



AS IT IS

## More Than 4 Million Americans Have Already Voted

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More than 4 million Americans have already voted in the 2020 election, with Election Day still four weeks away. In 2016, only 75,000 people had voted one month before the election.

Those numbers come from the U.S. Elections Project, which gathers early voting data.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3.

The increase has been driven by an expansion of early and mail-in voting in many states as a safe way to vote during the coronavirus health crisis. It has also been driven by a desire to decide the political future of President Donald Trump, said Michael McDonald of the University of Florida. He leads the U.S. Elections Project.

“We’ve never seen this many people voting so far ahead of an election,” McDonald said. “People **cast** their ballots when they make up their minds, and we know that many people made up their minds long ago and already have a judgment about Trump.”

The high numbers have led McDonald to predict a record turnout of about 150 million voters. That would be about 65 percent of people able to vote, the highest rate since the 1908 election.

Trump, a Republican, is running against Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. National opinion studies have shown Biden leading Trump. But studies in critical **battleground states** suggest a closer race.

The numbers reported so far come from 31 states, McDonald said. The numbers will rise quickly as more states begin early in-person voting and report **absentee** mail-in totals in the next few weeks.

All but six states permit some kind of early in-person voting.

The total number of early or mail-in votes more than doubled from nearly 25 million in 2004 to 57 million in 2016, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission says.

Trump has repeatedly criticized mail-in voting, saying it leads to **fraud**. But experts say voter fraud is rare.

Those attacks by the president may have led to lower Republican interest in voting by mail.

A national opinion study carried out last week by Reuters/Ipsos found that 5 percent of Democrats said they had already voted, compared to 2 percent of Republicans. The study also found that about 58 percent of Democrats planned to vote early, compared to 40 percent of Republicans.

McDonald said early voting usually starts strong, then drops before rising again just ahead of the election. But in some states, the rates of early voting have been huge -- with one month still to go.

In South Dakota, early voting has already reached nearly 23 percent of the total turnout in 2016. It is nearly 17 percent of total 2016 turnout in Virginia and nearly 15 percent of total 2016 turnout in the battleground state of Wisconsin.

“That’s just **nuts**,” McDonald said. “Every piece of data suggests very high turnout for this election. I think that’s just a given.”

I'm Ashley Thompson.

*The Reuters news agency reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**cast** - v. to make (a vote) formally

**battleground state** - n. a US state where the two major political parties have similar levels of support among voters

**absentee (*ballot*)** - n. a vote that is submitted before an election by a voter who is not able to be present when the election occurs

**fraud** - n. the crime of using dishonest methods to take something valuable from another person

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