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## ***Biden's Victory Margin in California in this Year's Presidential Election Could Reach Historic Proportions***

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Results from the final pre-election *Berkeley IGS Poll* show that voter preferences among California voters in this year's presidential race have not wavered much throughout the long summer and fall campaign.

The latest poll completed last week finds Democrat Joe Biden leading incumbent Republican Donald Trump by thirty-six percentage points (65% to 29%). The results are very similar to the findings of two prior *Berkeley IGS Polls* completed in mid-September and July which found Biden leading by margins of 38 and 39 points, respectively. If Biden's 36-point lead is borne out in the election, this outcome would be the largest victory margin in a California presidential election since 1920 when Republican Warren Harding defeated Democrat James Cox by 42 percentage points and would be the largest Democratic victory in California history.

The poll also finds that voters' primary focus in this election has been and continues to be on the President and not on his challenger. Among voters backing the re-election of the President 62% say their main reason for their vote choice is because they like Trump. Conversely, among those backing Biden a 55% majority say their main reason for backing him is because they don't like Trump. These results mirror those found in earlier surveys.

When preferences in the presidential election are examined across major subgroups of the election, the poll finds the same characteristics of backers of each party's presidential candidates as was found in earlier polls. Support for Biden includes majorities across all major regions of the state and virtually all demographic subgroups. His strongest segments are among Democrats (95%), liberals (93%), Blacks (85%), voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (77%), those who have a post graduate education (77%) and voters under age 30 (75%).

The IGS Poll also finds solid support for Biden from Latinos (72%) and Asian Americans (71%), with support among white Californians lower (61%), although still strong relative to white voters in other states.

The only major segments where majorities are backing the President are fellow Republicans, conservatives and white evangelical Christians.

Given the age of two major party candidates, about four in ten Californians say they are giving greater importance than usual to the vice-presidential nominees when making their vote choices, and this includes both voters backing Biden and those supporting the President.

And when asked to assess each party's vice-presidential nominee, voters see them as a world apart politically. Greater than nine in ten (91%) view incumbent Republican Vice President Mike Pence as a political conservative and this view is shared by voters of all stripes. By contrast, 73% consider Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris a political liberal. While nearly all Trump supporters (95%) hold this view, somewhat smaller proportion of Biden supporters (63%) say this, with 26% describing Harris as a political moderate and 7% as a conservative.

When asked whether each vice-presidential nominee would make a good president if the sitting president were to become incapacitated or were unable to complete his term, opinions unsurprisingly are directly tied to voters' presidential vote choice.

These are the top-line findings from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted in English and Spanish October 16-21, 2020 among a stratified random sample of 6,686 registered voters across California, 5,352 of whom were considered likely to vote or had already voted in this year's presidential election.

### **Support for Biden remains broad-based across the state's major voting blocs**

Voter preferences in this year's presidential continue to be extremely partisan and tied to the self-described political ideology of voters. Nearly all Democrats and liberals say they backing the Biden-Harris ticket while among Republicans and conservatives nearly all are supporting the Trump-Pence ticket.

Biden's vote support across the state is very broad-based and receives majority support among voters across each of the eight major regions of the state. Besides Democrats and liberals, the subgroups in which Biden receives his strongest include Blacks (84%), voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (77%), those who have a post graduate education (77%) and voters under age 30 (75%).

By contrast, the only voter segments other than Republicans and conservatives, where a large majority backs the President's re-election are white evangelical Christians (69%). He trails across all major regions of the state, men and women and all age segments of the electorate.

