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SEXISM IS ALIVE

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Associated Press

Recent data collected by the Illinois Research Consortium (IRC) reveals that women face widespread discrimination and sexism in many important areas of life. The study, which included archival data analysis and a survey of over 5,000 current undergraduates and 5,000 alumni who graduated between 1998 and 2008, revealed that women routinely face discrimination and inequality in the workplace, politics, the courtroom, and in everyday interpersonal interactions. In addition, the survey revealed that men continue to hold negative attitudes about women.

POLITICAL DISPARITIES

Although women make up 51% of the population, less than 13% of elected officials are female. The study revealed that women hold only 12.4% of the seats in the U. S. Congress: holding only 12.0% of the Senate seats and 12.6% of the seats in the House of Representatives. Only 5 states currently have women in the Governor's office and only 19 states in U.S. history have ever had female governors. Men are twice as likely as women to say that men make better leaders than women and indicate that they would hesitate to vote for a female candidate.

SEXISM STILL PERVASIVE

The data also showed that stereotypes and negative attitudes about women have remained pervasive in recent years. Research has shown that between 75% and 80% of men hold sexist attitudes and would discriminate against women if given the opportunity. Men generally also rate women as more irrational, manipulative, over-emotional, and less competent than men. In a survey of American men last year, over 65% said that they thought women

should stay home and raise kids. In short, all women face pervasive sexism on a regular basis and lack opportunities compared to men.

MENTAL HEALTH RISKS

Men's attitudes definitely have an impact on women. The study revealed that 60% of current female students reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment from male students, faculty, and work supervisors. Women were also eight times more likely than male students to report hearing prejudiced assumptions made about their personal and academic interests, to be the target of derogatory remarks, and to be treated disrespectfully because of their gender. This type of discrimination-related stress is known to lead to increased physical and psychological health problems. In fact, women are more than three times as likely as men to report experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression. The Illinois Research Consortium concluded that the stress associated with experiencing discrimination likely contributed to these mental health disparities.

NOT EXPECTING THIS

Finally, 90% of the female alumni reported that while in college they did not recognize the extent to which prejudice would cause personal and professional barriers for them. In short, the Illinois Research Consortium demonstrated that women face pervasive discrimination on a regular basis and a lack of opportunities compared to men.

More results from the survey can be found online at <http://www.irc.org>