



Atlantic Council

ADRIENNE ARSHT
LATIN AMERICA CENTER

U.S. - CUBA

**A New Public Survey
Supports Policy Change**



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The Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center is dedicated to broadening awareness of the transformational political, economic, and social changes throughout Latin America. It is focused on bringing in new political, corporate, civil society, and academic leaders to change the fundamental nature of discussions on Latin America and to develop new ideas and innovative policy recommendations that highlight the region's potential as a strategic and economic partner for Europe, the United States, and beyond. Founded through a gift from philanthropist and business leader Adrienne Arsht, the nonpartisan Arsht Center began operations in October 2013.

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U.S.- CUBA

**A New Public Survey
Supports Policy Change**

FOREWORD

Why is now the right moment to commission a poll on the US public's views toward Cuba and US-Cuba relations? Why is a new, nonpartisan Latin America center reaching out to grab the third rail of Latin American foreign policy in the United States? Both good questions.

Sometimes in foreign policy, structural impediments or stark policy differences will stymie progress in a certain area. Relations with China could not proceed until the United States recognized a “one China” policy that forever downgraded US relations with Taiwan. An activist foreign policy with Africa was impossible until the United States denounced apartheid.

Today, the United States has not one, but two structural problems with Latin America. Unfortunately, the United States will not be able to form strong partnerships in its own neighborhood unless it addresses these long-standing issues.

The first is immigration. The United States needs to find a solution for the more than 11 million undocumented immigrants residing within its borders, most of whom arrived here from Latin America. These immigrants' plight in the United

States is a continuing source of concern in their home countries.

The second issue is Cuba. The injustice suffered by Cuba's refugees as they fled the country—their possessions and loved ones left behind—is impossible to forget, whether they left this month or in 1959. Fifty-five years later, the Castro government continues to repress liberties, abuse human rights, and, despite some openings, deny its citizens access to basic economic freedoms.

Notwithstanding the many US efforts to prompt regime change, the government of Cuba is firmly in place, even surviving the transition of power from Fidel to Raúl Castro. It maintains widespread control over virtually all aspects of daily life. Scores of political prisoners are sitting in Cuban jails. Among them is Alan Gross, a US citizen and US Agency for International Development subcontractor, serving a fifteen-year prison sentence after his 2009 arrest on charges of acts against the independence of the state.

US-Cuba policy has largely remained stagnant for decades. The question today is whether the United States should move in a new direction to achieve US policy goals.

The Obama administration has made a series of

This survey shows that the majority of Americans on both sides of the aisle are ready for a policy shift.

laudable adjustments to US-Cuba policy, while the Cuban government has taken slow steps to allow the independent private sector to grow. Yet, in the past weeks alone, prominent voices are increasingly asking whether it is time to do more. One of the most important Cuban exile leaders, Alfonso Fanjul, recently said he was open to investing in Cuba under the right circumstances. A traditionally tough sanctions supporter, former Florida Senator Bob Graham visited Cuba in late January to discuss coordinating oil policy issues. Former Florida Governor Charlie Crist—now running again for governor—announced in early February his support for ending sanctions.

The renewed attention to US-Cuba policy spurred the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center to commission this first comprehensive national poll on the US-Cuba relationship to allow the broader views of Americans to now be part of the policy debate. Given the results of the survey that follows, it is clearly time to take another look at the dynamics of US-Cuba policy. This poll asks the American people, and especially the Florida voters, who have played the largest role in formulating Cuba policy over the decades, if the moment has come for a change.

This survey shows that the majority of Americans on both sides of the aisle are ready for a policy shift. Most surprisingly, Floridians are even more supportive than an already supportive nation to incrementally or fully change course. This is a key change from the past: Cuba used to be intractable because Florida was intractable. This poll argues that is no longer true.

This is not the first time the Atlantic Council has sought to review US-Cuba policy. In 2007 the Atlantic Council Working Group on Cuba produced a roadmap for the initial restructuring of US-Cuban relations. It offered twenty recommendations in six areas (sanctions, leverage, international support, migration, transnational threats, and property claims) with the goal being to reengage the United States in effectively influencing events in Cuba.

The Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center is committed to highlighting Latin America's potential as a strategic and economic partner for Europe, the United States, and beyond. This requires strengthening our relationships with the region. This poll amplifies the voice of the American people, the most important of all stakeholders, on an issue that needs to be reviewed, and the policies that have yet to be updated to reflect today's new dynamics.

Peter Schechter
Director
Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center

Jason Marczak
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MAIN FINDINGS

For over fifty years, the United States has imposed a comprehensive trade embargo against Cuba. This survey looks at whether there is overall support for normalizing US relations (or, engaging more directly) with Cuba as well as changing individual aspects of US-Cuba policy such as travel restrictions, trade and investment opportunities, and diplomatic engagement. Respondents also were asked to respond to factual statements about Cuba and react to arguments in support or against the embargo. The poll carefully documents the demographics and political leanings of the respondents.

The Numbers

A majority of Americans from every region and across party lines support normalizing relations with Cuba. Nationwide, 56 percent of respondents favor changing our Cuba policy, with an increase to 63 percent among Florida adults and 62 percent among Latinos [see Figure 2, p.9]. Support is strongest among Democrats and Independents, but 52 percent of Republicans also favor normalization [see Figure 5, p.11].

Florida, home to the country's largest Cuban-American population, leads the nation by 7 percentage points in supporting normalized

relations. In Miami-Dade County, where the highest percentage of the state's Cuban-American population lives, support registers at 64 percent—as high as the overall state number [see Figure 13, p.23].

Specific Alternatives

More than six in ten nationwide respondents would like the policy to be changed to enable US companies to do more business in Cuba and allow Americans to travel and spend money in Cuba without restrictions. Here again, Floridians and Latinos lead the nation in changing elements of the policy, with 67 percent of Florida adults and 66 percent of Latinos in favor of removing all travel prohibitions [see Figure 7, p.13]. Three-quarters of Americans and over eight in ten Floridians would like the United States to hold meetings with Cuban officials on issues of mutual concern such as drug trafficking [see Figure 8, p.14].

Cuba is one of only four countries designated as a state sponsor of terrorism—a list that includes Iran, Syria, and Sudan. This designation restricts US foreign assistance, defense exports and sales, and select financial engagement. It also penalizes people and countries engaging in certain trade with

Nationwide, 56 percent of respondents favor changing the United States' Cuba policy, with an increase to 63 percent among Florida adults and 62 percent among Latinos.

Florida, the state that allegedly has the greatest reluctance to reengage with Cuba, is now more willing than an already supportive country.

Cuba. Although this is US policy, 61 percent of the American people believe that Cuba should not be considered a state sponsor of terrorism; in Florida, the number rises to 67 percent [see **Figure 13, p.19**].

When asked whether the United States should establish a special diplomatic envoy for Cuba, 61 percent of both the nationwide respondents and Floridians agreed that this should be pursued [see **Figure 16, p.22**]. The White House has the power to appoint a special envoy for Cuba. An envoy is a position created to give high-level attention to a specific issue, and there are currently twelve special envoys serving in the State Department. Envoy positions range from a focus on Sudan and Middle East peace to Eurasian energy.

In the course of the poll, additional information was provided about Cuba, including a series of factual statements as well as viewpoints by those who supported normalizing relations and

those against greater engagement. The reaction to these statements is provided in this report. Understandably, messages to keep current policy in place resonated among the American people given the repressive policies of the Cuban government.

When provided with alternatives, messages in favor of changing our relations also resonated. After positive and negative messaging, a solid majority of Americans (55 percent) continues to favor changing US policy, with that number rising to 66 percent among Floridians and 61 percent for Latinos.

The survey results indicate that Americans want a change in US-Cuba policy. They have concerns with the Cuban government's repression, but recognize the need for alternatives in light of the failure of the current policy to achieve its objective. And importantly, Florida, the state that allegedly has the greatest reluctance to reengage with Cuba, is now more willing than an already supportive country. ★

METHODOLOGY AND ABOUT THE POLLSTERS

The survey was conducted in English and Spanish from January 7 to January 22, 2014, with a nationwide margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent (Florida, +/-4.0 percent and Latinos, +/-4.4 percent) at the 95 percent confidence interval. Respondents were interviewed on landlines and cell phones. In addition to a benchmark sample of 1,024 randomly-selected US adults age 18 and over, the survey includes additional oversamples with notable results from the 617 Florida residents and the 525 Latinos interviewed.

A bipartisan polling team of Paul Maslin and Glen Bolger conducted the survey.

Paul Maslin is one of the leading observers of public opinion and campaign strategists in the country. After a decade in Washington, DC, where he advised six presidential candidates, a dozen US senators, and scores of governors, mayors and members of Congress, Maslin moved to California in 1989. In 1992, he joined Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates (FM3).

Mr. Maslin has personally helped win many key campaigns in both California and across the country in the past decade. In 2003–2004, he was the pollster and one of the key strategists in Howard Dean’s groundbreaking run for president, which opened new venues for grassroots organizing and fundraising. He worked for Governor Bill Richardson in his 2008 presidential campaign. Mr. Maslin has also advised US Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, and Mayors Bill White of Houston, Tom Menino of Boston, and Tom Barrett of Milwaukee. He was a key strategist in all the campaigns from 1998–2003 of former Governor Gray Davis of California.

