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Race relations, hate groups, and undocumented immigrants: State actions preferred by Floridians differ most by age, race/ethnicity, and education.

By Susan A. MacManus, *Project director*

Florida's growth over the past four decades, fueled by people moving into the state from other states and countries, has transformed it into the nation's third largest state. New arrivals, along with generational replacement, are constantly changing the state's population makeup.

In this population flux, the **2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey** shows Floridians growing more critical of the State's efforts to improve race relations. At the same time, Floridians are highly supportive of protecting religious and educational facilities from attacks by hate groups and of requiring employers to check the immigrant status of new hires. Opinions are more mixed, but negative, toward expanding rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants and creating safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented immigrant students.

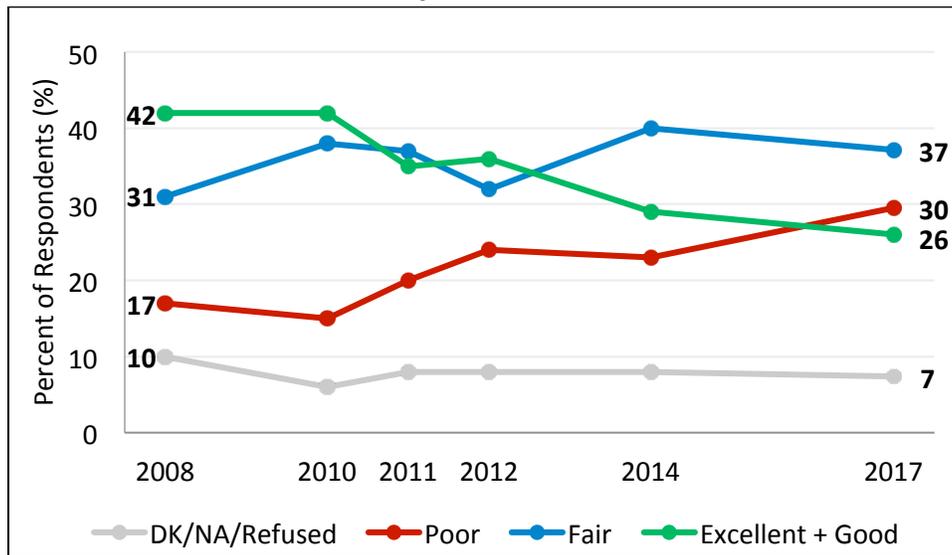
State falling behind in improving race relations.

Florida's minority population more closely mirrors the racial/ethnic makeup of the nation at-large than any other state.¹ As the minority population has grown, Floridians have become more critical of the State's efforts to improve race relations: 67% give the State either a "fair" or "poor" grade compared to 26% who award it a "good" or "excellent" grade. (A similar pattern has been observed nationally.²) **"Poor" ratings of the State's performance in improving race relations have nearly doubled since 2008, from 17% to 30%.** Positive ratings fell from 42% to 26% over the same period.

¹ U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2015. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>, accessed October 13, 2017.

² John Whitesides, Reuters, "More Americans Say Race Relations Deteriorating: Reuters Poll," April 28, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-poll-race/more-americans-say-race-relations-deteriorating-reuters-poll-idUSKBN17U1JU>, accessed October 13, 2017.

“Poor” ratings of the State’s efforts to improve race relations have nearly doubled since 2008



Question wording: “How good a job does the state do improving race relations? Would you say excellent, good, fair or poor?”

Source: Annual USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Surveys.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

The most striking difference of opinion appears between blacks and other racial/ethnic groups: almost half of black respondents (46%) give the State a “poor” rating, compared to roughly a quarter of white (26%) and Hispanic (25%) respondents. Feelings of racial injustice, especially toward the criminal justice system, are highest among the state’s black population.³

By age, younger (18- to 34-year-olds—32%) and the oldest (80 and older—36%) Floridians are the most likely to say that the State government is doing a “good” or “excellent” job of improving race relations. Working-age Floridians are more critical, in part because they are more likely to perceive pay and promotion disparities through racial lenses. By educational level, the most positive ratings come from those with only a high school diploma or less, and the most critical from college graduates.

Negative ratings are highest in South Florida: Miami/Fort Lauderdale (71%) and Palm Beach (83%) with their larger minority populations and Naples (72%) with its larger share of older white college graduates. Slightly less critical of State efforts are residents of North Florida and the I-4 Corridor regions: North Florida (61%), Tampa Bay (63%), and Orlando (61%).

Two-thirds favor State funding to protect religious facilities and schools against hate group attacks.

