



# UNITED STATES

## COUNTRY DATA SHEET<sup>1</sup>



### WHAT DO RESPONDENTS THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE USA TODAY?

- ➔ There is little consensus among respondents in the USA as to the most important issues facing the country today. **The two most often cited issues are “the economy”<sup>2</sup> (44 percent) and “global diseases and pandemics” (38 percent).** “Health” is also considered as one of the most important issues by 28 percent of respondents in the USA.
- ➔ Four percent of respondents see “inequality between women and men” as a top issue in the United States today. **Ten percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 see gender inequality as a top issue**, compared to three percent in older age brackets (aged 45 and older).
- ➔ These priorities are broadly the same for male and female respondents but differ on two issues. Male respondents are more likely to care about “the economy” (52 percent) than female respondents (37 percent), whereas female respondents prioritize “racism and other forms of discrimination against minorities” (30 percent) more than male respondents (21 percent). Younger respondents aged 18 to 24 are also much more likely to care about “racism and other forms of discrimination against minorities” (34 percent) than older cohorts (26 percent, aged 25 to 44; 20 percent, aged 45 to 59; 26 percent, aged 60 and older). Instead, older respondents are more likely to be concerned about “the economy” (55 percent, aged 60 and older) than younger respondents (18 percent, aged 18 to 24).



### WHAT DO RESPONDENTS IN THE USA THINK ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY?

- ➔ **Sixty-four percent of respondents in the USA declare gender equality is “important” to them personally**, with fewer (11 percent) considering it unimportant. Respondents who politically identify as left-leaning are less likely (3 percent) to consider gender equality “unimportant” than respondents who identify as right-leaning (17 percent).

<sup>1</sup> This country data sheet captures findings from a public perception survey on gender equality for the USA. This work is co-led by Focus 2030 and Women Deliver. The survey was executed through an online poll, conducted by Deltapoll, in 17 countries. Approximately one thousand respondents in each country were surveyed in July/August 2020. Demographic data collected included: gender, age, income level, education level, last vote in national elections (where applicable), ethnicity (where applicable), migrant status, and region of residency. In the USA, 1,001 respondents were surveyed, including 513 female respondents, 485 male respondents, and 3 respondents who identified “in another way”. Of the 1,001 respondents, 131 were aged 18 to 24, 333 were aged 25 to 44, 258 were aged 45 to 59, and 279 were aged 60 and older. Please see [www.focus2030.org](http://www.focus2030.org) and [www.womendeliver.org](http://www.womendeliver.org) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> Text in italics and quotes reflect survey response options presented to respondents.

- ➔ **Forty-six percent of respondents in the USA think gender equality in the USA is “better” now than it was 25 years ago.** Among female respondents the picture shifts notably, with more believing the situation is *“more or less the same”* (35 percent) or *“worse”* (15 percent), than *“better”* (37 percent). White respondents are more likely to consider that gender equality is *“better”* in their country (52 percent) compared with respondents who self-identify as Black or African Americans (20 percent), and in particular compared to female respondents who self-identify as Black (16 percent). An age gradient exists, with older respondents more likely to believe that there has been positive change (65 percent, aged 60 and older) than younger respondents (20 percent, aged 18 to 24). Income also affects perceptions of gender equality, as 60 percent of respondents in the 20 percent highest income group believe gender equality is *“better,”* compared to 30 percent in the lowest.
- ➔ **Fifty-one percent of respondents think that the government “should do more” to promote gender equality,** 24 percent think it is doing *“the right amount,”* and nine percent think it is doing *“too much.”*
- ➔ To promote gender equality in the USA, **36 percent of respondents think the government should “reform laws to promote gender equality and end discrimination against women.”**
- ➔ As to the main reasons why women may not be equal to men in the USA, many factors are considered important, with three standing out as commanding the most support: *“because boys and girls are treated differently growing up”* (29 percent), *“because unpaid care, domestic work, and parental responsibilities are not shared equally between women and men”* (27 percent), and *“because women and men have different employment opportunities”* (25 percent).



## ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

- ➔ To improve equality between women and men, respondents in the USA rank the **promotion of women’s economic justice and rights first priority,** with 22 percent citing *“access to well paid jobs, equal pay, financial independence, and property rights”* as top priority for government action. Forty-nine percent of respondents choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ In order to improve women’s broader economic opportunities and decision-making powers, **“achieving equal pay for women and men” (39 percent) and “preventing violence and harassment in the workplace” (35 percent) are seen as key measures for government action** by respondents in the USA. The importance of gender pay parity increases with age, with 26 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 citing pay parity as important, compared with 33 percent of those aged 25 to 44, 40 percent of those aged 45 to 59, and 52 percent of those aged 60 and older. Similarly, 29 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 cite the *“prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace,”* compared with 45 percent of those aged 60 and older.
- ➔ Forty-two percent of American female respondents declare that they have faced any one of the prompted common gender disadvantages in their life. Eighteen percent of female respondents report that they have **“not been paid as much as male counterparts,”** 16 percent feel have not had the **“same access to promotion opportunities in [their] job as male peers.”** In addition, 12 percent have had **“difficulty accessing education and training compared with male peers,”** and nine percent **“have not or will not receive the same inheritance as [their] male relatives.”**

- ➔ For 47 percent of respondents in the USA, it is “unacceptable” “to let women do the majority of housework, childcare, and elderly care,” with more female respondents finding this “unacceptable” (53 percent) than male (41 percent). Additionally, “to ask a woman during a job interview whether she has, she would like to have, children” is “unacceptable” for 55 percent of respondents, with more female respondents finding it “unacceptable” (61 percent) than male (49 percent). Sixty-four percent believe “that women earning less than men for the same work” is “unacceptable,” with more female respondents finding this “unacceptable” (68 percent) than male (60 percent).
- ➔ During the COVID-19 pandemic, **31 percent of female respondents have spent more time “doing housework”** than they normally would have, compared to 24 percent of male respondents.



## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- ➔ **Gender-based violence is ranked second priority for the government to focus on to improve gender equality**, with 20 percent of respondents in the USA choosing “end violence against women” as their first priority. Fifty-one percent identify this area as a top-three priority for government action.
- ➔ To end gender-based violence, 46 percent of respondents believe that **their government should “increase accountability for [perpetrators of] physical and sexual crimes against women.”** This measure received strong support among older respondents (67 percent, aged 60 and older; compared to 32 percent, aged 18 to 24). There is also support for “funding programs to support women who have experienced violence” (31 percent) and “ending traditional practices that are harmful to women and girls” (30 percent).
- ➔ Forty-two percent of respondents in the USA feel at risk, or know someone who feels at risk, of assault or harassment in some place or another, including 45 percent of female respondents and 39 percent of male respondents. In fact, 50 percent of respondents who self-identified as white do not feel, or know someone who feels, at risk of assault or harassment, as opposed to 21 percent of respondents who self-identified as Black or African American.
- ➔ The most common place where respondents feel at risk, or know someone who feels at risk, is “public spaces” (26 percent, and 30 percent of female respondents). Younger age groups are also noticeably more likely to feel at risk, or know someone who feels at risk, “in public spaces”: 38 percent of those aged 18 to 24, compared to 22 percent of those aged 60 and older.
- ➔ Fifty-four percent of respondents in the USA believe it “unacceptable” “for women to always obey their partner,” and 15 percent deem it “acceptable.” More female respondents believe this is “unacceptable” (59 percent) than male respondents (49 percent). Sixty-six percent also believe that it is “acceptable” “for women to refuse sexual intercourse with their partner,” and 66 percent find it “unacceptable” “to whistle at a woman in the street or to touch her without her consent.”
- ➔ Ten percent of respondents have had “their freedom of movement restricted by family or a partner.”



## FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

- ➔ **Feminist movements and leadership is the respondents' third priority overall**, with 10 percent ranking *"improve women's participation and leadership in politics, and cultural and social movements"* as top priority for government action. Forty percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ For 26 percent of respondents, *"supporting women's political leadership and participation"* is a key action the government should take. Female respondents aged 60 and older are more supportive of this action (33 percent) than those aged 18 to 24 (19 percent). Additionally, *"achieving equal representation of women in politics"* (25 percent) and *"achieving an equal representation of women on boards of companies"* (24 percent) are also perceived as important.
- ➔ One in three respondents (33 percent) *"agree"* that imposing gender quotas in all political decision-making bodies is a good way to advance gender equality in the USA, while 30 percent *"neither agree nor disagree"* and 29 percent *"disagree."* Male respondents aged 18 to 24 are more supportive of gender quotas (45 percent) compared to older male respondents (32 percent of those aged 25 and more) and female respondents aged 18 to 24 (33 percent).



## BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

- ➔ **Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights is ranked fourth**, with nine percent of respondents in the USA ranking *"access to contraception and family planning, good maternal health, and sex education in schools"* as top priority for government action. Thirty-one percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ To advance women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, **one in three respondents in the USA (34 percent) would like their government to "increase access to sexual health services,"** and 28 percent support *"increasing access to contraception and family planning options."* Respondents would also like their government to *"increase access to accurate information including sexual education in school,"* including 24 percent of all respondents and 30 percent of female respondents aged 18 to 24.
- ➔ **Seven percent of female respondents in the USA have had difficulty in their lives "accessing their chosen method of contraception," rising to 12 percent among those aged 18 to 24.** Five percent *"have had difficulty accessing abortion and post-abortion care"* in their lifetime, including 14 percent of those aged 18 to 24.
- ➔ During the COVID-19 pandemic, five percent of respondents in the USA have had *"difficulties accessing contraception and other sexual health services,"* including 14 percent of female respondents aged 18 to 24. Four percent of respondents have *"had difficulties accessing abortion options and/or post-abortion care"* during this time. This is also more pronounced (10 percent) among female respondents aged 18 to 24.



## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- ➔ **Technology and innovation for gender equality is the respondents' fifth most often cited priority for government action**, with seven percent ranking *"invest in technology to improve women's access to health services, education, and economic opportunities"* as top priority. Thirty-one percent choose this as a top-three important area.
- ➔ To promote the use of technology and innovation for gender equality, 43 percent of respondents believe the government should *"provide equal opportunities for girls and women to study and work in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)."* An age gradient exists, with older respondents placing more importance on this than younger respondents (55 percent, aged 60 and older; 30 percent, aged 18 to 24). Respondents would also like the government to *"increase safety of digital spaces for girls and women"* and *"address barriers preventing girls and women from accessing, designing, and developing technology,"* each receiving 30 percent of support from respondents.



## FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

- ➔ **The sixth most often cited issue is feminist action for climate justice**, with four percent of respondents in the USA ranking *"promote women's participation in climate change action"* as a top priority to improve equality between women and men in the country. Fifteen percent identify this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ To promote women's efforts to respond to climate change, 34 percent of respondents think their government should *"promote the training and hiring of women in jobs related to climate change."* Twenty-six percent support *"increased funding for women-led organizations that are working to fight climate change,"* and 25 percent would like action from their government to *"increase girls' and women's participation in the development of solutions to fight climate change."*



## FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- ➔ **Forty-seven percent of respondents in the USA "agree" that the government should increase funding for gender equality in the USA.** In addition, 41 percent *"agree"* that the government should increase its funding for international projects and organizations fighting for gender equality around the world. A higher proportion of younger respondents support funding for gender equality projects generally, whether domestically (50 percent among 18 to 24, compared to 42 percent among 60 and older) or abroad (46 percent among 18 to 44, compared to 36 percent among 60 and older).
- ➔ **Forty-four percent of American respondents "agree" that achieving gender equality is essential to end poverty in all countries**, compared to 17 percent who *"disagree"* with this.



## WHAT ACTIONS ARE RESPONDENTS IN THE USA WILLING TO TAKE?

- ➔ To encourage policymakers to tackle gender inequality around the world, 29 percent of respondents in the USA would be willing to “vote in an election for a candidate supporting gender equality.” Twenty-five percent of respondents would also be willing to “promote gender equality in everyday conversations and interactions” and “sign a petition.”



## IMPACT OF COVID-19

- ➔ For 42 percent of respondents, the government’s response to support people through the COVID-19 pandemic has met the needs of women and men equally. Twenty-one percent of respondents “disagree,” and this is the same among male and female respondents.
- ➔ Seventy-three percent of respondents in the USA “agree” that women should be involved in all aspects of the global health and recovery efforts to COVID-19, with only four percent who “disagree.”
- ➔ There is disagreement as to whether COVID-19 will exacerbate inequality between men and women. Overall, more respondents “disagree” (31 percent) than “agree” (26 percent), but even more say “neither agree nor disagree” (35 percent). Disagreement with the statement is more driven by male respondents (36 percent) and respondents over the age of 60 (47 percent) (for female respondents this was 26 percent).
- ➔ More female (27 percent) than male respondents (16 percent) have experienced “emotional stress or mental health issues” as a result of COVID-19. Younger respondents have also experienced “emotional stress or mental health issues” at a higher rate than older cohorts (29 percent, aged 18 to 24; compared to 25 percent, aged 25 to 44; 20 percent, 45 to 59; and 16 percent, aged 60 and older).

This country data sheet is a supplement to *Citizens Call for a Gender-Equal World: A Roadmap for Action*, a global report on the findings from a 17-country public perception survey on gender equality. For the full report and all country data sheets, please visit: <http://womendeliver.org/citizens-call-for-a-gender-equal-world/>.