

# **UCLA**

## **Southern California Survey**

### **Title**

Issue 9: Terrorism Concern High in Southern California

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3fc4d6fk>

### **Authors**

Haselhoff, Kim

Ong, Paul M.

Wong, Norman

### **Publication Date**

2005-05-01

# SCS FACT SHEET

FINDINGS FROM THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY (SCS)

Vol. 1 No. 9

<http://lewis.spa.ucla.edu>

May 2005

## Residents More Concerned About Terrorism than Rest of Country

### INTRODUCTION

Public opinion surveys can play an important role in decision making as they gather information that complements data from standard sources such as the Decennial Census and Current Population Survey. This Fact Sheet presents findings from a recently completed survey of Southern California residents (those living in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura). Details of the survey can be found in the appendix. The information from the survey can help better inform elected officials about the public's concerns and priorities, such as the prospect of a terrorist attack in the region and local officials' preparedness for such an event. Our main finding is that Southern Californians are more worried about the likelihood of a terrorist attack than is the rest of the nation.

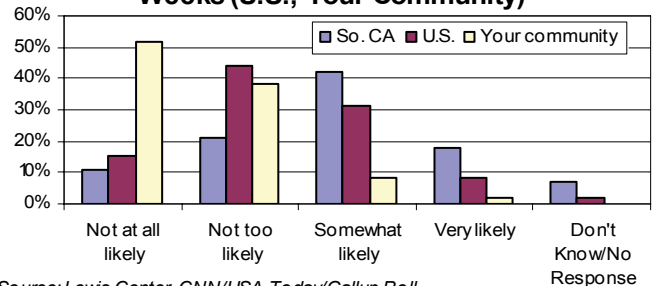
### BACKGROUND

There is a general consensus that the attacks on September 11th served as a wake-up call for the United States. Although the fear of further terrorist attacks was high in the months following the attacks, that fear has somewhat subsided, replaced by concerns over the economy and the war in Iraq. However, a poll done by the Field Institute in July 2002 claimed that an overwhelming majority of Californians (86 percent) believe that there will likely be a terrorist attack somewhere in the United States in the near future, while a somewhat smaller percentage (69 percent) believe that a similar event will occur within California (DiCamillo and Field, 2002a). Although many in the state have downplayed the events of 9/11, believing that the country has done a lot to improve its primary response to acts of terrorism (fire and police), some Californians believe that we are still lagging in such areas as computer security, health care emergency response, and border security (DiCamillo and Field, 2002b; *Los Angeles Times*, 2002). For Southern California in particular, Los Angeles World Airport is considered a prime terrorist target. In 2001 a suspect was arrested in a plot to bomb the airport on the eve of the millennium. Modernization plans for LAX have also been held up by concerns about how to best increase security.

### TERROR CONCERN HIGH IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The results of the Southern California Survey indicate that a majority of Southern California residents believe it is likely that there will be at least one act of terrorism in the region in the next two years (see Figure 1). We compared these results to a nationwide CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll undertaken at about the same time. Although the CNN Poll asked about the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the U.S. over the next several weeks (not years) the results were the opposite of what we found for Southern California. A majority of Americans felt that an attack was not likely. When asked how likely it was that there would be an act of terrorism in their own community over the next several weeks only ten percent of Americans thought such an attack was likely. These results are similar to polls taken in 2002 in which Californians also thought it was more likely that there would be terrorist attacks in the U.S. in the near future than did Americans in general (86 percent versus 56 percent, respectively). In the same poll over two thirds of Californians thought it was likely that there would be a terrorist attack in their own state in the near future (DiCamillo and Field, 2002a).

