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“Make us safer.” Floridians want more action on opioid drug overdoses, vehicular and boating safety, Internet threats, privacy protection, and anti-crime efforts

By Susan A. MacManus, *Project director*

Floridians agree that more rigorous laws need to be put in place and some laws already on the books need to be better enforced to improve their personal health and safety. The 2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey finds the vast majority of Floridians want the State to:

- spend more money to reduce heroin and other **opioid drug overdoses**;
- require devices on vehicles owned by **DUI offenders** to prevent people who have consumed alcohol from starting the vehicle;
- better inform Florida drivers about the State’s **“Move Over” traffic law**;
- require **motorcycle owners** to buy insurance (current state law does not require it);
- increase the minimum **age to operate a motor boat** from age 14 to 16; and
- do better job of **rehabilitating criminals**.

The State gets the best marks for **informing people about public health dangers** like Zika and other epidemics; 68% rate it “good” or “excellent.”

Health issues: Opioids, Informing public of health hazards

Heroin and opioid overdoses (the two are related)¹ are increasing in Florida², as elsewhere.³ In May (2017), the Governor officially declared the epidemic to be a public health emergency. Beyond their devastating impacts on individual lives, opioid drug overdoses are burdening the state’s health care and social safety-net systems and businesses (large and small) that are losing valuable employees. **Nearly three-fourths (72%) of Floridians see spending more money on**

¹ Wilson M. Compton, Christopher M. Jones, and Grant T. Baldwin, “Relationship Between Nonmedical Prescription-Opioid Use and Heroin Use,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, January 14, 2016.

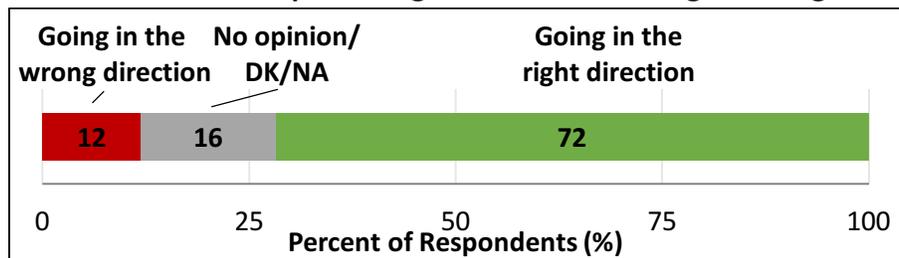
² For an excellent analysis of the reasons, see David Vittoria (Assistant Vice President, South Miami Hospital Addiction Treatment & Recovery Center), “From The Front Lines: From Painkillers to Heroin,” *Informed Families Blog*, December 16, 2014.

³ Anne Schuchat, Debra Houry, Gery P. Guy, Jr., “New Data on Opioid Use and Prescribing in the United States,” *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, August 1, 2017.

efforts to reduce heroin and other opioid overdoses as moving in the *right* direction, while a mere 12% see it as going in the wrong direction.

Support for greater spending is strongest among groups shown by studies to be experiencing the greatest increases in addiction and overdoses: *women* (74%), *whites* (74%), and the *more affluent* with a household income of \$75,000 or higher (77%).⁴ These groups are more exposed than others to opioid painkillers because they have greater access to the health care system.

Nearly three in four Floridians say spending more money on efforts to reduce heroin and other opioid drug overdoses is moving in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to spend more money on efforts to reduce heroin and other opioid drug overdoses, would you say that is 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

Floridians give the State relatively high marks for informing people of public health dangers, such as Zika and other epidemics; 68% says State does a "good" (51%) or "excellent" (17%) job of spreading the word. The highest ratings come from whites, Hispanics, wealthier Floridians, those with only a high school diploma or less, and residents of Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and North Florida regions. The most critical of State informational efforts are African Americans, the poorest households, and those living in the Naples area.

Vehicular and boating safety: Move Over laws, cars, buses, motorcycles, boats.

