



U.S ELECTION WEEKLY INSIGHTS AND PREDICTIONS BRIEF

RIWI forecasters expect President Trump to be re-elected with at least 259 Electoral votes and a 93% probability of gaining at least the additional 11 votes required for a White House victory; Republican Senators expected to win 3 of 8 key Senate races, Democrats to take 3, and 2 are tied.

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FINAL REPORT

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.

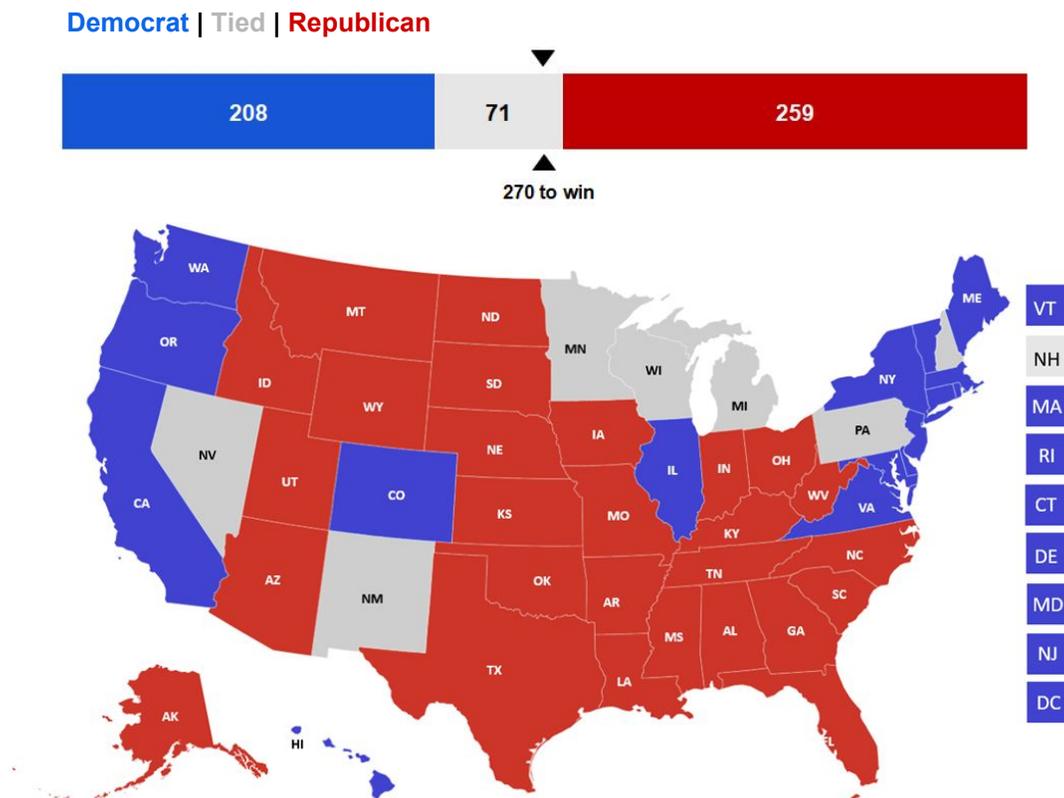
RIWI forecasters expect President Trump to be re-elected with at least 259 Electoral votes and a 93% probability of gaining at least the additional 11 votes required for a White House victory: Republican Senators expected to win 3 of 8 key Senate races, Democrats to take 3, and 2 are tied

Electoral College: As of 8 a.m. EST on November 2, President Trump is leading. RIWI data shows President Trump has 259 electoral votes vs. former Vice President Biden’s 208 (Map 1). The candidates are statistically tied on 71 electoral votes.

The results shown are limited to those responders who say they are / were likely to vote, or to those who say that it is / was worth their time to vote (the precise respondent subsets are identified in relevant parts of this brief). These results reflect the views of randomly engaged RIWI forecasters from the full September 8 - November 2 period.

