



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

NEWS Release
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Despite Years of Terror Scares, Public's Concerns Remain Fairly Steady

Since 9/11, there have been major terrorist attacks in Great Britain, Spain and other countries. And in the United States, there have been Orange Alerts and numerous near misses involving bombs smuggled aboard aircraft and in parked cars.

But over the course of all of this, there is little evidence that close calls in this country or terrorist attacks overseas have led to a fundamental change in the public's worries about terrorism.

A recent national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Nov. 4-7 among 1,255 adults, finds that 59% say they are very (21%) or somewhat (38%) worried there will soon be another terrorist attack in the United States.

This is little changed from July 2007 (20% very, 42% somewhat worried). In fact, looking back over nearly a decade, the public's worries over another attack have been fairly steady, with a few exceptions. In June 2002, following the arrest of Jose Padilla, an American accused of planning a "dirty bomb" attack on the U.S., the percentage saying they were very worried about an attack jumped to 32% from 20% six

Terrorism Concerns Have Changed Little Since 2007

<i>Worried about another attack in the U.S.?</i>	Very %	Some-what %	Not too/Not at all %	DK %
November 2010	21	38	38	3=100
July 2007	20	42	36	2=100
August 2006	23	44	31	2=100
July 2005	26	42	31	1=100
October 2004	17	43	39	1=100
June 2004	25	42	32	1=100
January 2004	20	45	34	1=100
August 2003	13	45	41	1=100
March 2003	22	42	34	2=100
February 2003	34	41	24	1=100
January 2003	18	50	31	1=100
December 2002	31	42	26	1=100
August 2002	16	46	37	1=100
June 2002	32	44	24	*=100
January 2002	20	42	37	1=100
October 2001	29	42	28	1=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

months earlier. But by August 2002, just 16% said they were very worried.

The proportion saying they were very worried also rose in February 2003, shortly before the Iraq war. At that time, 34% said they were very worried about another terrorist attack in the United States, almost double the percentage from January (18%). However, just a month later the percentage saying they were very worried slipped back to 22% and by August 2003 to just 13%.

The latest Pew Research survey was conducted shortly after reports of an aborted plot to smuggle package bombs aboard cargo jets destined for the United States. The survey was conducted before the most recent terrorist scare – the arrest of a Somali-born man in Portland, Oregon who allegedly had sought to detonate a bomb at a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony.

The survey finds the public is divided over whether the U.S. is winning or losing its campaign against terrorism around the world: 38% say the United States is winning, while about the same number (43%) say it is losing. This also is little changed from 2007.

Recent Scare Attracted Modest Interest

Public interest in the failed package bomb plots was lower than for two other incidents in the past year – the attempt to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner last Christmas and the failed effort to detonate a car bomb in Times Square last May. Nearly three-in-ten (29%) followed the recent package bomb plots very closely, compared with 37% each for the failed Christmas and Times Square attacks.

Of the many terrorist incidents since the 9/11 attacks, the one that attracted the greatest public interest was the attempt to blow up multiple airliners travelling from Great Britain to the United States and Canada in August 2006. More than half of Americans (54%) followed that story very closely. Interest in that story also surpassed interest in terrorist attacks overseas since 2001, including the attacks on London subways and buses in July 2005 (48% very closely).

Notably, while the airliner plot of 2006 and the London attacks of 2005 attracted widespread interest, the public's concerns about the prospect of a new terrorist attacks in this country rose only modestly in the wake of each incident. The August 2006 survey was being conducted as news broke about the transatlantic airliner plot: In interviewing conducted before the plot became public, 17% said they were very concerned about another attack on the United States; afterward, 25% said they were very worried. (*See "American Attitudes Hold Steady in Face of Foreign Crises," August 17, 2006.*)

News Interest in Terrorism Incidents: 2001-2011

<i>% followed...</i>	Very Closely	Less Closely
U.S. attacks/incidents	%	%
Terrorist attacks in NY, DC (Sept. 2001)	74	26
Plot to blow up airliners flying from Britain to U.S. (Aug. 2006)	54	46
Reports of anthrax in U.S. (Nov. 2001)	47	53
"Code Orange" terrorist alert (Sept. 2002, Feb. 2003)*	39	61
Christmas Day plot to bomb Detroit-bound airliner (Jan. 2010)	37	62
Failed car bombing in Times Square (May 2010)	37	63
Terrorist plots in Europe and U.S. (Nov. 2010)	29	70
Foreign attacks/incidents		
Bombings in London (July 2005)	48	52
Killing of Russian children by Chechen rebels (Sept. 2004)	48	52
Bombings in Madrid (March 2004)	34	66
British police defuse car bomb in London (July 2007)	34	66
Attacks in Mumbai, India (Dec. 2008)	29	71
Bombing of nightclub in Bali, Indonesia (Oct. 2002)	20	80

Top responses shown; interest in incidents in Iraq, Afghanistan not included.

* Asked on multiple surveys, top responses shown.

Few See Diminished Terrorist Threat

Only about a quarter of Americans (26%) say that the danger of a major terrorist attack is less now than it was before 9/11. About as many (28%) say the danger is greater while 43% say the danger of an attack is about the same as it was at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

These views, like concerns about the possibility of a new attack, have shown little overall change since 2007. However, about as many Republicans now see a greater terrorist threat as a reduced threat (32% vs. 30%). In July 2007, 46% of Republicans said the threat was less than it had been at the time of 9/11 while just 19% said it was greater. Opinions among Democrats have shown less change, though somewhat more see a reduced terrorist threat than in 2007 (32% vs. 21%).

