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Faith in the President?: How Public Perception of Barack Obama's Faith Shape Views of Him and his Presidency



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Perceptions about President Obama's Faith & its Relationship to his Favorability & Job Approval



**PART I. PERCEPTION OF OBAMA'S
RELIGIOUS IDENTITY**

**PART II. VIEWS ABOUT OBAMA'S
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

Data Sources



- Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, November 2010.
- Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010.
- Public Religion Research Institute, American Values Survey, September 2008.
- Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2008.

Two Measures of Obama's Faith

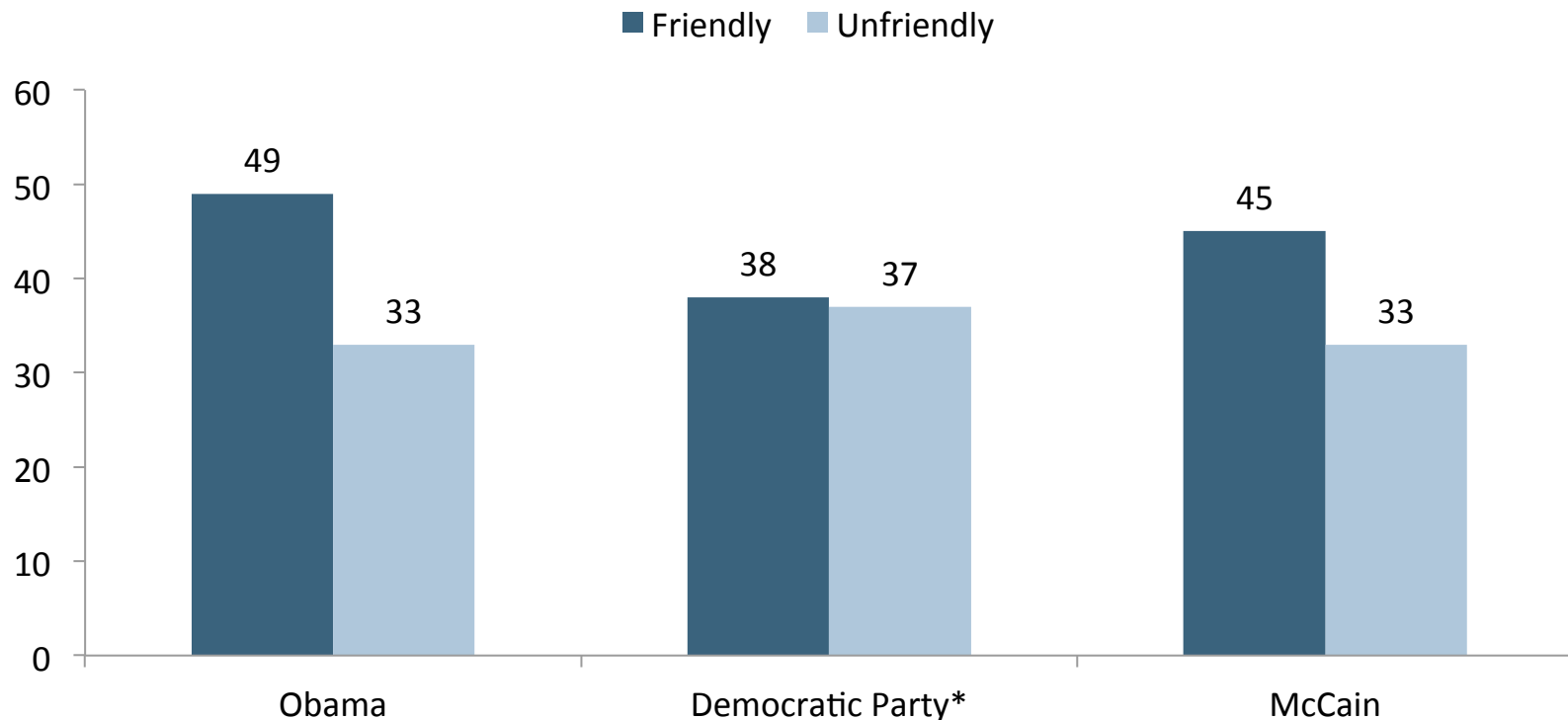


- **Obama's Religious Identity (Pew):** Now, thinking about Barack Obama's religious beliefs... do you happen to know what Barack Obama's religion is? Is he Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, or something else?
- **Obama's Religious Beliefs (PRRI):** From what you know, do you think Barack Obama has religious beliefs that are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different than your own religious beliefs?

Candidate Obama Friendliness Toward Religion



2008 Candidates Perceived Friendliness Toward Religion



Source: Public Religion Research Institute, American Values Survey, Aug. 2008 (N=2,000);

* Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, July 2008 (N=2,905)

