

## **Inflation and Cost of Living Dominate as the Top Issue for North Carolinians**

In a statewide poll of North Carolina adults, conducted on June 2 and June 3, the ECU Center for Survey Research, as a part of a new series of “Talk of the Town” polls, finds that *inflation and overall cost of living increases* top all other issues as the most important. When asked to identify the most important issue facing people in North Carolina today, 44% of survey respondents answered inflation and overall cost of living increases, followed by the economy in general at 11%, violent crime at 9%, the new state law in abortion at 5%, and the quality of public schools (K through 12) at 5%. Other issues, such as climate change and the environment, political correctness/wokeness, and racism each polled at 3% (for the full results of all issues, see Table 1 below).

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**Table 1. Most Important Issue in North Carolina**

*What do you think is the most important issue facing people in North Carolina today?*

1. Inflation / overall cost of living: 44%\*
2. Economy in general: 11%
3. Violent crime / public safety: 9%
4. New state law on abortion: 6%
5. Affordable health care: 5%
6. Quality of public schools (K through 12): 5%
7. Climate change / environment: 3%
8. Political correctness / wokeness: 3%
9. Racism: 3%
10. Federal budget deficit: 2%
11. Lack of good job opportunities / unemployment: 2%
12. Border security: 2%
13. Taxes: 2%
14. Affordable child care: 1%
15. Multiple issues: 1%
16. Less than 1% for: War in the Ukraine; COVID-19; gun control; transportation; legalization of marijuana; homelessness; hunger; political polarization; Democratic Party; big government; fascism; capitalism; and manufactured fear and outrage.

\* Note: Includes those who selected “high gas prices” and “increases in housing costs/rent costs.”

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Many respondents explained their answers further in a follow-up question that asked why the issue they selected was the most important. Some notable responses included:

- “All prices are going up, yet we’re still making the exact same money that we’ve made since the ‘80s. At this rate there’s no way we can keep going on like this.”
- “[My] 2019 rent was 900 dollars. [In] 2023, it’s \$1900 for the same apartment. [It’s] hard to afford rent.”

- “In North Carolina prices are going up, and so is the cost of living. I moved here from up north because it was affordable. Now it’s not anymore.”
- “People can’t afford their medication, food, gas, rent, and bills. Not to mention our 401k’s falling thousands of dollars. Inflation is killing us.”
- “The cost of living is growing but not my paycheck. It frustrates me. I deserve higher pay if my rent increases same with gas and food. It is not affordable. Nothing is anymore.”

The results of the poll also revealed that inflation/overall cost of living is a top issue across party lines with 48% of self-identified Republicans, 44% of self-identified independents, and 38% of self-identified Democrats citing it as the most important.

There were, however, some partisan differences. Some 15% of Republican respondents answered “the economy in general” as the most important issue compared to 7% of Democrats (with independents at 10%). This was especially true for Republicans without a four-year college degree, with 17% selecting the “economy in general” as the most important issue. In contrast, some 11% of Democrats identified the new state law on abortion as the most important issue compared to just 2% of Republicans overall (with independents at 5%).

Senior adults (age 65 and above) were also more likely than those younger to see the federal budget deficit, affordable health care, and political correctness/wokeness as a top issue. Some 8% of seniors answered that the federal budget deficit was the most important, whereas not a single respondent under the age of 40 selected it. Likewise, 8% of seniors view affordable health care as the most important issue and 6% cite political correctness/wokeness compared to less than 4% for those under age 65 on affordable health care and less than 2% for those under age 65 on political correctness/wokeness.

According to Dr. Peter Francia, Director of the ECU Center for Survey Research, “Back in 1992, James Carville famously said, ‘It’s the economy, stupid.’ Right now in 2023, it’s the economy again, but with inflation and cost of living increases dominating the concerns of North Carolinians across the state and across party lines.”

## **Methodology**

The ECU Center for Survey Research conducted this poll beginning on June 2 and ending on June 3, 2023. The sample consisted of 405 adult respondents (18 years or older) in North Carolina, with a credibility interval, much like a poll’s margin of error, of +/- 5 percentage points. The data were weighted in proportion to the overall demographics (region, age, education, gender, and race) of the adult general population in North Carolina. Survey responses were collected using an online sample provided by Cint.

