



Quick Facts

Data Release No. 3 | Oct. 12, 2016 Elections: Amendments and Integrity

The USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

Florida, the nation's third largest state, is also one of the most diverse in terms of the people who live here. The constant in- and out-migration of people from other states and countries, as well as within-state re-locations, give rise to new problems and differing opinions as to how to resolve them. The goal of the annual USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey is to provide the state's government, business, and not-for-profit leaders, as well as citizens, in-depth analyses of public opinion on a wide-range of issues so that they might better serve the people who choose Florida as their home.

AMENDMENTS

Constitutional Amendments: Have Enough Information?

Six-in-ten Floridians think they do not get enough information on constitutional amendments.

- Fully 60% of Floridians say they do not get enough information on proposed constitutional amendments. This opinion is at a four-year high, up from 48% in 2014. Over the same period, the share of Floridians that believes they are well-informed on the proposed amendments has fallen from 34% in 2014 to just 22% this year. Another 15% think they only get one side of the issue.
- Those out of the work force, living in low-income households, and with some college education are most likely to believe they do not get enough information on proposed amendments. Most confident they get enough information on amendments are persons employed part-time, living in high-income households, and college educated. (See full data release for details.)

Constitutional Amendments: Average Citizens or Special Interests?

Over 70% of Floridians believe that constitutional amendments are put on the ballot by special interest groups.

- A majority—71%—of Floridians believes that constitutional amendments are put on the ballot by well-financed special interest groups—down slightly from 75% in 2012 and 2014. The proportion seeing average citizens banding together as the source of proposed amendments remained constant at 17%.
- Wealthy, college-educated, and older Floridians see well-financed special interests as the source of amendment proposals placed on the ballot. Younger Floridians, low-income households, and those with less formal educational attainment are more likely to think average citizens are the source. (See full data release for details.)

FELON VOTING RIGHTS

Felon Voting Rights – Automatic Restoration or Petition Governor?

Over one-third of Floridians support automatically restoring the voting rights of ex-felons.

- This year, over one-third (37%) of Floridians support automatically restoring the voting rights of ex-felons, an increase of 5% from 2014. Almost half (49%) favor the status quo—restoration after petitioning the Governor and being granted approval—down 6% from 2014. Another 7% do not believe that ex-felons should ever have their voting rights restored—the same as 2014.

The USF-Sunshine State Survey is in collaboration with





SUNSHINE STATE SURVEY

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

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Felon Voting Rights – Automatic Restoration or Petition Governor? *Cont.*

- Younger Floridians, those with a child at home, African-Americans, and persons with some college education are most supportive of automatically restoring voting rights to ex-felons. The status quo (request, then state approval) has the strongest support from those without a child at home, whites, and college graduates. Older Floridians are most likely to think voting rights should never be restored. (See full data release for details.)

PRIMARIES – OPEN OR CLOSED

Open or Closed Primaries

Two-thirds of registered voters think that Florida should have open primary elections.

- A majority of self-identified registered voters—67%—believes that Florida should move to an open primary system where independents may vote in partisan primaries. Just over 30% believe that the state should keep its current closed primary system. Less than one percent does not understand primary elections.
- Strongest support for opening primary elections comes from females, younger Floridians, the unemployed, part-time workers, those living in a low-income household, and those with less formal education. (See full data release for details.)

STATE PERFORMANCE – ELECTIONS

State Government Performance Ratings: Providing Highly Dependable Election Equipment

Over half of Floridians think that the state does a “good” or “excellent” job providing dependable election equipment.

- A majority of Floridians—52%—gives the state “good” or “excellent” marks in its provision of dependable election equipment. “Fair” ratings come from 29% of those surveyed, while 14% grade the state’s efforts as “poor.”
- Every year since 2010 a majority of Floridians has acknowledged that the state does a “good” or “excellent” job of providing dependable election equipment.
- The most positive ratings come from females, whites, and residents of North Florida and Tampa Bay. The most negative ratings come from males, Hispanics, and residents of Palm Beach. (See full data release for details.)

State Government Performance Ratings: Making it Convenient to Vote

The state receives its best performance ratings for making it convenient to vote; over two-thirds rate the state as “good” or “excellent.”

