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California Voters Express Concerns about Disparities in Turnout.

Many voters who say they are less likely to vote express interest in having more trusted news sources

A *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted on behalf of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund among 5,962 California registered voters finds that those who report being less likely to vote in the upcoming June primary election offer a variety of reasons for not participating. Mentioned most frequently are a lack of information about the issues and candidates (38%), concerns that moneyed special interests have too much influence (35%), and the belief that their vote does not matter (28%).

When low propensity voters are asked what might increase their chances of voting, the most common response was the need for unbiased and trusted news sources (41%). Many also state that they would be more likely to vote if they felt that candidates or ballot measures would advance their interests (31%), if there were differences between the candidates on the issues they cared about (30%), and if they felt election results were more trustworthy (29%).

The poll also found widespread voter concerns about disparities in voter participation across major subgroups of the electorate. For example, when asked whether “younger voters voting at much lower rates than older voters” was a potential threat to a representative democracy in California, 56% felt this was a major concern. A similar 55% stated that “Latino, Black, Asian American, and American Indian voters voting at much lower rates than white voters” was a major concern.

IGS co-Director Eric Schickler commented, “The survey shows that many potential voters are not engaged and appear to have an appetite for trusted news sources that will inform them about the candidates’ differences and how they might (or might not) serve these voters’ interests.”

Voters Who Report Being Less Likely to Vote Cite Lack of Information and Distrust of Political System Most Often as Reasons for Not Voting

When registered voters who report being less likely to vote in the June primary were asked why they may not plan to vote, the most common response (38%) was a lack of information about the issues and candidates. Another 35% cited the belief that “special interests and big money are controlling things,” while 28% stated their “vote doesn’t matter much,” 26% claimed that “election results can be manipulated and can’t always be trusted,” and 20% noted that they “don’t like the candidates for governor.”

Young voters – a group which historically displays among the lowest turnout rates in the state – were especially likely to cite concerns about information as a reason for not voting in the June primary (47%); a large share of young voters also cite the heavy influence of special interest groups (33%), being too busy (31%), and the belief that their vote does not matter much (27%).

<i>Table 1</i>		
Which of these are reasons you may not vote in this year’s primary election? (asked of those who report being less likely to vote in the June primary)		
	All Voters %	18-29 Year Olds %
I’m not all that well informed about the issues and the candidates	38	47
Special interests and big money are controlling things	35	33
My vote doesn’t matter much	28	27
Election results can be manipulated and can’t always be trusted	26	23
I don’t like the candidates for governor	20	18
I’m very busy and may not find time to vote	19	31
I’m not that interested	14	18
Voting is inconvenient for me and takes too much time	8	11
Ballots in California are too long and complicated	7	6
I’m confused about how to vote	6	6
Other mentions (3% or less each)	5	2
None of these	10	8

(Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Registered voters who stated they were not very likely to vote were also asked what might increase their chances of voting in the June primary. The most common response was “access to unbiased and trusted news about the election” (41%). Another 20% also noted that “assistance to better understand the issues and candidates” would make them more likely to vote. A substantial share also cited skepticism about the candidates; 31% felt that “ballot measures or candidates that advance my interests” and 30% noted that “differences between the candidates on issues that I care about” would make them more likely to vote. Another 29% said they would be more likely to vote if “election results

were more trustworthy.” Many potential non-voters also stated that the accessibility of the voting process itself was a factor: these registrants cited “making voting more convenient” (18%), and “more information about how to vote” (17%).

Young voters were especially likely to cite access to unbiased and trusted election news as a change that would make them more likely to vote (48%), along with the belief that ballot measures or candidates would advance their interests (36%).

"Too many voters, including nearly half of young people (48%), don't plan to vote because they do not have access to unbiased and trustworthy information," said Darius Kemp, executive director of California Common Cause. "This demonstrates that we must continue to fight dis/misinformation through strengthening local media and independent journalists as trusted sources of information. We must demand rules that address online and AI-generated misinformation to prevent voter mistrust in our elections."

