



NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

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COUNCIL *on*  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

# U.S. ADULTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE WORLD





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Full Questionnaire and Topline



# | F O R E W O R D |

As the Constitutional Convention adjourned, a person is reported to have asked Benjamin Franklin, “What have we got — a Republic or a Monarchy?” To which Franklin responded, “A Republic, if you can keep it.” From the earliest days of America’s founding, the nation’s fathers understood that its citizens had a role in preserving this democracy. They would need a level of basic knowledge about their country and its role in the world, which would allow them to better understand the challenges they faced, and in turn would enable them to hold their elected representatives to account. Now, over 230 years later, it is clear that given our increasingly interconnected world, geographic and geopolitical literacy is more important than ever.

This is why the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Geographic Society commissioned Gallup to ask 2,000 Americans questions about the United States’ role in the world, geography, foreign policy and demographics. The good news is that respondents recognize geography and foreign policy are important to learn, with more than 80 percent agreeing it is important to teach foreign policy in high school and nearly 90 percent agreeing it is important to do so in college. In addition, 70 percent of those polled agree that international issues affect their daily lives. Majorities of Americans think it is extremely or very important to teach geography in elementary and middle school (70 percent), high school (85 percent) and college (68 percent).

The bad news is that less than 30 percent say they learned about foreign policy while in school, and on average they answered just over half of the knowledge questions correctly. Only six percent of respondents got at least 80 percent of the questions correct – the equivalent of a B- or better. Less than half of the respondents were able to identify Afghanistan as the country that provided Al-Qaeda with safe haven prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, despite America having waged a war in Afghanistan due to this fact for nearly two decades. Just over half could identify Iraq on a map, even though 100,000 American soldiers were in the country just a decade ago.

Unsurprisingly, those who say they studied foreign policy or follow the news answered a higher percentage of the questions correctly. And while Americans get most of their information on international issues from the internet and television, those who say they use books, magazines or radio to keep on top of these issues and those who get their information from a wide range of sources scored better than their peers.

Only about one in four Americans say they commonly discuss “geography” in their daily lives, but twice as many (53 percent), say they discuss “geographical topics and issues.” This gap suggests people may have a fairly narrow interpretation of the word “geography.”

What do Americans believe are the most important international issues, and how do Americans view the world and their country's role in it? Trade topped the agenda, followed by immigration and climate change. Still, over three-fourths of Americans believe international trade benefits the United States. The majority of Americans view climate change as a serious threat to U.S. prosperity and national security. More Americans want the country to reduce its international role (44 percent) than maintain the status quo (29 percent) or expand its role (16 percent). Respondents believe the U.S. spends too little on domestic programs like healthcare and education, and too much on the military and foreign aid.

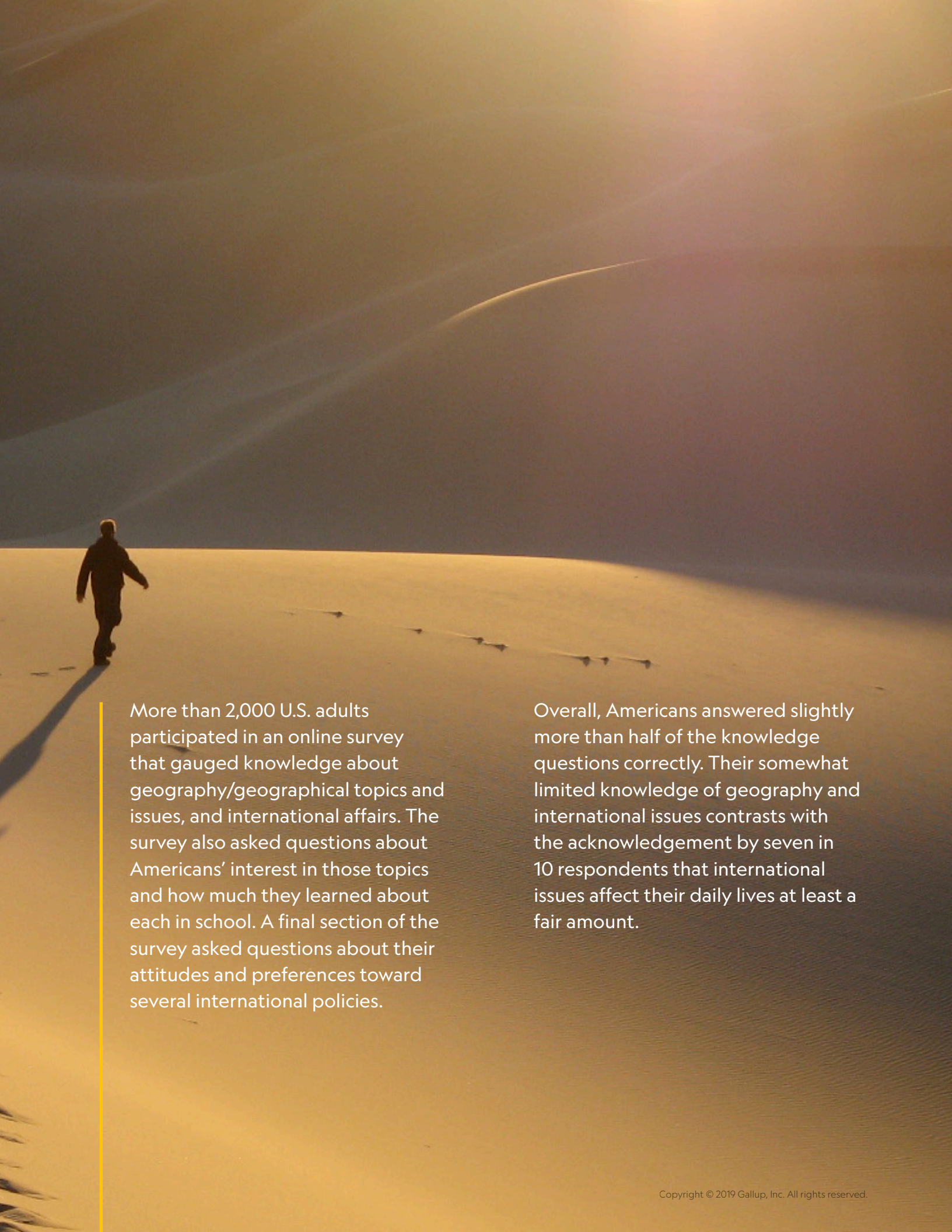
This gap between the recognition of the importance of international issues and Americans' knowledge of these topics calls for putting greater emphasis on geography and international affairs in our nation's classrooms. It also makes one hope that these subjects will receive greater and more serious coverage on television given that it is the primary source of news for many Americans. And it makes the case for citizens seeking out those newspapers, magazines, websites, radio programs and podcasts that provide regular, quality coverage of the world.

To understand how the world works, one must first understand the basics, from geography to demography. It is critical to not only be able to answer the question of “where?” but also “why there?” and “why does that matter?” If Americans are to preserve their republic, they will need to learn more about the world and America's role in it.



| SURVEY  
HIGHLIGHTS |





More than 2,000 U.S. adults participated in an online survey that gauged knowledge about geography/geographical topics and issues, and international affairs. The survey also asked questions about Americans' interest in those topics and how much they learned about each in school. A final section of the survey asked questions about their attitudes and preferences toward several international policies.

Overall, Americans answered slightly more than half of the knowledge questions correctly. Their somewhat limited knowledge of geography and international issues contrasts with the acknowledgement by seven in 10 respondents that international issues affect their daily lives at least a fair amount.



One reason respondents did not perform better may be that they had somewhat limited formal instruction on the topics – 27% say they learned at least a fair amount about foreign policy while in school and close to half indicate they learned about events happening in the world at the time, while a majority of 67% had some instruction in geography. Americans say it is important to have formal instruction in geography and foreign policy at U.S. schools and colleges.

Roughly **seven in 10** U.S. adults believe that events around the world affect their daily lives either a great deal (18%) or a fair amount (52%).

Other key findings from the survey include:

## KNOWLEDGE OF GEOGRAPHY AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

- Americans on average answered 53% of the knowledge questions correctly.
- The highest-scoring subgroups were college graduates, men, those who had more instruction in geography and foreign policy, and those who follow international news regularly.
- There was a pronounced gender gap in knowledge scores, with men on average answering 60% of questions correctly compared with 47% for women.
- U.S. adults between the ages of 30 and 64 were slightly more knowledgeable than those under age 30 or those aged 65 and older. Residents of the Northeast and West were modestly more knowledgeable than those in the South, and political independents fared better than Republicans and Democrats.
- When asked about the location of countries or places, most Americans correctly identified the home continent.
- By topic area, Americans tended to answer more knowledge items about climate change, international institutions, and U.S. military and diplomatic commitments correctly, and answered fewer items about trade and world demographics (such as country populations) correctly.
- Although the specific questions asked differed from a 1988 National Geographic/ Gallup knowledge survey on geography and international issues, Americans got a similar proportion of answers correct on both the 1988 and 2018 surveys.

## INTEREST AND EDUCATION IN GEOGRAPHY AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

- Majorities of Americans think it is extremely or very important to teach “geography” in elementary and middle school, high school and college.<sup>1</sup> Two-thirds of Americans say they learned “a great deal” or “a fair amount” about geography during their formal schooling. When alternatively labeled as “geographical topics and issues,” majorities say it is important to teach the subject in high school and college, but not in elementary and middle school. About one in four say they learned at least a fair amount about geographical topics and issues during their formal schooling.
- Twenty-seven percent of U.S. adults say they learned about foreign policy in school. At the same time, almost half, 46%, say they learned about “events that were happening in the world” while they were in school. Most Americans say it is important to teach foreign policy in high school and college, but less than half say the same about teaching the subject in elementary and middle school.
- Seven in 10 Americans say events around the world affect their daily life a great deal (18%) or a fair amount (52%).
- Americans are split on whether they follow international news closely most of the time (46%), or only when something important is happening (47%).
- The internet and television are the two main sources Americans use to learn about international issues. Young adults are much more inclined to use the internet while older adults primarily rely on television.

<sup>1</sup> An experiment was conducted in the survey to see if people interpreted the terms “geography” and “geographical topics and issues” differently, with the former assumed to be a narrow definition of the study of maps and country locations and the latter a more expansive definition that included countries’ locations but also their culture, climate and demographics. “Geography” was not defined for respondents or illustrated with examples in the survey. “Geographical issues” was illustrated with examples (immigration, urbanization, changes to the natural environment).

## | POLICY PREFERENCES

- Americans divide evenly as to whether the U.S. should reduce or not reduce its role in the world, with majorities of college graduates and Democrats preferring to maintain or expand the U.S.' role and majorities of Republicans, independents and college nongraduates favoring a reduced role.
- However, U.S. adults overwhelmingly believe it is better for the U.S. to act multilaterally (88%) rather than unilaterally (6%) in the world.
- Asked in an open-ended format to identify the international issues most important to them, Americans are most likely to mention trade, immigration and climate change. Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to mention climate change, while Republicans are much more inclined than Democrats to mention immigration and terrorism.
- Those who say climate change is important to them were significantly more likely than those for whom climate change is not important to answer the climate change knowledge items correctly. The same pattern was not evident for the trade issue, as the percentage of knowledge items about trade answered correctly was similar among those who identified trade as important to them and those who did not.
- Americans are more inclined to think the U.S. spends too much rather than too little on foreign aid and the military. In contrast, they think the U.S. spends too little rather than too much on domestic programs. Americans who overestimate the percentage the U.S. spends on the military or foreign aid are more inclined to think the government spends too much in those areas.







| DETAILED  
FINDINGS |

KNOWLEDGE OF  
GEOGRAPHY AND  
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

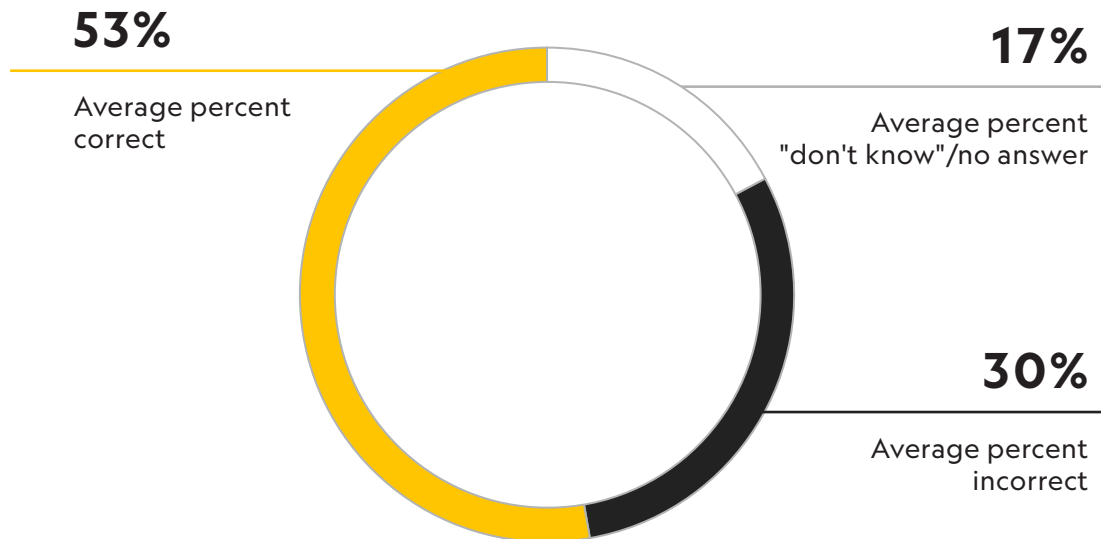


The knowledge portion of the survey asked a series of questions that gauged knowledge about geography, foreign policy, world demographics, the U.S.' role in the world and other related topics. On average, U.S. adults correctly answered 53% of the 32 knowledge questions<sup>2</sup> that were scored in the survey. Across the 32 questions, an average of 17% indicated they did not know the answer, while 30% answered incorrectly.

