

UC Berkeley

IGS Poll

Title

IGS Poll Finds Support for Extending Taxes on Wealthy, Increasing Cigarette Tax

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5p6285dj>

Author

Institute of Governmental Studies

Publication Date

2016-08-16



For immediate release

IGS Poll Finds Support for Extending Taxes on Wealthy, Increasing Cigarette Tax

August 16, 2016

Most California voters support Proposition 55, a November ballot measure that would extend higher temporary income taxes on people earning more than \$250,000 a year, according to a new poll released today by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

The survey of registered voters also found extremely strong bipartisan support for Proposition 56, which would increase the cigarette tax by \$2 a pack.

The poll used online English-language questionnaires to survey 3,020 respondents from June 29 to July 18. All respondents were registered California voters, and the responses were then weighted to reflect the statewide distribution of the California population by gender, race/ethnicity, education and age.

Asked about Proposition 55, which will be on the Nov. 8 ballot, 65.3 percent of respondents favored the measure, while only 34.7 percent opposed it. Democrats were overwhelmingly in support, 78 percent to 22 percent, while Republicans opposed the measure 53.8 percent to 46.2 percent.

Voters approved higher temporary income tax rates for the wealthy when they passed Proposition 30 in 2012. That measure also raised sales taxes for all, but the higher rates for both the income and sales taxes are scheduled to expire by the end of 2018. Proposition 55 would extend the higher income tax rates, but not the higher sales taxes.

To test voters' reaction to various arguments, the survey included three versions of a question on Proposition 55. One form of the question simply described the proposed extension. The second form noted that the ballot measure would extend the higher taxes "even though the state has a healthy budget surplus." The third form noted that the extension was being proposed "because of the need for funding of state programs."

All three versions of the question produced majority support for extending the taxes. Support was lowest (62.7 percent) when people were told about the surplus, and higher when they were simply asked the basic question (68.5 percent), or when the need for programmatic funding was mentioned (64.8 percent).

Support for the tax extension included a majority of respondents in every ethnic, age and educational category. Even among relatively high-income earners, there was support for the extension. Support was highest (69.9 percent) among respondents with a household income of less than \$40,000 per year, but even among those with incomes of more than \$100,000 a year, 58.7 percent supported retaining the higher rates.

Cigarette tax

Proposition 56 would raise the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack from its current rate of 87 cents per pack. That measure was supported by 74.3 percent of respondents, including strong majorities in both parties and among independents. All demographic groups supported the increase, but there were clear differences along educational lines, as support increased steadily with a higher level of education, from 58.1 percent from those with less than a high school diploma to 85.6 percent for those with a graduate degree.

General level of taxation

A more generic taxation question asked respondents whether their level of state and federal incomes taxes is “too high, about right or too low.” Among Democrats, 50.8 percent answered “too high,” while 46 percent said “about right.” This contrasted with Republicans, among whom 73.4 percent said “too high” and only 25 percent said “about right.” Very few respondents in either party thought they paid too little in income tax.

Although California’s income tax is extremely progressive, collecting a large share of the revenue from high-income earners, objections to the overall level of taxation did not rise dramatically with income. Among those earning less than \$40,000 a year, 54.6 percent of respondents said their taxes are “too high.” Among those earning more than \$100,000, 62.2 percent answered “too high.” The belief that taxes are too high was most common among those with a college degree or less education, and was lower among those with a graduate degree.

For full results of the poll, please go to the IGS website at igs.berkeley.edu.

CONTACTS

Jack Citrin, IGS director, (510) 642-4692

Ethan Rarick, IGS associate director, (510) 642-5158

Gabe Lenz, associate professor of political science, (510) 575-9971

Appendix

Prop. 30 Tax Extension

(Each of the following versions of the question was seen by one-third of the total respondents.)

Question version 1:

In 2012 voters increased state income taxes for people earning more than \$250,000 a year and sales taxes for everyone. These increases will expire by the end of 2018. A proposed ballot measure would extend the higher state income tax rates but not the higher sales taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a measure?

Question version 2:

In 2012 voters increased state income taxes for people earning more than \$250,000 a year and sales taxes for everyone. These increases will expire by the end of 2018. Even though the state has a healthy budget surplus, a proposed ballot measure would extend the higher state income tax rates but not the higher sales taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a measure?

Question version 3:

In 2012 voters increased state income taxes for people earning more than \$250,000 a year and sales taxes for everyone. These increases will expire by the end of 2018. Because of the need for funding of state programs, a proposed ballot measure would extend the higher state income tax rates but not the higher sales taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a measure?

Sample sizes: version 1-1,005; version 2-1,008; version 3-1,007; all respondents-3,020.

	Question version 1	Question version 2	Question version 3	All Respondents
Favor	68.5%	62.7%	64.8%	65.3%
Oppose	31.5%	37.3%	35.2%	34.7%

By Partisanship – All Respondents

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Favor	78%	54.7%	46.2%
Oppose	22%	45.3%	53.8%

By Income – All Respondents

	Less than \$40,000	\$40,000-\$99,999	\$100,000+
Favor	69.9%	67.3%	58.7%

Oppose 30.1% 32.7% 41.3%

By Age – All Respondents

	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+
Favor	71.5%	69.5%	69.8%	62.9%	60%
Oppose	28.5%	30.5%	30.2%	37.1%	40%

By Race/Ethnicity – All Respondents

	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Favor	66.1%	71.5%	70.3%	62.1%
Oppose	33.9%	28.5%	29.7%	37.9%

By Education – All Respondents

	Less than high school	High school degree or equivalent	Some college	Bachelor’s degree	Advanced degree
Favor	58.2%	60.5%	65.7%	65.4%	68.7%
Oppose	41.8%	39.5%	34.3%	34.6%	31.3%

By Gender – All Respondents

	Female	Male
Favor	65.8%	64.4%
Oppose	34.2%	35.6%

Cigarette Tax Increase

A proposed ballot measure would increase California’s cigarette tax by \$2 per pack to fund healthcare, anti-smoking, and other programs. The current tax is 87 cents per pack. Would you favor or oppose increasing the tax?

Sample size: 3,020

	Percent
Favor	74.3%

Oppose 25.7%

By Partisanship

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Favor	80.5%	70.3%	64.6%
Oppose	19.5%	29.7%	35.4%

By Income

	Less than \$40,000	\$40,000-\$99,999	\$100,000+
Favor	70.2%	72.9%	78.5%
Oppose	29.8%	27.1%	21.5%

By Age

	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+
Favor	84.4%	80.8%	78%	69.2%	70.8%
Oppose	15.6%	19.2%	22%	30.8%	29.2%

By Race/Ethnicity

	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Favor	84.1%	80.4%	80.1%	68.7%
Oppose	15.9%	19.6%	19.9%	31.3%

By Education

	Less than high school	High school degree or equivalent	Some college	Bachelor's degree	Advanced degree
Favor	58.1%	68.4%	70.1%	78.8%	80.9%
Oppose	41.9%	31.6%	29.9%	21.2%	19.1%

By Gender

	Female	Male
Favor	76.7%	71.3%
Oppose	23.3%	28.7%

Level of Taxation

Do you consider the amount of federal and state income taxes that you and your family have to pay is too high, about right or too low?

Sample size: 3,020

	Percent
Too High	59.8%
About Right	37.6%
Too Low	2.6%

By Partisanship

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Too High	50.8%	66.7%	73.4%
About Right	46%	30.3%	25%
Too Low	3.1%	3.1%	1.5%

By Income

	Less than \$40,000	\$40,000- \$99,999	\$100,000+
Too High	54.6%	61.2%	62.2%
About Right	43%	36.6%	35%
Too Low	2.4%	2.2%	2.8%

By Age

	Age 18- 24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+
Too High	49%	56.2%	55.6%	66.1%	60.6%
About Right	49.3%	40.6%	41.2%	31.4%	37.2%
Too Low	1.7%	3.2%	3.2%	2.5%	2.2%

By Race/Ethnicity

	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Too High	63.6%	69.7%	58.4%	58.6%
About Right	34.5%	28.2%	38.6%	38.9%
Too Low	2%	2.2%	3%	2.4%

By Education

	Less than high school	High school degree or equivalent	Some college	Bachelor's degree	Advanced degree
Too High	65.8%	59.4%	61.9%	62.5%	56.3%
About Right	34.2%	36.5%	36.4%	35.5%	40.5%
Too Low	0%	4.1%	1.7%	2%	3.2%

By Gender

	Female	Male
Too High	63.2%	56.6%
About Right	34.4%	40.7%
Too Low	2.5%	2.6%