

2022

U.S. TRANS SURVEY

**Civic Engagement
in the 2022 U.S.
Transgender Survey**

AUGUST 2024

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INTRODUCTION

THE 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) sought to understand civic engagement among respondents, including in voting and other civic and political activities. The 2022 USTS also asked respondents about the issues that are most important to them. This report presents findings about the voting and civic participation activities of 2022 USTS respondents related to the November 2020 presidential election¹ and during other time periods.

The 2022 USTS is the largest survey ever conducted to examine the experiences of binary and nonbinary transgender people in the United States, with an unprecedented 92,329 respondents, including 84,170 adults (18 and older). The study was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality (now Advocates for Trans Equality Education Fund, “A4TE”) in partnership with the Black Trans Advocacy Coalition, National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance, and TransLatin@ Coalition. As the successor to the 2015 USTS, the 2022 USTS provides updated information to help the public better understand the lives of transgender people in the United States and the challenges that many transgender people face. It is an invaluable resource for identifying and addressing issues that are of vital importance to binary and nonbinary transgender people in the United States.

Methodology

The USTS was conducted online in English and Spanish from October 19 through December 5, 2022. It was open to binary and nonbinary transgender people aged 16 and older residing in the United States, a U.S. territory, or on a U.S. military base overseas. The survey covered a wide range of experiences and issues, such as those related to health care, employment, education, housing, and public accommodations.

Findings in this report are presented as weighted percentages of the entire adult sample or of specified subgroups. When sample sizes (“n”) are included, the values are unweighted. Results are only reported for respondents aged 18 and older. When referencing a time period in this report, it relates to when the respondent took the survey.

For example, “in the last 12 months” in this report means that the respondent had the experience in the 12 months prior to taking the survey. Additional information about survey methodology is available in the “Early Insights” report of the 2022 USTS² and will be available in the forthcoming full report of the 2022 USTS.

When interpreting the findings presented in this report, it is important to note that although the team sought to recruit a sample that was as representative as possible of transgender people in the U.S. and analytic weights reduce sample biases, study respondents were not drawn from a random sample. Therefore, while this sample is a large one, the findings may not be representative of all transgender people.

RESULTS

Voter Registration³

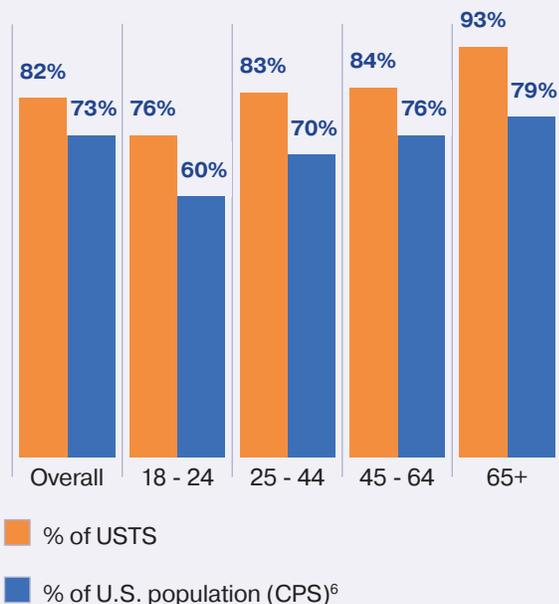
USTS respondents were highly engaged in the voting process as compared to the U.S. population. This is despite unique barriers to participation, such as voter identification laws, limitations on name and gender change updates on identification documents, and potential negative interactions with election officials or staff.

- Eighty-two percent (82%) of U.S. citizens of voting age in the sample (“voting eligible respondents”)⁴ reported that they were registered to vote in the 2020 presidential election, compared to 73% in the U.S. population.⁵ USTS respondents also appear more likely to be registered to vote compared to the U.S. population across age groups.

Percent Registered to Vote in the 2020 Presidential Election by Age

(of USTS Voting Eligible Respondents and U.S. Voting Eligible Population)

Current Age



- The trend of higher voter registration among 2022 USTS respondents is consistent with the trend observed in the 2015 USTS in which 76% of voting eligible respondents reported that they were registered to vote in the November 2014 midterm election, compared to 65% in the U.S. population.⁷
- Among the top reasons for not being registered to vote,⁸ voting eligible respondents who were not registered reported that they were not interested in the election or not involved in politics (24%), they did not think their vote would make a difference (19%), they did not meet registration deadlines (11%), or they did not know where or how to register (10%). Eighteen percent (18%) reported they were not registered for other reasons.
- Of the 18% of voting eligible respondents who were not registered for other reasons,⁹ 5% reported that they did not have an identification document (ID) and thought they needed one to register. Among the other reasons for not being registered to vote, respondents also reported reasons related to being transgender, including that their current name did not match their driver’s license or Social Security card (3%), they wanted to avoid being harassed by election officials because they were transgender (2%), and they thought their state’s voter identification law could stop them from voting (1%).

Reasons for Not Being Registered to Vote in the 2020 Presidential Election (of USTS Voting Eligible Respondents and U.S. Voting Eligible Population)	% USTS	% U.S. population (CPS)
Not interested in the election or not involved in politics	24%	39%
My vote would not make a difference	19%	5%
Did not meet registration deadlines	11%	11%
Did not know where or how to register	10%	3%
Not eligible to vote because of a criminal/felony conviction	9%	10%
Did not meet residency requirements/did not live here long enough	4%	3%
Concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic	3%	2%
Permanent illness or disability	2%	5%
Other reasons (including):	18%	17%
■ Did not have an ID and thought they needed one to register	5%	N/A
■ Current name did not match their driver's license or Social Security card	3%	N/A
■ Wanted to avoid being harassed by election officials because they were transgender	2%	N/A
■ Thought their state's voter identification law could stop them from voting	1%	N/A

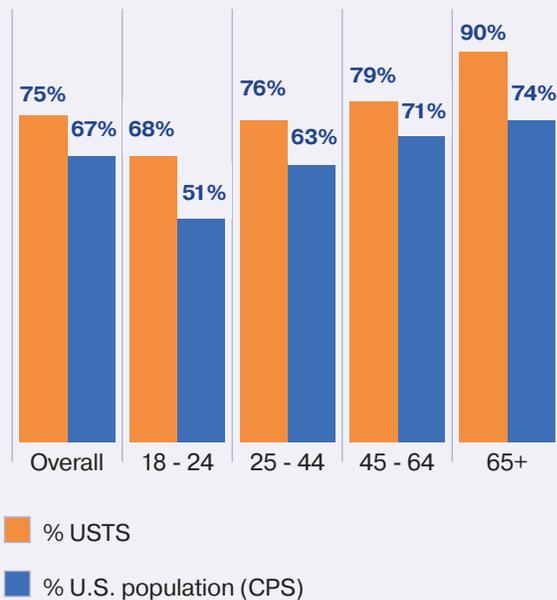
Voting

- Three-quarters (75%) of voting eligible respondents reported that they had voted in the 2020 presidential election, compared to 67% in the U.S. population.¹⁰ USTS respondents also appear more likely to have voted compared to the U.S. population when looking across age groups.

Age of Voters in the 2020 Presidential Election

(of USTS Voting Eligible Respondents and U.S. Voting Eligible Population)

Current Age



- The trend of higher voter engagement among 2022 USTS respondents is consistent with the trend observed in the 2015 USTS in which 54% of voting eligible respondents reported that they had voted in the midterm election, compared to 42% in the U.S. population.¹¹

- Respondents who were registered to vote but did not vote¹² reported that they were not interested or felt their vote wouldn't make a difference (24%), they did not like the candidates or campaign issues (17%), they forgot to vote or send in their absentee ballot (11%), they were out of town or away from home (8%), or they were too busy or had a conflicting work or school schedule (8%). Another 8% reported they did not vote for other reasons.