Glen Bolger is a partner and cofounder of Public Opinion Strategies and is one of the Republican Party’s leading political strategists and pollsters. Bolger is the only pollster to be a three-time winner of the “Republican Pollster of the Year” award. In 2010, Glen served as pollster for the successful campaigns of five senators, one governor, and twenty-seven members of Congress. In addition, Glen served as the pollster for seven successful major statewide Independent Expenditure campaigns, as well as the largest Independent Expenditure in the congressional races, working in seventy-six congressional races, including forty-nine of the seats Republicans took away from Democrats.

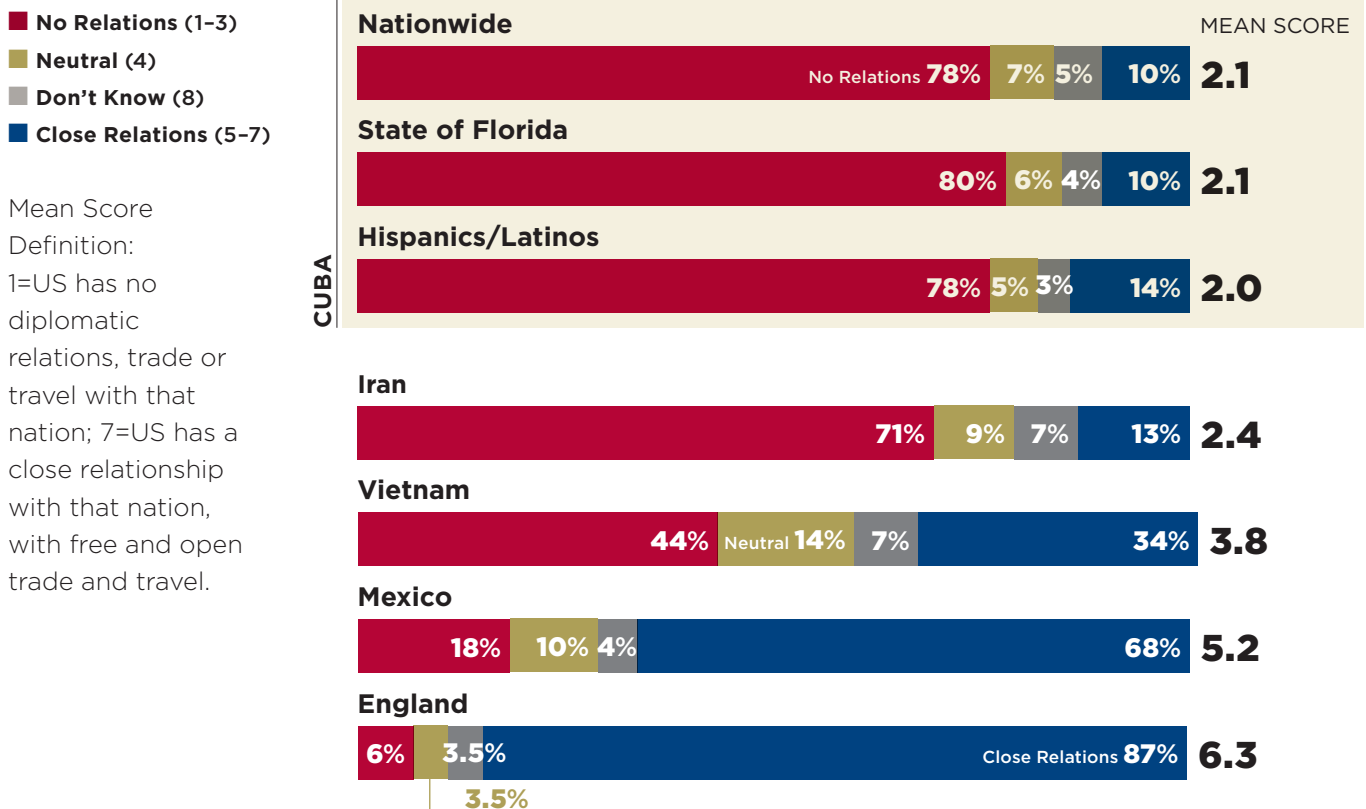
Overall, Glen polled in fifty-three of the sixty-three Republican pick-up districts. Glen’s corporate polling experience includes crisis management polling for some of the top issues in recent years, as well as image and message work for major clients such as Wal-Mart, Bank of America, BlueCross BlueShield of Florida, Tyson Foods, BNSF Railway, Catholic Health Association, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, and numerous Fortune 500 companies. ★

THE POLL IN-DEPTH

This section presents the responses to individual questions asked in the poll. The seventeen figures in the following pages offer a comprehensive analysis of the findings, though the full survey is available at: www.AtlanticCouncil.org/Cuba.

Americans Rank Relationship with Iran as Worse than with Cuba

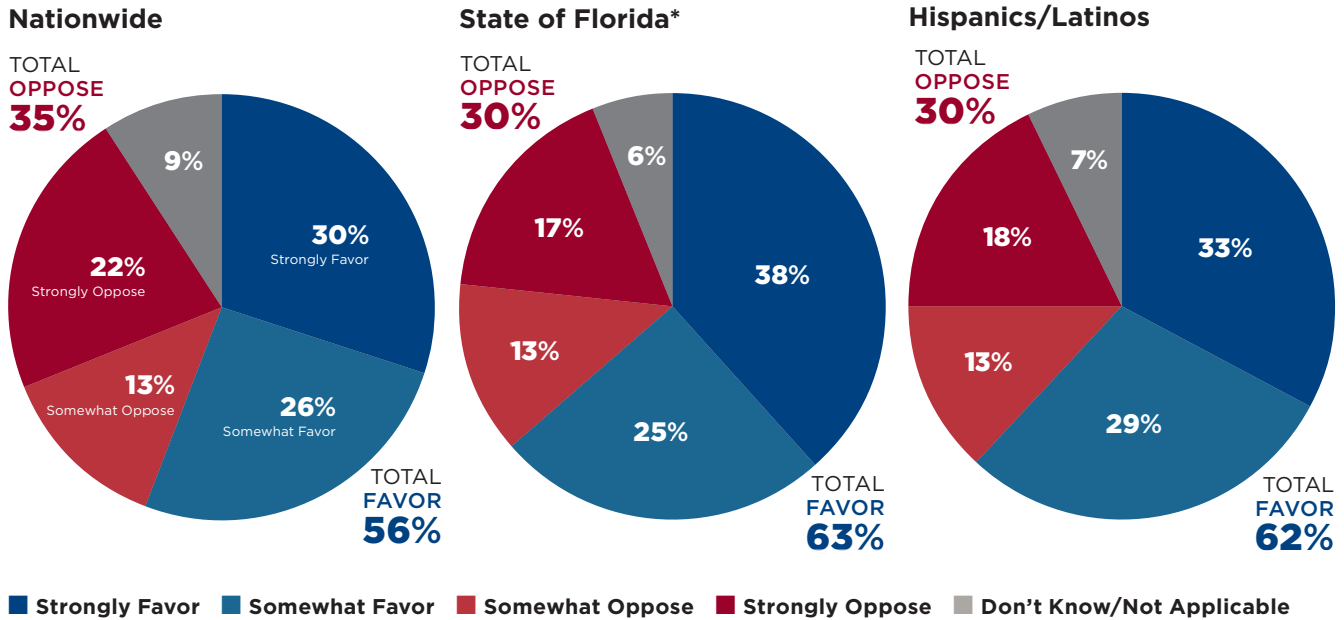
FIGURE 1: Perception of US Diplomatic Relations with Other Nations



Respondents were asked to rank the closeness of the United States’ relationship with various countries using a 1-7 scale. This question helped determine understanding of the current status of the United States’ international relationships. An overwhelming majority of people indicated very close ties to England, with a strong majority also ranking the US relationship with Iran as very weak, which signifies baseline knowledge of current status. Among the countries tested, respondents—nationwide as well as Floridians and Latinos—began the poll with an understanding that the United States had the poorest relationship (which involves no diplomatic relations and a prohibition on trade and travel) with Cuba.

