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## IGS Poll

### Title

Release #2020-21: Evaluations of Governor Newsom as he approaches mid-term

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6c33n2vr>

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### Publication Date

2020-09-29



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Release #2020-21

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

***Evaluations of Governor Newsom as he approaches mid-term:  
Voters rate Newsom's overall performance highly, but assessments vary  
about his handling of the many pressing issues now facing the state.***

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*  
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As Governor Gavin Newsom approached the mid-point of his term as governor, the Berkeley IGS Poll asked California registered voters for their opinions of the job Newsom has been doing both overall and across a wide range of issues that voters feel are important for the state to be addressing.

The results indicate that Californians offer a very positive overall assessment of the Governor's performance, but give him lower marks in a number of specific areas. The good news for Newsom is that nearly two thirds of all voters (64%) say they currently approve of the job he is doing overall, while just 36% disapprove. This represents a seven-point increase in the 57% approval that voters gave to Newsom last year.

California voters cite a long list of issues they believe are important for the state to address. Mentioned most frequently is homelessness, cited by 27%, followed by housing costs (23%), and jobs and the economy (21%). In addition, significant proportions believe the state should also be addressing these other issues as well: climate change (17%), the threat of wildfires (17%), the coronavirus (16%), education and the schools (15%), crime and public safety (14%), and taxes and the state budget deficit (14%).

When voters are asked to assess the job that Governor Newsom is doing in handling each of these issues, opinions vary. Newsom receives his highest marks from voters for the very high visibility role he has been taking in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. Nearly twice as many voters rate Newsom as doing an excellent or good job as say he is doing a poor or very poor job in handling this issue. More voters also give positive than negative marks to Newsom for his handling of climate change, race relations and health care.

On the other hand, voter evaluations of Newsom's performance are decidedly negative in two areas considered by many to among the most important issues facing the state – homelessness and housing costs.

IGS co-director Cristina Mora notes that, “These findings show California voters largely approve of Newsom’s handling of emergency issues like the pandemic, but have more reservations about his handling of long-term, systemic issues related to economic inequality, like housing costs.”

Added IGS co-director Eric Schickler, “The emerging threat of wildfires as a state issue is also an area in which voter evaluations are more negative than positive, suggesting an additional potential area of vulnerability for Governor Newsom.”

**Nearly two in three voters approve of Governor Newsom’s job performance overall**  
 In the latest poll about two in three California voters (64%) say they approve of the overall job that Newsom is doing as governor. This represents a seven-point increase in the Governor’s job approval from last year. In addition, this increase is the result of more voters now saying they strongly approve of Newsom’s overall performance.

<b>Table 1a</b>		
<b>Overall job that Gavin Newsom is doing as Governor now compared to last year (among California registered voters)</b>		
	<b>September 2020</b>	<b>June 2019</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Approve	<b><u>64</u></b>	<b><u>57</u></b>
Approve strongly	<b>25</b>	15
Approve somewhat	<b>39</b>	42
Disapprove	<b><u>36</u></b>	<b><u>42</u></b>
Disapprove somewhat	<b>13</b>	17
Disapprove strongly	<b>23</b>	25
No opinion	*	1

\* Less than ½ of 1%

**Voter approval of Newsom’s overall job performance is broad based**  
 Voter approval of the overall job Newsom is doing as governor is quite broad based across the major subgroups of the state’s registered voter population. With the exception of Republicans and conservatives, majorities of voters across all major demographic subgroups now say they approve of Newsom’s performance overall.

Approval of Newsom is greatest among Democrats and political liberals, of whom nearly nine in ten give the governor positive marks. He also is given high job marks from large majorities of voters living in his home region of the San Francisco Bay Area, women, political moderates, voters of color, and from Los Angeles County and San Diego County voters.

