



## Business English News 46 - US Presidential Election 2020

### *Transcript*

Days after the US **election**, the final result still **hangs in the balance**. While some **networks** have **called the election** for Biden, the process is **far from over**. So why don't we have **a final tally** on election night? As the Independent points out:

An **unprecedented** number of Americans - 97 million by Monday, well over twice the number from 2016 - have voted by mail. And some states will count **ballots** that are delivered after the election if they are **postmarked** by a **deadline**. In Washington state, for example, **mail-in ballots** can still be counted on November 23. In Alaska state officials don't even begin counting mail-in ballots until around November 10.

The difference between states is important here, not just in how they **administer** the election. The *results* of each state are what **ultimately determines** the winner regardless of the **popular vote**. Indeed, Hilary Clinton received three million more votes than Trump in 2016. But it's the **electoral college** votes - and that **magic number** 270 - that determine the outcome. The electoral college is organized by state, as the BBC notes:

The number of **electors** from each state is roughly **in line with** the size of its **population**. California has the most electors - 55 - while a **handful** of **sparsely populated** states like Wyoming, Alaska and North Dakota have a minimum of three. There are 538 electors in total and a **candidate** needs to gain a **majority** of the votes - 270 or more - to win the presidency.

Due to the **idiosyncrasies** of this system, **campaigns** have **evolved** to focus on just a handful of states. You might have heard that Joe Biden was in Michigan delivering his **stump speech**, or that Trump was in Pennsylvania for yet another **rally**. That's because in the electoral system certain states end up having greater **influence** than others. We call these states **swing states**, as Global News explains:

Swing states are key **battleground states** where it is not immediately clear who the winner will be. These states are considered to be "**competitive**," meaning that over the last several **election cycles**, the **electorate** has switched between supporting **Republicans** and **Democrats**. In swing states, neither party's candidate has a clear lead, meaning both parties see them as an opportunity to **pick up** electoral votes.

How do campaigns decide where they spend their time? In part, they rely on **polls**. Polling companies and **media outlets** conduct **opinion surveys** to **get a read on** voter intentions in advance of an election. But the polls are proving **notoriously** unreliable. As the Daily Mail describes:

Four years ago Hillary Clinton was **widely predicted** to win, but lost. Polls held just before election day this time around gave Joe Biden an average lead of ten **points** nationally, and **narrower** leads in swing states, which **all-but evaporated** on the day itself. In reality, Biden has **garnered** around 50 per cent while Trump has taken 48 per cent, with many ballots still left to be counted.

Despite pollsters' early certainty, it's still **too close to call**. And people around the world are feeling impatient. Will the **incumbent** get another four years? Or will Trump be one of only three **one-term** presidents since **World War 2**? The answer might not arrive soon. As the Standard reports:

With legal challenges **legal challenges** and **recounts** ahead, it might take weeks before a candidate can officially **declare victory**. Appearing before **supporters** at the White House, the President said: "We were getting ready to win this election... **frankly**, we did win this election." However, that is not yet true. When the votes are all **tallied**, Trump may just find himself **on the outside looking in**.

## **Vocabulary**

**Election:** the process of electing a person or government; "The election for President of the United States takes place every four years in November."

**To hang in the balance:** to be uncertain or likely to fail; "With this financial scandal, the CEO's job appears to be hanging in the balance."

**Networks:** broadcast companies; "The major American television networks compete to see who can report on big news before the others."

**To call an election:** to say that an election is over and a winner has been decided; "After several days of counting ballots, they finally called the election for the candidate from Pennsylvania."

**Far from over:** not close to being finished; "I'm excited to be done this part of the project, but the whole development process is far from over!"

**Final tally:** the final count of votes in an election; "According to the final tally, the senator has lost the election by several thousand votes."

**Unprecedented:** never seen or happening before; "The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to the global economy."

**Ballot:** a piece of paper that you write your vote on; "If you vote in person, you will be asked to fill out your ballot behind a screen or curtain before placing it in the ballot box."

**Postmarked:** officially accepted by a postal company for delivery; "We received the cheque on November 5, but the stamp on the envelope tells me it was postmarked on November 1."

**Deadline:** the date by which something must be done; "I'm worried about finishing this report by Friday, so could we change the deadline to sometime next week?"

