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Biden's job ratings decline in California, while Trump strengthens his hold over the field in the state's March GOP presidential primary.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

President Joe Biden's job ratings have declined and are now underwater in California for the first time in his presidency, with more voters now saying they disapprove of his performance overall (52%) than approve (44%). In addition, most of those who disapprove report strongly disapproving of his performance.

The poll also finds California voters disapproving of Biden's performance in handling many of the major issues facing the nation by considerable margins. These include immigration (60% disapprove vs. 30% approve), inflation (61% disapprove vs. 31% approve), crime and criminal justice (53% disapprove vs. 32% approve), the economy (55% disapprove vs. 37% approve), the fighting between Israel and Hamas (55% disapprove vs. 35% approve) and relations with China (46% disapprove vs. 34% approve).

While Californians who voted for Biden in 2020 generally view the President's performance in a more positive light, significant proportions do not. This is true both with regard to his handling of major domestic issues like inflation and immigration but also his handling of the ongoing fight between Israel and Hamas in the Middle East. And, in each case about four in ten of those who voted for Biden in 2020 disapprove of his performance in these areas.

This is happening at a time when his likely challenger in the 2024 presidential election, former President Donald Trump, is widening an already huge lead over the Republican candidate field in the state's March 2024 GOP presidential primary. The latest poll finds Trump to be the choice of 57% of likely voters for the Republican nomination in California's March presidential primary election, while support for his next closest challenger, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, has declined to just 12%.

These trends appear to be influencing voter preferences in next year's November presidential election, as the poll finds Biden's impressive 30-point 2020 election victory over Trump in California has now shrunk to just 15 points when the two are paired in a simulated Presidential election contest, 46% to 31%. An unusually large proportion of likely voters (23%) are undecided or say they wouldn't support either candidate. The size of Biden lead over Trump is similar in a simulated four-candidate field when including independents Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West, with Biden ahead of Trump by 14 points 43% to 29% , with 9% supporting Kennedy and 4% for West.

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed online October 24-30 among 6,342 California registered voters and including a weighted subsample of 4,506 likely voters.

Observed IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler, "While Biden is in no danger of losing California, his low approval ratings underscore the deep challenges the President faces in solidifying the support of his Democratic base and appealing to swing voters. It is a clear warning sign for his national campaign."

Biden's job ratings as President now underwater in California

For the first time in Biden's tenure as president, a significantly larger proportion of California voters disapproves of the job he is doing overall (52%) than approves (44%). In addition, most of those who disapprove report strongly disapproving of his performance.

By comparison last May Biden's job ratings in this state were almost evenly divided, with 48% approving and 46% disapproving, while in February more approved than disapproved of his performance 57% to 39%.

Table 1
Trend of voter appraisals of the job Joe Biden is doing as President
(among California registered voters)

	Approve (total) %	Approve strongly %	Approve somewhat %	Disapprove (total) %	Disapprove somewhat %	Disapprove strongly %	No opinion %
Late Oct. 2023	**44**	*17*	*27*	**52**	*14*	*38*	**4**
May 2023	48	17	31	46	12	34	6
February 2023	57	23	34	39	9	30	4
September 2022	52	18	34	43	12	31	5
August 2022	48	16	32	48	16	32	4
April 2022	50	17	33	46	14	32	4
February 2022	47	17	30	48	14	34	5
July 2021	59	30	29	37	10	27	4
April 2021	62	39	23	34	8	26	4

Largest Biden's job ratings decline coming from traditional Democratic voting blocs

The decline in the President's job approval rating since May includes significant declines among the traditional Democratic voting blocs. For example, double digit increases are seen in the proportions of voters disapproving of Biden's performance among females, Latinos, Asian Americans, and voters under the age 40.

On a regional basis, significant declines are also noted among voters in several Southern California regions including San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange counties.

The President's standing among the overall Democratic electorate has declined from a 76% to 18% positive rating in May to 69% to 27% at present. Similar declines are noted among Californians who say they voted for Biden in the 2020 election.

Table 2
Comparing President Biden's current job ratings to those he received in May across major subgroups of the California registered voter population

	Late October 2023			May 2023		
	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	**44**	**52**	**4**	**48**	**46**	**6**
Party registration						
Democrats	69	27	4	76	18	6
Republicans	7	91	2	7	92	1
No party preference	39	55	6	41	48	11
Other parties	26	69	5	29	65	6
Voting in 2020 election						
Biden voter	71	25	4	80	16	4
Trump voter	3	95	2	1	97	2
Did not vote in 2020	39	55	6	42	46	12
Political ideology						
Strongly conservative	9	90	1	6	91	3
Somewhat conservative	15	83	2	17	81	2
Moderate	41	53	6	47	45	8
Somewhat liberal	73	22	5	74	17	9
Strongly liberal	73	25	2	79	16	5
Region						
Los Angeles County	48	47	5	51	41	8
San Diego County	41	55	4	47	46	7
Orange County	37	61	2	44	51	5
Inland Empire	35	62	3	37	60	3
Central Coast	47	48	5	53	42	5
Central Valley	36	60	4	40	54	6
San Francisco Bay Area	56	40	4	59	35	6
North Coast/Sierras	44	52	4	50	48	2
Gender						
Female	45	50	5	53	40	7
Male	43	54	3	44	52	4
Age						
18-29	34	58	8	40	44	16
30-39	39	54	7	49	42	9
40-49	40	55	5	48	49	3
50-64	43	55	2	46	51	3
65 or older	60	40	*	56	43	1
Race/ethnicity						
White	47	51	2	51	48	1
Latino	41	55	4	44	44	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	42	50	8	48	40	2
Black	53	38	9	53	42	5

* less than 1/5 of 1%

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Voters disapprove of Biden's handling of many of the major issues facing the country

California voters also disapprove of Biden's performance in handling many of the major issues facing the nation by considerable margins. These include immigration, inflation, crime and criminal justice, the economy, the fighting between Israel and Hamas, and relations with China.

While Californians who voted for Biden in the 2020 presidential election offer more positive assessments of the President's performance in each of these areas, significant proportions do not. This is especially true with regard to his handling of the fighting between Israel and Hamas (43%) and on the issues of immigration (42%) and inflation (38%).

By contrast, overwhelming majorities of those who voted for Trump in 2020 disapprove of Biden's performance in each area, and those who didn't vote in 2020 also offer more negative than positive evaluations of the President's performance in each area.

Table 3
Voter appraisals of the job President Biden is doing in seven areas
(among California registered voters)

	Total registered voters %	Biden voters in 2020 %	Trump voters in 2020 %	Non-voters in 2020 %
The war in Ukraine				
Approve	**46**	67	12	40
Disapprove	**46**	25	84	46
No opinion	**8**	8	4	14
Relations with China				
Approve	**34**	52	6	29
Disapprove	**46**	25	87	43
No opinion	**20**	23	7	28
The fighting between Israel and Hamas				
Approve	**35**	47	23	25
Disapprove	**55**	43	71	59
No opinion	**10**	10	6	16
The economy				
Approve	**37**	62	2	29
Disapprove	**55**	30	94	59
No opinion	**8**	8	4	12
Crime and criminal justice				
Approve	**32**	52	2	27
Disapprove	**53**	31	94	52
No opinion	**15**	17	4	21
Inflation				
Approve	**31**	52	2	22
Disapprove	**61**	38	95	66
No opinion	**8**	10	3	12
Immigration				

Approve	**30**	46	2	27
Disapprove	**60**	42	95	57
No opinion	**10**	12	3	16

Trump's lead over the GOP presidential primary field continues to expand in California

The latest poll also finds former president Trump expanding his previous huge lead over the rest of the GOP candidate field in the state's March presidential primary. Trump is now the choice of 57% of likely voters in that election, while support for DeSantis, his nearest challenger, continues to decline, and now receives just 12% of the preference voters of likely GOP primary voters in California.

The fact that Trump's support continues to exceed 50% is significant since according to state GOP rules for awarding delegates to the Republican National Convention, if any candidate secures more than half of the statewide Republican primary vote he or she would be awarded all of the state's largest in the nation, 169 convention delegates.