Improve awareness of Move Over law. *One of the most significant findings of the 2017 Sunshine State Survey is that many Floridians (86%) are either personally unaware (29%) of the State's "Move Over" law⁵ or say other Florida drivers are "not too" or only "somewhat" aware (57%) of the law. Just 12% believe other Florida drivers are "very aware" of the law.* This lack of knowledge helps explain the recent spike in traffic accidents (36% plus) and citations issued (5,500 plus) for crashes related to violations of the Move Over law.⁶

⁴ KPIX (CBS San Francisco). "More White Americans Are Getting Addicted to Opioid Painkillers," February 27, 2017; <http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2017/02/27/more-white-americans-are-getting-addicted-to-opioid-painkillers/>, accessed October 9, 2017.

⁵ FS 316.126.

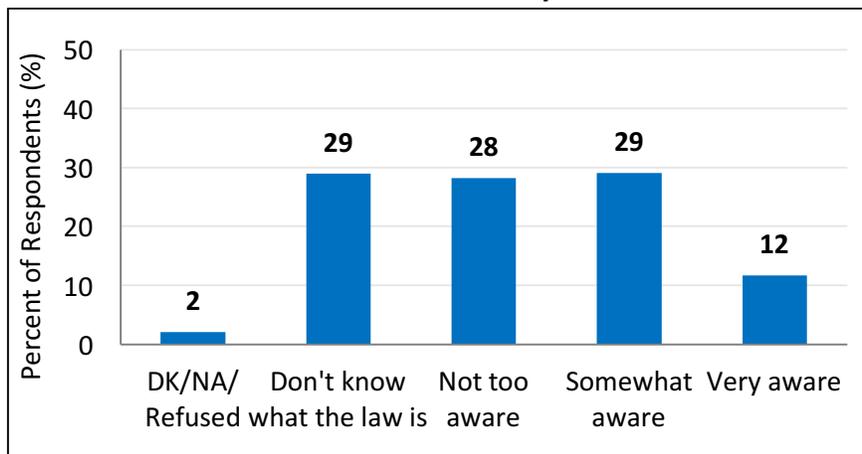
⁶ Kristina Webb, "Move Over Crashes Skyrocket in Florida, Up Almost 40 Percent in 2016," *Palm Beach Post*, January 5, 2017.

The 15-year-old law (passed in 2002) requires a driver to move over a lane—when it is safe to do so—for stopped law enforcement, emergency, sanitation, utility service vehicles, and tow trucks or wreckers:

- If you can't move over — or when on a two-lane road — slow to a speed that is 20 mph lower than the posted speed limit.
- Slow down to 5 mph when the posted speed limit is 20 mph or lower.⁷

Lack of awareness of the law is highest among the least likely to own or be driving a car—those ages 18 to 34 and 80 and older, Hispanics, unemployed persons, and low-income households. Regionally, the highest incidence of little or no knowledge of the law are among residents of the Miami/Fort Lauderdale and Tampa Bay regions.

Eight in ten Floridians say either that they do not know about the Move Over law themselves or that Florida drivers are not very aware of the law



Question wording: “How aware do you think Florida drivers are of the “Move Over” law? Are they very aware, somewhat aware, not too aware, or do you not know what it is?”

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%.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

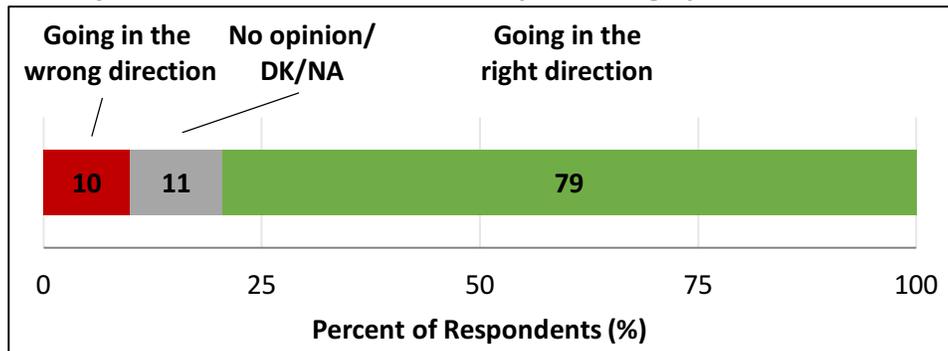
Impose stricter interlock device requirements on DUI offenders. A State requirement designed to prevent DUI offenders consuming alcohol from getting back on the road (a device that prevents starting the car) is seen as going in the right direction by 79% of Floridians. DUI-related traffic offenses are highly publicized and generate outrage, especially when they result in the death of innocents and are committed by repeat DUI offenders.⁸ Currently, the courts have some latitude over the conditions under which interlock devices are installed and when

