



March 11, 2011

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## **I. Survey Methodology**

The Elon University Poll is conducted using a stratified random sample of households with telephones and wireless telephone numbers in the population of interest – in this case, citizens in North Carolina. The sample of telephone numbers for the survey is obtained from Survey Sampling International, LLC. Methodological information is also available at: <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/elonpoll/methodology.xhtml>.

### ***Selection of Households***

To equalize the probability of telephone selection, sample telephone numbers are systematically stratified according to subpopulation strata (e.g., a zip code, a county, a state, etc.), which yields a sample from telephone exchanges in proportion to each exchange's share of telephone households in the population of interest. Estimates of telephone households in the population of interest are generally obtained from several databases. Samples of household telephone numbers are distributed across all eligible blocks of numbers in proportion to the density of listed households assigned in the population of interest according to a specified subpopulation stratum. Upon determining the projected (or preferred) sample size, a sampling interval is calculated by summing the number of listed residential numbers in each eligible block within the population of interest and dividing that sum by the number of sampling points assigned to the population. From a random start between zero and the sampling interval, blocks are systematically selected in proportion to the density of listed household "working blocks." A *block* (also known as a *bank*) is a set of contiguous numbers identified by the first two digits of the last four digits of a telephone number. A working block contains three or more working telephone numbers. Exchanges are assigned to a population on the basis of all eligible blocks in proportion to the density of working telephone households. Once each population's proportion of telephone households is determined, then a sampling interval, based on that proportion, is calculated and specific exchanges and numbers are randomly selected. The methodology for the wireless component of this study starts with the determining which area code-exchange combinations in North Carolina are included in the wireless or shared Telcordia types. Similar to the process for selecting household telephone numbers, wireless numbers involve a multi-step process in which blocks of numbers are determined for each area code-exchange combination in the Telcordia types. From a random start within the first sampling interval, a systematic  $n$ th selection of each block of numbers is performed and a two-digit random number between 00 and 99 is appended to each selected  $n$ th block stem. The intent is to provide a stratification that will yield a sample that is representative both geographically and by large and small carrier. From these, a random sample is generated. Because exchanges and numbers are randomly selected by the computer, unlisted as well as listed household telephone numbers are included in the sample. Thus, the sample of telephone numbers generated for the population of interest constitutes a random sample of telephone households and wireless numbers of the population.

### ***Procedures Used for Conducting the Poll***

The survey was conducted Sunday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, through Thursday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, of 2011. During this time calls were made from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Sunday, and from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm on Monday through Thursday. The Elon University Poll uses CATI system software (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) in the administration of surveys. For each working telephone number in the sample, several attempts were made to reach each number. Only individuals 18 years or older were interviewed; those

reached at business or work numbers were not interviewed. For each number reached, one adult is generally selected based on whether s/he is the oldest or youngest adult. Interviews, which are conducted by live interviewers, are completed with adults from the target population as specified. Interviews for this survey were completed with 467 adults from North Carolina. For a sample size of 467, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 4.6 percentage points (the margin of sampling error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For sub-samples (a subgroup selected from the overall sample), the margin of error is higher depending on the size of the subsample. When we use a subsample, we identify these results as being from a subsample and provide the total number of respondents and margin of error for that subsample. In reporting our results, we note any use of a subsample where applicable; there are subsamples of the population in reporting these results. Because our surveys are based on probability sampling, there are a variety of factors that prevent these results from being perfect, complete depictions of the population; the foremost example is that of margin of sampling error (as noted above). With all probability samples, there are theoretical and practical difficulties estimating population characteristics (or parameters). Thus, while efforts are made to reduce or lessen such threats, sampling error as well as other sources of error – while not all inclusive, examples of other error effects are non-response rates, question order effects, question wording effects, etc. – are present in surveys derived from probability samples.

