



## **2016 a bad year for presidential polling predictions; will we see the same in 2020?**

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SHREVEPORT, La. -- Plenty of polls out there right now are providing a lot of information about the presidential election outcome. But how accurate and how reliable are those polls?

You know it didn't go to well for the pollsters in 2016. Remember these headlines:

- "The most recent CBS News national poll shows Hillary Clinton with a 9-point lead over Donald Trump."
- "CNN is releasing a new poll of polls which is an average of the six last surveys and it shows Donald Trump trailing Hillary Clinton by 10 points."
- "What would Donald Trump need to do to turn things around? Prayer. He needs to be a little bit like Kramer in Seinfeld and hope for a festivus miracle."

Of course, everyone knows what happened: "Donald Trump will be the 45th President of the United States," reported Fox News.

Throughout the month of October none of the national polls have President Trump being re-elected.

KTBS asked a Shreveport resident, "Do you trust the polls that you see?" The response: "No, doesn't seem to be extremely accurate."

"I'm kind of iffy about the polls," said another Shreveporter.

KTBS asked a political analyst to weigh in too with this question, "Do you think the general public has much faith in the polls at this point?" "No," replied Mark Leeper, political science professor at Centenary College.

But that's not an opinion he shares.

"2016 was really an aberration. 2020, I have a fair amount of confidence in the poll results we're seeing," said Leeper.

What we're seeing is Joe Biden ahead in the polls leading up to the election by 8, 10, 12 even 14 points. Is that reality?

"The Cato Institute in July had a study that showed 77% of self identified conservative and very conservative voters said that the political environment these days prevents them from sharing their opinions because they're afraid of offending someone. On the other end of the spectrum, 60% of self identified very liberal voters said they had no problem sharing their political opinion," said Ryan Cassin, political strategist for Beast Digital.

There's also an ongoing debate about media bias in these surveys. Are modern polls meant to reflect public opinion or shape it?

"I think those in the profession would say they're doing it to reflect public opinion and to play the media's proper role of providing information. ... I don't think the intent of the professionals is to manipulate the masses," said Leeper.

"I think what we've seen is that you can get a pole to say anything you want. So if the media has a narrative that they want to drive home, it's great to be able to bring in a pole which looks objective and it looks like it's giving additional information. But what it really is doing is reinforcing an existing narrative. There are so many ways to tweak a pole to get the result you want that it's good to take them with a grain of salt," said Cassin.

Whether the polls are right or wrong in 2020, it remains to be seen.

Only two major polls got it right in 2016. The IBD/TIPP poll had President Trump at plus-2 points and the Rasmussen Reports poll had him at minus 2 points, which is within the margin of error.

One thing all can agree on -- now is the time to make your voice heard.