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The Highly Political Supreme Court

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Introduction to Research

- This study explores which party supports the Supreme Court more.
- To understand current public opinion of the Supreme Court, it is important to look at the history of the court and its politicization in recent years.
- The Supreme Court is the one undemocratic branch of the government and is isolated from any outside pressure.
 - Currently there are 5 conservative justices and 4 liberal ones
 - The Supreme Court has made some of the most important political decisions in this country's history including ones on civil rights and freedom of speech.
- Although many view the Court as unpolitical, it is in fact highly partisan and is used by political parties to their advantage.
- The initial purpose of the Supreme Court was to interpret the Constitution and settle disputes between the Federal and State governments

Supreme Court Throughout History

- **1960's and the era of civil rights**
 - During the late 1950's though the 1980's, The supreme court was a solid liberal institution, that reenforced democratic policy making.
 - With many justices being appointed by Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy and Johnson, they helped expand civil rights and grow the power of the national government over states.
- Starting in the 1980's under the Reagan administration, the court took a sharp turn to the right with well timed Supreme Court nominations.
- With five of the last seven presidents being Republican, they have been able to appoint 12 of the last 16 Supreme Court Justices
 - Under the direction of William Rehnquist, Neoconservatives on the court pushed a conservative agenda.

Making Sense of it All

- While Supreme court justices are sheltered from political elections, their nomination are equally as political.
- Presidents research their nominations to make sure they will be a political ally in the court.
- After seeing this correlation, Studying public opinion will help us see whether Americans have legitimacy in the courts or see it as a puppet of political parties

Research Question:

Which political party supports a strong Supreme Court and why?

Hypotheses:

- H 1: Republicans are more likely to view the Supreme Court favorably
- H 2: Democrats want to weaken Supreme Court Strength.

Hypothesis Reasoning

• **Republicans will support a stronger Supreme Court because they have held an ideological majority for over 30 years. In turn, Democrats will want to weaken Supreme Court power because they have been underrepresented in the Court since the 1970's**

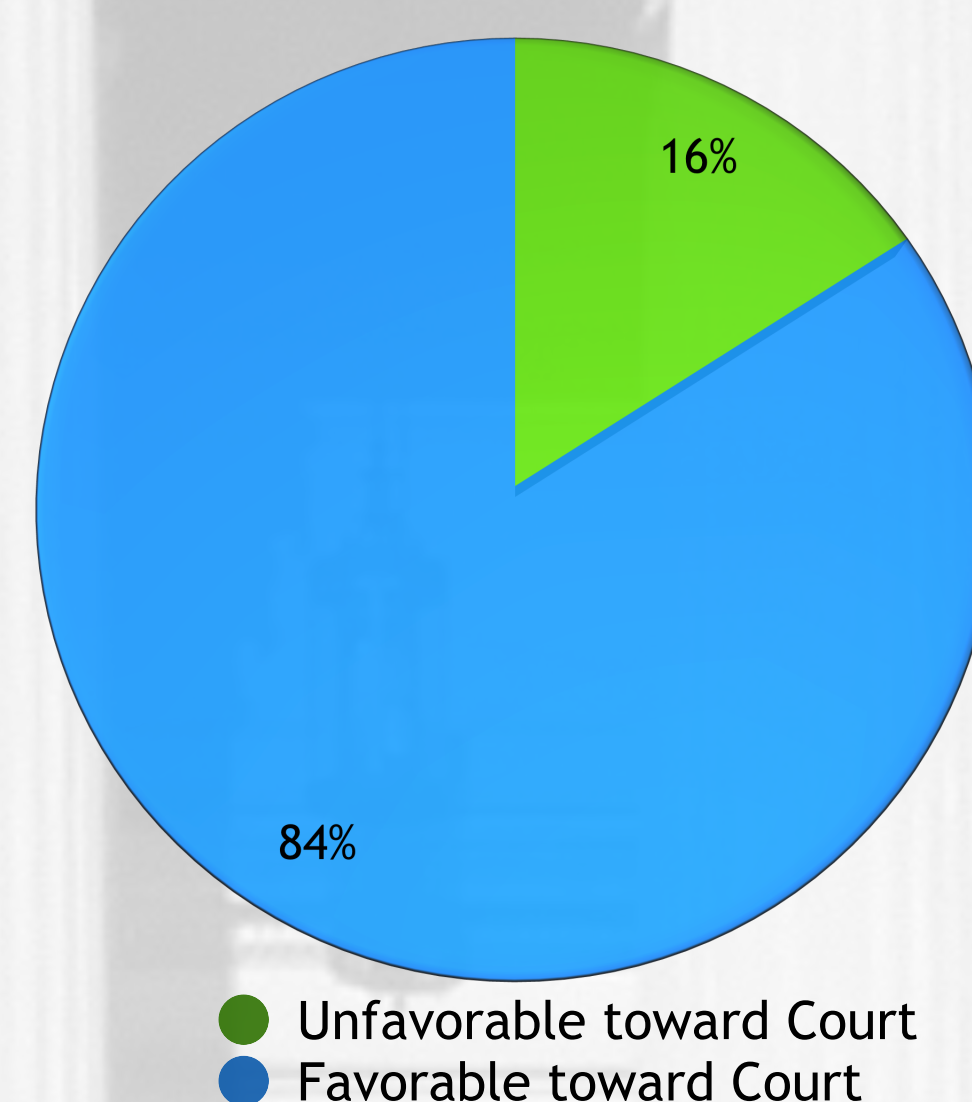
Data

H1: Opinion of Supreme Court

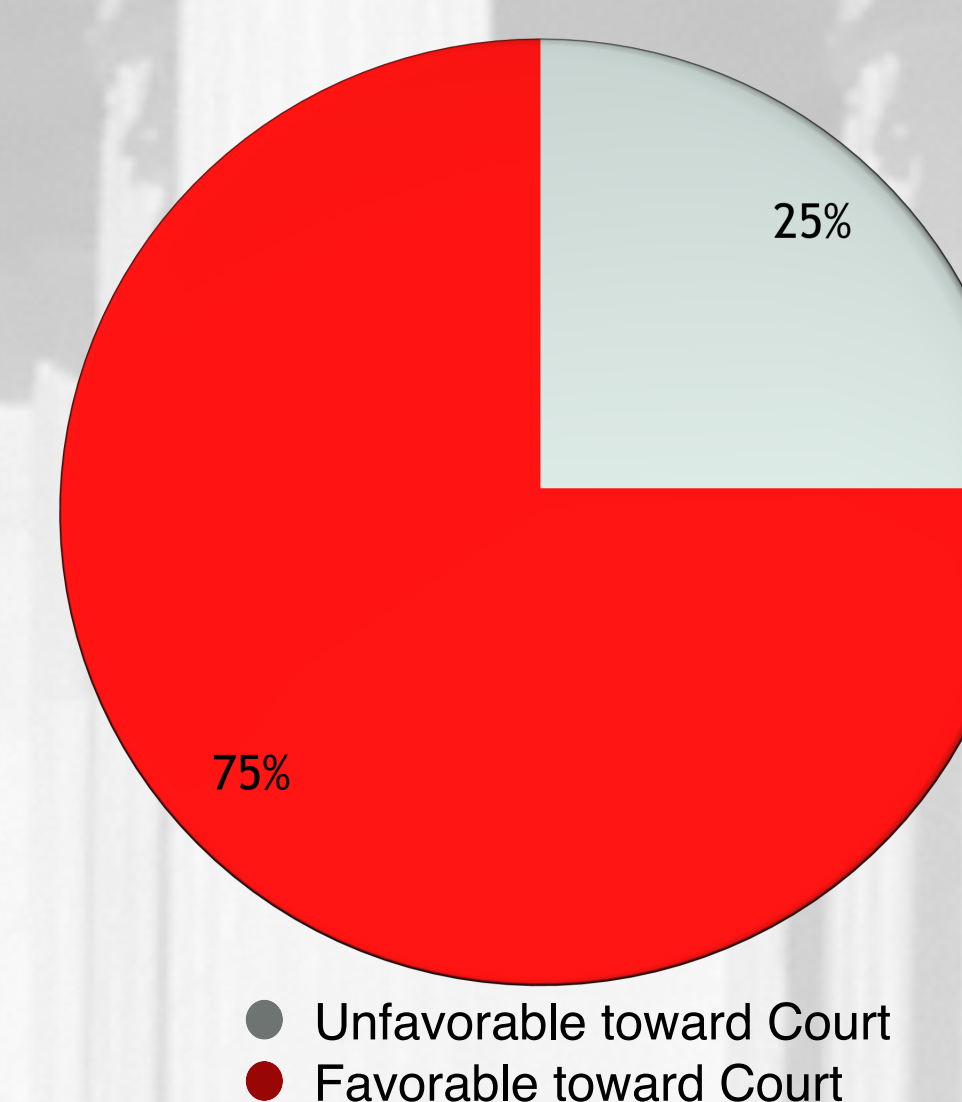
Cross Tabulation Results:

- Do Away with Supreme Court Strength
 - Republican: 54.8%
 - Democrats: 47.8%
- Eliminate Supreme Court all together
 - Republican: 17.2%
 - Democrat: 13.4%
- Remove Supreme Court Justices
 - Republican: 48%
 - Democrat: 44.4%
- Should State law trump Federal law
 - Republican: 61.9%
 - Democrat: 36.9%

