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***California Voters Strongly Support Voting Rights Act,
Voter Friendly Reforms, and Options to Make Elections
More Inclusive.***

A *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund among 6,474 California registered voters finds that voters strongly support the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA), which is celebrating its 60th anniversary and protects voters from discrimination and unequal access to the ballot. Voters also support the election administration reforms that California has implemented that have been threatened by recent executive orders.

Important parts of the federal Voting Rights Act have been rolled back by the Supreme Court over the last 12 years. When California voters were asked if they would support or oppose California lawmakers passing laws to establish VRA protections in state law, should federal protections be rolled back further, 64% expressed support while only 19% expressed opposition. Support is high among all races but highest among Black voters (77%) and lowest among Latinos (59%), while white and AAPI voters expressed support at 64% and 69% respectively. As expected, there are substantial differences by political party identification. While 83% of Democrats support restoring the protection, just 26% of Republicans support it.

“California has long been at the forefront of protecting voting rights and ensuring fair representation,” said Angelica Salceda, Program Director at the ACLU of Northern California. “If the federal government and federal courts abandon their duty to safeguard these rights, California voters believe the state must be ready to step in by adopting protections so that communities can challenge election systems that dilute their voting power.”

Table 1 The federal Voting Rights Act protects voters from discrimination and unequal access to the ballot. Parts of it have been rolled back by the Supreme Court. If it is rolled back further, would you support or oppose California lawmakers passing laws to recreate its protections in state law?			
	Support %	Oppose %	Neither/no opinion %
Total registered voters	63	19	11
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	83	6	10
Republicans	26	47	26
No party preference/other	64	16	19
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	64	22	14
Latino	59	17	24
Black/African American	77	14	9
Asian American/Pacific Islander	69	10	18
<u>Age</u>			
18-29 years old	67	12	21
30-39 years old	64	15	20
40-49 years old	61	19	20
50-64 years old	62	23	15
65 and older	63	23	12
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	69	14	15
San Diego County	63	25	12
Orange County	57	21	22
Inland Empire	53	21	26
Central Coast	65	18	18
Central Valley	53	26	21
San Francisco Bay Area	73	15	12
North Coast/Sierras	65	24	11

California voters also support at high levels additional reforms that California has passed, which President Trump has sought to eliminate. They support these policies even when informed that some of these reforms may delay completing the vote count. Voters were informed that “California gives all registered voters the opportunity to vote by mail as long as their ballots are postmarked by Election Day and received up to seven days after the election. Generally speaking, do you think offering voters this type of flexibility when voting by mail is a good or bad thing?” To this question, 74% of voters stated that the flexibility, i.e. accepting vote by mail ballots that arrive after election day as long as they are postmarked by election day, was a “good thing.” President Trump has signed an executive order to eliminate this grace period, which is now being challenged in court.

Support for this type of vote by mail flexibility was 70% or above for all races, genders, and income levels. Once again, support splits by political party, however. Democrats support the policy at 92%, while Republicans only do so at 41%.

Table 2 Voter protections in California beyond the Voting Rights Act			
	A good thing %	Unsure %	A bad thing %
California gives all registered voters the opportunity to vote by mail as long as their ballots are postmarked and received up to seven days after an election.	74	18	8
Recent changes in state election laws also allow eligible citizens who are not registered to vote to become a registered voter anytime up to and including Election Day.	71	19	11

When asked to evaluate tradeoffs, Californians consistently chose maximizing voter access. This was particularly salient in the wake of media complaints following the 2024 election, from inside California but also election watchers around the nation, about the length of California’s vote-counting process which slowed finalizing the seat count in the U.S. House of Representatives. In the wake of these complaints, the state legislature and House of Representatives have proposed reforms to speed up the count, potentially limiting some of the flexibility that California currently offers voters to fix problems with their ballot, vote by mail, and register to vote on Election Day.

Voters were provided the statement “Providing Californians with greater flexibility in when they can register to vote and how they can vote results in many more votes being left uncounted on Election Night, since the eligibility of these late voters needs to be verified. In some elections this can delay the final counting of votes for up to a month after an election.” They were then asked whether it was more important to change election laws to ensure a faster count, even if it would take away some of the flexibility California voters currently have, or to provide voters with maximum opportunities to register and vote “even if it takes a long time to count all the votes.”

Only 35% of voters responded that a faster vote count outweighs the increased access to voter registration and voting involved in these reforms. Support for speeding the vote count was lowest among Democrats (18%), Black voters (20%), Spanish-dominant Latinos (23%), and low-income voters. Republicans provided far greater support for speeding the vote count (68%) than did Democrats.

Table 3 Is it more important to provide voters with greater flexibility in registering and casting votes or to ensure that it does not take too long to count all the votes?			
	More important to count votes quickly %	More important for voters to have flexibility %	Not sure %
Total registered voters	35	55	10
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	18	72	10
Republicans	68	24	9
No party preference/other	33	56	11
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	37	54	8
Latino (all)	31	55	14
Latino (Spanish-dominant)	23	54	23
Black/African American	20	75	5
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	57	11
<u>Income</u>			
Less than \$20,000	24	61	15
\$20,000-\$39,999	28	57	15
\$40,000-\$59,999	36	54	10
\$60,000-\$99,999	37	54	9
\$100,000-\$199,999	36	56	8
\$200,000 or more	40	54	6

Moreover, 71% disagreed with changing the rules to speed the vote count if it means elections officials could not be confident they were counting every eligible vote. Trends for both issues looked similar across groups, with majorities of each racial, age, and regional group expressing support for broader voter access. Unsurprisingly, party identification correlated heavily with opinion on this question, yet even then a majority of Republicans (56%) expressed support for maximizing voter access even if it takes longer to finalize the count. Notably, younger citizens seemed to express support at twice the rate of older ones.

