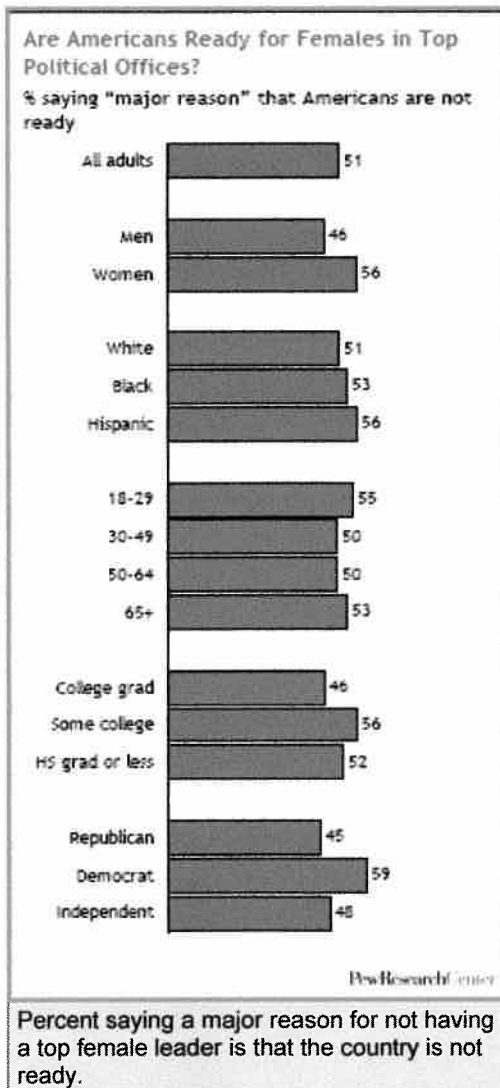


Senior Citizen Politics

Senior Citizens Send Puzzling Signals in Poll on Females' Ability to Lead the Nation

Seniors are least likely to say men have better leadership skills than women, among least likely to say U.S. ready for female leader



Sept. 4, 2008 – With all the attention on women as political leaders, the Pew Research Center has taken a look at how U.S. adults perceive the leadership traits of women and their ability to serve as political leaders. The general public finds women have everything it takes and more of it than men, but are still hesitant to say they are better leaders than men. Senior citizens, as usual, took a slightly different slant than younger people.

Americans 65 and older agree that women are better than men on the key leadership traits of honesty and intelligence. They were, in fact, the least likely age group to choose men on these two issues.

But, they think men are more decisive and work harder. Yet, they gave men less of an edge than younger people on being decisive.

On the key traits of honesty, intelligence and decisiveness, seniors gave women a smaller edge over men than the younger age groups.

So, it was surprising to find senior citizens joining the 18-to-29 age group to lead others in saying Americans are not ready for females in the top political office.

Senior citizens were right on the average with all adults who said men make the best leaders – 21%. But, they were the least likely to say men had better leadership skills than women – just 6%.

The seniors were just as confusing about women. They were also the least likely to say women had the best leadership skills – 17%.

So, what is this all about. Well, if they did not choose “men” or “women,” that means they considered them equal are refused to give an answer.

For the question about which gender has the strongest leadership skills, the percent that did not make a choice were 68% of those 18-29, 65% of those 30-49,

69% of those 50-64 and a whopping 77% of those over 64. That appears to be a strong statement that most seniors consider the genders pretty well equal when it comes to leadership ability.

Who Makes the Best Political Leader? Question: Which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion about men and women as political leaders: 1) Men generally make better political leaders than women; 2) Women generally make better political leaders than men, 3) In general, women and men make equally good political leaders.				
Age Group	Men	Women	Both Equal	DK – No Answer
18-29	19	4	73	4
30-49	22	5	69	4
50-64	22	8	66	3
65+	21	8	65	6
Men	21	4	69	6
Women	20	8	68	3
All Adults	21	6	69	4

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Doing the same analysis on the question of which sex makes the best political leader finds the same evidence is there but it is not as convincing. The non-choosers were 77% (18-29), 73% (30-49), 70% (50-64) and 71% (65+). It should be noted, however, that in most polling senior citizens are more likely to say they don't have an answer. In the chart above it shows only 65% of seniors considered the sexes equal but 6% had no answer to the question. So, the seniors were the least likely to consider them equal on this question.

But, on the bottom line question, senior citizens were among the most likely to say American is not ready for a female leader.

The General Results

The analysis of the nationwide poll by Pew Research, which was released August 25, before Sen. John McCain selected a female running mate, concludes that Americans believe women have the right stuff to be political leaders. When it comes to honesty, intelligence and a handful of other character traits they value highly in leaders, the public rates women superior to men.

Nevertheless, a mere 6% of respondents in this survey of 2,250 adults say that, overall, women make better political leaders than men. About one-in-five (21%) say men make the better leaders, while the vast majority -- 69% -- say men and women make equally good leaders.

Age Group	Men Best Political Leaders? %	Men Better on Leadership Traits? %	Women Best Political Leaders? %	Women Better on Leadership Traits? %
18-29	19	12	4	20
30-49	22	9	5	26
50-64	22	9	8	22
65+	21	6	8	17
Men	21	14	4	16
Women	20	5	8	28
All Adults	21	9	6	22

The paradox embedded in these survey findings

is part of a wider paradox in modern society on the subject of gender and leadership. In an era when women have made sweeping strides in educational attainment and workforce participation, relatively few have made the journey all the way to the highest levels

of political or corporate leadership. Why not? In the Pew Research Center Social and

Top Leadership Traits: Women Have More of the Right Stuff				
Leadership Trait	% Saying "Absolutely Essential"	%Saying "More True of Women:	%Saying "More True of Men"	Advantage Men or Women
Honest	52	50	20	Women +30
Intelligent	46	38	14	Women +24
Hardworking	45	28	28	No advantage
Decisive	39	33	44	Men +11
Ambitious	30	34	34	No advantage
Compassionate	28	80	5	Women +75
Outgoing	22	47	28	Women +19
Creative	20	62	11	Women +51

Note: Results shown above are based on two questions. The first asked respondents how important the trait was in a political leader, and the percentage that said the trait was "absolutely essential" is shown in the first column. The second and third columns report the results of the question that asked if the specific characteristic was more true of men or women.

Demographic Trends survey, the public cites gender discrimination, resistance to change, and a self-serving "old boys club" as reasons for the relative scarcity of women at the top. In somewhat smaller numbers, respondents also say that women's family responsibilities and their shortage of experience hold them back from the upper ranks of politics and business.

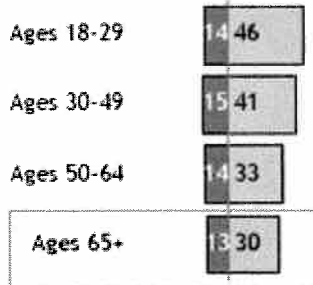
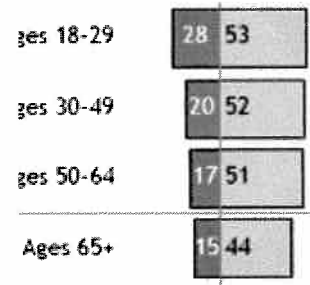
this characteristic more true of men or women...

Honesty

Intelligent

Men Women

Men Women

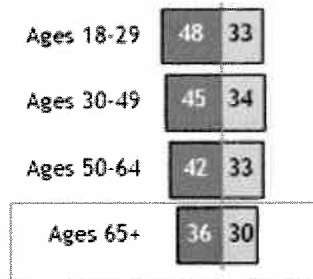
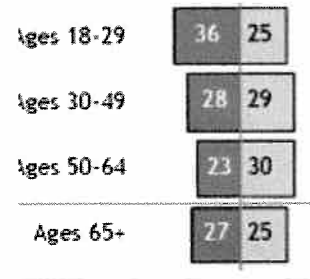


Hardworking

Decisive

Men Women

Men Women



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on Multiple Traits

The percentage in each group who say women or men are better on at least three of the four key traits ...

honest, intelligent, hard-working and decisive

	Men better	Women better
All	9	22
Gender		
Men	14	16
Women	5	28
Race/Ethnicity		
Whites	10	18
Blacks	6	39
Hispanics	7	34
Age		
18-29	12	20
30-49	9	26
50-64	9	22
65+	6	17
Education		
College grad+	9	15
Some college	9	23
H.S.grad or less	10	26
Party ID		
Republican	13	17
Democrat	7	28
Independent	9	21

What the public does not say is that women inherently lack what it takes to be leaders. To the contrary, on seven of eight leadership traits measured in this survey, the public rates women

either better than or equal to men.

For example, half of all adults say more honest than men, while just say men are more honest (the

don't know or volunteer the opinion that there's no difference between the sexes on this trait). And honesty, according to respondents, is the most important to leadership of any of the traits measured in the survey.

The next most important leadership trait, in the public's view, is intelligence. Here again, women outperform men: 38% of respondents say women are smarter than men, while just 14% say men are smarter, and the remainder say there's no difference between the sexes.

Men and women tie on two of the next three traits on the public's ranking of leadership qualities measured in this survey – hard work and ambition. Men prevail over women on decisiveness (their lone "victory" in the battery of eight traits), with 44% of respondents saying that men are more decisive and 33% saying women are.

Finally, women have big leads over men on the last three traits on the public's rankings of the eight items measured: being compassionate (80% say women; 5% say men); being outgoing (47% say women; 28% say men) and being creative (62% say women; 11% say men).

