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The Parties on the Eve of the 2016 Election: Two Coalitions, Moving Further Apart

Trends in voter party identification 1992-2016

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The Parties on the Eve of the 2016 Election: Two Coalitions, Moving Further Apart

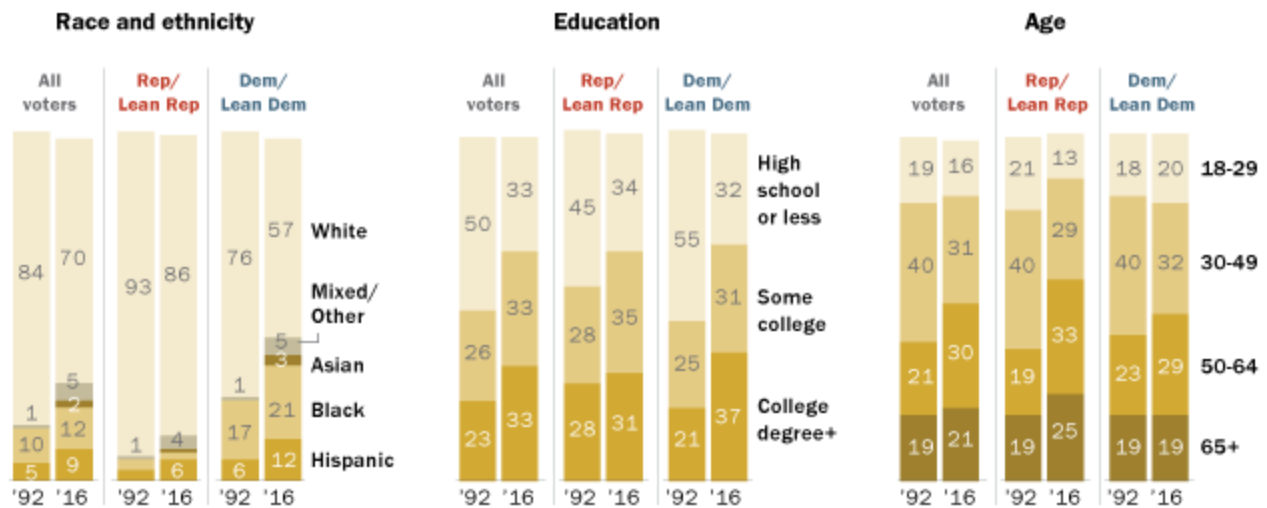
Trends in voter party identification 1992-2016

Ahead of the presidential election, the demographic profiles of the Republican and Democratic parties are strikingly different. On key characteristics – especially race and ethnicity and religious affiliation – the two parties look less alike today than at any point over the last quarter-century.

The fundamental demographic changes taking place in the country – an aging population, growing racial and ethnic diversity and rising levels of education – have reshaped both party coalitions. But these changes, coupled with patterns of partisan affiliation among demographic groups, have influenced the composition of the two parties in different ways. The Democratic Party is becoming less white, less religious and better-educated at a faster rate than the country as a whole, while aging at a slower rate. Within the GOP the pattern is the reverse: Republican voters are becoming more diverse, better-educated and less religious at a slower rate than the country generally, while the age profile of the GOP is growing older more quickly than that of the country.

Changing demographic profiles of Republican and Democratic voters

% of registered voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Asians are non-Hispanic and English-speaking only.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Yet an analysis of more than 8,000 interviews conducted by Pew Research Center in 2016 finds that, despite these long-term changes, the overall balance of party identification has changed little in recent years. This year, 48% of registered voters identify as Democrats or say they lean toward the Democratic Party, compared with 44% who identify as Republican or lean toward the Republican Party. That is identical to the balance of leaned party identification in 2012. (*Explore detailed tables for 2016 [here](#).*)

Today, non-Hispanic whites make up 57% of all Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters, down significantly from 76% in 1992. By contrast, though the share of GOP voters who are white also has declined since 1992, the change has been much more modest: Currently, 86% of Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters are non-Hispanic whites, compared with 93% in 1992. As a result of these changes, the 17-percentage-point gap between the share of white voters in the Republican and Democratic parties seen in 1992 has grown to a 29-point gap today.

The Republican Party – once more youthful than the Democratic Party – has aged rapidly over the past 24 years. In 1992, far more GOP voters were under the age of 50 (61%) than age 50 and older (38%). Today, fully 58% of Republican voters are 50 and older while the share under 50 has declined to 41%. Among Democratic voters, 48% are 50 and older, while 51% are under 50. The rate of aging within the Democratic Party since 1992 (when 57% were under 50 and 42% were 50 and older) has been much less steep than that seen within the GOP.

Americans overall are better educated than they were a quarter-century ago, and this change also has had a profound impact on the composition of the two parties. The share of voters who have a college degree or more education has increased by 10 percentage points since 1992, from 23% to 33%. Better-educated voters are increasingly identifying as Democrats [and expressing liberal attitudes across a range of issues](#).

Since 1992, the share of Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters with at least a college degree has increased sharply, from 21% to 37%. Among Republicans, 31% have at least a college degree, up only slightly from 28% in 1992. As a consequence, a greater proportion of Democrats than Republicans now have a college degree or more education.

While Americans remain highly religious, the share of registered voters who are religiously unaffiliated – describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – has increased from 8% in 1996 to 21% today. Here again, the pace of change in religious affiliation has been far faster among Democratic than Republican voters, resulting in a widening gap between the two parties in the shares who do not affiliate with a religion. In 1996, just 10% of Democratic voters were religiously unaffiliated; today that share has nearly tripled to 29%. Among Republican and

Republican-leaning registered voters, the share not affiliating with a religion has increased from 6% to 12% over the past two decades.

Trends in party identification

The balance of party identification among all voters tends to change slowly over time. For most of the past quarter-century, Democrats have held at least a slight edge. Currently, 34% of registered voters identify as independents, 33% identify with the Democratic Party while 29% identify as Republicans. When the partisan leanings of independents are taken into account, 48% either identify as Democrats or lean Democratic; 44% identify as Republicans or lean Republican.

The Democratic Party's advantage in leaned party identification is identical to its edge in 2012. However, it has narrowed significantly from 2008 (51% to 39%), the final year of George W. Bush's administration, when the Democratic edge in leaned party affiliation was as wide as at any point in the past quarter century.

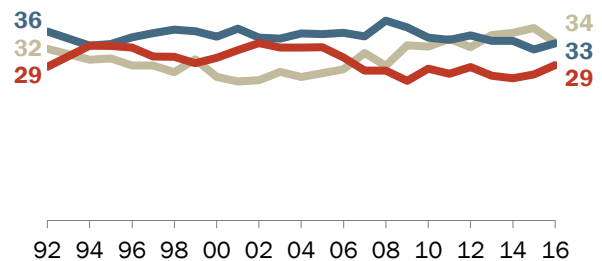
The Republican Party has been able to offset Democratic trends in affiliation among many growing demographic groups by improving its standing among older voters – who also make up a larger share of the electorate today – as well as among white voters, men and those with lower levels of education. This has been especially apparent during Barack Obama's presidency.

In 2008, the year Obama was first elected, Democrats held sizable advantages among voters 50 and older. Among those 50-64, 51% identified with or leaned toward the Democratic Party, compared with 40% who identified with the GOP or leaned Republican. The Democrats' advantage among voters 65 and older was almost as large (49% to 40%).

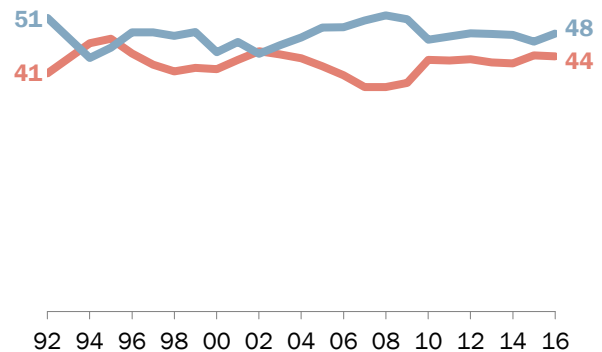
Party identification: 1992-2016

% of registered voters who identify as ...

Republican Democrat Independent



Republican/Lean Rep Democrat/Lean Dem



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Both groups of older voters are now more Republican than eight years ago. Today, voters 50-64 tilt Republican (48% identify with the GOP or lean Republican, while 46% identify with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic). Republicans hold a wide, 51% to 42% lead among voters 65 and older – an edge that is nine points greater than it was in 2008.

White voters – who were roughly divided in their partisan leanings eight years ago – are now much more likely to identify as Republican or lean Republican (54%) than to say they identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (39%).

And voters with no college experience – long a reliably Democratic bloc – are now split in their partisan preferences: 46% identify as Republican or lean Republican, while an identical 46% identify as Democrats or lean Democratic.

GOP gains in affiliation in Obama era came largely during his first term

% of each who identify as ...

Some of the sharpest movement toward the GOP has come among less educated and older whites. Whites with no college experience have become 14 points more likely to affiliate with the GOP since 2008, including a six-point shift over the last four years. White voters age 65 and older are now 13 points more likely to identify as Republican or lean Republican than they were eight years ago.

While the GOP has made gains overall and among key groups, there is no sign that Democratic affiliation is waning among the party's core constituents. College graduates, blacks and Hispanics are as likely to identify as Democrats or lean Democratic today as they were four or eight years ago.

And while older voters have moved increasingly toward the GOP in the Obama era, young voters remain overwhelmingly Democratic in their partisan affiliation. Today, nearly six-in-ten voters younger than 30 identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (59%), which is little changed from 2008 (60%).

	2008		2012		2016		08-12 change in 'Rep'	08-16 change in 'Rep'
	Rep/ Ln Rep	Dem/ Ln Dem	Rep/ Ln Rep	Dem/ Ln Dem	Rep/ Ln Rep	Dem/ Ln Dem		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
All voters	39	51	44	48	44	48	+5	+5
Men	44	46	48	44	51	41	+4	+7
Women	35	56	40	52	38	54	+5	+3
18-29	32	60	35	56	35	59	+3	+3
30-49	41	50	45	47	41	49	+4	0
50-64	40	51	44	49	48	46	+4	+8
65+	40	49	49	44	51	42	+9	+11
White	46	44	52	40	54	39	+6	+8
Black	6	88	7	88	7	87	+1	+1
Hispanic	27	63	29	62	27	63	+2	0
Asian	30	61	29	64	27	66	-1	-3
College grad+	41	51	43	50	41	53	+2	0
Some college	40	50	46	46	46	45	+6	+6
HS or less	36	53	43	48	45	46	+7	+9
<i>Among whites</i>								
Men	51	39	56	36	61	32	+5	+10
Women	42	49	48	44	47	46	+6	+5
18-29	42	49	45	46	46	50	+3	+4
30-49	48	42	54	39	52	39	+6	+4
50-64	45	45	51	41	57	37	+6	+12
65+	45	44	55	38	58	37	+10	+13
College grad+	46	46	48	46	47	48	+2	+1
Some college	48	43	56	37	57	36	+8	+9
HS or less	45	44	53	38	59	33	+8	+14

Notes: Based on registered voters. Percent not identifying with or leaning toward either party not shown. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Asians are non-Hispanic and English-speaking only.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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1. The changing composition of the political parties

Over the past quarter-century, the demographic profile of the U.S. has been changing: The country has become more racially and ethnically diverse, less likely to be affiliated with a religion, better educated and older. National demographic trends coupled with different patterns of party affiliation among demographic groups have fundamentally changed the makeup of the Republican and Democratic parties.

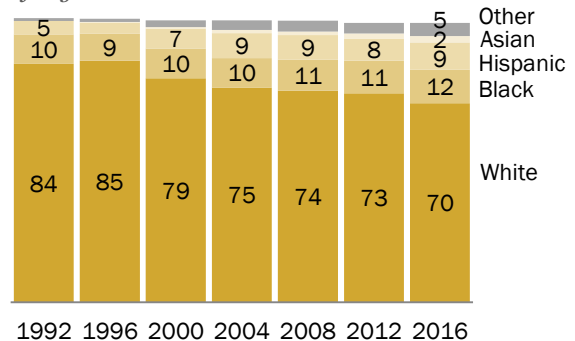
Overall, non-Hispanic whites now make 70% of all registered voters, down from 84% in 1992. The share of Hispanic voters has nearly doubled over this period: From 5% in 1992 to 9% today. The share describing their race as mixed race or “other” also has grown from 1% to 5%. Since 1992, the share of all voters who are black has edged up slightly from 10% to 12%.

The country’s growing racial and ethnic diversity has changed the composition of both the Republican and Democratic parties, but the impact has been much more pronounced among Democrats and Democratic leaners.

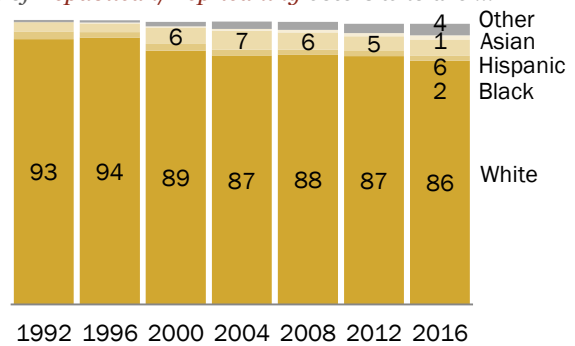
In 1992, 76% of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters were white, while 17% were black and just 6% were Hispanic. In surveys conducted thus far in 2016, the profile of Democratic voters has grown much more diverse: 57% are white, 21% are black, 12% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian and 5% describe themselves as mixed race or describe their

Racial and ethnic profile of voters

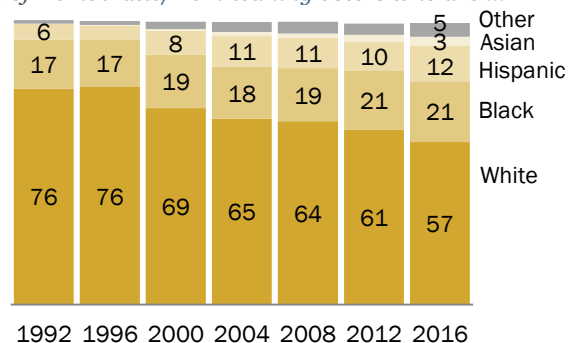
% of registered voters who are ...



% of *Republican/Rep-leaning* voters who are ...



% of *Democratic/Dem-leaning* voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Asians are non-Hispanic and English-speaking only. Other includes those who identify as more than one race.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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race as “other.”

The composition of Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters has also grown somewhat more diverse over the last 24 years, though the pace of change lags behind that of the country overall and the party remains overwhelmingly white. In 1992, 93% of Republican voters were white; that share has declined somewhat to 86% today. The share of Hispanic voters in the GOP has edged up from 3% to 6%. There has been no increase in the share of Republicans who are black; blacks made up 2% of all Republican voters in 1992 and make the same share of all GOP registered voters today.

The population is growing older due to longer life expectancy, the graying of the large Baby Boom generation, and a decline in birth rates since the Baby Boom. In 1992, the median age of all registered voters was 46; today the median age has risen to 50.

In 1992, the Republican Party was made up of somewhat younger voters than the Democratic Party. However, as the country has aged over the past 24 years, there has been a dramatic shift in the composition of the two coalitions, which has resulted in Republican and Republican-leaning voters now being a significantly older cohort than Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters.

In surveys conducted thus far in 2016, 58% of Republican voters are age 50 and older, compared with far fewer (41%) who are under age 50. This marks a flip of the party's age composition from 1992 when 61% of all GOP voters were under age 50 and just 38% were 50 and older.

The impact of an aging population has been less pronounced among Democratic and Democratic leaners. Today, 51% of Democratic voters today are under age 50, while 48% are 50 and older. In 1992, 57% were under age 50, compared with 42% who were age 50 and older.

In 1992, the median age of Republican voters was 46, while the median age of Democratic voters was 47. Today, the median age of Republican voters has increased six years, to age 52, while the median age of Democratic voters has increased one year, to 48.

Age profile of voters

% of registered voters who are ...

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	
65+	19	19	19	19	19	20	21	65+
50-64	21	21	23	25	27	31	30	50-64
30-49	40	42	40	39	37	32	31	30-49
18-29	19	16	17	15	16	15	16	18-29

% of Republican/Rep-leaning voters who are ...

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	
65+	19	18	18	18	19	23	25	65+
50-64	19	22	22	25	28	31	33	50-64
30-49	40	43	42	42	39	33	29	30-49
18-29	21	17	17	14	13	12	13	18-29

% of Democratic/Dem-leaning voters who are ...

