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For The People & The Press

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Political Knowledge Update

AWARENESS OF IRAQ WAR FATALITIES PLUMMETS

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Political Knowledge Update

AWARENESS OF IRAQ WAR FATALITIES PLUMMETS

Public awareness of the number of American military fatalities in Iraq has declined sharply since last August. Today, just 28% of adults are able to say that approximately 4,000 Americans have died in the Iraq war. As of March 10, the Department of Defense had confirmed the deaths of 3,974 U.S. military personnel in Iraq.

In August 2007, 54% correctly identified the fatality level at that time (about 3,500 deaths). In previous polls going back to the spring of 2004, about half of respondents could correctly estimate the number of U.S. fatalities around the time of the survey.

In the current poll, more respondents underestimated than overestimated the number of fatalities. A plurality of 35% said that there have been about 3,000 troop deaths, and another 11% said there have been 2,000 deaths. Just under a quarter (23%) said the number of fatalities is closer to 5,000.

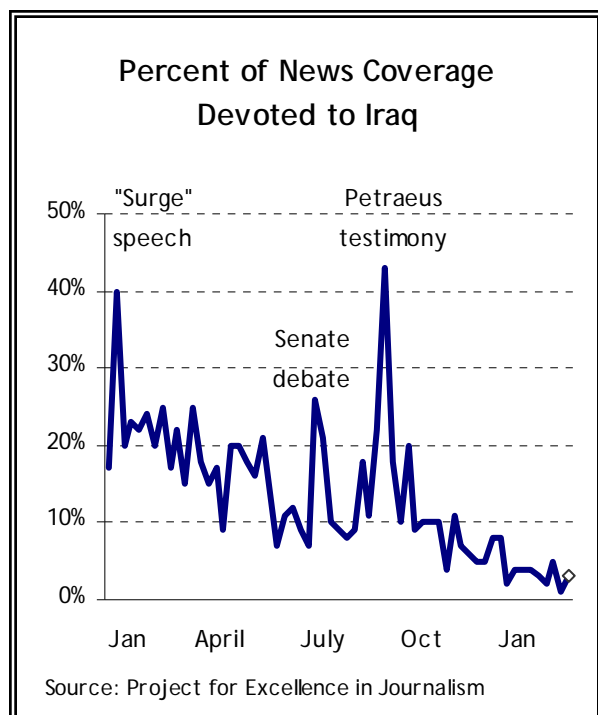
The drop in awareness comes as press attention to the war has waned. According to the News Content Index conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, the percentage of news stories devoted to the war has sharply declined since last year, dropping from an average of 15% of the newshole in July to just 3% in February.

As news coverage of the war has diminished, so too has public interest in news about Iraq. According to Pew's News Interest Index survey, Iraq was the public's most closely followed news story in all but five weeks during the first half of 2007; however, it was a much less dominant story between July 2007 and February 2008. Notably, the Iraq war has not

Awareness of U.S. Troop Deaths in Iraq Down by Half

<i>Know number of U.S. troop deaths*</i>	Percent Correct	<i>Correct Category</i>
Feb. 28-Mar. 2, 2008	28	4,000
Aug. 9-16, 2007	54	3,500
June 22-25, 2007	49	3,500
February 2007	55	3,000
December 2006	47	3,000
April 2006	53	2,500
October 2005	48	2,000
June 2005	54	1,000-2,000
April 2004	55	500-1,000

*Question wording for current poll: "Since the start of military action in Iraq, about how many U.S. military personnel have been killed? To the best of your knowledge, have there been, around 2000, 3000, 4000 [or] 5000 troop deaths?"



been the public's top weekly story since mid-October.

Along with declining interest in news about Iraq, a Pew poll last month found a significant increase in the number of Americans who believe that military progress is being made in Iraq. However, the public remains divided about when to remove troops and a majority continues to say that the war was the wrong decision.

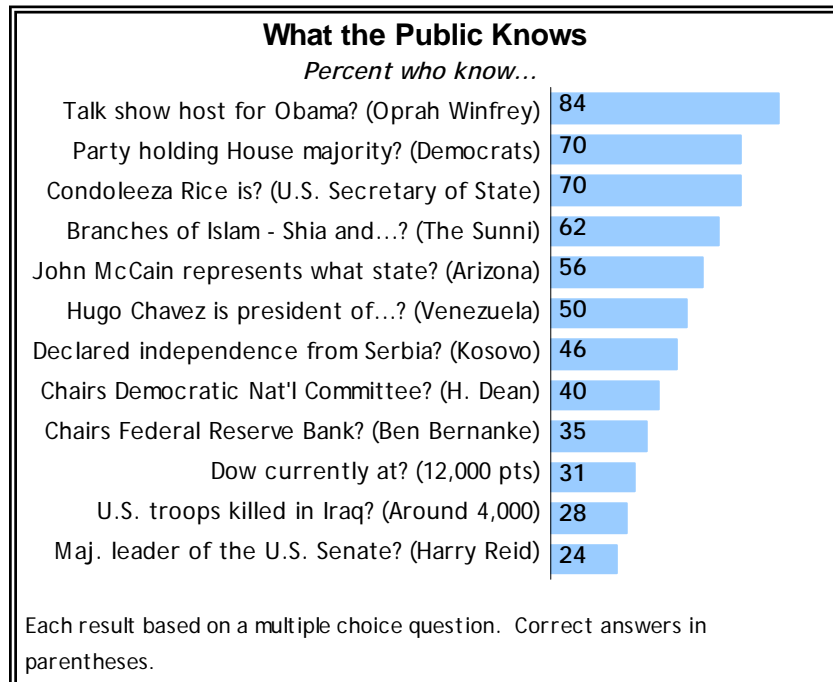
See ["Obama Has The Lead, But Potential Problems Too," February 28, 2008.](#)

Awareness of the number of troop deaths has declined substantially among every demographic group, including the well-educated. College graduates in August were somewhat more likely than other respondents to correctly identify the level of troop deaths (60% correct, vs. 51% for those with some college experience and 47% for those with no college experience). Now, college graduates are no more likely than other groups to know the number of deaths. The proportion of Republicans who can correctly identify the number of troop deaths fell by half between August and the current poll (down 27 points from 53% to 26%). The same is true of independents (down 30 points from 59% to 29%).

<i>Know number of US troop deaths</i>	Aug	Feb	<i>Change</i>
	2007 %	2008 %	
Total	54	28	-26
Men	60	34	-26
Women	47	23	-24
18-29	39	24	-15
30-49	54	28	-26
50-64	56	28	-28
65+	69	38	-31
H.S. or less	47	27	-20
Some college	51	33	-18
College grads	60	27	-33
Republicans	53	26	-27
Democrats	49	30	-19
Independents	59	29	-30

Pew News IQ

The current Pew News IQ survey provides an updated look at the public's knowledge of political and world affairs. A total of 1,003 adults were interviewed Feb. 28-March 2 and asked to answer a series of 12 multiple choice questions. The margin of error for the poll is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.



A large majority of those interviewed (84%) correctly named Oprah Winfrey as the talk show host who has campaigned for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama. Seven-in-ten (70%) were able to name the Democratic Party as having a majority in the U.S. House; in August, 78% could do so. An identical percentage (70%) could identify Condoleezza Rice as the U.S. Secretary of State.

The percentage able to name the Sunnis as the branch of Islam competing for control of Iraq with the Shiites was 62%, five points lower than in August and the same percentage as in March 2007. A majority of Americans (56%) also knew that Sen. John McCain represents Arizona. Half were able to identify Hugo Chavez as the President of Venezuela, while fewer than half (46%) were aware that Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia.

Only four-in-ten knew that Howard Dean is chair of the Democratic National Committee. Approximately one-third (35%) could identify Ben Bernanke as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. And 31% could correctly place the Dow Jones Industrial Average at around 12,000, down from 41% in August who knew that it was around 13,000 at the time. The level of knowledge about the Dow is now about what it was in May 2000, when 28% knew that the index was around 10,000.