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

Electoral College votes, profiling ‘Likely voter’ data only, 95% Confidence Interval



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream. September 8 - November 2. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”) and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough* to express a clear opinion. n = 24,076 forecasters. Of these, RIWI collected 10,251 forecasters from October 26 - November 2. Map created November 2 at 8:30 EST. Respondents are unique, anonymous and unincentivized.

Map 1 / Note 1: Map 1 determines that a state wins if RIWI forecasters predict a win in their state based on a 95% Confidence Interval. Any reference in this Report to “state” includes the District of Columbia, since, for the purposes of the Electoral College, it is treated as if it were a state. All states except Vermont have 50 or more *Likely voters* as of November 2, 2020. For Vermont, due to its relatively small data set, we examined 50 or more respondents who reported it is / was worth their time to vote (a subset which RIWI has consistently found to be statistically equivalent in sentiment to the “Likely voter” cohort).

Map 1 / Note 2: While there is a unique structure of the Electoral College votes in Maine and Nebraska, we assume under this model that the winner takes all the electoral votes in both states. There is historically only one toss-up vote in these two states, and, traditionally, the overall winning candidates in each of the two states are from opposite parties, resulting in a reasonable likelihood that the toss-up votes balance each other out. While it is possible that the same candidate may win both toss-up votes, we chose (for the purposes of question-design consistency at the state-level) not to formulate our data collection method by congressional district. On October 29, we conducted a statistical analysis of congressional districts in Maine, disaggregating our state-level response data by all counties, and the results of that analysis validate this 'winner-take-all' approach.

President Trump has a 93% probability of gaining the remaining Electoral College votes necessary to win the White House

As seen in Map 1 above, RIWI forecasters predict President Trump to receive 259 College votes. As set out in Table 1 below, there is a 93% probability of President Trump obtaining at least the required additional 11 votes needed to win.

Table 1: If any of the 11 options in the three scenarios below occur, President Trump gains the additional 11 Electoral College votes to win a total of 270.

	State	Electoral College Votes	Probability of Winning a State			Probability of Winning	Probability of Losing
			First State	Second State	Third State		
Scenario 1							
President Trump has 3 options, winning any one of these states	MI	16	50%			50%	50%
	PA	20	55%			55%	45%
	VA	13	0%			0%	100%
Scenario 2							
Assuming President Trump wins WI, he has 4 options since he only also needs one of the other states	WI	10	50%				
	MN	10		38%		19%	81%
	HI	4		0%		0%	100%
	NM	5		38%		19%	81%
	NH	4		62%		31%	69%
Scenario 3							
Assuming President Trump wins MN, he has 3 options since he only also needs one of the other states	MN	10	38%				
	HI	4		0%		0%	100%
	NM	5		38%		14%	86%
	NH	4		62%		24%	76%
Scenario 4							
President Trump has 1 option of winning <i>all</i> three of these states	NM	5	38%				
	HI	4		0%			
	NH	4			62%	0%	100%
Probability President Trump loses all of the options							7%
Probability President Trump does not lose all of the options, meaning winning at least one option and thus winning the additional 11 Electoral College Votes required to be re-elected							93%

Table 1 Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream. September 8 - November 2. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”) and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough* to express a clear opinion. Table created November 2 at 8:30 am EST.

Table 1 Note: While Hawaii shows a 0% chance of President Trump winning in Table 1, we include it for clarity and completeness since the state is statistically tied, and thus may change relatively quickly, and is also on the borderline between 0% and a small probability of President Trump winning. We include Virginia for the same reasons even though it is not even statistically tied; it is both on the borderline of being statistically tied and the borderline between 0% and a small probability of President Trump winning.

