FLORIDIANS RATE HEALTHCARE AS THE "MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE" FACING THE STATE TODAY

FLORIDIANS SHARE CONCERNS OVER HEALTHCARE, CRIME, THE ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION; DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS SHARPLY DIVIDED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMIGRATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE.

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SUMMARY

Floridians identify healthcare, crime, environmental conservation and education as among the most important issues facing the state according to recent survey data collected by the University of South Florida and Nielsen. Two additional areas—climate change and immigration—were identified as the state's "most important" issue by more than 10% of respondents, but these responses were subject to sharp partisan differences. In particular, Republicans were more likely to emphasize immigration as important, while Democrats placed a greater emphasis on climate change.

Figure 1.

Most Important Issue (Percentage of Respondents)

Source: 2019 Sunshine State Survey
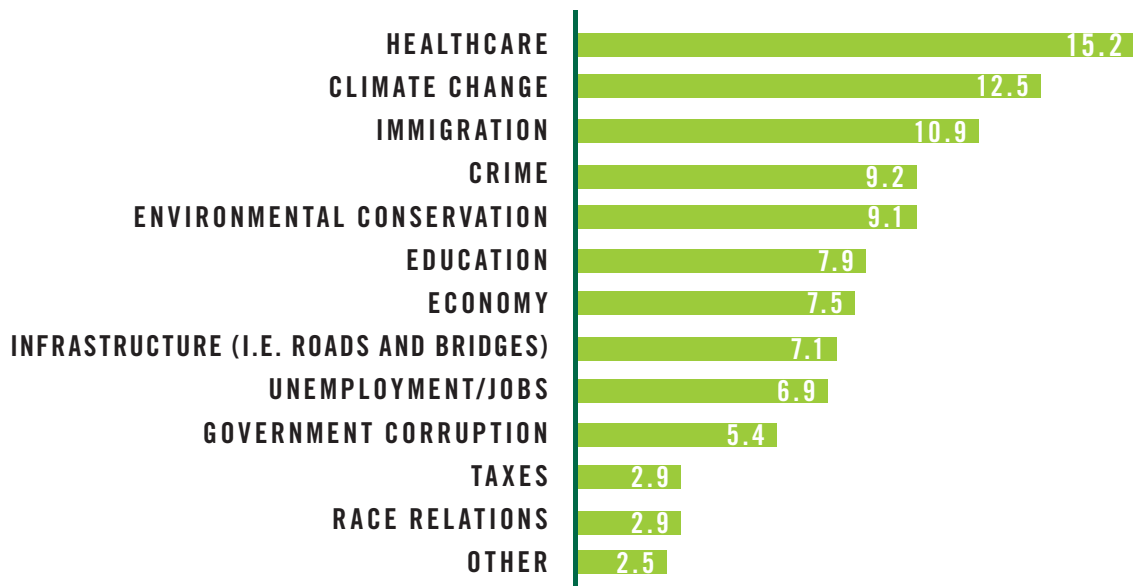
COMMON PRIORITIES

Healthcare is the top-ranked "most important issue facing the state of Florida today" for 15.2% of survey respondents (Figure 1), according to data collected as part of the annual Sunshine State Survey. Additionally, 92.8% of Floridians identified healthcare as either an "Important" or "Very Important" legislative priority for the Florida Legislature in 2020 (Table 1). Healthcare was identified as universally important across demographic groups, though Democrats placed a slightly higher importance on the issue than Republicans (Figure 2) and older Floridians were more likely to identify healthcare as the "most important issue."

Table 1.

2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES (REPORTED AS ROW PERCENTAGES)

