

For 9 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 18

By Gary Langer

### Worries About Terrorism Rise Post-Paris

Americans' worries about terrorism have increased modestly in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris, as has public priority on investigating terrorism even at the expense of personal privacy. Barack Obama, for his part, is doing slightly better in trust to handle the issue.

Seventy-six percent of Americans in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll say they're worried about the possibility of a major terrorist attack in this country, up from 71 percent in October and numerically the most since 2003. It's been a big majority steadily in ABC/Post polls since 1995, ranging from 62 to 87 percent, the latter immediately following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Total worry includes 34 percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), who say they're "very" worried about an attack, numerically the most since October 2001, albeit not by a significant margin. (It was 32 percent in October.)

Given that concern, the public by 2-1, 63-32 percent, says it's more important for the federal government to investigate possible terrorist threats – even if that intrudes on personal privacy – than to avoid intruding on privacy, if that limits its ability to investigate. That's shifted from a 57-39 percent division in July 2013, its closest margin in ABC/Post polls since 2002.

The two views are closely related: People who are very worried about terrorism give a higher priority to investigating threats than protecting privacy by a vast 75-21 percent, and it's 64-31 percent among those who are somewhat worried. By contrast, among those who are less worried about terrorism, 51 percent are more concerned with protecting privacy, vs. 44 percent who give investigating terrorism the higher priority.

Obama, for his part, received criticism for not attending or sending a high-level representative to an anti-terrorism rally in Paris after the attacks there, a point his spokesman conceded. But it looks not to have damaged his approval rating at home for handling terrorism: Americans divide on the question, 47-45 percent, better than his ratings on the issue in December and October. (The latter, 42-50 percent, was his career worst on terrorism.)

	Obama's handling of terrorism	
	Approve	Disapprove
1/15/15	47%	45
12/14/14	43	48
10/12/14	42	50

There are, as usual, sharp ideological and partisan divisions on Obama's handling of terrorism. Approval ranges from 27 to 54 to 66 percent among conservatives, moderates and liberals, and from 18 to 49 to 70 percent among Republicans, independents and Democrats, respectively.

The president's approval rating for handling terrorism is lower among those who are worried about a major attack – in large part because they include more of his partisan and ideological opposites. Worry about a major attack ranges from 87 percent among conservative Republicans to 63 percent among liberal Democrats. (Strong worry is especially high among conservatives and Republicans alike.)

Among other groups, worry about a terrorist attack – including strong worry – is higher among women than men, and among older vs. younger adults. Strong worry peaks among less-educated Americans and in the East (likely given the locus of the 9/11 attacks). Perhaps counterintuitively, overall worry is somewhat lower in urban centers than elsewhere, especially when compared with rural areas. That reflects partisan and ideological distributions.

Putting a priority on investigating terrorism vs. protecting privacy rights peaks in some of the same groups in which terrorism concerns are highest – notably among women and older adults. However, on this issue, Democrats and Republicans hold similar views, as do conservatives and moderates. Smaller majorities of independents and liberals support investigating terrorism at the expense of privacy rights.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 12-15, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including design effect.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Full results follow.

\* in data columns = less than 0.5 percent

1, 2a, 3-29 held for release.

2b. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling the threat of terrorism? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/15/15	47	22	25	45	14	31	8
12/14/14	43	21	22	48	14	34	9
10/12/14	42	21	21	50	15	35	8
1/23/14	50	29	21	42	14	28	8
1/15/12	56	36	20	38	10	28	6
11/3/11	60	37	23	34	12	22	6
9/1/11	62	33	29	32	12	21	6
6/5/11	60	35	25	34	13	21	6
5/2/11*	69	42	27	21	9	12	10
2/8/10	56	28	28	39	14	25	5
1/15/10	55	31	23	42	14	28	4
11/15/09	53	31	22	41	14	27	6
9/12/09	55	31	24	34	12	23	11
6/21/09	57	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	7
4/21/09**	57	"	"	26	"	"	17

\*Washington Post-Pew Research Center

30. How do you feel about the possibility of a major terrorist attack in the United States - very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried or not worried at all?

	----- Worried -----			----- Not worried -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
1/15/15	76	34	42	23	15	8	*
10/12/14	71	32	39	28	17	11	*

Compare to: How concerned are you about the possibility there will be more major terrorist attacks in the United States - is that something that worries you a great deal, somewhat, not too much or not at all?

	----- Concerned -----			---- Not concerned ----			No opinion
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	At all	
4/21/13*	68	31	37	31	21	10	1
9/7/08	64	18	46	36	23	13	*
9/7/07	66	25	41	34	23	10	*
9/7/06	74	29	45	25	17	8	*
8/21/05	66	24	42	33	23	10	1
7/21/05	73	30	43	27	17	10	*
9/8/04 RV	73	25	47	27	20	7	1
9/7/03	71	25	46	29	20	9	*
3/20/03	76	29	47	24	16	8	1
2/16/03	72	27	45	27	18	9	1
9/8/02	74	22	52	26	19	7	0
7/15/02	73	29	44	27	20	7	*
4/21/02	73	30	43	26	18	9	*
3/10/02	70	23	47	30	21	9	1
12/19/01	70	27	43	29	22	8	1
10/15/01	77	35	43	23	14	9	0
10/9/01	82	36	46	18	12	6	*
10/7/01	81	41	40	18	13	4	1
9/27/01**	83	43	39	17	12	5	*
9/11/01	87	49	38	12	7	4	1
6/13/97	62	21	41	38	24	14	*
6/2/97	63	22	41	37	28	9	*
8/5/96	74	31	43	26	18	8	*
4/20/95	78	38	40	21	16	5	1

\*Washington Post poll.

\*\*9/27/01 and previous: "How concerned are you about the possibility there will be more major terrorist attacks in this country."

31. What do you think is more important right now - (for the federal government to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy); or (for the federal government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats)?

	Investigate threats	Don't intrude on privacy	No opinion
1/15/15	63	32	5
7/21/13	57	39	4
6/9/13*	62	34	4
11/21/10	68	26	6
1/15/10	75	23	2
12/11/06	63	34	3
9/7/06	65	32	3
5/15/06	67	30	3
5/11/06	65	31	4
1/8/06	65	32	3
9/7/03**	73	21	5
9/8/02	78	18	4
6/9/02	79	18	3

\*Washington Post/Pew  
\*\*9/7/03 and previous: "FBI" rather than "federal government"

\*\*\* END \*\*\*