⁷ Violating the Move Over law will result in a fine, fees, and points on your driving record Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, “Move Over, Florida!” <https://www.flhsmv.gov/safety-center/driving-safety/move-over/>;

⁸ 27% of Florida’s total auto accident fatalities are alcohol-impaired. Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility, “Drunk Driving Fatalities, State Map: Florida,” 2015 statistics; <https://responsibility.org/get-the-facts/state-map/state/florida/>; accessed October 9, 2017.

they can be removed.⁹ Floridians appear to want more rigor in the law. Support is strongest among whites, African Americans, more affluent Floridians, and those with only a high school diploma—because they are more aware of the problem and/or of the victims.

About 80% of Floridians say that it is going in the right direction for the State to require vehicles owned by DUI offenders to have devices preventing operation under the influence



Question wording: “There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to, on vehicles owned by DUI offenders, require devices that prevent people who have consumed alcohol from starting the vehicle, would you say that is 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

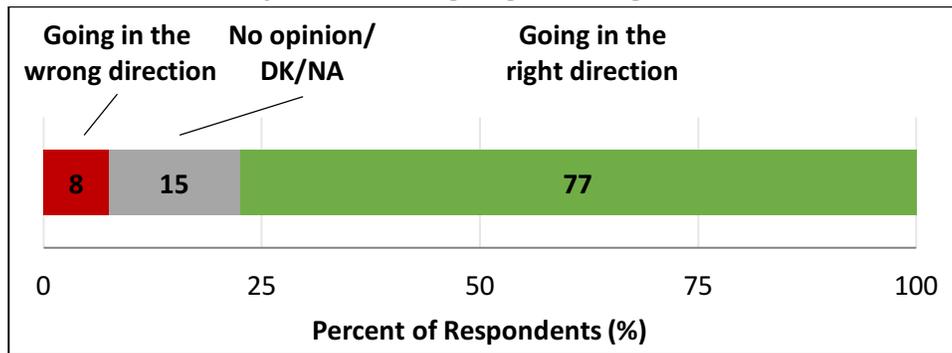
Requiring motorcycle owners to have insurance. Motorcycle-related crashes and fatalities are on the upswing in Florida.¹⁰ Yet, unlike most other states, Florida does *not* have the same insurance laws for motorcycles as cars. Car drivers must carry personal injury protection to cover medical bills and lost income in the event of an accident, regardless of who is at fault. Motorcycle owners/operators do not have the same requirement, but they can be held financially responsible for bodily injuries to others and property damage to the vehicles of others, then forced to buy liability insurance.¹¹ **Regardless, 77% of Floridians say that it is going in the right direction for the State to require motorcycle owners to carry insurance.** Strongest support comes from women, older Floridians, whites, part-time workers, and those living in a household with annual income of \$75,000 plus. The common thread here is greater awareness of accident rates and insurance laws.

⁹ Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, “Florida Ignition Interlock,” <http://www.dmvflorida.org/ignition-interlock.shtml>, accessed October 9, 2017.

¹⁰For motorcycle accident and fatality statistics, see FDHSMV, “Traffic Crash Facts Annual Report 2015,” https://flhsmv.gov/pdf/crashreports/crash_facts_2015.pdf, accessed October 9, 2017.

¹¹Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, “Motorcycles and Mopeds,” <https://www.flhsmv.gov/courts/latestinfo/Helmetseyeprotectioninsuranceinfractions.pdf>, accessed October 9, 2017.

About three in four Floridians say the State requiring motorcycle owners to carry insurance is going in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to require owners of motorcycles to purchase vehicle insurance, would you say that is 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

Requiring seat belt use on public buses. Although the federal government created a new regulation requiring motor coaches to be equipped with seat belts, the regulation does *not* apply to city transit buses or school buses.¹² **(As of 2001, Florida has required seat belts be installed in all new school buses and each passenger to wear it when the bus is in operation, but does *not* impose such requirements on other public buses charging passengers to ride.¹³)** Just more than half (54%) see the imposition of requirements for public bus passengers in Florida to wear seat belts as moving in the right direction, while 16% say just the opposite.

