

## **National Survey of American Muslims Finds Mosques Help Muslims Integrate into American Political Life**

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011

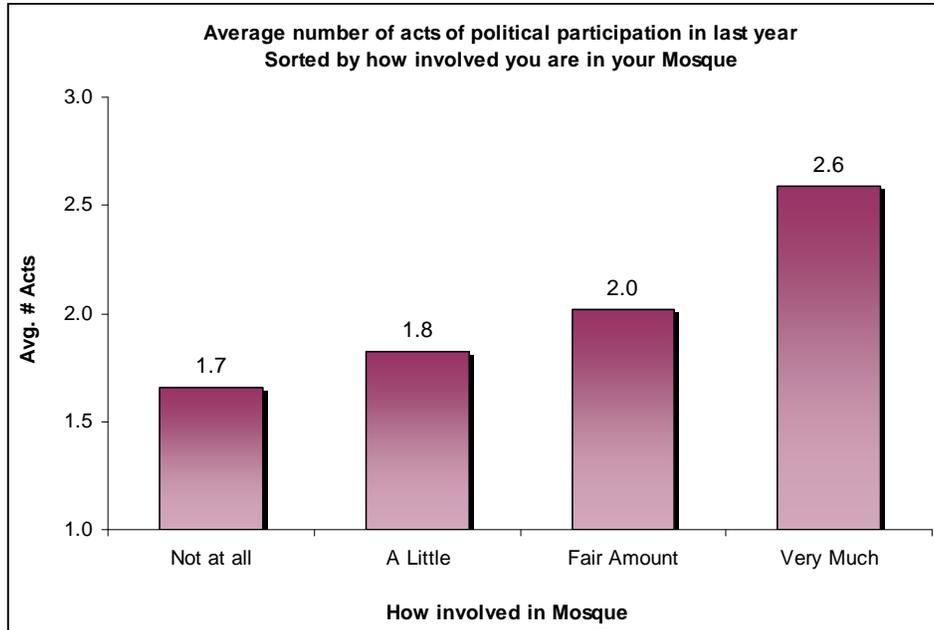
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On Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Congressman Peter King (R-NY) will begin Congressional Hearings questioning the role of mosques and religiosity in radicalizing the Muslim population of the United States. A large scale national survey of the Muslim American population finds that involvement with the mosque, and increased religiosity increases civic engagement and support for American democratic values. The study, the Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS) was completed in 2008, and interviewed 1,410 Muslim American respondents across the nation on issues of religion, civic engagement and public policy in the United States, and is currently being sponsored by a research grant from the Social Science Research Council. The study was lead by principal investigators Dr. Karam Dana and Dr. Matt A. Barreto.

In recent months, the loyalties and patriotism of American Muslims have come under considerable questioning and scrutiny. Increasingly, Muslims living in the US are being investigated for potential ties to terrorists. The role of Muslim institutions and cultural centers are coming under serious scrutiny, dividing the American public. Unfortunately, little empirical evidence or data has been offered in this debate. To date, there has been no data to demonstrate that mosques or devout Muslims are at risk of fostering radicalization. Rather than build on emotion, as social scientists, we turn to empirical data.

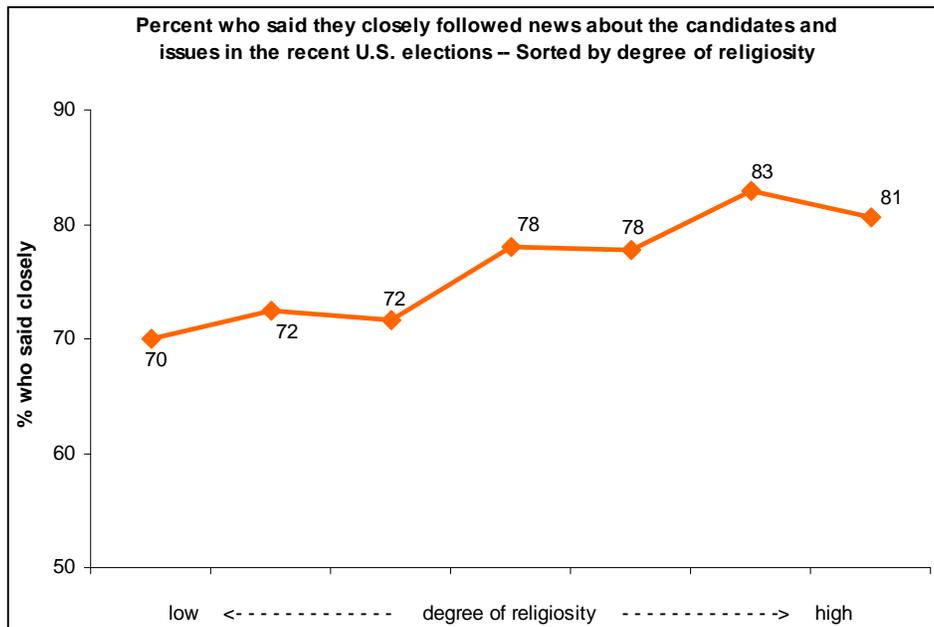
The MAPOS study of Muslim Americans is the largest in the United States to date, and addresses various questions from Islamic teachings and their compatibility with the American political system, to mosque attendance and its association with political participation in and incorporation into American politics. The empirical findings suggest that an association exists between higher levels of involvement in mosque-related activities, and participation in American politics. Thus, mosques serve as important religious institutions that are no different than churches and synagogues and their roles in the communities they are located. These institutions have been proven to be associated with a higher level of civic engagement, and to contribute greatly in creating a more informed citizenry. Further, our findings show that those Muslims residing in the US, with relatively higher levels of religiosity, tend to believe that the Islam is compatible with the American political system.

