TEXAS TRENDS 2023

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

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TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
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School of Public Affairs

Texas Trends 2023
2024 Texas Republican Presidential Primary

In 2021, the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston and the Executive Master of Public Administration Program in the Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University launched a five-year survey project to study Texas's changing population. In addition to a representative sample of all Texans, the 2023 survey includes an oversample of Black Texans to allow for an objective and statistically valid report of their diverse opinions and experiences with a level of detail that is not possible in standard surveys. The third survey was fielded between October 6 and October 18, 2023 in English and Spanish, with 1,914 YouGov respondents 18 years of age and older, resulting in a confidence interval of +/-2.2. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education and are representative of the Texas adult population. The results of this 2023 statewide survey will be presented in six separate reports: state propositions, vouchers, the 2024 primary elections, electric vehicles, extreme weather, and climate change.

This report examines the vote intention of likely voters in the 2024 Texas Republican Presidential Primary as well as in a hypothetical 2024 GOP two-candidate primary faceoff between Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis.

Executive Summary

58% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Donald Trump.

14% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Ron DeSantis.

6% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Nikki Haley.

3% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Vivek Ramaswamy.

3% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Mike Pence.

2% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Chris Christie.

2% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Tim Scott.

1% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Asa Hutchinson.

1% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters intend to vote for Ryan Binkley.

1% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters combined intend to vote for Doug Burgum, Larry Elder, Will Hurd, and Perry Johnson.

9% of likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters are unsure of how they intend to vote.

Hurd dropped out of the race midway through the fielding of the poll while Elder and Pence dropped out after the fieldwork had been completed.

In a hypothetical two-candidate race between Trump and DeSantis, Trump's vote intention is 66% while DeSantis's is 25%, with 9% either unsure (5%) or indicating that they would not vote if these were the only two candidates (4%).

In a hypothetical two-candidate contest between Trump and DeSantis, Haley and Christie voters overwhelming prefer DeSantis while Ramaswamy and Pence voters overwhelmingly prefer Trump.
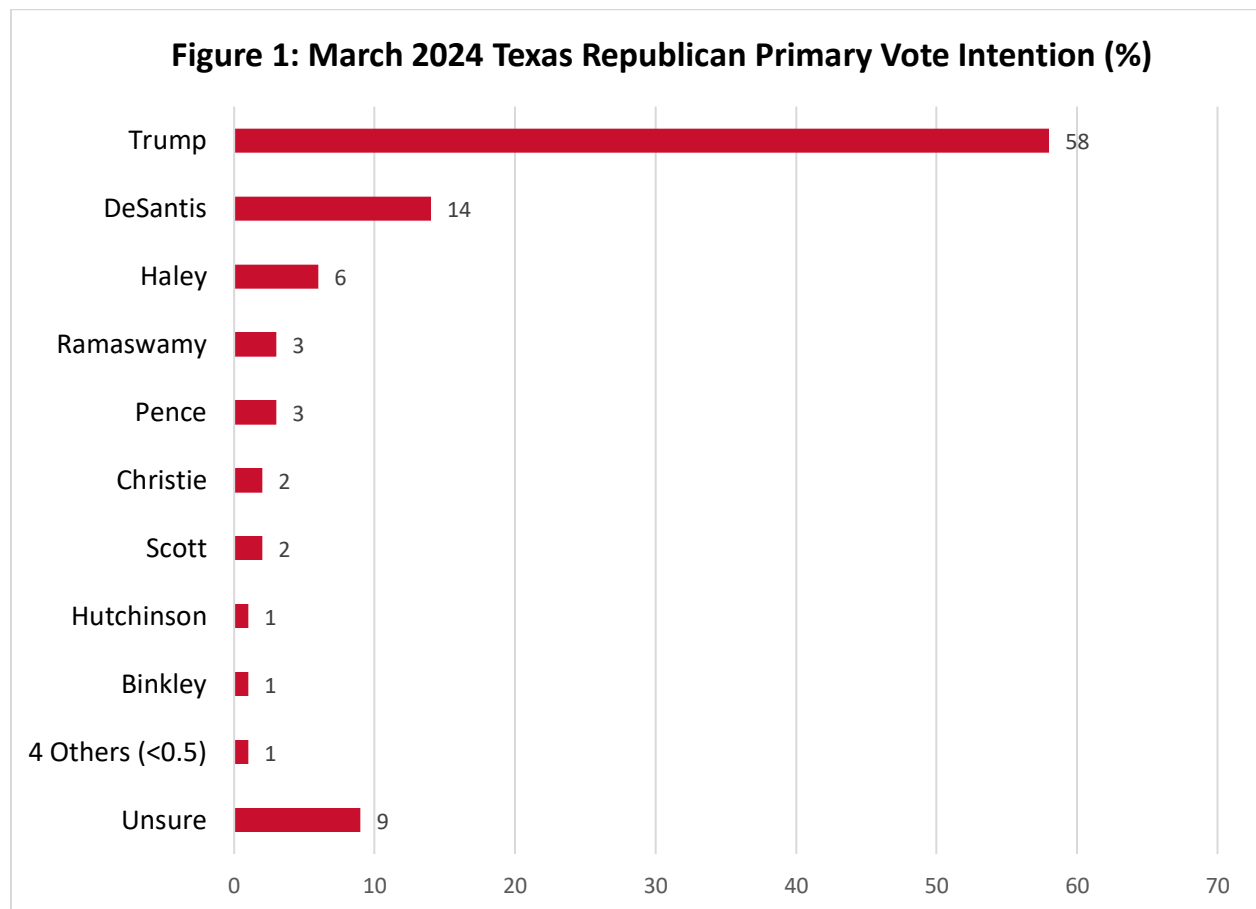
Survey Population Demographics

The population for this report consists of the 524 Texas registered voters who indicated that they planned to vote in the 2024 Texas Republican presidential primary, with a confidence interval of +/- 4.3. Men represent 52% of this population of likely Republican voters, and women 48%. White Texans account for more than two-thirds (69%) of these likely GOP voters, followed by Latino Texans (22%), Black Texans (3%) and other Texans (6%). Regarding generations, 46% of this population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 27% to Generation X (Gen-X) (1965-1980), and 27% to the combined Millennial (1981-1996) and Generation Z (Gen-Z) (1997-2012) cohort. The highest level of educational attainment of 28% of this population is a high school degree or less, with the remaining population split between those whose highest level of educational attainment is a two-year degree or some college (29%) or a four-year degree or post-graduate degree (43%). More than two-fifths (43%) of this GOP primary population reports attending church/religious services (excluding weddings and funerals) at least once a week, 10% once or twice a month, 29% a few times a year or seldom, and 16% never. Texans who identify as Republican account for 88% of this population and who identify as Democrat 3%, with 9% identifying as Independent. Finally, 34% of these likely GOP primary voters identify as very conservative, 37% as conservative, 23% as moderate and 6% as either liberal or very liberal.

Vote Intention in the 2024 Texas Republican Presidential Primary

Texas registered voters who indicated that they planned to vote in the March 2024 Texas Republican presidential primary were asked, if the primary election were held today, who would they vote for. Their options (presented to the respondents in a randomized order) were: Dallas
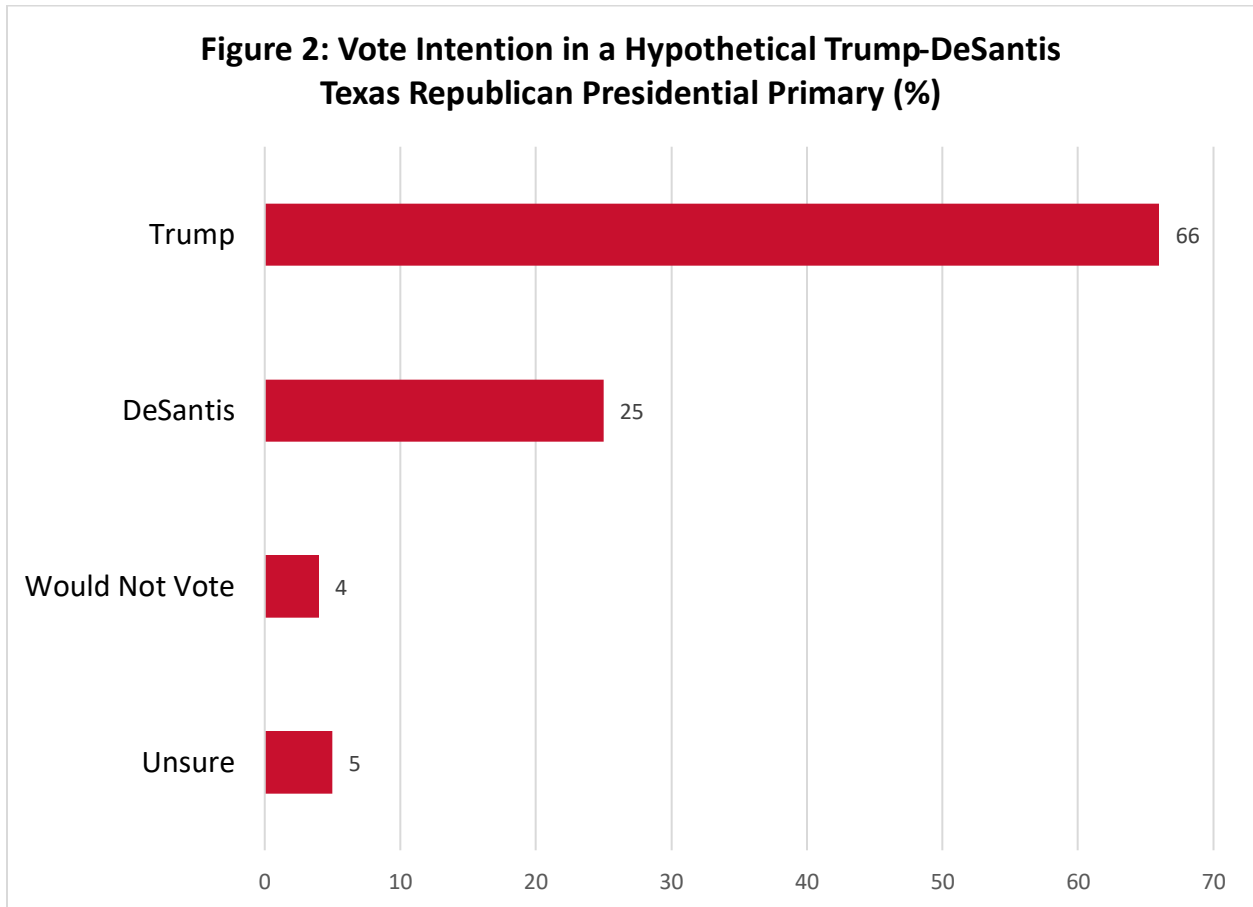
businessman Ryan Binkley, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, media personality Larry Elder, former UN Ambassador and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, former Texas Congressman Will Hurd, former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, Michigan businessman Perry Johnson, former Vice President and Indiana Governor Mike Pence, Ohio businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, South Carolina U.S. Senator Tim Scott, and former President Donald Trump. Respondents also had the option of answering "don't know/unsure". The survey was midway through its fieldwork when Hurd dropped out of the race, but finished its fieldwork prior to Elder's, Johnson's and Pence's respective decisions to end their candidacies.

Figure 1 provides the vote intention for these 13 prospective presidential candidates as well as for the "don't know/unsure" option. Nine of the candidates garnered the vote intention of 1% or more of these likely 2024 Texas Republican primary voters, while the remaining four (Burgum, Elder, Hurd, Johnson) all combined netted a vote intention of 1%. Trump leads the field by a gargantuan margin, with a vote intention of 58%, more than four times that of the second-place candidate, DeSantis (14%). The vote intentions of all of the remaining candidates are in the mid to low single digits, ranging from a high of 6% for Haley to lows of 1% for Hutchinson and 1% Binkley, with Ramaswamy (3%), Pence (3%), Christie (2%) and Scott (2%) in between, and with 9% of these likely voters unsure about their vote intention.

