

Findings & Results

April 2022 Winthrop Poll

Approval Ratings of Government Leaders in Latest Winthrop Poll released in May 2022
NOTE: this is a general population poll, not a poll of just registered voters or likely voters.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Nearly 18 months after the 2020 presidential election, South Carolina residents are evenly divided on whether the election was fair and accurate, according to the latest Winthrop Poll.

The results indicate how sharply divided South Carolina is, much like the rest of the country, in viewing Democratic President Joe Biden’s win over then President Donald Trump. The disagreement over the certification of the November results continue to cause partisan conflict.

Meanwhile, 47% of South Carolina residents said it was a fair election, while 45% said it wasn’t. Of those responding, 85% of Democratic responders said it was fair, while 77% of Republicans said it wasn’t.

Winthrop Poll Director Scott Huffmon noted that, “Belief, or at least desire to publicly express belief, in the premise that the outcome of the 2020 presidential election was fraudulent remains a major partisan point of division. While no widespread fraud was found, it remains a touchstone of Republican identity in South Carolina to vocally express doubt.”

As the pandemic lingers and inflation and gas prices rise dramatically, approval ratings for Biden continue to dive in South Carolina. While his national approval rating is at a record low of 39%, his approval rating among South Carolina residents who expressed an opinion is at 32%. Additionally, 68% who expressed an opinion said they disapproved of Biden’s performance. As for Trump, a little over half of S.C. residents gave him a favorable rating, while 83% of Democrats gave Trump an unfavorable nod.

However, the former president remains popular with those who self-identify as Republicans, 89% of whom view him favorably.

For other Palmetto state leaders, here are their ratings:

- Republican Governor Henry McMaster, 55% approval rating by those who expressed an opinion. More than 80% of GOP respondents approved of him, while 88% of Democrats do not.
- U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) registered a 58% disapproval rating among the general public, but a 65% approval rating among self-identified Republicans.
- Junior U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) has a 66% approval rating among the general public and an 89% approval rating among Republicans.
- Former Republican Governor Nikki Haley received a 63% favorable rating from all respondents, while a little more than half of Democrats viewed her as unfavorable. She remains extremely popular with self-identified SC Republicans with a favorable rating of 82%.

Race continues to be divisive issue in America, and South Carolina is no exception. Eighty percent of white poll respondents said they have not been discriminated against in the past year based on their race, while 43% of black respondents said they were.

Expressing political opinions is also not popular: nearly half of residents said they did not share their opinions out of fear of being verbally attacked or harassed. Republicans tended to feel this way more than Democrats.

Huffman noted, “Cancel culture is alive and well in the minds of South Carolina Republicans. Half of self-identified Republicans noted that they were afraid to publicly express their political opinions out of fear of harassment compared to only 37% of Democrats.”

Concerning critical race theory, 62% were familiar with its public debates and discussions. Of those, 44% said they were in favor of proposed laws that would forbid teaching anything related to critical race theory in the public schools. Almost 70% of Republicans favored proposed laws, while 80% of Democrats opposed it. And half of white respondents favored the ban, while 65% of black residents opposed it.

According to Huffman, “Critical Race Theory is a topic that demonstrates that racially related issues have become more polarizing on the basis of partisanship than even on the basis of race itself.”

When the topic of Confederate Memorials is brought up, there are mixed opinions about whether to leave them in place. Only a third of all respondents said to leave alone the memorials to Confederate soldiers who died during the Civil War. Around a fourth of residents said to add a marker for context, while 30% said to move them to a museum. Half of black residents said to move them to a museum.

The Confederate battle flag reminds 43% of S.C. residents of white supremacy and conflict. Half of white respondents said the flag is more a symbol of Southern pride, while 70% of black respondents attributed the flag to feelings of racial conflict.

This year will be the first election using the updated 2020 Census data and the redrawn electoral districts for Congress, the State House and Senate. Only a third of residents think the districts were redrawn in a fair manner, and another third don’t know. Republicans have more confidence in the process than Democrats but even 44% of Republicans said they weren’t sure.

Methodology and Funding

For this latest Winthrop Poll of the South Carolina *general population*, callers spoke to 817 South residents. Phone calls were made between April 2-24 primarily during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening and were made in English. Results have a margin of error of +/- 3.4% at the 95% confidence level. The Center for Public Opinion & Policy Research often works on multiple projects at once. Since this poll was allowed to stay in the field longer than usual, efforts were made to offer only questions about on-going issues that would not be expected to shift dramatically over the time of the survey.