For anyone keeping score, that's women over men by five to one, with two ties, on eight traits, each of which at least two-thirds of the public says is very important or absolutely essential to leadership. Notably, nearly all of these gender evaluations are

women are one-in-five rest say they

shared by men as well as women, though the margins are more heavily pro-woman among female respondents than among male respondents.

The survey also asked respondents to assess whether men or women in public office are better at handling a range of policy matters and job performance challenges. On the policy front, women are widely judged to be better than men at dealing with social issues such as health care and education, while men have a big edge over women in the public's perception of the way they deal with crime, public safety, defense and national security.

As for job performance skills, women get higher marks than men in all of the measures tested: standing up for one's principles in the face of political pressure; being able to work out compromises; keeping government honest; and representing the interests of "people like you."

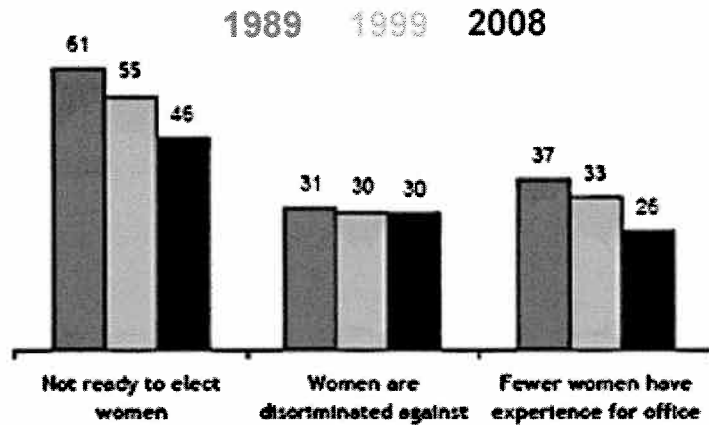
Overall, however, women emerge from this survey a bit like a sports team that racks up better statistics but still loses the game -- witness the tiny 6% sliver of the public that says women generally make better political leaders than men.

To be sure, the fact that such a large majority of respondents (69%) say that women and men make equally good political leaders is itself a measure of the profound changes in women's role in society that have taken place over the past several decades.

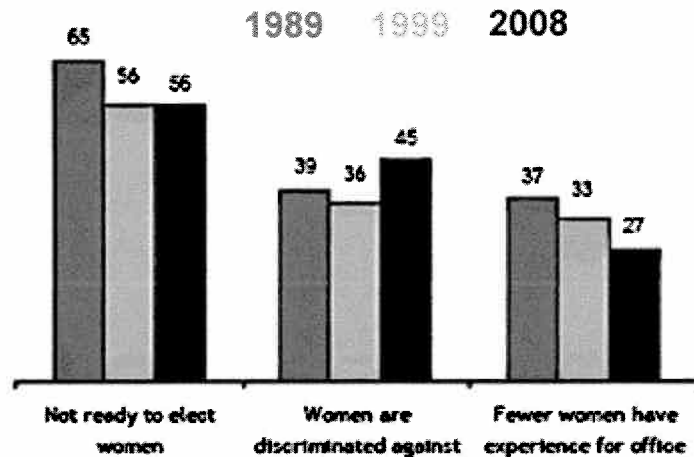
Women make up 57% of all college students, about half of all law and medical school students, and more than four- in-ten students who earn masters degrees in business. They make up 46% of the total private sector workforce and 38% of all managers.

Changes in Men's and Women's Views

% of men saying this is a major reason there are fewer women than men in high political office



% of women saying this is a major reason there are fewer women than men in high political office



Note: "Don't know" and "depends" responses are not shown.

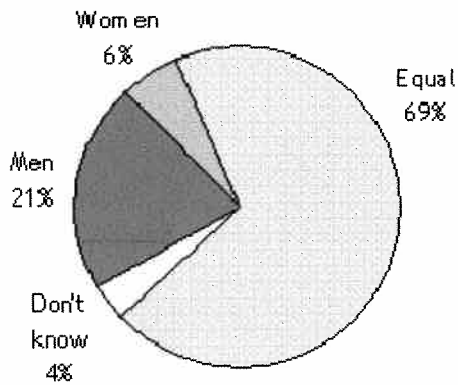
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Changes Over Time in Assessment of Obstacles

Virginia Slims surveys conducted in 1999 and 1989 also asked respondents why there were fewer female political leaders than male political leaders. In 1999, there was no gender gap in the share of respondents saying that a major reason was that many voters are not ready to elect women. Among men, 55% said so and among women, 56% did. Men are now less likely to say voters are not ready. But women's responses have not changed.

Men's likelihood to cite discrimination as a major reason has

Who Makes a Better Political Leader: Men or Women?



