more likely to vote Democratic (ANES), 1964–76	152
6.14	Republican preference rises with education, with the smallest gender gaps among the highest educated (ANES), 1964–76	154
6.15	The “modern” gender gap emerges earliest in the Northeast (ANES), 1964–76	154
6.16	Support for equal roles for women generally similar among women and men (ANES), 1972–76	156

LIST OF FIGURES

7.1	The appearance of the “gender gap” in published books, 1920–2008.	160
7.2	Women complete college and enter the labor force at rates close to men in the 1980s and 1990s.	163
7.3	CPS indicates women consistently more likely to vote than men after 1980 but ANES and Gallup less clear, 1980–96.	168
7.4	Considerable turnout gender gap among African Americans, smaller gaps among non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics (CPS), 1980–96	170
7.5	Women more likely to turn out than men, except among the oldest voters (CPS), 1980–96.	170
7.6	College-educated turn out more than poorly educated, and the effect is stronger for women (ANES), 1980–96.	172
7.7	People who work are more likely to vote, and the effect is more powerful for women than for men (ANES), 1980–96.	172
7.8	In contrast to earlier periods, the effects of marriage and children are the same on men and women (ANES), 1980–96	173
7.9	The turnout gender gap closes in the South (ANES), 1980–96	174
7.10	Large majorities of women and men endorse an equal role for women in business, industry, and government (ANES), 1980–96	176
7.11	The size of the gender gap varies from election to election, but women remain more likely to cast ballots for Democrats, 1980–96.	177
7.12	Women less likely than men to support Ross Perot (ANES), 1992	178
7.13	Women of color most Democratic and white men most Republican (exit polls), 1980–96.	180
7.14	Partisan gender gap persists across age cohorts; only the oldest women are not distinctively Democratic (ANES), 1980–96.	181
7.15	College-educated voters are more Republican than grade school educated voters, but the effect is much weaker for women (ANES), 1980–96	182
7.16	Employed men are distinctively Republican in their vote choice (ANES), 1980–96.	183

LIST OF FIGURES

7.17	Married moms and dads were the most likely to vote Republican (ANES), 1980–96.	184
7.18	The South is no longer distinctive in terms of partisanship and the gender gap is visible in every region (ANES), 1980–96.	184
7.19	In the South, women – especially women of color – are more Democratic than men (exit polls), 1980–96.	185
8.1	Women close the gap in college completion and narrow the gap in labor force participation.	196
8.2	Women consistently more likely to turn out than men, 2000–16.	204
8.3	African American women more likely to turn out to vote than (non-Hispanic) white men (CPS), 2000–16.	205
8.4	The turnout gender gap exists among all but first-generation immigrants (CPS), 2000–16.	206
8.5	Women more likely to turn out than men across most age cohorts (CPS), 2000–16.	207
8.6	Turnout gender gaps generally consistent across educational groups (ANES), 2000–16.	208
8.7	Employment has no impact on male or female turnout (ANES), 2000–16.	209
8.8	Marriage provides a turnout boost to women and especially men (ANES), 2000–16.	210
8.9	South continues to lose distinctiveness with regards to gender and turnout (ANES), 2000–16.	212
8.10	Increasing numbers of women run for and serve in the US Senate (CAWP), 1970–2016.	213
8.11	Increasing numbers of women run for and serve in the US House of Representatives (CAWP), 1970–2016.	213
8.12	Women more likely to vote Democratic than men, 2000–16.	215
8.13	Gender gap persists across racial groups, but a majority of white women vote Republican and a super-majority of women of color vote Democratic (exit polls), 2000–12.	216
8.14	The strongest Democrats are younger women and the strongest Republicans are older men (ANES), 2000–16.	217

