Shortly after winning the 2016 election to become the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump claimed to have won in a landslide over Hillary Clinton.

While there is no official definition of a "landslide election," political experts agree that an Electoral College landslide occurs when a candidate wins at least 375 out of 538 electoral votes (70%).

This visualization examines the aforementioned criteria for an Electoral College landslide in relation to recent first-term elections, including Trump's 2016 election. Slides 2-7 provide interactive synopses of the selected elections. These slides are arranged in order of the most electoral votes won to the fewest. Slides 2 and 3 serve as benchmarks of Electoral College landslides. Slide 8 is a summary of this study. Slide 9 cites the sources used in this visualization. Use the navigation bar at the top to view the slides.

John J. Pitney, an author and professor of American Politics at Claremont McKenna College, has ranked all 58 US presidential elections based on the winning candidate's percentage of Electoral College votes. These rankings will also be noted in this visualization.

How accurate is Trump's statement?
Ronald Reagan 1980: 489 Electoral Votes

In the 1980 election, Ronald Reagan defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter in electoral voting, 489-49 (90.89%), becoming the first victorious presidential candidate to win in a landslide manner since Richard Nixon's 1972 victory (96.65%). According to Pilney, Reagan's 1980 victory ranks 9th overall.

Click on a state to highlight it. Control+click to highlight multiple states. Click again on the state to de-select it. Select a region to compare results.

1980 Electoral Vote

1980 Popular Vote %
Bill Clinton 1992: 370 Electoral Votes

Bill Clinton defeated incumbent George H.W. Bush, 370-168 (68.77%) in electoral voting. According to Pitney, Clinton's victory ranks 30th out of 58 US presidential elections.

1992 Electoral Vote

Select a Region: All

1992 Popular Vote %

Select a Region: All
Barack Obama 2008: 365 Electoral Votes


Click on a state to highlight it. Control+click to highlight multiple states. Click again on the state to de-select it. Select a region to compare results.
Donald Trump 2016: 304 Electoral Votes

Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton 304-227 (56.88%) in electoral voting. According to Pitney, Trump's victory ranks 46th out of 58 US presidential elections.

Click on a state to highlight it. Control+click to highlight multiple states. Click again on the state to de-select it. Select a region to compare results.

Select a Region:
All

2016 Electoral Vote

Select a Region:
All

2016 Popular Vote %

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Value

0 20 40 60 80
Examining the 2016 Election: Was Trump's Victory a Landslide?

George W. Bush 2000: 271 Electoral Votes

George W. Bush defeated Vice President Al Gore, 271-266 (50.37%) in electoral voting. According to Pitney, Bush's victory ranks 56th out of 58 US presidential elections.
To achieve an Electoral College landslide, the victorious candidate must win at least 375 out of 538 electoral votes, or 70% of the share. Based on the evidence from official election results shown below, Donald Trump’s 2016 victory does not meet that criteria.
Sources


