

APRIL 29, 2013

Americans Express Little Interest in Syrian Conflict

Modest Support for Military Force if Syria Used Chemical Weapons

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE
PEOPLE & THE PRESS**

Michael Dimock

Director

Carroll Doherty

Associate Director

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4372

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

Americans Express Little Interest in Syrian Conflict

Modest Support for Military Force if Syria Used Chemical Weapons

By a 45% to 31% margin, more Americans favor than oppose the U.S. and its allies taking military action against Syria, if it is confirmed that Syria used chemical weapons against anti-government groups.

Public interest in the Syrian conflict remains low, and nearly a quarter of Americans (23%) have no opinion about the use of military force in Syria.

Nonetheless, the new survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted April 25-28 among 1,003 adults, finds more public willingness to consider the use of force in Syria than did previous surveys that made no mention of the Syrian government's alleged use of chemical weapons. [In December](#), just 27% then said the U.S. had a responsibility to do something about fighting between the Syrian government and anti-government groups.

The survey finds that just 18% followed news about the charges that Syria used chemical weapons against anti-government groups very closely, which is little changed from interest in the Syrian conflict over the past two years.

Those who tracked news about the chemical weapons charges very closely favor the U.S. and its allies taking military action against Syria by nearly two-to-one (55% to 28%). Among those who followed Syrian news less closely, 44% favor the use of military force while 32% are opposed.

Plurality Supports U.S. and Allies Using Force Against Syria

<i>Favor/oppose military action against Syria, if use of chemical weapons by Syria is confirmed ...</i>	Favor	Oppose	DK
	%	%	%
Total	45	31	23=100
Men	54	29	17=100
Women	37	33	29=100
18-29	40	28	32=100
30-49	52	28	21=100
50-64	45	36	19=100
65+	43	35	23=100
College grad+	40	34	26=100
Some college	44	33	23=100
HS or less	50	28	22=100
Republican	56	24	20=100
Democrat	46	34	20=100
Independent	41	36	23=100
<i>Following Syria news</i>			
Very closely	55	28	18=100
Less closely	44	32	24=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER April 25-28, 2013.
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

By 56% to 24%, Republicans favor the use of military force against Syria if the charges that it used chemical weapons are proven. There is less support among Democrats (46% favor vs. 34% oppose) and independents (41% favor vs. 36% oppose).

Little Interest in Syria News

Since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, it has never drawn much attention from the U.S. public. At most, only about one-in-five have tracked developments in Syria very closely.

The new survey, which asked specifically about allegations that the Syrian government used chemical weapons against anti-government groups, finds that 18% say they followed this news very closely while 25% followed it fairly closely. A majority followed the chemical weapons charges not too closely (24%) or not at all closely (33%).

Other recent news stories have drawn far more public interest. A week ago, 63% say they followed news about the bombings at the Boston Marathon very closely; this week, 49% paid very close attention to the investigation into the bombings. Other domestic news stories over the past two months, including the debate over gun control (39% followed very closely), news about the economy (35%) and the budget sequester (31%) also attracted more interest than news about Syria.

Among recent foreign news stories, North Korea's recent nuclear threats against the U.S. drew twice as much interest as charges that Syria used chemical weapons (36% vs. 18%). However, the percentage paying very close

