

Most Important Issue Among Likely Voters

October 21-25, 2014

The Elon University Poll conducted a live-caller, dual frame (landline and cell phone) survey in North Carolina between October 21-25, 2014. This report examines responses to the open-ended question “*What do you think is the most important issue in the United States*” and focuses on the responses from the 687 respondents who were identified as likely voters. The survey has margin of error of +/- 3.74.

Key Findings:

1. International affairs and national defense remain the most important issue on the minds of voters in North Carolina (see Table 1). This confirms the findings in a September Elon Poll, which also found more respondents mentioning **international affairs** as the most important issue than any other issue. Prior to the September survey, the **economy** was consistently the most commonly mentioned issue. Not since 2007 had the Elon Poll found international issues surpassing the economy as the most important issue.
2. Hagan and Tillis supporters tend to see the world differently and this can be seen by how they answer the “most important issue” survey question (see Table 2). For Tillis supporters **international affairs** are the most frequently mentioned issue; for Hagan voters it is the **economy**. Hagan supporters are much more likely to mention **education** as the most important issue in the country (12.1%) than Tillis voters (1.5%). Only one (1) Hagan supporter mentioned the budget, deficit or debt as the most important issue (less than 1%), whereas 20 Tillis supporters were concerned about fiscal issues (over 7%). Only 6 Tillis voters mentioned **poverty, inequality or welfare** (2%), while 10.7% of Hagan voters mentioned such issues. **Immigration** was more frequently mentioned by Tillis supporters (10.7%) than Hagan supporters (2.8%).
3. There are some noticeable differences in how men and women perceive the most important policy issues facing the country (see Table 3). Slightly more women (18.1%) mentioned **international affairs** than men (16.2%) did, while men (19.7%) mentioned the **economy** more than women (14%) did. Women (10.3%) were much more likely to mention **education** as the most important issue than men (3.1%).

Table 1: Most Important Issue among Likely Voters

What do you think is the most important issue in the United States?

	September 2014 Likely Voters		October 2014 Likely Voters	
International Affairs/Defense	20.2%	127	17.2%*	118
Economy	17.7%	111	16.8%	115
Education	9.7%	61	6.8%	47
Jobs	9.5%	60	9.0%	62
Government/Politicians	8.9%	56	7.1%	49
Immigration	7.6%	48	7.1%	49
Healthcare/ACA	6.7%	42	6.8%	46
Miscellaneous	6.7%	42	8.9%	61
Budget/Debt	4.6%	29	3.5%	24
Poverty/Inequality/Welfare	2.7%	17	6.4%	44
God/Religion/Morality	2.5%	16	3.0%	21
Environment/Energy	0.3%	2	1.3%	9
Ebola	--		3.2%	22
Don't Know/Refused	2.8%	18	2.9%	20
Total	100.0%	629	100.0%	687

* includes 2.8% (19 respondents) who mentioned Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

Table 2: Most Important Issue among Hagan and Tillis Likely Voters

What do you think is the most important issue in the United States?

	Hagan Voters October 2014		Tillis Voters October 2014	
Economy	16.0%	49	19.6%	55
International Affairs/Defense	12.2%	38	21.4%	60
Education	12.1%	37	1.5%	4
Jobs	11.5%	35	8.0%	22
Poverty/Inequality/Welfare	10.7%	33	2.0%	6
Miscellaneous	9.8%	30	6.5%	18
Government/Politicians	8.2%	25	6.1%	17
Healthcare/ACA	6.5%	20	7.1%	20
Ebola	3.9%	12	3.1%	9
Immigration	2.8%	9	10.7%	30
Environment/Energy	2.3%	7	0.4%	1
Budget/Debt	0.4%	1	7.1%	20
God/Religion/Morality	0.4%	1	4.6%	13
Don't Know/Refused	3.3%	10	1.9	5
Total	100.0%	307	100.0%	280

Table 3: Most Important Issue among Male and Female Likely Voters

What do you think is the most important issue in the United States?

	Male Voters October 2014		Female Voters October 2014	
Economy	19.7%	65	14.0%	50
International Affairs/Defense	16.2%	54	18.1%	64
Jobs	10.1%	34	8.2%	29
Immigration	9.1%	30	5.3%	19
Miscellaneous	8.2%	27	9.3%	33
Government/Politicians	8.2%	27	6.1%	22
Healthcare/ACA	5.5%	18	7.9%	28
Budget/Debt	5.0%	17	2.2%	8
Poverty/Inequality/Welfare	4.8%	16	7.9%	28
Education	3.1%	10	10.3%	37
God/Religion/Morality	2.7%	9	3.7%	13
Ebola	2.5%	8	3.9%	14
Environment/Energy	1.3%	4	1.2%	4
Don't Know/Refused	3.7%	12	2.0%	7
Total	100.0%	331	100.0%	356

Basic Methodological Information

Mode:	Live Interviewer RDD Telephone (Dual Frame: Cell Phone & Landlines)
Population & Sample Area	North Carolina Likely Voters
Dates in the field:	October 21-25, 2014
Likely Voter Sample Size	687
Likely Voter Margin of Error	± 3.74
Confidence Level	95%
Weighting Variables	Age , Race, Gender, & Phone Ownership

The Elon University Poll uses a stratified random sample of households with telephones and wireless (cell) telephone numbers. Please direct questions about the results of this report or Elon University Poll's methodology to Dr. Kenneth Fernandez at 336-278-6438; kfernandez@elon.edu or Dr. Jason Husser at 336-278-5239, jhusser@elon.edu.

The full report for the October 21-25, 2014 Election Survey and description of the likely voter model used can be found at Elon University Poll's website: <http://www.elon.edu/elonpoll/>

The Elon University Poll Team

- Dr. Kenneth Fernandez is the Director of the Elon University Poll. Dr. Fernandez holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from University of California – Riverside. Dr. Fernandez is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Elon University. He has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed social science journals.
- Dr. Jason Husser is the Assistant director. Dr. Husser is also Assistant Professor of Political Science at Elon University and Faculty Fellow for Civic Engagement. Dr. Husser holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University.
- John Robinson serves as Director of Communications for the Poll. He is a former newspaper editor, veteran journalist, and North Carolina native.
- Daniel Anderson is Vice President of Elon University Communications.
- Eric Townsend is Director of the Elon University News Bureau. Both work very closely with the directors in communicating results of the poll.



Fernandez



Husser



Robinson

Faculty members in the Department of Political Science are also involved in advising the directors. The poll operates under the auspices of the College of Arts and Sciences at Elon University, led by Interim Dean Gabie Smith.

The Elon University administration, led by Dr. Leo Lambert, president of the university, fully supports the Elon University Poll as part of its service commitment to state, regional, and national constituents. Elon University fully funds the Elon University Poll. Because of this generous support, the Elon University poll does not engage in any contract work. This permits the Elon University Poll to operate as a neutral, non-biased, non-partisan resource.

Elon University students administer the survey as part of the University's commitment to civic engagement and experiential learning where "students learn through doing." Student interviewers receive extensive training prior to engaging in interviewing. A team of student supervisors (led by Mary Young '15) assists the directors with quality control and monitoring.

For more information on the Elon University Poll, visit www.elon.edu/elonpoll

Or contact:

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