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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** ATTENTION POLITICAL EDITORS, Rutgers-Eagleton Poll Director David Redlawsk may be contacted at 319-400-1134, 732-932-9384, ext. 285, or [redlawsk@rutgers.edu](mailto:redlawsk@rutgers.edu). Visit <http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com> for more commentary.

## **RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL FINDS NEW JERSEYANS STILL QUESTION OBAMA'S RELIGION**

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – While New Jersey voters are less likely to say President Barack Obama is Muslim compared to recent national polls, a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today finds 12 percent still call him Muslim. Obama is Protestant, and his religion is correctly identified by 43 percent of respondents; 3 percent think he is Roman Catholic, while 38 percent say they do not know. Nationally, 43 percent do not know Obama's religion, according to a Pew Center poll released last month.

About three-in-four voters who think Obama is a Muslim claim they learned his religion from the media, 10 percent from presidential behavior or statements and 7 percent from the Internet. The remaining 7 percent are unsure or say his ancestry or name reveals his faith.

Voters in general know little about the religious beliefs Gov. Chris Christie as well: 56 percent say they do not know Christie's religion. Only 14 percent correctly identify him as Catholic, while 25 percent voters believe Christie is Protestant.

"The public's erroneous perception about Obama's religion has been well-documented in recent weeks," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science. "Our polling shows that misperception is still widespread in the state. The reason this matters for Obama – while not meaning much for other elected officials – is that those who identify him as Muslim do so in a negative way. Being Muslim is seen as out of the mainstream. Being identified as Protestant when you are Catholic has limited consequences."

The poll of 912 registered New Jersey voters was conducted Sept. 23 to 26 and has a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percentage points.

### **Who believes Obama is a Muslim?**

Almost half (48 percent) the most religious voters (those who attend services at least weekly) correctly identify Obama's religion, while only 10 percent say he is Muslim and 33 percent say they don't know. Less religious voters are more likely to get Obama's religion

wrong. Among those attending services monthly, 16 percent label the president as Muslim, 34 percent correctly say he is Protestant and 41 percent say they don't know.

Partisanship plays a central role in questions about Obama's religion. Only 8 percent of Democrats say he is Muslim, one-third the percentage of Republicans. Just 6 percent of independents believe the president is Muslim.

Conversely, 54 percent of Democrats get Obama's religion right, twice the percentage of Republicans and 12 percent higher than independents. The latter group also is the most likely to say they don't know Obama's religion (46 percent). One-quarter of Republicans with a favorable impression of the Tea Party call Obama Muslim, but only 18 percent of Republicans who are unfavorable toward the Tea Party do the same.

### **Impressions of the President and Job Approval**

President Obama has seen a five percentage point gain among registered voters in his New Jersey favorability ratings (now 57 percent) since an August Rutgers-Eagleton Poll; 34 percent hold an unfavorable view, down from 36 percent. More than half (53 percent) rate Obama's job performance excellent or good and 45 percent judge it fair or poor. Of those with a favorable impression of the president, 83 percent think he is doing an excellent or good job. Of those with an unfavorable impression, only 12 percent call his work excellent or good; 60 percent say he is doing a poor job.

Belief that Obama is Muslim is highly correlated with attitudes toward the president: 8 percent with a favorable view say he is Muslim, 51 percent correctly identify him as Protestant, and 34 percent say they don't know his religion. Among voters with an unfavorable impression, 18 percent say he is Muslim, 31 percent say he is Protestant, and 43 percent are unsure.

"One thing we know is that belief that Obama is Muslim is part of a package of negative feelings towards him," said Redlawsk. "While most who disapprove of Obama do not say he is Muslim, a significant number do, while few of those who approve of him say the same."

### **Obama's "Americanism" and ideology questioned by many in New Jersey**

As in February, voters were asked to agree or disagree with a series of questions, including several about Obama and his administration. Twenty-five percent of voters now agree that the Obama Administration is "un-American" (up from 18 percent in February), and 39 percent concur that Obama is a socialist (up from 32 percent). More Republicans and Democrats

now agree with both statements than in February, but agreement is much stronger among GOP voters.

A perception that the administration is un-American is also related to belief that Obama is Muslim, with 19 percent of this group identifying him as such. Only 9 percent of those who disagree with this statement identify Obama as Muslim. Further, 20 percent of those who call the president a socialist also say he is Muslim, while only 6 percent of other voters think so.