Pennsylvania Observation

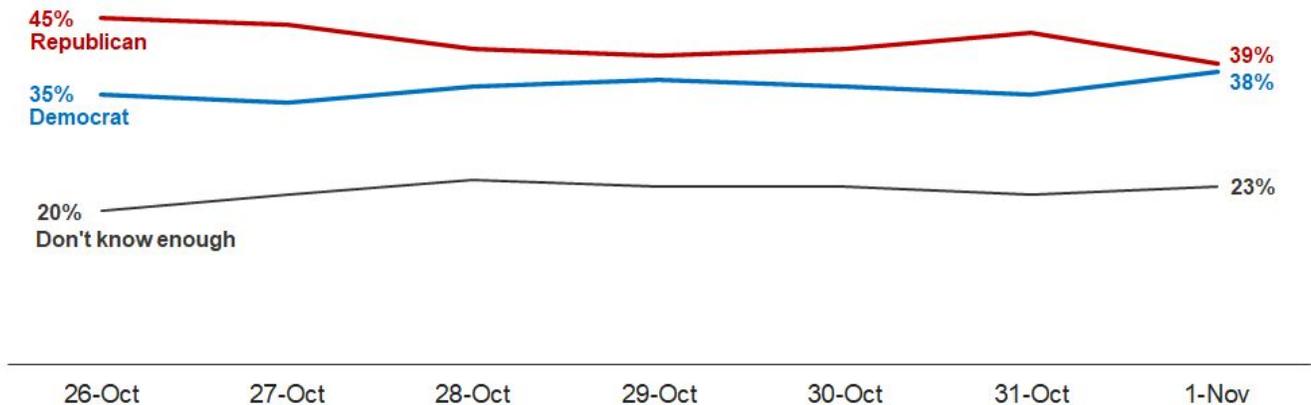
When widening our subset of data to include randomly engaged RIWI forecasters who report that it is “worth their time to vote,” we observe an interesting fact regarding the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania, a pivotal swing state with 20 electoral votes, has periodically switched, over the prior 72 hours, from between: a) inside the statistical margin for President Trump giving the 20 votes to the President, and b) a statistical tie. Furthermore, Pennsylvania has steadily remained “lean Trump” even during periods of statistical tie. The opinions of this larger “worth their time to vote” cohort of RIWI forecasters tend to be collinear with the “likely voter” cohort.

President Trump maintained his lead over Mr. Biden in the last days of the campaign

When it comes to expectations about who will win the Electoral College, President Trump has maintained a close lead nationally over Mr. Biden throughout the last week before the election (October 26 - November 1), according to RIWI forecasters who were / are likely to vote (Chart 1).

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

Profiling ‘Likely voter’ data only



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, October 26 - November 1 2020. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”). n = 12,780 respondents. Respondents are unique, anonymous and unincentivized. Chart created November 2 at 8:30 EST.

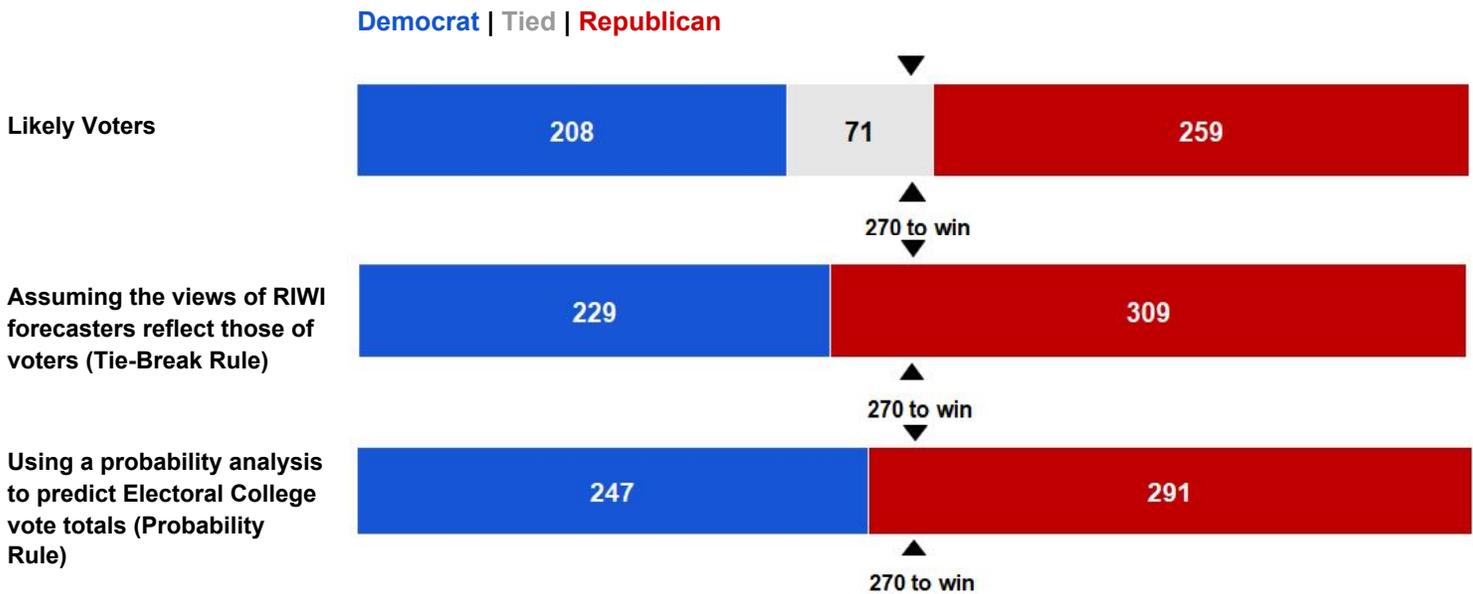
RIWI’s Approach to Break the Statistical Ties: The *Tie-Break Rule* & *Probability Rule*

