



**2020 U.S. ELECTION
WEEKLY INSIGHTS
AND PREDICTIONS
BRIEF**

RELEASE DATE
OCTOBER 9, 2020
EDITION 4

The Tight U.S. Election Was Predictable

November 16, 2020

Note: This has been inserted into each edition of the “RIWI U.S Election Weekly Insights & Predictions Brief” in order to provide context and a summary of post-election results.

While almost all public polling predicted a landslide victory for President-elect Joe Biden, RIWI’s technology showed for weeks in advance that the race would be much tighter, in line with the actual results.

Traditional polls underestimated support for Trump...again

In 2016, mainstream public polls systematically underestimated support for President Trump, and as a result, failed to predict the outcome. In 2020, almost all public polls predicted a landslide victory for Mr. Biden. But once the votes were counted, “Americans had not delivered a blunt repudiation of Trump’s values, but had shown themselves to be intractably divided” (*The New Yorker*, November 16, 2020 issue). “[We] over-estimated support for Joe Biden”, [The Economist](#) wrote. Instead of a landslide, Mr. Biden beat Mr. Trump by less than two percentage points in the states that decided the election. Public polling aggregator FiveThirtyEight and *The Economist’s* U.S. elections forecasting project under-estimated support for Trump in every battleground state, and by at least five percent in Florida, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, polls said Mr. Biden was ahead by ten percentage points, and he won by less than one, a huge polling miss.

According to [The New York Times](#), “pollsters spent much of the last four years trying to fix the central problem of 2016 — the underestimation of the Republican vote in multiple states — and they failed.”

Clients asked RIWI to provide an alternative lens for 2020

In the months leading up to the election, several global finance firms hired RIWI to provide an alternative, evidence-based lens for their election-related investment decisions. They were skeptical about the reliability of public polls after 2016 and wanted to confirm or challenge their investment theses.

RIWI collected data across the entire country, but the main challenge and area of client interest was to identify whether there was a risk that the polls were missing something in the contested races. As the polls began to show comfortable leads for Mr. Biden in these states, RIWI was asked to look for evidence to confirm, nuance, or reject what the polls were seeing.

RIWI engaged those who don’t typically answer polls

Each day over the seven weeks leading up to the election, RIWI technology reached a broad-based, diverse, unique, and random sample of Americans. Respondents included those who don’t typically answer or even get asked to answer election polls. Two-thirds of RIWI’s U.S. respondents reported they had not answered an election poll in the past year — with over half saying they had *never* answered one. Engaging a truly random sample each day could allow RIWI to identify new coalitions that would not necessarily show up using conventional methods.¹ In total, RIWI randomly engaged 100,584 Americans, half of those in the final week before the election.

¹ Conventional polls draw on a pre-identified sample or voter database, which does not represent a truly random sample of the population. As a result, these approaches risk failing to identify new or changing coalitions of support (a key factor in the 2016 polling miss). Pollsters tried to correct for the 2016 error by overweighting non-College educated white males, but it appears that Mr. Trump may have expanded his voter turnout in new demographic groups, and the polls missed this.

To increase the likelihood of truthful responses, RIWI asked respondents to forecast the outcome in their state, in addition to their preferred candidate and voting likelihood. To further increase the chance of truthfulness and reduce the chance of any “shy” Trump or “shy” Biden voter effects, RIWI did not collect any personally identifiable information from respondents, unlike mainstream polls.

RIWI forecasters anticipated a much tighter race for weeks in advance of the election

While polls showed a consistently strong Biden lead, data from RIWI forecasters showed a tighter race than the conventional poll-of-polls data throughout the pre-election period, both overall and in many of the contested states. As RIWI wrote in its September 25th election report, “there is a broad-based perception among knowledgeable [RIWI] forecasters of an ‘undetected’ GOP vote.”

RIWI’s data identified and showed consistently tight races in Michigan, Wisconsin, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, all of which Mr. Biden won by less than two percentage points (polls had expected a much more comfortable margin). In Florida and North Carolina, RIWI forecasters found enough undetected support for Mr. Trump to correctly anticipate him winning those states (polls had expected Mr. Biden would win these states).² Each day, RIWI checked these findings by surveying a new randomly engaged group of forecasters in those states, and the results held firm. RIWI forecasters overestimated support for Mr. Trump in Arizona and Georgia which ultimately went to Mr. Biden in exceptionally tight races (the final margin of victory in both states was 0.3 percent).

