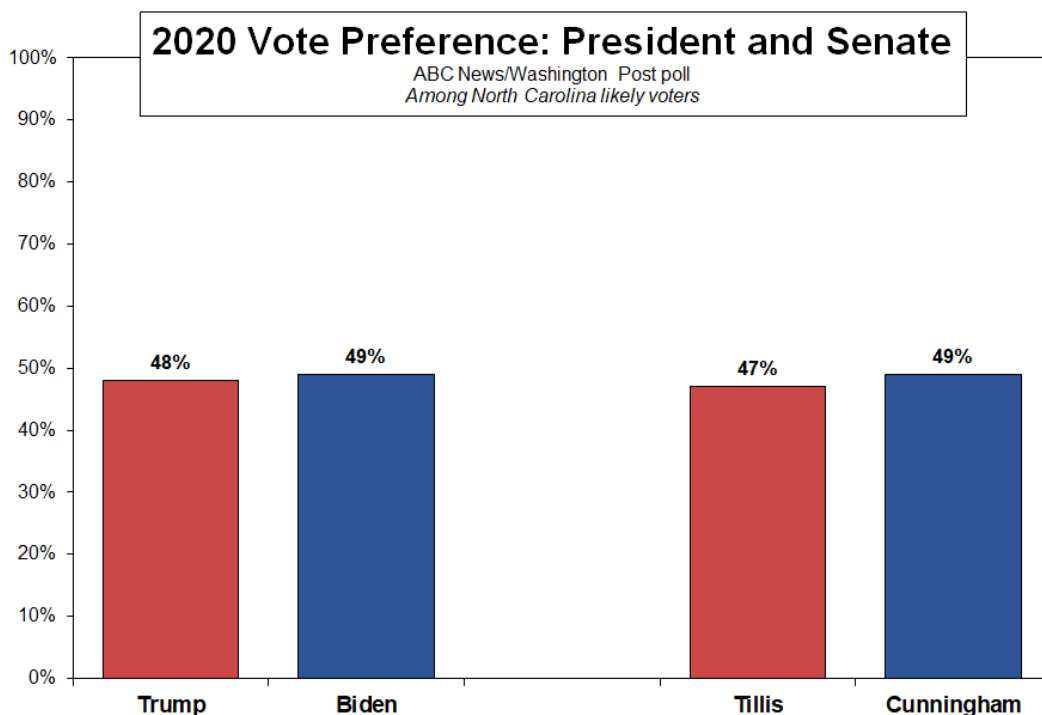


With Coronavirus Concerns a Factor, It's All Tied Up in North Carolina

Coronavirus concerns lift Joe Biden in North Carolina while the state's sizable evangelical and rural populations pull for Donald Trump, producing a dead-heat contest in a state that's backed Democratic presidential candidates just twice in the last half century.

Biden has 49 percent support among likely voters in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll in the state, with 48 percent for Trump. The U.S. Senate race, potentially critical for control of the chamber, is similar, with 49 percent support for Democrat Cal Cunningham, despite revelations of an extramarital relationship, and 47 percent for incumbent Republican Thom Tillis.

