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Women

Equal Pay Cited Most Often as Top Issue Challenging Working Women, Survey Finds



By Larry Swisher

Oct. 14 — The top two issues facing working women are equal pay and equal opportunity to get ahead, in that order, survey results from Gallup Inc. showed Oct. 13.

Asked to name the “most important issues facing working women in this country today,” 39 percent of adults said equal pay or fair pay, while the next most popular answer was equal opportunity for advancement or “no gender discrimination,” cited by 20 percent, the

Washington-based consulting company reported.

Fewer than 10 percent each named other issues, including sexual harassment or better treatment in the workplace; access to child care or better child care; balancing work and home life; and health care, Gallup said. Respondents could cite more than one issue.

“Americans clearly see norms of fairness and equality—in terms of pay and the opportunity to get ahead—as the greatest challenges for working women,” the company said.

The findings are based on a telephone survey of 1,252 adults, including 233 working women, conducted Sept. 25-30. The overall results have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Issue Resonates With Voters

One reason for the prominence of equal pay in the survey findings may be this year's election campaigns for the U.S. House and Senate, where it has become a major issue, Gallup said.

The issue resonates with many voters, it said. Among the 1,095 registered voters who participated in the survey, 87 percent of Democrats and 58 percent of Republicans said equal pay was very or extremely important to them. By comparison, 89 percent of Democrats and 83 percent of Republicans cited the availability of jobs, while 86 percent of Democrats and 91 percent of Republicans named the economy.

Among all adults, political liberals and conservatives diverged in their perceptions of the key issues for working women, according to the survey results. Liberals were nearly twice as likely as conservatives to mention equal pay as the biggest challenge (51 percent to 28 percent). Even so, it still was the most commonly mentioned issue among conservatives.

The issue named most often by moderates also was equal pay or fair pay (44 percent). Conservatives were the most likely not to cite any issue, with 26 percent saying they had no opinion.

Gender Differences Seen

Almost as many women as men are employed in the U.S., and many women “seek not only to have jobs but to establish their careers and advance in them,” Gallup said. “But working women continue to face challenges that differ from those of working men.”

The views of men, women as a whole and working women about the most important challenges facing working women are, for the most part, similar, Gallup said.

The greatest differences between men and working women concerned their perceptions about the importance of child care, work-home balance and health care, the survey results show. Only 3 percent of men or fewer mention these as the most important challenges for working women, while 9 percent of working women named health care; 10 percent, balancing work and home life; and 12 percent, child care.

Men also were less likely to cite any issue, with 20 percent saying they didn't have an opinion, compared with 12 percent of all women and 8 percent of working women.

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For More Information

Information about the poll is available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/178373/americans-say-equal-pay-top-issue-working-women.aspx>.

Contact us at <http://www.bna.com/contact/index.html> or call 1-800-372-1033

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