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Leaving California: Half of State's Voters Have Been Considering This
Republicans and Conservatives Three Times as likely as Democrats and Liberals to be Giving Serious Consideration to Leaving the State

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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Half of the state's registered voters admit to having given serious (24%) or some (28%) consideration recently to leaving California.

Only modest differences are seen across most major regional or demographic subgroups of the state. However, there are significant partisan and ideological differences when examining the opinions of voters giving serious consideration to moving out of state, as three times as Republicans and conservatives as Democrats and liberals report this.

The high cost of housing (71%) is the most common reason given by voters for wanting to leave California. However, high taxes (58%) and the state's political culture (46%) are also prominently mentioned, particularly by Republicans and conservatives.

Another question in the poll updated a 50-year time series asking Californians how they would describe the state as a place to live. The results of the latest poll are somewhat more upbeat than recent past measures. Half of the state's registered voters (50%) now describe California as "one of the best places" to live, up from 43% who felt this way in 2013, the last time this question was posed. However, here too, partisanship and political ideology play a prominent role, with Democrats and liberals nearly three times as likely as Republicans and conservatives to describe California as one of the best places to live.

These findings come from a *Berkeley IGS Poll*, conducted online in English and Spanish among a random sample of 4,527 of the state's registered voters September 13 - 18.

Half of the state's voters say they've given consideration recently to leaving California

Fully 52% of the state's registered voters admit to having given serious (24%) or some (28%) consideration recently to moving out of the state.

Large partisan and ideological differences are observed among voters who report giving serious consideration to leaving the state, with Republicans and conservatives about three times as likely to report this than Democrats and liberals.

Table 1
Are you giving any consideration to moving out of California?
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Yes, giving serious consideration</u> %	<u>Yes, giving some consideration</u> %	<u>Considering moving, but within California</u> %	<u>Not considering a move</u> %
Total registered voters	24	28	10	38
Party registration				
Democrats	14	24	13	48
Republicans	40	31	3	26
No Party Preference/other	23	32	11	34
Political ideology				
Very liberal	16	27	10	47
Somewhat liberal	11	27	15	47
Moderate	24	29	11	36
Somewhat conservative	35	31	6	28
Very conservative	46	28	2	24
Region				
Los Angeles County	23	26	12	38
San Diego/Orange counties	23	27	7	43
Other Southern California	25	31	10	34
Central Valley	27	29	10	34
San Francisco Bay Area	20	30	10	40
Other Northern California	26	22	13	39
Gender				
Male	26	28	10	36
Female	21	29	10	40
Age				
18-29	23	29	20	28
30-39	25	34	8	23
40-49	28	33	8	31
50-64	26	27	8	39
65 or older	17	23	8	52
Race/ethnicity				
White non-Hispanic	26	30	6	37
Latino	19	24	15	42
Asian American	17	27	12	44
African American	27	31	17	25

High cost of housing is most commonly cited reason for wanting to leave the state, but “high taxes” the “state’s political culture” are also factors

The most common reason given by voters for leaving the state among those who are considering doing so relates to the “high cost of housing,” cited by 71%. However, “high taxes” (58%) and the “state’s political culture” (46%) are also mentioned prominently, especially among Republicans and conservative voters.

Concerns about the high cost of housing span virtually every demographic, regional and political subgroup of the state’s registered voters as a potential reason for leaving California. There are some generation differences in opinions about this, with voters under age 40 more likely to offer this as a reason, and seniors age 65 or older less apt to say this.

However, there are much larger subgroup differences in the proportions citing high taxes and the state’s political culture as reasons for possibly leaving the state. For example, Republican and conservatives cite these as their top two reasons for wanting to leave, eclipsing even the high cost of housing.

By contrast, far fewer Democrats or liberals mention the state’s political culture as a reason for wanting to leave the state, and their mention of high taxes is only about half that of Republican and conservative voters.

Although significant proportions of voters across all major regions cite high taxes and the state’s political culture as reasons for leaving the state, they are reported more by

There are other demographic and generational differences in the proportions citing high taxes and the state’s political culture as a reason for leaving. Both are mentioned much more frequently by men than women and by voters age 40 or older than younger voters. Voters in the Central Valley and Southern Californians living outside of Los Angeles County are also more apt to cite these as factors than voters living elsewhere.

