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Turnout in the state's general election likely to be high, but wide racial and age gaps persist between those most likely to vote and those less certain.

In a statewide survey of 5,095 registered California voters completed last week by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, greater than three in four California voters (78%) indicate that they are highly likely to vote in the state's upcoming November general election.

However, the survey reveals substantial differences across voter segments regarding Californians' voting intentions in November. For example, the proportion of white voters saying they are highly likely to vote (89%) is much larger than the comparable proportions of Black voters (66%), Latino voters (70%), or Asian American voters (62%). In addition, fewer younger voters (60%) report being highly likely to vote than voters ages 65 or older (89%).

Among the factors motivating California voters to participate, *"to vote in this year's presidential election"* (70%) tops the list. Other reasons voters cite for voting in November include: *"to stand up for the issues that I support"* (66%), *"it's an important civic duty"* (63%), *"to protect and preserve our democracy"* (60%), *"to have a say in how my tax dollars are spent"* (58%), *"to vote on state and local ballot propositions"* (58%), and *"to influence the direction of the government"* (55%).

Those who say they are less likely to participate also refer to the presidential election, but as a factor *inhibiting* them from voting. The number-one reason these voters say they are less certain to vote in the November general election is *"I don't like the candidates for president,"* cited by 40%. Nearly as many also say it's because *"special interests and big money are controlling things"* (36%).

"Knowing what is motivating California voters to participate in elections, and to what degree, is key to understanding our democratic systems," said John Kim, President and CEO of Catalyst California. "This state has made strides in recent years to make voting more accessible. Yet the racial disparities that persist are a call to action for advocates and state officials to work together to address continuing structural impediments."

Californians will be facing a long ballot this year, with many important decisions having long lasting impacts. In addition to presidential, congressional and local races and ballot measures, more than a dozen state ballot propositions and referendums are expected. According to the poll, just over half of the state's electorate (55%) say that even when confronted with long ballots they usually vote on all the issues and candidate races listed on the ballot. This compares to 28% who

say they usually vote on most election contests, while 14% vote on only some or a few. The top reason cited for not always voting on all the issues is “*I don’t have enough information to make informed decisions on all of them*” (73%).

“An informed electorate is a powerful electorate,” said Christian Arana, Vice President of Civic Power and Policy at the Latino Community Foundation. “With a multitude of elected positions and propositions on this year’s ballot, investments in voter education are tantamount to ensuring that voters across the state, especially among racial/ethnic groups, understand the significance of their votes and the influence they hold in directing policy in the state.”

Observed IGS co-director Eric Schickler, “The results suggest that overall engagement with the election is reasonably high in California, but the big gaps across racial and ethnic subgroups and age cohorts underscore that interest in this election is far from universal, and that dissatisfaction with the two major party candidates may be a substantial obstacle in mobilizing turnout to the level seen in 2020.”

78% of California voters are highly likely to vote in the November general election

When California voters are asked to assess how likely they are to vote in the state’s November general election on a ten-point scale, where 10 denotes “definitely will vote” and 1 “definitely will not vote,” greater than three in four voters (78%) give a rating of 9 or 10 indicating a very high likelihood of voting.

The voter subgroups who appear most inclined to vote are seniors ages 65 or older (89%), white voters (89%), Republicans (87%), homeowners (86%), and voters with a postgraduate degree (85%). By contrast, the subgroups where smaller proportions indicate a high likelihood of voting are voters not affiliated with either major political party (67%), Black voters (66%), young voters between 18 and 29 years old (60%), and voters with no more than a high school education (66%). Also expressing a lower likelihood of participating are voters from the state’s fast growing Asian American and Pacific Islander segment, especially Chinese and Korean American voters, only about half of whom (54% and 49%, respectively) indicate they are highly likely to vote in the election. Naturalized citizens (67%) are also less likely to indicate a high likelihood of voting than native born citizens (82%)

Table 1
Self-described likelihood of voting in the November 2024 general election
(among California registered voters)

	Highly likely to vote (9 or 10) %	May vote, but less certain (4-8) %	Least likely to vote (1-3) %	Not sure %
Total statewide	78	16	4	2
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	81	14	4	1
Republican	87	10	3	-
No Party Preference/other	67	22	6	5
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	60	29	7	4
30-39	75	16	6	2
40-49	77	17	4	4
50-64	84	9	4	2
65 or older	89	6	3	1
<u>Gender</u>				
Female	80	13	4	3
Male	77	16	5	2
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White	90	7	2	2
Latino/Hispanic	70	19	8	3
Black/African American	66	21	6	6
Asian American/Pacific Islander (<i>net</i>)	<u>62</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>
Chinese American	54	34	13	-
Vietnamese American	65	24	8	3
Korean American	49	36	11	4
Other AAPI	71	21	5	3
<u>Education</u>				
High school graduate or less	66	21	7	6
Some college/trade school	79	14	5	2
College graduate (<i>BA</i>)	81	14	3	2
Post graduate work	85	12	3	4
<u>Tenure</u>				
Homeowner	86	10	3	1
Renter/other	71	19	6	4
<u>Nativity</u>				
Native born citizens	82	11	4	2
Naturalized citizens	67	25	6	2

Voting for president the top reason highly likely voters give for wanting to vote this year, but many other factors are cited

Voters who indicate a high likelihood of voting in the November general election offer a wide array of reasons when asked to identify their main reasons for voting. Most frequently cited are: “to vote in this year’s presidential election” (70%), “to stand up for the issues that I support” (66%), “it’s an important civic duty” (63%), and “to protect and preserve our democracy” (60%). In addition, majorities cite these other reasons: “to have a say in how my tax dollars are spent” (58%), “to vote on state and local ballot propositions” (58%), and “to influence the direction of the government” (55%).

