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Release #2021-08

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## ***Voter Support for Recalling Governor Newsom Remains at 36%.***

*None of the Republican replacement candidates are attracting much support at this stage; The state's Democratic voters favor having Democrats among the replacement candidates.*

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*  
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The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed last week finds that the proportion of California voters who support recalling Governor Gavin Newsom stands at 36%, unchanged from late January. However, a larger proportion of voters now say they intend to vote NO in the recall (49%), up four points from three months ago. Another 15% remain undecided.

Opinions about removing Newsom from office continue to be sharply divided along partisan and ideological lines. But the poll also finds some striking regional differences. For example, while greater than two-to-one majorities of voters in the state's two major urban hubs, the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County, are lining up on the NO side, supporters outnumber opponents in several parts of the state, including the Inland Empire, the Central Valley, and the sparsely populated North Coast/Sierra region.

The recall election has yet to arouse a great deal of interest among the state's overall electorate, with fewer than half (46%) expressing high levels of interest. In addition, early interest is heavily skewed toward the state's GOP voters, with more than twice as many Republicans as Democrats or No Party Preference voters expressing high interest.

The recall ballot will also ask the voting public who they would choose to replace Newsom should he be removed from office. In a show of solidarity with the Governor, the state Democratic Party in recent weeks has been openly discouraging other Democrats from running as replacement candidates in the election. However, when Democratic voters in this survey are asked their opinions about this, more (48%) favor having a prominent Democratic included among the replacement candidates than not (29%), although a relatively large proportion (23%) are undecided about this.

None of four prominent Republicans currently running in the replacement election are generating much support among the overall electorate at this stage. When voters are asked whether they would be inclined or not inclined to vote for each candidate, fewer than one in four voters statewide say they are currently disposed to back them. Former San Diego Mayor

Kevin Faulconer and former gubernatorial candidate John Cox receive the largest shares of voters inclined to support their candidacies (22%). However, in each case more than twice as many are not inclined to do so and about three in ten have no opinion. Former congressman Doug Ose receives the backing of 14% in this setting, although 48% of voters are not inclined to back his candidacy. Attracting the least support of the four Republicans measured is reality TV personality Caitlyn Jenner. Just 6% of the state's registered voters say they are inclined to back her candidacy, while 76% are not.

The poll also finds that Newsom's job performance ratings among the state's voters have rebounded from what they were three months ago. At present, 52% of registered voters approve of the job Newsom is doing overall, while 43% disapprove. Three months ago, the poll found voters about evenly divided in their assessments. Newsom's improved job ratings appear largely due to voters much more positive view of the Governor's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic compared to three months ago. However, voters continue to be highly critical of Newsom in his handling of several other major issues facing the state, especially in the areas of homelessness and housing costs.

Observed IGS co-Director Eric Schickler, "Newsom benefits from the improving situation with the pandemic but there are still some warning signs -- the low interest of Democratic voters and the substantial number of undecided voters. But the Governor is now in better shape and is helped by the absence of a compelling GOP alternative."

#### **Support for Newsom's recall remains unchanged from late January**

The poll finds that 36% of the state's registered voters currently say they would vote to recall of Governor, identical to what the *Berkeley IGS Poll* found in late January. However, slightly more voters (49%) now say they would vote NO in the recall election, up four points from three months ago.

Opinions continue to be sharply divided along partisan and ideological lines, with Republicans and strong conservatives very one-sided in supporting Newsom's ouster, while Democrats and liberal voters remain very much opposed.

However, the poll finds striking differences in views about Newsom's recall across different parts of California. Voters in the state's two major urban hubs, the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County, are lining up on the NO side by greater than two-to-one margins. By contrast, supporters outnumber opponents in several other regions of the state, including the Inland Empire, the Central Valley and in the sparsely populated North Coast/Sierra region.

Voter opinions about the recall also differ by age, gender, and race. For example, while majorities of voters age 65 or older and those age 50-64 are opposed to the recall, opposition declines among younger voters, with many remaining undecided. Women are also less inclined than men to be backing Newsom's recall. Voters of color are also less supportive of recalling the Governor than are the state's white voters.

