

# POLLS AND PRESS

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# PROBLEM STATEMENT

Explore and quantify the relationship between press coverage and polling performance

# Data

## Candidates

- Donald Trump
- John Kasich
- Ted Cruz
- Marco Rubio
- Ben Carson
- Jeb Bush
- Chris Christie
- Carly Fiorina
- Rick Santorum
- Rand Paul
- Mike Huckabee

## Polls

- Source
  - FiveThirtyEight
- Summary
  - 670 polls between Jan 25, 2015 and May 3, 2016

## Press

- Source
  - Global Data on Events, Language and Tone (GDELT) Global Knowledge Graph V2
- Summary
  - 5.3 Mln articles

# Engineering

Polls

DATE	POLLSTER	SAMPLE	WEIGHT	LEADER	Trump +10										
					TRUMP	KASICH	CRUZ	RUBIO	CARSON	BUSH	CHRISTIE	FLORIDA	SANTORIUM	PAUL	HUCKABEE
OCT. 17-22	Saint Leo University	220 LV	0.00	Trump +1	24%	2%	4%	11%	22%	8%	4%	6%	1%	3%	1%
OCT. 17-21	Ipsos, online	471 LV	0.00	Trump +9	30%	5%	6%	7%	21%	9%	3%	8%	1%	2%	5%
OCT. 16-20	Ipsos, online	484 LV	0.00	Trump +14	34%	4%	7%	7%	20%	8%	3%	7%	1%	2%	4%
OCT. 15-19	Ipsos, online	440 LV	0.00	Trump +16	35%	4%	8%	7%	19%	8%	3%	8%	1%	1%	4%
OCT. 15-19	Morning Consult	770 RV	0.00	Trump +26	40%	2%	5%	5%	14%	6%	4%	3%	1%	2%	3%
OCT. 15-18	Washington Post-ABC News	364 RV	0.00	Trump +10	32%	2%	6%	10%	22%	7%	3%	5%	0%	2%	3%
OCT. 15-18	NBC/Wall Street Journal	400 LV	0.00	Trump +3	25%	3%	9%	13%	22%	8%	1%	7%	0%	2%	3%
OCT. 15-18	Monmouth University	348 RV	0.00	Trump +10	28%	1%	10%	6%	18%	5%	3%	6%	0%	4%	4%
OCT. 14-18	Ipsos, online	438 LV	0.00	Trump +19	38%	3%	8%	6%	19%	7%	3%	7%	0%	2%	4%
OCT. 16-17	Emerson College	403 LV	0.00	Trump +9	32%	3%	6%	14%	23%	8%	2%	6%	0%	0%	4%
OCT. 14-17	Opinion Research Corporation	465 RV	0.00	Trump +5	27%	3%	4%	8%	22%	8%	4%	4%	2%	5%	5%
OCT. 13-17	Ipsos, online	343 LV	0.00	Trump +21	40%	3%	7%	6%	19%	7%	2%	7%	1%	2%	4%
OCT. 12-16	Ipsos, online	334 LV	0.00	Trump +21	39%	2%	7%	8%	18%	9%	2%	7%	0%	3%	3%
OCT. 13-15	SurveyMonkey	1,881 RV	0.00	Trump +5	28%	3%	6%	9%	23%	5%	2%	6%	0%	2%	3%

Press



Global Knowledge Graph  
(public)

- 935.3 Mln rows
- 9.85 TB

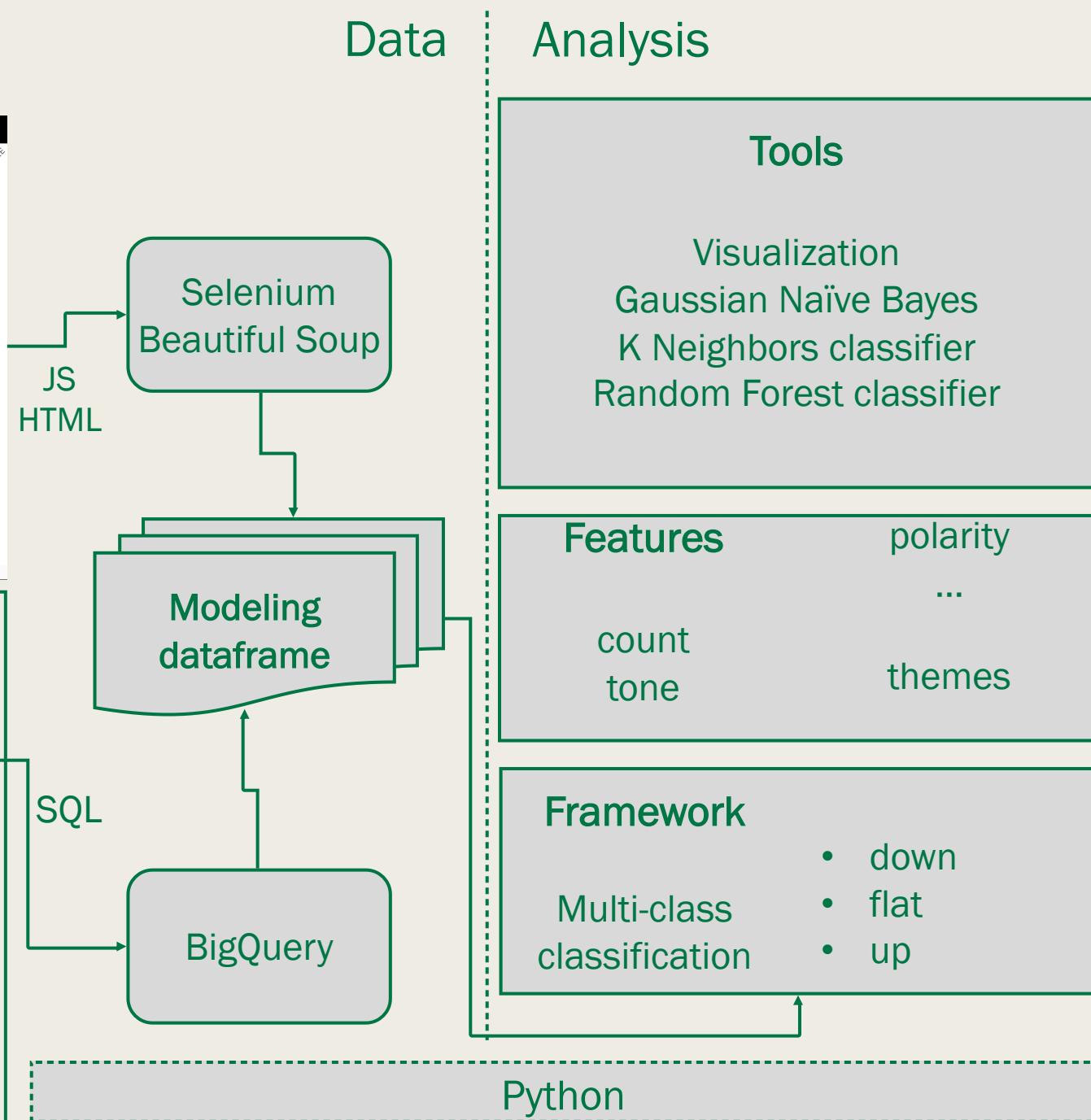
Google BigQuery

SQL



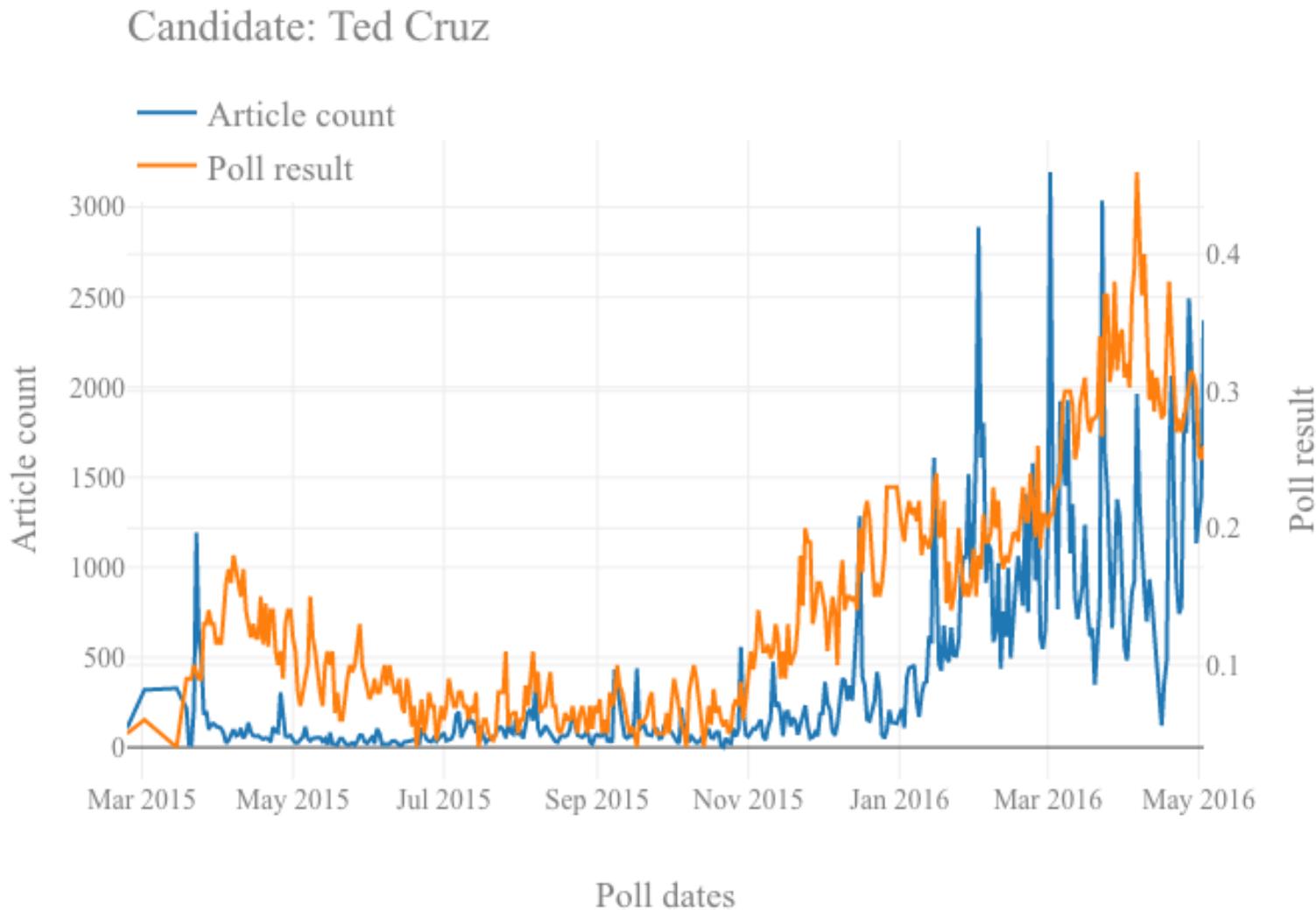
Staging table  
(private)

