

Florida poll: Research important for state economy, jobs

October 27 2011

A majority of Floridians (87%) believe it is important for their state to be a leader in science and medical research, according to a new state poll commissioned by Research!America. The poll also shows that 80% think spending money on scientific research is important for Florida's economy in terms of job creation and incomes.

Many Floridians also believe the state should lead in [science](#) and technology education and career growth. An overwhelming majority (92%) believe education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is important to U.S. competitiveness and [economic prosperity](#). Eighty-seven percent think it is important for their state to encourage young people to pursue careers that require a solid education in science and 88% say their state should create more opportunities for careers in science and research for its young people.

The Florida poll findings were released today at a forum on science journalism at the Embassy Suites Tampa-USF convened by Research!America, Pfizer and the University of South Florida (USF).

"Scientists have a responsibility to tell the public just how intricately tied the research enterprise is to their state's economy," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO, Research!America. "When research funding slows, medical progress stalls, [health care costs](#) rise and jobs are lost."

"There needs to be a culture change in the sciences that's integrated into the educational process of future scientists," said Jay Dean, PhD,

professor and interim chair of the Department of Molecular Pharmacology & Physiology at the University of South Florida. "We have to learn to effectively and concisely communicate in a technologically advanced age what we do and why it matters to the public."

Despite their strong support for research Floridians do not feel well-informed about research-related issues. More than 80% cannot name a living scientist. Sixty-percent would like to see more information about science and research than is currently in the news.

A huge percentage of Floridians trust scientists (90%) and health care professionals (86%) as spokespeople for science news. However, trust in journalists is less widespread. Many Floridians (60%) think journalists are just somewhat trustworthy as science news spokespersons. While 62% of Floridians trust their elected officials less today than they did five years ago, trust in the scientific community has remained stable. More than half (56%) say they trust the scientific community about the same as five years ago.

"Scientists are trusted spokespersons because they are the obvious communicators of what is newsworthy in science," said Jack Watters, MD, vice president, External Medical Affairs, Pfizer Inc. "There is no shortage of material. Indeed the frontiers of science have never been more exciting and yet we have done a poor job of communicating that excitement. Scientists make discoveries that can positively affect the lives of millions and now is the time to talk about it."

Further findings from the Florida poll include:

- 52% believe that the use of animals in medical research is necessary for progress in medicine.

- 65% favor medical research using embryonic stem cells.
- Floridians trust the information provided by newspapers (74%), radio (69%), television (71%), magazines (70%), and websites (69%). Social media fared less well, with 55% of [Floridians](#) saying social media is not trustworthy.
- Television and the Internet are the most commonly consumed media outlets in the state. 73% use television as a news source while 62% frequent the Internet/Websites for news information.

About the poll: Research!America commissioned JZ Analytics to conduct an online survey of 800 adults in Florida in September 2011. The sample is proportionate to the state's demographics, including gender, age and ethnicity, with a theoretical sampling error of $\pm 3.5\%$.

Provided by Research!America

Citation: Florida poll: Research important for state economy, jobs (2011, October 27) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-florida-poll-important-state-economy.html>

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