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What the Public Knows – In Pictures, Words, Maps and Graphs

Pew Research Center News IQ Quiz

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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What the Public Knows – In Pictures, Words, Maps and Graphs

Pew Research Center News IQ Quiz

(Before reading this report, take the quiz yourself by clicking [here](#).)

The latest Pew Research Center News IQ survey finds that, nearly half a century after the death of Martin Luther King Jr., an overwhelming majority of Americans (91%) are able to identify the civil rights leader from his picture.

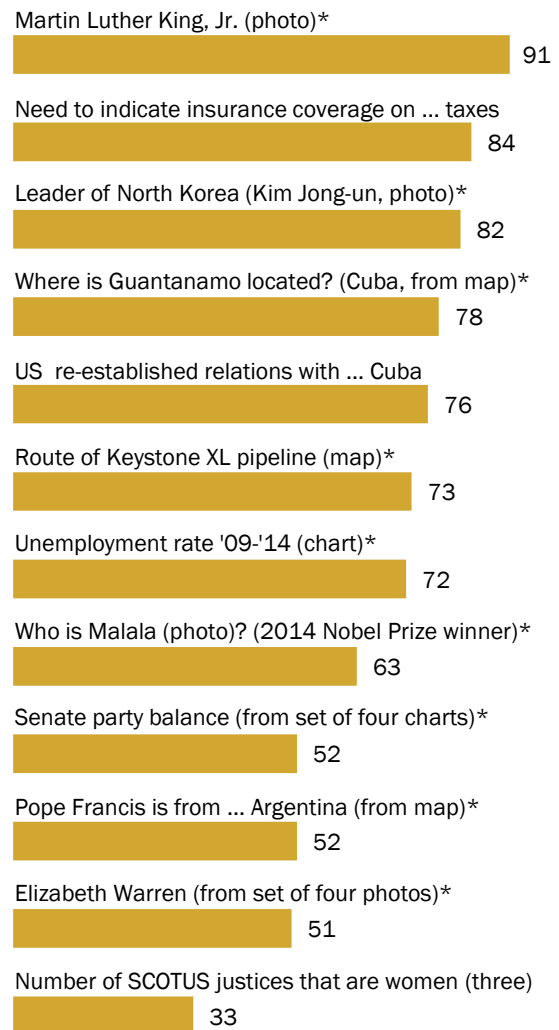
Fully 96% of Millennials (ages 18 to 34), who were born decades after King's assassination, could identify King, as could 89% among older generations. Respondents were shown a photograph of King and asked to identify him from a list of names that included Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson and Thurgood Marshall.

The survey, conducted March 10-April 6 among 3,147 adults who are part of the Pew Research Center's [American Trends Panel](#), also finds a large majority are able to associate a photograph of Kim Jong-un with the country he leads. Shown a picture of Kim Jong-un, 82% say he leads North Korea (from a list that includes South Korea, China and Malaysia).

The survey was conducted in the weeks leading up to the April 15 tax deadline: 84% know that in order to comply with the health care law, they must indicate on their taxes that

The Public's News IQ

% answering each question correctly



* Indicates a visual question for which respondents were shown images. American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. All questions are multiple choice; for full wording see survey topline.

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they have health insurance coverage. The other choices given for demonstrating health coverage were when people vote, change their address, or get a driver's license.

The public did well on several questions that included photographs and images. For instance, when shown a photo of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani advocate for girls' education, 63% identify her as the winner of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize (other choices: first Muslim elected to U.S. Congress, an Academy Award-winning director, Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S.)

But questions about U.S. politics, even those that include images, proved challenging. About half (51%) could identify Elizabeth Warren from an array of four photographs of women lawmakers (other choices: Nancy Pelosi, Deb Fischer and Tammy Baldwin). [In January 2013](#), fewer (43%) could identify Warren from the same set of photographs. ([A Pew Research Center survey released April 2](#) found that 38% of registered voters had not heard of Elizabeth Warren).

And 52% know the correct partisan balance of the Senate (54 Republicans, 44 Democrats, two independents) from images showing various partisan configurations. About one-in-five (21%) say the GOP has an even larger Senate majority (61 seats), while 10% say Democrats hold the majority and 6% think the balance is 50-50.