- 5.4 Mln rows
- 0.02 TB



Analysis

# Longitudinal view

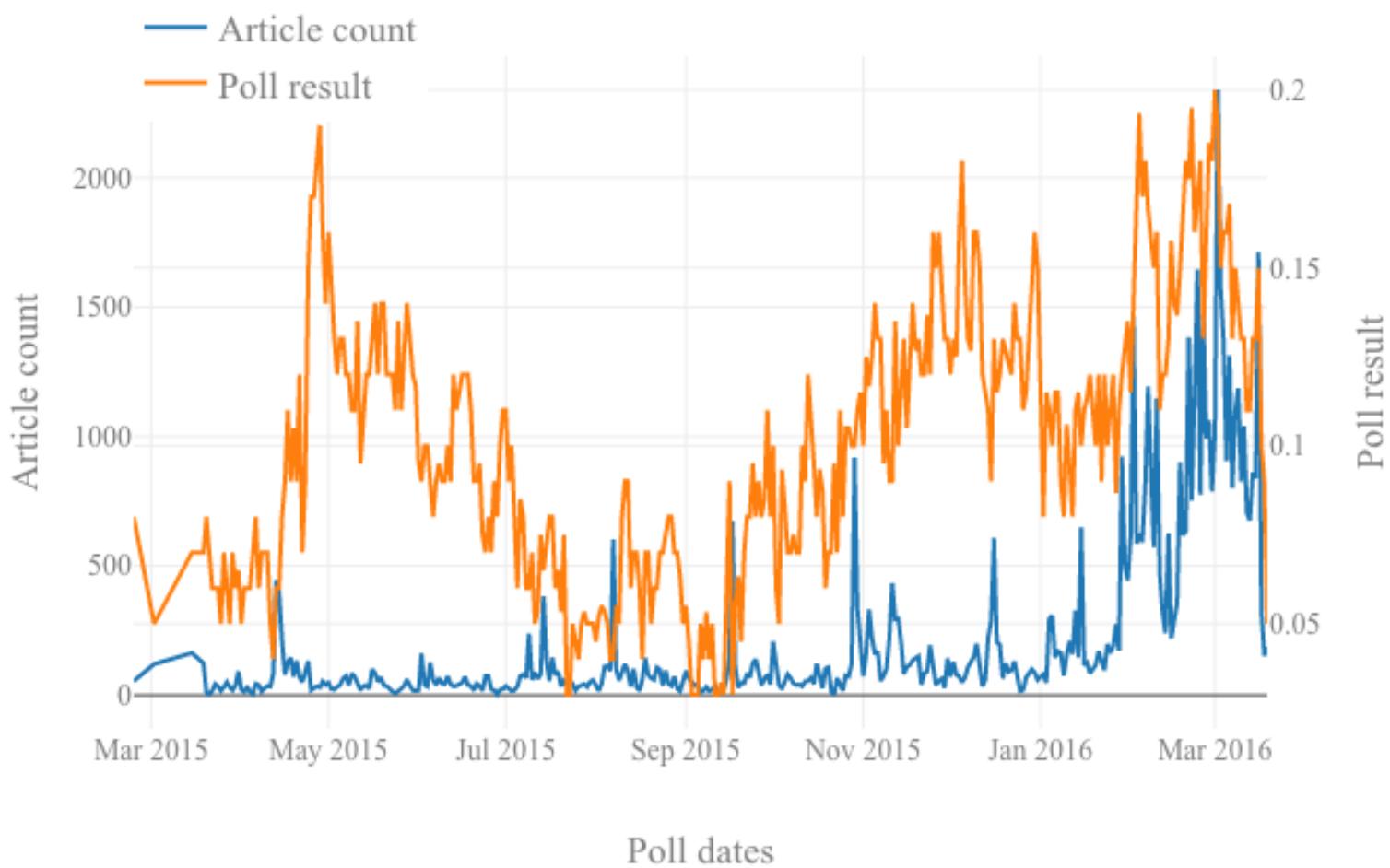


## Observations

- *Apparent positive relationship*
- *Coverage increases in the later stages of the race*
