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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7wx193w5>

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### Publication Date

2019-06-13



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Release #2019-02

Thursday, June 13, 2019

***California's Democratic Presidential Primary Race A Wide Open Affair.  
Biden holds slim lead; Kamala Harris currently running fourth in her home state.***

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Likely voters in California's pivotal March 3, 2020 Democratic primary currently are dividing their preferences across five main presidential contenders. Former Vice President Joe Biden holds a slim four-point advantage at 22%, followed by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren at 18%, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (17%), California U.S. Senator Kamala Harris (13%) and South Bend Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg (10%). No other candidate receives more than 3%, and 11% are undecided.

The closeness of the race is further demonstrated when voters' first and second choice preferences are combined. In this setting, Warren is chosen by 35%, Biden and Harris each receives 34%, and Sanders 29%. Buttigieg is further back at 18%.

A major factor contributing to the preference standings at this point in the race relates to voter familiarity with the candidates. Approximately nine in ten likely voters can offer an opinion of Biden, Warren, Sanders and Harris, with large majorities viewing each favorably. Somewhat fewer voters, about six in ten, have an opinion of Buttigieg and former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke, while two in three can rate New Jersey Senator Cory Booker. Fewer than half are able to do so for each of eleven other Democratic candidates included in the poll.

Biden is attracting his greatest support among the voters age 50 or older and among moderate or conservative voters within the likely Democratic primary electorate. He also holds leads in areas of Southern California outside of Los Angeles County. Warren is the current favorite of the state's progressive voters, while Sanders leads among voters under the age of 30. Support for Harris is evenly distributed across the state's major subgroups.

While the poll finds likely Democratic primary voters supporting each of nine proposed changes to federal government law, they give highest priority to moving immediately to expand background checks to cover all sales of firearms, increase taxes on the wealthy, increase the pay of K-12 teachers nationwide, reform immigration laws so that

undocumented immigrants can stay and apply for citizenship, and enact the Green New Deal to transition the U.S. to renewable and zero-emissions energy sources.

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted June 4-10 among 4,435 of the state’s registered voters in English and Spanish, of whom 2,131 are considered likely to vote in the state’s March 3 Democratic primary for president.

**California’s Democratic presidential primary a wide open affair**

At present, likely voters in California are dividing their preferences across five main candidates in next March’s Democratic presidential primary election. Biden receives 22% support, followed by Warren at 18% and Sanders at 17%. Harris, California’s home state U.S. Senator, is at 13%, while Buttigieg is the choice of 10%. No other candidate receives more than 3%, and 11% are undecided.

When voters’ first and second choice preferences are combined, Warren is the choice of 35%, Biden and Harris receive 34% each, 29% select Sanders, while 18% choose Buttigieg. Even in this setting, each of the other candidates is in single digits.

**Table 1**  
**Preferences in California’s March 2020 Democratic primary for president**  
**(among likely Democratic primary voters in California)**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> choices (combined)</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Joe Biden	22	12	34
Elizabeth Warren	18	17	35
Bernie Sanders	17	12	29
Kamala Harris	13	21	34
Pete Buttigieg	10	8	18
Beto O’Rourke	3	5	8
Cory Booker	1	3	4
Andrew Yang	1	1	2
Amy Klobucher	1	1	2
Julian Castro	1	1	2
Eric Swalwell	*	*	1
Kirsten Gillibrand	*	1	1
Jay Inslee	*	1	1
John Hickenlooper	*	*	1
Marianne Williamson	*	*	*
Steve Bullock	*	*	*
Tim Ryan	*	*	*
John Delaney	*	*	*
Undecided	11	16	--

\* less than ½ of 1%

### **Preferences vary across subgroups of the likely Democratic primary electorate**

Support for the leading candidates varies across major segments of the state's likely Democratic primary electorate.

For example, Biden holds large leads over his Democratic rivals among voters age 50 or older and among Democratic primary voters who describe themselves as moderate or conservative in politics. Geographically, Biden also runs strongest among likely Democratic primary voters in areas of Southern California outside of Los Angeles County.

By contrast, Warren holds a significant lead among progressive voters, capturing the support of one in three of those describing themselves as very liberal in politics. She also leads the field among Democratic primary voters age 30-39.

