

Topline
How the News Media Covered Religion in the General Election
 Project for Excellence in Journalism, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

All data is from June 1 – Oct. 15, 2008, unless otherwise specified

**Percent of Religion-Focused Campaign Stories
 Where Each Figure was the Lead Newsmaker***

Newsmaker	% of religion/campaign newshole
Barack Obama	53.0
Sarah Palin	19.1
John McCain	8.5
James Dobson	2.5
Rick Warren	1.8
New Yorker Magazine	1.4
Michael Pflieger	1.1
Bristol Palin	0.7
Joe Biden	0.7
Levi Johnston	0.7
Mazen Asbahi	0.7
Todd Palin	0.7
Andy Martin	0.4
Brit Hume	0.4
Carly Fiorina	0.4
Chuck Heath	0.4
Gianna Jessen	0.4
Kirby John Caldwell	0.4
Meghan McCain	0.4
Michelle Obama	0.4
Supreme Court	0.4

*A person or group is considered a lead newsmaker if they are included in 50% or more of the story

Religion-Focused Storylines During the General Election Period

Storyline	% of campaign newshole
Palin family/personal issues	1.1
Obama Muslim rumors*	0.9
Warren civil forum	0.5
New Yorker cover controversy*	0.4
Abortion as an issue	0.4
Candidates reach out to evangelicals/relig. vote	0.3
James Dobson's Obama comments	0.2
Obama leaves Trinity Church #	0.2
Rev. Michael Pfleger comments #	0.1
McCain's relationship with John Hagee	0.1
Obama's relationship with Jeremiah Wright #	0.1
Pastors preach politics from the pulpit	0.1
Same-sex marriage as an issue	< 0.1
Stem cell research as an issue	< 0.1
Obama's "bitter" remark	< 0.1
Dalai Lama meets with McCain	< 0.1
Total	4.4%

*these storylines were grouped together for analysis

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Storyline	% of religion/ campaign newshole
Palin family/personal issues	25.0
Obama Muslim rumors*	20.4
Warren civil forum	11.4
New Yorker cover controversy*	9.1
Abortion as an issue	9.1
Candidates reach out to evangelicals/relig. vote	6.8
James Dobson's Obama comments	4.5
Obama leaves Trinity Church #	4.5
Rev. Michael Pfleger comments #	2.3
McCain's relationship with John Hagee	2.3
Obama's relationship with Jeremiah Wright #	2.3
Pastors preach politics from the pulpit	2.3
Same-sex marriage as an issue	< 0.1
Stem cell research as an issue	< 0.1
Obama's "bitter" remark	< 0.1
Dalai Lama meets with McCain	< 0.1
Total	100%

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News Coverage of Obama and False Muslim Rumors Over Time, March 1 - Oct. 15, 2008

Month	% of all Muslim Rumor stories	number of stories
March	12%	11
April	1%	1
May	12%	11
June	46%	43
July	9%	8
August	17%	16
September	1%	1
October*	2%	2
Total	100%	93

*only first two weeks of October included

Religion-Focused Campaign Coverage by Medium (as a percentage of the religion/campaign newshole)

Newspapers: 26.1% %		Cable: 23.8% %		Network: 17.9% %		Radio: 12% %		Internet: 20% %	
New York Times	9.0	Hannity & Colmes (Fox)	4.8	Good Morning America (ABC)	4.7	Rush Limbaugh	4.5	MSNBC.com (9 am)	4.5
Washington Post	6.9	Anderson Cooper 360° (CNN)	2.4	Today (NBC)	2.9	Randi Rhodes	2.5	CNN.com (4 pm)	2.5
San Francisco Chronicle	4.9	Election Center (CNN)	2.4	NBC Nightly News	2.7	Michael Savage	1.5	Google News (9 am)	2.4
Los Angeles Times	3.1	Verdict with Dan Abrams (MSNBC)	2.3	World News Tonight (ABC)	2.3	Sean Hannity	1.3	MSNBC.com (4 pm)	2.4
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	1.8	Special Report with Brit Hume (Fox)	2	Newshour (PBS)	2.2	Morning Edition	1.2	Google News (4 pm)	2.1
USA Today	0.4	The Situation Room (CNN)	1.7	CBS Evening News	1.9	Ed Schultz	0.8	AOL News (4 pm)	1.7
		The O'Reilly Factor (Fox)	1.7	The Early Show (CBS)	1.2	CBS News Headlines	0.2	CNN.com (9 am)	1.5
		Hardball, Chris Matthews (MSNBC)	1.4			ABC News Headlines	0.1	AOL News (9 am)	1.2
		MSNBC Live	1.2					Yahoo News (4 pm)	0.9
		Countdown with Keith Olbermann (MSNBC)	1.1					Yahoo News (9 am)	0.8
		Fox Report with Shepherd Smith	1						
		Lou Dobbs Tonight (CNN)	0.9						
		Fox News Live	0.3						
		Race for the White House (MSNBC)	0.2						
		CNN special coverage	0.2						
		CNN Live	0.2						

Other campaign narratives unrelated to religion

Role of the Clintons (5.5% of gen. election coverage)	
1. Hillary/supporters at convention	1.7
2. Hillary suspends campaign	1.3
3. Clinton as possible VP	1.1
4. Role of Bill Clinton	1
5. Clinton's campaign review/sexism?	0.2
6. calls for Hillary to drop out	0.2
Economy/financial crisis (8.7% of coverage)	
1. Economy as an issue	5.1
2. Financial crisis response, reaction	3.2
3. Gramm's comments- "nation of whiners"	0.4
Race as an issue (4.1% of coverage)	
1. Obama as historic nominee	1.6
2. Obama's race, related to electability	0.7
2. Jesse Jackson's Obama comments	0.7
3. Race card played by campaigns?	0.6
4. Obama/McCain speak at NAACP	0.4
5. Obama's comments on black fathers	0.1
Iraq as an issue (6.4% of coverage)	
1. Obama's overseas trip	3.9
2. Iraq war as an issue	2.2
3. Foreign policy in general	0.3
Republican convention (3.8% of coverage)	
1. Republican convention in Minnesota	1.5
2. Convention speech by McCain	1.3
3. Gustav to delay Repub convention?	0.8
4. Bush and the Republican convention	0.2
Democratic convention (4.8% of coverage)	
1. Democratic convention in Denver	3.4
2. Convention speech by Obama	1.1
3. Ted Kennedy at convention	0.2
4. Assassination attempt at convention	0.1

Energy as an issue (2.0% of coverage)	
1. Energy as an issue	2.1
2. Price of gas as an issue	0.3
3. Energy attack ad against Obama	<0.1