<i>Table 2</i>		
Would any of the following increase your chances of voting? (asked of those who report being less likely to vote in the June primary)		
	All Voters %	18-29 Year Olds %
If I had access to an unbiased and trusted source of election news	41	48
If I felt ballot measures or candidates would advance my interests	31	36
If I felt candidates differed on issues I care about	30	31
If election results were more trustworthy	29	24
Getting assistance from person/group to help understand issues/candidates	20	23
If I felt ballot measures/candidates put my interests at risk	20	18
Making voting more convenient for me	18	25
Getting more information on how to vote and when to vote	13	21
Other mentions (3% or less)	9	11

(Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Voters Express High Levels of Concern about Unequal Voting Participation Across Major Subgroups of the Electorate

The poll provided voters with a list of “potential threats to having a representative democracy in California.” Fully 56% of respondents believe that “younger voters voting at much lower rates than older voters” is a major concern in this regard, while 24% stated it is a minor concern, and 15% that it is not a concern at all. Young people aged 18-29 (66%) were especially likely to cite this as a major concern (as compared to just 51% of those 65 and older). Black voters (65%), Asian Americans (62%), and Latinos (61%) were also more likely to cite this as a major concern. Democrats (70%) are far more likely than Republicans (30%) to believe low turnout among young people is a major concern. A 56% majority of NPP/Other voters believe this turnout disparity was a major concern to them.

“Californians are recognizing that lower turnout among young people is not just a turnout gap. It is a threat to democracy,” said Saa’un Bell, executive vice president at Power California. “We need to turn this threat into an opportunity to strengthen and build democratic systems and practices with young voters in mind. A system that works for young people strengthens democracy as a whole.”

Table 3

To what extent does “Younger voters voting at much lower rates than older voters” concern you as being a potential threat to having a representative democracy in California?

	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern
Total registered voters	56%	24%	15%
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	70	21	5
Republicans	30	29	34
No party preference/other	56	23	12
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	52	28	15
Latino	61	19	14
Black/African American	65	17	12
Asian American/Pacific Isle.	62	21	12
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	66	22	8
30-39	57	21	14
40-49	57	20	17
50-64	52	26	17
65 or older	51	27	17

(Differences between 100% and the sum of percentages for each row equal proportions with no opinion.)

A similar share of voters – 55% -- believe that “Latino, Black, Asian American, and American Indian voters voting at much lower rates than white voters” is a major concern. Another 20% believe this is a minor concern, while just 18% say it is not a concern. Once

again, the partisan disparity is especially sharp: 73% of Democrats and 55% of NPP/Other voters believe low turnout by people of color is a major concern, as compared to 24% of Republicans. There are also differences across racial groups, though a majority of each nonetheless view racial turnout disparities as a major concern: 51% of whites, 63% of Latinos, 71% of Black, and 58% of Asian American voters believe that the lower turnout of people of color is a major concern.

"Black people know what it is to face discrimination in the wake of ongoing threats. Most Black voters (71%) are concerned about what it means for a representative democracy that voters of color are voting at lower rates than white voters," said Kristin Nimmers, Policy and Campaigns Manager for the California Black Power Network. "It's no surprise that IGS polling also shows that Black voters overwhelmingly (87%) support efforts to strengthen democracy because we know decisive action must be taken to protect all voters from disenfranchisement."

Table 4

To what extent does “Latino, Black, Asian American, and American Indian voters voting at much lower rates than white voters” concern you as being a potential threat to having a representative democracy in California?

	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern
Total registered voters	55%	20%	18%
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	73	17	5
Republicans	24	24	43
No party preference/other	55	21	16
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	51	22	20
Latino	63	14	15
Black/African American	71	16	10
Asian American/Pacific Isle	58	22	13
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	64	18	12
30-39	59	16	15
40-49	56	18	19
50-64	51	21	21
65 or older	50	23	20

(Differences between 100% and the sum of percentages for each row equal proportions with no opinion.)

