



THE COMMONWEALTH POLL

VCU Center for Public Policy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Dec.13, 2001

Release # 0149-2

Contact: Cary Funk, Director

Phone 804 827 1430 / E-mail clfunk@vcu.edu

Assessing the Impact of Terrorism on Virginians

Richmond, VA—Even as the immediate sense of crisis begins to subside, Virginians are still feeling the effects of the terrorist attacks which shook the nation on September 11. Nearly half (48 percent) of Virginians say they have changed their priorities for the future in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks by either a lot or some according to a new poll conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University. The Commonwealth Poll was conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 6 with 793 adults in Virginia. The margin of error is +/- 4 percentage points.

Women and African-Americans are more likely to have changed their priorities for the future than other Virginians. Fifty-nine percent of women compared to 36 percent of men have changed their priorities by either a lot or some in the three months since the attacks. Sixty-two percent of African-Americans have changed their priorities compared to 45 percent for whites.

Changed Priorities for the Future?

	A LOT OR SOME	NOT MUCH OR NOT AT ALL
All	48%	51%
Women	59%	39%
Men	36%	64%
African-Americans	62%	37%
Whites	45%	54%

Nearly seven in ten Virginians (68 percent) have an American flag displayed on their car or home. Thirty-two percent of Virginians have changed their daily life activities, and about a quarter of Virginians (26 percent) are worried about a terrorist attack in the area where they live. Those in northern Virginia and the Tidewater regions are somewhat more worried than other

-more-

Virginians. Thirty-four percent of northern Virginians and 32 percent of those in Tidewater are worried about a terrorist attack. Women are more worried than men about a terrorist attack in their area; 34 percent of women are worried about this compared with 17 percent of men. A quarter of Virginians are worried about being exposed to anthrax. Concern over anthrax is higher among African-Americans than whites. Four in ten African-Americans are worried about being exposed to anthrax compared to 22 percent of whites. Nearly twice as many women are worried about anthrax exposure as men (32 compared to 17 percent).

Worried about Terrorist Attacks in Your Area?

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
All	26%	73%
Women	34%	66%
Men	17%	81%

Worried about Anthrax Exposure?

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
All	25%	74%
African-Americans	40%	60%
Whites	22%	78%
Women	32%	67%
Men	17%	82%

Focus on Government

The terrorist attacks have focused new attention on government at all levels and reshaped both federal and state government budgetary needs for the coming year. Nearly half of Virginians consider state government more important in light of the terrorist attacks (47 percent); roughly equal portions (at 46 percent) think state government’s importance is about the same, and just 4 percent say it is less important. Those who are more worried about terrorist attacks in their area are more likely to think state government takes on added importance. Six in ten of those worried about a terrorist attack say that state government is more important than before, while a third of this group say it has the same importance. This compares with 42 percent of those who are not worried about a terrorist attack saying that state government is more important than before, and a bare majority, at 51 percent, saying it has the same importance.

Importance of State Government

	MORE IMPORTANT	SAME	LESS IMPORTANT
All	47%	46%	4%
Worried about attacks	60%	33%	6%
Not worried	42%	51%	4%

A clear majority of the public has confidence in the Virginia government to protect citizens from future terrorism. Seventy-two percent report either a great deal or fair amount of confidence in state government to protect against future terrorism, while just 23 percent hold either not much or no confidence in government to do so. Confidence is a bit lower in the ability of state government to protect citizens from bioterrorism threats such as anthrax, although a 59 percent majority still holds either a great deal or fair amount of confidence in government to do this. Thirty seven percent have either not much or no confidence in state government to protect citizens from bioterrorism.

Confidence in Virginia Government

	GREAT DEAL OR FAIR AMOUNT	NOT MUCH OR NONE AT ALL
To protect from future terrorist attacks	72%	23%
To protect from bioterrorism	59%	37%

Attention to the News

News stories on events related to the attacks have captured the interest of Virginians and overshadowed attention to the growing budget crisis in Virginia. Nearly all Virginians (95 percent) have followed the news of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. very or fairly closely; 92 percent have followed news on the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan very or fairly closely. The attacks put a standstill to the campaign for a new governor for two weeks. Seven in ten Virginians followed the news on the gubernatorial election -- 37 percent very closely and another one third fairly closely. The state budget situation has captured the attention of fewer Virginians. Fifty-four percent have followed the state budget news very or fairly closely; just a fifth of Virginians have paid close attention to the state budget situation. In typical times, sports news would be expected to capture much greater interest among the public than international and political news. Just a third of Virginians have followed the story of Michael Jordan's basketball comeback very closely, yet another indicator that these times are far from typical.

