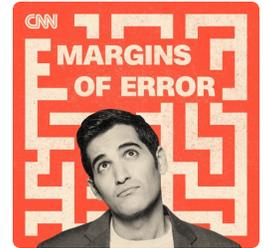


# Margins of Error

JUN 7, 2022

## Why Americans Won't Give an Inch on Metric



**Speakers**

Harry Enten, John Travolta in Pulp Fiction, Samuel L. Jackson in Pulp Fiction, Stephen Mihm, Metric Educational Video, CNN reporter 1981, Speaker 1 from CNN report, Speaker 2 from CNN report, Speaker 3 from CNN report, Speaker 4 from CNN report, Elizabeth Benham, Tucker Carlson on Fox News, Archival Lincoln Chafee

00:00:02

**Harry Enten**

When I was a kid, "back to school" shopping was one of the worst days of the entire summer. But it was also a chance to pick up supplies and maybe learn a thing or two. And one thing I got every year was a composition notebook. You know, the ones I'm talking about with that black and white splotchy design. Anyway, in the back of every single composition notebook, was my first introduction to the idea that there are a lot of different ways that we can measure things. Obviously, an inch is an inch of what is a foot. But did you know that 320 rods equals a mile, or that a cord equals 128 cubic feet? What the frick is a rod or a cord anyway? I mean, when in your day to day life have you ever needed to know what a furlong is? Which is a roundabout way of saying that we have a few different ways of measuring things in this country. We have our U.S. customary units. Some people refer to them as imperial units, though they're not exactly the same. But those are your inch, your foot, your pound. But there's also the metric system, which is based on tens. One kilogram equals a thousand grams. Ten millimeters equals one centimeter. You know that one, too. So that composition notebook, it's probably the first time you get introduced to the idea that there are different ways to measure the exact same objects or I don't know, maybe you just watched Pulp Fiction and picked it up there.

00:01:38

**John Travolta in Pulp Fiction**

And you know what? They call it a quarter pounder with cheese in Paris?

00:01:42

**Samuel L. Jackson in Pulp Fiction**

They don't call it a quarter pounder with cheese?

00:01:44

**John Travolta in Pulp Fiction**

They get the metric system. They don't know what a f\*\*\*ng quarter pounder is.

00:01:48

**Samuel L. Jackson in Pulp Fiction**

What do they call it?

00:01:49

**John Travolta in Pulp Fiction**

They call it Royale with Cheese.

00:01:50

**Samuel L. Jackson in Pulp Fiction**

Royale with Cheese.

00:01:53

**Harry Enten**

Fun fact. My father actually rented Pulp Fiction when I was like six, and we watched it together. I'm not sure it was an entirely wise decision, but at least it was a learning experience. I've also been thinking about the ways we measure things here in the U.S. Why haven't we joined basically the rest of the world and gone metric? Well, according to polling from 2016, only 32% of Americans wanted to go metric, even though we already learned the metric system in school and interact with it in our daily lives, or at least I do whenever I buy a two liter bottle of A&W Cream Soda, Zero Gugar, which you'd know if you listened to our episode about diet soda. So why do we still have the metric system and U.S. customary units here in America? Why can't we just choose one? Now, this might not seem like that big of a deal to you. After all, heavy is heavy. Long is long. But there's a lot more going on here because as we'll find out, there's a lot of national pride and history wrapped up in our inches and pounds. Oh, silly me. There's also a lot of money in politics on the line, too. Today, the weird world of our hybrid measurement system. I'm Harry Enten and this is Margins of Error.

00:03:18

**Stephen Mihm**

When I was a kid, we were told in no uncertain terms by our elementary school teachers that it would only be a matter of a few years before we were all on the metric system.

00:03:29

**Harry Enten**

This is Stephen Mihm. He's a professor of history at the University of Georgia who specializes in economic and business history.

00:03:36

**Stephen Mihm**

And so I think that experience, that very personal experience probably led me to wonder what it was about, both the kind of utopian qualities of embracing the metric system. On the one hand, you know, the idea that it was going to change our world, but also the harsh reality that any system of measurement, no matter how virtuous and how well conceived, does not easily take root when another system is already in use.

00:04:08

**Harry Enten**

Which means, you guessed it, it's time to talk U.S. customary.

