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***Trump dominating next week's California GOP presidential primary.
Disaffection with both Biden and Trump is drawing support away
from each in a multi-candidate general election field.***

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

In a poll completed one week before next week's Republican presidential primary, former President Donald Trump's already dominant lead over the Republican field keeps getting larger. The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds 75% of the state's Republicans likely to vote in the primary are now intending to back the former president, up from 66% in early January. Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley places a distant second at 15%, while none of the seven other Republicans listed on the state's GOP presidential ballot, most of whom have formally dropped out of the race, are receiving more than 3% support.

Because of new rules adopted by the state's Republican Party last year, if a majority of Republicans statewide vote for Trump in the primary he will be awarded all of California's largest in the nation trove of 169 delegates to the Republican National Convention.

Despite his overwhelming popularity among the state's Republican voters, the poll also finds that Trump continues to be held in low regard by the broader statewide electorate. When asked their overall opinion of the former president, twice as many registered Californians report having an unfavorable opinion of Trump (63%) as view him favorably (31%).

Yet it is also the case that California voters now view incumbent President Joe Biden more negatively than positively, although his standing with voters is not nearly as unfavorable as Trump's. The latest poll finds 49% of the state's registered voters holding an unfavorable opinion of Biden overall, while 46% offer a positive assessment. This represents a big decline in appraisals of Biden compared to how California voters viewed him at the start of his term in late January 2021. At that time 62% of the state's voters held a favorable opinion of Biden while just 32% viewed him unfavorably.

The decline in Biden's image rating in California is broad-based and spans every major subgroup of the state's electorate. But, among the steepest declines are those observed from the state's younger voters and its large Latino voting population, two constituencies that heavily supported Biden in 2020.

The disaffection that California voters now have of the major party presidential candidates is impacting voter preferences in the November general election race. Whereas Biden easily carried California by 30 points four years ago, his lead over Trump in a two-candidate pairing is now just eighteen points, 52% to 34%. And, when the names of three other presidential candidates are

included, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Cornel West, and Jill Stein, the President’s lead is just 12 points, with 40% backing Biden, 28% supporting Trump, 11% choosing Kennedy, and with 3% and 2%, respectively, siding with West and Stein.

These findings come from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed online February 22-27, 2024, among a stratified random sample of 6,536 California registered voters across the state.

IGS Co-Director G. Cristina Mora notes, “the latest results signal a significant amount of voter pessimism around this year’s election. Enthusiasm for the leading presidential contenders is low. Issues like the economy and immigration are likely at the center of this trend and the question is whether this pattern will change in the coming months.”

Trump’s primary election vote support among California Republicans has grown dramatically over the past year

Over the course of six polls conducted among likely Republican voters leading up the state’s GOP primary over the past 12 months, the *Berkeley IGS Poll* has documented the dramatic increase in voter support for former President Trump with regard to next week’s presidential primary.

One year ago Republican voter support for Trump in California stood at just 29%, and at the time he actually trailed Florida Governor Ron DeSantis by eight points. However, in each of five successive polls of likely Republican voters since then Trump has increased his share of GOP primary voter preferences, rising to 44% in May, 55% in August, 57% in October, 66% in January to its present 75% level.

Trump now dominates GOP voter preferences across all regions of the state and all major demographic subgroups of the party. Haley, the only major GOP presidential challenger remaining in the race, received just 15% in the latest poll, and has made only modest gains in support over this period, even as the Republican candidate field has winnowed.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences in California’s 2024 GOP presidential primary
(among Republicans likely to vote in the presidential primary)

	Late February 2024 %	Early				
		January 2024 %	Oct. 2023 %	August 2023 %	May 2023 %	Feb. 2023 %
Donald Trump	75	66	57	55	44	29
Nikki Haley	15	11	9	7	3	7
Ron DeSantis	3	8	12	16	26	37
Others*	2	5	10	12	13	16
Undecided	5	10	11	8	13	10

* In the latest poll, “others” included Vivek Ramaswamy, Chris Christie, Asa Hutchinson, Ryan L. Binkley, David Stuckenberg, and Rachel Swift, whose names will also appear on California’s March 2024 Republican presidential primary ballot. Each received less than 1% support in the latest survey. Previous measures included other Republican presidential candidates who have since dropped out of the race and whose names will not appear on the California election ballot.

Biden and Trump both viewed more negatively than positively by the state’s voters

While both Trump and Biden appear to be the consensus nominees of their parties, both are now viewed more negatively than positively by California’s registered voters.

Table 2 below summarizes the trend of voter impressions of each man since the beginning of Biden’s presidency in January 2021. It shows that while California voter opinions of Trump have remained highly negative by margins of two and three to one throughout, views of Biden have changed considerably.

In a *Berkeley IGS Poll* taken just after Biden’s inauguration in late January 2021, 62% of California voters viewed him favorably, while 32% held an unfavorable opinion. Since then voter impressions of Biden among the state’s voters have declined steadily to where this year in polls conducted both in early January and late February, more voters say they hold an unfavorable opinion of the President as view him favorably.

Table 2
Trend of the image ratings of President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump 2021 -2024 among California registered voters

	Favorable %	Unfavorable %	No opinion %
<u>Joe Biden</u>			
Late February 2024	46	49	5
January 2024	45	49	6
May 2023	50	46	4
February 2023	56	41	3
Late January 2021	62	32	3
<u>Donald Trump</u>			
Late February 2024	31	63	6
January 2024	31	64	5
May 2023	27	69	3
February 2023	26	71	3
Late January 2021	32	63	5

Biden’s image decline spans most major subgroups of the state’s voting population

The declines in California voter assessments of President’s Biden have been broad-based and span every major subgroup of the registered voter population. But perhaps most striking are his declines among younger voters and among the state’s sizable Latino voting population, two constituencies that heavily backed Biden’s presidential bid in 2020.

