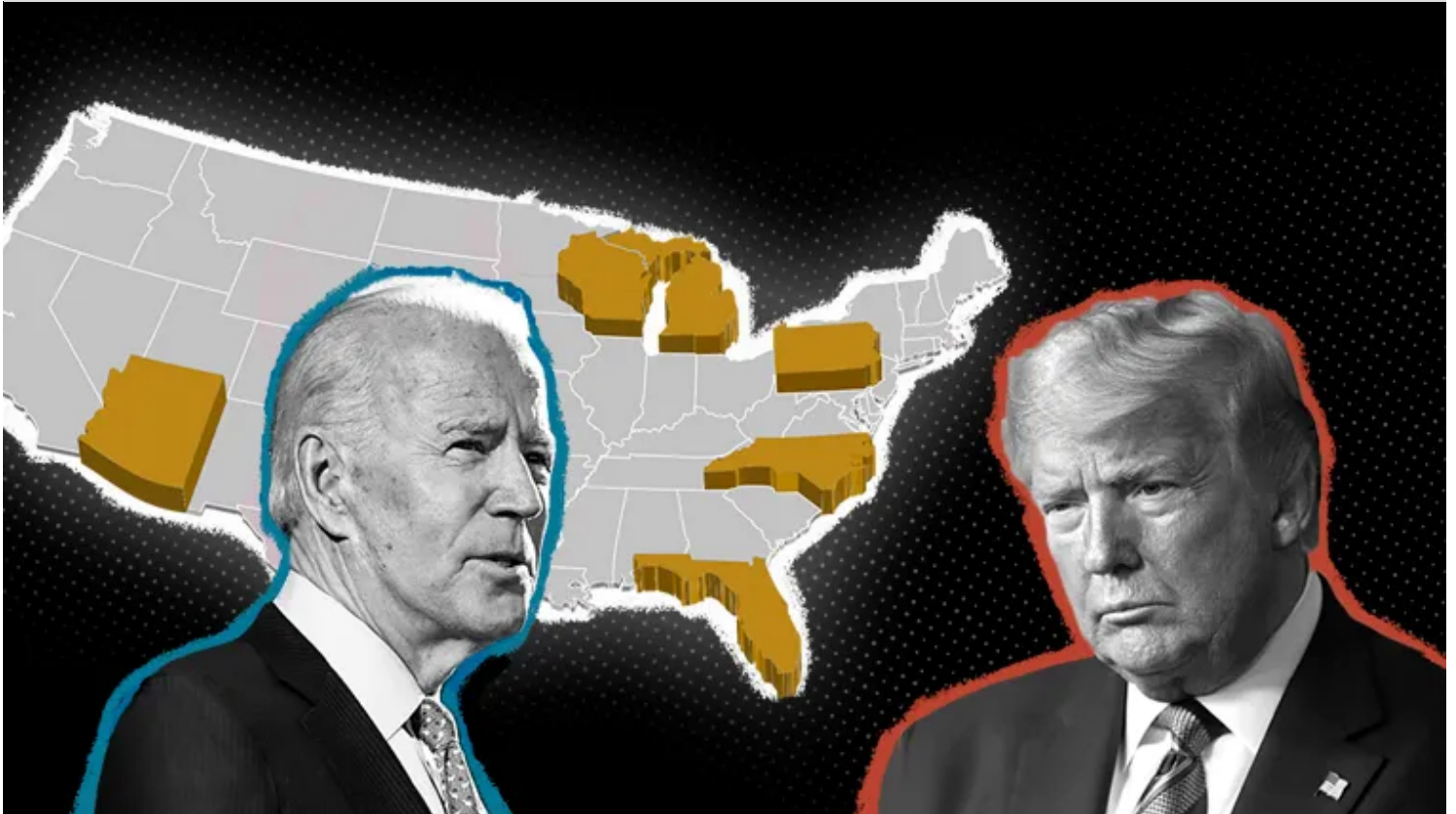




# **Election 2020: All eyes will be on these 6 states on Election Day. Here's what we know.**

Here's what we know about the state of the presidential race in the six battleground states expected to decide Tuesday's election.

**Craig Gilbert, USA TODAY**

Updated 9:41 a.m. PST Nov. 2, 2020



**Y**ou'll want to keep an eye on six states above all others in Tuesday's election — and possibly in the days afterward.

These states — the Great Lakes battlegrounds of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and the Sunbelt battlegrounds of Arizona, Florida and North Carolina — are more likely than any others to determine whether Republican Donald Trump or Democrat Joe Biden captures an Electoral College majority.

They account for every one of the 15 top markets in the presidential ad wars in the closing weeks of the campaign, according to the [Wesleyan Media Project](#). And they're where Trump and Biden have made the most recent visits in the run-up to Tuesday.

**RELATED:** [These 6 swing states are pivotal in the White House race. But what are the keys to winning each state?](#)



If this contest is as close as 2016 was, when fewer than 80,000 votes in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania decided the presidency, expect these states to again provide most of the suspense.

Early voting amid the pandemic has exploded in most of these states. Florida and North Carolina have passed 90% of their 2016 turnout, while Arizona has passed 80%, Wisconsin has passed 60% and Michigan has passed 50%, according to the U.S. Elections Project.

TV spending is off the charts, with \$1.5 billion in presidential ad spending since April by candidates and groups, according to Wesleyan. Trump has outspent Biden on digital advertising, and Biden has outspent Trump on television.

Biden enjoyed a significant spending edge on TV in October. And he's had an average lead in the national polls of 8 or 9 points.

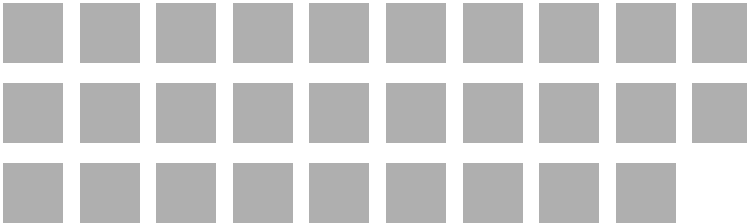
Still, his lead in some key battlegrounds has been much smaller.

state) to Georgia, Minnesota, Iowa and maybe even Texas.

But attention will be on these six states first and foremost Tuesday night.