Democratic Oppinion of Court

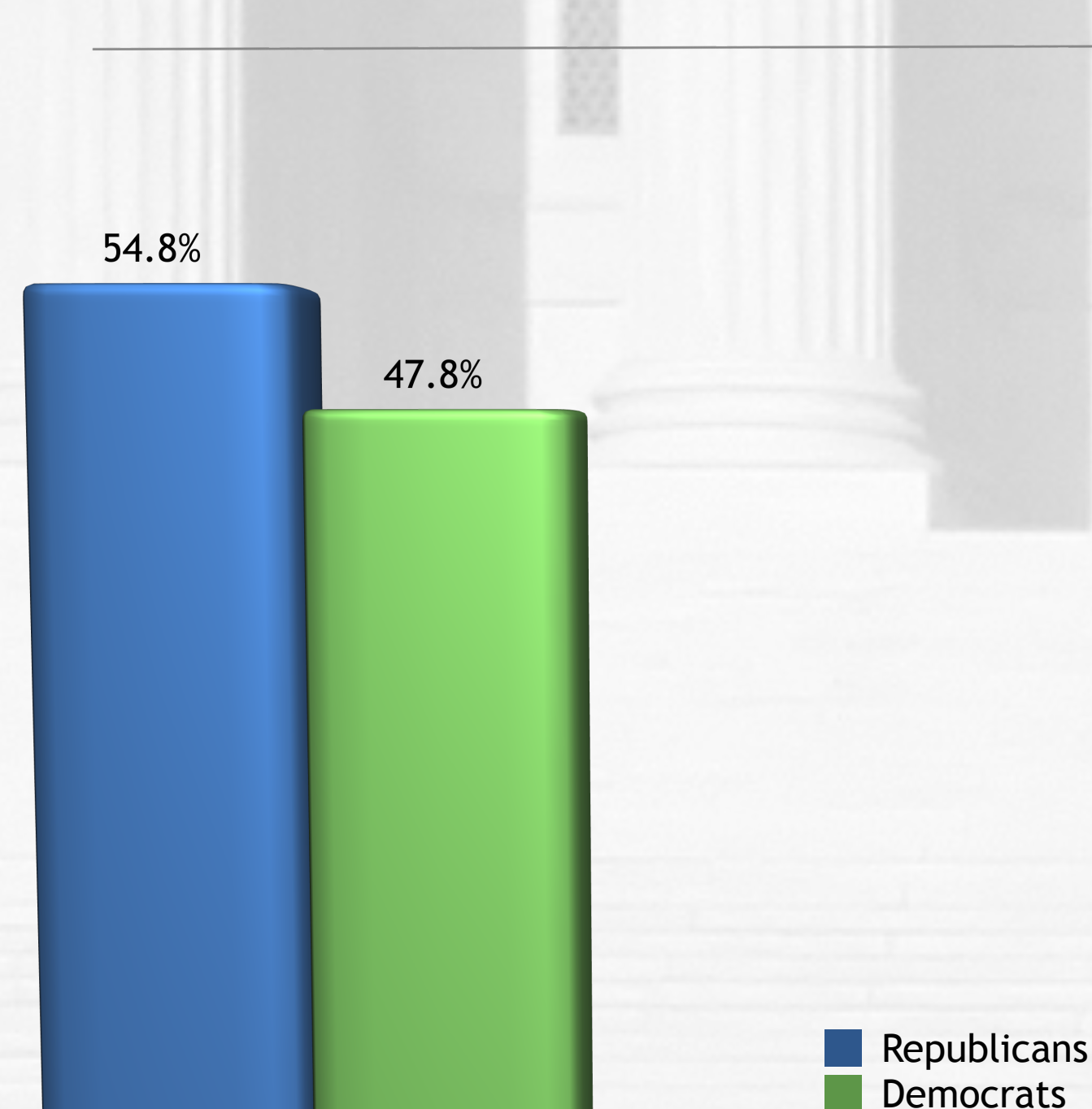


Republican Oppinion of Court



H 2: Supreme Court Strength

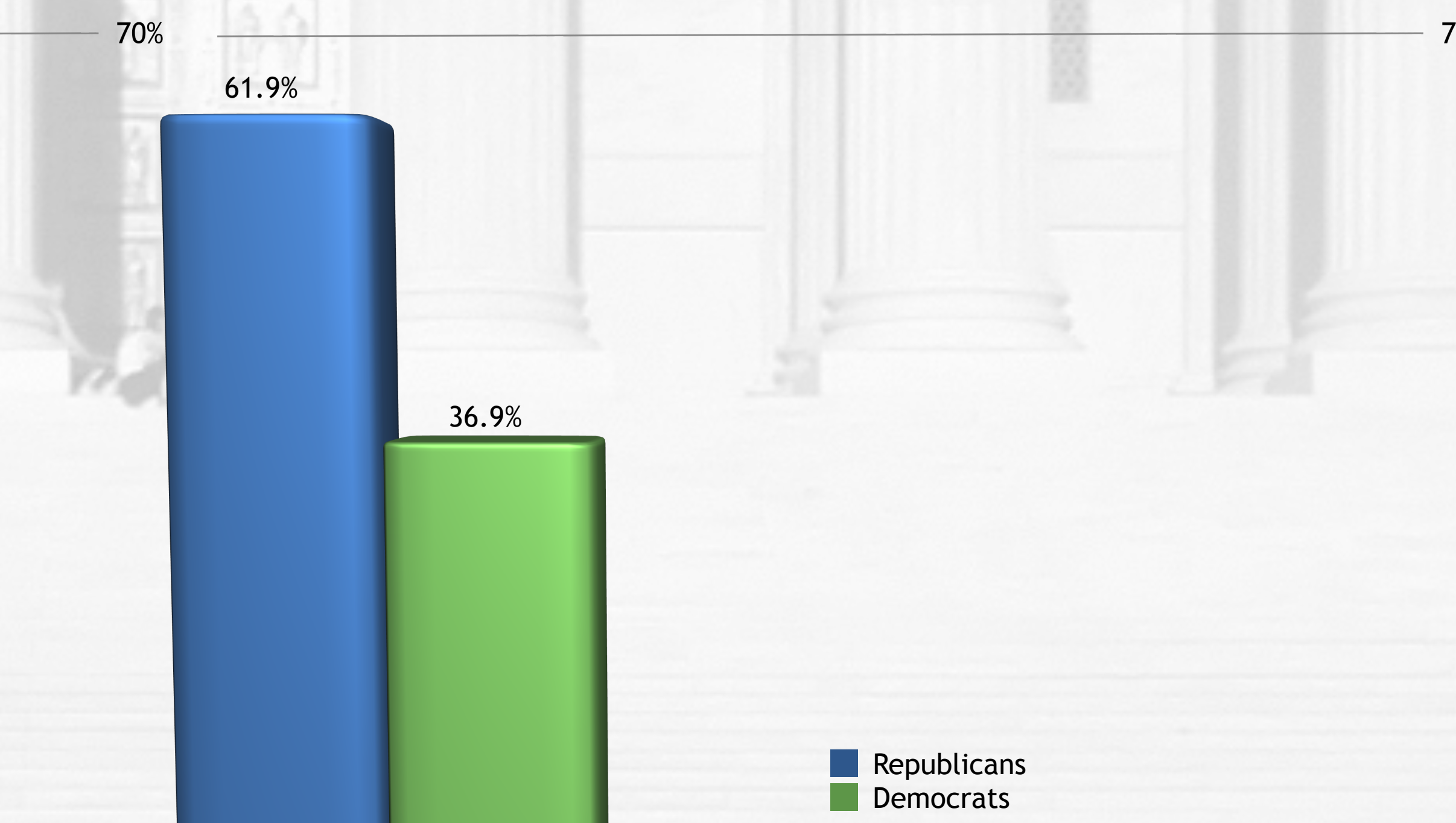
Eliminate Supreme Court Streghnth



Want to eliminate Supreme Court strength

Graph 3

Should State law trump federal law



Agree that State law should be superior to federal law

Findings

H1: After analyzing the data, this hypothesis was actually proved wrong, 84% of Democrats view the Supreme Court favorably while only 75% of Republicans see it positively.

H2: Again, this hypothesis was proven invalid with 54% of Republicans wanting to eliminate the strength of the Court while only 47% of Democrats wanted to.

In every category studied, Democrats favored the Supreme Court more than Republicans. Upon further research, it became clear that this was a federalism issue rather than a political issue. The Supreme Court regularly overrules state law, creating a new federal precedence in the process. This is why the Supreme Court was so powerful in the Civil Rights era to overrule state laws.

Graph 3: This shows that 61% of Republicans think that States have the right ignore federal law while only 36% of Democrats believe so

Conclusions

- Democrats view the Supreme Court more favorably than Republicans do.
- Republicans are more likely to want to diminish power of the Supreme Court.
- This is more of a federalism issue that political one.
- Republicans who favor states rights see the Supreme Court as a threat to state sovereignty.
- Democrats see the Supreme Court as a way to expand federal authority over states.