

**SOUTH CAROLINA  
STATE SURVEY**

**SPRING 2001**

**SUMMARY FINDINGS FOR THE**

**SOUTH CAROLINA  
PROGRESSIVE NETWORK**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background .....	1
Questionnaire Design .....	1
Sampling .....	1
Interviewing .....	2
Sampling Error .....	3
Summary Findings for the South Carolina Progressive Network .....	4
Campaign Reform Issues .....	4
Table 1. Cost of Elections Keeps Qualified People from Running for Public Office – By Demographic Characteristics .....	5
Table 2. Should South Carolina Have a System of Public Financing for Candidates Who Agree to Spending Limits – by Demographic Characteristics .....	7
Table 3. Support Public Financing – Cost of \$3.50 Per Year By Demographic Characteristics .....	9
Summary .....	10
Appendix .....	12
Questionnaire (Field Version)	
Note 1. Weighting Variables Used in Analysis	
Note 2. Counties Used in Regional Analyses	

## **Background**

THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE SURVEY is a cost-shared random probability survey of citizens age eighteen and older living in the State of South Carolina that is conducted biannually by the University of South Carolina's Institute of Public Affairs. The South Carolina State Survey allows policy makers, researchers, and other interested organizations an opportunity to gather reliable data in a timely and cost-effective manner.

## **Questionnaire Design**

The substantive questions in the survey are constructed by the participating groups with the assistance of the South Carolina State Survey staff. The demographic questions and other technical aspects of the questionnaire are the responsibility of the South Carolina State Survey staff.

Before the questionnaire was finalized it was pretested to determine whether or not the questions could be easily understood by respondents, if the order of the questions seemed logical to the interviewers and respondents, or if it contained other identifiable weaknesses. Problems were detected and corrected. No major problems persisted into the actual conduct of the survey.

## **Sampling**

The respondents to be interviewed for the South Carolina State Survey are selected from a random sample of households with telephones in the State. Each of these numbers is called by the survey interviewers. Approximately thirty percent of the numbers are discarded because they are found to be businesses, institutions, or not assigned. The remaining numbers, when called, result in contacts to residences. Within these residences a respondent, 18 years of age or older, is randomly chosen from the household's occupants. To avoid biasing the sample in favor of households that can be reached on multiple phone numbers, each case is weighted inversely to its probability of being included in the sample. The data are also weighted to correct any potential biases in the

sample on the basis of age, race, sex, and number of adults in the household (see the Appendix, Note 1).

### **Interviewing**

The interviewing was conducted by the interviewing staff of the Institute of Public Affairs. Prior to the actual fieldwork (interviewing), the interviewers and interviewing supervisors received one day of specialized training for this survey. The interviewing was conducted from the Institute's offices on the University of South Carolina Columbia campus. Many of the interviews were monitored to insure that instructions were being followed. Calls were made from 9:00 AM to 9:30 PM Monday through Friday, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturday, and 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Sunday. The main survey period was from April 12 to May 17, 2001. A total of 808 fully completed interviews and 35 partially completed interviews were conducted. The response rate for this survey was 61.0%.

Interviews were conducted using the Institute's computer-aided telephone interviewing facilities. After the interviews were completed, the open-ended questions were coded. Following this coding, analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Organizations participating in this survey receive the frequency counts for their questions and cross-tabulations of these questions with seven demographic items.

### **Sampling Error**

The South Carolina State Survey, like all surveys, has a potential for sampling error due to the fact that not all residents of the state were interviewed. For all questions that were answered by eight hundred (800) or so respondents the potential for error is +/- 3.5%. Results for questions answered by significantly fewer than 800 respondents and results for subgroups of the population have a potential for larger variation than those for the entire sample.

## **SUMMARY FINDINGS FOR THE SOUTH CAROLINA PROGRESSIVE NETWORK**

As part of the Spring 2001 South Carolina State Survey, the South Carolina Progressive Network asked three questions designed to determine how South Carolinians feel about campaign financing in South Carolina. These included the public's view on whether or not the cost of elections keeps many qualified people from running for public office, whether or not South Carolina should have a system of public financing, and opinions on a public finance system that would cost each taxpayer about \$3.50 a year. (A copy of the complete questionnaire used in this survey is provided in the Appendix). This report provides a summary of the findings for this survey. In addition to providing the major findings for the complete sample, comparisons across demographic subgroups are presented in order to identify significant differences in opinion on these issues. Significant differences across subgroups (determined as  $p < .05$ ) are highlighted in bold on the tables.

