

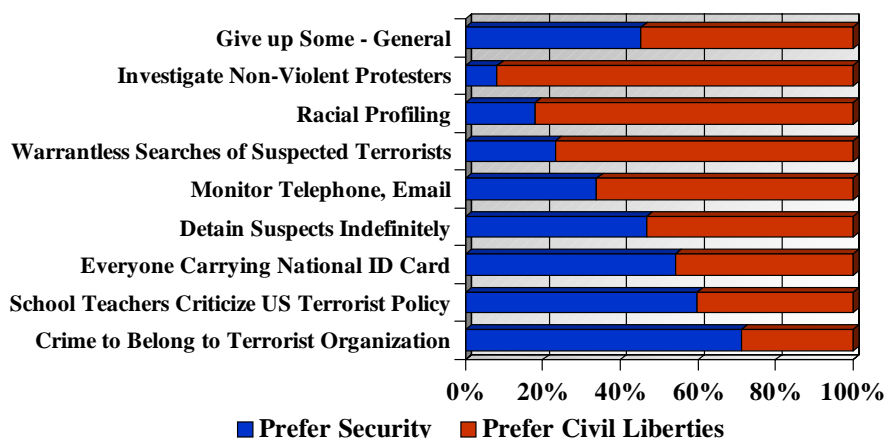


The Institute for Public Policy and Social Research

Policy Brief

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Americans Protect Civil Liberties



included more than double the number of Hispanic/Latino/Chicano and African American respondents than would typically be the case. In all, 1,448 people participated in the survey, and after weighting, the sample is nationally representative.

Concern About Future Terrorist Attacks

The overwhelming majority—more than 84%—of Americans remained “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the possibility of a future international terrorist attack on America. While this level of concern has declined somewhat in recent months, newspaper polls reveal a continuing heightened concern about terrorism.

Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of IPPSR Policy Brief. This publication is produced to bring the latest research to policymakers and those interested in public policy issues.

In this volume, you will find an executive summary of a nationwide study on the implications of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America. The study was conducted by Darren Davis, Ph.D. and Brian Silver, Ph.D., faculty members in the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. The survey was administered by the Office for Survey Research at the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. It was funded by the National Science Foundation, the MSU College of Social Science and the MSU Program in Public Opinion and Political Participation.

We value your input. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for future issues.

Carol S. Weissert, IPPSR Director—

Conception of Study

This study was conceived immediately after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The National Science Foundation solicited requests for proposals for studies of the implications of the attacks on American society. Past research on political and security crises in American society has shown that they are important contexts for revealing fundamental attitudes and values. This study, therefore, asks not only about Americans' reactions to the terror but also about fundamental beliefs such as tolerance toward different ethnic and racial groups, support for civil liberties, national pride, and trust in government.

A Word on Sample Design

A nationwide telephone survey was the best way to learn the full variety of reactions to the September 11 attack. Because of the special importance of some of the fundamental civil liberties issues to minority groups, the sample

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Information contained in this issue of IPPSR Policy Brief is an executive summary of results from a nationwide study on the implications of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America. The study was conducted by Darren Davis and Brian Silver, faculty members in the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. The survey was administered by the Office for Survey Research at the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. The Survey was funded by the National Science Foundation and two MSU units, the College of Social Science and the Program in Public Opinion and Political Participation.

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Analyses and interpretations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of IPPSR or MSU.

Concern Varies by Geography

When queried on their concern about future attacks, people are less concerned about an attack on their area (40%) than about the possibility of another attack on America in general (84%). Also, people living in cities (51%) and suburbs (46%) are more likely to express concern about an attack in their area than are those in small towns (32%) and rural areas (30%).

About the Study

- Nationwide random digit-dialing telephone survey
- Respondents: 1,448
- Weighting: Representative of the United States population
- Completion rate: 52.3%; Refusal rate 19.0%
- Sampling error: +/- 2.7%
- Field Dates: November 14, 2001 to January 15, 2002
- Conducted by: Darren Davis, Ph.D. and Brian Silver, Ph.D.
- Administered by: Office for Survey Research of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University
- Funding: National Science Foundation, MSU College of Social Science, and Program in Public Opinion and Political Participation

Bioterrorism Versus Terrorism

Americans also seem more concerned with a bioterrorist attack on themselves or their families (56%) than they do about a terrorist tack in their area (40%). The extent of concern varies greatly by social background. For example, concern about a bioterrorist attack on themselves or their families for African Americans (72%) and Hispanic/Latino/Chicanos (68%) is much higher than for Caucasians (51%).

Root Causes of Terrorism

When asked how important different factors might be, large majorities believe that U.S. foreign policy is a "very important" or "somewhat important" factor in the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks. In all, 86% view America's support of Israel as a factor. Nearly as many view America's foreign economic and aid policies as factors. Just over half (54%) view "the Islamic religion" as a root cause. This does not necessarily mean that people think U.S. foreign policy is wrong, but that many see a link between U.S. policy and the terrorist attack.

