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Harris's candidacy has widened the Democrats' lead over Trump in her home state; biggest gains seen among voters ages 18-29, independents and the state's Black voters.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

Vice President Kamala Harris has expanded her party's lead against Republican Donald Trump in California when compared to the lead that President Joe Biden held prior to his withdrawal. Harris now has a 25-point lead over Trump in her home state, 59% to 34%, up from an 18-point lead that Biden had over Trump the last time the poll paired the two in late February. When comparing the two polls, Harris is receiving much higher levels of support than Biden did among voters ages 18-29 (+23), independents not affiliated with either major party (+17), and Black voters (+16), although double-digit increases are also noted among political moderates (+12), registered Democrats (+11), liberals (+11) and Latinos (+10).

Harris's selection of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her vice-presidential running mate has also been warmly embraced by the state's Democrats, with 56% of those surveyed after his selection describing themselves as enthusiastic about the pick, while another 25% are satisfied. Just 5% of the Democrats surveyed are dissatisfied with Harris's selection of Walz.

Voter impressions of Harris have also improved significantly among her home state voters, with 58% now viewing her favorably and 40% unfavorably. This compares to an evenly divided 48% - 48% favorable to unfavorable appraisal among Californians at the beginning of the year. By contrast, there has been no change in Californians' largely negative view of Trump, with greater than six in ten (63%) viewing him unfavorably and 34% favorably. Initial impressions of J.D. Vance, Trump's vice-presidential running mate, are also two-to-one negative (59% unfavorable vs. 30% favorable).

There is broad-based agreement among Californians that a presidential candidate's positions on the issues (77%) are more important to their voting decision than a candidate's personal qualities and leadership abilities (20%). The poll also finds that each candidate's supporters hold different views when asked about their own financial situation and the impact that immigration is having on the country, with Harris supporters offering a more positive assessment than Trump voters. Harris voters are also substantially more likely than supporters of Trump to view her being a woman of color as an advantage for her candidacy.

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted July 31-August 11 among 3,765 Californians considered likely to vote in the November 2024 presidential election.

Observed IGS co-director Eric Schickler, “Vice President Harris has reversed several of the weaknesses that plagued President Biden in his campaign against former President Trump. Core Democratic groups that had been lukewarm towards Biden are now showing substantially more enthusiasm for Harris.”

Harris has broadened the Democratic base of support against Trump in California

The Democratic Party’s late change replacing President Biden as their party’s nominee with Vice President Harris has significantly broadened support for the Democrats against Trump in California. The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll*, completed over a ten-day period ending Sunday, finds Harris holding a 25-percentage point lead over Trump in her home state, 59% to 34%. This compares to an 18-point lead that Biden had over Trump in California the last time the poll paired the two in a head-to-head match-up in late February.

Harris’s larger lead against Trump is due to her garnering greater support than what Biden was achieving across several key voter constituencies. For example, Harris is now receiving significantly larger proportions of support than Biden among voters ages 18-29 (+23), independents not affiliated with either major party (+17), and the state’s Black voters (+16 points), political moderates (+12), registered Democrats (+11), liberals (+11) and Latinos (+10).

Table 2
Comparing current presidential preferences between Harris and Trump to those pairing Biden against Trump in late February in California

	<u>Early August 2024</u>			<u>Late February 2024</u>		
	Harris %	Trump %	Undecided %	Biden %	Trump %	Undecided %
Total	59	34	7	52	34	14
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	90	4	6	79	9	12
Republicans	5	90	5	8	87	5
No party pref./other	62	29	9	45	30	25
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Strongly conservative	7	91	2	6	91	3
Somewhat conservative	14	79	7	17	73	10
Moderate	59	31	10	47	29	24
Somewhat liberal	93	2	5	83	5	12
Strongly liberal	99	1	--	88	2	10
<u>Gender</u>						
Female	63	31	6	57	27	16
Male	55	38	7	47	41	12
<u>Age</u>						
18-29	73	22	5	50	25	25
30-39	58	33	9	51	32	17
40-49	58	34	8	50	35	15
50-64	56	39	5	50	40	10
65 or older	57	37	6	57	35	8
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White	59	38	3	55	36	9
Latino	58	34	8	48	35	17
Asian/Pacific Islander	61	34	5	52	26	22
Black	74	15	1	58	23	19

Note: Early August findings based on likely voters in the upcoming November election, while the poll’s February results were based on the state’s overall registered voter electorate.

Voters of all political stripes describe Biden's decision to withdraw from the presidential race as a good thing for the country

California voters are nearly unanimous in their view that President Biden's decision to withdraw from the presidential race was a good thing for the country. Overall, nearly nine in ten Californians (88%) feel this way, while just 4% think it was a bad thing. And this includes voters of all political stripes, with 91% of Democrats, 83% of Republicans and 90% of independent voters in agreement.

Similarly, there is near unanimity among the state's Democratic voters when asked whether they favor the party making Harris their nominee following Biden's withdrawal, with 81% of the state's Democrats backing her nomination, while just 11% say they would have preferred someone else as the party's standard-bearer.

