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Latest Winthrop Poll Surveys S.C. Residents on Presidential Candidates

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Latest Winthrop Poll Surveys S.C. Residents on Presidential Candidates

Quick Facts

- A majority of South Carolina residents surveyed in the latest Winthrop Poll said they did not view Trump or Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton favorably or as “honest.”
- The poll, which was conducted between Sept. 18-26, ending before Monday’s first presidential debate, found that Trump was preferred by 42% of likely voters in SC, while Clinton was at 38%.



Scott Huffmon

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Donald Trump has a lead among South Carolina voters, but his numbers still lag the performance of previous Republican presidential candidates in the state.

A majority of South Carolina residents surveyed in the latest **Winthrop Poll** said they did not view Trump or Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton favorably or as “honest.”

The poll, which was conducted between Sept. 18-26, ending before Monday’s first presidential debate, found that Trump was preferred by 42% of likely voters in SC, while Clinton was at 38%. Seven percent were undecided, while none of the third party candidates registered support in double digits.

Only 1 in 5 residents described Clinton as **honest**, while Trump garnered that same description from a third of residents. Both candidates were viewed unfavorably by around 55% of residents.

Clinton fared somewhat better than Trump when residents were asked if they thought she was **capable**. Fifty-three percent of residents said the former Secretary of State was capable, while only 46% said the term accurately described the Republican nominee.

According to **Winthrop Poll Director Scott Huffmon**, “While Clinton is seen as the more capable candidate, she is also viewed as more dishonest. However, both candidates are setting records for being viewed unfavorably. While Trump has the lead, these factors may contribute to why he is underperforming expectations of a hypothetical generic Republican versus generic Democrat matchup.”

Almost three-fourths of those surveyed said the presidential election’s outcome was very important and would affect their personal future, while 95% believed it very important in affecting America’s future.

Drawing from the discipline of psychology, the poll also measured where respondents fell on the **Authoritarianism Scale**. The scale, verified by psychologists, asks non-political questions to determine a respondent’s general orientation. Authoritarianism, as defined by psychologists and measured here, reflects a desire for order and tradition, as well as suspicion and fear of “outsiders.” The poll found that more authoritarian leaning voters tended to support Trump over Clinton.

Huffmon noted: “With 70% of respondents feeling that the country is headed in the wrong direction, it’s not hard to imagine that many are feeling uncertain or that the American way of life is being threatened. People who score high on the Authoritarian Scale are more likely to turn to a “strong” leader when they perceive a threat.”

[CHECK HERE FOR POLL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.](#)

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President Barack Obama's approval rating in South Carolina has improved to 48% among residents but disapproval is almost at 50% for likely voters. The two-term president's ratings in the Palmetto State has consistently lagged behind national approval ratings. His approval rating is lower, and lower than his disapproval numbers, among likely voters.

Governor Nikki Haley's approval rating remains strongly positive among South Carolinians at 57%. The approval ratings for the state's two U.S. senators hover around the same ratings as in the spring. **U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham**, who ran for president on the GOP ticket, has a 41% disapproval rating, while the state's junior senator, **U.S. Sen. Tim Scott** is more highly rated among the Republican base with a 52% approval rating.

ECONOMY

Seventy percent of the S.C. general population said the country is headed in the wrong direction. They cited the economy, 11.3%, racial issues or racism, 9.8%, and terrorism, 8.3%, as top problems facing the country. Still, 54% said the country's economy is either very or fairly good.

Nearly half said the Palmetto State is on the right track. S.C. residents rate education, 12.4%; jobs/unemployment, 11%; racial issues/racism, 6.5%; roads/bridges/infrastructure, 5.9%; and politicians/government, 5.4% as the most pressing problems. A majority – 61% - said the state's economy was either very or fairly good.

When asked about their personal financial situation, 56% of all respondents said their finances were excellent or good.

RACE

Racial issues came up for the first time as one of the top issues concerning South Carolinians. Nearly 10% said it was the most important problem facing the country right now while 6.5% said it was the most important problem facing our state.

Huffmon said, "The rise for concern over racism and racial divisiveness hardly seems surprising given growing attention to the death of black men in confrontations with police, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the racial undercurrents that have marked this presidential contest."

ISSUES AHEAD FOR S.C.

The **Winthrop Poll** looked at how many S.C. residents would support a driver's license question about whether a resident would allow the donation of **brain tissue** for research and education. More than three-fourths of residents said yes. Already, S.C. residents can agree to the donation of organs or tissue that can be transplanted into living patients, such as heart, lungs, liver, kidneys or eye tissue.

An overwhelmingly number of S.C. residents – 81% – supported the state passing a law requiring private companies to pay the same amount to men and women for the same job and experience, while still allowing for different pay based on seniority or job performance.

The **S.C. Conservation Bank**, which is a state agency that protects the state's rivers, farms and forests through voluntary land protection agreements, will expire in 2018. Nearly 80% of residents said they would support its reauthorization in 2017 and 2018.

The "main" Winthrop Poll is a General Population poll of 694 SC residents. Results which use All Respondents have a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.7% at the 95% confidence level. Results for LIKELY VOTERS in the November presidential election have a sample size of 475 and have a margin of error of approximately +/- 4.5% at the 95% confidence level. Any subset will have a larger margin of error. Margins of error are based on weighted sample size.

Poll phone calls were made during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening to those with landlines and mobile devices.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL METHODOLOGY STATEMENT.](#)

POLL FUNDING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The **Winthrop Poll** is paid for by Winthrop University with additional support from [The West Forum on Politics and Policy](#) at Winthrop University. For additional information, or to set up an interview with **Poll Director Scott Huffmon**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at longshawj@winthrop.edu or

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