

# FLORIDA GOVERNOR POLL: DESANTIS NARROWLY LEADS CRIST, FRIED, AND DEMINGS

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis holds a narrow lead in hypothetical matchups versus potential Democratic challengers Charlie Crist, Nikki Fried, and Val Demings. Among the three Democrats, Crist is certainly the most dangerous.

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Poll conducted May 4, 2021 via IVR among more than 600 respondents in Florida. MoE  $\pm 4.1\%$ .





## (A) Executive Summary

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Democrat and **former Governor Charlie Crist** declared his candidacy for the 2022 gubernatorial race in Florida. Crist is the first serious opponent to **officially join the race to defeat incumbent Governor Ron DeSantis**, a rising star in the GOP. However, it's unlikely that Crist will be DeSantis' only Democratic challenger.

**Nikki Fried, Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services**, was the only Democrat to win statewide elected office in 2018 (the same year DeSantis won the gubernatorial race). Since then, **Fried has been the face of Florida's Democratic Party**, and she's leveraged this role to boost her name ID and position herself for higher political office. Florida politicians all agree that she is angling for a 2022 gubernatorial run, which is yet to be announced.

**Congresswoman Val Demings** hails from central Florida, and she's no stranger to the spotlight either. In early 2020, reports emerged that **Demings was "on the shortlist" to become Democratic nominee Joe Biden's running mate**. Ultimately, Senator Kamala Harris from California became Biden's VP pick, but Demings has since been riding the wave of attention into the national spotlight. She has since confirmed that she is "seriously considering" challenging DeSantis in 2022.

If Crist, Fried, and Demings all decide to run, they would first battle each other in a heated Democratic primary, and the winner would advance to challenge DeSantis in the general election in November of 2022. **Let's dive into the numbers.**

- **Demings and Fried lag far behind DeSantis and Crist in terms of Name ID.** Only 2% and 7% of voters have no opinion of DeSantis and Crist, respectively. For Demings and Fried, however, that number jumps to 38% and 40%, respectively. (*Section C*)
- **DeSantis has the strongest base by far.** 49% of all voters and 76% of Republicans have a very favorable opinion of him. (*Sections B and D*)

