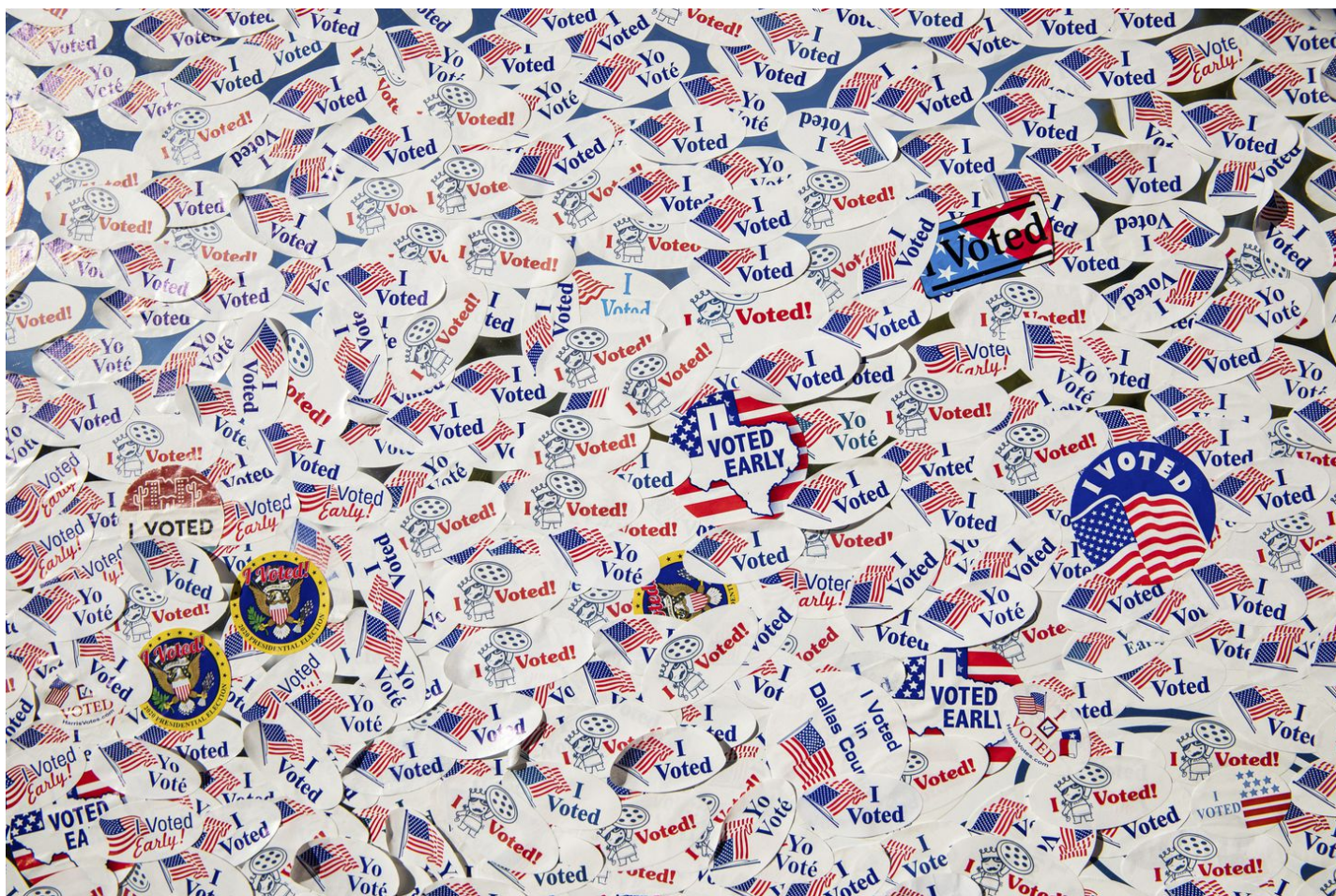


Here are the key voters who shifted from 2016 to make this such a close race

By **Matt Rocheleau** Updated November 4, 2020, 1:58 p.m.



TAMIR KALIFA/NYT

We still don't know who won the presidency. But while we wait for the final results in several battleground states to trickle in, a clearer picture has emerged about what changed in the electorate from four years ago.

National exit poll data show that several key segments of voters shifted — largely away from Trump and toward Biden — to make the race into the cliffhanger it is now.

The data, collected by Edison Research, are considered preliminary and were published overnight by various news outlets, including the [New York Times](#). The data are based on a national survey of 15,590 voters interviewed outside of polling places or early voting sites, or by phone.

Fewer people voted for a third-party candidate this time

Think back to 2016 and you may recall the names Gary Johnson and Jill Stein. Those third-party candidates, among others, scooped up a small but significant percentage of votes, collectively grabbing nearly 6 percent of the nationwide total.

