

UMass Lowell  
Survey of New Hampshire Likely Voters

October 16-26, 2020

**N=757 New Hampshire Likely Voters**

**The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-4.5%**

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

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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

### *Biden leads Trump by 10 points in the Granite State*

Former Vice President Joe Biden has extended his lead over President Donald Trump in the contest for New Hampshire's four electoral votes in a new swing state poll of New Hampshire likely voters released by the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion. New Hampshire was hotly contested in 2016 with Hillary Clinton besting Trump by fewer than 3000 total votes, a margin of less than one half of one percent.

In a September 29, 2020 UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion poll, Biden led Trump by eight points. He now leads by ten. With minor party candidates included on the ballot, Biden polls at 53%, Trump at 43%, other candidates at 3%, and 2% of New Hampshire likely voters remain undecided. Biden's growing lead, now in double digits, stands in stark contrast to what we observed in 2016 polling. An early October 2016 poll showed Hillary Clinton with a 6-point lead over Donald Trump, but by early November, that lead evaporated and the race was tied. A critical swing state in the 2016 election, New Hampshire appears with a clearly blue hue in the 2020 Presidential race.

Biden is winning 96% of self-identified Democrats, while Trump is winning 87% of Republicans. However, among pure Independents, 39% are for Biden compared to only 45% for Trump. Biden's support is much higher among respondents with a Bachelor's degree (63% Biden to 32% for Trump) while Trump does better among those without a college degree, 50% Trump to 47%



Biden. However, this number represents a bit of a collapse for Trump who counted on the votes of working class voters in states like New Hampshire in 2016. Biden is also winning voters 18-44 by a 25 point margin, 60% to 35%, while he also leads by a smaller margin among those over 45, 50% to 46%.

While New Hampshire does not have early in-person voting, due to the pandemic, Granite State voters were allowed to request a no-fault absentee ballot, and the turnout in the state has already reached 24% of the 2016 total.<sup>1</sup> In our survey, 24% of respondents reported that they had already voted. Among those who have voted, Biden leads Trump by a large margin, 80% to 19%.

While Trump trails Biden, his approval rating is 44%, almost equivalent with vote percentage in the head-to-head with Biden. While many voters who had a negative view of Trump in 2016 ended up ultimately supporting him, the fact that his vote total tracks so closely with his approval shows that when opinions about Trump are negative, they are very negative. Among the 56% who disapprove of Trump, 48% *strongly disapprove*.

With the two presidential debates in the books, a plurality of New Hampshire likely voters believe that Joe Biden was the winner of the first debate, but believe Trump did significantly better at the second debate. On the first debate, Biden was given the nod by 46% of voters compared to 31% for Trump; another 14% said the debate was a draw and 9% were unsure. On the second debate, 40% gave Trump the win, 34% gave Biden the win, 19% said it was a draw, and 7% said they were unsure. When asked about the overall quality of the 2020 debates compared to previous years, 75% of New Hampshire likely voters said that the debates were worse than in previous years, 10% said they were better, 10% said they were about the same, and 5% were unsure.

### *Shaheen, Sununu maintain double-digit leads in other statewide races*

Two prominent and well-liked Granite State incumbents continue to lead their challengers by comfortable margins in the races for US Senate and Governor.

Democratic U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen leads her challenger, Republican Corky Messner, by 19 points, 57% to 38% with 1% saying they will vote for another candidate and 4% still undecided. In last month's poll, Shaheen led by an equivalent margin, 19 points, 56% to 37%. Shaheen continues to win the support of an impressive 97% of Democrats, but also 48% of Independents and 16% of Republicans.

Meanwhile, incumbent Republican Governor Chris Sununu leads Democratic challenger Dan Feltes by 23 points, 59% to 36%, with 1% saying they will vote for another candidate and 4%

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<sup>1</sup> <https://electproject.github.io/Early-Vote-2020G/index.html>



saying they are undecided. Sununu's lead is down 3 points from a month ago when a UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion poll had him ahead by 26 points, 60% to 34%. Sununu wins the support of 92% of Republicans, but also 69% of Independents and 24% of Democrats.

### *The Pandemic Election*

The 2020 election has been a remarkably stable election, but it is unique because it has been overtaken one issue more than any other, the reality of the coronavirus pandemic. On this issue, President Trump has struggled, and it is clear from our polling that COVID-19 is the albatross that explains much of why the President went from barely losing New Hampshire in 2016 to trailing by double digits with less than a week to go in the campaign.

Asked how satisfied they are with the federal government's response to COVID-19, 58% of New Hampshire likely voters say they are unsatisfied, compared to 42% who are satisfied. Asked who is better suited to handle the pandemic, likely voters give the edge to Biden, 53% to 38% for Trump. On the question of whether it is safe to re-open schools, 54% of New Hampshire likely voters say that is either probably (34%) or definitely (20%) not safe to reopen local public schools for face-to-face instruction. Finally, when asked if Donald Trump could have avoided contracting COVID-19 by wearing a mask more often, 72% of likely voters say yes, while 27% say no.

Without COVID-19 case rates rising in many states, including New Hampshire, these questions suggest that the pandemic and the federal government response continues to be a losing issue for President Trump. When the question is who will best handle the economy, Trump beats Biden 48% to 45% in New Hampshire. That is his signature issue and an election contested on that issue alone might look very different. But, as the pandemic has taken over the narrative, Trump has found himself in the uncomfortable and difficult position of trying to defend his record on the pandemic – a regard that the majority of voters in New Hampshire give him poor marks on.

### *Other Findings from the poll*

- New Hampshire likely voters were split on whether they were in favor of their Senators voting to confirm Justice Amy Coney Barrett: 51% said Senators should vote for the nomination and 49% said they should vote against.
- Asked who they think will win the 2020 Presidential election, Granite State likely voters give Biden the edge: 44% say Biden will win and 41% say Trump will win. Biden led on this same question by 5 points in late September. Voters continue to view the race as competitive, even in the face of Biden's growing lead in state and national polling.
- The Trump campaign has made a concerted effort to pin to Joe Biden the label of a "corrupt politician," tying him to his son's activities in the Ukraine. Has it worked? Head to head, our survey asked likely voters about the candidates on a number of dimensions. On the question of "who is more corrupt?" 54% say Trump and 35% say Biden, with 8% saying they are about equal, and 3% unsure.