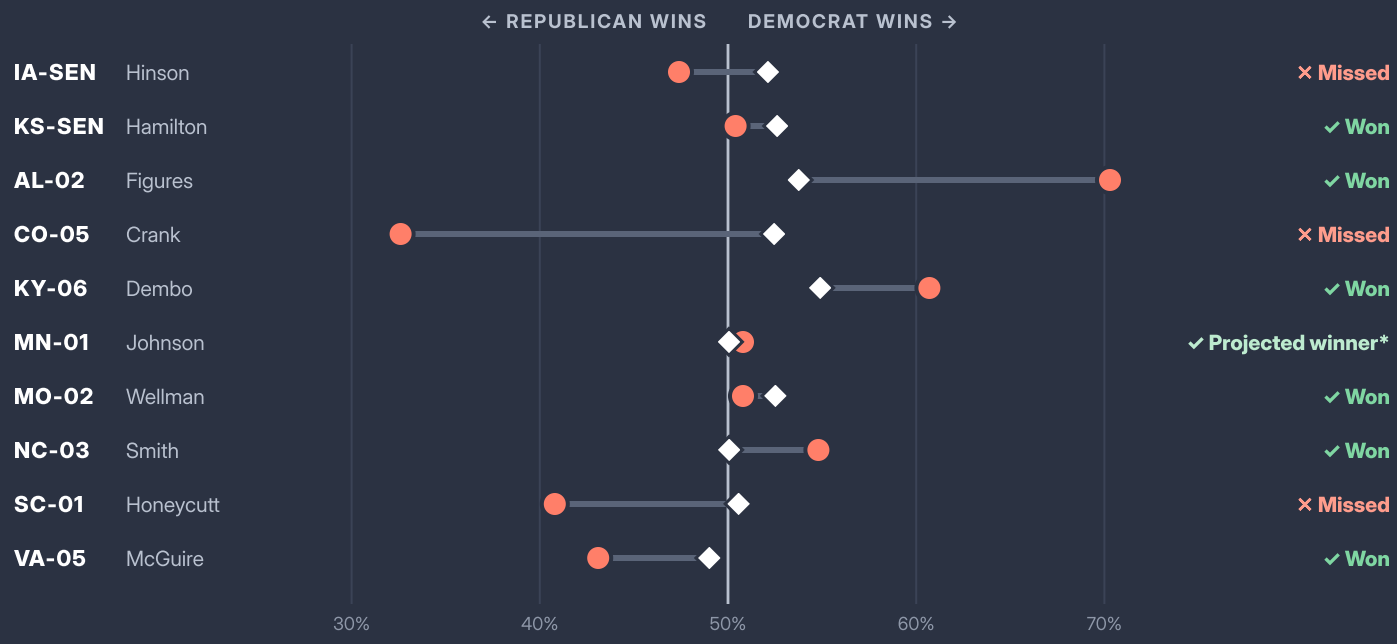
ValidateNine™

VALIDATENINE™ 2026 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTION REPORT

How well did synthetic focus groups predict the 2026 midterm elections?

We used ValidateNine™ synthetic focus groups to predict ten of the closest races in the 2026 midterms, using zero polling data. **They called seven of ten correctly, including three of four picks against the market odds.***



7 of 10 close midterm races called correctly, with zero polling data*

3 of 4 picks against the betting market that turned out correct*

* Unofficial results as of November 11, 2026. One of the seven, MN-01, is a projected winner: our pick leads the count and Kalshi's implied odds of victory were over 94% when this report was published; that race is not certified. Market odds for picks against the market are Kalshi prices saved at 7:16 a.m. Mountain on Election Day, before any panel was run.

Derrick Lawter · ValidateNine™

Version 1.5 · November 12, 2026 · validatenine.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We tested whether synthetic focus groups can accurately predict close elections with no polling data.

On November 3, ValidateNine™ put ten of the closest midterm races in front of ten synthetic focus groups, 40 personas each, calibrated the results, and published its picks before the polls closed. **Our model picked 7/10 races correctly, including 3 upsets, while the market favorites closed at 5/10.**

7 / 10
ValidateNine™ picks that won or are the projected winner*

5 / 10
Kalshi favorites that won, same ten races, same morning

3 of 4
Picks against the betting market that turned out correct

0
Polls used. No polling data given to the focus groups

How ValidateNine™ works

We build the focus group on our own proprietary platform. Forty personas per race, with ages, jobs, incomes, worries and news habits that fit the place. Each one reads the same neutral packet on both candidates and casts a ballot with reasons.

Then we calibrate it. Every synthetic focus group has a built-in lean. That is a known property of the technology, and handling it is a standard step in our process. We run each group on a question with a known answer, the 2024 presidential race, measure its lean, and remove it.

Then we publish. Numbers locked at 11:26 a.m. Mountain, posted at 11:30, graded in public here.

What we found

7/10 races called correctly, against 5/10 for the market favorites, on races the market itself rated closest. Three of our seven were upsets: picks the market had as underdogs.

The focus groups read candidates. The Democrats they rated highest were the ones who most outran their districts: a 0.68 correlation across the ten races (page 5).

Calibration is what makes it work. It cut the average miss on vote share from 25.2 points to 7.2, and left almost no tilt in either direction.

It is fast. All ten focus groups were built, run and calibrated in one morning.

> **The one-line version.** ValidateNine™ synthetic focus groups, with calibration built into the process, called 7/10 of the closest midterm races with no polling data. The market favorites went 5/10.

* MN-01 is counted as a projected winner: Johnson leads the state count by 322 votes and Kalshi's implied odds of his victory were over 94% when this report was published. The race is not certified and a recount is expected; if it flipped, the score would be 6 of 10. In NC-03, Smith leads by 293 votes and his opponent conceded on November 11. Ten races is a first test, and page 25 sets out its limits.

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How to read this report.

Pages 2 to 5 give you the result. Pages 6 to 14 explain how the system works and what calibration contributes. Pages 15 to 24 take the races one at a time. The last pages cover the misses, the outliers and our sources.

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THE TEN RACES

IA-SEN · Hinson over Turek — ✕ MISSED 15

KS-SEN · Hamilton over Marshall — ✓ CALLED IT 16

AL-02 · Figures over Marques — ✓ CALLED IT 17

CO-05 · Crank over Killin — ✕ MISSED 18

KY-06 · Dembo over Alvarado — ✓ CALLED IT 19

MN-01 · Johnson over Finstad — ✓ PROJECTED WINNER* 20

MO-02 · Wellman over Wagner — ✓ CALLED IT 21

NC-03 · Smith over Murphy — ✓ CALLED IT 22

SC-01 · Honeycutt over Lacore — ✕ MISSED 23

VA-05 · McGuire over Perriello — ✓ CALLED IT 24

FOUR TERMS WE USE THROUGHOUT

Persona. A fictional voter, written by us, played by an AI model.

Focus group (or panel). Forty personas built for one race.

Two-party share. The split of the vote between only the Democrat and the Republican. 50% wins.

Calibration. Testing a panel on a question with a known answer, then removing the error we find.

THE SCORECARD

Every call, graded.

Each row is one race. "Our forecast" and "Actual" are our pick's share of the two-party vote, meaning the vote split between just the Democrat and the Republican.

RACE	OUR PICK	OUR FORECAST	ACTUAL	MISS	KALSHI CHANCE	RESULT
IA-SEN Iowa · Senate	**Hinson** REP	52.6%	47.9%	+4.7	47% ▲	✕ MISSED
KS-SEN Kansas · Senate	**Hamilton** DEM	50.4%	52.6%	−2.2	63%	✓ CALLED IT
AL-02 Alabama · District 2	**Figures** DEM	70.3%	53.8%	+16.5	53%	✓ CALLED IT
CO-05 Colorado · District 5	**Crank** REP	67.4%	47.6%	+19.8	53%	✕ MISSED
KY-06 Kentucky · District 6	**Dembo** DEM	60.7%	54.9%	+5.8	56%	✓ CALLED IT
MN-01 Minnesota · District 1	**Johnson** DEM	50.8%	50.05%	+0.8	41% ▲	✓ PROJECTED WINNER*
MO-02 Missouri · District 2	**Wellman** DEM	50.8%	52.5%	−1.7	41% ▲	✓ CALLED IT
NC-03 North Carolina · District 3	**Smith** DEM	54.8%	50.06%	+4.7	40% ▲	✓ CALLED IT
SC-01 South Carolina · District 1	**Honeycutt** REP	59.2%	49.4%	+9.8	51%	✕ MISSED
VA-05 Virginia · District 5	**McGuire** REP	56.9%	51.0%	+5.9	58%	✓ CALLED IT

▲ We picked against the market favorite Kalshi chance = the market's odds that our pick would win, at 7:16 a.m. Mountain on Election Day

SEVEN HITS

Kansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina and Virginia. Five of the seven were seats the other party held going in, and we called the flip.

THREE MISSES

Iowa, Colorado and South Carolina. In all three we picked the Republican and the Democrat won. The model was too cautious about the size of the Democratic wave.

THE ONE REPUBLICAN

Only one Republican won among these ten: John McGuire in Virginia's 5th. We picked him. Before correction the panel had him losing.

