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Incumbents Hold Wide Lead in Upcoming Statewide Primary

The latest IGS Poll shows incumbent officials with a wide lead in the upcoming statewide primary election contest. Governor Gavin Newsom has the support of 50% of likely voters, with his nearest competitor, Republican Brian Dahle, at 10%, and No Party Preference candidate Michael Shellenberger receiving 5% of the vote. With 26 candidates on the ballot, it has proven difficult for any of Newsom's challengers to break through so far. The race for second-place in the top two primary will depend heavily on what the 16% of undecided voters choose in the final days leading up to the election.

Voters are being asked to vote in two Senate primaries: a special election to fill the remainder of the term won by Vice President Kamala Harris (which ends in January 2023) and the other to fill that seat for the subsequent six-year term beginning in January. Alex Padilla, the incumbent senator appointed by Newsom, enjoys a substantial lead in both races. Padilla has the support of 42% of likely voters in the contest for the full term, and 44% in the special election. His nearest rivals in the race to fill the full term are Republicans Mark Meuser (11%) and Chuck Smith (6%).

Incumbent Attorney General Rob Bonta is also well ahead of his challengers, with 46% of likely voters' support, as compared to 16% for Republican Eric Early and 12% for Republican Nathan Hochman.

IGS co-Director Eric Schickler commented, "In the aftermath of last year's recall election, the statewide primaries this year have not galvanized voters' attention. The incumbents are running well ahead of their challengers, and the main question is who will come in second

under the top-two system, and whether the runner ups in June will be able to gain more traction by November.”

Table 1
Voter preferences for Governor in the June 2022 primary election
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters %	Demo- crats %	Republi- cans %	No party preference/ other %
Gavin Newsom, Governor of California (D)	50	83	4	46
Brian Dahle, Senator/Farmer (R)	10	1	26	8
Michael Shellenberger, Homelessness Policy Advocate (NPP)	5	1	10	6
Shawn Collins, Military Officer/Attorney (R)	3	<1	7	2
Anthony Trimino, Entrepreneur/CEO (R)	3	<1	7	4
Jenny Rae Le Roux, Entrepreneur/Mom/ Businesswoman (R)	2	<1	4	1
Major Williams, Entrepreneur/Businessman (R)	2	<1	5	2
All others (1% or less each)	9	5	13	13
Undecided	16	9	24	16

(D) demotes Democratic, (R) denotes Republican, and (NPP) denotes No Party Preference.

Governor Newsom enjoys a commanding lead in the gubernatorial primary, with support from 50% of likely voters. The overwhelming majority of Democrats (83%) plan to vote for the incumbent governor, along with 46% of No Party Preference/Other Party voters, and just 4% of Republicans. In the race for second place, Republican Brian Dahle has the support of 10% of all likely voters, but is running ahead among Republicans, with 26% of likely voters; Dahle has the support of 8% of No Party Preference (NPP) voters. NPP candidate Michael Shellenberger has the support of 5% of all likely voters; he currently has the support of 10% of Republicans and 6% of NPP voters, but just 1% of Democrats. None of the other 23 candidates on the ballot garner more than 3% of voters’ support. The race for second place will likely come down to the 16% of voters who remain undecided.

Newsom enjoys a clear lead across regions of the state, though his margin is lowest in the Central Valley (36%-23% over Dahle), Inland Empire (35%-10% over Dahle), and San Joaquin Valley (33%-22%). Newsom has wide support across racial groups, with 47% of white voters, 54% of Latinos, 70% of Black voters, and 60% of Asian American voters supporting the governor.

Table 2
Voter preferences for US Senate in the June 2022 primary election
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters %	Demo- crats %	Republi- cans %	No party preference/ other %
<u>U.S. Senator (Full-term)</u>				
Alex Padilla, Appointed U.S. Senator (D)	42	70	5	35
Mark P. Meuser, Constitutional Attorney (R)	11	1	29	6
Chuck Smith, Retired Law Enforcement (R)	6	<1	15	5
James P. Bradley, CEO/Business Owner (R)	3	<1	9	3
Jon Elist, Small Business Owner (R)	2	<1	6	1
Cordie Williams, Doctor/Business Owner (R)	2	<1	4	3
Obaidul Huq Pirjada, Attorney (D)	2	2	<1	3
All others (1% or less each)	10	8	8	14
Undecided	22	18	24	30
<u>U.S. Senator (Partial-term)</u>				
Alex Padilla, Appointed U.S. Senator (D)	44	72	5	40
Mark P. Meuser, Constitutional Attorney (R)	14	1	38	10
James P. Bradley, CEO/Business Owner (R)	7	1	16	7
Jon Elist, Small Business Owner (R)	5	<1	13	3
Dan O'Dowd (D)	3	4	<1	4
Timothy J. Ursich Jr., Doctor (D)	2	4	<1	2
Myron L. Hall, Podiatric Physician (R)	2	<1	4	2
Daphne Bradford, Education Consultant (NPP)	1	1	1	3
Undecided	21	17	23	29