Republicans, Democrats and independents express comparable levels of concern over the possibility there will soon be another terrorist attack in the U.S.: 23% of Republicans say they are very worried there will be a new attack, as do 20% of Democrats and independents. The partisan differences in terrorism concerns also were modest in 2007.

Chance of Major Attack on U.S. ...

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
November 2010				
Greater than before 9/11	28	32	26	29
Less than before 9/11	26	30	32	21
Same as before 9/11	43	37	42	46
Don't know	2	2	1	4
	100	100	100	100
July 2007				
Greater than before 9/11	22	19	26	19
Less than before 9/11	29	46	21	26
Same as before 9/11	47	33	51	53
Don't know	2	2	2	2
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Divided Views of Struggle Against Terrorism

Public opinion about the country's campaign against terrorism around the world is divided; 38% say the United States is winning, while about the same number (43%) say the nation is losing the campaign. This is similar to public sentiment in the summer of 2007, when 40% said the U.S. was winning the war on terrorism and 39% said the country was losing it.

Today, there is little difference in the opinions of Republicans, Democrats and independents, with opinion divided in all three partisan groups. By contrast, although overall opinion was similar in 2007, there were significant partisan differences three years ago: By a ratio of more than three-to-one (63% vs. 19%) Republicans said the country was winning rather than losing the war on terrorism, while Democrats were about twice as likely to say the country was losing (55%) rather than winning (27%) the war.

A Pew Research Center survey last month found little change in recent months in the public's ratings of the government's efforts to reduce the threat of terrorism. In that poll, 69% said the government was doing very well (15%) or fairly well (54%) in reducing the threat of terrorism. (See "[Continued Positive Marks for Government Anti-Terror Efforts](#)," Oct 22, 2010.)

Partisan Shifts in Views of Anti-Terror Campaign

<i>In its campaign against terrorism, U.S. is ...</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
November 2010	%	%	%	%
Winning	38	42	40	36
Losing	43	41	43	46
Neither (vol.)	10	10	9	10
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100
July 2007				
<i>In the war on terrorism, U.S. is ...</i>				
Winning	40	63	27	38
Losing	39	19	55	40
Neither (vol.)	12	9	10	15
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

About the Survey

Results from this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted November 4-7, 2010 among a national sample of 1,255 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (828 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 427 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 189 who had no landline telephone). Interviewing was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. 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/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1255	3.5 percentage points
Republican	360	6.5 percentage points
Democratic	389	6.0 percentage points
Independent	435	6.0 percentage points

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.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
NOVEMBER 2010 POST-ELECTION SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
NOVEMBER 4-7, 2010
N=1255

QUESTIONS 1-68 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 69-70

ASK ALL:

Thinking about the issue of terrorism for a moment...

Q.71 Do you think the United States is winning or losing its campaign against terrorism around the world?

TREND FOR COMPARISON

		----- <i>War on terrorism</i> -----					
		(RVs)			(RVs)		
Nov 4-7		Jul	Nov	Sept	Nov	Oct	Early
<u>2010</u>		<u>2007</u> ¹	<u>2006</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2004</u>
38	Winning	40	46	39	45	46	52
43	Losing	39	33	41	31	31	28
10	Neither (VOL.)	12	10	9	10	9	9
9	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	9	11	11	14	14	11

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=631]:

Q.72F1 Do you think the danger of a major attack on the United States is greater now than it was before September 11th, less now than it was before September 11th, or is it about the same?

Nov 4-7		Jul
<u>2010</u>		<u>2007</u>
28	Greater	22
26	Less	29
43	Same	47
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

¹ In July 2007 and before, question read, "Do you think the United States is winning or losing the war on terrorism?"

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=624]:Q.73F2 How worried are you that there will soon be another terrorist attack in the United States? **[READ]**

	<u>Very worried</u>	<u>Somewhat worried</u>	<u>Not too worried</u>	<u>Not at all worried</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Nov 4-7, 2010	21	38	24	14	3
July, 2007	20	42	25	11	2
August, 2006	23	44	21	10	2
July, 2005	26	42	19	12	1
Mid-October, 2004	17	43	27	12	1
August, 2004	20	44	25	10	1
July, 2004	17	41	26	15	1
June, 2004	25	42	20	12	1
Mid-March, 2004	20	42	25	12	1
Early February, 2004	13	42	28	16	1
Mid-January, 2004	20	45	24	10	1
August, 2003	13	45	29	12	1
March, 2003	22	42	20	14	2
February, 2003	34	41	17	7	1
January, 2003	18	50	23	8	1
December, 2002	31	42	18	8	1
Early October, 2002	20	46	22	11	1
Late August, 2002	16	46	25	12	1
June, 2002	32	44	17	7	*
January, 2002	20	42	28	9	1
December, 2001	13	39	27	19	2
October 15-21, 2001	29	42	18	10	1
October 10-14, 2001	27	40	19	12	2
Early October, 2001	28	45	15	11	1

NO QUESTIONS 74-75**QUESTIONS 76-86 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

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?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	26	33	34	4	*	3	14	14
Jun 16-20, 2010	27	34	34	3	1	2	15	15
Apr 21-26, 2010	26	33	36	3	1	3	16	13
Mar 11-21, 2010	28	34	32	3	*	3	13	12
Mar 10-14, 2010	22	33	37	6	*	3	14	13
Feb 3-9, 2010	26	31	37	3	*	3	14	17
Jan 6-10, 2010	22	33	42	2	1	2	17	16
Yearly Totals								
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
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	--	--	--	--	--