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NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll*

Don't Know Much About History...

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

A notable proportion of Americans may need to brush up on their U.S. history. While 77% of residents nationally correctly cite Great Britain as the country from which the United States declared its independence, nearly one in four, 23%, either mention another country, 8%, or are unsure, 15%. These findings have changed little from when this question was last reported in 2011.

Education and income make a difference. Nearly nine in ten Americans with a college education or income above \$50,000 are able to identify Great Britain as the country from which the United States won its liberty. Of note, white Americans, 84%, are also more likely than Latino residents, 70%, or African Americans, 53%, to correctly identify Great Britain. Although race is a factor, its importance is exaggerated by differences in education and income among ethnic groups. Interestingly, age makes little difference.

“Curious about other countries that get mentioned?” asks Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Thirteen other countries get tabbed as the country from which the United States gained its independence. A scattering of people mention France, Mexico, and Germany among the longer list of countries. At least one person surveyed mentioned Afghanistan, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Italy, Japan, Panama, or Russia.”

Three in ten Americans, 30%, also do not know the year in which the United States declared its independence. Included here are 11% of residents who mention a year other than 1776 and 19% who are unsure. But, there has been improvement. In 2011, 42% of U.S. residents were unaware of the year the United States broke away from Great Britain. 69%, up from 58%, now say the United States declared its independence in 1776.

*All references to the survey must be sourced as “NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll”