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Voters offer a wide range of issues they'd like the state to address.

Majority support for continuing to build the high-speed rail project

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
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Voters offer a wide array of responses when presented with a list of fifteen issues facing California and asked which one or two they consider most important for the state to address. Topping the list are housing affordability, mentioned by 31%, homelessness (29%), crime and public safety (23%) and gas prices (21%).

There are big partisan differences in the responses of Democratic and Republican voters on this. Among the state's Democrats the top issues are housing affordability, cited by 37%, homelessness (32%) and climate change/the environment (27%). On the other hand, Republican voters offer a somewhat different array of issues, most frequently citing crime and public safety (39%), gas prices (28%), immigration (27%) and taxes (26%).

The poll finds that by a five-to-three margin, (56% to 35%) voters favor the state continuing to build the high-speed rail project even with operations extending only from Bakersfield to Merced in the Central Valley by the year 2030 and to the Bay Area by the year 2033 as is currently planned.

Four in ten Californians (41%) also report that the recent price hikes in gasoline are causing a very serious problem for themselves and their families while another 28% say this is causing a somewhat serious problem for them. Replies are directly related to annual household income, with those at the lowest end of the income spectrum more than three times as likely as upper income Californians to say the price hikes in gasoline are a very serious problem.

A relatively large proportion of voters (43%) say that because of the recent gas price hikes it is very likely that they will drive less around town or shorten their weekend or car vacation trips. By contrast, relatively few (11%) expect that the price hikes will increase their ridership of public transit.

Observed IGS co-Director Eric Schickler, "The substantial number of voters who see rising gas prices as a serious problem suggests that Democrats, both in Sacramento and nationally, need to develop responses that these voters can understand and find credible."

Voters identify a wide range of issues for the state to address

Voters offer a wide range of replies when presented with a list of fifteen issues now facing California and asked which one or two they consider most important for the state to address. Most frequently cited are housing affordability, mentioned by 31%, homelessness (29%), crime and public safety (23%) and gas prices (21%).

There are big differences in the issue priorities that the state’s Democratic and Republican voters would like addressed. The three dominant issues on the minds of California Democrats are housing affordability (37%), homelessness (32%), and climate change and the environment (27%). By contrast, topping the list among the state’s GOP voters are crime and public safety, mentioned by 39%, followed by gas prices (28%), immigration (27%) and taxes (26%).

Table 1
Most important issues for the state to address - overall and by party
(among California registered voters)

	Total registered voters	Democrats	Republicans	No Party Pref./other
	%	%	%	%
Housing affordability	31	37	19	33
Homelessness	29	32	22	30
Crime and public safety	23	14	39	23
Gas prices	21	16	28	21
Climate change and the environment	17	27	2	14
Taxes	15	8	26	17
Jobs and the economy	12	10	13	14
Education and the schools	12	11	14	12
Immigration	11	5	27	7
Income inequality	9	14	1	10
Threat of wildfires	7	9	4	6
Health care	7	9	3	8
The coronavirus	4	6	1	4
Race relations	2	3	1	2
Traffic	2	2	1	3

Majority supports continuing to build the state’s high speed rail project even with its scaled back service offerings

By a five to three margin (56% to 35%) voters support the state continuing to build the high-speed rail project even if, as is currently planned, its operations only extend from Bakersfield to Merced in the Central Valley by the year 2030 and to the Bay Area by the year 2033.

Views about continuing to build the high-speed rail project are highly partisan, with nearly three in four Democrats (73%) backing the project compared to just 25% support among the state's Republicans.

Table 2
Views about continuing to build the state's high-speed rail project even when operating only from Bakersfield to Merced by the year 2030 and extended service to the Bay Area by 2033
(among California registered voters)

	Total %	Democrats %	Republicans %	No Party Pref./other %
<u>Favor (net)</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>54</u>
Favor strongly	31	43	12	27
Favor somewhat	25	30	13	27
<u>Oppose (net)</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>37</u>
Oppose somewhat	10	9	11	13
Oppose strongly	25	9	55	24
No opinion	9	9	9	9

Gas price increases having their biggest impact among lower income voters

Voters in the survey were asked how serious a problem the recent gasoline price increases have created for themselves and their families. The results indicate that about four in ten voters statewide (41%) consider the problem very serious while another 28% say it is causing them a somewhat serious problem.

