

The Definitive Guide to the Convention Bounce

By AEI's Political Corner

Conventional wisdom suggests that a presidential candidate will receive a small boost following his party's national convention. These convention "bounces" have varied in size, from the tiny two-point jump for George W. Bush in Gallup's data from 2004 to the massive sixteen percentage point bounce for Bill Clinton in 1992. There are a few exceptions to the phenomenon: John Kerry's numbers declined after the 2004 Democratic convention. Convention bounces tend to be short-lived.

How to read this chart: The calculations here were made using the last poll before and the first poll after each party's convention. One reason for the differences in the Gallup, CBS/NYT, and NBC/WSJ numbers is that the polling organizations were in the field at different times before and after each convention. The Gallup polls taken immediately before and after the 1976 Democratic convention, show that Jimmy Carter's standing rose 9 percentage points after the convention, and Gerald Ford's fell by 7 points. The gain/loss is not equal because some people moved into the "other" or "don't know" categories. A diamond (♦) indicates that the poll from which the bounce was measured was taken more than ten days before the convention, while the spade (♠) indicates that the poll was taken more than ten days after the convention.

1976	Gallup
DEM convention <i>July 12-15</i>	DEM +9 ♦ GOP -7
GOP convention <i>Aug. 16-19</i>	GOP +5 DEM -4

1980	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
GOP convention <i>July 14-17</i>	GOP +8 ♠ DEM -5	GOP -2 ♦♠ DEM -9	GOP +13* DEM -3
DEM convention <i>Aug. 11-14</i>	DEM +10 GOP -7	DEM +11 ♠ GOP -12	DEM +10 GOP -8

1984	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
DEM convention <i>July 16-19</i>	DEM +9 GOP -7	DEM 0 ♠ GOP -6	DEM +2 ♠ GOP -2
GOP convention <i>Aug 20-23</i>	GOP +4 ♠ DEM -4	GOP +2 ♦♠ DEM 0	GOP +4 ♠ DEM -3

1988	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
DEM convention <i>July 18-21</i>	DEM +7 GOP -4	DEM +3 GOP -6	DEM +4 GOP -4
GOP convention <i>Aug. 15-18</i>	GOP +6 DEM -5	GOP +13 ♦ DEM -10	GOP +8 DEM -11

1992	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
DEM convention <i>July 13-16</i>	DEM +16 GOP -14	DEM +12 GOP -12	DEM +12 ♠ GOP -5
GOP convention <i>Aug. 17-20</i>	GOP +5 DEM -4	GOP +2 DEM 0	GOP +7 ♠ DEM -1

1996	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
GOP convention <i>Aug. 12-15</i>	GOP +3 DEM -2	GOP +9 DEM -9	GOP +8 DEM -2
DEM convention <i>Aug. 26-29</i>	DEM +5 GOP -4	DEM +1 GOP -2	DEM +3 ♠ GOP 0

2000	Gallup	CBS/NYT	NBC/WSJ
GOP convention <i>July 31-Aug. 3</i>	GOP +8 DEM -2	GOP +4 DEM -5	GOP 0 DEM +2
DEM convention <i>Aug. 14-17</i>	DEM +8 GOP -3	DEM -2 GOP +6	DEM +5 GOP -1

2004	Gallup	CBS	NBC/WSJ
DEM convention <i>July 26-29</i>	DEM -1 GOP +5	DEM +4 GOP +2	DEM 0 ♠ GOP 0
GOP convention <i>Aug. 30-Sept. 2</i>	GOP +2 DEM -2	DEM -4 ♦ GOP +5	DEM 0 ♦ GOP +1

Note: * In 1980, NBC/WSJ did include Barry Commoner and Ed Clark in the pre-GOP convention poll, but not in the post-convention poll. For more information on methodology and background or if you have any other questions, please contact Karlyn Bowman at kbowman@aei.org or Adam Foster at afoster@aei.org.