Home state voter impressions of Harris have improved significantly since the beginning of the year, while voters' largely negative views of Trump have not changed

The latest poll finds that California voters now hold a much more positive opinion of Harris than they did at the beginning of the year, the last time the *Berkeley IGS Poll* measured her overall image among the statewide electorate. At present, 58% of Californians describe their opinion of Harris as favorable, while 40% view her unfavorably. This compares to evenly divided 48% - 48% favorable to unfavorable appraisal of the Vice President in January.

Harris's increase in favorability ratings is due primarily to the changing opinions of the state's Democratic and independent voters, who now hold Harris in higher regard than they did at the start of the year. Republican voter views of the Vice President, on the other hand, have not changed and remain almost uniformly negative.

Over this same period there has been no change in voter opinions of former President Trump. Greater than six in ten Californians (63%) continue to hold an unfavorable opinion of Trump overall while 34% view him favorably, identical to the image scores he received from Californians in January. The latest poll finds about nine in ten Democrats rating Trump negatively (91%) while an equivalent proportion of Republicans (89%) view him favorably. The state's independent voters not affiliated with either major party also view Trump more unfavorably than they did in January, with just 25% offering a favorable opinion and 73% unfavorable.

The initial impressions that Californians have of Vance, Trump's vice-presidential running mate, are two-to-one negative, with 59% viewing him unfavorably and just 30% offering a positive assessment. And, like voter views of former President Trump, opinions of Vance divide sharply along partisan lines, with Republicans viewing him favorably greater than seven to one (80% to 11%), while Democrats are overwhelmingly negative (84% to 6%). The state's independent voters' views about Vance are closer to those of the state's Democrats than its Republicans, with 65% holding an unfavorable opinion, and just 22% rating him positively.

Table 3
California voter image ratings of Harris, Trump and J.D. Vance

	Early		Democrats		Republicans		No party pref./other	
	August	January	August	January	August	January	August	January
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>Kamala Harris</u>								
Favorable	58	48	88	77	7	4	60	42
Unfavorable	40	48	10	18	91	93	36	55
No opinion	2	4	2	5	2	3	4	3
<u>Donald Trump</u>								
Favorable	34	34	7	4	89	83	25	32
Unfavorable	63	63	91	91	10	15	73	66
No opinion	3	3	2	5	1	2	2	2
<u>J.D. Vance</u>								
Favorable	30	NA	6	NA	80	NA	22	NA
Unfavorable	59	NA	84	NA	11	NA	65	NA
No opinion	11	NA	10	NA	9	NA	13	NA

Note: August findings based on likely voters in the upcoming November election, while the poll's February findings were based on the state's overall registered voter electorate.

Most Californians think Harris would make a good President

By a five-to-three margin (57% to 38%), California voters think Harris would make a good president. Of the 57% who feel that she would make a good president, 33% feel she definitely would, while 24% think she probably would. On the other hand, nearly all of the 38% who believe Harris would not make a good president feel strongly about this, with 32% saying she definitely would not.

Views about whether Harris would make a good president are directly tied to voting preferences, with nearly all voters supporting Harris (93%) believing she would make a good president, while 98% of those backing Trump think she would not. It is significant to note that voters who report being undecided in the presidential election are more inclined to think Harris would not make a good president (54%) than feel she would (24%), although 22% have no opinion.

Table 4
Would Kamala Harris make a good President?
(among likely voters in California)

	Total likely voters	Harris voters	Trump voters	Undecided voters
	%	%	%	%
Yes (net)	57	93	1	24
Definitely	33	55	--	4
Probably	24	38	1	20
No (net)	38	2	98	54
Probably not	6	2	8	29
Definitely not	32	--	90	15
No opinion	5	5	1	22

Voters say that a presidential candidate’s position on the issues is more important to them than personal qualities and leadership abilities when deciding whom to support

By a nearly four to one margin (77% to 20%), California voters maintain that a presidential candidate’s positions on the issues are more important to them when deciding whom to support than their personal qualities and leadership abilities.

This view is held by large majorities of both Harris supporters and those backing Trump, as well as voters who are currently undecided.

Table 5

**Which is more important to you when choosing a President – personal qualities and leadership abilities or positions on the issues facing the nation?
(among likely voters in California)**

	Total likely voters %	Harris voters %	Trump voters %	Undecided voters %
Positions on the issues	77	70	88	85
Personal qualities and leadership abilities	20	27	9	10
No opinion	3	3	3	5

Supporters of each of the presidential candidates offer differing views of their financial situation and the impact that immigration is having on the country

Two of the dominant issues in this year’s presidential election relate to how voters feel the economy is affecting them personally, and how they view the issue of immigration. When polled about these two issues, voters supporting Harris and those backing Trump offer differing evaluations of each issue.

When voters are asked whether they feel financially better off or worse off than they were a year ago, more Californians say they are financially worse off (46%) than better off (24%), and another 29% report no change. However, voters backing Harris offer a more positive assessment, with 37% describing themselves as better off than last year compared to 25% who say they are worse off, and 37% reporting no change. By contrast, Trump’s supporters overwhelmingly describe their financial situation as being worse than they were a year ago (81% to 5%), with 14% reporting no change.

When the California electorate is asked whether they feel immigration generally is a good thing or bad thing for the country, 41% describe it as a good thing, while 13% see it as a bad thing, and another 42% offer a mixed assessment. But again, voters backing Harris’s candidacy offer a more positive assessment, with 60% considering immigration a good thing for the country overall, while just 2% viewing it as a bad thing, and 35% have a mixed view. This differs markedly from Trump voters’ opinions of the impact of immigration on the country, more than twice as many of whom believe immigration’s impact on the country is more negative than positive (34% to 14%), while more than half (51%) expressing mixed feelings.

Table 6
Voter assessments of their own personal financial situation and their views about immigration and their relationship to voting preferences for president (among likely voters in California)

	Total likely voters %	Harris voters %	Trump voters %	Undecided voters %
Personal financial situation now compared to one year ago				
Better off now	24	37	5	10
No change	29	37	14	34
Worse off now	46	25	81	54
No opinion	1	1	--	2
Is immigration generally a good thing or bad thing for the country?				
Good thing	41	60	14	25
Mixed	42	35	51	61
Bad thing	13	2	34	6
No opinion	4	3	1	8

Perceptions of the impact that Harris being a woman of color is having on her candidacy

The poll also included a question asking voters to choose between two statements about the impact that Harris being a woman of color is having on her candidacy for president. About half of the state’s electorate (51%) side with the statement that being a woman of color is more of an advantage for Harris “by galvanizing the support of women and the nation’s increasingly diverse voting population.” This compares to 15% who side with the statement that being a woman of color is more of a disadvantage “because many Americans may not feel comfortable electing a woman of color as their president.” A relatively large proportion of voters (34%) reserve judgement and offer no opinion on this question.

Harris’s supporters and registered Democrats are much more likely than others to believe that being a woman of color serves as more of an advantage for her candidacy, with seven in ten siding with this view, compared to fewer than one in ten who feel it is more of a disadvantage. Voters supporting Trump’s candidacy and Republican voters respond quite differently, with larger proportions holding to the view that Harris’s being a woman of color is more of a disadvantage than an advantage by three to two margins, although more than half reserve judgement on the question and do not offer an opinion.

Although nearly all major subgroups of the voting population say Harris’s being a woman of color serves more of an advantage than disadvantage to her candidacy, somewhat larger proportions of the state’s black voters, females, seniors aged 65 or older, voters ages 18-29, and Asian American voters hold to this view than others.

Table 7

**Is being a woman of color more of an advantage for Harris by galvanizing the support of women and the nation’s increasingly diverse population or more of a disadvantage because many Americans may not feel comfortable electing a woman of color as their president?
(among likely voters in California)**

	An advantage	A disadvantage	No opinion
	%	%	%
Total likely voters	51	15	34
<u>Vote preference</u>			
Harris supporters	72	8	20
Trump supporters	16	28	56
Undecided	41	7	52
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	71	9	20
Republicans	18	27	55
No party preference/other	49	13	38
<u>Gender</u>			
Female	54	13	33
Male	47	17	36
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	53	18	29
30-39	48	21	31
40-49	46	14	40
50-64	49	14	37
65 or older	56	13	31
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	51	13	36
Latino	47	16	37
Asian/Pacific Islander	55	20	25
Black/African American	63	9	28

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 July 31-August 11, 2024 among 3,765 Californians considered likely to vote in the 2024 November general election.

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 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 provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists. To protect the anonymity of 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, 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 all 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 likely voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

Please indicate whether your opinion of the following political figures is favorable or unfavorable, or whether you don't yet know enough about them to offer an opinion – (1) Donald Trump, former President, (2) Kamala Harris, Vice President, (3) J.D. Vance, Ohio Senator and Republican nominee for Vice President) **ORDERING RANDOMIZED**

On July 21 President Joe Biden announced that he had decided to end his reelection campaign for president. Do you think Biden's decision not to run again is a good thing or bad thing for the country?

IF DEMOCRAT: Do you think the Democratic nomination for president should now go to Vice President Kamala Harris or would you prefer that the party nominates a different candidate? **IF DEMOCRAT POLLED AUGUST 6 OR LATER:** How would you describe your overall feelings about Kamala Harris's choice of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her Vice-Presidential running mate?

Now that Biden has withdrawn from the presidential race, for whom would you vote if the choices in the November general election were between Kamala Harris, Democrat, and Donald Trump, Republican?

Do you think Kamala Harris would make a good president?

Some say that Kamala Harris's personal characteristics as a woman of color would be an advantage if she were to become the Democratic Party's nominee by galvanizing the support of women and the nation's increasingly diverse voting population. Others think her personal characteristics would be a disadvantage because many Americans may not feel comfortable electing a woman of color as their president. Which comes closer to your own opinion about this?

Which is more important to you in choosing a candidate for president – their personal qualities and leadership abilities, or their positions on the issues facing the nation?

On the whole, do you think immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for this country today?

Would you say that you and your family living here are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?

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 G. Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of California public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll seeks to provide broad measures of contemporary public opinion and generate data for scholarly analysis. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the poll. For a complete listing of reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, please visit <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.