



# **Election Update: A Look at Public Opinion After the Conventions**

**September 2020**

The two parties delivered very different messages during the conventions.



### Primary Themes

**"A season of darkness."** Biden promised to bring back the empathy and cooperation he says is lacking in the Trump White House.

**A return to normal.** Biden blamed recent upheaval on Pres. Trump's policies and style and promised that a Biden administration would address injustices.

**Democracy is under attack.** Democrats attempted to raise awareness about threats to democracy this election, particularly around voting challenges.



### Republican National Convention

### Primary Themes

**Mission accomplished.** Pres. Trump stressed that his strong leadership has brought the pandemic under control and that the GOP is best for the economy.

**Safety and security will crumble under Biden.** The President described suburbs in peril and rioters out of control, warning that Biden would make it worse.

**Independent voices are under attack.** Republicans highlighted cancel culture getting out of control and promised that independent voices won't be sidelined.

Americans preferred the Democrats' message and tone.



**53%**

approved of the DNC's message.

**51%**

felt the Democrats spent too much time attacking Republicans.



**Republican National Convention**

**37%**

approved of the RNC's message.

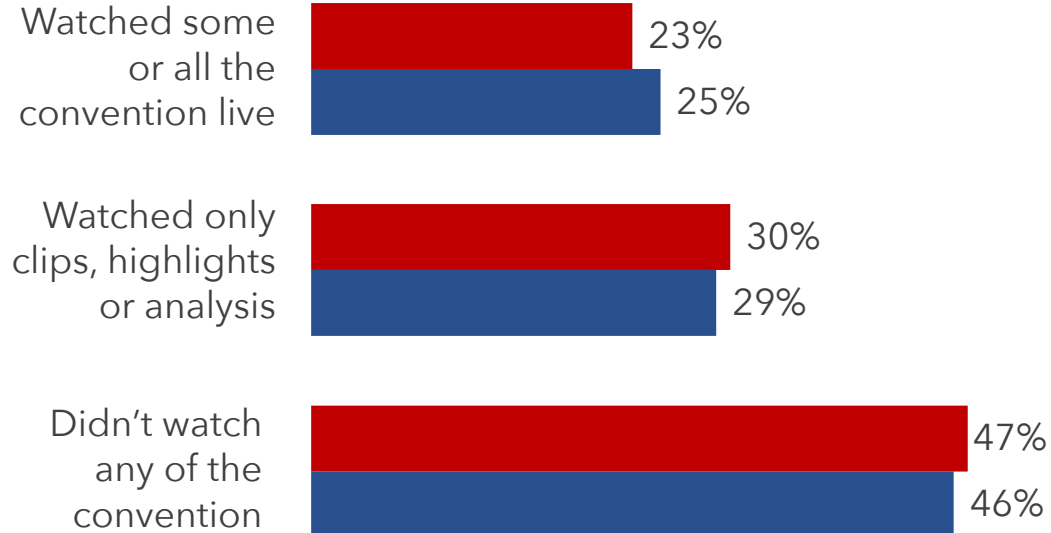
**62%**

felt the Republicans spent too much time attacking Democrats.

