

March 2015 Winthrop Poll

The Winthrop Poll surveyed 1,109 residents in South Carolina by landline and cell phones between Feb. 21 and March 1. Of those interviewed, 44.5% were reached via cell phone. The poll has a margin of error of approximately +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level.

When asked about the attention the Palmetto State receives from its first-in-the-South primaries leading up to the presidential election, respondents said they liked it. Quizzed about whether the primaries have a positive or negative effect concerning economic impact and national media attention, around 70% of respondents said it was somewhat or very positive.

Six in ten South Carolinians, including nearly two-thirds of registered voters, say U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham should not run for president, according to Winthrop Poll respondents.

The senior senator from S.C. is exploring a White House run in 2016. His approval rating stands at 45.5% among all poll respondents, 46.5% among registered voters and 60.3% among GOP and leaners, according to calls made last week.

GUN OWNERSHIP AND GAS TAX OPINIONS

This spring, legislators are debating bills that toughen South Carolina's domestic violence laws, creating a tiered system of offenses, increasing penalties and barring batterers from possessing guns. The state – one of the deadliest in the country for women - currently ranks second in the nation for the rate of women killed by men.

Winthrop Poll callers told respondents that federal law forbids those convicted of criminal domestic violence from owning guns. However there is not consistent enforcement across all states. When asked if legislators should pass a law to ensure full enforcement of the federal law here in South Carolina, three-fourths of respondents said yes.

On another piece of S.C. legislation, respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay 10 cents a gallon more for gas so the money raised would be used for infrastructure, such as repairing roads and bridges. This would increase the cost of gas in S.C., but it would still remain lower than in Georgia and North Carolina. Fifty-five percent of respondents said they would support this proposal.

ECONOMY

The direction of the nation still has many concerned. More than two-thirds of South Carolina residents said our nation is headed in the wrong direction.

They are more positive about the Palmetto State's path, with 52% saying the state's current direction is good. They see the national economy as getting better (51.2%) and South Carolina's economy getting better (63.3%).

News in the Middle East is another area of concern. ISIS or terrorism in general is the most important problem they said for the country, followed by politicians/government and the economy/financial crisis. In South Carolina, the most important problem is education, followed by jobs/unemployment and the economy/financial crisis.

Regarding their own financial situation, 55.7% of respondents rate their household's experience as either good or excellent, and a majority said it is getting better.

HEALTH AND MARRIAGE

There is currently a proposal before the General Assembly to allow the health department to offer the HPV vaccine to female students entering the seventh grade. The Department of Health and Environmental Control would also develop a brochure, which could be handed out at schools, to explain the link between HPV and cervical cancer. The legislation does NOT require girls to get the vaccine in order to attend school. A little more than two-thirds of the respondents said they would support the proposal.

More than half of respondents (52.7%) said they think marriages between same-sex couples should not be recognized by the law as valid. The percent of all respondents who feel same-sex marriages should be valid – 42.8% – is nearly identical to the percent in South Carolina who felt same-sex marriages should be valid in 2013 when accounting for the margin of error for both polls. An October 2013 Winthrop Poll of the general population found that 38.5% felt same-sex marriages should be valid and 52.2% felt that same-sex marriages should not be valid.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERS

President Barack Obama's approval rating in South Carolina continues to remain low at around 40% and lags behind national approval for Obama which is around 50%.

Meanwhile, Congress' approval rating also remains low at 14.9%, a figure that is a little lower than the national opinion of Congress.

Approval ratings of leaders in South Carolina:

- Governor Nikki Haley - 53.2% among S.C. residents, 56.2% among registered voters, 78.4% among GOP and leaners.
- S.C. State Legislature - 41% among S.C. residents and 41.9% among registered voters.
- U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C. - 53.6% among S.C. residents, 57.5% among registered voters and 71% among GOP and leaners.

Tea Party membership is claimed by only 7.1% of those surveyed and 11.4% of GOP and leaners. Only 22.1% of respondents and 38.8% of GOP and leaners respondents approve of the movement. Nearly half are either unsure or don't feel that they have enough information to form an opinion.

POLL FUNDING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Winthrop Poll is paid for by Winthrop University with additional support from [The West Forum on Politics and Policy](#) at Winthrop University.

For additional information, or to set up an interview with Poll Director Scott Huffmon, please contact Judy Longshaw at longshawj@winthrop.edu or [803/323-2404](tel:8033232404) (office) or [803/984-0586](tel:8039840586) (cell).