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	
65+	19	20	20	20	18	19	19	65+
50-64	23	21	23	25	27	31	29	50-64
30-49	40	41	39	37	36	32	32	30-49
18-29	18	17	17	16	18	18	20	18-29

Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Over the past quarter-century, registered voters in the U.S. have become better educated. In 1992, half of voters had no college experience; today that share has fallen to 33%. At the same time, the share of voters with some college experience has risen from 26% to 33% and the share with at least a four-year college degree has grown from 23% to 33%.

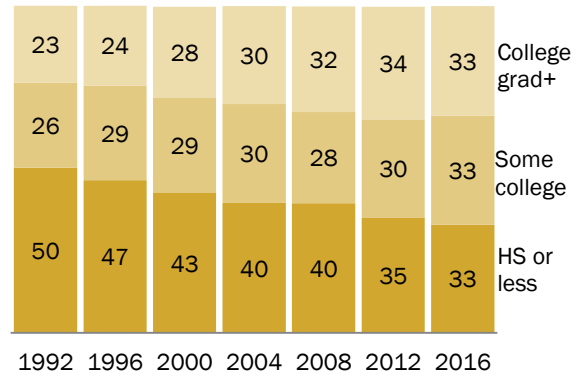
As the country has become better educated, the education profiles of the two parties have flipped: In 1992, Republican voters were much better educated than Democratic voters; today, Democrats are somewhat better educated than Republicans.

Among Republican voters, the share with a college degree has increased from 28% in 1992 to 31% in 2016; the share with some college experience, but no degree, has also grown from 28% to 35%. There has been a corresponding decline in the share with no college experience over this period (from 45% to 34%).

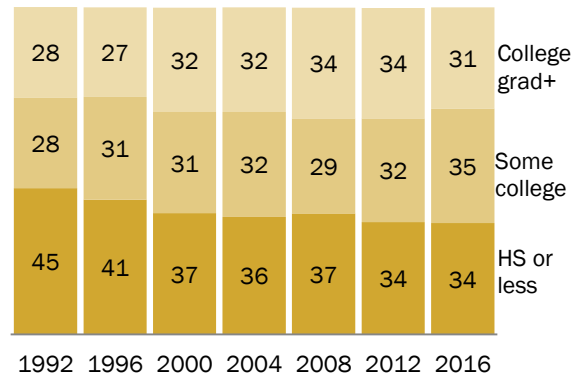
There has been a sharper increase among Democratic than Republican registered voters in the share who have at least a college degree. Overall, 37% of Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters have a college degree today, up 16 points from 1992 (21%), and higher than the 31% of Republican voters who are college educated. The share of Democrats and Democratic leaners with some college

Educational profile of voters

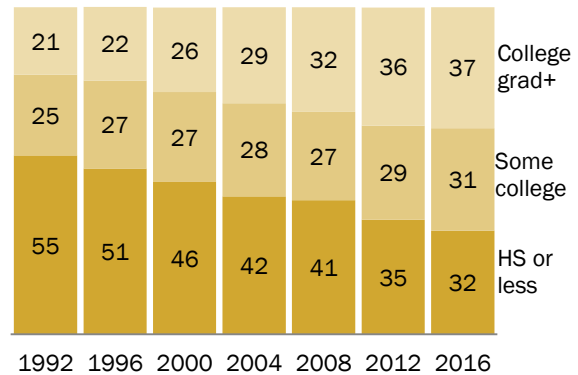
% of registered voters who are ...



% of Republican/Rep-leaning voters who are ...



% of Democratic/Dem-leaning voters who are ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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experience has increased from 25% to 31%. Those with no college experience – who made up a 55%-majority of Democratic voters in 1992 – now make up about a third of all Democratic registered voters (32%).

In 1992, a 63%-majority of all registered voters were whites without a college degree. Due to growing diversity and rising levels of education, the share of all voters who are non-college whites has fallen dramatically over the last 24 years, to 45% in 2016 surveys.

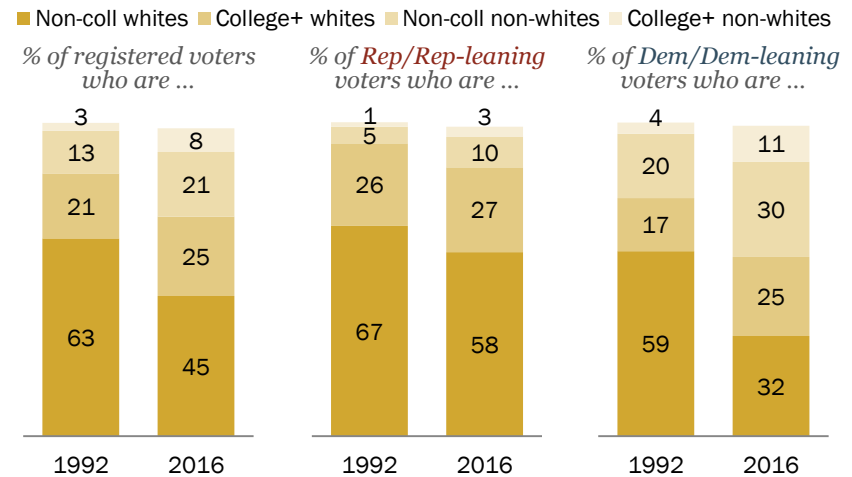
While the share of all voters who are non-college whites has fallen 18 points, the share who are whites with a college degree has edged up from 21% in 1992 to 25% today.

Non-whites now make up a larger share of all voters than they did in 1992 and this increase has occurred among both non-whites with a college degree (from 3% of all registered voters in 1992 to 8% in 2016) and non-whites without a college degree (from 13% to 21%).

The decline in the share of whites without a college degree has been far more pronounced within the Democratic than Republican Party. Non-college whites made up 59% of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters in 1992. Today, only about a third (32%) of Democratic voters are non-college whites.

Among Republicans, the decline has been more modest: 58% of all GOP voters today are non-college whites, which is a somewhat smaller majority than in 1992 (67%). As a result of these differential rates of change, the gap between the share of non-college whites in the Republican Party and Democratic Party has increased significantly from eight points in 1992 to 26 points today.

Non-college whites make up a much smaller share of Democratic voters than in 1992



Notes: Based on registered voters. Non-college includes all of those who do not have a degree from a four-year college or university.
 Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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The country’s religious landscape also has been shifting over the past few decades. One of the most fundamental changes has been the increase in the share of voters who do not affiliate with a religion (from 8% in 1996 to 21% in 2016).

The increase in the share of voters who do not identify with a religious group is occurring faster within the Democratic than Republican Party, moving the religious profiles of the two coalitions further apart from one another.

In 2016, nearly three-in-ten (29%) Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters are religiously unaffiliated – describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – up from just 10% in 1996.

Overall, 11% of Democratic voters are white mainline Protestants, 10% are white Catholics and 8% are white evangelical Protestants; all three of these groups make up much smaller shares of all Democratic voters than they did in 1996. Black Protestants make up 15% of all Democratic voters and Hispanic Catholics account for 6%; there has been no decline in the shares of these two groups.

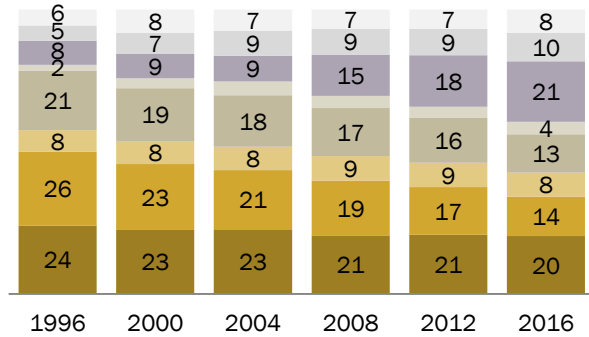
Shifts in the composition of the Republican Party have been more modest and GOP voters are now even more likely than Democratic voters to affiliate with a religion than they were 20 years ago. About a third (35%) of Republican voters are white evangelical Protestants, 18% are white Catholics, 17% are white mainline Protestants and 12% are religiously unaffiliated. The share of GOP voters that is unaffiliated has risen six points since 1996.

