



BRIEFING PAPER

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United States of America: 2020 presidential election

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Summary

The United States held an election on Tuesday 3 November 2020, with advance voting – both in person and postal – taking place ahead of election day.

Due to the US operating what is essentially a two-party system, only two candidates had a chance of taking the presidency: incumbent President Donald Trump for the Republicans and former Vice-President Joe Biden for the Democrats.

The election was viewed as effectively a referendum on Trump's presidency and his handling of the US response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coronavirus was a key issue for the electorate in deciding who to vote for, alongside related topics such as the economy and healthcare.

Biden won the election, securing 306 Electoral College votes, against Trump's 232.

He also won the "popular vote" with a total of over 81 million votes; the single highest total received in a presidential election in history.

Trump initially refused to concede to Biden and, on 6 January 2021, thousands of his supporters rallied in Washington DC, with dozens of protesters entering the Capitol building unlawfully and forcing their way into the House of Representatives.

Following this, Trump was impeached for a second time.

On 20 January, President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris will be sworn into office.

This briefing gives an overview of the main campaign issues during the election (providing a glance as to what Biden might try to achieve during his presidency), explains the election result and voting methods, and features a timeline of the key events in the presidential race from 2020 to Inauguration Day.

1. Background

The United States held elections on Tuesday 3 November 2020.

As well as electing a President and Vice-President, the US electorate voted for 33 Senators (one third of the US Senate is elected every two years to serve a six-year term), all 435 members of the House of Representatives and some State Governors.

Presidential elections take place every four years and Presidents can serve a maximum of two terms in office.

Election campaigns last for over a year, as the parties hold caucuses and primaries to whittle down the field and choose their candidate.

The US political system is dominated by two parties – Republicans and Democrats – and the 2020 presidential race was a contest between incumbent President Donald Trump (Republican) and former Vice-President Joe Biden (Democrat).

On 7 November Joe Biden collected enough Electoral College¹ votes to be named President-elect and, on 6 January 2021, Congress met in a joint session to confirm his election victory.

He will be inaugurated on 20 January 2021, with Kamala Harris sworn in as Vice-President.

¹ The BBC has a useful explainer on the Electoral College: [‘US election 2020: What is the electoral college?’](#) *BBC News Online*, 27 October 2020

2. Candidates

Donald Trump secured the Republican nomination with little opposition, whereas Joe Biden took the Democratic ticket after a competitive primary season that began with a large field of candidates.

2.1 President Donald J. Trump

President Trump was born on 14 June 1946, in Queens, New York City. He has married three times and has five children and ten grandchildren.

A billionaire real-estate developer, reality television star and author, Donald Trump was the first ever US presidential candidate without either military or elected political experience.

When running for the 2016 presidential election, Trump campaigned with the slogan “Make America Great Again”. He aimed to rebuild the nation’s industrial base and concentrate on domestic matters – such as the economy and immigration – ahead of foreign policy.

Trump was elected to be the 45th President, defeating Hillary Clinton.

During his four-year presidency, Trump has been a polarising figure and his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic has come under criticism.

Trump is the only president to have been impeached twice.

2.2 Former Vice-President Joe Biden

Joe Biden was born on 20 November 1942 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He has married twice and fathered four children (two are deceased). He has seven grandchildren.

In November 1972 Biden was elected as a Senator for Delaware, beginning a long career in elected office.

Biden previously ran for president on two occasions, in 1988 and 2008, and served as vice-president to President Barack Obama from 2009 to 2017.

In 2017 he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

3. Election campaign

There are numerous campaign issues that are important to voters in US elections. For the 2020 presidential election, as well as the economy being a major issue, the Covid-19 pandemic and the differing responses offered by the main candidates were a factor to voters when deciding who to vote for.

3.1 Covid-19 pandemic

The US has had a difficult year with the Covid-19 pandemic and is the country where Covid-19 has had the biggest impact, with 24 million confirmed cases and 400,000 deaths across the country.²

Coronavirus was one of the main issues for Democratic voters in the run-up to the election, with 82 per cent saying it was important in an August 2020 survey. By contrast, just 39 per cent of Republicans voters rated coronavirus a top issue.³

Donald Trump has downplayed the pandemic since the start, initially saying the virus would fade away (especially in warmer weather) and he was reported to be promoting unproven treatments.

Even after contracting the virus and spending time in hospital, Trump continued to hold large rallies and not wear a face covering.

Trump's defence was that, in the early days of the pandemic, he shut down the country to visitors from China and other hotspots, before introducing a wider ban on travel. His supporters say that without these actions the situation would have been even worse.

Joe Biden has been very critical of Trump's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, singling out Trump's rallies and his downplaying of the virus as major factors in the US suffering so badly.

Biden has set out a three-step plan for tackling the pandemic, in an approach that differs from Trump's.

