

## North Carolina and the Federal Budget Crisis

Elon University Poll

February 24-28, 2013

---

**Kenneth E. Fernandez, Ph.D.**

Director of the Elon University Poll

Assistant Professor of Political Science

[kfernandez@elon.edu](mailto:kfernandez@elon.edu)

(336) 278-6438

**Jason A. Husser, Ph.D.**

Assistant Director of the Elon University Poll

Assistant Professor of Political Science

[jhusser@elon.edu](mailto:jhusser@elon.edu)

(336) 278-5239

**John L. Robinson**

Director of Communications for the Elon University Poll

[jrobinson24@elon.edu](mailto:jrobinson24@elon.edu)

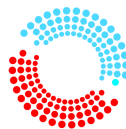
---

**Daniel J. Anderson**

Vice President for University Communications

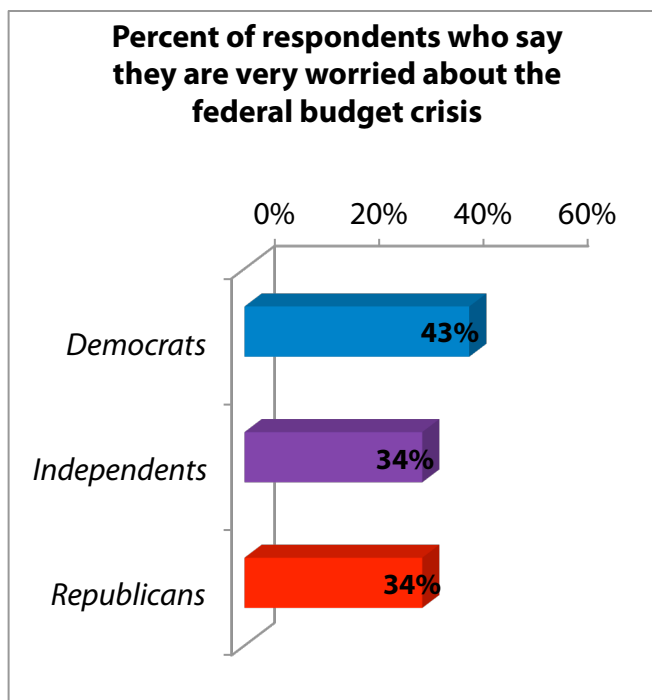
**Eric Townsend**

Director of Elon University News Bureau



## Concern over the federal budget crisis looms large in North Carolina

A February 2013 survey conducted by the Elon University Poll found that many North Carolina residents are worried about a pending federal budget crisis with automatic across-the-board spending cuts set to take effect March 1, 2013. Seventy percent of survey respondents said they were at least “somewhat worried” about sequestration – a reduction of \$85 billion in government spending this year - and



the poll found noticeable differences based on partisan identification and age.

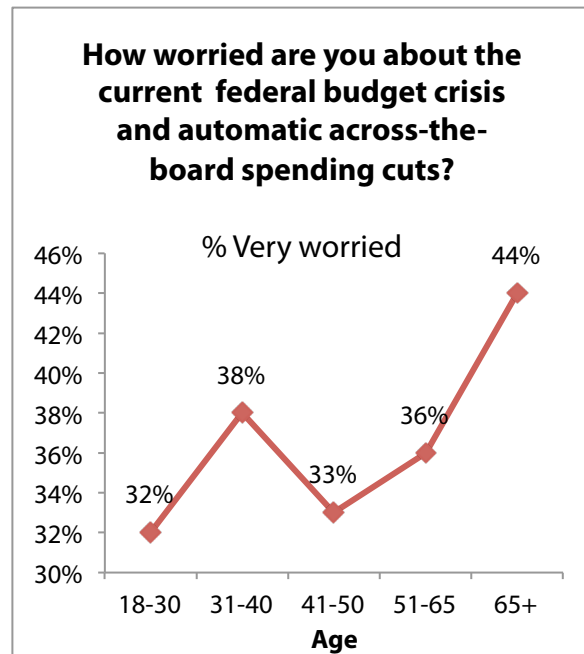
Approximately 43 percent of Democrats said they were “very worried” about the budget crisis compared to 34 percent of Republicans and 34 percent of Independents. And although the automatic spending cuts will not impact Social Security or Medicare, older respondents were much more worried than younger respondents. Forty-four percent of respondents 65 and older said they were “very worried” about spending cuts, while only 32 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 30 said they were very worried.