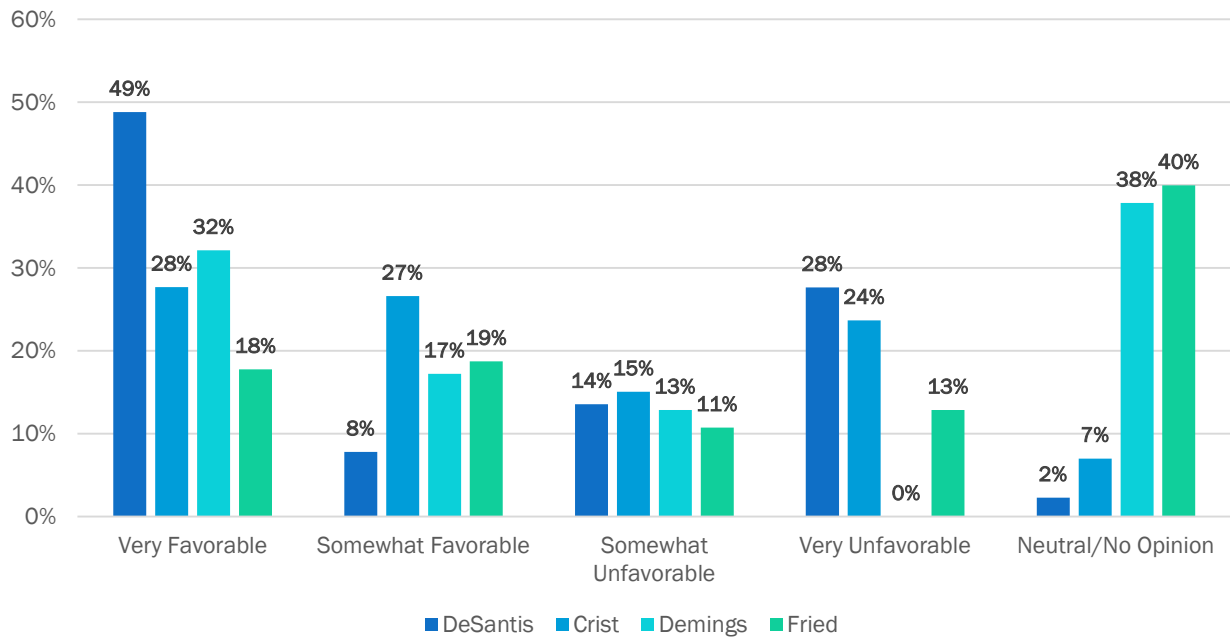


- **Demings' lack of statewide recognition also means she enjoys fewer negative opinions.** Only 13% of voters have an unfavorable opinion of Demings, compared to 24% for Fried, 39% for Crist, and 41% for DeSantis. *(Section C)*
- **Crist is an early favorite to win the Democratic Primary.** In a three-way primary, 53% of Democrats are in Crist's corner, Demings and Fried trail with 30%, and 17%, respectively, making Crist's lead far beyond the margin of error. However, this early lead is largely due to the fact that Crist enjoys a significant Name ID advantage, even among Democrats only. *(Section E)*
- **Crist's strength across the entire state gives him an advantage over his Democratic counterparts.** In our poll, Crist won in five congressional districts that Demings and/or Fried lost to DeSantis (one of which is the district he represents). *(Section F)*
- **Fried, Demings, and Crist all trail DeSantis in the general election by less than 9%.** Demings trails by 8%, Fried by 7%, and Crist by 6%. *(Sections H, K, and N)*
- **Of all Democrats, Crist has the best chance of winning the governorship in 2022.** Not only does he lead in the Democratic Primary, but he also posts the best numbers in a head-to-head matchup versus DeSantis. Our simulations give him a 10% chance of victory if he becomes the Democratic nominee, compared to 8% for Fried and 3% for Demings. *(Section P)*
- **As things currently stand, DeSantis' hopes of re-election are looking strong.** With 57% of voters having a favorable opinion of him, and simulations giving him a >90% chance of victory against any of his challengers, DeSantis is in a great position as the race for Florida Governor begins to heat up. *(Sections C and P)*

Read on for more results, charts, and analyses.