U.S. Responsibility

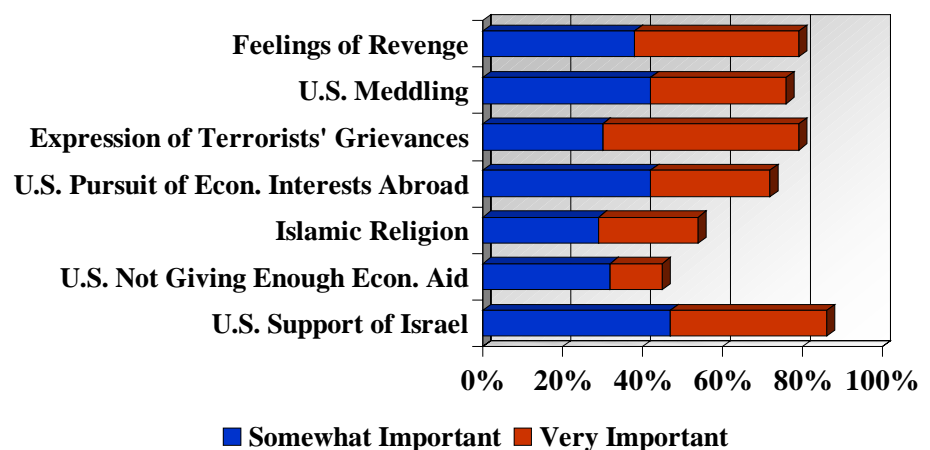
More than half (55%) of the respondents say that the United States bears "some" or "a lot" of responsibility for the hatred that led to the terrorist attack. This does not mean that Americans think the U.S. was directly *responsible* for the attacks. Instead it demonstrates that citizens perceive the root causes of the attacks to be *linked* to America's own actions.

In a separate study of Michigan residents' viewpoints, conducted from January 12 to February 19, 2002, a similar overall percentage (52%) said the U.S. bears "some" or "a lot" of responsibility for the hatred that led to the attacks. An executive summary of this report is available online at <http://www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS/>. This finding was in a survey in which terrorism was only a minor part of the questionnaire.

Political Ideology

Whether people attribute U.S. responsibility for the hatred that led to the attacks depends

**Root Causes of Terrorism Against the US:
Percent Saying "Very" or "Somewhat" Important**



on their broader political beliefs. Among those who “always” trust the national government, 40% say the U.S. bears responsibility for the hatred, while 68% of those who “never” trust the government say the U.S. bears responsibility. Similarly, among those who are “very proud” to be American, less than half (48%) attribute responsibility for the hatred to the United States, while 95% of those who are “not proud” to be American place blame on the U.S. for the hatred.

This is not just a partisan or ideological matter. The survey also shows that surprisingly large percentages even of political conservatives (40%) view the U.S. as having “some” or “a lot” of responsibility for the hatred.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are important factors in how people perceive America’s responsibility in this matter. Although a bare majority (51%) of Caucasians think the U.S. bears “some” or “a lot” of responsibility for the hatred, some 57% of African Americans and 72% of Hispanic/Latino/Chicanos hold this view. This may indicate that

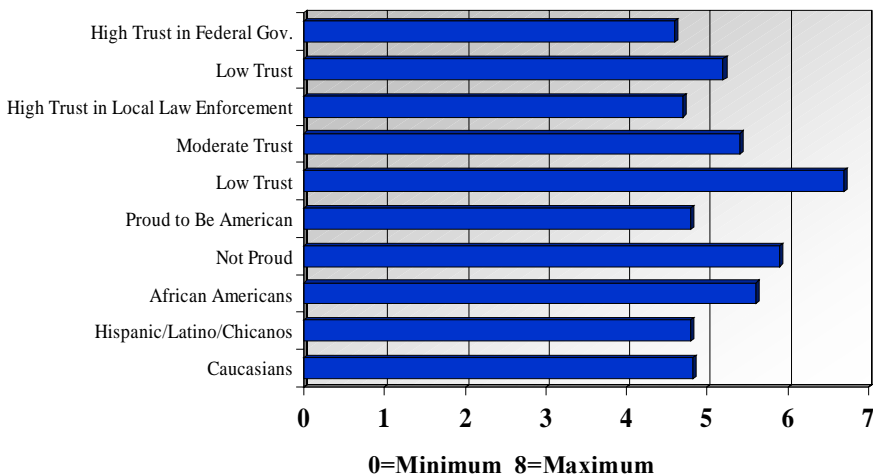
the experience of being African American or Hispanic/Latino/Chicano in the United States heightens ones awareness of how U.S. behavior may anger people in other countries.

The researchers consider the survey findings concerning the perceived root causes of terrorism to be very surprising. In their further analyses and the planned follow-up survey, they will further examine these issues.