The plan aims to: distribute 100 million vaccine jabs in Biden's first 100 days in office, pledges a face mask mandate to be signed on his first day in office, and ramp-up efforts to get children back to school safely.⁴

3.2 Economy

The economy was one of the top campaign issues for both Republican and Democratic voters, as America has seen unemployment skyrocket amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, Trump had a strong record in building a healthy, robust economy. But, with widespread lockdowns enforced by state leaders as a result of the pandemic, small businesses

² [Coronavirus Research Center](#), John Hopkins University

³ [Important issues in the 2020 election](#), Pew Research Center, 13 August 2020

⁴ ['Biden details plan to combat coronavirus pandemic in first 100 days'](#), *CNN*, 11 December 2020

throughout the country have had to close and millions of Americans are out of work.

Trump has been dismissive of lockdowns and said that such measures are harmful to the economy.

On a wider economic note, many Republicans have praised Trump's tax reform plan, which was viewed as a major overhaul of the tax system and resulted in tax cuts for many Americans.

Joe Biden had promised a "Build Back Better" plan, reversing some of Trump's tax cuts, shifting the burden back on America's wealthiest to help working- and middle-class Americans.

He supports a national minimum wage of \$15 an hour and has promised to pump billions of dollars into American business, in what would represent perhaps the biggest federal intervention in years.⁵

3.3 Healthcare

Healthcare is another constant, dominant factor in US presidential elections.

For the 2020 election, the coronavirus pandemic has made healthcare a particularly crucial issue for voters, with a lack of healthcare coverage leading to some difficulties in getting care, as well as the prospect of huge medical bills once people recover.

Donald Trump's main health policy has been to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) – aka "Obamacare". Although he was unable to do this entirely, his administration took several steps to weaken the ACA.

Three major steps include eliminating the ACA mandate, refusing to reimburse insurance companies for certain benefits, and allowing less-expensive insurance plans with fewer benefits.⁶

The US Supreme Court is hearing a case on whether the ACA should be replaced and President Trump's appointment of Justice Amy Coney Barrett, in the final months of his presidency, could prove pivotal. Coney Barrett has spoken critically about the ACA in the past, although she has not said whether she is in favour of the appeal.

Joe Biden has proposed protecting and building on the Affordable Care Act, expanding the plan to offer a "public option", as with Medicare.

He has proposed stopping "surprise billing" – when patients get unexpected bills after going to an out-of-network provider – and plans to double the federal investment in community health centres.

Biden's healthcare policy also includes repealing the law banning Medicare from negotiating with drug companies on prescription pharmaceutical prices and allowing Americans to buy prescription drugs from other countries.⁷

⁵ ['Biden's America'](#), *Sky News*, 18 January 2021

⁶ ['Donald Trump's Health Care Policies'](#), *The Balance*, 21 October 2020

⁷ ['Joe Biden: Where He Stands'](#), *US News and World Report*, 12 September 2020

3.4 Race relations

US presidential candidates' policies on race have long mattered in elections; in 2020 this was especially so.

The killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis in May led to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement protests expanding across the country.

The video of Floyd saying he could not breathe, while a police officer knelt on his neck, went viral and sparked a conversation about police killings and racism in the country.

Citizens of all colours protested across America; not just against police violence, but also against what they perceived as systemic racism. They called for large-scale police reform, with many – including senior Democratic figures – calling for a defunding of the police.

Critics of the BLM movement pointed towards the damage caused by the protests, with Trump calling the protesters “looters” and vowing to restore law and order to the streets.

Trump's opponents accused him of fanning the flames of racial tension and failing to unite the country.

Democrats were vocal in their support of the BLM movement and leading figures within the party, such as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, “took the knee” in solidarity.

Kamala Harris, the first Black Asian woman to be elected Vice-President, featured prominently in discussions on race and was outspoken for the BLM movement ahead of being picked as Biden's running-mate.

On 17 June 2020, in an interview on “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert”, Harris told Colbert that BLM protests should continue apace, saying:

They're not gonna stop. They're not gonna stop, and this is a movement, I'm telling you.

They're not gonna stop, and everyone beware, because they're not gonna stop. They're not gonna stop before Election Day in November, and they're not gonna stop after Election Day.

Everyone should take note of that, on both levels, that they're not going to let up – and they should not. And we should not.⁸

3.5 Abortion

Abortion is a topic of particular importance to voters and is critical to a large part of Trump's base: white evangelicals. Although small in number, this group goes to the polls in large numbers.

Although many conservative Protestant Christians hold values that are diametrically opposed to Trump's multiple marriages and divorces, the fact is they oppose abortion even more.

⁸ [‘Fact check: Quotes from Democratic leaders about riots, unrest taken out of context’](#), *USA Today*, 15 January 2021

In the 2020 presidential race, Trump was seen as the anti-abortion candidate and was the first sitting president to attend the anti-abortion “March for Life”.

On the other side of the spectrum, abortion is also an important issue for liberal voters and there is a large pro-choice movement within the Democratic Party.

For many, a vote for Biden is a vote for future pro-choice Supreme Court justices that would likely be nominated should any vacancies arise during his presidency.

3.6 Crime and policing

The many protests that took place in 2020, together with calls to defund the police, pushed crime and policing up the political agenda.

Donald Trump vowed to be the “law and order” president, urging state governors to make more arrests during the BLM protests and denouncing proposals to defund the police.

Republicans were also concerned about Democratic proposals to change the criminal justice system, including ending cash bail that often impacts low-income Americans.

In 2018 Trump signed into law a bipartisan measure aimed at reducing mandatory minimum sentences and expanding drug treatment programmes for prisoners and allowing prisoners to earn an early release.

Joe Biden wants to go further and reduce the number of people in prison, specifically those incarcerated for drug use alone.

He has pledged to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences and end the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine possession.

Further Biden commitments include eliminating the federal death penalty and directing the Justice Department to address systemic police and prosecutorial misconduct.

3.7 Immigration

One of Donald Trump’s main election pledges when first running for the presidency in 2016 was to build a wall on the US southern border with Mexico. Trump has dedicated a significant proportion of his presidency to promoting the wall and it has been a key feature of his campaign rallies.

Trump prioritised restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration and in, 2018, his administration enacted a zero-tolerance approach to illegal crossings. This policy, which led to thousands of children being separated from their parents whilst they awaited legal action, drew strong criticism both domestically and from abroad.

Joe Biden has committed to reuniting families that have been separated at the border and his immigration policy would allow a path to US

citizenship for people in the United States who were brought to the country as children, without legal status.

Since Biden was confirmed as President-elect, there have been reports of thousands of citizens from Central America heading to the US-Mexico border.⁹

3.8 Education

Throughout Trump's presidency, his central education goal has been to promote school choice. He also advocated for "patriotic education", describing the concept as teaching "American exceptionalism".

Trump has consistently attempted to cut education funding and his most recent budget proposal would have seen \$150 billion cut from federal student aid programmes over ten years, according to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.¹⁰

One exception has seen historically black colleges and universities seeing their federal funding increase under the Trump presidency, among other steps to raise their profile.

Joe Biden has made several commitments on education and his wife, Jill, is a community college professor.

He has pledged to eliminate the cost of tuition fees at community colleges and to erase student debt for those earning \$30,000 or less.

Biden has also pledged to increase funding for schools with low-income students and to "reinstate Obama-era programmes to diversify schools and work to ensure students of colour can learn from teachers of colour."¹¹

3.9 Foreign policy

President Trump has promoted a strong "America First" message in his foreign policy. This applies to his dealings with both allies and enemies across the globe.

Much of his presidency was clouded by claims of collusion with Russia, but Trump dismissed such accusations.

He has publicly engaged with North Korea and recently thawed tensions and renewed diplomatic relations between several Middle Eastern countries.

In December 2017 Trump announced his intention to relocate the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, from Tel Aviv. Although many viewed this move as a provocation, it reflected his renewed support for Israel and was enacted in 2018.

More recently, in 2020, the Trump Administration helped to broker deals to restore diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab

⁹ ['Migrant caravan trekking north to US border clashes with Guatemalan troops'](#), *the Guardian*, 17 January 2021

¹⁰ ['Donald Trump: Where He Stands'](#), *US News and World Report*, 10 August 2020

¹¹ ['Joe Biden: Where He Stands'](#), *US News and World Report*, 12 September 2020

States, including Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.

Trump has long seen China as the main threat to the US, both in terms of trade and also on the world stage as the dominant superpower.

President Trump maintained a trade war with China and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic only amplified tensions, especially with Trump repeatedly referring to Covid-19 as the “China Virus” or “Kung Flu”.

Trump also shook up leading international organisations: he cut US ties with the World Health Organisation after accusing it of being under Chinese control; and insisted the other NATO countries spend more on defence, with the aim of meeting the target of each member state spending at least two per cent of GDP on defence.

Although the latter policy alienated some European allies, it nonetheless resulted in billions of extra dollars for defence spending across the Alliance.

Joe Biden has promised to “restore” US democracy at home as an essential element of US leadership abroad.

He has criticised Trump for cosying up to Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, pledging that he will not “coddle dictators”.¹²

Biden has pledged to re-invest in the diplomatic corps and to strengthen historic partnerships, including a suggestion that he will place a higher value on NATO that the Trump administration did.

Joe Biden has described the European Union as one of “our closest allies”. The departure of the UK from the EU means that the UK will no longer be the bridge between the US and Europe: this could weaken the “special relationship”.

For more information on Biden’s foreign policy and how closely his objectives align with those of the UK, see Commons Library Briefing Paper 9080, [Biden and the UK](#), 15 December 2020

3.10 Trade and tariffs

As part of his “America First” agenda, Donald Trump has advocated for greater trade protectionism and, during his presidency, imposed a series of tariffs on China, Mexico, Canada, the European Union, and other trading partners.

His administration justified these policies on three grounds: that they would benefit American workers, especially in manufacturing; that they would give the United States leverage to renegotiate trade agreements with other countries; and that they were necessary to protect American national security.¹³

One of Trump’s first actions as President was to withdraw the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and, with the competition of the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA), Trump fulfilled his

¹² Ibid.

¹³ [Did Trump’s tariffs benefit American workers and national security?](#) The Brookings Institution, 10 September 2020

commitment to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Joe Biden's campaign website states: "The goal of every decision about trade must be to build the American middle class, create jobs, raise wages, and strengthen communities."¹⁴

He has sought to chart a course somewhere between Trump's trade wars and an uncritical acceptance of free trade during his presidential campaign, arguing Washington must "write the rules of the road"¹⁵ on trade within the existing international system.

Biden has shown support for the USMCA, saying: "What I've seen change is that the vast majority of the labour movement supported it."¹⁶

3.11 Climate and energy

Climate change is a top issue for Democratic voters, with 68 per cent saying it was important in an August 2020 survey. Only 11 per cent of Republicans voters rated climate change a major factor in the election.¹⁷

Donald Trump does not believe in climate change – he has called it a "hoax"¹⁸ – and withdrew the US from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, the international pact to limit global warming.

Trump also promised to revive the coal industry and expanded oil and gas drilling on federal land, championing fracking.

Trump has long linked environmental policy with the economy, suggesting additional measures to protect the environment would have a detrimental effect on the economy, and has been particularly critical of the "Green New Deal" proposed by leading Democrats, saying:

It'll kill millions of jobs, it'll crush the dreams of the poorest Americans, and disproportionately harm minority communities. I will not stand for it. We will defend the environment, but we will also defend American sovereignty, American prosperity, and we will defend American jobs.¹⁹

Joe Biden, by contrast, has pledged to return the US to the Paris Climate Agreement and has pledged trillions of taxpayer dollars to environmental policies to address climate change.

Although more moderate than the Green New Deal pushed by some Democrats, Biden's policy – if enacted – would still be the most progressive climate policy strategy the US has ever attempted.

¹⁴ [The Biden plan to ensure the future is "Made In All Of America" by all of America's workers](#), JoeBiden.com [accessed 18 January 2021]

¹⁵ [After Trump: What Will Biden Do on Trade?](#) Council on Foreign Relations, 13 January 2021

¹⁶ ['Biden Says He Supports USMCA, Citing Provisions for Labor'](#), *Financial Post*, 20 December 2019

¹⁷ [Important issues in the 2020 election](#), Pew Research Center, 13 August 2020

¹⁸ ['What does Trump actually believe on climate change?'](#) *BBC News Online*, 23 January 2020

¹⁹ ['Trump says Green New Deal would 'crush' poor Americans, touts environmental record'](#), *Fox News*, 8 July 2019

Biden has proposed making US electricity production carbon-free by 2035 and for the country to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century.

He also plans to spend \$2 trillion over four years to drive down emissions, by upgrading four million buildings to make them more energy efficient.²⁰

3.12 Gun policy

The Second Amendment to the US Constitution gives citizens the right to bear arms, a right more cherished by Republicans than Democrats.

With every presidential election, the candidates' policy on personal firearms and gun control is a factor for voters' decisions. This was especially so for the 2020 election, as Americans reacted to the protests spurred by the death of George Floyd and sought to protect their homes and businesses.

The two parties have opposing views on gun policy: Republicans favour greater liberty, arguing restrictions infringe on a fundamental right of self-defence guaranteed under the Second Amendment; whereas Democrats favour tighter restrictions, believing this will help prevent everyday gun violence, as well as mass shootings.

Donald Trump's position on guns has varied over the years. Although painting himself as a staunch defender of the Second Amendment, he has – in the past – called for background checks for gun buyers, in the wake of mass shootings.²¹

That said, the National Rifle Association (NRA), representing the powerful gun lobby in Washington, endorsed Trump's re-election campaign, saying:

You have done more than any president to protect the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. The NRA stands behind you and your administration.²²

Joe Biden supports universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons and a federal gun buyback scheme. He also supports the development of "smart gun" technology, using biometrics to ensure that only authorised owners of guns would be able to pull the trigger.

Biden also supports restricting gun purchases and possession by fugitives, people convicted of hate crimes and those deemed by the Social Security Administration to be unable to manage their own affairs.

