



To: Congressional Institute
From: The Winston Group
Re: Survey Summary
Date: June 19, 2012

The following is a summary of national survey of 1300 registered voters, including an oversample of 800 female voters, June 12-14. Three national firms, the Winston Group, American Viewpoint and Presentation Testing conducted eight focus groups in Columbus, Tampa and Denver; one online discussion group, and a national survey as part of this research project.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Reflecting the findings of the qualitative research, economic issues dominate the issue set for the electorate, including women.

Which group of issues concerns you most?	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN
Economic – like taxes, budget and jobs	53	58	48
Social – like education, health care and environment	24	20	27
Moral – like prayer in schools, abortion and gay rights	14	13	15
Foreign affairs – like defense, terrorism and international relations	7	8	6

Across all female subgroups in the survey, economic issues were most important.

Like the broader electorate, women have a negative outlook on the present state of the economy (37-55 among women; 33-60 overall).

While President Obama's job approval is slightly negative overall (45-51), women overall tend approve of his job performance by a small margin (50-46), although there are variations by women's subgroups.

- Independent females (45-52 approve disapprove) and married women with children (46-52 approve-disapprove) tend to disapprove of the President's job performance, while senior women are split (46-47).

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

In terms of how they are doing financially, we asked respondents to rate how they were doing financially on a scale of 1-9, with 1 being that things were not going well at all, 5 being neutral, and 9 being that things are going very well. The mean response was 5.40, with 5.35 among women.

In looking back on how they were doing four years ago, the mean response was 5.95 among voters overall and among women, indicating that their financial situations have gotten worse since 2008.

About two-thirds of the electorate said that they had made major cutbacks in spending (59%), with 61% of women having made major cutbacks. Additionally more than one out of two voters overall (55%) as well as women (53%) felt like they were behind in terms of where they should be financially.

Consistent with what we heard in the qualitative research, many women have already made or were in the process of making major lifestyle shifts to make ends meet. This usually involved taking another job, going back to work, as well as spending cuts and paying off debt. In most cases, they were living very frugally and had already cut every expense that could be cut. The most serious problems described by the women in the focus groups tended to be immediate challenges rather than long term problems, and they were not yet able to plan for with long range issues like retirement or long term financial planning. According to Linda DiVall of American Viewpoint, *“They are the rock for their families and it is small wonder that more do not crack under the constant pressure they face.”*

PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES AND VALUES

Based on the listening sessions from the qualitative phase, we asked survey respondents to rate the importance of a series of potential outcomes on a scale of 1-9, with 1 being important, 5 being very important, and 9 being extremely important (full list below). Among women, the most important outcomes related to cost of living, secure retirement, being able to have the health care they need, having job security, and not having to worry about being able to pay next month’s bills.

	MEAN	MEN	WOMEN
1. Being able to have the health care that you need	8.06	7.74	8.35
2. Having a secure retirement	8.13	7.96	8.28
3. Being able to effectively manage cost of living	7.84	7.56	8.10
4. Having job security	7.91	7.74	8.07
5. Not having to worry about whether you can pay next month’s bills	7.89	7.75	8.02
6. Having a quality of life that you are satisfied with	7.97	7.91	8.02
7. Making sure you receive equal pay for the same work	7.40	6.90	7.85
8. Being able to afford my child’s education and college costs	7.33	6.95	7.70
9. Being able to take care of parents if they need help	7.45	7.20	7.68
10. Kids being able to get jobs	7.53	7.39	7.65
11. Being safe from terrorism	7.51	7.40	7.60
12. Getting out of debt	7.44	7.35	7.54
13. Balancing time at home with time at work	7.19	6.98	7.39
14. Not having your taxes go up	7.02	7.06	6.99
15. Being able to afford a family vacation	5.86	5.76	5.96
16. Having access to birth control	5.32	4.66	5.94
17. Being able to start your own business	5.42	5.59	5.25

Across key women’s subgroups like married women with children, independent women, and seniors, there were general similarities in terms of the top tier of outcomes that were most important to them, such as getting the health care they need, secure retirement, job security, and managing cost of living.

Married Women with Kids	Independent Females	Senior Women (65+)	Single 18-40
Health care you need (8.48)	Secure retirement (8.43)	Health care you need (8.19)	Health care you need (8.42)
Secure retirement (8.40)	Health care you need (8.39)	Secure retirement (8.01)	Afford education/college (8.33)
Job security (8.29)	Next month’s bills (8.16)	Quality of life (7.93)	Job security (8.31)
Afford education/college (8.20)	Able to manage cost of living (8.13)	Able to manage cost of living (7.87)	Secure retirement (8.23)

In terms of retirement and health care, the concern about these issues largely stems from the “sandwich situations”, as described in the focus groups, as many women find themselves taking care of elderly parents, children who cannot financially support themselves, as well as spouses. The concern is not just about their own retirements and health care, but about how to manage three generations of retirement/health care.

As one independent voter in Columbus described, “ *Who is going to take care of us? I took care of my dad for a few years. Our kids...are barely able to keep their head above water.*”

Thus, based on this set of outcomes and the qualitative discussions that we heard, the values that emerge from this set of priorities center upon financial security and taking care of family.

OUTLOOK ON PUBLIC POLICY DISCOURSE

In terms of the recent health care plan, voters overall tend to oppose the plan (39-51 favor-oppose), but women overall were split (45-46). This reflects what we heard in some of the focus groups, in that many women had mixed feelings about the health care bill. As we heard in several of the focus groups, there were serious concerns about the bill, but many women still take a “wait and see” approach.

- Independent women and married women with children tended to oppose the bill (-13 and -10 respectively).
- Senior women leaned unfavorably to the bill but by single digits (-5).

Consistent with the findings from the qualitative research, women’s issues were important, but their primary issue concerns were the economy and cost of living issues, and there was significantly more interest in hearing about who had a clear plan for the economy (7-87 among women; 8-88 among voters overall). In the words of a mom from Columbus, “*I am looking for a problem-solver; I want someone who understands and who has a strategy and vision to make it better.*”

There was also skepticism about the political motivation behind the recent public discussions about “women’s issues” and a “war on women”. Based on the qualitative research, most had not heard of the term “war on women”. There is also the belief that politicians think that women want to hear about women’s issues rather than the economy.

- 81% of women believe the statement that *lawmakers say what they think we want to hear, but don’t have a clear understanding of the challenges I face.* (81-14 believe-do not believe)

- 75% of women think that when *lawmakers talk about women's issues, they are just saying this to win the women's vote because they think this is what women want to hear, rather than that lawmakers are genuinely concerned about women's issues.* (15%)
- One in four women agrees with the statement that *there is a war on women* (25-69 agree-disagree).

Not unexpectedly, there was dissatisfaction with the present public policy discourse, as both groups felt Washington DC was removed from their everyday lives and out of touch, with negative reactions to hyperbole and hyper-partisan rhetoric or blame from both sides. By a wide margin, women think that the political discourse in Washington does not represent the concerns that they have (28-66 does-does not).

Finally, they felt that lawmakers try to do too many things and don't focus on priorities, rather than that lawmakers don't address enough issues (70-23 among women). Based on the qualitative findings, if lawmakers focused on priority issues like the economy and jobs, women felt confident that they will be able to take care of the rest. As one female Hispanic voter in Denver stated, "*There should be priorities. I think they've got them all mixed up somewhere, all of them.*"