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Take the Latest Quiz Online!

We invite you to test your own News IQ by taking the latest interactive knowledge quiz now available on the Pew Research Center website. The short quiz includes the same questions that were included in a 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 latest quiz, click on this link:

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

Political Knowledge Update

SENATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS A MYSTERY TO MANY

The public has consistently expressed strong interest in the health care debate, but relatively few Americans can correctly answer two key questions related to the Senate’s consideration of health care legislation.

In the latest installment of the Pew Research Center’s News IQ Quiz, just 32% know that the Senate passed its

version of the legislation without a single Republican vote. And, in what proved to be the most difficult question on the quiz, only about a quarter (26%) knows that it takes 60 votes to break a filibuster¹ in the Senate and force a vote on a bill. The survey was conducted before Massachusetts Republican Scott Brown won a special election to the Senate on Jan. 19; Brown’s election means Senate Democrats can no longer count on a 60-vote majority once he takes office.

What the Public Knows

Percent who know...

Who holds most U.S. debt (China)	59
U.S. imports ___ of oil it consumes (Two-thirds)	57
# of women on SCOTUS (More than one)	56
Unemployment rate closer to... (10%)	55
Attempted bomber trained in... (Yemen)	50
In '09, more U.S. deaths in Iraq/Afghan (Afghan)	43
S. Colbert is a... (Comedian and TV host)	41
Majority leader of the U.S. Senate (Reid)	39
Dow currently at (Around 10,000 pts)	36
GOP Senate votes for health bill (None)	32
Chairs GOP Nat'l Committee? (Steele)	32
# of votes in Senate to break filibuster (60)	26

Questions Pew 1-Pew 12. Results based on multiple choice questions. Correct answers in parentheses.

¹ The filibuster is a legislative procedure, unique to the U.S. Senate, that allows opponents to legislation a means to delay or entirely prevent a vote on a proposal by extending debate on that proposal.

About six-in-ten (59%) correctly identify China as the foreign country holding the most U.S. government debt. Nearly as many (57%) know that the United States imports two-thirds of the oil it consumes. As was the case in previous knowledge surveys, a majority (55%) knows the current unemployment rate is about 10%. However, far fewer (36%) correctly estimate the current level of the Dow Jones Industrial Average at about 10,000 points.

The news quiz, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Jan. 14-17 among 1,003 adults reached on cell phones and landlines, asked 12 multiple choice questions on subjects ranging from economics and foreign affairs to prominent people in the news. Americans answered an average of 5.3 questions correctly.

The survey finds that while the public struggled with most of the political questions on the survey, most Americans (56%) know that there currently is more than one woman serving on the Supreme Court. Notably, this is the only question on the quiz where as many women as men answer correctly; men scored significantly better on other questions.

In response to questions about terrorism and national security, half (50%) correctly identify Yemen as the country where intelligence officials believe the suspect in an attempted Christmas Day airline bombing received training and bomb materials. A slightly smaller percentage (43%) knows that during all of 2009 there were more American military fatalities in Afghanistan than in Iraq; 32% said more U.S. troops were killed in Iraq. This question proved difficult for many, even though interest in developments in Afghanistan – and media coverage – picked up in late 2009 as President Obama announced his war strategy [*See [“Top Stories of 2009: Economy, Obama and Health Care,”](#) released Dec. 29, 2009*].

Questions about people in the news round out the quiz update. About four-in-ten (39%) know that Nevada Democrat Harry Reid is the majority leader of the U.S. Senate. About a third (32%) correctly pick Michael Steele as the chairman of the Republican National Committee. Interestingly, nearly half of Republicans (48%) are able to identify Reid as Senate majority leader compared with just a third (33%) of Democrats. More Republicans can identify Reid as majority leader than can identify Steel as chairman of the RNC (37%).

About four-in-ten (41%) correctly say that Stephen Colbert is a comedian and television talk show host. This is the only question on the quiz that more people younger than 30 than older people answer correctly (49% vs. 39%).

Knowledge and the Senate Health Care Bill

Asked how many GOP senators voted for the chamber's health care bill on Dec. 24, only 32% know that the measure received no support from Republican members. About as many answer incorrectly, saying that five (13%), 10 (8%), or 20 (8%) GOP Senators voted for the bill. About four-in-ten (39%) do not know or decline to answer.

A smaller percentage (26%) knows that 60 votes are needed to break a filibuster in the Senate.

About as many (25%) mistakenly say that a simple majority of 51 votes can break a filibuster.

As with most other questions on the news quiz, well-educated people, older Americans and men are more likely to correctly answer the questions about the Senate vote on health care and the filibuster.

