

Democrats Face Ideological Split Over Wal-Mart

Attacks on Company May Turn On Liberals, Turn Off Moderates

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Several leading Democrats have launched election-year attacks on Wal-Mart, criticizing the company for providing what they say are inadequate wages and employee health care benefits. Yet the party's rank-and-file is deeply divided in opinions about Wal-Mart, with liberal Democrats taking a much more negative view of the company than do moderate and conservative Democrats.

Democrats Divided Over Wal-Mart

	<u>Total</u>	-----Party & Ideology-----				
		Mod/		Cons/		
		Cons <u>Rep</u>	Lib <u>Rep</u>	Ind <u>Ind</u>	Mod <u>Dem</u>	Lib <u>Dem</u>
<i>Overall opinion of Wal-Mart...</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	65	72	73	65	70	44
Unfavorable	30	23	25	31	27	53
<i>Rating Wal-Mart...</i>						
<i>Effect on community*</i>						
Good	68	74	67	66	72	57
Bad	19	15	20	19	19	24
<i>Effect on country</i>						
Good	64	71	71	67	64	43
Bad	24	18	21	23	23	44
<i>As a place to shop</i>						
Good	81	84	86	79	87	62
Bad	13	10	11	13	9	32
<i>As a place to work</i>						
Good	56	64	64	56	57	41
Bad	34	24	29	34	35	53

* Based on those with a Wal-Mart nearby (91% of public)
Survey conducted Dec. 7-11, 2005 among 1,502 adults

Most liberal Democrats (53%) have an unfavorable opinion of Wal-Mart, according to a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in December. By contrast, 70% of conservative and moderate Democrats - and solid majorities in other political categories - have positive impressions of the world's largest company.

The complaint that Wal-Mart does too little for its employees may resonate with liberal Democrats. A majority of liberals (53%) say that Wal-Mart is a bad place to work. But this opinion is not shared nearly as widely among conservative and moderate Democrats; only about a third (35%) say that Wal-Mart is a bad place to work, while 57% view it as a good place to work.

More broadly, liberal Democrats are evenly split in opinions about Wal-Mart's impact on the country (43% good, 44% bad). By greater than two-to-one (64%-23%), conservative and moderate Democrats say Wal-Mart has a good effect on the country. The ideological divisions among Democrats in views of Wal-Mart are evident even when income differences are taken into account.

Fewer Liberals Shop at Wal-Mart

The December survey found that Wal-Mart stores are practically ubiquitous on the American landscape. Overall, 91% say they live close enough to a Wal-Mart to shop there, and 84% say they have done so in the past year.¹

Liberals Less Likely to be Wal-Mart Shoppers

	<i>Shopped at Wal-Mart in past year?</i>		
	Reg- <u>ularly</u>	Once <u>a while</u>	Don't <u>shop</u>
	%	%	%
Total	42	42	16=100
Conserv. Republican	46	39	15=100
Mod./Lib. Rep.	44	42	14=100
Independent	41	44	15=100
Conserv./Mod. Dem.	45	40	15=100
Liberal Democrat	28	46	26=100

About three-quarters of liberal Democrats (74%) said they had shopped at a Wal-Mart in the past year, but just 28% reported shopping there regularly. That compares with 45% of conservative and moderate Democrats and similar percentages in other political groups.

Most liberal Democrats (62%) say Wal-Mart is a good place to shop. But 32% of liberals say it is a bad place to shop; that compares with just 9% of conservative and moderate Democrats, 13% of independents, 10% of conservative Republicans, and 11% of moderate/liberal Republicans who have a negative view of Wal-Mart as a place to shop.

About this Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,502 adults, 18 years of age or older, from December 7-11, 2005. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling

is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on form 1 (N=761) and form 2 (N=741) the sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Notes

¹See "[Wal-Mart a Good Place to Shop, But Some Critics Too](#), Dec. 15, 2005.