- Of the 8% of respondents who were registered but did not vote for other reasons,¹³ 1% reported that they did not have the ID they needed to vote. Among the other reasons for being registered to vote but not voting, respondents also reported reasons related to being transgender, including that their ID did not match their current name, gender, or appearance (1%), the gender or name on their ID did not match their voter registration (1%), or they wanted to avoid being harassed by election officials because they were transgender (1%).

Reasons for Not Voting in the 2020 Presidential Election (of USTS Voting Eligible Respondents and U.S. Voting Eligible Population)	% USTS	% U.S. population (CPS)
Not interested or felt their vote wouldn't make a difference	24%	18%
Did not like the candidates or campaign issues	17%	15%
Forgot to vote or send in their absentee ballot	11%	4%
Out of town or away from home	8%	6%
Too busy or had a conflicting work or school schedule	8%	13%
Illness or disability (own or family's)	6%	13%
Registration problems (for example, didn't receive absentee ballot, not registered in current location)	6%	5%
Concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic	5%	4%
Transportation problems	4%	2%
Inconvenient hours, polling place, or hours or lines too long	2%	3%
Bad weather conditions	<1%	<1%
Other reasons (including):	8%	15%
■ Did not have the ID they needed to vote	1%	N/A
■ ID did not match their current name, gender, or appearance	1%	N/A
■ Gender or name on their ID did not match their voter registration	1%	N/A
■ Wanted to avoid being harassed by election officials because they were transgender	1%	N/A
■ Was not allowed to vote by a poll worker or election official because they were transgender	<1%	N/A

Of respondents who voted in person,¹⁴ 2% reported problems with voting because they were transgender, including having poll workers question their identity or ID, having a problem with their name listed on the

voter list, having a problem with the gender marker on their ID, being harassed by poll workers or other voters, or being made to vote on a provisional ballot because of a name or gender issue.

Civic Engagement

USTS respondents participated in a range of civic activities during the 2020 presidential election cycle and in the last 12 months, from volunteering for or donating to campaigns to attending political protests and rallies.

- During the 2020 presidential election cycle, respondents reported that they donated money to a presidential campaign (13%) or another political candidate, issue, or cause (19%). They also volunteered or worked for a presidential campaign (3%) or another political candidate, issue, or cause (9%).
- Respondents were asked about their level of civic or political activity in the 12 months prior to completing the survey. More than three-quarters (81%) of respondents were engaged in a civic or political activity during that time, such as signing a petition (66%), contacting a government official (28%), or attending a political protest or rally (26%).

Percent of USTS Respondents that Participated in Civic or Political Activity in the 2020 Presidential Election	% USTS
Gave money to another political candidate, issue, or cause	19%
Gave money to a presidential campaign	13%
Volunteered or worked for another political candidate, issue, or cause	9%
Volunteered or worked for a presidential campaign	3%
At least one civic or political activity	25%

Percent of USTS Respondents that Participated in Civic or Political Activity in the 12 Months Prior to Taking the Survey	% USTS
Signed a petition	66%
Commented about politics on a message board or internet site	60%
Contacted a government official	28%
Attended a political protest or rally	26%
Served on a committee for a civic, non-profit, or community organization	10%
Written a letter or email to a newspaper/magazine or called a live radio or TV show	7%
Held a publicly elected office (such as in local, state, or federal government, not student government).	<1%
Run for a publicly elected office (such as in local, state, or federal government, not student government).	<1%
At least one civic or political activity in the last 12 months	81%

Policy Priorities

- Respondents were asked for their opinion on the most important policy priorities for transgender people in the United States. Among the top priorities were: violence against transgender people (46%), racial justice (38%), coverage for trans-related health care (34%), poverty/income (28%), housing and homelessness (27%), youth access to trans-related health care (23%), lack of health providers who know how to serve transgender people (13%), discrimination by health providers (11%), changing name and gender on identity documents and records (11%), and employment (10%).
- Opinions on top priorities differed by age on issues such as employment, access to updated identity documents and records, racial justice, and coverage for trans-related health care. But they were consistent on other issues, such as addressing violence against transgender people, the lack of health care providers with competency in serving transgender people, and youth access to trans-related health care. For example, employment was a higher priority for respondents who were 45 – 64 (20%) and 65 and older (20%) than those who were 25 – 44 (10%) and 18 – 24 (6%). Access to updated identity documents was also a higher priority for older respondents, with respondents who were 45 – 64 (19%) and 65 and older (19%) including identity documents access as a priority more than those who were 25 – 44 (10%) or 18 – 24 (8%). Respondents of all ages ranked violence against transgender people as a high priority, including those who were 18 – 24 (49%), 25 – 44 (43%), 45 – 64 (47%), and 65 and older (46%).

