

ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST POLL: BIOTERRORISM
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2001

A Sober Response To Anthrax Scare

Most Americans are reacting soberly to the anthrax scare, with barely over a quarter expressing a great deal of worry that they or a loved one may become infected.

Fifty-four percent do have some concern that they, or someone close to them, could be the victim of an anthrax attack. But fewer – 26 percent of Americans – say the possibility worries them “a great deal.” That falls well short of wholesale, high-level alarm.

At the same time, the public divides on the extent of the problem. While 45 percent see it as a few isolated cases limited to a small number of people, 50 percent see it – more menacingly – as the first of an ongoing series of cases that could affect many people.

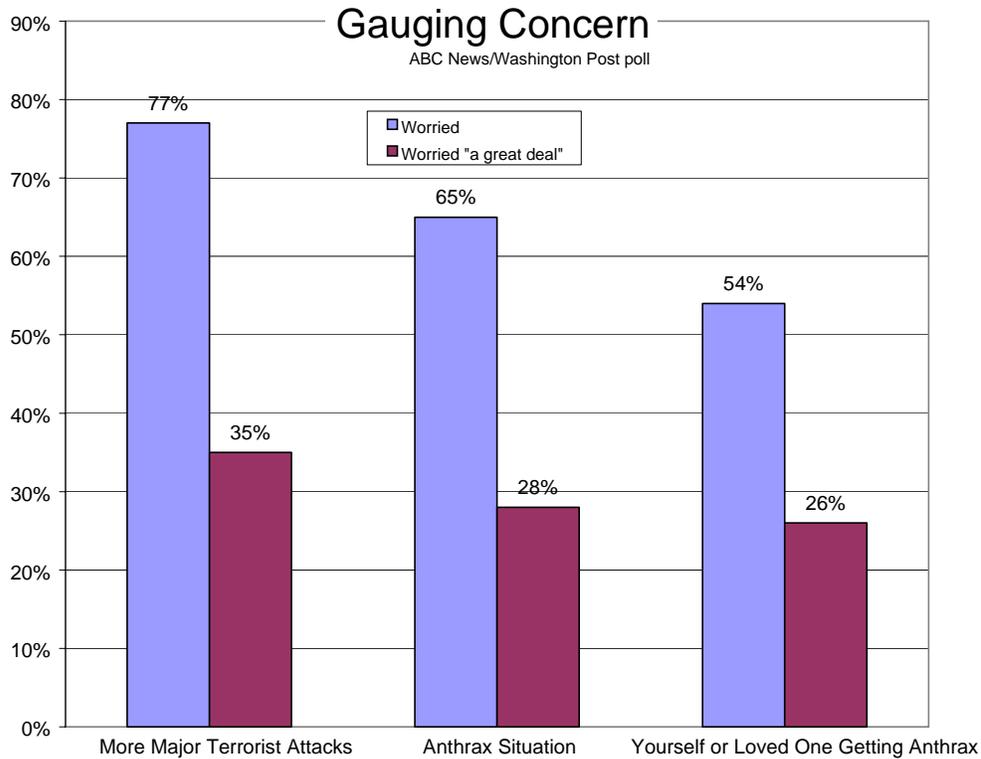
This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted Monday night, after evening news reports that an anthrax-contaminated letter had been delivered to the office of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. Midway through the evening came word that anthrax had been diagnosed in a child who’d visited ABC News offices in New York. Poll results before and after that report were essentially identical.

CONCERN – Another sign of tempered concern is this: Just one percent say they or someone in their household has bought a supply of antibiotics in case of biological attack. (That represents perhaps a couple of million people – many individuals, albeit a tiny percentage.)

Beyond the chance of personal exposure, about two-thirds of Americans express some worry about the anthrax situation more broadly. Again, though, just 28 percent say they’re worried “a great deal” about it.

Concern is a bit higher about more “major terrorist attacks” in general – 77 percent are worried about it, 35 percent a great deal. That overall worry is down, though, from 87 percent the night of Sept. 11, to its lowest since the terrorism crisis began.

	Worried	Worried “a great deal”
More major terrorist attacks	77%	35
The anthrax situation	65	28
Yourself or a loved one getting anthrax	54	26



RESPONSE – Eighty-five percent of Americans say they’re satisfied with the way government authorities have responded to the anthrax situation; they divide about evenly between being “very” and “somewhat” satisfied with the government’s response.

