

Terrorism Concerns Rise, But Without Undue Alarm

Public concern about the threat of terrorism on New Year's Eve has risen, but with no sign of undue alarm.

Forty percent of Americans express concern about the possibility of a major terrorist attack in this country on Friday night, up from 26 percent last week. Fifty-nine percent are not much worried – still a majority, but down from 73 percent a week ago.

Possibility of a New Year's terrorist attack:

	-----Worried-----			-----Not Worried-----		
	Net	Great deal	Somewhat	Net	Not much	Not at all
12/26	40%	9	31	59	29	30
12/19	26	8	18	73	26	47

While it's up, concern is muted: Fewer than one in 10 express a "great deal" of worry, essentially no different than last week. What's changed are those who are "somewhat" concerned, up 13 points; and "not at all" worried, down 17 points. That suggests official warnings to some extent have achieved their purpose: Raising concern, but not panic.

WARN - The government has issued several warnings of the possibility of terrorism since the Dec. 14 arrest in Washington state of Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian accused of smuggling bomb-making materials from Canada; and the Dec. 19 arrests in Vermont of an Algerian man and a Canadian woman. Authorities linked her to a terrorist group.

Concern about a major terrorist attack at some unspecified time has been much higher – three-quarters of Americans expressed such worries after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, as did six in 10 two years later. This poll asks a narrower question, measuring concern about an attack on one specific night – one on which security will be high, and three-quarters of Americans plan, in any case, to spend the evening at their own home, or a friend's.

METHODOLOGY – This ABCNews.com survey was conducted by telephone Dec. 21-23 and Dec. 26, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,012 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

Here are the full results:

30. How concerned are you about the possibility of a major terrorist attack in this country during the New Year's Eve holiday this year - 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	opin.
12/26/99	40	9	31	59	29	30	*
12/19/99	26	8	18	73	26	47	1

Compare to: How concerned are you about the possibility there will be more major terrorist attacks in this country - 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	opin.
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

* <0.5