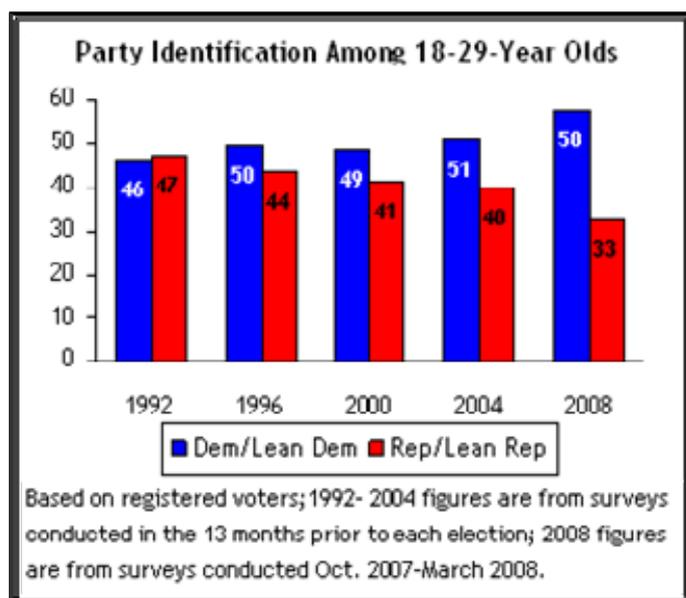


Gen Dems: The Party's Advantage Among Young Voters Widens

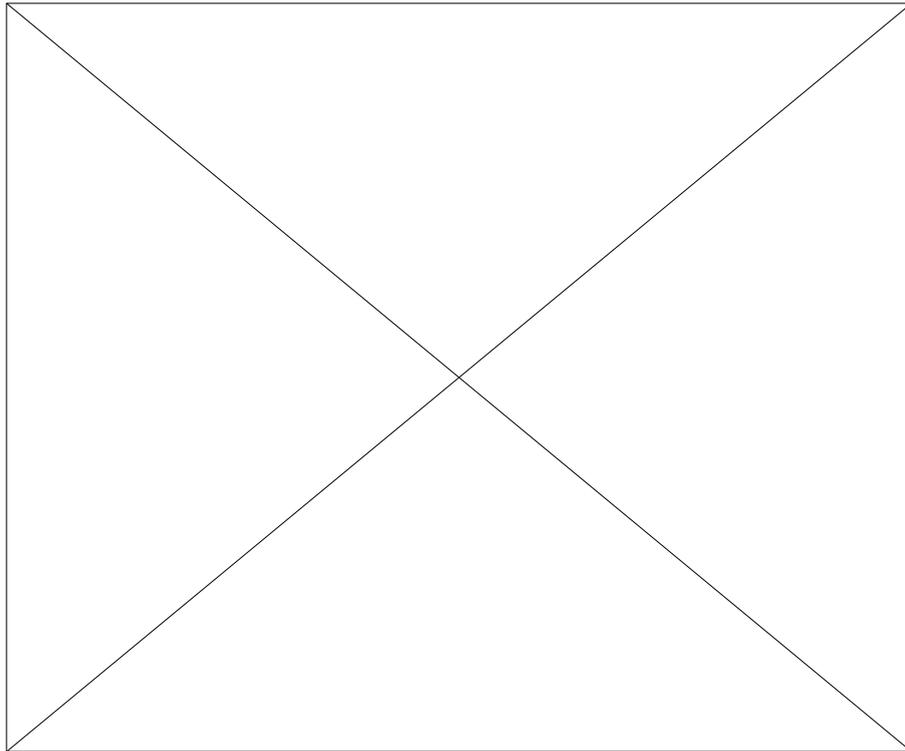
by Scott Keeter, Director Survey Research, Juliana Horowitz, Research Associate and Alec Tyson, Research Assistant, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press
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Trends in the opinions of America's youngest voters are often a barometer of shifting political winds. And that appears to be the case in 2008. The current generation of young voters, who came of age during the George W. Bush years, is leading the way in giving the Democrats a wide advantage in party identification, just as the previous generation of young people who grew up in the Reagan years -- Generation X -- fueled the Republican surge of the mid-1990's.

In surveys conducted between October 2007 and March 2008, 58% of voters under age 30 identified or leaned toward the Democratic Party, compared with 33% who identified or leaned toward the GOP. The Democratic Party's current lead in party identification among young voters has more than doubled since the 2004 campaign, from 11 points to 25 points.

In fact, the Democrats' advantage among the young is now so broad-based that younger men as well as younger women favor the Democrats over the GOP -- making their age category the only one in the electorate in which men are significantly more inclined to self-identify as Democrats rather than as Republicans. Use the interactive tool to track generational differences in party affiliation over time.



While more women voters in every age group affiliate with the Democratic Party rather than the GOP, the gap is particularly striking among young women voters; more than twice as many women voters under age 30 identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party as favor the Republican Party (63% vs. 28%).

This analysis is part of a series of reports on changes in the balance of party identification in the electorate. On March 20, the Center released breakdown of trends in party identification in Republican "red" states, Democratic "blue" states, and politically contested swing states.¹

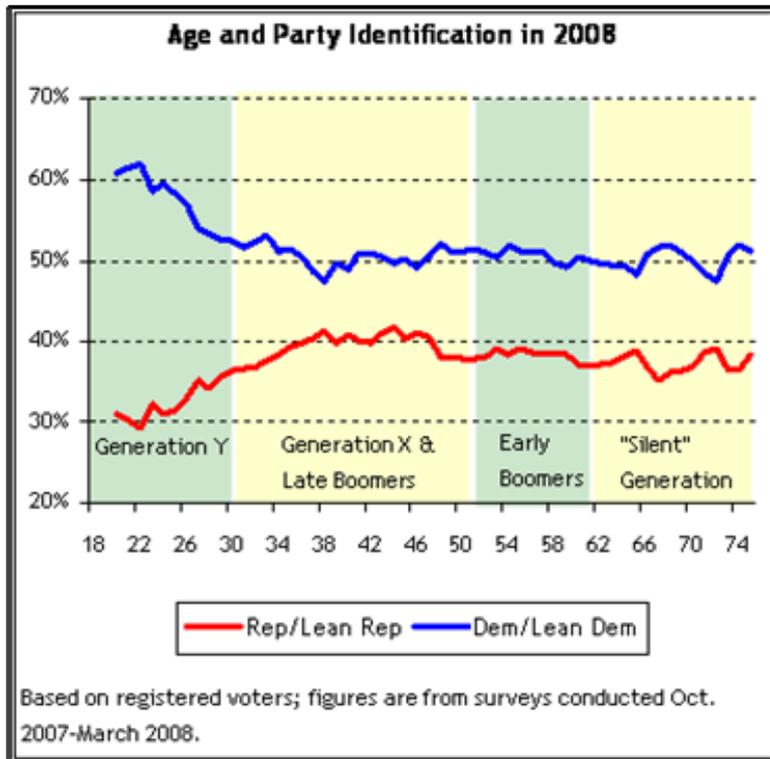
A Shift Since 2004

	----- 2004 -----			----- 2008 -----		
	Rep/ Lean Rep	Dem/ Lean Dem	Dem- Lean Rep Diff	Rep/ Lean Rep	Dem/ Lean Dem	Dem- Lean Rep Diff
	%	%		%	%	
'Silent' Gen. (Before 1946)	43	48	+5	38	50	+12
Early Boomer (1946-55)	42	49	+7	39	50	+11
Late Boomer & GenX (1956-76)	47	44	-3	39	51	+12
Gen Y (1977-)	39	52	+13	33	57	+24
Total	44	47	+3	38	51	+13

Based on registered voters; 2004 figures are from surveys conducted Oct. 2003-Nov. 2004; 2008 figures are from surveys conducted Oct. 2007-March 2008.

Since 2004, identification with the Democratic Party has increased across all age groups. Four years ago, 47% of all voters identified with or leaned toward the Democratic Party, while 44% identified with or leaned toward the GOP. In surveys from October through March, Democrats held a 13-point party identification advantage (51% to 38%).

