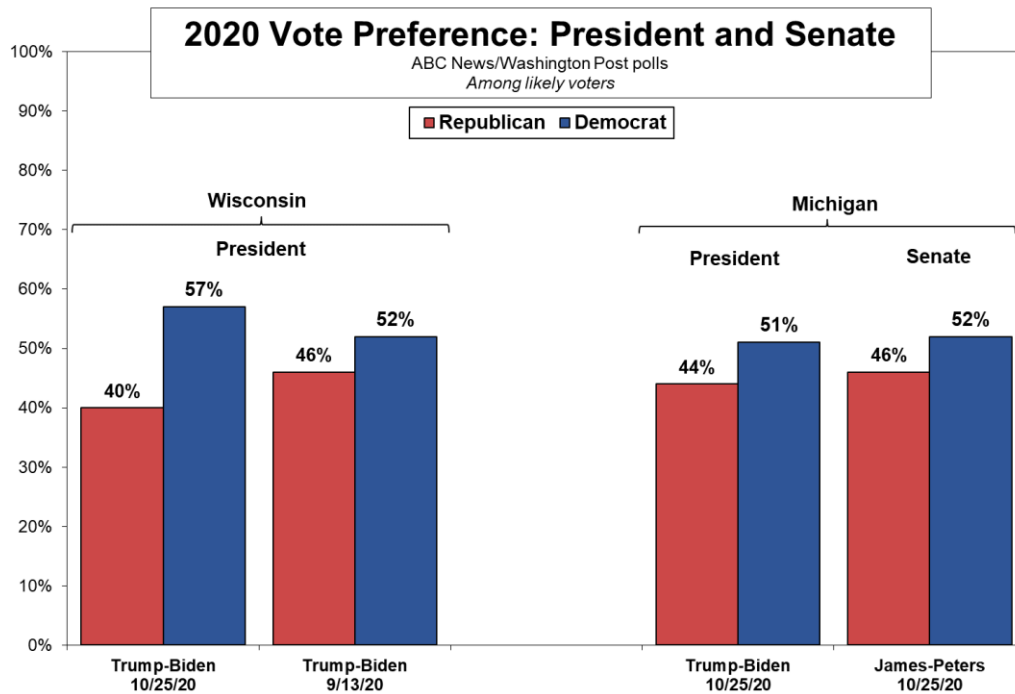# COVID Surge Hurts Trump in WI; Biden Leads in a Closer MI Contest

A surge in coronavirus cases has damaged Donald Trump's re-election campaign in Wisconsin, with growing criticism of his work on the pandemic and preference for Joe Biden to handle it. Biden holds a slighter advantage in Michigan, with sizable leads among women, moderates and independents in ABC News/Washington Post polls in both states.
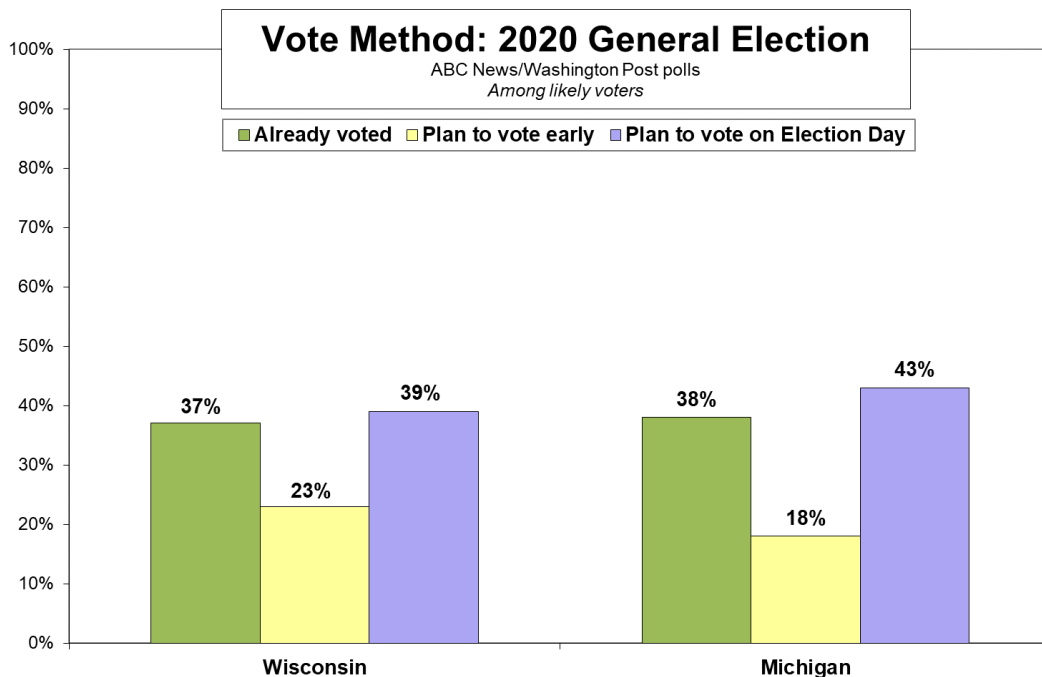
Biden leads Trump by 57-40 percent among likely voters in Wisconsin, a state that's now reported to be third in the nation in per capita COVID-19 cases, with a 53 percent increase in average daily cases in the past two weeks, a record number of hospitalizations and a 112 percent jump in deaths. That compares with a closer 52-46 percent in mid-September.

