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## IGS Poll

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***Most Californians view President Biden favorably and are optimistic that his administration will make progress on issues of importance to them.***

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*  
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The latest statewide *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that by a nearly two-to-one margin (62% to 32%) California voters hold a favorable opinion of newly elected President Joe Biden.

Coronavirus relief is at the top of voters' agenda when asked about the national issues most important for the new administration to address. Other issues that Californians cite next most frequently in this setting are strengthening the economy, health care, climate change and race relations.

Even in the presence of a politically divided Congress, large majorities of Californians express optimism that Biden and the Congress will be able to make progress on many of the issues that are important to them. For example, eight in ten of the voters rating climate change and race relations among their top issues feel that it is likely that that progress will now be made in these areas. Similarly, about three in four voters who consider coronavirus relief and health care as their most important issues believe that the Biden administration and Congress will also be likely to take action in these areas.

Californians also give Biden high marks for his cabinet selections. When presented with the names, job titles and pictures of his entire cabinet, 52% of California voters describe them collectively as excellent or good choices, 18% describe them as fair and just 20% as poor or very poor. Majorities give Biden even higher marks for their inclusiveness of both women and men and for the ethnic diversity of his appointments.

The poll finds that Vice President Kamala Harris is favorably regarded by the voters of her home state by a 56% to 38% margin. A 55% majority also expects that Harris will accrue greater power and influence than most Vice Presidents due to her tie-breaking role in the U.S. Senate, with both Democrats and Republicans sharing this view.

IGS Co-Director Cristina Mora noted that "Californians' embrace of Biden and his appointed officials at this stage reflect both a general sense of optimism in the new administration, but

also hope that issues like the pandemic, racial justice, the economy and climate change, which are so important to the future of the state, will be taken seriously and acted upon.”

**Biden viewed favorably by a nearly two-to-one majority of Californians**

In its first measure of the Biden presidency, the IGS Poll finds that Californians generally hold the President in high regard, with 62% viewing him favorably and 32% unfavorably.

Predictably, opinions are highly partisan and ideologically based. Nearly nine in ten Democrats and liberals offer a positive appraisal of him, while just 15% and 13% Republicans and strong conservatives say this. Biden’s standing with moderates and independents is also quite strong, with about two in three rating him favorably.

Majorities of men and women also view Biden in a positive light, although women are somewhat more likely to do so than men. Similarly, while majorities of voters across all racial and ethnic groups give the President a favorable rating, voters of color, especially within the Black community, are more likely than whites to offer a positive assessment.

**Table 1**  
**Overall voter impressions of President Joe Biden**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Favorable %	Unfavorable %	No opinion %
<b>Total statewide (total)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	87	7	6
Republicans	15	80	5
No Party Preference/other	60	31	9
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	13	82	5
Somewhat conservative	29	66	5
Moderate	67	24	9
Somewhat liberal	89	5	6
Strongly liberal	86	11	3
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	58	36	6
Female	65	28	7
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	65	25	11
30-39	63	30	7
40-49	59	33	8
50-64	60	34	6
65 or older	63	34	3
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	59	39	2
Latino	63	22	15
Asian/Pacific Islander	66	28	6
Black	76	19	5

**Pandemic relief seen as most important issue for the Biden administration to address**

Voters in the survey were presented with a list of thirteen major issues facing the nation, and asked which they felt were most important for the Biden administration to address. Voters could select up to three choices for their answers.

The national issue that the largest proportion of Californians (56%) consider most important to address is providing coronavirus relief. The next most frequently mentioned issues are strengthening the nation’s economy (41%), health care (31%), climate change (29%), and race relations 24%.

The issue priorities of the state’s Democratic and Republican voters are starkly different. Among the Democrats, coronavirus relief is far and away their top priority. The next most frequently mentioned issues by the state’s Democrats are climate change, health care, and race relations, followed by strengthening the economy. By contrast, among Republicans strengthening the economy is cited most frequently, followed by election reform, national security, coronavirus relief and the federal budget deficit.

Coronavirus relief ranks as the top national issue for the Biden administration to address among voters in all regions of the state and across all age segments, among both men and women as well as among each of the state’s major racial and ethnic constituencies, except Black voters who rank race relations a close second.

