FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S VOTE IN THE 2010 AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN

ACLW

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The Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW), a virtual Centre at www.leadershipforwomen.com.au conducted an online Survey from 5 August 2010 to 11 August to help inform how women would vote in the upcoming 2010 Federal Election on 21 August 2010 and the factors influencing their vote.

119 women participated in the online survey from a selective sample of 600 women. Participants were chosen from the Centre's overall national membership representing women who were and are still involved in leadership issues and in its analysis on many fronts.

Participants represent a cross section of age and occupation.

The 119 participants represent a cross section of age with the predominant **age** group being 41-50 years with 35% women, followed by 30% being in the 51-60 age group and 15% in the 31-40 age group. There were 14% in the 61+ age group and 3% in the 20-30 age group. 3% were unknown.

Participants represent a cross section of occupations including education, health, community, business, public service and management**.** Predominantly 23% were in Management and 12% were in Education and in the Public Service.

The positions held by the women participants were primarily in the upper echelons of the organization. 62% were Managers.

First and Later Preference of Women Participants

41% of the participants said that they would give their first preference vote to the Australian Labor Party (ALP) followed by 29% to the Greens. 23% would give their first preference vote to the Liberal/National Coalition.

In terms of their later preference**,** 23% chose the ALP with 8% choosing the Liberal/National Coalition as their later preference. 3% chose the Greens.

Within the participant group of 119 women in this study, on a two-party preferred vote, the ALP would be the winner.

Factors Influencing Participants' vote for Gillard

Ranking of the Factors according to the Percentage of women Influenced by Them
Eg. 84% of participants indicated that views and priorities will influence their vote for Gillard.

1. Views and Priorities (84%)
2. Gillard's Leadership Style (78%)
3. Gillard's Achievements (74%)
4. First Woman PM in Australia (64%) and Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected (64%)

Ranking of the Factors according to the Percentage of women NOT Influenced by Them
Eg. 26% of participants indicated that Gillard being first woman PM in Australia will not influence their vote for her.

1. First Woman PM in Australia (26%)
2. Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected (25%)
3. Gillard's Achievements (15%)
4. Gillard's Leadership Style (10%)
5. Views and Priorities (6%)

Women participants who choose to vote for Gillard are strongly influenced by Gillard's views and priorities first and foremost, her leadership style, second and her achievements, third, before the considerations that she is the first woman PM in Australia and that she will do more for women's issues if elected.

Gender, nevertheless, is a factor in this election as 64% of the women indicated that they will vote for Gillard because she is the first woman PM in Australia and because they believe that she will do more for women's issues if elected.

When the gender factor is considered alone, in terms of the issue of Gillard being first woman PM in Australia and that she will do more for women's issues if elected, for each of these factors, there are more votes in the affirmative than in the negative.

Policies Influencing Participant's vote for Gillard

Other factors that influenced participant's vote for Gillard primarily focused on their dislike of Tony Abbott, his position on women's issues and what he represents. ALP Policy was the next strongest factor that influenced women to vote for Gillard.

Education was the most frequently named policy which influenced voting for the Gillard Government followed by Health care and Employment, and then equally Climate Change and Social Justice.

Media Coverage of Gillard

In terms of the overall media coverage of Julia Gillard, 52% of the participants see the media coverage of Julia Gillard as focussing on her as a woman. 43% of women saw the coverage as focussing on Gillard as a political leader.

60% of women said that the media coverage of Gillard was biased because she is a woman and 36% of women said that the media coverage was fair on gender grounds.

48% of the participants indicated that the media coverage of Prime Minister Gillard was biased for the following reasons stated in the survey. Below is a ranking of the factors according to the percentage of women who indicated it as a bias in the media coverage of Gillard.

1. Attention on Gillard as a woman rather than a political candidate (16%)
2. Attention on Gillard's appearance (clothes, hair etc) (13%)
3. Attention on Gillard's marital status (8%)
4. Attention on Gillard having no children (7%)
5. Attention on Gillard's personality (5%)
6. Attention on Gillard' s physical attributes (0%)

Additionally more women indicated that a*ll or more than one* of the above stated reasons applied in terms of the biased media coverage.

It is evident that women who are in the upper echelons of a cross section of occupations and ages will, in the majority, vote for Gillard and do so not because of gender, but because of her vision, policy, leadership style and achievements.

This study does also affirm that Gender is a factor in this election as even though this factor is not influencing women's votes first and foremost, it is rated as a significant influence with 64% of participants voting for Gillard because she is the first woman PM in Australia and because they believe that she will do more for women's issues if elected. As women celebrate the achievement of the highest public office, they also anticipate that Gillard will address women's issues.

Despite a gender biased media coverage, for the majority of women in this study voting for Gillard is more about leadership than gender. Gillard's views, priorities, leadership style and achievements ranked higher considerations for women than her being first PM and the possibility that she will do more if elected. Whilst this ranking differentiates leadership perspectives from gender, it is inherent that there is a strong link between these perspectives. For Gillard to do more for women's issues, she needs to have the power and influence that being first PM affords her and for her to address women's issues, she needs to use her leadership skills, experience, and consultative style of leadership to implement her views and priorities for women.

Whilst the media has raised in our consciousness that gender is associated with leadership, it would seem from this study that it is more important for the media to show a positive connection between gender and leadership if the media is to be astute in reflecting the direction of women's thinking about women and leadership in the political sphere.

Introduction

Introduction_____

Four days to go to the 2010 Australian Federal Election and as the pundits say, the vote is still up for grabs. In such a close election, what will give Abbott or Gillard the advantage? One factor that has been raised since Gillard became Prime Minister was her gender.

As polls[1] (Roy Morgan Research, July 2010) showed that Gillard was preferred by women at a greater margin than by men (ABC Lateline 27/7/2010b), there began much speculation in the media, politics and in the community about women's votes.

Comments such as that women will vote for Gillard because they are "excited about electing Australia's first female prime minister," or that the "sisterhood" will support her because she is a woman (SMH 1/8/2010)" or that Gillard's gender gives her an "unfair advantage" (Abbott, SMH 1/8/2010) have been tempered with the focus that Gillard "speaks about the things that are of concern to Australian women (Plibersek, ABC Lateline 27/7/2010b)" and that whilst "it's worth also celebrating that historic time... gender's not the important thing in this equation (Plibersek, ABC Lateline 27/7/2010b)."

With polls[2] (Roy Morgan Research, August 2010) continuing to present a "gender" breakdown of the vote and showing fluctuations of support for Abbott and Gillard, this study was conducted in the midst of the 2010 election campaign after the televised national debate as both major parties released more policies critiquing each other and Rudd came in to centre stage to campaign. The study aimed to quantify and qualify how women would vote in the upcoming election and the factors influencing their vote.