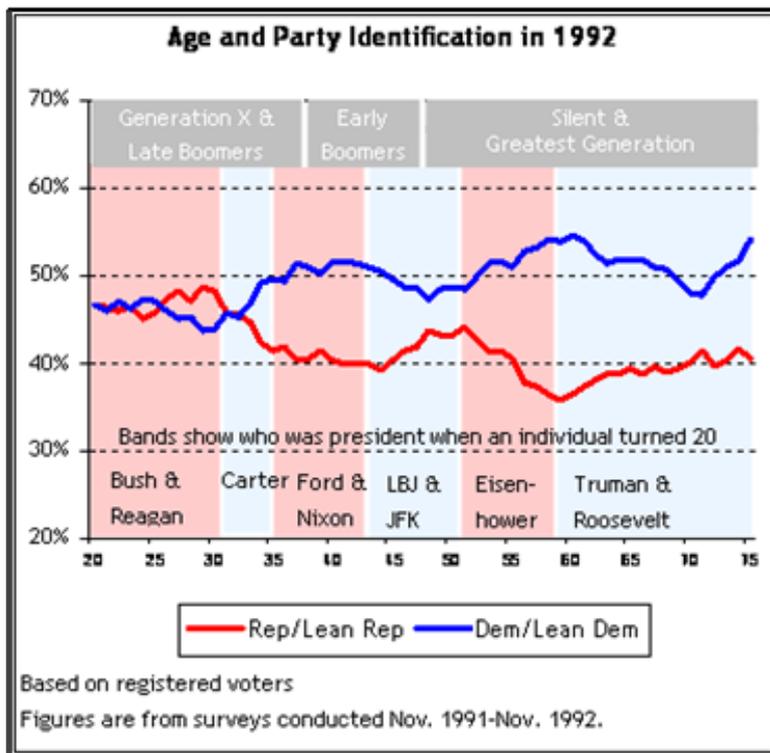
Perhaps the most striking change since 2004 has come among voters born between 1956 and 1976 -- the members of Generation X and the later Baby Boomers. People in this age group tended to be more Republican during the 1990s, and the GOP still maintained a slight edge in partisan affiliation among Gen X and the late boomers in 2004 (47% identified with or leaned toward the GOP while 44% described themselves as Democrats or leaned Democratic).



Currently, 51% of voters in this age group affiliate with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic compared with 39% who describe themselves as Republicans or lean toward the GOP. Thus voters in Gen X and the latter part of the Baby Boom -- the most Republican age cohort four years ago -- now are about as Democratic as are older age groups, the early Baby Boomers and the so-called Silent Generation.

Still, the youngest voters -- the members of Generation Y, born in 1977 or later -- continue to stand out as the most Democratic age group. The Democrats' identification advantage among Gen Y voters, which was 13 points in 2004 (52% to 39%) has nearly doubled in the current presidential campaign to 24 points.

1992: When Gen X Came of Age



The Democratic Party has not always held an edge among the young. In 1992, young voters divided their partisan loyalties roughly evenly (46% Democratic, 47% Republican). By 1996, young voters were more Democratic than Republican, and the Democratic advantage increased slightly in 2000 and 2004.

Age differences in party affiliation are a result of a variety of influences, including the circumstances of individuals at different points in the life cycle as well as generational differences that reflect the political climate at the time when individuals were forming their political identity and loyalties. As the data from 1992 clearly show, young people are not necessarily more liberal or Democratic by virtue of their age alone.

The youngest voters in 1992 -- the members of Generation X -- were more Republican than most other age groups, in part reflecting the fact that they had come of age politically during a time in which conservative ideas were ascendant and the presidency was held by a popular Republican, Ronald Reagan.

In addition, those in the latter half of the Baby Boom generation, who were in their late 20s to mid-30s in 1992, also were more Republican than average; many of these individuals developed their political leanings in the late 1970s, during the troubled presidency of Jimmy Carter. By contrast, older Baby Boomers, who came of age politically during the turbulent and unpopular presidency of Richard Nixon, were more Democratic than most other age groups. Among older Americans in 1992, most of those then in their 50s -- also known as the "Silent" generation -- had come of age during the Eisenhower administration. Those ages 60 and older reached adulthood during the Democratic presidencies of Harry Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Much of this generation is known as the "Greatest Generation," in honor of the sacrifices many made during World War II.

Gender and Young Voters

Women Even More Solidly Democratic

	<i>All Voters</i>					
	<i>--- Men ---</i>			<i>--- Women ---</i>		
	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>D-R</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>D-R</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>diff</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>diff</i>
2008	43	46	+3	33	56	+22
2004	48	43	-5	40	51	+11
2000	47	42	-5	38	51	+13
1996	49	43	-6	39	53	+14
1992	45	46	+1	40	52	+12

	<i>Voters Ages 18-29</i>					
	<i>--- Men ---</i>			<i>--- Women ---</i>		
	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>D-R</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>D-R</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>diff</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>diff</i>
2008	38	52	+14	28	63	+35
2004	44	47	+3	36	54	+18
2000	46	44	-2	37	53	+16
1996	50	44	-6	38	55	+17
1992	52	42	-10	42	50	+8

Based on registered voters who identify with or lean toward the Democratic or Republican Party; 1992-2004 figures are from surveys conducted in the 12 months prior to each election; 2008 figures are from surveys conducted Oct. 2007-March 2008.

