

# Gender Equality, the Status of Women and the 2020 Elections

Results from a Supermajority, PerryUndem  
National Survey of 1,912 Likely 2020 Voters  
August 19, 2019

## Executive Summary

This report presents results from a Supermajority survey, conducted by PerryUndem, of the electorate on issues related to women, gender equity, and the 2020 election. Supermajority is a new home for women's activism and a community for people of all backgrounds, races, and ages who want to fight to make sure all of us are treated equally, no matter our gender. PerryUndem is a non-partisan public opinion research firm that studies opinions on policy issues, such as gender equity, health care, and abortion. Together, Supermajority and PerryUndem explored many dimensions of opinion related to gender equity. Particularly in this cultural moment when gender issues are top of mind, and people are aware of the #MeToo movement, the Kavanaugh hearings, and now the abortion bans that have multiplied across the country, this study explored if people felt there has been a rollback of women's rights—and how that's impacting civic engagement. The goal of the research is to provide a resource for the public, the media, policymakers, and researchers who are interested in how voters feel and think about the most pressing issues related to women and gender equity.

## Methods:

The survey was conducted among a total of n = 1,912 likely 2020 voters nationwide from July 3 – 14, 2019 using YouGov's online panel. The survey included a base sample of 1,000 likely 2020 voters nationwide. We then oversampled women to obtain totals of 339 Black women likely 2020 voters, 301 Latinx women likely 2020 voters, and 318 Asian American / Pacific Islander women likely 2020 voters. The final data were weighted by demographic variables including race, ethnicity, and gender to reflect their proper proportions. In other words, women of color respondents were weighted down significantly so that the oversamples do not skew the total results. The margin of sampling error is + 3.1 percentage points.

## Key Findings:

1. Many voters are angry and worried about the state of women's rights and gender equality in the country.
2. Women across nearly every demographic segment are more likely to think President Trump has made things worse, rather than better, for women.
3. Women voters connect a number of issues to gender equality, including violence against women, equal pay, paid family leave, and access to abortion.
4. The recent abortion bans aggravated and elevated feelings about the state of women's rights.
5. Voters who oppose access to safe and legal abortion are most likely to hold inegalitarian views that are antithetical to women's equality.
6. Democratic voters are more unified and mobilized around abortion than Republican voters are.

7. The way women are treated in society is a top voting issue for Democratic women voters and black women, but not Republican women voters.
8. Democratic women are most likely to feel that the 2020 elections are “more important than usual.” Republican women are least likely to feel the upcoming elections are atypical.
9. A majority of Democrats and women of color feel it’s true that women are becoming the most powerful force for positive political change.

## Detailed Findings:

### **1. Many voters are angry and worried about the state of women’s rights and gender equality in the country.**

- Nearly half (47 percent) of women likely 2020 voters say they feel angry, scared, nervous, or sad about the current state of women’s rights in our country. Democratic women (70 percent) and Independent women (48 percent) are much more likely to feel these emotions than Republican women (16 percent). Sizeable proportions of Democratic men (62 percent) and Independent men (41 percent) also have negative feelings about the state of women’s rights (v. 13 percent of Republican men).
- Most voters do not think it’s a “good time” to be a woman in America, especially a woman of color in America, an immigrant woman, an LGBTQ woman, or a Muslim woman. About three-quarters of women likely voters (73 percent) say more work needs to be done to achieve full equality for women in “work, life, and politics.” Interestingly, most Republican men (77 percent) think gender equality has already been achieved (v. 36 percent of voters overall).

### **2. Women across nearly every demographic segment are more likely to think President Trump has made things worse, rather than better, for women.**

- Nearly every segment of women voters are more likely to say President Trump has made things worse, rather than better, for women. Overall, 49 percent of women say the president has made things worse compared to 28 percent who say the president has made things better for women. White women, Black women, Latinx women, Asian American / Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, college-educated women, non-college educated women, suburban women, Democratic women, and Independent women are all more likely to say President Trump has made things worse rather than better for women.
- A large majority of Republican men (73 percent) and 62 percent of Republican women think that President Trump has made things better for women in our country.
- Majorities of several segments of voters perceive President Trump’s administration as trying to take away people’s rights, including Democratic men and women (84 percent and 86 percent), Black women (79 percent), Latinx women (67 percent), college-educated women (63 percent), and about half of suburban women (51 percent).
- Republican men (77 percent) and Republican women (83 percent) do not feel like President Trump and his administration are trying to take away people’s rights.
- A majority of respondents (63 percent) think President Trump has “definitely” (44 percent) or “probably” (19 percent) sexually assaulted women in his past. Just 14 percent think the President has “definitely not” sexually assaulted women. The survey was fielded soon after the latest allegation of sexual assault was made against President Trump.