Women are significantly more likely to favor the requirement than men—63% vs. 45%. Research shows a majority of transit riders are females.¹⁴ Significantly, 30% did not share an opinion, most likely because they are less likely to use public bus transportation.¹⁵

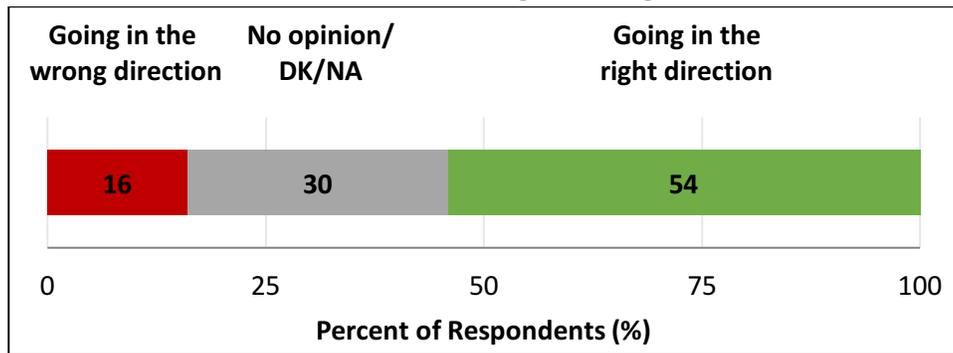
¹² The rule took effect in 2016. CBS News, "Gov't Announces New Motor Coach, Bus Seat Belt Regulations," November 21, 2013.

¹³ 2017 *Florida Statutes* 316.6145. Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, "Buckle Up Florida, It's the Law!," <https://www.flhsmv.gov/safety-center/vehicle-safety/buckle-up-florida-its-the-law/>, accessed October 9, 2017.

¹⁴ American Public Transportation Association, "Who Rides Public Transportation," January 2017. <https://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublication/Documents/APTA-Who-Rides-Public-Transportation-2017.pdf>, accessed September 28, 2017.

¹⁵ Fewer Floridians use public bus services than in many other states. See American Public Transportation Association, "2016 Public Transportation Fact Book," February 2017. <http://apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/FactBook/2016-APTA-Fact-Book.pdf>, accessed September 28, 2017.

Just more than half of Floridians say requiring public bus passengers to wear seat belts is moving in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to require passengers using public buses to wear seat belts, would you say that is 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

Age to operate motor boat. Florida law requires all persons born after January 1, 1988, who operate a motorized boat of 10 horsepower or more to complete a boating safety course and obtain a Boating Safety Education Identification Card issued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). However, no one younger than 14 may operate a personal watercraft on Florida waters at any time, even if the person has completed the course and has an I.D. card.¹⁶ **The clear majority (71%) of Floridians believe increasing the minimum age from 14 to 16 is a step in the right direction; just 16% say it would be the wrong direction.** Age has become a bigger issue in recent years.¹⁷ Boating accidents and deaths are on the rise in Florida,¹⁸ and FWC data show operator inexperience as the second leading cause of accidents.¹⁹

Women, Floridians ages 55 to 64, whites, Hispanics, wealthier Floridians, and college graduates are the most supportive of increasing the minimum age. Women worry more than men about the safety of minors. Boat owners are more likely than others to be aware of dangers facing young operators; and ownership rates are higher among whites, wealthier Floridians, and college graduates.

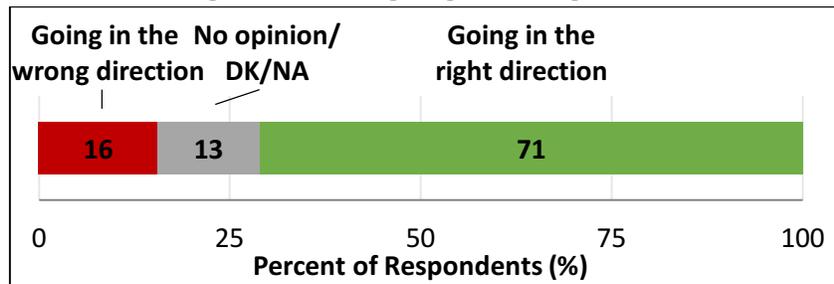
¹⁶ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, "Florida Boating Laws and Regulations," https://www.boat-ed.com/florida/boating_law.html, accessed October 9, 2017.

