



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

RELEASE DATE

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EDITION 2

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 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 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 in Edition 2 were collected between September 8th - September 25th, 9:30 AM EST.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Election: Five weeks out from the election, 58% of RIWI forecasters do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in 2020. A shift from Republican to Democrat lead has occurred in Maine in the past week.

Presidential Election: There has not been a significant change when compared to last week's data. Forty-seven percent of forecasters still do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in the presidential election. President Trump currently leads 6 battleground states among RIWI forecasters who feel they have sufficient knowledge to predict who will win the presidential election in their state. This is consistent with our findings from last week showing that there is a broad-based perception among knowledgeable forecasters of an “undetected” GOP vote.

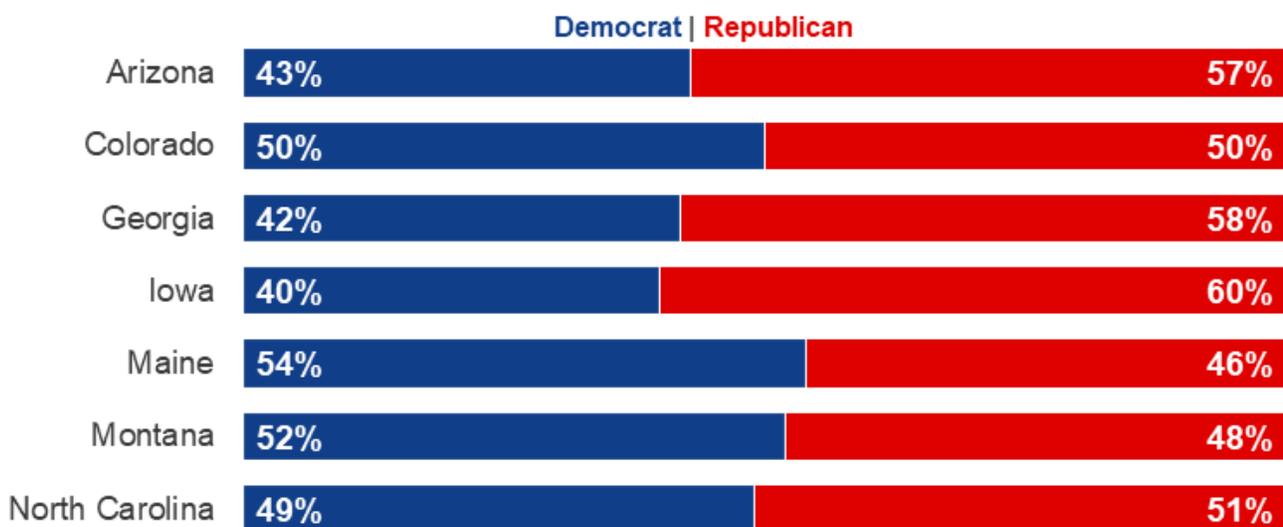
Personal Preference: Among those who know who they prefer, President Trump is in the lead (55%) compared to former Vice President Biden (45%). When analyzed by gender, males are much more likely to prefer President Trump (60%) over former Vice President Biden (40%).

Impact of Race: RIWI forecasters who identify as African-American or White are the most likely to feel it is worth their time to vote in the election. Of White forecasters, 63% would personally prefer President Trump to win the election, whereas 78% of Black / African-American forecasters personally prefer Mr. Biden to win.



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 8-25 2020, 2,676 respondents (Arizona 461, Colorado 335, Georgia 561, Iowa 240, Maine 374, Montana 233, North Carolina 472) Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

Five weeks out from the election, 58% of RIWI forecasters still do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in 2020.

- Predictors in Iowa and North Carolina remain the most uncertain.
- Of forecasters who have enough knowledge to make a prediction, Republican Senate candidates are favored to win in Arizona, Georgia and Iowa. There are currently Republican incumbents in each of those three states. Colorado, Maine, Montana, North Carolina, all of which also have Republican incumbents, are statistically tied.

