New University of Nevada, Reno election poll shows Lombardo and Laxalt with big leads

Poll suggests competitive November races loom, polarization on abortion and election issues

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RENO, Nev. - As voting in the 2022 primary elections begins, the results of a [new University of Nevada, Reno poll of Nevadans](#) released today finds clear leaders in the Republican primaries, close elections in November and persistent polarization on key issues.

The [Nevada Election Survey Project](#) primary poll, which asked 1,100 Nevadans about their views on primary candidates, state and national officials, and issues like abortion, election administration and the economy, found Joe Lombardo with a 33 point lead in the Republican governor's primary over his closest competitor, Dean Heller. Adam Laxalt leads Sam Brown by 26 points in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate.

The poll also hints at close governor and U.S. Senate races in November. In a hypothetical matchup between Steve Sisolak and Joe Lombardo for governor, 43% of Nevadans said they planned to vote for Sisolak, compared to 31% for Lombardo, while 16% remain undecided. 48% plan to vote for Catherine Cortez Masto, compared to 27% for Adam Laxalt, while 14% remain undecided.

Although the Democratic incumbents have clear leads, these results suggest potential ceilings of voter support for both Governor Sisolak and Senator Cortez Masto. "No matter the matchup, even with less competitive candidates, they each received a similar percentage of support," notes Jeremy Gelman, one of the University of Nevada, Reno political scientists who fielded the poll.

"This suggests they have a ceiling of support right now, somewhere in the mid to upper 40s, with the rest of the electorate looking for an alternative choice. Once voters learn more about the Republican candidates, we expect polls in the fall to be much closer."

Nevadans remain polarized on key issues. In anticipation of the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade later this summer, 53% of Nevadans support keeping the state's current law that allows for legal abortion through 24 weeks of pregnancy, while 34% prefer to reduce the number of weeks an abortion is legal. 57% believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases and over 75% of Nevadans believe it should be legal if a pregnancy threatens the women's life or health, or is the result of rape.

The poll also found that although most Nevadans believe that ballots are counted accurately in the state (63%) and that President Joe Biden's election win in November 2020 was legitimate (62%), partisan divisions on election administration persist. 37% of Republicans believe votes are counted accurately in Nevada and 32% agree or strongly agree that Biden won enough votes to win the presidency in November 2020.

Nevadans views on other issues and support for politicians and U.S. political institutions are also polarized. Although inflation is a concern across the political spectrum, Democrats and Republicans disagree on what other issues are most important. Democrats rate health care, inflation, climate change, crime and water conservation as their top issues.

Republicans rate inflation, crime, immigration, free speech and health care as the most pressing. COVID-19 rates outside the top 10 of important issues for Democrats and is the sixth least important issue for Republicans. Gun policy is rated more important for Democrats than Republicans, although most respondents completed the poll prior to the mass shootings in Buffalo, N.Y. and Uvalde, Texas.

48% of Nevadans disapprove of how President Biden is handling his job. Governor Sisolak and Senator Cortez Masto fare better with 35% and 32% disapproving, respectively.

Methodology

The Nevada Election Survey Project primary poll was conducted between May 17-27, 2022 and consists of 1,127 Nevadans. 1,048 respondents completed an online survey conducted by Lucid, which included a target of 25% Latino/Hispanic respondents. 79 respondents were recruited by a mailer sent to a random sample of 2,500 rural Nevadans. The summary findings include both samples. The overall margin of error is +/- 3.5. The margin of error for subgroups is larger due to smaller sample sizes. To generalize to the state of Nevada, the data is weighted based on demographics and political characteristics including age, race/ethnicity, income, education, gender and location in Nevada (Washoe, Clark or Other). Weight targets were calculated using the American Community Survey (ACS) and the state of Nevada voter file (as of May 5, 2022). The authors can be contacted at nesp@unr.edu.

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