Sanders does best among voters in the likely Democratic primary electorate under age 30, and is narrowly preferred over Biden among Latinos.

The profile of Harris's supporters is fairly consistent across the state's major political and demographic subgroups of the primary electorate, with no single voter segment standing out.

**Table 2**  
**1st choice preferences in March 2020 Democratic primary for president**  
**across major subgroups (among likely Democratic primary voters in California)**

	<u>Biden</u>	<u>Warren</u>	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>Harris</u>	<u>Buttigieg</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Party registration</b>							
(.81)* Democrats	22	19	16	13	9	10	11
(.19) No party preference	23	14	20	14	13	7	10
<b>Political ideology</b>							
(.31) Very liberal	12	32	21	15	8	5	7
(.36) Somewhat liberal	19	18	17	13	13	8	12
(.33) Moderate/conservative	36	5	13	12	9	11	14
<b>Region</b>							
(.30) Los Angeles County	21	18	21	13	13	7	7
(.15) Orange/San Diego	24	14	16	14	10	8	14
(.12) Other Southern CA	29	13	12	11	11	13	11
(.14) Central Valley	22	18	17	16	5	8	14
(.26) San Francisco Bay Area	21	23	14	13	10	7	12
(.03) Other Northern CA**	18	18	24	11	6	10	13
<b>Gender</b>							
(.43) Male	24	14	22	12	12	8	8
(.57) Female	21	21	14	15	8	8	13
<b>Age</b>							
(.12) 18-29	9	19	39	13	4	6	10
(.15) 30-39	13	29	18	14	9	8	9
(.15) 40-49	23	19	21	12	9	6	10
(.27) 50-64	28	13	11	14	12	9	13
(.31) 65 or older	27	16	11	13	12	9	12
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>							
(.58) White non-Hispanic	21	19	12	15	15	8	4
(.25) Latino	25	10	32	9	9	10	5
(.07) Asian American	23	21	16	10	6	8	16
(.06) African American**	34	32	7	14	14	7	2

\* denotes its relative share of the overall likely Democratic presidential primary electorate

\*\* small sample base

**The leading Democratic contenders are each well known and viewed quite favorably**

A main factor contributing to the early preference advantages of Biden, Warren, Sanders and Harris is that each is currently well-known to voters. About nine in ten of the state’s likely Democratic primary voters is able to offer an opinion of each and majorities view them in a very favorable light. Both Harris and Warren score highest in overall positive assessments, achieving net favorable to unfavorable ratios of +59. Biden, Sanders and Buttigieg also receive very positive net image scores of +39, +40 and +42, respectively.

The net favorable image ratings given to Booker (+34) and O’Rourke (+26) are also very respectable.

By contrast, more than half of the state’s likely Democratic primary electorate can not offer an opinion of each of the other presidential candidates included in the poll.

**Table 3**  
**Image ratings of the Democratic presidential candidates**  
**(among likely Democratic primary voters in California)**

	<b>Favorable</b> <b>%</b>	<b>Unfav- orable</b> <b>%</b>	<b>No opinion</b> <b>%</b>	<b>Net favorable</b> <b>%</b>
Kamala Harris	74	15	11	+59
Elizabeth Warren	73	14	13	+59
Bernie Sanders	67	27	6	+40
Joe Biden	67	28	5	+39
Pete Buttigieg	52	10	38	+42
Cory Booker	47	13	40	+34
Beto O’Rourke	47	21	32	+26
Kristen Gillibrand	29	20	51	+9
Amy Klobucher	27	15	58	+12
Julian Castro	26	9	65	+17
Eric Swalwell	19	9	72	+10
Jay Inslee	13	9	78	+4
Andrew Yang	12	12	76	0
John Hickenlooper	10	15	75	-5
Tim Ryan	6	11	83	-5
Steve Bullock	6	7	87	-1
Marianne Williamson	5	14	81	-9
John Delaney	4	11	85	-7

## **Candidate characteristics considered to be advantageous and disadvantageous**

Likely Democratic primary voters were also asked whether they felt each of seven characteristics was an advantage or disadvantage for a candidate running for president. The characteristics that voters consider most advantageous are:

- has decades of political experience (88% advantage vs. 11% disadvantage)
- under the age of 50 (76% advantage vs. 22% disadvantage)
- a woman (71% advantage vs. 28% disadvantage)
- a person of color (67% advantage vs. 31% disadvantage)

By contrast, voters are about evenly split on another candidate characteristic, and two others are viewed as being more negative than positive characteristics. These include:

- *a gay man* (47% advantage vs. 51% disadvantage)
- *a political outsider* (38% advantage vs. 61% disadvantage)
- *over the age of 70* (16% advantage vs. 83% disadvantage) \*

*Note: Differences between 100% and sum of percentages for each item equal proportions with no opinion.*

These results would appear to cut both ways for two of the leading Democratic contenders, Biden and Sanders. Both have many decades of political experience, but they are also the oldest candidates in the Democratic field at 77 and 78, respectively. Similarly, while Warren appears to benefit from her gender, she will soon be turning 70 and this too could become a disadvantage for her candidacy.

Harris's gender and her racial background would appear to benefit her candidacy, as she is an American of mixed Indian and Jamaican descent. Buttigieg who is 37, and O'Rourke at 46, would appear to benefit from their youth. However, since Buttigieg is gay, this according to the voters polled could potentially weigh down his election chances.

## **Likely voter priorities with regard to changing federal government laws and policies**

The likely Democratic primary electorate was also asked their opinions about nine different proposals aimed at changing federal government laws and policies. In each case voters were asked whether the next president should move immediately to adopt this policy, take steps in this direction, or not adopt the policy at all.

Of the nine proposals measured, majorities of likely Democratic primary voters rate five as things the next president should immediately move to adopt. These include:

- *passing new laws to expand background checks to cover all sales of firearms* (88% immediately adopt, 10% move in this direction, 2% don't adopt)
- *increasing taxes on the wealthy* (72% immediately adopt, 24% move in this direction, 4% don't adopt)
- *increasing the pay of K-12 teachers nationwide* (72% immediately adopt, 26% move in this direction, 2% don't adopt)
- *reforming immigration laws so that undocumented immigrants who've lived in the U.S. for a number of years can stay and apply for citizenship* (64% immediately adopt, 32% move in this direction, 3% don't adopt)
- *Green New Deal, making sweeping changes to transition the U.S. to renewable and zero-emissions energy sources in transportation, manufacturing, building and farming* (61% immediately adopt, 36% move in this direction, 3% don't adopt)

Between 40% and 48% of the state's likely Democratic electorate also support the next president immediately moving to adopt four other proposals, although for each about as many favor only taking steps to move the policy in this direction. These include:

- *Medicare for All, shifting to a government-run health care system* (48% immediately adopt, 43% move in this direction, 9% don't adopt)
- *reducing the length of federal prison sentences for low-level federal offenses* (46% immediately adopt, 46% move in this direction, 8% don't adopt)
- *offering free tuition to all qualified students to attend a four-year public college* (44% immediately adopt, 45% move in this direction, 11% don't adopt)
- *legalizing recreational marijuana nationwide* (40% immediately adopt, 43% move in this direction, 17% don't adopt)



## **Proportions of voters attaching high priority to changing federal policies across subgroups of the Democratic electorate**

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While large proportions of likely Democratic primary voters support each of the nine proposed changes to federal government laws and policies included in the poll, some segments of the likely electorate attach a higher priority to moving immediately forward to enact these than others.

For example, majorities of voters who identify themselves as very liberal in politics or who are under age 30 favor immediately moving forward with all nine proposals. Greater than three in four say this with regard to background checks for gun purchase, increasing taxes on the wealthy, increasing teacher pay nationwide, reforming the nation's immigration laws and enacting the Green New Deal.

By contrast, moderate and more conservative segments of the Democratic primary electorate attach less urgency to immediately moving forward with most of the proposals. However, even among these voters, majorities support doing so in three areas -- requiring background checks for all gun purchases, increasing taxes on the wealthy, and increasing the pay of teachers nationwide.

