



SHE LEADS.

**Women & the
Midterm Elections**

December 4, 2018



WOMEN & POLITICS INSTITUTE
SCHOOL of PUBLIC AFFAIRS



**Benenson
Strategy
Group**

Methodology

- Benenson Strategy Group conducted 1,200 online interviews with voters who voted in the 2018 midterm election from November 15-20, 2018. We oversampled women voters for a total of 799 interviews with women.
- The margin of error for the dataset overall is +/- 2.83% and the margin of error among women overall is +/- 3.47% at the 95% confidence level and is higher among subgroups.
- **All of the data presented is among women voters unless otherwise noted.** Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100%.



Key Findings

Key Findings – Midterm Landscape



The Trump Factor

- President Trump is deeply unpopular with women voters. They are disturbed by his rhetoric, particularly toward women, and largely disagree with him on issues.
 - 60% of women are unfavorable toward him, including 50% very unfavorable. Three-quarters of women are troubled by either his tone or his policies, over half are troubled by both.
 - Even among Republican women, just 55% said they both like him and agree with him on important issues, and 48% are concerned about the way he speaks about women.
 - And when it comes to Trump's favorite targets – immigrants & the media – at least two thirds of women voters are concerned about his rhetoric toward them (73% and 66% respectively among Independents).
- But he wasn't the only vote driver. When choosing members of Congress, 65% said the merits of the individual candidate mattered more to them than electing someone to be a check on Trump.
 - Among Independents that number rose to 75%. Among Democratic women, who were assumed to be driven largely by animus toward Trump, 49% were more focused on the candidate.
- That's because there are issues and values that are doing just as much to animate women voters as Trump is, including healthcare and the economy
 - Among Republican women, issues they cared about – immigration, the economy – were more important to their vote than expressing support for Trump.
 - Though opposition to Trump energized Democratic women more than support for him energized Republican women, healthcare remained their number 1 issue.



Congress

- Though Pelosi is unpopular (36% fav / 49% unfav), the Republican focus on her misunderstood women's motivations. Only a small minority of women said she was a factor in their vote – mostly hardcore Republicans – while just 16% of Independent Women, the key swing bloc, rated her as mattering “a great deal” to their vote.
 - Additionally, Democrats in Congress are viewed much more favorably (51 fav/ 43 unfav) than Republicans in Congress, who are 24 points underwater with women (35 fav / 59 unfav).
- The Kavanaugh fight appeared mostly to energize liberal women and did not rate as a critical factor for Independent or even Republican women.

Key Findings – Year of the Woman

Optimism

- The historic number of women elected in the fall has left women voters feeling energized and hopeful that these new representatives will begin to make progress on the issues that matter to them.
 - In a forced choice, 62% of women said that the historic number of women elected makes them hopeful that we will break through gridlock in Washington; 66% agreed that more women in office would help us do a better job dealing with the country's problems.
- Women voters believe this change was long overdue. And it's personal – they believe that when other women succeed, it opens up doors for them as well and makes them feel their contributions are valued.

- Part of women's optimism about our newly-elected women leaders is rooted in a belief that women – much more than men – embody the leadership qualities they most value and are critical to moving our country forward. Indeed, women outpaced men in terms of possessing every leadership quality we tested.
 - Women see women leaders as fighters and doers, advancing our interests through their ability to get things done collaboratively and with respect, while also maintaining a focus on the future. They see women as being able to find common ground, not just holding their ground for the sake of a win.
- Similarly, when it comes to their issue priorities – health care, prescription drug costs, protecting Social Security and Medicare, promoting civility in our politics – they expect women politicians will make more progress than their male counterparts.
 - But some gender stereotypes continue to haunt views – women are seen as significantly more effective on “women's” issues like choice and childcare, but men close the gap on issues including homeland security, economic growth and job creation.

Leadership

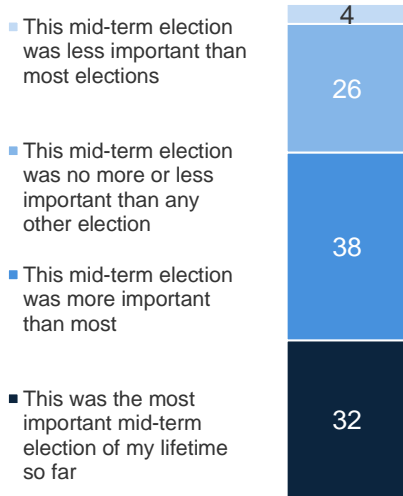
But...

Women candidates cannot take women voters for granted. They are not a unified bloc who will throw their support behind a woman out of gender loyalty. Alignment on issues and values is key, and at the end of the day, the party a candidate belongs to will override enthusiasm for the idea of more women in office.

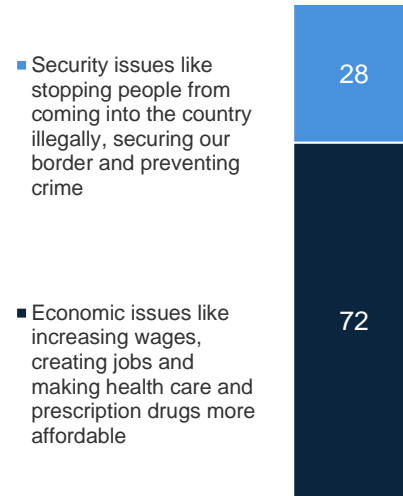
Lay of the Land

70% of Women Voters Said This Midterm Was More Important Than Most; They Looked for Candidates Focused On Pocketbook Issues; Over Half Decided More Than a Month Out

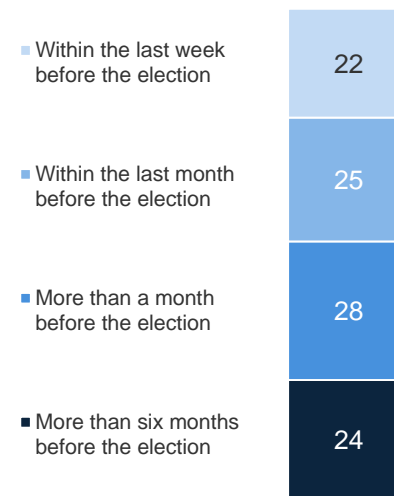
Thinking about your decision to vote in the 2018 midterm election, would you say you believe that:



Looking ahead, which of the following would you most like to see Congress focus on?



