

Pace University Research Center

National Opinion Poll

Pace University Poll on Technology-Based Terrorism: 69% of Americans Think Technology-Based Terrorist Threat Likely Within 3-5 Years; Concern About Cyber-Attacks Increases With Age, Reflecting A Potential Generational Divide In How Technology Is Understood And Experienced.

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Technology-Based Terrorism: A Nation at Risk

Last week, a cyberattack cut millions of Americans off from the internet, and throughout the 2016 presidential election cycle hacked emails have been released in an attempt to influence the nation's most fundamental and democratic process.

Today, we are more reliant on technology than at any time in our nation's history—and our vulnerability to cybercriminals and cyberattacks increases in tandem.

When Americans hear the word “terrorism,” they instantly think of violent, unfeeling people carrying out direct, in-person attacks using guns, bombs, trucks, and planes.

Technology-based terrorism can be just as deadly and destructive as conventional acts of terror, and it can be executed remotely—from another location—and even from the other side of the globe. Our critical infrastructure is fraught with extraordinary vulnerabilities that many may not have considered or even know exist.

Our federal and state governments can and must do more to promote awareness about this ever-present risk, while simultaneously acting swiftly and effectively to eliminate our exposure to technology-based security threats.

Consider some of the most basic components of our nation's critical infrastructure that are most vulnerable to technology-based terrorism:

- Internet and telephone systems
- Power grids and electrical systems
- Plane and train travel, as well as automobiles filled with computer chips
- Red light systems in every mid-sized and major city in the nation
- The US banking system

The risk to our nation's critical infrastructure doesn't adhere to business hours. The threat exists 24 hours a day.

This ever-present vulnerability sparks important questions that demand answers: If these systems are attacked, how long is the recovery period? What is the role of the federal government in coordinating measures to protect critical infrastructure operated by private companies? Is it practical to think that another country wouldn't launch an attack on a major portion of the critical infrastructure except as part of a major war? While most public attention has focused on China and Russia in this area, are other countries developing a similar capacity to attack our critical infrastructure? Is there any evidence that non-state hostile groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda are developing similar capacities?

At a time when candidates for elective office are discussing important issues as they vie for influence and votes, technology-based security has been largely absent from the public discussion. That doesn't mean, however, that Americans aren't thinking about it or that they're blind to the possibility of it.

This Pace University Research Center nationwide opinion poll of adults living in the US was launched to measure that concern.

Overview

This Pace University Research Center nationwide opinion poll was conducted as part of an *InsideTrack* interview with Joel F. Brenner, former Inspector General and Senior Counsel for the National Security Agency (NSA) and bestselling author of *Glass Houses* and *America the Vulnerable*. Titled “Invisible Enemies,” the interview of former Inspector General Brenner focused on emerging issues that threaten to undermine US financial markets, impact the 2016 presidential election and other high-profile national races, and disrupt essential infrastructure.

Results of the poll are based on 850 responses from adults living in the US who were contacted by telephone. Respondents from all 50 states participated in the survey, which was completed on October 19, 2016. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.21%.

All telephone calls were made from Pace University’s Westchester Campus in Pleasantville, New York.

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe technology-based terrorist threats are likely to occur in the next three to five years? An example would be hacking to disrupt our power grid or mass transit systems. Do you think this is likely?"

Findings

A Pace University Research Center national poll shows that the American people believe a technology-based terrorist threat is likely to occur in the next three to five years.

Overall Result

69% of Americans feel that a technology-based threat is likely to occur in the next three to five years.

Gender

Results show that a greater percentage of **males** (76%) believe a threat is likely than do **females** (61%).

Age

The older portion of those polled think a threat is more likely, reflecting a potential generational divide in how technology is understood and experienced.

Millennials think a technology-based threat is less likely than any other generation.

Of those who identified their age as **18–30**, only 58% think technology-based terrorism is likely to occur, while 85% of people **over age 60** think that it is likely. Of respondents **31–40** years old, 72% believe a technology-based threat is likely, as do respondents between the ages of **41–50** (72%). The percentage who think a technology-based security threat is likely increased to 79% for respondents aged **51–60**.

Race

There are sizable differences among respondents who identified their ethnicity. While all groups polled above 50%, respondents identifying themselves as **Caucasian** polled the highest, with 78% expressing a

belief that a technology-based threat is likely to occur in the next three to five years. More than two-thirds (68%) of those identifying themselves as **Asian** think a technology-based threat is likely. Respondents identifying themselves as **African American** polled at the same percentage (58%) as respondents who identified themselves as **Hispanic** (58%).

Geographic

New York State, at 68% saying yes, tracks closely with the national results.

The poll also looked at states considered “swing states” in the 2016 presidential election:

- Only 43% of respondents in **Colorado** and 53% of those in **Virginia** think a technology-based threat is likely to occur.
- 100% of those polled in **Nevada** and **New Hampshire** think it is likely.
- The sentiment among respondents in the remaining swing states ranges from a solid majority to a strong majority: **North Carolina** (61%), **Iowa** (67%), **Florida** (68%), **Ohio** (68%), **Pennsylvania** (76%), and **Michigan** (77%).

Pace University Poll on Technology-Based Terrorist Threats: Comprehensive Results

Results of Pace University Poll on Technology-Based Terrorism		
Do you believe technology-based terrorist threats are likely to occur in the next three to five years?		
	Yes	No
All Americans	69%	19%
Gender		
Males	76%	16%
Females	61%	20%
Age		
18—30	58%	28%
31—40	72%	16%
41—50	72%	17%
51—60	79%	11%
61+	85%	10%
Race		
African Americans	58%	31%
Asians	67%	24%
Caucasians	78%	11%
Hispanics	58%	31%
Geographic		
New York	68%	16%
Swing States		
Colorado	45%	45%
Florida	68%	13%
Iowa	67%	33%
Michigan	77%	14%
Nevada	100%	0%
New Hampshire	100%	0%
North Carolina	61%	18%
Ohio	68%	23%
Pennsylvania	76%	12%
Virginia	53%	29%
Wisconsin	72%	28%

Values do not always total 100%, as some respondents did not specify gender, age, or race, or indicated that they “were not sure.”

About the Pace University Research Center

The Pace University Research Center is a joint initiative involving the Office of University Relations and the Center for Student Enterprise.

Kathryn F. Winsted, PhD, manages polling outreach, analysis, and operations, and serves as Associate Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Student Enterprise. Polling project support is provided by students from the Lubin School of Business through the Pace Connect program.

About Pace University

Pace University is a comprehensive, independent University with campuses in New York City and Westchester County. Nearly 13,000 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Lubin School of Business, Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems, School of Education, Elisabeth Haub School of Law, and College of Health Professions. www.pace.edu