

MEMORANDUM ON THE 2020 ELECTION CYCLE

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
 FROM: RAGNAR RESEARCH PARTNERS
 DATE: JANUARY, 2021

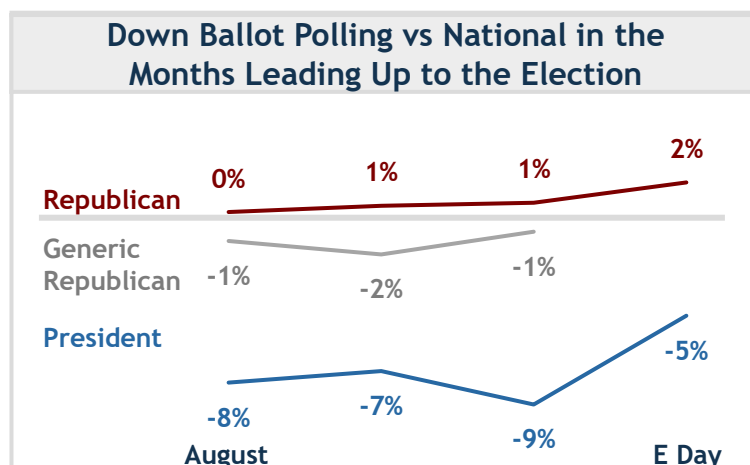
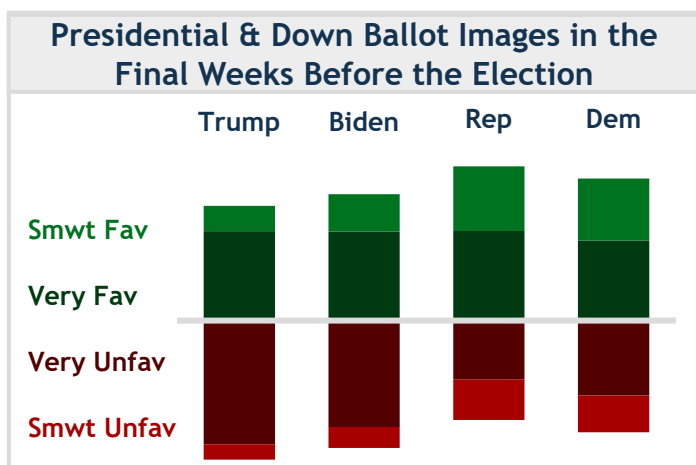
Coming out of the 2020 election cycle, Ragnar Research has three key takeaways:

- The top of the ticket made this a difficult year, but by localizing elections to the issues voters care about in their communities there remains a path toward a successful 2022 for Republicans.
- Keep an eye on demographic groups that are less likely to participate so corrections can be made for them.
- Text-to-web can be an aid to survey feasibility when deployed in tandem with traditional methods but presents too many biases to be relied upon as the sole methodology for accurate survey research.

The President's Impact on Down Ballot Candidates and Polling

This cycle the national environment and President Trump's approval ratings were significant hurdles for down ballot Republicans to overcome - and that's exactly what they did. At the Congressional and local level Republicans were faced with the kinds of daunting national trends that armchair media types often say are insurmountable. By focusing on the issues that matter to voters in their local communities down-ballot Republicans were able to beat the narrative and continue to wield significant power all around the country.

Neither Presidential candidate had a very strong image with down-ballot voters, but President Trump's was worse overall and in intensity (-10% unfavorable for Trump vs. -7% very unfavorable for Biden). That was reflected in poll results in the months leading up to the election, and ultimately he lost by 5% nationally. Despite this, **Down-ballot Republican candidates ended the election with stronger images and over performed the President by an average of 7 points.** On the Federal level, a plurality of Senators (42%) and a majority of House Republicans received more ballot share than Trump within their districts (72%)*. These candidates won by appealing to voters on a local level and not entangling themselves with the national environment.



Combined polling & election results. *Note: Presidential results by US Congressional District for 284 districts were available to the public at the time of this memo's release. Of those, 265 districts had both a Republican and Democrat running.

Did “Trump Voters” Ruin 2020 Polling?

Every pollster knows some voters just don’t want take surveys. **But there were concerns that the President’s increasingly vocal attitude toward the industry would cause Trump voters to not participate in studies.** To gauge whether this was a problem, Ragnar Research analyzed data from incomplete interviews - respondents who began a survey but dropped out before the end - from August through October.

We found that overall respondents dropped off at roughly the same rate regardless of party ID. However, there are differences when party ID is broken out by gender and age. Among men, Republican and Independents were the most likely to not complete a survey. For women, younger Democrats made up the largest share of incomplete responses.