Less than a third of Republicans or Democrats can correctly identify the number of votes needed to end a filibuster (30% among Republicans, 25% among Democrats). College graduates fared better than other demographic groups on this question, but fewer than half of college graduates (45%) know that it takes 60 Senate votes to overcome a filibuster.

U.S. Senate votes needed to break filibuster		Number of GOP Senators who voted for health bill	
	%		%
51	25	0	32
60	26	5	13
67	7	10	8
75	5	20	8
Don't know	<u>37</u>	Don't know	<u>39</u>
	100		100

Questions: Pew5/Pew6. Correct answers in bold. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

	60 Senate votes breaks filibuster	No GOP senators voted for health bill	N
	%	%	
Total	26	32	1,003
Men	33	39	463
Women	21	25	540
White, non-hisp	30	37	777
Black, non-hisp	20	20	102
18-29	14	16	163
30-49	27	35	282
50-64	32	39	288
65+	32	38	247
College grad	45	51	355
Some college	24	33	238
HS or less	16	20	404
Republican	30	38	260
Democrat	25	29	321
Independent	29	34	341

Questions: Pew5/Pew6.

Republicans More Knowledgeable on Many Issues

Republicans, on average, answered one more question correctly than Democrats (5.9 vs. 4.9 correct). These differences are partly a reflection of the demographics of the two groups; Republicans tend to be older, well educated and male, which are characteristics associated with political and economic knowledge. Still, even when these factors are held constant, Republicans do somewhat better than Democrats on the knowledge quiz.

More Republicans Know that Reid Is Senate Leader				
	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D
	%	%	%	diff
U.S. imports ___ of oil it consumes (Two-thirds)	67	52	58	+15
Majority leader of the US Senate (Reid)	48	33	43	+15
Dow currently at (Around 10,000 pts)	44	30	39	+14
Current unemployment rate close to (10%)	65	52	56	+13
Who holds most U.S. debt (China)	68	56	62	+12
Attempted bomber trained in... (Yemen)	58	47	52	+11
GOP senators who voted for health bill (None)	38	29	34	+9
Chairs Republican Nat'l Committee? (Steele)	37	29	36	+8
# of votes in Senate to break filibuster (60)	30	25	29	+5
In '09, more U.S. deaths in Iraq/Afghan (Afghan)	47	43	43	+4
Stephen Colbert is a... (Comedian and TV host)	39	39	49	0
Women on U.S. Supreme Court (More than one)	50	58	61	-8

Questions: Pew1-12.

Among the largest gaps comes over knowledge of who leads the U.S. Senate. About half (48%) of Republicans are able to identify Reid as the current majority leader, while only a third of Democrats can name their own party's Senate leader. More Republicans can name Reid (48%) than Steele (37%), the RNC chairman.

The one question in the survey in which Democrats slightly outperform Republicans is about the number of women now serving on the U.S. Supreme Court. Close to six-in-ten Democrats (58%) know that more than one woman serves on the high court, compared with 50% of Republicans. Though the Democratic Party is made up of more women than men, this finding does not appear driven mostly by gender. Republican men and women are about equally likely to answer this question correctly (about half each), while solid majorities of both Democratic men (60%) and women (57%) get this question right.

Large Age Gap in Knowledge

As in previous knowledge surveys, older people fare much better on most questions than do young people. The largest gaps come on questions about the Christmas Day terrorist plot and the name of the Senate leader.

When asked to name the country that intelligence officials believe trained and equipped the suspected

Christmas Day bomber, close to six-in-ten (59%) Americans 50 and older correctly identify Yemen, compared with just 25% of those younger than 30. Similarly, there is a 34-point difference between those younger than 30 and older than 50 in knowledge of who leads the U.S. Senate (16% vs. 50%).

The most notable exception to this pattern is the ability of young people to identify Colbert. About half (49%) of those younger than 30 correctly identify the comedian and talk show host compared with 38% of those older than 50.

Gender Differences on Economic Questions

The Pew Research Center's news consumption surveys have consistently measured greater attentiveness to news about politics and economics among men than among women. The results of the News IQ Quiz tend to reflect these news preferences.

In the current poll, men on average answer more questions correctly than women

(6.0 for men vs. 4.6 for women). The gender gap in news knowledge is greatest on the question

	18-29	30-49	50+	Old-Yng diff
	%	%	%	
Attempted bomber trained in... (Yemen)	25	54	59	+34
Majority leader of the U.S. Senate (Reid)	16	39	50	+34
Chairs Republican Nat'l Committee? (Steele)	15	33	39	+24
Current unemployment rate close to (10%)	38	58	61	+23
Dow currently at (Around 10,000 pts)	18	42	40	+22
GOP senators who voted for health bill (None)	16	35	38	+22
Who holds most U.S. debt (China)	47	58	67	+20
Women on U.S. Supreme Court (More than one)	44	55	63	+19
# of votes in Senate to break filibuster (60)	14	27	32	+18
In '09, more U.S. deaths in Iraq/Afghan (Afghan)	37	44	45	+8
U.S. imports ___ of oil it consumes (Two-thirds)	55	59	55	0
Stephen Colbert is a... (Comedian and TV host)	49	40	38	-11

Questions: Pew1-12.