00:04:12

**Stephen Mihm**

So we know pounds, we know feet. Likewise, other units had connections with things that we don't really think of as being particularly precise, like a certain number of barley corns lined up, you know, end-to-end, would be equivalent to an inch. And likewise, you know, there were all these units that are kind of hilariously dated now, like the perch or the furlong and many more. And all of them were in use and all of them vary greatly throughout England, in the English speaking world, and it's those units that we inherited.

00:04:55

**Harry Enten**

However, even though the American colonies kind of got a bit of a head start by inheriting a system of measurement that already existed, at the end of the 18th century, American colonists ran into a problem. Units actually started drifting, so people would disagree about how long, say, a furlong actually was.

00:05:17

**Stephen Mihm**

There are lots of hilarious, albeit kind of obscure stories of people in the American colonies, you know, having arguments about how big a bushel was. And, you know, they would say, "well, let's go look at the standard." And they would go to the customs office or what have you, and demand to see it. And then they realized that someone had stolen it and melted it down for scrap metal. In other words, there was a way in which these these things that we think of as being like, you know, they're instruments of state power and of taxation, of government, would end up getting really badly abused. And sadly, this remained the norm in the United States after the United States was created.

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**Harry Enten**

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, "oh, well, that seems like a bad basis for a system of measurements." And you'd be right. But the British units we used in America weren't officially defined by the federal government here until the 1830s. So when I heard about this, I couldn't help but think, okay, well, why don't we just adopt the metric system back then? Because in many ways, problems like this were why French scientists established the metric system in 1799. According to some estimates, prior to the creation of the metric system, there were at least 250,000 different units of weights and measures used in France. But Stephen says there were a couple of key reasons that America didn't go metric. And like I said earlier, the history of measurements has always been pretty darn political.

00:06:58

**Stephen Mihm**

There was a political division within the United States in the 1790s between those who favored England and those who favored France. Those who favored England thought the French revolutionaries were a bunch of bloodthirsty nut jobs, basically. And the idea of adopting their system of measurement was viewed as heretical and a dangerous invitation to sow the seeds of revolution within the United States. The second problem, though, which crops up later, is that the French themselves hated the metric system and all but abandoned it in the early 19th century. So when we got around, finally in the 18 teens and 1820s to considering what system of measurement we were going to use metric or our British units, we didn't really know what to do because the metric system didn't seem to be taking root the way that the revolutionaries had anticipated. And so we opted to basically do what Americans are really good at doing, which is kicking the can and not making a decision.

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**Harry Enten**

But like in most moments of crisis, a lone genius step forth, determined to institute order where once chaos reigned.

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**Stephen Mihm**

His name was Ferdinand Hassler. And he was actually not an American. He was this very eccentric Swiss scientist who had taken on the very thankless task of surveying the United States coast. It was the Coast and Geodetic Survey that he was in charge of, and he was dealing with the fact that feet weren't uniform, which is not a good idea for mapmakers. And so he was a scientist and he said, I'm going to create standard units. And so he was the one without any congressional authorization at all who actually chose our bushel, our foot. You know, the exact definitions of these things, the inch, all of our kind of core units were gifts, if you will, of a Swiss surveyor. So he made all these units and they were really beautiful and uniform, and he distributed them to all the United States customs houses. And the United States, in theory, had uniform units. A few decades later, the federal government checked on the status of these, and much like their colonial forebears, they realized that many of them had been lost. Melted down for scrap metal, banged up and otherwise utterly neglected and discarded.

00:09:41

**Harry Enten**

So. Okay, maybe Ferdinand Hassler couldn't solve our country's measurement problem by himself. But that didn't stop others from trying to. And by the mid-19th century, metric was gaining steam. For example, after Napoleon had let metric lapse during his reign, it was reinstated as the system of measurement in France in 1840. So there was some discussion in America: was it time to go metric?

00:10:10

**Stephen Mihm**

When the Industrial Revolution really kicks off and I'm speaking here after the Civil War, a lot of engineers and industrialists need uniform units. In particular, they need to define the inch with absolute precision. There's some discussion of going metric at the time, but because the inch had been completely woven into factories, the decision was made and it was a fateful one by engineers that they would standardize the inch and not go metric. And this was in the 1860s and 1870s. They didn't like the metric system because they would have to retool their factories and that would have been expensive. So that's a financial consideration. But they also had a very practical objection to the centimeter, which would have been the most logical thing to substitute for the inch. A lot of people said, Well, what's the big deal? Just simply take a quarter inch and convert it to centimeters. But when you do that, you end up with this horrible decimal.

00:11:13

**Harry Enten**

That horrible decimal, it's 0.635.

