

TEXAS POLL: KEN PAXTON LEADS JOHN CORNBY FOR US SENATE IN 2026

January 8, 2025

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Poll conducted January 4-6, 2025 among likely Republican primary voters throughout Texas. Responses were collected via Interactive Voice Response and Text-To-Web. This poll was not commissioned by any candidate or committee.





Executive Summary

John Cornyn, the senior US Senator from Texas, has been a statewide elected official in Texas since before the turn of the century. After more than two decades in the US Senate, many Republicans – especially those who strongly support President Donald Trump – have begun to question Cornyn’s voting record and beliefs, painting him as a moderate Republican entrenched in DC’s political establishment. Meanwhile, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a conservative firebrand and fierce ally to President Trump, has been openly flirting with the idea of challenging Cornyn in the Republican primary. But Paxton has some weaknesses of his own – could he really put up a fight against an incumbent US Senator who has cruised through every primary election for decades?

In short, **yes**. Our poll, conducted among likely Republican primary voters throughout Texas during the first week of 2025, shows Paxton *leading* Cornyn by 8 points in a hypothetical head-to-head matchup. Against a generic “someone else” option, Cornyn also trails, though only by 4%. As the race currently stands, Cornyn could be in for some serious trouble in the primary election.

Cornyn’s weakness comes from abysmal support among voters who self-identify as “Donald Trump MAGA Republicans” (Paxton+31%) or “Constitutional Conservatives” (Paxton+26%). In fact, among those two groups, Cornyn comes in dead last in terms of favorability ratings out of the 7 Republican officials included in our poll. Though Paxton’s favorability numbers are also far from perfect, he outperforms Cornyn across nearly every single favorability metric.

All of this being said, the 2026 primary election is still well over a year away, and things could change quite drastically by then. For starters, we don’t yet know who will actually file to run, and a crowded field could weaken Paxton’s chances if those who dislike Cornyn split their votes between several of the incumbent’s challengers. However, we must remember that Texas holds runoff elections if no candidate reaches 50% support in the primary. So, even if there’s a crowded field, if Paxton can hold Cornyn to below 50% in the primary (which seems perfectly feasible considering that Cornyn commands only 34% of the vote as of today), he could be well-positioned to defeat Cornyn in the runoff.

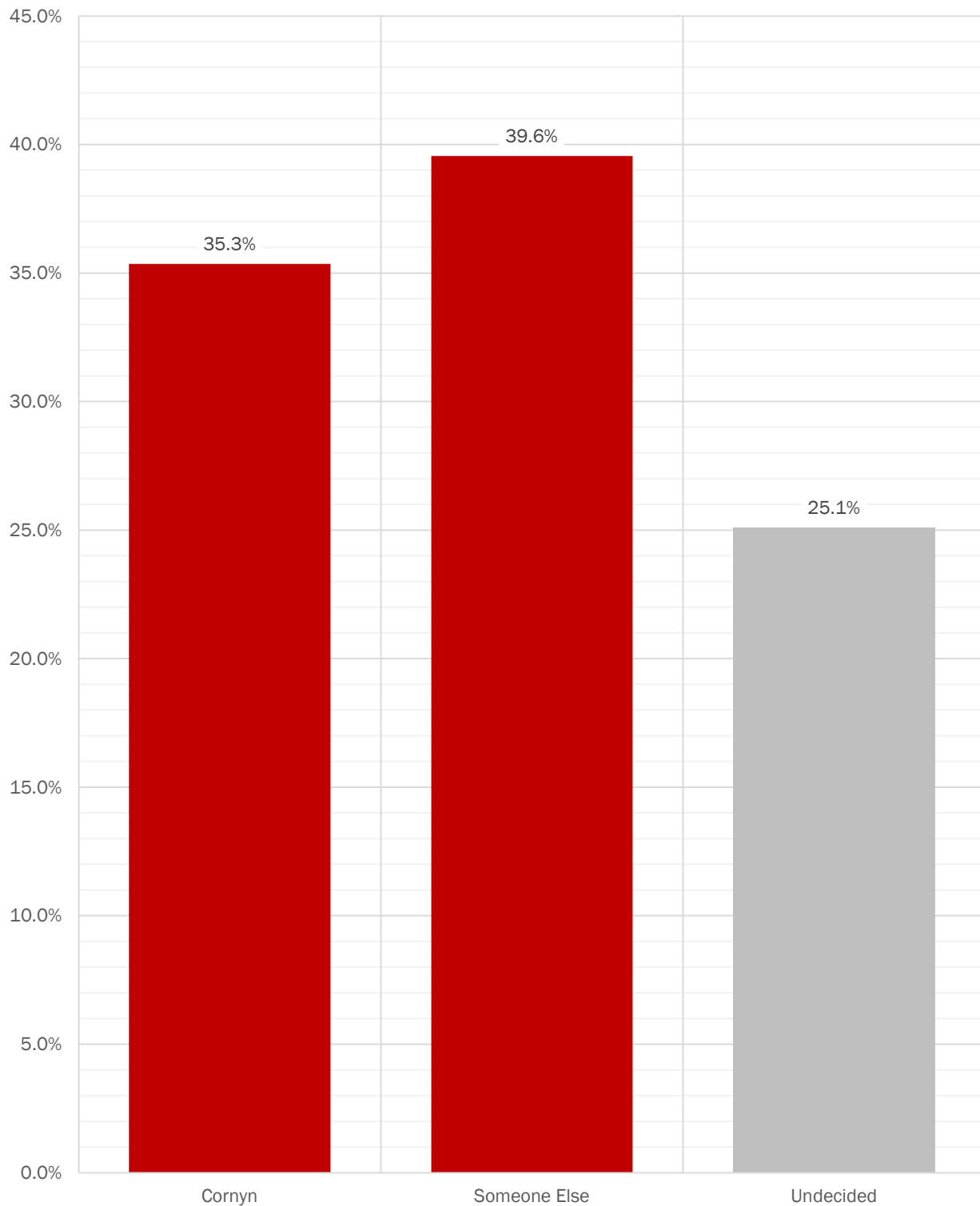
As with all political prognostication, there are many possibilities and few certainties. All we can do now is bring you the most high-quality and up-to-date data on the state of the race, and that’s exactly what we’re doing. **Read on to learn more.**