In Michigan, it's 51-44 percent, Biden-Trump, among likely voters, a slight Biden lead in this poll, produced for ABC by Langer Research Associates. The Senate race there stands at 52 percent for incumbent Democrat Gary Peters vs. 46 percent for Republican John James, not a statistically significant difference, thus a rare chance this cycle for a GOP pickup, with control of the Senate in the balance.

2020 Vote Preference: President and Senate
ABC News/Washington Post polls
Among likely voters

Vote preference results look very much like views on Trump's performance as president overall, seemingly cementing the contest as a referendum on the incumbent. In Wisconsin, registered voters disapprove rather than approve of his work in office, 58-41 percent. In Michigan, it's 52-46 percent. Both nearly match vote preferences.

Behind it all, an atypical election clock is ticking. Thirty-seven percent of likely voters in Wisconsin, and 38 percent in Michigan, say they've already voted. And an additional 23 percent in Wisconsin, and 18 percent in Michigan, say they will vote early or absentee. Early voters are strong Biden groups. The share planning to vote on Election Day – broadly for Trump – has fallen from 51 percent last month to 39 percent now in Wisconsin. It's 43 percent in Michigan.

Vote Method: 2020 General Election
ABC News/Washington Post polls
Among likely voters

Legend: ■ Already voted ■ Plan to vote early ■ Plan to vote on Election Day

	Wisconsin	Michigan
Already voted	37%	38%
Plan to vote early	23%	18%
Plan to vote on Election Day	39%	43%

One wildcard is whether voting and vote-counting are aligned. The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday effectively barred the counting of mail-in ballots received in Wisconsin after Election Day, raising the question of how many late-arriving votes will be disqualified.

THEN AND NOW – Trump won Michigan by 10,704 votes out of 4.8 million cast in 2016 and Wisconsin by 22,748 out of 3 million – narrow victories that, with Pennsylvania and Florida, catapulted him to the presidency even while losing the national popular vote by almost 2.9 million.

Four years later, Trump's handling of the pandemic poses challenges to a repeat performance. While he has criticized mask mandates and business restrictions, about in seven in 10 of registered voters in both states support these measures, with 56 percent strong support alike.

The disconnect is deepest in Wisconsin, which has sustained a seven-day average of more than 4,000 cases per day, the most since the outbreak began last winter. With hospital beds filling, a

field hospital has been opened on the state fairgrounds. These developments have occurred even as Trump, in the final debate last week, and again in Waukesha on Saturday, said the nation was "rounding the turn" in controlling the pandemic.