Disparities Across Subgroups About Comfort Levels Voting in Person in Elections

The poll also asked voters how comfortable they felt voting in person in elections. While 65% state that they have no reservations about voting in person, 23% express some reservations, and 7% state that they have too many reservations to vote in person. Younger voters, women and voters of color were somewhat more likely than other voters to express reservations about voting in person. For example, just 49% of voters under age 30 express no reservations about voting in person, as compared to more than 70% of

those older than 50. Similarly, while 71% of white voters had no reservations about voting in person, lower percentages of Latinos (60%), Black voters (62%), and Asian American voters (53%) said this. Women (59%) were also less likely than men (72%) to state they had no reservations about voting in person.

“The Berkeley IGS Poll highlights clear disparities in voter certainty and comfort of voting in person by AAPI voters,” said Deanna Kitamura, Managing Attorney of Asian Law Caucus’ Democracy & National Initiatives. “When nearly half of AAPI voter report reservations about voting in person, it underscores gaps in access to trusted information and the importance of ensuring multiple, accessible ways to cast a ballot. This is especially important at a time when attempted efforts to restrict options like voting by mail risk further widening voter participation gaps.”

<i>Table 5</i>			
Do you feel comfortable voting in person?			
	Yes, with no reservations	Yes, but with some reservations	No, I have too many reservations
Total registered voters	65%	23%	7%
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	60	28	7
Republicans	82	11	5
No party preference/other	58	27	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	71	20	5
Latino	60	27	7
Black/African American	62	20	13
Asian American/Pacific Isle	53	30	12
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	72	19	5
Female	59	27	9
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	49	35	10
30-39	59	27	9
40-49	66	24	7
50-64	74	18	4
65 or older	73	17	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, Spanish, Chinese (both simplified and traditional dialects), Vietnamese and Korean from April 9-18, 2026, among a stratified random sample of 5,962 registered voters in California. Funding for the poll was provided by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

The poll was conducted by distributing email and text message invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Each email and text message invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the Institute and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey questionnaire was housed. To accommodate non-English language voters, Californians whose voting record indicated that they preferred to have their voting materials sent to them in 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 and texts were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further invitations.

Samples of California registered voters were derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls and was provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc. (PDI), a leading supplier of registered voter lists and were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls, which is a public document. To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters' email addresses, cell phone numbers and all other personally identifiable information derived from their voter record were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample of registered voters surveyed to population characteristics of registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state on a wide range of variables. More information about the survey methods used by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* can be found on the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

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 from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of about +/-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 June primary election. Choose any number between 1 and 10 for your answer.

(IF ANSWERED 1-7 OR NOT SURE):

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 June primary election? Please select as many as apply.-- I'm not that interested, My vote doesn't matter much, I don't like the candidates for governor, I'm not that well informed about the issues and the candidates, Ballots in California are too long and complicated, Special interests and big money are controlling things, Voting is inconvenient for me and takes too much time, Election results can be manipulated and can't always be trusted, I'm confused about how to vote, Language problems make it difficult for me to vote, Voting is more difficult for people with disabilities, I'm very busy and may not find the time to vote. None of these. (ORDERING RANDOMIZED)

Would any of the following things increase your chances of voting in this year's June primary election? Please select as many as apply. (ORDERING RANDOMIZED) Making voting more convenient for me, Getting assistance from a person or group that I trust to help me better understand the issues and the candidates, Getting more information about how and when to vote, Getting transportation assistance in returning my ballot, If voting materials were available to me in my preferred language, If I had access to an unbiased and trusted source of news about the election, If I felt that ballot measures or candidates were putting my interests at risk, If I felt that ballot measures or candidates would advance my interests, If I felt there were differences between the candidates on the issues I care about, If election results were more trustworthy, If I received language assistance when voting, If voting was made more accessible for people with disabilities. None of these.

Reflecting on the current moment in the U.S., do you feel comfortable voting in person?

To what extent do the following things concern you as being potential threats to having a representative democracy in California? (1) Younger voters voting at much lower rates than older voters; (2) Latino, Black, Asian American, and American Indian voters voting at much lower rates than white voters.

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. Veteran pollster Mark DiCamillo serves as director of

the *Berkeley IGS Poll*. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.