

ROAD TO '24

Election 2024: Backgrounder on Polling, Public Opinion Formation & Socialization

OLLI Fall 2024
Class #2

Wednesday, 25 September 2024




David McCuan, Professor & Graduate Coordinator
Sonoma State University
Department of Political Science
Email: david.mccuan@sonoma.edu



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Slides, for each week, are sent to [Grace Burroughs](mailto:Grace.Burroughs@sonoma.edu) for You All

Additional questions, comments, & concerns to:
david.mccuan@sonoma.edu



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Here's Our Plan for Each Week of the Course: We Take a Break, Halfway, Each Weekly Session

- ~~Today, 18 SEPT 2024:~~
 - What matters to watch over the next eight weeks?;
 - What to make of this close race?;
 - Where to get information?
- **Class #2, 25 SEPT 2024:**
 - Deep dive into polling and public opinion formation;
 - Focus on the “Culture Wars” in American politics
 - Guest Speaker, 10:05-10:45 over Zoom;
- Class #3, 02 OCT 2024:
 - VP Debate Wrap-up;
 - Down-ballot races & sub-national elections;
 - *Possible* guest over Zoom;
- Class #4, 09 OCT 2024:
 - Direct Legislation & voting in CA;
 - CA politics-focus;
 - Guest Speaker (In-person / Zoom);
- Class #5, 16 OCT 2024:
 - Consequences of the Three Presidencies Hypothesis;
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) discussion;
 - Mal-, mis-, and disinformation in elections;
 - Disinfo. Guest Speaker over Zoom;
- Class #6, 23 OCT 2024:
 - What to watch Election Week?
 - What to watch on Election NIGHT?;
 - What happens after the race?

3

The Plan This Day, Class #2

- Part I: Michael Yaki, former Commissioner, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, former SF County Supervisor and former Senior Advisor to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 10:05– 10:45 am; then a break.
- Part II: Introduction, Overview on WHAT MATTERS shaping 2024 elections; with emphasis this week on what to make of polling – especially given changing demographics as well as broader changes that affect races up *and* down the ballot?;
- Last week, we began to examine the conditions & expectations affecting the Politics of 2024 onwards to 2028 along with WHAT TO WATCH this year & moving forward?
- In Part II for TODAY: We begin with this question...
- Thinking about 2016, 2020, and onto to 2024, we can compare polling trends in the 2024 presidential election with those of previous races – correct.
- **HOWEVER** – much of the analysis (ours included!!) focuses on racial, gender, and age identity groups— yet will 2024 still be an election determined by how the working class decides to vote?



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For Class #2, We Draw Heavily From:

- Pew Public Opinion Polling Basics:
 - <https://www.pewresearch.org/course/public-opinion-polling-basics/>

and

- Washington Post (WaPo) Polling Averages Methodology:
 - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/2024/06/26/presidential-polling-averages-methodology/>

5

We Start Here Today...

- Our politics right now are defined by three things: **partisanship**, **polarization**, and **parity**;
- Most voters are partisans, and **partisanship** determines your political attitude more than anything else.
- You may change your mind(s) even on issues they care a lot about (like abortion), then change the party they identify with.
- This leads to **polarization**, where Democrats hate Republicans more than they ever did before, and Republicans hate Democrats more than they ever did before.
- And then you have **parity**, which is that the two parties are basically even in terms of identification – which makes it very hard to move voters.

6

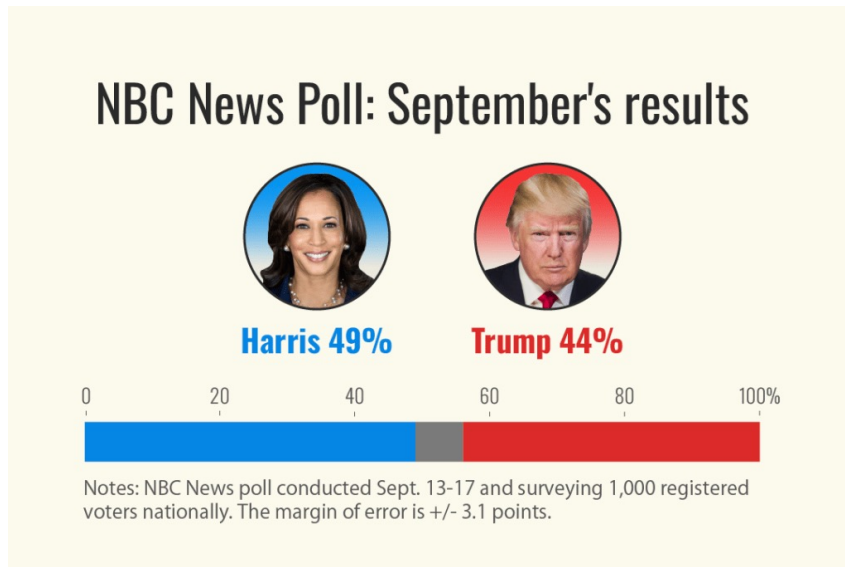
Polls, H2H (Harris vs. Trump): Problematic Measures So Far, Yet Also Fluidity in This Race

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98564875	65861111	48916498	11001018	98564875	17823156	56788832	32535466
56732149	87484647	68456343	64578956	56732149	73213321	13321672	89355644
0-932476	81261782	25354668	87776886	0-932476	67223154	23154312	57577658
98345656	31115673	93556476	65478516	98345656	31221453	21453201	61111874
00874768	21332167	58647869	55844551	00874768	20113156	18831565	84647812
55647016	22315431	68866874	61494643	55647016	54345874	43577458	61743122
89355647	22145321	84610478	45648964	89355647	98645789	74986457	14532131
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68748464	49864786	65478956	65478956	68748464	49864786	65478956	86421315
78126178	15673213	15673213	15673213	78126178	15673213	15673213	65434587
23156732	87484647	87484647	87484647	23156732	87484647	87484647	49886845
13321672	78916498	78916498	78916498	13321672	78916498	78916498	63432535
23154312	76886654	77688665	12617823	23154312	84563432	89649860	46689355
21453201	78516558	47851655	15673213	21453201	53546689	84563432	64765864
13156543	44551614	84455161	32110672	13156543	35564765	53546689	78696886
45874986	94643456	49464345	64564868	45874986	86111187	35564457	68748461
45789568	48916498	64896498	57875867	45789568	45789568	48464781	57765861
77768860	68456343	68456343	88944334	77768860	26178231	11187484	78231567
65478516	25354668	25354668	21010011	65478516	11567321	64781261	32133216
55844551	93556476	93556476	56456475	55844551	33216722	78231115	72213156
06149464	58647869	58647869	61249765	06149464	31543122	67321332	54345874
34564896	68866874	68866874	91093485	34564896	14532131	16727231	98645789
49860845	84610478	84647812	39201010	49860845	50006565	54312214	56877768
63432535	12617823	61782315	10048924	63432535	43458749	53213150	86654785

OVERLOAD

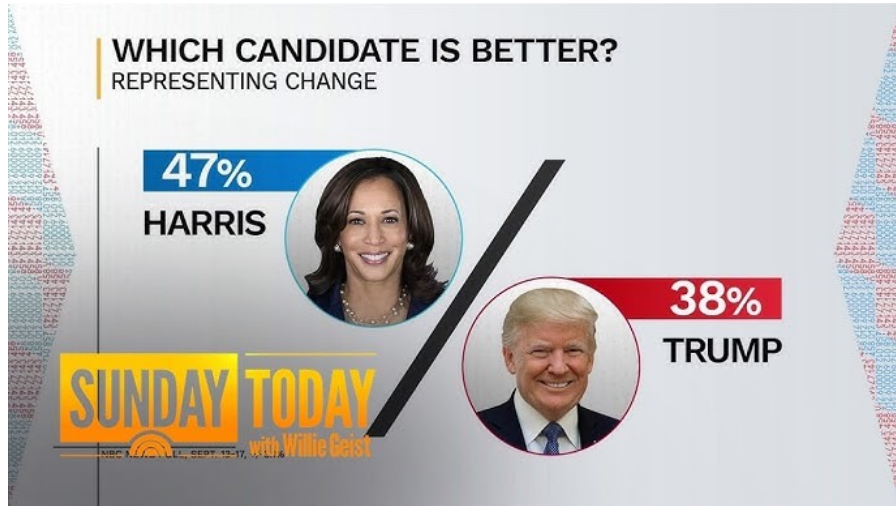
7

This Past Sunday (22 SEPT 2024), by *NBC News*



8

This Past Sunday (22 SEPT 2024), by NBC News

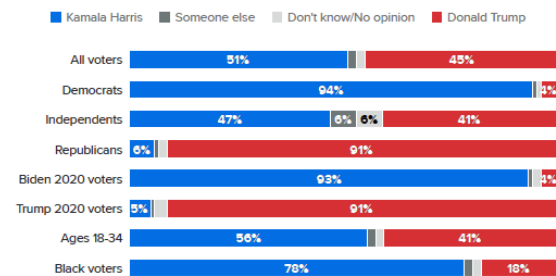


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Late Last Week, Poll by Morning Consult –

Tracking the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election

Harris posts record lead over Trump



MORNING CONSULT

Whom likely U.S. voters said they would vote for if the 2024 U.S. presidential election were held today

Latest surveys conducted Sept. 13-15, 2024, among 11,022 likely voters, with an unweighted margin of error of +/-1 percentage point. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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In Today's NYT – Wrong Again!

The New York Times
The Tilt
With Nate Cohn
POLITICS | SEPTEMBER 22, 2024






In the Electoral College, it doesn't matter if you win a state by one vote or a million. Adam Szulc and Nate Cohn for The New York Times

Republicans' Electoral College Edge, Once Seen as Ironclad, Looks to Be Fading

By Nate Cohn

A Shrinking Advantage

If polling trends hold, the Republican advantage in the Electoral College will be at its lowest level in a decade.

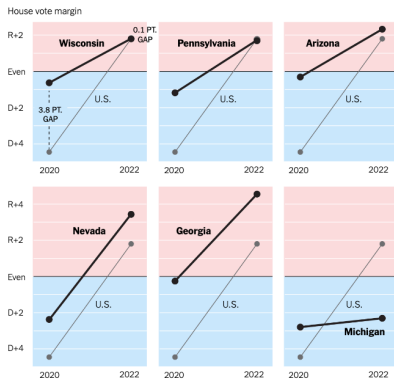
Election	National vote	'Tipping-point' state	Electoral College advantage
2016	D +2.1	R +0.8	 R +2.9
2020	D +4.5	D +0.6	 R +3.8
2024 (polls)	D +2.6	D +1.8	 R +0.7

Figures are rounded.

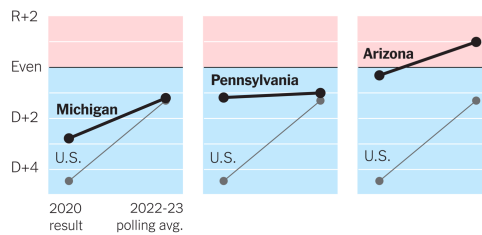
11

In 2020, DJT Had a Roughly +3 Pt. Advantage in the E.C.*

Battleground States Voted More Similarly to the U.S. in 2022 House Vote



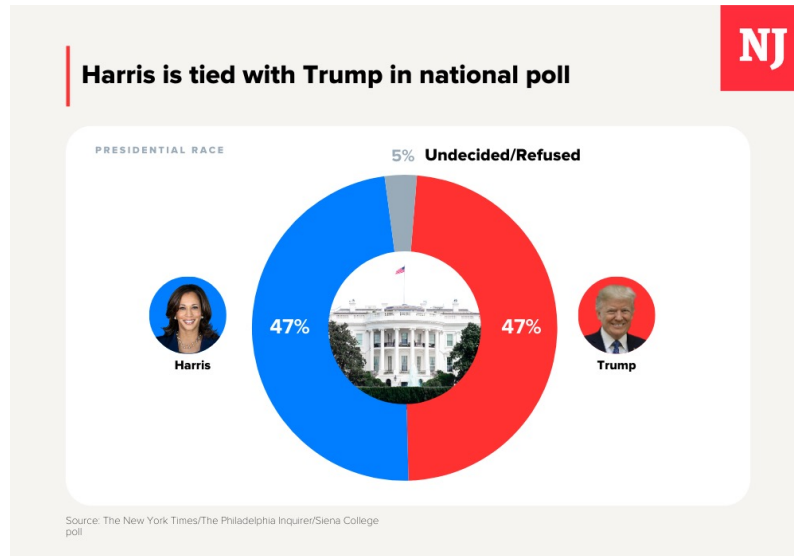
Presidential vote margin



Note: *Half this size in 2024 – WHY?

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Reported YESTERDAY (24 SEPT) at 1:30 pm!



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Here's Where Things Stand...

- **Kamala Harris** has moved the polls, but she has more work to do to win as this race is really quite close / fluid;
- In the first two months of her campaign, Harris has met or exceeded expectations, but she has to do more to pull ahead of Donald Trump in battleground states;
- **Harris** leads in **4 of the 7 battleground states** that are most likely to determine the outcome of the election.
- Why **Harris** isn't doing enough... **Trump's** support is under-reported + polling error (of techniques among *how* a poll is conducted; *who* is polled) = **Trump** support is slightly understated.

14

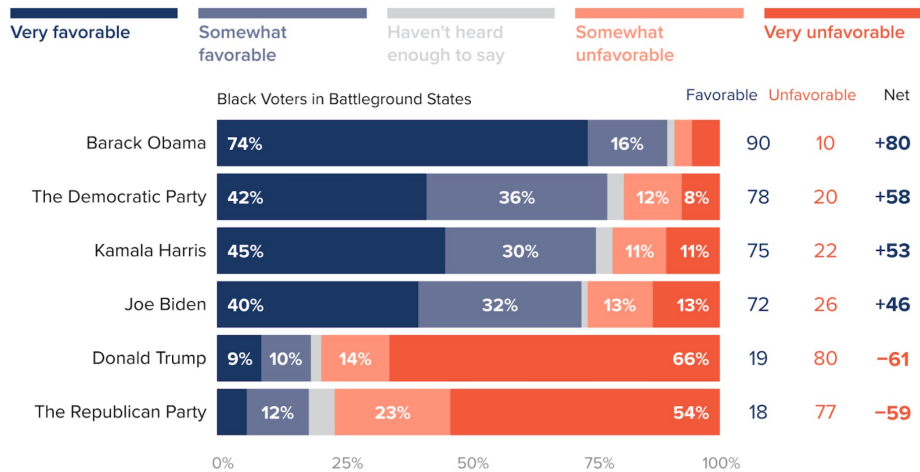
The 2020 Biden vs. Dem Numbers, 2012 - 2020

Race	2012	2016	2020	2016 to 2020
White	42%	41%	44%	+3%
Black	97%	93%	90%	-3%
Latino	70%	71%	63%	-8%
Asian	66%	68%	67%	-1%
Other	55%	53%	55%	+2%
White Non-College	40%	36%	37%	+1%
White College	46%	50%	54%	+4%

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Black Battleground Voters Have a More Favorable View of Harris Than Biden, Both Lag Behind Obama

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people or institutions?



July 12-14, 2024 survey of 1,011 Black or African American likely voters in AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, and WI

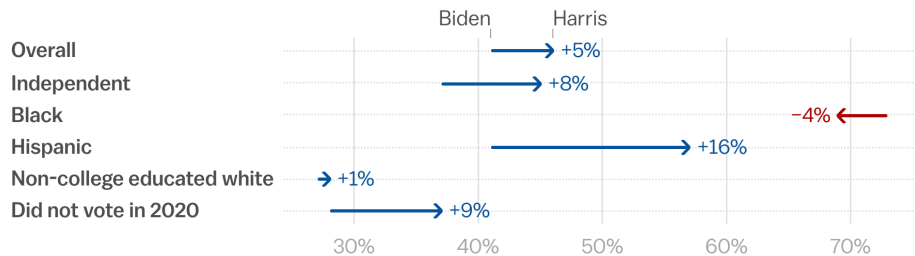
DATA FOR PROGRESS SPLIT TICKET

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Before + After the VP Entered the Race...

Harris appears to be gaining among key voters

Polls conducted before and after President Joe Biden dropped out suggest that Vice President Kamala Harris is more popular among voter groups who may play a decisive role in the election.



Based on polls of registered voters (including leaners) conducted July 22-24 and June 28-July 2, 2024.

Source: The New York Times/Siena College

Vox

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Late July 2024 Movement...

If the 2024 election were held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were:

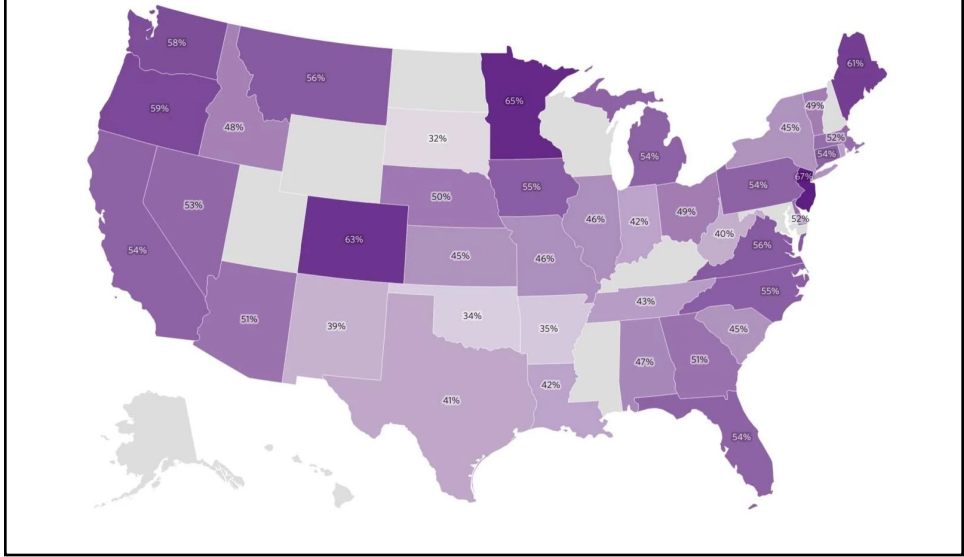


If the 2024 election were held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were:



18

What Matters From Biden 2020 to July 2024:
Half of Young People Voted in 2020, Major Increase From 2016



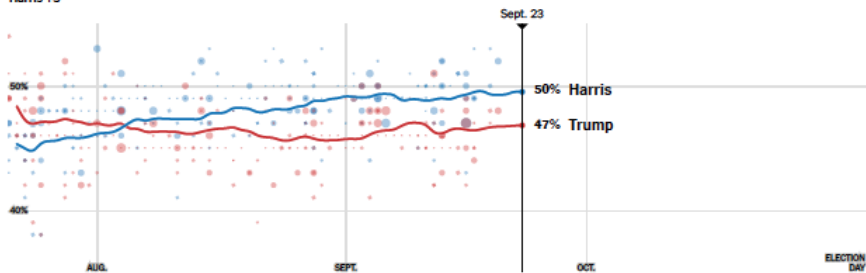
19

As of September 23rd 2024, Nationally vs. Swing States:

Harris holds the edge in three states, Trump leads in one, and the pair are practically tied in three states, according to the recent [New York Times/Siena College polling](#).

Who's leading the polls? ^o

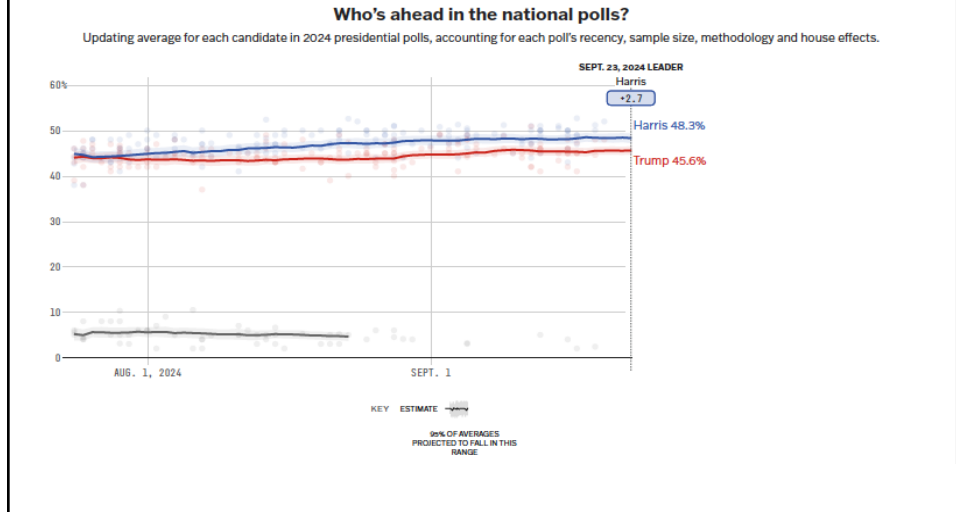
National polling average
 Harris +3



20

As of September 23rd 2024, National Polling Averages

VP Harris holds a national “averaged” lead over former President Trump, according to recent [538.com](https://www.538.com) national polling found [here](#).



