



Concerns About a Terrorist Attack in the U.S. Rise

November 19-22, 2015

- Following the terrorist attacks overseas, Americans' concerns about a terror attack in the U.S. have risen. 69% say an attack is at least somewhat likely, the highest since May 2011.
14% now say terrorism is the most important problem facing the country, up from only 2% just two weeks ago. It is now only outranked by the economy and jobs.
Once a strong point of his presidency, approval of how President Obama is handling the threat of terrorism has dropped to an all-time low of 36%. 66% of Americans think President Obama does not have a clear plan for dealing with ISIS.
For the first time in CBS News Polls, Americans are now more concerned that the government will fail to enact strong anti-terrorism laws (46%) than they are about the government restricting civil liberties (40%).
Americans divide on whether Syrian refugees should be allowed to enter the U.S., but large majorities think stricter screening processes are necessary.
Support for sending ground troops to Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS has ticked up, and 63% of Americans think ground troops will be necessary to defeat ISIS. Still, just 44% of Americans think the U.S. should take the lead role in confronting ISIS.

Concerns About an Attack

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut and Mali, more Americans are now concerned about a terrorist attack here in the United States. 69% think an attack in the U.S. is very or somewhat likely to occur in the next few months, up 25 points from April, and the highest since May 2011 after the killing of Osama bin Laden.

The majority who think a terror attack is likely includes 28% of Americans who now say an attack is "very likely;" that figure is the highest it's been since February 2003 (35%), when the U.S. was on high terror alert just before the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Likelihood of Terror Attack in U.S. in Next Few Months

Table with 3 columns: Date/Event, Likely, Not Likely. Rows include: Now (69%/28%), 4/2015 (44%/53%), 4/2013 (post-Boston bombing) (66%/31%), 5/2011 (post-killing of bin Laden) (69%/29%), 1/2010 (post-underwear bombing attempt) (66%/30%), 2/2003 (US on high terror alert) (80%/18%), 10/2001(post-9/11 attacks) (88%/10%).

Historically, CBS News polling has found Americans' expectations of a terrorist attack have sometimes risen after terror-related events. After the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, concerns about an attack grew, as they did a few years earlier in January 2010, soon after the "underwear bomber" attempted to detonate a bomb aboard an airplane. 88% thought another terrorist attack was likely after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. And throughout much of 2002 and 2003, the U.S. was on heightened state of alert.

Meanwhile, most Americans are not very concerned about a terrorist attack in the area where they live -- but a quarter (25%) is very concerned, up from the spring and the highest it has been since the summer of 2006.

		Very Concerned About Attack In Your Area?							
		Now	4/2015	4/2013	8/2006	2/2003	10/2002	10/2001	9/2001
Yes	25%	16%	23%	26%	27%	32%	30%	43%	
No	73	83	76	73	72	67	68	56	

Once a strong point of his presidency, approval of how President Obama is handling the threat of terrorism has dropped to an all-time low. Now just 36% of Americans approve of his handling of terrorism – a six-point drop from August and 36 percentage points below his all-time high of 72% recorded just after the killing of Osama bin Laden. 56% now disapprove of his handling of terrorism – a record high.

		President Obama's Handling of Terrorism				
		Now	8/2015	10/2014	11/2013	5/2011
Approve	36%	42%	41%	51%	72%	
Disapprove	56	48	49	41	19	

More now see terrorism as a pressing issue for the country. In an open-ended question, 14% of Americans say terrorism is the most important problem facing the county, up from only 2% in a CBS News Poll conducted just two weeks ago. Islamic extremists and ISIS are now in third place (8%), followed by immigration (6%).

Most Important Problem Facing the Country		
	Now	2 weeks ago
Economy and jobs	16%	20%
Terrorism	14	2
Islamic extremists/ISIS	8	2
Immigration/illegal immigrants	6	6
Misc social issues	5	2
Poverty/homelessness	4	3
The President/Barack Obama	4	2
Health care	4	5
Defense/national security	3	1
Homeland security	3	1

The U.S. Government's Efforts Fighting Terrorism

While President Barack Obama's approval rating on handling terrorism has taken a hit, 63% of Americans have at least a fair amount of confidence in the federal government's ability to

protect its citizens from terrorism (but just 21% have a great deal of confidence). These evaluations are similar to what they were earlier this year.

	Confidence in Govt. to Protect U.S. from Attack?						
	Now	4/2015	4/2013	1/2010	3/2006	9/2002	9/2001
Great deal	21%	23%	22%	15%	17%	20%	35%
Fair amount	42	41	48	56	43	56	53
Not very much	25	26	23	23	28	18	10
None at all	11	10	6	4	10	4	1

Democrats and independents are more confident in the government's ability to protect the country from terrorism than Republicans.

