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UNF Poll Shows Competitive Sheriff's Race in St. Johns County *Lack of Awareness for Public Figures*

The Public Opinion Research Lab (PORL) at the University of North Florida has a new poll of likely voters for the August 2020 Republican primary in St. Johns County. The poll reveals a potentially tight race for Sheriff. Candidates Rob Hardwick and Chris Strickland appear to be neck and neck, with 13% and 12%, respectively. Candidate Keith Perniciaro garnered less than 1% of the vote; however, 75% of respondents indicated they do not know who they would vote for.

"At this stage of the Sheriff's race polling is based on name recognition, and the two leading candidates both need to do some more work in that department," stated Dr. Michael Binder, director of the Public Opinion Research Lab.

When asked about whether they approve or disapprove of the job St. Johns County Commissioners are doing, 69% stated they strongly or somewhat approve, with only 19% disapproving.

"Considering this a sample of Republican voters, assessing the job approval of Republican elected officials, it is not surprising that they are supportive," Binder noted. "But, approval numbers this high, a net positive 50 approval, is especially impressive for legislative bodies."

Respondents were asked if they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of six public figures in St. Johns County, or if they had never heard of that person. Large majorities of voters are unfamiliar with the public figures running for local office in the upcoming August primary election. Of the six candidates listed in the survey, no one garnered more than 50% awareness from likely Republican primary voters.

When asked about Henry Dean, 69% of respondents stated they had never heard of him, while 12% had a favorable opinion and 2% had an unfavorable opinion. Similarly, 66% of voters have never heard of Paul Waldron, but of those who have, 20% have a favorable opinion and just 3% an unfavorable opinion. For Chris Strickland, 64% of respondents have never heard of him, with 19% having a favorable opinion and 2% an unfavorable opinion. When asked about Rob Hardwick, 59% of respondents indicated they had never heard of him, while 22% had a favorable opinion and 2% an unfavorable opinion. Kevin Geddings had the lowest levels of awareness of all public figures in the survey, with 78% of respondents stating they had never heard of him. Geddings received an 8% favorable and 4% unfavorable opinion rating. Lastly, Cyndi Stevenson received the highest level of awareness, with 50% of respondents never having heard of her. Additionally, 31% of respondents had a favorable opinion of Stevenson, while 6% had an unfavorable opinion.

“There is undoubtedly a general lack of awareness regarding the candidates for St Johns County Commissioner and Sheriff, but it’s still early,” said Binder. “The election isn’t until August, and candidates have plenty of time to get their names out.”

When asked which of the following was the most important issue facing St. Johns County, keeping taxes low led the way with 27%, followed by keeping schools top-rated and limiting development, with 22% and 21%, respectively. Another 19% stated that roads and traffic were the most important issue facing the area.

For details about the methodology of the survey and additional crosstabs by age, race, sex, education, and income, visit the [Recent Polls](#) section of the [PORL website](#).

Survey Results

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that the St. Johns County Commissioners are doing?

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=313
Strongly Approve	22%
Somewhat Approve	47%
Somewhat Disapprove	12%
Strongly Disapprove	7%
Don't Know	12%

If the August 2020 election for St. Johns County Sheriff were being held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were:

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=299
Rob Hardwick	13%
Keith Perniciaro	<1%
Chris Strickland	12%
Don't Know	75%

If the August 2020 election for St. Johns County Commissioner were being held today, how would you vote if the candidates were:

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=309
Henry Dean	12%
Kevin Geddings	4%
Don't Know	84%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Henry Dean

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=313
Favorable	15%
Unfavorable	2%
Never heard of them	69%
Don't know	13%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Rob Hardwick

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=313
Favorable	22%
Unfavorable	3%

Never heard of them	59%
Don't know	16%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Kevin Geddings

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=313
Favorable	8%
Unfavorable	2%
Never heard of them	78%
Don't know	12%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Chris Strickland

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=303
Favorable	19%
Unfavorable	2%
Never heard of them	64%
Don't know	16%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Cyndi Stevenson

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=312
Favorable	31%
Unfavorable	6%
Never heard of them	50%
Don't know	13%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Paul Waldron

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=312
Favorable	20%
Unfavorable	3%
Never heard of them	66%
Don't know	12%

Between these four issues facing St. Johns County, which is the most important to you?

Answer Choices	Likely Voters n=314
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Roads/traffic	19%
Keeping taxes low	27%
Keeping our schools top-rated	22%
Limit development	21%
All of them	10%
None of them	<1%
Something else	1%
Don't know	<1%

Survey Demographics

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

Answer Choices	Florida Voters n=313	Florida Voters n=307*
Less than high school	-	<1%
High school graduate	15%	15%
Some college	35%	35%
College graduate	26%	29%
Post-graduate degree	24%	21%

What is your annual household income?

