

Slammed by Job Loss, 'Waitress Moms' Pull Away From GOP

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Grumpy complaints of skewed polls aside, President Obama appears to be outpacing Mitt Romney in a slew of recent polls, perhaps even more importantly in swing states. And once again, it seems we can thank women for helping widen that gulf. [A poll released today](#) by Quinnipiac shows Obama with an 18 point lead among women, helping him best Romney 49-45 percent among likely voters.

A particularly interesting demographic, though, is blue-collar women, or “waitress moms.” These white, non-college educated women have voted GOP in every election since 1980 except 1996. Obama only won 41 percent of their vote in 2008. But in Heartland, battleground states in the Midwest, [they are leaning toward Obama](#). What could be persuading them to go Dem this time around?

The answer is likely the economy. The recession has gouged an enormous hole in the middle of the economy, decimating mid-wage jobs and mainly replacing them with low-wage ones. Those mid-wage jobs were often a ticket to the middle class for someone without a college degree, blue and pink collar alike. But a [report from the National Employment Law Project](#) shows that middle hollowing out.

This trend often conjures images of the decline in manufacturing: men can no longer graduate high school knowing they can easily land a factory job. But it's hit women just as hard. These are the waitress moms, but they might be better described as secretary moms, because this mid-wage job loss has been concentrated among secretaries and administrative assistants. When NELP looked at the mid-wage jobs with the weakest growth during the recovery period, secretaries and administrative assistants were at number two. In fact, administrative jobs have lost a total of 672,660 jobs since 2009.

So why would these women, who have suffered huge job losses and income insecurity under President Obama's watch, turn to him in the election? Because one of the biggest issues separating men and women voters is not reproductive rights or even the economy per se – it's the government's role in the economy and “whether you want a smaller government with fewer services, or a bigger government with more services,” [in the words](#) of Carroll Doherty of the Pew Research Center. How men and women answer that question is more correlated with which party they'll give their vote than any other issue, according to Pew.

Women's answer can be summed up thus: more safety net, please. In fact, [research on the storied gender gap](#) in voting that's been with us since the 1980s shows that it's largely driven by differing views on government spending. Women are far more supportive of increased spending on welfare, education, and healthcare and overall support a bigger safety net in bad times. So while men might feel the pain of the economy and move to dump someone who talks about increasing government support, women feel the pain and know that everyone needs more help in a down economy.

Obama's lead with women still holds with those who have a college degree, who also gave him 52 percent of their votes in 2008. But a new allegiance from working-class women could add even more momentum this time around. Secretary moms, out of work and feeling the burden of difficult times, may be turning toward a Democrat in the hopes of giving everyone a better chance to escape this mess.

