

The Third Vanderbilt Poll has just been completed by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Vanderbilt University. Under the direction of Professors Josh Clinton and John Geer, the opinions of 1,500 random Tennesseans on politics, education, and the direction of the state and country were collected via a landline telephone to assess their opinion. The poll was in the field from October 28th through November 5th (but no calls were made on Halloween to avoid potential non-response issues due to the holiday) and 61% of the people contacted agreed to participate in the poll according to the standards of the American Association of Public Opinion Research. The data was weighted to ensure that the sample was representative of Tennessee in terms of age, gender, education, region (West, Middle, East), and race/ethnicity, but the weighted and unweighted results were nearly identical. The margin of error for a proportion based on the 1423 respondents with complete demographic information is +/- 2.6%

The questions of the fifteen minute long Vanderbilt Poll were all pre-screened by a bipartisan board to ensure that they were unbiased. Whenever possible, the Vanderbilt Poll used questions that were previously used to follow best practices and permit consistent measurement.

The Vanderbilt Poll asked Tennesseans about a variety of important topics. A series of questions asked about the upcoming presidential race. Tennesseans were asked about their preferences in the Republican primary, their opinions in several head-to-head matchups between Obama and likely Republican challengers, and the possible impact of a third candidate on the election contest.

The Poll also continued to track important trends in Tennessee opinion with regard to approval of important political leaders such as President Obama, Governor Haslam, and Senators Corker and Alexander and to assess the approval of the U.S. Congress and the Tennessee State legislature. Tennesseans were again asked about the direction of the state and national economy and their opinions on what state priorities ought to be.

The Vanderbilt Poll also asked more specific questions about various policy proposals being considered in Tennessee such as the direct election of judges, legislative redistricting, as well as a variety of questions on education policy including support for teacher pay, collective bargaining for teachers, vouchers and increased charter schools.

Given recent events, Tennesseans were asked about the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements to measure the support for these two grassroots movements in

Tennessee and to determine which individuals were most likely to self-identify with the goals of each.

In asking these questions, the Vanderbilt Poll continued to employ cutting-edge survey techniques to expand the type of questions that the survey can address. In particular, by asking a question in several ways –i.e. a so-called “split ballot” design – we can identify how different phrasings and arguments might affect public opinion.



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