If women are considering voting for Gillard, will they do so because she is the first woman PM in Australia; or because of her views and priorities; or her leadership style; her achievements or because she will do more for women's issues if elected?

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[1] Federal Poll released 29 July 2010 by Roy Morgan Research: Analysis by gender shows both genders have recorded falls in the ALP vote since the Debate. The clear gender gap still exists between the ALP & L-NP. Among women the ALP leads by 16 points (ALP 58% cf. L-NP 42%) while among men the L-NP is 3 points ahead (L-NP 51.5 cf. ALP 48.5).

[2] Federal Poll released 4 August 2010 by Roy Morgan Research: Analysis by gender clearly shows a large fall in the ALP vote amongst women is behind this week's overall fall in the ALP vote. Women now marginally prefer the L-NP (50.5%) cf. ALP (49.5%) on a Two-Party preferred basis while men lean slightly towards the ALP (50.5%) cf. L-NP (49.5%).

As media influences and informs perceptions of leaders and their political agenda and is used by leaders to connect with the masses, the study also aimed to explore women's perceptions of the media coverage of Gillard. With "gender politics" (ABC Lateline 27/7/10a) taking a centre stage with coverage of Gillard's appearance, personality, physical attributes, marital status and having no children gaining media attention, these aspects are explored in particular.

Acknowledging the small sample size of 119 participants, it will be interesting to see the findings of this study in the context of the election outcomes.

Methodology

The Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW), a virtual Centre at www.leadershipforwomen.com.au conducted an online Survey from 5 August 2010 to 11 August 2010 comprising 10 questions which included closed and open ended questions.   The survey (See Appendix) was designed to ascertain the following:

1. Which Party will women give their first preference vote for in the House of Representatives?

2. To which party will women give their later preference to if it is not for the ALP or Coalition?

3. If women did vote for the Gillard Government, which of the following will influence their vote?

- First woman PM in Australia
- Views and Priorities
- Gillard's leadership style
- Gillard's achievements
- Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected

4. Which policies would influence their vote?

5. In terms of the overall media coverage of Julia Gillard, do women see the primary focus of the media portrayal of Julia Gillard as being:

- Gillard as a political leader
- Gillard as a woman

6. Do women regard the overall media coverage of Prime Minister Julia Gillard in the Election Campaign as being:

- Fair on gender grounds
- Biased because she is a woman

7. If women regard the media coverage of Prime Minister Gillard to be biased, which reason below explains why they hold this view:

- Attention on Gillard's appearance (clothes, hair etc)
- Attention on Gillard' s physical attributes
- Attention on Gillard as a woman rather than a political candidate
- Attention on Gillard's personality
- Attention on Gillard's marital status
- Attention on Gillard having no children

The selective sample of 600 participants who were invited by email to take part in the survey at CLW were given a special link and a common code to enter to maintain the study's sampling.   All participants were provided the same code thus assuring anonymity. Participants were not asked to provide any details about their identity except their age and country.

Responses to the Survey were collated and analysed using Content Analysis by Dr Rodgers-Healey. The qualitative and quantitative findings which emerged are reported in this document.

SAMPLE

Participants were selected from the Centre's overall national membership on the basis of their participation in the Centre's leadership activities at one point or another since 2000 when the Centre commenced. As such, participants comprise a select group of women involved in leadership issues and in its analysis on many fronts. They represent a cross section of age and industry. They are predominantly in high positions in their workplaces.

The sample's involvement in leadership issues through CLW's activities indicates that the sample is informed about leadership and therefore has credibility in assessing the issues that CLW aimed to investigate through the survey.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Of the 119 participants, the predominant age group as shown in Diagram 1 was 41-50 years with 35% being in this age group, followed by 30% being in the 51-60 age group and then 15% in the 31-40 age group. There were 14% in the 61+ age group and 3% in the 20-30 age group.

Diagram 1: Age Distribution of Participants

3%   3%

14%

15%

30%

35%

- unknown
- Age 20-30
- age 31-40
- age 41-50
- age 51-60
- age 61+
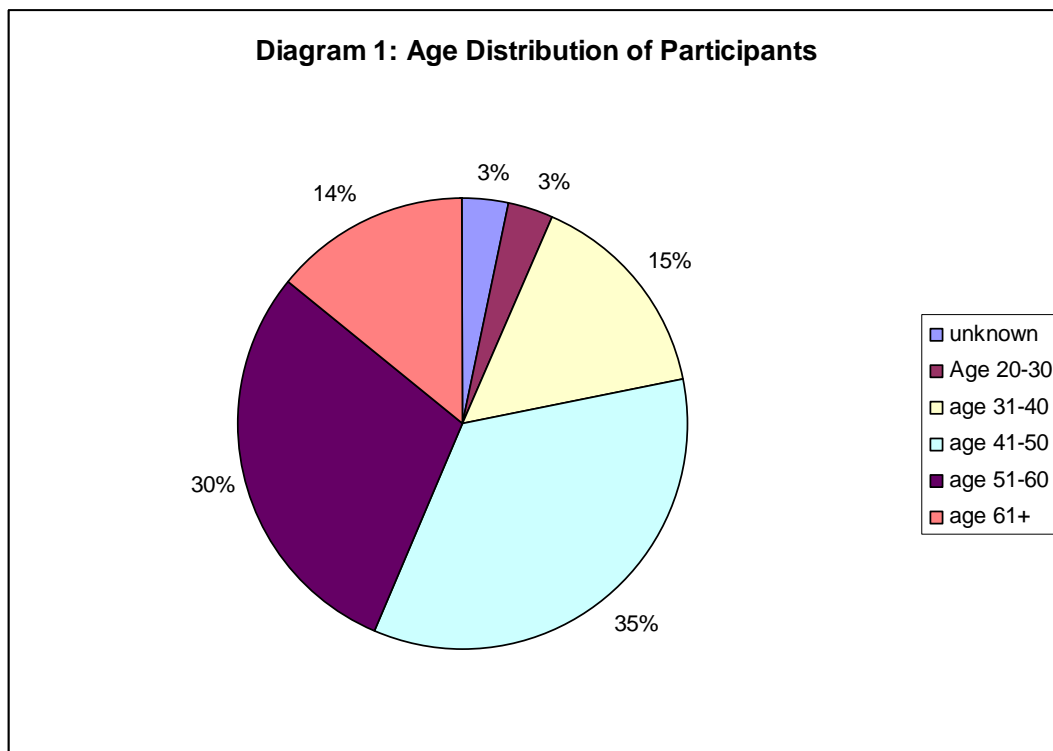
In terms of the occupation of participants as shown in Diagram 2, 23% were in management and 12% were in Education and in the Public Service.
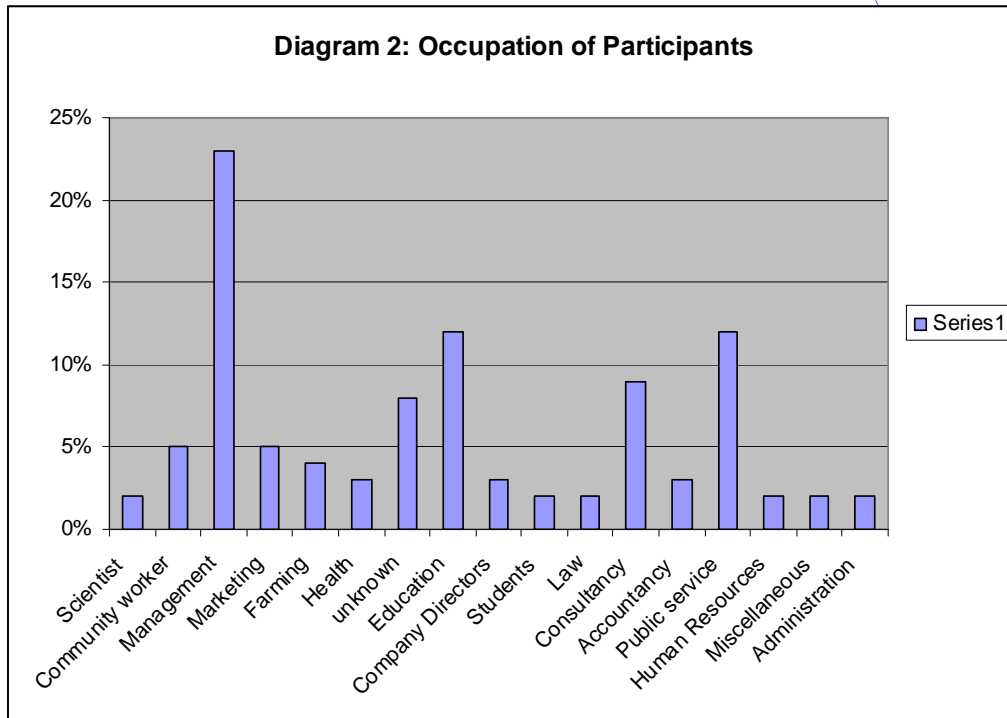
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Diagram 2: Occupation of Participants

