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Likely Voter Preferences on Four State Ballot Propositions

Prop. 15 leads, Prop 16 trails, and Props. 21 and 22 are close

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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In its latest statewide survey, the *Berkeley IGS Poll* presented voters with the official “ballot labels” that voters will see when voting on four of the most contentious and heavily contested propositions on the November 2020 statewide election ballot. Likely voters were then asked how they would vote if the election were held today.

The results indicate that a plurality of voters is currently supportive of one of the four ballot measures, a plurality is opposed to a second, and on two others voters are about evenly divided.

The proposition with the most support is Proposition 15, the initiative to change the way property taxes are assessed on commercial and industrial property. When presented with its official ballot summary, 49% of likely voters say they would vote Yes, 34% would vote No, and 17% are undecided.

The measure with the least support was Proposition 16 to allow diversity as a factor in government decision-making on policies relating to public employment, contracting and education. Just one in three likely voters (33%) are currently intending to vote Yes, 41% say they would vote No, and 26% are undecided.

Voters are more closely divided on Proposition 22 to classify app-based drivers as independent contractors, with 39% of likely voters lining up on the Yes side on Prop. 22 and 36% on the No side. Voters are evenly split on Proposition 21 to expand local governments’ authority on rent control, with 37% in favor and 37% in opposition. Relatively large proportions of likely voters, about one in four, are undecided on each of these initiatives.

Table 1
Likely voter preferences regarding four salient statewide propositions appearing on California’s November 2020 election ballot

| | Yes % | No % | Undecided % |
|---|----------|---------|----------------|
| Proposition 15 (Split roll property taxes) | 49 | 34 | 17 |
| Proposition 16 (Allowing diversity in employment, education and contracting) | 33 | 41 | 26 |
| Proposition 21 (Rent control) | 37 | 37 | 26 |
| Proposition 22 (Classifying App-based drivers as independent contractors) | 39 | 36 | 25 |

Big subgroup differences in preferences on Proposition 15 (split roll property taxes)

Proposition 15 calls for taxing commercial and industrial property worth more than \$3 million based on its current market value instead of its purchase price, as has been the case since voters passed the landmark Proposition 13 property tax reduction initiative in 1978. If approved, the initiative would also provide between \$6.5 and \$11.5 billion dollars annually in new funding to local governments and the state’s public schools.

When presented with the initiative’s ballot summary, half of likely voters (49%) say they intend to vote Yes, 34% are on the No side, while 17% are undecided.

Voter preferences are highly partisan and ideologically based. Prop. 15 currently receives broad support from the state’s Democratic and liberal voters but is heavily opposed by Republicans and conservative voters.

Regionally, the initiative receives majority support among voters in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (58%) and in Los Angeles County (54%). Support remains below 50% in each of the state’s six other major regions and the initiative currently trails among voters in Orange County.

Voters under 30 are lining up on the Yes side by a three-to-one margin, while voters age 50 or older are divided. Renters also back the initiative about two to one, as do voters living in union households. On the other hand, homeowners are about evenly divided. Majorities of the state’s Latinos, Asian and Black voters are also in favor, compared to 45% among support among white non-Hispanics.

G. Cristina Mora, IGS co-director, noted that “These trends suggest that California’s racial minorities are more likely to see corporate tax reform as an important solution to the state’s public funding crisis.”

Table 2
Likely voter preferences on Proposition 15 to Change the Way Taxes are Assessed on Commercial and Industrial Property and Increase Funding for Public Schools, Community Colleges, and Local Government Services