Part I. Obama's Religious Identity

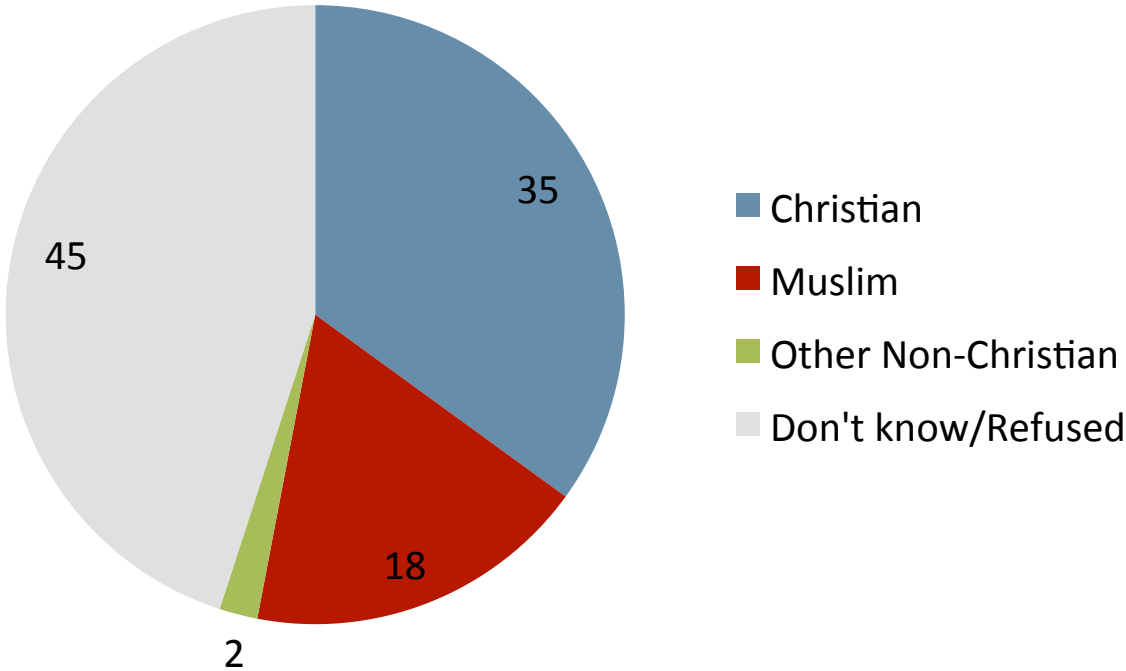


**CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, DON'T KNOW?
RELATIONSHIP TO JOB APPROVAL**

Perception of Obama's Religion in 2010



Perception of Barak Obama's Religious Identity



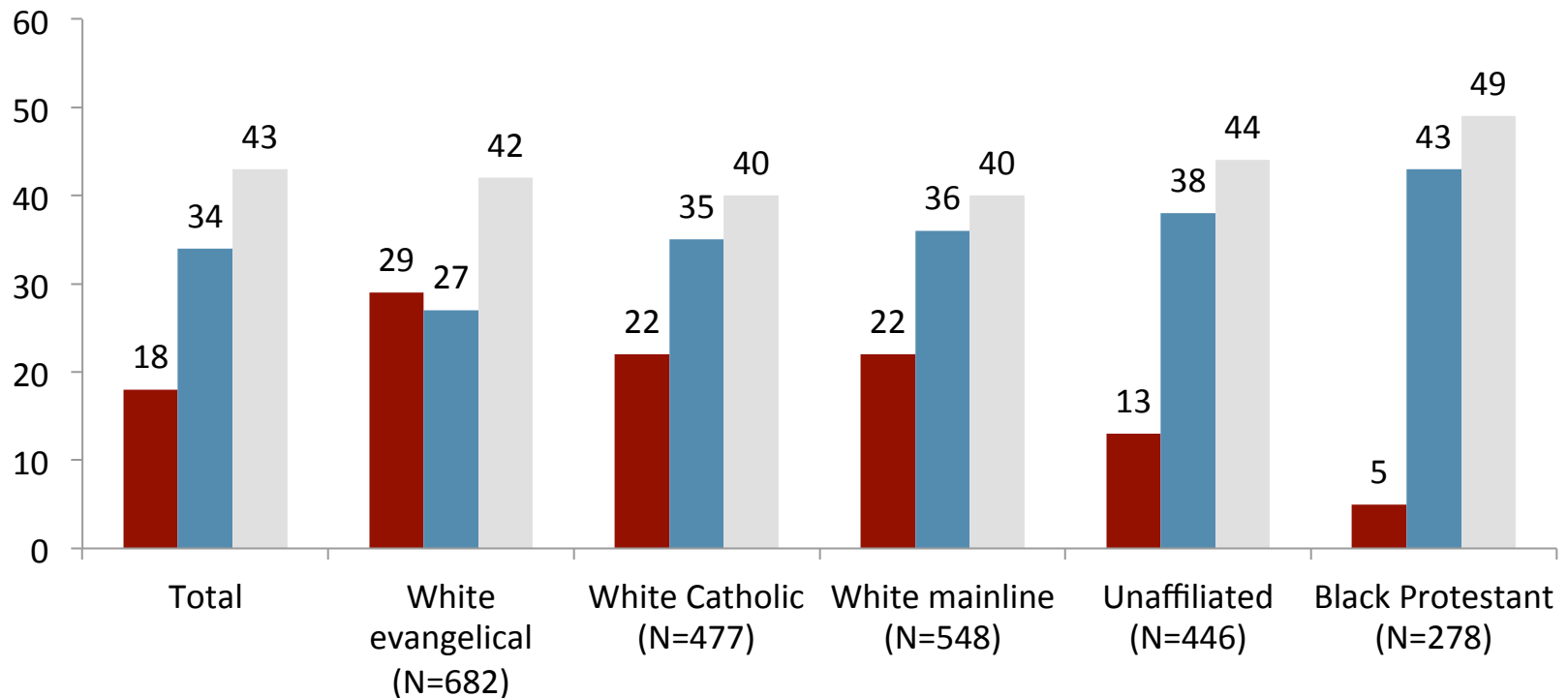
Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010 (N=3,003)