**Mail-in ballot:** an official voting paper that you send in by mail rather than voting in person on election day; "In some states, voters receive a mail-in ballot automatically, while in others you have to request one."

**To administer:** to manage or ensure a process happens according to certain rules; "There are testing centers around the city that are authorized to administer our test."

**To ultimately determine:** to officially decide; "All staff provide input on the plan, but it's the manager who ultimately determines what that plan looks like."

**Popular vote:** the total number of votes received for a candidate; "The popular vote tells us who was the favorite candidate overall in the election."

**Electoral college:** a process whereby a small group of people elect an official on behalf of the public; "The electoral college system was established when the United States was much smaller in population and complexity."

**Magic number:** a special number or threshold; "If you want a bonus as a salesperson, you should be aiming for that magic number of \$100,000 in monthly sales."

**Elector:** a person who participates in an election as part of the electoral college; "As a massive state, California has 55 electors, while the tiny state of Delaware has only 3."

**In line with:** matching or in agreement with; "I'm sorry, but your idea isn't really in line with our strategic plan, so we're not going to resource it."

**Population:** the number of people in a particular place; "The U.S. has the largest economy in the world, but China has the largest population."

**Handful:** a few or a small number; "We can't pursue all of these initiatives. We need to choose a handful that we think are going to be high-impact."

**Sparsely populated:** not having many people living in a place; "Moscow and St Petersburg are busy urban centers, but much of Russia is very sparsely populated."

**Candidate:** a person competing for a position in an election; "I've read a lot about every candidate in the election, but I still don't know which one I'm going to vote for."

**Majority:** over 50%; "Decisions by the board of directors are made by a simple majority vote."

**Idiosyncrasy:** unusual, strange, or unlike other things; "Even though you have lots of experience in this industry, every company has idiosyncrasies that you'll have to adapt to in a new job."

**Campaign:** a series of activities done by a person or political party to try to win an election; “Even in the age of Facebook, a really important part of most political campaigns is TV and radio advertising.”

**To evolve:** to develop over time; “We used to have very formal meetings, but our practices have evolved and now they’re pretty casual.”

**Stump speech:** a short political speech given several times during an election campaign; “I’m getting tired of hearing the same stump speech every time I attend one of Biden’s campaign events.”

**Rally:** a public gathering in support of an idea or person; “They were hoping for a few thousand people at the rally, but only a few hundred showed up because of the cold weather.”

**Influence:** power to affect; “To run a good campaign, you need to get the support of public people who have a lot of social, political, or corporate influence.”

**Swing state:** a state in the U.S. that has roughly equal support for Democrats and Republicans, and can therefore go either way in an election; “One of the closest swing states in the 2020 election was Georgia, where only a few thousand votes separated the candidates.”

**Battleground state:** see “swing state;” “In the final days before the election, Trump spent a lot of time in the battleground states of Michigan and Pennsylvania.”

**Competitive:** involving intense competition; “California always goes Democrat, so it’s not really competitive enough for either candidate to spend much time in.”

**Election cycle:** the period of time from election to election, such as the four years between U.S. presidential elections; “The political parties work hard to raise money throughout the election cycle, not just the year of an election.”

**Electorate:** voters, or the people who are eligible to cast votes in an election; “Different politicians appeal to different parts of the electorate; Trump, for example, is popular among white Americans in rural areas.”

**Republicans:** people who support the Republican party in the United States; “Republicans tend to favor policies that support big business and free market principles.”

**Democrats:** people who support the Democratic party in the United States; "Democrats tend to favor policies that support public welfare and socio-economic equality."

**To pick up:** to earn, in addition to something else; "We might lose Tucker County, but I'm hoping we can pick up some votes in the west to make up for it."

**Poll:** a kind of research where many people are asked their opinion on one or just a few important things; "In our exit poll, we asked people who had just voted who they chose to support."

**Media outlet:** any media company, in television, radio, or print media; "Every campaign needs experienced communications experts who can get the different media outlets interested in their candidate."

**Opinion survey:** a kind of research where many people are asked their opinions of several things; "According to a recent public opinion survey, 30% of American seniors don't feel comfortable with basic digital technologies."

**To get a read on:** to assess and evaluate a situation or a person's intentions; "Yeah, Howie seems pretty nice, but I can't really get a read on him well enough to know what he wants."

**Notoriously:** famous for something bad or negative; "Well Ken, Jeeps certainly look pretty cool, but they're notoriously unreliable mechanically."

**Widely predicted:** expected in the future by many people; "Electric cars are widely predicted to be much more commonplace on the roads by 2025."

**Points:** percentage points; "At 51% to 48%, the polls are telling us that we only have a three-point lead over the competition."

**Narrow:** a small difference; "With only a narrow lead over the next candidate, we're going to need to do some good promotions before election day."

**All-but evaporated:** almost totally disappeared; "We used to be the number one construction firm in town, but our dominance has all-but evaporated with so many new companies."

**To garner:** to earn or collect; "We've found that social media is more effective than public rallies at garnering support from young voters."

**Too close to call:** in a competition, too close to accurately predict a winner; "I'm sorry but this is too close to call. I think we should count the ballots again."

**Incumbent:** a person competing in an election to regain a position they already hold; "The challenger ran a good campaign but was ultimately unable to beat the incumbent in the election."

**One-term:** serving in an elected position for only one period; "The elder George Bush was a one-term president, but his son managed to win two terms."

**World War 2:** a major global war from 1939 to 1945; "World War 2 completely changed the global economy and increased industrial capacity."

**Legal challenge:** any action or lawsuit taken to court; "A group of parents is mounting a legal challenge to force the schools to provide better online learning options."

**Recount:** a situation after a close election where the votes are counted a second time to make sure the count was accurate; "After the recount, the final result of the election changed by only a few hundred votes."

**To declare victory:** to state that you have won a competition or election; "Joe Biden has declared victory, but Donald Trump hasn't yet called him to congratulate him on the win."

**Supporter:** someone who supports a person or idea; "In cities around America, Trump supporters staged protests on one side of the street while Biden supporters crowded the other side."

**Frankly:** honestly; "I know the election is important, but quite frankly I don't find politics very interesting at all."

**To tally:** to count many of something to find a total number; "Well, all the ballots have been received, now our group of volunteers just has to tally them."

**On the outside looking in:** not included in a group or activity; "After 30 years with the company, it's odd to be retired and now on the outside looking in."

## Language Review

### A. Collocations

Match words from each column to make collocations found in the article.

1. Electoral	a. survey	
2. Sparsely	b. balance	
3. Battleground	c. populated	
4. Opinion	d. speech	
5. Mail-in	e. college	
6. To hang in the	f. outlet	
7. Stump	g. ballot	
8. Media	h. state	

### B. Vocabulary Quiz

1. In the electoral college system, the size of each state determines its number of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Candidates
  - b. Electors
  - c. Campaigns
  - d. Ballots
2. Which of the following are question-based research? [choose 2]
  - a. Opinion surveys
  - b. Election cycles
  - c. Campaigns
  - d. Polls
3. Because it took so long to count all the \_\_\_\_\_, it wasn't possible to \_\_\_\_\_ the election on election day.
  - a. Popular vote / postmark
  - b. Final tally / evolve
  - c. Ballots / call
  - d. Electors / get a read on

4. Which of the following might be part of a candidate's campaign? [choose 2]
- a. Final tally
  - b. Mail-in ballot
  - c. Stump speech
  - d. Rally
5. States where support for Democrats and Republicans is roughly equal are called \_\_\_\_\_ states.
- a. Swing
  - b. Electorate
  - c. Recount
  - d. Unprecedented
6. A person who holds a position and runs in an election to keep or retain that position is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Candidate
  - b. Incumbent
  - c. One-term
  - d. Outlet
7. Which of the following might delay the final results of an election? [choose 2]
- a. Polls
  - b. Recounts
  - c. Legal challenges
  - d. Networks
8. Another word for "counting" votes is \_\_\_\_\_ votes.
- a. Garnering
  - b. Picking up
  - c. Evolving
  - d. Tallying

## ***Answers***

### **A. Collocations**

**1/e, 2/c, 3/h, 4/a, 5/g, 6/b, 7/d, 8/f**

### **B. Vocabulary Quiz**

**1/b, 2/a,d, 3/c, 4/c,d, 5/a, 6/b, 7/b,c, 8/d**