

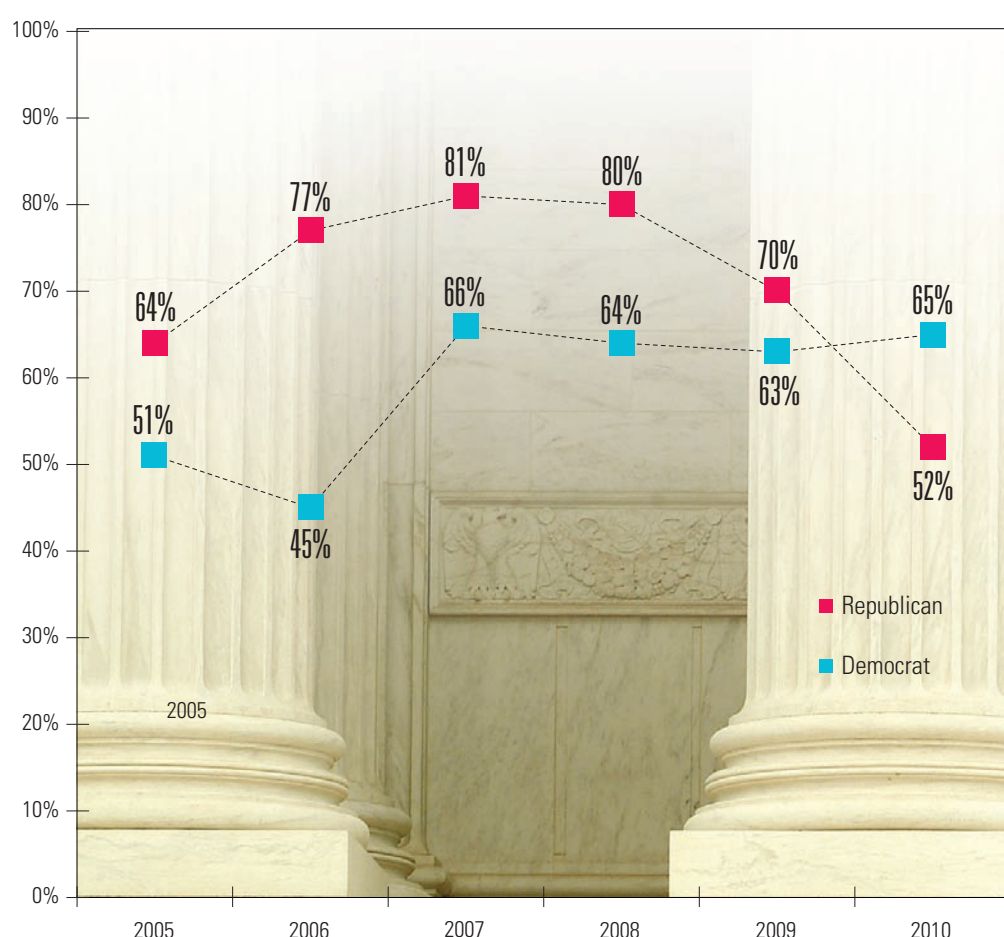
How Americans view the Court

The Obama administration's effort to paint the Supreme Court as an unacceptably conservative institution does not appear to be working. Survey data released during the summer by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press suggests that, if anything, more of the public views the Court as liberal than in the past. One reason, according to the Pew report, may be that the biggest news coming from the Court in the past year has been the addition of two Democratic nominees—Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan—to its membership. The Pew report also offers yet more evidence of the public's lack of knowledge about the Court.

Here's a view of some of the data from Pew, a nonpartisan opinion research group that studies the press, politics and public policy issues.

Partisan views of the court

What percentage of Republicans or Democrats view the court favorably? Although the ideological makeup of the court is practically the same, Democrats have a more favorable view than they did during the Bush years, and Republican views have plunged.



Source: Pew Research Center

Shifting ideology?

