



## VOTER REGISTRATION IN ORANGE COUNTY: 2000-2008

### INTRODUCTION

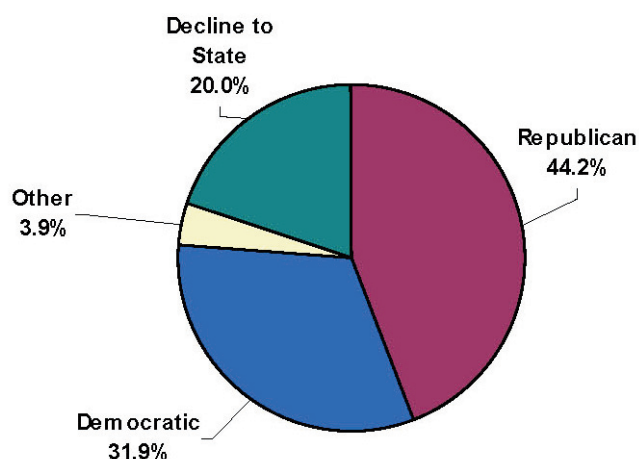
A high level of citizen involvement improves the accountability of government and increases personal investment in community issues. The most traditional way for citizens to engage in civic activities is by voting. This action allows them to voice their opinions, which impacts the future at the local, state, and national levels in regards to elected officials, propositions, public works, taxation, etc. Because of this, it is important to look at the voter registration patterns and trends. This issue of *Profiles* will look at new voter registration in Orange County and the makeup of all registered voters by jurisdiction. Attention will be given to how new voter registration has fluctuated in recent years and how Orange County registrations compare to other Southern California counties. In addition, this issue will show new voter registration rises considerably during the year of a national presidential election in the United States and that the election cycles during this decade were no different.

### TOTAL REGISTERED VOTERS

Orange County has historically been known as a predominately Republican county with 44.2% of its voters registering as Republican (Figure 1). Another third (31.9%) of County voters are registered as Democrats and one-fifth (20.0%) of registered voters declined to state their party affiliation during registration. The remaining 3.9% of voters are registered with various other political parties.

In Southern California, Riverside County shows a similar share of party registration with Republican being the dominant party affiliation at 41.9%, followed by Democrat at 36.7% and 17.1% declining to state. Democrats lead the shares of total registered voters in Imperial (52.6%) and Los Angeles (51.8%). San Bernardino County had an equal share of registered Republicans and Democrats, about 39% each. San Diego County had a similar occurrence where total registered voters for both parties were about 36% each. Voters declining to state their affiliation averaged about 20% for southern counties and on average about 4% are affiliated with other political parties.

Figure 1  
Orange County Total Voter Registration, 2008



Source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, November 2008

### NEW VOTER REGISTRATION: 2000-2008

Each year, new voters register to vote along with listing their party affiliation. Since 2000, there have been notable shifts in new voter registrations for Southern California counties. For the six counties, annual voter registration increased by 47.7% between 2000 and 2008 from 586,072 to 865,367. New registrations for Republicans stayed at about 200,000, dropping only 1.8% from 2000 to 2008. New Democratic registrations increased in Southern California by 61.1%, from 262,402 to 422,314. Those declining to state their party affiliation doubled from 99,138 to 198,287 and other party affiliations increased 108.5% from 21,765 to 45,377.

Figure 2 shows the shares of new registrations by Southern California counties for 2000 and 2008. Riverside (32.5%), Orange (31.4%) and San Diego (25.7%) counties reported the largest share of newly

registered Republicans. Los Angeles (58.9%), Imperial (52.4%) and San Bernardino (49.8%) reported the largest shares of new Democratic registrations.

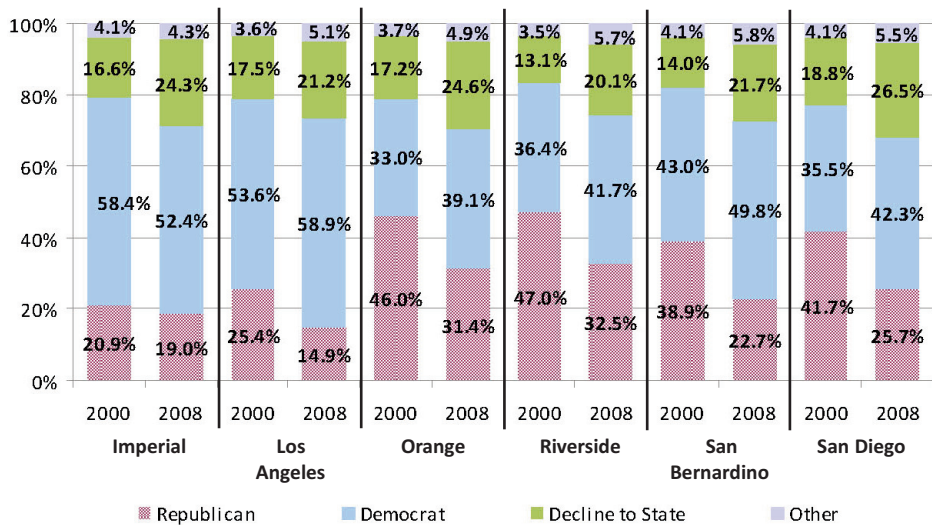
Although Republican registrations as a percent of all new voter registrations dropped from 2000 to 2008 in all the counties, the raw numbers of new voter registrations increased for both Riverside and San Diego Counties, by 9,005 and 20,362, respectively. The numbers of individuals registering to vote as Democrats increased for all of the counties. Those registering with other parties or declining to state their affiliation increased by

100.0% and 108.5%, respectively.

In 2000, Orange County had 60,215 (46%) newly registered Republicans with Democrats having a new voter registration of 43,210 (33%). Only Riverside County had a higher percentage of registered Republicans than Orange County with 47% (22,381). Riverside and Orange were followed by San Diego County with 41.7% (26,771) newly registered Republicans. The county with the largest number of newly registered Democrats in 2000 was Los Angeles County with 156,122 (53.6%). Los Angeles was followed by San Bernardino and San Diego Counties with 21,328 (43.0%) and 22,732 (35.5%) respectively. All of the six Southern California counties had less than 20% of those who declined to state a party affiliation when registering. San Diego (18.8%), Los Angeles (17.5%) and Orange (17.2%) Counties had the largest percentage of voters who declined to state any party affiliation in 2000.

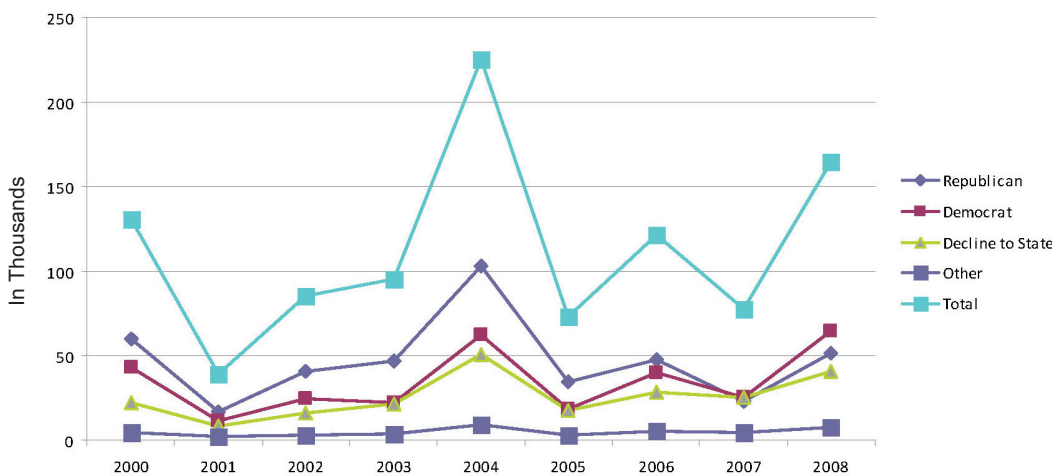
In 2008, Orange County had 51,623 (31%) new voters registered as Republicans and 64,254 (39.1%) registering as Democrats. Once again, Riverside County had a larger share of registered Republicans than Orange County with 32.5% (31,386). Riverside and Orange were followed by San Diego County with a 25.7% (47,133) share of newly registered Republicans. The county with the largest number of newly registered Democrats in 2008 was Los Angeles County with 197,473 (58.9%). Los Angeles was followed by San Bernardino and San Diego County with 77,414 (42.3%). In 2008, all six counties had increased shares, between 20% and 27%, of those who