| <b>Table 1</b>   |                     |                    |                         |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Voter preferences for president among Californians likely to vote in the election</b> |                     |                    |                         |
|  | <b>Biden–Harris</b> | <b>Trump–Pence</b> | <b>Other*/Undecided</b> |
|  | <b>%</b>            | <b>%</b>           | <b>%</b>                |
| <b>Total likely voters</b>   | <b>65</b>           | <b>29</b>          | <b>6</b>                |
| Democrat   | 95                  | 2                  | 3                       |
| Republican   | 8                   | 88                 | 4                       |
| No party preference  | 69                  | 22                 | 9                       |
| Other parties  | 46                  | 31                 | 23                      |
| Very conservative  | 8                   | 91                 | 1                       |
| Somewhat conservative  | 17                  | 77                 | 6                       |
| Moderate   | 69                  | 21                 | 10                      |
| Somewhat liberal   | 96                  | 2                  | 2                       |
| Very liberal   | 91                  | 2                  | 7                       |
| Los Angeles County   | 73                  | 22                 | 5                       |
| San Diego County   | 59                  | 34                 | 7                       |
| Orange County  | 55                  | 36                 | 9                       |
| Inland Empire  | 58                  | 38                 | 4                       |
| Other Southern California  | 59                  | 35                 | 6                       |
| Central Valley   | 52                  | 41                 | 7                       |
| San Francisco Bay Area   | 77                  | 18                 | 5                       |
| Other Northern California  | 60                  | 34                 | 6                       |
| Male   | 60                  | 32                 | 8                       |
| Female   | 70                  | 27                 | 3                       |
| 18-29  | 75                  | 17                 | 8                       |
| 30-39  | 68                  | 24                 | 8                       |
| 40-49  | 64                  | 29                 | 7                       |
| 50-64  | 63                  | 33                 | 4                       |
| 65-74  | 63                  | 34                 | 3                       |
| 75 or older  | 56                  | 38                 | 6                       |
| White non-Hispanic   | 61                  | 34                 | 5                       |
| Latino   | 72                  | 22                 | 6                       |
| Asian/Pacific Islander   | 71                  | 25                 | 4                       |
| Black  | 84                  | 10                 | 6                       |
| High school graduate or less   | 59                  | 34                 | 7                       |
| Some college/trade school  | 57                  | 37                 | 6                       |
| College graduate   | 71                  | 24                 | 5                       |
| Completed post-graduate work   | 77                  | 18                 | 5                       |
| Whites evangelical Christians  | 22                  | 69                 | 9                       |

\* Other candidates and parties included on California's 2020 presidential election ballot are: Howie Hawkins-Angeles Nicole Walker (Green), Roque "Rocky" De La Fuente Guerra-Kanye Omari West (American Independent), Jo Jorgensen - Jeremy "Spike" Cohen (Libertarian), and Gloria La Riva-Sunil Freeman (Peace and Freedom).

**Voters remain largely focused on President Trump in this election**

The latest survey repeated a question included in last month’s *Berkeley IGS Poll* asking supporters of each of the major party candidates which of three possible factors was the main reason for their vote choice: (1) because they liked their preferred candidate, (2) because their candidate is the nominee of their preferred party, or (3) because they didn’t like the other candidate.

The results are virtually identical to those found last month, with majorities of voters on both sides of the aisle saying their vote in the election was being made primarily in relation to President Trump. Among backers of the President 62% say their main reason for their vote choice is because they like Trump, while a 55% majority of Biden’s supporters say it is because they don’t like the President.

**Table 2**  
**Main reason for supporting their preferred candidate for president**  
**(among likely voters supporting each candidate)**

|   | Late October   |                | September      |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|   | Biden voters % | Trump voters % | Biden voters % | Trump voters % |
| Because I like my candidate                         | 16             | 62             | 15             | 63             |
| Because he is the (Democratic) (Republican) nominee | 29             | 15             | 33             | 14             |
| Because I don’t like the other candidate            | 55             | 23             | 52             | 22             |

**Minimal impact of the President testing positive for the coronavirus on preferences**

Greater than eight in ten Californians (82%) say the fact that President Trump had earlier tested positive for the coronavirus is having no effect on their vote choice. However, for some voters it does matter. About one in five Biden supporters (21%) and undecided voters or those backing a minor party candidate (18%) say this has made them less likely to back the President.

**Table 3**  
**Impact of President Trump testing positive for the coronavirus on vote choice**  
**(among likely voters in California)**

|                        | Total likely voters % | Biden voters % | Trump voters % | Others/ undecided % |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Less likely to support | 15                    | 21             | 1              | 18                  |
| No effect              | 82                    | 78             | 90             | 81                  |
| More likely to support | 3                     | *              | 9              | 1                   |

\* less than ½ of 1%.

**Four in ten attach greater than usual importance to the vice presidential nominees when making their vote choice**

Given the age of the major party presidential candidates, voters in this survey were asked whether they are giving more, about the same or less importance to the vice-presidential candidates when making their voting decision for president. While about half (49%) are attaching about the same amount of importance to this year’s vice-presidential candidates, about four in ten (41%) say they are giving more importance to them, and this includes both voters backing Biden and those supporting the President.

**Table 4**  
**Given the age of the major party candidates, do you attach more, about the same or less importance to the vice-presidential candidates when deciding whom to support (among likely voters in California)**

|                 | <b>Total likely voters %</b> | <b>Biden voters %</b> | <b>Trump voters %</b> | <b>Others/ undecided %</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| More importance | <b>41</b>                    | 42                    | 39                    | 35                         |
| About the same  | <b>49</b>                    | 49                    | 48                    | 49                         |
| Less importance | <b>10</b>                    | 9                     | 13                    | 16                         |

**Voters view the two vice-presidential nominees as polls apart politically**

Greater than nine in ten California voters (91%) view incumbent Republican Vice President Mike Pence as a political conservative. This view is shared by voters of backers of each of the candidates as well as voters who remain undecided or are backing other candidates.

By contrast, 73% consider Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris a political liberal. While nearly all Trump supporters (95%) hold this view, a somewhat smaller proportion of Biden supporters (63%) say this, with 26% describing Harris as a political moderate and 7% as a conservative.

**Table 5**  
**Voter perceptions of the political ideology of the**  
**vice-presidential candidates**  
**(among likely voters in California)**

|                           | <b>Kamala Harris</b> |              |              |               | <b>Mike Pence</b>   |              |              |               |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
|                           | Total likely voters  | Biden voters | Trump voters | Undec./others | Total likely voters | Biden voters | Trump voters | Undec./others |
|                           | %                    | %            | %            | %             | %                   | %            | %            | %             |
| 1 (Very liberal)          | 30                   | 5            | 85           | 32            | 1                   | 1            | *            | *             |
| 2                         | 15                   | 18           | 7            | 17            | *                   | *            | *            | *             |
| 3                         | 28                   | 41           | 3            | 11            | 1                   | 1            | *            | 1             |
| 4 (Moderate)              | 18                   | 26           | 2            | 14            | 3                   | 3            | 4            | 1             |
| 5                         | 3                    | 4            | *            | 7             | 8                   | 2            | 18           | 17            |
| 6                         | 1                    | 1            | *            | 3             | 19                  | 10           | 35           | 26            |
| 7 (Very conservative)     | 2                    | 2            | 1            | 7             | 65                  | 77           | 41           | 47            |
| No opinion                | 3                    | 3            | 2            | 9             | 3                   | 6            | 2            | 8             |
| <b>Liberal (1-3)</b>      | <b>(73)</b>          | <b>(64)</b>  | <b>(95)</b>  | <b>(60)</b>   | <b>(2)</b>          | <b>(2)</b>   | <b>(*)</b>   | <b>(1)</b>    |
| <b>Moderate (4)</b>       | <b>(18)</b>          | <b>(26)</b>  | <b>(2)</b>   | <b>(14)</b>   | <b>(3)</b>          | <b>(3)</b>   | <b>(4)</b>   | <b>(1)</b>    |
| <b>Conservative (5-7)</b> | <b>(6)</b>           | <b>(7)</b>   | <b>(1)</b>   | <b>(17)</b>   | <b>(92)</b>         | <b>(89)</b>  | <b>(94)</b>  | <b>(90)</b>   |

\* less than 1/2 of 1%.