	Confidence in Govt. to Protect U.S. from Attack?			
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Great deal/fair amount	63%	49%	77%	60%
Not very much/none	36	50	22	38

Amid the recent acts of terrorism overseas, concerns about restriction of civil liberties in the fight against terrorism have lessened some. For the first time in CBS News Polls, Americans are now more concerned that the government will fail to enact strong anti-terrorism laws (46%) than they are about the government restricting civil liberties (40%).

	Which Concerns You More: Government Will....?				
	Now	9/2008	8/2006	1/2006	12/2001
Fail to enact strong anti-terror laws	46%	31%	39%	40%	43%
Restrict civil liberties	40	51	46	48	45
Don't know	10	14	12	8	9

Republicans (56%) are more worried the government will fail to enact anti-terror laws than Democrats (42%) or independents (43%).

At the same time, some concerns about personal privacy remain. More than half of Americans (54%) express at least some concern about losing their privacy as a result of steps taken by the federal government to fight terrorism, but concerns have dipped slightly since last year and from June 2013, soon after the disclosure of U.S. surveillance programs involving the collection of Americans' phone records.

Americans across party lines express similar levels of privacy concerns.

	Concern About Losing Privacy In Government's Efforts to Fight Terrorism					
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	1/2014	6/2013
Very/somewhat	54%	51%	53%	57%	59%	59%
Not very/not at all	44	48	47	39	41	40

Syrian Refugees

As large numbers of Syrians flee the violence in their country, Americans are split on whether the U.S. should allow Syrian refugees into the country. 47% say they should be allowed to enter as long as they go through a screening process, while 50% say they should not be allowed to come to the U.S. at this time.

There is a stark partisan divide on this: most Republicans say Syrian refugees should not be allowed into the country at this time, while most Democrats think they should be allowed.

Allowing Syrian Refugees into the U.S.

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Allowed with screening process	47%	27%	63%	47%
Not allowed at this time	50	68	36	49

However, there is widespread agreement on a stricter screening process for Syrian refugees. Nearly eight in 10 Americans – including majorities across party lines -- say it is necessary for Syrian refugees to go through a stricter security process than they do now.

Necessary for Syrian Refugees to Go Through Stricter Screening Process than They Do Now?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes, necessary	78%	87%	77%	74%
No, not necessary	15	6	19	16

Most Americans (67%) think allowing Syrian refugees into the U.S. poses a security threat to the U.S.: 45% say it is a major threat, while 22% think it is a minor threat. Republicans are more likely to view allowing Syrian refugees into the United States as a major threat to U.S. security.

Allowing Syrian Refugees into the U.S. Poses a Security Threat?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Major threat	45%	66%	33%	42%
Minor threat	22	19	25	23
Not a threat	26	12	36	28

The President

President Obama's overall approval rating is now at 42%. While his approval among Democrats is 71%, just 14% of Republicans approve. Among independents, more disapprove (47%) than approve (37%).

President Obama's Overall Job Rating

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	42%	14%	71%	37%
Disapprove	47	82	19	47

On specific measures, more Americans disapprove than approve of President Obama's handling of the economy and foreign policy, and 59% disapprove of his handling of the situation with ISIS militants in Syria and Iraq – a new high.

President Obama's Ratings on Issues

	Approve	Disapprove
Economy	44%	49
Foreign policy	37%	51
Terrorism	36%	56
ISIS	31%	59

Just 23% of Americans think President Obama has a clear plan for dealing with ISIS, the lowest number yet recorded in the CBS Poll. Two-thirds do not think he has a clear plan – a record high.

Does President Obama Have a Clear Plan for Dealing with ISIS?					
	Now	3/2015	2/2015	10/2014	9/2014
Yes	23%	25%	30%	29%	35%
No	66	64	60	61	55

The Fight Against ISIS

In considering military options in the fight against ISIS, three in four Americans continue to favor airstrikes against ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria. Half now favor sending in U.S. ground troops, an increase from August.

Military Action against ISIS					
U.S. Air Strikes			U.S. Ground Troops		
	Now	2/2015	Now	8/2015	
Favor	75%	77%	50%	46%	
Oppose	17	16	42	45	

Most Americans think ground troops will be necessary to remove the threat from ISIS militants; just one in five thinks the threat from ISIS can be removed using airstrikes alone. Majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and independents think ground troops will be necessary.

How Can the U.S. Remove the Threat from ISIS?					
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	
Ground troops will be necessary	63%	73%	59%	60%	
Only airstrikes are necessary	20	15	22	20	

But there is less agreement about what the U.S. role should be in leading the fight against ISIS. While 44% of Americans think the United States should take the leading role among all other countries against ISIS militants, more – 50% - do not. Republicans and Democrats hold different views on this – while six in 10 Republicans think the U.S. should take the lead role, an equal ratio of Democrats do not.

