



University of North Florida
Public Opinion Research Lab
www.unf.edu/coas/porl/

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New UNF Poll Shows Gillum ahead of DeSantis for Governor with Nelson and Scott Tied for Senate

High Support for Restoring Felon Voting Rights Among Likely Voters

The Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of North Florida has a new poll of likely voters that reveals Andrew Gillum in the lead for the upcoming gubernatorial election in Florida, with Ron DeSantis close behind, and Sen. Bill Nelson locked in a dead heat with Gov. Rick Scott in the upcoming Senate election for the state of Florida. The survey also shows that a supermajority of respondents support restoring the voting rights of individuals with felony convictions after they have served their sentences.

The poll, comprised of likely Florida voters, shows that 47 percent of respondents plan to vote for Gillum, the Democratic candidate in the upcoming election for Florida governor, while 43 percent plan to vote for the Republican candidate, DeSantis.

Of those likely voters, 10 percent don't know who their choice will be. Among Democrats, 85 percent indicate they plan to vote for Gillum, 6 percent for DeSantis and 9 percent don't know where they'll cast their vote. Eleven percent of Republican likely voters say they will vote for Gillum, while 81 percent indicate they'll vote for DeSantis; eight percent don't know.

Regarding the upcoming U.S. Senate race, when asked who they would vote for if the election were held today, 45 percent of likely voters indicated they would vote for Nelson, the Democratic candidate, 45 percent would vote for Scott, the Republican, and 8 percent didn't know. Of Democratic likely voters, 78 percent claim they will vote for Nelson, while 9 percent for Scott; Thirteen percent don't know. Among Republican respondents, 12 percent say they will vote for Nelson, 83 percent for Scott, and 4 percent don't know.

“It’s still early in the election season, and even though Gillum has a small lead a lot can happen in the next 6 weeks. Nelson and Scott are currently tied, but one bit of hope for Nelson is that more Democrats are unsure who they will vote for – and partisans will come home in November. With polling numbers this close, the candidates that are most successful getting their voters to the polls are the ones who are going to win,” said Dr. Michael Binder, faculty director of the Public Opinion Research Lab at UNF. “Historically, Florida has had very close statewide elections, and this year is shaping up to be no different.”

Additionally, the poll reveals that respondents show high support for restoring felon voting rights. When asked whether they would vote “yes” or “no” on a proposition to restore the voting rights of Floridians with felony convictions, 71 percent of likely voters claimed they would vote “yes” on the proposition, with 21 percent voting “no.” Only 8 percent didn’t know how they would vote. Regarding race, 82 percent of African-American respondents indicated they would vote “yes” on the amendment, while 69 percent of white respondents and 65 percent of Hispanic respondents claimed they would vote “yes” on the proposition.

“These results reflect the status of African-Americans as the population most directly affected by Florida’s felon disenfranchisement laws,” said Dr. Natasha Christie, chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at UNF. “With such a large majority of likely voters saying they would vote “yes” on Amendment 4, this indicates views on this issue are becoming more progressive overall throughout the state, regardless of race.”

When asked about the most important problem in Florida, education (20 percent) led the way, followed closely by health care and environment with 18 percent.

“Democrats across the state have been highlighting both health care and the environment, a message that appears to resonate with a lot of voters,” Binder noted

For details about the methodology of the survey and additional crosstabs by partisanship, sex, education, race and age go to: <http://www.unf.edu/coas/porl/2018FLFall.aspx>

Survey Results

If the election for Florida governor were being held today, how would you vote if the candidates were...

Answer Options	Florida Likely Voters n=605
Andrew Gillum, the Democrat	47%
Ron DeSantis, the Republican	43%
Someone Else	<1%
Don't Know	10%

Answer Options	Democratic Likely Voters n=234	Republican Likely Voters n=253
Andrew Gillum, the Democrat	85%	11%
Ron DeSantis, the Republican	6%	81%
Someone Else	1%	-
Don't Know	9%	8%

If the 2018 election for U.S. Senator from Florida were being held today, how would you vote if the candidates were...

Answer Options	Florida Likely Voters n=603
Bill Nelson, the Democrat	45%
Rick Scott, the Republican	45%
Someone Else	1%
Don't Know	9%

Answer Options	Democratic Likely Voters n=235	Republican Likely Voters n=252
Bill Nelson, the Democrat	77%	12%
Rick Scott, the Republican	9%	83%
Someone Else	<1%	1%
Don't Know	13%	4%

Amendment 4 on the statewide ballot for 2018 is called "Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative." This Amendment would restore the voting rights of Floridians with felony convictions after they complete all terms of their sentence, including parole or probation. The amendment wouldn't apply to those convicted of murder or sexual offenses. If the election were held today, would you vote "yes" or "no" for this proposition?

