

Kalikow School Poll at Hofstra University Executive Summary and Analysis



Poll Release Date: 10/30/2020

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Abstract

With less than one week until Election Day, the fundamentals of the presidential race suggest that President Trump is in a weak position and, as a result, prospects for a second term are dim. President Trump continues to receive low marks for the direction of the country, his job performance, and personal favorability. He has consistently received low marks on one of the key issues to voters — healthcare — and his strongest issue — the economy — is down five percentage points from where it was in March 2020.

In a head-to-head matchup with Joe Biden, Donald Trump currently trails his opponent by 11.4 percentage points. Biden has a healthy lead with suburbanites, suburban women, and both men and women with a college degree. Biden is also ahead in all age groups, except those who are 65 years or older. Likely voters' preference for Biden echoes in a generic congressional matchup, where Democrats enjoy a 9-point advantage. Overall, the Kalikow School Poll results portend a good year for Democrats in both the presidential and congressional races.

Other key highlights from the Kalikow School Poll are:

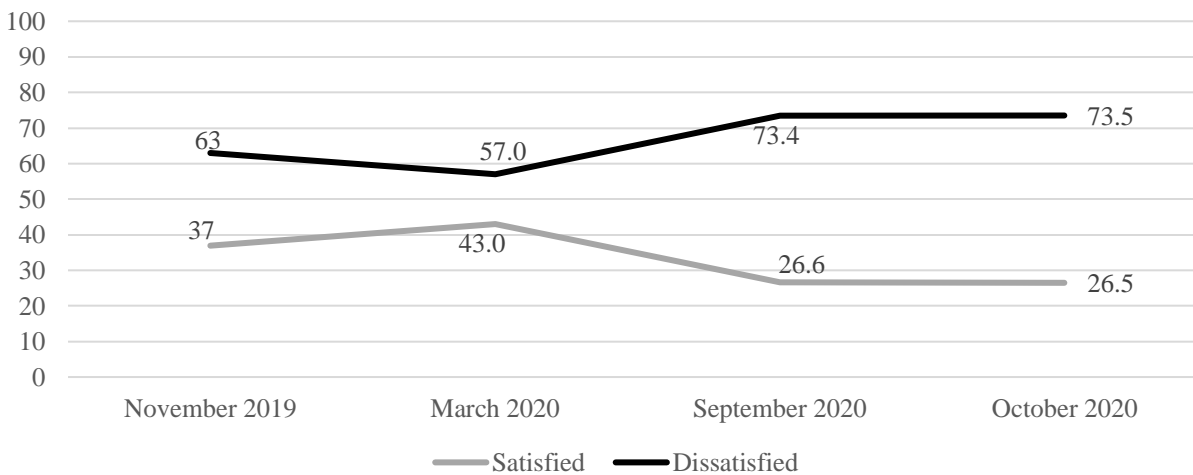
- 42% of our sample has already voted. Early voters strongly preferred Biden (69.2%) to Trump (28.7%). The 58% of respondents who have not voted yet prefer Trump (52.5%) to Biden (42.7%).
- 38.8% of likely voters reported the choice of Vice President was “a major consideration.”
- The *New York Times*' report that Trump paid \$750 in taxes for 2016 and 2017 caused 15.2% of likely voters to be less likely to vote for Trump. A majority (58.7%) said it had no impact because they had already decided. Another 21.9% said the report was untrue.
- After Trump's positive COVID-19 test, 27.1% of people said they have taken more precautions to avoid the virus.
- A majority of likely voters did not support Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation to the Supreme Court, with 32.6% saying it was too close to the election.
- A strong majority (62.1%) of likely voters oppose expanding the size of the Supreme Court.
- A majority (53.7%) of likely voters think the Senate should keep the filibuster.
- If a respondent's candidate loses, a majority (59.7%) would support changing the presidential selection method, 38.7% would support a constitutional convention, and 33.6% would support secession from the United States.