Everytown for Gun Safety, the largest gun safety group in America, endorsed Biden in his election campaign, saying:

Americans know Joe Biden — and we can trust he'll fight like hell for new, common-sense gun safety measures to keep us safe.²³

²⁰ ['Joe Biden: How the president-elect plans to tackle climate change'](#), *BBC News Online*, 10 November 2020

²¹ ['A timeline of Trump's record on gun control reform'](#), *ABC News*, 5 August 2019

²² [NRA-PVF Endorses President Donald Trump for Reelection](#), NRA National Rifle Association Political Victory Fund (NRA-PVF), 20 July 2020

²³ [Everytown For Gun Safety Endorses Vice President Joe Biden For President](#), Everytown for Gun Safety, 9 March 2020

3.13 Supreme Court appointments

Of the nine Justices of the Supreme Court, three were nominated by President Trump. Neil Gorsuch was appointed in 2017, Brett Kavanaugh in 2018 and Amy Coney Barrett in 2020.

The latter was to replace the vacancy that arose following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a liberal icon, who died due to complications from pancreatic cancer on 18 September 2020.

Her death set off a heated debate on whether she should be replaced immediately, or whether to wait until after the election. It marked an important moment in the weeks leading up to the presidential election, as appointments are for life and the balance of the Supreme Court could be tipped in favour of conservatives for generations to come.

Democrats were keen to wait until after the election – hoping Biden would win – but Trump cited a plan by many Democrats to “pack” the court and add more justices, a question Biden has avoided answering.

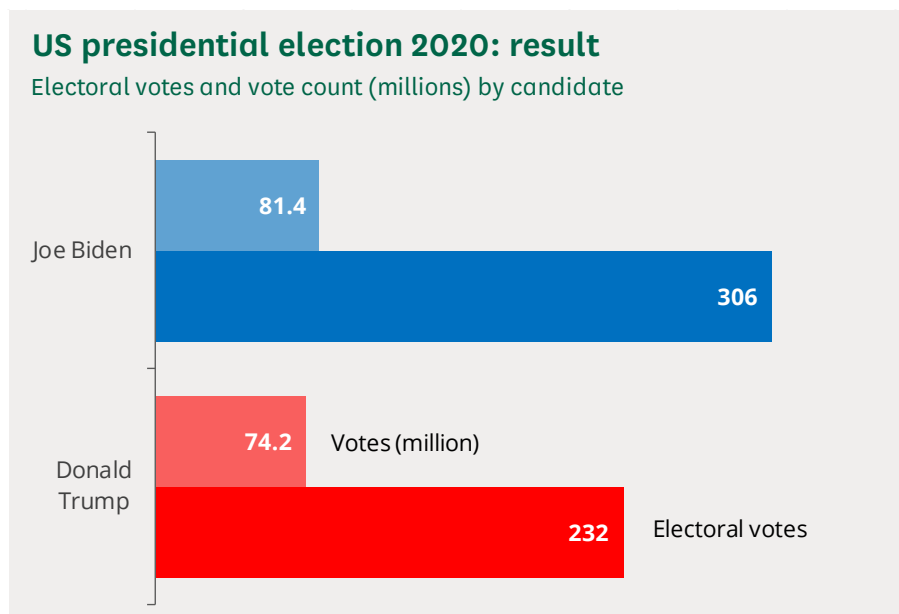
4. Election results

The US presidential election was held on 3 November 2020 and Joe Biden's victory was declared on 7 November and confirmed on 14 December.

He won 51.3 per cent of the vote, compared with 46.8 per cent for the incumbent President Donald Trump.

However, winning the most votes ("the popular vote") is not always enough to win the US presidential election: the election is decided by the number of electoral votes each candidate wins. Each state represents a number of "Electoral College" votes and this number varies with the size of its population.

The chart below shows the number of votes and electoral votes won by each candidate.



Note: as of 12 January 2021. Vote counts continue in Illinois, Colorado and Alaska; 99% of votes here have been counted.

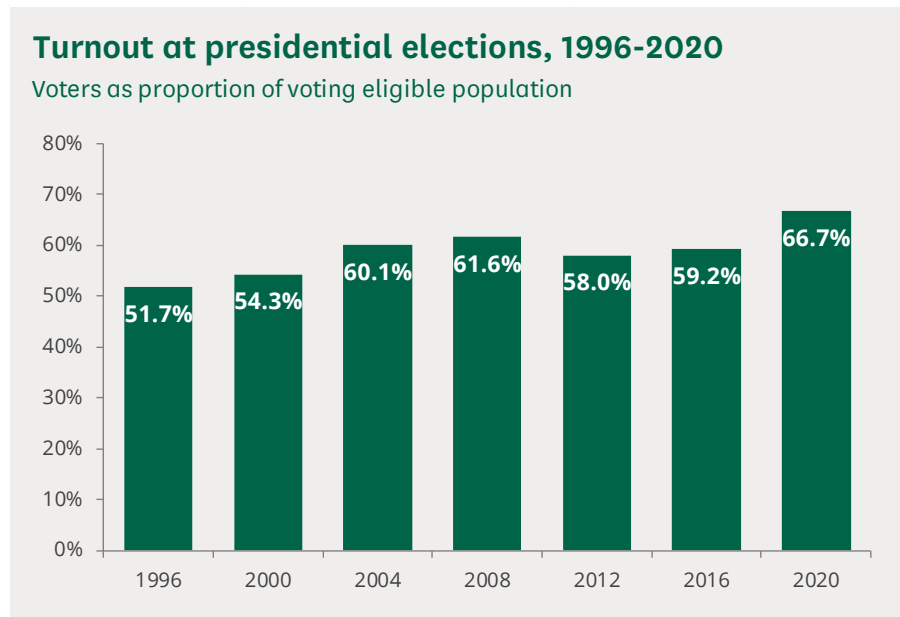
Source: [Associated Press](#)

