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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/51x5s5v6>

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Publication Date

2020-09-25



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Release #2020-19

Friday, September 25, 2020

Biden maintains huge lead over Trump in California.

For most voters the election is mainly about President Trump. Two in three California Democrats express enthusiasm for Biden's selection of Harris as his vice president.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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Former Vice President Joe Biden continues to hold a commanding lead over incumbent President Donald Trump in California. The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds 67% of likely voters supporting the Democratic ticket of Biden and Kamala Harris and just 29% backing the GOP ticket of Trump and Mike Pence. This is almost identical to the 67% to 28% Biden lead in July prior to the Democratic and Republican conventions and his selection of California's junior U.S. Senator as his vice-presidential running mate.

Most of the supporters of each candidate say they are making their selection in relation to their views about the President. Among Biden's supporters 53% say their main reason for backing the former Vice President is because they don't like Trump, while 63% of Trump supporters say their main reason for their vote choice is because they like Trump.

Backers of Biden cite a wide range of issues as being important to them in this year's presidential election, with no one issue dominating. These include bringing the country together (35%), the coronavirus (28%), climate change (28%), nominations to the Supreme Court (21%), health care (18%), economic inequality (16%) and race relations (15%). By contrast, Trump's backers overwhelmingly choose the economy as the most important issue in this year's election (67%). Cited next often by supporters of the President are policing and criminal justice (28%), nominations to the Supreme Court (22%), and immigration (19%). (*Note: This poll was completed prior to the death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.*)

IGS co-director Eric Schickler observed, "There is no single policy issue that unites Biden supporters in this election – the overriding unifying theme is simply their determination to see President Trump defeated."

Another contrast between voters supporting Biden and those backing the President relates to how voters say they would feel if the opposing candidate were to win the election. When

asked to choose which of four adjectives best describes how they would feel Trump were to win re-election, two in three Biden supporters (67%) say they'd be angry if Trump were to win the election, while another 32% would be disappointed. The percentages are nearly reversed among supporters of the President, with disappointed being the most common description (61%), compared to 38% who say they'd be angry.

Added Cristina Mora, IGS co-director, "The findings indicate the emotional toll that the November election is having on Californians. That Biden supporters would be angry if he lost, but more relieved that excited if he won indicates that Democrats are thinking about the election as more than simply about their preferred candidate. Biden supporters may well be thinking that the future of their democratic institutions is now on the line in this election."

Nearly two in three California Democrats (63%) express enthusiasm about Biden's choice of home state Senator Harris as his vice-presidential running mate. This sentiment is shared by majorities across most of the state's major Democratic voter subgroups. One exception is voters under age 30 who, while supportive, express less enthusiasm for her selection than other Democratic voting blocs.

While most Californians think that having Harris serve as the nation's Vice President would have a positive impact on the state, opinions about this are highly partisan and ideologically based, with Democrats and liberals very optimistic about the impact she would have on the state and Republicans and conservatives mostly negative.

Biden lead over Trump in California unchanged since the party conventions

There has been little change in California voter preferences in the presidential election following each party's nominating conventions and Biden's selection of California's junior U.S. Senator Harris as his vice-presidential running mate. A *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed in late July found Biden holding a commanding 39-point lead over President Trump in California, 67% to 28%. The latest poll shows him leading by 38 percentage points, 67% to 29%. If borne out in the election, it would be an even bigger Democratic victory than their 30-point win in California in the 2016 presidential election.

The poll finds the same massive chasm between the voting preferences of California Democrats and Republicans and its conservatives and liberals, with overwhelming proportions of Democrats and liberals backing the Biden-Harris ticket and nearly all Republicans and conservatives backing Trump and Pence.

Biden receives majority support across all major regions and virtually all demographic subgroups of California's likely voter population, with his largest leads among Blacks (85% to 11%), voters living in the San Francisco Bay Area (78% to 19%), those with a post graduate education (78% to 19%) and No Party Preference voters (76% to 18%). The only major voting bloc other than Republicans and conservatives where a majority is backing the President's re-election are evangelical Christians (55%).

