



Public Attitudes On Supreme Court Expansion



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Introduction

- Recently, public evaluations of the Supreme Court have become more negative and politicized.¹
- Possible reforms include expansion, term limits, shifting jurisdiction, and increasing transparency.²
- President Biden maintains opposition to expanding the Supreme Court, while other Democrats have pushed for Supreme Court expansion.³

Research Questions

- What were public attitudes towards Supreme Court expansion as of November 2022?
- Is interest in politics associated with attitudes on Supreme Court expansion?
- How does this association vary by party affiliation?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=2000) were drawn from the online YouGov panel of 1.8 million voluntary U.S. resident participants and surveyed between Nov. 18-29, 2022.
- A matched sample of 1461 national respondents was combined with an oversample of 539 Black respondents.
- Matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores, considering demographics; weights were then post-stratified on 2016 and 2020 Presidential vote choices, and demographic categories.

Measures

- Interest in politics was measured with the question “How often do you pay attention to what’s going on in government and politics?” on a 5 point categorical scale from “Never” to “Always”.
- Opinion on multiple reforms was measured on a 5 point categorical scale (“strongly oppose” to “strongly favor”, including “not sure” as an option) with the prompt “Please indicate whether you favor or oppose the following proposals.” Attitudes on Supreme Court expansion were specifically measured with the prompt “Increasing the number of justices serving on the U.S. Supreme Court.”
- Party affiliation was determined by a 7 point scale, with independents who leaned Democrat or Republican classified as partisans.

