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Marquette Law School Poll of Wisconsin voters finds Gov. Evers approval up, GOP presidential primary razor thin between Trump and DeSantis, and Biden with bigger lead over Trump than over DeSantis

Biden leads Trump by 9, DeSantis by 2 in hypothetical head-to-heads

MILWAUKEE – A new Marquette University Law School Poll survey of Wisconsin voters finds 57% approve of the job Gov. Tony Evers is doing as governor and 39% disapprove. In October 2022, 46% approved and 47% disapproved. Despite the governor's approval, 57% think the state is on the wrong track, while 40% say it is headed in the right direction—a minimal change from the October survey.

Other headlines

- *Among Republicans and independents who lean Republican, the GOP presidential primary is a near-even divide, with 31% supporting former President Donald Trump and 30% supporting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Former Vice President Mike Pence is the choice of 6% and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott receives 5%.*
- *If the election were held today and DeSantis were the GOP nominee against Biden, it would be a very close race, with 49% for Biden, 47% for DeSantis, and 4% declining to choose. Biden has a materially larger lead over Trump in a hypothetical matchup, with 52% for Biden to Trump's 43% and 4% undecided.*

The survey was conducted June 8-13, 2023, interviewing 913 Wisconsin registered voters, with a margin of error of +/-4.3 percentage points. The sample includes 419 Republicans and independents who lean Republican and were asked about their preferences in the Republican presidential primary, with a margin of error of +/-6.5 percentage points. The Democratic primary preference was asked of 453 Democrats and independents who lean Democratic, with a margin of error of +/-6 percentage points.

State approval

[Table 1](#) shows approval of Governor Evers by partisanship in the current poll and, for comparison, in October 2022. (All results in the tables are stated as percentages; the precise wording of the questions can be found in the online link noted above.)

Table 1: Evers approval, by party identification

(a) June 2023

Party ID	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know	Refused
Republican	17	79	4	0
Independent	60	35	5	0
Democrat	93	4	1	1

(b) October 2022

Party ID	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know	Refused
Republican	5	90	4	0
Independent	44	45	8	3
Democrat	94	2	3	0

Among registered voters, 57% think the state is on the wrong track, while 40% say it is headed in the right direction. In October 2022, 58% said the state was on the wrong track and 34% said it was moving in the right direction. Partisan differences on this question are shown in [Table 2](#). Opinion is slightly less polarized by party in June than was the case on the eve of the 2022 election.

Table 2: Wisconsin headed in right direction or wrong track, by party identification

(a) June 2023

Party ID	Right direction	Wrong track	Don't know	Refused
Republican	23	77	0	0
Independent	44	53	3	0
Democrat	53	43	4	0

(b) October 2022

Party ID	Right direction	Wrong track	Don't know	Refused
Republican	12	84	4	1
Independent	34	59	7	0
Democrat	57	28	13	3

Voters remain negative about how government in Wisconsin is working, with 64% saying it is “broken” and 32% saying it is working as intended. Unlike many measures of political opinion, there is very little difference by partisanship in this view, as shown in [Table 3](#), with about two-thirds of each partisan group saying government is broken.

Table 3: Wisconsin government working as intended or broken, by party identification

Party ID	Working as intended	Is broken	Don't know	Refused
Republican	30	68	2	0
Independent	34	64	2	1
Democrat	31	64	5	0

Biden approval

Approval of how Joe Biden is handling his job as president is 45%, with disapproval at 53%. In October 2022, 41% approved and 54% disapproved. [Table 4](#) shows approval remains highly polarized by party, with independents becoming somewhat more approving of Biden since October.

Table 4: Biden approval by party identification

(a) June 2023

Party ID	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know	Refused
Republican	1	97	1	0
Independent	46	52	1	0
Democrat	89	9	1	1

(b) October 2022

Party ID	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know	Refused
Republican	3	96	2	0
Independent	36	56	7	2
Democrat	90	9	1	0

Presidential primary outlook

Among Republicans and independents who lean Republican, the GOP presidential primary is a near-even divide, with 31% supporting former President Donald Trump and 30% supporting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Former Vice President Mike Pence is the choice of 6% and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott receives 5%. The full list of candidates is shown in [Table 5](#). A substantial 21% say they have not decided whom to support.