Should the U.S. Take the Lead Role Against ISIS?					
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	
Yes	44%	58%	37%	40%	
No	50	35	60	51	

And most Americans regardless of political affiliation show at least some concern that U.S. intervention in Iraq and Syria will lead to a long and costly involvement. About eight in 10 Republicans and independents and nine in 10 Democrats are at least somewhat concerned.

Concern that U.S. Intervention in Iraq and Syria Will Lead to Long & Costly Involvement					
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	
Very concerned	46%	40%	51%	44%	
Somewhat concerned	37	37	39	36	
Not too/not at all concerned	15	21	9	16	

By a two to one margin, Americans think the fight against ISIS is going badly. Just 29% think it is going well – an increase from two weeks ago but similar to what has been recorded over the past year.

How is the U.S. Fight Against ISIS Going?						
	Now	2 weeks ago	8/2015	5/2015	2/2015	10/2014
Well	29%	21%	28%	27%	28%	33%
Badly	62	72	64	64	67	57

Views of Islam

As they have for years, Americans continue to have net negative views of the Islam religion. 26% have at least a somewhat favorable impression of Islam, while more - 37% - view the religion unfavorably. 28% haven't heard enough to say. Opinions of the Islam religion haven't changed much from two years ago, when CBS News last asked the question soon after the Boston Marathon bombing.

The CBS News Poll began asking about views of Islam in 2002. Back then 30% viewed the religion favorably, it dipped just below 20% in 2006 and 2007 (hitting a low of 15% in 2007) and rose again to 30% in 2011.

Impression of Islam							
	Now	4/2013	9/2012	3/2011	2/2007	4/2006	2/2002
Favorable	26%	21%	25%	30%	15%	19%	30%
Not favorable	37	38	38	35	46	45	33
Haven't heard enough	28	30	27	26	34	31	31

This poll was conducted by telephone November 19-22, 2015 among a random sample of 1,205 adults nationwide. Data collection was conducted on behalf of CBS News by SSRS of Media, PA. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones.

The poll employed a random digit dial methodology. For the landline sample, a respondent was randomly selected from all adults in the household. For the cell sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone.

Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish using live interviewers.

The data have been weighted to reflect U.S. Census figures on demographic variables.

The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups may be higher and is available by request. The margin of error includes the effects of standard weighting procedures which enlarge sampling error slightly.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

CBS NEWS POLL**Concerns About a Terror Attack in the U.S. Rise
November 19-22, 2015**

Q1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Nov15a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	42	14	71	37	45
Disapprove	47	82	19	47	48
Don't know/No answer	11	4	10	16	7

Q2. What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Economy & jobs	16	14	16	17	20
Terrorism	14	12	17	12	2
Islamic extremists groups/Isis	8	11	7	8	2
Immigration/illegal immigrants	6	7	6	5	6
Miscellaneous social issues	5	6	5	5	2
Poverty/homelessness	4	1	4	5	3
Health care/the cost of/coverage	4	2	4	4	5
Barack Obama/the president	4	5	1	4	2
Homeland security	3	3	2	4	1
Defense/national security	3	7	1	2	1
Education/school loans	2	1	2	2	3
Miscellaneous government issues	2	3	2	1	3
Other	24	24	30	24	45
Don't know/No answer	5	4	3	7	5

Q3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling foreign policy?

Approve	37	13	63	31	33
Disapprove	51	83	26	50	52
Don't know/No answer	13	4	12	19	15

Q4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	44	19	75	36	44
Disapprove	49	78	20	53	51
Don't know/No answer	7	4	4	11	5

Q5. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jul15e
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	36	14	64	29	42
Disapprove	56	84	30	59	48
Don't know/No answer	8	2	7	12	10

Q6. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria?

					Nov15a
Approve	31	11	51	26	31
Disapprove	59	83	38	60	54
Don't know/No answer	11	5	11	14	14

Q7. What is your impression of the religion called Islam? Is it very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable, or haven't you heard enough about that to say?

