

FOR RELEASE APRIL 12, 2017

# Public Supports Syria Missile Strikes, but Few See a ‘Clear Plan’ for Addressing Situation

*Stark partisan divide over U.S. obligation to accept Syrian refugees*

**FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:**

Carroll Doherty, Director of Political Research  
Jocelyn Kiley, Associate Director, Research  
Bridget Johnson, Communications Associate

202.419.4372

[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

## About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. The Center studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the Center's reports are available at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org). Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2017

# Public Supports Syria Missile Strikes, but Few See a ‘Clear Plan’ for Addressing Situation

*Stark partisan divide over U.S. obligation to accept Syrian refugees*

By a wide margin (58% to 36%), Americans approve of the U.S. missile strikes against Syria in response to reports of the use of chemical weapons by Bashar al-Assad’s government. By a comparable margin (61% to 32%), the public says that Donald Trump does not have a clear plan for dealing with the situation in Syria.

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted April 5-11, finds little change in public attitudes about another key aspect of U.S. policy toward Syria: 47% say the U.S. has a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria into the country, while about as many (48%) say it does not. The questions in this report were asked April 7-11, after the April 6 missile strikes, among 1,062 adults.

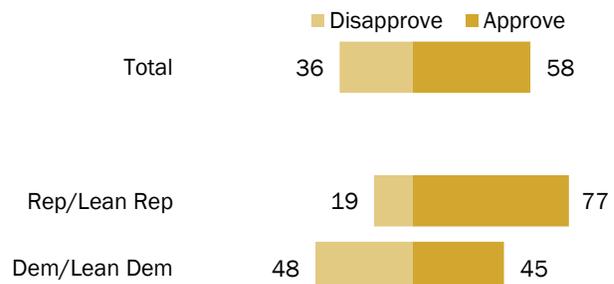
Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (67%) are about three times as likely as Republicans and Republican leaners (22%) to say the U.S. has a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria.

The U.S. missile strikes against Syria have registered widely with the public. About nine-in-ten Americans have heard a lot (61%) or a little (30%) about the attack.

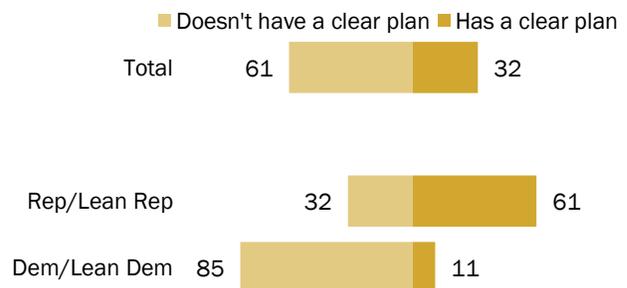
Republicans overwhelmingly approve of the missile strikes (77% approve). A smaller majority of Republicans (61%) think Trump has a clear plan for dealing with the situation, while 32% say he does not.

## Republicans largely approve of U.S. strikes on Syria; Democrats are divided

*Do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. conducting missile strikes against Syria in response to reports that the Syrian government used chemical weapons? (%)*



*Do you think Donald Trump has a clear plan for dealing with the situation in Syria? (%)*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.  
Source: Survey conducted April 7-11, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

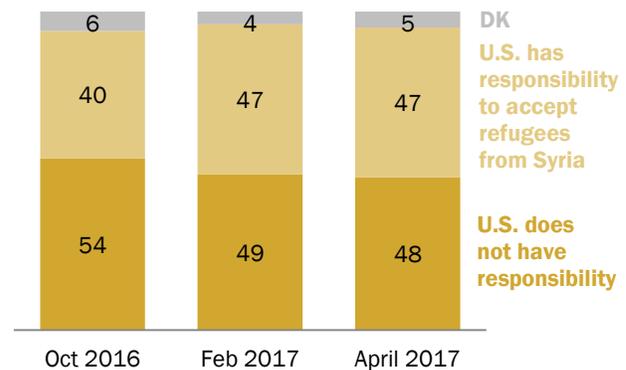
Democrats are divided over the missile strikes – but a large majority says Trump lacks a clear plan for Syria. Nearly half of Democrats (45%) approve of the U.S. military action, while 48% disapprove. However, just 11% of Democrats believe Trump has a clear plan for the situation, compared with 85% who say he does not.

