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FEBRUARY 06, 2015

In the coming weeks, 12 men and women from eastern Massachusetts will be impaneled to determine the fate of accused Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. As the trial unfolds, the Globe aims to have its opinion pages be a forum for our readers and the public's reactions to the proceedings — can Tsarnaev receive a fair trial? Is he guilty beyond a reasonable doubt? Does his age matter? Should he be executed? Will sentencing bring closure?

To this end, we recently asked the firm SocialSphere to poll 1,000 Massachusetts residents, raising many of these very questions. What is clear is that most respondents — 81 percent — felt Boston survived the Marathon attacks and became stronger as a result. But also stark, however, was the fact that the city and its inhabitants didn't go unscathed. This crime has influenced notions of justice, of safety, of who should be our neighbors, where our soldiers should be sent. In short, these results reflect what has been said so frequently: The impact of these terrorist attacks — and the fear they inflicted — reverberated far beyond the direct victims and hit the city and region as a whole.

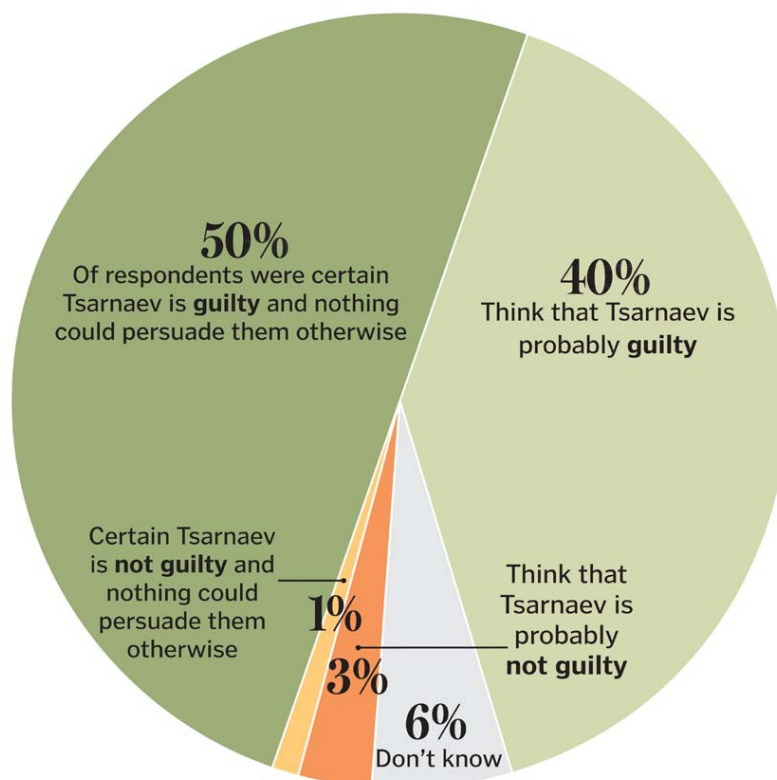
Nonetheless, the poll not surprisingly raised many more questions. Questions that we plan to pose and explore online over the next several weeks at bostonglobe.com/tsarnaevforum. We hope you will join the conversation there.

JUSTICE

Is Dzhokhar Tsarnaev guilty?

