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Chapman Survey of American Fears, 2020/2021¹

WAVE 7 TOP 10 FEARS BY PARTY AFFILIATION:

Summary: 9 out of the 10 top fears show statistically significant differences across party affiliation. In nearly all the top fears, the percentage of Independents responding very afraid or afraid lie between that of Republican and Democrats.

Analysis shows that Democrats were more afraid of people they love dying, widespread civil unrest, a loved one contracting the Coronavirus (COVID-19), people they love becoming seriously ill, a pandemic or major epidemic, cyber-terrorism, and pollution of oceans, rivers, and lakes while Republicans seemed to be more afraid of corrupt government officials and economic/financial collapse. There was no statistical difference between the groups regarding fear of biological warfare.

Some of the starkest differences across party lines were seen in fears related to Pandemic/COVID-19 contraction (A 37.5 percentage point difference across Republican and Democrat being very afraid or afraid of people they love becoming seriously ill, a 34.9 percentage point difference across the two parties responding very afraid or afraid of a loved one contracting the Coronavirus, and a 37.9 percentage point difference across the two parties in being very afraid or afraid of a major pandemic/epidemic was found).

While the significance of the difference in fears surrounding COVID-19 is extremely apparent across political parties, the overall starkest difference seems to be fear surrounding pollution. The percentage of Democrats who are very afraid or afraid of pollution of oceans, rivers, and lakes was 38.4 percentage points higher than Republicans who responded the same way.

Differences of Very Afraid and Afraid percentages amongst Party Affiliations are shown below for the top 10 fears. Full cross-tabulation tables are included afterwards.

1. Corrupt Government Officials (80.2%) Q21b
Chi-square=25.79 p=.001 Gamma=.162

Very Afraid or Afraid
Republican: 84.6%
Independent: 78.6%
Democrat: 77.8%

2. People I love Dying (57.0%) Q10d
Chi-square=84.73 p=.000 Gamma=-.335

¹ Because the survey was fielded at the start of 2021 (Jan 5th to 15th), we have used 2020/2021 in the title.

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 41.4%

Independent: 57.6%

Democrat: 69.9%

3. Widespread Civil Unrest (56.9%) Q16n

Chi-square=22.36 p=.001 Gamma=-.154

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 52.3%

Independent: 53.00%

Democrat: 64.3%

4. A Loved One Contracting the Coronavirus (COVID-19) (56.8%) Q28b

Chi-square=105.69 p=.000 Gamma=-.364

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 37.7%

Independent: 57.3%

Democrat: 72.6%

5. People I Love Becoming Seriously Ill (56.4%) Q10b

Chi-square=111.21 p=.000 Gamma=-.390

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 36.4%

Independent: 56.0%

Democrat: 73.9%

6. A Pandemic or a Major Epidemic (55.4%) Q16m

Chi-square=120.11 p=.000 Gamma=-.400

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 35.1%

Independent: 54.9%

Democrat: 73%

7. Economic/Financial Collapse (54.3%) Q16L

Chi-square=24.54 p=.002 Gamma=-.030

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 58.3%

Independent: 47.0%

Democrat: 57.3%

8. Cyber-Terrorism (50.6%) Q15c

Chi-square=23.75 p=.001 Gamma=-.146

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 43.7%

Independent: 47.3%

Democrat: 59.3%

9. Pollution of Oceans, Rivers, and Lakes (50.2%) Q13c

Chi-square=137.44 p=.000 Gamma=-.402

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 26.7%

Independent: 56.2%

Democrat: 65.1%

10. Biological Warfare (49.1%) Q16r

Chi-square=10.40 p=.238 Gamma=-.080

Very Afraid or Afraid

Republican: 42.8%

Independent: 49.7%

Democrat: 53.1%

	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Party IDRC * Q21b. How afraid are you of the following: Corrupt government officials?	1035	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q10d. How afraid are you of the following: People I love dying?	1038 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?	1035 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q28b. How afraid are you of the following: A loved one contracting the coronavirus (COVID-19)?	1036 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q10b. How afraid are you of the following: People I love becoming seriously ill?	1035 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q16m. How afraid are you of the following events: A pandemic or a major epidemic?	1035 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%

Party IDRC * Q16l. How afraid are you of the following events: Economic/financial collapse?	1037 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q15c. How afraid are you of the following: Cyber-terrorism?	1035 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q13c. How afraid are you of the following: Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes?	1034 ^a	99.9%	.999	0.1%	1034.999	100.0%
Party IDRC * Q16r. How afraid are you of the following events: Biological warfare?	1035 ^a	100.0%	0	0.0%	1034.999	100.0%

a. Number of valid cases is different from the total count in the crosstabulation table because the cell counts have been rounded.

			Q21b. How afraid are you of the following: Corrupt government officials?					
			Web Blank	Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	0	174	101	35	15	325
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	53.5%	31.1%	10.8%	4.6%	100.0%
	Independent	Count	0	141	120	56	15	332
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	42.5%	36.1%	16.9%	4.5%	100.0%
	Democrat	Count	2	141	153	55	27	378
		% within Party IDRC	0.5%	37.3%	40.5%	14.6%	7.1%	100.0%
Total	Count		2	456	374	146	57	1035
	% within Party IDRC		0.2%	44.1%	36.1%	14.1%	5.5%	100.0%

Crosstab

			Q10d. How afraid are you of the following: People I love dying?				
			Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	43	92	110	81	326
		% within Party IDRC	13.2%	28.2%	33.7%	24.8%	100.0%
	Independent	Count	103	89	93	48	333
		% within Party IDRC	30.9%	26.7%	27.9%	14.4%	100.0%
	Democrat	Count	143	122	86	28	379
		% within Party IDRC	37.7%	32.2%	22.7%	7.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		289	303	289	157	1038
	% within Party IDRC		27.8%	29.2%	27.8%	15.1%	100.0%

Crosstab

Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?

			Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	63	107	115	40	325
		% within Party IDRC	19.4%	32.9%	35.4%	12.3%	100.0%
	Independent	Count	86	90	110	46	332
		% within Party IDRC	25.9%	27.1%	33.1%	13.9%	100.0%
	Democrat	Count	124	119	101	34	378
		% within Party IDRC	32.8%	31.5%	26.7%	9.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	273	316	326	120	1035	
	% within Party IDRC	26.4%	30.5%	31.5%	11.6%	100.0%	

Crosstab

Q28b. How afraid are you of the following: A loved one contracting the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

			Web Blank	Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	0	58	64	113	89
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	17.9%	19.8%	34.9%	27.5%
	Independent	Count	1	106	85	97	44
		% within Party IDRC	0.3%	31.8%	25.5%	29.1%	13.2%
	Democrat	Count	0	155	120	79	25
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	40.9%	31.7%	20.8%	6.6%
Total	Count	1	319	269	289	158	
	% within Party IDRC	0.1%	30.8%	26.0%	27.9%	15.3%	

Crosstab

Q16m. How afraid are you of the following events: A pandemic or a major epidemic?

			Web Blank	Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	0	39	75	128	82
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	12.0%	23.1%	39.5%	25.3%
	Independent	Count	1	91	92	93	56
		% within Party IDRC	0.3%	27.3%	27.6%	27.9%	16.8%
	Democrat	Count	0	143	133	81	21
		% within Party IDRC	0.0%	37.8%	35.2%	21.4%	5.6%
Total	Count	1	273	300	302	159	
	% within Party IDRC	0.1%	26.4%	29.0%	29.2%	15.4%	

Crosstab

Q10b. How afraid are you of the following: People I love becoming seriously ill?

			Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	44	74	137	69	324
		% within Party IDRC	13.6%	22.8%	42.3%	21.3%	100.0%
	Independent	Count	95	91	100	46	332
		% within Party IDRC	28.6%	27.4%	30.1%	13.9%	100.0%
	Democrat	Count	146	134	80	19	379
		% within Party IDRC	38.5%	35.4%	21.1%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	285	299	317	134	1035	
	% within Party IDRC	27.5%	28.9%	30.6%	12.9%	100.0%	

Crosstab

Q16I. How afraid are you of the following events: Economic/financial collapse?

		Web Blank	Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Republican	Count	0	71	119	97	39	326
	% within Party IDRC	0.0%	21.8%	36.5%	29.8%	12.0%	100.0%
Independent	Count	1	86	70	124	51	332
	% within Party IDRC	0.3%	25.9%	21.1%	37.3%	15.4%	100.0%
Democrat	Count	0	100	117	124	38	379
	% within Party IDRC	0.0%	26.4%	30.9%	32.7%	10.0%	100.0%
Count		1	257	306	345	128	1037
% within Party IDRC		0.1%	24.8%	29.5%	33.3%	12.3%	100.0%

Crosstab

Q13c. How afraid are you of the following: Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes?

		Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total	
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	31	56	129	109	325
	% within Party IDRC	9.5%	17.2%	39.7%	33.5%	100.0%	
Independent	Count	83	103	99	46	331	
	% within Party IDRC	25.1%	31.1%	29.9%	13.9%	100.0%	
Democrat	Count	107	139	105	27	378	
	% within Party IDRC	28.3%	36.8%	27.8%	7.1%	100.0%	
Total		Count	221	298	333	182	1034
% within Party IDRC		21.4%	28.8%	32.2%	17.6%	100.0%	

Crosstab

Q16r. How afraid are you of the following events: Biological warfare?

		Web Blank	Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total
Republican	Count	1	72	70	116	65	324
	% within Party IDRC	0.3%	22.2%	21.6%	35.8%	20.1%	100.0%
Independent	Count	0	85	80	99	68	332
	% within Party IDRC	0.0%	25.6%	24.1%	29.8%	20.5%	100.0%
Democrat	Count	0	98	103	119	59	379
	% within Party IDRC	0.0%	25.9%	27.2%	31.4%	15.6%	100.0%
Total		1	255	253	334	192	1035
		0.1%	24.6%	24.4%	32.3%	18.6%	100.0%

Crosstab

Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?

		Very Afraid	Afraid	Slightly Afraid	Not Afraid	Total	
Party IDRC	Republican	Count	63	107	115	40	325
		% within Party IDRC	19.4%	32.9%	35.4%	12.3%	100.0%
	Independent	Count	86	90	110	46	332
		% within Party IDRC	25.9%	27.1%	33.1%	13.9%	100.0%
	Democrat	Count	124	119	101	34	378
		% within Party IDRC	32.8%	31.5%	26.7%	9.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	273	316	326	120	1035	
	% within Party IDRC	26.4%	30.5%	31.5%	11.6%	100.0%	