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**INSTITUTE FOR
GOVERNANCE & CIVICS**
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

IGC POLL REPORT

Federalism Part 2 – *Who Should Be Responsible? Americans’ Views on the Proper Balance of National, State, and Local Authority*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federalism is a system of government in which power is shared across multiple levels—national, state, and local. In [part I](#) of this report series, we found that Americans widely believe the national government exerts too much influence across major sectors of society. But does that mean Americans want a smaller national government? The Institute for Governance and Civics at Florida State University surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,059 U.S. adults in May 2026. We asked respondents what level of government should make policy across nine major policy domains. We also analyzed historical survey data to place contemporary attitudes in broader context. Key findings include:

- **Americans support a larger role for state governments, but not radical decentralization**

Large majorities believe state governments should take greater responsibility for problems within their borders and often view state governments as more effective than the national government. But they oppose limiting the national government in key areas of governance.

- **Americans often prefer state and local governments to take the lead on domestic policy**

Respondents are more likely to support state or local governments in education, law enforcement, criminal justice, infrastructure, and social welfare. They favor a national role in foreign affairs, environmental and health policy.

- **Support for federalism reflects more than political ideology**

Although there are some differences between modern conservatives and liberals, these differences are generally modest and concentrated.

- **Support for federalist principles has remained widespread for decades**

Majorities of Americans have endorsed core federalist principles since the late 1980s. Although support for limiting national authority varies somewhat depending on which party controls the presidency, support for federalism—at least in the abstract—has remained strong.

INTRODUCTION

Public policy debates frequently raise questions about which level of government should act. Decentralization advocates often argue that state and local governments are more effective and responsive than the national government to the unique needs of their communities. Others contend that many challenges require national solutions and that the national government should play a leading role in policymaking.

In Part I of this report series, we examined Americans' perceptions of national influence across major sectors of society. The findings revealed widespread concern that the national government exerts too much influence in many areas of American life. Yet questions remain. Do Americans actually favor shifting authority away from Washington and toward state and local governments? Or do they simply believe the national government should exercise its existing authority differently?

To address these questions, the Institute for Governance and Civics at Florida State University included a series of questions in its May 2026 nationally representative survey of 1,059 American adults.¹ Respondents were asked about federalism—the distribution of authority between state and national governments—and which level of government they believe should make policy across nine major policy domains. To place contemporary attitudes toward federalism in broader context, we also examine historical survey data spanning nearly four decades.

Our findings show that Americans generally express support for federalist principles and often favor a larger role for state and local governments. But support for federalism does not translate into support for strong decentralization. Most Americans continue to assign important responsibilities to the national government and reject more extreme limitations on national authority. Further, while conservatives tend to support federalist principles more than liberals do, attitudes toward federalism represent a distinct and durable dimension of public opinion that cannot be reduced to ideology alone.

AMERICANS SUPPORT A GREATER ROLE FOR STATE GOVERNMENTS, BUT NOT RADICAL DECENTRALIZATION

To measure general attitudes toward federalism, we asked respondents a series of ten questions adapted from political scientists Hunter Rendleman and Jon Rogowski's measure of federalism preferences.² These items assess support for state authority, views about the proper scope of the national government, and perceptions of whether state governments perform better than the national government.³

Figure 1 shows that Americans support a greater role for state governments.⁴ Fully 74% of respondents agree that state governments should take more responsibility for problems within their borders, including 33% who strongly agree. Sixty-eight percent agree that state governments have better ideas about how to solve problems, while 63% agree that state governments address problems faster than the national government.

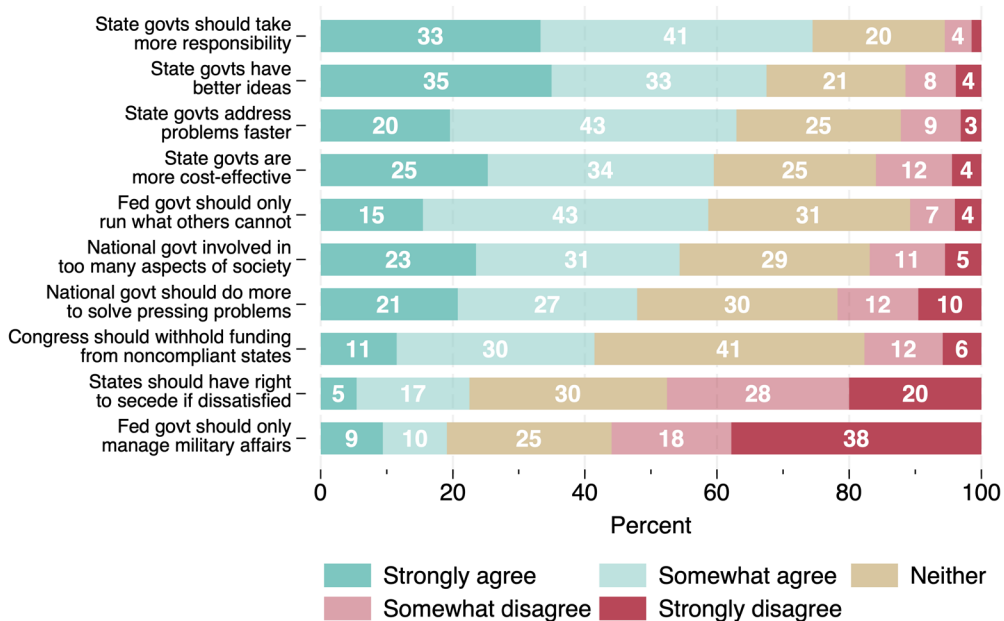


Figure 1. Public Attitudes Toward Federalism and the Proper Scope of National Authority

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,047–1,051 across items). Bars show the distribution of responses for each item.

Americans also express skepticism about the scope of national authority. Fifty-eight percent agree that the national government should run only those things that cannot be run at the state or local level, and 54% agree that the national government is currently involved in too many aspects of American society.

¹ The survey also included an oversample of 425 Florida residents. Florida-specific results are reported separately where applicable.

² See Rendleman, H., & Rogowski, J. C. (2024). Americans' attitudes toward federalism. *Political Behavior*, 46(1), 111-134.

³ Although these ten items are often treated as indicators of a broader federalism orientation, neither our analysis nor the original validation work by Rendleman and Rogowski suggests that they form a perfectly unidimensional scale. Exploratory factor analyses indicate that the items reflect multiple related dimensions, including preferences regarding the allocation of authority between levels of government and perceptions of the relative effectiveness of state governments. Nevertheless, because these dimensions are conceptually related and because our goal is to provide a broad summary measure of federalism attitudes, we follow Rendleman and Rogowski in constructing an overall index by averaging responses across all ten items.

⁴ Florida residents exhibit a pattern of responses similar to that observed nationally. Majorities support a greater role for state governments and often view them as more effective than the national government, while support for more sweeping restrictions on national authority remains limited. See Appendix Figure A1 for Florida-specific results.

At the same time, Americans do not embrace a sharply reduced national government. Nearly half of respondents (48%) believe the national government should do more to solve pressing problems. Only 22% agree that states should have the right to secede from the United States if they are dissatisfied with the national government, while 48% disagree. Even fewer respondents support limiting the national government primarily to military affairs: just 19% agree that the national government should only manage military affairs and that states should do everything else, while 56% disagree.

Important differences emerge across ideological groups.⁵ Figure 2 shows that 86% of conservatives agree that state governments should take more responsibility for problems within their borders, compared to 67% of liberals. Similarly, conservatives are more likely to agree that the national government is involved in too many aspects of American society (62% vs. 50%) and that the national government should run only those functions that cannot be handled at the state or local level (68% vs. 52%).