There has been little change in the share of all GOP voters who are white evangelical Protestants or

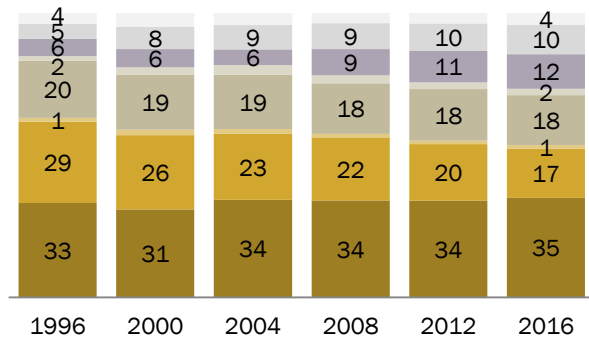
Changing religious profile of voters

■ White evang. ■ White mainline ■ Black Prot.
■ White Catholic ■ Hisp. Catholic ■ Unaffiliated
■ Other Christian ■ All others

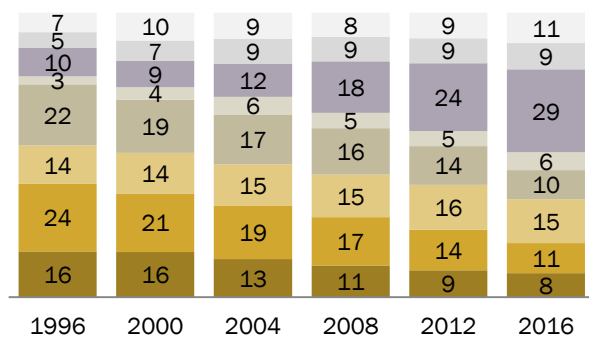
% of registered voters who are ...



% of Republican/Rep-leaning voters who are ...



% of Democratic/Dem-leaning voters who are ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. See appendix A for more details on religious category definitions. Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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white Catholics over the past two decades, but the share who are white mainline Protestants has declined 12 points.

2. Party affiliation among voters: 1992-2016

Overall, 48% of all registered voters identify as Democrats or lean Democratic compared with 44% who identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP.

While partisan preferences among all voters are narrowly split, there are wide gaps in leanings among demographic groups. There are fundamental differences in how men and women, young and old, whites, blacks and Hispanics describe their partisan leanings. In many cases, persistent differences have grown wider in recent years.

Wide race, gender differences in partisan leaning

There are wide differences in partisan affiliation between white, black and Hispanic registered voters. Partisan differences between these groups have been relatively stable in recent years, but are wider than they were in 2008 – a relative high point in Democratic affiliation – when white voters were less Republican in their partisan orientation than today.

Overall, 35% of white registered voters identify as independent, while about as many (36%) identify as Republican and fewer (26%) identify as Democratic.

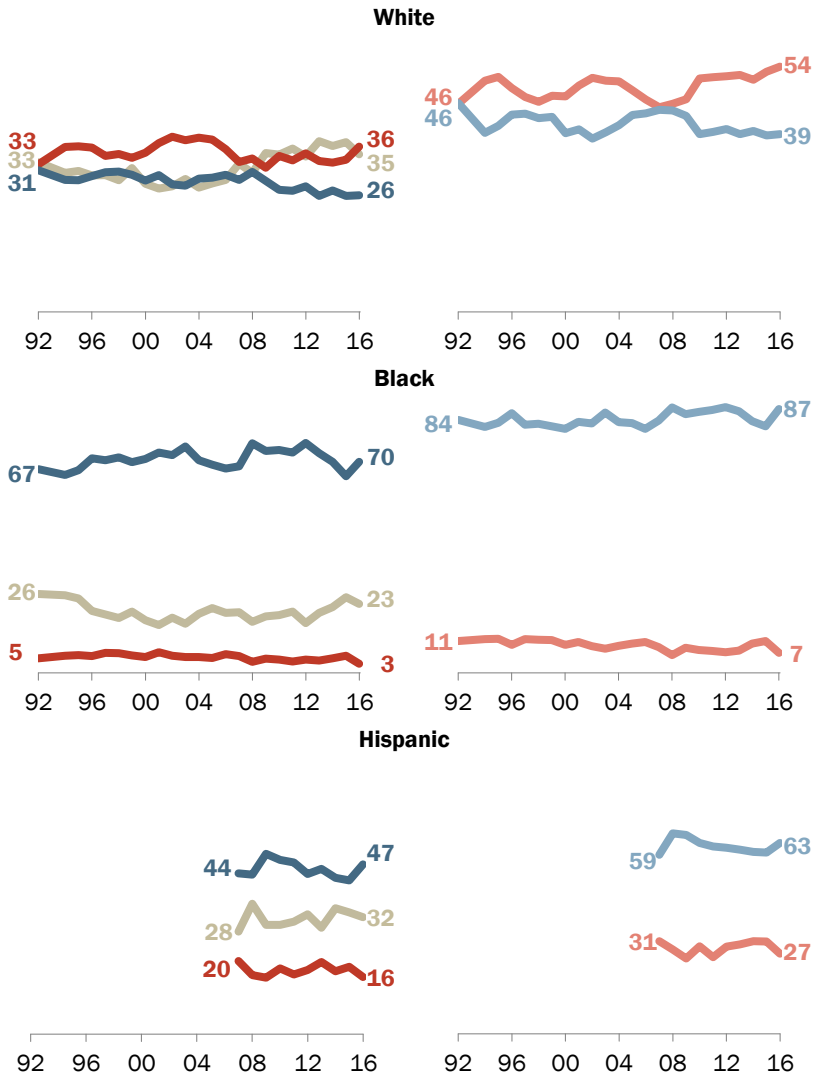
Partisan identification among whites is little changed since 2012. Since 2008, however, the share of white voters who identify as Democrats has declined five points, while the share who identify as independent has increased four points. There has been a slight two-point increase in the share identifying as Republican.

The Republican Party holds a sizable advantage in leaned

White voters increasingly lean toward the GOP

% of registered voters who identify as ...

Rep Dem Ind Rep/Ln Rep Dem/Ln Dem



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Data for Hispanics shown only for years in which interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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party affiliation among white voters. This year, 54% of white registered voters identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP, while just 39% affiliate with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic. While that represents only a modest shift since 2012, when Republicans led by a 12-point margin (52%-40%), in 2008 leaned partisan alignment among whites was closely divided (46% Republican, 44% Democratic). The current 15-point GOP edge in leaned partisan affiliation is as wide an advantage for the Republican Party among white voters as Pew Research Center has measured over the past 24 years.

Trends in party affiliation among black voters have been largely stable over recent years. Overall, 87% of black voters identify with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic, compared with just 7% who identify as Republican or lean Republican.

Among Hispanic voters, the Democratic Party holds a 63% to 27% advantage over the GOP in leaned party identification. As with black voters, trends in party affiliation among Hispanic voters have changed little in recent years.

Based on 2016 surveys, 66% of Asian registered voters identify with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic, compared with 27% who identify as Republican or lean Republican. The data for party identification among Asians are based on interviews conducted in English.

When it comes to gender and partisan preferences, the Republican Party has a significant advantage in leaned party identification among men, an edge that has widened in recent years, while the Democratic Party holds a large advantage among women.

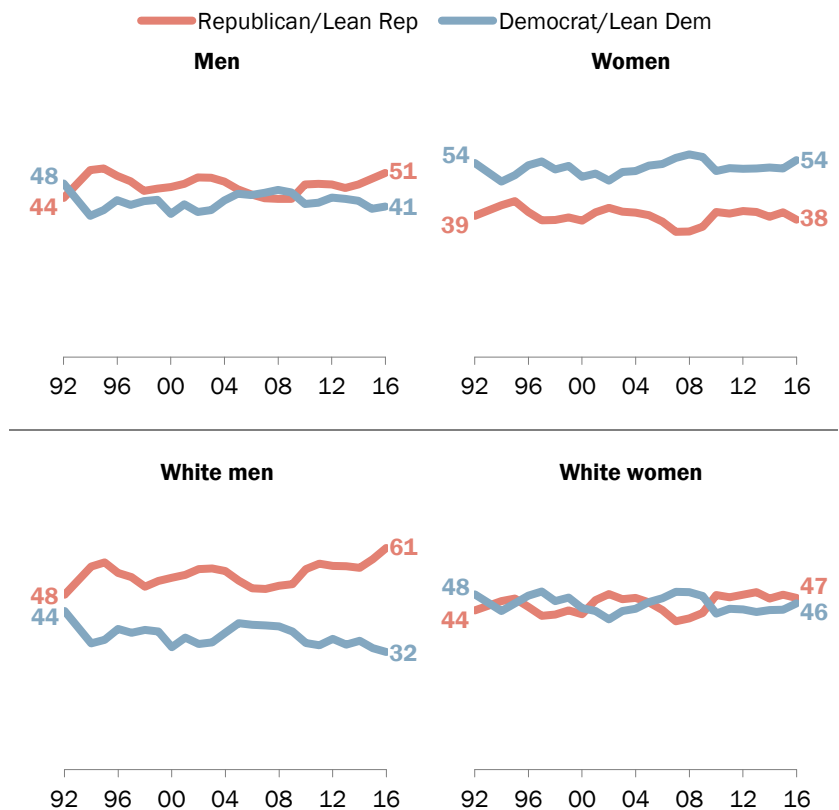
By 51% to 41%, more men identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP than identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. This marks a major change from 2008, when the Democratic Party briefly enjoyed a slight edge in leaned party identification among men (46%-44%). The current 10-point edge held by the Republican Party also is significantly higher than the four-point edge the GOP held in 2012.

