



**A Finn Partners Ireland Guide:
US Elections 2024**

A Finn Partners Ireland guide to U.S. Election Day 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This American election is like no other, it has captured the minds of the Western world's political anoraks and offered gripping political theatre. Multiple assassination attempts and a dramatic change in candidate for the Democratic Party have created an unprecedented race.

We explore the key indicators and dynamics for US Election Day 2024 and what it could mean for Irish and European businesses.

THE GROUND RULES

Trump v Harris is likely to be the most remarkable election for a generation, and if [polling averages](#) are to be believed, it will likely be the closest since Bush v Gore in 2000. The key number is 270, the number of Electoral College (EC) votes required to win the Presidency. For all intents and purposes, the popular vote should be ignored. It is worth noting that in modern times, the EC tends to favour Republicans, take for example 2016 where Hillary Clinton won 48.2% of the popular vote compared to Trump's 46.1% and still lost the EC by 304 to 227.

In reality only seven states truly matter in this race; Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada. The rest are far outside the margin of error in favour of one party or the other. Pennsylvania, with its 19 EC votes, is commonly seen as the '[hinge state](#)' in this race.

The most 'straightforward' and realistic path to 270 for the Democrats likely necessitates winning Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, alongside Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District. Nebraska alongside Maine are the only two states that [split](#) their EC votes. Harris will also by default be seeking to expand a victory to Nevada, Arizona, Georgia and North

Carolina.

The Trump campaign will be hoping their most straightforward path to the White House runs through Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina, bringing them to precisely 270 EC votes with potential to expand the map in Arizona, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin.

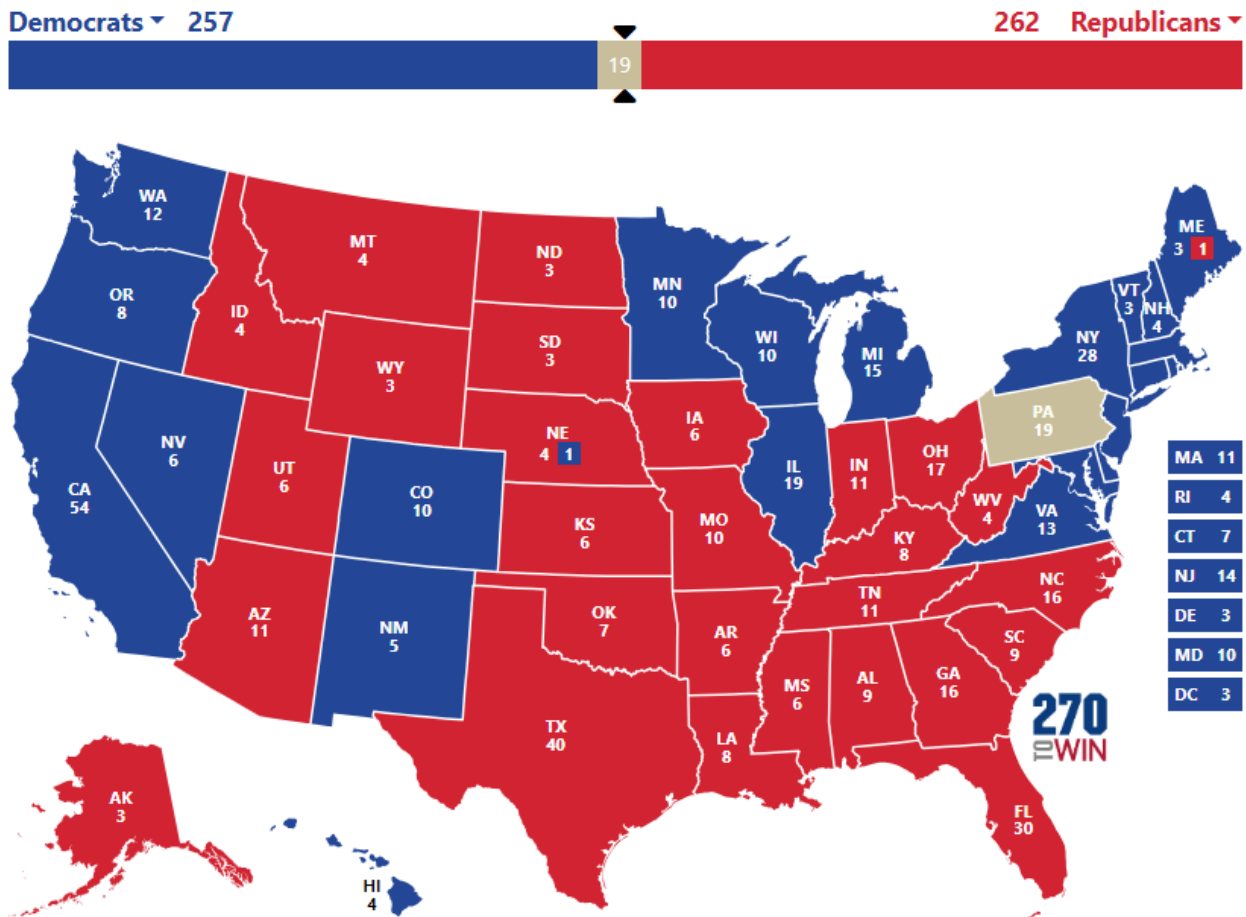
270+ **7**
EC votes to win **Battleground states**