In July 2007, the Pew Center surveyed Americans about the high court's ideology. Then, 26% of Republicans defined the Court as conservative and 18% called it liberal. Those numbers have shifted since Barack Obama's election and the nominations of Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. Now, 34% of Republicans view the Court as liberal and just 12% call it conservative. Meanwhile, 48% of Democrats called the Court conservative in 2007. Now, just 31% view the Court as conservative. Meanwhile, despite the nominations, few experts believe the Court's ideology has shifted dramatically at all—even with the two new justices.

Here are the Pew Center's results:

2010

THE CURRENT COURT IS...	TOTAL	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	INDEPENDENT
Conservative	23%	12%	31%	22%
Middle of the Road	39%	39%	41%	41%
Liberal	23%	34%	16%	24%
Don't Know	14%	15%	12%	12%

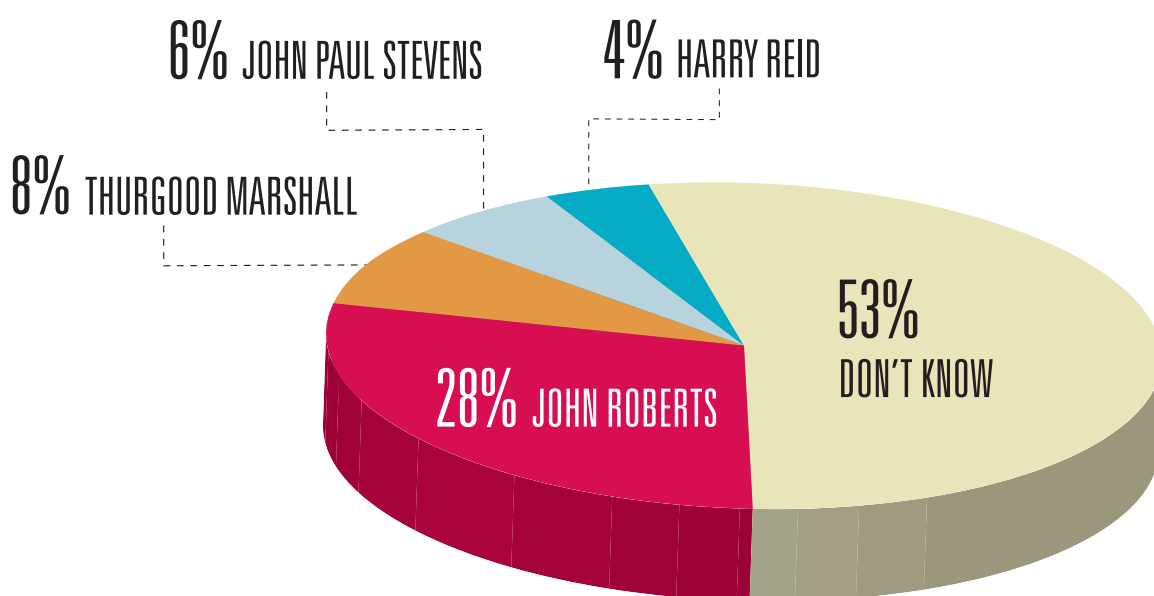
2007

THE CURRENT COURT IS...	TOTAL	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	INDEPENDENT
Conservative	36%	26%	48%	37%
Middle of the Road	35%	44%	28%	35%
Liberal	14%	18%	11%	13%
Don't Know	15%	12%	13%	16%

Who is John Roberts?

Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. may be a legal superstar, but to the public at large he's not exactly a household name. Pew asked Americans to identify the chief justice of the United States, and offered several names—including Roberts, Thurgood Marshall and Harry Reid—as possible answers. Just 28% correctly named Roberts. Most said they didn't know. Marshall, dead since 1993 and never the chief, was in third place.

Who is the chief justice of the united states?



Source: Pew Research Center July 1-5, 2010. Results based on a multiple-choice question. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.