

## The 2024 U.S. Elections



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- Presidential (General) Election
- U.S. House of Representatives Elections
- U.S. Senate Elections
- State and Local Elections (Governors, Mayors, etc)

# For Today

- Understand the dynamics and consequences of the elections for both Congress and the Presidency
- Assess key issues, including the state of the economy, presidential approval
- Evaluate the campaigns, considering their goals of mobilization and persuasion, and in the context of polarized vs disinterested publics.
- (For consideration: Formulate a campaign strategy for the candidates)

## Discussion Questions

If the general election were held today between Trump and Harris, who do you think would win, and why?

Related, what do you see as the major strengths for each candidate? Concerns?

# Let's Talk about Congress: U.S. House and Senate Elections

- Advantage, Incumbents: <https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/reelection-rates>
- Costs of running have soared: <https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/cost-of-election> and <https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/election-trends>
- Greater diversity in Congress, but much progress remains <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/02/07/the-changing-face-of-congress/>
- Slim party majorities in both chambers

# 2024 Congressional Elections

## ● Senate

- At Present: 51 “Democrats” (4 Independents who caucus with the Dems); 49 Republicans
- 1/3 of Senators go up for election every 2 years (due to 6 year terms)
- 10 “Competitive Elections” with Democrats defending 8
- Forecast:  
<https://www.270towin.com/2024-senate-election/>

## ● House

- At Present: 220 Republicans; 211 Democrats; (4 Vacancies)
- All seats up for election/reelection every 2 years
- Incumbents rarely lose, turnover principally through resignations/retirements
- Forecast: <https://www.270towin.com/2024-house-election/consensus-2024-house-forecast>
- Governance challenges with small majorities (e.g. recent Speaker of the House votes)

# Implications

- Divided Government: Continued gridlock
- Democratic Unified: Democrats will not have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate (currently 60). Possible push for ending filibuster
- Republican Unified: Republicans...(ibid)
- Note: Change in filibuster could see major policy changes, e.g. minimum wage increase for Democrats

## Vice President Harris (Incumbent Party) Prospects

- Models: Current Approval of the President & the State of the Economy are strong predictors of the outcome
  - Economy: <https://fredaccount.stlouisfed.org/public/dashboard/1151>
  - Approval of Pres. Biden: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/biden-approval-rating/>



# Former President Trump's Favorability

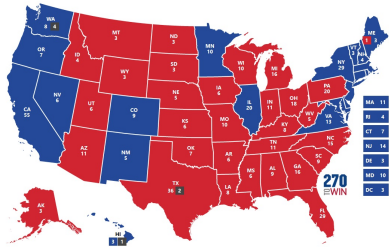
- Favorability: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/polls/favorability/donald-trump/>

# Electoral College

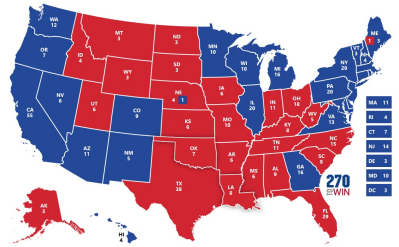
- Electoral College  
<https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>
- “Battleground States” (also “Swing States” or “Purple States”)
  - Former “Blue Wall” States: Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania
  - Southwest and Southeast States: Arizona, Nevada, Georgia
  - Others, Potentially: Virginia, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Minnesota, Nebraska (1)
- <https://www.270towin.com/>
- One Strategy: For Harris, repeat 2020. For Trump, repeat 2016 (Small caveat: 2020 Census changed some states electors)

# 2016 vs 2020

Clinton (D) 227 304 Trump (R)



Biden (D) 306 232 Trump (R)



# Campaigns: “The Goal is to WIN!”

- Strategy: Mobilization
  - Mobilize Base (e.g. Make America Great Again voters); Discourage mobilization from opponent’s (potential) supporters
- Strategy: Persuasion
  - In the end, only a small percentage are persuadable—but in battleground states, that percentage is enough to change the outcome
  - Agenda-setting/Issue salience
- 2024 Issues? Examples: Economy, Immigration, National Security, Crime, Technology/AI...
- Unique situation where challenger (Trump) is the better known candidate than the incumbent party VP (Harris)

# Why Persuasion is Especially Challenging: “Motivated Reasoning”

- Most partisans have made their choice—Partisanship acts as a filter for news and information
  - Party
- Social networks can reinforce views: Those with whom we talk about politics tend to be like-minded

## Polarized vs Disinterested Publics

- On average, those who are more politically active are further to the right and to the left (i.e., more extreme ideology, and have decided)
  - Rise in polarization and “Negative Partisanship”
- Distinterest/Apathy and lower levels of political knowledge among the electorate (i.e. persuadable voters, potentially, but harder to reach)
  - Turnout in elections, 2/3 of adults at best

# Time Frame

- Earlier Events: mostly noise (e.g. Post-convention “bumps”)
- Events Now: Summer is over, less politically interested voters start paying attention
- Events shortly before the election: Greater significance (e.g. Hillary Clinton’s emails)
  - Campaigns shaping news coverage

# Campaigns

- Media Strategy
  - Harris: Less known than Trump. Both parties will try to shape the narrative
  - Presidential Debate, Sept 10 (Highlights/overarching narrative will reach less politically interested)
- Campaign Finances and Spending: Campaign ads; Visits to (mostly) battleground states
  - Mixed evidence of success of ads and visits
  - Super PACs and PACs: not aligned with parties/candidates, donations not restricted
- “Ground Game” and Campaign offices, staff, volunteers: Knocking on doors



# Some Election-Related Concerns this Fall/Winter

- Misinformation, AI-Generated Content and “Deep Fakes”
- Process for determining a winner
- Polarization, concern for political violence
- (Note: 2024 will be unlike 2020 Election that had higher absentee voting)

# The Future

- Unified vs Divided Government
- Powers of the presidency
- 2017 Tax Cuts / Deficits and National Debt
- Immigration, Federalism
- Polarized Politics

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