

Penta Policy Insiders

Florida Insights Review Series

Top Issues

Executive summary

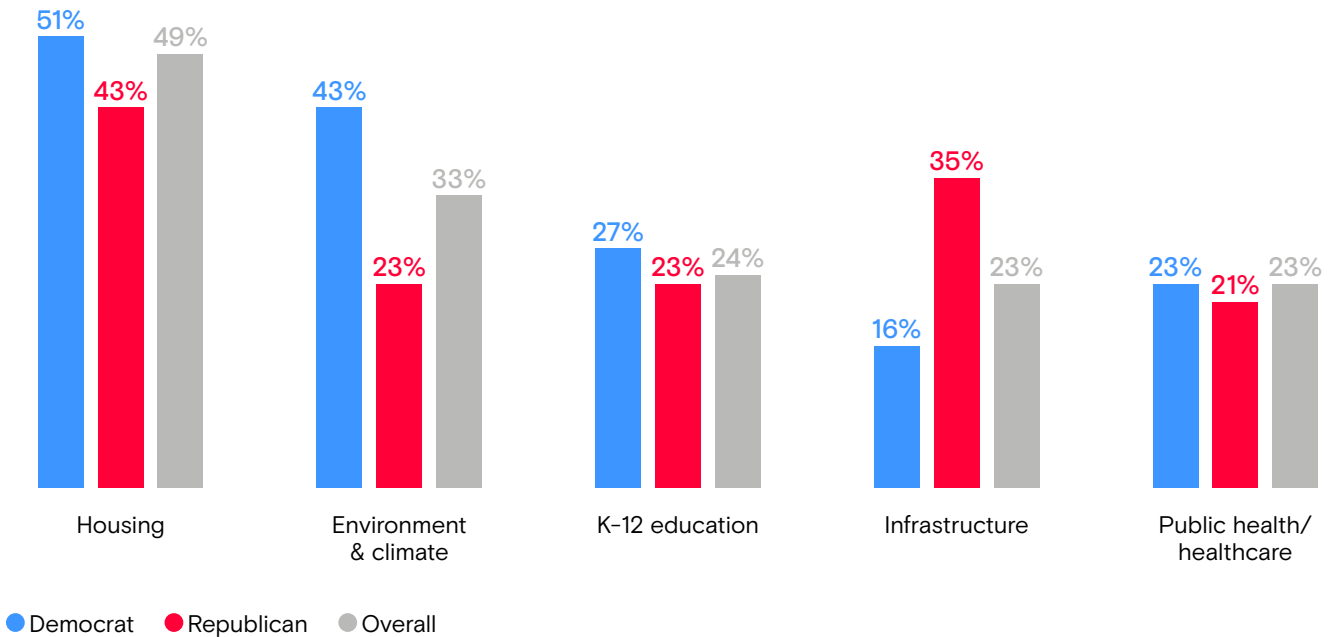
We are excited to share our findings from this year's Florida Insights Review. From April to September 2022, we surveyed and spoke with over 250 state and local policymakers in Florida to understand their policy priorities and how the private and public sectors can collaborate to move forward on important issues.

Last year was particularly noteworthy for the state of Florida, which was at the center of national discourse when its business community and political leadership found themselves misaligned over issues relating to corporate engagement on social issues, highlighted by the Parental Rights in Education legislation. Our research in Florida indicates that policymaker perceptions of corporate engagement on social issues vary significantly by party, with Republicans more critical of corporate engagement on these issues. In fact, 40% of Republican policymakers believe that companies should avoid engaging on social issues, altogether. Those Republican policymakers that welcome private sector engagement tend to suggest that such engagement should be directly related to business functions and avoid overstepping into political issues.

In terms of policy priorities, both Democrats and Republicans report that the state's housing issues are top of mind, while education and healthcare remain in the top five priorities of Florida policymakers.

This report is the first in a series that examines five of Florida policymakers' top policy priorities, which include (i) Housing (ii) Environment and Climate (iii) K-12 Education (iv) Infrastructure and (v) Public health and healthcare.