**Figure 1: Likelihood of Terrorist Attack in Next Two Years (So. CA) or Next Several Weeks (U.S., Your Community)**

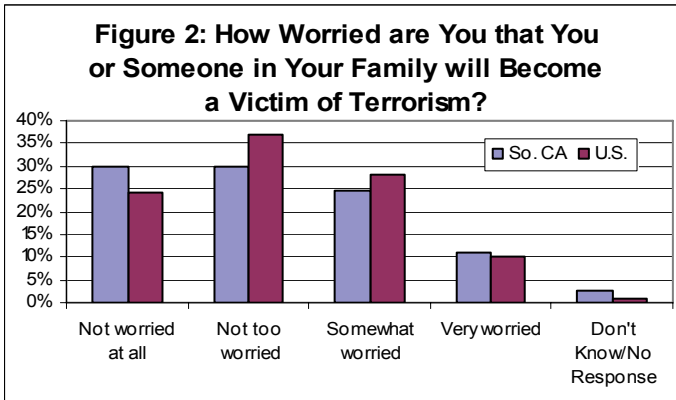


Source: Lewis Center, CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll Jan 7-9, 2005, Nationwide

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

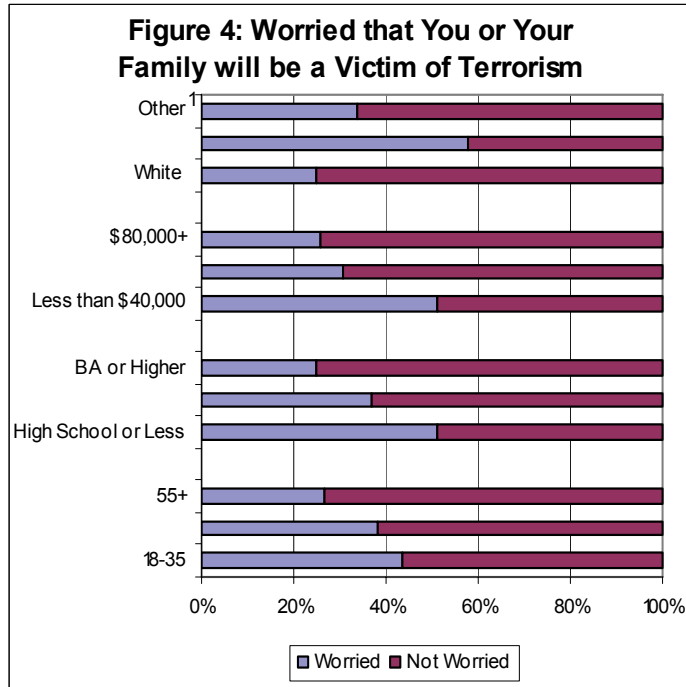
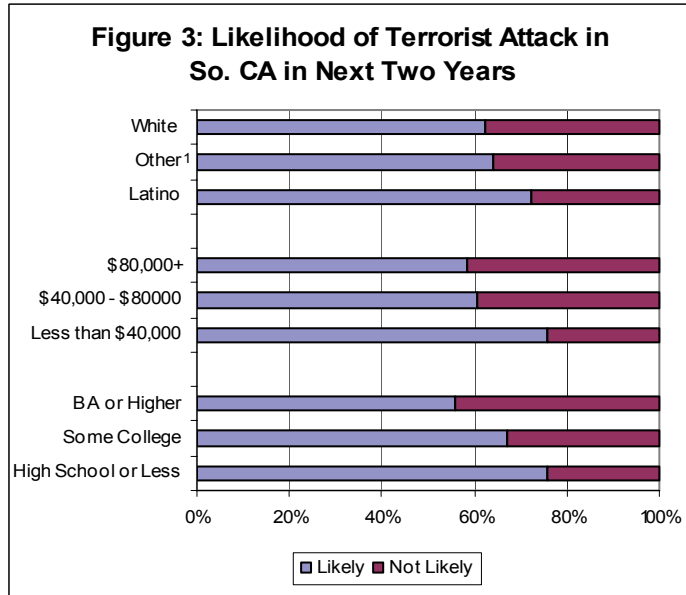
**Kim Haselhoff** is a post-doctoral fellow at the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. **Paul Ong** is Director of the Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. **Norman Wong** is an Administrative Specialist in the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies.

The survey results are more interesting in light of a poll taken of city officials in California by the Public Policy Institute of California in 2002. The poll found that “local officials in California do not seem as concerned about potential terrorist strikes as their counterparts in the rest of the nation” as reflected in the level of emergency planning. Apparently, city officials in California are less concerned about terrorist attacks than is the public itself. While Southern Californians are more concerned about the likelihood of a terrorist attack than are Americans in general, both are equally worried about themselves or their families becoming victims of terrorism. A little over a third of respondents from both polls are worried about becoming victims of terrorism, while about sixty percent are not (see Figure 2).



