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Release is effective immediately

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**Hawkeye Poll: Iowans support U.S. Supreme Court term limits, oppose expansion of court size**

According to a recent Hawkeye Poll — conducted by University of Iowa faculty and students between March 31 and April 13, 2022 — a majority of Iowans support having U.S. Supreme Court justices serve a fixed term, but oppose expanding the number of justices. Specifically, 62.9% of respondents indicated support for supreme court justice term limits, while 20.3% of respondents opposed them. Another 16.7% either did not know or declined to answer. When it comes to whether Iowans think the number of justices should be expanded, a majority of respondents, 57.0%, indicated that the number of supreme court justices should not be changed, compared to 23.4% who supported expansion. 19.6% of respondents said they did not know or declined to answer.

The UI Department of Political Science has conducted the Hawkeye Poll since 2007. A series of national and state public opinion polls, this experience serves as an important learning opportunity for students. More than 1,000 students have had the opportunity to directly participate in the research and survey process and to acquire valuable career-related knowledge about survey research and public polling in general. This year, 28 students collaborated to design and implement a poll of Iowans.

Regardless of their stance on U.S. Supreme Court expansion, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of reasons for expansion and then with a second set of reasons against expansion. Among reasons favoring expansion, the most agreed with reason was that an expansion could offer a wider range of opinion on the court, cited by 41.1% of respondents. A smaller share of respondents, 30.5%, agreed with the statement that expansion could make the court more ideologically balanced. The statement that an expansion could give more opportunities for a wider variety of generations to be represented was selected by 33.7% of respondents. 10.8% of respondents agreed with the consideration that supreme court expansion has happened many times before. Turning to considerations offered in opposition to expansion, 36.1% agreed with the statement that an expansion could undermine the integrity of the judicial system if the number of justices can be changed this easily. 32.1% of respondents agreed with the statement that an expansion could make arguments less productive and deliberations more difficult, while 29.9% respondents agreed that an expansion could diminish the power of the justices, and 24.4% supporting the tradition of a nine-member bench.

Responses to these reforms varied with respondent political party affiliation. Democrats were more likely to support term limits, though a majority of respondents across all party affiliation groups supported it. A large majority of Democrats, 72.6%, supported justices serving a fixed term, compared to 60.5% of Republicans and 61.5% of Independents. When it comes to expanding the size of supreme court, 74.6% of Republicans said that the number of supreme court justices should not be changed, compared to 38.4% of Democrats and 60.8% of Independents. Age also produced differences in supporting an expansion. Among those aged 18 to 34, 38.9% indicated support for an expansion. The percentage supporting it decreased steadily across older groups, dropping to 6.7% among those 70 and older.

Notable differences in agreeing with reasons for supporting an expansion were observed based on attitudes toward a post-15-week abortion ban. Those who are more likely to oppose a post-15-week abortion ban are more likely to agree with the statement that an expanded supreme court could be more ideologically balanced. Specially, 48.2% of those who strongly opposed a post-15-week abortion ban agreed with this statement, compared to only 14.5% of those who strongly supported a ban. Similarly, 52.8% of those who opposed the post-15-week abortion ban and 51.1% of those who strongly opposed it agreed that supreme court with more than nine justices could present a wide range of opinions, compared to 32.2% strongly supporting a post-15-week abortion ban and 43.8% supporting it.

Learn more about the course at <https://now.uiowa.edu/2019/11/taking-iowas-pulse-hawkeye-poll>.

**Respondent identification:** The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) assisted with data collection. Responses were gathered by phone (116) and by web (947). For the phone portion, the ISRC obtained a random sample of Iowans consisting of 40% household landline numbers and 60% mobile phone numbers. All respondents who stated they were older than 18 and willing to participate in the survey were included. After training, students in the class used the ISRC's computer-assisted interviewing resources to complete the calling and interviews. No quotas were set for the phone component. For the online portion, the ISRC contracted with a respected web panel vendor to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of 947 online respondents. Respondents invited to complete the online survey were Iowa adults, aged 18 to 120 years, recruited for participation via web panel. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set on the following demographics: sex, age, and urbanicity.

**Sample:** 1,063 voting-age residents in Iowa (online and by phone), margin of error +/-3.1%. Among these, 947 respondents took the online version of the survey, with a margin of error of 3.2%.

Results for this release use only responses to the web survey since the questions about U.S. Supreme Court reforms were not asked on the phone version to reduce interview length.

**Weighting:** Reported results are weighted by age, sex, and party identification.

### **About the Hawkeye Poll**

The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of UI faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the Department of Political Science. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, which uses the facilities of the Iowa Social Science Research Center directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science and faculty advisor for the poll. The Department of Political Science, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the UI Public Policy Center support the poll; financial support was provided through a Student Technology Fee award (#1290-91).

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