Answer Choices	Florida Voters n=247	Florida Voters n=246*
Less than \$25,000	4%	5%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	10%	8%
\$50,000 to \$75,000	18%	17%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	14%	18%
More than \$100,000	54%	52%

Age	Florida Voters n=319	Florida Voters n=309*
18-24	1%	1%
25-34	3%	3%
35-44	7%	7%
45-54	15%	15%
55-64	24%	24%
65 and older	51%	50%

Race	Florida Voters n=319	Florida Voters n=309*
White (Not Hispanic)	96%	96%
Black (Not Hispanic)	-	<1%
Hispanic	2%	2%
Other	3%	2%

Sex	Florida Voters n=319	Florida Voters n=309*
Male	50%	50%
Female	50%	50%

Telephone	Florida Voters n=318	Florida Voters n=309*
Landline	32%	32%
Cellphone	68%	68%

*Indicates sample frame for questions Sheriff vote choice and Strickland favorability

Methodology

The UNF St. Johns County Poll was conducted and sponsored by the Public Opinion Research Lab (PORL) at the University of North Florida in partnership WSOS 103.9 Radio Station Monday, Feb. 24 through Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020 by live callers via the telephone from 4 to 9 p.m. each day. The sample frame was comprised of registered Republican Florida voters, 18 years of age or older. The phone numbers used for this survey were sourced from the December update of the Florida voter file. UNF undergraduate students and employees conducted interviews in English. Data collection took place at the PORL facility with its 27-station Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 5.5 percentage points. The breakdown of completed responses on a landline phone to a cellphone was 32% to 68%, with less than 1% unidentified. Through hand dialing, an interviewer upon reaching the individual as specified in the voter file asked that respondent to participate, regardless of landline telephone or cellphone. Data were then weighted by age, race, sex, and education. Education weights were created from the December update of the Florida Voter File to match the active registered Republican likely voters in Florida for the percent of college-educated individuals in the state of Florida, approximately 29%. Sex, race, and age weights were also created from the December update of the Florida Voter File to match the active registered Republican likely voters in Florida. These demographic characteristics were pulled from the voter file list. As a side note, an additional 210 surveys were conducted solely about the Sheriff's race to correct for a typographical error in the original survey instrument.

All weighted demographic variables were applied using the SPSS version 25 rake weighting function, which will not assign a weight if one of the demographics being weighted on is missing. In this case, respondents missing a response for any of the demographic information were given a weight of 1. There were no statistical adjustments made due to design effects. This study had a 21% response rate. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 3 (RR3) calculation was used which consists of an estimate of what proportion of cases of unknown eligibility are truly eligible. This survey was 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. 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 at (904) 620-2784.

About University of North Florida

UNF is a nationally ranked university in Jacksonville, Florida, that is nestled on a beautiful 1,300-acre campus surrounded by nature. The University features six colleges of distinction, premiere flagship specialties, with 60 bachelor degree programs and 78 areas of academic concentration for a student-centered educational experience that is creating the next generation of thinkers, leaders and problem solvers. More information at www.unf.edu.

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Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of North Florida - UNF St. Johns County Poll

For more information visit: <https://www.unf.edu/coas/porl/>

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that the St. Johns County Commissioners are doing?

N=312	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=168	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=61	65+ n=160	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=136
Strongly Approve	22%	24%	20%	25%	19%	22%	-	-	38%	-	20%	29%	17%	19%	25%	15%	28%
Somewhat Approve	47%	54%	40%	43%	51%	46%	-	80%	63%	75%	70%	43%	57%	43%	44%	48%	47%
Somewhat Disapprove	12%	8%	16%	13%	12%	13%	-	-	-	-	-	14%	11%	19%	10%	14%	10%
Strongly Disapprove	7%	6%	8%	7%	8%	7%	-	20%	-	-	-	4%	11%	8%	11%	5%	
Don't Know	12%	8%	16%	13%	11%	13%	-	-	-	25%	10%	14%	11%	9%	13%	13%	10%

If the August 2020 election for St. Johns County Sheriff were being held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were:

