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# Sexual Harassment at Work in the Era of #MeToo

*Many see new difficulties for men in workplace interactions and little effect on women's career opportunities*

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## Terminology

All references to party affiliation include those who lean toward that party: Republicans include those who identify as Republicans and independents who say they lean toward the Republican Party, and Democrats include those who identify as Democrats and independents who say they lean toward the Democratic Party.

References to college graduates or people with a college degree comprise those with a bachelor's degree or more. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. "High school" refers to those who have a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

References to whites and blacks include only those who are non-Hispanic and identify as only one race. Hispanics are of any race.

# Sexual Harassment at Work in the Era of #MeToo

*Many see new difficulties for men in workplace interactions and little effect on women's career opportunities*

Recent allegations against prominent men in entertainment, politics, the media and other industries have sparked increased attention to the issue of sexual harassment and assault, in turn raising questions about the [treatment of the accused and the accusers](#) and what lies ahead for [men and women in the workplace](#).

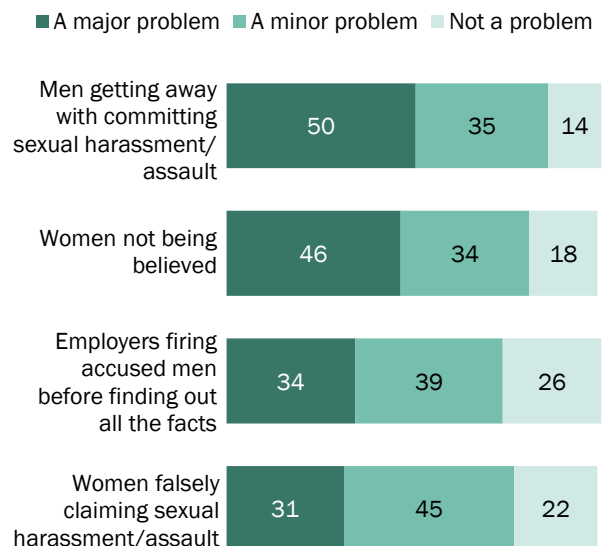
A new Pew Research Center survey finds that, when it comes to sexual harassment in the workplace, more Americans think men getting away with it and female accusers not being believed are major problems than say the same about employers firing men before finding out all the facts or women making false accusations. And while these attitudes differ somewhat by gender, they vary most dramatically between Democrats and Republicans.

The nationally representative survey of 6,251 adults was conducted online Feb. 26-March 11, 2018, using Pew Research Center's [American Trends Panel](#).<sup>1</sup>

Many Americans also believe the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault poses new challenges for men as they navigate their interactions with women at work. About half (51%) say the recent developments have made it harder for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace. Only 12% say this increased focus has made it easier for men, and 36% say it hasn't made much difference.

## Americans more concerned about men getting away with sexual harassment than men being fired prematurely

% saying each is \_\_\_ when it comes to sexual harassment and assault in the workplace today



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018. "Sexual Harassment at Work in the Era of #MeToo"

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see the [Methodology](#) section of the report.

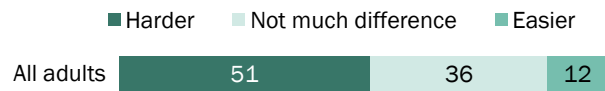
At the same time, Americans see little upside for women's workplace opportunities as a result of the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault. Just 28% say it will lead to more opportunities for women in the workplace in the long run, while a somewhat smaller share (20%) say it will lead to fewer opportunities and 51% say it won't make much of a difference.

The survey also finds that 59% of women and 27% of men say they have personally received unwanted sexual advances or verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature, whether in or outside of a work context. Among women who say they have been sexually harassed, more than half (55%) say it has happened both in and outside of work settings.

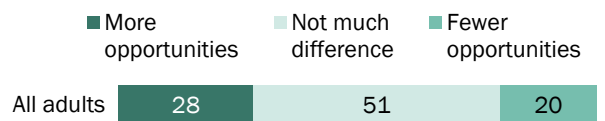
### Mixed views on implications of increased focus on sexual harassment

*% saying the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault ...*

*Has made it \_\_\_ for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace*



*Will lead to \_\_\_ for women in the workplace*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.  
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## Large partisan gaps in concerns about men getting away with sexual harassment and women not being believed

When asked about sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace today, half of Americans think that men getting away with this type of behavior is a major problem. Similarly, 46% see women not being believed when they claim they have experienced sexual harassment or assault as a major problem.