Fifty-Six Percent of Americans, and Over Sixty Percent of Floridians and Latinos Favor Changing US Policy toward Cuba

FIGURE 2: Support for Normalizing Relations or Engaging More Directly with Cuba



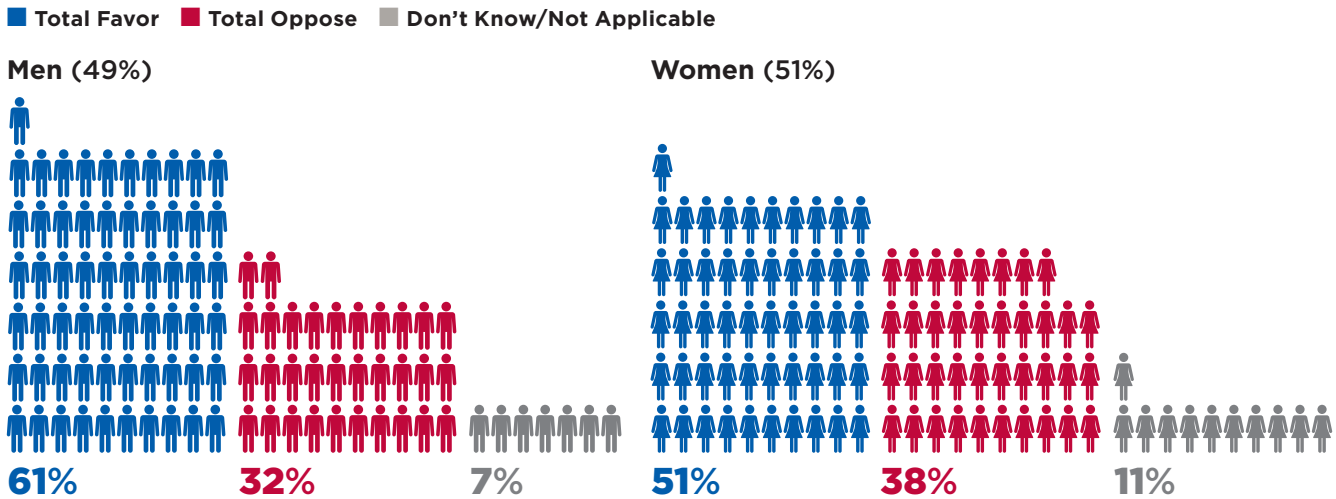
*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

For decades the rhetoric around changing Cuba policy has been that Florida would never let it happen. The results from this poll challenge that long-held belief by putting Florida 7 percentage points ahead of the nation in favoring normalization. Not only are Floridians more willing than a supportive nation for change, but they favor strongly favor normalization by 8 percentage points more than the country as a whole. Latinos share near identical levels of support. Floridians and Latinos are more likely to be well-educated on the issue of the US-Cuba relationship because of geographic and personal ties. The numbers indicate that the closer people are to the issue, the more likely they are to favor changing policy.

Not only are Floridians more willing than a supportive nation for change, but they strongly favor normalization by 8 percentage points more than the country as a whole.

Men are Significantly More Likely to Favor Changing Cuba Policy than Women

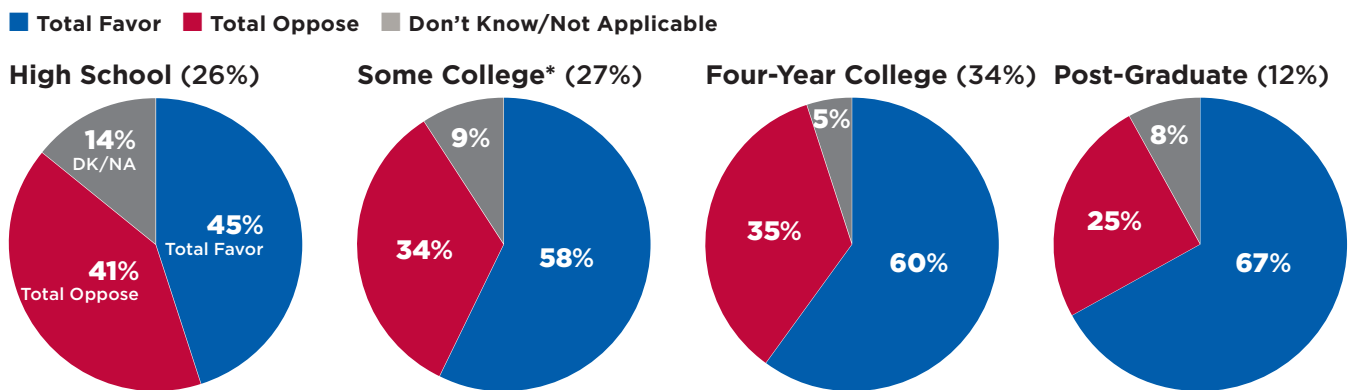
FIGURE 3: Normalize/Engage with Cuba by Gender



Men tend to be more comfortable with policy change in Cuba. This tends to be true across the policy spectrum with women generally showing a greater reluctance for change.

Higher Education Means Greater Support for Changing Policy

FIGURE 4: Normalize/Engage with Cuba by Education

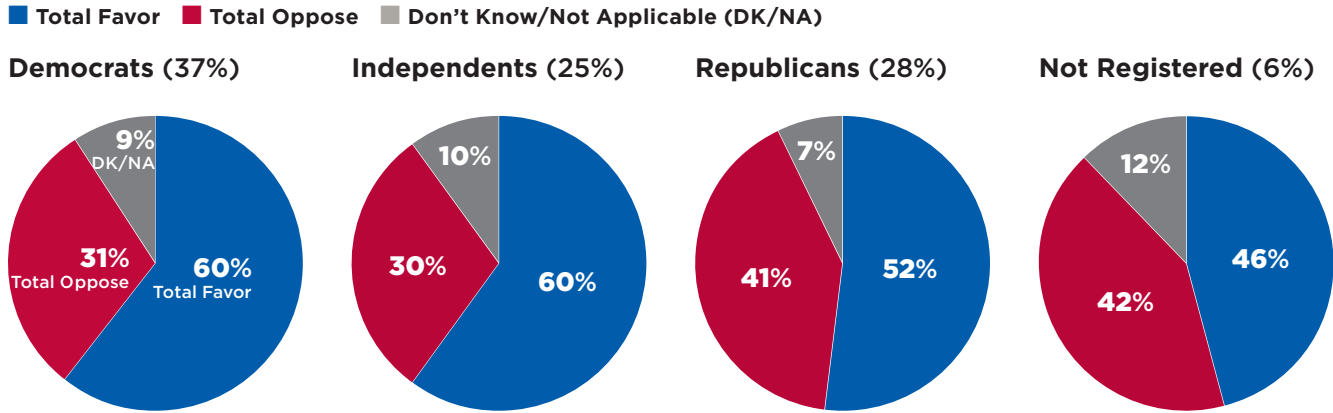


*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

As education levels increase, so does support for US engagement with Cuba. This points to a similar trend seen in the higher levels of support among Floridians and Latinos: the more a person knows about the issue, the more likely he or she is to support changing policy. While Floridians and Latinos are more knowledgeable because of geographic proximity and heritage, people with higher education are likely be better informed about the role of diplomatic and economic engagement and support normalization accordingly.

Support is Strongest Among Democrats, but the Majority of Republicans Support Change

FIGURE 5: Normalize/Engage with Cuba by Party



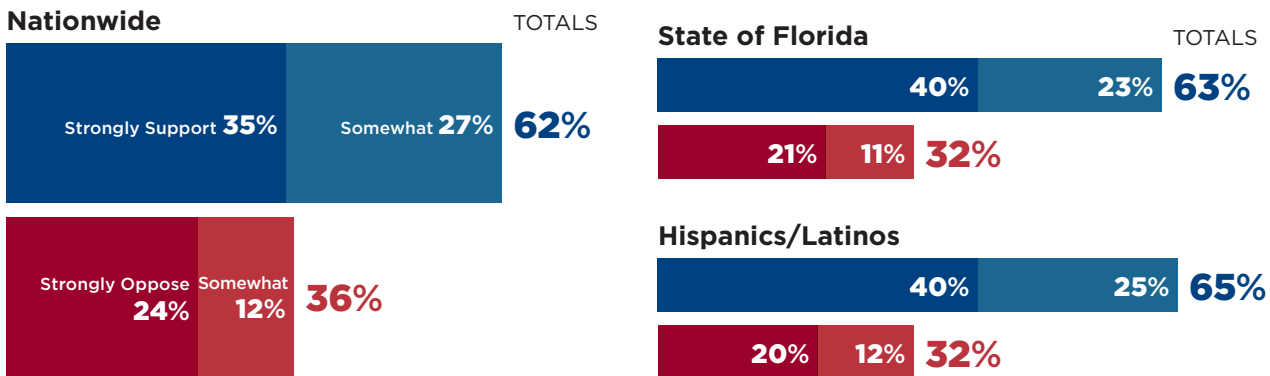
Much like with the results from Florida, this breakdown challenges previous conceptions that US-Cuba policy issues are split across party lines. While support for changing policy is certainly more prevalent among Democrats and Independents, the majority of self-identified Republicans favor normalization. With increasing bipartisan support for normalization, politicians from both sides of the aisle should be less likely to fear a popular backlash against their support of policy change. When discussing the changing rhetoric around US-Cuban relations these numbers were some of the most important in understanding the trend of public opinion.

While support for changing policy is certainly more prevalent among Democrats and Independents, the majority of self-identified Republicans favor normalization.

