

# The impact of the pandemic on 18-30 year old women in U.S.

## Findings from national online survey

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# Methodology

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Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted online from February 11 to February 20, 2022. The survey reached 1,000 women ages 18-30 nationwide with oversamples of 50 Black women and 100 AAPI women.

The sample was drawn from an online opt-in panel of listed adults and screened to be women ages 18-30. The base sample was weighted by region and education to reflect attributes of the actual population. Black women were weighted by age and education; AAPI women were weighted by region and party identification; and Latina women were weighted by region and age. All oversamples were weighted down into the base to reflect their actual proportion of women ages 18-30.

Lake Research Partners and Wellesley College conducted six online focus groups in January 2022. These groups were segmented as follows: 25-30-year-old women of color, non-college-educated (January 5), 18-24-year-old women, mixed race, non-college-educated (January 6), 25-30-year-old white women, non-college-educated (January 11), 25-30-year-old women, mixed race, college-educated (January 12), Wellesley College Students (January 18), and Wellesley College Students (January 18).

A majority of women ages 18-30 are white, and close to half are Black, Hispanic/Latino, AAPI, or Native. About a third are college graduates and about a third are parents. Household incomes are evenly split below and above \$40,000. A plurality are Democrats.

### AGE

18-19	—	16%
20-21	—	15%
22-24	—	23%
25-27	—	21%
28-30	—	24%


### RACE

White/Caucasian	54%
Black/AA	14%
Hispanic/Latino	22%
Asian/PI	6%
Native American	3%

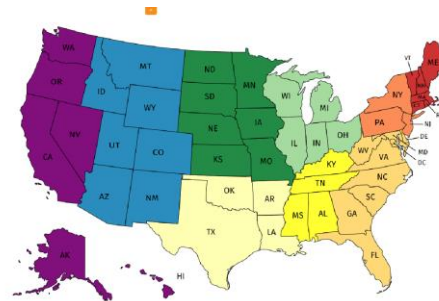
### CHILDREN

Yes	31%
No	68%

### EDUCATION




High School or Less	—	32%	
Post-H.S. / Some College	—	36%	
College Graduate	—	26%	32%
Post-Graduate	—	6%	College Grad or Post Grad

### REGION



Pacific	17%	New England	5%
Mountain	8%	Middle Atlantic	12%
West North Central	6%	South Atlantic	19%
East North Central	14%	East South Central	6%
		West South Central	13%

### PARTY IDENTIFICATION

	Democrat	45%
	Republican	23%
	Independent	16%

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Below 40 thousand	47%
Above 40 thousand	46%

### LGBTQ+



# Key Findings

# Key Takeaways

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- The pandemic was a profound experience on this cohort of women, but the pandemic does not define them.
- This cohort of women are optimistic about the future, even though the pandemic profoundly impacted them. Unlike this cohort, the public is mixed between pessimism and optimism.
- They are also postponing having children or choosing not to have them. Many feel financial security, and the work-life balance necessary to be a good parent, are difficult in these times, based on focus group discussions.
- In the era of the great resignation, this cohort is demanding financial security and respect. They want to redefine the workplace to produce good wages and benefits and respect for all. Young women, across age, race, education, political orientation want good wages and respect from employers.
- These women are united behind a new agenda. They are leading the push for mental health and tying mental health to well-being and aspirations. They are intensely supportive of an agenda on freedom from sexual violence, affordable health care for all, pay equity for women, and workplaces free from discrimination.
- There are some ideological divisions already in this cohort, particularly around issues of reproductive choice, racial profiling, protections for transgender people and undocumented immigrants, and student debt forgiveness, and universal pre-k. Republican women are less likely than Democratic or Independent women to find these policies very important.
- This is the most comprehensive study conducted by Lake Research of the 18–30-year-old cohort. Six percent of young women are Asian American/Pacific Islander, 14% are Black, 22% are Hispanic/Latino, 3% are Native American, and 54% are white.

# Stressed about economic present....

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- Many women in this cohort have been feeling financial anxiety. Concern about finances and their job situation are top worries. Yet, they have hope that their financial situation will improve in the next 5 years.
- Two in ten women say the pandemic has had great impact on their economic and financial stability. Two-thirds say their personal wellbeing has been impacted because of the pandemic.
- Only 7% say they are doing very well in the economy right now (34% well overall), while 29% say they are not doing well at all (61% not well)
  - Rural women are having the hardest time in the economy right now with almost seven in ten saying they are not doing well.
  - College-educated women who are Black, Latina, or AAPI are split on how they feel they are doing in the economy right now, whereas college-educated white women say they feel they are not doing well in the economy right now (22% not well at all, 62% not well).
- Over three quarters of women are feeling financial anxiety, with a little under half having felt financial anxiety very often in the past month.
  - White non-college women, women whose household income is below 40 thousand, and moms are the most likely to have been feeling financial anxiety very often in the past month.
  - Every single demographic group feels financial anxiety.

