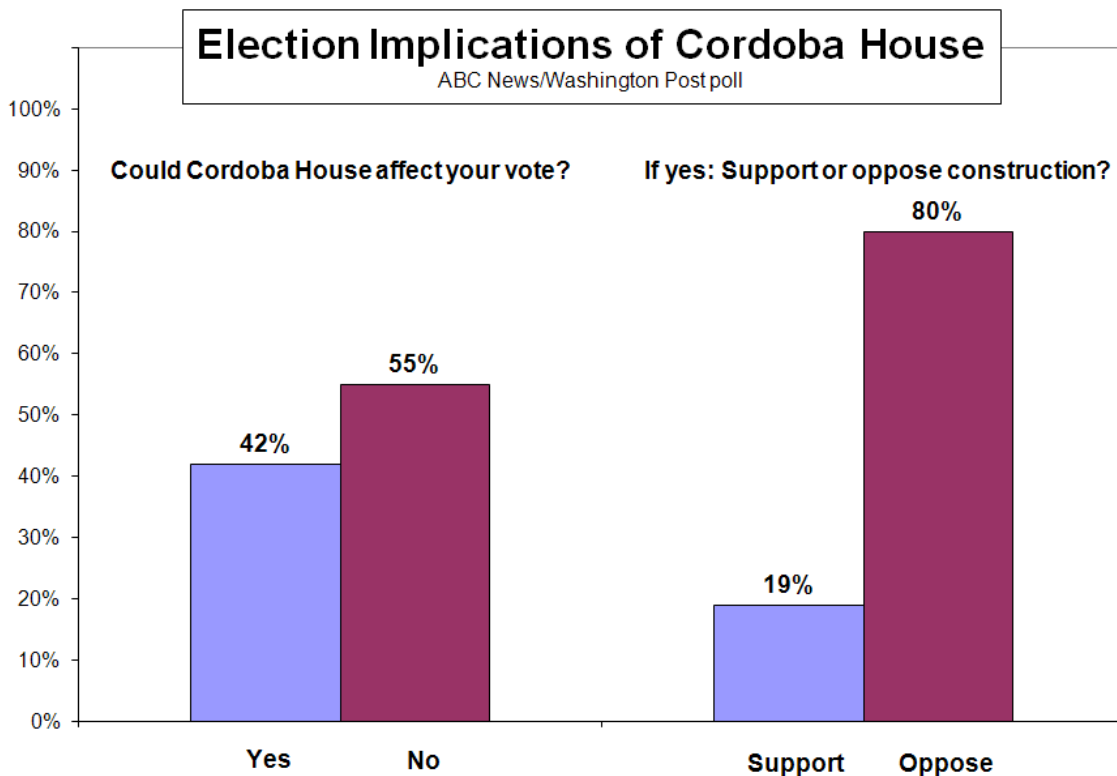


Cordoba House Controversy Could Pose Political Risks

The debate over construction of a Muslim community center in Lower Manhattan could carry political risks: Four in 10 registered voters – overwhelmingly opponents of the plan – say they feel strongly enough about it that it could influence their vote for Congress this fall.

At the same time, the complaint is with this particular site: While 66 percent of Americans in this ABC News/Washington Post poll oppose construction of the Cordoba House facility, 82 percent of opponents also say they object to its proposed location, not to building mosques in general.



There is nonetheless substantial, continued suspicion in this country of Islam, a faith practiced by an estimated 1.5 billion adherents worldwide, or about one-fifth of humanity, but by fewer than 1 percent of the U.S. population. Among those results:

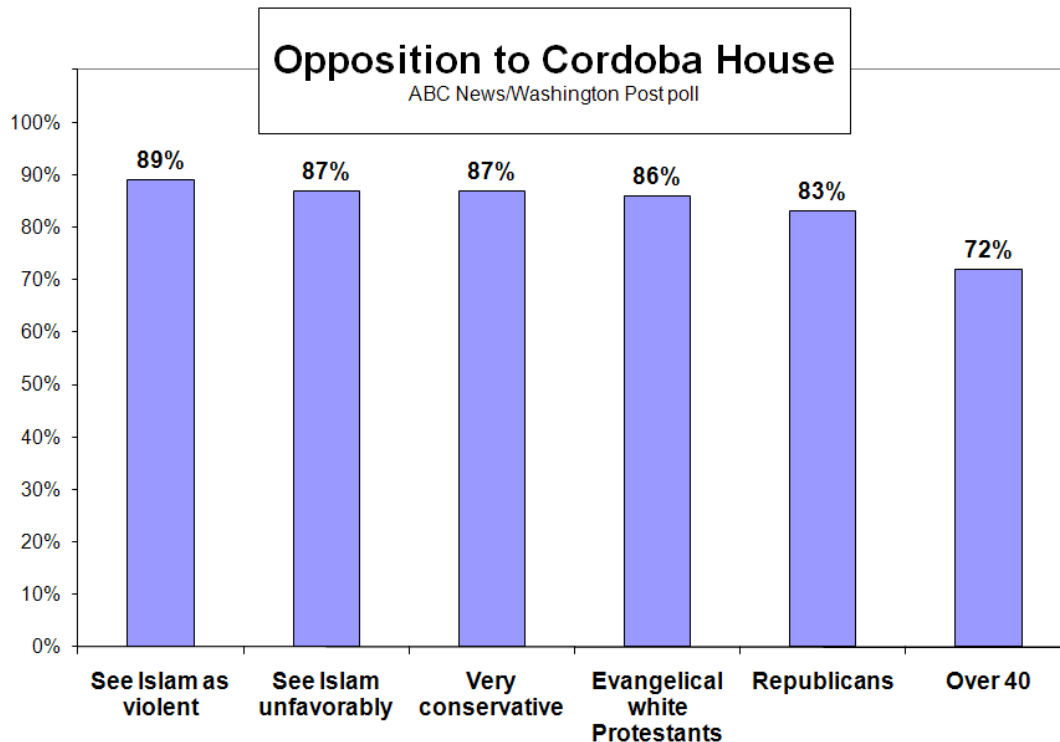
- A quarter of Americans (26 percent) concede feelings of prejudice against Muslims, and just 37 percent express a favorable opinion of Islam overall – the fewest in ABC/Post polls dating to October 2001 (albeit by just 2 points). Forty-nine percent view the religion unfavorably – essentially the same as in the spring, but well up from its lows in 2002, when many were undecided.

