

## True or False statements about America

The survey was conducted as part of PoliticsHome's Phi5000 – a unique daily tracker of British public opinion, conducted using a panel of 5000 voters. The fieldwork was carried out between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> August and the data was weighted to match the demographic and political profile of all adults in Great Britain. 1,622 people answered these True or False questions.

### **Overall you are more likely to be murdered in the USA than in the UK**

**54% said true, 34% said false, 12% didn't know**

True – the general Western European rate, including in the UK, is approximately 1-2 annual murders per 100,000 population, with America's rate being approximately 5 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup>

### **Overall you are more likely to be victim of a personal assault in the USA than in the UK**

**35% said true, 51% said false, 14% didn't know**

False – According to the International Crime Victims Survey #4, in both Britain and Australia, more than 6% of the population reported being the victim of a personal assault or threatened assault within the last year, double the American rate.<sup>2</sup>

### **Americans who have not paid their hospital fees or insurance premiums are not entitled to emergency medical care.**

**31% said true, 56% said false, 14% didn't know**

False – there is a legal right to emergency treatment.

### **Overall Americans are more likely than people in Europe to say they have little in common with people of other races and ethnicities**

**45% said true, 35% said false, 20% didn't know**

False according to a 2002 Pew survey<sup>3</sup>

### **Most European countries have been far more successful than the United States at reducing carbon emissions in recent years**

**70% said true, 14% said false, 17% didn't know**

False according to the Wall Street Journal, which notes: "[T]he U.S. has outperformed the EU-15 since 2000, according to the latest U.N. data. America's rate of growth in CO2 emissions from 2000-04 was eight percentage points lower than from 1995-2000. By comparison, the EU-15 saw an increase of 2.3 points."<sup>4</sup>

### **Since the Second World War, the USA more often sided with non-Muslims when they came into conflict with Muslims, and with non-Arabs when they came into conflict with Arabs.**

**52% said true, 19% said false, 29% didn't know**

False. Barry Rubin wrote in 2002 for Foreign Affairs: "The overall tally, in fact, is staggering: during the last half-century, in 11 of 12 major conflicts between

<sup>1</sup> See the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) at <http://rechten.uvt.nl/icvs/> and our briefing on America and Crime at <http://americaintheworld.typepad.com/briefings/2008/08/america-and-c-1.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Kohut, Andrew and Bruce Stokes (2006), *America Against the World*, Times Books, p.51

<sup>4</sup> 'Europe v. America on CO2', Wall Street Journal, 14 December 2006, at

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116606091947649743.html?mod=opinion\\_main\\_review\\_and\\_outlooks](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116606091947649743.html?mod=opinion_main_review_and_outlooks)

Muslims and non-Muslims, Muslims and secular forces, or Arabs and non-Arabs, the United States has sided with the former group.” Those conflicts are: “Muslim versus non-Muslim states: Turkey vs. Greece, Bosnia vs. Yugoslavia, Kosovo vs. Yugoslavia, Pakistan vs. India, Afghans vs. Soviets, and Azerbaijan vs. Armenia. Arab versus non-Arab states: Iraq vs. Iran. Muslim states versus secular forces: Saudi Arabia and other monarchies vs. Egypt, Jordan and other regimes vs. Syria and Iraq, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia vs. Iraq.”<sup>5</sup>

**The legal age when one can purchase or publicly possess alcoholic drinks is 21 in America.**

**84% said true, 8% said false, 7% didn't know**

True – the National Minimum Drinking Act 1984 established fiscal penalties for states with a lower drinking age and by 1988 all states had complied.<sup>6</sup>

**The USA has three or four times as many weekly churchgoers as the UK**

**85% said true, 4% said false, 11% didn't know**

True – 41% of Americans told Gallup in 2007 they had attended a church or synagogue in the last seven days, and 30% said they normally did so once a week.<sup>7</sup> In 2006, The Tearfund found a figure for Britain of 10% attending once a week or more.<sup>8</sup>

**From 1973 to 1990 the United States sold Saddam Hussein more than a quarter of his weapons.**

**80% said true, 4% said false, 15% didn't know**

False – according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's investigation, the US supplied 200 (0.46%) of Iraq's imported weapons in this period, of a total 43,915 from all countries. The UK supplied 79 (0.18%) of Iraq's weapons. The USSR, France and China supplied 57%, 13% and 12% respectively.<sup>9</sup>

**Fewer than one in five Americans over 18 own a passport.**

**63% said true, 15% said false, 22% didn't know**

False – This is a claim made by Michael Moore in a letter to the German publication Die Zeit: “82 Prozent von uns haben nicht einmal einen Pass!”.<sup>10</sup> But household surveys in the U.S. and Canada found 34% of Americans (and 41% of Canadians) aged 18 and over own a passport.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> ‘The Real Roots of Arab Anti-Americanism’ Barry Rubin, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 81, No. 6, pp.73-86, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Highlight on Underage Drinking’, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, at [http://alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/index.asp?SEC={DA5E054D-FB8E-4F06-BB8C-6EED9F37A758}&Type=B\\_BASIC](http://alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/index.asp?SEC={DA5E054D-FB8E-4F06-BB8C-6EED9F37A758}&Type=B_BASIC)