“These poll results continue to show strong support for democracy protection among a clear majority of Californians. At this moment in history when the President is determined to single-handedly rollback voting rights, the state of California can lead the way in standing up for the most basic fundamental right in our entire Constitution - the right to vote,” said Dr. Matt A. Barreto, faculty director of the UCLA Voting Rights Project. “Democracy can only work when voting is fully accessible and open to all American citizens. This poll confirms that California is ready to protect our right to the ballot box.”

Table 4 (Agree/disagree) Election rules should be changed to allow election officials to count ballots faster, even if that means they could no longer be sure that every single ballot from every eligible voter is counted.			
	Agree %	Neither/ No opinion %	Oppose %
Total registered voters	18	11	71
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	11	9	79
Republicans	30	15	56
No party preference/other	16	11	73
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	15	8	77
Latino	20	15	65
Black/African American	9	14	77
Asian American/Pacific Islander	20	13	67
<u>Age</u>			
18-29 years old	10	13	77
30-39 years old	12	13	74
40-49 years old	14	10	76
50-64 years old	23	12	65
65 and older	23	9	68

Voter support for flexibility in when and how voters cast their ballots was coupled with a degree of apprehension regarding the process of voting in person. Voters were asked, “reflecting on the current moment in the U.S., do you feel comfortable voting in person?” Only 54% said, “Yes, with no reservations.” Those numbers were even lower for Transgender/non-binary voters (28%), young voters (39%), female voters (46%), Asian American or Pacific Islander voters (46%), and Latino voters (46%). (Note: the sample size for Transgender/non-binary respondents is just 101, warranting caution in interpreting the results). Democrats were also much less likely (45%) than Republicans (71%) to say they have no reservations about voting in person. Although further research is necessary to understand the sources of many voters’ discomfort with in-person voting, the pattern of results raise the possibility that the present political moment has led some to have reservations about participating in the democratic process through in-person voting.

Table 5 Reflecting on the current moment in the U.S., do you feel comfortable voting in person?			
	Yes, with no reservations %	Yes, but with some reservations %	No, I have too many reservations %
Total registered voters	54	27	12
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	45	32	16
Republicans	71	17	6
No party preference/other	52	29	10
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	59	26	11
Latino	46	30	12
Black/African American	49	25	17
Asian American/Pacific Islander	46	32	13
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	62	24	7
Female	46	30	16
Transgender/non-binary (N=101)	28	42	23
<u>Age</u>			
18-29 years old	39	39	12
30-39 years old	46	33	13
40-49 years old	56	26	13
50-64 years old	60	24	9
65 and older	63	19	13

In keeping with the general pattern of support for flexibility and access to the voting process, Californians also support language access in elections, which has been a part of the VRA since 1975. When asked if “eligible voters who are limited-English speaking should have translated voting materials available to them in their preferred language”, 70% agreed. Additionally, Californians support concrete steps to make voting more inclusive. 68% of voters support making it possible for all language communities, regardless of nation of origin, to receive translated versions of voting materials and 67% support providing language communities that meet specific size thresholds at a neighborhood level with a translated votable ballot, instead of the current translated reference ballot (See IGS Poll Release 2025-06 for additional details on these questions). Both changes would go beyond the current VRA requirements as well as current state law.

Additionally, 71% of CA voters support same-day voter registration, which enables eligible voters to register and then vote on Election Day. Strong support for same-day registration exists across a variety of income, racial and education groups (see IGS Poll Release 2025-07 for additional details on this question).

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, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, June 2-6, 2025, among 6,474 Californians registered to vote. Funding for the poll was provided by the Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund.

The poll was conducted by distributing email and text message invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email and text invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the Institute and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey questionnaire was housed. Reminder emails and texts were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations. To accommodate non-English language voters, voters whose voting records indicated that they preferred to have their voting materials sent to them in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, or Korean were sent their email invitations in-language asking them to choose which language they preferred to complete the survey.

Samples of California registered voters were derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls and was provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc. (PDI), a leading supplier of registered voter lists. To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters' email addresses, cell phone numbers and all other personally identifiable information found on the 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 of registered voters to population characteristics of the registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state on a wide range of variables. More information about the survey methods used by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* can be found on the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

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 from the overall statewide registered voter sample have an estimated sampling error of about +/-2 points at the 95% confidence level.

Question Wording

The federal Voting Rights Act protects voters from discrimination and unequal access to the ballot. Parts of it have been rolled back by the Supreme Court. If it is rolled back further, would you support or oppose California lawmakers passing laws to recreate its protections in state law?

California gives all registered voters the opportunity to vote by mail as long as their ballots are postmarked by Election Day and received up to seven days after an election. Generally speaking, do you think offering voters this type of flexibility when voting by mail is a good thing or a bad thing?

Recent changes in state election laws also allow eligible citizens who are not registered to vote to become a registered voter any time up to and including Election Day. Generally speaking, do you think offering eligible citizens the opportunity to register to vote up to and including Election Day is a good thing or a bad thing?

Providing Californians with greater flexibility in when they can register to vote and how they can vote results in many more votes being left uncounted on Election Night, since the eligibility of these late voters needs to be verified. In some elections this can delay the final counting of votes for up to a month after an election. Given this tradeoff, which do you think is more important – Changing election laws to ensure a faster vote count even if this takes away some of the flexibility that Californians now have with regard to when they can register and vote, or Continue providing Californians with maximum opportunities to register and vote even if it takes a long time to count all the votes?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Election rules should be changed to allow election officials to count ballots faster, even if that means that they could no longer be sure that every single ballot from every eligible voter is counted.

Reflecting on the current moment in the U.S., do you feel comfortable voting in person?

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. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll*. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.