

Appendix table 7-5

Correct answers to scientific literacy questions: 1985–2006

(Percent)

Question	1985 (n = 2,003)	1988 (n = 2,041)	1990 (n = 2,005)	1992 (n = 1,995)	1995 (n = 2,006)	1997 (n = 2,000)	1999 (n = 1,882)	2001 (n = 1,574)	2004 (n = 2,025)	2006 (n = 1,864)
<i>The center of the Earth is very hot. (True)</i>	NA	80	79	81	78	82	80	80	78	80
<i>All radioactivity is man-made. (False)</i>	NA	65	63	73	72	71	71	76	73	70
<i>Lasers work by focusing sound waves. (False)</i>	NA	36	37	37	40	39	43	45	42	45
<i>Electrons are smaller than atoms. (True)</i>	NA	43	41	46	44	43	46	48	45	53
<i>The universe began with a huge explosion. (True)</i>	NA	54	32	38	35	32	33	33	33 ^a	33
<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)</i>	79	80	77	79	78	78	80	79	77	80
<i>Does the Earth go around the Sun, or does the Sun go around the Earth? (Earth around Sun)</i>	NA	73	73	71	73	73	72	75	71	76
<i>How long does it take for the Earth to go around the Sun? (One year)</i>	NA	45	48	46	47	48	49	54	NA	55
<i>It is the father's gene that decides whether the baby is a boy or a girl. (True)</i>	NA	NA	NA	65	64	62	66	65	62	64
<i>Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria. (False)</i>	NA	26	30	35	40	43	45	51	54	56
<i>Human beings, as we know them today, developed from earlier species of animals. (True)</i>	45	46	45	45	44	44	45	53	42 ^a	43

NA = not available, question not asked

^aQuestion asked of 1,558 survey respondents.

NOTE: Table includes all years for which data collected.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics, Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology (1985–2001); University of Michigan, Survey of Consumer Attitudes (2004); and University of Chicago, National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (2006).

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