

Pew Research News IQ Quiz

What the Public Knows about the Political Parties

Most Americans can correctly identify the relative positions of the Republican and Democratic parties on the major issues of the day. But a review of what Americans know about the political parties shows that the public is better informed about the partisan affiliations of two popular recent presidents – Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton – than it is about the positions of the parties on key issues that dominate the current national debate.

About seven-in-ten (71%) know that the Republican Party is considered to be the more conservative party. And majorities can correctly place the parties relative to each other on current issues that define the liberal-conservative divide, such as taxes, gay rights, abortion, and defense spending.

But the latest News IQ survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 29-

April 1 among 1,000 adults, finds considerable variance in what the public knows about the parties. While 67% correctly identify the Democratic Party as more supportive of raising taxes on higher-income people to reduce the budget deficit, far fewer (53%) identify the Republican Party as more in favor of reducing the size and scope of government.

Knowledge of the Parties' Positions

% who know ...

The more conservative party (Rep)	71
<i>The party generally more supportive of ...</i>	
Raising taxes on high incomes (Dem)	67
Expanding gay rights (Dem)	66
"Path to citizenship" (Dem)	63
Restricting abortion (Rep)	61
Oil drilling in Arctic Refuge (Rep)	60
Reducing defense spending (Dem)	58
Reducing size of fed gov't (Rep)	53

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

While there is some confusion over the parties' ideological and issue positions, two recent political figures are clearly identified with their respective parties. Overall, 85% of the public knows that Reagan was a Republican, while virtually the same percentage (84%) knows that Clinton is a Democrat.

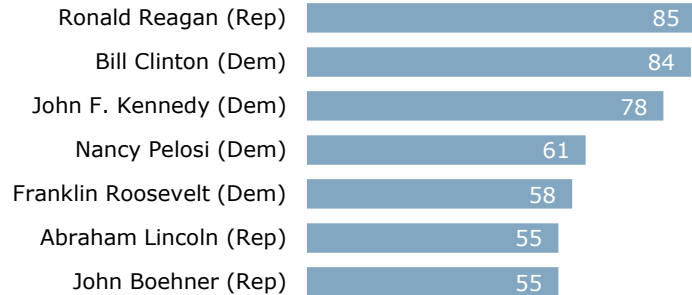
Nearly as many (78%) correctly identify John F. Kennedy as a Democrat. But Americans are less familiar

with the partisan affiliations of earlier presidents and current congressional leaders. Roughly six-in-ten (58%) know that Franklin Roosevelt was a Democrat, while 55% correctly identify Abraham Lincoln as a Republican. Comparable majorities know that House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi is a Democrat (61%) and House Speaker John Boehner is a Republican (55%).

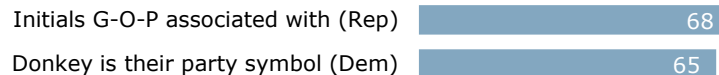
Two other items on the poll asked about the parties' nicknames and symbols. Nearly seven-in-ten respondents (68%) correctly said that the initials "G-O-P" are usually associated with the Republican Party. And 65% correctly noted that the Democratic Party uses the donkey as its mascot or symbol.

Knowledge of Past Presidents, Current Leaders and Party Symbols

% who can identify the party of ...



% who know ...



PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

Partisan Differences in Knowledge

Republicans fare substantially better than Democrats on several questions in the survey, as is typically the case in surveys about political knowledge.

The largest gaps are in awareness of which party is more supportive of reducing the size and scope of the federal government (30 points) and which party is more conservative (28 points).

Republicans also are 21 percentage points more likely than Democrats to know that the GOP is more supportive of drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

There is only one policy question – which party is more supportive of cutting defense spending – on which Democrats are more knowledgeable than Republicans.

Two-thirds of Democrats (67%) identify the Democratic Party as being more supportive of reducing the size of the defense budget, compared with 59% of Republicans.

Democrats Less Likely to Know that GOP Is More Conservative, FDR Was a Democrat

<i>% who answered each correctly</i>	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D diff
Party considered to be ...	%	%	%	
More conservative on most issues (Rep)	90	62	70	+28
Party generally more supportive of ...				
Reducing the size of federal gov't (Rep)	76	46	51	+30
Oil drilling in Arctic Wildlife Refuge (Rep)	77	56	59	+21
Expanding rights of gays & lesbians (Dem)	74	69	64	+5
Raising taxes on higher-income people (Dem)	72	73	65	-1
Restricting access to abortion (Rep)	63	65	62	-2
Path to citizenship for illegal immig. (Dem)	63	70	64	-7
Reducing the defense budget (Dem)	59	67	55	-8
Republican or Democrat?				
Nancy Pelosi (Democrat)	75	59	60	+16
Franklin Roosevelt (Democrat)	73	58	53	+15
Abraham Lincoln (Republican)	61	54	53	+7
Ronald Reagan (Republican)	92	88	80	+4
Bill Clinton (Democrat)	91	89	80	+2
John F. Kennedy (Democrat)	85	84	71	+1
John Boehner (Republican)	57	62	53	-5
Symbol, nickname associated w/ each...				
The donkey symbol (Democratic Party)	76	66	63	+10
The initials "G-O-P" (Republican Party)	78	71	63	+7
Average number correct overall	12.6	11.4	10.7	+1.2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

On the remaining issues – expanding the rights of gays and lesbians, increasing taxes on the wealthy, restricting abortion and providing immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally with a possible “path to citizenship” – there are no significant differences in knowledge between Democrats and Republicans.

