

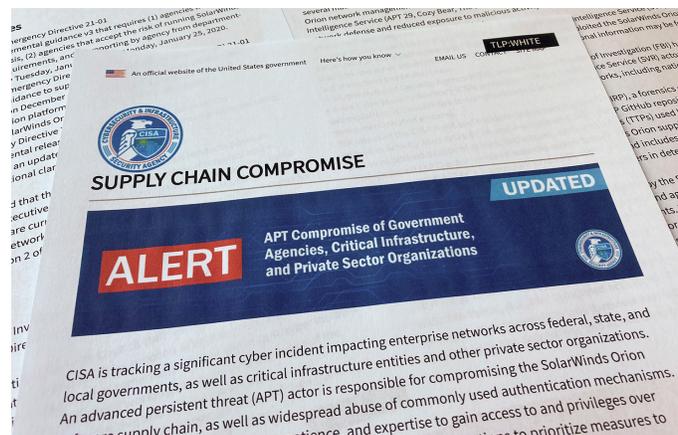
# THE PUBLIC IS HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT CYBER-ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES

Most Americans are concerned about cyber-attacks on U.S. institutions, and many say the Chinese and Russian governments are a big threat to the nation's cybersecurity, according to a new Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll.

The survey finds that more Americans are concerned about attacks on financial institutions and national security than transportation networks and agricultural production. Older adults are more likely to be worried about cyber-attacks than younger adults, with concern increasing with age.

When it comes to potential sources of attacks, more Americans view the Chinese and Russian governments as a threat to U.S. cybersecurity than the Iranian government, other foreign governments, and non-governmental groups and individuals. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say the Russian government is a big threat (79% vs. 70%).

The nationwide poll was conducted by [Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago](#) and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from September 9-13, 2021, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,071 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points. The poll is being released in conjunction with the [2021 Pearson Global Forum](#), which will address these issues.



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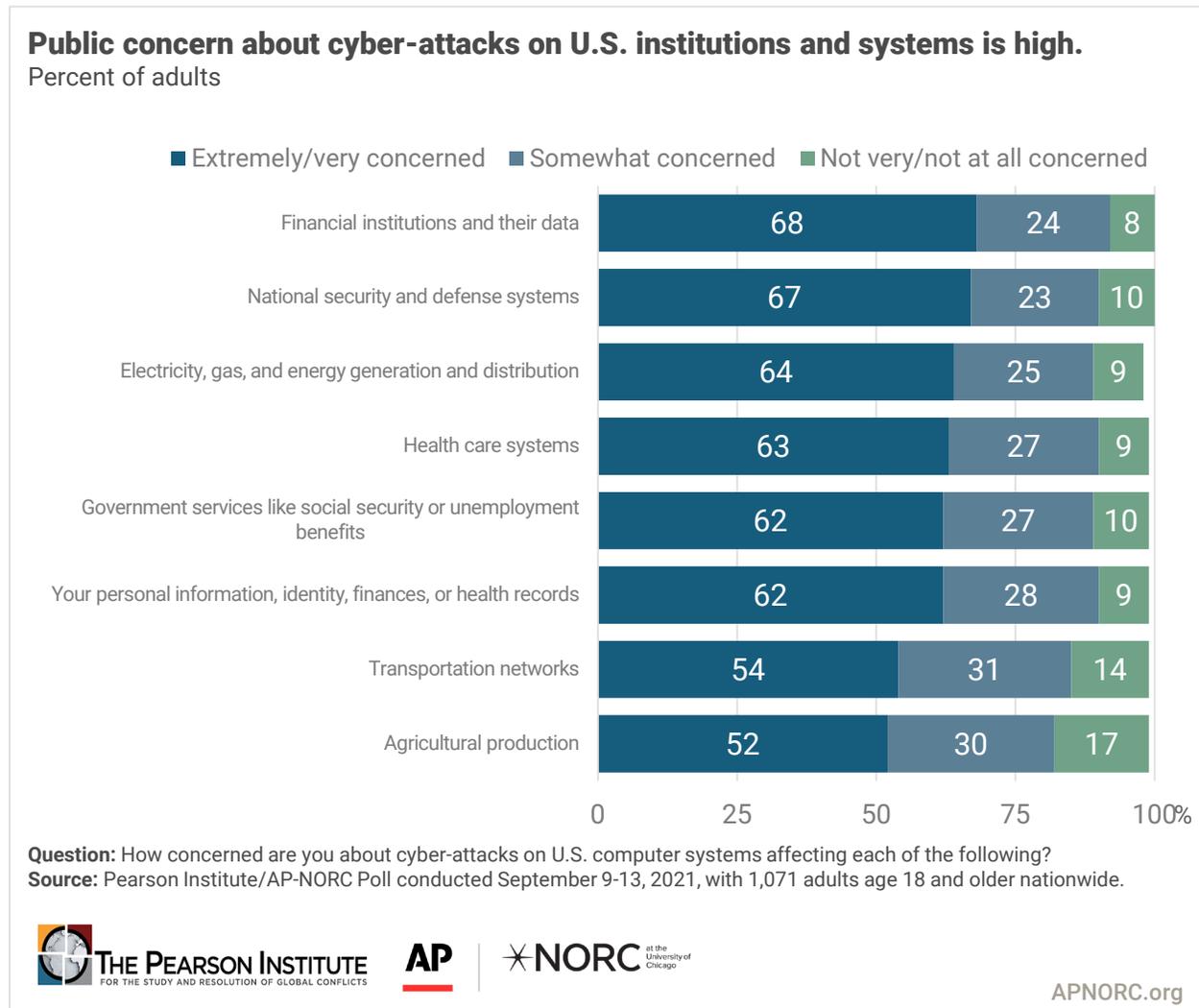
## Three Things You Should Know

