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Newsom job performance rating declines among state voters.

- *Very mixed voter views of the governor's taking a more prominent role in national politics* -

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

California voter opinions about the job Gavin Newsom is doing as governor have taken a negative turn. Throughout most of his tenure in office Governor Newsom has received positive job assessments from the state's voting public. Yet, the latest poll finds voter opinions changing with more Californians now disapproving (49%) than approving (44%). The fall-off in governor's approval ratings is broad-based and is particularly noteworthy among political moderates and No Party Preference voters, the state's two major swing voter blocs.

Newsom's recent actions in taking a much more active role in national Democratic politics appear to be related to his recent decline, as voters here hold decidedly mixed views about taking on this role at a time when California is facing increasing budgetary challenges and is dealing with a host of other pressing problems. When asked about this 45% of voters approve while 43% disapprove.

Republican voters are one-sided in opposing Newsom taking on this new role, with 85% disapproving. They are joined by the state's No Party Preference voters, who also disapprove 47% to 37%. By contrast, 70% Democrats favor Newsom's actions in this regard.

More voters approve than disapprove of two other recent actions taken by Governor Newsom. -- traveling to China to discuss how California and China can work together to address climate change and his appointment of Laphonza Butler to the U.S. Senate following the death of Dianne Feinstein. With regard to his recent trip to China, 89% voice an opinion and their reviews are generally positive, with 50% approving and 39% disapproving. Fewer voters (67%) can offer an opinion of Newsom's appointment of Butler to the U.S. Senate, but among those who do slightly more approve (37%) than disapprove (30%).

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted among 6,342 registered voters across the state October 24-30 in English and Spanish.

Observed IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler, "The dip in Newsom's approval suggests that many Californians are concerned with how things are going in the state, which may give the governor less leeway to fully engage on the national stage."

Trend of Newsom’s job ratings as governor

This is eleventh time the *Berkeley IGS Poll* has asked voters to assess the job Newsom is as governor since taking office in 2019, and it is the first in which a significantly larger proportion have disapproved than approved of his performance.

After surviving a recall attempt in September 2021, the governor’s job ratings improved the following year and he easily won re-election to a second term in November 2022. Yet, the latest poll finds voter opinions changing, with more Californians now disapproving (49%) than approving (44%) of Newsom’s performance as governor.

What’s also striking about voters’ latest assessments is that most of the changes are seen at the extremes, with the proportion strongly approving of Newsom’s performance declining from 25% to 18%, while those strongly disapproving climbing from 29% to 36%.

Table 1
Trend of the overall job performance of Governor Gavin Newsom
(among California registered voters)

	Approve (total) %	<i>Approve strongly %</i>	<i>Approve somewhat %</i>	Disapprove (total) %	<i>Disapprove somewhat %</i>	<i>Disapprove strongly %</i>
Late October 2023	44	18	26	49	13	36
February 2023	55	25	30	39	10	29
August 2022	53	20	33	42	13	29
February 2022	48	16	32	47	16	31
September 2021	50	20	30	42	11	31
July 2021	50	20	30	42	12	30
April 2021	52	21	31	43	13	30
January 2021	46	14	32	48	17	31
September 2020	64	25	39	36	13	23
September 2019	60	18	42	39	12	27
June 2019	57	15	42	42	17	25

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

Newsom’s recent job rating decline is broad-based spanning most major voter subgroups

A comparison of voters’ latest assessment of Newsom’s performance as governor to those obtained the last time the poll made an assessment last February, reveals that the decline is broad-based spanning virtually all major political and demographic subgroups of the voting population.

In addition, this includes significant declines among the governor’s Democratic voter base and is most prominent among two of the state’s swing voter blocs – political moderates and No Party Preference voters. In February more voters in both subgroups approved than disapproved of Newsom’s overall performance in office, whereas now they rate the governor’s performance negatively by similar five to three margins.

Younger voters have also turned against the governor, while voters ages 65 or older remain supportive.

	Late October 2023			February 2023		
	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %	Approve %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	44	49	7	55	39	6
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	66	25	9	82	12	6
Republicans	7	91	2	8	88	4
No party preference/other	37	54	9	49	43	8
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Strongly conservative	11	87	2	13	84	3
Somewhat conservative	14	82	4	20	76	4
Moderate	38	54	8	51	40	9
Somewhat liberal	71	19	10	82	13	5
Strongly liberal	72	18	10	86	11	3
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	47	43	10	62	30	8
San Diego County	42	50	8	47	46	7
Orange County	38	58	4	47	45	8
Inland Empire	37	56	7	52	45	3
Central Coast	49	42	9	55	38	7
Central Valley	33	60	7	40	55	5
San Francisco Bay Area	53	41	6	66	29	5
North Coast/Sierras	47	52	1	43	57	*
<u>Gender</u>						
Female	46	45	9	58	35	7
Male	41	54	5	52	44	4
<u>Age</u>						
18-29	35	45	20	50	35	15
30-39	38	52	10	54	40	6
40-49	43	52	5	55	42	3
50-64	44	55	1	56	39	5
65 or older	53	44	3	58	41	1
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	44	52	4	52	46	1
Latino	45	48	7	57	35	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	37	46	16	54	33	13
Black	57	38	5	71	21	8

Californians hold mixed views about Newsom taking an increasingly prominent role in national Democratic politics

California voters are about evenly divided when asked whether they favor or oppose Governor Newsom's recent actions in taking a more prominent role in national politics by appearing on national news broadcasts and going to events outside the state to criticize the Republican Party and its political leaders. Statewide 45% of voters favor his doing so, while 43% are opposed.