Republicans also are more familiar with the partisan affiliation of two leading Democrats – one from the present, Nancy Pelosi, and one from the past, Franklin Roosevelt. Three-quarters (75%) of Republicans know that Pelosi is a Democrat, compared with 59% of Democrats. And while 73% of Republicans identify FDR as a Democrat, just 58% of Democrats do so.

Independents also are less knowledgeable than Republicans about the parties’ positions on a number of issues and the affiliation of some political leaders. Notably, independents (71%) are less likely than Republicans (85%) or Democrats (84%) to know that John F. Kennedy was a Democrat.

The partisan gaps in knowledge are at least partly a consequence of demographic differences. On average, Republicans are older and more affluent than either Democrats or independents, and both of these are associated with knowledge about the parties’ positions and leaders.

Demographic Differences in Knowledge

Although previous Pew Research surveys of political knowledge have found young people to be less knowledgeable than older people, the pattern in this poll is more mixed.

People younger than 30 are much less likely than older Americans to be able to correctly associate several political leaders with their parties. Fewer than half of those younger than 30 correctly identify Nancy Pelosi and Franklin Roosevelt as Democrats (43% each). By contrast, three quarters of those 65 and older know that Pelosi and Roosevelt are Democrats. The gap between young and old is nearly as large on the item about John F. Kennedy's party (28 points).

But young people are relatively well informed about the parties' positions on most issues. In fact, people younger than 30 are more likely than those 65 and older to know that the Democrats are more supportive of expanding gay rights (72% vs. 56%) and creating a way for illegal immigrants to become citizens (74% vs. 59%).

On several other issues – which party is more supportive of drilling for oil in Alaska, reducing the defense budget and for restricting access to abortion – there are no significant age differences. In addition, about seven-in-ten across all age categories,

Most Young People Know Democrats Are More Supportive of Gay Rights, "Path to Citizenship"

<i>% who answered each correctly</i>	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	Old- yng diff
Party considered to be ...	%	%	%	%	
More conservative on most issues (Rep)	68	72	71	71	+3
Party generally more supportive of ...					
Reducing the size of federal gov't (Rep)	44	53	56	58	+14
Raising taxes on higher-income people (Dem)	58	67	71	70	+12
Oil drilling in Arctic Wildlife Refuge (Rep)	57	62	61	62	+5
Restricting access to abortion (Rep)	62	64	62	56	-6
Reducing the defense budget (Dem)	65	59	57	55	-10
Path to citizenship for illegal immig. (Dem)	74	61	60	59	-15
Expanding rights of gays & lesbians (Dem)	72	66	67	56	-16
Republican or Democrat?					
Nancy Pelosi (Democrat)	43	60	68	75	+32
Franklin Roosevelt (Democrat)	43	53	63	75	+32
John F. Kennedy (Democrat)	65	71	84	93	+28
John Boehner (Republican)	43	53	61	64	+21
Ronald Reagan (Republican)	74	85	89	92	+18
Abraham Lincoln (Republican)	48	53	56	63	+15
Bill Clinton (Democrat)	80	80	88	90	+10
Symbol, nickname associated w/ each...					
The initials "G-O-P" (Republican Party)	60	67	70	76	+16
The donkey symbol (Democratic Party)	57	64	69	72	+15
Average number of correct answers	10.1	10.9	11.5	11.9	+1.8

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

including 68% of those younger than 30, know that the Republican Party is considered to be more conservative on most political issues. However, fewer than half (44%) of young people know that the Republican Party is more supportive of reducing the size and scope of the federal government; majorities in older age categories know this.

As in previous Pew Research Center News IQ surveys, there are wide educational differences in knowledge about the parties. Those with no more than a high school education are far less likely than better educated people to be aware of the parties' positions on issues and to correctly associate political leaders with their parties.