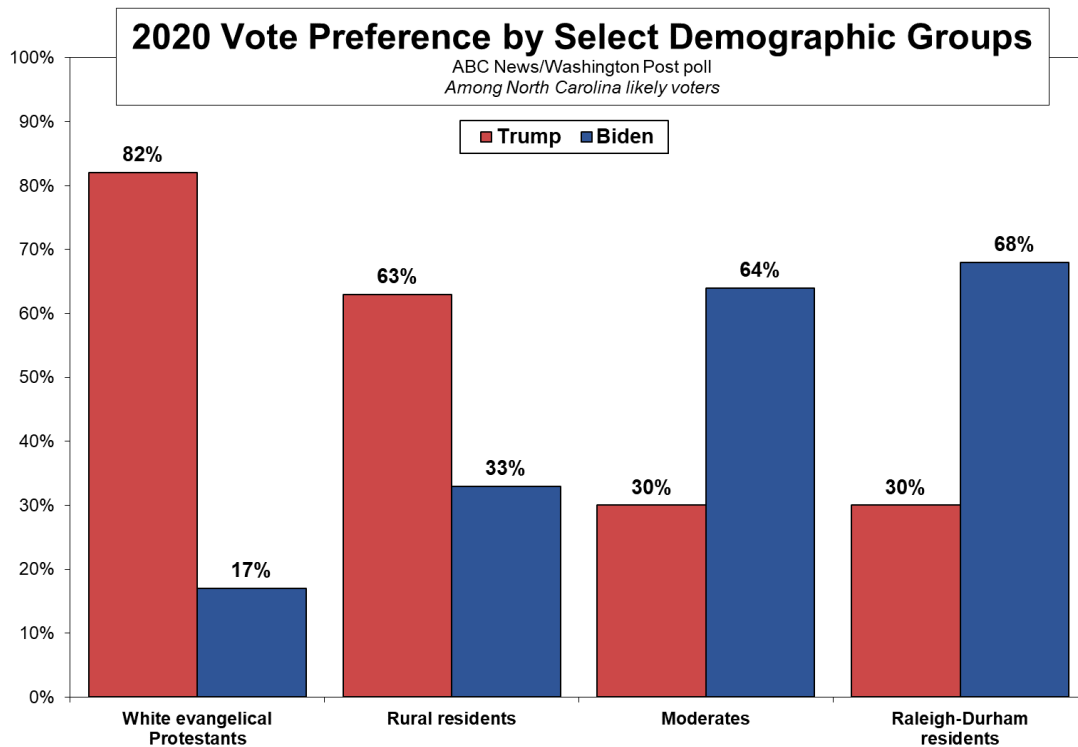


The presidential race differs from the contest nationally – an ABC/Post poll last week found a 12-point Biden lead – in large part given differing demographics. Most notably, evangelical white Protestants account for 31 percent of likely voters in North Carolina, compared with 15 percent nationally. White evangelicals in the state support Trump over Biden by 82-17 percent.

Rural voters also are part of the difference in this survey, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#); they account for 21 percent of likely voters nationally but 28 percent in the state, and

back Trump by nearly 2-1, 63-33 percent. So, too, are very conservative likely voters – 16 percent nationally but 24 percent in North Carolina, nearly all for Trump.

Biden pushes back with a 34-point lead among moderate voters, 64-30 percent, surpassing Hillary Clinton’s 20-point win in this group in 2016; a 68-30 percent lead in the state’s political, academic and technology hub, the Raleigh-Durham area; and 60-38 percent among college graduates – the widest Democratic advantage in this group in exit polls since 1988.



VOTING and the VIRUS – Early voting is commonplace in North Carolina; 66 percent of likely voters say they’ll vote early or already have done so, about the same as in 2016. Far fewer, 28 percent, plan to vote on Election Day (and 6 percent are undecided when to vote). In a pattern seen nationally and in other states, Biden leads by 60-37 percent among those who plan to vote early, compared with a wide Trump lead, 72-24 percent, among Election Day likely voters.

Voting intentions are associated with coronavirus concerns. With the state having reported its highest single-day increase in COVID-19 cases last week, 61 percent of likely voters are very or somewhat worried that they or an immediate family member may catch the coronavirus. Those who are worried are 22 points more apt than others to plan to vote early or to have already voted.

Likely voters divide 51-45 percent, Biden-Trump, in trust to handle the pandemic (not a statistically significant difference); similarly, 51 percent disapprove of how Trump is handling it. More tellingly, among those who are more worried about catching the coronavirus, 68 percent support Biden. Among those less worried or unworried, 80 percent favor Trump.

2020 Vote Preference <i>(among likely voters)</i>		
	Trump-Biden	Trump margin
Coronavirus attitudes:		
More worried (61%)	30-68%	-38 pts.
Less worried (31%)	80-14	+66

Again reflecting national results, economic attitudes are better for Trump. Fifty-four percent of likely voters approve of how he's handling the economy and 52 percent prefer him rather than Biden to manage it. Among those who approve of Trump's economic performance, 86 percent back him.

Also better for Trump, as elsewhere, is that 76 percent of his supporters are very enthusiastic about supporting him, while strong enthusiasm for Biden falls to 61 percent. That said, Trump's overall job approval rating is weak, 47-50 percent, approve-disapprove.

REGIONS and GROUPS – Biden's 68 percent support in Raleigh-Durham is somewhat higher than typical for that region – Clinton won 60 percent there – and looks critical to his chances.

Elsewhere, the contest, regionally, looks like a rerun of 2016. It's a close 50-47 percent, Biden-Trump, in Charlotte, and flips to an also-close 51-46 percent, Trump-Biden, in eastern North Carolina. It's close again, 51-44 percent, Trump-Biden, in the central Piedmont region, and a wide 63-35 percent Trump advantage in the conservative west.

	Trump-Biden <i>(among likely voters)</i>		Trump-Clinton <i>(2016 exit poll)</i>	
All	48-49%	-1 pts.	50-46%	+4 pts.
Raleigh-Durham	30-68	-38	37-60	-23
Charlotte	47-50	-3	46-50	-4
East	51-46	+5	51-45	+6
Piedmont/Central	51-44	+7	53-43	+10
West	63-35	+28	63-34	+29

Trump won North Carolina by 50-46 percent four years ago. The state has gone Republican in every presidential election since 1968, save two: Barack Obama won here in 2008 by about 14,000 votes out of 4.3 million cast, as did Jimmy Carter, more comfortably, in 1976.

