



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

RELEASE DATE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

EDITION 1

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. Each brief will: (a) address key findings and high-level trends from RIWI's continuous real-time data stream; (b) shall be sourced from randomly engaged RIWI forecasters representative of the US public; and, (c) shall ensure broad representation from diverse participants who do not participate in traditional non-random polls comprised of paid or otherwise incited 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 in order to:

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

The data included were collected between September 8th - September 18th, 9:30 AM EST.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Election: Seven weeks out from the election, 59% of RIWI forecasters do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in 2020. Currently, Montana is the only battleground state where RIWI forecasters predict a Democratic victory.

Presidential Election: 47% of forecasters do not feel that they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in the presidential election. President Donald Trump enjoys a 7% lead over former Vice President Biden nationally among RIWI forecasters.

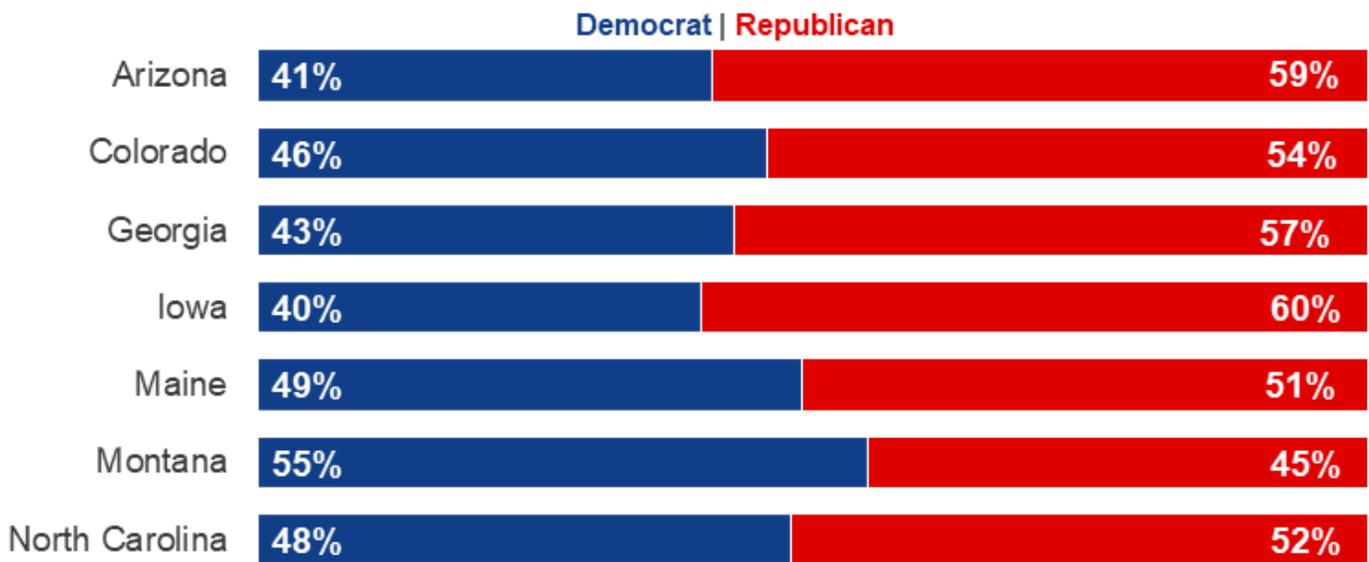
Impact of Age: Generally, the older the forecaster's age, the more likely he or she is to think it is worthwhile to vote in the upcoming presidential election. This trend is echoed when looking at forecasters' likeliness to vote. These data suggest that the ability for either Party to motivate young people to vote for their side will be an important dimension to the campaign.





SENATE ELECTION SENTIMENT EARLY SIGNALS

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



Note: Analyzed by State. Filtered out Don't know.
Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-18 2020, 1,683 respondents: Arizona 302, Colorado 229, Georgia 341, Iowa, 141, Maine 255, Montana 127, North Carolina 286) Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

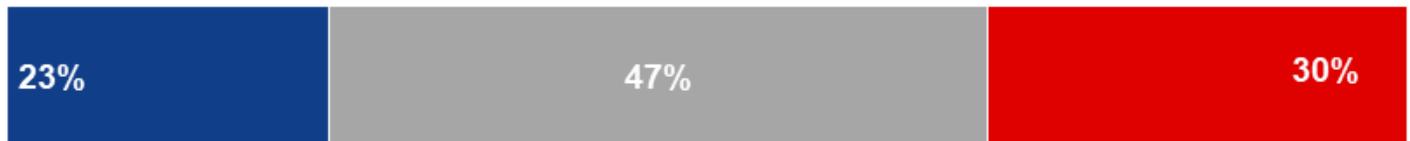
Seven weeks out from the election, 59% of RIWI forecasters do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in 2020.