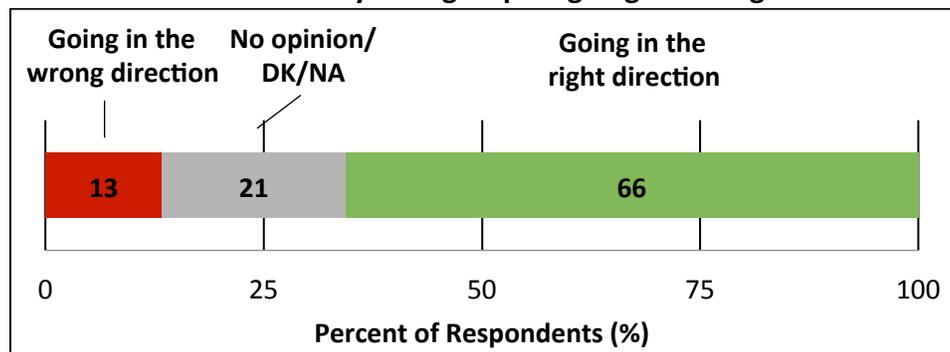
³Bedi, N., Humburg, C. (2017). If you’re black. *Tampa Bay Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2017/investigations/florida-police-shootings/if-youre-black/>

Two-thirds of Floridians (66%) say that it would be going in the *right* direction for the State to provide funding to protect religious facilities and schools from attacks by hate groups. Relatively few say that this would be going in the *wrong* direction (13%). Twenty-one percent did not express an opinion on the issue. Opinions differ most by gender and race/ethnicity.

Women (71%) are more likely to support this State action than men (60%), a difference that can be explained in two ways. First, women are more religious than their male counterparts.⁴ Second, women are more likely than men to volunteer at their child's school or place of worship, making security of these facilities more important in their daily lives.

Blacks (71%) are slightly more likely than whites (66%) or Hispanics (64%) to view protection of religious facilities and schools as a step in the *right* direction. FBI hate-crime statistics show higher rates of hate crimes against blacks than other races, especially crimes committed at churches.⁵

Two-thirds of Floridians say providing funding to protect religious facilities and schools from attacks by hate groups is going in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to provide funding to protect religious facilities and schools from attacks by hate groups, would you say that was going in the right direction or the wrong direction, or do you have no opinion about it?"

Source: Telephone survey of a random sample of 1,215 Floridians ages 18 and older conducted July 24-August 14, 2017. Margin of error \pm 2.8%.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

Two-thirds favor the State requiring employers to check immigration status of new hires.

Roughly two-thirds (67%) of Floridians see requiring employers to check the immigration status of new hires as a step in the *right* direction (results are in line with national surveys⁶). Only 14 percent say that this would be a step in the wrong direction. Almost a fifth (19%),

⁴ Pew Research Center. (2016). The gender gap in religion around the world. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/>

⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "What We Investigate," links to annual reports on hate crimes beginning in 1992; <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>, accessed October 14, 2017.

⁶ A Washington Post-ABC News poll conducted September 18-21, 2017 reported that 79% of those surveyed support such a requirement, including 61% who support it strongly.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2017/09/25/National-Politics/Polling/release_491.xml?uclid=SOHmZqHgEee1c47IbN_h7Q

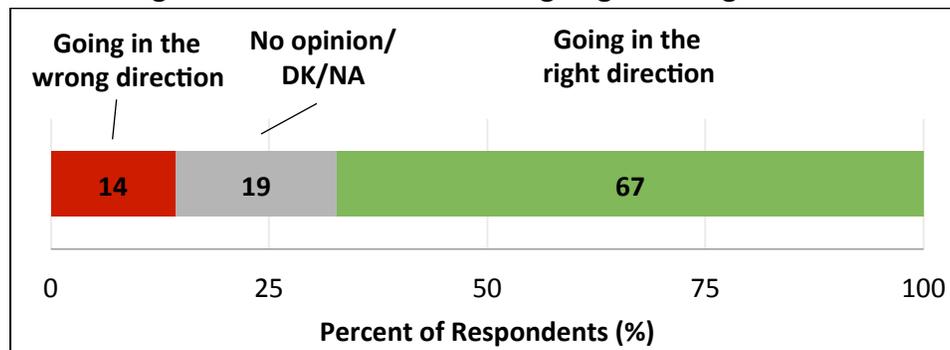
meanwhile, have no opinion on the issue. In general, this policy issue appears to be less controversial than other immigration issues, in part because it seems logical for employers to check a prospective employee's background, including immigration status.