Views about this are highly partisan, with nearly nine in ten Republicans (85%) opposing Newsom taking on this new role, while just 7% in favor. They are joined by the state's No Party Preference voters who also oppose Newsom taking a more prominent partisan role in national Democratic politics 47% to 37%. By contrast, seven in ten of the state's Democrats (70%) favor Newsom's actions, while 19% are opposed.

Fewer than half of voters across most other major demographic subgroups support Newsom taking on this role, with the exception of the state's Black voters and voters ages 65 or older.

Table 3
Views about Governor Newsom taking on a more prominent role in national Democratic politics by appearing on national news broadcasts and going to events outside of the state to criticize the Republican Party and its political leaders.
(among California registered voters)

	Favor %	Oppose %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	45	43	12
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	70	19	11
Republicans	7	85	8
No party preference/other	37	47	16
<u>Gender</u>			
Female	47	39	14
Male	43	47	10
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	10	84	6
Somewhat conservative	15	75	10
Moderate	42	43	15
Somewhat liberal	72	15	13
Strongly liberal	75	15	10
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	44	34	22
30-39	42	43	15
40-49	44	43	13
50-64	43	49	8
65 or older	52	42	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	42	48	10
Latino	48	41	11
Asian/Pacific Islander	46	34	20
Black	59	27	14

Voter views of two other recent actions taken by the Governor

More voters approve than disapprove of two other recent actions taken by Governor Newsom. These include his traveling to China to discuss how California can China work together to address climate change issues, and his appointment of Laphanza Butler to the U.S. Senate following the death of Dianne Feinstein.

With regard to his trip to China, 89% offer an opinion and their reviews are generally positive, with 50% approving and 39% disapproving. Fewer voters (67%) offer an opinion of Newsom’s appointment of Butler to the U.S. Senate, but among those who do slightly more approve (37%) than disapprove (30%) of the appointment.

Table 4
Voter opinions with regard to two other recent actions taken by Newsom
(among California registered voters)

	Traveling to China to discuss how California and China can work together to address climate change issues	Appointing Laphonza Butler to the U.S. Senate following the death of Dianne Feinstein
	%	%
Approve	50	37
Approve strongly	24	18
Approve somewhat	26	19
Disapprove	39	30
Disapprove somewhat	11	8
Disapprove strongly	28	22
No opinion	11	33

Low awareness of the state’s \$6.4 billion mental health bond on the March primary ballot, but initial reactions are positive

Relatively few likely voters (15%) report having seen, read, or heard anything about the \$6.4 billion bond on mental health that was placed on the March 2024 election ballot by the state legislature. However, when they were read a summary of its major tenets, likely voters appear to be highly receptive of it. The proposed bond would pay for an estimated 10,000 treatment beds and other supportive housing facilities for persons with serious mental illnesses or who have serious substance abuse disorders. It also amends the state’s existing mental health service tax, approved by voters in 2004, that imposed a new tax on those with annual incomes of more than \$1 million.

After being told of its major elements, 60% of the likely voters surveyed say they would vote Yes on the ballot measure, while 17% are opposed, and 23% are undecided.

Early support for the bond is broad-based, with majorities in most major demographic subgroups saying they would vote yes. The exceptions are Republicans and conservatives who are more evenly divided, with about one in three remaining undecided.

Table 5
Initial voter opinions when read a description of Proposition 1, a \$6.4 billion
mental health bond on the March 2024 statewide election ballot
(among California likely voters)

	Would vote YES %	Would vote NO %	Undecided %
Total registered voters	60	17	23
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	76	6	18
Republicans	33	35	32
No party preference/other	58	17	25
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	33	35	32
Somewhat conservative	35	34	31
Moderate	62	14	24
Somewhat liberal	77	5	18
Strongly liberal	81	3	16
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	64	15	21
San Diego County	69	17	24
Orange County	46	25	29
Inland Empire	57	19	24
Central Coast	58	15	27
Central Valley	58	15	27
San Francisco Bay Area	65	13	22
North Coast/Sierras	50	29	21
<u>Gender</u>			
Female	63	11	26
Male	57	22	21
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	61	18	21
30-39	61	14	25
40-49	58	20	22
50-64	57	18	25
65 or older	62	15	23

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 October 24-30, 2023 among 6,342 California registered voters, of whom a weighted subsample of 4,506 were considered likely voters. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The poll 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 California registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in the state and were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls. The sample was stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents.

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. In addition, 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.

The sampling error associated with the survey results are difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and the post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings based on the overall registered voter sample are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the likely voter sample would have a sampling error of approximately +/- 2.5 percentage points.

Question wording

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Gavin Newsom is handling his job as Governor of California?

Do you approve or disapprove of Governor Newsom traveling to China to discuss how California and China can work together to address climate change?

Over the past year Governor Newsom has been increasing his national profile by appearing on national news broadcasts and going to events outside of the state to criticize the Republican Party and its political leaders. Do you favor or oppose Newsom taking a more prominent national role and acting as a spokesperson for the national Democratic Party?

Last month Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Laphonza Butler to the U.S. Senate, following the death of California Senator Dianne Feinstein. Do you approve or disapprove of Newsom's appointment of Butler to the U.S. Senate?

Have you seen, read, or heard anything about Proposition 1, a mental health bond measure that was placed on the March 2024 primary election ballot by the state legislature?

Proposition 1 is a \$6.4 billion bond to pay for an estimated 10,000 new treatment beds and other supportive housing facilities for persons with serious mental illnesses or have serious substance abuse disorders. It also amends the state's existing mental health services tax on persons with incomes over \$1 million. If you were voting today, how would you vote on Proposition 1?

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 listing of reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.