

## Islamophobia by the numbers

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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According to a Quinnipiac University [poll](#), 54 percent of New York State voters agree "that because of American freedom of religion, Muslims have the right to build the mosque near Ground Zero." That strikes me as a shockingly small majority—almost half don't feel that "religious freedom" by definition applies to all religions, even when the question's *put* that way?—but hey, glad to hear of majority support for basic American principles, right?

Well, not quite. Fifty-three percent of the same group agree that "because of the sensitivities of 9/11 relatives, Muslims should not be allowed to build the mosque near Ground Zero." So a majority thinks that Muslims have the same rights as everyone else, and a similar majority thinks that in this case, those rights somehow shouldn't apply. The 7 percent or so who flipped between these two questions are doing some remarkable hairsplitting: it's not that people don't *have* rights, it's that they don't have them *right now*.

That 71 percent agree "that because of the opposition of Ground Zero relatives, the Muslim group should voluntarily build the mosque somewhere else" doesn't alarm me. I think that people should voluntarily refrain from doing all kinds of things they have every right to do. Most of the time they go ahead and do them. So what?

In other bizarre-Islamophobia-related-statistics news, apparently [24 percent](#) (pdf) of Americans now think the president is a Muslim (yet another way, as Jonathan Zimmerman [points out](#), in which Obama's presidency recalls Lincoln's). I'm guessing the first family might soon experience a change of heart about their decision not to join and regularly attend a church.