Table 5: Republican presidential primary preferences, among Republicans and independents who lean Republican (= less than 0.5%)*

Response	Percent
Donald Trump	31
Ron DeSantis	30
Mike Pence	6
Tim Scott	5
Nikki Haley	3
Vivek Ramaswamy	3
Chris Christie	1
Asa Hutchinson	*
Larry Elder	*
Doug Burgum	0
Haven't decided	21

When Republicans were asked whom they would pick if the choice were only between Trump and DeSantis, DeSantis is the choice of 57% and Trump is the pick of 41%. [Table 6](#) shows how preferences divide when respondents are limited to only Trump and DeSantis. When forced to choose, those whose first choice is someone other than DeSantis or Trump pick DeSantis by 74% to Trump's 25%. Among those who said they were undecided among the full slate (Table 5), 65% choose DeSantis and 28% choose Trump, while 7% continue to not choose.

Table 6: Choice of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents when limited to picking Trump or DeSantis

GOP 1st choice	Donald Trump	Ron DeSantis	Don't know
DeSantis	1	98	1
Trump	98	2	0
Other candidate	25	74	1
Undecided	28	65	7

The survey asked favorability of DeSantis, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Pence, and Trump. Among Republicans and independents who lean Republicans, the results are shown in [Table 7](#). Trump and DeSantis have nearly equal favorability ratings, but DeSantis has a better (lower) unfavorable rating and more responses of "haven't heard enough." Pence is better known than DeSantis or Haley, and all candidates are viewed more favorably than unfavorably among GOP voters.

Table 7: Favorability ratings, among Republicans and independents who lean Republican

Candidate	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough	Don't know/refused
Trump	68	30	2	1
DeSantis	67	14	20	0
Pence	52	34	13	2
Haley	38	10	47	5

Among Democrats and independents who lean Democratic, Biden is the first choice of 49%, followed by 9% who prefer Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and 3% who choose Marianne Williamson. A sizable 39% say they are undecided.

While many Democratic voters say they are undecided, Biden's favorability rating is 83%, and his unfavorability is 15%, among all Democrats and independents who lean Democratic. [Table 8](#) shows Biden favorability by choice of primary candidate. He is rated more favorably than unfavorably even among those supporting Kennedy or Williamson and among those who are undecided.

Table 8: Biden favorability, by first choice in primary, among Democrats and independents who lean Democratic

First choice	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough
Biden	97	2	1
Kennedy or Williamson	60	39	1
Undecided	73	24	4

2024 general election

If the election were held today and DeSantis were the GOP nominee against Biden, it would be a very close race in Wisconsin, with 49% for Biden, 47% for DeSantis, and 4% declining to choose. These responses include those initially undecided who were then asked "if you had to choose."

Biden has a larger lead over Trump in a similar hypothetical matchup, with 52% for Biden to Trump's 43% and 4% undecided. These responses, too, include those who were initially undecided but were then asked "if you had to choose."

[Table 9](#) shows the breakdown of vote choices by party identification. Republicans are virtually equal in their support of either DeSantis or Trump. Independents prefer Biden over DeSantis, but Biden does even better among independents when Trump is the nominee.

Table 9: General-election vote, by party identification

(a) DeSantis vs. Biden

Party ID	Ron DeSantis	Joe Biden	Haven't decided	Don't know/Refused
Republican	94	2	2	1
Independent	44	52	2	3
Democrat	3	94	2	1

(b) Trump vs. Biden

Party ID	Donald Trump	Joe Biden	Haven't decided	Don't know/Refused
Republican	93	5	1	0
Independent	38	56	4	3
Democrat	2	97	1	1

Favorability for Wisconsin political figures

Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who is up for reelection in 2024, is viewed favorably by 40% and unfavorably by 37%, while 22% say they haven't heard enough to have an opinion. In October 2022, she was seen favorably by 37% and unfavorably by 37%, with 17% saying they didn't know enough. [Table 10](#) shows her favorability by party identification.

Table 10: Baldwin favorability, by party identification

Party ID	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough
Republican	9	75	15
Independent	37	34	29
Democrat	76	4	19

Potential Republican opponents to Baldwin have yet to declare their intention to run. The survey asked about Rep. Tom Tiffany, Madison businessman Eric Hovde, and former Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke. The poll also asked about Rep. Mike Gallagher, who stated while polling was underway that he would not be a candidate.

None of these candidates is as well-known as Baldwin, which is not surprising at this stage of a race. Even sitting members of Congress are not well known outside their districts. [Table 11](#) shows the favorability ratings of these four Republican figures, first among all registered voters and then among Republicans and independents who lean Republican. Clarke is the best known of the four, while Hovde is least known. Hovde ran in the GOP Senate primary in 2012. None of the four is substantially better known among Republicans (including leaners) than in the larger electorate, but they are all viewed more favorably in their party (including leaners) among those who say they have heard enough to have an opinion than they are in the comparable group in the larger electorate.

