



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 18, 2023

Polls Show Trump Leading DeSantis in Texas and Florida

Is it too early to count Trump out?

There is a widespread belief among mainstream pundits that not only is Trump unlikely to pull off a general-election victory this time around, but that he cannot even get past the primary.

The recurring narrative from such voices is that even Republican voters are tired of Trump's antics and would rather rally behind a presidential candidate who doesn't have all that "baggage."

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has been cast as the most viable alternative to Trump, and the polls have shown a divide, with a number indicating that DeSantis has a lead while others give the edge to Trump.



AP Images

Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis in 2018

Polling from two of the most hard-right states in the union, Texas and Florida, suggests that Trump still has a significant hold on the base. Support in those two bastions of conservatism could very well translate to winning numbers across the country in Republican primaries, which tend to be decided by the party's most engaged — and, thus, most active — members.

According to an Emerson College Polling [survey](#) published on Friday, 47 percent of Florida's GOP voters stand with Trump, scraping out a three-point lead over DeSantis, whose support was at 44 percent.

It's not surprising that the results in the Sunshine State were close; Florida is home to both men. DeSantis is one of the most popular Republicans the state has seen in recent history, and has earned a reputation as one of the nation's most conservative elected officials. Trump, whose revered status among conservative Republicans is comparable to Ronald Reagan's, resides in Florida and has been doing business in the state for years.

"While 90% of Republican voters approve of DeSantis, that does not translate into a firewall of support over the former President for the nomination in their home state," Emerson College Polling executive director Spencer Kimball said in the survey's summary.

2024 Florida Republican Primary

- Trump — 47%
- DeSantis — 44%
- Pence — 4%
- Haley — 2%
- T. Scott — 1%
- Pompeo — 1%



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— InteractivePolls (@IAPolls2022) [March 17, 2023](#)

While DeSantis is making all the moves typical of a presidential candidate, such as traveling to Iowa and scoring an endorsement from House Freedom Caucus policy chair Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas), he has not yet officially announced his candidacy. When the Emerson College poll looked only at those candidates who are already in the race, Trump's support skyrocketed to 79 percent.

By contrast, the runner-up in a DeSantis-less field was Nikki Haley, at 16 percent.

Per a survey from CWS Research/Defend Texas Liberty PAC, Trump is also leading in Texas.

Breitbart News [noted](#):

The survey showed Trump leading the pack with 43 percent support. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis came in a distant second with 27 percent support. No other candidate came close, as presidential candidate Nikki Haley placed third with five percent support followed by Sen. Ted Cruz and former Vice President Mike Pence, who garnered four percent support each.

Anti-woke businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, who also formally joined the presidential race, garnered two percent support, while Sen. Tim Scott and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saw one percent support each.

Overall, 13 percent remain undecided.

It's noteworthy that in a state where neither candidate has the home advantage, Trump's lead on DeSantis was much wider. This could suggest that while DeSantis enjoys the benefit of home support and local name recognition in the Sunshine State, this will not necessarily translate to the same margin in other states.

To a certain extent, this makes sense. While DeSantis' crusades against the Left in Florida have made him a popular figure among conservatives (and a villain to the Left), the fact that this has all been state-level politics means that outside of Florida, there are likely many casual Republicans who are not as familiar with him. People who closely follow politics may know the name DeSantis, but the average voter tends to know only the big names in national politics and doesn't pay attention to state political players from states outside his own.

Trump, on the other hand, was president. And before that, he was a household-name celebrity. Thus, it's no surprise that he still maintains greater name recognition than DeSantis.

The question is how this will change once DeSantis officially enters the race. Up to this moment, most of the coverage of him has revolved around his highly publicized initiatives in Florida — cracking down on critical race theory, shipping illegal aliens to Martha's Vineyard, etc. But once he files, the media will begin giving him much more coverage. Will this allow him to gain ground on Trump?

There is also the question of how the debates will affect voters. The debate stage will certainly give DeSantis more visibility, which may help him close the margin between him and Trump. But it will also force him to go toe-to-toe with the 45th president, who is known as one of the most charismatic speakers in contemporary American politics.



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Trump is at home and in his element on the debate stage, and he used it expertly to his advantage during the 2016 primary race. Will it help or hurt DeSantis to publicly go at it with his former ally on national TV?



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