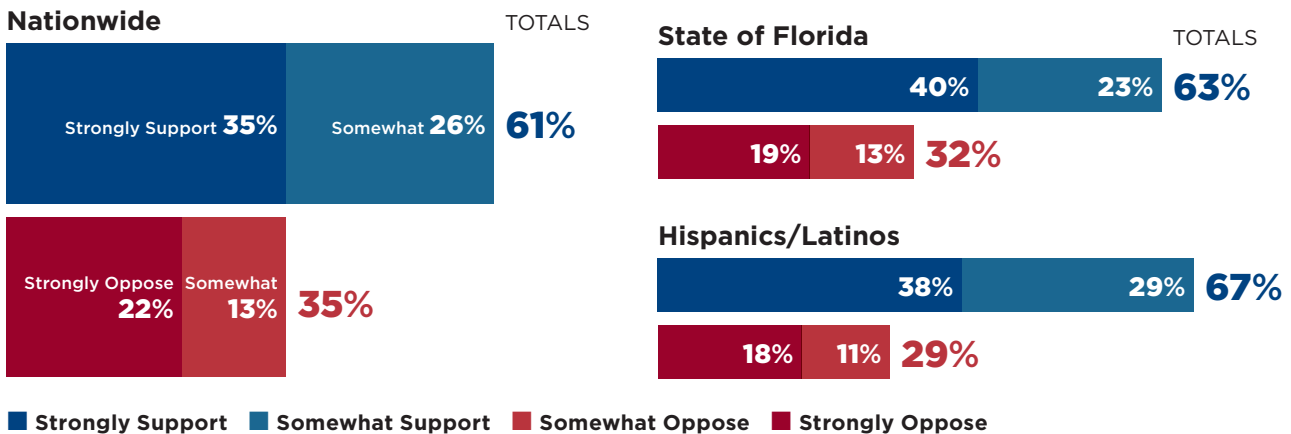
More than Six in Ten People Want all Economic Restrictions Lifted

FIGURE 6: Respondents were asked if they supported or opposed five possible ways to change US policy toward Cuba. Figures 6, 7, and 8 illustrate their responses.

POLICY OPTION 1: Allowing more American companies to do business in Cuba



POLICY OPTION 2: Removing restrictions on US citizens to spend dollars in Cuba

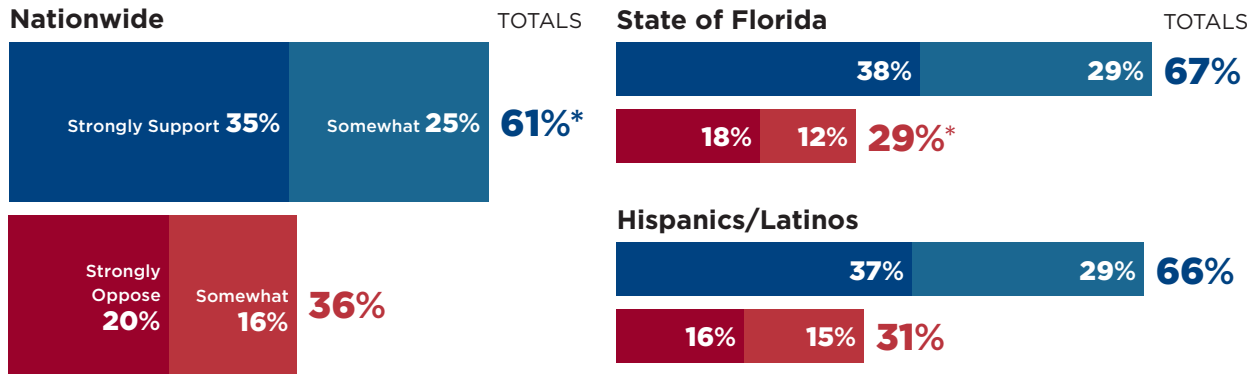


A common sense majority of Americans responded that they would support normalizing relations with Cuba. This number jumps to even higher levels of support, reaching well into the 60 percent range, when asked about specific policy changes that could ultimately put the United States and Cuba on a path to normalization. **Figure 6** shows that a strong majority of the US public, including Floridians and Latinos, would like to see the removal of economic restrictions. Florida residents and Latinos tended to have slightly higher levels of support for most of these changes in keeping with their overall levels of support.

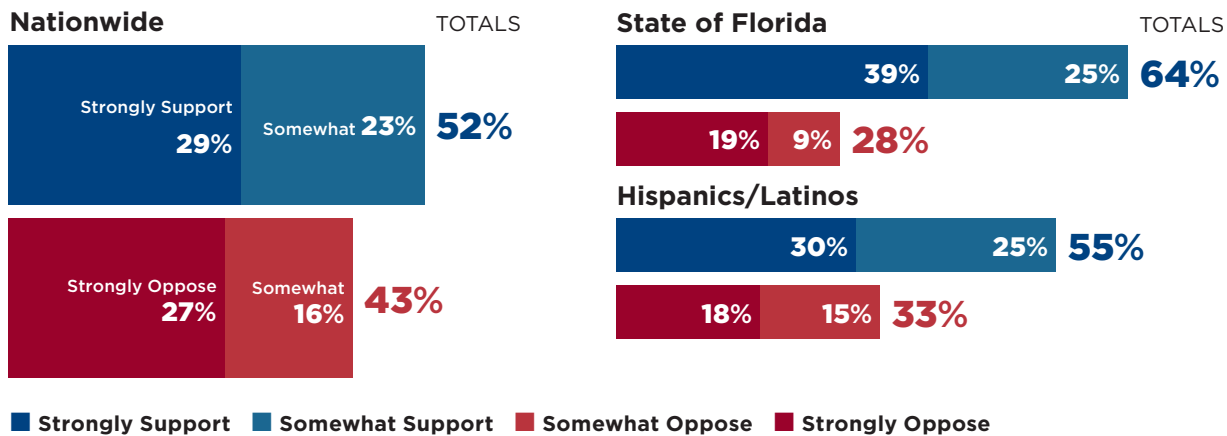
Strong Support Exists for Alleviating Travel Restrictions

FIGURE 7: Respondents were asked if they supported or opposed five possible ways to change US policy toward Cuba. Figures 6, 7, and 8 illustrate their responses.

POLICY OPTION 3: Removing all restrictions on travel to Cuba by US citizens



POLICY OPTION 4: Allowing Cuba access to high-speed Internet and other telecommunications systems based in the United States



*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

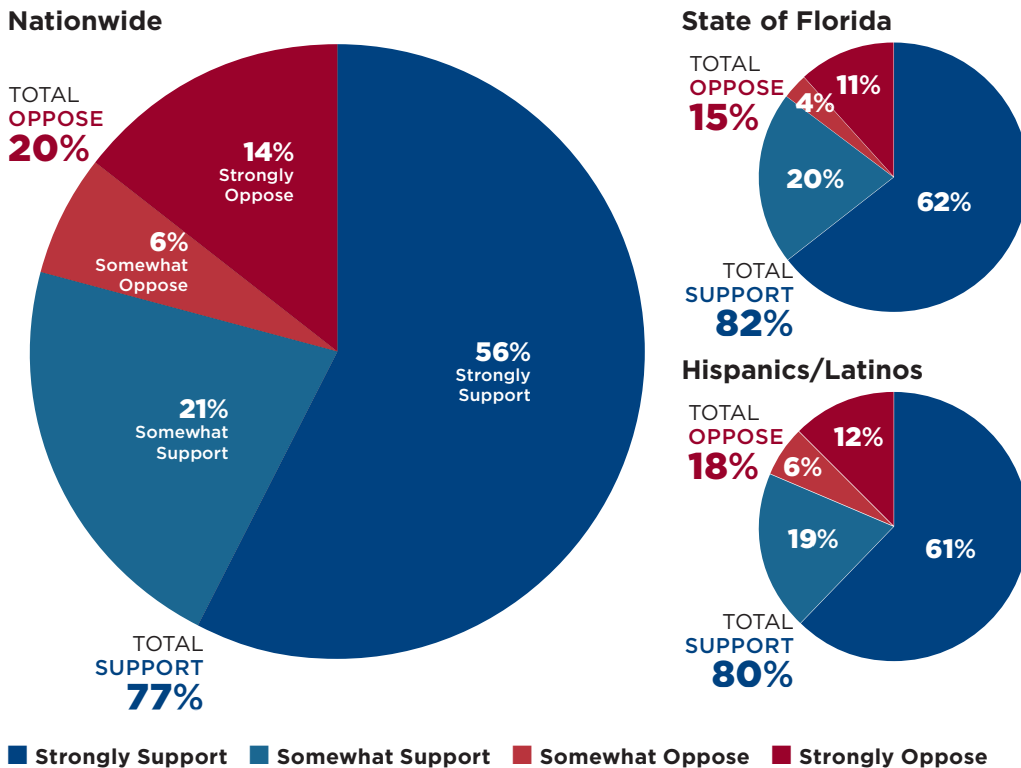
Non-Cuban US citizens are barred from traveling to Cuba without government permission, while Cuban-Americans may visit freely without a special visa. This is the only country in the world with which the United States has this policy of restricting certain US citizens and not others. Still, the Cuban authorities report that over 98,000 US citizens traveled to Cuba in 2012 (after obtaining US visas) and although not reported in Cuba’s tourism statistics, it is estimated that an additional 350,000 Cuban-Americans visited Cuba in that year. These numbers reflect a small percentage of the potential number of US tourists if all travel restrictions were lifted—a policy option that is supported by 61 percent of US adults, 67 percent of Floridians, and 66 percent of Latinos.