Various news outlets have produced maps visualising the distribution of electoral votes by state, see for example the [New York Times](#), [Bloomberg](#), the [BBC](#), and the [Financial Times](#).

5. Turnout and voting methods

It was widely reported prior to the election that more Americans had voted before election day (either by post or by voting early in person) than the number voting overall in the previous election.²⁴ At 66.7 per cent, turnout was the highest since 1900 (when it was 73.7 per cent).²⁵

The chart below shows turnout at presidential elections since 1996.



Note: as of 12 January 2021. Vote counts continue in Illinois, Colorado and Alaska; 99% of votes here have been counted.

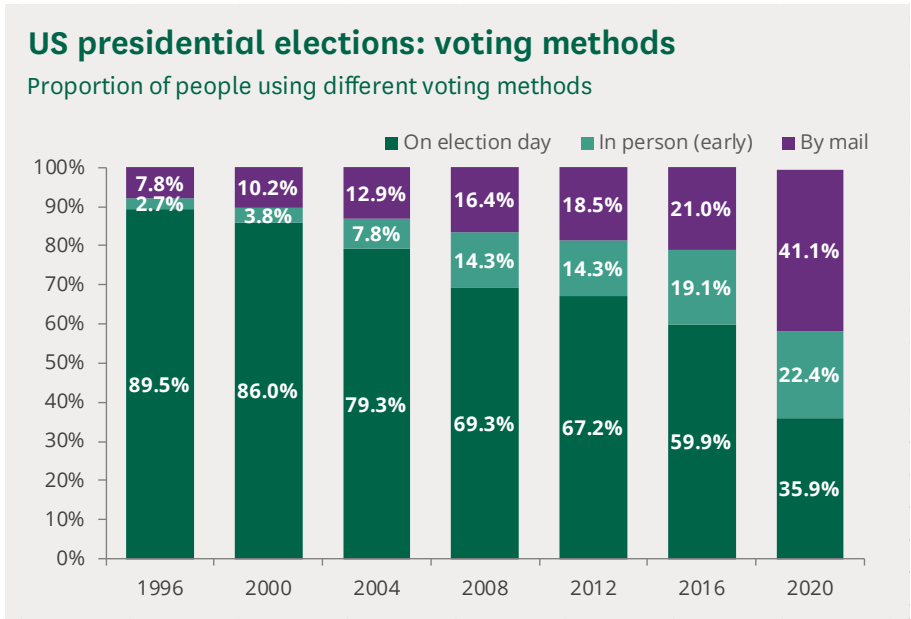
Source: The American Presidency Project (UC Santa Barbara), [data archive](#) (accessed on 12 January); Council on Foreign Relations, [The 2020 Election by the Numbers](#), 15 December 2020 (accessed on 12 January 2021)

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, many voters favoured alternative voting methods. About 36 per cent of voters voted in person on election day, with 41 per cent voting by mail and 22 per cent voting in person before election day.

This was substantially more than in previous elections, as shown in the chart below. Note that the data represented below comes with a degree of uncertainty, as voting data for 2020 is not yet complete and data for earlier years are survey-based.

²⁴ E.g. Bloomberg, [Voter turnout hits historic levels with states still counting votes](#), 4 November 2020, (accessed on 12 January 2021)

²⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, [The 2020 Election by the Numbers](#), 15 December 2020 (accessed on 12 January 2021)



Note: the 2020 data are based on an article from 15 December and are therefore subject to revision. Data for earlier years is survey data and come with a degree of uncertainty, particularly as these data tend to suggest higher turnout than was actually recorded

Sources: Census Bureau, [Characteristics of Voters in the Presidential Election of 2016](#), table 3; Council on Foreign Relations, [The 2020 Election by the Numbers](#), 15 December 2020 (accessed on 12 January 2021)

Analysis suggests that people who voted early mostly supported the Democrats (44.8 per cent, compared with 30.5 per cent for the Republicans).²⁶

²⁶ US Elections Project, [2020 General Election Early Vote Statistics](#), last updated on 23 November 2020 (accessed 12 January 2021)

6. Post-election events

It took several days for state results to be called and the counting of ballots is ongoing, although 99 per cent have been counted as of Inauguration Day.

There were also recounts in some districts and states, with Georgia conducting several recounts.

