ELON UNIVERSITY
POLL

For immediate release
November 10, 2026

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- Topline and methodology for this poll
- Charts for this poll

Elon University Poll measures N.C. attitudes toward impeachment, potential 2028 presidential candidates

With Democrats winning control of both the U.S. House and Senate in last week's election, one of the looming questions relates to the potential impeachment of President Trump and other members of the Trump administration.

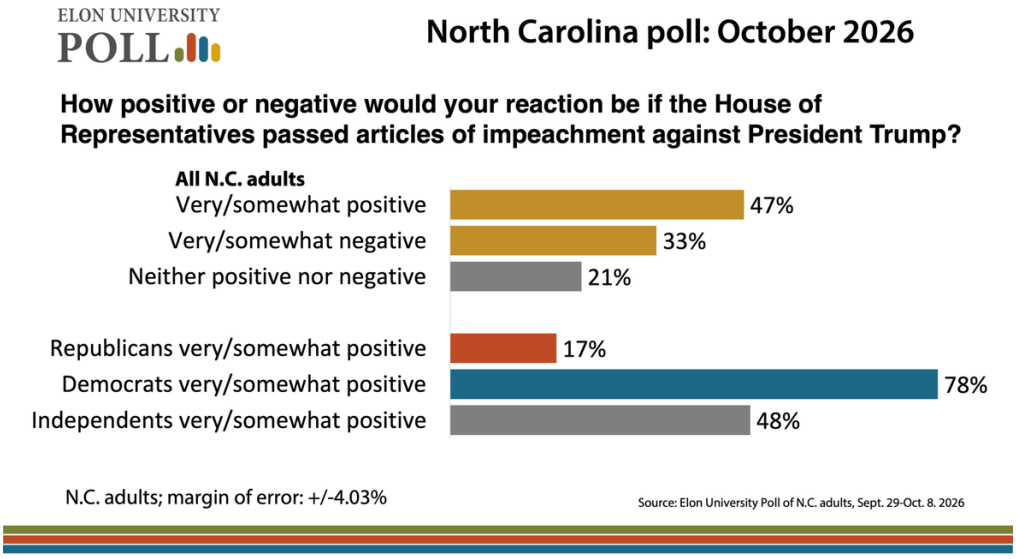
Trump was impeached by the House twice during his first term in office and was acquitted both times by the Senate.

Prior to the election, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) and other Democratic leaders developed plans to investigate Trump, his family and his administration over charges of corruption and abuse of power. Jeffries said he and other Democrats had neither ruled out, nor ruled in filing articles of impeachment.

In a pre-election Elon University Poll, **47%** of North Carolinians said they would react either "very" or "somewhat" positively to an impeachment effort, compared with **33%** who said they would react negatively and 21% who said their reaction would be neither positive nor negative.

A large majority of Democrats (78%) reacted positively to the prospect of impeaching Trump, while 48% of Independents and 17% of Republicans said they had a positive reaction to impeachment.

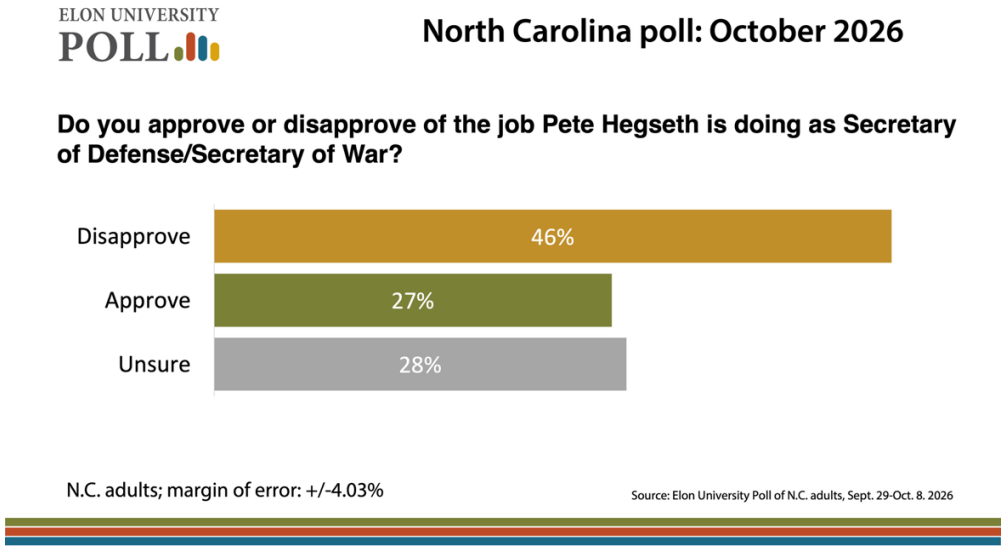
The survey of 800 North Carolina adults was conducted Sept. 29-Oct. 8, 2026, and has a margin of error of +/-4.03%.