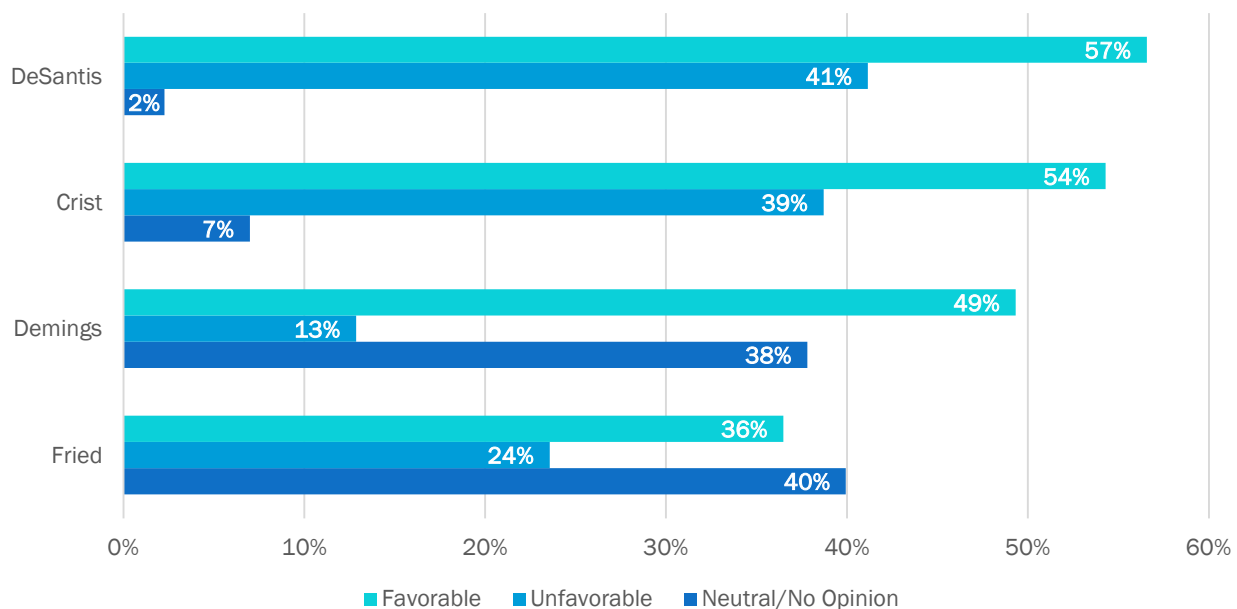


## (B) Voters' Opinions of Each Candidate



## (C) Total Favorability of Each Candidate

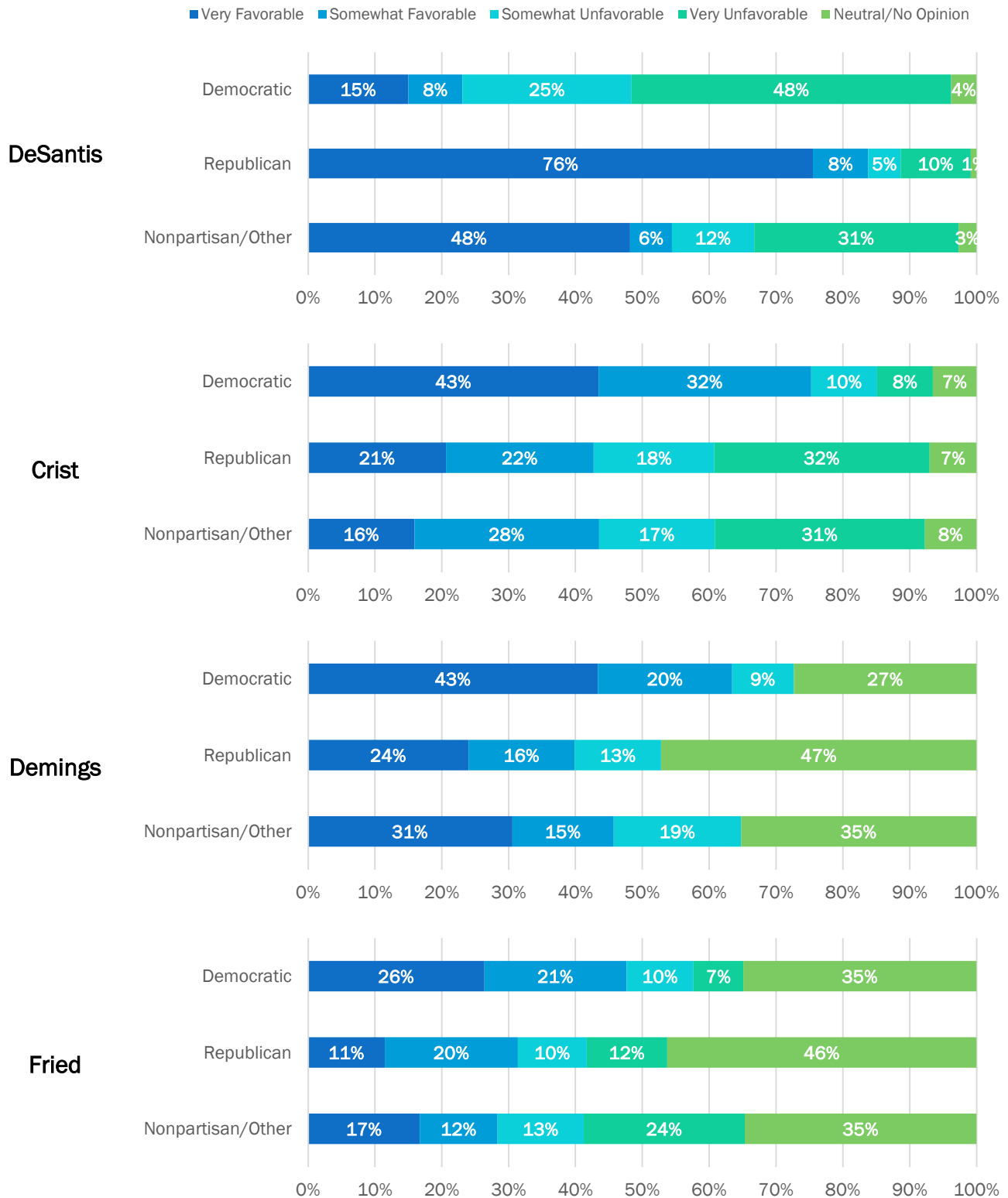
As the chart below shows, current Governor Ron DeSantis and former Governor Charlie Crist experience similar favorability ratings from voters. However, as Section B demonstrates, DeSantis enjoys fiercer support than Crist does (49% vs. 28% Very Favorable). The spike in neutral responses for Demings and Fried demonstrates the fact that they each have much lower Name ID than DeSantis and Crist.





