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## IGS Poll

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***California voters in need of news and information they can trust when voting, wary of online disinformation.***

More than eight in ten Californians (83%) consider political disinformation and not knowing whether the information they are receiving online about politics and elections is accurate and truthful to be a problem, with a majority (51%) saying it is a major problem. Concerns cross party lines, political ideology, race and ethnicity, and age, as majorities or near majorities cite it as a major problem.

When asked where they get information to understand and make decisions on election issues and how to vote in an upcoming election, California voters most frequently cite local television and radio news (67%), reference materials and online searches (54%), and newspapers or magazines, either online or in print (44%), as the information sources that they turn to.

But at the same time, most voters (58%) express having a generally low level of trust in the information they receive about politics and upcoming elections from mainstream news sources, like TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and news websites. An even larger majority (79%) has little or no trust in the political and election-related news they receive from social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok.

“In a political environment in which our national politics is hyper-polarized, Californians are looking to information sources closer to home, including local TV, radio, and materials provided by election officials,” said Jonathan Mehta Stein, Executive Director of California Common Cause. “California needs to see local journalism as a public good and invest in it accordingly. Our local and ethnic media are the only sources left where Californians can get trustworthy, unbiased news rooted in our local communities.”

Two in three Californians (68%) maintain that they are satisfied with the information that state and local governments provide to inform them when elections are being held and what options they have for voting, but 28% are not. A slightly smaller proportion (61%) expresses satisfaction with the information that government agencies offer to help them make informed decisions about voting, while 35% are dissatisfied. Younger voters, non-college graduates, Republicans, and those who have not voted frequently in recent elections express greater dissatisfaction with the information provided by state and local governments in these areas.

The poll also demonstrated divides in who is being reached out to by political campaigns. While half of the state’s electorate (49%) say they were contacted several times a week or more by political campaigns in the weeks leading up to the 2022 election, certain segments of the state are far less likely to be contacted. For example, 64% of regular voters who voted in five of the last seven statewide elections say they were contacted several times a week or more, compared to 40% among

infrequent voters and 30% among voters who had not voted in any recent election. Latinos (16%), Black (12%) and Asian American voters (9%), renters, and low-income voters were also more likely than others to say they had never been contacted.

One in five voters (20%) say they need the assistance of others when voting. The most common type of assistance cited is to get a better understanding of the issues on the ballot (14%). Another 5% say they need help understanding how and when to vote, and a similar proportion report needing transportation assistance or help in returning their ballot.

These findings come from a *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted July 20-25, 2023, among 6,164 California voters. This report, the fourth of a five-part series on democracy, voting rights, and state election laws, was funded under a grant from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

**Half of the electorate consider online political disinformation to be a major problem**

A 51% majority of California voters considers political disinformation and not knowing whether or not the information is accurate and truthful to be a major problem when obtaining news online about politics and elections. Another 32% describe this as a minor problem, while just 12% do not consider political disinformation to be a problem.

Problems with online political disinformation span all demographic and political subgroups, with only minor variations noted by party, age, or race and ethnicity.

“The fact that more than eight in ten Californians consider disinformation to be a problem shows how polluted our information ecosystems have already become. Unfortunately, we are entering a new era in which artificial intelligence will turbocharge disinformation further, making it appear more convincing and easier to create. We have to make a major commitment as a state to countering the threat that disinformation, deep fakes, and AI pose to our democracy,” said Jonathan Mehta Stein, Executive Director of California Common Cause.

*Table 1*  
**When going online, how much of a problem is political disinformation and not knowing whether the information you are receiving is accurate and truthful**

	<b>A major problem</b>	<b>A minor problem</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	48	35	11	5
Republicans	56	26	14	4
No party preference/other	52	31	12	5
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	56	28	10	7
30-39	49	32	12	7
40-49	48	34	14	4
50-64	53	31	12	3
65 or older	51	33	13	4
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	50	33	14	3
Latino	51	29	10	9
Asian/Pacific Islander	54	31	9	7

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**Information sources that voters rely on for election-related information**


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Californians offer a wide range of responses when asked to name the information sources that they rely on when trying to understand and make decisions about election issues and how they will vote in an upcoming election. Most frequently cited are local television and radio news (67%), reference materials and online searches (54%), and newspapers or magazines, either online or in print (44%).