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<sup>2</sup> The full list of questions asked is available in the appendix.

## U.S. Adults' Knowledge About the World



About **one in five** U.S. adults (18%) answered 70% or more of the questions correctly – roughly equivalent to a C grade or higher in school. At the other end of the spectrum, 12% of respondents answered 30% or less of the questions correctly.

Subgroups with higher scores in the survey include:

- Adults with postgraduate education (average 62% correct) and adults with a four-year degree, but no postgraduate education (57%)
- People who report learning “a great deal” about geography (60%) or, alternatively, geographical issues (61%), foreign policy (63%) or international events happening at the time (59%) during their schooling
- People who say they regularly follow international news (60%)
- Men (60%)
- People who use books (59%), magazines (57%) or radio (57%) as one of their main sources for keeping up with international issues
- People who use a wide variety of information sources to keep up with international news; for example, those who identified five or more (from a list of nine) sources as their “main sources for learning about international issues” answered 57% of the knowledge questions correctly



The higher score for men relative to women (average 47% correct) is consistent with results from prior knowledge surveys on a variety of topics.<sup>3</sup> The gender differences can be explained by two factors – men's greater willingness to answer questions rather than to respond "don't know" and men's greater attention to international news. Across the 32 knowledge items in the current survey, an average of 13% of men versus 21% of women chose the "don't know" response option. Thus, men may have scored higher in part because they were able to make a correct guess on many questions. Additionally, 58% of men, compared with 36% of women, say they follow international news regularly.

3 See, for example: <http://www.pewresearch.org/science/2015/09/10/gender-gaps-evident-on-topics-in-the-physical-sciences/> and Jeffery J. Mondak and Mary R. Anderson, "The Knowledge Gap: A Reexamination of Gender-Based Differences in Political Knowledge," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 2 (May 2004): 492-512.

There were modest age differences, with four percentage points separating the highest-scoring (30- to 49-year-old, 55%) and lowest-scoring (18- to 29-year-old, 51%) age groups. Senior citizens, those aged 65 and older, got an average of 52% of questions correct, while those between the ages of 50 and 64 answered 53% correctly.

Political independents had slightly higher scores (56%) than Democrats (53%) and Republicans (52%). The differences between independents and the two partisan groups are statistically meaningful.

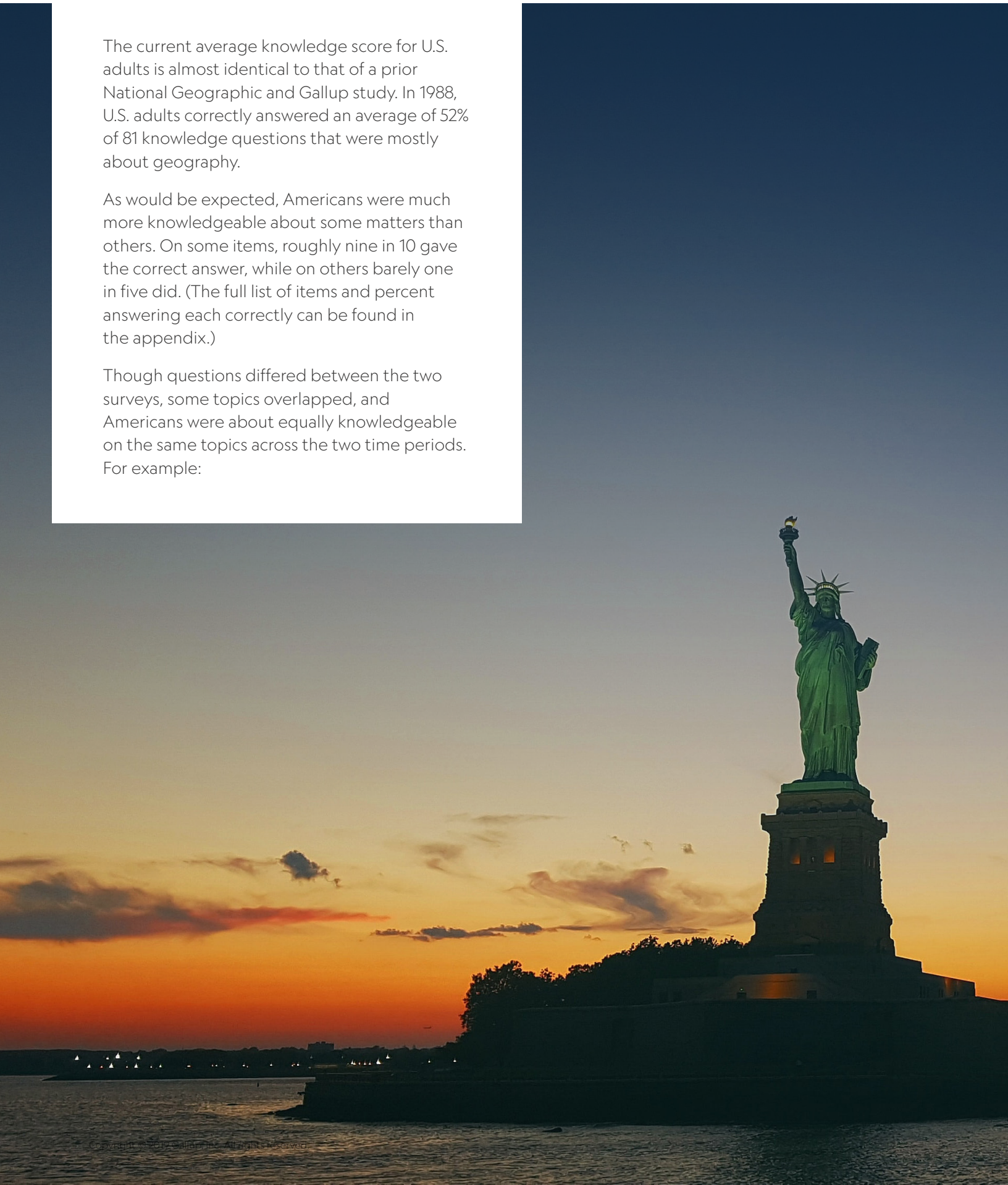
Americans living in the Northeast (54%) and West (54%) regions of the country performed slightly better than those in the South (52%), a difference that was statistically meaningful. Midwest residents' average 53% score was not significantly different from that of those living in other regions of the U.S.



The current average knowledge score for U.S. adults is almost identical to that of a prior National Geographic and Gallup study. In 1988, U.S. adults correctly answered an average of 52% of 81 knowledge questions that were mostly about geography.

As would be expected, Americans were much more knowledgeable about some matters than others. On some items, roughly nine in 10 gave the correct answer, while on others barely one in five did. (The full list of items and percent answering each correctly can be found in the appendix.)

Though questions differed between the two surveys, some topics overlapped, and Americans were about equally knowledgeable on the same topics across the two time periods. For example:



## 43% vs. 45%

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In 1988, 43% of Americans correctly identified the U.S. population as within a range of 150 million and 300 million. In 2018, 45% correctly identified the U.S. as containing 4% to 5% of the world's population.

## 94% vs. 88%

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In 1988, 94% of respondents knew that the effects of damage to the Earth's ozone layer from fluorocarbons and other chemicals would be felt all over the world as opposed to being limited to either industrialized nations or to "underdeveloped third-world countries." Eighty-eight percent in 2018 knew that climate scientists attribute climate change to the increase in greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere from human activity.

## 90% vs. 86%

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Ninety percent in 1988 correctly identified California and Japan as locations vulnerable to earthquakes. Eighty-six percent in 2018 could identify locations likely to be threatened (or not threatened) by tsunamis.

## 55% vs. 48%

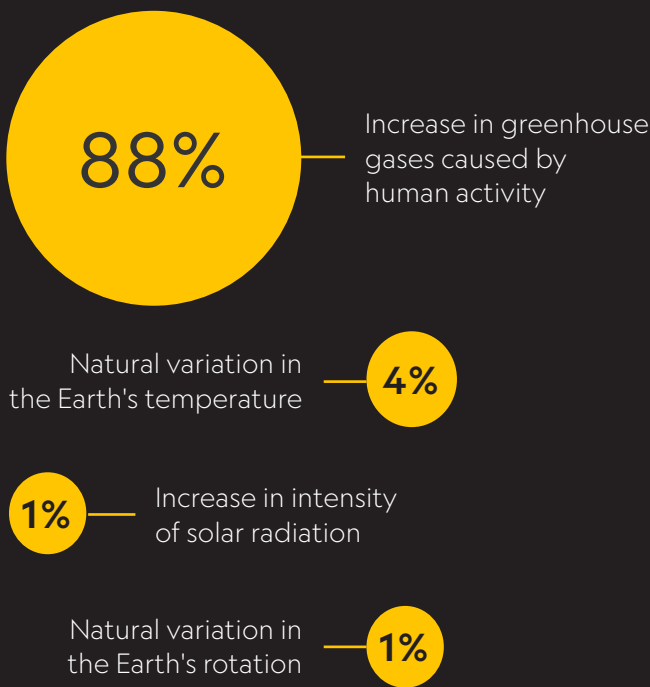
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In 1988, 55% correctly identified South Africa with the country that had apartheid as the official national policy, and 50% answered that Nicaragua was the country in which the Sandanistas and Contras were fighting. In 2018, 47% correctly identified Afghanistan as the country that gave safe haven to al-Qaeda prior to 9/11, and 48% identified Indonesia as a country in which the majority of the population is Muslim.

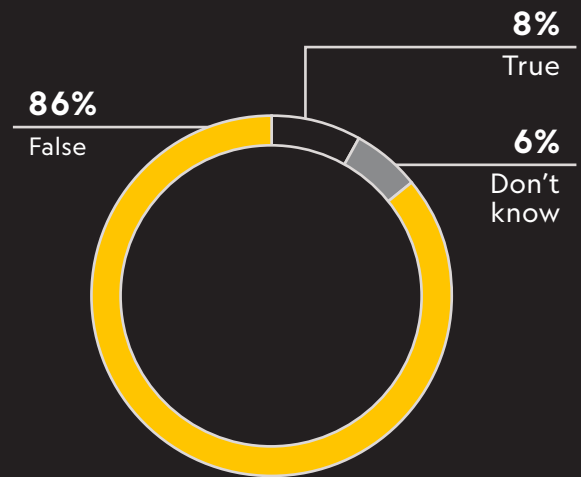


## + AMERICANS WERE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Which one of the following do climate scientists consider to be a primary cause of climate change?



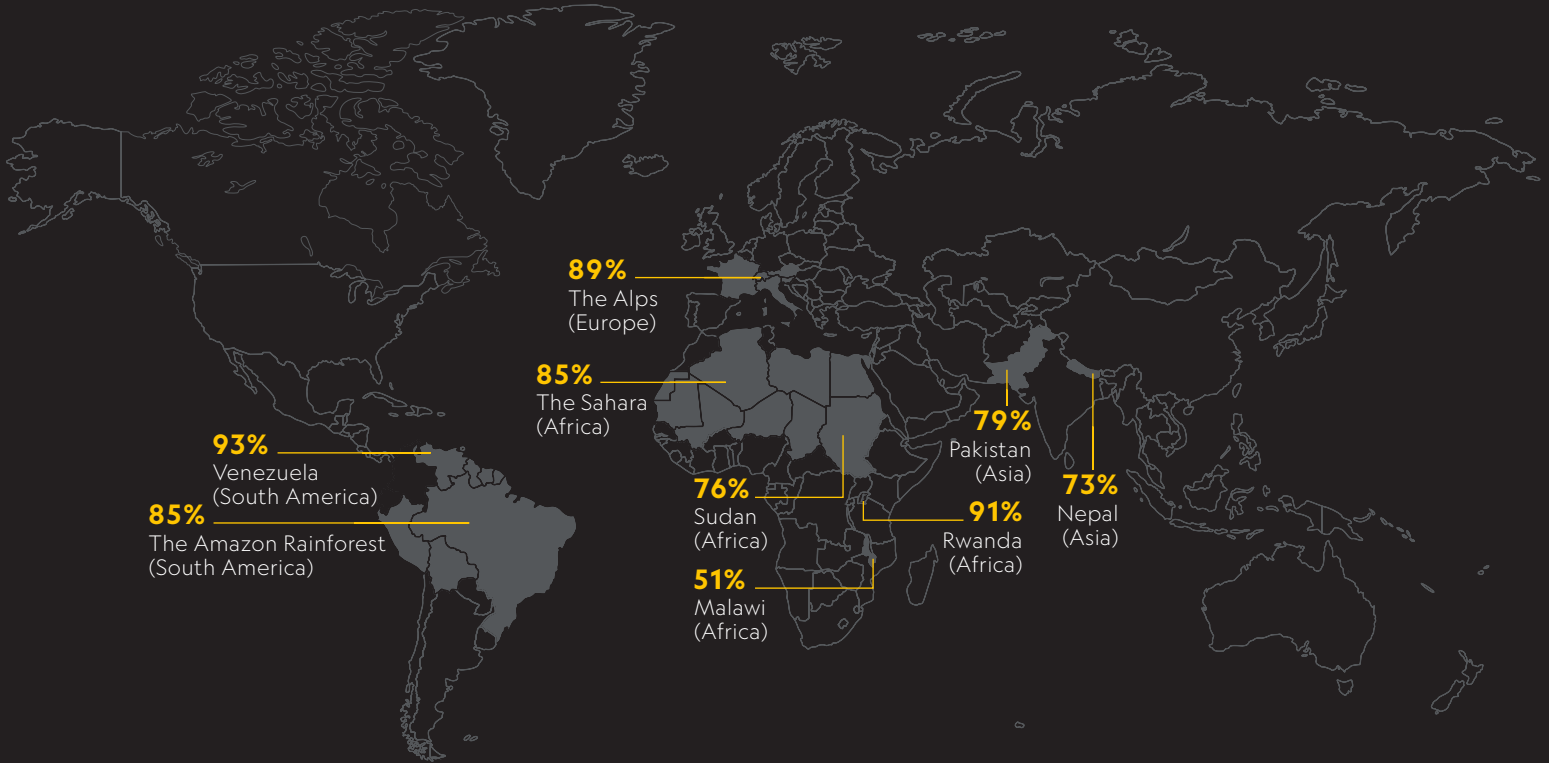
True or **false**: The U.S. has the highest life expectancy in the world



