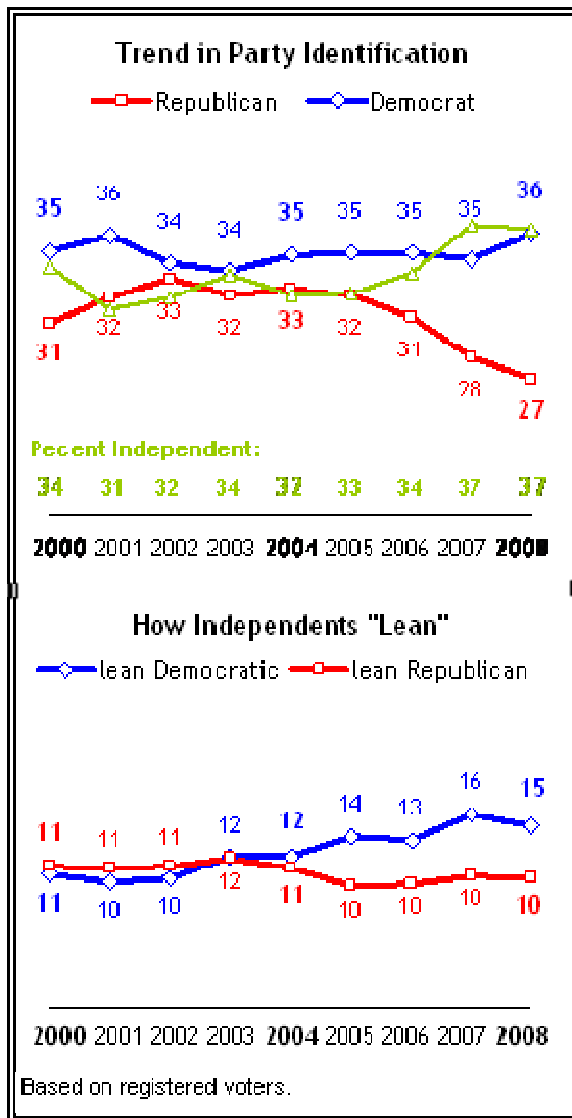


Fewer Voters Identify as Republicans

Democrats Now Have the Advantage in "Swing" States

March 20, 2008



The balance of party identification in the American electorate now favors the Democratic Party by a decidedly larger margin than in either of the two previous presidential election cycles.

In 5,566 interviews with registered voters conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press during the first two months of 2008, 36% identify themselves as Democrats, and just 27% as Republicans.

The share of voters who call themselves Republicans has declined by six points since 2004, and represents, on an annualized basis, the lowest percentage of self-identified Republican voters in 16 years of polling by the Center.

The Democratic Party has also built a substantial edge among independent voters. Of the 37% who claim no party identification, 15% lean Democratic, 10% lean Republican, and 12% have no leaning either way.

By comparison, in 2004 about equal numbers of independents leaned toward both parties. When "leaners" are combined with partisans, however, the Democratic Party now holds a 14-point advantage among voters nationwide (51% Dem/lean-Dem to 37% Rep/lean-Rep), up from a three-point advantage four years ago.

Despite these trends, the proportion of voters who identify with the Democratic Party outright has not increased in recent years. Currently, 36% say they think of themselves as a Democrat, virtually unchanged from 2004 (35%) and 2000 (35%). Instead, as the proportion of self-identified Republicans has decreased, the percentage of independents has grown substantially, from 32% in 2004 to 37% today.

