

The Divided States of America: The Biden era ushers in hope for his supporters, despair for Trump backers

Most 2020 GOP voters say President-Elect Biden will do a worse job handling COVID-19 than Trump

January 19, 2021 – Tomorrow the pages of American history turn again, with the inauguration of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris.

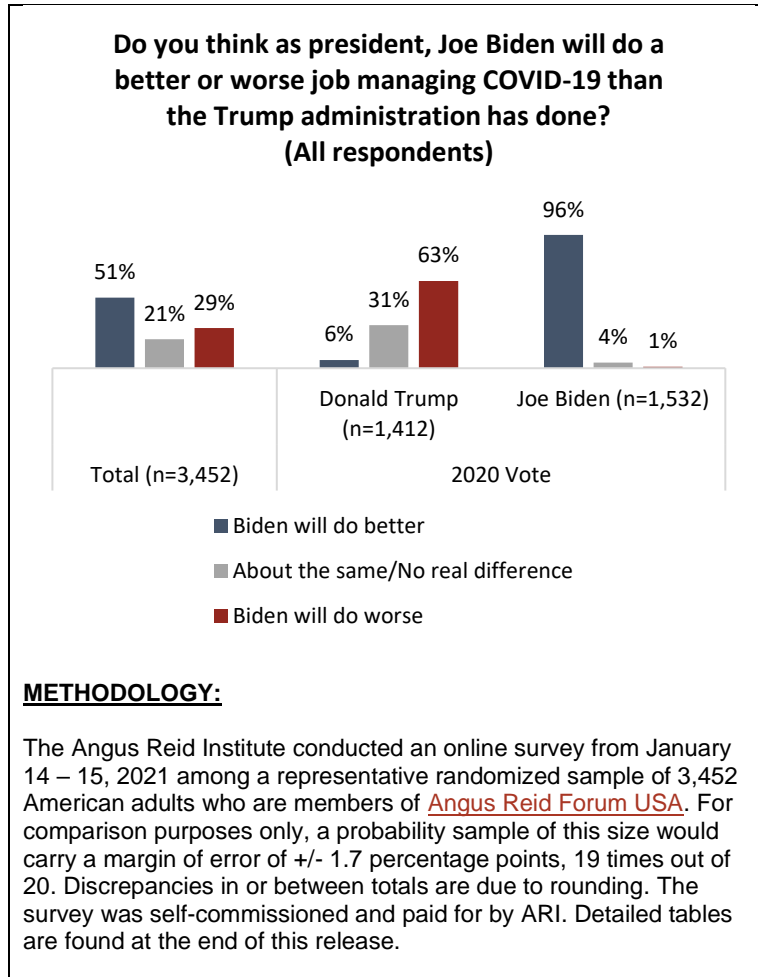
But what kind of narrative is written onto those pages will depend squarely on Biden and his administration's ability to reach across the political divide to those who didn't vote for him. This will be crucial, given new data from the Angus Reid Institute that show voters for each of the two presidential candidates carry such widely divergent assessments about the last four years – and the four years ahead – that it leads observers to question whether Americans have it within themselves to find unity again.

Biden voters – younger, more highly educated, and more likely to be women – are at least three times more likely to say their mental health, finances, and sense of safety and security have taken a considerable hit over the past four years, and expect each to improve significantly under a new administration. By contrast, Trump voters – older, more likely to be male, and less likely to have a university or college education – are steadfast in their view that those same personal metrics have improved over the past four years, and will worsen now that Biden is set to take office.

While this discord will be a major, long-term challenge of the Biden-Harris years, the first major issue the administration will deal with is COVID-19. On this file, half of Americans (51%), but just six per cent of Trump voters, feel Biden will be an improvement in his response to the pandemic.

More Key Findings:

- Overall, 57 per cent of Americans say they are pleased to see Joe Biden sworn in as the 46th President of the United States, while 43 per cent feel the opposite.



