

ABC NEWS POLL: ANTHRAX UPDATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Thursday, Oct. 25, 2001

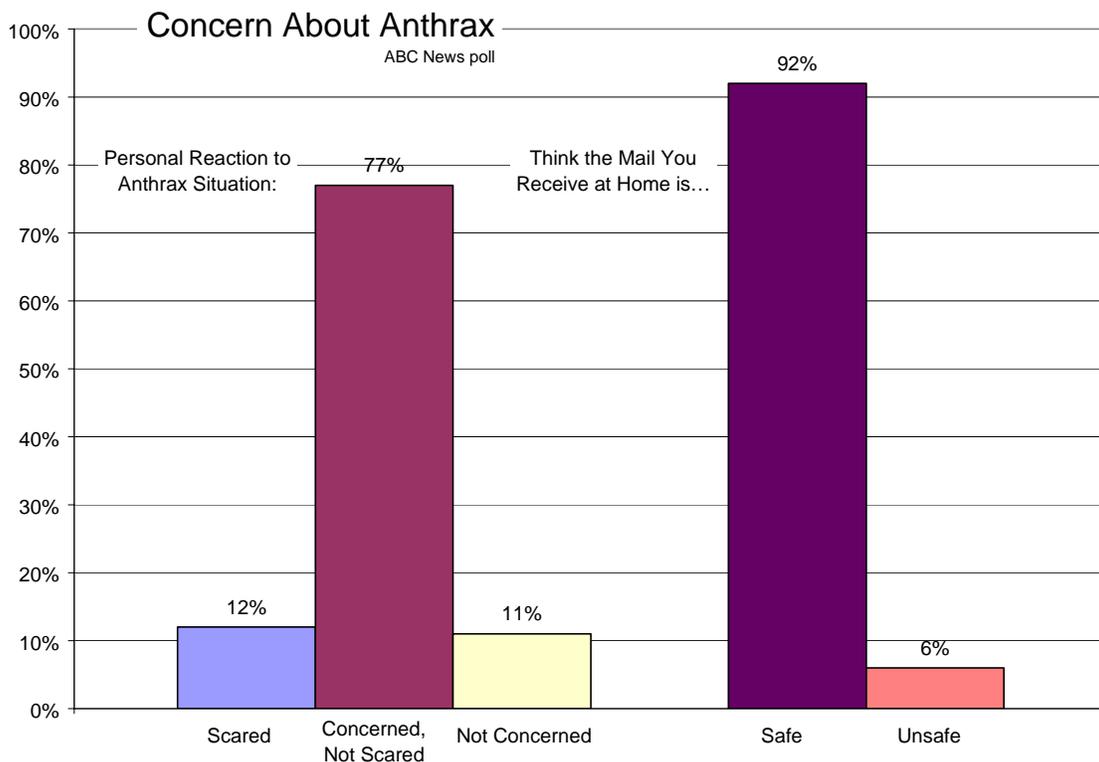
Anthrax Anxiety Remains Muted; Nine in 10 Think Their Mail's Safe

Americans are remaining doggedly level-headed in the face of the nation's anthrax attacks, with large majorities expressing concern but not fear, satisfaction with the government's response and an overwhelming sense that their own mail remains safe.

Remarkably, anxiety hasn't grown in the last week and a half – it's even ebbed slightly. Seventeen percent now express a "great deal" of worry that they or a loved one could become infected, down from 26 percent on Oct. 15.

That's occurred despite discovery of the bacteria at Postal Service facilities, additional exposures and the deaths of two postal workers. But the official response has intensified and, probably most important, the outbreak has remained localized – likely the reason 92 percent of Americans think their own mail is safe.

The results also seem to reflect an unconscious resolve not to get overwrought. Half the public continues to see the anthrax situation as an ongoing problem that could affect many people. At the same time, however, barely over one in 10 say it scares them.