**Figure 2**  
**Southern California New Voter Registration by County**  
**2000 and 2008**



Source: County Registrars of Voters, October/November 2008

**Figure 3**  
**Orange County New Voter Registration by Party, 2000-2008**



Source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, November 2008

**Table 1  
Orange County Total Voter Registration by City, 2008**

Jurisdiction	Democrat		Republican		Other		Decline to State		Total Voter Registration <sup>1</sup>	Total City Population <sup>2</sup>	Percent of Registered Voters
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Aliso Viejo	8,181	29.3%	12,010	43.0%	1,155	4.1%	6,572	23.5%	27,918	45,249	61.7%
Anaheim	53,594	37.0%	58,591	40.5%	5,467	3.8%	27,083	18.7%	144,735	346,823	41.7%
Brea	7,013	28.9%	12,152	50.0%	932	3.8%	4,196	17.3%	24,293	40,081	60.6%
Buena Park	15,376	40.0%	13,806	35.9%	1,549	4.0%	7,724	20.1%	38,455	82,768	46.5%
Costa Mesa	17,859	31.1%	23,670	41.2%	3,138	5.5%	12,826	22.3%	57,493	113,955	50.5%
Cypress	9,823	34.2%	12,048	42.0%	1,086	3.8%	5,740	20.0%	28,697	49,541	57.9%
Dana Point	6,520	26.8%	11,673	47.9%	1,226	5.0%	4,935	20.3%	24,354	36,982	65.9%
Fountain Valley	10,519	28.9%	17,289	47.5%	1,429	3.9%	7,186	19.7%	36,423	57,925	62.9%
Fullerton	23,741	33.3%	30,236	42.4%	2,950	4.1%	14,338	20.1%	71,265	137,437	51.9%
Garden Grove	28,355	35.4%	32,461	40.5%	3,010	3.8%	16,267	20.3%	80,093	173,067	46.3%
Huntington Beach	37,502	28.7%	60,237	46.2%	6,030	4.6%	26,675	20.4%	130,444	201,993	64.6%
Irvine	36,281	32.4%	41,357	36.9%	3,892	3.5%	30,532	27.2%	112,062	209,806	53.4%
La Habra	10,692	37.9%	11,381	40.3%	1,110	3.9%	5,055	17.9%	28,238	62,635	45.1%
La Palma	3,265	36.3%	3,506	39.0%	272	3.0%	1,953	21.7%	8,996	16,176	55.6%
Laguna Beach	7,387	38.6%	6,920	36.2%	916	4.8%	3,905	20.4%	19,128	25,131	76.1%
Laguna Hills	5,366	26.9%	9,587	48.1%	825	4.1%	4,142	20.8%	19,920	33,421	59.6%
Laguna Niguel	11,612	27.0%	20,813	48.5%	1,684	3.9%	8,819	20.5%	42,928	66,877	64.2%
Laguna Woods	6,603	41.3%	6,642	41.5%	430	2.7%	2,329	14.6%	16,004	18,442	86.8%
Lake Forest	12,434	27.3%	22,079	48.5%	1,811	4.0%	9,182	20.2%	45,506	78,317	58.1%
Los Alamitos	2,486	34.9%	3,028	42.5%	305	4.3%	1,307	18.3%	7,126	12,191	58.5%
Mission Viejo	16,871	26.9%	31,591	50.3%	2,313	3.7%	12,012	19.1%	62,787	98,572	63.7%
Newport Beach	14,027	21.9%	36,041	56.2%	2,386	3.7%	11,708	18.2%	64,162	84,554	75.9%
Orange	21,398	30.2%	33,374	47.2%	2,895	4.1%	13,110	18.5%	70,777	140,849	50.3%
Placentia	8,669	30.6%	13,360	47.1%	1,057	3.7%	5,266	18.6%	28,352	51,727	54.8%
Rancho Santa Margarita	7,124	24.7%	14,812	51.4%	1,039	3.6%	5,828	20.2%	28,803	49,764	57.9%
San Clemente	10,011	24.0%	21,286	51.1%	1,984	4.8%	8,361	20.1%	41,642	67,892	61.3%
San Juan Capistrano	5,203	26.6%	9,959	50.8%	856	4.4%	3,570	18.2%	19,588	36,782	53.3%
Santa Ana	51,026	48.9%	30,975	29.7%	3,334	3.2%	19,004	18.2%	104,339	353,184	29.5%
Seal Beach	7,332	36.2%	9,120	45.0%	664	3.3%	3,159	15.6%	20,275	25,986	78.0%
Stanton	6,163	40.6%	5,322	35.1%	688	4.5%	3,011	19.8%	15,184	39,276	38.7%
Tustin	11,209	32.0%	14,592	41.6%	1,409	4.0%	7,871	22.4%	35,081	74,218	47.3%
Villa Park	788	17.3%	3,025	66.3%	109	2.4%	643	14.1%	4,565	6,259	72.9%
Westminster	15,187	31.6%	20,469	42.5%	1,991	4.1%	10,479	21.8%	48,126	93,027	51.7%
Yorba Linda	9,794	22.6%	25,023	57.6%	1,425	3.3%	7,177	16.5%	43,419	68,312	63.6%
Unincorporated	18,978	25.7%	39,065	52.9%	2,564	3.5%	13,254	17.9%	73,861	122,032	60.5%
<b>County Total</b>	<b>518,389</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>717,500</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>63,877</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>325,219</b>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>1,624,985</b>	<b>3,121,251</b>	<b>52.1%</b>