✓ **Ben Galbraith**
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PS: For the first time ever, we’ve released a Poll Dashboard to accompany this poll report. On the Poll Dashboard, you can explore topline and crosstab results for yourself, and even chat with an AI Assistant with significant knowledge of the race and complete access to poll results. Access the Poll Dashboard here: https://victory-technology.com/poll_dashboard/public/TX_US_Senate_2026
Poll Dashboard is still in beta testing. Please send any feedback to info@victory-insights.com.

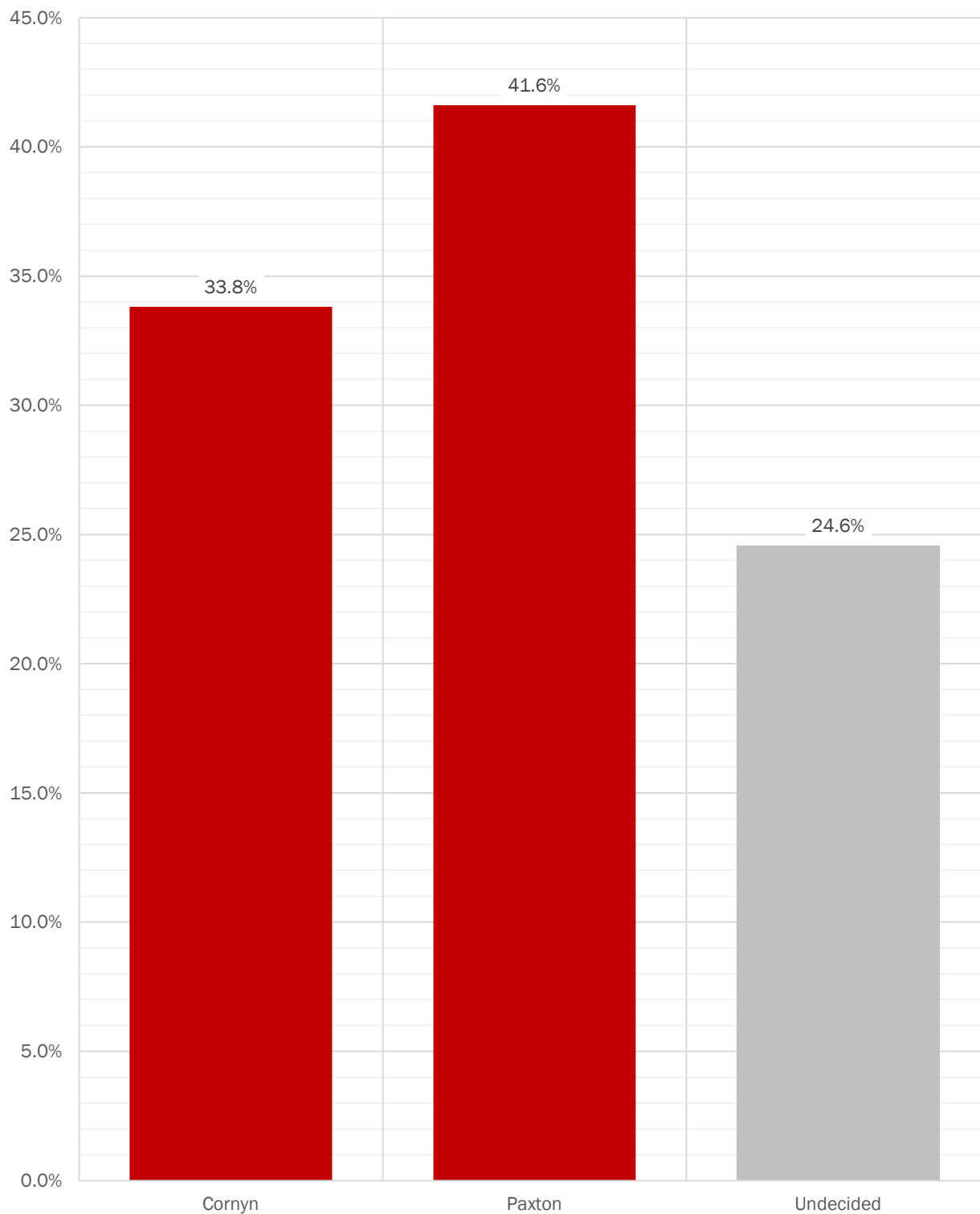
Generic Republican Primary

Matched up against a generic “someone else” in the 2026 Republican primary, Cornyn trails by about 4%, with another 25% of voters undecided. This is a very weak showing for an incumbent US Senator.



Cornyn-Paxton Republican Primary

