

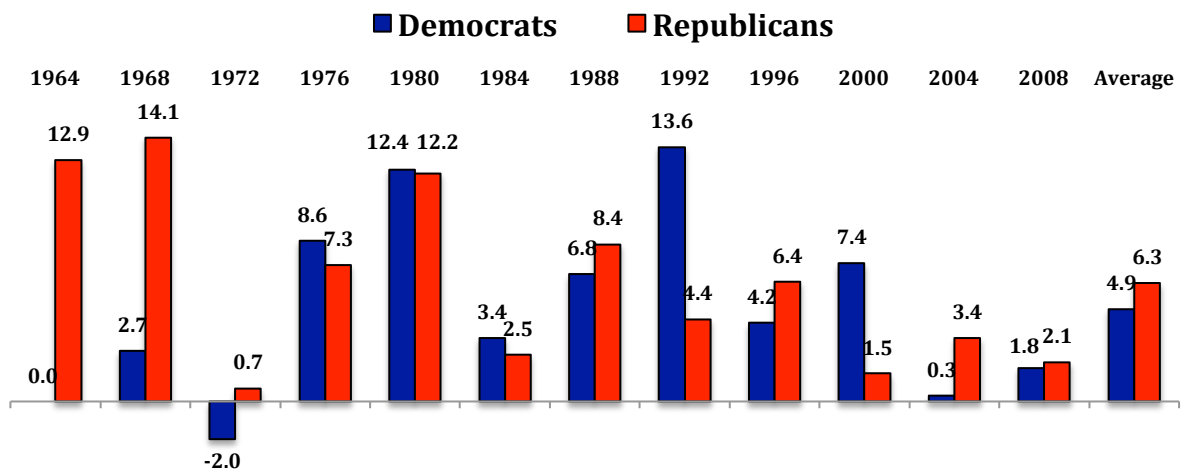
Likelihood of a Bounce: As both Republicans and Democrats prepare for their conventions, what kind of poll “bounces” can their candidates anticipate? Polling News and Notes highlighted a [study](#) in 2008 by the University of Wisconsin’s Professor Tom Holbrook that found bounces have widely varied each election from 1964 to 2008. Some candidates (Johnson in 1964, McGovern in 1972, and Kerry in 2004) saw minimal if any poll movement, while the bumps of other candidates (Goldwater in 1964, Nixon in 1968, Reagan and Carter in 1980, and Clinton in 1992) were at least six times as large.

On average, Democrats saw a 4.9% swing and Republicans had a 6.3% increase. Both 2008 candidates saw better polls in the days immediately following their conventions, but a comprehensive [survey](#) of before and after polls found that Barack Obama’s bounce was only 1.8%, while John McCain’s standing improved by 2.1%.

Mr. Holbrook reasoned differences in post-convention polls could be attributed to the timing of the convention (the candidate whose convention was first typically received a larger bounce), and/or the candidates’ position going into the conventions (the candidate lagging behind where he “should” have been in the polls usually received a higher bounce). However, these bounces do not always predict November’s outcome. In half the elections studied, the candidate with the larger convention bounce won election (1968, 1972, 1976, 1988, 1992, and 2004) and in the other half of they elections, they lost.

With President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney in a dead head, it is hard to say who is likely to have the bigger bounce; however, Mr. Romney has the most to gain, as has the first chance to use the convention’s large stage to dispel the Obama campaign’s attacks and provide voters a sense of who he is and what he will do in office.

Convention Bounces: 1964 to 2008



Method: Professor Tom Holbrook used Campbell, Cherry, and Wink’s (1992) measure of convention bounces, which is the average share of the two-party vote in polls six to two weeks prior to the convention with those seven days following the conventions.