

September 19, 2016

Women and the 2016 Elections Findings from a National Survey of Voters

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

With the fall political campaigns now in full swing, a recent poll of voters commissioned by American Women¹ indicates that critical voting blocs of women in the electorate — including millennial women, women of color, and unmarried women — will be a force in this year's election. These women have a clear point of view when it comes to their priorities and the issues that matter to them when they head to the ballot box, and candidates can benefit from paying attention to them as they communicate with voters this fall.

While the electorate as a whole sees economic concerns as the most important issue, these women express deeper concerns about economic stresses in their daily life; and as a result, they are more likely to emphasize issues and support policies that address their concerns. And while these women also have concerns about security issues, their fears tend to focus more locally on gun violence and racial profiling issues than on the issues of terrorism and threats from immigrants and refugees.

The agenda that resonates with these crucial blocs of women voters is well-defined: they want their elected leaders and candidates to focus on strengthening their economic security, including equal pay for women, job training, college affordability, and paid medical and family leave. They also want leaders who will protect their access to reproductive health care; and they want leaders who will take action to address the gun violence epidemic.

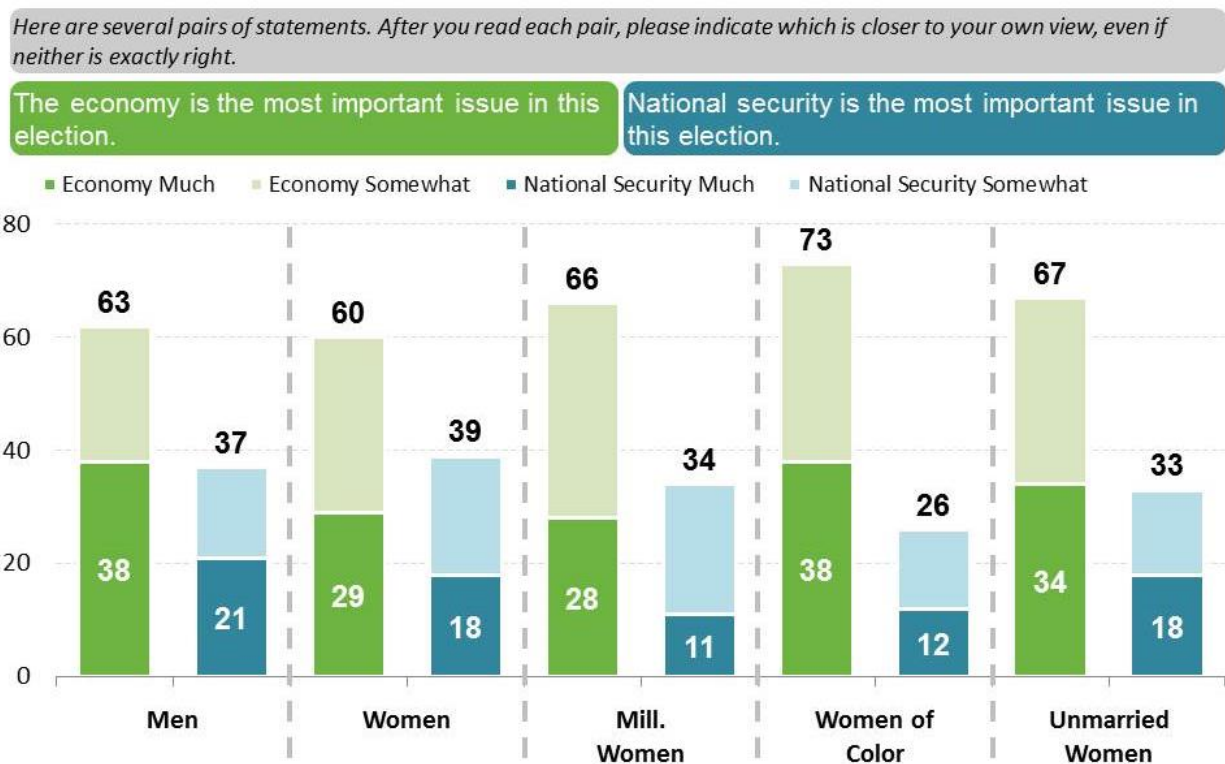
The following memo is based on a national online survey of 1,000 registered voters, including an oversample of 200 women who identify as independent in partisan beliefs and voting behavior, weighted to be representative of registered voters nationally. The survey was conducted from August 19-25, 2016.