Results

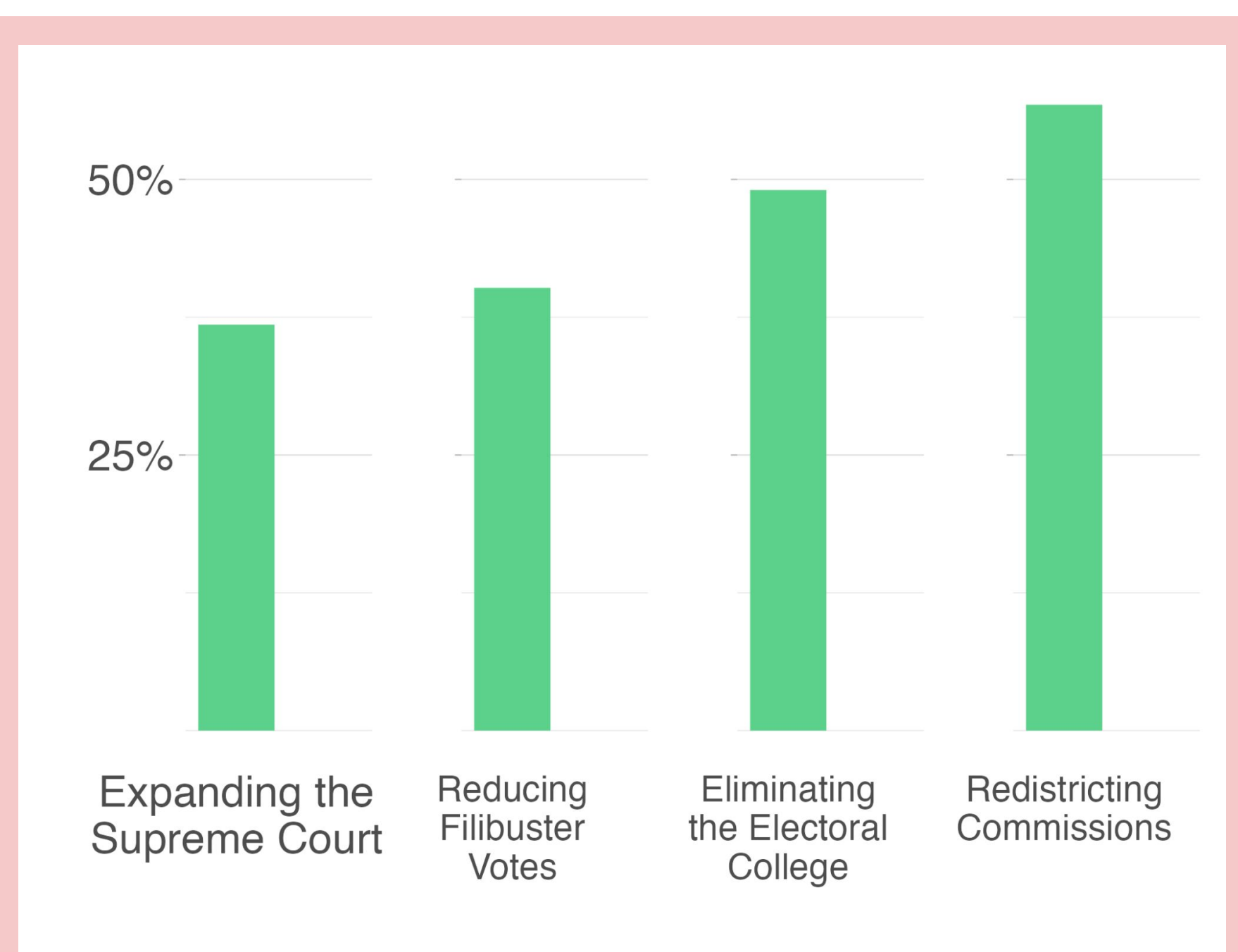


Fig. 1, Support for Supreme Court Expansion Compared to Other Reforms

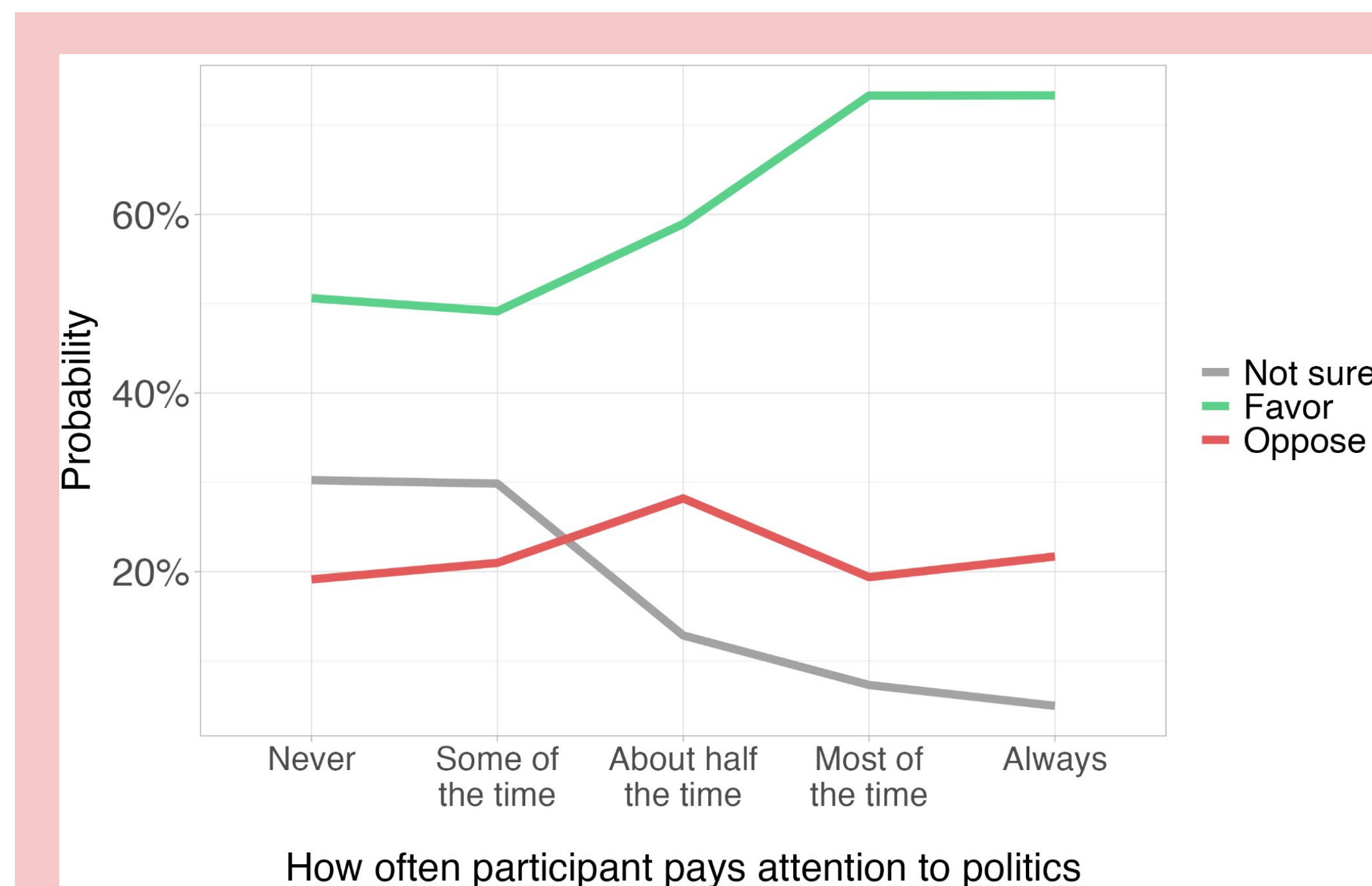


Fig. 2, Likelihood of Supreme Court Expansion Opinion by Interest in Politics Among Democrats

Fig. 2 and Fig. 3: Multinomial Regression Models

- Figures 2 and 3 show predicted probabilities from multinomial logit models; the independent variable is interest in politics and the dependent variable is a 3-category measure of attitude (favor, oppose, not sure). Separate models were estimated for Democrats and independents, with both models controlling for demographic characteristics (e.g. sex, race, age, education).
- The Democrat model (fig. 2) revealed a significant relationship between interest in politics and attitude at most interest levels.
- The independent model (fig. 3) revealed a significant relationship between interest in politics and attitude at some interest levels.

