

# 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. Huffman 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. Huffman 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 Huffman**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu) or 803-323-2404 (office) or 803-984-0586 (cell).

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# Survey Methodology

## February 2019 Winthrop Poll

These results represent the responses of 1007 adult residents in South Carolina. Results that use **all respondents** have a **margin of error of +/- 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.

Margins of error are based on weighted sample size and account for design effects. No design effects were expected due to sampling methodology.

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) 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. All samples were purchased from Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International).

**Data are weighted based on age, sex, race, and education using Census Bureau data.**

Phone numbers selected for the survey were re-dialed up to 5 times in an attempt to reach a respondent. Surveys were conducted in English.

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.

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

|          | <b>Census for SC</b> | <b>March 2019<br/>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/<br>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/<br>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/<br>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<br>[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<br>[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<br>[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<br>Respondents | GOP<br>(including<br>Leaners) | Democrats<br>(incl<br>Leaners) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Support                   | 80                 | 80                            | 83                             |
| Oppose                    | 17                 | 16                            | 16                             |
| Not Sure<br>[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<br>(including<br>Leaners) | Democrats<br>(incl<br>Leaners) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Disposed of                         | 20              | 21                            | 21                             |
| Scientific Research                 | 33              | 30                            | 34                             |
| Frozen indefinitely                 | 11              | 10                            | 13                             |
| Something else*                     | 21              | 22                            | 21                             |
| In Vitro should be<br>illegal [vol] | 0               | 0                             | --                             |
| Not sure<br>[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<br>(including<br>Leaners) | Democrats<br>(incl<br>Leaners) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Support                   | 31              | 47                            | 15                             |
| Oppose                    | 61              | 42                            | 80                             |
| Not Sure<br>[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<br>Respondents | GOP<br>(including<br>Leaners) | Democrats<br>(incl<br>Leaners) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Should                    | 79                 | 66                            | 92                             |
| Should Not                | 16                 | 28                            | 5                              |
| Not Sure<br>[volunteered] | 4                  | 5                             | 3                              |
| Refused                   | 1                  | 1                             | 1                              |