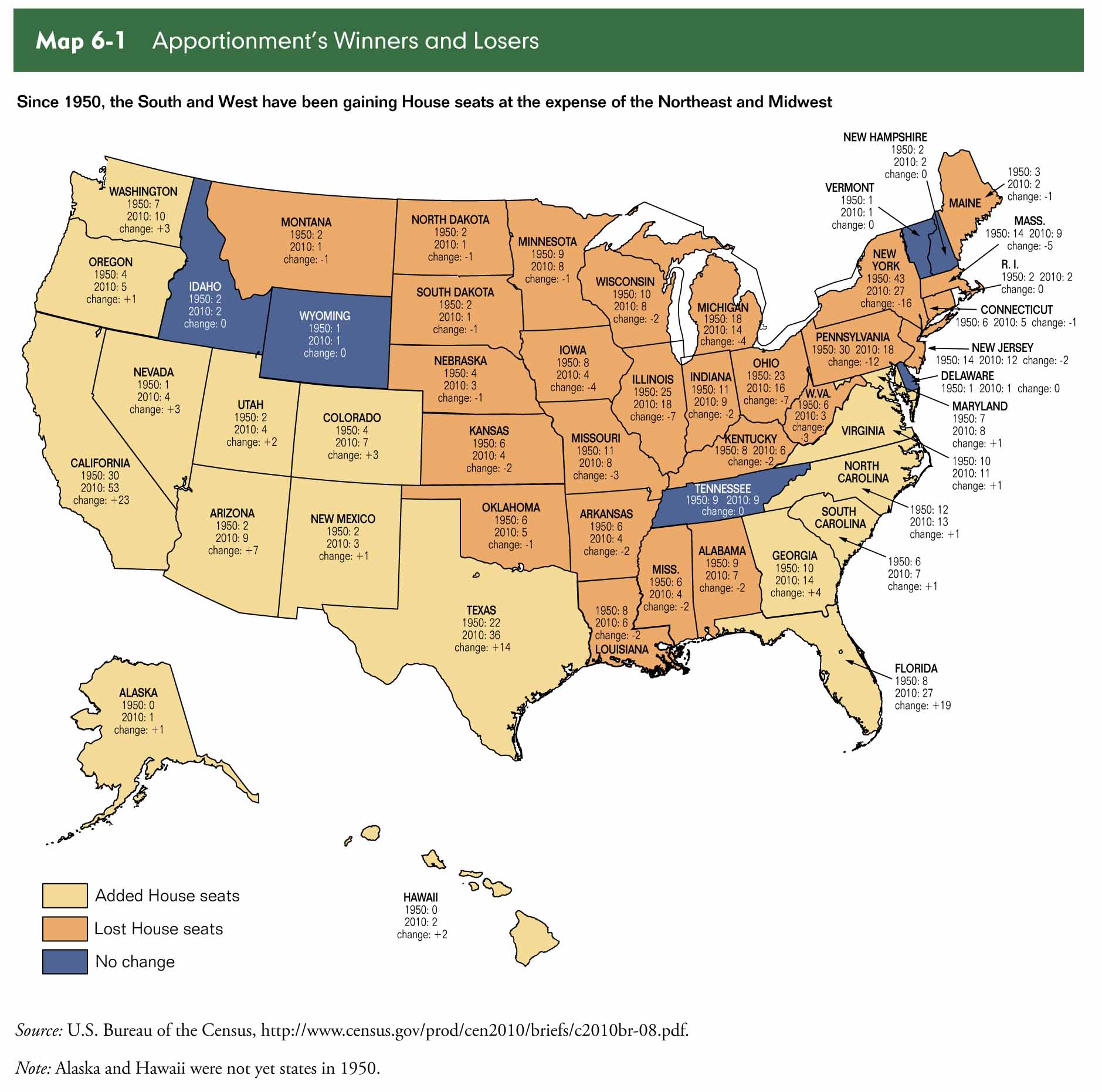
*The Logic of American Politics*, 7th Edition

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Data Literacy Exercises: Chapter 6

Map 6-1



**Learning Objective:**  6.1 Describe the requirements and powers of Congress and how the congressional electoral system works.

Although each state is apportioned the same number of Senators (2), apportionment to the U.S. House of Representatives is roughly based on population—roughly because each state, no matter how lowly populated, receives one seat and because state populations aren’t equally divisible. Before 1911, the size of the U.S. House could increase to accommodate new states. The U.S. House membership after the first Census of 1790 was 105, growing to 386 after 1910. Since 1911, however, congressional legislation has set the number of seats at 435 (only increased to 437 to temporarily allow one seat each to the newly admitted states of Hawaii and Alaska in 1959). Although Congress chose not to increase the number of seats in direct relationship to the increases in the U.S. population before 1911 (district populations, on average, increased from roughly 34,000 after the first Census of 1790 to under 200,000 before the number of seats was capped in 1910), the capping of seats has dramatically increased the average number of legal residents per district to over 710,000.

Different mathematical algorithms have been used to determine how many seats each state gets, with the Huntington-Hill method employed since the 1940s. Because states cannot be allocated “partial” house members, some dramatic disparities exist between states, especially those at the margins of being allocated an extra district by the method. Montana’s one at large district now contains more than one million legal residents almost twice that of each of Rhode Island’s two districts. It is also important to note that, ever since the number of districts has been capped, a state can actually gain population but lose house seats to states whose population increased more dramatically. Seat allocation is also important in presidential elections as the number of electoral votes afforded each state is based upon the total size (House and Senate) of its congressional delegation.

Generally, the western and southern states have been advantaged by reapportionment since the cap was set in 1911. Pacific Coast States have witnessed the largest numerical and percentage increase; the Mid-Atlantic the largest declines. Florida (with a 550% increase) and Texas account for most of the growth in the South. Four southern states actually lost seats during this period. In all but the Rocky Mountains, no state in any other region gained seats except for Maryland (Border).