- This year, 68% give the state “good” or “excellent” marks for making voting convenient. Only 9% rate the state’s efforts as “poor,” while 21% rate the state’s performance as “fair.”
- The proportion of Floridians rating the state’s efforts to make it convenient to vote is near an eight-year low (in 2008, the proportion was 66%).

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State Government Performance Ratings:

Making it Convenient to Vote, *cont.*

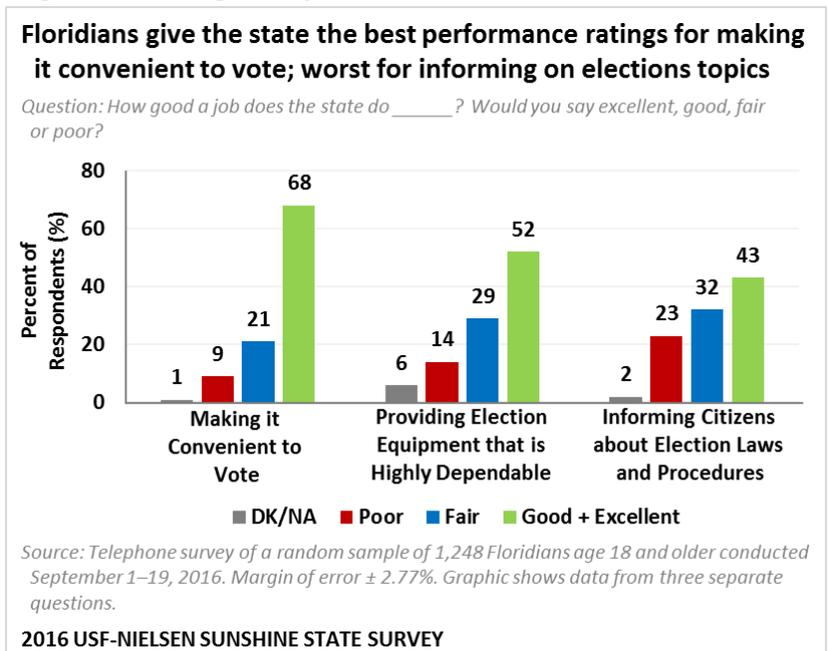
- Females, older Floridians, those with a child at home, whites, more affluent households, and residents of the Naples, Palm Beach, and Tampa Bay areas give the state the most positive voting convenience marks. The highest proportion of poor marks come from males, younger Floridians, those without a child at home, Hispanics, those out of the work force, mid-income households, and residents of the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa Bay, and Orlando areas. (See full data release for details.)

State Government Performance Ratings:

Informing Citizens about Election Laws and Procedures

Floridians give mixed ratings to state for the job it does informing citizens about election laws and procedures; only 43% give positive ratings, while 55% judge it more negatively.

- Only 9% of Floridians rate the state’s performance as “excellent” while another 34% give “good” ratings for informing citizens on elections topics. Most Floridians assign the state either “poor” (23%) or “fair” (32%) ratings.
- Historically, positive citizen ratings have been consistently falling since 2008—from 64% to just 43% this year.
- The most positive marks come from females, the oldest Floridians, whites, college graduates, and residents of the Naples and North Florida areas. The worst ratings come from males, younger Floridians, Hispanics, the unemployed, those with some college education, and residents of the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area. (See full data release for details.)



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Detailed Analysis of Hot Topics and Additional Questions on Elections—Amendments and Integrity

Detailed Contents

Hot Topics: Elections – Amendments and Integrity

-  Constitutional Amendments: Have Enough Information?
-  Constitutional Amendments: Average Citizens or Special Interests?
-  Felon Voting Rights – Automatic Restoration or Petition Governor?
- NEW** Open or Closed Primaries
-  State Government Performance Ratings – Providing Highly Dependable Election Equipment
-  State Government Performance Ratings – Making it Convenient to Vote
-  State Government Performance Ratings – Informing Citizens about Election Laws and Procedures

Elections

-  Voter Registration Status
-  Reason for Not Registering (Among Those Not Registered)
- NEW** Who is Eligible to Vote in Nonpartisan Primaries?

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