

PewResearchCenter

---



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press



THE PEW FORUM  
ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE

---

FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2010, 4:00PM

NYC Mosque Opposed, Muslims' Right to Build Mosques Favored

---

## Public Remains Conflicted Over Islam

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

---

### Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

**Andrew Kohut**, Director

**Scott Keeter**, Director of Survey Research

**Carroll Doherty**, Associate Director, Editorial

**Michael Dimock**, Associate Director, Research

Tel (202) 419-4350

[www.peoplepress.org](http://www.peoplepress.org)

---

### Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

**Luis Lugo**, Director

**Alan Cooperman**, Associate Director

**Greg Smith**, Senior Researcher

Tel (202) 419-4550

[www.pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org)

---

## NYC Mosque Opposed, Muslims' Right to Build Mosques Favored Public Remains Conflicted Over Islam

The public continues to express conflicted views of Islam. Favorable opinions of Islam have declined since 2005, but there has been virtually no change over the past year in the proportion of Americans saying that Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence. As was the case a year ago, slightly more people say the Islamic religion does not encourage violence more than other religions (42%) than say that it does (35%).

Amid controversy over the proposed construction of an Islamic cultural center and mosque near the former site of the World Trade Center, more Americans agree with those who object to the building of the center than with the supporters of the project (51% to 34%). At the same time, 62% say that Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups to build houses of worship in their local communities; just 25% say local communities should be able to block mosques in their area if they do not want them.

The new poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted Aug. 19-22 among 1,003 adults, finds that opinions about Islam are less favorable than in the summer of 2005. Currently, 30% say they have a favorable opinion of Islam while slightly more (38%) have an unfavorable view; nearly a third (32%) offer no opinion. In 2005, slightly more expressed a favorable opinion of Islam than an unfavorable opinion (by 41% to 36%).

### Public Views of Islam...

|   | July 2005       | Aug 2010        |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Opinion of Islam...</i>                                | %               | %               |
| Favorable   | 41              | 30              |
| Unfavorable   | 36              | 38              |
| Don't know  | <u>23</u>       | <u>32</u>       |
|   | 100             | 100             |
| <i>Compared with other religions, Islamic religion...</i> | <b>Aug 2009</b> | <b>Aug 2010</b> |
| Is more likely than others to encourage violence          | 38              | 35              |
| Does not encourage violence more than others              | 45              | 42              |
| Neither/Don't know  | <u>16</u>       | <u>24</u>       |
|   | 100             | 100             |

### And the Building of Mosques

|   | Aug 2010  |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Agree more with...</i>   |           |
| Those who object to building Islamic center and mosque near World Trade Center                  | 51        |
| Those who think center and mosque should be allowed to be built                                 | 34        |
| Don't know  | <u>15</u> |
|   | 100       |
| <i>Which comes closer to your view...</i>   |           |
| Muslims should have same rights as other groups to build houses of worship in local communities | 62        |
| Local communities should be able to prohibit construction of mosques if they do not want them   | 25        |
| Don't know  | <u>13</u> |
|   | 100       |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

As in the past, there are substantial partisan, educational and age differences in opinions about Islam. By more than two-to-one (54% to 21%), Republicans express an unfavorable opinion of Islam; the balance of opinion among independents is negative (40% unfavorable vs. 28% favorable). Among Democrats, favorable opinions of Islam outnumber unfavorable ones (by 41% to 27%).

While those who are younger than 50 have mixed views of Islam, the balance of opinion is more negative among those older than 50 (44% unfavorable vs. 24% favorable). By a margin of 47% to 28%, college graduates express favorable opinions of Islam; pluralities of those with less education express unfavorable views.