Source: Vital Statistics on Congressional Politics: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/vital-statistics-congress-mann-ornstein>

Questions to Consider:

1. Since the 1950s, which regions have been most likely to lose seats?

a. the Northeast and West

\*b. the Northeast and Midwest

c. the South and West

d. the Midwest and South

@ Feedback: The states in the old industrial heartland of the country have either lost population or not gained fast enough to maintain their seats in the U.S. House. New York lost a staggering 16 seats, *even though its population increased by roughly five million from 1950 to 2010*.

2. Which state has gained the most seats between 1950 and 2010?

a. Florida

b. Arizona

c. Texas

\*d. California

@ Feedback: California’s 23 seat gain is the highest of any state (although it did not gain any seats after the last Census). Florida is a close second at 19. Arizona gained the most proportionately, more than quadrupling its delegation size (2 to 9).

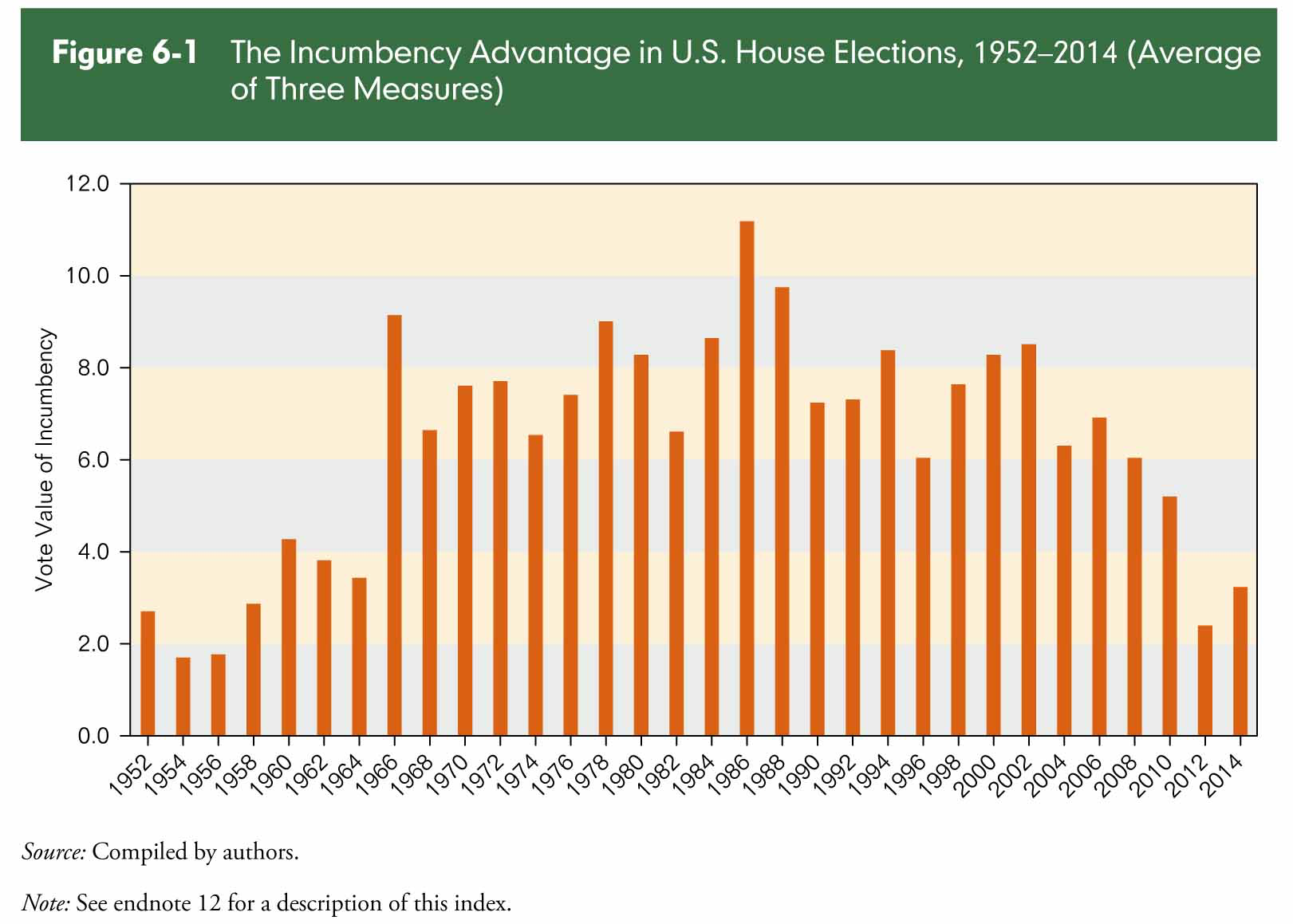
3. Since 1950, every southern state has increased the size of its house delegation.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Although the South has increased its delegation overall, several southern states have actually lost in the apportionment game. None had its population decrease over this time period.

Figure 6-1



**Learning Objective:** 6.2 Identify the factors that create advantages and disadvantages in congressional electoral politics.

Congressional incumbents, especially in the U.S. House, almost always win reelection. Even in the turbulent election year of 1992, when reapportionment, redistricting and a banking scandal hit incumbents hard, over ninety percent of those incumbents running in the general election won. Even with an abnormally high number of retirements, roughly seventy-five percent returned to office.

Source: Vital Statistics on Congressional Politics: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/vital-statistics-congress-mann-ornstein>

The main reason for this is the same as the reason why they win their first election—they are usually of the same party as a majority of voters in their respective districts. The “incumbency advantage” is an estimate of *how much extra* an incumbent receives above and beyond what one would expect based upon the partisan nature of one’s district. This advantage, also characterized as the “personal vote,” measures the additional support gained by name recognition and constituency service. How much an incumbent can gain from this advantage is partially based on how well elections follow party lines. For much of the mid to late twentieth century, elections became more candidate centered (although still mainly partisan), therefore increasing the incumbency advantage.

