Methodology Statement

Survey Methodology – September 2011 Winthrop Poll

The September 2011 Winthrop Poll interviewed 1552 registered voters from South Carolina. Results which use all respondents have a margin of error of +/- 2.49% at the 95% confidence level. Reported results using a subset of the entire sample will naturally have a higher margin of error.

The majority of questions, however, were only asked of Republicans and Independents who lean Republican (previous research has shown that leaners often behave in a more consistently partisan manner than weak party identifiers). These results come from 596 Republicans and Republican leaners in SC who are also registered to vote and have a margin of error of +/- 4.01% at the 95% confidence level. Reported results using a subset of the entire sample will naturally have a higher margin of error.

The survey was in the field from September 11-18, 2011. Phone calls were made during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening. Weekday daytime calls are generally 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.). Weekday daytime calls are generally only made when a respondent has specifically requested a daytime call back to complete the survey. 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) Sample drawn from lists of registered voters in SC, also called Registration Based Sample (RBS), (2) Random Digit Dialing (RDD), and (3) wireless phone number sampling. The registered voter sample was purchased from Aristotle/Voter Lists Online. However, because these lists have a natural lag of six or so months – AND since SC does not collect and update phone information -- ONLY using Registration Based Sample would produce a systematic bias. 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.

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.

Additionally, we:

(1) purge RDD and wireless against registered voter sample (RBS) before going into the field to ensure that no number can appear in multiple samples and, therefore, have a higher probability of being selected

(2) Screen RDD and wireless sample for registration status and confirm with respondents selected from the RBS sample that they are, in fact, registered to vote

(3) Screen the wireless sample for cell-only status since individuals who have a cell phone and a land line already have an established probability of appearing in either the RDD or RBS sample

(4) weight responses from RDD and wireless samples by the proportion of registered voters on the original voter list who had no phone number listed and weight the responses from the registered voter
Sample (RBS) by the proportion of registered voters who did have a phone number available from the registered voter list.

and

(5) Weight responses based on sex, age, and race according to the known population of registered voters.

These methods are consistent with recommendations from


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.

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

**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.