(D) demotes Democratic, (R) Republican, (NPP) No Party Preference and (P&F) Peace and Freedom party

Incumbent Senator Alex Padilla has a substantial lead in both the special election to fill the remainder of Vice President Kamala Harris’s term and for the regular election to serve a full six-year term starting in January 2023. In the latter race, Padilla has the support of 42% of likely voters, with Republicans Mark Meuser (11%) and Chuck Smith (6%) trailing badly. Padilla has the support of 70% of Democrats, 35% of NPP voters, and 5% of Republicans. Meuser leads among Republicans, with 29% of the vote to Smith’s 15%, while the two draw nearly equally from NPP voters (6% for Meuser, compared to 5% for Smith). None of the 20 other candidates in the race have the support of more than 3% of likely voters. As in the statewide races, the battle for second place in the top-two primary will depend heavily on how the 22% of undecided voters break in the final days before the election.

Padilla leads in each region of the state, though his support is highest in the Bay Area (51%), LA County (47%) and Central Coast (55%), and lowest in the Inland Empire (31%), Central Valley (33%), San Joaquin Valley (25%), and North Coast (33%). Padilla’s support is similar across racial groups, with 42% of white voters, 41% of Latinos, 45% of Black voters, and 46% of Asian Americans expressing support for the incumbent senator.

Table 3
Voter preferences for California Attorney General in the June 2022 primary election
(among likely voters)

	Total likely voters %	Demo- crats %	Republi- cans %	No party preference/ other %
Rob Bonta, Appointed Attorney General (D)	46	77	5	38
Eric Early, Attorney/Business Owner (R)	16	1	39	15
Nathan Hochman, General Counsel (R)	12	1	30	8
Anne Marie Schubert, District Attorney (NPP)	6	4	4	11
Dan Kapelovitz, Criminal Defense Attorney (G)	2	2	1	4
Undecided	19	14	21	24

(D) denotes Democratic, (R) denotes Republican, (NPP) denotes No Party Preference, and (G) denotes Green party

In the race for Attorney General, incumbent Rob Bonta is well ahead of his challengers, with 46% of likely voters’ support. His Republican rivals Eric Early (16%) and Nathan Hochman (12%) are in a close race for second place, with two other candidates, Anne Marie Schubert and Dan Kapelovitz, trailing behind. Bonta enjoys the support of 77% of Democratic voters, as compared to just 5% of Republicans and 38% among No Party Preference voters. Early has the support of 39% of Republicans and 15% of NPP voters, with Nathan Hochman registering the support of 30% of Republicans and 8% of NPP voters. Fully 19% of likely voters are undecided in the Attorney General race.

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 May 24-31, 2022, among 5210 California registered voters of whom a weighted subsample of 3438 were considered likely to vote in the June 2022 primary. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The *Berkeley IGS Poll* is administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. The latest poll also included an oversampling of registered voters in the City of Los Angeles, administered using the same methods, to enable the poll to examine specific issues of interest to voters in that City and to the *Times*. After the completion of data collection, the results were weighted to realign the Los Angeles City sample to its actual share of the statewide voter population.

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 voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample was stratified by age and gender 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 sample of registered voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's registered voters.

The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and the post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings based on the overall sample of 3438 likely voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/- 2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

In the primary election for Governor, the following 26 candidates are listed on the ballot. If you were voting today, for whom would you vote? (**IF ALREADY VOTED: For whom did you vote?**) (**NAMES, JOB TITLES AND PARTY AFFILIATION OF ALL 26 CANDIDATES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER**)

In the statewide primary election for Attorney General, the following 5 candidates are listed on the ballot. If you were voting today, for whom would you vote? **(IF ALREADY VOTED: For whom did you vote?) (NAMES, JOB TITLES AND PARTY AFFILIATION OF ALL 5 CANDIDATES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)**

Voters will be asked to vote twice in the primary election for United States Senator. Once to elect someone to serve a full six-year term beginning next year, and a second time to elect someone to complete the remainder of the current term left by Senator Kamala Harris after she was elected Vice President.

In the full-term election for U.S. Senate, the following 23 candidates (are) (were) listed on the primary election ballot. If you were voting today, for whom would you vote? **(IF ALREADY VOTED: For whom did you vote?) (NAMES, JOB TITLES AND PARTY AFFILIATION OF ALL 23 CANDIDATES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)**

In the partial term election for U.S. Senate to serve out the remainder of the current term, the following eight (8) candidates are listed on the primary election ballot. If you were voting today, for whom would you vote? **(IF ALREADY VOTED: For whom did you vote?) (NAMES, JOB TITLES AND PARTY AFFILIATION OF ALL 8 CANDIDATES LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER)**

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 past poll reports issued by the poll, please visit <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.