We explore what would happen if we add an assumption in order to break statistical ties, as well as what the probability is of President Trump winning the Electoral College. In both explorations, outlined below under the **Tie-Break Rule** and **Probability Rule**, President Trump wins the Electoral College (Chart 2).

Tie Break Rule: This rule assumes that the views of RIWI forecasters who are likely to vote reflect the views of the voting population. Using this assumption, we can see who would win some of the states that are statistically tied. For example, if RIWI data show a 51% - 49% statistical tie, and the above assumption is correct, then we say that the winner is the candidate with 51%.

Probability Rule: Using the probability of winning each state, we assign a “partial” vote. For example, if President Trump has an 62% chance of winning a state, we assign 62% of the votes possible in that state to the President.

Chart 2: President Trump is Leading in Electoral College votes using all Three Approaches



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, includes *Likely voters* and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough*. Data collection in most states is illustrated to include observations from September 8 - November 2. Chart created November 2 at 8:30 EST.

Note 1: For *Likely Voters*, refer to the entirety of Note 1 of Map 1. For **Tie-Break Rule** and **Probability Rule**, refer to Note 1 of Map 1 only with respect to sample size.

Note 2: Due to the unique structure of the Electoral College seats in Maine and Nebraska, we assume the ‘winner-takes-all’ electoral vote approach as explained above in Note 2 to Map 1.

