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Tampa, Fla. (October 24, 2017)

Floridians *strongly* favor more State help for the physically disabled, veterans, and victims of domestic violence and human sex trafficking

By Susan A. MacManus, *Project director*

Florida's vulnerable populations need more assistance from the State according to the 2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey. **Most in need?** The physically disabled, veterans, domestic violence victims, and human sex trafficking victims. **But not to be ignored** are rape victims, children, and the LGBTQ community. **Overall, Floridians strongly support helping victims of abuse.**

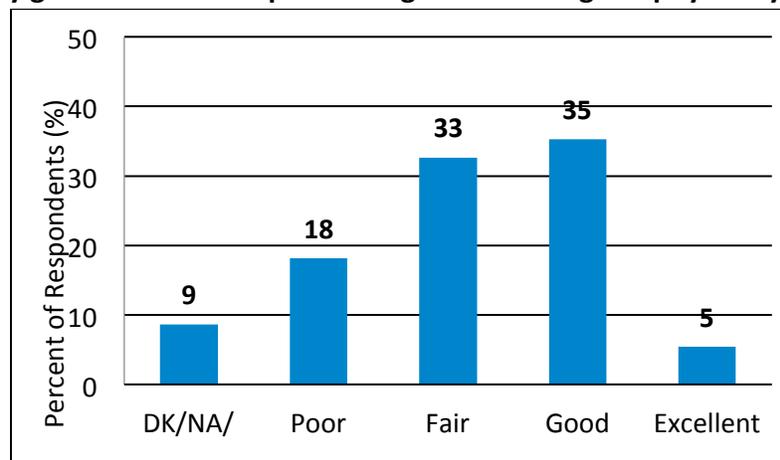
The physically disabled

A majority (51%) gives the State “fair” or “poor” ratings for assisting the physically disabled. While “there is no single accepted definition of disability,” the U.S. Census Bureau gathers data on six types--hearing, visual, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care and independent living.¹ In Florida, 13% of persons of all ages are classified as disabled, with the highest prevalence rate for ambulatory disability, followed by independent living.

The toughest critics (“poor” ratings) of the State’s help to the physically disabled are African Americans (26%) and Floridians living in the Naples (28%) and Miami/Fort Lauderdale (26%) regions. The Naples area has a large elder population (Collier and Lee counties), while the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area has large black and senior populations. The most positive ratings are from North Florida residents.

¹ W. Erickson, C. Lee, and S. von Schrader, “2015 Disability Status Report: Florida.” Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, 2016.

Majority gives State fair or poor ratings for assisting the physically disabled



Question wording: "How good a job does the state do assisting the physically disabled? Would you say excellent, good, fair or poor?"

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

Veterans

Florida has the third largest veteran population in the United States (1.5 million in 2016)² and 20 military installations.³ Public support for the military (active duty and veterans) has always been strong. Veterans' issues are well covered by the media, including shortcomings of large VA hospitals (federally funded), especially excessive wait times.⁴ Homelessness and unemployment rates among returning vets (problems more within the purview of state government) have also garnered a great deal of publicity. Thus, **it is not surprising that 63% of Floridians give low marks to the State for its veterans' assistance—34% "poor," 29% "fair."**⁵

The most critical of veterans' assistance are 35- to 54-year-olds (40% say it is "poor"), African Americans (42%), and the unemployed (44%). Regionally, the most negative ratings come from residents in the Naples area (44%), and the most positive ("excellent" ratings) from North Florida (12%). North Florida has the highest concentration of veterans and active military bases;

² Fiscal year data are from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as reported by Florida Department of Veterans Affairs. <http://floridavets.org/our-veterans/profilefast-facts/>, accessed September 29, 2017.

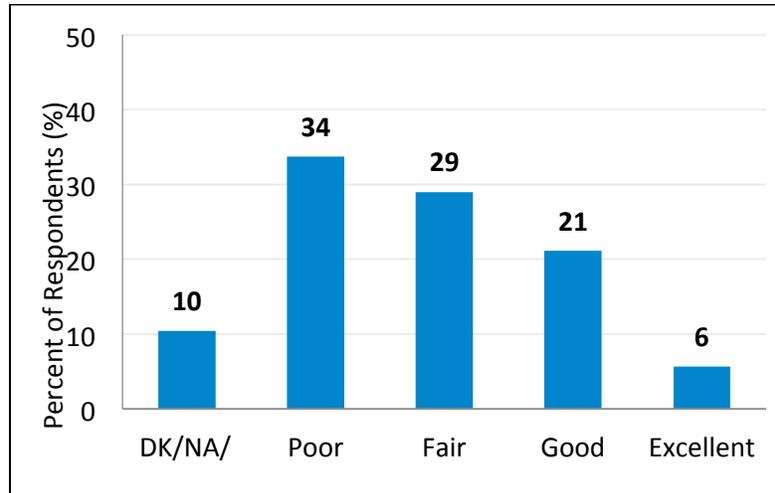
³ Enterprise Florida, "Florida's Military Profile," https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/Military_Install_Map.pdf, accessed September 29, 2017.

