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***Trump is now the choice of 55% of California Republicans in the state's
March presidential primary.***

- If this holds, he would secure all of the state's delegates to the GOP convention -

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

Despite the multiple indictments now confronting Donald Trump, Republican voter support for the former President has grown in California over the past three months. According to the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll*, Trump is now the choice of 55% of likely voters in the state's March 5 presidential primary, up from 44% three months ago. Trump's increasing support in the state has come largely at the expense of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. DeSantis, who briefly led Trump among GOP voters here earlier in the year, has seen his support decline precipitously throughout the year. Just 16% of California Republicans are now backing his candidacy, down from 26% in May and 37% in February.

The fact that Trump's support in the GOP primary now exceeds 50% is especially significant since earlier this year the party's executive committee changed its rules for allocating delegates to the Republican National Convention so that if any candidate secures more than half of the statewide primary vote he or she would be awarded all of the state's convention delegates.

Despite California's well-deserved reputation as a deeply blue state in general elections, because of its sheer size with over 5 million registered Republicans it possesses the largest number of GOP voters in the nation. And because of this it will send the largest bloc of delegates to the 2024 Republican National Convention of any state, 169 delegates in all. This means that if the state's Republican electorate continues to back Trump at its current level they would be providing him with nearly 14% of all the delegates he would need to capture the GOP nomination.

Other major findings from the poll with regard to next year's presidential election include the following:

- President Joe Biden is receiving only token opposition in California's March 2024 Democratic presidential primary. When paired against environmental attorney Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and author Marianne Williamson, Biden is the choice of 66% of likely voters in the primary, while 9% favor Kennedy and 3% support Williamson. Another 6% say they would vote for "someone else," while 16% are undecided.
- Biden also holds a commanding 51% to 31% lead over Trump when all voters are asked their voting preferences in a general election rematch. However, nearly half of the state's electorate also say they would be very open (24%) or somewhat open (23%) to supporting a third-party candidate should Biden and Trump emerge as their party's respective nominees.

Observed IGS co-director Eric Schickler, “Even with all of his legal troubles, former President Donald Trump’s lead in the Republican primary looks more like what one expects to see from an incumbent running for reelection than for a candidate in an open-seat. While it remains early, it has to frustrate Trump’s opponents that his lead has grown even amid his series of indictments.”

Trump the choice of more than half of likely voters in the state’s GOP presidential primary

The latest poll finds former president Trump has expanded his lead over the large field of Republican presidential candidates in California. Trump now receives 55% support among Republicans considered likely to vote in the state’s March 2024 presidential primary, up from 44% in May. Meanwhile, support continues to decline for DeSantis, Trump’s main rival, who now is the choice of just 16%, down from 26% in May and 37% in February. Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley places a distant third at 7%, although this is up from 3% that she polled in May. No other candidate receives more than 4% in the current poll.

Trump’s strongest voter segments continue to include Republicans who identify as strongly conservative in politics and among GOP voters who are non-college graduates.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences in California’s 2024 GOP presidential primary election

	August 2023	May 2023	February 2023	August 2022
	%	%	%	%
Donald Trump, former President	55	44	29	38
Ron DeSantis, Florida Governor	16	26	37	27
Nikki Haley, former South Carolina Governor	7	3	7	3
Vivek Ramaswamy, high tech executive	4	2	NA	NA
Chris Christie, former New Jersey Governor	3	1	NA	NA
Mike Pence, former Vice President	3	4	3	7
Tim Scott, South Carolina Senator	2	1	1	*
Larry Elder, Broadcaster/Author	1	*	NA	NA
Others/Undecided	9	13	17	25

Note: August and May 2023 preferences based on likely voters, while prior measures were asked of all registered Republicans.

*NA: Not measured * less than 1/5 of 1%*

Biden holds commanding lead in the state’s March 2024 Democratic primary for president

President Biden is holding a commanding lead in the state’s March 2024 Democratic primary. When Biden is paired against presidential primary challengers Kennedy and Williamson in the state’s March 2024 Democratic primary, 66% of likely voters say they would support Biden, while just 9% favor Kennedy and 3% Williamson. Another 6% of likely voters say they would vote for “someone else”, while 16% are undecided.

California Democratic Party election rules permit both registered Democrats and independent voters registered as No Party Preference to vote in the state’s Democratic presidential primary. When the preferences of these two groups are compared, Biden’s support is stronger among rank-and-file Democrats than it is among No Party Preference voters who express an interest in voting in the Democratic presidential primary.

Biden also receives somewhat lower levels of support from younger voters ages 18-29 who are likely to vote in the Democratic primary (49%) support. He also polls less well among Latino (53%) and Asian American voters (57%) than among whites (71%) and Black primary election voters (77%).

Table 2
Likely voter preferences in California’s March 2024 Democratic presidential primary election

	Total likely voters %	No Party Democrats Preference	
		%	%
Joe Biden, President	66	68	51
Robert F. Kennedy Jr., environmental attorney	9	8	15
Marianne Williamson, author	3	2	3
Someone else	6	6	7
Undecided	16	16	24

Biden holds a commanding lead over Trump in a general election rematch, but many Californians would be open to a 3rd party candidate if these two are again the nominees

When the overall California electorate is asked who they would prefer if the November 2024 general election for president pitted Biden against Trump, the incumbent Biden holds a commanding 51% to 31% lead over his GOP rival, although 13% say they would vote for “someone else” and 5% are undecided.

