

# February 2019 WU Poll

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – South Carolina residents remain among the strongest supporters of President Donald Trump as his approval rating in the Palmetto State stands at 42%, according to the latest Winthrop Poll.

The president's approval numbers here continue to be a few points higher than the national average of 39% as measured March 10 by Gallup. The 45th president has a disapproval rating of 49% among Palmetto State citizens.

Earlier Winthrop Polls over the past year have showed similar approval ratings. Trump has strong support within his own party in South Carolina; the president has support from 82% of residents who identify GOP or lean Republican. White Evangelicals particularly support the president.

Meanwhile, 9 of every 10 S.C. residents who identify with the Democratic Party disapprove of Trump.

A large majority of South Carolina residents also disapprove of Congress. Only 16% of South Carolina residents approve of the way federal lawmakers are handling their job. According to Winthrop Poll Director, Dr. Scott Huffmon, "Obviously, a more conservative state like South Carolina sees President Trump more positively than his overall national numbers, but the President remains extremely polarizing in South Carolina among partisan identifiers and leaners."

## **LINDSEY GRAHAM, SC GOVERNOR HENRY MCMASTER AND OTHERS**

Almost half of S.C. residents approve of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. As South Carolina's senior senator has become closer with Trump, his approval rating among Republicans has risen greatly. His approval among Republicans, and those who lean Republican, stands at 74%, while only 1/4 of Democrats support Graham. According to Huffmon, "Graham's approval has benefited from his defense of, and alignment with, President Trump. While Graham's numbers used to lag those of other Republicans among GOP identifiers, since he has taken up the President's banner on most every issue, his approval among Republicans in South Carolina has steadily risen."

The state's junior senator, U.S. Sen. Tim Scott continues to be highly rated among the Republican base. He has a strong 74% approval rating among the GOP (including Leaners). Scott's popularity among the general public remains high as well, with 55% reporting approval of the job he is doing. Huffmon notes, "While Graham's approval still hews to partisan expectations, Senator Scott has found himself in a position of being equally popular as Graham among Republicans, but less lopsided – in fact, roughly equal – among Democrats. While still appealing to core Republicans, Senator Scott has pushed issues that even many Democrats appreciate."

S.C. Governor Henry McMaster's approval rating in South Carolina stands at 52% which has gone up since he won election in November. Nearly 3/4 of GOP residents, particularly those who also support Trump, back the former lieutenant governor. Democrats aren't as charitable, with only 34% giving McMaster a positive nod. According to Huffmon, "Governor McMaster is not only 'above water' – meaning his approval is higher than his disapproval -, but his overall approval among South Carolinians is over 50%. Further, his faithfulness to President Trump has paid off with more than seven in ten Trump supporters in SC also supporting Governor McMaster."

The S.C. General Assembly got an approval nod from 43% of those polled while 31% disapprove of the job they're doing. With a huge windfall of revenues, South Carolina residents will be watching this spring to see how lawmakers handle several important issues, including education and teacher raises.

## **ECONOMY AND STATE GOVERNMENT**

Nearly 60% of Winthrop Poll respondents said our country is headed in the wrong direction. Yet two thirds of South Carolina residents said our country's economy is very good or fairly good. More than half (53%) think South Carolina is moving in a positive direction, while ¾ of residents think the condition of the state's economy is either very or fairly good.

A majority of S.C. residents are optimistic about the future and their own finances: they are confident that our country and the state's economic conditions are getting better. Nearly 60% described their own financial situation as good or excellent, and a significant number reported their personal finances were getting better.

S.C. residents said the most important problem facing our country is immigration, followed by politicians/government, Donald Trump and racism. Those surveyed said the most important issues facing the Palmetto State are education, roads/bridges/infrastructure, jobs or unemployment, and racism.

## **GUN OWNERSHIP AND ABORTION**

Concerning background checks for those making gun purchases, 80% of those surveyed said they would support legislation that would require a completed background check before a person is sold a gun. Currently, when a person buys a firearm, if the background check takes longer than three days, the buyer can receive the gun if the seller agrees.

This loophole came to the forefront with a gun sale for Dylann Roof, the convicted shooter in the 2015 **assault on Emanuel AME Church** in Charleston, South Carolina, who shot at 12 victims, killing nine of them.

Both GOP and Democrats supported legislation similarly on this issue. Dr. Huffmon notes, “Most firearm purchases need to have a background check anyway; everyone – Republicans, Democrats, or otherwise, - seem to have no problem with ensuring that those checks are fully completed. Such a measure ensures law abiding citizens can still buy guns while there is an extra check on people like the Charleston murderer, who I won’t name, getting a firearm.”

With abortion, a majority of South Carolinians surveyed said they favor at least some restrictions on abortions. However, strong majorities believe that some circumstances, such as the health of mother, the viability of fetus, or rape and incest, do warrant legal abortions.

Dr. Huffmon states, “While a majority of South Carolina citizens favor some restrictions on abortions in the state, significant majorities still want legal abortions for those whose health is threatened, are carrying a non-viable fetus, or are pregnant as the result of rape or incest. This data shows that South Carolinians are NOT fans of abortion, but recognize certain circumstances when legal abortion may be appropriate. These attitudes cut against so-called ‘personhood’ bills which would outlaw ALL abortion and even several kinds of birth control.”

S.C. residents were torn about what to do with the extra fertilized eggs for women who are trying to get pregnant. Twenty percent said dispose of the eggs, 33% said to use them for research, 11% said to freeze the eggs indefinitely, while 21% said some other option was more desirable such as donating the eggs to an infertile couple.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For this latest Winthrop Poll, callers surveyed 1007 adult residents in South Carolina by landline and cell phone in late February and March. **All Respondents** have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 3.1%** at the 95% confidence level. Any subset will have a larger margin of error. Margins of error are based on unweighted sample size and account for design effects.

## **POLL FUNDING AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

The Winthrop Poll is funded by Winthrop University. For additional information, or to set up an interview with **Poll Director Scott Huffmon**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu) or 803-323-2404 (office) or 803-984-0586 (cell).

**Poll Demographics for February 2019 Winthrop Poll v. Census Data on South Carolina**

	<b>Census for SC</b>	<b>March 2019 Winthrop Poll</b>
Male	47.9412	49.6
Female	52.05879	49.8
Not Sure	--	0.7
18-19	4.0608	4.3
20-29	17.966	17.1
30-39	16.4846	16.6
40-49	17.9802	17.8
50-59	17.7694	18.0
60-69	13.9953	14.4
70-79	7.5244	7.7
80-89	3.5764	3.6
90-99	0.6247	0.6
over 100	0.0184	--
White	68.57	66.1
Black	26.5	26.4
Other	4.93	5.4
Refused	--	2.1

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

Table 1: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Donald Trump** is handling his job as President of the United States?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	White Evangelicals	National Approval (Gallup 3/10/19)
Approve	42	82	3	72	39
Disapprove	49	11	92	19	57
Not Sure	7	7	4	8	
Refused	2	1	1	1	

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

	All Respondents
Approve	16
Disapprove	72
Not Sure	10
Refused	2

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

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	Trump Supporters
Approve	52	73	34	72
Disapprove	24	8	43	8
Not Sure	21	17	21	17
Refused	3	2	2	4

Table 4: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **the South Carolina State Legislature** is handling its job?

	All Respondents
Approve	43
Disapprove	31
Not Sure	23
Refused	3

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

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	Trump Supporters
Approve	49	74	25	75
Disapprove	38	15	66	14
Not Sure	12	10	8	10
Refused	2	1	2	2

Table 6: Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Tim Scott** is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	Trump Supporters
Approve	55	74	39	72
Disapprove	22	7	39	9
Not Sure	20	17	18	16
Refused	3	2	4	3

Table 7: 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	31
Wrong Direction	60
Don't know/ Refused	9

Table 8: 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	53
Wrong Direction	33
Don't know/ Refused	14

Table 9: What do you think is the most important problem facing the United States of America today?

Top Four	All Respondents
Immigration	13.5
Politicians/Government	6.7
Donald Trump	6.4
Racism	6.1

Table 10: What do you think is the most important problem facing the state of South Carolina today?

Top Four	All Respondents
Education	16.8
Roads/Bridges/ Infrastructure	8.3
Jobs/Unemployment	4.5
Racism	4.0

Table 11: 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	20
Fairly Good	56
Fairly Bad	17
Very Bad	6
Not Sure	2
Refused	1

Table 12: Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the country as a whole are getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	54
Getting Worse	37
Not Sure [volunteered]	8
Refused	1

Table 13: 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	15
Fairly Good	60
Fairly Bad	16
Very Bad	6
Not Sure	3
Refused	1

Table 14: Right now, do you think that economic conditions in South Carolina are getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	63
Getting Worse	24
Not Sure [volunteered]	12
Refused	2

Table 15: How would you rate your financial situation today? As excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	All Respondents
Excellent	16
Good	44
Only Fair	29
Poor	9
Not Sure	0
Refused	1

Table 16: Right now, do you think that your financial situation as a whole is getting better or getting worse?

	All Respondents
Getting Better	69
Getting Worse	18
Not Sure [volunteered]	12
Refused	2

Table 17: Currently, when a person purchases a firearm, if the background check takes longer than three days to come back, the buyer may receive the firearm without a completed background check if the seller agrees. Would you support or oppose legislation that would require a completed background check before a buyer can take possession of a firearm, even if the background check takes longer than three days to come back?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leanners)	Democrats (incl Leanners)
Support	80	80	83
Oppose	17	16	16
Not Sure [volunteered]	2	3	1
Refused	1	1	--

Table 18: Do you believe a woman should or should not be able to legally obtain an abortion if her doctor says the pregnancy is a threat to her health or that the fetus is not viable?