Incompletes by Stated Party ID

	Total	Men	Men 18-44	Men 35-54	Women	Women 18-34
Republican	28%	30%	30%	33%	27%	21%
Independent	26%	32%	36%	33%	21%	24%
Democrat	28%	23%	21%	20%	33%	39%

Combined polling results from regionally disparate interviews in US.

In several studies, **we noticed issues with these demographic groups, particularly on their 2016 Presidential vote.** Monitoring incomplete data allowed us to proactively adjust our weighting in these instances to ensure the results were accurate. In the final weeks leading up to the election, we found both studies that required adjusted weighting and those that didn’t predicted the ballot within 1 point of the final results.

The most important takeaway from this is that survey work is not a product that can be treated the same way every time. It requires constant monitoring and adaptation. The Ragnar Research team proved, once-again, to be curious and agile enough in this dynamic data environment that our clients were able to trust and act on the data they received to move and stay ahead of their Democrat opponents.

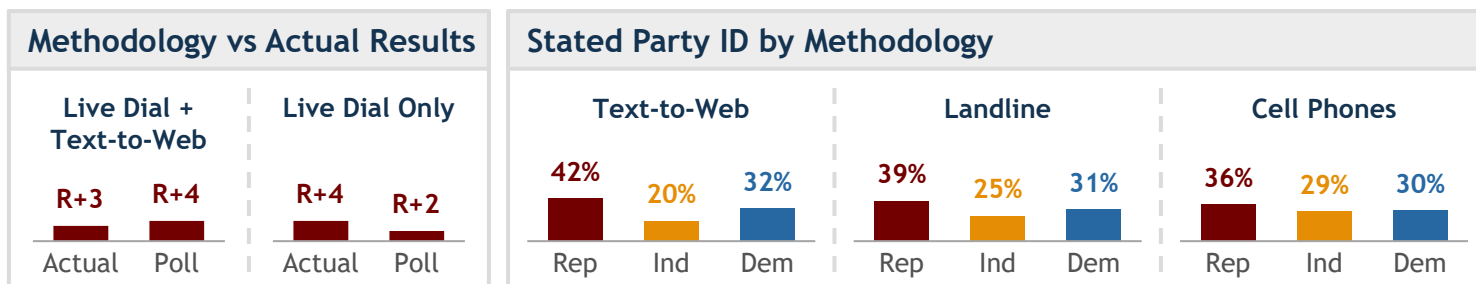
Methodology vs Actual Results

Traditional		Corrected for Gender & Age	
R+3	R+2	R+0	R+0
Actual	Poll	Actual	Poll

Combined polling & election results from regionally disparate interviews in US.

Do Text-to-Web Surveys Have a Place in Political Polling?

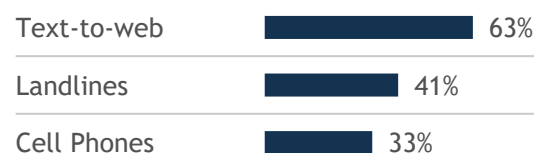
One of the foundational beliefs of Ragnar is that survey research needs to drag itself out from the early 2000's. To this end, we've made a point of studying information on what we've noticed during each election cycle. In 2018, we studied the differences between landline and cell phone interviews. This cycle we explored text-to-web. The most important takeaway, gathered from tens of thousands interviews, is that **text-to-web by itself can result in unexpected partisan shifts to a sample but when deployed as part of a multi-modal research approach can aid in increasing accuracy of survey results.**



Combined polling & election results from regionally disparate interviews in US.

The text-to-web respondents in our surveys tended to lean more conservative in their responses than live dial cell phone respondents. Text-to-web respondents were more likely to be Republicans than both live cell phones (+6%) and landlines (+3%). **Text-to-web respondents were also more engaged than live dial respondents.** Text-to-web respondents generally were more likely to be aware of and have an opinion of candidates from both parties. Similarly, they were much more likely to have recently heard information about candidates from both parties.

Heard Info on Candidates Recently



Combined polling results from regionally disparate interviews in US.

Finally, there are notable demographic differences between methodologies which should be taken into account for meeting quotas. Text-to-web respondents tended to be more likely to have a higher socio-economic status. This methodology by itself has also shown to be less effective at reaching some minority populations.

However, there are situations where it can be a useful tool. **Most importantly, in the final weeks of an election, when combined with live interviews, it did not negatively impact a study's accuracy.** In the final weeks, both blended and exclusively live dial studies predicted the ballot within 1-2 points of the final results. Additionally, text-to-web shows some significant promise as a way to reach younger populations that can be difficult to reach via live dial interviews.

Ultimately, given our experiences in 2020, text-to-web is only viable "as part of a complete breakfast." On its own it will have significant underlying biases, but combined with live dial on cell phone and landline these penalties can be offset, especially in the final weeks of the election. **It is a tool in the toolbox, not a panacea for lower response rates or higher costs.**