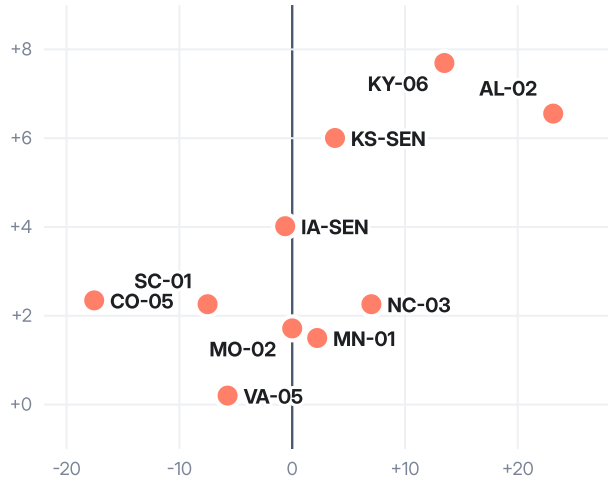
Vote counts are unofficial as of November 11, 2026, taken from the closest available published figures for each race (sources on page 28); certified results may differ slightly. A positive miss means we forecast too high a share for our pick; negative means too low.

WHAT THE PANEL HEARD

The focus groups could tell strong candidates from weak ones.

Underneath every forecast, each focus group contributes one number: how much better or worse this Democrat did with these 40 personas than Harris did with the same group. We checked that number against reality.

PANEL SIGNAL VS. HOW FAR EACH DEMOCRAT RAN AHEAD OF THE BASELINE



Panel signal: Democrat's 2026 panel share minus Harris's, in points

Vertical axis: actual Democratic share minus (2024 result + 4.8), in points

Where the numbers come from

Across: each focus group's 2026 vote for the Democrat minus the same group's vote for Harris in its 2024 calibration test. Both come from our saved response files.

Up: the Democrat's actual share minus what history predicted, which is the district's 2024 Harris result plus our 4.8-point swing. Results are unofficial counts as of November 11; the 2024 results were checked against published sources.

The 4.8 shifts every race by the same amount, so it does not change the correlation. Done after the election on ten races; we treat it as the basis for the next test.

How to read it

Each dot is a race. Further right means the panel liked the 2026 Democrat more than it liked Harris. Further up means the Democrat really did run ahead of what the district's history predicted.

The two candidates the panel was most excited about, **Figures** in Alabama and **Dembo** in Kentucky, are the two who most outran their districts. Of the three Democrats it was cool on, one, **Perriello** in Virginia, is the only Democrat of the ten who lost. The other two, Killin and Lacore, won anyway.

0.68

Correlation between panel signal and real over-performance across the ten races (1.0 would be perfect, 0 would be none)

If the focus groups' read had no real link to the results, a correlation this strong across ten races would appear by chance about 3 times in 100 ($p \approx 0.03$, confirmed by reshuffling the races 200,000 times).

Why this matters beyond elections. The same thing a campaign wants to know about a candidate, a company wants to know about a product, a price or an ad: holding everything else equal, does this version do better or worse with this audience? That relative read is what the panels were good at. The absolute numbers needed correcting. The direction was mostly right before we touched it.

WHY WE RAN THIS TEST

We picked a test with a public answer key.

ValidateNine™ sells synthetic focus groups: you describe an audience, we build it out of AI personas, and you find out how they react before you spend money on the real thing. The obvious question is whether those reactions mean anything.

Elections are the hardest fair test

Most market research never gets graded. A campaign tests a message, runs it, and never learns what the other message would have done. An election is different. Millions of real people answer the same question on the same day, and the count is public.

So on the morning of November 3 we looked at Kalshi and Polymarket, took ten of the House and Senate races the markets rated closest, and asked our focus groups to call each one. The market favorite in these races was priced between 51% and 63%. Nobody was confident about any of them.

Why the closest races

Calling safe seats shows nothing. If we had picked ten races at random we could have scored nine out of ten by reading a map. Picking races where the market's own favorite was only modestly ahead meant the benchmark was a hard one, and finishing ahead of it had to come from somewhere.

Three rules we set for ourselves

1. **No polls, no odds, no forecasts.** The personas saw candidate bios, platforms, recent statements and records. Nothing told them who was ahead.
2. **Publish before the count.** The card went up at 11:30 a.m. Mountain, four and a half hours before the first polls closed in any of the ten races. It is archived on the Wayback Machine.
3. **Grade everything in public.** We said on the card that we would publish a full scorecard, hits and misses.

> We ran all of this the same morning, in under two and a half hours. Because everything was locked before the count, nothing could be tuned after the fact.

ELECTION DAY, MOUNTAIN TIME

7:16	9:05	10:26	11:26	11:30	4:00 pm
Odds saved Kalshi prices, all ten races	**Focus groups run** All ten midterm races	**Calibration run** Same ten groups, 2024 question	**Numbers locked** Final file saved	**Card published** Site, X and Wayback Machine	**First polls close** Kentucky, 6 p.m. Eastern

Times are close estimates, based on the saved response files.

HOW IT WORKS · STEP 1 OF 4

Build the voters.

For each of the ten races we built a focus group of 40 personas: fictional residents, each with a life detailed enough to have a point of view. None of them is told who to vote for.

40
personas in each of 10 focus groups

19–83
age range, median 49

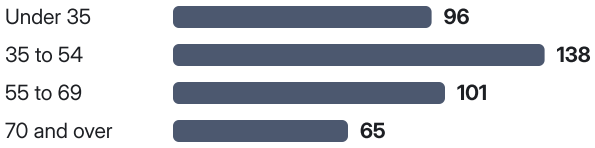
50/50
women and men

$51k
median personal income

What goes into a persona

Each persona is a detailed profile, generated on our platform to fit the place it lives in. The mix follows the district. Across the ten groups, 98 live in rural areas or small towns, 102 in small cities, and 200 in cities, metro areas and suburbs. 274 own their home and 126 rent.

AGE MIX ACROSS THE TEN GROUPS



What we deliberately leave out. No persona is assigned a candidate. Each profile carries an instruction not to infer beliefs from ethnicity or gender, and not to use polls or forecasts. The vote has to come from the person's circumstances meeting the candidates' records.

ONE PERSONA · KANSAS FOCUS GROUP, MEMBER 14

Aaron Finch, 61

School facilities worker · Rural Cherokee County, KS

Income	$38,000 a year
Education	High school diploma
Cares about	security, fairness, straight answers
Worried by	household instability; unreliable public commitments
Decides by	detail focused
Gets news from	public radio, long-form candidate interviews

He has a small mortgage and limited savings for unexpected repairs. He prefers practical detail to campaign confrontation. Main concerns: medication costs, retirement, local services.

Figures on this page describe the personas as built on our platform; they are not census data. Aaron is invented. This is a summary, not his full profile; parts of the persona data are proprietary to ValidateNine™. No real voter was contacted, modelled or impersonated for this study. His ballot appears on page 9.

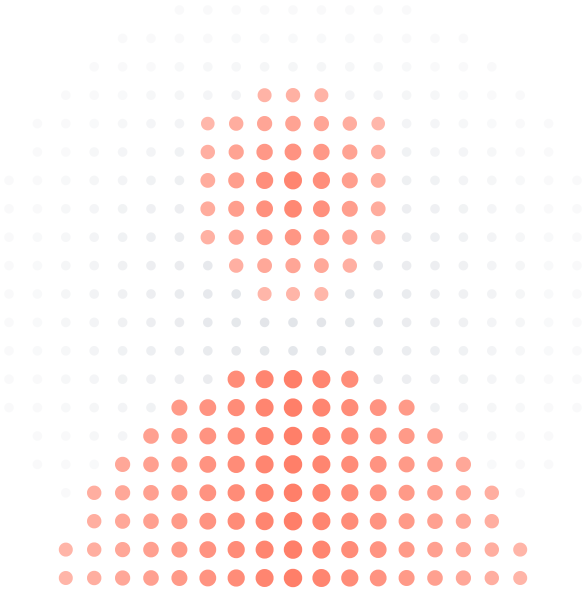
HOW IT WORKS · STEP 2 OF 4

Hand everyone the same packet.

Every persona in a race reads one document covering both candidates. It is written to be the kind of even-handed voter guide a local paper would print, with the same structure for each side.

What is in the packet

The packet describes the race and the place, then gives each candidate the same treatment: who they are, what they stand for, what they have said recently and what they have done, in the same order and at similar length.



What is kept out

- **No polling.** Not for this race, not nationally.
- **No betting odds.** We saved Kalshi's prices that morning to grade ourselves against. The personas never saw them.
- **No forecasts or ratings** from any analyst.
- **No hint of who is expected to win.**

This matters for what the result means. If the personas had seen a poll, a good score would only show they can read. Because they saw none, a good score has to come from how these people, in this place, react to these two candidates.

> **A real example.** The Missouri packet quotes Ann Wagner defending the Iran strikes on St. Louis Public Radio on October 22, and Fred Wellman on KSDK a week later saying the War Powers Resolution "was never meant to be a 60-day war coupon." Voters got the argument the way St. Louis got it.