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What to Make of All of This? Let's Revisit Polling Error as a Source of Concern

- Trump consistently outperforms his polling numbers – in 2016; in 2020; and
- There are concerns that polling is not fully capturing the level of support for the former President;
- Especially in Swing States – where the Democratic share of the two-party vote is notably higher in polling than at the polls.

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**Revisiting Polling Error, 2020 – 2024
Averaged RCP/538 “Swing State Pres. Polling
Averages**

State	Current averaged 538/RCP averages			Actual 2020 results			Dem '24 poll margin - 2020
	Harris	Trump	Dem margin	Biden	Trump	Dem margin	Biden margin
AZ	46.2%	47.3%	-1.2%	49.2%	48.9%	0.3%	-1.5%
GA	47.0%	47.4%	-0.4%	49.5%	49.2%	0.2%	-0.6%
MI	47.5%	46.0%	1.5%	50.6%	47.8%	2.8%	-1.3%
NV	46.8%	46.5%	0.3%	50.1%	47.7%	2.4%	-2.1%
NC	47.0%	47.0%	0.0%	48.6%	49.9%	-1.3%	1.3%
PA	47.0%	46.6%	0.4%	49.9%	48.7%	1.2%	-0.8%
WI	48.3%	46.1%	2.2%	49.5%	48.8%	0.6%	1.6%

*NOTE that 4 of 7 show avg. lead below 0.5% or tied. **WATCH WISCONSIN...**

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Polling Error, Actual Margin MINUS Poll Margin, 2020

State	2020 combined 538/RCP final poll average			Actual 2020 results			Dem actual margin - Dem poll margin
	Biden	Trump	Dem margin	Biden	Trump	Dem margin	
AZ	48.3%	46.6%	1.8%	49.2%	48.9%	0.3%	-1.5%
GA	47.9%	47.8%	0.1%	49.5%	49.2%	0.2%	0.1%
MI	50.6%	44.5%	6.1%	50.6%	47.8%	2.8%	-3.3%
NV	49.2%	45.4%	3.9%	50.1%	47.7%	2.4%	-1.5%
NC	48.3%	47.5%	0.8%	48.6%	49.9%	-1.3%	-2.1%
PA	49.5%	46.6%	2.9%	49.9%	48.7%	1.2%	-1.7%
WI	51.6%	44.0%	7.6%	49.5%	48.8%	0.6%	-7.0%

In the far-right column on this table, a negative number means that the actual margin was more **Republican** than the margin in the final polling average, and a positive number means that the final result was more **Democratic** than the final polling average.

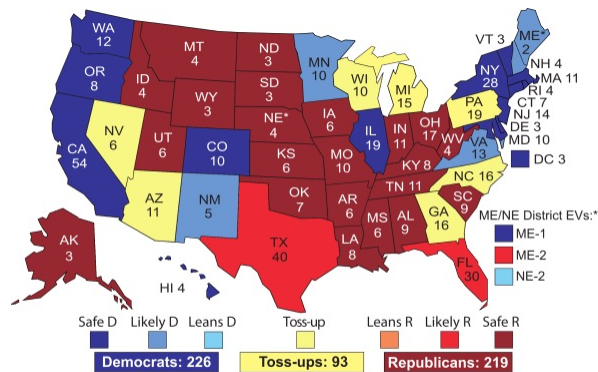
24

Polling Error & Final Margins, 2016 – 2024

- Polling averages actually performed very well in some swing states.
- For instance, the polling averages in both Arizona and Georgia in both years were impressively close to the final results.
- Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin stand out for having polls that were too Democratic-leaning compared to the final result in each year:
 - This was particularly true in Wisconsin, which had an error of 7 points in both 2016 and 2020.
 - Wisconsin polling produced some exceedingly big misses from prominent pollsters: [New York Times/Siena College](#) had Biden up 11 points in its final 2020 Wisconsin survey, and [ABC News/Washington Post](#) had Biden up a staggering 17 points.
- Democratic performance was also overstated by a couple of points or more in North Carolina in both 2016 and 2020 as well.
- Nevada overstated Trump in 2016 and then Biden in 2020.

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Polling Error as a Driver of Conclusions: 20 AUG EC Map



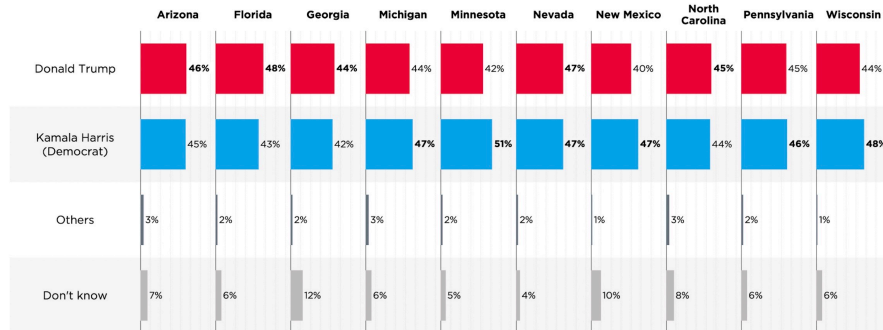
*Two states, Maine and Nebraska, award electoral votes by congressional districts (all others are awarded winner-take-all statewide). Nebraska's two statewide electoral votes, and two of its three districts, are rated Safe Republican. Maine's statewide votes are rated Likely Democratic. The ratings for Maine's two districts, and Nebraska's one competitive district, are listed separately.
 © 2024 Center for Politics at UVA

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So – How Would YOU Interpret This Slide??

2024 Presidential Election Voting Intention, *Swing States*

If the candidates for the Presidential Election on November 5, 2024 are as follows, for whom will you vote?



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Part II: The Setting for the MAIN Point

- How has American Politics changed since the mid- to late-1960s?
- What pressures on the Public Space, the Public Square are created as a result?
- What to make of the “Law of Unintended Consequences” as a result of these changes?

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Think BROADLY...What's Changed?

- Technology;
- Complexity;
- “Speed of Access” & “Demands;”
- Anti-government era;
- Populism? An “Anti-Politics” Era?:
- Characterize the “Trump Era” of the last 4-6 years?
- Characterize the common “Political Earthquakes” pattern of California Politics – Prop. 13; Term Limits; Gray Davis & Arnold in 2003; Newsom vs. the GOP in 2021;
- How have POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, ACTORS, & PROCESSES changed?

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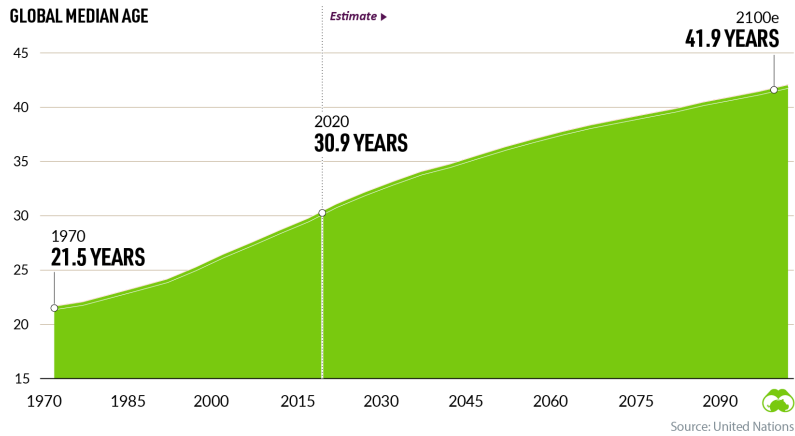
Six Trends Shaping the Future – The Landscape of Rapid Change in *The New Roaring 20s*

- Get ready for a rollercoaster of a decade, marked by dramatic economic, social, and political upheaval;
- Seven Trends:
 - Aging Trend;
 - Urban – Rural Divide & Rise of the Megacities;
 - A Globalized Middle Class;
 - Rising Inequality Gap;
 - Rising Environmental Pressures;
 - Political Pressures & Release “Valves;”
 - Changes in Conflict, How We Do “War;”



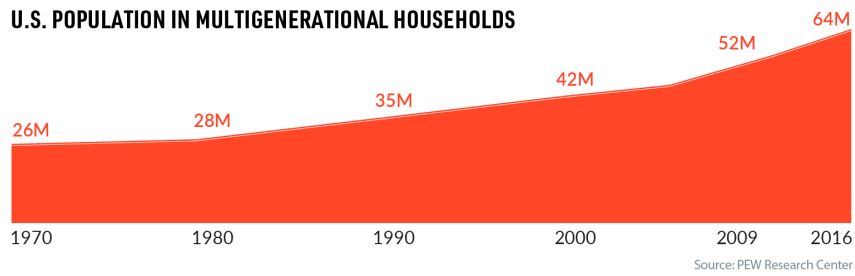
30

Trends Shaping the Future – 1. The Aging Trend



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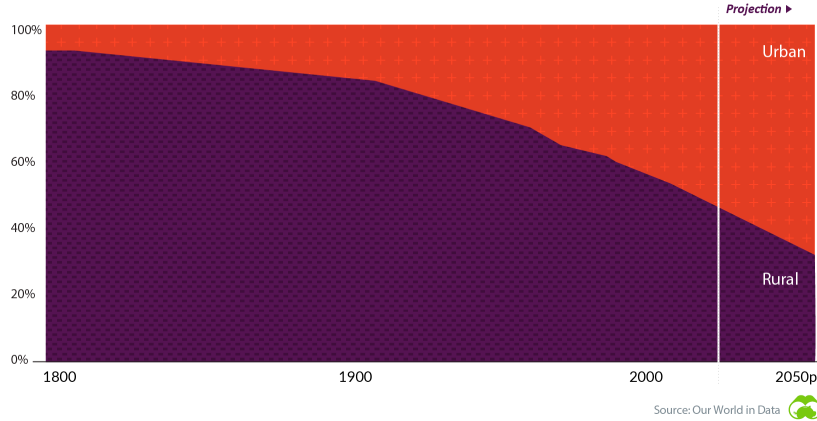
Trends Shaping the Future – The Aging Trend



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Trends Shaping the Future – 2. The Urban Divide