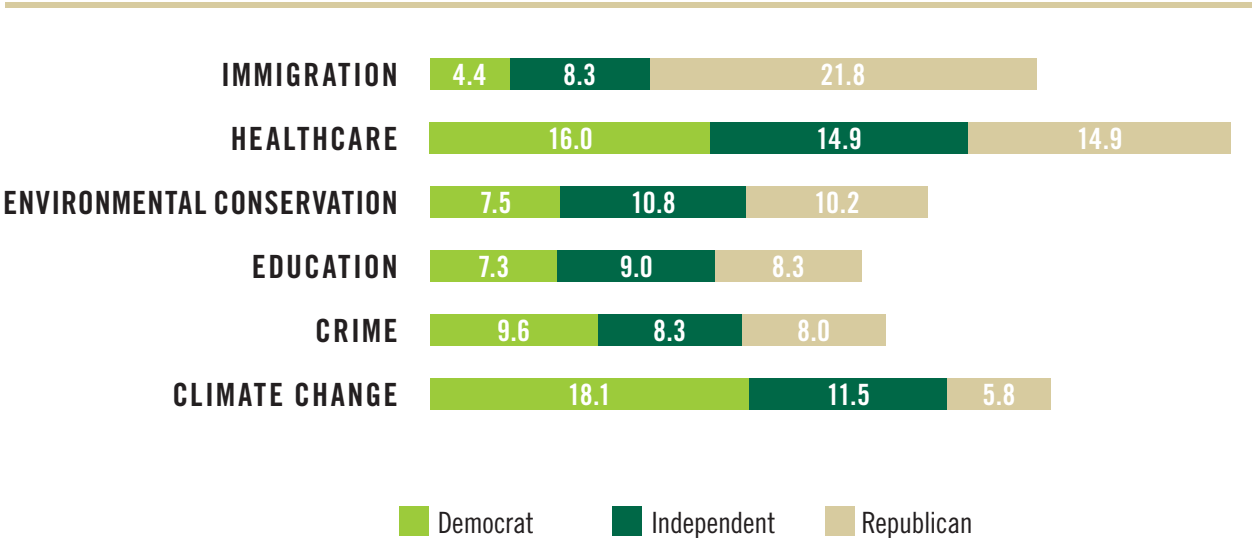| How important is it to you that the Florida Legislature take action to address each of the following issues in the next year?	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NEITHER IMPORTANT OR UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNSURE
Climate Change	45.5	26.9	16.2	5.5	5.0	0.9
Crime	51.9	37.9	8.3	1.4	0.4	0.0
Economy	49.1	37.7	11.5	1.1	0.3	0.2
Education	54.5	35.9	8.0	1.1	0.4	0.2
Environmental Conservation	48.8	36.4	10.6	2.4	1.4	0.4
Government Corruption	47.0	34.9	13.2	2.4	1.6	0.9
Healthcare	59.4	33.4	6.0	0.9	0.2	0.0
Immigration	38.3	33.7	18.1	5.2	3.8	0.9
Infrastructure	37.8	47.9	10.6	2.5	0.9	0.3
Race Relations	32.1	37.8	21.2	4.5	3.2	1.3
Taxes	36.0	43.6	16.2	3.0	0.8	0.4
Unemployement/Jobs	39.7	39.1	15.8	3.8	1.4	0.2

Source: 2019 Sunshine State Survey

Crime and education were also common priorities across demographic groups, with roughly 90% of respondents identifying both as either "Important" or "Very Important" legislative priorities. Notably, respondents 49 years of age or younger were more likely to identify education as "Very Important", while African Americans were significantly more likely to identify crime as a "Very Important" legislative priority.