Perception of Obama's Religion by Religion



Perception of Obama's Religion in 2010

■ Muslim ■ Christian ■ Don't know

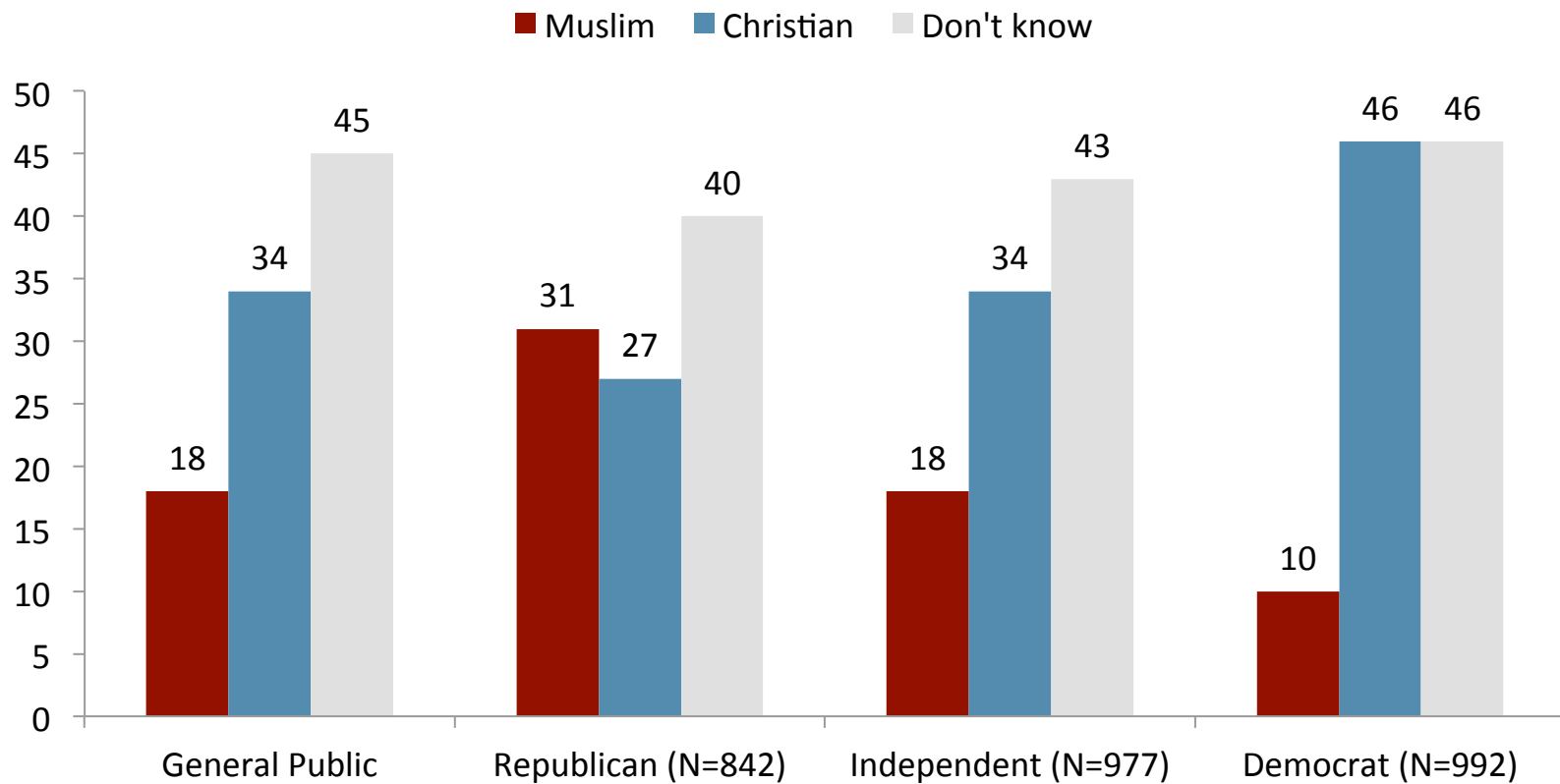


Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010

Perception of Obama's Religion by Party



Perception of Obama's Religion by Party

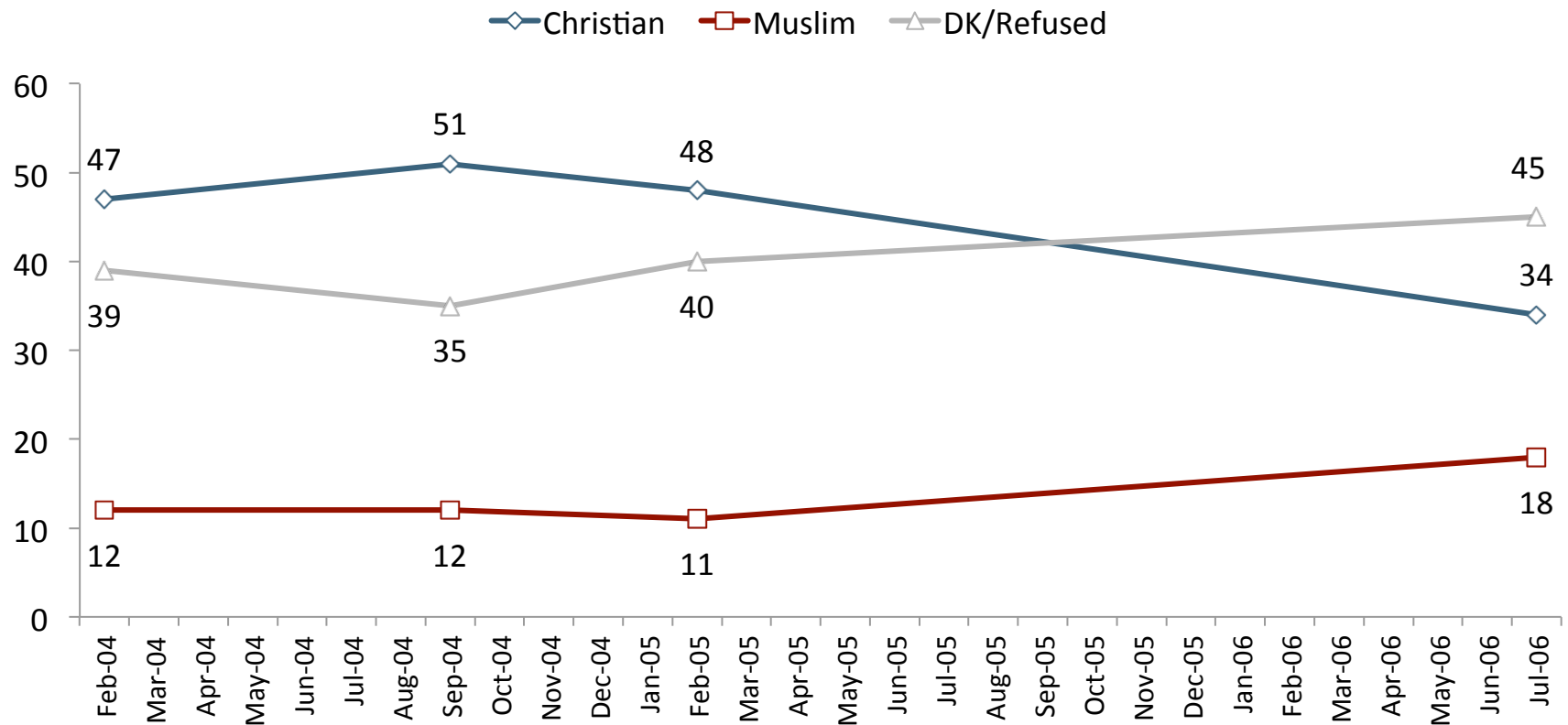


Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010

Americans Less Likely to Believe that Obama is Christian



Perception of President Obama's Religion (2008-2010)

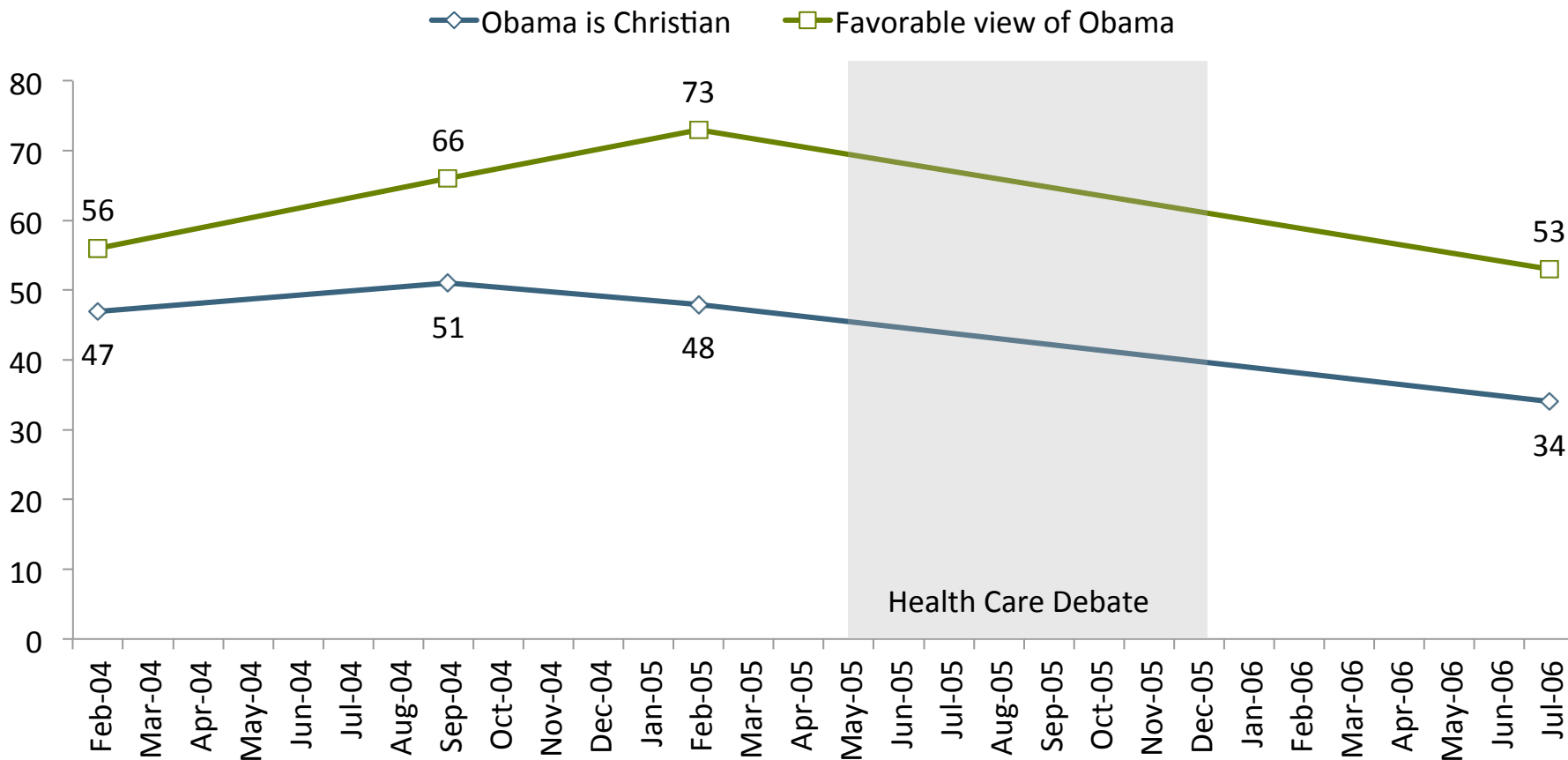


Source: Pew Research Center Surveys, 2008-2010

Drop in Personal Favorability Tracks Drop in Number who believe Obama is Christian