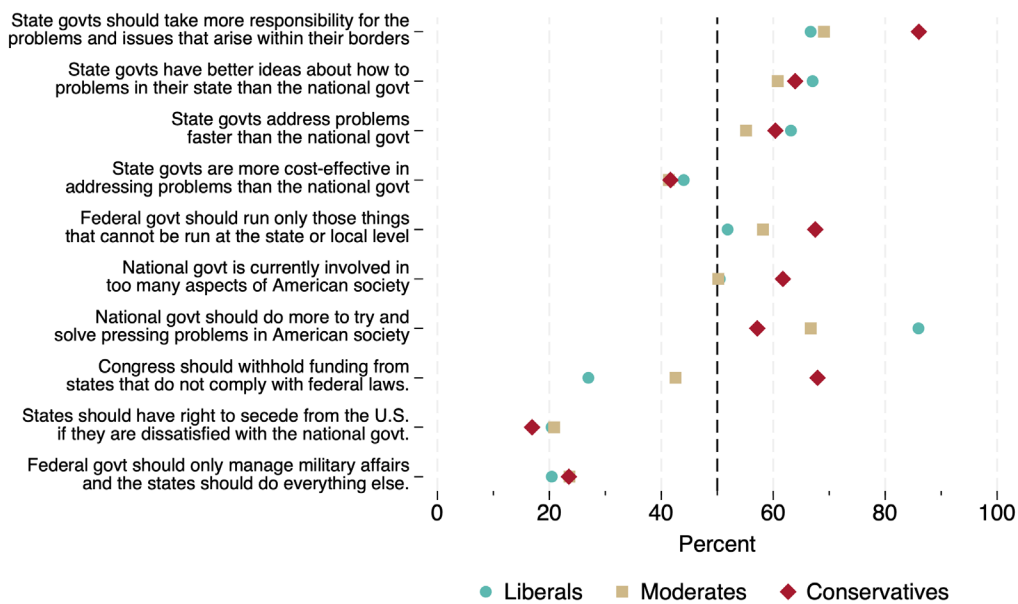


Figure 2. Public Attitudes Toward Federalism and the Proper Scope of National Authority, by Ideology

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,029–1,033 across items, including 289–291 liberals, 334–337 moderates, and 404–406 conservatives). Markers represent the percentage of respondents in each ideological group who selected either “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree.”

Ideological differences are smaller on other questions. Liberals and conservatives agree that state governments address problems faster than the national government (63% vs. 60%), have better ideas about how to solve problems within their states (67% vs. 64%), and are more cost-effective in addressing problems (44% vs. 42%).

⁵We also constructed a broader federalism index by averaging responses across nine of the ten federalism items. One item—“The national government should do more to solve pressing problems in American society”—was excluded because it exhibited substantially weaker psychometric properties than the remaining items, including a very low item-rest correlation. The resulting nine-item index ($\alpha=0.76$) demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and produces a substantively similar pattern of ideological differences. Readers interested in the relationship between ideology and the full nine-item federalism index may refer to Appendix Figure A2.

AMERICANS OFTEN PREFER THAT STATE GOVERNMENTS MAKE POLICY

We asked respondents which level of government—local, state, or national—should have the primary responsibility for making policy decisions across nine major policy domains.

Figure 3 shows that Americans prefer state and local governments to make policy.^{6,7} In five of the nine policy areas, respondents are more likely to say state or local government should have primary responsibility. Majorities favor state or local government responsibility for roads and infrastructure (72%), law enforcement (72%), education (68%), criminal justice (59%), and social welfare (54%).

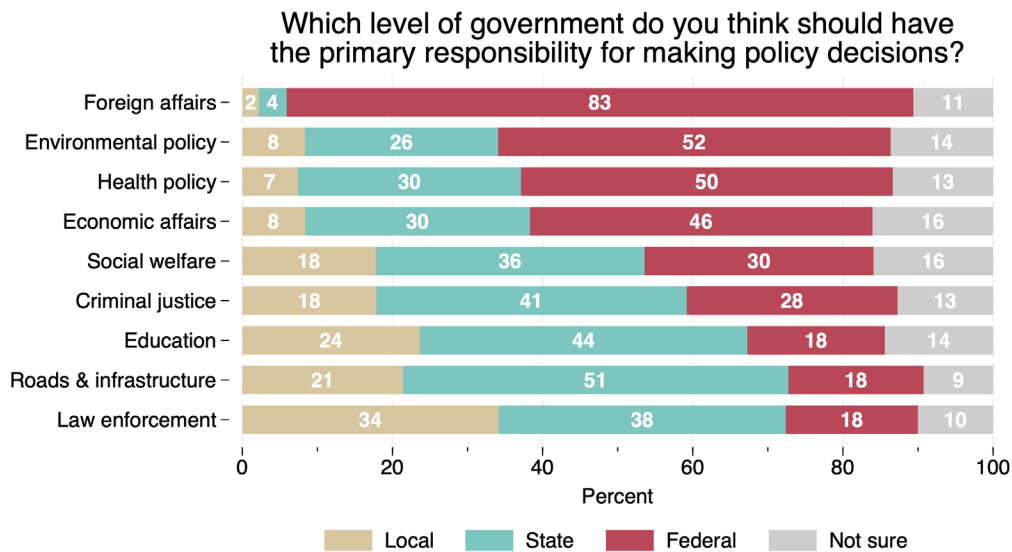


Figure 3. Preferred Level of Government Responsibility, by Policy Domain

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,052–1,056 across domains). Respondents were asked: “Different levels of government in the United States—local, state, and national—can play a role in making policy. For each of the following issue areas, please indicate which level of government you think should have the primary responsibility for making policy decisions.” Bars show the distribution of responses for each policy area.

⁶ A broadly comparable question was asked in a 1995 Council for Excellence in Government survey, which asked respondents which level of government should be “most responsible for running” various government programs. Although the wording differs from our measure—which asks which level of government should have primary responsibility for making policy decisions—the results are remarkably similar and, for education, identical. In both surveys, respondents were substantially more likely to assign education, law enforcement, roads and infrastructure, and social welfare to state or local governments than to the national government. Comparisons involving environmental issues should be interpreted more cautiously because the 1995 survey asked specifically about “air and water quality control programs,” whereas our survey asked more broadly about “environmental policy.” Readers interested in a direct comparison of the two surveys may refer to Appendix Figure A3.

⁷ The pattern observed among Florida residents closely resembles that of the nation as a whole. Floridians, like Americans overall, overwhelmingly assign primary responsibility for foreign affairs to the national government while favoring state and local responsibility for education, law enforcement, roads and infrastructure, and criminal justice. Although Florida residents are somewhat more likely than the national public to assign responsibility to state governments in several policy domains, the overall ranking of issue areas is remarkably similar. Readers interested in the responses among Florida residents may refer to Appendix Figure A4.

⁸ Additional analyses indicate that policy-responsibility preferences are consistently associated with respondents’ broader federalism attitudes, even after accounting for ideology, partisanship, and demographic characteristics. Respondents who express stronger support for state authority are less likely to assign primary policymaking responsibility to the national government across most policy domains. See Appendix Figures B1–B2.

Foreign affairs clearly stand apart from every other issue examined. Eighty-three percent of respondents believe the national government should make foreign policy. Only 4% of respondents favor state governments and 2% local governments. Respondents also tend to lean toward national leadership in environmental policy (52%), health policy (50%), and economic affairs (46%).

Important ideological differences emerge in several policy domains, especially health policy, environmental policy, education, and social welfare. For example, Figure 4 shows that 67% of liberals (but 45% of conservatives) believe the national government should have primary responsibility for health policy. Similarly, 66% of liberals favor national responsibility for environmental policy, compared to 47% of conservatives. While both groups believe education and social welfare should be handled at the state or local level, liberals are more supportive than conservatives of a stronger national responsibility for education (30% vs. 13%) and social welfare (41% vs. 25%).

By contrast, ideological differences are considerably smaller in other policy areas. Liberals and conservatives hold similar views regarding the national role in economic affairs (52% vs. 45%), criminal justice (26% vs. 28%), and law enforcement (13% vs. 19%). There is also broad agreement across ideological groups that foreign affairs should remain primarily a national responsibility.⁸

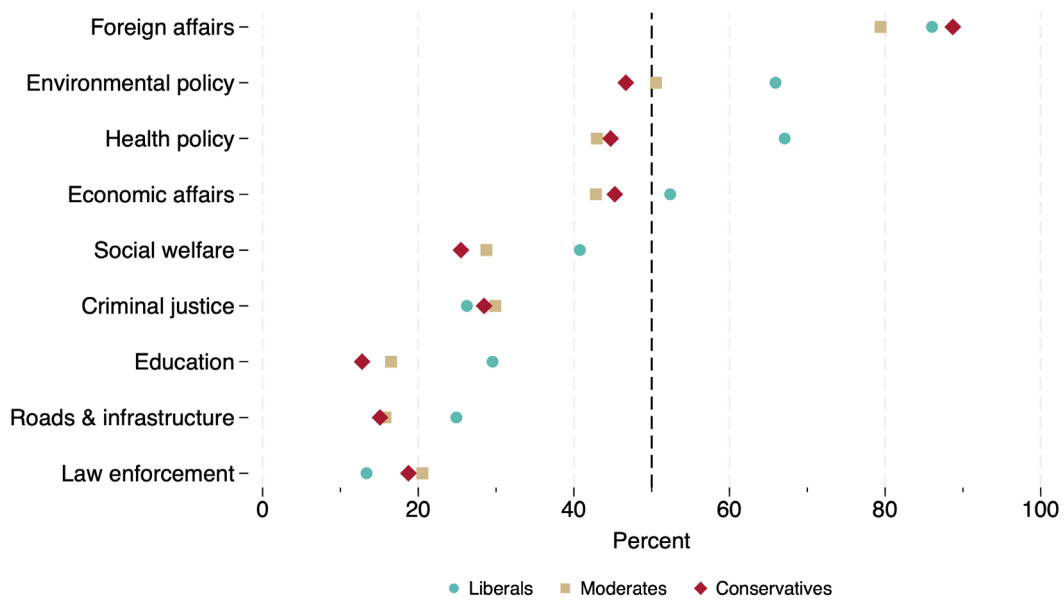


Figure 4. Percent Preferring National Responsibility, by Policy Domain and Ideology

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,031–1,034 across domains, including 290–292 liberals, 335–338 moderates, and 402–406 conservatives). Markers represent the percentage of respondents in each ideological group who selected the national government (rather than state government, local government, or “Not sure”) as having primary responsibility for a given policy domain.

AMERICANS WHO TRUST THEIR STATE GOVERNMENTS VIEW THEM AS MORE EFFECTIVE

If federalism attitudes are not simply reducible to ideology or partisanship, what other factors might help explain why some Americans express stronger support for state authority than others? One possibility is trust in state government. Are citizens who have greater confidence in their state governments more willing to support shifting authority away from Washington and toward the states?

Figure 5 shows that Americans generally express more confidence than skepticism toward their state governments. Sixty-nine percent say they trust their state government to do what is right either some of the time (48%) or most of the time (21%), compared to 31% who say they trust it rarely (23%) or never (8%).⁹ Florida residents respond in almost identical numbers as the national population.

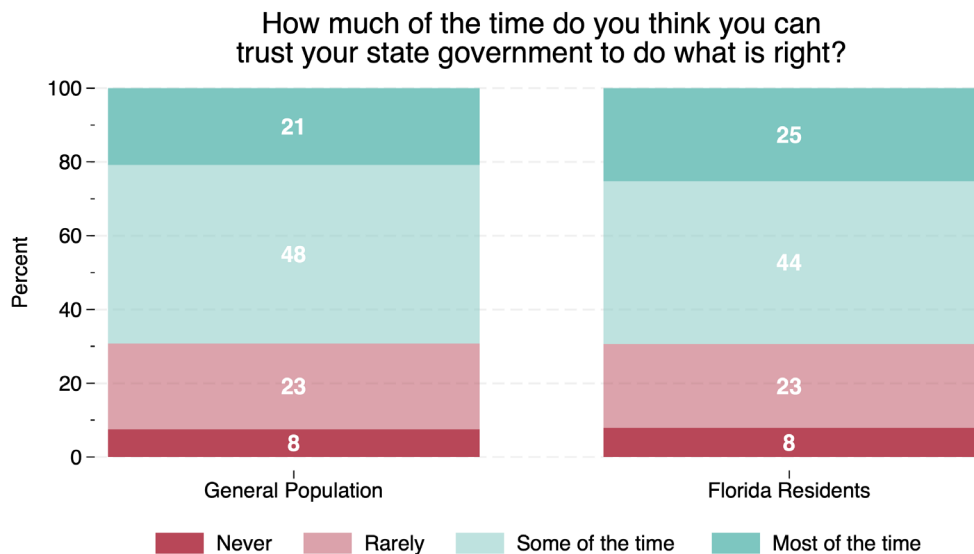


Figure 5. Trust in State Government, Nationally and in Florida

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,054) and Florida adult population (n = 420), respectively. Bars show the distribution of responses within each sample. Due to the small number of respondents (n = 30) selecting “just about always,” this category was combined with “Most of the time.”

Surprisingly, respondents who trust their state governments are not significantly more supportive of state authority than their less trusting neighbors.

Trust is, however, strongly related to a narrower set of attitudes: beliefs about whether state governments perform better than the national government. As shown in Figure 6, adjusting for ideology, party, and demographic characteristics, respondents who express greater trust in their state governments are more likely to view state governments as faster, more innovative, and more cost-effective than the national government.

⁹ Due to the small number of respondents selecting “just about always” (2%), this category was combined with “Most of the time” for presentation purposes.

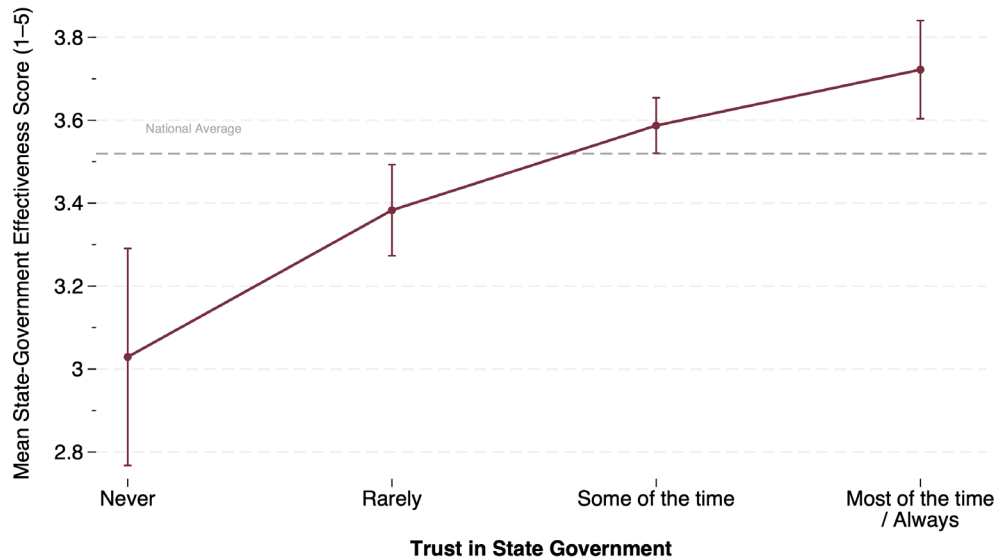


Figure 6. Perceptions of State-Government Effectiveness, by Trust in State Government

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,023). Markers represent the average score on a three-item state-government performance index (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) by level of trust in state government. The index averages responses to the following statements ($\alpha = 0.77$): (1) “State governments can address problems faster than the national government”; (2) “State governments are more cost-effective in addressing problems than the national government.”; and (3) “State governments have better ideas about how to address problems in their state than the national government.” Estimates adjust for ideology, party affiliation, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The dashed horizontal line indicates the sample mean.

Notably, neither trust in state government nor attitudes regarding state-government performance differ substantially across ideological or partisan groups.¹⁰ At first glance, this suggests broad agreement regarding the effectiveness of state governments. Yet Democrats and Republicans are often not evaluating the same states, and each group is disproportionately concentrated in states governed by its preferred political coalition.

Consistent with this interpretation, Figure 7 estimates the relationship between a state’s 2024 Republican presidential vote margin and perceptions of state-government effectiveness separately for Democrats and Republicans.¹¹ The results reveal a partisan pattern: Democrats tend to view state governments more favorably in Democratic-leaning states, while Republicans view state governments more favorably in Republican-leaning states. Using a five-point scale ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5), average agreement across the three state-government performance items declines among Democrats from 3.74 in strongly Democratic states to 3.44 in strongly Republican states. Among Republicans, the pattern runs in the opposite direction, increasing from 3.21 in strongly Democratic states to 3.76 in strongly Republican states.

¹⁰Trust in state government varies only modestly across partisan and ideological groups. Twenty-three percent of Democrats, 19% of Republicans, and 17% of independents report trusting their state government “most of the time” or “just about always.” Similarly, 26% of liberals, 19% of moderates, and 19% of conservatives report high levels of trust. Perceptions of state-government performance exhibit even less variation by ideology: mean scores on a five-point performance index are 3.52 among liberals, 3.54 among moderates, and 3.52 among conservatives. Although Democrats evaluate state-government performance somewhat more positively than independents (3.58 vs. 3.32), Republicans (3.49) differ little from Democrats.

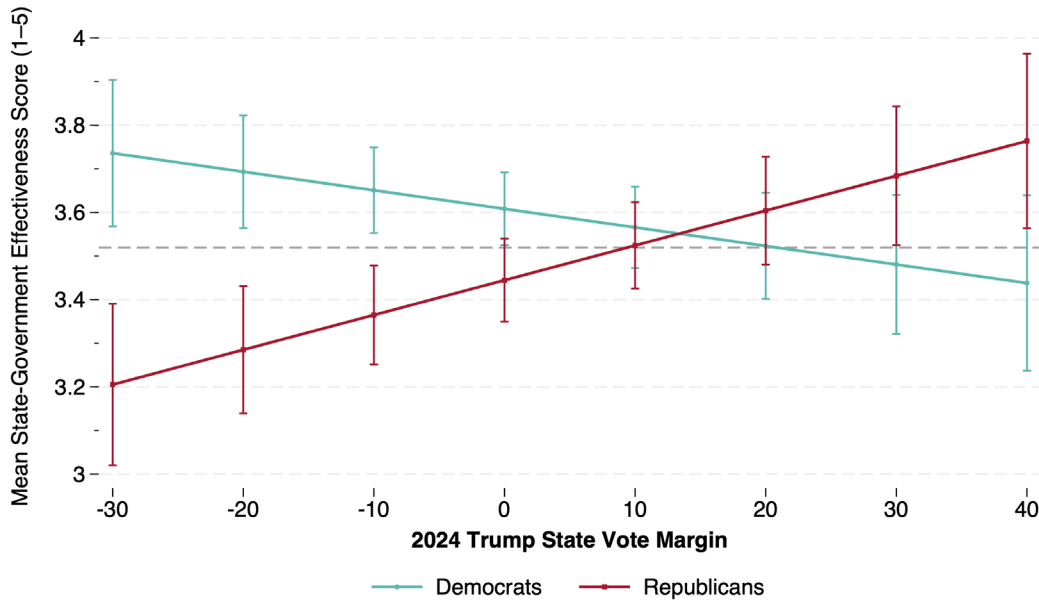


Figure 7. Perceptions of State-Government Effectiveness, by 2024 Trump Vote Margin in Respondents’ States and Party Identification

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,026). Markers represent the average score on a three-item state-government performance index (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) by respondents’ party identification and the 2024 Trump vote margin in their state of residence. The index averages responses to the following statements ($\alpha = 0.77$): (1) “State governments can address problems faster than the national government”; (2) “State governments are more cost-effective in addressing problems than the national government”; and (3) “State governments have better ideas about how to address problems in their state than the national government.” Estimates adjust for ideology, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The dashed horizontal line indicates the sample mean. 2024 Trump vote margin was calculated as Donald Trump’s two-party vote share minus Kamala Harris’s two-party vote share in each respondent’s state of residence, using certified 2024 presidential election results compiled by the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

A similar pattern emerges for trust in state government itself: Democrats report greater trust when they live in Democratic-leaning states, while Republicans report greater trust when they live in Republican-leaning states (Appendix Figure A6).

¹¹ A similar pattern is observed by ideology. See Appendix Figures A5 and A7.

SUPPORT FOR FEDERALISM IS A DURABLE FEATURE OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

The preceding sections examined contemporary attitudes toward federalism. Historical survey data allow us to place these findings in broader context. Such data, however, is available for only one of the federalism items included in our battery: the belief that the national government should perform only those functions that cannot be carried out at the state or local level.¹²

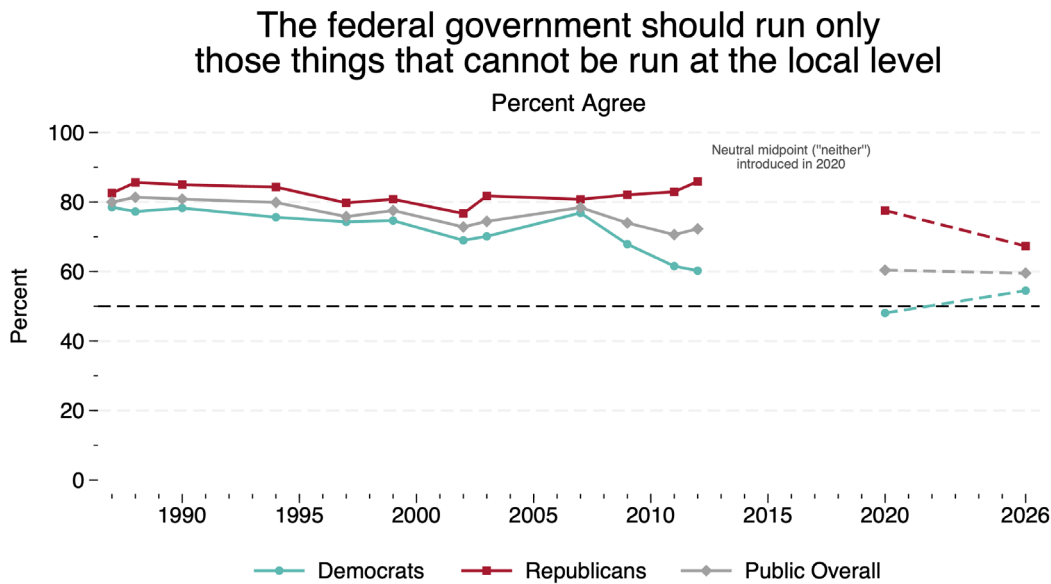


Figure 8. Support for Limiting National Responsibility (1987–2026)

Note: Markers represent the percentage of respondents who agreed that the national government should run only those functions that cannot be handled by lower levels of government. Estimates for 1987–2012 are drawn from the Pew Values Survey, estimates for 2020 are drawn from the Cooperative Election Study (Tufts University module), and estimates for 2026 are drawn from the Institute for Governance and Civics' nationally representative survey of U.S. adults. Estimates are shown separately for Democrats, Republicans, and Americans overall. The Pew Values Survey and 2020 Cooperative Election Study asked respondents whether "The federal government should run only those things that cannot be run at the local level." The 2026 survey asked whether "The federal government should run only those things that cannot be run at the state or local level." In addition, the Pew Values Survey employed a four-point agree-disagree scale, whereas the 2020 and 2026 surveys employed a five-point scale that included a neutral midpoint ("Neither agree nor disagree"). As a result, comparisons across survey years should be interpreted with caution. The dashed horizontal line indicates the 50 percent threshold.

¹² Although historical data are unavailable for the other federalism items included in our survey, this item is strongly correlated with the broader federalism battery and is the single item most closely associated with respondents' overall federalism scores. As such, it provides a useful indicator of support for federalist principles over time.

¹³ See Section A of the separate Supplementary Appendix file for a list of all survey items, their question wording, and the surveys from which they originate. See Section B to download a dataset containing all individual survey items, metadata, and available covariates

Figure 8 displays the share of respondents (by party and among Americans overall) who agreed with this principle from 1987 through 2026.¹³ Although more recent surveys added a neutral response option (“Neither agree nor disagree”), making direct comparisons with earlier (1987-2012) surveys imperfect, one pattern is clear: support for this federalist principle has remained widespread throughout the period examined. Across every survey, a majority of Americans agreed that the national government should run only those functions that cannot be handled at the state or local level.

Republicans have generally expressed stronger agreement with this principle than Democrats, though majorities of both groups have endorsed it throughout most of the period examined. These findings suggest that federalist attitudes are not a recent development but rather represent a durable feature of American public opinion.

Yet durability does not mean these attitudes are immune to contemporary political circumstances. As we found in Part I of this report series, Americans’ views about federal regulation are shaped in part by which party controls the White House. Figure 9 examines whether support for limiting national authority exhibits a similar pattern.

Among both parties, agreement with the statement that the national government should run only those functions that cannot be handled at the state or local level is three percentage points higher on average when the other party controls the White House.

The federal government should run only those things that cannot be run at the local level

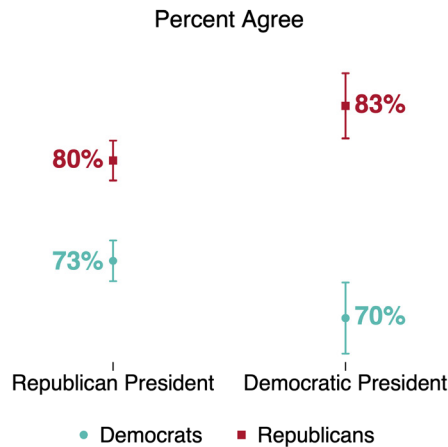


Figure 9. Support for Limiting National Responsibility (1987–2026), by Party Affiliation and Party of the Presidency

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population. Markers represent the estimated percentage of Democrats and Republicans who agreed that the national government should run only those functions that cannot be handled by lower levels of government. Democratic administrations include surveys conducted during the Clinton and Obama presidencies (1994, 1997, 1999, 2009, 2011, and 2012). Republican administrations include surveys conducted during the Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Trump presidencies (1987, 1988, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2020, and 2026). Estimates adjust for congressional party control, survey year, age, sex, educational attainment, survey response scale format (four-point vs. five-point agree-disagree scale), race, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Although these statistically significant differences are not large, they suggest that attitudes toward federalism reflect more than abstract beliefs about how power should be divided between different levels of government. Americans appear somewhat more supportive of decentralizing power away from Washington when the national government is controlled by the opposing party—a pattern similar to the one we observed with attitudes toward federal regulation in Part I of this report series. Still, the data show that support for federalism runs strong even as political circumstances change.

CONCLUSION

In Part I of this report series, we examined Americans' perceptions of national influence and judgments about its appropriateness across major sectors of society. The findings revealed widespread concern that the national government exerts too much influence in many areas of American life. Given these views, the current report examined whether Americans also favor shifting authority and responsibility away from Washington and toward state and local governments.

Several findings emerge. First, Americans are broadly supportive of federalist principles in the abstract and often favor a larger policymaking role for state and local governments in practice. Majorities believe state governments should take greater responsibility for problems within their borders and generally view state governments as more effective problem-solvers than the national government. Americans also frequently prefer policymaking authority to reside below the national level. Across many policy domains—education, law enforcement, criminal justice, roads and infrastructure, and social welfare—respondents are more likely to favor state or local responsibility than national responsibility. Moreover, those who express stronger federalist attitudes in the abstract are substantially more likely to favor state and local responsibility across a wide range of policy domains.

But broad support for federalist principles and a larger role for state and local governments should not be mistaken for a rejection of national authority. Most Americans oppose limiting the national government primarily to military affairs, and continue to assign primary responsibility to the national government in areas such as foreign affairs, environmental policy, and health policy. Rather than embracing either centralized national authority or radical decentralization, Americans generally appear to favor a federalist system in which responsibilities are shared across multiple levels of government.

This report also finds that attitudes toward federalism cannot be explained by political ideology alone. While conservatives tend to be somewhat more supportive of federalist principles and the transfer of authority to lower levels of government than liberals, these differences are generally modest and concentrated in specific policy areas. Moreover, support for federalism remains strongly associated with policy-responsibility preferences even after accounting for ideology, partisanship, and demographic characteristics.

Finally, historical evidence suggests that support for federalist principles remains a durable feature of American public opinion. While attitudes toward federalism are influenced to some degree by contemporary political circumstances, majorities of Americans—including in both parties—have consistently endorsed core federalist principles for decades.

Taken together, the findings from Parts I and II of this report series suggest that Americans want a different balance of authority between levels of government rather than a wholesale reduction in the role of government itself. While many believe the national government exerts too much influence in important areas of American life, they do not favor a wholesale retreat from national authority. Instead, Americans generally appear to prefer a federal system in which authority is shared across multiple levels of government, with state and local governments playing a larger role in many areas while the national government continues to play the central role in others.

Poll Information

The survey was conducted by Ipsos using its KnowledgePanel® probability-based online panel from May 19–28, 2026, among a nationally representative sample of 1,059 U.S. adults, along with an oversample of 425 Florida adults. National results were weighted to match U.S. Census Bureau benchmarks for demographic composition, party identification, and 2024 presidential vote choice. The margin of sampling error for the national sample is ± 3.17 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Characteristics of the two samples are presented in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics by Survey Sample

Category	Main Survey Sample	Florida Sample
Sex		
Male	49%	49%
Female	51%	51%
Age		
18 to 29	19%	17%
30 to 49	34%	31%
50 to 64	25%	24%
65 or older	22%	27%
Race/Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	59%	52%
Black	11%	13%
Hispanic	18%	27%
Other	11%	7%
Income		
Less than \$50,000	23%	24%
\$50,000-\$99,999	27%	30%
\$100,000-\$149,999	20%	21%
\$149,999 and over	29%	26%
Education		
Less than HS	10%	10%
HS Graduate	27%	27%
Some college	28%	29%
BA Degree	21%	22%
Postgrad / Prof. Degree	14%	12%
Parent Status		
Has children (0-17)	19%	17%
No children (0-17)	81%	83%
Stated Party		
Democrat	28%	25%
Republican	31%	34%
Independent / Something else	41%	41%
Political Ideology		
Liberal	27%	26%
Moderate	34%	34%
Conservative	39%	40%
N	1,059	425

APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTARY FIGURES

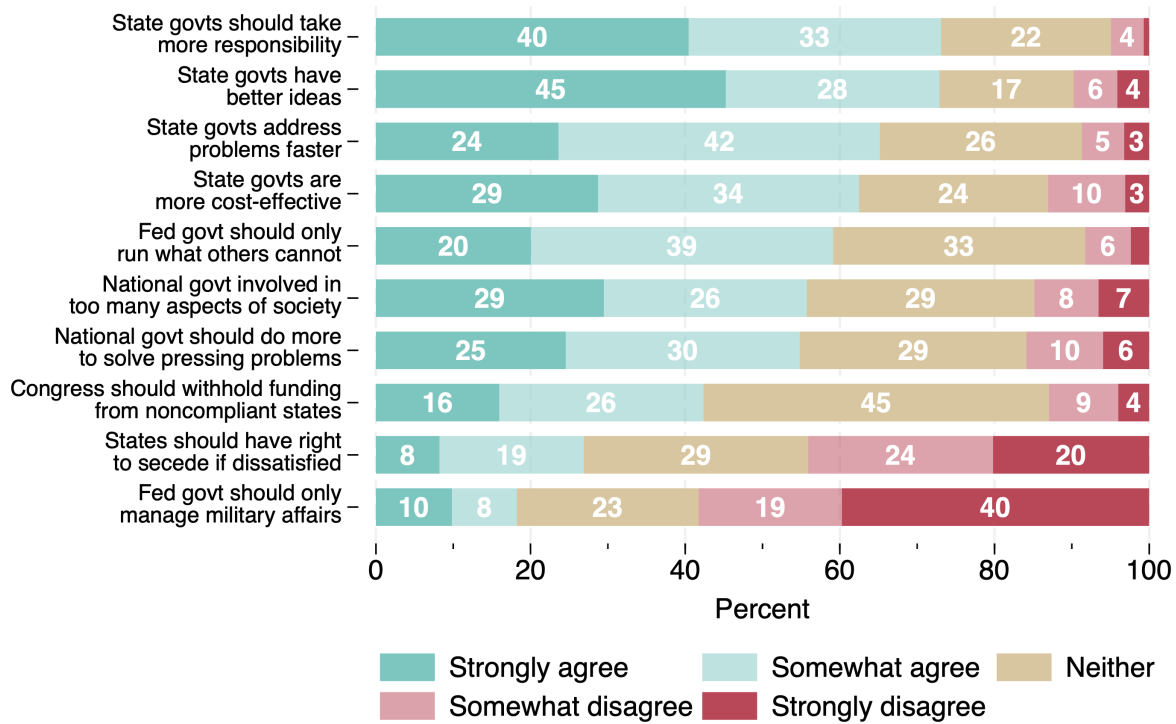


Figure A1. Attitudes Toward Federalism and the Proper Scope of National Authority Among Florida Residents
Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the Florida adult population (n = 420–423 across items). Bars show the distribution of responses for each item.

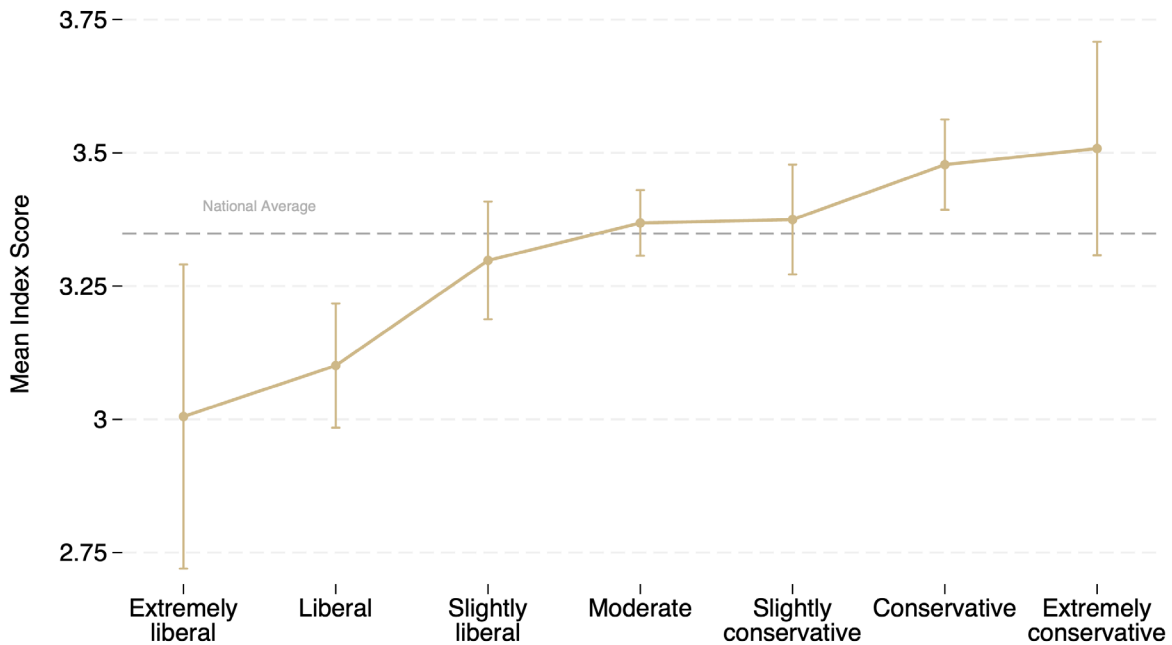


Figure A2. Average Federalism Index Scores, by Ideological Self-Identification

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,018). Markers represent the average score on the nine-item federalism index by ideological self-identification. The index combines responses (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree) to survey items measuring support for state authority, views regarding the proper scope of the national government, and perceptions of state-government performance relative to the national government. Higher values indicate stronger support for state authority relative to national authority. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The dashed horizontal line indicates the sample mean.

