

Social Justice Watch 1030

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[Election night marks the end of one phase of campaign 2020 – and the start of another](#)

[Nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received paycheck protection loans, and most were under \\$150K](#)

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Share of registered voters who identify with the GOP has ticked up since 2017

% of registered voters who identify as ...

Rep Dem Ind



'94 '98 '02 '06 '10 '14 '18/'19

% of registered voters who identify as/lean toward ...

Rep/Lean Rep Dem/Lean Dem



'94 '98 '02 '06 '10 '14 '18/'19

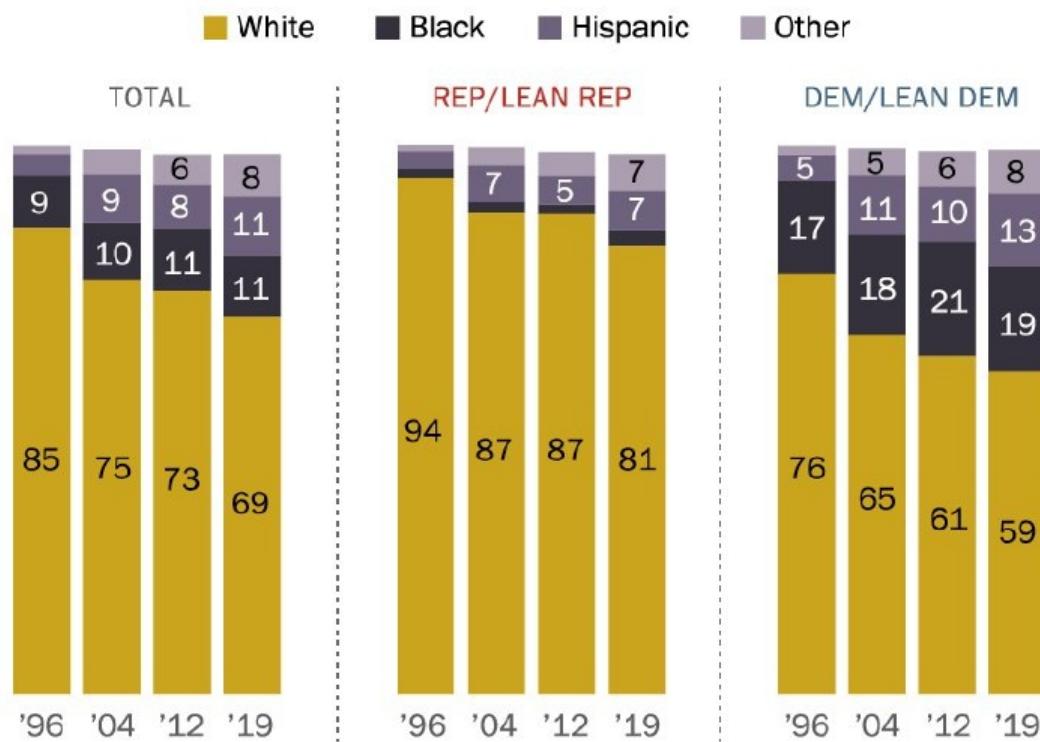
Notes: Based on registered voters. Due to smaller sample sizes in 2018 and 2019, the data from those years has been combined.
Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Nonwhites make up four-in-ten Democratic voters but fewer than a fifth of Republican voters

% of registered voters who are ...



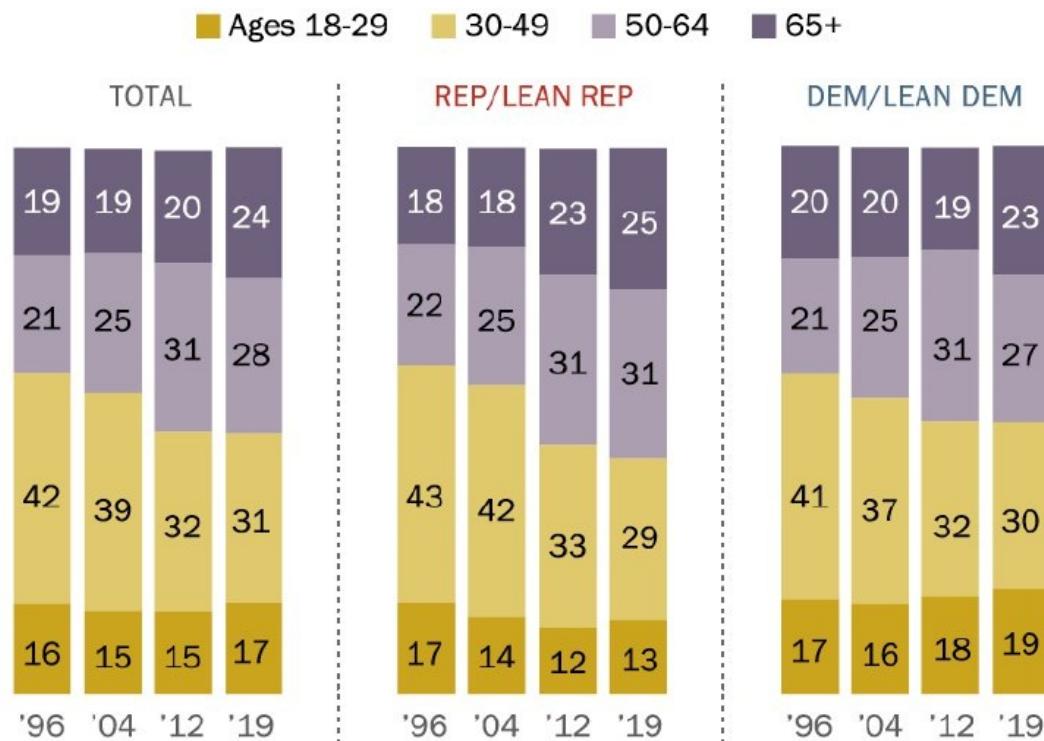
Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The aging U.S. electorate: A majority of Republican voters – and half of Democrats – are 50 and older

% of registered voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

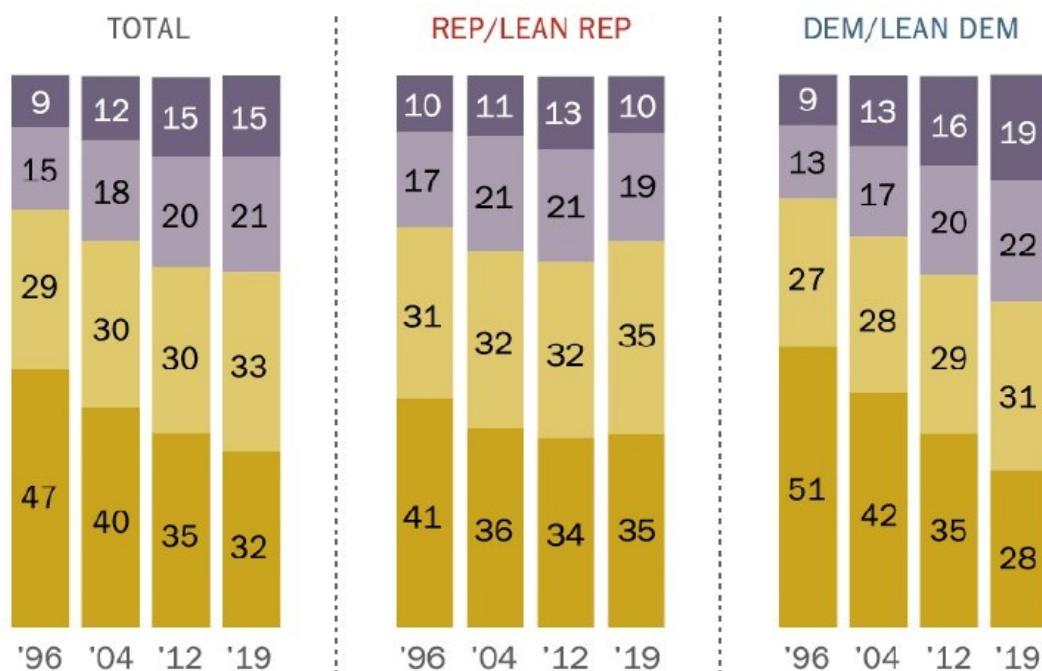
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Share of Democratic voters with no college experience has fallen sharply; much less change among the GOP

% of registered voters who have completed ...

■ HS or less ■ Some college ■ College degree ■ Postgrad



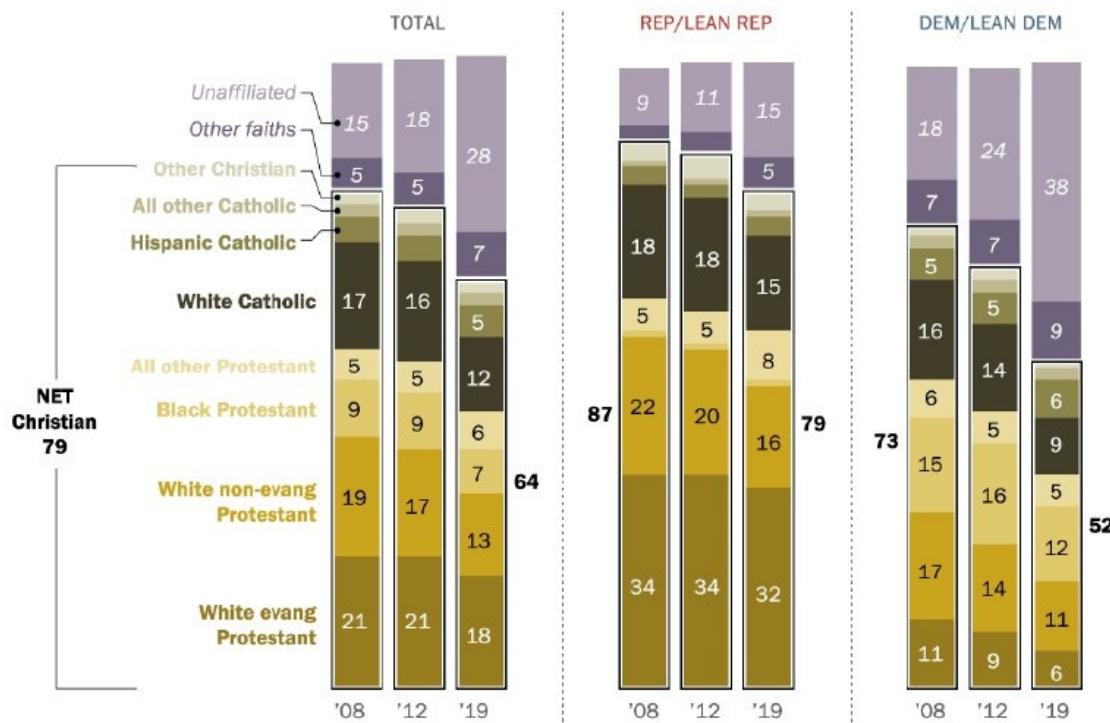
Notes: Based on registered voters. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Self-identified Christians continue to make up a large majority of Republican voters, but are now only about half of Democrats

% of registered voters who identify as ...



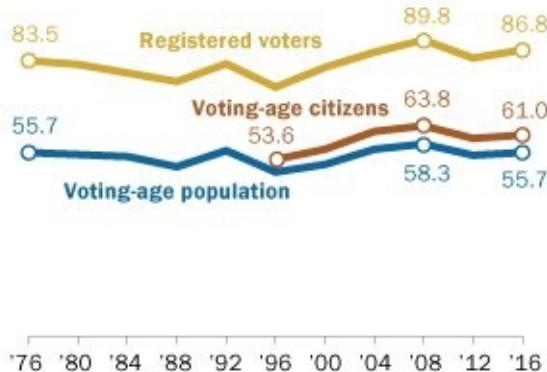
Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. See Appendix A for full details of religious category definitions. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Turnout in U.S. presidential elections

Votes cast as a share of ...



Source: Census Bureau (population estimates), House Clerk's office and Pew Research Center (vote totals).

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What the 2020 electorate looks like by party, race and ethnicity, age, education and religion [source](#)

Nearly 2,800 U.S. newspaper companies received PPP loans, with these companies employing an estimated 40,000 people



5.2M

total number of companies that received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans



2.8K

total number of companies within the newspaper publishing industry that received PPP loans



40K

reported number of employees at newspaper companies within the newspaper industry that received PPP loans

Note: Data represents 2,778 companies within the newspaper publishing industry that received PPP loans in all U.S. states and D.C. Data for canceled or unapproved loans is not included in this analysis. In this data, 2,435 newspaper companies provided employment figures. Data includes all loans approved as of Aug. 8, 2020.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan data.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Majority of PPP loans to newspaper companies were less than \$150K; companies receiving larger loans reported more jobs on average than those with smaller loans

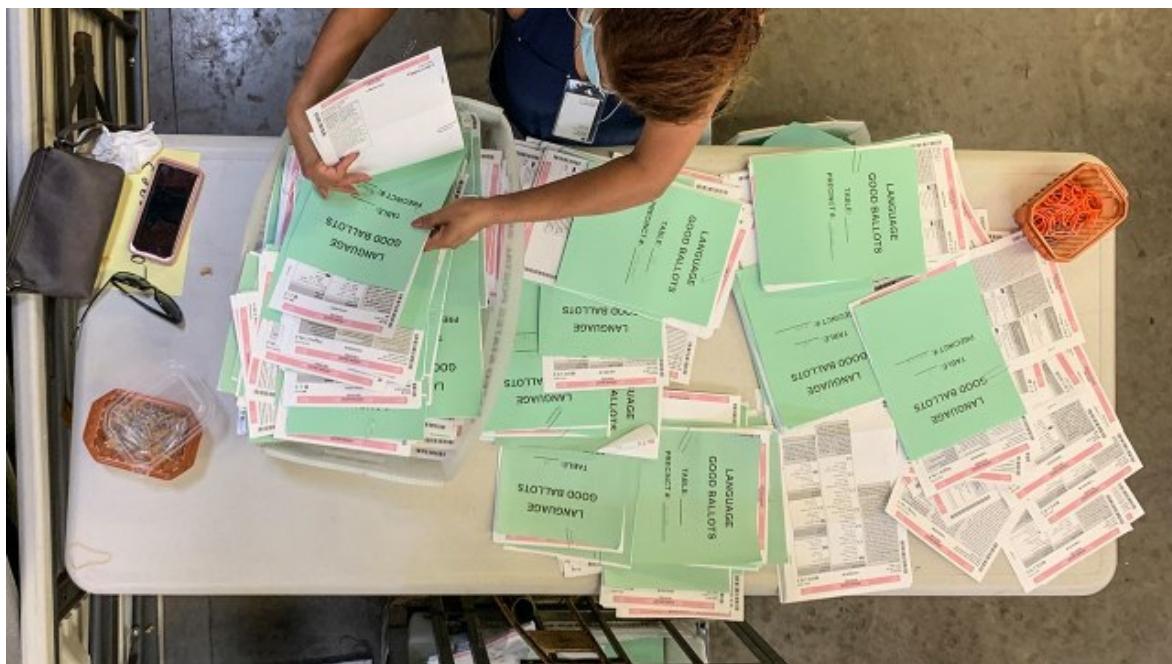
| % of PPP loans to newspaper companies that were ... | Number of PPP loans | Average number of newspaper jobs per loan |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Less than \$150K | 2,325 | 6 |
| \$150K - \$350K | 261 | 26 |
| \$350K - \$1M | 120 | 53 |
| \$1M - \$2M | 40 | 125 |
| \$2M - \$5M | 28 | 204 |
| \$5M - \$10M | 4 | 475 |

Note: Data represents 2,778 companies within the newspaper publishing industry that received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans in all U.S. states and D.C. Data for canceled or unapproved loans is not included in this analysis. In this data, 2,435 newspaper companies provided employment figures. Loan ranges referred to in this chart are taken directly from the data. Data includes all loans approved as of Aug. 8, 2020.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan data.