-more-

Attention to News

	VERY OR FAIRLY CLOSELY	NOT TOO CLOSELY OR NOT AT ALL
Terrorist attacks on the U.S.	95%	5%
The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan	92%	9%
Reports of anthrax cases around the country	85%	15%
The election of a new governor in Virginia	70%	31%
The state budget situation in Virginia	54%	45%
Michael Jordan's comeback	33%	67%

These questions asked in randomized order.

Method of the VCU Commonwealth Poll
 Nov. 30-Dec. 6., 2001
 Number of respondents: 793

The Commonwealth Poll is an omnibus public opinion survey of Virginia residents. Each survey covers a variety of topics. The survey is conducted by telephone with a randomly-selected sample of adult Virginians.

Interviewing for The Commonwealth Poll was conducted by telephone from the facilities of the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. The interviewing is conducted by a staff of professionally trained, paid interviewers using computer-assisted telephone interviewing software.

The sample of telephone numbers was prepared by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA, and was designed so that all residential telephones, including new and unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion. The cooperation rate for the survey was 44%. Using the CASRO response rate calculations, interviews were obtained with respondents in 38% of the known or assumed residential households in the sample.

The data were weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple telephone lines and multiple adults living in the household. In addition, the data were weighted on sex, race, age and region of residence to reflect the demographic composition of the Virginia adult population. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents.

Questions answered by the full sample of adults are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 4 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 4 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all adult Virginians with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. Because of nonresponse (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research.

Further information is available on request from the director of the Commonwealth Poll, Dr. Cary Funk, at (804) 827-1430 or clfunk@vcu.edu. More information on the Commonwealth Poll can be found at <http://www.vcu.edu/commonwealthpoll/>.

Questions referred to above were worded as follows:

Given the recent terrorist attacks in this country, would you say state government is more important than before, less important than before, or about the same?

More important	47%
Less important	4%
Same	46%
Don't know/No answer	3%

-more-

How much confidence do you have in the Virginia government to protect its citizens from future terrorist attacks-a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or no confidence at all?

Great deal	19%
Fair amount	53%
Not very much	17%
No confidence at all	6%
Don't know/No answer	5%

How much confidence do you have in the Virginia government to protect its citizens from bioterrorism threats such as anthrax-a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or no confidence at all?

Great deal	13%
Fair amount	46%
Not very much	25%
No confidence at all	12%
Don't know/No answer	4%

How much have the terrorist attacks and related events made you change activities in your daily life-a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

A lot	10%
Some	22%
Not much	28%
Not at all	39%
Don't know/No answer	1%

And, how much have the terrorist attacks and related events made you change your priorities for the future-a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

A lot	20%
Some	28%
Not much	21%
Not at all	30%
Don't know/No answer	1%

Are you personally worried about a terrorist attack in the area where you live, or not?

Yes, worried	26%
No, not worried	73%
Don't know/No answer	1%

Are you personally worried about being exposed to anthrax or not?

Yes, worried	25%
No, not worried	74%
Don't know/No answer	1%

I'm going to read a list of stories that news organizations have covered recently. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (These questions asked in randomized order.)

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely
Terrorist attacks on the U.S.	75%	20%	4%	1%
The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan	64%	28%	7%	2%
Reports of anthrax cases around the country	46%	39%	13%	2%
The election of a new governor in Virginia	37%	33%	19%	12%
The state budget situation in Virginia	20%	34%	30%	15%
Michael Jordan's comeback with the Washington Wizards	14%	19%	27%	40%

Do you happen to have an American flag displayed on your car or in front of your home?

Yes 68%
 No 31%
 Don't know/No answer -

###