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Broad support for police reform and proposals aimed at reducing police violence, even as most are satisfied with their local police.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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While seven in ten California voters (70%) say they are satisfied with the job their local police departments are doing, an equally large proportion (72%) supports the idea of reducing police responsibilities as first responders on matters relating to the homeless, substance abusers and the mentally ill, preferring instead to redirect some of its funds to increasing social and mental health services for these people.

And, in the wake of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police and the nationwide demonstrations that have followed, there is large and broad-based support for four proposals aimed at reducing police violence against the public, according to the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll*. These proposals include:

- passing laws that would make it easier to prosecute police officers who use excessive force (80%).
- banning police use of chokeholds and strangleholds when detaining suspects (78%).
- granting civilians the right to sue police officers for gross misconduct and excessive use of force even if this makes their jobs more difficult (70%).
- limiting the power of police unions by reducing their collective bargaining rights (61%).

“These results reveal widespread support for making substantial changes to police practices,” said IGS co-director Eric Schickler. “While elected officials have, in the past, resisted calls for police reform, the wide margins now in favor that extend across racial and geographic lines suggest that the politics of this issue have shifted substantially.”

Added Cristina Mora, IGS's other co-director: "The findings show that the issue of policing is complex. Overall, voters seem familiar with and are generally supportive of their local police. Yet, they also recognize that there are deeply ingrained problems with the nature of policing and law enforcement today, and broadly support systemic change."

Seven in ten Californians are satisfied with the job their local police department is doing

A large majority of California voters (70%) say they are satisfied with the job their local police department is doing. This includes 36% who report being very satisfied and 34% who are somewhat satisfied. Just 19% are dissatisfied.

While majorities across each of the state's eight major regions are satisfied with the overall performance of their local police, somewhat fewer voters in Los Angeles County say this (63%), while more voters in Orange County report being satisfied (79%).

Evaluations of the local police differ somewhat by age and across racial lines. Whites display the highest levels of satisfaction (74%), while Blacks report the lowest (50%). Older voters are also significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to say they are satisfied with the job their local police department is doing.

Evaluations of the local police are also related to the partisanship and the political ideology of voters. For example, among Republicans and voters who are very conservative in politics, about nine in ten report being satisfied with the job their local police department is doing, and two thirds are very satisfied. However, satisfaction with the local police declines to 60% among Democrats and just 39% among voters who are very liberal in politics.

Table 1
Overall satisfaction with the job your local police department is doing
(among California registered voters)

	Very satisfied %	Somewhat satisfied %	Somewhat dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %
Total statewide	36	34	11	8
Los Angeles County	26	37	15	11
San Diego County	37	36	11	5
Orange County	50	29	8	5
Inland Empire	44	31	9	4
Other Southern California	46	30	10	6
Central Valley	40	32	9	9
San Francisco Bay Area	31	34	13	10
Other Northern California	38	38	7	7
Democrat	22	38	15	12
Republican	67	23	3	2
No Party Preference	30	36	13	8
All other parties	34	34	11	9
Very conservative	68	20	3	3
Somewhat conservative	55	31	5	3
Moderate	38	38	9	5
Somewhat liberal	20	40	16	9
Very liberal	11	28	22	24
White non-Hispanic	42	32	10	7
Latino	29	35	13	10
Asian/Pacific Islander	32	40	9	7
Black	22	28	20	16
Male	38	33	12	9
Female	34	35	11	8
18-29	20	28	16	17
30-39	25	31	15	15
40-49	36	34	12	8
50-64	42	36	10	5
65 or older	46	37	7	2

Note: In this and succeeding tables the differences between 100% and the sum of percentages for each row equals the proportion of voters with no opinion.

Large majorities favor reducing police responsibilities as first responders on certain matters

Despite Californians' generally positive assessment of the job their local police departments are doing, nearly three in four (72%) support the idea of reducing police responsibilities as first responders on matters relating to the homeless, substance abusers

and the mentally ill, preferring instead to redirect some of its funds to increasing social and mental health services for these people.

Large majorities across nearly all major voter subgroups support making this change, although significant partisan and ideological differences remain. Whereas Democrats and liberals are overwhelmingly supportive of taking this approach, just 39% of Republicans or those describing themselves as very conservative in politics are in favor.