The Winthrop Poll is paid for by Winthrop University. For additional information, or to set up an interview with Poll Director Scott Huffman, please contact Judy Longshaw at longshawj@winthrop.edu or 803/323-2404 (office) or 803/984-0586 (cell).

Methodology Statement

April 2022 Winthrop Poll

These results represent the responses of 817 adult residents in South Carolina. Results that use all respondents have a margin of error of +/- 3.4% at the 95% confidence level. Any subset will have a larger margin of error. Margins of error are based on weighted sample size and account for design effects. No design or sampling effects were expected due to sampling methodology. While steps were taken at every stage of this survey to ensure accuracy, all public opinion research is subject to unmeasured error.

Phone calls were made primarily during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening. 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) for Land Line and (2) Random 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. The Center for Public Opinion & Policy Research often has multiple projects going at the same time. This Winthrop Poll was in the field from April 2 – 24, 2022. There was no calling on Easter, April 17. Efforts were made to only offer questions about on-going (rather than “hot button”) issues that would not be expected to shift dramatically over the time of the survey.

All samples were purchased from Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International). Sample frames for this survey were randomized probability samples for landline and cell phones. Data are weighted based on age, sex, and race using Census Bureau data. Surveys were conducted in English by live callers who dialed the numbers and entered data and disposition codes using the CPOPR’s Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Callers prompted respondents to preserve attention to questions when necessary. Phone numbers selected for the survey were re-dialed up to 4 times in an attempt to reach a respondent. Final disposition codes (e.g. completion, refusal, business, etc.) ensured no number had the opportunity to appear more than once in the survey. According to the Centers for Disease Control Wireless Substitution

Rates, only 4% of South Carolinians are unreachable by cell phones and are reachable only by land line. 6% of our sample was reached via land line.

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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Cell entries represent percent responding as indicated. Columns may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Tables 1&2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Joe Biden** is handling his job as President of the United States?

	All Respondents	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	28	32
Disapprove	59	68
Not Sure	9	
Refused	3	

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All	Those Expressing an Opinion	All	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	5	6	79	85
Disapprove	92	94	13	15
Not Sure	2		6	
Refused	1		2	

Tables 3&4: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Henry McMaster** is handling his job as Governor of South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	44	55
Disapprove	35	45
Not Sure	16	
Refused	5	

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All	Those Expressing an Opinion	All	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	69	81	20	22
Disapprove	16	19	69	88
Not Sure	12		6	
Refused	3		5	

Tables 5&6: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Lindsey Graham** is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	35	42
Disapprove	50	58
Not Sure	12	
Refused	4	

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All	Those Expressing an Opinion	All	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	58	65	14	15
Disapprove	31	35	78	85
Not Sure	9		5	
Refused	2		3	

Tables 7&8: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Tim Scott** is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	50	66
Disapprove	26	34
Not Sure	20	
Refused	4	

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All	Those Expressing an Opinion	All	Those Expressing an Opinion
Approve	72	89	25	31
Disapprove	9	11	56	69
Not Sure	19		14	
Refused	1		6	

Table 9: Would you say that your view of former South Carolina governor **Nikki Haley** is generally favorable or unfavorable?

Would you say very or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?

	All Respondents	Combined
Very Favorable	33	63
Somewhat Favorable	30	
Somewhat Unfavorable	17	29
Very Unfavorable	12	
Refused	9	9

Table 10: Would you say that your view of former South Carolina governor **Nikki Haley** is generally favorable or unfavorable?

Would you say very or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All Respondents	Combined	All Respondents	Combined
Very Favorable	58	82	10	39
Somewhat Favorable	24		29	
Somewhat Unfavorable	9	14	30	53
Very Unfavorable	5		23	
Refused	4	4	8	8

Table 11: Would you say that your view of **Donald Trump** is generally favorable or unfavorable?

Would you say very or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?

	All Respondents	Combined
Very Favorable	34	53
Somewhat Favorable	19	
Somewhat Unfavorable	11	44
Very Unfavorable	33	
Refused	3	3

Table 12: Would you say that your view of **Donald Trump** is generally favorable or unfavorable?

Would you say very or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?

	Republicans (not including leaners)		Democrats (not including leaners)	
	All Respondents	Combined	All Respondents	Combined
	Very Favorable	64	89	5
Somewhat Favorable	25	10		
Somewhat Unfavorable	4	10	9	83
Very Unfavorable	6		74	
Refused	2	2	1	1

Table 13: In the past year, do you feel that you have been discriminated against because of your race or ethnicity?

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
Yes	27	19	43
No	72	80	57
Not Sure	1	1	1
Refused	0	1	--

Table 14: In the past year, has there been a time when you felt that you could not express your political opinions out of fear of being verbally attacked or harassed?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	46	50	37
No	52	50	62
Don't Know/ Refused	2	--	1

Table 15: Are you familiar with the public debates and discussions surrounding what is known as “Critical Race Theory” or “CRT”?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	62	60	58
No	34	36	38
Don't Know/ Refused	4	4	4

Table 16&17: ONLY AMONG THOSE WHO REPORTED BEING FAMILIAR WITH THE CRT DEBATE

Several laws have been proposed in South Carolina that would forbid teaching anything related to Critical Race Theory in public schools. Would you favor or oppose such a law?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Favor	44	69	12
Oppose	48	28	80
Not Sure	7	3	6
Refused	2	1	2

	White Respondents	Black Respondents
Favor	51	23
Oppose	42	65
Not Sure	6	10
Refused	1	2

Table 18: Which of the following comes closest to your opinion about what to do with monuments or memorials to Confederate soldiers who died during the Civil War?

	All Respondents	White respondents	Black respondents
Leave them just as they are	36	43	19
Leave them, but add a plaque or marker for context and historical interpretation	23	28	11
Move them to a museum	30	21	52
Remove them completely	8	5	15
Don't Know	2	1	2
Refused	2	1	2

Table 19: Some people say the confederate battle flag reminds them of white supremacy and racial conflict. Other people say the confederate battle flag is a symbol of southern heritage and pride.

Do you think the flag is more a symbol of racial conflict or of southern pride?

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
Racial Conflict	43	32	70
Southern Pride	41	52	17
Equally Both*	8	8	6
Don't Know/Not Sure	4	5	2
Refused	4	3	5

*Equally both was only coded if respondent said "both" a second time after prompted.

Table 20: Do you believe that the results of the 2020 Presidential election were fair and accurate?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	47	18	85
No	45	77	10
Not Sure	6	5	3
Refused	2	0	2

Table 21: As you may know, after every Census, electoral districts are redesigned in order to reflect any changes in the population. This happens for all Congressional districts as well as districts for State House and State Senate.

2022 will be the first election using the newly drawn districts from the 2020 Census. Do you believe the electoral districts in South Carolina were redrawn in a fair manner?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	36	41	31
No	24	14	42
Don't Know	36	44	24
Refused	4	2	3

The data in Figures 1 and 2 come from questions known as "Feeling Thermometer" questions. A Feeling Thermometer is simply another way of asking people whether they like or dislike a person, group, or object by asking them to rate the person, group or object on a scale of 0 - 100. "Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward" the person, group, or object and "[r]atings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the [person/group/object] and that you don't care too much for" them. A score of 50 means neither like nor dislike the person/group/object. The scores presented are the average for the designated group.

Figure 1:

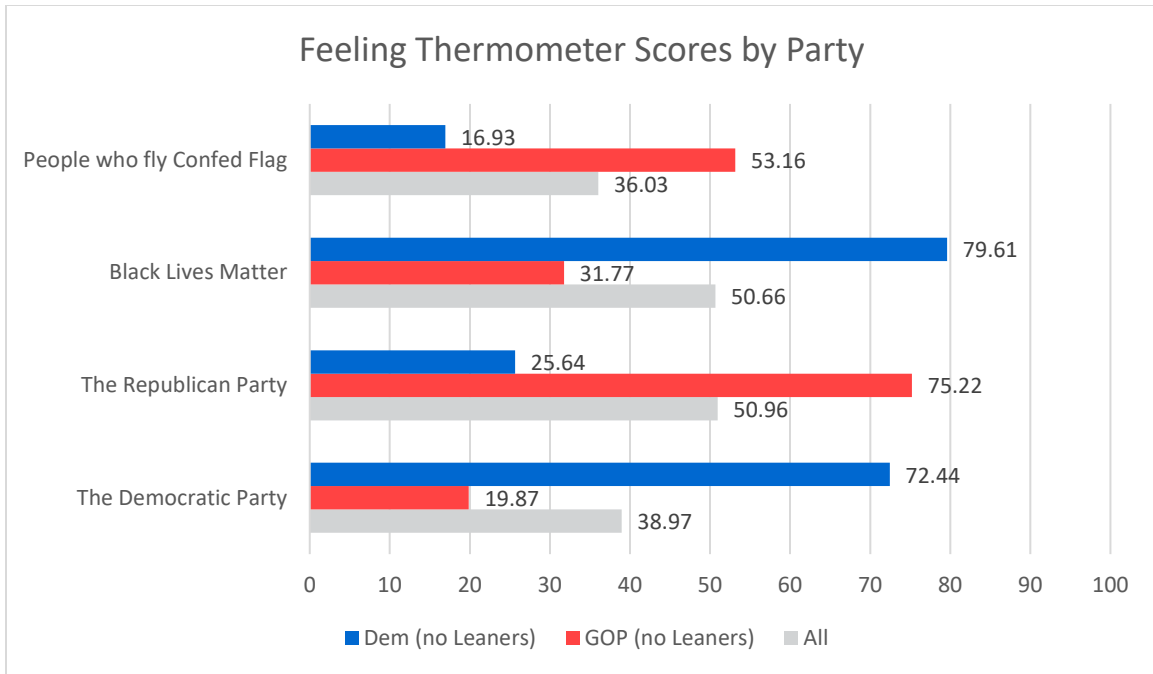
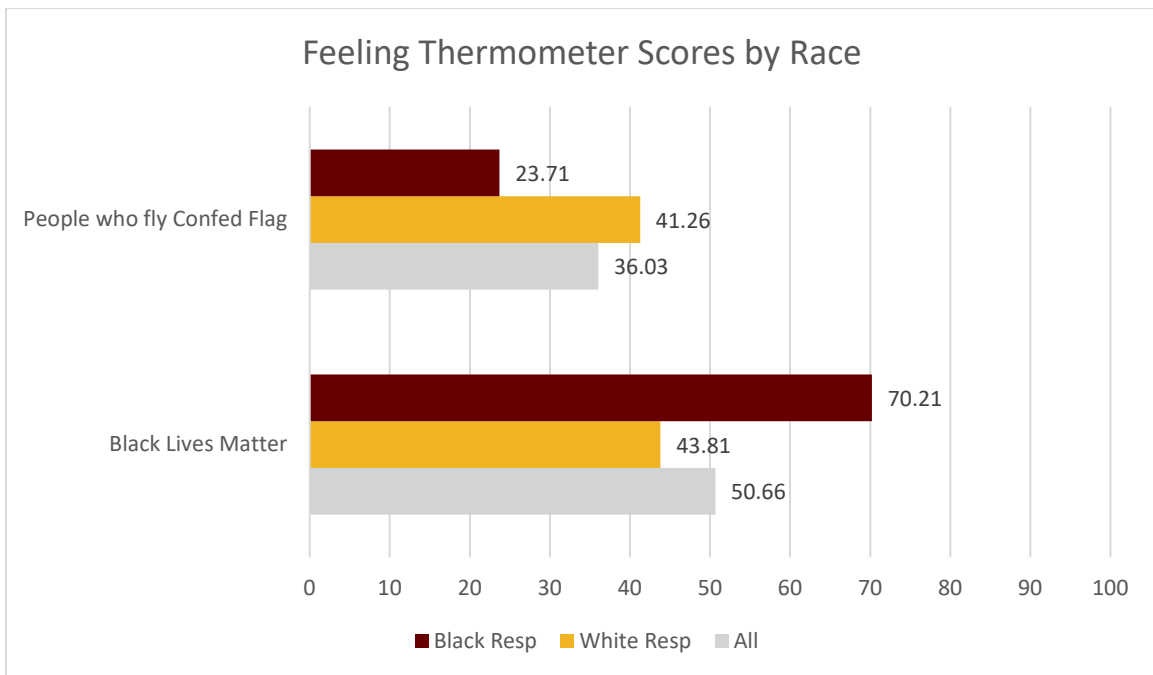


Figure 2:



The Feeling Thermometer scores for "People who fly the confederate flag" and "Black Lives Matter" deserve additional analysis. As expected there is a significant difference

between Blacks and Whites in how much they like or dislike these groups (although, note, both the average scores for Blacks and Whites rate those who fly the confederate flag as below 50). However, the gap between Democrats and Republicans is *even greater*. The difference between Blacks and Whites regarding people who fly the confederate flag is 17.55 and the gap for Black Lives Matter is 26.4. Both are sizeable gaps. However, the gaps between Republicans and Democrats are 36.23 for those who fly the confederate flag and an astounding 47.84 for Black Lives Matter. The only gaps that are larger come from Republicans' and Democrats' views of each other. That partisan polarization over racial issues is greater than racial polarization over racial issues is an eye opening, although perhaps not astonishing, finding.