SHE SHOULD RUN

The Issues Motivating Women

OVERVIEW

For decades, the political landscape has been full of stories about women's underrepresentation in government and the barriers that women face when considering elected office. With 2022 marking the first year that Gen Z could run for federal office, She Should Run set out to discover the spark that motivates women to take action in their communities, especially as it relates to motivating women to consider a future run for office.

As a national, nonpartisan nonprofit working to drastically increase the number of women from all walks of life considering elected office, She Should Run has a bold goal to inspire 250,000 women to take their first steps toward public leadership and join their Community by 2030. As part of this work, She Should Run uncovered new data that shifts the conventional wisdom about how to reach women and pull them into the political process, and connects the dots between the societal issues that have disproportionate effects on women and the motivations that encourage them to consider elected office.

Utilizing both She Should Run data and research from YWCA's YWomenVote 2022 – Midterm Election Study and UN Women, She Should Run found that the majority of women - across demographics and ideologies - are **motivated** by issues that disproportionately affect them and their communities. These include the **Economy, Climate Change, Reproductive Health, Racism, and Gun Violence.** Additionally, women are most likely to take action on issues related to children, health, education, and poverty. As a result, these commonalities are motivating factors to considering elected office.

As part of this research, She Should Run also set out to understand the **total untapped opportunity of women primed to be motivated to seek elected office**, uncovering an addressable market of **22.4% (or 24.4 million) adult women in the US** who are motivated by issues to take action and can be encouraged to run for office. By reaching and motivating this untapped talent, the goal of reaching equal representation in government can be accomplished.

Finally, in studying the issues motivating women to take action, She Should Run found that **conversations happening among nextgen women today are not focused on gender equity alone.** This group is not motivated by generic conversations about gender equity but rather **focused on the issues**

that have a disproportionate effect on their lives as women. Whether in-person or in "group chat" conversations with friends and trusted support networks, women are diving into the issues impacting their day-to-day lives.

This first-ever **She Should Run 'Group Chat Issues' Report** highlights new research on the catalyst that motivates women across different demographics, ages, and party lines to take action on an issue, and ultimately consider running for elected office.

"GROUP CHAT ISSUES"

Over the years, the term "kitchen table issues" has been used to represent the societal issues of concern to the average person, and those that might be discussed by the family around the kitchen table. Today, we know that the issues in women's daily lives are still discussed at the kitchen table *and* are also discussed with trusted friends and community members, whether in-person or online in "group chats."

As a result, She Should Run is evolving the term for the issues of importance to women to "Group Chat Issues" to capture the spirit of women in 2023 and highlight the everyday issues that matter to them *now*.

Post the 2020 Covid Era, 71% of adults say text messages and group chats have helped them stay connected to family and friends. As part of She Should Run's research into what motivates women to take action in their communities, the organization found that a vast majority **(70%+) of women considering running for office discuss current issues on social media.** Specifically, 36-45 (Older Millennials) are the most likely of any age group to discuss and speak out on issues on social media.

Prioritizing issues is of particular importance for motivating **Gen Z women, across demographics, who are uniquely driven by specific issues more than partisanship.** In fact, voter turnout among Gen Z women has been steadily increasing. And as 2022 marked the first year that Gen Z could run for federal office, the trend of candidates motivated by issues over party is only expected to increase. According to the Millennial Action Project, in 2023, there are 73 Gen Z state legislators serving in their state capitals – compared to 27 in 2022, a 170% increase in just one year, with a partisan breakdown that is a near even split - 38 are Republicans and 35 are Democrats.

Finally, research shows that women benefit from an inner circle of close female friends to discuss personal information, especially those seeking leadership roles. Similarly, She Should Run found that **women are more likely to run if they receive support and encouragement from trusted sources in their lives**, whether that be family members, friends, members of their community, former teachers/professions, faith leaders, elected officials, and in-person or online.

Therefore, not only are "group chats" key for discussing the issues of importance to women, but they are also key to motivating women to take action in their communities, and consider running for office.

Findings in Brief

- Utilizing She Should Run data and research from [YWCA's YWomenVote 2022 – Midterm Election Study](#) and [UN Women](#), She Should Run found that the majority of women - **across demographics and ideologies** - are **motivated** by issues that disproportionately affect them. These include **the Economy, Climate Change, Reproductive Health, Racism, and Gun Violence.** Additionally, women are most likely to **take action** on issues related to children, health, education, and poverty. As a result, these commonalities are motivating factors to consider seeking elected office.