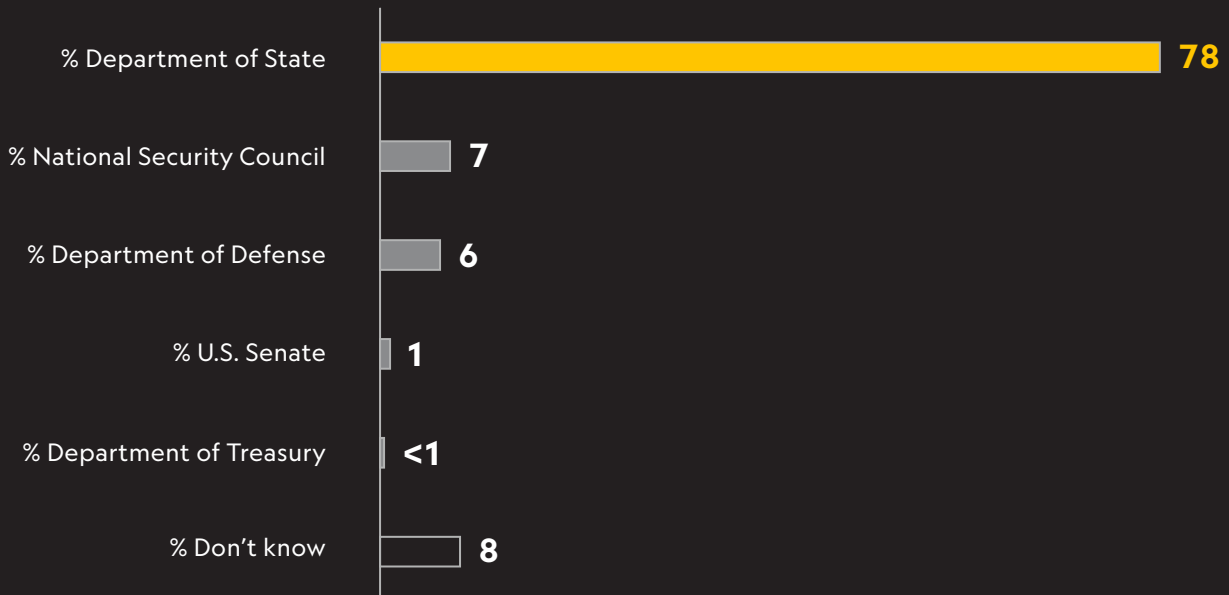
Which city would be LEAST likely to be threatened by a tsunami?



Match each place with the continent where it is located.

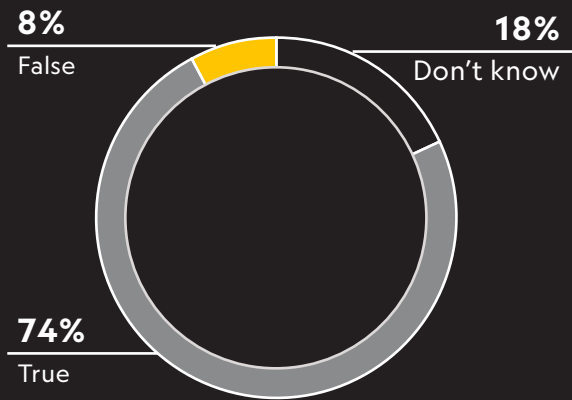


Which part of the U.S. government is responsible for diplomatic relations with other countries, including managing U.S. embassies?



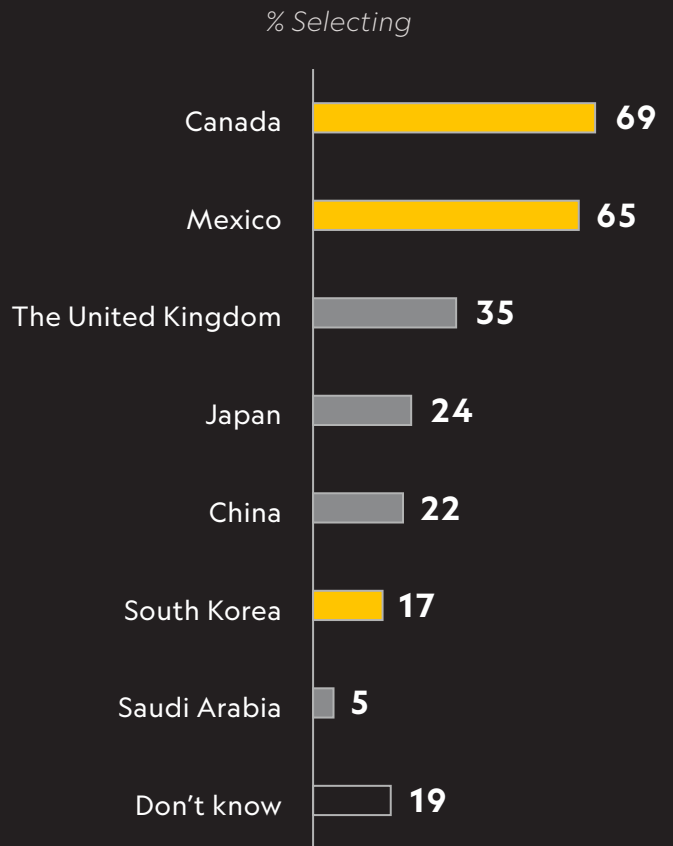
**AMERICANS WERE LESS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

True or **false**: The U.S. trades more with China than it does with the 28 countries in the European Union **combined**, based on total dollar value of goods and services.

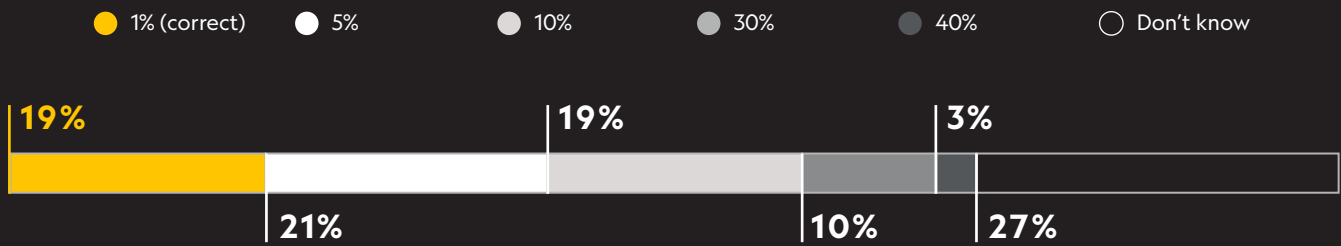


The U.S. has a free trade agreement with South Korea, but not the United Kingdom, Japan or China. Most did know the U.S. had free trade agreements with Canada and Mexico. The gaps in knowledge on these trade items is especially notable given that respondents mentioned trade most often as the international issue most important to them.

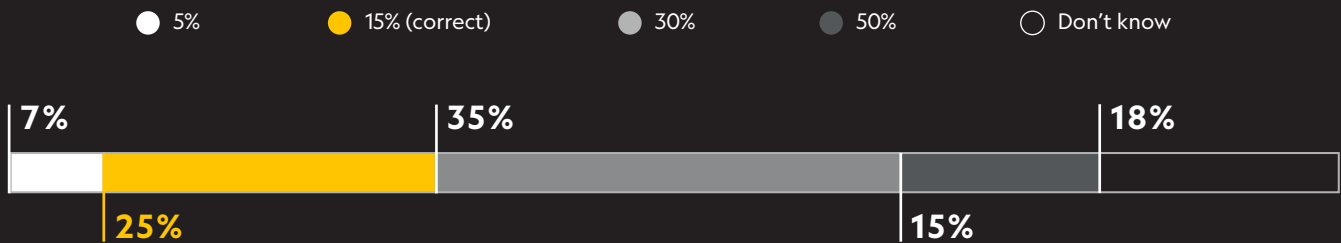
The U.S. has formal **free trade** agreements with which **three** of the following countries?



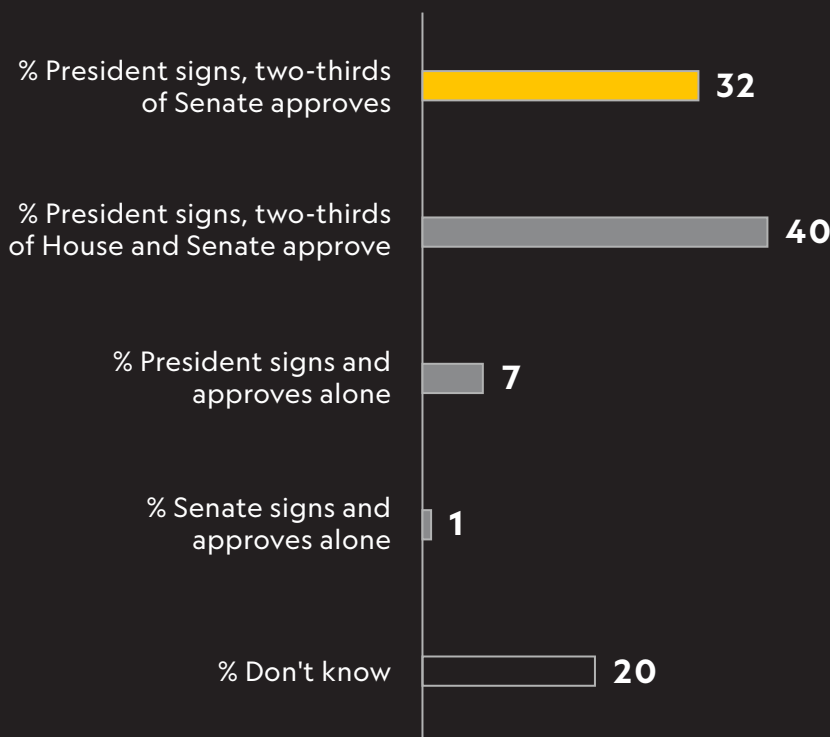
### Estimate of Percent U.S. Spends on Foreign Aid



### Estimate of Percent U.S. Spends on Military and Defense



Which of the following describes the process by which the U.S. can reach treaties with foreign countries?



The knowledge survey asked questions in 16 broad topic areas identified by National Geographic and Council on Foreign Relations as worthy of inquiry.<sup>4</sup> Americans tended to answer a greater proportion of questions about climate change, international institutions (e.g., the United Nations and NATO) and U.S. military commitments correctly. They tended to answer fewer questions about trade and international demographics (e.g., country populations) correctly.

<sup>4</sup> The full topline, available in the appendix, organizes the survey by the knowledge topic areas.



| DETAILED  
FINDINGS |

INTEREST AND EDUCATION  
IN GEOGRAPHY AND  
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES







## EDUCATION AND INTEREST IN GEOGRAPHY

Americans believe it is “extremely” or “very” important to teach geography at all levels of education, but are more likely to say it is important to do so in high school (85%) than in elementary and middle school (70%) or in college (68%).

Half of the respondents in the survey were asked about teaching “geography” in school. The other half were asked about the importance of teaching “geographical topics and issues” such as “immigration, urbanization and changes to the natural environment.” This wording experiment was included in the survey to assess whether people’s understanding of

the term “geography” was narrowly focused on knowing where certain places are on maps.<sup>5</sup> If so, that narrow interpretation of the term might lead them to underestimate how much experience they have had with it in their daily lives.

Given the broader definition of geographical topics and issues, less than half of respondents – 44% – say it is extremely or very important to teach that subject in elementary and middle school. But large majorities in excess of 80% say it is important to teach geographical topics in high school and college.

### Importance of Teaching Geography/Geographical Topics in School

*Figures are the percentage who say it is extremely or very important to teach the subject*

	GEOGRAPHY <sup>^</sup>	GEOGRAPHICAL TOPICS <sup>^</sup>
Elementary and middle school (Grades K-8)	70%	44%
High school (Grades 9-12)	85%	82%
College	68%	84%

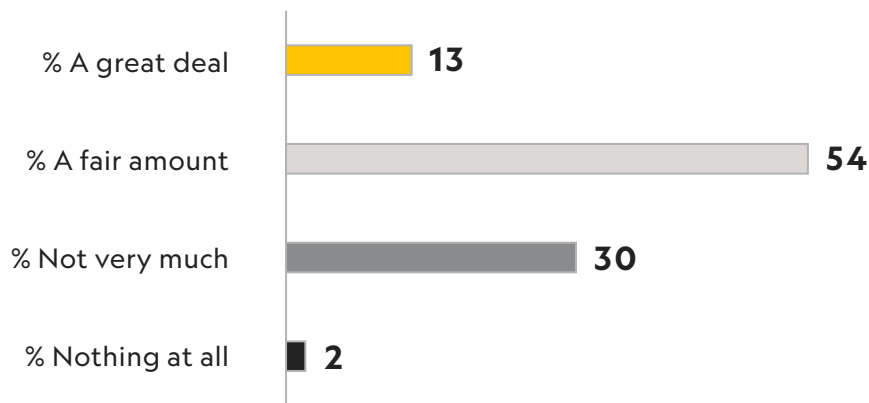
<sup>^</sup> Each respondent was randomly assigned to be asked about either “geography” or “geographical topics and issues.”

<sup>5</sup> The 1988 survey asked the following question to get at Americans’ understanding of the term geography: “Suppose someone told you that he or she was going to be taking a geography course and asked what you thought they would learn about in that course. What would you tell them?” The most common response by a significant margin was “locations of other countries.”

