

# The 2024 US elections



**Emma Kilheaney McSherry** discusses some of the outcomes of November's polls

On 5 November 2024, elections took place in the USA, not only to decide who would become the 47th president but also to decide on the composition of the 119th Congress, the governor of 11 states and the outcome of many state-wide ballot measures.

## The presidential election

Donald Trump became the first president since Grover Cleveland in the late nineteenth century to be elected president twice but serving two non-consecutive terms. Unlike in 2016, Trump won in 2024 having secured a majority of the popular vote as well as the Electoral College vote. However, Trump won fewer votes than Joe Biden did in 2020 (see tables).

Trump secured all 94 Electoral College votes in the seven swing states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In 2020, Biden won six out of the seven. Trump won back three of the rust belt's traditionally 'blue wall' states that he won in 2016 but lost in 2020 – Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

## Social media

Trump's social media campaign contributed to him winning more votes from men aged under 30 than Harris – a group that strongly favoured Biden in 2020 over Trump. Trump was interviewed by Joe Rogan,

**Table 1 2024 results**

	Trump	Harris
% of popular vote	50.2%	48.2%
Electoral College votes	312	226

**Table 2 2020 results**

	Trump	Biden
% of popular vote	46.8%	51.3%
Electoral College votes	232	306

**Table 3 2016 results**

	Trump	Clinton
% of popular vote	46.1%	48.2%
Electoral College votes	304	227

the top podcaster in the USA who has 14.5 million followers on Spotify and 17.5 million YouTube subscribers, most of whom are men aged under 30. His interview with Rogan received over 44 million views on YouTube. Another interview, with influencer Adin Ross, received over 500,000 views.

## Campaign finance

The 2024 elections became the most expensive ever, with record-breaking sums of money raised and spent. Open Secrets confirmed that over \$2.69 billion was raised by Trump and Kamala Harris's committees and outside groups, with \$1.6 billion of this raised by

Harris – including \$81 million in the first 24 hours after Biden announced he would not stand.

Billionaires donated 60% more money in 2024 than in the 2020 elections – nearly \$2 billion in total. More than three-quarters of billionaire donations went to the Republicans. Timothy Mellon, heir to a banking fortune, donated \$165 million to Trump and the Republican Party. Elon Musk, owner of X (formerly Twitter), donated \$118.5 million to the American Political Action Committee that focuses on voter registration and persuading voters in swing states to vote for Trump. Musk's donations contributed towards the \$1.2 billion that was spent in Pennsylvania on advertisements – the first time that over \$1 billion was spent on ads in a single state. After being elected, Trump announced that Musk would co-lead a new department of government efficiency. This raises questions about the extent to which a small number of mega-donors can influence the outcome of US elections and government.

## Congressional elections

The Republicans took control of the Senate after winning 53 seats, and they very narrowly kept control of the House of Representatives. In the Senate, Arizona flipped back to Democrat control, but Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia all flipped from Democrat to Republican. Trump-backed Republican candidate Kari Lake lost in Arizona to Democratic candidate Ruben Gallego. However, other Trump-backed candidates, including Bernie Moreno in Ohio, did win. This was unlike 2022, when several Trump-backed flawed Republican candidates lost to their Democratic opponents in the congressional elections.

## Ballot measures

Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, New York and Nevada all voted to enshrine abortion rights in their state constitution. Florida, Nebraska and South Dakota voted not to. While 57% of Florida voters supported the measure, it needed to reach a

threshold of 60% to be approved. Other states only required a majority of voters to support their abortion ballot measures in 2024.

Florida, North Dakota and South Dakota also voted to reject the legalisation of marijuana. Nebraska voted to both legalise and regulate marijuana use for medical reasons. Massachusetts voted to reject a legalisation of natural psychedelic substances.

### Class task

- 1 Identify the factors from this article that may contribute towards a candidate winning an election in the USA.
- 2 Evaluate which of these factors was most important in 2024.

### Class debate

- 1 Does Trump winning the popular vote as well as the Electoral College suggest that the Electoral College does not need reform?
- 2 Should campaign finance be more strictly regulated in the US?

### Weblinks

Find out more about how much was spent in the 2024 elections at Open Secrets:

<https://www.opensecrets.org>

Find out more about the key 2024 ballot measures that took place in Florida relating to abortion rights and marijuana:

<https://tinyurl.com/abortion-ballot> and

<https://tinyurl.com/marijuana-ballot>

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