

# Marquette University: New Marquette Law School national survey finds a very close race for president in 2024; Trump and DeSantis top GOP primary field; Biden job approval rating declines to 39%

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MILWAUKEE – A new Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds very close races between President Joe Biden and either former President Donald Trump or Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in hypothetical 2024 presidential elections. Among registered voters, Biden and Trump each receive 38% of the vote, with 20% saying that they would vote for someone else and 4% that they would not vote.

In a matchup between Biden and DeSantis, DeSantis receives 42% and Biden is the choice of 41%, with 13% saying they would vote for someone else and 4% saying they would not vote.

*Table 1: Biden vs. Trump trend, among registered voters*

| <b>Poll dates</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Joe Biden</b> | <b>Someone else</b> | <b>Wouldn't vote</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 11/1-10/21        | 35                  | 43               | 18                  | 4                    |
| 1/10-21/22        | 33                  | 45               | 18                  | 4                    |
| 3/14-24/22        | 38                  | 43               | 16                  | 4                    |
| 9/7-14/22         | 36                  | 42               | 19                  | 3                    |

|             |    |    |    |   |
|-------------|----|----|----|---|
| 11/15-22/22 | 34 | 44 | 19 | 4 |
| 1/9-20/23   | 40 | 40 | 17 | 3 |
| 3/13-22/23  | 38 | 38 | 20 | 4 |

The trend in the Biden vs. Trump matchup is shown in *Table 1* and the Biden vs DeSantis trend is shown in *Table 2*. While Biden led Trump through 2022, the two have been tied in the first two 2023 polls. DeSantis has also moved into a very close race with Biden, leading Biden in January by 7 points but holding just a 1-point edge in March. In both matchups, the relatively high percentages saying they would vote for “someone else” or would not vote indicates the potential for volatility in coming months as candidate choices become clarified. (All results in the tables are stated as percentages; the precise wording of the questions can be found in the online link noted above.)

*Table 2: Biden vs. DeSantis trend, among registered voters*

| <b>Poll dates</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> | <b>Joe Biden</b> | <b>Someone else</b> | <b>Wouldn't vote</b> | <b>Web blank</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1/10-21/22        | 34                  | 43               | 17                  | 5                    | 0                |
| 3/14-24/22        | 35                  | 39               | 19                  | 5                    | 0                |
| 9/7-14/22         | 38                  | 43               | 15                  | 5                    | 0                |
| 11/15-22/22       | 42                  | 42               | 11                  | 4                    | 0                |
| 1/9-20/23         | 45                  | 38               | 13                  | 4                    | 0                |
| 3/13-22/23        | 42                  | 41               | 13                  | 4                    | 0                |

The latest Marquette Law School Poll's national survey was conducted March 13-22, 2023. The survey interviewed 1,004 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of +/-3.8 percentage points. The sample includes 863 registered voters with a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points. The sample size for registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican is 381, with a margin of error of +/-6.1 percentage points. The sample size for registered Democrats and independents who lean Democratic is 401, with a margin of error of +/-5.9 percentage points.

### **Republican primary choices**

Trump leads in the presidential nomination race, with 40% among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican, while DeSantis is the choice of

35%. Former Vice President Mike Pence is supported by 5% and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley by 5%. No other potential candidate received more than 1% support, while 12% said they were undecided or did not support any of the 11 names offered in the question. *Table 3* shows the full results.

*Table 3: Here are some potential candidates for the Republican presidential nomination. If the primary were today, who would you vote for? among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican. \*=less than 0.5%*

| <b>Candidate</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|------------------|----------------|
| Donald Trump     | 40             |
| Ron DeSantis     | 35             |
| Mike Pence       | 5              |
| Nikki Haley      | 5              |
| Mike Pompeo      | 1              |
| Chris Sununu     | 1              |
| Kristi Noem      | *              |
| Chris Christie   | *              |
| Tim Scott        | *              |
| Asa Hutchinson   | *              |
| Glenn Youngkin   | *              |
| Undecided        | 10             |
| None of these    | 2              |

When asked to choose if the choice were between only Trump and DeSantis, DeSantis is the choice of 54% and Trump is the choice of 46%. That represents a sharp tightening of the race since January, when DeSantis received 64% to Trump's 36%. The trend is shown in *Table 4*.

*Table 4: If it were a choice between just the two of them, who would you prefer as the Republican nominee for president in 2024: Donald Trump or Florida Governor Ron DeSantis? among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Poll dates</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 11/15-22/22       | 40                  | 60                  |

|            |    |    |
|------------|----|----|
| 1/9-20/23  | 36 | 64 |
| 3/13-22/23 | 46 | 54 |

Among those who choose a candidate other than DeSantis or Trump in the multi-candidate question, DeSantis picks up almost three-quarters of the support when they are asked to decide between DeSantis and Trump. A handful of respondents shift away from their first choice of Trump or DeSantis in the subsequent two-candidate question. Those initially undecided or not choosing any named candidate split close to evenly when offered only Trump or DeSantis.

*Table 5: Choice between Trump or DeSantis only, by first choice in multi-candidate question, among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Respondent's multi-candidate choice</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Trump                                      | 91                  | 9                   |
| DeSantis                                   | 3                   | 97                  |
| Other candidate                            | 26                  | 74                  |
| Undecided/None                             | 43                  | 56                  |

DeSantis holds a slight lead among those who call themselves “Republicans,” but sees a larger advantage among independents who say they lean Republican, as shown in *Table 6*.

*Table 6: Choice between Trump or DeSantis, by strength of Republican identification among registered voters*

| <b>Strength of Republican identification</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Republican                                   | 48                  | 52                  |
| Lean Republican                              | 40                  | 60                  |

DeSantis has more support than Trump among those Republicans and Republican leaners who describe themselves as very or somewhat conservative, while Trump does better among those who consider themselves moderate or liberal.

*Table 7: Choice between Trump or DeSantis, by ideology among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Ideology</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|

|                       |    |    |
|-----------------------|----|----|
| Very conservative     | 46 | 54 |
| Somewhat conservative | 41 | 59 |
| Moderate or liberal   | 53 | 46 |

Trump has greater support among Republicans without a college degree while DeSantis does better among those with at least a bachelor's degree.

*Table 8: Choice between Trump or DeSantis, by education among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>College grad</b> | <b>Donald Trump</b> | <b>Ron DeSantis</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Non-college grad    | 51                  | 49                  |
| College grad        | 37                  | 63                  |

DeSantis is well-liked among Republicans who also hold a favorable view of Trump, making him a competitor to Trump from inside Trump's coalition. DeSantis is less well-liked among Republicans unfavorable to Trump. *Table 9* shows favorability to DeSantis by favorability to Trump.

*Table 9: DeSantis favorability, by Trump favorability among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Trump favorability</b> | <b>Favorable opinion of DeSantis</b> | <b>Unfavorable opinion of DeSantis</b> | <b>Haven't heard enough</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Favorable opinion         | 80                                   | 8                                      | 12                          |
| Unfavorable opinion       | 51                                   | 32                                     | 17                          |

Despite leading Trump among those who prefer a candidate other than Trump or DeSantis, DeSantis has negative favorability among those respondents, and it is notably less favorable than among those who make Trump their top pick in the multi-candidate choice question. DeSantis has a quite favorable rating among those for whom Trump is their first choice for the presidential nomination.

*Table 10: DeSantis favorability, by multi-candidate first choice among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Multi-candidate 1st choice</b> | <b>Favorable opinion</b> | <b>Unfavorable opinion</b> | <b>Haven't heard enough</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Trump                             | 71                       | 10                         | 19                          |
| DeSantis                          | 93                       | 5                          | 2                           |
| Other candidate                   | 36                       | 42                         | 23                          |
| Undecided/None                    | 30                       | 35                         | 35                          |

### **Favorability toward potential GOP candidates**

For Republican voters, Trump is nearly universally known and Pence and DeSantis are fairly well-known. Most other potential Republican candidates are far less familiar to Republican voters. *Table 11* shows the favorable, unfavorable, and haven't-heard-enough responses to eight potential candidates.

*Table 11: Favorability ratings of potential Republican candidates, among registered Republicans and independents who lean Republican*

| <b>Name</b> | <b>Favorable opinion</b> | <b>Unfavorable opinion</b> | <b>Haven't heard enough</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Trump       | 66                       | 31                         | 2                           |
| Pence       | 48                       | 41                         | 11                          |
| DeSantis    | 69                       |                            |                             |