
Shootings weighed on Americans in 2015

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According to those polled, the most important events of 2015 were a string of mass shootings, including the attacks in San Bernardino, California, and Paris, plus Islamic State group atrocities.

Fifty-seven per cent of those polled say this year was worse than last year for the world as a whole, up from the 38 per cent asked that question a year ago. Only 10 per cent believe 2015 was a better year than 2014, while 32 per cent think there was not much difference.

Americans also are much less likely than they were a year ago to believe that the current year was better for the United States - only 17 per cent compared with 30 per cent a year ago. Thirty-seven per cent think this year was worse for the country than last year, while 44 per cent do not think there was much difference.

On a personal level, fewer than a third (29 per cent) believe 2015 was better for them than 2014, while 21 per cent feel it was worse, compared with 15 per cent in 2014.

Of those polled, 68 per cent listed mass shootings in the US as very or extremely important news events this year, including the one in San Bernardino that heightened fears of domestic terrorism, plus shootings in Charleston, South Carolina; Roseburg, Oregon; and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Close behind, at 64 per cent, were the Paris attacks that ushered in 2015, targeting Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish market, then the Bataclan concert hall and other city sites in November.

And third, at 63 per cent, came the Islamic State group's various far-flung atrocities.