

**NEW POLL: Americans See Progress in a Closing Gender Gap; Women and Men Willingly Make Trade-Offs to Balance Work and Family Life**  
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**12th Allstate-National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll Explores Americans' Opinions on Changing Gender Roles in the Economy the Workplace and the Family**

WASHINGTON, March 16, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Most Americans say that having a majority of women in the workforce is an encouraging trend for the country, despite the trade-offs that both women and men must make to balance work and family life, according to poll results announced today by The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL) and *National Journal*.

The 12th quarterly Allstate-*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll explored the attitudes and experiences of men and women in their home, family and professional lives. More than half (56%) of American men and women consider gender diversity to have a positive impact on the economic health of the country, and 36% of men and 39% of women cite "a flexible work schedule to pursue outside interests and spend time with your family" as their first or second most important reason for working.

While full-time working women earn an average of 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man working full-time, the genders place different weights on the "best explanation" for the disparity. A total of 49% of women and 39% of men say the wage gap is caused by the fact that many women leave jobs, scale back their hours and/or dedicate more time than men to family care responsibilities. Only 27% of Americans cite gender discrimination as the best explanation for the wage gap. Overall, 79% of Americans (including 75% of women) who have held a job believe they can advance in the workplace regardless of gender.

"This poll shows that belief in the American dream remains strong notwithstanding our economic challenges," said **Thomas J. Wilson**, chairman, chief executive officer and president of Allstate. "Americans once again show their ability to have a sophisticated conversation around complicated issues such as gender, economics or race. Americans understand, as does Allstate, that diversity is a part of the American dream. They acknowledge that gains have been made in creating opportunity for women but that more can be done."

Fewer than half (48%) of all Americans and only 40% of women believe that men and women have equal opportunity to advance in the workplace. Conversely, more than two-thirds of women say they have more opportunity than their mothers did to get ahead in society, while only 45% of men say they have more opportunity than their fathers.

"Despite the persistence of the wage gap and some continued doubts about equal opportunity, the most powerful sentiment among women in this poll is a sense of doors opening, especially when compared with previous generations," said *National Journal* editorial director **Ronald Brownstein**. "Even as both men and women wrestle with balancing their home and work responsibilities, the poll found that the era of 'mommy wars' between working and stay-at-home mothers is being replaced by women who are comfortable shifting between the two roles, at a pace and proportion that they control."

Key findings from the 12th Allstate-*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll ([PDF](#)) include:

**1) Americans generally believe that the change to a majority-female workforce is encouraging and will have a positive impact on the country, but there are wide differences between age groups.**

- A total of 56% of Americans believe the changing gender makeup of American workers is "encouraging and it will have a positive impact on the country because the economy will benefit from a workforce that represents more of the unique talents and skills offered by women."
- Conversely, 32% believe the change is "troubling and it will have a negative impact on the country because it reflects a shift away from the traditional family structure where women could devote more time to raising children and running the household."
- Opinions dramatically differ by age group, with 74% of those aged 18-29 saying the change is encouraging, but only 41% of those age 65+ agreeing.

**2) Americans are confident in their abilities to succeed at work regardless of gender, despite a sense that gender inequity in opportunity still exists.**

- A total of 79% of Americans, including 83% of men and 75% of women, who have held a job in their lives believe they can advance in the workplace regardless of gender.
- Only 48% of Americans, and only 40% of women, believe that women and men have equal opportunity to get ahead in American workplaces.
- While 68% of women say that they have more opportunity to get ahead in society than their mothers had, only 45% of men see more opportunity than their fathers.

**3) Both men and women preferred more flexible work schedules and would choose more family time over higher income.**

- A total of 36% of men and 39% of women say "a flexible work schedule to pursue outside interests and spend time with your family" is the first or second most important reason for working. Fifty-three percent of working moms choose a flexible work schedule as their first or second most important reason for working.
- Given the choice between more income (requiring longer hours and less time for family and personal life) versus more time for family and personal life (shorter hours and less income), Americans in working households choose more family and personal time by a 56%-35% margin.

**4) Men and women report primary family roles quite differently.**

- Men: 12% say they are or were more actively involved in the care of children, 35% name their spouse, while 52% cite equally shared responsibilities. Women: 63% say they were primarily responsible for children, only 1% name their spouse, and 33% say responsibilities were equally shared.
- A total of 38% of men say they are primarily responsible for family finances, while 24% name their spouse or partner and 37% say responsibilities are shared equally. A total of 51% of women say that they are primarily responsible for finances, 17% name their spouse or partner and 32% cite equally shared responsibilities.

**5) Financial experiences and economic outlook vary greatly across genders and socioeconomic factors.**

- A total of 48% of men rate their financial situation "excellent" or "good" versus 42% of women.
- Men: 70% of working men with a college degree believe their financial situation will improve, compared to 53% of working men without a college degree.
- Women: 66% of working women with a college degree believe their financial situation will improve, compared to 49% of working women without a college degree. Non-married mothers are the least positive about their financial situation.

**6) Economic and political metrics demonstrate an uptick in support for President Obama and an improvement in perceptions of the direction of the country and of the economy.**

- A total of 60% of Americans now believe the economy will improve over the next 12 months, compared to 56% who said the same in December 2011 and 50% who said so in October 2011.
- Thirty percent of Americans now believe the country is headed in the right direction. The last two Heartland Monitor surveys measured this sentiment at 20%.
  - The improvement is largely due to a surge in optimism among Democrats, with 55% now saying the country is headed in the right direction, up from 33% in December 2011.
- President Obama's approval rating now stands at 51%, compared to 44% in October and December of 2011, the lowest ratings in the Heartland Monitor Poll's history.
  - The president's numbers among independents are now positive (49%-47%), an improvement since December 2011 (38%-52%)
- Only 44% of Americans say they would vote to re-elect President Obama, while 48% say they would vote for someone else. Still, this is an improvement from December 2011, when 38% said they would re-elect and 53% would vote for someone else.

**Notes to Editors**

## Survey Methodology

A nationally representative survey of American adults conducted March 3 – 6, 2012, among 1,000 American adults age 18+. Respondents were reached via landline and cell phone. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.1% in 95 out of 100 cases.

## About Allstate

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