# Democrats drew more live viewers and more engagement than Republicans.

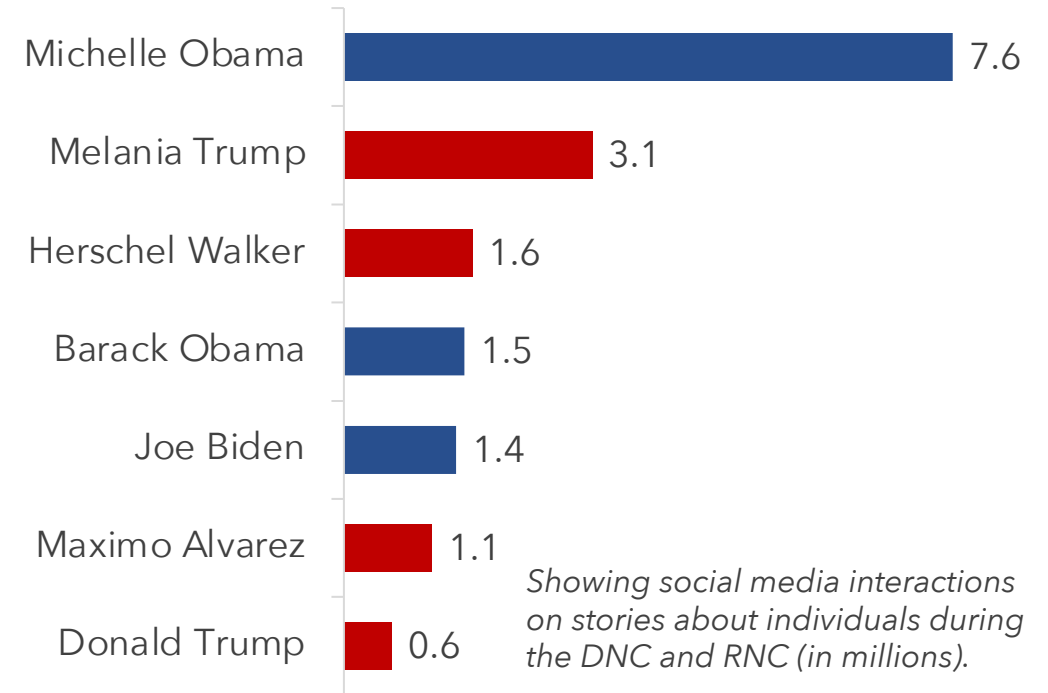
## RNC and DNC Viewership

■ RNC ■ DNC



**Live viewership for both conventions was down significantly from 2016.**

## Most Viral Speeches



As in recent years, neither candidate saw a significant post-convention bump.

## 2020 Post-Convention Polling Bumps

Joe  
Biden

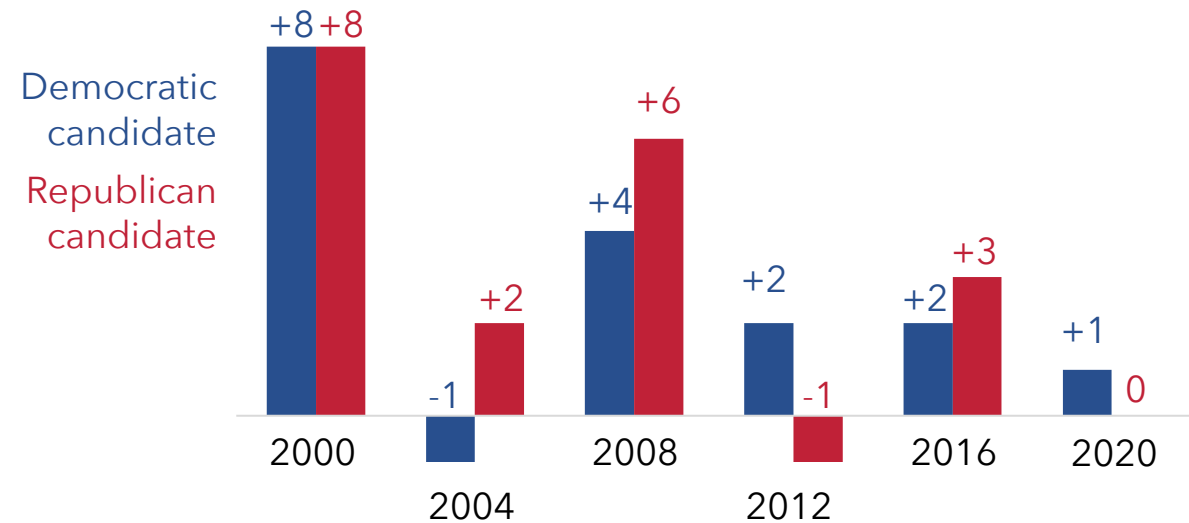
**+1**

President  
Trump

**+0**

*Based on change in aggregated  
polling from early to late-August*

## Post-Convention Polling Bump Comparison

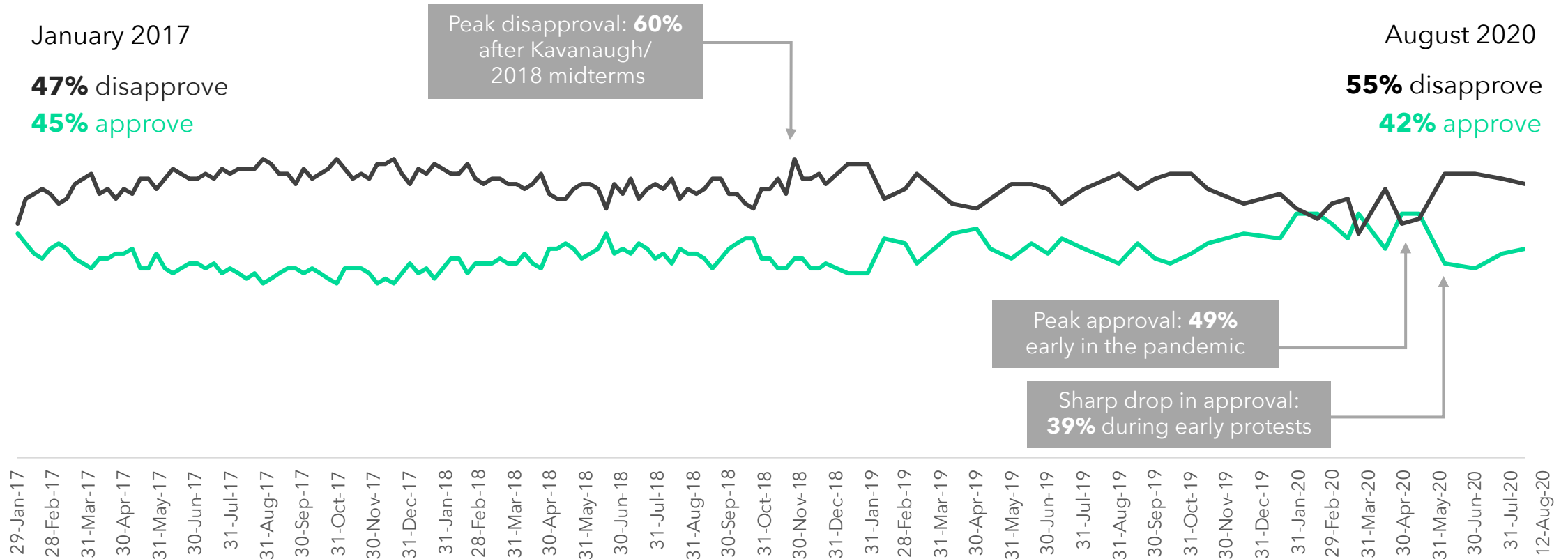




# The Battleground



## President Trump's approval rating has ticked up 3 points since early June.

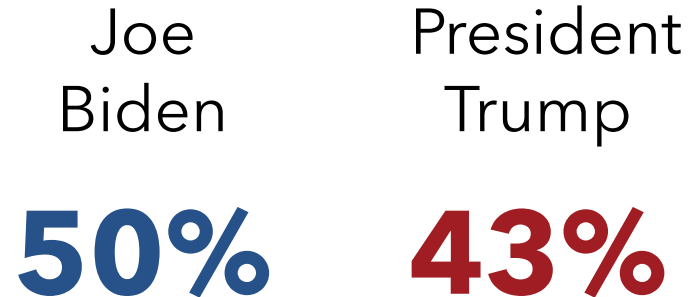


Biden maintains a significant lead nationally.

### Current National Average

**Biden leading by 7 points**

*No significant change from pre-convention polling.*



*Based on aggregated polling from  
August 26 - September 6*

### Comparison to Recent Years

Early September polling in recent elections showed **closer races** and **incumbents with the advantage**.

**2016: Clinton +2**

**2012: Obama +1**

**2008: McCain +3**

**2004: Bush +6**

**2000: Bush +1**

Biden's lead has also been **more consistent** than in other recent races.



Source: RealClearPolitics, 8/26 - 9/6/2020 ([https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/general\\_election\\_trump\\_vs\\_biden-6247.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/general_election_trump_vs_biden-6247.html)); RealClearPolitics comparison data; 2016 (<https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/trump-vs-biden-national-polls-2020-vs-2016/>); 2012 ([https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/general\\_election\\_romney\\_vs\\_obama-1171.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/general_election_romney_vs_obama-1171.html)); 2008 ([https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2008/president/us/general\\_election\\_mccain\\_vs\\_obama-225.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2008/president/us/general_election_mccain_vs_obama-225.html)); 2004 ([https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2004/president/us/general\\_election\\_bush\\_vs\\_kerry-939.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2004/president/us/general_election_bush_vs_kerry-939.html)); CNN Gallup, 9/6-8/2000 (<https://www.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/09/09/tracking.poll/index.html>)



But at this point, national numbers are much less important.

**This year's race will come down to a handful of competitive states.**

**Many are already talking about the possibility of the popular vote not reflecting the winner.**



**Another electoral college-popular vote split? It's possible**

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

**Can Trump win again without winning the most votes? Yes. Pennsylvania shows how.**

**FiveThirtyEight**

**Politics Podcast: If Biden Wins The Popular Vote By 2-3 Points, He Isn't Favored To Win The Electoral College**

**theguardian**

**Electoral college: how Trump could lose the popular vote and win again**

**The Washington Post**

**How will Americans respond when there's another split between the electoral college and the popular vote?**

Based on current polling, Biden maintains an electoral college advantage.

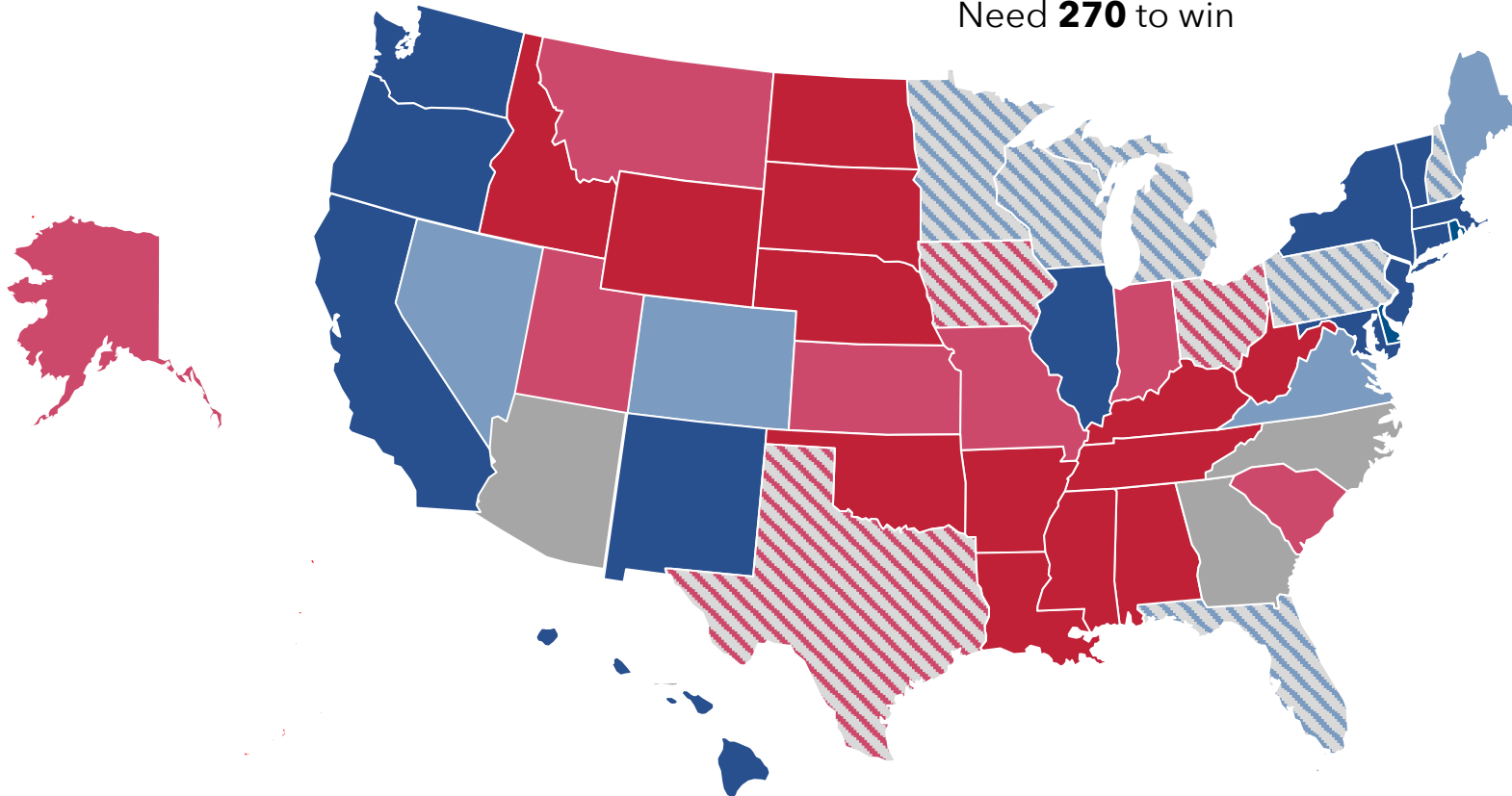
Electoral vote counter:



Democrat: 308

Need **270** to win

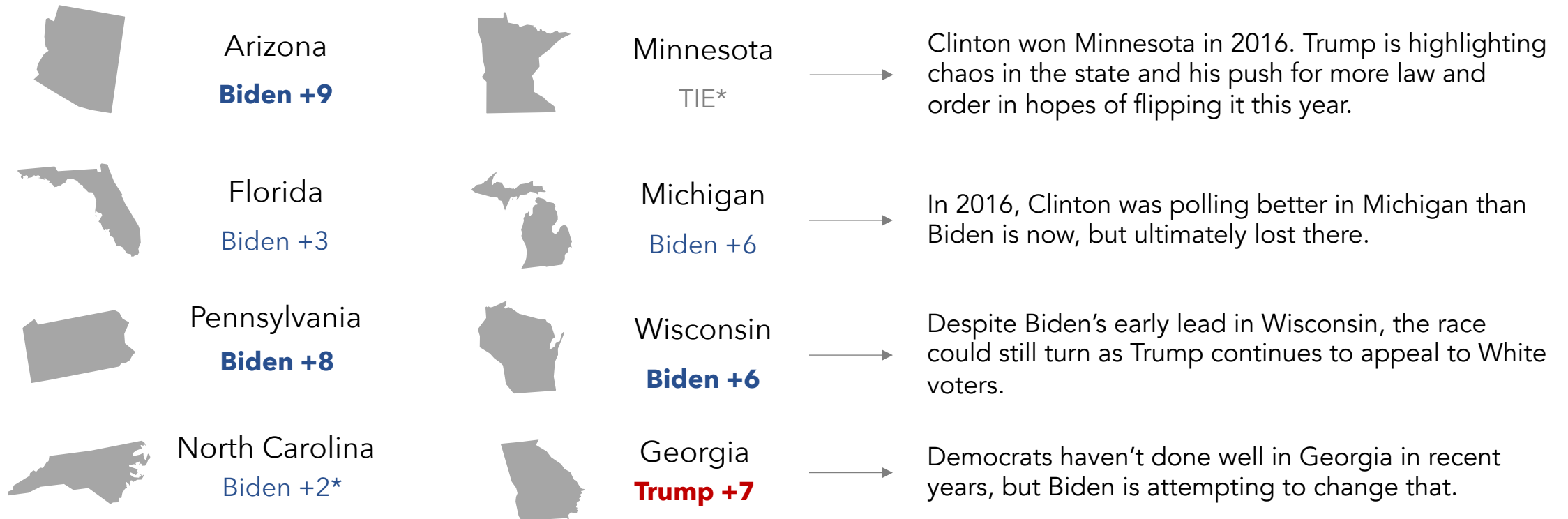
Republican: 187



Safe Democrat  
Likely Democrat  
Leans Democrat  
Toss up  
Leans Republican  
Likely Republican  
Safe Republican