The positions held by the women participants were primarily in the upper echelons of the organization as shown in Diagram 3. 61% were Managers.

Diagram 3: Position of Participants

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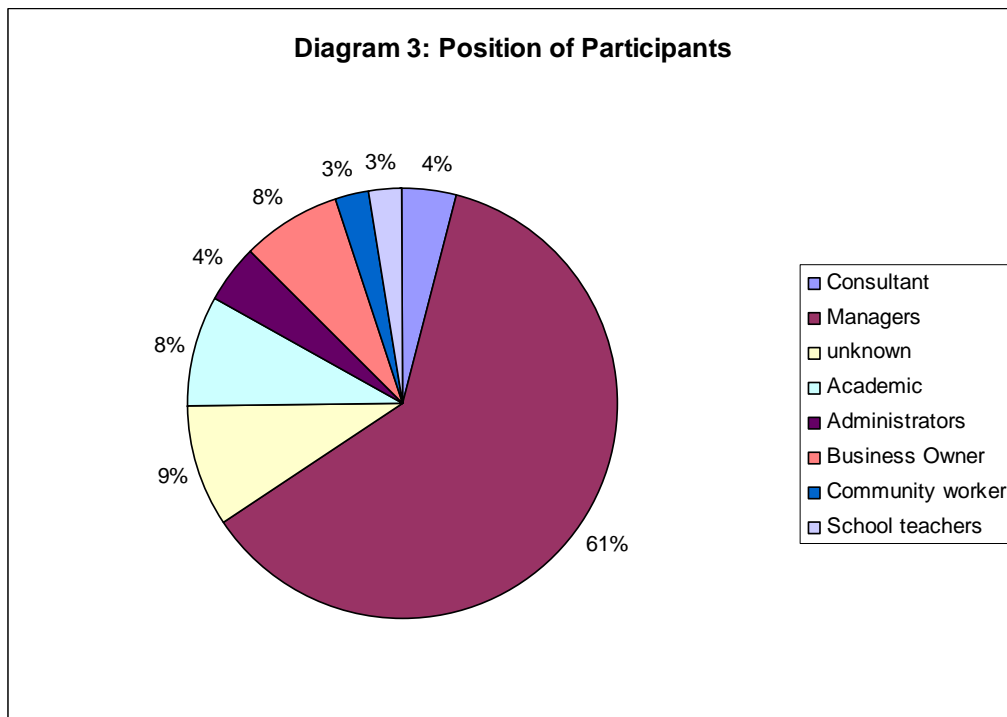
Although the respondent participant size of 119 is small, it is important to note that the distribution was representative of a cross section of ages and occupations.

Findings

Findings

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First Preferences

Participants were asked which Party will they give their first preference vote for in the House of Representatives.

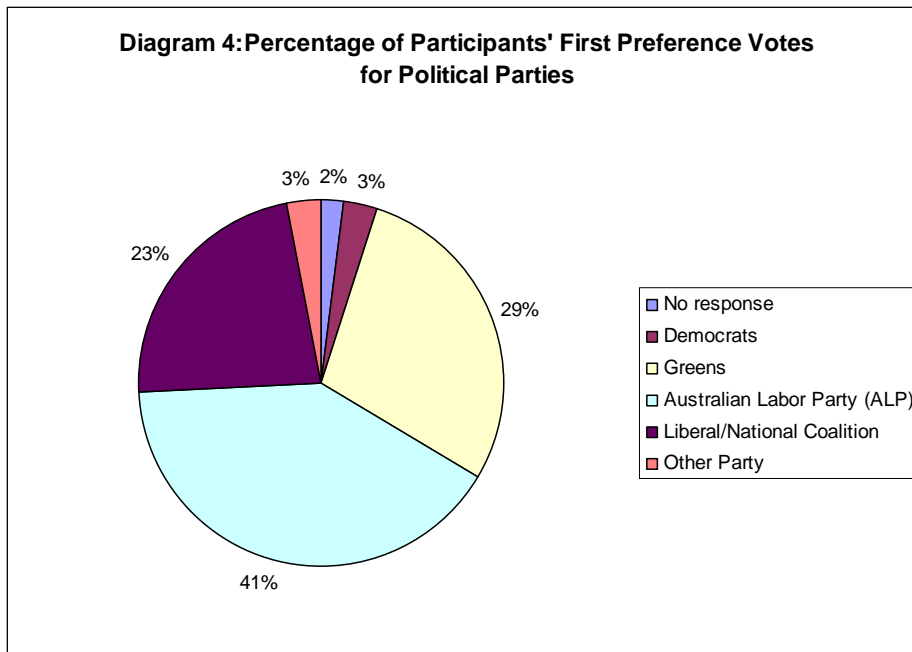As shown in Diagram 4, 41% of the participants said that they would give their first preference vote to the Australian Labor Party (ALP) followed by 29% to the Greens. 23% would give their first preference vote to the Liberal/National Coalition.