HONEST LIMITS OF THE PACKET

A packet is a summary written by us. It cannot carry everything a real campaign does: the ads, the door knocks, the yard signs, the neighbor's opinion. Scandals and attack lines only appear if they were part of the public record we drew on. Where it was part of the public record, a candidate's own primary result is included. No general-election polling or odds are.

Third-party candidates were not counted as a choice in our tallies, although real voters gave them 1 to 3 points in most of these races. All our shares are therefore between the two major candidates only.

HOW IT WORKS · STEP 3 OF 4

Collect a ballot, with reasons.

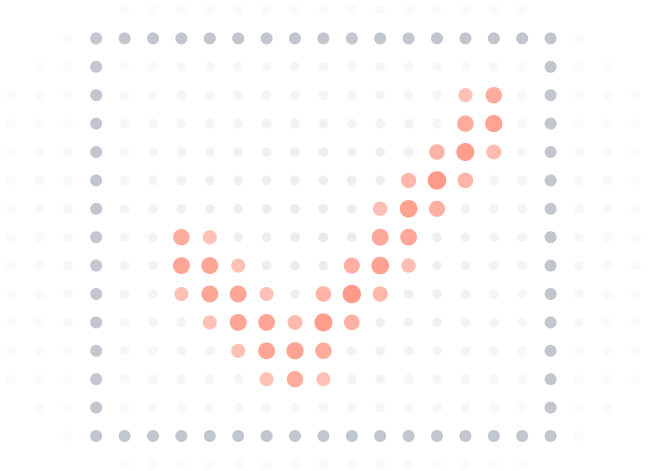
Each persona votes alone, before any discussion, and has to explain the choice. One run of a 40-person panel takes about four minutes.

What each persona hands back

A vote, in their own words, with the reasons behind it, and a set of scores for both candidates. Each group answered twice: once on its midterm race and once on the calibration question described next. The sample ballot on this page shows what one looks like.

How a ballot is counted

A short script reads each written vote and files it under a candidate or under undecided. Undecided voters are set aside, so a panel that splits 31 to 7 with 2 undecided counts as 31 of 38, or 81.6%. The script, the raw tallies and the final file are all saved, and anyone with the response files can rerun the count. We did, for this report, and every number matched.



AARON FINCH'S BALLOT · KANSAS SENATE

> "I voted for Adam Hamilton because his stance on health care and his commitment to protect rural hospitals align with my concerns about medication costs and local services. His Affordability Agenda and support for letting Medicare negotiate drug prices seem promising for reducing health care expenses."

	HAMILTON	MARSHALL
Trust	**7**	5
Relatability	**6**	5
Issue fit	**8**	6
Certainty of vote		**7 of 10**

On Marshall: "Marshall's rural background is relatable, but his policies on health and trade are less appealing due to personal impact."

His hesitation: "I'm leaning toward Hamilton due to his health care policies and moderate positions, but remain wary due to his lack of political experience."

Recorded November 3, 2026 at 9:31 a.m. Mountain. This is where a focus group earns its keep: the count tells you who is ahead, and the reasons tell you why and what might change it.

WHY STEP 4 EXISTS

Every synthetic focus group has a lean. Calibration is how we remove it.

This is the step that makes a synthetic focus group usable. We don't treat the lean as a surprise. We measure it and take it out before anything is published.

25.2 pts
average lean of an uncalibrated group in this study

10 of 10
groups leaned the same direction, toward the Democrat

7.2 pts
average miss after calibration

1.6 pts
average tilt left after calibration, close to zero

DEMOCRATIC SHARE OF THE TWO-PARTY VOTE, AVERAGED ACROSS THE TEN RACES



Where the lean comes from

The usual explanation is that the language models behind AI personas were trained on an internet that skews younger, more urban and more liberal than the electorate of, say, southern Minnesota. Ask one to play a 61-year-old school facilities worker in rural Kansas and it does a good job with his budget and his worries. On his politics it tilts toward the Democrat.

The important thing is that the lean is consistent. All ten groups tilted the same way in 2026, and all ten tilted the same way when asked about 2024. A consistent error is one you can measure and subtract.

Why this is the valuable part

Without calibration, a synthetic focus group gives the same answer whatever you ask it. Ours all said "Democrat" for 2026, when Democrats won nine of these ten, and all said "Harris" for 2024, when she lost all ten.

> With calibration, the same groups separated the ten races, put the only Republican winner in the Republican column, and called 7/10 against 5/10 for the market favorites. The focus group supplies the signal. Calibration makes the signal checkable. ValidateNine™ does both, every time.

HOW IT WORKS · STEP 4 OF 4 · THE PART THAT MATTERS

Measure the bias. Then subtract it.

We ask each panel a question we already know the answer to. We use those answers to calibrate the panel's results.

A **Run the real question.** The 40 Kansas personas vote Hamilton or Marshall. Result: 31 to 7 for Hamilton, or 81.6% of decided ballots.

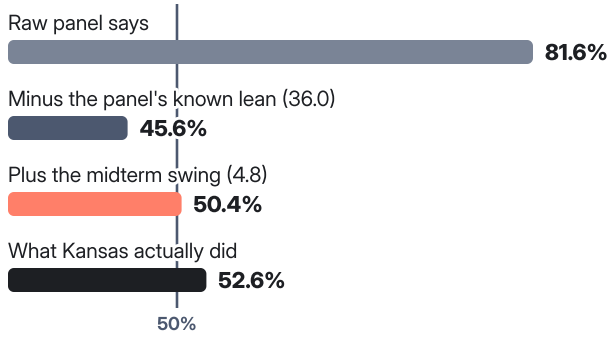
B **Run a question with a known answer.** The same 40 personas get a packet for the 2024 presidential race, written as if it were November 4, 2024, and vote Harris or Trump. Result: 28 to 8 for Harris, or 77.8%.

C **Measure the lean.** Harris really got 41.8% of the two-party vote in Kansas. The panel said 77.8%. This panel leans Democratic by **36.0 points**.

D **Subtract it.** 81.6 minus 36.0 leaves 45.6% for Hamilton.

E **Add the midterm swing.** The party that holds the White House usually loses ground in a midterm. We added 4.8 points to every Democrat. That figure is ValidateNine™'s own estimate of the midterm swing, set internally before the test from historical midterm results and our judgment. Hamilton lands at **50.4%**.

KANSAS, STEP BY STEP · DEMOCRATIC SHARE



We published Hamilton at 50.4% and called it a toss-up leaning his way. He won with 52.6% of the two-party vote. The raw panel was off by 29 points. The corrected number was off by 2.

THE WHOLE METHOD IN ONE LINE

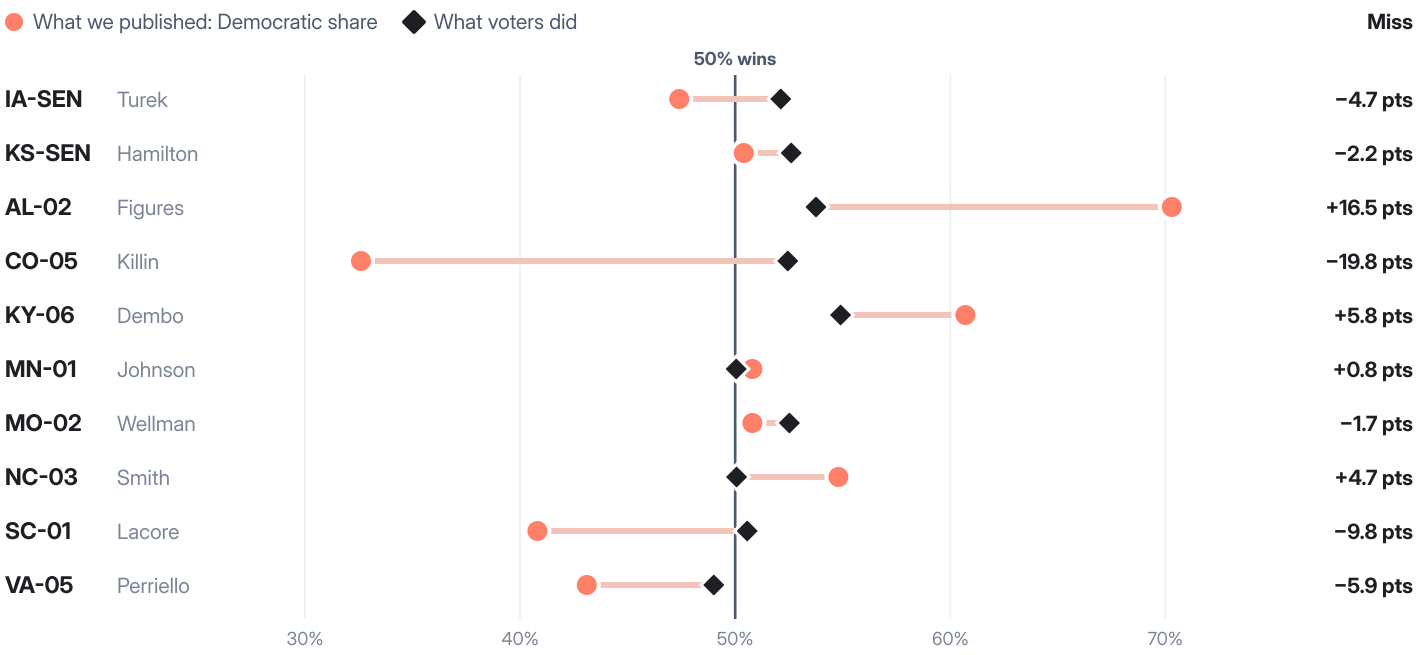
Published share = raw panel share − (panel's 2024 share − real 2024 share) + 4.8

Nothing else goes in: no polls, no market prices, no adjustment by race or by hand. The 2024 baseline for each House district is Harris's share under the district lines used in 2026. The test panels ran in 2026, so the model behind the personas already knew who won in 2024, and still picked Harris everywhere. That makes the lean a property of the panel, which is what we want to measure.

