

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

To: Interested Parties

From: Henry Fernandez & Ray Block, Jr., African American Research Collaborative

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Re: October 2022 Poll of Florida Voters on Affordable Housing for Local Progress

About this Survey

On behalf of Local Progress, the African American Research Collaborative (AARC) polled 1,250 registered Florida voters. The poll oversampled African Americans (n=400) and Latinos (n=400). The blended phone and online poll was in the field from October 4 to 11, 2022 and has a margin of error of +/- 2.8% for the full sample. The margins of error for the Black, Latino, and White samples are each +/- 4.9%.

Findings Overview

- The lack of affordable housing/high cost of rent is a top tier issue in the state, second only to inflation among voters. Concern about the issue crosses party, ideology, geographic, and racial/ethnic lines.
- Startingly, over a quarter of Florida voters indicate that they have experienced at least one form of homelessness (ranging from living in a car, motel, or shelter to sleeping on a friend's couch) over the last couple of years.
- Florida voters believe the state should be activist in protecting against rising rents. 8 in 10 voters agree the state should limit rent increases and require 60 day notice for changes in rent prices by landlords.
- Work needs to be done to educate Floridians about existing tenant rights as almost half of voters are unaware of current protections. A large majority of voters, across all demographics, believe there should be a database of landlords who violate tenants' rights.
- Florida voters would support a ballot initiative to limit rent increases and want the existing law allowing municipalities to limit such increases to be changed so that an emergency does not need to be declared annually.
- Community organizations, lawyers who work with low income communities, and schoolteachers are all well trusted messengers on housing policy. Black voters especially trust Black elected officials and Black college professors.
- Florida voters blame people moving from out of state, and to a lesser extent climate change, for rising rents. They also blame large corporate landlords over smaller mom and pop landlords for high rents.

The Affordable Housing Problem

Florida voters believe housing affordability and high rents are a top issue that elected officials and candidates should address. When asked for the top 3 issues that elected officials and candidates should address in the context of the 2022 election, the top issue for Florida voters (as is the case around the country) is inflation at 47%. But number two for all regions was the “cost of housing/rent” at 29% in North Florida, 27% in Central Florida, and 26% in South Florida. It is also a top 3 issue for all racial/ethnic groups, at 29% with Latino voters, 28% with Black voters, and 24% for White voters. The concern for housing affordability is higher among women (30%) than men (23%). It is also higher for renters (37%) than homeowners (21%) and for City (33%) residents when compared to Suburban (23%) or Small town/Rural (28%) residents. This is a bipartisan issue -- there is no difference among Democrats (27%), independents (26%), and Republicans (26%). There is some variation across ideology, though housing affordability is a top 3 issue across all ideologies: Liberals (30%), Moderates (28%) and Conservatives (23%).

The current housing crisis is severe, with 27% of Florida voters saying they have experienced some form of homelessness or near homelessness over the last couple of years. We tested 7 different kinds of homelessness ranging from living on the street, in a car, in a shelter, in a motel, or empty building, to staying at someone else’s home for free or very little rent because you could not afford a place to stay. 4% of Florida voters said they had spent time in a shelter or boarding house because they did not have a place to stay. 9% said they had spent the night in their car and fully 17% said they had stayed at someone’s home for free or very little rent in the last couple of years because they could not afford a place to stay. 23% of Floridians said they had made their home available to someone else because that person could not afford a place to stay in the last couple of years. The numbers on recent housing insecurity are striking given that this is a poll of registered voters who are more likely to be financially and housing secure than people who are not registered voters.

Just over half (52%) of Florida voters see the rising cost of rent as a crisis, and a remarkable 88% see it as either a crisis or major problem. Higher percentages of Floridians see rising rents as a crisis (52% crisis, 36% major problem) than consider the rising cost of owning a home as a crisis (43% crisis, 39% major problem) or the general lack of affordable housing as a crisis (42% crisis, 37% major problem). But all three are significant concerns.

What Florida Voters Want Done on Housing

Floridians see housing as a basic human need (82%) as opposed to an investment (18%). This is true across all demographics with similar scores for Black, White, and Latino respondents. Even homeowners (79%) and landlords (76%) agree with this sentiment.

Florida limiting rent increases is popular. 81% of Florida voters agree either strongly (51%) or somewhat (26%) that Florida should limit rent increases. 89% of renters and 77% of homeowners agree, with fully 69% of renters strongly agreeing. There is equal agreement

among those who say they are definitely voting (81%) in 2022 or those less likely to vote (82%). The state limiting rent increases is also popular among all political parties and ideologies. Total agree: Liberal: 90%, Moderate: 82%, Conservative: 75%, Democrat: 91%, Independent: 72%, Republican: 78%

Florida voters want high rents to be treated as a consumer protection issue where government protects renters as it does with price gouging. Fully 81% of Floridians either strongly or somewhat agreed with this sentiment. This had high levels of agreement across the board but was especially popular with Latinos, renters, people in Central Florida, and those living in rural areas and small towns. Interestingly, even landlords agreed but were less likely to strongly agree than the state as a whole and more likely to somewhat agree.

Florida voters overwhelmingly want 60 day notice requirements for rent changes. Asked whether they support or oppose a law to require landlords to give 60 days notice prior to raising rent by 5% or more, 82% support, with 60% strongly supporting. This is broadly supported by all demographics and ideologies, with highest support among those voters over 50 years old (88%), married (87%), those who say they are definitely voting (84%), Liberals (88%) and Moderates (85%).

