

I'm still in it to win it, vows defiant Joe

Feisty Biden won't quit as despairing Democrats warn: 'No one thinks he can survive'

By **CAROLINE GRAHAM**
IN LOS ANGELES
and **GLEN OWEN** IN LONDON

DEFIANT President Joe Biden refused to quit during a feisty rally on Friday night as it emerged Democratic donors have withheld £69million pledged for his campaign.

As a crowd of 2,000 supporters chanted 'Don't you quit' and 'We've got your back', Mr Biden accused rival Donald Trump of rape while insisting he would not drop out of the race for the White House. Mr Trump was found guilty in a civil case of sexually assaulting writer E. Jean Carroll, with Mr Biden telling the rally: '[He] raped her.'

The former president has always denied the rape allegations.

Mr Biden insisted he would stay in the race despite a disastrous debate performance and fresh gaffes including introducing Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky at a Nato conference this week as 'president Putin.'

He also called vice president Kamala Harris 'vice president

'It's not a matter of if he steps down, it's when'

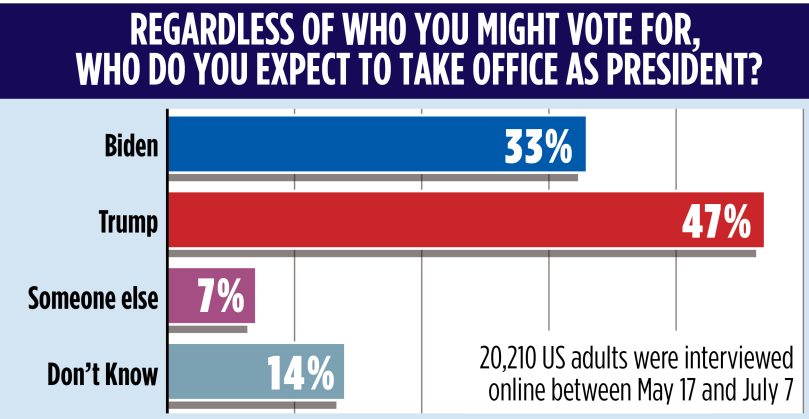
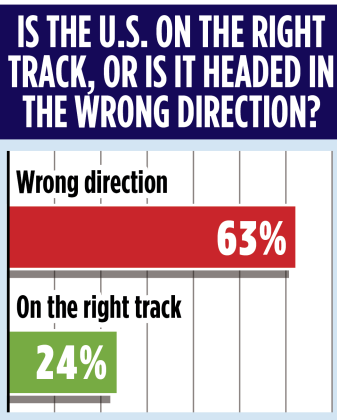
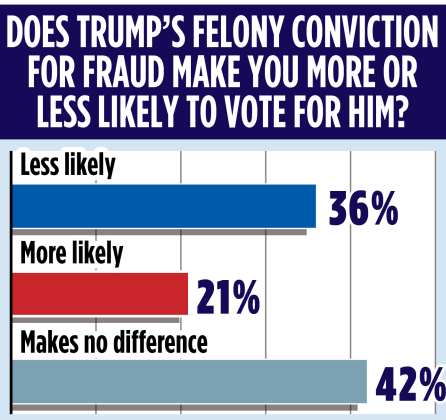
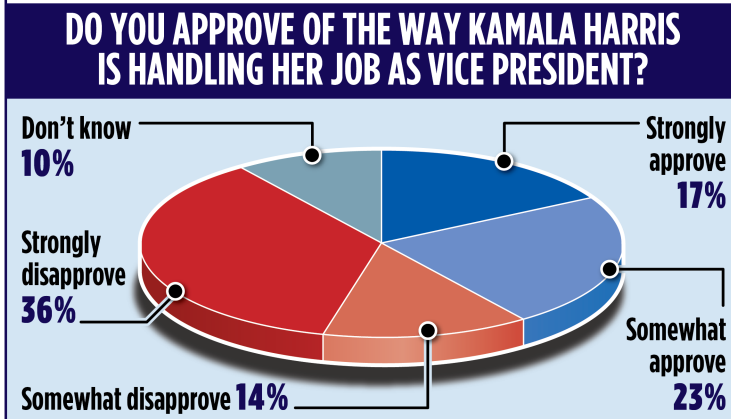
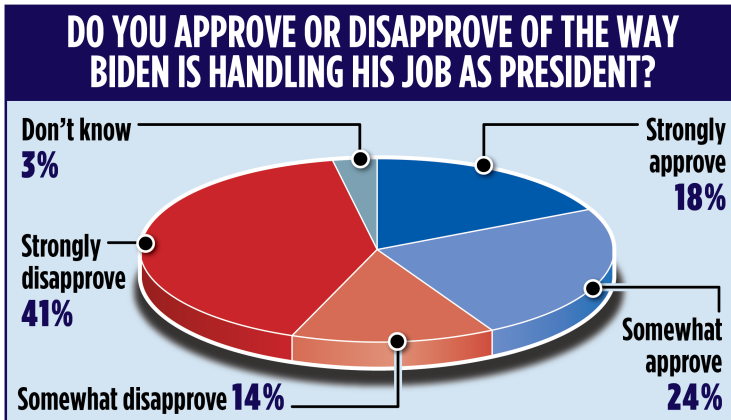
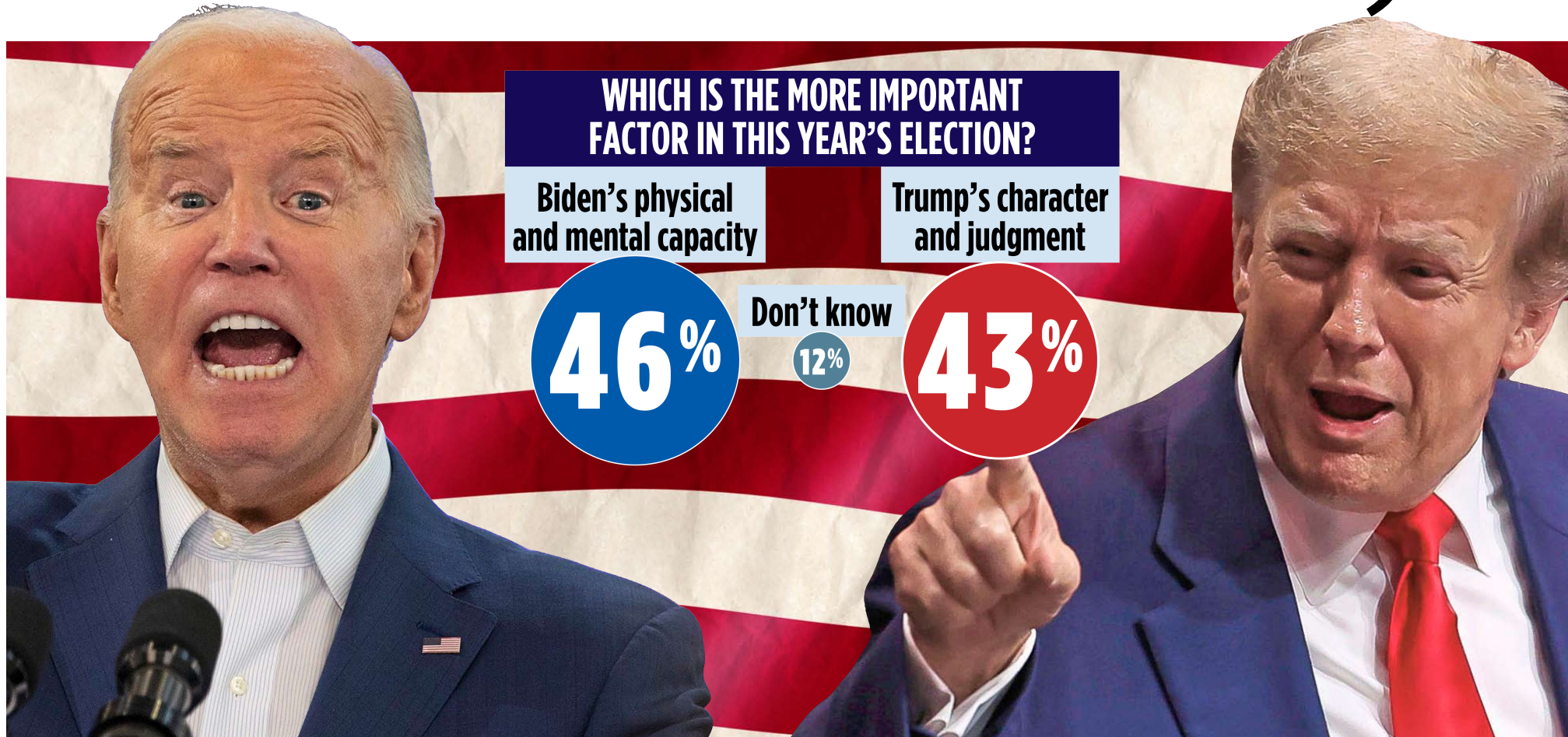
Trump'. The 81-year-old denied he was planning to quit, saying: 'I am running and we're going to win.'