LIST OF FIGURES

8.15	College education, once associated with Republican vote choice, increasingly associated with Democratic vote choice, especially among women (ANES), 1952–2016	218
8.16	The partisan gender gap spans all education levels (ANES), 2000–16	219
8.17	Single women especially Democratic, married women with children especially Republican (ANES), 2000–16	220
8.18	Employed men more Republican than all other voters (ANES), 2000–16	221
8.19	The partisan gender gap is everywhere (ANES), 2000–16	222
8.20	Partisan gender gaps vary across states (CCES), 2016	223
8.21	Small gender gap among white voters, strong Democratic support and a larger gender gap among minority voters (CCES), 2016	231
9.1	Women’s turnout exceeds men’s after 1976 (CPS), 1980–2012.	236
9.2	The pro-Democratic gender gap emerges and persists (ANES), 1980–2016	237
9.3	Stereotypical moms are not representative of women voters (CPS), 1980–2016	239
9.4	After 1990, Democratic women on the rise as candidates and office-holders, but Republican women tend to stagnate (CAWP), 1970–2019	247

Acknowledgments

In May of 2015, we met for lunch at Purple Porch Co-op in South Bend, Indiana to celebrate signing the contract for our book, *Counting Women's Ballots: Female Voters from Suffrage Through the New Deal*. Our research into women voters immediately after suffrage had commenced in the Fall of 1998, so we were thrilled and more than a little relieved to be closing in on the completion of that project. We were, however, still in the midst of finishing the final revisions before the manuscript went into production. On the last page of the last chapter, printed for mark-up for the last time, Wolbrecht had scribbled an outline for a new book, describing and analyzing women voters, not just immediately after suffrage, but throughout the first 100 years following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Maybe we weren't completely done with women voters, after all? The book in your hands (or on your screen) is the answer to that question.

We are grateful for the support and feedback which made this book possible. Conversations with Lisa Baldez, Karen Beckwith, Adam Berinsky, Barry Burden, Nancy Burns, Erin Cassese, Devin Caughey, Sara Chatfield, Michael Coppedge, Jane Junn, Philip Klinkler, Corrine McConnaughy, Melissa Michelson, Heather Ondercin, Virginia Sapiro, Eric Schickler, and Maya Sen – as well as others we are surely but regretfully forgetting – enriched and improved our work. Presentations at the American, British, and Canadian Political Development workshop (Oxford University, UK), the Historical Women's Movements conference (University of Pennsylvania), and the Political Parties in Comparative Perspective conference (Georgetown University, Firenze, Italy) helped us refine and improve our arguments. Talks on *Counting Women's Ballots* at Northwestern University, University of California-Berkeley, the Ohio State University, Cornell University, University of Denver, University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

of Texas-Austin, and Western Michigan University aided us in drawing out the implications of that work for later elections. Public presentations to the Kalamazoo Public Library and Kalamazoo Ladies' Library Association and to Notre Dame alumni at the National Women's Rights Historical Park in Seneca Falls helped us learn to convey our research in ways that we hope are clear and compelling for those who do not look at voting data for a living.

We also benefited from excellent research assistance. At Western Michigan, graduate student Vilitcia Barghouti, and at Notre Dame, undergraduates Casey Baker, Katelyn Berens, Ceramontana Crowell, Madeline Doctor, Kathryn Doyle, Zachary Herford, Kate Lenahan, Joseph McKenna, Lisa Michelini, Avery Naylor, Caitlyn O'Connell, Rachel O'Grady, Ryan Schaffler, MacKenzie Thurman, Allison Towey, Jenna Wilson, Zachary Yim, and especially Katie O'Sullivan, helped us with a range of tasks, most notably tracking down many of the newspaper stories we use to help illuminate public discourse about women voters over time. We are grateful for financial support from the Department of Political Science at Western Michigan University, made possible by Chet Rogers and John Clark. At Notre Dame, Wolbrecht is thankful for the support of collaborator and chair David Campbell, as well as Kathy Cummings, Karen Graubart, and Karrie Koesel. We are especially indebted to editor Sara Dосkow at Cambridge University Press for her enthusiasm and guidance from start to finish, and to the anonymous reviewers for their cogent and generous feedback.

As always, we are grateful to our families, who did not riot when we told them we were going to write another book. Corder appreciates the willingness of his wife, Susan Hoffmann, to remain enthusiastic about each new iteration of every figure. Wolbrecht thanks her husband, Matt Doppke, whose support remains constant and essential (and only occasionally sardonic), and her daughters, Ella and Jane, who will cast their first ballots in the second century of women's enfranchisement, helping to ensure that the future is indeed female.