

July 27, 2021

Florida Policy Survey: Higher Education Supplement

Summary: Researchers at the University of South Florida conducted a statewide survey of 600 Floridians to measure public opinion on a variety of current policy issues. The result presented in this report address attitudes toward higher education and student loan debt. The survey included a representative sample of Floridians, fielded between July 15th and 25th, 2021. Topline results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.

Key Findings:

- Two-thirds of Floridians (67%) favor an extension of the pause on student loan repayments that was initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Most Floridians (61%) either somewhat or strongly agree that a college education is necessary in order to succeed in America today.
- Just over 70% of respondents agree that a college education should be considered a “basic right” for all Americans.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) say that greater investments in higher education are necessary to overcome historic racial inequities.
- An overwhelming majority of Floridians (85%) say that greater investments in higher education are necessary in order for America to remain competitive in the global economy.
- There is majority support among Floridians for providing free tuition to students attending community colleges (66%) and public universities (60%).
- A majority (61%) also support recent proposals to forgive up to \$10,000 in student loan debt for all borrowers. Support declines for greater levels of forgiveness: 50% support forgiving up to \$50,000 in debt, while 46% support forgiving all outstanding student loan debt.

Summary of Responses

*The federal government has placed a pause on the repayment of federal student loans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is set to expire at the end of September. **Do you believe that the repayment pause should be extended?***

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it should be extended until the end of 2021	167	27.8
Yes, it should be extended into 2022	235	39.2
No, repayments should resume in October of this year as scheduled	198	33.0

(N=600)

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: **A college education is necessary in order to succeed in America today.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	224	23.3
Somewhat Agree	224	37.3
Somewhat Disagree	150	25.0
Strongly Disagree	86	14.3

N=600

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: **A college education should be considered a basic right for all Americans.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	230	38.3
Somewhat Agree	191	31.8
Somewhat Disagree	94	15.7
Strongly Disagree	85	14.2
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<i>N=600</i>		

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: **New investments in education are necessary to overcome historic racial inequities.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	195	32.5
Somewhat Agree	188	31.3
Somewhat Disagree	110	18.3
Strongly Disagree	107	17.8
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<i>N=600</i>		

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: **New investments are necessary for America to remain competitive in the global economy.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	275	45.8
Somewhat Agree	237	39.5
Somewhat Disagree	56	9.3
Strongly Disagree	32	5.3
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<i>N=600</i>		

Please indicate whether you would support or oppose the federal government taking each of the following measures: **Providing free tuition for Americans attending community colleges.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	232	38.7
Somewhat Support	164	27.3
Somewhat Oppose	86	14.3
Strongly Oppose	118	19.7

N=600

Please indicate whether you would support or oppose the federal government taking each of the following measures: **Providing free tuition for Americans attending public colleges and universities.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	197	32.8
Somewhat Support	165	27.5
Somewhat Oppose	105	17.5
Strongly Oppose	133	22.2

N=600

Please indicate whether you would support or oppose the federal government taking each of the following measures: **Cancelling \$10,000 in debt for all student loan holders.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	212	35.3
Somewhat Support	156	26.0
Somewhat Oppose	80	13.3
Strongly Oppose	152	25.3

N=600

Please indicate whether you would support or oppose the federal government taking each of the following measures: **Canceling \$50,000 in debt for all student loan holders**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	177	29.5
Somewhat Support	123	20.5
Somewhat Oppose	113	18.8
Strongly Oppose	187	31.2
<i>N=600</i>		

Please indicate whether you would support or oppose the federal government taking each of the following measures: **Canceling all outstanding federal student loans.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	155	25.8
Somewhat Support	117	19.5
Somewhat Oppose	119	19.8
Strongly Oppose	209	34.8
<i>N=600</i>		

Survey Information

600 adult Floridians were surveyed via an online web-panel using Prodege MR, an industry leading market research provider. The survey was fielded from July 15th through 25th, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 4. Respondents were selected via a stratified, quota sampling approach to ensure a representative sample. Quotas for gender, age, race/ethnicity and party affiliation were determined based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida's Department of State, and Florida's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). Quotas were stratified by region of the state to ensure geographical representativeness.

Table A1
Sample Comparison

	USF Survey Sample	Florida Demographics*
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	51.8%	51.1%
Male	47.3%	48.9%
Other	0.8%	-
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	8.5%	10.8%
25-44	30.7%	31.2%
45-64	34.2%	32.4%
65+	26.7%	25.6%
<i>Race</i>		
Black/African American	17.5%	16.9%
White/Caucasian	72.3%	77.3%
Asian	3.0%	3.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2%	0.5%
Other	6.0%	2.3%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	27.2%	26.4%
Non-Hispanic	72.8%	73.6%
<i>Political Affiliation (registered voters only, n=541)</i>		
Democrat	36.0%	36.2%
Independent	25.9%	26.4%
Republican	36.6%	35.7%
Other	1.5%	1.7%
<i>Region</i>		
Panhandle	7.2%	7.2%
Northeast Florida	11.8%	12.4%
Central Florida	23.5%	25.5%
West Coast	24.8%	21.9%
Southeast Florida	32.7%	32.9%

*Gender, race, ethnicity, and region quotas based on U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP): <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fl> Age quotas based on Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR): <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/population-demographics/data/index-floridaproducts.cfm> Political Affiliation quotas based on Florida Division of Elections <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/voter-registration-reportsxlsx/voter-registration-by-party-affiliation/>

About our Research Team

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About the University of South Florida

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