As previous News IQ surveys have shown, the public is not very knowledgeable about the Supreme Court. Just a third of Americans (33%) know that of the nine Supreme Court justices, three are women. More (39%) say that there are two women on the high court, while 14% say there is one woman on the court and 4% say there are four.

The public's lack of awareness about the court is not new: [Three years ago](#), just 34% could identify John Roberts as the Supreme Court's chief justice. In 1986, 43% identified William Rehnquist as chief justice, shortly after his confirmation (29% said it was Warren Burger, who had recently stepped down.)

Generations and News Knowledge

On half of the 12 questions in the news IQ quiz, there are no significant differences in knowledge across generations. And Millennials are somewhat more likely than the Silent Generation (ages 70-87), as well as Baby Boomers (50-69) and Gen X (35-49), to identify King's photograph.

But Millennials are less likely than members of the Silent Generation to answer several questions correctly, many of them about politics.

Majorities across age cohorts correctly name Cuba as the country with which the U.S. recently re-established relations. A higher share of the Silent Generation (86%) than Millennials (69%) know this.

Similarly, more members of the Silent Generation (83%) than Millennials (67%) could identify the route of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline from a map.

Nearly six-in-ten Silents (58%) and 46% of Millennials could identify Pope Francis' native country as Argentina, from a map that includes Italy, Spain and Mexico.

Modest Generational Differences in News Knowledge

% answering each question correctly

	Millennial 18-34	Gen X 35-49	Boomer 50-69	Silent 70-87	Mill-Silent diff
	%	%	%	%	
Martin Luther King, Jr. (photo)	96	89	89	89	+7
Need to indicate insurance coverage on ... taxes	83	88	84	79	+4
Where is Guantanamo located? (Cuba, from map)	80	80	76	76	+4
Unemployment rate '09-'14 (chart)	73	75	68	71	+2
Leader of North Korea (Kim Jong-un, photo)	83	79	82	83	0
Number of SCOTUS justices that are women (three)	34	32	32	36	-2
Who is Malala (photo)? (2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner)	58	63	68	64	-6
Current Senate party composition (from set of four charts)	47	53	56	58	-11
Pope Francis is from ... Argentina (from map)	46	54	53	58	-12
Elizabeth Warren (from set of four photos)	45	51	54	59	-14
Route of proposed Keystone XL pipeline (map)	67	73	76	83	-16
U.S. recently re-established relations with ... Cuba	69	73	80	86	-17
Average number correct overall	7.8	8.1	8.2	8.4	+0.6

American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. Significant differences in **bold**. All questions are multiple choice; for full wording see survey topline.

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And Millennials are less likely than Silents to know the partisan composition of the Senate (47% of Millennials vs. 58% of Silents) and correctly identify Elizabeth Warren from a set of four photos (45% of Millennials vs. 59% of Silents).

Across most measures, older Millennials are better informed than younger Millennials, with some of the widest gaps on questions about Pope Francis, Elizabeth Warren and the composition of the Senate. Just 33% of younger Millennials (ages 18-24) could identify Pope Francis' native country of Argentina from a map; 59% of older Millennials (ages 25-34) answered this correctly. About four-in-ten younger Millennials (39%) and 53% of older Millennials identified the correct partisan balance of the Senate. And about half of older Millennials (51%) and 38% of younger Millennials could identify Warren.

Educational Differences in Knowledge Persist

As in the past, there are substantial differences in news awareness by levels of education. Still, half or more of those with no more than a high school education answered eight of 12 questions correctly.

The education gap is particularly wide in the question about Pope Francis' native country. Large majorities of both post-graduates (81%) and college graduates (71%) are able to correctly identify Argentina as the pope's home country, while only about four-in-ten of those with some college experience (43%) and a high school degree or less (38%) can do so.

By contrast, roughly nine-in-ten across educational categories are able to identify Martin Luther King Jr. It is the only question on which there are no significant differences by education.

