

GAPMINDER

TEST QUESTION



Literacy

www.gapminder.org/test-questions



What percent of adults in the world today are literate - can read and write?

- A** 80% are literate
- B** 60% are literate
- C** 40% are literate



CORRECT
ANSWER

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In 20 years the proportion of adults in the world who can read and write has increased from 75% to 84%.

That's a great improvement in education across the world!

Source:
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS/countries?display=graph>



Large Ignorance

Results from our public knowledge surveys

All three countries below present a similar pattern of ignorance in regards to the literacy rate in the world. The question was asked to a representative sample of their population.

Remember: Chimpanzees pick the correct answer 33% of the time, just by random!



		Sweden	Norway	US	
A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 80% are literate	20%	21%	22%	33%
B	<input type="checkbox"/> 60% are literate	52%	60%	52%	33%
C	<input type="checkbox"/> 40% are literate	28%	19%	26%	33%

The public scored below random!

Sources for survey results

SWE & NOR: http://www.gapminder.org/GapminderMedia/wp-uploads/Novus-Gapminder-Ignorance-Survey-SWE-NO-nov_dec_20131.pdf
 US: http://www.novus.se/media/29390/novus-gapminder_ignorance_survey_us_nov_2013.pdf

WHY IGNORANCE?

It's a very interesting fact that all countries surveyed showed similar results for all three options! It's very important to understand why people think like this and answer alike. Here are some possible ideas on why the public answered this question so poorly.



Macrotrends are not news worthy

People might be unaware the the improvements in basic education across the world has started decades ago. These kind of improvements take many years to show relevant results, which is why they are portrayed in media channels. Big changes in statistics of literacy rates happens only after many years or decades, so the public doesn't hear about it.



Wrong assumptions

More than half of the public in these countries chose the alternative in the middle. Perhaps they assumed that literacy would not be so high as 80%, nor so low as 40%. This clearly shows that the public is completely unaware about the current state of the world.



Exaggeration of extremes

Another hypothesis is that the public might still have the misconceptions that the majority of people are still very poor and uneducated. Although there is an awfully large number of extremely poor people in the the world, the majority actually lives in-between extreme poverty and extreme wealth. Most people in the world do have the opportunity to get at least basic education and learn how to read and write.

Chimpanzees have none of the problems above. They simply guess. That's why they beat humans on knowledge questions. They just pick random answers without distortion of preconceived ideas and intuition. To learn more about our Global Ignorance Project and what we do to fight ignorance, visit: www.gapminder.org/ignorance, or watch this TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_and_ola_rosling_how_not_to_be_ignorant_about_the_world

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The Gapminder Foundation is a Swedish not-for-profit organization, independent from all political, commercial and religious affiliations. Gapminder's mission is to fight devastating ignorance with a fact-based worldview that everyone can understand. Gapminder's chairman Hans Rosling is a professor of International Health at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden. For more information visit: www.gapminder.org