African American voters who are considering moving out of state are also more likely than other voters to cite the high cost of housing and less apt to mention the state’s political culture as reasons for leaving.

Table 2
Main reasons given for considering moving out of California
(among registered voters giving serious or some consideration to moving out of state)

	<u>High cost of housing</u> %	<u>High taxes</u> %	<u>State's political culture</u> %	<u>Over- crowding</u> %	<u>Family consider- ations</u> %	<u>Lack of job oppor- tunities</u> %	<u>Other reasons</u> %
Total considering a move	71	58	47	38	14	13	26
Party registration							
Democrats	77	36	11	33	13	14	24
Republicans	63	77	85	45	12	12	26
No Party Preference/other	72	60	43	35	16	13	29
Political ideology							
Very liberal	77	20	3	22	13	13	28
Somewhat liberal	74	38	9	38	14	9	29
Moderate	73	67	50	43	15	17	26
Somewhat conservative	66	76	77	39	16	11	24
Very conservative	61	76	84	42	8	13	24
Region							
Los Angeles County	69	51	34	39	16	14	28
San Diego/Orange counties	64	62	52	44	11	10	22
Other Southern California	75	68	59	38	12	12	27
Central Valley	67	66	58	31	16	18	30
San Francisco Bay Area	79	50	37	40	12	11	20
Other Northern California	63	51	50	25	17	13	36
Gender							
Male	71	63	54	38	14	12	27
Female	70	53	40	37	13	14	26
Age							
18-29	82	48	48	37	14	25	30
30-39	80	47	47	40	17	15	21
40-49	73	64	64	31	11	11	25
50-64	70	64	64	44	14	10	29
65 or older	50	64	63	34	13	7	26
Race/ethnicity							
White non-Hispanic	67	59	51	39	14	11	27
Latino	76	56	40	38	11	15	21
Asian American	76	56	39	34	16	13	35
African American	83	57	27	35	9	22	30

NOTE: reasons given add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions.

Voter assessments of California as a place to live 1967 – 2019

In its latest survey the *Berkeley IGS Poll* updated a 50-year time series initiated by non-partisan *The Field Poll** asking voters to rate California as a place to live. In the latest poll half of the state’s registered voters (50%) describe California as “one of the best places” to live, another 25% consider the state “nice, but not outstanding”, 11% say it is “about average,” while just 14% believe it is a “rather poor place” to live.

These voter appraisals are more positive than those given by voters in each of the three most recent previous measures over the past ten years.

On the other hand, voters’ current appraisals are not nearly as positive as they were once were. During the period 1967-1985, seven in ten Californians or more consistently described the state as one of the best places to live and just 2% felt it was a rather poor place to live.

Table 3
Trend of voter opinions of California as a place to live
(among California registered voters)

	<u>One of the best places</u> %	<u>Nice, but not outstanding</u> %	<u>About average</u> %	<u>Rather poor place</u> %
2019	50	25	11	14
2013	43	26	21	8
2011	39	28	20	10
2009	41	25	22	9
2007	50	29	16	4
2003	47	32	14	7
2002	49	33	12	5
2001	40	29	20	10
2000	54	25	17	4
1997	46	29	18	6
1994	44	28	18	8
1992	33	29	22	15
1991	51	25	17	6
1989	58	27	11	3
1985	78	14	6	2
1981	70	20	9	2
1977	75	13	9	2
1967	73	15	10	2

** Past measures based on statewide surveys conducted by The Field Poll, as reported in Release #2457, published December 12, 2013 by Field Research Corporation.*

Partisan differences in voter assessments of the state are widening

While there are some regional and demographic subgroup variations in opinions about the state as a place to live, the largest by far relate to voters' party registration and political ideology.

Democrats and political liberals than Republicans and conservatives to describe the state as one of the best places to live. Two in three registered Democrats (67%) say this, while among Republicans just 23% offer this assessment. Similarly, while 74% of voters describing themselves as very liberal in politics describes the state as one of the best places, just 19% of those who are very conservative thinks of California this way.

In 2013 similar partisan and ideological differences characterized voter descriptions of the state as a place to live. However, over the past six years these differences have widened further.

For example, since 2013 the proportion of Democrats describing the state as one of the best places to live has increased fourteen points from 53% to 67%. Similar increases are seen among voters describing themselves as liberal in politics.

