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## Survey: Women More Pessimistic Than Men on the Economy

[Gloom Among Chief Purchasers Bodes Ill for Consumer Spending](#)

By [Abbey Klaassen](#)

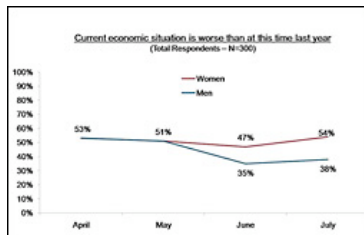
Published: [August 27, 2009](#)



NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- For a majority of women, the glass is still half empty -- and for marketers that could be tough to swallow.

Even though they have arguably fared better in the recession, women are more pessimistic about the economy than men, according to a 300-person survey by Performics, part of Publicis Groupe's VivaKi Nerve Center. While men appear to have improved their outlook on the economy, women have not.

The unit's "2009 Online Buyer Economic Trend Study" reported that 53% of women said their situation is worse than a year ago. By contrast, only 38% of men said they are worse off than a year ago. In April, when Performics posed those same questions, 53% of both genders said they were worse off.



Women More Pessimistic Than Men About Economy

The trend is interesting, considering unemployment among women is more than two percentage points lower than it is for men, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Men, by many accounts, have born the brunt of the job cuts.

But the divergence is more eye-opening when you consider the rule of thumb that women are responsible for more than 80% of household spending. And that "chief purchaser" role may actually

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be contributing to the pessimism.

**Reduced household budgets**

"In this down economy, household financial situations are negatively impacted by lower incomes, no raises, no bonuses and, in some cases, unemployment," Michael Kahn, senior VP-marketing at Performics, said in an e-mail interview. "Given that women are the primary purchaser in many -- if not most -- households, they may bear the brunt of having to watch dollars more carefully and make a reduced household budget work. This applies not only for a two-income household but a single-income household as well."

What's more, 73% of women said the recession has fundamentally changed the way they think about saving and spending money vs. 57% of men.

But there might also be another explanation, said Marti Barletta, the author of "Marketing to Women" and CEO of TrendSight Group. She said she's not surprised to see women are more pessimistic, because they just tend to be so.

Women's overall pessimism likely signals that consumer spending isn't going to return yet. And if women remain gloomy, the implications go beyond marketing. Ms. Barletta said women, thanks to their purchasing power, are a group the government needs to worry about as well, because they hold the key to consumer spending.

"If we can't get women to feel more hopeful and confident about the future, it's going to have significant implications," she said.

**The right messaging**

From a messaging perspective, she said marketers should address women "not as pessimists but as rationalists."

"The optimistic message [from marketers], all the 'You deserve it' stuff, is completely wrong right now," she said. "What is right is saying, 'You're smart. You can handle this. You can make the right decisions, and here's how we can help.'"

Mr. Kahn also said marketers should "reinforce value and use budget-friendly messaging in [the] marketing mix." They should "focus on the 'essential' aspects of a product as appropriate. He also suggested advertisers "utilize ad copy and visuals that reinforce the basic needs a product fulfills."

According to the survey results, 55% of women expect to spend less in the next 60 days, vs. 37% of men. And 41% of women expect to spend less on household essentials in that time period, up from 34% in April.

The study also noted regional differences in spending expectations and attitudes: The Southwest was by far the most optimistic region, with 32% of respondents reporting that they are better off than a year ago. That was followed by Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, at 16%, the Southeast at 14%, the Midwest at 9% and the West at 7%.

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By Rodney33 | FRISCO, TX [August 27, 2009 08:49:58 pm](#):

We have done studies on both how to go to market better in a

Shows Than at Selling Cellphone Service

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recession and how to communicate and motivate Mom. "The Seven Rules Of Superior Recession Proof Design" and "Seven Keys To Mom's Heart" are two of our white papers on the subject.

In those studies we found the ways to build loyalty and preference beyond a simple lowest price strategy include;

- 1) Focusing on branded connections at the point-of-purchase to overcome the barriers to purchase,
- 2) Empathizing with consumers' need to cut back,
- 3) Providing assistance in helping them make better decisions
- 4) Helping Moms make their job fun and easier and
- 5) Simplifying shopping experiences with solution based partners,

Rodney Mason, CMO  
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By AHRL | CHICAGO, IL [August 28, 2009 01:17:23 am](#):

Since half or so of women are single moms....I have no doubt same are more pessimistic. They also make 77% of what men make.

Helping moms make their jobs more fun might have to do with their being able to get more sleep as they work 2 full time jobs--being moms and being workers. Not to mention they have inadequate healthcare.

Anne Lyon  
Boulder CO  
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By KGA | Dhaka, MD [August 28, 2009 02:43:18 am](#):

I think the more single parent households will be, the more difficulties would be for CPG marketers.

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By Laurence | Kew Gardens, NY [August 28, 2009 10:06:03 am](#):

What's interesting about this is that men have statistically been hit much harder by this recession than womrn.

Men have seen much higher job losses than women, leading to the term "ManceSSION"

<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/manceSSION.asp?partner=forbes-hpm>

In addition, men tend to invest more in stocks and other risky investments- meaning they also lost more money in the market downturn.

<http://www.filife.com/stories/the-male-and-female-investment-style>

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By pocketman | Minneapolis, MN [August 28, 2009 11:25:36 am](#):

"According to the survey results, 55% of women expect to spend less in the next 60 days, vs. 37% of men."

"73% of women said the recession has fundamentally changed the way they think about saving and spending money vs. 57%

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of men"

This coincides with the fact that men are, in general, more brand loyal and less price sensitive.

pocketknifeadvertising.com

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By Nattiedread | Dallas, TX [August 28, 2009 11:26:55 am](#):

Because women are in the trenches and actually talk about their struggles, lack of money etc. etc. No knock on men, women are just more expressive and society does not require nor demand that we always have it together. Soooo, we are more open and know what our friends are facing. We know its no longer "shopping" as usual. And we know that if I cannot buy those Jimmy Choos, by golly pessimism reigns! (I guess my pessimism will reign for quite a few more years...sigh)

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By Rachel | NY, NY [August 28, 2009 02:46:09 pm](#):

Moms are on the front line. They're making the decisions on a daily basis of what their family has to curtail or give up, and they're the ones that have to make explanations to their kids on why they have to say 'no!' And that's depressing. Short term, moms make a hundred decisions a week in the supermarket. Our experience tells us those decisions were complicated and emotionally fraught already, and in today's economy more so. Moms are more in touch with all the child-related expenses like sports related uniforms, birthday gifts and parties, 'latest and greatest' toys, electronics, accessories, clothes and more that their kids want and that aren't in the family budget that dad sees every month. Brands need to re-assess their equities to make sure they have the value-added that keeps mom turning to their brand, and not the generic alternative. For some time, it seems.

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