## (D) How Does Favorability Vary By Party?

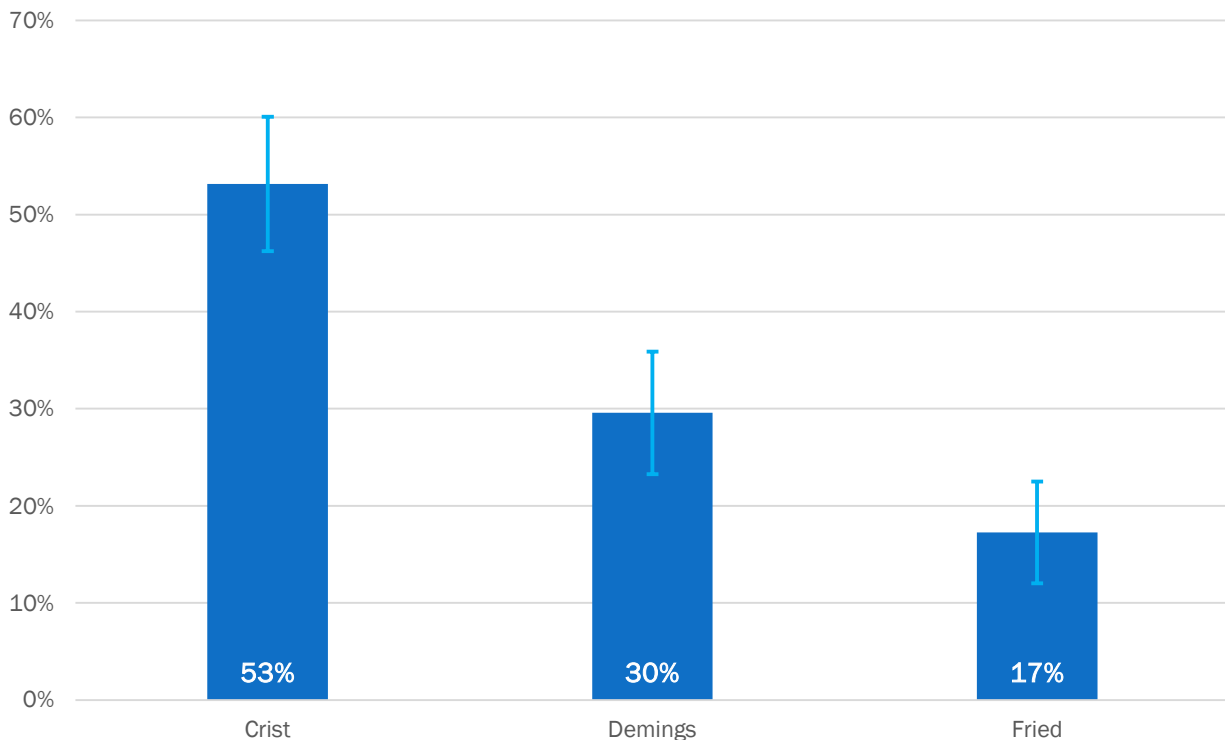
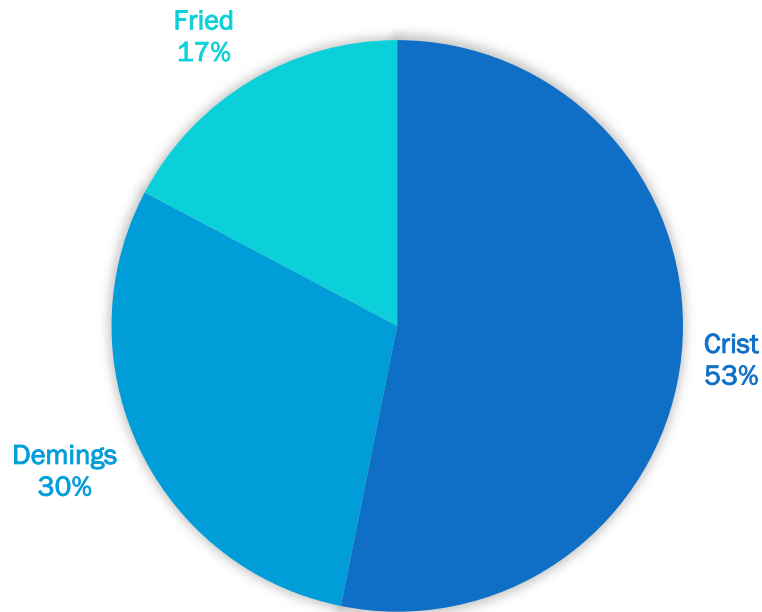
The charts below show candidates' favorability across party lines. As expected, DeSantis is the most polarizing candidate. Demings has little fierce opposition, while Crist is highly unpopular among both Republicans and nonpartisans.