Favorable Views of Obama and Perception of his Religion



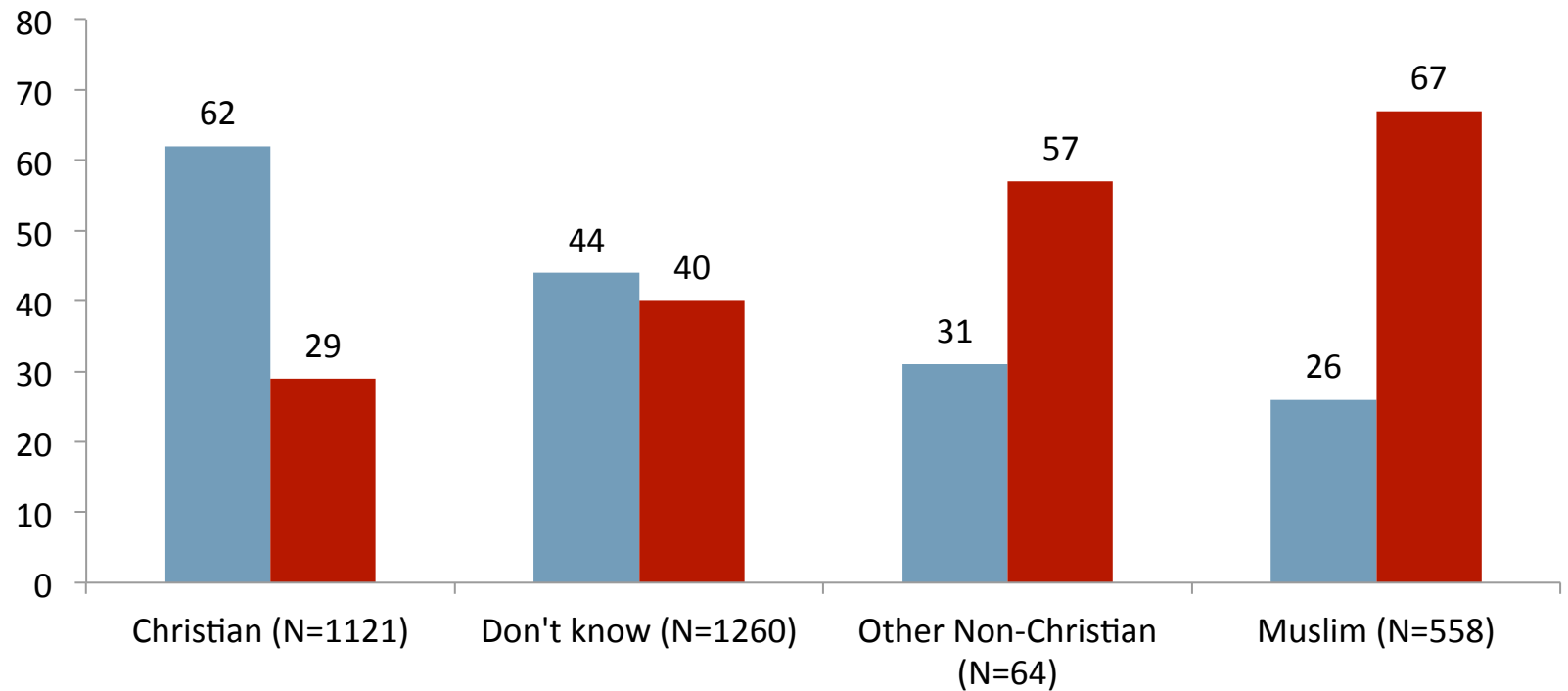
Source: Pew Research Center Surveys, 2008 - 2010

Relationship between Perceptions of Obama's Religious Identity and Job Approval



Believe Obama is....

■ Approve ■ Disapprove



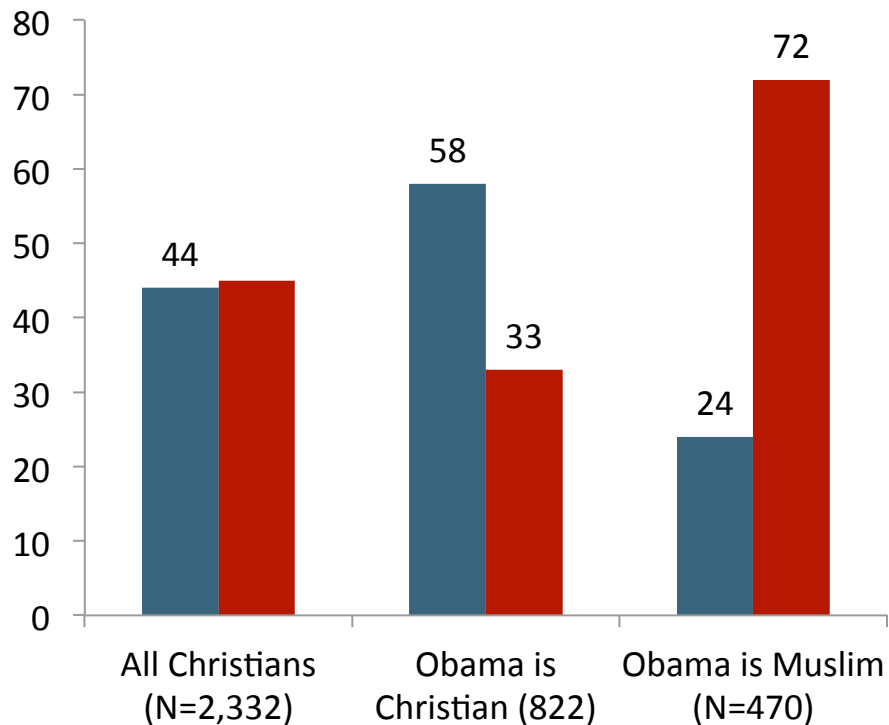
Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010

Relationship between Perceptions of Obama's Religious Identity and Job Approval



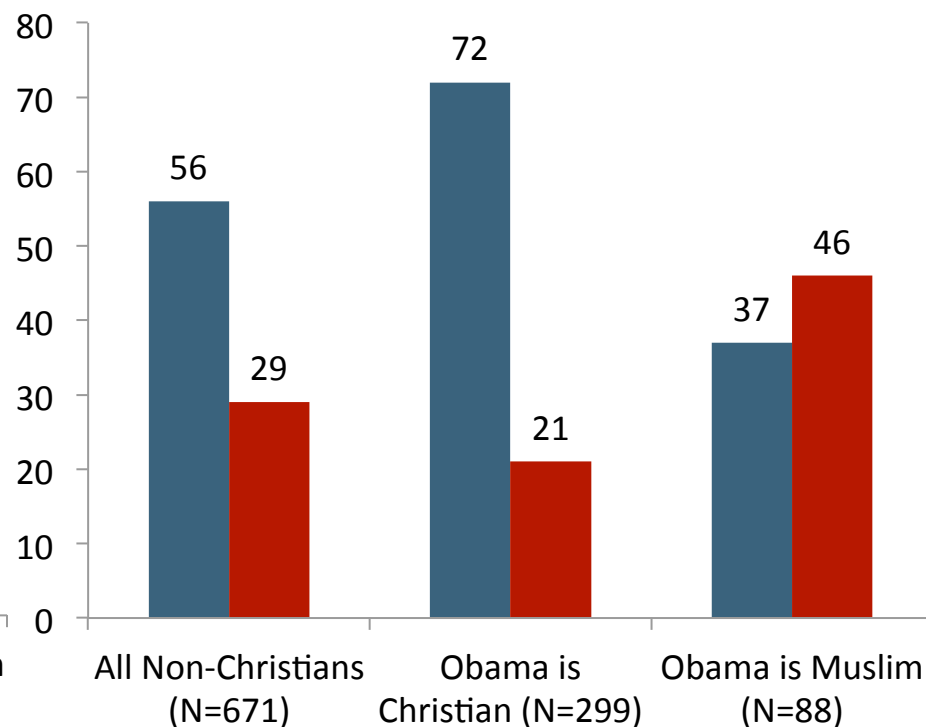
Among Christians

■ Approve ■ Disapprove



Among Non-Christians

■ Approve ■ Disapprove



Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010

Predicting Obama's Job Approval



Logistic Regression Predicting Disapproval of Obama's Job as President

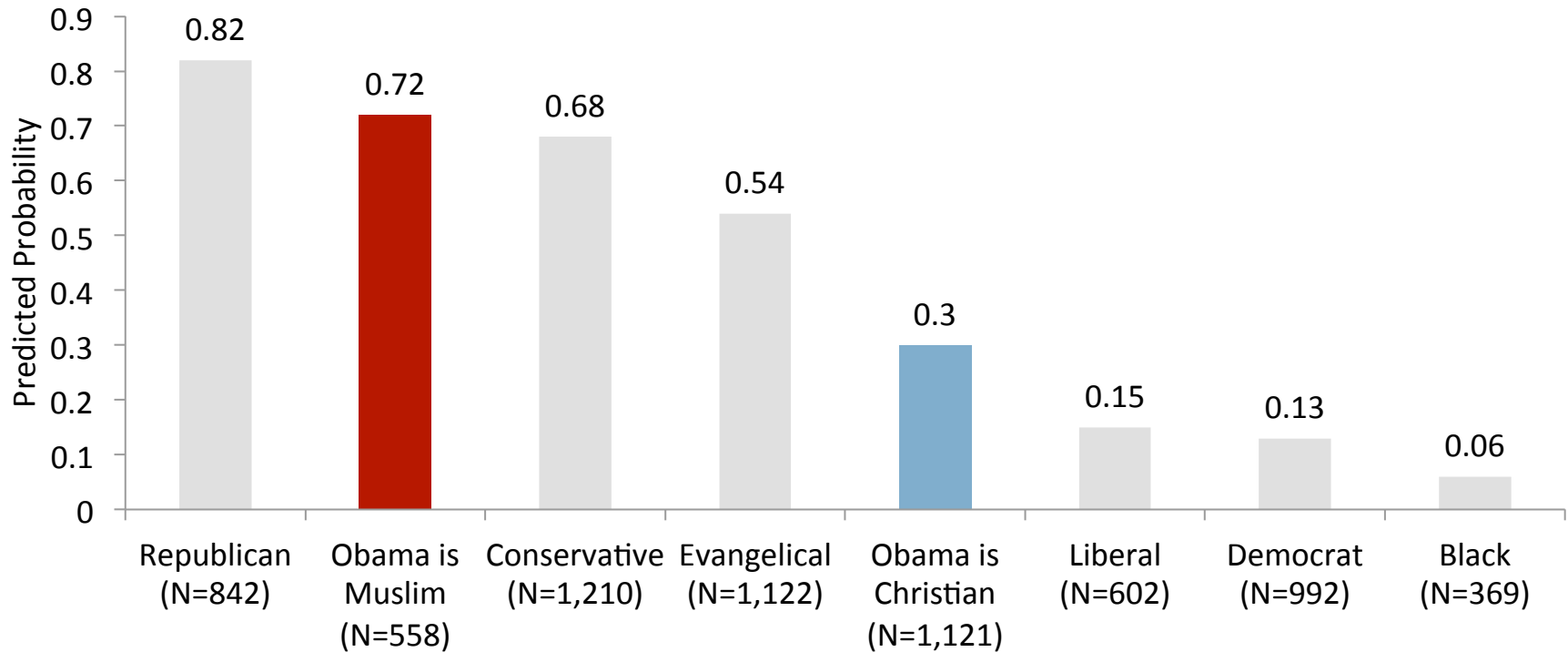
	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Sig.</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Obama is Christian (Ref. Don't know)	-.470	.112	.000	.63
Obama is Muslim (Ref. Don't know)	.691	.137	.000	1.9
Republican (<i>Ref. Independent</i>)	1.181	.137	.000	3.3
Male (<i>Ref. Women</i>)	.305	.099	.002	1.4
Conservative (<i>Ref. Moderates</i>)	.891	.109	.000	2.4
Evangelical (<i>Ref. All Others</i>)	.441	.112	.000	1.6
Age (<i>Linear</i>)	.011	.003	.000	1.01
Educational Attainment (<i>Linear</i>)	.087	.031	.006	1.1
Religious Attendance (<i>Linear</i>)	-.095	.034	.005	.91
Liberal (<i>Ref. Moderate</i>)	-.575	.148	.000	.56
Black (<i>Ref. All Others</i>)	-2.251	.255	.000	.105
Democrat (<i>Ref. Independents</i>)	-1.3	.126	.000	.27
Intercept	-1.204	.271	.000	.3

Believing Obama is Christian or Muslim both Matter



Predicted Probabilities of Disapproving of Obama's Job as President

Mean Scores by Category



Source: Pew Research Center, Religion & Politics Survey, August 2010 (N=3,003)

Part II. Evaluations of President Obama's Religious Beliefs

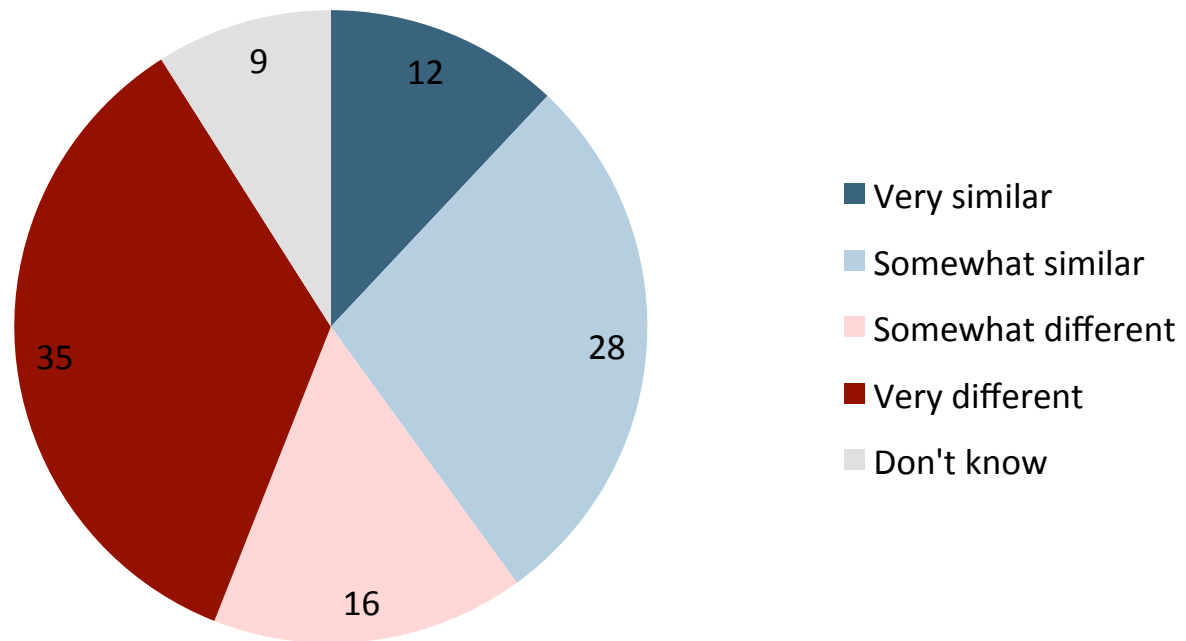


**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIEWS OF
HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND JOB
APPROVAL AND FAVORABILITY**

Views about Obama's Religious Beliefs



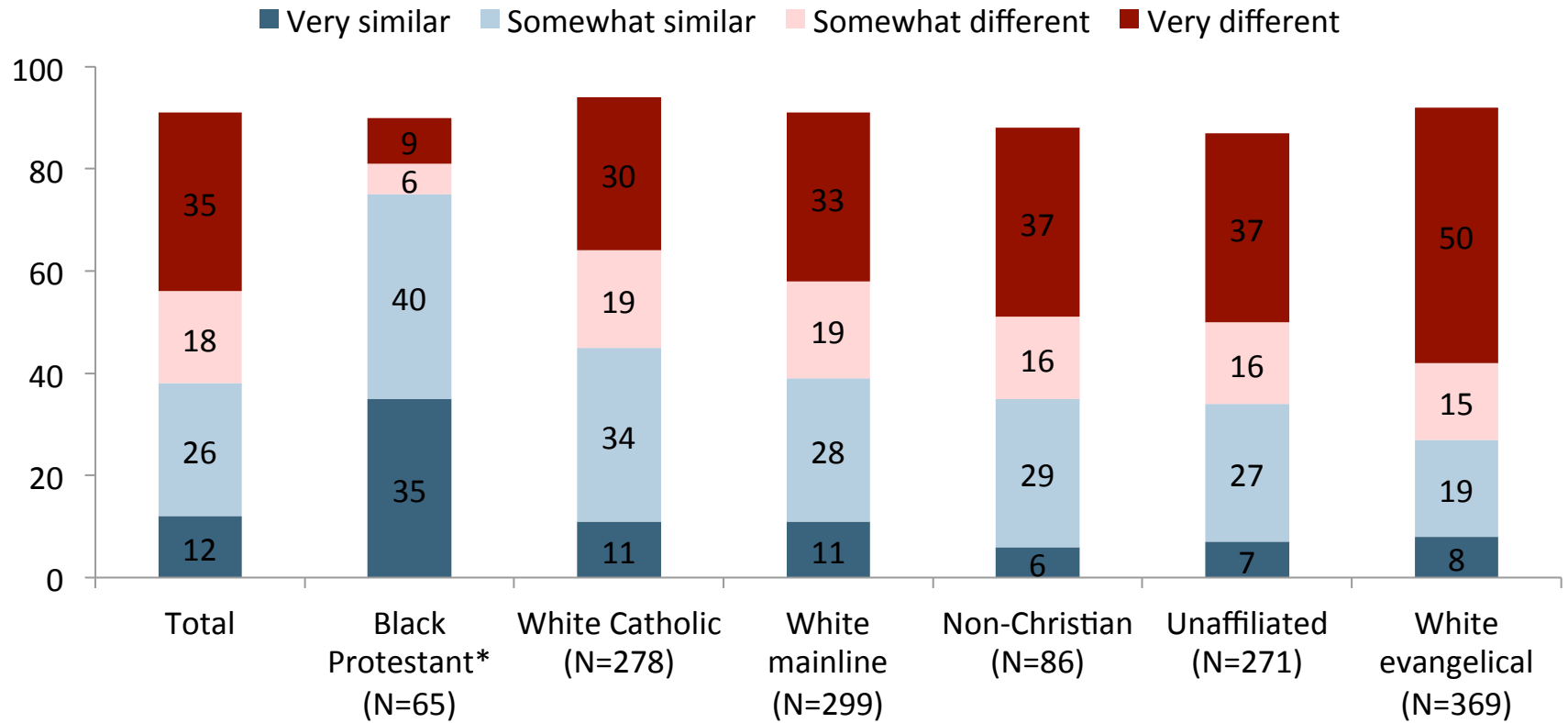
Compared to your own religious beliefs Barack Obama's religious beliefs are...