### **Campaign Reform Issues**

Respondents were first asked if they thought the cost of elections keeps many qualified people from running for public office. Overall, the majority of respondents either strongly agreed (29.9%) or agreed (32.2%) that the cost of campaigning keeps qualified people from running for public office (Table 1). Only 9.6% of respondents said they disagreed and even fewer strongly disagreed (1.3%) with the idea campaign costs are prohibitive. Slightly more than a quarter (26.9%) of the respondents said they had no opinion on this issue.

There were a number of differences in responses to this question across demographic subgroups. A higher percentage of black respondents (42.3%) than whites (20.2%) said they had no opinion concerning the effect the cost of campaigning has on who runs for public office.

TABLE 1  
 COST OF ELECTIONS KEEPS QUALIFIED PEOPLE FROM RUNNING  
 FOR PUBLIC OFFICE – BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>N</u>
<b>Total</b>	29.9	32.2	9.6	1.3	26.9	807
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	<b>30.0</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>23.0</b>	383
Female	<b>29.5</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>30.2</b>	417
<u>RACE</u>						
Black	<b>23.6</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>220</b>
White	<b>32.9</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>544</b>
<u>AGE</u>						
18 – 29	26.9	29.1	10.4	1.1	32.4	182
30 – 45	31.6	30.7	10.2	1.2	26.2	244
46 – 64	34.2	32.9	10.1	2.2	20.6	228
65 and Over	25.4	36.5	8.7	1.6	27.8	126
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
Less than High School	<b>18.5</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>108</b>
High School Diploma	<b>23.7</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>253</b>
Some College	<b>39.1</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>230</b>
College Degree	<b>36.0</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>186</b>
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	<b>16.5</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>79</b>
\$15,000 - \$29,999	<b>31.3</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>128</b>
\$30,000 - \$49,999	<b>31.0</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>158</b>
\$50,000-and Over	<b>40.1</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>237</b>
<u>TYPE OF AREA</u>						
Urban	30.0	30.5	11.5	2.5	25.5	200
Suburban	33.2	35.4	9.9	0.7	20.8	274
Rural	28.2	30.2	9.1	1.0	31.5	308
<u>REGION</u>						
Upstate	29.7	35.3	7.4	0.9	26.6	323
Midlands	26.9	31.8	11.0	2.0	28.2	245
Lowcountry	32.2	28.9	10.3	0.9	26.7	232
<u>PARTY ID</u>						
Republican	<b>30.0</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>263</b>
Independent	<b>36.6</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>213</b>
Democrat	<b>28.1</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>235</b>

Whites were significantly more likely than blacks to either agree or strongly agree that the costs of elections keeps many qualified candidates from running for public office.

Similar differences were found across levels of education. A higher percentage of those with a high school education or less did not have an opinion on this question, while respondents with some college education or more agreed that the cost of campaigns is a barrier for some qualified candidates.

A parallel finding was evident across levels of family income. Respondents from lower income families were more likely to give a “don’t know” response to this item, while those with higher family incomes agreed that the cost of campaigns kept many qualified candidates from running for office.

Respondent’s party identification also had a significant effect on responses to this question. While a majority of each group agreed that the cost of campaigns might discourage some qualified candidates, a higher percentage of Democrats (31.1%) than Independents (23.9%) or Republicans (18.6%) gave a “don’t know” response to this question. A higher percentage of Republicans (16.4%) disagreed with this statement.

Although the differences in responses to this question between men and women were not large, they did reach statistical significance. A higher percentage of women than men (30.2% to 23.0%) had no opinion on this question, while men were more likely to either strongly agree or agree with this statement (66.0% to 58.5%).

When asked if South Carolina should have a system of public financing for candidates who agree to spending limits for political campaigns, over half of those interviewed either strongly agreed (20.3%) or agreed (33.3%); approximately a fifth disagreed with this idea (4.7% strongly disagreed and 16.4% disagreed), and 25.3% had no opinion on this issue (Table 2).



