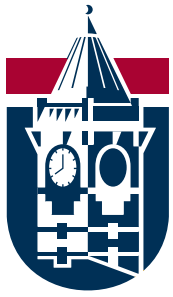


WINTHROP POLL FOCUS

April 2017





WINTHROP

U N I V E R S I T Y

April 3, 2017

Dear South Carolina policy maker,

The John C. West Forum on Politics and Policy at Winthrop University is collaborating with the Winthrop Poll to provide you with an in-depth look at the viewpoints of our citizens, based on the latest results of the statewide Winthrop Poll. The West Forum is a non-partisan initiative begun by former South Carolina Governor John C. West to educate leaders and future leaders in our state, and encourage civic engagement of our citizens. The Winthrop Poll is a long-term survey initiative designed to keep public policy makers in touch with the attitudes and opinions of citizens in South Carolina.

In this document you will find results not previously published by the Winthrop Poll, along with some context and information related to the results. Our goal with the “Winthrop Poll Focus” is to highlight opportunities and needs in South Carolina as they are revealed by the results of the Winthrop Poll. We hope that this information will enlighten your work in the South Carolina legislature and beyond.

For further information about the West Forum, please see www.winthrop.edu/westforum. More information about Winthrop Poll results can be found at www.winthrop.edu/winthroppoll.

Sincerely,

Katarina D. Moyon
Co-Director, West Forum
Winthrop University

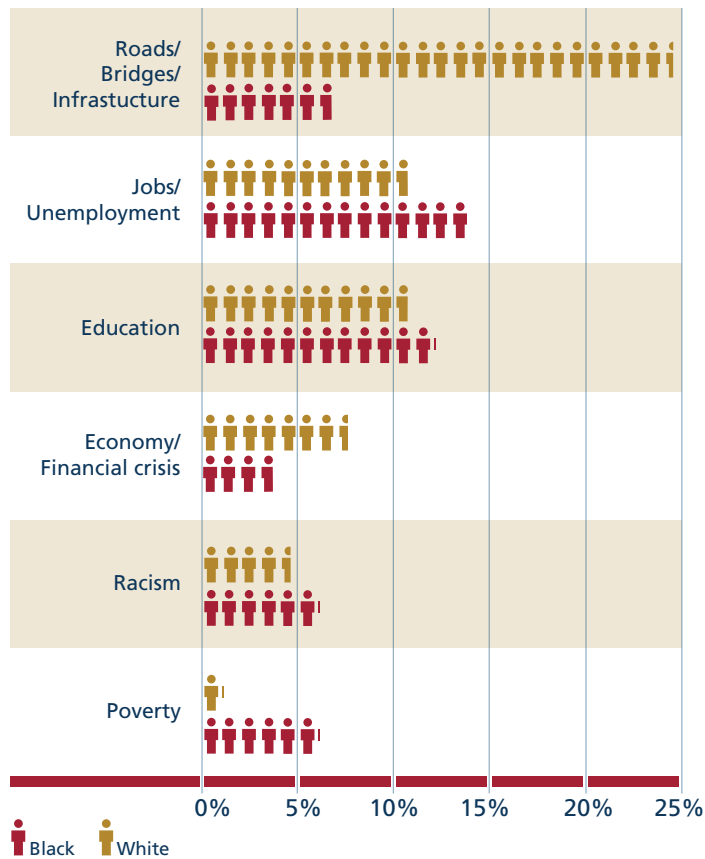
Karen M. Kedrowski
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Winthrop Poll Focus

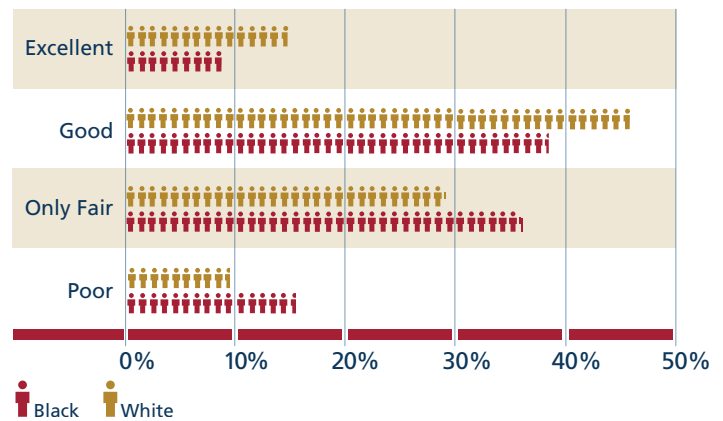
The February 2017 Winthrop Poll shows similarities and differences in the way black and white South Carolinians define the most important problems facing our state and our country. We hope that state legislators can use this information as they tackle pressing questions, such as employment and education, that face the state. While we have identified differences that can aid policymakers' understanding of specific concerns of individual groups in our state, the similarities also offer opportunities for policymakers to address concerns of all South Carolinians and potentially improve their lives.

Figure 1: "What do you think is the most important problem facing the state of South Carolina today?" (February 2017)



24.5% of whites and 6.8% of African Americans said that roads/bridges/infrastructure were the most important issue concerning our state. When taken together, the answers jobs/unemployment and economy/financial crisis were chosen by 18% of both black and white respondents, indicating strong concern about financial and employment issues in our state. While the response "jobs" does not necessarily mean the same thing as the response "the economy," both answers indicate a common concern among a representative cross-section of South Carolinians over "bread and butter" issues.

Figure 2: "How would you rate your financial situation today?" (February, 2017)



African-Americans' specific concern about jobs and unemployment may be partially driven by their personal economic circumstances. Figure 2 shows that African Americans are more likely to reveal that they face greater financial uncertainty. Sixty-one percent of white South Carolinians rate their financial situation as "excellent" or "good" compared with 47% of black South Carolinians. Fifty-two percent of black South Carolinians rate their financial situation as "only fair" or "poor" compared to 39% of whites. These perceptions are not baseless. According to the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, 2008-2012 per capita income for white residents of South Carolina was \$27,981, while African-American income was \$15,398. Though many factors account for per capita income, the current improving economic climate creates an opportunity to address some of the economic disparities between blacks and whites.

According to the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, unemployment in South Carolina has been dropping consistently since April 2016. As improvements continue, there is an opportunity to tackle some of the issues described above. In 2016 South Carolina's urban areas had unemployment rates that were 2-3 times higher for blacks than for whites. For example, in 2016 in Charleston-North

Charleston unemployment for whites was 4.6%, while it was 12% for blacks (data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey). These numbers were 5.2% and 11.3% respectively in Columbia and 6% and 11.4% in Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin. As unemployment improves in our state policymakers have the opportunity to address some of the financial uncertainty of both black and white residents and therefore help address some of the issues of racial disparity.

Figure 1 (pg. 2) also shows another point of consensus: Education. Education was the second most important issue for whites (tied with jobs) and the second most important issue for blacks (after jobs). Focusing on education is an opportunity for legislators to address a problem that is important to all South Carolinians, irrespective of race.

In the September, 2016 Winthrop Poll, 13% of African Americans and 3.5% of whites indicated that racism was the most important issue facing our state. In February, 2017 6% of African Americans and 4.6% of whites indicated racism was the most important issue. South Carolina has not been immune to incidents of violence, given the racially motivated shooting in Charleston in June, 2015 and the death of an unarmed civilian by a police officer in North Charleston in April, 2015. Fortunately, despite raising concerns about race relations in South Carolina, neither of these incidents resulted in civil unrest across the state. Additionally, in the past year, South Carolina legislators and the Governor have worked on issues related to crime and policing as well as the Confederate flag. There are opportunities for further work regarding this issue.

These data demonstrate clear opportunities for the legislature to work on the concerns of many South Carolinians. While many white South Carolinians indicated a concern for roads/bridges/infrastructure, both blacks and whites indicated a strong interest in working on issues related to jobs, economic growth, and schools. White South Carolinians perceive greater income security, while black South Carolinians perceive they live in a state in which they are less economically secure. State policy makers may face challenges in bringing together these disparate views, but they clearly have an opportunity to begin with bread and butter issues, which could be beneficial to all. This area of commonality can also build consensus around public policy initiatives in other areas, such as education.

Figure 3: “What do you think is the most important problem facing the United States Today?” (February, 2017)

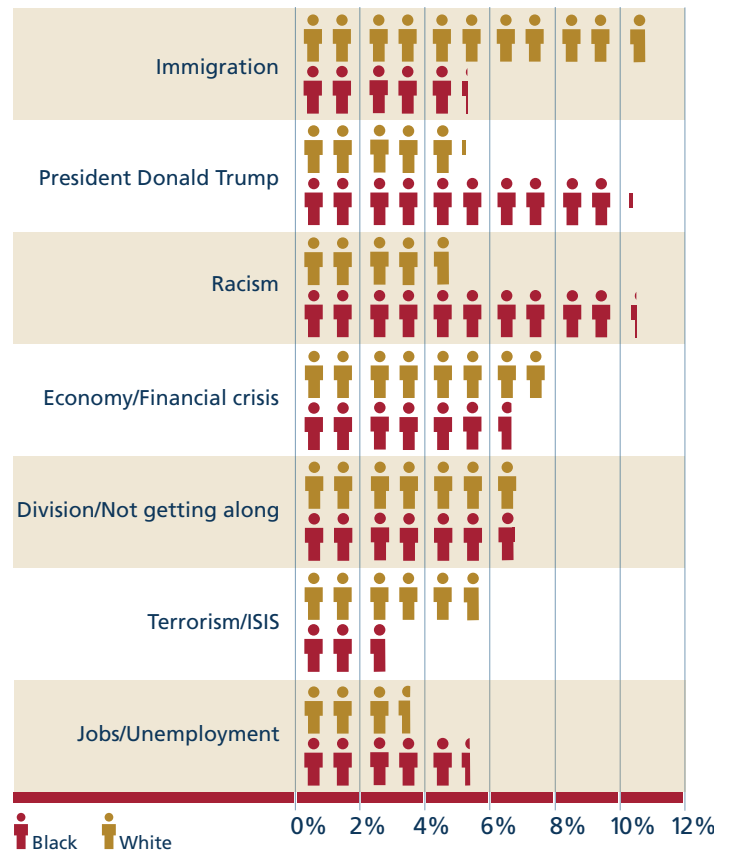


Figure 3 shows that as of February, 2017 South Carolinians’ opinions of problems facing the country were more divided than their opinions of problems facing the state. While both blacks and whites once again found the economy and jobs to be of concern, black South Carolinians largely saw racism and President Donald Trump as the most important problems our country is facing today (10.2% and 10.3% respectively), followed by division/not getting along (6.9%), and the economy/financial crisis (6.7%). By contrast, white South Carolinians saw immigration as the main issue (10.8%), followed by the economy/financial crisis (8%), division/not getting along (7%) and terrorism/ISIS (5.8%).

For margin of error and entire February 2017 Poll results, please see: www.winthrop.edu/winthropoll.



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