

Project Summary

Use Google Trends to gather data on where in the country people are Googling the terms "Obama" and "Romney".

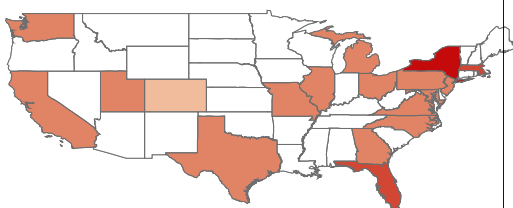
Repeat this search twice a week from the start of the project to the end to make the data more reliable.

Display the data visually

Analyze, and show conclusions

Comparing Hits

Rather than areas of specifically democrat or republican political action, these two maps seem to imply that certain areas of the country are simply more politically active on both sides of the spectrum. This means that states such as New York, Texas, and Florida have the more Google hits for both "Obama" and "Romney" than most of the country. Thus, rather than an indication of voting trends, high amounts of Google hits for politicians in a certain area show high political involvement in that area.

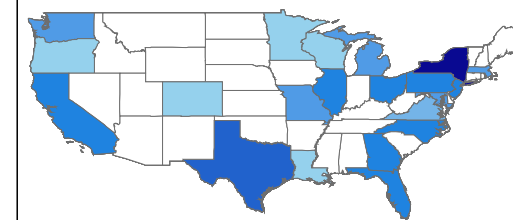


Legend:

More Romney Hits →



More Obama Hits →

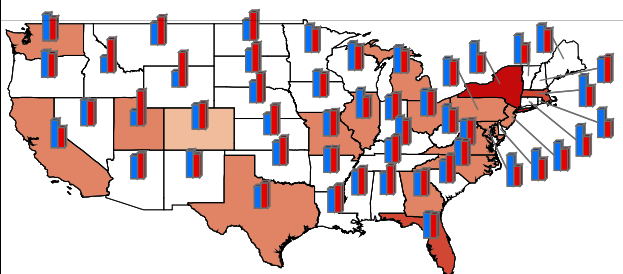
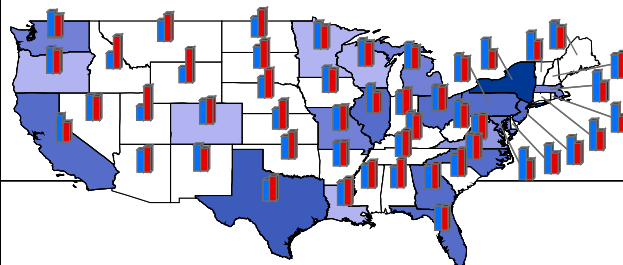


Data was taken from Google trends twice a week from 4/10/12 to 5/7/12 on Mondays and Thursdays. According to Google, the data is pre-normalized for population, day of the week, and other non-time, non-geographic influences.

Each white to colored block represents the same amount of normalized Google hits, thus the reason the blue scale is larger is because the maximum number of "Obama" hits is almost twice that of the maximum number of "Romney" hits.

Google Trends and Politics

By Michael Patashnik and Mark Wiggans



More Romney Hits →



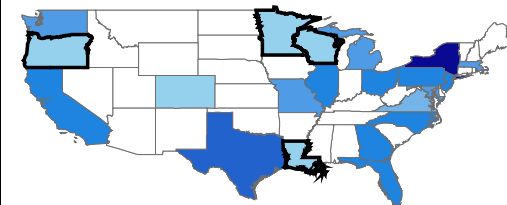
More Obama Hits →

Bar Graphs: Republican % Democrat %

These two maps show the overlay of democrat and republican self-identification percentages over the previous two maps. As expected from the previous slide, there is little correlation between Google hits for one of the two candidates and self-identification with that candidate's party. For example, states that identify as republican states such as Texas, Florida, and North Carolina, have more Google hits for Obama than Romney, while no states that identify as democrat have more Google hits for Romney than Obama. However, this trend is not really reliable either, as an equal number of red states have more hits for Romney, and a number of blue states have more hits for Obama. Additionally, many states have almost no hits for either candidate, implying that either those regions are not relatively politically active, or that they do not rely heavily on the internet. Thus, the only logical conclusion is that there is no connection between the candidate with more Google hits and the political self identification in any given state.

States that Defy this Trend

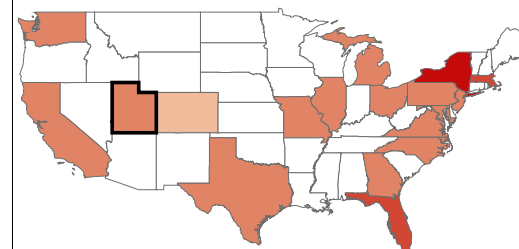
While most states had either a large number of Google hits for both candidates or very few hits for either, four specific states defied this trend. These states are, on the Romney side, Utah, and on the Obama side, Oregon, Louisiana, Wisconsin and Minnesota. While the true causes of these outliers can't entirely be confirmed, some guesses are that large amounts of citizens in these states share some quality with the candidate in question. Some examples could include race, religion, position on gay marriage, and economic principles.



More Romney Hits →

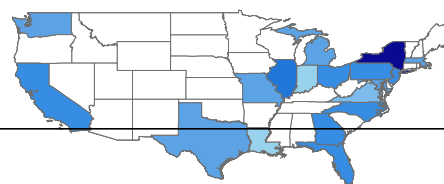


More Obama Hits →

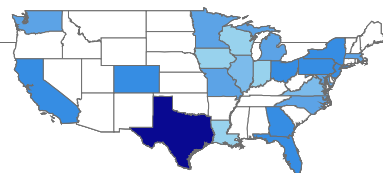


Analysis of the Effect of Campaigning on Google Hits

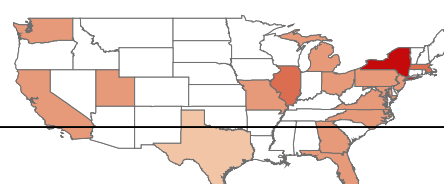
Obama 4/10



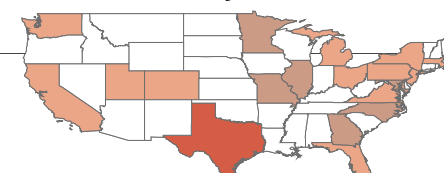
Obama 5/7



Romney 4/10



Romney 5/7



Overall, as can be seen in the maps, while there were some to both the Obama and Romney trends, the overall aspect of the maps remained constant. Both Obama and Romney have been very active in their campaigning, a few specific states. With relation to Google hits (a relative measure of political interest, though not voting trends), there is little correlation between campaigning and lasting political interest. The majority of states that both Obama and Romney campaigned in saw no change in the number of Google hits. Some others saw a slight increase, which faded back to the state's average after another week, while a few actually lost Google hits after Obama or Romney came and left town. (North Carolina from 4/23 to 4/26 is an example of this, as Obama came on 4/24). This suggests that, if Google hits are trusted to be a display of political interest, campaigning does create some political drive, but it is very short lived. In turn, this implies that the most effective campaigning is that which takes place under two weeks before the election, when the speeches given are still in the voter's minds. This doesn't draw any trends to actual voting patterns, however.