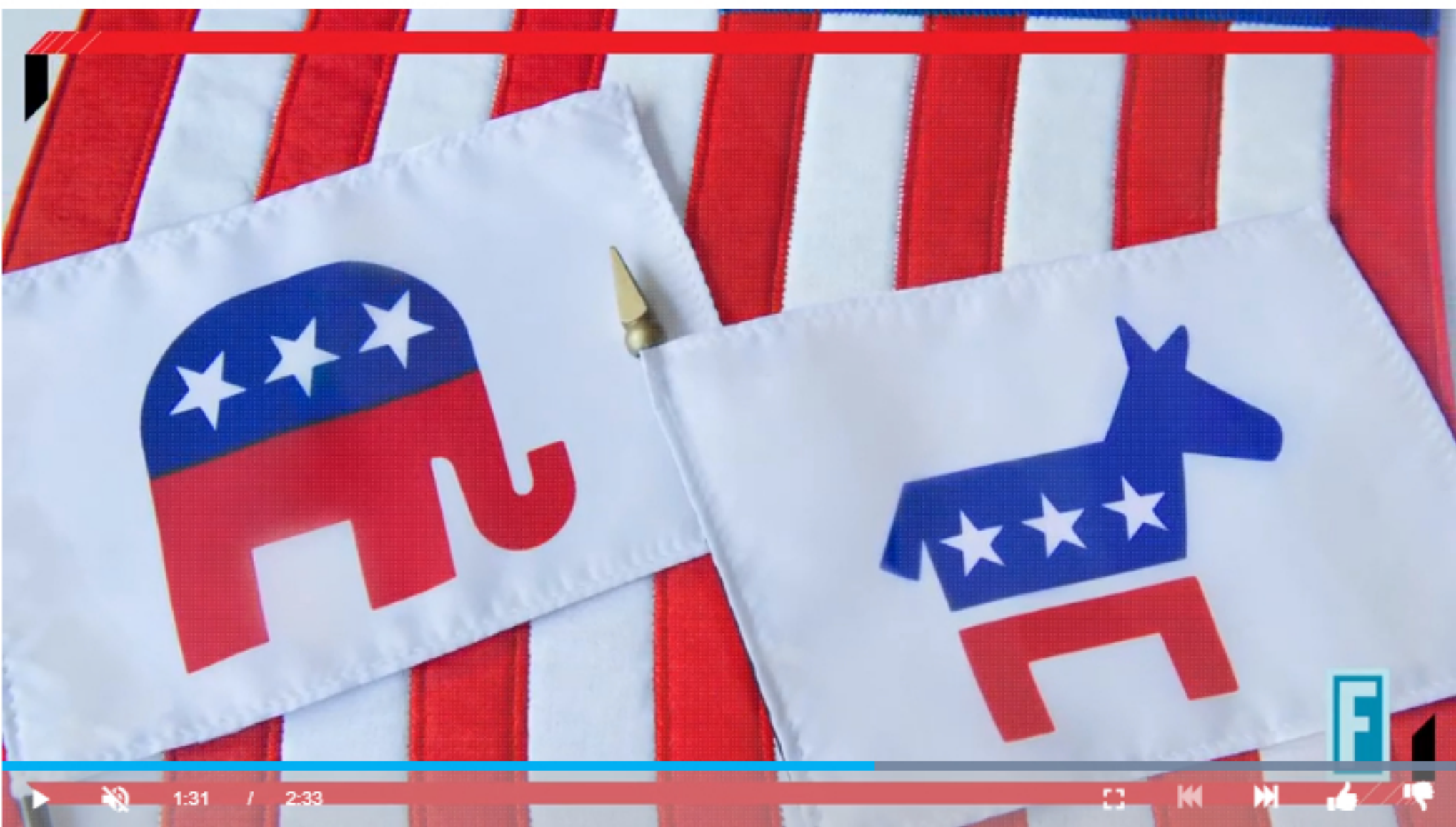


POLITICS • 2020 ELECTION

Florida is getting tighter as Trump cuts into Biden's lead

BY LANCE LAMBERT
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If Donald Trump loses Florida, his reelection is toast.

For much of the campaign the President has trailed in the Sunshine State. This week, however, Trump topped the [RealClearPolitics poll average](#) in Florida—the first time he's led Democratic nominee Joe Biden in the metric since April. But it's a slim lead: Trump is ahead by [0.4 points](#) in the RealClearPolitics poll average in Florida, on par with his [0.2 point](#) lead in Florida four years ago—which translated into a 1.2 point win.