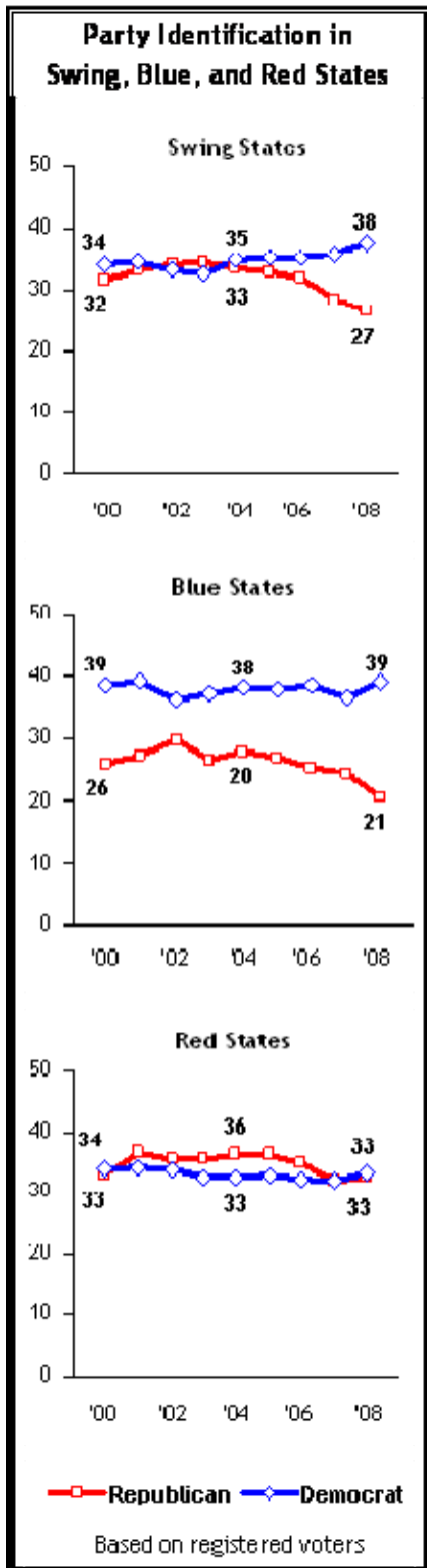
The Electoral Landscape

The decline in the number of self-identified Republicans is evident in all parts of the country, but is perhaps most significant in the politically important "swing" states that were closely contested in the 2004 presidential election (see "How the States are Analyzed" below).

Four years ago there were about as many Democrats (35%) as Republicans (33%) in the 12 states where the voting was closest in 2004, and the balance was similar in the 2000 election cycle. But so far in 2008, Democrats hold a substantial 38% to 27% identification advantage in these states.

In the "blue" states -- those where John Kerry won by at least five percentage points in 2004 -- the Democratic Party's advantage has nearly doubled from 10 points to 18 points since the last presidential election. As is the case nationwide, the number of Democrats in these states has remained relatively stable, while Republican identification is down seven percentage points over the past four years. Currently, 39% of registered voters in the 13 states Kerry won by more than five points identify themselves as Democrats, compared with 21% who identify as Republicans.