Specifically, the MAPOS study finds as Muslims report being more involved in their mosque, they also report being more actively involved in American politics. On a range of political activities, those with no connection or involvement to the mosque report 1.7 average acts of political participation. In contrast, those who say they are very involved with the mosque report 2.6 political acts per year – a 53% increase in civic engagement.



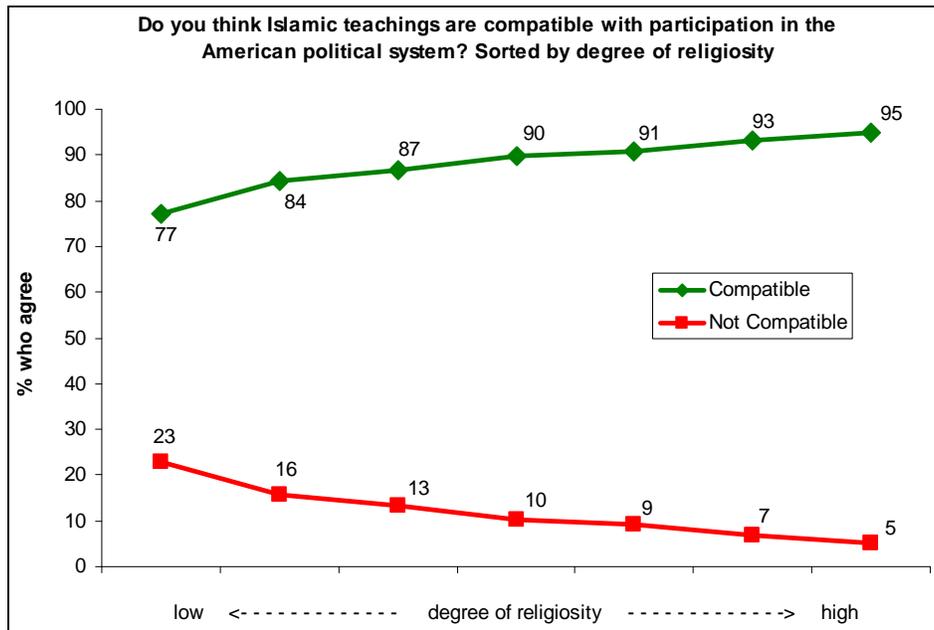
Types of participation asked: In the past year, did you participate in any of these activities: community meeting, rally or protest, write letter to public official, donation to political campaign, voted in the statewide election

In addition to mosque involvement, respondents to the survey were asked how closely they followed religious teachings in their daily lives. Combining mosque involvement and religious commitment into an overall scale of religiosity reveals further positive associations between religion and civic participation. For example, 70% of those with the lowest level of religiosity indicate they follow news about elections closely, compared to 81% who follow elections closely on the high end of the religiosity scale.



Scale of religiosity includes mosque involvement in combination with a question, “how much do you follow Qu’ran and Hadith in your daily life.” Someone who scores on the lowest end is a person who is not involved at all as their mosque, and never follows Qu’ran and Hadith. Someone who scores on the highest end is a person who is very involved in the mosque and follows Qu’ran and Hadith very closely in their daily life.

Finally, we find those with high levels of religiosity are overwhelmingly likely to believe that Islam is compatible with political participation in the United States. While 77% of those with the lowest levels of religiosity feel Islam is compatible with political involvement in America, 95% of those who are most religious feel Islam is compatible with American politics.



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Despite the popularized idea that Muslims are radicalized around the country in mosques, we find that mosques help Muslims integrate into US society, and in fact have a very productive role in bridging the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. This is a finding in social science that is consistent with decades of research on other religious groups such as Jews, Protestants and Catholics where church attendance and religiosity has been proven to result in higher civic engagement and support for core values of the American political system. Likewise, mosques are institutions that should be encouraged to function as centers of social and political integration in America.

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