

GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

February 13, 2006

Women on Their Own in Unmarried America

www.greenbergresearch.com

Washington, DC
10 G Street, NE
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20002

Phone: +1 202 478 8300
Fax: +1 202 478 8301

California
50 California Street
Suite 1500
San Francisco, CA 94111

Phone: +1 415 277 5403
Fax: +1 415 439 5299

February 13, 2006

Women on Their Own in Unmarried America

In 2004, Women's Voices, Women Vote embarked on a large scale project to engage unmarried women, or women on their own, in the democratic process. Through registration and get-out-the-vote efforts, WVWV was able to contribute to the increased engagement of women on their own, over and beyond the elevated turnout among all voters.

Despite the success of WVWV, there still remains a chasm in registration and turnout between married and unmarried women. In 2004, during a high turnout election, unmarried women continued to vote at a lower rate than their married sisters (59 percent versus 71 percent of married women). In total, 20 million unmarried women are unregistered or did not vote.

As America's demographic profile continues to change – we expect that a majority of the nation's families will be headed by someone unmarried by 2008 – unmarried women, with their unique set of interests and concerns, have the potential to change America. WVWV seeks to continue its ongoing contact with unmarried women in the 16 states in which they operated in 2004, to ensure these women remain invested and involved in the democratic process. Moving forward, WVWV will build upon their registration and turnout efforts to further narrow the turnout gap between married and unmarried women. This year, however, we put the situation of unmarried women in the context of unmarried America writ large. This survey, commissioned by WVWV, explores the gender, racial and ethnic diversity of unmarried America in order to understand why unmarried women's status is so unique. Moreover, it helps WVWV further refine its targeting to include some of the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged groups of unmarried women in America.

By speaking to women on their own about their sense of responsibility for becoming informed, participating in the political process as citizens, and calling on them to have their say on the issues that matter to them most, women on their own can become a force that changes American's civil society.¹

¹ This memo is based on a random-digit-dial telephone survey of 1,509 unmarried Americans. Research was conducted January 4-19, 2006 and carries a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points.

■ **Table 1:** Unmarried Americans – Voting Behavior

The Future: Unmarried Americans

	Voted	Registered, didn't vote	Not registered
Total	64	8	28
Total Unmarried	55	10	35
Total Married	71	7	22
Unmarried Women	59	10	31
Married Women	71	7	22
Unmarried Men	50	10	39
Married Men	70	7	23

2004 Current Population Survey, November Supplement

Key Findings

- Unmarried women face substantial economic challenges; half have household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year.
- One third of unmarried women will move in any two-year period, which means in every election year, many are new residents in their community, and thus will not have the roots and community ties that often encourage other Americans to vote.
- Women on their own do not participate in the democratic process largely because they lack information. Many women on their own find elections complicated, and they feel that they do not have information from sources they trust about the process and the candidates.
- Unmarried women have a policy agenda that largely reflects their economic circumstances. They want the government to pay attention to the needy and the middle class, to make health care more affordable and accessible, and to ensure Americans have access to quality, affordable education.
- Unmarried women show a willingness to vote, but they will not do so unless they feel informed on the issues or know that they are voting for the right kind of candidate. In other words, they hunger for information, but they also want candidates they like and can believe in.
- Unmarried women say that they would be motivated to vote if they had more information from sources they trust.
- Women on their own respond to messaging that evokes their sense of civic responsibility as Americans and reminds them they can bring change to the issues that matter most to them: education, healthcare and a Congress that is committed to helping middle class Americans.
- Among unmarried women, certain groups present special opportunities for increased registration and turnout efforts: unmarried women drop-off voters (i.e. unmarried women who voted in 2004 but not 2002) and Hispanic unmarried women.

- Unmarried women drop-off voters are roughly a quarter of all unmarried women. Most report they would be more likely to vote if they had information about candidates and elections from sources they trust.
- Unmarried women are open to messaging and are hungry for direct contact. Messaging on reasons to go out and vote produces substantial shifts in reported likeliness to vote: a net +17 point shift among unmarried women, a net +26 point shift among drop-off women, and a net +17 point shift among Hispanic women.

Who Are Unmarried Women? (aka Women On Their Own)

The rise of unmarried Americans stems from many social and economic changes in the country over the past 40 years. In the 1950s, 80 percent of all households were a residence with a married head of household. Today, only 50 percent of residences have a married head of household. Moreover, Americans are now married for a smaller proportion of their lives. Many young people opt to delay marriage until their late 20s or 30s and because we now have longer life expectancies, many women will live years after the death of their spouse.

Demographically, unmarried Americans are very different from married Americans. In particular, they live under a very different set of economic and social circumstances that are related to their lower levels of participation in our civic life. Specifically, their lack of economic resources and their lack of deep community roots deprives them of crucial resources that undergird civic participation.

