

What to watch out for as results come in

Charissa Yong points out the key factors as polls close in states across America.



DONALD TRUMP

TOTAL: 538
270 NEEDED TO WIN



JOE BIDEN

To become the next president of the United States, President Donald Trump or former vice-president Joe Biden will have to win at least 270 electoral votes out of a total of 538, whether or not they win the nationwide popular vote. Each state has a given number of electoral votes but most states have a history of voting Democrat or Republican, so the election will come down to a few crucial states that could swing either way.



This year, experts urge patience as many results may not be known on Election Night itself due to the surge in mail-in voting amid the pandemic.

11am onwards

IS THE CONTEST CLOSE?

Ordinarily, major TV networks and news outlets will call the race based on exit polls before an official announcement is made. The winner has been called as early as at 9am, though in 2004, 2008 and 2012 this happened around or just past noon. In 2016, Mrs Clinton called Mr Trump to concede around 3.45pm.

This year, experts say it can take days or even weeks to count all the ballots. Processing and counting mail-in ballots takes time, and some states cannot start until after polls close. Other states accept ballots after Nov 3, as long as they are postmarked on Election Day. Absentee voting rules may be contested in court, lengthening the wait before the winner is finalised.

If either candidate appears headed for a big victory, the chances that the result is disputed will be lower. But if the contest is close, and if ballots counted later swing the race in favour of Democrats, this could prompt calls from Mr Trump that the election is rigged. The President has also declined to say whether he will accept the result of the election, leaving a question mark hanging over how Election Night will turn out.

Source: REALCLEARPOLITICS
PHOTOS: EPA-EFE, BLOOMBERG
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

7am to 9am (Singapore time)

WHICH WAY WILL THE TOSS-UP STATES FALL?

	FLORIDA	GEORGIA	TEXAS	NORTH CAROLINA	OHIO	IOWA
Electoral votes	29	16	38	15	18	6
Polls close (Local time/Singapore time)	7pm/8am	7pm/8am	7pm/9am	7.30pm/8.30am	7.30pm/8.30am	9pm/11am
Lead in opinion polls in percentage points*	Biden +1.8	Trump +0.2	Trump +1.2	Trump +0.2	Trump +1.4	Trump +1.4

- Mr Trump and Mr Biden have a **50-50 chance of winning** most of these states, even though the President won them by comfortable margins in 2016.
- No Republican president has won the White House without Florida in **100 years**, and losing Florida will be very hard for Mr Trump to come back from.
- Florida tends to tally its votes quickly and a Biden win could signal it being over early for Mr Trump, while a Trump win keeps him very much in the game.
- Democrats also believe that parts of the "red wall" in the Sun Belt, Georgia and Texas, are in play for them in this election. Texas, with its **38 votes**, would be a big prize. If Mr Biden flips states like Georgia, Iowa, Ohio and Texas, he may be headed for a decisive victory.



Campaign signs in support of Mr Biden and Mr Trump.

WILL THE MIDWEST KEEP FAITH WITH TRUMP?

	MICHIGAN	PENNSYLVANIA	WISCONSIN
Electoral votes	16	20	10
Polls close	8pm/9am	8pm/9am	8pm/10am
Lead in opinion polls in percentage points*	Biden +5.1	Biden +2.6	Biden +6.7

- Mr Trump famously won the three "blue wall" states of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin by **77,000 votes in total in 2016**, dashing the presidential hopes of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.
- If Mr Biden flips Florida blue, a victory in one or more of these states could seal the presidency for him. Winning all three of these Midwestern states could also be a path to the White House for him.
- If Mr Trump holds on to them or the contest remains close, prepare for a long drawn-out night. Moreover, all three states will probably not be called so early, because they count their mail-in votes slower. Pennsylvania, for instance, can start processing mail-in ballots only on Tuesday morning.

WILL THEY STAY WITH BIDEN?

	ARIZONA	NEVADA	MINNESOTA
Electoral votes	11	6	10
Polls close	7pm/11am	7pm/11am	8pm/10am
Lead in opinion polls in percentage points*	Biden +0.9	Biden +3.6	Biden +4.3

- The two Sun Belt states of Arizona and Nevada lean Democrat at the moment, but the Trump campaign is gunning for them.
- Minnesota has voted Democrat since 1972, but Mrs Clinton won it by a **narrow 1.5 point margin in 2016**.
- If Mr Trump wins these states, or comes close to winning them, it may signal trouble for Mr Biden's campaign.

*RealClearPolitics polling average as at Nov 2