Public opinion about whether the U.S. has a responsibility to accept Syrian refugees has not changed since February, though the share saying the U.S. has a responsibility to accept Syrian refugees is higher today (47%) than it was last October (40%). The partisan divisions on this issue remain stark.

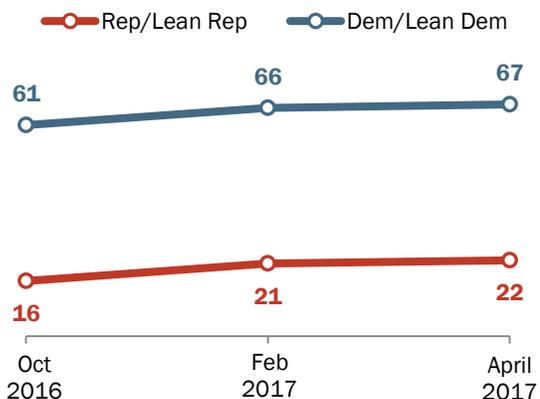
[A survey in early January](#) found that Republicans also are far more likely than Democrats to view the large number of refugees leaving Syria and Iraq as a “major threat” to the United States: 63% of Republicans expressed this view, compared with just 30% of Democrats.

## Public remains split on whether U.S. has responsibility to accept Syrian refugees

*Do you think the U.S. has a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria into the country? (%)*



*% who say U.S. has a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria into the country*



Notes: Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.  
Source: Survey conducted April 7-11, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Gender, age differences in opinions about Syria

About half of women (52%) say the U.S. has an obligation to accept Syrian refugees, but fewer men (42%) say the same. And while a majority (63%) of adults younger than 30 believe the U.S. has such a responsibility, only about four-in-ten older adults (43%) say the U.S. has a responsibility to take in Syrian refugees.

There also are sizable gender and age differences in views of the missile strikes and on whether Trump has a clear plan for addressing the Syrian situation. Nearly seven-in-ten men (68%) approve of the U.S. missile strikes in response to the reported use of chemical weapons, compared with 48% of women.

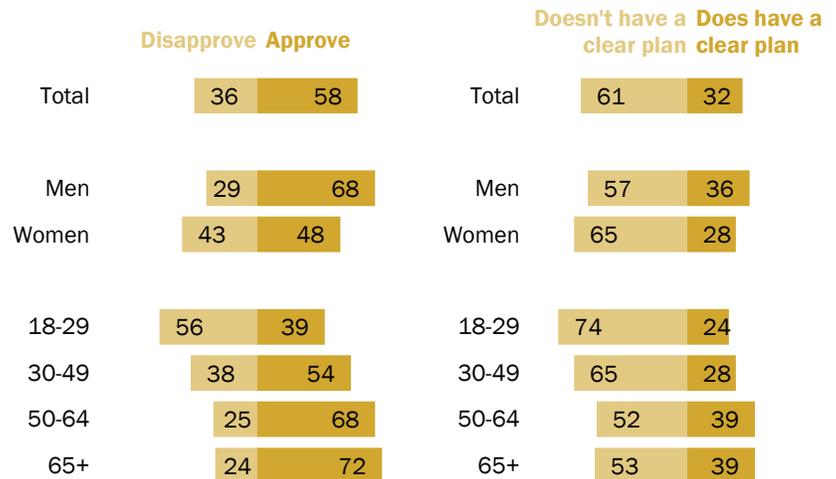
And while majorities of both men and women say Trump lacks a clear plan for Syria, women are more likely to express this view (65% of women vs. 57% of men).

Adults under 30 are the only age group in which more people disapprove (56%) than approve (39%) of U.S. missile strikes against Syria. Majorities in older age groups approve of the U.S. military action. Younger people (those under 50) also are more likely than those 50 and older to say that Trump does not have a clear plan for dealing with the situation in Syria.

