

Appendix table 7-10.

Correct answers to specific science literacy questions: 2001
(Percentages)

Characteristic	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	Sample size (number)
All adults	80	76	87	65	45	48	51	33	79	53	94	48	65	76	75	54	45	22	1,574
Male	85	81	92	58	61	52	46	43	83	57	94	50	70	89	86	66	47	28	751
Female	76	71	82	72	30	43	55	24	74	50	93	45	60	65	66	42	44	15	823
Formal education																			
Less than high school	71	61	79	45	32	29	25	20	62	45	95	36	52	61	52	31	28	27	116
High school graduate	79	75	88	66	41	45	49	32	79	49	92	46	63	78	76	51	38	17	834
Baccalaureate	90	92	88	77	65	66	73	44	89	67	96	58	78	85	92	77	69	28	393
Graduate/professional	92	86	89	76	65	70	76	59	90	81	95	67	80	82	92	76	68	37	221
Science/mathematics education^a																			
Low	73	67	55	59	33	33	39	25	72	46	92	40	60	71	65	39	28	10	674
Middle	86	80	58	69	49	56	57	38	82	56	95	53	64	79	92	61	54	23	469
High	92	92	91	77	71	77	76	50	91	69	96	62	80	89	94	83	70	37	431
Attentiveness to science or technology^b																			
Attentive public	88	80	89	68	58	57	56	50	90	72	93	61	78	82	83	66	50	28	195
Interested public	83	79	88	67	47	51	57	39	81	53	94	48	65	80	81	58	48	22	755
Residual public	76	71	84	62	39	42	43	24	73	49	93	44	62	71	68	46	41	19	624

^aRespondents were classified as having a "high" level of science/mathematics education if they took nine or more high school and college science/mathematics courses. They were classified as "middle" if they took six to eight such courses and "low" if they took five or fewer.

^bTo be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is "very interested" in that issue, is "very well informed" about it, and is a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Individuals who report that they are "very interested" in an issue but do not think that they are "very well informed" about it are classified as the "interested public." All other individuals are classified as members of the "residual public" for that issue. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of these issues but is a member of the interested public for at least one of these issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology.

NOTES: A few respondents did not provide information about their highest level of education. Responses are correct for the following statements:

A = The center of the Earth is very hot. (True)

B = All radioactivity is man-made. (False)

C = The oxygen we breathe comes from plants. (True)

D = It is the father's gene which decides whether the baby is a boy or a girl. (True)

E = Lasers work by focusing sound waves. (False)

F = Electrons are smaller than atoms. (True)

G = Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria. (False)

H = The universe began with a huge explosion. (True)

I = The continents on which we live have been moving their location for millions of years and will continue to move in the future. (True)

J = Human beings, as we know them today, developed from earlier species of animals. (True)

K = Cigarette smoking causes lung cancer. (True)

L = The earliest humans lived at the same time as the dinosaurs. (False)

M = Radioactive milk can be made safe by boiling it. (False)

N = Which travels faster: light or sound? (Light)

O = Does the Earth go around the Sun, or does the Sun go around the Earth? (Earth around the Sun)

P = How long does it take for the Earth to go around the Sun: one day, one month, or one year? (One year)

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Q = Please tell me in your own words, what is DNA?

R = Please tell me in your own words, what is a molecule?

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, 2001.

See Figure 7-4 in volume 1.

Page 2 of 2

Science & Engineering Indicators – 2002