SENTIMENT IN GEORGIA

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

Liberman | Warnock | Loeffler | Collins



Note: Analyzed by State. Filtered out Don't know option. Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-25 2020, 434 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincemented.

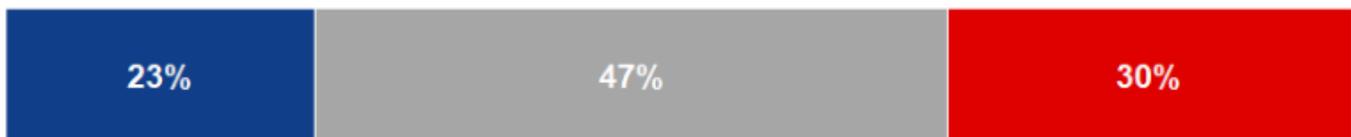
There are two Senate elections taking place in Georgia this year. The regular scheduled election, illustrated in the first graph, is between Republican candidate David Perdue and Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff. The second election, referred to as the Special Election, will be conducted to fill Senator Johnny Isakson's seat as he resigned on December 31, 2019. A primary election will not occur; instead, all candidates, regardless of party, will be placed on the same ballot. 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.

- Currently, 59% of forecasters feel they do not have sufficient knowledge to predict which candidate will win the Senate special election.
- Republican Candidate Kelly Loeffler (33%) is now in the lead over fellow Republican Candidate Doug Collins (28%) among forecasters who report that they have sufficient knowledge to predict the winner of the State of Georgia special election.

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 8-25 2020, 9,430 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.

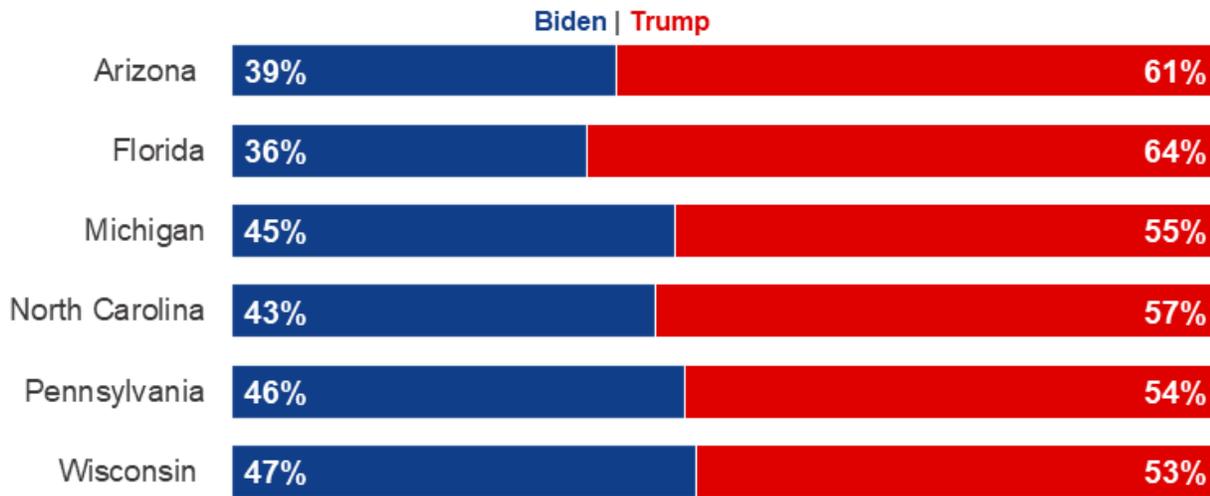
Over the past 3 weeks, President Trump has been consistently gaining momentum among forecasters seeking to evaluate his likelihood of keeping the White House.