The connection between Obama's perceived religion and voters' negative feelings about his administration and ideology is very strong. Fully 40 percent of voters who say Obama is Muslim also think the administration is un-American; 64 percent say Obama is a socialist.

### **Anger at Washington unrelated to beliefs about Obama's Religion**

Asked if "thinking about the government in Washington makes me angry," 59 percent agreed and 38 percent disagreed. This anger is unrelated to beliefs about Obama's religion, Redlawsk said. Among voters who say Washington causes anger, 44 percent know Obama's religion. Nearly as many (42 percent) who are not angry accurately identify Obama as Protestant. Twelve percent of those who are angry at Washington say Obama is a Muslim, compared to 11 percent who are not angry.

"The 'Obama is Muslim' discussion is not about Washington politics as such, but is directed at Obama himself," said Redlawsk. "For the 12 percent of New Jersey voters who say that Obama is Muslim, the issue is personal. Most think he is a socialist and many consider him un-American, but they are no more likely to be angry at 'the government in Washington' than anyone else."

**QUESTIONS AND TABLES FOLLOW ON THE NEXT PAGE**

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll September 23-26, 2010  
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of October 7, 2010 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**Q. Thinking back to the last presidential election, did you vote for Barack Obama, John McCain, some other candidate, or were you unable to vote?**

Obama	59%
McCain	31%
Some other candidate	5%
Unable to vote	5%
Don't Remember	0%
N=	877

**Q. I'd like to ask about some people and organizations. Please tell me if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. First, [next]: [ROTATE]**

	President Obama	Governor Christie	Tea Party
Favorable	57%	46%	32%
Unfavorable	34%	42%	43%
Don't Know	9%	12%	24%
N=	909	911	904

**Q. Please rate how Barack Obama is handling his job as President. Is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

Excellent	22%
Good	32%
Fair	23%
Poor	22%
Don't Know/ No Opinion	1%
N=	909

Job Performance	Favorability Rating		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	DK
Excellent	35%	6%	4%
Good	48%	6%	22%
Fair	15%	26%	57%
Poor	1%	60%	11%
Don't Know	0%	1%	6%
N=906	514	311	81

*New Jersey & Obama's Religion – October 2010  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

**Demographics for Obama Favorability and Job Performance**

	Party ID				Ideology	
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Middle	Conserv
Favorable	89%	43%	18%	89%	56%	27%
Unfavorable	7%	40%	73%	9%	31%	64%
Don't Know	4%	17%	9%	1%	13%	9%
N=	401	258	244	225	419	248
Excellent	38%	8%	12%	49%	14%	13%
Good	48%	29%	7%	41%	35%	15%
Fair	12%	35%	28%	8%	30%	23%
Poor	2%	26%	52%	2%	19%	48%
Don't Know	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%
N=	401	256	244	225	421	246

	Education				Male	Female
	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work		
Favorable	58%	61%	51%	53%	51%	62%
Unfavorable	32%	33%	38%	37%	37%	31%
Don't Know	10%	6%	12%	10%	12%	7%
N=	275	321	179	131	431	479
Excellent	31%	26%	10%	13%	19%	25%
Good	27%	33%	33%	36%	28%	35%
Fair	20%	19%	31%	27%	25%	20%
Poor	20%	22%	25%	24%	26%	18%
Don't Know	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%
N=	272	322	180	131	432	477

	Employment				White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl				
Favorable	61%	63%	45%	54%	49%	86%	54%	77%
Unfavorable	31%	31%	43%	33%	42%	9%	26%	18%
Don't Know	7%	6%	11%	13%	10%	4%	20%	6%
N=	478	91	199	139	631	113	43	99
Excellent	26%	26%	15%	20%	12%	47%	36%	59%
Good	34%	37%	25%	29%	32%	37%	37%	19%
Fair	21%	19%	27%	25%	27%	15%	15%	11%
Poor	19%	17%	31%	26%	28%	1%	11%	11%
Don't Know	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
N=	481	91	196	139	633	113	43	97

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	Age				Income			
	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	under 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+
Favorable	72%	60%	53%	45%	67%	54%	46%	53%
Unfavorable	16%	33%	36%	47%	26%	36%	44%	44%
Don't Know	12%	7%	11%	9%	7%	10%	10%	4%
N=	145	335	239	100%	100%	100%	88	71
Excellent	22%	34%	13%	15%	30%	23%	7%	15%
Good	44%	25%	37%	26%	32%	32%	33%	29%
Fair	20%	20%	25%	25%	21%	23%	28%	25%
Poor	13%	19%	25%	32%	14%	22%	32%	32%
Don't Know	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%
N=	146	332	239	189	322	245	88	71

