

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – In the crowded Republican field for president, 24% of the likely Republican voters in South Carolina back real estate tycoon Donald Trump. Seventeen percent remain unsure who they will support in the Feb. 20 primary, according to the latest Winthrop Poll.

The poll came out of the field on Dec. 7, the same day Trump made his controversial stand about enacting a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.”

In descending order, SC GOP Presidential Primary Likely Voters support:

- New York tycoon Donald Trump, 24%
- U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, 16%
- Neurosurgeon Ben Carson, 14%
- U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, 11%
- Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, 9%
- Former HP CEO Carly Fiorina, 2%
- U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, 2%
- Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, 2%
- N.J. Governor Chris Christie, 1%
- Ohio Governor John Kasich, 1%
- U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, 1%.

Three candidates – former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore, former New York Governor George Pataki and former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum – did not register any support. One percent of poll respondents refused to answer the question.

[Winthrop Poll Director Dr. Scott Huffmon](#) noted, "Trump leads across multiple categories of voters from a high of 35% among those who wish to create a database of Muslims in the U.S. to a low of 22% among Evangelical Christians, who will make up nearly 60% of the S.C. GOP Presidential Primary electorate. Ted Cruz is tied with Ben Carson at 17% among Evangelicals. This is a significant drop for Carson among Evangelicals. He registered 33% support among this group in a Monmouth Poll a month ago. It is worth noting that 1 in 5 Evangelicals remain undecided.

“With 25%, Ted Cruz is within the margin of error of Trump’s 27% among those who approve of the Tea Party,” Huffmon continued. “Trump’s support is high among those who express anger - as opposed to frustration or contentment - with the government. He rakes in nearly a third of the angry voters, 9 percentage points higher than Ted Cruz, his nearest rival in this category.”

Poll respondents had a different take on the 14 GOP candidates when asked if they have generally favorable or unfavorable views of them. The front runner Trump received a favorable rating from only half of respondents while 37% said unfavorable and 13% undecided. Here is how others fared in descending order:

- Ben Carson, 75% favorable, 14% unfavorable
- Marco Rubio, 66% favorable, 16% unfavorable, 12% undecided
- Ted Cruz, 59% favorable, 19% unfavorable, 14% undecided
- Mike Huckabee, 58% favorable, 26% unfavorable, 14% undecided
- Carly Fiorina, 50% favorable, 22% unfavorable, 12% undecided, 16% not familiar
- Jeb Bush, 44% favorable, 41% unfavorable, 13% undecided
- Chris Christie, 42% favorable, 34% unfavorable, 18% undecided
- Lindsey Graham, 40% favorable, 51% unfavorable
- Rick Santorum, 33% favorable, 38% unfavorable, 20% undecided
- Rand Paul, 27% favorable, 48% unfavorable, 16% undecided
- John Kasich, 24% favorable, 31% unfavorable, 18% undecided, 28% not familiar
- George Pataki, 7% favorable, 38% unfavorable, 15% undecided, 39% not familiar
- Jim Gilmore, 3% favorable, 24% unfavorable, 11% undecided, 61% not familiar

According to Huffmon, “High unfavorable numbers, or – worse – being underwater with higher unfavorable than favorable, means your pool of potential new supporters is smaller than that of your competition.”

For this **latest Winthrop Poll**, callers surveyed 828 South Carolina residents by landline and cell phones between Nov. 30 and Dec. 7. Results which use all respondents have a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.4% at the 95% confidence level. Subgroups have higher margins of error. [Information about the poll methodology can be found here.](#)

South Carolina is important in the GOP process to choose the 45<sup>th</sup> president because it is the first primary in the South, and it is the first time presidential candidates can be vetted by a variety of conservative voters – those who are in the military or have strong fiscal, social or financial beliefs.

[See the questions and responses.](#)

### **Most Important Election Issue**

The threat of terrorism stands out as the most important issue for likely Republican voters. A third of respondents said terrorism/ISIS/ISIL/terrorists is key, while the economy and immigration (not refugees), at 13% and 10% respectively, round out the top three issues.