## Biden also maintains an edge in most swing states.

**Bold text represents increase from pre-convention polling.**

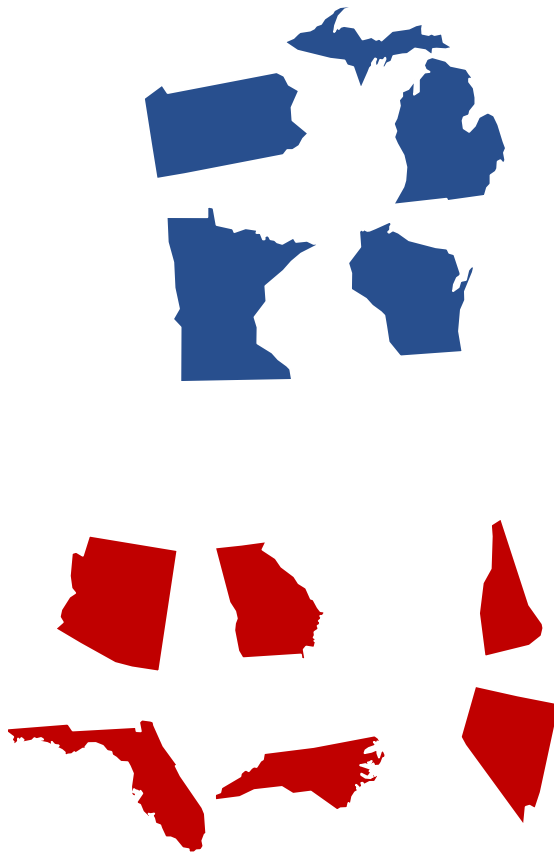


\*denotes polling within the margin of error



Source: FoxNews, 8/29-9/1/2020, n = 853 AZ voters (<https://static.foxnews.com/foxnews.com/content/uploads/2020/09/Arizona.pdf>); Quinnipiac, 8/29-9/1/2020, n = 1,235 likely FL voters and n = 1,107 likely PA voters (<https://poll.qu.edu/2020-presidential-swing-state-polls/release-detail?ReleaseID=3672>); Monmouth, 8/29 - 9/1/2020, n = 401 NC voters ([https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_NC\\_090320/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_NC_090320/)); Trafalgar, 8/15-18/2020, n = 1,141 likely MN voters (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k75e8WjQL01TXmzE3aVSBqrHo5CucbD-/view>); CNBC/Change Research, 8/21-23/2020, n = 809 likely MI voters (<https://changeresearch.com/post/states-of-play-battleground-wave-12/>); CBSNews, 9/1-3/2020, n = 1,006 WI voters ([https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jPWxDDUmXxfuiGU01I\\_2liTRiRQrlfS/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jPWxDDUmXxfuiGU01I_2liTRiRQrlfS/view)); WSB-TV/Landmark, 8/29 - 9/1/2020, n = 500 GA likely voters (<https://www.ajc.com/politics/politics-blog/wsb-poll-trump-builds-lead-over-biden-in-georgia-after-rnc/B7XVX4WYHJG4BIQMVTM2AJEEQM/>); NYTimes analysis, 9/6/2020 ([https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/politics/trump-biden-2020.html?campaign\\_id=2&emc=edit\\_th\\_20200907&instance\\_id=21974&nl=todaysheadlines&regi\\_id=55312340&segment\\_id=37552&user\\_id=83f443b04edbc0f139207c01308da9a0](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/politics/trump-biden-2020.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20200907&instance_id=21974&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=55312340&segment_id=37552&user_id=83f443b04edbc0f139207c01308da9a0))

But Pres. Trump still has a path to victory.



## How could Trump win?

Even if Biden takes Rust Belt states of WI, MI, MN and PA, Pres. Trump still has a chance.