⁴ Associated Press, "A Watchdog Releases Report on Florida Facilities," March 2, 2016; <http://health.wusf.usf.edu/post/va-watchdog-releases-report-florida-facilities>, accessed September 29, 2017.

⁵ It is likely that some respondents do not know which level of government has primary responsibility for actions affecting veterans.

veterans there benefit more from stronger support networks and better access to help than those in southwest Florida⁶ in spite of its large senior population.

About six in ten Floridians are critical of State's assistance to veterans



Question wording: "How good a job does the state do assisting veterans? Would you say excellent, good, fair or poor?"

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

Domestic violence victims

The incidence of domestic violence⁷ is underreported in Florida.⁸ Still, the number of reported cases is alarmingly high (105,640 in 2016).⁹ The issue has gotten lots of attention over the past few years, however, and awareness is growing: **84% of adult Floridians now say that State provision of more help for domestic violence victims is "going in the right direction."**

Women are significantly more likely to favor more help for domestic violence victims than men (90% vs. 79%). Research clearly shows that victimization rates are highest among women.¹⁰

⁶ Enterprise Florida, "Florida's Military Profile." Joshua Wright, "The Share of Veterans in Every County," EMSI, March 21, 2017. <http://www.economicmodeling.com/2017/03/21/share-veterans-every-county/>, accessed September 30, 2017.

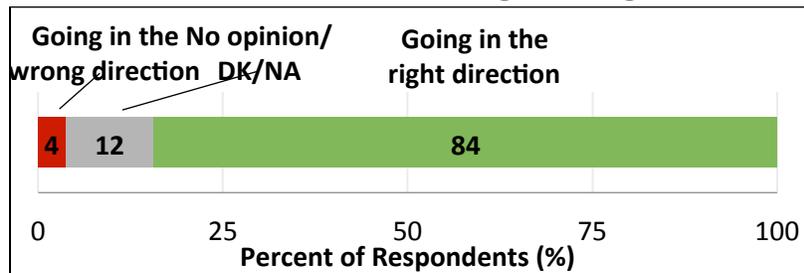
⁷ Domestic violence crimes include murder, manslaughter, rape, fondling, aggravated assault, aggravated stalking, simple assault, threat/intimidation, and stalking.

⁸ Many victims are reticent to report the crime out of "shame, fear, or being prevented from doing so by their abusers." Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV), "Florida's Domestic Violence Statistics," <https://www.fcadv.org/resources/floridas-domestic-violence-statistics>, accessed September 30, 2017.

⁹ Florida Department of Law Enforcement. *Crime in Florida, Florida uniform crime report, 2016* [Computer program]. Tallahassee, FL: FDLE. Florida Statistical Analysis Center. <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/cms/FSAC/Data-Statistics/UCR-Domestic-Violence.aspx>, accessed September 30, 2017.

¹⁰ It is estimated that from 22 to 25% of all women will experience domestic violence at some point during their lives. FCADV.

Vast majority of Floridians say State provision of more help for domestic violence victims is moving in the right direction



Question wording: “There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to provide more help for domestic violence victims, 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

Human sex trafficking victims

Human trafficking involves “soliciting, recruiting, harboring, transporting or otherwise obtaining another person to exploit him or her for labor, domestic servitude, or *sexual* exploitation.”¹¹ It is “a highly profitable crime that exploits an adult through force, fraud, or coercion, or that engages a child in any form of commercial sexual exploitation.”¹²

The spread of human sex trafficking across the state—urban and rural areas alike—helps explain the fact that nearly two-thirds of Floridians say the State’s efforts at stopping it largely fall short. Sixty-one percent rate its success as “poor” (33%) or “fair” (28%), while only 19% judge it as “good” (16%) or “excellent” (3%). Criticism is highest (“poor” ratings) among African Americans (41%) and unemployed persons (36%)—more susceptible populations—and 65- to 79-year-olds (37%) and college graduates (35%)—more informed segments of the citizenry. The regions with the highest share of “poor” ratings are Naples (38%) and Tampa Bay (36%). The Tampa area is a magnet for tourists of all ages, with an abundance of adult clubs and beaches. In Naples, agriculture is a key economic sector, increasing the odds of labor-related sex trafficking

