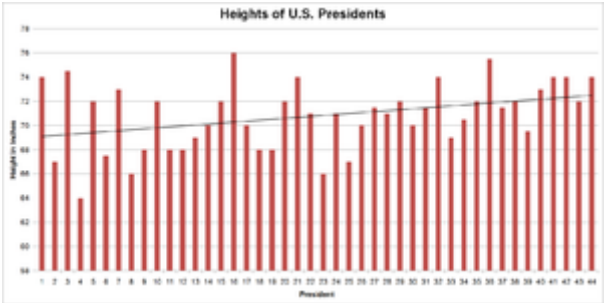


Heights of presidents and presidential candidates of the United States

A record of the heights of the presidents of the United States and presidential candidates is useful for evaluating what role, if any, height plays in presidential elections. Some observers have noted that the taller of the two major-party candidates tends to prevail, and argue this is due to the public's preference for taller candidates.^[1]

The tallest U.S. president was Abraham Lincoln at 6 feet 4 inches (193 centimeters), while the shortest was James Madison at 5 feet 4 inches (163 centimeters).

Joe Biden, the current president, is 5 feet 11½ inches (182 centimeters) according to a physical examination summary from December 2019.^[2]



Presidents have grown taller over time as shown using linear trend estimation.

Contents

- U.S. presidents by height order
- Electoral success as a function of height
- Comparative table of heights of United States presidential candidates
- Extremes
- Notes
- References
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U.S. presidents by height order

Rank	No.	President	Height (in)	Height (cm)	Ref.
1	16	<u>Abraham Lincoln</u>	6 ft 4 in	193 cm	[3]
2	36	<u>Lyndon B. Johnson</u>	6 ft 3½ in	192 cm	[4][5][6]
3	45	<u>Donald Trump</u>	6 ft 3 in	191 cm	[7][8][9][note 1]
4	3	<u>Thomas Jefferson</u>	6 ft 2½ in	189 cm	[12][13]
5	1	<u>George Washington</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	[14][15]
	21	<u>Chester A. Arthur</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	[12]
	32	<u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	[12]
	41	<u>George H. W. Bush</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	[12][16]
	42	<u>Bill Clinton</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	[12][16][17][18][19][20]
10	44	<u>Barack Obama</u>	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	[21]
11	7	<u>Andrew Jackson</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	[12][22]
	35	<u>John F. Kennedy</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	[23]
	40	<u>Ronald Reagan</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	[12]
14	5	<u>James Monroe</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12][24]
	10	<u>John Tyler</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12]
	15	<u>James Buchanan</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12]
	20	<u>James A. Garfield</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12]
	29	<u>Warren G. Harding</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12]
	38	<u>Gerald Ford</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	[12][25]
20	27	<u>William Howard Taft</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	[26]
	31	<u>Herbert Hoover</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	[27]
	37	<u>Richard Nixon</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	[12][25]
	43	<u>George W. Bush</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	[20][28][29][30]
	46	<u>Joe Biden</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	[2]
25	22, 24	<u>Grover Cleveland</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	[12]
	28	<u>Woodrow Wilson</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	[12][31]
27	34	<u>Dwight D.</u>	5 ft	179 cm	[12]



Abraham Lincoln at 6 ft 4 in (193 cm) surmounts Lyndon B. Johnson as the tallest president.



James Madison, the shortest president, was 5 ft 4 in (163 cm).