	How often R attends religious service			
	At least once a wk	Almost every wk	Once a month	Other
Favorable	59%	59%	56%	55%
Unfavorable	32%	33%	29%	39%
Don't Know	9%	9%	15%	6%
N=	292	134	142	332
Excellent	29%	27%	26%	14%
Good	29%	28%	28%	36%
Fair	20%	23%	25%	24%
Poor	21%	22%	20%	24%
Don't Know	2%	1%	0%	1%
N=	292	134	140	334

**Q. For each of the following, tell me if you agree or disagree with the statement. First, [next]: [ROTATE]**

**The Obama administration is un-American.**

Agree	25%
Disagree	71%
Don't Know	4%
N=	906

**President Obama is a socialist.**

Agree	39%
Disagree	50%
Don't Know	11%
N=	908

**The financial bailout was a good use of taxpayer money.**

Agree	41%
Disagree	50%
Don't Know	9%
<hr/>	
N=	908

**I am glad the health care reform bill was passed.**

Agree	58%
Disagree	36%
Don't Know	7%
<hr/>	
N=	907

**The federal stimulus program has helped the economy.**

Agree	52%
Disagree	42%
Don't Know	6%
<hr/>	
N=	908

**I get angry thinking about the government in Washington.**

Agree	59%
Disagree	38%
Don't Know	3%
<hr/>	
N=	905

**Q. Now, thinking about Barack Obama's religious beliefs. Do you happen to know what Barack Obama's religion is?**

**[OPEN-ENDED; CODE TO LIST, DO NOT READ LIST]**

Protestant	43%
Roman Catholic	3%
Jewish	1%
Mormon [include Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints]	1%
Orthodox Church (Greek or Russian)	0%
Muslim	12%
Other religion	0%
No religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic	2%
Don't Know	38%
<hr/>	
N=	912

*New Jersey & Obama's Religion – October 2010  
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Obama's Religion	Party ID		
	Dem	Ind	Rep
Protestant	54%	42%	27%
Roman Catholic	4%	0%	4%
Jewish	2%	1%	1%
Mormon	0%	0%	1%
Muslim	8%	6%	24%
No religion	1%	4%	2%
Don't Know	31%	46%	40%
N=904	401	260	243

	Favorability toward Tea Party											
	Favorable				Unfavorable				Don't Know			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Total
Protestant	48%	38%	24%	34%	64%	56%	43%	60%	34%	25%	22%	27%
Roman Catholic	13%	0%	5%	6%	2%	1%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Jewish	7%	0%	1%	2%	0%	3%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mormon	3%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Muslim	3%	12%	25%	16%	7%	2%	18%	7%	13%	7%	23%	14%
No religion	0%	6%	2%	3%	2%	3%	0%	2%	0%	4%	3%	2%
Don't know	26%	43%	39%	37%	25%	35%	32%	28%	51%	64%	50%	55%
N=	69	84	139	292	238	102	44	384	86	73	60	219

	How often Respondent Attends Religious Service			
	At least once a wk	Almost every wk	Once a month	Less than Once/Mon
Protestant	48%	46%	34%	41%
Roman Catholic	4%	3%	1%	2%
Jewish	1%	0%	5%	0%
Mormon	1%	2%	0%	0%
Muslim	10%	19%	16%	9%
No religion	2%	1%	3%	3%
Don't Know	33%	30%	41%	44%
N=902	294	134	141	333

Obama's Religion	Obama Favorability Rating		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	DK
Protestant	51%	31%	37%
Roman Catholic	4%	2%	0%
Jewish	2%	1%	1%
Mormon	1%	0%	0%
Muslim	8%	18%	14%
No religion	1%	3%	1%
Don't Know	34%	43%	47%
N=909	517	311	81



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Obama's Religion	Obama Admin is Un-American			Obama is Socialist		
	Agree	Disagree	DK	Agree	Disagree	DK
Protestant	37%	47 %	10%	36%	52%	22%
Roman Catholic	7%	1%	0%	2%	3%	1%
Jewish	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Mormon	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Muslim	19%	9%	16%	20%	6%	12%
No religion	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	0%
Don't Know	33%	38%	71%	36%	34%	64%
N = 906	227	641	38	353	454	102

Obama's Religion is:

Obama is un-American	Obama's Religion is:						
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Mormon	Muslim	No religion	DK
Agree	21%	64%	25%	20%	40%	30%	22%
Disagree	78%	36%	75%	80%	54%	65%	70%
DK	1%	0%	0%	0%	6%	5%	8%
N = 906	390	25	12	5	109	20	342

Obama's Religion is:

Obama is a socialist	Obama's Religion is:						
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Mormon	Muslim	No religion	DK
Agree	33%	36%	50%	60%	64%	45%	37%
Disagree	61%	60%	50%	40%	25%	55%	44%
DK	6%	4%	0%	0%	11%	0%	19%
N = 909	390	25	12	5	109	20	345

Obama's Religion	Financial Bailout Good			Glad Health Care Passed		
	Agree	Disagree	DK	Agree	Disagree	DK
Protestant	54%	37%	26%	53%	29%	32%
Roman Catholic	4%	1%	4%	3%	2%	2%
Jewish	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Mormon	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Muslim	8%	16%	7%	8%	18%	12%
No religion	1%	3%	1%	2%	4%	0%
Don't Know	29%	41%	62%	32%	44%	53%
N = 906	375	452	82	524	324	60

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Obama's Religion	Stimulus Helped Economy			Angry at Govt in Washington		
	Agree	Disagree	DK	Agree	Disagree	DK
Protestant	55%	29%	29%	44%	42%	38%
Roman Catholic	3%	2%	11%	4%	2%	0%
Jewish	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Mormon	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Muslim	7%	19%	4%	12%	11%	12%
No religion	2%	3%	4%	3%	1%	0%
Don't Know	32%	44%	53%	35%	42%	50%
N = 906	473	381	55	536	346	24

**Q. And how did you learn about Obama's religion?  
[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE SAYING OBAMA IS MUSLIM; OPEN ENDED – CODE TO BEST OPTION]**

Any Media or News mention	73%
Obama's behavior or something he said	10%
Friends or Family said so	1%
Obama's ancestry- you can tell by his name, appearance or background	3%
Any mention from the Internet/blogs/websites	7%
Other	2%
Don't Know	4%
N=	109

**Q. Now, thinking about Chris Christie's religious beliefs. Do you happen to know what Chris Christie's religion is? [OPEN-ENDED; CODE TO LIST, DO NOT READ LIST]**

Protestant [include Christian, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist]	25%
Roman Catholic	14%
Jewish	2%
Mormon [include Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints]	1%
Orthodox Church (Greek or Russian)	0%
Muslim	0%
Other religion	0%
No religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic	2%
Don't Know	56%
N=	912

	Party ID		
	Dem	Ind	Rep
Protestant	27%	20%	28%
Roman Catholic	13%	14%	16%
Jewish	3%	1%	2%
Mormon	1%	0%	2%
Muslim	0%	0%	0%
Other religion	0%	0%	0%
Don't Know	54%	62%	50%
N=906	402	260	244

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	How often R attends religious service			
	At least once a wk	Almost every wk	Once a month	Other
Protestant	30%	29%	24%	20%
Roman Catholic	14%	15%	12%	15%
Jewish	2%	3%	5%	1%
Mormon	2%	0%	0%	0%
Muslim	0%	1%	0%	0%
No religion	1%	2%	3%	2%
Don't Know	50%	49%	56%	62%
N=903	293	134	142	334

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll September 23-26, 2010**  
New Jersey Statewide Poll

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from September 23-26, 2010 with a scientifically selected random sample of 912 registered voters statewide. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 777 landline respondents acquired through random digit dialing, and 135 interviews of randomly selected cell phone households.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 912 registered voters is +/-3.2 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent confident that the true figure would be between 46.8 and 53.2 percent (50 +/- 3.2) had all registered voters been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects.

Data were collected by Braun Research, Incorporated, of Princeton, NJ and were analyzed by staff of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. The AAPOR response rate 3 was 20.1%, the refusal rate 2 was 31.4% and the cooperation rate 3 was 39.1% for the landline part of this poll. For the cell phone sample, the response rate 3 was 10.7%, the refusal rate 2 was 22.7% and the cooperation rate 3 was 32.0%.

<b>Weighted Sample Characteristics (N=912 Registered Voters)</b>			
44% Dem	47% Male	16% 18-29	69% White
29% Independent	53% Female	37% 30-49	12% Black
27% Republican		26% 50-64	11% Hispanic
		21% 65+	5% Asian
			2% Other