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changed little from past surveys, but women are more likely now to call it a major reason.

However, it's still lonely for women at the very highest rungs of the corporate and political ladder. Women are just 2% of the CEOs of the nation's Fortune 500 companies. In the political realm, they make up just 17% of all members of the U.S. House of Representatives; 16% of all U.S. senators; 16% of all governors; and 24% of all state legislators. Internationally, the U.S. ranks in the middle range -- 85th in the world -- in its share of women in the lower house of its national legislative body.

Asked what accounts for this slow movement toward gender parity in top political positions, about half (51%) of all survey respondents say a major reason is that Americans simply aren't ready to elect a woman to high office; more than four-in-ten (43%) say a major reason is that women who are active in politics are held back by men, and 38% say a major reason is that women are discriminated against in all realms of society, and politics is no exception.

These are the three most prevalent choices among seven possible explanations presented in the survey.

Next in the pecking order of explanations is the time pressure that comes with trying to balance work and family; 27% of the public cites this as a major reason there aren't more women leaders in politics. Some 26% say that a big reason is that women don't have the experience required for higher office. The least common explanations - chosen as a major reason by just 16% and 14% of respondents, respectively - are that women don't make as good leaders as men and that women aren't tough enough for politics.

Other key findings from the survey:

Negative Gender Stereotypes: In addition to asking about the eight leadership traits, the survey asked about four traits that are often viewed in a negative light. By a lopsided margin, respondents say that women (85%), not men (5%), are the more *emotional* sex, and by a two-to-one margin they say women (52%) rather than men (26%) are more *manipulative*. On the other side of the ledger, some 70% of respondents say men are the more *arrogant* sex. And 46% of respondents say men are the more *stubborn* gender, compared with 32% who say that about women.

Gender Solidarity: In this survey, women see themselves in a more favorable light than men see women. Likewise, men see themselves in a better light than women see men. However, for men, gender solidarity goes only so far. Overall, they give their gender the better ratings on just five of the 12 traits (decisiveness; hard work; ambition; not being emotional; not being manipulative) and they give themselves inferior ratings

on seven (honesty; intelligence; compassion; creativity; being outgoing; being stubborn; being arrogant). By contrast, while women say they are more emotional and more manipulative than men, they give themselves higher marks than men on the 10 other traits measured.

Gender and Race: Of all demographic groups, black women are distinctive in the degree to which they say women are superior to men in their evaluations of character traits. Nearly eight-in-ten (78%) black women (compared with 51% of white women and 50% of all adults) say women are more honest than men. About two-thirds (65%) of black women (compared with 37% of white women and 38% of all adults) say women are smarter than men. And about half (49%) of black women (compared with 33% of white women and 28% of all adults) say women are more hardworking than men.

Twice as Hard; Half as Far: The feminist rallying cry that women have to work twice as hard to get half as far as men in their careers finds some statistical support from this survey, at least with regard to leadership evaluations. Survey respondents who rate men better than women on key character traits have a sharply increased likelihood of saying that men make better political leaders than women. But respondents who rate women better than men on these same traits have only a slightly increased likelihood of saying women make better leaders than men.

It's a Man's World: By a ratio of nearly two-to-one, Americans say that, all things considered, men rather than women have a better life in this country. Women believe this in greater numbers than men do, and younger and middle-aged adults believe it in greater numbers than older adults do. The view that men have the better life than women is not as strong now as it was 15 years ago, when the public said by a ratio of about three-to-one that men had the better life. However, still farther back in time, attitudes were much different. In 1972, during the early days of the modern gender revolution, slightly more adults said women had the better life than said that about men.

Generational Differences Among Women: Older women are more inclined than younger women to see the need for more social change to ensure that women have equal rights; seven-in-ten women ages 50 and over say more change is needed, a view shared by just 53% of women ages 18-29. At the same time, younger and middle-aged women are more inclined than older women to say that men rather than women have the better life in this country.

Discrimination and Equal Rights: A majority of adults (57%) say the nation needs to continue to make changes to give women equal rights with men. A similar majority (54%) says discrimination against women is either a serious or somewhat serious problem in society. However, a bigger majority (63%) says that discrimination against blacks is a serious or somewhat serious problem.

Admiration for Hillary Clinton: The survey asked no questions about Sen. Hillary Clinton or the 2008 presidential campaign. However, in answer to an open-ended question, Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama were each named by 13% of respondents as the political figure in the U.S. that they admire most. President Bush was the third most frequently mentioned figure, named by 7% of respondents. Women are more than twice as likely as men to name Clinton as the figure they admire most; and Hispanics are much more likely than blacks and somewhat more likely than whites to name her as the figure they admire most.

[Read the full report at pewsocialtrends.org](http://pewsocialtrends.org)