



TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: NEIL NEWHOUSE, PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES  
MARGIE OMER, PENN SCHOEN BERLAND

RE: WALMART MOM FOCUS GROUPS

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2016

---

*On behalf of Walmart, Public Opinion Strategies and Penn Schoen Berland conducted two focus groups of Walmart Moms. (Walmart Moms are defined as voters with children age 18 or younger at home and who shopped at Walmart at least once in the past month.)*

*Each group was comprised of likely 2016 voters who were not entirely settled on their Presidential ballot choice. These women were screened to include only those who either undecided, inclined to vote for a third party candidate, or were “soft” supporters of either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton and who said they could change their minds between now and Election Day.*

*The focus groups were conducted in Columbus, Ohio and Phoenix, Arizona on August 9, 2016. To view the focus groups in their entirety, please visit the Public Opinion Strategies website – [www.pos.org](http://www.pos.org).*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

**1. *The '16 Presidential Campaign is frustrating; makes Walmart Moms feel “nauseous.”***

As we've observed in previous groups, these Walmart Moms consider the current Presidential election to be as important or more important than previous elections, but they worry about the “circus-like” atmosphere, the “name-calling” and “disrespect” in this year's campaign. As one mom said about her feelings on the election and the implications it has going forward: “It makes me scared spit-less; scared for the future of my children and the country.”

There's a clear sense that the tone of this campaign is running far below what voters expect for the highest office in the land. A number of moms even said they feel like asking “Is this a joke?” when asked about the election. In fact, politics seems more troubling to these voters than either the economy or the direction of the country.

**2. *Walmart Moms don't like the choice they are being asked to make.***

These Moms are truly unhappy with the decision they feel forced to make. As one mom said: "The decision is like choosing which arm to cut off." Another mom in Phoenix said both candidates "make me sick with their integrity and moral values" to the point that it is "kind of gross." Overall, there is a sense of disappointment that it has come to this, and confusion about where to go from here. One undecided mom in Phoenix said, "I don't know which way to go, it's just a total mess." Another mom wished that "we could start all over."

**3. *Social Media helps inform and divide, and makes the election ever-present.***

Even though many of these Walmart Moms say they get their information regarding the campaign from Facebook, there is a clear sense that social media exacerbates their election tension. Moms are not reluctant to offer that they have unfriended others and become stressed out by messages posted by friends and relatives. Many offer that they simply don't feel comfortable talking about politics or the upcoming election for fear of getting into a disagreement.

While voters complain that they can't get away from the campaign, many feel that social media has made things worse and these moms feel like they cannot escape. "It's everywhere" said one mom, "I am getting tired of it." Another mom even said she "had to get off Facebook for a while," just to avoid the constant election buzz.

**4. *Hillary Clinton is saddled heavily with "trust" issues.***

Walmart Moms acknowledge that Hillary Clinton is confident, knowledgeable and experienced; but, that's only a fraction of how they describe her. She is viewed, even by some who support her, as "untrustworthy," "dishonest," "cold-hearted" and calculating. One woman commented that "she lies and is always getting caught." Another said that "She has swept so much under the rug that the rug doesn't lie flat anymore."

Hillary is seen as just another politician, someone who is not likely to change Washington all that much and who would be unlikely to get along with Congress. That said, the moms in both groups were unanimous in their expectation that she will win the election.

**5. *Voters understand the significance of electing a woman, but aren't convinced that Hillary's the right one.***

There are certainly a few women in these two groups who are excited to vote for the first female President, but for others, she's just a typical politician. In fact, these women admit they are not nearly as excited or enthusiastic about Hillary as they were voting for Barack Obama, the nation's first African-American President. Few of these women will give Hillary the benefit of the doubt on Election Day simply because of her gender.

**6. *Trump's image is clear, but flawed.***

At best, Trump brings business acumen to the office and he won't beat around the bush about where he stands on the issues. But at the same time, he's described by these women as a "buffoon," "dangerous," "a joke," "scary," or "racist."

Voters are clearly concerned about Donald Trump's lack of a political filter – that he says whatever comes to mind. They go on to say that he is petty and he gets riled up too quickly. One woman said that his main weakness is his mouth. "He seems oblivious to the impact of what he is saying." "He acts like a two-year old." "He has an ego the size of Disneyland." On the topic of the Trump's calling

2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment supporters the only ones who might be able to “do something” about Hillary placing liberal justices on the Supreme Court, these moms were mostly unsurprised and didn’t see it as a “call to arms,” though one mom did comment that it sounded like he was “basically saying, ‘Take her out.’”

Not a single Walmart Mom said Donald Trump has the right temperament to be President. However, he was the overwhelming favored cookout guest with most moms saying they would rather have Trump attend their barbeque because he “would be a hoot” and someone they “want to share a beer with.”

**7. *There is a real appetite for a third party choice, but few voters have any clue about Gary Johnson or Jill Stein.***

Even though a significant number of Walmart Moms in each group noted that they would vote for a third-party candidate, only a couple had any ideas as to who the third party candidates were. Others are simply hoping that another candidate might replace one of the two major party nominees. So, while there may be an appetite for another choice, it’s clear that these voters don’t know enough about the potential choices to embrace one.

There were also a few women who admitted they “probably won’t vote.” This is a response not typically seen in focus groups, even if it may be true.

**8. *Neither VP candidate had made much of an impression with Walmart Moms.***

When the Phoenix women were asked their impressions of the two men who received their party’s Vice-Presidential nominations, a collection of blank stares faced the moderator. Not a single voter believed that either of the two VP candidates would tip the scale to their respective running mate. One mom called Mike Pence, “Trump’s little side puppet,” and another claimed Clinton picked Kaine “because he is a follower.”

One mom recalled seeing Mike Pence’s Sixty Minutes interview and said it “scared the bejesus out of me” because she thought he had picked someone “with experience” who could act as “his conscience.” Instead, she said he came across as “not knowing anything.”

**9. *The conventions had little impact on these voters.***

While most of these Walmart Moms had seen parts of both conventions, there seemed to be little that stuck with them from either convention, with no one offering that they learned something new about either candidate. A couple of voters came away impressed with Donald Trump’s kids and the way they handled themselves, but few other speakers even merited a mention. Even the Khan story had mostly passed from these moms’ minds, coming up briefly but more as an aside in the discussion.

**10. *A few voters believe the system is rigged, but not the election.***

Voters seem to reject the notion that the election is rigged, but some do buy into the sense that the media and the establishment put their thumb on the scale as much as possible to favor Hillary. As one Republican leaning mom said: “the system is corrupt, not rigged and it’s more corrupt on the liberal side.” In fact, there was a consensus that the media was biased and report the news in a way that reflects their views.