Smaller shares see premature firings (34%) and false claims of sexual harassment or assault (31%) as major problems.

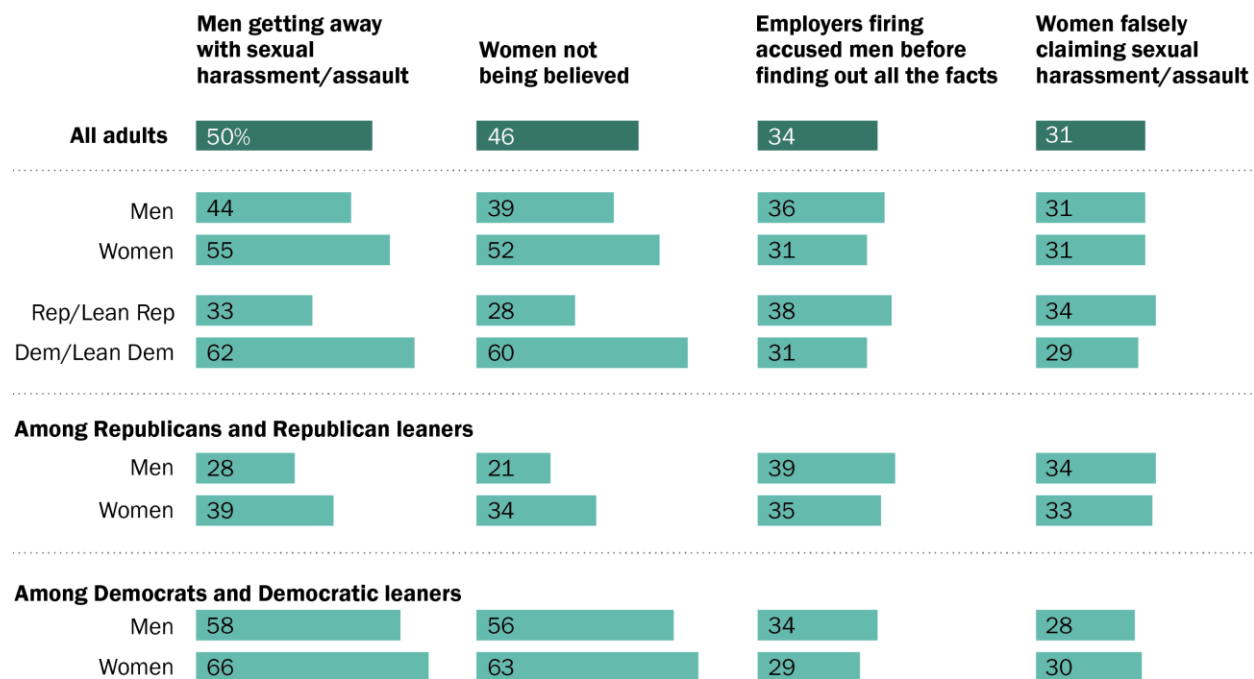
In general, women are more likely than men to be concerned about sexual harassment going unpunished and victims not being believed. Some 52% of women say that women not being believed is a major problem, compared with 39% of men. And while a 55% majority of women think that men getting away with sexual harassment is a major problem, 44% of men say the same. Men and women express similar levels of concern over employers firing men who have been accused of sexual harassment before knowing all the facts and about women making false claims of sexual harassment.

Concerns about sexual harassment in the workplace vary even more widely along partisan lines when it comes to men getting away with it and women not being believed. About six-in-ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say that men getting away with sexual harassment (62%) and women not being believed when they claim they have experienced it (60%) are major problems. By contrast, just 33% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents see men getting away with it as a major problem, and 28% say the same about women not being believed.

Because the gender gap exists within each party coalition, this leaves Democratic women as the most concerned and Republican men as the least on both of these questions. For example, 63% of Democratic women and 56% of Democratic men say that women not being believed is a major problem, compared with 34% of Republican women and 21% of Republican men.

## Democrats far more likely than Republicans to see men getting away with sexual harassment and women not being believed as major problems

*% saying each is a **major problem** when it comes to sexual harassment and assault in the workplace today*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.  
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Conversely, Republicans are somewhat more likely than Democrats to say that employers prematurely firing men accused of sexual harassment is a major problem (38% vs. 31%) and to say the same about women falsely claiming they have experienced sexual harassment (34% vs. 29%).

