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*Release is effective immediately*

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**Hawkeye Poll: Plurality of Iowans favor eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences**

According to a recent Hawkeye Poll — conducted by University of Iowa faculty and students between March 31 and April 13 — a plurality of Iowans (50.0%) were in favor of eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences so that judges have more discretion to make sentencing decisions on a case-by-case basis. Alternately, 30.7% of Iowans opposed an elimination of mandatory minimum prison sentences. Another 19.3% of respondents either did not know their opinion 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.

Support for eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentence differs based on party identification. Among those who identified as Democrat, 60.6% were in favor of eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences, compared to 20.0% opposing an elimination. 19.5% of Democrats either did not know their opinion or declined to answer. Respondents who identified as Republican were more evenly split in opinion, with 43.3% in support of an elimination and 42.0% opposed. 14.8% of Republicans either did not know yet or declined to answer. Among those who identified as Independent, a plurality of respondents, 46.3%, supported eliminating mandatory minimum prison sentences, compared to 29.8% opposing it. 22.8% of Independents said did not know their opinions or declined to answer. Support did not vary much with age or a respondent's community type.

Respondents were polled on how confident they are in the efficacy of a federal investigation of a police department when a police department is accused of corruption or misconduct. 50.3% of Iowans indicated they were very (11.5%) or somewhat (38.8%) confident in the efficacy of a federal investigation of a police department, compared to 41.2% who reported they were not (24.3%) or not at all (16.9%) confident.

Notable differences in confidence in the efficacy of a federal investigation of a police department were observed based on racial identity. Minority groups were more skeptical about a federal investigation than Whites. Specifically, 53.0% of Whites expressed confidence in a federal investigation, while 28.0% of Blacks, 38.6% of Asians, 19.6% of Native Americans, and 37.0% Hispanics/Latinos felt in the same way. Majorities of Blacks and Asians—57.4% and 53.2%—respectively, did not have confidence in such an investigation. When party affiliation was taken into account, 60.3% of Republicans expressed confidence compared to 50.8% of Democrats and 46.7% of Independents. In contrast, 42.5% of Democrats and 43.3% of Independents did not have confidence in a federal investigation, compared to 33.8% of Republicans.

Respondents also were asked whether they support or oppose a recent proposal that would give the Iowa governor more power in appointing nominating commission members for each of the state's judicial election subdistricts. More respondents indicated that they oppose the proposal than favor it, 39.0% to 18.2%, but the plurality of respondents, 42.7%, either did not know their opinion or declined to answer. Opposition varied with respondent partisanship, with 51.8% of Democrats opposing compared to 30.4% of Republicans and 35.4% of Independents. However, overall, a plurality of Republicans and Independents, 48.3% and 48.5% respectively, either did not know whether they would favor or oppose it or declined to answer.

Learn more about the Hawkeye Poll 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 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.

**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.

**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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