- Predictors in Iowa and North Carolina are the most uncertain.
- In Georgia, 60% of forecasters feel they do not have sufficient knowledge to predict which candidate will win the Senate special election.
- As it stands, Republican Candidate Doug Collins is currently in the lead (30%) among forecasters who report that they have sufficient knowledge to predict the winner. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, the top two finishers will advance to a runoff election, to be held on January 5, 2021.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SENTIMENT

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

Biden | Don't know | Trump



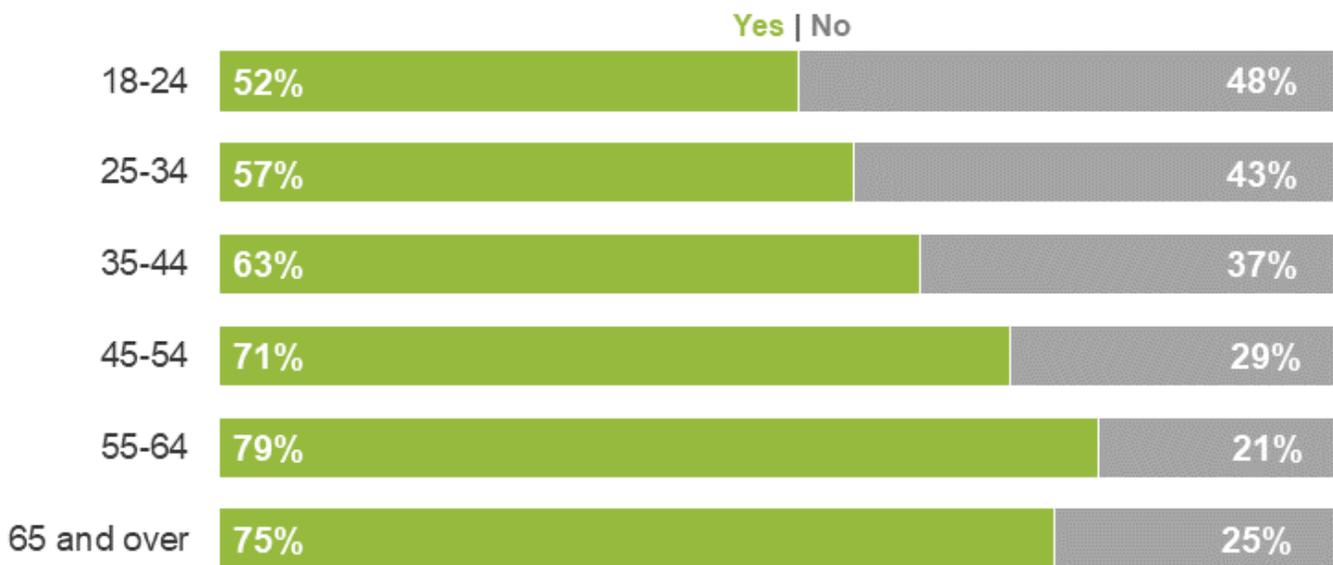
Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-18 2020, 13,955 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

Seven weeks out from the election, 47% of forecasters do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in the presidential election.

- President Donald Trump has a 7% lead over former Vice President Biden nationally among RIWI forecasters. It is too early to assess whether forecasters' assessments of a "shy Trump" voter effect will manifest itself in the vote, especially in battlegrounds.
- Republicans currently take the lead in Texas (67%) Florida (66%) and Pennsylvania (57%).
- In future reports, as sample sizes increase, this question will predict the Electoral College result 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. We will illustrate this result using visual mapping.



Is it worth your time to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election?



Note: Analyzed by age group. Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-18 2020, 10,987 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

Generally, the older the forecaster’s age, the more likely he or she is to think it is worthwhile to vote in the upcoming presidential election. This trend is echoed when looking at forecasters' likeliness to vote. These data suggest that the ability for either Party to motivate young people to vote for their side will be an important dimension to the campaign.

- Only 52% of forecasters between the ages of 18-24 feel that it is worth their time to vote in the 2020 presidential election.
- Forecasters 35 and over are more likely to think President Trump will win their state in the 2020 Presidential Election.

A close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stripes and stars. The flag is positioned in the upper half of the page, behind the title.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN EDITION # 2

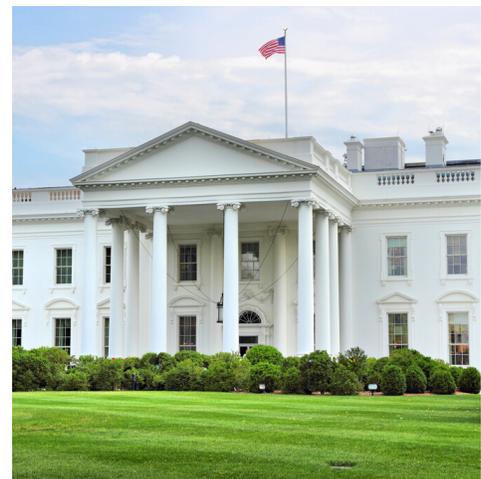
- We shall present who forecasters *personally prefer* to win the Presidential Election. As data collection continues, it is valuable to assess the degree to which personal preference trends are collinear with forecasted trends.
- We shall evaluate who *likely voters* think will win the Presidential 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.



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?

We have the answer option shown on the survey as “Don’t know enough” to whom the respondent prefers to win the election. At first, it may seem off that nearly half of all random respondents “don’t know enough.” However, historical voter engagement has been low in the US, 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 US election work.

Note: “Don’t know enough” may increase as well if the race becomes close. We will focus on the results of this group of politically engaged/likely to vote respondents in later reports, as it is still too early on 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.

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