

# Frendo

“Patriotism is the willingness to kill and be killed for trivial reasons.” - Bertrand Russell

HOME

14 Sep 2006

## Who are Terrorists?

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[Austan Goolsbee writes](#) in today’s NYTimes about selection bias in the depiction of recent terrorist descriptions. Regarding a study by Efraim Benmelech and Claude Berrebi, he writes:

They gathered data on Palestinian suicide bombers in Israel from 2000 to 2005 and found that for terrorists, just like for regular workers, experience and education improve productivity. Suicide bombers who are older — in their late 20’s and early 30’s — and better educated are less likely to be caught on their missions and are more likely to kill large numbers of people at bigger, more difficult targets than younger and more poorly educated bombers.

Goolsbee argues that we perceive terrorists to be more educated than they are because we tend to focus on the more successful ones. Taking a step back, as Benmelech and Berrebi have done allows us to better understand what drives terrorism, not just what drives a certain subset of terrorists.

Posted by Steven Bass on Thursday, September 14th, 2006, at 8:36 am, and filed under [Economics & Business](#).

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