

 DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

FINAL DFP NATIONAL & STATE POLLING:

Why Joe Biden Doesn't Need to Win Pennsylvania

Charlotte Swasey *VP of Data & Polling, Data For Progress*

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Key Takeaways

- ▶ An early Biden victory is possible, even if Pennsylvania takes a long time to produce results
- ▶ Biden has a path to 270 electoral votes through Florida, without Pennsylvania
- ▶ He could also get to 270 with Arizona and either North Carolina, Georgia, or a Nebraska/Maine combination
- ▶ We'll be tracking live results over at the Election Night Integrity Project: 2020.dataforprogress.org

BIDEN'S PATHWAYS TO VICTORY

Our final numbers show a strong Biden lead nationally. Of course, the popular vote is not the final determinant of who wins the presidency, as we all saw in 2016. Most forecasters have Pennsylvania as the tipping point state, where Biden would earn that crucial 270th electoral vote. This is complicated not because of any disagreement over the likely Pennsylvania results, but because of the fear that legal challenges in the state could lead to an extremely slow count and the possible omission of absentee ballots.

However, according to our final polls, we see a path to victory for Biden that does not require final Pennsylvania results to have 270 EVs allocated.

SCENARIO 1: **WE'RE RIGHT**

Our numbers are predicting a narrow Biden victory in Florida (51 Biden - 48 Trump). This would give him sufficient electoral votes to win the presidency, even without results being finalized in Pennsylvania. Florida would become the “tipping point” state, the one that gives one candidate their 270th EV, and decides the election. We expect to get results from Florida relatively early in the night on election day, although some counties will be lagging. This could lead to a Biden victory being called in the early hours of the morning on November 4th.

At the risk of stating the obvious, we know that Florida is a difficult state to poll, and one in which turnout in crucial counties can swing the result. On election day, we'll be watching to see what turnout looks like, and particularly how many voters of color go to the polls. We'll also be keeping an eye on the vote coming out of the Miami area, which can be an indicator of whether Hispanic voters in the area have gone for Biden in lower-than-expected numbers.

This uncertainty also leads us to present the following...

SCENARIO 2:

WE'RE A LITTLE TOO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BIDEN'S NUMBERS

If we're too optimistic in Florida but correct elsewhere, Biden should get sufficient electoral votes from winning Arizona, North Carolina, and/or Georgia.

Even if our polls are 2-3 points too Democratic compared to the final result, we still predict a Biden victory. This path would run through Pennsylvania, which we see as a likely Democratic state, but a very slow one to report results given the likelihood of legal challenges to mail votes. Alternatively, in this scenario, Biden could win 270 EVs without PA through some combination of a narrow victory in Arizona plus the Nebraska 2nd Congressional District, Maine 2nd Congressional District, or North Carolina.

FINAL NATIONAL POLL IN CONTEXT

Biden has maintained a lead in practically every poll for the duration of this cycle, so it should come as no surprise that our final national results place him at 54 percent support among likely voters with a 10 point lead over Trump. While these numbers reflect the national popular vote, this lead is large enough to give Biden an electoral college win in most situations. The question on election night is when exactly this lead will appear over the course of the counting of votes. Typically, slow-to-count states like California and New York make up a large portion of both the electoral college and popular vote margins for Democratic candidates. This could lead to some uncertain-seeming points early in the night.

STATES TO WATCH

FLORIDA

There's a narrow lead for Biden in this tricky to poll (and tricky to predict) state, at 51 percent to Trump's 48 percent. What happens on election night will depend heavily on turnout, especially among Hispanic voters. The state seems in good shape to produce results pretty quickly, so we should know how it is shaping up by early morning on November 4th.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_fl_11.2.20.pdf

NORTH CAROLINA

Biden holds a small lead, at 50 percent, with Trump at 48 percent. This reflects the national Democratic shift in the presidential race this year, as Clinton lost this state by around 3.5 points. Cunningham leads in the Senate race, by a smaller margin than we saw earlier in the cycle, but still a fairly substantial 5

points. With scandals on both sides of the Senate race, it seems likely to end up reflecting Presidential vote choice and partisanship more than opinions on the content of text messages.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_nc_11.1.20.pdf

ARIZONA

McSally seems poised to lose her second Senate election in this Sun Belt state, as Mark Kelly leads 54 percent to her 46 percent. This result likely reflects her low approval rating and the campaign's emphasis on her ties to an unpopular president. The presidential race is somewhat closer, with Biden at 50 percent to Trump's 47 percent, putting this state as a likely Biden pickup.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_az_11.1.20.pdf

GEORGIA

This state's unusual runoff rules (requiring a runoff if no candidate gets over 50% of the vote) in the Senate, and a bonus special senate election, make it a big Democratic focus and a tricky pickup. Biden is leading Trump, 50 percent to 48 percent, making this 16 EV state a plausible contributor to a Biden electoral college win. The normal Senate race has a strong Ossoff lead over Perdue, 51 to 46. In the special election, Warnock leads the field at 41 percent, with Republicans Loeffler and Collins at 26 and 21 percent respectively. Leiberman trails the rest of the field at eight percent.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_ga_11.2.20.pdf

PENNSYLVANIA

The likely electoral vote tipping point state has a stable Biden lead, 52 percent to 45 percent for Trump. While this result seems clear-cut, the state has heavily signaled that results will be delayed. Republicans have further indicated that they're planning to challenge the count of absentee votes in the state and generally delay the vote counting process. At this point, it seems likely that we'll be waiting on Pennsylvania for days or weeks.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_pa_11.2.20.pdf

TEXAS

The quintessential Democratic reach state is a true toss-up this year. Biden holds a narrow lead at 49 percent to Trump's 48 percent, well within margin of error and a number we've seen fluctuate over our recent weeks of Texas polls. Hegar trails Biden slightly, with 47 percent to Cornyn's 50 percent. Early voting has brought unprecedented turnout to Texas, but the exact partisan balance of these new voters remains to be seen. While early voters are slightly more Democratic, according to our polling, election day turnout could well determine the result we see in this state.

https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/dfp_tx_11.1.20.pdf

POLLING DATA

NATIONAL

Biden 54 | **Trump** 44

<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2020/11/1/joe-biden-continues-to-lead-trump-heading-into-election-day>

STATE POLLS CAN BE FOUND AT

<https://filesforprogress.org/datasets/2020/11/2020-election-polls/toplines/>

ABOUT CHARLOTTE SWASEY

Charlotte Swasey (she/her/hers) is the Vice President of Data and Polling at Data For Progress. She helps partner organizations to structure their research questions and understand how data can help them with their policy priorities. She primarily works in R and Python. Before DFP, she was the Special Projects and Strategy lead on the data team at Warren For President, doing delegate math and creating useful models to guide resource allocation and strategy. She's particularly interested in making novel data and polling methods accessible to progressive organizations, through education and outreach.

ABOUT DATA FOR PROGRESS

We are a multidisciplinary group of experts using state-of-the-art techniques in data science to support progressive activists and causes. Our polling has been used by journalists from the New York Times, Washington Post, and hundreds of other trusted news organizations.

We work with movement organizations to provide data and polling that empower progressive activists, and have advised progressive presidential candidates, Senators and members of Congress on policy and polling.

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