Opinions differ most by race/ethnicity, age, and educational attainment, although there is majority support across the board. About three in four whites (73%) believe requiring employers to check immigration status is going in the *right* direction, compared with 59% of Hispanics and 56% of African Americans. Higher levels of support for mandatory immigrant status checks come from older Floridians ages 55 to 64 (Baby Boomers--80%) than Millennials (18- to 34-year-olds--54%)—the nation's most racially diverse generation.

College graduates are twice as likely as those with only a high school diploma or less (18% vs. 9%) to oppose checking a new hire's immigration status. Research shows that college-educated persons have more immigrant-friendly attitudes.⁷

Substantial majorities of the residents of the Naples (80%), North Florida (75%), and Orlando (74%) regions say that checking a new hire's immigration status is going in the *right* direction, while support is much lower in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale (57%), and Palm Beach (58%) areas with their larger immigrant populations.

Two-thirds of Floridians say requiring employers to check the immigration status of new hires is going in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to require employers to check the immigration status of new hires, would you say that was going in the right direction or the wrong direction, or do you have no opinion about it?"

Source: Telephone survey of a random sample of 1,215 Floridians ages 18 and older conducted July 24-August 14, 2017. Margin of error \pm 2.8%.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

Opinions mixed about expanding rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants.

⁷ Julius A. Nikpezah, "Creating an Immigrant-Friendly Society—What Drives Feelings Toward Immigrants?" *Journal of Policy Practice*, July 28, 2017;

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15588742.2017.1344605?needAccess=true&journalCode=wjpp20>, accessed October 15, 2017.

About half of Floridians (52%) say the State giving more rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants would be going in the *wrong* direction. Only 24% say that this is the *right* direction, while a quarter (25%) do not express an opinion. Moreover, little change has occurred in opinions on this issue since the question was asked on the 2016 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey. **Opinions** vary most by race/ethnicity and age—but are **often mixed within groups.**

Mixed opinions are most evident among racial/ethnic minorities. Florida Hispanics are about evenly split: 35% say giving more rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants is going in the right direction, while 38% say it's the *wrong* direction. Among blacks, 28% percent say such action is the *right* direction, while 37% say wrong direction.⁸ **Black support for undocumented immigrants has slipped since last year.** The 2016 survey showed a plurality (41%) of black respondents supported increasing rights and assistance for undocumented immigrants. The 2017 survey reveals the reverse: a plurality (37%) of black Floridians now see such State action as moving in the *wrong* direction.⁹ White respondents are more in agreement: 61% see the change as going in the *wrong* direction.

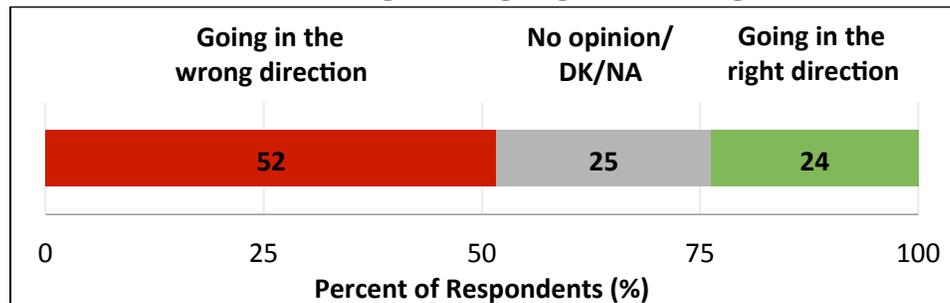
Millennials (ages 18 to 34) are the only age group analyzed that is evenly split in their opinions—35% believe that the State giving more rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants is going in the *right* direction, while 36% say just the opposite. In contrast, among those 35 to 64 years old, 60 percent believe expanding help and rights to undocumented immigrants would be going in the wrong direction. Fears among some of these prime working-age respondents may be at least partially driven by notions that employing undocumented immigrants results in lower wages and/or part-time work or unemployment for them or their offspring.

Regionally, respondents in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale region are most likely to say that expanding rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants is going in the *right* direction (34%). North Floridians are the most likely to say that such a move would be going in the *wrong* direction (61%). Miami/Fort Lauderdale has much larger and more diverse immigrant populations than North Florida.

⁸ National polls have shown that Hispanic opinions on immigration often differ by whether they were born in the United States and by generation. Polls also show less black support for immigration. For a good overview of black opinions, see Thomas B. Edsall, "The Democrats' Immigration Problem," *New York Times*, February 16, 2017; for Hispanic differences, see Jesse J. Holland, Associated Press, "Pew: Hispanics Split on Issues Before Trump Inauguration," February 28, 2017.