**Table 1b**  
**Newsom’s current job performance rating across major subgroups**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Approve %	Disapprove %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Party registration</b>		
Democrat	88	12
Republican	17	82
No Party Preference/others	63	37
<b>Political ideology</b>		
Very conservative	11	89
Somewhat conservative	27	73
Moderate	68	32
Somewhat liberal	87	12
Very liberal	87	13
<b>Region</b>		
Los Angeles County	67	33
San Diego County	67	32
Orange County	55	45
Inland Empire	52	48
Other Southern California	63	36
Central Valley	53	46
San Francisco Bay Area	75	24
Other Northern California	64	36
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59	40
Female	68	32
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	63	36
30-39	62	37
40-49	64	35
50-64	64	36
65-74	65	34
75 or older	61	39
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White non-Hispanic	60	40
Latino	69	31
Asian / Pacific Islander	70	29
Black	73	27

*Note: Differences between the sum of each item’s percentages and 100% equal proportion of voters with no opinion.*

**Californians cite a long list of issues that voters want the state to address**

California voters cite an unusually long list when asked to name the one or two issues they consider most important for the state to be addressing. Mentioned most frequently in this setting are homelessness, cited by 27%, housing costs (23%) and jobs and the economy (21%). However, significant proportions believe the state should also be addressing these other issues as well: climate change (17%), the threat of wildfires (17%), the coronavirus (16%), education and the schools (15%), crime and public safety (14%), and taxes and the state budget deficit (14%).

There are large partisan differences in the issues voters feel are most important for the state to be addressing. Most important to the state’s Democrats are the issues of homelessness, housing costs and climate change, followed by the coronavirus and the threat of wildfires. Republicans most often cite crime and public safety, taxes and the budget deficit, and jobs and the economy, although one in four also cites homelessness.

**Table 2a**  
**Most important issues facing the state – overall and by party registration**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>No Party Preference /others</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Homelessness	27	28	25	28
Housing costs	23	28	11	25
Jobs / the economy	21	16	27	21
Climate change	17	26	3	16
Threat of wildfires	17	20	11	17
The coronavirus	16	22	7	15
Education/ the schools	15	17	10	17
Crime/ public safety	14	6	32	12
Taxes/state budget deficit	14	6	30	14
Health care	10	12	5	11
Immigration	9	3	23	5
Ensuring reliable electricity	5	3	7	5
Race relations	5	7	2	5

*(Columns add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)*

### **Assessments of Newsom handling of the state’s top issues vary**

After naming the issues they consider most important for the state to address, voters were asked to evaluate the job they felt Governor Newsom was doing in handling each issue. The results show that assessments of Newsom’s performance vary considerably across the many issues now facing California.

Voters give Newsom his highest marks for the way he is handling of the coronavirus epidemic. Nearly twice as many voters (49%) say the Governor’s performance in this area has been excellent or good as say he has done a poor or very poor job (28%). Another 19% offer a fair job assessment.

More voters also rate Newsom positively than negatively in his handling of climate change, race relations and health care. Californians offer more mixed assessments of the Governor’s performance -- with about as many offering a positive as negative evaluation – in regard to his handling of immigration, jobs and the economy, ensuring the reliability of electricity, and education and the schools.

On the other hand, voter evaluations of Newsom’s performance are decidedly negative in two areas considered by many to among the most important issues facing the state – homelessness and housing costs. In each case about four to five times as many voters rate Newsom’s performance as poor or very poor as say he is doing an excellent or good job.

Slightly more voters offer a negative than positive assessment of the Governor’s performance handling of the wildfire threat, taxes and the state budget deficit, and crime and public safety.

**Table 3**  
**Voter assessments of the job Newsom is doing in handling each major issue**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b>Excellent/ good %</b>	<b>Fair %</b>	<b>Poor/very poor %</b>	<b>No opinion %</b>
The coronavirus	49	19	28	4
Climate change	34	24	24	18
Race relations	32	24	29	15
Health care	31	26	27	16
Immigration	32	19	32	17
Jobs / the economy	29	27	31	13
Ensuring reliable electricity	29	25	31	15
Education/ the schools	28	26	32	14
Crime/ public safety	27	25	35	13
Taxes/state budget deficit	25	23	36	16
Wildfire threat	25	24	39	12
Housing costs	12	25	46	17
Homelessness	11	22	55	12

### **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 September 9-15, 2020 among 7,198 California registered voters.

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 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 due to the effects of sample stratification and the 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.

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**

Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way Gavin Newsom is handling his job as Governor of California?

Of the following issues facing the state of California, which one or two, do you consider to be most important for the state to address? (SEE RELEASE FOR ISSUES LISTED) Please select at most two choices.

And how would you rate the job Gavin Newsom is doing in handling each of these issues?

### **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>.