[CALLER: if they ask what 'not viable' means, say, "unlikely to survive after birth."]

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	White Evangelicals	All Evangelicals	Attend Church Weekly (all)
Should	73	67	82	58	63	65
Should NOT	17	24	10	31	26	23
Not sure [volunteered]	7	6	6	6	7	7
Refused	4	3	3	4	5	5

Table 19: Do you believe a woman should or should not be able to legally obtain an abortion if the pregnancy was caused by rape or incest?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	White Evangelicals	All Evangelicals	Attend Church Weekly (all)
Should	70	59	84	46	54	56
Should NOT	20	32	8	42	34	32
Not sure [volunteered]	6	6	5	8	7	6
Refused	5	4	3	5	5	6

Table 20: Do you believe a woman should or should not be able to legally obtain an abortion if the pregnancy was unplanned and she does not feel ready or able to care for a child?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	White Evangelicals	All Evangelicals	Attend Church Weekly (all)
Should	40	22	62	16	24	25
Should NOT	52	72	31	79	70	68
Not sure [volunteered]	5	3	6	3	3	4
Refused	3	2	3	2	3	3

Table 21: In vitro fertilization is a procedure where a woman who is having difficulty becoming pregnant has some of her eggs removed. They are fertilized by sperm in the laboratory and implanted into the woman. Because it often takes multiple attempts, several eggs are fertilized and extras are frozen and stored by a clinic. After a successful pregnancy, these extra fertilized eggs, or embryos, are no longer needed.

In your opinion, what should be done with the unneeded embryos. Should they be

[CALLER: rotate first three]

Disposed of OR Donated for use in scientific research OR Kept frozen indefinitely

or do you think something else should be done with them

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leanners)	Democrats (incl Leanners)
Disposed of	20	21	21
Scientific Research	33	30	34
Frozen indefinitely	11	10	13
Something else*	21	22	21
In Vitro should be illegal [vol]	0	0	--
Not sure [volunteered]	12	15	8
Refused	4	3	4

\* This choice skipped to an opened response where the respondent could tell the caller what the “something else” was; the overwhelming responses here were variations of “let the mother/couple decide what to do with them.” The other responses that came up multiple times were variations of “donating the eggs to an infertile couple.”

Table 22: Seismic testing for oil and gas in the ocean floor involves ships towing several dozen air guns which shoot pressurized blasts that form sound waves that travel through the water column to the seafloor. The echoes of those sound waves provide information about what lies beneath.

[CALLER: rotate]

Supporters say this is the most accurate way to determine where to drill for oil or gas

Opponents say the powerful sound waves can harm marine animals and the environment.

Would you support or oppose seismic testing for oil and gas off the coast of South Carolina?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)
Support	31	47	15
Oppose	61	42	80
Not Sure [volunteered]	8	10	5
Refused	1	1	--

Table 23: Do you support or oppose permitting drilling for oil off of the South Carolina coast?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)	All Respondents Feb 2018 Winthrop Poll
Support	37	55	18	41
Oppose	56	39	76	51
Not Sure [volunteered]	6	5	5	7
Refused	1	1	1	1

Table 24: Partisan Self-identification

	Self - Identification	Leaners as Partisan*
Strong Republican	24	44
Not so strong Republican	12	
Independent – Leans Republican	8	
Independent – Does Not Lean	15	15
Independent – Leans Democratic	10	36
Not so strong Democrat	8	
Strong Democrat	18	
Something Else	4	4
Refused/Don't Know	2	2

\*Research consistently shows that Leaners vote at least as reliably partisan as “not so strong” partisans.

Table 25: Recently, you may have noticed that Climate Change has been getting some attention in the news. Climate Change, sometimes called global warming, refers to the idea that the world's *average* temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that the world's climate may change as a result.

Which of the following comes closest to your opinion: [CALLER: rotate answers]

Climate change is happening, but it is primarily a natural process

Climate change is happening, and humans are the primary cause

Climate change is happening, and it is an equal combination of humans and a natural process

OR

Climate change is **NOT** really happening

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)
Is happening, natural process	22	35	12
Is happening, humans to blame	29	11	46
Is happening, equal humans & nature	39	43	33
Is NOT happening	6	10	4
Not Sure	4	1	5
Refused	1	1	1

Table 26: Do you believe the state of South Carolina should or should not be taking steps to address future threats that may be caused by climate change, such as flooding due to sea level rise?

	All Respondents	GOP (including Leaners)	Democrats (incl Leaners)
Should	79	66	92
Should Not	16	28	5
Not Sure [volunteered]	4	5	3
Refused	1	1	1