

UC Berkeley

IGS Poll

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California Voters Voice Strong Support for the University of California System

-- UC Education, Research and Medical Centers Get High Marks --

California voters voiced strong support for the University of California, according to a new poll conducted this summer by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS). The IGS Poll finds that registered voters voice strong support for the University of California system, which includes 10 campuses across the state. Overall, 66% of respondents agreed that the UC system was “important for helping students to get ahead,” while 71% agreed that UC campuses “produce important research that benefits communities in California.” A strong majority of voters across rural and urban, racial, age, and partisan lines agreed with both sentiments.

The highest marks were reserved for UC’s medical centers. When voters were asked whether they agreed that UC medical centers “are important to communities they serve,” 77% agreed.

When asked whether state funding for the UC system should be “increased, decreased, or stay the same,” 58% responded that it should be increased, while just 13% believed it should be decreased.

The survey also asked, “If a close friend or relative today asked you for advice on whether they should enroll in a UC school if admitted, what would you advise them?” Here, 70% of respondents answered they would advise them to enroll.

And in a follow up, the poll asked registered voters who had graduated from a UC campus the following: “Considering the costs of getting your degree from a UC school versus the benefits to you personally, in your opinion was getting your degree worth it or not?” In response to this question, 76% noted it was “worth its costs.” Once again, a strong majority of UC graduates across racial, religious, age, and ideological groups agreed that their UC education was “worth it.”

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora notes that “in an era where the benefits of public higher education are being questioned, the polling results suggest that California’s residents see the value in a UC education and recognize the many different ways the UC system contributes positively to the state, from its research to its health services to its educational offerings.”

Favorable Views of UC Research, Medical Centers, Education

As a leading public research institution, the University of California oversees several ventures that drive innovative genetic, biological, engineering and other scientific findings, as well as new knowledge on markets, society, and politics. However, the question remains as to whether California’s everyday voters, including those who do and do not have a college degree, find value in these publicly-funded efforts.

The results of the poll suggest there is strong support for UC research. 71% of voters agreed or strongly agreed that the University of California “produces important research that benefits communities in California.” Strong majorities of registered voters across all regions of the state, urban and rural areas, racial lines, gender, and income groups agreed that UC research benefits California communities. While support was higher among those with a college degree, even 62% of those with only a high school degree agreed that UC research provides important benefits. Those voters in their 20’s were most enthusiastic about UC research, showing 77% agreement that UC research benefits their communities, although at least 67% displayed support across each age group.

Table 1
Agree/Disagree: The University of California System “produces important research that benefits communities in California”

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total statewide	45	26	8	5	11
<u>Party registration</u>					
Democrat	59	19	5	2	11
Republican	23	35	15	12	11
No Party Preference/other	42	28	8	4	11
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White	49	23	8	5	11
Latino	39	29	8	6	12
Black/African American	53	22	8	2	9
Asian American/Pacific Isle	43	30	10	5	8
<u>Education</u>					
High school graduate or less	33	29	10	7	15
Some college/trade school	40	29	10	6	10
College graduate	52	24	7	4	9
Post graduate education	58	17	6	4	12

Note: For tables 1-3 differences between the sum of the %ages and 100% equal the proportion of voters with no opinion.

The UC system also encompasses six academic health centers: UC Davis Health, UC Irvine Health, UCLA Health, UC Riverside Health, UC San Diego Health, and UC San Francisco Health. Together, these centers and faculty practice groups provide California residents with primary care and the highest levels of complex health care while also being locations for thousands of clinical trials. Every day, thousands of Californians interact with the UC’s health care system, which in the last fiscal year saw more than 2.5 million patients, had 1.3 million inpatient days and provided over 10 million outpatient visits.

When asked whether UC “medical centers are important to the communities they serve,” 77% of voters answered affirmatively, with 56 % noting that they “strongly agreed” with the statement. Some regional differences were evident, as respondents in the North Coast, where there is no UC medical center, were least likely to agree but still registered a majority, with 66% noting the affirmative. Strong majorities across all racial, educational, age, and income groups agreed that UC medical centers are important to their communities. Notably, 75% of Republicans and 80% of Democrats agreed.

IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler observed “the very high support for the medical centers among members of both parties is a rare case of consensus across party lines in today’s highly polarized era.”

Table 2					
Agree/Disagree: The University of California System “medical centers are important to the communities they serve”					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total statewide	56	21	6	3	10
<u>Party registration</u>					
Democrat	65	15	3	2	12
Republican	41	34	9	6	7
No Party Preference/other	53	22	7	3	10
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White	59	20	5	3	9
Latino	52	22	6	4	13
Black/African American	62	16	7	*	10
Asian American/Pacific Isle	52	26	7	4	7
<u>Education</u>					
High School graduate or less	44	29	6	3	12
Some college/trade school	54	21	7	4	9
College graduate	59	20	5	3	9
Post graduate education	65	15	4	2	11

And when respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement that the UC system is “important for helping students to get ahead,” 66% of voters agreed or strongly agreed. Once again, majorities agreed across racial, partisan, gender, age, and education groups.