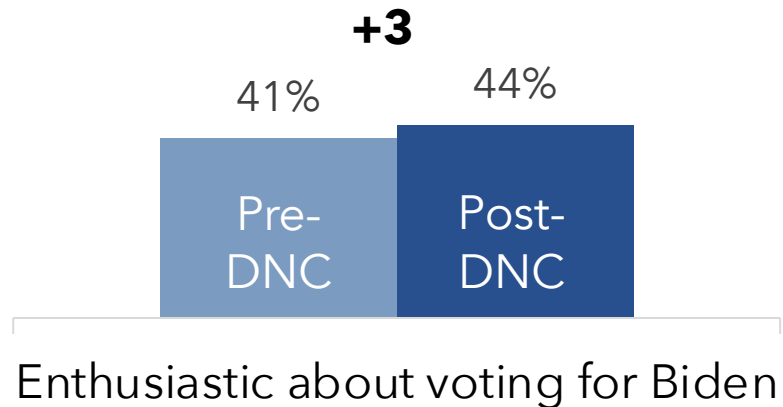
Taking AZ, GA, FL and NC – states he won in 2016 – could put Pres. Trump just over the mark to win this year.

This strategy only works if he can also flip smaller states that Clinton took in 2016 (NV, NH).

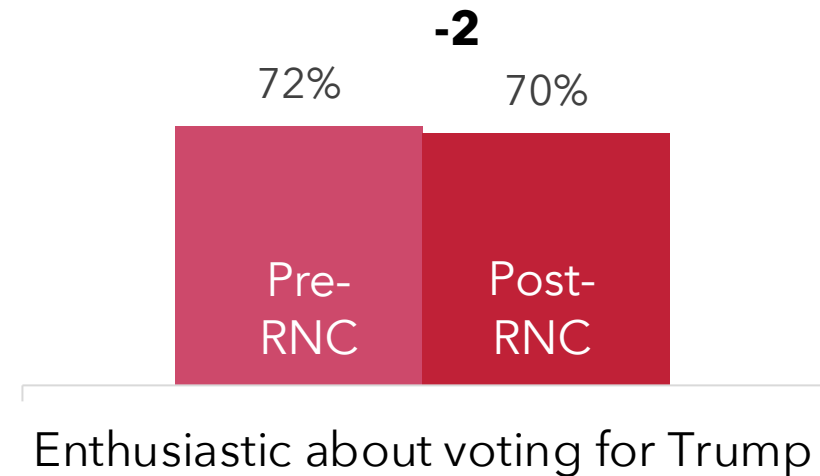
## Turnout Watch: Trump has the enthusiasm advantage.

**Neither saw a major change in enthusiasm post-convention.  
Excitement among Trump voters remains much higher.**

*Among Biden voters:*



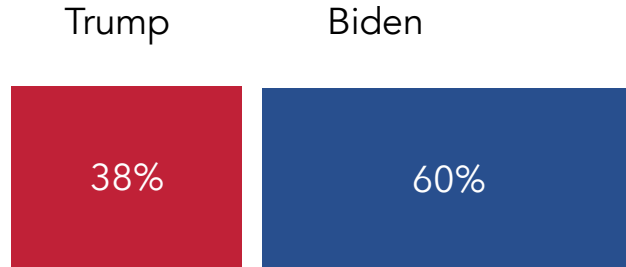
*Among Trump voters:*



## On the Issues: Biden is seen as better on the virus; Trump better on the economy.

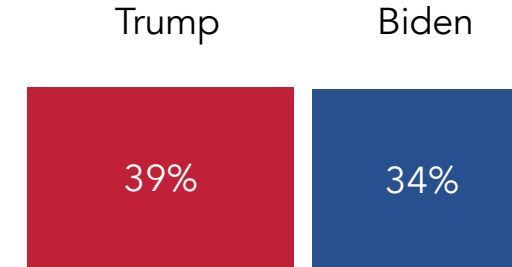
### Americans would trust Biden over Trump on the virus.

#### Better at handling virus response



### Trump has a slight edge on improving the economy.

#### Believe economy will get better if \_\_\_\_ is elected



Biden is stronger on protests and safety, but these issues are becoming more divisive.

## Most believe Biden would be better on race relations and safety.

Believe \_\_\_\_ would be better at...