Wisconsin registered voters now disapprove of Trump's handling of the pandemic by 20 percentage points, 59-39 percent, up from 54-44 percent in mid-September. They trust Biden over Trump to handle it by a similar 57-37 percent, up from a close 49-42 percent previously.

Moreover, 63 percent of registered voters in the state are very or somewhat worried that they or someone in their immediate family may catch the coronavirus, and an additional 7 percent say it's already happened. Likely voters who are worried about catching the virus support Biden overwhelmingly, 75-22 percent.

Results are similar, albeit more muted, in Michigan, where the outbreak has been less extreme. Wisconsin has seen 71 new daily cases per 100,000 population on average in the past week, per Washington Post tabulations. Michigan has had 22 cases per 100,000.
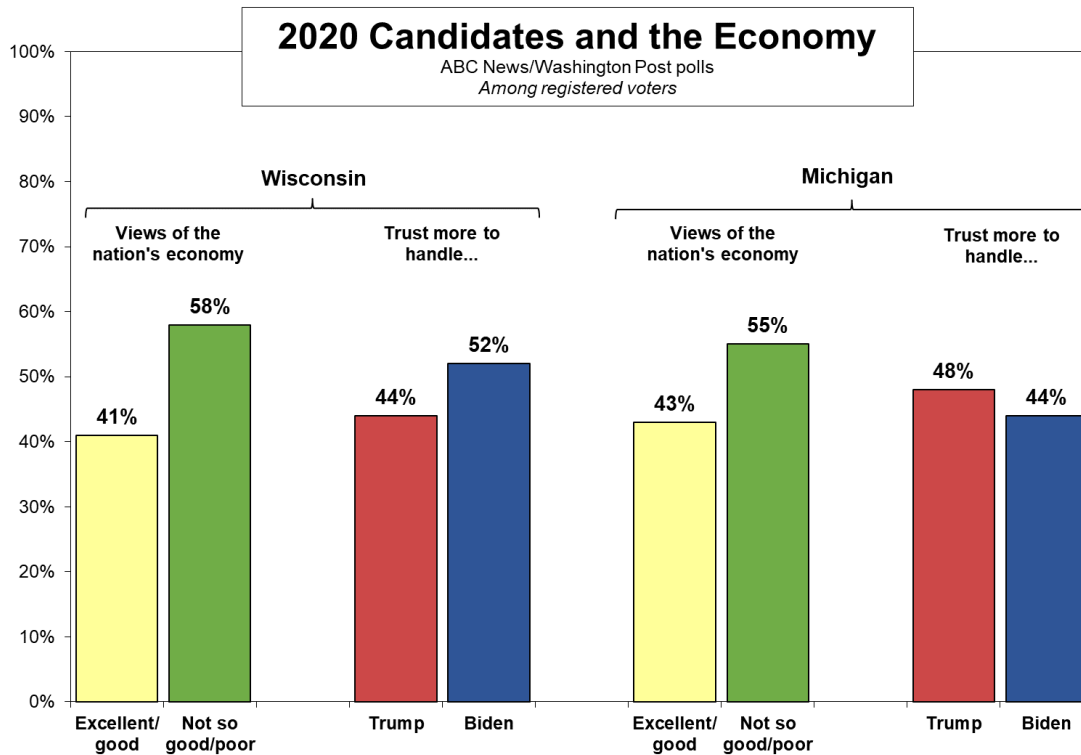
There, 56 percent of registered voters are worried about catching the virus; 55 percent disapprove of how Trump has handled it; and Biden leads by 53-39 percent in trust to handle it.

	The Pandemic Election (among registered voters)	
	Wisconsin	Michigan
Worried about catching the coronavirus	63%	56%
Have caught it (inc. immediate family)	7	6
Approve-disapprove of Trump's handling of the virus	39-59	42-55
Trust Trump or Biden more to handle the pandemic	37-57	39-53
Overall support for state's coronavirus restrictions	68	69
Strong support for state's restrictions	56	56

THE ECONOMY and ATTRIBUTES – Even with a pandemic-induced recession, the economy has been safer ground for Trump – but he has challenges here as well, especially in Wisconsin.

There, trust to handle the economy has gone from 50-45 percent, Trump-Biden, last month, to 52-44 percent, Biden-Trump, now. In September, registered voters said by a 10-point margin that the economy was in bad shape; now it's a 17-point margin. And Trump's approval rating for handling the economy has lost 6 points, from 53 to 47 percent.

Michigan registered voters also rate the condition of the economy negatively, by 55-43 percent. Still, 52 percent approve of Trump's work on it, a slight 5 points more than in Wisconsin, and there's a 48-44 percent division, Trump-Biden, in trust to handle it. Biden does 8 points better on this measure in Wisconsin than in Michigan.

2020 Candidates and the Economy
ABC News/Washington Post polls
Among registered voters

Biden has gained in Wisconsin on personal attributes as well, going from +11 to +20 points against Trump in being seen by registered voters as more honest and trustworthy, from +5 to +17 points as better understanding the problems of people like them and from -3 to +9 points as the stronger leader.

Again, views are more divided in Michigan – Biden +9 points on honesty, +10 on empathy and, on strong leadership, -1.

Who do you think…?	Candidate Attributes: Trump-Biden *(among registered voters)*			
	Wisconsin		Michigan	
Is more honest and trustworthy	36-56%	-20 pts.	40-49%	-9 pts.
Better understands your problems	38-55	-17	40-50	-10
Is the stronger leader	43-52	-9	48-47	+1

An additional question asks who bears more blame for the recent feud between Trump and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat. Registered voters are far more likely in both states to blame Trump, by 46-23 percent in Michigan and 43-18 percent in Wisconsin. (The rest say both bear equal blame or have no opinion.)

GROUPS – While the extent of the gaps differ, Biden relies on similar groups in both states, with vast leads among women and moderates and strong results among independents, classic swing voters in most elections.

2020 Trump-Biden Vote Preference				
(among likely voters)				
	Wisconsin		Michigan	
All	40-57%	-17 pts.	44-51%	-7 pts.
Women	34-64	-30	36-60	-24
Moderates	26-71	-45	25-67	-42
Independents	35-59	-24	37-52	-15
Suburban voters	40-56	-16	49-46	+3

The suburbs make up one notable difference between these two neighboring states: Biden leads Trump by 56-40 percent among likely voters in suburban Wisconsin. In Michigan's suburbs, by contrast, it's very close, 49-46 percent, Trump-Biden.

The result in suburban Wisconsin is a shift from 54-45 percent, Trump-Biden, last month. This chiefly reflects a swing away from Trump and to Biden in the Chiwaukee suburbs, a usually Republican region surrounding Milwaukee. Trump won there by 20 points in 2016.

There's also a difference between the two states among non-college whites, who back Trump by 56-38 percent in Michigan while dividing evenly, 48-49 percent, in Wisconsin. (Trump led by 10 points in this group in Wisconsin last month.) That includes a gender gap: In both states, Trump does 13 points better with non-college white men than with non-college white women.

Biden's support from women also is evident among independents, moderates and suburbanites. In both states, he has 20 points more support from independent women than from independent men. He does nearly as well with moderate women vs. moderate men. And he does better among suburban women than among suburban men by 20 points in Wisconsin and 17 in Michigan.

Preferences among older people, a group that's especially vulnerable to the coronavirus, also are striking. Biden leads by 61-37 percent among likely voters age 65 and older in Wisconsin – a group Trump won by 1 point in 2016. In Michigan, it's a more modest Biden +12 among seniors; Trump won them by 4 points in the ABC News exit poll four years ago.