Policy Priorities of USTS Respondents by Current Age	Overall % of USTS resp.	18 – 24	25 – 44	45 – 64	65 and older
Violence against transgender people	46%	49%	43%	47%	46%
Racial justice	38%	45%	41%	21%	18%
Coverage for trans-related health care	34%	30%	34%	43%	40%
Poverty/income	28%	27%	32%	21%	18%
Housing and homelessness	27%	28%	31%	22%	18%
Youth access to trans-related health care	23%	23%	22%	22%	25%
Lack of health providers who know how to serve transgender people	13%	12%	13%	15%	15%
Discrimination by health providers	11%	13%	10%	9%	8%
Changing name and gender on identity documents and records	11%	8%	10%	19%	19%
Employment	10%	6%	10%	20%	20%

Conclusion

In a world of close elections, transgender people are a key part of the electorate. USTS respondents engaged in voting at high levels and participated in civic and political activities in a variety of ways to make their voices heard. They expressed concerns about violence against transgender people, access to and coverage for trans-related health care, income, employment, housing, and access to identity documents that accurately reflect their identities, each of which persist as issues for those who completed the USTS since the 2015 survey.

ENDNOTES

1. Survey respondents were asked questions about voting in relation to the November 3, 2020 presidential election, which was the national election held in closest proximity to the start of the fielding period on October 19, 2022. A hyperlinked explanation stated: “This was the election in November 2020 to elect the U.S. President (between Joe Biden and Donald Trump), members of the U.S. Congress, and state-level offices.”
2. James, S.E., Herman, J.L., Durso, L.E., and Heng-Lehtinen, R. (2024). *Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality, Washington, DC.
3. Voter registration and voting questions are drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) November Voting and Registration Supplement. USTS respondent results are based on the responses of U.S. citizens in the sample who were aged 18 or older at the time of the election to provide the most appropriate comparison to CPS data on registration and voting in the U.S. population.
4. “Voting eligible respondents” means those who are adult U.S. citizens (n = 72,740). We do not consider other issues of eligibility for voting, such as laws that prohibit voting for those convicted of felonies or other crimes.
5. Fabina, J. and Scherer, Z. (2022). *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2020*. U.S. Census Bureau. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/demo/p20-585.pdf>. See also U.S. Census November voting and registration data tables, available at: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html>.
6. Fabina and Scherer, *Voting and Registration*. See also U.S. Census November voting and registration data tables.
7. James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., and Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* (p. 232). Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality. Respondents in the 2015 USTS were asked about the 2014 midterm election because that was the closest national election to the survey fielding period (August 19 – September 21, 2015).
8. Voting eligible respondents who were not registered to vote (n = 4,535).
9. Voting eligible respondents who were not registered to vote for “other reasons” (n = 794).
10. Fabina and Scherer, *Voting and Registration*. See also U.S. Census November voting and registration data tables.
11. James, Herman, Rankin, Keisling, Mottet, and Anafi, *Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, 234.
12. Respondents who were registered to vote but did not vote (n = 3,431).
13. Respondents who were registered to vote but did not vote for “other reasons” (n = 282).
14. Respondents who voted in person represent 55% of the voting eligible respondents who voted in the November 2020 election. Of voting eligible respondents (n = 72,740), three-quarters (75%) voted in the election.

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August 2024

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Recommended Citation: *Civic Engagement in the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey*. 2024. Advocates for Trans Equality Education Fund, Washington, DC.

