



NEWS Release
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Take the Quiz Before You Read the Report!

As part of the Pew Knowledge Project, people are invited to test their own news IQ by taking an interactive knowledge quiz now available on the Pew Research Center website. The short quiz includes the same questions that were included in the national poll. Participants will instantly learn how they did on the quiz in comparison with the general public as well as with people like them. To take the quiz, click on this link:

<http://pewresearch.org/newsiq/>

Public Affairs Knowledge Update

HILLARY'S NEW JOB BETTER KNOWN THAN DOW JONES AVERAGE

A new Pew News IQ survey yields some predictable results about the public's knowledge of facts about politics and world affairs, but also a few surprises. Hillary Clinton's nomination to be secretary of state is known by just about everyone – not too surprisingly. However, even at a time of great focus on Wall Street's troubles, fewer than half were generally aware of where the Dow Jones Industrial Average is trading these days.

A total of 1,000 adults were interviewed Dec. 4-7 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and were asked to answer a series of 10 multiple choice questions about events and people in the news. Respondents answered an average of six correctly.

Following an election that generated great public interest, nearly nine-in-ten (87%) could correctly identify secretary of state as the job that President-elect Barack Obama has nominated Clinton to take

What the Public Knows

Percent who know...

Clinton nominated to be... (Sec. of State)	87
Party with House majority... (Democrats)	82
Guantanamo Bay is... (U.S. naval base)	76
Speaker of the House is... (Nancy Pelosi)	72
US gas taxes vs. Europe... (Lower)	64
John Roberts is... (A conservative)	53
Robert Gates is... (Sec. of Defense)	52
Dow currently at... (Around 8,000 pts)	45
U.S. troops killed in Iraq... (Around 4,200)	40
Nicolas Sarkozy is president of... (France)	38

Results based on a multiple choice questions. Correct answers in parentheses.

on in his cabinet. More than eight-in-ten (82%) knew that the Democratic Party controls a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Majorities could correctly answer several other questions on topics that have been in the news. More than three quarters (76%) knew that Guantanamo Bay is the site of a U.S. Naval Base that houses a military prison for suspected terrorists. Nearly as many (72%) could identify Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House, virtually the same number as knew this in August 2007.

But at a time when the ups and downs of Wall Street have been regular front page news, just 45% could correctly say that the Dow Jones Industrial Average was trading around 8,000 points. Respondents could choose from four possibilities.

Three other questions, meanwhile, showed evidence of increased public awareness compared with past surveys. Almost two-thirds (64%) were aware that gasoline taxes in the U.S. are lower than they are in Europe, up from 53% who knew this in 1989. A small majority (53%) correctly said that Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts is generally considered to be a conservative, up from 37% who answered correctly in February of 2007. That also is significantly higher than the 30% who could correctly say in 1989 that William Rehnquist, Robert's predecessor as chief justice, was a conservative. A similar majority (52%) could identify Robert Gates as the secretary of defense, up from 41% who knew this in August of last year. Obama recently announced that Gates will stay on in the new administration.

In other questions, four-in-ten (40%) knew that around 4,200 U.S. military personnel have died thus far in Iraq. And 38% could correctly say that Nicolas Sarkozy is the president of France.

Fluctuation in Knowledge of Troop Deaths

Awareness of the level of U.S. military fatalities in Iraq has fluctuated in recent months. At 40%, the current level of knowledge is the second-lowest recorded by Pew surveys. The question has been asked 11 times since 2004, and usually about half of the public can select the category containing the current number of troop deaths. However, in March 2008, the percentage able to do so plunged to 28%. That happened after a

	Aug 2007	Mar 2008	Apr 2008	Dec 2008	Change Apr-Dec
<i>Know number of US troop deaths</i>	%	%	%	%	
Total	54	28	60	40	-20
Men	60	34	64	41	-23
Women	47	23	56	38	-18
18-29	39	24	45	30	-15
30-49	54	28	60	38	-22
50-64	56	28	62	43	-19
65+	69	38	73	46	-27
College grad+	60	27	71	47	-24
Some college	51	33	56	37	-19
H.S. or less	47	27	52	33	-19
Republican	53	26	65	38	-27
Democrat	49	30	58	39	-19
Independent	59	29	61	42	-19

period of several months in which news attention to Iraq had greatly diminished.

