



Polls differ on treatment of Muslims

By CHRIS HAWLEY. The Associated Press -- March 13, 2012

Two polls of New Yorkers offered conflicting views Tuesday about the police department's gathering of intelligence on Muslims as it guards the city against another terrorist attack.

A survey by Quinnipiac University showed most voters in the city believe police have acted appropriately toward Muslims, while another, broader poll by Baruch College found New Yorkers evenly divided over whether the department should be focusing on Muslims.

Polling experts attributed the divergent findings to differences in wording and question order.

The Quinnipiac poll found that 58 percent of voters surveyed believe the department has treated Muslims "appropriately," while 29 percent think they have been treated "unfairly" and 13 percent didn't know or had no answer. Overall, 82 percent believe the NYPD's counterterrorism efforts are effective.

"New Yorkers overwhelmingly think their police are doing a good job of protecting against terrorism, and they don't believe they're picking on Muslims," said Maurice Carroll, director of the university's polling institute.

The Baruch College survey asked people if they "approve or disapprove of police focusing on Muslims." The question followed several queries about racial profiling and the NYPD's controversial practice of stopping and frisking people thought to be acting suspiciously.

The poll showed 44 percent disapproved of the focus on Muslims, while 43 percent approved. The margin of error was plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Micheline Blum, director of Baruch survey research, said the language in Quinnipiac's poll -- whether the NYPD "unfairly targeted" Muslims -- may have elicited a slightly different response than the Baruch poll. Both polls were phone surveys of similar size, but Quinnipiac questioned only registered voters.

Quinnipiac surveyed 964 people between March 6 and 11, and the poll had a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points. The Baruch poll surveyed 804 people from Feb. 28 to March 7.