# ... but hopeful about their future

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- Although most do not feel they are doing well in the economy right now, every group says they feel their personal financial situation will improve in the next 5 years (70% improve), there is no group that thinks it won't improve.
  - College women, urban women, and women whose household income is above 40 thousand are most likely to think their personal financial situation will improve in the next 5 years.
- Seven in ten women feel optimistic about their future with only one-sixth (16%) feeling pessimistic, whereas three-in-ten feel pessimistic about the present. Across subgroups, a solid majority of women are feeling optimistic about their future.
- When they compare their life to how their mom's life was at their age, a little over half (53%) say they are doing worse or about the same as their mom at their age.
  - A majority of college-educated women of color (57% better, 40% about the same/worse) and small business owners (59% better, 40% about the same/worse) say they are doing better than their mom at their age.
- When they imagine themselves at 35 or 40 years old, a majority (62%) said their life will be better than their mother's at the same age.

# Current Worries and Concerns

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- When shown a list of personal concerns, this cohort of women say **they are the most worried about getting a good paying job (33% very worried)**. Other worries include *being able to afford your rent or mortgage (33%)*, *that your total family income will not be enough to meet your family's expenses and pay your bills (33%)* and *having a medical expense for you or your family that you cannot afford (33%)* making up part of their top concerns.
- They're also very worried about climate change (with 33% very worried).
- Concerns regarding discrimination (gender discrimination at work – 38% worried, at work due to children – 34% worried, at work due to pregnancy – 29% worried) and racism (31% worried) are the lowest-ranking worries for this cohort. However, a majority of Black (58% worried, 32% very worried) and AAPI (61% worried, 29% very worried) women rank experiencing racism high. Notably, only 44% of Latinas are worried (19% very worried) about experiencing racism.



# Worries and Concerns for the Future

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- A majority of women say the pandemic has shaped their expectations for their future. Only a quarter say it hasn't.
  - Most subgroups are fairly split on whether their expectations for the future are very different or somewhat different, but a plurality of Black women say that their expectations are very different (48% very, 41% somewhat different).
- **Over half (57%) of women are concerned about being able to juggle or balance their career or job with their personal life and family in the future, with about a quarter being very concerned.**
  - Women of color (23% very concerned, 58% concerned) are equally as concerned as white women (23% very concerned, 55% concerned) are about being able to juggle or balance their career or job with their personal life and family in the future, but AAPI women specifically are 10 points more likely than women of other races to say they are concerned (67% concerned).
  - The most concerned are women who say they are very likely to have children in the next 5 years, women who say starting a small business is very important to them, and smaller city women.

# Life Priorities

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- Looking at what they see as important, financial security and stability stand out. **Being financially secure (94% important) and stable (92% important) are the most important to women, with four-fifths (81% secure very important, 80% stable very important) saying they are very important.**
- Your personal well being also ranks highly with **67% saying it is very important to them (87% important).**
- While two-thirds say being a good parent is very important to them (**78% important**), only **35% say having children is very important (57% important)**. In fact, caregiving for parents and other family members is more important (**42% very important, 74% important**).
  - **Non-college-educated women (45% very important) place more importance than college-educated women (37% very important) on caregiving for parents and other family members.**
  - **Women ages 25 to 30 years old think it is nearly as important to have children (42% very important) as it is to be able to give care for parents and other family members (43% very important).**
- **Childfree women are focused on success in their job or career, achieving their education goals, and managing work and personal responsibilities more than moms are. Moms place more importance than childfree women on financial stability, being a good parent, and owning a home.**

# Current Feelings and Values

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- The top two words to describe how they feel most of the time these days are **tired (40%)** and **stressed (39%)**, followed by **happy (32%)**.
  - Unlike women of other races, **Black women's top feeling is happy.**
- Top values for this cohort of women are **stability, freedom, safety, and equality**.
  - These values rank similarly across groups, but the top value for **AAPI women is opportunity.**
- Every group thinks things will get better, with two-thirds having often experienced in the past month the feeling that things will get better (**22% very often, 66% often**).
  - Out of the demographic subgroups, **Black women are the most likely to have felt very often in the past month that things will get better.**

# Employer Expectations

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- **Respect and good wages/salary are the most important things for employers to provide across the board.**
  - Respect for all employees – (78% very important, 92% important)
  - Good wages/salary – (78% very important, 91% important)
- **The least important for employers to provide to this cohort are aligned values and networking opportunities.**
  - Values align – (48% very important, 79% important)
  - Networking opportunities – (39% very important, 74% important)

# Role of Mental Health

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- **Mental health is a key component to achieving their future goals.** Nine in ten respondents (89%) say mental health is important in achieving their future goals (68% very important), and they believe the pandemic will have long-term impacts on their mental health and wellbeing (78%).
- **Mental health plays a big factor in the way in which these women's expectations for the future have shifted due to the pandemic.** Those who say their expectations for the future are very different from before the pandemic versus now are the most likely to strongly agree that the pandemic will have a long-term impact on their mental health and well-being and are the most likely to think mental health is very important to achieving their future goals.

# Core Views

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- **Three-quarters hold the opinion that society should work for all, including women. This is almost a core value.**
  - Democrats, AAPI women, Independents, unmarried women, and women whose household income is above 40 thousand are most likely to hold the opinion that we need a society that works for all, including women.
  - A solid majority of every group, including Republicans, think society should work for all, including women.
- **Young women see a role for government. Half of the women would prefer the government create opportunities for advancement, and only 29% think government should get out of the way.**
  - Democrats as well as Black, Latinx, and AAPI women, college educated women who are Black, Latina, or AAPI, and urban women, would especially prefer this.
  - Less than half of Republicans, rural, white, and married women prefer this. Republicans are the only group that has a plurality that say they would prefer government get out of the way (39% government create opportunities, 44% government get out of your way).
  - However, none of the subgroups has a majority who say they want the government to get out of their way.

# Policy Priorities

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- **Women find it very important for elected officials to address issues related to sexual violence and harassment.**
  - Ensure workplaces are free from sexual violence and harassment – (63% very important, 82% important)
  - Pass protections to address domestic and sexual violence – (61% very important, 81% important)
- **Pay is also very important, with strengthening equal pay laws and passing federal legislation that guarantees a livable minimum wage in women’s top tier of very important issues for elected officials to address.**
  - Strengthen equal pay laws for women – (59% very important, 78% important)
  - Pass federal legislation that guarantees a livable minimum wage – (58% very important, 78% important)
- **A strong majority of young women say it is important for elected officials to address expanding mental health services, with a majority saying it is very important.**
  - Expand the availability of mental health services in schools and communities for women and girls – (56% very important, 80% important)
- **The top policies resonate across demographic subgroups, and while there are some nuances in intensity, there are not any notable policy priority differences across demographic subgroups; however, there are partisan differences on policies in this cohort. Democrats support a wide range of policy solutions. Republicans respond less to policies that involve increased government services or reproductive rights.**

# What Women Need

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- What women volunteer they most need right now is **financial help/a livable wage**, with almost a quarter stating that this is what their note to an elected leader or business leader would be about.
- In the focus groups, when asked to write a letter with the three things they need as young women to be who they want to be, focus group participants mostly wrote **financial help, child care, and things related to mental health like mental health care, mental/emotional support, and mental health resources.**



# Key Distinctions

# Different Perspectives: Black Women

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- **Black women are more likely than any other subgroup to think it's important to:**
  - **start a small business (39% very important, 62% important)**
  - **be their own brand (48% very important, 73% important)**
- **About half of Black women (46%) also say it is very important to them to help their community (75% important).**
  - **Starting a small business or being their own brand is their way of giving back to their community, by creating more generational wealth and increasing representation. For a lot of them, it could be their path to success that doesn't have to involve a college degree, as most of the sample are non-college-educated.**

# Different Perspectives: AAPI Women

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- **AAPI women** really believe in creating more opportunities for others, with opportunity being their most important value (26%).
- **AAPI women** are among the top two subgroups most likely to say they prefer the government to create opportunities for advancement (66%) and believe that society should work for all, including women (80%).

# Different Perspectives: Latina Women

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- **Latinas** know mental health is important because the pandemic has had an impact on this aspect of their lives. Compared to their counterparts, they are the most likely to say that mental health is important in achieving their future goals (71% very important, 94% important).
- Two-thirds of Latinas say the pandemic has shaped their expectations for the future, with 45% saying those expectations are very different from before the pandemic versus now.
- Much of what was impacted by the pandemic was Latina's personal well being. About a quarter (24%) say the pandemic had a great impact on their personal well being (69% impact).
- Compared to their counterparts, Latinas are the most likely to say that mental health support is very important (70% very important, 88% important) for employers to provide.
- Latinas are less concerned than Black or AAPI women about experiencing racism.

# Different Perspectives: White Women

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- **White women's worries and priorities are very economic-centered, and they feel that this has stemmed from the pandemic.**
- **White women say the pandemic has impacted their economic and financial stability (21% great impact, 62% impact) and they are the most likely to have experienced feeling financial anxiety in the past month (48% very often, 79% often).**
- **White women's top intensely felt concern is being able to afford their rent or mortgage (34% very worried, 57% worried). They are also worried about getting a good paying job with benefits (30% very worried, 64% worried) and their total family income not being enough to meet their family's expenses and pay their bills (32% very worried, 62% worried).**
- **White women know what they need to succeed and that's financial help/a livable wage (25%).**



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