- Of all forecasters, 47% still do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to say who will win their state in the presidential election.
- President Trump continues to have a 7% lead over former Vice President Biden nationally among RIWI forecasters. To note, this national forecast includes respondents who don't know enough to make a prediction. It is for this reason we see a slightly narrower lead than illustrated in our next graph, which removes respondents who say they do not know enough.
- This week President Trump has sustained his lead in Ohio (72%), Texas (65%), Florida (64%) and Pennsylvania (54%), among forecasters who report that they have enough knowledge to make a prediction.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SENTIMENT

President Trump currently leads in six key battleground states - Arizona, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin - among RIWI forecasters who feel they have sufficient knowledge to predict who will win the presidential election in their state.

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



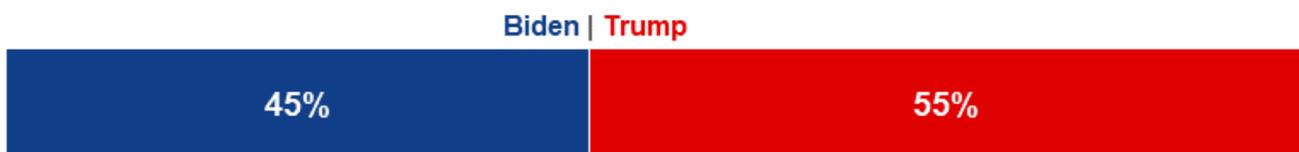
Note: Analyzed by state. Filtered out Don't know. Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-25 2020, 2,188 respondents (Arizona 241, Florida 705, Michigan 325, North Carolina 339, Pennsylvania 404, Wisconsin 188) Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincientized.

Traditional high-quality polls, notably, one by Monmouth University, have documented that up to 55% of US voters are convinced that undetected support for President Trump will help him win reelection. A valuable recent Morning Consult 'mode effect' study of likely voters sought to examine the veracity of the 'undetected Trump vote' phenomenon to show that President Trump performed about the same against Mr. Biden nationally, regardless of whether the pollster interviewed respondents by phone or online. However, the Morning Consult study deployed an outbound recruitment method, the details of which are not disclosed, for accessing respondents to participate in each mode.

All outbound recruitment methods that we are aware of, such as email, contain personally identifiable information that is readily traceable to any respondent, and known by the respondent to be easily traceable. By contrast, no RIWI data are traceable to an individual identifier of any kind, and RIWI deploys a truly anonymous inbound method where any individual answering knows that the researcher has no means to re-contact them or identify them in any way.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE SIGNALS

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



Note: filtered out Don't know. Source: RIWI data, US Election tracking, September 8-25 2020, 9,464 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincarcerated.

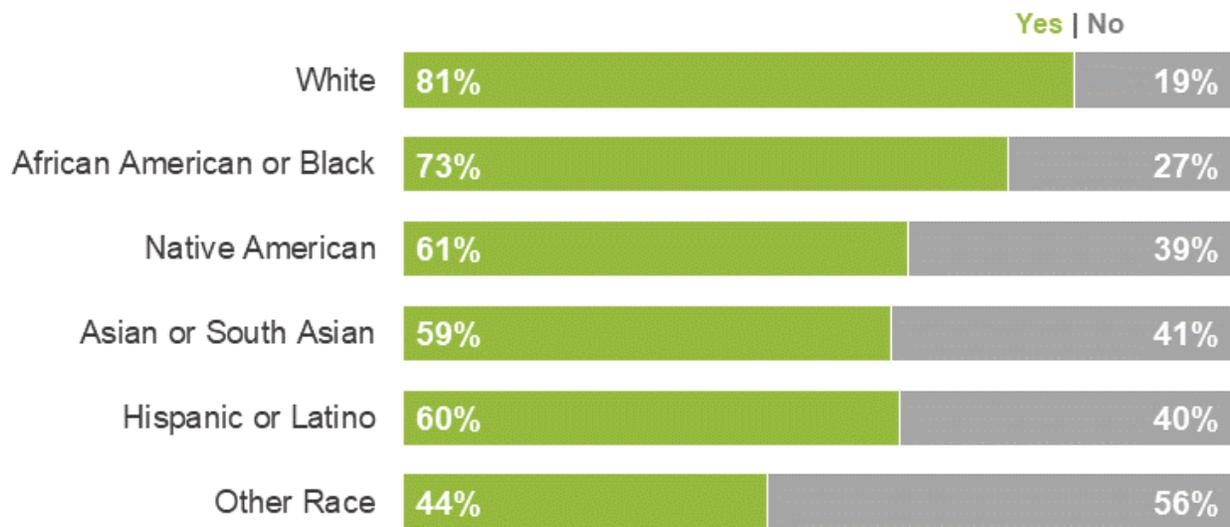
President Trump is in the lead (55%) among RIWI forecasters who know whom they would personally prefer to win the 2020 Presidential election.

