

UMass Lowell  
Survey of North Carolina Likely Voters

September 18-25, 2020

**N=921 North Carolina Likely Voters**

**The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-4.1%**

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

Survey design and analysis by Joshua J. Dyck, Director and John Cluverius, Associate Director,  
Center for Public Opinion, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Do you have a question about this poll? If so, tweet @UML\_CPO and we'll get back to you.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

### *Trump and Biden tied in tight North Carolina race*

President Donald Trump and Former Vice President Joe Biden are deadlocked in the contest for North Carolina's 15 Electoral Votes in a new swing state poll of North Carolina likely voters released by the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion. North Carolina has been in the swing state conversation since 2008, when Barack Obama surprised everyone and carried the state by less than 0.5%. Republicans won the state by 2% in 2012 and 3.6% in 2016.

With minor party candidates included on the ballot, Trump polls at 47%, Biden at 47%, other candidates at 3% and 2% of North Carolina likely voters say they are undecided.

Biden wins the support of 92% of Democratic voters in North Carolina, while Trump wins the support of 91% of Republicans. The two candidates are splitting pure Independents nearly evenly, with 42% supporting Trump, 40% supporting Biden, 11% supporting another candidate, and 7% undecided. Biden's support is higher among respondents with a college degree, 57% to Trump's 39%, while Trump leads among those without a college degree 51% to 43%.

White voters in North Carolina support Trump, 57% to 39%, while Black voters overwhelmingly support Biden, 75% to 16%. We also see notable differences by gender, with women supporting Biden 51% to 44%, and men supporting Trump 51% to 43%. Young voters strongly back Biden,



with those under 45 indicating they will vote for Biden at 52% compared to 36% for Trump, while those over 45 support Trump at 54% to 45% for Biden.

Trump's approval rating reflects the divided nature of the North Carolina electorate – 49% approve of the job he is doing as President and 51% disapprove. Among approvers, 33% strongly approve and 16% somewhat approve of Trump's performance as President. Among disapprovers, only 9% somewhat disapprove, while 42% strongly disapprove of the job he is doing as President.

Among Democrats, 94% disapprove of President Trump's job performance, including 82% who strongly disapprove. Among independents, 58% disapprove of his job performance, including 39% who strongly disapprove. Among Republicans, 9% disapprove of his job performance, including 4% who strongly disapprove. Contrast this with Trump's approval numbers. Among Republicans, 64% strongly approve while 28% somewhat approve. In North Carolina, the electorate is relatively divided about Trump overall performance in office, but his negatives are more strongly negative than his positives are strongly positive. This could spell trouble when it comes to turnout in an election that appears to be closely contested.

Further evidence of polarization in this country comes from two questions on whether the Biden and Trump campaigns, respectively, have been cheating in order to win the election. Less than half of North Carolina likely voters say that Biden and his allies have been cheating "a great deal" (27%) or "somewhat" (20%), while over half say that Trump and his allies have been cheating "a great deal" (36%) or "somewhat" (17%). As we see in the other states included in the release today, these numbers break down by party identification, but the perception of partisan cheating by Trump among Democrats is exceptionally high: 69% of Democrats think Trump and his allies are cheating "a great deal," compared to 50% of Republicans who think Biden and his allies are cheating "a great deal." These perceptions of cheating could raise questions about the legitimacy of the election as election results start coming in on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Senate Challenger Cunningham (D) leads incumbent Tillis (R) by 6; Cooper (D) up 13 points in Gubernatorial reelection bid*

In the race for U.S. Senate in North Carolina, incumbent Republican Senator Thom Tillis has found himself in a difficult race against Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham, a decorated military officer in the Army Reserves and former state senator. The race is in the national spotlight as it is a possible flip for Democrats, who need to gain four seats to regain control of the chamber.

Cunningham leads Tillis by 6 points, with 49% of North Carolina likely voters supporting Cunningham, 43% for Tillis, 1% for another candidate, and 7% undecided. Cunningham's lead is bolstered by support from a large percentage of Democratic voters (90%), leading among Independents, 41% to 36%, and also by gaining the support of 11% of Republican identifying cross-over voters.



In the race for Governor, incumbent Democratic Governor Roy Cooper leads his challenger, Republican Dan Forest 54% to 41%. Cooper is winning big among ideologically moderate voters, who make up nearly a third (32%) of North Carolina's electorate. Cooper wins moderates 77% to Forest's 18%. Cooper is also winning among liberals, 93% to 4%, while Forest is ahead among conservatives 74% to 21%.

*North Carolina voters prefer that the President wait on nominating Ginsburg's successor*

Our survey also asked about whether the next Supreme Court justice – the replacement for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg – should be appointed by the current President or by the winner of the 2020 Presidential election. Here, we find that a majority, 53%, of North Carolina likely voters say that the winner of the Presidential election should appoint Justice Ginsburg's successor to the high court, while 47% say that the sitting President should appoint the next supreme court justice.

In a state where Trump and Biden are tied, this 6-point gap in how to handle supreme court succession could be important in the final vote disposition. Democrats are unified – 93% say the winner of the 2020 election should appoint Ginsburg's successor. Likewise, 55% of Independents agree that it should be the winner of the 2020 election and not the sitting President. Finally, 13% of Republicans dissent from the party stance here and believe that the winner of the election should appoint Ginsburg's successor. When we look at the data by gender, 56% of women believe that Ginsburg's successor should be appointed by the 2020 winner, while 44% believe it should be the sitting President. Men are split more evenly, with half (50%) saying the 2020 winner should appoint and half (50%) saying the current President should appoint.

*Other Findings from the poll*

- A majority (57%) of North Carolina likely voters think it's not safe to re-open local public schools for face-to-face instruction (30% say definitely not safe, 27% say probably not safe, 28% say probably safe, 16% say definitely safe).
- Asked who they think will win the 2020 Presidential election, North Carolina likely voters give a Trump reelection the edge: 47% say Trump and 37% say Biden.
- 34% of North Carolina likely voters think things in the country are headed in the right direction, while 66% say things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track.
- North Carolina is a no-fault absentee balloting state that also has an extensive in-person early voting program. Among likely voters, 28% say they plan to vote by mail, 43% say they plan to vote early in person, while 29% plan to vote in person on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- North Carolina is one of a handful of states where voting has already begun. Among those voters we classified as likely voters, 8% indicated that they had "already voted." Biden leads Trump among those who have already voted, 77% to 21%. By intended voting method, Biden leads Trump 72%-23% among intended vote-by-mail voters, they



are tied 49%-49% among intended early voters, and Trump leads Biden 68%-23% among intended election day voters.