| | Yes % | No % | Undecided % |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Total likely voters | 49 | 34 | 17 |
| Democrat | 68 | 15 | 17 |
| Republican | 12 | 74 | 14 |
| No Party Preference/other | 49 | 31 | 20 |
| Very conservative | 10 | 76 | 14 |
| Somewhat conservative | 17 | 68 | 15 |
| Moderate | 46 | 35 | 19 |
| Somewhat liberal | 66 | 14 | 20 |
| Very liberal | 82 | 8 | 13 |
| Los Angeles County | 54 | 29 | 17 |
| San Diego County | 46 | 36 | 18 |
| Orange County | 39 | 43 | 18 |
| Inland Empire | 44 | 44 | 12 |
| Other Southern California | 47 | 37 | 16 |
| Central Valley | 41 | 41 | 18 |
| San Francisco Bay Area | 58 | 24 | 18 |
| Other Northern California | 49 | 36 | 15 |
| Homeowner | 43 | 41 | 16 |
| Renter/other | 57 | 25 | 18 |
| Union household | 55 | 30 | 14 |
| Non-union | 47 | 35 | 18 |
| Male | 48 | 38 | 14 |
| Female | 50 | 31 | 19 |
| 18-29 | 61 | 21 | 18 |
| 30-39 | 58 | 25 | 17 |
| 40-49 | 53 | 30 | 17 |
| 50-64 | 42 | 40 | 18 |
| 65 or older | 44 | 41 | 15 |
| White non-Hispanic | 45 | 39 | 16 |
| Latino | 55 | 27 | 18 |
| Asian / Pacific Islander | 56 | 26 | 18 |
| Black | 62 | 24 | 14 |

Plurality oppose Prop. 16 to allow diversity in government decision-making

Proposition 16 would allow for diversity as a factor in government decision-making on policies relating to public employment, contracting and education. If approved, it would repeal an earlier initiative, Proposition 209, passed by California voters twenty-four years ago that prohibited such practices.

When likely voters in the latest poll are asked how they would vote on the amendment, 41% currently line up on the No side, 33% are intending to vote Yes, and 26% are undecided.

One ray of hope for proponents of the amendment is that Democrats and liberal voters, the segments most supportive of Prop. 16, are among the voter segments with the largest proportions of undecided voters. By contrast, relatively few Republicans and conservative voters, who overwhelmingly oppose the amendment, are undecided.

Working against the odds of passage, however, is the fact that pluralities of political moderates and voters registered as No Party Preference are currently lining up on the No side. These voter segments often hold the balance of power in determining election outcomes on initiatives in highly partisan contests.

There are significant differences in voter preferences on Prop. 16 by race and gender, with pluralities of men and white non-Hispanic voters opposed, women evenly divided, and pluralities of voters of color in favor.

While a plurality of voters in the San Francisco Bay Area is supporting Proposition 16, voters in Los Angeles County are about evenly divided, while the amendment trails among voters in each of the other major regions of the state.

Table 3
Likely voter preferences on Proposition 16 to Allow Diversity as a Factor in
Public Employment, Education and Contracting Decisions

| | Yes | No | Undecided |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Total likely voters | 33 | 41 | 26 |
| Democrat | 49 | 20 | 31 |
| Republican | 9 | 78 | 13 |
| No Party Preference/others | 29 | 43 | 28 |
| Very conservative | 8 | 80 | 12 |
| Somewhat conservative | 12 | 75 | 13 |
| Moderate | 29 | 42 | 29 |
| Somewhat liberal | 45 | 21 | 34 |
| Very liberal | 60 | 13 | 27 |
| Los Angeles County | 37 | 35 | 28 |
| San Diego County | 33 | 40 | 27 |
| Orange County | 28 | 50 | 22 |
| Inland Empire | 30 | 48 | 21 |
| Other Southern California | 31 | 48 | 21 |
| Central Valley | 23 | 52 | 25 |
| San Francisco Bay Area | 43 | 30 | 27 |
| Other Northern California | 32 | 43 | 25 |
| Male | 32 | 47 | 21 |
| Female | 35 | 35 | 30 |
| 18-29 | 33 | 41 | 26 |
| 30-39 | 34 | 36 | 30 |
| 40-49 | 39 | 36 | 25 |
| 50-64 | 32 | 43 | 25 |
| 65 or older | 32 | 43 | 25 |
| White non-Hispanic | 28 | 46 | 26 |
| Latino | 40 | 33 | 27 |
| Asian / Pacific Islander | 42 | 33 | 25 |
| Black | 51 | 28 | 21 |
| Union household | 36 | 38 | 26 |
| Non-union | 33 | 42 | 25 |

Likely voters evenly divided on Proposition 21 (rent control)

If approved, Proposition 21 would expand local governments' authority to establish rent control on residential properties in California that are over fifteen years old.

When likely voters are presented with Prop. 21's official ballot summary and asked how they would vote if the election were held today, preferences are evenly divided, with 37% lining up on the Yes side and 37% intending to vote No. Greater than one in four (26%) are undecided.

Views about Proposition 21 are also highly partisan and tied to the political ideology of the electorate. Large majorities of Republicans and conservative voters are opposed. And, while pluralities of Democrats and liberals are supportive of Prop. 21, about three in ten remain undecided. The preferences of political moderates and No Party Preference voters are closely divided on the initiative.

Homeowners and renters are taking opposite positions on the initiative, with homeowners opposed 47% to 28% and renters in favor 50% to 25%. Voters living in union households are on the Yes side by ten points, while voters in non-union households are narrowly opposed.

Age is correlated to voting preferences on Prop. 21, with pluralities of younger voters intending to Yes, while voters age 50 or older lining up on the No side.

Differences are also observed along race and gender lines. Pluralities of men and white non-Hispanics oppose the initiative, while Latinos, Blacks and women tend to be supportive.

Table 4
Likely voter preferences on Proposition 21 to Expand Local Governments’
Authority to Enact Rent Control on Residential Property

| | Yes % | No % | Undecided % |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Total likely voters | 37 | 37 | 26 |
| Democrat | 51 | 19 | 30 |
| Republican | 13 | 73 | 14 |
| No Party Preference/others | 35 | 36 | 29 |
| Very conservative | 15 | 71 | 14 |
| Somewhat conservative | 18 | 68 | 14 |
| Moderate | 34 | 38 | 28 |
| Somewhat liberal | 45 | 22 | 33 |
| Very liberal | 63 | 10 | 27 |
| Los Angeles County | 42 | 32 | 26 |
| San Diego County | 34 | 39 | 27 |
| Orange County | 34 | 44 | 22 |
| Inland Empire | 36 | 41 | 23 |
| Other Southern California | 40 | 39 | 21 |
| Central Valley | 30 | 43 | 27 |
| San Francisco Bay Area | 41 | 33 | 26 |
| Other Northern California | 31 | 41 | 28 |
| Homeowner | 28 | 47 | 25 |
| Renter/other | 50 | 25 | 25 |
| Union household | 43 | 33 | 24 |
| Non-union | 36 | 38 | 26 |
| Male | 36 | 43 | 21 |
| Female | 38 | 32 | 30 |
| 18-29 | 45 | 25 | 30 |
| 30-39 | 46 | 26 | 28 |
| 40-49 | 42 | 34 | 24 |
| 50-64 | 35 | 42 | 23 |
| 65 or older | 29 | 45 | 26 |
| White non-Hispanic | 33 | 41 | 26 |
| Latino | 45 | 28 | 27 |
| Asian / Pacific Islander | 38 | 37 | 25 |
| Black | 59 | 22 | 19 |

Likely voters closely divided on Proposition 22 to classify app-based drivers as independent contractors

The initiative that is likely to see the greatest level of campaign spending on this year's ballot is Proposition 22, the initiative to classify app-based drivers as independent contractors instead of employees.

Likely voter preferences on the initiative are currently inconclusive, with 39% of likely voters intending to vote Yes, 36% intending to vote No and 25% undecided.

Although some differences are observed in voting preferences across major subgroups of the state's likely electorate, they are not as prominent as on the three other ballot propositions measured.

While more Democrats are opposed than supportive, they are dividing their preferences fairly evenly, with 42% voting No, 31% voting Yes and 27% undecided. Republicans are currently backing Proposition 22 by a 53% to 29% margin.

Somewhat wider differences are seen by political ideology, with conservatives supportive nearly two to one, and liberals, especially those describing themselves as very liberal, most opposed. At present pluralities of political moderates and No Party Preference voters are lining up in support of Proposition 22, although large proportions are undecided.