About the Pearson Institute/  
 AP-NORC Poll Among American Adults:

- 1) 91% are at least somewhat concerned about cyber-attacks on U.S. financial institutions and their own data, including 68% who are very concerned.
- 2) China and Russia are viewed as the biggest threats to U.S. cybersecurity (73% and 72%).
- 3) 88% of adults age 60 and older say that the Chinese government is a serious threat to the cybersecurity of the U.S. government, compared to 53% of adults age 18-29.

## MOST AMERICANS ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT CYBER-ATTACKS ON U.S. SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS.

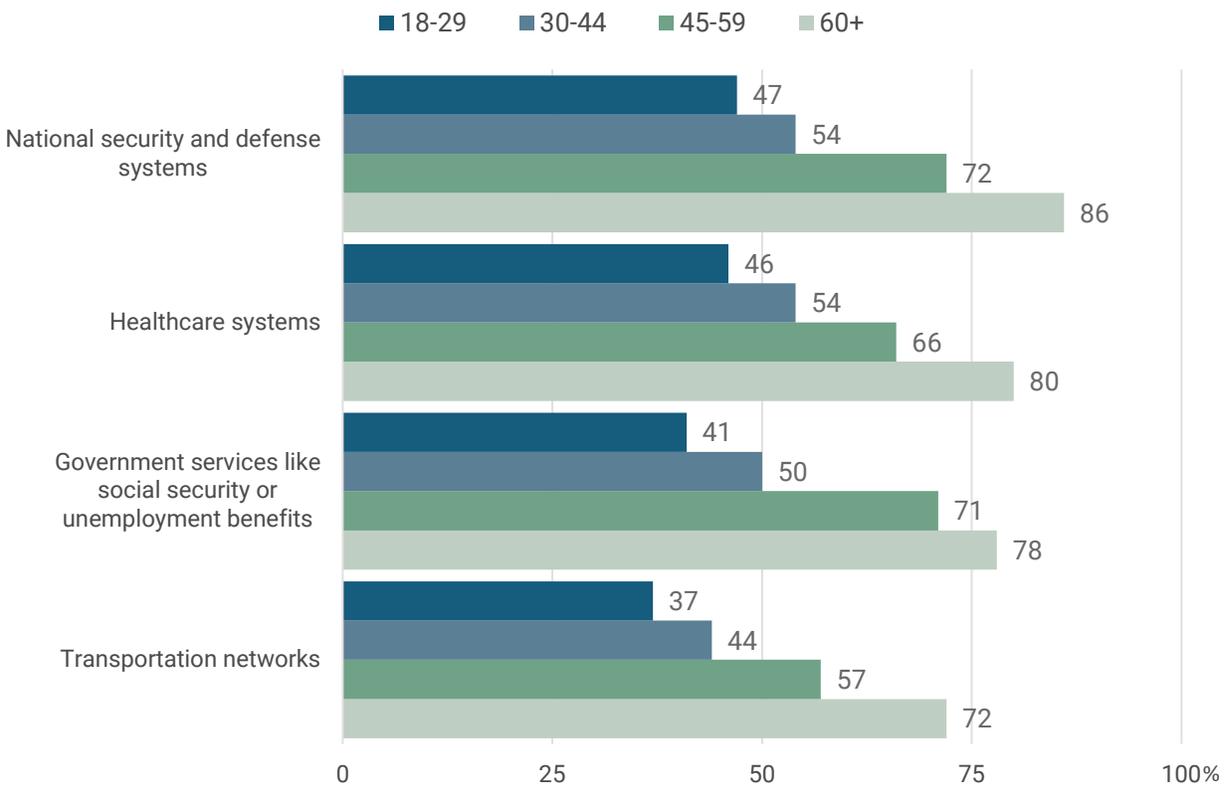
A majority of adults are very concerned about cyber-attacks across a wide range of sectors, including financial, defense, and infrastructure. And 62% are concerned about the vulnerability of their own information and data. Less than 1 in 5 are not concerned at all about cyber-attacks on these U.S. institutions.