'I'm the only Democrat or Republican who has beaten Donald Trump and I'm going to beat him again.' But support from his own party has haemorrhaged, with 21 Democrat members of the House of Representatives and one senator calling for him to go.

A source said: 'It's a constant drip, drip, drip and it is getting worse. He is hanging on but it's death by a thousand cuts. Privately, no-one I've spoken to within the party thinks he can survive. It's not a matter of if he steps down, it's when?'

Hollywood supporters including actors George Clooney and Ashley Judd and writer Stephen King have urged him to go.

As of last night, £69million that had been pledged to Democrats was being withheld by donors including theme park heir Abigail Disney and Netflix co-founder Reed Hastings. One donor told The Mail on Sunday the party expects the figure to rise to £100million 'within a couple of days'. 'When the money starts disappearing like this then so will any remaining



Biden is handling the presidency, 55 per cent said they didn't, and 42 per cent did. The figures are not much better for Ms Harris, with 50 per cent disapproving.

And while Mr Trump's recent felony conviction for fraud makes 36 per cent of voters less likely to vote for him, it makes 21 per cent more likely to do so. And for 42 per cent it 'makes no difference'.

A worrying 63 per cent agreed America is 'headed in the wrong direction' while 24 per cent think it is 'on the right track'.

The poll also found Mr Trump is ahead on four of the five top issues – the cost of living, the economy and jobs, immigration, and crime – while Mr Biden leads only on healthcare.

The President's woes mean that just 33 per cent think he will win, with 47 per cent betting on Mr Trump.

Writing in this newspaper today, Lord Ashcroft says: 'The new prominence of Biden's health as a campaign issue effectively neutralises Trump's downsides'.

● 20,210 US adults were interviewed online between May 17 and July 7.

US voters are increasingly convinced Trump will be re-elected

By **LORD ASHCROFT**
AUTHOR AND POLLSTER



could dream of. As party loyalties weaken, people increasingly look for the candidate they think would do the better job for them, however much their choice might have horrified their grandparents.

Meanwhile, it is older voters who most back Biden – whether because they trust him more to protect Medicare and social security, hold a certain idea of how a President should comport himself, or have a sneaking sympathy with him over his age-related controversies.

One of the ways in which this election is unusual is that it does not come down to 'change' versus 'the devil you know'. Instead, Americans are faced with two devils they know only too well.

In 2020, they voted to replace the chaos and division with what they hoped would be some semblance of moderation and calm. Four years later, many say life feels no better and they have a President with his own very obvious flaws.

