



THE
WINTHROP
POLL *Southern Focus Survey*

August 2022 Southern Focus Survey

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Three-fourths of residents in 11 Southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) believe a woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion if the pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health, according to the latest Southern Focus Survey, an initiative of the Winthrop Poll.

The issue of abortion became a hot topic in June when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the federal case that allowed legal abortion. With states left to decide how to proceed, most abortions are now banned in several Southern states and advocates are suing to block enforcement of laws that restrict the procedure.

In what is its first online survey, the Winthrop Poll Southern Focus Survey found that respondents want to leave that decision to individuals if the pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health: 77% said the woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion, while 71% of Republicans and 85% of Democrats agreed.

If the pregnancy was the result of a rape, three-fourths of respondents also said the woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion. Republican support was 65%, while Democratic support was 85%.

Support dropped if the baby was likely to be born with severe disabilities or health problems but was still at least half among groups surveyed.

According to poll director, Dr. Scott Huffmon, “As more states across the South move to increase restrictions on abortion, if not eliminate it completely, they should keep in mind that the typical citizen definitely believes in some exceptions.”

In other Winthrop Poll results, 44% of respondents said former President Donald Trump should be charged with a crime for his involvement in the events at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2020. Three-fourths of Republicans said Trump shouldn’t be charged, while more than three-fourths of Democrats said yes. Dr Huffmon stated, “Nearly 1 in 5 southerners are unsure about whether the former President should face charges. People’s opinions come down more to partisanship than anything else.”

About half of respondents have been following Congressional hearings concerning what happened on Jan. 6. Only half of the respondents said they believed that the results of the 2020 presidential election were fair and accurate. Seventy percent of those who identified strongly as “MAGA Republicans” answered no to the question. Huffmon notes, “While the solid majority of Republicans do not believe the election was fair or accurate, it is of note that those who more strongly identify as ‘Traditional Republicans’ were 7 points more likely to believe in the legitimacy of the election results than those who strongly identify as ‘MAGA Republicans’.”

[\(Read more analysis on MAGA Republicans in the South from this survey in The Washington Post.\)](#)

Approvals for Government Leaders

Meanwhile, approval ratings for President Joe Biden in the South remain low at 35%. Support typically falls along party lines with Republicans being very critical and Democrats much more supportive.

As for Trump, a little less than half of Southern respondents gave him a favorable rating, while almost an equal amount gave him an unfavorable rating. The former president remains popular with those who self-identify as Republicans, 84% of whom view him favorably.

Nearly 60% of respondents disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job. Republicans particularly don't like the workings of the Democratic-controlled U.S. House and U.S. Senate with 78% disapproval rate. Half of all respondents also disapprove of the way the U.S. Supreme Court handles its job.

Is it hard to talk about the issues?

Nearly half of respondents said they don't feel comfortable at all talking about politics with someone they don't know well. Nearly a third don't want to talk race relations and a fourth don't want to discuss religion. According to Huffmon, "While whites and Blacks are about equally comfortable discussing religion, white southerners are notably more uncomfortable discussing race with a stranger than Black southerners."

About 45% of respondents agree that churches and other religious organizations focus too much on rules and are too involved with politics.

On the other hand, two-thirds agreed that churches and religious organizations bring people together and strengthen community ties. More than half agree that such groups protect and strengthen morality in society.

Race, gender and religious reactions

The Winthrop Poll also sought to find out how much discrimination there is against different groups in our society.

Here are the findings:

- Black people – three-fourths of all respondents said there was some or a lot, 71% of white respondents said some or a lot and 94% of Black respondents said some or a lot. Huffmon noted, “Whites and Blacks see a very different landscape when looking at discrimination. Black southerners are two and a third times more likely to believe Blacks face ‘a lot’ of discrimination. They are also more likely than whites to believe Hispanics and Asians face ‘a lot’ of discrimination.”
- Hispanics – three-fourths of all respondents said some or a lot, 70% of white respondents said some or a lot and 85% of Black respondents said some or a lot.
- White people – half of all respondents said some or a lot, 57% of white respondents said some or a lot and 38% of Black respondents said none at all.
- Asian people – 72% of all respondents said some or a lot, 69% of white respondents said some or a lot and 77% of Black respondents said some or a lot.