- *Some variation in poll-to-poll results exist but a trend factor also seems present*

# Longitudinal view

Candidate: Marco Rubio

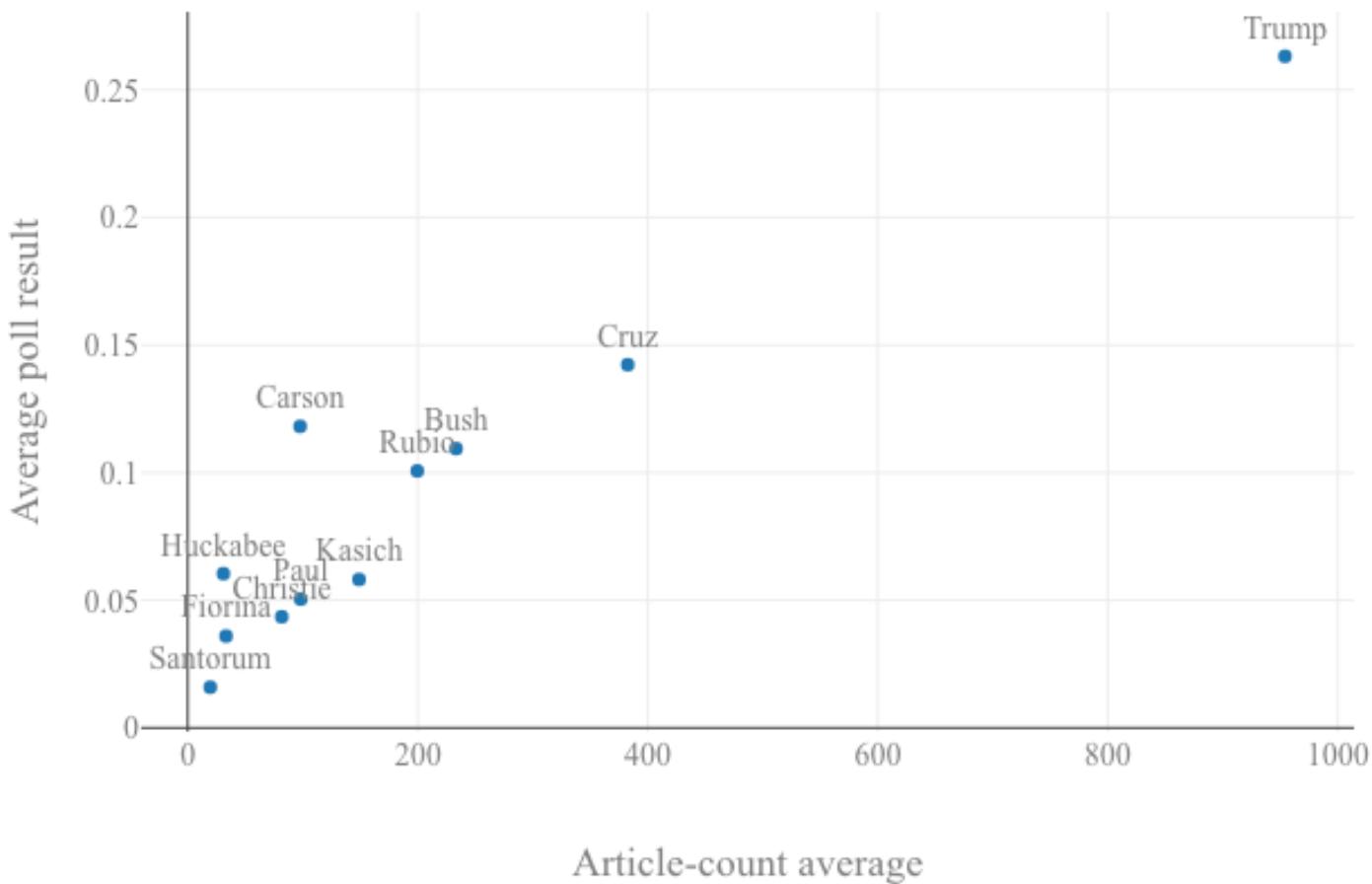


## ■ Observations

- Press coverage increased as the race progresses even for a range-bound candidate