More than half of women (54%) identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, compared with 38% who say they are Republican or lean Republican. Democrats have held a consistent advantage among women in leaned party identification in Pew Research Center surveys dating to 1992. The current 16-point edge is as large as it has been over the past several years, but somewhat smaller than the 21-point advantage the Democratic Party held among women in 2008.

Among white men, the Republican Party holds a wide 61% to 32% advantage in leaned party identification. The GOP advantage among white men is larger than it was in both 2008 (51%-39%) and 2012 (56%-36%).

Growing gender gap among white voters, as more white men align with the Republican Party

% of registered voters who identify as ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic. Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

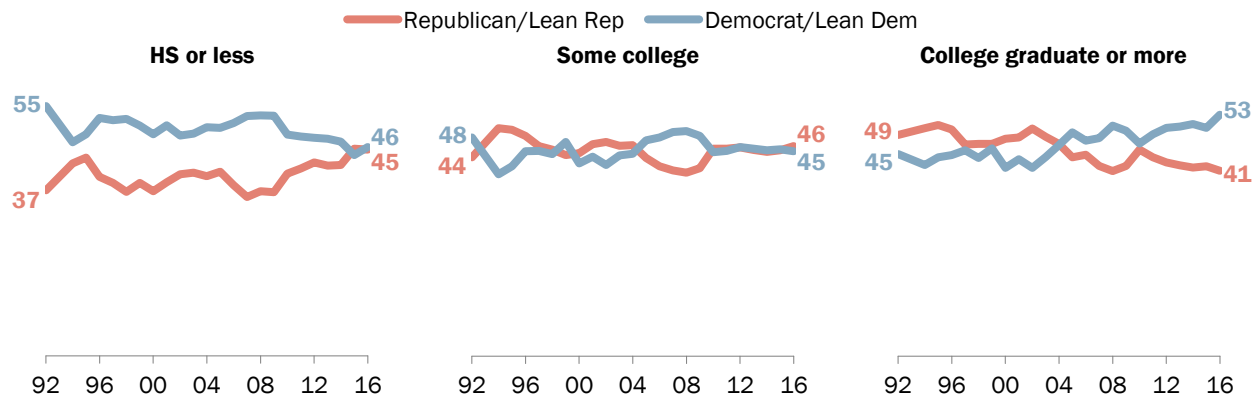
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Among white women, about as many registered voters identify as Republican or lean toward the Republican Party (47%) as say they identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (46%). Leaned party identification among white women has fluctuated over the past decade: in 2008, the Democratic Party held a 49% to 42% advantage in leaned party identification; in 2012, the Republican Party held a 48%-44% edge.

Democrats hold wide advantage among college graduates

Democrats gain ground with college graduates as less educated voters move toward the GOP

% of registered voters who identify as ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Trends in partisan identification among those with different levels of education have undergone major changes over the last two decades. Less-educated voters – once a strong Democratic bloc – have moved toward the Republican Party, while college graduates have moved toward the Democratic Party.

In 1992, Democrats held an 18-point advantage in leaned partisan identification among those with no more than a high school degree (55% vs. 37%). This Democratic advantage persisted through the 1990s and early 2000s but has evaporated over the course of the last eight years.

In 2008, the Democratic edge in leaned party affiliation among those with no college experience was 17 points: 53% said they identified as Democrats or leaned Democratic, compared with 36% who identified as Republican or leaned Republican. Today, the picture is dramatically different: 46% now identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, compared with about as many (45%) who identify as Republican or lean Republican.

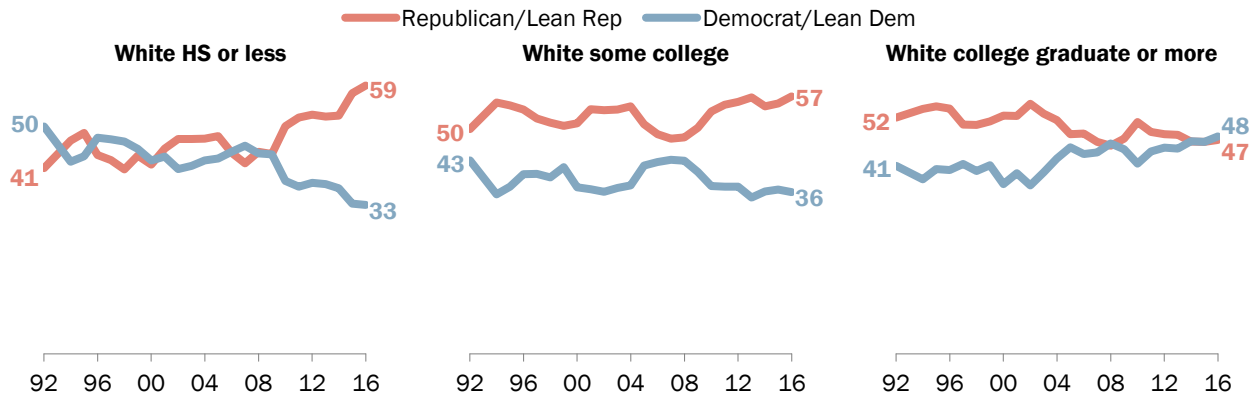
Patterns in party affiliation are the reverse among college graduates. The Democratic Party currently holds a 53% to 41% advantage in leaned party identification among voters with a college degree or more. In 1992, 49% of college graduates preferred the GOP, while 45% affiliated with the Democratic Party. The Republican Party began to lose ground among college graduates in the

second half of George W. Bush's first term, and by 2008, the Democratic Party held a 10-point edge in leaned party affiliation among college graduates (51% to 41%). The Democratic advantage narrowed by the midterm election year of 2010, but has reemerged over the last six years.

The partisan preferences of voters with some college experience, but no degree, are divided. In 2016, about as many identify as Republican or lean Republican (46%) as identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (45%). In 2008 – the Democratic Party's recent high-water mark in party affiliation – Democrats had a 10-point advantage in leaned party identification among those with some college experience. That edge was not long-lasting and disappeared by 2010.

White voters with no college experience move toward the Republican Party

% of white registered voters who identify as ...



Notes: Based on white registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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The Republican Party's gains among those with no college experience are particularly pronounced among white voters. Currently, 59% of whites with no college experience identify as Republican or lean Republican, compared with just 33% who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. This is a dramatic shift from 2007, when the Democratic Party held a slight 46% to 42% edge among non-college whites in partisan affiliation.

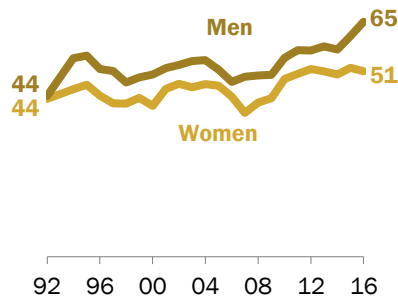
By contrast, white voters with at least a college degree are evenly divided in their leaned partisan affiliation (48% Democrat vs. 47% Republican). The balance of leaned party affiliation among white college graduates is about the same as it was in 2008 and 2012, but is less Republican than in 2010. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, white college graduates were significantly more likely to lean toward the Republican than Democratic Party.

