

ELECTION 2020

POLITICS

NEWS

Florida polls show Biden 3 points ahead of Trump — with undecideds leaning toward president

By ANTHONY MAN
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Supporters gather as President Donald Trump arrives in Jupiter for a campaign-style rally on Sept. 8, 2020. A new Florida Atlantic University poll finds Joe Biden 3 points ahead of Trump. Undecideds lean toward Trump, making the race a tie days before mail voting begins. (Mike Stocker / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

With just 10 days until millions of Florida voters begin casting their presidential ballots, the race couldn't get any closer, with Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden tied with President Donald Trump.

A [Florida Atlantic University Poll](#) released Tuesday found 49% of likely voters favoring Biden and 46% for Trump, a 3-point difference that amounts to a statistical tie.

FAU pollsters found almost everyone has their minds made up — pro or con — about Trump, Biden and the presidential race with just 5% of likely voters undecided.

A [Monmouth University Poll](#), also released Tuesday, also found a 49% to 46% percent contest, assuming voter turnout is about the same as 2016. If voter turnout is somewhat higher than 2016, the poll found the race would be 50% for Biden and 45% for Trump.

As with the FAU poll, either scenario is a statistical tie. Monmouth said 3% of the likely voters it surveyed were undecided.

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The FAU and Monmouth results show a trend that's been seen in other Florida polls since the Democratic and Republican conventions last month, and reported by political strategists and party leaders from both camps: an exceedingly close presidential race in Florida.

Monmouth reported that 88% said they were “very motivated” to vote in the presidential election and FAU reported 9% of its respondents said there's a chance they could change their minds.

Of the 5% who said they were undecided in the FAU poll, four-fifths said they were leaning toward Trump. When they're factored in, Biden and Trump would be tied at 50%.

[Kevin Wagner](#), an FAU political scientist and research fellow at the university's Business and Economics Polling Initiative, said the small number of undecided votes is remarkable. “There really are not that many persuadables. Both campaigns are going to spend a lot of money in Florida, and the question is, ultimately, is there anyone left to persuade.”

Starting next week, supervisors of elections will begin sending out vote-by-mail ballots. As they start arriving in people's homes, the imperative for the Biden and Trump campaign is getting their supporters to actually cast ballots.

Wagner said the FAU poll shows “that Florida is a highly competitive state, and will continue to be so, I think, through the election.”

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The FAU poll found 72% of Trump voters are extremely excited about the election, compared with 60% of Biden voters who are extremely excited.

Monmouth found registered voters have a more positive view of Biden than Trump, but the numbers show a sharply divided public.

Biden is viewed favorably by 47% and unfavorably by 44%, a net positive of 3 points. Trump is viewed favorably by 41% and unfavorably by 51% of voters surveyed by Monmouth, a net negative of 10 points.

The candidates are in roughly the same position — very close — that the FAU poll showed them earlier in the year. [In March, Trump led](#) 51% to 49%, a Trump advantage of 2 points. [In May, Biden led](#) 53% to 47%, a Biden advantage of 6 points.

It's not an exact comparison, however, since FAU switched to using “likely voters” for the latest poll. Early in election cycles, pollsters use “registered voters,” and then switch to likely voters closer to Election Day in an attempt to better focus on people expected to vote.

Monmouth also used “likely voters” to focus on people with a greater chance of voting.

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Florida is a critical state. It's the largest of the battleground states that could go either way, and it awards 29 of the 270 electoral votes required to win the presidency.



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And it has a history of exceedingly close races. In 2016, Trump won 49% of the vote statewide to Democrat Hillary Clinton's 47.8%. Democratic strategist Steve Schale, in an [analysis of the race he posted online](#) this week, noted that more than 51 million votes have been cast for president by Florida voters since 1992. Less than 20,000 separate Republicans and Democrats.

The fine print

The latest results come from an [FAU Business and Economics Polling Initiative](#) survey of survey of 631 Florida likely voters conducted online and through automated calls to people with landline telephones on Sept. 11 and 12. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

The sample size for subgroups, such as Republicans or Democrats, is smaller, so the margin of error is higher.

Anthony Man can be reached at aman@sunsentinel.com or on Twitter [@browardpolitics](https://twitter.com/browardpolitics)



Anthony Man

South Florida Sun Sentinel

CONTACT



Anthony Man is the Sun Sentinel's political writer. Concentrating on local political people, parties and trends, he also covers state and national politics from a South Florida perspective. He previously covered Palm Beach County government and made repeated reporting trips to Tallahassee. He has also covered state and local politics in Illinois.