### GROUP DIFFERENCES IN FEAR OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

Certain groups appear to be more concerned about the likelihood of a terrorist attack than others. Latinos are more inclined to think a terrorist attack is likely (72 percent) than are whites (62 percent) or other ethnic groups (64 percent). Of those respondents making less than \$40,000 per year, 76 percent believe an attack is likely in the next two years, versus only 59 percent of those making \$80,000 or more. The percentages are similar when we look at education – 76 percent of those with only a high school education or less believe an attack is likely, versus only 56 percent of those with a BA or higher (see Figure 3). Although there is less concern overall about becoming a victim of an act of terrorism, the differences between the groups was even greater. Latinos were more than twice as likely as whites to be worried about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. Those making less than \$40,000 per year were twice as likely to be concerned as those making more than \$80,000. Similarly, those with a high school degree or less were twice as likely to be worried about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack as those with a BA or higher. Finally, younger respondents are more worried about becoming victims than are older respondents (See Figure 4).

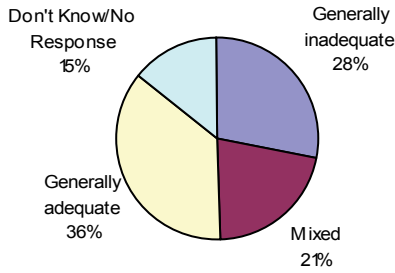


### GOVERNMENT EFFICACY IN DEALING WITH TERRORISM

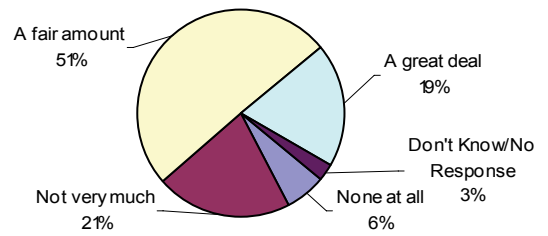
Overall, Southern California residents are fairly satisfied with the preparedness of their local officials. Only about a quarter of respondents feel that officials have done an inadequate job of preparing for a terrorist attack or have little or no confidence in their local government’s ability to respond. A majority feel that local officials have done a generally adequate (36 percent) or mixed (21 percent) job of preparing for an attack, (see Figure 5) and over two thirds have confidence in local governments’ ability to respond (see Figure 6).

<sup>1</sup> “Other” includes Asians, African-Americans, and mixed ethnicities, as well as respondents who did not indicate their ethnicity on the survey.

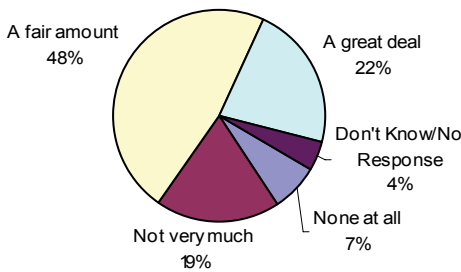
**Figure 5: Performance of Local Elected Officials in Preparing for a Possible Terrorist Attack in the Region**



**Figure 8: Of Those Who Think a Terrorist Attack is Likely: Confidence in Local Government to Respond**



**Figure 6: Confidence in Local Government to Respond to Attack**



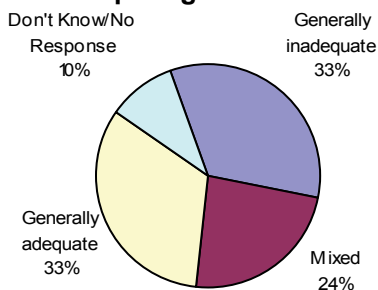
**APPENDIX**

The 2005 Southern California Public Opinion Survey is supported by the UCLA Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and is designed to gather the views and opinions of Southern California residents on critical public policy issues in this region. The survey was developed with input from the campus and community organizations. UCLA units include the Center for Communications and Community, the Institute of Transportation Studies, the Center for Civil Society, and the Anderson School of Management. Three public agencies participated in the process: the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Agency (MTA), and the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC). Several UCLA faculty provided valuable input: Professors Vickie Mays, Michael Stoll, Brian Taylor, Amy Zegart, Frank Gilliam, Helmut Anheier, Chris Thornberg, and Ed Leamer.

