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**Gen Y Women Still Facing Gender Discrimination in the Workplace
New Survey Results from Business and Professional Women's Foundation**

Washington, DC - Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation today released [*Gen Y Women to Employers: What they Want in the Workplace and Why it Matters for Business*](#), a report that explores Generation Y women's career choices and the opportunities and challenges they face in the workplace. This research, based on a national survey conducted in May 2011, disputes many reports in today's popular literature that Gen Y women do not believe that gender is a problem in today's workplace. In fact, 77% of respondents said that gender is a moderate or severe problem in today's workplace and almost 50% said that they had observed or experienced gender discrimination.

"Far too often Gen Y women are treated as a homogenous group with monolithic perspectives. BPW Foundation's research questions such views, highlighting how Gen Y women's workplace expectations and experiences differ by occupation, employer type, compensation type and presence of children," said Dr. Sheila Barry-Oliver, Chair of the BPW Research and Education Committee that oversaw the research. "Exploring key areas of social difference is vital to understanding Gen Y women's workplace challenges and opportunities."

Key findings included concerns about gender and age discrimination, the desire for a holistic approach to work-life balance and the fact that Gen Y women do not hold a uniform set of work values.

1. **Gen Y women believe Gender Discrimination is Still an Issue in Today's Workplace.** Over 75% of survey participants identified gender as a moderate or severe problem in today's workplace. The most prevalent forms reported were: stereotyping (63%), unequal compensation (60%), not being treated as an equal (58%), inequality of opportunities (58%), being held to different standards (51%), sexist jokes (38%), and sexual harassment (31%).
2. **Gen Y Women Experience a Double Jeopardy -Gender and Age.** Survey results indicate that gender and age may have a compounding effect. Gen Y women who had experienced gender discrimination were more likely to report generational conflict or discrimination than those who had not. Fifty-one percent of Gen Y women who observed or experienced gender discrimination also reported generational discrimination. The most common forms of age discrimination reported were: being perceived as incompetent or inexperienced because of age; name calling such as "kid" and "girl"; being passed over for promotions because of age; and being held to different standards because of age.
3. **Gen Y Women Want a More Holistic Approach to Work-Life Balance.** Work-life balance literature often focuses on how workers combine work and family responsibilities. Survey results highlight the need to broaden this focus because: 1) Work-life balance is equally

important to Gen Y women regardless of whether or not they have children; 2) Family is important for Gen Y women without children; and 3) Gen Y women have responsibilities outside of work and home.

4. **Gen Y Women Hold Disparate Career Values.** Gen Y women, as a cohort, did not uniformly report a set of work values. Responses were mediated by various dimensions of difference: occupation, employer type and presence of children. Gen Y women represent a heterogeneity of goals associated with their work life.

“Employers cannot afford to ignore the challenges that Gen Y women face in the workplace. Continuing challenges related to work-life balance and especially to gender and age discrimination have profound business implications. Promoting workplace cultures and practices that embrace equality, flexibility, and inclusivity are imperative for the success and sustainability of business,” explained BPW Foundation CEO Deborah L. Frett.

“For instance, to meet Gen Y women’s work-life balance demands, employers need to move beyond programmatic responses and critically examine their assumptions about the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker.’ Often the ‘ideal worker’ is a person who is available anytime, anywhere and for as long as the employer needs. Gen Y women are largely rejecting this notion.” Frett said. “They are refusing to mistake their job for their life.”

Key Employer Applications from the study include:

1. **Check assumptions.** Employers should examine assumptions about Gen Y women and assumptions underlying workplace policies and practices.
2. **Address the sources not just the symptoms.** Designing actions to address work-life balance, gender discrimination and fostering cross-generational relations requires both identifying the condition of inequality and contributing factors to the inequality.
3. **Measure success.** Employers should develop indicators to measure the success of actions taken to address challenges and promote opportunities—measures that avoid simply “counting” and that measure changes in levels of gender or age inequality.

This research, funded from the Virginia Allan Young Careerist Grant, is part of BPW Foundation’s ongoing “Young Careerist” research project that since 2005 has been exploring the career opportunities and challenges facing today’s young working women. The research gives voice to a distinct group of working women who are vital to developing a diverse and skilled workforce. Research has been conducted using social media, focus groups and this national survey. To find all of the research and this report, visit our [Young Careerist website](#).

Business and Professional Women’s (BPW) Foundation is a 501(c) (3) research and education organization that is transforming the workplace for women and employers. Through groundbreaking research and as a convener of employers and employees, BPW Foundation leads the way in developing and advocating for policies and programs that “work” for both women and businesses. www.bpwfoundation.org.