Just over seven in 10 also express some confidence in the federal government’s ability to deal with a large-scale biological or chemical attack – though quite a bit fewer, 22 percent, are “very” confident.

Also, nearly seven in 10 continue to say the United States is doing all it reasonably can do to prevent further terrorist attacks. That’s a turnaround from Sept. 13, when two-thirds said the authorities could have done more to prevent the attacks of Sept. 11.

MEDIA – Most see the news media’s coverage of the anthrax situation as balanced: About a third say the media have exaggerated the dangers, but more than six in 10 think not.

THE SEXES – Women are just over 20 points more apt than men to think the anthrax cases to date are the first of an ongoing series of cases that could affect many people. That may be why women are also more apt than men to express “a great deal” of concern with the situation.

BUSH/CIVILIANS – George W. Bush, meanwhile, continues to receive soaring grades for his work, with 92 percent saying they approve of the country’s campaign against

terrorism. Eighty-five percent think the United States is doing all it reasonably can to try to avoid civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 15, 2001, among a random national sample of 509 adults. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results (*=less than 0.5 percent)

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the U.S. campaign against terrorism? Do you approve/disapprove STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT?

	-----Approve-----			-----Disapprove-----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	opin.
10/15/01	92	75	17	5	3	3	3

2. 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
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	None	op.
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

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

3. Do you think the United States is doing all it reasonably can do to try to prevent further terrorist attacks, or do you think it should do more?

	US doing all it can	US should do more	No opin.
10/15/01	68	29	3
10/9/01	71	27	2

Compare to:

Do you think the United States government did all it reasonably could do to try to prevent these attacks, or do you think it could have done more?

	US did all it could	US could have done more	No opin.
9/13/01	31	65	4
9/11/01	43	44	13

4. There's been news lately about letters contaminated with the anthrax bacteria being distributed by mail. Is this situation something that worries you a great deal, somewhat, not too much or not at all?

	-----Worried-----			-----Not worried-----			No
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	None	op.
10/15/01	65	28	37	35	22	14	0

5. What about the chance that you personally, or a close friend or relative, might be the victim of an anthrax attack - does that worry you a great deal, somewhat, not too much or not at all?

	-----Worried-----			-----Not worried-----			No
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	None	op.
10/15/01	54	26	29	45	29	17	*

6. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way government authorities have been handling the anthrax situation? Would you say you are very satisfied/dissatisfied or only somewhat?

	-----Satisfied-----			-----Dissatisfied-----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	op.
10/15/01	85	43	41	12	9	3	3

7. Given what you know about it, do you think of the anthrax situation as (a few isolated cases limited to a small number of people), or as (the first of an ongoing series of cases that could affect large numbers of people)?

	Isolated	Ongoing	No opin.
10/15/01	45	50	5

8. How confident are you in the federal government's ability to respond effectively to a large-scale biological or chemical attack in the United States - very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not confident at all?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not confident-----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	op.
10/15/01*	72	22	50	26	20	6	2
10/9/01	74	23	51	25	19	6	1

*added "large-scale"

9. Generally speaking, do you think the news media have (exaggerated the danger of the anthrax situation), or have they (reported the anthrax situation without exaggerating the danger)?

	Exaggerated	Not exaggerated	No opin.
10/15/01	34	62	4

10/12. Since September 11th, have you or has anyone in your household bought a supply of antibiotics in case of biological attack, or not? (IF NO) Are you seriously considering doing that, or not?

	Yes	-----No-----		DK/REF	No
		Consider	Not cons.		opin.
10/15/01	1	9	89	1	0

13. On another subject, how worried are you that the U.S. war on terrorism will grow into a broader war between (the U.S. and its allies) on one side, and

(Arabs and Muslims) on the other side? Is that something that worries you a great deal, somewhat, not too much or not at all?

	-----Worried-----			-----Not worried-----			No
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not much	None	op.
10/15/01	63	28	35	36	19	16	1
10/9/01	66	25	41	33	22	11	1

14. Do you think the United States is doing all it reasonably can do to try to avoid civilian casualties in Afghanistan, or do you think it should do more?

	US doing all it can	US should do more	No opin.
10/15/01	85	12	2

END