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California voters overwhelmingly prefer Biden to Trump in the November presidential election

Both Kamala Harris and Karen Bass receive favorable reviews as a potential Biden pick for Vice President among California Democrats

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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With less than 100 days remaining before the November 2020 presidential election, former Vice President Joe Biden has opened up a huge thirty-nine-point lead over President Donald Trump among likely voters in California. According to the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed online in English and Spanish last week, 67% of the state's likely voters now favor Biden, while just 28% are supporting Trump. If borne out on Election Day, Biden's lead is even greater than Hillary Clinton's historic 30-point victory over Trump in California in the 2016 presidential election.

While Trump continues to receive the strong backing of fellow Republicans and conservatives, majorities of voters in every major region of the state and across virtually all major demographic subgroups of the likely voter population are now backing Biden.

According to press reports, two Californians, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and Los Angeles Congresswomen Karen Bass, are on the short list of women that Biden is considering as his vice-presidential running mate. When Democratic voters in this survey were asked whether they favored or opposed Biden choosing either of these women to be his vice president, they express support for him picking either.

Professor Eric Schickler, co-director of the University of California, Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, which conducted the Poll, offered these observations. "Biden's overwhelming support across all racial groups is striking. He leads by at least a two-to-one margin among white voters, Latinos, Black voters and Asian Americans. In many states, white voters are closely divided and there are big differences in the views of President Trump across racial groups. Not so in California."

Trump's standing with the state's overall electorate has deteriorated over the past six months. Just 29% of registered voters now say they approve of the job Trump is doing as president,

while 71% disapprove. What's more, of those who disapprove, 63% disapprove strongly, up 6 percentage points from January.

The segments most responsible for the President's lower job assessments include Blacks, non-partisans and voters who are moderately conservative in politics. On a regional basis, the Poll also finds significant declines in Trump's job approval among voters in the Inland Empire, Central Valley and among Northern Californians living outside the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

There is also a direct relationship between voter appraisals of Trump and how they view two issues that are now dominating the news: the Black Lives Matter movement and the coronavirus. According to the Poll 65% of Californians hold a favorable view of the Black Lives Matter movement, and among these voters 97% disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president and 93% are backing Biden in the November election.

Similarly, the Poll finds that 67% of likely voters believe the health threat of the coronavirus is now getting more serious in their own local area, and among these voters greater than eight in ten disapprove of Trump's performance as president (87%) and are backing Biden in the presidential election (84%).

Finally, the Poll finds voters offering starkly different assessments when asked for their overall opinions of the two major party candidates for president. By a wide 71% to 28% margin, more Californians hold an unfavorable than favorable opinion of President Trump. By contrast, Biden is held in relatively high esteem, with 57% having a favorable opinion of the former Vice President and just 38% viewing him negatively.

These results come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed online in English and Spanish July 21-27, 2020 among 8,328 California registered voters, 6,756 of whom are considered likely to vote in the upcoming November 2020 presidential election.

Presidential preferences across major subgroups of the California electorate

Biden's huge thirty-nine percentage point advantage over Trump among Californians likely to vote in the November presidential election is very broad-based, with majorities of voters in all regions of the state and across virtually all major demographic subgroups of the likely voter population. Republican and conservative voters are the major exceptions, with 88% of Republican voters and 84% of those identifying as very conservative in politics backing the President's re-election.

The Poll estimates that the shape of the likely electorate in California this fall will clearly favor the Democrats, with 48% of those considered likely to vote being registered Democrats and just 26% registered Republicans. The survey also finds that 13% of the likely voters include those who are newly registered to vote since the last statewide general election. The preferences of these new voters mirror those of the overall electorate, with 67% backing Biden, 25% supporting Trump and 8% undecided.

Table 1
Presidential preferences between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden among Californians likely to vote in the November 2020 election

	Biden %	Trump %	Undecided %
Total likely voters	67	28	5
(.48) Democrat	95	2	3
(.26) Republican	8	88	4
(.22) No party preference	73	18	9
(.04) All other parties	64	23	13
(.11) Very conservative	13	84	3
(.17) Somewhat conservative	26	66	8
(.31) Moderate	69	23	8
(.22) Somewhat liberal	96	2	2
(.19) Very liberal	96	1	3
(.71) Coastal counties	70	25	5
(.29) Inland counties	58	36	6
(.25) Los Angeles County	71	24	5
(.09) San Diego County	64	31	5
(.08) Orange County	56	39	5
(.10) Inland Empire	59	37	4
(.05) Other Southern California	65	31	4
(.17) Central Valley	58	35	7
(.22) San Francisco Bay Area	78	17	5
(.04) Other Northern California	65	30	5
(.47) Male	63	31	6
(.53) Female	70	25	5
(.12) 18-29	73	20	7
(.16) 30-39	75	21	4
(.15) 40-49	68	27	5
(.28) 50-64	61	32	7
(.29) 65 or older	64	33	3
(.54) White non-Hispanic	66	31	3
(.23) Latino	63	30	7
(.13) Asian/Pacific Islander	72	21	7
(.07) Black	87	7	6
(.21) High school or less	61	32	7
(.32) Some college/trade school	60	36	4
(.29) College graduate	71	24	5
(.18) Post graduate work	79	17	4
(.13) Newly registered since 2018	67	25	8

Trump’s overall job performance rating is declining in California

Past Polls have shown that Californians’ overall opinion of Trump’s performance as president has remained remarkably stable over the first three years of his presidency. In six successive measures of Trump’s job performance conducted by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* between December 2017 and January 2020, the proportions of Californians approving of Trump’s performance have ranged narrowly between 30% and 33%, while those disapproving have stayed consistently in the 66% and 69% range.

However, the results from the latest Poll reveal some slippage in the President’s overall approval ratings. At present just 29% of the state’s registered voters say they approve of the job Trump is doing overall, while 71% disapprove. What’s more, of those who disapprove of Trump, 63% disapprove strongly, up 6 percentage points from January.

Table 2
Trend of Donald Trump’s job performance ratings as President
(among California registered voters)

	Late July 2020 %	January 2020 %	November 2019 %	September 2019 %	June 2019 %	April 2018 %	December 2017 %
Approve	<u>29</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>30</u>
Strongly	18	22	20	19	21	18	18
Somewhat	11	11	12	12	12	13	12
Disapprove	<u>71</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>66</u>
Somewhat	8	10	10	11	10	8	9
Strongly	63	57	58	58	57	59	57
No opinion	*	*	*	*	*	2	4

* Less than ½ of 1%

When comparing Trump’s current job ratings in California to the assessments he received in a January 2020 *Berkeley IGS Poll*, the deterioration in the President’s standing is primarily due to declines in his job approval marks from the following voter subgroups:

- *Blacks* (-13), from 24% approval in January to 11% now
- *Somewhat conservative in politics* (-11), from 76% in January to 65% now
- *Northern Californians outside the Bay Area* (-9), from 40% in January to 31% now
- *Inland Empire voters* (-8), from 43% in January to 35% now
- *Central Valley voters* (-7), from 44% in January to 37% now
- *Non-partisans** (-7), from 29% in January to 22% now

* includes all voters not registered as either Democrats or Republicans

Appraisals of Trump are strongly related to voter views of the Black Lives Matter movement and their perceptions of the seriousness of the coronavirus

There is a direct relationship between voter appraisals of the President with two issues that are now dominating the news: the Black Lives Matter movement and health threat posed by the coronavirus.

The Poll finds that 65% of likely voters in California have a favorable opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement, while 30% view it unfavorably. Among the two-thirds majority who hold positive views of the Black Lives Matter movement nearly all (96%) disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president and 93% are backing Biden for president. By contrast, among the 30% of likely voters who hold an unfavorable opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement 85% approve of the President’s performance and 83% are backing his reelection.

Table 3
How likely voters in California view the Black Lives Matter movement and its relationship to job appraisals of the President Trump and voting preferences in the November presidential election

	Overall opinion of Black Lives Matter movement		
	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
	%	%	%
Total likely voters	65	30	5
Trump job performance as president	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Approve strongly	2	65	20
Approve somewhat	2	20	19
Disapprove somewhat	4	4	9
Disapprove strongly	92	11	52
Voting preference for president			
Biden	93	11	54
Trump	3	83	31
Undecided	4	6	15

Similarly, there is a strong relationship between voter views about the seriousness of the health threat posed by the coronavirus and their opinions of the President. The Poll finds that two in three likely voters (67%) believe that the health threat posed by the virus is getting more serious in their own local area, while 21% believe it is staying about the same and 12% see the threat as getting less serious.

Among the two-thirds majority who view the health threat from the virus as becoming more serious 87% disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president and 84% are backing Biden in the presidential election. Voters who view the health threat as remaining the same are evenly divided in their appraisals of Trump’s performance as president and only narrowly support his re-election. By contrast, among the 12% of voters who feel the health threat posed by the virus is becoming less serious in their area, 89% approve of Trump’s overall performance in office and back his re-election 87% to 10%.

Table 4
How likely voters in California view the seriousness of the health threat posed by the coronavirus in their area and its relationship to job appraisals of President Trump and voting preferences in the November presidential election

	<u>Health threat from coronavirus in your area</u>		
	Getting more serious %	Remaining about the same %	Getting less serious %
Total likely voters	67	21	12
Trump job performance as president	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Approve strongly	8	35	77
Approve somewhat	5	16	12
Disapprove somewhat	4	5	2
Disapprove strongly	83	44	9
Voting preference for president			
Biden	84	43	10
Trump	11	50	87
Undecided	5	7	3

Californians hold starkly different views of the two major party presidential candidates

When asked whether they hold a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Trump overall, seven in ten Californians (70%) view the President unfavorably, while just 28% report having a favorable opinion of him. On the other hand, California voter views of Biden are generally positive, with 56% viewing him favorably and 40% unfavorably.

Opinions of the presidential candidates remain highly partisan, with Democrats viewing Biden positively 79% to 7% and Trump negatively 93% to 6%. Republican voters hold opposite opinions, and give Trump an 84% to 16% positive assessment, while viewing Biden negatively 87% to 20%.

The opinions of non-partisan voters are much closer to those held by Democrats, with nearly eight in ten holding a negative opinion of the President overall, while a majority views Biden positively.

Table 5
Image ratings of Donald Trump and Joe Biden among
Californians likely to vote in the November 2020 presidential election

	Total likely voters %	Democrats %	Republicans %	No Party Preference %	Other parties %
Donald Trump (R)					
Favorable	<u>28</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>22</u>
Strongly	<u>18</u>	2	60	9	9
Somewhat	<u>10</u>	4	24	10	13
Unfavorable	<u>70</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>76</u>
Somewhat	<u>5</u>	3	7	7	7
Strongly	<u>65</u>	90	9	72	69
No opinion	<u>2</u>	1	*	2	2
Joe Biden (D)					
Favorable	<u>56</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>55</u>
Strongly	<u>21</u>	33	4	15	13
Somewhat	<u>35</u>	46	6	43	42
Unfavorable	<u>40</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>40</u>
Somewhat	<u>14</u>	12	15	15	17
Strongly	<u>26</u>	5	72	20	23
No opinion	<u>4</u>	4	3	7	5

*(R) denotes Republican (D) denotes Democrat * less than 1/2 of 1%*

At the end of the long 2016 presidential election campaign many voters across the country reported holding unfavorable views of both of that year's presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Yet polls taken at the time found that most of these voters resolved their conflict by supporting Trump over Clinton, and it was one of the main reasons he was elected president.

Results from the current survey, however, find that in California this is not likely to be repeated this year. According to the Poll 15% of Californians hold an unfavorable opinion of both of presidential candidates and among these voters Biden is preferred over Trump five to one, 71% to 14%.

The state's Democrats hold favorable views of Californians Kamala Harris and Karen Bass as potential vice-presidential running mates for Joe Biden

According to press reports, two Californians, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and Los Angeles Congresswomen Karen Bass, are on the short list of women that Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is considering as his vice-presidential running mate. When likely Democratic voters are asked whether they favored or opposed Biden choosing either of these women to be his vice president, both receive very positive marks.

Of the two, Harris is the better known of the potential nominees, with 88% of California Democrats offering an opinion of her as Biden's vice-presidential pick, and 68% in favor and 20% opposed. Yet, even though fewer Democrats are able to offer an opinion of Bass' selection

as a potential Biden vice-presidential running mate (56%), she is very positively received among those who do, with 46% in favor and 10% opposed.

Table 6
State Democratic voter opinions about Joe Biden choosing Californians
Kamala Harris or Karen Bass as his vice-presidential running mate

	Kamala Harris %	Karen Bass %
Favor	<u>68</u>	<u>46</u>
Favor strongly	34	14
Favor somewhat	34	32
Oppose	<u>20</u>	<u>10</u>
Oppose somewhat	13	8
Oppose strongly	7	2
No opinion	12	44

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 July 21-27, 2020 among 8,328 California registered voters, 6,756 of whom were considered likely to vote in the November 2020 presidential election.

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. Likely voters were identified based on a voter’s stated interest in and intention to vote in the upcoming presidential election and factoring in their history of voting in past elections.

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 or from the sample of likely voters in the November general election 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

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President?

If the presidential election were held today and the candidates were (Republican Donald Trump) and (Democrat Joe Biden) who would you vote for? (**ORDERING OF NAMES ROTATED**)

Generally speaking, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of (Donald Trump) (Joe Biden)? (**ORDERING OF NAMES ROTATED**)

A number of news reports have included two California women, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and Congresswoman Karen Bass, on the list of persons whom likely Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is considering as his vice-presidential running mate. Do you favor or oppose Biden choosing (Senator Kamala Harris) (Congresswoman Karen Bass) as his vice-presidential running mate on the Democratic Party ticket for the November presidential election? (**ORDERING OF NAMES ROTATED**)

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>.