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President Obama's nomination of Sonia Sotomayor for the Supreme Court could force Republicans to choose between the often-nasty nomination battles that attend such weighty decisions and the potentially wide popular appeal of a Hispanic woman portrayed as one who understands and deserves some compassion.Should compassion be a qualification for a Supreme Court Justice? If so, then Sotomayor is a strong choice, social researchers would say.A Pew Research Center survey last year found that 80 percent of Americans believe women are generally more compassionate than men. Only 5 percent said men are more compassionate.The White House certainly hopes compassion plays a role. Obama said he wanted a justice with a "common touch and a sense of compassion" as well as experience and depth of knowledge, Fox News reports.Obama also touted reasons that Americans might show a little compassion for Sotomayor. Among the stories he told about her today:"Born in the South Bronx, she was raised in a housing project not far from Yankee Stadium, making her a lifelong Yankee's fan. ... Sonia's parents came to New York from Puerto Rico during the second world war, her mother as part of the Women's Army Corps. ... Sonia's father was a factory worker with a 3rd-grade education who didn't speak English. ... When Sonia was nine, her father passed away. And her mother worked six days a week as a nurse to provide for Sonia and her brother."Of course it's mostly men in Congress who will set the tone of the nomination hearings. And so the battle has already begun."The C.O. P. has to make a stand," Scott Reed, manager of the 1996 presidential campaign of Bob Dole, is quoted as saying in The New York Times. "This is what the base and social conservatives really care about, and we need to brand her a liberal with some out-of-the-mainstream positions. Forget about cosmetics and ethnic heritage, and focus on her record."Others are using gentler words."Senate Republicans will treat Judge Sotomayor fairly," U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said today. "But we will thoroughly examine her record to ensure she understands that the role of a jurist in our democracy is to apply the law even-handedly, despite their own feelings or personal or political preferences. Our Democratic colleagues have often remarked that the Senate is not a 'rubber stamp.' Accordingly, we trust they will ensure there is adequate time to prepare for this nomination, and a full and fair opportunity to question the nominee and debate her qualifications."Below are some other interesting details from the Pew survey. First, the poll.Should Supreme Court Justices Be Compassionate?(blog polls) The percentage of respondents (men and women combined) who said the following characteristics are more true of men or women:Arrogant: Men (70 percent); Women (10 percent)Stubborn: Men (46 percent); Women (32 percent)Decisive: Men (44 percent); Women (33 percent)On some other important traits, men and women were perceived to be more equal. Percent who thought the following characteristics are more true of men or women:Ambitious: Men (34 percent); Women (34 percent)Hardworking: Men (28 percent); Women (28 percent)Women won out on these:Manipulative: Men (26 percent); Women (52 percent)Honest: Men (20 percent); Women (50 percent)Among the more interesting findings in the survey, however: Though women are rated higher in many traits that are considered desirable for leaders, just 6 percent said that, overall, women make better political leaders than men.Check out the full results of the Pew survey to see how the responses varied significantly depending on the gender of the respondent.The Most Powerful Modern Women LeadersRobert Roy Britt is the Editorial Director of Imaginova. In this column, The Water Cooler, he looks at what people are talking about in the world of science and beyond. Tuesday August 15, 2017 8:48 am PDT by Mitchel BroussardApple, Twitter, Snap, Facebook, Microsoft, and a collection of other technology companies have filed a legal brief this week, aimed at the Fourth Amendment and its "rigid analog-era" protections that lag behind protecting users in the modern age (via Reuters). The brief was filed in regards to the case Carpenter v. United States, which is a Supreme Court case focusing on the warrantless search ... The Supreme Court has seen its fair share of newsworthy events over the last few years. These include the passing of the legendary Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg in 2020, the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett the same year, and most recently, the confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson to succeed the retiring Justice Stephen Breyer. Judge Jackson, once sworn in, will be the first Black woman to sit on the Supreme Court. All these events may have sparked your curiosity about America's highest court. You may wonder, "Why do Supreme Court justices serve for life?". "Why do justices wear black robes?", and "How many justices are on the Supreme Court?" There are some interesting notes about that latter question, by the way. Read on to learn exactly how many justices we have on the Supreme Court and how that number came to