Voters also frequently turn to these other sources for information about election issues: national or cable television news (38%), family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers (37%), and state and local government websites (36%), trusted community-based organizations (31%), campaign mailers (28%) and social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and TikTok (26%).

While the hierarchy of the information sources cited is similar across most major subgroups of the voting population, some differences are noteworthy. For example, white voters are more likely than voters of color to say they use reference materials and online searches, as well as newspapers and magazines to obtain election-related information. On the other hand, Latinos (34%), Asian Americans (33%), and Black voters (35%) are far more likely than white voters (19%) to use social media platforms for election-related information.

Younger voters (49%) were four times more likely than voters aged 65 or older (11%) to cite social media as a source of election information. Older voters rely more on newspapers and magazines either online or in print, and national or cable television news, while younger voters are likely to seek election information from family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers.

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*Table 2*

**Information sources that voters rely on to get information about election issues and how they will vote in an upcoming election**

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	<u>%</u>
Local television and radio news	67
Reference materials and online searches	54
Newspapers or magazines either online or in print	44
National or cable television news	38
Family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers	37
State and local government websites	36
Trusted community-based organizations	31
Campaign mailers	28
Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok	26
Ethnic media	6
Other sources (volunteered)	19
No opinion	3

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**Low levels of trust in both mainstream media and social media platforms as election-related information sources**

Most Californians report low levels of trust in the political and election-related information provided to them by mainstream news sources like TV, radio, newspapers, and news websites, with 58% placing not much or no trust in them. This compares to 7% who have a great deal or 33% who have a fair amount of trust in the political and election-related information these sources are providing.

An even larger majority of voters (79%) have little or no trust in the political and election-related news provided on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and TikTok. Just 2% place a great deal of trust and 15% a fair amount of trust in these sources for news about politics and upcoming elections.

Distrust in both types of media sources is broad-based across most major subgroups of the voting population. However, Republicans express greater distrust in both sources than Democrats, with 83% of GOP voters placing little or no trust in mainstream media for news about politics and upcoming elections, and a similar proportion (84%) saying this regarding social media platforms. Most Democrats (75%) distrust the political and election information provided on social media platforms, but a smaller proportion (42%) says this in relation to mainstream media sources.

While majorities of Latinos, Asian American and Black voters report having little or no trust in social media platforms for news about politics and upcoming elections, distrust in these platforms is even higher among white voters.

*Table 3*

**Trust in mainstream media, such as TV, radio, newspapers, and news websites, as sources of information about politics and upcoming elections**

	<b>A great deal</b>	<b>A fair amount</b>	<b>Not very much</b>	<b>None at all</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	11	46	32	10
Republicans	2	13	39	44
No party preference/other	5	30	36	26
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	4	34	39	18
30-39	6	34	35	22
40-49	6	32	34	26
50-64	8	31	34	26
65 or older	10	37	31	21
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	8	33	34	24
Latino	8	33	35	21
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	37	39	13
Black	5	41	34	19
<u>Education</u>				
High school grad or less	8	35	31	21
Some college/trade school	6	27	35	30
Bachelor's degree	7	38	36	18
Post graduate degree	10	41	35	14

*Differences between 100% and the sum of each item's percentages equal proportion with no opinion.*

**Table 4**

**Trust in social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, as sources of information about politics and upcoming elections**

	<b>A great deal</b>	<b>A fair amount</b>	<b>Not very much</b>	<b>None at all</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	3	19	44	31
Republicans	2	10	33	51
No party preference/other	2	14	43	38
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	2	23	45	26
30-39	3	20	41	31
40-49	2	16	42	37
50-64	2	12	42	41
65 or older	1	9	37	49
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	1	9	41	46
Latino	5	24	39	27
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	17	49	27
Black	2	27	38	30

*Differences between 100% and the sum of each item's percentages equal proportion with no opinion.*

**While a majority of voters are satisfied with the election information that state and local governments provide, about three in ten are not**

A 68% majority of voters say they are satisfied with the information provided by state and local governments about when elections are being held and their options for voting, but 28% are not. A slightly smaller majority (61%) also say they are satisfied with the information state and local governments provide to help voters make informed voting decisions, while 35% are dissatisfied.

