

# Terrorism and Military Action Survey Assessment Report 2001

Syracuse University  
Office of Residence Life

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## Overview

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The Office of Residence Life 2001 Terrorism and Military Action survey was administered in October Fall 2001 to 3,295 students who were selected as a 25% sample of all registered students at Syracuse University. Of this sample, 25% (n=811) of the surveys were completed and returned. The survey was conducted using a combination of two Internet communication tools: electronic mail and internet polling software. This survey contained sixteen multiple-choice questions pertaining to perceptions of terrorism and military action. The results are summarized in this report.

## Purpose

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This survey was created in response to concern over the effect on students at SU of the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the United States on September 11, 2001. This assessment project was focused on gathering information on student perceptions of current events and their relevance to students' daily lives.

## Methods

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The multiple choice questions in this survey asked respondents about their knowledge of current events, their perspective on foreign policy, their perceptions on war and terrorism, and their reactions to the terrorist attacks committed in the United States on September 11, 2001. Additionally, students were asked about the effects of these events on their academic routine and their resulting comfort level on campus. Demographic information including class year, gender, race, and nationality was also collected.

This survey was distributed to 3,295 students who were enrolled as full-time students at Syracuse University during the Fall 2001 semester in the form of a web-based survey. Seventeen thousand two hundred and forty two (n=17,242) student files were acquired from the Registrar's Office representing all Syracuse University students registered for the Fall 2001 semester. Of these files, a sample of approximately 25% (n=4,307), stratified by class year, race, and gender was generated. These files were then configured into a listserv. In this process 1,012 were eliminated as duplicate or invalid addresses. Such discrepancies were anticipated due to the tentative and continuously changing nature of student records at the onset of a new academic year. The resulting number of students on the listserv was 3,295.

An initial electronic mailing was sent to the 3,295 students requesting that they select a web-link that was included in the body of the electronic mail message. Clicking on this link connected students to the Office of Residence Life assessment web page that briefly explained the survey and provided a web-linked button, which, upon clicking, connected students to a survey that was maintained on the Office of Residence Life assessment web server. Within the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to enter an electronic mail address to be entered into a drawing for two \$25 Syracuse University Bookstore gift certificates. Upon completing the survey, respondents were prompted to submit their responses by clicking on a submission button.

Following this initial mailing, electronic mail addresses entered for the drawing were collected and, those that were identical to the original listings on the mailing list were removed from the listserv. Due to the use of alternative electronic mail addresses and aliases, a removal of all individuals who responded to the survey was not possible. Students who used an alias to respond to the survey or who did not want to continue receiving reminder messages were prompted in a footnote in the mailings to contact the listserv manager via electronic mail for removal from the mailing list. During this process, the accumulation of data was monitored.

One day after the initial mailing, a second electronic mailing was sent to all students who remained on the mailing list. This attempt to increase the response rate was accompanied by a third, fourth, and fifth electronic mailing (ending eight days after the first mailing) requesting participation in the survey. A total of 811 students responded for a response rate of 25%.

## Results

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### Demographics

Class Year	Percent	Number
Freshman	23%	(n=186)
Sophomore	19%	(n=155)
Junior	17%	(n=134)
Senior	20%	(n=163)
Graduate Student	21%	(n=173)

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
African American	3%	(n=24)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	(n=1)
Asian/Pacific Islander	9%	(n=71)
Hispanic/Latino(a) American	3%	(n=27)
White, Non-Hispanic	78%	(n=635)
Other	7%	(n=53)

Gender	Percent	Number
Male	39%	(n=317)
Female	61%	(n=492)
Transgendered	0%	(n=2)

Nationality	Percent	Number
U.S. Citizen	91%	(n=738)
International Student	9%	(n=73)

### Data Analysis

Results are reported in descriptive form to indicate the raw scores and percentages of responses to each multiple-choice question. Additional comparative analyses were conducted that compare responses of particular groups to various questions.

## Results

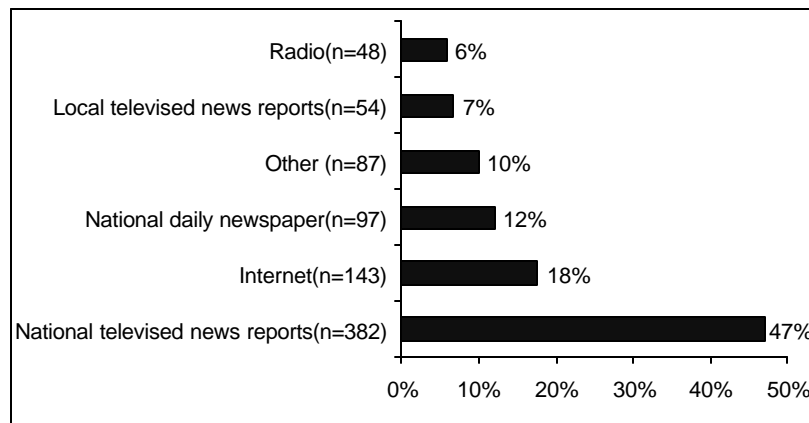
Students were first asked to rate their overall knowledge of current political and social issues. Overall, students rated themselves as more knowledgeable of US issues (96% moderately and very knowledgeable) than of international issues (85%). Relatively few (4% and 15%) rated themselves as not knowledgeable of political and social issues (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1 – Knowledge Ratings of Political and Social Issues**

	Not Knowledgeable	Moderately Knowledgeable	Very Knowledgeable
How would you rate your overall knowledge of current U.S. political and social issues?	4% (n=36)	63% (n=508)	33% (n=267)
How would you rate your overall knowledge of current international political and social issues?	15% (n=121)	62% (n=506)	23% (n=184)

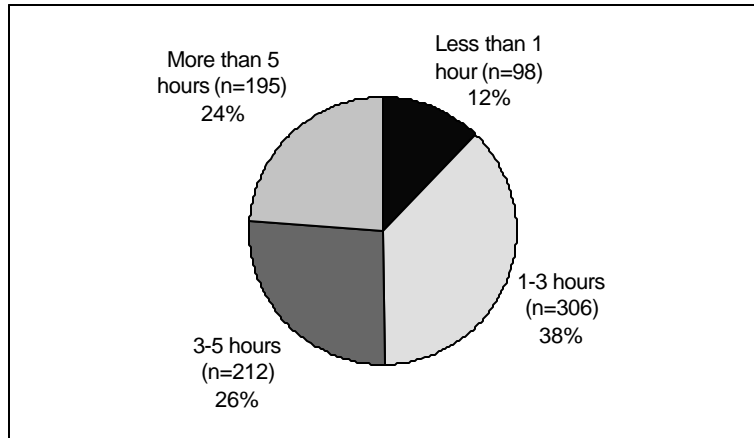
Students were then asked to indicate their primary source of information regarding current events. The largest group of students (47%) indicated that they rely on nationally televised news reports, followed by 18% relying on Internet sources, 12% relying on national daily newspapers, 7% on local televised news, 6% relying on radio and 10% relying on other sources (Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2 – What source do you primarily rely upon to obtain information regarding current events?**



When asked to indicate the total number of hours spent learning about current events per week, 88% (n=713) of students surveyed spend one hour or more learning about current events (Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.3 – What would you estimate is the total number of hours per week you currently spend learning about current events?**



When asked about United States interventions, 43% (n=347) of students agreed that the U.S. should intervene whenever there is a crisis affecting humanity in any part of the world as opposed to 95% (n=768) of students agreeing that the U.S. should intervene whenever the national security of the U.S. is in jeopardy. Seventy six percent (n=616) of students agreed with the statement that it is in U.S. citizens' best interest to have a strong U.S. military presence in the world today (Figure 1.4).

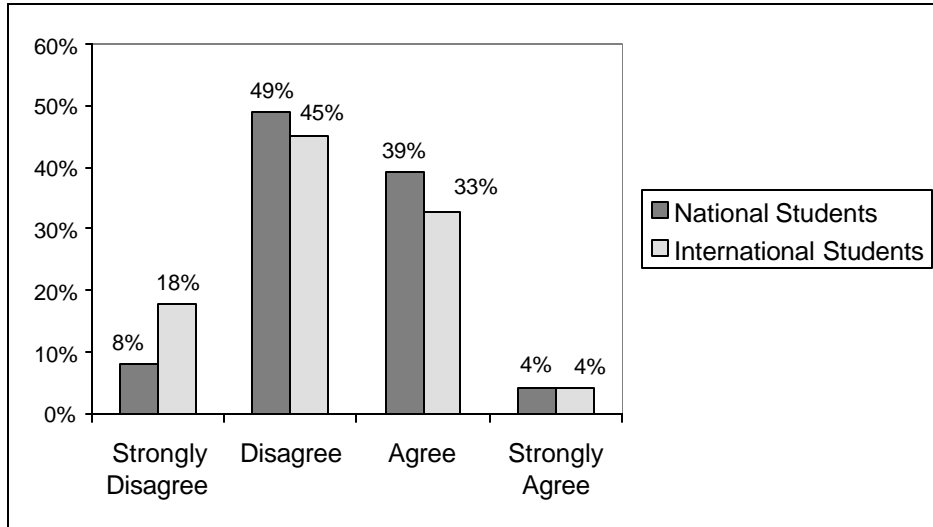
**Figure 1.4 – Aggregate Responses to Questions on U.S. Intervention and Military Presence**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The U.S. should intervene whenever there is a crisis affecting humanity in any part of the world.	9% (n=71)	48% (n=393)	39% (n=313)	4% (n=34)
The U.S. should intervene whenever the national security of the U.S. is in jeopardy.	1% (n=9)	4% (n=34)	35% (n=279)	60% (n=489)
It is in U.S. citizens' best interest to have a strong U.S. military presence in the world today.	5% (n=41)	19% (n=154)	48% (n=386)	28% (n=230)

