2017-05-10

Has Party Identification Changed in Utah?

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Has Party Identification Changed In Utah?  
An Analysis of Utah Party Identification from 2012 to 2016

Introduction
Three weeks before the 2016 election, Utah was labeled as a swing state by most mainstream media outlets. The offensive rhetoric from both the Trump and Clinton campaigns and the rise of a popular independent candidate increased the potential for changes in the party identity of the Utah electorate. My research question is as follows:

How has each 2012 party ID group changed in 2016?

Data and Methods
While working with a group called the Utah Colleges Exit Poll, I helped organize and implement a survey of approximately 29,000 Utah voters in the 2016 election. Each voter responded with a self-assessment question about their current and past party identification. They also responded to a variety of opinion and demographic questions. These voter responses provide the basis for this analysis.

Changes By Demographic

Percent Change by Party ID 2012 to 2016

- Active LDS Republicans drop significantly in 2016; however, most people move toward independent leaning Republican instead of a Democratic identity
- Hispanics shift toward independent leaning Democrat more than any other group. They do not move toward conservative identities
- Millennials decrease in the strong partisan groups and increase significantly in the independent groups
- Females moved from the strong partisans and increased in identification groups closer to the center

Why did some people leave their 2012 party?
- Republicans left their party because of a poor view of Trump or a positive view of Clinton, and Obama
- Millennials were more likely to leave the Republican Party
- McMullin had no effect on leaving either party
- Democrats left their party mainly because of a negative view of Clinton
- The logit analysis below explains the details of why some people left their party.
- The binary dependent variable is whether or not someone left their 2012 party
- Independent leaners are included in the party

Conclusion and Limitations
- Utah voters are shifting away from strong partisan identities toward independent identities
- Many Utah voters were dissatisfied with the 2016 candidates and may have shifted party ID as a result

Limitations
- Small shifts in party identification do not signify a permanent adjustment or realignment
- This analysis is prone to bias because of the self-assessment question measuring party ID in 2012
- Permanent shifts are difficult to discover without future data

Data Source: Utah Colleges Exit Poll 2016