GLOBAL URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

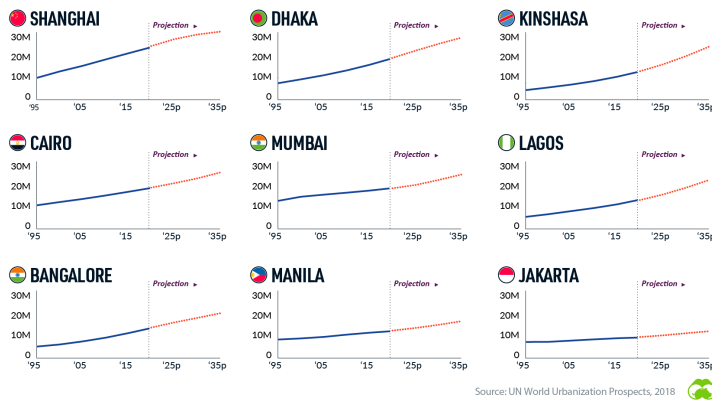


33

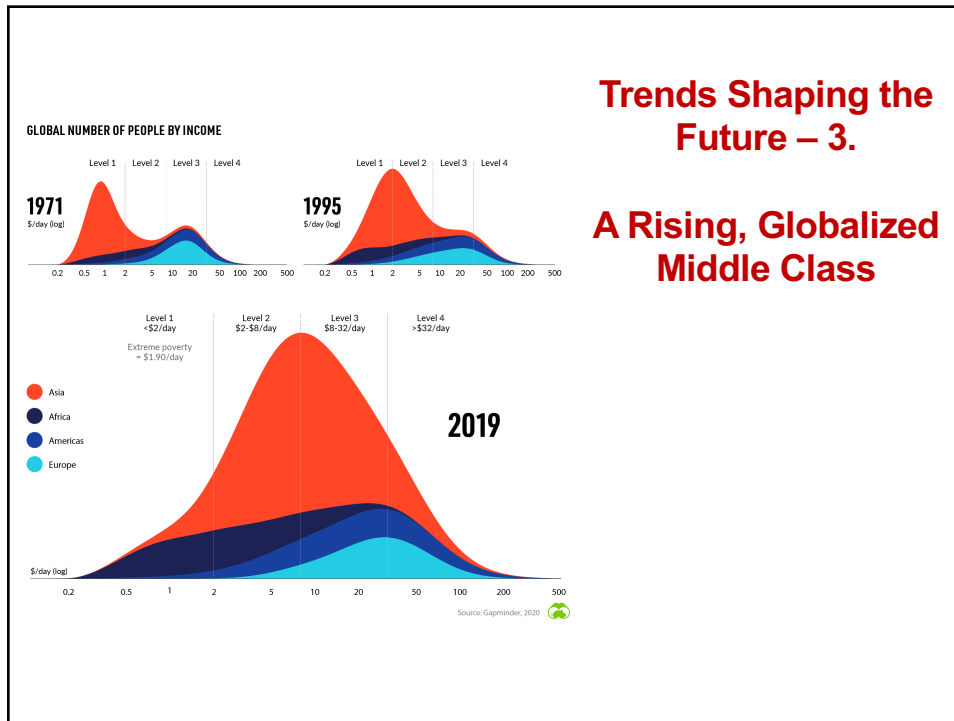
Trends Shaping the Future – Megacities, Megapolis

URBAN GROWTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES 1995-2035P

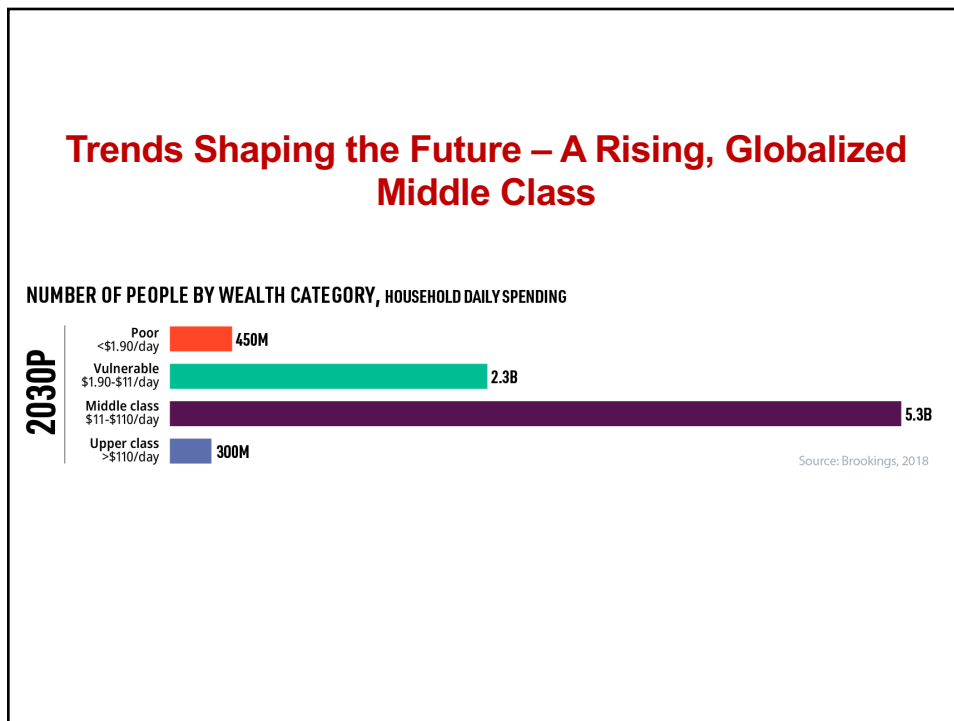
Cities in developing countries are on a robust growth trajectory.



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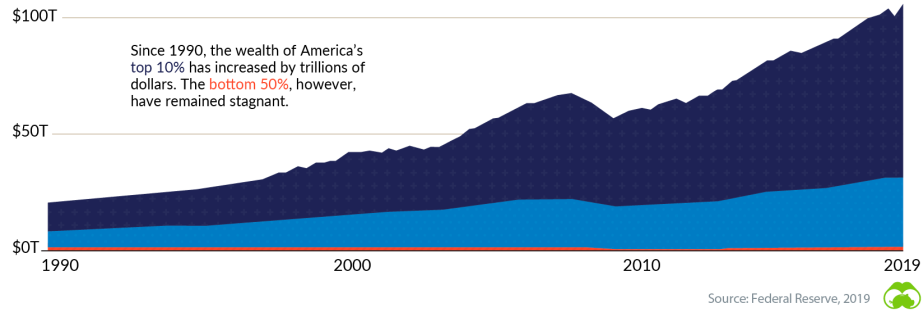


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Trends Shaping the Future – 4. Rising Inequality Gap

SHARE OF TOTAL WEALTH BY WEALTH GROUP

● Bottom 50% ● 50% - 90% ● Top 10%

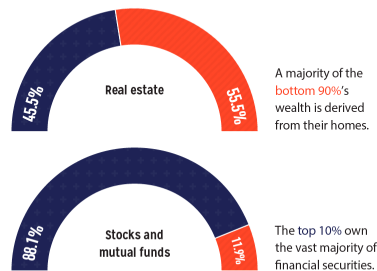


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Trends Shaping the Future – Rising Inequality Gap

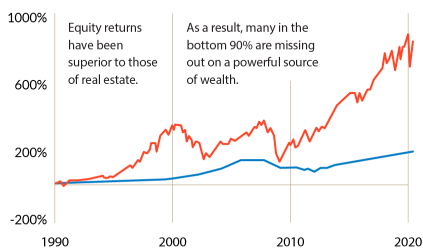
SHARE OF U.S. ASSETS OWNED

Percentage share of total ● Top 10% ● Bottom 90%



HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE: EQUITIES VS. REAL ESTATE

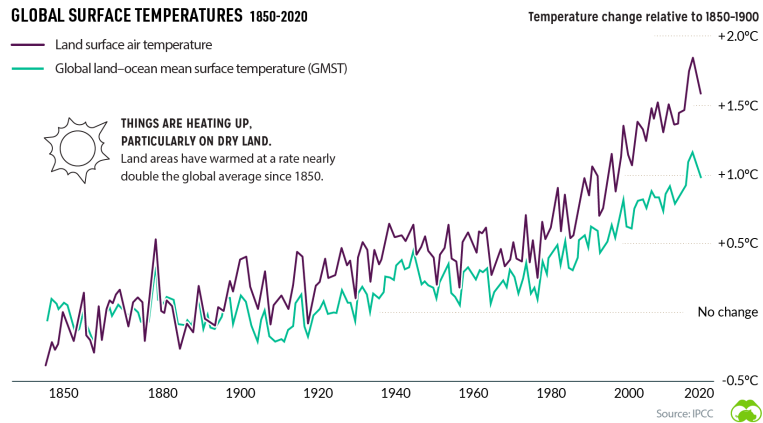
— S&P/Case-Shiller U.S. National Home Price Index — S&P 500



Source: Federal Reserve, Yahoo Finance

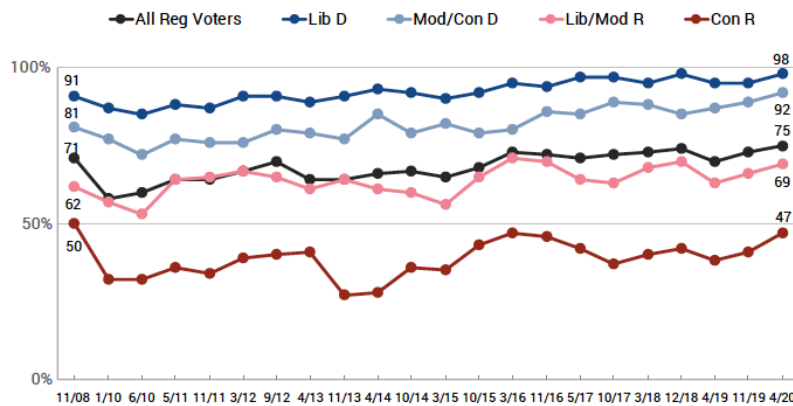
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Trends Shaping the Future – 5. Rising Environmental Pressures



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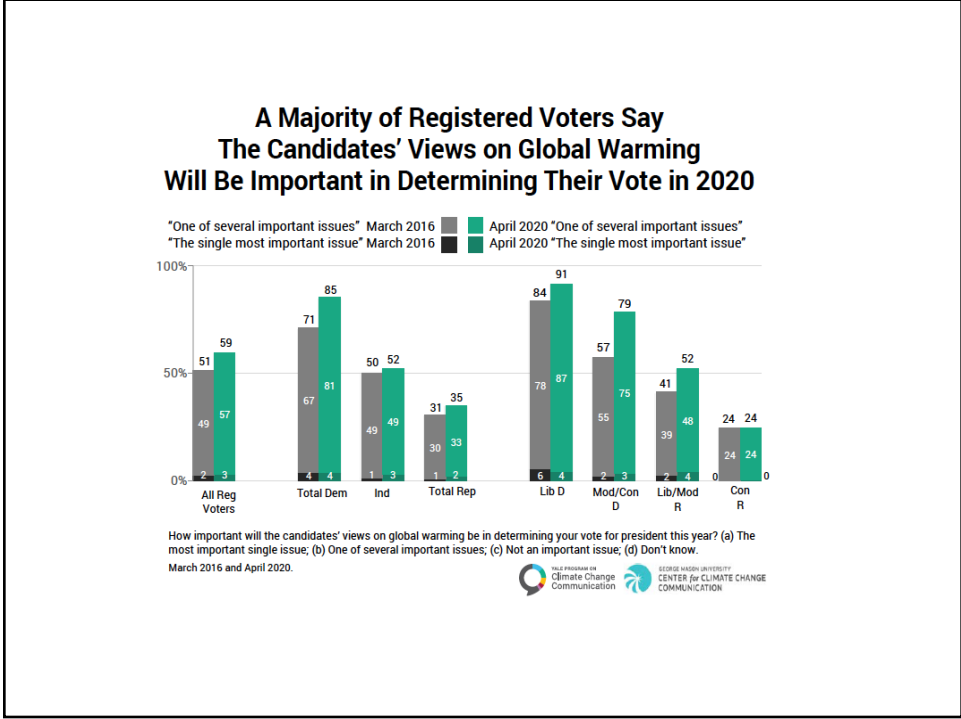
Most Registered Voters Think Global Warming Is Happening



Do you think global warming is happening? [% responding "yes"]
April 2020.