Source: (1) Orange County Registrars of Voters, November 2008  
(2) California Department of Finance, January 1, 2008 E-5a, released May 2008

NOTE: Highlighted cells represent majority party registration.

declined to state a party affiliation when registering. San Diego (26.5%), Orange (24.6%), and Imperial (24.3%) Counties had the largest percentage of voters who declined to state any party affiliation in 2008.

**ORANGE COUNTY**

From 2000 to 2008, there were three years with presidential elections and six without. During this time, the average number of new voters registering in Orange County each year was 112,534. Figure 3 shows the annual new registration by political party, as well as the total number of new voters. The peaks in this figure show the total new voter registration in the County reaches its highest levels when there is a national election for the

presidency: 2000, 2004 and 2008. In 2000, there were 130,780 newly registered voters; in 2004 that figure jumped to 225,332. The registration for 2008 (164,332) was a gain from the previous year but did not match levels of the prior election year (2004).

The Republican Party had the largest number of new registrants from 2000 to 2006. Then in 2007, registrations for Democrats increased and exceeded those for Republicans; this happened again in 2008. As with the other Southern California counties, Orange County has an increasing percentage of voters who declined to state their party affiliation.

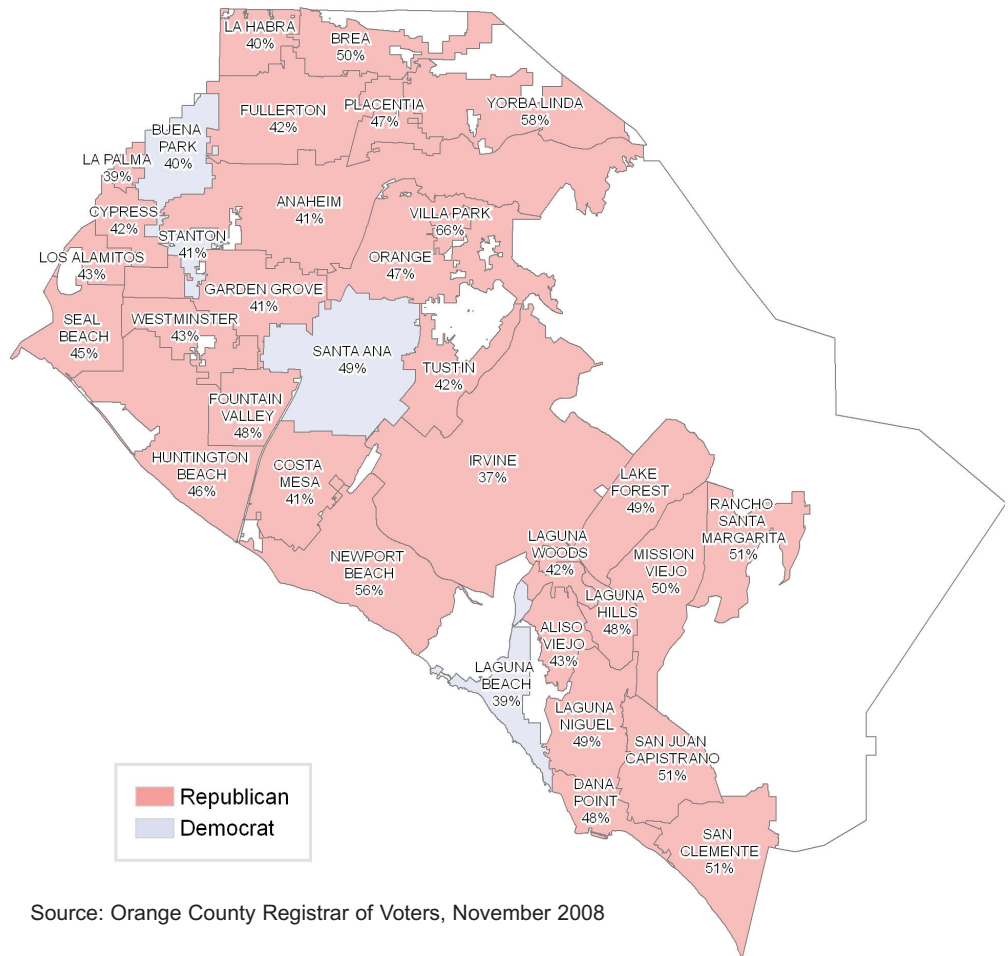
For the most part, the shares of those who declined to state their party affiliation are consistently the third largest

group of newly registered voters. This was the case until 2007 when those declining to state surpassed both Democratic and Republican newly registered voters.