## Appendix

### I. Poll Demographics

#### Are you male or female, or do you prefer another description?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	198	49.0	49.0	49.0
	Female	206	50.8	50.8	99.8
	Prefer another description	1	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

#### What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school graduate, GED, or did not finish high school	142	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Some college or a 2-year associate degree	121	30.0	30.0	65.0
	4-year college or university degree	89	22.0	22.0	87.0
	Postgraduate degree	53	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

#### Which category best describes you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hispanic or Latino of any race	45	11.0	11.0	11.0
	White or Caucasian	251	62.0	62.0	73.0
	Black or African American	85	21.0	21.0	94.0
	Asian or Asian American	16	4.0	4.0	98.0
	Some other race or ethnicity, or multiple races	8	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

### What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 29 years old	77	19.0	19.0	19.0
	30 to 39 years old	71	17.5	17.5	36.5
	40 to 49 years old	71	17.5	17.5	54.0
	50 to 64 years old	97	24.0	24.0	78.0
	65 years or older	89	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

### What region do you live in?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Eastern North Carolina (this includes the Wilmington area)	93	23.0	23.0	23.0
	Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill area (The Triangle)	89	22.0	22.0	45.0
	Charlotte area	73	18.0	18.0	63.0
	Piedmont/Central North Carolina	81	20.0	20.0	83.0
	Western North Carolina	69	17.0	17.0	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

### In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, independent, or something else?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Republican	119	29.5	29.5	29.5
	Democrat	121	29.8	29.8	59.3
	Independent	146	36.1	36.1	95.4
	Something else	19	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

**Three years ago, which candidate did you vote for in the 2020 presidential election?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Joe Biden	153	37.7	37.7	37.7
	Donald Trump	157	38.8	38.8	76.5
	Some other candidate	5	1.3	1.3	77.8
	You did not vote in the 2020 presidential election	78	19.2	19.2	97.0
	Prefer not to answer	12	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	405	100.0	100.0	

**II. Additional Comments from Respondents**

Because inflation affects everyone in some shape or form. The higher the cost of living, the more people will struggle.

Because my wages are stagnant but prices for groceries are going up.

Because inflation has struck everyone.

Because everyone is having to pay more for basic needs and we're having a hard time keeping up with all this inflation.

Because everything is high right now the cost of living it needs to be adjusted.

Because normal people are struggling to pay rent and feed their kids.

Because it's a lot of people living in debt and need help.

Because prices are on a high now and jobs aren't paying any more than they normally would. People are living in the streets without help. It's a shame.

When, on average, a 1-bedroom apartment is \$750 a month, while the average person makes about that or slightly more every 2 weeks, it makes it impossible to get above the poverty line.

With inflation the prices on everything from food to gasoline skyrockets up from what the normal price would be.

With the cost of living increasing through inflation, it causes our quality of life to decrease.

Because the price of food, housing, everything is going higher.

Because the prices of basic needs are through the roof.

Because there are many elderly and low-income people on fixed incomes that they must give up things such as high-priced medicine or food for good health.

Because things are too hard to afford price goes up everyday.

Because we are not getting paid enough and every time we do get a little increase in pay everything goes up in price because of inflation and it's stupid.

Because when everything goes up it is hard to be able buy things.

It's unbelievable how expensive it is to live in a major city in NC. I feel lucky to make enough money to live comfortably, but I know that isn't the case for so many people.

It is getting too expensive to live in NC! The price is up across the board on all goods!

Inflation is making it more difficult to get by then it already was, especially for people with low incomes or just not prepared for it.

Because you can't afford every day expenses and just to live every day anymore.

Cost of living raise you receive from your job is not keeping with the increase in a person's overall cost of living.

Cost of things is rising faster than wages.

Due to things beyond our control, we were hit with inflation and the cost is living it is rising, and the value of the dollar is decreasing.

Everything is becoming very expensive, and North Carolina is being hard to live in.

I think inflation is hitting most North Carolinians hard. The rising cost of everything is making it harder and harder to stretch your budget to meet expenses.

Everything is just on the rise and more expensive people are struggling to even put food on the table nowadays.

Families are crumbling under the weight of debt.

Groceries are so high and it's just difficult to make it week by week here in NC. I really think that someone needs to work on that before it gets so bad that it can't be fixed. We can't keep going like this.

Inflation erodes families' ability to pay for the everyday expenses including housing and healthcare.

Inflation is making people broke. The more people that move here is damaging the economy.

Inflation is up over 30% and the average income isn't enough to sustain a family.

We can barely afford to keep food on our table due to the increased rise in cost for everything.

Inflation affects everything, from grocery to gas prices. It changes how well people can feed themselves, or whether they can afford to drive to work or travel for leisure. Prices keep increasing yet minimum wage hasn't changed in decades.

People don't make the money to afford the cost of living. Raises are typically not enough to cover the cost of inflation over the past 2 years.

Prices are still too high, especially on groceries.

Regular everyday people everywhere can't afford to live and take care of themselves without working 2 or even 3 jobs.

