

Research Question & Hypotheses | **Findings & Discussion**

How does Party Identification (PID) affect willingness to amend the Constitution?

Often certain groups favor a policy circumstantially, but aren't willing to take dramatic legal measures (such as pass an amendment) to completely enact it. This is the difference between so-called "soft support" and "hard support" (Persily, Citrin, and Egan 2008).

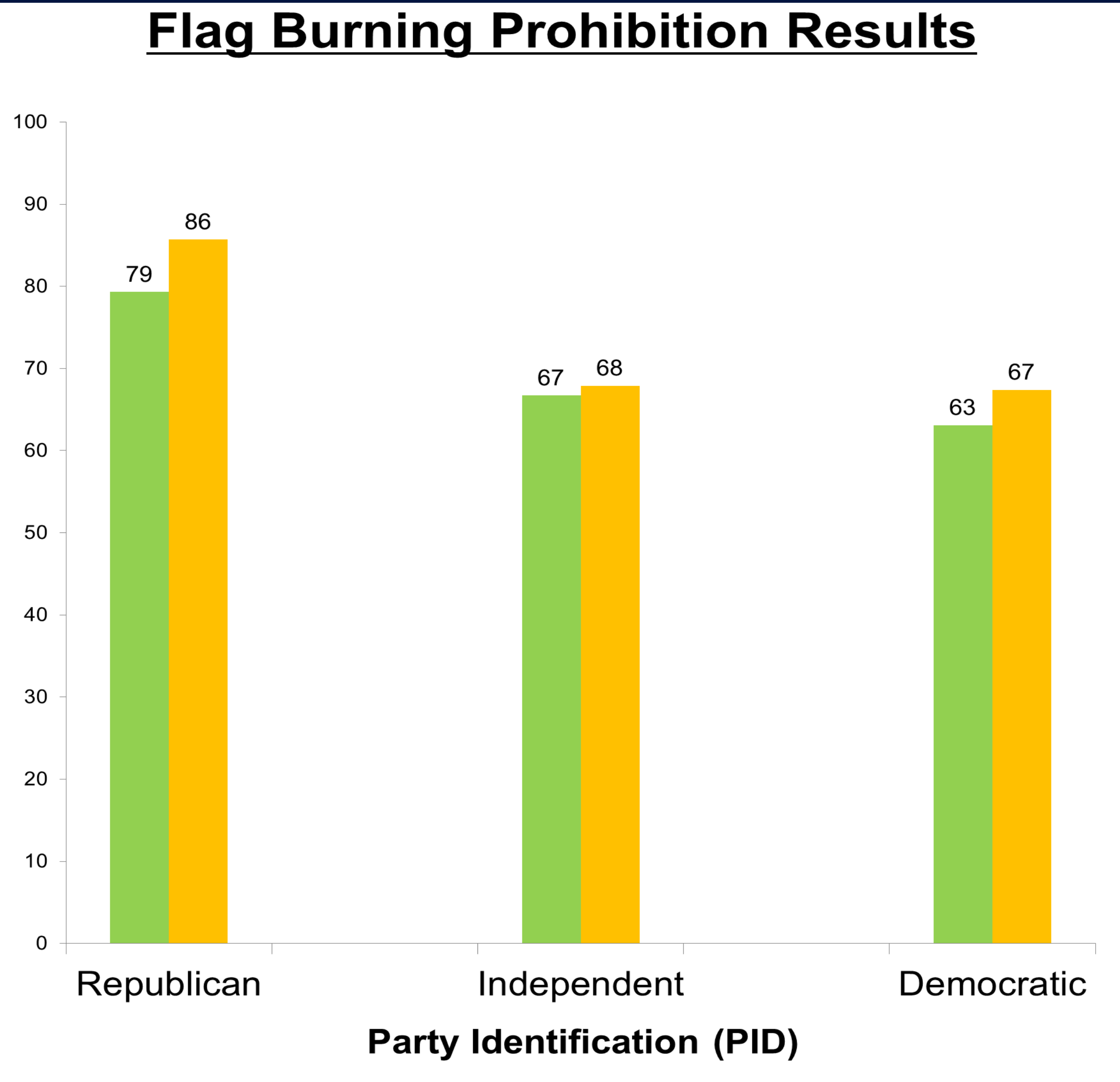
Two possible relationships connecting support and party identification exist, with competing explanations:

The first, more general belief is that Republicans favor less government, and less interaction, with Democrats opposite both of these sentiments. Therefore Republicans will support policies and amendments the least out of all PIDs.