The GOP holds a 21-point advantage today in partisan affiliation among white voters with some college experience but no degree (57% to 36%). The Republican Party has held an edge in leaned party affiliation among white voters with some college experience over each of the last 24 years. The current GOP advantage among whites with some college experience is comparable to the 19-point edge the party held in 2012 and larger than the five-point edge it held in 2008.

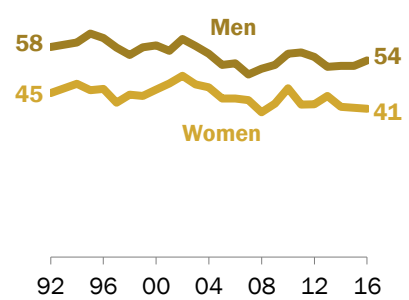
In 1992, an identical 44% of white men and white women who had not graduated from college identified as Republican or leaned Republican. Today, white men without a college degree (65%) are much more likely than white women without a college degree (51%) to identify as or lean Republican. The current gap between the two groups in Republican affiliation is as wide as it has been in the past quarter-century.

Nearly two-thirds of white non-college educated men identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP

% of white registered voters without a college degree who identify as/lean Republican ...



% of white registered voters with a college degree who identify as/lean Republican ...



Notes: Based on white registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic.
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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The gap in Republican affiliation among college educated white men and white women, by contrast, is about the same today as it has been over the course of the last 24 years. Overall, 54% of white men with a college degree identify as Republican or lean Republican, compared with 41% of white women with at least a college degree. The current 13-point gap in Republican affiliation between the two groups is the same as it was in 1992.

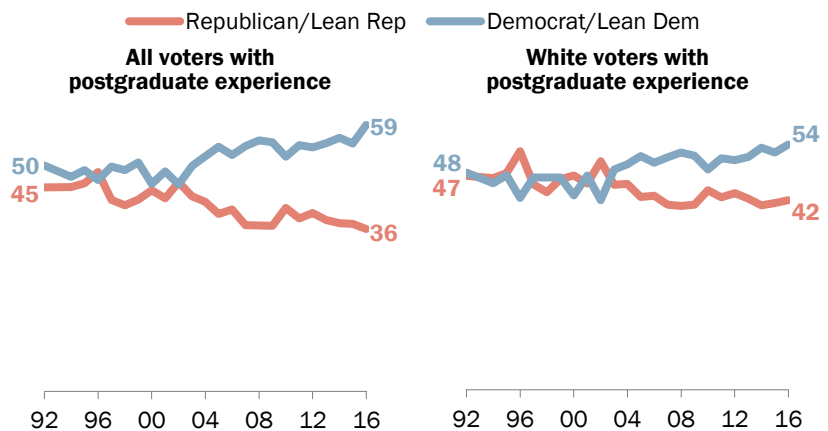
The overall Democratic advantage among voters who have graduated from college is driven in large part by the strong Democratic tilt of those with postgraduate experience. Nearly six-in-ten (59%) registered voters with postgraduate experience identify with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic, compared with far fewer (36%) who identify as Republican or lean Republican. The Democratic advantage among those with postgraduate experience began to emerge in George W. Bush's first term and is currently as wide as it has been in Pew Research Center surveys dating to 1992.

Among those who have received a college degree but do not have any postgraduate experience, the Democratic Party holds a more modest edge: Half identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, while 44% identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP.

Among white voters with postgraduate experience, the Democratic Party has a 54% to 42% advantage in leaned party identification. This is the only educational group among whites where the Democratic Party holds a significant edge over the GOP. Among whites with a college degree but no postgraduate experience, 50% identify with the Republican Party or lean that way, compared with 45% who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic.

Democratic advantage among registered voters with postgraduate experience

% of registered voters who identify as ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Party identification across generations

Among Millennials, the youngest adult generation (today ages 18-35), 41% identify as independents, compared with 34% who identify as Democrats and just 22% who identify as Republicans. The share of Millennials who identify as independent is up eight points since 2008.

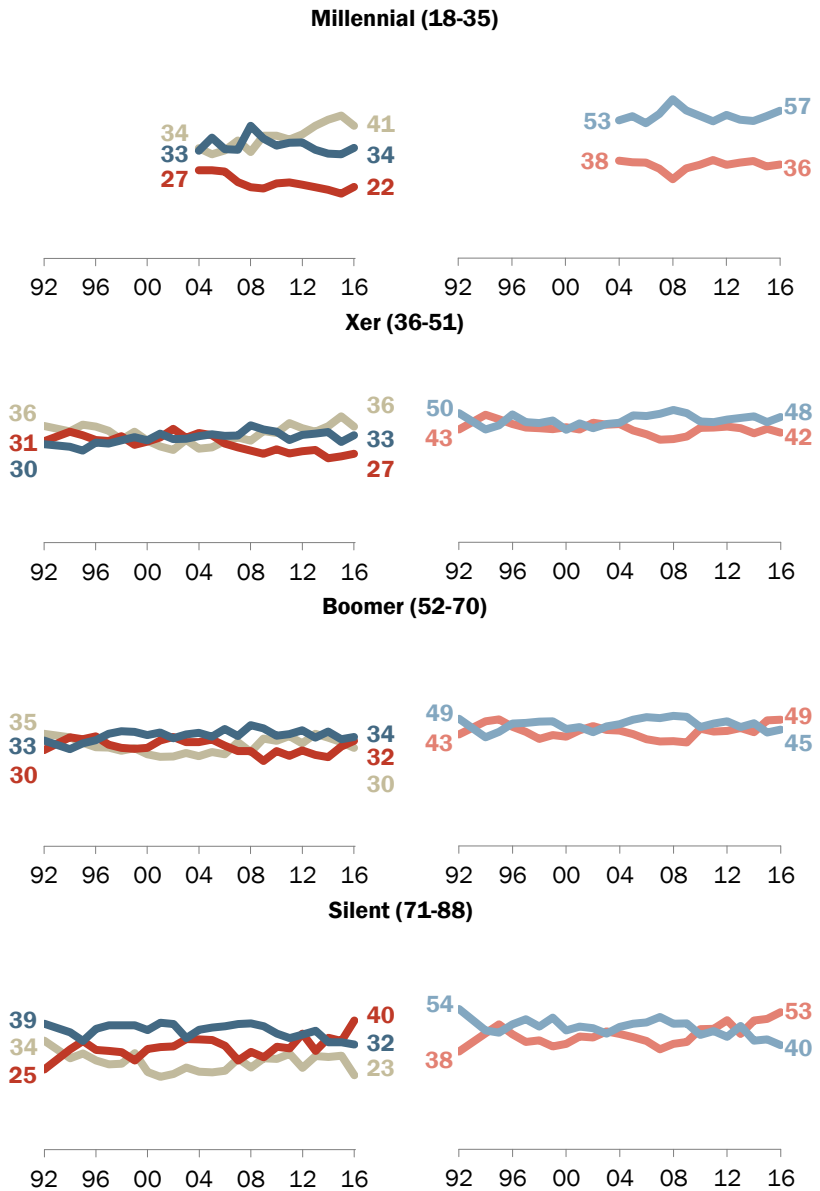
On leaned party affiliation, however, Millennials have a strong Democratic orientation. By 57% to 36% more Millennial voters identify as Democrats or lean Democratic than identify as Republican or lean Republican.

The partisan leanings of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers are more closely divided. Overall, somewhat more Gen Xers identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (48%) than identify as Republicans or lean Republican (42%). Among Baby Boomers, the GOP holds a slight 49% to 45% edge in leaned party affiliation. Gen Xers and Baby Boomers have been relatively split in their

Partisanship across generations

% who identify as ...

Rep Dem Ind Rep/Ln Rep Dem/Ln Dem



Notes: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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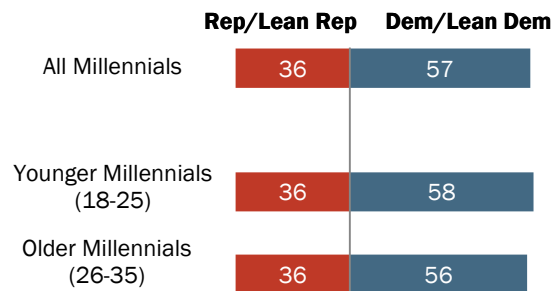
partisan leanings for much of the past 24 years, though the Democratic Party briefly held a fairly wide advantage among both groups between 2006 and 2008.

