

MARIST POLL™

POLL MUST BE SOURCED:
NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll*

Plurality of Americans Find Ford More Credible than Kavanaugh... If Doubts Linger, a Majority Say, “No,” to Kavanaugh Confirmation **For Immediate Release**

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Griffith
Marist College
845.575.5050

This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

Following last week’s testimonies of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and Judge Brett Kavanaugh before the Senate Judiciary Committee, 45% of Americans say Dr. Ford was telling the truth about the incidents at a high school party which led to her accusations of sexual assault against Judge Kavanaugh. One in three residents (33%) say Kavanaugh was honest. 22% are unsure. Last week, 32% said Ford was telling the truth while 26% believed Kavanaugh’s story. 42% were unsure.

In a 1991 NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* Poll, 40% of Americans thought Clarence Thomas told the truth during the Senate’s investigation into Anita Hill’s sexual harassment allegations against the then Supreme Court nominee. 24% believed Hill’s testimony.

Current public opinion falls along party lines. 76% of Democrats believe Ford while 76% of Republicans believe Kavanaugh. Among independents, a plurality say they believe Ford (47%) over Kavanaugh (29%). While a majority of women (52%) believe the testimony of Ford, there is little consensus among men. 39% of men say they think Kavanaugh was being honest, 37% report Ford was truthful, and 24% are unsure.

“Twenty-seven years after the Thomas-Hill controversy, Americans are reacting very differently to the Kavanaugh-Ford testimony,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Although a notable number of Americans are still on the fence, overall, Kavanaugh comes up short in the court of public opinion, and the gap between the two of them has widened since before the Senate hearings.”

Many Americans, though, think neither Ford nor Kavanaugh is telling the whole truth. 40% of residents nationally say Dr. Ford was telling the truth about what happened between her and

Kavanaugh in high school. 22% say she was *mostly* telling truth but also hiding something, and 24% think she mostly lied. 14% are unsure. In 1991, only 11% of Americans reported to the CBS/*New York Times* Poll that Hill was completely truthful. 39% said she was mostly telling the truth but also hiding something, and 38% thought she mostly lied. 12% were unsure.

Looking at Americans' views about Kavanaugh's level of honesty, 31% say he told the truth. 26% think he mostly told the truth, and 30% report he mostly lied. 13% are unsure. A comparable proportion of Americans (30%) in 1991 thought Clarence Thomas told the entire truth before the Senate Judiciary Committee. However, a larger proportion (44%) said he mostly told the truth, and only 9% said he lied. 19% were unsure.

Democrats (67%) are more likely than Republicans (11%) to assert Ford was completely honest while Republicans (71%) are more likely than Democrats (3%) to say Kavanaugh was completely truthful.

Nearly half of Americans (48%), up from 43% just last week, say they oppose the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Kavanaugh. 41%, comparable to 38% previously, support it, and 11% are unsure. 19% were uncertain prior to the hearings last week. Among the 75% of voters who characterize the midterm elections as "very important," 51% oppose Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court, and 44% support it.

If the FBI's investigation into the sexual assault charges against Judge Kavanaugh does not dispel the doubts, a majority of Americans (52%) say Kavanaugh should *not* be confirmed to the Supreme Court. 40% think he should, and 8% are unsure. These findings are in stark contrast with public opinion in 1991. According to the CBS News/*New York Times* survey, 56% thought Thomas should be appointed even if doubt still existed. 35% said he should not be, and 9% were unsure.

"If the results of the FBI investigation are inconclusive, a majority of Americans do not think Judge Kavanaugh should be confirmed," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "If the discussion remains at a 'he said/she said' level, the benefit of the doubt favors Ford."

Partisan differences are present. 84% of Democrats and 51% of independents think Kavanaugh should not be confirmed if questions still exist after the FBI investigation. 77% of Republicans, though, say Kavanaugh should be confirmed even if doubts still exist.

Also of note, majorities of women (58%) and voters who consider the 2018 midterm elections to be very important (54%) do not think Kavanaugh should be confirmed if doubts linger. Men divide. 47% say Kavanaugh should not receive a seat on the Supreme Court, and 46% report he should.

Many Americans trust the FBI. 59% express a great deal or a good amount of confidence in the Bureau while 36% have not very much or no confidence at all in the FBI. These proportions are little changed from those reported in the July NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll.

However, Republicans now hold the FBI in higher esteem than in the past. A majority of Republicans (58%), up from 34% in July, have confidence in the FBI. Among Democrats, more than seven in ten (71%) still have this view. 55% of independents currently share this view comparable to the 56% who said the same in July.

A majority of Americans (55%), up from 43% last week, say the Senate Judiciary Committee treated Dr. Ford fairly. 32% think she was treated unfairly, and 13%, down from 27%, are unsure.

Half of Americans (50%) also perceive the Senate Judiciary Committee's treatment of Kavanaugh to have been fair. 37%, up from 28%, say he was treated unfairly, including 72% of Republicans. 13%, a decrease from 26%, are unsure.

More Americans have formed opinions of Ford and Kavanaugh. While a plurality of Americans have a favorable view of Ford, nearly half have a negative view of Kavanaugh. 41% of residents, up from 20% last week, have a favorable impression of Dr. Ford. 32%, also up from 24%, have a negative view of her. 27%, down from 56%, have either never heard of her or are unsure how to rate her.

47% of residents, up from 37% last week, have an *unfavorable* opinion of Kavanaugh. 36%, an increase from 31%, have a favorable view of him, and 18%, down from 32% have either never heard of him or are unsure how to rate him.

The Kavanaugh nomination remains a voting issue. 40% of registered voters, including a plurality (43%) of those who consider this year's midterm elections to be very important, say they are more likely to support a candidate who opposes Kavanaugh's appointment. 31% are more likely to back a candidate who supports the Kavanaugh nomination, and 26% say it makes no difference to their vote. These proportions are little changed from those reported last week.

The proportion of voters who feels strongly about voting for a candidate who opposes the Kavanaugh nomination (36%) is greater than the proportion who say they feel strongly about voting for a candidate who favors the Kavanaugh appointment (28%).

Three in four Americans (75%), up from 69% in July, say they consider this year's midterm elections to be very important. The enthusiasm gap which advantaged the Democrats by 10 points over the summer, has evaporated. 82% of Democrats describe the midterm elections as

very important as do 80% of Republicans. 65% of independents have this view which is nearly the same proportion that did in July (64%).

“Despite the overall picture which favors Ford’s side of the argument, the back and forth between Democrats and Republicans has resulted in the enthusiasm gap closing,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Voters in both parties are now similarly motivated about the midterm elections.”

The Democrats (48%) have a net +6 point advantage over the Republicans (42%) in the generic congressional ballot question. Last week, the Democrats had a similar net +7 lead. The gender gap on the generic congressional ballot question has widened from 13 points to 30 points. Women currently favor the Democratic candidate to the Republican, 55% to 35%. Men are more likely to support the Republican (50%) than the Democrat (40%). Men divided, 44% to 44%, in the previous NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll.

41% of Americans approve of the job President Trump is doing in office, including 27% who strongly have this view. 53% disapprove of how the president is doing his job, including 41% who strongly have this opinion. The proportion of Americans who disapprove of President Trump’s job performance has inched up from 49% in September.