**TOTAL CITY REGISTRATIONS**

The latest voter registration published in 2008 by the Orange County Registrar of Voters shows some standouts among the jurisdictions within Orange County. The city with the largest share of registered voters is Laguna Woods, a city known for having a large senior population. Laguna Woods (86.8%) is followed by Seal Beach (78%) and Laguna Beach (76.1%). Santa Ana, which has a large foreign-born population, has the smallest percentage of registered voters with 29.5%. The cities with the largest shares of registered Republicans are Villa Park (66.3%, Table 1), Yorba Linda (57.6%) and Newport Beach (56.2%). Santa Ana, which has a large Hispanic population, has the highest percentage of Democratic registration (48.9%) and is followed by Laguna Woods (41.3%) and Stanton (40.6%). Those cities with the highest percentage of those who declined to state any party affiliation are Irvine (27.2%), Aliso Viejo (23.5%), and Tustin (22.4%). Figure 4 shows the majority registration by city; 30 of 34 cities have a majority of voters registered as Republican.

**Figure 4  
Total Majority Party Registration by Orange County City, 2008**



**CONCLUSION**

New voter registrations are driven in large part by demographic forces. These come from adult immigrants obtaining citizenship and registering in the United States to vote for the first time. Children go through a rite of passage when they reach the age of 18 and register to vote. People move to different counties and states and register to vote in their new hometowns. All of these contribute to changes in voter registrations. Registration patterns change annually. Political climates can have an effect on voter registrations, as people age, move, and become citizens, voter registrations will continue to be dynamic and of interest in the future.

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