N=297 (taken from Sample 2)	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=165	F n=132	Yes n=172	No n=123	White n=284	Afr Amer /Black n=4	Hispanic n=3	Other n=6	18-24 n=2	25-34 n=17	35-44 n=31	45-54 n=54	55-64 n=64	65+ n=129	100K and below n=109	Over 100k n=136
Rob Hardwick	13%	15%	11%	14%	13%	14%	-	-	-	33%	22%	10%	9%	15%	13%	20%	10%
Keith Perniciaro	<1%	1%	-	-	1%	<1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	1%	-
Chris Stickland	12%	11%	12%	15%	9%	12%	-	-	-	-	11%	19%	14%	11%	11%	11%	14%
Don't Know	75%	73%	77%	71%	77%	74%	-	100%	100%	67%	67%	71%	77%	74%	76%	68%	77%

If the August 2020 election for St. Johns County Commissioner were being held today, how would you vote if the candidates were:

N=307	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=165	F n=142	Yes n=181	No n=125	White n=299	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=5	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=37	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=155	100K and below n=106	Over 100k n=135
Henry Dean	12%	14%	10%	10%	14%	12%	-	20%	-	-	-	10%	15%	5%	15%	11%	11%
Kevin Geddings	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	-	-	-	33%	-	5%	-	5%	5%	7%	2%
Don't Know	84%	82%	87%	85%	84%	84%	-	80%	100%	67%	100%	85%	85%	90%	81%	82%	87%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Henry Dean

N=312	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=168	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=159	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	15%	21%	10%	15%	16%	16%	-	20%	-	-	-	19%	19%	13%	16%	18%	14%
Unfavorable	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	5%	-	5%	1%	4%	2%
Never heard of them	70%	66%	73%	73%	66%	69%	-	80%	100%	100%	100%	62%	66%	72%	68%	68%	72%
Don't know	13%	12%	15%	11%	15%	14%	-	-	-	-	-	14%	15%	9%	15%	10%	11%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Rob Hardwick

N=312	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=168	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=159	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	23%	25%	19%	23%	21%	22%	-	20%	-	33%	11%	36%	17%	25%	20%	30%	16%
Unfavorable	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5%	3%	5%	2%
Never heard of them	59%	59%	59%	61%	57%	58%	-	80%	100%	67%	78%	50%	63%	56%	60%	55%	66%
Don't know	16%	12%	20%	14%	19%	17%	-	-	-	-	11%	14%	21%	13%	18%	11%	16%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Kevin Geddings

N=312	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=168	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=159	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	8%	9%	7%	7%	9%	8%	-	20%	-	33%	-	10%	4%	11%	8%	8%	6%
Unfavorable	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	3%	2%	2%
Never heard of them	79%	80%	77%	80%	76%	78%	-	80%	100%	67%	100%	75%	88%	78%	76%	84%	82%
Don't know	12%	8%	15%	11%	12%	12%	-	-	-	-	-	15%	8%	10%	13%	6%	11%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Chris Strickland

N=301 (taken from Sample 2)	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=166	F n=135	Yes n=176	No n=123	White n=288	Afr Amer /Black n=4	Hispanic n=3	Other n=6	18-24 n=2	25-34 n=16	35-44 n=32	45-54 n=54	55-64 n=65	65+ n=132	100K and below n=110	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	19%	20%	18%	22%	15%	19%	100%	-	-	-	11%	23%	21%	25%	15%	16%	21%
Unfavorable	2%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	5%	5%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Never heard of them	64%	58%	69%	59%	70%	63%	-	100%	100%	100%	78%	59%	61%	58%	67%	70%	63%
Don't know	16%	19%	13%	18%	12%	16%	-	-	-	-	11%	14%	14%	16%	16%	11%	15%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Cyndi Stevenson

N=311	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=167	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=5	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=158	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	31%	29%	33%	25%	37%	31%	-	60%	25%	25%	44%	36%	19%	35%	32%	30%	27%
Unfavorable	6%	7%	5%	7%	4%	6%	-	-	-	-	-	5%	-	12%	5%	6%	5%
Never heard of them	50%	56%	45%	55%	46%	50%	-	-	75%	50%	56%	41%	71%	41%	48%	54%	53%
Don't know	13%	9%	17%	13%	14%	13%	-	40%	-	25%	-	18%	10%	12%	15%	11%	14%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people or if you have never heard of them—Paul Waldron

N=311	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=167	F n=144	Yes n=183	No n=127	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=5	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=158	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
Favorable	20%	21%	19%	17%	24%	21%	-	25%	-	-	11%	19%	13%	30%	19%	26%	17%
Unfavorable	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Never heard of them	65%	67%	64%	68%	62%	64%	-	75%	100%	67%	89%	62%	77%	57%	65%	58%	72%
Don't know	12%	9%	15%	13%	10%	12%	-	-	-	33%	-	19%	6%	10%	13%	12%	10%

Between these four issues facing St. Johns County, which is the most important to you?