Sixty-one percent of poll respondents said they are frustrated with the federal government; while 35% said they are angry and only 3% basically content. Of the Trump supporters, 52% were frustrated and 47% angry.

“Trump seems to draw a significant amount of his support from those who express anger at the government,” Huffmon observed.

Trump supporters were more likely to favor conducting surveillance of Muslim mosques (80%) and in creating a database of all Muslims in the United States (72%).

### **Approval Ratings, Religion and Misc.**

How do likely GOP voters view their governmental leaders? Here’s a snapshot:

- President Barack Obama, 93% disapprove
- Congress, 85% disapprove
- S.C. Governor Nikki Haley, 81% approve, 84% approval among Tea Party supporters
- S.C. State Legislature, 54% approve, 28% disapprove, 17% don’t know
- U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, 76% approve, 81% approve who also favor the Tea Party
- U.S. Lindsey Graham, 53% approve, 40% disapprove

Huffmon noted, “While some had speculated that Governor Haley’s stand on the Confederate Flag this summer might hurt her with the Republican base, her approval of the S.C. GOP core – likely Republican voters – is as strong, or stronger, than ever.”

“While Senator Graham’s job approval among S.C. GOP likely voters is above 50%, his approval significantly trails that of S.C.’s junior senator, Tim Scott, and Graham’s approval rating among those who approve of the Tea Party is at 47%, a statistical tie with his disapproval numbers from that group,” Huffmon added.

When asked if Christians in America experience discrimination, 46% of poll respondents said they see a great deal of discrimination. Only 17% said little or no and 38% said some discrimination.

Huffmon observed, “Even though Christians make up 71% of Americans and 78% of South Carolinians (source: Pew – ed.), S.C. GOP voters see Christians as the target of discrimination. A seeming siege mentality of Christian values being under attack from the secular world has been a regular feature of modern conservative politics, in general, and this presidential cycle, in particular.”

A third of respondents said Evangelical Christians have the right amount of influence in the Republican Party, while 42% said too little. Of those surveyed, 57% questioned described themselves as “born again” or evangelical Christian.

Sixty-five percent of respondents said marriage between a same-sex couple should not be valid, while 52% said business owners should be allowed to refuse service to gay or lesbian customers. Meanwhile, 70% said doctors should be allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients.

### **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](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu) or [803/323-2404](tel:8033232404) (office) or [803/984-0586](tel:8039840586) (cell).

## December 2015 Winthrop Poll

**NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding**

T1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Barack Obama** is handling his job as President of the United States?

	All Respondents
Approve	5
Disapprove	93
Don't Know	2
Refused	0

T2 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Congress** is handling its job?

	All Respondents
Approve	10
Disapprove	85
Don't Know	5
Refused	0

T3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Nikki Haley** is handling her job as Governor of South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Approve of Tea Party
Approve	81	84
Disapprove	13	11
Don't Know	5	4
Refused	1	1

T4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **the South Carolina State Legislature** is handling its job?

	All Respondents
Approve	54
Disapprove	28
Don't Know	17
Refused	2

T5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Tim Scott** is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Tea Party Favorable
Approve	76	81
Disapprove	9	6
Don't Know	14	11
Refused	2	2

T6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Lindsey Graham** is handling his job as a United States Senator for South Carolina?

	All Respondents	Tea Party Favorable
Approve	53	47
Disapprove	40	46
Don't Know	7	7
Refused	1	1

T7 I'm going to read you a list of names of people or things. For each person or thing, please tell me whether you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable view of them. If you are familiar with them, but undecided – or if you are unfamiliar with them – you can tell me that as well.