¹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a national online survey of 800 registered voters, with an oversample of 200 self-identified independent women voters for a total sample size of 1,000. The survey was conducted from August 19-25, 2016.

Women view economic concerns as more important than security in this election

Voters view the economy as the more important issue than national security in the November elections by a 61-38 percent margin. Both men (63 - 37 percent economy/national security) and women (60 - 39 percent economy/national security) believe that economic issues outweigh security by similar margins. Additionally, growing blocs of influential women voters—including millennial women, women of color, and unmarried women—express a stronger support for economics as the dominant issue in the elections. The intensity of the preference for a focus on the economy is particularly strong among women of color—73% of whom believe that the economy is the most important issue this election year.

Figure 1: Economy versus National Security concerns, by subgroup



Women view the economy as the biggest problem facing both the country and their own families. However, for key groups of women, their personal economic situation and concerns outpace other worries by larger margins.

- In an open-ended question about the biggest issue facing their country, 49 percent of voters volunteer an economic-related response, compared to 29 percent who cite a security-related response. There is not a strong difference among women, as 51 percent of women volunteer an economic-related response, compared to 31 percent who cite a security-related response.
- When asked a similar open-ended question about the biggest problem facing their own daily lives, however, women—particularly women of color and millennial women—put economic concerns far and above as their top concern. Overall, 44 percent of voters cite

worries about personal finances, jobs, costs, and the economy as their biggest personal concern. Among millennial women this number rises to 48 percent, and among women of color, more than half (52 percent) say that economic issues are their biggest personal concern.

Given that women volunteer economic issues as their top problem, it is not surprising that they are more likely to see economic issues as top priorities for Congress and government to address in the next two years. Overall, voters prioritize protecting retirement benefits and addressing the federal deficit as biggest priorities, followed by protecting threats from terrorism and Zika and tackling gun violence.

However, there are different trends among the emerging blocs of women voters.

- Millennial women focus far less on retirement, terrorism, and the deficit, and instead want more focus on helping parents with paid family leave policies, making college more affordable, and reducing gun violence.
- Gun violence is also a key agenda item for women of color; it is, in fact, the top issue they want government to address, along with making education more affordable and increasing the minimum wage.
- Unmarried women want Congress and the next government to focus on making education more affordable and ensuring equal pay for women.

Figure 2: Top 4 most important things for Congress or the government to focus on in the next two years, by subgroup

	Total RVs	Women	Mill. Women	Women of Color	Unmarried Women
Protecting retirement benefits, like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security	35	33	14	22	29
Reducing the federal deficit and government spending	33	25	23	17	21
Protect the country from terrorism and threats like Zika	26	25	21	20	22
Prevent gun violence by requiring mandatory background checks	20	21	24	29	23

Top security concerns for women: gun violence, terrorism, and racial profiling

While women view the economy as most important in this election, this does not mean that they are not also worried about security. Their fears, however, are not solely centered on terrorism. They also center on threats like gun violence, mass shootings and racial profiling. Fears about illegal immigration and refugees fall into the bottom tier of security concerns for voters across the board, including various cohorts of women voters. Women of color express far more serious concerns about gun violence and profiling mistreatment than any other security threats; millennial women and unmarried women are also more likely to be “very concerned” about these issues, though they also worry about terrorist attacks on American soil.

Figure 3: Level of concern about issues by subgroup

	% Very Concerned				
	Total RVs	Women	Mill. Women	Women of Color	Unmarried Women
Gun violence and mass shootings	59	62	61	79	66
Terrorist attacks from groups like ISIS on American soil	56	61	51	62	57
Racial profiling and mistreatment of people of color by law enforcement	38	42	49	75	49
Illegal immigration and refugees coming into this country.	36	34	22	21	28
Abuse of opioids and prescription drugs in communities	29	31	30	42	33
Zika or other public health issues	24	28	28	37	31
Physical violence from a romantic partner or loved one	18	21	22	35	23
Sexual harassment in the workplace	15	18	18	29	20

These target blocs of women provide clear direction on who they trust and how they want to see these security issues handled by their leaders:

- Who do you trust to keep us safe? Millennial women trust Democrats over Republicans to keep us safe at home and abroad in the fight against terrorism, and unmarried women trust Democrats more by 8 points. Women of color are more likely to trust Democrats by 59 points.
- This widens when it comes to the debate at the top of this year's ballot. While voters overall trust Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump (54-45) to keep us safe at home and abroad in the fight against terrorism by 10 points, the margin in favor of Clinton is 18 points with women voters (58-40), 36 with millennial women (68-32) and 37 points among unmarried women (68-31).
- Women of color, millennial women, and unmarried women all overwhelmingly support taking action to strengthen gun laws in the county. Eighty-eight percent of women of color support stronger gun laws over keeping the laws as they are, including two-thirds who prefer stronger laws much more than keeping them the same. Support for stronger gun laws also comes from 77 percent of millennial women and 69 percent of unmarried women.