Table 2
Reduce police responsibilities as first responders on matters relating to the homeless, substance abusers and the mentally ill and redirect some of its funds to increasing social and mental health services for these people (among California registered voters)

	Support strongly %	Support somewhat %	Oppose somewhat %	Oppose strongly %
Total statewide	45	27	12	16
Los Angeles County	45	28	11	15
San Diego County	49	24	11	16
Orange County	37	26	13	24
Inland Empire	40	24	15	21
Other Southern California	44	26	13	16
Central Valley	42	26	12	20
San Francisco Bay Area	51	27	11	11
Other Northern California	46	27	8	17
Democrat	60	26	8	6
Republican	16	23	17	44
No Party Preference	46	30	12	11
All other parties	44	30	14	12
Very conservative	21	18	12	48
Somewhat conservative	18	30	19	34
Moderate	36	35	15	14
Somewhat liberal	62	28	6	3
Very liberal	84	10	3	3
White non-Hispanic	46	24	11	19
Latino	42	30	13	14
Asian/Pacific Islander	43	31	12	14
Black	59	23	9	8
Male	42	27	13	18
Female	47	27	11	15
18-29	55	22	12	11
30-39	53	26	10	12
40-49	43	26	15	16
50-64	40	28	12	20
65 or older	38	30	11	20

Support for four proposals aimed at reducing police violence against the public

In the wake of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police and the nationwide demonstrations that have followed, various proposals have been offered as ways to attempt to reduce the incidence of police violence against the public. Four such proposals were offered to California voters in this survey and each receive broad support.

The two that receive the most support include passing laws that would make it easier to prosecute police officers who use excessive force and banning police use of chokeholds and strangleholds when detaining suspects. About eight in ten voters statewide favor each, with majorities strongly in favor.

Seven in ten voters (70%) also say they would support the idea of granting civilians the right to sue police officers for gross misconduct and excessive use of force even if this makes their jobs more difficult.

Another six in ten (61%) say they would favor limiting the power of police unions by reducing their collective bargaining rights.

Table 3
Opinion of four proposals aimed at reducing police violence against the public
(among California registered voters)

	Favor strongly %	Favor somewhat %	Oppose somewhat %	Oppose strongly %
Pass laws making it easier to prosecute police officers who use excessive force	60	20	7	9
Ban police from using chokeholds and strangleholds when detaining suspects	63	15	9	9
Grant civilians the right to sue police officers for gross misconduct and excessive use of force even if this makes their jobs more difficult	47	23	12	13
Limit the power of police unions by reducing their collective bargaining rights	37	24	13	13

Support for the four proposals aimed at reducing police violence is broad-based

Support for these proposals is broad-based. For example, majorities of voters across all eight major regions of the state favor each of them. Support also includes majorities of men and women, and spans all major age and racial/ethnic subgroups. Republicans and strongly

conservative voters are the only segments not offering majority support, although about half would favor banning police chokeholds when detaining suspects.

Table 4
Voter opinions about reducing police responsibilities as first responders on matters relating to the homeless, substance abusers and the mentally ill and redirecting some of its funds to increasing social and mental health services for these people (among California registered voters)

	% in favor of each proposal			
	Make it easier to prosecute police officers who use excessive force %	Ban police chokeholds/strangleholds when detaining suspects %	Ability to sue police for gross misconduct/excessive force %	Reduce collective bargaining rights of police unions %
Total statewide	80	78	70	61
Los Angeles County	81	81	73	64
San Diego County	79	78	66	61
Orange County	78	75	67	64
Inland Empire	79	74	63	53
Other Southern California	82	78	69	55
Central Valley	76	71	64	55
San Francisco Bay Area	86	85	77	68
Other Northern California	80	76	65	58
Democrat	94	93	86	73
Republican	49	50	32	32
No Party Preference	85	80	75	66
All other parties	86	74	75	67
Very conservative	44	52	33	31
Somewhat conservative	62	59	45	46
Moderate	82	78	68	58
Somewhat liberal	96	93	89	78
Very liberal	99	96	95	81
White non-Hispanic	78	76	64	57
Latino	83	79	75	63
Asian/Pacific Islander	82	81	76	69
Black	94	92	91	76
Male	79	73	68	62
Female	82	83	71	61
18-29	87	78	81	72
30-39	85	78	76	68
40-49	81	74	69	59
50-64	78	78	65	56
65 or older	75	82	62	54

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 21-27, 2020 among 8,328 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 respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the voter rolls 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 are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

Do you favor or oppose each of the following proposals intended to reduce police violence against the public? (1) Favor strongly, (2) Favor somewhat, (3) Oppose somewhat, (4) Oppose strongly. **(ORDERING OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED)**

- (1) Pass laws making it easier to prosecute police officers who use excessive force.
- (2) Ban police from using chokeholds and strangleholds when detaining suspects.
- (3) Limit the power of police unions by reducing their collective bargaining rights.
- (4) Grant civilians the right to sue police officers for gross misconduct and excessive use of force even if this makes their jobs more difficult.

How satisfied are you with the job your local police department is doing overall? (1) Support strongly, (2) Support somewhat, (3) Oppose somewhat, (4) Oppose strongly.

Do you support or oppose reducing police responsibilities as first responders on matters relating to the homeless, substance abusers and the mentally ill and redirecting some of its funds to increasing social and mental health services for these people? (1) Favor strongly, (2) Favor somewhat, (3) Oppose somewhat, (4) Oppose strongly.

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 listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.