Among members of the Silent Generation, which includes voters who are today between the ages of 71 and 88, the Republican Party has opened a wide advantage in leaned party affiliation over the past several years. By 53% to 40% more members of the Silent Generation identify as or lean Republican than Democratic. This is the largest advantage for the GOP among Silent Generation voters in Pew Research surveys dating to 1992.

Millennials now match Baby Boomers as the generation that represents the [largest number of eligible voters in the country](#). While Millennials are a large and diverse cohort, there continues to be no sign of differences in partisanship among younger and older member of the generation. Similar shares of Millennials ages 18-25 (58%) and 26-35 (56%) identify as Democrats or lean towards the Democratic Party.

Strong Democratic leaning among both older and younger Millennial voters

% who identify as ...



Notes: Based on registered voters.

Source: Annual total of Pew Research Center surveys conducted January-August, 2016.

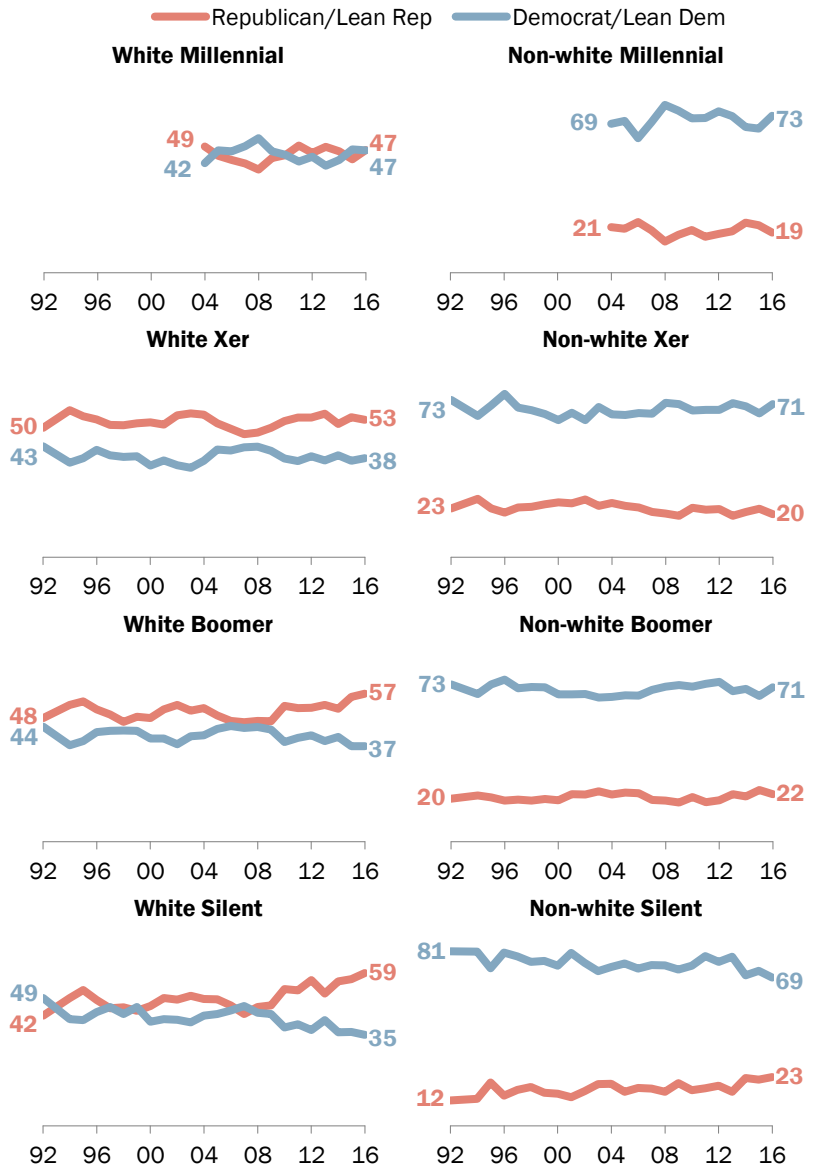
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Leaned party affiliation across generations among white and non-white registered voters

% who identify as ...

Among white voters, as many Millennials identify as Republican or lean Republican (47%) as say they identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (47%). Among all older generations, the GOP has a significant advantage in leaned party affiliation among white voters, including a 24-point edge among white voters in the Silent generation.

Among non-white voters, the Democratic Party holds a wide advantage in leaned party affiliation and there is little difference in patterns across generations. Roughly seven-in-ten non-white voters in each generation identify as Democrats or lean Democratic.



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic; non-whites include Hispanics.
 Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

Party identification across religious groups

White evangelical Protestants – long a solidly Republican group – have become even more likely to identify with the Republican Party in recent years. Currently, about three-quarters of white evangelicals (76%) identify with the GOP or lean Republican, compared with just 20% who are Democrats or lean Democratic. The share affiliating with the GOP is up 12 points since 2008, including a five-point uptick since 2012.

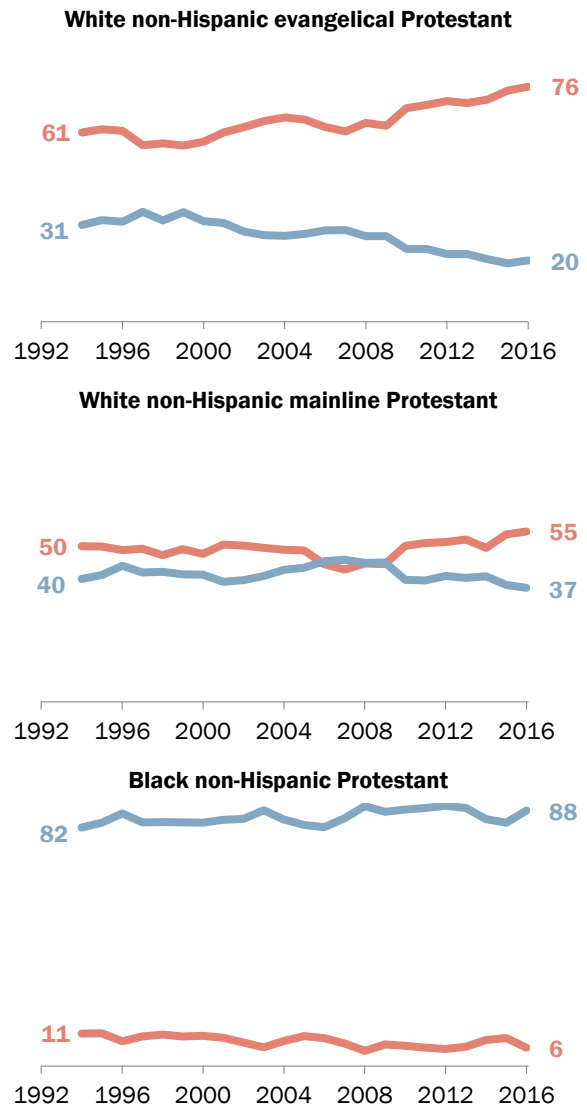
The partisan leanings of white mainline Protestants today are similar to those of white voters overall. By 55% to 37%, more affiliate with the GOP than Democratic Party. In 2008 – a recent high-point in Democratic affiliation – white mainline Protestants were divided: As many aligned themselves with the Democratic Party as the Republican Party (45% each). The Republican Party regained a significant advantage in leaned partisan affiliation among mainline Protestants by 2010 and the current 18-point GOP edge is as large as it's been in the last two decades.

Black Protestants remain solidly Democratic in their partisan orientation and there has been little change in their affiliation over the past few decades. Today, nearly nine-in-ten (88%) identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, while only 6% say they affiliate with the GOP.

Trends in leaned party affiliation among Protestants

% who identify as ...

Republican/Lean Rep Democrat/Lean Dem



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Catholics are split in their partisan preferences: About as many affiliate with the GOP (47%) as the Democratic Party (46%). The Democratic Party has traditionally enjoyed an advantaged in leaned party affiliation among all Catholics, but the GOP has made gains in recent years: 2013 marked the first time in about two decades that Catholics were no more likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party than the Republican Party.