With the Greens giving their preferences to the ALP[3], the percentage of votes accruing for the ALP is therefore 70%.

Diagram 4: Percentage of Participants' First Preference Votes for Political Parties

Legend:
- No response
- Democrats
- Greens
- Australian Labor Party (ALP)
- Liberal/National Coalition
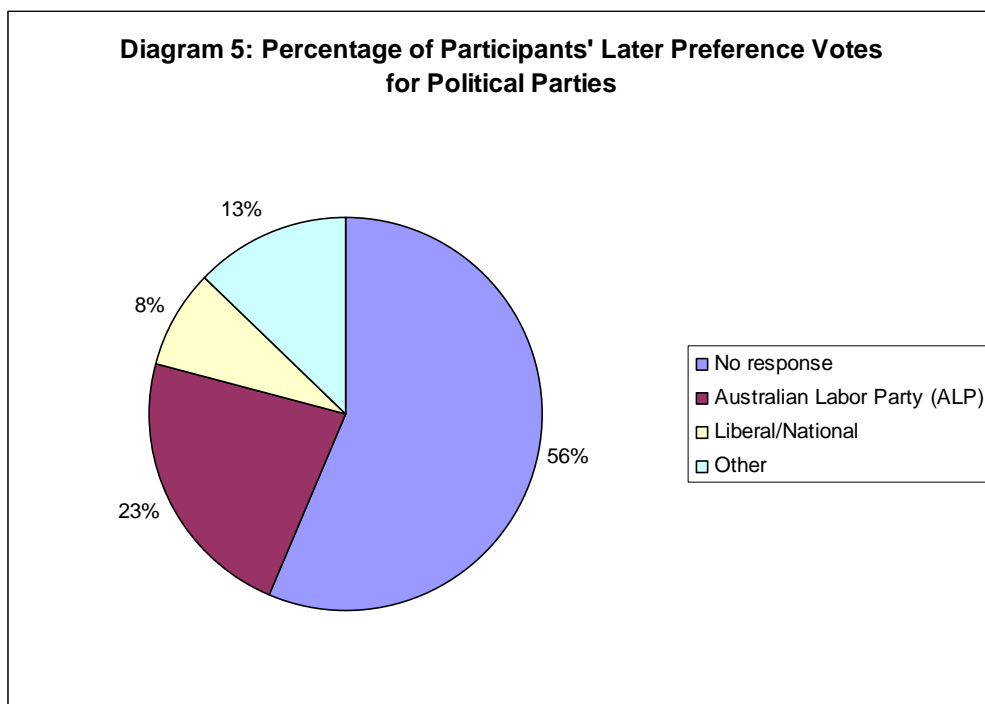- Other Party

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3 The Greens and Labor preference deal sees Labor receiving Greens' preferences in more than 50 marginal seats while the Greens will receive Labor's Senate preferences in every state and territory. Only a handful of seats are not included in the deal and preferences will be negotiated at a local level in these seats between Labor and the Greens (SMH 19/7/2010).

LATER PREFERENCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants were asked to which party would they give their later preference to, if it is not for the ALP or Coalition.

As shown in Diagram 5, 56% of participants did not indicate to which party they would give their later preference to. 23% chose the ALP with 8% choosing the Liberal/National Coalition as their later preference.

Diagram 5: Percentage of Participants' Later Preference Votes for Political Parties

13%

8%

56%

23%

■ No response
■ Australian Labor Party (ALP)
□ Liberal/National
□ Other

Of the 13% who chose *Other* parties for their later preference, as shown in Diagram 6, 89% did not name any political party.   Of the remainder 21%, an Independent or the Greens were stated as a later preference. Specifically, 3% chose the Greens.

Diagram 6: Percentage of Participants Choosing other Political Parties for Later Preference

3%
1%
3%
1%
3%

Legend:
- no party named
- Independent
- Australian Sex Party
- Greens
- Family First
- Unsure

89%
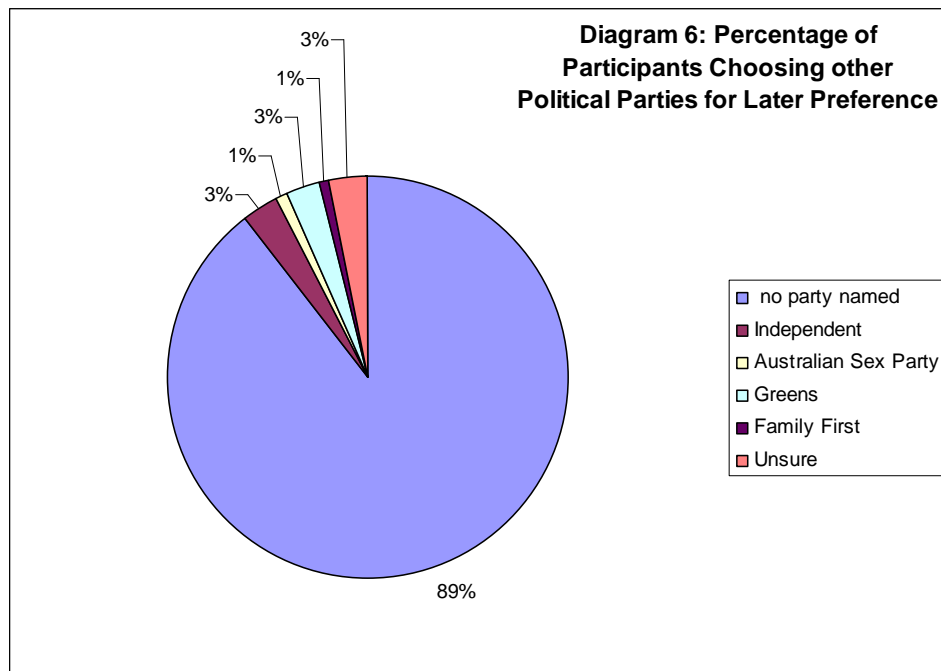
Factors Influencing Women's Vote

Participants were asked if they did vote for the Gillard Government, which of the following will influence their vote?

- First woman PM in Australia
- Views and Priorities
- Gillard's leadership style
- Gillard's achievements
- Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected

First woman PM in Australia

In terms of the first factor, First woman PM in Australia, , as can be seen in Diagram 7, 22% said that this factor would influence their vote **strongly;** 31% of women said that this factor would **partly** influence them and 11% said it would influence them a **little.**

So on the positive side 64% of the participants would be influenced by this factor and 26% said that this factor would not influence their vote at all.

