

Poll shows tight 2028 Democratic primary

Voters consider Vance likely GOP candidate

Fernando Cervantes Jr.
USA TODAY

As buzz around potential 2028 presidential candidates grows, a new poll shows a tight race for the Democratic nomination but a clear GOP front-runner.

The poll released by YouGov/Bowling Green State University found that a vice presidential face-off could be in the cards in 2028 as former Vice President Kamala Harris and current Vice President JD Vance lead their respective primaries.

Both Harris and Vance have now led in a series of early 2028 primary polls, with both showing strength among their primary base.

However, on the Democratic side, a tighter primary could be in the cards.

According to the new poll, among Democrats, Harris leads only slightly with 17% support, followed closely by former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg with 16%. Gov. Gavin Newsom and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez also remain close, with both garnering 14% support.

For Republicans, the picture appears clearer as Vance comfortably leads the field with 44% support. His closest challenger, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, came in second with 21%, followed by President Donald Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. with 8%.

The poll surveyed 1,200 likely voters from Aug. 25 to Sept. 1 and has a margin of error of 3.3 percentage points, according to YouGov/Bowling Green State University.

With speculation mounting, some politicians have expressed their feelings about a potential run for the White House in 2028.

Most recently, Newsom said in an interview with CNN that he would not run in 2028 if Harris decided that she wants to campaign for the seat a second time.

The governor made the statement



Voters surveyed in a poll foresee a possible 2028 runoff between former Vice President Kamala Harris and current Vice President JD Vance if the two decide to run.

ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

during a fishing trip in Montana with CNN's Jake Tapper. The reporter asked about Newsom's presidential ambition if Harris joined the race as well.

"I don't know if she runs, but we'll see," Newsom told Tapper. "I wouldn't run if she ran."

Among prominent GOP figures, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas fueled speculation about another White House bid. He finished second to Trump in the 2016 Republican presidential primary race.

"It's no secret that I want to be president," Cruz said in August during an appearance on Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick's podcast.

Whereas Cruz signaled his potential to run, Rubio has sought to tamp down speculation, although he did not completely rule out a campaign.

Speaking during an official visit to Colombia, he was asked about a possible presidential run and whether he could see himself seeking the White House after Trump's second term ends.

"I don't know what the future holds, but I have no plans at this time," Rubio said. "I'm not a candidate for anything right now. And I'm 100% focused on my job, and I have to be because I have two jobs."

GOP lawmaker publicly breaks with president

Salazar says deportation push has 'gone too far'

Zac Anderson
USA TODAY

A Republican congresswoman from Florida running for reelection in a heavily Hispanic district is criticizing President Donald Trump's immigration policies in a new campaign ad, an extraordinary public break with the president for a GOP candidate.

Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar's pointed critique of a signature piece of Trump's second-term agenda comes as the president has been losing support among Hispanic voters amid backlash to his aggressive deportation push, reversing the inroads he made during the 2024 campaign.

"Mr. President, some of your immigration enforcement efforts have gone too far," Salazar says in the ad, adding: "The same Hispanics who helped you get to the White House in 2024 feel betrayed today."

Trump's crackdown on immigrants without legal status has roiled many communities, sparking protests against Immigration and Customs Enforcement and a battle in Congress over agency reforms.

The issue has receded somewhat after Trump recalibrated his approach following public outcry over the shooting deaths of two U.S. citizens during an immigration enforcement operation in Minneapolis, but Salazar's new ad is evidence that it remains a hot topic in key districts. Trump's immigration efforts are proving unpopular, with 62% of Americans saying they disapprove of the president's handling of the issue in a Gallup survey.

Meanwhile, Just 25% of Hispanic adults approve of Trump, according to an October survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's down from 44% shortly before he took office in 2025.

Salazar's district in the Miami area includes many immigrants from Cuba and South America. Trump carried the



In a new campaign ad, Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar, R-Florida, criticizes President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS FILE

district by double digits in 2024 on his way to winning majority-Hispanic Miami-Dade County, flipping a long-time Democratic stronghold and demonstrating his sway with Hispanic voters.

Yet there have been signs that the pendulum in swinging back toward Democrats in the region, with a Democrat winning the Miami mayor's race last year for the first time in nearly three decades.

Salazar is running for a fourth term against Democrat Elliott Rodriguez in a matchup that features two former Cuban American television journalists. Rodriguez has criticized Trump's mass deportation effort.

In her 30-second ad, Salazar warned Trump "to be careful what your advisers are telling you about immigration policy." She notes that half of the people detained by ICE in July did not have criminal records.

Trump's low approval rating is threatening to drag down Republican candidates in battleground districts, and others have moved to distance themselves from the president in recent days.

A pair of Republican Iowa lawmakers, Reps. Zach Nunn and Mariannette Miller-Meeks, voted Sept. 15 to limit Trump's war powers in Iran.

Contributing: Reuters

SpaceX aims for orbit in next Starship flight

Launch window possible the morning of Sept. 22

Eric Lagatta
USA TODAY NETWORK

After more than three years of testing, the world's largest rocket could reach orbit for the first time in its next flight.