- Gays and Lesbians – 77% of all said some or a lot, 68% of Republicans said some or a lot and 86% of Democrats said some or a lot.
- Women – 69% of all said some or a lot, 61% of men said some or a lot and a 75% of women said some or a lot.
- Men – 41% of all said some or a lot, half of men said some or a lot and a third of women said some or a lot.
- Jews – two-thirds of all said some or a lot, 58% of Republicans said some or a lot and three-fourths of Democrats said some or a lot.
- Muslims – 77% of all said some or a lot, 71% of Republicans said some or a lot and more than 83% of Democrats said some or a lot.
- Christians – a little more than half said some or a lot, 66% of Republicans said some or a lot and half of Democrats said some or a lot.
- Southerners – half of all respondents said some or a lot.

Two-thirds of white respondents said they have not been discriminated against in the past year based on their race, while 40% of Black respondents said they were.

Another area explored by the Winthrop Poll was religion's role in government. Half of all respondents said the federal government should not declare the United States a Christian nation. More than a third said the federal government shouldn't advocate Christian values. Half agreed that the federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state. Yet half also agreed that the federal government should allow the display of religious

symbols in public spaces. The idea that the United States is a special nation figures into many Southerners' thinking. About 43% agreed that the success of this country is part of God's plan. Another 45% agreed that the federal government should allow prayer to be read over the intercom to all students in public schools. This series of questions was based on previous studies of "Christian Nationalism" (see Whitehead and Perry 2020 or Gorski and Perry 2022 among others).

When the topic of **Confederate Memorials** is brought up, there are mixed opinions about whether to leave them in their place. Only a third of all respondents said to leave alone the memorials to Confederate soldiers who died during the Civil War. Around 30% of residents said to add a marker for context, while 18% said to move them to a museum. A third of Black respondents said to move them to a museum. According to Huffmon, "There is still a strong racial divide on how statues of the Confederacy should be treated. Whites were two and a half times more likely than Black respondents to want to leave them just as they are."

The **Confederate battle flag** brings up strong feelings among Southerners. Half of white respondents said the flag is a symbol of Southern pride. Meanwhile, 43% of Black respondents felt the flag was a symbol of racial conflict and only 9% stated it represented Southern pride.

Methodology and Funding

The August Southern Focus Survey was the Center for Public Opinion & Policy Research's first fully online survey. Conducted and paid for by Winthrop University, the survey is a sample drawn from panels of adult residents in 11 Southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia). Data from 2275 (weighted) respondents were collected August 3 (soft launch), August 5 – 7 (main launch), and August 22 – 25, 2022 (65+ targeted launch). Results using all respondents have a margin of error of +/- 2.1% at the 95% confidence level. All subgroups will have a higher margin of error.

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 (office) or 803/984-0586 (cell).

RESULTS MAY NOT SUM TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

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

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Approve	35	8	74
Disapprove	51	88	16
Not sure	14	4	11

TABLE 2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Congress** is handling its job?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Approve	20	10	38
Disapprove	59	78	42
Not sure	21	12	20

TABLE 3: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **the Supreme Court** is handling its job?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Approve	31	43	28
Disapprove	49	38	57
Not sure	21	18	15

TABLES 4 & 5: Would you say that your view of **Donald Trump** is

	All Respondents	Combined
Very Favorable	25	44
Somewhat Favorable	19	
Neither	14	14
Somewhat Unfavorable	10	42
Very Unfavorable	32	

	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Very Favorable	53	9
Somewhat Favorable	31	8
Neither	7	9
Somewhat Unfavorable	5	13
Very Unfavorable	4	60

TABLE 6: 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	26	20	40
No	67	75	49
Not sure	7	5	12

TABLE 7: 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	41	43	42
No	53	51	55
Not sure	6	6	3

Thinking about a conversation you might have with someone you don't know that well, how comfortable would you feel discussing...

TABLE 8: Politics

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Very comfortable	13	13	19
Somewhat comfortable	34	37	35
Not at all comfortable	45	45	41
Not sure	8	5	6

Thinking about a conversation you might have with someone you don't know that well, how comfortable would you feel discussing...

TABLE 9: Race relations in the United States

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
Very comfortable	19	16	26
Somewhat comfortable	36	36	36
Not at all comfortable	37	42	29
Not sure	8	7	9

Thinking about a conversation you might have with someone you don't know that well, how comfortable would you feel discussing...

TABLE 10: Religion

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Very comfortable	28	31	31
Somewhat comfortable	37	39	36
Not at all comfortable	28	25	27
Not sure	7	5	5

As you read the following statements about churches and other religious organizations, please tell me if you **agree or disagree** with each one.