<sup>7</sup> ‘Easter Season Finds a Religious, Largely Christian, Nation’, Frank Newport, Gallup.com, 21 March 2008, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/105544/Easter-Season-Finds-Religious-Largely-Christian-Nation.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> ‘Churchgoing in the UK’, Figure 3a Frequency of church attendance among UK adults (February 2006), Jacinta Ashworth & Ian Farthing, TearFund, April 2007, p.20 at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/03\\_04\\_07\\_tearfundchurch.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/03_04_07_tearfundchurch.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> ‘Arms transfers to Iraq, 1973-2002’, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 4 December 2003, at [http://web.archive.org/web/20040601181327/projects.sipri.se/armstrade/Trnd\\_Ind\\_IRO\\_Imps\\_73-02.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20040601181327/projects.sipri.se/armstrade/Trnd_Ind_IRO_Imps_73-02.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> ‘Nicht ganz Amerika ist verrückt’, Michael Moore, Die Zeit, 6 November 2003, at <http://www.zeit.de/2003/46/AbdruckMoor?page=2>

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Potential of a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Passport Requirement on Canada's Tourism Industry’ Table A – Passport possession in the United States and Canada, Canadian Tourism Commission, 29 July 2005, p.9 at [http://www.corporate.canada.travel/docs/research\\_and\\_statistics/industry\\_research/Impact\\_of\\_the\\_WHTI\\_eng\\_web.pdf](http://www.corporate.canada.travel/docs/research_and_statistics/industry_research/Impact_of_the_WHTI_eng_web.pdf)

**In America it is more likely for a white student to be accepted to university than for a black student with the same academic qualifications.**

**48% said true, 31% said false, 21% didn't know**

False – where academic qualifications are equal, affirmative action policies mean black candidates are more likely to be accepted.

**Over a quarter of Americans are obese**

**89% said true, 5% said false, 6% didn't know**

True – studies over the last decade reveal the figure easily exceeds a quarter: 30.5% in 1999-2000 and 30.6% in 2001-2002.<sup>12</sup>

**Overall taxes are lower in the USA than the UK**

**69% said true, 11% said false, 20% didn't know**

True - according to the OECD total tax revenue as a share of GDP is 27.3% in the USA and 36.5% in the UK.<sup>13</sup>

**The average American couple has more children than the average British couple.**

**32% said true, 37% said false, 31% didn't know**

True – The CIA World Factbook 2008 estimates are that Americans have 2.1 children per woman<sup>14</sup> as against 1.66<sup>15</sup> for Britons.

**The USA spends more on defence than the next fifteen-highest spending countries combined**

**72% said true, 9% said false, 19% didn't know**

True, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. America's figure is a little under 50% of the global total – so almost as high as all the rest of the *world* put together.<sup>16</sup>

**The election of the President of the United States takes place once every five years**

**46% said true, 40% said false, 14% didn't know**

False – the election takes place in November once every four years.

**Polygamy – being married to more than one man or woman at the same time - is legal in some parts of the USA**

**58% said true, 28% said false, 14% didn't know**

False – it is illegal in all fifty states. "Polygamy is illegal in all 50 states because of the individual criminal codes of the 50 states, and not because of any federal criminal provision. The Model Penal Code section 230.1 defines the third-degree

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<sup>12</sup> 'Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity Among US Children, Adolescents, and Adults, 1999-2002', Allison A. Hedley, PhD; Cynthia L. Ogden, PhD; Clifford L. Johnson, MSPH; Margaret D. Carroll, MSPH; Lester R. Curtin, PhD; Katherine M. Flegal, PhD, Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 291 No. 23, 16 June 2004, at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/291/23/2847>

<sup>13</sup> 'OECD countries' tax burdens back up to 2000 historic highs', Table A. Total tax revenue as percentage of GDP, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 17 October 2007, at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/41/39494985.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> 'United States', The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

<sup>15</sup> 'United Kingdom', The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uk.html>

<sup>16</sup> 'The 15 major spender countries in 2007', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2008, at [http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex\\_major\\_spenders.pdf/download](http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_major_spenders.pdf/download) America's figure is in fact close to half the global total.

felony of polygamy as cohabitating with more than one spouse at a time in purported exercise of the right of plural marriage.”<sup>17</sup>

**The USA executes more people than China**

**26% said true, 46% said false, 28% didn't know**

False. According to Amnesty International, there were 42 executions in the United States in 2007 as against 470 in China.<sup>18</sup>

**The United States is the world's largest economy**

**51% said true, 28% said false, 21% didn't know**

True - American GDP is higher than for any other country.<sup>19</sup>

**The USA banned slavery earlier than the UK**

**23% said true, 47% said false, 30% didn't know**

False – slavery was banned in 1862 in the USA as against 1807 in the UK and 1833 throughout all British colonies<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Testimony of Gregory Brower', United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 24 July 2008, at [http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=3489&wit\\_id=7321](http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=3489&wit_id=7321)

<sup>18</sup> 'Amnesty report says China leads the world in executions', International Herald Tribune, 15 April 2008, at <http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2008/04/15/europe/EU-GEN-Britain-Death-Penalty.php>

<sup>19</sup> 'United States', The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

<sup>20</sup> 'Chronology - Who banned slavery when?', Reuters UK, 21 March 2007, at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL1561464920070321>