

Americans know surprisingly little about their government, survey finds



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PHILADELPHIA – Americans show great uncertainty when it comes to answering basic questions about how their government works, a national survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania has found.

The survey of 1,416 adults, released for Constitution Day (Sept. 17) in conjunction with the launch of the Civics Renewal Network, found that:

While little more than a third of respondents (36 percent) could name all three branches of the U.S. government, just as many (35 percent) could not name a single one.

Just over a quarter of Americans (27 percent) know it takes a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate to override a presidential veto.

One in five Americans (21 percent) incorrectly thinks that a 5-4 Supreme Court decision is sent back to Congress for reconsideration.

“Although surveys reflect disapproval of the way Congress, the President and the Supreme Court are conducting their affairs, the Annenberg survey demonstrates that many know surprisingly little about these branches of government,” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC). “This survey offers dramatic evidence of the need for more and better civics education.

Most Americans do not know which parties control the House and Senate.

The study also found that more than half of Americans do not know which party controls the House and Senate:

Asked which party has the most members in the House of Representatives, 38 percent said they knew the Republicans are the majority, but 17 percent responded the Democrats, and 44 percent reported that they did not know (up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).

Asked which party controls the Senate, 38 percent correctly said the Democrats, 20 percent said the Republicans, and 42 percent said they did not know (also up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).

(Source : <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-know-surprisingly-little-about-their-government-survey-finds/>)