A website to look up landlords who violate tenant rights or housing codes is quite popular. 82% of Floridians agree that there should be such a website. It is popular across all demographics and ideologies.

Floridians believe that insurance companies should not be able to raise rates when homes are damaged by natural disasters. 83% of Florida voters say they either strongly or somewhat agree with this strategy. This is popular across all demographics and ideologies.

There is still quite a lot of work to be done to inform Floridians of their existing rights -- half of all renters, and 45% of all Floridians, say they are unaware of housing codes and laws to protect renters. Similarly, 50% of those over 50 years old and 50% of those living in suburbs say they are unaware of these laws.

Limiting Rent Increases

In the absence of state action, Florida voters support both a ballot initiative to limit rent increases and more action by local government. 81% of Florida voters agree that a ballot initiative is needed if the state does not take action. 82% of Florida voters agree that local governments should step in to pass affordable housing policies if the state does not take action. Both are especially popular among renters, African Americans, those with college degrees, and city residents. The ballot initiative process for limiting rent increases is popular in North (76% agree) and South Florida (77% agree) but especially popular in Central Florida (87% agree).

Two-thirds of Florida voters support ending the requirement that cities or counties declare annual emergencies before limiting rent increases. Following a brief explanation of the current law requiring annual emergency declarations, we asked whether “you support or oppose

changing Florida law so that local governments can limit rent increases without having to declare an emergency every year.” This received total support of 67% with 33% strongly supporting, 35% somewhat supporting, 13% somewhat opposing and 8% strongly opposing. 11% don’t know. Despite the complexity of the issue, there is solid support, with highest levels of support for ending the emergency declaration requirement among Liberals (80%), Democrats (76%), Renters (74%), and Black voters (71%). This is a policy that is genuinely bipartisan, with 63% support among independents, and 62% support among Republicans.

Who Do Florida Voters Trust and Blame?

On issues related to housing in their state, Florida voters have high levels of trust for community organizations, lawyers working on behalf of low-income communities and schoolteachers. Any of these could serve as effective messengers. Floridians have much less trust on average for the federal government (driven by distrust among White voters) and landlords. Black voters have highest levels of trust for Black local elected officials and Black college professors.

	Total Trust	Total Distrust	Never heard of or don't know	Net Trust (ranked high to low)
Community organizations	71%	22%	7%	+49%
Lawyers who work with low-income communities or people in need	68%	24%	8%	+44%
School teachers	69%	25%	5%	+44%
The Florida Housing Justice Alliance	52%	23%	25%	+29%
Florida state government, such as the Governor and other lawmakers in Tallahassee	62%	33%	5%	+29%
Local elected officials (such as mayors, or county commissioners)	58%	37%	5%	+21%
Black local elected officials (asked only of Black respondents)	84%	10%	6%	+74%
Latino local elected officials (asked only of Latino respondents)	68%	27%	6%	+41%
College professors	54%	34%	11%	+20%
Black college professors (asked only of Black respondents)	78%	15%	7%	+63%
Latino college professors (asked only of Latino respondents)	62%	28%	10%	+34%
Religious leaders	56%	39%	6%	+17%
Landlords	44%	47%	9%	-3%
The Federal government in Washington DC	46%	50%	3%	-4%
Federal government among White respondents	41%	58%	1%	-17%
Federal government among Black respondents	67%	28%	6%	+39%
Federal government among Latino respondents	53%	44%	3%	+9%

More than 8 in 10 Floridians blame out of state people moving to Florida for driving up the price of housing. 82% of Florida voters agree that out of state people moving to Florida are driving up rent prices for Floridians already living here, with 44% strongly agreeing and 38% somewhat agreeing. There are higher levels of agreement for White voters (84%), married voters (87%), those 30-49 (85%), and those living in small towns/rural areas (86%), but it is broadly agreed to across demographics. Floridians also agree that out of state investors are preventing affordable housing in the state (72%), but at a lower level of agreement than is present for blaming people moving from out of state.

Two-thirds of Florida voters blame climate change for increasing rents as people move away from the coasts and into inland areas. 67% of Florida voters either strongly agree (32%) or somewhat agree (35%) with this idea. This is not as effective as placing blame on out-of-state movers, but is particularly effective with 18-29 year olds (79%), South Florida residents (75%), and moderates (77%). This message is not nearly as effective in North Florida, where total agreement is at 46%, and disagreement at 34%, quite a bit higher than all other demographics and ideologies, including Conservatives (57% agree, 24% disagree).

Elections

Voters see the fact that rents are rising quickly across Florida, making it difficult for hard working people to afford living in their own state, as a reason to vote. 52% say that it makes it more likely for them to vote, 40% say that it makes no difference in whether they vote, and 5% say that it will make it less likely that they will vote. Renters, those who have experienced homelessness, City residents, and Latinos are most likely to say this makes them more likely to vote.

Republicans hold a small advantage in all elections we tested, but a slightly larger one among those saying they will definitely vote in 2022. On the generic Congressional ballot, Republicans lead by 1, 41% to 40%, with 16% undecided. Republicans hold a larger 6 point advantage among those who say they will definitely vote (47% to 41%), while Democrats hold an 18 point advantage among those who are not definite they will vote (39% to 21%). For the Governor election, Republican Ron DeSantis (46%) leads Democrat Charlie Crist (41%) by 5 points. For Senate, Marco Rubio (42%) leads Val Demings (40%) by 2 points.