

USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research Understanding America Study

University Research Survey UAS 147 – Field dates 8/16 – 9/17, 2018

Data in this report from final analytic data set of respondents to this survey and UAS 172 (N = 4,362)

Questions were randomized to ask trend or new questions first. Randomized order of positive/negative, agree/disagree and important/unimportant at the respondent level, so similar questions use the same order. Some questions were asked of half samples, and have been combined for this report.

The next questions ask about research and other activities that are associated with universities in the United States.

1. In general, how do you feel about Universities in the United States

	9/17/2018
Entirely positive	9
Mostly positive	52
Neither positive nor negative	31
Mostly negative	7
Entirely negative	1

2.

2. Specifically, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Universities are elitist institutions that are out of touch with the rest of society

	9/17/2018
Agree Strongly	4
Agree Somewhat	22
Disagree Somewhat	36
Disagree Strongly	24
Not sure	15
Agree	26
Disagree	36
Not sure	38

3.

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Scientific research is causing the world to change too fast.

	4/1/1968 ¹	9/17/2018
Agree strongly	20	4
Agree somewhat	35	18
Disagree somewhat	25	24
Disagree strongly	20	24
Neither agree nor disagree		31*

* the 1968 question did not include the “neither” option

¹ National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. NORC SRS Amalgam Survey, Apr, 1968 [survey question]. USNORC.68SRS1.R61B. National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Jul-31-2019. (N=1482)

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Q4ta/Q4tb combined. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The research going on at colleges and universities is the only thing that will enable America to solve problems like energy and the environment.

	10/1/1976 ²	9/17/2018
Agree	29	44
Disagree	47	27
Don't know / Neither	24	29

	9/17/2018
Agree strongly	10
Agree somewhat	34
Neither agree nor disagree	29
Disagree somewhat	20
Disagree strongly	7

Q4ra/Q4rb combined. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The research going on at our universities helps the United States to solve major problems facing the country.

	9/17/2018
Agree strongly	19
Agree somewhat	46
Neither agree nor disagree	26
Disagree strongly	2
Disagree somewhat	6

The next few questions about how much, if at all, the rest of the world depends on the United States to supply goods and services. If you are not sure about a particular question, just your best guess will do³

Randomized order of the questions in this series (Q5-Q9)

5. Does the rest of the world depend on the United States a lot, a little, or not at all for scientific research?

	11/13/1978	9/17/2018
A lot	65	38
A little	27	44
Not at all	3	4
Not sure	5	14

6.

² Cambridge Reports/Research International. Cambridge Reports/National Omnibus Survey, Oct, 1976 [survey question]. USCAMREP.76OCT.R315. Cambridge Reports/Research International [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLLS [distributor], accessed Jul-31-2019. (N=1500)

³ ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates. ABC News/Harris Survey, Nov, 1978 [survey question]. USABCHS.021279.R4A. ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLLS [distributor], accessed Jul-31-2019. One question from the series was not asked: "Industrial know-how". (N=1195)

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7.

6. Does the rest of the world depend on the United States a lot, a little, or not at all for food supplies?

	11/13/1978	9/17/2018
A lot	81	43
A little	17	42
Not at all	1	5
Not sure	1	11

7.

8. Does the rest of the world depend on the United States a lot, a little, or not at all for technology?

	11/13/1978	9/17/2018
A lot	67	36
A little	24	45
Not at all	3	6
Not sure	6	12

9.

8. Does the rest of the world depend on the United States a lot, a little, or not at all for money for investment and construction?

	11/13/1978	9/17/2018
A lot	67	37
A little	23	38
Not at all	4	7
Not sure	6	19

9. Does the rest of the world depend on the United States a lot, a little, or not at all for military defense?

	11/13/1978	9/17/2018
A lot	80	63
A little	15	24
Not at all	3	3
Not sure	2	9

Q10ta. Who would you say does the most research developing new medicines in the United States⁴?

	1/25/1979	9/17/2018
The federal government	9	5
The drug companies	30	43
Independent laboratories	18	18
Universities	28	12
Other (vol.)	1	0
Don't know	14	21

4 Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. Drug Regulation, Jan, 1979 [survey question]. USPARC.79DRUG.R26. Public Affairs Research Center [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. Post-hoc cognitive testing by UAS in June 2018. (N=1514)

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Each question asked separately, among half sample- new question, not trend.

Q10ra. For each of the following organizations, please indicate how important a role that organization plays, if any, in developing new medicines in the United States. Just your best guess will do

Row percentages – add to 100% horizontally	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important
The federal government	10	36	35	19
US drug companies	4	26	43	27
Independent laboratories in the United States	3	27	46	25
U.S. Universities	4	32	44	20

Teaching and research are two reasons why colleges and universities exist. For each of the following questions, please indicate if you feel it is a very important, somewhat important, somewhat unimportant, or very unimportant purpose of colleges and universities.⁵

10. How important or unimportant is **teaching**, as a purpose of colleges and universities?

	10/1/1985	9/17/2018
Very important	83	72
Somewhat important	16	12
Somewhat unimportant	-	3
Very unimportant	-	10
Don't know/No opinion	1	4

11.

12. How important or unimportant is **research**, as a purpose of colleges and universities?

	10/1/1985	9/17/2018
Very important	66	54
Somewhat important	31	28
Somewhat unimportant	2	4
Very unimportant	-	8
Don't know/No opinion	1	6

⁵ See note. American Attitudes Toward Higher Education 1985, Sep, 1985 [survey question]. USORC.85EDUC.R11A. Opinion Research Corporation [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLLS [distributor], accessed Jul-31-2019. Post-hoc cognitively tested by UAS June 2018 - Original question gives a third reason (public service). (N=1004)

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For the next set of questions, you will use an A through F grading scale - where A represents the best possible grade you can give and F represents the worst possible grade - to rate the job colleges and universities are doing in each described area.