RIWI data consistently cast doubt on the conventional polling wisdom

The consensus polling wisdom was that Biden would win comfortably in the contested states critical to the election. RIWI relied on a truly random sample of Americans — including the perspectives of those who do not respond to traditional polling methods — rather than trying to sample, or over-sample, various demographic groups based on past voting patterns. Each day in the seven weeks before the election, RIWI tested the prevailing wisdom by canvassing the views of a unique, randomly engaged cohort, and each day these random cohorts cast doubt on the consensus. This approach provided a check on public polling results, and showed clients that a “Blue Wave” was not a forgone conclusion. Clients who knew this in advance were able to leverage this knowledge for increased confidence in their investment decisions.

About RIWI

RIWI stands for “Real-time Interactive World-wide Intelligence.” At RIWI, “Every Voice Counts.” We provide access to continuous consumer and citizen sentiment in all countries. We break through the noise to find the truth about what people really think, want and observe — by reaching the most diverse audiences, including the disengaged and quiet voices who do not typically answer surveys or express their views on social media. RIWI technology rapidly collects data in every country around the world and displays the results in a secure interactive dashboard in real-time. We only collect anonymous information and from 229 countries and territories, over 80 languages and 1.6 billion interviewees and counting. For more information, please visit www.riwi.com.

For RIWI’s 2016 election prediction of a win for President Trump, [click here](#), and for other past elections work, [click here](#). For more information or business inquiries please contact neilweitzman@riwi.com.

² The same was true for the North Carolina Senate race: while no public polls [correctly called the North Carolina Senate race](#) Republican, RIWI forecasters continued to point to enough undetected support for Republican Senator Thom Tillis to win. Both RIWI and the poll aggregators anticipated the results of the other Senate races, except for the race in Maine.

ABOUT THE 2020 U.S. ELECTION WEEKLY INSIGHTS AND PREDICTIONS BRIEF

The 2020 U.S. Election Weekly Insights and Predictions Briefs will be released every Friday leading up to Election Day. An additional brief will also be released the Monday before Election Day. Each brief will: (a) address key findings and high-level trends from RIWI's continuous real-time data stream exclusively available to data stream subscribers; (b) shall be sourced from randomly engaged RIWI forecasters representative of the U.S. public, and (c) shall ensure broad representation from diverse participants who do not participate in traditional non-random polls comprised of incented and habitual respondents on online email access panels.

RIWI will examine trends and indicators such as voting intentions, dynamic sentiment on support for Democratic and Republican candidates, and will probe other trends in response to ongoing events such as presidential debates, new policy announcements, official economic data releases and geopolitical events in the news.

RIWI accurately predicted the results of the 2016 Presidential Election, and many other significant events, and we are applying that same methodology for the 2020 U.S. election to:

- Reach the diverse, unbiased, quiet and traditionally disengaged voices across the U.S.
- Track changing citizen sentiment for both the Senate and presidential elections
- Determine the margin of victory for both the presidential and the Senate races
- Track and predict the Senate, Electoral College and popular vote outcomes

The data included in **Edition 4** were collected between September 8 - October 9, updated at 8 AM (EDT). Some charts highlight specific, shorter time periods in the footnotes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“A week is a long time in politics.”

Attributed to Sir Harold Wilson,
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
(1964 - 1970, 1974 - 1976)

