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Shifting Views of Supreme Court's Ideology among Liberals, Conservatives

*Most Liberal Democrats Now View
Court as Conservative*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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Most Liberal Democrats Now View Court as Conservative

Overall views of the U.S. Supreme Court – and its ideology – have changed only modestly since last measured in April before the court's end-of-term decisions, including the Hobby Lobby ruling that limits the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive requirement.

But among liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans there have been sizable changes in opinions of the court; more liberals now view the Supreme Court as conservative – and fewer conservatives view it as liberal – than did so just a few months ago.

The national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted July 8-14 among 1,805 adults, finds that as many Americans call the court liberal (26%) as say it is conservative (27%). More (38%) say the current Supreme Court is “middle of the road.”

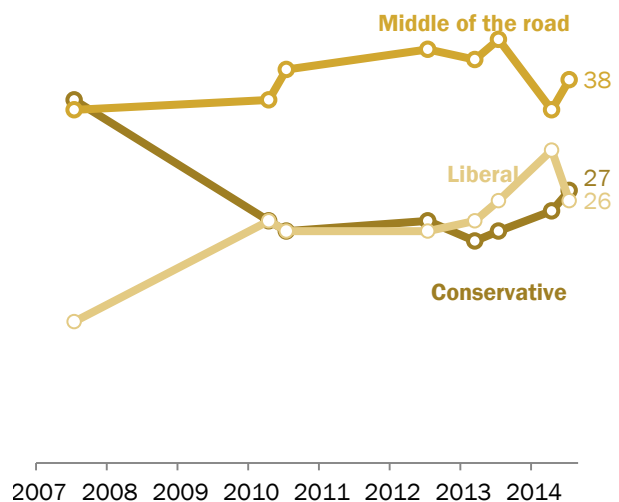
Before the recent rulings, somewhat more viewed the court as liberal (31%) than conservative (25%), with 35% viewing it as middle of the road.

Liberal Democrats are much more likely to see the court as conservative after this term's rulings; fully 60% now say this, compared to less than half in April (47%). Today, liberal Democrats are nearly twice as likely as the public overall to say the court is conservative.

By contrast, there has been an 11 percentage point decline in the share of conservative Republicans who view the Supreme Court as liberal (from 53% in April to 42% currently). Today, conservative Republicans are as likely to say the court is middle of the road (44%) as to say it is liberal (42%). In April, more conservative Republicans saw it as liberal (53% vs. 33% middle of the road).

As Many Now Call the Supreme Court 'Conservative' as 'Liberal'

% saying the current Supreme Court is ...



Survey conducted July 8-14, 2014.

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The balance of opinion about the court's ideology also has shifted among Republicans and Republican leaners who agree with the Tea Party. Today, about half (51%) view the court as middle of the road; in April, most Tea Party Republicans described the court's ideology as liberal (56%).

College graduates remain more likely than those with less education to view the Supreme Court as conservative; 36% of those with college degrees say this, compared with about a quarter of those with some college or less.

Fewer Conservative Republicans See Court as Liberal; More Liberal Democrats View Court as Conservative

% saying current Supreme Court is ...

	----- April 2014 -----			----- July 2014 -----		
	Conserv	Middle of the road	Liberal	Conserv	Middle of the road	Liberal
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	25	35	31	27	38	26
College grad+	33	40	22	36	41	19
Some college	22	37	35	24	40	28
HS or less	23	32	34	25	36	29
Republican	10	38	45	11	45	38
Conservative	9	33	53	8	44	42
Moderate/Liberal	11	49	31	16	46	31
Independent	25	35	32	28	38	25
Democrat	40	36	18	40	34	18
Conserv/Moderate	36	39	18	30	40	23
Liberal	47	33	19	60	26	11
<i>Among Rep/Rep leaners</i>						
Tea Party	3	37	56	7	51	39
Non-Tea Party	13	37	40	15	43	34

Survey conducted July 8-14, 2014. Don't know responses not shown.