00:11:18

**Stephen Mihm**

And that's not as graceful as one over four and certainly not as useful to a mechanic or machinists working in the 1880s.

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**Harry Enten**

In many ways, this is where a lot of rational resistance to metrication built up. Not from any kind of patriotic zeal, but because changing established norms was expensive and complicated. But there were some people who did see Metric's appeal.

00:11:47

**Stephen Mihm**

The fact is that the metric system has many advantages, right? Especially if you're in the sciences or if you're in other fields where dividing stuff by ten or multiplying by ten has utility. In a series of fields, most of which are allied with science, you begin to see people voluntarily adopt the metric system. Pharmacists do it, in the late 19th century, a growing number of scientists convert very quickly to metric. So you begin to see people voluntarily adopting it. And so begins the great motley adoption selectively of metric alongside our old British units. And these two worlds are coexisting and in many ways have continued to co-exist ever since that time.

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**Harry Enten**

Which brings us to maybe the most important moment in metric's life in America: President Gerald Ford's Metric Conversion Act. Passed in 1975, it declared metric, quote, the preferred system of weights and measures for United States trade and commerce. And once the Metric Conversion Act passed, well, in came the PSAs designed to teach Americans how to go metric thickness America to their learn the.

00:13:07

**Metric Educational Video**

Take 10, America, to learn the metric way. It's a simple system based on tens that you can start today. Efficient, more accurate, more universal too. It's good for our economy, our country, and for you.

00:13:18

**Harry Enten**

Ford's motivations for pushing metric. Well, they were pretty darn practical. A lot of U.S. companies found it both costly and difficult to do conversions between U.S. customary and metric, which is a little ironic since money was a big reason why some American companies didn't metricate earlier. Now they were finding it costly not to go metric. Damned if you metricate. Damned if you don't. But let me read that bit about the Metric Conversion Act again, which declared metric the preferred system of weights and measures for United States trade and commerce. You hear that? Preferred -- which means it was voluntary. It still allowed for the continued use of U.S. customary units as well. So while specific pockets of American industry had already metricated, or did so in response to the Metric Conversion Act, well, if you don't want to go metric, you didn't have to. And many Americans didn't want to. According to Gallup polling in 1977, of the Americans who actually knew what the metric system was, which somehow was not all of them, 60% of them opposed going metric. And so just a few years later, Ronald Reagan defunded the metric board that Gerald Ford had established. The American people had spoken and they did not like metric.

00:14:44

**CNN reporter 1981**

A few weeks ago, a "foot" ball was given by a bunch of New Yorkers who are passionately opposed to the metric system creeping in on little cat feet. The group that calls itself Americans for Customary Weight and Measure cries give the foot a hand and stand up for the foot. Stop metric madness.

00:15:02

**Harry Enten**

This anti metric party called the "foot" ball. Yeah, you hear me right, was featured in the CNN report from 1981.

00:15:11

**Speaker 1 from CNN report**

I try and maintain a certain element of my life that has feet in it.

00:15:15

**Speaker 2 from CNN report**

No metric. Definitely.

00:15:17

**Speaker 3 from CNN report**

We want to make people much more aware of the fact that we have a beautiful, beautiful system of measurement that already exists.

00:15:24

**Speaker 4 from CNN report**

Oh, I'm against metric measure (Why?) It's not human.

00:15:29

**Harry Enten**

Honestly, listening to that, it's easy to forget that happened in 1981. Because when it comes to the metric system, you'll hear many of the same complaints now. And so here we are with pun intended, one foot in metric and one foot in us customary. So is it time to fully metricate? Well, after the break, I'll talk with someone who spent more than a decade spreading the good word of the metric system. Her thoughts on the matter. That's after the break.

00:16:07

**Harry Enten**

So I'm going to say nist but it's N-I-S-T, so I'm not sure if I if I'm supposed to say the acronym or not.

00:16:15

**Elizabeth Benham**

So the title of our organization is the National Institute for Standards and Technology, which is a mouthful. So we all do use and just NIST, the acronym and we call ourselves Nisters. So, you know, it's part of our culture just to abbreviate that and sort of the alphabet soup that we tend to use with all our measurement terms and things.

00:16:41

**Harry Enten**

This is Elizabeth Benham. She's the metric coordinator at NIST, a position she's held since 2005. And I got to tell you, working at NIST sounds like a dream come true to me.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

We are all things measurement. We look at developing standards, documentary standards, measurement science, all types of technology that innovates and trying to get that into the marketplace to stimulate the economy so that trade and commerce are facilitated.

