

National Politics

Saint Leo University Polling Institute
September 27, 2020 – October 2, 2020

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Saint Leo University Polling Institute is pleased to present the results of a national poll of Americans.

The poll was designed to assess public views regarding politics, 2020 presidential candidates, current issues, Pope Francis, the Catholic Church and faith in politics, society and racial justice, trust and confidence, politics in sports and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research study included survey responses from 1000 respondents nationally and 500 respondents within Florida approximately proportional to state population contribution. The poll was conducted September 27 – October 2, 2020. A pre-test occurred on September 27, 2020.

The national poll included the following areas for investigation:

- Job approval ratings for President Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
- Issues of concern
- Impressions of Pope Francis and the Catholic Church
- Views on using faith in political decision making
- Trust and confidence in law enforcement and the judicial process
- Politics in sports
- The COVID-19 Pandemic
- Among Florida poll respondents, views on state leaders and 2020 ballot measures
- Demographics

Section II of this report discusses the methodology used in the study, while Section III includes highlights derived from an analysis of the quantitative research. Section IV is a summary of findings from the online survey.

Section V is an appendix to the report containing the survey instrument employed, the composite aggregate data and cross tabulations.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative research design, the Saint Leo University Polling Institute completed 1000 online surveys nationally and 500 online surveys among Florida residents.

Survey design input was provided by the membership of the Polling Institute Committee.

Survey design is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by the Institute (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree) are balanced evenly. Additionally, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

This survey was conducted September 27 – October 2, 2020.

Respondents qualified for the survey if they were a resident of the United States and 18 years of age or older. Responses were approximately proportional to each state's population.

All facets of the study were completed by the Polling Institute's senior staff and researchers. These aspects include survey-design, pre-test, computer programming, fielding, coding, editing, verification, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis and report writing.

Statistically, a sample of 1000 completed surveys has an associated margin for error of +/- 3.0% at a 95% confidence level. A sample of 500 Florida respondents has an associated margin for error of +/-4.5% at a 95% confidence level.

Results throughout this report are presented for composite results – all 1000 cases. Throughout, composite results are presented side by side with Florida specific results.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public relations or information campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein may be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted, and extrapolated.

Furthermore, it is important to note that all surveys contain some component of “sampling error”. Error that is attributable to systematic bias has been significantly reduced by utilizing strict random probability procedures. This sample was strictly random in that selection of each potential respondent was an independent event based on known probabilities.

Each qualified online panel member within the United States had an equal chance for participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

HIGHLIGHTS

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ON POLITICS, ISSUES AND THE 2020 ELECTION...

The national approval rating for President Donald Trump is currently 41.0%. This is down somewhat from 43.4% and 44.3% in November 2019 and February 2020, respectively.

The overall job approval rating for the U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is statistically unchanged at 33.5%. Down slightly from 34.4% in February 2020.

The COVID-19 Pandemic, as an issue, was added to a list of 17 other issues in this latest round of Saint Leo University polling. Over one-third of all respondents, 37.1%, named COVID-19 as the issue most important to them today among 18 issues named. This was followed by “jobs and the economy” (22.8%) and healthcare (10.6%). Only “jobs and the economy” increased in importance (from 15.1% in February 2020) in the current polling.

The leading issues, weighing most heavily on respondent 2020 vote decisions, in declining order included: the economy and jobs (71.6%), the COVID-19 pandemic (68.1%), recent rioting/property destruction (61.7%), and attacks on and murder of police officers in 2020 (57.8%).

In the national head-to-head matchup between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, Joe Biden is currently at 52.1% with Trump following at 38.3%. When undecided voters are asked who they lean toward, the percentages move to Biden 54.2% and Trump 40.3%.

Hypothetically, if the election was between Mike Pence and Kamala Harris instead of Joe Biden and Donald Trump, Harris secures 48.3% with Pence trailing at 41.5%.

Interestingly, in Florida, Mike Pence leads Kamala Harris – 46.8% to 46.7%.

Overall, among all national respondents, 43.7% suggest their vote for president in 2020 is mostly “for” their respective candidate. Another 27.3% note their vote is mostly “against” the other candidate.

On the enthusiasm gap, Republicans are significantly more likely (53.0%) to suggest their vote is “for” their candidate than Democrats (43.2%)

Two-fifths of all national poll respondents, 39.3% noted they will vote in person on election day with others reporting they will vote by absentee ballot, mail-in ballot or early, in-person, voting – 11.2%, 30.2%, and 13.6%, respectively.

Despite all the news about potential chaos regarding the voting process in 2020, it appears confidence in the election this year has increased significantly over 2016 and 2018. Confidence that the respondents' vote will be accurately recorded moved to 79.3% from 65.6% in 2018. Confidence in the integrity and security of voting machines/systems moved to 75.5% from 50.7% in 2018.