When did you decide who you would vote for?

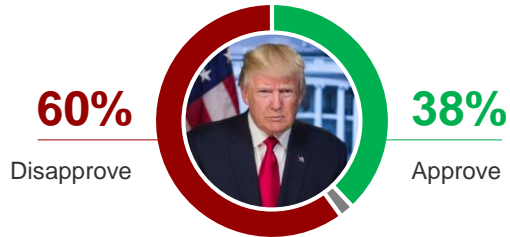
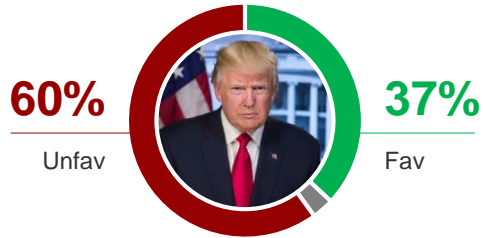


Late Deciders:
 Hispanic women: 36%
 18-34: 35%
 Moms: 31%

52% decided more than a month out.
 Including:
 59% of Dem women
 53% of Repub women
 Only 28% of 18-34 yo

Trump is Deeply Unpopular With Women and Over Two Thirds Say He Factored In To Their Vote, But Most Still Say They Chose Candidates Based on Individual Merit

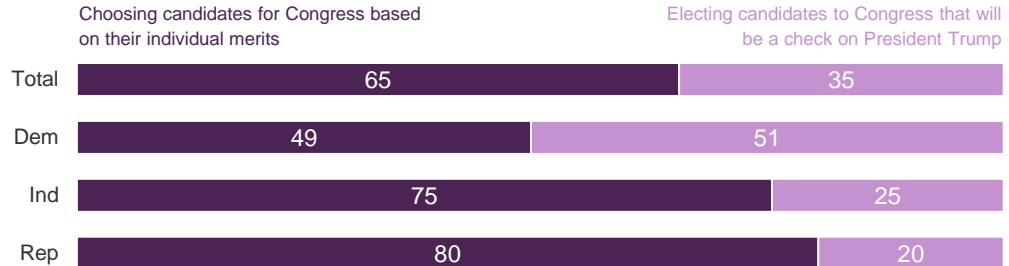
Dem women were more inclined to say they wanted a check on Trump, but 49% still said they were choosing candidates on their merits



How much did President Trump factor in to your decision of who to vote for?



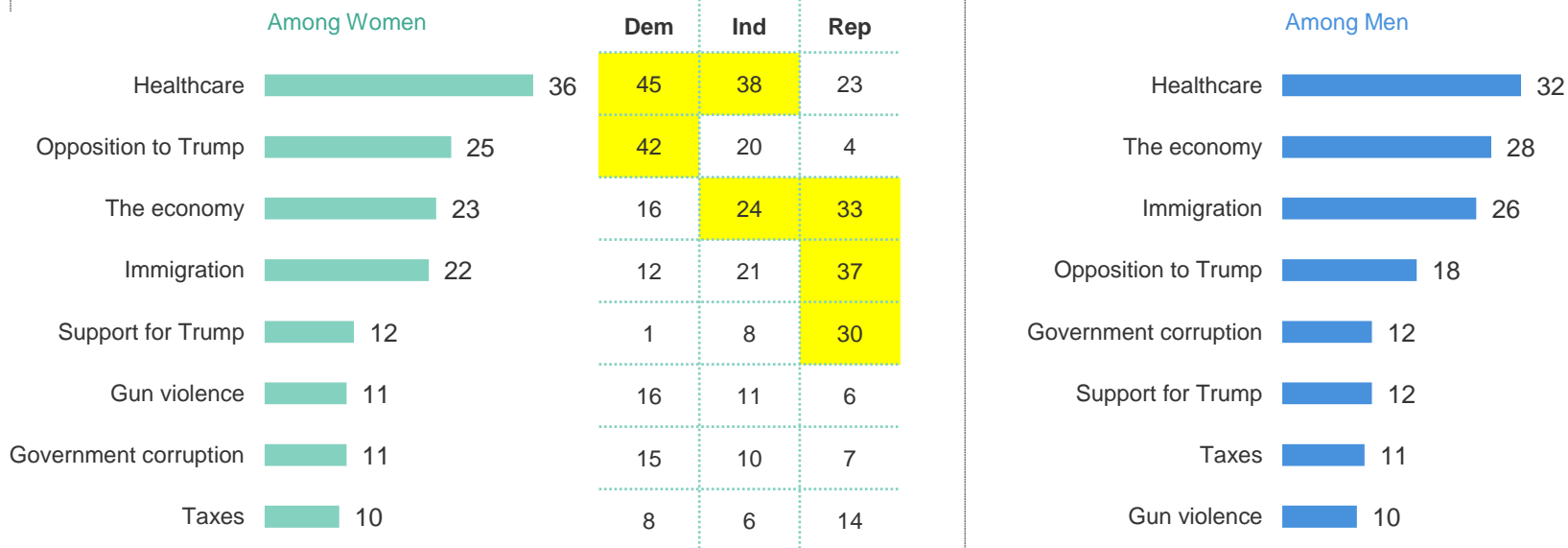
Which was a more important factor in your vote for Congress this November?



