

A never-ending struggle: New data reveals that antifeminists outnumber Feminists in the US

New data from consumer predictions consultancy Foresight Factory, highlights the tensions surrounding the concept of Feminism in America today.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Sisyphus has to push his boulder, women have to carry theirs like a burden, chained to their ankle.

The history of women's rights is one of constant struggle. Constantly fighting for the right to be equal, women have gained - and sometimes lost - the right to abort, to vote, to have a bank account, to have a job.

When it comes to History, women are once again depreciated. Even though some women (Marie Curie, Rosa Parks, Frida Kahlo) have survived the unfair passage of time, how many names have been forgotten in the dusty pages of time?

Who remembers Ada Lovelace, the first computer programmer?

Who remembers Hedy Lamarr, the creator of "frequency-hopping", the principle behind Bluetooth, GPS and Wi-Fi?

Who remembers Stephanie Kwolek, the inventor who discovered Kevlar?

What exactly makes these women forgettable?

The burden of sexism and a selective patriarchal memory prevent us from learning more about humanity, technology, science, progress and history.

It can also be extremely demoralising for women around the world, who start a career wondering if they'll ever be recognised or rewarded for their work.

In 2024, will we see the light at the end of the tunnel, or is there still a long way left to dig?

New data from *Foresight Factory* highlights the tensions surrounding the concept of Feminism in the US and the UK today.

Who is a feminist?

In the UK, over a third of consumers agree with the statement, "I consider myself a feminist," while 29% disagree. Only around a quarter of Americans agree, while a far greater proportion of (38%) disagree.

US millennials are the most likely generation to self-identify as feminists: 39% do, compared with 21% of Gen X and 20% of Boomers. Women are also far more likely than men to consider themselves feminists (36% vs. 20%).

Despite these low numbers, agreement is stronger among those who consider feminism a positive for society overall: 38% of US consumers feel feminism is positive, while only 19% see it as a negative. However, 48% of UK consumers say feminism is positive for society, a far greater proportion than in the US.

Millennials are polarised about the impact of feminism on society; they are both the largest group thinking it's positive and negative. Interestingly, Boomers are the generation least likely to view it as negative, with just 16% believing that, followed closely by Gen X (18%).

Proud Feminists vs Anti-Feminists

Foresight Factory's data shows that one-third of all US consumers are passionately for or against feminism. 20% of these consumers fall into the proud feminist category, and 13% are in the anti-feminist group. Proud feminists are more likely to be female than male, while the reverse is true for anti-feminists, as 64% in that group are male, with 36% female.

The data also reveals that the youth's opinion on feminism is rather nuanced. Indeed, the strongest group of proud feminists are women 16-34, with 30% of proud feminists falling into this age range. However, the second strongest group jumps to an older age range, with 23% of proud feminists made up of women 55+.

The strongest group on the other side of the aisle is also made up of younger consumers: 26% of anti-feminists are men aged 16-34. While younger consumers on both sides of the issue are more passionate than older groups, consumers aged 55+ are also divided on feminism and its current place in society.

LGBTQ+, Transgender rights, and gender identity

Consumers' position on feminism greatly impacts their view on LGBTQ+ and transgender rights. Approximately three-quarters of proud feminists agree that increased rights for LGBTQ+ people and transgender people are positive for society, in contrast to just 18% and 10% of anti-feminists, respectively.

One issue proud feminists and anti-feminists agree on is the importance of gender to their sense of personal identity. Although they have differing views on the actual definition of gender, two-thirds of each group agree their gender is important to their identity.

However, while 36% of proud feminists say that only people assigned female at birth can call themselves a woman, the vast majority of anti-feminists think this is the case.

Anti-feminists also have less progressive views on transgender rights: 59% think that increased rights for transgender people harm women's rights, while just 23% disagree with this statement. Proud feminists' flexible perspective on womanhood supports the reverse outlook: 51% disagree that increased rights for transgender people harm women's rights, while 33% agree.

Time for brands to take measures

"Companies can't afford to be apathetic in today's society but first and foremost should reflect their culture and employee values and views outwardly." - Meabh Quoirin, CEO and Co-Owner at Foresight Factory.

"If they're genuinely committed to Diversity and Inclusion and empowering women, there is no reason for them to shy away from their commitment to equality publicly and sharing strong brand stories. This gives other women a platform for confidence and arguably, over time, removes the need to draw such polarising terms as feminism and anti-feminism." adds Meabh Quoirin.

Foresight Factory recommends brands take the following approaches:

- Be considerate when it comes to who you target with politically-charged messaging

Proud feminists are more likely to consider their politics significant to their sense of identity, including LGBTQ+ and transgender rights. Messaging around these topics may alienate consumers who are not feminist.

- Employ inclusive language that is respectful of all perspectives

Using inclusive language can help you reach proud feminists, anti-feminists, and those who fall along the spectrum.

- Help disparate groups find common ground

Help both sides communicate by supporting open dialogue and promoting empathy, while warding off aggression and misinformation.

- Help consumers better understand the real meaning of feminism

Campaigns that educate (but don't patronise) could help consumers of all viewpoints understand that the true purpose of feminism is about having equal footing.

- Lean into gender identity without being exclusionary

Strictly or flexibly defining gender can alienate one or either group, so leaving that up to their own interpretation can help appeal to both.

- Position your brand as a champion of feminists

If your brand's values align with those of proud feminists, tailor your branding accordingly to resonate with this group. Lean into the identity characteristics that proud feminists identify with and support the societal issues they view as positive. You can also fight against the issues they view as negative.