Table 11: Favorability ratings of possible GOP Senate candidates

(a) Among all registered voters

Candidate	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough
Tom Tiffany	12	13	73
Mike Gallagher	15	11	71
Eric Hovde	4	8	85
David Clarke	25	23	50

(b) Among Republicans and independents who lean Republican

Candidate	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough
Tom Tiffany	22	4	73
Mike Gallagher	27	2	70
Eric Hovde	7	7	84
David Clarke	48	8	42

Sen. Ron Johnson, who won reelection to a third term in November 2022, is seen favorably by 37% and unfavorably by 50%, with 12% saying they haven't heard enough about him. In October 2022, just before the election, Johnson was rated favorably by 43% and unfavorably by 46%, with 7% not having heard enough. [Table 12](#) shows Johnson's current favorability by party identification.

Table 12: Johnson favorability, by party identification

Party ID	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough
Republican	82	9	8
Independent	29	53	17
Democrat	3	87	7

Policy issues

There has been modest change in views of abortion policy since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, as shown in [Table 13](#). There have been a slight increase in the percent saying abortion should be legal in all cases and a similar decline in the percent saying it should be illegal in all cases. In the current survey, 66% say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, and 31% say it should be illegal in all or most cases.

Table 13: Abortion policy trend, June 2022-June 2023

Poll dates	Legal in all cases	Legal in most cases	Illegal in most cases	Illegal in all cases	Don't know	Refused
6/14-20/22	27	31	24	11	5	2
8/10-15/22	30	35	25	5	3	1
6/8-13/23	32	34	25	6	1	1

Similarly, 64% say they oppose the U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe*, while 31% favor that decision. [Table 14](#) shows the breakdown by party identification. A majority of Republicans favor the Court's decision, while a majority of independents and a large majority of Democrats oppose the ruling.

Table 14: Favor or oppose overturning *Roe v. Wade*, by party identification

Party ID	Favor	Oppose
Republican	63	33
Independent	27	69
Democrat	5	92

The Wisconsin legislature approved and Evers signed a bill to increase state aid to counties and municipalities, which is known as shared revenue. A majority of registered voters, 70%, support increasing such aid, while 20% are opposed to an increase. [Table 15](#) shows support by party identification, with a majority of each partisan group favoring an increase.

Table 15: Favor or oppose increasing shared revenue, by party identification

Party ID	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Republican	53	39	8
Independent	73	17	9
Democrat	85	6	8

Support for increasing shared revenue is high across the regions of the state, and especially so in Milwaukee County, as shown in [Table 16](#).

Table 16: Favor or oppose increasing shared revenue, by region

Region	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Milwaukee County (includes city)	78	18	4
Rest of Milwaukee media market	64	27	8
Madison media market	72	16	11
Green Bay media market	71	20	7
Rest of north & west of state	71	18	10

The public is divided over giving cities and counties the ability to increase sales taxes to support local government programs. Forty-three percent favor allowing such tax increases, while 53% are opposed. As shown in [Table 17](#), the regional differences are notable on this policy, which is directed to the City of Milwaukee and to Milwaukee County. A slight majority of respondents in Milwaukee County (as always, including the city) favor allowing a sales tax increase, but the sample size is small, 120 respondents, with a correspondingly large margin of error of +/-11.7 percentage points.

Table 17: Favor or oppose allowing sales tax increase, by region

Region	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Milwaukee County (includes city)	52	48	0
Rest of Milwaukee media market	36	59	4
Madison media market	56	37	5
Green Bay media market	41	57	2
Rest of north & west of state	35	60	3

More registered voters say they prefer to reduce property taxes, 50%, than say they would like to increase spending on public schools, 47%. Since 2018, the percent more concerned about taxes has moved up while those favoring school spending has declined. The full trend on this question since 2013 is shown in [Table 18](#).

