AMERICAN WOMEN’S POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT POLL

MARCH 2018
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ABOUT THE POLL

The American Women’s Political Engagement Poll was developed through a partnership between Bustle Trends Group and VoteRunLead to shed light on how women really feel about running for office, political affiliations, and their engagement leading into the 2018 midterm elections.

POLL OBJECTIVE

Gain a greater understanding of where women stand when it comes to fundamental beliefs, public service, and politics. We set out to:

- Track the top issues for American women, across ages;
- Understand their political ambitions and motivations, from the full political spectrum, and
- Better understand the concerns of women stepping up to vote, to run for office and to lead.

METHODOLOGY

N = 1,000
Demographics: W18-49, U.S.
Field dates: 2/12 - 2/14
Survey Platform: Pollfish
THE “WOMAN CARD” IS A MYTH

Women are influencing elections in new ways. The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements are influencing elections. Women are showing their ownership over their bodies and their rights as American citizens through political action; 39 percent of women ranked women’s rights as one of the top three issues they are passionate about.

More women are encouraged to run for office than ever before. Regardless of party affiliation, women are feeling empowered to run because they saw someone could win the highest office in the country without political experience; nearly 1 in 3 (30 percent) women who have considered running for office said the primary reason is that they saw someone without political experience could run for office and win.

Women are voting based on issues and candidate values (not gender), and this is not new. All women find honesty to be the most important attribute in a political candidate; 66 percent of all women surveyed ranked honesty as one of the top three. Women of color writ large; 78 percent voted in the last presidential election, and 86 percent of those women did not vote for Donald J. Trump.

Healthcare is the issue that matters most to women — whether they identify as Republican, Democrat, third-party or unaffiliated. When positioned to choose their top three issues, healthcare was the most popular choice among women polled with 67 percent of women choosing it.

The attention and consequences garnered by the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements are working because women believe that sexual harassment and assault are being taken seriously. Thirty-three percent of women indicated their reason for becoming more politically active was #MeToo, the Women’s March, or considering themselves part of the resistance. And, exactly half of all poll respondents agreed with the statement “The harassment and assault of women is being taken seriously by men in positions of power.

Women are demanding more from their elected officials. More than one-third (35 percent) would feel better represented by someone who shares their specific characteristics likes age, race, or religion. And out of nine key issues, women’s rights was ranked fourth highest in level of importance among all respondents with 39 percent of women polled ranking it in their top three.
Women are voting on the issues that are most important to them, as opposed to a candidate’s gender. The data from this survey and the 2016 election results bear this out and supports longstanding views that women are issue-based voters.

- 79 percent said that when choosing between candidates, they do not take gender into account
- 78 percent said that gender does not affect their likelihood of voting for someone; they look at all candidates equally and do not take gender into account
- 60 percent said they didn’t think or weren’t sure if sexism played a role in the 2016 presidential election

American women are savvy voters that put issues ahead of considerations of gender. In this way, traditional messaging to female voters that exclusively prioritizes so-called “women’s issues” falls short.

**Taking Gender Out of the Voting Equation**

**Political Experience is No Longer a Barrier for Entry**

The surge of women running for office is in the millions, and there is no sign of the momentum stopping. More than 1 in 4 (26 percent) of the women polled indicated that they have been motivated to run or politically engaged because of the election. That is potentially 18 million women with ambitions to run for office. Of the women considering running, half of them are interested in running by 2020.

A clear shift and a direct result of the election is that women don’t need political experience and value it less. Only 19 percent of women chose “years of political experience” when asked which top three traits are most important for an ideal political candidate.

It’s not just the resistance — women across the political spectrum are ready to run. 19 percent of Democrats, 18 percent of Republicans, and 12 percent of Independents are now considering running for political office. Additionally, 25 percent of Trump voters said they were also considering running.

**Education**

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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
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<td>University</td>
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<td>Vocational Tech. College</td>
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<td>Middle School</td>
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_Sample Size: 1000_
WHAT MATTERS MOST TO FEMALE VOTERS

American women look for candidates to be honest with them. When asked which traits they feel are most important in an ideal political candidate, nearly two-thirds (66 percent) said “honesty” was what mattered most. It was a clear lead characteristic, followed by “consistent track record” (following through with what they say) (42 percent) and “that their values align with mine” (23 percent).

Women of all backgrounds felt this way, but the group that had the strongest emphasis on honesty were African-American women (70 percent). More black women also ranked women’s rights in their top three issues that are most important to them (57 percent, versus 39 percent of all women surveyed). As was shown in Alabama’s special election, politicians need to pay attention to black women as they can and will make all the difference.

Honesty is in the eye of the beholder. Sixty-five percent of Republican women said honesty was one of the most important traits an ideal candidate should possess (higher than Democrats’ 63 percent and lower than Independents’ 70 percent). When asked to rate Donald J. Trump’s first year in office, just nine percent of Republican women gave him an “F,” whereas 60 percent of Democrats and 39 percent of Independents did so. When women support a candidate, their perception of who they are as a person fits what they would like to see.
DIFFERENT PARTIES, SAME ISSUE

All women polled selected healthcare (67 percent) as the most important issue to them. A distant second, rounding out the top three issues, were education (48 percent) and the economy (43 percent). When split across party, healthcare was still the top issue among Democrats (71 percent), Republicans (70 percent), and Independents (66 percent).

The poll results very clearly pointed to the fact that the most important topics on women’s minds are nonpartisan. Everyone wants to be able to go to the doctor when they need to, provide their children with the same educational opportunities, and have a steady job to pay the bills.
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Bustle and VoteRunLead both feel a civic responsibility to women in America, providing them with the resources to get and stay politically active in their communities. The results of the poll have laid a roadmap for work to be done nationally on a nonpartisan level.

To best support the rising number of women stepping up to run in 2018 and beyond, VoteRunLead is crisscrossing the country with its nonpartisan #RunAsYouAre curriculum for women at all stages of running for office. With the nation’s only Rural Women’s Initiative and an alumnae base that is 60 percent women of color, VoteRunLead will continue to train diverse women to run for office and win by hosting in-person trainings, growing its online library of over 60 campaign training resources, and launching new engagement tools that focus on the 519,000 local and state offices where women make up a stagnant and meager 22 percent representation.

Bustle will continue to inspire women to share their stories, raise their voices, and create positive change in their lives and the lives of others.
VoteRunLead

With more than 26,000 women trained to run for office and win, VoteRunLead is the largest and most diverse campaign and leadership organization in the country. Our mission is to educate women to unleash their political power, seek public office, and transform American democracy. We work to equip women with the right know-how, trainings and how-tos to help them enter politics with a purpose. We believe that by empowering women to run as they are, they will build a campaign based on their own passion, their own ideas, and their own values.

For more information on VoteRunLead, please contact Erin Vilardi, Founder and CEO, Erin@VoteRunLead.org

Bustle Trends Group is a new, full-service arm born from Bustle Digital Group’s mission of empowering women to be curious, to be themselves, and to be excited about owning their place in the world. We deliver authentic and relatable insights designed to help marketers and consumers alike understand what drives the millennial woman’s decision-making tree.

For more information on Bustle Trends Group, please contact Jessica Tarlov, Head of Research Jessica.Tarlov@Bustle.com
### VoteRunLead

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