Healthcare Was Top Of Mind; Trump Opposition Animated Women Much More Than Men, But The Economy and Immigration Still Top Priorities, Esp Among Ind and Repub Women

Support for Trump was not as powerful a motivator for Republican women as opposition to him was for Democratic women

Top Two Issues in Deciding Their Vote



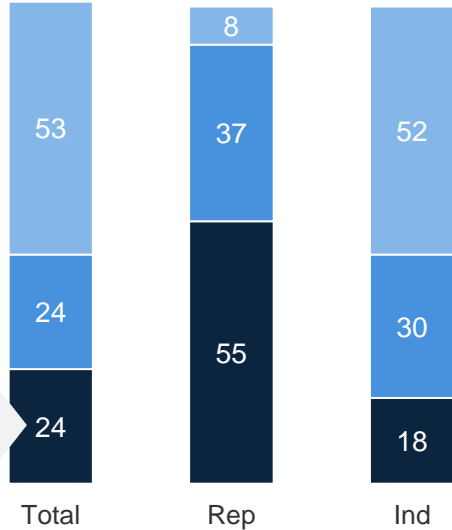
A Majority of Women Both Dislike and Disagree With Trump; Three Quarters Are Bothered By His Tone or His Policies, Over Half Are Concerned About Both

When forced to choose, his tone is more concerning than policy. Just 55% of Republican women say they both like and agree with him

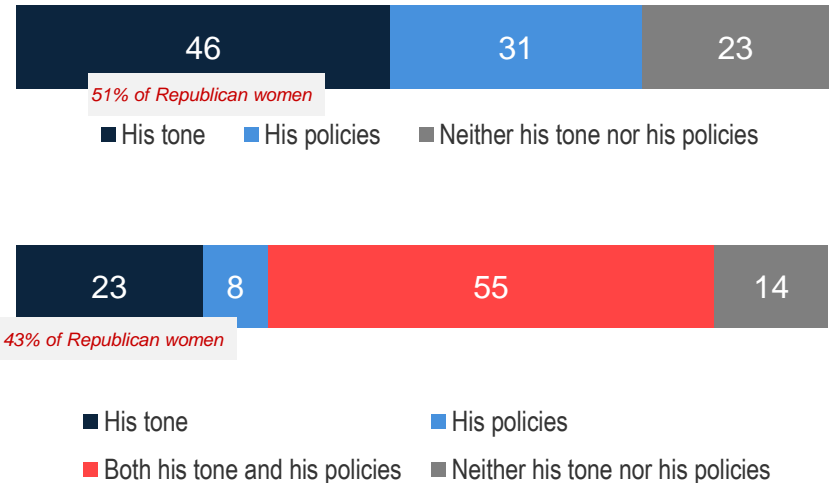
Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion about Donald Trump?

- I don't like him and I disagree with him on most important issues
- I don't really like him, but I agree with him on most important issues
- I like him and agree with him on most important issues

36% among non-college white women



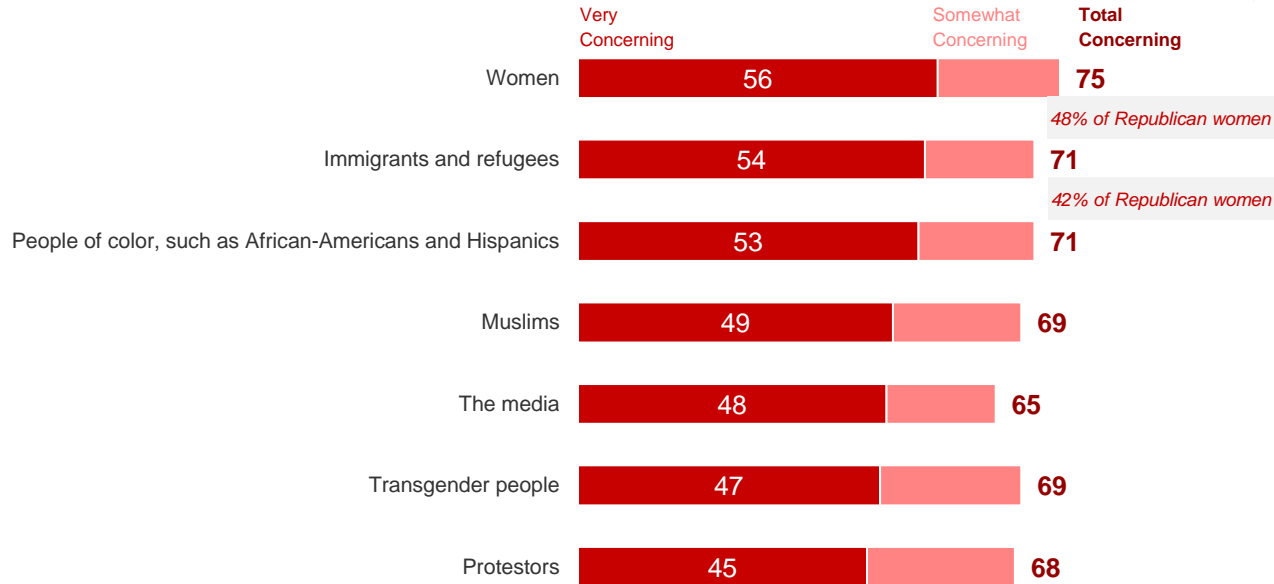
Regardless of who you support, which concerns you the more about President Trump – his tone or his policies?



Trump's Inflammatory Rhetoric – Especially Toward Women – Is a Source of Intense Concern Across the Board, But Spikes With Women of Color and Millennial Women

White suburban women – who were a critical factor in Democratic victories – also worry about Trump's language

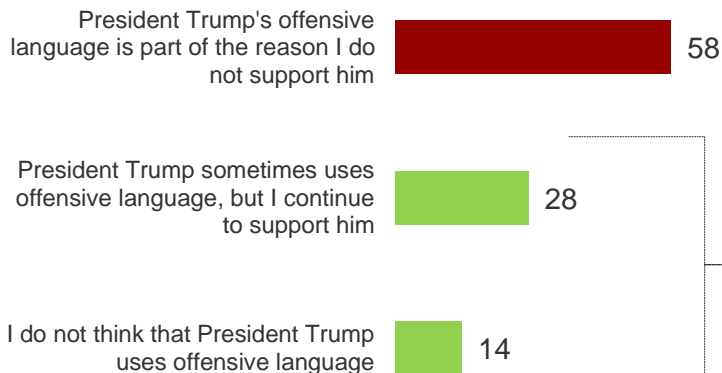
How concerning is it to you personally the way President Trump talks about...