Table 3					
Agree/Disagree: The UC System “is important for helping students to get ahead”					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total statewide	38	28	11	7	11
<u>Party registration</u>					
Democrat	48	26	7	4	11
Republican	20	34	16	14	11
No Party Preference/other	37	27	13	7	11
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White	35	30	12	9	10
Latino	41	26	9	5	14
Black/African American	46	22	13	6	9
Asian American/Pacific Isle	41	31	12	6	8
<u>Education</u>					
High school graduate or less	34	26	12	6	14
Some college/trade school	34	29	14	7	11
College graduate	40	30	10	8	9
Post graduate education	48	26	8	6	11

These positive attitudes toward UC translated into widespread support for increased state funding for the UC system. When asked if they believe that “state funding for the UC system (for teaching, research, student services, etc.) should be increased, decreased, or stay the same?” 58% responded that it should be increased, while 13% responded that it should be decreased and 19% believed it should stay the same. Majorities of each racial, age, gender, and education group supported increased funding. There was more party disagreement on this item: large majorities of Democrats (74%) and No Party Preference (58%) voters favored increased spending, while Republicans were more split with 30% favoring an increase, 25% believing it should remain the same, and 33% favoring a decrease.

Table 4				
Do you believe that state funding for the UC system (for teaching, research, student services, etc.) should be increased, decreased or stay the same?				
	Increased %	Decreased %	Stay the same %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	58	13	19	10
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	74	2	15	9
Republicans	30	33	25	12
No Party Preference/other	58	11	19	12

Strong Majority Would Advise Others to Enroll in UC

When asked “If a close friend or relative today asked you for advice on whether they should enroll in a UC school if admitted, what would you advise them?” 70 % of voters in the state answered that they would advise them to “enroll.” Majorities across each region, racial, age, gender, education, and partisan group stated they would advise their friend or relative to enroll at a UC.

Table 5			
If a close friend or relative today asked you for advice on whether they should enroll in a UC school if admitted, what would you advise them?			
	Enroll %	Not Enroll %	Not sure %
Total registered voters	70	10	20
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	82	4	14
Republicans	51	24	25
No Party Preference/other	67	9	24

Considering Costs and Benefits, UC Grads State it was “Worth It”

In a follow-up to this series, we asked voters who indicated they had obtained a degree from a University of California campus the following: “Considering the cost of getting your degree from a UC school versus the benefits to you personally, in your opinion was getting your degree worth it or not?”

Here, 76 % noted that their UC degree was “worth its costs,” while just 14 % did not believe it was worth it. Strong majorities across racial, regional, ideological, religious, gender and age groups

agreed. UC educated voters in the Inland Empire and North Coast were least enthusiastic but still registered 62 % as “worth it.” (The North Coast does not have a UC campus.)

Table 6 Considering the costs of getting your degree from a UC school versus the benefits to you personally, in your opinion was getting your degree worth it or not? (among UC degree recipients)			
	Worth its costs	Not worth it	Not sure
	%	%	%
Total UC degree recipients	76	14	10
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	82	9	9
Republicans	64	27	9
No Party Preference/other	71	16	13

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on *Berkeley IGS Polls* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. Two separate polls were completed. The first poll was administered online in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, between June 2-9, 2025, among 6,474 Californians registered to vote. The more recent August follow-up findings are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* of 4,950 California registered voters that was administered online in English and Spanish between August 11–17, 2025.

For both efforts, the poll was conducted by distributing email and text message invitations to random samples of the state’s registered voters. Each email and text message invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the Institute and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey questionnaire was housed. Reminder emails and texts were distributed to non-responding voters, and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations.

Samples of California registered voters were derived from information contained on the state’s official voter registration rolls and was provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc. (PDI), a leading supplier of registered voter lists, derived from the state and county voting records, which are public documents. To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters’ email addresses, cell phone numbers and all other personally identifiable information derived from their voter record were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample of registered voters surveyed to population characteristics of registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state on a wide range of variables. More information about the survey methods used by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* can be found on the poll’s website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

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 from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of about +/-2 points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

June 2025 Berkeley IGS Poll:

The University of California System includes UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, UC Irvine and other UC campuses across the state. Do you agree with the following statements concerning the University of California (UC) system? (ORDERING RANDOMIZED)

- (a) It is important for helping students to get ahead
- (b) It produces important research that benefits communities in California
- (c) Its medical centers are important to the communities they serve

The University of California receives 9.1% of its budget from the state of California. In recent years, this %age has declined. Do you believe that state funding for the UC system (for teaching, research, student services, etc.) should be increased, decreased, or stay the same?

If a close friend or relative today asked you for advice on whether they should enroll in a UC school if admitted, what would you advise them?

August 2025 Berkeley IGS Poll:

IF COLLEGE GRADUATE OR POST GRADUATE DEGREE: Did you obtain a degree from a University of California school? IF YES: Considering the costs of getting your degree from a UC school versus the benefits to you personally, in your opinion was getting your degree worth it or not?

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 Professor G. 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. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll*. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.