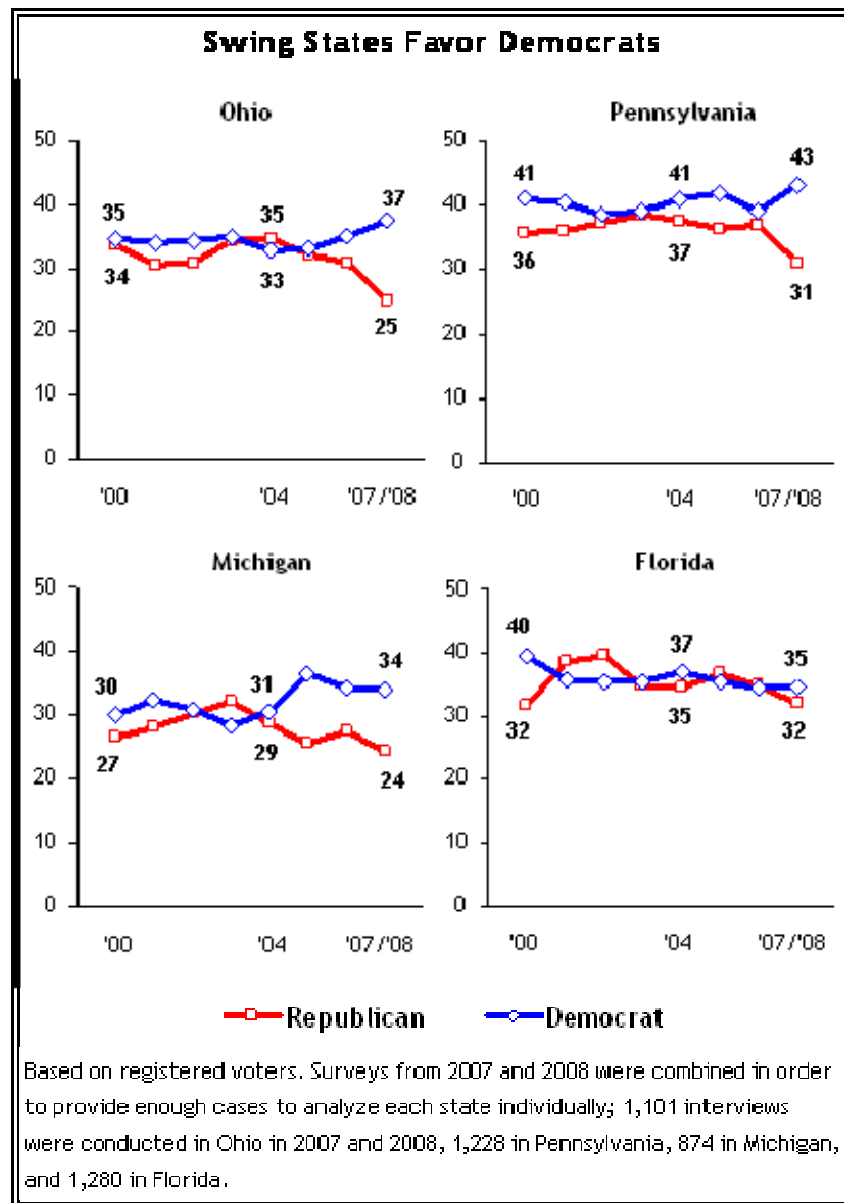
The balance of party identification in "red" states -- where George Bush won by more than five points in 2004 -- has been more stable. Throughout the last three election cycles, there have been roughly as many Democrats as Republicans in these 24 states collectively. Currently, 33% of voters in these states call themselves Republicans, 33% call themselves Democrats, and 34% choose neither party.



Inside Key Swing States

The growing Democratic identification advantage in swing states generally holds true when several of the largest swing states are analyzed individually. In Ohio, 37% of voters identify with the Democratic Party, while just 25% identify with the Republican Party, based on surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008.¹

This is a 10-point drop in Republican ID since 2004, and a four-point gain for Democrats. The pattern is similar in Pennsylvania and Michigan, where a rough balance in the number of Democrats and Republicans in the last two election cycles has shifted to a substantial Democratic advantage.