Further, 72.7% have confidence that the 2020 election will result in a legitimate winner. And concern over voter fraud is down to 53.9% from 58.8% in 2016.

Those frustrated by the election and wondering if they may vote at all is down to 26.3% over 43.0% in 2016.

However, voter suppression concern is up to 60.4% over 52.9% in 2016.

ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC....

A large majority of Americans surveyed, 79.9%, are very or somewhat concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Readers are reminded that the narrative throughout this report refers to national composite aggregate data – the 1000 completed surveys as well as the supplemental sample of 500 Florida respondents. Text throughout this report presents national composite results while many graphs and tables also present results among Florida respondents.

POLITICS, ISSUES AND 2020 CANDIDATES

Respondents nationally, and within Florida, were asked to provide job approval ratings for President Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The cumulative favorable job approval ratings (strongly and somewhat approve) are displayed within the following tables nationally and for Florida.

The overall approval rating for President Trump decreased to 41.0% from 44.3% in February 2020 and from 43.4% in November 2019.

National Results

How would you rate...	National Approval October 2018	National Approval February 2019	National Approval April 2019	National Approval November 2019	National Approval February 2020	National Approval October 2020
The job Donald Trump is doing as President	42.2	39.8	41.8	43.4	44.3	41.0
The job Mike Pence is doing as Vice President	---	40.8	43.9	44.0	45.7	---
The job Senator Mitch McConnell is doing as U.S. Senate Majority Leader	---	28.8	28.1	27.4	34.4	33.5
The job Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi is doing as Speaker of the House	---	39.7	39.0	42.7	38.4	---
The job Democratic U.S. Representative Adam Schiff did as the lead impeachment trial manager	---	---	---	---	38.9	---

Florida Results

How would you rate...	Florida Approval October 2018	Florida Approval February 2019	Florida Approval April 2019	Florida Approval November 2019	Florida Approval February 2020	Florida Approval October 2020
The job Donald Trump is doing as President	47.6	45.0	40.4	45.6	44.0	44.4
The job Mike Pence is doing as Vice President	---	46.0	43.2	47.0	44.9	---
The job Senator Mitch McConnell is doing as U.S. Senate Majority Leader	---	33.6	31.2	35.4	37.2	41.0
The job Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi is doing as Speaker of the House	---	43.4	43.2	41.0	42.0	---
The job Democratic U.S. Representative Adam Schiff did as the lead impeachment trial manager	---	---	---	---	41.8	---

All respondents were asked to name the most important issue facing the nation today. The most important issues were reported to be healthcare, jobs and the economy, immigration, global climate change and government spending. Results are presented in the following table in declining order by importance based on the composite national data from October 2020. The COVID-19 Pandemic – a new addition to the list of issues – was named as the leading concern.

Issues Most Important	National August 2018	National October 2018	National February 2019	National April 2019	National November 2019	National February 2020	National October 2020
COVID-19 Pandemic	---	---	---	---	---	---	37.1
Jobs and the economy	17.1	14.4	15.4	14.4	14.4	15.1	22.8
Healthcare	16.1	18.2	15.9	20.5	18.7	21.8	10.6
Government spending / federal budget deficit	9.3	11.2	13.3	8.3	8.7	9.5	4.3
Global climate change	4.0	4.4	6.5	3.6	9.3	8.6	3.9
Some other issues	3.9	5.2	3.6	2.8	3.7	3.6	3.7
Crime	2.6	3.5	1.8	2.2	3.4	2.7	3.1
Immigration	13.2	9.0	14.0	18.3	11.6	10.0	2.3
Homeland security and anti-terror policy	4.1	3.6	4.0	5.6	4.8	4.4	2.1
Education	5.0	5.7	4.2	3.9	3.6	4.8	1.6
Gun violence	5.6	4.4	6.3	3.7	5.5	4.4	1.2
Declining U.S. status worldwide	4.7	4.1	3.9	3.7	4.3	3.0	1.0
Terrorism	2.6	2.7	1.7	3.1	2.7	2.4	1.0
International trade imbalance	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.9	0.7
Gun control / Second Amendment rights	3.8	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.2	2.7	0.6
Internet / data security	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.6	1.2	0.4
Foreign affairs	2.3	1.6	1.0	2.0	2.1	1.0	0.3
Energy policy	0.4	1.1	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.3

The issues most important to Florida residents are presented in the following table. The table is presented in declining order, based on issue importance, for the composite data from October 2020.

