

# Political Advertising

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## Domain and Data

Ads are an inescapable part of our daily lives, so much so that there are constant changes to the way that companies and political groups choose to advertise. Especially with the upcoming election, we begin to see many political ads surface to try to pull voters over to one specific party or candidate. But are these ads even effective? Google tracks political advertising and spending on their various platforms and we would like to create a scrollytelling analysis of political ad spending and reach in the US. Our goal for this would be to display the data relating to political ad spending, where the money is coming from and where it is being spent the most and least, and how effective actually are these ads and what variable would result in them being seen more than others would shed some light on the facts of what seems like an unavoidable aspect of our everyday consumption of information.

From the files provided by Google, we chose two that would best demonstrate different markers to fulfill its purpose as an ad. Both datasets are a table format and also in csv. Link to the data set: <https://adstransparency.google.com/political?region=US&topic=political>. This makes the data easily accessible but also easy to constantly redownload and put back into our project as it is constantly being updated.

The first data set's items are individual political advertisements that were/are on Google. There are many different attributes for this dataset but we will focus on are the region/country the ad is being shown in (limiting to the US), the number of days the ad was shown for, the range of ad impressions, range of money spent on a particular ad (possibly only using one of the bounds for a clearer picture), and maybe the format the ad was (text, video, image) if we decide to explore beyond the money. We would like to show trends of ad creation and spending, showing impressions corresponding to spending on each ad. This would show the most cost-effective outcomes in ads throughout the last couple of years (2018-2024).

The second data set's items are more focused on the individual advertisers that have delivered political ads in the US. Important attributes in this dataset focus on the state the advertising was done in, the amount of money spent on that ad, and the advertiser that paid for

this ad. This data set would allow us to break down the ad spending for states to show a more individual picture of where ads have reached the most impressions and their costs in the state range. We can also choose to show popular advertisers in states and how their impressions vary state by state.

These data sets are very large before being filtered, one having 58 attributes 1.3 M items and the other has 23 attributes and almost 400 items. This is because they are constantly being updated and are pertaining to the entire world. We would only be working with the attributes listed above, leaving us with around 10-12 attributes and much fewer rows as we eliminate any entries that are not in the US or have important fields blank concerning our data's focus.

## Related Work

["Political Advertising in 2016: The Presidential Election as Outlier?" by Erica Franklin Fowler, Travis N. Ridout, and Michael M. Franz](#)

<https://politicaladstracker.com/dashboard/>

<https://www.opensecrets.org/online-ads>

There is certainly already work done in this area for data visualizations even with our google political ads data set. Both Open Secrets and Political Ads Tracker use this google data to make simple data visuals to analyze spending. The visuals on Political Ads Tracker are either tables or stacked bar charts using both Google and Meta political ads data looking mostly at top spenders. Open Secrets is similarly simple, with tables and a simple overall expenditure map of the U.S. The research paper "Political Advertising in 2016: The Presidential Election as Outlier?" looked at the 2016 election and the advertising trends that occurred with frequency of ads, ad spending, and ad content and looked at how much advertising really mattered. There is certainly plenty of other work in this area.