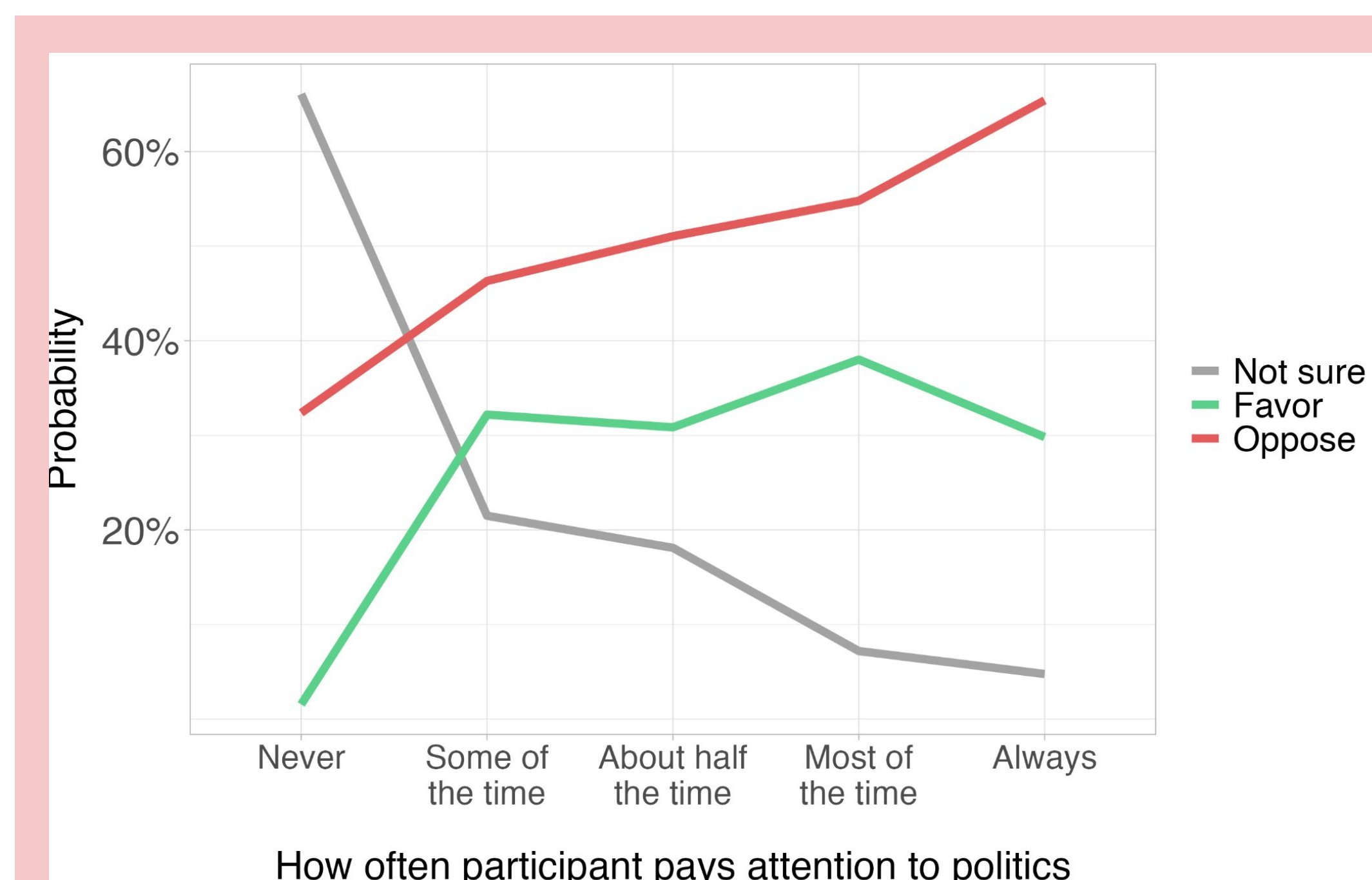


Fig. 3, Likelihood of Supreme Court Expansion Opinion by Interest in Politics Among Independents

Discussion

- Expanding the Supreme Court is less popular than other proposed reforms.
- As Democrats’ interest in politics increases, the likelihood of favoring Supreme Court expansion increases, and the likelihood of being “not sure” decreases.
- As independents’ interest in politics increases, the likelihood of opposing Supreme Court expansion increases, and the likelihood of being “not sure” decreases.
- Further research is necessary to compare attitudes on Supreme Court expansion to alternative Supreme Court reforms.

References

¹Blazina, Carrie, et al. (2022) “5 facts about the Supreme Court.” *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/02/25/5-facts-about-the-supreme-court/>.

²Adams, Michelle, et al. (2021) “Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States: Final Report.” *The White House*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/pscscotus/>.

³Olorunnipa, Toluse, et al. (2023) “Biden pledges new path to student loan relief after judicial setback.” *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/06/30/biden-student-loan-forgiveness-future/>.

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