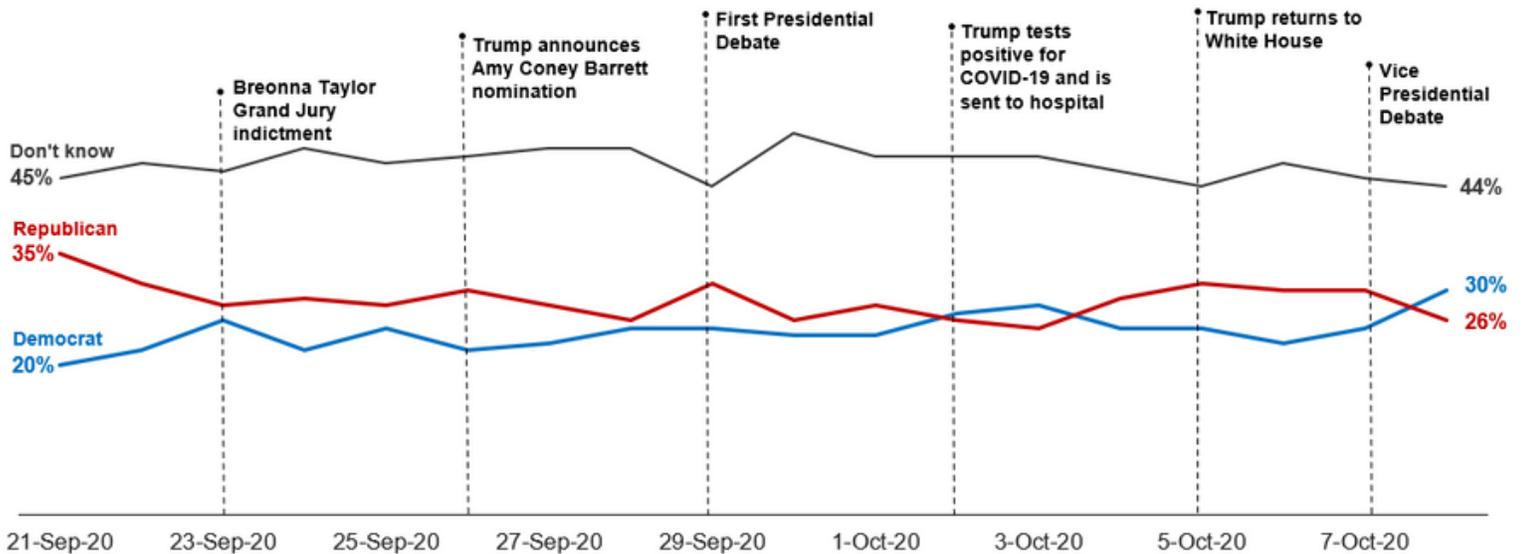
- **Senate Election:** Democrats pull ahead in Maine and Colorado, while Republican candidates maintain their lead in Iowa and Georgia.
- **Presidential Election:** President Trump is still in the lead, but support is declining as he maintains only a 2% prediction share lead of former Vice President Biden.
- **Positive COVID-19 Test:** Following the announcement that President Trump and The First Lady had tested positive for COVID-19, RIWI forecasters briefly predicted, for the first time since tracking began on September 8th, that former Vice President Biden would win. While RIWI forecasters expressed greater support for President Trump as his condition reportedly improved and made his public return to the White House, it has declined once again following the Vice Presidential Debate on the evening of Wednesday, October 7th.



POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST RESULT BRINGS TEMPORARY UPSWELL OF SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP

As seen in *Chart 1*, following the first Presidential debate on September 29th, RIWI forecasters express an initial drop in support for President Trump. After President Trump announced he had tested positive for COVID-19, RIWI forecasters briefly predicted, for the first time since tracking began on September 8th, that former Vice President Biden would win. While support for President Trump increased as his condition reportedly improved and made his public return to the White House, it has declined once again following the Vice Presidential Debate on the evening of Wednesday, October 7th.

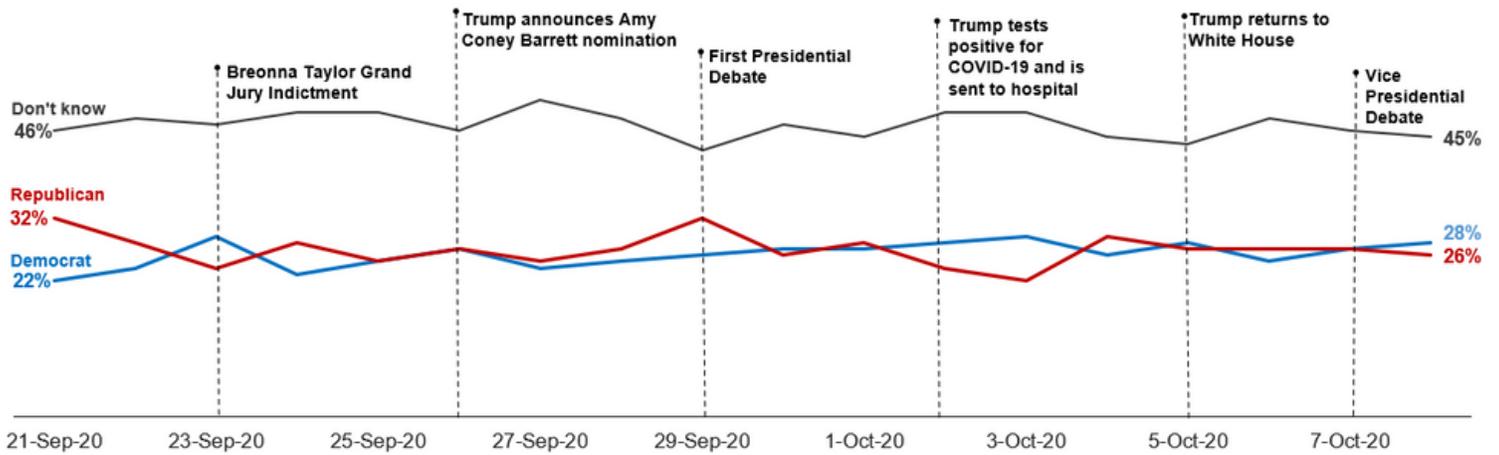
Chart 1: Regardless of whom you support, who do you think will win your state in the 2020 Presidential Election?