The toughest question on the survey asked respondents to choose the current Senate majority leader from a list of four men. Fewer than one-in-four (24%) could identify Harry Reid as the Senate leader.

On average, respondents could correctly answer approximately six out of twelve questions (mean 5.97; median 6.0). There were substantial differences in knowledge levels across demographic groups. Men could correctly answer an average of 6.7 of the 12 questions; women could answer an average of 5.3 questions. College graduates could correctly answer an average of nearly three more questions than could respondents with no college experience (7.4 vs. 4.5). And respondents 50 and older could correctly answer an average of about two more questions than those under age 30 (6.7 vs. 4.6).

How Americans Scored on the Pew News IQ Quiz	
	Average # correct out of 12 questions
TOTAL	6.0
<u>Sex</u>	
Men	6.7
Women	5.3
<u>Education</u>	
College Grad	7.4
Some College	6.0
High School or Less	4.5
<u>Age</u>	
18-29	4.6
30-49	6.0
50-64	6.7
65+	6.7
<u>Registered Voter</u>	
Yes	6.4
No	4.5
<i>Correctly answered at least*...</i>	
10 questions	17
8 questions	31
6 questions	52
4 questions	76
2 questions	93
1 question	98
*Out of 12 questions.	

Who Knows What?

Some demographic and political differences stood out:

- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is not nearly well known as his counterpart in the House of Representatives, Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In August, 74% of the public correctly identified Pelosi as the Speaker, while in the current news quiz fewer than one-in-four (24%) know that Harry Reid leads the Senate. More Republicans (34%) and independents (24%) than Democrats (19%) can identify the majority leader.
- More than half of the general public (56%) knows that Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, represents Arizona in the U.S. Senate; however only three-in-ten Americans under age 30 could identify McCain's home state. That compares with solid majorities of 30 to 49 year olds (59%) and those age 50 or older (67%). Roughly two-thirds (64%) of registered voters knew that John McCain is from Arizona, more than twice the number of nonvoters (26%) who answered this question correctly.
- More women (88%) than men (81%) know that Oprah Winfrey is backing Sen. Obama.
- High-income Americans are much more likely than those with lower incomes to know the level of the Dow and to know that Ben Bernanke is the Federal Reserve chairman.

About the Survey

Results for this report are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted Feb. 28-March 2, 2008 under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of six 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
 FEBRUARY POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE UPDATE SURVEY
 FINAL TOPLINE
 FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 2, 2008
 N=1,003**

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

ROTATE ITEMS Q.1 THROUGH Q.7 AND ITEMS Q.8 THROUGH Q.13 IN SEPARATE SECTIONS.

QUESTION 1 NOT INCLUDED IN KNOWLEDGE SCALE.

Q.1 Do you happen to know which group in Hollywood was on strike earlier this year? Was it... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

- 91 The writers (*Correct*)
- 1 The stuntmen
- 3 The producers [OR]
- 1 The directors
- 4 Don't know/Refused (**VOL. DO NOT READ**)
- 100

Q.2 Is Condoleezza Rice... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

- 70 The U.S. Secretary of State (*Correct*)
- 20 The Secretary of Defense
- 2 The Governor of Louisiana [OR]
- 1 The President of Harvard University
- 7 Don't know/Refused (**VOL. DO NOT READ**)
- 100

Q.3 Followers of the two major branches of Islam are seeking political control in Iraq. One branch is the Shi'a, [PRONOUNCED: SHE-ah] whose members are known as Shiites [PRONOUNCED: SHE-ites]. Can you name the other one? Is it... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

	Aug. 16- <u>19, 2007</u>		March 9-12, <u>2007</u> ¹	
62	67	The Sunni (<i>Correct</i>)	62	The Sunni (<i>Correct</i>)
10	8	The Hezbollah	7	The Hezbollah
2	3	The Kasmars	1	The Kasmars
13	13	The Kurds	9	[OR] some other group
<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>21</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)
100	100		100	

¹ For March 9-12, 2007 "The Kurds" was not offered as a response option, and "some other group" was offered.

