

**SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE SURVEY**

SPRING 2001

SUMMARY FINDINGS FOR THE

**SOUTH CAROLINA
PROGRESSIVE NETWORK**

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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>
Total	29.9	32.2	9.6	1.3	26.9	807
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	30.0	36.0	10.4	0.5	23.0	383
Female	29.5	29.0	9.1	2.2	30.2	417
<u>RACE</u>						
Black	23.6	25.9	7.7	0.5	42.3	220
White	32.9	34.4	10.8	1.7	20.2	544
<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	18.5	35.2	9.3	1.9	35.2	108
High School Diploma	23.7	25.7	11.1	2.8	36.8	253
Some College	39.1	31.7	7.0	0.4	21.7	230
College Degree	36.0	37.6	12.9	1.1	12.4	186
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	16.5	34.2	8.9	2.5	38.0	79
\$15,000 - \$29,999	31.3	23.4	7.0	2.3	35.9	128
\$30,000 - \$49,999	31.0	35.4	11.4	0.6	21.5	158
\$50,000-and Over	40.1	34.6	8.4	1.7	15.2	237
<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	30.0	35.0	14.1	2.3	18.6	263
Independent	36.6	31.9	7.0	0.5	23.9	213
Democrat	28.1	32.3	7.7	0.9	31.1	235

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>
Total	20.3	33.3	16.4	4.7	25.3	805
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	23.2	31.5	16.9	6.8	21.6	384
Female	17.8	35.1	15.9	2.9	28.4	416
<u>RACE</u>						
Black	20.9	33.2	10.5	0.9	34.5	220
White	20.2	33.3	19.7	6.6	20.2	544
<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	20.2	31.2	13.8	0.9	33.9	109
High School Diploma	18.2	32.8	15.8	4.0	29.2	253
Some College	23.5	33.5	16.5	6.1	20.4	230
College Degree	19.9	34.4	21.5	7.0	17.2	186
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	11.1	28.4	12.3	7.4	40.7	81
\$15,000 - \$29,999	23.3	33.3	14.7	5.4	23.3	129
\$30,000 - \$49,999	23.4	38.6	15.2	1.9	20.9	158
\$50,000-and Over	22.8	32.5	18.6	7.6	18.6	237
<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	18.3	34.4	21.4	8.0	17.9	262
Independent	25.5	27.4	17.0	5.2	25.0	212
Democrat	23.8	35.7	13.2	1.7	25.5	235

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 as 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>
Total	23.3	36.5	21.9	12.3	6.0	805
<u>SEX</u>						
Male	26.5	32.7	23.4	13.2	4.2	385
Female	20.4	40.0	20.4	11.5	7.7	417
<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	17.7	40.9	25.4	10.5	5.5	181
30 – 45	24.1	40.4	20.8	12.2	2.4	245
46 – 64	28.9	32.9	18.0	14.9	5.3	228
65 and Over	21.3	29.9	25.2	11.0	12.6	127
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
Less than High School	12.8	37.6	23.9	15.6	10.1	109
High School Diploma	15.0	39.9	22.5	15.8	6.7	253
Some College	31.0	34.9	21.0	10.0	3.1	229
College Degree	33.2	33.7	20.3	9.6	3.2	187
<u>INCOME</u>						
Under \$15,000	10.0	42.5	30.0	8.8	8.8	80
\$15,000 - \$29,999	19.7	39.4	23.6	11.8	5.5	127
\$30,000 - \$49,999	28.5	40.5	18.4	9.5	3.2	158
\$50,000 and Over	34.2	33.8	17.3	13.1	1.7	237
<u>TYPE OF AREA</u>						
Urban	23.5	32.5	25.0	13.0	6.0	200
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<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
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Independent	25.5	34.0	23.1	14.6	2.8	212
Democrat	26.0	39.1	20.4	8.5	6.0	235

ranging from 50.4% among those with less than a high school education to 68.0% among those with family incomes of \$50,000 or more.

Significant group differences that were apparent on the previous two questions were also found for the question on a public campaign finance system that would cost each taxpayer about \$3.50 a year. Many of these distinctions were a result of a higher percentage of respondents in some groups voicing strong support for this statement as opposed to “support” in others, and of a higher percentage of “don’t know” responses in several groups. Across age groups, for example, respondents age 45 or younger were more likely to respond “support” to this question, while a higher percentage of those age 65 or older had no opinion on this item. Across levels of education, respondents with some college education or more were more likely to strongly support this system of public campaign finance, while those with less education were more likely to give a “don’t know” response. Similarly, a larger percentage of those with higher family incomes strongly supported this statement, while those with lower incomes were slightly more likely to say they “didn’t know.” Men were more likely than women (26.5% to 20.4%) to strongly support this system, while a higher percentage of women (40.0% to 32.7%) supported this system, but not strongly.

Summary

Overall, the results of these questions indicate that, in general, South Carolinians support a system of campaign finance reform. More than 60% of those surveyed believe that the cost of elections keeps many qualified people from running for public office, a majority believes that the state should have a system of public financing, and almost 60% would support a system of public financing if it would cost the average citizen about \$3.50 a year.

There are differences in opinion on these questions across subgroups. The general pattern of these results suggests that those with at least some college education, higher family incomes, and men are more supportive of campaign finance reform. Those with less education, from lower income families, women, and blacks are more likely not to have an opinion on these issues. Partisanship also makes a difference on these questions. Although a majority of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats voice support for these campaign finance reform measures, a higher percentage of Republicans disagrees with the idea that the costs of elections keeps qualified people from running and they are also less likely to believe that South Carolina should have a system of public financing for candidates. No significant differences of these items were found by type of area in which respondents lived or across regions of the state.