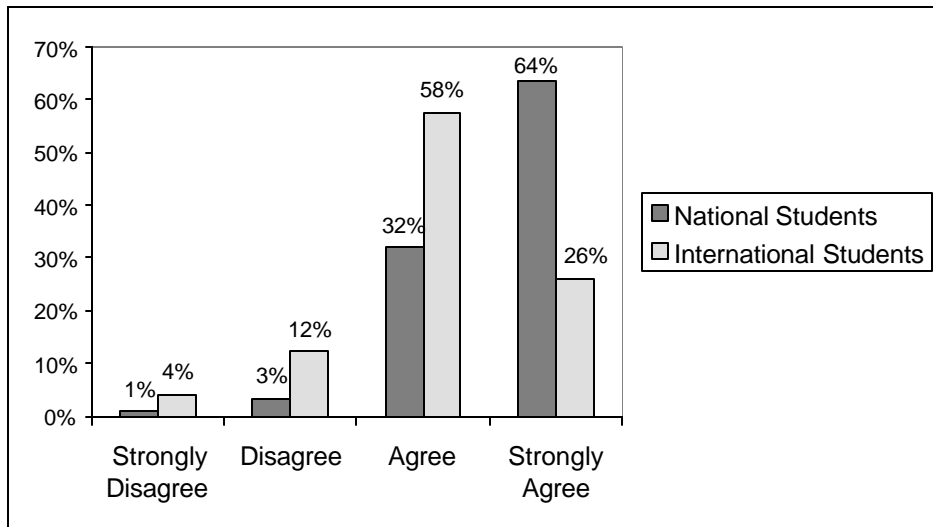
The following charts compare responses of national students versus international students with regard to these questions. When asked if the US should intervene whenever there is a crisis affecting humanity in any part

of the world, national students tended to agree more (43%) than international students (37%) (Figure 1.5). When asked if the US should intervene whenever the national security of the US is in jeopardy, national students tended to agree more (96%) than international students (84%) (Figure 1.6). When asked to respond to the statement that it is in US citizens' best interest to have a strong U.S. military presence in the world, national students tended to agree more (78%) than international students (49%) (Figure 1.7).

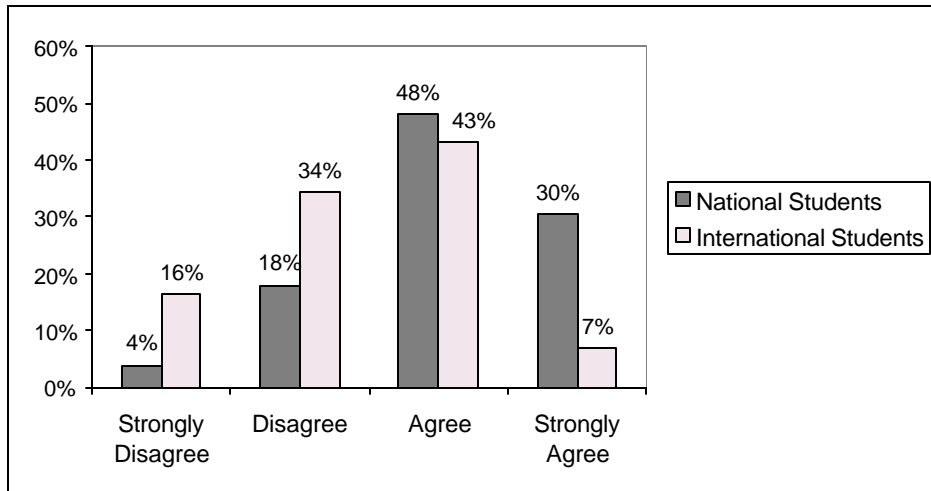
**Figure 1.5 - The U.S. should intervene whenever there is a crisis affecting humanity in any part of the world.**



