

# Opinion Polls: Americans Are More Afraid of the US Government than of the Terrorists

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, April 29, 2013

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#),  
[Terrorism](#)

Washington Post and Fox News Fiynd that – Even Right After the Boston Terror Attacks – Americans Are More Leery of Government Tyranny than Terrorists

WND [reports](#) today:

According to a pair of recent polls, for the first time since the 9/11 terrorist hijackings, Americans are more fearful their government will abuse constitutional liberties than fail to keep its citizens safe.

Even in the wake of the April 15 Boston Marathon bombing – in which a pair of Islamic radicals are accused of planting explosives that took the lives of 3 and wounded over 280 – the polls suggest Americans are hesitant to give up any further freedoms in exchange for increased “security.”

[A Fox News survey](#) polling a random national sample of 619 registered voters the day after the bombing found despite the tragic event, those interviewed responded very differently than following 9/11.

For the first time since a similar question was asked in May 2001, more Americans answered “no” to the question, “Would you be willing to give up some of your personal freedom in order to reduce the threat of terrorism?”

Of those surveyed on April 16, 2013, 45 percent answered no to the question, compared to 43 percent answering yes.

In May 2001, before 9/11, the balance was similar, with 40 percent answering no to 33 percent answering yes.

But following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the numbers flipped dramatically, to 71 percent agreeing to sacrifice personal freedom to reduce the threat of terrorism.

Subsequent polls asking the same question in 2002, 2005 and 2006 found Americans consistently willing to give up freedom in exchange for security. Yet the numbers were declining from 71 percent following 9/11 to only 54 percent by May 2006.

Now, it would seem, the famous quote widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin – “They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety” – is holding more sway with Americans than it has in over a dozen years.

A similar poll sampling 588 adults, conducted on April 17 and 18 [for the Washington Post](#), also discovered the change in attitude.

“Which worries you more,” the Post asked, “that the government will not go far enough to investigate terrorism because of concerns about constitutional rights, or that it will go too far in compromising constitutional rights in order to investigate terrorism?”

The poll found 48 percent of respondents worry the government will go too far, compared to 41 percent who worry it won’t go far enough.

And similar to the Fox News poll, the Post found the worry to be a fresh development, as only 44 percent worried the government would go too far in January 2006 and only 27 percent worried the government would go too far in January 2010.

The Fox News poll found that a bare majority of Democrats (51%) would give up more personal freedom to reduce the threat of terror, while only 47% of Republicans – and a mere 29% of independents – would do so.

This is not entirely surprising.

As we [noted](#) in February:

For years, “conservative” pollsters have said that Americans are furious at the government:

- Rasmussen noted in 2010 that [only a small minority](#) of the American people think that the government has the consent of the governed, and that [the sentiment was “pre-revolutionary”](#)
- Gallup noted in 2011 that a higher percentage of American liked [King George during the colonial days than currently like Congress](#)
- And last year, Gallup noted that trust was plummeting in [virtually all institutions](#)

Liberals may be tempted to think that this is a slanted perspective. But non-partisan and liberal pollsters are saying the same thing:

- An NBC News/Wall [Street Journal](#) poll from 2011 found that 76% of Americans believe that the country’s current financial and political structures [favor the rich over the rest of the country](#)
- The Washington Post reported in 2011 that Congress was less popular than [communism, BP during the Gulf oil spill or Nixon during Watergate](#)
- Public Policy Polling added last month that Congress is also less popular than [cockroaches, lice, root canals, colonoscopies, traffic jams, used car salesman and Genghis Khan](#)
- And the liberal Pew Charitable Trusts noted last week that – for the first time – a majority of the public says that [the federal government threatens their personal rights and freedoms](#):

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Jan. 9-13 among 1,502 adults, finds that 53% think that the federal government threatens their own personal rights and freedoms while 43% disagree.

In March 2010, opinions were divided over whether the government represented a threat to personal freedom; 47% said it did while 50% disagreed. In surveys between 1995 and 2003, majorities rejected the idea that the government threatened people's rights and freedoms.

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The survey finds continued widespread distrust in government. About a quarter of Americans (26%) trust the government in Washington to do the right thing just about always or most of the time; 73% say they can trust the government only some of the time or volunteer that they can never trust the government.

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Majorities across all partisan and demographic groups express little or no trust in government.

Obviously, Democrats are currently more trusting in government than Republicans. [For example:](#)

The Pew Research Center's 2010 study of attitudes toward government found that, since the 1950s, the party in control of the White House has expressed more trust in government than the so-called "out party."

But given that even a growing percentage of Dems believe that government is a threat to their freedom, things are indeed getting interesting ...

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