T1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President of the United States?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Approve	40.8	40.1
Disapprove	52.0	54.6
Don't Know	6.1	4.0
Refused	1.1	1.3

T2 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Approve	14.9	13.6
Disapprove	76.7	79.8
Don't Know	7.6	6.0
Refused	0.9	0.5

T3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nikki Haley is handling her job as Governor of South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Approve	53.2	56.2	78.4
Disapprove	37.1	36.2	15.8
Don't Know	8.9	6.8	5.8
Refused	0.8	0.8	

T4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way the South Carolina State Legislature is handling its job?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Approve	41.0	41.9
Disapprove	39.3	41.4
Don't Know	17.5	14.6
Refused	2.2	2.1

T5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Lindsey Graham is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Approve	45.5	46.5	60.3
Disapprove	41.6	42.7	29.4
Don't Know	10.9	9.1	9.0
Refused	2.0	1.7	1.3

T6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Tim Scott is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Approve	53.6	57.5	71.0
Disapprove	22.4	23.7	9.5
Don't Know	21.2	16.2	18.2
Refused	2.8	2.6	1.3

T7 Thinking about the current path that our nation is taking, do you think our country is on the right track or headed in the wrong direction?

	All Respondents
Right Track	26.1
Wrong Direction	67.4
Don't Know/ Refused	6.5

T8 Thinking about the current path that the state of South Carolina is taking, do you think South Carolina is on the right track or headed in the wrong direction?

	All Respondents
Right Track	52.0
Wrong Direction	39.8
Don't Know/ Refused	8.2

T9 What do you think is the most important problem facing the United States of America today? (Top 3 responses)

	All Respondents
ISIS/Terrorism (in general)	10.3
Politicians/Government	9.2
Economy/Economic-Financial Crisis	9.0

T10 What do you think is the most important problem facing the state of South Carolina today?

	All Respondents
Education	17.9
Jobs or Unemployment	12.9
Economy/Economic-Financial Crisis	9.4

T11 How would you rate the condition of the economy of the country as a whole these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

	All Respondents
Very Good	4.1
Fairly Good	51.9
Fairly Bad	29.3
Very Bad	13.4
Not Sure	1.3
Refused	0.1

T12 Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the country as a whole are getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	51.2
Getting Worse	40.5
Not Sure	6.8
Refused	1.4

T13 How would you rate the condition of the economy of South Carolina these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

	All Respondents
Very Good	6.7
Fairly Good	59.7
Fairly Bad	25.3
Very Bad	6.2
Not Sure	2.1
Refused	0.1

T14 Right now, do you think that economic conditions in South Carolina are getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	63.3
Getting Worse	28.4
Not Sure	6.9
Refused	1.4

T15 How would you rate your financial situation today? As excellent, good, only fair, or poor

	All Respondents
Excellent	10.5
Good	45.2
Only Fair	31.1
Poor	11.7
Not Sure	0.9
Refused	0.6

T16 Right now, do you think that your financial situation as a whole is getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	61.4
Getting Worse	27.8
Not Sure	9.2
Refused	1.6

T17 Currently federal law forbids people who have been convicted of criminal domestic violence from owning guns. However, there is no mechanism in this law which ensures consistent enforcement across all states. Do you think the South Carolina Legislature SHOULD or should NOT pass a law to ensure full enforcement of this federal law in the state of South Carolina.

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Should	74.0	75.2
Should NOT	19.5	18.9
Not Sure [volunteered]	4.5	3.8
Refused	2.0	2.0

T18 In the primary elections leading up to a presidential election, South Carolina generally holds the First in the South presidential primary for both Republicans and Democrats...

[NOTE: after this introduction, the following two questions were rotated]

In terms of economic impact on the state, do you view South Carolina holding the First in the South presidential primary as positive or negative for the state?

.... do you feel that way “very” or “somewhat”

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Very Positive	24.6	26.4
Somewhat Positive	46.1	46.6
Neither Positive nor Negative [volunteered]	5.1	4.8
Somewhat Negative	10.4	10.4
Very Negative	4.3	4.3
Not Sure	7.6	6.0
Refused	1.8	1.6

In terms of national media attention and focus on the state, do you view South Carolina holding the First in the South presidential primary as positive or negative for the state?

.... do you feel that way “very” or “somewhat”

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Very Positive	28.0	30.7
Somewhat Positive	41.4	40.4
Neither Positive nor Negative [volunteered]	4.3	3.5
Somewhat Negative	12.7	13.3
Very Negative	6.3	6.5
Not Sure	5.4	4.0
Refused	1.8	1.6

T19 South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham says he is "testing the waters" for a possible presidential run. Do you think Lindsey Graham SHOULD or should NOT run for president in 2016?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Should	28.1	26.0	34.0
Should NOT	60.2	65.3	56.5
Not Sure [volunteered]	9.4	7.1	8.2
Refused	2.2	1.6	1.3

T20 There is currently a proposal in the South Carolina Legislature to increase the state gas tax by up to 10 cents a gallon. This would increase the cost of gas in the state, but a gallon of gas in South Carolina would still be cheaper than a gallon of gas in North Carolina or Georgia. The money raised would be restricted to use for infrastructure, such as repairing roads and bridges.

