

Methodology: The Citadel Poll

May 21 – 31, 2026

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Survey description

The Citadel Poll has surveyed registered voters in South Carolina. A sample of 1,505 registered voters were contacted to take the survey between Thursday May 21 and Sunday May 31, 2026. Respondents were interviewed over the phone by Promark Research, contacted through SMS messages by Verasight, or recruited through emails to some eligible respondents in Verasight's national panel. In total 605 surveys were completed with live telephone interviews (40%), 830 respondents responded to an SMS invitation (55%), and 70 respondents were from the Verasight Community (5%).¹

The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.2% for the full sample in South Carolina. These numbers are slightly larger than the margin of error of 2.5%, because we account for the difference between who was invited to take the survey and who responded. The likely voter subsample has a size of 600 likely voters in South Carolina's Republican primary and 427 likely voters in South Carolina's Democratic primary. These respondents said they would "definitely vote" in this year's election or had already voted. The margin of sampling error for this smaller population is 4.5% in the Republican primary and 6.3% in the Democratic primary, again a bit larger than the margins of error of 4% and 4.7%.

The sample is weighted to reflect demographic and geographic parameters known from state voter files (link to scvotes.gov and sos.ga.gov). These include gender, race, age, residence in a media market (Nielsen), and 2020 presidential vote choice. Weights also allow the sample to reflect the education attainment of registered voters in South Carolina and Georgia as reported by the Associated Press (link to apnorc.org/projects/ap-votecast-2022/). Weights were calculated for the likely voter samples using the same population statistics, with the exception of presidential vote choice.

Individuals were included in the poll's target population if they were registered to vote in South Carolina. The sampling approach allowed voters in the state to be randomly contacted to ensure a representative sample and probability-based design.

¹ Verasight's online respondents are recruited via random address-based sampling, random person-to-person text messaging, and dynamic online targeting. All Verasight community members are verified via multi-step authentication, including providing an SMS response from a mobile phone registered with a major U.S. carrier (e.g., no VOIP or internet phones) as well as within-survey technology, including verifying the absence of non-human responses with technologies such as Google reCAPTCHA v3. Those who exhibit low-quality response behaviors over time, such as straight-lining or speeding, are also removed and prohibited from further participation in the community. Verasight Community members receive points for taking surveys that can be redeemed for Venmo or PayPal payments, gift cards, or charitable donations. Respondents are never routed from one survey to another and receive compensation for every invited survey, so there is never an incentive to respond strategically to survey qualification screener questions.

Live telephone interviews:

Our list of registered voters was drawn from L2, a company which consistently updates its file (May 8, 2026) and provides accurate matches of telephone numbers to the registered voter. We reached the named voter 89% or another registered voter in the home 11% of the time in South Carolina. All numbers of the telephone sample were dialed a maximum of three times. Cell phone numbers that were not reached on the first attempt received a text introducing the survey after before the second call. The 605 phone interviews came from mobile numbers (545) and landline numbers (60) calling 83,568 phone numbers

Verasight Panel:

Additional respondents received a link to take the survey through Qualtrics via SMS messages and emails. These respondents were verified as registered voters by Catalyst, another firm that provides up-to-date contact information for verified registered voters. In addition to verifying the identity of a person taking the survey, Verasight is also committed to the data quality of surveys from its platform. Respondents who exhibit low-quality response behaviors over time, such as straight-lining or speeding, are removed and prohibited from further participation in the community. Verasight Community members receive points for taking surveys that can be redeemed for Venmo or PayPal payments, gift cards, or charitable donations. Respondents are never routed from one survey to another and receive compensation for every invited survey, so there is never an incentive to respond strategically to survey qualification screener questions. To further ensure data quality, the Verasight data team implements several post-data collection quality assurance procedures, including confirming that all responses correspond with U.S. IP addresses, confirming no duplicate respondents, verifying the absence of non-human responses, and removing any respondents who failed in-survey attention and/or straight-lining checks. Respondents that completed the survey in less than 30% of the median completion time were removed.

AAPOR Transparency Initiative Information:

The Citadel Poll follows the guidelines for disclosure of the American Association for Public Opinion research Transparency Initiative. Details from this inaugural poll will be used to apply for certification.

1. The poll is sponsored by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at The Citadel, Military College of South Carolina.
2. The Citadel Poll, under the direction of Profs. DuBose Kapeluck and Mark Owens, designed the survey instrument and performed all statistical analyses and writing. The data collection was administered by Promark Research and Verasight based on instructions sent by The Citadel.
3. Funding for this study was provided by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences as an initiative to enhance public conversations about civics participation and leadership.
4. The full survey instrument and accompanying information is available at poll.citadel.edu.
5. The population surveyed includes registered voters in the state of South Carolina and the state of Georgia.
6. The sampling frame is a blend of a registration based sample (95.4%) and Verasight's panel of respondents (4.6%).
7. The sampling frame blends two sampling techniques across two modes.

