

HEARTLAND MONITOR POLL



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NationalJournal

New Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll Finds Narrow Majority of Americans See Work/Life Balance as Attainable

Americans Not Optimistic about Cooperation in Washington or Politics Role in Improving Lives

November 14, 2014 (Washington, D.C.)— Despite concerns about the direction of the country and the likelihood of compromise in Washington following the mid-term election, a majority of the American public believes that most people can still find a way to balance the demands of work, family and contributions to community. These are among the key findings of the 21st Allstate/*National Journal* [Heartland Monitor Poll](#), which explores what Americans believe is necessary to balance their obligations at work, at home and in their neighborhoods and what they think could help them do better.

Of the topline results in the Heartland Monitor, a narrow majority of Americans (54 percent) believe that “most people can succeed at work, make a good living, and contribute to their family and their community, if they manage their time well and set the right priorities.” Some groups are especially positive with younger adults demonstrating significant optimism compared to the wider public: About one-third (36 percent) of 18 to 33-year-olds in the poll feel that balancing a successful career with family and civic commitments is unattainable in today’s economy, while 59 percent, said that people can succeed in all three facets of modern life. Perhaps less surprising, 61 percent of men said work/life balance is attainable, compared to 48 percent of women with similar splits recorded among fathers and mothers.

In line with previous Heartland Monitor polls, respondents to the survey also expressed belief in personal or individual responsibility when it comes to making life better. Sixty percent said that “more Americans taking responsibility to work hard, improve their skills and education and provide for their families” would make life a lot better. With regard to civic and community activity, two-thirds of survey participants called for greater contributions of time and money to charity and community groups. Specifically, 36 percent said that volunteering and donation to non-profits from other citizens would make life a lot better, and a further 33 percent said such actions would make life somewhat better.

“As we have seen throughout the past six years, Americans continue to display a resilient determination in this latest survey of their attitudes and experiences,” said Atlantic Media Editorial Director Ronald Brownstein. “But it’s also clear that amid living standards that have remained essentially stagnant since 2000, many Americans are finding it an impossible puzzle to both provide for their family and participate in family life the way they’d like to.”

“The poll results present an opportunity to understand what’s at the heart of Americans living a ‘good life’ and the challenges they face in achieving it,” said Stacy Sharpe, senior vice president of corporate relations, Allstate. “Americans believe in themselves and their ability to achieve a work-life balance. Family, health, giving back to the community, and earning enough to pay for education and retirement, are all incredibly important to Americans’ ability to live the good life.”

With the recent midterm election delivering a crippling defeat for Democrats, the Heartland Monitor Poll—which was conducted just prior to November 4—also shows that few Americans, regardless of party affiliation, expect cooperation in Washington to improve. Though a majority of Americans say more cooperation in Washington would benefit people like them, the poll found that just 13 percent of those surveyed said they believed that “as a result of [the] election, Congress and the President” will cooperate more than before to get things done.

Among the key findings in The Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll XXI:

Having It All

More than half the country believes in Work/life balance, but the concept remains a fantasy for many. The Heartland Monitor Poll captured both optimism and widespread anxiety about whether most people can achieve both in today’s economy.

- The nation is somewhat split on work-life balance: slightly more than half the country (54 percent) believes you can still “have it all” when it comes to managing work, family, and a good living successfully; 40 percent think in today’s economy, this is unattainable.
- A substantial gender gap separated attitudes on this question. Three-fifths of men surveyed said that most people could succeed at both work and home. But women split more evenly: 48 percent said it was possible, and 46 percent said it was not.
- Among adults in their prime working years from 30 through 49, 45 percent agree that “In today’s economy, it’s not possible for most people to succeed at work...and have enough time to contribute to their family, and their community.”
- Sixty-eight percent believe that “even in today’s competitive economy, employers could make it a priority to give workers much more flexibility in their schedules and happier workers would be more productive and better for business.”
- Forty-nine percent have gone to work sick because they couldn’t take off or felt like they shouldn’t take time off.

Pessimism for Politics

Did the results of the midterms matter? Polled in late October in the lead up to the elections, most respondents expect to remain disappointed with Washington, regardless of the outcome on Nov. 4.

- Nearly 60 percent said regardless of what happened on Nov. 4, the level of cooperation will stay about the same in Washington, and another 21 percent said it would get worse.
- Far more Americans believe the country would benefit from greater compromise between Republicans and Democrats (with 54 percent saying it would make life “a lot better”), than from either party amassing unified control of the White House and Congress.
- Just 13 percent of those surveyed said they believed that “as a result of [the] election, Congress and the President” will cooperate more than before to get things done.
- The President’s approval rating remained low: 41 percent of American adults surveyed approved of Obama’s job performance, with 49 percent disapproving.
- Just 9 percent said they approved of Congress’s job performance, tying the lowest Congressional approval rating since the Heartland Monitor Poll began measuring this sentiment in 2012.
- Sixty-three percent of Americans think the country is on the wrong track. Twenty-four percent say we’re going in the right direction.

Survey Methodology

Since April 2009, the Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Polls have explored Americans' personal financial experiences, their views on the financial system, and their opinion of how the federal government's budget situation impacts their personal finances. The most recent Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor poll was conducted by FTI Consulting, from October 22–26, 2014, among N=1,000 American adults age 18+, with 500 reached via landline and 500 reached via cell phone. The margin of error for the N=1,000 telephone sample is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

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