The five polls used to calculate the Florida [RealClearPolitics poll average](#) are October results from [Florida Atlantic University](#) (Biden +2), [Susquehanna Polling & Research](#) (Trump +4), [CBS News/YouGov](#) (Biden +2), [St. Pete Polls](#) (Biden +2), and [Rasmussen Reports](#) (Trump +4).

But even as Florida polls gets tighter, Biden is still projected to win. As of Wednesday, FiveThirtyEight forecast [Biden will win Florida by 1.5 points](#). That's much closer than two weeks ago when FiveThirtyEight forecast a 4.1 point Biden win, and it's significantly tighter than Biden's peak lead of 7.6 points on July 24—during the height of Florida's COVID-19 outbreak.

FiveThirtyEight gives Biden a [61% chance of carrying Florida](#). But that alone doesn't guarantee victory. Indeed, FiveThirtyEight gave Clinton a [55.1% chance](#) of winning Florida four years ago.

How 2020 battleground polls stack up to 2016

RealClearPolitics poll averages as of October 27

State	2016 poll average	2016 result	2020 poll average
NEW HAMPSHIRE	CLINTON +0.6	CLINTON +0.3	BIDEN +11.0
MAINE	CLINTON +4.5	CLINTON +2.9	BIDEN +11.0
MICHIGAN	CLINTON +3.4	TRUMP +0.3	BIDEN +8.7
MINNESOTA	CLINTON +6.2	CLINTON +1.5	BIDEN +6.0
WISCONSIN	CLINTON +6.5	TRUMP +0.7	BIDEN +7.8
NEVADA	TRUMP +0.8	CLINTON +2.4	BIDEN +4.6
PENNSYLVANIA	CLINTON +1.9	TRUMP +0.7	BIDEN +3.8
ARIZONA	TRUMP +4.0	TRUMP +3.5	BIDEN +2.4
IOWA	TRUMP +3.0	TRUMP +9.5	BIDEN +1.4
NORTH CAROLINA	TRUMP +1.0	TRUMP +3.7	BIDEN +0.7
FLORIDA	TRUMP +0.2	TRUMP +1.2	TRUMP +0.4
GEORGIA	TRUMP +4.8	TRUMP +5.1	TRUMP +0.4
OHIO	TRUMP +3.5	TRUMP +8.1	TRUMP +0.6
TEXAS	TRUMP +12.0	TRUMP +9.0	TRUMP +2.6

*AVERAGE OF FIVE POLLS CONDUCTED IN MINNESOTA PRIOR TO THE 2016 ELECTION. REALCLEARPOLITICS DIDN'T HAVE A 2016 AVERAGE FOR MINNESOTA.
TABLE: LANCE LAMBERT • SOURCE: REALCLEARPOLITICS

FORTUNE

Why the Trump uptick? As the COVID-19 caseload in Florida began to fall in August, the President started to see his poll numbers rise. He temporarily saw that climb pull back following his subpar first debate performance and his own coronavirus hospitalization in early October. But in recent weeks that climb has returned.

And Trump is aided by an improving Florida economy. The spring shutdowns hit tourism-heavy Florida particularly hard, with its unemployment rate soaring to 13.8% in April. But with eased restrictions, that jobless rate is 7.6% as of September. In total, [1.2 million Floridans have been rehired or found new jobs](#), according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The same October 20–23 [CBS News/YouGov](#) poll that finds Biden up +2 points in Florida also finds voters in the state say Trump would do a better job handling the economy, by 50% to 42%.

But Trump would need more than Florida to secure a second term. Biden would win with 312 electoral votes if he wins every state Clinton won four years ago along with the six Trump 2016 states he's currently leading in: [Michigan](#) (+8.7 points), [Pennsylvania](#) (+3.8 points), and [Wisconsin](#) (+7.8 points), [Arizona](#) (+2.4 points), [Iowa](#) (+1.4 points), and [North Carolina](#) (+0.7 points), according to RealClearPolitics poll averages.

That explains why the cash-strapped Trump campaign is [shifting ad dollars out of Florida](#) to help in Midwestern states like Pennsylvania. To fill the void, the Republican National Committee is making ad purchases in Florida—but it will still be greatly outspent in Florida by the Biden camp.

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