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New Marquette Law School national survey finds four-point increase in overall public approval of U.S. Supreme Court’s performance and plurality support of five recent major decisions

Please note: Complete Poll results and methodology information can be found online at law.marquette.edu/poll

MILWAUKEE – A new Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds that 45% of adults approve of the job the U.S. Supreme Court is doing and 55% disapprove. While approval remains below disapproval, this is a 4-percentage point increase in approval since May and the second highest rating since March 2022, when approval stood at 54%. The trend in approval since 2020 is shown in Table 1. (All results in the tables are stated as percentages; the precise wording of the questions can be found in the online link noted above.) For each of five June 2023 decisions inquired about, a plurality of people with an opinion favored the Court’s ruling, as discussed after the first two tables.

Table 1: Supreme Court approval
Among adults

Poll dates	Approval	
	Approve	Disapprove
7/7-12/23	45	55
5/8-18/23	41	59
3/13-22/23	44	56
1/9-20/23	47	53
11/15-22/22	44	56
9/7-14/22	40	60
7/5-12/22	38	61
5/9-19/22	44	55
3/14-24/22	54	45
1/10-21/22	52	46
11/1-10/21	54	46
9/7-16/21	49	50
7/16-26/21	60	39
9/8-15/20	66	33

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Overall, how much do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is handling its job?

Approval among Republicans rose by 12 percentage points, to 71% in July, up from 59% in May. Approval among independents rose 2 percentage points, while among Democrats it declined 2 percentage points from May to July. Approval of the Court by party identification is shown in Table 2 for July and for May.

Table 2: Approval of the Supreme Court, with party identification, May and July 2023

Among adults

Party ID	Approval	
	Approve	Disapprove
July 2023		
Total	45	55
Republican	71	29
Independent	40	60
Democrat	24	76
May 2023		
Total	41	59
Republican	59	41
Independent	38	62
Democrat	26	74

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Overall, how much do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is handling its job?

Other headlines

- Each of five decisions released in June 2023 and included in the survey found a plurality of support, with at least two-thirds awareness in cases involving race in college admissions, student-loan forgiveness, and religious beliefs and free speech:
 - Half of all respondents, 50%, favored the Court’s decision that colleges cannot use race as one of several factors in deciding which applicants to admit, while 37% favored the decision against President Biden’s student loan forgiveness program and 35% favored the decision that a business owner’s religious beliefs or free speech rights can justify refusing some services to gay people. About a third of those surveyed had not heard enough to weigh in on the decisions.
- Cases involving the need for employers to accommodate religious practices and Alabama’s congressional map elicited awareness of only about one-third of respondents:
 - A ruling that federal civil rights law requires an employer to accommodate an employee’s religious practice was favored by 27%, but 63% had not heard enough to have an opinion. Similarly, 24% favored the ruling that Alabama, in drawing a congressional districting map, had diluted the power of Black voters, in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but 66% had not heard enough.

The latest Marquette Law School Poll’s national Supreme Court survey was conducted July 7-12, 2023. The survey interviewed 1,005 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points.

Confidence in the Court as an institution rose in July, with 31% of respondents saying they have a great deal or a lot of confidence in the Court, an increase from May when 25% said the same. The full trend is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court

Among adults

Poll dates	Confidence		
	Great deal/a lot	Some	Little/None
7/7-12/23	31	32	37
5/8-18/23	25	36	39
3/13-22/23	28	40	32
1/9-20/23	31	38	31
11/15-22/22	30	36	34
9/7-14/22	30	34	36
7/5-12/22	28	28	44
9/8-15/20	39	45	16
9/3-13/19	37	42	20

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here is a list of institutions in American society. How much confidence do you have in each one? . . .
The U.S. Supreme Court.