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Steam, Daily Data from September 17- October 8th 2020, 19,428 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

The share of RIWI forecasters saying they would personally prefer President Trump to win remained relatively consistent at 30% until the first Presidential debate, as observed in *Chart 2*. However, after that, the share of RIWI forecasters who preferred President Trump to win the election dropped below Mr. Biden and has continued on a slight downward trend ever since, despite a brief - though sizeable upswell of preference in the days following his positive COVID-19 test.

Chart 2: Who do you personally prefer to win the 2020 Presidential Election?



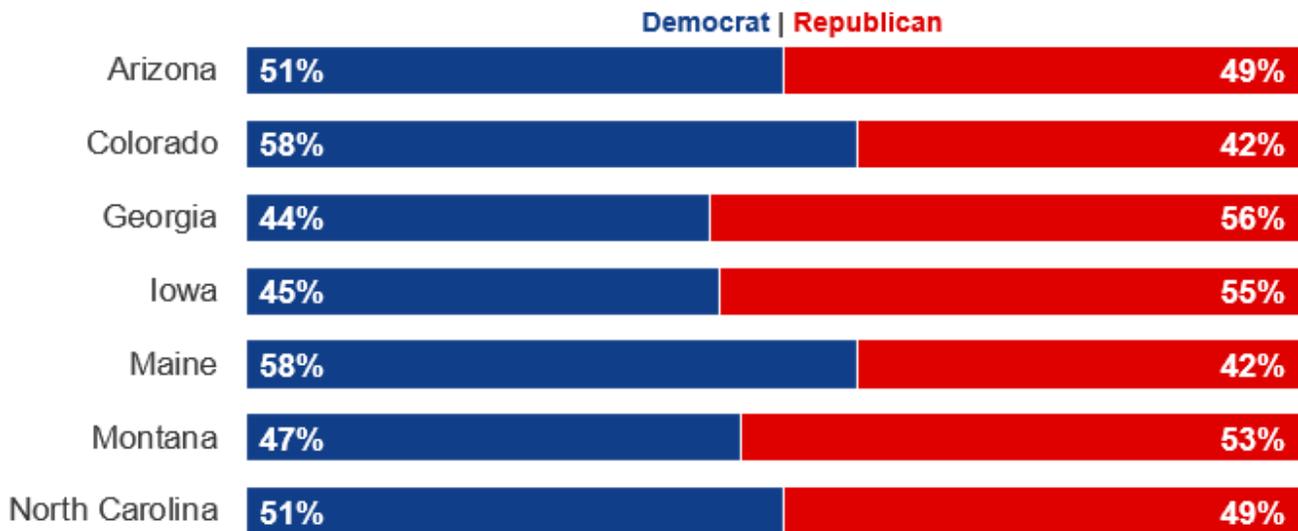
Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, Daily Data from September 17- October 8th 2020, 17,140 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincientized



SENATE ELECTION SENTIMENT: DEMOCRATS LEAD IN MAINE AND COLORADO

- In Maine, Speaker Sara Gideon (D) has maintained her lead, with 58% of forecasters predicting her to win. In Colorado, former Governor John Hickenlooper (D) has pulled ahead this week; 58% of RIWI forecasters predict Mr. Hickenlooper to win, as outlined in *Chart 3*.
- The Republican candidates maintain their lead amid forecasters in Georgia and Iowa relative to prior weeks.
- The Republican and Democratic candidates remain statistically tied in Montana and North Carolina. The Republican candidate in Arizona, Martha McSally, has lost her lead among forecasters who predict her to win. This race has shifted to a statistical tie among forecasters expressing a prediction over the past week.

