

■ **INDEPENDENT VOTERS HAVE INCREASED IN SIZE AND SHARE OF THE ELECTORATE.**

Between the 1988 and 2004 presidential elections, the share of California voters registered as “decline to state” doubled (9% to 17.7%), while the share fell for Democrats (50.4% to 43%) and Republicans (38.6% to 34.7%). Since 1988, the absolute numbers have shrunk for Democrats (7.1 to 6.6 million) and Republicans (5.4 to 5.2 million), while the number of independents today has more than doubled (1.3 to 3 million), and their share of the electorate has grown (9% to 19.3%).

■ **INDEPENDENTS ARE MORE YOUTHFUL, MALE, EDUCATED THAN PARTISANS.**

Independents (23%) have more likely voters in the 18-24 year-old age group than Democrats (17%) or Republicans (14%), while Republicans (44%) and Democrats (42%) are more likely than independents (32%) to be age 55 and older. A slightly larger share of independents (59%) than Republicans (54%) are male, while the majority of likely voters among Democrats are women (58%). Independents (57%) are slightly more likely than Democrats or Republicans (53% each) to have college degrees.

■ **INDEPENDENTS ARE CONTENT IN THEIR REGISTRATION STATUS.**

Among likely voters, 47 percent of independents say they have always been independents, while half say they were previously registered with a major party (25% Democratic, 25% Republican). When asked what they would do if there were a political party that reflected their views, most independents (69%) say they would still prefer to remain unaffiliated with any specific party, while 31 percent would join that party. When it comes to independents' major party leanings, the Democratic Party holds an edge over the Republican Party (43% to 30%), while 27 percent of independents volunteer a response that they lean toward neither party.

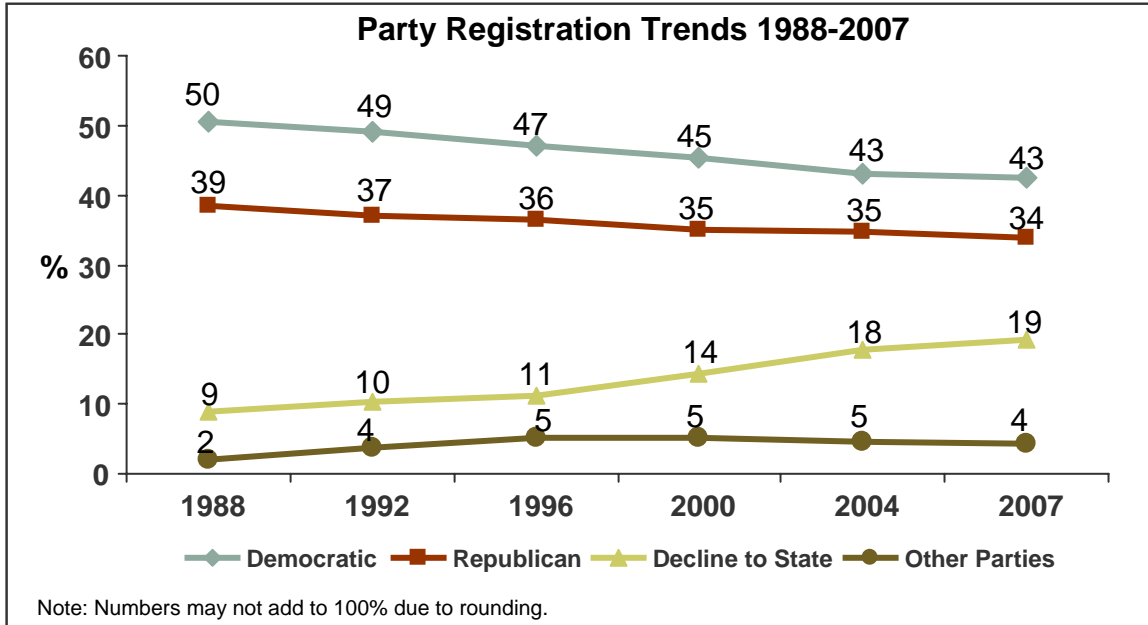
■ **INDEPENDENTS ARE MORE POLITICALLY MODERATE THAN PARTISANS.**

A plurality of independents (39%) consider themselves politically moderate, while equal shares consider themselves liberal (31%) or conservative (30%). Most Republicans call themselves conservative (67%), and most Democrats liberal (53%). Independents tend to support abortion rights, environmental policies, gay marriage, expanding health coverage, and giving illegal immigrants a chance to keep their jobs and apply for legal status. Independents' views on fiscal and tax and spending issues fall between the more polarized views of Democrats and Republicans.