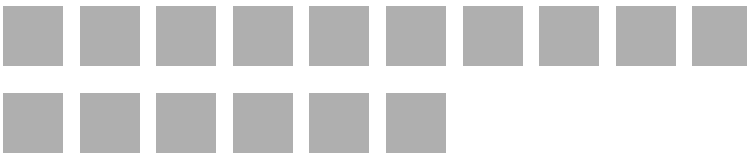
**29**

Florida



**16**

Michigan



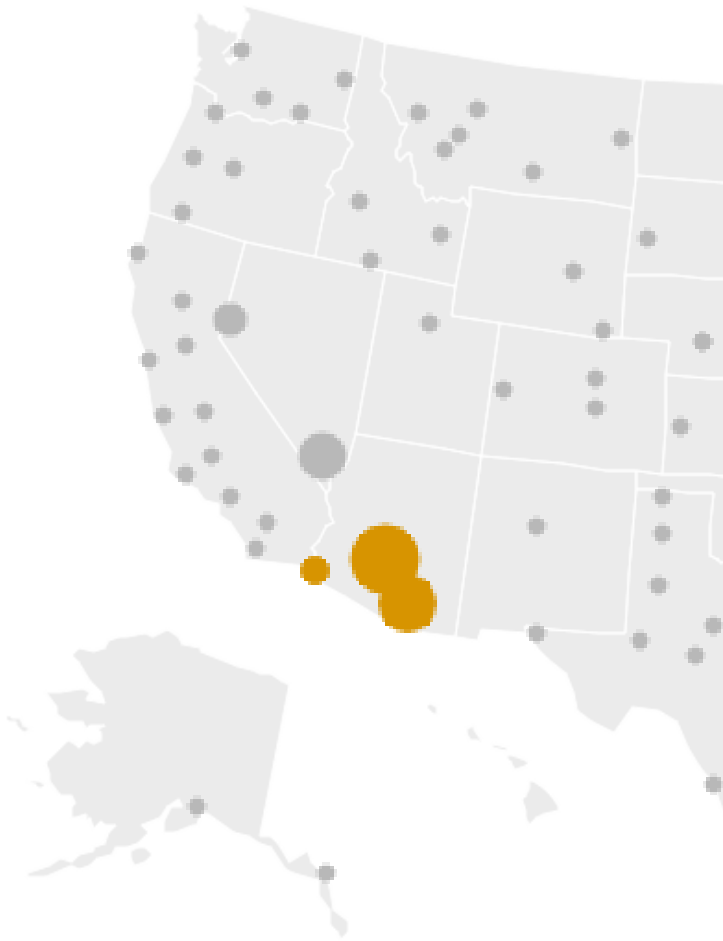
**11**

Arizona



**The six battlegrounds account for 18 of the top 20 markets for ads**

Total airings from October 12 to 25:

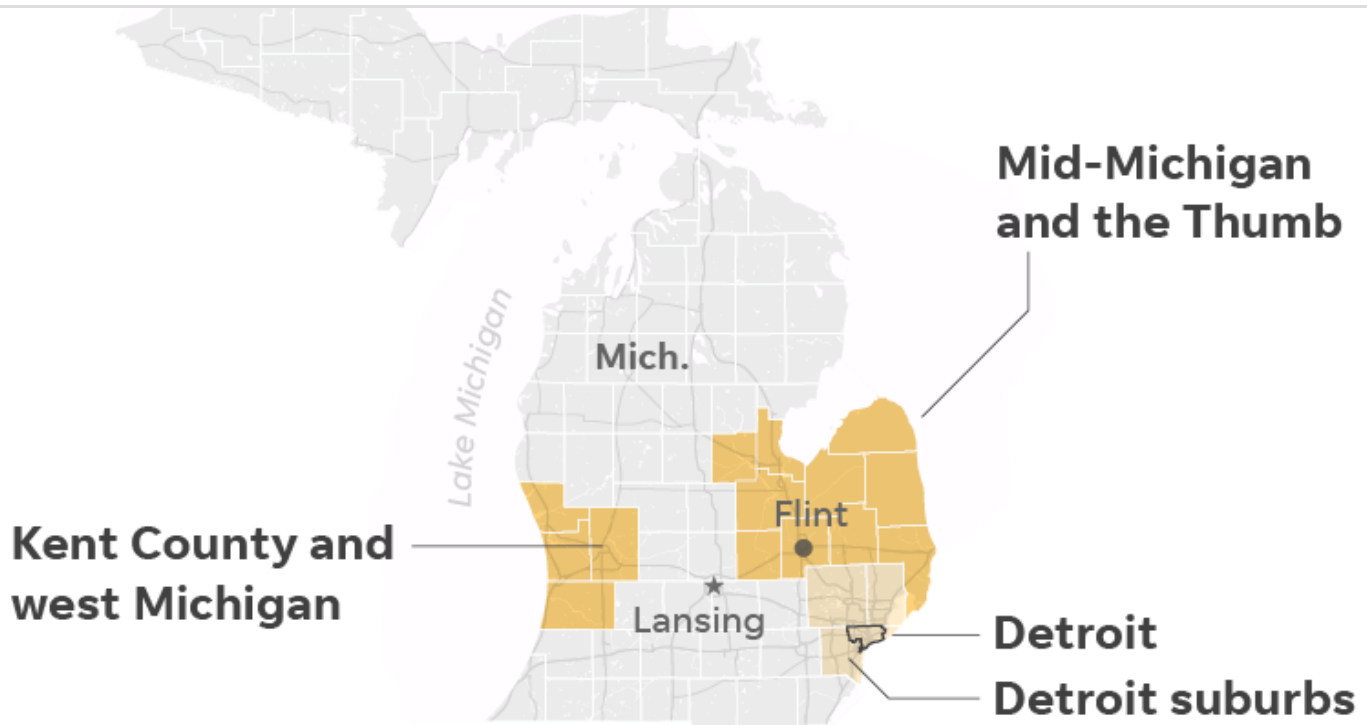


National cable: **4,189** N

SOURCE Wesleyan Media Project

## Michigan

**Key battlegrounds:**



Of all the battleground states that flipped from blue to red four years ago, Michigan still appears most likely to swing back to supporting the Democratic nominee.