Chart 3: Regardless of whom you support, which candidate do you think will win the Senate Election in your state?



Note: Filtered out Don't know.
Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, September 18- October 9 2020, 3,039 respondents (Arizona 484, Colorado 382, Georgia 613, Iowa 279, Maine 433, Montana 308, North Carolina 540) Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

As noted last week, there are two Senate elections taking place in Georgia this year. The regularly scheduled election, illustrated in the first chart, is between Senator David Perdue (R) and media executive Jon Ossoff (D). The second election, referred to as the Special Election, will be conducted to fill the seat of former Senator Johnny Isakson (R), who resigned on December 31, 2019.



According to our data, RIWI forecasters predict that both Republican candidates lead their respective races for the Georgia Special Election, as seen in *Chart 4*.

- While Senator Kelly Loeffler (R) remains in the overall lead (31%), a declining share of RIWI forecasters have been predicting her to win for the past three weeks. Her prediction share has decreased from 38% during the week of September 18th to 24% this week.
- In the past week, Rep. Doug Collins (R) has 33% of forecasters predicting him to win, up from the previous week (28%).
- The share of RIWI forecasters predicting that Reverend Raphael Warnock (D) will win rose from 20% on the week of September 18th to 29% this week (October 2-9).

Chart 4: Regardless of whom you support, which candidate do you think will win the Senate Special election in Georgia?

Liberman | Warnock | Collins | Loeffler



Note: Filtered out Don't know.
Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, September 18- October 9 2020, 505 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SENTIMENT: PRESIDENT TRUMP STILL IN THE LEAD, BUT SUPPORT DECLINING

- This week, President Trump maintains a 2% prediction share lead over former Vice President Biden among all forecasters (as shown in *Chart 5*). Two weeks ago, President Trump enjoyed a 7% lead, and last week he had a 5% lead, illustrating a slight decline.
- In the past five weeks, Mr. Biden's overall prediction share has increased from 23% to 26%.
- In the past five weeks, President Trump's overall prediction share has declined from 29% to 28%.
- In the past five weeks, the share of forecasters who are uncertain about the outcome has declined from 48% to 46%, the lowest percentage since September 8th.

Chart 5: Regardless of whom you support, who do you think will win your state in the 2020 Presidential Election?

Biden | Don't know | Trump



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, October 2-9 2020, 6,253 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

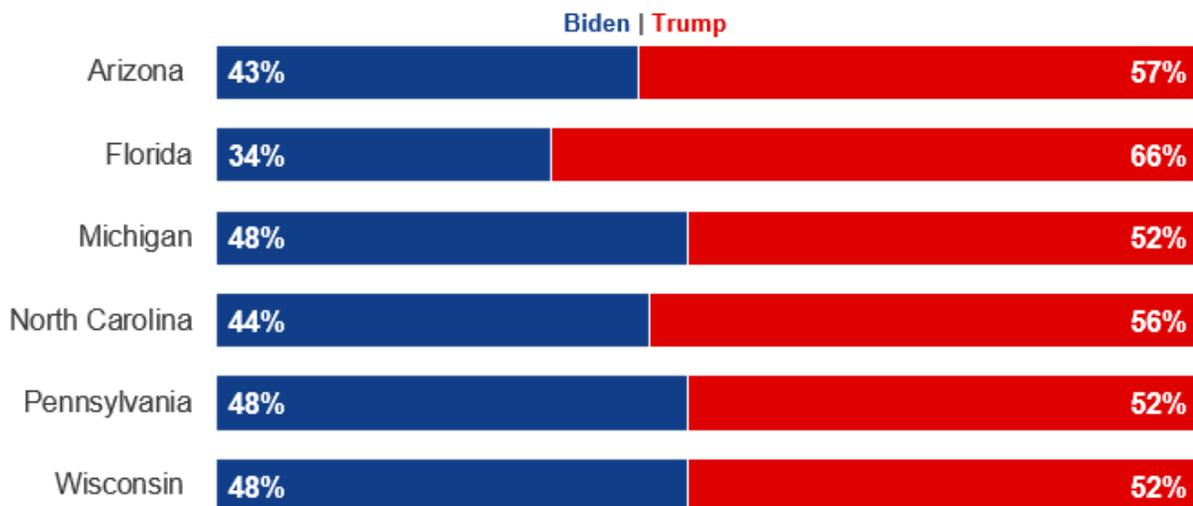
BATTLEGROUND ELECTORAL COLLEGE PREDICTION: PRESIDENT TRUMP IS STILL IN THE LEAD, BUT SUPPORT DECLINING