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Trends Shaping the Future – 6. Political Climate & Questions of Legitimacy

- Assault on Elections, Electioneering;
- +
- Assault on Governance
- =
- Assault on Legitimacy which ••
- → Democracy & Quality of Confidence in Institutions, Actors, & Process (I-A-P Model)

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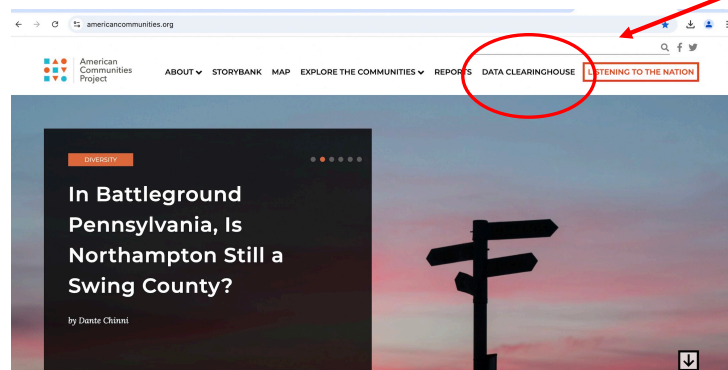
Part III: Introduction to Public Opinion

- Public Opinion
 - The distribution of the population’s beliefs about politics and policy issues
- “Demographics as Destiny”
 - The science of population changes
- U.S. Census – Critical Element of State, as well as Midterm, and National Presidential Elections
 - A valuable tool for understanding population changes
 - Required every 10 years by the Constitution
 - Use the product, “[American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#)” – and a separate, independent companion, “[American Communities Project](#)”

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The “American Communities Project”

- Check this out:
https://app.americancommunities.org/?_gl=1%2a1qs21hl%2a_ga%2aMzUwOTg0MDY0LjE3MjcwMzI5NjI.%2a_ga_72CXLLPW01%2aMTcyNzAzMjk2MS4xLjAuMTcyNzAzMzAxNC4wLjAuMA..



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The American People

- The Immigrant Society
 - United States is a nation of immigrants.
 - Three waves of immigration:
 - Northwestern Europeans (prior to late 19th Century)
 - Southern and eastern Europeans (late 19th and early 20th centuries)
 - Hispanics / LatinX and Asians (late 20th century)

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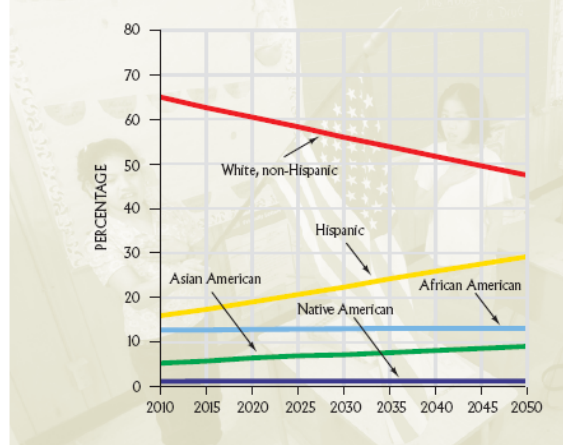
The American People

- The “American Melting Pot”
 - Melting Pot: the mixing of cultures, ideas, and peoples that has changed the American nation
 - Minority Majority: the emergence of a non-Caucasian majority
 - Political culture is an overall set of values widely shared within a society.

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The American People

FIGURE 6.1
The Coming Minority Majority



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The American People

FIGURE 6.2
Shifting Population



Source: The 1940 map was the work of the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, as printed in John Sauer's 1946 book *Inside U.S.A.*

- The Regional Shift
 - Population shift from east to west; from Rust Belt to Sun Belt
 - Reapportionment: the process of reallocating seats in the House of Representatives every 10 years on the basis of the results of the census

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The American People

- The Graying of America
 - Fastest growing age group is over 65
 - Potential drain on Social Security
 - Pay as you go system
 - In 1942, 42 workers per retiree
 - In 2040, 2 workers per retiree

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Changing Demographics of the New Roaring Twenties

RECALL How the R.A.E. is affecting 2022 & 2024 and onto 2028!

TWO VARIABLES:

Where Emerging Voters LIVE...

Who They ARE...

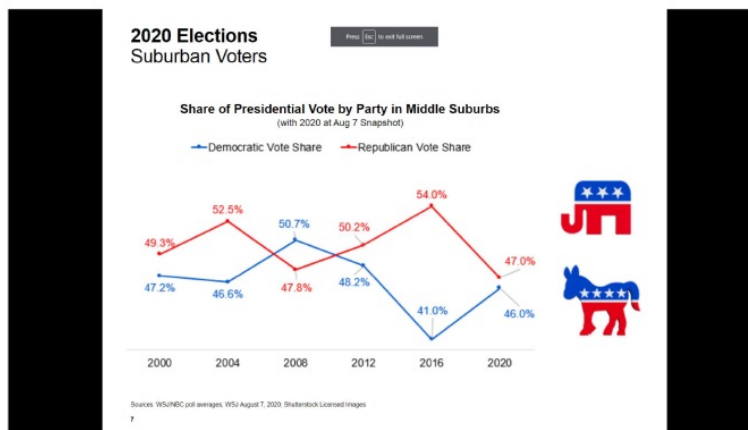
50

**All Bets Are Off; Fundamental Rules Are Out
Where is The Vote? The Fight for the Exurbs!**



51

Battle for the 'Burbs (Exurbs)



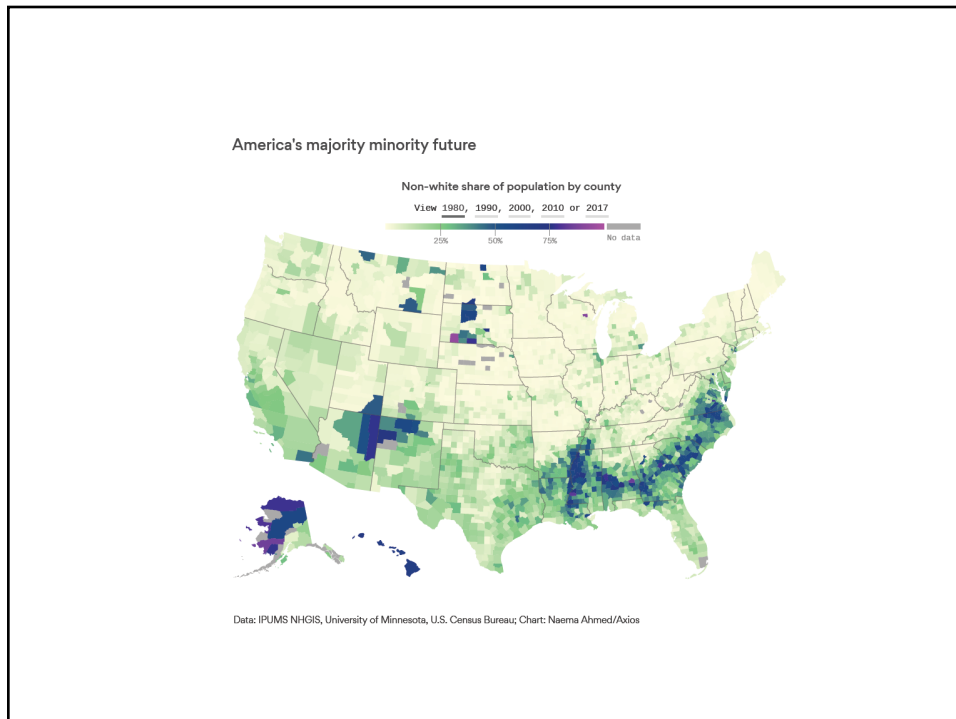
52

The R.A.E. & Population Dynamics Affecting the New Roaring Twenties

- How and why 2016-2020-2024 period is different:
 - The “Rising American Electorate” / **The R.A.E.**
 - Politics as changing in dramatic ways: Online? No rules?
 - Changing rules and “Laws” of American politics?
- There are three divides emerging amongst voters: **An Ideological Divide**; **A Cultural Divide**; and **A Racial Divide**.*

*Add a **Gender Divide**? An **Education Divide**?

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FIVE Demographic Trends of Interest Also Reflected by US Census & State-by-State Pop. Data

Δ with Income Earners; Economic Growth vs. Economic Stress

Δ with Married Couples / Marital Status

Δ with Ethnicity

Δ with Education Levels; Gaps of Achievement & Earning Power; Labor Force Impacts

Δ with Locational Nexus, "the Exurbs" (location of where these new voters actually "habitate")

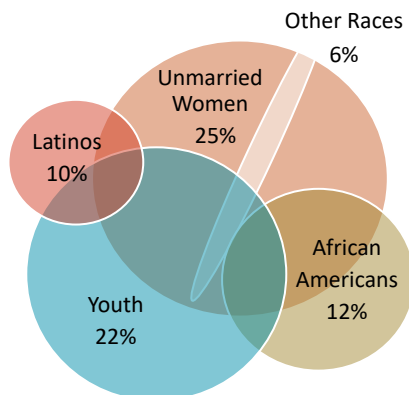
How Changing Demos is Changing Politics: Watch the "Exurbs"

See for example:

<https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/article254620572.html>

55

Focus on the RAE!



The RAE makes up 53% of the Voting Age Population (VAP)

The RAE is..

