

July 27, 2021

Florida Policy Survey

Summary: Researchers at the University of South Florida conducted a statewide survey of 600 Floridians to measure public opinion on a variety of current policy issues. The result presented in this report address infrastructure, education, COVID-19, and presidential/gubernatorial job approval. The survey included a representative sample of Floridians, fielded between July 15th and 25th, 2021. Topline results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.

A majority of Floridians approve of the job President Biden is doing in several key areas, despite partisan differences. Six months into his term as president, Joe Biden enjoys majority approval for his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (61%), jobs and the economy (53%), race relations (51%), and climate change (51%). Republicans are more likely to disapprove of the President’s performance in these policy areas.

Most Floridians also approve of the job being done by Governor DeSantis in spite of notable partisan differences. Two-and-a-half years into his term as governor, Ron DeSantis enjoys majority approval for his handling of jobs and economy (60%) and the COVID-19 pandemic (52%). DeSantis enjoys plurality support across every other issue surveyed. Democrats are more likely to disapprove of the governor’s performance across each policy area.

COVID-19 is still the most important issue for a plurality of Floridians. Just under a third of respondents identified COVID-19 as the most important issue facing the state (29%). These perceptions hold as the top issue across party affiliations: Democrats (38%), Republicans (22%), and Independents (32%). The economy was the second most frequently identified issue by 13% of respondents.

Robust support for COVID-19 booster shots should they be recommended. Among individuals who are or plan to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus, nearly 70% report a strong likelihood of receiving a booster shot should public health professionals recommend one. Among Floridians reluctant toward a booster vaccination, most cite either a lack of necessity in a booster shot or previous side effects from vaccination.

Large partisan splits on confidence in vaccine advocacy by public health officials. Nearly three-quarters of Floridians say that they are either very or somewhat confident in the vaccine guidance currently being offered by public health officials. Confidence is highest among Democrats (86.1%), followed by Independents (70.7%) and Republicans (50.0%)

Respondents favor additional relief for student loan borrowers. Two-thirds of respondents say that the temporary pause on student loan repayments should be extended by the Biden administration: 28% favor extending the pause until the end of 2021, while 39% say that it should be extended into 2022.

Strong support for federal investments in infrastructure. Seven-in-ten (72%) of respondents indicated support for passage of the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure framework being debated by Congress: 35% “strongly support” the bill’s passage, while 37% are at least “somewhat” supportive. Support was highest among Democrats, though a majority from both parties are in favor of the bill.

A majority of Floridians would support a ban on ransomware payments. After a spate of ransomware attacks against local governments in Florida, over half of Floridians (56%) say they would support a state level ban on paying ransoms to cyber-attackers.

Summary of Responses

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that President Joe Biden is doing in each of the following areas? (As a percentage of total respondents by row)

	Total Approval	Strongly Approve	Somewhat Approve	Total Disapproval	Somewhat Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	Unsure
Jobs and the Economy	52.9	25.7	27.2	41.1	10.3	30.8	6.0
Foreign Policy	46.5	20.3	26.2	42.6	12.3	30.3	10.8
Race Relations	51.2	23.2	28.0	39.6	12.0	27.5	9.3
Immigration/Border	39.0	16.0	23.0	51.8	15.5	36.3	9.2
COVID-19 Pandemic	61.3	33.3	28.0	32.6	12.8	19.8	6.0
Climate Change	51.0	22.0	29.0	36.2	12.0	24.2	12.8
Unifying Americans	47.9	22.2	25.7	40.6	9.8	30.8	11.5

N=600; (Statistically significant differences in approval exist across each policy area by political partisanship. Detailed partisanship data available upon request.)

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that Governor Ron DeSantis is doing in each of the following areas? (As a percentage of total respondents by row)

	Total Approval	Strongly Approve	Somewhat Approve	Total Disapproval	Somewhat Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	Unsure
Jobs and the Economy	59.5	32.7	26.8	32.8	13.0	19.8	7.7
Race Relations	46.8	26.5	20.3	40.5	14.8	25.7	12.7
COVID-19 Pandemic	51.7	32.0	19.7	42.5	13.0	29.5	5.8
Climate Change	43.1	22.3	20.8	39.1	13.8	25.3	17.7
Conservation/ Environment	48.4	26.2	22.2	36.0	12.5	23.5	15.7
Unifying Floridians	47.8	29.0	18.8	40.5	13.0	27.5	11.7

N=600; (Statistically significant differences in approval exist across each policy area by political partisanship. Detailed partisanship data available upon request.)

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing the state of Florida today?

	Frequency	Percentage
COVID-19 Pandemic	177	29.5
Economy	80	13.3
Unemployment/Jobs	58	9.7
Immigration	53	8.8
Climate Change	39	6.5
Healthcare	35	5.8
Crime	29	4.8
Environment and Conservation	27	4.5
Race Relations	22	3.7
Government Corruption	21	3.5
Education	20	3.3
Infrastructure (i.e. roads and bridges)	20	3.3
Other	19	3.2

N=600 (Statistically significant differences in perception of the most important issue exist by political partisanship. Detailed partisanship data available upon request.)

