



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Data for Progress & the FL chapter of the Committee to Protect Health Care
DATE: September 9th, 2021
RE: Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' Handling of the Coronavirus Pandemic

DeSantis Out of Step with Florida Voters on Coronavirus Response

Executive Summary

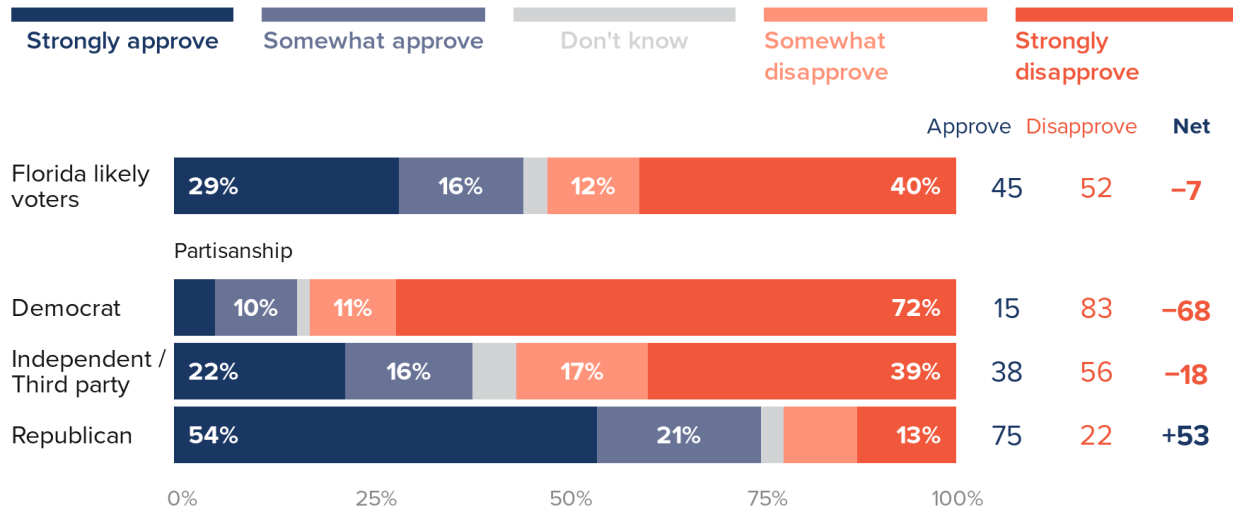
As the Delta variant has surged in Florida and parents navigate the start of a new school year, medical professionals from the Florida Chapter of the Committee to Protect Health Care commissioned a late August 2021 [poll](#) of likely voters in Florida. The poll, completed in collaboration with Data for Progress, shows that Governor Ron DeSantis is out of step with Floridians when it comes to coronavirus response, and a majority disapprove of his handling of the pandemic.

73% of Floridians are on the other side of Ron DeSantis and think schools should be able to mandate masks to keep kids safe.

When asking voters whether they approve or disapprove of the job Gov. DeSantis is doing handling the coronavirus pandemic, we find that his rating is underwater. A majority of likely voters disapprove of his performance by a 7-point margin (45 percent approve, 52 percent disapprove). While Republicans approve of how DeSantis has handled the pandemic by +53 points, Democrats and Independents rate him negatively by 68 and 18 points, respectively.

A Majority of Florida Voters Disapprove of Gov. DeSantis' Handling of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that Governor Ron DeSantis is doing handling the COVID-19 pandemic?



