



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

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

RE: WALMART MOM FOCUS GROUPS

DATE: OCTOBER 25, 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.)

The first 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 are 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 second group was comprised of couples voting for different presidential candidates.

The focus groups were conducted in Las Vegas, Nevada and Charlotte, North Carolina on October 25, 2016. To view the focus groups in their entirety, please visit the Public Opinion Strategies website – www.pos.org.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The '16 Presidential Campaign is a “miserable” affair; makes these Walmart Moms feel “frustrated” and “anxious.”

Much like we saw in the August groups, these Walmart Moms express frustration at the state of the Presidential campaign. The negative atmosphere has allowed “petty name calling” and “school yard taunting” to take prevalence over the issues. One Walmart Mom even describes herself as “ballistic” because “no one is sticking to policies.” Overall, there is a sense this personality driven campaign is “making a mockery of it all.” The Moms share a sentiment that both sides “aren’t taking the office seriously” and say it seems like “anyone can run for President.”

Additionally, these Moms don’t like what their children are seeing in this campaign. They say their children, some “as young as nine,” are noticing what is going on and asking their parents about the candidates. Meanwhile their older children often watched the debates with them, and one Mom

notes she “did not want her kids seeing the name calling,” as she doesn’t want them to be impacted by the candidates’ behavior.

2. *This election continues to be a point of contention in personal relationships.*

Both groups highlight the tension and strain this election is putting on their personal relationships. In Las Vegas the Moms talk about “unfriending people on Facebook” because of their campaign rhetoric, and one pro-Clinton Mom uses words like “selfish” and “indecent” to describe people supporting Donald Trump.

The tension is even more palpable in Charlotte. While some of the couples have “agreed to disagree” and are finding ways to cope, like “wearing headphones to watch the news” or “watching the debate in separate rooms,” it is clear other couples are struggling. One couple even notes, “this is the worst our marriage has ever been.”

3. *At the Senior Prom, Hillary would be “hanging out with the faculty” while Donald “spikes the punch.”*

Imagining Hillary Clinton in high school, these Walmart Moms picture an active “student council member” who might hang out with “the debate team,” “the faculty,” or “the nerds” at her prom. Multiple Moms even agree the prom would be “out of her league,” and say she likely “wouldn’t show up” or “wouldn’t have a date” if she did.

Alternatively, Donald Trump is described as “the good time Charlie” who would “spike the punch” and “burn one” while hanging out with “the football players and cheerleaders.” In Charlotte, seven of the ten participants agree they would rather hang out with high school Trump because he “would be a good time” in contrast to the “boring” Hillary.

4. *Hillary Clinton’s message is lacking crispness. Trump’s message, for better or for worse, has that crispness.*

Few of these Moms can pin down Hillary’s message or identify the key moments in her campaign. A few Moms speak vaguely about messages of “experience,” “education,” “equality,” or “unity,” and even fewer can identify a key moment that has stuck with them throughout the campaign.

On the other hand, these Walmart Moms have no problem identifying Trump’s message. They mostly agree Trump’s platform is about “trying to protect the country” and “making a point” that you “don’t need to be a politician to run for President.” Similarly, these Moms point out there has been no shortage of memorable moments from the Trump campaign, though most of them are bad ones. From his “attacking Mexicans and Hispanics” to “making fun of the [disabled] reporter” and “the locker room talk tape,” these Moms agree Trump “can’t control himself.”

5. *Most of these Walmart Moms are voting to “keep the other candidate out of office,” and a few may not vote on the top-of-the-ticket at all.*

More than half of the Moms in both groups, as well as their significant others in Charlotte, say they are “anti-Trump” or “anti-Hillary” voters. Some are voting for Hillary to “keep Donald Trump out of office,” and others are for Trump because they are “just against Hillary.” As one Hillary voting Mom says, “I feel dirty about being not with him more than with her.”

A number of Moms, particularly in Las Vegas, also hint they may not vote for President because they would be “ashamed to vote for either one.” These women say “both candidates are so terrible that they could only win against each other” and argue that “neither candidate has earned their vote.”

One Mom says that when it comes to choosing “between a psychopath and an idiot,” not voting seems like a good alternative.

6. *Clinton will win, but Trump could have won if he “didn’t open his mouth.”*

There is almost unanimous agreement across the two groups that Hillary Clinton will win the election, but there is similar agreement that Trump had a legitimate chance to be President. While some Moms say Trump’s chances have been hurt because he has been “attacked by the media more than Hillary,” most say Trump should have “acted more professionally” or “taken it seriously.” These Moms think Trump has “made an ass of himself” with his “cocky attitude” and “shot his integrity” with “the way he makes fun of people.”

7. *Vegas Moms are worried about a rigged election. Charlotte Moms, not so much.*

Six of the ten Walmart Moms in Las Vegas believe there will be cheating in this election. As one Mom voting for Trump says, “She will win, but I am not sure she can do it without cheating.” These Moms highlight both media bias and voter fraud as rigging issues, and say they “100% believe” that there could be enough voter fraud to sway the national election.

In Charlotte, on the other hand, no one really believes the national election could be rigged. The couples note voter fraud has occurred and may happen in this election, but see Trump’s claims as “more of a cop out” and “an excuse for losing.” As one participant says, “He is trying to put the blame somewhere.”

8. *Walmart Moms are far more engaged with this Presidential Election than with past campaigns.*

Though these Moms are turned off by the election, they remain engaged and highly informed. One Mom explains the phenomenon by likening the election to “a train wreck—it’s gruesome but you have to watch.” For example, though the topic of Clinton’s emails had to be broached by the moderator in both groups, Moms in both groups discussed nuanced points about “the merits of a private server” and whether or not any information was “considered classified at the time.”

9. *At the same time, though, the engagement doesn’t extend beyond the Presidential race.*

Though these Walmart Moms are more engaged with the Presidential race than usual, almost all of them are uninformed when it comes to other races. Only six of the ten in Charlotte can name both vice presidential candidates, and most in both groups “know very little” about the down-ballot races. Even though both Nevada and North Carolina are battle ground states, these Moms say they are “staying away until later” and “will decide at the last minute;” a tendency that is in line with what we saw in 2014.

10. *Some Walmart Moms are willing to split their ticket.*

At least three Moms in both groups say they are planning on voting a split ticket. In Nevada it is the two Johnson voters and the Mom who refused to pick a Presidential candidate who split for the Republican Senate candidate, and in Charlotte, there are three Trump-Ross tickets.

In Charlotte, the main driver for Moms and their spouses splitting their ticket is HB2. These couples aren’t separating HB2 from the Senate race, and say the fact HB2 is “hurting them as a state” by “forcing out businesses” is influencing their opinion of Burr. In fact, these Moms seem to tie Burr more closely to HB2 than to Donald Trump.