

UC Berkeley

IGS Poll

Title

Release #2021-06: Voters of color, especially Latinos and Native Americans, are being disproportionately affected by the Covid pandemic

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1ck4s2nq>

Author

DiCamillo, Mark

Publication Date

2021-02-23



Institute of Governmental Studies
126 Moses Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Tel: 510-642-6835
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

Release #2021-06

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

***Voters of color, especially Latinos and Native Americans, are
being disproportionately affected by the Covid pandemic.
Broad voter support for hazard pay for essential workers and
employment protections for farmworkers.***

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
(c) 415-602-5594

The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that voters of color, and especially Latinos and Native Americans, are more likely to report that they or their families are being negatively affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The racial differences are stark. Among the state's Latino voters eight in ten report being "very concerned" about getting sick from the virus, compared to six in ten whites. And at least two in three Latinos report that they or their families have experienced a "very serious" or "somewhat serious" problem due to the pandemic in the following areas: being unable to get medical care, being unable to pay for basic necessities, working under dangerous conditions, reduced wages or work hours, or losing a job outright. In comparison, no more than one in three white voters report these as serious concerns.

Because the survey was conducted among over 10,000 registered voters, it marks the first time that a major statewide public poll can reliably examine the opinions of the state's Native Americans. The results indicate that Native American voters are also more likely than the overall voter population to be negatively affected by the virus, with majorities reporting a serious problem in five of the seven areas measured. For example, Native American respondents are twice as likely as whites to report being "very concerned" about losing their health insurance and not being able to pay for basic necessities.

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora notes, "The patterns continue to show that the coronavirus presents one of the greatest racial justice challenges of our time. Covid-19 has exacerbated long-standing inequalities within the state. Communities of color are suffering disproportionately, both economically and socially, and the amount of fear and reported loss, especially among Latinos, is undeniable."

The poll also finds broad voter support for legislation that would require employers to provide hazard pay to frontline essential workers, like grocery store employees (77%), as well as Covid-related employment protections for the state's farmworkers. Nearly nine in ten (87%) believe farmworkers should be given access to handwashing stations, personal protective equipment and working conditions that enable them to practice social distancing, 76% agree that they should receive full replacement wages to stay home when they get sick from the virus, and 73% support providing them with equal pay regardless of their legal status or seasonal work status during the pandemic.

Voters of color, and especially Latinos and Native Americans, are more likely to report being negatively affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Large proportions of California voters report that they or their families are encountering serious problems due to the coronavirus pandemic. For example, 66% report getting sick from the virus as a serious family problem, 47% cite reduced wages or work hours, 45% mention being able to get medical care, 42% report that a family member is unable to work remotely and works under dangerous conditions, 40% cite being unable to pay for basic necessities, another 40% mention losing a job, while 30% say losing their health insurance is a serious problem.

Voters of color, and especially Latinos and Native Americans, are the most likely voter segments reporting these problems. For example, among Latinos about two in three or more report that getting sick from the virus, reduced wages or work hours, being unable to get medical care, being unable to work remotely and work under dangerous conditions, being unable to pay for basic necessities, or losing a job as serious problems for their family. In addition, the severity of the situation is such that about half of the Latinos are describing each problem as “very serious.”

Native American voters are also more likely than the overall electorate to say that the seven virus-related circumstances are causing serious problems for themselves or their families, with majorities reporting that five of the seven issues – not being able to get medical care, getting sick from the virus, not being able to pay for basic necessities, reduced wages or work hours, and working under dangerous conditions – are serious problems.

Black voters are also more likely than the overall electorate to describe many of virus-related issues as serious problems for themselves or their families. These include getting sick from the virus, reduced wages or work hours, working under dangerous conditions, not being able to pay for basic necessities, and losing a job.

Voters of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage report encountering these pandemic-related circumstances in roughly the same proportions as the overall statewide public.

White voters are less likely than others to report that their families have been negatively affected by the virus, and in only one circumstance, getting sick from the virus, does a majority describe this as a serious problem.

Table 1 Voters who report the following as “very serious” or “somewhat serious” problems for themselves or their families due to the coronavirus - overall and by race/ethnicity (among California registered voters)						
	Total	White	Latino	Asian/ Pac Isle	Black	Native American
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Getting sick from the virus	<u>66</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>57</u>
“Very serious” problem	41	31	60	40	47	43
Reduced wages or work hours	<u>47</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>54</u>
“Very serious” problem	32	21	54	29	37	45
Not being able to get medical care	<u>45</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>61</u>
“Very serious” problem	26	15	46	25	27	38
Unable to work remotely or working under dangerous conditions	<u>42</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>52</u>
“Very serious” problem	27	16	48	23	30	41
Not being able to pay for basic necessities	<u>40</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>54</u>
“Very serious” problem	27	15	50	24	36	33
Losing a job	<u>40</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>43</u>
“Very serious” problem	29	18	50	28	33	31
Losing my health insurance	<u>30</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>39</u>
“Very serious” problem	22	13	42	20	22	27

Broad voter support for legislation requiring employers to provide hazard pay to frontline essential workers

There is broad voter support for legislation that would require employers to provide hazard pay to frontline essential workers, like grocery store employees, until they are able to receive vaccines. Greater than three in four registered voters statewide (77%) support such legislation, of whom 57% are strongly supportive. Just 17% are opposed.