There are significant differences in concern according to age group. While over three-quarters of adults age 60 and older are at least very concerned about attacks on national defense and security systems, government services, and health care systems, less than half of adults age 18-29 say the same. Similar gaps persist in concerns about personal records, energy infrastructure, transportation networks, and financial institutions.

### Worry about cyber-attacks increases significantly with age.

Percent of adults who say they are extremely/very concerned



**Question:** Question: How concerned are you about cyber-attacks on U.S. computer systems affecting each of the following?  
**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-13, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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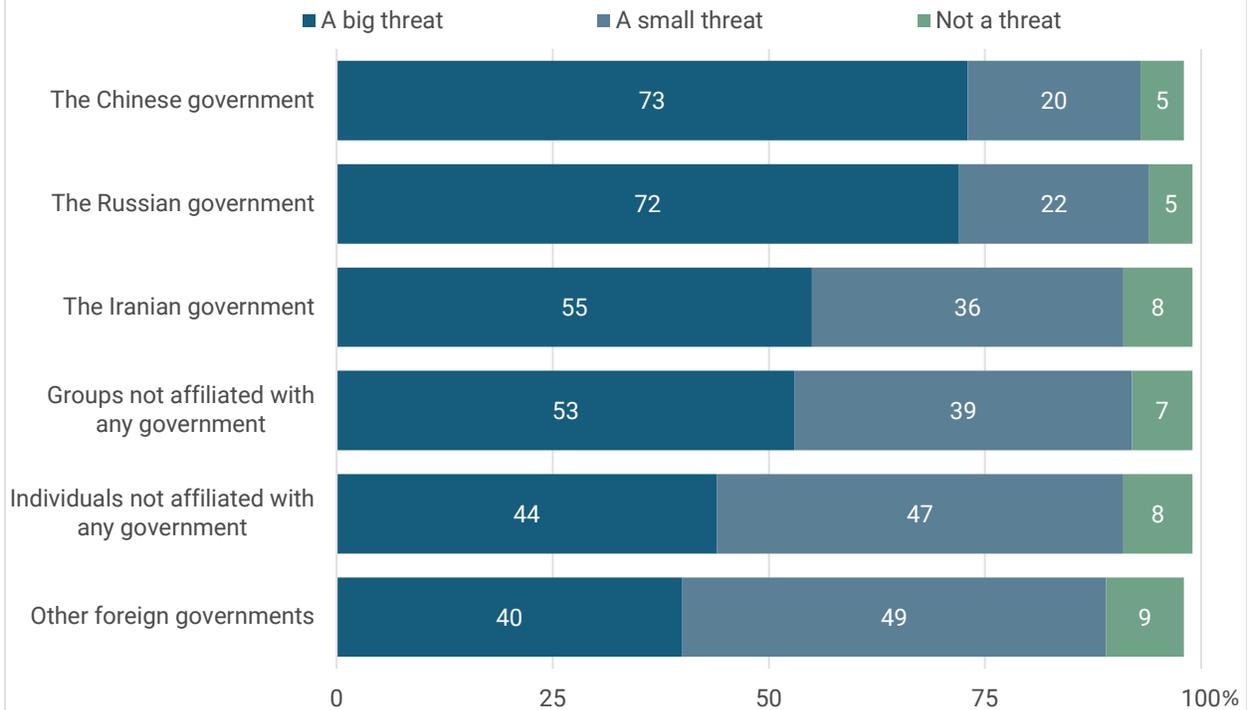
### MOST AMERICANS VIEW THE CHINESE AND RUSSIAN GOVERNMENTS AS BIG THREATS TO U.S. CYBERSECURITY.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans believe that the Chinese and Russian governments are serious threats to the cybersecurity of the U.S. government. About half say the same about the Iranian government and unaffiliated groups, but fewer believe unaffiliated individuals and other foreign governments are big threats.

However, there is public consensus that all these actors pose at least some threat to U.S. cybersecurity, with less than 1 in 10 saying they are not a threat at all.