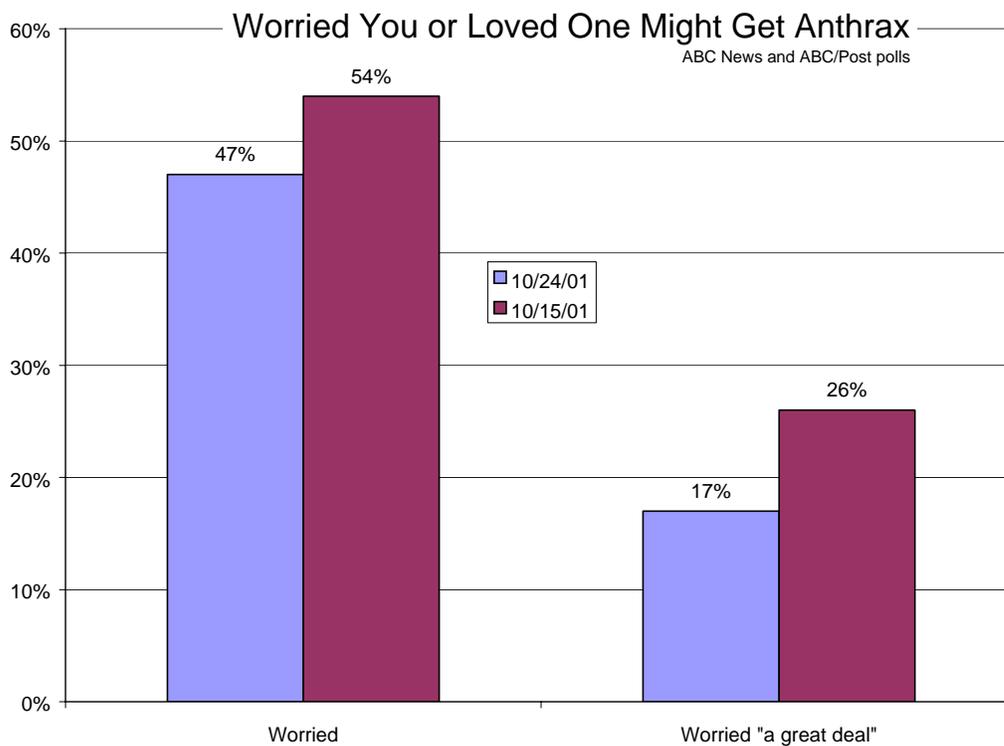
	Personal response to the anthrax situation	
Scared		12%
Concerned, not scared	77	
Not concerned		11

MEDIA – Indeed the biggest change since last week is in the sense that the news media are exaggerating the danger of the situation. Forty-six percent now think that’s the case, up a dozen points from 34 percent last week.

News media are:	10/24	10/15
Exaggerating the danger	46%	34
Not exaggerating	49	62

RISK – Just under half – 47 percent – express some worry that they or a close friend or relative could be an anthrax victim. (It was 54 percent last week.) This includes the 17 percent with “a great deal” of worry, plus 30 percent with more moderate concerns.

Concerns about personal exposure – excluding the risk to a friend or relative – are lower, 33 percent, including 12 percent with a “great deal” of worry.



	Worried, total	Worried, "great deal"
Risk to self, friend, relative	47%	17
Risk to self only	33	12

REGION – A regional breakdown supports the notion that concern is linked to the localized nature of the exposures – especially the recent focus on Washington, D.C., followed by New York and New Jersey. Concern about possible infection is higher since last week only in the East, about steady in the South, and down in the Midwest and West.

	Worried you or loved one might get anthrax:	
	10/24	10/15
East	65%	56
South	49	53
Midwest	39	56
West	34	53

Personal fear also is higher in the East, with 21 percent saying they’re scared; it’s lowest, seven percent, in the West.

OFFICIAL RESPONSE – While authorities have taken some criticism for not seeing the threat to postal facilities sooner, most Americans don’t seem to be in a blaming mood. Seventy-eight percent say they’re satisfied with the government’s response to the anthrax situation – still a large majority, if not quite last week’s 85 percent.

Seventy-five percent also say they’re confident in the federal government’s ability to respond effectively to a large-scale chemical or biological attack, about the same as last week. That confidence, it should be noted, is not supreme: Just 23 percent are “very” confident of an effective response.

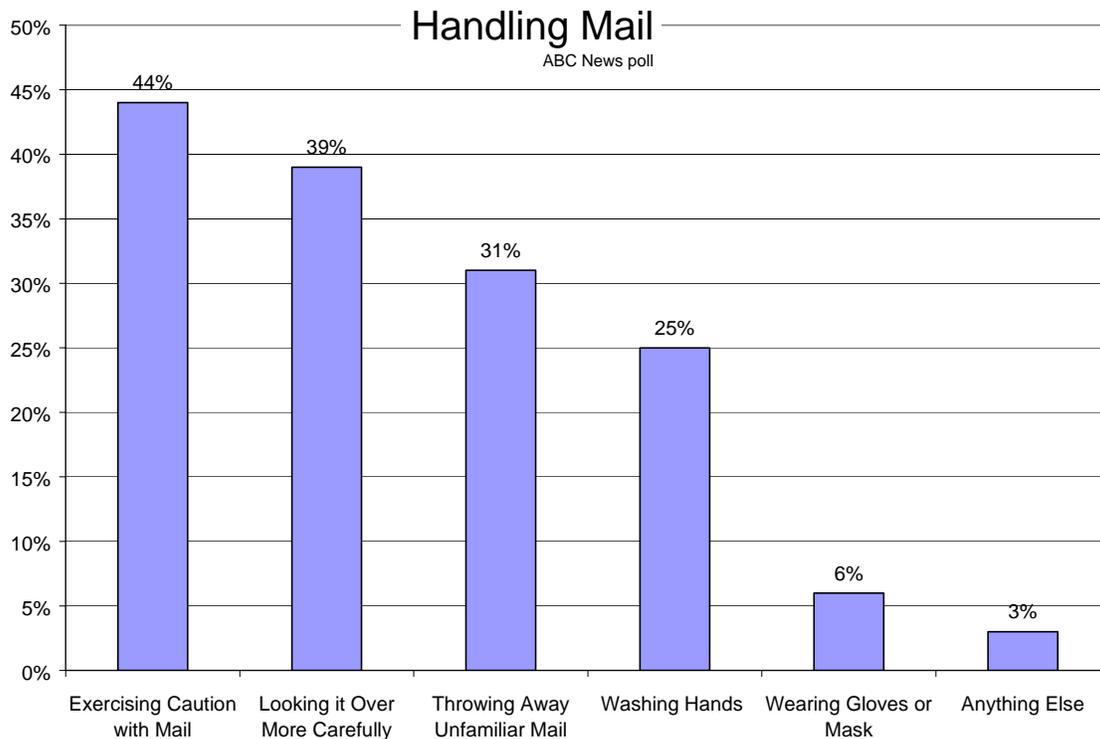
But most people do recognize the government’s recent efforts. Looking back, about six in 10 say the government did not do all it reasonably could have done to prepare for this kind of attack. (This, too, peaks in the East.) But looking ahead, six in 10 say the United States now is doing all it reasonably can to prevent further biological attacks.

MAIL – The main personal response to the situation is to check your mail – 44 percent are now doing this, about the same as it was over the weekend. But most of them are keeping it simple: looking their mail over more carefully, and throwing away unfamiliar mail without opening it. A quarter are washing their hands. Few are donning gloves or a mask.

	Mail precautions
Handling mail with caution	44%
Looking it over more carefully	39
Throwing away unfamiliar mail	31
Washing hands after handling mail	25
Wearing gloves/mask	6

There’s also a regional difference in this result, with caution handling mail exceeding 50 percent only in the East.

	Cautious when opening mail:	
	10/24	10/21
East	53%	44
South	46	45
Midwest	41	35
West	37	32



OTHER STEPS – Thirty-five percent of Americans also say they’ve gathered information about what to do in case of an anthrax attack, unchanged since the weekend. Fourteen percent say they’re avoiding crowded places, such as shopping malls – far from a majority, but still a potential cause of concern to retailers, if it holds.

Eight percent have spoken with a doctor, and four percent say they’ve bought antibiotics. The latter was two percent in a poll completed Sunday; a two-point change is not significant, given polling tolerances.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 24, 2001, among a random national sample of 508 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. How concerned are you 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.
10/24/01	47	17	30	53	32	21	1
10/15/01	54	26	29	45	29	17	*

2. Apart from a friend or relative, what about the chance that you yourself might get anthrax - 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.
10/24/01	33	12	21	66	33	33	1

3. How would you describe your own personal reaction to the anthrax situation - on a personal level would you say you're scared about it, concerned about it but not scared, or not concerned?

	Scared	Concerned/ not scared	Not concerned	No opin.
10/24/01	12	77	11	*

4. 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.
10/24/01	78	37	41	19	11	8	3
10/15/01	85	43	41	12	9	3	3

5. 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.
10/24/01	42	51	7
10/15/01	45	50	5

6. 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.
10/24/01	75	23	52	23	17	6	2
10/15/01*	72	22	50	26	20	6	2
10/9/01	74	23	51	25	19	6	1

*added "large-scale"

7. Overall, do you think the mail you receive at home is safe, or unsafe?

	Safe	Unsafe	No opinion
10/24/01	92	6	2

8. Do you think the United States government was as prepared as it reasonably could have been to deal with a biological attack like this anthrax situation, or do you think it should have been better prepared?

	US did all it could	US should have done more	No opin.
10/24/01	39	59	3

9. Do you think the United States is doing all it reasonably can do to try to prevent further biological attacks like this anthrax situation, or do you think it should do more?

	US doing all it can	US should do more	No opin.
10/24/01	61	37	3

10. 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.
10/24/01	46	49	5
10/15/01	34	62	4

11. Since September 11th, have you or has anyone in your household (READ ITEM), or not? (IF NO) Are you seriously considering doing that, or not?

10/24/01

	Yes	-----No-----			No op.
		NET	Consider	Not cons.	
a. Bought a supply of antibiotics in case of biological attack	4	95	15	80	1
b. Spoken with a doctor about anthrax or some other biological attack	8	92	11	80	0
c. Started to exercise caution in opening your mail	44	55	17	39	1
d. Gathered information about what to do in case of an anthrax or other biological attack	35	63	18	45	2
e. Started avoiding crowded places such as shopping malls because of the chance of terrorism	14	86	11	75	*
f. Tried to reduce the amount of mail you handle by asking people to send you e-mail instead	7	92	6	86	1

Trend:

a. Bought a supply of antibiotics in case of biological attack

	Yes	-----No-----		No op.
		Consider	Not cons.	
10/24/01	4	15	80	1
10/21/01	2	10	86	2
10/15/01	1	9	89	1

b. Spoken with a doctor about anthrax or some other biological attack

	Yes	-----No-----		No op.
		Consider	Not cons.	
10/24/01	8	11	80	0
10/21/01	5	11	84	1

c. Started to exercise caution in opening your mail

	Yes	-----No-----		No op.
		Consider	Not cons.	
10/24/01	44	17	39	1
10/21/01	40	16	44	1

d. Gathered information about what to do in case of an anthrax or other biological attack

	Yes	-----No-----		No
		Consider	Not cons.	op.
10/24/01	35	18	45	2
10/21/01	35	15	50	1

e. Started avoiding crowded places such as shopping malls because of the chance of terrorism

	Yes	-----No-----		No
		Consider	Not cons.	op.
10/24/01	14	11	75	*
10/21/01	8	12	79	1

f. No trend.

12. (IF STARTED TO EXERCISE CAUTION WITH MAIL) As far as exercising caution with your mail, are you or is someone in your household (READ ITEM) or not?

11/12 NET TABLE - ALL RESPONDENTS

	Yes	-----No-----			No op.
		NET	Not this	Not anything	
a. Looking it over more carefully than usual	39	61	5	55	0
b. Throwing away unfamiliar mail without opening it	31	68	13	55	1
c. Wearing gloves or a mask when handling mail	6	94	39	55	0
d. Washing your hands after handling the mail	25	75	19	55	0
e. Doing anything else with your mail	3	96	41	55	0

END