

Marquette University: New Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds Trump and DeSantis leading Biden in head-to-head matches, DeSantis losing ground to Trump in primary, majorities having unfavorable views of all three, and a majority of Democrats continuing to disfavor a Biden run

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MILWAUKEE – A new Marquette Law School Poll national survey finds that, as the race for president in 2024 now stands, Democratic President Joe Biden trails Republican former President Donald Trump by 5 percentage points among registered voters, with 52% for Trump and 47% for Biden. Biden also trails Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis by 4 percentage points, with 52% for DeSantis and 48% for Biden.

Many voters demonstrate reluctance to choose between either pair of candidates. When voters are given the choice of Biden, Trump, someone else, or not voting, 34% say Biden, 41% say Trump, 19% say someone else, and 7% say they won't vote. When voters are given the same choices involving Biden and DeSantis, 37% say Biden, 38% say DeSantis, 18% say someone else, and 7% say they won't vote.

This means that, with the options to vote for someone else or not to vote included in the question, 26% avoid choosing between Biden and Trump and 25% avoid picking Biden or DeSantis. In both matchups, the fact of 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 are clarified.

Just among those who initially avoid choosing between Biden and Trump, when they are asked whom they would choose if they had to choose, 51% prefer Biden and 47% pick Trump. Just among those reluctant to choose between Biden and DeSantis, when pushed to make a choice, 42% support Biden and 58% back DeSantis.

The latest Marquette Law School Poll’s national survey was conducted May 8-18, 2023. The survey interviewed 1,010 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of +/-3.7 percentage points. The sample includes 833 registered voters, with a margin of error of +/-4.1 percentage points. The sample size for registered Republican primary voters is 377, with a margin of error of +/-6.1 percentage points. The sample size for registered Democratic primary voters is 344, with a margin of error of +/-6.3 percentage points. In the May poll, primary voters are those who say they will vote in each party’s primary. In earlier surveys, registered voters who identified with a party or are independents who leaned to a party were asked the primary-vote questions. For simplicity hereafter, these are referred to simply as registered Republican or Democratic voters.

Both Biden and Trump are seen more unfavorably than favorably among registered voters nationwide, with Biden at 37% favorable and 60% unfavorable. Trump is seen favorably by 38% and unfavorably by 59%. While Biden and Trump are virtually universally familiar to voters, 23% say they haven’t heard enough to give a favorability rating for DeSantis, who is viewed favorably by 30% and unfavorably by 47%.

Partisans are quite positive toward their party’s candidates and very negative to the other party’s candidates. Independents regard all three candidates more unfavorably than favorably. Table 1 shows the favorability to Biden, Trump, and DeSantis, by party.

Table 1: Favorability to Biden, Trump, and DeSantis, by party identification, among registered voters

(a) Biden

Party ID	Favorable opinion	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
Republican	5	94	1
Independent	22	66	12
Democrat	77	21	2

(b) Trump

Party ID	Favorable opinion	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
Republican	72	26	2
Independent	20	73	8
Democrat	8	91	1

(c) DeSantis

Party ID	Favorable opinion	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
Republican	58	16	26
Independent	18	44	37
Democrat	3	81	16

Republican primary choices

Trump leads among registered Republican voters, drawing support from 46%, with DeSantis the choice of 25%. Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley receives 5%, businessperson Vivek Ramaswamy is the choice of 3%, and former Vice President Mike Pence is supported by 2%. South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott receives 1%, as do talk radio host Larry Elder and New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu. Former governors Chris Christie and Asa Hutchinson received less than .5% support, while 16% said they were undecided. Table 2 shows the full results.

Table 2: Here are some potential candidates for the Republican presidential nomination. If the primary were today, who would you vote for? Among registered Republican voters.

Candidate	Percent
Donald Trump	46

Ron DeSantis	25
Nikki Haley	5
Vivek Ramaswamy	3
Mike Pence	2
Tim Scott	1
Larry Elder	1
Chris Sununu	1
Chris Christie	*
Asa Hutchinson	*
Undecided	16

*=less than .5%

In the March 2023 Marquette poll, Trump was supported by 40% and DeSantis was the choice of 35%, while Pence was the choice of 5% in that survey.

When asked to choose between only Trump and DeSantis, Trump is the choice of 52% and DeSantis is the choice of 48%. Trump has gained support since November while DeSantis has lost support. The trend is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: 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 Gov. Ron DeSantis? Among registered Republican voters.

Poll dates	Donald Trump	Ron DeSantis
11/15-22/22	40	60
1/9-20/23	36	64
3/13-22/23	46	54
5/8-18/23	52	48

When asked to choose between only Trump and DeSantis, DeSantis picks up 70% or more of the support of those who had previously chosen a candidate other than DeSantis or Trump or were undecided in the multi-candidate question. A handful of respondents shift away from their first choice of Trump or DeSantis in the subsequent two-candidate question.

Table 4: Choice between Trump or DeSantis only, by first choice in multi-candidate

question, among registered Republican voters

Multi-candidate choice Donald Trump Ron DeSantis

Trump	96	4
DeSantis	2	98
Other candidate	23	77
Undecided	30	70

Republican support for a Trump candidacy rose in May to 62%, while 38% would not like him to run. In January, 52% wanted him to run. The full trend is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Would you like to see Donald Trump run for president in 2024, or not? Among registered Republican voters.

Poll dates	Yes	No
11/1-10/21	60	40
1/10-21/22	56	44
3/14-24/22	61	39
5/9-19/22	61	38
7/5-12/22	64	35
9/7-14/22	60	40
11/15-22/22	55	45
1/9-20/23	52	48
5/8-18/23	62	38

Trump's favorability rating among Republican voters rose in May to 72%, up from 66% in March. The full trend is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Trump favorability trend, among registered Republican voters.

Poll dates	Favorable opinion	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
11/1-10/21	70	29	1
1/10-21/22	71	28	1
3/14-24/22	75	23	1
5/9-19/22	75	22	2

7/5-12/22	76	22	2
9/7-14/22	74	25	1
11/15-22/22	67	32	1
1/9-20/23	70	28	2
3/13-22/23	66	31	2
5/8-18/23	72	26	2

DeSantis' favorable rating has declined among Republican voters from a high of 71% in January to 56% in the May poll. This reversed a year of steadily rising favorability in 2022, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: DeSantis favorability trend, among registered Republican voters.

Poll dates	Favorable opinion	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
1/10-21/22	57	9	34
3/14-24/22	57	7	35
5/9-19/22	58	15	27
7/5-12/22	62	9	29
9/7-14/22	65	10	25
11/15-22/22	68	10	22
1/9-20/23	71	10	19
3/13-22/23	69	15	15
5/8-18/23	56	20	24

DeSantis is viewed favorably by Republicans who are also favorable toward Trump, but this has fallen to 64% in May from 80% in March. His favorability among those unfavorable to Trump has also declined. Table 8 shows favorability to DeSantis by favorability to Trump in May and in March.

Table 8: DeSantis favorability, by Trump favorability, among registered Republican voters.

(a) May 2023

Trump favorability	Favorable opinion of DeSantis	Unfavorable opinion	Haven't heard enough
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Favorable opinion	64	15	20
Unfavorable opinion	37		