**Table 2**  
**National issues most important for the Biden administration to address**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b>Total registered voters %</b>	<b>Democrats %</b>	<b>Republicans %</b>	<b>No Party Preference /others %</b>
Coronavirus relief	56	71	29	54
Strengthening the economy	41	31	55	44
Health care	31	41	12	32
Climate change	29	42	5	28
Race relations	24	34	7	23
Immigration reform	19	19	22	18
Election reform	18	11	34	15
National security	16	9	33	14
Budget deficit	14	5	28	18
Tax policies	11	7	17	11
Foreign policy	10	5	17	11
Rebuilding nation’s roads, bridges, and airports	9	8	11	9
Judicial nominations	3	4	2	2

*(Columns add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)*

**Californians are generally optimistic about the chances of making progress on the issues most important to them**

Even given the politically divided backdrop of the U.S. Congress, large majorities of Californians express optimism that President Biden and the Congress will be able to make progress on many of the issues cited as being important to them.

Eight in ten of the voters rating climate change and race relations among their top issues feel that it is likely that progress will be made in Washington on these matters. Three in four voters who consider coronavirus relief and health care among their top issues also express optimism that action will be taken in these areas. In addition, greater than six in ten voters citing judicial appointments and immigration reform among their top concerns also feel it is likely that the President and Congress will be able to make progress in these areas.

**Table 3**  
**Voter opinion of the likelihood that President Biden and the Congress issues will be able to make progress and act upon the issues most important to them**  
**(among Californians who rate each among their most important issues)**

	Likely %	Not likely %	No opinion %
Climate change	80	19	1
Race relations	80	18	2
Coronavirus relief	76	22	2
Health care	74	24	2
Judicial nominations	65	32	3
Immigration reform	61	37	2
Strengthening the economy	52	46	2
Rebuilding nation's roads, bridges, and airports	45	53	2
National security	38	60	2
Foreign policy	38	60	2
Tax policies	34	63	3
Election reform	30	68	2
Budget deficit	29	70	1

**Most Californians want federal policies to move in a more liberal direction on climate change, judicial nominations, race relations and health care**

When voters were asked whether they favored federal policies moving in a more liberal, moderate or conservative direction on the issues most important to them, majorities favor a liberal direction on climate change (62%), judicial nominations (61%), race relations (52%) and health care (51%).

On the other hand, among Californians who consider national security and the budget deficit among their top issues, which tend to include more Republicans than Democrats, most favor moving federal policy in a more conservative direction.

**Table 4**  
**Do you favor President Biden and the Congress moving more in the liberal, moderate or conservative direction on the issues most important to you?**  
**(among Californians who rate each among their most important issues)**

	Liberal %	Moderate %	Conservative %	No opinion %
Climate change	62	30	3	5
Judicial nominations	61	23	15	1
Race relations	52	34	7	7
Health care	51	35	8	6
Coronavirus relief	45	37	11	6
Immigration reform	32	31	27	9
Rebuilding nation's roads, bridges, and airports	28	40	29	3
Election reform	28	18	49	5
Tax policies	24	25	42	9
Strengthening the economy	20	38	35	7
Foreign policy	16	39	38	7
National security	15	30	50	5
Budget deficit	11	30	55	4

**Biden receives high marks for his cabinet appointees**

Voters in the poll were shown the names, job titles and pictures of President Biden's cabinet appointees and asked to offer their opinions about them. The results indicate that Californians give the President generally high marks for his selections.

When asked how they would rate the President's cabinet selections overall, 52% rate them collectively as excellent or good choices, 16% say fair, while just 20% describe them as poor or very poor. Biden receives even higher marks for his cabinet's inclusion of both men and women, with 66% of voters rating them excellent or good, while 61% of voters rate the picks excellent or good for their ethnic diversity.

A somewhat smaller plurality of voters (40%) rates Biden's picks as excellent or good when asked about their inclusion of both political moderates and progressives within the Democratic Party.

Large partisan differences characterize voters' overall views of the President's cabinet selections and its inclusion of both moderates and progressives. However, the partisan gap is less pronounced when it comes to assessments of its inclusion of both men and women and its ethnic diversity.