Matched up against Paxton, the situation gets even more dire for Cornyn. In a head-to-head matchup, Paxton leads by nearly 8%. Just like in the generic ballot, about a quarter of voters remain undecided.



Cornyn-Paxton Republican Primary by Type of Republican

We presented respondents with various “types of Republicans” and asked them to identify which type matched them the closest. The chart below breaks down the Cornyn-Paxton Republican Primary ballot by each major self-identified type of Republican.



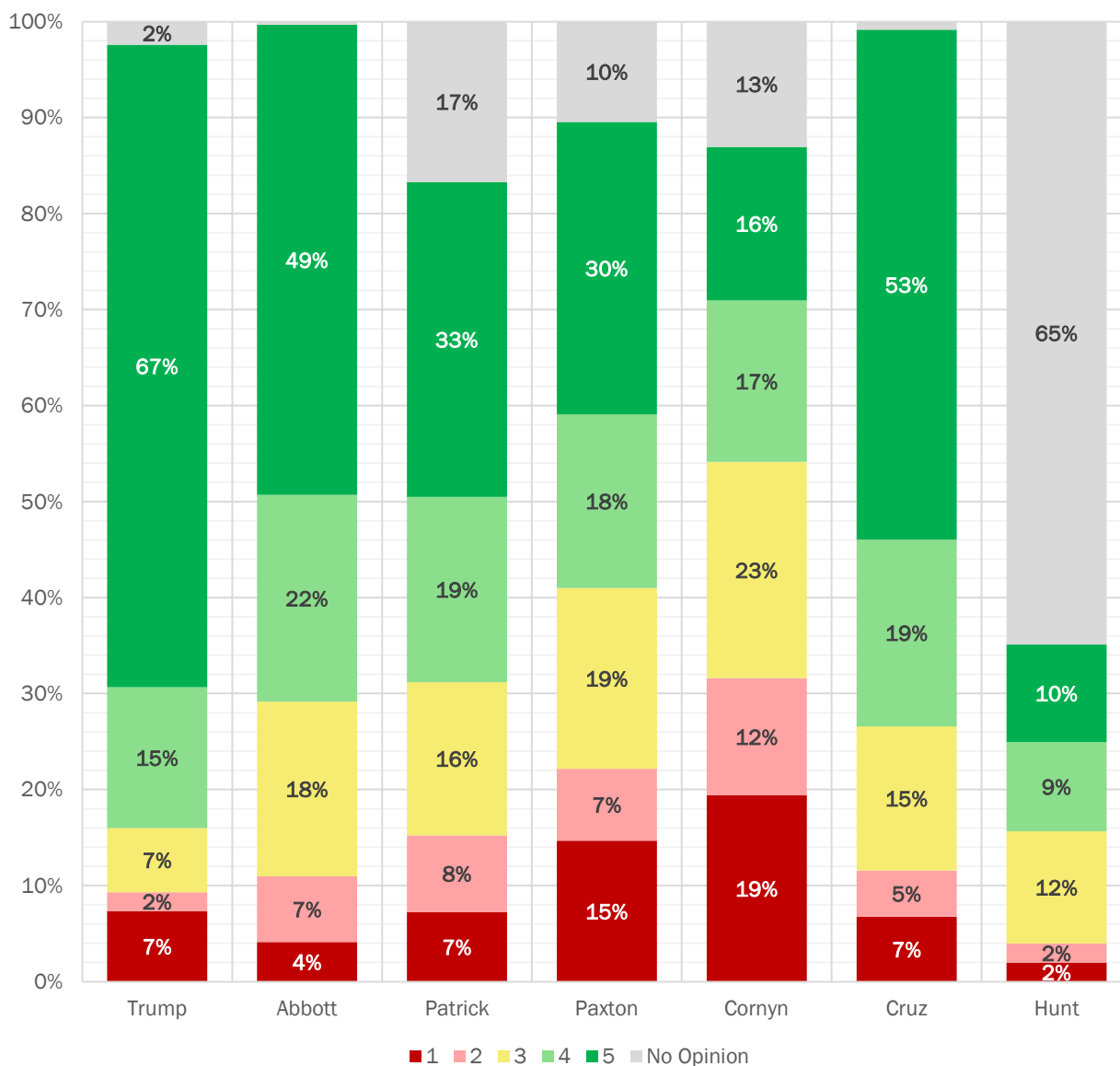
It doesn't take a genius to spot the trend here. Voters on the more moderate or traditional end of the spectrum tend to prefer Cornyn, while more conservative or Trump-aligned voters tend to prefer Paxton. The issue for Cornyn is that Donald Trump MAGA Republicans and Constitutional Conservatives together make up 69% of the electorate, and Paxton dominates among those types.