A clear agenda for making voting decisions

For these emerging target blocs of women, there is a clear separation on issues when it comes to making voting decisions. The women rank addressing gun violence, ensuring equal pay for women, and providing paid sick leave for workers as most important in their voting decisions, when compared against other issues like immigration and national security. The top three issues are consistent among these blocs of women, with much larger gaps between the top tier and second tier issues than voters overall.

Figure 4: Most important issue when it comes to making decisions about voting, by subgroup

	% 1-3				
	Total RVs	Women	Mill. Women	Women of Color	Unmarried Women
Requiring background checks to purchase guns and passing a ban on assault weapons	61	64	66	70	62
Making women and families more economically secure by ensuring equal pay for equal work	52	61	63	69	65
Supporting parents who work by providing paid sick days, paid family and medical leave, and affordable childcare	46	51	62	60	53
Maintaining the U.S. commitment to our NATO allies in Europe	42	35	28	23	27
Increase funding to combat Zika and other public health epidemics	32	33	32	29	28
Building a wall along the Mexico border to stop illegal immigrants from entering this country	25	21	16	16	23
Preventing Muslims from entering the United States	24	20	16	11	21
Strengthening laws to protect employees from sexual harassment and violence in the workplace	18	16	17	21	21

Women strongly support policies addressing gun violence, women's reproductive health, and economic well-being

Falling closely in line with the issues driving voting decisions, millennial women, women of color, and unmarried women show strong support for a package of policies that address their economic concerns, as well as tackle important issues on guns and reproductive health care. First, these women are more likely to strongly support policies that speak to strengthening the economic standing for women and families, including equal pay for women, job training, paid family leave, affordable college, childcare, and long term care:

- Ensure that women get equal pay for equal work in order to make women and families economically secure, protect workers from retaliation, hold employers accountable, and provide salary negotiation training for women and girls.
 - This policy resonates strongly among unmarried women.
- Provide more skills training and apprenticeship opportunities for good, available jobs that pay.
- Establish paid family and medical leave for workers who have new babies, are caring for aging parents, or have ill family members.
- Lower student loan interest rates and rising college tuition costs.
- Expand access to high-quality, affordable childcare for working families by providing child care tax credits to working parents and providing universal pre-K.
- Invest in home care workers, who are caring for seniors and people with disabilities in their homes so they can live with dignity and independence.

Tied to this economic agenda, women in these key demographics also strongly support protecting access to reproductive health care and birth control:

- Stop insurance companies from charging women more for the same health care coverage as men, and fight efforts to end free coverage for mammograms and birth control.
- Ensure access to reproductive health care, including birth control.

And, they demand action on guns, reacting favorably to any proposal that bucks the status quo:

- Strengthen gun laws by requiring mandatory background checks and preventing those on the terrorist watch list from buying guns, as well as passing a ban on assault weapons.

These women react negatively to just two policies offered: sending a coalition of U.S. and allied troops to Syria to combat ISIS and blocking all immigration from countries affected by terrorism. While voters overall only slightly support these proposals, the key blocs of women oppose both proposals.

Figure 5: Policies favored by subgroup

	RVs		Women		Mill. Women		Women of Color		Unmarried Women	
	% Strongly favor	% Total favor	% Strongly favor	% Total favor	% Strongly favor	% Total favor	% Strongly favor	% Total favor	% Strongly favor	% Total favor
GUNS	62	78	68	87	69	90	76	93	67	85
EQUAL PAY	57	89	69	94	78	95	88	95	75	96
WOMEN'S HEALTH	54	80	65	87	65	86	80	92	71	89
REPRO HEALTH	50	76	58	86	76	95	69	94	67	91
JOB TRAINING	52	91	56	93	59	94	74	96	62	94
COLLEGE DEBT	51	84	60	90	66	90	74	91	65	94
PAID FAMILY LEAVE	42	77	56	84	75	95	77	97	65	91