Would you support or oppose this proposal?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Support	55.4	56.6
Oppose	41.7	41.2
Not Sure	2.3	1.6
Refused	0.5	0.6

NOTE: This question gave an accurate portrayal of the proposal (how much of an increase and the fact that the money is restricted) AND full context (the cost of gas WILL RISE, but SC gas would still be cheaper than NC gas). The reason for doing it this way was because of the incredible variability in responses to gas tax questions that were asked of LIKELY VOTERS in October 2014. A basic question to LIKELY VOTERS in 2014 offering a "pro" argument and a "con" argument (rotated), but no context, showed 43.5% who favored the gas tax and 52.3% who opposed. A following question in that poll that asked about a gas tax where SC gas would still be cheaper than gas in NC and GA showed 51.5% who favored the gas tax and 42.2% who opposed. In the same poll, only 32.5% favored and 60.7% opposed if the cost of SC gas increased to be equal to the cost of gas in NC and GA. Finally, in the same poll, questions that added ANY specific dollar (cents) amount showed support only between 34 and 36%.

Therefore, this question has full context with two things that proved to decrease support in the past (an actual dollar [cents] amount and the restatement that the cost of gas would RISE) and two things that proved to increase support in the past (money restricted to infrastructure and gas still cheaper than NC and GA). A balanced question with full context.

T21 There is currently a proposal in the South Carolina legislature to allow the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to offer the HPV vaccine to female students entering the 7th grade. The Department would also develop a brochure, which could be handed out at schools, explaining the link between HPV and cervical cancer in women. This proposal would NOT require girls to have the vaccine in order to attend school.

Would you support or oppose this proposal?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Support	67.7	67.5
Oppose	23.7	24.7
Not Sure	6.8	6.3
Refused	1.8	1.5

T22 Do you think marriages between same-sex couples SHOULD or should NOT be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as a marriage between a man and a woman?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters
Should be valid	42.8	39.6
Should not be valid	52.7	55.8
Not Sure	2.2	2.1
Refused to answer	2.4	2.5

NOTE: the percent of all respondents who feel same-sex marriages should be valid is nearly identical to the percent in SC who felt same-sex marriages should be valid in 2013 when the margin of error for both polls is taken into account. An October 2013 Winthrop Poll of the general population found that 38.5% felt same-sex marriages should be valid and 52.2% felt that same-sex marriages should not be valid.

T23 In general, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Tea Party movement or are you not familiar enough with the Tea Party movement to have an opinion?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Approve	22.1	25.1	38.8
Disapprove	27.9	32.6	14.6
Not Sure OR Not familiar enough to have opinion	48.4	40.8	45.5
Refused	1.5	1.4	1.0

T24 Would you consider yourself a MEMBER of the Tea Party Movement?

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP and Leaners
Yes	7.1	8.5	11.4
No	85.7	86.4	80.9
Not Sure	5.9	4.3	7.3
Refused	1.3	0.8	0.4

Note: According to the latest American Community Survey done by the United States Census Bureau, there are 3,695,726 adults (i.e. individuals aged 18 and older) in SC. The 7.1% figure among all respondents translates to roughly 262,000 people.

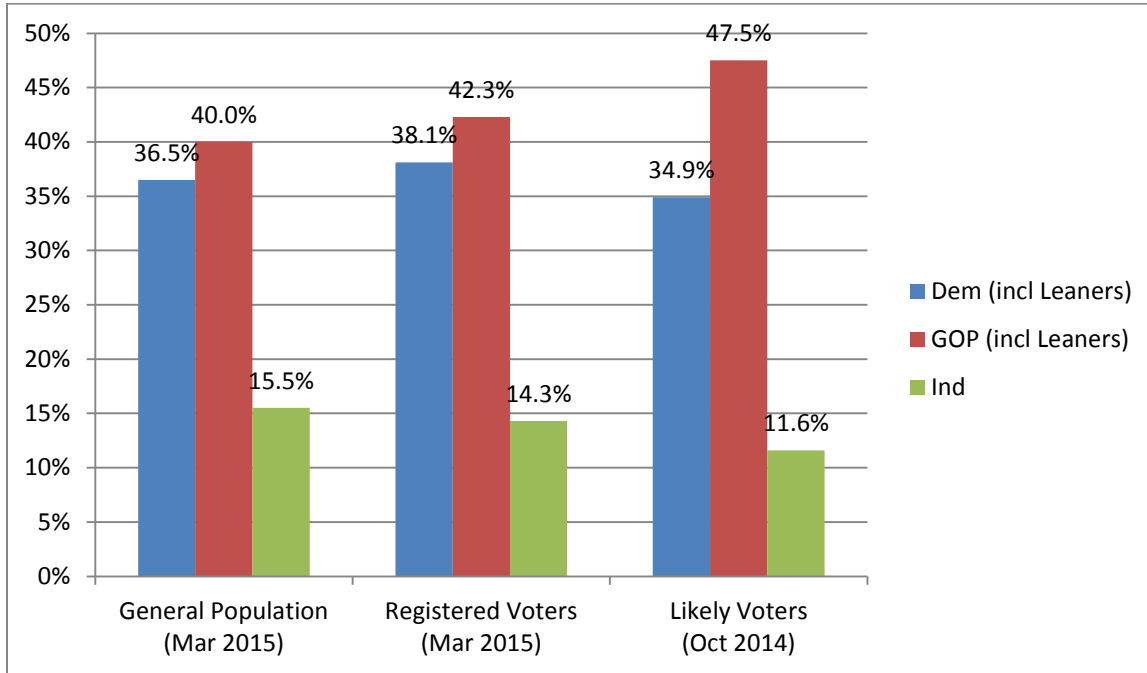
T25 As of January 1, 2015, twenty nine states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages above the federal minimum wage. Do you think the state of South Carolina SHOULD or should NOT pass a law increasing the minimum wage above the federally mandated minimum.