SpaceX said the milestone will be the primary objective of the next Starship launch, set for no earlier than Sept. 22 from South Texas.

The mission would be the 14th flight test of Starship since April 2023 and the third of 2026.

The impending launch also comes at a crucial time for SpaceX, as tech mogul Elon Musk's company races to have the Starship rocket operational in time for NASA's next mission under its Artemis moon program. Musk, who founded SpaceX in 2002, also has grand dreams of Starship bringing humans to Mars.

SpaceX said a window could open from 8:15 to 9:30 a.m. Sept. 22 ET. If the launch needs to be postponed, a planning advisory from the Federal Aviation Administration, which licenses commercial rocket launches, suggests another opportunity is available the following day.

The morning launch window would be a departure for SpaceX, which since November 2024 has conducted Starship flight tests in the evening to allow for "better conditions for visual observations," the company has previously said.

The last time Starship got off the ground in the morning was during flight five on Oct. 13, 2024.

SpaceX launches the rocket at its Starbase company town and headquarters in Texas near the U.S.-Mexico border.

To date, Starship has never reached orbital space in any of its 13 test flights. That's intentional on SpaceX's part, as the company has opted to fly the upper-stage of the rocket on suborbital trajectories "to maximize public safety while allowing for maximum learning," SpaceX said.

But flight 14 could become the first time Starship reaches orbit. The feat would mark a significant milestone as



The fully integrated Starship spacecraft is composed of both a 236-foot-tall lower-stage booster known as Super Heavy and a 171-foot-tall upper stage simply called Starship.

STEVE NESIUS/REUTERS

SpaceX works to develop Starship to become the first fully reusable launch vehicle, with both the lower- and upper-stages of the rocket able to fly multiple times.

Once again, the rocket's lower-stage booster, known as Super Heavy, is due to land off the Gulf Coast after providing the initial burst of thrust to get the upper-stage off the ground. SpaceX then plans for Starship's upper-stage to reach an altitude of more than 170 miles high, where it could complete six orbits of Earth during a mission lasting up to 10 hours.

A successful mission would end with the upper-stage making a water landing in the Pacific Ocean to the west of Chile, according to SpaceX.

Flight 14 could also mark the first time that SpaceX's Starship deploys operational Starlink satellites following a series of test deployments on previous missions.

The 26 third-generation Starlink satellites – larger and more powerful than the nearly 11,000 broadband internet satellites SpaceX already operates in low-Earth orbit – could begin serving customers a few weeks after the launch,

SpaceX said.

Starship's most recent flight test in July marked the second flight of SpaceX's third-generation prototype of the rocket. Standing at 407 feet tall when fully stacked, the new iteration of Starship – known as Version 3, or V3 – is the largest and most powerful rocket SpaceX has ever launched.

Similar to previous designs, the fully integrated Starship spacecraft is composed of both a 236-foot-tall lower-stage booster known as Super Heavy, as well as a 171-foot-tall upper stage simply called Starship.

SpaceX has been testing Starship since April 2023. It is developing the rocket to be a fully reusable transportation system that can carry huge satellites and other payloads to space, meaning both the rocket and vehicle can return to the ground for additional missions.

Musk's vision has long been for Starship to be an interplanetary vehicle that takes humans to Mars, where they can establish a self-sustaining colony. While the world's richest man has indicated that SpaceX will focus on building a lunar city first, the company has al-

ready announced a human-led expedition to Mars' orbit – though it has not set a target date.

In order for that to be possible, Starship will need to be capable of refueling midflight in a complex process that requires two Starships equipped with docking adapters to meet in orbit to transfer propellant. The maneuver is one SpaceX has yet to test.

SpaceX is also under contract with NASA to develop a lunar lander configuration of its Starship to ferry astronauts to the moon, known as the Human Landing System.

NASA has high hopes that Starship will be ready in time for a mission due in 2027 known as Artemis III. SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin are competing to develop lunar landers for future crewed and uncrewed Artemis missions, both of which will be tested first in Earth orbit during the crewed Artemis III mission.

The venture will be the latest under the U.S. space agency's campaign to return American astronauts to the moon as early as 2028 and build a lunar outpost to enable a long-term presence.

SpaceX last launched its Starship rocket July 24.

Powered by 33 of SpaceX's Raptor-class engines, the booster provided the initial burst of thrust at liftoff before separating from the upper stage minutes after launch and making a water landing in the Gulf of Mexico, renamed in the United States under executive order as the Gulf of America. While the booster was able to make a controlled landing, it was traveling faster than intended and made what the company later referred to as a "hard splashdown."

The upper-stage had a much longer flight, using its own six Raptor engines to fly halfway around the world before landing in the Indian Ocean. Along the way, the vehicle successfully deployed 20 third-generation Starlink satellites, which communicated with the rest of the Starlink network before they burned up in Earth's atmosphere as intended.

The upper-stage, designated Ship 40, was able to slowly tip over and float in the ocean without exploding or sinking, as prior prototypes have done. That allowed SpaceX to haul the vehicle to shore near Australia and begin efforts to transport it back to Starbase, Texas.