House Turnover by Decade (%)



Source: Vital Statistics on Congressional Politics: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/vital-statistics-congress-mann-ornstein>

Interesting as the pattern of the last six decades may be, the pattern of reelection and retention varied greatly throughout U.S. history. Through much of the 19th century, many members of congress were not concerned about reelection as a congressional career was not important to most members. For the better part of that century, most members did not return because they chose not to. In addition, two-party competition was relatively keen from the 1830s to the 1890s, increasing the proportion of general election defeats.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. According to Figure 6-1, The “incumbency advantage” reached its peak in which year?

a. 1966

b. 1992

\*c. 1986

d. 2012

@ Feedback: The incumbency advantage exceeded eleven per cent in 1986, roughly only three percent in 2012, the latter indicative of the increase partisan nature of elections.

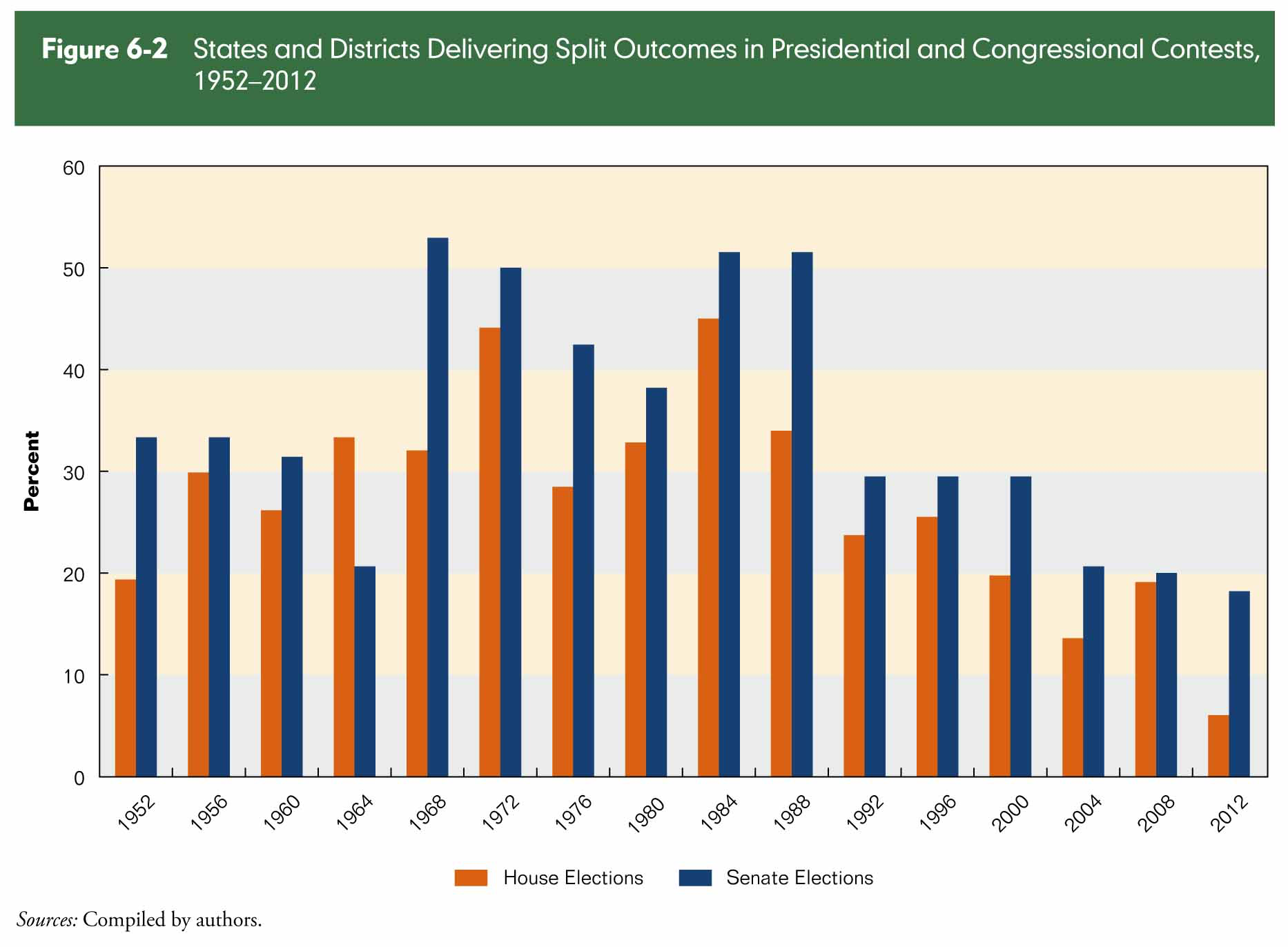
2. The incumbency advantage estimated for 2012 was the lowest since the mid-1950s.

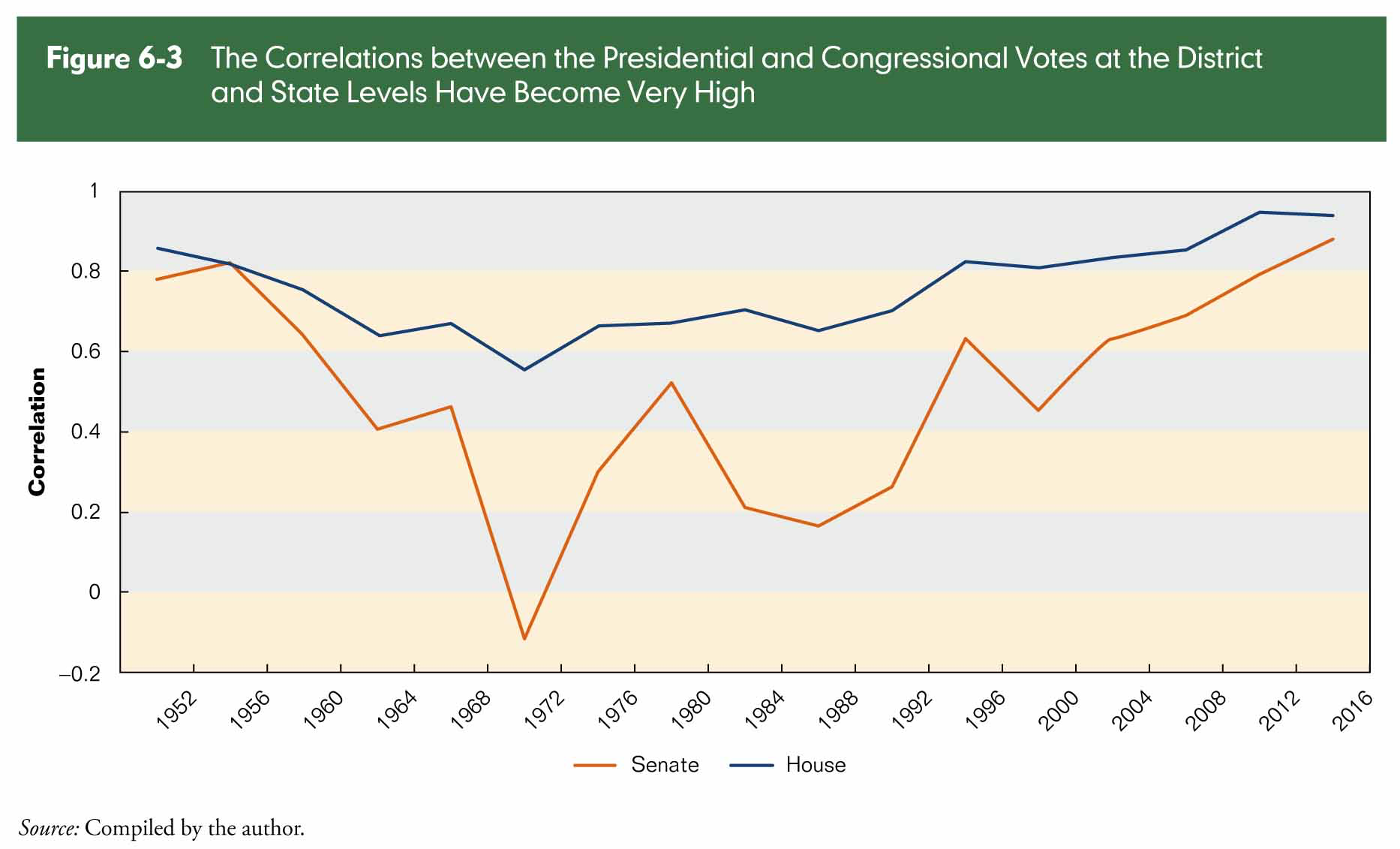
\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: The incumbency advantage increased dramatically by the late 1960s, continuing well into the current century.

Figures 6-2 and 6-3





**Learning objective:** 6.2 Identify the factors that create advantages and disadvantages in congressional electoral politics.

By almost any measure, partisanship, albeit always an important determinant of the vote, has gained increased prominence in the last decade. One way to measure the importance of partisanship is by measuring the degree of split ticket-voting. A split-ticket is one where a voter votes for the presidential candidate of one party and a congressional or down-ballot candidate of another. This can be measured in the aggregate, or, as we will see in chapter 12, by individuals. A problem with survey data is that it may underestimate or overestimate the proportion of those who split their tickets between presidential and house candidates. It may underestimate if respondents, especially those who didn’t vote but state that they did, answer in a consistent fashion. Evidence indicates, however, that surveys may overestimate as many respondents over report voting for the incumbent house candidate (roughly half of whom are not of the president’s party).

To complement individual, survey estimates, we can turn to aggregate data that is not dependent upon self-reporting but, rather, election outcomes (Figure 6-2) and official vote reports (Figure 6-3). As with surveys, each is not without potential mis-estimations. Although the percent of split outcomes has been drastically reduced, a consistent outcome may hide a fair degree of split ticket voting. A state or district may, in the aggregate, vote for the same party for different offices, but with a fair degree of partisan inconsistency. A district, for example, that casts 52% of its vote for a Democratic presidential candidate may cast 90% of its vote for that party’s house candidate. Such a district would not show up in Figure 6-2. This potential (and it’s only potential) problem can be addressed by Figure 6-3. In that figure, it is the vote percentage given to the candidate of each party that is correlated (not just who won, but by how much). The high correlations between the presidential and house votes by district, for example, reached .953 and .940 in 2012 and 2014 respectively (a perfect correlation would equal 1.00). It is highly unlikely that much ticket-splitting could have occurred in those years (unless voters switched en masse from Democratic president to Republican house in numbers equal to those who voted for a Republican president and Democratic house member. The correlations for the Senate are not as high (and sometimes negative), but, as the following scatterplot demonstrates, the correlational match-up between House and Senate has been fairly consistent. House correlations define the horizontal axis, Senate the vertical axis.

The important take away from this discussion is that, as any form of measurement may contain some inherent problems, the fact that three different types of measures, using both aggregate and individual data produced the same general results provides striking evidence of the decline in split-ticket voting.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. The percentage of split outcomes (Figure 6-2) has:

a. always been higher at the district (president-house member) level

b. always been higher at the state (president-senator) level

\*c. has always been higher at the state level except once

d. has always been higher at the district level except once

@ Feedback: Senators represent whole states that are usually much more partisanly complex than individual districts. Senate races are also more high profile, allowing candidate attributes more influence in the outcome. 1964 is the one anomaly most likely due to the fact that it was an exceptionally good year for Democrats and 25 of the 34 Senate seats that were contested were held by Democrats, 23 where the Democratic incumbent ran.

2. Refer to Figure 6-3. The correlation between party votes between president and house has been higher than president-senate.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: The correlation difference, measured as the gap between the blue (president-house) and orange (president-senate) has always weighed on the former. The one possible exception is 1956, where the lines seem to connect. Even then, however, the correlation at the district level was slightly higher (.828 vs .821).

