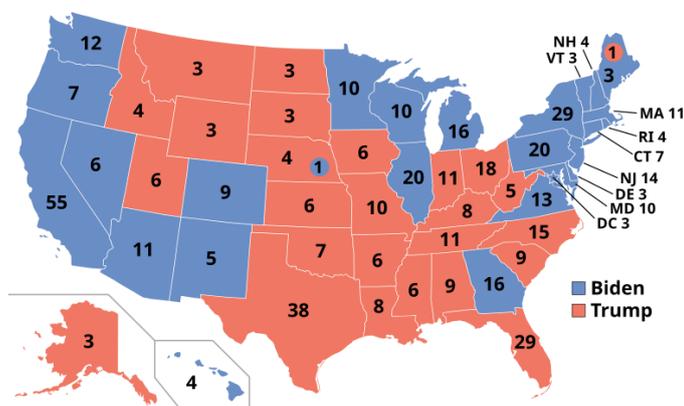


So how does the Electoral College elect the president? On Election Day, each state has its own election. Voters see the names of the candidates for president and vice president on the ballot, but they are actually voting for a group of electors who were chosen by the candidate's political party in that state. Almost every state uses a "winner takes all" system, so that means the candidate who wins the state's popular vote wins all of the state's electors. Only Maine and Nebraska use a different system, where two electoral votes go to the winner of the popular vote in the state, and one vote is awarded to the winner in each congressional district. That means Maine and Nebraska can split their electoral votes. The total number of electors is 538, and 270 votes are needed to win the presidency.



The 2020 election results. The blue states were won by Biden, and the red states were won by Trump. Biden received 306 electoral votes, while Trump received 232. There are 48 "winner takes all" states, but Maine and Nebraska split their electoral votes.

In almost every election, the winner of the electoral vote and the winner of the popular vote has been the same candidate. However, there have been five times where the winner of the popular vote did not win the election. Two recent examples are the elections in 2000 and 2016. In 2000, Gore beat Bush in the national popular vote, but lost to Bush in Florida by a mere 537 votes. Bush's win in Florida gave him 271 electoral votes, enough to win the election. In 2016, Clinton received more votes nationwide, but Trump bested her in key swing states, and surprisingly won some states that had traditionally leaned Democratic, so he ended up winning the election.

In December, the electors who were decided in November by the presidential election finally cast their votes for president. Before voting, they pledge to vote for

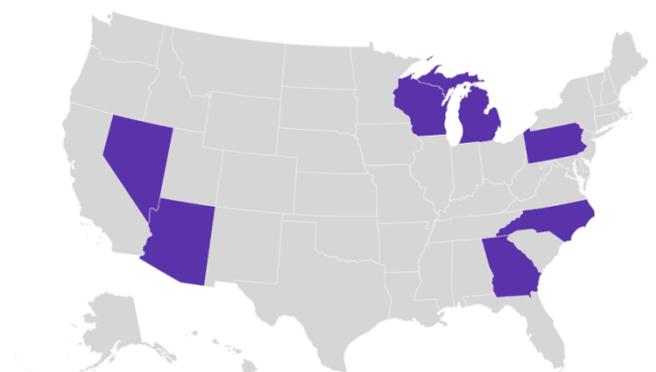
the winning candidate in their state, but they don't always keep their word. In 2016, a record ten "faithless electors" voted for alternative candidates. For example, Clinton won my home state, but of the 12 electors, four refused to vote for her. Many states punish faithless electors by voiding their votes or fining them, but some states allow their votes to be counted. Up until now, faithless electors have never affected the results of the election, but in a neck-and-neck race, anything can happen.

Q: What is a "swing state"?

A: A state where support for both parties is nearly equal, and the winning party "swings" from election to election.

Almost all states lean Republican or Democratic. For example, voters in Southern and Midwestern states tend to vote for Republicans, and voters on the West Coast and in the Northeastern states tend to vote for Democrats. States that vote for the Republican Party are called "red states" and states that vote for the Democratic Party are called "blue states."

However, both Parties have a chance of winning "swing states," also called "battleground states" or "purple states." Instead of campaigning in states that they will easily win or lose, presidential candidates focus almost all of their efforts on the swing states. The "winner takes all" system of the Electoral College means that the swing states determine the results of the election.



The swing states in 2024 are Nevada, Arizona, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia. With a total of 93 electoral votes, winning these states is essential.

Q: Who did you vote for?

A: I won't write that publicly, but I'm from a blue state, so take a guess. ★

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