Favorability

Finally, voters were asked to rate a number of public figures on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being extremely negative, and 5 being extremely positive. Voters could also indicate that they have no opinion of each public figure. In addition to Cornyn and Paxton, we asked about President Donald Trump, Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, Senator Ted Cruz, and Congressman Wesley Hunt (who was reportedly included as an option on an unreleased December poll of the upcoming US Senate race).

Overall Favorability

The chart below shows the overall results of the favorability questions. We'll dive deeper into these results on the following page.



Favorability Metrics

From voters' ratings of each public figure, we calculated four different metrics which together provide a near-comprehensive explanation of the results. These four metrics, as well as their definitions, are shown in the table below. For each metric, the best result is highlighted in dark green, the second-best in light green, the second-worst in light red, and the worst in dark red. For Average Opinionated Rating (AOR), we also broke it down by each type of Republican.

	Trump	Abbott	Patrick	Paxton	Cornyn	Cruz	Hunt
Positive Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure "4" or "5" out of 5	81.6%	70.5%	52.1%	48.6%	32.8%	72.6%	19.4%
Negative Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure "1" or "2" out of 5	9.3%	11.0%	15.2%	22.2%	31.6%	11.6%	4.0%
Total Name ID % of respondents who rated the public figure anything other than "No Opinion"	97.6%	99.7%	83.3%	89.6%	86.9%	99.2%	35.1%
Avg. Opinionated Rating Average rating (1-5) given to the public figure by those who gave any numerical rating	4.35	4.05	3.75	3.47	2.97	4.08	3.67
AOR Among Donald Trump MAGA Republicans	4.74	4.23	4.06	4.08	2.70	4.28	3.72
AOR Among Constitutional Conservatives	4.54	4.09	3.89	3.53	2.61	4.43	3.76
AOR Among Traditional Republicans	4.50	4.32	3.56	2.92	3.78	3.96	3.60
AOR Among Moderate Republicans	3.17	3.42	2.76	2.42	3.59	3.17	3.29

Donald Trump is widely adored, earning the highest Positive Name ID and highest AOR while simultaneously holding the second-lowest Negative Name ID. Hunt is generally unknown, with only 35% Name ID. Abbott is broadly liked, as his AOR places in the top 3 among all four major types of Republicans. Cruz is also very well-liked, though his appeal is mainly concentrated among conservative and MAGA voters. Patrick falls somewhere in the middle of all this, posting mediocre or below-average numbers across all metrics.

Finally, let's drill down on the two candidates we've been focusing on throughout this report: Cornyn and Paxton. The reality is that both candidates post poor favorability numbers across nearly every metric, but even so, Paxton tends to outperform Cornyn. Cornyn has the lowest AOR, the highest Negative Name ID, and the lowest AOR among Donald Trump MAGA Republicans and Constitutional Conservatives. The only metric in which Cornyn outperforms Paxton is AOR among moderate and traditional Republicans, which together make up less than 28% of the electorate.



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