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- The prospect of Kamala Harris taking over at some point in the term is more divisive. In this case, 51 per cent say they would be comfortable with the idea, while 49 per cent dislike or dread it.
- 46 per cent of Americans expect the lives of Black, Hispanic, and other minority groups to improve under the Biden Presidency. This optimism is higher among Biden voters (78%), but partisan differences persist, as just 14 per cent of Trump voters say the same.

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part One: Planet Biden, Planet Trump

President-Elect Joe Biden will be inaugurated January 20. Thus far, his appeal for national unity has widely been seen as [unwavering](#). It has also, evidently, been [unmoving](#). The nation appears as divided as it has been in modern history. Outgoing President Donald Trump will not attend the inauguration, instead heading to Florida making [continuing, unfounded](#) accusations of election fraud.

Biden won the popular vote [by over 7 million votes](#), finishing with 51 per cent to Donald Trump's 47 per cent. Their supporters represent distinct and different demographics of the American population.

Biden's predominantly young supporters were the foundation for his victory. Seven-in-ten women between the ages of 18 and 34 voted for Biden, alongside 64 per cent of men in that age category. For Trump, men over the age of 54 were his largest voting block; two-thirds (65%) among this group cast their ballot for the incumbent:

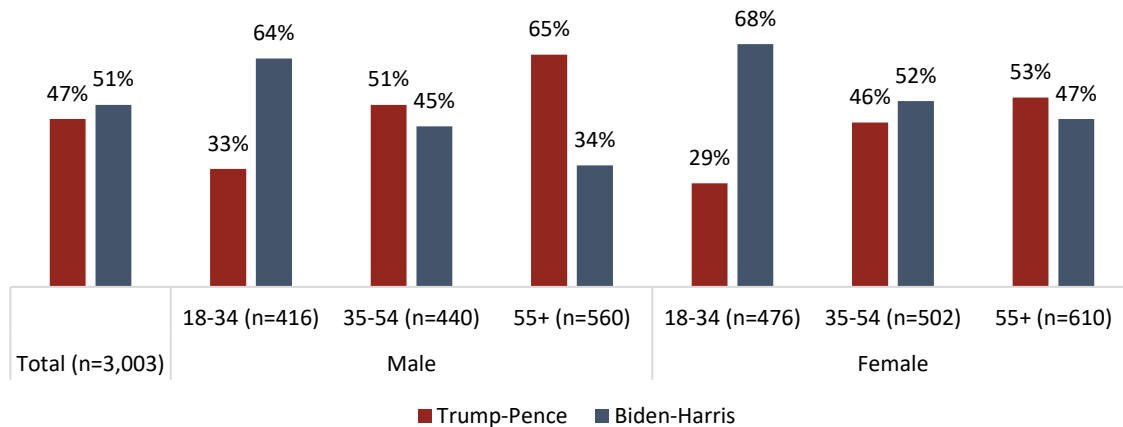
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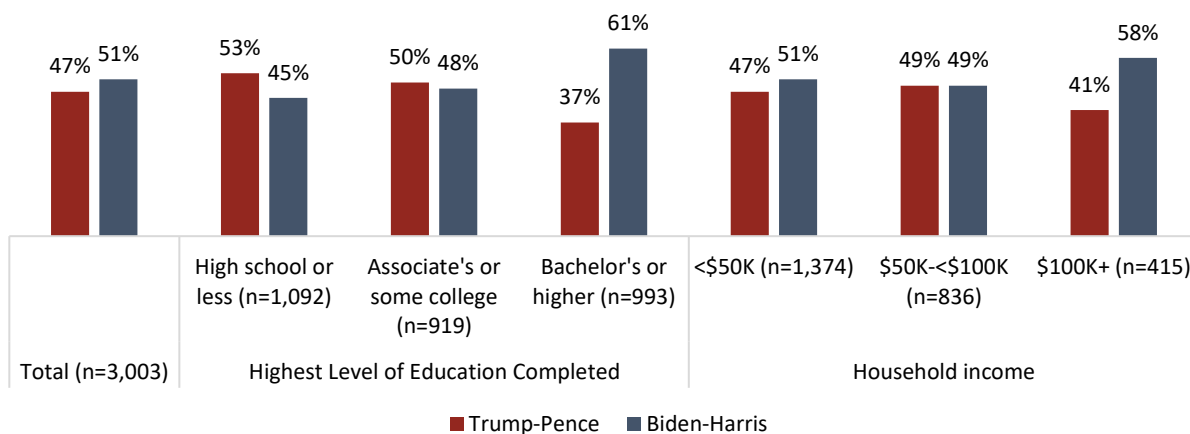
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**Which ticket did you support in the November Presidential election?
(Those that voted in 2020)**