However, if the choices for president in November were Biden and Trump, many California voters say they would be open to the possibility of voting for a third-party candidate. Nearly half of the state’s voters (47%) say they would be “very open” (24%) or “somewhat open” (23%) to this possibility. This compares to 36% of the electorate who would not be open to a third-party candidate and 17% who say it depends on who the candidate is.

Majorities of political moderates (62%) and non-partisans (65%) report being very or somewhat open to supporting a third-party candidate if Biden and Trump are the nominees next year.

Younger voters are also more likely than older voters to say they would be open to a third-party presidential candidate in November if Biden and Trump are the choices. Greater than six in ten voters under age 30 (62%) report this, while among voters ages 65 or older just 38% say this.

	Very open %	Somewhat open %	Not open %	Depends %
Total registered voters	24	23	36	17
Democrats	20	22	42	16
Republicans	17	20	47	16
No Party Preference/othe	37	28	20	15
Strongly conservative	15	12	56	17
Somewhat conservative	28	23	32	17
Moderate	32	30	21	17
Somewhat liberal	18	26	40	16
Strongly liberal	17	17	54	12
18-29	30	32	24	14
30-39	28	25	31	16
40-49	22	23	35	20
50-64	21	22	37	20
65 or older	21	17	50	12

Trump and Biden vulnerabilities as presidential candidates in 2024

The poll also assessed some of the potential vulnerabilities that both Biden and Trump would possess when running as presidential candidates in 2024. For example, when asked to appraise the personal ethics and ethical standards of each man, assessments of Biden are mixed, with 48% rating them excellent or good and 43% saying they are not good or poor. But Trump's personal ethics present him with greater vulnerabilities, as just 22% of the state's electorate rate his personal ethics as excellent or good while 71% say they are not good or poor.

On the other hand, when Californians are asked the extent to which they think Biden's age and Trump's legal problems will hurt their chances to win the presidency next year, more consider Biden's age to be a negative drag than feel this way about Trump's legal problems. The poll finds greater than eight in ten Californians (84%) saying they believe Biden's age will hurt him a lot (42%) or a little (42%) in his bid for re-election next year. This compares to 69% who feel Trump's legal problems will hurt the former president a lot (32%) or a little (37%) in 2024.

A third question asked voters how concerned they personally were about Biden's age and Trump's legal problems when running for president next year. The results reveal that similar, high levels of California voters express concerns about both problems. with 48% very concerned about Biden age, and 49% very concerned about Trump's legal problems.

Views about these matters are highly partisan, with Democrats and Republicans holding starkly different assessments of the two candidates. However, it is noteworthy that more Democrats say Biden's age will hurt his election chances than Republicans say this about Trump's legal problems.

Table 4
How Californians appraise Biden’s and Trump’s ethics and Biden’s age and Trump’s legal problems when running for president in 2024
(among California registered voters)

	Total registered voters		No Party					
	Joe Biden	Donald Trump	Democrats		Republicans		Pref./ other	
	%	%	Biden	Trump	Biden	Trump	Biden	Trump
			%	%	%	%	%	%
Personal ethics and ethical standards of each candidate								
Excellent/good	48	22	75	4	9	61	39	20
Not good/poor	43	71	18	93	86	30	47	72
No opinion	9	7	7	3	5	9	14	8
Extent to which voters believe (Biden’s age) (Trump’s legal problems) will hurt his election chances in 2024								
Will hurt a lot	42	32	27	41	69	13	43	33
Will hurt a little	42	37	55	38	20	38	40	32
Will not hurt at all	9	23	12	14	4	42	8	24
No opinion	7	8	6	8	7	7	9	11
Personal concerns about (Biden’s age) (Trump’s legal problems) as a presidential candidate								
Very concerned	48	49	30	69	82	14	51	46
Somewhat concerned	28	14	38	10	8	18	29	17
Not concerned	19	30	28	15	6	63	15	27
No opinion	5	7	4	6	4	5	5	10

About the Survey

The findings 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 August 24-29, 2023 among 6,030 California registered voters, including 2,833 voters considered likely to vote in the state’s Democratic presidential primary and 1,175 Republicans likely to vote in the GOP presidential primary election. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

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 and provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc.

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 the 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 registered voters are subject to an estimated sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the subsamples of likely Democratic primary voters and Republican primary voters would be approximately +/-3 and +/- 4 percentage points, respectively.

Question wording

(IF DEMOCRAT OR NO PARTY PREFERENCE WITH HIGH INTEREST IN VOTING IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY): Suppose you were voting in California's 2024 Democratic primary for President and the following candidates were listed on the ballot. If the election was held today, for whom would you vote? (NAMES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)

(IF REGISTERED DEMOCRAT FROM VOTING RECORD) Suppose you were voting in California's 2024 Republican primary for President and the following Republicans were listed on the ballot. If the election was held today, who would be your first choice? (NAMES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)

If the November 2024 general election for President were being held today and the major party nominees were Joe Biden, Democrat and Donald Trump, Republican, for whom would you vote?

How open would you be to voting for a 3rd-party candidate for president in the November general election if the major party candidates were Joe Biden, Democrat, and Donald Trump, Republican?

Overall how would you rate the personal ethics and ethical standards of (President Joe Biden) (former President Donald Trump) – excellent, good, fair, poor, or very poor?

How concerned are you about (Joe Biden's age) (Donald Trump's legal problems) when running as a candidate for president next year—very, somewhat, not too, not at all concerned?

To what extent do you think (Joe Biden's age) (Donald Trump's legal problems) will hurt his chances to win (re-election as president) (the presidency) next year – a lot, a little, not at all?

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 copy of the detailed tabulations to this report or a listing of all past poll reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, please visit the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.