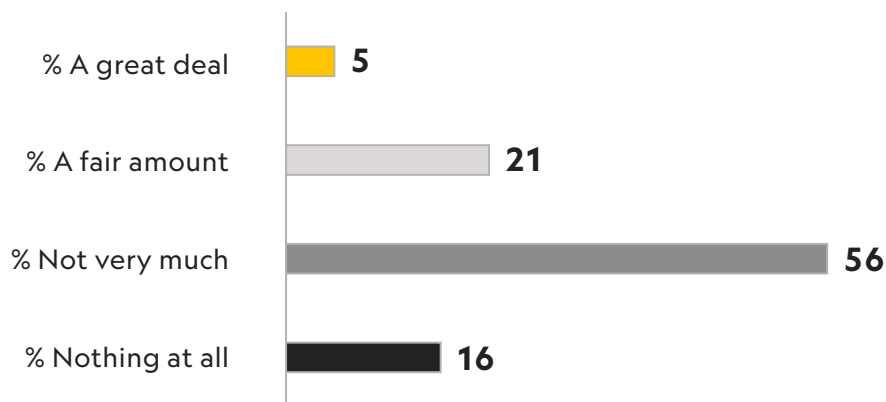
Overall, then, Americans believe it is much more important for elementary and middle school students to learn about “geography” than “geographical topics.” They see both subjects as being equally important for high school students to learn and think geographical topics and issues are more important than geography for college students to learn.

Reflecting on their own educational experiences, the majority of Americans, 67%, say they learned “a great deal” or “a fair amount” about geography during their formal schooling. Far fewer, 26%, indicate they learned much about geographical topics and issues.

### How much did you learn about **geography** during your formal schooling?



### How much did you learn about **geographical topics and issues (e.g., immigration, urbanization, changes to the natural environment)** during your formal schooling?



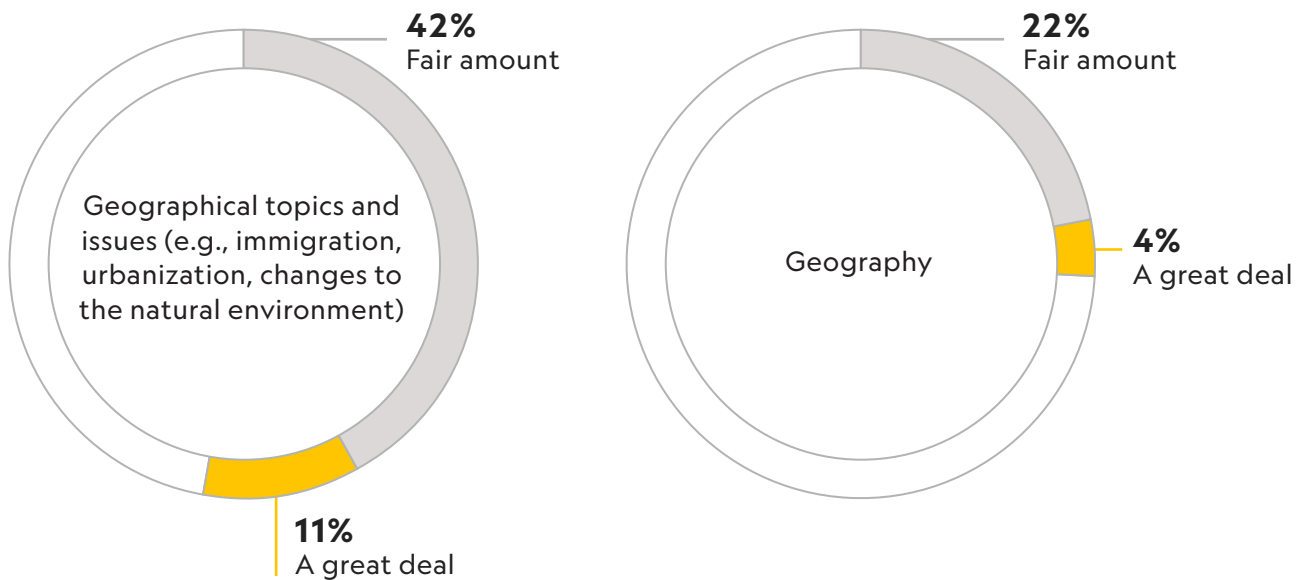
College graduates are more likely than college nongraduates to report learning about geographical topics and issues, 33% to 23%, but do not differ meaningfully in the extent to which they learned about geography.

There are no differences by age in reports of learning about geography in school. However, those under age 50 (30%) are slightly more likely than those ages 50 and older (21%) to say they learned about geographical topics and issues.

There are, at best, modest differences between college graduates and nongraduates, and between older and younger adults, in the extent to which they discuss these issues, however described. As would be expected, the major differentiator in how often people discuss geography or geographical topics is their level of interest in international issues.

Only about **one in four** Americans say they commonly discuss “geography” in their daily lives, but **twice as many**, 53%, say they discuss “geographical topics and issues.” This gap suggests people may have a fairly narrow interpretation of the word “geography.”

### How Often Topics Are Discussed in Daily Life



# EDUCATION AND INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

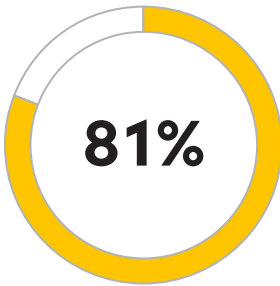
## Importance of Teaching Foreign Policy in School

Figures are the percentage who say it is extremely or very important to teach the subject

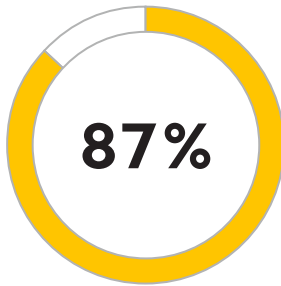
Elementary and middle school (Grades K-8)



High school (Grades 9-12)



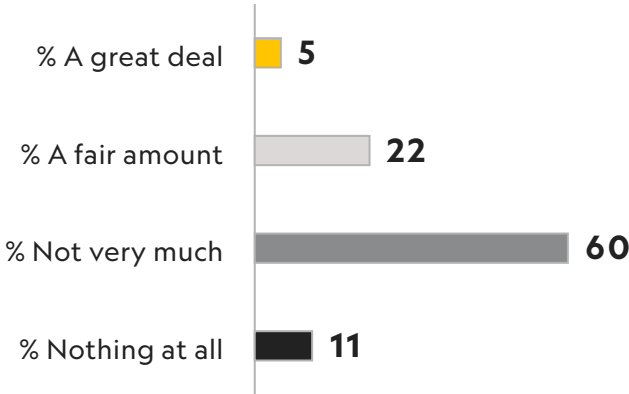
College



All survey respondents were asked about the importance of teaching foreign policy. Just three in 10 say it is important to teach the subject in elementary and middle school, while 81% say it is important to teach foreign policy in high school and 87% say the same about college.

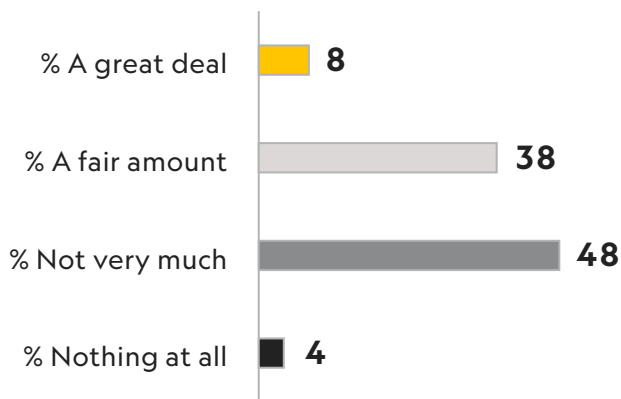
Although U.S. adults place a relatively high value on teaching foreign policy in school (especially for older students), relatively few U.S. adults, 27%, say they learned a great deal or fair amount about foreign policy while they were in school. However, close to half, 46%, indicate they learned a great deal or fair amount about events that were happening in the world while they were attending school.

## How much did you learn about foreign policy (how the U.S. is involved in the world) during your formal schooling?





During your formal schooling, including any elementary school, high school and college, how much did you learn about events that were happening in the world at that time?

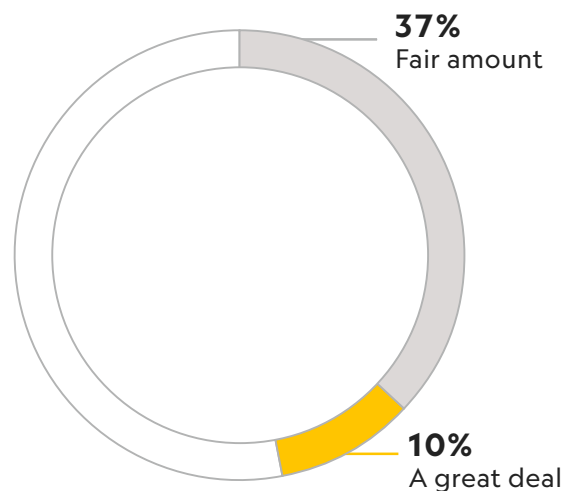


Thirty-four percent of college graduates report they learned a great deal or fair amount about foreign policy during school, a relatively low number in absolute terms, but still higher than the proportion of college nongraduates (24%) who say the same. Similar percentages of college graduates (47%) and nongraduates (45%) say they learned about current events while in school.

Asked about their present-day experiences, about half of U.S. adults, 47%, say they discuss foreign policy either a great deal or a fair amount.

Similar to the findings for geography, the extent to which younger and older adults, or college graduates and nongraduates, discuss international issues and foreign policy is similar. Sixty-nine percent of those who say they follow international news closely most of the time say they discuss international issues and foreign policy often, compared with 29% of those who follow international news only when something important is happening.

How Often International Issues and Foreign Policy Are Discussed in Daily Life



## RELEVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO DAILY LIFE

Roughly seven in 10 U.S. adults believe that events around the world affect their daily lives either a great deal (18%) or a fair amount (52%). College graduates are more inclined to hold this view than are college nongraduates, 78% to 66%. Also, more Democrats (79%) than independents (67%) or Republicans (62%) say international events affect their daily lives.

Americans split evenly as to whether they follow international news closely “most of the time” (46%) or “only when something important is happening” (47%). The wide gender gap in attention to international news, referenced earlier, is consistent with prior Gallup research. On average, Gallup’s annual World Affairs survey has found a 10-point gap in the percentage

of men (30%) versus women (20%) who follow news about foreign countries “very closely.” The reasons for the gender gap in attention to international news are unclear. In the current survey, the differences between men and women persist even when taking into account respondents’ education, age and perceptions of how much international events affect their daily lives.

In addition to the gender differences in attention, there are significant age differences. Older Americans, especially senior citizens, follow international news more regularly than younger Americans do. Attention to international news is similar by education and partisanship.

### Attention to International News

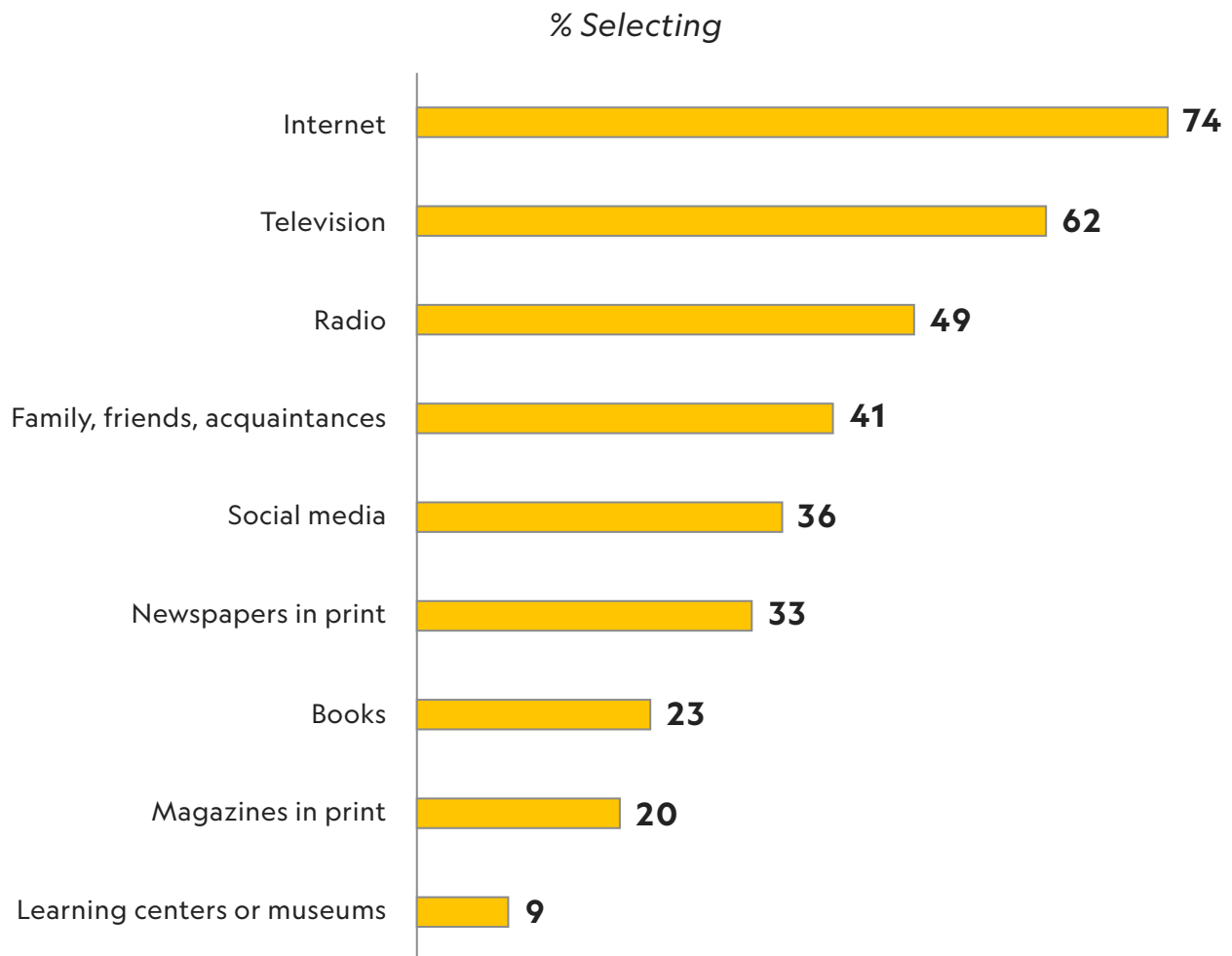
	Follow closely most of the time, whether or not something important is happening	Follow closely only when something important is happening
<b>U.S. ADULTS</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>MEN VS. WOMEN</b>		
Men	<b>58%</b>	<b>38%</b>
Women	<b>36%</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>AGE GROUP</b>		
18 to 29 years old	<b>40%</b>	<b>52%</b>
30 to 49 years old	<b>43%</b>	<b>50%</b>
50 to 64 years old	<b>48%</b>	<b>47%</b>
65 years old and older	<b>54%</b>	<b>40%</b>

About as many U.S. adults say they **follow international news** closely only when important events are happening as say they follow it regularly.

