

The Years Were...

2000

1993

1996

1988

1983

1985

1998

Perhaps one of the most shocking things about the terrible events of September 11 was the total lack of precedent. Never before had so many civilians been murdered on or above American soil in a span of less than two hours. Never before had a horrified nation sat in front of its television sets and watched, in color and in real time, as icons of United States industrial prowess and commercial might literally disintegrated into clouds of debris and lost lives.

Certainly, Americans had been attacked—and even killed—by international terrorists before. But as awful as they were, those disasters were usually somehow far away—in the air over Scotland, on the tarmac in Beirut, in the waters off Yemen.

The questions public opinion researchers asked in the aftermath of those events are haunting in their repetition: Would better security

have helped? Should we retaliate, against the criminals, against their nations? Are we afraid to go out in public?

And then there are the questions that we now most surely are asking ourselves. As the years went by, marked by new assaults, did we take the threat seriously enough? Did the government? Did the polling industry?

On February 26, 1993 a terrorist attack took the lives of six Americans and injured over a thousand. A search of the Roper Center's iPOLL database reveals that out of 14,550 questions asked by pollsters that year, a grand total of eight dealt with this event.

The event was the bombing of the World Trade Center.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

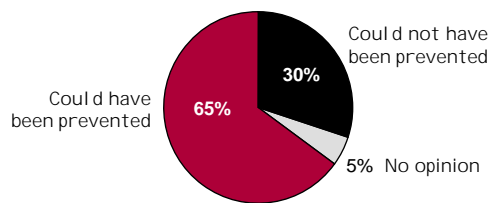
Beirut, Lebanon

241 US Marines killed in truck bombing of barracks.

October 23, 1983

Question:

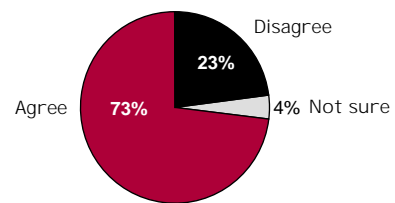
Some people say the terrorist would not have been able to kill the Marines in Beirut if security at the Marine base had been better. Others say no defense could have prevented such a suicide attack. What about you, do you think the killings could have been prevented, or don't you think so?



Source: Survey by ABC News/ Washington Post, October 26-28, 1983.

Question:

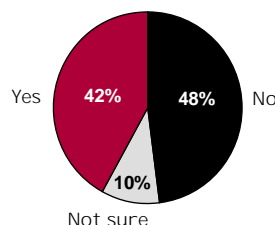
...[T]ell me if you agree or disagree... If the US pulls the Marines out of Lebanon now, after we've had over 225 killed, it will look as though this country can be intimidated by terrorist tactics.



Source: Survey by Louis Harris & Associates, October 28-31, 1983.

Question:

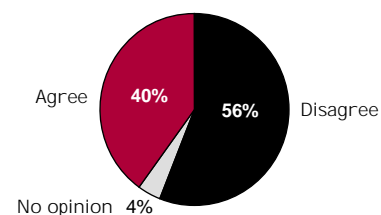
Do you think the United States ought to launch a military strike to punish whoever was responsible for the bombing of US Marines in Beirut, or not?



Source: Survey by the Los Angeles Times, November 12-17, 1983.

Question:

...[Please tell me whether you tend to agree or disagree.] The United States should find and militarily punish the groups or nations responsible for the terrorist attack on the Marines even if it means risking a larger war.



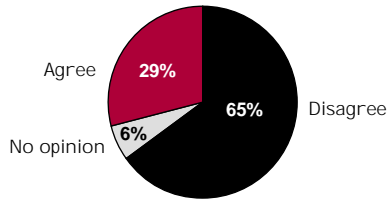
Source: Survey by ABC News/ Washington Post, October 26-28, 1983.

Beirut International Airport

TWA Flight 847 hijacked and held hostage; one passenger killed.

Question:

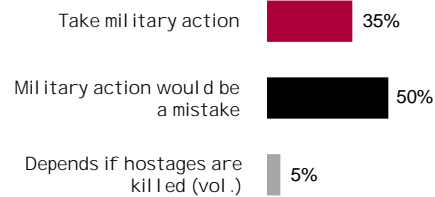
[...For each, please tell me if you agree, disagree, or if perhaps you have no opinion on that statement.] ...There is nothing the United States can do to prevent such acts of terrorism [like the hijacking of a TWA plane by Arab terrorists and the holding of American hostages].