Voter preferences across the major regions of the state are mostly divided, with neither side currently achieving a majority in any region. Supporters outnumber opponents in San Diego and Orange counties, in the Central Valley and Inland Empire regions as well in other areas of Southern California outside of Los Angeles County. Opposition is greatest in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Voters living in union households are opposing the initiative by twelve points, while those living in non-union households favor Prop. 22 by seven points.

The survey finds only modest differences in voting preferences on Prop. 22 by age, gender, and race/ethnicity, with opinions in each segment closely divided and large proportions undecided.

Table 5
Likely voter preferences on Proposition 22 to Classify App-based Drivers as Independent Contractors Instead of Employees

| | Yes % | No % | Undecided % |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Total likely voters | 39 | 36 | 25 |
| Democrat | 31 | 42 | 27 |
| Republican | 53 | 29 | 18 |
| No Party Preference/others | 41 | 33 | 26 |
| Very conservative | 52 | 33 | 15 |
| Somewhat conservative | 55 | 25 | 20 |
| Moderate | 46 | 29 | 25 |
| Somewhat liberal | 30 | 39 | 31 |
| Very liberal | 18 | 57 | 25 |
| Los Angeles County | 38 | 38 | 24 |
| San Diego County | 43 | 34 | 23 |
| Orange County | 46 | 30 | 24 |
| Inland Empire | 43 | 32 | 25 |
| Other Southern California | 42 | 35 | 23 |
| Central Valley | 42 | 31 | 26 |
| San Francisco Bay Area | 31 | 42 | 27 |
| Other Northern California | 36 | 42 | 22 |
| Male | 42 | 38 | 20 |
| Female | 37 | 34 | 29 |
| Union household | 32 | 44 | 24 |
| Non-union | 41 | 34 | 25 |
| 18-29 | 36 | 40 | 24 |
| 30-39 | 33 | 42 | 25 |
| 40-49 | 36 | 37 | 27 |
| 50-64 | 43 | 34 | 23 |
| 65 or older | 42 | 33 | 25 |
| White non-Hispanic | 39 | 37 | 24 |
| Latino | 36 | 36 | 28 |
| Asian / Pacific Islander | 41 | 33 | 26 |
| Black | 40 | 34 | 26 |

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

PROPOSITION 15: INCREASES FUNDING SOURCES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES BY CHANGING TAX ASSESSMENT OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

Taxes such properties based on current market value, instead of purchase price. Fiscal impact: Increased property taxes on commercial properties worth more than \$3 million providing \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion in new funding to local governments and schools. If the election were held today how would you vote on Proposition 15?

PROPOSITION 16: ALLOWS DIVERSITY AS A FACTOR IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND CONTRACTING DECISIONS. LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Permits government decision-making policies to consider race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in order to address diversity by repealing constitutional provision prohibiting such policies. Fiscal Impact: No direct fiscal effect on state and local entities. The effects of the measure depend on the future

choices of state and local government entities and are highly uncertain. If the election were held today how would you vote on Proposition 16?

PROPOSITION 21: EXPANDS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS’ AUTHORITY TO ENACT RENT CONTROL ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY. INITIATIVE STATUTE. Allows local governments to establish rent control on residential properties over 15 years old. Local limits on rate increases may differ from statewide limit. Fiscal Impact: Overall, a potential reduction in state and local revenues in the high tens of millions of dollars per year over time. Depending on actions by local communities, revenue losses could be less or more. If the election were held today how would you vote on Proposition 21?

PROPOSITION 22: EXEMPTS APP-BASED TRANSPORTATION AND DELIVERY COMPANIES FROM PROVIDING EMPLOYEE BENEFITS TO CERTAIN DRIVERS. INITIATIVE STATUTE. Classifies app-based drivers as “independent contractors,” instead of “employees,” and provides independent-contractor drivers other compensation, unless certain criteria are met. Fiscal Impact: Minor increase in state income taxes paid by rideshare and delivery company drivers and investors. If the election were held today how would you vote on Proposition 22?

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>.