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Diagram 7: Percentage of Women whose Vote will be Influenced by Gillard being First PM

10%

22%

11%

No response
Little
Not at all
Partly
Strongly

26%

31%
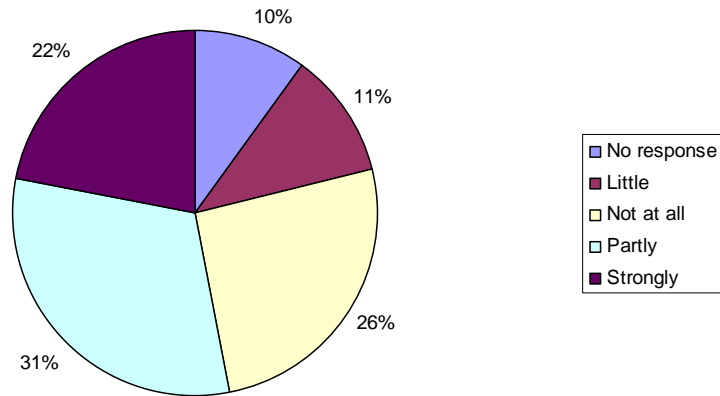
Views and Priorities

In terms of the second factor, Views and Priorities, as can be seen in Diagram 8, 60% said that this factor would influence their vote **strongly;** 21% of women said that this factor would partly influence them and 3% said it would influence them a **little.**

So on the positive side 84% of the participants would be influenced by this factor and 6% said that this factor would not influence their vote.

Diagram 8: Percentage of Women whose Vote will be Influenced by Gillard's Views & Priorities

10%

3%

6%

No response
Little
Not at all
Partly
Strongly

60%

21%

Gillard's leadership style

In terms of the third factor, Gillard's leadership style, as can be seen in Diagram 9, 34% said that this factor would influence their vote **strongly;** 29% of women said that that this factor would **partly** influence them and 15% said it would influence their vote a **little.**

So on the positive side 78% of the participants would be influenced by this factor and 10% said that this factor would not influence their vote.

Diagram 9: Percentage of Women whose Vote will be Influenced by Gillard's Leadership Style

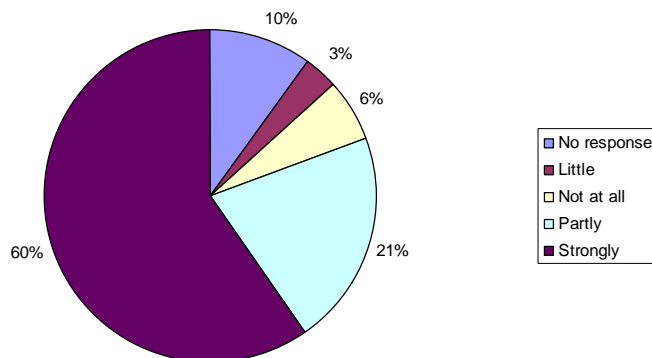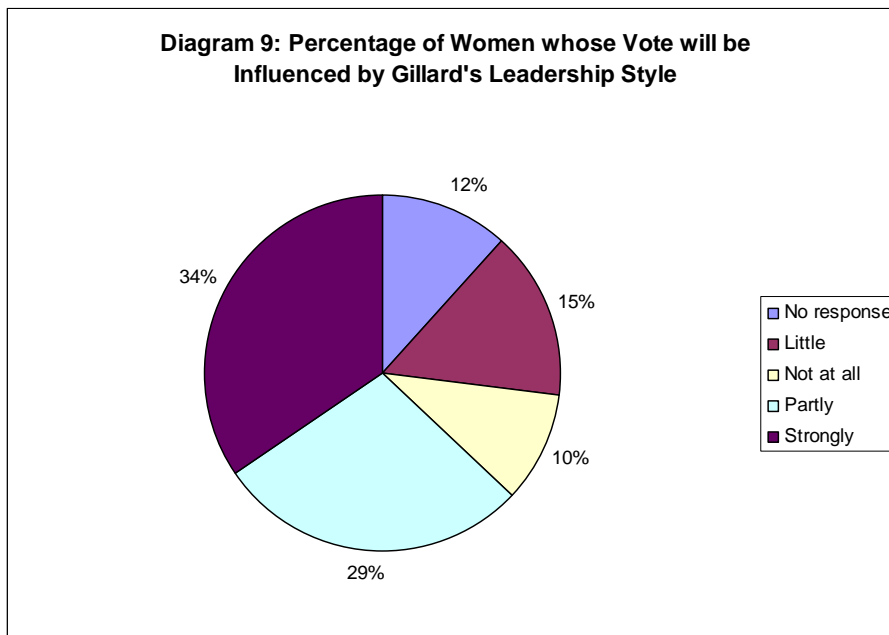12%

34%

15%

□ No response
■ Little
□ Not at all
□ Partly
■ Strongly

10%

29%

Gillard's achievements

In terms of the fourth factor, Gillard's achievements, as can be seen in Diagram 10, 28% said that this factor would influence their vote **strongly;** 33% of women said that this factor would **partly** influence them and 13% said it would influence their vote a **little.**

So on the positive side 74% of women would be influenced by this factor and 15% said that this factor would not influence their vote.

Diagram 10: Percentage of Women whose Vote will be Influenced by Gillard's Achievements

11%

28%

13%

15%

33%

- No response
- Little
- Not at all
- Partly
- Strongly

Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected

In terms of the fifth factor, Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected, as can be seen in Diagram 11, 9% said that this factor would influence their vote **strongly;** 34% of women said that this factor would **partly** influence their vote and 21% said it would influence their vote a **little.**

So on the positive side 64% of women would be influenced by this factor and 25% said that this factor would not influence their vote.
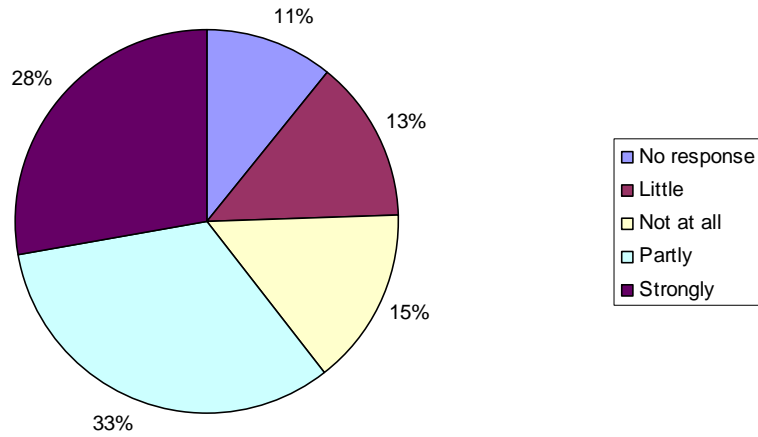
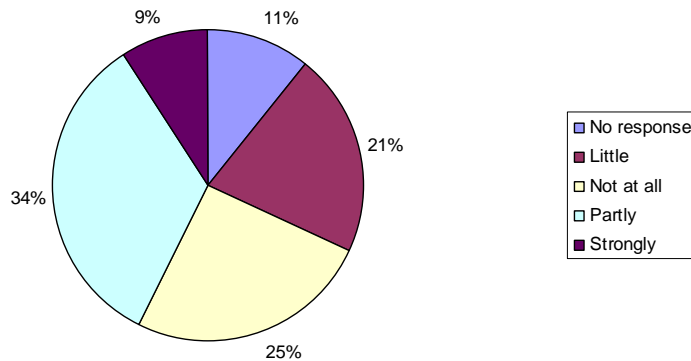**Diagram 11: Percentage of Women whose Vote will be Influenced by view that Gillard will do More for Women's Issues if Elected**