**Figure 1.6 - The U.S. should intervene whenever the national security of the U.S. is in jeopardy.**

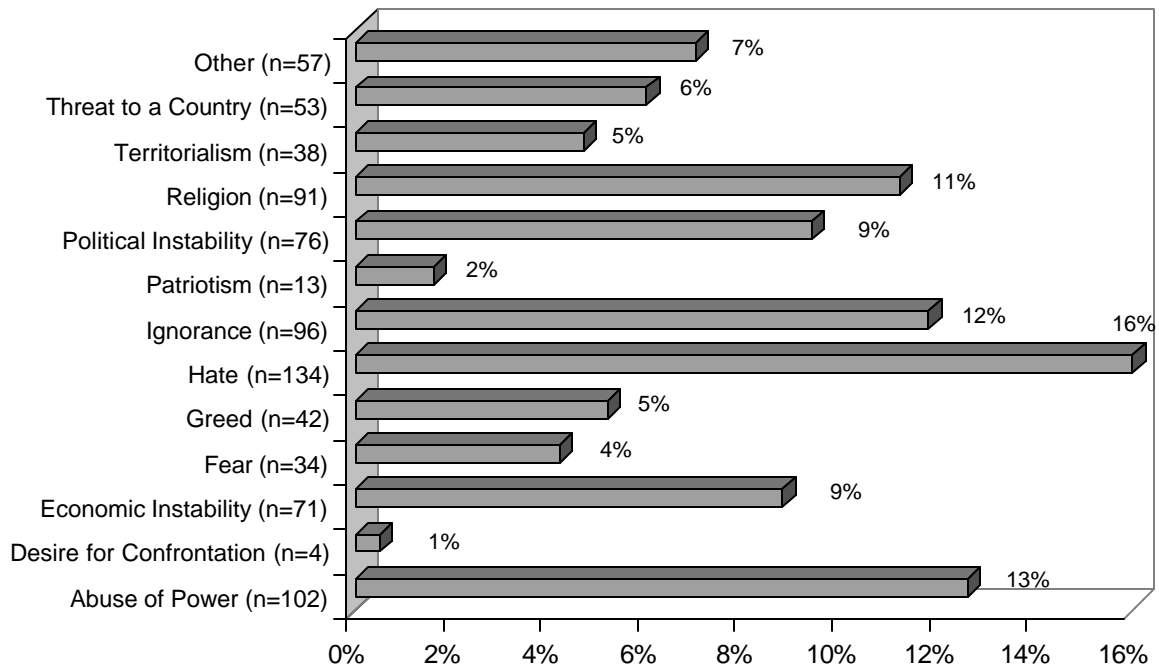


**Figure 1.7 - It is in U.S. citizens' best interest to have a strong U.S. military presence in the world today.**



When asked to select the primary cause of major wars, the largest group of students (16%) indicated hate, followed by abuse of power (13%), ignorance (12%), religion (11%), and economic instability (9%) (Figure 1.8).

**Figure 1.8 - What do you believe is the primary cause of major wars?**



Students' responses to the statements, "The threat of war is always present" and "There are times when war is justified" are summarized in Figure 1.9 according to gender, citizenship and ethnicity. Overall, more students, 72% and 76% respectively, agreed with both statements. Males tended to agree more with both statements (74% and 87%), while international students and non-whites agreed more that the threat of war is always present. U.S. citizens, whites, and males tended to agree more with the statement that there are times when war is justified.

**Figure 1.9 –Responses to Questions on War**

	All		Gender				Citizenship				Ethnicity			
	Yes	No	Male		Female		US Citizen		International		Non-White		White	
The threat of war is always present.	72%	28%	74%	26%	70%	30%	72%	28%	74%	26%	72%	28%	71%	29%
	(n=582)	(n=229)	(n=235)	(n=82)	(n=345)	(n=147)	(n=528)	(n=210)	(n=54)	(n=19)	(n=88)	(n=35)	(n=452)	(n=183)
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
There are times when war is justified.	76%	24%	87%	13%	69%	31%	77%	23%	66%	34%	72%	28%	78%	22%
	(n=616)	(n=195)	(n=275)	(n=42)	(n=340)	(n=152)	(n=568)	(n=170)	(n=48)	(n=25)	(n=88)	(n=35)	(n=498)	(n=137)
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