## (E) Democratic Primary: Who Will Democrats Choose?

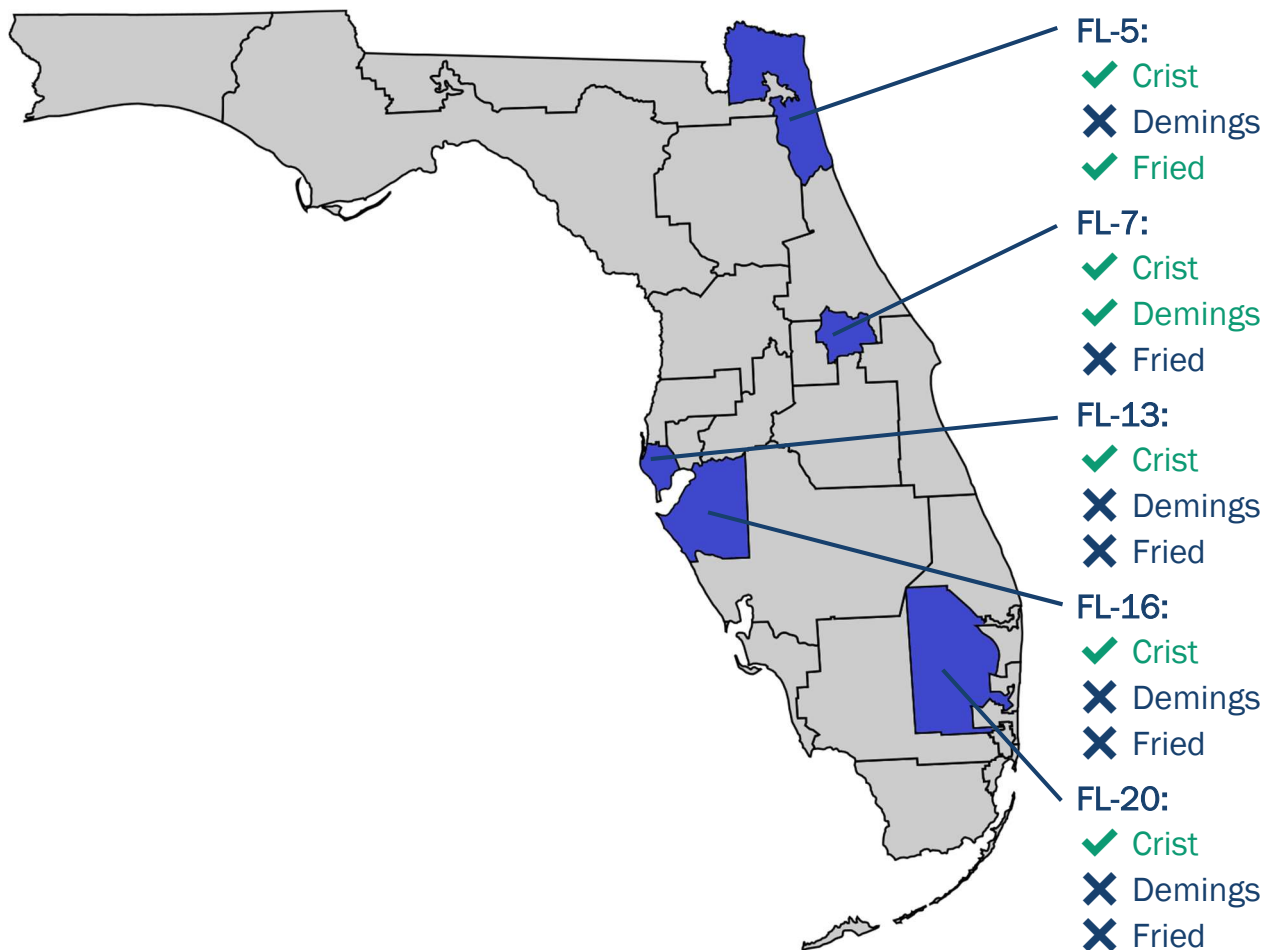
Charlie Crist holds a commanding lead of the Democratic Primary. Take these precise numbers with a grain of salt – as only self-identified Democrats were asked this question, the sample size is smaller, and thus the margin of error is approximately 7%. Nevertheless, Crist's lead is far outside the margin of error.





## (F) Geographic Breakdown: Who Wins Where?

Voters throughout the state of Florida were posed with hypothetical matchups between DeSantis and each of the potential Democratic candidates. In the chart below, districts highlighted in blue are those that were won by certain Democrats, but which DeSantis won in at least one matchup. Again, take this map with a grain of salt, as each particular congressional district had a much lower sample size than the overall poll. The primary purpose of this map is to show differences in outcomes between Democratic candidates.



The most impactful takeaway from this map is Crist's strength across different geographic regions. Crist was the only Democrat to win in FL-13 (the district he currently represents), but also in nearby FL-16, as well as FL-20. There was not a single district won by Demings or Fried that Crist did not also win.

