



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on July 8, 2023

Worry Abounds in DeSantis Camp as Poll Numbers Stagnate

Tensions between the Trump and DeSantis camps remain high, but the governor of Florida has not yet been able to break the Trump wall in Republican primary polling.

DeSantis' entry into the primary was highly anticipated, as he was expected to be the only candidate who could pose a genuine threat to Donald Trump. While DeSantis has managed to lead the non-Trump field, he still trails the 45th president in nationwide and state polls.

According to the Real [Clear Politics average of polls](#), Trump's support is at 52.4 percent, while DeSantis is down by more than 30 points at 21.5 percent.



AP Images
Ron DeSantis

And in further bad news for DeSantis, his reputation as the second-loudest voice in the room may be diminishing; an [Echelon Insights poll](#) published on Wednesday found that businessman Vivek Ramaswamy is gaining ground. According to that poll, Trump is at 66 percent, DeSantis is at 52 percent, and Ramaswamy is at 40 percent. This is a gain for Ramaswamy, who per the same pollster was in fourth place behind former Vice President Mike Pence back in May.

Ford O'Connell, a Florida-based GOP strategist, told [The Hill](#) that Ramaswamy is more formidable than many initially believed and should not be discounted from the race.

"Everyone goes, my God, this Vivek guy is not going to win, but he's the only guy actually pushing the ideas envelope, and the ideas that he's pushing is actually reinforcing a lot of what Trump is saying," O'Connell said.

DeSantis' unfavorable position in the polls is stirring concern among his team. During a Twitter Space conversation this week, Steve Cortes, a former Trump strategist who now is spokesman for the pro-DeSantis PAC Never Back Down, called Trump the "runaway front-runner" and said DeSantis faces an "uphill battle."

Cortes maintained that DeSantis can still win while acknowledging Trump's commanding lead in the polls, remarking that Trump is helped by the fact that "[t]he former president has debated through two successive presidential cycles, so of course he possesses a lot of experience in that arena."

The Hill noted that the DeSantis camp is far from waving the white flag, continuing to pull in large amounts of fundraising cash:

In a statement to *The Hill* on Wednesday, DeSantis's campaign press secretary Bryan Griffin described the primary as "a marathon, not a sprint."

"Ron DeSantis has been underestimated in every race he has won, and this time will be no



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different,” Griffin said.

... So far, it appears that DeSantis’s bumpy start hasn’t dissuaded donors from lining up behind him. On Thursday, the campaign announced it had raised \$20 million in its first six weeks, though that trailed the more than \$35 million Trump’s campaign raised for the second quarter.

Observers have noted that it’s still early in the race and that things could shift drastically, particularly after the debates begin in August and voters see and hear candidates next to each other on the stage. Some point to the 2008 Republican primary, which was a whirlwind of uncertainty early on and by no means a given that McCain would claim the nomination. Rudy Giuliani, in fact, was initially seen as a strong candidate at the beginning of the race, but the fortunes turned against him.

Looking at the most recent election cycles, however, may inspire less optimism for DeSantis. While it’s true that the general election polls in 2016 understated Trump’s support and repeatedly treated Hillary Clinton as the shoo-in for the presidency, the GOP primary polls were much more accurate in that cycle. Virtually from the beginning, Trump held front-runner status, and he carried that lead in the polls all the way to Cleveland convention.

DeSantis has blamed the media for his poll numbers. During a recent interview, he [argued](#), “Well, I think if you look at the people like the corporate media, who are they going after? Who do they not want to be the nominee? They’re going after me.”

“So, I think if you look at all these people that are responsible for a lot of the ills in our society, they’re targeting me as the person they don’t want to see as the candidate,” the governor added.

A comparison to 2016, however, puts that argument into question. In that election, the media was strongly against Trump and continually churned out anti-Trump coverage. Rather than derail his popularity with the Republican base, however, this coverage only helped him, allowing him to win over Republicans who had long since come to view the mainstream media as their enemy.

So while the negative coverage the mainstream media has given DeSantis likely hurts him with Democrat voters, it’s unlikely that it makes him less popular with the GOP base.

The most likely factor is that Trump still has the most name recognition and favorability among American conservatives.

Speaking of the DeSantis campaign, O’Connell gave his opinion to *The Hill* that “[t]he mistake they made — and again, it’s a mistake most people running for a new office make — they assume people know more about Ron than they actually do.”

While circumstances can still change, it presently appears it will take something drastic to shake up the firm hold Trump has on the base.



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