Confidence in Congress and in the presidency also increased from May to July, though by less than confidence in the Court. In July, 14% said they had a great deal or a lot of confidence in Congress, up from 11% in May. Those saying the same about the presidency were 28% in July, compared to 25% in May. These trends are shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4: Confidence in Congress

Among adults

Poll dates	Confidence		
	Great deal/a lot	Some	Little/None
7/7-12/23	14	44	43
5/8-18/23	11	41	49
3/13-22/23	15	43	42
1/9-20/23	13	43	44
11/15-22/22	17	43	40
9/7-14/22	16	37	47
7/5-12/22	10	35	56
9/8-15/20	13	42	44
9/3-13/19	10	39	51

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here is a list of institutions in American society. How much confidence do you have in each one? . . .
Congress.

Table 5: Confidence in the presidency

Among adults

Poll dates	Confidence		
	Great deal/a lot	Some	Little/None
7/7-12/23	28	32	40
5/8-18/23	25	30	45
3/13-22/23	26	34	40
1/9-20/23	26	30	43
11/15-22/22	30	33	37
9/7-14/22	33	29	38
7/5-12/22	21	31	48
9/8-15/20	31	23	45
9/3-13/19	28	25	47

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here is a list of institutions in American society. How much confidence do you have in each one? . . .
The presidency

The Department of Justice has become the subject of debate over its handling of a number of prosecutions and investigations in recent years. Overall, 25% say they have a great deal or a lot of confidence in the DOJ, while 34% say they have some confidence, with a substantial 41% saying they have little or no confidence.

Partisans are substantially divided concerning the Department of Justice, with a majority of Republicans expressing little or no confidence. Only 16% of Democrats say the same. These differences are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Confidence in the Department of Justice, with party identification, July 2023

Among adults

Party ID	Confidence		
	Great deal/a lot	Some	Little/None
Total	25	34	41
Republican	13	29	58
Independent	22	33	45
Democrat	42	42	16

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here is a list of institutions in American society. How much confidence do you have in each one? . . .
The U.S. Department of Justice

Confidence in the national news media remains at low levels, with 13% expressing a great deal or a lot of confidence, 27% saying they have some confidence, and a majority, 60%, saying they have little or no confidence. The partisan divisions are also sharp, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Confidence in the national news media, with party identification, May and July 2023

Among adults

Party ID	Confidence		
	Great deal/a lot	Some	Little/None
July 2023			
Total	13	27	60
Republican	3	14	83
Independent	9	28	63
Democrat	29	40	31
May 2023			
Total	16	27	57
Republican	6	16	78
Independent	11	27	62
Democrat	33	39	28

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here is a list of institutions in American society. How much confidence do you have in each one? . . .
The national news media

Attention to news concerning the Supreme Court varies considerably across topics, as shown in Table 8. Two decisions, concerning student-loan forgiveness and concerning the use of race in college admissions, drew high levels of attention, with more than half of respondents saying they heard or read a lot about these topics. In contrast, fewer than 20% said they had heard or read a lot about decisions involving congressional districting in Alabama or the power of state legislatures to set rules for federal elections. A similarly low percentage, 15%, heard a lot about Justice Samuel Alito’s financial disclosure reports. For comparison, in May, about twice as many, 33%, had heard a lot about Justice Clarence Thomas’ financial disclosure reports.

Table 8: Attention to news concerning U.S. Supreme Court

Among adults

Topic	Amount heard or read about...		
	A lot	A little	Nothing at all
A Supreme Court case concerning student-loan forgiveness	56	38	7
A Supreme Court case concerning the use of race in college admissions	51	31	18
A Supreme Court case concerning the powers of state legislatures to set the rules for federal elections for Congress and president	17	46	38
News stories about Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito’s financial disclosure reports	15	33	51
A Supreme Court case concerning congressional districts in Alabama	10	36	54

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Here are some recent topics in the news. How much have you heard or read about each of these?

Awareness of the makeup of the Court, in terms of which party’s presidents have appointed a majority of justices, rose in July, with 36% saying Republican presidents had definitely appointed a majority of justices, 42% saying Republican presidents had probably done so, and 22% believing a majority had definitely or probably been appointed by Democrats. The percentage correctly saying Republicans appointed a majority has generally increased since 2019, though it ebbs and flows, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Majority of Court appointed by which party’s presidents

Among adults

Poll dates	Majority appointed by		
	Definitely/Probably Dem majority	Probably Rep majority	Definitely Rep majority
7/7-12/23	22	42	36
5/8-18/23	29	41	30
3/13-22/23	27	41	31
1/9-20/23	23	41	36
11/15-22/22	24	40	35
9/7-14/22	22	40	37
7/5-12/22	20	40	40
5/9-19/22	31	39	31
3/14-24/22	28	47	24
1/10-21/22	23	44	33
11/1-10/21	28	44	28
9/7-16/21	25	46	29
7/16-26/21	24	45	30
9/8-15/20	28	51	21
9/3-13/19	27	53	19

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: What is your guess as to whether a majority of the current U.S. Supreme Court justices were appointed by Democratic or Republican presidents?

Awareness of and opinion about recent decisions

While many people lack information about individual Court decisions, a plurality favor each of five particular decisions that were handed down in June and inquired about in the survey. The percentage favoring and opposing each decision varies, as does the degree of awareness, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Awareness and opinion on recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions

Among adults

Court Decision	Awareness and opinion		
	Not heard enough	Favor	Oppose
Ruled that colleges cannot use race as one of several factors in deciding which applicants to admit	28	50	22
Ruled that the Biden administration exceeded the authority granted to it by Congress to alter loan conditions, thus striking down the student-loan forgiveness policy	32	37	31
Ruled that a business owner’s religious beliefs or free speech rights can justify refusing some services to gay people	33	35	32
Ruled that federal civil rights law requires an employer to accommodate an employee’s religious practice unless it can show that doing so would result in substantial increased costs to the employer	63	27	11
Ruled that Alabama, in drawing a congressional districting map, diluted the power of Black voters, in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965	66	24	10

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Do you favor or oppose the following recent Supreme Court decisions, or haven’t you heard enough about this to have an opinion?

Respondents were asked if they thought that the Court, over the past 15 years or so, had expanded or reduced the rights protected for each of several groups. Those responses are shown in Table 11. Respondents perceive an increase in rights protected for LGBTQ people and for religious people and organizations, while there is a nearly even split in seeing increased or reduced rights for gun owners and

voting rights for minority groups. Rights of those seeking an abortion are seen by a large majority as having been reduced.

Table 11: Has the Court expanded or reduced rights protected?

Among adults

Group	Change in rights protected		
	Expanded rights	Reduced rights	Has not changed much either way
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) people	56	25	19
Religious people and organizations	42	23	35
Gun owners	32	29	39
Voting rights of racial or ethnic minorities	30	29	41
Those seeking an abortion	9	78	13

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Over the past 15 years or so would you say the Supreme Court has generally expanded or reduced the rights protected for each of these groups or has it not changed much either way?

Respondents were asked about past decisions concerning abortion, same-sex marriage, and anti-discrimination protection for gay and transgender employees. Those results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Favor or oppose past decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court

Among adults

Decision	Favor or oppose decision			
	Strongly favor	Somewhat favor	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade, thus striking down the 1973 decision that made abortion legal in all 50 states	23	15	15	47
In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage	42	23	16	18
In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that a federal civil rights law protects gay and transgender workers from workplace discrimination	50	31	12	7

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: How much do you favor or oppose this decision?

Public perception of the ideology of the U.S. Supreme Court has shifted in a conservative direction since 2019, as shown in Table 13. In September 2019, 38% of the public saw the Court as very or somewhat conservative. In the current poll, 62% see the Court that way. Over this same period, the percent saying the Court is moderate has declined from 50% to 28%.

Table 13: Perceived ideology of the U.S. Supreme Court

Among adults

Poll dates	Perceived ideology				
	Very conservative	Somewhat conservative	Moderate	Somewhat liberal	Very liberal
7/7-12/23	27	35	28	7	3
5/8-18/23	24	33	30	10	3
3/13-22/23	23	35	34	6	2
1/9-20/23	22	37	31	8	2
11/15-22/22	25	36	32	6	2
9/7-14/22	29	35	27	5	3
7/5-12/22	34	33	21	7	3
5/9-19/22	23	33	34	8	2
3/14-24/22	15	37	36	10	2
1/10-21/22	17	38	35	8	2
11/1-10/21	15	35	39	8	1
9/7-16/21	16	35	40	7	2
7/16-26/21	13	37	42	6	1
9/8-15/20	5	30	54	9	2
9/3-13/19	5	33	50	9	3

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: In general, would you describe each of the following as...? . . . The U.S. Supreme Court.