Recent polls have brought Biden's average lead down to about 6.5-percentage points, but that's still larger than the apparent edge Hillary Clinton had headed into the election four years ago. The latest Detroit Free Press poll had Biden ahead of Trump 48%-41% going into the final weekend. Four years ago, Trump won Michigan by 10,704 votes — or about two-tenths of 1% of the vote.

and on Friday, in Oakland County outside Detroit. If he can cut into Biden's apparent edge in the suburbs, it could make a difference. Trump also planned three more trips in the final days of the campaign, including a Monday night rally in Grand Rapids, where he finished his successful 2016 campaign.

**RELATED:** [Biden needs to win Michigan to beat Trump. These regions are key to a 2020 election victory](#)

Biden, meanwhile, hasn't been taking the state for granted either, with stops in Grand Rapids, Southfield (in Oakland County) and Detroit. On Saturday, he went to Flint and returned to Detroit with his old boss, former President Barack Obama, to campaign. They urged voters who hadn't yet cast their absentee ballots to do so in person at drop off locations or at the polls.

Democrats also have been blitzing the state with TV ads, with some 18,100 spots running in Michigan's media markets between Oct. 12-25, [according to the Wesleyan Media Project](#), an effort at Wesleyan University in Connecticut to track campaign spending. That compares to about 5,700 pro-Trump/anti-Biden spots during the same period. Together, the campaigns and their allies have spent nearly \$18.6 million on ads during the period, with more being spent only in Florida and Pennsylvania.

No one is certain how election night will go, with more than 2.6 million absentee ballots having been returned, an unprecedented number. The Michigan Secretary of State's Office has been working with local clerks to try to help them get ready to process such a huge number but has warned it could be days before a final tally is known.

Unless another court intervenes, clerks need to receive absentee ballots by 8 p.m. on Election Day. However, a court overturned an earlier ruling giving

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— *Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press*

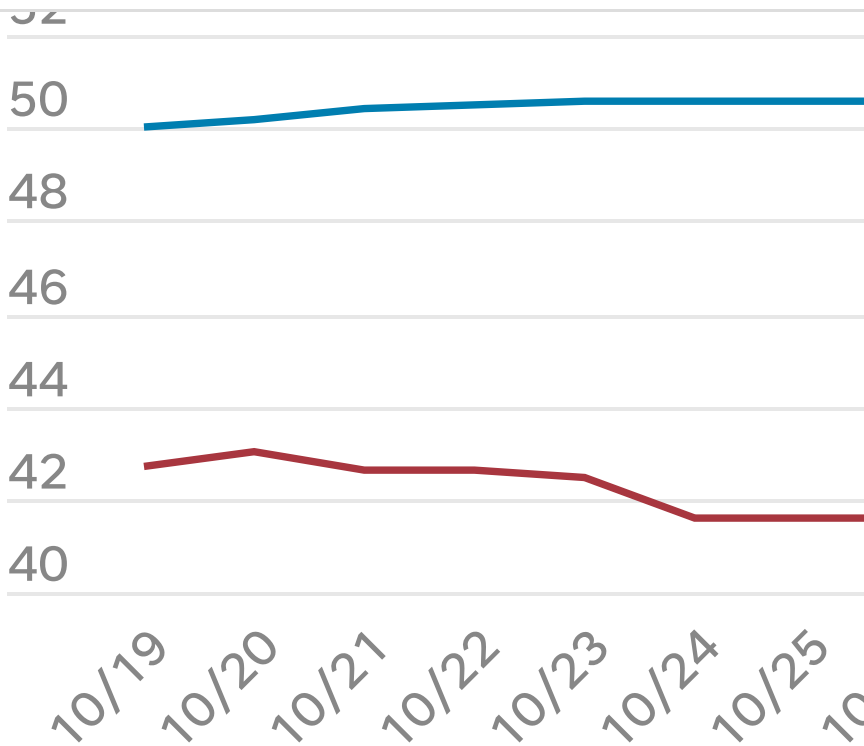
## **Real Clear Politics polling average**

Biden

Trump

As of Nov. 1

**14-day change in polling average**



SOURCE Real Clear Politics poll average

### Current status

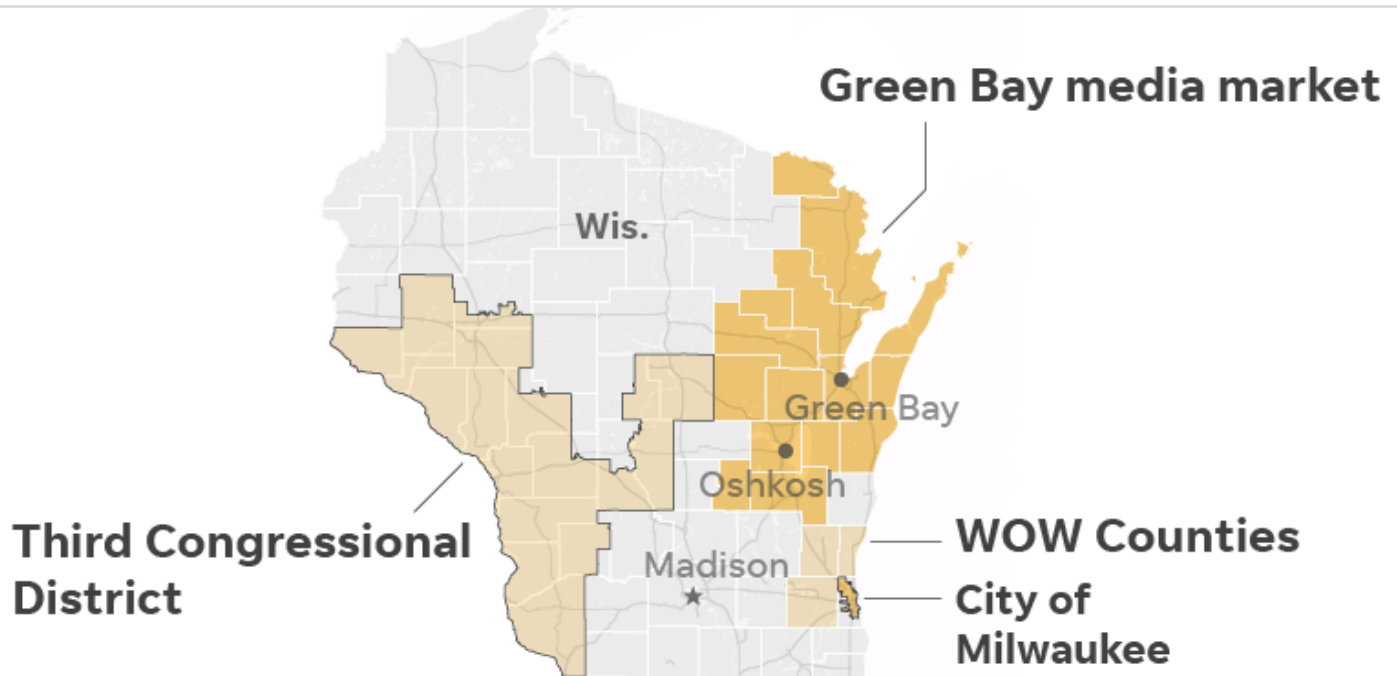
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Report