Hypothesis:
Support for constitutional amendments amongst those who support related policies:
 $PID_R < PID_I < PID_D$

The second is that people approach legal issues based on legalistic views associated with PID. Republican association with conservatism connects it to strict constructionism, and Democratic association with liberalism connects it to loose constructionism. Therefore, literal Republicans would be required to interact directly and actively more with law than interpretive Democrats.

Hypothesis:
Support for constitutional amendments amongst those who support related policies:
 $PID_D < PID_I < PID_R$

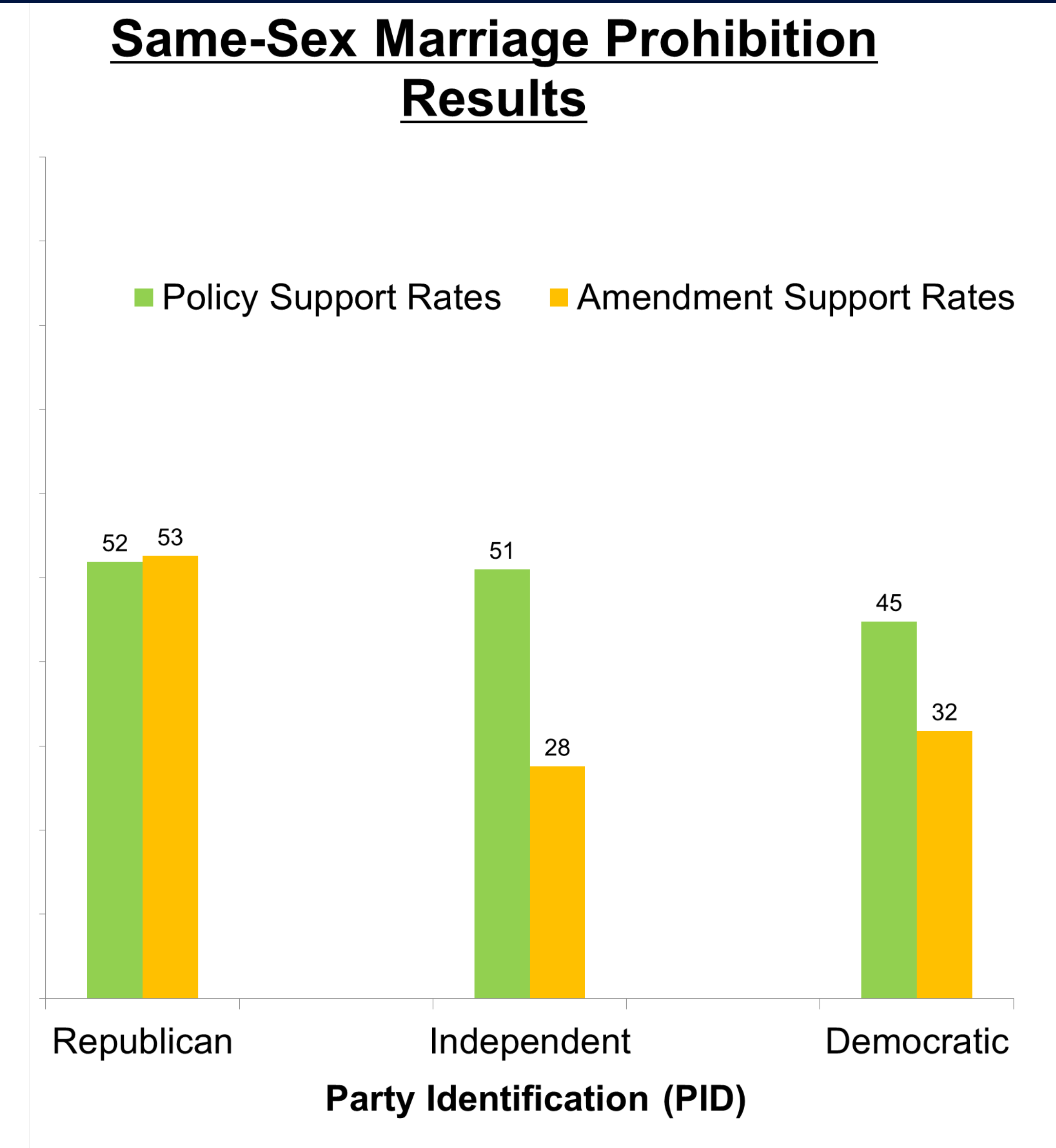


Increase in support from policy to amendment may be related to wording of Flag Burning policy question
Policy support question asked if the respondent agreed with the Supreme Court decision. It is possible that while the respondent agreed the Court's ruling was correct based on the current Constitution, they still do not agree with such an expansive definition of free speech.

Republicans support amendments most, may be reflective of strict constructionist/originalist legalistic views requiring non-expansive interpretation.

Large drop in Democratic support of prohibiting same sex marriage as an amendment, as opposed to policy, shows "soft support" and could have predicted changes after 2004 Democratic Party support for same-sex marriage.

High Democratic support and low Republican support for Electoral College Reform is likely related to the Bush v. Gore race that preceded the poll, the surrounding controversy, and race's outcome.