# Horizontal view - count

Average poll results versus article-count average

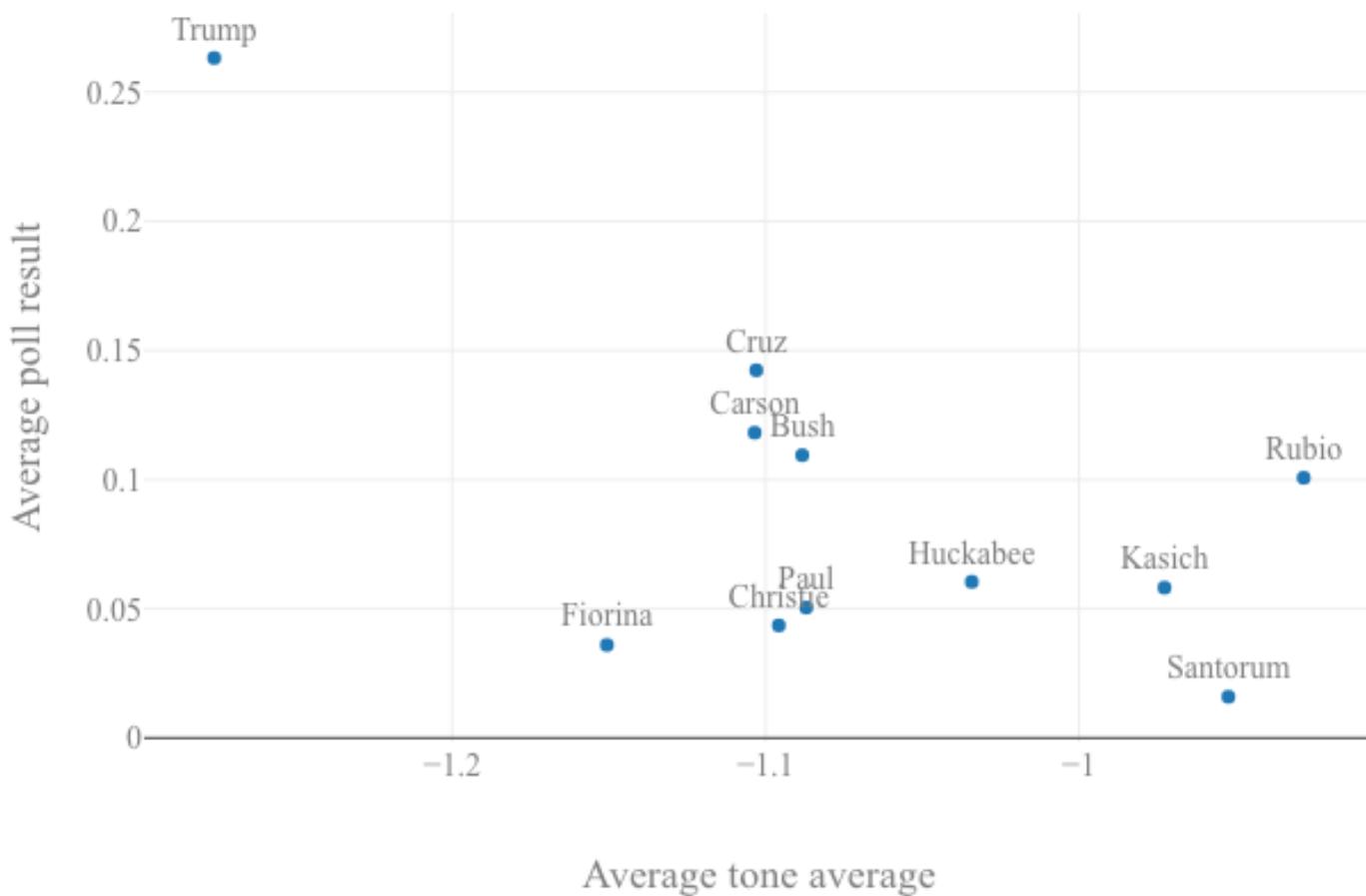


## Observations

- Across all candidates, an intuitive positive relationship between poll performance and press coverage seems present
- Still, Trump is a noticeable outlier with substantial press coverage and the highest poll average