	All Respondents	Registered Voters	GOP & Leaners	Dem & Leaners
Should	68.0	66.2	48.6	89.8
Should NOT	29.0	30.8	48.3	9.0
Not Sure [volunteered]	2.5	2.3	3.1	0.9
Refused	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.3

	Male	Female	White	Black
Should	58.9	76.3	60.3	86.0
Should NOT	39.1	19.5	35.9	13.0
Not Sure [volunteered]	1.8	3.2	3.3	0.3
Refused	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.7

	Age 18-24	Age 25-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+
Should	74.7	68.5	69.8	58.2
Should NOT	23.3	28.7	27.8	37.1
Not Sure [volunteered]	2.0	1.9	1.9	4.3
Refused	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.4

Partisan Breakdown in SC (Independents who report that they "Lean" towards a party are included with that party)



Survey Methodology

March 2015 Winthrop Poll of Adults in SC

The March 2015 Winthrop Poll interviewed 1109 adults (aged 18 and older) living in South Carolina. Results which use all respondents have a margin of error of approximately +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level. Results that use less than the full sample will naturally have a higher margin of error. Results for Registered Voters only have a margin of error of approximately +/-3.4% and results for GOP and Leaners only have a margin of error of approximately +/-4.6%. Margins of error are based on raw, unweighted sample size. 44.5% of the respondents came from wireless (i.e. cell phone) sample.

The survey was in the field from 2/21-3/1, 2015. Phone calls were made during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening. Weekday daytime calls are not made to avoid oversampling those who are more likely to be at home during the day (e.g. retirees, stay-at-home-moms, etc.). Conducting weekend calls is important to avoid systematically excluding certain populations (such as those who may work 2nd or 3rd shift during the week).

The survey used (1) Random Digit Dialing (RDD) and (2) wireless phone number sampling. Both RDD and wireless samples are crucial to ensure no adult in the geographical area of interest is systematically excluded from the sample. Both the RDD sample and the wireless sample were purchased from Survey Sampling International (SSI). A further explanation of RDD methodology, with descriptions taken from SSI's website, may be found below. Questionnaires were administered in English.

Phone numbers selected for the survey were re-dialed five or more times in an attempt to reach a respondent. Once a household was reached, we also employed procedures to randomize within households for RDD sample.

Additionally, we:

1. Weight responses based on sex, age, and race according to the known population of residents of SC age 18 and older.
2. Randomize within household for respondents reached via RDD sample. Households are randomly designated for respondent selection based on the oldest/youngest male/female adult living in the household.

Computerized autodialers were not used in order to ensure the survey of wireless phones complied with the Telephone Consumers Protection Act and all FCC rules regarding contacting wireless telephones.

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Additional Explanation of RDD Methodology : (with descriptions taken from SSI website)

Samples are generated using a database of "working blocks." A block (also known as a 100-bank or a bank) is a set of 100 contiguous numbers identified by the first two digits of the last four digits of a telephone number. For example, in the telephone number 203-567-7200, "72" is the block. A block is termed to be working if some specified number of listed telephone numbers are found in that block.

Samples of random numbers distributed across all eligible blocks in proportion to their density of listed telephone households are selected. All blocks within a county are organized in ascending order by area code, exchange, and block number. Once the quota has been allocated to all counties in the frame, a sampling interval is calculated by summing the number of listed residential numbers in eligible blocks within the county and dividing that sum by the number of sampling points assigned to the county. From a random start between zero and the sampling interval, blocks are systematically selected in proportion to their density of listed households. Once a block has been selected, a two-digit number is systematically selected in the range 00-99 and is appended to the exchange and block to form a 10-digit telephone number.