### Handling racial discrimination



### Handling protests



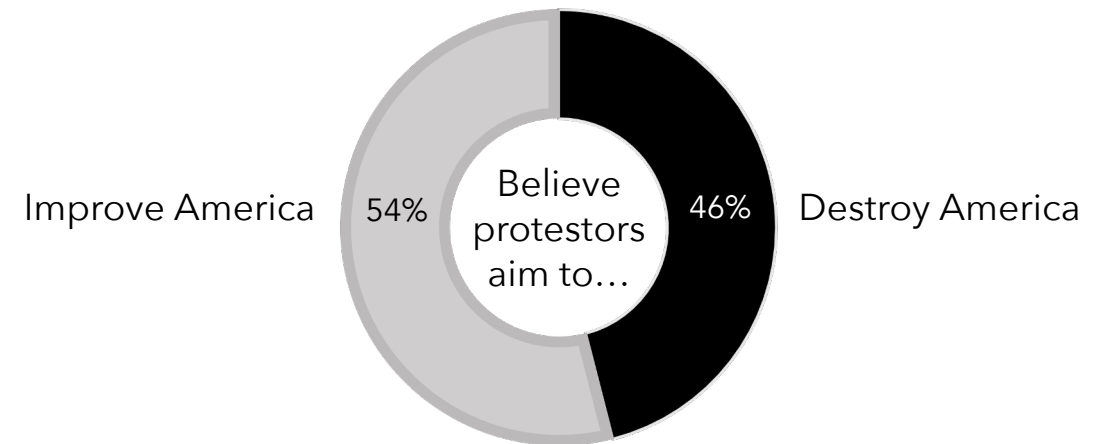
### Reducing violence



### Keeping us safe



## Sustained protests coupled with Trump's rhetoric may be having an impact.



**Opposition** to BLM has increased  
**+10 pts.**  
 since early June





# House and Senate Updates

## Democrats maintain their advantage in Senate races.

Solid Dem	Likely/Lean Dem	Toss Up	Likely/Lean Rep	Solid Rep
DE-Coons	MI-Peters	CO-Gardner	AL-Jones	AR-Cotton
IL-Durbin	AZ-McSally	ME-Collins	GA-Loeffler	ID-Risch
MA-Markey		NC-Tillis	KS-Open	LA-Cassidy
NH-Shaheen		MT-Daines	KY-McConnell	MS-Hyde-Smith
NJ-Booker		IA-Ernst	<b>SC-Graham*</b>	NE-Sasse
OR-Merkley		GA-Perdue	TX-Cornyn	OK-Inhofe
RI-Reed			AK-Sullivan	SD-Rounds
VA-Warner				TN-Open
MN-Smith				WV-Moore Capito
NM-Open				WY-Open

**To take the Senate, Democrats need to retain all 12 current seats in play and pick up 4 Republican seats.**

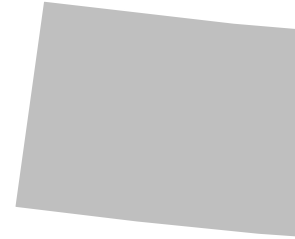
Half of Senate toss-ups currently lean towards Democratic challengers. Others are within striking distance in Republican strongholds.

### Georgia



Incumbent: **David Perdue** (R)  
Challenger: **Jon Ossoff** (D)  
Recent polling: **Perdue +3\***

### Colorado



Incumbent: **Cory Gardner** (R)  
Challenger: **John Hickenlooper** (D)  
Recent polling: **Hickenlooper +9**

### Maine



Incumbent: **Susan Collins** (R)  
Challenger: **Sara Gideon** (D)  
Recent polling: **Gideon +4**

### North Carolina



Incumbent: **Thom Tillis** (R)  
Challenger: **Cal Cunningham** (D)  
Recent polling: **Cunningham +2\***

### Montana



Incumbent: **Steve Daines** (R)  
Challenger: **Steve Bullock** (D)  
Recent polling: **Daines +6**

### Iowa



Incumbent: **Joni Ernst** (R)  
Challenger: **Theresa Greenfield** (D)  
Recent polling: **Ernst +1\***

\*denotes polling within the margin of error



Sources: WXIA/SUSA, 8/6-8/2020, n = 623 likely GA voters (<http://www.surveysusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=4b9009c4-ef1d-4774-a211-0c4402738ec8>); Quinnipiac, 7/30-8/3/2020, n = 807 registered ME voters ([https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/sc/tri08062020\\_bgxe21.pdf](https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/sc/tri08062020_bgxe21.pdf)); Emerson, 7/31-8/2/2020, n = 584 likely MT voters (<https://emersonpolling.reportablenews.com/pr/montana-2020-trump-holds-strong-as-biden-coalesces-support/>); Monmouth, 8/29 - 9/1/2020, n = 401 NC voters ([https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_NC\\_090320/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_NC_090320/)); PPP Polling, n = 731 CO Voters, 8/18-19/2020 (<https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ColoradoResults1.pdf>); Monmouth, 7/30-8/3/2020, n = 401 likely IA voters ([https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_IA\\_080520/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_IA_080520/))

## Democrats hold more vulnerable House seats than Republicans, but analysts predict they will increase their margins this year.