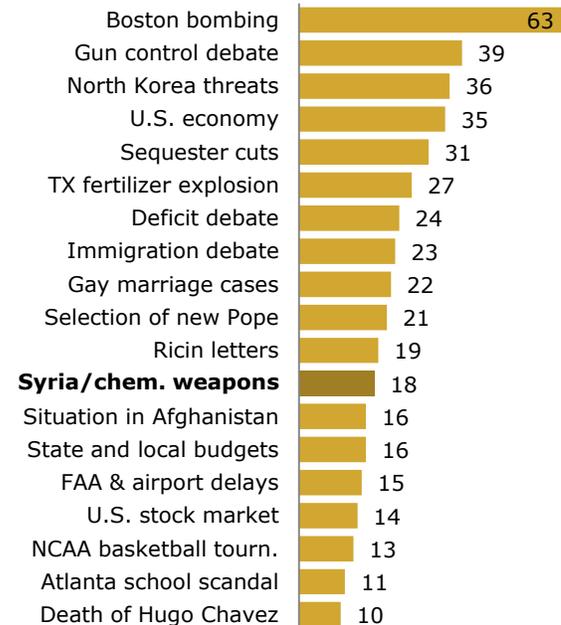
No Increased Interest in Syria

Percent following news about Syria very closely



Syria Interest Well Below Other Recent News Stories

Percent following March/April news very closely



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 25-28, 2013.
For stories tracked over multiple weeks, highest weekly interest is shown.

attention to news about Syria is on par with interest in news about the situation in Afghanistan (16% very closely).

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 25-28, 2013 among a national sample of 1,003 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (500 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 237 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. 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, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2012 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 among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,003	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	253	7.4 percentage points
Democrats	324	6.5 percentage points
Independents	362	6.2 percentage points
<i>Following news about syria</i>		
Very closely	191	8.5 percentage points
Less closely	799	4.2 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
April 25-28, 2013, OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,003

ASK ALL:

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a. The investigation into the terrorist bombings at the Boston Marathon					
April 25-28, 2013	49	33	9	9	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
April 18-21, 2013: <i>A terrorist bombing at the Boston Marathon</i>	63	22	10	5	*
November 4-7, 2010: <i>News about recent plots in the United States and Europe</i>	29	31	19	20	*
October 28-November 1, 2010	28	33	17	21	1
June 24-27, 2010: <i>The man who attempted to bomb Times Square pleading guilty</i>	18	28	26	27	1
May 7-10, 2010: <i>The investigation and arrests following an attempted car bombing in Times Square in New York</i>	37	32	16	15	*
January 8-11, 2010: <i>The government's response to an attempted terrorist attack on a Detroit-bound plane on Christmas</i>	37	36	14	12	*
November 13-16, 2009: <i>The investigations into the shootings at Fort Hood Army post in Texas</i>	35	37	16	11	1
November 6-9, 2009: <i>A shooter killing 13 people at Fort Hood Army post in Texas</i>	44	34	14	8	*
September 25-28, 2009: <i>News about recent terrorist plots in the United States</i>	32	38	17	14	0
May 11-14, 2007: <i>The arrest of six men charged with plotting an attack on the Fort Dix Army base</i>	19	29	20	31	1
July, 2002: <i>Defending against terrorist attacks in the U.S.</i>	51	33	9	6	1
June, 2002: <i>The arrest of a man for planning a "dirty bomb" attack on the U.S.</i>	30	30	24	15	1
June, 2002: <i>Defending against terrorist attacks in the U.S.</i>	45	35	12	7	1
April, 2002	46	36	10	7	1
Early April, 2002	49	35	10	5	1
January 2002: <i>Reports on the failed suicide bombing of an American Airlines jet coming from Paris</i>	20	34	22	23	1
December, 2001: <i>Terrorism attacks on the United States</i>	60	29	7	3	1
Mid-November, 2001	66	25	6	2	1
Early November, 2001	63	26	6	3	2
Mid-October, 2001	78	16	4	1	1
Early October, 2001: <i>News about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington</i>	73	22	4	1	*
Mid-September, 2001	74	22	3	1	*

