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**Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab Poll: Iowans Trust School Officials and Parents the Most to Make Decisions about Banning Books**

According to a recent Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab Poll, Iowans' opinions are varied on who they trusted to make decisions about whether to ban a book from a school library. A plurality of Iowans (40.3%) responded that they trust school librarians and administrators the most to make decisions about banning books. Just more than 30% (31.2%) of Iowans responded that they trust parents the most, followed by elected school board members with 10.1% of responses, and state elected officials with 5.7% of responses. The online poll, designed by University of Iowa faculty and student as a research project, surveyed 883 voting-age Iowans between Feb. 10 and Feb. 25, 2022.

Opinions on who should make this decision varied with the respondent's political party identification. A total of 54.9% of Democrats answered that they trust school librarians and administrators the most, compared to 28.4% of Republicans and 37.3% of Independents. A total of 47.8% of Republicans surveyed said they trust parents the most compared to 13.9% of Democrats and 32.2% of Independents. Trust in elected local school board members did not vary across party lines; 10.6% of Democrats, 11.0% of Republicans, and 10.6% of Independents selected elected local school board members as the most trusted. There was no notable difference by party affiliation among respondents in selecting state elected officials, either: 6.3% of Democrats, 5.9% of Republicans, and 5.1% of Independents indicated chose state elected officials as the most trusted group.

Respondents' perception of religion as guidance also affects the preference on banned topic deciders, according to the poll. Almost 50% (49.6%) of Iowans who indicated that religion provides a great deal of guidance in their lives indicated that they trust parents the most compared to 19.0% among those who indicated religion is not that important in their life. Among those for whom religion provides quite a bit of guidance, 26.6% chose parents; this increased to 34.3% among those who indicated that religion provides some guidance. Inverse trends were observed with responses toward school librarians and administrators: 49.7% of those who answered that religion is not that important selected school librarians and administrators as most trusted compare to 26.5% among those for whom religion provides a great deal of guidance. A total of 39.7% of those who answered religion offers quite a bit of guidance and 42.5% of Iowans who indicated that religion provides some guidance chose school librarians and administrators as the most trusted for deciding which books to ban.

Responses were overall quite similar between respondents who reported children under the age of 18 in the household and those who did not. A plurality of both groups chose school librarians and administrators as the most trusted decision makers: 42.3% of respondents who do not have children and 36.0% of respondents who do have children in the household. Parents were the second most frequently chosen, selected by 31.2% of respondents without children at home and 30.6% of respondents with at least one child.

The survey also asked respondents to indicate which topics they were concerned about appearing in books available in school libraries. Responses were nearly evenly distributed across the four categories offered: 22.9% were concerned about sex and sexuality; 26.4% were concerned about gender identity; 22.4% were concerned about race and racism; and 23.4% were concerned about guns and violence. Only 2.7% indicated that there were other topics that concerned them. Across all topics, just shy of half of respondents were concerned about at least one of the topics, 49.3%, while nearly as many, 45.7%, were not concerned about any of the topics. Topics of concern did not vary substantially based on the presence of children in the household.

**Respondent identification:** The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) contracted with a respected web panel vendor to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of up to 900 respondents. Respondents invited to complete the web survey were Iowa adults, aged 18-120 years, recruited for participation via web panel. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set on the following demographics: sex, age, and urbanicity.

**Sample:** 883 voting-age residents in Iowa, margin of error +/-3.4%.

**Weighting:** Reported results are weighted by age, sex, and party identification.

#### **About the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab**

The poll was designed by the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab, comprised of University of Iowa faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. The Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab is co-directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science, and Kajsia Dalrymple, professor of journalism and mass communication. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, and was implemented in collaboration with the Iowa Social Science Research Center directed by Frederick J. Boehmke. The UI Public Policy Center provided support for this poll as part of its student success mission, intended to expand experiential policy-relevant research for UI students.

Zoe Lagessie, Molly Fischer, and Nolan Hansen, research fellows for the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab, assisted with the preparation of this release.

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