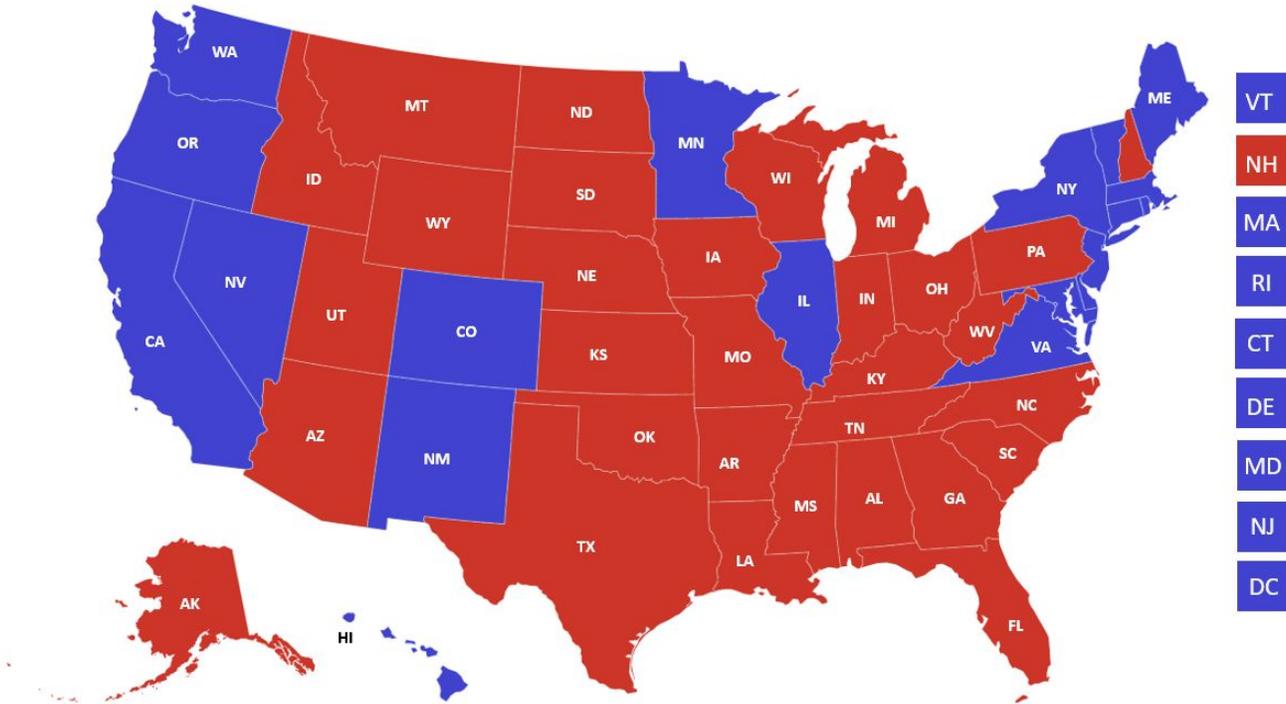
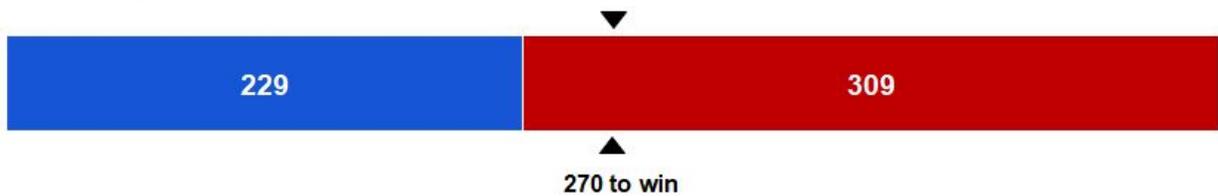
In the Tie-Break Rule, President Trump Expected to Win 309 Electoral College Votes

If the assumption in the **Tie-Break Rule** is correct – that the views of RIWI forecasters match the views of voters perfectly – then RIWI forecasters expect President Trump to win 309 votes in the Electoral College and Mr. Biden to win 229.

Map 2: Regardless of whom you support, who do you think will win your state in the 2020 Presidential Election?

Electoral College Votes, profiling 'Likely voter' data only (using the **Tie-Break Rule**)

Democrat | Republican



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream. September 8 - November 2. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”) and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough* to express a clear opinion. n = 24,066 forecasters. Of these, RIWI collected 9,953 forecasters from October 26 - November 2. Respondents are unique, anonymous and unincentivized. Map created on November 2 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

Note 1: The state win determination in this map assumes that the views of RIWI forecasters are perfectly reflective of the views of voters (the **Tie-Break Rule**).

Note 2: Refer to Note 1 of Map 1 only with respect to sample size.

Note 3: Refer to Map 1, Note 2 for how we determine a winner in Maine and Nebraska, due to the unique structure of Electoral College votes in these states.