Americans are most likely to list the internet (74%) as the main source they use to learn about international issues. The internet was defined to include news websites (including those affiliated with newspapers or television networks) and internet searches.

Television is the second most common source, chosen by 62%, followed by radio (49%) and family and friends (41%). Reflecting major societal changes in the internet era, as many adults say they rely on social media (36%) as on newspapers in print (33%) to learn about international issues. Less than one in four Americans use books (23%), magazines in print (20%), or learning centers or museums (9%) to learn about international issues.

### What are your main sources for learning about international issues?





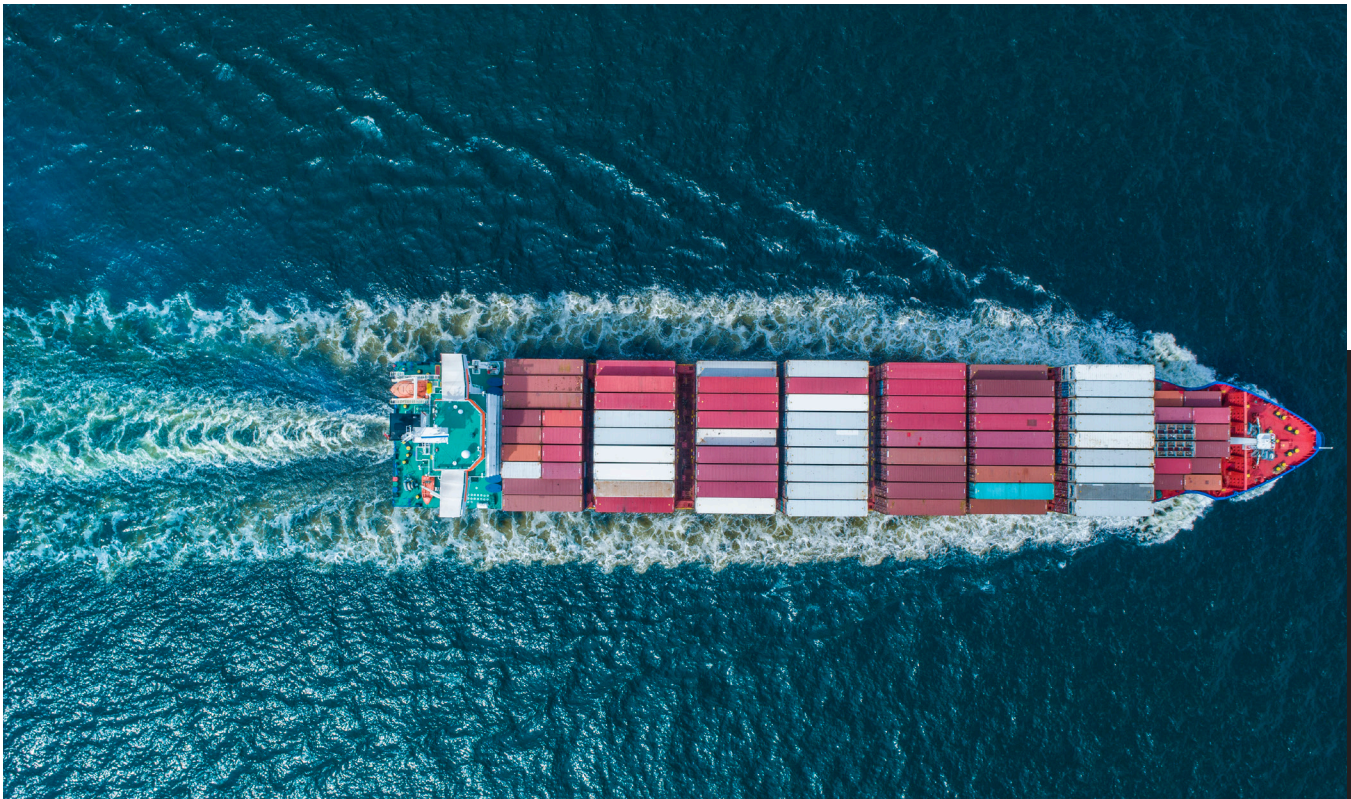
The information sources people rely on to learn about international issues vary by age, consistent with differences in media usage found in other research.<sup>6</sup> Whereas 87% of young adults rely on the internet, just 59% of senior citizens do. In contrast, 84% of senior citizens list television as

one of their main sources for international news, compared with 36% of young adults. A majority of senior citizens, 54%, say they use print newspapers to keep up with international events, but only 23% of those under age 30 do.

### Main Sources for Learning About International Issues, % by Age

18 TO 29 YEARS OLD		30 TO 49 YEARS OLD		50 TO 64 YEARS OLD		65 YEARS OLD AND OLDER	
Internet	<b>87%</b>	Internet	<b>81%</b>	Television	<b>75%</b>	Television	<b>84%</b>
Family/friends	<b>57%</b>	Television	<b>53%</b>	Internet	<b>67%</b>	Internet	<b>59%</b>
Social media	<b>53%</b>	Radio	<b>53%</b>	Radio	<b>49%</b>	Newspapers	<b>54%</b>
Radio	<b>47%</b>	Family/friends	<b>46%</b>	Newspapers	<b>32%</b>	Radio	<b>43%</b>
Television	<b>36%</b>	Social media	<b>41%</b>	Family/friends	<b>32%</b>	Family/friends	<b>32%</b>

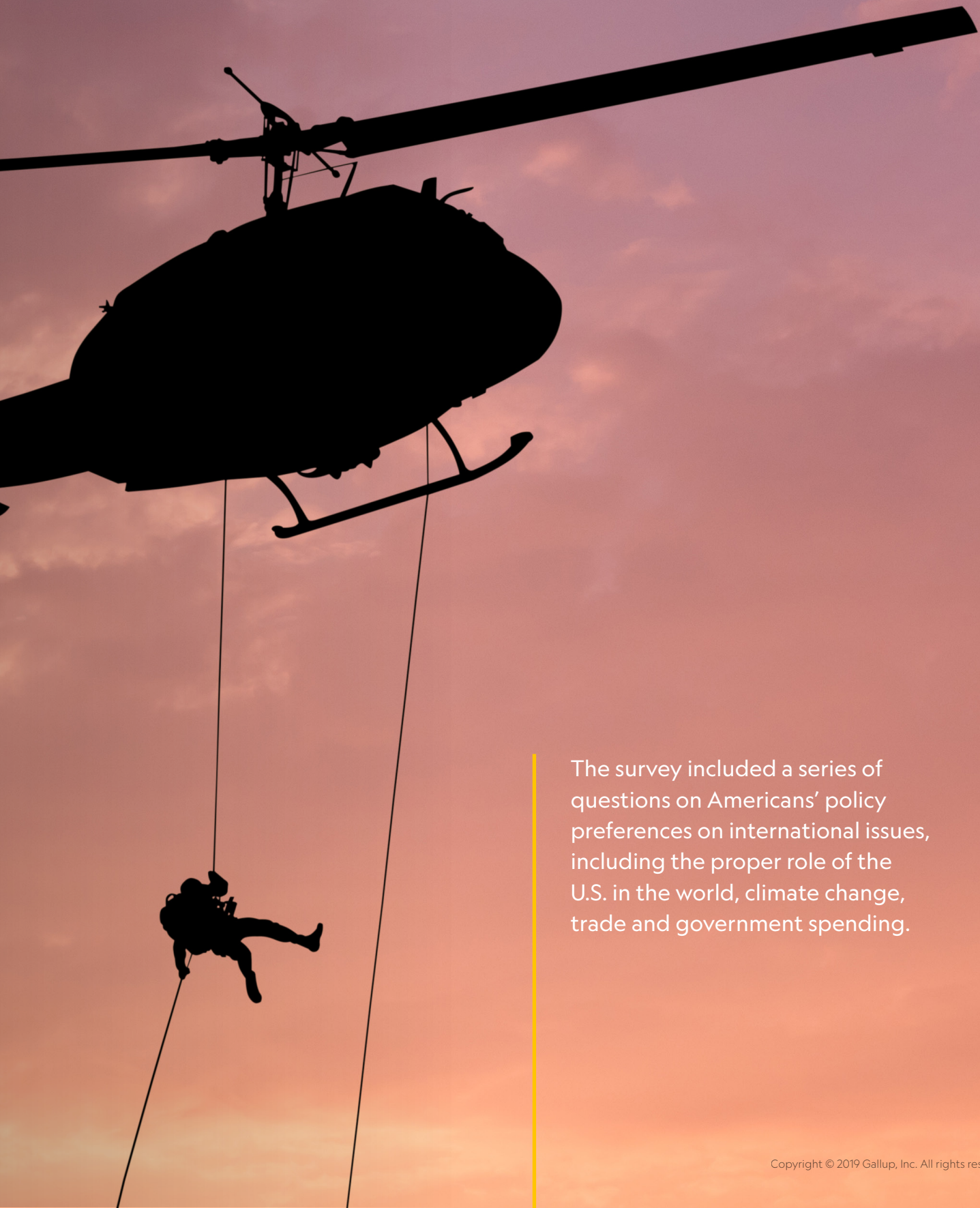
<sup>6</sup> [https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/pdfs/000/000/242/original/KnightFoundation\\_AmericansViews\\_Client\\_Report\\_010917\\_Final\\_Updated.pdf](https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/pdfs/000/000/242/original/KnightFoundation_AmericansViews_Client_Report_010917_Final_Updated.pdf), page 60



# | DETAILED FINDINGS |

POLICY  
PREFERENCES

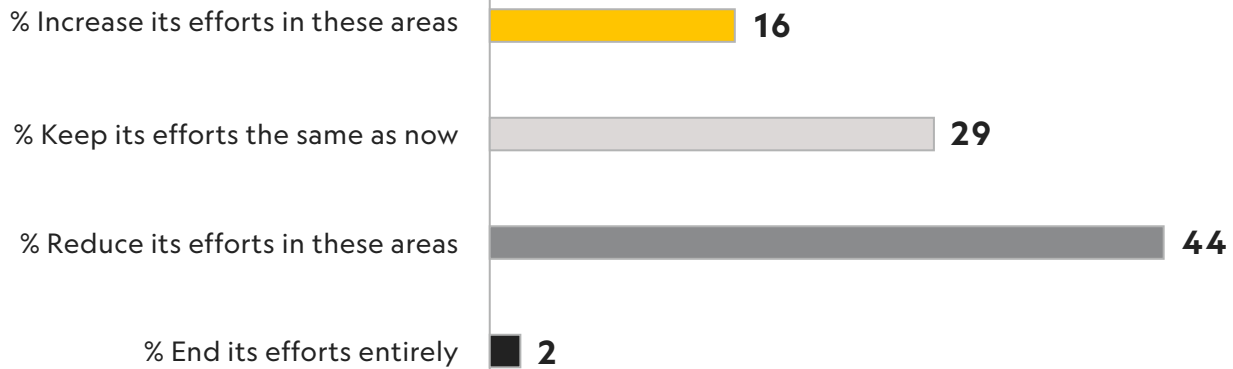




The survey included a series of questions on Americans' policy preferences on international issues, including the proper role of the U.S. in the world, climate change, trade and government spending.

## U.S. ROLE IN THE WORLD

Thinking about the role the U.S. plays in the world, including its participation in international institutions, sending troops abroad and giving foreign aid to other countries, would you like to see the U.S. –



In terms of the role the U.S. plays in the world, about as many Americans want the U.S. to reduce its efforts in the world or end them entirely as to keep them the same or increase those efforts.

The majority of college graduates want the U.S. to either increase its role (26%) or keep it the same (32%). In contrast, 53% of noncollege graduates want the U.S. to reduce its role or end it entirely.

Partisans' preferences differ as well, with 64% of Republicans and 55% of independents wanting a reduced or ended role for the U.S. in world affairs, while a majority of Democrats want to expand U.S. efforts (27%) or keep them as they are (34%).

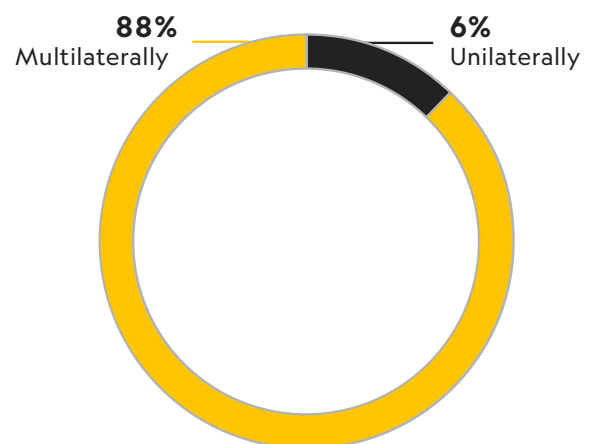
Although Americans are divided in their views of how much the U.S.' role in the world should change, they do overwhelmingly believe it is better for the U.S. to act multilaterally in the world rather than unilaterally, 88% to 6%.