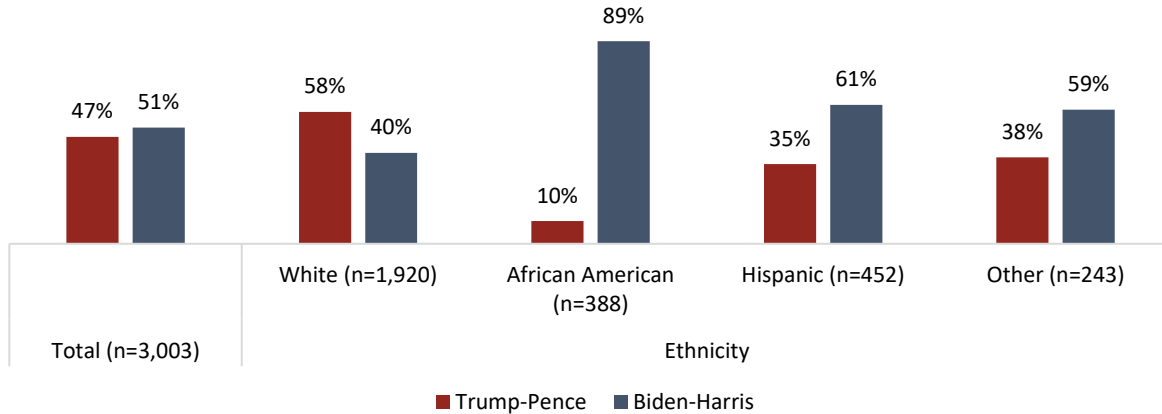
Income and education, too, tell the story. Those earning household incomes of less than \$100 thousand annually were equally likely to have voted for either candidate, while Biden won out among higher-income earners. Biden also benefitted from a significant advantage among university educated voters, while Trump won the vote among lower-educated Americans by an eight-point margin:

**Which ticket did you support in the November Presidential election?
(Those that voted in 2020)**



Ethnicity represents another important demographic factor, as Biden garnered support from a strong majority of voters from non-white backgrounds. White voters, however, preferred Trump by nearly a three-to-two margin:

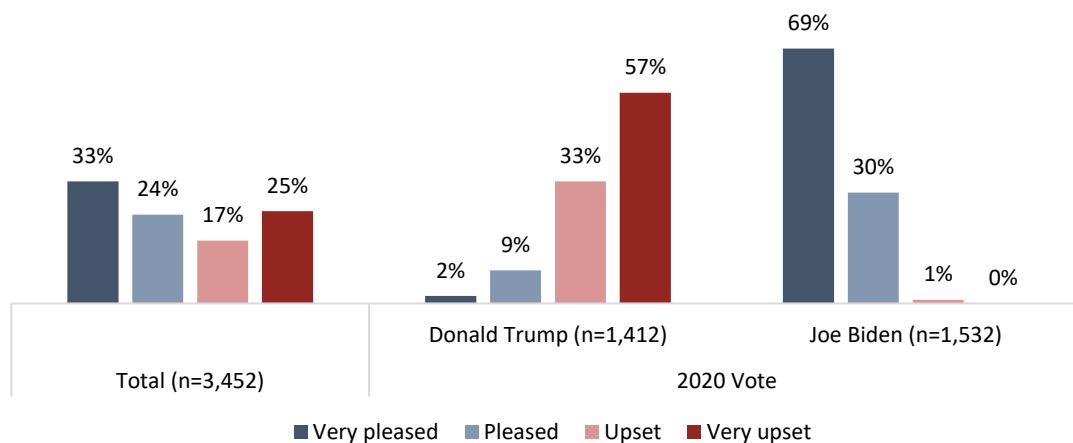
**Which ticket did you support in the November Presidential election?
(Those that voted in 2020)**



Part Two: Bracing for or celebrating Biden-Harris?