***“Almost seventy-percent of North Carolina residents are worried about the federal budget crisis and across-the-board spending cuts.”***

## Who will be blamed for Sequestration?

North Carolinians place more blame on Congress than the president for the current fiscal dilemma. When asked if the president or Congress deserves more blame for the budget crisis, most respondents (54 percent) chose Congress, 22 percent said the president, and 17 percent said both deserve the blame for the federal budget impasse. The image of both the president and Congress seem tarnished by the impending deadline.

***“The President seems to be weathering the budget crisis far better than Congress.”***



Approval for Congress is typically very low, generally averaging around 30 percent in national polls taken since the 1970s. As sequestration and automatic cuts become ever more likely,

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?	
	<u>%</u>
	<u>Approve</u>
Republicans.....	13%
Independents.....	10%
Democrats.....	13%

Congress’s approval rating seems to be approaching an all-time low in North Carolina, with only 11 percent approving of the way Congress is doing its job. Republicans and Democrats are equally disappointed in Congressional job performance (13 percent

approval), while 10 percent of Independents approve of the job Congress is doing. The

president seems to be weathering the budget crisis far better than Congress. Forty-eight percent of respondents in the state said they approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president compared to 45 percent who disapprove.

***“Both parties seem to share part of the blame for failing to reach an agreement to avoid sequestration.”***

Thirty-four percent of those surveyed in North Carolina believed Republicans deserved the brunt of the blame for the budget crisis compared to 28 percent who blamed the Democrats. A sizable portion of those sampled (32%) indicated that neither or both parties are to blame. This suggests that both parties risk significant political damage from budgetary fallout. However, Republicans seem somewhat more exposed than Democrats.

**-Dr. Kenneth E. Fernandez and Dr. Jason A. Husser**

## **Basic Methodological Information**

---

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

**Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?**

	#	%
Approve .....	424	48%
Disapprove .....	401	45%
Don't know .....	61	7%
N=.....	891	100%

**Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?**

	#	%
Approve .....	96	11%
Disapprove .....	734	82%
Don't know .....	55	6%
N=.....	891	100%

**How worried are you about the current federal budget crisis and automatic across-the-board spending cuts?**

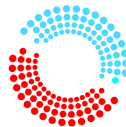
	#	%
Very worried.....	318	36%
Somewhat worried.....	306	34%
Not too worried .....	161	18%
Not at all worried.....	88	10%
Don't know .....	17	2%
N=.....	891	100%

**Do you think Congress or the President deserves more blame for the current budget crisis?**

	#	%
Congress.....	481	54%
President .....	193	22%
Both [volunteered] .....	149	17%
Neither [volunteered].....	39	4%
Don't know .....	25	3%
N=.....	891	100%

**Do you think Republicans or Democrats deserves more blame for the current budget crisis in Washington?**

	#	%
Democrats .....	249	28%
Republicans.....	302	34%
Neither / Other [volunteered].....	286	32%
Don't Know.....	48	5%
N=.....	891	100%



## **Methodology**

The Elon University Poll uses a stratified random sample of households with telephones and wireless (cell) telephone numbers. Our target margin of error is at a maximum +/- 3 percent based on a 95 percent confidence interval. Please direct questions about the Elon University Poll's methodology to the Director of the Elon University Poll, Dr. Kenneth Fernandez at 336-278-6438 or [kfernandez@elon.edu](mailto:kfernandez@elon.edu).

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

The Elon University Poll typically conducts surveys over a five-day period. Live interviewers call from 4:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. during the week and from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. during the weekend. Each survey report specifies dates and times called. The Elon University Poll uses CATI system software (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) for the administration of surveys. We attempt to reach each working telephone number in the sample up to five times. We only interview residents of North Carolina who are over 18.

## **Additional Methodological Decisions**

### Branching Questions

For many questions with multiple response options, we program our surveys to branch into a secondary probing question.

### "Don't Know" & "Refused" Response Options

All questions include an option for respondents to volunteer "don't know" or to refuse. In the vast majority of questions, interviewers do not prompt "don't know" responses.

### Weighting

We typically weight results from the Elon University Poll on multiple demographic characteristics: race, gender, household size, region, education, and age. Weighting rarely leads to substantial changes in results. We use demographic characteristics of registered voters when possible. We use iterative raking, adjusting one dimension at a time. We include detailed information about weighting of survey samples for each poll on both the Elon University Poll website and within released reports.

