

Stepping Up and Standing Out: Women’s Political Participation in 2020

Benenson Strategy Group conducted a nationwide online survey among 800 likely 2020 presidential voters from December 5-12, 2019 to learn more about what’s driving women voters to step up and stand out in 2020.

The sample was weighted to ensure it is proportionately representative of likely 2020 general election voters nationwide. The margin of error is $\pm 3.39\%$ at the 95% confidence level. It is higher among subgroups.

Key Findings:

1) The 2016 election marked a new era of women’s involvement in political issues and campaigns and they show no sign of stopping in the 2020 cycle.

Only 16% of women voters said they’ve become *less* politically involved in the last few years, with 55% saying their involvement has stayed the same, and 29% saying they’ve become *more* involved.

Democratic women have been especially motivated to get involved (35% say they have gotten *more* involved in the last few years), as well as two key voting blocs—41% of millennial women and 36% of women of color say they’ve gotten *more* involved in the last few years.

Thinking back over the last few years, how would you describe your involvement in political issues or campaigns?

	More involved	Involvement stayed the same	Less involved
All likely 2020 voters	31	51	18
Women	29	55	16
Democratic women	35	50	16
Independent women	23	58	19
Republican women	27	59	13
Millennial women (18-34)	41	43	17
Women of color	36	44	20

Looking ahead to the 2020 election, the trend of increased involvement is likely to continue. **Democratic women, millennial women, and women of color** are more likely to say that in the next year they expect to be **more involved** in political issues or campaigns.

Thinking ahead through the end of next year, do you expect to be more or less involved in political issues or campaigns than you were in the last few years?

	More involved	Involvement will stay the same	Less involved
All likely 2020 voters	31	59	11
Women	31	60	9
Democratic women	39	51	9
Independent women	28	64	8
Republican women	23	68	9
Millennial women (18-34)	40	47	12
Women of color	40	45	14

2) Women are engaging in a range of activities, but are particularly focused on encouraging friends or family to vote or get involved in a campaign or issue.

In the past few years, have you taken any of the following actions? % who say YES

	Women	Men
Encouraged friends or family to vote or get involved in a campaign or issue	42	35
Signed a petition digitally or on paper from a political candidate or an issue advocacy group	33	32

Contacted an elected official about an issue that is important to you	24	28
Signed up for the email list of an elected official, political candidate, or issue advocacy group	24	24
Attended a local political or government event, such as a town hall, public forum, or school board meeting	20	21
Attended a march, rally, or protest	13	10

On every key political action, women of color report being more politically engaged than white women—they volunteer their time, donate to candidates, attend marches, sign petitions, and encourage their friends to get involved at higher rates.

Millennial women (18-34 years old) are also leading the charge and taking to the streets—about a quarter (23%) of millennial women say they have attended a march, rally, or protest in the past few years.

3) Despite increased involvement in political issues, women voters identified time (i.e. being too busy working and/or taking care of family) as the biggest barrier to getting politically involved.

*What is the top reason why you have not gotten involved in political issues or campaigns in the past few years? Among voters who are currently **not** involved (i.e. have not done 2 or more “political” actions in the last few years)*

	All Women	Among Women		
		Dems	Indeps	Reps
I'm too busy working and/or taking care of my family	22	17	21	26
I don't know enough about political issues to get involved	15	13	22	12
I don't like taking stances on controversial issues	13	13	19	8
Our political system is so polarized that there's no point in getting involved	12	10	9	14
As just one person, I don't think my actions can really make a difference	10	13	6	9
I don't know how to get involved in a meaningful way	7	8	1	9
I don't have the money to make a difference on political issues	7	8	2	9
I'm worried that getting involved in political issues will hurt my personal relationships	5	6	5	5
There's no one in Washington who reflects my values	5	3	11	3
Our political leaders don't care about what women have to say	4	5	2	3
Other people are getting involved so I don't feel like I need to	2	4	1	2

A key distinction between men and women is the perception of not having enough time versus not having enough money to participate and make a difference—women are less likely to view money as a barrier to being politically active.

What is the top reason why you have not gotten involved in political issues or campaigns in the past few years?

	Women	Men
I'm too busy working and/or taking care of my family	22	12
I don't have the money to make a difference on political issues	7	17

4) Confidence in their own political knowledge is also a barrier unique to women.

Despite comparable news consumption, women are 3 times more likely to choose “I don't know enough about political issues to get involved” as their top reason for not getting involved in politics.

How often do you get news from each of the following sources? % Once a day or more

	Women	Men
Broadcast network news, such as NBC, ABC, or CBS	21	21
Cable news channels such as CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News	16	19
Social media like Facebook and Twitter	15	13

National newspapers, such as NYT or Washington Post	6	7
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What is the top reason why you have not gotten involved in political issues or campaigns in the past few years?

	Women	Men
I don't know enough about political issues to get involved	15	5

- 5) **Women, on either side of the political aisle, are primarily motivated by the aspirations they hold for the country.** We tested several reasons for why voters have gotten involved in politics in the past few years, and the top two are *I want to make my country a better place* and *I want to make sure our country moves forward not backward*.

What is the top reason why you've gotten involved in political issues or campaigns in the past few years?
Among voters who are currently involved (i.e. have done at least 2 "political" actions in the last few years)

	All Women	Among Women		
		Dems	Indeps	Reps
I want to make my country a better place	21	13	30	25
I want to make sure our country moves forward not backward	19	25	11	15
I'm afraid of what will happen if people like me don't get involved	17	15	16	20
As an American, I have a duty to get involved	12	12	11	13
I want to stand up to the extremism in our political system	7	7	8	5
If I don't get involved, people who disagree with me will be more likely to get their way	5	8	1	5
I want to make my voice heard so that I can persuade or inform others	5	4	6	4
I want to set a good example for my kids or others	5	4	7	5
I want to feel like I'm part of something bigger	4	3	5	3
I have a responsibility to continue what others before me started	3	5	0	3
I'm inspired by other people who have made a difference	3	4	5	2

- 6) **Women are inspired by other women's political involvement, especially when it comes to supporting women running for office.** Women are more likely to volunteer or donate to female candidates, especially Democratic and millennial women, as well as women of color.

Would you be more or less likely to volunteer for or donate to a woman candidate?

	More likely	No more or less	Less likely
All likely 2020 voters	38	47	15
Women	43	44	13
Democratic women	55	33	12
Independent women	41	51	9
Republican women	30	51	19
Millennial women (18-34)	54	34	13
Women of color	54	27	19



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