While the US public is in favor of allowing access to high-speed Internet and telecommunications, their enthusiasm for this policy change is not as strong as observed for other options. This could reflect a general sense of unease around data security issues.

Three-Quarters of Americans Favor Diplomatic Coordination on Issues of Mutual Concern

FIGURE 8: Respondents were asked if they supported or opposed five possible ways to change US policy toward Cuba. Figures 6, 7, and 8 illustrate their responses.

POLICY OPTION 5: Holding meetings with the Cuban government to coordinate on issues of mutual concern, like preventing drug trafficking and smuggling



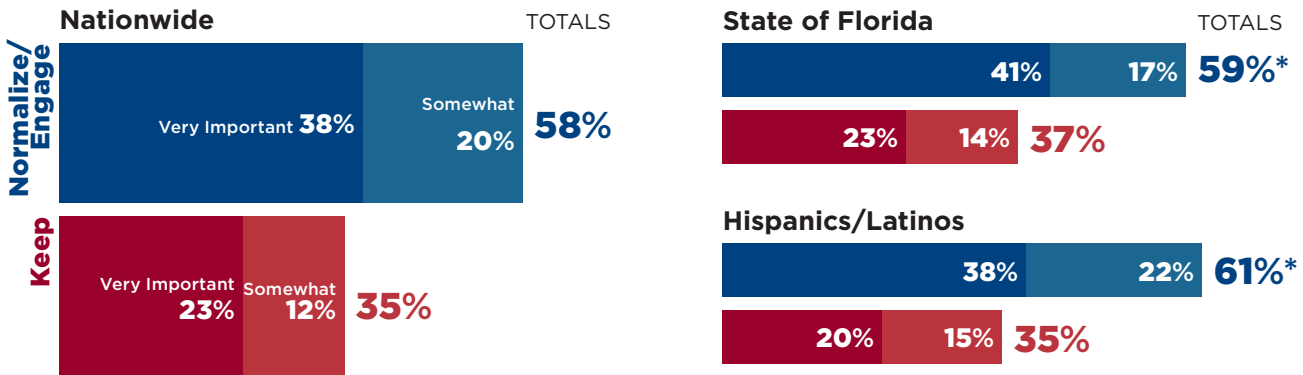
Respondents were asked if they supported coordinating with the Cuban government on issues of mutual concern, such as preventing drug trafficking and smuggling. Such high levels of support indicate people’s desire to prioritize issues of concern to the United States and to engage in the most productive way possible to protect US interests. Throughout history the United States has worked with unsavory nations to strategically manage those issues most important to this country. There is clear demand for the United States to do the same with Cuba.

There is a clear desire to prioritize issues of concern to the United States and to engage in the most productive way possible to protect US interests.

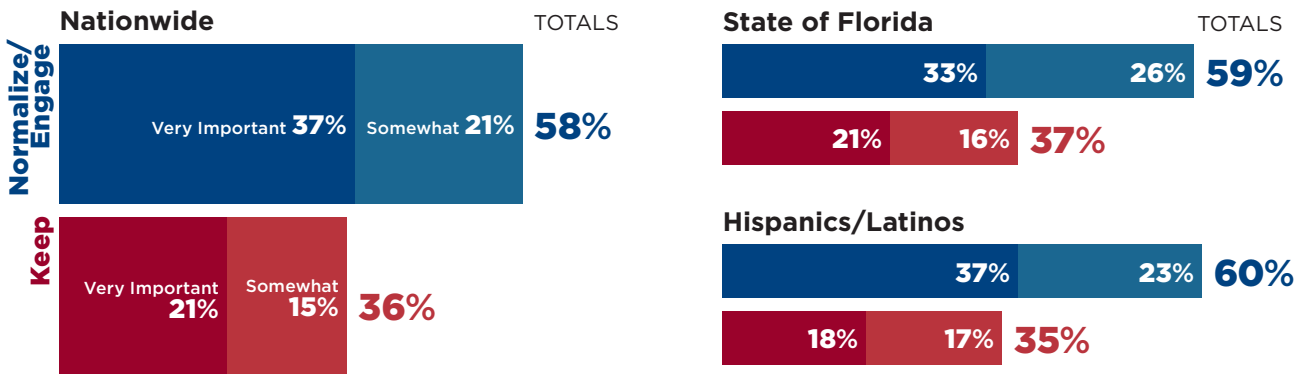
“Ninety Miles Away” and Travel Restrictions are Compelling Logic for Engagement

FIGURE 9: Respondents were read factual statements about the United States and Cuba and asked if they considered each statement a reason to normalize relations or keep current policy in place. Figures 9, 10, and 11 illustrate their responses.

STATEMENT 1: Cuba is only ninety miles away from the US mainland.



STATEMENT 2: Our government only allows Cuban-Americans to travel to Cuba without permission. If you are not Cuban-American, the US Treasury Department must approve your travel. We do not do that with any other country.



■ Very Important to Normalize/Engage
 ■ Very Important to Keep Current Policy
■ Somewhat Important
 ■ Somewhat Important

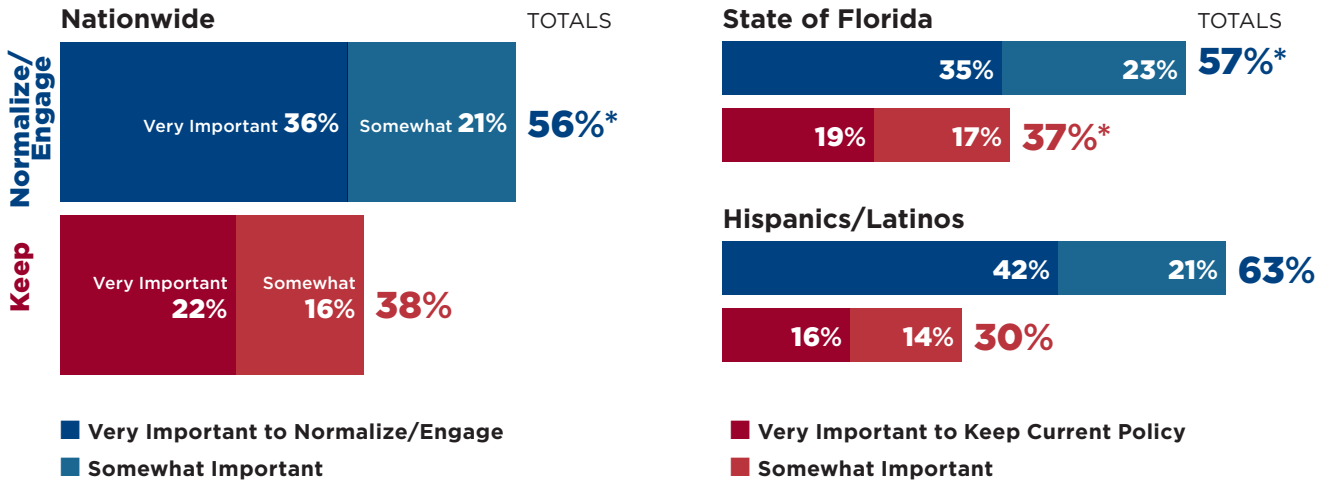
*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

When told that Cuba was only ninety miles off the coast of Florida, or when it was shared that US travel policy with Cuba is unique in the world, approximately six in ten people said this was an important reason to normalize relations. The majority of those who saw the statement as justification to engage with Cuba considered it a “very important” reason (not just “somewhat important”), indicating the intensity of desire for change.

Economic Policy is Particularly Important to Latinos among Reasons to Engage

FIGURE 10: Respondents were read factual statements about the United States and Cuba, and asked if they considered each statement a reason to normalize relations or keep current policy in place. Figures 9, 10, and 11 illustrate their responses.

STATEMENT 3: The Cuba trade embargo is estimated to cost the US economy as much as \$4.8 billion in exports and related economic output per year.



*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Latinos are 7 percentage points ahead of the nation in considering the economic impact of the embargo to be a reason to open relations with Cuba. The US Latino community had been particularly hard hit by the downturn of the US economy—a potential reason for its support of any policy change that could yield additional economic opportunities. Across the board the results show strong support for normalization among those who found this statement to be an important reason to change policy.