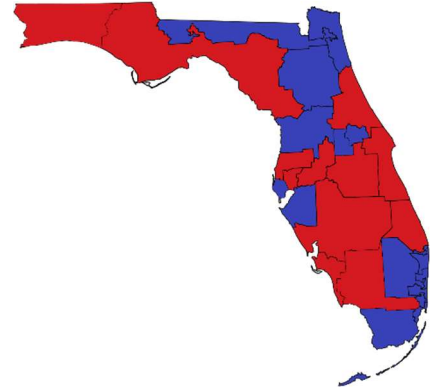
### (G) Head-to-Head: Crist vs. DeSantis



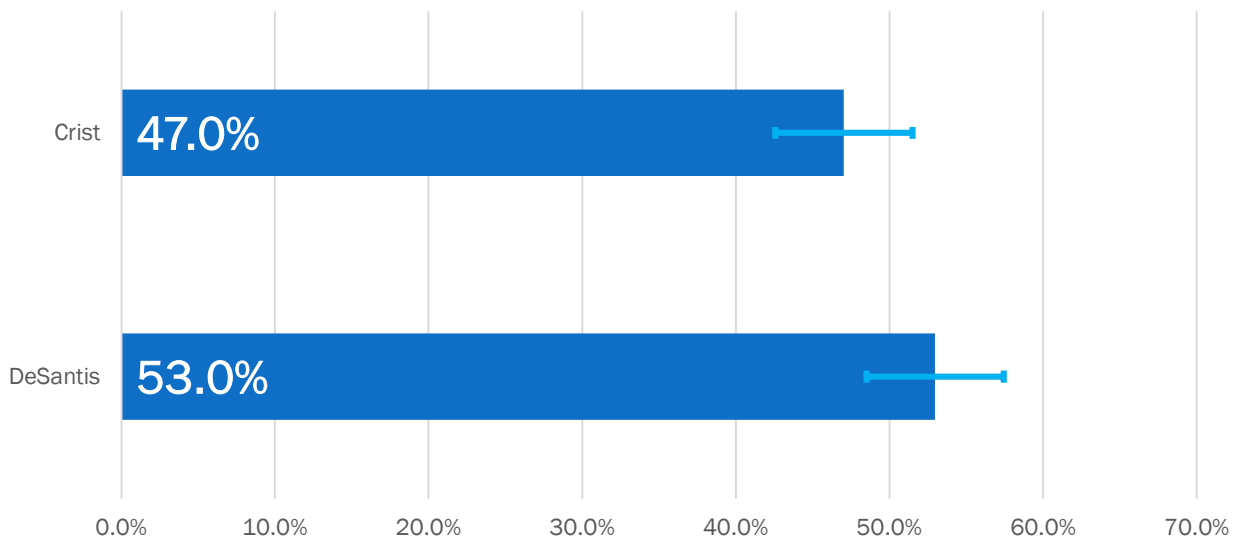
Crist



DeSantis ✓



### (H) Exact Results: Crist vs. DeSantis



### (I) Simulated Chances of Victory: Crist vs. DeSantis



9.7% Crist



90.3% DeSantis





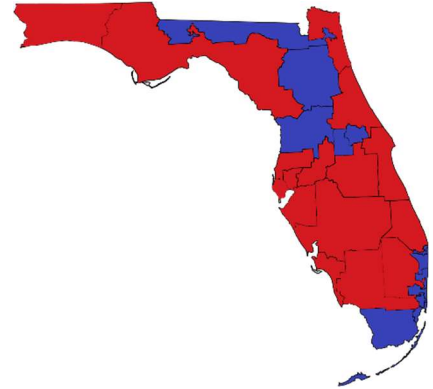
### (J) Head-to-Head: Demings vs. DeSantis