Democrats who describe their political views as liberal express particularly high levels of concern about men getting away with sexual harassment (71% vs. 55% of moderate or conservative Democrats say this is a major problem) and women not being believed (67% vs. 54%). In contrast, moderate or conservative Democrats are more likely than their liberal counterparts to express concern about men accused of sexual harassment being fired prematurely and women making false accusations. A similar pattern is evident among Democrats with at least a bachelor's degree and those with less education. For example, 39% of Democrats with a high school diploma or less education see employers firing accused men prematurely as a major problem, compared with 32% of those with some college experience and 22% of those with at least a bachelor's degree. Differences by ideology and educational level tend to be less pronounced among Republicans.

### **Older adults, Republicans more likely to say increased focus on sexual harassment has made it harder for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace**

Many Americans see the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault as potentially creating challenges for men at work while not necessarily having a positive impact for women in terms of career opportunities. About half (51%) think the increased attention to the issue has made it harder for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace, while 12% say it's made it easier for men and 36% say it hasn't made much difference.

At least a plurality of men (55%) and women (47%) say the recent developments have made it harder for men to navigate workplace interactions. There is a large partisan gap on this question, however, with Republicans and Republican-leaning independents far more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to say the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault has made it harder for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace. Most Republicans (64%) say this is the case, compared with 42% of Democrats.

Republican men are particularly likely to express this view: 68% say workplace interactions with women are harder now, compared with a narrower majority of Republican women (59%). Democratic men and women are both far less likely to say the same (45% and 40%, respectively).

There is a significant age gap on this question as well. Among adults ages 65 and older, about two-thirds (66%) say the heightened attention has made navigating workplace interactions more difficult for men. By comparison, 52% of those ages 50 to 64, 47% of those 30 to 49 and 42% of those younger than 30 say the same.

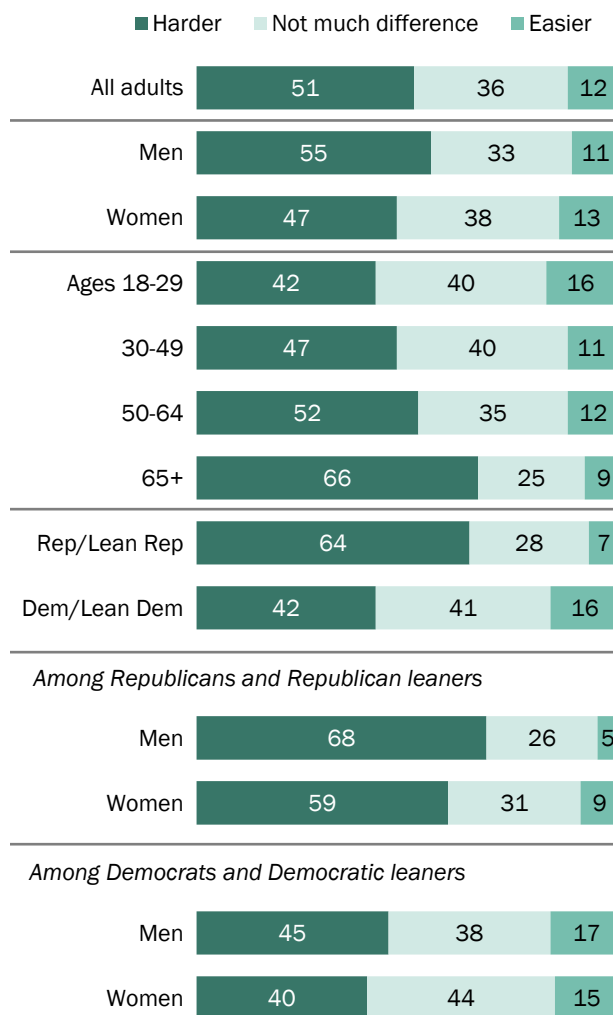
## Roughly half of all adults say the increased focus on sexual harassment will have little impact on women’s career opportunities

A relatively small share of Americans think the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault will lead to more opportunities for women in the workplace in the long run. Roughly three-in-ten (28%) expect this outcome, while 20% believe this will lead to *fewer* opportunities for women and 51% say it won’t make much difference. Men and women express similar views on this question.

Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents are far more likely than Republicans and Republican leaners to say women will have more opportunities in the workplace in the long run as a result of the increased focus on sexual harassment. About four-in-ten Democrats (39%) say this, compared with just 15% of Republicans. Liberal Democrats are especially likely to hold this view – about half (48%) think the increased attention to sexual harassment will lead to more opportunities for women, while about three-in-ten moderate or conservative Democrats (31%) say the same.

## About half say increased focus on sexual harassment has made it harder for men to interact with women at work

% saying the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault has made it \_\_\_ for men to know how to interact with women in the workplace



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.  
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Among Democrats, views on this issue vary by educational attainment. About half of Democrats with a bachelor's degree or more education (52%) think this increased focus will lead to more opportunities for women, compared with 37% of those with some college experience and 29% of those with a high school education or less.

## About six-in-ten women say they have received unwanted sexual advances or experienced sexual harassment

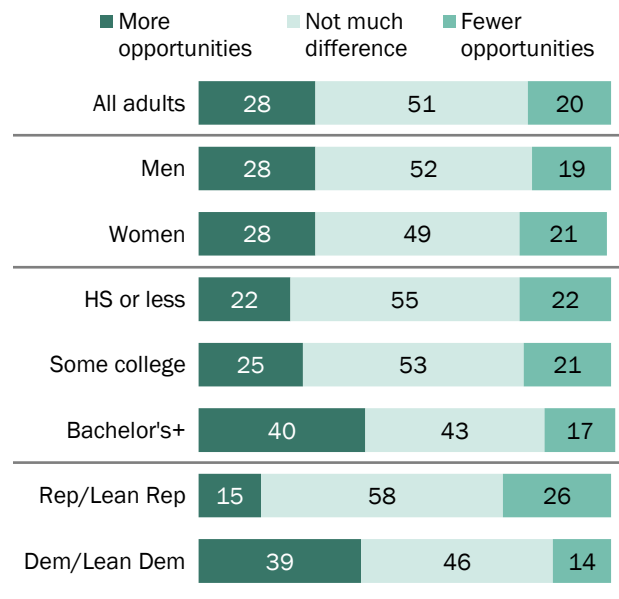
Some 44% of Americans say they have received unwanted sexual advances or verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. About six-in-ten women (59%) say they have experienced this, while 27% of men say the same.

Among women, those with at least some college education are far more likely than those with less education to say they have experienced sexual harassment. Seven-in-ten women with a bachelor's degree or more education and 65% of women with some college but no bachelor's degree say they have been sexually harassed, compared with 46% of women with a high school education or less.

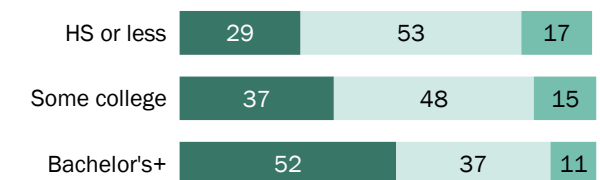
Reports of unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment are also more common among white women: 63% in this group say this has happened to them, compared with half of black and Hispanic women. The shares of women saying they have been sexually harassed are largely similar across age groups.

## Views of how increased focus on sexual harassment will affect women's opportunities linked to education, party

% saying the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault will lead to \_\_\_ for women in the workplace



### Among Democrats and Democratic leaners



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018. "Sexual Harassment at Work in the Era of #MeToo"

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While somewhat higher shares of Democratic than Republican women say they have received unwanted sexual advances or experienced sexual harassment, majorities of both groups say this has happened to them (63% vs. 56%).

Among women who say they have received unwanted sexual advances or experienced sexual harassment, more than half (55%) say this has happened to them both in *and* outside of a professional or work setting. Overall, 69% of women who say they have experienced sexual harassment say this happened in a professional or work setting; 85% say they have experienced this outside of work.

Among men who say they have been sexually harassed, roughly four-in-ten (42%) say they experienced it both in and out of work situations. Overall, about six-in-ten men who say they have been sexually harassed (61%) say it happened in a professional or work setting; 80% say they experienced this outside of a work situation.

Men and women who say they have experienced sexual harassment are more likely than their counterparts to say that men getting away with sexual harassment or assault is a major problem. Fully 61% of women and 51% of men who say they have experienced sexual harassment hold this view, compared with 46% of women and 41% of men who say they have not been sexually harassed.