- She Should Run's research revealed that there are two major patterns in what motivates women to take action:
    - **Solving a Problem** - She is energized and activated by a specific issue
    - **Potential in Her Community** - She has a history of community impact work

- With these two audiences alone, **22.4% (or 24.4 Million) of adult women in the US are primed to take action and be motivated to seek elected office**, creating a large addressable market to increase women's representation in government.

- According to She Should Run, **a vast majority (70%+) of women considering running for office discuss current issues on social media.** Specifically, 36-45 (Older Millennials) are the most likely of any age group to discuss and speak out on issues on social media.

- **81% of Black women considering a run have previously worked on a campaign** (either volunteer or staff). This is significantly higher than other groups.

- **Of Native American women** who have considered a run for office, **67% have a specific role in mind** (more than any other group).

- **Gen Z concentrates more on specific issues than political parties** or partisan dynamics. Additionally, they are most likely to view major societal issues through an intersectional lens.

MOTIVATION TO TAKE ACTION

She Should Run's research revealed that there are two major patterns in what motivates women to take action. Women driven by:

1. Solving a Problem
She is energized and activated by a specific issue

2. Potential in Her Community
She has a history of community impact work

With these two audiences alone, 22.4% (or 24.4 Million) of adult women in the US are primed to take action and be motivated to seek elected office, creating a large addressable market to increase women's representation in government.

Among these audiences, a crucial next step to considering running is receiving support from her community.

Encouragement to Run for Office
(According to She Should Run)

- 25-35 (Younger Millennials) are likely to have been encouraged at least once to run for elected office.
- 36-45 (Older Millennials) are likely to have been encouraged at least once to run for elected office.
- Black women considering a run have been encouraged far more than other groups. In fact, 31% of those considering a run said they had been encouraged over 10 times.
- Asian women rely on encouragement more from friends and less from people in the community.
- Middle Eastern/North African women relied on former teachers/professors for encouragement more than any other group.

Digging into these specific audiences further, She Should Run uncovered the following distinguishing features for the addressable market of women that could be motivated to run for office:

The Problem Solvers
(7.8% of Women - 8.5 Million)

- She is energized and activated by a specific issue and frustrated with the state of politics today, causing her to turn her anger into action.
- She receives support from community members and takes action in her community weekly.

- While she hasn't considered running for office, she frequently follows national politics and is driven to help underserved communities improve their lives, and get better representation and equality.

- Causes the Problem Solver 1. Cares about & 2. Takes action on:
  - Children *(Cares about: 52% / Takes action on: 52%)*
  - Health *(Cares about: 34% / Takes action on: 52%)*
  - Poverty *(Cares about: 47% / Takes action on: 47%)*
  - Violence *(Cares about: 30% / Takes action on: 38%)*
  - Animals *(Cares about 21% / Takes action on: 34%)*
  - Equality *(Cares about: 52% / Takes action on: 31%)*
  - Voter Registration *(Cares about: 38% / Takes action on: 20%)*

The Community Helpers

(14.6% of Women - 15.9 Million)

- She takes action in her community weekly, if not more, and has realized that to make the most impact, she might need to go where decisions are being made in order to better serve her community.

- She receives support from community members and the causes she is frequently involved with.

- While she has not taken steps to run for office, she may have thought about it, and may even have a specific position in mind, and she is often following local politics to better support the causes she is involved with.

- Causes the Community Helper 1. Cares about & 2. Takes action on:
  - Children *(Cares about: 71% / Takes action on: 52%)*
  - Health *(Cares about: 48% / Takes action on: 52%)*
  - Poverty *(Cares about: 57% / Takes action on: 47%)*
  - Violence *(Cares about: 42% / Takes action on: 38%)*
  - Animals *(Cares about 33% / Takes action on: 34%)*
  - Equality *(Cares about: 67% / Takes action on: 31%)*
  - Voter Registration *(Cares about: 54% / Takes action on: 20%)*

While common motivators were extrapolated in the above audiences, we know that women are not monolithic. Every woman has a unique journey leading up to a decision to run, influenced by her specific set of motivators and barriers, life experiences, and interactions within her ecosystem. These journeys can be influenced by the right support at the right time.