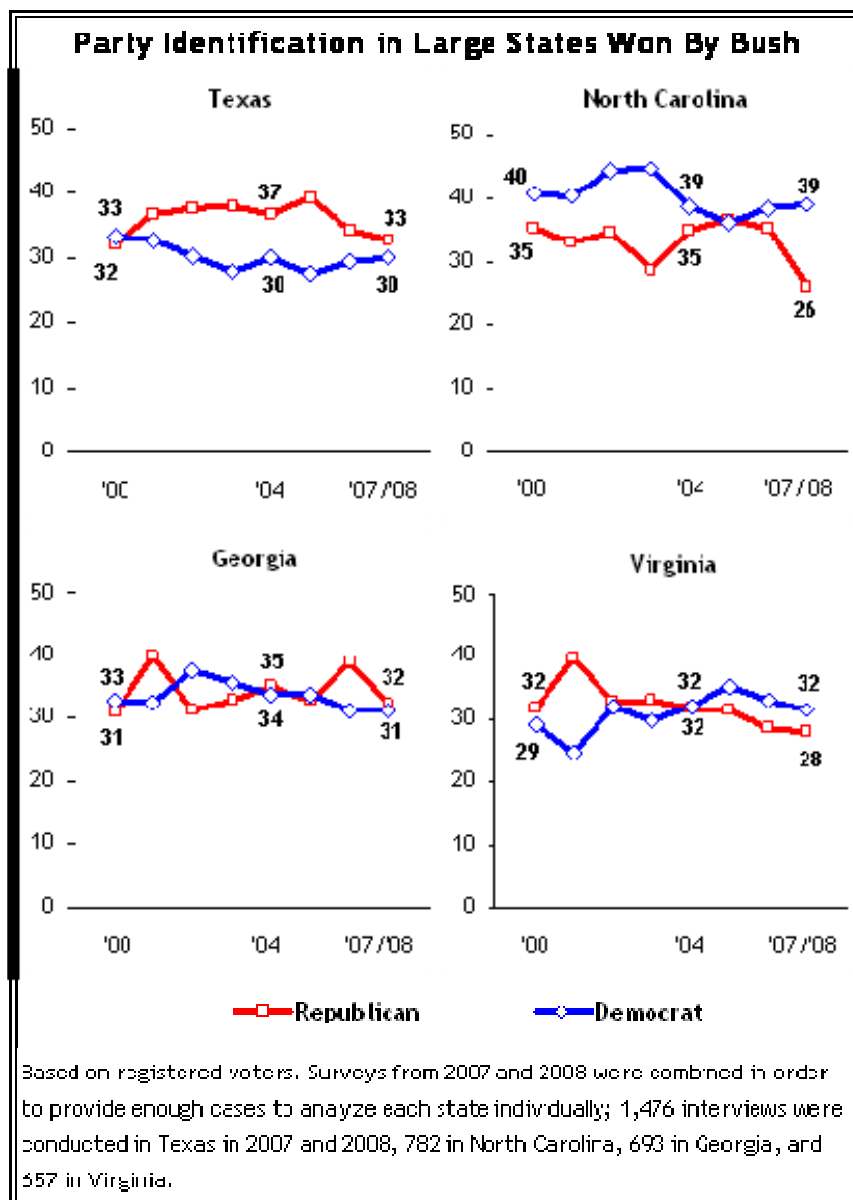
In Florida, however, neither party has gained an advantage in party identification. As was the case in 2004, there are about as many Democrats (35%) as Republicans (32%). The number of voters who identify with neither political party has risen from 28% in 2004 to 33% in 2007 and 2008.

Inside Key "Red" States

Whether the Republican losses in these swing states will translate into an electoral advantage for Democrats remains uncertain. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between the balance of party identification in a given state and the electoral outcome in presidential elections.

