



## Past July 4 polls promising for Obama

By: [David Paul Kuhn](#)  
July 4, 2008 05:20 AM EST

It's an axiom in presidential politics to ignore the early polls. Perhaps that's one piece of conventional wisdom that's better ignored.

In the post-war era, the Gallup polls taken closest to the Independence Day holiday have been correct in picking the popular vote winner two-thirds of the time, in 10 of 15 presidential contests, a Politico analysis found.

With the latest Gallup tracking poll (concluded July 2) showing Barack Obama ahead of John McCain 47 percent to 43 percent, count it as one more historical obstacle McCain need overcome.

Yet the GOP nominee can take solace from one fact: The eventual winner of the popular vote has trailed in the Gallup poll at this point in four of the past five presidential elections. The Gallup poll failed to prove prescient in 1968, 1988, 1992, 2000 and 2004.

In honor of the July 4 holiday, Politico offers this look back in time at the midsummer Gallup presidential polls.

### **2004: Kerry 46 percent - Bush 44 percent (Dates 6/21-6/23)**

#### **See also**

- [Campaign trail a gray area for Obama](#)
- [Obama to 'refine' Iraq plan](#)
- [Right to Life convention attacks Obama](#)

John Kerry looked solid at this point, holding a slim edge despite his fateful March comment that he "actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it." But the Swift Boat offensive was yet to come.

### **2000: Bush 45 percent - Gore 36 percent (Dates 6/23-6/25)**

The CNN/Gallup weighting of likely voters had George W. Bush ahead by even more: 52 percent to 39 percent. But that lead would evaporate over time as Al Gore climbed back and ended up winning the popular vote by a half-million votes, only to lose the electoral vote.

### **1996: Clinton 51 percent - Dole 35 percent (Dates 6/27-6/30)**

Though at 51 percent in the Gallup poll, President Bill Clinton ultimately fell short of the 50 percent mark he so dearly desired, leaving Jimmy Carter as the last Democrat to win a majority. Sen. Bob Dole's decision in May to resign from the Senate and seek the presidency the "hard way" provided him with only a fleeting uptick in the polls. Clinton won by 8 percentage points.

### **1992: Bush 32 percent - Clinton 31 percent - Perot 28 percent (Dates 7/9-7/10)**

Though this poll suggested something close to a dead heat, a large sample size mid-June poll actually showed Ross Perot ahead of the pack and Clinton in a distant third.

**1988: Dukakis 47 percent - Bush 41 percent (Dates 7/8-7/10)**

By late July, following the Democratic National Convention, Michael Dukakis had expanded his lead to almost 17 percentage points. Then it all fell apart for the Democratic nominee. By Election Day, Dukakis had been framed effectively as a “card carrying liberal,” an effete Boston elitist who opposed the Pledge of Allegiance and supported furloughs for murderers. George H. W. Bush won comfortably, by 7 percentage points.

**1984: Reagan 50 percent - Mondale 40 percent (Dates 6/29-7/02)**

Even at this early point, Walter Mondale could see he was going to lose. Another Gallup poll the week earlier showed President Ronald Reagan up by 16 points — the exact margin of Reagan’s victory. Reagan would go on to carry 49 states, repeating a feat accomplished by Richard Nixon in 1972.

**1980: Reagan 40 percent - Carter 38 percent (Date 6/24)**

Ronald Reagan ultimately won by a much larger margin, close to 10 percentage points, with John Anderson finishing in third place with 6 percent.

**1976: Carter 49 percent - Ford 28 percent (Date 6/22)**

Despite the yawning gap, Gerald Ford almost pulled off the come-from-behind win. Gallup called it “the greatest comeback in the history of public-opinion polling.” But Ford never escaped his pardon of Nixon, while Jimmy Carter repeatedly pledged, “I’ll never lie,” enough to give him the 2 percentage point win.

**1972: Nixon 42 percent - McGovern 31 percent - Wallace 19 percent (Date 6/13)**

Richard Nixon ultimately won by twice the June poll’s margin — 23 percentage points — providing him with a landslide win in the company of the 1964 and 1936 elections.

**1968: Humphrey 34 percent - Nixon 32 percent - Wallace 17 percent (Dates 6/26-7/01)**

The “new Nixon” came back in 1968 and resurrected his political career in an election year marked by civil unrest and political upheaval. The race remained tight until the end, when Nixon won by less than a percentage point over Hubert Humphrey. George Wallace finished third with 14 percent.

**1964: Johnson 74 percent - Goldwater 19 percent (Dates 6/25 - 6/30)**

Barry Goldwater finished with twice that amount, but his rise in the polls was a small consolation to conservatives in what was eventually a 61 percent to 38 percent landslide loss to Lyndon Johnson.

**1960: Kennedy 46 percent - Nixon 41 percent (Date 6/28)**

Another Gallup poll, in mid-July, had John F. Kennedy looking even stronger, ahead by some 18 points. But Richard Nixon roared back and by mid-October, George Gallup refused to predict a winner: It was that close. Kennedy did indeed win, but by a mere .2 percent.

**1956: Eisenhower 58 percent - Stevenson 36 percent (Date 7/10)**

Dwight Eisenhower eventually won but by half that margin, some 15 percentage points over Adlai Stevenson in a rematch of their 1952 contest.

**1952: Eisenhower 56 percent - Stevenson 34 percent (Date 7/10)**

Ike would hold his lead, though the final score shrank to 11 percentage points. Eisenhower ran as the war hero who would “go to Korea” whereas Stevenson never seemed able to lose the “egghead” image, in what would prove to be the beginning of the effete liberal caricature.

**1948: Truman 40 percent - Dewey 39 percent (Date 7/14)**

Another Gallup poll around the same time had Harry Truman up by three points. In an election year noted for its polling mistakes, Gallup later had Thomas Dewey at 49.5 percent the day before the election. But against all odds, Truman won by nearly five percentage points, 49.6 percent to Dewey’s 45.1 percent.