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Release #2020-06: Racial Minorities More at Risk in the Workplace and the Economy

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Racial Minorities More at Risk in the Workplace and the Economy

The latest Berkeley IGS Poll reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic is having especially large effects on the safety and economic well-being of people of color in California. Racial minorities are significantly more likely to report having jobs that place them in regular contact with others and they are more concerned that their jobs place them at risk of contracting the disease.

When it comes to safety in their workplaces, people of color in California also report a high level of concern. Of those currently employed, 61% of whites are able to work at home, as compared to just 42% of Latinos and 53% of Black respondents. As such, Latinos and Blacks are much more likely to report that working in close proximity to others is a very serious problem they face with respect to COVID-19. Indeed, nearly three times the number of Latinos and twice the number of Blacks are concerned about working in jobs that place them in close contact with others than are whites.

Table 1: Ability to Work from Home by Race

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Percent able to work from home	0.556	0.613	0.533	0.418	0.589

Table 2: Seriousness of Problem Caused by Working in Proximity to Others

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Very serious problem	0.227	0.148	0.271	0.391	0.283
Somewhat serious problem	0.139	0.117	0.167	0.176	0.161
Not much of a problem	0.157	0.155	0.125	0.164	0.152
No problem at all	0.445	0.549	0.411	0.241	0.359
Not sure	0.032	0.031	0.027	0.028	0.044

The concerns go beyond simply individual health and work safety, as racial minorities are also more likely to be concerned about their family. Among whites, 44% report that their immediate family members, including spouses, are all able to work from home while 41% report that their immediate family members work outside of the home and have regular contact with others. For Latinos and Blacks, only 24% and 33% percent state that their family members can work from home. IGS Co-Director Cristina Mora notes that “the stark racial differences in which populations can safely work from home are striking. Latinos, Blacks, and their families simply face more contact and more risk than whites.”

Table 3: Job Type of Immediate Family Members

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
All work from home	0.384	0.442	0.338	0.240	0.399
Some work outside, minimal contact with others	0.170	0.149	0.153	0.225	0.179
Some work outside, regular contact with others	0.447	0.409	0.508	0.535	0.422

Table 4: Concern about Family Members Working Outside the Home

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Not at all concerned	0.074	0.088	0.081	0.057	0.025
Somewhat concerned	0.449	0.509	0.355	0.357	0.466
Extremely concerned	0.476	0.403	0.564	0.585	0.509

Beyond work safety, the poll also finds important racial trends with respect to economic well-being. A majority of Latino (60%) and Black (54%) Californians report that COVID-19 is a “major threat” to their personal or family’s financial situation, as do 45% of Asian Americans

and 37% of white Californians. Latino, Black, and Asian American Californians are also more likely to report that not being able to pay for basic necessities and access to medical care are each serious problems that they are facing or expect to face from COVID-19.

Table 5: Level of Threat from COVID-19 to Personal/Family Finances

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Major threat	0.441	0.373	0.538	0.596	0.446
Minor threat	0.391	0.434	0.301	0.299	0.421
No threat	0.142	0.170	0.120	0.078	0.111
Not sure	0.025	0.024	0.041	0.028	0.023

Table 6: Seriousness of Problems with Paying for Basic Necessities due to COVID-19

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Very serious problem	0.226	0.136	0.319	0.419	0.270
Somewhat serious problem	0.179	0.158	0.191	0.219	0.191
Not much of a problem	0.239	0.255	0.257	0.191	0.239
No problem at all	0.345	0.440	0.213	0.164	0.291
Not sure	0.011	0.011	0.020	0.008	0.009

While some political leaders have argued that the economic damage caused by the pandemic requires a quicker reopening, the IGS poll shows that Latino, Black, and Asian American respondents are actually just as, if not more, supportive of continuing shelter-in-place as are white Californians. People of color offer greater support for a national shelter-in-place order than do white respondents, with 62% of Latinos, 67% of Blacks, and 59% of Asian Americans in support, as compared to 53% of whites. When asked whether they are more worried that California will endanger health by ending shelter-in-place too soon or more worried that the state will unnecessarily damage the economy by continuing shelter-in-place for too long, each racial group worries more about the shutdown ending too soon, with the largest margin among Black Californians (81%-19%), but a very wide margin among Latinos (72%-28%), Asian Americans (76%-24%), and a slightly lower but still substantial margin among whites (68%-32%). IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler notes that “those groups facing the greatest economic hardship from the pandemic are not necessarily the most eager to end the lockdown. That may be because these same groups also are most likely to have jobs that put them at greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19.”

Table 7: Support for Nationwide Shelter-in Place Order

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Favor strongly	0.561	0.530	0.673	0.621	0.590
Favor somewhat	0.256	0.253	0.253	0.241	0.308
Oppose somewhat	0.106	0.124	0.043	0.085	0.072
Oppose strongly	0.076	0.093	0.031	0.053	0.030

Table 8: Concern about Length of Shelter-in-Place Order

	Total	White	Black	Latino	Asian
More concerned about health effects of ending too soon	0.700	0.676	0.809	0.724	0.760
More concerned about economic effects of continuing too long	0.300	0.324	0.191	0.276	0.240

For media inquiries or further questions, please contact igs@berkeley.edu.

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 in conjunction with the California Institute of Health Equity and Access. The poll was administered online in English and Spanish between April 16 and 20 among 8,800 voters statewide.

The survey was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state’s registered voters. Once the questionnaire and email invitations had been finalized, they were translated into Spanish and reviewed for cultural appropriateness. Each email included an invitation for voters to participate in a nonpartisan survey 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 participate and not wanting to receive future emails from IGS about the survey.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California. The email addresses of voters were derived from information contained on the state’s official voter registration rolls. The overall sample of registered voters with email addresses was stratified 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 were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. At the conclusion of the data processing phase, post stratification weights were applied to align the sample to population characteristics of the state's overall registered voter population. 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 the results are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results based on subgroups of this population would be subject to larger margins of sampling error.

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. IGS's co-directors are Associate Professor G. Cristina Mora and Professor Eric Schickler.

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