Civil Liberties Versus Security Trade-Off

Following the September 11 attack, when asked in the abstract whether they think it is necessary to give up some rights for the sake of greater security, many Americans (45%) are willing to make trade-offs. Thus, in the *abstract*, American citizens are willing to sacrifice certain civil rights and personal freedoms for greater safety and security. In more *specific* terms, that willingness to sacrifice varies. When specific policies are considered, this willingness to concede civil rights depends on the right in question, as well as on an individual’s beliefs and background.

Number of Answers Favoring Protection of Civil Liberties



Protection of Liberties Varies

American citizens are willing to allow the government to consider people who associate with U.S. government designated terrorist organizations as terrorists (71%), to restrict school teachers from criticizing America’s anti-terrorism policy (60%), and to support the carrying of national ID cards (54%). While there is substantial support for law enforcement detaining suspected terrorists indefinitely (47%) and monitoring of telephone and email conversations (34%), American citizens are not very tolerant of investigating non-violent protestors (8%), using racial profiling (18%), or allowing searches without a court warrant (23%).

On the whole, American citizens are more in favor of protecting civil liberties than in limiting civil liberties to combat terrorism. Some 62% give a consistent pro-civil liberties response to at least 50% (4 of 8) of the civil liberties questions. Some 77% give a consistent pro-civil liberties response to at least 63% (5 of 8) of the civil liberties questions.

Political Ideology

The willingness to trade-off civil liberties for security means granting more power to government agencies. People’s attitudes towards the government as a whole and toward certain agencies affect their political ideology as well as their willingness to trade-off rights. The level of pride in being an American and the level of

trust in the government impacts perceptions of whether the U.S. is responsible for the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks on America.

As one would expect, individuals who are less proud to be American are more inclined to blame the U.S. for some of the hatred than are individuals who are more proud. Likewise, individuals who are less trusting of government are more likely to place some of the blame on the U.S. for the hatred that led to the attacks than are individuals who are more trusting of government.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity play a large role in determining whether American citizens are willing to sacrifice certain civil liberties and civil rights for greater safety and security.

On the whole, African Americans are more resistant than Hispanic/Latino/Chicanos and Caucasians to trading-off civil liberties. This finding probably has a lot to do with a historical struggle for civil rights and lower levels of trust in the federal government and local law enforcement agencies by African Americans.

Trust in the Federal Government

Trust in the federal government and local law enforcement play a major role in influencing the support for civil liberties in the context of the terrorist attacks.

American citizens realize that to give up certain civil liberties and personal freedoms for greater security empowers the government, in particular local law enforcement. Therefore, citizens who are more distrustful are less likely than citizens who are more trustful of the federal government to maintain their support for civil liberties.

“The opposition to racial profiling was much higher than we expected. This may account for why those who have low trust in local law enforcement are so unwilling to give up civil liberties.” (See charts p.1,3)

Brian Silver, Ph.D.

Trust in Local Law Enforcement

Trust in local law enforcement is especially influential. Citizens with low trust in local law enforcement give 6.7 (out of 8) pro-civil liberties responses, while citizens with moderate trust give 5.4 pro-civil liberties responses, and citizens with high trust give only 4.7 pro-civil liberties responses.

The researchers have found the opposition to racial profiling to be much higher than expected. This may account for why those who have low trust in local law enforcement are so unwilling to give up civil liberties.

Pride in Being an American

Pride in being an American also influences the willingness to sacrifice civil liberties. Citizens who are proud to be Americans are more willing to sacrifice certain civil liberties for personal security than citizens with little pride. Citizens who are proud to be American give 4.8 pro-civil liberties

responses while citizens who are not proud give 5.9 pro-civil liberties responses.

These results raise basic issues about the relationship between protection of individual freedoms and rights and the protection of the society as a whole. Persons with greater national pride and greater trust in government are more willing to limit civil liberties and to grant greater powers to the government to protect America from terrorism. Persons with less national pride and less trust in the government are less willing to grant powers to the government that might limit their civil liberties.

“On the whole, American citizens are more in favor of protecting civil liberties than in limiting civil liberties to combat terrorism.”

Darren Davis, Ph.D.

For More Information

For more information on the survey, contact Brian Silver, Ph.D. at bsilver@msu.edu or (517) 355-2237 or Darren Davis, Ph.D. at davisda@msu.edu or (517) 432-0028.

For more information on this issue of *IPPSR Policy Brief*, contact Amy J. Baumer, IPPSR Director of Policy Analysis at baumeram@msu.edu or (517) 355-6672.

A copy of the questionnaire used for the study is available on the *Program in Public Opinion and Political Participation website* at: <http://polisci.msu.edu/ppopp/pubs.html>.

A slideshow presentation of the results is available on the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research website at <http://ippsr.msu.edu/ppie/policybrief.htm>

Follow-Up Studies

The researchers are planning a follow-up survey in Fall 2002 to learn whether Americans' attitudes about the terror and civil liberties trade-offs have changed permanently. They have applied to the National Science Foundation and private foundations for support.

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U N I V E R S I T Y
M I C H I G A N S T A T E

Address correction requested.

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