- unmarried women,
- people of color,
- and young people.

56

Growth of the RAE

The RAE is responsible for 80% of the growth in U.S. population between 2000 and 2010.

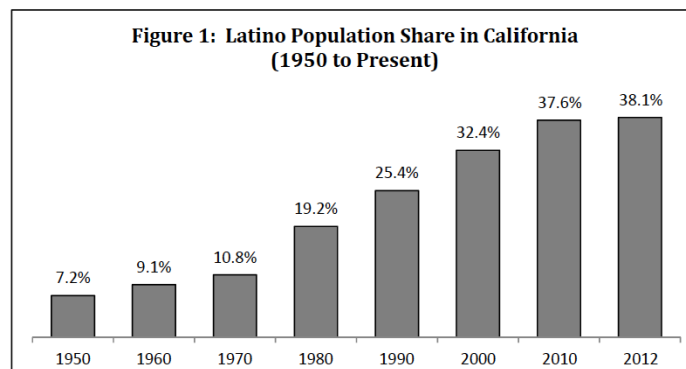
RAE also makes up more than half of the **Voting Eligible Population (VEP)** but was only 47% of the electorate in 2008 and 42% in 2010.

51% in 2016.
52-54% in 2020
55%-58% in 2024?



57

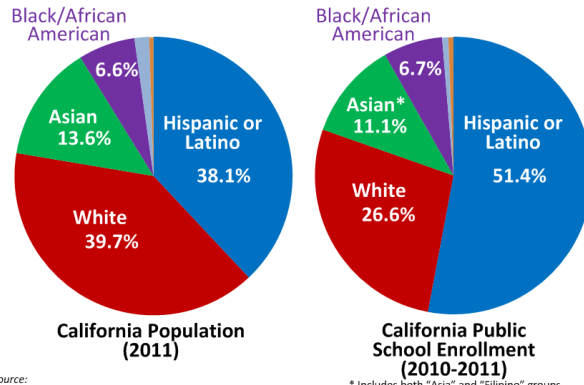
Figure 1: Latino Population Share in California (1950 to Present)



Source: LAO (lao.ca.gov)

58

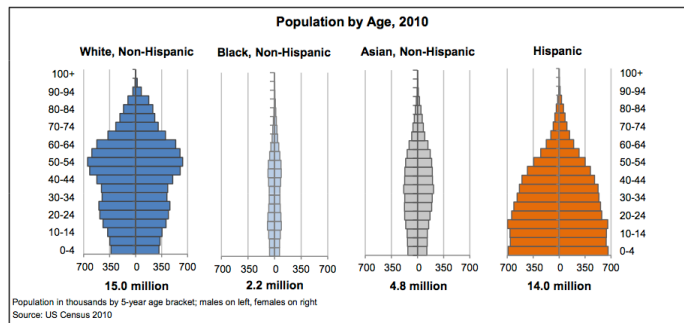
California Population Compared to Public School Enrollment (by Ethnic Background)



Source: Ed-Data Education Data Partnership: *Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in Public Schools*
<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/Outputs/EdDataClassic/StudentTrendsNew.asp?reportNumber=123&fyr=2011&level=04&report=enrollmentbyethnicity#enrollmentbyethnicitychart>
 United States Census Bureau: *State & County QuickFacts: California*
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>

59

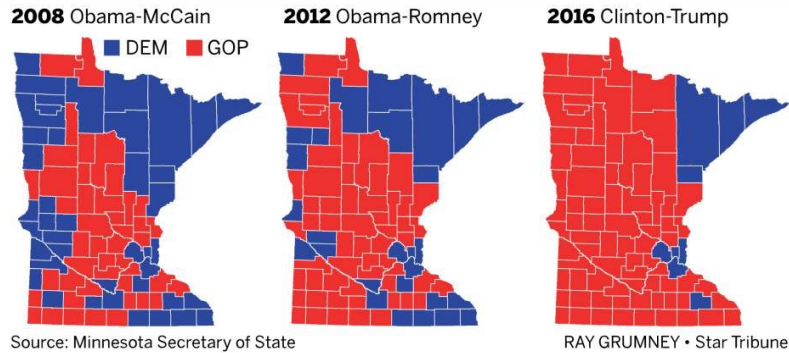
The RAE Collides With...



60

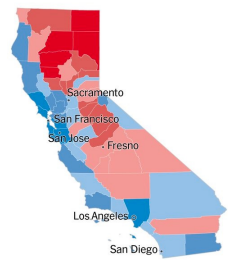
The RAE vs. the Evolving Bifurcation of the Presidential Vote

Where is The Vote? Concentrated "Pockets" of Obama-Trump Voters



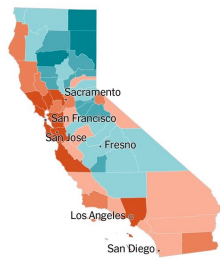
61

2018
California Governor
Election Results



Rep. 50 60 70%
Dem. 50 60 70%

2021
California Recall
Election Results



Yes, recall Newsom 50 60 70%
No, don't recall 50 60 70%

**Bifurcation &
Concentration of the
Recall Vote**

Source: The Associated Press



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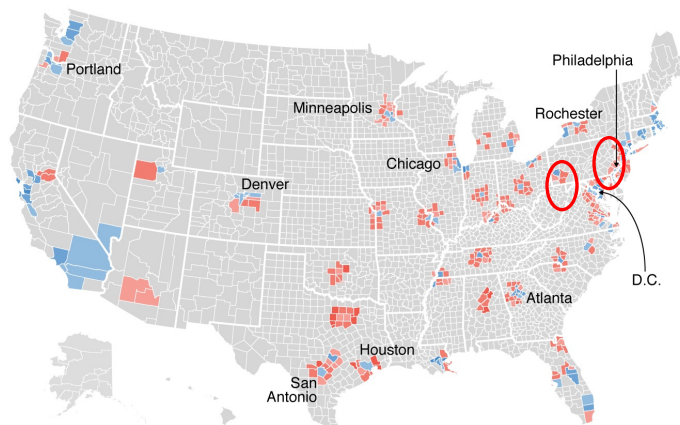
Part II: All Bets Are Off; Where is The Vote?
The “Corridor” in Wisconsin – Recall Earlier Discussion of Wisconsin



Source: Dr. David McCuan, Professor & Chair, Dept. of POLS

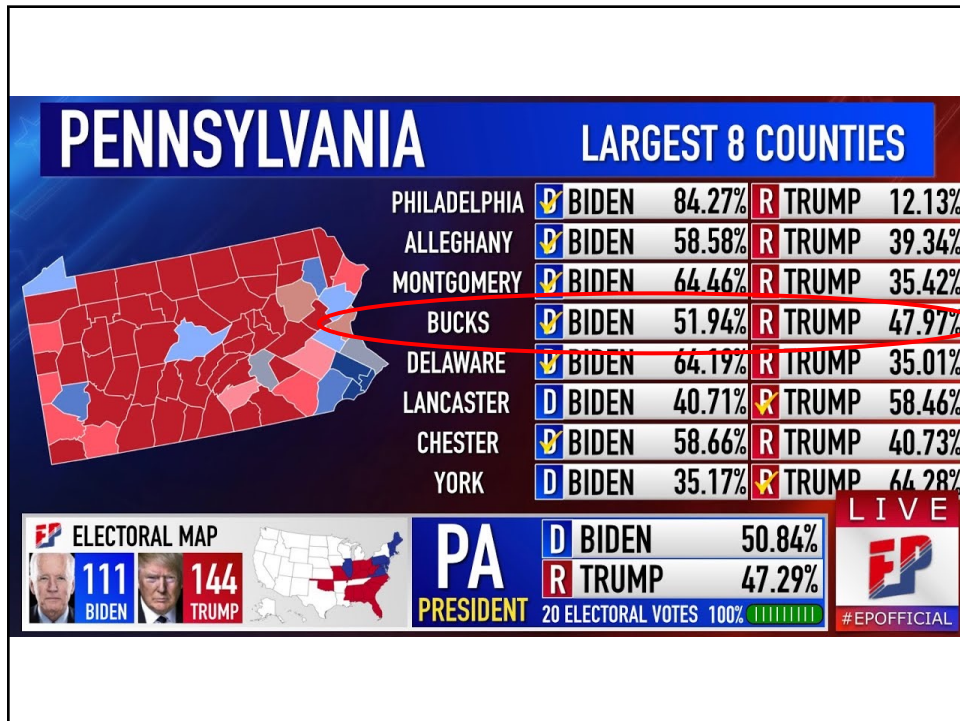
63

Part II: Where is The Vote? Punctuated by the “Swingers” & the RAE



Source: Dr. David McCuan, Professor & Chair, Dept. of POLS

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Candidate's Most Precious Resource? – Their Time; The *Glocal* Angle

Trump's Small-Town Rallies

Since his inauguration, President Trump has held 67 rallies in 63 cities. Of the 63 cities, only 21 were ranked among the 200 most populous cities.

- 33** cities with populations of less than 100,000 people
- 19** cities with populations of less than 50,000 people
- 8** cities with populations of less than 30,000 people
- 3** cities with populations of less than 10,000 people



GLEN STUBBE, STAR TRIBUNE

President Donald Trump greeted cheering crowds at the Target Center on Thursday, Oct. 10, 2019, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Source: Dr. David McCuan, Professor & Chair, Dept. of POLS

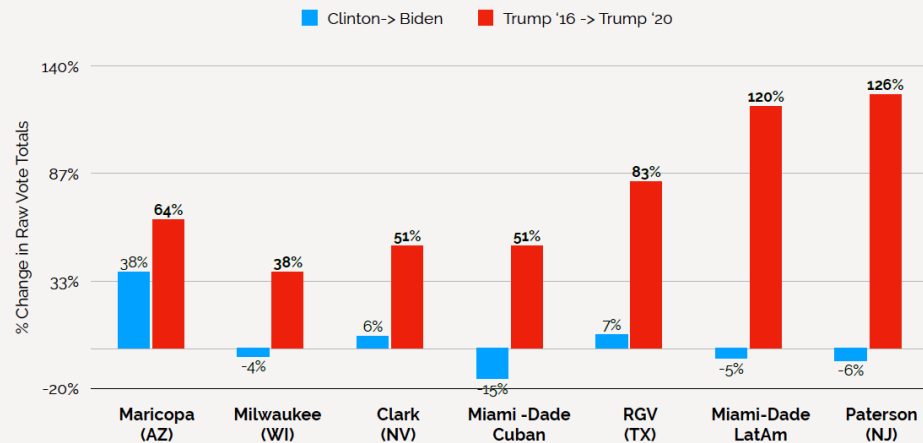
66

Shifts occurred in Hispanic-heavy geographies across the country, to differing degrees
 Outside Miami, Latinos still supported Democratic nominee at high levels

