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Author

DiCamillo, Mark

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Institute of Governmental Studies
126 Moses Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Tel: 510-642-6835
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

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Many Californians are concerned about the integrity of this year's presidential election

A record number of Californians say they'll be voting using a mail ballot, with many more Biden supporters than Trump supporters reporting this.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
(c) 415-602-5594

The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that many California voters express concerns about the integrity of this year's presidential election. When asked how likely they feel it is that the presidential election will be held in a way that is fair and open, while 58% say it is very or somewhat likely that it will be, an unusually large four in ten (42%) feel this is not likely.

Greater than eight in ten Californians (82%) are worried that many Americans will not respect the outcome of this year's presidential election. Concerns about this span voters of all political stripes, including more than eight in ten of voters supporting former Vice President Joe Biden, as well as those backing President Donald Trump's re-election.

IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler commented, "It was not that long ago that voters in both parties had high confidence in the integrity of the election process. The loss of that confidence is a worrisome sign for democratic stability going forward."

The poll also finds a relatively large proportion of Californians (41%) expressing concerns about whether they can trust the U.S. Postal Service to deliver the nation's mail ballots safely and on time. Voters backing the President's re-election express far greater skepticism of the postal service's ability to perform this task than Biden's supporters.

This is significant since the poll finds that about eight in ten California voters (78%) say they intend to use a mail ballot to vote in this year's election, a record high. Given their greater distrust in the postal service, far fewer Californians who are backing President Trump's re-election (50%) than voters supporting Biden (90%) plan to use a mail ballot to vote.

These results come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed online in English and Spanish September 9-15, 2020 among 7,198 California registered voters, 5,942 of whom were considered likely to vote in the November 2020 presidential election.

Many in California are concerned about the integrity of this year's election

An unusually large proportion of the California electorate express concerns about the integrity of this year's presidential election. When asked how likely it is that this year's presidential election will be conducted in a way that is fair and open, while 58% say it is very or somewhat likely, a relatively large proportion (42%) feel it is not likely.

Voters under age 30 express the least confidence about this year's election, with 56% believing it is not likely that the process will be fair and open. On the other hand, among seniors age 65 or older two in three (65%) say it is likely that the elections will be fair and open and just 35% think it will not.

Voters at both ends of the political spectrum -- those who say they are very liberal in politics as well as those who are very conservative -- also tend to express greater concerns about the fairness of the presidential election than other voters. Among very liberal voters 56% think it is not likely that the elections will be fair and open, as do 50% of those describing themselves as very conservative in politics. By contrast, only about one in three political moderates (34%) believe it is not likely that the elections will be fair and open, while 66% think they will be.

The views of voters backing Biden's candidacy for president and those supporting President Trump's re-election hold similar views about this, with 41% of Biden's supporters and 44% of Trump's backers expressing concerns about the integrity of this year's presidential election process.

Table 1
Californians' views about whether this year's presidential election
will be conducted in a way that is fair and open
(among likely voters in California)

	Very/somewhat likely %	Not too/not at all likely %
Total likely voters	58	42
Presidential preference		
Biden supporters	59	41
Trump supporters	55	44
Others/undecided	52	48
Political ideology		
Very liberal	44	56
Somewhat liberal	59	41
Moderate	66	34
Somewhat conservative	62	37
Very conservative	50	50
Age		
18-29	44	56
30-39	49	51
40-49	58	42
50-64	61	39
65 or older	65	35

(In this and succeeding tables the differences between 100% and the sum of the percentages for each question equal the proportion of voters with no opinion)

More than eight in ten Californians worry that many Americans will not respect the outcome of this year's presidential election

California voters are worried that many Americans will not respect the outcome of this year's presidential election. Greater than eight in ten voters statewide (82%) feel this way, while just 13% are not worried.

This concern is shared by voters of all political stripes and includes 81% of the supporters of Biden's bid for the presidency as well as 85% of voters backing President Trump's re-election.

