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Majority of Americans trust president, Congress less than half the time

A new Hawkeye Poll survey suggests that trust in government institutions is generally low, and women are slightly less likely to trust these institutions than men. Respondents were asked how often they typically trust the president, the Supreme Court, and Congress to do the right thing.

About 8% of respondents say they always trust the president to do the right thing, with 23% responding that they trust the president to do the right thing most of the time. Thirteen percent of respondents trust the president about half the time, and 26% trust the president some of the time. Twenty-five percent say they never trust the president to do the right thing.

Trust in the Supreme Court mirrored trust levels in the president. Eight percent of respondents always trust the Supreme Court to do the right thing; 24% trust it most of the time; 15% trust it about half the time; and 31% trust the Supreme Court some of the time. Fifteen percent of respondents say they never trust the Supreme Court.

Congress inspired the lowest trust of the three federal branches. Only 4% of respondents say they always trust Congress to do the right thing, with 13% responding that they trust Congress most of the time, and 19% trusting it half of the time. Thirty-nine percent say they trust Congress some of the time, and 19% of respondents never trust Congress.

Americans' trust in different levels of government differs slightly based on gender. The largest disparity is in the Supreme Court: 25% of women say they trust the Supreme Court to do the right thing always or most of the time, compared with 40% of their male counterparts.

This trend is also evident for other branches of government, albeit slightly less pronounced: 12% of women say they trust Congress more than half the time, compared with 23% of men; and 27% of women trust the president more than half the time, compared with 37% of men.

Respondent Identification:

The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) contracted with a respected web panel vendor to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of 1,123 respondents.

Respondents invited to complete the web survey were U.S. adults, ages 18 to 120, recruited for participation via web panel. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set on the following demographics: sex, age, and census region.

Sample:

1,123 voting-age residents in the United States, margin of error +/-2.9%.

Date of Survey:

The Hawkeye Poll was fielded between March 24 and April 5, 2023.

Weighting:

Reported results are weighted by age, sex, and census region.

About the University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll:

The poll was designed by the University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll, composed of University of Iowa faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. The poll is a teaching and research project and is one of many of the experiential learning undergraduate courses offered in the Department of Political Science. The poll was implemented in collaboration with the Iowa Social Science Research Center.