[Names for Tables T7 – T20 were asked in random order]

### Carly Fiorina

	All Respondents
Favorable	50
Unfavorable	22
Undecided	12
Not familiar	16
Refused	0

### T8 Jeb Bush

	All Respondents
Favorable	44
Unfavorable	41
Undecided	13
Not familiar	2
Refused	0

### T9 Ben Carson

	All Respondents
Favorable	75
Unfavorable	14
Undecided	7
Not familiar	4
Refused	0

### T10 Chris Christie

	All Respondents
Favorable	42
Unfavorable	34
Undecided	18
Not familiar	6
Refused	0

### T11 Ted Cruz

	All Respondents
Favorable	59
Unfavorable	19
Undecided	14
Not familiar	8
Refused	0

### T12 Lindsey Graham

	All Respondents
Favorable	40
Unfavorable	51
Undecided	9
Not familiar	1
Refused	0

### T13 Mike Huckabee

	All Respondents
Favorable	58
Unfavorable	26
Undecided	14
Not familiar	3
Refused	0

T14 Jim Gilmore

	All Respondents
Favorable	3
Unfavorable	24
Undecided	11
Not familiar	61
Refused	0

T15 George Pataki

	All Respondents
Favorable	7
Unfavorable	38
Undecided	15
Not familiar	39
Refused	1

T16 Rand Paul

	All Respondents
Favorable	27
Unfavorable	48
Undecided	16
Not familiar	9
Refused	0

T17 John Kasich

	All Respondents
Favorable	24
Unfavorable	31
Undecided	18
Not familiar	28
Refused	0



T18 Marco Rubio

	All Respondents
Favorable	66
Unfavorable	16
Undecided	12
Not familiar	5
Refused	0

T19 Rick Santorum

	All Respondents
Favorable	33
Unfavorable	38
Undecided	20
Not familiar	9
Refused	0

T20 Donald Trump

	All Respondents
Favorable	49
Unfavorable	37
Undecided	13
Not familiar	0
Refused	0

T21 If the **Republican Party Primary** election for **United States President** were held today who would you vote for?

	All Respondents	Approve of Tea Party	Evangelical	Muslim Database	Angry About Gvt	Foreign Pol Issue
Jeb Bush	9	3	8	8	3	8
Ben Carson	14	14	17	12	14	15
Chris Christie	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ted Cruz	16	25	17	17	23	13
Carly Fiorina	2	2	1	1	1	1
Jim Gilmore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindsey Graham	2	0	0	2	2	2
Mike Huckabee	2	2	2	2	1	1
John Kasich	1	1	0	0	0	1
George Pataki	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rand Paul	1	1	1	0	0	0
Marco Rubio	11	9	11	7	11	12
Rick Santorum	0	0	0	0	0	0
Donald Trump	24	27	22	35	32	27
Not sure	17	12	20	14	12	18
Refused	1	2	1	1	1	1

NOTE: "Muslim Database" refers to those who answered "Should" to the question in table T26. "Angry About Gvt" refers to those who answered "Angry" to the question in table T24. "Foreign Pol Issue" are those respondents who answered with any foreign policy related issue when asked what issue was the most important for the 2016 Presidential campaign.

T22 What do you think is the most important issue for the 2016

## Presidential Election?

	All Respondents
Terrorism/ISIS/ISIL/Terrorists	34
Economy	13
Immigration (not refugees)	10

T23 Would you support or oppose an increase in South Carolina’s gas tax if the money was to be used for repairing roads and transportation infrastructure?

	All Respondents	Tea Party Favorable
Support	61	53
Oppose	33	43
Not Sure	5	3
Refused	1	1

NOTE: While this question shows that Likely GOP voters may support an increase in the gas tax *in the abstract* and when the tax is *tied to road repair*, previous polling shows that when you add a specific monetary amount – ANY specific monetary amount per gallon – support drops significantly. In public opinion research, we sometimes refer to things like this as opinions being “unconstrained” – meaning a respondent may express preference for mutually exclusive things (For example, people often want more data on their cell phone plans AND lower rates). In this instance, while no one likes taxes, respondents will accept it in the abstract to repair roads, BUT past polling shows that when respondents have a concrete amount that they know will affect their wallet (“x cents per gallon”), support tends to fall.

T24 Some people say they are basically content with the federal government, others say they are frustrated, and others say they are angry. Which of these best describes how you feel?

	All Respondents	Trump Supporters
Basically Content	3	1
Frustrated	61	52
Angry	35	47
Not sure	1	1
Refused	0	0

T25 Do you believe that the government should or should not

conduct surveillance of Muslim mosques?