Top policy priorities in Florida



Top issues in 2022

Housing

Housing is the top policy priority for policymakers across the state of Florida, with almost half of all respondents (49 percent) indicating this to be an issue they would like to address this year. Policymakers highlight accessibility, with a particular emphasis on affordability, as a particular pain point they are focused on.



I just think the biggest problem we have in our area is **the housing market is becoming more and more out of the reach of the common person.**

Mayor, Municipal, R



We are currently experiencing significant issues related to housing affordability... but, we also have had skyrocketing rents, especially in Tampa, Miami, and Orlando. People are seeing double-digit, in some cases triple-digit increases in their rent. **We also really need to address the rental crisis. Folks need to be able to live and work in the same kind of communities.** And we're not addressing that right now.

Staff Director, Florida House of Representatives, D

Environment and climate

Florida policymakers also prioritize environment and climate issues, honing in on the transition to green and renewable energy. Democrats prioritize this issue much more than Republicans, with 43 percent of Florida Democrats identifying it as a priority, compared with only 23 percent of Republicans.



It's renewable energy. We're figuring out how to get batteries to work more efficiently, lasting longer, being cheaper... **it's the wave of the future for energy.**

Commissioner, Municipal, I



I'm all for realistic options. **We have got to look at it long-term... I think we definitely need to find ways to create renewable energy,** but they have to be more good than bad.

Supervisor, Executive, R



I think focusing on **climate resiliency** is going to be important to long-term sustainability of Florida.

Staff Director, Florida House of Representatives, D

K-12 Education

Policymakers across parties agree that K-12 education is a priority, with many noting the ongoing teacher shortage as a critical challenge for the state to address.



The teacher shortages [are an immediate] issue. People are leaving the profession left and right because they're not supported, because they're not paid, because they're not given the tools they need to succeed.

Director of Communications, Legislative, D



I think **giving the teachers the tools that they need in order to be able to make an impact** on the kids and not be worried...they're constrained. They really don't have the ability to be able to teach to the degree that they can make an impact on the kids.

Manager, Executive, R



I think we have to find out why kids aren't learning and then find out how to get them to learn. How do we reach those kids in underperforming schools and underperforming families? ...to me that's the most important thing. **How do we change the future for these children by teaching them and allowing them to have...a brighter future.**

Director, Executive, D



Infrastructure

Florida faces a broad range of infrastructure issues that policymakers are placing at the forefront of their agendas for the coming year. Infrastructure is of particular importance to Florida Republicans, with over a third reporting it to be a priority item.



I think infrastructure issues should be at the front. And while that normally means roads and things like that, in this context means being able to respond to the continued influx of population that Florida experiences and frankly, the gigantic boom we're in which means all of the kinds of government services, not just roads and schools but water... Also health care infrastructure, not just hospitals but professionals to do the work and safety net service needs.

Staff Director, Florida House of Representatives, R



We need to think about... how we maintain our infrastructure, our aquifers, our forests, our wildlife, our biosphere... How do we fit in the way that humans live with that and not destroy Florida?

Director, Executive, D

Public health and healthcare

Investment in healthcare, particularly on mental health resources, is also top of mind for Florida policymakers.



We know we have a problem with mental health, as we see nationwide... We know that. And it's a matter of people also having health insurance that will cover this and even if you can go across the state to find help.

Government Operations Consultant, Executive, N/A



I think [mental health] is a crisis that really needs to be given more attention... There is no good mental health available unless you can afford \$150 an hour... [the] problem is **mental health needs to be more accessible, needs to be better. I think it's a major problem for this state, this country.**

Supervisor, Executive, R



We have significant unmet needs in mental health in the country.

Staff Director, Florida House of Representatives, R

Conclusion

Policymakers believe housing to be the most significant issue facing Florida today, but also view the environment and education as other top areas in need of attention. They are also working to make progress for the state's infrastructure and public health needs. Policymakers are looking to industry leaders to help them address these challenges, particularly when it comes to getting solutions to local communities in a more timely manner.



About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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