UNF Poll shows DeSantis in Comfortable Lead for Florida Governor
Rubio ahead of Demings in U.S. Senate Race

A new poll of likely voters in Florida from the Public Opinion Research Lab (PORL) at the University of North Florida shows Republican incumbent for Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has a 14-point lead against former governor, Republican-turned-Democrat, Charlie Crist.

Registered likely voters in the November 8 midterm election were asked about their vote choices in the upcoming midterm election, as well as perceptions surrounding election security and voter fraud. An explanation of a "likely voter" can be found in the methodology section.

In the race for Florida Governor, 55% indicated they would vote for Ron DeSantis, while 41% indicated a vote for Charlie Crist. Less than one percent said they would vote for someone else, and 4% did not know or refused to answer.

"Given DeSantis's historic fundraising and popularity among Republicans, his lead in this race is not surprising," commented Dr. Michael Binder, PORL faculty director and UNF professor of political science. "The surprise in these numbers is that a statewide race in Florida is closer to a blowout than a recount."

When asked about the election for U.S. Senator for the State of Florida, 54% indicated a vote for Republican incumbent Marco Rubio, with 43% for Democrat Val Demings, and 3% who didn't know or refused.

"Demings has raised a lot of money and has been on the attack for months, but Rubio is up double digits," noted Binder. "Florida has become a red state, it will likely take an exceptionally weak Republican candidate for Democrats to win statewide – and Rubio is not a weak candidate."

Respondents were also asked which candidate they support for Florida Attorney General. Republican candidate Ashley Moody came in the lead with 50%, with Democrat Aramis Ayala trailing by 14 points with 36% of the vote. Fourteen percent of respondents said they don't know or refused to answer. When asked about Agricultural Commissioner, 44% said they would vote for Republican Wilton Simpson and 39% indicated a vote for Naiomi Esther Blemur, the Democrat. Seventeen percent said they don't know or refused.

"The Attorney General and Agricultural Commissioner races are a little less exciting for most folks, and these tend to go down party lines," said Binder. "As is the case with a lot of these races, the outcome will largely come down to who turns out the most voters – Republicans or Democrats – and it looks like Republicans are going to win that fight."

In addition to vote choice, respondents were asked about their perceptions surrounding the prevalence of voter fraud. When asked how often there is an election with enough fraudulent voting to affect the outcome, 34% said less than 1% of races, with 54% saying it happens more frequently. Twelve percent said that substantial voter fraud occurs in over half of all races. In a related question, respondents were asked who they think won the 2020 election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, based on receiving the most votes cast by eligible voters in enough states to win. Fifty percent of respondents said Joe Biden definitely won the election, and 19% said Trump definitely won.

"Most of the research in this area suggests impactful voter fraud is rare—well under 1% of elections," Binder stated, "but most people seem to think it's much more prevalent." He went on, "this general distrust in elections is pretty clear when you look at perceptions of the 2020 election, with only half of respondents convinced Biden really won."

Click here for the full survey crosstabulations.

Methodology

The UNF PORL Florida Statewide Poll was conducted from October 17 through October 24, 2022, by the Public Opinion Research Lab (PORL) at the University of North Florida, and consists of a random sample of 622 registered, likely Florida voters. A voter was considered "likely" if they met the following criteria: 1. they voted in the 2018 midterm general election and/or the 2022 primary election; OR 2. they registered to vote in Florida in 2020 or later. The sampling frame was sourced Florida voter file. To ensure a representative sample of likely voters, the 10 Florida designated media market areas were stratified into 18 different strata. Heavily urban and highly educated counties were separated out from their media markets and given their own strata.

Respondents were contacted by live callers via the telephone from 4:30 to 9:00 p.m. daily with up to three callbacks attempted. PORL interviewers administered surveys in both English and Spanish. Data collection took place at the PORL facility with its 27-station Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. A single interviewer, through hand dialing, upon reaching an individual by phone, asked the listed respondent by name. If the respondent was not available, the call was terminated. Respondents who indicated they would *definitely* not vote or *probably* not vote in the upcoming election were screened out of the survey. In addition, respondents who gave a response of less than 7 on the 1-10 vote likelihood scale were excluded from analysis. This study had a 4.3% response rate, using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 3 (RR3) calculation.

The weighting process had three steps. First, data were weighted by geographic strata to reflect the population of likely voters across the State of Florida, followed by educational attainment. Finally, data were weighted to partisan registration, age, race, sex, and 2020 vote choice. Education weights were created from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 5-year estimates for individuals 25 and over. Partisan registration, sex, race, and age weights were created from the Florida Voter File to reflect turnout in the 2018 midterm election. All weighted demographic variables were applied using the SPSS version 27 rake weighting function, a weight of one was applied to demographic variables that were missing.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 4.7 percentage points, including the estimated design effect. In the Governor and U.S. Senate races, vote choice was imputed for certain respondents, when possible. When a respondent indicated they did not know who they would vote for or refused to answer, PORL used the answers to "social circle" questions, as well as past vote choice and party registration to impute a likely vote choice.

The PORL is a full-service survey research facility that provides tailored research to fulfill each client's individual needs from political, economic, social, and cultural projects. The PORL opened in 2001 and is an independent, non-partisan center, a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative and a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organization. As members of AAPOR, the PORL's goal is to support sound and ethical practices in the conduct of survey and public opinion research. For more information about methodology, contact Dr. Michael Binder at porl@unf.edu or (904) 620-2784.

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