Focusing on unmarried women:

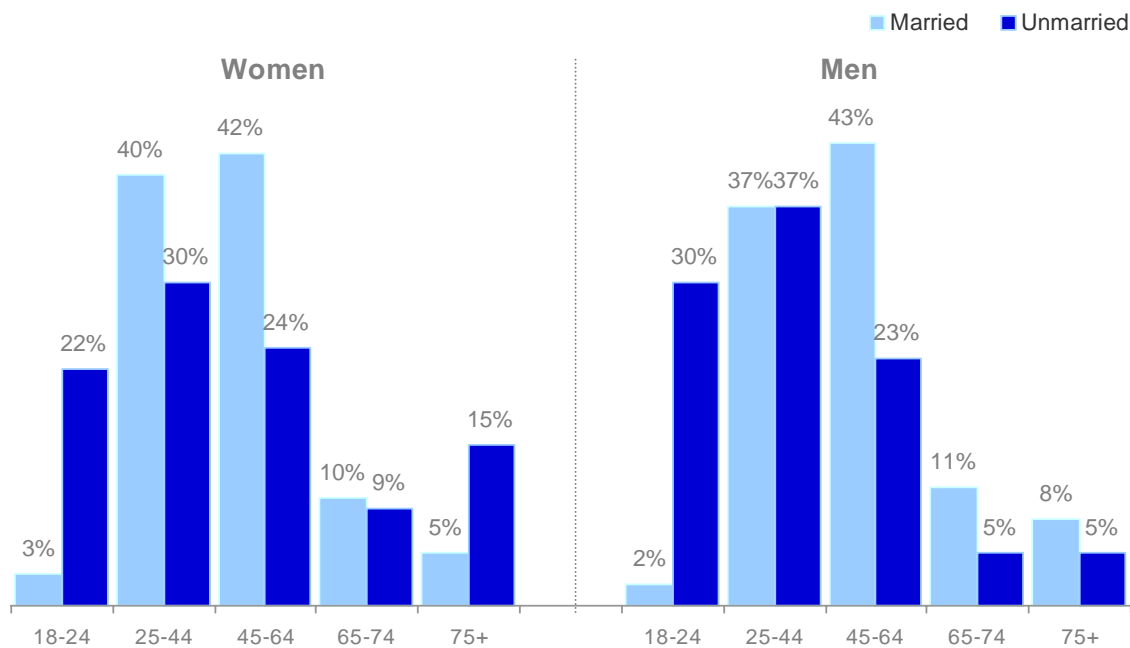
- Unmarried women achieve lower levels of educational attainment than married women. Nearly half (48 percent) of unmarried women have a high school education or less (compared to just 42 percent among married women).²
- There are also substantial age differences between married and unmarried women. Unmarried women are both younger and older than their married counterparts. Half (52 percent) of unmarried women are under age 45 versus 43 percent of married women. At the same time, 24 percent of unmarried women are over age 65, versus 15 percent of married women.³

² Current Population Survey, 2004, November supplement.

³ Current Population Survey, 2004, November supplement.

■ **Figure 1:** Unmarried Americans – Age

Age of Unmarried Men and Women



Current Population Survey, 2004 November Supplement

- Their lower level of education and their age differences mean that unmarried Americans earn significantly less money than their married counterparts; this disparity is most pronounced among unmarried women. Half of all unmarried women have a household income of less than \$30,000 a year versus 19 percent of married women.⁴
- It is possible, of course, that as unmarried Americans approach middle age they will improve their economic standing. But it is clear that unmarried women face some structural challenges to improving their lot in life – they are more likely than unmarried men to be single parents (19 percent among unmarried women versus 5 percent among unmarried men).⁵ Unmarried women are also particularly likely to be concentrated in low status jobs in the service sector. Finally, women live longer than men, and elderly women on their own face very serious challenges to maintaining their economic security.
- Unmarried women are more racially diverse, as only 68 percent of unmarried women are white compared to 80 percent of married women.⁶ While there are few differences among African American and white unmarried women when it comes to civic participation, Hispanic unmarried women are among the most disadvantaged in the country when it comes to the electoral process.

