

March 2, 2025

Release is effective immediately

Hawkeye Poll: 74% of Americans Prefer a Yard over a Park, 43% Prefer Working by Themselves

According to a recent Hawkeye Poll — conducted by University of Iowa faculty and students between November 14 - November 20— 73.4% of Americans stated they would prefer a smaller yard over a large park, even if the park would have amenities that they otherwise could not afford, with 15.9% saying they would prefer the park. A second group was asked if they would prefer working in a group or by themselves, 41.4% stated they preferred working by themselves, while 37.1% stated they preferred working with others.

The full text of the yard question is as follows: “Let’s say you are moving to a new home and have narrowed the choice to two homes. The two homes are similar in every other factor, except one has a large personal yard that you can do with as you please, and the other has a park managed by the local community. If you were to choose the area with the park you would have a larger area to relax, with more amenities (a garden/basketball court/etc.) which you wouldn't be able to afford on your own, but you would have to share the space with others and compromise with them when choosing what to do with the park. Which home would you prefer?” Half of respondents were selected to receive this question while the other half received the question about working in a group. Those that were randomly selected for the latter received the following question: “Imagine you are in a situation where if you were to work together with a group of people you could achieve more, but you would have to compromise with others in the group. Would you prefer working on your own or working with the group?”

Following these two questions, respondents were randomly divided into thirds. The first third was asked why they chose the option they did. The respondent was given similar options, although one option, wanting to work in a group/privacy, was changed depending if they chose the home with the park/to work with others or not. Of those who stated they preferred a home with a yard, 53.9% stated they chose it due to simple preference, 36.2% stated they chose it because they preferred privacy, 7.4% chose it due to efficiency, 2.0% believed they could not do what they wanted otherwise, and the last 0.4% said it was for some other reason. There were not enough observations to conclude anything for those who preferred the park. Of those who stated they preferred working on their own, 39.4% stated simple preference, 44.5% stated they believed it was more efficient, 13.8% stated they prefer privacy, and around 1.4% selecting either they could not do what they wanted or other. Of those who stated they preferred working in a group, 82.4% stated it was because they believed it was more efficient, with simple preference and other being selected around 5.3 and 5.2% of the time each, respectively, and the other options being selected less than 2% of the time. Of note, a large portion of those who chose the home with a yard or working on their own cited simple preference, an intrinsic motivation rather than any tangible benefits. In contrast, the vast majority of those who chose to work in a group cited efficiency, rather than any sort of preference for working with others.

We found that age and gender were the most impactful on a person’s preference towards preferring a yard or a park. Age was the most impactful, with only 62.4% of those aged 18-35 preferring the yard, compared to 79.1% of those aged 55-69 and 77.7% of those 70 or over. A similar pattern was seen when the question of if they preferred working in a group was asked, 45.7% of those aged 18-35 preferred working in a group, compared to 41.7% of those aged 55-69 and 26.7% of those aged 70+.

The results by respondent gender show that women were more likely than men to prefer a yard and

working on their own. 80.0% of women preferred the home with the yard, compared to only 65.5% of men. Likewise, 46.7% of women preferred working on their own, compared to only 36.5% of men. Minor differences were found when comparisons were done by respondent area of residence, party identification, and education level.

The second third of the respondents received a set of scenarios and asked if any of them would change their mind. If they were asked if they would prefer a home with a yard or a park they were given the following four prompts:

1. The community has shown interest in hearing what the new neighbors want done with the park;
2. The community focuses on keeping the costs of the park low;
3. The park is rarely used, meaning you're likely to be left alone;
4. The current council is quite rigid and unwilling to change much about the park.

Those who were asked if they preferred working alone or in a group were given one of the following two prompts:

1. The people you would work with are interested in hearing what you want and compromising with you;
2. The group is quite rigid, and is unlikely to listen to your opinion.

None of the prompts convinced a majority of those who chose any one option to change their minds. The most significant impacts were the prompts stating that those they would be working with would be either rigid in their ways or interested in the person's input. Of those who stated they would prefer working in a group 34.4% said they would change their mind if the group was rigid. Of those who stated they would prefer a home with a park 25.3% said they would change their mind if the council was rigid. Of those who said they would like to work alone, 21.6% said they would change their mind if the group was interested in their input. Around 5-10% of people said they would change their minds when given the other prompts.

The University of Iowa 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. Over 1100 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 24 students collaborated to design and implement a poll of Iowans. Learn more about the course at <https://now.uiowa.edu/2019/11/taking-iowas-pulse-hawkeye-poll>.

Respondent Identification: The Iowa Center for Social Science Innovation (CSSI) assisted with survey programming and data collection. The CSSI contracted with Verasight to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of about 1000 respondents. Respondents invited to complete the web survey were U.S. adults, aged 18+, recruited for participation via web panel.

To further ensure data quality, the Verasight data team implements a number of post-data collection quality assurance procedures, including confirming that all responses correspond with U.S. IP addresses, confirming no duplicate respondents, verifying the absence of non-human responses, and removing any respondents who failed in-survey attention and/or straight-lining checks. The Verasight data team also

reviewed open-ended items to ensure no responses contained nonsensical, inappropriate, or non-sequitur text. Respondents that completed the survey in less than 30% of the median completion time were removed.

Sample: 1002 U.S. voting-age respondents. The margin of sampling error, which accounts for the design effect and is calculated using the classical random sampling formula, is +/- 3.3%.

Weighting: The data are weighted to match the August 2025 Current Population Survey on age, race/ethnicity, sex, income, education, region, and metropolitan status, as well as to a running three-year average of partisanship distributions from the Pew Research Center NPORS benchmarking surveys and population benchmarks of 2024 vote.

About the Hawkeye Poll: The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, composed of University of Iowa faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the Political Science departments. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, and is directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science. The Department of Political Science provides financial support for the poll.

Student Research Team: Martin Viles assisted with the preparation of this release.

Contact: Frederick Boehmke, Faculty Advisor for the Hawkeye Poll, 319-335-2342 (office), 716-866-9277 (cell), frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu.

Martin Viles, Political Science Student, (515) - 291 - 0805, mviles@uiowa.edu or martinviles36@gmail.com.

###