Lean Dem		Toss Up		Lean Rep		
AZ-01 O'Halleran	<i>NJ-07 Malinowski</i>	CA-21 Cox	<i>NY-22 Brindisi</i>	NE-02 Bacon	AK-At Large Young	NC-08 Hudson
CA-48 Rouda	NV-03 Lee	<i>FL-26 Mucarsel-Powell</i>	OK-05 Horn	<i>NJ-02 Van Drew</i>	<i>FL-15 Spano</i>	NY-01 Zeldin
GA-06 McBath	<i>NY-19 Delgado</i>	<i>IA-01 Finkenauer</i>	<i>SC-01 Cunningham</i>	NY-02 Open	IL-13 Davis	NY-24 Katko
GA-07 Open	<i>PA-07 Wild</i>	IA-02 Open	<i>UT-04 McAdams</i>	OH-01 Chabot	MI-03 Open	PA-01 Fitzpatrick
<i>MI-08 Slotkin</i>	PA-08 Cartwright	<i>IA-03 Axne</i>	<i>VA-02 Luria</i>	PA-10 Perry	MI-06 Upton	<i>TX-03 Taylor</i>
<i>MI-11 Stevens</i>	<i>TX-07 Fletcher</i>	<i>ME-02 Golden</i>	<i>VA-07 Spanberger</i>	<i>TX-21 Roy</i>	<i>MN-01 Hagedorn</i>	<i>TX-10 McCaul</i>
<i>MN-02 Craig</i>	<i>TX-23 Open</i>	MN-07 Peterson	<i>AZ-06 Schweikert</i>	TX-22 Open	MT-At Large Open	<i>VA-05 Open</i>
		<i>NJ-03 Kim</i>	<i>CA-25 Garcia</i>	TX-24 Open		
		<i>NM-02 Torres Small</i>	<i>IN-05 Open</i>			
		<i>NY-11 Rose</i>	<i>MO-02 Wagner</i>			





# Looking Ahead

## What's Ahead

### SEPTEMBER

#### **EARLY VOTING STARTS**

- Voters have begun casting mail-in votes in North Carolina and will soon begin in-person in Minnesota (Sept. 18).

#### **FIRST DEBATE**

- First presidential debate, held in Cleveland (Sept. 29).

#### **POTENTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

- Funding runs out on September 30.

### OCTOBER

#### **DEBATES CONTINUE**

- Vice Presidential debate, held in Salt Lake City (Oct. 7).
- Second presidential debate, held in Miami (Oct. 15).
- Third presidential debate, held in Nashville (Oct. 22).

### NOVEMBER

#### **POSSIBLE VACCINE?**

- US Surgeon General has directed states to be prepared to distribute a vaccine by November 1.

#### **ELECTION DAY**

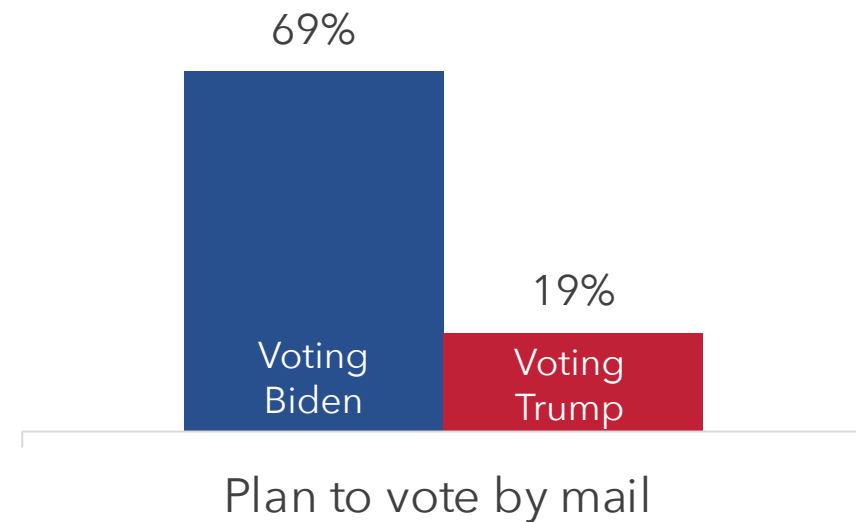
- Tuesday, November 3.

#### **STATES TALLY MAIL-IN BALLOTS**

- Expected to continue into the weeks after November 3.

## November Challenges: Modeling shows a possible “red mirage” on election day.

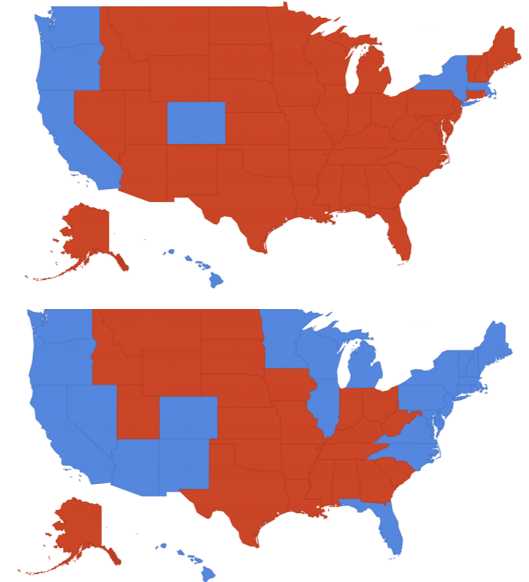
**Most Biden voters plan to vote by mail.  
Trump voters plan to vote in person.**



**Based on these divides, analysts warn of  
a “red mirage” on election night.**

*On **November 3**, Trump could come away looking like the winner based on in-person tallies.*

*But by **November 9**, Biden could instead appear to win as more mail-in votes are tallied.*



**The implication:** The Trump campaign could declare an early victory – one that could be reversed in the days or weeks following the election.



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