At the beginning of his term in early 2021, California voters under age 40 held a more favorable than unfavorable opinion of Biden by margins of greater than two to one, while now a majority views him negatively. Similarly, while Latino voters’ overall opinions of the President were three-to-one positive in early 2021, they too have declined to where now more of the state’s Latino voters view him unfavorably than favorably.

Also noteworthy are the declines in voter opinions of Biden among two of the state’s key swing constituencies, those registered as No Party Preference or with a minor party, and political moderates.

Both groups held highly positive opinions of Biden at the beginning of his term, but now also view him more negatively than positively.

In addition, while voters across all major regions of the state held a more favorable than unfavorable image of the President in late January 2021, voters in five of the state’s eight major regions now hold more negative than positive opinions of Biden. This includes voters in the Central Valley, Orange County, San Diego County, the Inland Empire, and the North Coast/ Sierras region.

Table 3
Comparing California voter image ratings of President Joe Biden now to those held of him at the beginning of his term in late January 2021

	late February 2024			late January 2021		
	Favorable %	Unfavorable %	No opinion %	Favorable %	Unfavorable %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	46	49	5	62	32	6
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	69	26	5	87	7	5
Republicans	7	90	3	15	80	5
No party preference/other	41	52	7	60	31	9
<u>Political ideology</u>						
Strongly conservative	8	89	3	13	82	5
Somewhat conservative	18	77	5	29	66	5
Moderate	43	47	10	67	24	9
Somewhat liberal	74	22	4	89	5	6
Strongly liberal	70	28	2	86	11	3
<u>Region</u>						
Los Angeles County	50	44	6	67	26	7
San Diego County	44	51	5	64	32	4
Orange County	38	56	6	55	41	4
Inland Empire	38	55	7	56	38	6
Central Coast	51	43	6	60	37	3
Central Valley	35	59	6	52	40	8
San Francisco Bay Area	57	39	4	70	25	5
North Coast/Sierras	45	55	--	57	40	3
<u>Gender</u>						
Female	50	44	6	65	28	7
Male	42	53	5	58	36	6
<u>Age</u>						
18-29	35	57	8	65	25	11
30-39	41	51	8	63	30	7
40-49	46	46	8	59	33	8
50-64	47	49	4	60	34	6
65 or older	56	42	2	63	35	2
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>						
White non-Hispanic	48	51	1	59	39	2
Latino	43	49	8	63	22	15
Asian/Pacific Islander	44	45	11	66	28	6
Black	57	34	9	76	19	5
<u>Gender</u>						

Some college or less	39	54	7	57	35	8
College graduate	54	42	4	69	28	3

Biden leads by 18 points when paired against Trump in the November general election, but that his lead declines to 12 points in a multi-candidate field

When California voters are asked whom they would support in this year’s November presidential election if the choices were Biden and Trump, Biden is preferred by 18 points, 52% to 34%, with 14% undecided.

However, Biden’s lead over Trump declines to just 12 points when three other possible presidential candidates, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Cornel West, and Jill Stein, are included in the mix. In this setting Biden is the choice of just 40%, Trump receives 28%, with Kennedy at 11%, West at 3% and Klein at 2%.

An examination of the second-choice preferences of voters supporting each of the three minor party candidates indicates that Biden’s decline is mainly due to the presence of West and Stein on the ballot, as these voters generally prefer Biden over Trump if they were the only two on the ballot. By contrast, Kennedy’s supporters divide almost evenly between Trump and Biden were he not on the ballot.

Table 4
Presidential preferences in the 2024 November general election
(among California registered voters)

	Two candidate field %	Five candidate field %
Joe Biden	52	40
Donald Trump	34	28
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.	--	11
Cornel West	--	3
Jill Stein	--	2
Undecided	14	16

About the Survey

The findings are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the University of California’s Institute of Governmental Studies. It was conducted online in English and Spanish February 22-27, 2024, among 6,536 California registered voters, including a weighted subsample of 1,053 Republicans likely to vote in the GOP presidential primary. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Data collection for the poll was completed by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of 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 California registered voters with email addresses were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls and provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of voter lists in California.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, voters’ email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from their voter listing were purged from the data file during data processing and

replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number. After the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file to align the sample of registered voters to population characteristics of the registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state.

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 +/- 1.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while sampling error estimates for results from the sample of Republican likely voter sample are +/- 3.5 points.

For a more complete description of the survey methods used by the Berkeley IGS Poll, please visit: https://igs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/survey_methods_of_the_berkeley_igs_poll_updated_1_3_24.pdf

Question wording

ASKED OF REPUBLICANS LIKELY TO VOTE IN THE GOP PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

IF ALREADY VOTED: Below are the candidates that were listed on the California Republican primary election ballot for president. For whom did you vote?

IF LIKELY TO VOTE: Below are the candidates that will be listed on the California Republican primary election ballot for president. If you were voting today for whom would you vote? (ORDER RANDOMIZED)

ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS

Looking ahead to the November 2024 general election for President. If the election for president were held today and the following candidates were listed on the ballot, for whom would you vote? (CANDIDATE ORDERING RANDOMIZED (IF 1ST CHOICE GIVEN): Who would be your second choice?

What if the choices in the November 2024 presidential election were only between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump? If the election were held today for whom would you vote?

Regardless of whom you may support in the November presidential election, please indicate whether your opinion of the following candidates is generally favorable or unfavorable, or don't you know enough about him or her to say? (ORDERING 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 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 copy of the detailed tabulations to this report or a listing of all past poll reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, please visit the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.