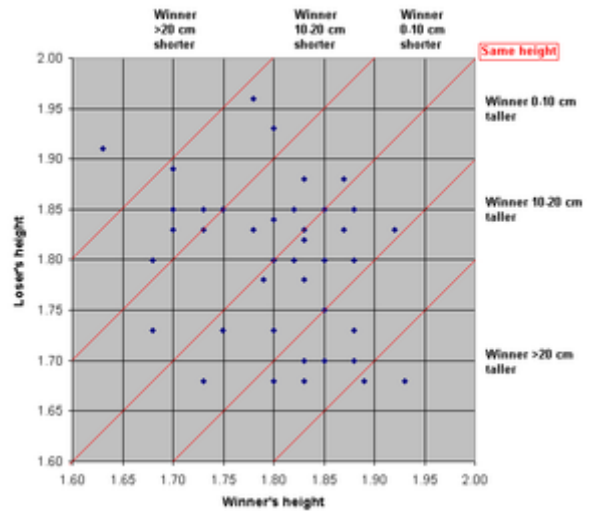
		<u>Eisenhower</u>	10½ in		
28	14	<u>Franklin Pierce</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	[12]
	17	<u>Andrew Johnson</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	[12]
	26	<u>Theodore Roosevelt</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	[12][24]
	30	<u>Calvin Coolidge</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	[12]
32	39	<u>Jimmy Carter</u>	5 ft 9½ in	177 cm	[12][25]
33	13	<u>Millard Fillmore</u>	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	[12]
	33	<u>Harry S. Truman</u>	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	[12]
35	19	<u>Rutherford B. Hayes</u>	5 ft 8½ in	174 cm	[12][32]
36	9	<u>William Henry Harrison</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	[12]
	11	<u>James K. Polk</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	[12][33]
	12	<u>Zachary Taylor</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	[12][24]
	18	<u>Ulysses S. Grant</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	[34]
40	6	<u>John Quincy Adams</u>	5 ft 7½ in	171 cm	[35]
41	2	<u>John Adams</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	[12][36]
	25	<u>William McKinley</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	[12]
43	8	<u>Martin Van Buren</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	[37]
	23	<u>Benjamin Harrison</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	[38]
45	4	<u>James Madison</u>	5 ft 4 in	163 cm	[12][39]

Electoral success as a function of height

Folk wisdom about U.S. presidential politics holds that the taller of the two major-party candidates always wins or almost always wins since the advent of the televised presidential debate.

There are more data if the relationship of electoral success to height difference starts from the year 1900, rather than from the beginning of televised debates. In the thirty-one presidential elections between 1900 and 2020, twenty of the winning candidates have been taller than their opponents, while nine have been shorter, and two were the same height. On average the winner was 1.1 inches (2.8 cm) taller than the loser.

However, it may be argued that drawing the line at any date ignores the fact that pictorial depictions of presidential hopefuls have been available to the American public at large well before debates were televised. Stereographs were widely used as a form of photojournalism for historical events (including political events) by the 1870s.^[40] Cutting off the date at 1900 excludes the seven presidential elections immediately preceding where the taller candidate won only *once* (which, when included, partially equalizes the ratio to 21 taller vs 14 shorter winners between 1872 and 2020). Considering that political cartoons and text-based descriptions of candidates have been a staple of American politics since the beginning, one could argue that Americans have always been able to compare candidates by height. Thus, upon including all elections until 2016 where the heights of each candidate are known, the average height of the winner above the loser drops to a mere 0.3 inches (0.8 cm);^[41] this average height difference becomes little more than a round-off error—a mere 0.1 inches (0.3 cm)—when excluding the 2016 election, in which gender not only accounted for the height difference, but was likely the greater physical distinction between the two main candidates than height.^[41]



Graph of winner v. loser heights in presidential elections from 1789 – 2004

The claims about taller candidates winning almost all modern presidential elections is still pervasive, however. Examples of such views include:

- In Ray Bradbury's 1953 dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*, when Mildred and her friends talk about the success of one presidential candidate over the other in a recent election, they talk only about the attractiveness of the winning candidate over the loser. One of their points is "You just don't go running a little short man like that against a tall man."
- A 1988 article in the *Los Angeles Times* fashion section about a haberdasher devoted to clothing shorter men included a variation of the tale: "Stern says he just learned that Dukakis is 5 feet, 8 inches. 'Did you know,' he adds, noticeably disappointed, 'that since 1900 the taller of the two candidates always wins?'"^[42]
- A 1997 book called *How to Make Anyone Fall in Love with You* discusses the issue in a section about the importance of height: "What about height? One assumes the taller the better, because our culture venerates height. In fact, practically every president elected in the United States since 1900 was the taller of the two candidates."^[43]
- A chapter titled "Epistemology at the Core of Postmodernism" in the 2002 book *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmodernisms* makes this observation: "I remember the subversive effect the observation had on me that in every U.S. presidential race, the taller of the two candidates had been elected. It opened up space for a counterdiscourse to the presumed rationality of the electoral process."^[44]
- A 1975 book called *First Impressions: The Psychology of Encountering Others* notes: "Elevator Shoes, Anyone? One factor which has a far-reaching influence on how people are perceived, at least in American society, is height. From 1900 to 1968 the man elected U.S. president was always the taller of the two candidates. (Richard Nixon was slightly shorter than George McGovern.)"^[45]
- A 1978 book titled *The Psychology of Person Identification* states: "They also say that every President of the USA elected since the turn of the [20th] century has been the taller of the two candidates (Jimmy Carter being an exception)."^[46]

- A 1999 book, *Survival of the Prettiest* by Nancy Etcoff, repeated a version of the legend in a section on the power of heights: "... Since 1776 only [two Presidents,] James Madison and Benjamin Harrison[,] have been below-average height. The easiest way to predict the winner in a United States election is to bet on the taller man: in this century you would have had an unbroken string of hits until 1972 when Richard Nixon beat George McGovern."^[47]

A comparison of the heights of the winning presidential candidate with the losing candidate from each election since 1788 is provided below to evaluate such views.

