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Gender Gaps in Voting Evident Across All 2016 U.S. Senate Races

Gender gaps in voting were widespread across U.S. Senate races in the 2016 elections, according to an analysis of Edison Research exit polls conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Gender gaps in voting, defined as measurable differences in the proportions of women and men who voted for the winning candidate, were evident in all of the 20 U.S. Senate races involving candidates of both parties where exit polls were conducted. Women were more likely than men to support the Democratic candidate by margins of 3 to 16 percentage points -- and less likely to support the Republican -- in each race. (See table below.)

In highly contested races in Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, women and men preferred different candidates. In Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, men's preferences prevailed and Republicans were victorious. In Nevada and New Hampshire, women's preferences won out and Democratic candidates were elected.

Susan J. Carroll, senior scholar at CAWP, observed, "The widespread evidence of gender differences in candidate preferences, even in an election as unusual and unpredictable as 2016, is a testament to the enduring nature of the gender gap."

An 11 percentage-point gender gap was also apparent in U.S. House races, with women voters more likely than men to favor Democratic candidates. Nationally, 54% of women, compared with 43% of men, voted for the Democratic congressional candidates in their districts; 44% of women, compared with 55% of men, voted for Republican U.S. House candidates.

About CAWP

The Center for American Women and Politics, a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a university-based research, education and public service center. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's changing relationship to politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. CAWP is a leading authority in its field and a respected bridge between the academic and political worlds.

2016 Exit Poll Data: Vote in U.S. Senate Races

State	Candidate	Party	Gender Gap	Women	Men
AZ	McCain Kirkpatrick	R	4 pts.	51%	55%
		D		45%	38%
CO	Glenn Bennet	R	9 pts.	41%	48%
		D		56%	47%
FL	Rubio Murphy	R	4 pts.	50%	54%
		D		47%	41%
GA	Isakson Barksdale	R	16 pts.	48%	64%
		D		48%	31%
IL	Kirk Duckworth	R	8 pts.	37%	43%
		D		59%	51%
IN	Young Bayh	R	7 pts.	49%	56%
		D		46%	38%
IA	Grassley Judge	R	9 pts.	56%	66%
		D		41%	32%
KY	Paul Gray	R	12 pts.	51%	63%
		D		48%	37%
MO	Blunt Kander	R	9 pts.	46%	55%
		D		52%	40%
NV	Heck Cortez Masto	R	9 pts.	41%	50%
		D		52%	43%
NH	Ayotte Hassan	R	11 pts.	42%	53%
		D		55%	41%
NY	Long Schumer	R	15 pts.	22%	35%
		D		77%	62%
NC	Burr Ross	R	12 pts.	46%	58%
		D		51%	38%
OH	Portman Strickland	R	10 pts.	54%	64%
		D		42%	32%
OR	Callahan Wyden	R	8 pts.	33%	38%
		D		62%	54%
PA	Toomey McGinty	R	12 pts.	43%	55%
		D		54%	40%
SC	Scott Dixon	R	8 pts.	57%	65%
		D		41%	33%
UT	Lee Snow	R	3 pts.	66%	69%
		D		29%	27%
WA	Vance Murray	R	13 pts.	33%	46%
		I		65%	52%
WI	Johnson Feingold	R	11 pts.	45%	56%
		D		52%	41%

* The gender gap shown for each poll in the table is based on the responses for the winning candidate. Contest winners are in boldface.

** Exit polls were conducted in only 21 Senate races. California results are not shown because the state's open primary system produced two Democratic candidates in the general election.