13. What grade would you give to colleges and universities for the job they are doing in conducting scientific research?

	7/6/1989	9/17/2018
A	17	23
B	38	44
C	24	17
D	6	2
Fail	2	1
Don't know	14	14

14.

15. What grade would you give to colleges and universities for the job they are doing in preparing students to be productive members of the work-force?

	7/6/1989	9/17/2018
A	13	13
B	30	37
C	37	29
D	10	10
Fail	5	5
Don't know	5	5

16.

17. What grade would you give to colleges and universities for the job they are doing in providing all Americans with equal opportunity to succeed?

	7/6/1989	9/17/2018
A	18	12
B	31	25
C	29	32
D	11	14
Fail	8	10
Don't know	-	7

18. What level of confidence do you have in the objectivity of university research⁶?

	9/17/2018
Extremely confident	7
Very confident	28
Somewhat confident	40
Not too confident	11
Not confident at all	3
Don't know	11

⁶ Replaced a question in the 1989 series which asked about confidence in leadership of colleges and universities

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The next questions ask you to think about various things that may have contributed to making American society better. For each question, please indicate if it made a major contribution to making American society better, a minor contribution or hardly contributed at all⁷⁸

19. How much has scientific research contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	89	61
Minor contribution	7	25
Hardly any contribution	1	3
Not sure	3	12

20.

21. How much has Democracy as its political system contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	74	47
Minor contribution	15	22
Hardly any contribution	5	12
Not sure	6	19

22.

23. How much has the availability of capital contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	69	44
Minor contribution	20	25
Hardly any contribution	4	8
Not sure	7	24

24.

25. How much has freedom of thought in the universities contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	66	43
Minor contribution	23	28
Hardly any contribution	6	12
Not sure	5	17

26.

⁷ Louis Harris & Associates. Harris Survey, Nov, 1977 [survey question]. USHARRIS.011678.R06. Louis Harris & Associates [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. (N=1498) Note: Asked by Louis Harris & Associates in 1977 using the following construction: *Now here is a list of things some people believe have made America great. For each, would you tell me if you feel this was a major factor in making America great, a minor factor or hardly a factor at all. In your opinion was scientific research a major factor in making America great?* Post-hoc cognitive testing indicated that the idea of America and greatness has become associated with Donald Trump's presidential campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" so the wording was changed for this survey to "making American society better".

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27.

28. How much have deep religious beliefs contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	62	25
Minor contribution	25	31
Hardly any contribution	10	27
Not sure	3	16

29.

30. How much has having industry and business under private control contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	61	37
Minor contribution	21	30
Hardly any contribution	9	11
Not sure	9	23

31.

32. How much has outstanding political leadership contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	47	25
Minor contribution	35	36
Hardly any contribution	14	22
Not sure	4	18

33.

34. How much has having a government that regulates industry contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	30	24
Minor contribution	39	37
Hardly any contribution	21	18
Not sure	10	20

35.

36. How much have hard working people contributed to making American society better?

	11/7/1977	9/17/2018
Major contribution	87	80
Minor contribution	11	10
Hardly any contribution	2	3
Not sure	-	7

37.

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38. How much have U.S. colleges and universities contributed to making American society better⁹?

	9/17/2018
Major contribution	45
Minor contribution	35
Hardly any contribution	6
Not sure	14

Some of the questions in the next section may seem similar to questions we have asked before. Please just answer them to the best of your ability, regardless of how you may have answered previous questions.

Q10rb. For each of the following organizations, please indicate how important a role that organization plays, if any, in developing new medicines in the United States. Just your best guess will do¹⁰.

	Major contribution	Minor contribution	Hardly any contribution	Not sure
Row percentages				
The federal government	24	39	20	16
US drug companies	58	23	7	12
Independent laboratories in the United States	46	34	5	15
U.S. Universities	36	44	5	15

Q10tb. Who would you say does the most research developing new medicines in the United States¹¹?

	1/25/1979	9/17/2018
The federal government	9	4
The drug companies	30	42
Independent laboratories	18	25
Universities	28	12
Other (vol.)	1	1
Don't know	14	15

39.

⁹ New question not included in the 1977 series.

¹⁰ New question asked of half sample

¹¹ Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. Drug Regulation, Jan, 1979 [survey question]. USPARC.79DRUG.R26. Public Affairs Research Center [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-1-2019. Post-hoc cognitive testing by UAS in June 2018. (N=1514)

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40.

26. Recently, you may have noticed that global warming has been getting some attention in the news. Global warming refers to the idea that the world's average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that the world's climate may change as a result. Which of the following comes closest to your view about global warming¹²

	5/2017	9/17/2018
Caused mostly by human activities	58	58
Caused mostly by natural changes in the environment	27	28
Neither: global warming isn't happening	8	6
None of these	8	8

For the next set of questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

27. I'd rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts and intellectuals

	9/17/2018
Disagree strongly	23
Disagree somewhat	24
Neither agree nor disagree	28
Agree somewhat	19
Agree strongly	6

28.

28. When it comes to really important questions, scientific facts don't help very much

	9/17/2018
Disagree strongly	33
Disagree somewhat	30
Neither agree nor disagree	20
Agree somewhat	14
Agree strongly	3

29.

29. Ordinary people can really use the help of experts to understand complicated things like science and health

	9/17/2018
Disagree strongly	3
Disagree somewhat	4
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Agree somewhat	43
Agree strongly	34

¹² Yale University Project on Climate Change Communication, George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. Yale University/George Mason University Climate Change in the Latino Mind Survey, May, 2017 [survey question]. USKN.092717CCH.R15. GfK Knowledge Networks [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Jul-31-2019.

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