

Law and Courts Questions from 2005 Poll

How much do you follow news about court decisions: a lot, some, or not much at all?

A lot	26.8
Some	48.4
Not much at all	24.7
No answer	0.1

Do you think the partisan background of judges influences their court decisions a lot, some, or not much at all?

A lot	40.3
Some	45.2
Not much at all	9.6
No answer	5.0

Most state judges are elected, while all federal judges are appointed and usually get to stay on the bench for life. Do you think that more judges should be elected, that the number of judges that are elected is about right, or that fewer judges should be elected?

More	47.9
About right	32.5
Fewer	14.1
No answer	5.5

Have you ever voted in a state judicial election?

Yes	60.8
No	35.9
No answer	3.4

If yes to above: If you have voted in a state judicial election, how much would you say you knew about the candidates running for judicial office: a lot, some, not much at all?

A lot	17.5
Some	43.8
Not much at all	29.5
No answer	9.2

A federal judge must first be nominated by the President and then confirmed by the Senate. Do you trust the President and Senate to pick good judges a great deal, somewhat, or not much?

A lot	17.6
Some	46.4
Not much at all	37.7
No answer	1.2

Many conflicts end up in the courts. Do you think this is because judges actively involve themselves in the controversies, because elected officials fail to deal with the controversies themselves, or because most people want the courts to get involved?

Activist judges	9.9
Political failures	18.7
People want	57.4
No opinion	14.0

Which of the following best describes your view of what judges do?

The law is essentially a set of detailed rules and the judge's job is to strictly apply legal rules to individual disputes.	31.4
The law is mostly a set of general principles that judges largely interpret at their discretion.	33.5
Both	31.7
Neither	3.5

Judges should be shielded from outside pressure and allowed to make their decisions based on their own independent reading of the law.

Agree	71.9
Disagree	23.6
No opinion	4.5

Media coverage of the courts tends to pay more attention to a judge's partisan background than to the reasoning that a judge uses to justify the court's decision

Agree	67.9
Disagree	21.9
No opinion	10.2

The courts are out of step with the American people

Agree	49.4
Disagree	42.3
No opinion	8.3

The law is so complicated that usually only legal experts know if a judge has made a correct decision.

Agree	57.6
Disagree	39.5
No opinion	2.9

Judges should be held more accountable to elected officials

Agree	44.2
Disagree	51.1
No opinion	4.7

Judges always say that their decisions are based on the law and the Constitution, but in many cases judges are really basing their decisions on their own personal beliefs

Agree	57.9
Disagree	33.6
No opinion	8.5

Media coverage of the courts generally provides a good explanation of why judges make decisions they do

Agree	34.3
Disagree	59.5
No opinion	6.2