

Call for Abstracts

Annual Meeting of the American College of Epidemiology
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Poster presentations provide an opportunity for participants in the ACE annual meeting to share their work with interested colleagues in an informal, relaxed setting. Poster sessions are prominently scheduled during the meeting and include poster discussion groups and oral presentations by some authors. Prizes will be awarded for the best student-prepared poster.

FEAR OF TERRORISM IN NEW YORK ON THE BRINK OF WAR

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PURPOSE: To assess the prevalence and impact of terrorism fears in New York after the September 11 attacks.

METHODS: We undertook two statewide telephone surveys of New York adults -- one in September 2002 (N=1,001) and one in March 2003

(N=484). **RESULTS:** The September survey indicated that 46.1% (95% confidence interval [CI]=42.7-49.5) of residents were fearful of future terrorist attacks. Fear was higher on all indicators among downstate residents (New York City and Long Island) compared with the rest of the state ($p < 0.001$). A multivariate model predicting higher overall fear indicated that down-state residents (odds ratio [OR]=1.9, $p = 0.001$), women (OR=1.6, $p = 0.012$), those 45-64 years old (OR=2.0, $p = 0.034$), African Americans (OR=2.4, $p = 0.003$), Hispanics (OR=2.6, $p < 0.001$), those with high school educations or less (OR=2.2, $p = 0.002$), those who would flee the area (OR=2.1, $p < 0.001$), were more likely to be fearful of attacks. However, compared with the March survey, overall fear decreased among New Yorkers (26.0% vs. 34.1%, $p < 0.05$). Conversely, the number of residents reporting they made preparations for future attacks increased (14.7% vs. 6.6%, $p < 0.05$). In addition, 61.0% (95% CI=56.1-65.8) of New Yorkers indicated they would likely receive the Smallpox vaccine, if available.

Furthermore, while about 30% of New Yorkers indicated they would likely flee in the event of a biological or nuclear threat, 69.0% (95% CI=64.2-73.4) reported they would have confidence in information provided by police or fire department officials in making evacuation decisions. While this confidence was lower for government information (54.9%, 95% CI=44.7-54.8), trust in this information actually increased with the onset of the Iraq War (54.9 vs. 45.1, $p < 0.05$). Finally, 37.9 (95% CI=33.1-43.0) of New Yorkers reported they were aware of bio-terrorism information on the New York Health Department's web site.

CONCLUSION: Terrorism preparedness has increased among New Yorkers and fear of terrorism has decreased. The disparity in terrorism fears by gender, race, ethnicity, and education level, however, may be reason for concern.