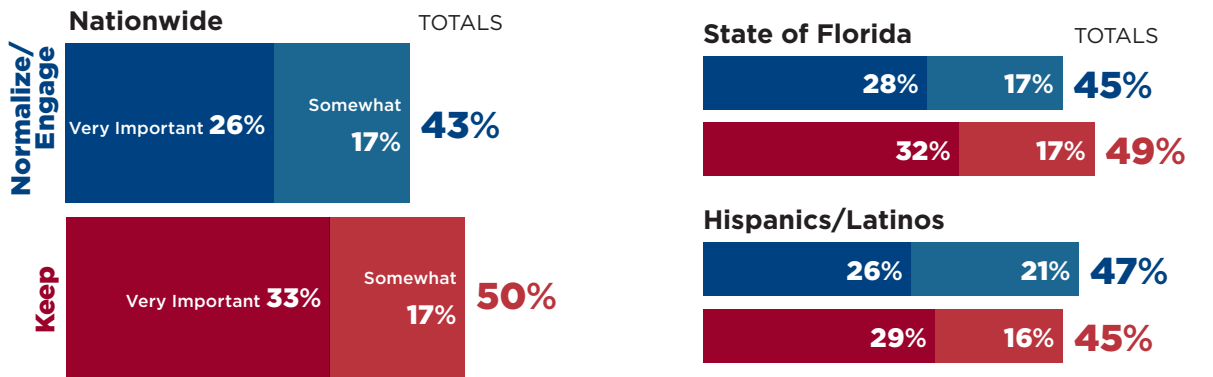
The results show strong support for normalization among those who found the economic cost of the embargo to be an important reason to change policy.

The Castros' Human Rights Record is a Strong Deterrent to Changing Policy

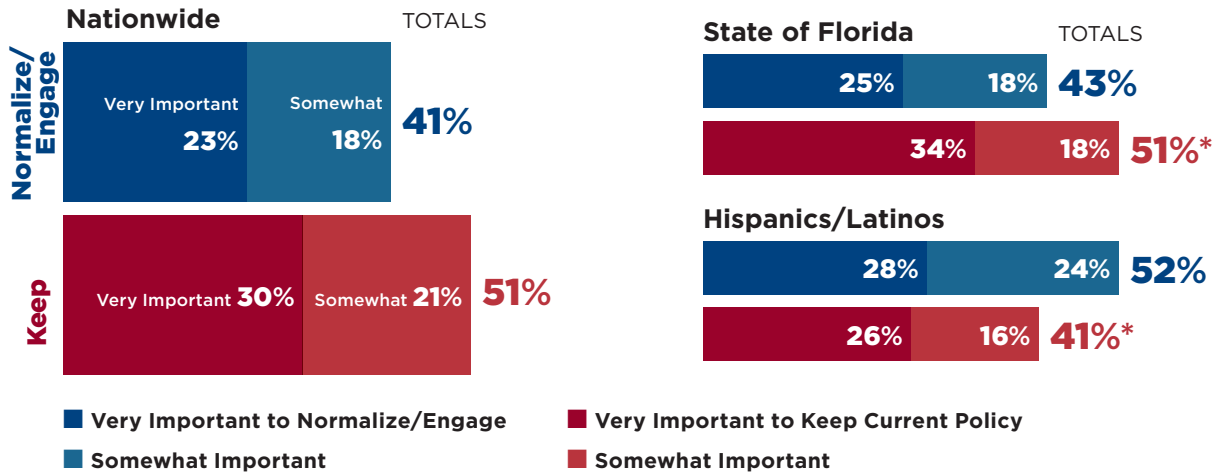
FIGURE 11: Respondents were read factual statements about the United States and Cuba, and asked if they considered each statement a reason to normalize relations or keep current policy in place. Figures 9, 10, and 11 illustrate their responses.

STATEMENT 4: Cuba continues to have a dismal human rights record.

The Castro regime represses virtually all forms of political dissent through detentions, arbitrary arrests, beatings, travel restrictions, forced exile, and sentencing dissidents in closed trials.



STATEMENT 5: After more than fifty years of no US relations with Cuba the Castro regime remains in power.

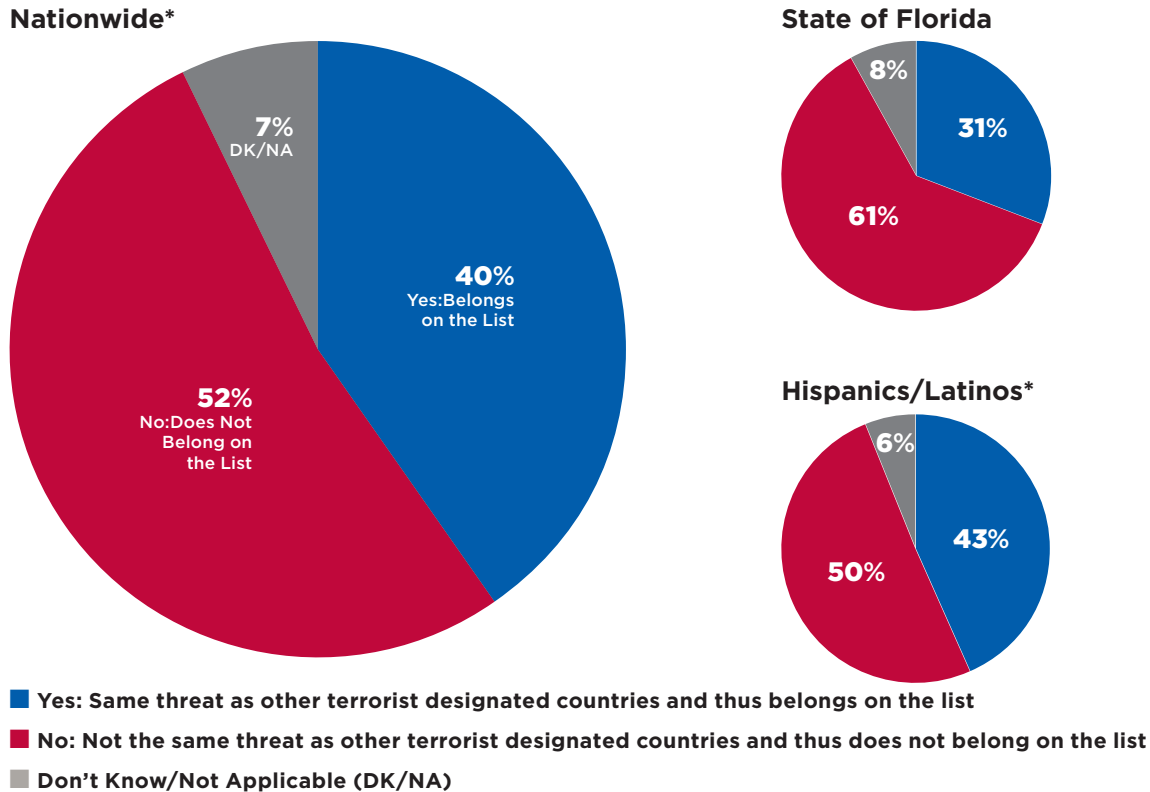


*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Most Americans consider Cuba’s abysmal human rights record under Fidel and now Raúl Castro a reason to keep current policy. The original intention of the embargo was to isolate the country through comprehensive economic sanctions. Though the embargo has failed to isolate Cuba, the majority of Americans and Floridians believe that the Castros remaining in power fifty years later is a reason to keep current policy. Latinos, however, see the continuation of the Castro regime as a reason to normalize. They are also potentially slightly more inclined to change policy in light of the human rights situation.

Half the Nation and over Sixty Percent of Floridians Do Not Think Cuba Belongs on the US Terrorism List

