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The New Normal: Women, the Workplace, and Pandemic Politics

New Poll of American Women Reveals the Heavy Toll and Ongoing Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

CAMBRIDGE, MA (March 9, 2022)—After almost two years of contending with Covid-19, women across the country increasingly believe that the pandemic has created a new normal, [according to an online survey](#) released today by [Gender on the Ballot](#), a partnership between the [Women & Politics Institute at American University’s School of Public Affairs](#) and the [Barbara Lee Family Foundation](#). The survey reveals that women are economically stressed, struggling with mental health, and concerned about the state of the country, yet they are also galvanized in support of improving healthcare systems, electing women to public office, and seeing the first Black woman Supreme Court justice. [Benenson Strategy Group](#) conducted this survey on the opinions and sentiments of women voters, which dovetails with [Gender on the Ballot’s polling](#) on similar topics one year ago.

“Women are consistently at the vanguard of our nation’s social and political progress, and will continue to shape our trajectory this election season. [The New Normal](#) shows that women voters are inspired by seeing women in elected office and in prominent leadership roles, because women leaders have a positive impact on the country,” said Barbara Lee, President and Founder of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation. “Amidst global upheaval that has disproportionately impacted women, it is more important than ever that leaders understand the power of women voters and listen to their political opinions.”

“The last two years—characterized by the Covid-19 pandemic, persistent political turmoil, and the upending of everyday life—have taken a toll on women, even as they demonstrate incredible resilience and fortitude,” said Betsy Fischer Martin, Executive Director of the Women & Politics Institute. “*The New Normal* is an unflinching and comprehensive look at both pain points and sources of optimism for women across the country, from the ballot box to the office and at home. Our elected officials and leaders in every sector should take note.”

“It’s no secret that the invisible work of women has only grown during the pandemic,” said Lindsay Vermeyen, Senior Vice President at Benenson Strategy Group. “*The New Normal* shows us the crunch – between the mental load and financial burdens of disrupted careers, balancing caregiving and work, and outside factors like inflation – that women are feeling in 2022. Now more than ever, our society needs to find better ways to support women and families.”

Key Findings:

Women feel increasingly burned out, disengaged with politics, and disillusioned with elected officials.

Nearly 50% of women say that they feel more burned out than usual, and 53% of women believe that elected officials have let people down and not delivered results. This poll found that 41% of women say that they are more tuned out from politics, a +12 rise from 2021. Women of color and women under age 40 in particular reported an even more drastic rise in their disengagement levels, at 49% (a +20 increase from 2021) and 55% (up +22 from 2021), respectively.

The economy and inflation continue to be issues of concern and stress for women. Among women overall, 59% indicated pessimism about the economy (compared to 48% in 2021). 50% of women surveyed said that their financial situation has gotten worse since the pandemic began, an increase of 11% from 2021. When asked which issues will be most important in deciding who to vote for in 2022, 36% of women said “the economy.” “Inflation” tied with “healthcare” as the third most common issue, named by 26% of women.

There is rising consensus among women that life will never “go back to normal.” In 2021, 26% of women surveyed said that life “will never go back to normal” due to the pandemic. This year, an additional 14% of women expressed the same sentiment, for a total of 40% of women overall. And 77% of women believe that the pandemic will have long-lasting impacts on women and their careers.

Women say that the pandemic has irrevocably exposed cracks in healthcare, the workforce, and caregiving structures. Nearly all women believe we need better, more affordable healthcare. 82% of all women, including 73% of Republican women, agree that we need to expand Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act. Almost 80% of women indicated that the pandemic has made them more supportive of paid sick leave and paid family or maternity leave. More than three in four women believe that the 9-5 work model is outdated, and 56% of mothers with children under 18 say that it has been harder than ever to balance caregiving with other responsibilities.

Women voters view women leaders as a positive influence, and support electing women to political office. 54% of survey respondents said that the record number of women in Congress has had a positive impact on women’s lives. Three in four Democrats and over half of Independents want to see more women in office, and 83% of women believe that the first Black woman Supreme Court justice will inspire other women of color to dream big and be the “first” in their field.

“Women on Wednesdays” Virtual Panel Event on *The New Normal*

Betsy Fischer Martin, Amanda Hunter (Executive Director, Barbara Lee Family Foundation), and Lindsay Vermeyen will discuss this survey’s findings on Wednesday, March 16th at 6 pm EST. Details and registration for the virtual discussion are available [here](#).

About *Gender on the Ballot*

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation and the American University’s Women & Politics Institute are proud partners on *Gender on the Ballot*, a nonpartisan project that examines and contextualizes gender dynamics in American politics. As the conversation and culture around running for office in the US continues to evolve, *Gender on the Ballot* contributes to the dialogue on gender and politics through accessible content from experts and practitioners.

About The Barbara Lee Family Foundation

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation works to advance women’s equality and representation in American politics through political research, strategic partnerships, and grants and endowments. The Foundation’s work is guided by its core belief that women’s voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.

About the Women & Politics Institute at American University’s School of Public Affairs

The mission of the Women & Politics Institute is to close the gender gap in political leadership. WPI provides young women with academic and practical training that encourages them to become involved in the political process and facilitates research by faculty and students that enhances our understanding of the challenges and opportunities women face in the political arena.

About Benenson Strategy Group

Benenson Strategy Group delivers game-changing strategies to help clients navigate tough issues and develop winning campaigns. BSG uses innovative and provocative techniques that probe deeply on core beliefs, attitudes, and emotions to uncover the hidden architecture of opinion.