⁹ One explanation for the change is that working-class blacks see immigrants as economic competitors and thus more strongly support restrictive immigration policies, especially when the immigrant population where they live grows. Jamelle Bouie, "How African Americans View Immigration Reform," *The American Prospect*, January 28, 2013. Cites work of political scientists Tatishe Nteta. <http://prospect.org/article/how-african-americans-view-immigration-reform>, accessed October 14, 2017.

About half of Floridians say giving more rights and assistance to undocumented immigrants is going in the wrong direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to give more rights and assistance to undocumented (illegal) immigrants, would you say that was going in the right direction or the wrong direction, or do you have no opinion about it?"

Source: Telephone survey of a random sample of 1,215 Floridians ages 18 and older conducted July 24-August 14, 2017. Margin of error \pm 2.8%.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

Opinions divided about State providing safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented immigrant students

Floridians are divided over whether the State should provide safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented immigrant students. More say that this would be going in the *wrong* direction than the right direction (41% vs. 31%), although a substantial minority did not express an opinion on the issue (27%). Race/ethnicity, age, gender, and education divides are widest.

Race/ethnicity. Nearly half of African Americans (47%) say State provision of safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented immigrants is going in the right direction, compared with 39% of Hispanics and only 26% of whites.

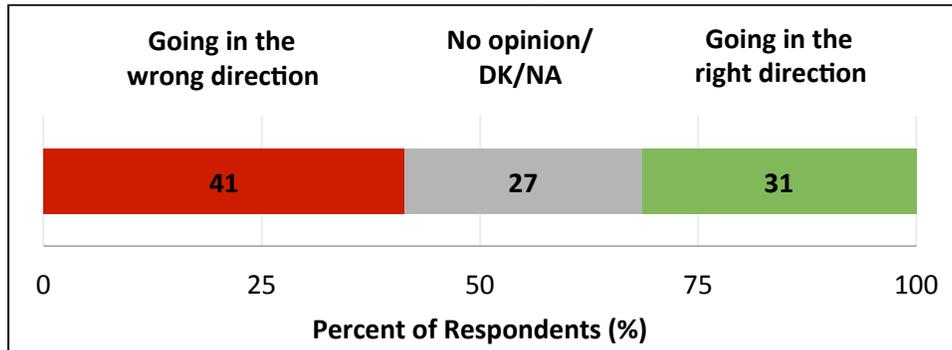
Age. About half (47%) of Florida's Millennials say State provision of safe spaces is a step in the *right* direction, compared to only a quarter (25%) of Baby Boomers (ages 55 to 64) and 22% of the oldest cohort (80 and older). Research has shown that Millennials have more positive views of immigrants¹⁰, reflecting their more racially/ethnically diverse cohort. Campus efforts to provide education about undocumented youth has also elevated awareness of their plight.

Gender. Women (37%) are more likely than men (26%) to support State provision of safe spaces on college campuses. High-profile cases and campaigns by advocacy groups have publicized issues of consent and sexual assault on college campuses. Meanwhile, undocumented victims of sexual assault or domestic abuse may choose not to come forward due to fear of deportation.

¹⁰ Bradley Jones, "Americans' Views of Immigrants Marked by Widening Partisan, Generational Divides," Pew Research Center, April 15, 2016; <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/15/americans-views-of-immigrants-marked-by-widening-partisan-generational-divides/>, accessed October 15, 2017.

Region. Respondents in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale region are the most supportive (48%) of safe spaces on college campuses, while respondents in North Florida are the most opposed (49%)—a pattern attributable to the considerably larger immigrant (legal and illegal) in South Florida.

Floridians divided over providing safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented immigrant students



Question wording: “There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to provide safe spaces on college campuses for undocumented alien students, would you say that was going in the right direction or the wrong direction, or do you have no opinion about it?”

Source: Telephone survey of a random sample of 1,215 Floridians ages 18 and older conducted July 24-August 14, 2017. Margin of error ± 2.8%.

State needs to improve race relations and strengthen protection and hiring

In a state with growing minority and immigrant populations, Floridians are growing more critical of their State government’s efforts to improve race relations. Floridians support protecting religious and educational facilities from attacks by hate groups and of requiring employers to check the immigrant status of new hires.

Interested parties may view results for all questions and detailed analysis, including questions not analyzed here and significant factors for all related questions, on the survey website: <http://www.sunshinestatesurvey.org/results/2017/>

The USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey is a collaborative learning opportunity between the USF College of Arts and Sciences and The Nielsen Company, LLC., that allows USF students to gain valuable experience before graduation. Each of the students below made significant contributions to this year’s Survey. Valuable input into the survey question content and structure came from all students in the upper-level Media and Politics class (Spring 2017).

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