% Very Concerning		
White Suburban Women	Women of Color	Women 18-34 years old
51	66	61
47	66	59
44	69	61
43	61	58
44	54	44
41	56	52
36	60	50

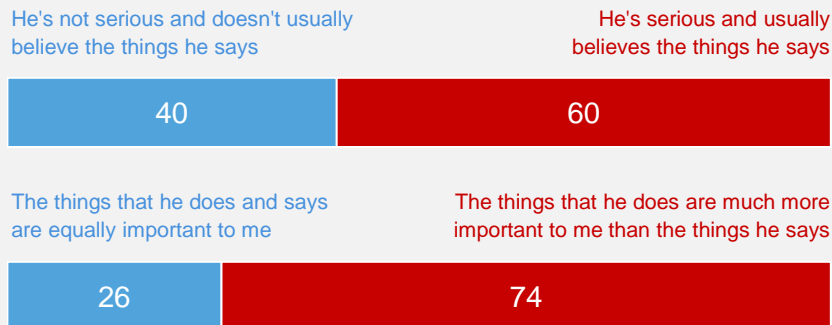
Nearly 3 in 5 Women Say Trump's Offensive Language is Part of Why They Don't Support Him; Among Those Who Support Him, They Care Far More About What He Does Than His Words

President Trump has been accused of using offensive or inflammatory language in his statements about women, immigrants, people of color and the media. **Which of the following comes closest to your view?**



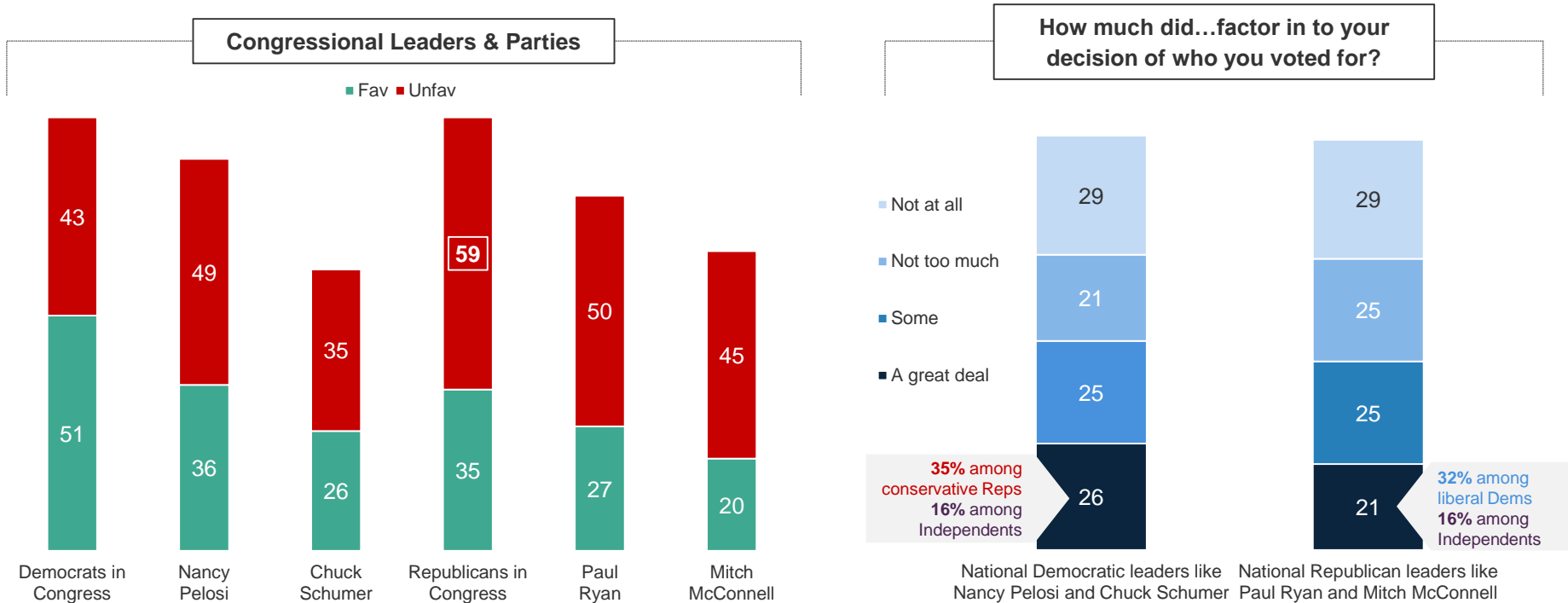
When President Trump uses language that people think is offensive, which is closer to your view?

Among those who find President Trump's language offensive, but still support him or those who don't think his language is offensive



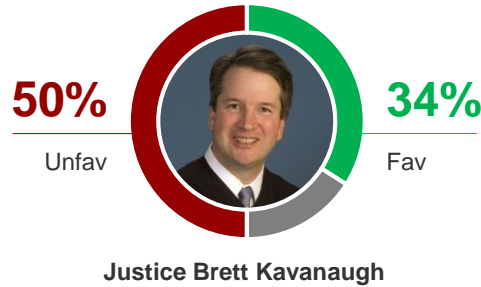
Women Have a Much More Favorable View of Dems Than Reps in Congress; Congressional Leaders Aren't Liked, But They Weren't A Big Factor In Votes

Though Pelosi is unpopular, the Republican focus on her didn't resonate, and other Congressional leaders have lower favs

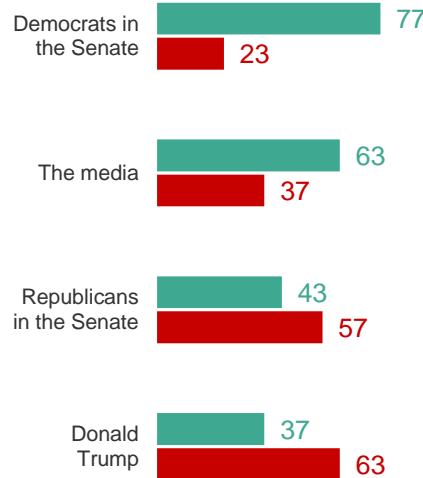


Justice Kavanaugh Is Viewed Unfavorably; Women Believe Ford Was Treated Unfairly by POTUS and Republicans, But His Confirmation Didn't Play a Big Role in Their Vote