ADVERTISING



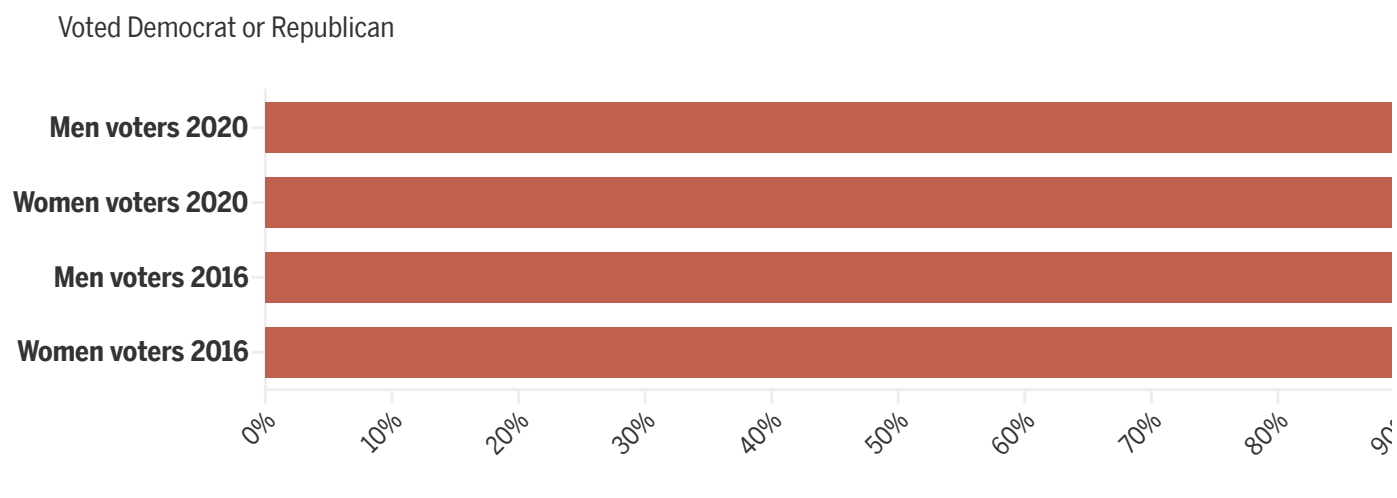
This year, however, third-party candidates account for just 1.6 percent of the vote, as of the count Wednesday just before 11 a.m.

That means a larger share of the votes have gone to one of the two major candidates: Republican President Donald Trump or former Vice President and Democrat Joe Biden.

This trend is clear in exit poll data, too. For example, in 2016, 96 percent of women and 94 percent of men said they had voted for either Trump or Democrat challenger Hillary Clinton.

But this year, 99 percent of women and 97 percent of men said that they had voted for either Trump or Biden.

Fewer people voted for an independent candidate



 A Flourish chart

Those differences may seem small, but in a race this tight, a couple of percentage points one way or another can make all the difference.

Biden got support from former third-party voters

In exit poll interviews, voters were asked how they had voted in 2016.

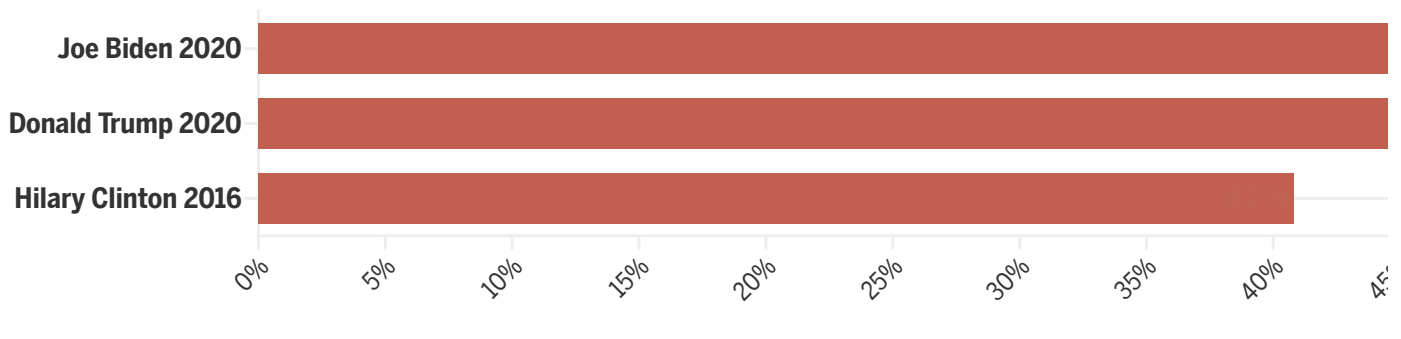
And the results show Biden saw a clear advantage among people who voted for a third-party candidate in the 2016 election and also among people who did not vote at all that year, picking up more than 60 percent of voters in each of those two categories.

Biden also got 8 percent of voters who had voted for Trump in 2016 while Trump picked up just 4 percent of voters who had voted for Clinton in 2016.

Biden did better with men than Clinton did, and even slightly better with women

In 2016, Clinton got 41 percent of the male vote. This year, Biden got 48 percent to Trump's 49 percent.