Table 18: Which is more important, reducing property taxes or increasing public school spending

Poll dates	Reducing property taxes	Increasing spending on public schools	Don't know
3/11-13/13	49	46	4
5/6-9/13	49	46	4
4/7-10/15	40	54	5
2/25-3/1/18	33	63	3
6/13-17/18	35	59	5
8/15-19/18	32	61	5
9/12-16/18	38	57	5
10/3-7/18	37	57	6
10/24-28/18	40	55	4
1/16-20/19	39	55	6
1/8-12/20	41	55	4
2/19-23/20	38	56	5
8/3-8/21	42	52	5
4/19-24/22	46	50	4
8/10-15/22	43	52	5
9/6-11/22	41	51	5
10/3-9/22	42	52	5
10/24-11/1/22	46	48	5
6/8-13/23	50	47	3

Satisfaction with public schools in the community is shown in [Table 19](#). About two-thirds say they are very satisfied or satisfied, while 31% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Table 19: Satisfaction with public schools in your community

Poll dates	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
4/26-29/12	23	43	17	10	4
5/9-12/12	23	44	18	7	5
5/23-26/12	23	48	17	7	4
4/7-10/15	25	50	16	5	2
3/13-16/17	25	49	14	6	4
9/12-16/18	18	46	17	8	6
1/8-12/20	15	44	22	11	6
8/3-8/21	22	47	15	6	7
10/26-31/21	25	35	18	13	8
4/19-24/22	16	47	19	13	4
9/6-11/22	19	43	20	11	7
6/8-13/23	13	53	23	8	2

A majority, 54%, favor allowing all students statewide to use publicly funded vouchers to attend private or religious schools, while 44% are opposed to this. Support for vouchers varies by region of the state, but the Madison media market is the only area without a majority in favor, as shown in [Table 20](#).

Table 20: Support or oppose vouchers, by region

Region	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Milwaukee County	59	41	0
Rest of Milwaukee media market	62	35	2
Madison media market	36	62	1
Green Bay media market	50	48	2
Rest of north & west of state	59	40	1

While a majority support vouchers, when asked if it were a choice between increasing state support for students to attend private schools and increasing support for public schools, a majority, 71%, favor increased support for public schools, while 28% prefer increasing support for attending private schools. On this choice, majorities in each region of the state prefer support for public schools, as shown in [Table 21](#).

Table 21: Increase state support for private or public schools, by region

Region	Private schools	Public schools
Milwaukee County	26	74
Rest of Milwaukee media market	32	67
Madison media market	25	74
Green Bay media market	25	74
Rest of north & west of state	30	68

About half of registered voters say they are very concerned (22%) or somewhat concerned (29%) about the safety of the water supply in their community, while 31% are not too concerned and 19% are not at all concerned. Concern is highest in Milwaukee County, and lowest in the Madison media market, shown in [Table 22](#).

Table 22: Concern about safety of water supply, by region

Region	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned
Milwaukee County	26	32	34	8
Rest of Milwaukee media market	20	28	31	21
Madison media market	16	27	37	20
Green Bay media market	25	31	28	16
Rest of north & west of state	24	26	27	23

Somewhat higher percentages are concerned about long-lasting chemicals, known as PFAS, contaminating their drinking water, with 34% very concerned, 35% somewhat concerned, 19% not too concerned, and 9% not at all concerned. Concern specifically about PFAS is higher in each region, as shown in [Table 23](#), than general concern about safety of the water supply (Table 22).

Table 23: Concern about PFAS contamination of drinking water, by region

Region	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned
Milwaukee County	38	39	18	5
Rest of Milwaukee media market	34	29	26	9
Madison media market	35	34	20	7
Green Bay media market	29	43	12	10
Rest of north & west of state	34	33	17	13

About the Marquette Law School Poll

The Marquette Law School Poll is the most extensive statewide polling project in Wisconsin history. The survey was conducted June 8-13, 2023, interviewing 913 Wisconsin registered voters, with a margin of

error of +/-4.3 percentage points. The sample includes 419 Republicans and independents who lean Republican who were asked about their preferences in the Republican presidential primary, with a margin of error of +/-6.5 percentage points. The Democratic primary preference was asked of 453 Democrats and independents who lean Democratic, with a margin of error of +/-6 percentage points.

The survey was conducted with a hybrid sample of 715 respondents selected from the Wisconsin voter registration list and 198 selected from the SSRS Opinion Panel, the latter group drawn from postal addresses across the state and invited to take part in surveys online. The interview was conducted online with 666 respondents and by telephone with a live interviewer with 247 respondents. Full details of the methodology are contained in the methodology statement at the link below.

The partisan makeup of the sample is 29% Republican, 28% Democratic, and 41% independent. Since January 2020, the long-term partisan balance has been 30% Republican and 28% Democratic, with 41% independent.

The entire questionnaire, methodology statement, full results, and breakdowns by demographic groups are available at law.marquette.edu/poll/results-and-data.

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