President Trump currently leads in three key battleground states (see *Chart 6*) – Arizona, Florida, and North Carolina. Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin are statistically tied – among RIWI forecasters who feel they have sufficient knowledge to predict who will win the presidential election in their state.

- Please note this graph differs from the ones in previous reports as it is filtered to include very likely and likely voters (currently 60% of all predictors).
- While President Trump has maintained a sizable prediction share lead over Mr. Biden in Florida at 67%, his prediction share lead in Florida has declined 11 points since September 8th.

Chart 6: Regardless of whom you support, who do you think will win your state in the 2020 Presidential Election?

By likely voters



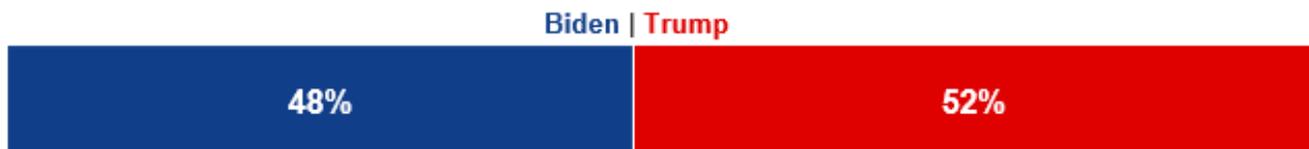
Note: Filtered out Don't know and by likely voters.
Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, September 08- October 9 2020, 2,240 respondents (Arizona 265, Florida 685, Michigan 348, North Carolina 364, Pennsylvania 408, Wisconsin 170) Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE

In the past week (October 2-9), President Trump is leading (52%) among RIWI forecasters who know whom they would personally prefer to win the national election, compared to 56% on September 18th (shown in *Chart 7*).

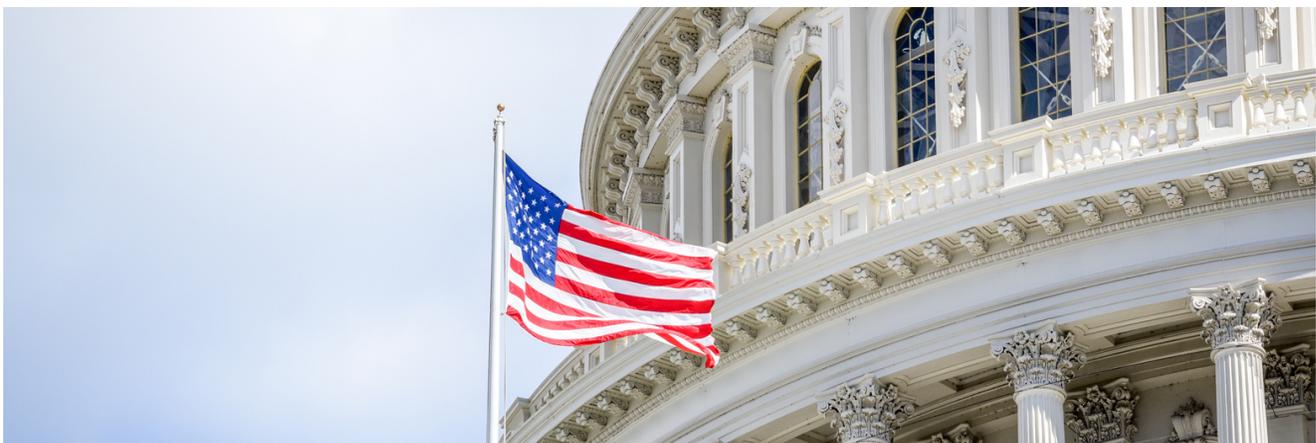
- From September 8th to today, preference for President Trump has decreased from 53% to 52%, a statistically insignificant change that continues to support the idea there is an 'undetected Trump voter' at the national level.

Chart 7: Who do you personally prefer to win the 2020 Presidential Election?