AFTER CALIBRATION

How close the corrected numbers came.

The same arithmetic was applied to all ten races. Here is every published number next to what voters did.



WITHIN 3 POINTS

3

Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas

WITHIN 6 POINTS

7

adds Iowa, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia

MORE THAN 6 POINTS

3

South Carolina by 10, Alabama by 17, Colorado by 20

The one-directional lean is largely gone

Before correction every panel was too high on the Democrat, by 25 points on average. After correction six forecasts are too low and four are too high, and the average tilt is 1.6 points toward the Republican. The one-directional error has largely been removed. What remains is scatter around the right answer.

The scatter is the next job

Seven of ten forecasts landed within six points with no polling at all. The three that did not are Alabama, Colorado and South Carolina, and pages 25 and 26 explain what they have in common. We believe this is fixable, and the next test will show it.

Published figures are as locked at 11:26 a.m. Mountain on November 3. Actual shares use unofficial counts as of November 11. Per-race calibration inputs are not published in this report.

WHAT CALIBRATION DID

Calibration cut the error by more than two thirds and separated the one Republican win from nine Democratic ones.

We reran the numbers several ways to show what each part of the method contributes. Only the highlighted row was published; the others are comparisons made afterwards.

VERSION	WHAT IT USES	WINNERS CALLED	AVERAGE MISS ON VOTE SHARE
ValidateNine™, as published	**Focus group, calibrated, plus midterm swing**	**7 / 10**	**7.2 pts**
Kalshi favorite	Whoever the market had above 50%	5 / 10	n/a
Uncalibrated focus group	Raw output, before our process	9 / 10	25.2 pts

Calibration turns a lean into a measurement

Before calibration the average miss on vote share was 25.2 points, always in the same direction. After, it was 7.2, with almost no tilt either way. In Kansas the uncalibrated number was 82% for the Democrat. We published 50.4%. He got 52.6%.

The uncalibrated groups show nine winners in the table only because they said "Democrat" every time in a year Democrats won nine of these ten. They would have said the same in any year. The calibrated groups made a real distinction between races, which is how we called John McGuire in Virginia, the only Republican who won.

Each group needs its own calibration

At 11:14 four districts were still waiting on their own 2024 test, so we borrowed Kansas's 36-point lean for them. That version scores 5. Twelve minutes later each district had its own measured lean, Minnesota and North Carolina flipped to the Democrat. North Carolina has since been conceded, and Minnesota is a projected winner. Calibrating each group on its own was worth two races.

The focus group adds what history can't

Take the focus group away and use only each district's 2024 result plus the midterm swing, and you call just 3 winners. History has no way to tell a strong candidate from a weak one. It put Kansas, Kentucky, Alabama, Minnesota and North Carolina in the Republican column. The focus groups moved all five to the Democrat, correctly.

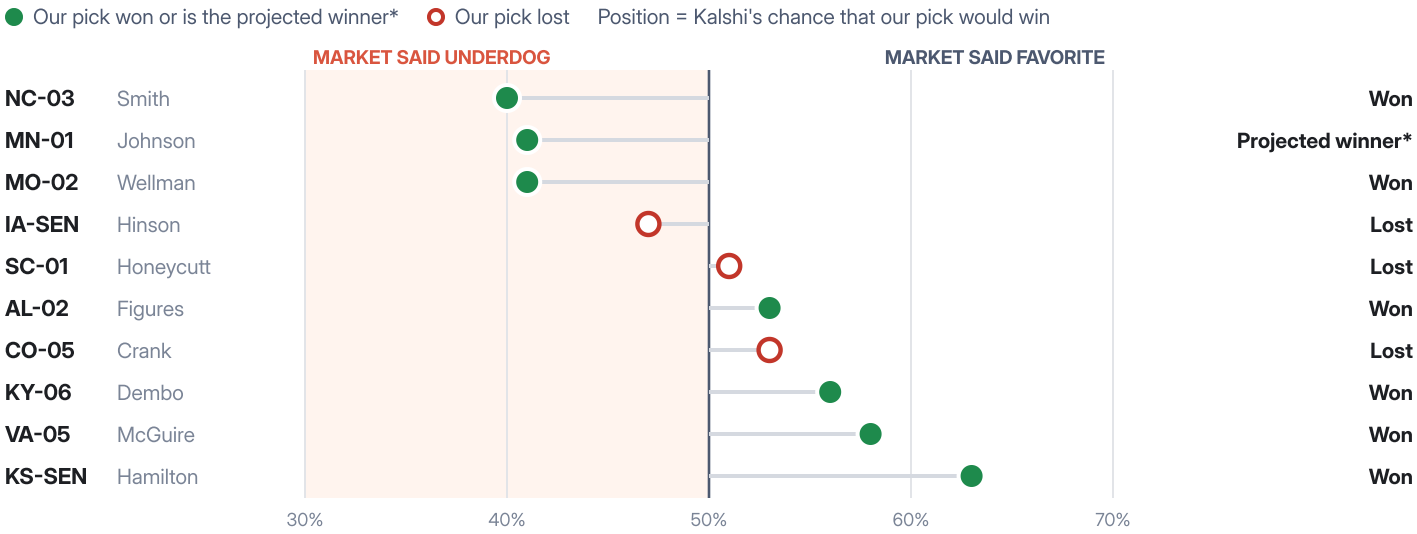
History alone is steadier on the exact vote share, missing by 3.5 points. That tells us where the next gain is: the focus group reads candidates correctly and reacts a little too strongly. In Alabama and Colorado it moved the forecast by around twenty points when the real effect was a few.

> So the recipe is clear. Keep the focus group for its read on the candidates and keep calibration for accuracy. The over-reaction is a specific, measurable effect, and corrections for it are built into the next version.

AGAINST THE MARKET

When we disagreed with the money, we were right three times out of four.*

Kalshi is a regulated exchange where people bet real money on election outcomes. Its prices are a fair stand-in for the best public guess. We saved them at 7:16 a.m. Mountain, before running a single panel.



WE PICKED THE UNDERDOG

3 of 4

Wellman (41%) and **Smith** (40%) won. **Johnson** (41%) is the projected winner.* **Hinson** (47%) lost.

WE AGREED WITH THE MARKET

4 of 6

Hamilton, Figures, Dembo and McGuire won. Crank and Honeycutt lost, and the market lost with us.

HEAD TO HEAD

7 / 10

against 5/10 for the market's own favorites, on the races it rated closest.

How much weight to put on it. Four disagreements is a small sample, so we read it as a strong early sign and not a settled record. What makes it notable is where it happened: on the three longest shots on our card, in districts the market had leaning the other way, with no polling given to the focus groups.

* Johnson (MN-01) is a projected winner: leading the count with Kalshi odds over 94% at publication, not yet certified.

RACE FILE 01 OF 10 · IOWA · U.S. SENATE

Iowa: we called Hinson. Turek won by four.

An open Senate seat, and the one race where we went against the market and lost.

OUR CALL

Ashley Hinson REP

Forecast **52.6%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✕ MISSED

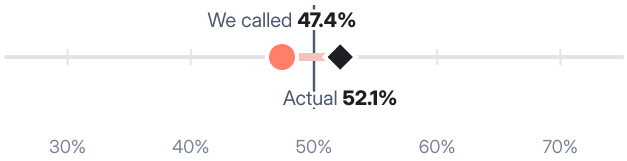
Josh Turek DEM

Our pick got **47.9%**. Miss: **+4.7 pts**

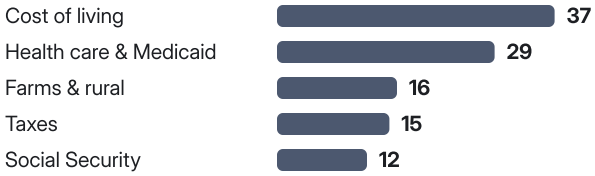
KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE UNDERDOG

Turek **53%** Hinson **47%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

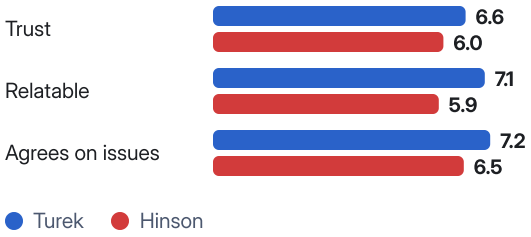


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 7.2 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I am voting for Josh Turek as his focus on making health care more affordable resonates deeply with my values and priorities. His experience with the health care system and his focus on eliminating corruption align well with my..."