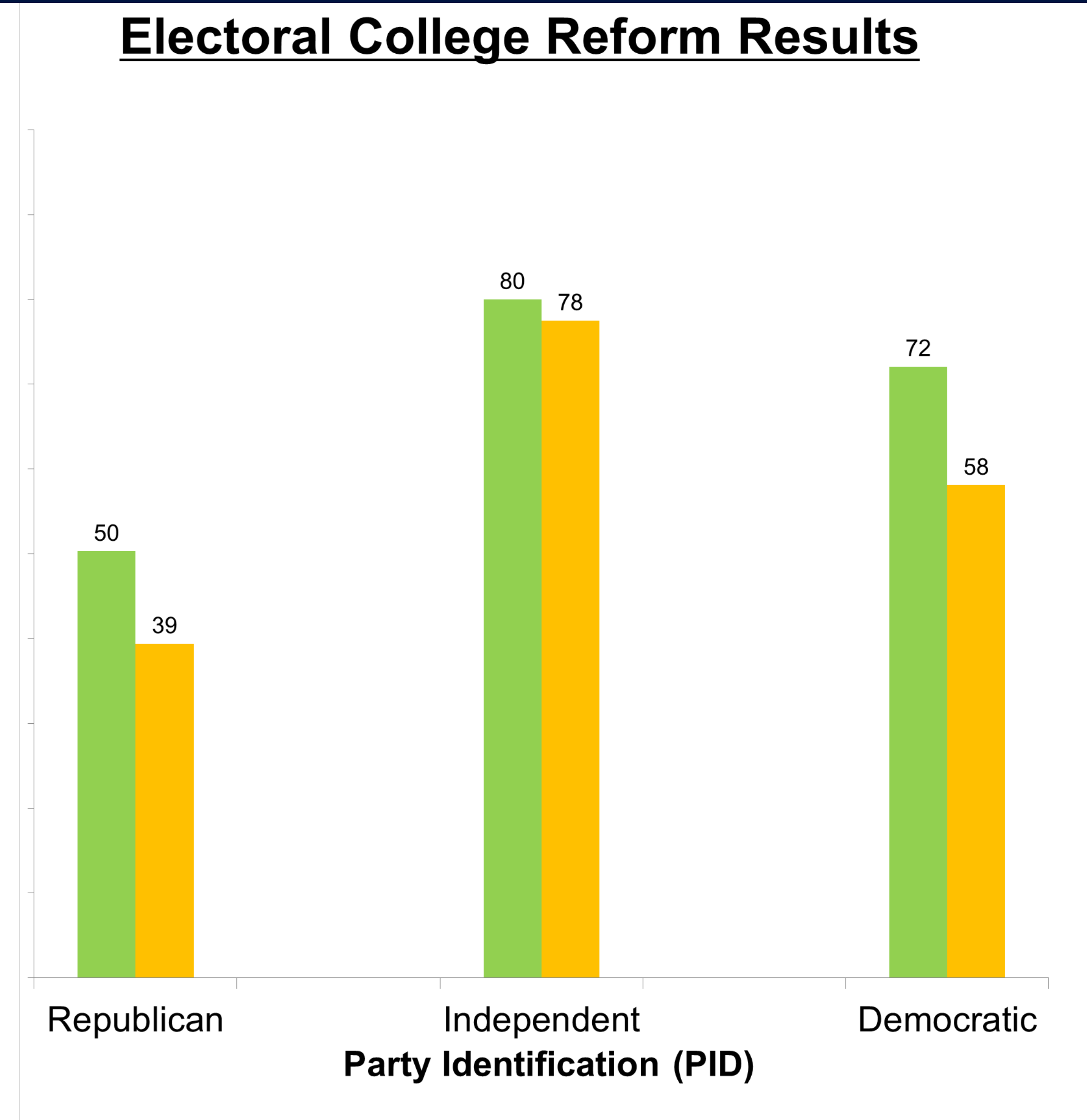


In two out of the three issues, all three PIDs had amendment support rates lower than policy support rates.

Republicans have the highest advocacy rates for both policy and constitutional changes in two of three areas (Flag Burning, Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition).

Policy/amendment support more linked to political party platform than the legalistic view associated with the party.

Neither hypothesis was completely supported by the data. Instead, the nuanced results paint a more intricate relationship between issues and "soft support" and "hard support". More research should be done to see if this relationship is affected more by socioeconomic and demographic factors than party identification.



References & Acknowledgements

Persily, Nathaniel, Jack Citrin, and Patrick J. Egan. Eds 2008. *Public Opinion and Constitutional Controversy*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc

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Data and Methodology

All three polls examined used a representative random samples of non-institutionalized national adults over the telephone and weighted to match standard census demographics. Due to the twofold nature of my research question, all of the polling used entails two questions:

- The respondents' support (or lack thereof) of a policy, and
- The respondents' willingness to amend the Constitution to allow for that policy's implementation.

After data cleaning, crosstabs were used to examine differences in policy support v amendment support. To analyze such variations, three policies that have had proposed amendments were examined:

- Gallup/Newsweek Poll # 1989-89193: Flag Burning (June 23, 1989)**
 - The Supreme Court ruled this week that burning the American flag...is protected under the...First Amendment to the Constitution. Do you agree or disagree? (Flag Burning Policy)
 - Do you think we should pass a constitutional amendment to make flag burning illegal, or not? (Flag Burning Amendment)
- CBS News/New York Times Poll # 2004-11a (Nov 18-24, 2004)**
 - Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, OR gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry, OR there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship? (Same-Sex Policy)
 - Do you think defining marriage as a union only between a man and a woman is an important enough issue to be worth changing the U.S. Constitution for, or isn't it that kind of issue? (Same-Sex Amendment)
- Gallup Election Wrap-Up Poll, (Dec 15-17, 2000) (Electoral College Reform)**
 - Do you think the system in which votes are cast and counted in this country is in need of – complete overhaul, major reform, minor reform, no reforms. (Electoral College Reform Policy)
 - Thinking for a moment about the way in which the president is elected in this country, which would you prefer – direct election, electoral college, both/neither. (Electoral College Reform Amendment)