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FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY'S PUBLICMIND POLL FINDS TRUMP SUPPORTERS MORE CONSPIRACY-MINDED THAN OTHER REPUBLICANS

23 PERCENT OF AMERICANS BELIEVE CLINTON KNEW ABOUT THE BENGHAZI ATTACKS IN ADVANCE

Fairleigh Dickinson University, May 4, 2016 – Conspiracy theories are alive and well among supporters of the 2016 Republican candidates for President, but Trump supporters are more likely than Kasich or Cruz voters to endorse them. Trump supporters are more likely than those of the other Republicans to believe in birther theories about President Obama, think that Hillary Clinton knew about the Benghazi attacks before they happened, and to think that global warming is a myth.

In the most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind, a nationwide sample of registered voters was asked whether several conspiracy theories were "definitely true," "probably true," or "definitely not true." The most popular was the belief that Democratic Presidential frontrunner Hillary Clinton knew about the Benghazi attacks before they took place, with 23 percent of Americans saying that it was "definitely true," – including 10 percent of registered Democrats. The least popular theory dealt with whether there was a link between childhood vaccines and autism, something only 7 percent of Americans said was "definitely true."

"Conspiracy theories appeal to voters across the spectrum," said Dan Cassino, a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson and an analyst for the poll. "The data shows that lots of people on both sides of the aisle are willing to believe a theory when it claims someone they dislike was up to something nefarious."

Seventy-seven percent of Americans who say that they intend to support Trump in a match-up with Clinton in November say that President Obama is "definitely" or "probably" hiding important information about his early life. Forty-six percent of Americans overall – and 29 percent of Democrats – say the same. Trump's figures on this are a bit higher than those of Cruz supporters (73 percent) and much higher than Kasich supporters (66 percent). A bit more than two years ago, 36 percent of Americans, and 64 percent of Republicans, said that it was "probably true" that Obama was hiding important information about his background and early life.

"While it hasn't come up much during the campaign, it's important to remember that Trump has been a long-time supporter of the Birther movement," said Cassino. "Even if he's no longer talking about it, his supporters seem to remember."

26 percent of independents and 25 percent of Republicans say that global warming is "definitely" a myth concocted by scientists, compared with 13 percent of Democrats, and 18 percent of all Americans. However, 29 percent of Trump supporters think that scientists definitely made up global warming, compared with just 22 percent of Kasich supporters.

"There's a lot of distrust of scientists in conservative media," said Cassino. "But it seems Trump supporters and Independent voters are more distrustful than Republicans in general, on this issue."

Trump supporters are also more likely to think that Clinton knew about the Benghazi attacks before they happened, with 50 percent saying that she "definitely" knew that the consulate was going to be attacked. This figure is far higher than the 12 percent of Sanders supporters who say the same, and the 23 percent of Americans overall who do so. Once again, belief in this conspiracy among Trump's supporters outpaces those of Cruz supporters (43 percent) and Kasich supporters (40 percent).

While Republicans in general were more likely to endorse these conspiracy theories than Democrats, Trump supporters were much more likely to do so than other Republicans. Democrats – whether supporters of Clinton or challenger Bernie Sanders – said that, on average, 0.5 of the theories were "definitely true." Americans who support John Kasich in a match-up with Clinton said that 1.1 were "definitely true" on average, a figure which rose to 1.2 for Cruz supporters, and 1.4 for Trump supporters.

The results showed some conspiracy theories appeal more to Democrats than Republicans. While only 15 percent of Americans think that President Bush knew about the 9/11 attacks before they happened, 55 percent of Democrats (and only 36 percent of Republicans) said that it was "definitely" or "probably" true. In a past PublicMind poll from January, 2013, 25 percent of Americans, and 36 percent of Democrats, said that it was "probably true" that Bush knew about the 9/11 attacks in advance.

Not all of the conspiracy beliefs were partisan. Republicans and Democrats alike rejected the idea that the Sandy Hook school shootings were faked, with only 8 percent of Democrats and 7 percent of Republicans saying that it was true. These figures seem to have declined over the past few years; in a May, 2013, PublicMind poll, 25 percent of Americans agreed that the truth about the Sandy Hook shootings was being hidden for political reasons. Similarly, only 6 percent of Democrats, and 8 percent of Republicans, say that there's definitely a proven link between childhood vaccines and autism, though Republicans were more likely to say that it was probably true.

Methodology - The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone April 13-17, 2016 among a random national sample of 809 registered voters. Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 4.1 percentage points, including the design effect.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: http://publicmind.fdu.edu

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The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from April 13-17, 2016 using a randomly selected sample of 809 registered voters nationwide. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 4.1 percentage points, including the design effect. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup.

Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

Interviews were conducted by SSRS of Media, Pennsylvania, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline or cellular phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, race, and education. 504 interviews were conducted on landlines and 505 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

Number of Conspiracy Theories Respondent considers "Definitely True"									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Trump	Sanders	Cruz	Kasich
0	52%	35	67	50	64	30	65	36	43
1	23%	28	19	20	19	26	20	28	26
2	14	20	8	16	9	24	8	20	18
3	8	13	3	9	4	15	4	11	9
4	3	3	2	3	2	4	2	4	4
5	0	0		1	0	0	0	1	1
6	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Average	0.9	1.2	.5	1	.6	1.4	.6	1.2	1.1

President Bush knew about the 9/11 attacks before they happened.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	15%	12	18	33	18	18	12	10	9
Possibly true	31%	24	37	29	33	35	24	30	29
Definitely not true	45%	58	37	23	41	40	57	52	56
Don't know	7%	6	6	15	6	6	7	7	6
Refused	1%	0	2	0	1	1			0

President Obama is hiding important information about his background and early life.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	17%	31	7	26	8	8	40	32	28
Possibly true	29%	39	22	24	23	24	37	41	39
Definitely not true	47%	26	67	46	64	63	19	23	29
Don't know	5%	3	3	5	5	5	3	3	4
Refused	1%	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1

It has been proven that childhood vaccines cause autism.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	7%	8	6	8	8	7	8	9	8
Possibly true	36%	43	31	37	23	32	44	40	37
Definitely not true	45%	42	51	41	64	51	37	41	45
Don't know	11%	7	11	14	5	10	11	9	9
Refused	1%	1	1	0	0	0	1%	1	1

The 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook elementary were faked, in order to increase support for gun control.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	8%	7	8	15	10	9	4	5	4
Possibly true	14%	14	13	35	13	14	17	15	13
Definitely not true	71%	77	70	45	70	71	72	75	78
Don't know	6%	2	8	5	6	6	6	5	4
Refused	1%	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1

Global warming is a myth concocted by scientists.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	18%	25	13	26	12	12	29	25	22
Possibly true	23%	29	18	27	18	18	29	31	28
Definitely not true	55%	43	66	37	66	66	39	40	47
Don't know	4%	2	2	10	4	3	3	2	3
Refused	1%	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton knew the US Embassy in Benghazi was going to be attacked and did nothing to protect it.									
		Party ID			Candidate Support in head-to-head				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Clinton	Sanders	Trump	Cruz	Kasich
Definitely true	23%	44	10	5	10	12	50	43	40
Possibly true	37%	37	36	66	38	39	35	40	40
Definitely not true	29%	14	43	9	43	40	10	13	15
Don't know	9%	5	10	20	9	9	4	4	5
Refused	1%	0	1	0	1	1	0		1

If the election for president was held today and the choices were [candidates] who would you vote for?						
	Clinton-Trump	Sanders-Trump	Clinton-Cruz	Sanders-Cruz	Clinton-Kasich	Sanders-Kasich
Clinton	55%		50%		47%	
Sanders		56%		50%		50%
Trump	30%	30%				
Cruz			36%	34%		
Kasich					37%	32%
Won't Vote	9%	8%	9%	9%	9%	11%
Don't Know	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%
Refused	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Note: This item was part of a question order experiment, and the aggregate results should not be interpreted as a full measure of Presidential Preferences - See *http://view2.fdu.edu/publicmind/2016/160428/*

Question wording and order:

Regardless of whether or not you are registered to vote, if the election for president was today and the choices were….. who would you vote for? [Rotate question order and candidate names]

CAND1 Democrat Hillary Clinton or Republican Donald Trump
CAND2 Democrat Bernie Sanders or Republican Donald Trump
CAND3 Democrat Hillary Clinton or Republican Ted Cruz
CAND4 Democrat Bernie Sanders or Republican Ted Cruz
CAND5 Democrat Hillary Clinton or Republican John Kasich
CAND6 Democrat Bernie Sanders or Republican John Kasich

1 Dem
2 Repub
3 Won't vote/ (vol)
8 Dk (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

For each of the following statements, could you tell me if it is DEFINITELY TRUE, POSSIBLY TRUE, OR DEFINITELY NOT TRUE
[Rotate items]

CON1 President Bush knew about the 9/11 attacks before they happened.
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

CON2 President Obama is hiding important information about his background and early life
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

CON3 It has been proven that childhood vaccines cause autism.
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

CONS4 The 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook elementary were faked, in order to increase support for gun control.
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

CONS5 Global warming is a myth concocted by scientists
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

CONS6 As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton knew the US Embassy in Benghazi was going to be attacked and did nothing to protect it
1 Definitely true
2 Possibly true
3 Definitely not true
8 Don't know (vol)
9 Refused (vol)

Weighted Sample Characteristics

Gender	*Male*	48%
	Female	52%
Age	*18-29*	16%
	30-49	33%
	50-64	27%
	65+	21%
	Refused	3%
Race	*White Non-Hispanic*	69%
	Black Non-Hispanic	12%
	Hispanic	10%
	Other/Refused	9%
Education	*HS or less*	41%
	Some college/AA degree	26%
	College and beyond	32%
	DK/Refused	1%