**Table 1**  
**Voter preferences in the recall election of Governor Newsom**  
**(among registered voters)**

	Yes, to recall %	No, to retain %	Undecided %
<u>Total registered voters</u>			
<b>Late April</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>15</b>
Late January	36	45	19
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrat	8	75	17
Republican	85	8	7
No party preference	33	45	22
Other parties	48	29	23
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	85	11	4
Somewhat conservative	70	17	13
Moderate	34	44	22
Somewhat liberal	9	75	16
Strongly liberal	4	83	13
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	28	52	20
San Diego County	39	46	15
Orange County	45	45	10
Inland Empire	45	39	16
Central Coast	34	52	14
Central Valley	46	39	15
San Francisco Bay Area	25	60	15
North Coast/Sierras	52	39	9
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	40	47	13
Female	32	51	17
<u>Age</u>			
18-24	31	35	34
25-29	33	40	27
30-39	35	47	18
40-49	35	49	16
50-64	38	51	11
65 or older	36	56	8
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White	42	48	10
Latino	28	48	24
Asian/Pacific Islander	28	51	21
Black	20	59	21

**Early interest in the recall election is relatively low and skews heavily toward GOP voters**

The recall election has not yet aroused great interest among most of the state’s electorate, with fewer than half (46%) reporting a high degree of interest in the recall.

Early interest is also heavily skewed toward the state’s GOP voters. The poll finds twice as many Republicans (75%) as Democrats (36%) or No Party Preference voters (35%) reporting a high degree of interest.

**Table 2**  
**Interest in the gubernatorial recall election on a 1-10 scale**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b>Total registered voters %</b>	<b>Democrats %</b>	<b>Republicans %</b>	<b>No Party Preference %</b>	<b>Other parties %</b>
High interest (8, 9 or 10)	46	36	75	35	43
Moderate interest (4, 5, 6, or 7)	29	30	19	37	32
Low interest (1, 2, or 3)	25	34	6	28	25

**The state’s registered Democrats favor having a prominent Democrat included among the replacement candidates**

Voters in the recall election will not only be asked to vote Yes or No on the matter of removing Newsom from office, but they will also be asked who they would choose to replace the Governor should Newsom be recalled. In a show of solidarity with the Governor, the state Democratic Party in recent weeks has been openly discouraging other Democrats from running as replacement candidates in the recall election.

However, when Democratic voters across the state are asked their opinions about this, more favor having a prominent Democratic included among the replacement candidates than not.

When assessing opinions on this strategic decision, the poll presented Democratic voters with two statements about whether other Democratic candidates should run in the replacement election, asking these voters which statement was closer to their own view. The two statements posed were as follows:

- (1) Have other prominent Democrats listed on the replacement election ballot to provide another way for a Democrat to remain as governor if Newsom is removed from office.*
- (2) Not have other prominent Democrats run in the replacement election for governor to demonstrate party solidarity with Newsom and not undercut his campaign to defeat the recall.*

In this setting 48% of registered Democrats statewide chose the first alternative of having other prominent Democrats run as replacement candidates, while only 29% favored not having other prominent Democrats on the ballot. Another 23% of the state’s Democrats are undecided.

### **Relatively small proportions are inclined to back the various Republican candidates**

Voters in the poll were also asked whether they would be inclined or not inclined to support each of four prominent Republicans who are running as replacement candidates in the recall election. The results show that none of the four has yet to attract a significant following among the overall electorate.

The two Republicans receiving the largest proportions of voters expressing support for their candidacies are former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer and former gubernatorial candidate John Cox. In each case, 22% of voters say they would be inclined to back each as a replacement candidate. However, more than twice as many voters are not inclined to back each Republican and about three in ten do not have an opinion.

Most of Faulconer's and Cox's early support is coming from fellow Republicans, with about half of the state's GOP voters saying they would be inclined to back their candidacies. However, both receive little support among the state's Democrats and only modest backing from the state's No Party Preference voters.

When asked about Republican Congressman Doug Ose, 14% of the electorate say they would be disposed to back his candidacy. However, 48% say they would not be inclined to do so, and another 38% have no opinion. Here again, Ose's early support comes primarily from GOP voters, with 33% of Republicans currently inclined to back his candidacy.