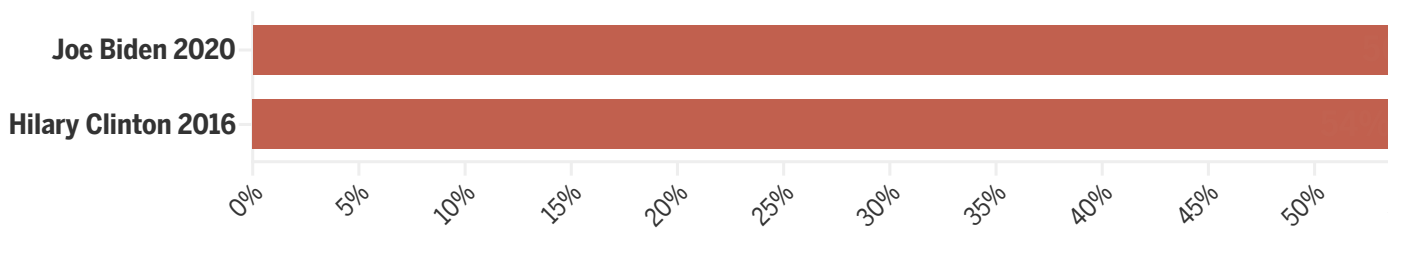
Biden did better overall with male voters



 A Flourish chart

At the same time, Biden received about 56% of the female vote compared with 54 percent for Clinton four years ago.

Biden did better overall with women voters



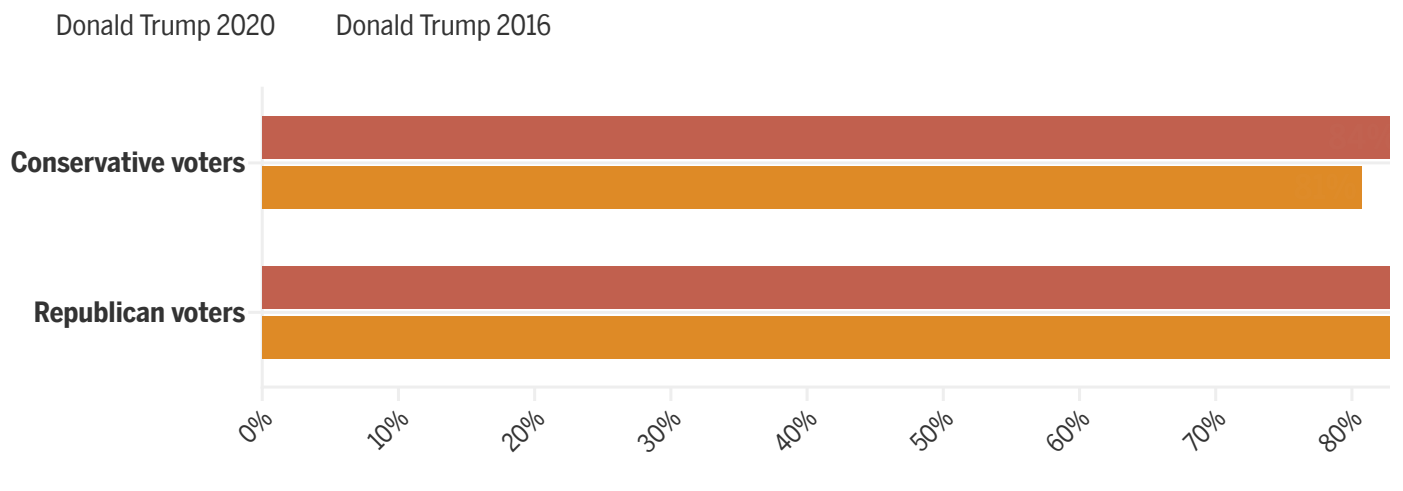
 A Flourish chart

Biden attracted many more moderate voters

Both candidates managed to grow their share of the vote from their respective bases.

Trump captured a larger share of the vote from people who identified themselves as conservative, 84 percent this year, up from 81 percent in 2016. Similarly the president got support from 93 percent of Republican voters, up from 90 percent four years ago.

Conservative and Republican voters

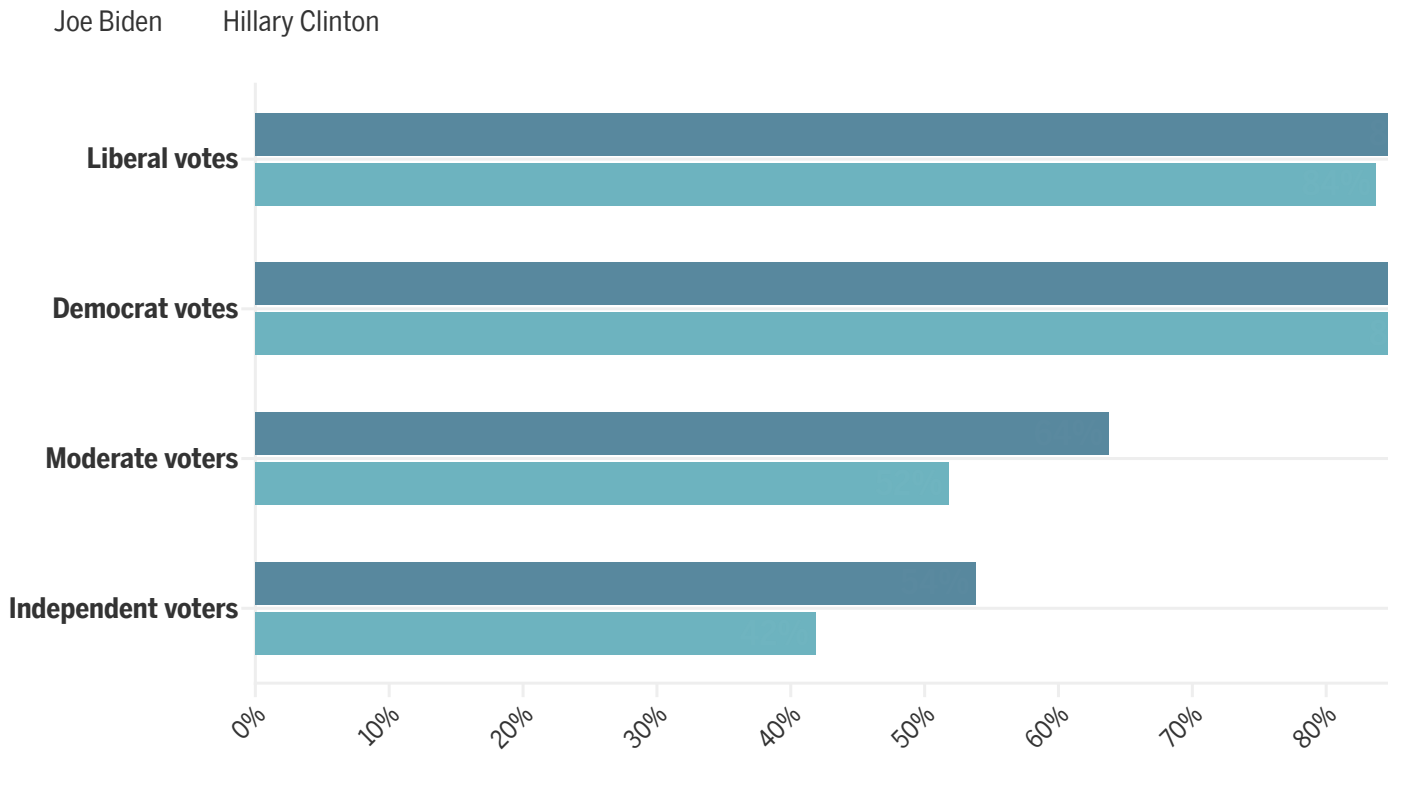



 A Flourish chart

Meanwhile, Biden captured a larger share of the liberal vote than Clinton did four years ago: 89 percent versus 84 percent and a bigger share of the vote among Democrats, 94 percent to the 89 percent Clinton got in 2016.

But the key shift was among moderate voters. Biden captured 64 percent of the support from this critical group, up from 52 percent for Clinton four years ago. Likewise, among voters who consider themselves as "independent or something else," 54 percent backed Biden this year compared with 42 percent who backed Clinton in 2016.

Biden and moderate voters



 A Flourish chart

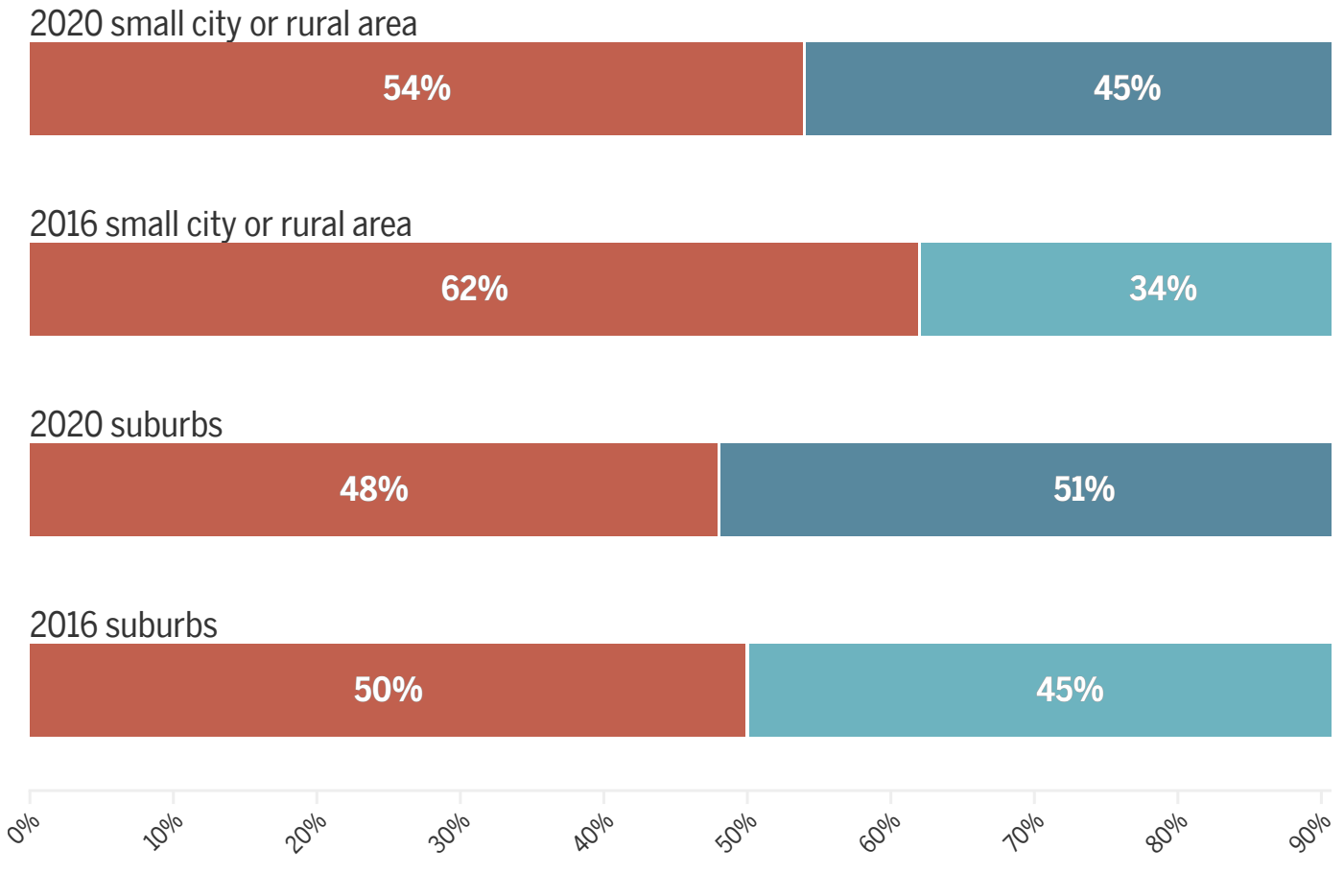
Biden flipped the suburbs and even gained some ground in rural areas

