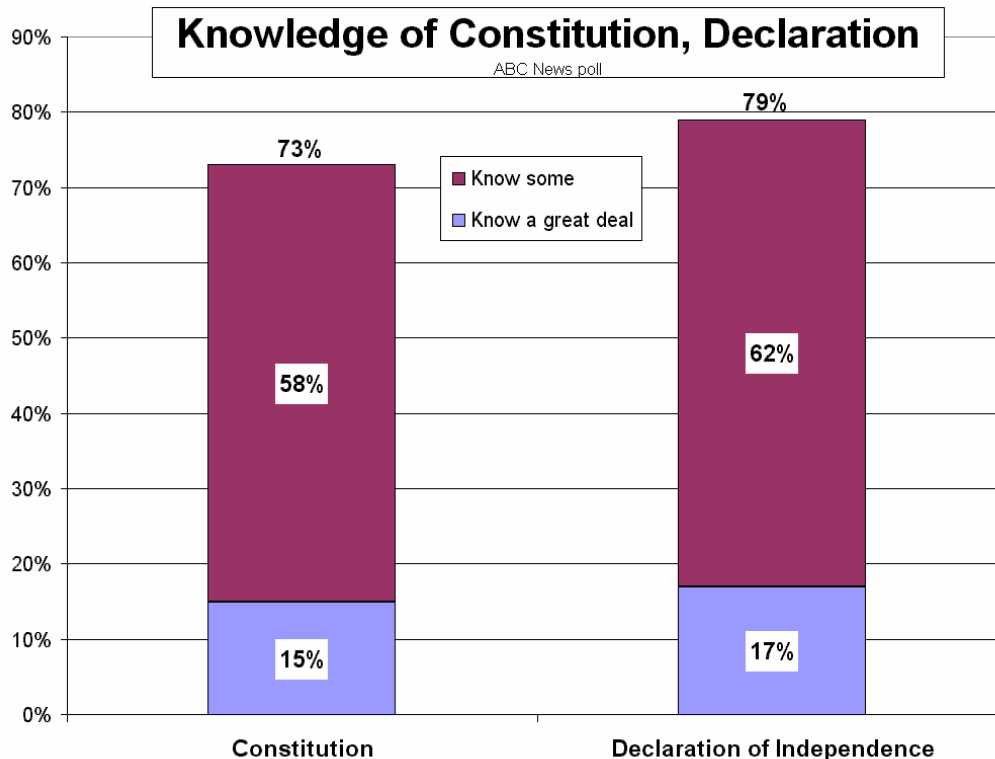


U.S. Constitution: Great Impact, But Hold the Details

Americans feel the impact of the U.S. Constitution far more than they know its content. And most, on this Fourth of July, suspect the founding fathers would be less than satisfied with the nation those words created.

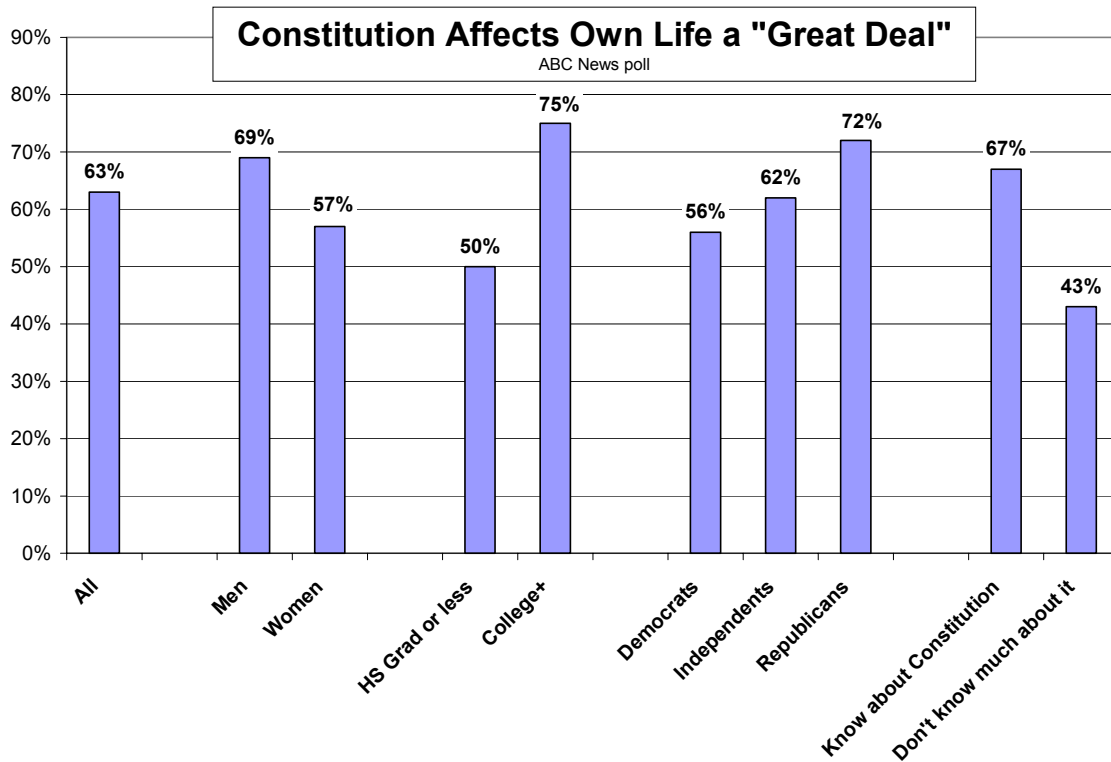
In testimony to its enduring relevance, more than six in 10 adults in this ABC News poll say the Constitution has a “great deal” of impact on their personal lives. Another three in 10 feel at least some impact.