Table 1			
Presidential preferences between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden among Californians likely to vote in the November 2020 election			
	Biden–Harris	Trump–Pence	Other*/Undecided
	%	%	%
Total likely voters	67	28	5
Democrat	95	2	3
Republican	9	86	5
No party preference	76	18	6
All other parties	55	30	15
Very conservative	6	93	1
Somewhat conservative	21	71	8
Moderate	72	21	7
Somewhat liberal	96	2	2
Very liberal	96	-	3
Los Angeles County	72	23	5
San Diego County	68	26	6
Orange County	56	37	7
Inland Empire	59	37	4
Other Southern California	68	28	4
Central Valley	55	40	5
San Francisco Bay Area	78	19	3
Other Northern California	67	27	6
Male	63	32	5
Female	71	25	4
18-29	71	21	7
30-39	72	22	6
40-49	72	22	6
50-64	63	32	5
65 or older	64	34	2
White non-Hispanic	64	32	4
Latino	73	21	6
Asian/Pacific Islander	68	27	5
Black	85	11	4
High school or less	59	36	5
Some college/trade school	63	33	4
Bachelor’s degree	71	24	5
Post graduate work	78	19	3
Evangelical Christians	40	55	5

* Other candidates and parties included on California’s 2020 presidential election ballot are: Howie Hawkins - Angeles Nicole Walker (Green), Roque “Rocky” De La Fuente Guerra - Kanye Omari West (American Independent), Jo Jorgensen - Jeremy “Spike” Cohen (Libertarian), and Gloria La Riva - Sunil Freeman (Peace and Freedom).

For most Californians the election is mainly about President Trump

Supporters of each of the major party candidates were asked to choose from three possible answers to explain their main reason for their vote choice – (1) because they liked their preferred candidate, (2) because their candidate is the nominee of their preferred party, or (3) because they didn’t like the other candidate.

The results indicate that for most Californians their choice for president this year is mainly being made in relation to President Trump. Among Biden’s supporters a 52% majority say their main reason for backing him is because they don’t like Trump, while among backers of the President 63% say their main reason for their vote choice is because they like Trump.

Table 2
Main reason for supporting their preferred candidate for president
(among likely voters supporting each candidate)

	Biden voters	Trump voters
	%	%
Because I like my candidate	15	63
Because he is the (Democratic) (Republican) nominee	33	13
Because I don’t like the other candidate	52	24

Contrasting views of each candidate’s backers about the issues most important in this year’s election

There are wide differences related to the issues most important to supporters of Biden and those backing the President in this year’s presidential election.

Backers of Biden cite a wide range of issues as being important to them in this year’s presidential election, with no one issue dominating. These include bringing the country together (35%), the coronavirus (28%), climate change (28%), nominations to the Supreme Court (21%), health care (18%), economic inequality (16%) and race relations (15%)

By contrast, one issue dominates among Californians preferring Trump’s re-election and that is “the economy”. Statewide nearly seven in ten of his supporters (67%) choose it among their top two issues in the election. Other issues mentioned next most often by the President’s supporters are “policing and criminal justice” (28%), “nominations to the Supreme Court” (22%), and “immigration” (19%).

Table 3
Most important issues to voters when deciding whom to support for president
(among likely voters in California)

	Total likely voters %	Biden voters %	Trump voters %	Support others/ undecided %
Will bring the country together	29	35	15	25
The economy	27	10	67	35
The coronavirus	20	28	4	13
Nominations to the Supreme Court*	20	21	22	9
Climate change	20	28	1	20
Health care	14	18	4	19
Policing and criminal justice	14	8	28	13
Race relations	11	15	2	8
Economic inequality	12	16	3	12
Immigration	10	6	19	8
Foreign policy	7	5	14	8
Gun policies	4	2	9	5
Federal budget deficit	2	1	5	11

* Survey completed prior to the death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Nearly twice as many Biden supporters than Trump supporters say they’d be “angry” if the opposing candidate were to win the election

Voters in this survey were asked to choose which of four adjectives would best describe sentiments were President Trump to be re-elected or asked the same question were Biden to win the presidency. The descriptions offered to voters were “excited,” “relieved,” “disappointed,” and “angry.”