Table 2
Agree/disagree: “I worry that many Americans will not respect the outcome of this year’s presidential election”
(among likely voters in California)

	Agree %	Disagree %
Total likely voters	82	13
Presidential preference		
Biden supporters	81	14
Trump supporters	85	11
Others/undecided	77	10
Political ideology		
Very liberal	82	12
Somewhat liberal	83	14
Moderate	81	14
Somewhat conservative	84	11
Very conservative	81	11

Four in ten Californians do not trust the U.S. Postal Service to deliver the nation’s mail ballots safely and on time

Many Californians also express concerns about whether the U.S. Postal Service will deliver the nation’s mail ballots safely and on time in the election. When asked whether they agree or disagreed with the statement, “I trust that election ballots cast by mail across the country will be delivered safely and on time by the U.S. Postal Service” 58% agree, but about four in ten (41%) disagree.

Californians backing President Trump’s re-election are far less likely than voters supporting Biden to trust the postal service to deliver the nation’s mail ballot safely and on time. Among Trump supporters 65% don’t trust the postal service’s ability to do this, while just 31% of Biden’s backers feel this way.

Younger voters also express less trust in the postal service than the state’s older voters.

Table 3		
Agree/disagree: “I trust that the election ballots cast by mail across the country will be delivered safely and on time by the U.S. Postal Service”		
(among likely voters in California)		
	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
Total likely voters	58	41
Presidential preference		
Biden supporters	68	31
Trump supporters	33	65
Others/undecided	59	36
Age		
18-29	44	56
30-39	51	47
40-49	57	42
50-64	60	38
65 or older	64	35

Nearly eight in ten Californians plan to vote using a mail ballot

Nearly eight in ten of California likely voters (78%) say they intend to use a mail ballot when voting in this year’s presidential election, while 22% say they will plan to vote in person at a polling place. If realized, this would represent a record proportion of Californians voting by mail, surpassing the 72% of voters who cast a mail ballot in the March 2020 presidential primary and 65% who did so in the 2018 general election.

Of the 78% intending to use a mail ballot in this election, about half (41%) say they plan to put their ballot in the mail, while 37% will drop it off at a polling place or drop box. Of the 22% who intend to vote in person, most (17%) say they will do so on Election Day, while 5% expect to go to a polling center to vote in advance of Election Day.

Many more of the Californians who are supporting Biden’s bid for the presidency than those backing President Trump’s re-election will be using a mail ballot when voting. According to the survey, nine in ten of Biden’s supporters (90%) say they plan to use a mail ballot to vote in this year’s election, compared to only 50% of Trump’s supporters.

Table 4
Voting method Californians say they will use when voting
in this year’s presidential election
(among likely voters in California)

	Total likely voters %	Biden supporters %	Trump supporters %	Support others/ undecided %
<u>Mail ballot voters</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>75</u>
Will use mail ballot and mail it in	41	47	26	44
Will use mail ballot and drop it off	37	43	24	31
<u>In person voters</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>25</u>
Will vote in person on Election Day	17	7	42	19
Will vote in person at polling center before Election Day	5	3	8	6

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, 5,942 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

California will be mailing out election ballots to all registered voters in advance of this year's election, although voters in most jurisdictions will still have the option of going to the polls or to a voting center to cast their ballot. If you do vote in this year's election, how will you most likely cast your vote?

I will complete a vote-by-mail ballot and mail it in

I will complete a vote-by-mail ballot and drop it off

I will vote in person at the polls on Election Day

I will vote in person at a voting center before Election Day

How likely do you think it is that the current presidential election will be conducted in a way that is fair and open?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **(ORDERING OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED)**

- (1) I trust that the election ballots cast by mail across the country will be delivered safely and on time by the U.S. Postal Service
- (2) I worry that many Americans will not respect the outcome of this year's presidential election

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>.