TABLE 2  
 SHOULD SOUTH CAROLINA HAVE A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FINANCING  
 FOR CANDIDATES WHO AGREE TO SPENDING LIMITS --  
 BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>N</u>
<b>Total</b>	20.3	33.3	16.4	4.7	25.3	805
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	<b>23.2</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>384</b>
Female	<b>17.8</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>416</b>
<u>RACE</u>						
Black	<b>20.9</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>220</b>
White	<b>20.2</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>544</b>
<u>AGE</u>						
18 – 29	13.7	37.4	16.5	4.9	27.5	182
30 – 45	21.2	32.7	18.0	5.7	22.4	245
46 – 64	24.9	30.1	17.0	5.2	22.7	229
65 and Over	22.2	33.3	15.1	1.6	27.8	126
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
Less than High School	<b>20.2</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>109</b>
High School Diploma	<b>18.2</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>253</b>
Some College	<b>23.5</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>230</b>
College Degree	<b>19.9</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>186</b>
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	<b>11.1</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>81</b>
\$15,000 - \$29,999	<b>23.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>129</b>
\$30,000 - \$49,999	<b>23.4</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>158</b>
\$50,000-and Over	<b>22.8</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>237</b>
<u>TYPE OF AREA</u>						
Urban	18.9	36.8	16.9	4.5	22.9	201
Suburban	23.1	32.2	19.0	6.6	19.0	273
Rural	19.8	31.5	14.9	3.6	30.2	308
<u>REGION</u>						
Upstate	19.2	36.2	14.9	5.3	24.5	323
Midlands	16.3	34.7	18.0	5.7	25.3	245
Lowcountry	26.1	28.7	16.1	3.0	26.1	230
<u>PARTY ID</u>						
Republican	<b>18.3</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>262</b>
Independent	<b>25.5</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>212</b>
Democrat	<b>23.8</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>235</b>

Several of the distinctions across subgroups that were evident on the question of whether the costs of elections keep qualified people for running for public office were also evident on this item. Significant differences by race, education, level of family income, and sex are largely the result of a higher percentage of “don’t know” responses among black respondents, those with less education, those with lower family incomes, and women. While there was a slight tendency for a higher percentage of white respondents, those with a college degree, those with family incomes of \$50,000 or more and men to disagree that South Carolina should have a system of public financing for candidates who agree to spending limits, a majority of each of these groups agreed with this statement.

Responses to this question also differed by party affiliation, although a majority of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans agreed that South Carolina should have a system of public financing. However, a larger percentage of Republicans (29.4%) than Independents (22.2%) or Democrats (14.9%) disagreed with this statement. Across parties, the highest level of agreement with the idea that South Carolina should have a system of public financing was found among Democrats (59.5%).

The final question in this set asked respondents, “If this system (of public financing) would cost each taxpayer about \$3.50 a year and would reduce the effect that money has on elections would you strongly support it, support it, oppose it, or strongly oppose it?” Results for this question for the complete sample and broken down by subgroup are provided in Table 3.

As these data indicate, close to 60% of South Carolinians would support such a system, with 23.3% saying they would strongly support it and an additional 36.5% voicing support. Moreover, a majority of all subgroups supported this system, with the percentage of support

TABLE 3  
SUPPORT PUBLIC FINANCING – COST OF \$3.50 PER YEAR  
BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>N</u>
<b>Total</b>	23.3	36.5	21.9	12.3	6.0	805
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	<b>26.5</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>385</b>
Female	<b>20.4</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>417</b>
<u>RACE</u>						
Black	19.9	37.1	21.7	12.7	8.6	221
White	24.3	36.9	21.7	12.3	4.8	544
<u>AGE</u>						
18 – 29	<b>17.7</b>	<b>40.9</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>181</b>
30 – 45	<b>24.1</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>245</b>
46 – 64	<b>28.9</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>228</b>
65 and Over	<b>21.3</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>127</b>
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
Less than High School	<b>12.8</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>109</b>
High School Diploma	<b>15.0</b>	<b>39.9</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>253</b>
Some College	<b>31.0</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>229</b>
College Degree	<b>33.2</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>187</b>
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	<b>10.0</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>80</b>
\$15,000 - \$29,999	<b>19.7</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>127</b>
\$30,000 - \$49,999	<b>28.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>158</b>
\$50,000 and Over	<b>34.2</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>237</b>
<u>TYPE OF AREA</u>						
Urban	23.5	32.5	25.0	13.0	6.0	200
Suburban	25.5	38.3	22.3	9.1	4.7	274
Rural	22.0	38.2	19.1	15.2	5.5	309
<u>REGION</u>						
Upstate	21.7	39.9	21.4	11.8	5.3	323
Midlands	21.1	35.4	21.5	15.4	6.5	246
Lowcountry	28.7	33.0	23.0	9.6	5.7	230
<u>PARTY ID</u>						
Republican	23.7	37.4	22.1	12.6	4.2	262
Independent	25.5	34.0	23.1	14.6	2.8	212
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