In this setting, two in three Biden supporters (67%) say they’d be angry if Trump were to win the election, while 32% say they’d be disappointed. By contrast just 38% of the President’s backers say they would be “angry” were Biden to win election, while 61% would be disappointed.

Relieved is by far the description Biden supporters most often choose if he were to win the election (74%), while 25% say they would be excited. Among voters supporting Trump 57% say they would be relieved by a Trump election victory, and 42% would be excited.

Table 4
Which term best describes how you would feel if (Donald Trump)
(Joe Biden) were to win this year’s presidential election
(among likely voters in California)

	Total likely voters %	Biden supporters %	Trump supporters %	Others/ Undecided %
If Trump wins				
Excited	13	*	42	4
Relieved	18	1	57	26
Disappointed	23	32	1	47
Angry	46	67	*	20
If Biden wins				
Excited	17	25	*	4
Relieved	52	74	1	37
Disappointed	20	1	61	45
Angry	11	*	38	10

Most California Democrats express enthusiasm about Biden’s choice of Harris as his vice-presidential running mate

Democrats were also asked for their reaction to Biden’s selection of California Senator Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running mate and by and large it is enthusiastic. Statewide 63% of the Democrats likely to vote in the election describe themselves as enthusiastic about Biden’s choice of Harris. This compares to 31% who say they are satisfied but not enthusiastic, while just 6% report being dissatisfied.

While majorities of voter across most of the major subgroups of the Democratic electorate express enthusiasm for Biden’s selection of Harris, younger voters are the exception. Among Democrats under age 30 just 32% say they are enthusiastic about her selection, while 52% describe themselves as satisfied but not enthusiastic. Differences across racial groups are modest and range from 67% of Black Democrats expressing enthusiasm for Harris’s selection to 57% among Democrats who are Asian American.

Table 5
Reaction to Biden’s choice of Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running mate
(among Democrats likely to vote in California)

	Enthusiastic %	Satisfied, but not enthusiastic %	Dissatisfied %
Total Democrats likely to vote	63	31	6
Very liberal	58	34	8
Somewhat liberal	71	25	4
Moderate	62	34	4
Conservative	57	28	15
18-29	32	52	16
30-39	51	41	7
40-49	69	27	4
50-64	71	25	5
65-74	75	22	3
74 or older	72	26	1
Male	61	31	8
Female	65	31	4
White non-Hispanic	66	29	5
Latino	60	33	7
Asian/Pacific Islander	57	38	5
Black	67	30	3

Highly partisan views of what a Vice President Harris would mean for California

While Californian voters think that having Harris serve as the nation’s vice president would have a positive impact on California, opinions about this are highly partisan and ideological. Statewide 57% believe a Harris vice presidency would positively impact the state, 24% see it having a negative impact and 18% think it will have no real impact.

Democratic voters and liberals are the most optimistic segments, with about eight in ten believing that a Vice President Harris would positively impact the state. Among Republicans and strong conservatives only about one in ten feel this way.

Women, Blacks and Latinos are also more likely than other voter subgroups to believe Harris would have a beneficial impact on the state if she were serving as the nation’s vice president.