Gloria Tennant, 63 · Hospital social-work case manager · Des Moines, IA

"I am voting for Ashley Hinson because her positions on taxes, ethanol, and trade align closely with my interests in supply-chain predictability."

David Keene, 68 · Warehouse operations manager · Cedar Falls, IA

WHAT HAPPENED

State Rep. Josh Turek beat Rep. Ashley Hinson for the seat Joni Ernst is leaving. He is the first Democrat to win a Senate race in Iowa since 2008, and his win helped hand Democrats the Senate.

Turek 686,641 (50.5%), Hinson 630,808 (46.4%). Race called.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The Iowa panel treated Turek almost exactly as it had treated Harris in the 2024 test. With no extra signal for either candidate, the forecast fell back on the 2024 result plus our 4.8-point swing, which put Turek at 47.4%. The real swing in Iowa was almost nine points.

What we take from it. Our flat midterm swing was too small for 2026. Across all ten races the real shift toward Democrats averaged 8.3 points. A better swing estimate alone would have flipped this call.

RACE FILE 02 OF 10 · KANSAS · U.S. SENATE

Kansas: our closest call, and it held.

We put a first-time Democratic candidate four tenths of a point above 50 in a state Trump won by 16.

OUR CALL

Adam Hamilton DEM

Forecast **50.4%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

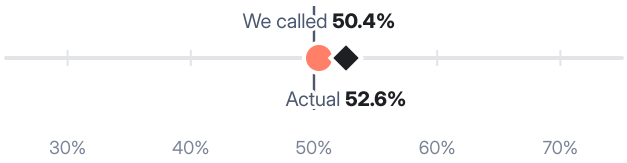
Adam Hamilton DEM

Our pick got **52.6%**. Miss: **−2.2 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Hamilton **63%** Marshall **37%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

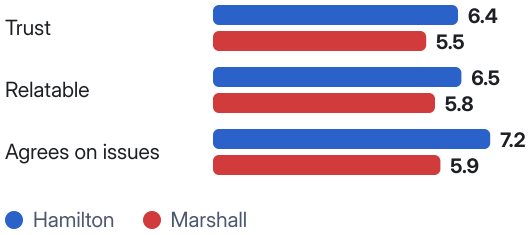


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.8 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I voted for Adam Hamilton because his stance on health care and his commitment to protect rural hospitals align with my concerns about medication costs and local services."

Aaron Finch, 61 · School facilities worker · Rural Cherokee County, KS

"I'm leaning toward voting for Roger Marshall because he supports removing the cap on income subject to the payroll tax, which aligns with my priority to protect Social Security."

Wilbur Gantz, 81 · Retired aircraft-parts inspector · Wichita, KS

WHAT HAPPENED

Adam Hamilton, a Methodist pastor in his first race, unseated Sen. Roger Marshall. Kansas had not elected a Democrat to the Senate since 1932.

Hamilton 561,143 (51.0%), Marshall 505,558 (46.0%). Race called.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

Before correction the panel had Hamilton far ahead, which is absurd for Kansas (page 11 walks through the arithmetic). After removing the panel's lean he sat at 45.6%, a loss. The midterm swing carried him to 50.4%. The panel rated him better than it had rated Harris, and that kept him close enough for the swing to matter.

What we take from it. This is the method working as designed: a wild raw number, corrected into a narrow and correct call that missed the real share by about two points. We labelled it a toss-up on the card, and that was the right label.

RACE FILE 03 OF 10 · ALABAMA · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 2

Alabama: right winner, far too confident.

Figures won a district redrawn to beat him. We said he would win by 40 points. He won by 8.

OUR CALL

Shomari C. Figures

DEM

Forecast **70.3%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

Shomari C. Figures

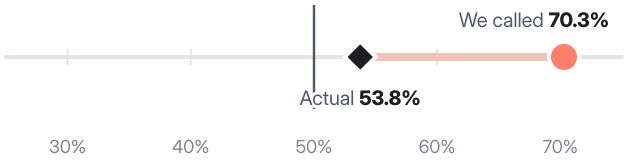
DEM

Our pick got **53.8%**. Miss: **+16.5 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Figures **53%** Marques **47%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE



WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

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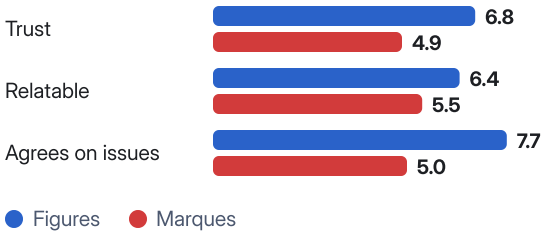


Average certainty of vote: 6.8 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I voted for Shomari Figures because his focus on healthcare access and his involvement in education align with my concerns about school funding and opportunities for young people."

Marcus Lett, 40 · High-school football coach and teacher · Eufaula, AL

"I have decided to vote for Rhett Marques because his platform strongly emphasizes reducing taxes and regulations on small businesses, which aligns well with my concerns as an insurance-agency owner."

Wendell Sumner, 52 · Insurance-agency owner · Dothan, AL

WHAT HAPPENED

Rep. Shomari Figures held a seat that Republican legislators redrew this year to favor their candidate, state Rep. Rhett Marques, who conceded on election night.

Figures 124,422 (53.8%), Marques 107,049 (46.2%). Marques conceded.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The panel liked Figures far more than it had liked Harris in the 2024 test, including among personas who chose Trump. That gap between the two tests was the largest in the study, and the method passed all of it straight into the forecast: 70.3% against a real 53.8%.

What we take from it. The panel was right that Figures would run well ahead of his party. He did, by more than almost any Democrat in our ten. But it overstated how far by a factor of three or four. Corrections for this are built into the next version.

RACE FILE 04 OF 10 · COLORADO · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 5

Colorado: our worst miss.

We gave Jeff Crank a "strong" rating. Jessica Killin became the first Democrat ever to win the district.

OUR CALL

Jeff Crank REP

Forecast **67.4%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✕ MISSED

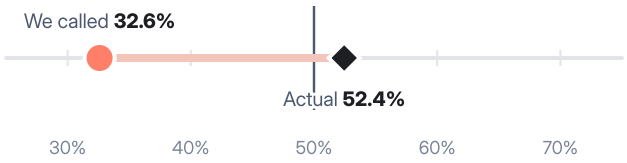
Jessica Killin DEM

Our pick got **47.6%**. Miss: **+19.8 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Killin **47%** Crank **53%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

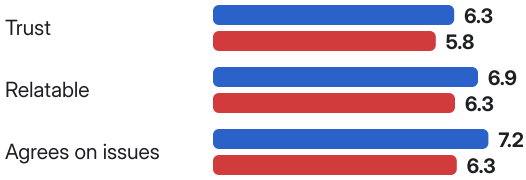


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.8 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I am casting my vote for Jessica Killin. Her commitment to healthcare improvements and her focus on better veterans' services resonate with my motivations for public competence and a functioning healthcare system."

Margaret Calder, 70 · Retired school administrator · Colorado Springs, CO — CO-05 portion

"I voted for Jeff Crank because his stance on reducing housing regulations aligns with my concerns about housing costs and the construction demand."

Devon Soto, 33 · Residential electrician · Security-Widefield area, CO — CO-05 portion

WHAT HAPPENED

Jessica Killin, an Army veteran, unseated first-term Rep. Jeff Crank in the Colorado Springs district, which had elected only Republicans since it was created in 1972.

Killin 155,598 (50.5%), Crank 141,074 (45.8%). Race called Nov 5.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

Two things stacked up. This panel had the largest measured lean of any in the 2024 test, so it took the biggest correction. Then a group of personas who had picked Harris chose Crank in the midterm, several citing his business background and his position on housing rules. A big correction applied to a softer result left Killin at 32.6%.

What we take from it. When a panel is this far from reality on the test question, straight subtraction becomes unstable, because a few personas changing their minds get multiplied into a 20-point swing. Corrections for this are built into the next version.

RACE FILE 05 OF 10 · KENTUCKY · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 6

Kentucky: a flip we called, and a share we nearly nailed.

An open seat in a district Trump carried by 16. We rated Dembo "strong" and he won comfortably.

OUR CALL

Zach Dembo DEM

Forecast **60.7%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

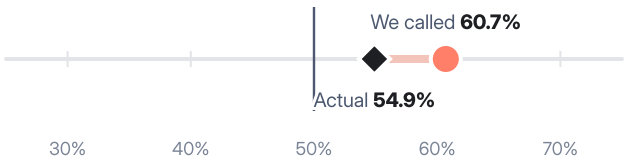
Zach Dembo DEM

Our pick got **54.9%**. Miss: **+5.8 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Dembo **56%** | Alvarado **44%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE



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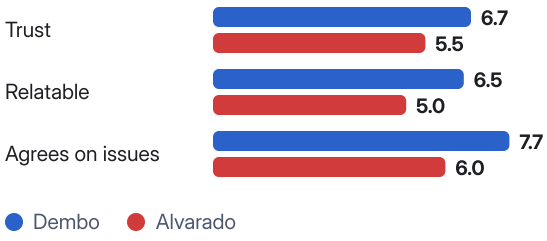
Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.8 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I am voting for Zach Dembo because he prioritizes healthcare access by opposing Medicaid cuts and supporting a public option, which aligns with my value of healthcare competence."

