What We Learned from the 2020 Election Exit Polls
Challenges 2020
Covering elections in 2020

DEALING WITH COVID-19
This affected both survey interactions with voters and having staff prepared to cover elections remotely

WAITING FOR RESULTS
This began with the Iowa Democratic Caucuses on February 3rd but became even more of an issue in the primary elections after COVID

CHANGING SCHEDULE
More elections were rescheduled in 2020 than in the past 32 years combined

CHANGING ELECTION RULES
Almost every state made changes to voting methods and reporting election results and courts became involved in procedural rulings
Challenges

Major changes to the voting process
More than 158 million people voted in 2020, an increase of more than 20 million voters over 2016 and the highest percentage of voting eligible voters since 1900.
Large increase in early voting

More than two-thirds of votes in 2020 were cast before election day – approximately 43% by mail and 24% in person at early voting centers – compared to approximately 42% who voted before election day in 2016.
Huge partisan differences in the voting method used by voters

Partisan differences led to delays in reporting results in certain states and large swings in the results as they were reported over time.
2020 Election Coverage

- Challenges
- Methods
- Findings
In 2020, Edison Research conducted entrance and exit polls in 23 states of 37,001 Democratic Primary voters.
Procedural changes to exit poll interviewing tested in GA, KY, NJ and DE primaries in June and July and used in November

| We maintained response rates by using the following interviewing procedures: |
| Exit Poll Interviewers were required to wear a mask at all times except during breaks | Exit poll materials were placed on a folding table |
| Interviewers required to wipe down the folding table and use hand sanitizer before touching any exit poll materials | Interviewers approached voters from a 6 foot distance and invited them to participate in the exit |
| Willing participants were instructed to take a survey and single-use golf pencil from the table, fill out the survey, and place it in the ballot box | Gloves, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes were made available on the table for voters and the interviewer to use |
| A garbage bag was provided for voters and interviewers to dispose of gloves, single-use golf pencils and sanitizing wipes |
Procedural changes to exit poll interviewing
Survey methods used in the NEP Exit Poll

1. In-person exit poll interviews of election day voters at more than 700 polling locations – representing 33% of the vote

2. In-person exit poll interviews of early voters at more than 175 early voting centers – representing 24% of the vote

3. Telephone interviews of absentee/by-mail voters – representing 43% of the vote
### Exit Poll response rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Exit Poll</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 General Election</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 General Election</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 General Election</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Presidential Primaries</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 General Election</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 General Election</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 General Election</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 General Election</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 General Election</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 General Election</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Presidential Primaries</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 General Election</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020 presidential vote by voting method

- **Voted by mail** (~43% of voters)
  - Joe Biden: 65
  - Donald Trump: 34
  - Biden-Trump: +31

- **Voted early in-person** (~24% of voters)
  - Joe Biden: 50
  - Donald Trump: 50
  - Biden-Trump: 0

- **Voted on Election Day** (~33% of voters)
  - Joe Biden: 39
  - Donald Trump: 59
  - Biden-Trump: -20

© 2020 Edison Research NEP Exit Polls

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
2020 polls needed to estimate three different electorates by voting method

### Georgia Presidential Vote by voting method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Method</th>
<th>Joe Biden</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absentee by Mail (26%)</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Voting in Person (54%)</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Day in Person (20%)</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### North Carolina Presidential Vote by voting method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Method</th>
<th>Joe Biden</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absentee by Mail (18%)</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Voting in Person (65%)</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Day in Person (17%)</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Special runoff election: Ossoff vs. Perdue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Method</th>
<th>Jon Ossoff</th>
<th>David Perdue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absentee by Mail (24%)</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Voting in Person (46%)</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Day in Person (30%)</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Special runoff election: Warnock vs. Loeffler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Method</th>
<th>Raphael Warnock</th>
<th>Kelly Loeffler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absentee by Mail (24%)</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Voting in Person (46%)</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Day in Person (30%)</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020 Election Coverage

Challenges

Methods

Findings
U.S. Election
November 3, 2020
Vote by gender

Men (48%)

Women (52%)

% supporting candidate

Biden

Trump

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Vote by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% supporting candidate</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N=36,832</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 18-29</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45-64</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Vote by race/ethnicity

% supporting candidate

White (66%)
- Biden: 41%
- Trump: 58%

Black (13%)
- Biden: 12%
- Trump: 87%

Hispanic or Latino (14%)
- Biden: 32%
- Trump: 65%

Asian (4%)
- Biden: 34%
- Trump: 61%

Other (4%)
- Biden: 41%
- Trump: 55%

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Vote by education

% supporting candidate

College graduate (42%)

Biden: 55%
Trump: 43%

Not a college graduate (58%)

Biden: 50%
Trump: 48%

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Vote by education/race

% supporting candidate

- White, College graduate (32%)
  - Biden: 51%
  - Trump: 48%

- White, Not a college graduate (35%)
  - Biden: 67%
  - Trump: 32%

- Non white, College graduate (10%)
  - Biden: 70%
  - Trump: 27%

- Non white, Not a college graduate (24%)
  - Biden: 72%
  - Trump: 26%

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Who would better handle:

- The economy: Biden 49, Trump 49
- The coronavirus pandemic: Biden 53, Trump 43

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Which is more important?

- Containing the coronavirus even if it hurts the economy: 52
- Rebuilding the economy now, even if it hurts efforts to contain the coronavirus: 42

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
How do you feel about the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Approve</th>
<th>Somewhat Approve</th>
<th>Somewhat Disapprove</th>
<th>Strongly Disapprove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=36,832

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Do you think [candidate] has the temperament to serve effectively as president?

N=36,832

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the 2020 NEP general election national survey conducted by Edison Research
Georgia U.S. Senate run-offs
January 5, 2021
In the 2020 election for president, did you vote for:

- Biden (48%)
- Trump (47%)
- Someone else (3%)
- Did not vote (2%)

From the 2021 NEP GA special election exit polls conducted by Edison Research
In the 2020 election for president, did you vote for:

- Biden (48%) - 97 votes
- Trump (47%) - 96 votes
- Someone else (3%) - 55 votes
- Did not vote (2%) - 65 votes

From the 2021 NEP GA special election exit polls conducted by Edison Research

N=5,948
Would you rather see the U.S. senate controlled by:

- The Democratic Party: 49
- The Republican Party: 48

N=5,948

From the 2021 NEP GA special election exit polls conducted by Edison Research
Upcoming Webinars:

Twitter Before and After Trump
Tuesday, February 16th

The Infinite Dial 2020
Thursday, March 11th
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