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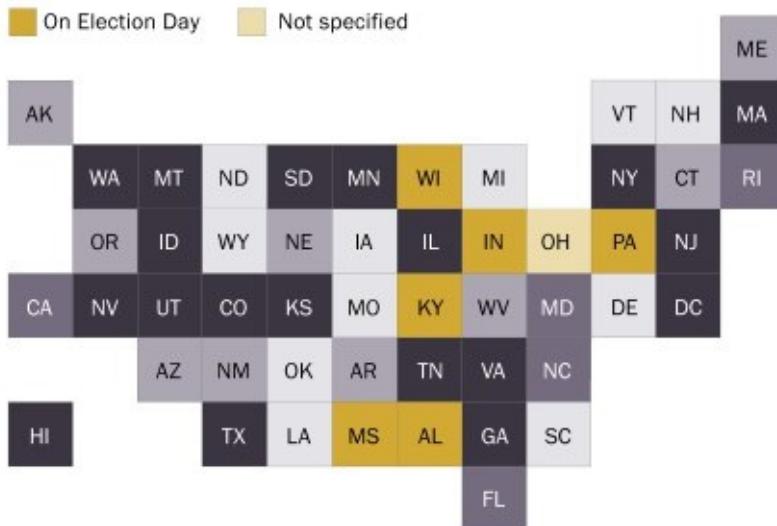
Nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received paycheck protection loans, and most were under \$150K [source](#)



Most states allow mail-in ballots to be processed (but not always counted) before Election Day

When states may begin processing ballots, by state law

■ Upon receipt ■ More than 2 weeks before Election Day ■ 1 to 2 weeks before Election Day ■ Less than a week before Election Day



Notes: In Indiana, initial signature review can be done upon receipt. In Kansas, ballots may be processed upon receipt but counties are not required to do so. In Louisiana, ballots may be processed 1 day before Election Day if parish has more than 1,000 absentee ballots; otherwise on Election Day. In Michigan, ballots may be processed 1 day before Election Day in cities with population over 25,000. In Minnesota, ballot may be processed upon receipt though envelopes can't be opened until 14 days before Election Day. In Montana, ballot may be processed upon receipt though envelopes can't be opened until 3 days before Election Day. In New Mexico, ballots may be processed 14 days before Election Day if county has sent more than 10,000 absentee ballots; otherwise 4 days before Election Day. In Wisconsin, ballot processing may begin after polls open on Election Day.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures; state election authorities.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In U.S., mail-in ballot deadlines and requirements vary by state

Deadline for receipt of mail-in/absentee ballot, by state

State has a different deadline for hand-delivered ballots than for mail-in ballots If accepted after Election Day, postmark must be ...

 Before Election Day

 On or before Election Day

TIME FROM
ELECTION DAY

1 day before  LA Deadline for hand-delivered ballots in AL, AR

| Election Day | Noon  AL  IN | 3 p.m.  NH | 5 p.m.  MN | 6 p.m.  NC | 7 p.m.  AZ  CO  FL  GA  HI  MD  NM  OK  SC  SD  VT  WY | 7:30 p.m.  AR  OH | 8 p.m.  CT  DE  ID  ME  MI  MT  NE  OR  RI  TN  WI  CA, DC, WA, PA | 9 p.m.  NY |
|--------------|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | |

Deadline for
hand-delivered
ballots in ...

1 day after  TX

3 days after  KS  KY  MA  NC  PA  VA

6 days after  IA  WV

7 days after  MN  MS  NV  NJ  NY  UT

10 days after  AK  DC  MD  OH

14 days after  IL

17 days after  CA

No specific
deadline
 ND  WA

Notes: In Utah, mailed ballots must be received by county canvass date, which varies from 7-14 days after Election Day. In New Jersey, mailed ballots without a postmark received within 48 hours of the polls closing on Election Day will be considered valid. In Nebraska, mailed ballots must be received by 8 p.m. Central time, 7 p.m. Mountain time. In Tennessee, mailed ballots must be received by 8 p.m. Eastern time, 7 p.m. Central time.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures; Democracy Works; state election authorities.

In 32 states and D.C., members of the Electoral College must back the winner of the statewide popular vote

Electors **not** bound by state law

Electors bound by state law, penalty for electors who do not vote for their pledged candidate



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of state laws and regulations.

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Election night marks the end of one phase of campaign 2020 – and the start of

another [source](#)



<https://www.facebook.com/LGBTwereregreatthewayweare/photos/a.565116227196110/10157000000000000/>

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telegra.ph/What-the-2020-electorate-looks-like-by-party-race-and-ethnicity-age-education-and-religion-10-29

Telegraph

What the 2020 electorate looks like by party, race and ethnicity, age, education and religion

The United States holds a presidential election every four years, but it's not just the candidates and issues that change from one campaign cycle to the next. The electorate itself is in a slow but constant state of flux, too. The profile of the U.S. electorate...

telegra.ph/Nearly-2800-newspaper-companies-received-paycheck-protection-loans-and-most-were-under-150K-10-29

Telegraph

Nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received paycheck protection loans, and most were under \$150K

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc on an already struggling newspaper industry and talks about further economic stimulus continue to stall, nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans from the U.S. government...

telegra.ph/What-we-can-trust-2020-election-polls-to-tell-us-10-29

Telegraph

What we can trust 2020 election polls to tell us

As Election Day draws closer, Americans are being inundated with polls about the state of the presidential race. And understandably, many are wondering whether polls can be trusted after Donald Trump's surprise victory in 2016. A better question to ask may...

[telegra.ph/Election-night-marks-the-end-of-one-phase-of-campaign-2020--and-the-start-of-another-10-29](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/Election-night-marks-the-end-of-one-phase-of-campaign-2020--and-the-start-of-another-10-29)

Telegraph

Election night marks the end of one phase of campaign 2020 – and the start of another

On Nov. 3, millions of Americans will trek to their local polling places to cast their ballots for the next president. That evening, after the polls close, they'll settle down in front of their televisions to watch the returns roll in from across the country....

Where religions are persecuted, I defend the freedom of all religions.

Where religious freedom is fully guaranteed, I am wary of all organized religions and advocate secularism. [source](#)

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Election night marks the end of one phase of campaign 2020 – and the start of another

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A worker processes ballots at the Orange County Registrar of Voters in Santa Ana, California, on Oct. 16, 2020. (Jeff Gritchen/MediaNews Group/Orange County Register via Getty Images)

On Nov. 3, millions of Americans will trek to their local polling places to cast their ballots for the next president. That evening, after the polls close, they'll settle down in front of their televisions to watch the returns roll in from across the country. Sometime that night or early the next morning, the networks and wire services will call the race, and Americans will know whether President Donald Trump has won a second term or been ousted by former Vice President Joe Biden.

Just about every statement in the previous paragraph is false, misleading or at best lacking important context.

Over the years, Americans have gotten used to their election nights coming off like a well-produced game show, with the big reveal coming before bedtime (a few exceptions like the 2000 election notwithstanding). In truth, they've never been quite as simple or straightforward as they appeared. And this year, which has already upended so much of what Americans took for granted, seems poised to expose some of the wheezy 18th- and 19th-century mechanisms that still shape the way a president is elected in the 21st century.

Here's our guide to what happens *after* the polls close on election night. While you may remember some of the details from high school civics class, others were new even to us. Keeping them in mind may help you make sense of what promises to be an election night like no other.

Between the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, fierce partisanship and intense public interest, this year's elections are likely to play out rather differently than Americans have gotten used to. We developed this explainer to help people understand how, and why, the complex U.S. electoral process is even more so this time around.

Much of the procedural description was derived from various reports and background papers from the Congressional Research Service. Data on current state rules regarding mail-ballot deadlines, ballot-processing timetables and the binding of presidential electors was obtained – and if necessary cross-checked – from CRS, the National Conference of State Legislatures, individual state election authorities and state statutes. Historical data on absentee/mail voting trends came from our analysis of data from the U.S. Electoral Assistance Commission.

By Election Day, much of the voting already will have happened

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Americans had been shifting away from lining up at the polls on Election Day. In 2016, only 54.5% of all ballots nationwide were actually cast in person on Election Day, according to data from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. The share was roughly the same (55.4%) in the 2018 midterms.

More people than ever before are likely to vote in person before Election Day, by absentee or mail ballot, or by taking ballots they've filled out at home to a drop box or other secure location. Close to half (47.3%) of the ballots cast in this

year's primary season (among the 37 states, plus the District of Columbia, for which data was available) were by absentee or mail ballot or by voting early in person. As of Oct. 28, more than 75 million voters already had cast ballots.

Counting the votes will take longer than usual

Most states allow mail-in ballots to be processed (but not always counted) before Election Day

When states may begin processing ballots, by state law



Notes: In Indiana, initial signature review can be done upon receipt. In Kansas, ballots may be processed upon receipt but counties are not required to do so. In Louisiana, ballots may be processed 1 day before Election Day if parish has more than 1,000 absentee ballots; otherwise on Election Day. In Michigan, ballots may be processed 1 day before Election Day in cities with population over 25,000. In Minnesota, ballot may be processed upon receipt though envelopes can't be opened until 14 days before Election Day. In Montana, ballot may be processed upon receipt though envelopes can't be opened until 3 days before Election Day. In New Mexico, ballots may be processed 14 days before Election Day if county has sent more than 10,000 absentee ballots; otherwise 4 days before Election Day. In Wisconsin, ballot processing may begin after polls open on Election Day.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures; state election authorities.

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Mail ballots pose a challenge to election workers, because they must be manually removed from their envelopes and verified as valid before they can be

fed into the tabulating machines. Although election workers in at least 33 states can start processing ballots (but not, in most cases, counting them) a week or more before Election Day, these counts may not be finished by election night depending on how many come in. In a half-dozen states, including the battlegrounds of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, processing can't start until Election Day itself.

Also, in 22 states (plus D.C.), mail ballots postmarked by Election Day (or in a few cases the day before) can still be counted even if they arrive days later — further lengthening the counting process. Bottom line: Any vote totals reported on election night will be even more unofficial than they typically are.

In U.S., mail-in ballot deadlines and requirements vary by state

Deadline for receipt of mail-in/absentee ballot, by state

- State has a different deadline for hand-delivered ballots than for mail-in ballots *If accepted after Election Day, postmark must be ...*
-  **Before** Election Day
-  **On or before** Election Day

TIME FROM
ELECTION DAY

1 day before  Deadline for hand-delivered ballots in AL, AR

| Election Day | Noon   | 3 p.m.  | 5 p.m.  | 6 p.m. | 7 p.m.   | 7:30 p.m.  | 8 p.m.   | 9 p.m. |
|--------------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |   |   |   |   |

Deadline for
hand-delivered
ballots in ...

MN

NC

KY

OH

CA, DC,
WA, PA

NY

1 day after 

3 days after      

6 days after  

7 days after      

10 days after    

14 days after 

17 days after 

No specific
deadline  

Notes: In Utah, mailed ballots must be received by county canvass date, which varies from 7-14 days after Election Day. In New Jersey, mailed ballots without a postmark received within 48 hours of the polls closing on Election Day will be considered valid. In Nebraska, mailed ballots must be received by 8 p.m. Central time, 7 p.m. Mountain time. In Tennessee, mailed ballots must be received by 8 p.m. Eastern time, 7 p.m. Central time.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures; Democracy Works; state election authorities.

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It's all about the electors

Unlike other U.S. elections, in which voters pick the winners directly, those millions of presidential votes won't actually be cast for Trump or Biden. Instead, they'll count toward a statewide tally to select the electors – the mostly little-known men and women who will actually elect the president.

Each state has as many electoral votes as it has senators and representatives combined (or, in the case of the District of Columbia, as many as it would have if it were a state). There are 538 in total, with 270 votes needed to win. As the Congressional Research Service puts it, the electors "tend to be a mixture of state and local elected officials, party activists, local and state celebrities, and ordinary citizens."

In 32 states and D.C., members of the Electoral College must back the winner of the statewide popular vote

Electors **not** bound by state law

Electors bound by state law, penalty for electors who do not vote for their pledged candidate



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of state laws and regulations.

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In all but two states, the candidate with the most popular votes statewide (regardless of whether it's a majority or a plurality) gets all that state's electoral votes. Maine and Nebraska do it differently: The statewide popular-vote winner

gets two of the electoral votes, and the winner in each House district gets an electoral vote. That's why Democrats this year are targeting Nebraska's 2nd District and Republicans have their eyes on Maine's 2nd District. Both parties hope to squeeze a precious electoral vote out of a state that's otherwise likely to go against them.

A key date in making this year's election outcome final: Dec. 14

According to federal law, each state will have until Dec. 8 this year to resolve any "controversy or contest" concerning the appointment of its slate of electors under its own state laws. That effectively gives states more than a month after Election Day to settle any challenges to their popular votes, certify a result and award their electoral votes. If they do so by this "safe harbor" date, Congress is bound to respect the result. (The U.S. Supreme Court's 2000 ruling in *Bush v. Gore* involved whether Florida was properly applying its own recount rules, and whether those rules ran afoul of the Constitution's equal-protection guarantee.)

The electors will meet in their respective states on Dec. 14 – officially, the Monday after the second Wednesday in December – and formally cast their votes for president and vice president. The Constitution expressly forbids them from meeting as a single nationwide group, a provision the Framers put in to reduce the chances of mischief. The electors are supposed to vote for the candidates whose name they were elected under – in fact, 32 states (plus D.C.) have laws intended to bind the electors to their candidates. The Supreme Court this summer unanimously upheld such laws.

So-called "faithless electors" have on occasion broken their pledges, though never enough to actually swing the outcome. In 2016, for instance, five Democratic electors voted for people other than Hillary Clinton and two Republican electors voted for people other than Donald Trump.

In any event, the electors' votes are supposed to be delivered to the vice president (in his capacity as president of the Senate) and a handful of other officials by Dec. 23 (the fourth Wednesday in December).