In 2016, Trump won the suburbs 50 percent to 45 percent. But in 2020, the suburbs flipped, backing Biden over Trump, 51 percent to 48 percent.

There was also a shift in support among voters from small city or rural areas. In 2016, they backed Trump over Clinton, 62 percent to 34 percent. This year, the margin of victory was smaller for Trump, 54 percent to 45 percent.

Suburbs and small city/rural area voters

Donald Trump Joe Biden Hillary Clinton



 A Flourish chart

Trump's support among Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian voters grew, but he lost white voters to Biden

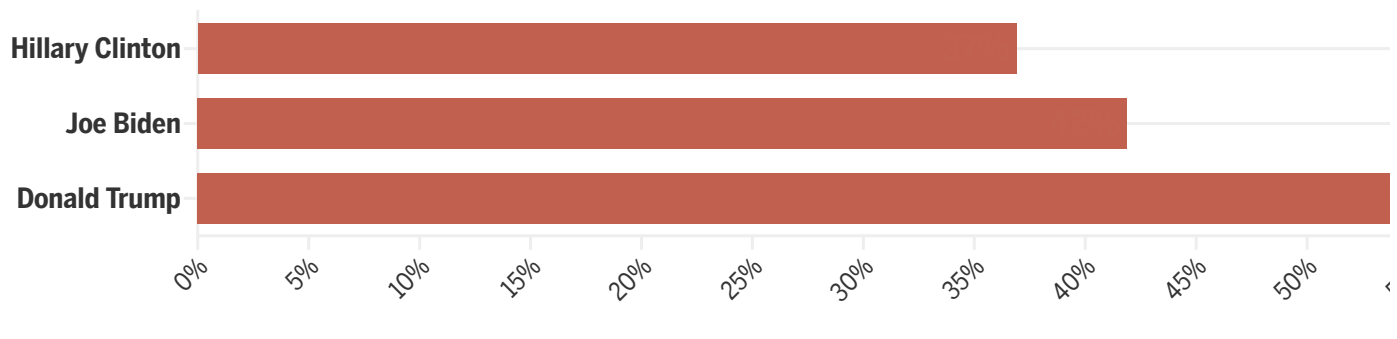
The share of Black voters supporting Trump was 12 percent this year up from 8 percent four years ago. Among Hispanic/Latinx voters, Trump saw his support rise from 29 percent in 2016 to 32 percent this year. And among Asian voters, backing for Trump climbed from 29 percent four years ago to 31 percent in 2020.

But Biden saw gains among white voters. He received support from 42 percent of white voters, compared with 27 percent who favored Clinton four years ago. Trump received 57

voters, compared with 57 percent who favored Clinton four years ago. Trump received 57 percent this year, just one percentage point lower than he received four years ago.

White voters overall

white voters overall

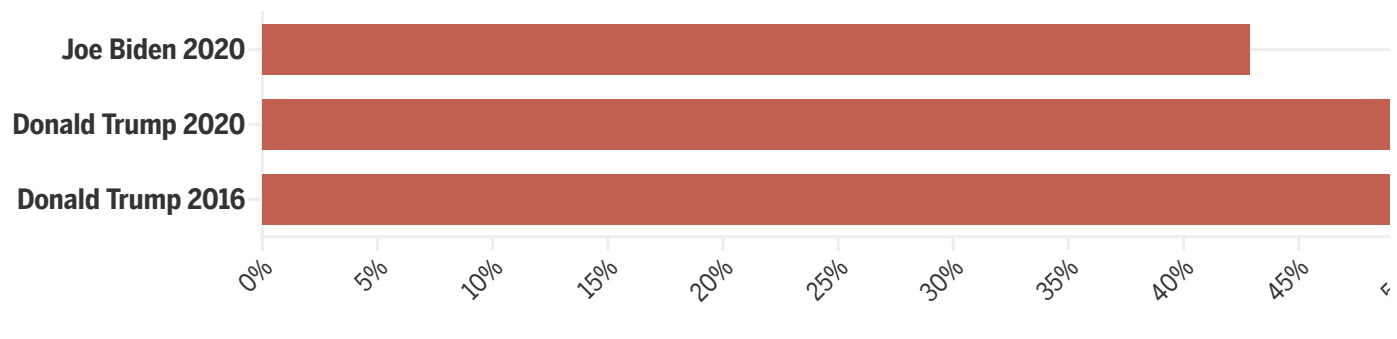


A Flourish chart

Trump’s support among white women grew, while Biden’s favorability among white men increased

Looking even closer, Trump saw his share of support among white women voters increase from 53 percent four years ago to 55 percent this year. Meanwhile, Biden received 43 percent, about the same support among white women that Clinton received in 2016.

Trump meanwhile gained among white women



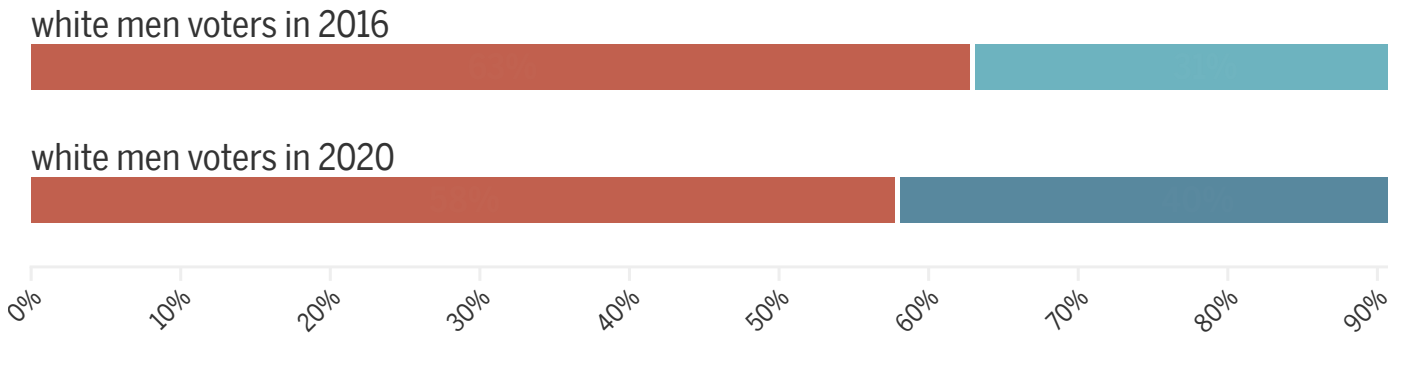
A Flourish chart

But among white men, the change from four years ago was more stark. In 2016, white men backed Trump over Clinton 63 percent to 31 percent. This year, the gap was

narrowed significantly, with 58 percent of white men backing Trump and 40 percent supporting Biden.

Biden's gains among white men

Donald Trump Joe Biden Hillary Clinton



A Flourish chart

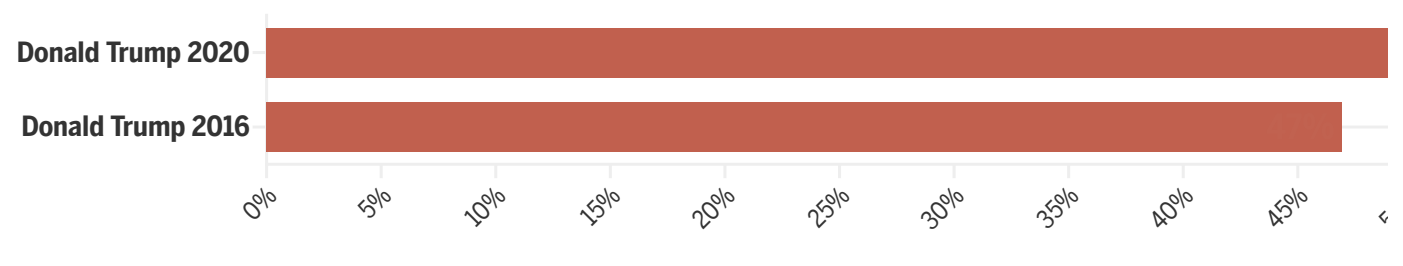
Trump received more support among wealthier families, Biden gained among lower-income voters

In 2020, 57 percent of voters with a total family income under \$50,000 favored Biden, compared with 53 percent of those voters who backed Clinton in 2016.

Among voters with a total family income of \$50,000 to \$99,999, 56 percent supported Biden this year, up from 46 percent four years ago.

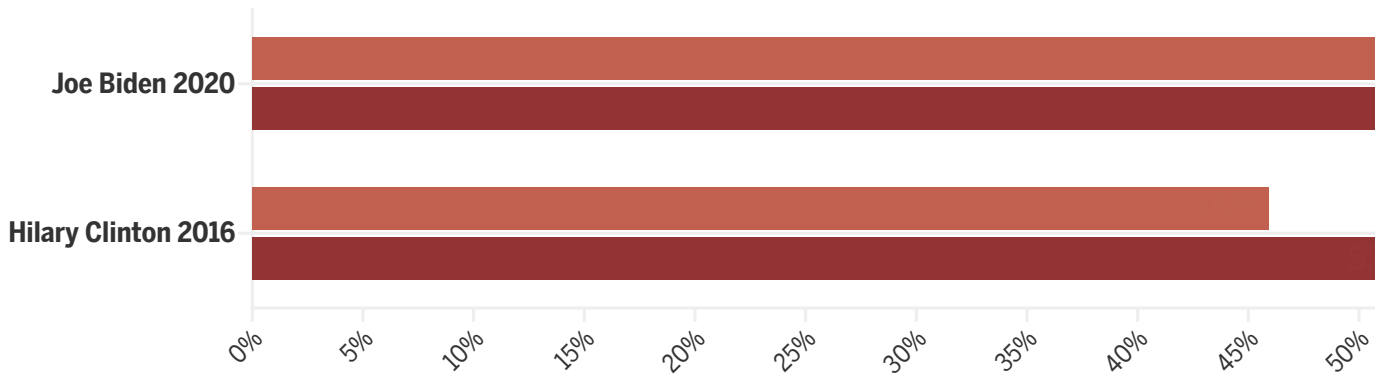
Meanwhile, among voters with a total family income of \$100,000 or more, 54 percent backed Trump this year up from 47 percent in 2016.

Trump received more backing from wealthier families...



A Flourish chart

...while Biden saw gains among lower-income voters

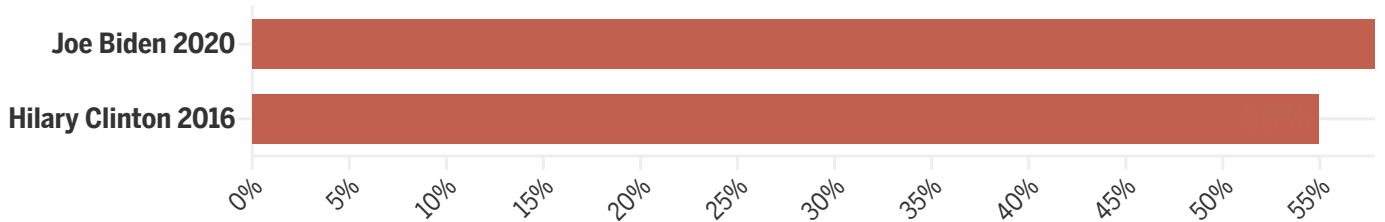


A Flourish chart

Biden did better with certain age groups

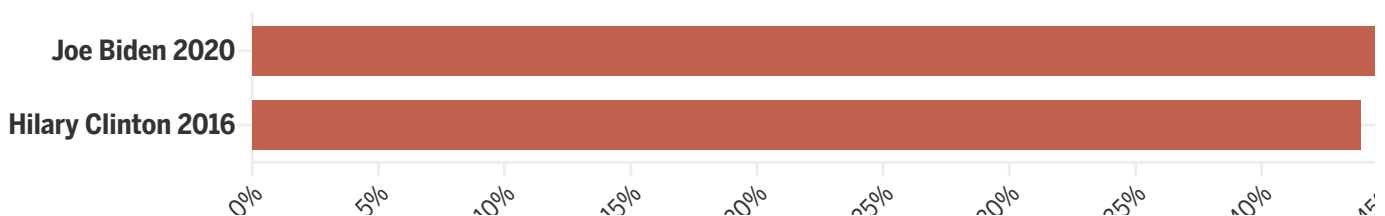
Biden improved compared with Clinton in a few other key areas. Among voters between 18 and 29 years old, Biden received 62 percent of the support, compared with 55 percent for Clinton. Among voters between 45 and 64 years old, he received 50 percent of the support, up from the 44 percent Clinton received.

Biden did better with younger voters...



A Flourish chart

... and 45-64-year-olds

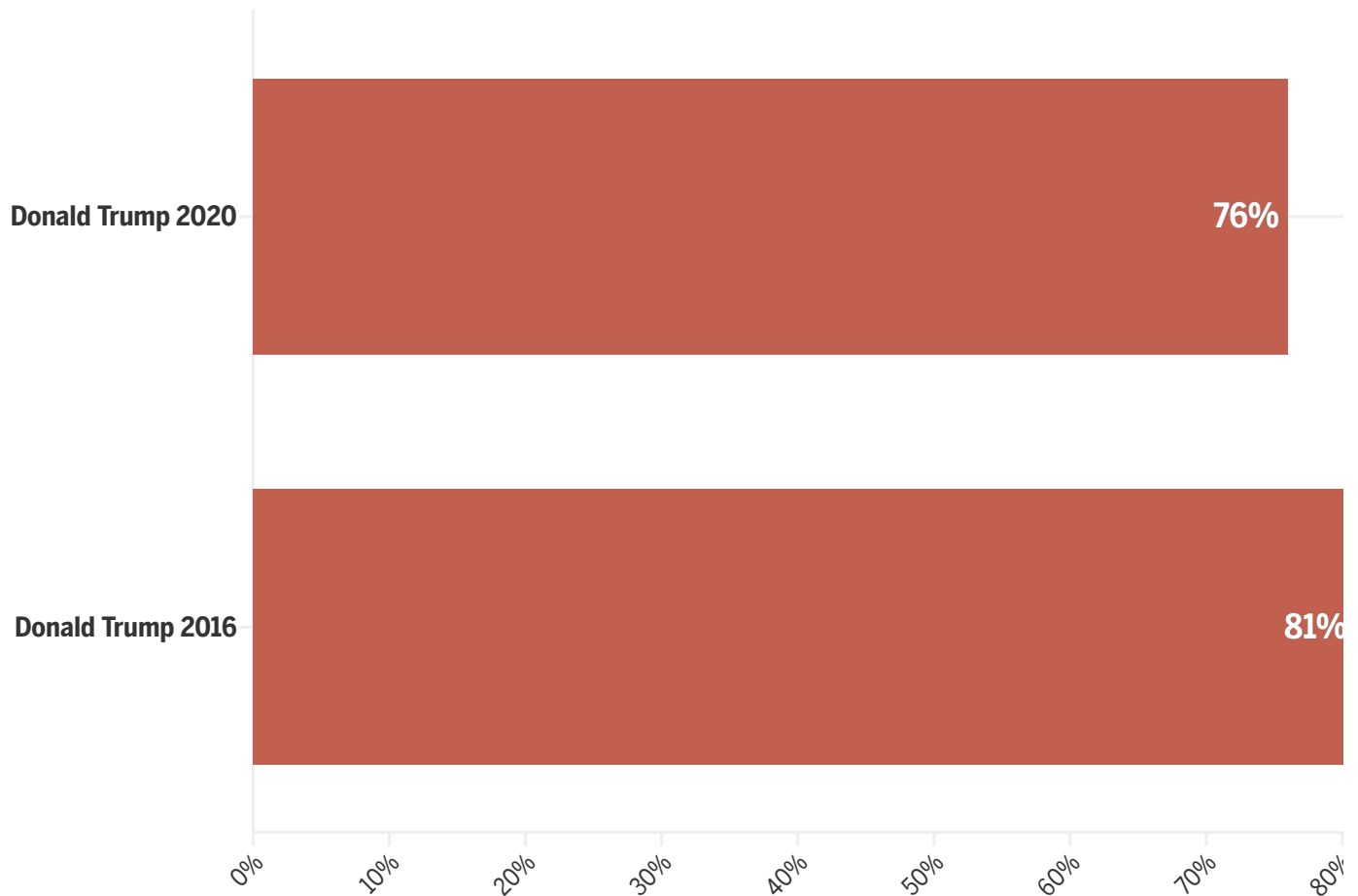


A Flourish chart

Trump lost support among white evangelical, born-again Christians and people who had served in the military

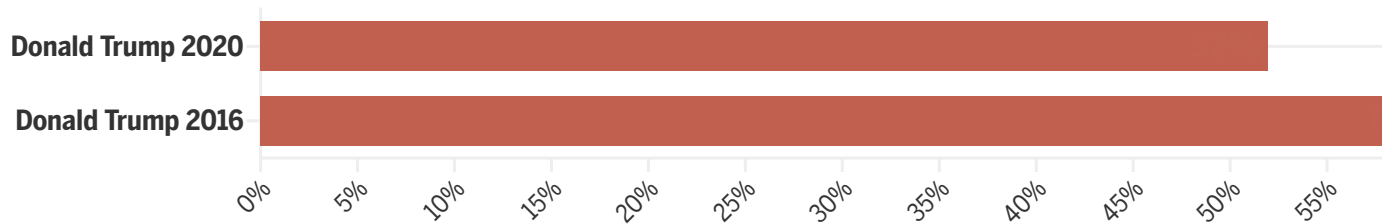
In 2016, 81 percent of white evangelical or born-again Christians supported Trump. This year, the figure dropped to 76 percent. And among people who had served in the military, backing for Trump declined from 61 percent four years ago to 52 percent this year.

Trump still dominated the white evangelical/born-again Christian cohort, but he did lose some supporters there



A Flourish chart

Trump also lost some support among **military veterans**



✳ A Flourish chart

Exit polls also show how differently Trump supporters and Biden supporters view the world

The issues that mattered most to voters who said they supported Biden were, in the following order: racial inequality followed by the coronavirus pandemic, and then health care policy, crime and safety, and the economy.

For Trump supporters, the order was the mirror opposite: the economy, crime and safety, health care policy, the coronavirus pandemic, and then racial inequality.

[Show comments](#)

©2021 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC