



**THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**For The People & The Press**

**NEWS Release**  
 1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700  
 Washington, D.C. 20036  
 Tel (202) 419-4350  
 Fax (202) 419-4399

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Friday, October 22, 2010**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
**Andrew Kohut, Director**  
**Carroll Doherty, Associate Director**

## But Many Say U.S. Has Been Lucky in Avoiding Attack Continued Positive Marks for Government Anti-Terror Efforts

The federal government continues to get positive marks for efforts to reduce the threat of terrorism, but many Americans say luck is a big reason why the United States has not suffered a major attack at home since Sept. 11, 2001.

About seven-in-ten (69%) say the government is doing very (15%) or fairly well (54%) in reducing the threat of terrorism, numbers that have changed only slightly since January. Still, 30% say the ability of terrorists to attack the U.S. is now greater than it was on 9/11, while 41% think it is about the same. Just a quarter (25%) say the ability of terrorists to attack is less now than it was in 2001. These numbers also are little changed since the start of the year.

### Little Change in Government's Anti-Terror Ratings

<i>How well is gov't doing in reducing threat of terrorism?</i>	<b>Feb 2009</b>	<b>Nov 2009</b>	<b>Jan 2010</b>	<b>Oct 2010</b>
	%	%	%	%
Very/Fairly well	71	74	65	69
Not too/Not at all well	22	22	33	28
Don't know	7	4	2	4
	100	100	100	100
<i>Compared w/ 9/11, terrorists' ability to attack U.S. is...</i>				
Greater	17	29	33	30
The same	44	38	35	41
Less	35	29	29	25
Don't know	4	4	3	4
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Oct. 13-18, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Oct. 13-18 among 2,251 adults, finds that the public continues to be divided over why there has not been another terrorist attack since 2001; 43% say it is mostly because America has been lucky while nearly as many (37%) say it is mostly because the government is doing a good job protecting the country. Another 13% say America is a difficult target for terrorists. These numbers have shown little change in recent years.

### Why Has There Not Been An Attack Since 2001 in the U.S.?

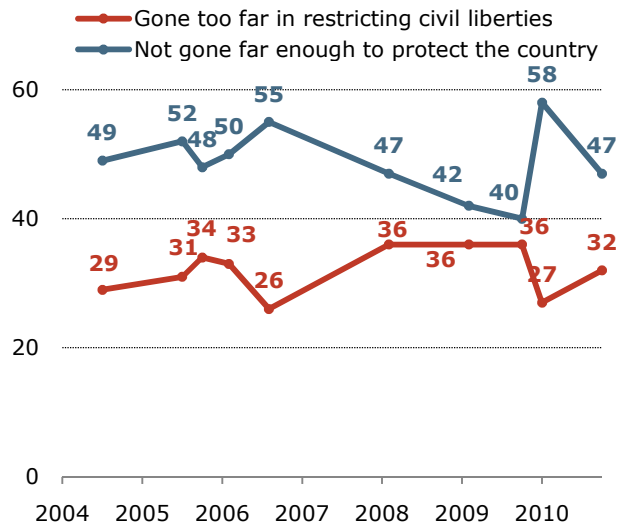
Mostly because...	Oct 2005 %	Aug 2006 %	Nov 2009 %	Oct 2010 %
American has been lucky so far	45	40	35	43
Gov't doing good job protecting country	33	39	44	37
America difficult target for terrorists	17	13	11	13
Don't know	5	8	9	8
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Oct.13-18, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Currently, nearly half (47%) say the government's anti-terrorism policies have not gone far enough to protect the country, while about a third (32%) say those policies have gone too far in restricting civil liberties.

Since January there has been a decline in the percentage saying the government's anti-terrorism policies have not gone far enough in protecting the country. At that time, shortly after the failed Christmas Day attack on an airliner, 58% said the government had not gone far enough in protecting the country, more than double the percentage saying it had gone too far in restricting civil liberties (27%). Just two months earlier, in November 2009, 40% said the government had not gone far enough in national security, while nearly as many (36%) said it gone too far in restricting civil liberties.

### Gov't Anti-Terrorism Efforts Have...



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Oct.13-18, 2010.

## Partisan Shift in Anti-Terror Ratings

Democrats are now more likely than Republicans to say the government is doing very or fairly well in reducing the threat of terrorism. Fully 84% of Democrats give the government positive ratings compared with 64% of Republicans.

During the Bush administration, the partisan gap was reversed. In February 2008, 84% of Republicans and 57% of Democrats expressed positive views of the government's anti-terror efforts; the partisan differences were even larger (46 points) in January 2007.

Independents' views of the government's performance in reducing the threat of terrorism have shown less change since the Bush administration. Currently, 62% say the government is doing very or fairly well, compared with 70% last November and 64% in February 2008.

There also have been partisan shifts in other attitudes and perceptions related to terrorism. Currently, 50% of Republicans mostly credit luck, rather than effective government policies (37% of Republicans), for why there has not been another attack since 2001. Among Democrats, 44% say it is mostly because of government policies while about as many (35%) say it is because the country has been lucky so far.