Answer Options	Florida Likely Voters n=617
Yes	71%
No	21%
Don't Know	8%

Answer Options	Democratic Likely Voters n=239	Republican Likely Voters n=259
Yes	83%	62%
No	10%	31%
Don't Know	7%	8%

Answer Options	White Likely Voters n=423	Black Likely Voters n=81	Hispanic Likely Voters n=83	Other Race Likely Voters n=30
Yes	69%	82%	65%	83%
No	23%	11%	28%	7%
Don't Know	9%	7%	7%	10%

What do you think is the most important problem facing Florida today?

Answer Options	Florida Likely Voters n=618
Economy/Jobs/Unemployment	10%
Education	20%
Healthcare	18%
Crime	10%
Environment	18%
Immigration	13%
Terrorism	2%
Gun Policy	1%
Race Relations	<1%
Government/Politics	2%
Something Else	2%
Don't Know	3%

Survey Demographics

Party Registration	Florida Voters n=654
Republican	40.8%
Democrat	39.5%
NPA and other	19.7%

Age	Florida Voters n=654
18 to 24	8%
25 to 34	10%
35 to 44	12%
45 to 55	16%
56 to 64	20%
65 and older	35%

Race	Florida Likely Voters n=654
White (not Hispanic)	67%
Black (not Hispanic)	14%
Hispanic	14%
Other	5%

Sex	Florida Likely Voters n=654
Male	45%
Female	55%

Telephone	Florida Likely Voters n=654
Landline	32%
Cell phone	67%
Don't Know/Refusal	1%

What is the highest grade in school or year of college you have completed?

Education	Florida Likely Voters n=654
Less than high school	2%
High school graduate	23%
Some college	39%
College graduate	21%
Post graduate degree	14%
Don't Know	<1%
Refusal	1%

What language was this survey completed in?

Survey language completed in...	Florida Likely Voters n=654
English	97%
Spanish	3%

Methodology

The UNF Florida Statewide Poll was conducted and sponsored by the Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of North Florida, from Monday, September 17 through Wednesday, September 19, by live callers via the telephone; calls were made from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by PORL interviewers. The phone numbers used for this survey were sourced from the voter file database provided by the Florida Division of Elections' August 8, 2018 update.

The sample frame was comprised of potentially likely voters who reside in Florida. Potentially likely voters were determined by vote history and having voted in the any of the following elections: 2014 primary election, 2014 general election, 2016 primary election, or any two of these elections – the 2016 presidential preference primary, the 2016 general election or

the 2012 general election. All voters who were 22 years of age and younger were included as potentially likely since they were ineligible to vote in enough of the previous elections to qualify as potentially likely. The voters who met these requirements were then randomly contacted by probability sampling. Respondents who answered that they would “definitely vote” or “probably vote” in the upcoming Florida General Election qualified to participate in the survey. Overall, there were 654 completed surveys with a total of 616 likely Florida voters, 18 years of age or older.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 3.95 percentage points. The breakdown of completed responses on a landline phone to a cell phone was 31 to 68 percent (1 percent were unidentified). A single interviewer, through hand dialing, upon reaching the specific registered voter as identified in the Florida voter file, asked the respondent to participate, regardless of landline telephone or cell phone. To ensure a representative sample being collected, the sample was stratified using the 10 Florida designated market areas (DMA). DMAs are defined as regions where the population can receive the same or similar television and radio station offerings, as well as other types of media including newspapers and Internet content. In addition, because of Miami-Dade County’s unique population, it was separately accounted for in its own strata, creating 11 strata from the 10 DMAs. Quotas were placed on each of these stratified areas to ensure a proportionate amount of completed surveys from across the state. Data were then weighted by partisan registration, sex, race, age, and education. Education weights were created from the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS). Partisan registration, sex, race, and age weights were created from the August 8, 2018 update of the Florida voter file to match the active registered potentially likely voters in the state of Florida. These demographic characteristics were pulled from the voter file list. All weighted demographic variables were applied using the SPSS version 23 rake weighting function. There were no statistical adjustments made due to design effects. This survey was sponsored by the UNF PORL and directed by Dr. Michael Binder, UNF associate professor of political science.

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. For more information about methodology, contact Dr. Michael Binder at porl@unf.edu or at (904) 620-2784.

UNF, a [nationally ranked](#) university located on an environmentally beautiful campus, offers students who are dedicated to enriching the lives of others the opportunity to build their own futures through a well-rounded education.