With the U.S. divided into two partisan camps, it is to be expected that slightly more than half the country (57%) is pleased about the inauguration, while the other half (42%) is upset. Whether they are elated or distraught, more Americans feel strongly about Biden coming to power than feel just moderately pleased or upset. Among those who voted for Trump, almost three-in-five (57%) are “very upset” about Biden’s inauguration, though one-in-ten (11%) are in fact pleased to see him sworn in.

On Wednesday, Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States. Are you pleased or upset about this? (All respondents)



What if Harris were to take over?

Kamala Harris will make history on Wednesday in her own right, as the first female vice president, the first Black VP, and the first of Indian descent. For millions of Americans, these are profoundly meaningful milestones. Regardless of these accomplishments, the job of vice president is that of backup – as

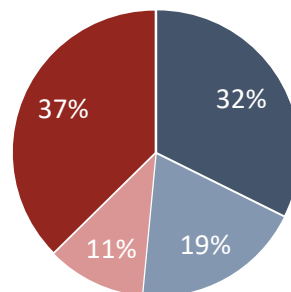
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commander-in-chief-in-waiting, in the event Joe Biden, who will be the country's oldest president, cannot continue his duties.

The prospect of "President Harris" draws more intense reactions than that of her running mate. Asked how they would feel if she were to become the president, Americans are roughly evenly split between positive and negative outlooks, but they are twice as likely to have strong feelings about this prospect as moderate ones.

How do you feel about the prospect of Vice President-elect Kamala Harris becoming President? Would you embrace or dread having Kamala Harris as US President?
(All respondents, n=3,452)



■ Embrace with open arms ■ Welcome ■ Don't like the idea ■ Totally dread it

This is especially true for those who backed the Trump-Pence ticket: fully four-in-five say that they "totally dread" the idea of Kamala Harris as president. On the campaign trail, [Republicans](#) focused many of their criticisms on her.

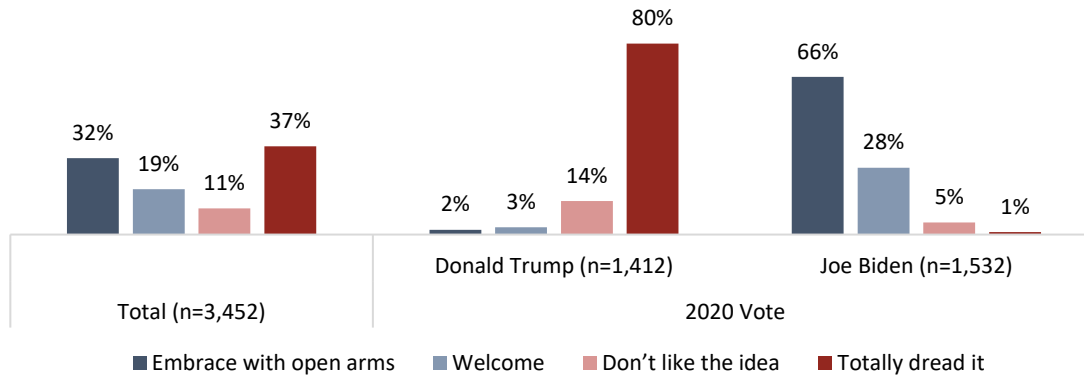
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Part Three: A tale of two realities

Divergent experiences and expectations

The competing perspectives in the United States are even more evident when Americans are asked to describe how their own lives have changed in the past four years, and how they expect the next four years to go. Much of what they have experienced and expect depends on which side of the political divide they occupy.