# Horizontal view - tone

Average poll results versus average tone average

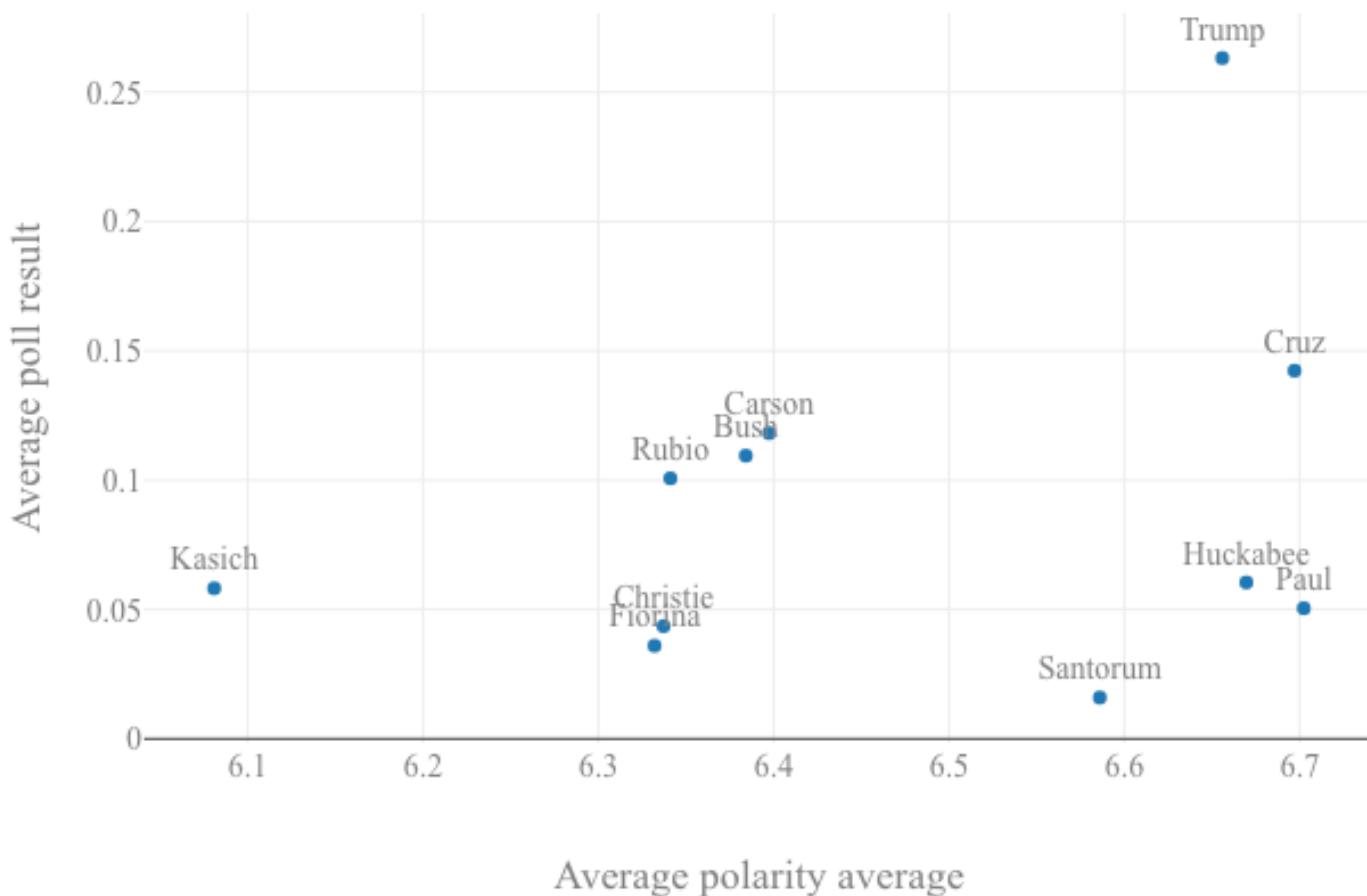


## Observations

- Less of pattern is present when poll performance is plotted versus average of the tone average
- Still, Trump is a noticeable outlier with negative average coverage yet the highest poll average

