



FiveThirtyEight



Kaushik Vasudevan



What is FiveThirtyEight?

- “Data Journalism”
- Started off as a political blog in March 2008
- 538: The Number of Electors in the Electoral College
- Licensed Feature of NYT in 2010
- Owned by ESPN since 2014
- Now also covers Sports, Science, Health, Economics

Nate Silver

- Creator of FiveThirtyEight
- First Gained Public Recognition for developing PECOTA in 2002
 - Player Empirical Comparison and Optimization Test Algorithm (MLB)
 - Sabermetric System for Forecasting MLB Player Performance
- Under the pseudonym “Poblano” started 538 as a blog
 - Predicted Obama: 859 Clinton: 829
 - Actual Obama: 847 Clinton: 834

Why FiveThirtyEight

- It was successful!
- Used Statistical Modeling driven by demographic and past voter data
- In 2008:
 - Presidential Election: 49/50 states.
 - Senate Race: 100%
- In 2012:
 - Presidential Election: 51/51 States and DC
 - Senate Races: 31/33

Method

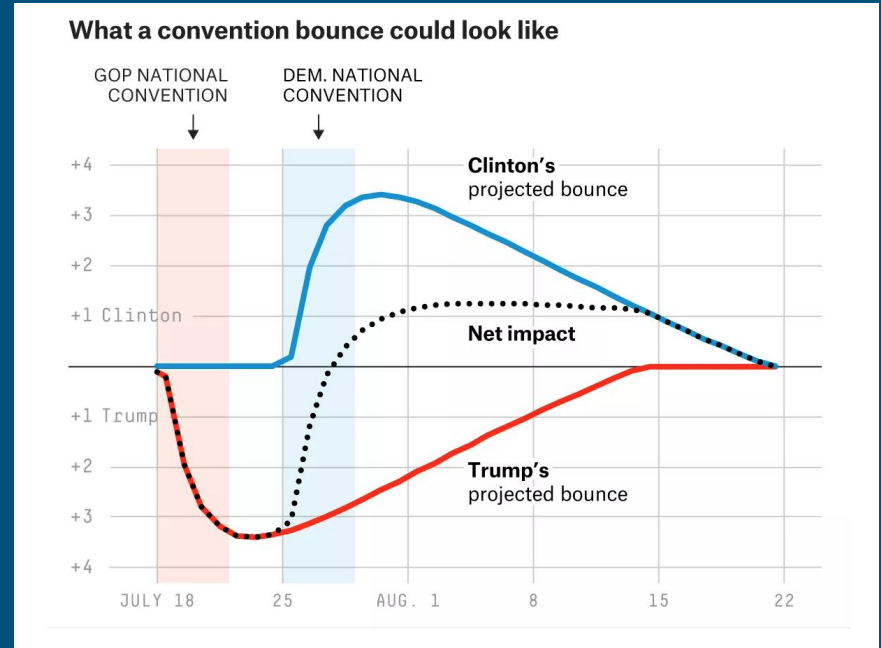
- Step 1: Collect, weight and average polls.
- Step 2: Adjust Polls
- Step 3: Combine polls with demographic and economic data.
- Step 4: Simulate election thousands of times

Step 1: Polls

- <http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/pollster-ratings/>

Step 2: Adjust Polls

- Likely voter
- Convent bounce
- Omitted third-party candidate
- Trend line
- House effects



Step 3: Polls Plus

- Demographic Regressions
- Economic Index
- Blending Polls and Regressions
- Polls Plus → Polls closer to Election Day

Step 4: Simulation

Simulate the Election at least 20,000 of times each day.

Links:

- <http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-election-forecast/>
- <http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/pollster-ratings/>
- <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/a-users-guide-to-fivethirtyeight-2016-general-election-forecast>

Potential Effects of Polling

- Bandwagon Effect
- Underdog Effect
- Strategic Voting

“It’s no longer necessary for a political candidate to guess what an audience thinks. He can [find out] with a nightly tracking poll. So it’s no longer likely that political leaders are going to lead. Instead, they’re going to follow.”

- Douglas Bailey (helped run President Ford’s campaign in 1976)



VOTE!

References

- <http://fivethirtyeight.com/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FiveThirtyEight>