In August 2006, a majority of Republicans (58%) said the United States had not suffered another terror attack mostly because of government policies, while 54% of Democrats said this was mostly because of luck. Again, independents views have changed less with the change of administrations – currently 44% say the absence of attacks since 2001 is mostly because of luck while 31% mostly credit government policies. In 2006, 40% said it was mostly because the country has been lucky and 33% said it was mostly because of government policies.

---

### How Well is Government Doing Reducing the Threat of Terrorism?

	Oct 2005	Jan 2007	Feb 2008	Nov 2009	Jan 2010	Oct 2010
<i>% saying very/fairly well</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	67	54	66	74	65	69
Republican	91	82	84	73	59	64
Democrat	55	36	57	78	76	84
Independent	60	51	64	70	59	62
R-D gap	+36	+46	+27	-5	-17	-20

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Oct. 13-18, 2010

---

## About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted October 13-18, 2010 among a national sample of 2,251 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (1,487 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 764 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 311 who had no landline telephone). Interviewing was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see:

<http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	2,251	2.5 percentage points
Republican	616	5.0 percentage points
Democrat	728	4.5 percentage points
Independent	752	4.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director

Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors

Michael Remez, Senior Writer

Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley, Senior Researchers

Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, and Alec Tyson, Research Associates

Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst

Mattie Ressler and Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistants

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**OCTOBER 2010 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**October 13-18, 2010**  
**N=2251**

**THOUGHT THROUGH Q.47 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**Q.48 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTION 49**

**Q.50 THROUGH Q.53 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTIONS 54-59**

**Q.60 THROUGH Q.64 HELD FOR RELEASE**

**NO QUESTIONS 65-69**

**ASK ALL:**

Thinking about the issue of terrorism for a moment...

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=1110]:**

Q.70F1 Overall, do you think the ability of terrorists to launch another major attack on the U.S. is greater, the same, or less than it was at the time of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks?

	<u>Greater</u>	<u>The same</u>	<u>Less</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
Oct 13-18, 2010	30	41	25	4
Jan 6-10, 2010	33	35	29	3
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	29	38	29	4
Feb 4-8, 2009	17	44	35	4
Mid-September, 2008	18	43	36	3
Late-February, 2008	16	41	39	4
December, 2006	23	41	31	5
August, 2006	25	37	33	5
January, 2006	17	39	39	5
Late-October, 2005	26	41	29	4
July, 2005	28	40	29	3
July, 2004	24	39	34	3
Late-August, 2002	22	39	34	5

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=1110]:**

Q.71F1 So far, there has not been another terrorist attack in America since 2001. Is this mostly because  
**[READ AND RANDOMIZE]?**

<u>Oct 13-18</u> <u>2010</u>		<u>Oct 28-</u> <u>Nov 8</u> <u>2009</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Late</u> <u>Oct</u> <u>2005</u>
37	The government is doing a good job protecting the country [OR]	44	39	33
13	America is a difficult target for terrorists [OR]	11	13	17
43	America has been lucky so far	35	40	45
8	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	9	8	5

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1141]:**

Q.72F2 In general, how well do you think the U.S. government is doing in reducing the threat of terrorism [READ]?

	Very <u>well</u>	Fairly <u>well</u>	Not <u>too</u> <u>well</u>	Not <u>at all</u> <u>well</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Oct 13-18, 2010	15	54	17	10	4
Jan 6-10, 2010	15	50	21	12	2
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	20	53	14	8	4
Mar 31-Apr 21, 2009	19	56	15	5	5
Feb 4-8, 2009	22	49	16	6	7
Late February, 2008	21	45	19	12	3
January, 2007	17	37	27	17	2
December, 2006	17	48	21	11	3
August, 2006	22	52	16	8	2
February, 2006	16	52	20	10	2
January, 2006	16	50	20	9	5
Late October, 2005	17	50	22	9	2
July, 2005	17	53	19	8	3
July, 2004	18	53	17	8	4
August, 2003	19	56	16	7	2
Early November, 2002 (RVs)	15	54	19	8	4
June, 2002	16	60	16	4	4
Early November, 2001	35	46	9	5	5
October 15-21, 2001	38	46	9	4	3
October 10-14, 2001	48	40	6	2	4

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1141]:**

Q.73F2 What concerns you more about the government's anti-terrorism policies [READ AND RANDOMIZE]: That they have gone too far in restricting the average person's civil liberties [OR] That they have not gone far enough to adequately protect the country?

	Have gone too far in restricting <u>civil liberties</u>	Have not gone far enough <u>to protect county</u>	(VOL.) Both/Neither/ Approve <u>of policies</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Oct 13-18, 2010	32	47	11	10
Jan 6-10, 2010	27	58	8	8
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	36	40	13	11
Feb 4-8, 2009 <sup>1</sup>	36	42	9	13
Late February, 2008	36	47	9	8
August, 2006	26	55	11	8
February, 2006	33	50	10	7
January, 2006	33	46	12	9
Late October, 2005	34	48	10	8
July, 2005	31	52	10	7
July, 2004	29	49	11	11

**NO QUESTION 74****Q.75 THROUGH PVOTE08B PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

<sup>1</sup> In February 4-8, 2009 the question asked whether the policies "go too far in restricting the average person's civil liberties" or "do not go far enough to adequately protect the country."