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How Influential Were U.S Political Parties On Voters In The Most Recent Presidential Elections?

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Abstract

Party identification has been a part of how we run our elections for more than 100 years, and it has been a steady solid influence on who voters decide to elect in U.S presidential elections for just as long. My research specifically examines how party identification affected vote choice in the most recent presidential elections and how that relationship either changed or did not change in the last four presidential election cycles, with the recent polarization of the parties. I compared what party voters were registered under in that election to who voters voted for in each election, with the Democratic candidate, the Republican candidate, and third-party candidates for the full picture. Using cross tabulations analysis, I tested the hypotheses that whichever party voters are registered for, the votes for the candidate in that party will increase. Which would help to show the polarization. My findings indicate that party identification has remained an influence that has not had any major change happen in connection with the vote choice for president, so the influence between party identification and vote choice in the most recent presidential elections stayed steady as compared to past elections.

Objectives of the Study

- ~To analyze the effect that party identification (Democrat or Republican) has had on who voters chose to vote for in the four most recent U.S presidential elections, and if it has been different than from other elections.
- ~ To evaluate the partisan divide between the two main political parties that has prevalent in the past elections, and how it is possibly more divided in the two most recent elections than the others.

Methodology

- ~ To test the relationship between party identification and vote choice, I conducted four cross tabulations analyses.
- ~ The data to conduct this analysis all came from the American National Election Study (ANES), from four different election years: 2020, 2016, 2012, and 2008.

Results: Party ID and Vote Choice in the 2020 U.S Presidential Election Cross Tabulations

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Joe Biden	71.1%	7.7%	27.9%
Donald Trump	2.3%	64.2%	16.5%
Jo Jorgenson	0.3%	0.9%	2.6%
Howie Hawkins	0.3%	0.1%	0.9%
P-value (chi-square)	.000		*Missing % = non-answers/not applicable
Lambda	.447		
Cramer's V	.532		

Results: Party ID and Vote Choice in the 2016 U.S Presidential Election Cross Tabulations

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Hillary Clinton	89.9%	7.4%	40.5%
Donald Trump	6.9%	87.1%	45.9%
Gary Johnson	1.8%	2.7%	8.4%
Jill Stein	0.7%	2.5%	2.6%
P-value (chi-square)	.000		*Missing % = non-answers/not applicable
Lambda	.293		
Cramer's V	.292		

Results: Party ID and Vote Choice in the 2012 U.S Presidential Election Cross Tabulations

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Barack Obama	73.7%	5.7%	33.4%
Mitt Romney	4.3%	73.2%	27.5%
Other	0.6%	1.2%	3.7%
P-value (chi-square)	.000		*Missing % = non-answers/not applicable
Lambda	.313		
Cramer's V	.328		

Results: Party ID and Vote Choice in the 2008 U.S Presidential Election Cross Tabulations

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Barack Obama	70.8%	6.7%	35.7%
John McCain	4.3%	71.8%	19.3%
Other	0.7%	0.5%	1.8%
P-value (chi-square)	.000		*Missing % = non-answers/not applicable
Lambda	.263		
Cramer's V	.299		

Conclusions

- ~ People who identify with a specific party, the person that they vote for in that election is most likely running in that party.
- Ex: in 2020, a citizen is registered as a Democrat, it is very, very likely they voted for Joe Biden over the other candidates.
- ~ The third-party candidates in all the elections analyzed seem to not have really any substantial impact on the spread of the votes, since their percentages are so minimal compared to the main candidates from either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party in all the elections analyzed.
- ~ Independent voters do have an impact on who gets elected that year, if you look at who won compared to how Independents voted between all the candidates percentage-wise.
- ~ It seems that is a more cemented partisan divide in the 2016 presidential election than in the other election years being analyzed.
- What could have caused this difference may have been the Republican candidate Donald Trump, which has been stated in the public discourse, but that is hard to determine from this research alone.
- ~ By looking at the data shown, it looks like partisanship played the same role that it has always played throughout the history of studied elections.

Future Research:

- ~ Possible future research could be done on specifically the 2016 election, to look into what they partisan divide was bigger than in the other elections.
- ~ There will be more presidential elections to come, so there will be more data to analyze to gain more insight on how party will continue to affect the voting choices of U.S. citizens.
- ~ Another possible future route of analysis of this topic is by looking at different segments of the population as those population segments pertain to what party they are in and who they voted for in these specific elections.