### ***Questions and Question Order***

The Elon University Poll provides the questions as worded and the order in which these questions are administered (to respondents). Conspicuous in reviewing some questions is the “bracketed” information. Information contained within brackets ( [ ] ) denotes response options as provided in the question; this bracketed information is rotated randomly to ensure that respondents do not receive a set order of response options presented to them, which also maintains question construction integrity by avoiding respondent acquiescence based on question composition. Some questions used a probe maneuver to determine a respondent’s intensity of perspective. Probe techniques used in this questionnaire mainly consist of asking a respondent if their response is more intense than initially provided. For example, upon indicating whether s/he is satisfied or dissatisfied, we asked the respondent “would you say you are very ‘satisfied’/‘dissatisfied’”. This technique is employed in some questions as opposed to specifying the full range of choices in the question. Though specifying the full range of options in questions is a commonly accepted practice in survey research, we sometimes prefer that the respondent determine whether their perspective is stronger or more intense for which the probe technique used. Another method for acquiring information from respondents is to ask an “open-ended” question. The open-ended question is a question for which no response options are provided, i.e., it is entirely up to the respondent to provide the response information.

### ***The Elon University Poll***

The Elon University Poll is conducted under the auspices of the Center for Public Opinion Polling (Hunter Bacot, Director & Mileah Kromer, Assistant Director), which is a constituent part of the Institute for Politics and Public Affairs (George Taylor, Director); both these organizations are housed in the department of political science at Elon University. These academic units are part of Elon College, the College of Arts and Sciences at Elon University. The Elon University administration, led by Dr. Leo Lambert, President of the university, fully support the Elon University Poll as part of its service commitment to state, regional, and national constituents. Dr. Hunter Bacot, a professor in the department of political science, directs the Elon University Poll. Elon University students administer the survey as part of the University’s commitment to experiential learning where “students learn through doing.”

## II. Survey Instrument and Percent Distributions by Question

Interviews were completed with 467 adults from households in the North Carolina. For a sample size of 467, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 4.6 percentage points (the margin of sampling error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. The questions as presented are normally in the order in which these appear on the survey instrument; in these results, questions on open government are not in the order as presented to respondents. The survey instrument, which provides the order of questions as administered, is available on our website (<http://www.elon.edu/e-web/elonpoll/default.xhtml>). Due to rounding, column totals may not equal 100 percent as indicated. Data are weighted to reflect the adult population in terms of age and race.

<b>About the Codes appearing in Questions and Responses</b>	
<b>Response Options not offered</b>	Response options are <u>not</u> offered to the person taking the survey (respondent), but are included in the question as asked (and usually denoted by brackets, [ ]). Response options are generally offered only for demographic questions (background characteristic, e.g., age, education, income, etc.).
<b>v = volunteered response</b>	Respondents volunteer response option. As response options are <u>not</u> offered to those taking the survey, some respondents offer or volunteer response options. Though not all volunteered options can be anticipated, the more common options are noted.
<b>p = probed response</b>	Respondents self-place in this option or category. A probe maneuver is used in questions to allow the respondent to indicate whether her/his response is more intense than initially provided for in the choices appearing in the question. For example, on probe questions the interviewer, upon a respondent indicating that she/he is satisfied (or dissatisfied), is instructed to ask him/her "Would you say you are "very satisfied"?"

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about the accessibility and availability of public documents. . . Most states have laws called "Sunshine Laws" that make public documents, records, information, and meetings available and accessible to citizens. . . are you [aware or not aware] if North Carolina has these laws?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NOT AWARE	62.5	50.2	58.4
AWARE	35.2	46.3	38.3
DON T KNOW/DON'T CARE (v)	2.3	3.5	3.3
Total	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

In general, how [important or unimportant] is it for citizens to have access to public documents, records, information, and meetings? Would you say it is [not at all important, somewhat important, or very important]?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	2.7	2.0	2.3
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	26.9	21.8	24.1
VERY IMPORTANT	68.1	74.1	71.3
DON T KNOW / DON'T CARE/ REFUSED (v)	2.3	2.1	2.3
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

Do you believe that citizen access to public documents, records, information, and meetings [does influence or does not influence] government operations?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
DOES NOT INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS	16.1	15.1	22.7
INFLUENCES GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS	75.9	79.3	73.2
DON T KNOW /DON'T CARE /REFUSED (v)	7.9	5.7	4.2
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

**Now I want to read you some statements about the availability and accessibility of public documents, records, information, and meetings, in connection with how government operates. Please tell me whether you [strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree] with each statement . . .**

	STRONGLY DISAGREE (p)	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE (p)	DON'T KNOW (v)
It's important to be able to get any document you want from government	4.5	18.6	45.3	29.3	2.3
Citizens have a right to know about everything government does	2.5	23.7	40.7	32.0	1.1
Citizen requests for government documents are just a big distraction for government workers	26.9	50.5	14.7	3.9	3.9
Every citizen should have complete access to information about their government	1.0	20.4	45.0	31.7	2.0
Sometimes it is better not to know too much about what is going on in government	23.3	46.2	25.1	3.6	1.9
Government records belong to the people, not to the government	2.6	14.3	53.1	25.3	4.6
It is nobody's business who gives what to a campaign	29.8	42.9	20.2	3.9	3.2
Transparency is the key to fighting government corruption	1.2	10.9	53.0	27.3	7.6
Public hearings are essential for good government	0.4	3.4	64.9	28.3	3.1
Public access to records is crucial to the functioning of good government	1.7	9.1	60.5	25.9	2.8
Governments naturally like to keep secrets from citizens	1.9	19.7	51.7	23.2	3.4

Note: Total=467, +/-4.6%

When it comes to actions and activities of state and local governments, would you say you have [a lot of interest, some interest, little interest, or no interest at all]?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NO INTEREST	1.2	1.1	2.6
LITTLE INTEREST	10.9	9.7	8.7
SOME INTEREST	47.8	47.6	44.0
A LOT OF INTEREST	39.6	40.3	44.6
DON'T KNOW / DON'T CARE (v)	0.5	1.4	0.1
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

When it comes to actions and activities of the federal government, would you say you have [a lot of interest, some interest, little interest, or no interest at all]?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NO INTEREST	1.3	1.9	1.8
LITTLE INTEREST	3.2	7.6	7.5
SOME INTEREST	34.2	33.1	34.9
A LOT OF INTEREST	60.8	57.2	55.4
DON'T KNOW (v)	0.5	0.2	0.4
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

As you may know, there is a state law that requires nearly all government bodies in North Carolina to conduct their affairs in public and make most information available to the public . . . [some argue that this law is too weak, while others argue that it is strong enough]. . . so, with this in mind, would you [support or oppose] an amendment to the North Carolina constitution that makes all public business of any government body in North Carolina open and available to the public.

	Percent
STRONGLY OPPOSE (p)	2.6
OPPOSE	13.0
SUPPORT	50.6
STRONGLY SUPPORT (p)	29.9
DON T KNOW (v)	3.6
REFUSED (v)	0.4
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0

When thinking about the accessibility and availability of your state and local governments, would you say they are [always accessible and available, somewhat accessible and available, or not at all accessible and available]?

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NOT AT ALL ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	7.0	6.8	8.4
SOMEWHAT ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	74.0	75.5	76.7
ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	7.8	10.2	6.8
DON'T KNOW/ DON'T CARE (v)	10.7	7.6	8.1
REFUSED (v)	0.5	0.0	0.1
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

**When thinking about the accessibility and availability of the federal government, would you say it is [always accessible and available, somewhat accessible and available, or not at all accessible and available]?**

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NOT AT ALL ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	18.4	19.3	18.6
SOMEWHAT ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	70.6	68.0	72.7
ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE & AVAILABLE	4.9	6.9	5.0
DON T KNOW/ DON'T CARE (v)	5.4	5.7	3.6
REFUSED (v)	.8	0.0	0.1
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

**Have you ever tried to get any public documents, records, and information?**

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NO	47.2	43.0	42.4
YES	52.1	55.9	57.4
DON T KNOW (v)	0.7	1.0	0.1
REFUSED (v)	0.0	0.1	0.1
Total (N=467, +/-4.6%)	100.0 N=620 +/- 4.0%	100.0 N=579 +/- 4.2%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