9%   11%

21%

34%

25%

- No response
- Little
- Not at all
- Partly
- Strongly

SUMMARY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S VOTE FOR GILLARD

To summarise at this point, Table 1 & 2 elucidates the positive and negative influences of the 6 factors collectively and individually.

Table 1: Individual Strength of the Factors Influencing/Not Influencing Women's Vote

Rating (%)	First woman PM in Australia	Views and Priorities	Gillard's leadership style	Gillard's achievements	Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected
STRONGLY	22	60	34	28	9
PARTLY	31	21	29	33	34
LITTLE	11	3	15	13	21
NOT AT ALL	26	6	10	15	25

Table 2: Collective strength of the Factors Influencing/Not influencing Women's Vote

Rating (%)	First woman PM in Australia	Views and Priorities	Gillard's leadership style	Gillard's achievements	Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected
YES	64	84	78	74	64
NO	26	6	10	15	25

Ranking of the Factors According to the Percentage of Women <u>Influenced</u> by Them
Eg. 84% of participants indicated that views and priorities will influence their vote for Gillard.

1. Views and Priorities (84%)
2. Gillard's Leadership Style (78%)
3. Gillard's Achievements (74%)
4. First Woman PM in Australia and Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected (64%)

Ranking of the Factors According to the Percentage of Women <u>NOT Influenced</u> by Them
Eg. 26% of participants indicated that Gillard being first woman PM in Australia will not influence their vote for her.

1. First Woman PM in Australia (26%)
2. Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected (25%)
3. Gillard's Achievements (15%)
4. Gillard's Leadership Style (10%)
5. Views and Priorities (6%)

For each of the stated factors, there are more women participants influenced by it than not influenced by it. The influence is significant as it is above 50%.

Women participants who choose to vote for Gillard are strongly influenced by Gillard's views and priorities, her leadership style and achievements before the considerations that she is the first woman PM in Australia and that she will do more for women's issues if elected.

Gillard's views and priorities stand out alone as the strongest factor influencing participant's votes with 60% of women indicating this. Gillard's leadership style ranks second with 34% and her achievements rank 3rd with 28%.

The gender factor of Gillard being first woman PM in Australia and that she will do more for women's issues if elected is a factor in this election as it rates highly on both counts with 64% of the women being influenced by it.

When the gender factor is considered alone, these issues gain more votes from the participants than not, as 64% of the participants affirmed this to varying degrees factor as opposed to 26% who said that her being first woman PM did not matter at all. More

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participants will vote for Gillard on the perception that she will do more for women if elected as again 64% indicated this in the affirmative to varying degrees as opposed to 25% who said that this did not matter at all.

OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING VOTES FOR GILLARD OR ABOTT

In terms of other reasons which participants offered that influence their vote for Gillard or Abbott, the responses are categorized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Other Factors Influencing Votes

THEME OF RESPONSE	NUMBER OF COMMENTS MADE
Other Factors Influencing Vote for Gillard	
- Tony Abbott	20
- Other parties are not a viable option	4
- Liberal/National Policies	3
- Labor Party Ideology	5
- Personal qualities of Gillard	7
- Achievements of ALP	7
- Policies of the ALP	17
Other Factors Influencing Vote Against Gillard	6
Other Factors Influencing Vote for Best Person	
- Best person should win on merit, not necessarily Gillard	3

As can be seen in Table 3, of the total 72 comments made by participants, a dislike of Tony Abbott, his attitudes towards women and what he represents ranks the highest factor that is influencing women voting for Gillard. The vote for Gillard is also influenced by the policies of the ALP which is the second highest ranking factor.

Some of the comments made about Tony Abbott are shown below:

- *Abbott's attitudes towards women*
- *Don't trust Tony Abbott and the Liberals not to re-introduce Work Choices*

- *I do not believe Tony Abbott would be a good PM,*
- *I do not want Tony Abbott to lead Australia*
- *I feel both major parties have weak leaders, but would prefer Gillard to Abbott by a long shot*
- *the highly conservative leader of the Liberal party and their policies*
- *his views towards women*
- *Don't trust Tony Abbott particularly his views of women and their roles*
- *I can not vote for Tony Abbott with his track record on women's issues*

Some of the comments showing that women would not vote for Gillard are included below:
- *Opposition of major parties to Gay marriage means I make a token vote to Greens instead of ALP*
- *I don't like what happened within the party, whether Gillard is female or not. Also she is against gay marriage which adds up to INSTANT dislike of her and her party.*
- *I think the Labor Government is run by factional men and she is one of them - too political and not real or genuine unfortunately*
- *I would not vote for her as she does not do anything for me and her voice is annoying especially the 'moving forward' statement.....*
- *my answers to the leadership style are the LACK of leadership style - i.e. she has just tried to buy the racist vote*
- *The Labor Party is corrupt, wastes tax payers' money and I would NEVER vote for them*
- *gay rights*

Policies which influence vote for the Gillard Government

When asked which policies would influence women's vote for the Gillard Government, 42 women did not respond to this question. Of the 77 women who did respond, Table 4 highlights the policies named and the order in which they were named as well as how many times the policy was referred to. For example, Education was named 14 times as the first policy in women's responses. It was named 7 times as the 2nd policy in women's responses and so on. Thus the total number of times it was named was 28 times.

