

Methodological Report American Jewish Population 2015: Political Orientation

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Nearly all of the surveys (255 of 257 surveys, n=283,000 respondents) in the current Jewish population data synthesis included questions about political orientation, in particular, party identification (Democrat/Republican) and views (Liberal/Conservative). Even among surveys that were on general topics of social issues, these two questions were included as background variables. Similar to our synthesis of data to estimate the Jewish population, data across these surveys were statistically combined to describe the distribution of party identification and political views within the Jewish population, as well as for the population overall.

For each of question (party identification and political views), three separate population models were run. The first two models were used to establish population “base rates” of the distributions of Democrats & Republicans (or Liberals & Conservatives), where population base rate is defined as the prevalence among all US adults, not just within the Jewish population. These models employed the same method as our Jewish population models, multilevel Bayesian regression models with poststratification. Geographic and demographic variables related to sampling were included as covariates. For political variables, unlike Jewish population models, there were more interactions among covariates that needed to be included. For example, there were significant interactions of race/ethnicity with age, sex and educational attainment. The results from these first two models were used to infer the base rates of the third category of outcome “Neither”, that is, the remaining proportion of adults who identify with neither of the two major US political parties.

In addition to the two models used to establish base rates within the population as a whole, a third model was then run to describe the distribution of political party identification within the Jewish population. This was obtained by adding the party identification (Repub/Dem/Neither) to our standard Jewish population model.

Although there are no published statistics on the distribution of self-identified political party identification and political views for the geographic areas used in our models, the results from these data synthesis models yield similar distributions nationally as those observed and reported in other nationally representative samples (see Table 1).

The data synthesis yields an estimate of 36% of US adults identifying as Democrat, 25% as Republican and 39% identifying with neither party. This latter group includes those who identify as Independents, with no party, or with other particular parties such as Libertarian or the Green party. These estimates are similar to estimates currently reported on the Huffington Post Pollster, which estimates 36% Democrat, 29% Republican and 37% Independent or other identification. The Huffington Post Pollster estimates are based on a combination of data across 90 different polling organizations.

Also included in Table 1 are data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the General Social Survey (GSS) -- each pooled over the sets of years covered by the data synthesis. For the ANES this includes data from 2008 and 2012. For the GSS this includes data from 2008, 2010 and 2012. Each the ANES and the GSS represent small sample sizes relative to sources

that pool over many surveys such as the SSRI data synthesis and the Huffington Post Pollster. The ANES and the GSS yield similar estimates, however, to Pew, which is based on a pooling of Pew’s own surveys. All of these sources provide similar estimates of the proportion of adults who identify as Republican, between 23% and 25% as observed in the data synthesis. They provide somewhat lower estimates of the proportion who identify as Democrat (32%-33%) compared to 36% in the data synthesis; and higher estimates of those who identify with neither party (41%-45%) compared to 39% in the data synthesis.

Table 1. Comparison of Data Synthesis Party ID and Political Views to Other Sources.

	Party ID		
	Democrat	Republican	Other
SSRI Data Synthesis	36.3 (36.1,36.5)	25.1 (24.9,25.2)	38.7 (38.4,38.9)
Huffington Post Pollster	35.5	28.4	37.0
ANES 2008-2012	33.7 (32.0,35.6)	25.0 (23.2,26.8)	41.3 (39.4,43.3)
GSS 2008-2014	33.1 (32.0,34.3)	23.5 (22.4,24.5)	43.4 (42.2,44.6)
Pew ¹	32.0	23.0	45.0
	Political Views		
	Liberal	Moderate/DK	Conservative
SSRI Data Synthesis	23.8 (23.6,24.0)	37.0 (36.7,37.2)	39.3 (39.1,39.5)
Gallup 2014	24.0	38.0	38.0
ANES 2008-2012	28.0 (26.0,30.0)	29.8 (28.8,31.9)	42.2 (40.0,44.5)
GSS 2008-2014	26.7 (25.7,27.8)	38.8 (37.5,40.0)	34.5 (33.3,35.7)
Pew ²	24.0	40.0	36.0

Notes. 1) Pew Deep Dive into Party Affiliation, 2014, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/07/a-deep-dive-into-party-affiliation/>

2) Pew Religious Landscape Survey, 2014 <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/political-ideology/>

Sources: Huffington Post Pollster: <http://elections.huffingtonpost.com/pollster/party-identification>

Gallup 2014: http://www.gallup.com/poll/180452/liberals-record-trail-conservatives.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_content=heading&utm_campaign=syndication

American National Election Studies (2012).

General Social Survey (2015).

For Political Views, the SSRI data synthesis yields similar estimates of the percentage of US adults who identify as Liberal (24%), Conservative (39%), and Moderate (37%) as does a report based on a synthesis of data from Gallup (24%, 38% & 38%, respectively). The data synthesis also yields similar estimates to the large (n ~ 35,000) nationally representative sample from the Pew Religious Landscape Survey (2014). Both the ANES and GSS estimates are somewhat

higher in the percentage of US adults who identify as Liberal. The ANES yields an estimate of of conservative that is substantially higher than all other sources.

In sum, there is variability across all sources in estimates of party identification and political ideology and no single sources provides a definitive estimate of the true underlying population total. The SSRI data synthesis, however, provides an estimate across the greatest range of data sources, including representative samples of surveys from Pew, Gallup, the ANES, the GSS, as well as other sources such as ABC and CBS news polls, the Annenburg National Election Survey, and other independent sources.

References

- American National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org) TIME SERIES CUMULATIVE DATA FILE [dataset]. Stanford University and the University of Michigan [producers and distributors], 2012. These materials are based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Numbers: SBR-9707741, SBR-9317631, SES-9209410, SES-9009379, SES-8808361, SES-8341310, SES-8207580, and SOC77-08885. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organizations.
- General Social Survey. Smith, Tom W, Peter Marsden, Michael Hout, and Jibum Kim. General Social Surveys, 1972-2012 [machine-readable data file] Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigator, Peter V. Marsden; Co-Principal Investigator, Michael Hout; Sponsored by National Science Foundation. --NORC ed.-- Chicago: NORC at the University of Chiago [producer]; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut [distributor], 2015.