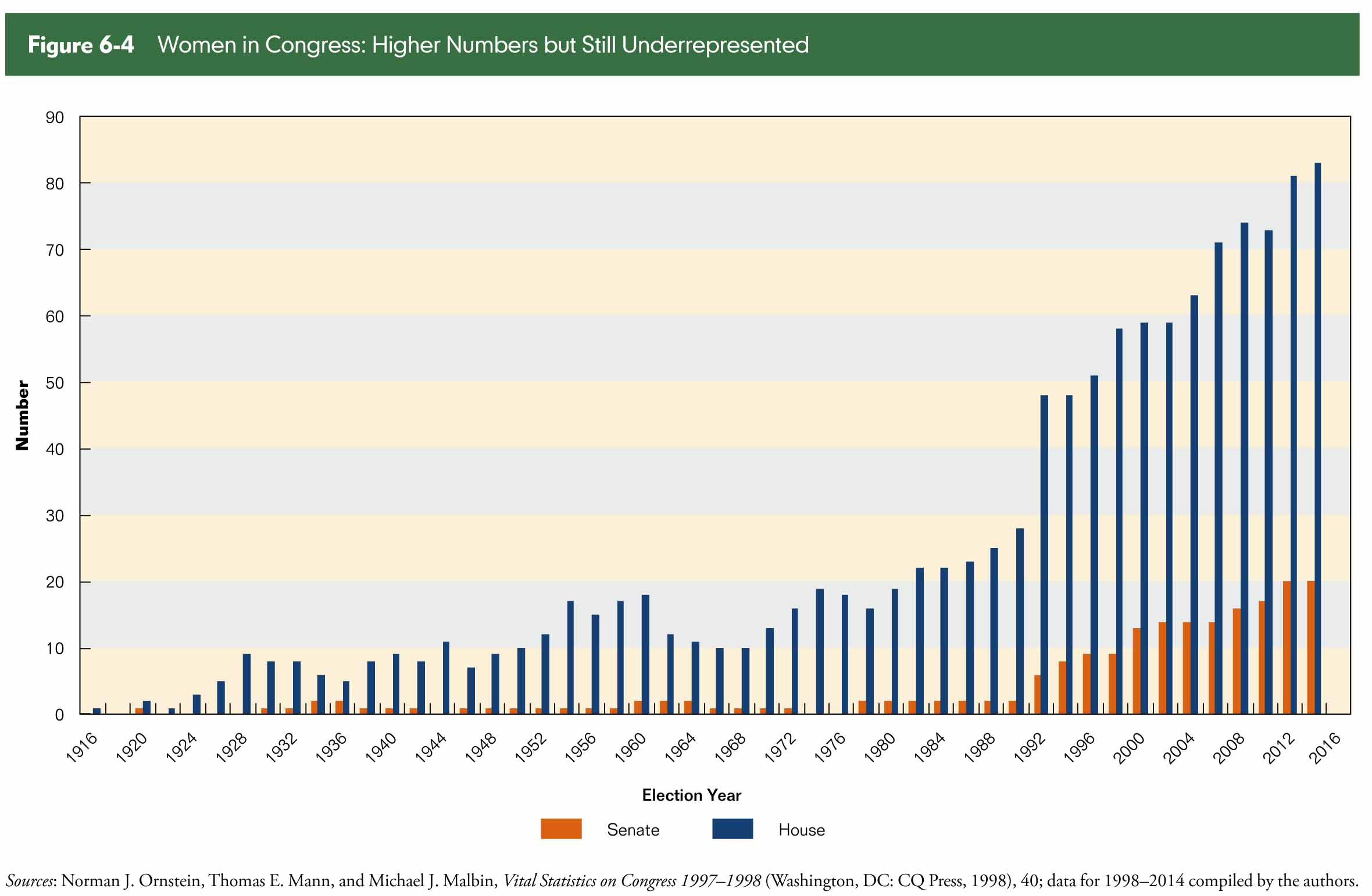
3. The correlation (Figure 6-3) between both president-house and president-senate vote percentages has always been positive.

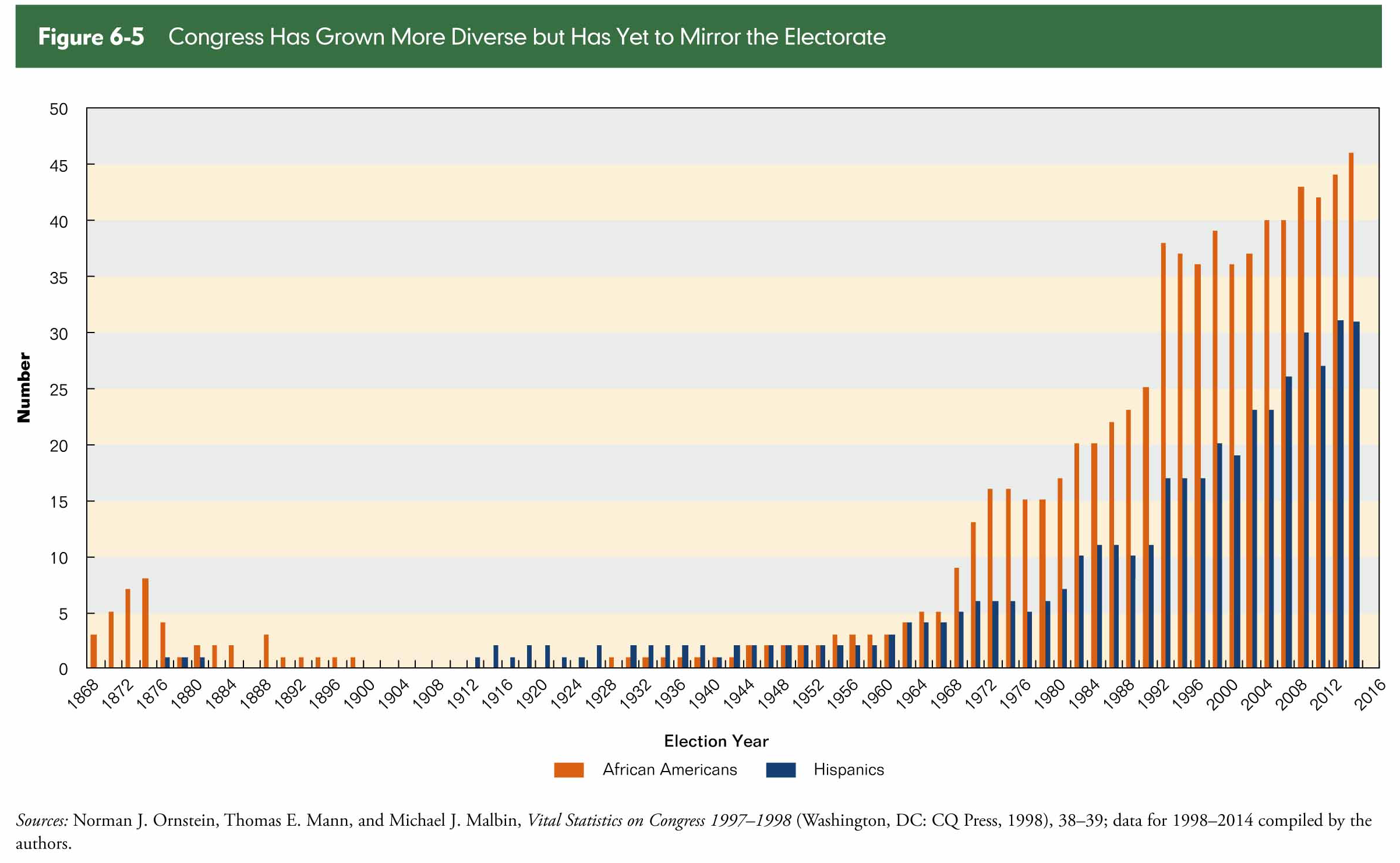
a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: While always true during this time period, the president-senate correlation is actually negative in 1972. Republican presidential incumbent Richard Nixon won in landslide fashion, but his coattails were not long enough to help many Republican candidates.

Figure 6-4 and 6-5





**Learning objective:** 6.3 Discuss the racial and ethnic makeup of Congress.

Congress is viewed as a representative body. But how does one define representation? One view is that, in order to be representative, members of a legislative body should reflect as closely as possible the demographic breakdown of the people they represent. By this definition, congress has, even with recent advances by women and ethnic minorities, seems less than representative. Women, for example, are a majority (52.1%) of the voting eligible population (even a larger majority—53.7%-- of voters), but in 2014 made up only 22 per cent of the Senate membership, 19 percent of the House (Figure 6-4). In several countries, women are guaranteed a certain proportion of legislative seats by law (gender quota). The following reproduction of Table 6-4 presents percentages rather than numbers, allowing for a more direct comparison between House and Senate success.

Hispanics comprised 3 and 6% of the membership of the respective chambers, while accounting for roughly 10.8% of the voting eligible population. Blacks come close to their population percentage (13.1%) in the House (10.1%) but not the Senate (2%), the former mainly due to their disproportionate population concentration in cities and the creation of districts gerrymandered to help the election of black representatives.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012*, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/index.html>. The voting eligible population includes all citizens 18 and over, but overestimates that figure as it does not discount those prohibited from voting due to a felony conviction.

Of course, representatives who are not of a specific gender or race or ethnicity may be able to represent those individuals. After all, it was an almost all white congress that passed civil and voting rights in the mid-1960s. On the other hand, that was a century after blacks had been granted their freedom and, five years later, Constitutionally-sanctioned voting rights.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. The largest increase in the number of women serving in the U.S. Congress occurred after 1990. (Figure 6-4)

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: 1992 was called the “year of the woman” as their numbers increased dramatically, especially in the House.

2. No blacks served in Congress until the 20th century (6-5).

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: During the post-Civil war period of Reconstruction, blacks served in Congress representing former confederate states. No black American would serve in the U.S. Senate again until Edmund Brooke (R-MA) in 1967.

