

Electability of Women in North Carolina 2004

A telephone survey was conducted of 600 likely voters from across North Carolina to assess their attitudes about women as elected political leaders. The survey was conducted May 3-4, 2004.

The margin of error is +/- 4%

Findings:

- 1. A large majority of voters in North Carolina are favorably disposed to voting for women for elective office.**
 - a. For North Carolinians who have been represented by women in local office (city or town council; board of county commissioners), 47% considered the women to be “above average” or “excellent,” while less than 9% considered the women to be “below average” or “poor.”
 - b. Only 6% of likely voters in NC would not vote for a woman running against a man.
- 2. Voters believe that women possess the skills and personal qualities necessary to be effective elected officials.**
 - a. Over 55% of likely voters consider women to possess above average or excellent skills in: running a meeting, making budget decisions, handling constituent problems, and providing leadership to the local community; as compared to less than 7% of voters who believe that women possess below average skills in these areas.
 - b. Over 80% of likely voters consider women candidates to be equal to or better than men candidates in possessing the following leadership attributes: assertiveness, competence, confidence, intelligence, persuasiveness, and thoroughness.
 - c. Women candidates were considered about 40% more likely than men candidates in terms of delivering campaign promises.
- 3. The support for women candidates crosses gender, education levels, and political party lines.**
 - a. Both men (45%) and women (48%) considered the performance of women in elected office to be above average or excellent.
 - b. Both Democrats (47%) and Republicans (44%) consider the performance of women in elected office to be above average or excellent.
 - c. Voters with less than a college degree (44%) and those with at least a college degree (47%) considered the performance of women in elected office to be above average or excellent.
 - d. Few Democrats (4%) and Republicans (6%) indicated that they would not vote for a woman running against a man.
 - e. Only 6% of men and 4% of women would not consider voting for a woman running against a man.
 - f. Of voters with less than a college degree only 6% said they would not consider voting for a woman running against a man. Among those with at

least a college degree, only 3.5% said they would not consider voting for a woman running against a man.

4. **There are only slight differences in the support of women due to geographical differences.**
 - a. Among urban residents, 62% were more likely to consider the performance of women in elected office to be above average or excellent, while 42% of suburban residents said so, as did 47% of rural residents.
 - b. Among rural residents, 6.5% said they would not vote for a women running against a man, as compared to 2% of urban residents and 0% of suburban residents.

Conclusions

1. Voter attitudes are not roadblocks for women running for and winning elected office in North Carolina.
2. Although 24% of the candidates on the primary ballot in Wake County are female, the number of women running for elected office in North Carolina is very low.
3. This suggests that other reasons exist for the low number of women who run for elected office. Possible reasons include:
 - a. Women are unwilling to take the risk to run for office.
 - b. Political parties do not support women running for office.

David B. McLennan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Communication and Politics & Public Affairs
Peace College
15 E. Peace St.
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-508-2758
dmclennan@peace.edu