

University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll – Topline Results
Plurality of Iowans favor eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences
May 23, 2022
March/April poll of Iowans

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 criminal justice and judicial reforms were not asked on the phone version to reduce interview length.

About: The Hawkeye Poll was fielded March 31 to April 13, 2022.

The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of University of Iowa 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 fund the poll; financial support was provided through a Student Technology Fee award (#1290-91).

The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) assisted with data collection. Responses were gathered by phone (116) and online (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.

Media contacts:

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Respondent identification: All respondents who stated they were older than 18 and willing to participate in the survey were included. Responses were completed online and by phone. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set for the online data collection on the following demographics: sex, age, and urbanicity. No quotas were set for the phone data collection.

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

When a police department is accused of corruption or misconduct, the claims are usually investigated by an external department or federal group. A common criticism about these investigations is that they are just for show and there will be no real punishment or reform of the police department. How confident are you in the efficacy of a federal investigation of a police department?

	%
Very Confident	11.5
Somewhat Confident	38.8
Not Confident	24.3
Not Confident at All	16.9
Don't Know/Declined	8.5
Total	100.0

In Iowa, many felonies require a mandatory minimum sentence. For example, people convicted of some class C felonies are required to serve at least 70% of the minimum sentence. Would you favor or oppose eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences so that judges have more discretion to make sentencing decisions on a case-by-case basis?

	%
Strongly Favor	15.0
Favor	35.0
Oppose	20.4
Strongly Oppose	10.3
Don't Know/Declined	19.3
Total	100.0

Currently, each of Iowa's judicial election subdistricts has a nominating commission. The commissions have 11 members: five elected by lawyers; five nonlawyers appointed by the governor; and the chair. Recently, Iowa lawmakers proposed a bill that would give the governor six appointments to each commission. Supporters believe that the bill will reduce the chance that the chief judge could have too much impact on the process. Opponents worry that the bill will inject more politics into the judicial selection process. Do you favor or oppose this bill?

	%
Favor	18.2
Oppose	39.0
Don't Know/Declined	42.7
Total	100.0

Have confidence in a federal investigation of a police department by party identification.

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Total
	%	%	%	%
Very Confident	10.6	14.6	12.0	12.4
Somewhat Confident	40.2	45.7	34.7	40.3
Not Confident	26.9	20.1	24.6	23.8
Not Confident at All	15.6	13.7	18.7	16.0
Don't Know/Declined	6.7	5.9	10.1	7.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Have confidence in a federal investigation of a police department by racial identity.

	White	Black	Asian	Native American	Hispanic/Latino	Some other race	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very Confident	12.1	6.1	8.2	0.0	10.6	0.0	11.6
Somewhat Confident	40.9	21.9	30.4	19.6	26.4	17.0	39.1
Not Confident	23.0	28.2	42.1	22.3	38.4	32.2	23.9
Not Confident at All	16.3	29.2	11.1	16.7	11.5	34.9	17.0
Don't Know/Declined	7.7	14.5	8.2	41.4	13.1	15.9	8.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Support for an elimination of mandatory minimum prison sentences by party identification.

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Total
	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	21.0	12.8	11.7	15.1
Favor	39.6	30.5	35.6	35.2
Oppose	15.7	25.5	20.3	20.5
Strongly Oppose	4.3	16.5	9.5	10.1
Don't Know/Declined	19.5	14.8	22.8	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Support for an elimination of mandatory minimum prison sentences by age.

	18-34	35-54	55-69	70 and over	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	20.1	17.2	10.0	7.3	15.0
Favor	31.1	31.8	40.7	40.5	35.0
Oppose	20.4	20.1	21.5	19.0	20.4
Strongly Oppose	7.5	11.3	10.2	14.4	10.3
Don't Know/Declined	20.8	19.5	17.6	18.8	19.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Support for an elimination of mandatory minimum prison sentences by community type.

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	16.7	13.5	15.2	15.0
Favor	33.3	37.8	34.2	35.2
Oppose	18.9	21.1	20.9	20.4
Strongly Oppose	9.1	11.1	9.1	9.8
Don't Know/Declined	22.0	16.5	20.6	19.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Support for a proposal that would give governor more power in appointing nominating commission members for each of Iowa's judicial election subdistricts by party identification.

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Total
	%	%	%	%
Favor	19.5	21.3	16.0	19.0
Oppose	51.8	30.4	35.4	39.2
Don't Know/Declined	28.7	48.3	48.5	41.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or other?

	%
Democrat	30.2
Republican	31.0
Independent	29.7
No preference	7.2
Other	1.8
Total	100.0

What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

	%
White	89.7
Black	5.8
Asian	1.5
Native American	0.5
Hispanic/Latino	1.8
Some other race	0.7
Total	100.0

Four-category age, recoded from: In what year were you born?

Four category age	%
18-34	29.6
35-54	32.4
55-69	25.4
70 and over	12.6
Total	100.0

Do you consider the community that you live in to be urban, suburban, or rural?

	%
Urban	27.5
Suburban	34.6
Rural	38.0
Total	100.0