Q.4 Since the start of military action in Iraq, about how many U.S. military personnel have been killed? To the best of your knowledge, have there been ... [READ IN ORDER] troop deaths?

		Aug. 9-16, <u>2007</u>	June 22-25, <u>2007</u>		Feb <u>2007</u>	Dec <u>2006</u>		April <u>2006</u>	
11	Around 2,000	8	9	Around 1,500	5	6	Around 1,000	4	Around 500
35	Around 3,000	19	20	Around 2,500	17	24	Around 2,000	16	Around 1,500
28	Around 4,000	54	49	Around 3,500	55	47	Around 3,000	53	Around 2,500
23	Around 5,000	17	12	Around 4,500	17	16	Around 4,000	19	Around 3,500
--	Other (VOL.)	--	3	Other (VOL.)	1	1	Other (VOL.)	1	Other (VOL.)
<u>3</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>7</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100		100	100		100	100		100	

		June <u>2005</u>	April <u>2004</u>	
Oct <u>2005</u>				
5	Around 500	4	28	Under 500
23	Around 1,000	13	55	500 to 1,000
48	Around 2,000	54	6	1,000 to 2,000
19	Around 3,000	24	4	More than 2,000
1	Other (VOL.)	--	--	Other (VOL.)
<u>4</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	DK/Ref (VOL.)
100		100	100	

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

Q.5 Do you happen to know what state U.S. Senator John McCain represents in Congress? Is it... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

56	Arizona (<i>Correct</i>)
9	Colorado
4	New Mexico [OR]
19	New Hampshire
<u>12</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.6 Do you happen to know the name of the current majority leader of the U.S. Senate? Is it... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

		<i>House Speaker</i> <u>Aug. 16-19, 2007</u>		
24	Harry Reid (<i>Correct</i>)	74	Nancy Pelosi (<i>Correct</i>)	
13	Patrick Leahy	5	Dennis Hastert	
13	Trent Lott	7	Barbara Boxer [OR]	
14	Joe Biden	5	Scooter Libby	
<u>36</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>9</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	
100		100		

Q.7 Do you happen to know which political party has a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives? [READ AND ROTATE]

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

Q.8 What is the name of the talk show host who has campaigned for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama? Is it... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

84 Oprah Winfrey (*Correct*)
 2 Rush Limbaugh
 3 Jay Leno[OR]
 2 Dr. Phil
 9 Don't know/Refused (**VOL. DO NOT READ**)
 100

Q.9 Is Hugo Chavez the President of... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

50 Venezuela (*Correct*)
 9 Colombia
 15 Mexico [OR]
 7 Cuba
 19 Don't know/Refused (**VOL. DO NOT READ**)
 100

² In May, 1989 the question was worded: "As a result of the election last year which party now has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington?"

Q.10 Do you happen to know if the Dow Jones Industrial Average is currently closer to **[READ IN ORDER]**?

		Aug. <u>16-19, 2007</u>		May <u>2000³</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
<u>28</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>16</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)	<u>62</u>	DK/Refused (VOL.)
100		100		100	

Correct answers for each trend highlighted in bold

Q.11 Can you name the chairperson of the Democratic National Committee? Is it... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

40	Howard Dean (<i>Correct</i>)
5	Rahm Emanuel
6	Donna Brazile [OR]
10	Joe Wilson
<u>39</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.12 Do you happen to know who is chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board? Is it... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]** {new}

35	Ben Bernanke (<i>Correct</i>)
27	Alan Greenspan
8	Paul Volcker
5	Henry Paulson
<u>25</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

Q.13 Which of the following recently declared its independence from Serbia? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

46	Kosovo (<i>Correct</i>)
20	Bosnia
4	Andorra
9	Chechnya
<u>21</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)
100	

³ In May, 2000 the question was worded: "Do you happen to know at what level the Dow Jones Industrial average is currently trading? Is it about..."