

New M3 poll shows Trump and DeSantis in the Lead in Early Primary States – M3

*By: Matt Podgorski**

Donald Trump is unique in many ways, including as a former President running for a third time and as a candidate who defies gravity and improves in polls from news that would end anyone else's career. Republicans still rally around Trump as he fights the Left, and he leads in polls 8 months before the Iowa caucuses. But Ron DeSantis enters the race this week with more money in the bank and broader support among Republicans.

"Trump Builds Huge Lead, says New York Magazine.

"Trump Widens Lead," says The Hill.

"Trump Surge to Huge Lead," says Newsweek.

These are excerpts of just a few headlines last week, shortly after Trump was found by a NY jury to be liable for battery and defamation to a woman who claimed he raped her.

Some (including Donald Trump) would have you believe, because his polling is stronger in the wake of the civil judgement against him, and despite being criminally indicted, that the race for the Republican nomination is effectively over.

This is not so. Far from it.

While former President Trump attracts affection and vocal support from some hard core Republicans, a recent poll by M3 (full details here) reveals that the former President divides Republicans in the early states. More importantly, support for him will quickly diminish if DeSantis performs strongly.

Based on the data, I divide Republicans into three camps with respect to Trump: (1) Trump enthusiasts, (2) Those seeking a credible alternative to Trump, and (3) Anti-Trump.

Those who are Anti-Trump do not necessarily disagree with Trump or dislike him. It includes Republicans who simply think Trump hurts the Republicans' chances of winning the White House and down ballot. It is a clear fact that will indeed happen for any objective observer if Trump is the nominee.

However, there are those Republican voters who want to support Trump as a way to stick it to the Left. There are Republicans, angry about the legal attacks on Trump, who express solidarity with the former President through polling. The treatment of Trump, from the Russia hoax to the flimsy NY indictment, is unprecedented, and telling pollsters that they still support Trump in the wake of that news is a rejection of the Left-controlled news.

However, Republicans are also deeply concerned about radical Democrats' policies and are motivated to win back the presidency.

So, the question I have been considering is: have Republicans effectively decided to vote for Donald Trump next January and February with the nation's future on the line, or is the Republican race still fluid? And which candidate or candidates are the top alternatives to Donald Trump?

To get at these questions, my firm conducted a poll of 521 Republican voters on May 21st in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina.

Here's a summary of interesting results from that poll:

Trump leads with strong support from 60% of respondents in Iowa, 48% in New Hampshire and 40% in South Carolina indicating that, if the election were today, they would probably vote for the former President. This is his third race for President; he has dominated the political landscape for 8 years.

DeSantis enters his first national race as the main alternative to Trump with double digit leads over any other announced candidate for the nomination; 21% of respondents in Iowa and New Hampshire and 18% in South Carolina said they would vote for the young Florida governor if the election were today.

DeSantis has broader support within the Republican Party. We asked respondents to rank their choices for President: DeSantis is the first or second choice of 80% in Iowa, 76% in New Hampshire and 65% in South Carolina, which is five percentage points more than Trump's support in each of these early primary states.

Trump divides the party far more than DeSantis. The former President is the last choice for 30% of Republican primary voters in South Carolina. DeSantis is the last choice of only 11%.

Many Republicans believe Trump can not win independent votes in key swing states. Nearly 40% of respondents in Iowa, 45% in New Hampshire and a majority in South Carolina do not believe that Trump can win in Georgia, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin.

A substantial minority of Trump supporters are ready to switch, already! Between 20% and 30% of the respondents in New Hampshire and South Carolina said that they would switch support from Trump to DeSantis if he were to win the Iowa caucuses.



As we approach the eighth anniversary of Trump's dramatic entrance into national politics, Republicans may have the seven-year itch. Trump still leads, but despite sustaining an unrelenting barrage of negative advertising for months from Trump, DeSantis enters the race as the clear alternative to Trump, and with broader support within the party.

Are Republicans ready to turn the channel and embrace a new leader? Or will they choose to stand through it all with the first candidate of the MAGA movement? My prediction is that they will turn the page for America's future.

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