

Can We Trust Our Elections? 28 Percent of Mail-In Voters Confess Fraud in 2020

With all the complications and mandates of 2020, it's safe to say it was an election unlike any other. Mail-in voting, debates over voter ID, and ballot drop boxes suddenly confronted every voter. Now, the next presidential election quickly approaches, but have we really considered if the 2020 election should be the model going forward?

A new Heartland Institute [study](#) answers this very question.

The study considered the impact of fraudulently cast ballots on the last Trump-Biden race for the White House, and it examines how the voting policies in 2020 impacted potential fraud.

The report based its findings on a [recent poll](#) in which over a quarter of American mail-in voters (28.2 percent) confessed to committing some kind of voter fraud, wittingly or unwittingly, in the fall of 2020.

Respondents most commonly confessed to filling out ballots for friends or family members, voting in states where they were no longer permanent residents, or signing ballots for other voters without their permission.

It is estimated that [43 percent](#) of voters cast their ballots by mail in 2020—the highest percentage in U.S. history.

Titled “Who Really Won the 2020 Election?” the Heartland Institute study created 29 different scenarios to determine whether Trump or Biden would have won the Electoral College under specific sets of conditions.

Researchers narrowed their focus on just “the key swing states

that Donald Trump lost by razor thin margins in 2020—Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.”

The study’s first scenario modelled what the election outcome would have been if indeed 28.2 percent of American mail-in voters cast their ballots fraudulently and therefore had their ballots appropriately excluded from the final count. Under those conditions, Trump would have won all six swing states and the Electoral College by a 311–227 margin, easily returning him to the Oval Office.

Each of the following scenarios answered the same question but incrementally reduced the percentage of fraudulently cast ballots, first to 27 percent, then 26 percent, and for every integer down to 1 percent.

Researchers designed their study this way in order to correct for poll respondents who may have overstated their wrongdoing, and to weed out any other confounding factors.

They discovered that even with just a modest 6 percent of mail-in voters casting their ballots fraudulently in 2020, Trump still would have won the Electoral College 289–249, returning him to the White House.

In the 5 and 4 percent scenarios, Trump and Biden would have tied 269–269 in the Electoral College vote, but due to Republicans controlling the House of Representatives in the wake of the election, Trump would almost certainly still have become president via a [tiebreaker vote](#).

Thus, only in the 3, 2, and 1 percent scenarios would Biden have won.

“We have no reason to believe that our survey overstated voter fraud by more than 25 percentage points,” [the study’s authors note](#), “and thus, we must conclude that the best available evidence suggests that mail-in ballot fraud significantly impacted the 2020 presidential election, in favor of Joe

Biden.”

In summarizing the study, the Heartland Institute remarks that traditionally “the majority of Americans have trusted that the electoral results delivered to the public were an accurate reflection of the will of the people,” but that this proud tradition was undermined in the lead-up to the last election:

In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, dozens of states significantly altered their voting processes. In many cases, these changes occurred imprudently, without serious consideration of their potentially adverse effects and without the consent of the people’s elected representatives in state legislatures.

These abrupt and hasty changes to voting procedures in the months before the 2020 election occurred despite the fact that ample evidence showed that mass mail-in voting, unsecure ballot drop boxes, ballot harvesting, and lack of signature verification would result in a flood of fraudulent ballots that would undermine the accuracy of the election results.

More than studying what could, should, or would have been, the authors provided a comprehensive list of election integrity reforms that could prevent similar outcomes in the future.

Among their proactive policy recommendations are that states

- Update and verify election registration rolls annually.
- Require identification to vote in person.
- Encourage in-person voting.
- Require a witness or notary signature on all mail-in ballots.
- Minimize mail-in voting by requiring a valid excuse to cast a ballot by mail.

In terms of preventative policies, the authors also recommended that states

- Outlaw ballot harvesting.
- Forbid unattended and unsecure election drop boxes.
- Require signature verification for mail-in voting.
- Establish agencies to investigate claims of election law violations.
- Impose harsh penalties for those who commit voter fraud.

Given how hotly contested the White House race will be this year, legislators and county officials would do well to take their recommendations very seriously.

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