FIGURE 12: Support for Cuba Remaining on the State Sponsors of Terrorism List

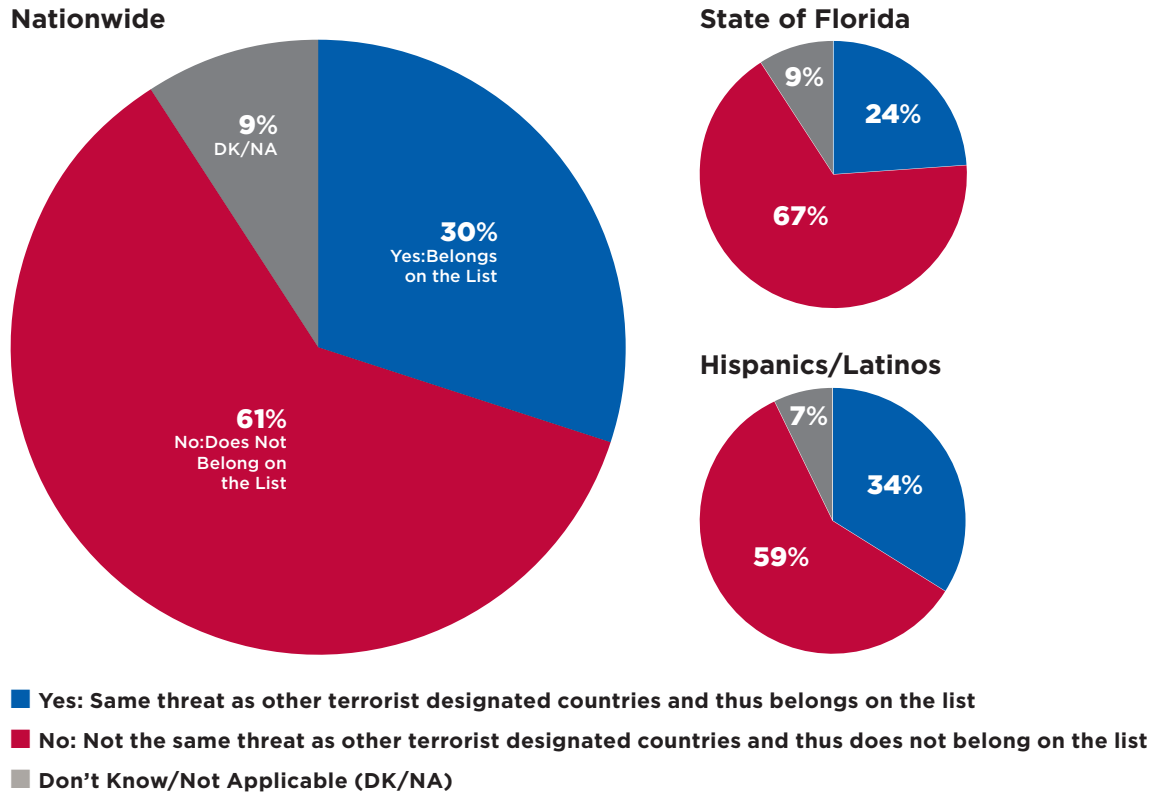


*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

An understanding of the details of Cuba politics proves to be a governing factor in the results of this question. Respondents were told: “Currently, the US State Department designates four countries in the world as state-sponsors of terrorism: Cuba, Iran, Syria, and Sudan. The State Department defines state sponsors of terrorism as countries that have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism, and places sanctions on these nations that restrict trade, travel, and foreign assistance.” Respondents were then asked to decide accordingly if Cuba deserved such a status: “In your opinion, does Cuba pose the same threat as these other countries—Sudan, Syria, and Iran—and thus belong on the list?” With a foreign policy centered around a war on terror the nation is somewhat squeamish about removing Cuba from the terror list. Those closest to the issue (Floridians) were more likely to distinguish between the threat that Cuba poses to the United States and that of the other three nations.

When Given More Information a Significant Number of People Believe Cuba Does Not Belong on the Terrorism List

FIGURE 13: Influence of Additional Information on Cuba Remaining on the State Sponsors of Terrorism List



After the initial question about whether Cuba belonged on the State Sponsors of Terrorism List respondents were provided additional information: “Thousands of Al-Qaeda terrorists are in Sudan or Syria, and Iran has been aggressively building its nuclear program. Despite human rights abuses, Cuba poses none of the active dangers to the United States and our security that these other countries possess.” The same question was then asked (as for **Figure 12**) but with a dramatic shift in those who believe that Cuba does not pose the same threat as the other nations on the list. An important takeaway is the tendency to be in favor of changing policy with even more information on the topic.

Economic Arguments Prove to be Most Convincing for Normalization

FIGURE 14: Reaction to Statements in Support of Normalization

Statements	Nationwide	State of Florida	Hispanics/Latinos
	Very/Somewhat Convincing	Very/Somewhat Convincing	Very/Somewhat Convincing
TRADE Latin America is the United States’ fastest growing trading partner. Cuba, just ninety miles off the Florida Coast, provides new opportunities for American businesses in all types of industries—agriculture, hotels and tourism, and high-tech—that will help grow the US economy and create new jobs in America.	65%	69%	71%
HURT For fifty years, the US embargo has hurt the people of Cuba, not the government. Changing our policy will help the Cuban people out of severe poverty, and we can continue to be tough on the Castro regime and hold it accountable for human rights abuses.	64%	64%	65%
VIETNAM Today we have good diplomatic relations with Vietnam, including open travel and free trade. If we are willing to talk to and work with a country we went to war with, surely it is time to reevaluate our outdated Cuba policy.	61%	57%	66%
CHANGE As with communism in Eastern Europe or dictatorships in the Middle East, Cuba’s government will eventually change. It is better for the US to engage more directly with Cuba now so we are in better position to respond to that change instead of waiting to respond to chaos, like what is happening in Egypt, just ninety miles from our shores.	57%	62%	64%
FLORIDA For too long, politicians have allowed Florida to control US foreign policy. It is time to set our Cuba policy based on what is best for America’s overall national security and economic interests.	56%	58%	66%

Respondents were read a series of statements made by those in favor of normalization. They were then asked whether each argument was very convincing, somewhat convincing, not convincing, or if they didn’t believe it. Those who considered the statements to be very and somewhat convincing are depicted in this chart. Much like when asked about possible policy changes, people were most responsive to the economic elements of this argument, believing that new business opportunities were a convincing reason to change current policy. As with the question that addressed the loss of business due to the embargo, Latinos lead the nation in finding this a particularly important reason to normalize relations.

Reasons for Maintaining the Embargo also Receive Support Across the Board

FIGURE 15: Reaction to Statements in Opposition to Normalization

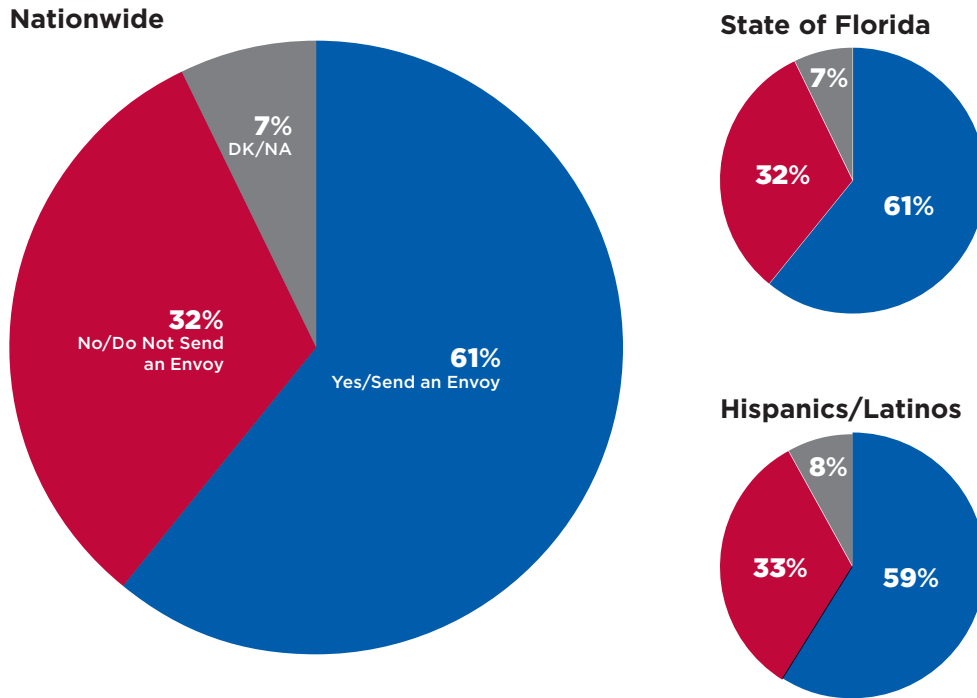
Statements	Nationwide	State of Florida	Hispanics/Latinos
	Very/Somewhat Convincing	Very/Somewhat Convincing	Very/Somewhat Convincing
WEAKEN Ending the embargo before the Cuban government meets the conditions specified would weaken the United States. Changing our policy would send a message to Iran, North Korea, and other countries that they can act against American interests with no consequences.	51%	52%	58%
CUBAN-AMERICANS Cuban-Americans support current US policy because it puts economic pressure on the Castro regime, while providing assistance to Cuban citizens. Travel and financial restrictions have already been lifted for Cuban-Americans to help their families; meanwhile we should stay tough on the Castro regime.	61%	67%	61%
WORKING Now is not the time to lift sanctions as the embargo is weakening the Cuban government. Keeping existing policies in place will help bring down the Castro regime, like our tough stance against communism helped bring down the Berlin Wall.	54%	52%	54%

Respondents were read statements made by those in favor of maintaining current US policy. Similar to **Figure 14**, they were then asked whether each argument was very convincing, somewhat convincing, not convincing, or if they didn't believe it. Unsurprisingly, in Florida, a state where approximately seven in ten Cuban-Americans live, people found the argument that invokes Cuban-Americans and their status to be particularly persuasive in keeping US policy. The previous question, which listed reasons in favor of ending the embargo, along with the question on the state sponsors of terrorism, both point to the power of information and messaging. A majority of people were convinced by the pro-normalization arguments, and then a slightly smaller majority—but a majority, nonetheless—also were swayed by the pro-embargo arguments.

In Florida, people found the argument that invokes Cuban-Americans and their status to be particularly persuasive in keeping US policy.

Sixty Percent of the Country Supports a Special Envoy for Cuba

FIGURE 16: Support for a Special Envoy for Cuba



Respondents were told: “The United States often establishes a special diplomatic position, called an envoy, for countries that we have hostile or tense relationships with, like North Korea, Sudan, and the Congo.” When asked if the United States should appoint a special envoy for Cuba, 61 percent of the nation believed this is a worthwhile policy to pursue. A majority of Latinos also agreed.