Issues Most Important	Florida August 2018	Florida October 2018	Florida February 2019	Florida April 2019	Florida November 2019	Florida February 2020	Florida October 2020
COVID-19 Pandemic	---	---	---	---	---	---	38.0
Jobs and the economy	14.8	14.0	11.8	13.2	11.2	14.9	22.6
Healthcare	15.4	19.5	19.8	18.4	20.8	22.3	11.4
Some other issues	2.8	2.4	2.8	3.0	4.0	4.3	3.8
Crime	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.4	3.0	1.9	3.6
Government spending and the federal budget deficit	8.6	9.3	10.0	7.0	8.6	8.3	3.2
Immigration	16.0	14.3	17.8	16.8	14.4	9.8	2.6
Homeland security and anti-terror policy	5.6	4.7	6.2	5.8	4.0	4.7	2.6
Declining U.S. status worldwide	4.2	4.7	5.8	4.8	3.8	3.7	2.4
Global climate change	3.0	5.6	3.0	5.4	7.2	8.6	2.2
Education	5.4	5.3	1.8	3.6	3.2	4.0	1.8
Gun violence	5.8	4.3	6.0	6.6	3.2	5.1	1.2
Terrorism	4.6	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.2	3.1	0.8
Gun control / Second Amendment rights	4.2	3.4	4.0	4.4	4.0	3.7	0.6
Foreign affairs	2.4	2.0	1.6	1.0	3.0	1.9	0.4
International trade imbalance	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.4	0.8	0.4
Internet / data security / ID theft	1.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.2	0.4	0.4
Energy policy	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.1	0.4

The following issues are frequently discussed in the 2020 campaigns for Congress and president. Respondents were asked how important or impactful each was or will be in their own vote this November. Respondents were asked to use a scale of one to ten where one is very important and ten is not at all important. The following tables present the cumulative totals for ratings of one through three (important) for both all respondents and likely voters. Results are displayed in declining order by likely voters.

National Results

Issue	All Respondents	Likely Voters
Economy and jobs	71.6	73.0
The COVID-19 pandemic	68.1	69.2
Recent rioting/property destruction	61.7	62.5
Attacks on and murder of police officers in 2020	57.8	59.2
The U.S. Supreme Court vacancy	56.3	57.7
Protests/free speech	54.3	55.3
Climate change	53.5	54.8
Racial injustice issues	53.1	54.2
Efforts to de-fund police departments	51.9	53.4
Closures and lockdowns by the government	52.1	53.3
Second Amendment rights	51.3	51.8
Abortion	43.7	44.5

Florida Results

Issue	All Respondents	Likely Voters
Economy and jobs	76.6	77.5
The COVID-19 pandemic	71.0	71.6
The U.S. Supreme Court vacancy	66.4	67.5
Attacks on and murder of police officers in 2020	65.0	65.6
Recent rioting/property destruction	64.4	64.8
Protests/free speech	62.2	60.7
Efforts to de-fund police departments	58.0	58.7
Closures and lockdowns by the government	57.0	57.9
Second Amendment rights	57.0	57.5
Racial injustice issues	55.4	55.4
Climate change	54.4	55.2
Abortion	53.8	54.6

All national likely voters (94.7% of all respondents) were asked how they did or would vote for president in November 2020 if the election was held today. The following results are among likely voters.

National Election 2020 Matchups

Matchup	Joe Biden	Donald Trump	Unsure
	52.1	38.3	5.8

Respondents who were unsure or undecided were asked which candidate they were leaning toward. The following table includes the leaning respondents.

Matchup	Joe Biden	Donald Trump
	54.2	40.3

All Florida likely voters (97.8% of all respondents) were asked how they did or would vote for president in November 2020 if the election was held today. The following results are among likely voters.

Florida Election 2020 Matchups

Matchup	Joe Biden	Donald Trump	Unsure
	49.9	43.4	4.9

Respondents who were unsure or undecided were asked which candidate they were leaning toward. The following table includes the leaning respondents.

Matchup	Joe Biden	Donald Trump
	51.3	45.2

All likely voters were asked, hypothetically, who they would vote for in a matchup if Mike Pence and Kamala Harris were running for president instead of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. The following tables include those leaning toward each candidate as well.

National Election 2020 Matchups

Matchup	Mike Pence	Kamala Harris	Unsure
	41.5	48.3	10.1

Florida Election 2020 Matchups

Matchup	Mike Pence	Kamala Harris	Unsure
	46.8	46.7	6.5

Using a scale of one to ten, respondents were asked to describe their vote for president in 2020 where one means their vote will be entirely in support of the candidate of their choice and ten means their vote means the vote is entirely to stop or block the opposing candidate. The following tables hold the cumulative totals for one through three (support) and eight through ten (to stop).

National

My Vote for President in 2020 is...	In support of my candidate (1-3)	To stop the other candidate (8-10)
Composite	43.7	27.3
Republicans	53.0	25.2
Democrats	43.2	28.7

Florida

My Vote for President in 2020 is...	In support of my candidate (1-3)	To stop the other candidate (8-10)
Composite	49.2	26.0
Republicans	63.4	17.1
Democrats	45.3	32.6