### Within Household Randomization

For landlines, we use the common "oldest-youngest" technique to ensure within household randomization. We assume cellphones belong to an individual rather than a household. Thus, we do not conduct within-household randomization within our cellphone sample.

### Completion Criteria

An interview is a complete only if a respondent progresses through the entire survey. Respondents who hang up before completing the last question or who refuse to more than 20 percent of the questions are incompletes.

### Support for Transparency

The Elon University Poll supports transparency in survey research and is a supporter of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative, which is a program promoting openness and transparency about survey research methods and operations among survey research professionals and the industry. All information about the Elon University Poll that we released to the public conforms to reporting conventions

recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research and the National Council on Public Polls.

## Question Construction and Question Order

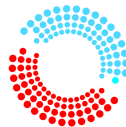
In releasing survey results, the Elon University Poll provides the questions as worded and the order in which respondents receive these questions. In some cases question ordering rotates to avoid biases. In an effort to provide neutral, non-biased questions, we attempt to observe conventional question wording and question order protocols in all of our polls. In order to avoid recency or primacy effects, we randomize candidate names and directional response options (e.g. support / oppose) within the text of each question. We pretest every questionnaire multiple times before entering the field.

## **Sampling**

Survey Sampling International, LLC, provide samples of telephone numbers. To equalize the probability of telephone selection, sample telephone numbers are systematically stratified according to subpopulation strata (e.g., a zip code, a county, 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 selected systematically 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 wireless component of the study sample starts with 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 nth selection of each block of numbers is performed and a two-digit random number between 00 and 99 is appended to each selected nth 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.

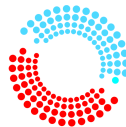


Because exchanges and numbers are randomly selected, unlisted as well as listed numbers are included in the sample. Thus, the sample of numbers generated for the population of interest constitutes a random sample of telephone households and wireless numbers of the population.

## Frequently Asked Questions about our Methodology

1. *Who pays for the Elon University Poll?*  
Elon University fully funds the Elon University Poll.
2. *Does the Elon University Poll favor a certain party?*  
The Elon University Poll is an academic, non-partisan survey. We do not engage or work with any political candidates or parties. We employ best practices to ensure the results are not biased.
3. *Where do you get your numbers?*  
We obtain samples of randomized phone numbers from Survey Sample International.
4. *How many times do you call a number before giving up?*  
We attempt to complete each working number five times before removing it from the sample.
5. *Do you call both cell phones and land lines?*  
Yes. We use a mixed sample of both cell phones and landlines. We weight on phone ownership to adjust for the higher probability of selection of those who own both cell phones and landline phones.
6. *Does the Elon University Poll do IVR surveys or automated "robopolls"?*  
No. Well-trained students at Elon University conduct all our interviews.
7. *Do you report non-response rates?*  
Yes. We report non-response rates based on AAPOR guidelines. The response rate for the February 28, 2013 Poll was 8%, which approximates the national average response rates of high quality survey organizations.
8. *Do you weight the data?*  
Yes. We apply weights to the data. An iterative proportional fitting algorithm generates weights based on Census parameters of residents in North Carolina.
9. *Do you randomize response options?*  
Yes. We rotate the order of candidate names in all applicable questions. We also rotate order of text for other questions, such as those that include response options such as "more" and "less." Furthermore, we rotate the order of some questions themselves if we suspect the order of a question could bias results.
10. *Do you conduct within-household randomization?*  
Yes. For landlines, we use the common "oldest-youngest" rotation to ensure within household randomization. We assume cellphones belong to an individual rather than a household. Thus, we do not conduct within-household randomization within our cellphone sample.





## 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.



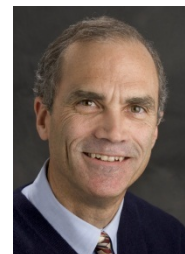
Fernandez

[Dr. Jason Husser](#) is the Assistant director. Dr. Husser holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University. Dr. Husser is also Assistant Professor of Political Science at Elon University. He recently published an article on public opinion in the *American Journal of Political Science*. He was previously the Associate Coordinator of the Vanderbilt University Poll.



Husser

John Robinson serves as Director of Communications for the Poll. He is a former newspaper editor, veteran journalist, and North Carolina native.



Robinson

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.

Faculty members in the Department of Political Science, chaired by Dr. Sharon Spray, 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 Dean Alison Morrison-Shetlar. 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 assists the directors with quality control and monitoring.

**For more information on the Elon University Poll, visit [www.elon.edu/elonpoll](http://www.elon.edu/elonpoll)**