There's a difference between the states in recalled past vote. Among Michigan likely voters who report having voted in 2016, 47 percent say they supported Trump, 47 percent Clinton. In Wisconsin, the division was very similar in September, 45-47 percent; now, 50 percent say they supported Clinton, 43 percent Trump. Disillusion with Trump may have motivated some to shift their 2016 recall; this has occurred mostly in the Chiwaukee suburbs, where, as noted, 2020 vote preferences also have moved toward Biden. Regardless, adjusting the sample to reflect the actual 2016 outcome still leaves Biden with a double-digit lead.

In all, Democrats account for 31 percent of likely voters in Wisconsin, Republicans 27 percent, with the rest independents or affiliated with another party. That's similar to the division in the mid-September ABC/Post there, 34-27 percent.

Just 2 percent of Democrats support Trump, while Biden is backed by 10 percent of Republicans. In Michigan, the partisan breaks are similar, 32-28 percent; here 5 percent of Democrats take Trump and 7 percent of Republicans go to Biden.

SENATE – As noted, the U.S. Senate race in Michigan is a close 52-46 percent, Peters-James, a non-significant difference. That includes virtual ties among independents and suburbanites, groups that may prove pivotal.

Peters holds wide leads among Democrats (97 percent), Black people (90 percent), liberals (87 percent), those worried that they or a family member might catch the coronavirus (73 percent) and moderates (67 percent). (Results among Black people are among registered voters for adequate sample size.)

For his part, James is lifted by Republicans (93 percent), conservatives (87 percent), those less worried about catching the virus (80 percent) and evangelical white Protestants (68 percent).

The two are essentially tied, 49-48, Peters-James, among likely voters in households that include a veteran or active-duty member of the military. Both are veterans – Peters, a former lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve, and James, an Army veteran who served multiple tours in Iraq.

Regionally, Peters leads by a broad 28 points, 63-35, in both Wayne County and southeastern Michigan (including the university cities of Ann Arbor and East Lansing). James is ahead in the typically GOP-leaning east central, southwestern and north central regions.

The Senate race features few split-ticket voters. Peters carries 93 percent of Biden supporters, with 6 percent preferring James. Among Trump supporters, it's reversed: Ninety-three percent support James, 6 percent, Peters. Also mirroring the presidential contest, about seven in 10 of those planning to vote in-person on Election Day support James; Peters wins as many of those planning to vote early, by mail or who already have voted.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone interviews Oct. 20-25, 2020, among random samples of 902 Michigan registered voters, including 789 likely voters; and 906 Wisconsin registered voters, including 809 likely voters. Results have margins of sampling error of 3.5 percentage points among registered voters and 4.0 among likely voters in both states, including design effects.

Partisan divisions – Democrats-Republicans-independents – are 30-27-36 percent among registered voters and 32-28-34 percent among likely voters in Michigan and 30-26-38 percent among registered voters and 31-27-36 percent among likely voters in Wisconsin.

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 Steven Sparks, Allison De Jong, 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.

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*= less than 0.5 percent
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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
10/25/20 Mich.	91	63	28	9	5	4	*
10/25/20 Wis.	93	68	24	7	4	3	*
9/13/20 Wis.	90	56	34	10	5	4	*

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

	Certain to vote	Probably vote	Chances 50/50	Less than that	Don't think will vote (vol.)	Already voted (vol.)	No op
10/25/20 Mich.	62	4	2	1	*	31	0
10/25/20 Wis.	62	4	1	1	*	31	0
9/13/20 Wis.	90	6	2	1	1	NA	*

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 Election Day	Vote early	Already voted (vol.)	No opinion
10/25/20 Mich.	45	21	32	1
10/25/20 Wis.	41	24	32	2
9/13/20 Wis.	51	44	NA	5

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 ballot	Mail	No opinion
10/25/20 Mich.	19	51	30	*
10/25/20 Wis.	29	35	36	0
9/13/20 Wis.	21	30	46	2

3/4 NET

	Vote on Election Day	--------- Vote early/already -------					No opinion
		NET	In person	Drop off ballot	Mail	No op.	
10/25/20 Mich.	45	53	10	27	16	*	1
10/25/20 Wis.	41	56	16	20	20	0	2

```
9/13/20  Wis.         51        44        9        13       20      1        5
```

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) and (Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker of the Green Party)], for whom would you
vote? Would you lean toward [(Trump and Pence), (Biden and Harris)], [(Jorgensen and
Cohen) or (Hawkins and Walker)]? Confidentially and for statistical purposes only, did
you vote for…?