Comparative table of heights of United States presidential candidates

Taller candidate was elected	Shorter candidate was elected
Winner and opponent were of the same height	Comparison data unavailable

Election	Winner in Electoral College	Height		Main opponent(s) during election	Height		Difference	
<u>2020</u>	<u>Joe Biden</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>Donald Trump</u>	6 ft 3 in	191 cm	3½ in	9 cm
<u>2016</u>	<u>Donald Trump</u>	6 ft 3 in	191 cm	<u>Hillary Clinton</u> ^[48]	5 ft 5 in	165 cm	10 in	26 cm
<u>2012</u>	<u>Barack Obama</u>	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	<u>Mitt Romney</u> ^[49]	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	0 in	0 cm
<u>2008</u>	<u>Barack Obama</u>	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	<u>John McCain</u> ^[50]	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	4½ in	12 cm
<u>2004</u>	<u>George W. Bush</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>John Kerry</u> ^[25]	6 ft 4 in	193 cm	4½ in	11 cm
<u>2000</u>	<u>George W. Bush</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>Al Gore</u> ^{[16][51]}	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	1½ in	3 cm
<u>1996</u>	<u>Bill Clinton</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Bob Dole</u> ^[52]	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	½ in	1 cm
<u>1992</u>	<u>Bill Clinton</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>George H.W. Bush</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	0 in	0 cm
<u>1988</u>	<u>George H.W. Bush</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Michael Dukakis</u> ^[53]	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	6 in	15 cm
<u>1984</u>	<u>Ronald Reagan</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	<u>Walter Mondale</u> ^[16]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	2 in	5 cm
<u>1980</u>	<u>Ronald Reagan</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	<u>Jimmy Carter</u>	5 ft 9½ in	177 cm	3½ in	8 cm
<u>1976</u>	<u>Jimmy Carter</u>	5 ft 9½ in	177 cm	<u>Gerald Ford</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	2½ in	6 cm
<u>1972</u>	<u>Richard Nixon</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>George McGovern</u> ^{[25][54]}	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	1½ in	3 cm
<u>1968</u>	<u>Richard Nixon</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>Hubert Humphrey</u> ^[54]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	½ in	2 cm
<u>1964</u>	<u>Lyndon B. Johnson</u>	6 ft 3½ in	192 cm	<u>Barry Goldwater</u> ^[54]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	4½ in	12 cm
<u>1960</u>	<u>John F. Kennedy</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	<u>Richard Nixon</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	1½ in	3 cm
<u>1956</u>	<u>Dwight D. Eisenhower</u>	5 ft 10½ in	179 cm	<u>Adlai Stevenson II</u> ^[54]	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	½ in	1 cm
<u>1952</u>	<u>Dwight D. Eisenhower</u>	5 ft 10½ in	179 cm	<u>Adlai Stevenson II</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	½ in	1 cm
<u>1948</u>	<u>Harry S. Truman</u>	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	<u>Thomas Dewey</u> ^{[53][54]}	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	1 in	2 cm
<u>1944</u>	<u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Thomas Dewey</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	6 in	15 cm
<u>1940</u>	<u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Wendell Willkie</u> ^{[54][55]}	6 ft 2½ in	189 cm	½ in	1 cm
<u>1936</u>	<u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Alfred Landon</u> ^[54]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	3 in	8 cm
<u>1932</u>	<u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u>	6 ft 2 in	188 cm	<u>Herbert Hoover</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	2½ in	6 cm