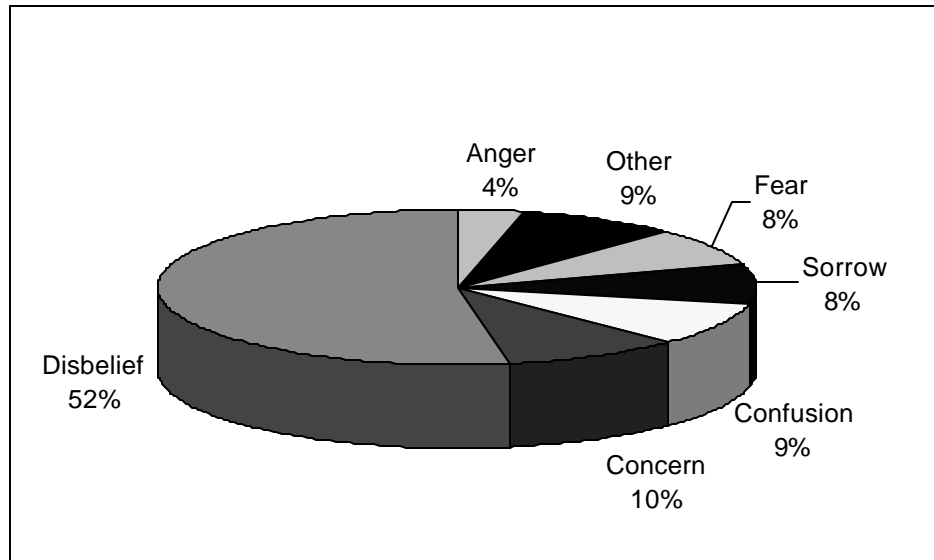
Figure 1.10 illustrates student responses when asked what they considered to be the level of threat for possible future terrorism incidents in Syracuse, New York State, and the United States. Syracuse was rated as the least likely to suffer from future terrorist acts with a majority of students (76%) indicating a low level of threat as compared with 79% indicating a high threat in the U.S. in general.

**Figure 1.10 – What do you consider to be the level of threat for possible future terrorism incidents in...**

	Low Threat	Moderate Threat	High Threat
Syracuse	76% (n=613)	23% (n=193)	1% (n=5)
New York State	6% (n=45)	49% (n=396)	45% (n=370)
The U.S.	2% (n=13)	19% (n=153)	79% (n=645)

Students were asked to indicate their initial reaction upon hearing about the terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001. Figure 1.11 demonstrates the top six most frequent responses of disbelief (52%), concern (10%), confusion (9%), sorrow (8%), fear (8%), and anger (4%).

**Figure 1.11 - Initial Emotional Responses**



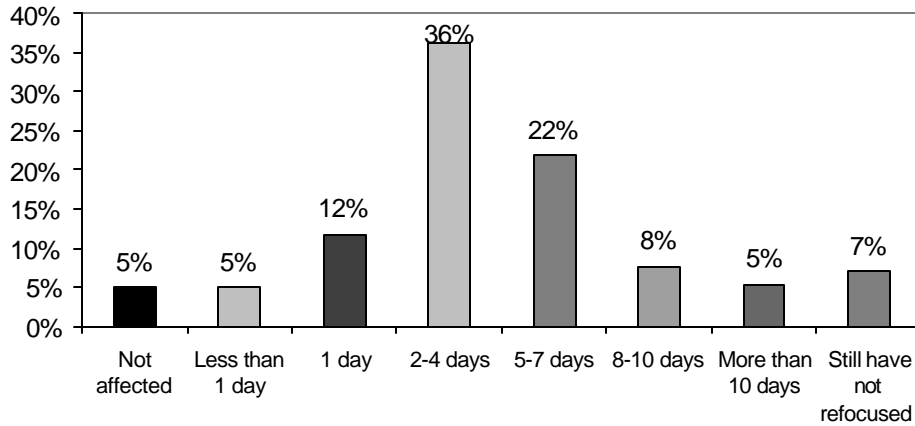
Of those surveyed, friends and acquaintances were the most affected in some way. Twenty-two percent had friends who were affected and 32% had acquaintances who were affected as compared to 7% and 10% of immediate and extended family members who were affected by loss of life, injury, financial burden, or unemployment. Figure 1.12 summarizes students responses.