Rent and food keeps going up.

Rent seems to still be high in North Carolina, but jobs are not paying enough to accommodate.

Retired people, even using savings and social security can't keep up with prices.

More people are struggling to survive. The economy is tanking. Food costs are rising and people are still unemployed and having difficulty finding employment. The housing market is horrible and rental expenses are so high that people can't afford to pay rent anywhere.

My husband and I make a decent living but the price of all goods make it hard to get by from month to month.

Right now taxes are high. Everything is expensive and our money and resources are being shipped away overseas on purpose.

It's getting harder to travel far or get to and from places such as school or work with the price of gas going up.

It's hard to find housing without lacking in other areas as far as finances for food, gas, travel, healthcare, etc.

I live in Public/Low income housing, I have just in the past year had a problem with high utility bills. And now I just signed my new lease agreement that jumped almost \$200. I can't afford these increases, neither can others.

Because all the rich people think it's funny to rent places way out of us poor people's money and there's so many homeless people who don't even get offered a pair of socks, which is sad.

The cost of living and the wages earned are not compatible! We don't get paid enough to cover the cost of living! And the rising prices for food but lowering our food stamps doesn't make sense either. And there is not enough help with housing either or it is going to mainly people over 65 and I'm disability, but the single parents and families of even single individuals that are trying to live a decent life there's not much help for us. Also the people that want and need help with addictions and are wanting to change their live they aren't getting help that they need either.

The economy just about effects everything else. When the economy is good, all is good. When the economy sucks, so does most everything else.

I live off of 540 they just cleared out a homeless camp but everywhere you go in NC there are panhandlers because they don't have a place to live.

I see that there has been an inflammation in rent cost since Biden has been in office and it's making it hard for individuals that still only make minimum wage to provide for their families when a 3 bed 1 bath is about 1200 in North Carolina.

Being able to get the basic necessities, food, clothing, shelter, are the basis for everything else. You cannot cure the other problems unless people are fed, clothed, and housed.

Homelessness and lack of adequate housing is an issue easily solved, yet no one really seems to do anything about it.

A lack of transportation and job opportunities makes a difference in someone being able to afford to meet daily expenses.

Because the cost of gas is so high it makes it harder to get back and forth to work.

Because gas prices are ridiculous.

A lot of people are looking for houses but there's not enough.

Abortion is a big issue and I don't think they should be able to take that away.



As a mother, I worry about the new law being a starting point for restricting all access to women's healthcare. My daughter already doesn't want to live here. I worry for poorer women who can't travel somewhere to get an abortion or other access to healthcare. This also affects companies and people moving here. It's also a harbinger I fear for attacking other human rights.

Living in 2023, there should be absolutely no laws regarding restrictions on women's bodies. There needs to be changed.

It is clear from outcomes in other states: Humans with uteruses have an elevated health risk when doctors have to consider whether they are breaking the law by treating their patients who need abortions to survive a health issue. It's also a threat to body autonomy. If humans with uteruses no longer have rights over their bodies, when will the state begin mandated blood donation? Kidney donation? Liver donation? Bone marrow donation? The existential risk to humans with uteruses is not hyperbole and not hypothetical. Women are being forced to wait until they are dying of sepsis or require hysterectomies to treat their miscarriages. It's a crisis that I fear too many people are simply not aware of the consequences of.

"Wokeness" is an immoral poison that is having a devastating effect on our children, grandchildren, and the fate of our state and nation.

Because of "wokeness" we are losing our founding freedoms. People cannot disagree without offending everyone.

Being PC or woke doesn't allow people to express their own/personal opinions or have a dialogue. The average person doesn't engage and isn't happy.

Can't do anything without feeling that you're offending someone.

All I have seen from a certain political party is nothing but hate. If you don't have a certain skin color or fit into a lifestyle that they think is appropriate then they are against you. This group of people seem to think they are bringing God back into the country but they are only spreading hate. If only we could accept people for who they are.

Because it's hard to find medical without copayments.

Health Care has gotten to be so expensive that people will go without care because they can't afford it. That's just wrong.

I am a senior citizen on a fixed income and the cost of anything medical is sky high without proper healthcare and insurance.

Too many people in this state lack adequate healthcare. People are dying because of the lack of access to healthcare.

It doesn't matter if you are really sick or just have to get a test done, prices are sky high and Insurance's deductibles are too high combined with your monthly payment it is all completely out of control. Health Insurance should not have to cost this much and the hospitals are all privately owned and set prices for all of the staff. It used to be when you went to the doctor, he or she knew what the charge would be. Now they know nothing about it.