Moreover, there are statistically significant differences in motivators between ethnic groups and demographics represented in our survey data, underscoring the critical importance of meeting women where they are, based on their unique lived experiences and attributes.

ADDITIONAL STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

(According to She Should Run Data)

Black/African American

▸ 81% of Black women considering a run have previously worked on a campaign (either volunteer or staff). This is significantly higher than other groups.

▸ More often than other groups, Black women consider running to serve their communities.

Hispanic/Latina

▸ On average, feelings toward politics are more negative than other groups.

▸ In response to conflict, substantially more Hispanic women said their first instinct is to fight for their side, though they tend not to protest (either in person or on social media).

Native American

▸ On average, feelings toward politics are more positive than other groups.

▸ Far more likely to take a stand for a cause they care about than other groups.

▸ More likely than any other group to describe themselves as a "leader."

▸ Of Native American women who have considered a run for office, 67% have a specific role in mind (more than any other group).

Asian/Pacific Islander

▸ When asked if they had ever considered a run, significantly more Asian or Pacific Islander women (63%) said they had never really considered it.

▸ When Asian women take a stand, it's mostly for a cause (more so than most groups, though less so than Native American women).

▸ Asian women rely on encouragement more from friends and less from people in the community.

Middle Eastern/North African

▸ Most likely to donate money to support a cause.

▸ More than other groups, Middle Eastern/North African women become involved in their community because they feel dissatisfied with local leadership, to make the world better for family/kids, and to leave a legacy.

▸ Rely on former teachers/professors for encouragement more than any other group.

Gen Z

- Seeks to improve the world for their generation.

- Extremely low levels of public trust and expectations for politicians.

- Gen Z is motivated by personal causes and prefers to seek change through grassroots participation in their particular causes over politics.

- To be convinced to run, Gen Z needs to see the value of having a seat at the table.

- Leverages their social media networks to "campaign" online, potentially reducing the barriers of not wanting to "campaign", and the perception of financial requirements to run.

- Most likely to view major societal issues through an intersectional lens.

MEETING WOMEN WHERE THEY ARE

If we're going to see women's voices and perspectives fully represented in our lifetime, we need to drastically shift the ways we reach and motivate women to consider running for office. It is time to push outside of the echo chamber, think bigger, and meet women where they are by focusing on the issues that show up in their everyday lives: **the Economy, Climate Change, Reproductive Health, Racism, and Gun Violence.**

Prior to this research, data on women's representation in politics focused on women who were already committed to running for office, from the strategies and messages used to reach her, to the money that supports her. **Unfortunately, that data does not help to reach the millions of women who are not in that headspace and have not yet considered running.**

So, how can you help be a part of the shift in motivating women to consider running for office?

1. Let's Talk Issues
Talk about the issues that matter to you with your circle, whether that be in a Group Chat, around the kitchen table, or in real life! Attend an upcoming event to dig in even further.

2. Support!
Encourage the women in your life that are passionate about issues to consider running.

3. Access Resources
Once you or someone you know has started to think about running, join the She Should Run Community to access free resources including programs to help women on their journey of considering elected office.

4. Get Active

Take existing action and amplify it by attending a town hall meeting in your community to weigh in on the issues that matter to you.

5. Run!

With a focus on issues, accessing strong personal support and resources, and engaging in the political process, you've taken key steps to support your path to elected office.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In order to reach women who aren't currently thinking of their role in elected leadership, organizations looking to grow women's representation in government need to meet them where they are. With most existing research focused on the barriers women face to elected office, She Should Run commissioned a market research study to uncover the motivators that can move a woman towards elected leadership, filling an essential gap in current field analysis.

The following findings are from a She Should Run quantitative survey of 419 women ages 18-75, across the US and political parties, conducted by Bixa in Spring 2022. This report also includes cross-referenced data from YWCA and UN Women to further investigate the issues of concern to women.

She Should Run is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit working to drastically increase the number of women from all walks of life considering elected office. As the only lead-finders for the field of women's representation, we have a bold goal to inspire 250,000 women to take their first steps toward public leadership and join our community by 2030. Our programs mobilize women from all walks of life to awaken to the power of their leadership potential. Learn more at sheshouldrun.org.