Views about Obama's Religious Beliefs By Religion



Are Obama's Religious Beliefs Similar or Different from your own?

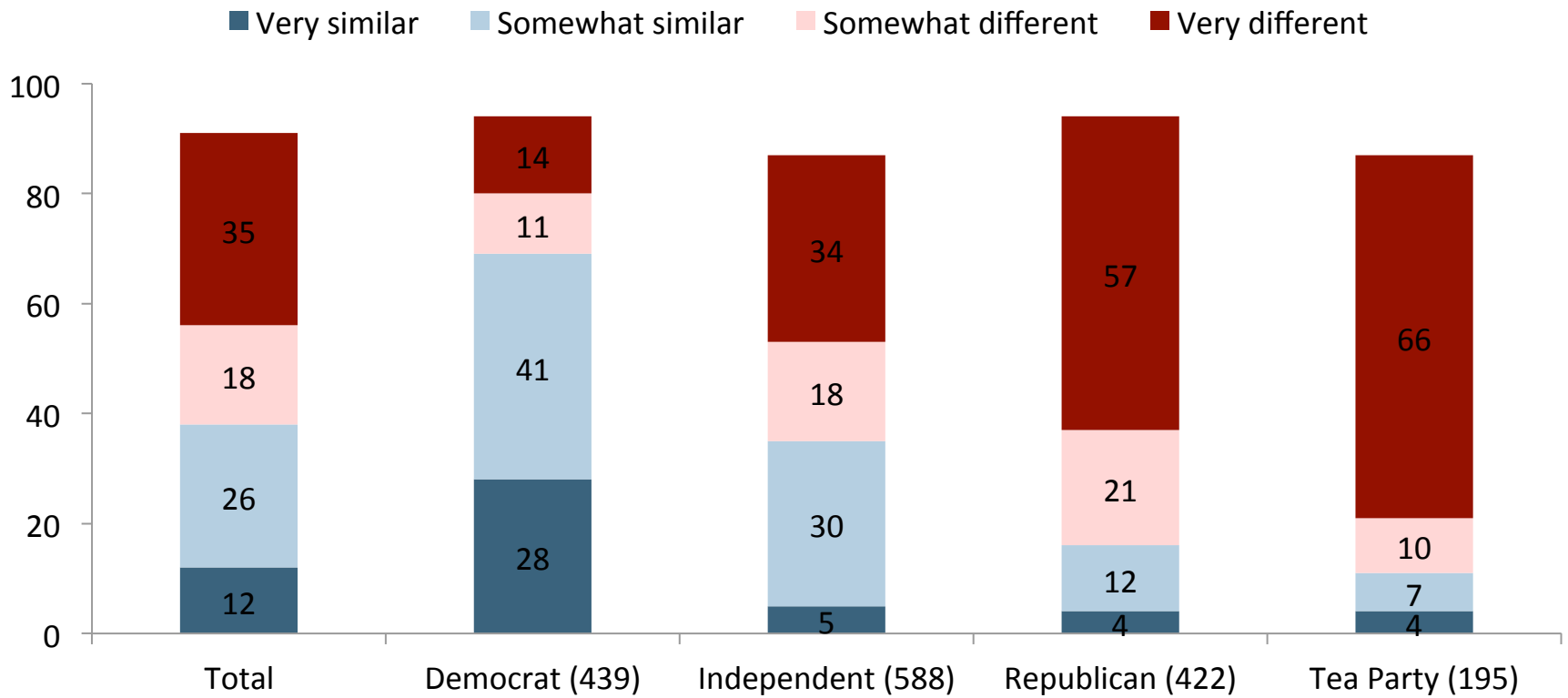


Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, 2010

Views about Obama's Religious Beliefs By Party ID



Are Obama's Religious Beliefs Similar to or Different from your own?



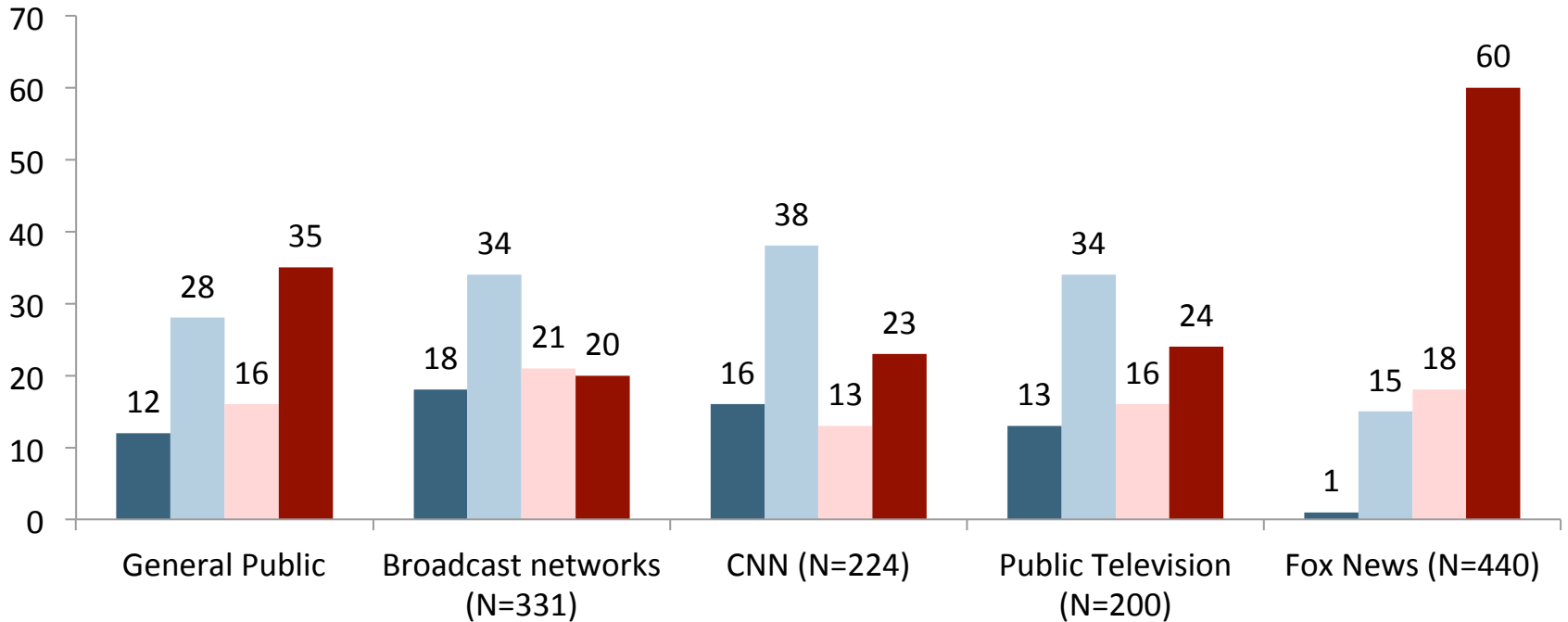
Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, 2010

