

## Google: What people search for most on presidential hopefuls

October 1 2015, by David Bauder

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In this Sept. 22, 2015 file photo, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks during a community forum on healthcare in Des Moines, Iowa. Potential voters who take their curiosity about presidential candidates to Google are interested in Hillary Clinton's age, Jeb Bush's height, Chris Christie's weight, Donald Trump's net worth, Carly Fiorina's marital status and Bobby Jindal's birthplace. Those were among the top questions that the Internet search engine was asked about each candidate over the past couple of months. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall, File)

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Those were among the top questions that the Internet search engine was asked about each candidate over the past couple of months. The data, which is being released by Google this year for the first time during a [presidential campaign](#), gives insight into what voters are thinking about that is different from what traditional pollsters provide.

The first lesson may be not to forget the basics: shortly after Google first released questions posed about each candidate, Republican Marco Rubio's campaign released a video in which he answered some of them.

Google gets some three billion search requests each day and is beginning to see the value of compiling that information. For instance, conventional pollsters badly missed the breadth of David Cameron and his Conservative Party's victory in the British elections this spring. Google didn't necessarily predict it either, but picked up an intriguing increase in the amount of questions people were asking about the Conservatives in the days before voting, said Simon Rogers, data editor for Google's News Lab.

Height is clearly a preoccupation of Google searchers. Besides Bush, that was the top question about Christie, John Kasich, George Pataki and Rand Paul. Age is also a popular query. Two of the top four questions about New Jersey's Christie concerned how much he weighed and how much weight he had lost.

Before he shot up in the polls late in the summer, voters simply wanted to know: "Who is Ben Carson?"



In this Sept. 30, 2015 file photo, Republican presidential candidate former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush speaks during a campaign stop in Bedford, N.H. Potential voters who take their curiosity about presidential candidates to Google are interested in Hillary Clinton's age, Jeb Bush's height, Chris Christie's weight, Donald Trump's net worth, Carly Fiorina's marital status and Bobby Jindal's birthplace. Those were among the top questions that the Internet search engine was asked about each candidate over the past couple of months. (AP Photo/Jim Cole, File)

After questions about her age and height, searchers asked about Clinton: "What did Hillary do wrong?" Other questions concerned whether she was still running or if she was in trouble. Some specific questions were asked frequently, such as why Fiorina was fired as Hewlett Packard's chief executive, Mike Huckabee's views on the Iran deal and Rubio's position on gay marriage.

Google does not publicly release specific numbers on the searches conducted on each candidate.

While not scientific, the Google search information gives an interesting snapshot, said Lee Miringoff, director of Marist College's Institute for Public Opinion.

"If you're a candidate, you ignore information like this at your own peril," he said.

As the campaign moves along, the types of queries from voters are likely to become much more specific, Rogers said. The data should remind journalists that voters know far less about people running for president than they do, he said. Privately, in front of a computer screen, they might ask questions that they would not necessarily bring up publicly.



In this Sept. 25, 2015 file photo, Republican presidential candidate, businessman

Donald Trump, holds up his bible who was giving to him by his mother as he speaks during the Values Voter Summit in Washington. Potential voters who take their curiosity about presidential candidates to Google are interested in Hillary Clinton's age, Jeb Bush's height, Chris Christie's weight, Donald Trump's net worth, Carly Fiorina's marital status and Bobby Jindal's birthplace. Those were among the top questions that the Internet search engine was asked about each candidate over the past couple of months. ( AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File)

There's plenty of potential for the information Google is collecting. "This is new and we're only starting to scratch the surface of it," he said.

In his video, Rubio sensed an opportunity as he read from a smartphone and answered [questions](#) posed in Google searches about his age, nationality and whether he was a twin. "No, I'm not," he said, laughing.

Then he saw an opportunity. The last question he posed: "How can I work on Marco Rubio's campaign?"

"Well, you can go to our website, that's the easiest way to plug into our campaign," he said. "I hope you'll join us."

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