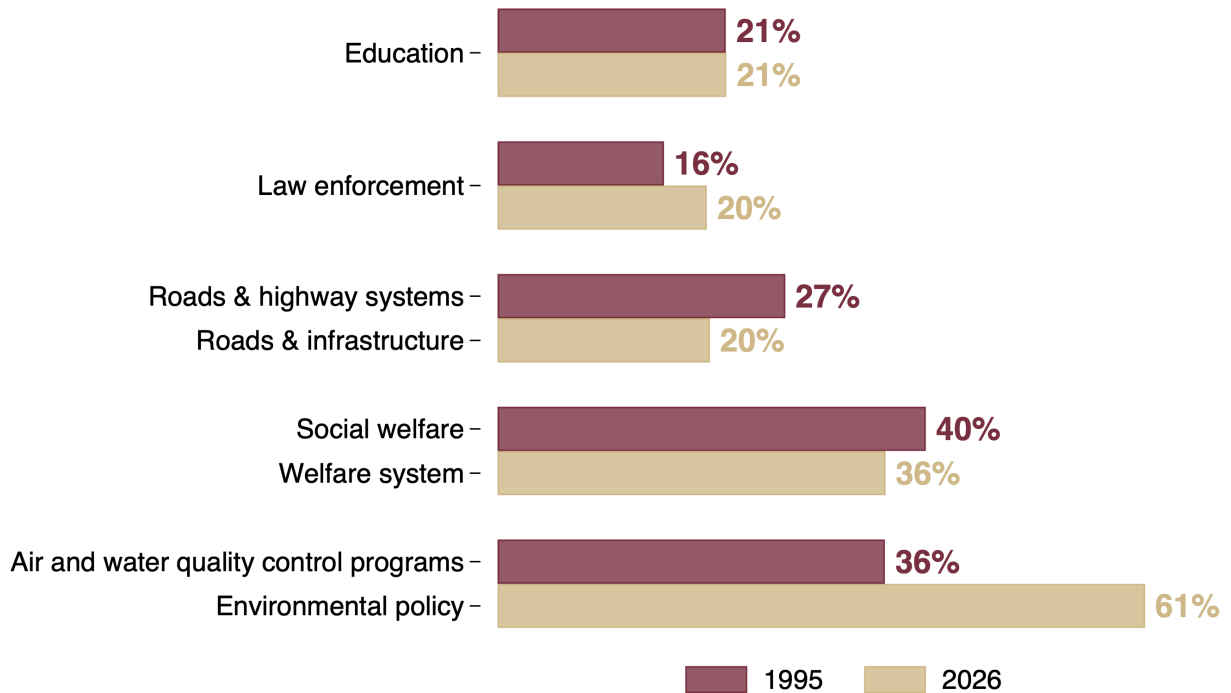


Figure A3. Support for National Government Responsibility in Selected Policy Domains, 1995 vs. 2026

Note. Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population in both surveys (1995 Council for Excellence in Government survey: n = 502; 2026 Institute for Governance and Civics survey: n = 1,059). Bars represent the percentage of respondents who selected the national government as the level of government that should have primary responsibility for the listed policy domain. The 1995 survey asked respondents which level of government should be “most responsible for running” various government programs, whereas the 2026 survey asked which level of government should have “primary responsibility for making policy decisions” in various issue areas. Comparisons involving education, law enforcement, roads and infrastructure, and social welfare should be interpreted as broadly comparable despite these wording differences. Comparisons involving environmental issues should be interpreted more cautiously because the 1995 survey asked specifically about “air and water quality control programs,” whereas the 2026 survey asked more broadly about “environmental policy.”

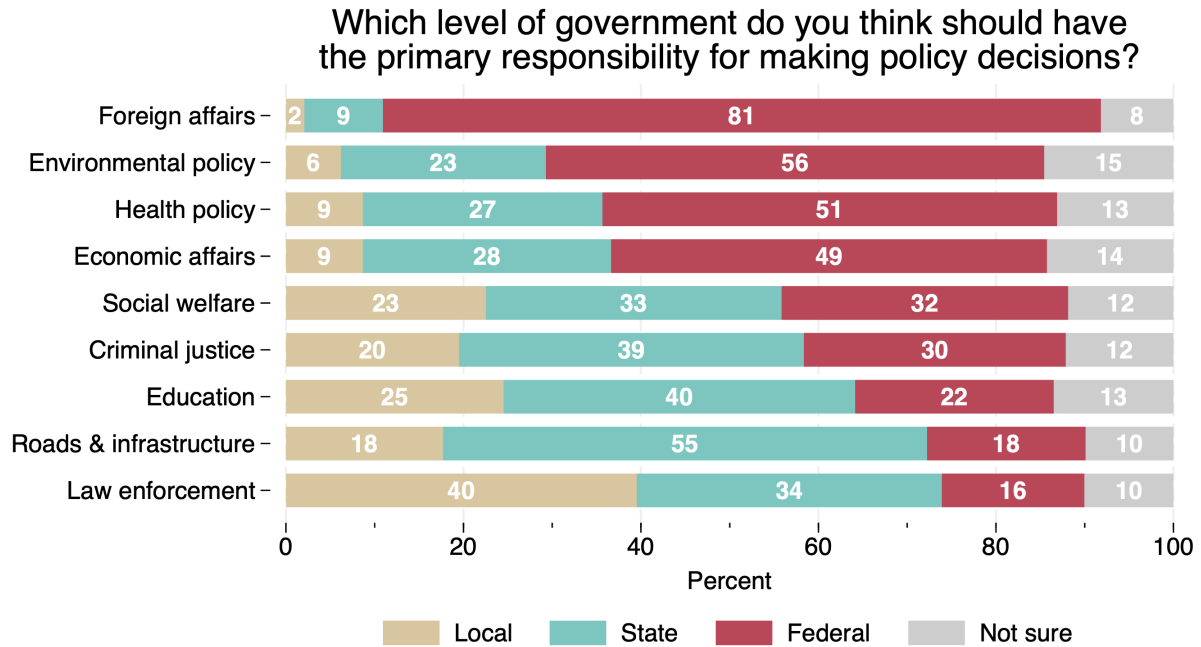


Figure A4. Preferred Level of Government Responsibility Among Florida Residents, by Policy Domain

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the Florida adult population (n = 422–425 across domains). Respondents were asked: “Different levels of government in the United States—local, state, and national—can play a role in making policy. For each of the following issue areas, please indicate which level of government you think should have the primary responsibility for making policy decisions.” Bars show the distribution of responses for each policy domain.

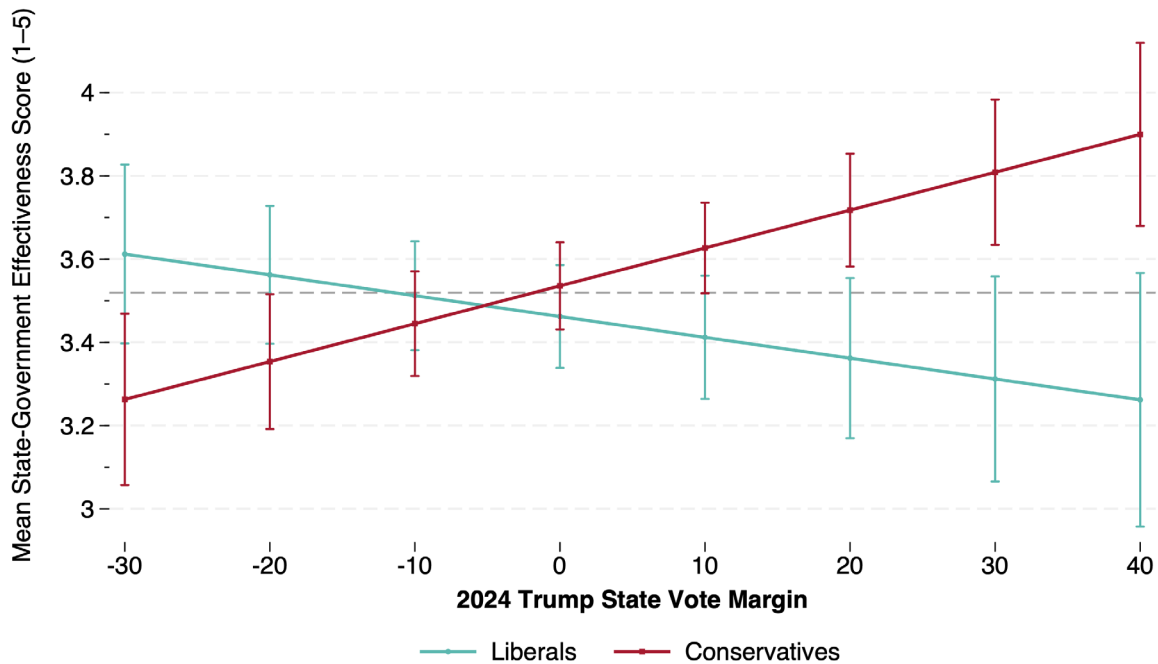


Figure A5. Perceptions of State-Government Effectiveness, by 2024 Trump Vote Margin in Respondents' States and Ideology

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population ($n = 1,026$). Markers represent the average score on a three-item state-government performance index (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) by respondents' political ideology and the 2024 Trump vote margin in their state of residence. The index averages responses to the following statements ($\alpha = 0.77$): (1) "State governments can address problems faster than the national government"; (2) "State governments are more cost-effective in addressing problems than the national government"; and (3) "State governments have better ideas about how to address problems in their state than the national government." Estimates adjust for ideology, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The dashed horizontal line indicates the sample mean. 2024 Trump vote margin was calculated as Donald Trump's two-party vote share minus Kamala Harris's two-party vote share in each respondent's state of residence, using certified 2024 presidential election results compiled by the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

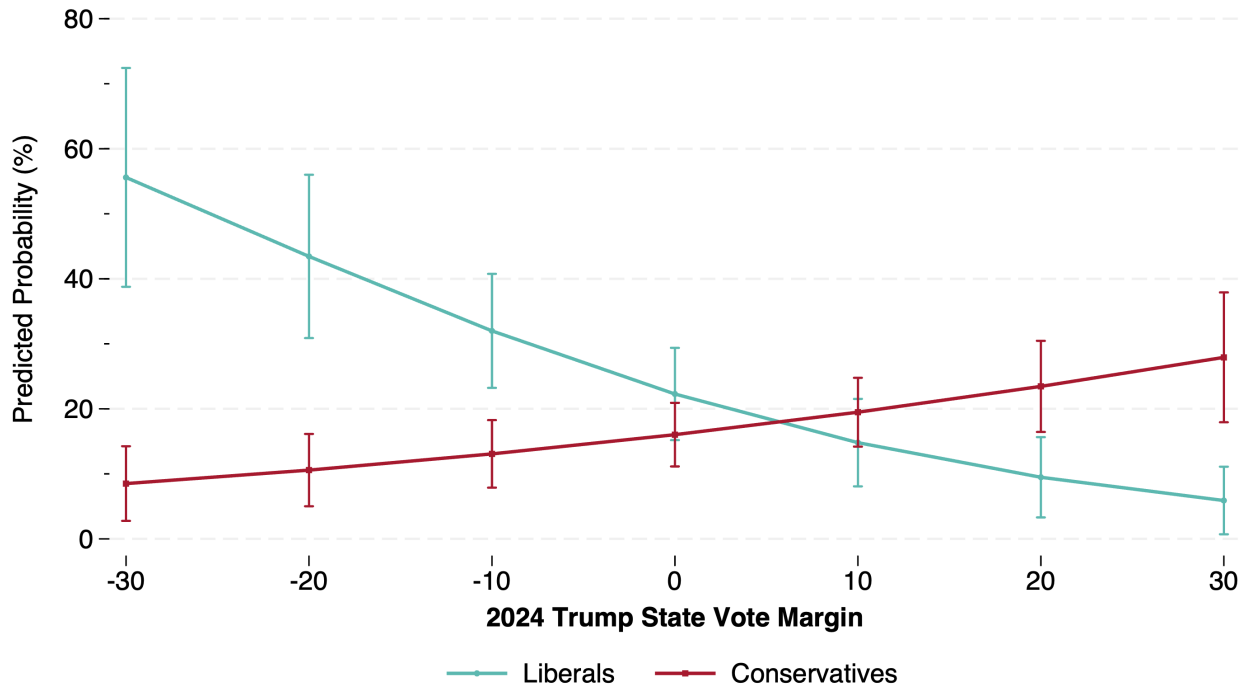


Figure A6. Estimated Probability of Trusting State Government Most of the Time or More, by 2024 Trump Vote Margin in Respondents’ States and Party Identification

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,033). Markers represent the predicted probability of reporting trust in state government “most of the time” or “just about always” across different levels of the 2024 Trump two-party vote margin in respondents’ states of residence. Estimates are shown separately for Democrats and Republicans and are derived from an ordered logistic regression adjusting for ideology, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The 2024 Trump vote margin was calculated as Donald Trump’s two-party vote share minus Kamala Harris’s two-party vote share in each respondent’s state of residence, using certified 2024 presidential election results compiled by the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

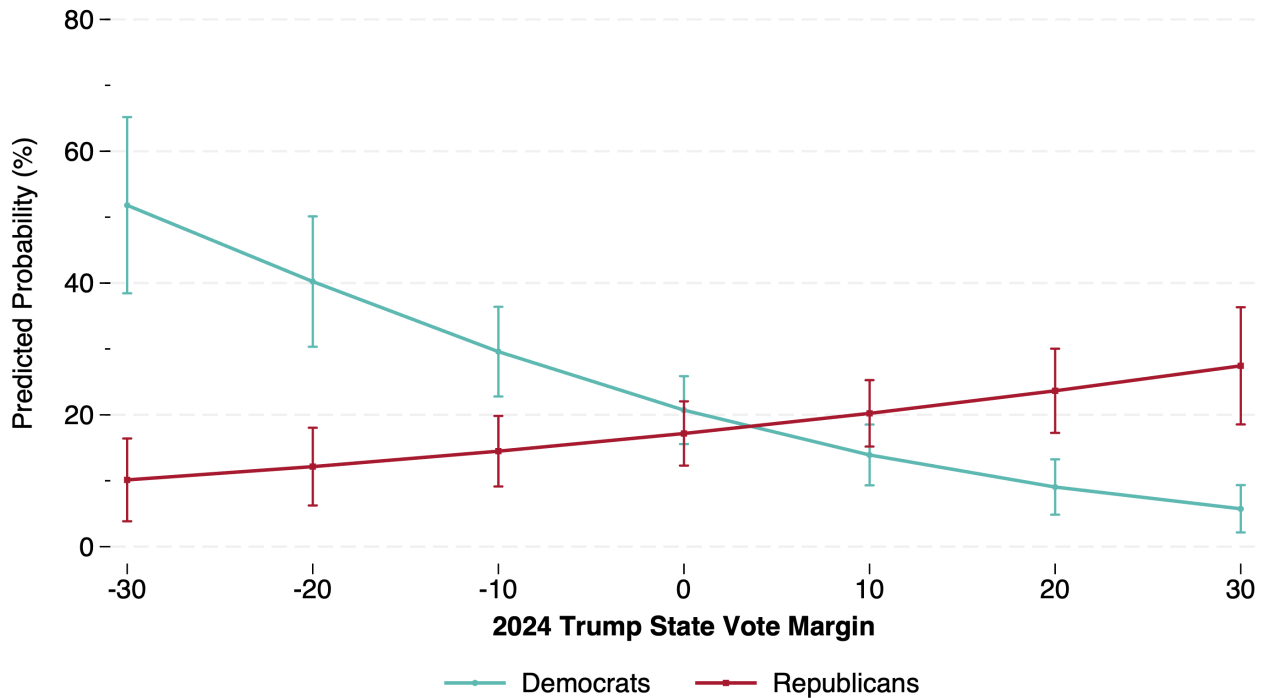


Figure A7. Estimated Probability of Trusting State Government Most of the Time or More, by 2024 Trump Vote Margin in Respondents’ States and Ideology

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,033). Markers represent the predicted probability of reporting trust in state government “most of the time” or “just about always” across different levels of the 2024 Trump two-party vote margin in respondents’ states of residence. Estimates are shown separately for liberals and conservatives and are derived from an ordered logistic regression adjusting for party affiliation, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. The 2024 Trump vote margin was calculated as Donald Trump’s two-party vote share minus Kamala Harris’s two-party vote share in each respondent’s state of residence, using certified 2024 presidential election results compiled by the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSES

To examine whether general attitudes toward federalism are associated with preferences regarding governmental responsibility across specific policy domains, we constructed a federalism index using respondents' answers to nine of the ten federalism items presented in the report.¹⁴ Higher values on the index indicate stronger support for state authority relative to national authority. We then estimated the relationship between the federalism index and the probability of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority across the nine policy domains examined in the survey.

Appendix Figure B1 displays the estimated effect of a one-standard-deviation increase in the federalism index on the probability of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority. Estimates adjust for political ideology, party affiliation, age, sex, race and ethnicity, household income, educational attainment, and census region. Negative values indicate that respondents with stronger federalist attitudes are less likely to favor national responsibility.

¹⁴ The federalism index was constructed by averaging responses across nine federalism items. As was noted previously, one item—"The national government should do more to solve pressing problems in American society"—was excluded because it exhibited substantially weaker psychometric properties than the remaining items, including a very low item-rest correlation. Although the federalism items do not form a perfectly unidimensional scale, the resulting nine-item index demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.76$) and provides a useful summary measure of overall federalism attitudes.

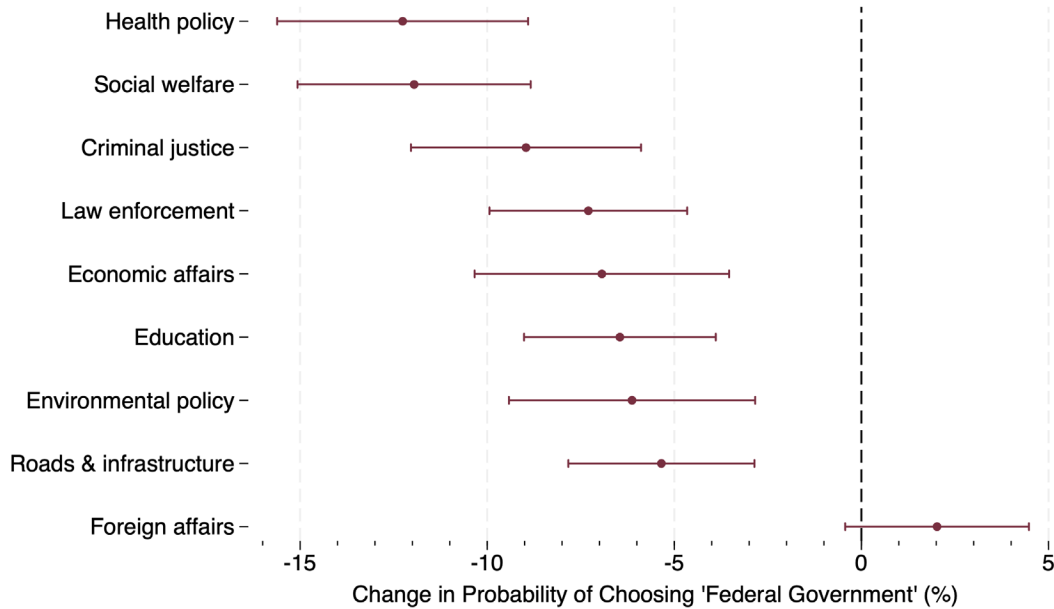


Figure B1. Effect of Federalism Attitudes on Preference for National Responsibility, by Policy Domain

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,013–1,017 across domains). Markers represent the average percentage-point change in the probability of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in the 9-item federalism index. Estimates adjust for ideology, party affiliation, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

The relationship is highly consistent across policy domains. Respondents with stronger federalist attitudes are significantly less likely to assign primary responsibility to the national government in eight of the nine areas examined. The largest effects are observed for health policy and social welfare, where a one-standard-deviation increase in the federalism index is associated with approximately a 12-percentage-point decrease in the probability of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority.

Smaller but statistically significant relationships are observed for criminal justice, law enforcement, economic affairs, education, environmental policy, and roads and infrastructure. In each case, respondents who express stronger support for state authority are more likely to favor state and local responsibility in practice.

Foreign affairs is the lone exception. Attitudes toward federalism exhibit little relationship with preferences regarding foreign-policy responsibility, likely reflecting the broad consensus observed in the main report that foreign affairs should remain primarily a national responsibility regardless of respondents' broader views about federalism.

Appendix Figure B2 illustrates the substantive magnitude of these relationships by displaying predicted probabilities of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority across the full range of the federalism index. The figure shows that support for national responsibility declines steadily as federalist attitudes increase across nearly every policy domain. The relationship is particularly pronounced for health policy and social welfare, while support for national responsibility in foreign affairs remains consistently high regardless of respondents' broader federalism attitudes.

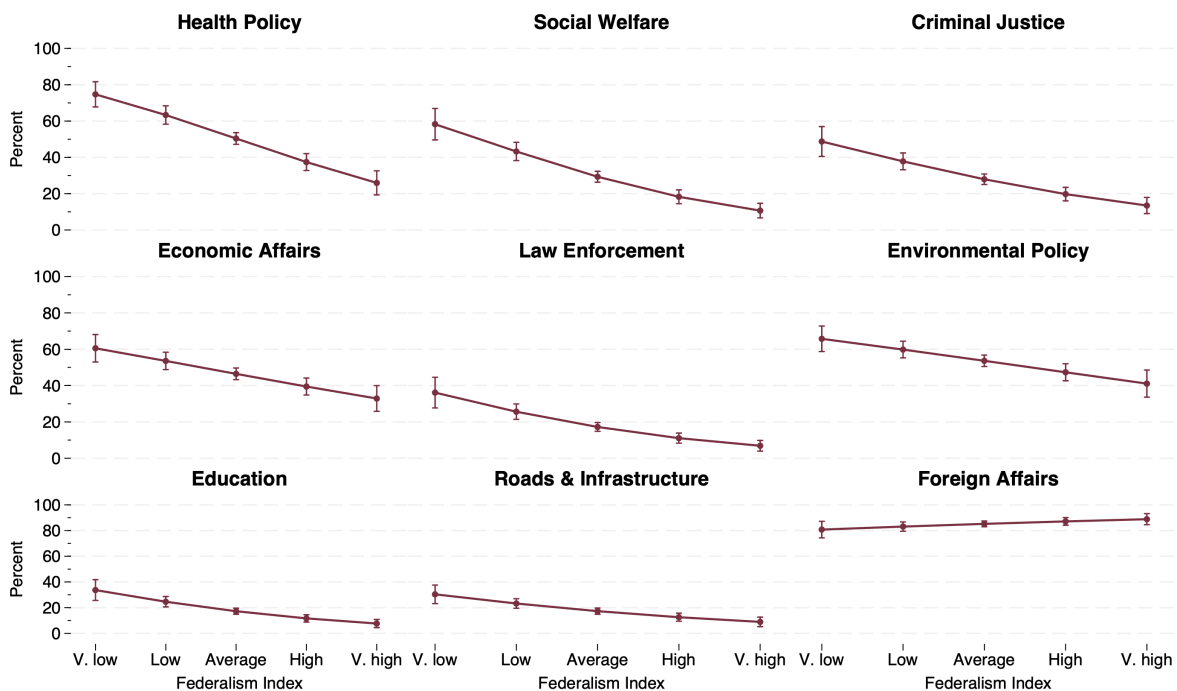


Figure B2. Predicted Probability of Selecting the National Government as the Primary Policymaking Authority Across Levels of the Federalism Index

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,013–1,017 across domains). Markers represent the predicted probability of selecting the national government as the primary policymaking authority at different levels of the 9-item federalism index, holding all other variables constant. Estimates adjust for ideology, party affiliation, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education, and census region. Values of the federalism index correspond to Very Low (–2 SD), Low (–1 SD), Average (0 SD), High (+1 SD), and Very High (+2 SD) levels of support for state authority relative to national authority.

Taken together, these analyses indicate that general attitudes toward federalism are strongly associated with preferences regarding the allocation of policymaking authority across most policy domains, even after accounting for ideology, partisanship, and demographic characteristics.