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## New Jersey poll finds most residents support surveillance of Muslims

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Surveillance of Muslims by the New York City Police Department that has angered New Jersey officials from the governor, to Newark's mayor, to a state FBI chief is viewed favorably by a majority of state residents, a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released Thursday concludes.

Just under half of state residents, 47 percent, said they believed the NYPD's surveillance of Muslim communities in New York and New Jersey was necessary to protect the United States; 32 percent felt it was a violation of civil liberties; and 12 percent said it was both, according to poll results.

The poll represents large public support for a police program that's been criticized by New Jersey law enforcement, civil rights groups and lawmakers over jurisdiction issues and possible civil rights infractions. The NYPD spied on and collected information about mosques, restaurants and worshipers in Muslim communities including Newark, according to news reports and police documents obtained by The Associated Press. The NYPD also targeted the Omar Mosque in Paterson and Muslim students at Rutgers University.

The NYPD has defended its operation as constitutional, legal and a necessary tool to root out terrorists.

In parts of New Jersey where surveillance took place, and with large Muslim populations, there was significantly less support for the NYPD operation. In urban northeast New Jersey, 44 percent of respondents said the monitoring was a violation of civil liberties and just 37 percent agreed it was a necessary action.

"Not surprisingly, those closest to the surveillance operations are the most likely to be concerned for civil liberties violations," said poll director David Redlawsk, a political science professor at Rutgers University.

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The NYPD operations had far more support among Republicans; 70 percent said surveillance was necessary, while just 32 percent of Democrats said the same. Meanwhile, 47 percent of Democrats said they believed the surveillance violated civil liberties; 15 percent of Republicans agreed.

Three-quarters of New Jersey residents also said they believed the secret monitoring was very effective or somewhat effective at protecting the public from terrorist threats.

Americans generally support civil liberties "in the abstract" but are willing to give up those rights in some cases, said Redlawsk.

"A sense of security is important to people," Redlawsk said, "and if they believe programs like the NYPD surveillance effort will help keep them safe, they are often willing to overlook its potential conflict with the Bill of Rights."

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