On nearly all of the issues polled, likely voters who are supporting Warren and Sanders, who include more progressives and younger voters, attached a greater sense of urgency to enacting each policy, with majorities in favor of the next president moving forward immediately with each proposal.

By contrast, voters who are backing Biden, and who include more moderate and older voters, attach somewhat less urgency to five of the nine proposals, although majorities of his backers do favor immediately moving forward with background checks for all gun purchases, increasing taxes on the wealthy, increasing teacher pay, and reforming the nation's immigration laws to enable undocumented residents living in the U.S. for many years a path to citizenship.

**Table 4**  
**Proportions of likely voters who favor immediately moving forward to adopt each proposal across subgroups of the likely California Democratic primary electorate**

	Background checks for all gun purchases %	Increase taxes on wealthy %	Increase teacher pay %	Reform immi- gration laws %	Enact Green New Deal %	Enact Medi- care for All %	Reduced prison for low-level offenses %	Free public college tuition %	Legal ize mari- juana %
<b>Total likely voters</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Political ideology</b>									
Very liberal	94	85	81	78	81	69	66	56	51
Somewhat liberal	90	70	76	66	58	44	46	39	44
Moderate/conservative	82	61	59	50	46	32	28	38	25
<b>Age</b>									
18-29	83	76	80	74	77	66	65	61	58
30-39	86	74	80	65	69	58	57	49	51
40-49	82	69	72	56	60	50	45	46	36
50-64	90	71	72	60	56	50	39	46	36
65 or older	92	70	65	68	55	34	41	32	33
<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice for president</b>									
Biden	89	63	66	60	47	35	32	39	27
Warren	95	89	76	72	78	63	63	48	45
Sanders	86	75	79	69	77	69	56	63	53
Harris	92	74	77	71	57	40	47	41	49

## **Questions Asked**

Below are the names of the Democrats who have qualified so far to participate in the first presidential debate. For each please tell me whether your opinion of that person is favorable, unfavorable or whether you don't know enough about them to say? *(SEE RELEASE FOR CANDIDATES LISTED. DISPLAY ORDER RANDOMIZED)*

If the California Democratic primary for president were being held today and the ballot listed these candidates, who would be your first choice? Who would be your second choice? *(SEE RELEASE FOR CANDIDATES LISTED. DISPLAY ORDER RANDOMIZED)*

For each of the following characteristics that a candidate might have, please tell me if you would consider this quality to be a major advantage, a minor advantage, a minor disadvantage or a major disadvantage? *(SEE RELEASE FOR CHARACTERISTICS LISTED. DISPLAY ORDER RANDOMIZED)*

The Democratic presidential candidates have been making a number of proposals that call for making changes to federal government laws and policies. For each of the proposals listed below, please indicate whether you feel the next president should move immediately to adopt this policy, take steps in this direction, or not adopt this policy? *(SEE RELEASE FOR POLICIES LISTED. DISPLAY ORDER RANDOMIZED)*

## **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 June 4-10, 2019 among 4,435 registered voters statewide, 2,131 of whom are considered likely voters in California's Democratic presidential primary election next March.

The survey was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Once the questionnaire and email invitations had been finalized, they were translated into the Spanish and reviewed for cultural appropriateness. Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by IGS and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters over a seven-day period. An opt out link was provided at the bottom of each invitation for voters not wishing to participate or not wanting to receive future emails from IGS about the survey.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California. The email addresses of voters were derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls. The overall sample of registered voters with email addresses was stratified in an attempt to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population by age, gender and race/ethnicity.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information were purged from the data file and replaced with a

unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. At the conclusion of the data processing phase, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample to population characteristics of the state's overall registered voter population. Likely voters were then identified based on each voter's stated intention to vote in next year's primary 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 the results from the likely Democratic presidential primary electorate are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results based on subgroups of this population would be subject to larger margins of sampling error.

Detailed tabulations reporting the results to each question included in this report can be found at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/igs-poll/berkeley-igs-poll>.

#### **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 (UC) system's flagship Berkeley campus, it is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. The director of the Institute of Governmental Studies is Lisa Garcia Bedolla.

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://igs.berkeley.edu/igs-poll/berkeley-igs-poll>.