be. Nine justices make up the United States Supreme Court. A chief justice and eight associate justices sit on the court. As of this writing, the Honorable John G. Roberts Jr. is the chief justice of the United States. He is America's 17th chief justice and has served in that role since 2005. Right now there are nine Supreme Court justices, but that wasn't always the case. You might be surprised to know that the U.S. Constitution never set a standard number of justices. Instead of having the total number written in the U.S. Constitution, it leaves the power up to Congress to determine the final number. Over hundreds of years, the total number of justices have ranged from five to ten, including the initial number of six—due to the Judiciary Act of 1789—to the present number, set at nine. To put the changes in perspective, it's good to put them in order. According to History.com, the number of justices began at six because of the Judiciary Act of 1789. That included a chief justice alongside five associate justices. The Judiciary Act of 1789 reads: Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the supreme court of the United States shall consist of a chief justice and five associate justices, any four of whom shall be a quorum, and shall hold annually at the seat of government two sessions, the one commencing the first Monday of February, and the other the first Monday of August. Since 1789 Congress has changed the maximum number of justices on the Court several times, with a bit of a tug-of-war in 1801. In short, the Judiciary Act of 1801 was passed by President John Adams and Congress to reduce the number down to five justices, but then-incoming President Thomas Jefferson repealed that act and put the number of justices back up to six. In 1807, less than two decades after the Judiciary Act of 1789, one more justice was added to the Supreme Court, for a total of seven. In 1837, 30 years after the first major change, the number of justices increased to nine. The highest total number of justices was in 1863 when there were ten. That didn't last for long, however. The number of justices decreased in 1866 to seven due to the Judicial Circuits Act. The current number of nine justices has been set since 1869—a period of more than 150 years. Many of these decisions and the changes to the number of justices on the Supreme Court of the United States were due to politics. Will the number of justices change yet again? Only time will tell. Sources: Tom Williams/Getty Images shutterstock (2) MLADEN ANTONOV/Staff/Getty Images Originally Published: March 01, 2022 The ultimate judicial and constitutional authority, the United States Supreme Court pays homage in its architecture to the rule of law. Justices are appointed for life, and their temple reflects their eminence. Designed by Cass Gilbert in the 1930s, its classical façade incorporates Corinthian columns supporting a pediment decorated with bas-reliefs representing Liberty, Law, Order and a crew of historical lawgivers. The sober style conceals whimsy in the shape of sculpted turtles lurking to express the "deliberate pace" of judicial deliberations. There are also ferocious lions—enough said. You can tour the building any time. Visitors enter from the plaza doors, on either side of the main steps. The ground level has a cafeteria, an introductory video show, a gift shop and changing exhibitions. The cathedral-like entrance hall daunts one into hushed tones. The courtroom, with its heavy burgundy velvet draperies and marble pillars, is where the nine judges hear around 120 of the more than 6,500 cases submitted each year. The black-robed figures appear as the court marshal announces "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" and sit in seats of varying height, handcrafted to their personal preferences. Goose-quill pens still grace the lawyers' tables, for tradition's sake. When the court is in session, generally in two-week intervals from October to April, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, visitors can see cases argued ("oral arguments"). There are generally two one-hour arguments a day, at 10am and 11am, with occasional afternoon sessions. The website has details of which days are "argument days". Two lines form in the plaza in front of the building: one for those who want to hear the whole argument (better be there by 8am), and the "three-minute line", for those who just want a peek. Seating for whole-argument visitors is at 9.30am; three-minute visitors are admitted from 10am. In May and June, "opinions" are handed down usually on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Check the newspapers' Supreme Court calendars or www.supremecourt.gov/oral\_arguments to see what cases are scheduled. Celebrated cases draw massive queues. Thirty-minute courtroom lectures, by docents, are available daily. On days that the Court is not sitting, they are hourly, on the half-hour, beginning at 9.30 a.m. with a final lecture at 3.30pm. When the Court is in session, lectures take place only after Court adjourns for the day. A line forms in the Great Hall on the ground floor before each lecture, and visitors are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis.





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