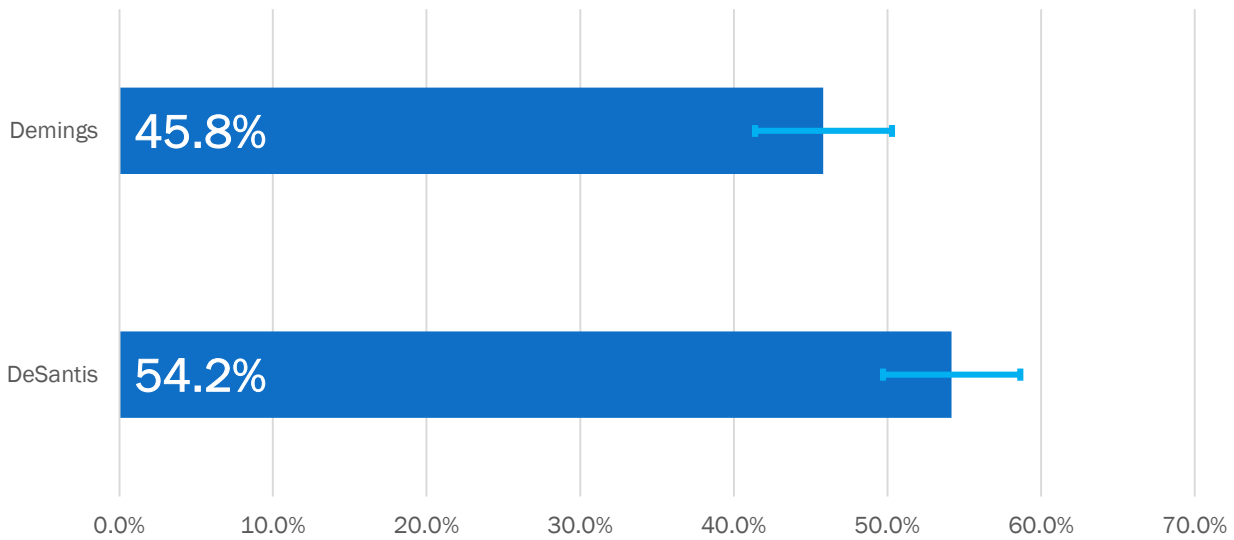
Demings



DeSantis ✓



### (K) Exact Results: Demings vs. DeSantis



### (L) Simulated Chances of Victory: Demings vs. DeSantis

3.4% Demings

96.6% DeSantis



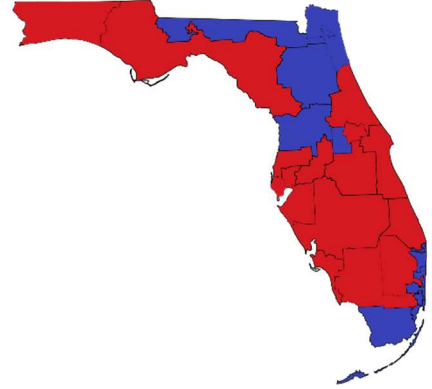
### (M) Head-to-Head: Fried vs. DeSantis



