

In US, Ebola fears rise but most confident in response

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After two health care workers in Texas were infected with Ebola while caring for a Liberian patient, a poll Tuesday showed a rattled US public that nevertheless stayed confident in the government's response.

The Pew Research poll was conducted October 15-20 and included more than 2,000 adults.

In early October, before two US nurses were infected with the hemorrhagic virus, 67 percent of Americans surveyed expressed little to no concern about getting Ebola, which has killed more than 4,500 people in West Africa this year.

The latest poll, which began the day the second American nurse's Ebola infection was announced, saw the number of fearless Americans drop to 58 percent.

Still, the percentage of people confident in the US ability to prevent a major outbreak stayed close to the same as earlier in the month.

A total of 54 percent expressed either a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the federal government and US hospitals to prevent a major Ebola outbreak in the United States. In early October, that figure was 57 percent.

When it came to the ability of US hospitals to diagnose and isolate possible Ebola cases, 61 percent had a great deal or fair amount of

confidence, while 38 percent had little or no confidence.

Nearly eight in 10 people favored the United States sending military troops, food and medical supplies to West Africa to combat the spread of the virus in the region.

More Americans were aware of the Ebola situation than they were about local elections or the airstrikes in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic State group of militants.

A full 98 percent of those surveyed said they had heard at least a bit about the Ebola outbreak, and nearly half (49 percent) said they were tracking news about Ebola "very closely."

"That is 20 points higher than the share following news about US airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria very closely (29 percent), and more than 30 points higher than the percentage paying very close attention to the midterm elections (16 percent)," said the poll.

Concern about the virus was also divided along political lines, with nearly half (49 percent) of Republicans worried and 36 percent of Democrats saying the same.

"The partisan gap in Ebola worries, which was negligible two weeks ago (three points), has increased to 13 points in the current survey."

Far fewer Republicans (42 percent) than Democrats (67 percent) had a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the US government's ability to prevent a major Ebola outbreak.

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