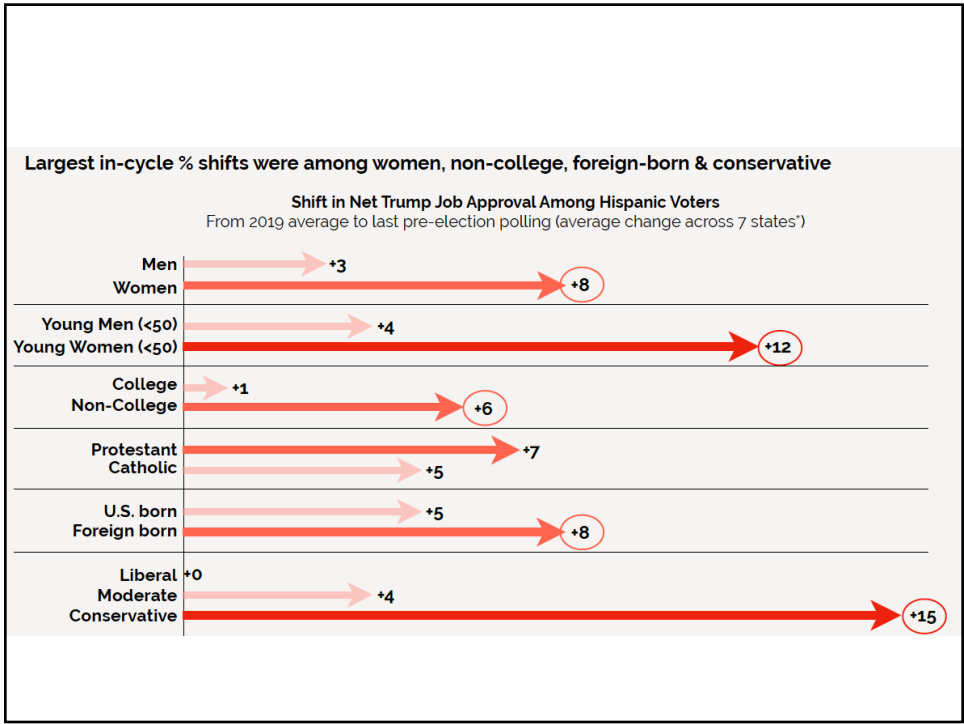
	Two-Way Democratic Support		Shift 2016 -> 2020
	Clinton '16	Biden '20	
FLORIDA			
Miami-Dade (>50% Cuban precincts)	49%	35%	-14
Miami-Dade (>50% LatAm precincts)	70%	50%	-20
Osceola (>30% PR precincts)	76%	65%	-11
TEXAS			
Rio Grande Valley (counties)	70%	58%	-12
NEVADA			
Clark County (>50% Latino precincts)	79%	73%	-6
WISCONSIN			
Milwaukee (>50% Latino precincts)	84%	78%	-6
ARIZONA			
Maricopa (>50% Latino precincts)	79%	76%	-3
NEW JERSEY			
Paterson (city)	91%	81%	-10
MASSACHUSETTS			
Lawrence (city)	85%	74%	-11

67

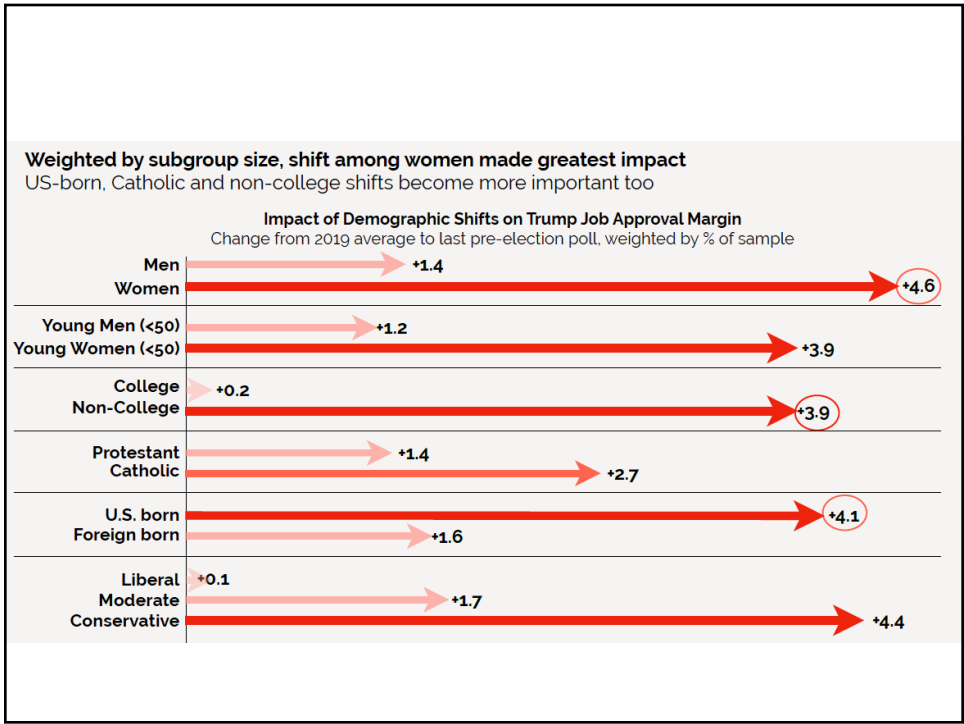
Trump's raw vote totals surged in Latino-heavy spots across the country
 But Arizona a case study in countering GOP gains



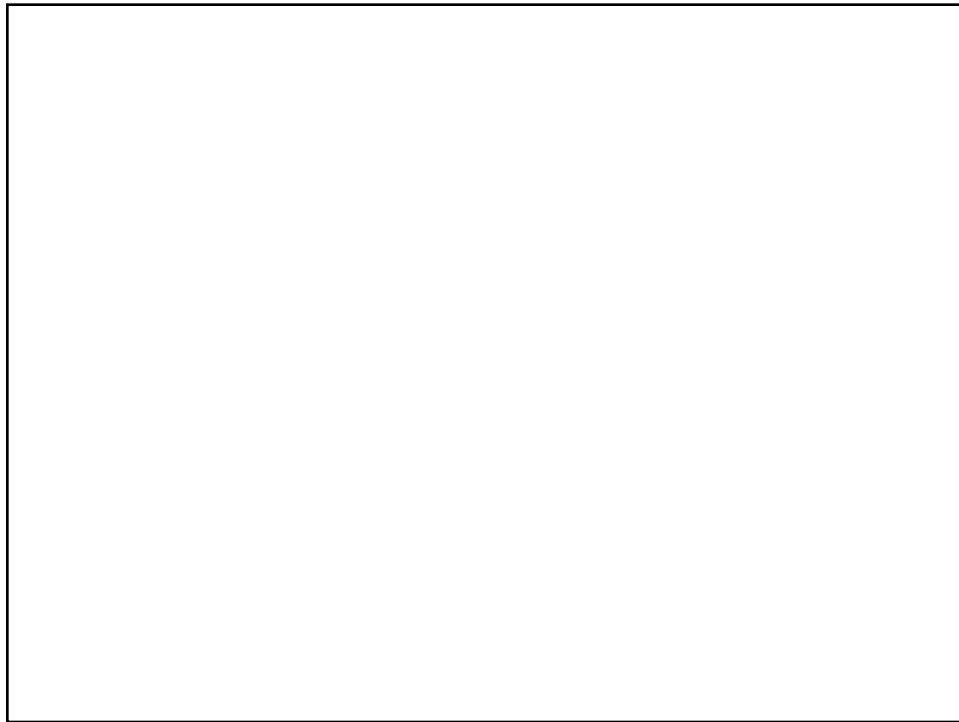
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Part III: How Americans Learn About Politics: Political Socialization

- Political Socialization:
 - “the process through which and individual acquires [their] particular political orientation”
 - Orientation grows firmer with age
- The Process of Political Socialization
 - The Family: Political leanings of children often mirror their parents’ leanings

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Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information Given Socialization

- How Polls Are Conducted
 - Sample: a small proportion of people who are chosen in a survey to be representative of the whole
 - Random Sampling: the key technique employed by sophisticated survey researchers which operates on the principle that everyone should have an equal probability of being selected for the sample
 - Sampling Error: the level of confidence in the findings of a public opinion poll

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Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

- The Role of Polls in American Democracy
 - Polls help politicians detect public preferences.
 - But critics say polls make politicians think more about following than leading public
 - Even though politicians often do not closely track opinion to make policy!
 - Question wording may affect survey results



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Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

- The Role of Polls in American Democracy
 - Polls may distort election process
 - Exit Polls: used by the media to predict election day winners
 - May discourage people from voting
 - 2000 presidential election in Florida
 - Findings in 2016 presidential election vs.
 - Findings in the 2020 presidential election
 - Bias in 2024 polls? Under-reporting?

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Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

- What Polls Reveal About Americans' Political Information
 - Americans don't know much about politics.
 - Americans may know their basic beliefs but not how that affects policies of the government.
- The Decline of Trust in Government
 - Since 1964, trust in government has declined.
 - Trust in government has gone up somewhat since September 11.

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Measuring Public Opinion & Political Info. Amongst Three “Types” of Voters

- **Committed to a party or candidate** and unlikely to change because of a debate. Democrats did however dump Biden based on debate performance
- **Single issue voters** like pro or anti abortion, gay rights climate change mitigation, etc. Not influenced by debates unless a candidate changes positions.
- **Uncommitted low information voters** who choose based on TV and other ads or internet memes. Not particularly interested in debate performances, facts, or even policies beyond tax cut promises.

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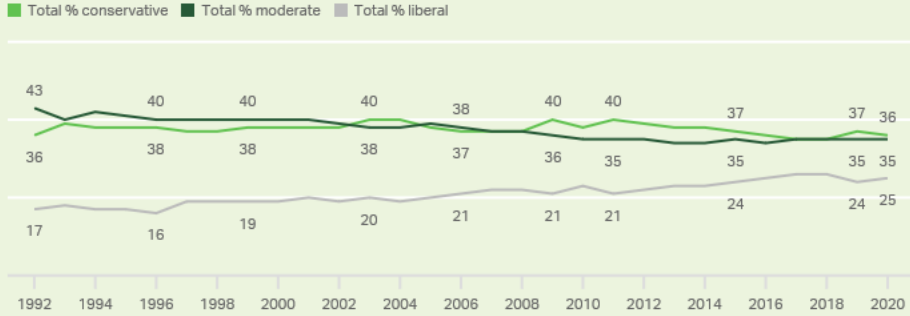
What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

- Political Ideology:
 - A coherent set of beliefs about politics, public policy, and public purpose
- Where to look for all of this? One place is:
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/467888/democrats-identification-liberal-new-high.aspx> and
<https://news.gallup.com/topic/ideology.aspx>
- Who Are the Liberals and Conservatives?
 - Predominance of conservative over liberal thinking
 - Currently about what % conservative?; what % liberal; and what % as moderate
 - Gender gap: women tend to be less conservative than men
 - Ideological variation by religion, too

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Americans' Ideological Views, by Year

How would you describe your political views -- very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal or very liberal?