In the *Probability Rule*, President Trump Expected to Win 291 Electoral College Votes

In the **Probability Rule**, we consider what the Electoral College **total** outcome would look like based on *probabilities* assigned to winning each of the states (Table 2). For example, if RIWI forecasters expect a candidate to win a state by 2%, then we estimate the probability of winning the Electoral College votes to be 55% and we assign the “partial” total votes for that state accordingly. Consider another example: if a candidate is winning by 20%, then we estimate the probability of winning at 100%. Table 2 illustrates how the **Probability Rule** assigns a “partial” vote based on the probability of the candidate winning that state.

Using this probabilities approach, we find that President Trump is likely to win **291 total** Electoral College votes.

Table 2: President Trump is Leading in Electoral College votes using Three Approaches

State	Electoral College	Likely Voter	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability
	Total Votes	Statistically Tied	Trump Won Votes			Biden Won Votes		
	538	71	259	309	291	208	229	247
AL	9	0	9	9	9	0	0	0
AK	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	0
AZ	11	0	11	11	11	0	0	0
AR	6	0	6	6	6	0	0	0
CA	55	0	0	0	0	55	55	55
CO	9	0	0	0	0	9	9	9
CT	7	0	0	0	0	7	7	7
DE	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
DC	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
FL	29	0	29	29	29	0	0	0
GA	16	0	16	16	16	0	0	0
HI	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
ID	4	0	4	4	4	0	0	0
IL	20	0	0	0	0	20	20	20
IN	11	0	11	11	11	0	0	0
IA	6	0	6	6	6	0	0	0
KS	6	0	6	6	6	0	0	0
KY	8	0	8	8	8	0	0	0
LA	8	0	8	8	8	0	0	0
ME	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
MD	10	0	0	0	0	10	10	10
MA	11	0	0	0	0	11	11	11
MI	16	16	0	16	8.0	0	0	8.0
MN	10	10	0	0	3.8	0	10	6.2
MS	6	0	6	6	6	0	0	0



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State	Electoral College	Likely Voter	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability
	Total Votes	Statistically Tied	Trump Won Votes			Biden Won Votes		
MO	10	0	10	10	10	0	0	0
MT	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	0
NE	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0
NV	6	6	0	0	0	0	6	6
NH	4	4	0	4	2.5	0	0	1.5
NJ	14	0	0	0	0	14	14	14
NM	5	5	0	0	1.9	0	5	3.1
NY	29	0	0	0	0	29	29	29
NC	15	0	15	15	15	0	0	0
ND	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	0
OH	18	0	18	18	18	0	0	0
OK	7	0	7	7	7	0	0	0
OR	7	0	0	0	0	7	7	7
PA	20	20	0	20	11	0	0	9
RI	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
SC	9	0	9	9	9	0	0	0
SD	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	0
TN	11	0	11	11	11	0	0	0
TX	38	0	38	38	38	0	0	0
UT	6	0	6	6	6	0	0	0
VT	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
VA	13	0	0	0	0	13	13	13
WA	12	0	0	0	0	12	12	12
WV	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0
WI	10	10	0	10	5	0	0	5
WY	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	0
	538	71	259	309	291	208	229	247
State	Total Votes	Statistically Tied	Trump Won Votes			Biden Won Votes		
	Electoral College	Likely Voter	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability	Likely Voter	Tie-Break	Probability

Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream, includes Likely voters and excludes forecasters who *Don't know enough*. Data collection in most states is illustrated to include observations from September 8 - November 2. Table created November 2 at 9:00 a.m. EST.