Among college graduates and those with post-graduate degrees, majorities answered 11 of 12 correctly. The only exception is the question about the number of women on the Supreme Court. Just 42% of those with a post-graduate degree and 40% of college graduates know there are three women on the high court. Even smaller shares of those with less education – 30% of those

Post-Grads Most Knowledgeable, But Fewer Than Half Know Number of Women on Supreme Court

% answering each question correctly

	HS or less %	Some college %	College degree %	Post grad degree %	Post-grad HS diff
Pope Francis is from ... Argentina (from map)	38	43	71	81	+43
Current Senate party composition (from set of four charts)	38	45	67	76	+38
Who is Malala (photo)? (2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner)	50	56	78	87	+37
Elizabeth Warren (from set of four photos)	37	44	62	74	+37
U.S. recently re-established relations with ... Cuba	64	70	88	93	+29
Where is Guantanamo located? (Cuba, from map)	66	73	91	93	+27
Route of proposed Keystone XL pipeline (map)	61	68	86	88	+27
Unemployment rate '09-'14 (chart)	63	67	81	85	+22
Leader of North Korea (Kim Jong-un, photo)	73	78	90	93	+20
Number of SCOTUS justices that are women (three)	26	30	40	42	+16
Need to indicate insurance coverage on ... taxes	78	81	91	91	+13
Martin Luther King, Jr. (photo)	89	91	94	92	+3
Average number correct overall	6.8	8.2	9.4	10.0	+3.2

American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. Significant differences in **bold**. All questions are multiple choice; for full wording see survey topline.

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with some college experience but no degree and 26% of those with a high school degree or less – answered this correctly.

Partisan Differences in Knowledge

On average, Republicans, Democrats and independents each answer about eight of twelve knowledge questions correctly. More

Republicans than Democrats could identify the route of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline from a map (79% vs. 66%) and locate the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo on a map (84% of Republicans and 72% of Democrats select Cuba).

And six-in-ten Republicans know the partisan composition of the Senate, while only about half of independents (51%) and Democrats (49%) correctly identify the party balance from a set of four charts depicting it.

Majorities across parties could identify the photographs of Malala and King, but Democrats are more likely than Republicans to answer these questions correctly (by six points and seven points, respectively).

Republicans More Likely to Know Route of Keystone, Partisan Balance of Senate

% answering each question correctly

	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %	R-D Diff
Route of Keystone XL pipeline (map)	79	66	75	+13
Where is Guantanamo located? (Cuba, from map)	84	72	79	+12
Current Senate party composition (from set of four charts)	60	49	51	+11
Need to indicate insurance coverage on ... taxes	89	80	84	+9
U.S. recently re-established relations with ... Cuba	82	75	73	+7
Number of SCOTUS justices that are women (three)	35	30	34	+5
Leader of North Korea (Kim Jong-un, photo)	83	80	82	+3
Unemployment rate '09-'14 (chart)	70	72	73	-2
Elizabeth Warren (from set of four photos)	51	53	50	-2
Pope Francis is from ... Argentina (from map)	50	53	53	-3
Who is Malala (photo)? (2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner)	59	65	65	-6
Martin Luther King, Jr. (photo)	87	94	93	-7
Average number correct overall	8.3	7.9	8.0	+0.4

American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. Significant differences in **bold**. All questions are multiple choice; for full wording see survey topline.

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Politically Engaged More Likely to Know Senate Composition

People who are politically engaged are more likely to know the party balance in the Senate than the less engaged; 56% of those who say they are registered to vote know the composition of the Senate, compared with 30% of those who are not registered to vote. And nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who report having voted in the 2014 midterms know the Senate's partisan balance; 38% of adults who did not vote in the midterm elections this past November know this.

In addition, those at either end of the ideological spectrum are more aware of the Senate's partisan composition, compared with those closer to middle ideologically. About six-in-ten (63%) conservative Republicans could identify the correct partisan balance of the Senate, compared with 54% of moderate and liberal Republicans. Liberal Democrats are 25 points more likely than conservative and moderate Democrats to know this (64% vs. 39%).

Liberals, Conservatives More Likely to Know Senate Balance

% identifying number of seats each party holds in U.S. Senate

	%
Total	52
Registered voter	56
Not registered	30
Voted in midterms	64
Did not vote in midterms	38
Republican	60
Cons Rep	63
Mod/Lib Rep	54
Independent	51
Democrat	49
Cons/Mod Dem	39
Liberal Dem	64

American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. All questions are multiple choice; for full wording see survey topline.

