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***Californians inclined to favor candidates who are described as a progressive
but are divided over those described as a Democratic Socialist***
-- Large generational fissures are observed in voter evaluations of candidate descriptors --

By Mark DiCamillo
Director, Berkeley IGS Poll

In its latest survey the *Berkeley IGS Poll* included a series of questions asking California's registered voters about the impact that different candidate descriptors had on their willingness to support each type of candidate. The descriptors tested in the survey were: "a progressive," "a Democratic Socialist," "a mainstream Democrat," "a Republican," and a "MAGA supporter."

Of the five descriptors measured, the one that draws the most positive response from the state's overall electorate is the term progressive, whom 40% would be more inclined to back while 29% would be less inclined. Another 31% say it would not make a difference or had no opinion.

Californians are evenly divided toward candidates described as Democratic Socialists, whom 38% would be more inclined to support and 38% would be less inclined.

When asked to evaluate the impact of a candidate who is a mainstream Democrat, a larger proportion of voters (36%) reports being less inclined to support than more inclined to support (29%).

Faring far worse to voters in this heavily Democratic-leaning state are candidates described as either a Republican or as a MAGA supporter, whom majorities would be less inclined to support and only a fraction would be more inclined to back.

Generational differences are prominent within the state's Democratic electorate toward these descriptors, especially regarding candidates identified as Democratic Socialists or as mainstream Democrats. For example, greater than two in three Democrats under age 40 say they would be more inclined to support a candidate who is a Democratic Socialist, while less than half of Democrats ages 65 or older would. And the reverse is true with regard to candidates described as a mainstream Democrat, whom about twice as many older Democrats than younger Democrats would be inclined to support.

Generational differences are also present within the GOP rank-and-file when evaluating the impact of candidates described as a Republican or as a MAGA supporter, as younger Republicans are significantly less likely than their older counterparts to react positively to either descriptor.

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted in English and Spanish August 3-9 among a stratified random sample of 4,207 registered voters throughout California, including a weighted sample of 1,905 Democrats, and 1,060 Republicans.

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora noted “the preferences reveal important generational divides across California voters. Older Republicans and Democrats favor “MAGA” and “Mainstream Democrat” candidates respectively at significantly greater rates than their younger, under-40 counterparts. As analysts look toward future elections, questions about who can galvanize these younger voters with newer, fresher campaigns will be important to answer.”

The overall electorate offers varied and highly partisan reactions to the five candidate descriptors measured

While voters offer varied responses when presented with the five different descriptors, candidates described as progressives fare the best among the overall electorate. Statewide, 40% of registered voters say they would be more inclined to back a candidate who is a progressive, while 29% would be less inclined. Another 20% say it would not make much difference and 11% have no opinion.

When asked how they would react to a candidate described as a Democratic Socialist, voters are evenly divided, with 38% reporting this would make them more inclined to support the candidate , while 38% would be less inclined.

But both descriptors have greater appeal to the state’s voters than candidates who are described as mainstream Democrats, whom 36% are less inclined to support and 29% are more inclined to support.

The two other descriptors tested, “a Republican” and “a MAGA supporter,” both receive far more negative appraisals than positives from the overall electorate. By more than two to one margin voters say they would be less inclined to support a candidate (52%) than more inclined (23%) if the candidate is described as a Republican. Candidates described as being a MAGA supporter fare worse, with 64% less inclined and 14% more inclined to back such candidates.

Voter responses to each descriptor are highly partisan, with many more Democrats reacting positively to candidates who are described as progressives, Democratic Socialists, or mainstream Democrats, while Republicans overwhelmingly react negatively to them. Conversely, very few Democrats react positively to candidates described as either a Republican or as a MAGA supporter, while a 70% majority of GOP voters would be more inclined to support a candidate described as a Republican and a plurality (46%) would be more inclined to back one described as a MAGA supporter.

The reactions of No Party Preference or those registered with a minor party are generally closer to the views of the state’s registered Democrats than Republican voters, although there are some differences. For example, compared to registered Democrats, voters not affiliated with either major party offer more divided views about candidates who are progressives and Democratic Socialists and hold more negative than positive views of those described as mainstream Democrats.

<i>Table 1</i> Impact that a candidate being described with different political descriptors has on voter inclinations to support that candidate <i>(among registered voters in California)</i>				
	More inclined %	Less inclined %	Not much difference %	No opinion %
<u>“A progressive”</u>				
Total registered voters	40	29	20	11
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	60	11	19	10
Republican	7	63	18	12
No Party Preference/other	37	27	22	14
<u>“A Democratic Socialist”</u>				
Total registered voters	38	38	15	9
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	58	16	17	9
Republican	3	82	9	6
No Party Preference/other	36	34	18	12
<u>“A mainstream Democrat”</u>				
Total registered voters	29	36	27	8
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	48	18	28	6
Republican	5	69	20	6
No Party Preference/other	20	36	33	11
<u>“A Republican”</u>				
Total registered voters	23	52	16	9
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	3	82	8	7
Republican	70	4	20	6
No Party Preference/other	15	50	24	11
<u>“A MAGA supporter”</u>				
Total registered voters	14	64	13	9
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	2	88	3	7
Republican	46	16	29	9
No Party Preference/other	7	68	14	11

Big divisions within the Democratic Party to candidates described as Democratic Socialists or who are described as mainstream Democrats

While Democratic voters react much more positively than negatively to candidates who are described as progressives, Democratic Socialists or mainstream Democrats than other voters, differences are observed across subgroups of the Democratic electorate. For example, Democrats under age 40 offer overwhelmingly positive reactions to candidates described as progressives or Democratic Socialists but are less sanguine of those who are described as mainstream Democrats. By contrast, Democrats ages 65 or older react far more positively to candidates who are mainstream Democrats or progressives than to those who are Democratic Socialists.

