

UMass Lowell
Survey of Texas Likely Voters

September 18-25, 2020

N=882 Texas Likely Voters

The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-4.3%

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.

HIGHLIGHTS

Trump up 3 in close Texas race

President Donald Trump has an apparent lead over former Vice President Joe Biden in a close contest for Texas' 38 Electoral Votes in a new swing state poll of Texas likely voters released by the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion. Texas has long been considered a solid Republican-leaning state, but the realities of population growth and demographic change are slowly turning the state more and more competitive.

With minor party candidates included on the ballot, Trump has the support of 49% of Texas likely voters, Biden is at 46%, other candidates are at 4%, and 1% of Texas likely voters say they are undecided. The poll carries a margin or error of +/-4.3%.

Biden is winning 95% of Democrats, while Trump is winning 93% of Republicans. However, among pure Independents, 43% are for Biden compared to 39% for Trump. Biden does better among respondents with Bachelor's degree (50% Biden to 44% for Trump) while Trump does better among those without a college degree (52% Trump to 43% Biden). While men are more likely to vote for Trump (52% Trump, 42% Biden), Trump is polling nearly even with Biden among women in Texas (49% Biden, 47% Trump); Biden likely needs to widen the gender gap in order to carry the state.



While Trump leads Biden, his approval rating is just above water at 50% approve and 49% disapprove. Among those who approve, 37% do so strongly and 13% somewhat. Among Trump disapprovers, 9% do so somewhat, and 40% strongly disapprove of the way he is handling his job as President. Among Democrats, 95% disapprove of President Trump's job performance, including 83% who strongly disapprove. Among independents, 60% disapprove of his job performance, including 39% who strongly disapprove. Among Republicans, 7% disapprove of his job performance, including 4% who strongly disapprove. But, among the 92% of Republicans who approve of Trump's job performance, 69% strongly approve, while 23% somewhat approve. As reelection campaigns are often a referendum on the incumbent, the approval numbers indicate a polarized electorate and also indicate strong disdain for the President among his disapprovers – *those who dislike Trump really dislike him*. Whether that strong disapproval is enough to turn Texas into a competitive state as the campaign moves on remains to be seen.

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. Slightly less than half of Texas likely voters say that Biden and his allies have been cheating “a great deal” (32%) or “somewhat” (16%), while half say that Trump and his allies have been cheating “a great deal” (36%) or “somewhat” (14%). As expected, these numbers break down by party identification, but the perception of partisan cheating by Trump among Democrats is higher: 72% of Democrats think Trump and his allies are cheating “a great deal,” and 57% of Republicans think Biden and his allies are cheating “a great deal.”

Cornyn with 10-point lead on challenger Hegar

In a closely watched US Senate race in Texas, Republican incumbent Senator John Cornyn leads Democratic challenger MJ Hegar, 50% to 40% with 1% of likely voters saying they will vote for another candidate and 9% of voters undecided.

While Cornyn leads by a comfortable margin, his lead also does not project strength; rather that he is running against a relatively unknown challenger. Cornyn is leading among Republicans 91% to Hegar's 3%, while Hegar leads among Democrats 83% to 7%. However, Hegar also leads among Independents by 9 points, 44% to 35%. Notably, 10% of Democrats and 11% of Independents remain undecided, compared to only 6% of Republicans.

As a challenger, Hegar's relative anonymity among Texas voters shows up in her favorables. She has a net favorability rating of +13 (35% to 22%), but a large number of Texas voters either have no opinion of her (26%) or have never heard of her (17%). Cornyn, by contrast, is not a particularly popular incumbent. His favorability rating is net neutral (38% favorable, 38% unfavorable), while 19% of likely voters have no opinion of the Senator and 5% have never heard of him.



A majority of Texas voters prefer that the President wait on nominating Ginsburg's successor

Respondents were also asked 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 see a majority, 54%, of Texas likely voters say that the winner of the Presidential election should appoint Justice Ginsburg's successor to the high court, while 46% say that the sitting President should appoint her successor.

How important this issue becomes to the campaign remains to be seen. Democrats are unified on this issue – 93% say the winner of the 2020 election should appoint Ginsburg's successor. Among independents, 63% agree that it should be the winner of the 2020 election and not the sitting President. Finally, 17% of Republicans dissent from the party stance here and believe that the winner of the election should appoint Ginsburg's successor.

Other Findings from the poll

- Governor Greg Abbott has an approval rating of 55% (28% strongly approve, 27% somewhat approve)
- Texas voters are split on whether it's safe to re-open local public schools. A slim majority (51%) of Texas likely voters think it's not safe to re-open local public schools for face-to-face instruction (26% say definitely not safe, 25% say probably not safe, 28% say probably safe, 21% say definitely safe).
- Asked who they think will win the 2020 Presidential election, Texas likely voters give Trump the edge: 49% say Trump will win and 37% say Biden will win.
- 37% of likely voters think things in the country are headed in the right direction, while 63% say things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track.
- Texas provides absentee ballots only to those voters who are unable to vote in person (i.e. they must provide a valid excuse). All other voters are expected to vote in person, but Texas does offer early between October 13 and October 30. Among likely voters, 15% say they plan to vote by mail, 64% say they plan to vote early, in person, while 22% plan to vote in person on election day. Among those who intend to vote-by-mail Biden leads 69% to 25%, among intended early voters Trump leads 50% to 46% and among election day voters Trump leads 66% to 29%.