



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

Turning Questions Into Answers.

TO: McCAIN CAMPAIGN
FROM: BILL McINTURFF / LIZ HARRINGTON / DAVID KANEVSKY
RE: RECENT LOS ANGELES TIMES SURVEY
DATE: JUNE 25, 2008

1. Party identification on the most recent Los Angeles Times survey is out of line with what most other public polls are showing.

The L.A. Times survey has party identification at 22% Republican, 39% Democrat, and 27% Independent.

The first major concern is that leaves 12% of the survey's sample unaccounted for. Having double digits don't know or refused on party ID is a quite unusual finding. Furthermore, since the LA Times does not release other demographics like age and ethnicity, it becomes very difficult for an independent observer to verify whether a survey is methodologically flawed or simply an outlier in public opinion trends.

Second, party identification is greatly out of line with what most other surveys are reporting. Most surveys have a party ID gap in the high single digits / low double digits.

Party Identification (without leaners)						
Survey	Sample	Dates	%GOP	%Dem	%Ind	Party ID D/s
NPR	N=800 LV	May 7-8 & 10	29%	37%	34%	-8
Democracy Corps	N=1,014 LV	May 13-15	32%	44%	24%	-12
CBS News / New York Times	N=861 RV	May 30 – June 3	24%	38%	31%	-14
Hotline / Diego	N=806 RV	June 5-8	27%	34%	32%	-7
NBC News / Wall Street Journal	N=1,071 RV	June 6-9	24%	33%	37%	-9
RT Strategies	N=880 RV	June 12-15	28%	36%	30%	-8
ABC News / Washington Post	N=1,125 Adults	June 12-15	37%	43%	19%	-6
AP / Ipsos	N=1,000 Adults	June 12-16	23%	37%	38%	-14
USA Today / Gallup	N=1,624 Adults	June 15-19	28%	36%	36%	-8
Fox News	N=900 RV	June 17-18	35%	42%	16%	-7
Survey Average			28.7%	38.0%	29.7%	-9.3

In addition, the PEW Research Center released data from the first two months of 2008 which showed that across 5,566 interviews with registered voters, party ID is 27% Republican, 36% Democrat, and 37% Independent. Given the large sample size, that is a useful barometer by which to measure party identification.

2. *If the L.A. Times survey is recalculated to a more normalized range for party identification, McCain would be down in the mid-single digits, which is what we are seeing in most other polls.*

McCain's double digit deficit is not a reflection of reality, simply a result of an unusual party identification result in this survey. The L.A. Times own survey shows that in a head-to-head match-up, McCain is winning the Independents, the crucial swing vote, by eight points (44% McCain – 36% Obama). Given what we are seeing in other surveys, it is almost impossible to believe that McCain is ahead among independents by eight points, yet losing by double digits.

If party identification on the L.A. Times survey is recalculated to just down by ten (29% GOP / 39% Dem / 27% Ind / 5% Don't Know/Refused), the ballot would be 40% McCain – 47% Obama.

3. *Party identification is out of line with historical trends.*

While most pollsters will acknowledge that party identification does shift over time, and that Republican identification has declined since 2004, the party identification gap on the recent L.A. Times poll is neither born out by other recent public polls or historical trends.

Exit Polls Election Year	% GOP	% Dem	% Ind	D / s
1976	22%	37%	41%	-15
1980	28%	43%	23%	-15
1984	35%	38%	26%	-3
1988	35%	37%	26%	-2
1992	35%	38%	27%	-3
1996	35%	40%	22%	-5
2000	35%	39%	26%	-4
2004	37%	37%	26%	0

Even in 2006, when Democrats made big gains in the Congressional elections, Democrats had just a two point advantage on party ID (36% GOP / 38% Dem / 26% Ind).

The Bottom Line

It is important that both the campaign, as well as reporters covering the campaign, not over-react to every single survey that is released.

The key for the campaign is to make sure that when the media is reporting on survey results, that they look beyond the horse race but also look at the survey's methodology and demographics. We are now seeing polls, like the L.A. Times and Newsweek surveys, which are getting heavy coverage in the press, even though they clearly showed unusual results on party identification, as well as other demographics like age, in the case of the Newsweek survey.

Our hope would be that on all public surveys that important variables like party, race, age, education and gender be shared with the public. By releasing these demographics, it will help all those who cover the campaign make better and more informed decisions about methodological differences that can account for these types of results.