Democrats are near unanimous in supporting multilateral action at 97%, but large majorities of independents (88%) and Republicans (78%) also believe it is the wiser course of action. However, 13% of Republicans believe it is better for the U.S. to act unilaterally.

Preferences for a prominent role for the U.S. in the international arena are consistent with prior Gallup research<sup>7</sup> as well as the Chicago Council on Global Affairs surveys.<sup>8</sup> Both find roughly seven in 10 Americans favoring an active U.S. role in world affairs. Thus, there is little doubt Americans exhibit a consensus that the U.S. should be involved internationally, but they may disagree on how much that role should be expanded or reduced, especially at a time when the incumbent president has pursued policies to prioritize U.S. interests over global interests.

In general, do you think it is better for the U.S. to – Act unilaterally in the world (not work with other countries) or Act multilaterally in the world (work with other countries)?



<sup>7</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/205286/americans-support-major-role-global-affairs.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/report\\_ccs18\\_america-engaged\\_181002.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/report_ccs18_america-engaged_181002.pdf)

## I IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Asked to name in an open-ended question format which international issues are most important to them, Americans are most likely to identify trade (29%), immigration (26%) and

climate change (17%). Substantial percentages also mention terrorism; U.S. involvement in international conflicts; foreign relations, diplomacy and foreign aid; and human rights.

### What international issues are most important to you, personally, in your daily life or when considering candidates for public office?

*Please list up to three.*

ISSUES MENTIONED BY 3% OR MORE OF RESPONDENTS <sup>9</sup>	
Trade/tariffs	29%
Illegal immigration	26%
Climate change/global warming	17%
Terrorism	12%
U.S. involvement/intervention in international conflicts/war	12%
Foreign relations/diplomacy/foreign aid	10%
Human rights/equality/freedom of religion/speech/women's rights	9%
Nuclear weapons/proliferation	7%
National security/defense/military strength	7%
Economy/financial issues	7%
Middle East affairs/Israel safety/support	5%
The environment/global pollution	5%
Government culture/right-wing nationalism	4%
Healthcare/diseases	3%
Peace/world peace	3%
Allies/protecting NATO/alliances	3%
Russia issues/aggression/meddling in election	3%

<sup>9</sup> See the appendix for complete results on this question.

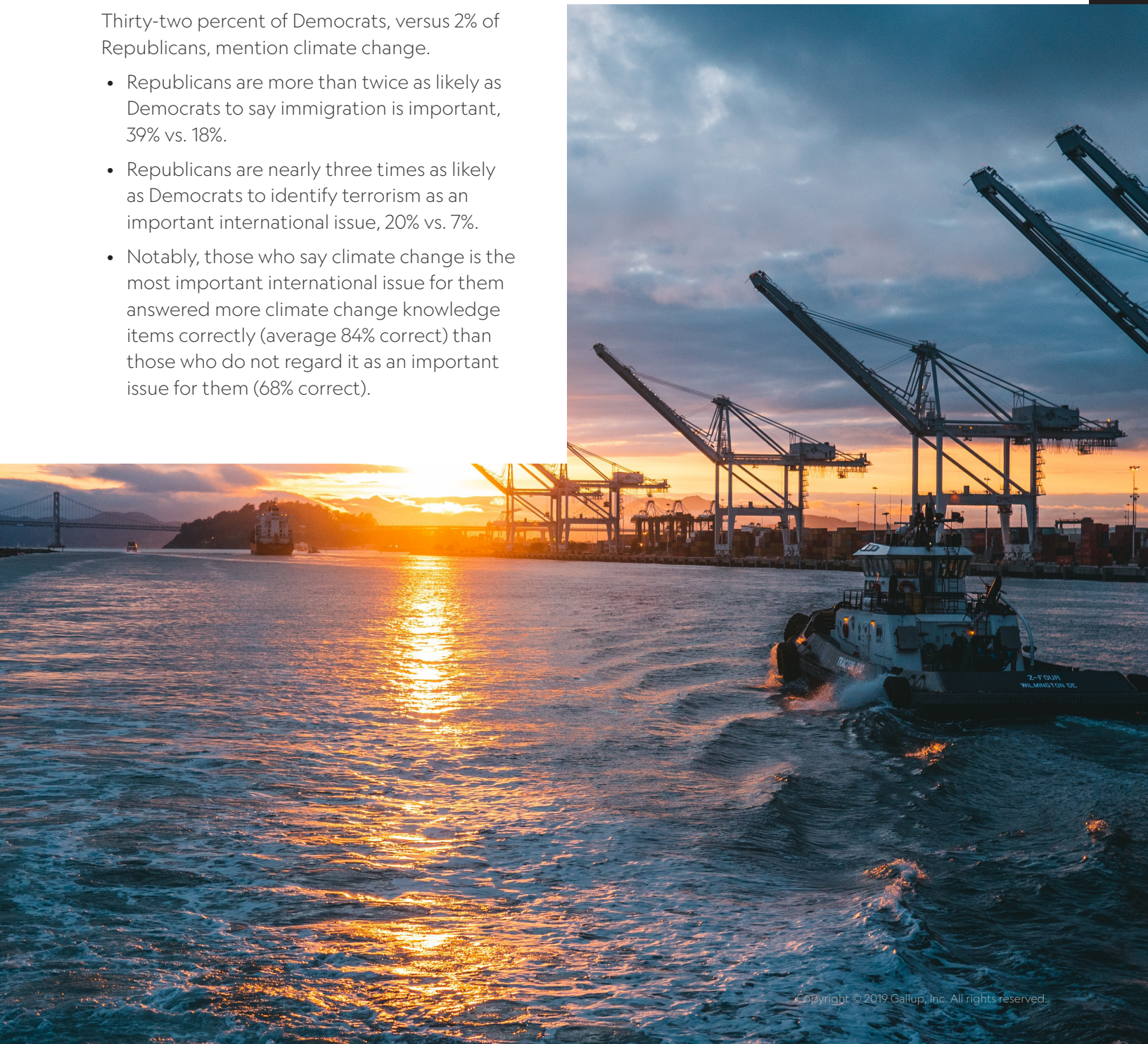
Trade, immigration and climate change likely owe their higher-ranking positions to their status as major issues in the news, making them more top-of-mind for respondents.

There are wide partisan differences with respect to which issues are most important:

Thirty-two percent of Democrats, versus 2% of Republicans, mention climate change.

- Republicans are more than twice as likely as Democrats to say immigration is important, 39% vs. 18%.
- Republicans are nearly three times as likely as Democrats to identify terrorism as an important international issue, 20% vs. 7%.
- Notably, those who say climate change is the most important international issue for them answered more climate change knowledge items correctly (average 84% correct) than those who do not regard it as an important issue for them (68% correct).

In contrast, those who identify trade as the most important issue did not get a significantly higher proportion of knowledge items on the topic correct than those who do not identify it as an important issue, 44% to 38%.



## CLIMATE CHANGE

The majority of Americans view climate change as a serious threat to U.S. prosperity and national security, including 42% who describe it as a very serious threat and 22% who say it is a moderately serious threat. Consistent with other polling on the topic,<sup>10</sup> there is a wide gulf between Democrats (94%) and Republicans (22%) in perceptions of global warming as a threat. Two-thirds of independents agree it is a threat.

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 (82%) and college graduates (80%) are two other groups who overwhelmingly view global warming as a serious threat. Nearly all those who say climate change is an important issue to them believe it is either a very serious threat (83%) or a moderately serious one (14%).

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 (82%) and college graduates (80%) are two other groups who

**overwhelmingly view global warming as a serious threat.**

## TRADE

On the issue of trade, 76% of Americans believe trading with other countries does more to benefit the U.S., while 13% say it does more harm. These results are in line with prior Gallup polling on the topic.<sup>11</sup> Those who mention trade as the most important international issue to them are slightly more likely than the general population to believe it does more to benefit the U.S., with 83% holding this view. College graduates (87%) are among the subgroups most likely to see trade as beneficial, as are Democrats (83%) and those living in the Northeast region of the U.S. (83%).

## GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Americans are more inclined to think the U.S. spends too much on the military (40%) and foreign aid (44%) than on domestic programs (14%). Two-thirds say the U.S. does not spend enough on domestic programs.

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/231530/global-warming-concern-steady-despite-partisan-shifts.aspx>

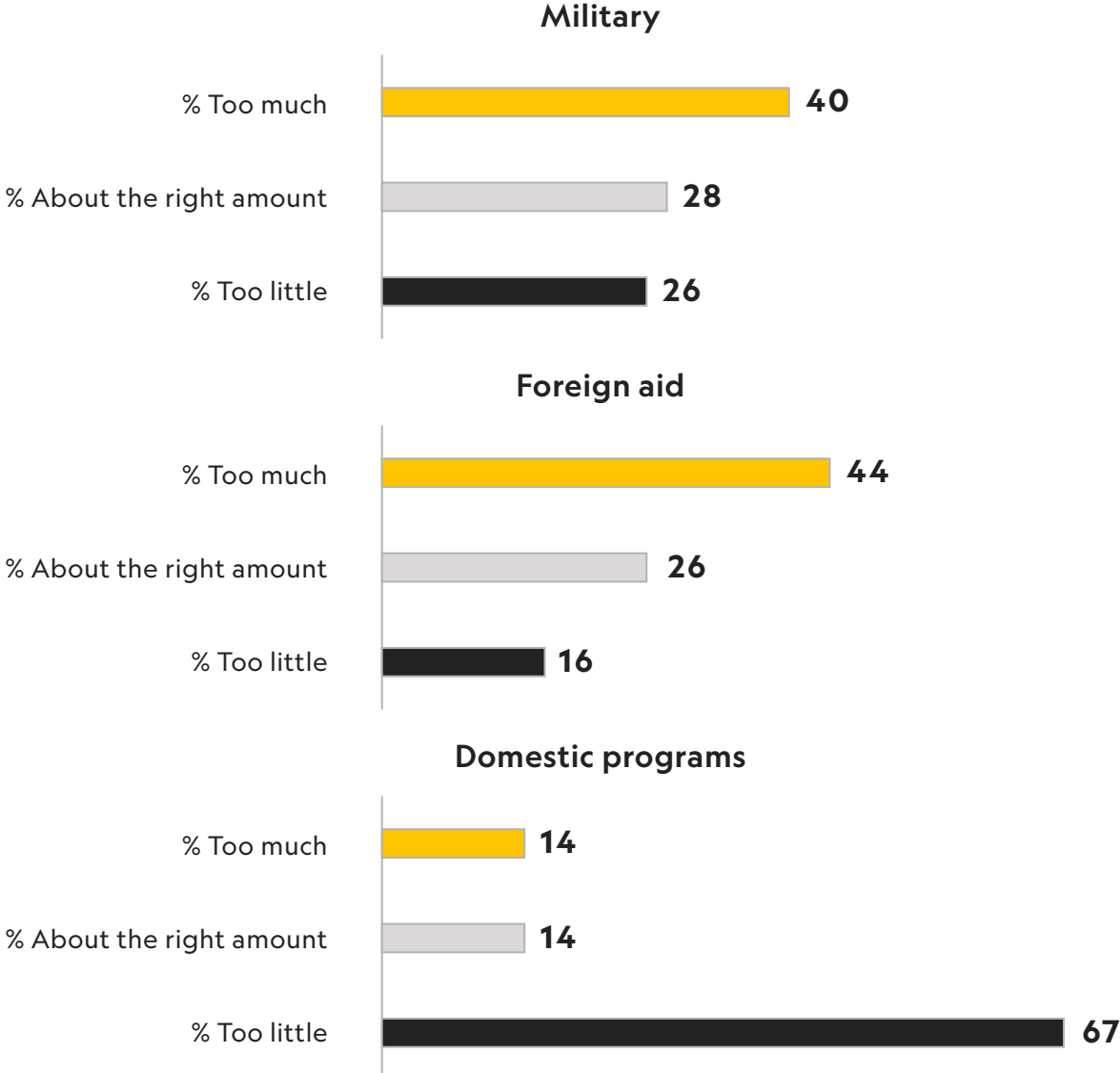
<sup>11</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/228317/positive-attitudes-toward-foreign-trade-stay-high.aspx>



Historically, Americans have tended to think the U.S. spends too much rather than too little on foreign aid, and are in favor of cutting spending on it.<sup>12</sup> Their opinions on military spending have varied over time, typically dependent on the amount the U.S. was devoting to the military at the time.<sup>13</sup> Gallup has not polled as

regularly on Americans' preference for "domestic spending" broadly, but Americans generally have favored increases in domestic spending over holding down the federal budget deficit when asked to choose,<sup>14</sup> and have expressed reluctance to cut spending on a variety of specific domestic programs.<sup>15</sup>

### Perceptions of U.S. Government Spending



12 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116350/Position-World.aspx>; <https://news.gallup.com/poll/145790/americans-oppose-cuts-education-social-security-defense.aspx>  
13 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/247622/demand-wanes-higher-defense-spending.aspx>  
14 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/147626/federal-budget-deficit.aspx>  
15 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/145790/americans-oppose-cuts-education-social-security-defense.aspx>



In the current survey, more than nine in 10 Democrats (92%), but only 35% of Republicans, say the U.S. spends “too little” on domestic programs. Democrats (30%) are also more likely than Republicans (1%) to say the U.S. spends too little on foreign aid, but more Republicans (57%) than Democrats (9%) say the U.S. spends too little on the military.