N=313	Total	Sex		Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
		M n=169	F n=144	Yes n=184	No n=127	White n=304	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=160	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=136
Roads/traffic	19%	17%	21%	13%	24%	19%	-	17%	-	-	11%	5%	21%	20%	20%	18%	19%
Keeping taxes low	27%	30%	24%	23%	32%	27%	-	17%	63%	67%	67%	14%	30%	23%	27%	26%	30%
Keeping our schools top-rated	21%	22%	21%	27%	15%	21%	-	50%	-	33%	11%	58%	15%	20%	21%	15%	23%
Limit development	21%	18%	24%	23%	19%	22%	-	17%	-	-	11%	29%	19%	27%	19%	26%	19%
All of them	10%	10%	9%	11%	8%	9%	-	-	38%	-	-	-	15%	8%	10%	13%	7%
None of them	<1%	-	1%	-	1%	<1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	-	-
Something else	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	5%	-	1%	2%	2%	2%
Don't know	<1%	1%	-	1%	-	<1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	-	1%

Would you be more or less inclined to vote for a candidate for St Johns County Commission if they opposed new taxes?

N=313	Total	Sex		Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
		M n=169	F n=144	Yes n=184	No n=127	White n=304	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=160	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=136
More inclined	66%	72%	60%	64%	69%	66%	-	60%	63%	100%	80%	65%	67%	61%	67%	66%	69%
Less inclined	15%	12%	18%	12%	18%	14%	-	-	38%	-	10%	20%	15%	17%	14%	16%	11%
Does not matter	15%	14%	15%	21%	8%	15%	-	20%	-	-	10%	15%	16%	15%	14%	14%	17%
Don't know	5%	2%	7%	4%	5%	4%	-	20%	-	-	-	-	4%	7%	4%	6%	2%

Would you be more or less inclined to vote for a candidate for St Johns County Commission if they supported new development?

N=312	Total	Sex		Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
		M n=168	F n=144	Yes n=184	No n=126	White n=303	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=6	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=38	45-54 n=35	55-64 n=62	65+ n=159	100K and below n=107	Over 100k n=135
More inclined	26%	35%	16%	25%	26%	23%	-	50%	100%	25%	60%	24%	23%	26%	24%	16%	35%
Less inclined	58%	49%	67%	57%	59%	60%	-	33%	-	25%	20%	67%	65%	55%	59%	70%	46%
Does not matter	12%	14%	10%	13%	10%	12%	-	17%	-	25%	10%	10%	13%	12%	12%	11%	13%
Don't know	5%	3%	7%	5%	5%	5%	-	-	-	25%	10%	-	-	7%	6%	3%	6%

In the race for St. John County Commissioner, would you be more or less inclined to vote for an incumbent who has presided over the County's continued economic boom, but has accepted tens of thousands of dollars from developers or would you be more inclined to vote for a challenger who is a small business owner, who promises not to raise taxes, but who was also convicted of political corruption only to have those charges later dropped?

N=294	Sex			Education (College Degree)		Race/Ethnicity				Age						Income	
	Total	M n=159	F n=135	Yes n=172	No n=121	White n=286	Afr Amer /Black n=0	Hispanic n=5	Other n=3	18-24 n=4	25-34 n=14	35-44 n=37	45-54 n=33	55-64 n=58	65+ n=148	100K and below n=102	Over 100k n=129
Incumbent	23%	24%	22%	25%	21%	23%	-	-	25%	-	44%	40%	16%	17%	24%	23%	26%
Challenger	45%	44%	47%	39%	51%	45%	-	25%	75%	67%	22%	35%	47%	54%	43%	43%	47%
Don't know	32%	32%	31%	36%	28%	32%	-	75%	-	33%	33%	25%	38%	29%	33%	34%	28%

Nature of the Sample		
Likely Republican St. Johns Voters	Sample 1 n=319	Sample 2 n=309
Sex		
Male	50%	50%
Female	50%	50%
Education (College Degree)		
Less than high school	-	<1%
High school graduate	15%	15%
Some college	35%	35%
College graduate	26%	29%
Post graduate degree	24%	21%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	96%	96%
African American/Black	-	<1%
Hispanic	2%	2%
Other	3%	2%
Age		
18-24	1%	1%
25-34	3%	3%
35-44	7%	7%
45-54	15%	15%
55-64	24%	24%
65+	50%	50%
Income		
Less than 25k	4%	5%
25k - 50k	10%	8%
50k - 75k	17%	17%
75k - 100k	14%	18%
More than 100k	54%	52%