*The U.S. Congress is currently debating a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill that would include funding for roads, bridges, and public transportation and airports, as well as additional investments to improve the nation's water and power systems. **From what you've read and heard about this proposal, would you support or oppose Congress passing this bill?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	209	34.8
Somewhat Support	222	37.0
Somewhat Oppose	64	10.7
Strongly Oppose	52	8.7
Unsure	53	8.8

N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 89.7%; Independents =70.7%; Republicans = 54.5%)

*The U.S. Congress is also considering additional infrastructure investment in a \$3.5 trillion budget proposal later this year. **Would you support or oppose additional infrastructure investments if they were passed without support from both Democrat and Republican lawmakers?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	161	26.8
Somewhat Support	156	26.0
Somewhat Oppose	85	14.2
Strongly Oppose	114	19.0
Unsure	84	14.0

N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 76.4%; Independents = 43.6%; Republicans = 36.4%)

How likely will you be to receive regular booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine if they are recommended by public health experts?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Likely	320	69.6
Somewhat Likely	106	23.0
Not Very Likely	19	4.1
Not at All Likely	15	3.3

Question was only asked to those who are or plan to be vaccinated. (N=460)

For which of the following reasons would you not be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot?

	Frequency	Percentage
I had side effects from the original COVID-19 vaccine	24	18.5
I don't think that a booster shot is necessary	38	29.2
I don't think that the vaccines work to prevent COVID-19	13	10.0
I'm no longer worried about COVID-19	16	12.3
Regular booster shots would be an inconvenience	13	10.0
Other	13	10.0

Question was only asked to those who did not report being "Very Likely" to receive COVID-19 booster shots if recommended by public health guidance. (N=130)

How confident are you in the vaccine guidance currently being offered by public health officials?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Confident	216	36.0
Somewhat Confident	230	38.3
Not Very Confident	84	14.0
Not at All Confident	70	11.7

N=600 (Very/Somewhat Confident: Democrats = 86.1%; Independents = 70.7%; Republicans = 50.0%)

***How would you describe Florida’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other states?
Florida has handled the COVID-19 pandemic...***

	Frequency	Percentage
Better than other states	252	42.0
Worse than other states	206	34.3
About the same as other states	113	18.8
Unsure	29	4.8

N=600 (Better than other states vs. Worse than other state: Democrats = 23.1% vs. 54.4%; Independents = 37.1% vs. 36.4%; Republicans = 68.2% vs. 11.6%)

*The federal government has placed a pause on the repayment of federal student loans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is set to expire at the end of September. **Do you believe that the repayment pause should be extended?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it should be extended until the end of 2021	167	27.8
Yes, it should be extended into 2022	235	39.2
No, repayments should resume in October of this year as scheduled	198	33.0

N=600 (Yes, it should be extended – combined: Democrats = 85.6%; Independents = 65.0%; Republicans = 50.5%)

If federal student loan repayments resume in October, will you be able to afford your student loan payments while continuing to meet your monthly financial obligations.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	36	39.1
No	56	60.9

Question was only asked to those with outstanding student loan debts (N=92)

*In recent years, several local governments in the state of Florida have suffered cyberattacks known as “ransomware”. These attacks can disable online systems – such as public utilities and emergency communication platforms – until a “ransom” is paid to the cyber-attackers. Some experts believe that paying these ransoms is necessary in order to ensure the continuity of public services, while others believe that paying them encourages future cyberattacks. **In your opinion, should local governments in Florida be allowed to pay ransomware attackers if they suffer a cyber-attack?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it should be up to the local jurisdictions if they want to pay off ransomware attackers	127	21.2
No, the state of Florida should outlaw ransomware payments by local governments to deter future attacks	339	56.5
Unsure	134	22.3

(N=600)

Survey Information

600 adult Floridians were surveyed via an online web-panel using Prodege MR, an industry leading market research provider. The survey was fielded from July 15th through 25th, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 4. Respondents were selected via a stratified, quota sampling approach to ensure a representative sample. Quotas for gender, age, race/ethnicity and party affiliation were determined based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida's Department of State, and Florida's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). Quotas were stratified by region of the state to ensure geographical representativeness.

Table A1
Sample Comparison

	USF Survey Sample	Florida Demographics*
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	51.8%	51.1%
Male	47.3%	48.9%
Other	0.8%	-
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	8.5%	10.8%
25-44	30.7%	31.2%
45-64	34.2%	32.4%
65+	26.7%	25.6%
<i>Race</i>		
Black/African American	17.5%	16.9%
White/Caucasian	72.3%	77.3%
Asian	3.0%	3.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2%	0.5%
Other	6.0%	2.3%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	27.2%	26.4%
Non-Hispanic	72.8%	73.6%
<i>Political Affiliation (registered voters only, n=541)</i>		
Democrat	36.0%	36.2%
Independent	25.9%	26.4%
Republican	36.6%	35.7%
Other	1.5%	1.7%
<i>Region</i>		
Panhandle	7.2%	7.2%
Northeast Florida	11.8%	12.4%
Central Florida	23.5%	25.5%
West Coast	24.8%	21.9%
Southeast Florida	32.7%	32.9%

*Gender, race, ethnicity, and region quotas based on U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP): <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/FL>. Age quotas based on Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR): <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/population-demographics/data/index-floridaproducts.cfm>. Political Affiliation quotas based on Florida Division of Elections <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/voter-registration-reportsxlsx/voter-registration-by-party-affiliation/>

About our Research Team

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About the University of South Florida

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