00:17:12

**Harry Enten**

But don't worry. Don't worry. Not looking for a new gig? No, I was talking with Elizabeth because. Well, it's 2022. Is it time for America to fully embrace the metric system? Of course, like we've talked about earlier in the episode, parts of America have embraced the metric system, which some people refer to as the international system of units or SI.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

Invisible metrication has been taking place for a very long time and it's not always real obvious. So that can lead to the impression that the U.S. has not adopted the SI very much or very deeply. Think about a iceberg floating out in the ocean. You're a consumer flying on a boat. You know, like see this iceberg? You see that portion that is sticking above the water. Analogous to your shopping experience, you go to the store, you see things sold by the gallon. You see a product sold by inches or feet. And that's your experience. You're under the impression, hey, there's no metric here or very little. However, that's kind of a myth because below the water's surface, of course, is the biggest part of the iceberg.

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**Harry Enten**

And according to Elizabeth, going full metric really would be beneficial to most business owners here.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

So here in the United States, traditionally the approach has been a marketplace decision. The idea is to minimize the cost and absorb them into your normal business practice, your operations. It's a cost of doing business. But unfortunately, operating in that hybrid system is often a cost of doing business as well and a risk, any time you have multiple measurements in place. And the challenges, of course, here in the United States, we have a law that requires for, you know, probably 90% of consumer products that it be dual labeled.

00:19:09

**Harry Enten**

Elizabeth, talking about the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act or the FPLA. In 1994, the FPLA began requiring that product labels here in the U.S. show both U.S. customary and metric units. To Elizabeth, well, this is suboptimal.

00:19:28

**Elizabeth Benham**

That cost of keeping everything system, maintaining those two systems that typically just gets passed on to the consumer. If that business thought that they wanted to do metric only labeling, then they could have both of those lines running with metric labeling. It's sort of like a double standard, that cost of having to do both, the inefficiencies that come with it. It may be a very small quantity of margin, but it is a competitive disadvantages for some companies. That's why I think it is important that we can eliminate those barriers for those businesses that feel like that business model works for them, when it comes to U.S. laws and regulations.

00:20:14

**Harry Enten**

It would seem to me essentially is that the answer is it depends on the business. If you're thinking of going into an international marketplace, then going metric seems like a pretty smart decision versus if you're really only going to be in the domestic market space, I mean, sure dual labeling is nice, but it really doesn't pay because most people here in the States don't really use metric nearly as much, at least on a number of different things.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

And also small businesses, often times like initially, they may purchase older technology bottling, packaging, equipment that lasts a long time, 40, 60 years, you know, and a small business is probably not going out there unless they have a lot of capital to buy the latest and greatest technology, which is probably designed in metric specifications.

00:21:05

**Harry Enten**

But the pro-metric argument goes beyond business. Elizabeth sent us a recent study from Old Dominion University which called our teaching both customary and metric in school, quote, a financial drain. Researchers found that eliminating customary from elementary and middle school curricula would save millions of hours of teachers and students time annually and by doing a cost benefit analysis of that time, researchers suggested that if we were to teach only the metric system, the U.S. would save anywhere from \$1.6 billion to \$2.5 billion a year. But, and this is an important but, Elizabeth recognizes that going from metric. Well, it's not something that can just happen overnight.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

Our economy is very, very complex. I wanted to give you a quote that is from a 1978 General Accounting Office report. The GAO found that no country with the economy and population anywhere near the size of the United States has converted to the metric system.

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**Harry Enten**

Of course, other countries have metricated since that GAO report from 1978, but obviously we haven't, at least not fully, because on a practical level, just think about how big and complicated the U.S. is.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

When we take the economies of individual states like the state of California, their GDP is analogous to that of France. The GDP of Texas is analogous to that of Canada. And so very complex. What's right for Texas or California may not be right for, let's say, Maryland or Florida or so forth and those different industries in those states. So it's hard to make that decision. It's not necessarily economically feasible for all of them.

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**Harry Enten**

But I was struck by something that Elizabeth said when we were talking about the two liter bottle, which is on the same level of recognition as, say, the gallon of milk. Ultimately, it's really important that we, as consumers and citizens and just plain old people, are familiar with the measurements that we're using, which cuts both ways when we think of going metric or not.

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**Elizabeth Benham**

Two liters, now, you go to the grocery store that's ubiquitous. Everybody, you could hold up a two liter bottle. Everybody in the United States like I know what that is. So it's building up those reference points that helps us navigate through our measurement system, understanding it. It's that innate ability to relate to a quantity that everybody needs to know to really function, whether you're estimating how much sugar you need to make lemonade or how many bags of potato chips you need to buy for a party or things like that. So estimating and understanding what a quantity is, is very important.

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**Harry Enten**

And so I guess, you know, looking into the future, do you think we could potentially have the prospect, I'm not saying right now, but ten, 20, 30, 40, 50 years down the line where we might ever fully metricate, are we going to always sort of be on this pathway where we have really two systems going on at the same time in this country?

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**Elizabeth Benham**

Well, I anticipate that we will be further along on that metric continuum. We will be closer to 100% than we are today. Ultimately, over time, legacy technology is taken out and replaced with the new. And that's where we see more and more things that are designed with the metric specifications from the ground up that are going to replace them.

00:25:00

**Harry Enten**

Coming up after the break, Professor Stephen Mihm will be back with us to break down another roadblock towards the US metricating: modern American society. Stick around. We'll be right back.

00:25:19

**Harry Enten**

Welcome back, folks. So last segment, we talked about metricating on a kind of macro scale from exports to education in the U.S. and all those reasons do check out. I understand them. But I got to be honest, as someone who's grown up in our hybrid system, I can't say I feel a deep personal push to go metric. And Professor Stephen Mihm, who we talked to earlier in the episode, says that ain't too surprising.

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**Stephen Mihm**

What's striking about the metric system since the 1970s, though, is the degree to which there is, outside of hard core partisan feelings on both sides within a very small group of people, a general apathy on this issue. In other words, while Tucker Carlson, has in fact, done segments in which he's painted the metric system as a dangerous, insidious form of global government that will infect and destroy the United States.

00:26:20

**Tucker Carlson on Fox News**

Almost every nation on Earth has fallen under the yoke of tyranny: the metric system. From Beijing to Buenos Aires, from Lusaka to London, the people of the world have been forced to measure their environment in millimeters in kilograms.

00:26:35

**Stephen Mihm**

And I gather that these are popular arguments to make for his particular audience. Most Americans just don't really care that much. The only thing that seems to bind us together is that we don't like change, really. In other words, we don't like having things renamed or units banished. And so we we tend to react badly in those cases.

00:26:57

**Tucker Carlson on Fox News**

Now, you might be smirking about the kind of anti metric rhetoric you can find in America these days, but people have historically taken measurement systems very seriously. I mean, very. Especially when governments have mandated top down overhauls.

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**Stephen Mihm**

You know, in Latin America, for example, in the 19th century, some of these countries were metric and there were riots, people smashed metric measures. There were these these these incidents of actual violence over this. I don't think that would happen. But I do think it -- in this moment of a rebelling against globalization that I think is informing a lot of political movements around the world, this is one issue that, you know, it may not be a good idea to poke the bear of of people's attachment to the gallon or the inch, you know, which seem quaint, antiquated, outdated to people who use the metric system. But it's really not probably worth the battles that that that would have to be fought. In other words, there could be a very significant political cost to whomever pushed the metric system and made it mandatory in the United States, particularly mandatory and exclusive.

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**Harry Enten**

Like, do you remember Lincoln Chafee? He's a former senator and governor of Rhode Island who briefly ran for president in the 2016 election and in his campaign announcement speech. Well, he decided to go big.

00:28:29

**Archival Lincoln Chafee**

Here's a bold embrace of internationalism. Let's join the rest of the world and go metric.

00:28:37

**Harry Enten**

Yeah. So did you catch that awkward pause and then laughter? Well, Chafee's presidential campaign lasted all of four months, and looking back on it, a year later, he called this focus on metrication, quote, the big mistake, because in many ways, he immediately became that guy who wanted to go metric. But this contemporary pushback against metric isn't only happening in America.

00:29:04

**Stephen Mihm**

Great Britain has gone through something similar but less dramatic, and that their move toward integration into the European Union was attended with the relinquishment of British units. And now that Brexit has taken place, there's now the door is wide open to reviving the older units.

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**Harry Enten**

The UK actually began Metricating in 1965, eight years before it joined the European Union. But in the wake of Brexit, imperial measurements seem to be making a bit of a comeback in Britain. Last year, Brexit Minister David Frost announced his intention to allow shopkeepers and supermarkets to sell items in imperial units, not metric. So back to buying fruit in pounds and ounces, just like the good Queen intended. But like we've said, people have been anti metric ever since it was invented. Like take this wild story.