PARTISAN DIFFERENCES

Although Floridians displayed widespread agreement on the importance of many issues, significant partisan differences were found in the cases of immigration and climate change. Greater than 10% of respondents identified each as the "most important issue facing the state." These attitudes were driven by wide partisan splits. Specifically, 18% of Democrats cited climate change as "the most important issue", compared to less than 6% of Republicans (Figure 2). In total, nearly 88% of Democrats identified climate change as either an "Important" or "Very Important" legislative priority, compared to 50% of Republicans (Figure 3). In contrast, nearly 22% of Republicans cited immigration as the "most important issue", compared to less than 5% of Democrats.
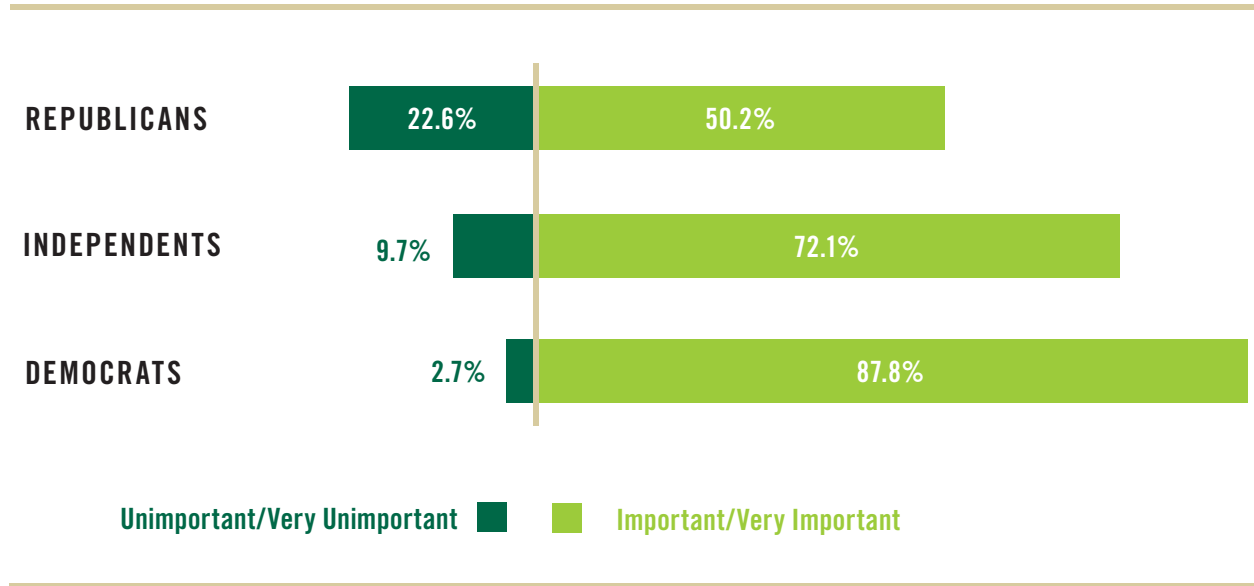
Figure 2.

Percent From Each Party that Selected "Most Important" Issue

Issue	Democrat	Independent	Republican
IMMIGRATION	4.4	8.3	21.8
HEALTHCARE	16.0	14.9	14.9
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION	7.5	10.8	10.2
EDUCATION	7.3	9.0	8.3
CRIME	9.6	8.3	8.0
CLIMATE CHANGE	18.1	11.5	5.8

Source: 2019 Sunshine State Survey

Figure 3.

Importance of Climate Change by Party Affiliation
(% Respondents)

	Unimportant/Very Unimportant	Important/Very Important
REPUBLICANS	22.6%	50.2%
INDEPENDENTS	9.7%	72.1%
DEMOCRATS	2.7%	87.8%

Unimportant/Very Unimportant ■   ■ Important/Very Important

Source: 2019 Sunshine State Survey

SURVEY INFORMATION

ABOUT NIELSEN

For this survey, 1,200 Florida residents were recruited using online panel provider Prodege MR - a leading market research panel - via a partnership with The Nielsen Company. The survey was fielded from October 26—November 20, 2019 , and the results are reported with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/-3.

For sampling purposes, and to overcome drawbacks associated with online panel surveys, participants were recruited to match Florida's demography associated with gender, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and age as reported by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) for the state of Florida. Table 2 details comparisons between the USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey sample and the BEBR 2019 estimates.

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Our approach marries proprietary Nielsen data with other data sources to help clients around the world understand what's happening now, what's happening next, and how to best act on this knowledge.

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Table 2.

SAMPLE COMPARISON

	USF-NIELSEN SUNSHINE STATE SAMPLE	BEBR 2019 ESTIMATES
GENDER		
MALE	48%	49%
FEMALE	52%	51%
RACE/ETHNICITY		
WHITE	75%	77%
BLACK	17%	17%
OTHER	8%	6%
HISPANIC	25%	26%
AGE		
18-24	10%	11%
25-54	47%	47%
55-64	17%	17%
65+	26%	25%

Source: 2019 Sunshine State Survey; 2019 BEBR Population Estimates

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The sample of participants was stratified by Florida region during recruitment to ensure the balance of the sample matched location dynamics (Northeast Florida, Tampa Bay Metro, Southwest Florida, Orlando/Daytona, Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Southeast Florida, and Northwest Florida). For the purposes of analysis, survey responses were weighted for representativeness based on age/gender, race, region of the state, and region by race.