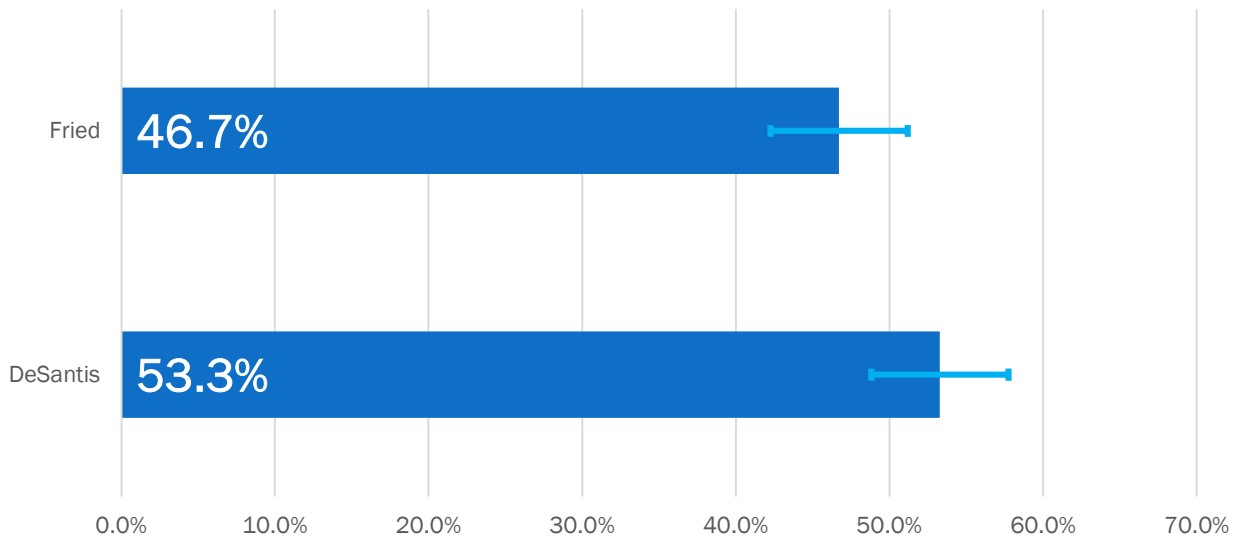
Fried



DeSantis ✓



### (N) Exact Results: Fried vs. DeSantis



### (O) Simulated Chances of Victory: Fried vs. DeSantis



7.5% Fried

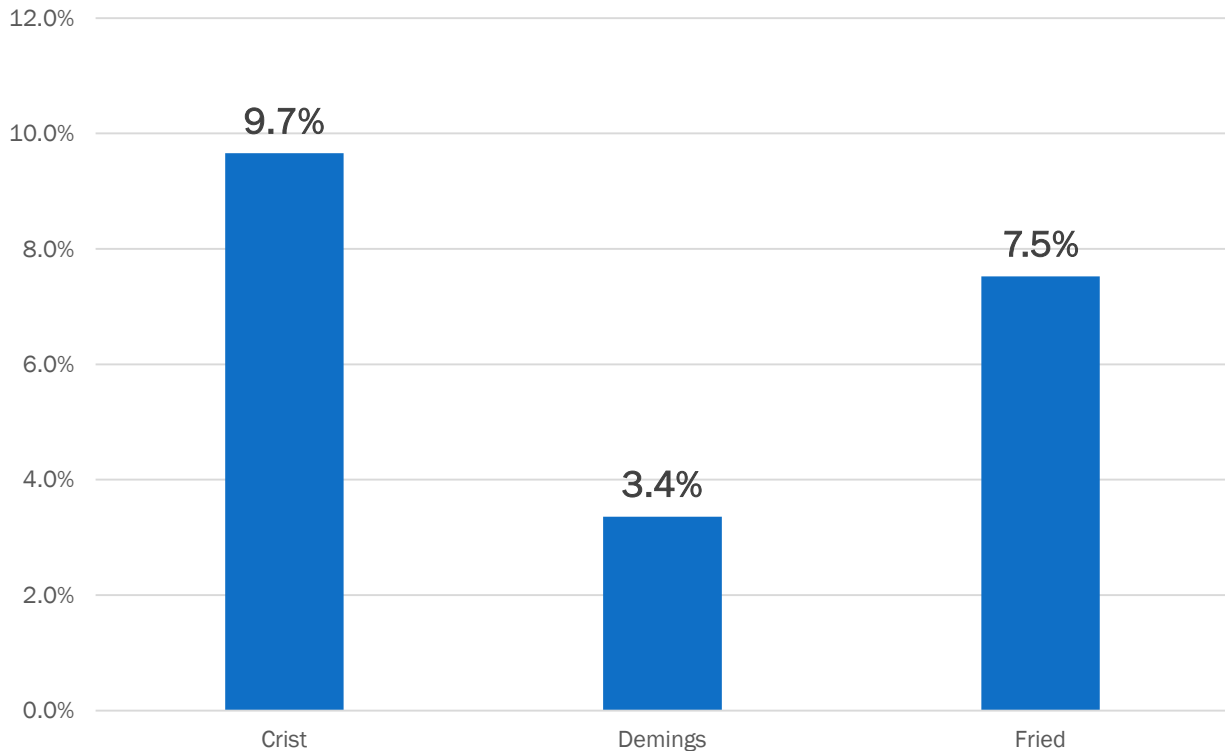


92.5% DeSantis



## (P) Head-to-Head Chances of Victory vs. DeSantis

This chart summarizes one of the key findings of the poll: in a head-to-head matchup, Crist has the best chance of victory against DeSantis, followed by Fried, and then Demings. Though these chances are currently quite small, very much can change between now and Election Day.



## (Q) Demographic Verification

The following section shows some of the key metrics used to ensure the poll results closely mirror the actual electorate for the Florida gubernatorial election in 2022. The demographics for the 2018 gubernatorial election are displayed alongside the demographics of the poll in order to transparently validate the accuracy of the poll's results. Please note that these were not the *only* variables considered, but rather some of the most important.

Age	2018 Gov. Race	Poll	Difference
18-30	11.5%	12.4%	+0.9%
31-45	18.3%	17.9%	-0.5%
46-60	27.9%	27.5%	-0.4%
61-75	30.1%	30.1%	0.0%
76+	12.1%	12.1%	0.0%

Section Q is continued on the next page.



<b>Party Registration</b>	<b>2018 Gov. Race</b>	<b>Poll</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<i>Democratic</i>	39.4%	38.7%	-0.7%
<i>Republican</i>	40.5%	37.0%	-3.5%
<i>Nonpartisan/Other</i>	20.2%	24.3%	+4.1%

<b>Congressional District Region</b>	<b>2018 Gov. Race</b>	<b>Poll</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<i>Central: 7, 9, 10, 11, 15</i>	19.1%	18.6%	-0.5%
<i>East Coast: 4, 6, 8, 18</i>	17.5%	16.8%	-0.7%
<i>North/Panhandle: 1, 2, 3, 5</i>	14.5%	15.1%	+0.6%
<i>Southeast: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27</i>	22.6%	24.7%	+2.1%
<i>Southwest: 17, 19, 25</i>	10.5%	8.7%	-1.8%
<i>West: 12, 13, 14, 16</i>	15.9%	16.1%	+0.2%



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