¹⁷ A high-profile incident in 2015 greatly elevated the age debate. Two 14-year-old boys were lost at sea and later died after leaving from the Jupiter Inlet in Palm Beach County.

¹⁸ Coast Guard statistics showed a 20% increase in deaths from boating and a 12% increase in accidents in 2016. Dan Scanlan, "Florida Boating Accidents, Deaths Increase in Last Year," Jacksonville.com/news/public-safety/2017-06-30/florida-boating-accidents-deaths-increase-last-year, accessed October 9, 2017.

¹⁹ The leading cause of boating accidents in Florida in 2016 was inattention or improper lookouts; excessive speed was the third most common cause, alcohol the fourth.

Clear majority of Floridians say increasing the minimum age to operate a motor boat from age 14 to 16 is going in the right direction



Question wording: "There are lots of issues facing Florida today. If the State of Florida were to increase the minimum age to operate a motor boat in Florida from 14 to 16 years of age, would you say that is 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%.

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Privacy protections: Internet threats, Individual rights

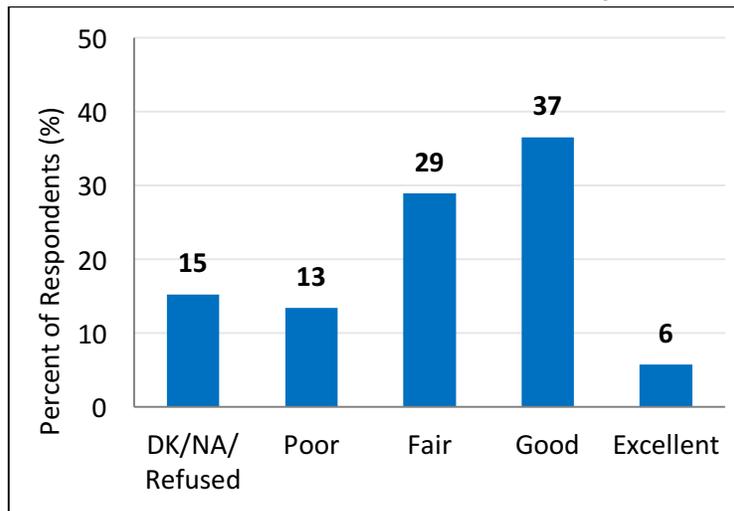
Protection against Internet threats. Floridians' complaints about computer crime are escalating. The most common, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Crime Center, are cyberbullying, online auction and retail schemes, Nigerian scam letters, phishing, identity theft, malware, spyware, spam, and Internet hoaxes about phony viruses.²⁰ Hackers are also constantly threatening government computer networks that "control everything from water supplies to payroll and health systems."²¹ **Floridians disagree about how well the State protects individuals and vital services from Internet threats; 43% give the State positive marks ("good" or "excellent"); 42% give negative grades ("poor" or "fair").**

Opinions differ sharply by age, gender, and region. By age, 18- to 34-year-olds are the most likely to rate State protection as "excellent," 65- to 79-year-olds as "poor." By gender, men are more critical than women, but a higher share of women have no opinion (tracking with their lower user rates). Regionally, the most negative assessments come from the Naples region, and the most positive from areas with younger populations—Tampa Bay, Orlando, and North Florida.

²⁰ Florida Department of Law Enforcement Crime Center, "Common Complaints," <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/cms/FCCC/Common-Complaints.aspx>, accessed October 9, 2017.

²¹ Jim Ash, "Florida's Top Cyber Cop Says Threats Are Constant," WFSU, August 15, 2017; <http://wfsu.org>, accessed October 9, 2017.

Floridians mixed on the State’s performance protecting people from Internet threats to individuals and vital services like electric power and transit systems



Question wording: “How good a job does the State do protecting people from Internet threats to individuals and vital services like electric power and transit systems? Would you say excellent, good, fair or poor?”

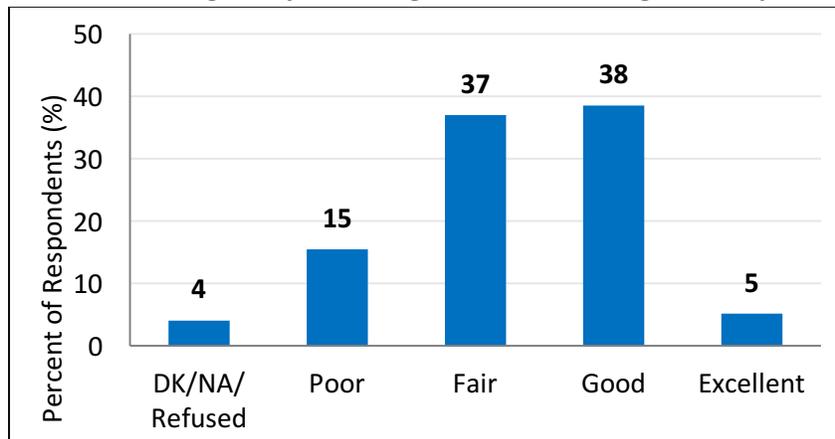
Source: Telephone survey of a random sample of 1,215 Floridians ages 18 and older conducted July 24-August 14, 2017. Margin of error \pm 2.8%.

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Protecting Individual Rights and Privacy. Worries about the erosion of individual rights and privacy have increased as technology has allowed more intrusion into the lives of many Floridians, although not everyone sees technology as overly intrusive. Passage of laws protecting certain groups of people are seen by others as discriminatory toward them. It is not surprising that the Sunshine State Survey results reflect these differences: **52% rates the State’s efforts at protecting one’s rights and privacy as “fair” or “poor,” but 43% are more positive (“good” or “excellent”) in their ratings.**

The most critical (“poor”) ratings are from men, 35- to 54-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds, African Americans, unemployed persons, and individuals living in Miami/Fort Lauderdale or Naples areas. More positive assessments come from the oldest cohort (80 and older), low-income and less formally educated Floridians, and residents of North Florida.

State gets lukewarm ratings for protecting the individual rights and privacy of citizens



Question wording: "How good a job does the state do protecting the individual rights and privacy of citizens? 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%.

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Anti-crime efforts: Prosecuting and rehabilitating criminals

Prosecuting criminals. A majority (55%) of Floridians are critical of the state's prosecution of criminals, rating it as "fair" or "poor." The share saying the State does a "good" or "excellent" job has fallen since 2010 (43% to 39%). While a drop has occurred in the overall crime rate, the proportion of violent and property crimes as a percentage of all reported offenses has remained steady over time.²² And it is these types of crime that dominate media coverage, along with repeat offenders. (Florida's most recent recidivism rate is 25%.²³)

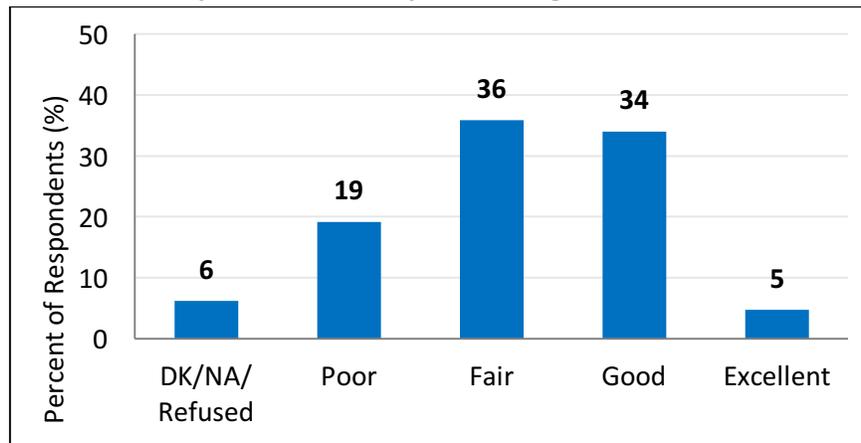
Opinions vary significantly by race—minorities are the most critical. Two-thirds (67%) of African Americans criticize the State for doing a "fair" or "poor" job, as do 59% of Hispanics compared with 50% of whites. Research in Florida has shown African Americans are more likely to be incarcerated and serve longer, harsher sentences²⁴ and to be critical of the criminal justice system. Regionally, residents of North Florida and Naples rate the State's performance in prosecuting criminals more positively than those living in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach areas where crime rates are higher.