00:30:01

**Stephen Mihm**

Well, in the 19th century, there was a movement and it was not a fringe movement, it was a very serious movement among people in Great Britain and the United States who were opposed to the metric system. They believed and I am not making this up, I feel like I need to make this disclaimer before I go forward. They believed that the inch was a God given, in other words, literally the big man himself had handed down the inch to humanity at the dawn of time and had embedded it, and I'm not quite certain how this worked in the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt.

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**Harry Enten**

Of course.

00:30:39

**Stephen Mihm**

And scientists and engineers, very prominent ones, you know, including, you know, people at Oxford, you know, Cambridge were huge proponents of this. A lot of these people were super smart and also invented amazing things that became central to the Industrial Revolution or made astronomical discoveries. So if there's a lesson to all this, it's that maybe maybe we need to let go of the belief that people can be wholly rational, wholly metric, and maybe acknowledge that there's a little bit of irrationality in all of us.

00:31:15

**Harry Enten**

Why does this debate bring out such passionate opinions from people? And why is it that it seems to bring out such passionate opinions from people who aren't really necessarily, you know, impacted too much by whether we go metric or not metric, you know, just people who are living their everyday lives, who aren't engineers or scientists, who, to be honest, are the ones who are perhaps most impacted by this.

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**Stephen Mihm**

That's a great question. And I think the answer probably goes to what weights and measures, in other words, systems of measurement have always been, which is that they aren't just a label on a food package or a number on a scale. But they are a kind of language. In other words, they are functioning in a very fundamental way as a means of communicating things about the world around us that we use to understand the world. When we grow up with one of those languages, whatever it might be, metric or imperial units, those systems become a kind of shorthand that we use to understand the world, the language we use to describe the world. When someone tries to take away your language or ask you to speak a new one, I think it brings out a very instinctive reaction and a resistance to it.

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**Harry Enten**

I actually really like that. I think that is exactly sort of right. It's something simple, but it represents something so much larger.

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**Stephen Mihm**

Exactly. And if you are -- let's say that everyone started learning the metric system as a child, those children would be totally fine with it, as adults, there would be no problem. It's it's the resistance inevitably is from those who are already speaking the language that they know and don't want to take on the burden of of learning something new. We are creatures of habit, human beings, and a new system of measurement is something that's difficult for people to acquire after they've grown up.

00:33:42

**Harry Enten**

Ultimately, our system's kind of a mess, but it's our mess, and it still works well, kind of.

00:33:51

**Stephen Mihm**

If I were to describe what what makes America, America, it's often times are our cludgy workarounds that actually sometimes are less disruptive and allow us to to function and tolerate the kind of, many different ways of doing things within a single country. And that's not a minor achievement, actually, on some level, if you if you think about it and it's embedded in our political system with 50 state governments operating simultaneously with a single national government, and perhaps on some level that's embedded in well, in our very ugly but functional system of measurement.

00:34:37

**Harry Enten**

I must admit that before we recorded this episode, I didn't know what to think of the metric system in America. I knew about kilometers and meters and kilograms from school, but for the most part, I didn't use them all that often in my daily life. Even tackling the topic came from my buddy Noam, and I thought to myself, "Hey, what's the deal with all that?" But as I looked at the metrication, it became clear to me that this wasn't just a trivia question. For example, which disastrous presidential campaign put forth metrication as a main issue? It was far larger and more complicated than that. Indeed, that's often why I choose the topics I do for this podcast. I love looking at issues that seem small at first, but actually say a lot about who we are. As for me and the metric system, I think I come down where Stephen does. Yes, there would be some clear advantages to switching. Yet what we have now mostly does the trick. In a world where there are so many big problems, why rock the boat? Coming up on our next episode, people these days are more single than ever, having less sex than ever and just being less romantic than ever, so I got to wonder, is love dead? And if so, who killed it? Next time I'll try to find out. Margins of Error is a production of CNN Audio and Western Sound. Our showrunner is Cameron Kell. Our producer is Savannah Wright, production assistance and fact checking by Nicole McNulty. Mischa Stanton is our mix engineer. Additional support from Tamika Ballance-Kolasny, Dan Dzula, Allison Park and Alex McCall. Our executive producers are Ben Adair and Megan Marcus and me, well, I'm Harry Enten.