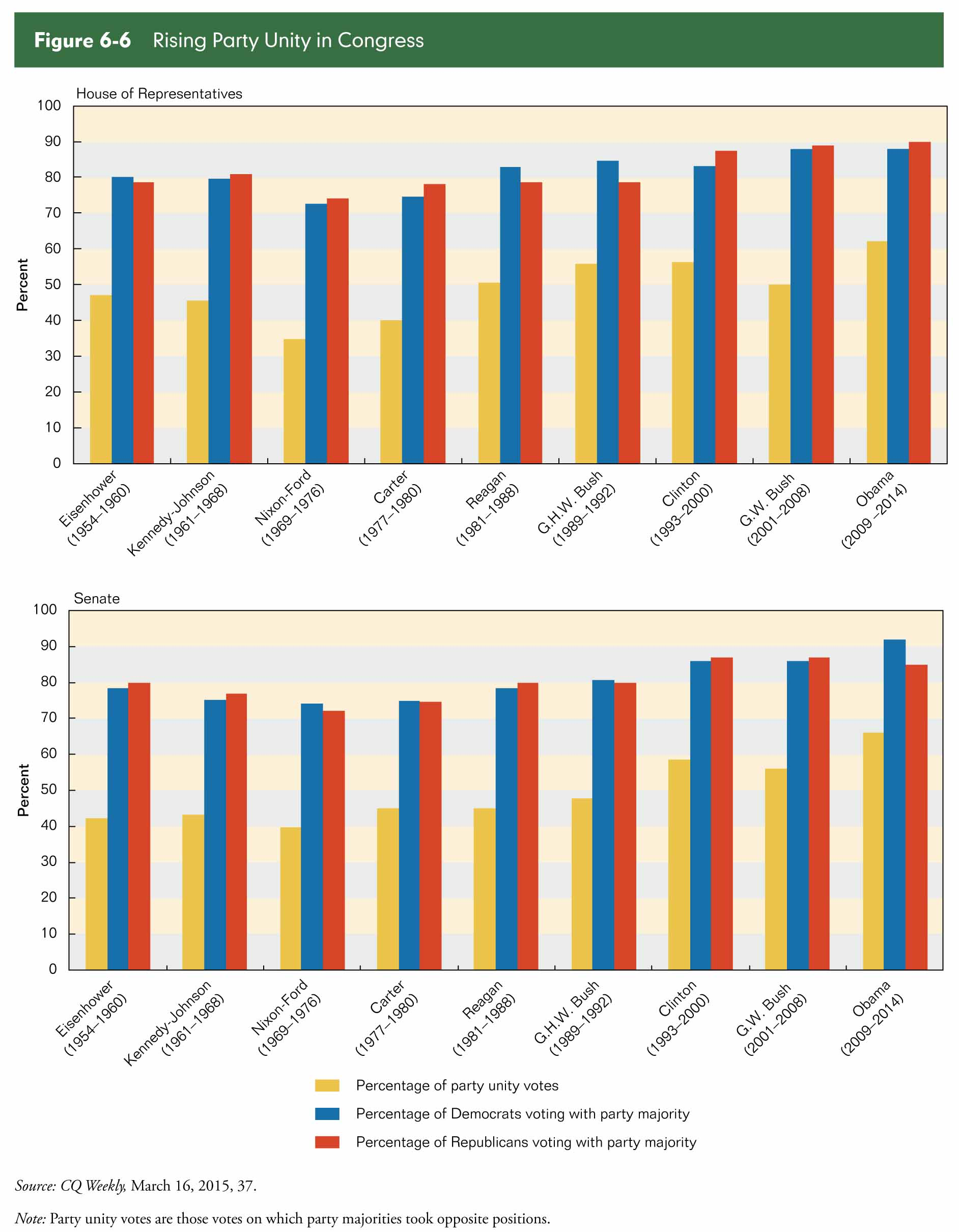
3. Although their total proportion (all ages) of the population exceeds that of black Americans, Hispanics lag behind blacks in congressional representation (6-5).

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: During the period from the 1930s-1950s, the number of Hispanic members of Congress matched or exceeded the number of black representatives. By the 1960s (mainly due to the Voting Rights Act), black representation increased more dramatically.

Figure 6-6:



**Learning objective:** 6.5 Relate the institutional structures in the House and Senate that help members overcome barriers to collective action.

“Party unity” can denote several aspects of congressional organization and action, from selecting a speaker (note the text’s discussion of the breakdown of party unity in 1910), to controlling committee outcomes, to voting together on final passage or defeat of a bill. For the latter, party unity votes are based only upon those votes where a majority of one party opposes a majority of the other. Note that this may eliminate certain votes where partisan differences are great (A) compared to those where it is minimal (B). These numbers listed are the percentage from each party that voted for/against the bill.

A B

Non-Party Unity Party Unity

R D R D

Y 100 51 Y 51 49

N 0 49 N 49 51

In roll call vote A, Republicans were 49 percentage points more likely to vote ‘Yea’ than were Democrats (almost twice as likely proportionately). In vote B, the partisan difference was only 2 percentage points. In reality, of course, many votes in the last decade have been closer to example A than B, especially on major legislation like the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare in 2010), when no Republicans voted for the bill while only 13.4% of Democrats voted against. Obviously, with Republicans and Democrats voting so consistently with their respective party overall (blue and red bars), the likelihood that votes look more like that cast for the Affordable care Act is rather high.

The *number* (yellow bar) of party unity votes is most definitely a function of the continuing homogenization (at least in the House) of the constituencies and congress members of each party in both conservative and liberal directions. That number may have also increased in the last decade due to the more than occasional imposition of the misnamed “Hastert Rule” that speakers often invoke to prevent bills from a floor vote that do not have support among a majority of the controlling party’s membership.

A cursory look at the charts seems to indicate that, over the period in question (9 administrations), party unity trended higher for Republicans than Democrats (6 vs 3 in the House,, 5 vs 4 in the Senate). Perhaps of greater significance, the president’s congressional opposition was more unified in the House (seven out of nine times) but not the Senate. Breaking this down by congressional terms (not full administrations) yields some interesting results. The following graph represents the difference in party unity by term. A positive number (above the bar of ‘0% difference) indicates greater party unity among Republicans, a negative number greater party unity among Democrats.

Republicans have been more unified than Democrats overall, but more so during Democratic administrations. Democrats have clearly been more unified during Republican administrations. This appraisal becomes even more evident when we look only at terms of divided government, when the party of the president was different from the party of the House.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. The percentage of party votes, in both the U.S. House and Senate was highest during which presidential administration?

a. Kennedy-Johnson

b. Clinton

c. George W. Bush

\*d. Obama

@ Feedback: Highlighting the increasing polarization of the parties, more than 60% of the votes recorded in both chambers were party unity votes.

2. Which of the following was true during the Nixon-Ford administration?

a. the percentage of party votes was the lowest of the nine administrations with Democrats being more unified than Republicans in both chambers

b. the percentage of party votes was the lowest of the nine administrations with Democrats being more unified than Republicans in the House

\*c. the percentage of party votes was the lowest of the nine administrations with Democrats being more unified than Republicans in the Senate

@ Feedback: The percentage of party unity votes was roughly 35 percent in the House, 40% in the Senate, with Democratic unity outscoring Republican only in the Senate.