The poll finds other differences among voters within the Democratic party to these descriptors, but they are relatively modest. Table 2 below reports how registered Democrats vary in their reactions to each descriptor by age, gender, race/ethnicity and union affiliation.

Table 2

Impact on registered Democrats of candidates being described as progressives, Democratic Socialists, mainstream Democrats

	<i>“A progressive”</i>			<i>“A Democratic Socialist”</i>			<i>“A mainstream Democrat”</i>		
	More inclined %	Less inclined %	No difference %	More inclined %	Less inclined %	No difference %	More inclined %	Less inclined %	No difference %
Total registered Democrats	60	11	19	58	16	17	48	18	28
<i><u>Democrats by age</u></i>									
18-29	68	4	18	69	6	13	32	17	41
30-39	67	8	15	68	13	10	34	32	29
40-49	63	8	17	63	10	20	40	20	33
50-64	54	18	20	54	19	20	55	17	20
65 or older	53	14	23	45	24	20	67	7	21
<i><u>Democrats by gender</u></i>									
Male	62	13	19	59	18	17	44	21	30
Female	59	10	19	58	14	17	51	15	26
<i><u>Democrats by race/ethnicity</u></i>									
White non-Hispanic	66	10	18	57	19	19	55	18	25
Latino	53	11	22	59	11	15	39	18	32
Asian/Pacific Isle	64	13	15	62	14	16	46	17	29
Black/African Amer.	45	15	20	54	18	15	46	19	24
<i><u>Democrats by union status</u></i>									
Union-affiliated household	70	9	14	66	13	14	46	23	25
Non-union household	57	12	21	56	17	18	49	16	29

(Differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each descriptor equal the proportion of voters with no opinion)

Divisions also seen within the Republican Party to candidates described as a Republican or as a MAGA supporter

A 70% majority of registered Republicans say they would react positively to a candidate described as a Republican, while by a 46% to 16% margin they would be more inclined than less inclined to back a MAGA supporter.

However, significant differences are also observed within the Republican party by ethnicity and across generations. For example, older Republicans and white GOP voters are more likely than their younger and Latino counterparts to say they would be more inclined to vote for candidates described as either a Republican or a MAGA supporter.

Table 3						
Impact that a candidate describing himself/herself as a (Republican)/(MAGA supporter) has on voter inclinations to support that candidate (among registered Republicans in California)						
	<u>"A Republican"</u>			<u>"A MAGA supporter"</u>		
	More inclined %	Less inclined %	No difference %	More inclined %	Less inclined %	No difference %
Total registered Republicans	70	4	20	46	16	29
<u>Republicans by age</u>						
18-39	57	4	28	27	27	34
40-49	61	4	32	46	12	35
50-64	75	4	16	49	17	27
65 or older	81	3	10	58	9	24
<u>Republicans by gender</u>						
Male	71	4	21	43	16	31
Female	70	4	18	49	16	26
<u>Republicans by tenure</u>						
Homeowner	77	4	15	49	14	28
Renter/other	60	4	27	40	19	30
<u>Republicans by race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	77	3	17	51	13	29
Latino	58	4	28	39	18	30

(Differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each descriptor equal the proportion of voters with no opinion)

Question wording

Generally speaking, if a candidate in an election were to describe himself or herself as (a Democratic Socialist) (a mainstream Democrat) (a Republican) (a progressive) (a MAGA supporter) would this make you more inclined to support that candidate, less inclined to support that candidate, or would it not make much difference to you? (ORDERING OF DESCRIPTORS RANDOMIZED)

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 conducted online in English and Spanish August 3 - 9, 2026 among 4,207 registered voters throughout California, including a weighted sample base of 1,905 Democrats, and 1,060 Republicans and 1,242

No Party Preference or other registrants. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Data collection was completed by distributing email and text message invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email or text invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey questionnaire was housed. Reminders were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations.

Samples of the state's registered voters 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 voter registration rolls, which is a public document. The samples were stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents. A separate random sample of Spanish-speakers was drawn from the pool of registered voters who requested that their official voting materials be sent to them in Spanish to enable the survey to assess voter opinions among the state's Spanish-speaking voters.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, the personally identifiable information about voters that was listed on their voting record was purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. Finally, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the data file to align the overall registered voter sample to population characteristics of registered voters both statewide and within major regions of the state.

The sampling error associated with the survey results is difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of about +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The findings based on the overall Democratic and Republican voter samples have an estimated sampling error of about +/- 3.5 and +/- 4.0 percentage points, respectively, although sampling error estimates of voters within each party would be larger and relate to each subgroup's sample size.

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 Professor G. 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. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll*. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.