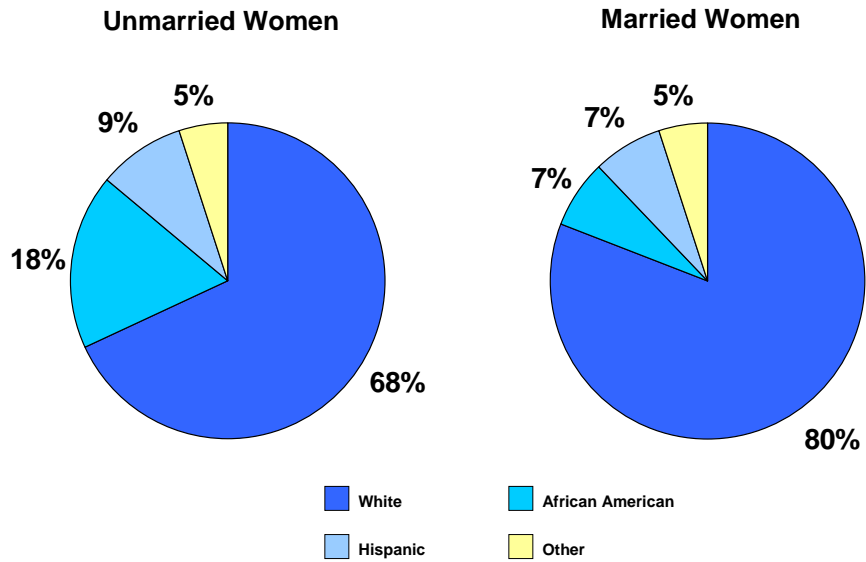
⁴ Current Population Survey, November 2004 Supplement.

⁵ Current Population Survey, November 2004 Supplement.

⁶ Current Population Survey, November 2004 Supplement.

■ **Figure 2:** Unmarried Women – Race

Race by Marital Status: 2004



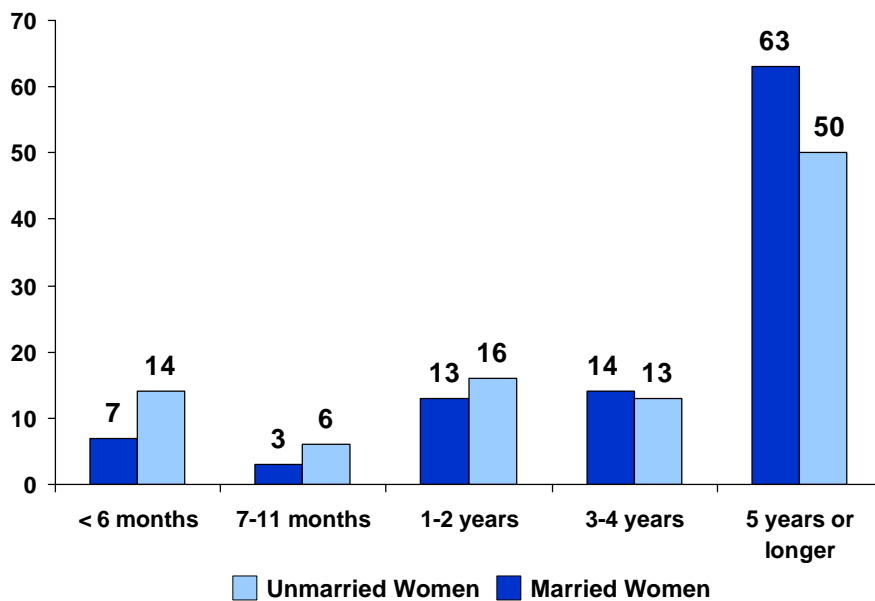
Current Population Survey, 2004 November Supplement

- Unmarried Americans are less engaged in the social networks that promote community and civic involvement. Their lack of community ties relates to their economic situation – they are less likely than married Americans to own their own home or own a car. They are also more mobile; half of unmarried women have lived at their current address less than 5 years compared to a third (37 percent) of married women. In a two-year election cycle, over a third of unmarried women will move, versus a quarter of married women.⁷

⁷ Current Population Survey, November 2004 Supplement.

■ **Figure 3:** Unmarried Women – Mobility

Mobility Among Women by Marital Status: 2004



Current Population Survey, November 2004 Supplement

- Unmarried men also have substantial economic challenges in their lives, but these challenges may stem from age as much as their position in society. Two-thirds of unmarried men are under 45 compared to 39 percent of married men and 52 percent of unmarried women. Unmarried men are quite rootless. Over a third (39 percent) will move within 2 years, versus less than a quarter (22 percent) of married men. Furthermore, over half never attend church⁸, a critical institution that fosters civic participation.

⁸ National Election Study, 2004.

■ **Table 2:** Unmarried America – Fast Facts

	Married Women	Unmarried Women	Married Men	Unmarried Men
INCOME*				
Less than \$30K	19	50	19	38
\$30K to under \$50K	21	21	21	24
\$50K to under \$75K	24	15	24	18
\$75K or more	36	14	36	20
MOBILITY*				
Less than 6 months	7	14	7	16
7-11 months	3	6	3	6
1-2 years	13	16	12	17
3-4 years	14	13	14	13
5 years or longer	63	50	63	47
HOME OWNERSHIP**				
Own	84	54	82	51
Do not own	16	46	18	49
EDUCATION*				
Less than H.S.	8	15	10	14
H.S. Graduate	34	33	32	36
Some College / Tech	29	32	25	30
College Graduate	20	14	20	14
Post Graduate	9	6	13	5
CHURCH ATTENDANCE**				
Every week/Almost every week	42	38	36	20
Once or twice a month	15	14	16	15
A few times a year	14	14	17	14
Never	29	34	31	51

* Current Population Survey, 2004 November Supplement
 ** National Election Study, 2004

Barriers to Civic Participation Among Women On Their Own

A lack of economic resources and community roots can create serious barriers to participation in civic life. Some of these barriers are also attitudinal – women on their own (like many Americans) are cynical about politics and politicians and they are uncertain about their own power. They do not feel confident about their knowledge of politics, parties and candidates and pull back because they do not feel like “qualified” participants in the process.

