

Scientific Survey Finds Voters of All Parties, Ages, and Genders Are Broadly Misinformed

At a recent “get-out-the-vote” rally in Las Vegas, former first lady Michelle Obama [declared](#) that people don’t have to be informed in order to vote. All they need, she said, is to “be a citizen,” “have opinions,” and want “a say in what happens.” She emphasized, “I’ve been voting since I was 18 years old—and trust me—I didn’t know nothing about nothing at 18 years old.”

In contrast, [James Madison](#)—the father of the Constitution and primary author of the Bill of Rights—[stressed](#) that voters “must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.” Failure to do this, he said, will produce government that is “a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps both.”

The results of a new scientific survey indicate that voters of all ages, political parties, and genders are following Obama’s lead instead of Madison’s. Moreover, the survey shows that many voters are not only uninformed about major issues—they are positively misinformed.

Those are the findings of an annual, national poll commissioned by [Just Facts](#), a non-profit research and educational institute. The poll was conducted by an academic research firm that used [sound methodologies](#) to assess U.S. residents who regularly vote.

While most surveys measure public opinion, this unique one measures voters’ knowledge of issues that affect their lives

in tangible ways—such as education, taxes, healthcare, the national debt, pollution, government spending, Social Security, global warming, energy, and hunger. Every year, the poll includes a new question about a prevalent, controversial issue. This year, the question is about rape.

Results for All Voters

For each question, voters were offered a selection of two or more answers, one of which was true. Voters also had the opportunity to say they were unsure.

On average, voters gave the correct answer 40% of the time, gave an incorrect answer 53% of the time, and said they were unsure 7% of the time. A majority of voters gave the correct answer to only six of the 24 questions.

The highest levels of misinformation were found on questions related to child hunger, tax burdens, landfills, health insurance copayments, and Social Security finances. For these questions, 25% or less of voters provided the correct answer.

Results by Age, Gender, and Politics

The survey also recorded voters' ages, genders, and political party preferences. This allows the poll to pinpoint segments of society that are most and least informed about specific issues.

The results show deep partisan and demographic divides, with different groups being more or less knowledgeable depending upon the questions.

In total, the rates at which voters gave the correct answers

varied from a high of 47% for Republican voters to a low of 34% for Democrat voters:

- 47% for Republican voters
- 43% for males
- 42% for 35 to 64 year olds
- 41% for 18 to 34 year olds
- 38% for 65+ year olds
- 38% for third-party voters
- 37% for females
- 34% for Democrat voters

The questions, answers, full survey results and methodologies are [available here](#).

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