Wait – Congress has a role in this too?

Indeed it does. The newly elected 117th Congress will be sworn in on Jan. 3,

2021. Three days later, it is supposed to assemble in joint session to formally open the electors' ballots, count them and declare a winner. Only then is the president officially "elected."

Any pair of one senator and one representative can object to any of those votes as "not having been regularly given" (that is, not cast according to law).

Following the 2004 election, for instance, Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D-Ohio, and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., filed an objection against Ohio's 20 electoral votes, alleging "numerous, serious election irregularities" in that state. But to sustain such an objection, both chambers must vote (separately) to do so. In the Ohio case, they both overwhelmingly rejected the challenge.

Each state is supposed to submit one set of electoral votes to Congress, and that's what usually happens. Following the disputed Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, in which three states submitted two conflicting sets of returns, Congress passed the Electoral Count Act to try to set rules in case such a thing ever happened again. Under that law, if two conflicting sets are submitted – say, one by a Republican-run legislature and one by a Democratic governor – and the House and Senate cannot agree on which set is the legitimate one, then the electoral votes certified by the state's governor are supposed to prevail. (Even stranger things are possible: In 1960, Hawaii's governor first certified Vice President Richard Nixon's electors, but after a recount certified Sen. John F. Kennedy's electors. Both slates of electors met and voted for their pledged candidate; when the time came for Congress to decide which slate was the legitimate one, Nixon voluntarily deferred to Kennedy.)

Assuming that the usually ceremonial counting goes smoothly this year, Vice President Mike Pence will then announce whether he and President Trump have their jobs for another four years, or whether Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will take their places.

Note: This post was updated on Oct. 28 to reflect new information about deadlines in some states.

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Drew DeSilver

is a senior writer at Pew Research Center. POSTS BIO TWITTER EMAIL

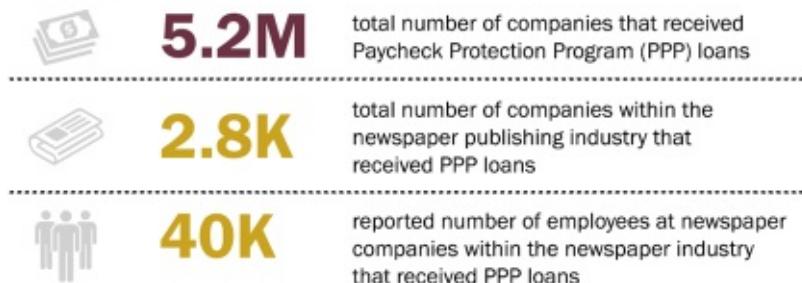
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Nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received paycheck protection loans, and most were under \$150K

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Nearly 2,800 U.S. newspaper companies received PPP loans, with these companies employing an estimated 40,000 people



Note: Data represents 2,778 companies within the newspaper publishing industry that received PPP loans in all U.S. states and D.C. Data for canceled or unapproved loans is not included in this analysis. In this data, 2,435 newspaper companies provided employment figures. Data includes all loans approved as of Aug. 8, 2020.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan data.

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As the coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc on an already struggling newspaper industry and talks about further economic stimulus continue to stall, nearly 2,800 newspaper companies received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans from the U.S. government as of this past August, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of Small Business Administration (SBA) data.

This is a sliver of the roughly 5.2 million PPP loans that have been lent out to small businesses – but represents a large segment of newspaper companies. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistics of U.S. Businesses, there were 4,166 U.S. companies in the newspaper publishing industry in 2016, and these companies collectively employed nearly 180,000 people.

This analysis is based on publicly released data published by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and includes all approved Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans issued to companies in the newspaper publishing industry as of Aug. 8, 2020. Companies in the newspaper publishing industry were eligible to apply for PPP loans if they had been affected by the coronavirus outbreak and employed fewer than 1,000 people. Specifically, the companies included in this analysis are any businesses that self-identified as being part of the newspaper industry and are responsible for producing and distributing newspapers, including gathering news; writing news columns, feature stories and editorials; and selling and preparing advertisements. They may publish newspapers in either print or electronic form.

This data represents less than 1% of the more than 5.2 million loans approved under the Paycheck Protection Program. Data for canceled or unapproved loans is not included in this analysis. To protect the privacy of borrowers, specific loan amounts were not made available by the SBA; rather, loans were reported as ranges in the data, and this is reflected in this analysis. The number of employees by PPP loan referenced in this analysis refers to the number of employees reported by the borrower and may not necessarily reflect the number of workers kept employed with PPP funds. About 12% of newspaper companies that received loans did not list any employees.

Working with external and large datasets requires, at the outset, critical and often complex structural and methodological decisions, as well as a major time investment in data organization and data cleaning. Researchers took multiple steps to review and clean the data, especially in cases where some discrepancies or errors were spotted. The objective was to obtain a clean dataset that is as complete as possible about the PPP loans given to newspaper businesses. More information about the Paycheck Protection Program as well as the data used in this analysis can be found [here](#).

The methodology for this analysis can be found [here](#).

The Paycheck Protection Program was established back in March 2020 as part of the CARES Act, a federal coronavirus aid package, to help small businesses pay employees and other expenses. These loans were designed to be forgiven if certain employee retention criteria were met and if the funds were used for eligible expenses.

Any company that self-identified as a newspaper publisher, was affected by the coronavirus outbreak and employed fewer than 1,000 employees was eligible to apply. The cap of 1,000 employees means that many local newspapers owned by larger companies such as Gannett or McClatchy were not eligible to apply. The qualifying rules also mean that some companies that are part of the newspaper publishing industry but are not traditionally thought of as newspapers, such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, are included in the data.

The vast majority of these PPP loans were relatively small in size. About eight-in-ten (84%) were for less than \$150,000, 9% ranged from \$150,000 to \$350,000, 4% were between \$350,000 and \$1 million, and about 3% were \$1 million or more. This was about on par with PPP loans across all industries, of which 87% were less than \$150,000, according to the SBA. In the data released by the SBA, loans were broken out into six different ranges and these ranges are used throughout this report.

The largest PPP loans – those for \$5 million or more – mainly went to bigger regional newspaper companies, such as Seattle Times Co., Newsday LLC and Times Publishing Co. (publisher of the Tampa Bay Times).

Majority of PPP loans to newspaper companies were less than \$150K; companies receiving larger loans reported more jobs on average than those with smaller loans

| % of PPP loans to newspaper companies that were ... | Number of PPP loans | Average number of newspaper jobs per loan |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Less than \$150K | 2,325 | 6 |
| \$150K - \$350K | 261 | 26 |
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Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan data.

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Out of the 2,778 self-identified newspaper companies that received PPP loans, 2,435 provided employment figures. In total, that amounted to an estimated

40,236 employees, with an average of 14 employees per loan. Companies that received loans that were less than \$150,000 reported six jobs per loan on average, those with loans in the \$150,000-\$350,000 range reported 26 jobs on average and companies with loans ranging from \$350,000 to \$1 million reported 53 on average. Companies with loans issued for more than \$1 million tended to have more jobs per loan on average, but these larger loans made up only a small share of the total number issued. Since 12% of newspaper companies that received PPP loans did not report their number of employees, it is likely that the number of newspaper employees within companies that received loans is higher.

Looking at the geographic distribution of PPP loans, more loans went to newspaper companies in states with larger populations, with newspaper companies in medium or smaller states receiving fewer loans. Indeed, about one-in-five (21%) of all PPP loans went to newspaper companies operating in three states: Texas (8%), California (7%) and New York (6%). Delaware, Rhode Island and Hawaii were the three states with the fewest PPP loans to newspaper publishers, with less than 1% of the loans going to those states. Several factors might explain why newspaper companies in larger states received more loans, ranging from the fact that larger states in general received overall more PPP loans, to previous research that has shown that more newspapers exist in more populous states and newsroom employment overall tends to be concentrated in certain geographical areas.

Note: Here is the methodology for this report.

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is a research analyst focusing on journalism and media. POSTS BIO EMAIL



Katerina Eva Matsa

is an associate director of journalism research at Pew Research Center. POSTS
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What the 2020 electorate looks like by party, race and ethnicity, age, education and religion

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Voters wait in line, socially distanced from each other, to cast early ballots on Oct. 19, 2020, in Miami, Florida. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

The United States holds a presidential election every four years, but it's not just the candidates and issues that change from one campaign cycle to the next. The electorate itself is in a slow but constant state of flux, too.

The profile of the U.S. electorate can change for a variety of reasons. Consider the millions of Americans who have turned 18 and can vote for president for the first time this year, the immigrants who have become naturalized citizens and can cast ballots of their own, or the longer-term shifts in the country's racial and ethnic makeup. These and other factors ensure that no two presidential electorates look exactly the same.

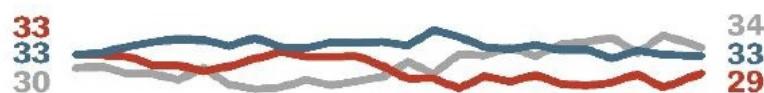
So what does the 2020 electorate look like politically, demographically and religiously as the race between Republican President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden enters its final days? To answer that question, here's a roundup of recent Pew Research Center findings. Unless otherwise noted, all findings are based on registered voters.

Party identification

Share of registered voters who identify with the GOP has ticked up since 2017

% of registered voters who identify as ...

Rep Dem Ind



% of registered voters who identify as/lean toward ...

Rep/Lean Rep Dem/Lean Dem



Notes: Based on registered voters. Due to smaller sample sizes in 2018 and 2019, the data from those years has been combined.
Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

Around a third of registered voters in the U.S. (34%) identify as independents, while 33% identify as Democrats and 29% identify as Republicans, according to a Center analysis of Americans' partisan identification based on surveys of more than 12,000 registered voters in 2018 and 2019.

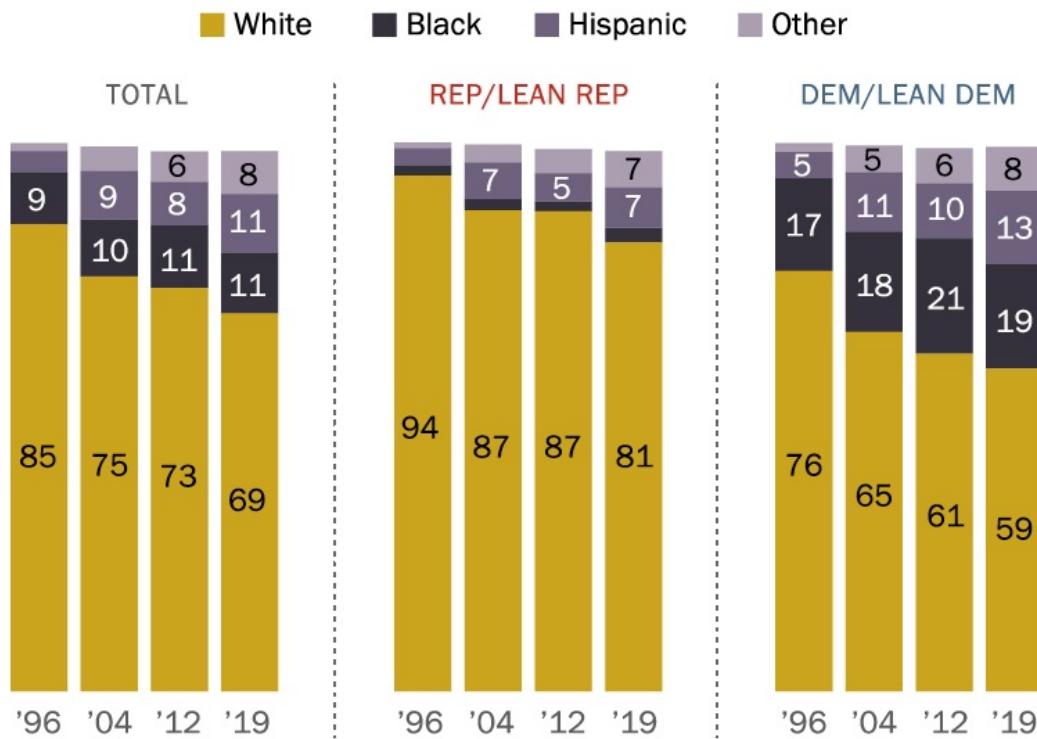
Most independents in the U.S. lean toward one of the two major parties. When taking independents' partisan leanings into account, 49% of *all* registered voters either identify as Democrats or lean to the party, while 44% identify as Republicans or lean to the GOP.

Party identification among registered voters hasn't changed dramatically over the past 25 years, but there have been some modest shifts. One such shift is that the Democratic Party's advantage over the Republican Party in party identification has become smaller since 2017. Of course, just because a registered voter identifies with or leans toward a particular party does not necessarily mean they will vote for a candidate of that party (or vote at all). In a study of validated voters in 2016, 5% of Democrats and Democratic leaners reported voting for Trump, and 4% of Republicans and GOP leaners reported voting for Hillary Clinton.

Race and ethnicity

Nonwhites make up four-in-ten Democratic voters but fewer than a fifth of Republican voters

% of registered voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Non-Hispanic White Americans make up the largest share of registered voters in the U.S., at 69% of the total as of 2019. Hispanic and Black registered voters each account for 11% of the total, while those from other racial or ethnic backgrounds account for the remainder (8%).

White voters account for a diminished share of registered voters than in the past, declining from 85% in 1996 to 69% ahead of this year's election. This change has unfolded in both parties, but White voters have consistently accounted for a much larger share of Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters than of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters (81% vs. 59% as of 2019).

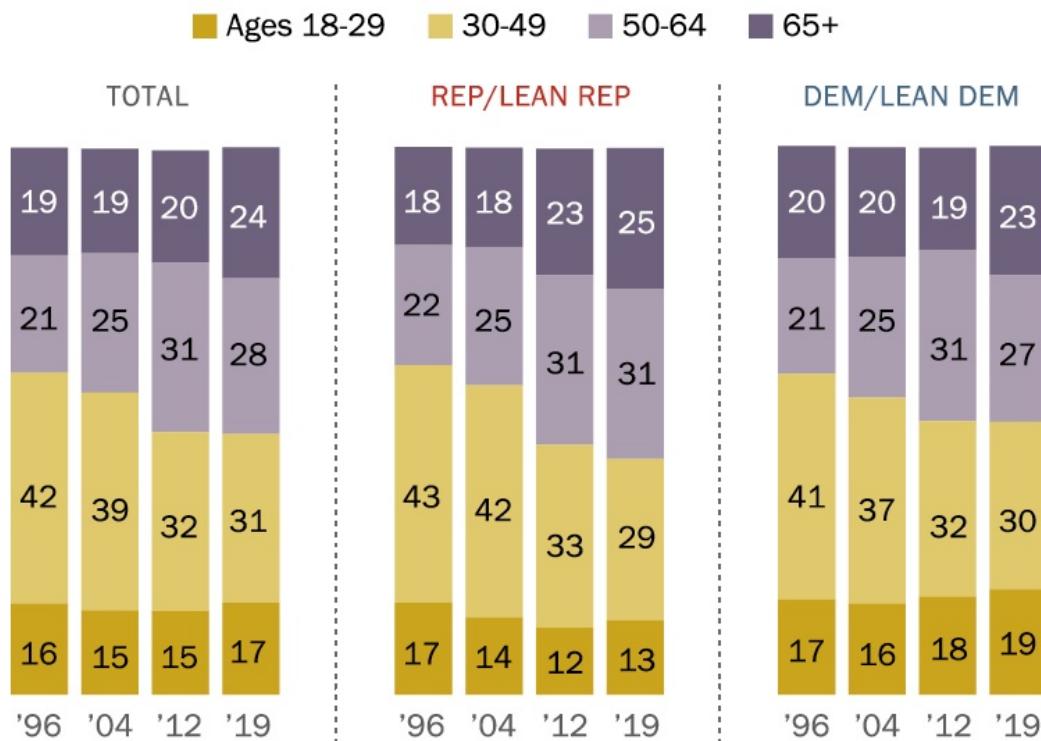
The racial and ethnic composition of the electorate looks very different nationally than in several key battleground states, according to a Center analysis of 2018 data based on *eligible voters* – that is, U.S. citizens ages 18 and older, regardless of whether or not they were registered to vote.

White Americans accounted for 67% of eligible voters nationally in 2018, but they represented a much larger share in several key battlegrounds in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, including Wisconsin (86%), Ohio (82%), Pennsylvania (81%) and Michigan (79%). The reverse was true in some battleground states in the West and South. For example, the White share of eligible voters was below the national average in Nevada (58%), Florida (61%) and Arizona (63%). You can see racial and ethnic breakdown of eligible voters in all 50 states – and how it changed between 2000 and 2018 – with this interactive feature.

Age and generation

The aging U.S. electorate: A majority of Republican voters – and half of Democrats – are 50 and older

% of registered voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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The U.S. electorate is aging: 52% of registered voters are ages 50 and older, up from 41% in 1996. This shift has occurred in both partisan coalitions. More than half of Republican and GOP-leaning voters (56%) are ages 50 and older, up from 39% in 1996. And among Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters, half are 50 and older, up from 41% in 1996.

Another way to consider the aging of the electorate is to look at median age. The median age among all registered voters increased from 44 in 1996 to 50 in 2019. It rose from 43 to 52 among Republican registered voters and from 45 to 49 among Democratic registered voters.

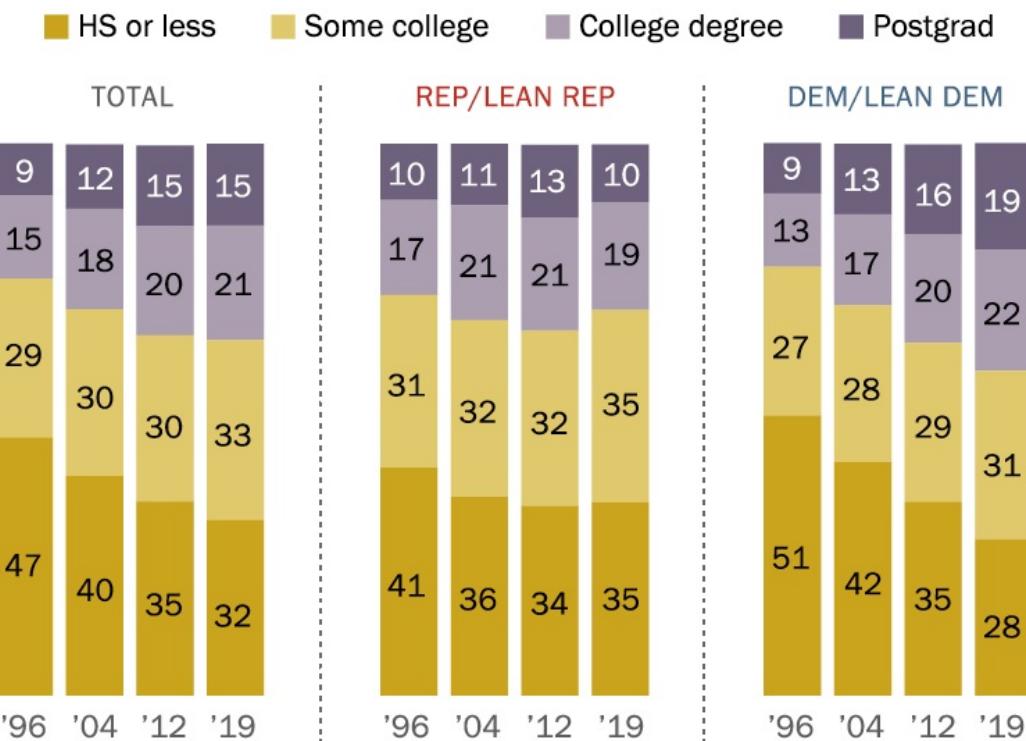
Despite the long-term aging of registered voters, 2020 marks the first time that

many members of Generation Z – Americans born after 1996 – will be able to participate in a presidential election. One-in-ten *eligible* voters this year are members of Generation Z, up from just 4% in 2016, according to Pew Research Center projections. (Of course, not all eligible voters end up registering and actually casting a ballot.)

Education

Share of Democratic voters with no college experience has fallen sharply; much less change among the GOP

% of registered voters who have completed ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Around two-thirds of registered voters in the U.S. (65%) do not have a college degree, while 36% do. But the share of voters with a college degree has risen substantially since 1996, when 24% had one.

Voters who identify with the Democratic Party or lean toward it are much more likely than their Republican counterparts to have a college degree (41% vs. 30%). In 1996, the reverse was true: 27% of GOP voters had a college degree, compared with 22% of Democratic voters.

Religion

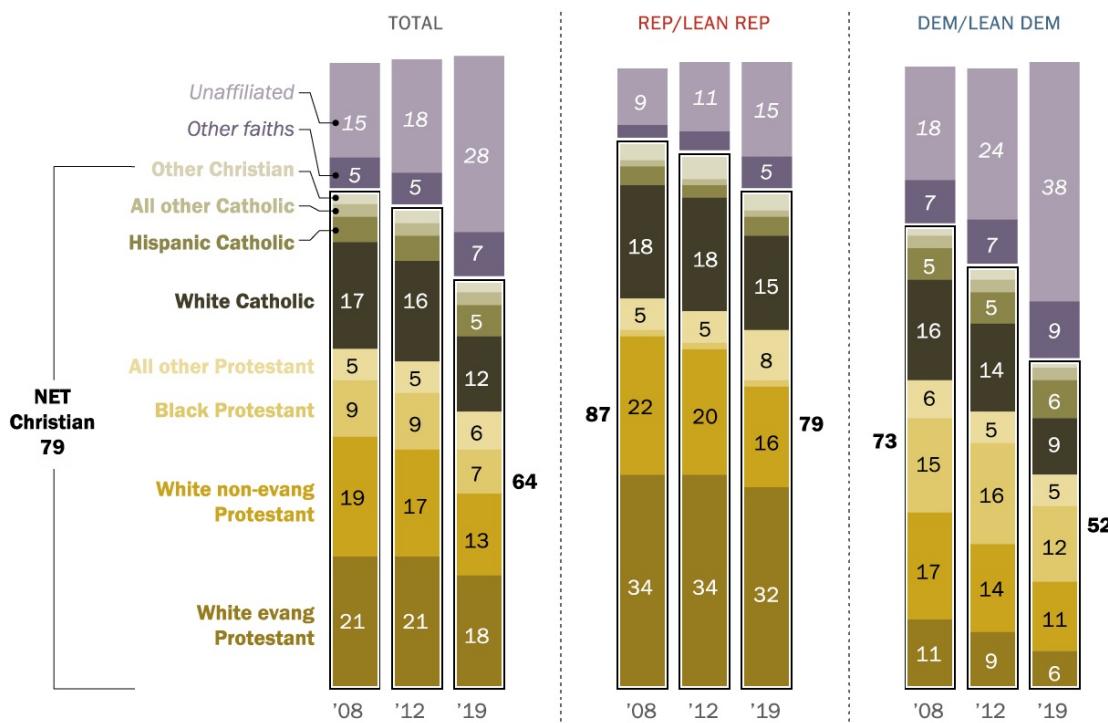
Christians account for the majority of registered voters in the U.S. (64%). But this figure is down from 79% as recently as 2008. The share of voters who identify as religiously unaffiliated has nearly doubled during that span, from 15% to 28%.

