

Does watching the news affect perceived risk of terrorism?

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Several authors have proposed that the news media elevate perceptions of risk and fear of crime. Research suggests that fear of crime is related to the overall amount of media consumption, “resonance” of news reports, how much attention the individual pays to the news, and how credible he or she believes it to be. The present study examines whether this dynamic applies for terrorism. Telephone survey data (n = 532) of New Yorkers and Washingtonians were obtained through financial support of the University of Maryland’s National Consortium for the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and are used to test whether perceived risk of terrorism is associated with news consumption, and whether this relationship is mediated by resonance, attention, or credibility. Findings are that while exposure to terrorism-related news, and attention paid to it are positively associated with perceived risk of terrorism, the relationship between news consumption and fear of terrorism is more complex. In addition, self-reported victimization (resonance) is significantly related to perceived risk but not fear. Finally, neither attention, victimization experience, nor perceived credibility of news reports mitigates the effects of the overall frequency of terrorism-related television news.

Example

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