### Republicans, Older People, Less Educated Are Less Favorable Toward Islam

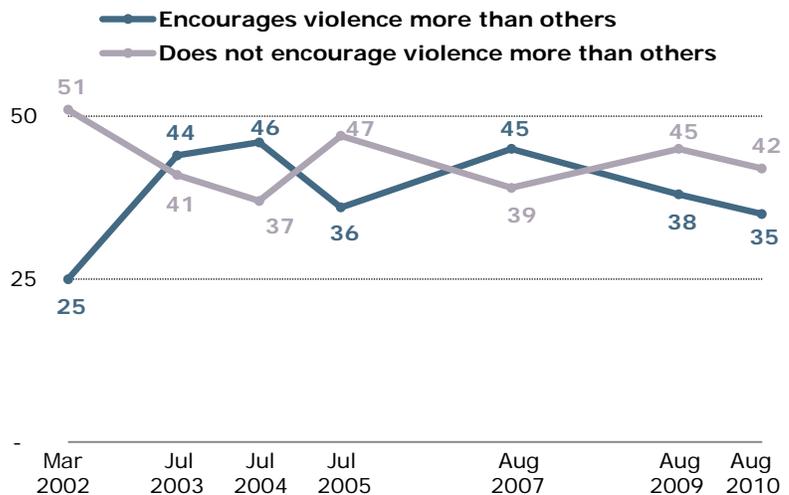
|             | Favorable % | Unfavorable % | DK     |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------|
| Total       | 30          | 38            | 32=100 |
| 18-29       | 35          | 33            | 32=100 |
| 30-49       | 34          | 35            | 31=100 |
| 50-64       | 27          | 40            | 32=100 |
| 65+         | 20          | 49            | 31=100 |
| Coll grad+  | 47          | 28            | 25=100 |
| Some coll   | 29          | 37            | 34=100 |
| HS or less  | 20          | 45            | 35=100 |
| Republican  | 21          | 54            | 25=100 |
| Democrat    | 41          | 27            | 32=100 |
| Independent | 28          | 40            | 32=100 |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

### Views of Islam and Violence

Opinions about whether Islam is more likely than other religions to promote violence have fluctuated since 2002. In March of that year, 51% said that Islam does not encourage violence more than other religions do, while only about half as many (25%) said that it does. Since then, opinions have been more closely divided. The current measure is comparable to 2009 and 2005, when pluralities said Islam was no more likely

### Little Change in Views About Whether Islam Encourages Violence More than Other Religions



PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010.

than other religions to encourage violence.

There are similar patterns in opinions about whether Islam encourages violence as in overall views of Islam. However, there is no political or demographic group in which a majority says that Islam encourages violence more than other religions. By a modest 47% to 38% margin, more Republicans say Islam is more likely to encourage violence. Independents are evenly divided (38% say it does encourage violence more, 38% say it does not). Democrats, by about two-to-one (50% to 24%), say Islam is not more likely than other religions to encourage violence.

### Opposition to New York Mosque

If anything, there are even starker partisan and age differences over the proposed construction of an Islamic center and mosque a few blocks from the site of the former World Trade Center. By more than four-to-one (74% to 17%), Republicans say they agree more with those who object to the building of this center; half of independents (50%) agree more with the center's opponents while 37% agree more with those who say it should be allowed. By contrast, more Democrats agree with the center's supporters than its opponents (by 47% to 39%).

Those 65 and older, as well as those 50 to 64, agree more with the opponents of cultural center and mosque by wide margins. Those younger than 30 agree more with those who say it should be built, by 50% to 36%.

While there is opposition to building the Islamic cultural center and mosque in New York City, most Americans (62%) say Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups when it comes to building houses of worship in local communities; 25% say that local communities should be able to prohibit the construction of mosques in their area if they do not want them.

---

### More Agree With Those Who Object to Mosque Near World Trade Center

|             | Agree more with:      |   |        |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
|             | Those who object<br>% | Those who say it should be allowed<br>% | DK     |
| Total       | 51                    | 34                                      | 15=100 |
| 18-29       | 36                    | 50                                      | 14=100 |
| 30-49       | 49                    | 36                                      | 16=100 |
| 50-64       | 61                    | 28                                      | 11=100 |
| 65+         | 63                    | 21                                      | 16=100 |
| Coll grad+  | 48                    | 41                                      | 12=100 |
| Some coll   | 50                    | 34                                      | 16=100 |
| HS or less  | 54                    | 30                                      | 16=100 |
| Republican  | 74                    | 17                                      | 8=100  |
| Democrat    | 39                    | 47                                      | 14=100 |
| Independent | 50                    | 37                                      | 13=100 |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

---

Large majorities of Democrats (74%) and independents (65%) say that Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups to build houses of worship. Republicans are closely divided: 47% say Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups while nearly as many (42%) say local communities should be able to prohibit the construction of mosques if they do not want them.

Majorities of all age groups – except for those 65 and older – think that Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups to build houses of worship. Fewer than half (48%) of those 65 and older express this view, while 33% say local communities should be able to block the construction of mosques.

### Majority Supports Muslims Having Same Right to Build Houses of Worship

|             | Local communities should be able to prohibit mosques<br>% | Muslims should have same rights as other groups to build<br>% | DK     |
|-------------|---|---|--------|
| Total       | 25  | 62  | 13=100 |
| 18-29       | 29  | 64  | 6=100  |
| 30-49       | 21  | 68  | 12=100 |
| 50-64       | 25  | 59  | 16=100 |
| 65+         | 33  | 48  | 19=100 |
| Coll grad+  | 19  | 74  | 7=100  |
| Some coll   | 28  | 62  | 10=100 |
| HS or less  | 28  | 54  | 18=100 |
| Republican  | 42  | 47  | 11=100 |
| Democrat    | 15  | 74  | 12=100 |
| Independent | 25  | 65  | 10=100 |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

### Most Know Little about Muslim Religion

As in previous Pew Research surveys, most Americans say they know little about the Muslim religion. Currently, 55% say they do not know very much (30%) or know nothing at all (25%) about the Muslim religion and its practices; 35% say they know some about the religion while just 9% say they know a great deal. These numbers are largely unchanged from 2007.

### How Much Do You Know about Muslim Religion?

|                | Nov 2001<br>% | March 2002<br>% | July 2003<br>% | July 2005<br>% | Aug 2007<br>% | Aug 2010<br>% |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| A great deal   | 6             | 5               | 4              | 5              | 7             | 9             |
| Some           | 32            | 29              | 27             | 28             | 34            | 35            |
| Not very much  | 37            | 37              | 39             | 36             | 33            | 30            |
| Nothing at all | 24            | 28              | 29             | 30             | 25            | 25            |
| Don't know     | 1             | 1               | 1              | 1              | 1             | *             |
|                | 100           | 100             | 100            | 100            | 100           | 100           |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 19-22, 2010.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Similarly, there has been little change in the percentage of Americans who say they know someone who is Muslim. In the new survey, 41% say they are acquainted with someone who is Muslim; comparable percentages said they knew someone who is Muslim last year and in 2007.

College graduates are far more likely than those with less education to say they know at least something about the Muslim religion. A majority of college graduates (63%) say they know some or a great deal about the religion, compared with 48% of those with some college experience and just 31% with a high school education or less.

Most college graduates (62%) say they know someone who is Muslim; that compares with 44% of those with some college experience and 26% of those with a high school education or less. As in the past, people younger than 50 (49%) are far more likely to be acquainted with a Muslim than are those 50 and older (31%).

## About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a national sample of 1,003 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from August 19-22, 2010 (672 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 120 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

| <b>Group</b> | <b>Sample Size</b> | <b>Plus or minus ...</b> |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Total sample | 1,003              | 4.0 percentage points    |
| Republicans  | 246                | 7.5 percentage points    |
| Democrats    | 303                | 7.0 percentage points    |
| Independents | 370                | 6.5 percentage points    |

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## About the Projects

The survey is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

**The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press** is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations.

All of the Center's current survey results are made available free of charge.

**The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life** seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It studies public opinion, demographics and other important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

This report is a collaborative product based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

---

### **Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life**

Luis Lugo, Director

Alan Cooperman, Associate Director

Sandra Stencel, Associate Director

Greg Smith, Senior Researcher

John C. Green, Senior Research Advisor

Neha Sahgal and Christine Bhutta,  
Research Associates

Scott Clement, Research Analyst

Tracy Miller and Hilary Ramp, Editors

Diana Yoo, Graphic Designer

### **Pew Research Center for the People & the Press**

Andrew Kohut, Director

Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research

Carroll Doherty, Associate Director, Editorial

Michael Dimock, Associate Director, Research

Michael Remez, Senior Writer

Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley, Senior Researchers

Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf and Alec Tyson,  
Research Associates

Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst

Mattie Ressler, Research Assistant

---

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS  
AND PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE  
AUGUST 19-22, 2010 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1003**

**PEW.1-PEW.3 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

On a different subject...