## Many Americans believe the Chinese and Russian governments are a serious threat to U.S. cybersecurity.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How big of a threat are each of the following to the cybersecurity of the U.S. government?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-13, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

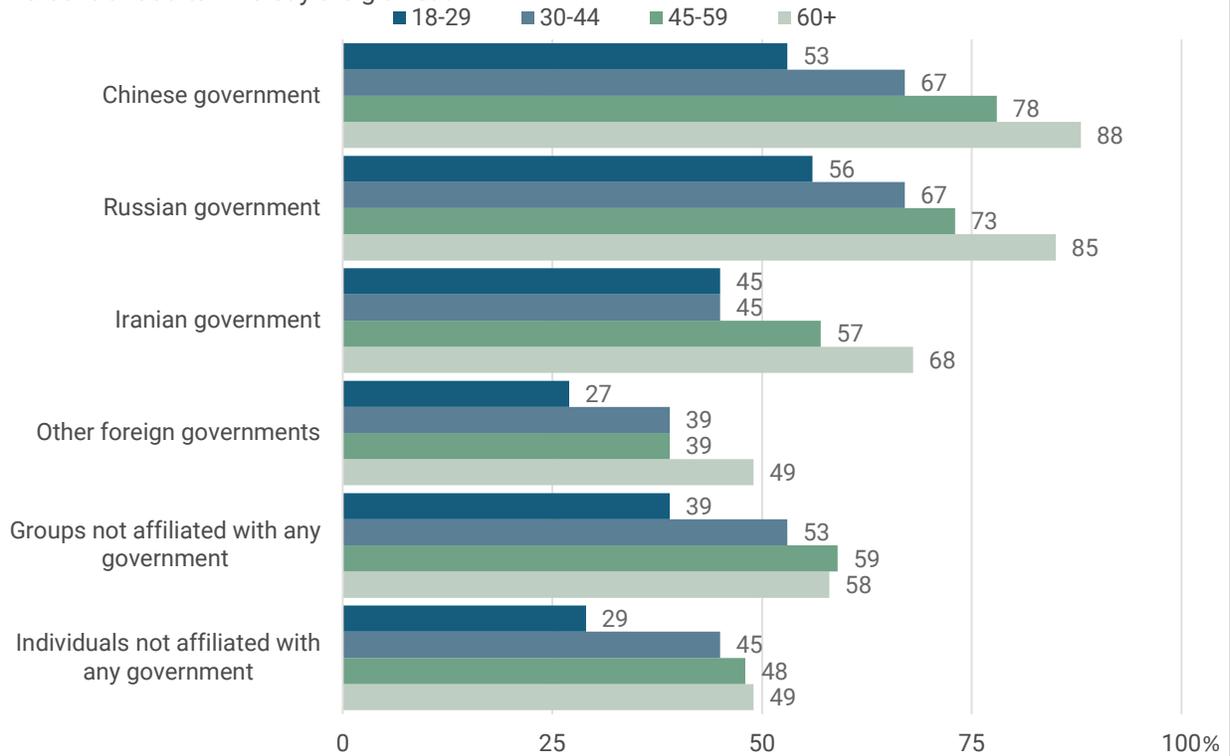


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Older adults are significantly more likely than younger adults to view these actors as big threats, and concern increases with age. For example, a large majority of adults age 60 and older say the Russian and the Chinese governments are a big threat, but only slightly more than half of those age 18-29 say the same. There are similar differences by age when it comes to the threats posed by the Iranian government, other foreign governments, and unaffiliated individuals and groups.

### Older Americans are most likely to view foreign governments as threats to cybersecurity.

Percent of adults who say a big threat



**Question:** How big of a threat are each of the following to the cybersecurity of the U.S. government?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-13, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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While majorities in both parties see both Russia and China as cybersecurity threats, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say the Russian government is a big threat (79% vs. 70%).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from the Pearson Institute and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly, multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between September 9 and September 13, 2021, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,071 completed the survey – 986 via the web and 85 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 19.3 percent, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 19.0 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.1 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.8 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2021 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP remains today the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).

## **ABOUT THE PEARSON INSTITUTE**

The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago promotes the ongoing discussion, understanding, and resolution of global conflicts, and also contributes to the advancement of a global society more at peace. Established through a grant from The Thomas L. Pearson and The Pearson Family Members Foundation, and led by Institute Director James Robinson, co-author of “Why Nations Fail” and “The Narrow Corridor,” the Institute achieves this by employing an analytically rigorous, data-driven approach and global perspective to understanding violent conflict. It is global in its scope, activities and footprint. Attracting students and scholars from around the world, its faculty are in the field studying conflicts – and approaches to conflict resolution – in Nigeria, Colombia, and Afghanistan, to name just a few.