In late March of 2008, the U.S. passed the grim milestone of 4,000 total fatalities. When the question was next asked on a survey in early April, the percentage able to answer correctly rose to its highest level, 60%. The decline in awareness since then has been greatest among older respondents and Republicans (down 27 percentage points in each group).

Who Did Well?

While very few people “aced” the quiz – just 7% answered all 10 questions correctly – about seven-in-ten (71%) got at least half the answers right and about one-third (34%) answered at least eight correctly. On average, respondents could correctly answer about six out of ten questions (mean 6.1; median 6.0).

As with previous knowledge quizzes, demographic groups differed significantly in how much they knew. Men correctly answered an average of 6.5 of the 10 questions; women answered an average of 5.7 questions. College graduates correctly answered an average of 7.3 questions; those with some college experience but no degree answered an average of 6.0 correctly. Those with no college experience answered 4.7 correctly. Older respondents were more knowledgeable than younger ones: respondents under age 30 answered 4.9 correctly, on average, while those 30 and older correctly answered six or more.

Though men score somewhat better than women overall, women and men are about equally likely to know that Nancy Pelosi is speaker of the U.S. House, the level of U.S. troop fatalities, and that Hillary Clinton has been nominated to be secretary of state. The largest gender difference in knowledge is the current level of the Dow Jones Industrial average (56% of men answered correctly, compared with 34% of women).

How Americans Scored on the Pew News IQ Quiz	
	Average # correct out of 10 questions
TOTAL	6.1
<u>Sex</u>	
Men	6.5
Women	5.7
<u>Education</u>	
College Grad	7.3
Some College	6.0
High School or Less	4.7
<u>Age</u>	
18-29	4.9
30-49	6.0
50-64	6.5
65+	6.7
<u>Registered Voter</u>	
Yes	6.4
No	3.7
<u>Party Affiliation</u>	
Republican	6.4
Democrat	5.9
Independent	6.2
<u>Correctly answered at least*...</u>	
2 questions	96
4 questions	81
6 questions	60
8 questions	34
All 10 questions	7
*Out of 10 questions.	

Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to know that Nancy Pelosi is the speaker of the House, and more Republicans and independents than Democrats are aware of the current level of the Dow. Democrats, Republicans and independents are about equally likely to know that the Democratic Party holds a majority of seats in the House, that

approximately 4,200 U.S. military personnel have died in Iraq, that Nicolas Sarkozy is the president of France, and that Robert Gates is the Secretary of Defense.

About the Survey

Results for this report are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted Dec. 4-7, 2008 under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
 DECEMBER POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE UPDATE SURVEY
 FINAL TOPLINE
 DECEMBER 4-7, 2008
 N=1,000**

Now I would like to ask you about some things that have been in the news recently. Not everyone will have heard of them...

ROTATE ITEMS Q.1 THROUGH Q.5 AND ITEMS Q.6 THROUGH Q.10 IN SEPARATE SECTIONS.

Q.1 Do you happen to know which political party has a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives? **[READ AND ROTATE]**

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
December 4-7, 2008	82	11	7=100
February 28-March 2, 2008	70	26	4=100
August 16-19, 2007	78	19	3=100
February, 2007	76	10	14=100
TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹			
May, 2008	53	15	32=100
Late October, 2006	4	58	38=100
April, 2006	6	64	30=100
April, 2004	8	56	36=100
June, 2001	34	31	35=100
August, 1999	8	55	37=100
December, 1998	11	56	33=100
June, 1997	6	50	44=100
April, 1996	8	70	22=100
June, 1995	5	73	22=100
July, 1994	60	18	22=100
February, 1994	58	42	n/a=100
September, 1992	46	9	45=100
June, 1992	44	12	44=100
May, 1992	49	12	39=100
May, 1989 <i>Political Knowledge Survey</i>	68	16	16=100

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

Q.2 To what cabinet position has Barack Obama recently nominated Hillary Clinton? Is it **[RANDOMIZE 1-3 AND READ]**...

- 3 Secretary of the Treasury
- 87 Secretary of State (*Correct*)
- 2 Ambassador to the United Nations
- 3 Or something else?
- 5 Don't know/Refused (**VOL. DO NOT READ**)
- 100

¹ In May 2008, and from May 1992 through Late October 2006 this was asked as an open-ended question, without offering response options for Democrats and Republicans (read and rotated). In May 1989 the question was worded "As a result of the election last year which party now has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington?"