<u>1928</u>	<u>Herbert Hoover</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>Al Smith</u> ^[54]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	½ in	2 cm
<u>1924</u>	<u>Calvin Coolidge</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	<u>John W. Davis</u> ^[54]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	1 in	2 cm
<u>1920</u>	<u>Warren G. Harding</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	<u>James M. Cox</u> ^[56]	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	6 in	15 cm
<u>1916</u>	<u>Woodrow Wilson</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	<u>Charles Evans Hughes</u> ^[54]	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	1 in	2 cm
<u>1912</u>	<u>Woodrow Wilson</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	<u>William Howard Taft</u> <u>Theodore Roosevelt</u>	5 ft 11 ½ in 5 ft 10 in	182 cm 178 cm	½ in 1 in	2 cm 2 cm
<u>1908</u>	<u>William Howard Taft</u>	5 ft 11½ in	182 cm	<u>William Jennings Bryan</u> ^{[57][58][59][60]}	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	½ in	2 cm
<u>1904</u>	<u>Theodore Roosevelt</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	<u>Alton B. Parker</u> ^[54]	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	1 in	3 cm
<u>1900</u>	<u>William McKinley</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	<u>William Jennings Bryan</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	4 in	10 cm
<u>1896</u>	<u>William McKinley</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	<u>William Jennings Bryan</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	4 in	10 cm
<u>1892</u>	<u>Grover Cleveland</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	<u>Benjamin Harrison</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	5 in	12 cm
<u>1888</u>	<u>Benjamin Harrison</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	<u>Grover Cleveland</u> *	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	5 in	12 cm
<u>1884</u>	<u>Grover Cleveland</u>	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	<u>James G. Blaine</u> ^[61]	5 ft 11 in	180 cm	0 in	0 cm
<u>1880</u>	<u>James A. Garfield</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	<u>Winfield Hancock</u> ^[62]	6 ft 1½ in	187 cm	1½ in	4 cm
<u>1876</u>	<u>Rutherford B. Hayes</u>	5 ft 8½ in	174 cm	<u>Samuel Tilden</u> * ^[63]	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	1½ in	4 cm
<u>1872</u>	<u>Ulysses S. Grant</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	<u>Horace Greeley</u> ^[64]	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	2 in	5 cm
<u>1868</u>	<u>Ulysses S. Grant</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	<u>Horatio Seymour</u>				
<u>1864</u>	<u>Abraham Lincoln</u>	6 ft 4 in	193 cm	<u>George B. McClellan</u> ^[65]	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	8 in	20 cm
<u>1860</u>	<u>Abraham Lincoln</u>	6 ft 4 in	193 cm	<u>Stephen A. Douglas</u> ^[66] <u>John C. Breckinridge</u> ^[67]	5 ft 4 in 6 ft 2 in	163 cm 188 cm	12 in 2 in	30 cm 5 cm
<u>1856</u>	<u>James Buchanan</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	<u>Millard Fillmore</u> <u>John C. Frémont</u> ^[68]	5 ft 9 in 5 ft 9 in	175 cm 175 cm	3 in 3 in	8 cm 8 cm
<u>1852</u>	<u>Franklin Pierce</u>	5 ft 10 in	178 cm	<u>Winfield Scott</u> ^[69]	6 ft 5 in	196 cm	7 in	18 cm
<u>1848</u>	<u>Zachary Taylor</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	<u>Lewis Cass</u> ^[70]	5 ft 8½ in	174 cm	½ in	1 cm
<u>1844</u>	<u>James K. Polk</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	<u>Henry Clay</u> ^[71]	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	5 in	12 cm