# Horizontal view - polarity

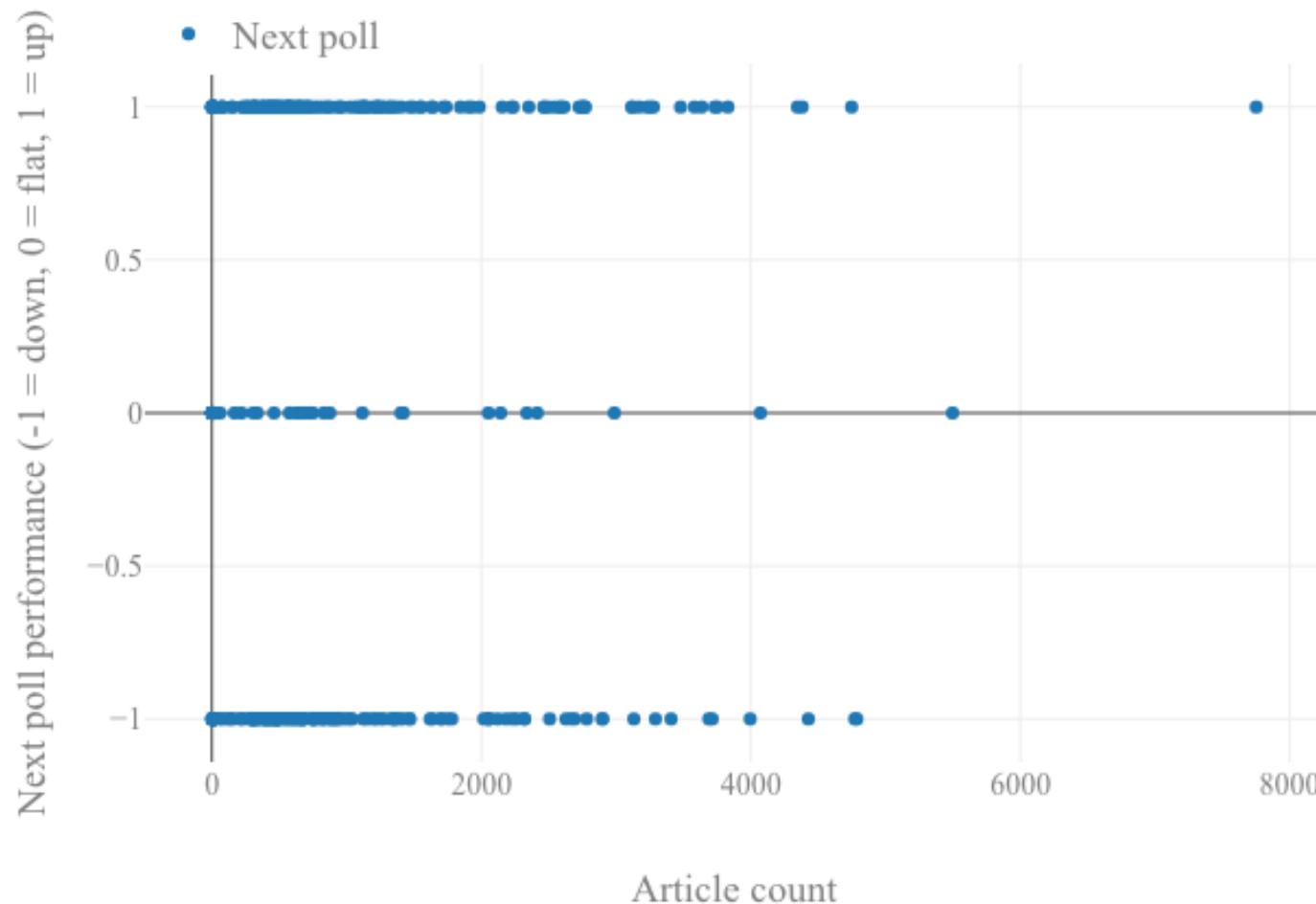
Average poll results versus average polarity average



- Observations
  - *Three distinct groupings along the polarity dimension are evident with Cruz, Paul, Huckabee and Trump all having high-polarity coverage*