### **More than nine**

### **in 10 Democrats**

(92%), but only 35% of Republicans, say the U.S. spends “too little” on domestic programs.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Americans who overestimate the percentage the U.S. spends on the military or foreign aid are more inclined to think the government spends too much in those areas. Those who answer accurately tend to be divided in their opinions. This indicates that opposition to increased spending in these areas may stem from uncertainty or incorrect assumptions many Americans have about the current federal budget outlays.

Many adults who did not offer an estimate of how much the government spends on foreign aid or the military nevertheless have opinions about how much the government is spending in those areas. Those respondents are much more likely to believe the U.S. is spending too much on foreign aid (42%) than on the military (27%).

## Opinions on Government Spending by Estimates of How Much the U.S. Spends

	Spends too much	Spends right amount	Spends too little	Don't know
<b>FOREIGN AID</b>				
One percent (correct)	22%	34%	37%	7%
Five percent	39%	33%	20%	8%
Ten percent	57%	27%	8%	8%
Thirty percent or more	72%	17%	5%	6%
Don't know	42%	20%	9%	28%
<b>MILITARY</b>				
Five percent	13%	36%	49%	2%
Fifteen percent (correct)	29%	33%	35%	3%
Thirty percent	46%	30%	20%	4%
Fifty percent	73%	17%	9%	1%
Don't know	27%	24%	31%	18%

# | CONCLUSION







Americans exhibit considerable gaps in their knowledge about geography and international issues, correctly answering slightly more than half of 32 multiple choice questions, on average. There is some evidence to suggest Americans may be no more knowledgeable today than they were 30 years ago, despite increasing educational attainment in the U.S.

Even among some of the highest-scoring subgroups, including those who have had the greatest instruction on the topics or have the greatest interest in them, the typical respondent did not know the correct answer to roughly 40% of the questions.

Nevertheless, the public does see personal relevance to international issues and expresses a strong desire to promote education in these areas. Most U.S. adults believe world events affect their daily lives at least a fair amount, and substantial percentages discuss international issues and geographical issues on a regular basis. Americans express a strong commitment to educating students about geography, geographical topics and issues, and foreign policy at various levels of the U.S. education system, and many report having had a considerable amount of instruction on geography and current world events while they were in school.



The public's appetite for greater instruction on geography and world affairs exists, and the obvious remedy is for K-12 schools and colleges to offer, if not require, more instruction in those areas. Implementing such a strategy could face structural barriers such as competing demands for finite instructional time in K-12 schools or degree requirements in colleges.

Americans — both those in school and those who have finished their education — can also take the initiative to become more knowledgeable about geography and international issues. Those in school can take classes in these areas. Both those who are still in school or are finished with their education can also educate themselves through reading books, visiting museums and keeping up with international news.

A better-informed public would surely enhance U.S. democracy. Citizens would be better able to evaluate policy proposals if they were knowledgeable about the context and facts surrounding issues. For example, a better understanding of federal spending, U.S. trade relations and policies, and U.S. immigration would help the public better evaluate policy proposals designed to address those challenging issues.

Also, in an increasingly global society, basic knowledge of other countries and international relations seems to be more important today than in the past, and Americans clearly acknowledge this reality.



# | METHODOLOGY |







Results are based on self-administered web surveys with a random sample of 2,486 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, who are members of the Gallup Panel. Gallup uses probability-based, random sampling methods to recruit its panel members. The sample of panel respondents used in this study was drawn to be demographically representative of the U.S. population on age, race and other demographics.

Interviewing took place between Nov. 12 and Dec. 2, 2018.

The response rate among panel members sampled for this study was 40%. All respondents who completed the survey received a \$5 incentive. All interviews were completed in English.

Gallup weighted the final, obtained sample to correct for nonresponse. Nonresponse adjustments were made by adjusting the sample to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets were based on the 2016 Current Population Survey figures for the aged-18-and-older U.S. population.

For results based on this sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

The survey took steps to account for the possibility that respondents might look up answers while taking the online survey. At the beginning of the survey, all respondents were encouraged not to look up answers and to use the "don't know" option (rather than guess) if they didn't know the answer to a question. Additionally, based on prior research<sup>16</sup> into discouraging "cheating" behavior in knowledge survey results administered by web, respondents were asked to make a commitment at the beginning of the survey to not look up answers or get help from outside sources. Lastly, at the end of the survey, respondents were asked to report whether they had looked up any answers or gotten help when answering the knowledge questions. All respondents who either 1) would not commit to answering the questions without help or 2) indicated they had gotten outside help on the questions were dropped from the final sample. In total, 180 respondents out of the 2,666 who completed the survey were removed from the sample for one of these reasons.

16 [http://www.jjerit.com/images/CliffordJerit\\_Cheating\\_Forthcoming.pdf](http://www.jjerit.com/images/CliffordJerit_Cheating_Forthcoming.pdf)

Knowledge scores were computed by giving respondents one point for each correct answer they gave. Questions that had multiple correct answers were scored such that each correct answer was worth a fraction of a point. For example, if a question had five correct answers, each correct answer was worth 0.2 points up to a total of one point for the entire question (this was done to ensure that questions with multiple correct answers did not receive greater weight in the total knowledge score). Three questions (Q6, Q21 and Q28) were not included in the final knowledge score after they failed a psychometric scaling validation test which indicated they were poor predictors of knowledge compared with other items. As a result, the knowledge score ranged from zero to a high of 32 points. The average respondent got 17.05 points, or 53% correct.

The range of percentage correct is as follows:

	<b>PERCENT OF SAMPLE</b>
90% to 100% correct	<b>&lt;1</b>
80% to 89% correct	<b>5</b>
70% to 79% correct	<b>13</b>
60% to 69% correct	<b>22</b>
50% to 59% correct	<b>21</b>
40% to 49% correct	<b>16</b>
30% to 39% correct	<b>12</b>
20% to 29% correct	<b>8</b>
10% to 19% correct	<b>3</b>
0% to 9% correct	<b>1</b>

# | APPENDIX |

## FULL QUESTIONNAIRE AND TOPLINE



These first questions are designed to help us learn which subjects are familiar to Americans today and which are unfamiliar. The results will help us to know where institutions might be able to help the public become more knowledgeable.

Some of the questions will be easy and some will be hard, we don't expect many people to get all or even most right. We are interested in "top of mind" knowledge, so we would prefer you to answer the questions as best you can without getting any hints from other sources.

Work fast—have fun! If you don't know an answer, please check the "don't know" option rather than guessing.

There are no grades or scores for individual respondents. If you are interested, the answers to all knowledge questions will be displayed after you complete the survey.

1. First, it is important to us that you do NOT use outside sources like the Internet or other people to find the correct answer.

Will you answer the following questions without help from outside sources?

**NOTE: Q1 is reported among the 2,664 who completed the survey. The 3% who would not commit to taking the survey without help from outside sources are excluded from the base for Q2-58.**

97	Yes
3	No
<1	No response

**NOTE: The order of Knowledge sections 1 through 16 were randomized. Question order within each knowledge section was also randomized. Correct responses are highlighted.**

## KNOWLEDGE 1: ENERGY

2. In 2017, the most recent year for which data are available, did the U.S. – [options 1-2 displayed in random order]

53	Produce more oil than it imported from other countries
33	Import more oil from other countries than it produced
14	Don't know
<1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 2: CLIMATE CHANGE

3. Most climate scientists agree that earth's climate patterns have changed in recent decades. Which one of the following do climate scientists consider to be a primary cause of climate change? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

88	The increase in greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere caused by human activity
1	An increase in the intensity of solar radiation from the sun
1	Natural variation in the earth's rotation
4	Natural variation in the earth's temperature
5	Don't know
<1	No response

4. In 2017, President Donald Trump announced his intention to withdraw the U.S. from what international agreement concerning climate change? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

8 United Nations Framework  
Convention on Climate Change

6 Clean Air Act

**74** Paris Agreement

10 Kyoto Protocol

9 Don't know

<1 No response

5. The world's countries have generally agreed on the overarching goal of limiting the global rise in temperatures in this century to which amount above pre-industrial levels?

4 0 degrees Celsius and Fahrenheit  
(no change)

**51** 2 degrees Celsius, or 3.6  
degrees Fahrenheit

6 8 degrees Celsius, or 14.4  
degrees Fahrenheit

1 20 degrees Celsius, or 36.0  
degrees Fahrenheit

38 Don't know

<1 No response

### KNOWLEDGE 3: TRADE

**NOTE: Q6 was excluded from the knowledge scale.**

6. Which single country was the largest trading partner of the U.S. in 2017, based on total dollar value of goods and services? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

**73** China

9 Canada

6 Mexico

2 Saudi Arabia

10 Don't know

<1 No response

7. True or False: The U.S. trades more with China than it does with the 28 countries in the European Union **combined**, based on total dollar value of goods and services.

74 True

**8** False

18 Don't know

<1 No response

8. The U.S. has formal free trade agreements with which three of the following countries? [options 1-7 displayed in random order]

69	Canada
22	China
35	The United Kingdom
24	Japan
65	Mexico
5	Saudi Arabia
17	South Korea
19	Don't know
1	No response

### KNOWLEDGE 4: FOREIGN AID FUNDING

9. The next question is about U.S. foreign aid, which includes money given by the U.S. to other countries to help with economic development, humanitarian relief and the military in those countries.

Approximately what percentage of the U.S. federal budget is spent on foreign aid?

19	1%
21	5%
19	10%
10	30%
3	40%
27	Don't know
1	No response

### KNOWLEDGE 5: MILITARY FUNDING

10. Approximately what percentage of the U.S. federal budget is spent on national defense, including the military?

7	5%
25	15%
35	30%
15	50%
18	Don't know
<1	No response

### KNOWLEDGE 6: COMMITMENTS AND MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS

11. The U.S. is bound by treaty to protect which four of the following countries if they are attacked? [options 1-8 displayed in random order]

74	Canada
6	China
69	Japan
46	Mexico
2	North Korea
3	Russia
73	South Korea
37	Turkey
21	Don't know
1	No response



12. At least 3,000 U.S. troops are present in which of the four following countries? [options 1-8 displayed in random order]

68	Germany
72	Iraq
61	Japan
18	Libya
4	Mexico
23	Israel
75	South Korea
12	Cuba
14	Don't know
1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 7: GLOBAL HEALTH

13. Health researchers categorize diseases into those that are communicable versus those that are non-communicable. Communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, are contagious and can be spread to others. Non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease and cancer, cannot be spread to others.

Of the world's deaths, approximately what percentage is due to non-communicable diseases?

10	10%
24	30%
14	50%
21	70%
32	Don't know
<1	No response

14. True or False: The U.S. has the highest life expectancy in the world.

8	True
86	False
6	Don't know
<1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 8: INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

15. Which five of the following countries have veto power over United Nations Security Council resolutions due to their status as permanent members of the Security Council? [options 1-10 displayed in random order]

2	Brazil
38	China
62	France
43	Germany
4	India
11	Israel
15	Japan
50	Russia
70	The United Kingdom
72	The United States
24	Don't know*
<1	No response

\* programmer: if checked, uncheck all others

16. When it was founded in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was primarily intended to prevent an attack on the U.S. and its allies by which country? [options 1-10 displayed in random order]

76	The Soviet Union
14	Germany
1	China
<1	Italy
7	Don't know
<1	No response

### KNOWLEDGE 9: DEMOGRAPHICS

17. In which one of these countries is a majority of the population Muslim? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

7	South Africa
13	Armenia
15	India
48	Indonesia
16	Don't know
<1	No response

18. Which five countries are among the ten most populated countries in the world; that is, they have the most total people living within their borders? [options 1-10 displayed in random order]

28	South Korea
47	Brazil
54	The United States
18	France
51	Indonesia
42	Pakistan
29	Nigeria
24	South Africa
18	Egypt
18	Vietnam
30	Don't know
<1	No response

19. What percentage of the world's population lives in the U.S.?

13	Between 1% and 2%
45	Between 4% and 5%
16	Between 14% and 15%
5	Between 19% and 20%
20	Don't know
1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 10: MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

20. Approximately what percentage of the U.S. population, including citizens and non-citizens, is made up of people born outside the United States?

12	4%
<b>37</b>	14%
20	34%
6	44%
25	Don't know
<1	No response

**NOTE: Q21 was excluded from the knowledge scale.**

21. Which of the following is accurate about educational attainment of U.S. immigrants, including both authorized and unauthorized immigrants?