Patricia Rowan, 71 · Retired school administrator · Lexington, KY

"I'm leaning towards Ralph Alvarado because his stance on Medicaid and health care aligns with my values, as he wants to return more control to the states."

Wesley Colfax, 60 · Distribution manager · Richmond, KY

WHAT HAPPENED

Zach Dembo, a former federal prosecutor, won the open Lexington-based seat held by Republican Andy Barr, carrying Fayette County by more than two to one.

Dembo 52.7%, Alvarado 43.3%. Race called election night.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The panel was strongly for Dembo, and several personas who chose Trump in the 2024 test crossed over. Costs, health care and corruption were the top themes on the ballots. After correction he stood at 55.9%, within one point of his real 54.9%. The midterm swing then pushed the published number to 60.7%.

What we take from it. A clean hit on the winner. On the share, this is the one race where our swing adjustment made a good number worse, because the panel had already picked up Dembo's strength on its own.

RACE FILE 06 OF 10 · MINNESOTA · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 1

Minnesota: the underdog, by 322 votes.

The market gave Jake Johnson a 41% chance. We had him at 50.8%. He is at 50.05%.

OUR CALL

Jake Johnson DEM

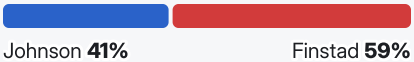
Forecast **50.8%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ PROJECTED WINNER*

Jake Johnson DEM

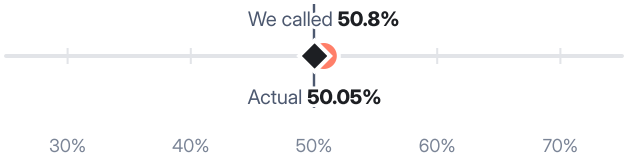
Our pick got **50.05%**. Miss: **+0.8 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE UNDERDOG



Johnson **41%** Finstad **59%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

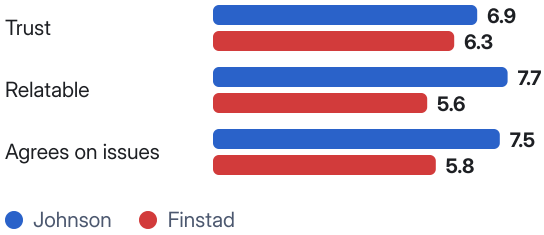


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.9 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I chose to vote for Jake Johnson because of his stance against tariffs, which are significantly impacting the farm economy and energy sectors in Minnesota."

Kyle Brekke, 32 · Wind-turbine technician · Owatonna, MN

"I'm leaning towards Brad Finstad because of his extensive experience in agricultural policy and previous leadership roles in related organizations."

Seth Rolfsrud, 44 · Corn, soybean and hog farmer · Rural Mower County near Adams, MN

WHAT HAPPENED

Jake Johnson, a high school math teacher, leads Rep. Brad Finstad by 322 votes out of 326,000 in a district Trump carried by 17 points. Finstad has said he will seek a recount. Kalshi put Johnson's chance of winning at 95% when this report was published.

Johnson leads Finstad by 322 votes in the state count. Not yet called; Finstad has said he will seek a recount. State canvass November 19.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The panel scored Johnson well above Finstad on relatability, the widest gap on that measure in any race. After correction he was at 46.0%, and the midterm swing put him over. Our first lock that morning, using a borrowed lean, had this race going to Finstad.

What we take from it. Our most accurate forecast: off by less than a point in a race decided by a tenth of one. It is also the best argument for measuring each panel's own lean. With the borrowed number we would have missed it.

RACE FILE 07 OF 10 · MISSOURI · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 2

Missouri: a 41% underdog who won.

Seven-term incumbent Ann Wagner was the market favorite and outspent her opponent. We picked Fred Wellman.

OUR CALL

Fred Wellman DEM

Forecast **50.8%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

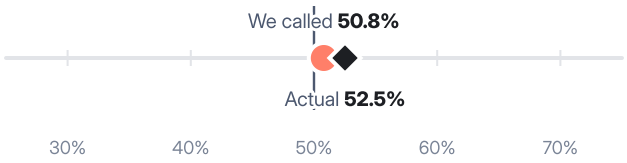
Fred Wellman DEM

Our pick got **52.5%**. Miss: **−1.7 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE UNDERDOG

Wellman **41%** Wagner **59%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

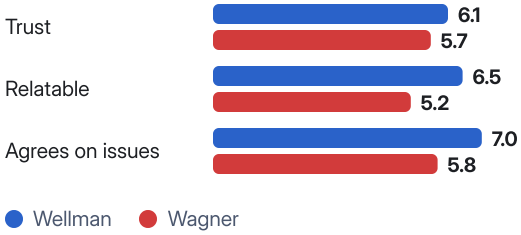


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.7 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I chose to vote for Fred Wellman because his focus on healthcare costs and a public option aligns closely with my concerns about healthcare affordability."

Haley Brunner, 28 · Occupational-therapy assistant · Washington, MO

"I voted for Ann Wagner because her experience and stance on trade align closely with my concerns about trade and tariffs affecting parts prices."

Rodney Kessel, 54 · Auto-parts distribution manager · Pacific, MO

WHAT HAPPENED

Fred Wellman, a retired Army officer, beat Rep. Ann Wagner in the suburban St. Louis district she had held since 2013. She conceded on election night.

Wellman 51.1%, Wagner 46.2%. Wagner conceded.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

This panel treated Wellman exactly as it had treated Harris in the 2024 test: the two results were identical. They cancel, so the forecast is simply the district's real 2024 result, 46.0%, plus the midterm swing: 50.8%. He got 52.5%.

What we take from it. A correct call, and an honest footnote: in Missouri the panel told us Wellman was a normal Democrat for the district and nothing more, and the national swing did the rest. The panel was right about that. He ran close to the average for our ten.

RACE FILE 08 OF 10 · NORTH CAROLINA · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 3

North Carolina: the longest shot on our card.

Kalshi gave Raymond Smith a 40% chance. He trailed on election night, took the lead a week later, and his opponent conceded.

OUR CALL

Raymond Smith DEM

Forecast **54.8%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

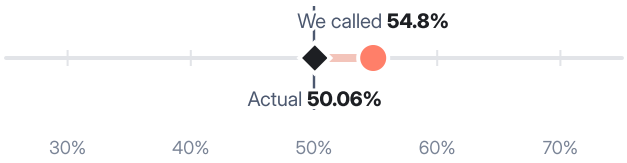
Raymond Smith DEM

Our pick got **50.06%**. Miss: **+4.7 pts**

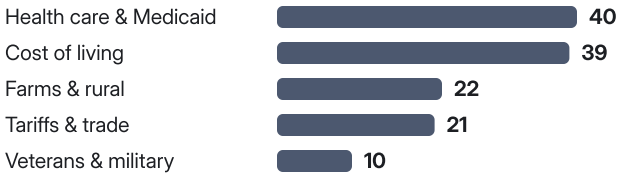
KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE UNDERDOG

Smith **40%** Murphy **60%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE

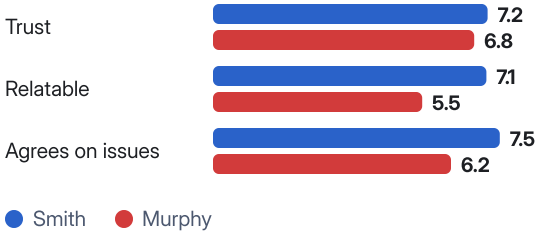


WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

HOW THE PANEL RATED EACH CANDIDATE (OUT OF 10)



Average certainty of vote: 6.8 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I am voting for Raymond Smith because his focus on addressing cost of living issues and his support for reversing Medicaid cuts align closely with my concerns about prescription costs and rent."

Kiersten Pate, 26 · Pharmacy technician · Wilson, Wilson County, NC

"I decided to vote for Greg Murphy because of his focus on opening foreign markets and tax provisions for farmers, which directly impacts my work as a crop-farm operator."

Seth Langford, 57 · Crop-farm operator · Sampson County, NC — NC-03 portion

WHAT HAPPENED

Rep. Greg Murphy led by 233 votes on election night and declared victory. After provisional ballots were counted on November 10, Smith led by 293. Murphy conceded on November 11. Counties canvass on November 13.

Smith 118,488, Murphy 118,195 after provisional ballots. Murphy conceded November 11. County canvass November 13.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The panel rated Smith better than it had rated Harris, with several 2024 Trump personas crossing over. Health care came up on all 40 ballots. After correction he stood at 50.0%. The swing made it 54.8%. Our first lock that morning had Murphy ahead.

What we take from it. This is the best single call in the study: the lowest market price of our ten picks, in a district analysts still rated Likely Republican. We overshot his share by about five points.

RACE FILE 09 OF 10 · SOUTH CAROLINA · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 1

South Carolina: we and the market both missed.

An open coastal seat priced at 51 to 49. We leaned Honeycutt. Lacore won by a point.

