

# Donald Trump's Self-Inflicted Wounds Make For An Unlikely Reelection, Experts Say

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The election is only a few weeks away, and polls continue to show a large gap between President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden.

- The former vice president has consistently led in national and battleground polls and has expanded his lead in critical swing states since the first debate.
- As Trump continues to focus on his base, the president has seen a decline in support from critical voting blocs including senior voters, suburbanites and women, polls show.

Polls have consistently shown a sizable polling gap between President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden with the election a few weeks away, leaving little time for the incumbent to increase his standing with battleground demographics that could decide the winner.

Biden has consistently led Trump in both national and battleground polls, and voters have widely disapproved of his handling of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Further, Trump's approval among two critical voting blocs — seniors and suburban women — has plummeted, allowing Biden to pull ahead in swing states that the president won four years ago.

“Politics remains a game of addition. You either broaden your base or turn it out in greater numbers,” Bruce Mehlman, a Republican strategist who has provided quarterly in-depth analyses of presidential races for years, told the Daily Caller News Foundation.

“President Trump has never really tried to expand beyond his core supporters,” he said.

In Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania — the three upper midwestern states that sealed Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016 — Trump trails Biden among senior voters by 20 points, 30 points and 11 points, respectively, polls show. Four years ago, he won the group by one point, four points and 10 points in each state, exit polls show.

According to FiveThirtyEight, Americans have also disapproved of Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which has disproportionately affected seniors as well.

And, as Trump caters to his base, the president has weakened his standing in Republican-leaning states like Arizona, Texas and Georgia, where rapidly expanding suburban areas have created opportunities for Democrats to win electorally, polls show.

“In, terms of the electorate, [Trump's] banking on a share that's not really growing,” J. Miles Coleman, an associate editor at Sabato's Crystal Ball, told the DCNF, referencing Biden's widespread coalition that has resonated with white suburban voters in states across the country.

Biden leads Trump by 13 points among that demographic, according to Morning Consult. It's a huge shift from when he narrowly won the group four years ago, according to exit polls.

In recent weeks, Trump has made direct pleas on Twitter and during his campaign rallies to both senior voters and suburbanites in an effort to garner support among the two groups, which could decide whether he or Biden ultimately wins, forecasters say.

Meanwhile, the pandemic, which has infected almost 8 million and killed approximately 215,000 Americans, has been a focus of the election.

“He makes it hard for himself,” Coleman said. “A good debate performance could have helped reset the tone, but it didn’t. He was also given a gift with the Supreme Court [vacancy], but that turned into a super-spreader event, which brought people’s focus back to the virus.”

Further shining light on the coronavirus was Trump’s own infection, said Walter Olson, a political expert at the Cato Institute. He said the president catching the virus “reminds the public of one of his consistently weakest issues” at the expense of things like the Supreme Court and the economy.

“The Barrett confirmation and, even more, the talk of court packing will probably bring some Republicans home, but Trump needs more than that,” he said.

Olson also pointed to Trump’s struggle to land successful attacks against Biden, noting how labeling him as “tired” or “sleepy” hasn’t resonated beyond his core supporters. He also noted that vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris “has adjusted her positions to Biden’s, not the other way around,” and consequently undermining the notion that Biden is merely a puppet of his party’s liberal wing.

And while “Trump hasn’t run out of themes,” Olson said, “he’s beginning to run out of time.”

Trump’s withdrawal from the second debate also hurt his reelection chances, according to The Washington post. The second two debates were his most notable chances to improve his standing against Biden and deliver his message to Americans of both parties, the Post reported, but instead he cut his opportunities to narrow Biden’s lead over him in half.

Trump called the second debate a “waste of time” after it was switched to a virtual format due to his coronavirus infection. The Commission on Presidential Debates ultimately canceled the event.

“I’m not going to say he has no chance,” Coleman said, “but short of any earth-shattering events, there’s not too much that can change where the race is now.”