“Though President Trump’s approval ratings in North Carolina are low, opinions about him were not negative enough at the time of our poll for a majority of adults in the state to view another impeachment positively,” said Jason Husser, director of the university poll and professor of political science and public policy,

An impeachment effort targeting Secretary of Defense/Secretary of War Pete Hegseth was filed on November 9 by Representative Thomas Massie (R-KY) of the House Judiciary Committee. Among his charges, Rep. Massie asserts that Secretary Hegseth has abused his powers as defense secretary and implemented unlawful orders by carrying out strikes against Iran.

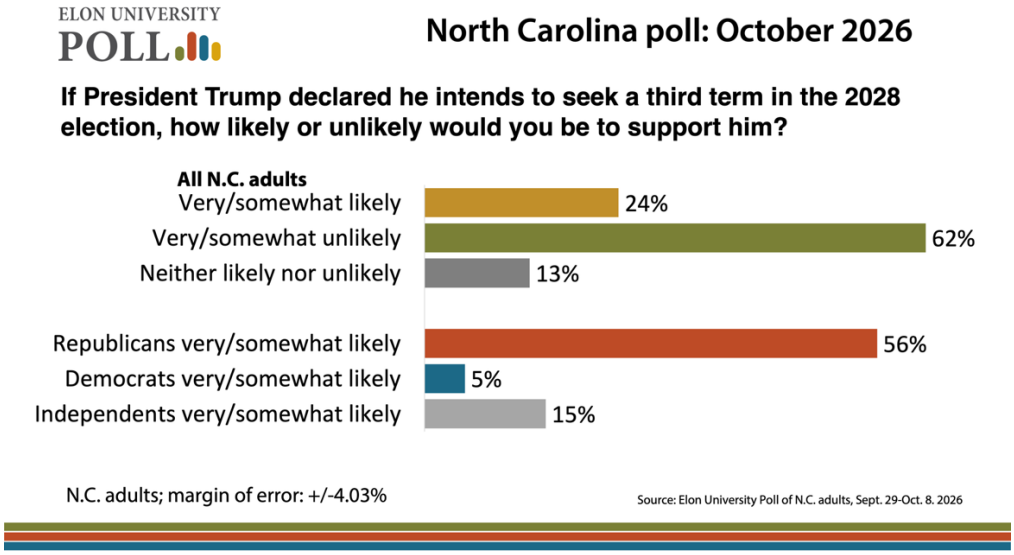
In the pre-election poll, North Carolinians gave low marks to Hegseth’s job performance. Forty-six percent disapproved of his performance, compared with 27% who approved and 28% who were unsure. Among Democrats, 72% disapproved of Hegseth’s job performance, compared with 58% of Independents and 13% of Republicans.



Looking ahead to the 2028 election

With the mid-term election complete, political attention turns to the 2028 presidential election and potential candidates. Trump has said he would "love to run" for a third term in office but said "the law is very strong."

In the pre-election survey, roughly one out of four (24%) North Carolinians said it is likely they would support a Trump candidacy in 2028, including 56% of Republicans. However, 62% said it is unlikely they would support Trump, including 93% of Democrats and 72% of Independents.



Asked to choose one person they would be pleased to support in a run for the presidency, poll respondents named the following (percentage of respondents who named each candidate):

1. JD Vance (11.7%)
2. Marco Rubio (7.9%)
3. Donald Trump* (7.7%)
4. Kamala Harris (7.5%)
5. Gavin Newsom (5.0%)
6. Pete Buttigieg (4.5%)
7. Barack Obama/Obama (no first name)* (3.3%)
8. Ron DeSantis (2.7%)
9. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (2.6%)
10. Jon Ossoff (2.6%)
11. Bernie Sanders (2.6%)

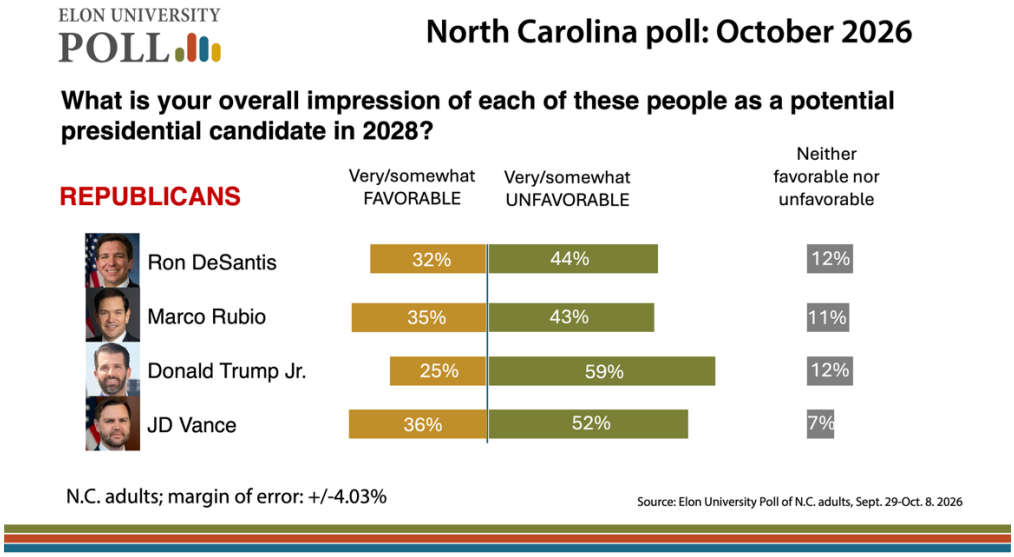
(*Already elected twice - see U.S. Constitution 22nd amendment)

“Our numbers are a very early snapshot of public attitudes about potential candidates in 2028 primary races,” Husser said. “We might see some of the names that did well in our pre-election poll end up being front runners, but we are just as likely to see new names emerge between now and the start of 2028 campaigning.

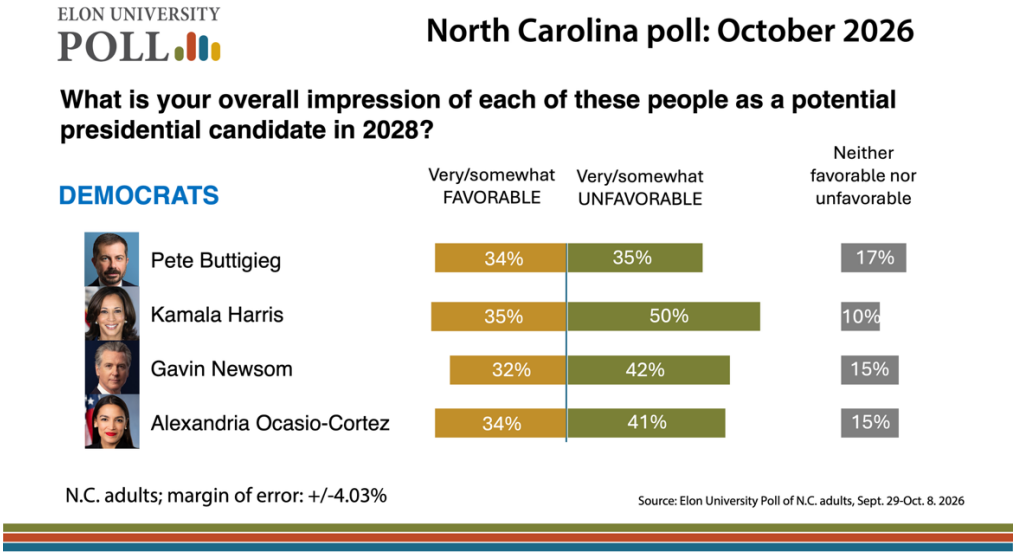
“Despite the qualification that our numbers will likely change dramatically between now and the 2028 presidential primaries, our data shows two Republicans (Vance and Rubio) and three Democrats (Harris, Newsom and Buttigieg) standing out as having a notable base to start campaigns in North Carolina,” Husser said.

The Elon University Poll asked respondents to rate their overall impression of a select group of four Republicans and four Democrats who have been mentioned as potential candidates. In all cases, the candidates had higher unfavorable ratings than favorable ratings:

Republicans
Ron DeSantis (Florida Governor): 44% unfavorable, 32% favorable
Marco Rubio (Secretary of State): 43% unfavorable, 35% favorable
Donald Trump Jr. (Trump organization executive): 59% unfavorable, 25% favorable
JD Vance (Vice President): 52% unfavorable, 36% favorable



Democrats
Pete Buttigieg (Former Secretary of Transportation): 35% unfavorable, 34% favorable
Kamala Harris (Former Vice President): 50% unfavorable, 35% favorable
Gavin Newsom (California Governor): 42% unfavorable, 32% favorable
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (U.S. House Rep. – NY): 41% unfavorable, 34% favorable



Among **Republicans**, the highest ("very favorable") ratings were for Vance (57%), Rubio (54%), DeSantis (50%) and Donald Trump Jr. (37%).

Among **Democrats**, the highest ("very favorable") ratings were for Harris (44%), Buttigieg (41%), Newsom (38%) and Ocasio-Cortez (38%).

Among **Independents**, the highest ("very favorable") ratings were for Buttigieg (16%), Rubio (16%), Vance (15%) and Harris (13%).

"Notably, Donald Trump Jr. has favorable ratings among Republicans when we gave respondents his name for evaluation, but less than 2% of Republicans volunteered his name in the open-ended question to name one person they would support," Husser said. "This is indicative that early leads in the upcoming primaries will depend largely on which candidates emerge to compete for voters' attention."

Poll Methodology

Access the poll topline and full methodology at: www.elon.edu/elonpoll. The survey was developed by the Elon University Poll and fielded by the international marketing and polling firm YouGov as an online, web-based survey, self-administered through online panels. Between September 29 and October 8, 2026, YouGov interviewed 1,038 North Carolina adults aged 18 and older. These respondents were then matched down to a sample of 800 to produce the final dataset. YouGov's sample matching procedure was used to create a sample of panelists that was representative of the North Carolina population on education, age, race, gender, registration, and partisanship (2024 vote). The margin of error for all adults in this survey is +/-4.03%.

About the Elon University Poll

Established in 2000, the Elon University Poll conducts national and North Carolina surveys on issues of importance to voters and residents. Information from these polls is shared with media, citizens and public officials to facilitate informed public policymaking through the better understanding of citizens' opinions and attitudes. The poll is fully funded by Elon University and operates as the neutral, non-biased information resource.

The Elon University Poll is a charter member of the Transparency Initiative, a program created by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) in 2014 to educate polling firms on ways to better share how they collect and interpret their information. The Elon Poll's voluntary participation in this initiative signifies a willingness to clearly state in its reports how questions were asked, in what order, who funded the poll and who conducted it, and a definition of the population under study, among other details.