**Figure 1.12 – Ways in which Friends, Immediate Family, Extended Family and Acquaintances were Affected by the Terrorist Acts**

	Loss of Life	Injury	Financial	Unemployment	Not Applicable
Friend	8% (n=67)	4% (n=30)	6% (n=48)	4% (n=36)	78% (n=630)
Immediate Family	1% (n=6)	1% (n=9)	4% (n=32)	1% (n=9)	93% (n=755)
Extended Family	3% (n=23)	1% (n=9)	5% (n=38)	2% (n=13)	90% (n=728)
Acquaintance	19% (n=154)	3% (n=24)	5% (n=41)	5% (n=41)	68% (n=551)

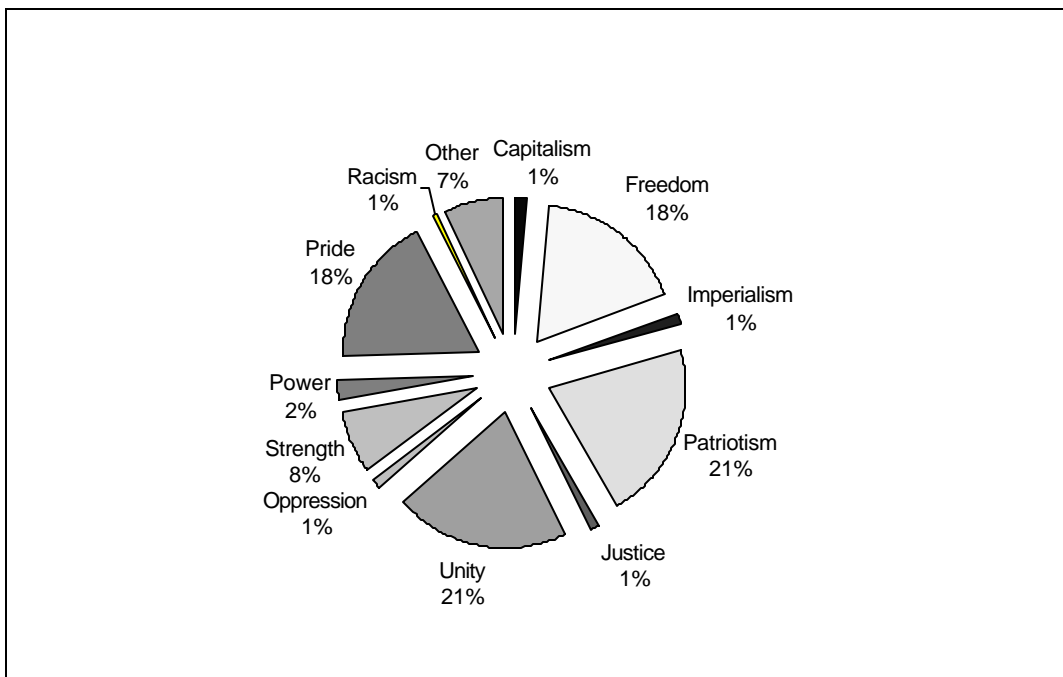
When asked to report the length of time it took them to refocus on their academic routine as a result of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, students responded in a normally distributed fashion. The majority of respondents (58%) indicated 2-4 or 5-7 days, with 70% of all respondents indicating it took them between one and seven days to refocus. However, 20% of respondents reported taking eight days or more to refocus on their academic routine. The results are summarized in Figure 1.13.

**Figure 1.13 – How long did it take to refocus on your academic routine?**



Students were asked to indicate what the American flag primarily symbolizes to them as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Their responses were limited to 11 choices. The most frequently reported were patriotism (21%) and unity (21%), followed by freedom (18%) and pride (18%). The results are summarized in Figure 1.14.

**Figure 1.14 - What does the American flag primarily symbolize?**



In order to develop an understanding of student comfort on campus, students were asked how comfortable they feel, based on their religious affiliation and race, in the following locations: walking around campus, in the classroom, in their residence hall, in faculty offices, and in administrative offices. Students rated comfort level in each of these places on a four point scale which included 1= very uncomfortable, 2=uncomfortable, 3=comfortable, 4=very comfortable. A fifth response, 5= not applicable, was excluded from this analysis. In order to summarize student comfort levels, scores for each of these locations were combined to form a comfort index (i.e. responses for each of the five locations were added together and then divided by five to provide an average comfort score). The distribution of this index of overall comfort was then plotted by nationality, race and gender.

Summarized in Figure 1.15, the overall comfort level of U.S. and international students is similarly distributed. Minor pattern differentiation between the two plotted lines indicate that a higher proportion of U.S. citizens (13% compared to 0%) were very uncomfortable, whereas international students were more concentrated in the comfortable region with a noticeable proportion (5%) averaging a comfort level just below comfortable.