Voters' answers about the gas price hikes are directly related to their annual household income, with those at the lowest end of the income spectrum more than three times as likely as upper income voters to consider the price increases very serious.

Table 3
Seriousness of recent gasoline price increases - overall and by annual household income
(among California registered voters)

	Total %	Less than \$40,000 %	\$40,000- \$99,999 %	\$100,000-\$1 99,999 %	\$200,000 or more %
Very serious	41	52	45	34	18
Somewhat serious	28	29	31	30	24
Not too/not at all serious	29	17	23	36	57
No opinion	2	2	1	--	1

Many expect to drive less because of the gas price hikes, but few expect that it will increase their ridership of public transit

Greater than four in ten Californians (43%) say it is very likely that they will be driving less around town and cut back on their weekend and vacation car trips because of the recent gas price increases. This increases to 66% among voters who describe the gas price increases as a very serious problem for their family.

By contrast, relatively few voters (11%) say it is very likely that the recent gasoline price increases will increase their ridership of public transit. Even among voters who report that the gas price increases are causing a very serious problem for themselves and their families, just 13% consider it very likely that they will now take public transit more.

Table 4
Likelihood of changing your behaviors because of the recent gas price increases
(among California registered voters)

	Total registered voters %	Seriousness of recent gas price increases		
		Very serious %	Somewhat serious %	Not serious %
<u>Will drive less around town or shorten weekend or vacation car trips</u>				
Very likely	43	66	39	13
Somewhat likely	28	21	40	27
Not too/not at all likely	26	10	20	56
No opinion	3	3	1	4
<u>Will take public transit more</u>				
Very likely	11	13	8	9
Somewhat likely	14	15	14	14
Not too/not at all likely	71	68	76	74
No opinion	4	4	2	3

When voters who were not likely to increase their ridership of public transit are asked their reasons for this, most frequently cited are: “it is not convenient to where I work or need to go” (45%), “it takes longer to get to where I need to go” (39%), “it’s not convenient to where I live” (35%) and “I don’t feel safe waiting for or riding on a bus or train” (34%). Other reasons reported with some frequency are: “the service isn’t frequent enough” (20%), “I feel it might increase my chances of getting COVID or some other illness” (16%) and “there isn’t any available in my area” (15%).

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 March 29-April 5, 2022, among 8,676 California registered voters. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The *Berkeley IGS Poll* is administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. The latest poll also included an oversampling of registered voters in the city of Los Angeles, administered using the same methods, to enable the poll to examine specific issues of interest to voters in that city and to the *Times*. After the completion of data collection, the results were weighted to realign the Los Angeles city sample to its actual share of the statewide voter population.

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 voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample was stratified by age and gender 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.

The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and the 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

Of the following issues, which one or two do you feel are the most important for the state to address this year? Please select no more than two issues. (SEE RELEASE FOR ISSUES LISTED. ORDERING OF ISSUES WAS RANDOMIZED)

The price of gasoline has increased a lot in recent months. How serious a problem does the recent rise in gasoline prices create for you and your family?

Due to the recent increases in gasoline prices how likely is it that you will drive less around town or shorten or cancel weekend or vacation trips in the coming year?

Due to the recent increases in gasoline prices how likely do you think it is that you will take public transit, such as buses and trains, more in the coming year?

Which of the following are the one or two reasons why you don't think it's likely that you'll be riding on public transit more in the coming year? (ORDER RANDOMIZED)

It's not convenient to where I live

It's not convenient to where I work or need to go

It takes longer to get there than driving

The service isn't frequent enough or doesn't fit my schedule

It's too expensive

I don't feel safe when waiting for or riding on a bus or train

I feel it might increase my chances of getting COVID or some other illness

I don't expect to be traveling much in the coming year

There isn't any available in my area

Other reasons

In 2008 California voters approved bonds to begin designing and building a high-speed rail system. The original plan called for service to run from San Diego through the Central Valley and up to Sacramento as soon as 2030. But cost estimates for the project have risen since 2008 and officials are now working under a longer timeline, with trains operating only from Bakersfield to Merced in the Central Valley by 2030, and then extending service to the San Francisco Bay Area by 2033. Do you favor or oppose the state continuing to build the high-speed rail project?

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 past poll reports issued by the poll, please visit <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.