President Trump made allegations of electoral fraud, including suggestions that some mail-in ballots were mishandled, and filed a number of lawsuits in multiple states.

He initially refused to concede the election and urged his supporters to “stop the steal”, suggesting the Democratic Party had rigged the election to install their candidate as President.

On 6 January 2021 – the day Congress was due to meet in a joint session to confirm Joe Biden’s victory – Donald Trump addressed thousands of his supporters who had gathered in Washington DC.

Later, a crowd marched to the US Capitol Building as the confirmation proceedings took place.

Large numbers of protesters swarmed the building and dozens entered, forcing their way into the chamber of the House of Representatives and temporarily halting proceedings. This marked the first time since the war of 1812 that the seat of US democracy had been breached.

One woman was shot dead by police during the violent protest and, later, a police officer and three others also lost their lives.

President-elect Biden labelled the violence an “insurrection” and said the protesters’ activity “borders on sedition.” Speaking from Wilmington, Delaware, he called on Trump to “step up” and repudiate the violence:

I call on President Trump to go on national television now to fulfil his oath and defend the Constitution and demand an end to this siege.

To storm the Capitol, to smash windows, to occupy offices on the floor of the United States Senate, rummaging through desks, on the House of Representatives, threatening the safety of duly elected officials.

It's not protest; it's insurrection.²⁷

In responding, Trump told his supporters to go home, but repeated his claims of election fraud:

I know your pain. I know you're hurt.

We had an election that was stolen from us. It was a landslide election, and everyone knows it, especially the other side.

But you have to go home now. We have to have peace.²⁸

²⁷ [‘Biden blasts Trump supporters’ ‘siege’ of Capitol’](#), *BBC News Online*, 7 January 2021

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Later, Capitol Police regained control of the building and the US Congress certified Biden's win.

Following the events at the Capitol, Twitter suspended President Trump's account – his main avenue of connecting with his supporters – as the social media platform feared his posts could stoke further tensions and violence.

Democrat leaders in Congress immediately began calling for Trump to be removed from office, either through the use of the 25th Amendment or via impeachment.

On 11 January, with only nine days remaining of the Trump presidency, an Article of Impeachment alleging Trump had incited the violent scenes at the US Capitol was introduced in the House of Representatives.

This was the first time in history that a president had twice been impeached.

Trump faces a trial in the Senate, but this will take place after he leaves office, with Joe Biden being sworn in on 20 January.

Despite the post-election events, a large proportion of President Trump's base continue to support him.

7. Election timeline (2020 -)

US presidential election campaigns run for many months – even years. This timeline picks up the key events in the campaign from 2020 to Inauguration Day.

7.1 2020

January 2020

- 13 January Cory Booker drops out of the Democratic race
- 14 January The seventh Democratic Party debate takes place in Des Moines, Iowa
- 15 January Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi signs the articles of impeachment against President Trump. The Sergeant-at-Arms and House Clerk deliver them to the Senate. The House Clerk announces to the Senate leadership that President Trump had been impeached and must stand trial
- 21 January The first US case of Covid-19 is confirmed in Washington state

February 2020

- 3 February Pete Buttigieg wins the Iowa caucuses, narrowly defeating Bernie Sanders
- 4 February President Trump delivers the State of the Union Address
- 5 February The Senate ends the impeachment trial of President Trump and votes to acquit him
- 7 February The eighth Democratic Party debate takes place in Goffstown, New Hampshire
- 11 February Bernie Sanders wins the New Hampshire primary, in a slim victory over Pete Buttigieg
- 12 February Andrew Yang drops out of the Democratic race
- 19 February The ninth Democratic Party debate takes place in Las Vegas, Nevada
- 22 February Bernie Sanders wins the Nevada caucus
- 25 February The tenth Democratic party takes place in Charleston, South Carolina
- 26 February Democratic Party debate in South Carolina
- 29 February Joe Biden wins the South Carolina primary by a large margin

March 2020

- 1 March Pete Buttigieg drops out of the Democratic race
- 2 March Amy Klobuchar drops out of the Democratic race
Klobuchar and Buttigieg endorse Joe Biden
- 3 March “Super Tuesday”: the big date in the primary calendar when 14 states – plus American Samoa and Democrats Abroad – vote for their preferred candidate.