For example, three times as many Trump voters say their own financial situation improved while he was president as Biden voters. The inverse effect is observed when respondents forecast the next four years. Similar results are seen across a number of measures:

Percentage saying each of the following has improved over the last four years vs. saying it will improve during the Biden Presidency				
		Total (n=3,452)	2020 Presidential Vote	
			Donald Trump (n=1,412)	Joe Biden (n=1,532)
My financial situation	Improved under Trump	32%	53%	17%
	Will improve under Biden	32%	9%	54%
My sense of safety and security	Improved under Trump	24%	48%	6%
	Will improve under Biden	38%	7%	71%

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My ability to access healthcare	Improved under Trump	23%	41%	9%
	Will improve under Biden	30%	7%	53%
My mental health	Improved under Trump	23%	39%	12%
	Will improve under Biden	33%	7%	62%

Looking at broader national issues, once again, Trump and Biden voters view the world from not just different places, but different planets. Those who cast a ballot for Trump are six times as likely as Biden supporters to say America’s democracy improved during the past four years, while the latter are eleven times as likely to say this will improve between now and 2024.

Whether it is America’s reputation in the world, the treatment of minority groups, or the environment, the same narrative holds.

Percentage saying each of the following has improved over the last four years vs. saying it will improve during the Biden Presidency				
		Total (n=3,452)	2020 Presidential Vote	
			Donald Trump (n=1,412)	Joe Biden (n=1,532)
Democracy in America	Improved in past 4 years	19%	37%	6%
	Will improve	43%	7%	79%
America’s reputation in the world	Improved in past 4 years	23%	49%	3%
	Will improve	47%	11%	82%
The lives of Black, Hispanic, and other minority groups	Improved in past 4 years	31%	61%	7%
	Will improve	46%	14%	78%
The environment	Improved in past 4 years	18%	35%	6%
	Will improve	42%	10%	76%

The COVID crisis

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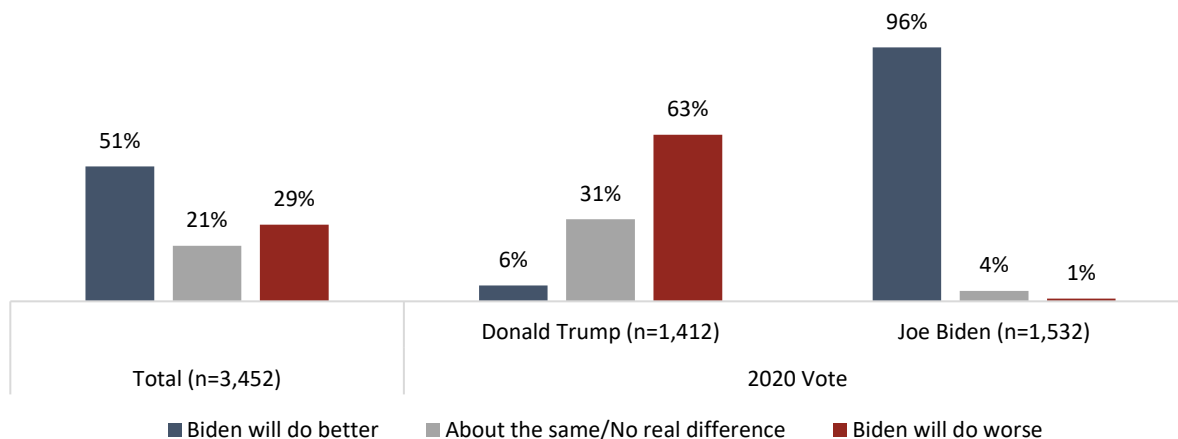
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Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus crisis has been [panned by observers and leaders](#) around the globe. In the United States, the reviews have been mixed. While [more than half of Americans](#) say he has done a poor job, still nearly 40 per cent say he is handling the crisis well.

But will Biden be an improvement?

Half (51%) say they expect the incoming administration to handle COVID-19 better than Trump. One-in-five (21%) expect little to no change, while three-in-ten (29%) say he will do worse. These opinions are near unanimously in favour of Biden among his voters, with 96 per cent trusting him to improve, but conversely, only six per cent of Trump's voters say the same:

**Do you think as president, Joe Biden will do a better or worse job managing the COVID-19 pandemic than the Trump administration has done?
(All respondents)**



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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