# The target variable

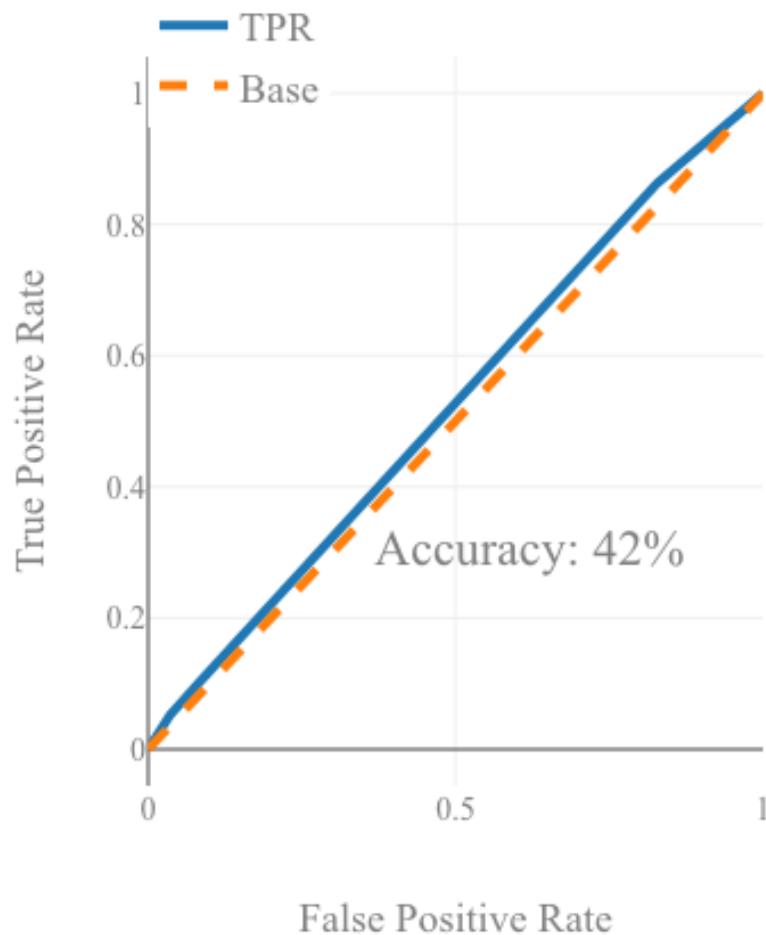
Candidate: Donald Trump



- Observations
  - Comparing the target variable - down, up or flat – to article count shows few distinguishable patterns and highlights modeling challenges

# Model evaluation

ROC curve & confusion matrix: Random Forest without vectorization



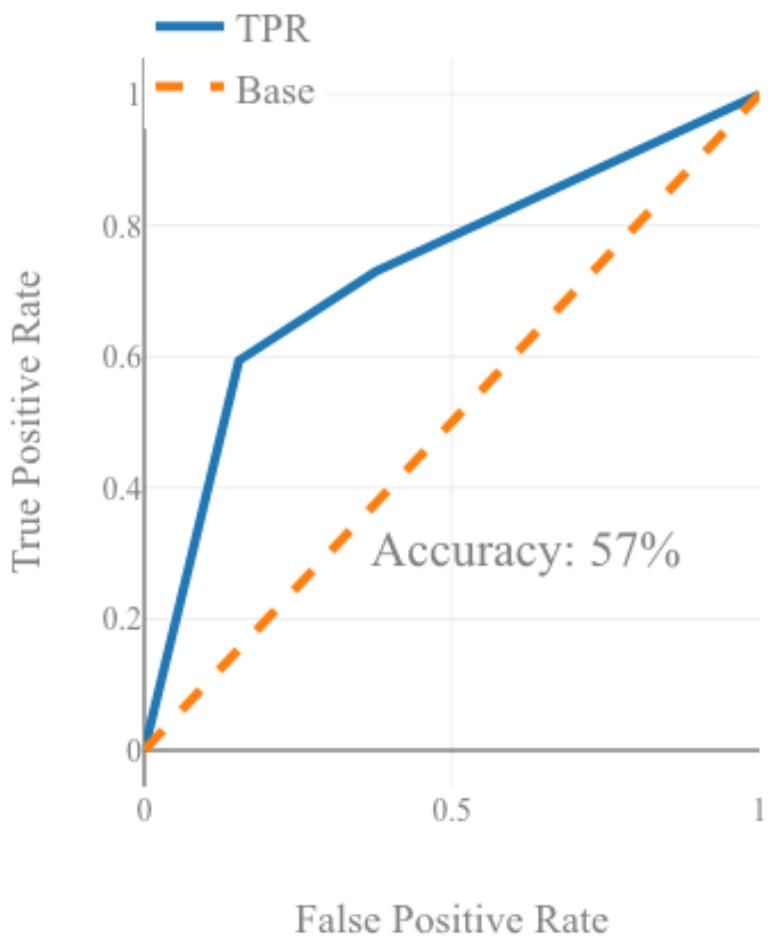
Matr:

Result	Down	Flat	Up
Down	14	12	8
Flat	7	6	4
Up	131	57	144

- Observations
  - *Most classification models show little predictive power*
- Model parameters
  - *Data - All candidates*
  - *Target - Next poll*
  - *Features - Article count*
  - *Model - Random Forest*

# Model evaluation

ROC curve & confusion matrix: Random Forest without vectorization



Matr:

Result	Down	Flat	Up
Down	3	0	3
Flat	2	1	0
Up	1	0	4

- Observations
  - Some evidence that predictive power improves when the model is focused on specific candidates and looks to future polls (small test sample)
- Model parameters
  - Data - Donald Trump
  - Target - Third poll
  - Features - Article count, Tone avg, Polarity avg
  - Model - Random Forest

# CONCLUSION

1. Building the dataset was a challenge, but it produces some interesting longitudinal and horizontal visualizations
2. Broad press metrics averaged across a wide candidate field provide little power in predicting performance in upcoming polls
3. More selectively modeling including focusing on specific candidates or selected publications may be more fruitful