Wide Educational Differences in Political Knowledge

	HS or less	Some coll	Coll grad	Coll-HS diff
<i>% who answered each correctly</i>				
Party considered to be ...	%	%	%	
More conservative on most issues (Rep)	54	77	90	+36
Party generally more supportive of ...				
Expanding rights of gays & lesbians (Dem)	51	71	85	+34
Raising taxes on higher-income people (Dem)	56	69	84	+28
Oil drilling in Arctic Wildlife Refuge (Rep)	48	66	74	+26
Reducing the size of federal gov't (Rep)	43	53	68	+25
Restricting access to abortion (Rep)	52	61	76	+24
Path to citizenship for illegal immigrants (Dem)	52	69	74	+22
Reducing the defense budget (Dem)	50	59	70	+20
Republican or Democrat?				
Nancy Pelosi (Democrat)	49	65	78	+29
John Boehner (Republican)	45	55	70	+25
Abraham Lincoln (Republican)	46	58	67	+21
Franklin Roosevelt (Democrat)	50	59	69	+19
John F. Kennedy (Democrat)	69	81	88	+19
Bill Clinton (Democrat)	76	88	93	+17
Ronald Reagan (Republican)	80	86	92	+12
Symbol, nickname associated w/ each...				
The initials "G-O-P" (Republican Party)	55	72	86	+31
The donkey symbol (Democratic Party)	57	69	76	+19
Average number correct overall	9.3	11.6	13.4	+4.1

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 29-Apr. 1, 2012.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 29-April 1, 2012 among a national sample of 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (599 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 180 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 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 following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,000	4.0 percentage points
Republicans	239	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	334	6.5 percentage points
Independents	340	6.5 percentage points
18-29	140	10.0 percentage points
30-49	233	7.5 percentage points
50-64	294	7.0 percentage points
65+	281	7.0 percentage points
College grad+	383	6.0 percentage points
Some College	251	7.5 percentage points
HS or less	350	6.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
APRIL 2012 KNOWLEDGE SURVEY
March 29-April 1, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,000**

**PEW.1-PEW.3, PEWWP.1 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
NO PEW.4-PEW.9**

ASK ALL:

PEW.10 Thinking about where the political parties stand on important issues, please tell me whether you think **[RANDOMIZE: the Republican Party OR the Democratic Party; KEEP PARTIES IN SAME ORDER FOR ALL ITEMS]** is generally more supportive of each of the following. Which party is generally more supportive of **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**? Next, **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]** **[IF NECESSARY: "Which political party is generally more supportive of this?"]**

PERCENTAGE OFFERING A CORRECT ANSWER HIGHLIGHTED BELOW

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a. Reducing the size and scope of the federal government March 29-April 1, 2012	53	25	22

PEW.10b HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

c. Increasing taxes on higher income people to reduce the federal budget deficit March 29-April 1, 2012	20	67	13
d. Restricting access to abortion March 29-April 1, 2012	61	19	20
e. Creating a way for immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally to eventually become citizens March 29-April 1, 2012	17	63	21
f. Reducing the size of the defense budget March 29-April 1, 2012	24	58	18
g. Expanding the rights of gays and lesbians March 29-April 1, 2012	12	66	22
h. Allowing drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge March 29-April 1, 2012	60	18	23

RANDOMIZE PEW.11-PEW.12

ASK ALL:

PEW.11 Which political party uses the donkey as its mascot or symbol? Is it the... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Mar 29-Apr 1

2012

22	The Republican Party
65	The Democratic Party (<i>Correct</i>)
13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE PEW.11-PEW.12**ASK ALL:**

PEW.12 The initials "G-O-P" are usually associated with... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Mar 29-Apr 1

2012

68 The Republican Party (*Correct*)
 13 The Democratic Party
 18 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)

ASK ALL:

PEW.13 And as I read the names of a few current and past political leaders, please tell me whether each one is a **[RANDOMIZE: Republican OR a Democrat; KEEP PARTIES IN SAME ORDER FOR ALL ITEMS]** First, is/was **[INSERT ITEM, RANDOMIZE]** a [Republican or a Democrat]?

PERCENTAGE OFFERING A CORRECT ANSWER HIGHLIGHTED BELOW

		<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Bill Clinton March 29-April 1, 2012	10	84	6
b.	Franklin Roosevelt March 29-April 1, 2012	25	58	17
c.	Ronald Reagan March 29-April 1, 2012	85	8	7
d.	John Boehner March 29-April 1, 2012	55	13	32
e.	Nancy Pelosi March 29-April 1, 2012	20	61	19
f.	John F. Kennedy March 29-April 1, 2012	16	78	6
g.	Abraham Lincoln March 29-April 1, 2012	55	28	17

ASK ALL:

PEW.14 Overall, which party is considered to be the more conservative party on most political issues?
[READ AND RANDOMIZE]

Mar 29-Apr 1

2012

71 The Republican Party (*Correct*)
 22 The Democratic Party
 8 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

ASK IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) <u>preference</u>	(VOL.) <u>party</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	Lean <u>Rep</u>	Lean <u>Dem</u>
March 29-April 1, 2012	21	33	36	4	*	5	12	16