

National Center for Disaster Preparedness

EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Data from the National Center for Disaster Preparedness Finds Americans Are Concerned and Angry About Recent Acts of Terrorism *Republicans Express Significantly More Anger and Consider Retaliatory Action, Compared to Democrats*

NEW YORK, NY (May 3, 2016) – The terrorist attacks over the past several months in Brussels, Paris, San Bernardino and elsewhere have rekindled concerns among the American public about the threat of terrorism. The timing of the latest attacks is affecting the intensifying U.S. presidential race. The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University’s Earth Institute sought to understand how much of this threat is being internalized into the daily lives of Americans and whether fear and anger are the new normal in today’s political climate.

To explore these questions, a nationally representative quota-based on-line survey was conducted between February 5 and February 11, 2016 to a sample of 1069 people across the US. The sample was weighted to the US census data for sex, gender, race and region. The survey was administered through an online survey panel by Survata. Key findings include:

- 80% of Americans exhibit some anxiety or fear of further terror attacks in the United States with over 16% saying they are extremely anxious or fearful.
- 62% of the population finds themselves thinking about terrorism at least once a week which has left 37% of Americans feel that terrorism is the “new normal.”
- Overall, 88% of Americans are angry about recent terror attacks in the United States of which 47% are extremely angry. 42% of Americans think that recent events in the US have made the country seem weak and vulnerable.
- 85% respondents who identified as Republican reported being somewhat, moderately or extremely angry about recent acts of terrorism in the United States compared to 67% of Democrats. Republicans were also more likely to agree that recent terrorist attacks made the United States seem weak and vulnerable (63%) compared to Democrats (26%).
- Republicans were more likely to agree with taking more aggressive military action both to prevent acts of terrorism (69%) and to retaliate for acts of terrorism (65%). Democrats were less likely to agree with taking more aggressive military action to reduce the risk of terrorism (34%) or for retaliation for acts of terrorism (34%).

Dr. Irwin Redlener, a professor of health policy and management and director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, said, “Until the devastating attacks of 9/11, America was essentially isolated from the kind of terror threats faced by so many nations around the World.” He continued, “In the subsequent 15 years since the attacks, massive investments have been made in homeland security; and now the subject of terrorism has become front and center in the political dialog, particularly in the hot rhetoric of the 2016 presidential race.”

“This is an important insight into what motivates our reactions to these kinds of events,” added Jeff Schlegelmilch, Deputy Director for National Center for Disaster Preparedness. “We assume that reactions to terrorism are based in fear, but anger and humiliation are also important motivations.

National Center for Disaster Preparedness

EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

These have the potential to be exploited for political or other purposes, particularly in this heated election cycle.”

“The majority of Americans have come to the same stark conclusion,” said Jonathan Sury, Project Director at NCDP, “that more terror attacks in the US are inevitable. Americans who hold the most anger are also those who believe the US is weak and vulnerable as a result of terrorism. Preventing extremism and reducing anger through awareness building and education will be critical to keep the peace within our own borders.”

The full report is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7916/D83B6014>.

###

About NCDP

The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute works to understand and improve the nation’s capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. NCDP focuses on the readiness of governmental and non-governmental systems; the complexities of population recovery; the power of community engagement; and the risks of human vulnerability, with a particular focus on children.

Media Contact:

Diane Iselin

Director of Media Relations, National Center for Disaster Preparedness
212.535.9400 x254 | diselin@chfund.org