Table 4: Policies Which Influence Vote for the Gillard Government

| POLICY	Order in which Policy Mentioned by Women in their Responses					
	1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place	Total
Asylum Seekers	4	2	3			9
Education (BER)	14	7	4	3		28
Housing	1					1
Environment	3	4	1			8
Climate Change	2	4	4	1		11
Infrastructure	1					1
Mining tax	2	1	1			4
Economy	5	1	1			7
Superannuation	1	2				3
Paid Parental Leave	1	1		1	1	4
Equal Pay	3					3
Employment	6	4	4	1	1	16
Family Issues		2	1			3
National Broadband	1	1	1			3
Women's Policies	2	1	3	1		7
Immigration/Population	2	1		1		4
Health Care	10	8	1		1	20
Social Justice	4	4	3			11
Disability	1		3			4

It is evident that Education was the most named policy to influence participant's vote for the Gillard Government followed by Health care. On the whole, Education was named the most with 28 references to it. Health Care was second with 20 references and Employment third with 16 references. There were in comparison 11 references to Climate Change and Social Justice.

Media COVERAGE of Julia Gillard:

Gillard as a Political Leader/as a woman

In terms of the overall media coverage of Julia Gillard, as shown in Diagram 12, 52% of the participants see the media coverage of Gillard as focussing on her as a woman. 43% of women saw the coverage as focusing on her as a political leader.

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Diagram 12: Women's Perceptions of Media Coverage of Gillard

5%

52%

43%

- No Responses
- Gillard as a political leader
- Gillard as a woman
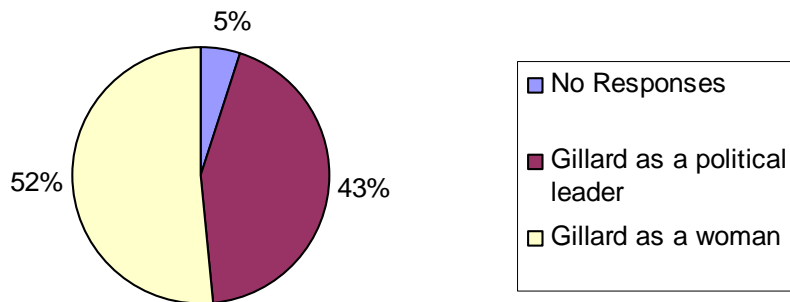
Media Coverage Fair or Biased on Gender Grounds

When the women participants were asked if they regarded the overall media coverage of Julia Gillard in the Election Campaign as being fair on gender grounds or biased because she is a woman, as Diagram 13 shows, 60% of women said that the media coverage of Gillard was biased because she is a woman and 36% of women said that the media coverage was fair on gender grounds.

Diagram 13: Fairness of Media Coverage of Gillard

4%

36%

60%

- No response
- Biased because she is a woman
- Fair on gender grounds
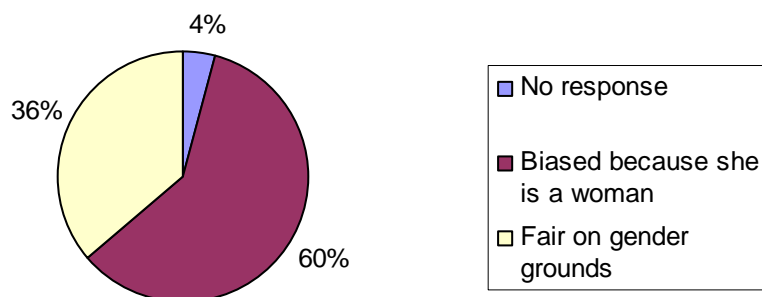
Reasons for Biased Coverage of Gillard

48% of the participants indicated that the media coverage of Prime Minister Gillard was biased for the following reasons stated in the survey. Below is a ranking of the factors according to the percentage of women who indicated it as a bias in the media coverage of Gillard.

1. Attention on Gillard as a woman rather than a political candidate (16%)
2. Attention on Gillard's appearance (clothes, hair etc) (13%)
3. Attention on Gillard's marital status (8%)
4. Attention on Gillard having no children (7%)
5. Attention on Gillard's personality (5%)
6. Attention on Gillard' s physical attributes (0%)

Specifically as shown in Diagram 14, 16% of the participants indicated that the media coverage of Gillard was biased because Gillard was depicted more as a woman rather than a political candidate.

Diagram 14: Bias in Media Coverage of Gillard

Legend:
- No response
- Gillard as woman rather than a political candidate
- Gillard having no children
- Gillard's appearance
- Gillard's marital status
- Gillard's personality
- For other reasons

Pie chart values: 33%, 16%, 7%, 13%, 8%, 5%, 18%
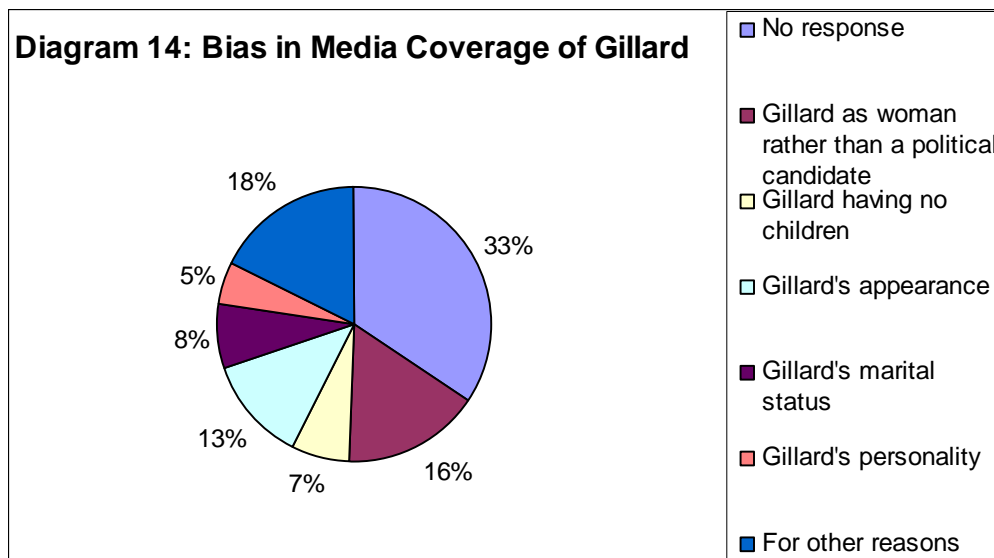
33% of participants did not give any responses and 18% or 21 women chose the *other* option for question 10 of the Survey (see appendix). When the responses for the other option were analysed, it became apparent that women who had already chosen one of the stated reasons also submitted information for this question. Thus instead of 21 responses for the other option there were 35 responses in total. Of the 35 women, 15 women indicated that "All of the above" stated reasons applied and 4 stated that "some" of the stated reasons applied. Predominantly, 19 out of 35 responses pointed to

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one or more of the stated reasons being applicable in terms of the biased media coverage.

A few participants said that such media coverage was to be expected by politicians: "all politicians attract media attention regarding their appearance and style. An unmarried male would attract interest as well." A few participants also claimed that there was no bias in the coverage.