Among groups, some shifts from 2016 are striking. Independents backed Trump over Clinton by 53-37 percent in 2016, per the ABC News exit poll; they now split, 47-46 percent, Biden-Trump. College graduates in 2016 divided 49-48 percent, Clinton-Trump; today, as noted, they go 60-38 percent, Biden-Trump. That said, 65 percent of likely voters don't have a college degree. Among them, non-college whites are critical for Trump – a 38-point lead, 67-29 percent.

As nationally, there's a gender gap; it's a 54-43 percent Biden-Trump race among women while 53-43 percent Trump-Biden among men. (These are slight differences given sample sizes.) That includes a 30-point Trump lead among white men, shrinking to a non-significant 10 percentage points among white women. Biden has 84 percent support from blacks, a fifth of the electorate, and 76 percent from racial and ethnic minorities overall, who account for nearly three in 10 likely voters.

SENATE – In the Senate race, Cunningham's helped by the number of likely voters willing to set aside his marital infidelity: Twenty-seven percent call this extremely or very important in their vote. (Cunningham has confirmed sending romantic text messages to a woman who's not his wife. That woman has said they had at least one intimate encounter, which Cunningham has neither confirmed nor denied.)

Many more, 59 percent, call Tillis' support for Trump highly important, and more still, 85 percent, ascribe high importance to which party wins control of the Senate.

Among those who call Cunningham's infidelity highly important, 80 percent back Tillis, while the Republican's support dives to 33 percent among likely voters who call this less important or unimportant. There are far closer divisions among those who focused on Tillis' support for Trump (52-46 percent, Tillis-Cunningham) and on control of the Senate (48-48 percent).

Scandal aside, the race is highly reflective of the presidential contest in the state. Cunningham leads among Democrats (93 percent), liberals (92 percent), racial and ethnic minorities (73 percent), those concerned about catching the coronavirus (65 percent), city residents (64 percent), moderates (61 percent) and women (55 percent). Tillis is boosted by support among Republicans (92 percent), conservatives (85 percent), evangelical white Protestants (82 percent), those in rural areas (62 percent), white people (58 percent) and men (55 percent). The race is essentially tied among independents and suburban voters.

Indeed, Cunningham is supported by 92 percent of those who back Biden, with 5 percent going to Tillis. Among Trump supporters, these numbers are precisely reversed.

As in the presidential contest, the Senate race is virtually tied in three of the state's five geopolitical regions – 49-48 percent in the central Piedmont region, 49-45 percent in the eastern part of the state and 48-45 percent in Charlotte, all Tillis-Cunningham. Those compare with a Tillis lead in the western counties, 58-38 percent, countered by a wide 65-32 percent advantage for Cunningham in the Raleigh-Durham area. (Tillis lives outside of Charlotte. Cunningham grew up in Lexington, in the Piedmont region, and now lives in Raleigh.)

Lastly, Cunningham, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve, runs essentially even with Tillis in households that include a veteran or active-duty member of the military, 48-47 percent, Tillis-Cunningham. (This accounts for nearly half of likely voters in the state.) It's also close, 50-45 percent, Cunningham-Tillis, in households without a veteran or current service member. This, too, is similar to the race for president: 50-47 percent, Trump-Biden, in veteran or current military households, and 51-46 percent, Biden-Trump, in others.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone interviews Oct. 12-17, 2020 among a random sample of 706 North Carolina registered voters and 646 likely voters. Results have margins of [sampling error](#) of 4.5 points among both groups. Partisan divisions – Democrats-Republicans-independents – are 33-32-30 percent among registered voters and 34-33-29 percent among likely voters.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), with sampling and data collection by Abt Associates of Rockville, Md. See details on the survey’s methodology [here](#).

Analysis by Gary Langer, with Allison De Jong, Steven Sparks, Christine Filer and Sofi Sinozich.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com. Join our [mailing list](#) to get updates on all new poll releases.

Media contacts: [Van Scott](#) (212-456-7243) or [Caragh Fisher](#) (212-456-3437).

Full results follow.

* = less than 0.5 percent.

1. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) How closely are you following the 2020 presidential race: very closely, somewhat closely, not so closely, or not closely at all?

	----- Closely -----			---- Not closely ----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	At all	opinion
10/17/20 NC	92	66	27	8	5	3	*

2. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election this fall: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or less than that?