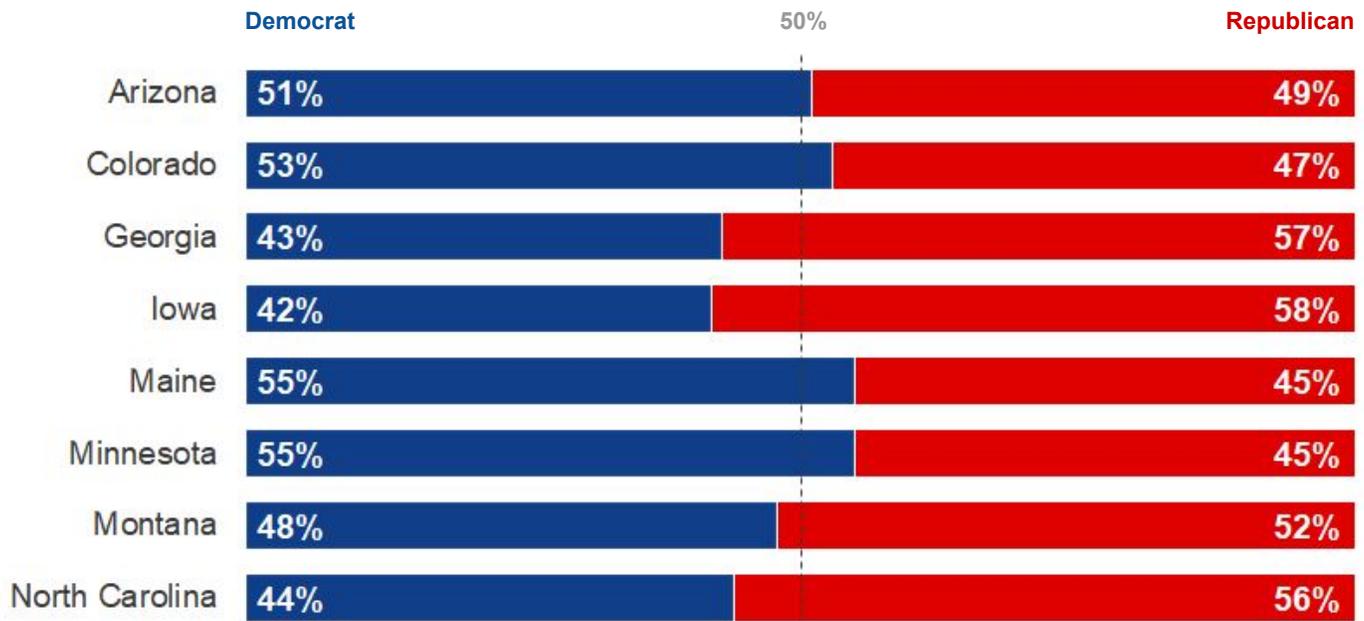
Watching Eight Close Senate Races: Three Republican, Three Democrat, Two Ties

Of the eight highly contested Senate seats under RIWI’s examination, RIWI forecasters (among those who are / were ‘likely’ to vote at the time of being asked) predict a Republican candidate victory in three states, and a Democratic win in an additional three states. Two states are statistically tied (Chart 3).

- RIWI forecasters predict Senators David Perdue (R) (incumbent) of Georgia, Joni Ernst (R) (incumbent) of Iowa, and Thom Tillis (R) (incumbent) of North Carolina, to win their states.
- RIWI forecasters predict Senator Tina Smith (D) (incumbent) of Minnesota, Governor John Hickenlooper (D) of Colorado, and Speaker Sara Gideon (D) of Maine to win their states. Speaker Sara Gideon and Governor John Hickenlooper’s victories would signify a Senate seat flip from Republican incumbents Senator Susan Collins (R) (Maine) and Senator Cory Gardner (R) (Colorado).
- Candidates in Arizona, and Montana are statistically tied.

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

Profiling ‘Likely voters’ only, October 1 - November 2



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream. October 1 - November 2. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”) and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough* to express a clear opinion. n = 4,687 forecasters (Arizona 814, Colorado 608, Georgia 850, Iowa 448, Maine 409, Minnesota 360, Montana 265, North Carolina 933). Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized. Chart created November 2 at 8:30 EST.

In the Georgia Special Election, RIWI forecasters do not think that one candidate will win more than 50% of the votes. Reverend Raphael Warnock (D) enjoys a prediction share (i.e., the share of RIWI forecasters who expect him to win) of 35% and Senator Kelly Loeffler (R) has a 30% prediction share; therefore, they are forecasted to advance to the runoff election on January 5, 2021.

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

Profiling 'Likely voter' data only, October 1 - November 2

Lieberman | Warnock | Collins | Loeffler



Source: RIWI, U.S. Election Predictive Data Stream. October 1-November 2. Includes only *Likely voters* (“Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”) and excludes forecasters who *Don’t know enough* to express a clear opinion. n = 765 forecasters. Respondents are unique, anonymous, and unincentivized. Chart created November 2 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

A Thank You from RIWI:

We thank our clients and partners for engaging with us throughout the 2020 U.S. Election season. We hope that the insights provided through RIWI’s unique technology and methodology have been valuable and useful for your business needs. Our goal is always to exceed our customers’ expectations, and we hope we have done that through the U.S. Election Weekly Insights & Predictions Briefs and associated discussions.

If you have questions on any of the U.S. Election Weekly Insights & Predictions Briefs, please contact katedier@riwi.com.

We are always working to improve, and any feedback is appreciated. If you would like to provide feedback or discuss any other RIWI-related business, please contact neilweitzman@riwi.com.

About the 2020 U.S. Election Weekly Insights and Predictions Brief:

The 2020 U.S. Election Weekly Insights and Predictions Briefs have been released every week up to the day before Election Day, November 3, 2020. Each brief: (a) addressed key findings and high-level trends from RIWI's continuous real-time data stream exclusively available to data stream subscribers; (b) was sourced from randomly engaged RIWI forecasters representative of the U.S. public, and (c) ensured 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 examined trends and indicators such as voting intentions, dynamic sentiment on support for Democratic and Republican candidates, and considered 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 applied 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 trends in expectations of victory for the presidential and the Senate races; and,
- Track and predict the Senate and Electoral College outcomes.

Our Methodology:

RIWI's patented mechanism produces 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.
- These RIWI-activated dynamic domains may be displayed to people from broken links to hypertext on financial blogs or other media, and on digital content that people read. RIWI access grows each day.
- RIWI's access expands dynamically, and randomly, because once a domain becomes commercially vacant, all the links associated with that domain potentially fall into the growing RIWI ocean of domains capable of inviting people to be subject to a RIWI ad test or survey. We then geo-locate with privacy-compliant precision.
- RIWI-activated domains are real registered domains that are 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 in order 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 like a significant proportion 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 focusing on those who think that it is worth their time to vote, and on those who are likely to vote, this “don’t know enough” category decreases significantly.

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.

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., self-reported age, gender, region); this allows for analysis using the sum of weight values across all cross-tabulations to be approximate to specified target values. In the Senate portion of the RIWI dashboard, we weight to Census for age group and gender. In the national portion of the dashboard, we weight to Census for age group, gender, and state population distribution nationally.

Our Electoral College analytics for the duration of this campaign were based on state-by-state predictions, which were dynamically re-weighted in real-time to the Electoral College vote allocations. These state-level forecasts were thus mapped in real-time to each state’s electoral vote count to determine our dynamic predictions for the Electoral College forecast.

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, each day, and always avoiding the use of a panel-based outbound approach to reach its respondents (i.e., RIWI does not recruit respondents from a pre-identified “sample” or “voter database”).

We also chose to ask forecasters which candidate they think will win in their state, independent of whom they may personally support for President. We did this for question-design data quality purposes. Based on our previous research, we have found that 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 and more prone to social desirability bias.

Furthermore, the purpose of our 'preference data', as we have phrased this term, 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 to break through the noise to get an accurate and true read of voter sentiment and awareness.

In this approach, RIWI purposefully makes the following assumptions: that forecasters' responses accurately account for enthusiasm and mobilization to vote, and that voters are honest in their responses to RIWI since they are completely anonymous to RIWI.

For RIWI, one truly random forecast from one randomly engaged, anonymous person is worth far more than 10 non-randomly engaged, non-random traditional survey respondents who habitually offer their personal opinions in exchange for incentives. Further, ensuring the anonymity of any respondent, without ever collecting personally identifiable information, is essential to ethically responsible data collection.

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 and from 229 countries and territories, over 80 languages and 1.6 billion interviewees and counting. For more information, please visit www.riwi.com.

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