Many women on their own simply dislike politicians. They believe politicians do not understand their lives, take no interest in their struggles, and prioritize the agendas of people with more influence over theirs. Fundamentally, women on their own believe that politicians are out of step with regular Americans. Nearly three out of four unmarried women (71 percent) feel that “elected officials in Washington lose touch with the people pretty quickly.” But more specifically to their personal experiences, women on their own believe their influence is neither wanted nor needed by politicians. They feel as though their voice is unimportant to politicians. A majority (61 percent) believe that, “most elected officials don’t care what people like me think.” Instead, they think that politicians are beholden to those with power and influence – women are particularly cynical about the influence of

corporations. A majority (56 percent) of unmarried women who did not vote in 2004 believe it does not matter if they vote because elections are controlled by big corporations.

Yet unmarried women greatly desire a candidate in whom they can believe. Nearly a third (29 percent) of unmarried women say they would be more likely to vote if they thought the candidate was actually going to get something done, follow through with their promises (29 percent) or fight for the issues they believe in (29 percent).

Table 3: Unmarried America – Reasons to Vote (Percent Responding)

Reasons Why Unmarrieds Would Vote

	Total	Unmarried Women	Unmarried Men
If I thought the candidate was actually going to get something done	31	29	32
If I thought the candidate would follow through on his or her promises	29	29	30
If I thought the candidate was going to fight for the issues I believe in	29	29	29
If I thought it would create real change in this country	24	25	22
If I thought the candidate understood some of the challenges I face in daily life	15	15	15
If I thought there was a real difference between the candidates	8	7	10

“Now I am going to read to you a set of things that some people say would help get them to vote. Please tell me which of these would be most likely to get you to vote in November.”

This cynicism is bolstered by unmarried women’s doubts about their own efficacy. While they acknowledge that voting is often the only way that people like them can have a say in how government runs things (70 percent agree), most unmarried women who did not vote in 2004 feel that their voice counts for very little. A majority (52 percent) of unmarried women who did not vote feel that “politicians don’t do anything to solve my problems whether I vote or not.”

Moreover, there is a great deal of confusion about the political process. A majority of unmarried women feel alienated from politics because they lack information and a clear understanding of the political process. Over two thirds of unmarried women non-voters feel that politics and elections can be so complicated they do not understand what is going on (70 percent).

■ **Table 4:** Unmarried America – Reasons Not to Vote (Percent Responding “Agree”)

Why Unmarrieds Don't Vote

	Total Unmarried	Unmarried Women	Unmarried Men
Sometimes politics and elections seem so complicated that I cannot really understand what's going on	64	70	59
Politics and elections are controlled by people with money and by big corporations so it doesn't matter if I vote	59	56	61
Politicians don't do anything to solve my problems whether I vote or not	51	52	51
My vote doesn't really count because the elections are rigged	36	38	35

“Here are some reasons people give for why they do or do not decide to vote. For each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.”

In fact, women on their own cite a lack of information as one of the key reasons why they do not vote. These Americans want to make an informed decision when voting, and unmarried women cite “more information from sources I trust” as the most effective way to get them to vote in November. Information is even more important to unmarried women who do not always vote in off-year elections (71 percent among drop-off unmarried women). This information is crucial to unmarried Americans’ civic participation, as half (51 percent) believe that “If I don't know anything about the candidates, I shouldn't vote.”

■ **Table 5:** Unmarried America – GOTV

Most Effective Ways of Getting Out the Vote

	Total Unmarried	Unmarried Women	Unmarried Men
If I had more information about the candidates from sources I trust	57	59	55
If someone would remind me when it is Election day	12	11	13
If someone would tell me how to get an absentee ballot or how to vote by mail	10	8	11
If someone would send me a voter registration form	9	9	9
If someone would give me information about where my polling place is	8	8	7
If someone would bring me to the polls on Election Day	6	6	6
If someone would tell me how to vote early	6	6	6

“Now I am going to read to you a set of things that some people say would help get them to vote. Please tell me which of these would be most effective in getting you to vote in November?”