Note: Filtered out Don't know

Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, October 2-9 2020, 2,941 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.



WHAT TO EXPECT IN EDITION #5

- Evaluation of who *likely voters* think will win the presidential and Senate elections in their state. As data collection continues, it is valuable to assess the degree to which likely voters' forecasts are collinear with the broader forecast.
- A high-level early review of the predicted Electoral College map based on RIWI forecasters' sentiment and based on a preliminary RIWI confidence model.
- Key findings from RIWI forecasters on the popular vote, and relevant patterns amongst demographic groups.



OUR METHODOLOGY

RIWI's patented mechanism of action to produce random, representative opinion data with the widest possible reach in any country:

- The RIWI machine learns every day. It functions based on people stumbling into a RIWI domain that is no longer or never was commercially active.
- There are hundreds of millions of these domains, they change and rise in number every day, on any Web-enabled device, on any browser.
- They may arrive at you from broken links to hypertext on financial blogs or other media and digital content you read. RIWI access grows each day.
- That's because once a domain goes commercially vacant, all the links associated with that domain potentially fall into the growing RIWI ocean of domains capable of inviting you to be subject to a RIWI ad test or survey. We then geo-locate with precision.
- It's a real registered domain that is not trademarked or confusingly similar to a commercial domain.
- The sample of domains and subdomains changes regularly, such that the audience exposed is a dynamic random sample – in any part of the world.
- The audience is representative and random as responses are fed into our database. Unweighted data, and data mapped to Census, are provided.
- Our data can be adjusted into any data format for easy 24/7 usage by our clients residing in any part of the world using our Web-based dashboard.
- No personally identifiable data traceable to an individual are collected or stored to ensure the highest data quality and client protection.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we see the majority of respondents choosing “Don’t know” when asked whom they prefer to win the presidential election?

For the survey question about who respondents “prefer” to win the election, one of the answer options is “Don’t know enough.” At first, it may seem high that half of all random respondents “don’t know enough.” However, historical voter engagement has been low in the U.S., and only about 55% of the voting-age population has turned out in recent presidential elections. When looking at those politically engaged in our early data by filtering for those who think that it is worth their time to vote and are likely to vote, this “don’t know enough” category decreases to around 21%, which is in the range we see in historical data of U.S. election work.

Many traditional polls reassign respondents who “Don’t know enough” as leaning towards one party or another. RIWI has found, in our previous electoral work, that removing these individuals provides more accurate results.

Note: It is possible that the percentage of respondents that answer “Don’t know enough” may increase if the race is close. We will focus on the results of this group of politically engaged/likely to vote respondents in later reports, as it is still early in the race to identify these respondents accurately.



How does RIWI weight the data?

Respondent weight values are generated post-stratification using a raking algorithm. The raking process generates weights based on target variables (e.g. age, gender, region); this allows for analysis using the sum of weight values across all cross-tabulations to be approximate to specified target values. On the Senate portion of the dashboard, we weight to census for age group and gender. On the national portion of the dashboard we weight to census for age group, gender, and state population distribution nationally.

The Electoral College analysis will be based on state-by-state predictions, re-weighted to the Electoral College seat allocations. These state-level forecasts will be mapped to each state's electoral seat count to determine our dynamic predictions for the Electoral College result.



Why do you ask who respondents think will win their state rather than the national election? That is not what we see in other election polls.

While it is common in traditional polls to ask who respondents predict will win the U.S. presidency, those results will not be comparable with our methodology as RIWI is the only data provider reaching a truly random sample of the U.S. population using a non-panel based outbound approach (i.e., RIWI does not recruit respondents from a pre-identified “sample”). We also chose not to ask forecasters who they will vote for or who they predict will win the U.S. presidential election, for question design quality purposes.

Based on our previous research, we have found it is more effective to depersonalize the question and ask respondents their opinion of what will happen on a state level or what they observe in their immediate surroundings rather than speculate on national trends, which is less accurate. Furthermore, the purpose of our preference data, as we have phrased it, is not to compare RIWI data to other traditional polls but to increasingly assess and validate the forecast data on a state level. We are not aiming to replicate non-random political opinion data elsewhere, but rather break through the noise to get an accurate and true read of voter sentiment and awareness. Our success in calling the 2016 U.S. presidential election, 2018 Senate elections and other elections around the world supports our methodology.

ABOUT RIWI

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