Source: Survey by ABC News/ Washington Post, June 17-19, 1985.

Question:

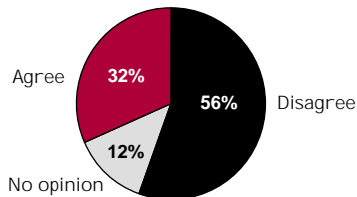
When this crisis is over, should the United States take military action to punish the people it feels are responsible, or do you think taking military action would be a mistake?



Source: Survey by CBS News, June 18, 1985.

Question:

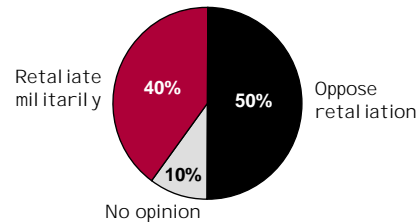
[...For each, please tell me if you agree, disagree, or if perhaps you have no opinion on that statement.] ...Once the hostages are safe, the US should take military action in retaliation for their capture and the killing of one American.



Source: Survey by ABC News/ Washington Post, June 30-July 1, 1985.

Question:

Even if we cannot identify all those responsible for the current skyjacking, once it is over, some people think the United States should retaliate militarily against any group with a clear connection to the hijackers to discourage future terrorism. Others oppose this kind of response because it might kill innocent people and trigger more violence against the United States. Which comes closer to your view?



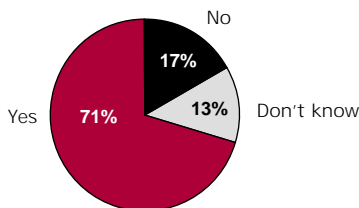
Source: Survey by Gallup Organization/ Newsweek, June 20-21, 1985.

Lockerbie, Scotland

270 killed in midair bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

Question:

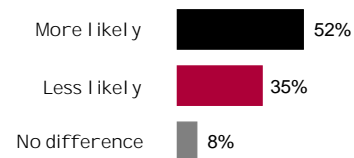
Do you think bomb attacks such as the one that caused the Pan Am crash can be prevented by tighter security?



Source: Survey by Gordon S. Black/ USA Today, December 29, 1988-January 2, 1989.

Question:

Do you think retaliating militarily against those responsible for the Pan Am bombing will make it more likely or less likely that there will be future terrorist attacks?

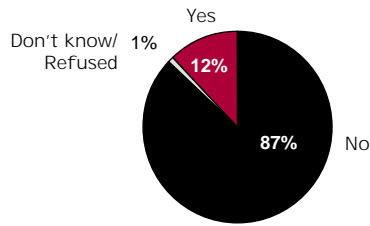


Source: Survey by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman/ Time/ CNN, January 9-10, 1989.

New York City, New York

Question:

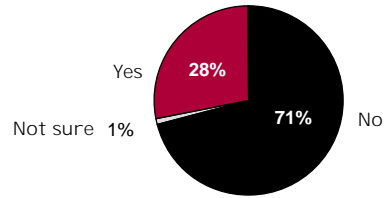
Do you personally feel any sense of danger from terrorist acts where you live and work, or not?



Source: Survey by Gallup/CNN/USA Today, March 12-14, 1993.

Question:

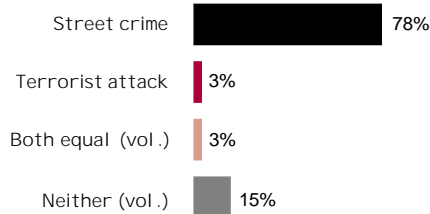
Do you personally worry about terrorism when you are in public places?



Source: Survey by Yankelovich/Time/CNN, March 18, 1993.

Question:

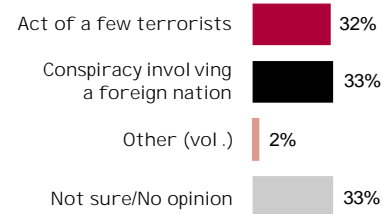
Do you worry more about being the victim of a street crime or about being the victim of a terrorist attack?



Source: Survey by Yankelovich/Time/CNN, March 18, 1993.

Question:

Considering the World Trade Center bombing, do you believe that the bombing was the act of a few terrorists or is part of a wider conspiracy involving a foreign nation?