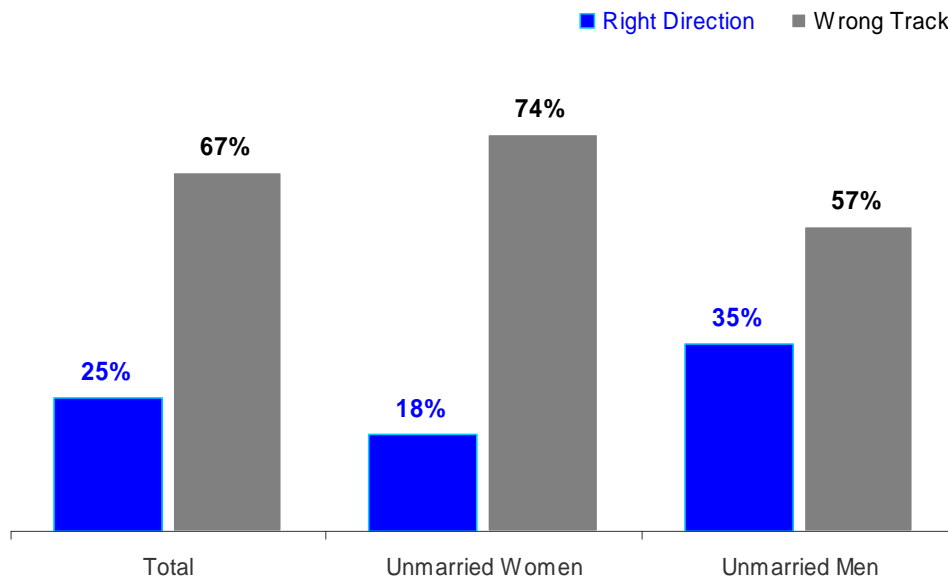
Unmarried men generally share in a cynical view of public officials, but they have more confidence in their political efficacy and do not express the same levels of confusion with the political process as unmarried women. While unmarried men are somewhat less likely to vote than unmarried women (50 percent unregistered or didn't vote in 2004, versus 41 percent of unmarried women), their disengagement is as much a consequence of their contempt for politics and their age as it is about feeling alienated from politicians.⁹ Like their female counterparts, a majority of men non-voters (51 percent) agree that politicians do nothing to solve their problems, regardless of whether they vote or not. Yet among non-voters, unmarried men are more likely than women to disagree that voting is the only way that they have a say in government (36 percent of men versus 30 percent of women), which suggests that some men feel there are other ways in which they can make their voices heard. And while a majority of men non-voters admit politics can be so complicated they do not understand it (59 percent), they are less likely than unmarried women to admit to this level of confusion (70 percent).

What Women On Their Own Want: Economic Help and a Focus on Home

Women on their own are unhappy with the direction of the country and are looking for change. Three-quarters (74 percent) of unmarried women think the country is on the wrong track, compared to 58 percent among married women.¹⁰ George Bush garners incredibly low approval ratings among women on their own, as 65 percent disapprove of the way he "is handling his job as president."

■ **Figure 4:** Unmarried Americans – Country Direction (Percent Responding)

Unmarrieds Believe Country is On Wrong Track



"Generally speaking, do you think that things in this country are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?"

⁹ As previously noted, two-thirds (67 percent) of unmarried men are under 45 years old. Younger people are significantly less likely to vote than older people.

¹⁰ Democracy Corps, January 31-February 2, 2006.

Unmarried women are preoccupied with worries about economic issues, particularly jobs, healthcare and education. There is a deep concern about long-term security for themselves and their children. They worry about the cost of healthcare, and in many cases getting coverage; they worry about retirement and how they will take care of themselves when they age and become infirm. They also worry about the educational opportunities for themselves, so they can get a better paying job, and for their children, to make sure they have a better chance in life.

■ **Table 6:** Unmarried Americans – Concerns (Percent Responding)

Iraq, Economy, and Healthcare Top of Mind for Americans on Their Own

	Total	Unmarried Women	Unmarried Men
The War in Iraq	31	34	27
The Economy and Jobs	29	26	33
Healthcare	29	32	24
Education	25	26	24
Retirement and Social Security	23	24	22
Terrorism and Homeland Security	18	18	18
Gas Prices	15	15	15
Taxes	9	7	12
The Federal Debt	9	7	11
Transportation and Roads	2	2	3

“Now I am going to read to you a list of concerns that people have. Please tell me which TWO of these you think your member of Congress should be paying the most attention to.”

Despite their cynicism about politicians and politics, unmarried women favor an expansive role of government — as a source for helping those in need and as a watchdog over powerful interests. Women on their own extend this support of a more expansive role of government to their own lives. These women, many of whom are living paycheck to paycheck on the margins of a consumer driven society, believe the government should support those in need, even if it means going into debt (62 percent).

