

# [***Be ready for Donald Trump to never accept an election result***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BXX-6FW1-JBSS-S1K8-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Former President Donald Trump has shown remarkable consistency over many years on a key issue of American ***politics***: He does not have faith in election results.

He questions the results when he has won. He refuses to concede when he has lost. Now he's reserving judgment on [*whether this year's election will be "honest."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/02/politics/donald-trump-accept-2024-election-results/index.html)

In each quote below, he answers a version of the same question: "Will you accept the results of a given election?"

Trump was not the favorite to win the election in 2016, which may have something to do with him laying the groundwork to reject the results in the months before Election Day, when he complained the system was "rigged."

At the [*final presidential debate of 2016*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/19/politics/presidential-debate-highlights/index.html), moderator Chris Wallace, then of Fox News and now with CNN, pointed out the principle of a peaceful transfer of power in this country - where the two parties come together after an election to move forward. When Wallace asked Trump if he would commit to that principle, Trump said, "What I'm saying is that I will tell you at the time. I'll keep you in suspense. OK?"

Even after his victory in the Electoral College, and after he became president, Trump refused to say the 2016 election that he won was legitimate, alleging, without proof, that millions of people voted illegally, costing him the popular vote. The [*special commission*](https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/presidential-election-commission/index.html) he appointed as president to investigate his allegations of voter fraud didn't find any.

Here again Trump is [*talking to Wallace when the anchor was at Fox*](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/transcript-fox-news-sunday-interview-with-president-trump). And here again, Trump refuses to say he'll accept the election results.

The reason, again, is unfounded claims of illegal voting, but the specifics have changed. In 2020, Trump was complaining about mail-in voting rather than a fantastical conspiracy of millions of people voting illegally. There is [*still no evidence*](https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/17/politics/mail-in-ballots-donald-trump-fraud-montana/index.html) of widespread mail-in voter fraud, by the way.

In 2020, as everyone knows, he refused to accept his loss and encouraged supporters to protest the counting of Electoral College votes on January 6, 2021. A mob of his supporters, many of whom have since been prosecuted, stormed the Capitol building.

Unlike in 2016 or 2020, when he trailed in polls against Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, respectively, Trump is currently ahead of Biden [*in some polling*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/28/politics/cnn-poll-trump-biden-matchup/index.html). Presumably citing changes to election laws pushed by Republican legislators in key states, Trump said he now expects the election to be "honest."

But he is clearly not ready to issue a blanket vote of confidence in the electoral system, and Trump said he will "let it be known" if there's something wrong with the 2024 election.

"I'd be doing a disservice to the country if I said otherwise," Trump said. "But no, I expect an honest election and we expect to win maybe very big."

Given that he likes to refer to his [*multiple criminal prosecutions*](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/07/politics/trump-indictments-criminal-cases/) as a form of "election interference," it's safe to say there is groundwork laid for him to reject the results of the coming election.

Most Republicans now lack confidence in US elections

Trump's attacks on election integrity, as CNN's Marshall Cohen [*has documented*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/us-election-news-09-24-20/h_504acbcfdf82b0688c3e9cba27093640), extended far beyond the three races in which he has been a candidate. The attacks have coincided with a steep decline in how his fellow Republicans view US elections.

As recently as 2006, 92% of Republicans were very or somewhat confident that votes would be accurately cast and counted, according to polling by [*Gallup*](https://news.gallup.com/poll/404675/confidence-election-integrity-hides-deep-partisan-divide.aspx). For comparison, 70% of independents and 66% of Democrats had the same faith in the accuracy of US elections.

By 2022, just 40% of Republicans said they were very or somewhat confident that votes would be accurately cast and counted compared with 85% of Democrats and 67% of independents.

It may be natural for supporters of an out-of-power party to have some reservations about the electoral system. But the decline of Republicans' faith since 2018, from 77% confident in the accuracy of elections to 40% in 2022, is remarkable.

Democrats get frustrated with results too

None of this is to say that Trump's rivals are likely to happily accept a Trump victory. In 2019, years after her loss to Trump, Clinton said she felt that Trump was an [*"illegitimate president"*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/hillary-clinton-trump-is-an-illegitimate-president/2019/09/26/29195d5a-e099-11e9-b199-f638bf2c340f_story.html) because of tactics Republicans used to suppress voting in 2016, among other things.

But that does not change the fact that, unlike Trump in 2020, she did accept his Electoral College victory in 2016.

"Last night, I congratulated Donald Trump and offered to work with him on behalf of our country. I hope that he will be a successful president for all Americans," Clinton said in her [*concession speech*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/09/politics/hillary-clinton-concession-speech/index.html) on November 9, 2016.

"Our constitutional democracy enshrines the peaceful transfer of power and we don't just respect that, we cherish it," she added at the time.

We can expect Trump will offer no such concession if he loses in November. Instead, he is likely to again allege a conspiracy to take the election away from him, regardless of what voters say.

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