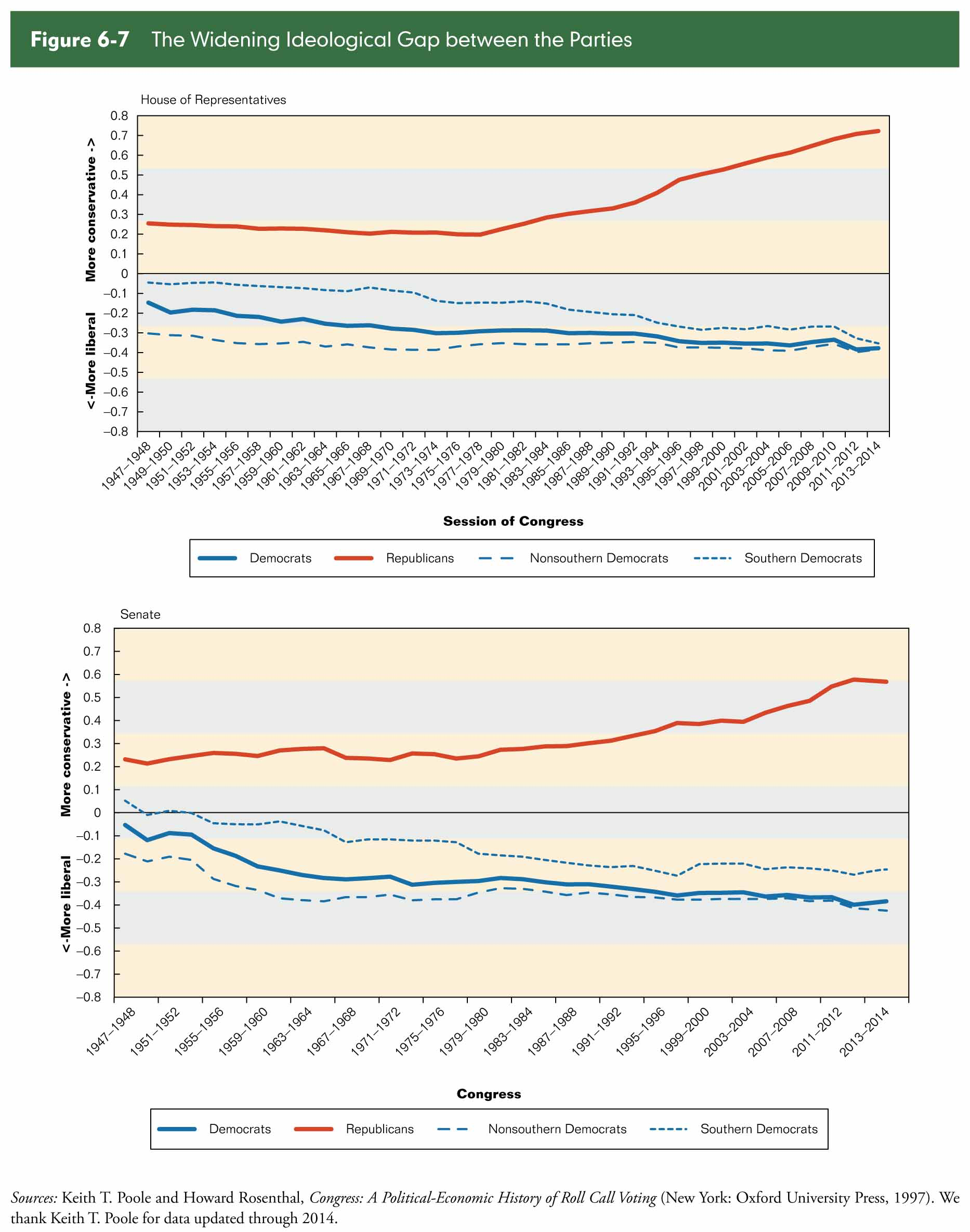
3. By administration, the Republicans have been more unified than the Democrats.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: For the nine administrations listed, Republicans in the House were more unified than Democrats six times, five times in the Senate.

Figure 6-7



**Learning objective:** 6.5 Relate the institutional structures in the House and Senate that help members overcome barriers to collective action.

Not only has party unity increased during the post-war period, the polarization between the parties has also increased. Most of this widening ideological gap has occurred within Republican ranks, especially in the House, where gerrymandering can make districts (but not states) more homogenous in their partisan character. Part of the change, however, came with the Civil Rights revolution, after which many formerly conservative Democratic southern districts and states became conservative Republican. Notice that, especially in the U.S. House, the liberalization of Democratic districts has occurred mainly in the South, as many districts moved to the Republican column, with the remaining Democratic districts being represented disproportionately by black, and therefore liberal members. Non-southern Democratic districts have witnessed little change in ideological liberalization.

The data upon which these graphs are derived are DW-NOMINATE scores. A member’s score can range from -1 (extremely liberal) to +1 (extremely conservative). It is important to note that these scores are relative, i.e., based upon the overall ideological complexion of Congress over time. It is not an absolute judgment, i.e., whether or not we view a legislator’s voting record as ‘liberal,’ but rather liberal in comparison to others. The two are, of course, related. The advantage of these scores as compared to those produced by interest groups such as the ADA (Americans for Democratic Action) or the ACU (American Conservative Union) is that, unlike those organizations, DW-NOMINATE scores use every vote that is not unanimous or nearly so. The representations on the graph indicate the mean score for all members within each party or party-region group.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which of the following is *least* true (Figure 6-7)?

a. Most of the increase in polarization is due to ideological changes among Republicans

b. Most of the increased liberalism of Democrats has occurred in the South

\*c. Especially in the House, little ideological change has occurred in non-southern states

d. None of the above

@ Feedback: The D-W Nominate scores, from which these data are derived, for non-Southern Democrats was -0.303 in the first session presented, -0.384. By contrast, Southern Democrat district scores changed from -0.046 to -0.354, Republican districts from 0.254 to 0.722.

2. For the time period represented, the mean ideological position of Republicans increased more in the Senate than the House.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: In the first session listed (1947-1948), the mean Republican score was .231, in the last (2013-2014) .577. For the House, the mean score changed from .254 to .722.