	All Respondents	Trump Supporters
Should	67	80
Should NOT	23	11
Not Sure	8	7
Refused	3	1

T26 Do you believe that the government should or should not create a database of all Muslims in the United States?

	All Respondents	Trump Supporters
Should	48	72
Should NOT	42	24
Not Sure	7	4
Refused	3	1

T27 Would you say that you think Christians in America today experience little or no discrimination, some discrimination, or a great deal of discrimination?

	All Respondents
Little or No	17
Some	38
Great deal	46
Not sure	0
Refused	0

T28 Do you think marriages between same-sex couples SHOULD

or should NOT be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as a marriage between a man and a woman?

	All Respondents
Should be valid	28
Should not be valid	65
Not Sure	4
Refused	3

T29 Do you think business owners **SHOULD** or **SHOULD NOT** be allowed to refuse service to gay or lesbian customers

	All Respondents
Should be allowed to refuse service	52
Should NOT be allowed to refuse service	40
Not Sure	5
Refused	2

T30 Do you think doctors should or should not be allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients?

	All Respondents
Should	70
Should NOT	22
Not Sure	7
Refused	1

T31 Do you think evangelical Christians have too much influence, too little influence, or the right amount of influence in the Republican Party today?

	All Respondents
Too Much	15
Too little	42
Right Amount	33
Not Sure	7
Refused	2

T32 In general, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Tea Party movement or are you not familiar enough with the Tea Party movement to have an opinion?

	All Respondents
Approve	47
Disapprove	17
Not Sure / Not Familiar Enough	36
Refused	1

T33 Would you consider yourself a **MEMBER** of the **Tea Party Movement**?

	All Respondents
Yes	11
No	85
Not Sure	4
Refused	0

T34 Would you describe yourself as a "born again" or evangelical Christian, or not?

	All Respondents
Yes	57
No	23
Not Sure	2
Not Protestant Christian	17
Refused	1

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**Methodology Statement**

**Survey Methodology**

## **December 2015 Winthrop Poll of Likely Voters in the SC Republican Presidential Primary**

The December 2015 Winthrop Poll interviewed **828** Likely Voters in the 2016 SC Republican Presidential Primary (aged 18 and older, registered to vote, screened for likelihood of voting in SC Republican Presidential Primary). Results which use all respondents have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 3.4%** at the 95% confidence level. Results that use less than the full sample will naturally have a higher margin of error. Results for those who Approve of the Tea Party have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 5%** at the 95% confidence level. Results for Evangelicals have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 4.5%** at the 95% confidence level. Results for those who Support a Database of Muslims have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 5%** at the 95% confidence level. Results for those who describe themselves as Angry at Government have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 5.8%** at the 95% confidence level. Results for Trump Supporters have a **margin of error of approximately +/- 7%** at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error are based on weighted sample size.

The survey was in the field from 11/30-12/7, 2015. Phone calls were made during weekday evenings, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon and evening. Weekday daytime calls are not made to avoid oversampling those who are more likely to be at home during the day (e.g. retirees, stay-at-home-parents, etc.). 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)** Registration Based Sample (RBS) of previous Republican Primary voters, **(2)** Random Digit Dialing (RDD), and **(3)** 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 simply because their number is not listed in the previous voter sample. MOST IMPORTANTLY, RDD and Wireless are necessary to capture any voters who are likely to vote in this contest, but did not vote in previous primaries (e.g. new to SC, newly registered voters, more interest in this contest, etc.) Both the RDD sample and the wireless sample were purchased from Survey Sampling International (SSI). RBS sample was purchased from Aristotle/Voter Lists Online.

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 for RDD sample. Numbers reached via RBS asked for specific randomly selected voters. Surveys were conducted in English.

**Additionally, we screen for voter registration status, screen for certainty of up-to-date registration status, *screen OUT* Democrats and Democratic-Leaning Independents, screen for likelihood of voting, and weight by sex, age, and race.**

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.

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**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.