

APRIL 9, 2013

Most Say U.S. Government Should Take Threats
Very Seriously

Public Divided over North Korea's Intentions, Capability

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE
PEOPLE & THE PRESS**

Michael Dimock

Director

Carroll Doherty

Associate Director

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4372

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

Most Say U.S. Government Should Take Threats Very Seriously Public Divided over North Korea's Intentions, Capability

A majority of Americans say that the United States should take North Korea's nuclear threats very seriously. At the same time, the public is divided over whether North Korea's leadership is willing and capable of following through on its threats against the United States.

The national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted April 4-7 among 1,003 adults, finds that 56% say the government should take North Korea's threats to use nuclear missiles against the U.S. very seriously. Another 27% say the government should take North Korea's threats somewhat seriously. 9% say the government should take North Korea's threats not too seriously, and 5% say the government should take North Korea's threats not at all seriously.

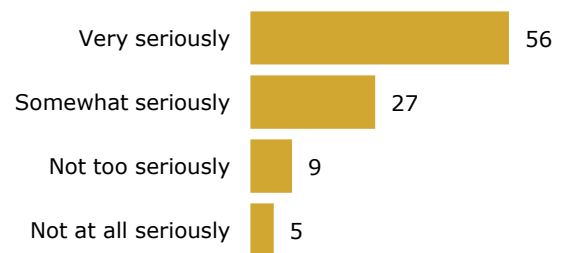
About half of Americans (47%) think that North Korea's leadership is really willing to follow through on its threats against the United States; 41% think North Korea is not really willing to follow through.

Opinion also is divided about North Korea's ability to make good on its threats: 47% say it is capable of launching a nuclear missile that could reach the U.S. while 43% say it is not capable.

About a third of the public (36%) says they are paying very close attention to news about North Korea's military threats and plans to restart its nuclear reactor, making this the most closely followed foreign news story of the year. Those who are following news about North Korea's threats very closely are far more likely than those following it less closely to say that the government should take the threats very seriously (73% vs. 46%).

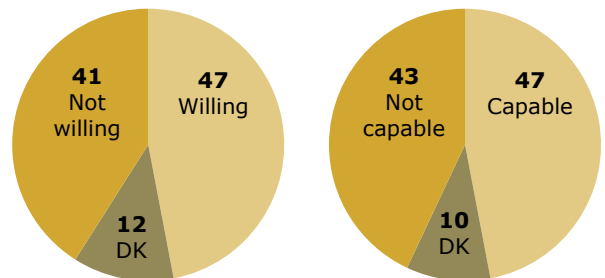
Views of North Korea's Nuclear Threats

How seriously should the U.S. government take North Korea's threats to use nuclear missiles against the U.S.?



Do you think North Korea's leadership is really willing to follow through on this threat?

Do you think North Korea is capable of launching a nuclear missile that could reach the United States?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 4-7, 2013.

In addition, far more of those who are tracking North Korean news very closely say the country's leaders are really willing to follow through on its threats (59% vs. 40% those following less closely).

However, assessments of whether North Korea is capable of reaching the U.S. with a nuclear missile are identical among those who are tracking news about North Korea's threats very closely and those following the threats less closely (47% each).

Republicans and Democrats have comparable levels of interest in news from North Korea. But Republicans are more likely to say the government should take the threats very seriously (64% vs. 52% of Democrats). More Republicans than Democrats also think that North Korea is really willing to carry through on its nuclear threats (58% vs. 37%).

Age, Partisan, Educational Differences in Opinions about North Korean Threat

	Take threats very seriously	Willing to follow through on threats	Capable of reaching US
	%	%	%
Total	56	47	47
18-29	45	37	57
30-49	54	43	44
50-64	61	56	49
65+	65	51	38
College grad+	48	39	40
Some college	57	53	46
HS or less	61	48	52
Republican	64	58	52
Democrat	52	37	47
Independent	57	50	45
<i>Following news about North Korean threats</i>			
Very closely	73	59	47
Less closely	46	40	47

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 4-7, 2013.

But partisans express similar views of North Korea's military capabilities. About half of Republicans (52%) and Democrats (47%) say that North Korea is capable of launching a nuclear missile that could reach the United States.

Few See North Korea as Both 'Willing' and 'Capable'

About a quarter of Americans (28%) see the maximum potential danger from North Korea: They say that North Korea is really willing to follow through on its threat to use nuclear weapons *and* that North Korea is capable of launching a nuclear missile that could reach the United States.

Roughly the same percentage (25%) expressed the opposite views. They say that North Korea is not really willing to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. and that its nuclear missiles would not be able to reach the United States.

