

North Carolina and Science

Elon University Poll

February 24-28, 2013

The Elon University Poll conducted a landline and cell phone survey from Feb. 24-28, 2013. The survey consisted of a random sample of 891 residents of North Carolina. The survey asked respondents about their opinions on a range of state and national issues. In this report we discuss the results of several survey items that ask respondents about various topics related to science.

Positive Image of Science

In general, North Carolinians have a very positive view of science. When asked if science had a mostly positive effect on our society or a mostly negative effect, almost 90 percent of respondents said science had a positive effect. When asked how they would feel if their son or daughter wanted to become a scientist, most respondents said they would be happy (85 percent for daughters/ 84 percent for sons). A majority (55 percent) also feel that government investment in research is essential for scientific progress, compared to 37 percent who said private investment was enough to ensure scientific progress, even without government support (a little over 8 percent were unsure or undecided).

Science in the State of North Carolina

Many respondents see North Carolina as a leader in the field of science. Thirty-seven percent said North Carolina was better than most states when it came to being a leader in science and technology. Thirty-eight percent said about the same and only 13 percent said the state was not as good as most states when it came to science and technology. A wide range of answers emerged when respondents were asked what organization in North Carolina comes to mind when they think of science. The most common response was the Research Triangle Park (with 6 percent), followed closely by many other prominent organizations such as Duke University, Duke Energy, GlaxoSmithKline, NC State, SAS, IBM and UNC Chapel Hill.

The North Carolina Science Festival

The North Carolina Science Festival is a multi-day event involving activities that celebrate science and technology. The Festival began in 2010 and this year is being held April 5th through the 21st. The North Carolina Science Festival highlights the educational, cultural and financial impact of science in our society and in our state. The Elon Poll asked respondents if they had heard of the North Carolina Science Festival and nearly 30 percent said they had.

Table 1: Overall, would you say science has had a mostly positive effect on our society or mostly negative effect on our society?

| | No. | % |
|---------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Mostly Positive | 799 | 89.70% |
| Mostly Negative..... | 39 | 4.30% |
| Neither/both [volunteered]..... | 42 | 4.70% |
| Don't Know..... | 11 | 1.20% |
| N= | 891 | 100.00% |

Table 2: Compared with other states, how would you rate North Carolina as a leader in science and technology. Would you say it is better than most states, about the same as most states or not as good as most states?

| | No. | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Better | 332 | 37.20% |
| About the Same..... | 341 | 38.30% |
| Not as Good | 119 | 13.30% |
| Don't know / No Opinion | 96 | 10.70% |
| Refused | 3 | 0.40% |
| N= | 891 | 100.00% |

Table 3: Which of these comes closer to your view? Government investment in research is essential for scientific progress OR Private investment will ensure that enough scientific progress is made, even without government investment.

| | No. | % |
|-----------------------------|-----|---------|
| Government Investment | 489 | 55.10% |
| Private Investment..... | 323 | 36.50% |
| Don't know | 75 | 8.40% |
| N= | 887 | 100.00% |

Table 4: Have you heard of the North Carolina Science Festival?

| | No. | % |
|------------------|-----|---------|
| Yes | 263 | 29.50% |
| No..... | 624 | 70.00% |
| Don't know | 5 | 0.50% |
| N= | 891 | 100.00% |

Table 5: From what you’ve heard or read, do scientists generally agree that the Earth is getting warmer because of human activity, or do they not generally agree?

| | No. | % |
|------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Scientist agree | 562 | 63.10% |
| Scientist DO NOT agree | 238 | 26.70% |
| Don’t know | 91 | 10.20% |
| N= | 891 | 100.00% |

Table 6: Now I’d like you to consider the following situation. If you had a daughter/son {split sample}, how would you feel if she wanted to be a scientist—would you feel happy, unhappy, or would you not care one way or the other?

DAUGHTER

| | No. | % |
|------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Happy | 375 | 85.20% |
| Unhappy | 2 | 0.40% |
| Do not care either way | 62 | 14.10% |
| Don’t Know | 1 | 0.30% |
| N= | 440 | 100.00% |

SON

| | No. | % |
|------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Happy | 376 | 83.50% |
| Unhappy | 4 | 1.00% |
| Do not care either way | 69 | 15.30% |
| Don’t Know | 1 | 0.30% |
| N= | 451 | 100.00% |

North Carolina’s Most Recognized Science Companies and Organizations

The Elon University Poll asked a representative sample of North Carolina residents the following question:

“When thinking about science, what is the first North Carolina company or organization that comes to mind?”

The most frequent overall response to the open-ended question was the Research Triangle Park. Duke University (or its subsidiary medical and research centers) ranked second. Duke Energy ranked third overall. It should be noted that the Research Triangle Park is not a single company or organization but rather home to over 170 companies.

Duke Energy was the most recognized science for-profit business among North Carolina residents. GlaxoSmithKline, SAS Institute, IBM, and DuPont were also among the most recognizable science businesses.

Among universities, Duke was the most recognized, followed by North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Just over one-third of the sample did not name any organization.

Table 7: North Carolina’s most recognized science organizations.

| Rank | Organization | Percent Mentioning |
|------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Research Triangle Park | 6% |
| 2 | Duke University | 5% |
| 3 | Duke Energy | 4% |
| 4 | GlaxoSmithKline | 3% |
| 5 | NC State | 3% |
| 6 | SAS | 3% |
| 7 | IBM | 3% |
| 8 | UNC Chapel Hill | 2% |
| 9 | Other Universities | 1% |
| 10 | DuPont | 1% |
| | Other Responses | 31% |
| | Don't Know | 36% |

Note: Total does not equal 100% due to rounding

Basic Methodological Information

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|---------------------|---|
| Mode: | Live Interviewer RDD Telephone Interviews (Dual Frame: Cell Phone and Landlines) |
| Sample Area: | North Carolina |
| Dates in the field: | February 24 – February 28, 2013 |
| Sample Size | 891 |
| Margin of Error | ±3.28 |
| Confidence Level | 95% |
| Weighting Variables | Age , Race, Gender, and Phone Ownership |

For more information on this Elon University Poll, visit www.elon.edu/elonpoll, or contact:

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