OUR CALL

Jenny Costa Honeycutt REP

Forecast **59.2%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✕ MISSED

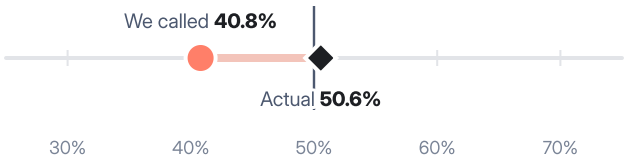
Nancy Lacore DEM

Our pick got **49.4%**. Miss: **+9.8 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Lacore **49%** Honeycutt **51%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE



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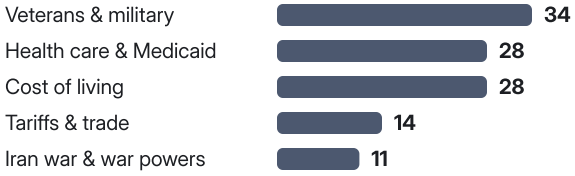

Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

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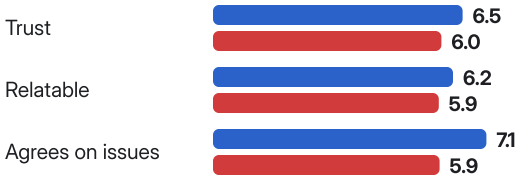


Average certainty of vote: 6.9 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

"I am voting for Nancy Lacore because her focus on reducing the cost of living, healthcare, and her background in supporting military families resonate with my priorities."

Claire Whitlock, 36 · Insurance account manager · Mount Pleasant area, SC — SC-01 portion

"I'm leaning towards Candidate A, Jenny Costa Honeycutt, because her focus on road safety and transportation improvements aligns well with my concerns about rural roads."

Randall Dunn, 60 · Timber-truck driver · Rural Colleton County near Walterboro, SC — SC-01 portion

WHAT HAPPENED

Nancy Lacore, a former Navy admiral, won the open Charleston-area seat that Nancy Mace left to run for governor.

Lacore 49.7%, Honeycutt 48.6%. Race called.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

The same pattern as Colorado, at half the size. The panel was cooler on Lacore than it had been on Harris, with some Harris personas moving to Honeycutt and citing her record on roads and local infrastructure. The model read that as a weak Democrat and published 40.8%. Lacore got 50.6%.

What we take from it. Both of our big Republican-side misses came from panels with some of the largest leans in the 2024 test. When the test result sits near the ceiling there is more room to fall than to rise, so ordinary noise looks like a move toward the Republican. That is a flaw in the arithmetic. We believe it is fixable, and the next test will show it.

RACE FILE 10 OF 10 · VIRGINIA · U.S. HOUSE, DISTRICT 5

Virginia: the one Republican who held on.

Nine of these ten races went to the Democrat. We picked the exception.

OUR CALL

John J. McGuire III

REP

Forecast **56.9%** of the two-party vote

RESULT ✓ CALLED IT

John J. McGuire III

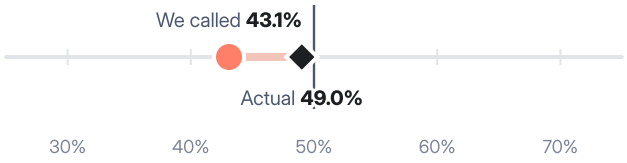
REP

Our pick got **51.0%**. Miss: **+5.9 pts**

KALSHI THAT MORNING · WE TOOK THE FAVORITE

Perriello **42%** McGuire **58%**

WHAT WE CALLED VS. WHAT VOTERS DID · DEMOCRATIC SHARE



WHAT THE 40 VOTERS TALKED ABOUT



Ballots out of 40 that raised the topic

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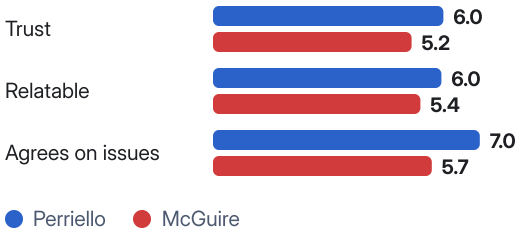


Average certainty of vote: 6.7 out of 10

IN THEIR WORDS

> "I'm voting for Tom Perriello because he focuses on reducing costs of living and healthcare, which align closely with my priorities."
>
> Devin Lockridge, 31 · Logistics dispatcher · Lynchburg, VA

> "I am voting for John J. McGuire III. His emphasis on energy costs and constituent service aligns with my concerns about rising utility costs."
>
> Warren Pugh, 54 · College facilities electrician · Farmville, VA — VA-05 portion

WHAT HAPPENED

Rep. John McGuire beat former congressman Tom Perriello by about two points in a district he won by 15 in 2024. Perriello conceded on November 5.

McGuire 181,644 (50.1%), Perriello 174,539 (48.1%). Perriello conceded Nov 5.

WHY WE LANDED THERE

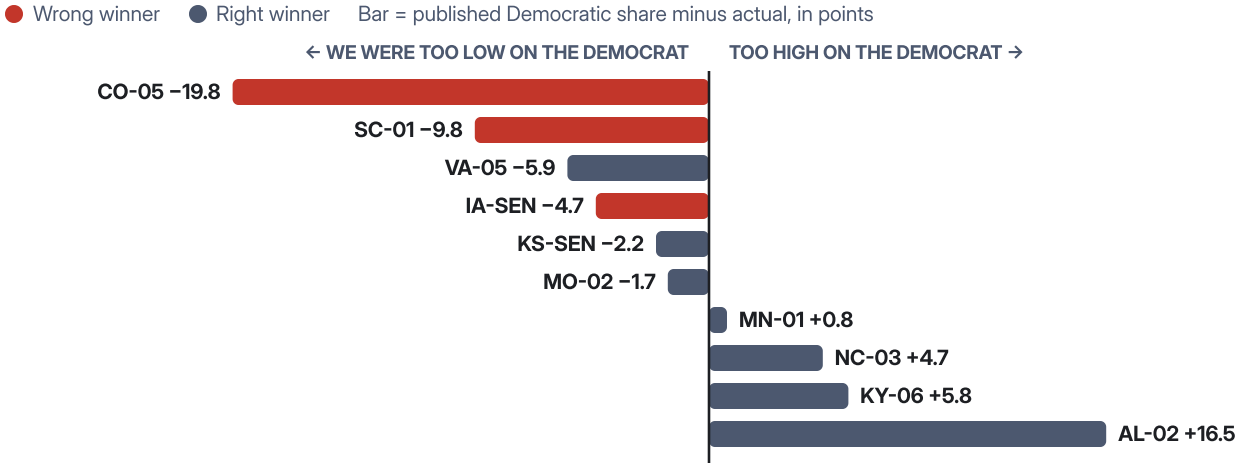
Before correction the panel had Perriello ahead. But the same personas had been even more favorable to Harris, so Perriello was doing no better with them than a candidate who lost the district badly. After correction he stood at 38.3%, and the swing brought him to 43.1%. He got 49.0%.

What we take from it. This is the result that separates the corrected model from the raw one. Anything that simply said "Democrat" got Virginia wrong. We were six points too hard on Perriello, which fits the pattern across the study, but the call was right for the right reason.

THE THREE MISSES

All three misses failed the same way. That is good news.

Random errors can't be fixed. Errors with a pattern can. All three missed in the same direction, for reasons we can name.



CAUSE 1 · THE SWING WAS TOO SMALL

We added 4.8 points for the midterm. Democrats actually gained **8.3 points** on 2024 across these ten. That gap alone explains Iowa, and it is why six of our ten forecasts sit too low on the Democrat.

CAUSE 2 · PANELS NEAR THE CEILING

Colorado's panel had the largest lean of all in the 2024 test. From that high a panel can only come down, and the method reads any drop as a weak Democrat. South Carolina drifted the same way.

CAUSE 3 · FORTY IS A SMALL ROOM

In a 40-person panel, seven people changing their minds moves the result by 18 points. That is about what happened in Colorado and South Carolina.

What we do about it

Each of the three causes is specific and measurable, which is what makes it something we can act on. Corrections for all three are built into the next version of the platform, and the next test will show whether they hold.

A larger swing estimate alone would have called one more of these races.

What we would not change

We would not go back and tune the 2026 numbers until they fit. Every correction is a rule written down in advance and tested on races that have not happened yet. A method adjusted after the fact to score ten of ten on last week's elections would tell you nothing about next year's.