Since 2019 there has been an increase in the percentage of the public who think that the justices' decisions are motivated mainly by politics, rising from 35% in 2019 to 58% in July 2023, with a sharp upturn since the end of 2021. The full trend is shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Are justices' decisions motivated mainly by the law or mainly by politics?

Among adults

Poll dates	Perceived motivation	
	Mainly politics	Mainly the law
7/7-12/23	58	42
1/9-20/23	49	51
7/5-12/22	52	48
1/10-21/22	47	53
11/1-10/21	30	70
9/7-16/21	39	61
7/16-26/21	29	71
9/8-15/20	37	62
9/3-13/19	35	64

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: In general, what most often motivates Supreme Court justices' decisions?

Recent news concerning the justices' financial disclosures and related matters have raised attention to the ethical standards of the Court. The public remains evenly divided in its perceptions of the honesty and ethical standards of the justices, with about a third of the public rating the justices as having very high or high honesty and ethical standards, a third rating the justices as average in this regard, and a third saying the justices have low or very low standards. The percentage rating the justices' standards as very high or high increased from about a quarter in May. Table 15 shows the results for May and for July.

Table 15: Honesty and ethical standards of U.S. Supreme Court justices

Among adults

Poll dates	Perceived honesty and ethical standards		
	Very high/high	Average	Low/Very low
7/7-12/23	32	33	35
5/8-18/23	26	39	35

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields? .

. . U.S. Supreme Court justices

Respondents were also asked about the honesty and ethical standards of judges in their state, lawyers, journalists, and people in cable TV news. Those results for the July poll are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Honesty and ethical standards of legal and news professions

Among adults

Group	Honesty and ethical standards		
	Very high/high	Average	Low/Very low
U.S. Supreme Court justices	32	33	35
Judges in your state	25	51	25
Journalists	16	42	42
Lawyers	14	47	39
Cable TV news	8	33	60

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, July 7-12, 2023

Question: Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields?

About the Marquette Law School Poll

The survey was conducted July 7-12, 2023, interviewing 1,005 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points. Interviews were conducted using the SSRS Opinion Panel, a national probability sample with interviews conducted online. The detailed methodology statement, survey instrument, topline results, and crosstabs for this release are available on the [Marquette Law Poll website](#). Some items from this survey are held for later release.

Wording of questions about future and past Supreme Court decisions: These items do not attempt to exactly frame the particular issues in specific cases but rather address the topic in more general terms.

The wording of questions about cases decided in June includes:

Do you favor or oppose the following recent Supreme Court decisions, or haven't you heard enough about this to have an opinion?

- Ruled that colleges cannot use race as one of several factors in deciding which applicants to admit.
- Ruled that a business owner's religious beliefs or free speech rights can justify refusing some services to gay people.
- Ruled that the Biden administration exceeded the authority granted to it by Congress to alter loan conditions, thus striking down the student loan forgiveness policy.
- Ruled that Alabama, in drawing a congressional districting map, diluted the power of Black voters, in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- Ruled that federal civil rights law requires an employer to accommodate an employee's religious practice unless it can show that doing so would result in substantial increased costs to the employer.

The wording of questions about previous decisions include:

Opinion of *Dobbs* decisions, striking down *Roe v. Wade*

- In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe versus Wade*, thus striking down the 1973 decision that made abortion legal in all 50 states. How much do you favor or oppose this decision?

Opinion of same-sex marriage decision:

- In 2015 the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage. How much do you favor or oppose this decision?

Opinion on anti-discrimination law protecting gay and transgender employees

In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that a federal civil rights law protects gay and transgender workers from workplace discrimination. How much do you favor or oppose this decision?

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