

Four signs Harris and Democrats appear to be falling flat ahead of election

Story by Jack Birle,

Vice President Kamala Harris's abbreviated campaign for the White House began in July in an effort to jolt Democratic enthusiasm, but weeks ahead of Election Day, **there are signs the Democrats may be faltering ahead of the critical November deadline.**

While Democrats are not close to the crushing state President Joe Biden's candidacy had them in after his disastrous June debate performance, **there are warning signs the party's ticket could fall flat when the results are counted next month.**

1. Walz debate performance

Gov. Tim Walz (D-MN), Harris's running mate, faced off against Sen. J.D. Vance (R-OH), former President Donald Trump's running mate, in the only vice presidential debate of the cycle last week, and the Minnesota governor delivered **an uneven performance.**

Walz made some flubs, including saying he is "friends with school shooters," and did not deliver a clear answer when asked about discrepancies in stories he had previously told, including about being in China in 1989.

Meanwhile, **Vance was generally praised for his debate performance**, which offered a softer side of the senator, who had sagging approval ratings heading into the event. The debate was widely seen as **better for the Trump campaign and a missed opportunity for the Harris campaign**, though the impact of vice presidential debates on the race typically is less than that of presidential debates.

2. Senate polling

Democrats face an uphill battle in maintaining their 51-49 majority in the Senate, with the seat of outgoing Sen. Joe Manchin (I-WV) a nearly guaranteed GOP flip, but they also face new polls that suggest several Republicans have momentum.

- In Montana, Sen. **Jon Tester (D-MT) has fallen significantly behind** his Republican challenger, Tim Sheehy, in polling, and the race has been moved from a "toss up" to "lean Republican," by the Cook Political Report. The Democrats' Senate campaign wing has also eyed other races as the Montana seat **appears to be slipping away.**
- In two other key races, Ohio and Wisconsin, the races of Democratic incumbents seeking to hold on have also tightened. An internal survey from the National Republican Senatorial Committee shows that Republican Bernie Moreno is in **an even race** against Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), while internal polling motivated the Cook Political Report to reclassify the Wisconsin Senate race, between Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Republican Eric Hovde, **from "lean Democrat" to "toss up"** on Tuesday.

3. Harris not separating herself from Trump in polls

While Harris has led Trump in various polls, both nationally and in key swing states, **she has either fallen behind or stayed within the margin of error in a bevy of key races.**

Nationally, Harris leads Trump in the RealClearPolitics polling average, 49.2% to 47.2%, but the 2-point lead is further behind the 4.6-point lead former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had over Trump at this time in 2016 and the 9-point lead Biden had over Trump at this time in 2020.

In the key swing states, Trump leads Harris in Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina, while the two are **tied in Pennsylvania**, according to the RealClearPolitics polling average. In the swing states where Harris is leading Trump, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Nevada, **her leads are narrow** and behind where Clinton and Biden were in 2016 and 2020, respectively.

4. Harris's and Walz's media appearances

Harris and Walz have hit the airwaves this week as the campaign enters the final stretch, but ***some of the interviews have been material for critics of the Democratic ticket.***

During their appearance on CBS News's 60 Minutes on Monday, Harris's and Walz's answers on some topics ***garnered criticism from Republicans.***

While on ABC News's The View on Tuesday, ***Harris also garnered criticism for saying she would not change anything that Biden did on policy.***