TABLE 11: Churches and other religious organizations **focus too much on rules.**

	All Respondents
Agree	45
Disagree	36
Not sure	19

TABLE 12: Church and other religious organizations **are too involved with politics.**

	All Respondents
Agree	46
Disagree	36
Not sure	18

TABLE 13: Church and other religious organizations **bring people together and strengthen community bonds.**

	All Respondents
Agree	67
Disagree	17
Not sure	16

TABLE 14: Church and other religious organizations **protect and strengthen morality in society.**

	All Respondents
Agree	58
Disagree	23
Not sure	19

TABLE 15: Thinking about conversations you have around subjects like religion, sexuality, race, or gender, which describes you better?

- I'm **more** comfortable talking about these subjects than I used to be.
- I'm **less** comfortable talking about these subjects than I used to be.
- My comfort level with talking about these subjects hasn't really changed much.

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
More comfortable	37	34	46
Less comfortable	24	27	21
Hasn't changed	39	39	34

Please tell us how much discrimination there is against each of these groups in our society today.

TABLE 16: Black people

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
A lot	43	32	74
Some	34	39	20
Only a little	14	19	4
None at all	8	10	3

TABLE 17: Hispanics

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
A lot	30	24	44
Some	45	46	41
Only a little	16	20	9
None at all	9	11	6

TABLE 18: White people

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
A lot	16	20	11
Some	31	37	19
Only a little	28	26	32
None at all	24	17	38

TABLE 19: Asian people

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
A lot	27	23	39
Some	45	46	38
Only a little	18	21	13
None at all	10	10	10

TABLE 20: Gays and Lesbians

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
A lot	43	30	56
Some	34	38	30
Only a little	14	22	7
None at all	10	11	7

TABLE 21: Women

	All Respondents	Men	Women
A lot	27	21	32
Some	42	40	43
Only a little	18	22	15
None at all	13	17	10

TABLE 22: Men

	All Respondents	Men	Women
A lot	14	21	9
Some	27	31	23
Only a little	29	26	32
None at all	30	23	36

TABLE 23: Jews

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
A lot	23	17	31
Some	43	41	43
Only a little	21	27	16
None at all	14	15	10

TABLE 24: Muslims

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
A lot	41	30	53
Some	36	41	30
Only a little	13	18	9
None at all	10	11	8

TABLE 25: Christians

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
A lot	22	30	17
Some	34	36	31
Only a little	24	24	26
None at all	19	11	26

TABLE 26: Southerners

	All Respondents	White Respondents	Black Respondents
A lot	13	14	14
Some	35	34	36
Only a little	28	29	28
None at all	24	23	23

For these next questions, we want you to tell us whether you strongly disagree, disagree, are undecided, agree, or strongly agree with each statement.

TABLE 27: The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	27
Disagree	20
Undecided	26
Agree	14
Strongly Agree	13

TABLE 28: The federal government should advocate Christian values.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	22
Disagree	16
Undecided	25
Agree	22
Strongly Agree	15

TABLE 29: The federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	11
Disagree	13
Undecided	27
Agree	26
Strongly Agree	23

TABLE 30: The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	10
Disagree	11
Undecided	27
Agree	33
Strongly Agree	19

TABLE 31: The success of the United States is part of God's plan.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	15
Disagree	11
Undecided	31
Agree	23
Strongly Agree	20

TABLE 32: The federal government should allow prayer to be read over the intercom to all students in public schools.

	All Respondents
Strongly Disagree	18
Disagree	14
Undecided	23
Agree	23
Strongly Agree	22

TABLE 33: 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	48	22	81
No	33	64	9
Not sure	19	15	10

TABLE 34: Do you believe that the results of the 2020 Presidential election were fair and accurate? [NOTE: Republican identifiers were asked to rate themselves as MAGA Republicans, America First Republicans, and Traditional Republicans on a 1 – 10 scale. The categories below include those who rated themselves 6 or higher in that category.]

	MAGA Republicans	America First Republicans	Traditional Republicans
Yes	16	19	23
No	70	67	63
Not sure	14	14	14

TABLE 35: 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	35	43	14
Leave them, but add a plaque or marker for context and historical interpretation	31	32	24
Move them to a museum	18	14	32
Remove them completely	6	4	15
Not Sure	10	7	16

TABLE 36: Some people say the confederate 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	23	16	43
Southern Pride	34	47	9
Equally Both	26	23	33
Not Sure	17	15	15

TABLE 37: On a scale from “1 = Not a Problem” to “10 = Extremely Serious Problem,” please tell us how serious of a problem you believe each of the following to be in America:

[cell entries represent the mean for that group]