August 27-31, 2021 survey of 753 Florida Likely Voters

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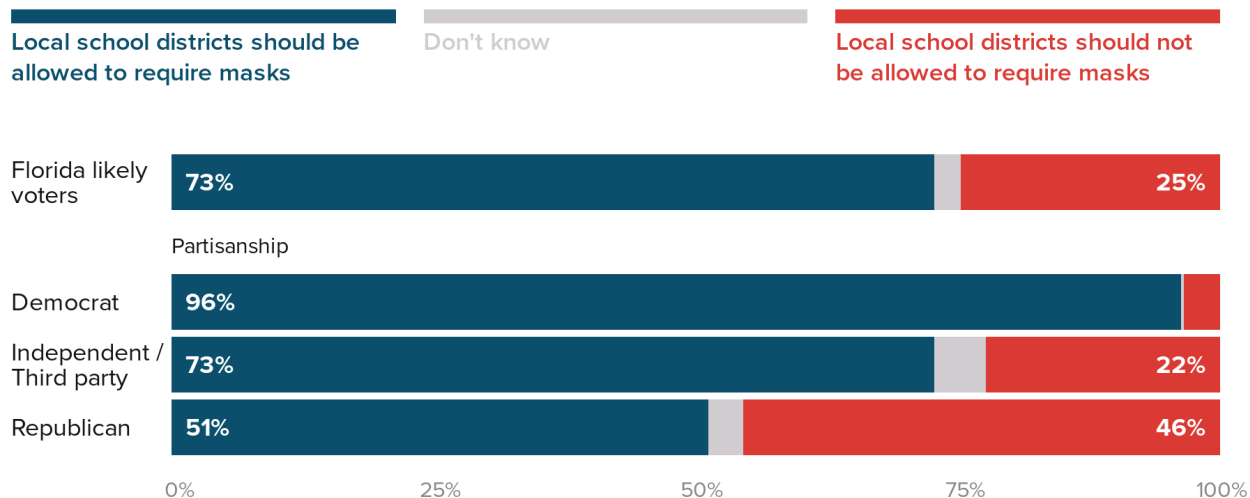


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In the wake of the DeSantis administration doubling down on penalizing school districts for instituting mask mandates, we asked voters about masks in schools. We find that voters overwhelmingly agree that local school districts should be allowed to require masks by a +48-point margin (73 percent agree, 25 percent disagree). Support for allowing mask mandates at the district level crosses party lines, with Democrats, Independents, and Republicans siding with local school districts by margins of +92 points, +51 points, and +5 points, respectively.

Three-Fourths of Florida Voters Say Local School Districts Should Be Allowed to Require Masks

Do you think that local school districts should or should not be allowed to require masks?



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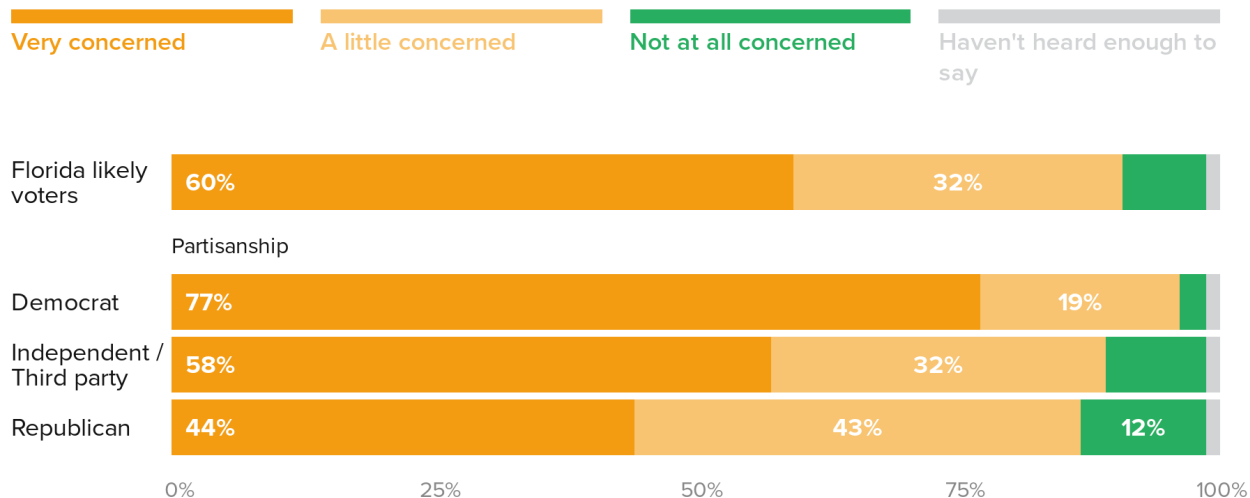


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We also asked Florida voters how concerned they are about the Delta variant. Over ninety percent of voters (92 percent) say they are concerned about the Delta variant, with 60 percent saying they are “very concerned.” While highest among Democrats (97 percent total, 77 percent very concerned), concern extends across the political spectrum, with 90 percent of Independent voters (58 percent very concerned), and 87 percent of Republicans (44 percent very concerned) indicating they are concerned about the Delta variant.

A Majority of Florida Voters Are Concerned About the Delta Variant of the Coronavirus

How concerned or not concerned are you about the Delta variant of the coronavirus?



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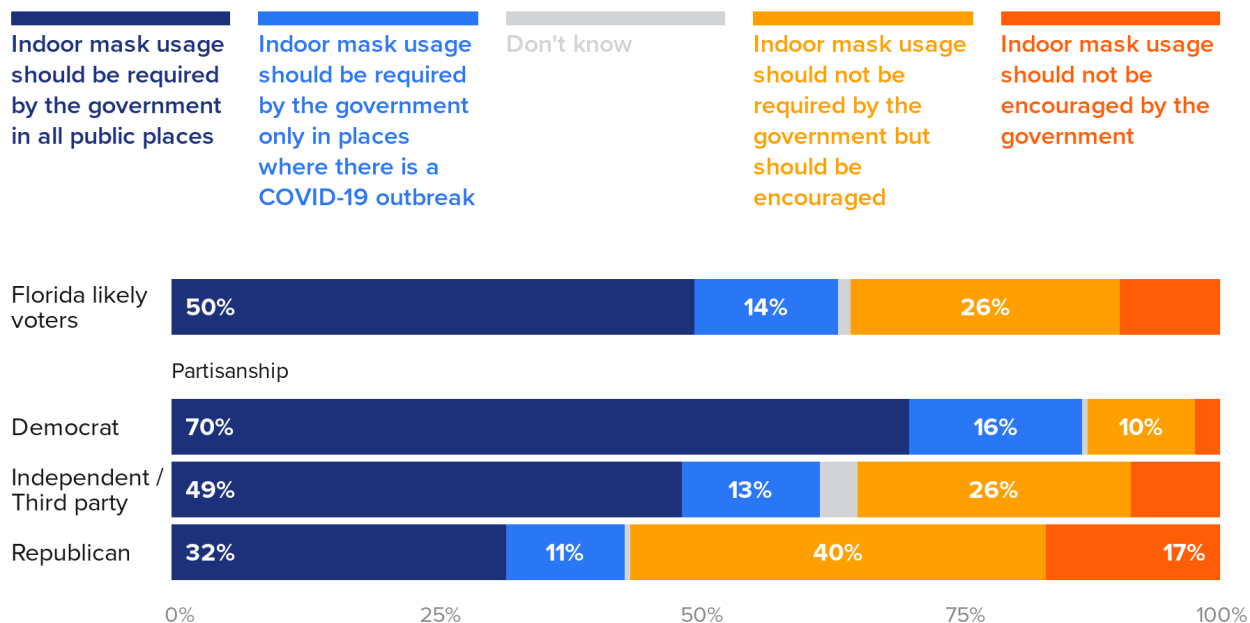
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Additionally, we asked voters about their level of support for general government masking guidance in all indoor public places. Half (50 percent) believe that indoor mask usage should be required by the government in all public places, and another 14 percent believe indoor mask usage should be required in places with active coronavirus outbreaks. A quarter (26 percent) of voters say that indoor mask usage should be encouraged rather than required, while only 10 percent say it shouldn't be encouraged.

Looking across partisanship, requiring masks indoors in all public places is supported by 70 percent of Democrats, 49 percent of Independents, and 32 percent of Republicans, while requiring masks indoors in public spaces with active coronavirus outbreaks is supported by 16 percent, 13 percent, and 11 percent of voters in the same groups, respectively. Meanwhile, 10 percent of Democrats, 26 percent of Independents, and 40 percent of Republicans think that indoor mask usage should be recommended, not required, and 2 percent, 9 percent, and 17 percent think they should not be encouraged by the government at all.

Half of Likely Florida Voters Say the Government Should Require Masks in Public Indoor Places

Some officials have proposed mandating indoor mask usage in areas where there is a significant outbreak of COVID-19. Which statement comes closer to your view, even if none of them are exactly right?



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Finally, voters read, in independently randomized order, a series of statements about how Gov. DeSantis has responded to the pandemic through four frames, and indicated how convincing or not convincing each one was as a reason not to vote for him. Specific statement wording can be found in the topline [here](#).

By far the strongest frame tested concerned the governor's actions around public school mask mandates. Specifically, voters were told about his executive order penalizing public schools for imposing mask requirements, which is in direct defiance of the guidance issued by the state's medical community. We find that, by a +24-point margin, voters rated this statement as convincing (62 percent convincing, 38 percent not convincing).

Voters also read a statement around Ron DeSantis' pandering to vaccine skepticism and anti-vaccine paranoia to score points for a 2024 presidential run, while Florida hospitals are overwhelmed and forced to cancel certain surgeries. By a +10-point margin, voters

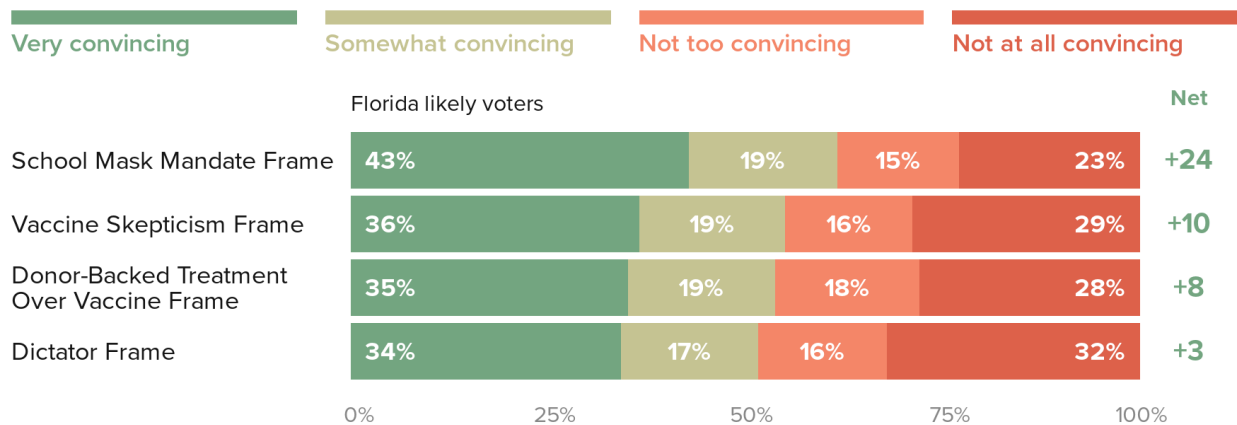
find this statement a convincing reason to not vote for Ron DeSantis (55 percent convincing, 45 percent not convincing).

Additionally, voters read a statement around the governor's promotion of an experimental coronavirus treatment backed by a wealthy campaign donor over supporting proven solutions that reduce the spread of the coronavirus in Florida, like the free and effective vaccine. We find that by a +8-point margin, voters say this statement is a convincing reason to not vote for the governor (54 percent convincing, 46 percent not convincing).

The final statement framed Gov. DeSantis' actions as those of a dictator, downplaying the virus for political gain, prioritizing his financial backers in the early days of vaccine distribution, and undermining medical experts for his own political gain. By a margin of plus three points, Florida voters say this is a convincing reason not to vote for the governor (51 percent convincing, 48 percent not convincing).

A Strong Majority of Florida Voters Find Various Messages Around Gov. DeSantis' Pandemic Response Convincing Reasons to Not Vote for Him

Voters were shown statements around the governor's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, fundraising off of anti-vaccine paranoia, downplaying the virus for political gain and prioritizing his cronies during the initial days of vaccine distribution, and issuing an order to defund schools that require their students to wear masks. They were then asked whether or not each statement was a convincing reason to not vote for Ron DeSantis.



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Conclusion

Taken together, these results clearly indicate that Florida voters take the threat of the Delta variant seriously and favor the commonsense public health solutions that Gov. DeSantis has repeatedly undermined. DeSantis' continued dismissal of the science and severity of the crisis is out of step with his electorate — and likely voters have taken notice.

Survey Methodology

From August 27 to 31, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey on behalf of the Committee to Protect Health Care of 753 likely voters in Florida using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 4 percentage points.