Younger voters, infrequent voters and non-voters, and non-college graduates report lower levels of satisfaction with the information provided by state and local governments in these areas than older voters and college graduates. Satisfaction about government-provided election information is highly partisan, with about twice as many Republicans saying they are dissatisfied as Democrats.

“While progress has been made to increase voter registration and access to voting, more is needed to strengthen our democracy. What’s critical is year-round education, engagement and organizing of voters who are typically neglected by traditional campaigns and need more information to feel empowered to vote. Building relationships and trust with low-income voters, communities of color, young voters, and immigrants is critical to combating cynicism and the perception that voting doesn’t matter,” said Veronica Carrizales, Vice President of Policy and External Affairs at California Calls.

*Table 5*

**Satisfaction with the information that state and local governments are providing them (about when elections are held and their options voters have for voting)  
(about what they need to make informed decisions when voting)**

	<i>When and how to vote</i>		<i>Making informed voting decisions</i>	
	Satisfied %	Not satisfied %	Satisfied %	Not satisfied %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>35</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	80	17	75	22
Republicans	50	46	43	53
No party preference/other	63	32	54	41
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	53	40	47	46
30-39	65	30	57	37
40-49	67	30	59	39
50-64	73	25	66	32
65 or older	77	21	72	26
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	73	25	63	35
Latino	64	31	60	34
Asian/Pacific Islander	60	33	57	38
Black	71	25	66	31
<u>Education</u>				
High school graduate or less	60	34	58	37
Some college/trade school	64	33	57	40
Bachelor's degree	72	24	64	32
Post graduate degree	80	19	71	27
<u>Frequency of voting*</u>				
Regular voters	78	21	70	29
Intermittent voters	72	26	63	35
Infrequent voters	62	34	55	40
Non-voters	49	40	47	43

*Differences between 100% and the sum of each item's percentages equal proportion with no opinion.*

\* "Regular voters" are those who voted in at least 5 of the last 7 state elections held since 2018.

"Intermittent voters" are those who did not vote in 3 or 4 of the last 7 state elections held since 2018.

"Infrequent voters" are those who voted in only 1 or 2 of the last 7 state elections held since 2018.

"Non-voters" are those who did not vote in any of the last 7 state elections held since 2018.

**Infrequent voters and non-voters are far less likely than regular voters to have been contacted by political campaigns in the weeks leading up to the 2022 election**

Outreach to voters by political campaigns in the form of text messaging, email, mail, telephone or in person was quite common during the 2022 election. About half of the state's registered voters (49%) report being frequently contacted by political campaigns in the weeks leading up to the 2022 election, with 10% saying they were contacted every day or multiple times a day, 12% almost every day, and 27% several times a week.

However, there are big differences in who gets contacted regularly. Voters who have voted in five of the last seven statewide elections report being contacted by political campaigns with much greater frequency than those who had voted infrequently or had not voted in any of the last seven state elections.

There were also differences between voters of color and white voters. For example, Latino (16%), Black (12%) and Asian American (9%) voters were all more likely to say they were never contacted by campaigns compared to white voters (6%). Young voters (16%) and renters (12%) were at least twice as likely as older voters (6%) and homeowners (6%) to say they were never contacted. In addition, lower-income voters making under \$20,000 per year were six times more likely than the state’s highest earners (over \$200,000 per year) to say they were never contacted by a campaign during the last election cycle (18% to 3%).

