



Fall 10-30-2013

Winthrop Poll Shows Approval Ratings for President, Congress, Governor and Others

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Winthrop University, "Winthrop Poll Shows Approval Ratings for President, Congress, Governor and Others" (2013). *Winthrop News 2013*. 219.

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Winthrop Poll Shows Approval Ratings for President, Congress, Governor and Others

Quick Facts

- S.C. residents (47.3%) blame Republicans in Congress for the recent government shutdown. Nearly 29% blame President Barack Obama, while 20% blame them equally.
- S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has ticked up in approval ratings since the February Winthrop Poll to 44.1% among all residents and 44.5% among registered voters. Last December, her approval and disapproval rating numbers were nearly even. Gov. Haley garners a higher approval rating—65.5% vs. 20% who disapprove of her job performance—among those who say they are Republicans.



Scott Huffman

Results of the Latest Winthrop Poll are in:

- Almost 48% of S.C. Residents Blame Republicans in Congress for the Federal Government Shutdown
- President Obama's Approval Rating By S.C. Residents Drops From 48% in February to 40%, While 51.1% Give Him a Thumbs Down
- S.C. Residents Overwhelmingly Disapprove of Congress, 86.5%
- Politicians/Government and Economy/Financial Crisis are Listed as Most Important Problems Facing the Country. For S.C., It is Jobs/Unemployment and Education
- S.C. Gov. Haley Viewed Positively By 44.5% of Registered Voters
- U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham's Approval Rating Slips
- Nearly Half of S.C. Residents Said Having Child Out of Wedlock is Acceptable, and an Overwhelming Number Said Interracial Marriages are OK
- Smoking Marijuana Not Acceptable by 54.6%

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The results of the latest **Winthrop Poll** of **887 respondents** living in South Carolina are in. The survey was in the field from **Oct. 19-27**, 2013.

After weights (for sex, age, and race) have been applied, results which use all respondents have a **margin of error** of approximately +/- 3.3% at the 95% confidence level. Results that use less than the full sample will naturally have a higher margin of error. For results using only registered voters, n=630, margin of error of approximately +/- 3.9% at the 95% confidence level.

Poll Director Scott Huffman provided context to how approval ratings should be interpreted. National figures like the president or Congress cannot be compared to statewide figures like the governor, legislature, or senators, he said. Evidence for the inability to compare can be found by examining the few people with no opinion at the national level compared to the larger number of those with no opinion in state offices. "The most relevant comparison for a statewide figure is their approval to

disapproval,” Huffmon said.

For example, **Tim Scott** has a 38.8% approval rating among the general public, but it is most important to note that this is 10 points higher than his disapproval number, and a full 30.6% of the general population (some of whom are not registered to vote) have not formed an opinion on South Carolina’s newest senator. To the degree that those with low exposure to the news get any political information at all, it is more likely to be about national political figures.

Additionally, the **Winthrop Poll** is designed to serve all of the citizens of South Carolina. This service is a centerpiece to the mission of the poll. “Although many campaign professionals attempt to dismiss general population polls, instead favoring ‘likely voter’ polls only, we believe that the voices of ALL South Carolinians should be heard on a regular basis, not just the individuals who help get the bosses of those campaign professionals elected,” Huffmon said.

He will conduct likely voter polls closer to the election. “However, gauging the opinions of all South Carolinians will still be our priority, and general population polls will continue to make up the majority of our surveys,” Huffmon added.

This **Winthrop Poll**, which is partially underwritten by the **John C. West Forum**, contains a significant number of social questions relevant to all South Carolinians, such as opinions on women bearing children out of wedlock, interracial marriage, marijuana, minority support programs and Tea Party acceptance.

For additional information on methodology, [see this link](#). For the questions and responses, [see this link](#).

Among the Winthrop Poll findings:

- S.C. residents (47.3%) blame **Republicans in Congress** for the recent government shutdown. Nearly 29% blame **President Barack Obama**, while 20% blame them equally.
- Approval ratings for the president and Congress decreased to their lowest numbers yet in S.C., with Obama at 40.7% and Congress in single digits at 6.7%. More than 48% of S.C. residents have a negative or very negative opinion of the two-term president, while 36% have a negative or very negative view of **U.S. House Speaker John Boehner**. U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid fared better but only because 34.7% did not know his name or were not sure about him.
- Nearly three-in-four of all respondents disapproved of the way **Republicans in Congress** are doing their job, while 61% disapprove of the job **Democrats** are doing.
- S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has ticked up in approval ratings since the **February Winthrop Poll** to 44.1% among all residents and 44.5% among registered voters. Last December, her approval and disapproval rating numbers were nearly even. Gov. Haley garners a higher approval rating—65.5% vs. 20% who disapprove of her job performance—among those who say they are Republicans.
- Regarding the **S.C. General Assembly**, 39.4% of S.C. residents approved and 37.5% disapproved. Nearly 1 in 5 was not sure.
- **U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham**, who is up for re-election in 2014 and has Republican opposition, saw his approval rating drop from the **February Winthrop Poll** from 71.6% among Republicans and those independents who lean toward the GOP to 45.2%. Among registered voters, the approval rating is 37.4%.
- **U.S. Sen. Tim Scott**, who was appointed by Gov. Haley to fill in for **Jim DeMint** after he resigned, remains a mystery to many residents. Nearly a third of residents are unsure of him. Scott has a 53.7% approval rating in his own Republican party, while 29% of them are not sure about him.
- In this red state, the **National Republican Party** does not have blind support. Among S.C. GOP and leaners, the party is viewed positively by 45%, while a quarter is neutral and another quarter is negative. GOP and leaners see their own state party in a much more favorable light. On the **Democratic side**, more than 60% of S.C. Democrats and leaners support the national Democratic Party.
- Support for the **Tea Party movement** among the GOP and leaners remains about the same since the February Winthrop Poll. Among S.C. residents, only 28% view it in a positive light.
- Fewer respondents think the **country is on the right track** (17%) compared with those who say it is headed in the wrong direction (75.1%). The four **most important problems facing the country** are, in order: politicians/government, economy or financial crisis, budget deficit or debt, and

jobs/unemployment. Almost half think conditions for S.C. are worse. The **Palmetto State's more important problems** are: jobs/unemployment, education, politicians/government and the economy/economic crisis.

- For S.C. residents, nearly half said **having a child without being married** is acceptable; 83% said **interracial marriage** between whites and blacks is acceptable, though more blacks agreed than whites; and around 42% said **smoking marijuana** by adults was acceptable.

For more information or to set up an interview with **Poll Director Scott Huffmon**, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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