October 6, 2006

Lately I’ve been spending most of my time doing consulting work for Webster Pacific and building the Data360 tool; however, I do have a few observations about the data that I have been seeing.

Social and Environmental:

• The number one global issue remains controlling population. See p3. http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=151

• I continue to be concerned about global warming. I found Al Gore’s movie, An Inconvenient Truth, to be quite compelling. See http://www.climatecrisis.net/. Yes, it was a dramatic piece, but the centerpiece of his case was data. It is curious to me that there has been no conservative response that is backed by the same data-driven approach that Gore used. I would also love to see the data from the movie put into in a Data360 Organization and updated on an ongoing basis. If anyone knows someone within the Gore organization, I would be grateful for a referral. See p4. http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=153

• Another piece of data that shocked me recently was the percentages of various countries’ citizens that believe in evolution. In the US, that figure is only about 40%. If belief in the US in evolution is only 40%, it would stand to reason that global belief in evolution is even less. Evolution is a scientific theory that, I believe, has been “proven” by the scientific community in a manner similar to the proof of gravity or relativity. The shockingly low belief in evolution indicates the challenges we face in solving other challenging problems, like overpopulation, educational improvement, terrorism and global warming. Those challenges are not a reason to despair, but instead a reason to support rational and creative approaches to problem solving. See p5. http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=286

• The war in Iraq and, more importantly, the war on terrorism, are in need of perspective. It is interesting to see the number of American troops deployed in the Middle East in comparison to the numbers of troops in previous military engagements. The first Gulf war is now a blip in terms of troop deployments compared to the current war. Moreover, our current deployments are approaching both the Korean and Vietnam wars in terms of numbers; moreover, with today’s technologies, it would make sense that 100 troops today are more “powerful” than 100 troops in 1970 or 1955. See p 6. http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=301
Economy and Business:

- The American economy continues chugging along, growing at about 6% a year (or 1.5% per quarter). We are no slouch. See p21.
  
  [http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=149](http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=149)

- The internet continues to boom and it will become a great equalizer, allowing people of lower means but higher abilities and ambitions to achieve more in their lifetimes. The data on internet usage demonstrates that already, the internet is dominated by individuals outside of North America. In North America, almost 70% of the population use the internet; however, North American users account for only 20% of global internet users. In Asia, only 10% of the population use the internet, but Asian internet users are already 35% of the global total. Curiously, only 38% of Europeans use the internet, but their usage represents about 28% of the global total. As it becomes cheaper and cheaper to access the internet, the “flattening” of our world will accelerate. See p37.
  

- Women continue to earn only a % of what men earn. The latest data is that women in the US earn $0.77 for every dollar that a man earns. See p19.
  

- I’m not a big fan of the minimum wage, but it is curious to see minimum wage in constant dollars. In today’s dollars, the minimum wage from the early 1960’s to the late 1970’s wage was $7 to $8. Today the Federal minimum wage is $5.15. I’d be curious to know how many people today are actually earning $5.15. See p18.
  
  [http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=373](http://www.data360.org/graph_group.aspx?Graph_Group_Id=373)

- Interest rates continue to rise, except for the 30 year mortgage rates. This continues to puzzle me and I would expect to see these rates rising as well. See p23.
  

- I have read articles about the falling housing market in the US and believe it to be true. However, our data is limited and we would welcome any leads on real estate data that we can incorporate into the site. Housing starts are definitely off. See p34.
  

Sincerely,

Tom Paper

tom@websterpacific.com