

US-China

The Final Countdown and What Could Happen Next

- The Harris-Trump race is extremely close, with Harris's lead shrinking to just 1.2% nationally
- High early voting turnout favors Democrats, but Trump's "shy voter" effect could again skew polling predictions
- Gender gap and targeted voter outreach in battleground states may benefit Democrats
- Legal challenges and ballot incidents could impact close House races and voter turnout
- AI-driven misinformation and media coverage on election fraud are deepening public distrust in the election's legitimacy
- A Republican sweep could lead to ambitious policy shifts, especially affecting US-China relations

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With just one day remaining before the 2024 US elections, the race between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is exceptionally close. Harris's lead over Trump has [narrowed](#) to 1.2% in national polls. In key battleground states, the contests are similarly tight. The Senate landscape is also competitive, with Republicans potentially poised to gain seats and reclaim control from the Democrats. In the House of Representatives, numerous races are highly contested, leaving the balance of power uncertain (see: [US Election is Still Far from Certain](#)).

Latest polling

| State | Trump-Vance | Harris-Walz | Who leads |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Michigan | 46.9% | 48.0% | Harris leads by 1.1% |
| Wisconsin | 47.3% | 48.2% | Harris leads by 0.9% |
| Pennsylvania | 47.8% | 47.7% | Trump leads by 0.1% |
| Arizona | 48.8% | 46.7% | Trump leads by 2.1% |
| Georgia | 48.6% | 47.1% | Trump leads by 1.5% |
| North Carolina | 48.4% | 47.1% | Trump leads by 1.3% |
| Nevada | 47.7% | 47.3% | Trump leads by 0.4% |

(Source: Fivethirtyeight.com, as of 2 November 2024)

If Trump's actual support once again exceeds polling predictions, as it did in 2016 and 2020, his chances of winning could rise significantly. However, high turnout in early voting suggests a boost in support for Democrats. Several ballot-related incidents could also impact close House races.

Final tactics and voter dynamics

Harris's decline in the polls over the past two weeks can be [attributed](#) to a shift in campaign strategy. Initially, the campaign's focus on her qualifications garnered support. However, as her messaging shifted toward attacking Trump, her momentum slowed. This more negative approach may have left some voters seeking greater clarity on her policy platform, as she is less familiar to the public than Trump, who built his platform on top of his first term from 2016 to 2020.

Both candidates have worked tirelessly to rally voters in the final weeks. Harris has targeted suburban women, young voters, communities of color, and the working class in seven key states to build a diverse coalition. Her grassroots approach emphasized reproductive rights,

economic opportunity, and social justice through appearances at churches, barbershops, and community centers.

Trump, meanwhile, has combined traditional rallies with unconventional appearances to connect with a wide range of voters. He appeared on popular podcasts and at high-profile events, such as UFC matches, to appeal to younger audiences, particularly men under 30. His brief stint behind a McDonald's counter was clearly designed to reinforce his "man of the people" image.

Once again, **it is possible that Trump's support will surpass polling predictions.** In previous elections, some Trump supporters were reluctant to disclose their preference in polls but turned out in greater numbers—a phenomenon known as the "shy Trump voter" effect—which could again influence results in key states.

At the same time, **high voter enthusiasm and record-breaking pre-election turnout in swing states may favor Democrats.** For instance, over 25% of Georgia's active voters [cast](#) their ballots early, and despite Hurricane Helene hitting parts of North Carolina, more than 353,000 voters from the state [showed](#) up on the first day of early voting—5,000 more than in 2020.

The gender gap could also [benefit](#) Democrats. Trump leads Harris by 16% among men, while Harris leads by 20% among women. In six states that track gender data, including Georgia, Michigan, and North Carolina, 54.2% of early ballots were [cast](#) by women, which could bolster Democrats' chances.

Legal actions by Republicans challenging voting rules in some states have [introduced](#) additional uncertainties. In North Carolina, lawsuits aim to restrict voting access, while emergency voting appeals in Pennsylvania and Virginia have drawn the Supreme Court into the process.

Contested provisional ballots could also affect close races. For example, Republicans in Butler County, Pennsylvania, along with the Republican National Committee, have requested that the Supreme Court block authorities from counting provisional ballots for voters whose mail-in ballots were rejected due to technical errors.

Ballot tampering incidents are further complicating matters. Fires set at ballot boxes in Washington, Oregon, and Arizona led to the loss of hundreds of ballots. While these incidents are unlikely to alter the presidential outcome, they could significantly impact tight local races. For instance, in Washington's third congressional district where the damaged ballot box was located, representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez won by fewer than 3,000 votes in 2022. Every vote will be crucial to the result.

Potential for a contentious post-election period

Ballots will be counted more quickly this year than in 2020 due to fewer mail-in votes and new laws that expedite processing. However, final results may still come in late due to narrow margins in key states. Recounts could be requested by either side in close races, potentially delaying the final result.

The influence of AI-driven election misinformation has grown, further eroding public trust in the electoral process. Doubts about the outcome resonate with already polarized views,

intensifying voter sentiment and fueling post-election uncertainty. Misinformation is also deepening racial divides, with targeted disinformation campaigns in specific communities. Spanish-language disinformation, for example, [remains](#) widespread and has received less attention compared to English-language misinformation. In the event of significant post-election protests, there is a possibility of increased participation from Hispanic and other minority groups.

Media coverage of election fraud allegations is more intense this cycle, driven by conspiracy theories, misinformation, and Trump's continued assertions of voter fraud. This coverage risks undermining public confidence in the election's legitimacy and could deepen distrust in the next administration.

A peaceful transition may be difficult regardless of the outcome. If Trump wins, Democrats are likely to mobilize legal teams in key states, request recounts, and take legal action to ensure ballot accuracy. Conversely, if Harris wins, Trump may escalate objections through rallies, investigations, and other high-profile methods. These maneuvers could impede a smooth transition, raising the risk of a contentious handover with prolonged legal battles and public demonstrations.

Implications of a Republican sweep

If Republicans secure the presidency, Senate, and House, they would have the opportunity to pursue an ambitious policy agenda without opposition. Trump's transactional approach to US-China relations, for example, could be swiftly enacted under a unified Republican government.

In this scenario, **Trump might even present surprising opportunities for Chinese businesses**, given his openness to favorable business deals. He has already signaled interest in allowing Chinese automakers to manufacture in the US, hinting at possible business openings under his administration.

For China, a Republican-led US government poses both challenges and opportunities. While anti-China rhetoric and sanctions may intensify, the US focus on internal affairs could enable China to expand its global influence, pursue new trade partnerships, and enhance its economic resilience amid shifting international dynamics.