

The Fix

Donald Trump campaign email: 'We're winning!' (He is not winning.)

By **Philip Bump** September 12

The Donald Trump campaign sent out an email on Monday morning with the deeply ambitious subject line, "We're winning!" It included the following arguments to bolster that claim.

Let's walk through these.

Leading Crooked Hillary nationally by two percentage points.

That's from the recent CNN-ORC poll, which indeed showed Trump leading Hillary Clinton by two points. In a four-way contest (in a head-to-head poll, he leads by one) and among likely voters (among registered voters, Clinton leads by two).

In other polls this month that include all four major candidates (adding in Libertarian Gary Johnson and Jill Stein of the Green Party), Trump trails by two, three, two, two, four, three and five points. In one, he is tied.

In other words, Trump is leading Clinton nationally in one of nine polls conducted. Overall, Clinton has a 2.2-point advantage over Trump in four-way polling and a three-point advantage in one-on-one match-ups. Meaning that he is not leading her nationally.

Trouncing Crooked Hillary among independent voters, by a stunning 20-point margin.

That's from the same poll. Trump does often lead among independents in recent polls collected by Huffington Post Pollster, but by narrower margins. He leads by 12 points in Fox News's poll from late August, for example.

Winning in the crucial states of Iowa, New Hampshire and Ohio.

So, like, what does "winning" even mean, man?

Are there polls showing Trump winning in Iowa and Ohio? Yes. Quinnipiac University had Trump up by one point in Ohio; a Florida Atlantic University poll that Trump loves to cite had him up two in that state. There was a poll in July that had Trump leading in New Hampshire, but that was before the conventions even started.

Overall, it's safe to say that Trump and Clinton are tied in Florida and that Clinton leads in Ohio and New Hampshire. Most Ohio polls show a Clinton lead or a tie, and RealClearPolitics gives her a 2.5-point lead at the moment. In Florida, Trump has a tiny lead of 0.1 points. In New Hampshire, Clinton's still up by five in the average, though it has fallen recently.

Trump may have won some polls, but he's not winning those states.

Surging in the swing state of Virginia, closing a double digit gap to within the margin of error in just two short weeks.

This is true, though that "margin of error" thing deserves some caveats. Here's a graph I made last week of polling in the state.

The lead has indeed dropped significantly — but in the polling average, Clinton's still up by 6.3 points.

If the margin of error in a poll is 3.5 points and Clinton leads by 6.3, that means that the average is technically "within the margin of error" — Clinton's numbers could be 3.5 points lower and Trump's 3.5 points higher. But there's a reason we don't usually report poll results that way: It's just as likely that Clinton's poll numbers are 3.5 points higher and Trump's 3.5 points lower, meaning that Clinton's up by 13.3 points. If a race is close and within the margin of error, that caveat is important. If you could stretch the margin of error to get two circles of results to overlap if you squint, that becomes a bit more rhetorical than accurate.

In a dead heat in the traditionally Democratic-voting states of Maine, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Speaking of rhetorical-vs.-accurate, a "dead heat" as used here means polling average margins for Clinton of 8.5, 7.3 and 5.3. So in Trump campaign parlance, "winning" means "losing narrowly." "Within the margin of error" means "losing." And "dead heat" means "losing badly but by less than 10 points." (Why Wisconsin isn't "within the margin of error" above isn't clear.)

More trusted by voters on the most important issues of the day, including the economy and terrorism.

This again depends on which polls you cherry-pick. In the new Post-ABC poll, for example, Clinton leads on the economy and on terrorism. Even Fox News had Clinton leading on terrorism and the two tied on the economy.

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That CNN-ORC poll seems to be the cherry the Trump campaign is picking; in that, he's up 15 on economy and six on terrorism.

Considered more honest and trustworthy than Crooked Hillary by a HUGE margin.

In that same CNN-ORC poll — again, the one poll that showed Trump winning — Trump is seen as more honest by a 15-point margin. (Another 15 percent say that neither Trump or Clinton is trustworthy.) In the new Post-ABC poll, Clinton is seen as more honest by five points (with 10 percent saying neither is). Even in our May poll, which showed Trump leading Clinton, she was seen as more trustworthy by a small margin.

This isn't rocket science. In his email to supporters, Trump is putting the best possible face on his improving position in the polls. He has picked them a delicious cherry from the CNN-ORC tree, and it is sweet and juicy.

But is he winning? No. No, he's not.

Philip Bump writes about politics for The Fix. He is based in New York City. [Follow @pbump](#)

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