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THE COVID STATES PROJECT: A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY

REPORT #29: ELECTION FAIRNESS AND TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

USA, December 2020

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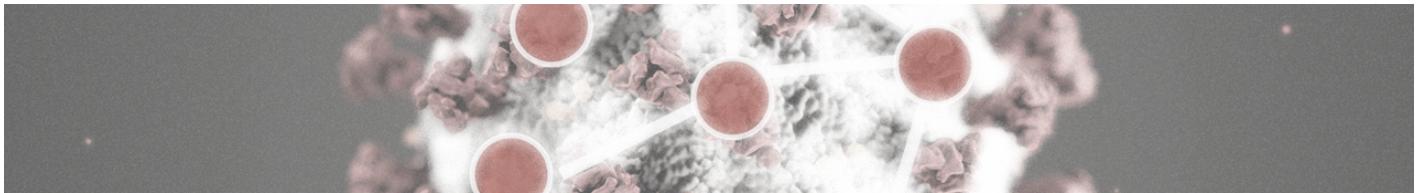
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Report of December 11, 2020, v.1

The COVID States Project

From: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:

Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

Authors: Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); David Lazer (Northeastern University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Jon Green (Northeastern University); Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University); Ata A. Uslu (Northeastern University); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University), and Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern University)

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COVER MEMO

Summary Memo — December 10, 2020

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From April through November, we conducted multiple waves of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented here. You can find previous reports online at covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

Between November 3 and 30, we surveyed 24,019 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

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Public perceptions of election fairness in 2020

The 2020 U.S. election was unusual in a number of ways. It happened in the midst of a pandemic and yet had a [record voter turnout rate](#). It had one of the most contentious and by far the [most expensive](#) campaigns in American history. The incumbent of the presidential race, Donald Trump, may never concede defeat – a first in modern times for a losing candidate.

Even before the election, President Trump and his allies made numerous allegations of voter fraud and election rigging. While no proof of election tampering ever emerged, the President [remained vocal](#) on the subject, [fired members of his administration](#) who disputed his claims, and [pressured state officials to overturn the election](#).

In this environment, many Americans who voted for President Trump have doubts about election fairness, concerns about voter fraud, and high levels of distrust towards social and political institutions involved in the electoral process. In our post-election survey, we asked a series of questions about perceived fairness and trust in institutions. We also asked Americans who won the election – a question many consider open even after almost every state has certified its results and President-elect Biden reached the number of pledged delegates needed to win.

Key findings

- **While 67% of Americans say President-Elect Biden won the election, 17% suggest that Donald Trump is the winner.** Thirty-nine percent of Republicans and 3% of Democrats reported thinking Trump is probably winning or definitely winning.
- Overall, **38% of Americans lack confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election.** That number is especially high among Republicans (64%) and Trump voters (69%) compared to Democrats (11%) and Biden voters (8%).
- There are **large partisan gaps (over 40 percentage points) in public concerns about mail-in fraud (85% of Republicans, 38% of Democrats)**, inaccurate or biased vote counts (84% of Republicans, 44% of Democrats), and illegal votes from non-citizens (81% of Republicans, 34% of Democrats).
- Asked about **acceptable reactions to an unfair election**, 45% of Americans approved of protesting on social media, 38% of protesting in person, **18% approved of violating laws without violence, and 8% of using violence.** Non-violent law breaking was approved by 23% Democrats and 17% Republicans, violence by 10% Democrats and 8% Republicans.
- **69% of Americans trust the Supreme Court to handle the election, 43% trust the news media, 31% trust social media companies.** Trump is trusted by 39%, Biden by 59%.

Election winners and losers according to popular opinion

In the month after the election, uncertainty about its outcomes lingered. **While 67% of Americans polled after November 3rd said President-elect Biden probably or definitely won the election, 17% suggested that the winner was Donald Trump (see Figure 1).** Another 16% were not sure who would occupy the White House over the next four years.

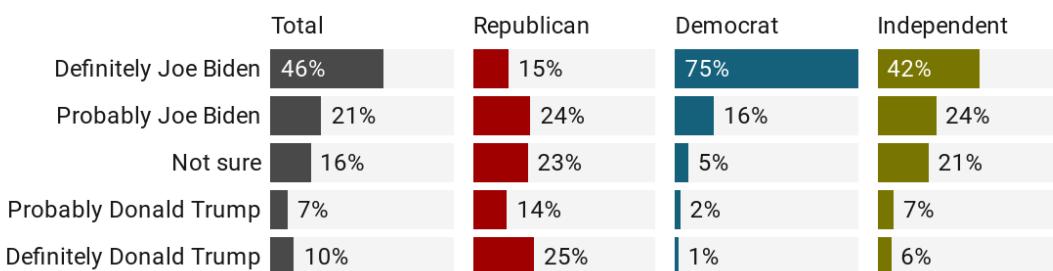
Predictably, the answers differed by political affiliation with partisans favoring their own candidate. Over a third of Republicans maintained that the winner of the election was Trump (39%), about the same proportion as those saying that Biden won (38%). Among Democrats, 91% thought Joe Biden probably or definitely won the presidential race, and only 3% said Donald Trump was the winner. Independents fell in the middle, with 66% selecting Biden and 13% opting for Trump.

Similar patterns emerged when limiting the sample to people who voted in the election, with 39% of Trump voters and 97% of Biden voters saying their candidate of choice probably or definitely won (see Figure 2).

As more time passed since the day of the election and more information became available, people's opinions adjusted somewhat to reflect new evidence. During the week of the 2020 election, 58% of Americans knew Joe Biden was the president-elect. That number increased to 74% by the end of November. The percent of Democrats correctly identifying the next president rose from 83% to 95%, while that for Republicans increased from 33% to 44% (see Figure 3).

2020 Presidential election winner perceptions by party

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

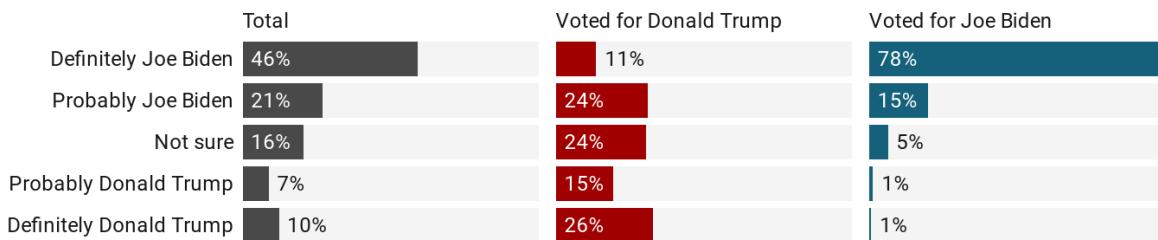
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

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Figure 1. Presidential election winner perceptions by party

2020 Presidential election winner perceptions by vote choice

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

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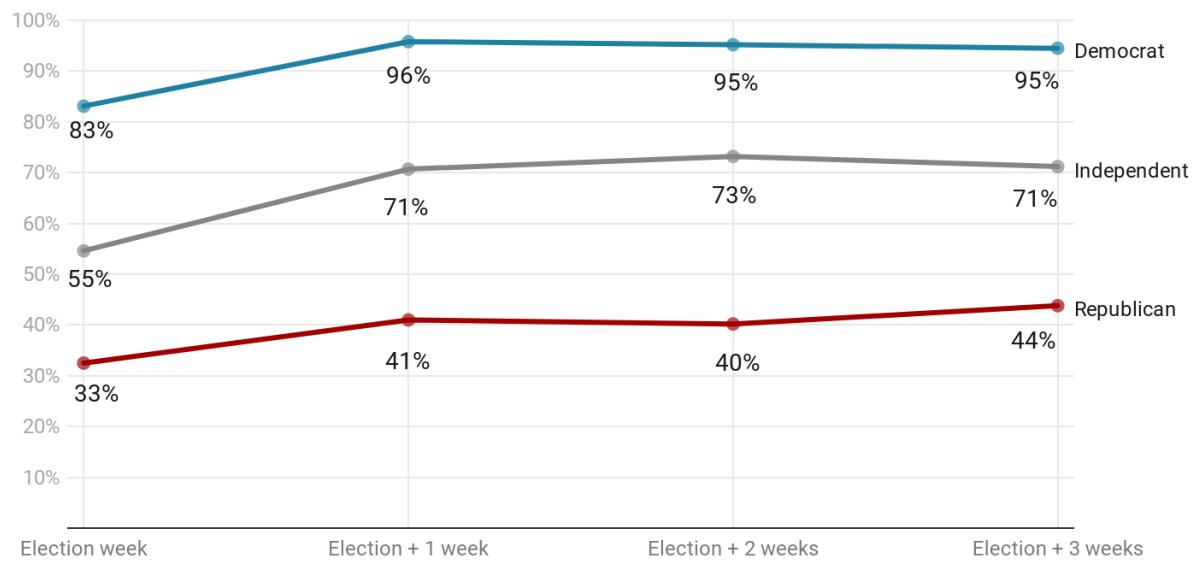
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Figure 2. Presidential election winner perceptions by vote choice

Percent Americans who say Joe Biden won the presidency in 2020

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

[Percent respondents who say "Probably Joe Biden" or "Definitely Joe Biden"]



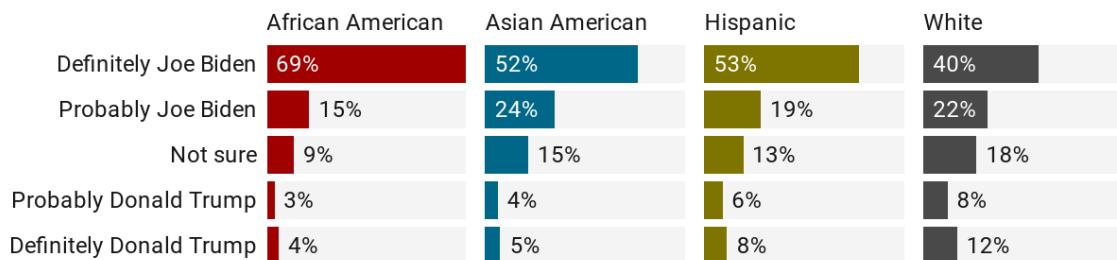
National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

Figure 3. Percent Americans who say Joe Biden won the presidency over time

2020 presidential election winner perceptions by race

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

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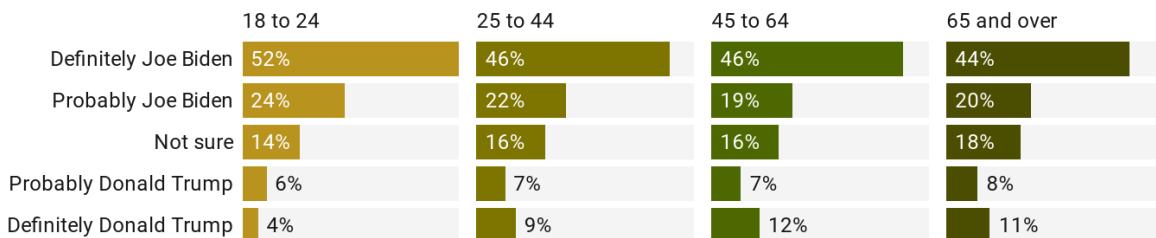
Figure 4. Presidential election winner perceptions by race

We also observed demographic differences in people's perceptions about the election results, with 20% of White respondents suggesting Donald Trump won compared to 14% of Hispanic Americans, 9% of Asian Americans, and only 7% of African Americans (see Figure 4).

Age differences were similarly relevant with 10% of Americans 18 to 24 years of age reporting Trump would probably or definitely remain in the White house, compared to 16% of people age 25-34, and 19% of those who were 45 and older (see Figure 5).

2020 Presidential election winner perceptions by age

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

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Figure 5. Presidential election winner perceptions by age

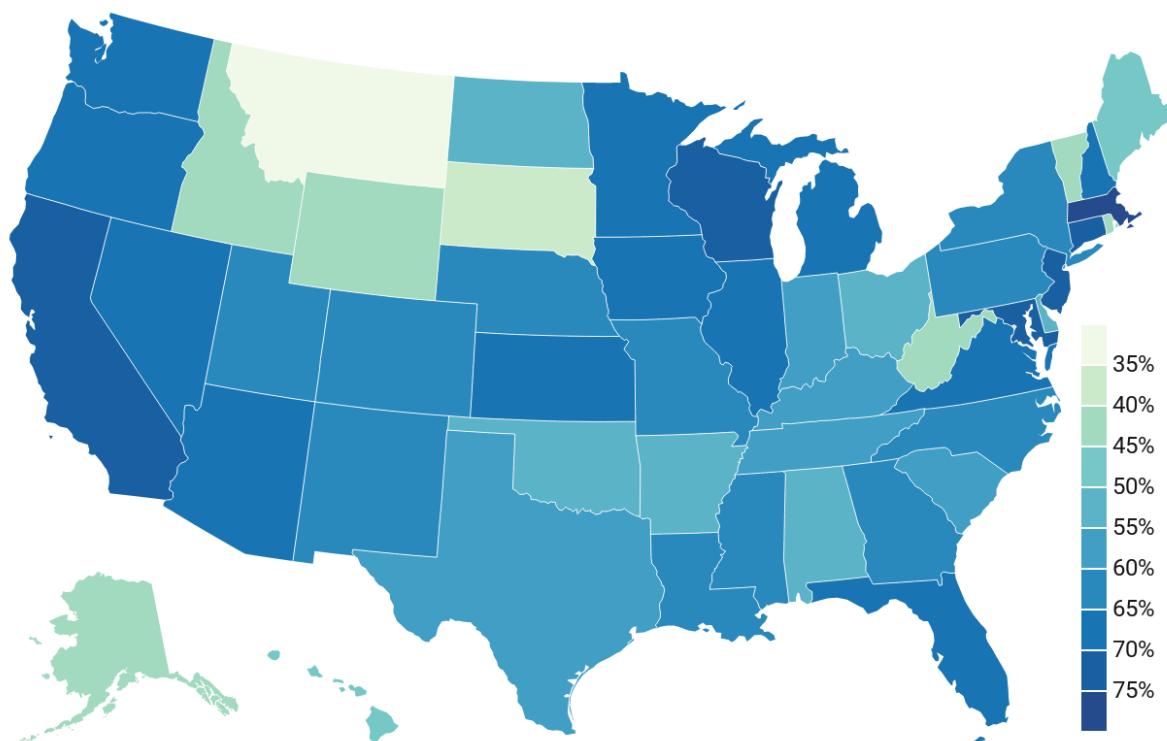
People's ideas as to who will run the country in the next four years differed by state, with blue states more likely to favor Biden and red states more reticent about accepting the election outcomes (see Figure 6).

The states with highest percent of people identifying Biden as the president-elect were Massachusetts (79%), New Jersey (76%), New Hampshire (75%) Connecticut (75%), Wisconsin (73%), Maryland (73%), and California (73%). The states with highest percent reporting a Trump win were West Virginia (36%), Ohio (25%), Texas (23%), Wyoming (23%), Florida (21%), New Mexico (21%), Louisiana (21%), Indiana (21%), and Alabama (21%). In the contested state of Pennsylvania, the split was 63% thinking Biden won compared to 18% for Trump, while in Georgia those numbers were 66% and 17%.

Did Joe Biden win the 2020 presidential election?

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

[Percent respondents who say "Probably Joe Biden" or "Definitely Joe Biden"]



National sample, N = 24,019. Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

Figure 6. Presidential election winner perceptions by state

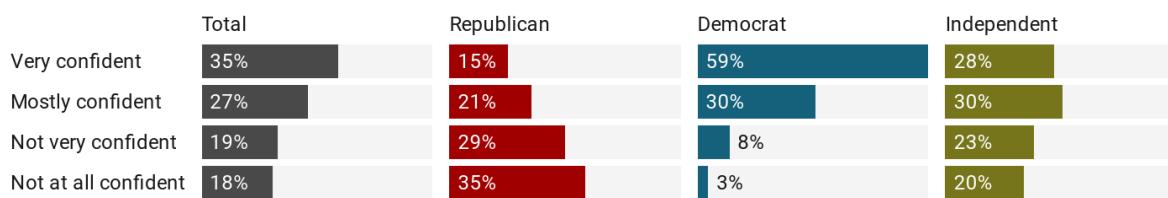
Perceptions of election fairness

Americans report considerable concerns about election fairness, likely due to the unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud [coming from President Trump](#) and [some Republican elected officials](#) and [amplified by right-wing talk shows](#).

Overall, 38% of Americans are *not at all confident* or *not very confident* in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election (see Figure 7). That number is especially high among Republicans (64%) and Trump voters (69%) compared to Democrats (11%) and Biden voters (8%).

Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by party

How confident are you in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

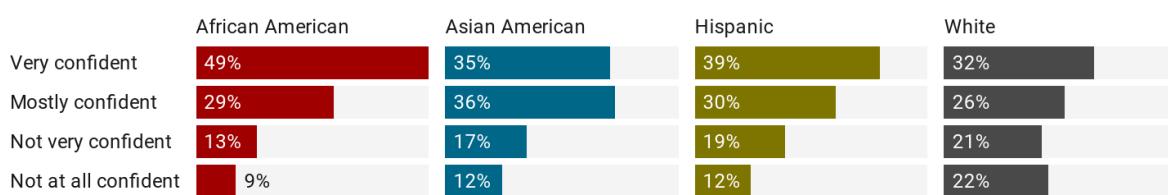
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Figure 7. Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by party

Demographic differences were also evident with 79% of African Americans *mostly* or *very confident* in the fairness of the election, compared to 71% Asian Americans, 69% Hispanic respondents, and 57% of Whites (see Figure 8).

Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by race

How confident are you in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election?



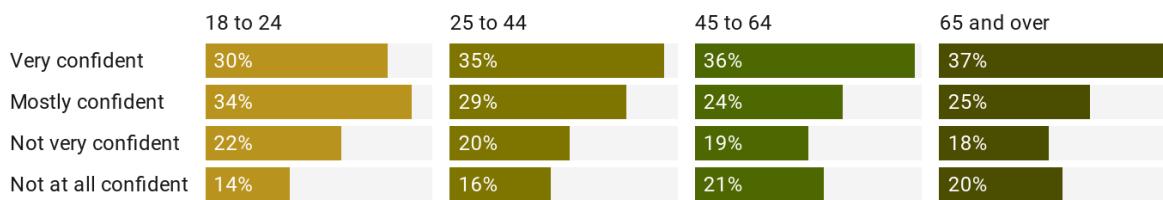
National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

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Figure 8. Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by race

Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by age

How confident are you in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election?



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

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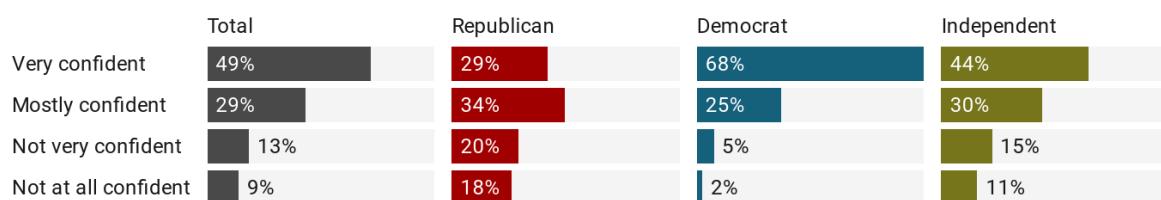
Figure 9. Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by age

Age differences were less pronounced, with confidence ranging between 60% to 64% among groups (see Figure 9). Older respondents were more likely to select the more extreme responses ("very confident" and "not at all confident") while younger Americans were more prone to choosing the middle ones ("mostly confident" and "not very confident").

We also asked Americans who voted in the 2020 election about their confidence that the ballot they cast would be counted accurately. Overall, 78% of voters were *mostly* or *very confident* that their ballot would be properly counted. That number was again lower for Republicans (62%) compared to Democrats (93%). People expressed highest confidence that their ballots would count in New York (87%), Wisconsin (86%), and Connecticut (86%) and lowest in North Dakota (68%), Hawaii (69%), and Alaska (71%). Pennsylvania ranked fifth lowest here with 72%, while Georgia was close to the middle of the list with 77%.

Confidence that your ballot will be counted accurately

How confident are you that your ballot will be counted accurately in the 2020 presidential election?
[Percent from respondents who voted in the 2020 presidential election]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

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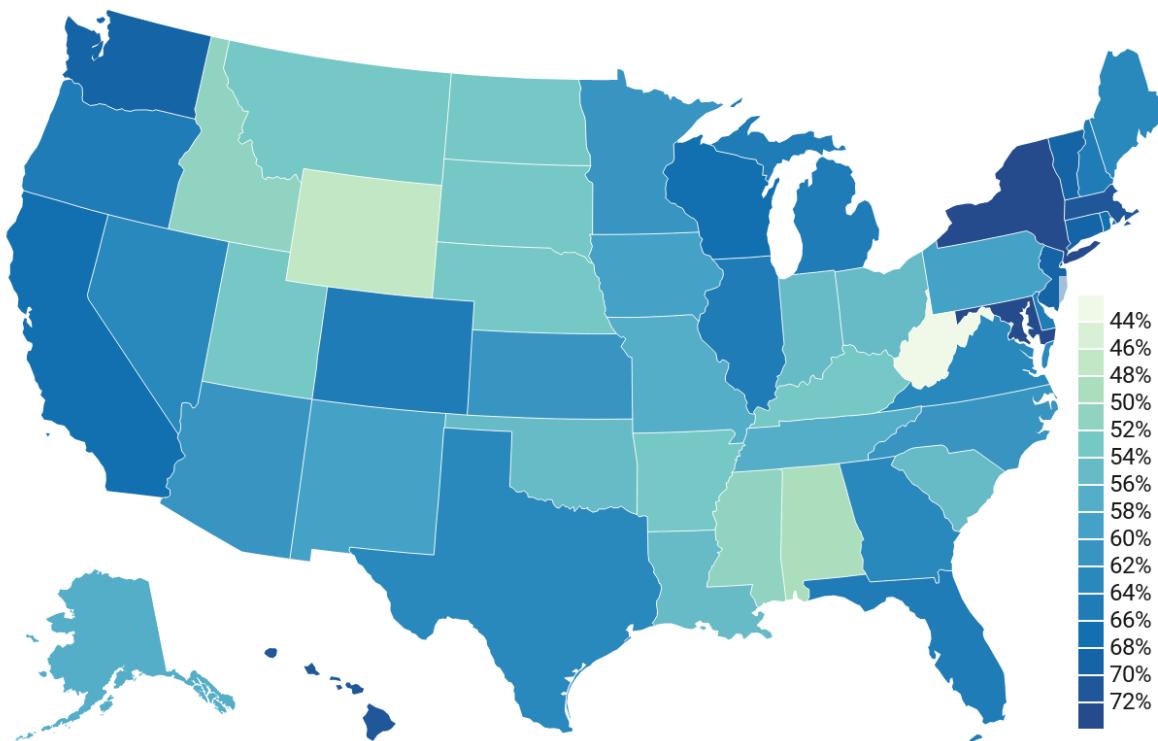
Figure 10. Confidence that your ballot will be counted accurately in the 2020 election

Confidence in the fairness of the election similarly varied by state (see Figure 11). Highest levels of concern were reported in West Virginia (57% *not at all* or *not very confident*), followed by Wyoming (53%), Alabama (51%), Idaho (49%), and Minnesota (49%).