Yet high relevance does not necessarily prompt high familiarity. Far fewer, only 15 percent, say they know a great deal about the document itself. A similarly low number, 17 percent, express a great deal of familiarity with the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776.



Knowledge of these founding texts is much broader than it is deep; most Americans express at least “some” familiarity with the Constitution, if not a “great deal.” Still, about one in four say they don’t know much about it at all. A bit fewer, one in five, express unfamiliarity with the Declaration of Independence.

	Great Deal	Some	Little/None
Your knowledge of the Constitution	15%	58	27
Its impact on your life	63	28	9



DISAPPOINTED – The founding fathers might have hoped for better. Indeed, in a sobering note this Fourth of July, 54 percent of Americans think the signers of the Declaration of Independence would be disappointed by the way the United States has turned out. That’s back to where it was in a 1999 poll, after a spike for the better in 2001.

There’s a more positive result in terms of Constitutional rights: Six in 10 Americans believe their rights are being adequately protected these days, compared with 35 percent who say not. That’s in line with previous polls in which majorities have rejected suggestions the Bush administration is unduly compromising individual rights as it wages the war on terrorism.

While 68 percent of Republicans say their constitutional rights are being adequately protected, nearly as many Democrats (61 percent) agree; it slips to 56 percent of independents. Sixty-three percent of whites say their rights are being protected, compared with 53 percent of non-whites.

People who feel their Constitutional rights are not being adequately protected are far more likely than others to say they think the founding fathers would be disappointed with the way the country has developed.

GROUPS – Men are 11 points more apt than women to say they know at least something about the Constitution, and 12 points more likely to say it affects their lives “a great deal.” Better-educated and higher-income Americans also are more apt to feel a personal impact of the Constitution.

A new museum dedicated to the Constitution, the National Constitution Center, opens July 4 in Philadelphia.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone June 25-29, 2003, among a random national sample of 1,026 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by David Morris.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll_Vault/Poll_Vault.html

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Results follow:

1. (HALF SAMPLE) How much would you say that you know about the U.S. Constitution and its provisions - a great deal, some, not much or nothing at all?

	-----Know-----			-----Don't know-----			
	NET	Great deal	Some	NET	Not much	Nothing	No opin.
6/29/03	73	15	58	27	24	3	*
4/13/87	65	9	56	34	30	4	*

2. (OTHER HALF) How much would you say that you know about the Declaration of Independence - a great deal, some, not much or nothing at all?

	-----Know-----			-----Don't know-----			
	NET	Great deal	Some	NET	Not much	Nothing	No opin.
6/29/03	79	17	62	21	19	3	*

3. How much do you feel the U.S. Constitution affects your own life - a great deal, somewhat, not much, or not at all?

	-----Affects-----			-----Doesn't affect-----			
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	Not at all	No opin.
6/29/03	91	63	28	9	6	3	1

4. Do you think your Constitutional rights are or are not being adequately protected these days?

	Are	Are not	No opin.
6/29/03	61	35	4

5. Overall, do you think the signers of the Declaration of Independence would be pleased or disappointed by the way the United States has turned out?

	Pleased	Disappointed	No opin.
6/29/03	42	54	4
7/1/01*	54	42	4
7/27/99*	44	55	1

*Gallup.

END