In evaluating government efficacy in dealing with terrorism we looked specifically at those respondents who felt that such an attack was likely in the next two years. These respondents were pretty evenly split on whether local officials are adequately preparing for a possible terrorist attack. One third said that their local official’s performance was “generally adequate” while another third said it was “generally inadequate.” About a quarter had mixed feelings on the issue and the remaining ten percent did not know or did not respond (see Figure 7). There was more confidence in local government’s ability to respond after an attack. These results were very similar to the results for all respondents to this question. While only 20 percent had “a great deal” of confidence, over 70 percent had some degree of confidence, versus only 28 percent who had only some or none at all (see Figure 8).

The 2005 Survey gathered basic demographic data and covered seven topical areas: 1) major issues facing the region, 2) the efficacy of local government, 3) transportation, 4) the state of the regional economy, 5) housing, 6) civic engagement, and 7) major disasters. When possible, questions were worded to parallel existing questions from other surveys. Half of respondents were asked questions related to terrorism.

**Figure 7: Of Those Who Think a Terrorist Attack is Likely: Performance of Elected Officials in Preparing for a Terrorist Attack**



The Survey was conducted in English and Spanish during the months of January and February 2005 using random digit dialing, and the data were collected by The Social Science Research Center at California State University, Fullerton. There are 1544 completed surveys for the five counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura. The sample is divided proportionally by county household population. The characteristics of the sample by age, ethnicity, income, and home ownership categories are consistent with the 2004 March Current Population Survey. There is a sampling error of +/- 2.6% at the 95% confidence level for the full sample, and +/- 3.7% for the subsample answering the questions related to terrorism. The size of the sampling error is larger for subpopulations.

## REFERENCES

- DiCamillo, M. & Field, M. (2002a). "No Diminishment in Californians' Expectations of Future Terrorist Attacks; Release #2049." San Francisco: The Field Institute.
- DiCamillo, M. & Field, M. (2002b). "Californians Think Sept. 11 Changed the U.S. in Both Positive and Negative Ways; Release #2054." San Francisco: The Field Institute.
- Los Angeles Times. (2002). Los Angeles Times Poll: 9/11 a Year Later. June 2.
- PollingReport.com. (2005). "War on Terrorism." CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup Poll, January 7 -9. <http://www.pollingreport.com/terror.htm>. Accessed 3/30/05.
- Public Policy Institute of California. (2002). "Golden State of Mind: California Less Worried About Terror Attacks Than Rest of Nation." Press Release. December 5. [www.ppic.org/main/pressrelease](http://www.ppic.org/main/pressrelease)

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

Haselhoff, K., Ong, P & Wong, N. (2005). "Residents More Concerned About Terrorism than Rest of Country." *SCS Fact Sheet*, Vol. 1, No. 9, UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies.

The **Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies** was established to promote the study, understanding and solution of regional policy issues, with special reference to Southern California, including problems of the environment, urban design, housing, community and neighborhood dynamics, transportation and economic development. It is a focus of interdisciplinary activities, involving numerous faculty members and graduate students from many schools and departments at UCLA. It also fosters links with researchers at other California universities and research institutes on issues of relevance to regional policy. Founded in 1988 with a \$5 million endowment from Ralph and Goldy Lewis, it was directed until December 1994 by Professor Allen J. Scott, directed by Roger Waldinger from 1994 through 1998 and is currently directed by Paul Ong. The Center is supported by its endowment, other private donors and foundations and research grants from a variety of agencies. The director works with an executive committee, with guidance from an advisory board that includes members drawn from both the University and the wider community.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Norman Wong, Margaret Johnson, Lucy Tran, and Diana Tran for formatting and editing the Fact Sheet, and the Center for Public Health and Disaster for their input and suggestions.

## DISCLAIMER

Neither the University of California, the School of Public Affairs nor the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies either support or disavow the findings in any project, report, paper, or research listed herein. University affiliations are for identification only; the University is not involved in or responsible for the project.

---

LEWIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL POLICY STUDIES  
UCLA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
3250 PUBLIC POLICY BUILDING  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1656

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
UCLA