<u>1840</u>	<u>William Henry Harrison</u>	5 ft 8 in	173 cm	<u>Martin Van Buren</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	2 in	5 cm
<u>1836</u>	<u>Martin Van Buren</u>	5 ft 6 in	168 cm	<u>Hugh Lawson White</u> ^[72] <u>William Henry Harrison</u>	5 ft 11 in 5 ft 8 in	180 cm 173 cm	5 in 2 in	12 cm 5 cm
<u>1832</u>	<u>Andrew Jackson</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	<u>Henry Clay</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	0 in	0 cm
<u>1828</u>	<u>Andrew Jackson</u>	6 ft 1 in	185 cm	<u>John Quincy Adams</u>	5 ft 7½ in	171 cm	5½ in	14 cm
<u>1824</u>	<u>John Quincy Adams</u>	5 ft 7½ in	171 cm	<u>William H. Crawford</u> ^[73] ^[74] <u>Andrew Jackson</u> ** <u>Henry Clay</u>	6 ft 3 in 6 ft 1 in 6 ft 1 in	191 cm 185 cm 185 cm	7½ in 5½ in 5½ in	20 cm 14 cm 14 cm
<u>1820</u>	<u>James Monroe</u> †	6 ft 0 in	183 cm					
<u>1816</u>	<u>James Monroe</u>	6 ft 0 in	183 cm	<u>Rufus King</u>				
<u>1812</u>	<u>James Madison</u>	5 ft 4 in	163 cm	<u>DeWitt Clinton</u> ^[75]	6 ft 3 in	191 cm	11 in	28 cm
<u>1808</u>	<u>James Madison</u>	5 ft 4 in	163 cm	<u>Charles C. Pinckney</u>	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	5 in	12 cm
<u>1804</u>	<u>Thomas Jefferson</u>	6 ft 2½ in	189 cm	<u>Charles C. Pinckney</u>	5 ft 9 in	175 cm	5½ in	14 cm
<u>1800</u>	<u>Thomas Jefferson</u>	6 ft 2½ in	189 cm	<u>John Adams</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	7½ in	19 cm
<u>1796</u>	<u>John Adams</u>	5 ft 7 in	170 cm	<u>Thomas Jefferson</u>	6 ft 2½ in	189 cm	7½ in	19 cm
<u>1792</u>	<u>George Washington</u> †	6 ft 2 in	188 cm					
<u>1788–89</u>	<u>George Washington</u> †	6 ft 2 in	188 cm					

Notes:

** Lost the House of Representatives vote, but received the most popular votes and a plurality of electoral votes; however, not the majority needed to win.

† Ran unopposed

Extremes

The tallest president elected to office was Abraham Lincoln (6 ft 3¾ in or 192.4 cm). Portrait artist Francis Bicknell Carpenter supplies the information for Lincoln:

Mr. Lincoln's height was six feet three and three-quarter inches "in his stocking-feet." He stood up one day, at the right of my large canvas, while I marked his exact height upon it.^[3]

A disputed theory holds that Lincoln's height is the result of the genetic condition multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2b (MEN2B); see medical and mental health of Abraham Lincoln.^[76]

Only slightly shorter than Lincoln was Lyndon B. Johnson (6 ft 3½ in or 192 cm), the tallest president who originally entered office without being elected directly.

The shortest president elected to office was James Madison (5 ft 4 in or 163 cm); the shortest president to originally enter the office by means other than election is tied between Millard Fillmore and Harry S. Truman (both were 5 ft 9 in or 175 cm).

The tallest unsuccessful presidential candidate (who is also the tallest of all presidential candidates) is Winfield Scott, who stood at 6 ft 5 in (196 cm) and lost the 1852 election to Franklin Pierce, who stood at 5 ft 10 in (178 cm). The second tallest unsuccessful candidate is John Kerry, at 6 ft 4 in (193 cm). The shortest unsuccessful presidential candidate is Stephen A. Douglas, at 5 ft 4 in (163 cm). The next shortest is Hillary Clinton, who lost the 2016 election and is 5 ft 5 in (165 cm).

The largest height difference between two presidential candidates (out of the candidates whose heights are known) was in the 1860 election, when Abraham Lincoln stood 12 inches (30 cm) taller than opponent Stephen A. Douglas. The second-largest difference was in the 1812 election, with DeWitt Clinton standing 11 inches (28 cm) taller than incumbent James Madison. The 2016 election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton has the third largest difference at 10 inches (25 cm).



President Lincoln at Antietam in October 1862 with eventual 1864 opponent Gen. George B. McClellan (second from left)

Notes

1. Some public records, such as Trump's driver's license, give his height as 6 ft 2 in (188 cm).^{[10][11]}

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External links

- Stats: Does the taller man always win? (<http://www.hackwriters.com/tall.htm>)
- The Straight Dope: Does the taller candidate always win the election? (http://www.straightdope.com/classics/a3_308.html)
- Presidential Timber Tends To Be Tall (https://www.forbes.com/2004/05/19/cz_ic_0519beltway.html)

1. As some examples, USA TODAY (https://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/president/2004-06-23-bush-kerry-cover_x.htm) listed height among six criteria for predicting who would win the 2004 election; a Washington Post blog (http://blog.washingtonpost.com/44/2007/10/11/head_and_shoulders_above.html) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20120729110212/http://blog.washingtonpost.com/44/2007/10/11/head_and_shoulders_above.html) July 29, 2012, at the Wayback Machine noted the significance of height in physical appearance and its effect on voters. See the discussion of this phenomenon later in the article for further examples.
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