Women on their own, moreover, support a strong government role in protecting people against powerful interests. They support government regulation of business as “necessary to protect the public interest” (50 percent agree), rather than viewing such regulation as a practice which “usually does more harm than good (40 percent agree).

Unmarried men also want to see the country move in a different direction (57 percent) and are unhappy with President Bush’s job performance (58 percent). These attitudes are very different from married men, who tend to approve of Bush’s job in office (56 percent) and are less disapproving about the direction of the country (50 percent wrong track).¹¹ Like unmarried women, unmarried men are driven by economic concerns, but their economic concerns are different from those of unmarried women. Unmarried men tend to worry more about wages and opportunities to advance in their

¹¹Democracy Corps, January 31-February 2, 2006.

careers. They find themselves stuck in low paying jobs with stagnant wages and cannot figure out how they are going to get on a solid career path so they can get the things they want in life. Because they do not have the same set of economic worries and because they tend to be more conservative than women, they are more reluctant to have government in their lives. While a plurality of men see the merits of government regulation, they are slightly more suspicious about it than women. They are split on the merits of government regulation of business; some feel it is “necessary to protect the public interest” (48 percent agree) while others view such regulation as a practice which “usually does more harm than good” (46 percent agree).

Unmarried women are deeply hostile to the war in Iraq for a variety of reasons. The war in Iraq is the number one issue they believe their member of Congress should be paying attention to (34 percent) and 71 percent strongly believe the war in Iraq is “not worth the cost in U.S. lives and dollars.” While the loss of life shocks these women, they also strongly desire that our government focuses on their problems at home. A majority of women (58 percent) believe domestic concerns should take precedence over foreign affairs.

In general, unmarried men tend to share in these views, but there is less hostility among them – they simply feel there are more important problems at home. They feel that the war in Iraq is not worth the costs (68 percent), and while they believe Iraq is an important issue for Congress to address (27 percent believe it is the most important problem), unmarried men rank the economy as more important (33 percent). While some are sympathetic to the need to be active in world affairs (40 percent), most feel that the government should concentrate on the problems at home (54 percent).

■ **Table 7:** Unmarried Americans – Argument Testing (Percent Responding)

Unmarried Americans Favor Expansive and Domestically Focused Government

	Total	Unmarried Women	Unmarried Men
The war in Iraq was worth the cost in US lives and dollars OR	25	23	28
The war in Iraq was NOT worth the cost in US lives and dollars	70	71	68
The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt OR	61	62	59
The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy	32	29	36
It's best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs OR	37	34	40
We should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home	57	58	54
Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest OR	49	50	48
Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good	42	40	46

“Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.”

The Road Ahead: How To Increase Turnout among Unmarried Women

Unmarried women, even those who do not vote, are civic-minded in their approach to voting. They feel a sense of guilt about the fact that they do not vote and argue that their inability to make an informed vote means that NOT participating is the responsible decision. In other words, they believe voters should be informed and cast their vote in a responsible manner. As we discuss, these women place a premium on education. Just as many want to further their education so they can get better jobs, they also want to deepen their civic education so they can be better citizens. WVWV can play an incredibly important role, both tapping into their sense of civic responsibility and patriotism, while also providing the information they believe is necessary to vote in an informed way.

In particular, drop-off voters reactions to the messaging merit special attention. These are women who voted in 2004 but not 2002. They comprise about 25 percent of unmarried women, roughly 7 million voters. These women are particularly receptive to messaging, and the opportunity for motivation is high, since they have already demonstrated a willingness to vote.

Table 8: Unmarried Women – Civic Duty Message Testing (Percent Responding “Very Convincing”)

Message Frameworks: Civic Duty

	Total Women	Not Registered Women	Drop-off Women	Likely Women Voters
[WOMEN ONLY] Unmarried women are doing it on their own. We are paying our bills, we are raising our children, we are making a contribution to society by working and being a part of the community. It is time politicians recognized that and worked to establish equal pay for equal work, affordable healthcare, and better public education.	74	70	74	76
It is the responsibility of every American citizen to participate in our democracy by voting. We can't just look to others to do our job for us and then expect it to get done right. If we don't like the direction the country is going, we need to speak up and say something ourselves.	74	60	65	83
Voting is one of our most basic rights and every American citizen has a responsibility to exercise that right and participate in our democracy.	68	47	65	80
We can no longer depend on government to stand up for the hard-working people of this country over the corporate interests. We need to get out and vote so we can send a message to Washington that they need to stop working for the big corporations and start investing in people.	63	46	55	70
Our country is headed in the wrong direction and we need to vote so we can bring needed change in Washington.	54	47	43	58
In the last presidential election, 20 million unmarried women didn't vote and 19 million unmarried men stayed at home too. Almost half of the households in this country are being headed by unmarried Americans. If all unmarried Americans voted, they would have the power to bring about change on the issues that matter to them most.	51	43	52	57
<i>"Now I am going to read you a series of statements that might motivate unmarried Americans to vote this year. As I read each statement, please tell me whether you find that statement very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing."</i>				

Messaging is twofold. First, it should invoke responsibility as an American and a sense of civic duty. Three-quarters (74 percent) of unmarried women in general, 65 percent of drop-off women voters and 60 percent of unregistered women, find the message on personal responsibility and using their own

voice to speak out against the direction of the country a “very convincing” reason to vote. For voters and non-voters alike, we find that these arguments resonate throughout all of our research and we believe unmarried women take it seriously.