**Table 6**  
**How often were you contacted by a political campaign in the weeks leading up to the 2022 election**

	Every day /multiple times per day %	Almost every day %	Several times a week %	Occa-sio nally %	Never %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>
<u>Age</u>					
18-29	6	5	25	39	16
30-39	9	12	24	36	11
40-49	10	12	26	35	10
50-64	9	14	29	35	7
65 or older	15	15	30	31	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White non-Hispanic	13	14	30	32	6
Latino	6	8	25	36	16
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	9	22	44	9
Black	14	11	25	32	12
<u>Tenure</u>					
Homeowner	13	14	29	32	6
Renter	8	10	26	37	12
<u>Frequency of voting</u>					
Regular voters	16	17	31	29	4
Intermittent voters	9	10	30	39	8
Infrequent voters	7	9	24	37	14
Non-voters	4	6	20	42	17

*Differences between 100% and the sum of percentages equals the proportion of voters who could not recall.*

**One in five Californians need the assistance of others when voting**

Overall one in five registered California voters (20%) say they need the assistance of others when voting. By far the most common type of assistance needed is to obtain a better understanding of the issues on the ballot, cited by 14%. Another 5% say they need the help of others to better understand how and when to vote, while a similar proportion report needing transportation assistance or assistance in returning their ballot.

Latinos (28%) and Asian American voters (31%) are more than twice as likely as white voters (13%) to need assistance to vote. Black voters (23%) are also more likely to report needing assistance as white voters. Younger voters and non-college graduates are the other segments of the electorate most likely to report needing the assistance of offers when voting.



**Table 7**  
**Proportion of voters who report needing the assistance of others to vote**  
**and the types of assistance needed**

	No assistance needed %	Assist- a nce needed (net) %	To under- stand the issues %	About how/ when to vote %	For trans-portat ion/ to turn in my ballot/ %	For a dis- ability %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<u>Age</u>						
18-29	62	31	21	10	10	3
30-39	70	27	17	9	8	2
40-49	83	14	12	4	2	1
50-64	82	16	11	2	4	1
65 or older	85	14	10	2	2	3
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	86	13	10	2	2	2
Latino	66	28	15	9	8	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	65	31	24	10	9	2
Black	73	23	17	8	5	4
<u>Education</u>						
High school graduate or less	70	26	13	10	9	4
Some college/trade school	76	21	14	5	6	3
Bachelor's degree	80	17	14	4	3	1
Post graduate degree	83	15	13	2	3	1

*Differences between 100% and the sum of percentages about needing assistance equal proportion not answering.*

**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 20-25, 2023 among 6,164 California registered voters. Funding was provided to IGS under a grant from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

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 registered voters with email addresses were derived from information contained on the voter registration rolls and provided 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. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample 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 a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

**Question wording**

How satisfied are you that state and local governments are providing voters with the information they need about when elections are being held and what options voters have for voting?

And, how satisfied are you that state and local governments are providing voters with the information they need about an upcoming election to make informed decisions when voting?

Do you need any assistance from others to vote for any of the following things? Select as many as apply. (SEE RELEASE FOR TYPES OF ASSISTANCE LISTED) (IF ANY ASSISTANCE NEEDED) How often do you need the assistance of others to vote?

What sources do you usually use to get information about election issues and how you will vote in an upcoming election? Select as many as apply. (SEE RELEASE FOR SOURCES LISTED)

How much trust and confidence do you have in the news that is reported in the mainstream media – such as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and news websites – as sources of information about politics and upcoming elections?

How much trust and confidence do you have in the news that is reported on social media platforms, such as on Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, as sources of information about politics and upcoming elections?

When going online to obtain news about politics and elections, how much of a problem for you is political disinformation and not knowing whether the information you are receiving is accurate and truthful?

**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 seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion and 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>.

**About the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund**

The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund works to advance equality and justice so every person can thrive and live life with dignity and hope. Rooted in the Bay Area, it focuses on a set of issues that include: building a fairer, more representative democracy in California; advancing more humane approaches to immigration and expanding opportunities for immigrant youth and families; and making higher education more affordable for lower-income California students. It has awarded over \$670 million in grants since its founding in 1953.