

Growth

The Growth Rate

The revised figures on voting registration for the June 4 primary in Santa Cruz county tend to support the theory that while our growth rate is maintaining its numerical pace, the rate of growth has slowed down on a percentage base.

The total figure of 56,093 registrants is up 3400 from June of 1966 or 6.6 per cent.

Voting registration is not a particularly good indicator of population growth for a variety of reasons although it does constitute a means of comparison.

The obvious factors such as the increase in school enrollment, the number of births compared to deaths, the unknown factor of the number of persons who are eligible yet decline to register complicate the guidelines.

Yet, some comparisons can be made.

For example, registration in 1950 after the census showed 33,856 voters in the county against a census mark of 66,534 or slightly more than 50 per cent of the population. School enrollment at that time was just under 10,000 or 15 per cent of the total population.

In 1960, when the census showed 84,219 residents in the county, the voter registration was 47,441 or more than 50 per cent, but 1960 was a presidential year and registration was much greater than in 1950. School enrollment was 17,600 or 20 per cent of the population.

In 1966, when the population as of

November, 1965, was 106,256 the registration total was 52,669 or slightly less than 50 per cent. School enrollment was up to 27,500 or 25 per cent of the population.

In 1968, our population estimate at this time is around 118,000 with a voter registration of 56,093 or below 50 per cent while school enrollment has increased to 32,000 or about 27 per cent.

On the basis of the registration for the June primary, we would expect that the November general election registration should come close, if not beyond the 60,000 mark, or nearly double it was 20 years ago.

On the basis of past records, registration for a general election in a presidential election year is greater than it is in the off years. Between 1962 and 1964, the registration jumped more than 5000 persons while between 1964 and 1966, it only gained 2500 despite the fact that the population growth was about the same.

Indicative of this condition is the fact that we still have less registration than we had in November, 1966 when the registration total was 56,156.

One of the interesting things about Santa Cruz county from a political point of view is the fact that for more than 30 years, there hasn't been much change in the percentage of party registration.

Back in 1936 there were 10,787 Democrats in the county and 9940 Republi-

cans, a difference of just over 800 persons. This June there are 27,524 Democrats and 26,248 Republicans or a difference of not quite 1300.

Most of the years, the Democrats have maintained a slight edge in registration although the Republicans have been ahead a few times, including January of this year. Back in 1962, there was only a difference of 15 in favor of the Democrats.

The fact that voter registration here maintains this close to 50 per cent ratio to population despite the marked increase in school enrollment is because we are still getting a higher-than-average percentage of retired persons moving into the community.

As a result Santa Cruz county always has a higher percentage of voters to population than the state or of most counties within the state.

During much of the past decade school enrollment has grown at a pace faster than our general population even though many of our newcomers are beyond the child-bearing age.

Our birth rate hasn't changed much, so it would appear that the families who migrate to Santa Cruz county have a relatively high number of children. If this isn't the case, then our population projections are due for serious change when the 1970 census figures become available.