	Men	Women	M-W diff
	%	%	
Who holds most U.S. debt (China)	70	49	+21
Dow currently at (Around 10,000 pts)	45	27	+18
Current unemployment rate close to (10%)	62	48	+14
Attempted bomber trained in... (Yemen)	57	43	+14
GOP senators who voted for health bill (None)	39	25	+14
Chairs Republican Nat'l Committee? (Steele)	39	25	+14
U.S. imports ___ of oil it consumes (Two-thirds)	63	51	+12
# of votes in Senate to break filibuster (60)	33	21	+12
In '09, more U.S. deaths in Iraq/Afghan (Afghan)	48	38	+10
Stephen Colbert is a... (Comedian and TV host)	46	37	+9
Majority leader of the U.S. Senate (Reid)	43	35	+8
Women on U.S. Supreme Court (More than one)	57	56	+1

Questions: Pew1-12.

of which country holds the most U.S. government debt (70% of men answer correctly vs. 49% of women) and the current level of the Dow (45% of men know this vs. 27% of women). But there is no gender divide on the item about the number of women on the Supreme Court. Roughly equal proportions of men (57%) and women (56%) answer this correctly.

News Knowledge on Average

The survey measures overall news knowledge using the 12 multiple choice questions in an additive scale. For each question answered correctly respondents receive one point on a scale ranging from zero (none correct) to 12 (all correct). In the current News IQ Quiz, just 2% of the public answered all questions correctly (12 out of 12), while 6% failed to answer a single question right.

Compared with the News Quiz from nearly a year ago, it proved harder for the public to answer at least half the questions correctly this time. Only 42% of Americans answered at least six questions right, compared with 71% who answered at least half the questions correctly in March 2009.

Consistent with past knowledge tests, demographic groups differed in how well they performed on the quiz. Men correctly answered an average of 6.0 out of 12 questions correctly, while women answered an average of 4.6 questions right. Those with college degrees correctly answered 7.3 questions correctly on average. Those with some college experience answered an average of 5.4 questions and those with no college experience answered 3.9 correctly on average.

As in the past, older Americans generally did better than young people. Respondents 50 and older could correctly answer an average of about two more questions than those under age 30 (5.9 vs. 3.8).

Republicans averaged 5.9 correct answers. Independents correctly answered 5.6 on average and Democrats answered 4.9 correct on average.

How Americans Scored on the Pew News IQ Quiz	
	Average # correct out of 12 questions
TOTAL	5.3
<u>Sex</u>	
Men	6.0
Women	4.6
<u>Education</u>	
College grad	7.3
Some college	5.4
High school or less	3.9
<u>Age</u>	
18-29	3.8
30-49	5.5
50+	5.9
<u>Income</u>	
<\$30,000	3.8
\$30,000 to \$74,999	5.8
\$75,000+	7.1
<u>Party Affiliation</u>	
Republican	5.9
Democrat	4.9
Independent	5.6
<u>Correctly answered at least*...</u>	
2 questions	87
4 questions	63
6 questions	42
8 questions	28
10 questions	15
All 12 questions	2
* Out of 12 questions.	

About the Surveys

January Omnibus/Political Knowledge Update

Some results in this report are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a national sample of 1,003 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from January 14-17, 2010, (672 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 123 who had no landline telephone. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also 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 January-June 2009 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 error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample is plus or minus 4 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.

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
JANUARY OMNIBUS
POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE UPDATE SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
January 14-17, 2010
N=1003

READ TO ALL: Next I'd like to ask about some things that have been in the news. Please answer as best you can. If you don't know the answer just tell me and we'll move to the next question.

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW1 Do you happen to know if the Dow Jones Industrial Average is currently closer to **[READ IN ORDER]**?