²² Florida Department of Law Enforcement, "Total Index Crimes"; <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/cms/FSAC/Crime-Trends/Total-Index-crimes.aspx>, accessed October 10, 2017.

²³ Florida Department of Corrections, "Recidivism Report: Florida Prison Recidivism Study Releases From 2008 to 2014," December 2016; <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/recidivism/2015/index.html>, accessed October 9, 2017.

²⁴ Josh Salman, Emily LeCoz, and Elizabeth Johnson, "Florida's Broken Sentencing System," Sarasota Herald-Tribune, December 8, 2016; <http://projects.heraldtribune.com/bias/sentencing/>; accessed September 28, 2017.

Majority of Floridians give fair or poor ratings to the State's performance in prosecuting criminals



Question wording: "How good a job does the state do prosecuting criminals? 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

Rehabilitating criminals. Floridians are highly critical of the State's efforts to rehabilitate criminal offenders; 73% give it "fair" (30%) or "poor" (43%) marks. While only 12% grade rehabilitation efforts positively, it is a slight improvement from 8% in 2015, coming after an increase in State attention to rehabilitation.²⁵ **Respondents critical of the state's criminal prosecution efforts are also highly critical of its rehabilitation efforts; 71% of those judging the State's prosecution of criminals as "poor" also rate its rehabilitation efforts "poor."** African Americans are the most critical of rehabilitation efforts; 59% rate them "poor" and another 23% as only "fair." Higher incidences of negative ratings also come from men, the college educated, and the unemployed. Regionally, residents of North Florida are more positive in their ratings of the State's rehabilitation efforts than those living in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale and the Palm Beach areas.

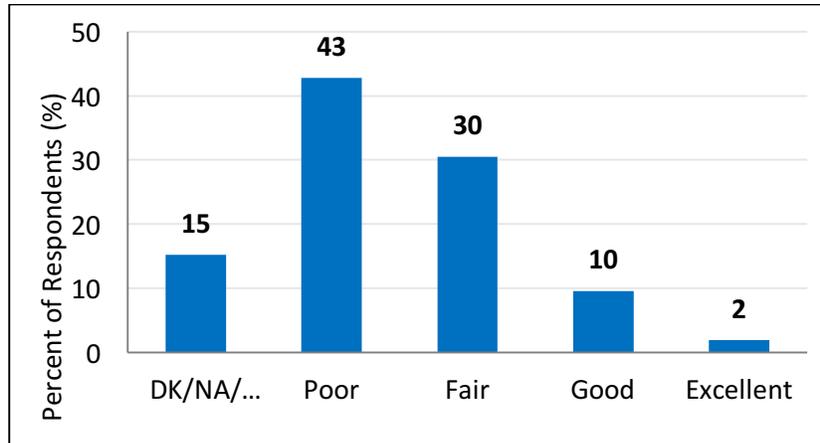
Floridians Want Greater State Effort to Keep Citizens Safe

The 2017 Sunshine State Survey showed that Floridians want the State to do more to reduce heroin and opioid overdoses and impose greater rigor in the law requiring interlock devices on cars of DUI offenders. On vehicular safety, residents want the State to improve awareness of the Move Over law, require motorcycle owners to buy insurance, require seat belt use on public buses, and increase the minimum age to operate motor boats from 14 to 16. In addition,

²⁵ Sasha Corder, "Florida Prison Officials Go Statewide with New Program to Better Help Rehabilitate Inmates," September 23, 2016; <http://news.wfsu.org/post/florida-prison-officials-go-statewide-new-program-better-help-rehabilitate-inmates>, accessed October 10, 2017.

respondents believe the State should do more to fight crime – both in prosecuting and rehabilitating criminals.

Floridians highly critical of State’s rehabilitation of criminal offenders



Question wording: “How good a job does the state do rehabilitating criminal offenders? 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 ± 2.8%.

2017 USF-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey

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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