**Table 5**  
**Voter assessments of President Biden’s cabinet appointments**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b>Excellent/ good %</b>	<b>Fair %</b>	<b>Poor/ very poor %</b>	<b>No opinion %</b>
<b><u>Overall quality of his appointments</u></b>	<b><u>52</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
Democrats	79	12	2	7
Republicans	10	16	59	15
No Party Preference/others	46	21	15	18
<b><u>Inclusion of both men and women</u></b>	<b><u>66</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>
Democrats	85	10	2	3
Republicans	30	24	17	29
No Party Preference/others	65	16	5	14
<b><u>Its ethnic diversity</u></b>	<b><u>61</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>
Democrats	81	12	3	3
Republicans	25	21	23	31
No Party Preference/others	59	17	7	17
<b><u>Its inclusion of both moderates and progressives within the Democratic Party</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>	<b><u>23</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>
Democrats	61	19	7	13
Republicans	8	13	57	22
No Party Preference/others	36	22	19	23

**A majority of Californians also hold Vice President Harris in high regard**

Vice President Harris also receives generally positive assessments from voters here in her home state, with more holding a favorable than unfavorable opinion of her by a 56% to 38% margin.

Similar to their assessments of the President, voter opinions of the Vice President are highly partisan and ideologically based, with large majorities of Democrats and liberals viewing her positively, and most Republicans and conservatives rating her negatively.

Harris is also viewed somewhat more favorably by women than men, and more favorably by voters of color, and especially by Blacks, than by whites.

**Table 6**  
**Overall voter impressions of Vice President Kamala Harris**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Favorable %	Unfavorable %	No opinion %
<b>Total statewide (total)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>6</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	83	13	4
Republicans	10	85	5
No Party Preference/other	52	39	9
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	12	84	4
Somewhat conservative	24	70	6
Moderate	58	34	8
Somewhat liberal	84	12	4
Strongly liberal	83	15	2
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	52	43	5
Female	60	34	6
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	54	35	11
30-39	59	34	7
40-49	55	38	7
50-64	56	41	3
65 or older	57	41	2
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	53	44	3
Latino	60	32	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	56	40	4
Black	74	20	6

**Bipartisan agreement that Harris will likely exert much greater power and influence than most other VPs**

A 55% majority of Californians believe Vice President Harris will accrue much greater power and influence than most other Vice Presidents due to her tie-breaking role in the Senate.

Views about this are bipartisan, with 58% of the state's Democrats and 59% of its Republicans in agreement on this point.



**Table 7**  
**Impact that having the tie breaking vote on Senate legislation will have on the power and influence of Vice President Kamala Harris in Washington (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Much more powerful/influential</b> %	<b>A little more powerful/influential</b> %	<b>No more powerful/influential</b> %	<b>No opinion</b> %
<b><u>Total statewide</u></b>	<b><u>55</u></b>	<b><u>29</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
Democrats	58	33	5	4
Republicans	59	19	15	7
No Party Preference/other	48	31	12	9

**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 January 23-29, 2021 among 10,357 California registered voters.

The survey was administered 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 registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on 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 survey 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, 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 errors 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 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 can be found at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

### **Question wording**

Thinking about the issues now facing the country, which of the following do you consider to be the most important issues for the Biden administration to address? **(SEE RELEASE FOR ISSUE LISTED)** Please select up to three choices.

How likely do you think it is that Biden and the next Congress will be able to make progress and act upon the issues that are most important to you?

When attempting to take action on the issues most important to you, would you rather President Biden and the next Congress move in a more liberal direction, a more moderate direction or a more conservative direction?

Below are the people President Joe Biden has selected to serve with him in his cabinet. **(HEAD SHOT OF EACH PERSON DISPLAYED ABOVE EACH PERSON'S NAME AND TITLE)** How would you rate the overall quality of the appointments President Biden has made to his cabinet?

How would you rate Biden's cabinet appointments on these characteristics?

- (1) Its racial and ethnic diversity
- (2) Its inclusion of both women and men
- (3) Its inclusion of both political moderates and progressives within the Democratic Party

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following elected officials?

- (1) incoming President Joe Biden
- (2) Incoming Vice President and former California Senator Kamala Harris

The Democrats and Republicans now have an equal number of Senators in the US Senate. This means that Vice President Harris will serve as the tie breaking vote on legislation whenever the Senate is evenly divided. What impact do you think this will have on the power and influence that Harris will have as Vice President?

- (1) She'll be much more powerful and influential than most other Vice Presidents
- (2) She'll be a little more powerful and influential than most other Vice Presidents
- (3) She'll be no more powerful or influential than most other Vice Presidents

#### **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 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. 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>.