Table 6
Impact that electing Kamala Harris as Vice President will likely have on California
(among likely voters in California)

	Very/somewhat positive %	Very/somewhat negative %	No real impact %
Total likely voters	57	24	18
Democrat	82	3	15
Republican	11	72	17
No party preference	59	15	26
All other parties	48	32	20
Very conservative	7	79	14
Somewhat conservative	22	61	17
Moderate	62	17	21
Somewhat liberal	81	3	16
Very liberal	76	3	21
Male	52	27	21
Female	62	22	16
White non-Hispanic	53	27	20
Latino	67	19	14
Asian/Pacific Islander	59	20	21
Black	73	13	14

Trump’s job rating remains deeply underwater in California

The poll also updated its time series examining California registered voter views of the job that Trump is doing as president. The results indicate that large majorities continue to offer a highly negative assessment, with most voters strongly disapproving of his performance. In the latest survey, 70% of registered voters disapprove of the job Trump is doing, 62% of whom disapprove strongly, while just 30% approve. These findings are nearly identical to those observed in late July when 71% of the state’s registered voters disapproved and 29% approved.

Table 7
Trend of Donald Trump’s job performance ratings as President
(among registered voters in California)

	Approve (total) %	Approve strongly %	Disapprove somewhat %	Disapprove (total) %	Disapprove somewhat %	Disapprove strongly %
September 2020	30	20	10	70	8	62
Late July 2020	29	18	11	71	8	63
January 2020	33	22	11	67	10	57
November 2019	32	20	12	68	10	58
September 2019	31	19	12	69	11	58
June 2019	33	21	12	67	10	57
April 2018	31	18	13	67	8	59
December 2017	30	18	12	66	9	57

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was administered online in English and Spanish September 9-15, 2020 among 7,198 California registered voters, 5,942 of whom were considered likely to vote in the November 2020 presidential election.

The survey was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample was stratified by age and gender in an attempt to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the original voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample of registered voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's registered voters. Likely voters were identified based on a voter's stated interest in and intention to vote in the upcoming presidential election and factoring in their history of voting in past elections.

The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely due to the effects of sample stratification and the post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings based on the overall sample of registered voters or from the sample of likely voters in the November general election are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Detailed tabulations reporting the results to each question can be found at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

Question wording

Asked of all registered voters: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President?

Asked of likely voters: Below are the names and parties of the candidates for President and Vice President whose names will appear on California's November election ballot. If the election were held today, for whom would you vote? **(DISPLAY ORDER OF PARTY TICKETS RANDOMIZED)**

Donald J. Trump – Michael R. Pence, Republican

Joe Biden - Kamala Harris, Democratic

Howie Hawkins - Angeles Nicole Walker, Green

Roque "Rocky" De La Fuente Guerra - Kanye Omari West, American Independent

Jo Jorgensen – Jeremy "Spike" Cohen, Libertarian

Gloria La Riva – Sunil Freeman, Peace and Freedom

Asked of likely voters supporting Trump-Pence: What is the main reason behind your vote for the Republican Party ticket of Trump-Pence?

- (1) Mainly because I like Trump
- (2) Mainly because Trump and Pence are the Republican nominees
- (3) Mainly because I don't like Biden

Asked of likely voters supporting Biden-Harris: What is the main reason behind your vote for the Democratic Party ticket of Biden-Harris?

- (1) Mainly because I like Biden
- (2) Mainly because Biden and Harris are the Democratic nominees
- (3) Mainly because I don't like Trump

Asked of likely voters: Of the following issues, which one or two, if any, is most important to you in deciding who to support for president this year? **(SEE RELEASE FOR ISSUES LISTED. DISPLAY ORDER OF ISSUES RANDOMIZED)**

Asked of likely voters who are registered Democrats: How would you describe your overall feelings about Joe Biden's choice of Kamala Harris as his Vice-Presidential running mate – enthusiastic, satisfied but not enthusiastic, dissatisfied?

Asked of likely voters: If the Democratic ticket of Biden and Harris were to win this year's election, what impact do you think electing Californian Kamala Harris as Vice President would have on the state of California – very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, very negative or no real impact?

Which of the following best describes how you would feel if (Donald Trump is re-elected) (Joe Biden is elected) President in the November 2020 election: excited, relieved, disappointed, angry?

About the Institute of Governmental Studies

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll, which is disseminated widely, seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion, and to generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. The director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll* is Mark DiCamillo. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.