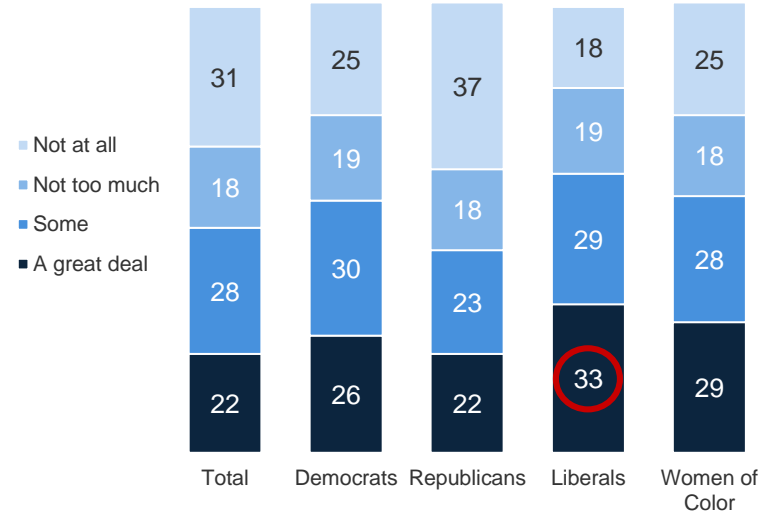
Only liberal women showed meaningful signs that he was an important factor in their vote



How **fairly/unfairly** do you think Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was treated by...?



How much did the Kavanaugh hearings factor in to your decision of who to vote for in the recent election?



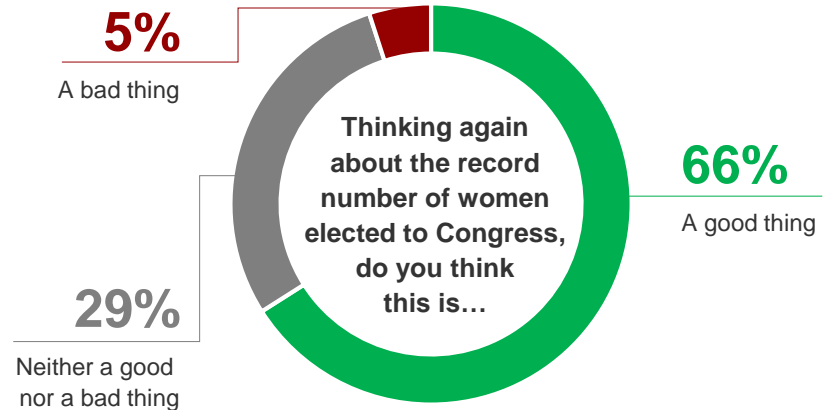
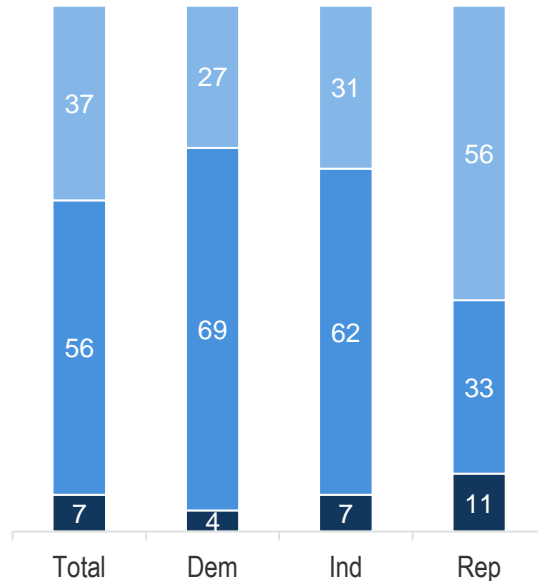
Year of the Woman

Overall, Women Clearly Think There Weren't Enough Women in Office Before the Midterms, and the Record Number of Women Elected is a Good Thing

Republican women appear out of step with Dem and Independent women, with electing women seemingly less of a priority for them

Thinking about the number of women who were in political office up until November's election, which comes closer to your view?

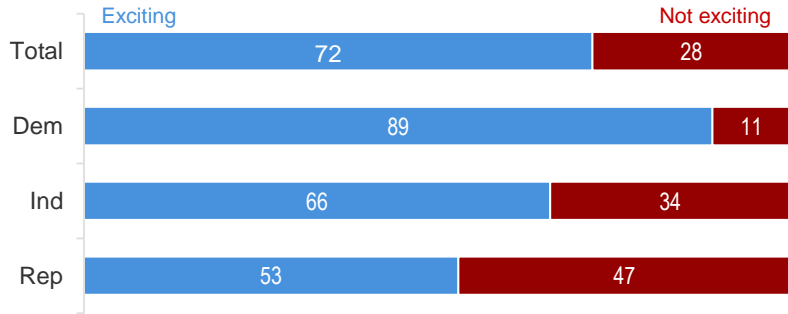
- There were about the right number of women in elected office
- There were too few women in elected office
- There were too many women in elected office



Voting for Women Is Exciting and Instills Confidence That Women Will Work Collaboratively To Break Through Gridlock and Deal With the Country's Problems

Again, Republican women show less enthusiasm than Democrats and Independents; Men also skeptical

In your view, was having a record number of women elected to the House of Representatives in November...

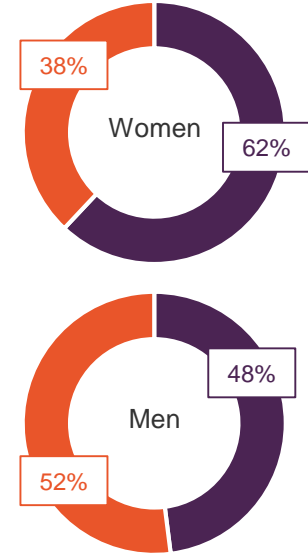


Which of the following comes closer to your view?

% Agree: If there were more women in political office, it would help us do a better job of dealing with the country's problems



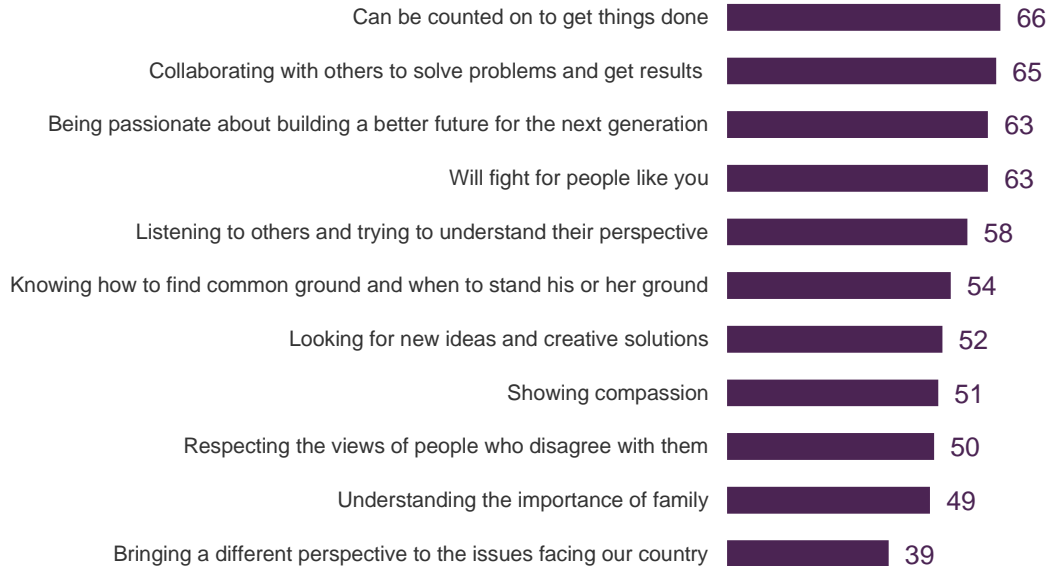
There is so much gridlock in Washington and that won't change, so I am not hopeful the women in Congress will be able to get things done.



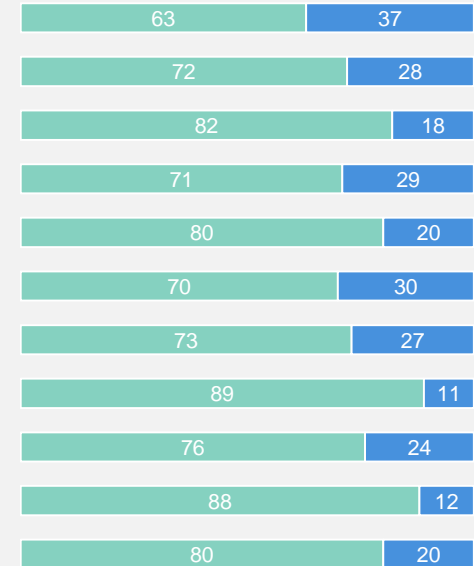
The big increase in the number of women elected to Congress makes me hopeful that they will work collaboratively to break through gridlock and get things done.

Why? Hope in Progress Rests on View that Women More Adept On Key Leadership Dimensions Needed In Washington; Women Seen as Doers, Problem Solvers, Future-Focused, Fighters, But Also Able To Collaborate, Listen, Respect

% Absolutely Essential Quality in Leaders



% Women / % Men in Politics Are More Likely To Do This



Also, It's Personal: Women Who Succeed Open Doors For Other Women and Make Women Feel Their Contributions are Valued (But They Still Worry About Including Men)

% Total agree with this statement among women

When women succeed, it opens up doors and provides more opportunities for women and girls everywhere. **85**

Women politicians bring a new and different perspective to the office - not better than a man, just different - and that will help our country move forward. **85**

When I see a woman succeed, it makes me feel like society will value the contributions and achievements of women more. **77**

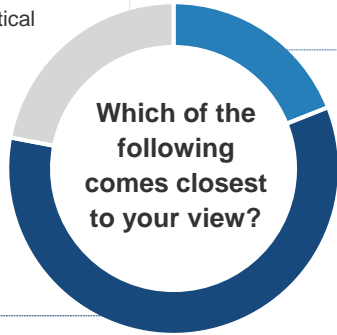
I want our politicians to fight for all of us and too much focus on a candidate being a woman makes me worry that the issues and challenges that men and fathers face will be overlooked or pushed to the side. **59** **63% Men**

	White Suburban Women	Women of Color	Women 18-34 years old	Democrat Women	Republican Women
When women succeed, it opens up doors and provides more opportunities for women and girls everywhere.	85	85	84	93	75
Women politicians bring a new and different perspective to the office - not better than a man, just different - and that will help our country move forward.	83	87	87	94	76
When I see a woman succeed, it makes me feel like society will value the contributions and achievements of women more.	74	88	86	89	67
I want our politicians to fight for all of us and too much focus on a candidate being a woman makes me worry that the issues and challenges that men and fathers face will be overlooked or pushed to the side.	53	66	59	56	68

Not a Cure for Tribalism: Women Won't Vote for Women for the Sake of It; Values, Vision, Party Matter More Than The Symbolic Victory of Female Representation

22%

It doesn't matter to me at all whether we elect more women to political office



Which of the following comes closest to your view?

19%

The idea of electing more women to political office is exciting to me. **It's time to make history and show the next generation that women can do anything**

59%

The idea of electing more women to political office is exciting to me, **but I need to know that woman is the right woman, with the right skills and values that I agree with**

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

I like the idea of having more women in political office, but when I go to cast my vote, it makes absolutely no difference whether the candidate is a man or a woman.

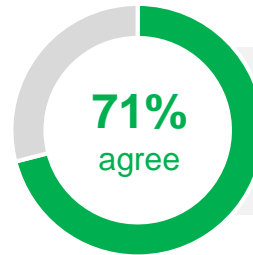


80

I like the idea of having more women in political office and when I go to cast my vote, I make it a top priority to vote for women candidates.



20

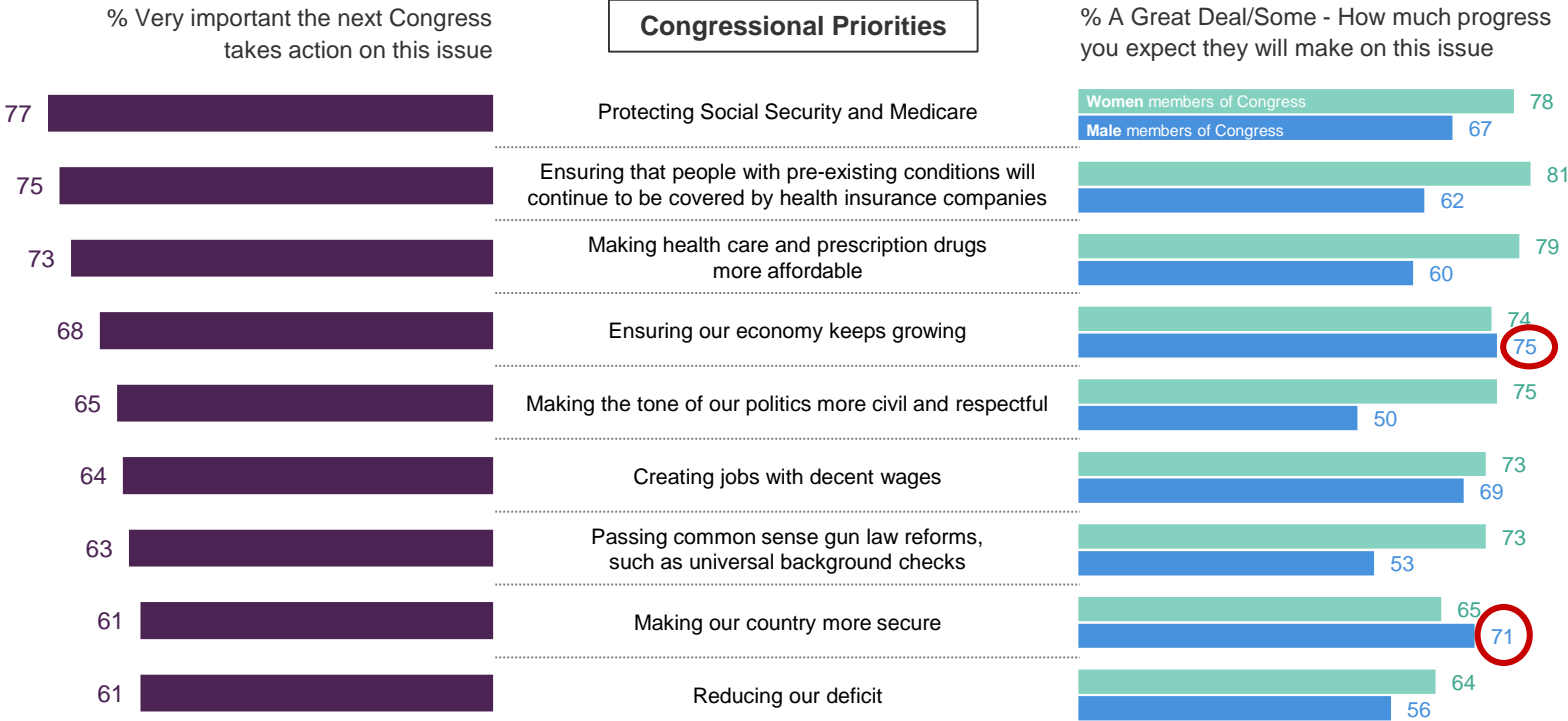


71%
agree

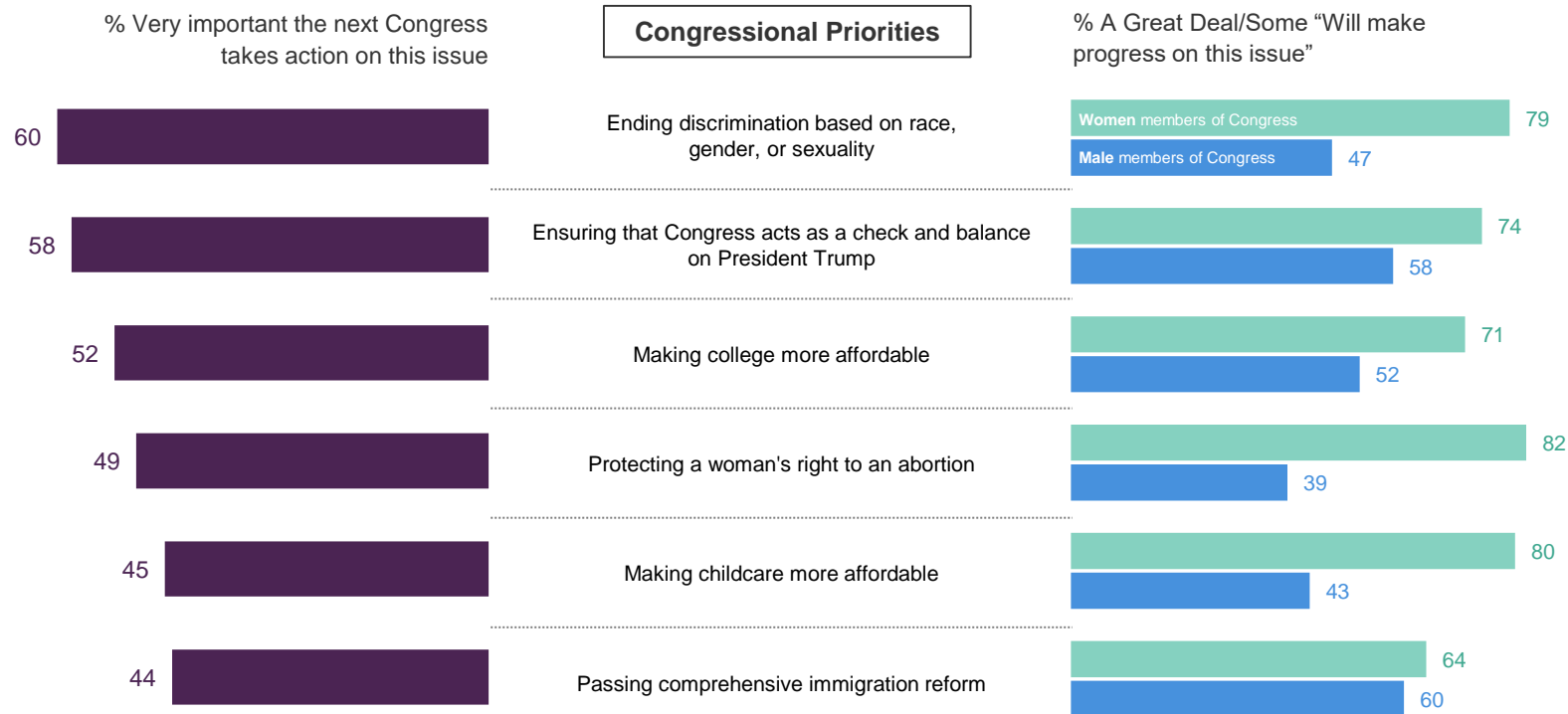
I like the idea of having more women in political office, but when I go to cast my vote, the **thing that matters most to me is whether the candidate is a Democrat or a Republican, not whether they are a man or a woman.**