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Supreme Court Favorability

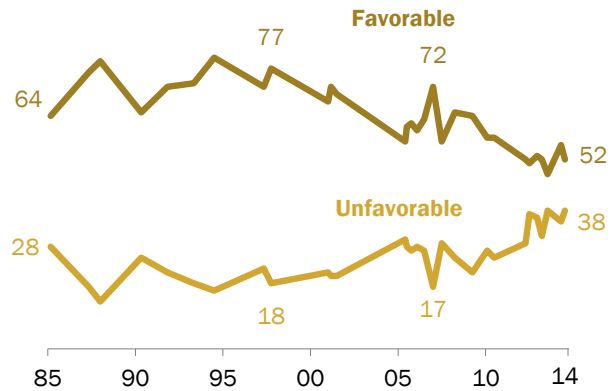
The survey finds that 52% of Americans now view the nation's highest court favorably, while 38% have an unfavorable opinion. Ratings of the court have edged lower since April (from 56% favorable).

Current ratings are mired near all-time lows (reached [a year ago](#)) as the court's image has declined significantly over the past several years. In January 2007, 72% held a positive view of the court.

The court's favorability decline since April has been driven by a shift in views among

Democrats. Roughly half of Democrats (52%) view the Supreme Court favorably, down from 63% in April. There has been little movement in favorability ratings among Republicans or independents.

Court Favorability Ticks Back Down



Survey conducted July 8-14, 2014.

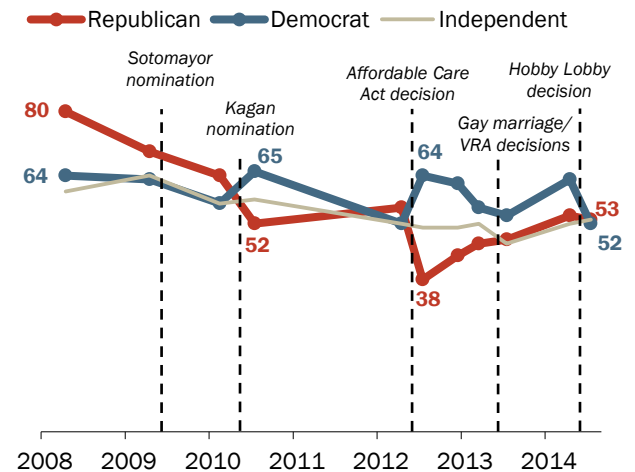
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Positive views of the court among liberal Democrats have dropped 13 points since April; fewer than half (44%) now hold a favorable view of the court. Conservative and moderate Democrats are more likely than liberal Democrats to view the court favorably, but their favorable rating also has dropped – down 10 points since April.

While little changed over the past three months, Republicans' views of the court are much more positive today than at this point two years ago, following the 5-4 decision that upheld core components of the Affordable Care Act.

Supreme Court Favorability Ticks Downward Among Democrats

% expressing favorable view of Supreme Court ...



Survey conducted July 8-14, 2014.

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Fewer than Half of Liberal Democrats View Supreme Court Favorably

% expressing favorable view of Supreme Court ...

	April 2014	July 2014	Change
	%	%	%
Total	56	52	-4
Republican	54	53	-1
Conservative	50	54	+4
Moderate/Liberal	62	50	-12
Independent	52	53	+1
Democrat	63	52	-11
Conserv/Moderate	68	58	-10
Liberal	57	44	-13
<i>Among Rep/Rep leaners</i>			
Tea Party	46	52	+6
Non-Tea Party	56	54	-2

Survey conducted July 8-14, 2014.

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About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted July 8-14, 2014 among a national sample of 1,805 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (723 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,082 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 597 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2012 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2013 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,805	2.7 percentage points
Republican	480	5.2 percentage points
Conservative	317	6.3 percentage points
Democrat	608	4.6 percentage points
Liberal	243	7.3 percentage points
Independent	639	4.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.