Table 9: Unmarried Women – Issue Message Testing (Percent Responding “Very Motivating”)

Successful Message Frameworks: Focus on the Issues

	Total Women	Not Registered Women	Drop-off Women	Likely Women Voters
Getting a good education is key to succeeding in life, but Congress is cutting funds for local schools and slashing student loan programs. It is important to vote so we can elect leaders who are committed to making college affordable for every American and improving public education for our children.	76	74	77	78
Our healthcare system is in shambles. Health insurance premiums keep going up, and prescription drugs cost seniors too much because Congress accepted millions of dollars in campaign contributions from big drug companies and then made it illegal for Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices. We need to vote so we can bring in elected officials who will work to find solutions for healthcare.	71	69	74	73
This Congress does not stand up for the middle class. While middle class families struggle, Congress approved a budget that gives tax breaks to the most wealthy and corporations, cutting resources for education, programs for low income senior citizens such as help with home heating oil, and health care for children. We need to vote in order to change Congress so it helps ordinary Americans.	70	75	66	72
<i>“Now I am going to read you a series of statements that might motivate unmarried Americans to vote this year. As I read each statement, please tell me whether you find that statement very motivating, somewhat motivating, a little motivating, or not at all motivating.”</i>				

Second, the messaging needs to connect notions of civic responsibility to the issues women on their own care most about and would help them improve their lives. These women respond to messages that speak specifically to the issues that directly affect them in their lives -- namely education (76 percent very convincing), health care (71 percent very convincing) and the middle class squeeze (70 percent very convincing). These messages are very strong among voters and non-voters alike.

Unmarried women respond to a message that:

- 1) evokes their sense of civic responsibility as Americans; and
- 2) reminds them they can bring change to the issues that matter most to them: education, healthcare and a Congress that is committed to helping middle class Americans.

Message Effectiveness

As we saw in the 2004 election, women on their own are hungry for information and highly responsive to direct contact. However, in an off-year election cycle, where stories of the election do not command center stage in the news or at the water cooler, the need for a trusted information source is all the greater. These women do not have access to a great deal of information that they trust. They respond to non-partisan efforts that invoke feelings of civic responsibility and tie it to the issues about which they care most.

At the beginning of the survey, we asked respondents how likely they were to vote, on a 10-point scale. After hearing the messaging, we re-asked respondents how likely it was that they would turn out to vote in November, using the same 10-point scale. Among unmarried women, these messages produced a net +17 point shift towards being more likely to vote.

■ **Table 10:** Shift Summary – Unmarried Women

Shift Summary Table:

Unmarried Women	
Toward Likely to Vote	23
Toward Unlikely to Vote	6
<i>Net (Likely-Unlikely to Vote)</i>	<i>+17</i>

"I know it's a long way off, but what are the chances of your voting in the election for Congress and other state and local offices this year? How likely are you to vote in the election for Congress and other state and local offices this year, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means you are absolutely certain to vote and 1 means you are certain to not vote?"

Clearly this movement comes from simply talking about the electoral process and issues that these Americans most care about. It was made very clear in focus groups conducted in the lead up to this

survey that unmarried women simply have fewer people in their lives who engage them in discussion or provide them with information about voting.¹² But it also comes from calling on them to perform their civic duty with an eye to making change on the issues they care about most.

WVWV is perfectly positioned to provide this basic service to unmarried women. Above all, unmarried women seek direct, unbiased information that educates them about the issues at stake for them.

Opportunities Among Unmarried women

While in 2004 WVWV focused its efforts on all unmarried women, this year it also singles out groups within unmarried America that merit special attention. These groups are particularly unlikely to be part of our civic life. They are the least likely to register and/or vote, and they are among the most economically marginal and least connected to their communities:

¹² Less than half of unmarried women (43 percent) said that they often discussed politics and political affairs with their family and friends.