Jan 14-17 <u>2010</u>		Oct 1-4, <u>2009</u>		Mar 26-29, <u>2009</u>		Dec 4-7, <u>2008</u>	
7	3,000	7	3,000	20	3,000	18	2,000
6	5,000	5	6,000	14	5,000	8	4,000
36	10,000 [OR]	33	10,000 [OR]	40	8,000 [OR]	45	8,000 [OR]
3	20,000	2	16,000	4	11,000	5	13,000
48	DK/Ref (VOL.)	52	DK/Ref (VOL.)	22	DK/Ref (VOL.)	24	DK/Ref (VOL.)
Feb 28- Mar 2, <u>2008</u>		Aug 16-19, <u>2007</u>		May <u>2000</u>			
16	4,000	16	2,000	5	3,000		
9	5,000	14	4,000	4	5,000		
16	10,000 [OR]	13	8,000 [OR]	28	10,000 [OR]		
31	12,000	41	13,000	1	20,000		
28	DK/Ref (VOL.)	16	DK/Ref (VOL.)	62	DK/Ref (VOL.)		

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW2 Thinking about the man who attempted to bomb an airliner on Christmas Day... Where do intelligence officials believe he was trained and given materials for the bomb. Was it... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Jan 14-17

<u>2010</u>	
50	Yemen (<i>Correct</i>)
4	Syria
15	Afghanistan
3	Israel
28	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW3 During the entire year of 2009, do you happen to know if there were more American military fatalities in...
[READ AND RANDOMIZE]

Jan 14-17

2010

43	Afghanistan (<i>Correct</i>) [OR]
32	Iraq
25	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW4 Do you happen to know if the national unemployment rate is currently closer to [READ IN ORDER]?

Jan 14-17

2010

2	5%
55	10% (<i>Correct</i>)
15	15%
15	20%
12	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Oct 1-4

2009

4
53
15
18
10

Mar 26-29

2009

3	4%
53	8% (<i>Correct</i>)
24	12%
18	16%
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW5 How many Republican senators voted to pass the health care reform bill in its vote on the Senate floor?...
[READ IN ORDER]

Jan 14-17

2010

32	0 (<i>Correct</i>)
13	5
8	10
8	20
39	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW6 In the United States Senate, opponents to legislation can delay a vote by filibustering. Do you know how many senators are needed to break a filibuster and bring a bill to the floor?... [READ IN ORDER]

Jan 14-17

2010

25	51
26	60 (<i>Correct</i>)
7	67
5	75
37	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

PEW7 As far as you know, which foreign country holds the most U.S. government debt? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Jan 14-17		Mar 26-29
<u>2010</u>		<u>2009</u>
59	China (<i>Correct</i>)	71
7	Japan	10
8	Saudi Arabia	12
4	Canada	4
22	DK/Ref. (VOL. DO NOT READ)	3

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW8 As far as you know, about how much of the oil consumed annually in the U.S. is imported? Is it... **[READ, IN ORDER]**

Jan 14-17	
<u>2010</u>	
11	One-third
12	One half
57	Two-thirds (<i>Correct</i>)
20	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW9 Do you happen to know the name of the current majority leader of the U.S. Senate? Is it... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Jan 14-17		Feb 28- Mar 2	
<u>2010</u>		<u>2008</u>	
39	Harry Reid (<i>Correct</i>)	24	Harry Reid (<i>Correct</i>)
3	Al Franken	13	Patrick Leahy
5	Mitch McConnell	13	Trent Lott
10	Hillary Clinton	14	Joe Biden
44	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	36	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

House Speaker

Aug 16-19

<u>2007</u>	
74	Nancy Pelosi (<i>Correct</i>)
5	Dennis Hastert
7	Barbara Boxer [OR]
5	Scooter Libby
9	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW10 Can you name the chairperson of the Republican National Committee? Is it...

[READ AND RANDOMIZE]

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

Democratic National Committee

Jan 14-17		Feb 28-Mar 2	
<u>2010</u>		<u>2008</u>	
32	Michael Steele (<i>Correct</i>)	40	Howard Dean (<i>Correct</i>)
3	Sarah Palin	5	Rahm Emanuel
9	Newt Gingrich	6	Donna Brazile
8	Howard Dean	10	Joe Wilson
49	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	39	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW11 Do you happen to know who Stephen Colbert is? Is he...[READ AND RANDOMIZE]

Jan 14-17	
<u>2010</u>	
41	A comedian and TV talk show host (<i>Correct</i>)
1	An Olympic athlete
7	A member of Congress
*	A Hip Hop artist
51	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW1-PEW12

ASK ALL:

PEW12 Do you happen to know how many women, if any, sit on the U.S. Supreme Court? Is it [READ IN ORDER]

Jan 14-17		TREND FOR COMPARISON:	
<u>2010</u>		<u>Jan 1988²</u>	
2	Zero	6	None
29	One	53	One (<i>Correct</i>)
56	More than one (<i>Correct</i>)	8	More than one
13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	33	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

QUESTIONS PEWA1 THROUGH PEW20 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

²

In January 1988, the question was open ended. No response options were offered.