Because fentanyl and other drugs are flooding our towns and areas because people aren't being checked coming over. Go look at San Francisco's pandemic or all the lives we lost due to the massive increase in drugs flooding the states.

Childcare is very expensive and prevents lots of parents from going back into the work force.

Lack of childcare options available, lack of staffing in the centers, long waitlists.

Education is the key to improving society in general. Lawmakers would rather have an ignorant public so they can go about the business of making themselves wealthy and ignoring the desires of their constituency.

How will the next generation succeed and thrive if they are deficient in the basics of education?

I am a teacher. We are treated horribly in this state. Overworked and underpaid.

I am currently a teacher in North Carolina. There is no support for us. We are struggling everyday and just told to keep up the good work. I can't even take a sick day without feeling stressed about who my students are with and how they are doing. It is easier for me to just come to work not feeling the best instead of taking a day off. The pay is terrible. It is not enough to support me and my boyfriend, let alone a family.

I believe safety in schools is the most important issue nationwide. If we cannot educate children without them getting shot, how can we trust in any safety in society?

NC legislature is increasingly underfunding public schools and continues to let charter schools rip away funding as well. Now expanding vouchers for private school? Children faced with only their local public school as their only choice may be a lot a huge disadvantage.

Every day you watch the news someone is getting shot or killed.

There has been a significant increase in the amount of active shooters and shootings in our state. Two days ago, Denton, was on the news for a shooting and I am from the small town.

There is a lot of gun violence and fights in schools now.

Crimes all over have become out of control.

There is a lot of people dying from the violence.

Too much shootings deaths everyday something needs to be done.

In North Carolina we have a lot of violence issues especially with gang members. I would like to see less violence and perhaps this can be done through using other means besides the police.

I think the crime level and the way it's easier to purchase a gun is wrong. Drugs, terrorists, and millions of illegal aliens are flooding our country.

Guns, AK 47 are getting in the hands of kids and they are killing people.

Guns, gangs, is all over the world it appears. Every single day so many young peoples and children was shoot and killed. So sad.

The forests are being destroyed for profit by private owners. The waters are trashed by people who don't care. The parks are not revered but taken for granted. Our water is also subject to runoff from poisonous chemicals used in farming and by people in their own yards who are ignorant of the effects. Irresponsible farmers or others cause wildfires, causing massive damage and poor air quality.

The weather is getting hotter and the storms more powerful. The eastern coast of Carolina is getting battered year after year and inland we're seeing more hurricanes and harsher storms. North Carolina doesn't even have mandatory recycling which was common where I'm from. Pollution, air quality, animals in distress, all are major problems.

DMV are currently backed up so bad that it takes 4 months to get an appointment.

Food stamps, ebt rules are not good elderly should automatically get them it's not fair.

North Carolina has too many state taxes and property taxes that are unnecessary and must be eradicated.

State tax rate is exorbitant for the average working person, and it's to fund too many social programs that do not benefit the working class that pays for it. The State just changed the implementation of one specific program through DHHR that is supposed to benefit the elderly and disabled. The criteria is not even reasonable. It is the Special Assistance In Home program. If a person can get a doctor to fill out an FL2 stating they have some disability that would require them to be in a facility they can get this program in order to stay out of a facility. The program is not working for the elderly and truly

disabled in the way that it should. The program's checks and balances has been removed and there is no accountability for the recipient for the case manager to verify and monitor. This is just one example.

Taxes are too high for employers and self employed contractors. That needs to be reduced so we can hire more people.

Our country and then includes residents of North Carolina has so much debt now that we are approaching a calamity. When we are no longer able to pay our debts they will either have to raise taxes dramatically or cut spending dramatically. We must live within our means and we simply are not doing that.

Our budget is at an all time crisis point and the powers that be just want to keep on borrowing money from whomever. Pretty soon China, if they are the lenders, will call in the debt to be paid and we won't be able to. What's next? They own the United States of America. What a tragic day that will be.

The budget has a trickle down effect on all areas of life. If our budget is not balanced then that will result in higher taxes, job loss, and business going under.

Our president isn't doing a great job and it's extremely concerning.

### III. Questionnaire

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The Center for Survey Research at East Carolina University (ECU) is conducting a short poll of adults in North Carolina about their opinions on issues related to politics, sports, and leisure. Please **make your opinions heard** by answering just a few short questions that will take about five minutes of your time. Your responses to all questions are completely anonymous and confidential.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this survey. Your participation in the poll is **voluntary**. You may stop at any time. If you have questions, please call Dr. Jonathan Morris at 252-328-1067. Or, call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board at 252-744-2914 for any questions about your rights as a participant.