Conversely, the states where Americans expressed most confidence in the election were New York (73% *mostly* or *very confident*), Maryland (73%), Massachusetts (71%), Hawaii (70%), Connecticut (70%), and New Jersey (70%).

Was the 2020 election conducted fairly?

How confident are you in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election?
[Percent respondents who say "Mostly confident" or "Very confident"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
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Figure 11. Confidence in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election by state

Concerns about election fraud

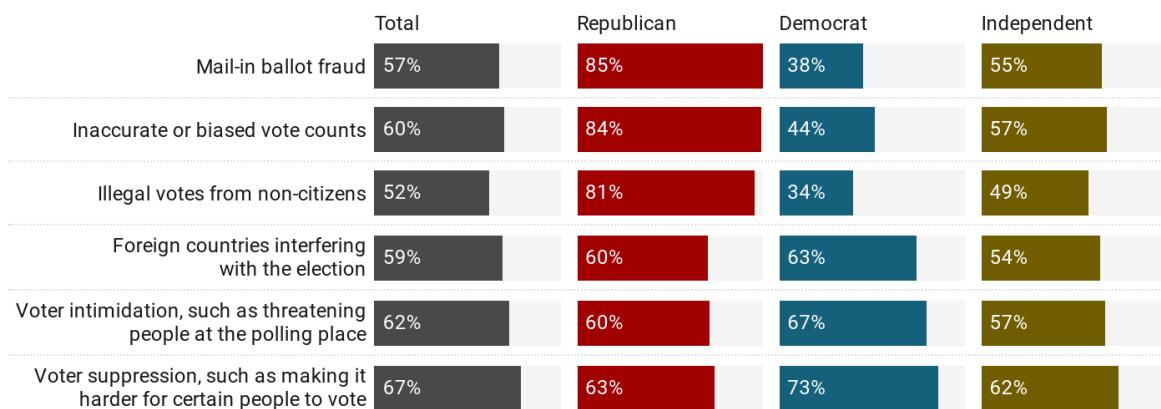
To better understand the reasons why some Americans doubt the fairness of the electoral process, we asked respondents about their level of concern with regard to a series of potential issues (see Figure 12). The problem that most people found troubling was *voter suppression* (making it harder for certain groups to vote), with over two-thirds of respondents (67%) saying they were *somewhat* or *very concerned* about it. *Voter intimidation* was a concern for 62% of the respondents, while *inaccurate or biased vote counts* troubled 60% of Americans. A total of 59% reported concerns over *foreign country interference*, 57% were concerned about mail-in ballot fraud, and 52% worried about illegal votes from non-citizens.

Among the issues we asked about, three were especially polarizing, with partisan gaps of over 40 percentage points in each case. All three were issues heavily emphasized by President Trump and received attention by right-wing media. Mail-in fraud was *somewhat* or *very concerning* for 85% of Republicans but only 38% of Democrats. Inaccurate or biased vote counting was a concern for 84% of Republicans and 44% of Democrats. Finally, 81% of Republicans and 34% of Democrats reported concerns over illegal votes from non-citizens.

There were relatively lower partisan differences with regard to foreign interference in the election (60% Republicans, 63% Democrats), voter intimidation (60% Republicans, 67% Democrats) and voter suppression (63% Republicans, 73% Democrats).

Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by party

How concerned, if at all, do you feel about the following issues regarding the 2020 U.S. election?
[Percent respondents who report they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" about an issue]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

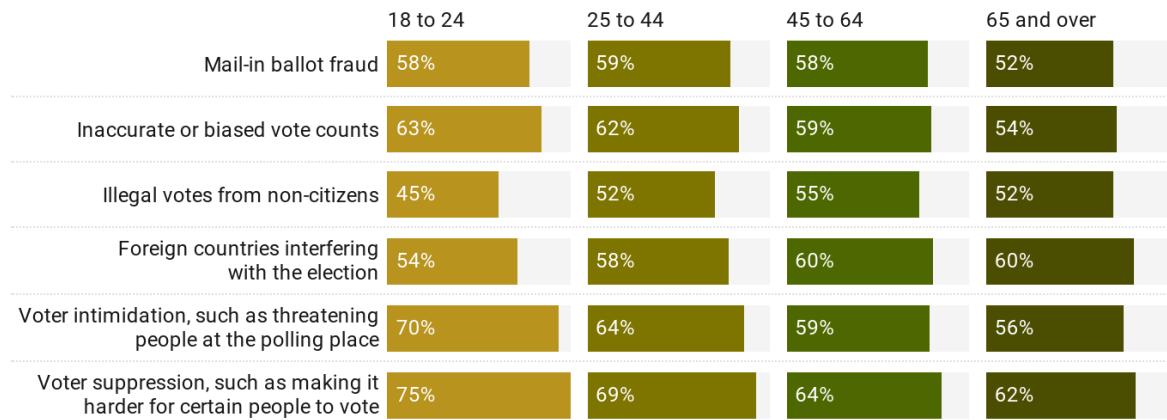
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Figure 12. Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by party

Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by age

How concerned, if at all, do you feel about the following issues regarding the 2020 U.S. election?

[Percent respondents who report they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" about an issue]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

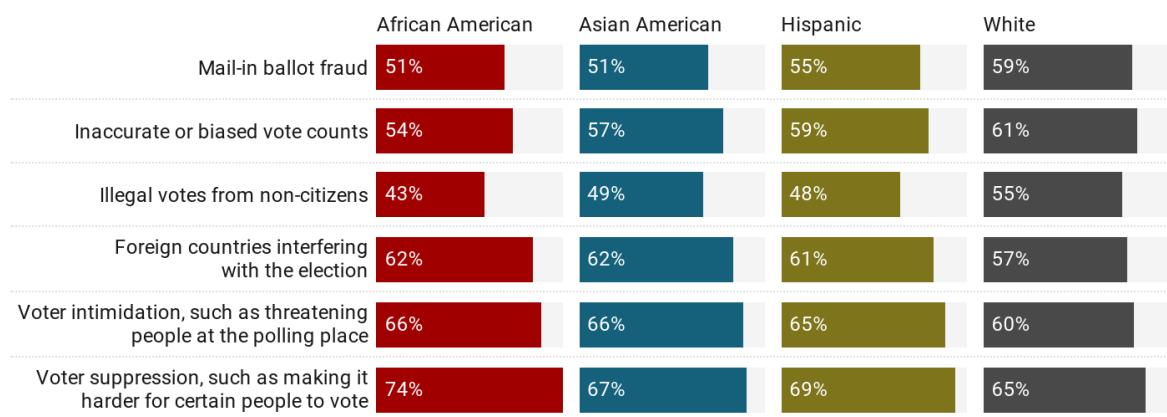
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Figure 13. Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by age

Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by race

How concerned, if at all, do you feel about the following issues regarding the 2020 U.S. election?

[Percent respondents who report they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" about an issue]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

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Figure 14. Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by race

Interestingly, while older Americans are more likely to be conservative and support Donald Trump, they were less prone to worrying about a rigged election (see Figure 13). People age 65 and over were least likely of all age groups to be concerned about *mail fraud* (52% vs. 58%-59% for other age groups) and *inaccurate or biased vote counts* (54% vs. 59%-63% for other age groups). Older Americans were also least likely to report concerns over *voter suppression* (56%) and *voter intimidation* (62%).

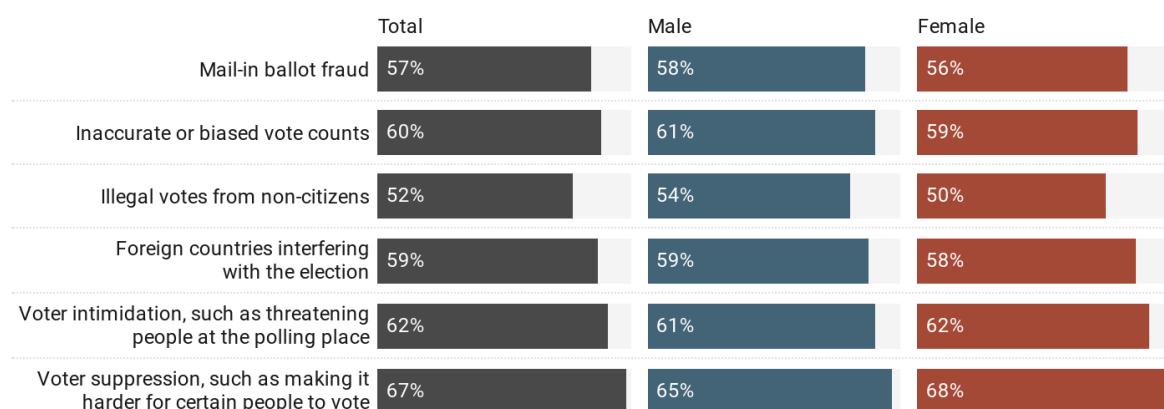
Conversely, respondents under the age of 25 were least likely to be concerned about *illegal votes from non-citizens* (45%) or *foreign country interference* (54%). They were, however, most troubled by *voter suppression* (70%) and *voter intimidation* (75%).

Differences were also present among racial and ethnic groups (Figure 14). White respondents were the ones most likely to be concerned about *mail-in fraud* (59% compared to 51% for African and Asian Americans, 55% for Hispanic respondents) and *inaccurate or biased vote counts* (61% compared to 54% African Americans, 57% for Asian Americans, and 59% for Hispanic Americans). Black respondents, on the other hand, were the most likely to think *voter suppression* was a problem (74% compared to 65% for White respondents, 67% for Asian Americans, and 69% for Hispanics).

We also found small gaps in concern levels by gender (Figure 15), with 54% of men vs. 50% of women being *somewhat* or *very concerned* about non-citizens voting; and 68% of women vs. 65% of men reporting concerns over voter suppression.

Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by gender

How concerned, if at all, do you feel about the following issues regarding the 2020 U.S. election?
[Percent respondents who report they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" about an issue]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
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Figure 15. Concerns about the fairness of the 2020 election by gender

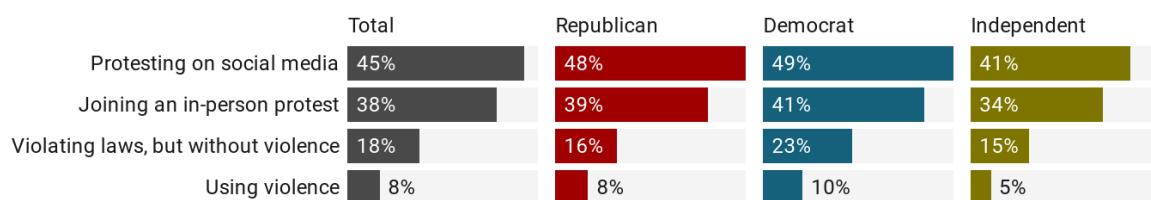
Acceptable reactions to election fraud

Our questionnaire also evaluated some of the possible reactions Americans might have to election fraud. We asked our respondents what reactions would be acceptable if it became clear that the 2020 election was not conducted fairly (see Figure 16).

Overall, 45% of respondents said they would *somewhat* or *strongly approve* of people who reacted to an unfair election by protesting on social media, while 38% approved of protesting in person. Additionally, 18% said they would approve of violating laws without violence (e.g., trespassing or defacing public property) and 8% approved of violence. The largest partisan gap in responses was for violating laws without violence (7 percent points), approved by 16% of Republicans and 23% of Democrats.

Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election by party

If it became clear to you that the 2020 presidential election was not conducted fairly, would you approve or disapprove of other people who reacted in the following ways?
[Percent respondents who say they "Somewhat approve" or "Strongly approve"]



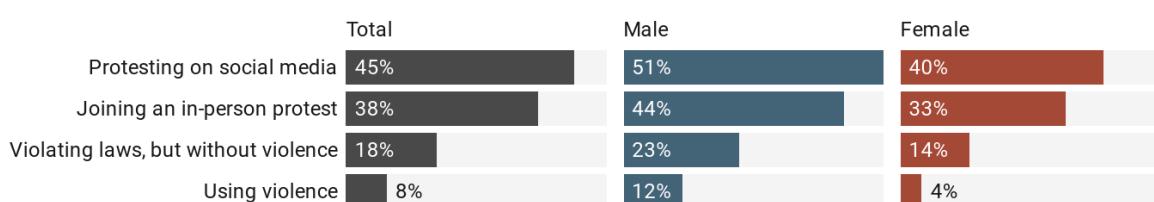
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Figure 16. Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election, by party

Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election by gender

If it became clear to you that the 2020 presidential election was not conducted fairly, would you approve or disapprove of other people who reacted in the following ways?
[Percent respondents who say they "Somewhat approve" or "Strongly approve"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

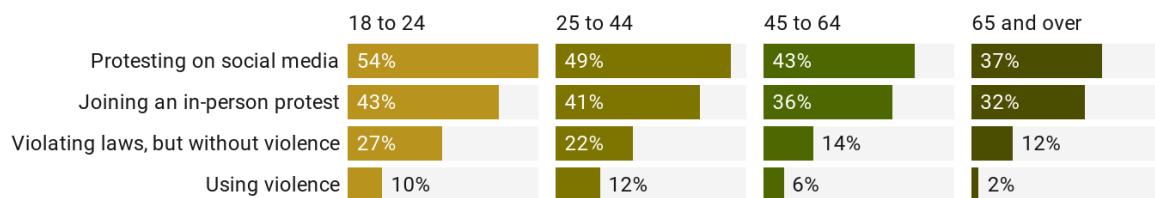
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
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Figure 17. Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election, by gender

The gender gaps in this case were larger than the partisan ones, with 40% of women vs. 51% of men approving of social media protests and 33% of women vs. 44% of men approving in-person protesting. Violating laws without violence was condoned by 23% of men and 14% of women, while violence was acceptable to 12% of men and 4% of women.

Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election by age

If it became clear to you that the 2020 presidential election was not conducted fairly, would you approve or disapprove of other people who reacted in the following ways?
[Percent respondents who say they "Somewhat approve" or "Strongly approve"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
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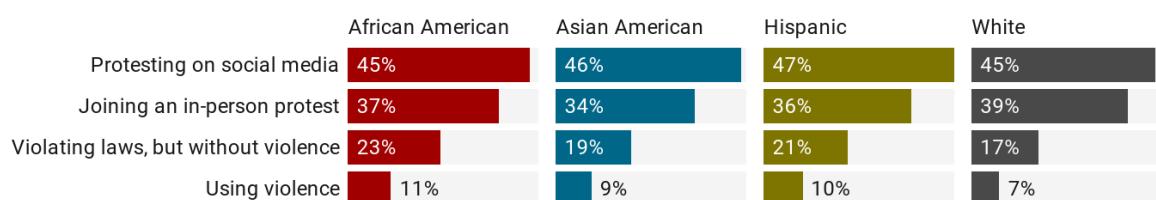
Figure 18. Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election, by age

A predictable difference emerged among age groups, with highest approval for each of the four reactions among young people and declining percentages reported as age brackets increased.

While the results for participating in online and offline protests were similar by race, approval for violating laws in case of an unfair election was somewhat higher among African and Hispanic Americans (23% and 21% respectively for violating laws without violence, 11% and 10% with violence). For white respondents, those numbers were 17% for violating laws without violence and 7% for violence.

Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election by race

If it became clear to you that the 2020 presidential election was not conducted fairly, would you approve or disapprove of other people who reacted in the following ways?
[Percent respondents who say they "Somewhat approve" or "Strongly approve"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

Figure 19. Approval of public reactions in case of an unfair election, by race

Trust in institutions to handle the 2020 election

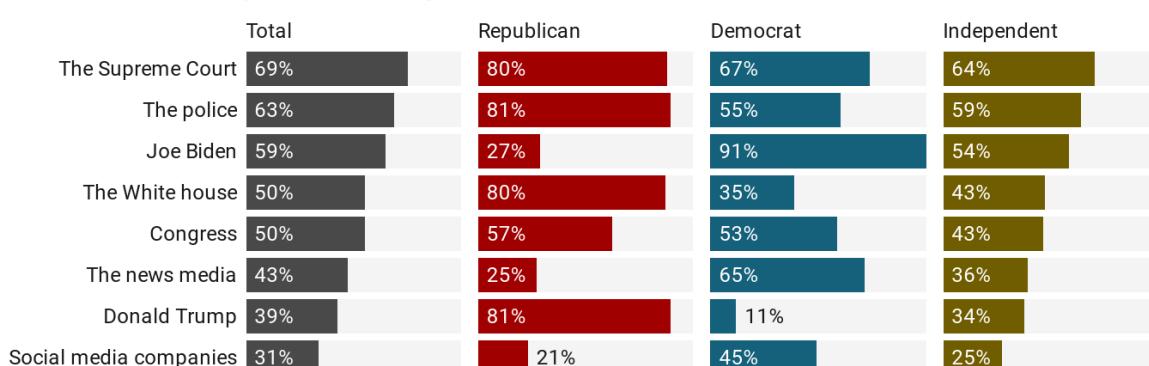
In recent years, public trust in U.S. democratic institutions has [reached near-historic lows](#). Americans report low trust in elected officials, federal and state governments, journalists, and media sources. In our post-election survey, we asked respondents specifically about their trust in the candidates and selected institutions to properly handle the 2020 U.S. elections.

Overall, the two most trusted institutions in this context were the U.S. Supreme Court (69% reporting *some* or *a lot* of trust) and the police (63%). Congress and the White House were each trusted by exactly half of the respondents (50%). There was a 20 percent point difference between the two presidential candidates, with 59% trusting Joe Biden to handle the election well and 39% saying the same about Donald Trump. The news media were trusted by 43%, and social media by 31%.

Considerable partisan gaps emerged for all institutions except Congress, which was trusted by 57% of Republicans and 53% of Democrats (see Figure 20). The largest differences, over 65 percent points in each case, emerged for the two participants in the presidential election. Biden was trusted by 91% of Democrats and 27% of Republicans, while Trump had the trust of 81% Republicans and 11% of Democrats. There was a 40 percent point partisan gap in trust for the news media (Republicans 25%, Democrats 65%), a 24 point difference for social media companies (Republicans 21%, Democrats 45%), and a 13 point difference for the Supreme Court (Republicans 80%, Democrats 67%).

Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election by party

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do the right thing to best handle the 2020 elections? [Percent respondents who say "Some" or "A lot"]



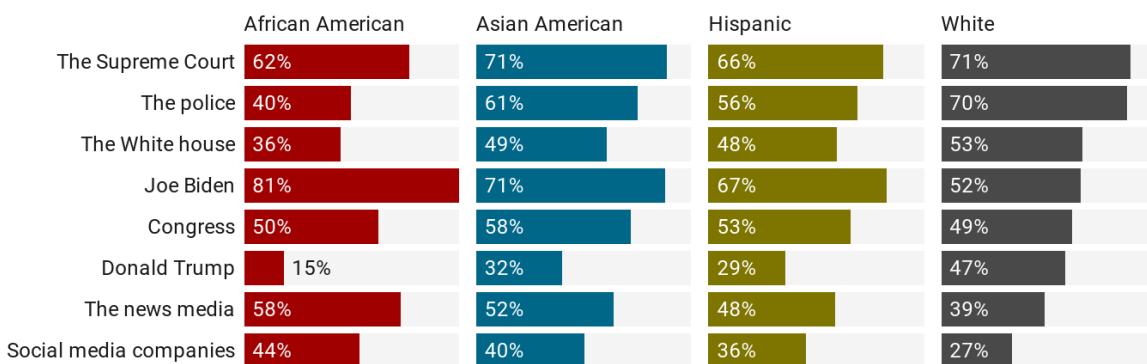
National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

Figure 20. Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election, by party

Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election by race

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do the right thing to best handle the 2020 elections? [Percent respondents who say "Some" or "A lot"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

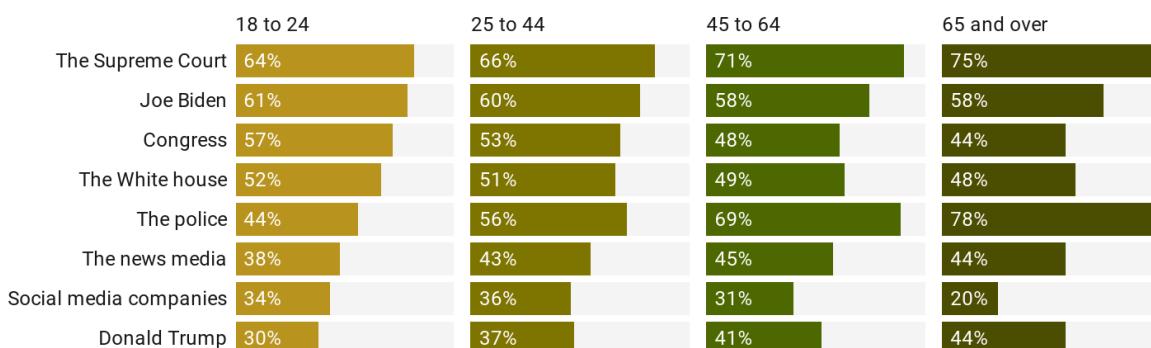
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

Figure 21. Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election, by race

To an extent, racial gaps in trust reflected partisan differences (see Figure 21), with White respondents more likely to report trust in Donald Trump (47%) compared to African Americans (15%), Asian Americans (32%), and Hispanic respondents (29%). Conversely, Joe Biden was trusted less by Whites (52%) compared to African Americans (81%), Asian Americans (71%), and Hispanics (67%). Another prominent difference was that in trusting the police, with African Americans at 40% compared to White respondents at 70%, Asian Americans at 61%, and Hispanic Americans at 56%.

Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election by age

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do the right thing to best handle the 2020 elections? [Percent respondents who say "Some" or "A lot"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

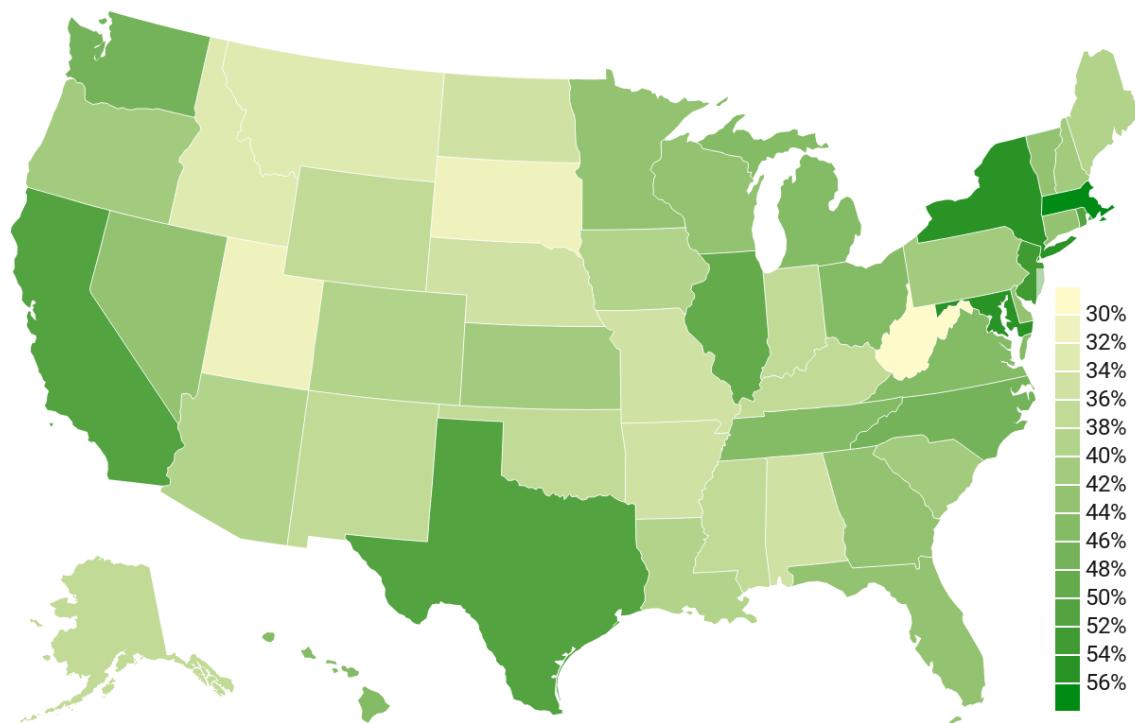
Figure 22. Trust in people and institutions to handle the 2020 election, by age

Trust in people and institutions to handle the election was also characterized by generational differences (see Figure 22). With each increase in age group, respondents became more likely to trust the Supreme Court, the police, and Donald Trump. Young Americans (age 18 to 24) were somewhat more likely than other groups to trust Congress (57%) and Joe Biden (61%).

We also examined patterns of trust by state (Figure 23). By and large, results for Donald Trump and Joe Biden mirrored election results with higher levels of trust reported in states where each candidate won. Trust in the news media was also linked to political orientation, with respondents in red states reporting lower media trust than those in blue states. One notable exception was the state of Texas where Trump won in 2020 but levels of media trust were relatively high. Overall, the highest levels of trust were reported by respondents in DC (61%), Massachusetts (57%), Maryland (55%), New York (54%), New Jersey (53%), Texas (52%), Rhode Island (51%), and California (51%). The lowest percent of Americans saying they trust media some/a lot were found in West Virginia (29%), South Dakota (30%), Utah (32%), Idaho (33%), Montana (33%), Missouri (34%), and North Dakota (34%).

Trust in the news media to handle the 2020 election well

How much do you trust the news media to do the right thing to best handle the 2020 elections?
[Percent respondents who say "Some" or "A lot"]



National sample, N = 24,019, Time period: 11/03/2020-11/30/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

Figure 23. Trust in the news media to handle the 2020 election

Appendix A: State Tables

Who do you think is winning the 2020 U.S. presidential election?							
State	Definitely Donald Trump	Probably Donald Trump	Probably Joe Biden	Definitely Joe Biden	Not sure	Error Margin	N
AK	9.6	9.5	12.7	28.3	39.8	7.5	331
AL	15.7	5.2	20.4	40	18.6	5.8	444
AR	10.3	7.9	20.1	39.1	22.4	6.7	361
AZ	7.4	9	18.1	49.8	15.7	5.8	503
CA	7.8	4.1	21	51.5	15.6	4.4	703
CO	10	5.8	21.6	45.5	17	5.6	465
CT	6.3	4.3	16.7	57.9	14.8	5.8	426
DC	5.2	2.5	7.3	26.6	58.4	5.7	406
DE	5.3	2.9	16.1	37.5	38.2	6.1	394
FL	13.3	8	17	47.6	14.1	4.4	685
GA	9.3	7.9	21.9	44.3	16.6	4.8	601
HI	8.5	5	19.1	31.7	35.7	6.9	341
IA	9.2	6.5	22.4	43.1	18.8	5.7	395
ID	12.1	7.1	22.6	24.2	34	5.6	490
IL	10.8	5.9	25	45	13.4	4.9	549
IN	13.2	7.8	22.6	38.6	17.7	5.5	423
KS	10.9	7.2	23.6	43.5	14.7	5.8	402
KY	15.1	5	23.1	38	18.8	5.2	446
LA	13.7	7.5	17	45.1	16.7	5.7	408
MA	5.3	6	17.1	61.7	9.8	5.1	460
MD	7.3	7.7	18.5	54.8	11.7	5.9	379
ME	9	5.9	20.3	31.2	33.5	4.5	638
MI	9.5	6	19.5	49.9	15.2	4.6	556
MN	9	5.6	24.6	47.7	13.2	5.4	466

MO	11.2	8.5	21	42.3	17	5.1	529
MS	9.9	9.2	24.5	44.4	12	6.7	459
MT	13	7.3	18.2	18.7	42.8	5.8	460
NC	11.5	7.9	20.7	46.1	13.7	4.7	567
ND	7.8	6.4	23	32	30.8	5.6	396
NE	8.6	6	23.6	43.8	17.9	5.8	421
NH	6.1	5.2	26.1	49.1	13.6	5.7	387
NJ	5.8	5.4	23.4	52.4	13	5.7	477
NM	16	5.2	21.6	43	14.3	6.9	376
NV	8.2	6.8	13.6	54.9	16.5	6.2	457
NY	10.3	7.6	21.5	41.9	18.8	4.4	715
OH	15.2	10.1	20	35.5	19.2	4.8	531
OK	11.2	7.6	20.9	34.8	25.6	5.4	425
OR	4.6	7.6	20.9	50	17.1	5.2	477
PA	10.6	6.9	24.4	38.8	19.3	4.5	518
RI	6.8	6.3	17.8	26.9	42.2	5.4	493
SC	9.2	9	21.5	39.6	20.7	5.2	474
SD	9.5	7.6	22.1	22.6	38.1	6	407
TN	10.4	8	17.7	43.9	20	5.7	439
TX	12.3	10.3	21	35.5	20.9	4.2	681
UT	8.7	11	27.9	38	14.5	5.3	402
VA	8.2	6.2	17	50.1	18.5	5.8	447
VT	8.7	4.7	12.7	26.6	47.3	7	285
WA	7.8	4.7	19.9	50.9	16.7	5.2	497
WI	5.8	7	23.7	49.7	13.8	4.2	722
WV	19.4	16.9	22.1	20.5	21.1	5.8	365
WY	14.3	8.3	21.1	22.5	33.7	7.2	286

How confident are you in the fairness of the 2020 presidential election?						
State	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Mostly confident	Very confident	Error Margin	N
AK	16.2	26	24.3	33.5	7.2	331
AL	31.5	19.4	23.4	25.7	5.5	443
AR	26.8	21	21.4	30.9	6.4	359
AZ	23.6	15.9	23.2	37.3	5.6	501
CA	13	19.6	31.3	36	4.2	702
CO	18	17.5	28.2	36.2	5.4	464
CT	13.1	17.1	28.7	41.1	5.8	425
DE	4.4	8.4	27.2	60	5.7	406
FL	15.6	19.1	23.7	41.6	6.2	395
GA	17.7	17.2	26.1	39.1	4.3	684
HI	18.5	18.2	28.3	34.9	4.6	600
IA	16.6	13.2	28.5	41.6	7.1	339
ID	20.3	21.3	26.3	32	5.4	395
IL	29	20	21.8	29.2	5.4	491
IN	18.5	17.1	30.8	33.6	4.7	548
KS	23.8	21.3	29.4	25.6	5.2	421
KY	15.1	23.7	25.9	35.2	5.6	403
LA	23.8	22.5	25.2	28.4	4.8	445
MA	23.5	21.2	25.6	29.7	5.2	407
MD	12.7	15.9	25.6	45.8	5.2	457
ME	15.7	11.8	29.4	43.1	5.9	379
MI	16	21	24.8	38.3	4.7	637
MN	16.7	18.2	27.3	37.7	4.5	555
MO	18.1	20.5	25.3	36.1	5.2	465
MS	22	21.6	28.4	28	4.6	530
MT	22.5	26.3	23.3	27.9	6.1	460
NC	25.5	22.1	24.6	27.8	5.3	459
ND	21.1	17.4	26.8	34.7	4.5	566

NE	22.8	23.5	27.2	26.5	5.3	395
NH	23.9	23	22.4	30.8	5.4	420
NJ	15.2	20.1	27	37.7	5.5	387
NM	11.5	18.8	29.5	40.2	5.6	475
NV	19	21.3	22	37.6	6.7	377
NY	20.5	15.9	26.5	37.1	6	456
OH	8.7	18	34.2	39.1	4.4	716
OK	21.2	24.8	26.1	27.9	4.5	531
OR	23.4	22.2	26.9	27.5	5.1	425
PA	13.2	21.8	28.5	36.5	5	477
RI	19.6	22	27.6	30.8	4.3	518
SC	13.9	19.4	27	39.7	5.3	492
SD	25	19.9	24.5	30.6	4.9	474
TN	25.2	21.1	22.9	30.8	5.7	406
TX	23.3	20.8	25.8	30.2	5.2	440
UT	16.6	20.4	31.1	31.9	4.1	684
VA	21.9	24.9	25.6	27.5	4.9	403
VT	17.8	18.9	21.4	42	5.7	447
WA	13.4	17.3	32	37.3	6.9	281
WI	12.3	18.4	28.8	40.6	5.1	496
WV	13.8	19.6	29.4	37.3	4.1	724
WY	29.2	27.6	23.3	19.9	6.3	365

How confident are you that your ballot will be counted accurately in the 2020 presidential election?

State	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Mostly confident	Very confident	Error Margin	N
AK	9.4	20.1	27.7	42.8	7.8	309
AL	16.4	10.7	29.4	43.6	6.6	348
AR	10.1	16.9	28.9	44.1	8.5	236
AZ	8.9	17.1	21.4	52.6	6.2	423
CA	6.7	12.3	28.8	52.2	4.8	565
CO	10	9.4	27.7	52.9	6.2	373
CT	4.8	9.7	29.9	55.6	6.4	345
DC	4.3	7.2	23.6	65	5.6	398
DE	8.3	11.4	27.1	53.3	6.6	364
FL	9.4	12.2	26.1	52.3	4.8	564
GA	10.9	12.3	27.2	49.6	5.4	469
HI	19.9	11	22.8	46.3	7.5	311
IA	6.6	11.2	31.6	50.6	6.4	313
ID	12.2	16.6	28.5	42.7	6.5	403
IL	9.6	13	30.7	46.7	5.3	454
IN	9.8	15.1	30.7	44.5	6.7	299
KS	6.7	12.4	29.9	51	6.8	302
KY	11.7	13.4	29	45.8	6.1	336
LA	10.7	14.6	27.2	47.5	6.6	302
MA	7	8.7	23.1	61.2	5.6	372
MD	8.2	9.4	31.4	51	6.7	300
ME	12.3	14	25	48.7	5	585
MI	9.3	13.5	26.9	50.3	5	468
MN	7.8	13	26.6	52.7	5.8	409
MO	11.3	13.1	34.3	41.4	5.6	415
MS	8.1	15.6	26.7	49.6	8.2	315
MT	14.2	13.4	34.2	38.2	5.9	437

NC	11.4	14	27.8	46.9	5.1	461
ND	18.2	13.6	30.6	37.7	6.2	353
NE	8.7	15	34.6	41.7	6.7	306
NH	6.4	8.8	30	54.8	6.3	308
NJ	6.4	14.3	31.4	47.8	6.3	384
NM	13.3	13.8	22.3	50.7	8	283
NV	13.9	9.8	25.7	50.6	6.9	363
NY	4.3	9.3	35.6	50.9	5.1	534
OH	9.9	16.4	30.4	43.4	5.5	417
OK	7.7	13.7	27	51.6	7	284
OR	6.2	13.1	27.3	53.4	5.7	395
PA	12	16	30.5	41.5	5	430
RI	11.1	14.5	25.5	48.9	5.7	458
SC	9.1	11.8	33.7	45.4	6	362
SD	12.6	11.8	28.6	46.9	6.4	379
TN	10.4	12	30.2	47.5	6.4	326
TX	9.2	10.1	34.1	46.6	5.1	493
UT	9.2	15	34.8	41	6.2	301
VA	11.3	8.5	24.2	55.9	6.3	361
VT	9.8	10.2	28.4	51.6	7.2	270
WA	4.7	10.8	31.7	52.9	5.6	405
WI	4.1	10.4	35.7	49.9	4.6	596
WV	8.3	17.6	28	46.1	8.4	255
WY	12.3	15.4	29.9	42.3	7.7	269

How much do you trust the news media to do the right thing to best handle the 2020 elections?

State	A lot	Some	Not too much	Not at all	Error Margin	N
AK	8.2	29.5	27.3	35	7.6	311
AL	9.8	24.8	29.7	35.6	5.9	414
AR	6.7	29.2	25.8	38.4	6.8	345
AZ	12.1	27.3	24.6	36	5.7	478
CA	12.1	38.4	21.2	28.2	4.7	594
CO	12.6	26.2	26.6	34.5	5.7	421
CT	11.2	31.5	28.9	28.4	5.7	394
DC	19.2	41.8	26.6	12.5	5.9	384
DE	11.1	31.3	28.4	29.2	6.1	374
FL	9.9	33.7	26.4	30	4.6	557
GA	12.9	30.5	24.4	32.3	4.9	518
HI	10	35.7	27.8	26.6	7.2	320
IA	8.6	29.6	28.1	33.6	5.8	340
ID	6.8	25.8	25.5	41.9	6	475
IL	12.9	35.1	22.3	29.7	5.1	476
IN	7.4	28.6	23.5	40.5	5.9	380
KS	10.4	29.8	27.1	32.7	5.8	363
KY	6.7	30.1	26	37.2	5.6	383
LA	9	30.9	23.2	36.8	5.8	368
MA	13.8	42.7	18.7	24.8	5.3	437
MD	18.9	35.9	22.1	23.1	5.8	360
ME	8.3	30.1	25.8	35.8	4.8	591
MI	12.9	31.9	23.1	32.1	4.5	505
MN	9.2	34	24.7	32.2	5.3	437
MO	10.5	23.9	28.3	37.3	5.3	475
MS	8.9	27.6	23.5	40	6.7	447
MT	8.2	25.1	21.5	45.2	6	434
NC	11.9	35.5	21.3	31.3	4.9	476

ND	3.7	30.7	28.4	37.2	6.1	361
NE	7.5	27.4	23.4	41.7	6	394
NH	7.7	33.8	28.3	30.2	5.7	336
NJ	12.9	39.6	23.1	24.4	6.1	403
NM	7.5	30.4	21.4	40.6	7.2	348
NV	12.1	30	27.8	30.2	6	428
NY	14.9	39.5	26.6	19	5.6	441
OH	9.2	35.4	26.1	29.3	5.7	383
OK	7.5	28.5	27.6	36.4	5.8	384
OR	9.6	31	28.8	30.6	5	432
PA	13.7	27.2	24.4	34.8	4.9	424
RI	12	39	21.5	27.5	5.8	421
SC	11.6	29.3	21.6	37.5	5.5	421
SD	6.3	23.9	26.3	43.6	6.3	379
TN	12.5	31.6	24.1	31.8	5.9	360
TX	13.4	38.4	22.1	26	5.2	475
UT	6.3	25.2	29.2	39.3	5.5	382
VA	13.1	32.2	22	32.7	6.1	367
VT	6.7	35.6	26.3	31.4	7.1	259
WA	11.7	35.3	23.8	29.2	5.2	444
WI	8.6	34	28.2	29.2	4.2	648
WV	7.8	21.4	24.4	46.4	8	276
WY	8.4	29.1	19.6	42.8	7.6	271