*Respondents answering 'no', 'don't know', or 'refused' to this question, skip following questions and are taken to the last question.*

*Respondents answering 'yes' to this question answer the following questions (denoted by indent).*



*These next three questions are asked ONLY of those answering 'yes' to previous question on whether they had ever tried to "get any public documents, records, and information".*

**Now I'm going to read a list of items and I would like for you to tell me if you have ever tried to access this information...**

	NO	YES	DON'T KNOW (v)
Police reports of crimes committed in your community.	27.2	71.8	1.0
The names and addresses of registered sex offenders.	38.0	61.0	1.0
Records of government officials' expense accounts.	82.6	15.9	1.5
Government records that identify the type, amount, and location of hazardous chemicals.	76.0	22.4	1.6
The annual salaries of public employees.	49.9	48.5	1.6
Records detailing someone's criminal past.	41.5	57.3	1.2
Public utility records	64.8	33.8	1.4
Government employees work e-mail.	77.5	21.5	1.0
Property tax records, including the value of a person's home and how much was paid in property taxes.	28.8	69.2	1.9
Driver's license records, which include a person's name, address, height, and weight.	73.8	24.3	1.9
Divorce court files, which may include family assets and allegations between spouses.	77.3	21.7	1.0
Government budgets or financial statements	54.0	44.6	1.3

Note: Total=268, +/-6.1%

**Were you generally successful in getting the documents, records, or information that you tried to?**

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
NO	14.9	11.5	14.8
YES	82.8	86.8	83.6
DON T KNOW (v)	2.2	1.7	1.6
Total (N=268, +/-6.1%)	100.0 N=323 +/-5.6%	100.0 N=324 +/- 5.6%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

Note: Question wording is slightly different in previous surveys (in 2009 and 2010); it was: "Were you successful in getting these documents, records, or information?"

**How was your experience in getting these documents, records, or information . . . was it [very easy, easy, difficult, or very difficult]?**

	March 2009	March 2010	February 2011
VERY DIFFICULT	12.4	10.3	9.0
DIFFICULT	40.0	35.6	34.8
EASY	35.5	44.1	45.3
VERY EASY	9.8	7.4	9.3
DON'T RECALL OR REMEMBER (v)	1.5	1.0	0.9
DON T KNOW/ REFUSED (v)	0.8	1.6	0.7
Total (N=268, +/-6.1%)	100.0 N=323; +/-5.6%	100.0 N=324 +/- 5.6%	100.0 N=467 +/-4.6%

*These questions are asked ONLY of those answering 'no', 'don't know', or 'refused' to question on whether they had ever tried to "get any public documents, records, and information".*

**Now I'm going to read a list of items and I would like for you to tell me if you believe ordinary citizens [should or should not] have access to this information.**

	DEFINITELY SHOULD NOT	SHOULD NOT	SHOULD	DEFINITELY SHOULD	DON'T KNOW (v)
Police reports of crimes committed in your community.	0.7	4.8	57.9	35.6	1.0
The names and addresses of registered sex offenders.	0.3	4.8	48.6	45.1	1.2
Records of government officials' expense accounts.	1.2	19.5	52.2	22.3	4.8
Government records that identify the type, amount, and location of hazardous chemicals.	0.3	6.4	58.2	32.6	2.4
The annual salaries of public employees.	5.8	22.7	48.1	20.1	3.3
Records detailing someone's criminal past.	2.8	18.8	53.7	22.0	2.7
Public utility records	2.6	22.4	53.1	11.4	10.4
Government employees work e-mail.	4.5	40.7	38.1	9.3	7.3
Property tax records, including the value of a person's home and how much was paid in property taxes.	5.4	37.8	42.9	10.1	3.8
Driver's license records, which include a person's name, address, height, and weight.	13.4	58.0	21.1	4.0	3.5
Divorce court files, which may include family assets and allegations between spouses.	15.6	62.1	15.8	1.7	4.9
Government budgets or financial statements	0.9	11.3	58.9	26.5	2.4

Note: Total=199, +/-7.1%