The Fox News Effect



Views about Obama's Religious Beliefs by Most Trusted Television News Source

■ Very similar ■ Somewhat similar ■ Somewhat different ■ Very different



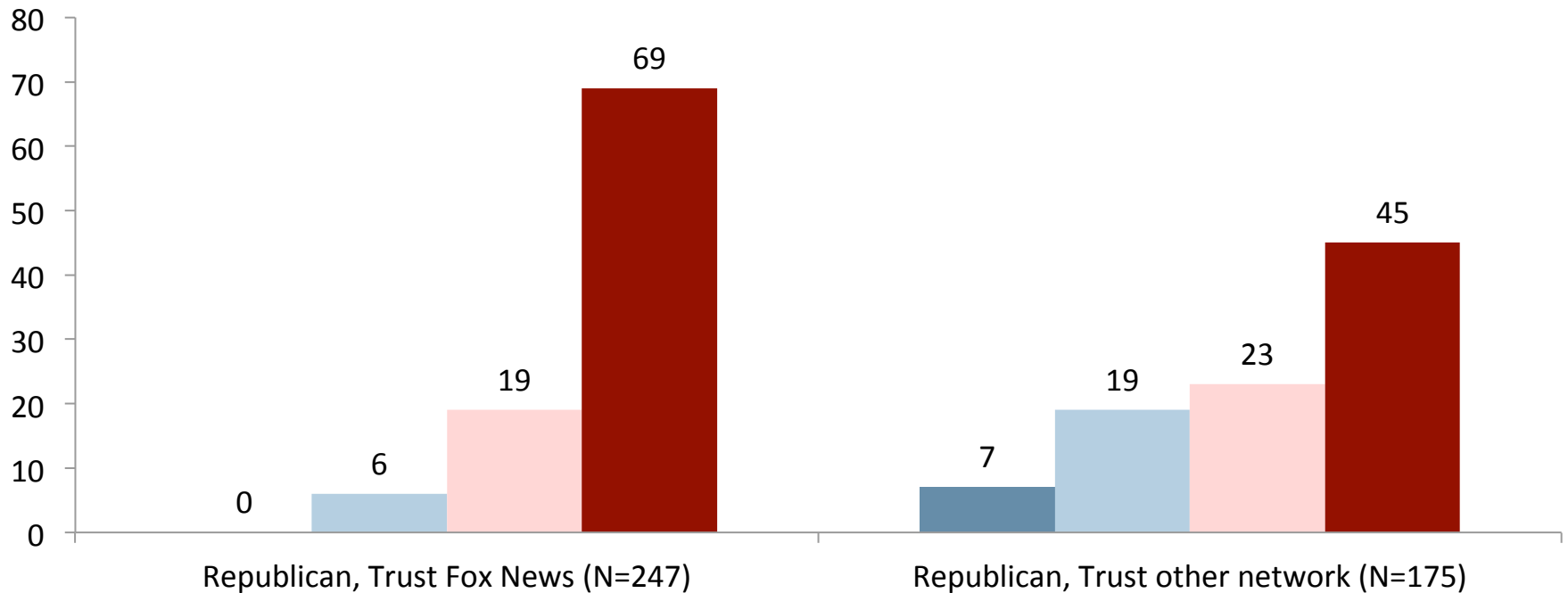
Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, 2010

The Fox News Effect Among Republicans



Differences in Views of Obama's Religious Beliefs Among Republicans By Trusted Media Type

■ Very similar ■ Somewhat similar ■ Somewhat different ■ Very different

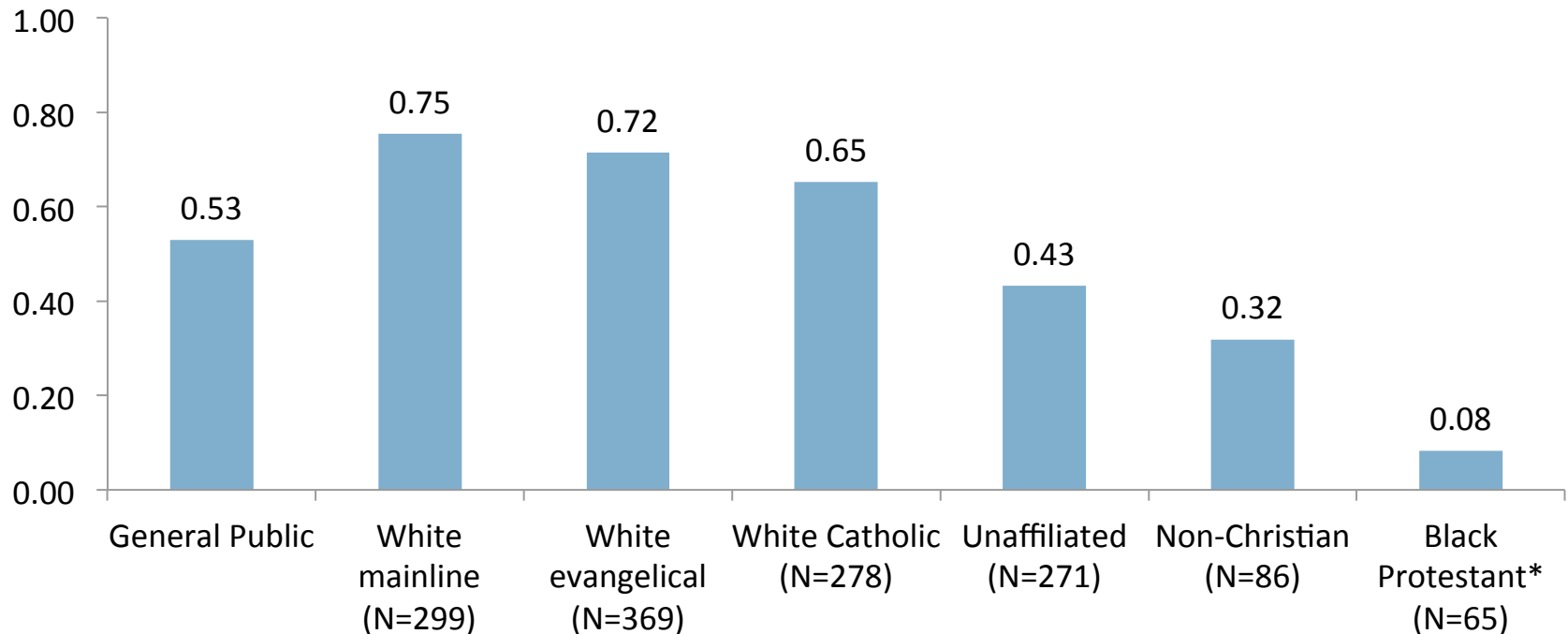


Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, 2010

Relationship between Views of Obama's Religious Beliefs and Personal Favorability



Correlation Between Obama Favorability and Shared Religious Beliefs by Religious Affiliation



Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, 2010

* Not significant (P=0.547)