Joe Biden wins 10 of the 14 states (gaining 726 delegates); Bernie Sanders wins the other four (adding 505 delegates to his tally).
- 4 March Michael Bloomberg drops out of the Democratic race, having spent \$500 million of his own money on his candidacy
- 5 March Elizabeth Warren drops out of the Democratic race
- 8 March Kamala Harris, who dropped out of the Democratic race on 3 December 2019, endorses Joe Biden for President
- 9 March Cory Booker endorses Joe Biden
- 10 March On a day with six primaries taking place, Biden win five states (Idaho, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri and Washington) and Sanders wins one (North Dakota caucus)
- 11 March The World Health Organisation declares Covid-19 to be a pandemic
- 13 March President Trump declares a national emergency regarding the Covid-19 pandemic
- 14 March Bernie Sanders wins the Northern Mariana Islands caucus
- 15 March The eleventh Democratic Party debate takes place in Washington DC. In the debate, Biden promises to choose a woman as his vice-presidential running mate if he were to win the Democratic nomination.
- 17 March Three Democratic primaries (Arizona, Florida, Illinois) take place and Biden wins them all
- 19 March Tulsi Gabbard drops out of the Democratic race and endorses Joe Biden

April 2020

- 7 April Joe Biden secures a clear win in the Wisconsin Democratic primary
- 8 April Bernie Sanders suspends his campaign, effectively making Joe Biden the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate
- 10 April Biden wins the Alaska Democratic primary

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13 April Bernie Sanders endorses Joe Biden for President

17 April Biden wins the Wyoming Democratic caucuses

28 April Biden wins the Ohio Democratic primary

May 2020

2 May Biden wins the Kansas Democratic primary

12 May Biden wins the Nebraska Democratic primary

19 May Biden wins the Oregon Democratic primary

22 May Biden is declared the winner of the Hawaii Democratic primary

25 May George Floyd dies after being arrested by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His death sparks nationwide protests over the months ahead and becomes a campaign issue.

31 May Amid continuing violent riots across the US in the wake of George Floyd's death, President Trump announces his plans to label Antifa a terrorist organisation.

June 2020

2 June Biden wins all eight Democratic primaries taking place today (District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and South Dakota)

6 June Biden wins both Democratic primaries in Guam and the US Virgin Islands and gains enough delegates to official become the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee.

9 June Biden wins Democratic primaries in Georgia and West Virginia

20 June In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Trump holds his first public rally since the Covid-19 pandemic took hold

23 June Biden wins the Democratic primaries in Kentucky and New York

30 June Biden announces he does not plan to hold any more campaign rallies due to the Covid-19 pandemic

July 2020

7 July Biden wins Democratic primaries in Delaware and New Jersey

11 July Biden wins the Louisiana Democratic primary

12 July Biden wins the Puerto Rico Democratic primary

30 July With many states pushing for mail-in voting due to safety concerns in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, President Trump suggests delaying the election, claiming postal voting is unreliable and open to fraud

August 2020

- 11 August Biden announces Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running-mate and wins the Connecticut Democratic primary
- 17-20 August Democratic Party Convention, with most speakers beaming in remotely
- 18 August Joe Biden is formally nominated Democratic candidate for the Presidential election
- 24 August Jacob Blake is shot by police officers responding to a domestic incident in Wisconsin. Protests erupt across the state and, later, nationwide.
- 24-27 August Republican Party Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina
- On the final day of the Convention, Trump accepts the Republican candidacy

September 2020

- 18 September US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies
- 26 September President Trump announces his intention to nominate Judge Amy Coney Barrett to fill the vacancy on the US Supreme Court
- 29 September The first presidential debate is held in Cleveland, Ohio

October 2020

- 2 October President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump reveal they have both tested positive for Covid-19
- Trump is admitted to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after experiencing mild symptoms
- 5 October Trump is discharged from Walter Reed and returns to the White House
- 7 October The sole Vice-Presidential debate takes place in Salt Lake City, Utah
- 22 October The final Presidential debate take place in Nashville, Tennessee
- 26 October The Senate votes to confirm Amy Coney Barrett's nomination to the US Supreme Court
- 27 October Amy Coney Barrett takes the judicial oath

November 2020

- 3 November Election Day
- 7 November With Pennsylvania being called for Biden, the major news networks in the US declare he now has the required 270 electoral college votes to be named President-elect
- President Trump refuses to concede

December 2020

- 14 December The Electoral College meets to formally vote for the President and Vice President. Biden officially receives 306 votes and Trump gets 232.

7.2 2021

January 2021

- 3 January The 117th US Congress convenes
- 5 January In the Georgia Senate run-off, both Democratic candidates are victorious. The result means Joe Biden's Democratic Party will control both houses in Congress
- 6 January Trump addresses thousands of his supporters, who have gathered in Washington DC
- Congress meets in a joint session to confirm Joe Biden's election victory, with a group of Republican Senators having pledged to object to the count
- Protesters enter the US Capitol building, temporarily halting proceedings
- 11 January With only nine days remaining of the Trump presidency, an Article of Impeachment alleging Trump had incited the violent scenes at the US Capitol is introduced in the House of Representatives.
- 12 January The House passes a resolution calling on Vice President Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment, to remove Trump from office. Pence states that he refuses to do so.
- 13 January The House formally votes to impeach Trump, making him the first US president to be impeached twice.
- 20 January Inauguration Day: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will be sworn in as President and Vice President respectively.
- Trump has pledged not to attend Biden's inauguration ceremony

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