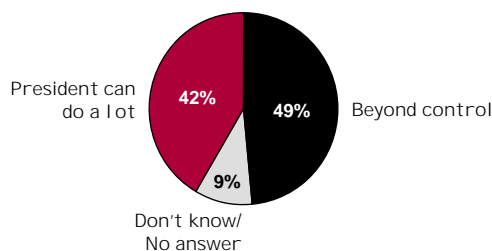
Source: Survey by the John Zogby Group International for the American Muslim Council, March 16-23, 1993.

Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

19 service members killed, 372 other Americans wounded, in truck bombing of US military base.

Question:

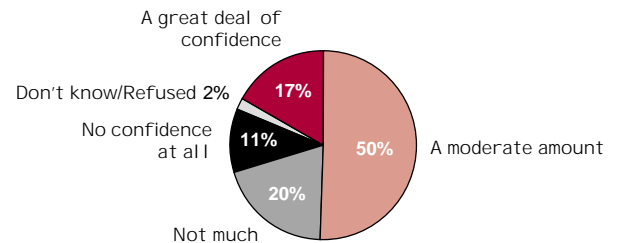
Is terrorism something a president can do a lot about, or is that something beyond any president's control?



Source: Survey by CBS News, July 21, 1996.

Question:

How much confidence do you have that the airlines that fly in this country are adequately protected from terrorist attack—a great deal of confidence, a moderate amount, not much, or no confidence at all?



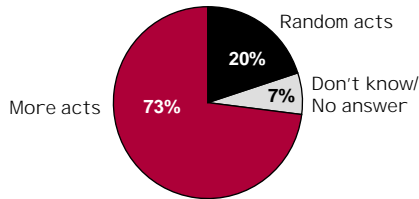
Source: Survey by Gallup/CNN/USA Today, July 18-21, 1996.

Kenya and Tanzania

258 killed in bombing of US embassies.

Question:

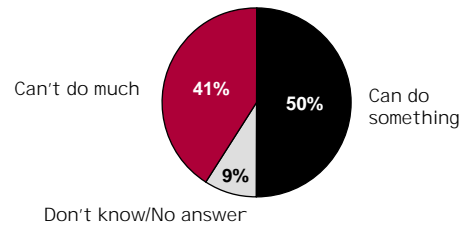
Thinking about last week's bombing at the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which of these statements is closer to your own opinion about what will happen?... In the next year or so, there will be more terrorist acts against the United States, or... the embassy bombings were random acts and are not likely to be repeated in the near future.



Source: Survey by CBS News, August 11-12, 1998.

Question:

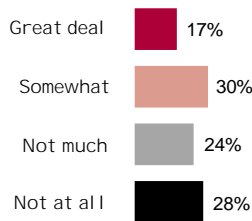
Do you think there is anything the United States government can do to significantly reduce terrorist attacks that affect American citizens, or is this something the United States government can't do much about?



Source: Survey by CBS News, August 11-12, 1998.

Question:

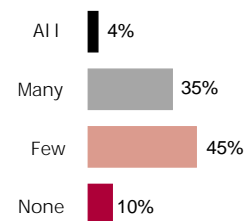
How much, if at all, do you worry about terrorism when you're in public places here in the United States? ...A great deal, somewhat, not much, or not at all?



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center, August 21-24, 1998.

Question:

If law enforcement officials were given the tools they need, do you think they would be able to prevent all future terrorist attacks here in the United States, or many of them, or only a few of them, or would they be able to prevent none of them?



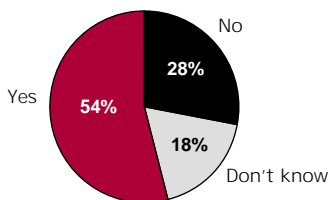
Source: Survey by the Los Angeles Times, August 22, 1998.

Port of Aden, Yemen

17 American sailors killed in suicide bombing of USS Cole.

Question:

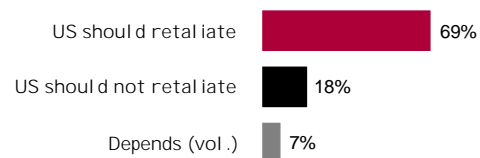
If the US can determine who is responsible for the attack on our naval ship in Yemen, do you think the US should respond with military action, or not?



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/Newsweek, October 12-13, 2000.

Question:

If the United States can determine with certainty who was responsible for the attack on the Navy ship in Yemen, the US may retaliate. Do you think that the US should retaliate because terrorists need to know that they will suffer consequences, or do you think that the US should not retaliate because it would encourage more terrorism and violence?



Source: Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, October 13-15, 2000.