Views of North Korea's Threats

<i>% saying North Korea is...</i>	Total %
Willing and capable	28
Willing, but not capable	15
Unwilling, but capable	13
Unwilling and not capable	25

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 4-7, 2013.

Between those two viewpoints, comparable percentages say that North Korea is willing – but not capable – of attacking the U.S. with nuclear missiles (15%) or that while North Korea is unwilling to follow through on its military threats, it does have the capability to carry them out (13%).

Opinions about how seriously the United States government should take the threat from North Korea differ according to people's views of its intentions and capability. Fully 83% of those who say North Korea has the will and capability to attack the U.S. think the government should take the threat very seriously. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of those who view North Korea as willing but not capable of attacking the U.S. agree.

Concern about North Korea Linked to Views of Intentions and Capability

<i>How seriously should U.S. take North Korea's threats?</i>	Total %	<i>Willingness and capacity of North Korea to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. ...</i>			
		Willing, capable %	Willing, not capable %	Unwilling, capable %	Unwilling, not capable %
Very seriously	56	83	65	45	29
Less seriously	41	17	35	52	71
Don't know	3	1	*	3	*
	100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 4-7, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Only about half (45%) of those who say North Korea is not really willing to follow through on its nuclear threats – but is capable of launching a missile that could reach the U.S. – view the threats as very serious. And just 29% of those who think that North Korea neither has the will nor the capability to attack the U.S. says the government should take North Korea's threats seriously.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 4-7, 2013 among a national sample of 1,003 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (500 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 229 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. 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://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 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, based on extrapolations from the 2012 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. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. 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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,003	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	262	7.3 percentage points
Democrats	301	6.8 percentage points
Independents	359	6.2 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
April 4-7, 2013, OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,003

PEW.1a-c, e PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
d. Military threats from North Korea and its plan to restart a nuclear reactor					
April 4-7, 2013	36	28	16	20	*
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
February 14-17, 2013: <i>North Korea conducting a nuclear test</i>	18	23	21	37	1
April 12-15, 2012: <i>North Korea's failed launch of a rocket carrying a satellite¹</i>	22	27	21	29	1
March 1-4, 2012: <i>North Korea taking steps to halt its nuclear program</i>	17	22	24	36	1
January 5-8, 2012: <i>The situation in North Korea following the death of its leader Kim Jong-il</i>	17	29	24	30	*
December 2-5, 2010: <i>Tensions between North Korea and South Korea</i>	35	30	19	16	1
May 27-30, 2010	19	24	24	32	1
May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>Reports about North Korea testing nuclear weapons and missiles</i>	34	36	17	13	*
April 3-6, 2009: <i>North Korea's plans to test a long range missile</i>	23	31	19	27	*
June 27-30, 2008: <i>North Korea takes steps to halt its nuclear weapons program</i>	19	30	26	24	1
February 16-19, 2007: <i>Recent negotiations to shut down North Korea's nuclear weapons program</i>	15	31	22	31	1
Late October, 2006: <i>North Korea's announcement that it recently tested a nuclear weapon</i>	45	33	13	8	1
February, 2005: <i>North Korea's nuclear weapons program</i>	22	34	22	22	*
September, 2003	19	32	27	21	1
May, 2003	27	40	22	11	*
March, 2003	34	34	19	12	1
February, 2003	33	34	18	13	2
January, 2003	33	34	18	14	1
Late October, 2002: <i>North Korea's admission that it has been secretly developing nuclear weapons</i>	25	31	23	20	1
June, 1994: <i>Reports about North Korea's building of nuclear weapons and refusal to allow U.N. inspections</i>	27	33	26	14	*

¹ Wording for Thursday, April 12, 2012, was: "North Korea's controversial plan to launch a rocket carrying a satellite" for PEW1.c and PEW2.

NO QUESTIONS PEW.2-PEW.3**PEW.4 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****ASK ALL:**

Thinking about North Korea...

PEW.5 In your view, how seriously should the U.S. government take North Korea's threats to use nuclear missiles against the U.S.?

Apr 4-7

2013

56	Very seriously
27	Somewhat seriously
9	Not too seriously
5	Not at all seriously
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

PEW.6 From what you've read and heard, do you think North Korea's leadership is really willing to follow through on its threat to use nuclear weapons against the U.S., or not?

Apr 4-7

2013

47	Really willing to use
41	No, not really willing to use
12	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

PEW.7 Do you think North Korea is capable of launching a nuclear missile that could reach the United States, or not?

Apr 4-7

2013

47	Yes, is capable
43	No, is not capable
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

PEW.8-PEW.10 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE