

## California Voter and Party Profiles

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### ➤ **Voter registration is holding steady; the share of independents has increased.**

California's 17.9 million registered voters—as of May 2016—constitute 72.3% of eligible adults, which is identical to the registration rate prior to the June primary in 2012. The share of eligible adults who are registered to vote is likely to increase, as it did in the lead-up to the 2012 general election (to 76.7%). The share of registered voters who are Democrats (44.8%) is up from 2012 (43.7%), while the share of Republicans (27.3%) is down (from 29.4%). The share of voters who say they are independent (also known as “decline to state” or “no party preference”) has been increasing: it is now 23.3%, up from 20.9% in 2012. Our surveys indicate that 45% of those we consider most likely to vote are Democrats, 31% are Republicans, and 20% are independents.

### ➤ **Most independent likely voters lean toward a major party.**

In our surveys over the past year, independent likely voters have been more likely to lean Democratic (41%) than Republican (32%); 27% did not lean toward either major party. This is similar to 2012, when 29% did not lean toward either party, while 41% leaned toward the Democrats and 29% leaned Republican. Independent likely voters are more likely to be moderate (41%) than conservative (31%) or liberal (28%).

### ➤ **Republicans are more ideologically cohesive than Democrats.**

Seven in ten (70%) of Republican likely voters say they are conservative, while 57% of Democratic likely voters describe themselves as liberal. One area in which ideological divisions are very evident is taxation and spending: when asked about the role of government, 67% of Democrats say they would prefer to pay higher taxes and have a state government that provides more services, while 82% of Republicans prefer lower taxes and fewer services. Independents also have a preference for lower taxes and fewer services (55% to 39%).

### ➤ **Likely voters are disproportionately white; half of Democrats are non-white.**

Whites make up 43% of California's adult population, but 60% of those our surveys identify as likely to vote are white. In contrast, Latinos make up 34% of the state's adult population but only 18% of likely voters. The shares of Asian American (12%) and African American (6%) likely voters are roughly proportionate to their shares of the state's adult population—15% Asian American and 6% African American. Half (50%) of Democratic likely voters are white; 24% are Latino, 12% are Asian American, and 11% are African American. An overwhelming majority (77%) of Republican likely voters are white; relatively few are Latino (10%), Asian American (9%), or African American (1%). Among independents, 57% are white, 18% are Asian American, 16% are Latino, and 3% are African American.

### ➤ **Many demographic characteristics of likely voters vary across parties.**

Democratic likely voters are more likely to be women (60%) than men (40%), while independents are more likely to be men (58%) than women (42%). Republicans are closely divided (53% men, 47% women). Nearly half of independents (46%) are college graduates, compared to slightly fewer Republicans (39%) and Democrats (41%). About one in three Democrats (35%) have household incomes under \$40,000, compared to three in ten independents (29%) and two in ten Republicans (20%). Independents (24%) and Democrats (21%) are more likely to be young adults (age 18 to 34) than are Republicans (9%), while Republicans are somewhat more likely to be age 55 and older (55%) than are Democrats (47%) or independents (39%).

### ➤ **Democrats and Republicans tend to live in different parts of the state.**

The regional distribution of likely voters mirrors that of the state's overall adult population (27% Los Angeles, 21% San Francisco Bay Area, 18% Orange/San Diego, 17% Central Valley, 9% Inland Empire, 9% other counties). Most Democrats live in Los Angeles County (32%) or the San Francisco Bay Area (25%), while most Republicans live in the Central Valley (21%), Orange and San Diego Counties (23%), or Los Angeles County (19%). Independents are most likely to live in Los Angeles County (28%) or the San Francisco Bay Area (23%).



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		Likely voters	Likely voter party registration			
			Dem	Rep	Ind	Other
All likely voters		–	45%	31%	20%	4%
Ideology	Liberal	35%	57	8	28	33
	Moderate	29	27	22	41	38
	Conservative	36	16	70	31	29
Strength of affiliation among major party voters	Strong	–	64	54	–	–
	Not very strong	–	35	42	–	–
	Don't know	–	2	4	–	–
Major party leanings among independent voters	Democratic Party	–	–	–	41	–
	Republican Party	–	–	–	32	–
	Neither/Don't know	–	–	–	27	–
Race/Ethnicity	African American	6	11	1	3	1
	Asian American	12	12	9	18	3
	Latino	18	24	10	16	17
	White	60	50	77	57	70
	Other/Multiracial	4	3	3	6	8
Gender	Men	48	40	53	58	63
	Women	52	60	47	42	37
Education	No college	17	20	17	15	9
	Some college	41	39	44	39	47
	College graduate	41	41	39	46	44
Income	Under \$40,000	29	35	20	29	29
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	27	26	30	25	22
	\$80,000 or more	44	38	50	47	50
Age	18 to 34	18	21	9	24	17
	35 to 54	35	32	36	36	50
	55 and older	47	47	55	39	33
Region	Los Angeles County	27	32	19	28	12
	San Francisco Bay Area	21	25	14	23	23
	Orange/San Diego Counties	18	13	23	19	24
	Central Valley	17	15	21	14	24
	Inland Empire	9	7	13	8	5
	Other	9	8	10	8	13

**Sources:** Seven PPIC Statewide Surveys from September 2015 to July 2016, including 11,935 adults and 7,306 likely voters. California Secretary of State, Report of Registration, October 2012 and May 2016. US Census, 2010–14 American Community Survey.

**Note:** “Likely voters” are registered voters meeting criteria on interest in politics, attention to issues, voting behavior, and intention to vote. For full description of this criteria and regional definitions, visit [www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf). For race and ethnicity, results are presented for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic Asian Americans, non-Hispanic African Americans, and for non-Hispanic other race and multiracial adults.

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