While voter support is broad-based and exceeds 70% across all racial and ethnic subgroup, Blacks (86%) and Latinos (85%) report the highest levels in favor of providing hazard pay to such workers.

Table 2 Views about legislation requiring employers to provide hazard pay to frontline essential workers, like grocery store employees, until they are able to receive vaccines (among California registered voters)						
	Total	White	Latino	Asian/ Pac Isle	Black	Native American
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>Support</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>74</u>
Support strongly	57	47	71	58	76	65
Support somewhat	20	24	14	23	10	9
<u>Oppose</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>22</u>
Oppose somewhat	7	10	3	5	3	9
Oppose strongly	10	13	6	8	7	13
No opinion	6	6	6	6	4	4

Large majorities also back providing virus-related farmworker protections

The poll also finds large majorities of the statewide electorate backing a number of virus-related protections for farmworkers. These include providing them with workplace safeguards to prevent their getting the disease, access to paid sick leave and medical benefits, and full replacement wages if they should contract the coronavirus and equal pay regardless of their legal or seasonal work status.

Nearly nine in ten voters (87%) agree that employers should provide farmworkers with access to handwashing stations, personal protective equipment and working conditions that enable them to practice social distancing, of whom two-thirds (67%) agree strongly.

Three in four also agree that farmworkers should receive full replacement wages from their employers to stay home when they get sick from the virus (76%), as well as equal pay regardless of their legal status or seasonal work status (73%). Another two in three (67%) also agree that undocumented farmworkers should be given the same medical and paid sick leave benefits as documented workers should they fall sick to the virus.

Support for each of these virus-related farmworker protections spans all racial and ethnic subgroups. However, Latino voters are the most supportive, with greater than eight in ten backing each proposal, and greater than seven in ten strongly supportive.

These findings are consistent with those found in April 2020 by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* first it first examined voter support for employment-related protections for the state's farmworkers at the start of the pandemic.

Table 3 Opinions about farmworker protections during the pandemic <i>(Proportions of voters agreeing with each statement)</i>						
	Total %	White %	Latino %	Asian/ Pac Isle %	Black %	Native American %
To prevent COVID-19 among farmworkers, employers should be responsible for providing handwashing stations, personal protective equipment, and work conditions that enable farmworkers to practice social distancing	<u>87</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>88</u>
“Agree strongly”	67	61	80	71	74	66
As essential workers, farmworkers should receive full replacement wages from their employers to stay home when sick with COVID-19.	<u>76</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>70</u>
“Agree strongly”	54	46	73	49	61	54
All farmworkers, regardless of their legal status or seasonal worker status, should receive equal pay as they work during the COVID-19 pandemic	<u>73</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>69</u>
“Agree strongly”	55	49	73	49	56	51
Undocumented farmworkers should receive the same medical and paid sick leave benefits as documented farmworkers if they fall sick with COVID-19	<u>67</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>61</u>
“Agree strongly”	51	43	73	46	50	47

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 (UCB). The questions in this poll were developed in collaboration with the Othering and Belonging Institute at UCB.

The poll was administered online in English and Spanish January 23-29, 2021 among 10,358 California registered voters 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 California voter lists and were derived from 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 respondents, voters' email addresses and 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, 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.

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 California registered voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Detailed tabulations reporting the results to each question are posted at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

Question wording

For each of the following, please indicate the degree to which each is a problem that you or your immediate family expect to face – or are already facing – as a result of the coronavirus:

- Getting or getting sick from the coronavirus
 - Not being able to pay for basic necessities (i.e., food, medication rent/mortgage)
 - Not being able to get medical care
 - Losing my job,
 - Reduced wages or work hours
 - Unable to work remotely or working under dangerous conditions (i.e., close proximity to others)
 - Losing my health insurance
- (ORDERING RANDOMIZED)**

How concerned are you about getting the virus and then spreading it to other people?

The coronavirus has created special challenges for farmworkers and the agricultural industry across the state. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. **(SEE RELEASE FOR STATEMENTS) (ORDERING RANDOMIZED)**

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. Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor Cristina Mora are IGS's Co-Directors.

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>.