- When analyzed by gender, males are much more likely to prefer President Trump (60%) over former Vice President Biden (40%). Preferences among women are evenly divided.
- In addition, when analyzed by age, forecasters over 35 are more likely to prefer President Trump to win the election.
 - While former Vice President Biden is preferred by the younger forecasters aged 18-35, they are also the most unengaged, as noted in last week's RIWI report.
- President Trump is preferred by forecasters who live in rural areas and the suburbs although preference in both large cities and suburbs is tightening between the two candidates.



DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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 8-25 2020, 10,722 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincientized.

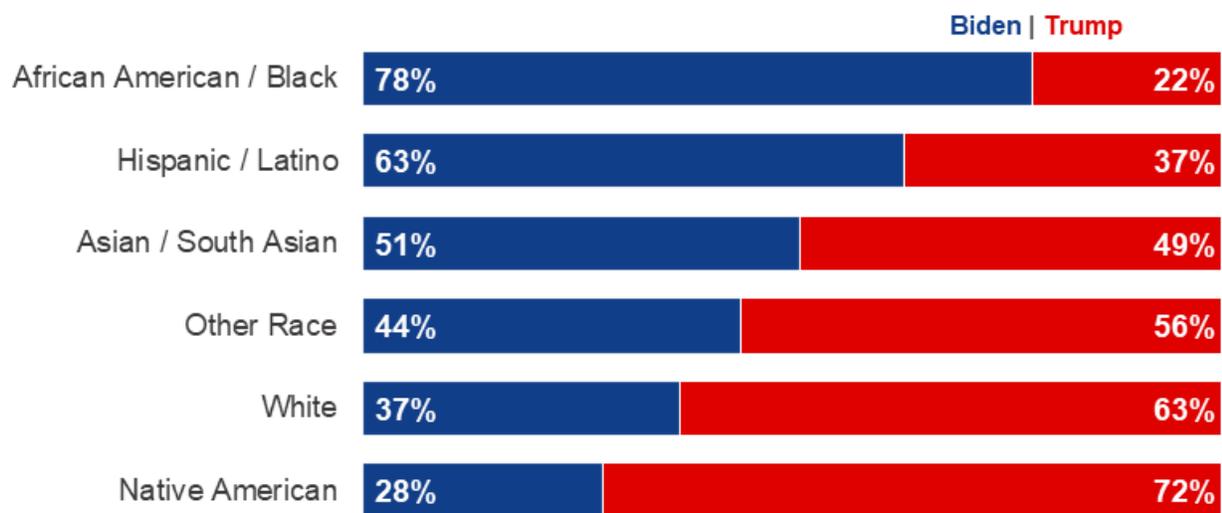
RIWI forecasters who identify as African-American or White are the most likely to feel it is worth their time to vote in the election. Of White forecasters 63% would personally prefer President Trump to win the election, whereas 78% of Black/ African-American forecasters personally prefer Mr. Biden to win.

Only 59% of Hispanic or Latino forecasters feel it is worth their time to vote. Of those Hispanics or Latinos who feel it is worth their time to vote 63% personally prefer Mr. Biden to win.