### Men are more likely than women to approve of U.S. missile strikes against Syria

% who \_\_\_\_\_ of U.S. missile strikes against Syria

% who say Trump \_\_\_\_\_ for dealing with the situation in Syria



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April 7-11, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

### Research team

Carroll Doherty, *Director, Political Research*

Jocelyn Kiley, *Associate Director, Political Research*

Alec Tyson, *Senior Researcher*

Bradley Jones, *Research Associate*

Baxter Oliphant, *Research Associate*

Rob Suls, *Research Associate*

Hannah Fingerhut, *Research Assistant*

Shiva Maniam, *Research Assistant*

Samantha Smith, *Research Assistant*

### Communications and editorial

Bridget Johnson, *Communications Associate*

### Graphic design and web publishing

Peter Bell, *Information Graphics Designer*

## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 7-11, 2017. These questions were added on April 7. The full survey was conducted April 5-11, 2017, among a national sample of 1,501 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (375 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,126 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 693 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see

<http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2015 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

---

*Survey conducted Apr. 5-11, 2017*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
<i>For interviews conducted Apr. 7-11</i>		
Total sample	1,062	3.5 percentage points
Republican/Lean Rep	446	5.3 percentage points
Democrat/Lean Dem	545	4.8 percentage points

---

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

Pew Research Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
APRIL 2017 POLITICAL SURVEY  
FINAL TOPLINE  
APRIL 5-11, 2017  
N=1,501**

**QUESTIONS 1-3, 11-13, 19-21, 25-26, 30-32, 36-37b, 41-43, 46-50, 55-57, 61-63, 65-67 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTIONS 4-10, 14-18, 22-24, 27-29, 33-35, 38-40, 44-45, 51-54, 58-60, 64, 68-69**

**ASK APRIL 7-11, 2017 ONLY [N=1,062]:**

Q.70 Do you think the U.S. has a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria into the country, or do you think the U.S. does NOT have a responsibility to do this?

Apr 7-11 <u>2017</u>		Feb 7-12 <u>2017</u>	Oct 20-25 <u>2016</u>
47	U.S. has a responsibility to accept Syrian refugees	47	40
48	U.S. does not have a responsibility to accept Syrian refugees	49	54
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4	6

**QUESTIONS 71-72, 80-81 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTIONS 73-79**

**ASK APRIL 7-11, 2017 ONLY [N=1,062]:**

Q.82 How much, if anything, have you read or heard about the U.S. conducting missile strikes against Syria in response to reports that the Syrian government used chemical weapons? Have you heard ... **[READ]**

Apr 7-11 <u>2017</u>	
61	A lot
30	A little
9	Nothing at all
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:**

*How much, if anything, have you read or heard about recent political violence in Syria?*

Dec 5-9 <u>2012</u>		Mar 7-11 <u>2012</u>
38	A lot	36
44	A little	39
18	Nothing at all	25
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1

**ASK APRIL 7-11, 2017 ONLY [N=1,062]:**

Q.83 Do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. conducting missile strikes against Syria in response to reports that the Syrian government used chemical weapons?

Apr 7-11 <u>2017</u>	
58	Approve
36	Disapprove
6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK APRIL 7-11, 2017 ONLY [N=1,062]:**

Q.84 Do you think Donald Trump has a clear plan for dealing with the situation in Syria, or don't you think so?

Apr 7-11	
<u>2017</u>	
32	Has a clear plan
61	Doesn't have a clear plan
7	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**NO QUESTIONS 85-91, 93-94****QUESTIONS 92, 95-96 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Apr 5-11, 2017	24	31	42	2	1	*	17	20
Feb 7-12, 2017	23	34	37	3	1	2	15	18
Jan 4-9, 2017	25	28	41	4	*	1	18	19
Nov 30-Dec 5, 2016	24	33	35	5	1	3	15	16
Oct 20-25, 2016	26	33	36	3	*	2	15	17
Aug 23-Sep 2, 2016	27	32	33	5	*	3	11	16
Aug 9-16, 2016	27	32	35	2	1	2	13	16
Jun 15-26, 2016	24	33	37	4	1	2	16	16
Apr 12-19, 2016	25	32	37	3	1	2	16	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2016	25.4	32.0	36.5	3.4	.5	2.2	14.6	17.0
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5

**PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...**

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean <u>Rep</u>	Lean <u>Dem</u>
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

**NO QUESTIONS 97, 99****QUESTION 98 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**