Table 4
Trend of voter preferences in California's 2024 GOP presidential primary election
(among Republicans likely voters)

	Late Oct. 2023 %	August 2023 %	May 2023 %	Feb. 2023 %	August 2022 %
Donald Trump, former President	**57**	55	44	29	38
Ron DeSantis, Florida Governor	**12**	16	26	37	27
Nikki Haley, former South Carolina Governor	**9**	7	3	7	3
Vivek Ramaswamy, high tech executive	**3**	4	2	*NA*	*NA*
Chris Christie, former New Jersey Governor	**2**	3	1	*NA*	*NA*
Tim Scott, South Carolina Senator	**1**	2	1	1	*
Others**	**5**	5	10	16	19
Undecided	**11**	8	13	10	13

*Notes: In the latest poll, "others" includes both voters who selected "other" as their answer option or supported former Vice President Mike Pence or broadcaster Larry Elder who have since dropped out of the race. The Late-October 2023, August 2023 and May 2023 preferences are based on likely voters, while prior measures were asked of all registered Republicans. NA: Not measured. * less than 1/5 of 1%.*

Biden's lead over Trump in general election trial heats is now half as large as his 30-point victory in the state in 2020

When Biden is paired against Trump in a simulated November 2024 presidential trial heat, the President's lead is now half as large as his 30-point victory margin over Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Currently 46% favor Biden, 31% are backing Trump, while an unusually large proportion (23%) are undecided or say they wouldn't support either candidate.

The poll finds hardly any of those who voted for Biden or Trump in 2020 are now defecting to the other candidate. However, large proportions of 2020 Biden voters and Trump voters do not express a preference in the current poll if Biden and Trump are the only candidates.

Biden's lead over Trump is similar when two independent presidential candidates, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.. and Cornel West, are included in the November presidential election mix. In that scenario Biden receives the support of 43%, Trump 29%, Kennedy 9%, West 4% while 15% are undecided.

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Kennedy supporters appear to draw evenly from voters who reported voting for Biden in 2020 (8%) or Trump (7%) in 2020. On the other hand, those who are now supporting West in a four-candidate race are derived primarily from Biden supporters or those who didn't vote in the 2020 election, while very few come from the ranks of former Trump supporters.

Table 5a
Comparing current preferences for president in 2024 n a 2-candidate field
to the actual presidential election results in California in 2020
(among likely voters)

	Joe Biden (D) %	Donald Trump (R) %	Neither/ undecided %
November 2020 election results	**64.5**	**34.3**	**1.2**
Total likely voters – late October 2023	**46**	**31**	**23**
Didn't vote for president in 2020*	39	30	31
Voted in for president in 2020*	48	32	20
Biden voter in 2020	75	3	22
Trump voter in 2020	1	83	16
Did not vote in 2020	39	30	31

* Data based on the confirmed voting participation of voters in the November 2020 presidential election from state voting records.

Table 5b
Current voter preferences for president in 2024 in a four-candidate field in 202
overall and by vote choice for president in the 2020 election
(among likely voters)

	Joe Biden (D) %	Donald Trump (R) %	Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (I) %	Cornel West (I) %	Undecided %
Total likely voters – late October	**43**	**29**	**9**	**4**	**15**
Didn't vote for president in 2020	37	26	12	5	20
Voted in for president in 2020	44	30	8	4	14
Biden voter in 2020	70	2	8	6	14
Trump voter in 2020	1	79	7	1	12
Did not vote in 2020	37	26	12	5	20

About the Survey

The poll was conducted 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

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distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations. Samples of California registered voters with email addresses were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls and provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample of registered voters to population characteristics of the registered voters 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 based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results from the total likely voter subsample would be +/- 2.5 percentage points, while findings based on likely voters in the Republican presidential primary would be +/- 4 percentage points.

Question wording
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as President?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Biden is doing in the following areas? (SEE RELEASE AREAS MEASURED) (CATEGORIES PRESENTED IN RANDOM ORDER)

(IF REGISTERED REPUBLICAN) Suppose you were voting in California's 2024 Republican primary for President and the following Republicans were listed on the ballot. If the election were held today for whom would you vote? (NAMES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)

If the November 2024 general election for President were held today and the following candidates were listed on the ballot, for whom would you vote? (NAMES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER) (IF 1ST CHOICE GIVEN): Who would be your second choice?