

## “Wingnuts” and President Obama

*A socialist? A Muslim? Anti-American? The Anti-Christ? Large minorities of Americans hold some remarkable opinions*

**New York, N.Y. — March 24, 2010** — A new book, *Wingnuts: How the Lunatic Fringe Is Hijacking America* by John Avlon describes the large numbers of Americans who hold extreme views of President Obama. This Harris Poll seeks to measure how many people are involved. It finds that 40% of adults believe he is a socialist. More than 30% think he wants to take away Americans’ right to own guns and that he is a Muslim. More than 25% believe he wants to turn over the sovereignty of the United States to a world government, has done many things that are unconstitutional, that he resents America’s heritage, and that he does what Wall Street tells him to do.

More than 20% believe he was not born in the United States, that he is “the domestic enemy the U.S. Constitution speaks of,” that he is racist and anti-American, and that he “wants to use an economic collapse or terrorist attack as an excuse to take dictatorial powers.” Fully 20% think he is “doing many of the things that Hitler did,” while 14% believe “he may be the anti-Christ” and 13% think “he wants the terrorists to win.”

These are some of the results of **The Harris Poll** of 2,320 adults surveyed online between March 1 and 8, 2010 by **Harris Interactive**.

The actual percentages of adults who believe these things are true are as follows:

- He is a socialist (40%)
- He wants to take away Americans’ right to own guns (38%)
- He is a Muslim (32%)
- He wants to turn over the sovereignty of the United States to a one world government (29%)
- He has done many things that are unconstitutional (29%)
- He resents America’s heritage (27%)
- He does what Wall Street and the bankers tell him to do (27%)
- He was not born in the United States and so is not eligible to be president (25%)
- He is a domestic enemy that the U.S. Constitutions speaks of (25%)
- He is a racist (23%)
- He is anti-American (23%)
- He wants to use an economic collapse or terrorist attack as an excuse to take dictatorial powers (23%)
- He is doing many of the things that Hitler did (20%)
- He may be the Anti-Christ (14%)

- He wants the terrorists to win (13%)

### **What Republicans, Democrats and Independents think**

There are – no surprise here – huge differences between what Republicans and Democrats believe. Majorities of Republicans believe that President Obama:

- Is a socialist (67%)
- Wants to take away Americans’ right to own guns (61%)
- Is a Muslim (57%)
- Wants to turn over the sovereignty of the United States to a one world government (51%); and
- Has done many things that are unconstitutional (55%).

Also large numbers of Republicans also believe that President Obama:

- Resents America’s heritage (47%)
- Does what Wall Street and the bankers tell him to do (40%)
- Was not born in the United States and so is not eligible to be president (45%)
- Is the “domestic enemy that the U.S. Constitution speaks of” (45%)
- Is a racist (42%)
- Want to use an economic collapse or terrorist attack as an excuse to take dictatorial powers (41%)
- Is doing many of the things that Hitler did (38%).

Even more remarkable perhaps, fully 24% of Republicans believe that “he may be the Anti-Christ” and 22% believe “he wants the terrorists to win.”

While few Democrats believe any of these things, the proportions of Independents who do so are close to the national averages.

One big surprise is that many more Republicans (40%) than Democrats (15%) believe the president does what Wall Street and the bankers tell him to do.

### **Differences by education**

These replies are also strongly correlated with education. The less education people have had the more likely they are to believe all of these statements. Consider these differences between those with no college education and those with post-graduate education:

- He is a socialist (45% and 20%)
- He wants to take away Americans’ right to own guns (45% and 19%)
- He is a Muslim (43% and 9%)
- He was not born in the United States so is not eligible to be president (32% and 7%)
- He is a racist (28% and 9%)
- He is anti-American (27% and 9%)
- He is doing many of the things Hitler did (24% and 10%).

After reviewing these findings, John Avlon comments, "These new numbers are shocking but not surprising – they detail the extent to which Wingnuts are hijacking our politics. This poll should be a wake-up call to all Americans about the real costs of using fear and hate to pump up hyper-partisanship. We are playing with dynamite by demonizing our president and dividing our country in the process. Americans need to remember the perspective that Wingnuts always forget – patriotism is more important than partisanship."

**So what?**

So what indeed! These responses recall a favorite saying of our founder Lou Harris that “when you don’t want to publish a poll finding you dislike, you should get out of the business.” The very large numbers of people who believe all these things of President Obama help to explain the size and strength of the Tea Party Movement, a topic that will be addressed in another Harris Poll in a few days time.

**TABLE 1  
PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE VARIOUS STATEMENTS ABOUT PRESIDENT OBAMA ARE TRUE**

"On another subject, here are some things people have said about President Obama. Please indicate for each whether you believe it is true or false."

**Summary of True**

Base: All adults

	Total	Education				Political Philosophy			Political Party		
		H.S. or less	Some College	College Grad	Post Grad	Cons.	Mod.	Lib.	Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
He is a socialist	40	45	38	42	20	67	30	15	67	14	42
He wants to take away Americans’ right to own guns	38	45	37	32	19	63	28	15	61	17	39
He is a Muslim	32	43	30	24	9	51	26	16	57	15	29
He wants to turn over the sovereignty of the United States to a one world government	29	37	28	21	12	52	20	13	51	12	28
He has done many things that are unconstitutional	29	35	28	26	13	53	20	10	55	9	27
He resents America’s heritage	27	31	26	25	18	49	19	9	47	12	27
He does what Wall Street and the bankers tell him to do	27	35	24	20	11	38	23	17	40	15	27
He was not born in the United States and so is not eligible to be president	25	32	22	21	7	41	19	10	45	8	24
He is a domestic enemy that the U.S. Constitutions speaks of	25	32	23	17	10	45	16	9	45	8	24
He is a racist	23	28	22	20	9	42	15	7	42	7	22
He is anti-American	23	27	22	20	9	43	14	8	41	7	22
He wants to use an economic collapse or terrorist attack as an excuse to take dictatorial powers	23	28	21	18	11	40	14	12	41	8	21
He is doing many of the things that Hitler did	20	24	20	18	10	36	13	9	38	6	19
He may be the Anti-Christ	14	18	13	9	4	24	9	8	24	6	13
He wants the terrorists to win	13	16	11	11	6	23	9	6	22	5	12

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

## Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States March 1 and 8, 2010 among 2,320 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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## About Harris Interactive

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