Popular Misinformation Questions Chart Details:

The chart of popular misinformation topics includes questions relating to President Obama’s citizenship and religion, health care reform, the Iraq war (specifically Saddam Hussein’s involvement in 9/11 and the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq), global warming, T.A.R.P., the number of military casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the economy (specifically the unemployment rate and the value of the Dow Jones Industrial average).

In order to be included in the chart, the question had to be factual – meaning that it had to contain an unequivocally correct response option. In addition, at least one of the incorrect response options had to be perceived as congenial to those on the left or right of the political spectrum.

The universe of questions for this chart was limited to non-academic surveys. The question areas were found through the use of Lexis-Nexis. We searched out articles that indicated high levels of public misinformation. Once an instance of potential misinformation was found, questions corresponding to that instance were sought using the Roper Center Archives.

Most of the questions found have incorrect response options that are congenial to those on the right of the political spectrum. Though attempts were made to find more questions with incorrect response options congenial to those on the left, we had great difficulty in finding many. This is not to be interpreted as commentary on the state of misinformation, but rather indicates a potential bias in the questions asked by private organizations about factual matters over the last 10 years.