Figure 1: March 2024 Texas Republican Primary Vote Intention (%)

Vote Intention in a Hypothetical Trump vs. DeSantis Faceoff

Figure 2 is based on a question that asked these same likely GOP primary voters what their vote intention would be if there were only two GOP candidates, Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis. The respondents were also given the option of answering that they were unsure of who they would vote for under this two-candidate scenario or that they would not vote if these were the only two candidates on the ballot in March.

Figure 2: Vote Intention in a Hypothetical Trump-DeSantis Texas Republican Presidential Primary (%)

Category	Value
Trump	66
DeSantis	25
Would Not Vote	4
Unsure	5

In a Trump vs. DeSantis faceoff, 66% of these likely GOP primary voters would vote for Trump while 25% would vote for DeSantis. The remaining 9% are split between those who remain unsure how they would vote under this scenario (5%) and those who indicate they would not vote if these were the only two candidates (4%). When the candidate pool was winnowed down to Trump and DeSantis, Trump saw his vote intention rise eight percentage points from 58% to 66% while DeSantis saw his vote intention rise eleven percentage points from 14% to 25%.

Table 1 details the distribution of the vote intention in a hypothetical Trump vs. DeSantis faceoff, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, educational attainment, church attendance, ideological orientation and partisan identification.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Groups & Vote Intention in a Hypothetical Trump-DeSantis Primary

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Trump	DeSantis
Gender	Women	65	26
	Men	67	24
Ethnicity/Race	White	62	29
	Latino	79	16
Generation	Silent/Boomer	61	29
	Gen-X	66	26
	Millennial/Gen-Z	76	16
Education	High School or Less	74	19
	2-Yr Degree/Some College	76	17
	4-Yr Degree/Post-Grad	55	34
Church Attendance	Once a Week or More	67	26
	A Few Times a Year/Seldom	61	28
	Never	70	22
Ideology	Moderate	58	32
	Conservative	62	27
	Very Conservative	77	20
Partisan ID	Republican	69	24
	Independent	55	32
Overall		66	25

There do not exist any noteworthy gender differences in vote intention for Trump and DeSantis.

Latino Republican primary voters are significantly more likely than white Republican primary voters to intend to vote for Trump (79% vs. 62%) and significantly less likely than white voters to intend to vote for DeSantis (16% vs. 29%).

Members of the combined Millennial/Gen-Z cohort (76%) are significantly more likely than members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (61%) to intend to vote for Trump.

Republican primary voters whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school degree or less (74%) and a two-year degree or some college (76%) are significantly more likely than GOP primary voters whose highest level of educational attainment is a four-year degree or a postgraduate degree (55%) to intend to vote for Trump. Conversely, GOP primary voters with a four-year or postgraduate degree (34%) are significantly more likely to intend to vote for DeSantis

than are GOP primary voters whose highest level of educational attainment is high school degree or less (19%) or a two-year degree or some college (17%).

GOP primary voters who identify ideologically as moderate are significantly less likely than GOP primary voters who identify as very conservative to intend to vote for Trump (58% vs. 77%) and significantly more likely to intend to vote for DeSantis (32% vs. 20%).

Table 2 contains the proportion of likely voters who supported the candidates in Figure 1 with a vote intention of 2% or greater who would vote for Trump or for DeSantis in a race featuring only these two candidates. Keeping in mind the small proportions of the vote intention for these five candidates (ranging from 6% to 2%), two findings stand out. First, an overwhelming majority of Haley (66%) and Christie (64%) voters would back DeSantis if he was their only choice other than Trump. Second, an overwhelming majority of Ramaswamy (69%) and Pence (60%) voters would back Trump if he was their only option other than DeSantis.

Table 2. Distribution of Other Candidate Voters in Trump-DeSantis Faceoff (%)

Candidate	Trump	DeSantis	Wouldn't Vote/Unsure
Haley	10	66	24
Ramaswamy	69	21	10
Pence	60	7	33
Christie	0	64	36
Scott	56	22	22

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