### **3. Women voters connect a number of issues to gender equality, including violence against women, equal pay, paid family leave, and access to abortion.**

- Voters connect a number of issues to gender equality – including violence against women (71 percent), unequal wages and pay (69 percent), men having more positions of power (62 percent), paid family leave (60 percent), access to safe and legal abortion (57 percent), and racism (54 percent).
- Most voters, but especially women, believe that improvements on a range of issues that would advance gender equality would also benefit the economy: promoting and paying women equally to men (69 percent of women and 61 percent of men say this helps the country's economy), women having access to affordable health care (68 percent of women and 61 percent of men), including affordable birth control (61 percent of women and 51 percent of men), and safe and legal abortion (46 percent of women and 41 percent of men). Sixty-three percent of women and 53 percent of men say that lack of affordable child care hurts the economy.

### **4. The recent abortion bans made voters think about the state of women's rights and equality.**

- The recent abortion bans in Georgia, Alabama, and other states likely aggravated feelings about gender equality. News of these bans broke through to 79 percent of voters, and 57 percent of respondents say they talked with their family or friends about the bans.
- More than half of all likely voters (55 percent) and three-quarters of Democratic women (77 percent) and Democratic men (75 percent) say the bans made them think about the state of women's rights and equality in our country. Large majorities of college-educated women (67 percent), Black women (64 percent), Latinx women (60 percent), and suburban women (57 percent) also say the recent abortion bans made them think about women's rights and equality. Among Republican voters, 37 percent of Republican men and 27 percent of Republican women say the bans made them think about the state of women's equality.
- The most common emotional response to the bans was outrage and anger. Sixty percent of Democratic women felt angry along with 52 percent of Democratic men, while 60 percent of Democratic men and 57 percent of Democratic women felt outraged. Among Republicans, the most common emotional response was hopeful and happy (one-third or more). About one-quarter of Republican voters say the bans made them feel relieved.

### **5. Voters who oppose access to safe and legal abortion are most likely to hold inegalitarian views.**

- Among voters who oppose access to safe and legal abortion, 77 percent agree that “women are too easily offended,” 71 percent agree that “most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist,” 54 percent agree that “men generally make better political leaders than women,” while 23 percent hold favorable views toward the #MeToo movement and 19 percent believe that “systems in society are set up to give men more opportunities than women.”
- Among voters who support access to safe and legal abortion, 38 percent believe that “women are too easily offended,” 38 percent agree that “most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist,” 24 percent agree that “men generally make better political leaders than women,” 71 percent hold favorable views toward the #MeToo movement, and 66 percent believe that “systems in society are set up to give men more opportunities than women.”
- Just one in three voters who opposes access to safe and legal abortion (34 percent) agrees “the country would be better off if we had more women in political office,” compared to 82 percent of voters who support safe and legal abortion.

- Among Republican voters who support access to safe and legal abortion, 61 percent agree the country would benefit with more women in elected office compared to one in four Republicans who opposes access to safe and legal abortion (26 percent).

**6. Democratic voters are more unified and mobilized around abortion rights than Republican voters are.**

- A majority (77 percent) of Democratic voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights and access, compared to 55 percent of Republicans who are more likely to vote for a candidate who opposes abortion rights and access. Just 13 percent of Democratic voters say the candidate's position on abortion does not matter in their vote, compared to 28 percent of Republican voters.
- And, the recent abortion bans also are more likely to have mobilized voters who support abortion rights and access than voters who oppose access to safe and legal abortion.
- Overall, 44 percent of all likely voters say that the recent abortion bans have motivated them “a lot” to make sure they vote in the 2020 election, including 56 percent of Democrats, 35 percent of Independents and 38 percent of Republicans.

**7. The way women are treated in society is a top voting issue for Democratic women voters, but not Republican women voters.**

- Most Democratic women (62 percent) say that the way women are treated in society is “extremely important” to them, compared to 17 percent of Republican women. Democratic women (64 percent) also prioritize “the way Black and brown people are treated in our society” as a voting issue, 12 percent of Republican women.

**8. Three-quarters of likely voters feel that the 2020 elections are “more important than usual.”**

- More than any other segment, Democratic women (84 percent) say the 2020 elections are “more important than usual,” 16 percentage points higher than Republican women (68 percent) and 14 percentage points higher than Independent women (70 percent).

**9. A majority of Democrats and women of color feel it's true that women are becoming the most powerful force for positive political change.**

- The majority of Democratic women (66 percent), Black women (64 percent), Latinx women (58 percent), Asian American and Pacific Islander women (57 percent) and Democrats as a whole (64 percent) feel women are becoming the most powerful force for political change compared to 39 percent of Independent women and 21 percent of Republican women.