

U.S. Supreme Court

Supreme Court Approval Rating Drops to 25-Year Low

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By [Debra Cassens Weiss](#)



Image from [Shutterstock](#).

Only 52 percent of the public has a favorable view of the U.S. Supreme Court, down from a previous low of 57 percent in 2005 and 2007.

The favorability rating is at its lowest point in 25 years, according to a [press release](#) on the survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The poll was conducted in April after the Supreme Court held oral arguments on the constitutionality of the health care law.

Fifty-six percent of Republicans and 52 percent of Democrats and independents give the court favorable ratings. (Others in the survey identified themselves as having no party preference, members of other parties, or "leaning" toward Democrats or Republicans, according to a [questionnaire summary](#).)

Among supporters of the health-care law, 52 percent have a favorable view of the Supreme Court. Among the bill's opponents, 55 percent view the court favorably.

Hat tip to [How Appealing](#).

Related coverage:

[ABAJournal.com](#): "Half of Americans Expect Supreme Court Ruling on Health Care to Be Partisan, Poll Says"

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MAY 1, 2012



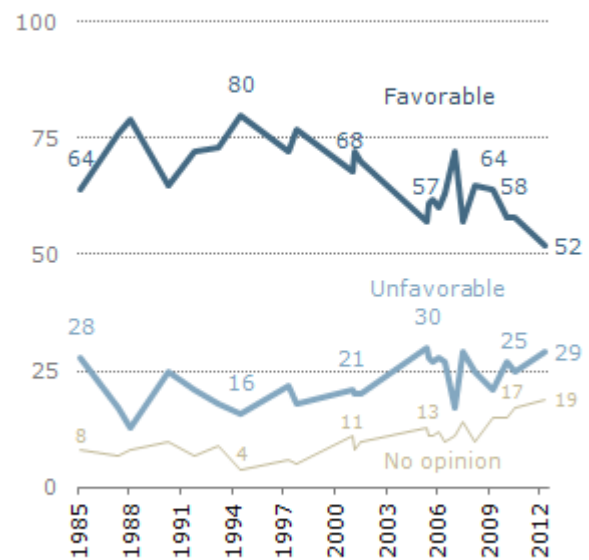
Supreme Court Favorability Reaches New Low

OVERVIEW

Public assessments of the Supreme Court have reached a quarter-century low. Unlike evaluations over much of the past decade, there is very little partisan divide. The court receives relatively low favorable ratings from Republicans, Democrats and independents alike.

The survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted April 4-15, 2012 among 1,514 adults nationwide, finds 52% offering a favorable opinion of the Supreme Court, down from 58% in 2010 and the previous low of 57%, in 2005 and 2007. About three-in-ten (29%) say they have an unfavorable view, which approaches the high reached in 2005 (30%).

Supreme Court Favorability Declines



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Declining Ratings across Party Lines

There are virtually no partisan differences in views of the Supreme Court: 56% of Republicans, and 52% of both Democrats and independents rate the Supreme Court favorably. And the decline in court ratings has occurred across party lines over the past three years. In April 2009, soon after Barack Obama took office, 70% of Republicans, 63% of Democrats, and 64% of independents held a favorable opinion of the court.

Republican ratings fell steeply between 2009 and 2010, with the appointments of Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan to the court. Democratic ratings remained relatively high through 2010, but have fallen steeply since.

The weak ratings for the court across party lines stands in contrast to most previous polls, in which those in the president's party have viewed the Supreme Court more favorably than those in the opposite party. Most recently, throughout George W. Bush's administration, Republicans felt much more favorably toward the Supreme Court than did Democrats. In July 2007, 73% of Republicans rated the court favorably, compared with 49% of Democrats. This divide began even before Bush took office, triggered by the Supreme Court's *Bush v. Gore* ruling. In early January 2001, 80% of Republicans viewed the court favorably, compared with 62% of Democrats.

The Court and Health Care

The survey was conducted after the Supreme Court's hearings on the 2010 health care law. It finds that the law's supporters and opponents express similar views of the court.

Overall, the public remains deeply divided over the health care law: 41% say they approve of it, while 49% disapprove. Among the bill's

Supreme Court Favorability By Party and Administration

<i>% favorable</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D diff
	%	%	%	%	
Obama					
2012 (Apr)	52	56	52	52	+4
2010 (Jul)	58	52	65	58	-13
2009 (Apr)	64	70	63	64	+7
G.W. Bush					
2007 (Jul)	57	73	49	58	+24
2005 (Jun)	57	64	51	51	+13
2001 (Jan)	68	80	62	69	+18
Clinton					
1997 (May)	72	69	78	73	-9
1994 (Jul)	80	79	83	80	-4
G.H.W. Bush					
1991 (Nov)	72	83	67	69	+16
1990 (May)	65	71	58	67	+13
Reagan					
1987 (May)	76	80	75	75	+5

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Health Care Law's Opponents, Supporters View Court Similarly

<i>View of the Supreme Court</i>	Total	<i>2010 Health care legislation</i>	
		Approve (41%)	Dis-approve (49%)
	%	%	%
Favorable	52	52	55
Unfavorable	29	34	28
Don't know	<u>18</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>18</u>
	100	100	100

supporters, 52% have a favorable view of the Supreme Court, while 34% view it unfavorably.

Among the bill's opponents, the balance is only slightly less negative; 55% favorable, 28% unfavorable.

However, a survey conducted last month found that while most Americans said the health care hearings did not change their views of the court, Democrats were far more likely than Republicans to say their opinions of the court had become less favorable.

The survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and The Washington Post, conducted March 29-April 1, 2012 among 1,000 adults, found that 32% of Democrats said their opinion of the court had become less favorable as a result of the hearings on the health care law; just 16% of independents and 14% of Republicans said their views of the court had become less favorable.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Partisan Reaction to Health Care Hearings

From what you saw and heard about the Court hearings on the health care law...

Opinion of the Supreme Court	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Hasn't changed	65	68	58	70
Less favorable	21	14	32	16
More favorable	7	13	4	8
Don't know	7	5	7	7
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/WASHINGTON POST Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2012

Supreme Court Favorability Reaches New Low

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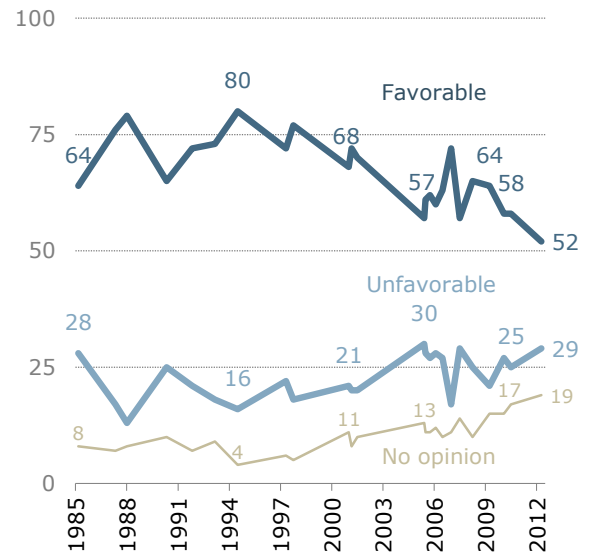
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About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 4-15, 2012, among a national sample of 3,008 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (1,805 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,203 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 603 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 March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2011 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the 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	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Form B	1514	2.9 percentage points
Form B		
Republicans	390	5.8 percentage points
Democrats	486	5.2 percentage points
Independents	568	4.8 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.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
2012 VALUES SURVEY
April 4-15, 2012
N=3008

QUESTIONS 1-2, 5a-c, 7-8, 17-21, 35-36 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

QUESTIONS 3-4, 9-15, 30, 40-59 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 6, 22-29, 31-34, 37-39

ASK FORM B ONLY [N=1514]:

Q.5 Is your overall opinion of [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE ITEMS a THROUGH c AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS a THROUGH c AS A BLOCK WITH ITEM d] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? [INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."] How about [NEXT ITEM]? [IF NECESSARY: Just in general, is your overall opinion of [ITEM] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?] [INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			(VOL.)	(VOL.)
	Total	Very	Mostly	Total	Very	Mostly	Never heard of	Can't rate/Ref
d.FB The Supreme Court								
Apr 4-15, 2012	52	11	41	29	10	20	*	18
July 1-5, 2010	58	9	49	25	8	17	1	16
Feb 3-9, 2010	58	8	50	27	8	19	*	15
Mar 31-Apr 6, 2009	64	8	56	21	6	15	0	15
April, 2008	65	15	50	25	7	18	*	10
July, 2007	57	12	45	29	9	20	0	14
January, 2007	72	18	54	17	3	14	2	9
July, 2006	63	7	56	27	8	19	1	9
February, 2006	60	16	44	28	10	18	*	12
Late October, 2005	62	12	50	27	10	17	*	11
July, 2005	61	12	49	28	10	18	*	11
June, 2005	57	8	49	30	8	22	*	13
July, 2001	70	15	55	20	6	14	*	10
March, 2001	72	15	57	20	5	15	*	8
January, 2001	68	18	50	21	8	13	1	10
October, 1997	77	13	64	18	6	12	*	5
May, 1997	72	16	56	22	5	17	0	6
July, 1994	80	18	62	16	3	13	*	4
May, 1993	73	17	56	18	4	14	0	9
November, 1991	72	18	54	21	5	16	0	7
May, 1990	65	10	55	25	7	18	1	9
January, 1988	79	14	65	13	2	11	*	8
May, 1987	76	13	63	17	2	15	*	7
Roper: March 1985	64	17	47	28	7	21	--	8

ASK FORM B ONLY [N=1514]:

On a different subject...

Q.16FB Do you approve or disapprove of the health care legislation passed by Barack Obama and Congress in 2010?

Apr 4-15 2012		Mar 7-11 2012	Jan 5-9 2011 ¹	Nov 4-7 2010	Sep 9-12 2010	Aug 25- Sep 6 2010	Jul 8-11 2010	Apr 1-5 2010
41	Approve	47	41	43	38	44	35	40
49	Disapprove	45	48	47	45	46	47	44
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	8	11	10	17	10	17	16

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Apr 4-15, 2012	24	31	39	3	*	2	15	15
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
Jan 11-16, 2012	22	31	42	3	*	2	17	16
Jan 4-8, 2012	26	31	35	4	*	4	14	14
Dec 7-11, 2011	23	33	38	3	*	2	12	17
Nov 9-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	1	2	16	15
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	23	33	38	2	1	3	18	16
Aug 17-21, 2011	24	30	40	3	*	3	17	18
Jul 20-24, 2011	24	32	38	4	*	2	16	14
Jun 15-19, 2011	26	34	32	4	*	4	13	13
May 25-30, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	15	17
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	25	32	37	3	*	3	17	16
Yearly Totals								
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8

¹ In January 2011 the question asked about legislation passed "last year," and in November 2010 it read "earlier this year." In September, August and July the question asked about legislation passed "in March." In April, the question asked about the legislation passed "last month."

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				preference	party			
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--