



CALIFORNIA VOTER AND PARTY PROFILES

August 2005

➤ **California is becoming less of a party state as the share of major party voters declines.**

The Democratic Party currently has an advantage of 1.4 million voters over the Republican Party (7.1 million to 5.7 million) or 9 percentage points (43% to 34%), according to the Secretary of State. A decade ago, Democrats outnumbered Republicans by 1.6 million voters (6.9 million to 5.3 million) or 12 percentage points (49% to 37%). The largest change in the electorate since 1994 is the addition of 1.4 million “decline to state” or independent voters (1.5 million to 2.9 million), which led to a 7 percentage point increase (11% to 18%) in their share of the electorate. Among those most likely to vote in this year’s elections, Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 7-point margin (44% to 37%), while 15 percent of likely voters are registered as independents.

➤ **Party profiles are starkly different along racial, ethnic, and demographic lines.**

Democratic voters differ from Republican voters in having higher percentages of women, Latinos, and African Americans. Republicans stand apart from Democrats in having much higher proportions of whites. Republicans and Democrats both have more voters in the 55 and older age group than do independents. Independents tend to have a higher proportion of men, voters under age 35, and college graduates than do either Democrats or Republicans.

➤ **Democrats and Republicans have different geographic strongholds.**

Almost six in 10 Democratic voters live in the urban coastal regions of Los Angeles (30%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (26%). In contrast, a majority of Republicans live in other Southern California counties outside of Los Angeles (34%) or in the Central Valley (21%). Independent voters are found in roughly equal proportions in the San Francisco Bay Area (29%), Los Angeles (25%), and other Southern California counties besides Los Angeles (25%).

➤ **There is a large ideological divide between Republicans and Democrats in California.**

While 67 percent of Republicans describe themselves as conservatives, 54 percent of Democrats consider themselves liberals. Independents are most likely to describe themselves as middle-of-the-road (39%) politically. There are large differences in the preferred role of the state government between parties. While 62 percent of Democrats prefer to pay higher taxes and have a larger state government with more services, 73 percent of Republicans prefer to pay lower taxes and have a smaller state government with fewer services. Independents side with GOP voters in favoring lower taxes and fewer services over higher taxes and more services (51% to 42%).

➤ **Lack of party loyalty leads to a more closely divided California electorate.**

Democratic voters (34%) are as likely as Republican voters (32%) to say that their party loyalty is “not very strong.” However, the fact that independents are more likely to lean toward Democrats than Republicans (42% to 28%) tends to work to the disadvantage of the GOP in statewide elections. Three in 10 independents say that they don’t lean toward either of the major parties.

		Likely Voters	Party Registration			
			Dem	Rep	Ind	Other
All Likely Voters			44%	37%	15%	4%
Gender	Male	49%	42	52	59	62
	Female	51	58	48	41	38
Age	18-34 years old	21	20	16	32	36
	35-54 years old	43	42	44	42	47
	55 years or older	36	38	40	26	17
Education	High school only	16	18	15	12	7
	Some college	30	28	33	28	34
	College graduate	54	54	52	60	59
Household income	Under \$40,000	27	32	22	26	31
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	36	35	36	36	40
	\$80,000 or higher	37	33	42	38	29
Race/ ethnicity	White	74	66	85	70	83
	Latino	14	18	9	15	9
	Black	7	11	1	6	4
	Asian	5	5	5	9	4
Region	Los Angeles	26	30	21	25	25
	SF Bay Area	23	26	15	29	26
	Central Valley	16	15	21	12	13
	Orange/San Diego	17	13	22	18	18
	Inland Empire	9	7	12	7	7
	Other regions	9	9	9	9	11
Political ideology	Liberal	34	54	10	34	49
	Middle-of-the-road	29	30	23	39	30
	Conservative	37	16	67	27	21
Government preference	Larger, higher taxes, more services	42	62	20	42	42
	Smaller, lower taxes, fewer services	50	29	73	51	52
	Don't know	8	9	7	7	6
Major party voters' strength of affiliation	Strong	-	64	65	-	-
	Not very strong	-	34	32	-	-
	Don't know	-	2	3	-	-
Independent voters' major party leanings	Lean Democrat	-	-	-	42	-
	Lean Republican	-	-	-	28	-
	Neither/Don't know	-	-	-	30	-

Sources: (1) Ten PPIC Statewide Surveys conducted between May 2004 and May 2005. Total sample size of 12,272 likely voters. (2) California Secretary of State, March 2004.