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Crysta

**Lean Democratic**

**Lean Dem**

**Wisconsin**



In a furious effort to hold on to a state he barely won four years ago, Trump visited Wisconsin five times in October amid a surging coronavirus caseload, touching down in southern Wisconsin, the Republican suburbs of Milwaukee, swingy western Wisconsin, the historic battleground of Green Bay and the city of Kenosha.

Biden made his only October visit to the state on Friday, but has easily outspent Trump on TV advertising in the closing weeks. And he's led consistently in the polling.

The state's leading poll, by the Marquette Law School, has had six surveys since May. Remarkably, there has been virtually no change despite the crises of 2020 — with Wisconsin at the epicenter of the pandemic and protests. Biden had led every time by 4 to 6 points. His lead is larger in some other polls.

**RELATED:** [Trump and Biden need to win Wisconsin. The swing state could be 2020 election 'tipping point'](#)

ranked football team, the University of Wisconsin Badgers, had to cancel its Oct. 31 game against Nebraska when multiple players and the coach tested positive.

This high-turnout state has cast around 1.9 million votes ahead of election day — more than 60% of its 2016 vote. Polls have shown Biden leading easily among those who've already voted, but Trump has a large edge among those who plan to vote on Election Day.

Like other battlegrounds, Wisconsin will be a test of Democratic turnout in the cities, Trump's remarkable strength in small towns and rural counties, and the president's political vulnerabilities with suburban voters.

Because state law doesn't permit local clerks to process absentee ballots before Election Day, the tally is expected to linger into Wednesday, especially in the state's biggest city, Milwaukee. The majority of Milwaukee's votes will be absentee, and they are counted separately from the election-day vote. The final tally may not come in until the early hours of Wednesday.

— *Craig Gilbert, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

## **Real Clear Politics polling average**

Biden

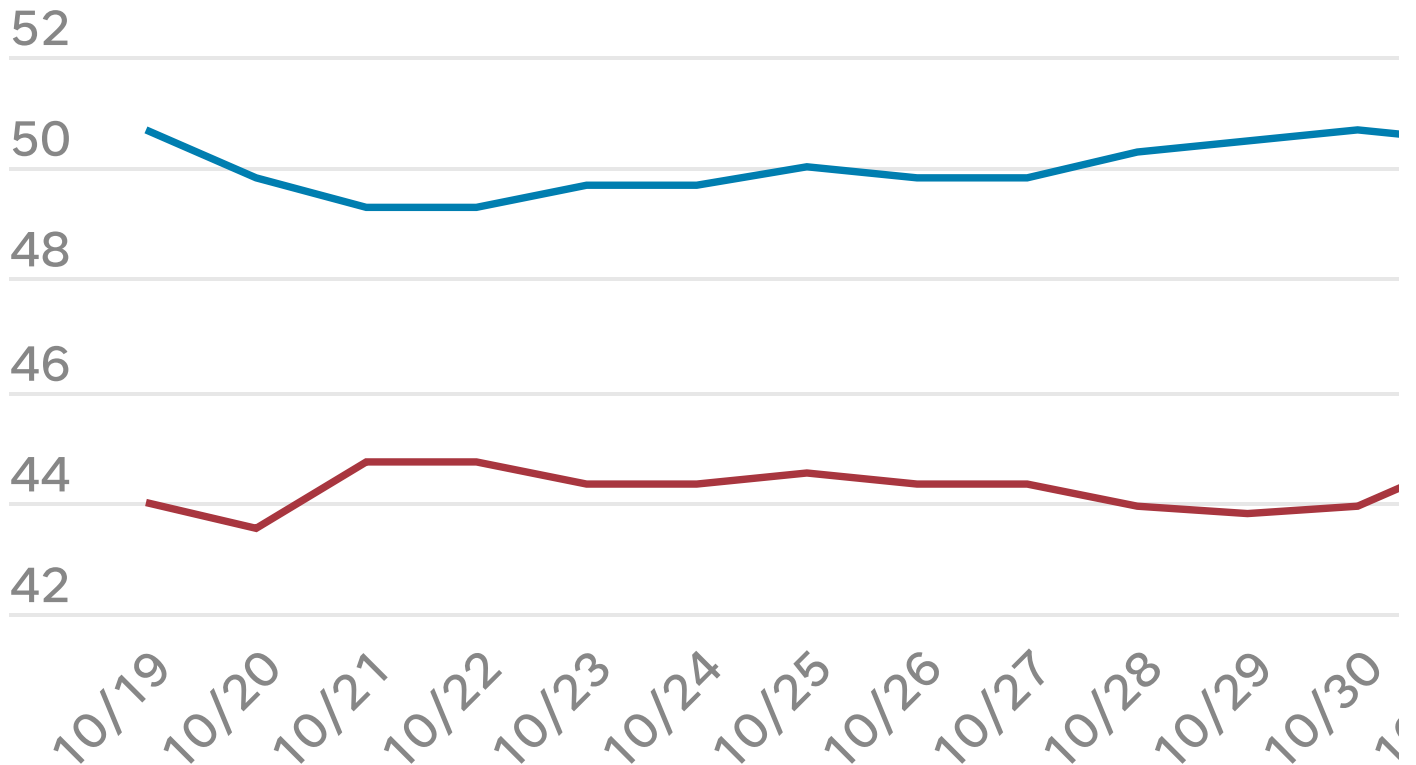
Trump

As of Nov. 1



Biden

Trump



SOURCE Real Clear Politics poll average

### Current status

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Report

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Insider  
Elect

**Lean Democratic**

**Lean Democratic**

**Lean Democratic**

**Pennsylvania**



If the race for Pennsylvania's 20 electoral votes were any hotter, it could melt steel.

In recent weeks, Trump and Biden have been ratcheting up their attempts to capture the Keystone State, which Trump won by just 44,300 votes in 2016.

Biden held a town hall in Philadelphia and visited Erie and Lancaster, and his campaign announced Friday that he, his wife Jill, running mate Sen. Kamala Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff will barnstorm Pennsylvania on Monday and "fan out across all four corners of the state."

Meanwhile, Trump has become a weekly presence in the state, sometimes attending two or more rallies in a day. As of Thursday, Trump or his surrogates had visited Pennsylvania 10 times.

In Biden's visits, he has hammered Trump for his response to the COVID-19 pandemic in a state that has seen nearly 8,800 deaths and more than 200,000 people infected.

Trump has played on voters' fears by warning them that Biden will wreck the economy with socialist and anti-fossil fuel policies and allow crime to increase.

The law-and-order attacks on Biden have only heightened around Philadelphia, where protests broke out after police there shot and killed a Black man on Oct. 26 who was suffering from a mental illness and was armed with a knife.

About 3.1 million Pennsylvania voters requested mail-in or absentee ballots for the general election, and 2.1 million ballots had been returned by Oct. 29, according to [ElectProject.org](#). Those included 1.4 million from Democrats, 467,000 from Republicans and 202,700 from unaffiliated voters.

In the past week, it's been reported that several counties — many smaller with limited resources — will not begin counting mail-in ballots until Wednesday morning. Coupled with Pennsylvania allowing mail-in ballots to be counted if they are postmarked by Tuesday and returned by Nov. 6, the results in the battleground state might not be known until a week or more after the election.

Two recent polls showed Biden maintaining his lead over Trump in Pennsylvania, where the Democratic challenger and Scranton native has enjoyed a consistent but fluctuating advantage.

The Franklin & Ma  
while a Quinnipiac  
RealClearPolitics.c  
points as of Friday.

mp 50% to 44%,  
.   
ania polling at 3.6

Television money from and for both candidates continues to flow in Pennsylvania, with six markets in the state — Philadelphia, Pittsburgh Johnstown, Erie, Harrisburg and Wilkes-Barre — in the top 25 for ad spending since Oct. 12, according to the [Wesleyan Media Project](#).