Florida ranks third among all 50 states and Washington, D. C., in the volume of phone calls, emails and online reports made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.¹³ The number of reports has continued to climb in Florida for two reasons. First, the problem itself is on the rise

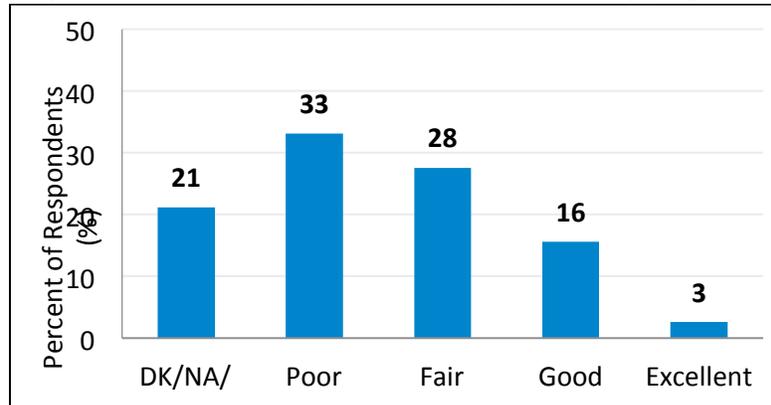
¹¹ Julius Whigham II, “NEW: Human Trafficking Reports Rise in Florida; Young Adults Targeted,” *Palm Beach Post*, February 20, 2017. <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/crime-law/new-human-trafficking-reports-rise-florida-young-adults-targeted/zuFa90aHDLZMf2wm74RQgl/>, accessed September 30, 2017.

¹² US Institute Against Human Trafficking (USIAHT), “What is Sex Trafficking?,” available at <http://usiaht.org/>

¹³ National Human Trafficking Hotline, National Human Trafficking Hotline Data Report: Florida State Report: 1/1/2016-12/31/2016. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/2016%20State%20Report%20-%20Florida.pdf>, accessed September 30, 2017.

due largely to the Internet and the huge profits made by exploiters.¹⁴ Second, first responders and child welfare professionals have become better trained by the State to recognize and report the crime,¹⁵ and the public has been made more aware of the issue via the news media.

Most Floridians say the State does a “poor” or “fair” job of stopping human sex trafficking



Question wording: “How good a job does the state do stopping human sex trafficking? Would you say excellent, good, fair or poor?”

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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

Not To Be Ignored: See Detailed Analysis and Crosstabs

Rape Victims: Eliminating Rape Kit Backlog: 48% say the State is doing “too little” to eliminate the rape kit backlog. Most critical are residents of Palm Beach region, 65- to 79-year-olds, and African Americans.

Children: Health Care: 46% give the State “poor” or “fair” marks for providing health care for young children. Most negative are men, 65- to 79-year-olds, and southeast Florida residents (Miami/Fort Lauderdale and Naples areas).

Children: Paid Leave to New Fathers: 63% say that the State’s requiring employers to provide paid parental leave to new fathers, not just new mothers, would be going in the right direction. Strong support comes from women, African Americans, and those with a child younger than 18 living in the home.

LGBTQ Community: Protecting Rights. LGBTQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning—that is, people whose sexual orientation differs from the majority. While 40% believe the State is doing “about right” in protecting their rights, 27% say that the State is doing “too little.” Nearly one-fourth (24%) did not express an opinion. Calls for better protection of the rights of LGBTQ citizens are highest among African Americans, college graduates, and southeast Florida residents (Palm Beach and Miami/Fort Lauderdale areas).

¹⁴ Alameda County (California) H.E.A.T. Watch, “Reasons for the Growing Epidemic,”

http://www.heatwatch.org/human_trafficking/reasons_for_the_growing_epidemic, accessed October 10, 2017.

¹⁵ CBS News/Associated Press, “Human Trafficking Cases Increase More than 50 Percent in Florida,” January 15, 2017. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/human-trafficking-cases-increase-more-than-50-percent-in-florida/>

More Help Needed for the Most Vulnerable Citizens

Floridians deplore the State’s efforts in protecting the physically disabled and veterans as well as stopping human sex trafficking. Among the most critical are African Americans and residents of the Naples area. While reports of domestic violence is alarmingly high, most Floridians believe the State’s efforts to help the victims is improving.

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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