

FLORIDA POLL: DESANTIS BEATS TRUMP FOR 2024 PRESIDENT

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Conducted July 13-14, 2022 via IVR among more than 600 likely Republican Primary voters throughout the state of Florida. Maximum margin of error of 4.1%. Not commissioned by any political candidate or committee.



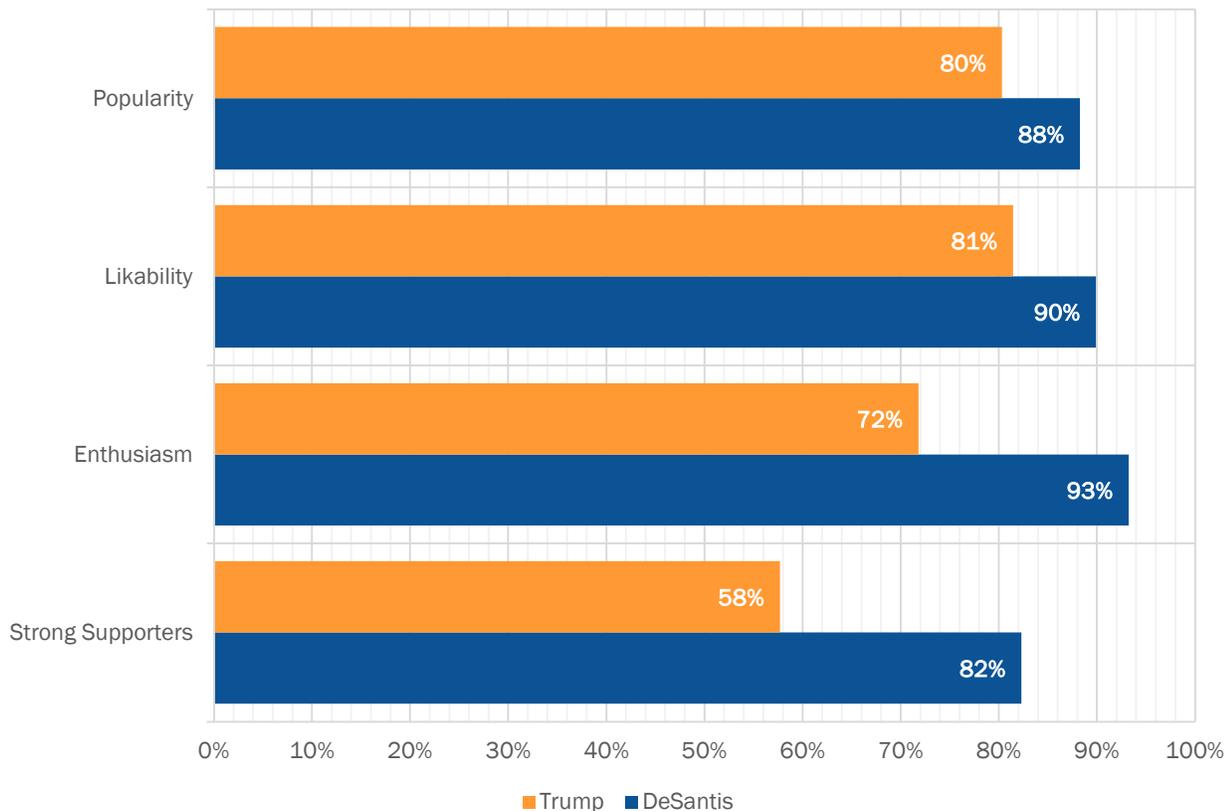


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This poll report dives deeply into the struggle for political preeminence in Florida Republican politics. Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis are clearly the top two names, but there is insufficient recent polling to discern how the two compare. This poll changes that. In the remainder of this report, we discuss DeSantis’s definitive favorability advantages, as well as his historic lead over former president Trump for the 2024 presidential nomination. However, we also identify some hidden silver linings for Trump, especially as they relate to his decision of whether or not to launch – or perhaps when to announce – a 2024 presidential campaign.

FAVORABILITY METRICS

When considering how favorably a candidate is perceived, we consider four metrics derived from a single question: popularity, likability, enthusiasm, and strong supporters.¹ The chart below compares the performance of DeSantis and Trump across these four metrics. You can learn more about how these metrics are calculated in the footnote below.



¹Popularity refers to the total percent of the electorate that views the candidate positively. Likability refers to the percent of opinionated voters (i.e. excluding neutral respondents) who have a positive opinion of the candidate. Enthusiasm refers to the percent of all who view the candidate positively that have a “Very Positive” opinion of them. Finally, Strong Supporters refers to the percent of the electorate who hold a “Very Positive” opinion of the candidate.

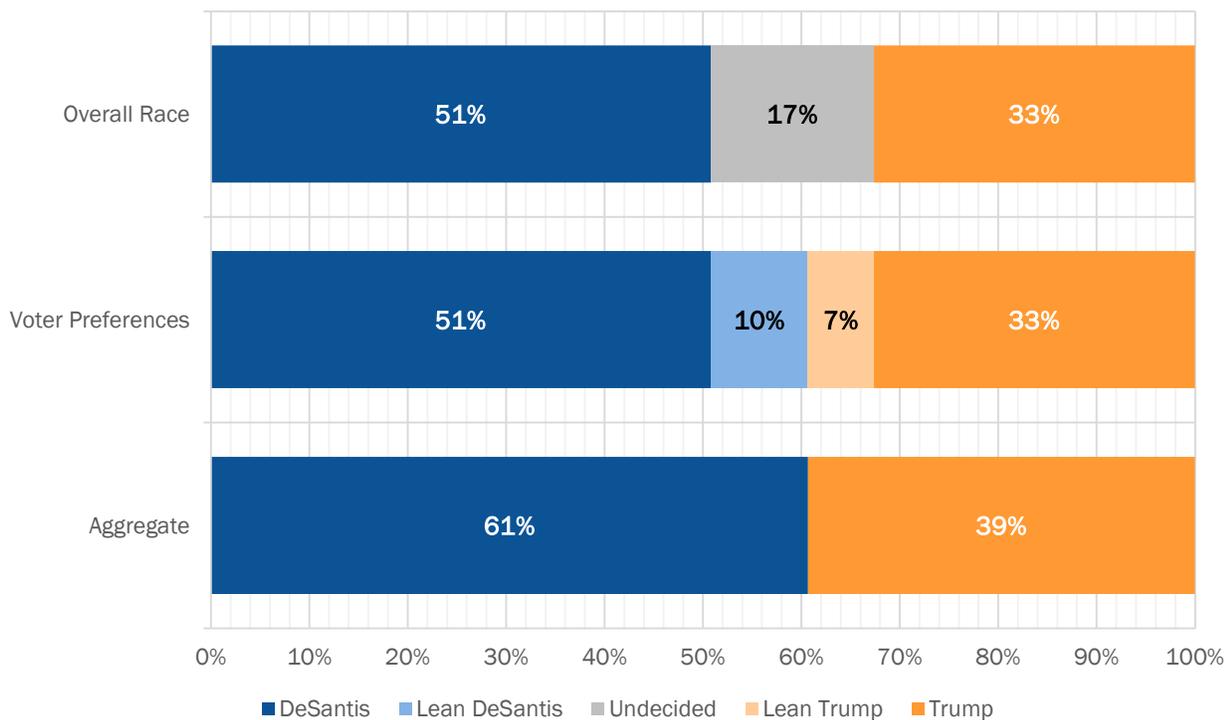


Clearly, DeSantis leads every single category. He is 8% more popular than Trump, 8% more likable, has 21% higher enthusiasm behind him, and a 24% higher number of strong supporters across the state. In other words, Ron DeSantis is officially more popular than Donald Trump in the state of Florida.

2024 PRESIDENTIAL BALLOT

But why is this important? Individual polls we've conducted for private clients across the state of Florida have indicated the same thing, and you might notice that many deep-red primary campaigns have shifted from pro-Trump messaging to pro-DeSantis messaging in recent months. While DeSantis's popularity advantage among Floridians has been established for some time now, his viability against Trump in a potential 2024 bout has been up in the air.

However, our new poll conclusively determines that DeSantis is favored to beat Trump in Florida's Republican Primary for US President in 2024. Not only that, but DeSantis's lead over the former president is the largest ever registered in a publicly-listed 2024 poll.

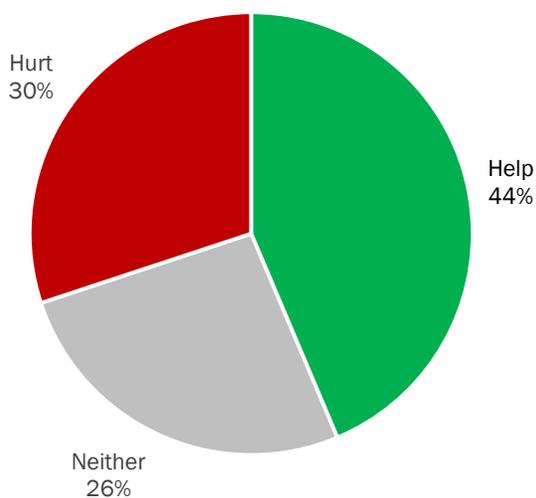


In Florida, 51% of voters want DeSantis as the 2024 nominee, compared to only 33% who want Trump. The 17% who are undecided still prefer DeSantis – 10% lean towards DeSantis while only 7% lean towards Trump. Overall, that means that DeSantis currently holds a 61% to 39% advantage over Trump, a lead which is far outside of the poll's margin of error. Not only is DeSantis unquestionably more popular than Trump in Florida, he is also unquestionably the favorite for the 2024 nomination.



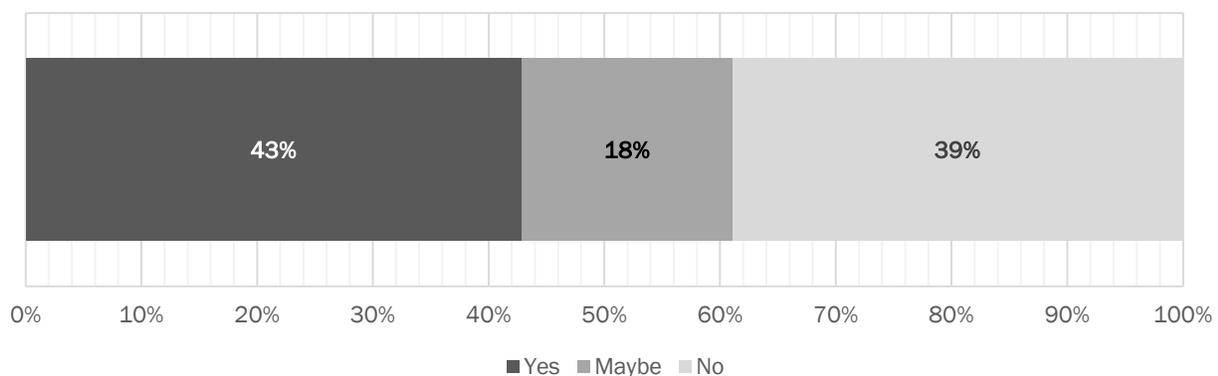
TIMELINE OF TRUMP'S ANNOUNCEMENT

A recent interview between former president Trump and New York Magazine revealed that Trump is questioning whether an announcement before or after the 2022 midterms would be more advantageous for him. A premature announcement from Trump could potentially hurt Republicans in the midterms (according to some of his closest advisors), but it could also cement him as the 2024 frontrunner and discourage other Republicans from joining the race. Particularly, DeSantis and his team have made it clear that they are focused on winning re-election as Florida Governor in 2022, and will certainly not make a 2024 announcement before the midterms. An early Trump announcement could force DeSantis to publicly pit himself *against* Trump, rather than allowing him to announce his candidacy as if the field were wide open.