## About six-in-ten women say they have been sexually harassed

*% saying they have ever personally received unwanted sexual advances or verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature*

	Among women	Among men
All adults	59%	27
White	63	25
Black	50	22
Hispanic	50	34
HS or less	46	24
Some college	65	30
Bachelor's+	70	27
Rep/Lean Rep	56	26
Dem/Lean Dem	63	27

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

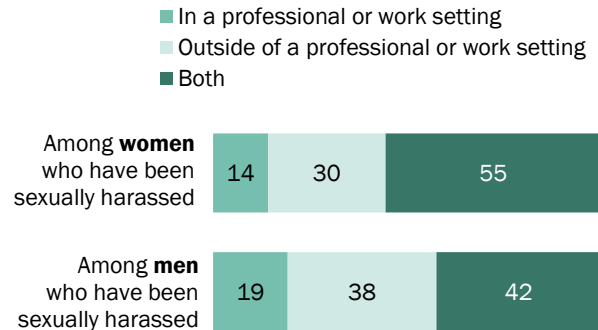
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On other concerns related to sexual harassment in the workplace, the views of men do not vary by whether they report experiencing sexual harassment or not. Among women, however, the experience of sexual harassment is linked to concerns about this issue. For example, 58% of women who say they have experienced sexual harassment say that women not being believed is a major problem when it comes to sexual harassment in the workplace, compared with 43% of women who do not report having been sexually harassed.

### More than half of women who have been sexually harassed say it has happened both in and outside of work

*% of those who say they have ever received unwanted sexual advances or verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature saying this happened ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
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## Methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by the Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults recruited from landline and cell phone random digit dial surveys. Panelists participate via monthly self-administered Web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by GfK.

Data in this report are drawn from the panel wave conducted February 26–March 11, 2018 among 6,251 respondents. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 6,251 respondents is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points.

Members of the American Trends Panel were recruited from several large, national landline and cellphone random digit dial (RDD) surveys conducted in English and Spanish. At the end of each survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The first group of panelists was recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, conducted January 23 to March 16, 2014. Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel and a total of 5,338 agreed to participate.<sup>2</sup> The second group of panelists was recruited from the 2015 Pew Research Center Survey on Government, conducted August 27 to October 4, 2015. Of the 6,004 adults interviewed, all were invited to join the panel, and 2,976 agreed to participate.<sup>3</sup> The third group of panelists was recruited from a survey conducted April 25 to June 4, 2017. Of the 5,012 adults interviewed in the survey or pretest, 3,905 were invited to take part in the panel and a total of 1,628 agreed to participate.<sup>4</sup>

A supplemental sample of respondents from GfK’s KnowledgePanel (KP) was included to ensure a sufficient number of interviews with adults in rural communities. The KP rural oversample was comprised of panelists in pre-defined rural ZIP codes. Rural ZIP codes were defined as those having 127 or fewer households per square mile.

The ATP data were weighted in a multi-step process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents’ original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the

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<sup>2</sup> When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents to the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey who indicated that they are internet users but refused to provide an email address were initially permitted to participate in the American Trends Panel by mail, but were no longer permitted to join the panel after February 6, 2014. Internet users from the 2015 Pew Research Center Survey on Government who refused to provide an email address were not permitted to join the panel.

<sup>4</sup> White, non-Hispanic college graduates were subsampled at a rate of 50%.

propensity to join the panel and remain an active panelist varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on a number of dimensions.

Gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region parameters come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey. The county-level population density parameter (deciles) comes from the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. The telephone service benchmark comes from the July-December 2016 National Health Interview Survey and is projected to 2017. The volunteerism benchmark comes from the 2015 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement. The party affiliation benchmark is the average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys. The Internet access benchmark comes from the 2017 ATP Panel Refresh Survey. Respondents who did not previously have internet access are treated as not having internet access for weighting purposes.

An additional raking parameter was added for Census Division by Metropolitan Status (living in a metropolitan statistical area or not) to adjust for the oversampling of rural households from KnowledgePanel. The Division by MSA benchmark comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	6,251	1.9 percentage points
Men	3,067	2.8 percentage points
Women	3,184	2.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The February 2018 wave had a response rate of 78% (6,251 responses among 7,996 individuals in the panel). Taking account of the combined, weighted response rate for the recruitment surveys

(10.0%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the cumulative response rate for the wave is 2.2%.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves are removed from the panel. These cases are counted in the denominator of cumulative response rates.