

# 87 percent of Americans say candidates should have basic understanding of science informing public policy

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An overwhelming majority of Americans (87%) say it is important that candidates for President and Congress have a basic understanding of the science informing public policy issues, including majorities across the political spectrum (92% of Democrats, 90% of Republicans and 79% of Independents). Americans also say the presidential candidates should participate in a debate to discuss key science-based challenges facing the United States, such as healthcare, climate change, energy, education, innovation and the economy, with 91% of Democrats, 88% of Republicans and 78% of Independents agreeing.

The public opinion poll of U.S. adults commissioned by Research!America and ScienceDebate.org, conducted by Zogby Analytics, found that less than half (45%) of Americans say they are well-informed about the positions of the current [candidates](#) for President about public policies and public funding for [science](#) and innovation (49% of Democrats, 48% of Republicans, and 37% of Independents), and 77% said that journalists should ask candidates about their views on scientific issues (82% of Democrats, 76% of Republicans and 72% of Independents).

"With Nobel Prize announcements in the news this week, science is in the public consciousness but is it top of mind for the candidates?" said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "This new poll shows how important science is to Americans and their quality of life. It

is time for candidates to articulate their vision for maintaining America's leadership in science."

A majority of Americans (77%) say that public policies should be based on the best available science (82% of Republicans, 81% of Democrats, and 68% of Independents), while 84% of Americans agree that science should not be partisan, that is, not the sole business of one political party or another (87% of Republicans, 83% of Independents and 82% of Democrats).

"Evidence from science is the great equalizer in a democracy," said Shawn Otto, chair of ScienceDebate.org, an organization pushing for a science-themed U.S. presidential debate. "We are living in a new age when science affects every aspect of public policy, and voters want candidates to give science issues like climate change, healthcare, GMO foods, and jobs in the new tech economy a higher priority."

Other poll highlights:

- A majority of Americans (87%) say scientific innovations are improving our standard of living. That sentiment is shared by Republicans (92%), Democrats (88%), and Independents (80%) alike.
- When asked "in which areas in your life do you think scientific research has played an important role," "health care" and "energy" were the top two responses across party lines, followed by "protecting the environment" among Democrats, and the "communication and the Internet" among Republicans and Independents.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) say "economy and jobs" is the most serious long-term issue facing the country, followed by "health care costs" (55%), "healthcare" (48%), "national security" (47%) and "international terrorism" (42%). One in

three Americans indicated "[climate change](#)" (33%) and "income inequality" (33%). Other issues of concern: "environmental degradation" (28%); clean water (27%); mental health (25%); "nuclear war" (22%); Alzheimer's and other dread diseases (20%). Respondents were able to choose more than one issue.

- 84% of Americans say it is important for scientists to inform elected officials and the public about their research and its impact on society.—88% of Democrats, 83% of Republicans and 79% of Independents.

This nationwide online survey was conducted by Zogby Analytics on behalf of Research!America and ScienceDebate.org during September 2015, among 1,002 adults ages 18+. This survey has a theoretical sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points. For complete methodology and to learn more about the poll, visit <http://www.researchamerica.org> or <http://www.sciencedebate.org>.

To view the poll, click [here](#).

Provided by Research!America

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