Former president Trump may not be enthused with the poll results discussed so far, but here's where he could spot some silver linings. First of all, it turns out that Republican voters generally disagree with the notion that a pre-midterm announcement from him would hurt the party's chances of victory in 2022. As the chart on the left indicates, only 30% of voters believe that an imminent Trump announcement would hurt Republicans in the midterms, compared to 44% who believe it would actually help them. The remaining 26% of voters are neutral on the matter.

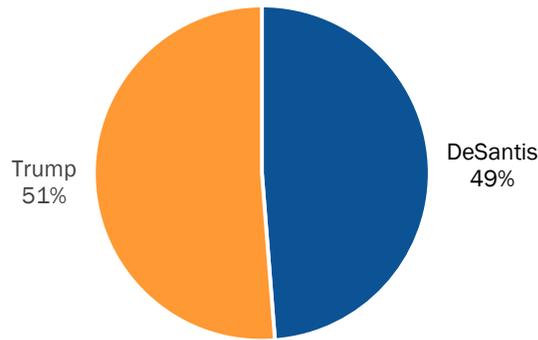
But this is not the only silver lining Trump can identify. We also asked voters whether they would want any other candidate(s) to run against Trump if he were to be the first to announce his candidacy (results are in the chart below). Interestingly, 39% of voters would prefer it if he went unopposed, which is 6% more than originally supported him for the nomination. This 39% includes some DeSantis voters and some undecided voters, suggesting that an early announcement might encourage non-Trump voters to join his camp early and discourage other candidates from even running.





FINAL THOUGHTS

There is one more poll result we'd like to mention. This particular result may raise more questions than it answers, but that's what makes it all the more interesting. We asked respondents who did a better job in their role: Ron DeSantis as Governor of Florida, or Donald Trump as President of the United States? The chart below displays the results.



The vote was close, but interestingly, it favored Trump. 51% of Florida Republicans think Trump did a better job as President than DeSantis did as Governor.

So if voters narrowly think Trump did a better job than DeSantis, why do they overwhelmingly want DeSantis to take the presidential reins? This question goes beyond the scope of our poll, but there are several theories to consider when contemplating this question.

Perhaps voters remember that Trump was unable to win the general election in 2020, and thus are flocking to DeSantis due to his perceived electability. Perhaps Florida Republicans appreciate all that Trump did in his first term in office, but think that a fresh conservative face in the Oval Office could be more effective and exciting. Or, more controversially, perhaps voters are caught up in the recent hype around DeSantis, but deep down have a greater appreciation for Trump.

We do not endorse any of these theories, as our job is simply to report the numbers and explain why they matter. However, as 2024 inches nearer and nearer, the future of our nation may depend on which one is true. As longtime Florida politico and Victory Insights partner Matt Hurley puts it, "2024 may be two years away, but key decision-makers are choosing sides now. Don't take DeSantis's outward focus on 2022 or Trump's intentional ambiguity towards 2024 too seriously. Make no mistake: the race is on, and whether each candidate even files to run is an indication of their confidence that they can win."

While it is true that 2024 is still years away, this poll's results are immediately applicable. The data we've presented provides context for Trump's decision of if (and when) to announce his 2024 candidacy, and it gives the public insight as to where the entire state of Florida currently stands. It should also certainly not be ignored that Florida is only one state, and as it's the state DeSantis currently governs, it's likely that no other state would provide quite as favorable results for him. Nevertheless, the fact that a former president is trailing one of his political apprentices in *any* poll is significant, especially to the degree shown in this poll.

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