- a. A probability-based methodology, that sampled a random list of registered voters with telephone calls from Promark Research (40% in South Carolina). A probability-based sampling approach was used SMS invitations to sample a random list of registered voters, to take an online version of the survey using the Verasight platform (55% in South Carolina).
 - b. A non-probability-based methodology, emailed respondents who were registered voters in South Carolina (self-reported) in the Verasight panel (5% in South Carolina). Individuals are recruited to the Verasight Community via random address-based sampling, random person-to-person text messaging, and dynamic online targeting. To participate in this study, those individuals must complete a multi-step authentication process that includes providing and SMS response and passing quality assurance measures in the survey.
 - c. Quotas were not used to guide how respondents were recruited into the sample.
 - d. The respondents in South Carolina who are part of the Verasight Community (5% SC), received points for taking their survey that could be redeemed for gift cards, electronic payments, or charitable contributions.
8. CATI surveys for phone calls and web surveys for text and email invitations were used for collecting the answers of the respondents.
 9. The survey began on Thursday May 21 and ended Sunday May 31, 2026. No interviews were conducted on Monday May 25, 2026.
 10. Details of design and response rates of this blended method survey are given below.

Tally of Surveys by mode, with response rate (rr)

	South Carolina
Telephone	605 (1.6%)
Text	830 (0.9%)
Online community	70 (13.5%)
Total Sample	1,505

11. The SC sample was designed to mirror registered voters in South Carolina. The sample size is 1,505. One likely voter subsample in South Carolina has 600 respondents who said they had voted or would “definitely vote” in this year’s Republican primary election. The margin of sampling error for the likely voters is 4.5%. Another likely voter subsample in South Carolina has 600 respondents who said they had voted or would “definitely vote” in this year’s Democratic primary election. The margin of sampling error for the likely voters is 6.3%.

12. Tally of Surveys by mode (pct), across voter group

	South Carolina	South Carolina Rep LV	South Carolina Dem LV
Telephone (cell)	545 (36%)	196 (33%)	175 (41%)
Telephone (landline)	60 (4%)	28 (5%)	17 (4%)
Text	830 (55%)	354 (59%)	216 (51%)
Online community	70 (5%)	22 (4%)	19 (4%)
Total Sample	1,505	600	427

13. The design effect for this survey is 1.24 in South Carolina, 1.29 in the Republican Primary, and 1.78 in the Democratic primary, which is incorporated into the margin of sampling error reported above.
14. The survey was administered in English only on the phone and text-to-web.
15. The percentages in this poll reflect a representative snapshot of the population at one time. The reality is that there are more than 3 million registered voters in South Carolina who react to the changing political environment around them. Also, respondents to this poll may understand a question differently than the rest of the population or differently based on the time they were asked to share their opinion. For these reasons, it is important to evaluate other factors that impact voters in the state especially at the time of an election.
16. Results for all items in the survey, including the full instrument, topline results, and cross-tabs are available at poll.citadel.edu.
17. For more information about how the survey was conducted contact Mark Owens at mowens6@citadel.edu.

Comparison of population and sample parameters (South Carolina)

* The percentages below reflect all surveys taken, including the over-sample counts in the unweighted columns.

	SC Voters	Unweighted, by frame			Weighted, by frame		Weight WGT
		Phone	Text	Panel	Phone (WGT)	Web (WGT)	
Female	55.2	44.6	48.7	74.3	54.9	51.5	52.9
Male	44.8	54.9	51.1	24.3	44.6	48.2	46.7
Black	23.6	19.3	16.5	22.9	23.6	23.6	23.6
White, College degree	29.2	41.1	42.0	31.4	32.1	27.3	29.2
White, No college degree	42.2	30.7	38.4	42.9	39.3	44.1	42.2
All Other	5.0	8.8	4.1	2.9	5.1	5.1	5.1
18-24	7.5	3.3	1.5	0	7.5	7.5	7.5
25-44	30.1	18.5	19.9	28.6	30.1	29.6	29.8
45-64	32.3	37.2	35.1	48.6	32.4	31.9	32.1
65 and over	30.0	41.0	43.6	22.9	30.0	31.0	30.6
Media Markets							
Charleston	18.2	20.7	18.0	11.4	18.2	18.2	18.2
Charlotte	7.6	10.9	9.3	5.7	7.6	7.6	7.7
Columbia	21.0	18.7	18.8	27.1	21.0	21.0	21.0
Myrtle Beach-Florence	13.1	12.1	15.9	18.6	13.2	13.1	13.1
Upstate	27.9	23.1	29.3	31.4	27.9	28.0	27.9
Others (Aug/Sav)	12.2	10.4	8.8	5.7	12.2	12.1	12.2
Kamala Harris in 2024	40.4	44.0	35.4	42.9	36.1	38.4	37.5
Donald Trump in 2024	58.2	41.7	55.7	45.7	52.1	55.4	54.0
Cannot recall/Did not vote/Refused	1.4	3.8	4.8	11.43	11.8	6.2	8.5
Total Count		605	830	70			
Total Count, LV Rep.		224	354	22			
Total Count, LV Dem.		192	216	19			

Percentages for education attainment for the state of South Carolina reflect the American Community Survey's 5-year estimates for the state's adult population (Source: U.S. Census Bureau). Percentages for all other estimates come from the South Carolina Election Commission.