

Marquette University: New Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds continuing decline in approval of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is doing its job, with amount varying according to respondents' partisanship

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MILWAUKEE – A new Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds that 41% of adults approve of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is doing its job, while 59% disapprove. This is a 6-percentage-point decline from January when 47% approved and 53% disapproved.

The trend in approval since 2020 is shown in Table 1. Approval has oscillated since 2020 but, in each cycle, has reached a lower peak than the previous cycle, before again turning down. The peak in September 2020 was 66%, followed by peaks of 54% in November 2021 and March 2022, with the most recent peak of 47% in January 2023. (All results in the tables are stated as percentages; the precise wording of the questions can be found in the online link noted above.)

Table 1: Overall, how much do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is handling its job?

Poll dates	Approve	Disapprove
9/8-15/20	66	33

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

The latest Marquette Law School Poll's national Supreme Court survey was conducted May 8-18, 2023. The survey interviewed 1,010 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of +/-3.7 percentage points.

Table 2 shows approval by partisanship in each Marquette poll taken in 2023. There are sharp partisan divides, but approval has declined among both Republicans and Democrats. Approval is little changed among independents. (Unless otherwise stated, independents who say they are closer to one party are included with partisans of that party.)

Table 2: Overall, how much do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is handling its job?, by party identification

Party ID	Poll dates	Approve	Disapprove
Republican	1/9-20/23	69	31
Republican	3/13-22/23	66	34
Republican	5/8-18/23	60	40
Independent	1/9-20/23	35	63
Independent	3/13-22/23	32	67
Independent	5/8-18/23	34	65
Democrat	1/9-20/23	31	69
Democrat	3/13-22/23	26	74

Democrat 5/8-18/23 24 76

Justice Thomas financial disclosure reports

The May survey was conducted after a series of news stories concerning Justice Clarence Thomas' financial disclosure statements, which did not report a real estate sale or certain travel expenses paid by others. Thirty-three percent said they had heard a lot about this, while 32% had heard a little and 35% had heard nothing at all.

Those who follow politics most of the time were more likely to have heard of the financial disclosure reports than those who pay less attention to politics generally, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: News stories about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' financial disclosure reports. (Here are some recent topics in the news. How much have you heard or read about each of these?) By attention to politics.

Attention to politics Heard a lot A little Nothing at all

Most of the time	60	28	12
Less often	18	34	48

Similarly, those with more information about the U.S. Supreme Court, measured by knowledge of which party's presidents have nominated a majority of justices on the Court, are more likely to have heard a lot about the disclosure reports, shown in Table 4.

Table 4: News stories about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' financial disclosure reports. (Here are some recent topics in the news. How much have you heard or read about each of these?) By knowledge of majority of Court appointments.

Court majority	Heard a lot	A little	Nothing at all
Definitely/Probably majority appointed by Dems	13	35	52
Probably majority appointed by Reps	27	34	39
Definitely majority appointed by Reps	62	25	12

Democrats are more likely to say they have heard a lot about the disclosure reports than are Republicans or independents, as shown in Table 5. Independents are especially more likely to say they have heard nothing at all about this.

Table 5: News stories about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' financial disclosure reports. (Here are some recent topics in the news. How much have you heard or read about each of these?) By party identification.

Party identification Heard a lot A little Nothing at all

Republican	26	42	31
Independent	14	26	60
Democrat	49	24	27

The partisan differences persist within levels of general attention to politics and specific knowledge about the Court, as shown in Table 6 (a) and Table 6 (b).

Table 6: News stories about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' financial disclosure reports. (Here are some recent topics in the news. How much have you heard or read about each of these?) By party identification.

(a) By attention and party identification

Party identification Attention to politics Heard a lot A little Nothing at all

Republican	Most of the time	43	46	11
Republican	Less often	15	40	45
Independent	Most of the time	46	26	28
Independent	Less often	8	26	66
Democrat	Most of the time	77	13	10
Democrat	Less often	29	33	39

(b) By knowledge of majority of Court appointments

Party identification	Court majority	Heard a lot	A little	Nothing at all
Republican	Definitely/Probably Dem majority	16	42	43
Republican	Probably Rep majority	25	43	32

Republican	Definitely Rep majority	44	43	13
Independent	Definitely/Probably Dem majority	7	21	72
Independent	Probably Rep majority	11	32	57
Independent	Definitely Rep majority	40	21	39
Democrat	Definitely/Probably Dem majority	14	35	50
Democrat	Probably Rep majority	36	28	36
Democrat	Definitely Rep majority	76	16	8

Perception of ethical standards of legal and media actors

Respondents rated the “honesty and ethical standards” of U.S. Supreme Court justices, state judges, lawyers, journalists, and cable TV news, as shown in Table 7. In all five groups, more respondents rate honesty and ethical standards as low or very low than rate them as high or very high. The extent of negativity varies considerably, with ratings of state judges and Supreme Court justices slightly negative, journalists and lawyers substantially negative, and cable TV news extremely negative.

Table 7: Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields.

Group	Net	Very high/high	Average	Low/Very low
Judges in your state	-1	24	51	25
Supreme Court justices	-9	26	39	35
Journalists	-26	19	<	