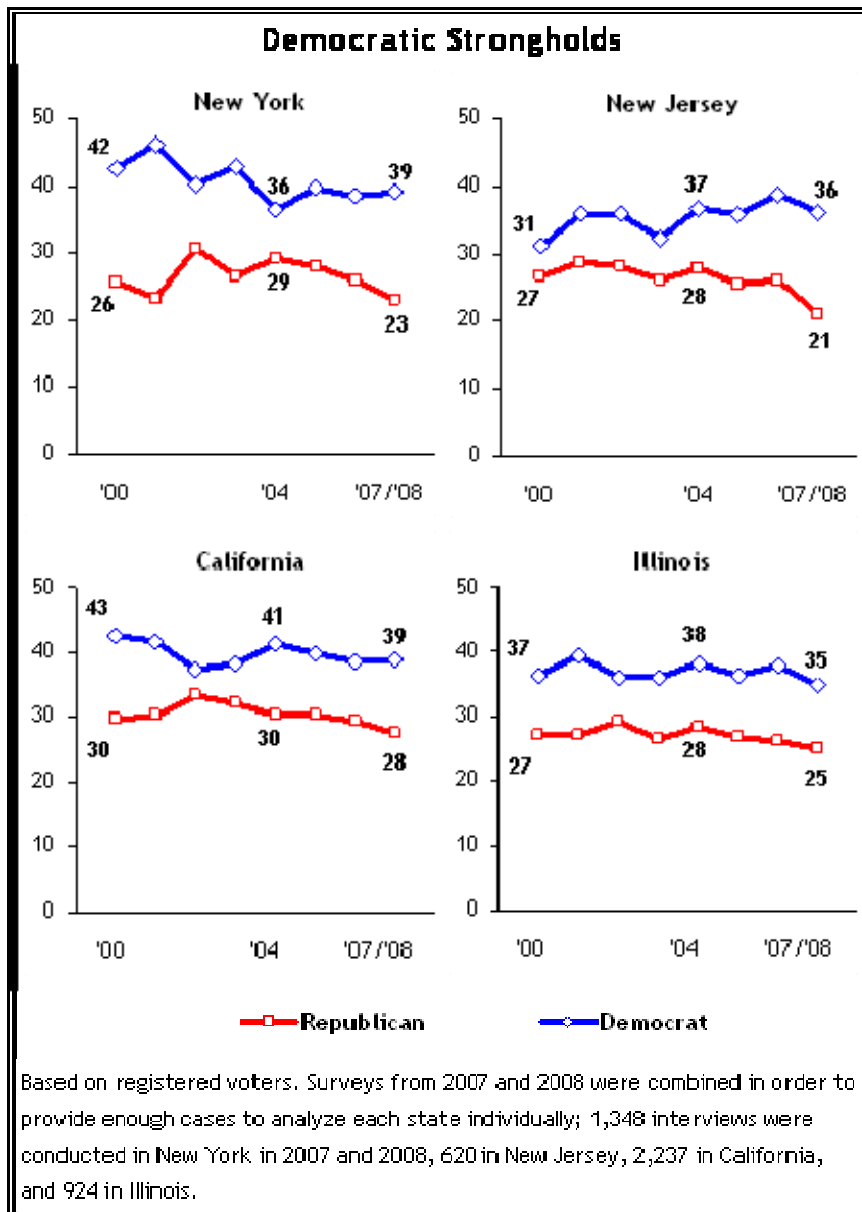
Nowhere is this gap more evident than in many of the states Bush won handily in 2000 and 2004. Bush carried North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia by eight points or more in 2004, even though the balance of party identification in those states was about even -- and actually favored the Democrats by four points in the case of North Carolina.

While the share of voters who identify as Republicans is down slightly in many of the largest "red" states, the shifts generally are more modest than in other parts of the country. In both Texas and Virginia, GOP identification is down four percentage points since 2004, and just three points in Georgia. Of the large states Bush won by more than five points in 2004, North Carolina has seen the greatest drop in GOP identification - from 35% in 2004 to just 26% today.



Inside Key "Blue" States

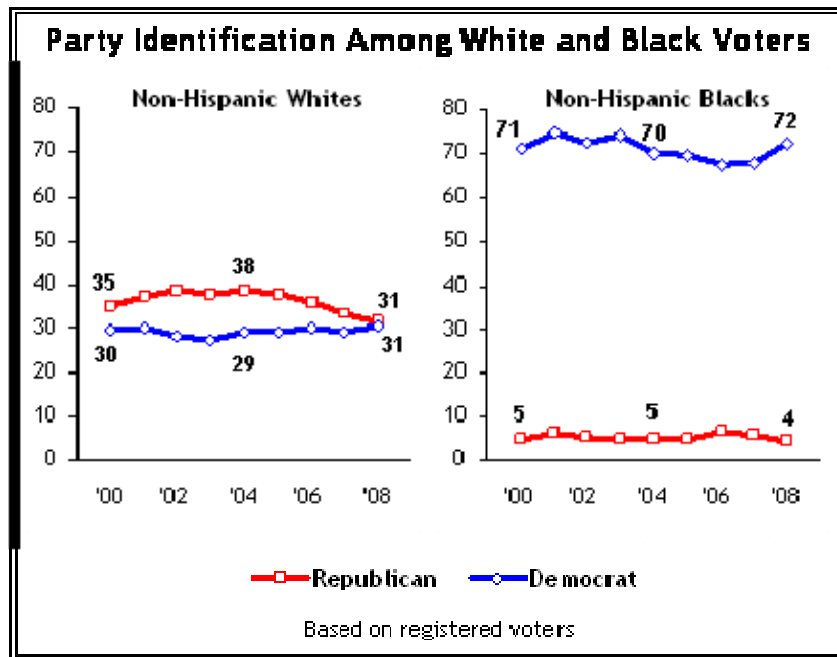
Democrats continue to hold sizable leads in traditional Democratic strongholds. In the four most populous blue states -- New York, New Jersey, California and Illinois -- Democrats enjoy a double-digit advantage in party identification.



