

UW-Madison: Battleground poll results

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FULL POLL RESULTS: <https://news.wisc.edu/battleground-state-poll-shows-biden--with-persistent-but-surmountable-leads/>

BATTLEGROUND STATE POLL SHOWS BIDEN WITH PERSISTENT BUT SURMOUNTABLE LEADS

MADISON – As voting gets underway in many states, Joe Biden remains ahead of Donald Trump in three key battleground states – Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin – according to a poll by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Elections Research Center.

Biden earns support from approximately half of voters, a key threshold that Trump did not reach in any of the three states in 2016. Trump's support is in the mid-40s, a close reflection of his job approval ratings among respondents, and within striking range of Biden. This represents a slight improvement for Trump compared to the previous ERC poll in August.

These findings are from the third set of 2020 battleground surveys from the Elections Research Center. The poll in Wisconsin is conducted in collaboration with the Wisconsin State Journal. Interviews were conducted between Sept. 10 and Sept. 21.

GENERAL ELECTION MATCHUPS

Biden bests Trump in all three states among respondents who are registered to vote. Trump trails by 8 points in Michigan (50% Biden to 42% Trump) but by only 5 points in Pennsylvania (49% Biden to 44% Trump) and Wisconsin (also 49% Biden to 44% Trump).

Unlike in August, Biden's lead actually narrows when limiting the focus to "likely" voters, defined as registered voters who also report that they are "certain" to vote. Biden remains near the 50% mark in all three states, but Trump narrows the gap among this key group of respondents. None of these differences between the candidates is statistically significant.

The survey is part of a panel study in which the same respondents who participated in the prior survey fielded from July 27 to Aug. 6 were reinterviewed in September. Their vote choices between the two waves are extremely stable, with only a handful of respondents shifting between the candidates.

REASONS FOR VOTE CHOICES

Biden and Trump voters see the country's challenges quite differently. Likely voters were given a list of 11 topics and asked which was the "most important issue facing the country." Nearly half of Biden voters selected the pandemic as the top issue. The traditional Democratic issues of health care, climate change, and inequality were named as most important by 12% to 14% of Biden voters.

In contrast, Trump voters named the economy as most important, crime as second, and the coronavirus pandemic much lower at just 13%. Before the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Trump voters were somewhat more likely than Biden voters to see Supreme Court appointments as the most important issue.

OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Approval ratings of all three Democratic governors fell slightly since the August survey, although Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer has more strong support than do Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers.

Ratings of Trump's overall performance remain exceptionally stable. About as many respondents "strongly disapprove" of Trump as those who "strongly" or "somewhat" approve of him.

Trump fares somewhat better when it comes to handling of the economy, where he is above water in all three states. There was a slight increase in the percentage of people who are satisfied with his handling of protests, although the majority continues to be dissatisfied.

MORE ABOUT THE SURVEY

This is the third of several surveys in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin that will be conducted during the 2020 election season by the ERC in partnership with the Wisconsin State Journal for all polling done in Wisconsin.

Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin all voted for Democratic presidential candidates going back to the 1980s but flipped to the Republicans in 2016 to help President Donald Trump win the Electoral College.

Surveys of voting age adults were conducted by YouGov under the direction of the ERC. YouGov is a leading marketing and polling firm that conducts surveys for news outlets such as CBS News, the Economist, and the Huffington Post. Interviews were conducted online with respondents selected from YouGov's opt-in panel. The sample was selected and weighted to reflect the adult population in each state based on gender, age, race, and education.

800 respondents were surveyed in each of the three states. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 4.66% in Michigan, 4.28% in Pennsylvania, and 4.21% in Wisconsin. Among likely voters the margins of error are 4.71% in Michigan, 4.73% in Pennsylvania, and 4.46% in Wisconsin.

More analysis about the poll and results from prior surveys are available on the Elections Research Center's website (elections.wisc.edu).