**Figure 1.15 - Index of Overall Comfort By Nationality**

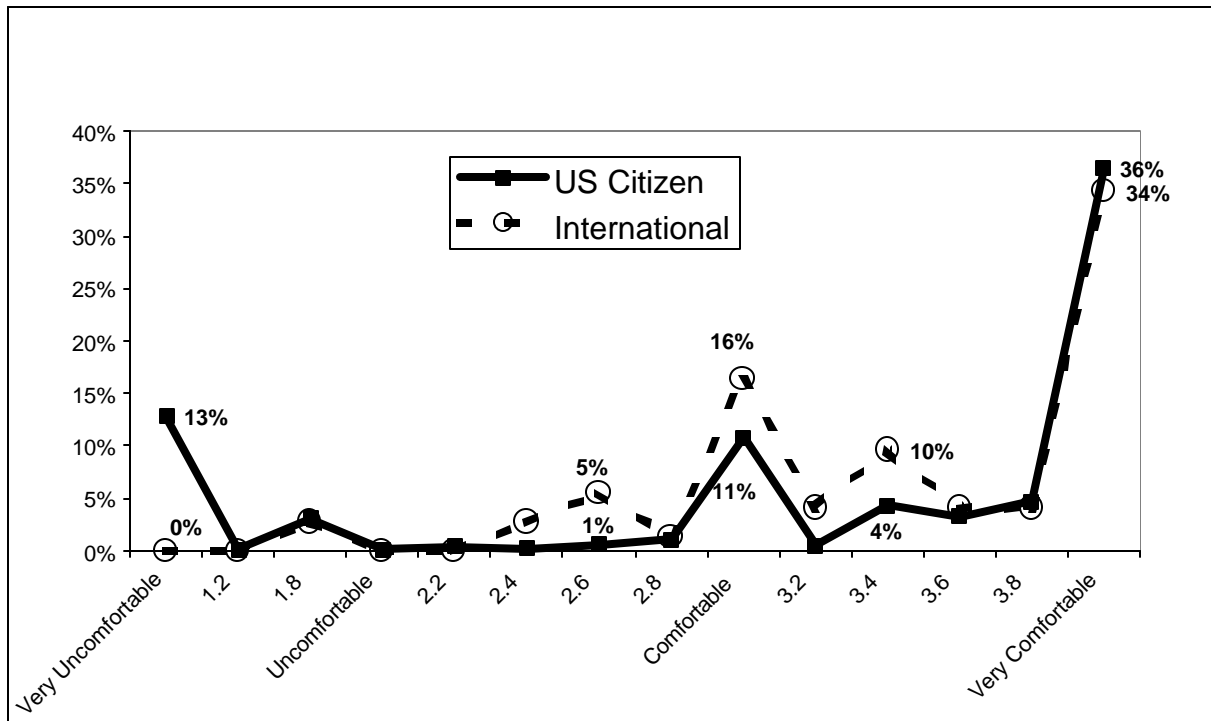


Figure 1.16 summarizes comfort levels for students of color as compared to white students. It is evident that a greater proportion of white students (18% as compared to 3%) have a comfort level of very uncomfortable. For students of color, the largest concentration of respondents (33%) were at the level of comfortable. Finally, 49% of white students and 34% of students of color assess their overall comfort level at very comfortable.