This is not to say there are not [numerous other paths](#) to victory for both candidates, various combinations are possible, these are simply the desired 'base states' which they will want to win. North Carolina and Georgia historically both lean Republican, despite the success of Joe Biden and Democratic Senate candidates in Georgia in 2020. Interestingly, while Trump won Pennsylvania by under 44,000 votes in 2016. Biden reversed this in 2020, winning the state by over 80,000 votes, perhaps bolstered by his working class 'Scranton Joe' persona, having been born in the state and spending much of his childhood there.

If renowned American pollster and data scientist Nate Silver is to be believed, if the election were to be held today, [his model](#) states Harris would win Michigan, Wisconsin and Nevada on incredibly narrow margins, while Pennsylvania is considered a dead heat, leaving her with 257 EC votes in the bag. Similarly, Trump would have 262 EC votes in hand if he were to take Georgia, North Carolina and Arizona.

This map below demonstrates the centrality of Pennsylvania to both campaigns as of October 22nd. However, polling is of course not always accurate, particularly in the United States and most especially in a year where the Democratic candidate has changed within a matter of weeks. 2016 was infamously a year where the polls under-estimated Trump across the board, while in 2022, Mid-term polling was considered broadly accurate. The reasons behind these discrepancies are still

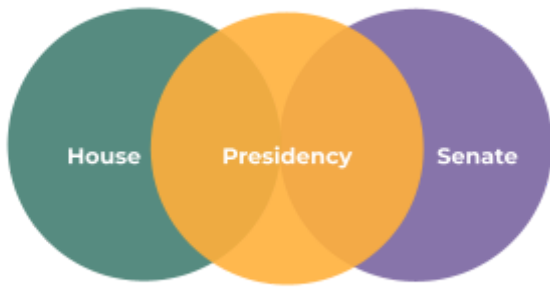
somewhat unknown, with 2020 polling also broadly underestimating Trump despite his defeat.



One could guess that polls may have swung the other way in order to compensate in 2024, or that they yet again failed to reach Trump voters when collecting data. In truth we will not know until all votes are counted, and like 2020, this will likely take numerous painstaking days.

THE DAY AFTER

This is not just a Presidential Election; the US Senate and House of Representatives are up for grabs. It is highly likely that Republicans will take control of the Senate, with Democrats and four amenable Independents currently holding 51 of 100 seats.



A successful domestic US Presidency typically hinges upon cooperation in both houses of Congress

Incumbent Democratic Senator for Montana, John Tester, will almost certainly lose his seat in a ruby red state, while Sherrod Brown faces a brutal test in Ohio and West Virginia. Conservative former Democrat Joe Manchin is retiring, meaning his seat will certainly go to the Republicans in deeply conservative West Virginia. The Democrats face a further daunting gauntlet of several additional tight races across the country this cycle, including in crucial Pennsylvania, meaning control of the US Senate will likely rest with

Republicans by January 2025. Although, an [unexpectedly close](#) race in Nebraska between pro-union Independent Dan Osborn and incumbent Republican Deb Fischer may offer a glimmer of hope of an upset for the Democrats should the wind blow their way on election day.

The House race is close, but a historic underperformance in 2022 by Republicans during an unpopular administration, alongside a historically unproductive congressional term, may favour Democrats to take back their majority. Almost all tight congressional races fall within the margin of error. Republican domination of Congress is not entirely unlikely, but divided government in some form, whether it be in the Executive Branch or Congress, is a more likely outcome by default than a trifecta, meaning that either Presidential candidate will have a very difficult time passing partisan legislation for their first two years.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

UKRAINE

For Americans, both candidates have drastically different visions for their country, in an environment of hyper-polarisation where red and blue voters struggle to see eye to eye on even the most mundane of domestic issues. For Europe and Ireland, foreign

policy and trade are the key concerns of divergence when considering the outcomes of November 5th, given the vastly differing visions for the world set forth by both candidates.

Establishment Europe, that is S&D, EPP, Green and Renew affiliated Governments and parties, all broadly favour a Harris Administration as a continuity of the Biden years, which saw largely positive strides in defence, trade and foreign policy. Trump has concerned Brussels, the UK and most EU capitals with his stance on Ukraine and has put into question America's commitment to its ally should he win back the White House.

In his debate with Harris, Trump refused to say whether or not he wanted Ukraine to win, simply replying "I want the war to stop". Widespread, unrefuted reports have stated that Trump has maintained contact with President Putin a number of times since leaving the White House and has insinuated that Ukraine is partially to blame for the war.

A collapse in American political and military support for Ukraine and an expansion of the conflict has the potential to upend pricing and economic stability across the continent. In spite of Russia's invasion, Ukraine harvested 80 million tons of grain and oilseeds in 2023, exporting roughly 50 million tons to global markets within a year. Shortages following the outbreak of war in 2022 sparked enormous inflation within the agriculture and food sectors, further destabilisation and the capture of key export routes by Russia could serve to reignite this dynamic.