— *J.D. Prose, USA TODAY Network - PA State Capitol Bureau*

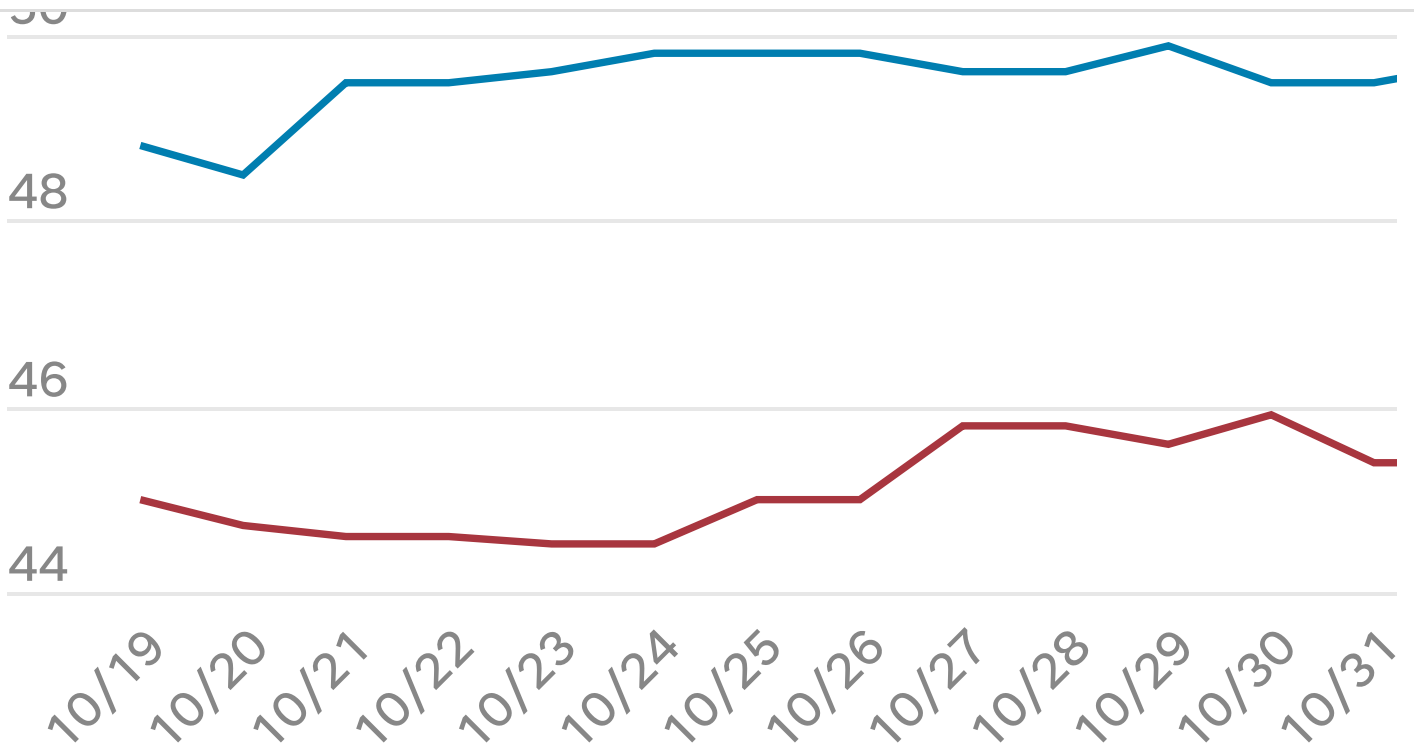
## Real Clear Politics polling average

Biden

Trump

As of Nov. 2

## 14-day change in polling average



SOURCE Real Clear Politics poll average

### Current status

Cook Political  
Report

**Lean Democratic**

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Crystal Ball

**Lean Democratic**

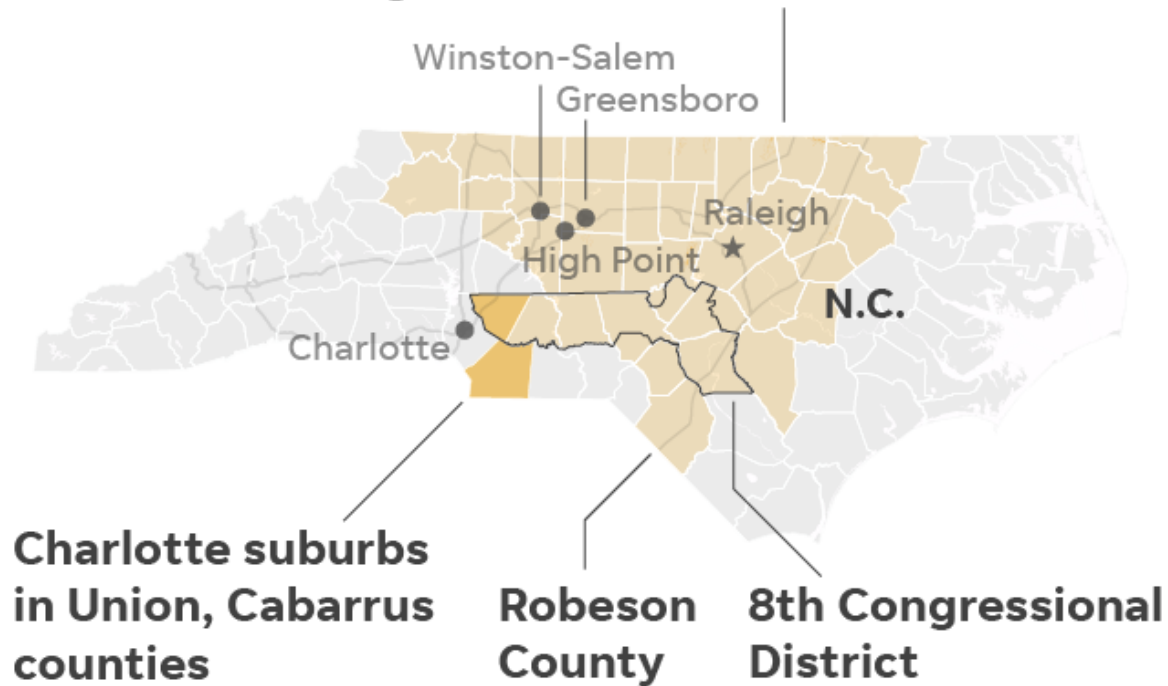
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**Lean Der**

**North Carolina**



## Triangle and Triad media markets



Biden has so many blue state Electoral College votes behind him that political scientists say he can afford to lose North Carolina, but Trump's path to victory will be extremely difficult without the Tar Heel state.

Not that Biden is ignoring North Carolina — far from it.

With surveys as of Friday night showing Biden just barely ahead among North Carolina's likely voters — and with its 15 Electoral College votes on the line — both camps have flooded the zone with campaign events and advertising. Trump has visited so frequently that one man joked that the president should start paying property taxes.

Harris made two stops Sunday in smaller cities. Trump rallied in North Carolina the same day and has another stop planned Monday — his third and fourth visits to North Carolina in nine days (although one of the four stops, to

**RELATED:** [Trump needs North Carolina in 2020 election, but the swing state is a toss-up](#)

Ad spending analysis by the [Wesleyan Media Project](#) says television ad spending promoting Biden and Trump totaled more than \$68 million in five of North Carolina's television markets from April 9 through Oct. 25. (The total does not include western North Carolina because that area is part of a television market based in South Carolina.)

A signal of how close the race could be: [Both candidates in October reached out to a relatively small group of voters: The Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina.](#)

There are fewer than 27,000 Native American voters in Robeson County, or about 0.36% of the state's 7.35 million registered voters. The number looks insignificant until it's compared with Democrat Barack Obama's 14,177-vote margin of victory in North Carolina in 2008.

Early voting ended Saturday in North Carolina. As of Sunday afternoon, 4.54 million North Carolinians have already cast their ballots via early voting and mail-in ballot. This is nearly 62% of registered voters — and 2020's pre-election vote total is nearly 96% of the total turnout in the 2016 general election.

A survey by Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape project estimates 78% of Biden's North Carolina voters are voting ahead of Election Day, while 59% of Trump voters are. The rest planned to vote on Election Day.

— *Paul Woolverton, senior North Carolina reporter*

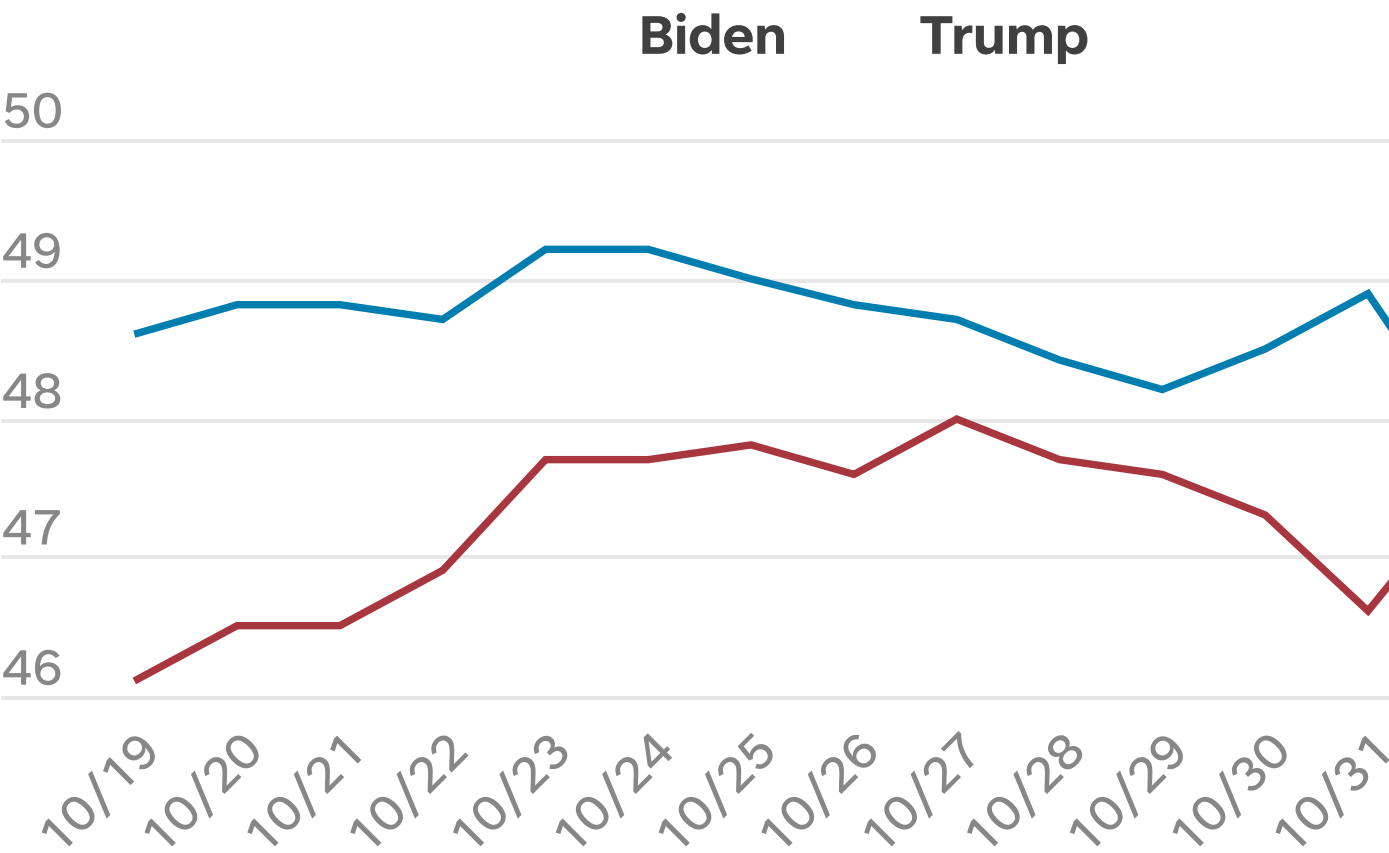
**Real Clear Politics polling average**

Trump

Biden

As of Nov. 2

14-day change in polling average



SOURCE Real Clear Politics poll average

Current status



Report

Crystal Ball

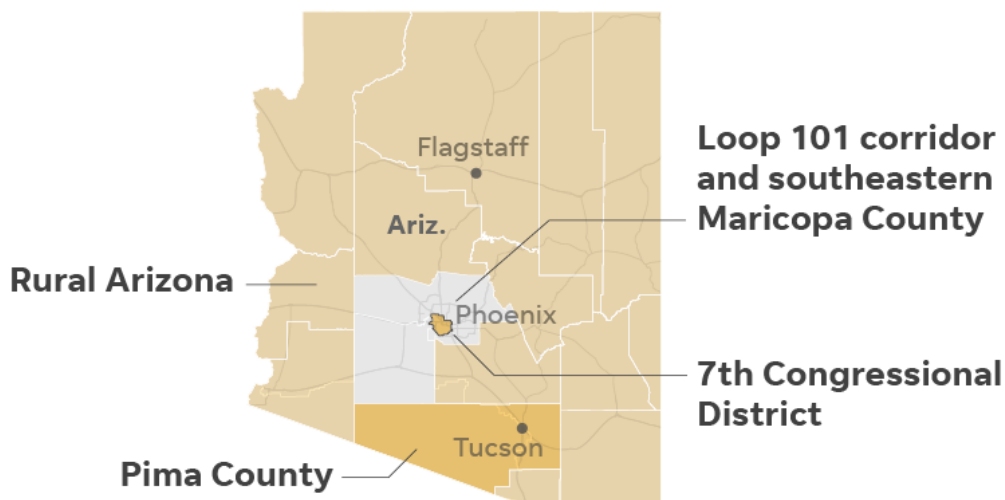
Toss-up

Toss-up

Lean Dem

## Arizona

### Key battlegrounds:



Arizona entered October leaning slightly to Biden, and he heads into Election Day with small polling lead.

The usually Republican-leaning state has likely set a record for visits by major-party candidates, with 16 this year. In October alone, all four members of the tickets visited a combined seven times.

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According to FiveThirtyEight's polling averages, Biden had a 3.9 percentage point lead in Arizona on Oct. 1. On Friday, it was 3 points. Real Clear Politics showed Biden leading in its polling average by 3 points at the start of the month, and the race was tied on Friday.

**RELATED:** [Arizona was once a sure bet for Republicans. Now it's a key swing state in the election](#)

The three leading nonpartisan political analysts rate the state as leaning to Biden, though registered Republicans are close to matching registered Democrats in the state's record-breaking early voting.

Phoenix has seen the most ads in the country boosting Trump's re-election campaign in the last two weeks of October, according to figures tracked by the Wesleyan Media Project. Phoenix is fourth on the list for pro-Biden ads in the same span.

More than 80% of Arizona's ballots will be cast early, and officials began tallying them days ago. Those results should be announced shortly after 10 p.m. EST on Tuesday.

Early ballots that are turned in on Election Day [could take days to count](#) because of the signature-verification process, meaning that if the state remains too close to call, the final vote could take days to come in.

It took six days before the winner of Arizona's 2018 U.S. Senate race was formally known.

— *Ronald J. Hansen, Arizona Republic*

**Real Clear Politics polling average**

DIDEN

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Trump

As of Nov. 2

**14-day change in polling average**

**Current status**



Report

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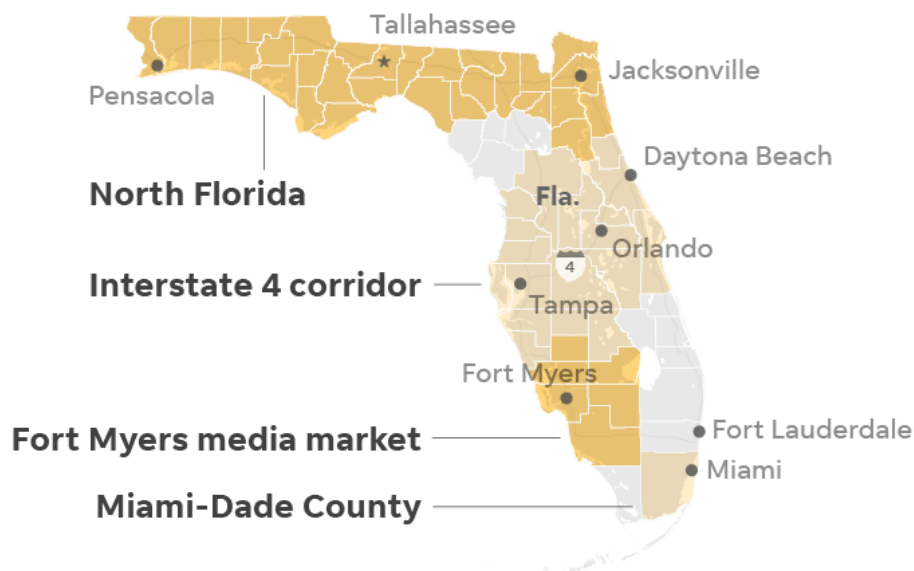
**Lean Democratic**

**Lean Democratic**

**Tilt Dem**

## Florida

### Key battlegrounds:



Florida, a toss-up heading into Election Day, is being closely watched because it could have final results Tuesday.