**Figure 1.16 - Index of Overall Comfort by Race**

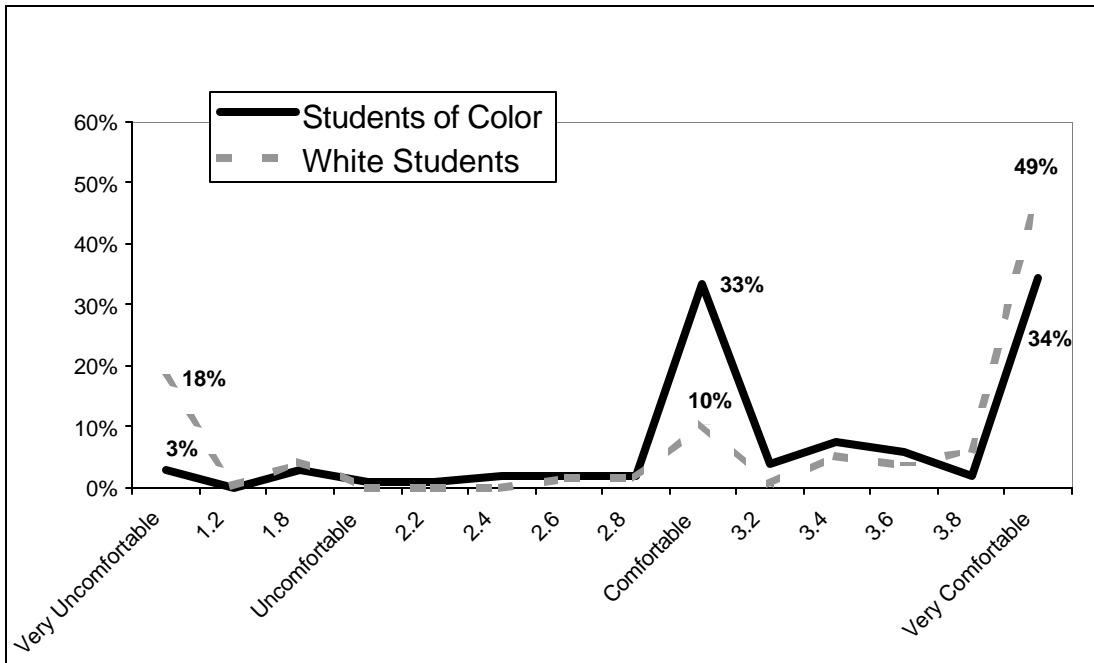


Figure 1.17 demonstrates that the distributions of female and male comfort scores are very similar. Males are slightly more concentrated in both the very uncomfortable zone (18% as compared to 13%) and the very comfortable zone (50% as compared to 43%). Females are slightly more represented (16% as compared to 11%) at the level of comfortable.

**Figure 1.17 - Index of Overall Comfort by Gender**

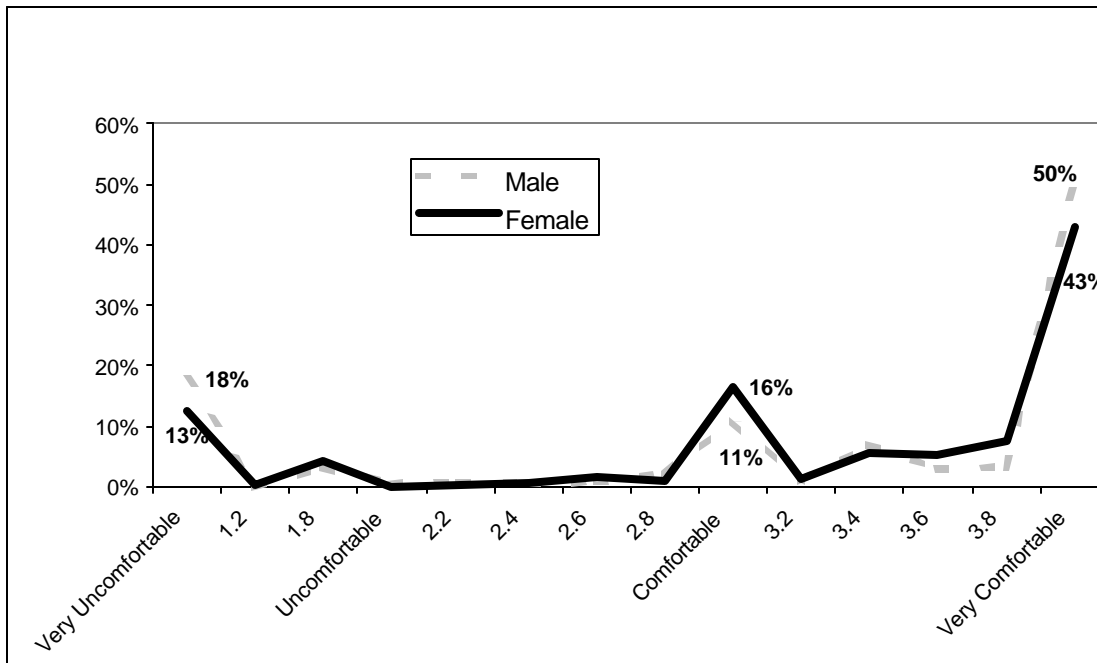


Figure 1.18 represents the average of all students' reported levels of comfort according to location on campus. On average, students reported being between comfortable (a score of 3) and very comfortable (a score of 4) in all five locations. On average, respondents indicated that they were most comfortable in their residence halls (a score of 3.75 out of 4). The average score for the overall comfort index used in the previous charts is 3.43, indicating that, on average, respondents were more than comfortable at the University in regard to their religious affiliation and race.

**Figure 1.18 - Average Overall Comfort Level by Location**