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About the American Trends Panel Survey (ATP)

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by the Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults living in households. Respondents who self-identify as internet users (representing 89% of U.S. adults) participate in the panel via monthly self-administered Web surveys, and those who do not use the internet participate via telephone or mail. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the March wave of the panel, conducted March 10–April 6, 2015 among 3,147 respondents (2,833 by Web and 314 by mail). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,147 respondents is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

All current members of the American Trends Panel were originally recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, a large (n=10,013) national landline and cellphone random digit dial (RDD) survey conducted January 23rd to March 16th, 2014, in English and Spanish. At the end of that survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The invitation was extended to all respondents who use the internet (from any location) and a random subsample of respondents who do not use the internet¹.

Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel. A total of 5,338 agreed to participate and provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists also receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

The ATP data were weighted in a multi-step process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel and remain an active panelist varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey. Population density is weighted to match the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. Telephone service is weighted to estimates of telephone coverage for 2014 that were projected from the July–December 2013 National Health Interview Survey. It also adjusts for party affiliation using an average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys, and for internet use using as a parameter a measure from the 2014 Survey of

¹ When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

Political Polarization. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking.

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	3,147	2.4 percentage points
Millennial (age 18-34)	601	5.4 percentage points
Gen X (age 35-49)	721	4.9 percentage points
Boomer (age 50-69)	1,305	3.6 percentage points
Silent (age 70-87)	501	5.9 percentage points
Post grad degree	624	5.3 percentage points
College degree	1,035	4.1 percentage points
Some college	902	4.4 percentage points
HS or less	581	5.5 percentage points
Republican	750	4.8 percentage points
Democrat	1,038	4.1 percentage points
Independent	1,258	3.7 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.

The Web component of the March wave had a response rate of 78% (2,833 responses among 3,634 Web-based individuals enrolled in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 61% (314 responses among 512 non-Web individuals enrolled in the panel). Taking account of the response rate for the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization (10.6%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the cumulative response rate for the March ATP wave is 3.4%².

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² Prior to the October wave, 962 web panelists who had never responded were removed from the panel. Prior to the November wave, 37 mail non-web panelists who had never responded were removed from the panel.

**2015 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 10 MARCH
FINAL TOPLINE
March 10 – April 6, 2015
TOTAL N=3,147
WEB RESPONDENTS N=2,833
MAIL RESPONDENTS N=314¹**

OTHER QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Here are some questions about people and things that have been in the news. Please answer the questions as best as you can. If you don't know the answer to a question, just move on to the next one. We will reveal the correct answers at the end of the survey.

ASK ALL:

K.1 What does the line on the map represent? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**



Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

73	Proposed Keystone XL Pipeline (<i>Correct</i>)
7	Mississippi River
3	New Madrid Fault
7	Expansion of the Midwest Regional Railroad Line
10	No answer

¹ Question wording in this topline is that from the web version of the survey. Question wording and format was adapted for the paper questionnaire delivered by mail; this questionnaire is available on request. All questions asked in both modes unless noted.

ASK ALL:

K.2 What is the name of this person? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**



Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- | | |
|----|--|
| 91 | Martin Luther King, Jr. (<i>Correct</i>) |
| 2 | Malcom X |
| 3 | Jesse Jackson |
| 1 | Thurgood Marshall |
| 3 | No answer |

ASK ALL:

K.3 Which country is Pope Francis originally from?



Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 2 | #1: Mexico |
| 52 | #2: Argentina (<i>Correct</i>) |
| 17 | #3: Spain |
| 17 | #4: Italy |
| 11 | No answer |

ASK ALL:

K.4 The United States recently announced that it would re-establish diplomatic relations with which of the following countries? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**

Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- | | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 76 | Cuba (<i>Correct</i>) |
| 7 | Russia |
| 8 | North Korea |
| 3 | Yemen |
| 6 | No answer |

ASK ALL:

K.5 Who is Malala Yousafzai? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**



Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- 63 2014 Nobel Peace Prize recipient (*Correct*)
- 10 The first Muslim woman elected to the U.S. Congress
- 1 An Academy Award-winning director
- 12 Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S.
- 14 No answer

ASK ALL:

K.6 To comply with the health care law, most Americans need to indicate they have health insurance coverage when they... **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**

Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- 84 File their taxes (*Correct*)
- 3 Vote in an election
- 2 Change their address
- 5 Receive a driver's license
- 6 No answer

ASK ALL:

K.7 This graph shows the trend in what national statistic? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**



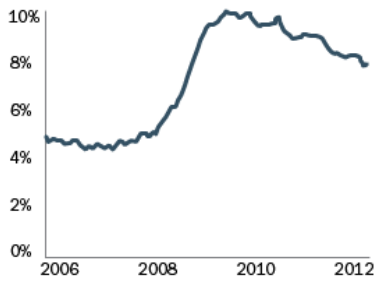
Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

- 72 The unemployment rate (*Correct*)
- 9 The inflation rate
- 4 The corporate tax rate
- 4 The high school dropout rate
- 12 No answer

K7 TREND FOR COMPARISON CONTINUED...

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

This graph shows the trend in what national statistic? [RANDOMIZE]



GfK²
Jan 18-24

2013

- 70 The unemployment rate (*Correct*)
- 10 The inflation rate
- 5 The corporate tax rate
- 3 The high school graduation rate
- 12 No answer

ASK ALL:

K.8 Which dot on this map represents where the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay is located?



Mar 10-Apr 6

2015

- 4 #1: Texas
- 78 #2: Cuba (*Correct*)
- 4 #3: Portugal
- 5 #4: Yemen
- 9 No answer

ASK ALL:

K.9 There are nine justices on the Supreme Court of the United States. How many are women?

Mar 10-Apr 6

2015

- 14 One
- 39 Two
- 33 Three (*Correct*)
- 4 Four
- 10 No answer

² January 2013 survey conducted by GfK among a random sample of households in their nationally representative online research panel, KnowledgePanel.

ASK ALL:

K.10 What country does this person lead? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**



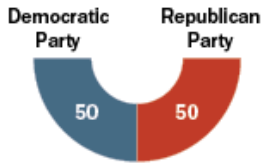
Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

82	North Korea (<i>Correct</i>)
9	South Korea
4	China
1	Malaysia
4	No answer

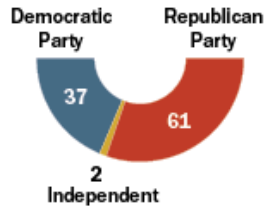
ASK ALL:

K.11 Which of the following shows the number of seats each party holds in the U.S. Senate? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**

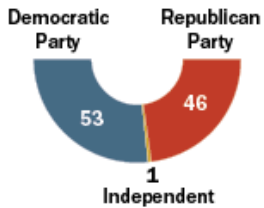
1.



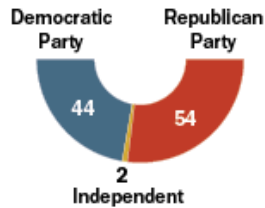
2.



3.



4.



Mar 10-Apr 6
2015

6	#1
21	#2
10	#3
52	#4 (<i>Correct</i>)
11	No answer

QUESTION K.12 NOT INCLUDED IN KNOWLEDGE SCALE

ASK ALL:

K.12 In what year did the U.S. war in Afghanistan begin? Was it...

Mar 10-Apr 6

2015

13	1997
43	2001 (<i>Correct</i>)
28	2003
8	2010
7	No answer

ASK ALL:

K.13 Which one is Elizabeth Warren, the senator from Massachusetts? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS]**

1.



2.



3.



4.



Mar 10-Apr 6

2015

51	#1: Elizabeth Warren (<i>Correct</i>)
11	#2: Tammy Baldwin
13	#3: Nancy Pelosi
7	#4: Deb Fischer
18	No answer

GfK³
Jan 18-24

2013

43
11
16
9
21

³ January 2013 survey conducted by GfK among a random sample of households in their nationally representative online research panel, KnowledgePanel.