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Poll: DeSantis holds 8-point lead over Crist in 'Increasingly Red' Florida

Among Florida's likely voters, Rubio ahead by 7 points over Demings

DELAND, Florida, Oct. 26, 2022 - According to a new poll of likely voters conducted by Stetson University's new Center for Public Opinion Research, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and Republican U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio are leading in their re-election bids.

According to the poll, DeSantis holds an 8-point lead over Democrat Charlie Crist (53% to 45%, respectively). Rubio holds a 7-point lead over Democrat Val Demings (52% to 45%, respectively).

"Even though Florida is very 'purple,' I think that Florida has probably turned a corner from being a 'swing state' to being increasingly red," said Steven Smallpage, PhD, associate professor of political science at Stetson University and director of Stetson's recently launched [Center for Public Opinion Research](#).

In conducting its first poll last week, the independent, non-partisan survey research center at Stetson polled 644 likely Florida voters and found DeSantis has an overall approval rating of 61%, with 39% disapproving. Among the likely voters, 64% think that DeSantis will win reelection. A majority of likely voters (58%) also expect Rubio to win reelection.

"Governor DeSantis is going into the last weeks of the campaign with high approval ratings from likely voters. DeSantis has a strong chance of winning as long as Republicans in key areas go to the polls on Election Day. Right now, it looks like they will," said Kelly B. Smith, PhD, assistant professor of political science at Stetson University.

"It seems like the overall narrative of this election has been whether social issues would overtake economic ones," Professor Smallpage said. "It seems as if we have an answer: It's still the economy."

According to the poll, the most important issue for Florida's likely voters was: "Cost of living/Inflation" (48%). The second and third most important issues were: "Abortion/Reproductive Rights" (12%) and "Economy/Jobs/Unemployment" (10%).

"Even for Florida's Democrats, for every voter who said reproductive rights was the most important issue (20%), nearly twice as many Democrats said it was inflation (38%). For Republicans, it was 9-to-1: only 6% said abortion was the most important issue, while 54% said it was cost of living or inflation," said Smallpage.

According to the poll, 53% of Floridians disapprove of how President Joe Biden has handled his job as chief executive, while only 47% approve.

“As with most elections—particularly in midterm elections—partisan identity is driving people to the voting booth and guiding people’s vote choice,” Professor Smallpage said. According to the poll, in both races, 90% of partisan identifiers support their candidate.

While the polling suggests a solid victory for the Republicans, Professor Smith warns that there is still a chance that the Democrats can push hard this November. “Although Sen. Rubio holds a 7-point lead, if Val Demings can energize Democrats in areas like Miami, Orlando or Tampa, she has a chance to keep this race close. However, with a majority of Floridians disapproving of President Joe Biden, this may be difficult,” said Professor Smith.

The survey was conducted Oct. 16-20. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points. The data was weighted by geographic area, ethnicity, age, education, partisan identity and gender. Data was collected through an online panel provided by Dynata. The polling results are available by visiting [the Center's website](#).

About Stetson University

Founded in 1883, [Stetson University](#) is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson focuses on intense learning experiences in a supportive community that allows students to develop their voice in a connected, inclusive environment. Stetson University ranks No. 4 on U.S. News & World Report’s 2023 list of Best Regional Universities (South) and has been recognized as one of The Princeton Review’s 388 Best Colleges in America, 2023 edition.

About Stetson University’s Center for Public Opinion Research (CPOR)

Founded in 2022, the Center for Public Opinion Research is an independent, non-partisan survey research center of Stetson University. The purpose of CPOR is to produce knowledge about how the public thinks about politics, the economy and other social issues. Stetson’s CPOR also advances our students’ education in the dynamic science of survey research and social science methodology.

Contact: Cory Lancaster

Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications & Media Relations

O: 386-822-7214

C: 386-717-5836

E: clancaster@stetson.edu