Forecasters who identify as a race that is not listed (i.e., "Other Race") are the least likely to feel it is worth their time to vote (44%). The majority (56%) of those who feel it is worth their time to vote and have enough knowledge to state their preference would prefer President Trump to win.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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



Note: Analyzed by race. Filtered by respondents who feel it is worth their time to vote and excluding Don't know option. Source: RIWI, U.S Election Predictive Data Stream, September 8-25 2020, 6,009 respondents Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized.



WHAT TO EXPECT IN EDITION #3

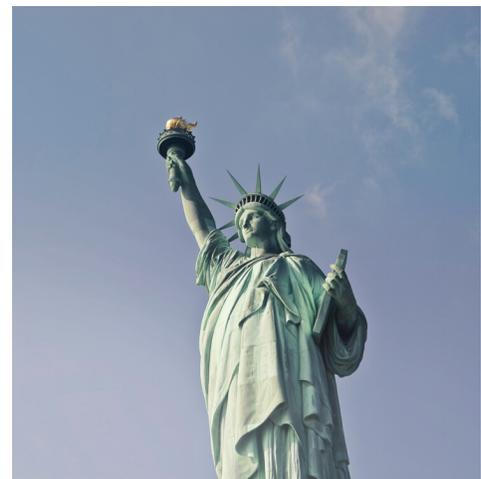
- We shall evaluate who likely voters think will win the Presidential and Senate Elections in their state. As data collection continues, it is valuable to assess the degree to which likely voters' forecasts are collinear with the broader forecast.
- We shall evaluate if forecasters are more likely to feel it is worth their time to vote in the 2020 Presidential election depending on their employment status.
- We shall provide observed sentiment shifts, if any, following the first Presidential debate (Sept 29th 2020).



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.

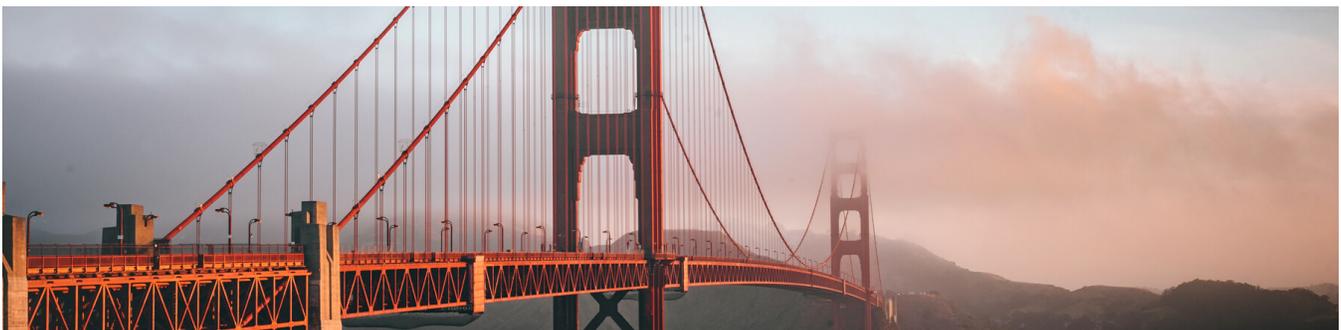
The Electoral College analysis will be based on state-by-state predictions, re-weighted to the Electoral College seat allocations. These state-level forecasts will be mapped to each state’s electoral seat count to determine our dynamic predictions for the Electoral College result.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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 US presidency, those results will not be comparable with our methodology as RIWI is the only data provider reaching a truly random sample of the US 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 US 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 US presidential election, 2018 Senate elections and other elections around the world supports our methodology.





ABOUT RIWI

RIWI stands for “real-time interactive world-wide intelligence.” RIWI provides 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: 229 countries and territories, over 80 languages and 1.6 billion interviewees and counting. For more information, please visit us at www.riwi.com.

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