The State of the 2020 Presidential Race

Satisfaction with Direction of the Country

Donald Trump faces substantial headwinds in his campaign for a second term. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of people have changed their minds about the direction the country is headed. Whereas in March 2020 57% of voters thought the country was headed in the wrong direction, that number has increased to 73.5% in October 2020, which is almost identical to the reading taken in September 2020.

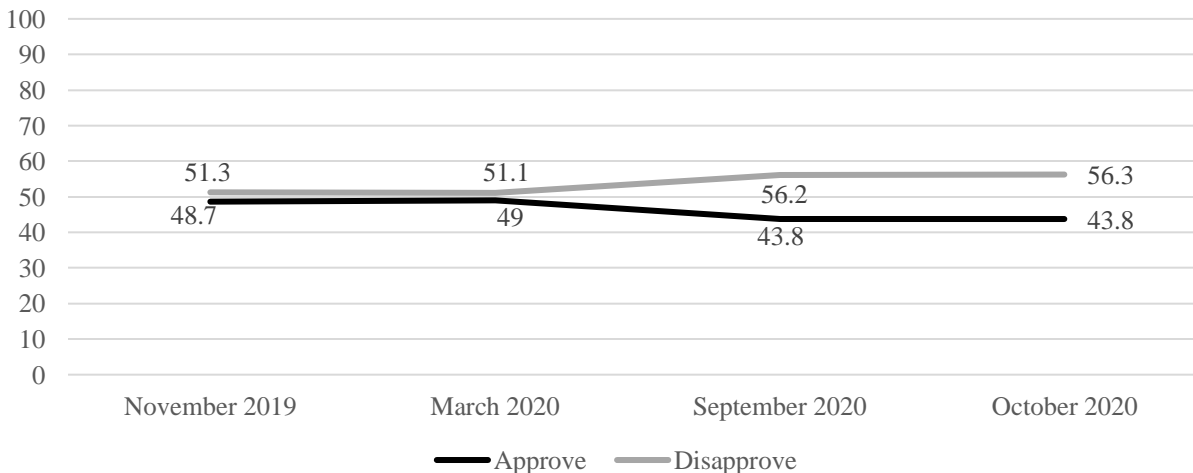
Satisfaction with Direction of the Country



Trump’s Job Approval and Favorability

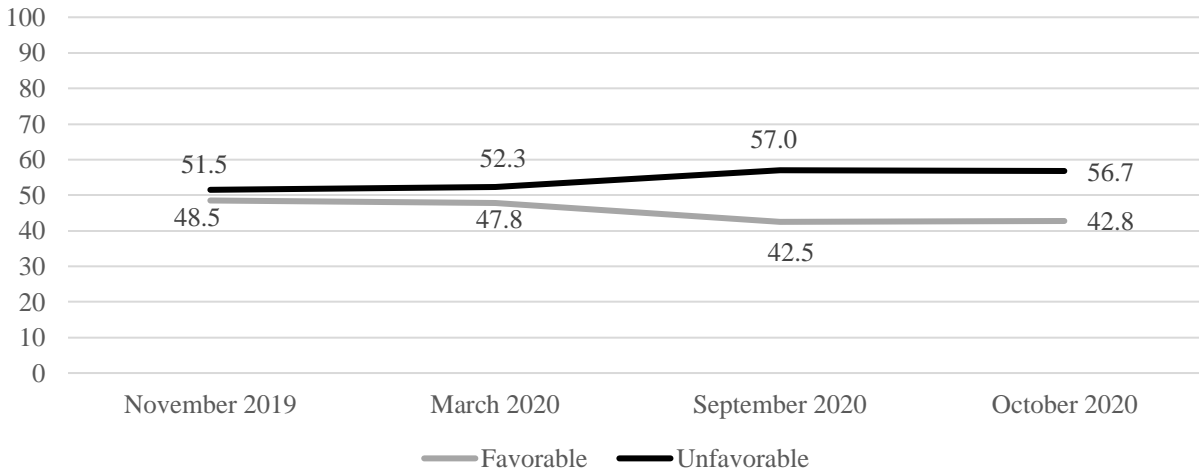
President Trump’s job approval rating has also declined since the onset of the pandemic. His pre-pandemic approval rating hovered near 50%. Since then, his job approval rating has declined to the low 40s, with both our September and October polls putting his approval rating at 43.8%.

President Trump's Job Approval



Similarly, Trump’s personal favorability has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. As was the case with his job approval, his favorability scores were near 50% pre-pandemic. Since then, these scores have declined to the low 40s, with our most recent reading being 42.8%.

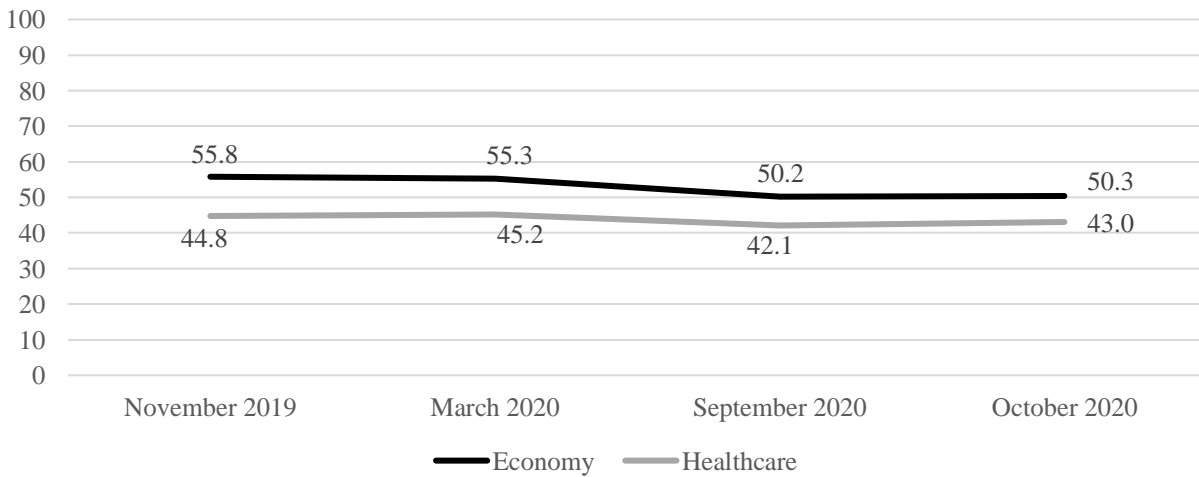
President Trump's Favorability



Trump’s Performance on Healthcare and the Economy

In previous polls, Trump’s job approval on the economy had been a consistent source of strength. Indeed, of the 8-10 issues we asked respondents to rate on each survey, the economy was the only consistent positive performance indicator for Trump that exceeded the margin of error. Since the pandemic, his rating on the economy has declined about 5 percentage points. Healthcare, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, has been stable.

President Trump's Approval on Key Issues



Voting Method and Trump/Biden Head-to-Head Matchup

As has been widely reported, early voting has increased significantly during the 2020 election cycle. In our poll, 42% of respondents reported that they have already cast their ballot. Indeed, just 32.4% of likely voters indicate they plan to vote on Election Day, with the remaining planning to still vote early (but have not yet done so).

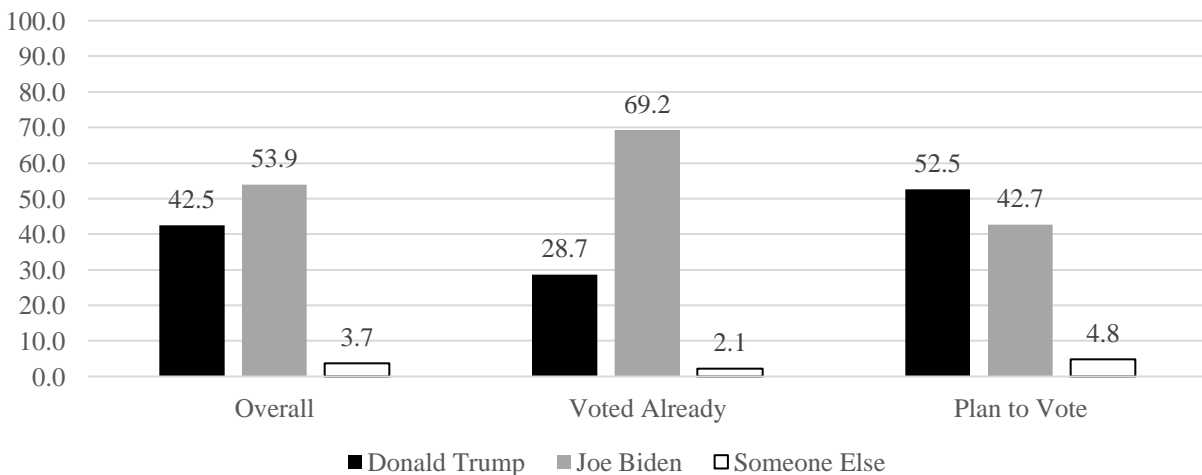
The partisan difference in voting method is striking. Democrats report a strong preference for early voting (52.8% report having already voted), while Republicans are more likely to vote on Election Day (45.5%). Independents are more mixed, though 40.4% have already cast a ballot.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Will Vote on Election Day	32.4	21.5	45.5	33.2
Will Vote Early In-Person	13.7	13.4	13.2	14.7
Will Vote Absentee/Mail/Drop Off	11.9	12.3	10.2	11.7
Already Voted Early In-Person	10.2	12.4	7.8	10.1
Already Voted Absentee/Mail/Drop Off	31.8	40.4	23.2	30.3
Total Plan to Vote	58.0	47.2	69.0	59.6
Total Already Voted	42.0	52.8	31.0	40.4

Biden enjoys an 11.4 percentage point lead over Trump with about a week left before Election Day. When we break down voting preference by method of voting, the difference in vote choice is substantial. Among likely voters who report having already voted, Biden leads Trump by 40.5 percentage points. For those who have not yet voted, Trump leads Biden by 9.5 percentage points.

What do these differences mean for the election outcome? If nothing else, it suggests Biden supporters are motivated to get their votes in early. It also sheds some light on what we might expect to see on election night. For states that count early votes — and especially mail in votes — before Election Day, Biden will likely jump to an early, substantial lead. As votes cast on Election Day are counted, those races will tighten (and possibly change the outcome). Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and North Carolina are all battleground states that allow votes to be counted before Election Day. The remaining battleground states may show an early Trump lead, with a subsequent tightening of the race (and possibly a change in the outcome) as absentee/mail-in votes are processed throughout election night.

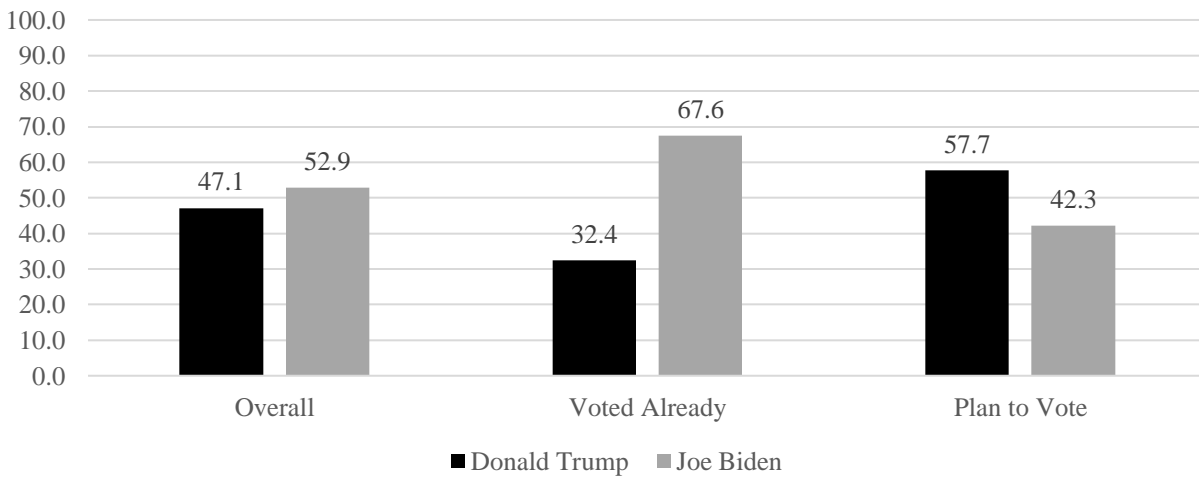
Trump vs. Biden



Who Do Likely Voters Think Will Win the Election?

On the September 2020 Kalikow School Poll, 51.8% of likely voters thought that Biden would win. On this poll, 52.9% of likely voters think Biden will win — a slight increase. In both polls, likely voters preferred Biden by over 11 percentage points. The difference between vote preference and predicted winner suggests that, while a majority of likely voters may support Biden, that majority also realizes that there is a real possibility of Trump winning. The smaller difference in predicted winner is likely a result of voters learning from 2016 — that is, the widely expected winner was able to win the popular vote but did not carry the Electoral College.

Who Will Win?



Demographics and Vote Preference

As expected, partisans plan to support their fellow partisan. Independents prefer Biden by 8.6 percentage points. Trump continues to do well in rural areas, while urbanites strongly prefer Biden. Suburban voters — which reside in swing areas — also prefer Biden by 6.3 percentage points.

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Suburban	Urban	Rural
Donald Trump	2.6	92.5	41.8	44.7	31.9	53.7
Joe Biden	95.8	6.7	50.4	51.0	64.5	43.3
Someone Else	1.6	0.8	7.8	4.3	3.7	3.0

Women strongly prefer Biden. Men also prefer Biden, though by a smaller margin. These results hold when examining just the suburbs, though both margins tighten a bit.

	Total		Suburban	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Donald Trump	44.5	40.7	46.6	43.0
Joe Biden	51.5	56.0	47.6	54.1
Someone Else	4.1	3.3	5.8	2.9

Biden continues to enjoy a big advantage among college educated (defined as having at least a two-year degree) likely voters. Among non-college likely voters, Biden has a small lead, though Trump leads this category in the suburbs.

	Total		Suburban	
	Less than College	College or More	Less than College	College or More
Donald Trump	47.3	38.1	48.0	41.8
Joe Biden	49.2	58.1	47.6	54.1
Someone Else	3.6	3.7	4.4	4.1

Trump does best with both men and women who do not have a college degree, with a majority of each supporting his reelection. Biden does best with men and women who have at least a two-year degree. The difference in support for Biden amongst college-educated women is quite substantial.

	Men		Women	
	Less than College	College or More	Less than College	College or More
Donald Trump	50.5	42	52.5	36.2
Joe Biden	46.3	53.7	44.0	60.6
Someone Else	3.2	4.4	3.5	3.2

Biden leads in every age group except those who are 65 and older. Those who are 44 years of age and younger strongly prefer Biden.

	18-29	30-44	45-64	>65
Donald Trump	29.7	32.2	45.9	53.5
Joe Biden	63.6	62.2	50.8	45.8
Someone Else	6.7	5.7	3.3	0.8

Generic Congressional Ballot

In a generic congressional matchup, likely voters prefer the generic Democrat over the generic Republican 54.5% to 45.5%, respectively. As was the case with presidential preference, early voters strongly prefer the Democrats (68.4%). Those who have yet to vote prefer Republicans (55.5%). Two key voting groups — Independents and suburbanites — prefer Democrats (though the Independent preference is within the margin of error).

	Overall	Voted Already	Plan to Vote
Republican	45.5	31.7	55.5
Democratic	54.5	68.4	44.5

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Suburban	Urban	Rural
Republican	2.4	95.0	48.3	47.5	32.9	58.3
Democratic	97.6	5.0	51.7	52.5	67.1	41.7

Importance of Vice President in Deciding How to Vote

The common wisdom states that the Vice President rarely, if ever, matters in presidential elections. When asked to consider that — no matter who wins — the next president will be the oldest person to ever begin a four-year term, 38.8% said it was a major consideration who was running on the ticket with the president. Interestingly, Republicans are more likely to report it as a major consideration, though we cannot know what is driving the result.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Major Consideration	38.8	32.3	48.3	38.9
Minor Consideration	36.8	39.0	29.9	42.9
Not a Consideration	24.4	28.8	21.8	18.2