By contrast, the proportion of Republicans who feel California is one of the best places to live has declined six points over the past six years from 29% in 2013 to just 23%, while among very conservative voters there has been a twelve-point decline from 31% in 2013 to 19% at present.

Table 4		
Proportions rating California as “one of the best places” to live across major subgroups of the state’s registered voter population -- 2019 vs. 2013		
	2019	2013
	%	%
Total registered voters	50	43
Party registration		
Democrats	67	53
Republicans	23	29
No Party Preference/other	48	43
Political ideology		
Very liberal	74	66
Somewhat liberal	69	50
Moderate	44	41
Somewhat conservative	29	33
Very conservative	19	31
Region		
Los Angeles County	51	43
San Diego/Orange counties	54	40
Other Southern California	42	40
Central Valley	44	33
San Francisco Bay Area	58	54
Other Northern California	50	47
Gender		
Male	47	42
Female	53	44
Age		
18-29	51	49
30-39	51	42
40-49	47	35
50-64	51	38
65 or older	51	51
Race/ethnicity		
White non-Hispanic	50	41
Latino	47	42
Asian American	55	NA
African American	62	NA

NA: Subgroup results not available due to small sample sizes

Two in three consider California a land of opportunity, although views about this are also politically based

Two in three of the state's registered voters (65%) say they consider California a land of opportunity for people likely themselves as their family, while 35% do not. However, views about this are also highly partisan and ideological, with about twice as many Democrats and liberals as Republicans and conservatives saying this.

The variations across all major regional and demographic subgroups are not nearly as prominent, with majorities of voters in each major segment describing California as a land of opportunity. However, the size of the majority varies some by region and age.

For example, while seven in ten voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (70%) and Los Angeles County (70%) think California is a land of opportunity, this declines to 55% among voters in the Central Valley.

Similarly, while 72% of voters under age 30 believe California is a land of opportunity, fewer than two in three say this across each of the four other age segments.

Ethnic voters, especially African Americans and Latinos, are more likely than white non-Hispanics to term California a land of opportunity. Greater than eight in ten African Americans (81%) and three in four Latinos (74%) feel this way, compared to 59% among whites.

Table 5		
Do you consider California a land of opportunity for people like you and your family?		
(among California registered voters)		
	Yes	No
	%	%
Total registered voters	65	35
Party registration		
Democrats	80	20
Republicans	42	58
No Party Preference/other	62	37
Political ideology		
Very liberal	77	23
Somewhat liberal	81	18
Moderate	62	38
Somewhat conservative	48	52
Very conservative	39	61
Region		
Los Angeles County	70	30
San Diego/Orange counties	65	35
Other Southern California	60	39
Central Valley	55	44
San Francisco Bay Area	70	30
Other Northern California	57	43
Gender		
Male	64	36
Female	66	34
Age		
18-29	72	28
30-39	65	35
40-49	61	39
50-64	62	37
65 or older	65	35
Race/ethnicity		
White non-Hispanic	59	41
Latino	74	26
Asian American	81	19
African American	67	33

Questions Asked

Some people have a great attachment to California, while others don't like it at all. Taking everything into account, how would you describe California as a place to live?

- (1) One of the best places to live
- (2) Nice but not an outstanding place
- (3) About an average place to live
- (4) Rather poor place to live

Do you consider California a land of opportunity for people like you and your family?

Have you given any consideration recently to moving out of California?

- (1) Yes, am giving serious consideration to moving out of California
- (2) Yes, am giving some consideration to moving out of California
- (3) No, but am considering moving to another location within California
- (4) No, am not considered a move

What is the main reason why you have considered moving out of the state? You may select more than one reason, if you wish. (ORDERING OF REASONS DISPLAYED WAS RANDOMIZED)

- (1) High cost of housing
- (2) High taxes
- (3) Lack of job opportunities
- (4) Family considerations
- (5) Overcrowding/too many people
- (6) The state's political culture
- (7) Other reasons

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 13-18, 2019 among 4,527 registered voters statewide.

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 the data collection 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.

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 overall registered voter sample are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/- 2 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 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, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. The co-directors of the Institute of Governmental Studies 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://igs.berkeley.edu/igs-poll/berkeley-igs-poll>.