**Would each of the two vice presidential nominees be a good president?**

When asked whether each vice-presidential nominee would make a good president if the sitting president were to become incapacitated or were unable to complete his term, opinions are directly tied to voters' presidential vote choice, with 93% of Biden voters saying this about Harris and 96% of Trump voters saying this about Pence.

**Table 6**  
**Views of whether (Kamala Harris) (Mike Pence) would be a good president if**  
**(Joe Biden) (Donald Trump) became incapacitated or was unable to complete his term**  
**(among likely voters in California)**

|                             | Total likely voters % | Biden voters % | Trump voters % | Others/undecided % |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| <b><u>Kamala Harris</u></b> |                       |                |                |                    |
| Yes                         | <b>62</b>             | 92             | 2              | 29                 |
| No                          | <b>38</b>             | 7              | 98             | 69                 |
| Not sure/no opinion         | *                     | 1              | *              | 2                  |
| <b><u>Mike Pence</u></b>    |                       |                |                |                    |
| Yes                         | <b>35</b>             | 7              | 97             | 42                 |
| No                          | <b>64</b>             | 93             | 3              | 53                 |
| Not sure/no opinion         | <b>1</b>              | *              | *              | 5                  |

\* less than 1/2 of 1%.

### **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 October 16-21, 2020 among 6,686 California registered voters, 5,352 of whom were considered likely to vote or had already voted in the November 2020 presidential election.

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 overall sample of registered voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's registered voters. Likely voters were identified based on a voter's stated interest in and intention to vote in the election and factoring in their history of voting in past elections.

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 sample of likely 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**

Below are the names and parties of the candidates for President and Vice President appearing on California's November election ballot. (If the election were held today, for whom would you vote?) (For whom did you vote?) **(DISPLAY ORDER OF PARTY TICKETS RANDOMIZED)**

Donald J. Trump – Michael R. Pence, Republican

Joe Biden - Kamala Harris, Democratic

Howie Hawkins - Angeles Nicole Walker, Green

Roque "Rocky" De La Fuente Guerra - Kanye Omari West, American Independent

Jo Jorgensen – Jeremy "Spike" Cohen, Libertarian

Gloria La Riva – Sunil Freeman, Peace and Freedom

**(ASKED OF VOTERS SUPPORTING TRUMP)** What is the main reason behind your vote for the Republican Party ticket of Trump-Pence? (1) Mainly because I like Trump, (2) Mainly because Trump and Pence are the Republican nominees, (3) Mainly because I don't like Biden.



**(ASKED OF VOTERS SUPPORTING BIDEN)** What is the main reason behind your vote for the Democratic Party ticket of Biden-Harris? (1) Mainly because I like Biden, (2) Mainly because Biden and Harris are the Democratic nominees, (3) Mainly because I don't like Trump.

What effect if any does President Trump's testing positive for the coronavirus have on who you will vote for in the presidential election?

Given the age of the two major party candidates do you now attach more importance, about the same or less importance to each party's vice-presidential candidates when deciding whom to support for president this year?

**(ORDERING ROTATED)**

Do you think Kamala Harris would make a good President if Joe Biden is elected and became incapacitated or was unable to complete his full term as President?

Do you think Mike Pence would make a good President if Donald Trump is re-elected and became incapacitated or was unable to complete his second term as President?

**(ORDERING ROTATED)**

On a scale of 1 to 7 where one means very liberal, 4 means moderate, and 7 means very conservative where would you place Kamala Harris in terms of her politics? You may choose any number from 1 to 7 for your answer.

On a scale of 1 to 7 where one means very liberal, 4 means moderate, and 7 means very conservative where would you place Mike Pence in terms of his politics? You may choose any number from 1 to 7 for your answer.

**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>.