Impact of the New York Times' Report on Trump's Taxes

In late September, the *New York Times* published an expansive expose on President Trump's tax filings based on receipt of his tax returns provided by an anonymous source. Within those tax returns was the startling finding that Trump had paid only \$750 in taxes for the 2016 and 2017 tax years. Overall, 15.2% of likely voters said it made them less likely to vote for Trump. A majority of likely voters (58.7%) said it did not have an impact because they had already made up their mind about which candidate they would support. A sizable portion of likely voters (21.9%) indicated that they thought the report was untrue.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Less Likely	15.2	23.2	4.6	17.5
More Likely	4.2	1.7	7.2	4.5
Already Decided	58.7	72.6	42.7	56.4
Report Untrue	21.9	2.5	45.6	21.7

Impact of Trump's Positive COVID-19 Test

We asked respondents if they had taken more precautions to avoid contracting COVID-19 after President Trump had announced his positive test. Overall, 27.1% of likely voters said they have taken more precautions. Democrats are more likely to have taken more precautions, while Republicans and Independents are less likely to have changed their behavior.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
More Precautions	27.1	36.8	21.6	20.9
No Change	73.0	63.2	78.4	79.1

Support for Amy Coney Barrett’s Supreme Court Nomination

A majority of likely voters opposed Amy Coney Barrett’s nomination to the Supreme Court. Many likely voters (32.6%) believed the nomination was too close to the election for the Senate to consider. A majority of Independents opposed the nomination either outright or due to the closeness of the election.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Should Confirm	45.1	7.7	90.1	45.7
Should Not Confirm	22.2	38.9	3.2	19.3
Too Close to Election	32.6	53.5	6.7	34.9

Should Congress and the President Expand the Size of the Supreme Court?

While a majority of respondents opposed the Senate’s decision to confirm Amy Coney Barrett, a stronger majority opposes the idea of expanding the size of the Supreme Court. Only Democrats support the idea (61.2 percent), with Republicans and Independents in strong opposition to the idea.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Should Expand Supreme Court	37.9	61.2	13.0	31.7
Should Not Expand Supreme Court	62.1	38.8	87.0	68.4

Should the Senate Keep the Filibuster?

A majority (53.7) of likely voters think the Senate should keep the filibuster. Democrats support ending the filibuster, though support for ending it is hardly robust at 53.8%. Both Republicans and Independents think the Senate should keep the filibuster in place.

	Overall	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Should Keep Filibuster	53.7	46.2	62.5	54.2
Should Not Keep Filibuster	46.3	53.8	37.5	45.8

Support for Changing Presidential Selection Method, Constitutional Convention, and Secession

We asked respondents to report what they would support if their preferred candidate were to lose. A majority (59.7%) of respondents indicated they would support changing the way we select presidents if their candidate loses. This number is slightly lower than the September 2020 poll, but well within the margin of error. A minority (38.7%) of respondents would support a

constitutional convention should their candidate lose, a number that is slightly higher than September (but within the margin of error). A minority (33.6%) of likely voters would support the extreme step of supporting secession, a number that has declined over 5 percentage points since September.

If Candidate Loses, Do You Support:



Methodology

The Kalikow School Poll, designed by Hofstra University’s Kalikow Center for the Study of the American Presidency and executed by YouGov, is based on interviews of 2,449 of YouGov’s panelists, matched down to a sample of 2,191 registered voters and then to a subset of 2,000 likely voters using a proximity matching method. The poll recorded responses from individuals who are 18 years or older and are likely voters in the 2020 election. The survey collected responses from October 19 – 26, 2020. The survey oversampled respondents who live in suburban areas of the country. The overall margin of error for the survey is 2.86. The margin of error for suburbanites is 3.69 (n=1,000), 5.99 for urban respondents (n=500), and 5.59 for rural respondents (n=500).