

**August 3, 2021**

**Florida Policy Survey: Conservation and Environmental Policy**

**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. This report summarizes attitudes and opinions regarding conservation and environmental policy issues in the state. The survey included a representative sample of Floridians, fielded between July 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Topline results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.

---

**Floridians see a need for more government action on the environment.** Nearly two-thirds of Floridians (64%) say that more action is needed to protect the state's environment from the effects of population growth and development. Democrats were more likely to support additional environmental measures, though a majority of Independents and Republicans said the same.

**Strong support for protecting natural habitats and endangered species.** A majority (55%) say that more action is needed to preserve the state's natural ecosystems, while only 24% say that the state is currently doing enough. Most Floridians would support additional funding to preserve ecosystems (86%) and to further protect endangered species (85%). Support was consistent among both Republicans and Democrats, though slightly lower among Independents.

**Floridians overwhelmingly approve of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act.** Earlier this year, the state of Florida adopted the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which set aside \$400 million to preserve ecosystems and wildlife in the state. Nearly nine in ten respondents (87%) said that they either strongly or somewhat approve of the act's passage.

**Reforestation is a popular environmental solution.** An overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) would support reforestation (i.e. extensive tree planting) to absorb carbon emissions. Support was equally high among Democrats (91%) and Republicans (90%).

**Amid recent outbreaks of red-tide, a majority favor stricter regulations on agricultural fertilizers.** More than eight in ten Floridians (85%) – including a large majority of both Republicans and Democrats – favor restrictions on the use of agricultural fertilizers, which are believed to contribute to red-tide outbreaks.

**Bipartisan support for a carbon tax.** Three-quarters of respondents (76%) favor taxing corporations to offset their carbon emissions. This includes bipartisan support among Democrats (87%), Independents (71%), and Republicans (71%).

**Floridians favor local control on single-use plastic bans.** While the state of Florida currently prohibits bans on single-use plastic products, most Floridians (56.5%) say the decision should be left to local jurisdictions.

**General bipartisan support for environmental reforms.** Across a variety of environmental policy proposals, Floridians of all political affiliations expressed strong support for additional reform efforts. (Please see tables below for more detailed numbers).

**Summary of Responses**

*The state of Florida recently passed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which set aside \$400 million to preserve ecosystems and wildlife in the state. **Do you approve or disapprove of the passage of this act?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Approve	305	50.8
Somewhat Approve	217	36.2
Somewhat Disapprove	25	4.2
Strongly Disapprove	5	0.8
Unsure	48	8.0

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Approve: Democrats = 90.8%; Independents =83.6%; Republicans = 89.9%)*

***In your opinion, is the state of Florida doing enough to preserve the state’s natural ecosystems, or is more action needed?***

	Frequency	Percentage
The state is currently doing enough to preserve its natural ecosystems	144	24.0
More action is needed to preserve the state’s natural ecosystems	327	54.5
Unsure	129	21.5

*N=600 (More action is needed: Democrats = 65.1%; Independents = 57.1%; Republicans = 62.5%)*

*The state of Florida’s population grew by approximately 2.7 million people between 2010 and 2020. In your opinion, is the state of Florida doing enough to protect the environment from the effects of population growth and development?*

	Frequency	Percentage
The state is currently doing enough to protect the environment	124	20.7
More action is needed to protect the environment	382	63.7
Unsure	94	15.7

*N=600 (More action is needed: Democrats = 76.4%; Independents = 61.4%; Republicans = 54.5%)*

*Would you support or oppose the state of Florida taking each of the following actions? Investing in reforestation (i.e. tree planting) to absorb carbon emissions.*

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	308	51.3
Somewhat Support	225	37.5
Somewhat Oppose	14	2.3
Strongly Oppose	6	1.0
Unsure	47	7.8

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 90.8% Independents = 87.9%; Republicans = 90.4%)*

Would you support or oppose the state of Florida taking each of the following actions?  
**Committing additional funding to preserve Florida’s natural ecosystems.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	292	48.7
Somewhat Support	226	37.7
Somewhat Oppose	29	4.8
Strongly Oppose	12	2.0
Unsure	41	6.8

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 88.8% Independents = 82.9%; Republicans = 89.9%)*

Would you support or oppose the state of Florida taking each of the following actions?  
**Committing additional funding to protect endangered species (such as Florida panthers and manatees).**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	313	52.2
Somewhat Support	194	32.3
Somewhat Oppose	38	6.3
Strongly Oppose	8	1.3
Unsure	47	7.8

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 89.3% Independents = 80.0%; Republicans = 85.9%)*

Would you support or oppose the state of Florida taking each of the following actions?  
**Restricting the use of agricultural fertilizers that can contribute to red-tide outbreaks.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	328	54.7
Somewhat Support	180	30.0
Somewhat Oppose	33	5.5
Strongly Oppose	12	2.0
Unsure	47	7.8

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 89.8% Independents = 82.9%; Republicans = 85.3%)*

Would you support or oppose the state of Florida taking each of the following actions? **Taxing corporations to offset their carbon emissions.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	300	50.0
Somewhat Support	155	25.8
Somewhat Oppose	47	7.8
Strongly Oppose	32	5.3
Unsure	66	11.0

*N=600 (Strongly/Somewhat Support: Democrats = 87.2% Independents = 71.4%; Republicans = 70.7%)*

*The term “single-use plastics” refers to non-biodegradable products such as plastic bags and Styrofoam food containers. In the state of Florida, it’s currently against the law for local governments to ban or prohibit the commercial use of single-use plastic products within their jurisdictions. **In your opinion, should local governments and communities be allowed to enact single-use plastics bans, or should the state continue to forbid such policies?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it should be up to the local governments if they want to enact bans or prohibitions on single-use plastics.	339	56.5
No, local governments should NOT be allowed to ban or prohibit single-use plastics.	150	25.0
Unsure	111	18.5

*(N=600) Yes, it should be up to local governments...: Democrats = 66.2%; Independents = 57.1%; Republicans = 49.0%)*

## **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 15<sup>th</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup>, 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**

	<b>USF Survey Sample</b>	<b>Florida Demographics*</b>
<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**

**Stephen Neely** (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2013) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. He is coordinator of the School's undergraduate program in *Leadership and Public Service*. His areas of specialization include survey research, quantitative data analysis, and public policy. He is a faculty researcher on the Sunshine State Survey project and has conducted survey research on behalf of local governments in the Tampa Bay region. For more information please visit his [USF faculty page](#). Dr. Neely can be contacted by email at [srneely@usf.edu](mailto:srneely@usf.edu)

**Joshua M. Scacco** (PhD, University of Texas at Austin, 2014) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida. He is the co-author of *The Ubiquitous Presidency: Presidential Communication and Digital Democracy in Tumultuous Times* (Oxford University Press, 2021). Scacco also serves as a faculty researcher on the Sunshine State Survey and is a Faculty Research Associate with the award-winning Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. He specializes in political communication, media content and effects, public opinion, and quantitative research methods. For more information, please visit [his USF Communication page](#).

### **About the University of South Florida**

The University of South Florida is a high-impact global research university dedicated to student success. Over the past 10 years, no other public university in the country has risen faster in U.S. News and World Report's national university rankings than USF. Serving more than 50,000 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF is designated as a Preeminent State Research University by the Florida Board of Governors, placing it in the most elite category among the state's 12 public universities. USF has earned widespread national recognition for its success graduating under-represented minority and limited-income students at rates equal to or higher than white and higher income students. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at [www.usf.edu](http://www.usf.edu).

**\*For media inquiries, please contact Stephen Neely at [srneely@usf.edu](mailto:srneely@usf.edu)**