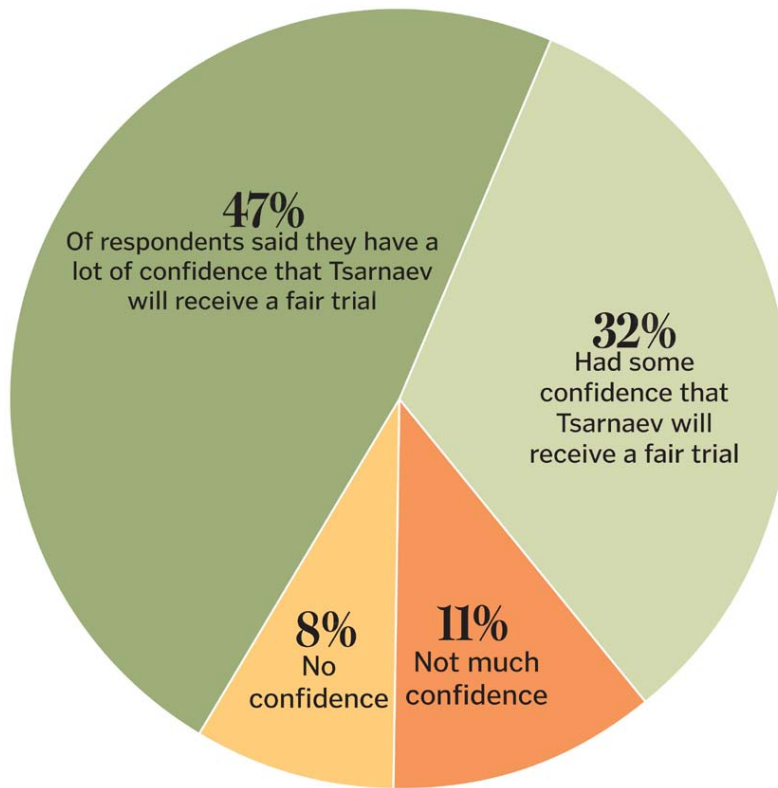
90% responded yes or probably. Given media reports, any doubt in Tsarnaev's guilt may be head-

scratching. But that actually suggests a healthy belief in the American justice system — the idea that a defendant ought to be considered innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Those who say they're completely certain Tsarnaev is innocent? That is harder to explain . . .



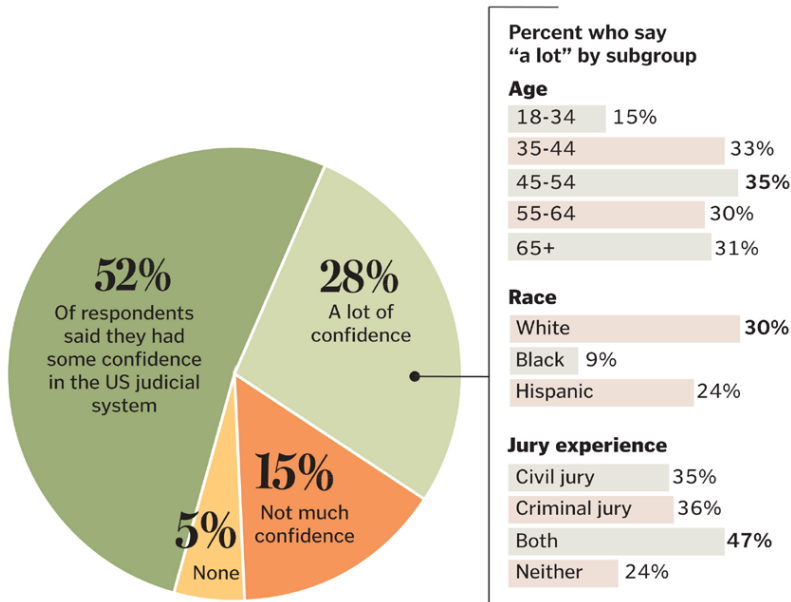
Will Tsarnaev receive a fair trial?

79% had at least some confidence that he will. The public's certainty that Tsarnaev can get a fair trial in Massachusetts is decidedly more mixed than that of presiding judge George A. O'Toole Jr., who has repeatedly denied requests for a change of venue. Contrast O'Toole's stance to the fact that 90 percent of those polled said they are reasonably sure Tsarnaev is guilty — plus the nearly seven out of 10 juror questionnaires that also say as much — and that makes plenty of room for an appeal of any guilty verdict that comes down.



Faith in the justice system

The portion of millennials highly confident in the US judicial system was half that of older generations. Jury service appears to inspire more trust.



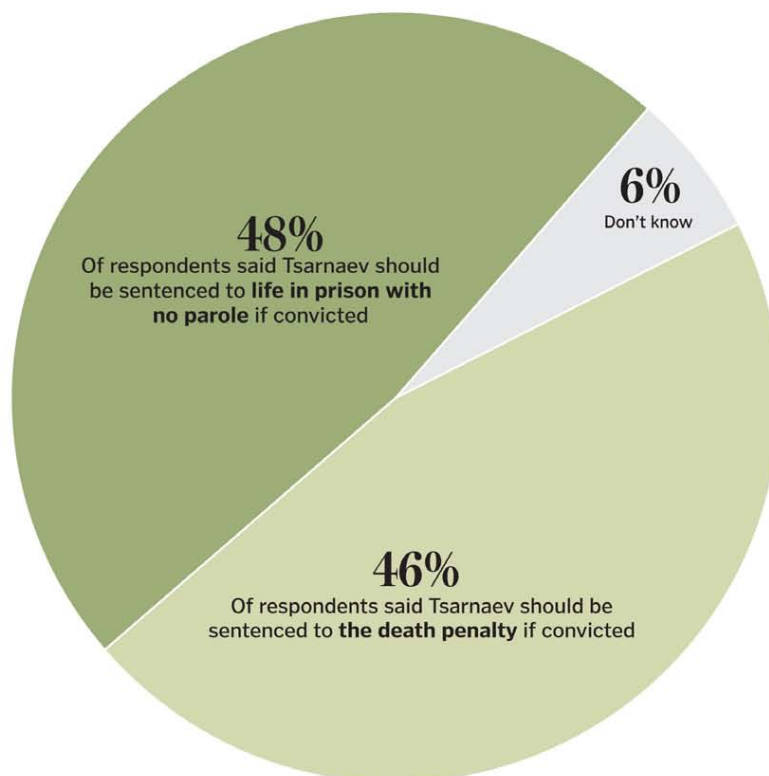
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PUNISHMENT AND PREVENTION

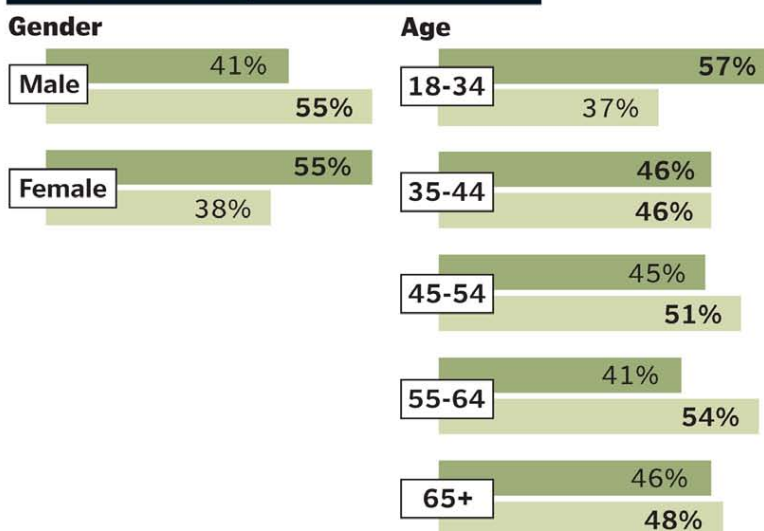
In contrast to national polls, people in Massachusetts — and those in the Globe poll — generally prefer life in prison to capital punishment in first-degree murder cases. In the poll, however, that preference narrowed in the Tsarnaev case, where suddenly nearly half of respondents believed he should be executed if convicted. Only millennials stand firm in their belief that Tsarnaev's life should be saved. This finding isn't surprising, according to Phoebe Ellsworth, a law professor at the University of Michigan who studies public attitudes toward capital punishment. Young people historically have been more opposed to executions than their elders. And, Ellsworth said, "When people are faced with a particular egregious case — such as Timothy McVeigh, the World Trade Center bombing, this one — you find that they might be for the death penalty when they usually wouldn't be." In fact, much of the lingering support that there is nationally for capital punishment appears to exist "only because of cases like Tsarnaev's," Ellsworth added.

If convicted, what punishment should Tsarnaev face?

48% favor life in prison with no parole. Tsarnaev faces 30 counts associated with the Boston Marathon bombings, including the bombing of a public place, malicious destruction of public property, carjacking, disruption of commerce, and possession and use of a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death.



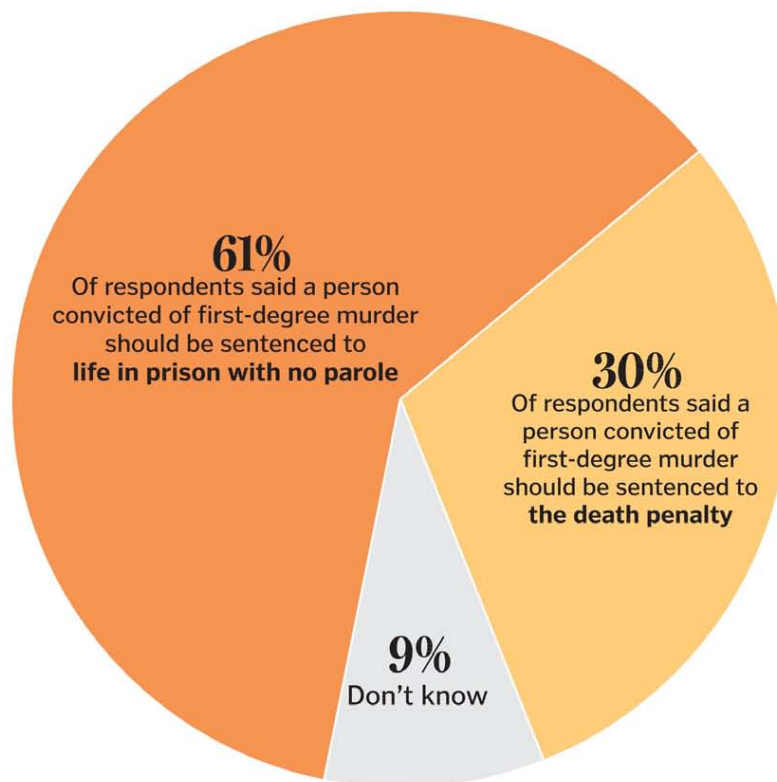
Color-coded respondent breakdown



What punishment does first-degree murder merit?

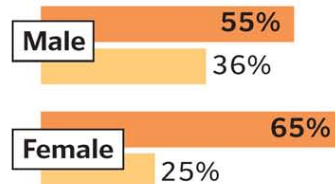
61% favor life in prison with no parole. Massachusetts defines first-degree murder as “murder committed with deliberately premeditated malice aforethought, or with extreme atrocity or cruelty.”

Massachusetts abolished the death penalty in 1984, but federal prosecutors can still seek the death penalty, as is the case in this trial. Tsarnaev is the third person in the state to be charged under the federal death penalty.

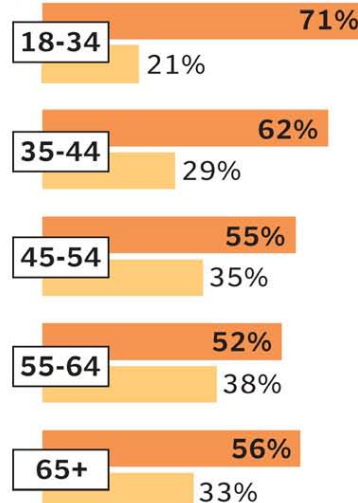


Color-coded respondent breakdown

Gender



Age

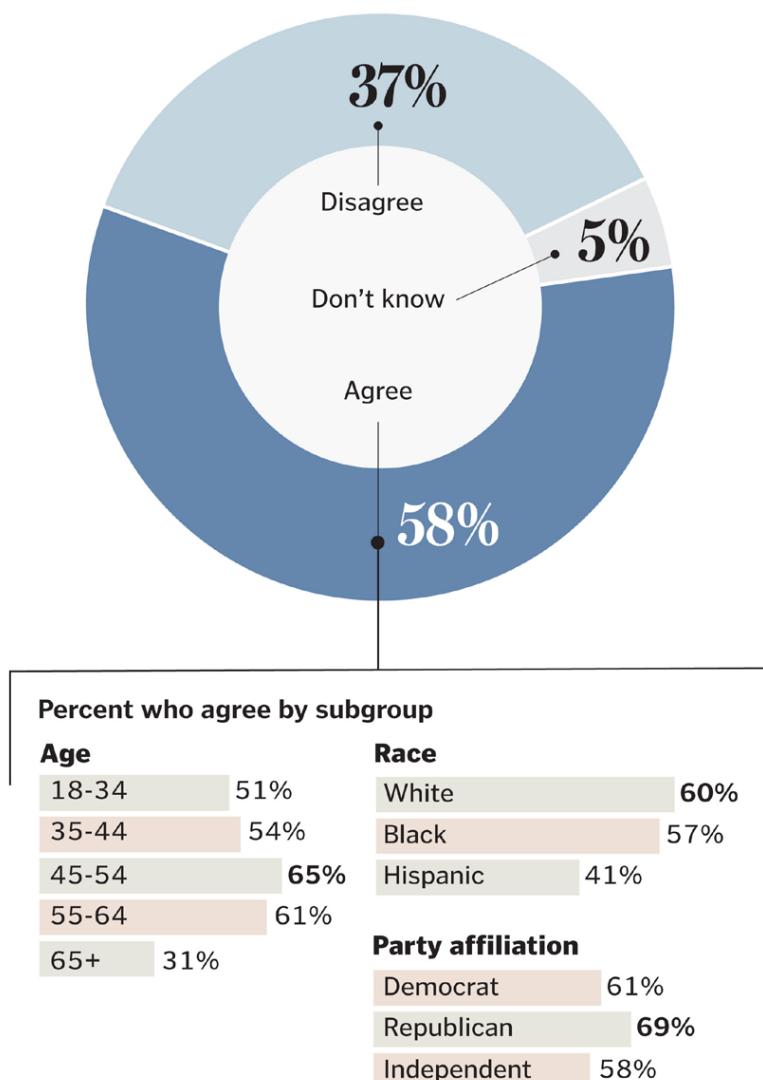


TERRORISM HITS HOME

A deep fear of terrorism appears to be the basis for these inconsistencies: Nearly three in five respondents were willing to trade some personal freedom or privacy in the name of national security. This may be because the Marathon attacks took place so close to home — a nationwide poll done by CNN and Time Magazine two weeks after the 2013 bombings found 61 percent of Americans were more concerned about the government restricting civil liberties than the need for stricter law enforcement measures to prevent future attacks.

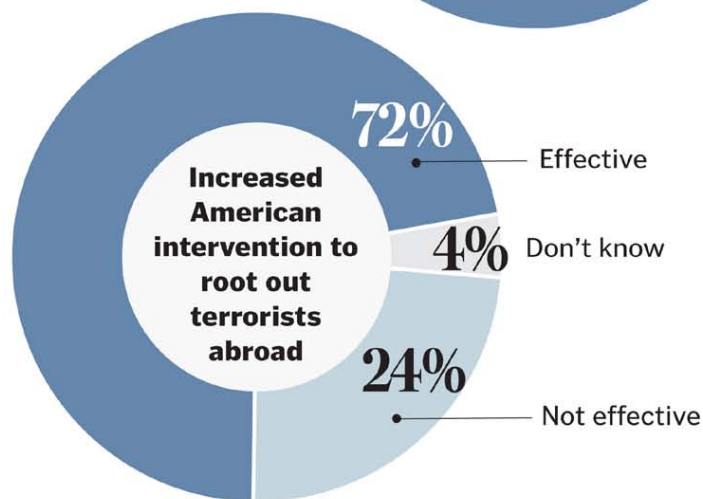
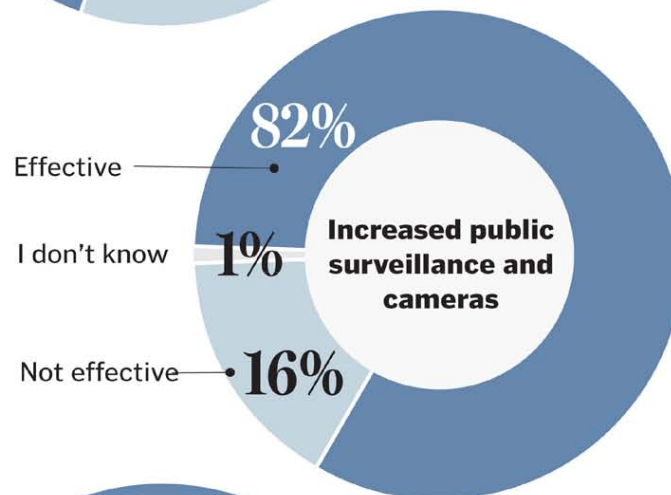
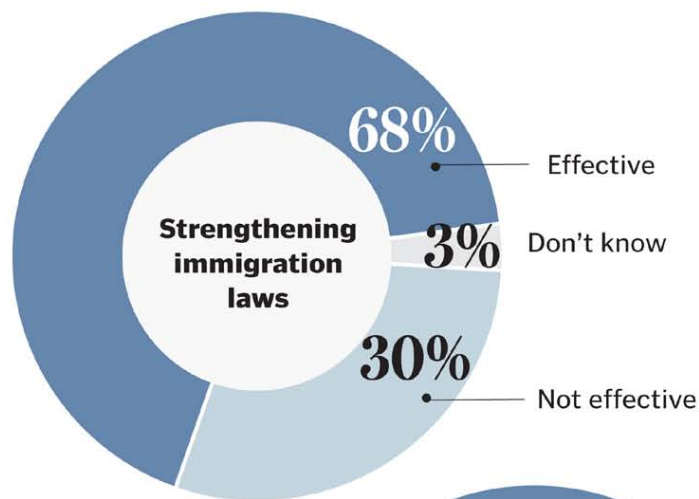
Security vs. privacy

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the statement “I am willing to give up some personal freedom and privacy for the sake of national security.”



How to prevent future attacks

Question: How effective do you think the following strategies can be at preventing terrorism in the future?



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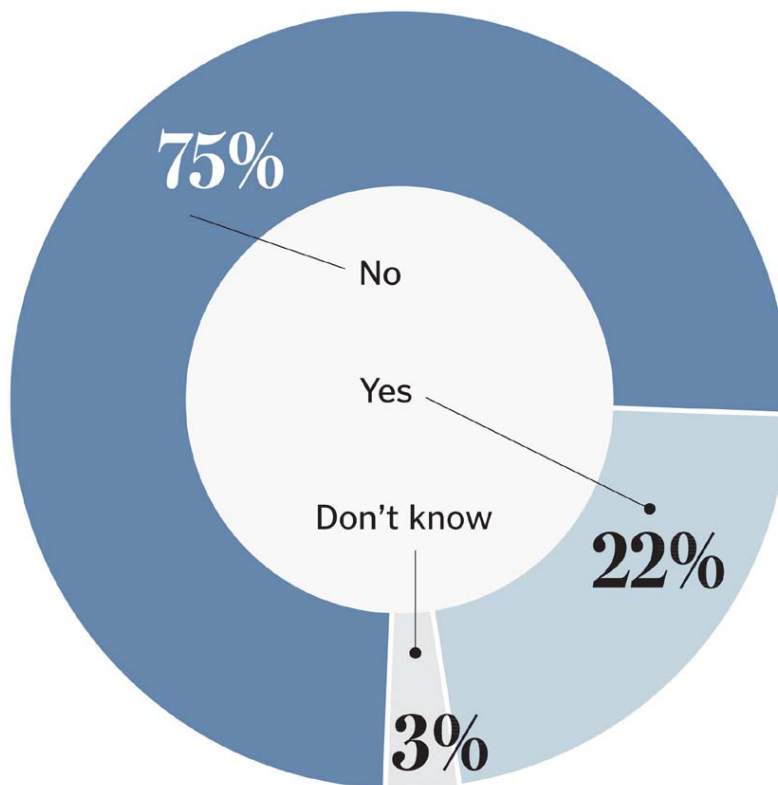
MITIGATING FACTORS

It's not hyperbole to suggest that Tsarnaev's defense team is working as hard — if not harder — to keep him

alive as get him acquitted. One obvious strategy is to seek sympathy for him because of his youth or by suggesting he only perpetrated this crime due to the influence of his older brother, Tamerlan. Neither of these arguments, however, held sway with our poll respondents.

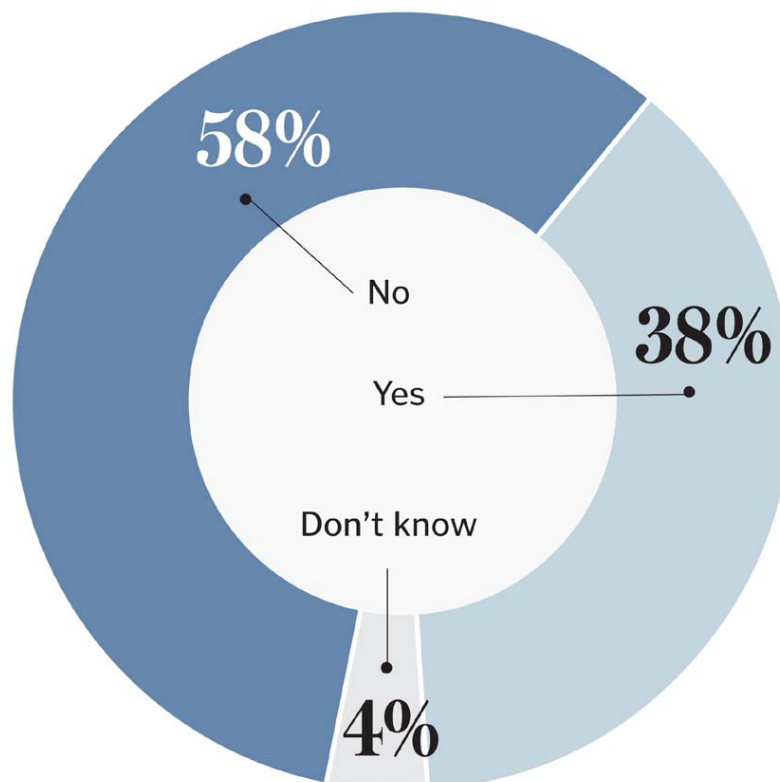
Tsarnaev's age

Tsarnaev was 19 years old at the time of the Boston Marathon bombings. **Should his age be a consideration during sentencing?**



Tamerlan's influence

Some have suggested that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev may have been pressured by his older brother Tamerlan to commit the crimes associated with the Boston Marathon bombings. **Should this be a consideration during his sentencing?**



This poll was conducted by SocialSphere on behalf of the Boston Globe Opinion page. SocialSphere interviewed 1,000 Massachusetts residents by telephone (landline and cell phone) between Jan. 15 and Jan. 22, 2015. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent, but is higher for subgroups. GRAPHICS BY HEATHER HOPP-BRUCE/GLOBE STAFF

Documents: [Crosstabs](#) and [Questionnaire](#)

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