The contest is still four months away, and it feels as though there is room for at least one more dramatic chapter in this story. We don't know how the legal cases will be resolved, or how the Democrats' internal drama will unfold. But my polling did find one thing that changed after the now infamous debate: more Americans became convinced that Trump would win.

Trump). It is dawning on some that they can preserve the fragile unity of the Democratic party, or they can hold on to the White House, but they might not be able to do both.

Trump's support looks resilient. Americans say he would do a better job than Biden on four of the five biggest issues – the cost of living, the economy and jobs, immigration and crime – and is for now at least doing better among younger and minority voters than recent Republicans

THIS weekend, Republicans gather at their convention in Milwaukee in the wake of two events that in another era would have seemed like political earthquakes. The first was Donald Trump's conviction in a New York court on 34 counts of falsifying business records, meaning that his party will next week formally nominate a felon for the highest office in the land. His sentencing, initially due on Friday, has been postponed until September as judges absorb the implications of a Supreme Court ruling that Presidents cannot be prosecuted for official acts carried out in office.

Then came Joe Biden's stumbling performance in the pair's first head-to-head TV debate, forcing Americans to confront the question of whether their commander-in-chief was up to the job now, let alone his likely capabilities in four years' time.

Thursday night's Nato press conference, in which he introduced Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky as 'president Putin' and referred to his own deputy as 'vice president Trump', hardly alleviated their doubts. The chain of events sums up the big issue facing voters in November: the two candidates' fitness for office, whether moral or literal.

Perhaps even more remarkable than the two momentous stories themselves is that neither made a significant dent in the polls.

In my three surveys conducted before and after the verdicts, and again after the TV debate, I found that, if anything, Trump's position has slightly strengthened since his case concluded – but neither event led to a movement outside the margin of error.

Nearly half of 2020 Trump voters say his convictions make them more likely to vote for him in November, and more voters now think the legal proceedings against him will help his chances than hinder them.

Non-Americans wonder at this: how can a candidate being convicted of fraud make no difference to his standing? There are several answers.

ONE is that many see the charges against Trump as a political exercise rather than a legal one, part of a long campaign to diminish his standing. Another is that people admire his sticking power and his continuing capacity to overcome adversity, even if he generates some of that adversity himself.

But most of all, as always, they weigh it against everything else and decide that other things matter more – especially a struggling economy, worrying overseas commitments and the memory of better times under President Trump.

As a woman in Pennsylvania told us: 'I'm not a fan of his behaviour and a lot of the terrible things he's done. But, from a business standpoint, he does a fantastic job. He said things people didn't want to hear but it was the truth and people had to hear it.'

For much of his presidency, Biden's re-election campaign has been a race against time.

The worse the economy feels, the more willing voters will be to overlook Trump's obvious shortcomings and put him back in the White House; the taller the green shoots of economic recovery, the less stomach they will have for the 4m tweets and other daily features of the Donald Trump show.

As my poll found, the country is divided as to which matters more – Biden's physical and mental capacity or Trump's character and judgment. From Biden's point of view, this means that the economy has to work harder to compensate.

Yet, despite improving indicators such as lower inflation and a rising stock market, few Americans are yet feeling better off. Part of the Democrats' problem is that people compare their present circumstances with how things were pre-Covid, which also happens to be pre-Biden.

This might be unfair, but politics is a bit like that – and only a quarter of voters, including only one in three of those who voted for Biden in 2020, say they feel better off than they did four years ago.

At the same time, the new prominence of Biden's health as a campaign issue effectively neutralises Trump's downsides.

The natural move would be to pass the baton to Vice President Kamala Harris, but it is clear that this puts the Democrats in even more of a quandary. They

MISSED ANDREW NEIL'S ELECTION COLUMN IN YESTERDAY'S MAIL?
SCAN HERE TO READ IT ON MAIL+

