



The Meredith College Poll Examines North Carolinians' Views of Women as Business Leaders

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Meredith College, Raleigh, N.C. — The Meredith College Poll has explored North Carolinians' views of women as business leaders and entrepreneurs. The Meredith Poll also examined voter opinions on the importance of a candidate's business background.

According to the poll, 85% of North Carolinians perceive the leadership abilities of men and women equally.

"There are areas of this poll that really put in the positive the strides women are making in business. The good news for women is that the public is seeing them as equally qualified to men in terms of leading corporations," said Kristie Ogilvie, dean of the Meredith College School of Business.

North Carolinians are generally pessimistic about the abilities of women to achieve gender equity as corporate leaders or business owners. When asked if there will be an equal number of women in top executive leadership positions as there are men in the next decade, a slight majority of all North Carolinians (57%) thought it was likely or very likely to happen. Under half of the women surveyed (47%) thought that gender equity would be achieved in corporate CEO positions in the next decade.

"Though this data shows we are making progress, there are conversations that need to continue to happen, because if a woman is as qualified, and is perceived as qualified, but a majority of corporations are not ready to put women in those roles then I don't believe we are as far along as we need to be," Ogilvie said.

Poll respondents were asked their opinions on why there are relatively few women in corporate executive positions or that own their own businesses. In many ways, North Carolinians, like most Americans feel that there is a double standard for women in the corporate world. Over three-quarters of North Carolinians believe that men have it easier in the business world, especially in achieving top executive positions.

Other business-focused questions explored by the poll include perceptions of leadership abilities of men and women; the impact of family on women's leadership; the impact of having children; and whether the country has made most of the changes needed to give women equal rights to men.

Voters Value Business Background

In the year of the outsider in presidential politics, as Donald Trump leads the polls for the Republican nomination and Carly Fiorina has seen time among the top tier GOP candidates, the Meredith College Poll also found that 57 percent of North Carolina voters consider a business background to be important for a candidate seeking elected office.

While it is a noteworthy aspect, only 19 percent consider business background to be the deciding factor when voting for a particular candidate, while traditional factors like party affiliation and policy positions are more important.

“Given the importance of economic issues in national and state elections, it is not surprising that voters thought that a business background was effective for political candidates,” said David McLennan, visiting professor of political science and one of the directors of the Meredith College Poll.

About The Meredith Poll

The Meredith Poll survey was conducted using a live-caller, dual frame (landline and cell phone) survey of 528 registered voters of North Carolina. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.25 percentage points for registered voters. Meredith College students administer the survey as part of the College's commitment to civic engagement.

About Meredith College

Chartered in 1891, Meredith College opened with just over 200 women. Today, our student body has grown to nearly 2,000, and includes men at the graduate level. Meredith challenges students to explore their interests, expand their skills, and build on their strengths.

Our graduates go on to use their intellect and abilities to make a positive impact on the world. And U.S. News, The Princeton Review and Forbes.com have all included Meredith in their “Best Colleges” lists. At 124 years and counting, Meredith College is still going strong.

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