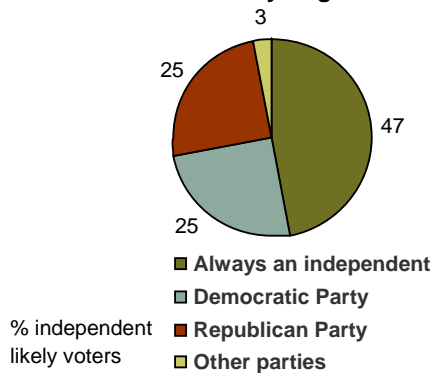
■ **INDEPENDENTS HAVE DIVIDED LOYALTIES AND CAN INFLUENCE ELECTIONS.**

While most partisans support their party's officeholders, PPIC surveys show the political flexibility of independents: Most disapprove of Bush (R), approve of Schwarzenegger (R), and approve of Democrats Feinstein and Boxer. With less than a majority of California voters registered in either major party, independents play an increasingly important role in deciding statewide elections. For example, in the 2004 presidential election, Republicans and Democrats supported their party's candidates. Because 56 percent of independents supported the Kerry-Edwards Democratic ticket, Kerry-Edwards beat the Bush-Cheney ticket in California by 10 points (54% to 44%). In the 2006 gubernatorial election, Republicans and Democrats supported their party's candidates, while 54 percent of independents backed Schwarzenegger, who won his reelection (56% to 39%).

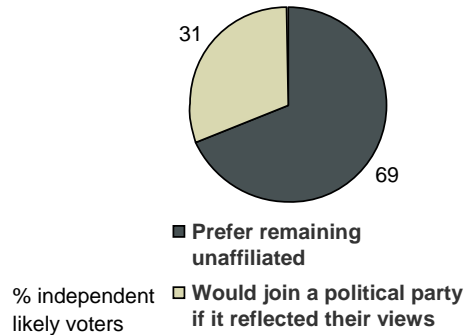
California's Independent Voters



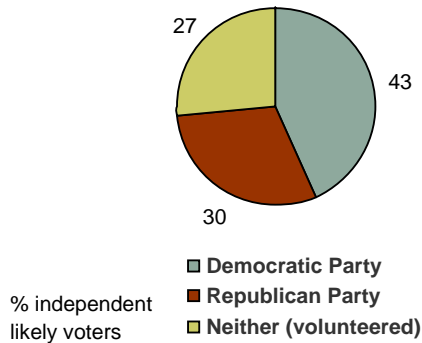
Previous Party Registration



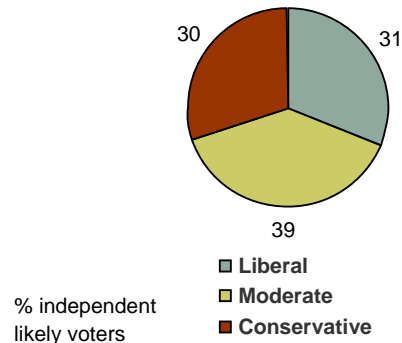
Registration Preferences



Leanings Toward Major Parties



Political Ideology



Sources: (1) California Secretary of State: *Report of Registration*, Oct. 2004 and Dec. 2007, and *Statement of Vote*, Nov. 1988, Nov. 2004, and Nov. 2006. Percentages for 1988-2004 reflect statistics for the close of registration for Nov. general elections; 2007 statistics reflect the 60-day close for the Feb. 2008 primary election; (2) *Los Angeles Times Exit Poll*, Nov. 2004; (3) PPIC Statewide Survey, Nov. 2006, including interviews with 2,000 general election voters; and (4) Combined results of nine PPIC Statewide Surveys conducted between Jan. and Dec. 2007, including interviews with 10,426 likely voters, of whom 1,690 are independents; Some data in 3rd paragraph on p. 1 and the top two pie charts on p. 2 are from six of these surveys, including interviews with 1,028 independent likely voters. The margin-of-error for 10,426 likely voters is +/-1%, for 1,690 independent likely voters is +/-2.5%, and for 1,028 independent likely voters is +/-3%. For more information on the demographic differences between independents and others, please see: *Just the Facts, Voter and Party Profiles*, http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/tf/JTF_VoterProfilesJTF.pdf.