The Obama administration has utilized the role of the special envoy and special representative more than any other previous administration, with twelve special envoys currently serving in the State Department. These roles exist for the purpose of being able to engage in productive relations through a high-level post in lieu of an in-country ambassador. By creating this position for Cuba the United States could avoid any tacit approval associated with an ambassador, yet still negotiate the relationship between the two countries.

Sixty-Four Percent of Miami-Dade County Favors Normalization

FIGURE 17: Florida Support for Normalizing Relations or Engaging More Directly with Cuba

Area/Region	Total Favor	Total Oppose	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	Percent of Florida Sample
Miami-Dade County	64%	30%	6%	13%
Broward & Palm Beach Counties	64%	33%	4%	16%
South Florida	64%	32%	5%	29%
I-4 Corridor	60%	32%	8%	24%
Atlantic Coast	69%	24%	7%	14%
Gulf Coast	64%	28%	9%	15%
Panhandle	58%	37%	5%	11%
North/South Central	73%	24%	3%	6%

As previously noted, Florida leads the nation in favoring normalization. This is not just in certain areas of the state: every single region is ahead of the national average, some by 17 percentage points. One of the most notable, however, is Miami-Dade County, the unofficial capital of Cuban-Americans. A long-held belief is that this county is the bastion of pro-embargo support; yet, 64 percent of Miami-Dade County favors changing US-Cuba policy. This number is one of the most crucial in challenging assumptions and understanding the new support for changing US policy.

A long-held belief is that Miami-Dade County is the bastion of pro-embargo support; yet 64 percent of respondents favor changing US-Cuba policy.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Cuba, an island nation of 11 million people, has become a boulder-sized pebble in the shoes of US relations with a region of over 580 million people. More than five decades after it was first implemented, the Cuba embargo is hampering the United States' ability to maximize cooperation with allies in the hemisphere at a moment when there is increasing stability, growth, and opportunity.

US policy toward Cuba—a web of laws and regulations designed to force regime change in Havana—has not produced its intended results as Fidel Castro maintained power for five decades, and, in 2006, successfully transferred power to Raúl Castro. The Cuban government is also not wholly isolated from the United States. Select US agricultural commodities and medicine/medical devices are regularly exported to the island under an exemption to the embargo passed by Congress in 2000. It is also estimated that approximately a half million US visitors traveled to Cuba last year.

Nor is Cuba sequestered from the rest of the world. In January 2014, for example, Havana hosted the United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS) secretaries general (Cuba's suspension from the OAS ended in 2009) and presidents of all Latin American nations for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit. The European Union, which introduced sanctions after the Cuban government rounded up seventy-five dissidents in 2003, lifted its sanctions in 2008. This was done to encourage change in Cuba after Raúl Castro took over as head of the government. On February 10, 2014, the European Union—Cuba's biggest foreign investor—agreed to launch negotiations with Cuba to increase dialogue on

trade, investment, and human rights issues.

The embargo has become the Cuban government's "enabler." Cuba today enjoys the benefits of increasing political support in the region, growing financial integration with much of the world, and the largesse of politically-compatible neighbors while making few concessions to its own people. Rather than accelerating an end to the Castro brothers' regime, the embargo has become the all-encompassing excuse for inaction on the island. Cubans remain repressed, controlled, and largely unable to forge their own destinies.

Latin America is the United States' fastest growing trade partner. As Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto likes to point out, a billion dollars of trade passes through the US-Mexico border every day. But our allies in the region are finding it increasingly difficult to defend our Cuba policy.

These regional allies point out that the United States negotiates with Iran. The president of Vietnam, a country with which the United States went to war and continues to be a one-party state, was welcomed to the White House in July 2013 and is now a negotiating partner in the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. It is true that the Cuban government represses freedoms, but the United States engages with unsavory governments all the time. Why, they ask, is it that the United States refuses to talk to a country ninety miles off the coast of Florida?

At the same time, Latin America has mostly moved on. Even the United States' stalwart ally, Colombia, is holding peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—a

While those opposing any change have much emotion and determination on their side, it is clear that demography and immigration have changed the equation of Florida politics.

guerrilla group waging war against the state since the 1960s—in Havana. In the meantime, the United States continues to support policies that make it harder to support Cuba’s emerging independent private sector and civil society. Notwithstanding recent changes to policy, US allies in the region find it difficult to defend the US embargo. They are forced to segregate meetings to accommodate the United States. Latin American countries are united in insisting that the next Summit of the Americas in 2016 will include Cuba, even if that means the United States will not participate.

The Obama administration has made a series of laudable adjustments to US Cuba policy. In 2009, it lifted all restrictions on family travel and remittances and it put in place new measures to ease travel restrictions and to allow Americans to send remittances to Cuba in 2011. Now, Americans can travel to Cuba for religious and educational travel under people-to-people licenses and at least nineteen US airports offer direct flights.

This poll shows the Obama administration should expand on those changes and further its commitment to increasing support for the Cuban people.

The policy implications of this poll are far ranging:

1 Profound changes to US-Cuba policy would be well received by the American people, and even more so, by Floridians and Latinos. Fifty-six percent of Americans agree with the wholesale proposition that the United States need to normalize relations (further engage) with Cuba. In Florida, that number jumps

to 63 percent support, and among Latinos, 62 percent. Over and over, the poll points to repeated instances where the American people—by up to three to one in some cases—support change. Americans may not know all the details. They may not be experts on the intricacies of the overlapping set of federal regulations known as the Cuba sanctions. But Americans know that Cuba is not a friend of the United States—characterizing US-Cuba relations as worse than those with Iran—and are aware that the Cuban government violates the basic rights of its own people. Still, they believe that a policy in place since the early 1960s is not working and support alternatives.

2 Steps that could largely be taken by the White House to increase its policy of support for the Cuban people yield even more support than a wholesale ending of the embargo.

This fits neatly with political reality. Americans want change, but they are more comfortable proceeding piece-by-piece. When asked about changing the specifics of the policy, Americans are even more supportive. Whether it is changing the travel ban, amending financial restrictions, meeting with the Cuban government to discuss matters of common interest, or removing Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, support for changing the individual policies rises above 61 percent. Over 80 percent of Floridians and Latinos say the United States should talk with Cuban authorities on issues of mutual concern such as preventing drug trafficking.

Americans clearly agree—almost three to

one—with messages that communicate compelling reasons to change the policy. Yet, even after hearing these messages, they prefer incremental steps over supporting a wholesale change in policy. Since there is little chance of removing in its entirety the congressionally mandated web of laws, Americans are telling President Obama that he is free to further expand the boundaries of engagement as long as this is done in tandem with a strong advocacy for human rights.

3 Florida actually leads the nation in clamoring for a new direction. This poll overturns decades of widely-accepted conventional wisdom. Political leaders who push for an easing of restrictions should not fear a backlash from Floridians and their views should no longer be an impediment to changing US policy toward Cuba. For decades, Florida's politics trumped national policy. This is no longer true. While those opposing any change have much emotion and determination on their side, it is clear that demography and immigration have changed the equation of Florida politics. Second- and third-generation Cuban-Americans today make up a smaller part of the state's Latino population. Young Cuban-Americans are rightly proud of their heritage, and continue to acknowledge the Cuban government's repression. However, they also believe that the policies of the last five decades have not worked. This is reflected in their views on Cuba policy. This poll demonstrates that national politicians could actually gain by acknowledging today's new realities and changing Cuba policy to meet them. This is consistent with President Obama's support among Cuban-Americans in 2012, when exit polls showed a plurality backed his reelection.

4 The majority of Americans support further policies that ease restrictions on travel, spending money in Cuba, and the ability of the US private sector to do business in Cuba.

Limitations have been eased in the past few years but more could be done. Over 60 percent of the US

public favor lifting travel restrictions and greater financial engagement with Cuba. Among Latinos, the number jumps to over 65 percent. Still, even more support is seen among Floridians (67 percent) for a complete abolishment of the current travel policy.

Greater financial engagement would also help to unleash the new wave of small, independent businesses on the island that began to open through a change in Cuban government policy in 2010. These businesses are clamoring for start-up capital and represent great potential for the Cuban people to increase their independence from the Cuban government. Most of all, over two-thirds of Americans believe that we must open up a dialogue with the Cuban government on issues of mutual concern such as terrorism, narcotrafficking, environmental safety, and resource management. Bilateral cooperation and dialogue is critical for the safety of both countries.

5 The Obama administration has a considerable number of tools to use should it want to follow the careful recommendations of Americans, including removing Cuba from the terrorism list and naming a special envoy for Cuba. Removing Cuba from the terrorism list is a top priority, with 67 percent of Floridians and 61 percent of Americans overall in support. Cuba's government is repressive and dictatorial, but Cuba does not belong on a list next to Iran or Sudan. In fact, keeping Cuba on the list actually makes it harder to provide support for the Cuban people. The United States talks to governments with reprehensible policies (that are not on the terrorism list) regularly and is even involved in a negotiation process with Iran over its nuclear program. At the same time, however, the United States should also insist that Cuban government reciprocates any overtures, including by freeing Alan Gross. Naming a special envoy for Cuba—a move supported by 61 percent of Americans—would show that the Obama administration is ready for deeper engagement with the island. ★

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