While other swing states could be counting mail votes for several days, Florida begins counting mail ballots weeks before the election, allowing it to report results earlier.

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show the president has a good chance of carrying the state.

Last week, the Real Clear Politics average of Florida polls briefly had Trump leading Biden for the first time since April. As of Sunday, Biden was up by 1.4 percentage points in the polling average, well within striking distance for Trump.

**RELATED:** [Florida is a swing state again. These battleground regions could decide the race.](#)

Trump and Biden have been campaigning regularly in the state in the closing stretch. The last 10 days of the race saw Trump cast his vote in Palm Beach, former Obama hold car rallies in Miami and Orlando, Biden travel to Tampa and Broward County and Trump return for a Tampa rally.

Florida is the largest swing state, with 29 Electoral College votes. It is a must-win for Trump, who has his permanent residence in Palm Beach. Biden could lose the state and still win, but he's hoping Florida delivers a knockout punch.

“Right here in Florida it's up to you, you hold the key,” Biden told the crowd in Broward County last week. “If Florida goes blue, it's over, it's over.”

Later in the day, Trump told the crowd in Tampa crowd that “we are going to win Florida and we are going to win four more years.”

— Zac Anderson, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

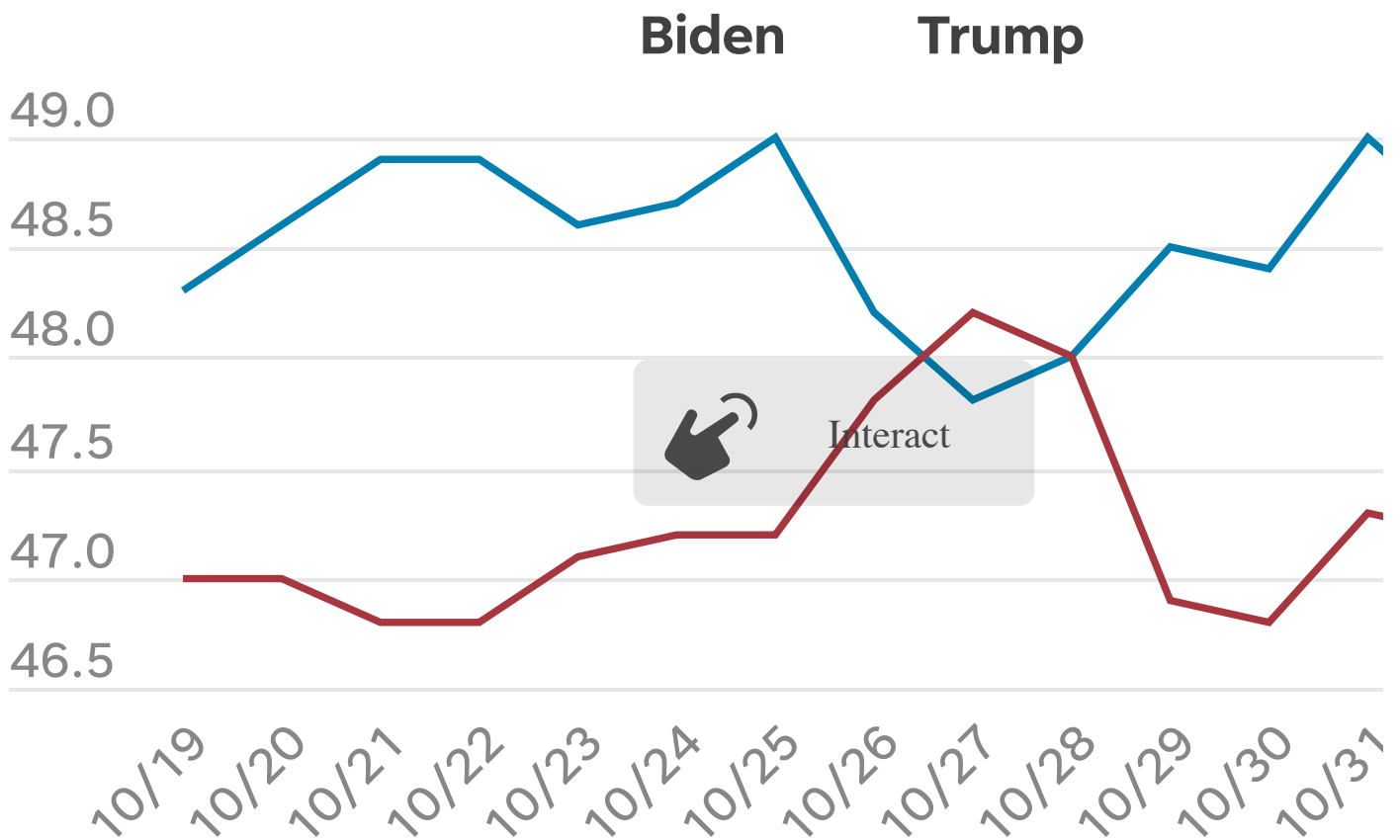
**Real Clear Politics polling average**

Biden

Trump

As of Nov. 2

14-day change in polling average



SOURCE Real Clear Politics poll average

Current status

Report

Crysta

**Toss-up**

**Tilt Democratic**

**Toss**



## **A look at polling in key battleground states ahead of the 2020 presidential election**

Battleground states are taking center stage ahead of the election. USA TODAY's States of America discusses polling in three key states.

STATES OF AMERICA, USA TODAY

Originally Published 4:53 a.m. PST Nov. 2, 2020

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