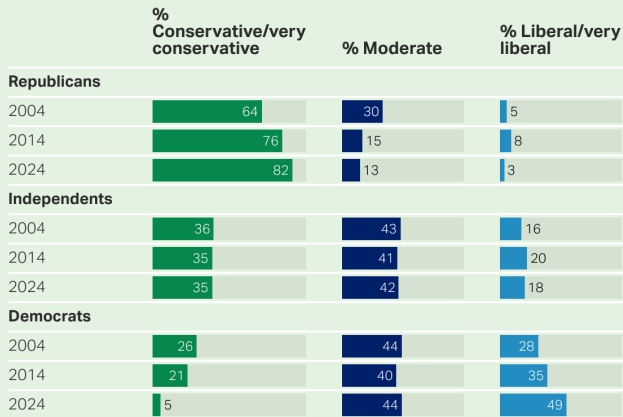


Based on annual averages
GALLUP

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Economic Issue Ideology, by Political Party, 2004 vs. 2014 vs. 2024

Thinking about economic issues, would you say your views on economic issues are -- [ROTATED: very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal (or very liberal)]?



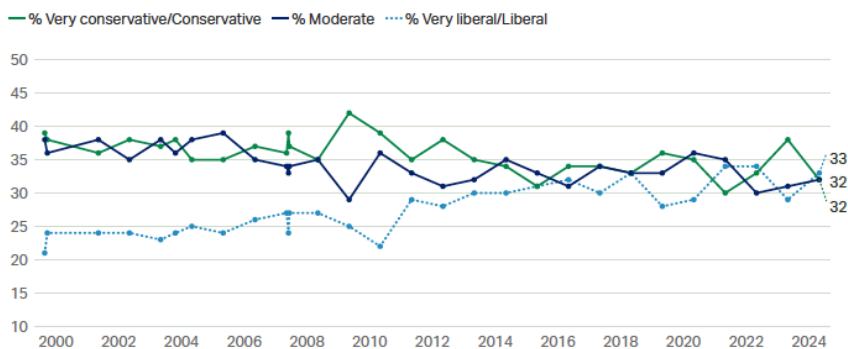
GALLUP

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Social Issue Identifications

Americans' Ideological Self-Identification on Social Issues

Thinking about social issues, would you say your views on social issues are -- [ROTATED: very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal (or) very liberal]?



Get the data • Download image

GALLUP

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What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

TABLE 6.2

How to Tell a Liberal from a Conservative

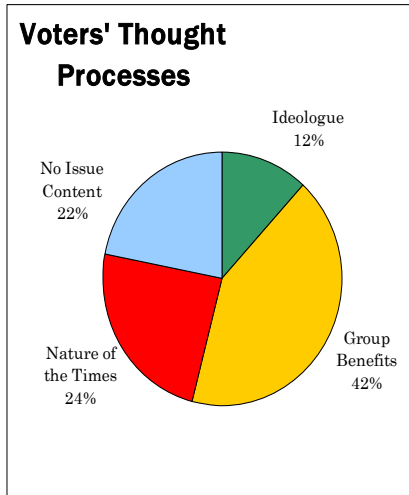
Liberal and conservative—these labels are thrown around in American politics as though everyone knows what they mean. Here are some of the political beliefs likely to be preferred by liberals and conservatives. This table, to be sure, is oversimplified.

	LIBERALS	CONSERVATIVES
Foreign Policy		
Military spending	Believe we should spend less	Believe we should maintain peace through strength
Use of force	Less willing to commit troops to action, such as in Iraq War	More likely to support military intervention around the world
Social Policy		
Abortion	Support "freedom of choice"	Support "right to life"
Prayer in schools	Are opposed	Are supportive
Affirmative action	Favor	Oppose
Economic Policy		
Scope of government	View government as a regulator in the public interest	Favor free-market solutions
Taxes	Want to tax the rich more	Want to keep taxes low
Spending	Want to spend more on the poor	Want to keep spending low
Crime		
How to cut crime	Believe we should solve the problems that cause crime	Believe we should stop "coddling criminals"
Defendants' rights	Believe we should guard them carefully	Believe we should stop letting criminals hide behind laws

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What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

- Do People Think in Ideological Terms?
 - Ideologues: think in ideological terms
 - Group Benefits voters: view politics through party or group label
 - Nature of the Times: view of politics based on whether times are good or bad
 - No issue content: vote routinely for party or personality



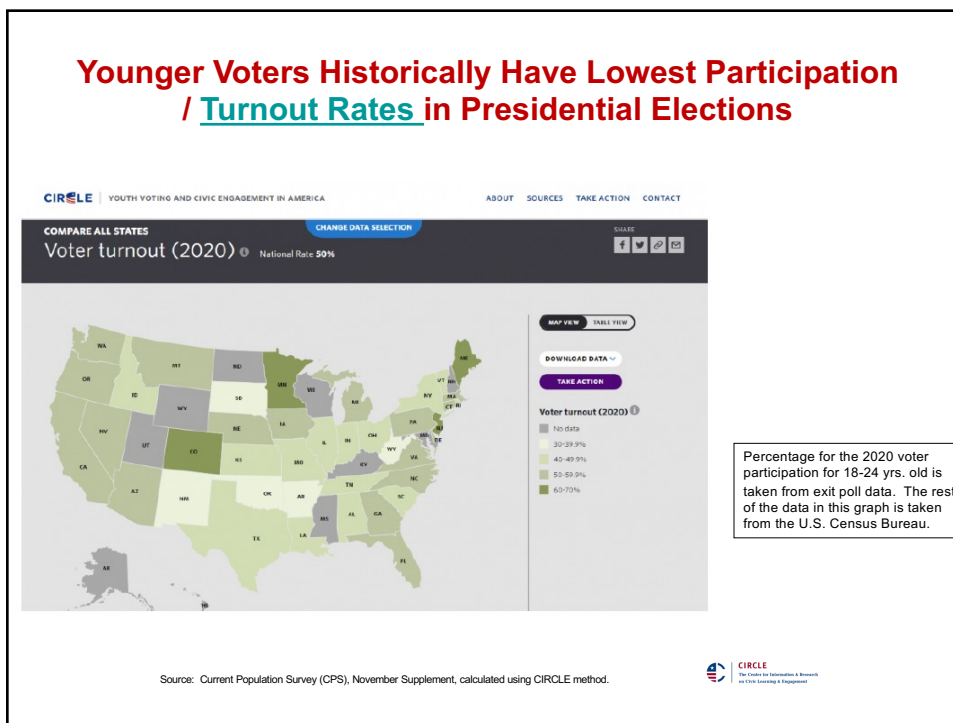
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PART IV: Elections & Electoral Behavior

Why Do Elections Matter?: An Introduction

84

Younger Voters Historically Have Lowest Participation / Turnout Rates in Presidential Elections



85

**The Averaged American Voter:
Who Are They? What Do They Know?
And, Why Do They Vote?**

**An Intro to the “Language & Lingo” of
Elections Studies**

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Some Points to Consider Here

- Do you think elections serve as a check on presidential power for a first term president? In what ways? What is required for elections to serve as a check? Do those conditions exist today? Is the *public capable of making that judgment?*
- *How Voters make up their minds?*
- *Do presidents win mandates?*

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Who Votes?

- People who are registered
- People with more education
- People with more interest in politics
- People with higher incomes
- African-Americans (all other things being equal)
- Generally, folks with higher SES

88

The “Voters are Ignorant” Thesis

The good news:

The United States is a democracy (88%)
Presidents serve 4 years (93%)
The First Amendment protects freedom of speech (75%)
Can name at least one cabinet position (72%)
Know that popular votes don't elect the president (69%)

The bad news:

Little knowledge of Institutions & Rules
The length of a House term or a Senate term (30%, 25%)
The substance of the Roe v. Wade decision (30%)
Can name Two 1st amendment rights, or 5th amendment rights (20%, 2%)
Can Name two or three branches of government (27%, 19%)

89

Knowledge: Most Americans Know the important people in politics

- 99% can name the US president
- 25% can name both of their US Senators
- 29% can correctly name their representative in the House
- 22 % Gerald Ford's party in 1974
- 15 % could identify Robert Bork in 1989

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Knowledge: Most Americans Know the important people in politics, cont'd

- 18% know the percent of the population below the poverty line
- 31% can describe affirmative action
- 35% can say where most immigrants are coming from
- 19% can locate Colombia on a map
- 39% can locate Massachusetts on a map
- 15% can say what the New Deal was

91

The Funnel of Causality

92

Do voters really decide based on issues presented in the campaign?

- Median Voter Theorem (MVT):
 - In a winner-take-all system, parties should promote policies that appeal to the voter at the median of the distribution of voter preferences.
- In Presidential elections, ensures that candidates will gravitate toward the middle, and NOT try to distinguish their positions

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Do Presidents Win Mandates?

- Only if:
 - Clear campaign positions, distinctly & clearly differentiated from opponent;
 - Voters know what their own positions are;
 - Voters know what president's positions are;
 - President wins clear electoral victory

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Understanding Public Opinion and Political Action

- Public Attitudes Toward the Scope of Government
 - Many people have no opinion about scope of government.
 - Public opinion is inconsistent, which may lead to policy gridlock.
- Democracy, Public Opinion, and Political Action
 - Americans select leaders, but do they do so wisely?
 - If people know little about candidates' issues, how can they?
 - People vote more for performance than policy.

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John Zaller's RAS Model*

Receive, Accept, Sample

1. Reception Axiom
The greater the person's level of cognitive engagement with an issue the more likely he or she is to be exposed to and comprehend — in a word, to receive — political messages concerning that issue.
2. Resistance Axiom
People tend to resist arguments that are inconsistent with their political predispositions, but they do so only to the extent that they possess the contextual information necessary to perceive a relationship between the message and their predispositions.
3. Accessibility Axiom
The more recently a consideration has been called to mind or thought about, the less time it takes to retrieve that consideration or related considerations from memory and bring them to the top of the head for use.
4. Response Axiom
Individuals answer survey questions by averaging across the considerations that are immediately salient or accessible to them.

*Source: Zaller, John R. (1992) *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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