					Apr13b
Very favorable	8	3	12	8	7
Somewhat favorable	18	13	25	16	14
Somewhat unfavorable	14	21	9	12	18
Very unfavorable	23	33	18	20	20
Haven't heard enough	28	23	27	31	30
Don't know/No answer	10	8	8	13	11

Q8. How much confidence do you have in the ability of the US government to protect its citizens from future terrorist attacks, a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

					Apr15a
A great deal	21	13	28	20	23
A fair amount	42	36	49	40	41
Not very much	25	38	18	23	26
None at all	11	12	4	15	10
Don't know/No answer	2	1	2	2	1

Q9. How likely do you think it is that there will be a terrorist attack in the United States within the next few months -- very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely	28	40	19	26	12
Somewhat likely	41	42	39	41	32
Not very likely	20	12	28	18	37
Not at all likely	8	4	10	8	16
Don't know/No answer	5	2	4	7	3

Q10. Would you say you personally are very concerned about a terrorist attack in the area where you live, or not?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Apr15a
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	25	28	24	24	16
No	73	70	76	73	83
Don't know/No answer	2	2	*	3	1

Q11. How concerned are you about losing some of your privacy as a result of steps taken by the federal government to fight terrorism -- are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?

					Jan14c
Very concerned	27	27	24	30	27
Somewhat concerned	27	24	29	27	32
Not very concerned	22	22	22	21	22
Not at all concerned	22	26	25	18	19
Don't know/No answer	2	*	*	4	1

Q12. Which concerns you more right now—1. that the government will fail to enact strong anti-terrorism laws, or 2. that the government will enact new anti-terrorism laws which excessively restrict the average person's civil liberties?

					Sep08c
Fail to enact laws	46	56	42	43	31
Restrict civil liberties	40	32	46	40	51
Both (vol.)	2	2	*	3	1
Neither (vol.)	2	1	3	1	3
Don't know/No answer	10	8	8	13	14

Q13. Which comes closer to your opinion about Syrian refugees who want to come to the United States?
1. The U.S. should allow refugees from Syria into the United States as long as they go through a security clearance process. OR 2. The U.S. should not allow any refugees from Syria into the United States at this time.

Should allow	47	27	63	47
Should not allow	50	68	36	49
Don't know/No answer	3	5	2	4

Q14. Do you think it is necessary for Syrian refugees who want to come to the United States to go through a stricter security clearance process than they do now, or don't you think that is necessary?

Necessary	78	87	77	74
Not necessary	15	6	19	16
Don't know/No answer	7	7	4	10

Q15. Do you think allowing Syrian refugees into the U.S. poses a threat to the security of the United States, or not?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Yes, major	45	66	33	42
Yes, minor	22	19	25	23
No, not a threat	26	12	36	28
Don't know/No answer	6	4	6	7

Q16. How would you say things are going for the U.S. in its fight against the militant group ISIS in Iraq and Syria? Would you say things are going very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Nov15a
					%
Very well	3	3	5	3	2
Somewhat well	26	14	36	25	19
Somewhat badly	33	31	38	31	36
Very badly	29	49	13	28	36
Don't know/No answer	9	4	9	12	7

Q17. Do you think Barack Obama has a clear plan for dealing with ISIS militants, or not?

					Mar15c
Yes, has clear plan	23	7	40	19	25
No, does not have clear plan	66	88	45	68	64
Don't know/No answer	11	4	16	12	11

Q18. Do you favor or oppose US airstrikes against ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria?

					Feb15b
Favor	75	83	74	71	77
Oppose	17	11	19	19	16
Favor airstrikes in Syria only (vol.)	*	*	1	-	--
Favor airstrikes in Iraq only (vol.)	-	-	-	-	--
Don't know/No answer	8	6	6	10	7

Q19. Do you favor or oppose the U.S. sending ground troops into Iraq or Syria to fight ISIS militants?

					Jul15e
Favor	50	66	43	45	46
Oppose	42	29	48	46	45
Favor airstrikes in Syria only (vol.)	-	-	-	-	--
Favor airstrikes in Iraq only (vol.)	-	-	-	-	--
Don't know/No answer	8	5	9	8	9

Q20. Do you think the United States will be able to remove the threat from ISIS militants using airstrikes alone, or do you think ground troops will be necessary in order to remove the threat from ISIS militants?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Feb15b
	%	%	%	%	%
Air strikes alone	20	15	22	20	18
Ground troops will be necessary	63	73	59	60	65
Don't know/No answer	17	11	19	20	17

Q21. Do you think the United States should or should not take the leading role among all other countries in the fight against ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria?

Should	44	58	37	40
Should not	50	35	60	51
Don't know/No answer	6	7	3	9

Q22. How concerned are you that U.S. intervention in Iraq and Syria will lead to a long and costly involvement there – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

					Feb15b
Very concerned	46	40	51	44	43
Somewhat concerned	37	37	39	36	42
Not too concerned	10	14	5	12	10
Not at all concerned	5	7	4	4	3
Don't know/No answer	2	2	1	3	2

	<u>Unweighted</u>	<u>Weighted</u>
Total Respondents	1,205	
Total Republicans	341	316
Total Democrats	381	396
Total independents	483	493