

National survey finds gender and partisan divides in perceptions of women's leadership abilities

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A national survey from the Newcomb Institute at Tulane University found that only 12% of U.S. adults agree that men make better political leaders than women, far lower than the global average of 50%. (Photo by iStock)

A national survey from the [Newcomb Institute](#) at Tulane University has found that significant gender and partisan divides persist in perceptions of women's leadership abilities.

While the majority of Americans do not believe men make better political leaders than women, there are stark differences in attitudes based on the gender and

political ideology of respondents, according to the Institute's forthcoming [#MeToo Harassment Study 2024](#), which polled more than 3,000 U.S. adults earlier this year.

The survey, conducted in partnership with the University of California at San Diego and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, included questions related to domestic violence, sexual harassment and abuse in the past 12 months.

It also asked participants how much they agree or disagree with the following statement: "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do." This item is used by the [World Values Survey](#) to assess this belief in other country contexts.

[Key findings](#) include:

- Only 12% of U.S. adults agree that men make better political leaders than women, far lower than the global average of 50%.
- Men are more likely than women to believe that men make better political leaders than women do – 16% of men compared to 10% of women hold this belief.
- There is a clear partisan divide, with 26% of very conservative respondents agreeing compared to only 5% of very liberal respondents.
- Disagreement with the notion that men make better leaders is highest in progressive states like California, which has relatively higher representation of women in elected office, and lowest in more conservative states like Mississippi.

"These findings are concerning, as persistent biases against women's leadership abilities can impede progress in achieving gender parity in political representation," said Anita Raj, executive director of the Newcomb Institute and professor of global public health at Tulane.

Raj said gender inequality in political representation matters because elected female officials are more likely than their male counterparts to introduce and enact bills, and they are more likely to build legislation on key areas affecting women and families, such as childcare, healthcare, paid family leave and sexual harassment in the workplace.

The full report, which will be released in September, will dive into experiences of sexual harassment in public and private spaces, including the workplace.

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