In both New York and New Jersey, the Democratic ID advantage has widened substantially since 2004, again due more to GOP losses than Democratic gains. In California and Illinois, the balance of party identification has remained largely unchanged, with Democrats holding roughly a 10-point edge. As in other parts of the country, however, the number of voters who say they identify with neither party is on the rise, from 29% to 33% of California voters since 2004, and from 34% to 40% of Illinois voters.

Race and Party Identification

The growing Democratic advantage in party identification nationwide is due in part to a decline in the share of white voters who call themselves Republicans.



The balance of party identification among African American voters has remained relatively stable in recent years; the Democrats now hold a 72% to 4% advantage, virtually unchanged from 2004. White voters now are as likely to identify with the Democratic Party as with the GOP (31%). This represents a significant shift from four years ago, when white voters called themselves Republicans by a 38% to 29% margin.

How the States are Analyzed

All surveys from 2000 to 2008 were analyzed based on registered voters. The pooled data provide 5,566 cases nationwide collected in 2008 (January and February only), 18,326 in 2007, 28,139 in 2006, 17,916 in 2005, 25,509 in 2004, 13,524 in 2003, 15,825 in 2002, 12,743 in 2001, and 20,517 in 2000.

In most cases, however, individual states cannot be analyzed separately using the 2008 data alone because their relatively small populations result in insufficient samples. Data from 2007 and 2008 were pooled to allow for state-by-state analyses.

To analyze the political landscape, this report groups states into political classifications based on results from the 2004 presidential election.

2004 Political classification

States that Kerry won by a margin of more than 5% are categorized as "Blue;" states Bush won by a margin of more than 5% are categorized as "Red" and the rest are categorized as "Swing" states.

Blue States: CA, NY, IL, NJ, WA, MA, MD, CT, ME, RI, DE, VT, DC

Red States: TX, NC, VA, GA, IN, MO, TN, KY, AL, AZ, LA, SC, OK, MS, AR, KS, UT, WY, NE, ID, MI, SD, ND, WY

Swing States: PA, FL, OH, WI, MN, WI, CO, OR, IA, NM, NV, NH

Note: No surveying conducted in Alaska or Hawaii.

In swing states, where the Republican Party enjoyed a clear advantage in party identification among white voters in the 2000 and 2004 election cycles, more whites now call themselves Democrats. Democratic identification improved to 34% among whites, up from 31% in 2004, while identification with the Republican Party dropped from 37% to 30% over the same period.

The GOP has also experienced losses among white voters in the "blue" states. Despite the Democrats' wide advantage in these states overall, white voters were about evenly divided between the Republican and Democratic Parties in 2000 and 2004. Since 2004, however, the share of whites who identify with the GOP has dropped considerably; about a quarter call themselves Republicans today (24%), down from a third four years ago. Whites in states that have voted solidly Democratic in the last two presidential elections are now much more likely to say they do not identify with either party (35% in 2004 vs. 43% now).

A similar pattern can be seen in the "red" states. The share of white voters who identify with the Republican Party in these states has dropped from 44% in 2004 to 38% in the first two months of 2008 while identification with the Democratic Party has remained stable and a growing number does not identify with either party. Despite these shifts, white voters in red states are still much more likely to call themselves Republicans than Democrats.

Notes

¹ Surveys from 2007 and 2008 were combined in order to analyze states individually.