	Certain	Probably	Chances	Less than	Don't think	Already	No
	to vote	vote	50/50	that	will vote	voted	op.
					(vol.)	(vol.)	
10/17/20 NC	82	4	4	3	*	8	0

3. (ASK IF CERTAIN OR PROBABLY VOTE) Do you think you'll (vote in person at a polling place ON Election Day), or (vote early either by mail or in person BEFORE Election Day)?

	Vote on	Vote	Already	No
	Election Day	early	voted (vol.)	opinion
10/17/20 NC	29	56	10	6

4. (ASK IF VOTE EARLY OR ALREADY VOTED) How do you think you will/did you vote - (in person at an early voting location), (by dropping off a ballot at a designated drop-box), or (by mail)?

	In person	Drop off	Mail	No
		ballot		opinion
10/17/20 NC	72	6	21	1

3/4 NET

	Vote on Election Day	----- Vote early -----					No opinion
		NET	In person	Drop off ballot	Mail	No op.	
10/17/20 NC	29	65	47	4	14	1	6

5. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) If the presidential election were being held today and the candidates were [(Donald Trump and Mike Pence, the Republicans), (Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the Democrats)], [(Jo Jorgensen and Spike Cohen of the Libertarian Party) or (Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker of the Green Party)], for whom would you vote? Confidentially and for statistical purposes only, did you vote for...?

NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE

	Trump	Biden	Jorgensen	Hawkins	Other (vol.)	None of these (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No
								op
10/17/20 NC LV	48	49	1	0	*	*	*	1
10/17/20 NC RV	46	48	2	1	*	1	1	2

6. (ASK IF NAMED TRUMP) Would you say you are very enthusiastic about supporting Trump, somewhat enthusiastic, not so enthusiastic or not enthusiastic at all?

	--- Enthusiastic ---			--- Not enthusiastic ---			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	opinion
10/17/20 NC	92	74	18	6	4	2	2

7. (ASK IF NAMED BIDEN) Would you say you are very enthusiastic about supporting Biden, somewhat enthusiastic, not so enthusiastic or not enthusiastic at all?

	--- Enthusiastic ---			--- Not enthusiastic ---			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	opinion
10/17/20 NC	91	59	32	9	6	3	*

8. (ASK IF NOT NAMED TRUMP OR BIDEN AND NOT ALREADY VOTED) If the only candidates were (Donald Trump and Mike Pence, the Republicans) and (Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the Democrats), for whom would you vote? Would you lean toward (Trump and Pence) or (Biden and Harris)?

NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE

	Trump	Biden	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No
						opinion
10/17/20 NC LV	48	50	*	*	*	1
10/17/20 NC RV	47	50	*	1	1	1

9. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Thinking now about the U.S. Senate race in North Carolina, if the election were today would you vote for (Cal Cunningham, the Democrat) or (Thom Tillis, the Republican)? Would you lean toward (Cunningham) or (Tillis)? Confidentially and for statistical purposes only, did you vote for...

	Cunningham	Tillis	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No
						opinion
10/17/20 NC LV	49	47	*	1	*	3

10/17/20 NC RV 49 46 1 2 * 3

10. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Thinking about [ITEM] - how important is this in your vote for U.S. Senate - extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not so important?

10/17/20 - Summary Table among North Carolina registered voters

	--- More important ---			--- Less important ---			No op.
	NET	Extremely	Very	NET	Somewhat	Not so	
a. Cunningham's extramarital affair	26	14	12	71	21	50	3
b. Tillis's support for Donald Trump	56	30	27	41	18	23	3
c. whether the (Democrats) or the (Republicans) control the U.S. Senate	81	47	33	18	13	6	1

Now thinking about the presidential election,

11. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Who do you trust more to handle [ITEM] - (Trump) or (Biden)?

10/17/20 - Summary Table among North Carolina registered voters

	Trump	Biden	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. the economy	51	45	*	2	1
b. the coronavirus outbreak	43	51	1	4	1

12. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/17/20 NC	47	37	10	51	6	44	3

13. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Trump is handling the economy? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/17/20 NC	53	42	11	44	10	34	2

14. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Trump is handling the coronavirus outbreak? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/17/20 NC	45	33	12	53	6	47	2

15. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) How do you feel about the possibility that you or someone in your immediate family might catch the coronavirus - very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not worried at all?

	---- Worried ----			----- Not worried -----			Already caught it (vol.)	No op.
	NET	Very	Smwht	NET	Not too	Not at all		

10/17/20 NC 61 25 36 31 19 12 9 *

	% of North Carolina registered voters
Men	48
Women	52
Age 18-39	33
Age 40-64	45
Age 65+	22
High school or less	31
Some college	36
College graduates	32
Whites, non-Hispanic	70
Blacks, non-Hispanic	20
Hispanics	5
Other/Multiple	6

*** END ***