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
January, 2000: <i>The recent arrests of suspected terrorists in the U.S.</i>	23	36	23	17	1
b. Debate over immigration policy in the U.S.					
April 25-28, 2013	19	25	24	32	*
April 18-21, 2013	21	22	25	31	1
April 4-7, 2013	23	22	22	32	*
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
January 31-February 3, 2013: <i>Debate in Washington over immigration policy</i>	23	25	22	29	1
June 28-July 1, 2012: <i>The Supreme Court decision on Arizona's immigration law</i>	29	21	19	30	1
April 26-29, 2012: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	24	26	27	1
May 12-15, 2011	18	22	27	32	1
September 2-6, 2010	30	31	19	20	1
August 12-15, 2010	27	31	19	21	1
July 29-August 1, 2010: <i>A court ruling that stops most of Arizona's immigration law from going into effect</i>	40	32	17	10	1
July 8-11, 2010: <i>The U.S. Justice Department challenging the legality of Arizona's recent immigration law</i>	30	27	19	23	1
July 1-5, 2010: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	34	30	20	14	1
May 7-10, 2010: <i>A new Arizona law that gives police more authority to question people they suspect might be illegal immigrants</i>	38	27	13	21	1
April 30-May 3, 2010	36	31	13	20	*
October 12-15, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	23	29	19	29	*
June 29-July 2, 2007: <i>The debate in Congress over new immigration policy</i>	26	30	21	23	*
June 22-25, 2007	24	28	22	26	*
June 15-18, 2007	22	32	21	25	*
June 8-11, 2007	24	29	20	26	1
May 24-27, 2007	27	31	22	19	1
April 12-16, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	29	24	26	*
August, 2006	34	40	16	9	1
June, 2006	36	41	15	7	1
May, 2006	44	33	13	9	1
April, 2006	39	34	16	10	1
December, 1994: <i>Passage of Proposition 187, the California law that bars education, health and welfare benefits from illegal immigrants and their children</i>	26	32	22	20	*
c. Flight delays at airports due to the furlough of air-traffic controllers					
April 25-28, 2013	15	21	24	40	*
TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
August 4-7, 2011: <i>The partial shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration due to disagreements in Congress</i>	17	24	22	36	1

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
d. Charges that Syria has used chemical weapons against anti-government groups April 25-28, 2013	18	25	24	33	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
March 28-31, 2013: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	13	22	25	40	1
December 13-16, 2012	14	26	26	33	1
December 6-9, 2012	19	28	23	29	1
November 29-December 2, 2012	15	23	23	39	1
August 16-19, 2012	12	24	26	37	2
July 19-22, 2012	17	24	23	36	1
June 28-July 1, 2012	13	19	26	42	*
June 14-17, 2012	15	24	21	40	1
May 31-June 3, 2012	12	25	25	37	1
April 12-15, 2012: <i>International efforts to stop political violence in Syria</i>	14	23	25	37	1
April 5-8, 2012	15	21	27	37	1
March 15-28, 2012: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	16	26	27	30	1
March 8-11, 2012	17	23	23	37	1
February 23-26, 2012	18	24	21	35	1
February 9-12, 2012	17	23	23	36	*
January 12-15, 2012	12	17	26	45	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	10	19	26	44	1
June 2-5, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	25	25	32	*
May 5-8, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	14	27	30	28	1
April 28-May 1, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	29	25	27	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*

ASK ALL:

PEW.2 If it is confirmed that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons against anti-government groups, would you favor or oppose the U.S. and its allies taking military action against the Syrian government?

Apr 25-28

2013

45	Favor
31	Oppose
23	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility?

	<u>U.S. has responsibility</u>	<u>U.S. doesn't have responsibility</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Dec 5-9, 2012	27	63	10
Mar 7-11, 2012	25	64	11

Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and its allies sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?

<u>Dec 5-9 2012</u>		<u>Mar 7-11 2012</u>
24	Favor	29
65	Oppose	63
11	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	9

Would you favor or oppose the U.S. and its allies bombing Syrian military forces to protect anti-government groups in Syria?

<u>Mar 7-11 2012</u>	
25	Favor
62	Oppose
13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

NO QUESTION PEW.3

PEW.4 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS PEW.5-PEW.7

PEW.8-PEW.13 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE