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Hillary Clinton's Gender Gap Most Evident Among Independents

Favorable opinion gap is 21 points between independent women and independent men

by Frank Newport and Joseph Carroll

GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- Sen. Hillary Clinton has a more positive image among women than among men. This gender gap is most evident among "pure" independents who do not lean toward either party. Clinton's favorable rating among purely independent women is 21 points higher than among independent men. The majority of independent women have a favorable view of Clinton, aligning them with Democrats; most independent men have an unfavorable view of Clinton, aligning them with Republicans.

The analysis presented in this report is based on 10,065 Gallup Poll interviews in which Clinton's favorable rating was measured, conducted between February 2005 and March 2007.

Gender

American women in general are more likely than men to have a favorable opinion of Clinton.

Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings by Gender
 2005-2007 aggregate

	Favor- able	Unfavor- able	No opinion	Sample size
	%	%	%	
<i>Total sample</i>	53	42	5	10,065
Men	47	49	5	4,831
Women	59	36	5	5,234

The gender gap in opinions of Clinton is highly significant. In this large sample, men are about evenly divided in their opinions of the New York senator, with 49% rating her unfavorably and 47% rating her favorably. Among women, on the other hand, Clinton has a 23-point net favorable rating, 59% to 36%.

This gender gap may result from several different factors. One, of course, is that Clinton is a famous female politician with a most realistic chance of becoming the first woman president in U.S. history, and thus someone with whom female voters may identify. Another cause is the greater likelihood of women than of men in the United States to identify with the Democratic Party, coupled with Democrats' tendency to rate Democratic politicians more favorably than do non-Democrats.

The accompanying table looks at the difference by gender in views of Clinton within each of the three major partisan groupings.

Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings
Party and Gender Group Results
 2005-2007 aggregate
 (percentage saying "favorable")

Men	Women	Sample size
%	%	

Democrats	79	86	3,483
Independents	45	59	3,532
Republicans	18	22	2,962

Clinton's ratings among women are higher than her ratings among men in all three groups. While the table makes clear that party has a major influence on views of Clinton (that is, Democrats are much more likely to be positive than independents or Republicans), it also demonstrates an independent gender effect. In other words, the impact of gender operates within partisan groups. The fact that there are more women who identify as Democrats (40%) than as independents (31%) and Republicans (29%) also helps tilt the overall gender gap to a larger figure than would be the case if women were distributed equally across the three partisan groups.

More on Party and Ideology

The party identification variable reported above is based on the first response to Gallup's basic question: "*In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent?*"

Gallup uses a follow-up question that provides an additional way of looking at party identification. Those who describe themselves as independents are asked if they lean toward one party or the other. Although party leaners in many ways share the opinions of those who initially identify with the party, the attachment of the former is not as strong, and thus, the link between party affiliation and attitudes should be somewhat weaker.

The accompanying table shows ratings across five categories of party identification -- Democrats, independents who lean Democratic, pure independents, independents who lean Republican, and Republicans.

Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings by Party Affiliation 2005-2007 aggregate

	Favor- able	Unfavor- able	No opinion	Sample size
	%	%	%	
Democrats	83	13	4	3,482
Democratic-leaning independents	70	24	6	1,684
Pure independents	46	43	12	755
Republican-leaning independents	26	71	4	1,094
Republicans	20	76	4	2,964

Opinions of Hillary Clinton within this five-category breakdown are generally in line with expectations. Unambiguous Republicans and Democrats are the most lopsided in their views either for or against Clinton. Independents who lean toward one party or the other are slightly less extreme in their views of Clinton, and pure independents are about evenly divided.

Gallup also routinely includes a measure of ideology in its surveys, classifying Americans based on their self-reports of their political views as conservative, moderate, and liberal.

The basic relationship between attitudes toward Hillary Clinton and self-reported ideology are presented in the table. Not surprisingly, liberals are the most positive about Clinton, conservatives are the most negative, and moderates are in the middle.

Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings by Political Ideology 2005-2007 aggregate

	Favor- able	Unfavor- able	No opinion	Sample size
	%	%	%	
Liberals	79	17	4	2,125
Moderates	57	37	6	4,158
Conservatives	33	64	4	3,644

Combining the party identification measure with this ideology measure provides a detailed look at attitudes across the political spectrum in the United States, from liberal Democrats on the left to conservative Republicans on the right.

For this analysis, "pure" Democratic and Republican identifiers -- that is, those who initially identify with either party and not as independents -- are split according to their ideological views. Democrats are split into two groups: liberals and moderates/conservatives. Republicans are split into two groups: moderates/liberals and conservatives. The process yields seven groups. Views of Clinton within each are displayed here.

Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings by Party Affiliation and Political Ideology 2005-2007 aggregate

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion	Sample size
	%	%	%	
Liberal Democrats	88	10	2	1,272
Moderate/Conservative Democrats	80	15	5	2,187
Democratic-leaning independents	70	24	6	1,684
Pure independents	46	43	12	755
Republican-leaning independents	26	71	4	1,094
Moderate/Liberal Republicans	33	61	6	1,062
Conservative Republicans	13	85	3	1,886

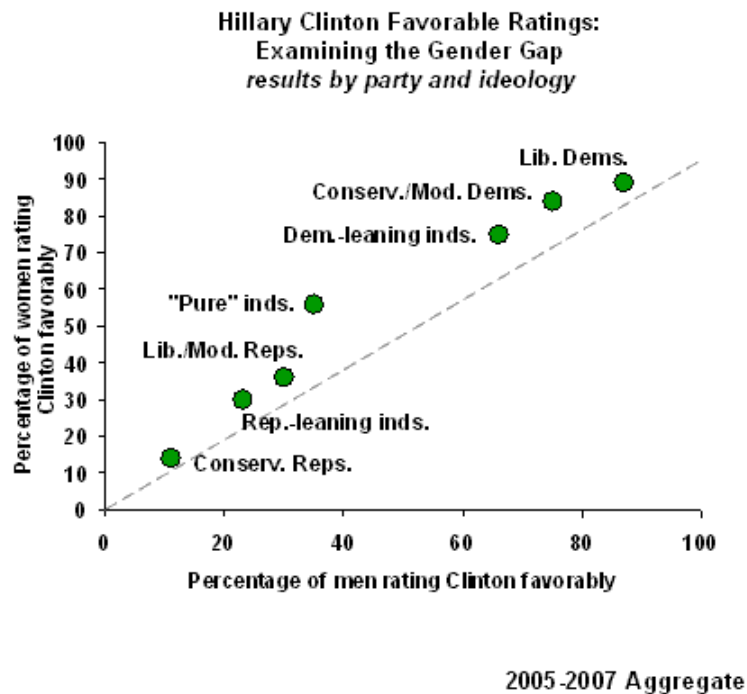
The results of this analysis are again what one might expect. One outlier from the otherwise sequential pattern of favorable ratings is that moderate/liberal Republicans are more favorable toward Clinton than are independents who lean toward the Republican Party.

The accompanying table looks at the gender gap in favorable opinions of Clinton within each of the seven basic party/ideology groups as explained above.

**Hillary Clinton Favorable Ratings
Party, Ideology, and Gender Group Results**
2005-2007 aggregate
(percentage saying "favorable")

	Men	Women	Gender gap
	%	%	
Liberal Democrats	87	89	+2
Moderate/Conservative Democrats	75	84	+9
Democratic-leaning independents	66	75	+9
Pure independents	35	56	+21
Republican-leaning independents	23	30	+7
Moderate/Liberal Republicans	30	36	+6
Conservative Republicans	11	14	+3

The same data are presented in the accompanying graph.



Several conclusions are evident from an analysis of the data in this table and graph:

- The two groups at either end of the political spectrum -- liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans -- have the lowest gender gaps in their views of Clinton. This results from these two groups' extreme and solidified views of her. Liberal Democrats are highly positive,

regardless of gender, and conservative Republicans are highly negative, regardless of gender. It appears that partisanship and ideology are such powerful influences that there is little additional room for gender to have an effect.

- Those in the pure independent group are presumably those who are least affected by the political affiliation of a public figure, since they themselves have little allegiance to one party or the other. As a result, Americans in this group are most distinctly divided by gender in their views of Clinton. It appears that this is a "pure gender" effect; namely, that everything else being equal, if there are no party allegiances tugging at one's views of Clinton, one's gender is a strong influence in evaluations of her.
- There is a slightly larger gender effect in views of Clinton among less extreme moderate/conservative Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents than there is among less extreme moderate/liberal Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

Bottom Line

American women are more positive than men toward Clinton, explained in part by the decades-old fact that women are more likely than men to identify as Democrats. Women, in other words, are generally more positive than men about any major Democratic politician.

The analysis reviewed in this report, however, indicates that there is more to Clinton's appeal to women than mere party identification. Clinton is more positively evaluated by women among Republicans, among independents, and among Democrats.

The detailed analysis shows additionally that the impact of gender on views of Clinton is particularly strong among independents, and almost non-existent among two groups at the extreme end of the American political spectrum: liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with more than 10,000 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted across 10 surveys from 2005 through 2007. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 2 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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