Women Members Expected to Make More Progress Than Men on Top Priorities for the Next Congress Including Healthcare, Drug Prices, Civility and Decent Jobs

Gender stereotypes haunt women's views on security, economic growth



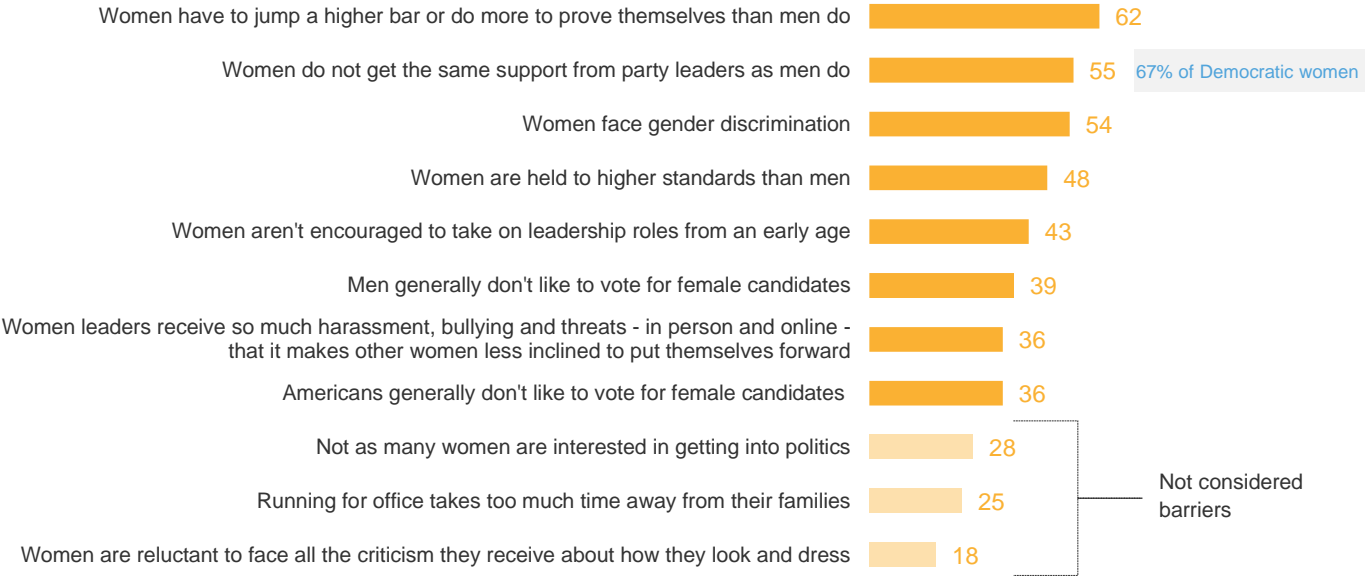
Majority of Women Want Congress to Address Discrimination, Check Trump and Tackle College Affordability, But Choice, Childcare and Immigration Reform Are Low-Order Priorities; Low Expectations That Men will Address “Women’s” Issues



Women Believe They Face Higher Expectations in Politics And Get Less Support From Parties; Concerns Resonate More With Women of Color, Young Women, Who Also Worry About Dislike and Harassment

Stereotypical concerns – lack of interest in politics, family, and looks – don’t rate as barriers

Reasons Why More Women Aren’t In Political Office | % Major Reason



	White Suburban Women	Women of Color	Women 18-34 years old
Women have to jump a higher bar or do more to prove themselves than men do	61	66	67
Women do not get the same support from party leaders as men do	56	62	58
Women face gender discrimination	49	66	70
Women are held to higher standards than men	49	51	49
Women aren't encouraged to take on leadership roles from an early age	34	55	54
Men generally don't like to vote for female candidates	34	49	45
Women leaders receive so much harassment, bullying and threats - in person and online - that it makes other women less inclined to put themselves forward	30	47	55
Americans generally don't like to vote for female candidates	33	49	50
Not as many women are interested in getting into politics	27	30	29
Running for office takes too much time away from their families	25	27	24
Women are reluctant to face all the criticism they receive about how they look and dress	10	28	30

Not considered barriers