LEANED NET VOTE PREFERENCE – LIKELY VOTERS

					Other	None of these	Would not vote	No
	Trump	Biden	Jorgensen	Hawkins	(vol.)	(vol.)	(vol.)	op.
10/25/20 Mich.	44	51	3	*	*	*	0	1
10/25/20 Wis.*	40	57	2	NA	*	1	*	1

*Hawkins not included

LEANED NET VOTE PREFERENCE – REG VOTERS

					Other	None of these	Would not vote	No
	Trump	Biden	Jorgensen	Hawkins	(vol.)	(vol.)	(vol.)	op.
10/25/20 Mich.	44	49	3	*	*	1	*	2
10/25/20 Wis.*	39	56	3	NA	*	1	*	1

Compare to:

			Other	Neither	Would not vote	No
	Trump	Biden	(vol.)	(vol.)	(vol.)	op.
9/13/20 LV Wis.*	46	52	*	1	0	1
9/13/20 RV Wis.*	46	50	1	3	*	1

*Two-way matchup

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
10/25/20 Mich.	95	70	25	5	3	2	1
10/25/20 Wis.	92	77	15	8	7	1	0
9/13/20 Wis.	94	69	25	6	5	1	0

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
10/25/20 Mich.	89	54	35	11	5	5	*
10/25/20 Wis.	89	56	34	10	4	6	1
9/13/20 Wis.	89	50	39	10	7	3	*

8. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE IN MICHIGAN) Thinking now about the U.S. Senate race in
Michigan, if the election were today would you vote for (Gary Peters, the Democrat) or
(John James, the Republican)? Would you lean toward (Peters) or (James)?
Confidentially and for statistical purposes only, did you vote for...?

```
                                                 None      Would
                                        Other   of these  not vote    No
                  Peters   James      (vol.)    (vol.)    (vol.)    opinion
10/25/20 Mich. LV   52      46          1         *         0         1
10/25/20 Mich. RV   49      45          *         1         1         4
```

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

10/25/20 – Summary table among Michigan registered voters

```
                                       Both      Neither    No
                         Trump  Biden  (vol.)    (vol.)    opinion
a. the economy            48     44      *         4         2
b. the coronavirus outbreak 39   53      *         6         2
```

10/25/20 – Summary table among Wisconsin registered voters

```
                                       Both      Neither    No
                         Trump  Biden  (vol.)    (vol.)    opinion
a. the economy            44     52      *         3         1
b. the coronavirus outbreak 37   57      *         4         2
```

Trend:

a. the economy

```
                                Both     Neither     No
             Trump   Biden    (vol.)    (vol.)    opinion
10/25/20 Wis.  44     52        *         3         1
9/13/20  Wis.  50     45        *         4         2
```

b. the coronavirus outbreak

```
                                Both     Neither     No
             Trump   Biden    (vol.)    (vol.)    opinion
10/25/20 Wis.  37     57        *         4         2
9/13/20  Wis.  42     49        *         7         2
```

10. (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
                  NET   Strongly  Somewhat    NET   Somewhat  Strongly   opinion
10/25/20 Mich.    46      34        12         52      6         46        2
10/25/20 Wis.     41      33         8         58      5         52        1
9/13/20  Wis.     46      34        12         52      6         46        2
```

11. (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
                  NET   Strongly  Somewhat    NET   Somewhat  Strongly   opinion
10/25/20 Mich.    52      41        11         44      11        34        4
10/25/20 Wis.     47      38         9         50      11        39        3
9/13/20  Wis.     53      41        12         46      13        33        1
```

12. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor?

```
                  ------ Positive ------   ------- Negative -------    No
                  NET   Excellent   Good   NET   Not so good   Poor   opinion
10/25/20 Mich.    43        8        34    55        33         22      2
10/25/20 Wis.     41        8        33    58        34         24      1
9/13/20  Wis.     44       11        33    54        30         24      2
```

13. (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
                  NET   Strongly   Somewhat   NET   Somewhat   Strongly   opinion
10/25/20 Mich.    42      29         14       55       5         50         2
10/25/20 Wis.     39      29         10       59       5         54         2
9/13/20  Wis.     44      30         15       54       7         47         2
```

14. (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?

```
                  -- More worried --   ----- Less worried -------   Already caught   No
                  NET   Very   Smwht   NET   Not too   Not at all     it (vol.)      op
10/25/20 Mich.    56     26     30     37      21          16             6          1
10/25/20 Wis.     63     29     34     30      16          14             7          *
9/13/20  Wis.     60     23     37     37      19          18             3          *
```

15. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Do you support or oppose [Michigan's/Wisconsin's]
current rules on masks, and restrictions on businesses and public gatherings? Do you
feel that way strongly or somewhat?

```
                  -------- Support --------   -------- Oppose ---------    No
                  NET   Strongly   Somewhat   NET   Somewhat   Strongly   opinion
10/25/20 Mich.    69      56         13       28       8         21         3
10/25/20 Wis.     68      56         12       28       8         20         4
```

Thinking about the election…
16. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Who do you think [ITEM] – (Trump) or (Biden)?

10/25/20 – Summary table among Michigan registered voters

```
                                                    Both    Neither    No
                                       Trump  Biden (vol.)   (vol.)   opinion
a. is more honest and trustworthy       40     49     *        9        2
b. better understands the problems
   of people like you                   40     50     *        8        1
c. is the stronger leader               48     47     *        3        2
```

10/25/20 – Summary table among Wisconsin registered voters

```
                                                    Both    Neither    No
                                       Trump  Biden (vol.)   (vol.)   opinion
a. is more honest and trustworthy       36     56     *        6        2
b. better understands the problems
   of people like you                   38     55     1        4        2
c. is the stronger leader               43     52     1        1        2
```

Trend:

a is more honest and trustworthy

```
                                 Both    Neither    No
                 Trump   Biden   (vol.)  (vol.)   opinion
10/25/20 Wis.     36      56       *       6          2
9/13/20  Wis.     38      49       2       9          2
```

b. better understands the problems of people like you

```
                                 Both    Neither    No
                 Trump   Biden   (vol.)  (vol.)   opinion
10/25/20 Wis.     38      55       1       4          2
9/13/20  Wis.     44      49       *       6          1
```

c. is the stronger leader

```
                                 Both    Neither    No
                 Trump   Biden   (vol.)  (vol.)   opinion
10/25/20 Wis.     43      52       1       1          2
9/13/20  Wis.     49      46       *       4          1
```

17. (ASK IF REGISTERED TO VOTE) Who do you think is more to blame for the feud between Trump and [IF WISCONSIN: Michigan] Governor Gretchen Whitmer - (Trump), (Whitmer), or both equally? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

| | --------- Trump --------- | | | ------- Whitmer --------- | | Both | No |
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	equally	op.
10/25/20 Mich.	46	42	4	23	3	20	27	4
10/25/20 Wis.	43	37	6	18	3	15	23	16

	% of Michigan Registered voters	% of Wisconsin registered voters
Men	49	48
Women	51	52
Age 18-39	35	33
Age 40-64	43	44
Age 65+	22	23
High school or less	35	37
Some college	36	32
College graduates	29	31
Whites, non-Hispanic	78	87
Blacks, non-Hispanic	13	5
Hispanics	5	4
Other/Multiple	5	4

*** END ***