15	Immigrants are much less likely than U.S.-born people to have a college degree
20	Immigrants are somewhat less likely than U.S.-born people to have a college degree
<b>22</b>	Immigrants are about as likely as U.S.-born people to have a college degree
16	Immigrants are somewhat more likely than U.S.-born people to have a college degree
6	Immigrants are much more likely than U.S.-born people to have a college degree
20	Don't know
<1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 11: TERRORISM

22. Which one of the following countries' governments gave safe haven to al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization that committed the 9/11 attacks, in the years before those attacks occurred? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

10	Iraq
23	Pakistan
9	Syria
<b>47</b>	Afghanistan
11	Don't know
1	No response

## KNOWLEDGE 12: PROLIFERATION

23. How many countries are known to have, or believed to have, nuclear weapons today?

5	Two countries
26	Five countries
<b>39</b>	Nine countries
11	Seventeen countries
19	Don't know
1	No response

### KNOWLEDGE 13: U.S. CIVICS

24. Which one of the U.S. government branches has the Constitutional authority to declare war? [options 1-3 displayed in random order]

- 33 Executive (President and cabinet)

---

- 64** Legislative (Congress)

---

- <1 Judicial (U.S. Supreme Court and lower courts)

---

- 3 Don't know

---

- <1 No response

25. Which of the following describes the process by which the U.S. can reach treaties with foreign countries? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

- 7 The president signs and approves treaties alone

---

- 32** The president signs a treaty and the Senate approves it by a two-thirds majority

---

- 40 The president signs a treaty and both the House of Representatives and the Senate approve it with a two-thirds majority

---

- 1 The Senate signs and approves treaties alone

---

- 19 Don't know

---

- <1 No response

26. Which part of the U.S. government is responsible for diplomatic relations with other countries, including managing U.S. embassies? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

- 6 Department of Defense

---

- <1 Department of the Treasury

---

- 7 The National Security Council

---

- 1 The U.S. Senate

---

- 78** Department of State

---

- 8 Don't know

---

- <1 No response

### KNOWLEDGE 14: U.S. DEBT AND DEFICITS

27. The amount spent by the federal government over what it receives in revenue in a given year is known as the:

- 75** Deficit

---

- 21 National debt

---

- 4 Don't know

---

- <1 No response

**NOTE: Q28 was excluded from the knowledge scale.**

28. Approximately what percentage of the U.S. federal budget is spent paying the interest on the national debt?

- 9 1%

---

- 19** 7%

---

- 24 18%

---

- 10 45%

---

- 38 Don't know

---

- <1 No response

**KNOWLEDGE 15: GEOGRAPHY**

29. Looking at the map, which letter matches each of the following countries?

**Country A**

**75** Israel

2 Iraq

2 Saudi Arabia

3 Iran

16 Don't know

1 No response

**Country B**

2 Israel

**52** Iraq

6 Saudi Arabia

19 Iran

19 Don't know

2 No response

**Country C**

3 Israel

16 Iraq

12 Saudi Arabia

**48** Iran

19 Don't know

2 No response

**Country D**

2 Israel

9 Iraq

**60** Saudi Arabia

9 Iran

19 Don't know

1 No response

30. Which city would be LEAST likely to be threatened by a tsunami? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

2 Honolulu, United States

3 Manila, Philippines

3 Tokyo, Japan

**86** Mexico City, Mexico

5 Don't know

<1 No response

31. Match each place with the continent where it is located. Note: there may be more than one on each continent [options 1-4 and items A-I displayed in random order]

**Venezuela**

- <1 Africa

---

- 1 Asia

---

- 2 Europe

---

- 93** South America

---

- 3 Don't know

---

- 1 No response

**Malawi**

- 51** Africa

---

- 19 Asia

---

- <1 Europe

---

- 3 South America

---

- 25 Don't know

---

- 3 No response

**Pakistan**

- 5 Africa

---

- 79** Asia

---

- 8 Europe

---

- 2 South America

---

- 5 Don't know

---

- 2 No response

**Rwanda**

- 91** Africa

---

- 1 Asia

---

- <1 Europe

---

- 1 South America

---

- 5 Don't know

---

- 2 No response

**Nepal**

- 5 Africa

---

- 73** Asia

---

- 13 Europe

---

- 2 South America

---

- 6 Don't know

---

- 1 No response

**Sudan**

- 76** Africa

---

- 12 Asia

---

- 3 Europe

---

- 2 South America

---

- 5 Don't know

---

- 2 No response

**The Amazon Rainforest**

- 9 Africa

---

- 1 Asia

---

- <1 Europe

---

- 85** South America

---

- 3 Don't know

---

- 1 No response

**The Alps**

<1	Africa
4	Asia
<b>89</b>	Europe
2	South America
4	Don't know
1	No response

**The Sahara**

<b>85</b>	Africa
6	Asia
1	Europe
2	South America
4	Don't know
2	No response

**32.** Roughly what percentage of people **in the United States** live in cities, towns or suburban areas?

1	20%
9	35%
33	55%
<b>41</b>	80%
16	Don't know
<1	No response

**33.** Roughly what percentage of people **in the world** live in cities, towns or suburban areas?

9	20%
17	35%
<b>28</b>	55%
21	80%
25	Don't know
<1	No response

**KNOWLEDGE 16: NATURE AND CONSERVATION**

**34.** Which **one** of the following environments is home to the greatest number of plant and animal species? [options 1-4 displayed in random order]

1	The Tibetan Plateau, Asia
1	Cascade Mountains, North America
<b>81</b>	The Amazon Basin, South America
5	The Serengeti, Africa
12	Don't know
<1	No response

**35.** Roughly what percentage of water on earth is fresh water?

<b>41</b>	3%
30	23%
6	53%
3	83%
19	Don't know
<1	No response

36. Roughly what percentage of the world's ocean areas are protected from fishing?

38	4-7%
18	24-27%
3	54-57%
1	84-87%
39	Don't know
1	No response

That completes the knowledge portion of the survey. Next, we'd like to ask you some questions about your background and interests.

### THEME 1: EDUCATION AND SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

37. During your formal schooling, including any elementary school, high school and college, how much did you learn about events that were happening in the world at that time?

8	A great deal
38	A fair amount
48	Not very much
4	Nothing at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response

38. How much did you learn about foreign policy (how the U.S. is involved in the world) during your formal schooling?

5	A great deal
22	A fair amount
60	Not very much
11	Nothing at all
2	Don't know
<1	No response

#### Q39 and Q39A split-sampled

##### BASED ON - 1,229 - ADULTS IN FORM A

39. How much did you learn about geographical topics and issues (e.g., immigration, urbanization, changes to the natural environment) during your formal schooling?

5	A great deal
21	A fair amount
56	Not very much
16	Nothing at all
2	Don't know
<1	No response

##### BASED ON - 1,257 - ADULTS IN FORM B

39A. How much did you learn about geography during your formal schooling?

13	A great deal
54	A fair amount
30	Not very much
2	Nothing at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response



**Q40 and Q41 split-sampled. Q40-42 and Q41-42 rotated as appropriate.**

**BASED ON - 1,229 - ADULTS IN FORM A**

40. How important is it for geographical topics and issues (e.g., immigration, urbanization, changes to the natural environment) to be taught in -

**Elementary and middle school (Grades K-8)**

19	Extremely important
25	Very important
37	Moderately important
13	Not too important
5	Not important at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response

**High school (Grades 9-12)**

40	Extremely important
42	Very important
14	Moderately important
2	Not too important
1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**College**

57	Extremely important
27	Very important
11	Moderately important
2	Not too important
1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**BASED ON - 1,257 - ADULTS IN FORM B**

41. How important is it for geography to be taught in -

**Elementary and middle school (Grades K-8)**

35	Extremely important
35	Very important
24	Moderately important
4	Not too important
<1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response

**High school (Grades 9-12)**

47	Extremely important
38	Very important
12	Moderately important
1	Not too important
<1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**College**

41	Extremely important
27	Very important
21	Moderately important
6	Not too important
1	Not important at all
2	Don't know
1	No response

42. How important is it for international issues and foreign policy (such as alliances, diplomacy, trade, and terrorism) to be taught in --

**Elementary and middle school (Grades K-8)**

13	Extremely important
17	Very important
39	Moderately important
23	Not too important
7	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**High school (Grades 9-12)**

37	Extremely important
44	Very important
16	Moderately important
2	Not too important
<1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**College**

59	Extremely important
28	Very important
9	Moderately important
1	Not too important
1	Not important at all
1	Don't know
1	No response

**Q43 and Q43a split-sampled**

**Q43-44 and Q43a-44 rotated as appropriate**

**BASED ON - 1,229 - ADULTS IN FORM A**

43. How often do you discuss geographical topics and issues (e.g., immigration, urbanization, changes to the natural environment) in your day-to-day life?

11	A great deal
42	A fair amount
39	Not very much
6	Not at all
<1	Don't know
<1	No response

**BASED ON - 1,257 - ADULTS IN FORM B**

43A. (Display only if Form B) How often do you discuss geography in your day-to-day life?

4	A great deal
22	A fair amount
55	Not very much
19	Not at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response

44. How often do you discuss international issues and foreign policy (such as alliances, diplomacy, trade, and terrorism) in your day-to-day life?

10	A great deal
37	A fair amount
42	Not very much
10	Not at all
1	Don't know
<1	No response

## THEME 2: MEDIA CONSUMPTION—INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND GEOGRAPHY

45. What are your main sources for learning about international issues? Please select all that apply. [options 1-9 displayed in random order]

62	Television (including ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CNN, MSNBC and others)
74	Internet (including Yahoo News, Huffington Post, Drudge Report, websites of newspapers and TV networks, and internet searches)
33	Newspapers in print (including your local newspaper, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and other national and international newspapers)
20	Magazines in print (including Foreign Affairs, National Geographic, Time, The Economist and others)
49	Radio (including your local radio stations, National Public Radio, and talk radio programs)
36	Social media (including Facebook, Twitter and other platforms)
41	Family, friends and acquaintances
9	Learning centers or museums
23	Books (fiction and non-fiction)
1	None of these
<1	No response

46. Which statement better describes you - [options 1-2 displayed in random order]

47	I follow international news closely ONLY when something important is happening
46	I follow international news closely most of the time, whether or not something important is happening
6	Don't know
<1	No response

### OPINION QUESTIONS

Next, just a few questions to ask your opinions on some current issues.

47. What international issues are most important to you, personally, in your daily life or when considering candidates for public office? Please list up to three.

29	Trade/tariffs
26	Illegal immigration
17	Climate change/global warming
12	Terrorism
12	U.S. involvement/intervention in international conflicts/war
10	Foreign relations/diplomacy/foreign aid
9	Human rights/equality/freedom of religion/speech/women's rights
7	Nuclear weapons/proliferation
7	National security/defense/military strength
7	Economy/financial issues

5	Middle East affairs/Israel safety/support
5	The environmental policy/pollution
4	Government culture/right-wing nationalism
3	Healthcare/diseases
3	Peace/world peace
3	Allies/protecting NATO/alliances
3	Russia issues/aggression/meddling in election
2	Poverty/hunger/homelessness
2	Relations with China
2	North Korea
2	Refugees/refugee crisis
2	Humanitarian concerns/aid
2	Border security/the Wall/Mexico
1	Oil/oil trade/gas prices
1	National/world debt
1	Education
1	Social issues/social awareness/justices/law and order
1	U.S. leadership/Trump
1	Relations (non-specific)
1	Aid (non-specific)
1	Crime/violence
1	War on drugs
9	Other
22	Don't know
4	Refused/No answer

**Q48-50 displayed in random order**

**48.** Does the U.S. spend too much, about the right amount, or too little on the military? [Form A: options 1-2-3 displayed in order; Form B: options 3-2-1 displayed in order]

40 Too much

---

28 About the right amount

---

26 Too little

---

6 Don't know

---

<1 No response

**49.** Does the U.S. spend too much, about the right amount, or too little on foreign aid? [Form A: options 1-2-3 displayed in order; Form B: options 3-2-1 displayed in order]

44 Too much

---

26 About the right amount

---

16 Too little

---

13 Don't know

---

<1 No response

**50.** Does the U.S. spend too much, about the right amount, or too little on domestic programs (like health care and education)? [Form A: options 1-2-3 displayed in order; Form B: options 3-2-1 displayed in order]

14 Too much

---

14 About the right amount

---

67 Too little

---

4 Don't know

---

<1 No response

**51.** Thinking about the role the U.S. plays in the world, including its participation in international institutions, sending troops abroad, and giving foreign aid to other countries, would you like to see the U.S. – [Form A: options 1-2-3-4 displayed in order; Form B: options 4-3-2-1 displayed in order]

16 Increase its efforts in these areas

---

29 Keep its efforts the same as now

---

44 Reduce its efforts in these areas

---

2 End its efforts entirely

---

9 Don't know

---

<1 No response

**52.** In general, do you think it is better for the U.S. to – [options 1-2 displayed in random order]

6 Act unilaterally in the world  
(not work with other countries)

---

88 Act multilaterally in the world  
(work with other countries)

---

5 Don't know

---

<1 No response

**53.** How much of a threat, if any, do you think climate change poses to U.S. prosperity and national security?

42 A very serious threat

---

22 A moderately serious threat

---

19 Not a very serious threat

---

14 Not a threat at all

---

2 Don't know

---

<1 No response

54. Do you believe trading with other countries (selling exports to them and buying imports from them) -- [options 1-2 displayed in random order]?

76	Does more to benefit the U.S.
13	Does more to harm the U.S.
10	Don't know
<1	No response

55. How much do you believe events around the world affect you in your daily life?

18	A great deal
52	A fair amount
27	Not very much
2	Not at all
2	Don't know
<1	No response

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Finally, just a few questions for statistical purposes.

56. In politics, as of today, with which political party do you most closely affiliate? [Form A: options 1-2-3-4 displayed in order; Form B: options 2-1-3-4 displayed in order]

29	Republican
39	Democrat
26	Independent
6	Other
<1	No response

**NOTE: figures below are combined responses to Q56 and Q56a**

56A. (Asked of independents) As of today, do you lean more to ...? [Form A: options 1-2-3-4 displayed in order; Form B: options 2-1-3-4 displayed in order]

37	The Democratic Party/ Lean Democratic
49	The Republican Party/ Lean Republican
13	Neither party/Another party
<1	No response

57. How would you describe your political views? [Form A: options 1-2-3-4-5 displayed in order; Form B: options 5-4-3-2-1 displayed in order]

10	Very conservative
22	Conservative
36	Moderate
22	Liberal
10	Very liberal
1	No response

58. Are you currently registered to vote?

94	Yes
5	No
1	No response

**NOTE: Q59 is reported among the 2,664 who completed the survey. The 5% who indicated they got help from outside sources are excluded from the base for Q2-58.**

59. Many people struggle to remember facts, even when they know them, and so they get help remembering. When you were answering the factual knowledge questions, did you get help from any other source, such as the internet or another person?

Please be honest, this is for statistical purposes only.

---

5 Yes

---

94 No

---

<1 No response

The survey is now complete. Please click the button to submit the survey.

Gallup, as well as National Geographic and the Council on Foreign Relations, which commissioned the research, thank you very much for your participation in this study and helping us understand how much information people are getting about international matters.

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**GALLUP®**

**World Headquarters**

The Gallup Building  
901 F Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

**t** +1.877.242.5587

**f** +1.202.715.3045

**[www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)**