Predicting Obama's Favorability



Logistic Regression Predicting Unfavorable View of President Obama

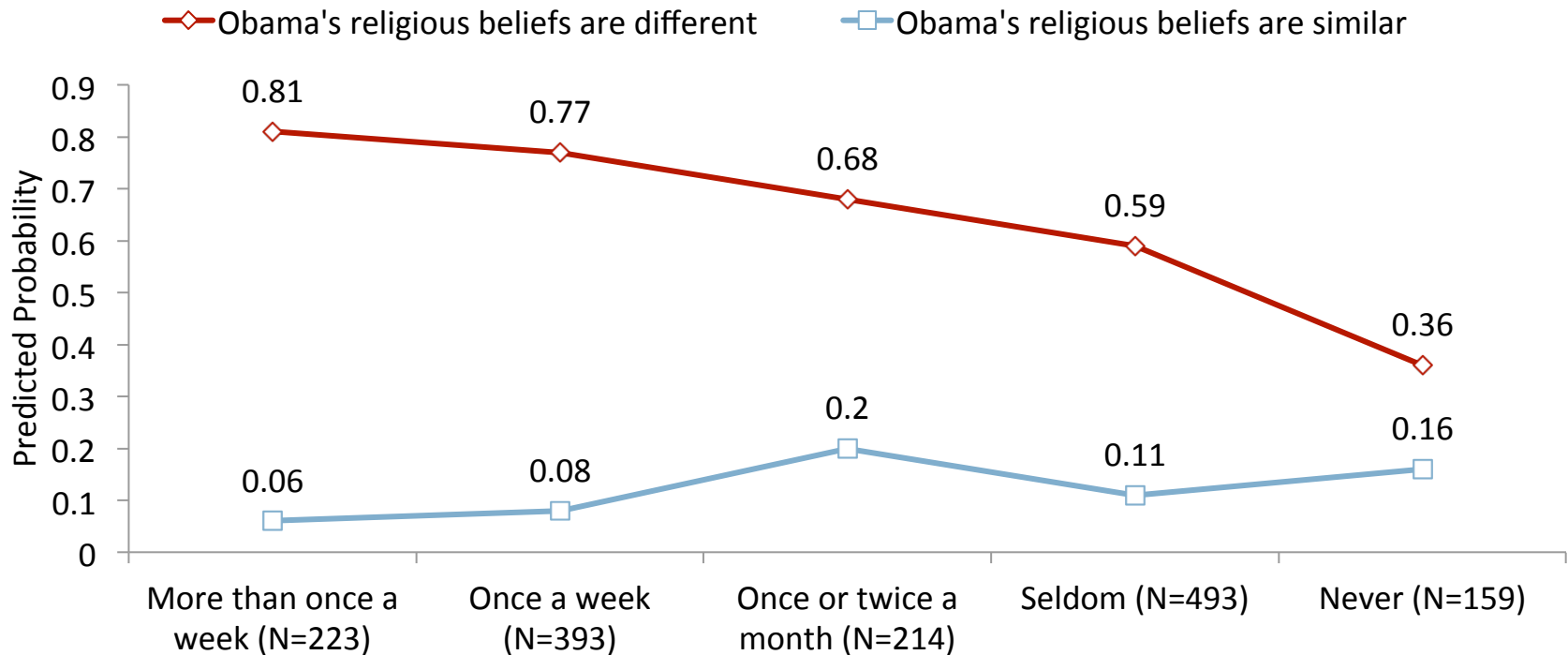
	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Sig.</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Obama's Religious Beliefs Different	2.242	0.181	0.000	9.4
Fox News Most Trusted Network (<i>Ref. All Others</i>)	2.021	0.236	0.000	7.5
Republican (<i>Ref. Independent</i>)	0.861	0.211	0.000	2.4
Male (<i>Ref. Women</i>)	0.498	0.168	0.003	1.6
Conservative (<i>Ref. Moderates</i>)	0.457	0.191	0.017	1.6
Evangelical (<i>Ref. All Others</i>)	0.071	0.198	0.719	1.1
Age (<i>Linear</i>)	0.013	0.005	0.007	1.01
Educational Attainment (<i>Linear</i>)	0.0001	0.052	0.998	1.00
Religious Attendance (<i>Linear</i>)	-0.18	0.056	0.001	0.84
Liberal (<i>Ref. Moderate</i>)	-0.897	0.267	0.001	0.41
Black (<i>Ref. All Others</i>)	-1.454	0.467	0.002	0.23
Democrat (<i>Ref. Independents</i>)	-1.587	0.223	0.000	0.21
Intercept	-2.164	.488	0.000	0.16

Views of Obama's Religious Beliefs More Important Predicting Favorability Among Highly Religious



Predicted probability of viewing Obama unfavorably by Religious Attendance

Mean Scores by Category



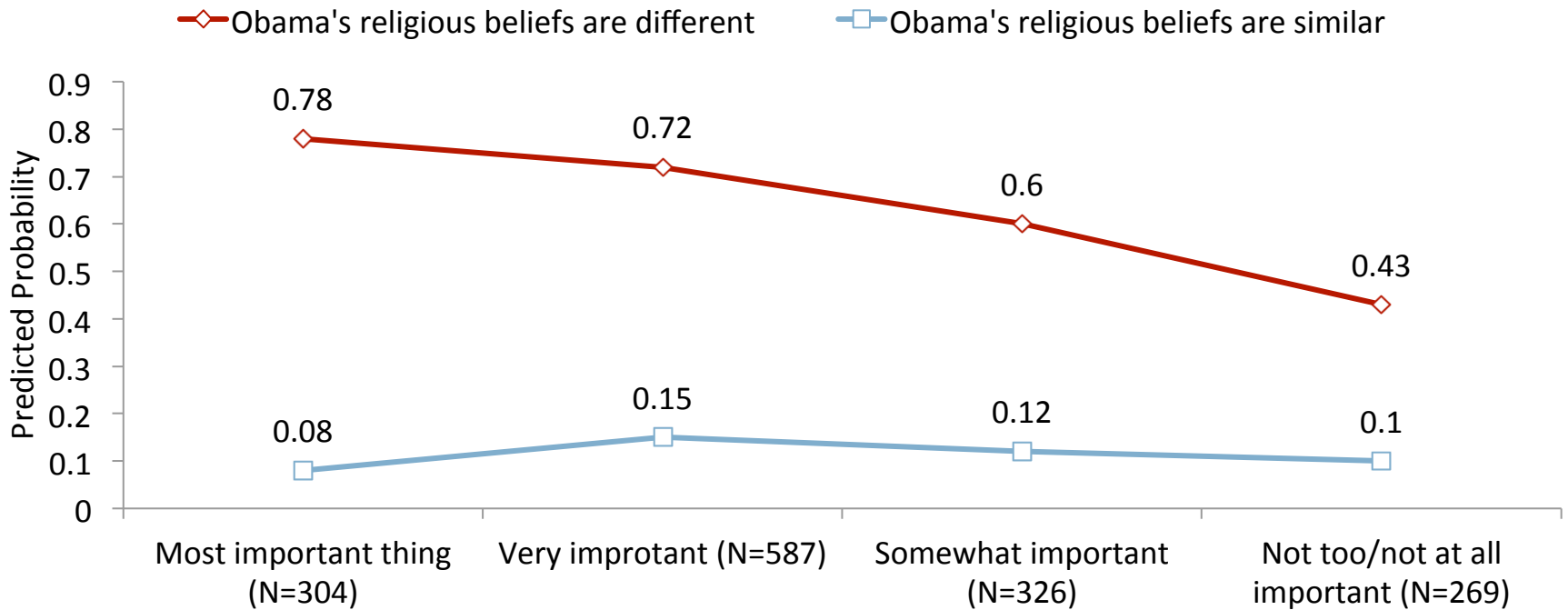
Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, Nov. 2010

Views of Obama's Religious Beliefs More Important Predicting favorability Among Highly Religious



Predicted probability of viewing Obama unfavorably by Religious Salience

Mean Scores by Category



Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Post-election American Values Survey, Nov. 2010

Conclusions



- **A Word on Causality**
 - None of the analysis here addresses the direction of the relationship between perception of Obama's religion and his political and personal evaluations
 - It is likely that favorability is affecting views about Obama's religion just as views about his religion are affecting his favorability
 - Need for panel data
- **Differential Effects**
 - The analysis shows that Obama's religious beliefs matter more for some Americans and less for others, (i.e. white mainline Protestants, white evangelicals, frequent attenders)

Conclusions



- **Christian vs. Muslim Identity**
 - Being viewed as a Christian has nearly as large a positive impact as being viewed as Muslim has a negative impact
 - These effects are true even among Non-Christians



For more information about these surveys:

<http://people-press.org/2010/08/19/growing-number-of-americans-say-obama-is-a-muslim/>

<http://www.publicreligion.org/research/published/?id=428>