65% of the wheat exported through the EU brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative reached developing countries, Maize was also exported almost equally to developed and developing countries. One must question whether or not Russia will be willing to export grains to Europe produced in captured territories, given that Europeans have placed severe sanctions on Russia in partnership with the US. Putin may also purposefully withhold exports from unstable regions like the Horn of Africa in order to create a deepened refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, Russia has already

manoeuvred across Central and West Africa to assist in the overthrow of Western-backed governments along crucial migration routes.

Tariffs and Trade

Ireland is uniquely vulnerable to Trump's proposed trade and tax policies, with the Republican candidate having proposed a 15% Federal corporate tax rate earlier in the year. This may serve to undermine our FDI-heavy economic model, attracting multinational taxes back to the United States and severely damaging the prospects of Ireland recording further multi-annual surpluses.

Trump's proposed trade tariffs, if even partially enacted, would also reshape the world economy, in a manner which has spooked everyone from Wall Street to Frankfurt. The former President has proposed tariffs between 60% and 100% on Chinese goods, while suggesting a tax of 10% to 20% on all imported products, telling the Economic Club of Chicago that these could reach as high as 50%.

It is worth noting that it is the American consumer that would bear the brunt of these tariffs given that it is the importer that pays them and then passes on the cost to the final purchaser. Equally, the European Union would impose retaliatory and likely escalatory tariffs on American products. A trade war between two of the world's largest allied economies would likely drastically disrupt standards of living and political relations, and moderates in congress could ultimately do little to stop it.

Trump On Europe at Chicago Economic Club:

"They screw us on trade so bad, the European nations. And then on top of that, they were screwing us on the military. So they're taking a tremendous advantage of us, \$350 billion deficit on trade and we're then supporting them. In other words, it's not sustainable. You can't keep doing this. You can't have that, China, all of these countries and stupid people made these deals. I saw trade deals that were so stupid that you'd have to be... excuse me, that was so bad that you'd have to be an idiot to sign them. And we signed them for years."

Of course, Trump has been President before, and tariffs were imposed on European steel and aluminium, these were suspended by the Biden Administration until March 2025. The EU responded in kind with tariffs on American-made products such as motorcycles, jeans and bourbon whiskey. It is worth noting that Trump has overstated his position on many key economic issues throughout his Presidency and campaigns, it remains to be seen whether or not he intends to follow through on his tariff proposals to the fullest extent.

It is likely that Trump will have more freedom to enact his Executive Branch level agenda if he wins, given his iron-grip centrality as the key power broker in the modern Republican party and the abundance of increasingly loyal Congressional politicians in the legislative branch. His 2017-2021 cabinet often impeded the perceived excess of some of his proposed policies due to a then ongoing power struggle between the old establishment wing of the party and the new MAGA movement, all indications would suggest that a new cabinet would be decidedly more loyal to Trump's agenda.

In 2022 the World Trade Organisation ruled the tariffs were against global trade standards, marking a remarkable moment where the post-1947 global trade consensus in the West was shattered by the nation and a continent which both in-part created it and wholly championed it.

On balance, Harris may represent a certain orthodoxy, but America's current version of trade orthodoxy is a sharp departure from the Reagan, Bush, Clinton and Obama years. The Biden Administration has in part championed protectionism and America First, refusing to undo much of Trump's trade policies, and that is certainly where the bipartisan consensus rests in Washington. As a caveat, Biden has focused more on 'de-coupling' and de-risking from China rather than severing trade relations entirely.

Harris is far more likely to rely on domestic tax incentives for American producers rather than tariffs, as seen in the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. Harris is also more likely to build or redesign multilateral trade agreements in a

manner which would better serve America's interests, from a Democratic Party perspective, rather than deploying unilateral tariffs.

Similarly, calls for strategic autonomy have sharply increased since 2016 in Europe in policy areas ranging from defence, foreign policy and trade, to critical raw materials. While Trump as President and a Republican congress may represent a more isolationist America, and precipitate a more protectionist Europe, these developments have been two decades in the making and arguably are a reflexive response to the breakneck globalisation of the 90s and early 2000s; and their associated electoral discontent. They are also trends unlikely to reverse for a number of years.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Who wins Pennsylvania will likely either sharply change Europe's medium-term course or ensure an extension of the current status quo, but if Harris wins, it may be a stall rather than a cure to the emerging trends of isolationism in the global economy. For Ukraine, this election is undoubtedly existential and the impacts of a larger Russian offensive in the absence of American military support represents a significant threat to the Eurozone's stability. For Ireland, Harris represents a broadly comfortable, if not slightly uneasy, status quo, while a Trump victory will represent uncertainty to many American MNCs with EU HQs in Ireland, and equally to Irish-based exporters.

**30% of Irish
Exports go to the
United States**

**34.7 million
Americans report
Irish ancestry**

**US businesses
employ 7% of the
Irish workforce**

**Ireland ranks 6th in
the world for inward
FDI to the US**