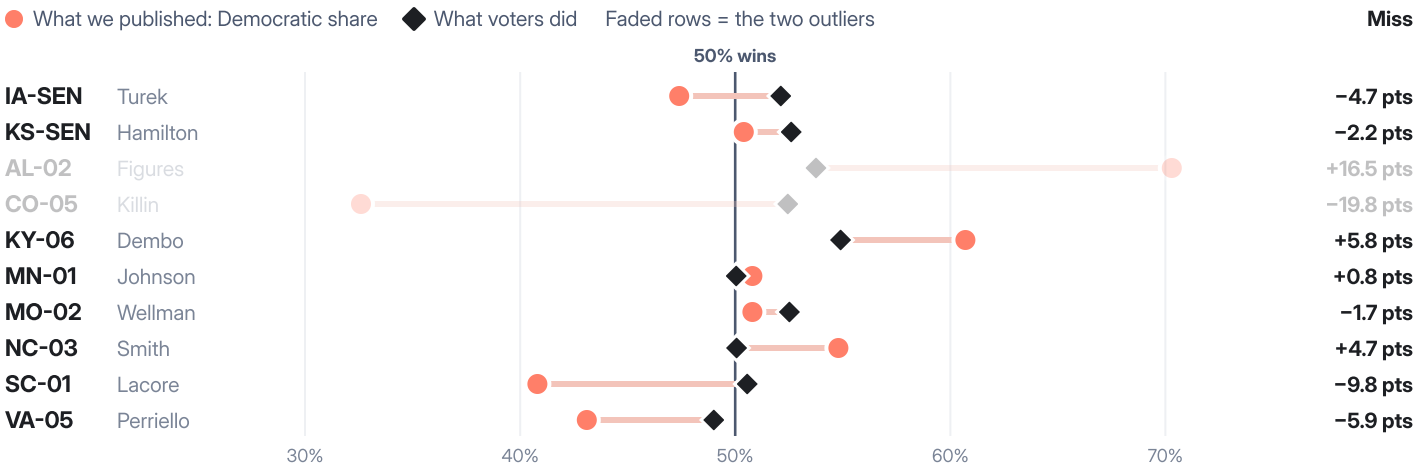
THE LIMITS OF A FIRST TEST

Ten races is a small sample; seven of ten could happen by chance about one time in six. 2026 was a strong Democratic year, which helps any method that leans that way. One of our seven is projected, not certified. The 40 personas in a group come from one AI model and are not fully independent. The AI model may have seen public polling in its training data; none was given to it for this test. History alone was closer on vote share (page 13).

THE TWO OUTLIERS

Seven of ten landed within six points. Here is why two were far off.

Alabama's 2nd and Colorado's 5th account for most of our error. We went back through the ballots, and both trace to the same cause.



WITHOUT THE OUTLIERS

6 of 8

winners called. Kalshi favorites: 4 of 8

AVERAGE MISS

4.4 pts

down from 7.2 across all ten

WITHIN 6 POINTS

7 of 8

median miss 4.7 points

OFFICIAL SCORE

7 of 10

stays as published. This view is analysis, not a re-grade

What the ballots show

In both races the personas who moved the result gave the same kind of reason: a sitting member of Congress with a committee seat and a named local win that matched their own job or town.

> "His work on the Agriculture Committee and his efforts on keeping Jackson Hospital open resonate with my concerns about local healthcare access."
>
> Alabama persona who chose Trump in the 2024 test and Figures in 2026

> "His experience on the Armed Services Committee and his work with local bases resonate with my occupation's connection to transportation and defense sectors."
>
> Colorado persona who chose Harris in the 2024 test and Crank in 2026

Alabama: 29 of 40 ballots raised the hospital or rural health care. **Colorado:** 31 of 40 raised the bases or military jobs, and Crank's opponent was a first-time candidate with no voting record to set against his.

The cause: an over-weighted local record

A persona reads the packet carefully and weighs a concrete local achievement heavily. Real voters in a wave year voted more on party and national mood. So the focus group pushed the incumbent too high in both: the Democrat in Alabama, the Republican in Colorado. One effect, two directions. South Carolina shows a smaller version.

Can we account for it? We think so.

This is a specific effect with a visible signature in the ballots, which makes it detectable before a forecast is published. Corrections for this are built into the next version, and the next test will show whether they hold.

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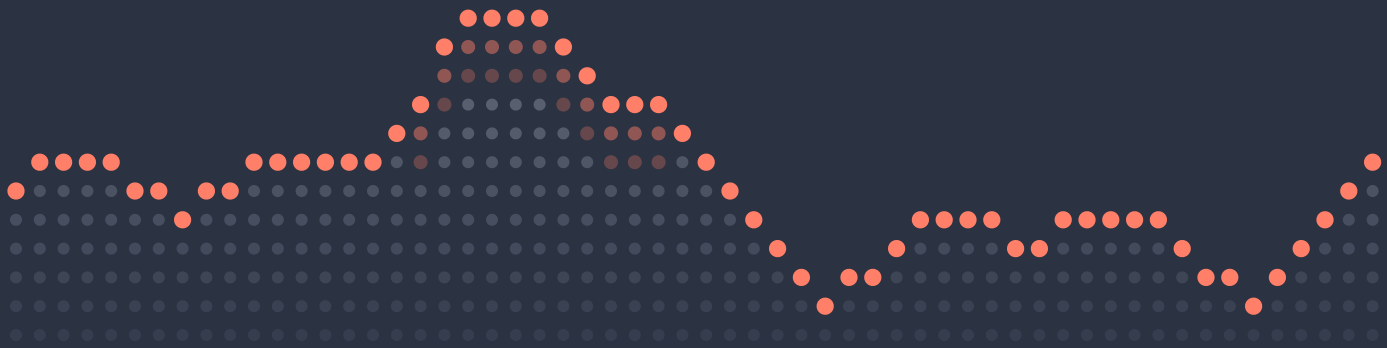

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Version 1.5 · November 11, 2026

APPENDIX

Method, files and sources.

DEFINITIONS

Two-party share: a candidate's votes divided by the Democratic plus Republican votes.

Panel: 40 AI personas written for one race. **Ballot:** one persona's full response. **Lean:** a panel's Harris share in the 2024 test minus Harris's real share in that district or state.

Published share = raw 2026 Democratic share − lean + 4.8. A Democratic pick requires a published share above 50.

Hit: our pick won or is the projected winner. **Projected winner:** our pick leads the unofficial count as of November 11, 2026 and Kalshi's implied odds of victory were above 90% at publication (MN-01, over 94%, as recorded by ValidateNine™). The race is not yet certified.

FILES BEHIND THIS REPORT

- Persona profiles for all ten focus groups (available on request)
- 20 packets and 20 response exports: midterm runs 9:05–9:55 a.m. MT, calibration runs 10:26–11:25 a.m. MT, Nov 3
- Counting script, 2024 baselines, raw tallies
- First lock (11:14 a.m.), final lock (11:26 a.m.) and the published card (11:30 a.m.)

For this report we recounted every ballot from the response files with the original script. Every tally matched the locked file.

PACKET CHECK

All 20 packets were checked for polling, betting odds, forecasts and race ratings; none contain any. Where public, a candidate's own primary result is included. The Missouri packet notes that Fred Wellman's positions are drawn partly from "candidate surveys": issue questionnaires he answered, not polls.

MARKET PRICES

Kalshi's displayed chance of winning for both candidates in each race, pulled at 7:16 a.m. Mountain on November 3, 2026. These are odds of winning, not vote shares.

THE PLATFORM

Every focus group in this study was built and run on ValidateNine™'s proprietary platform, developed in-house by Derrick Lawter. The platform creates the personas, assembles the groups, delivers the packets, runs the tests and captures every response. Persona responses in this study were generated with OpenAI's GPT-4o, chosen because it produced the most distinct, in-character persona responses in ValidateNine™'s internal calibration testing. Each 40-persona group completes in about four minutes.

ELECTION RESULTS (UNOFFICIAL, CHECKED NOVEMBER 11, 2026)

IA-SEN	NBC News results page; Wikipedia vote totals; Axios Des Moines, Nov 3
KS-SEN	Poliwave live results (561,143 – 505,558); Washington Post, Nov 3; NPR, Nov 3
AL-02	Yellowhammer News, Nov 5 (124,422 – 107,049); Alabama Daily News, Nov 4
CO-05	Decision Desk HQ and Rocky Mountain Voice from Colorado Secretary of State (155,598 – 141,074); Colorado Sun, Nov 5
KY-06	WKYT, Nov 4 (52.7% – 43.3%); NBC News results page; Washington Post
MN-01	Minnesota Secretary of State count via KTTC, Nov 9 (Johnson +322); MPR News, Nov 4–5
MO-02	NBC News results page (51.1% – 46.2%); St. Louis Public Radio; Missouri Independent, Nov 3
NC-03	Neuse News / WITN (118,488 – 118,195); NC Newsline, Nov 10; ABC11, Nov 11 (concession)
SC-01	NBC News results page (49.7% – 48.6%); CBS News projection
VA-05	Virginia Public Access Project (181,644 – 174,539); VPM News, Nov 5

Closest available published figures as of November 11. Where a source gave only percentages (KY-06, MO-02, SC-01), shares are derived from them. Certified results may differ.

2024 BASELINES

Harris's two-party share under the lines used in 2026: IA 43.3, KS 41.8, AL-02 42.4, CO-05 45.3, KY-06 42.4, MN-01 43.75, MO-02 46.0, NC-03 43.0, SC-01 43.5, VA-05 44.0. Set on November 3 and not revised. Checked against published 2024 results; all ten agree within half a point.

THE MIDTERM SWING

4.8 points of share, chosen internally by ValidateNine™ before the test from historical midterm swings and our own judgment. It is our estimate, not a published statistic, and was applied identically to all ten races.

> **This was a simulation.** No real voter was surveyed and all personas are fictional. Nothing here is a poll or advice on betting or investing. ValidateNine™ is a trademark of Trusted West LLC. GPT-4o is a product of OpenAI.