The share of *White* Christians in the electorate, in particular, has decreased in recent years. White evangelical Protestants account for 18% of registered voters today, down from 21% in 2008. During the same period, the share of voters who are White non-evangelical Protestants fell from 19% to 13%, while the share of White Catholics fell from 17% to 12%.

Around eight-in-ten Republican registered voters (79%) are Christians, compared with about half (52%) of Democratic voters. In turn, Democratic voters are much more likely than GOP voters to identify as religiously unaffiliated (38% vs. 15%).

Self-identified Christians continue to make up a large majority of Republican voters, but are now only about half of Democrats

% of registered voters who identify as ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. See Appendix A for full details of religious category definitions. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

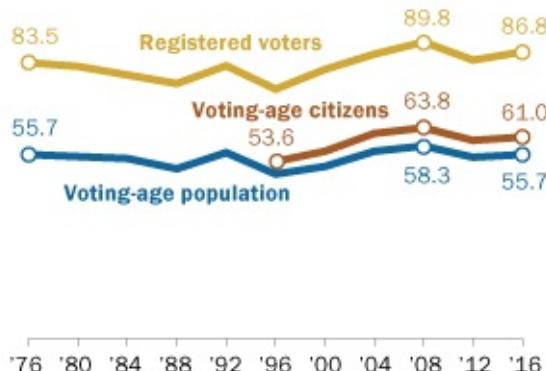
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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The key question: What about voter turnout?

Turnout in U.S. presidential elections

Votes cast as a share of ...



Source: Census Bureau (population estimates), House Clerk's office and Pew Research Center (vote totals).

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Surveys can provide reliable estimates about registered voters in the U.S. and how their partisan, demographic and religious profile has changed over time. But the critical question of voter *turnout* – who will be motivated to cast a ballot and who will not – is more difficult to answer.

For one thing, not all registered voters end up voting. In 2016, around 87% of registered voters cast a ballot, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data shortly after that year's election.

Also, voter turnout in the U.S. is not a constant: It can and does change from one election to the next. The share of registered voters who cast a ballot was higher in 2008 than four years ago, for example.

Turnout also varies by demographic factors, including race and ethnicity, age and gender. The turnout rate among Black Americans, for instance, exceeded the rate among White Americans for the first time in the 2012 presidential election, but that pattern did not hold four years later.

So what does all this mean for 2020? There are some early indications that overall turnout could reach a record high this year, just as turnout in the midterms two years ago reached its highest point in a century. But 2020 is far from an ordinary year. The combination of a global pandemic and public

concerns about the integrity of the election have created widespread uncertainty, and that uncertainty makes it even more difficult than usual to assess who will vote and who won't.

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John Gramlich

is a senior writer/editor at Pew Research Center. POSTS BIO TWITTER EMAIL

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What we can trust 2020 election polls to tell us

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Residents vote at a polling place on Oct. 20, 2020, in Milwaukee.
(Scott Olson/Getty Images)

As Election Day draws closer, Americans are being inundated with polls about the state of the presidential race. And understandably, many are wondering whether polls can be trusted after Donald Trump's surprise victory in 2016.

A better question to ask may be what, exactly, are we trusting polls to do? If the answer is to predict the future, then trust in polls is misplaced. But if the answer is to reveal the public's priorities and values – and why people vote the way they do – then polls are the best tool.

Four years ago, Trump won the White House despite trailing in most national surveys at the time. Several factors explain this disconnect. For one thing, presidents are chosen through the Electoral College, not the popular vote, and national surveys can't always pick up on state-level dynamics. (Nationally,

surveys in 2016 were quite accurate by historical standards.) Polls in some key Midwestern battleground states overstated support for Hillary Clinton and understated support for Trump by not correcting for having too many college graduates in their samples. And undecided voters in key states appear to have swung toward Trump in the race’s final days – a shift that went unnoticed because few polls, if any, were in the field at the time.

Some of these polling issues may have been unique to 2016. But others are constants that Americans would do well to keep in mind this year, particularly given the historic uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

First and foremost, polls are snapshots in time. The results of any preelection survey will depend heavily on when it was fielded. Due to COVID-19, more than 78 million Americans have already cast their ballots this year, which means that many “preelection polls” are actually “mid-election polls” instead.

Another polling challenge is determining whether people who say they will vote actually end up doing so. Historically, polls tend to be highly accurate when measuring public attitudes, but less accurate when measuring public behaviors. The pandemic has made this long-standing challenge even more stark by disrupting the campaign and the mechanics of casting a ballot. Turnout models based on Americans’ past behavior may well fail because 2020 isn’t like previous years.

The public has also long been conditioned to expect more certainty than preelection polls can realistically provide. Attention is often focused on the “horse race” – that is, which candidate is ahead and by how much – while less attention is paid to potential sources of polling error. Expectations are heightened further by so-called “polls of polls,” in which aggregate results from many surveys create an illusion of precision that really doesn’t exist. Then there’s the basic human desire for certainty, especially during an uncertain, anxious time like this one.

So what do surveys do well? Good preelection polls try to get inside people’s heads. They attempt to understand the reasoning behind Americans’ values, beliefs and concerns. They explore how voters are reacting to major events such as the pandemic and economic downturn; how they feel about the candidates and policies; and which factors are motivating them to vote for a particular candidate, or whether to vote at all.

Perhaps the greatest value of surveys emerges *after* the election. It's typical for winning candidates to point to the results and claim a mandate based on their interpretation of public will. But while elections are rightly the foundation of our democracy, they are imperfect measures of public sentiment. Not all Americans participate in elections: In 2016, only around 61% of voting-age citizens cast a ballot. And those who do vote may not like the (often-binary) choices on their ballot – or agree with their candidate on all the issues. Good public opinion polls are a necessary complement to elections to get a representative cross-section of what the entire public thinks, and to be sure the public's real priorities are registered.

A record share of voters said in a summer survey that it really matters who wins the 2020 election, and with that high level of engagement comes an understandable desire for certainty. But on the night of Nov. 3, Americans will be searching for hard data that may not exist. Millions of mail-in votes will need to be counted, even as exit polls – which traditionally provide important insights about where an election may be headed – will face unprecedented challenges. As Americans, we need to summon patience, accept the uncertainty of the moment and wait for election results and rigorous polling data to tell us what the voters decided and why.

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Michael Dimock

is the president of Pew Research Center. POSTS BIO TWITTER EMAIL

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