Other reasons for voting chosen by less than half of these voters include: “to affect the outcome of the election” (49%), “to bring about change” (48%), “to support the interests of my community” (47%) and “to vote for candidate elections other than president” (41%).

For white voters (80%) and those with higher levels of education (78%) and income (79%), seniors (76%), and Asian American and Pacific Islander voters (65), the presidential election is the most often cited reason for voting this year. For Latino (55%), Black (70%) and young voters (71%), the top reason cited for voting is “to stand up for the issues that I support.” Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say they are voting “to protect and preserve our democracy” this year (66% to 51%), while Republicans are more likely than Democrats to choose the reason “to have a say in how my tax dollars are spent” (69% to 55%). Younger voters ages 18-29 are the least likely age group to cite “to protect and preserve our democracy” as a reason for voting (46%), while seniors are the most likely (71%)

Not liking the presidential candidates an inhibiting factor to those less likely to vote

Among those who are less likely to vote in the state’s upcoming November general election, “I don’t like the candidates for president” (40%) is the most often cited reason. Nearly as many also say it’s because “special interests and big money are controlling things” (36%). Other reasons cited with some frequency are “I’m not that well informed about the issues and the candidates” (28%), “my vote doesn’t matter much” (25%), “election results can be manipulated and can’t always be trusted” (18%), “I’m very busy and may not find the time to vote” (13%), and “I’m not that interested” (12%). Democrats and liberal voters are more likely than Republicans and conservatives to cite “I don’t like the candidates for president” as a reason they might not participate in this year’s election.

Voters who have not voted in recent elections are most likely to cite as a reason for not voting, “I’m not that well informed about the issues and the candidates” (43%). By contrast, just 12% of those who have voted regularly in past statewide elections but are not highly likely to vote in this election cite this as a reason they might not vote. Instead, the main reason they offer for being less certain about voting this November is that, “I don’t like the candidates for president” (55%).

“With many lower-propensity voters responding that they believe special interests and big money control outcomes, some saying their vote doesn’t matter and others saying they can’t trust election results, it’s clear that when it come to our politics, belief is low and cynicism is high,” said Jonathan Mehta Stein, Executive Director of California Common Cause. “The State, philanthropy, and civil society all need to invest in solutions that will put regular people in the driver’s seat of our democracy and give them a reason to believe and participate.”

Table 2

Reasons why voters not highly likely to vote give for possibly not voting this year	%
I don't like the candidates for president	40
Special interests and big money are controlling things	36
I'm not that well informed about the issues and the candidates	28
My vote doesn't matter much	25
Election results can be manipulated and can't always be trusted	18
I'm very busy and may not find the time to vote	13
I'm not that interested	12
Ballots in California are too long and complicated	9
Voting is inconvenient for me and takes too much time	7
I'm confused about how to vote	5
Voting is more difficult for people with disabilities	3
Language problems make it difficult for me to vote	2
None of these	6

Factors that might increase the chances of voting by those not highly likely to vote

Voters who report not being highly likely to vote this year were also asked to choose which of twelve factors might increase their chances of participating in the election. Four things are cited most frequently: “if I felt that ballot measures or candidates would advance my interests” (30%), “if I had access to an unbiased and trusted source of news about the election” (29%), “if I felt there were differences between the candidates on the issues I care about” (27%), and “if election results were more trustworthy” (27%).

Voters ages 18-29 are four times more likely than seniors ages 65 or older to say, “getting more information about how and when to vote,” might increase their chances of participating (17% to 4%, respectively). Younger voters are also far more likely than seniors to cite two factors might increase their likelihood of voting, “making voting more convenient for me” (27% to 1%, respectively), and “getting assistance from a person or group that I trust to help me better understand the issues and the candidates” (21% to 3%, respectively).

Latino voters are the group mostly likely to cite “if election results were more trustworthy” (30%) as a potential way to increase their chances of voting. Black voters most frequently cite, “if I had access to an unbiased and trusted source of news about the election” (32%). White voters (35%) and Asian American voters (39%) are most likely to say that “if I felt that the ballot measures or candidates would advance my interests” could increase their chances of voting.