If you are willing to take this survey, please click the YES button below. Otherwise, please select the NO button. **To register your response, please click the purple arrow at the bottom of the page.**

Yes

No

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Page Break

End of Block: Consent Block

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Start of Block: Screen Block 1

**Q1. Do you currently live in North Carolina?**

Yes

No

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Page Break

End of Block: Screen Block 1

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Start of Block: Screen Block 2

**Q2. What is your age?** Please select the appropriate range.

- Less than 18 years old
- 18 to 29 years old
- 30 to 39 years old
- 40 to 49 years old
- 50 to 64 years old
- 65 years or older

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Page Break

**End of Block: Screen Block 2**

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Start of Block: Question block



**Q3. What do you think is the most important issue facing people in North Carolina today?** Please type your answer in the box below or select from the list of issues also shown below. *The list of issues below has been randomized and is in no particular order.*

Type your answer in the box (or select from the list below):

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- Overall cost of living / inflation
- Violent crime / public safety
- Climate change / environment
- The new state law on abortion
- Affordable health care
- The economy in general
- Taxes
- Quality of public schools (grades K through 12)
- Political correctness / "wokeness"
- Border security
- Affordable child care
- Lack of good job opportunities / unemployment
- High gas prices
- The federal budget deficit
- Increases in housing costs / rent costs
- Racism
- War in the Ukraine

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**Q4a. Would you like to explain why the issue you selected is the most important issue facing people in North Carolina today?**

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: Q5 If Would you like to explain why the issue you selected is the most important issue facing people in... = No*

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**Q4b. Why do you think the issue you selected is the most important issue facing people in North Carolina today? Explain in the box below.**

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Page Break

**Q5. Would you say that things overall in North Carolina are going in the right direction or that the current direction of things in North Carolina is on the wrong track?**

- Right direction
- Wrong track
- Not sure
- Other (please explain in the box below):

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*Skip To: Q6b If Would you say that things overall in North Carolina are going in the right direction or that the... = Wrong track*

*Skip To: Q7 If Would you say that things overall in North Carolina are going in the right direction or that the... = Not sure*

*Skip To: Q7 If Would you say that things overall in North Carolina are going in the right direction or that the... = Other (please explain in the box below):*

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Page Break

**Q6a. You answered previously that things overall in North Carolina are going in the right direction. Why do you feel that way? Explain in the box below or leave it blank if you prefer not to answer.**

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Page Break

**The next questions will cover sports and leisure. To complete this poll, please select "continue" below.**

Continue

*Skip To: Q7 If The next questions will cover sports and leisure. To complete this poll, please select "continue"... = Continue*

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Page Break

**Q6b. You answered previously that the current direction of things in North Carolina is on the wrong track. Why do you feel that way?** Explain in the box below or leave it blank if you prefer not to answer.

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Page Break

**Q7. Moving to sports, what is your favorite college or professional sports team?** Please type your answer in the box below. (If you do not follow sports, simply write "I do not follow sports" in the box.)

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Page Break

**Q8. Moving to leisure, what is your favorite place to spend time on vacation during the summer?** Please type your answer in the box below. (If you do not take a vacation in the summer, simply write "I do not spend time on vacation in the summer" in the box.)

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**To ensure that we have a balanced and representative sample, we need responses from Republicans, Democrats, and independents. Please help us ensure proper balance by answering the following questions:**

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Page Break

**Q9. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, independent, or something else?**

- Republican
  - Democrat
  - Independent
  - Something else (please specify in the box below):
- 

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Page Break

**Q10. Three years ago, which candidate did you vote for in the 2020 presidential election?**

- Joe Biden
  - Donald Trump
  - Some other candidate
  - You did not vote in the 2020 presidential election
  - Prefer not to answer
- 

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**The following questions are for statistical purposes only. Your answers to these questions will also help ensure that our sample is properly representative of the adult population in North Carolina.**

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**Q11. What region do you live in?**

- Eastern North Carolina (this includes the Wilmington area)
- Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill area (The Triangle)
- Charlotte area
- Piedmont/Central North Carolina
- Western North Carolina
- Other (please specify in the box below):  
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Page Break

**Q12. Which category best describes you?**

- Hispanic or Latino of any race
- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Asian or Asian American
- Some other race or ethnicity, or multiple races (please specify in the box below):  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Page Break

**Q13. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

- High school graduate, GED, or did not finish high school
- Some college or a 2-year associate degree
- 4-year college or university degree
- Postgraduate degree

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Page Break

**Q14. Are you male or female, or do you prefer another description?**

- Male
  - Female
  - Prefer another description (please specify in the box below):
- 

**End of Block: Question block**