

Highlights from the 2008 Women's Monitor

The Presidential Race

- ***Surpassing Gore and Kerry among women:*** Obama's current 12 point pre-convention lead among women is greater than either John Kerry's (+1 in June 2004) or Al Gore's (+9 in June 2000)¹ His 12 point lead is also greater than the final vote for either Kerry (+3) or Gore (+11) based on exit poll data
- ***After Gen Y women, Senior women are Senator Obama's next strongest generation:*** Obama leads Senator McCain by an incredible 30 points among Gen Y, 11 points among Seniors, 8 points among Gen X and 6 points among Boomers.
- ***Senior women: the opportunity target.*** Still, Obama's greatest room for growth is among Senior women. They give him an 11 point advantage over McCain, but give a generic congressional Democrat a 27 point lead over the Republican. The 16 point gap between presidential performance and generic Democratic performance is larger than in other generations and offers Obama an opportunity to grow his already historic margin.
- ***Hope and Optimism vs. Safety and Security:*** The key thematic divide in the presidential race is the equal split between those women who are looking for a candidate who offers hope and optimism (supporting Obama by a 60 point margin) and those who are looking for a candidate who offers safety and security (supporting McCain by a 35 point margin). The women's electorate divides exactly evenly among those who are looking for hope and optimism (38 percent) and safety and security (38 percent).

Political Engagement

- ***Presidential race: Hot. Congressional races: Not so much.:*** A majority of all generations of women say the outcome of the presidential race will make a lot of difference in their own lives (61 percent of all women). That number drops to 36 percent who think congressional elections will significantly affect their lives. The drop is most precipitous among Gen Y: 65 percent think the presidential race will make a large difference but only 26 percent think the congressional races are that important.
- ***Older women ISO news:*** Fifty (50) percent of both Boomers and Seniors say they actively seek out news about politics. Just 28 percent of Gen X and 26 percent of Gen Y are actively seeking news, with large majorities in the younger generations saying they are interested in politics, but not actively seeking information.
- ***Political giving increases with age:*** Twenty-nine (29) percent of all women have made a political contribution in the past two years to a candidate, a party, or a political cause group. Giving is greatest among Seniors (41 percent) and most uncommon among Gen Y (13 percent). Forty-two (42) percent of women who identify themselves as strong Democrats have contributed, compared with 33 percent of strong Republicans.

¹ Pew Research, *Should Women Worry Obama?*, 7/17/08

Societal Trends

- ***An important generational divide on declining manufacturing jobs:*** Forty-eight (48) percent of Seniors view the transition from manufacturing jobs to technology jobs unfavorably; compared to just 20 percent of Gen Y who view the trend unfavorably.
- ***A dramatic difference in acceptance of gay lifestyles:*** The most intense generational gap lies in the acceptance of gay and lesbian couples, with 41 percent of Gen Y women viewing this trend very favorably compared to 28 percent of Gen X; 21 percent of Boomers and 17 percent of Seniors.
- ***An attachment to tradition:*** Just 28 percent of all women feel favorably about the fact that Christian traditions like public displays about Christ's birth at Christmas are less prominent so people of different faiths don't feel excluded. A majority 52 percent view this trend unfavorably.

Feminism

- ***Young women don't take equality for granted.*** Seventy-seven (77) percent of Gen Y agrees that sexism is still a serious problem for women today, including 36 percent who agree strongly. Seventy-eight (78) percent of Gen Y agrees that there is still a need for a women's movement that has a strong political voice, including 34 percent who agree strongly. Eighty-three (83) percent of Gen Y thinks it would be better if more women were elected to office, including 48 percent who agree strongly.
- ***Perceptions of workplace equality change with age.*** Just 32 percent of Seniors and 30 percent of Boomers think that women have equal opportunities and treatment in the work place. That figure rises to 41 percent among Gen X and 49 percent among Gen Y.
- ***Electing a woman president is now something women can imagine.*** In May, 2005 we asked how likely the U.S. was to elect a woman as president in the next ten years. Just 38 percent thought it was very (19 percent) or fairly (19 percent) likely. Now, 69 percent think it is very (44 percent) or fairly (25 percent) likely that we will elect a woman president in the next 20 years.

Women and Information, Generationally

- ***Young women = Facebook.*** Seventy-six (76) percent of Gen Y women are a member of a social networking site (like Facebook or MySpace), compared to 26 percent of Gen X women, 9 percent of Boomers and a statistically insignificant number of Seniors.
- ***The Internet is not just for shopping.*** Forty-eight (48) percent of Gen Y women say the Internet is one of their most important sources of news about politics, compared to 28 percent of Gen X women; 17 percent of Boomers and 8 percent of Seniors.
- ***Truthiness has an audience.*** Eight (8) percent of all women say shows like The Daily Show and The Colbert Report are one of their most important sources of news about politics. Eleven (11) percent of college Gen Yers name comedy shows while eleven percent says their local paper is a top source of news.

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