Q.3 Since the start of military action in Iraq, about how many U.S. military personnel have been killed? To the best of your knowledge, have there been ... [READ IN ORDER] troop deaths?

Dec 4-7, 2008		April 4-7, 2008	Feb 28-Mar 2, 2008	
14	Around 2,200	6	11	Around 2,000
22	Around 3,200	15	35	Around 3,000
40	Around 4,200	60	28	Around 4,000
20	Around 5,200	16	23	Around 5,000
--	Other (VOL.)	--	--	Other (VOL.)
<u>4</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100		100	100	
Aug 9-16, 2007	June 22-25, 2007	Feb 2007	Dec 2006	
8	9	5	6	Around 1,000
19	20	17	24	Around 2,000
54	49	55	47	Around 3,000
17	12	17	16	Around 4,000
--	3	1	1	Other (VOL.)
<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100	100	100	100	
April 2006	Oct 2005	June 2005	April 2004	
4	5	4	28	Under 500
16	23	13	55	500 to 1,000
53	48	54	6	1,000 to 2,000
19	19	24	4	More than 2,000
1	1	--	--	Other (VOL.)
<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100	100	100	100	

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

Q.4 Is Nicolas Sarkozy the President of... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

38	France (<i>Correct</i>)
8	Colombia
6	Mexico [OR]
22	Russia
<u>26</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.5 Is Guantanamo Bay... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

4	A luxury resort in the Caribbean
76	The location of a U.S. naval base (<i>Correct</i>)
4	A new action film by Steven Spielberg
5	The location of recent pirate attacks on commercial ships
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.6 Do you happen to know the name of the current Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives? Is it...
[READ AND RANDOMIZE]

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

		August 16-19, 2007		Senate Majority Leader Feb. 28- March 2, 2008	
72	Nancy Pelosi (<i>Correct</i>)	74		24	Harry Reid (<i>Correct</i>)
3	Dennis Hastert	5		13	Patrick Leahy
3	Barbara Boxer [OR]	7		13	Trent Lott
3	Eric Holder	5		14	Joe Biden
<u>19</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>9</u>		<u>36</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)
100		100		100	

Q.7 Compared to Western Europe, do you think the tax on gasoline in the U.S. is higher, lower, or about the same?

		February 1989
20	Higher	21
64	Lower (<i>Correct</i>)	53
9	About the same	10
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)	<u>16</u>
100		100

Q.8 Do you happen to know if the Dow Jones Industrial Average is currently closer to **[READ IN ORDER]**?

		Feb. 28- March 2, <u>2008</u>		Aug. 16-19, <u>2007</u>		May <u>2000</u> ²	
18	2,000	16	4,000	16	2,000	5	3,000
8	4,000	9	5,000	14	4,000	4	5,000
45	8,000 [OR]	16	10,000 [OR]	13	8,000 [OR]	28	10,000 [OR]
5	13,000	31	12,000	41	13,000	1	20,000
<u>24</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>28</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>16</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>62</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100		100		100		100	

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

Q.9 Is Robert Gates... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

		August 16-19, <u>2007</u>	March 9-12, <u>2007</u> ³		
52	The U.S. Secretary of Defense (<i>Correct</i>)	41	37		The U.S. Secretary of Defense (<i>Correct</i>)
7	A Senator from Michigan	17	5		A Senator from Michigan
11	The chairman of General Motors	12	3		The chairman of General Motors
3	The host of CNN's evening news broadcast	8	24		[OR] is he something else
<u>27</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>22</u>	<u>31</u>		DK/Refused (VOL.)
100		100	100		

² In May, 2000 the question was worded: "Do you happen to know at what level the Dow Jones Industrial average is currently trading? Is it about..."

³ For March 9-12, 2007 "The host of CNN's evening news broadcast" was not offered as a response option, and "is he something else" was offered.

Q.10 The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is John Roberts. Can you tell me if he is generally considered a liberal, a moderate, or a conservative? [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

		February	TREND FOR COMPARISON:
		<u>2007</u>	<i>Rehnquist</i>
			Political
			Knowledge Survey
			<u>May 1989</u>
11	Liberal	6	11
11	Moderate	9	9
53	Conservative (<i>Correct</i>)	37	30
<u>25</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>48</u>	<u>50</u>
100		100	100