

Our research shows women face additional barriers when they seek executive office. While men are assumed to be qualified, women have to prove over and over they are up to the job.

Women candidates must satisfy both gender stereotypes. Voters expect a woman to be strong enough to handle difficult situations, but if a woman appears “too tough,” she risks jeopardizing her likeability.

We know from our research that likeability is non-negotiable for women. Voters will vote for a man they do not like, but will not do the same for a woman.

Confidence is key for women candidates when establishing likeability with voters. Voters assess a woman’s confidence within 30 seconds.

Voters want a woman candidate who can handle a crisis. Our research found that voters ranked being able to handle a crisis as a top trait when assessing a woman’s electability. Voters value two-way communication—both sharing information and listening to experts and people impacted—as essential for leaders in a crisis.

Authenticity is important. Voters want a 360-degree candidate. Voters want to see the whole of the candidate’s human experience, and how it will affect the decisions she makes as a leader.

ABOUT THE BARBARA LEE FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation works to advance women’s equality and representation in American politics through political research, strategic partnerships, and grants and endowments. The Foundation’s work is guided by its core belief that women’s voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.