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 How much would you say you know about the Muslim religion and its practices? **[READ, IN ORDER]**

| Aug 19-22<br><u>2010</u> |                                  | August<br><u>2007</u> | July<br><u>2005</u> | Mid-July<br><u>2003</u> | March<br><u>2002</u> | Mid-Nov<br><u>2001</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 9                        | A great deal                     | 7                     | 5                   | 4                       | 5                    | 6                      |
| 35                       | Some                             | 34                    | 28                  | 27                      | 29                   | 32                     |
| 30                       | Not very much                    | 33                    | 36                  | 39                      | 37                   | 37                     |
| 25                       | Nothing at all                   | 25                    | 30                  | 29                      | 28                   | 24                     |
| *                        | Don't know/refused <b>(VOL.)</b> | 1                     | 1                   | 1                       | 1                    | 1                      |

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?

| Aug 19-22<br><u>2010</u> |                                  | July<br><u>2005</u> | Mid-July<br><u>2003</u> | March<br><u>2002</u> | ---- ABC/Beliefnet ----<br><u>Jan 2002</u> <u>Oct 2001</u> |    |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--|----|
| 30                       | Favorable                        | 41                  | 40                      | 38                   | 41   | 47 |
| 38                       | Unfavorable                      | 36                  | 34                      | 33                   | 24   | 39 |
| 32                       | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b> | 23                  | 26                      | 29                   | 35   | 13 |

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 Do you, yourself happen to know anyone who is Muslim?

| Aug 19-22<br><u>2010</u> |                                    | -----Based on Non-Muslims <sup>1</sup> -----<br>Aug 11-17<br><u>2009</u> |    |    | August<br><u>2007</u> | Mid-Nov<br><u>2001</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--|----|----|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 41                       | Yes                                | 45   | 45 | 38 |                       |                        |
| 58                       | No                                 | 54   | 54 | 61 |                       |                        |
| 0                        | Respondent is Muslim <b>(VOL.)</b> | --   | -- | -- |                       |                        |
| 1                        | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>   | 1  | 1  | 1  |                       |                        |

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.7 Which statement is closer to your views even if neither is exactly right **[READ]**.

| Aug 19-22<br><u>2010</u> |   | Aug 11-17<br><u>2009</u> | August<br><u>2007</u> | July<br><u>2005</u> | July<br><u>2004</u> | Mid-July<br><u>2003</u> | March<br><u>2002</u> |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 35                       | The Islamic religion is more likely than others to encourage violence among its believers | 38                       | 45                    | 36                  | 46                  | 44                      | 25                   |
| 42                       | The Islamic religion does not encourage violence more than others                         | 45                       | 39                    | 47                  | 37                  | 41                      | 51                   |
| 6                        | Neither <b>(VOL.)</b>   | 1                        | 4                     | 3                   | 2                   | 3                       | 3                    |
| 18                       | Don't know <b>(VOL.)</b>  | 15                       | 12                    | 14                  | 15                  | 12                      | 21                   |

**PEW.8-PEW.9 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

<sup>1</sup> In each of these surveys, less than 1% of respondents identified as Muslim.

**ROTATE PEW.10 AND PEW.11**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.10 As you may know, there is a proposal to build an Islamic cultural center and mosque in downtown New York City, a few blocks from the site of the World Trade Center. From what you've read and heard, do you agree more with: **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Aug 19-22

2010

- 51 Those who object to the building of this center **[OR]**
- 34 Those who think the center should be allowed to be built
- 15 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ROTATE PEW.10 AND PEW.11**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.11 Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Aug 19-22

2010

- 25 Local communities should be able to prohibit the construction of mosques in their area if they don't want them **[OR]**
- 62 Muslims should have the same rights as other religious groups to build houses of worship in local communities
- 13 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

**ASK IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY:**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

|                 |                   |                 |                    | (VOL.)               | (VOL.)             | (VOL.)        | Lean       | Lean       |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
|                 | <u>Republican</u> | <u>Democrat</u> | <u>Independent</u> | <u>No preference</u> | <u>Other party</u> | <u>DK/Ref</u> | <u>Rep</u> | <u>Dem</u> |
| Aug 19-22, 2010 | 22                | 29              | 39                 | 7                    | *                  | 3             | 14         | 14         |