Since 1992, the Democratic Party has had a sizable advantage in partisan affiliation among women. But women voters now identify with the Democratic Party in greater numbers than in the past -- and the trend is particularly dramatic among younger women voters.

Fully 56% of women identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, compared with 33% who identify or lean toward the GOP. Since 2004, the Democrats' lead in party affiliation among women has doubled (from 11 points to 22 points).

The overall gender gap in party affiliation has not increased since 2004, as male voters have also become somewhat more Democratic. Currently, the Democrats hold a slight 46%-43% edge among men voters; in 2004, somewhat more male voters were affiliated with or leaned toward the Republican Party than the Democratic Party (by 48% to 43%).

As is the case among all women voters, the Democratic advantage among young female voters has almost doubled since 2004. Four years ago, just over half of women under age 30 identified as Democrats (54%) and 36% identified as Republicans, an 18-point advantage. Today, Democrats hold a 35-point advantage, with more than six-in-ten women in this age group calling themselves Democrats (63%) and just 28% calling themselves Republicans.

The balance of party identification has also shifted dramatically among men ages 18-29. The Democratic Party now holds a 14-point advantage among this group (52% vs. 38%). This is a reversal from 1992, when 52% of men under age 30 called themselves Republicans and 42% called themselves Democrats. The

gender gap in party affiliation among young voters has remained relatively stable since the 1992 election cycle and is consistent with the gap seen in the electorate as a whole.

Comparing Younger & Older Voters

More broadly, many of the demographic patterns evident in party identification among older voters also are seen in voters under age 30. For example, comparably large proportions of African Americans and liberals -- whether ages 30 and older, or younger than age 30 -- identify as Democrats.

	Age and Party Affiliation					
	---18-29---		---30+---		--All voters--	
	Dem/ Dem	Rep/ Rep	Dem/ Dem	Rep/ Rep	Dem/ Dem	Rep/ Rep
	Lean %	Lean %	Lean %	Lean %	Lean %	Lean %
Total	58	33	50	39	51	38
Men	52	38	45	44	46	43
Women	63	28	55	34	56	33
White	51	40	45	44	46	43
Black	83	10	84	8	84	8
Conservative	31	62	28	63	28	63
Moderate	62	28	56	31	57	30
Liberal	84	9	86	8	85	8
College grad	53	39	49	41	50	40
Some college	64	27	47	42	50	39
HS or less	54	36	54	34	54	34
Northeast	61	30	53	35	54	34
Midwest	61	32	49	39	50	38
South	53	38	49	41	49	40
West	58	29	53	38	53	36
Urban	65	28	57	32	58	31
Suburban	56	34	48	41	49	40
Rural	45	42	44	44	44	44
White evang. Prot	31	60	30	60	30	60
White mainline Prot	52	41	46	42	46	42
White Catholic	52	40	48	40	48	40
Unaffiliated	67	22	64	24	65	23
Less than \$20,000	73	17	65	22	67	21
\$20,000-\$30,000	62	32	57	31	58	32
\$30,000-\$50,000	57	32	51	38	52	37
\$50,000-\$100,000	55	38	48	44	49	43
\$100,000+	42	49	47	46	46	46
Married	44	43	44	45	44	45
Not married	61	31	60	29	60	29

Based on registered voters. Data from surveys conducted Oct. 2007-March 2008.

In addition, roughly six-in-ten conservatives and white evangelical Protestants in both the older and younger age groups identify with the GOP.

However, there are notable differences by region in party affiliation between younger and older voters. For instance, young voters in the Midwest are almost twice as likely to identify with or lean toward the

Democratic Party rather than the Republican Party (61%-32%). Among voters ages 30 and older in the Midwest, the Democrats hold a much narrower lead (49% to 39%). In the South, by contrast, there are smaller differences between older and younger voters.

In addition, higher proportions of voters under age 30 living in urban and suburban areas affiliate with the Democratic Party, compared with voters ages 30 and older in those communities. By contrast, there are virtually no age differences in party identification among young and older voters in rural areas.

The Democratic Party also holds a much greater advantage among younger voters with some college education than among voters ages 30 and older with some college. However, it is important to note that younger people with some college are fundamentally different from older people of similar education level. Among the younger group, "some college," includes many who are still in college. Among the older age groups, those with some college are likely to be people who started but never finished college.

Danny Dougherty, Jocelyn Kiley, Juliana Horowitz, Michael Dimock, Alec Tyson and Richard Auxier helped with conceptualization and production of the interactive feature. The graphic with 20th century presidents was inspired by Bill Marsh of the New York Times.

Notes

¹ See "[Fewer Voters Identify as Republicans](#)," March 20, 2008.