	All	Republicans (not including Leaners)	Democrats (not including Leaners)
Elections are not secure enough	6.32	7.78	5.26
Illegal immigration	6.82	8.21	5.82
It is too hard to vote	4.20	3.71	4.99
Opioid addiction	7.36	7.67	7.26
The country turning its back on God	6.28	7.49	5.75

TABLE 38: Should a woman be able to obtain a legal abortion if the pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	77	71	85
No	11	16	8
Not sure	12	13	7

TABLE 39: Should a woman be able to obtain a legal abortion if the pregnancy is the result of rape?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	74	65	85
No	12	21	8
Not sure	13	14	7

TABLE 40: Should a woman be able to obtain a legal abortion if the baby is likely to be born with severe disabilities or health problems?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	59	48	73
No	20	32	12
Not sure	21	20	14

TABLE 41: How closely have you been following the Congressional hearings concerning the events that happened at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Very Closely	18	12	33
Somewhat closely	37	38	41
Not closely	26	32	18
Not at all	19	19	8

TABLE 42: Do you believe Donald Trump should be charged with a crime for his involvement in the events that happened at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020?

	All Respondents	Republicans (not including leaners)	Democrats (not including leaners)
Yes	44	14	77
No	39	75	12
Not sure	18	11	10

High MAGA Identification is defined as rating oneself 9 or 10 on the scale asking how much “MAGA Republican” describes you. Low MAGA Identification is defined as rating oneself 1 – 4 on the same scale. Only those who self-identified as Republicans were asked to rate themselves on this scale

TABLE 43: MAGA Identification by Sex

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
Male	52	40
Female	48	60

TABLE 44: MAGA Identification by Age

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
18-24	7	7
25-44	27	30
45-64	43	41
65+	22	21

TABLE 45: MAGA Identification by Education

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
Less than High School	4	2
High School grad/ GED	34	37
Some College	22	24
2 Year/ Tech College grad	14	9
4 Year College grad	17	17
Post-graduate Degree	10	12

TABLE 46: 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?

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
Yes	51	39
No	45	54
Not Sure	5	7

TABLE 47: MAGA Identification by Evangelical Identification (only asked of those who identified as Christian)

Would you define yourself as a “born again” or evangelical Christian, or not?

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
Yes	62	46
No	34	49
Not Sure	4	5

TABLE 48: How important would you say religion is in your own life? (only asked of those who indicated a religious affiliation)

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
Very Important	61	47
Fairly Important	29	32
Not Very Important	9	20
Not Sure	1	1

TABLE 49: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (only asked of those who indicated a religious affiliation)

	High MAGA Identification	Low MAGA Identification
More than once a week	20	10
Once a week	22	20
Once or twice a month	6	9
A few times a year	16	17
Seldom	19	27
Never	17	17

Methodology Statement

August 2022 Southern Focus Survey

Quick Methodology

The August Southern Focus Survey was a fully online survey conducted and paid for by Winthrop University. The survey is a non-probability sample drawn from panels of adult residents of the South (11 state former Confederacy). Data from 2275 (weighted) respondents were collected August 3 (soft launch), August 5 – 7 (main launch), and August 22 – 25, 2022 (65+ targeted launch) . Results using all respondents have a margin of error of +/- 2.1% at the 95% confidence level. All subgroups will have a higher margin of error.

AAPOR Transparency Initiative Statement

The August Southern Focus Survey was a fully online survey conducted and paid for by Winthrop University (1,2). The survey is a non-probability sample drawn from panels of adult residents of the South (11 state former Confederacy - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) curated by Cint and purchased from M-S-G (4,5). Respondents were targeted proportional to each state population (5); this yielded a sample that matched data from the US Census Bureau for sex and race remarkably well.

Additional 65+ respondents were targeted to minimize weighting (5). Data were weighted on sex, race and age based on data from the US Census Bureau (9). Full question wording for released results are included; full

instrument available upon request (3). Participants responded using CAPI via computer or smartphone and the survey averaged 7 – 10 minutes (6). Data were collected August 3 (soft launch), August 5 – 7 (main launch), and August 22 – 25, 2022 (65+ targeted launch) (7). Weighted data include a sample of 2275 respondents which translates to a margin of error of +/- 2.1% at the 95% confidence level for results using all respondents; all subgroups will have a higher margin of error (8). Center for Public Opinion & Policy Research personnel conducted quality control by eliminating data with inappropriate responses (didn't match the question asked), "line" data (strings of the same number punched in in a long row), or completions recorded too quickly for an individual to have actually read the questions (10). All survey research contains unmeasured error and results should be seen as informative, not definitive (11).

Numbers correspond to the AAPOR Transparency Initiative Disclosure Elements.