■ **Table 11:** Best Testing Message Frameworks – Targets (Percent Responding “Very Motivating”)

Best Testing Message Frameworks: Focus on the Issues

	Total Women	Drop-off Women	Hispanic Women
Getting a good education is key to succeeding in life, but Congress is cutting funds for local schools and slashing student loan programs. It is important to vote so we can elect leaders who are committed to making college affordable for every American and improving public education for our children.	76	77	79
Our healthcare system is in shambles. Health insurance premiums keep going up, and prescription drugs cost seniors too much because Congress accepted millions of dollars in campaign contributions from big drug companies and then made it illegal for Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices. We need to vote so we can bring in elected officials who will work to find solutions for healthcare.	71	74	85
This Congress does not stand up for the middle class. While middle class families struggle, Congress approved a budget that gives tax breaks to the most wealthy and corporations, cutting resources for education, programs for low income senior citizens such as help with home heating oil, and health care for children. We need to vote in order to change Congress so it helps ordinary Americans.	70	66	80
<i>“Now I am going to read you a series of statements that might motivate unmarried Americans to vote this year. As I read each statement, please tell me whether you find that statement very motivating, somewhat motivating, a little motivating, or not at all motivating.”</i>			

Unmarried Women Drop-Off Voters

- One-quarter of unmarried women are drop-off voters, that is, they voted in 2004 but not 2002.¹³ This translates to roughly 7 million voters in the country.
- One half (48 percent) of unmarried women drop-off voters have household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year.
- Seventy eight percent of unmarried women drop-off voters believe the country is on the wrong track.
- Feelings of civic duty are amplified among these women. A full 100 percent agree “voting is a responsibility of being a citizen.”

¹³ Democracy Corps/CAF Post-election Survey, November 2004

- Drop-off women take information about the candidates very seriously. Fifty six percent identify with the description that “If I don’t know anything about the candidates, I shouldn’t vote.” Seventy one percent cite more information as the most effective way to get them to vote in November.
- Unmarried women drop-off voters respond strongly to messaging that evokes the difficulties of the middle class squeeze. Two-thirds of these women found this message very motivating (90 percent total motivating, versus 84 percent among all unmarried Americans). In general, all issue-based messaging performs well among this group.
- After hearing the messaging, drop-off women reported a net +26 point shift toward being more likely to vote in November.

Unmarried Hispanic Women

- Nearly one out of every ten unmarried women (9 percent) is Hispanic.¹⁴
- Over half (59 percent) of Hispanic women on their own have household incomes that are less than \$30,000 per year.
- Unmarried Hispanic women are severely underrepresented in the electorate. In 2004, over half (55 percent) of Hispanic women were either unregistered or did not vote.¹⁵
- Unmarried Hispanic women are convinced the country is on the wrong track (89 percent).
- Hispanic women also take information about the candidates very seriously. Fifty nine percent identify with the description that “If I don’t know anything about the candidates, I shouldn’t vote.” Sixty one percent cite more information as the most effective way to get them to vote in November.
- Healthcare messaging spoke most strongly to these women as 85 percent of Hispanic unmarried women find it very motivating (94 percent very/somewhat motivating) and the middle class message held up for Hispanic women as well with 80 percent finding it very motivating (88 percent very/somewhat motivating). A full 100 percent of Hispanic women found the education message motivating (79 percent very motivating).
- Eighty five percent of Hispanic women strongly believe important issues to be a key reason to vote.
- After hearing the messaging, Hispanic women reported a net +17 point shift toward being more likely to vote in November.

¹⁴ Current Population Survey, 2004, November supplement.

¹⁵ Current Population Survey, 2004, November supplement.

Appendix A: Other Messages Tested

■ **Figure 13:** Unmarried Women – Issue Message Testing (Percent Responding “Very Motivating”)

Less Successful Message Frameworks: Focus on the Issues

	Total Women	Not Registered Women	Drop-off Women	Likely Women Voters
The government has allowed good jobs to be outsourced overseas, and many of the new jobs are low-paying or minimum wage, with few or no benefits. Meanwhile, gas prices continue to go up. We need to vote in order to create opportunities to reinvest in the American workforce	65	55	61	71
Americans deserve a Congress that will fight to preserve the retirement security they have earned. We need to vote to stop the privatization of Social Security and protect Americans from corporations that bankrupt and eliminate pension plans	62	40	65	71
This Congress is one of the most corrupt and unethical in our nation's history, favoring big corporations over regular Americans. Members of Congress have been caught allowing big campaign contributors and corporate interests to write legislation affecting every American, including laws to block lower gas prices and prescription drug costs. Congressmen have been indicted for ethics violations and accepting bribes. We need to vote to change Congress so it works for all Americans lower	61	50	52	67
Voting is the best way to protect our rights as women. Roe v. Wade, the case that ensured a woman's legal right to choose, is now in jeopardy of being overturned because of the new conservative judges appointed to the Supreme Court.	49	41	47	59
<i>“Now I am going to read you a series of statements that might motivate unmarried Americans to vote this year. As I read each statement, please tell me whether you find that statement very motivating, somewhat motivating, a little motivating, or not at all motivating.”</i>				