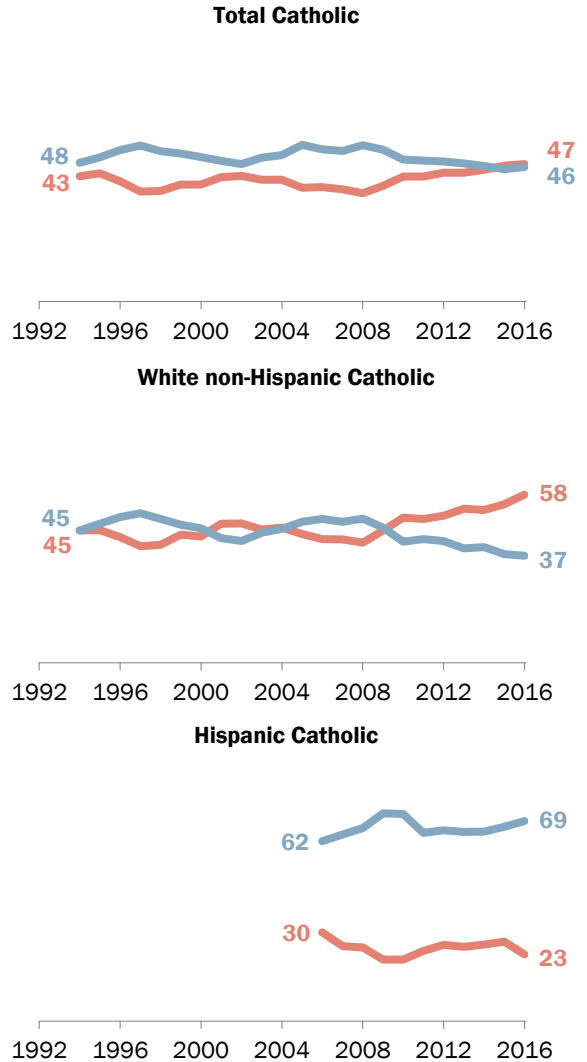
The shift among all Catholics toward the GOP has been driven by white Catholics. Nearly six-in-ten white Catholic registered voters (58%) now identify as Republican or lean Republican, compared with 37% who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. White Catholics are 17 points more likely to affiliate with the GOP than they were in 2008 and eight points more likely than there were in 2012.

Hispanic Catholics remain overwhelmingly Democratic in their partisan preferences: Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party. About a quarter (23%) of Hispanic Catholics affiliate with the GOP.

Trends in leaned party affiliation among Catholics

% who identify as ...

Republican/Lean Rep Democrat/Lean Dem



Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Data for Hispanics shown only for years in which interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

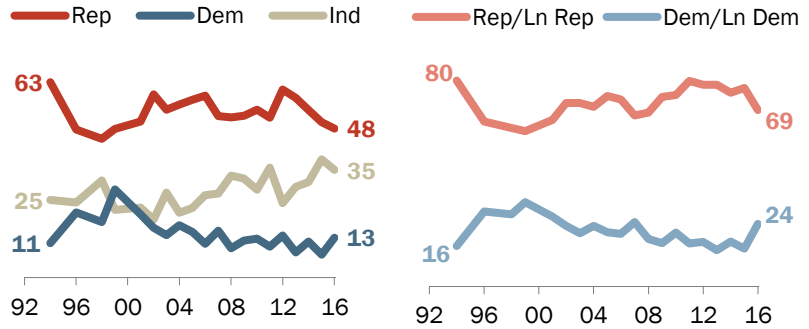
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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The share of Mormons identifying as Republican has edged down slightly in the last four years. Currently, about half of Mormons (48%) describe themselves as Republicans, while 35% say they are independents and just 13% identify as Democrats. In 2012, when Mitt Romney was the GOP nominee for President, 61% of Mormons identified as Republicans.

Modest decline in Mormons' Republican orientation

% of Mormon registered voters who identify as ...



Note: Based on registered voters.
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

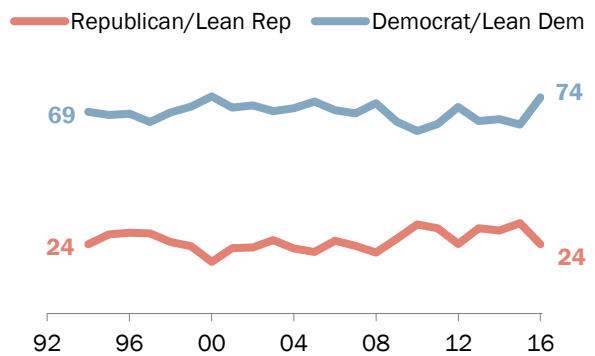
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On leaned party affiliation, 69% of Mormons identify as Republican or lean toward the GOP. This also marks a slight decline from 2012 when 78% of Mormons affiliated with or leaned toward the Republican Party.

Jewish registered voters continue to strongly prefer the Democratic Party over the GOP. Overall, 74% of Jewish voters identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party, compared with 24% who identify as Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party. The share of Jews who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic has grown slightly over the past few years, though the balance of leaned party affiliation among Jewish voters is about the same as it was in 2008.

Jewish voters' strong Democratic tilt

% of Jewish registered voters who identify as ...



Note: Based on registered voters.
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

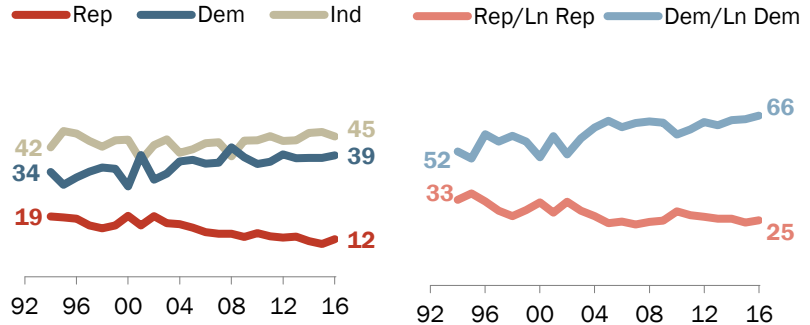
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Among voters who do not affiliate with a religious group, 45% identify as independent, compared with 39% who identify as Democrats and just 12% who identify as Republican.

Religiously unaffiliated voters continue to be overwhelmingly Democratic in their orientation. About two-thirds (66%) identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, compared with 25% who identify or lean Republican. In 1994, the Democratic Party held a somewhat smaller 52% to 33% edge among religiously unaffiliated voters.

Wide Democratic advantage among religiously unaffiliated registered voters

% of religiously unaffiliated registered voters who identify as ...



Note: Based on registered voters.
 Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data; 2016 data based off surveys conducted January-August.

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Acknowledgements

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Methodology

The analysis of changes in party identification over time is based on a compilation of 253 surveys and over 340,000 interviews among registered voters conducted by the Pew Research Center from January 1992 to August 2016. These surveys are combined into one large data file that can be sorted according to a range of demographic characteristics, with comparisons made across different time periods. Yearly totals are calculated by combining all surveys for the calendar year, with appropriate weights applied. The table below shows the number of surveys and interviews conducted each year as well as the margin of error for each yearly sample.

Year	Number of surveys	Sample size	Margin of error
1992	6	6,392	1.4
1994	6	7,696	1.3
1995	4	5,079	1.6
1996	7	7,988	1.2
1997	9	8,907	1.2
1998	13	15,223	0.9
1999	10	11,102	1.1
2000	11	15,662	0.9
2001	10	9,985	1.1
2002	11	14,215	0.9
2003	12	11,658	1.0
2004	15	20,162	0.8
2005	13	17,142	0.9
2006	14	19,850	0.8
2007	12	16,881	0.9
2008	16	26,126	0.7
2009	13	18,469	0.8
2010	12	20,182	0.8
2011	12	15,644	0.9
2012	12	18,779	0.8
2013	10	12,849	1.0
2014	12	19,436	0.8
2015	8	13,332	1.0
2016	5	8,113	1.2

Appendix A: Religious category definitions

The “Other Christian” category includes other minority Protestants as well as Protestants who declined to provide their race and a few white Protestants who were not asked the evangelical/born-again question; other minority Catholics as well as Catholics who declined to provide their race; Mormons; and Orthodox Christians. The “All others” category includes Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, members of other faiths, and those who declined to provide their religion; individually, each of these groups accounts for 2% or less of all registered voters.

Religious category definitions

White evangelical Protestant
 White mainline Protestant
 Black Protestant
 White Catholic
 Hispanic Catholic
 Religiously unaffiliated
 Other Christian
Other Protestants
Other Catholics
Mormons
Orthodox Christians
 All others
Jewish
Muslim
Buddhist
Hindu
Other non-Christian faiths
DK/Ref

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