- Just 54 percent call it a peaceful religion, moreover, while a substantial minority, 31 percent, thinks mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims. This view has held steady since 2003, after doubling from 2002.
- Unfamiliarity is part of the picture. Fifty-five percent say they lack a good, basic understanding of the teachings and beliefs of Islam. Half say they do not personally know anyone who is a Muslim. At the same time, familiarity with Islam has grown by 18 points since 2002, and personally knowing a Muslim is up by 8 points since '01.

Familiarity with Islam doesn't significantly influence views on the Cordoba House issue. But it is a factor in broader views. People who feel familiar with Islam, or who know a Muslim, have substantially more favorable views of the religion, by 17 and 19 points, respectively. (Overall favorability is not up because people who express unfamiliarity with Islam have grown sharply more negative in their appraisals of the religion since 2006.)

CORDOBA – Majorities across almost all population groups oppose construction of the Cordoba House, described in this survey as a planned “Muslim community center and place of worship.” (While widely described as a mosque, it’s not, because it’s planned to be used for non-religious as well as religious purposes.) In only two groups, among people who profess no religion and among the “very” liberal, do majorities, 56 and 53 percent, respectively, support construction.

There are differences across other groups nonetheless. Most strikingly, opposition to construction peaks at 89 percent among people who see Islam as violent and 87 percent among those who view it unfavorably overall. Opposition is a vast 46 points lower among those who see Islam favorably, and 36 points lower among those who see it as a peaceful religion.



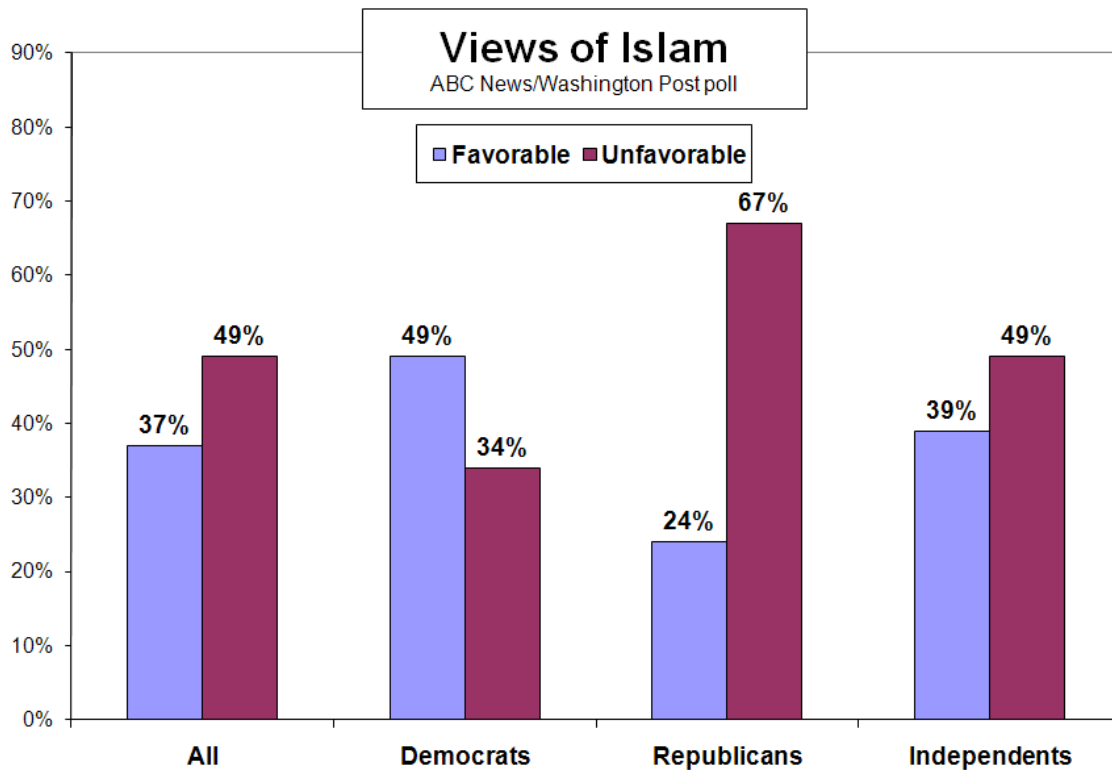
Reflecting these sentiments, 83 percent of Republicans are opposed, compared with 53 percent of Democrats. (Among independents it's 65 percent – at the approximate midpoint between political partisans.) Opposition's 87 percent among self-described "very conservative" adults (three-quarters "strongly" opposed) and 86 percent among evangelical white Protestants, two groups that hold Islam in especially deep suspicion.