5 participants implied that Gillard had brought it upon herself citing her actions to depose Rudd, her photographs in Women's Weekly, and that Gillard is "a puppet and not a party leader who needed to lead and own her campaign."

A few comments alluded to the gender disparity in perceptions of leadership as colouring media coverage: *"if a man is competitive it is seen as ok, if a woman is competitive it is seen as sly and underhanded. There is undue attention to her looks and her status as an unmarried woman with no children of her own. The newspapers are overtly giving her attributes she does not necessarily have, such as being sly, underhanded and ineffectual. The media is talking up the opposition as if it is a done deal already in order to try and influence the undecided voters."*

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the participant group in this study, the following conclusions are clear:

Two-party Preferred Vote

On a two-party preferred vote, the ALP would be the winner.

In terms of women's **later preference,** the ALP is preferred more than the Liberal/National Coalition .

Factors Influencing the Vote of Women:

It is evident that women who are in the upper echelons of a cross section of occupations and ages will, in the majority, vote for Gillard and do so not because of gender, but because of her vision, policy, leadership style and achievements.

This study does also affirm that Gender is a factor in this election as even though this factor is not influencing women's votes first and foremost, it is rated as a significant influence with 64% of participants voting for Gillard because she is the first woman PM in Australia and because they believe that she will do more for women's issues if elected. As women celebrate the achievement of the highest public office, they also anticipate that Gillard will address women's issues.

Women also appeared to be choosing Gillard over Abbott because of their dislike of him, his position on women's issues and what he represents. Although Kevin Rudd was mentioned and that the ALP was run by "factional men," the Rudd/Gillard's leadership spill did not emerge as a significant factor influencing votes in this study.

Policies influencing vote for Gillard:

The policies of the ALP are significant to women voters who choose to vote for the Gillard Government. This substantiates participant's interest in what Gillard represents in terms of her views and priorities. Whilst Education was the most frequently named policy which influenced participant's vote for the Gillard Government followed by Health care and then equally Climate Change and Social Justice, there was some

indication that these policies could be improved, but were on the whole better than those of the Liberal/National Coalition.

Media Coverage of Gillard and Gender

The media coverage of Julia Gillard is biased as the findings show that the majority of women participants indicate that the bias is in terms of the focus on Gillard as a woman rather than a political candidate. With 60% of women indicating that the media coverage of Gillard was biased because she is a woman and 36% of women indicating that the coverage was fair on gender grounds, it can be said that a gender focus has registered with the women. Whether this focus has been fair or unfair, in this study, has been shown as being unfair. The coverage is unfair according to the majority of the participants as the media focus has been through either one or more traditional gender stereotypes of appearance, marital status, having no children and her personality.

Despite a gender biased media coverage, for the majority of women in this study voting for Gillard is more about leadership than gender. Gillard's views, priorities, leadership style and achievements ranked higher considerations for women than her being first PM and the possibility that she will do more if elected. Whilst this ranking differentiates leadership perspectives from gender, it is inherent that there is a strong link between these perspectives. For Gillard to do more for women's issues, she needs to have the power and influence that being first PM affords her and for her to address women's issues, she needs to use her leadership skills, experience, and consultative style of leadership to implement her views and priorities for women.

Whilst the media has raised in our consciousness that gender is associated with leadership, it would seem from this study that it is more important for the media to show a positive connection between gender and leadership if the media is to be astute in reflecting the direction of women's thinking about women and leadership in the political sphere.

Acknowledging the small sample size of 119 participants and that they were in the upper echelons of their occupation, it is important to note that the distribution was representative of a cross section of ages and occupations.

Having a random sample for this study and a higher participation rate would have added to the validity of this study as well as further research comparing how Abbott is portrayed in the media. It is hoped, however, that this study will have in some small way analysed empirically what has been speculation about women's vote in the 2010 Federal Election.

References:

Gender politics get serious, Lateline ABC 27/7/2010a Reporter: Nick Harmsen

Plibersek discusses gender electioneering, Lateline ABC 27/7/2010b Reporter: Leigh Sales

Is Australia man enough to have a woman as PM? By Josh Gordon, 1/8/2010, Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)

August 9, 7.40am – Now who's the underdog? POLL POSITION: Cutting Peter to hurt Tony, 9/8/2010 Rob Burgess, Business Spectator

Greens strike crucial Labor preferences deal, Phillip Coorey, 19/7/2010 Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)

APPENDIX

2010 Federal Election

This is an anonymous questionnaire for women who have been invited by the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW) by email to participate. The Survey is about the 2010 Federal Election in Australia. You do not have to give any personal contact details such as name, address/telephone or email address.
The information you provide will help inform what is influencing the vote of women in the 2010 Federal Election and why women are considering voting for the Gillard Government if they choose to do so.
A report of the findings will be emailed to all invited participants. Thank you very much for your participation.

Dr Diann Rodgers-Healey

As this survey is on the internet and might be accessed by those not in the participant group, could you please enter the code below which was given to the entire participant group. The same code was given to all the members.
Code:_____
1 What is your age group:
20-30
31-40
41-50
51-60
61+

2. Which Country are you residing in?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What position do you hold?

5a. Which Party will you give your first preference vote for in the House of Representatives on 21 August 2010 in the Federal Election in Australia?
Liberal/National Coalition
Australian Labor Party (ALP)
Australian Greens
Australian Democrats
Other _____

5b. If your first preference is not for the ALP or Coalition, which party will your later preference go to?
Liberal/National Coalition

Australian Labor Party (ALP)
Other_____

6. If you vote for the Gillard Government on 21 August 2010 which of the following will influence your vote?
a) First woman PM in Australia
Strongly
Partly
Little
Not at all

b)Views and Priorities
Strongly
Partly
Little
Not at all

c) Gillard's leadership style
Strongly
Partly
Little
Not at all

d) Gillard's achievements
Strongly
Partly
Little
Not at all

e) Gillard will do more for women's issues if elected
Strongly
Partly
Little
Not at all
Other reasons that influence your vote_____

7. If you vote for the Gillard Government on 21 August 2010 in the Federal Election in Australia due to their policy platform, name the ones that influence your vote: _____

8. In terms of the overall media coverage of Julia Gillard, what do see as the primary focus of the media portrayal of Julia Gillard?
Gillard as a political leader
Gillard as a woman

9. How do you regard the overall media coverage of Prime Minister Julia Gillard in the Election Campaign?
Fair on gender grounds
Biased because she is a woman

10. If you regard the media coverage of Prime Minister Gillard to be biased, which reason below explains why you hold this view:

Attention on Gillard's appearance (clothes, hair etc)
Attention on Gillard' s physical attributes
Attention on Gillard as a woman rather than a political candidate
Attention on Gillard's personality
Attention on Gillard's marital status
Attention on Gillard having no children
Other_____

Thank you very much.