Table 3

Factors that might increase the chances of voting by those not highly likely to vote	%
If I felt that ballot measures or candidates would advance my interests	30
If I had access to an unbiased and trusted source of news about the election	29
If I felt there were differences between the candidates on the issues I care about	27
If election results were more trustworthy	27
Making voting more convenient for me	16
If I felt that ballot measures or candidates were putting my interests at risk	16
Getting assistance from a person or group that I trust to help me better understand the issues and the candidates	15
Getting more information about how and when to vote	10
If voting materials were available to me in my preferred language	3
Getting transportation assistance in returning my ballot	2
If voting was made more accessible for people with disabilities	2
If I received language assistance when voting	1
None of these	19

Most voters usually vote on all the issues and election contests listed on the ballot regardless of its length

Californians often face long election ballots that include many different issues and election contests to vote on. This year is no different, as the legislature is still considering more issues to send to voters in November. Even so, most survey respondents (55%) say they usually vote on all of the issues and election contests listed on the ballot. However, 42% say they don't vote on all of the issues, with 28% reporting that they vote on most of them, while 14% only vote on some or a few of them. This has implications for down-ballot contests.

Republicans (62%) are somewhat more likely than Democrats (55%) and No Party Preference voters (48%) to say they usually vote on all the issues and election contests listed on the ballot even when ballots are long. White voters (61%) are more likely than Latino (49%), Black (48%) and Asian American (43%) voters to say they usually vote on everything on the ballot.

Table 4
When ballots are long, how many of the issues and election contests do you usually vote?
(among voters whose voting record indicates voting participation in recent elections)

	All of them %	Most of them %	Some/ Only a few %	No opinion %
Total statewide	55	28	14	3
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	55	30	11	4
Republican	62	23	13	2
No Party Preference/other	48	28	20	4
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White	61	28	9	2
Latino/Hispanic	49	27	18	6
Black/African American	48	21	28	3
Asian American/Pacific Islander (<i>net</i>)	<u>43</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>6</u>
Chinese American	43	29	21	7
Vietnamese American	39	34	22	5
Korean American	37	40	23	--
Other AAPI	46	29	20	5

A lack of information about down-ballot races is the main factor for not always voting on all the issues and election contests on the ballot

When voters who say they don't usually vote on all the issues or election contests included on the ballot are asked why, a large majority say, "I don't have enough information to make informed decisions on all of them" (73%). Next most frequently cited is that "it's not easy to get unbiased information about each election contest" (42%).

Other factors are cited much less frequently and include: "there isn't enough information in the voter guide" (27%), "I don't always get the endorsements or recommendations on how to vote in all the issues from sources I can trust" (24%), "I don't care enough about them all" (18%), "it takes too long" (12%), and "don't believe voters should be deciding all of these issues" (10%).

Voters 18-29 are most likely to cite informational issues as a reason for not voting on all contests on the ballot. For instance, 80% of these younger voters say they "don't have enough information to make informed decisions on all of them," 52% say "it's not easy to get unbiased information about each election contest" and 38% say "there isn't enough information in the voter guide."

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 on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. The poll was administered online May 29-June 4, 2024, in five languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. A total of 5,095 registered voters throughout California were included in the poll.

The poll was conducted 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 voters with a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. To accommodate non-English language voters, voters whose voting record indicated that they preferred to have their voting materials sent to them in a Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean were sent their email invitations in-language asking them to choose which language they preferred to complete the survey. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations. Voter email addresses were derived from public information contained on the state’s voter registration rolls and were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, each voter’s email address and all other personally identifiable information included on their voting record were purged from the data file and replaced with an anonymous identification number during data processing. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample to population characteristics of the overall registered vote statewide, and where possible, within each of the state’s major regions.

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 based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

Not everyone has the time or interest to vote in every election. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means you will “definitely not vote” and 10 means you “definitely will vote,” how likely is it that you will vote in this year’s November general election. Choose any number between 1 and 10 for your answer.

(IF HIGHLY LIKELY TO VOTE) Below are some of the reasons why people vote in elections in California. Please indicate which of these are reasons why you are likely to vote in this year’s November general election? Please select as many as apply. **(ORDER RANDOMIZED)**

(IF NOT HIGHLY LIKELY TO VOTE) Below are some of the reasons why people don’t always vote in elections in California. Please indicate which of these are reasons why you may not vote in this year’s November general election? Please select as many as apply. **(ORDER RANDOMIZED)**

(IF NOT HIGHLY LIKELY TO VOTE) Would any of the following things increase your chances of voting in this year’s November election? Please select as many as apply. **(ORDER RANDOMIZED)**

When voting in elections that include many different issues and election contests for voters to vote on, do you usually vote on all of the issues and election contests on the ballot, most of them, some of them, or only a few of them?

(IF NOT VOTING ON ALL OF THEM) Which of the following are reasons why you don’t always vote on all of the issues or election contests on the ballot? Please select as many as apply. **(ORDER RANDOMIZED)**

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 G. Cristina Mora.

IGS conducted periodic surveys of California public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll seeks to provide broad measures of contemporary public opinion and generate data for scholarly analysis. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of the poll. For a complete listing of reports issued by the poll, please visit <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

About the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund works to advance equality and justice so every person can thrive and live life with dignity and hope. Rooted in the Bay Area, it focuses on a set of issues that include building a fairer, more representative democracy in California; advancing more humane approaches to immigration and expanding opportunities for immigrant youth and families; and making higher education more affordable for lower-income California students. It has awarded over \$695 million in grants since its founding in 1953.