

Global Terror, Well-Being and Political Attitudes

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Abstract

A growing literature examines the impact of terror on subjective well-being. However, findings are difficult to generalize because most studies typically focus on specific events and their local consequences, while the impact of terror becomes increasingly global. We leverage panel datasets for six countries together with data on all terror attacks in the world over 20 years. In this way, we can understand the type of events that matters and the diffusion channels through which terrorist attacks diminish well-being globally and continually. Identification stems from daily fluctuation in terror intensity over time while controlling for standard well-being determinants and individual fixed effects. We find a negative relationship between daily terror intensity (incidences or number of fatalities) and individual life satisfaction. The effect is particularly strong for days of intense terror, for events broadcasted on Western television or when respondents are culturally proximate to the victims. For a subset of countries, we study the impact of terror on political attitudes and find that global terror significantly increases the intention to vote for conservative parties. This conservative shift is associated with large well-being responses to terror.