Whites are much more apt than nonwhites to oppose construction, likely reflecting their partisan differences. And there's also a generational difference: While 56 percent of adults younger than 40 oppose construction of the Cordoba House, that jumps to 72 percent of their elders.

POLITICS – As noted, the results suggest political risk in advocating construction of the facility at its planned location. That's because 42 percent of registered voters say they feel strongly enough about the issue that it may influence their vote – and 80 percent in this group oppose construction.

That's a net total of 34 percent who both oppose construction and say the issue could impact that vote. Their opposites – the number who favor construction, and say the issue could affect their vote – is far lower, 8 percent.

ISLAM/GROUPS – As with the Cordoba House controversy, there are sharp divisions in overall attitudes on Islam. Democrats are twice as likely as Republicans to view the religion favorably, 49 percent vs. 24 percent. Young adults, the most-educated Americans, liberals and those with no religion are most apt to view Islam favorably; their opposites are most critical of the faith.



Views on violence follow a similar pattern. More than four in 10 Republicans, 43 percent, say mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims. That subsides to 24 percent of Democrats and 29 percent of independents.

PREJUDICE – It’s a closer call across groups in the numbers who report “at least some feelings of prejudice” against Muslims – for example, a quarter of Democrats and independents, and a similar 31 percent of Republicans.

For perspective, at 26 percent, self-reported feelings of prejudice against Muslims are lower than self-reported feelings of racial prejudice, 35 percent in an ABC/Post poll in 2009, including roughly equal numbers of whites and African-Americans alike.

Self-reported prejudice against Muslims is far higher than the number of Americans who say they oppose building mosques in general, not simply the Cordoba House at its planned location. That’s 9 percent of the public.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Aug. 30-Sept. 2, 2010, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-point error margin. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. This survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-17, 19-25 previously released.

26. On a different topic, do you feel you do or do not have a good basic understanding of the teachings and beliefs of Islam, the Muslim religion?

	Do	Do not	No opinion
9/2/10	43	55	2
3/29/09	45	55	*
9/7/06	40	58	2
3/5/06	40	59	1
9/7/03	33	64	3
10/15/02	25	73	2
1/6/02	31	61	8
10/9/01	34	65	1

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
9/2/10	37	49	13

3/29/09	41	48	11
9/7/06	41	45	14
3/5/06	43	46	11
9/7/03	39	38	23
10/15/02	42	33	26
1/6/02	41	24	35
10/9/01	47	39	13

28. Every religion has mainstream beliefs, and also fringe elements or extremists. Thinking of mainstream Islam, do you think mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims, or is it a peaceful religion?

	Encourages violence	Peaceful religion	No opinion
9/2/10	31	54	14
3/29/09	29	58	13
9/7/06	33	54	13
3/5/06	33	54	13
9/7/03	34	46	20
10/15/02	23	53	25
1/6/02	14	57	29

29. Do you personally know anyone who is a Muslim, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
9/2/10	49	50	*
3/29/09	47	53	1
10/9/01	41	58	1

30. There has been news lately about plans for a Muslim community center and place of worship in Lower Manhattan, near the site of the former World Trade Center. Do you yourself think this Muslim community center should or should not be built at this location? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	Should			Should not			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
9/2/10	29	14	15	66	13	53	5

31. (IF SHOULD NOT) Is that more because you oppose (building a Muslim community center at this particular location), or more because you oppose (building Muslim community centers in this country in general)?

	This location	In general	Other (vol.)	No opinion
9/2/10	82	14	3	1

Q30/31 NET

	Should	NET	In this location	Should not	In general	Oth. (vol.)	No opinion
9/2/10	29	66	54	9	2	5	

32. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you feel strongly enough about this issue for it to influence your vote for U.S. Congress in November, or not that strongly?

	Strongly	Not that strongly	No opinion
9/2/10	42	55	2

33. If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims?

	Yes	No	No opinion
9/2/10	26	71	2
3/5/06	27	72	1

Jews:

8/7/00	6	93	*
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Compare to: If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of racial prejudice?

	Yes	No	No opinion
1/4/09*	35	64	1
10/24/08 LV*	15	84	1
6/15/08	30	69	2
10/19/99**	34	66	*

*strong/not strong follow asked.

**"some racist feelings"

18, 34-37 held for release.

END