Attracting the least support of the four Republicans measured is reality TV personality Caitlyn Jenner. Just 6% of the state's registered voters say they would be inclined to back her candidacy, while 76% are not and 18% have no opinion.

Jenner also does more poorly than the other Republicans among voters within her own party, with just 13% of the state's GOP voters inclined to back her candidacy, while 62% are not.

**Table 3**  
**Voter inclination to support each of four prominent Republicans**  
**who are running as replacement candidates for governor in the recall election**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Total registered voters %	Democrats %	Republicans %	No Party Preference %	Other parties %
<u>Kevin Faulconer, former San Diego Mayor</u>					
Inclined to support	22	7	50	21	27
Not inclined to support	47	70	12	40	34
No opinion	31	23	38	39	39
<u>John Cox, former candidate for governor in 2018</u>					
Inclined to support	22	6	56	16	30
Not inclined to support	49	73	12	46	32
No opinion	29	21	32	38	38
<u>Doug Ose, former Congressman</u>					
Inclined to support	14	4	33	11	21
Not inclined to support	48	71	15	41	31
No opinion	38	25	52	48	48
<u>Caitlyn Jenner, reality TV personality</u>					
Inclined to support	6	2	13	6	9
Not inclined to support	76	86	62	71	71
No opinion	18	12	25	23	20

**Newsom’s standing with the state’s electorate has rebounded over the past three months**

The latest poll also included questions updating voter opinions about the job Newsom is doing as governor both overall and across a wide range of issues.

The results indicate that the Governor’s overall standing with voters has rebounded from what it was in late January. At present, 52% of registered voters approve of the job Newsom is doing overall, while 43% disapprove. This compares to a much more evenly divided 46% approve - 48% disapprove assessment observed three months ago.

**Table 4**  
**Trend of voter opinions of the overall job that Gavin Newsom is doing as Governor**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Late April 2021 %	Late- January 2021 %	September 2020 %	June 2019 %
<u>Approve</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>57</u>
Approve strongly	21	14	25	15
Approve somewhat	31	32	39	42
<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>42</u>
Disapprove somewhat	13	17	13	17
Disapprove strongly	30	31	23	25
No opinion	5	6	*	1

\* Less than ½ of 1%

**Newsom’s handling of the Covid-19 pandemic now viewed much more favorably**

Newsom’s improved standing with voters appears largely to be a function of their much more positive assessment of the way the Governor has been handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Nearly half of the state’s voters (45%) now rate Newsom’s job performance in handling the pandemic as excellent or good, while 35% give him a negative assessment of poor or very poor. This is a reversal in voter opinions from late January when more offered a negative than positive assessment of his performance, 43% to 31%.

Newsom receives particularly high marks for the way he is overseeing the distribution of the coronavirus vaccines to the public, with 54% rating him as doing an excellent or good job and just 20% saying his performance in this area is poor or very poor. This contrasts sharply with the nearly two-to-one negative assessment that voters gave to Newsom’s performance in this area three months ago.

One Covid-19 related area where voter opinions about the Governor’s performance remain divided relates to the way he and state government have set guidelines for businesses and the public to follow during the pandemic. The latest poll finds 40% giving Newsom a positive rating in this area, while about as many (39%) offer a negative opinion.



**Table 5**  
**Voter assessments of the job Governor Newsom is doing in handling**  
**the coronavirus pandemic -- Now vs. late January (among California registered voters)**

	Excellent/ good %	Fair %	Poor/ very poor %	No opinion %
<b><u>Handling the coronavirus pandemic in California (overall)</u></b>				
<b>Late April</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4</b>
Late January	31	23	43	3
<b><u>Overseeing the distribution of coronavirus vaccines to the public</u></b>				
<b>Late April</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
Late January	22	24	40	14
<b><u>Setting guidelines for business and the public to follow during the coronavirus pandemic</u></b>				
<b>Late April</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4</b>
Late January	na	na	na	na

*na: Not asked in late January survey.*

**Assessment of Newsom’s performance in most other areas are mixed**

The poll also asked voters to assess the job the Governor was doing in handling other major issues facing the state. In several areas, the Governor receives more negative than positive ratings. For example, 57% of the state’s voters rate Newsom as doing a poor or very job in handling homelessness, while just 13% rate his performance in this area as excellent or good job. Similarly, a 53% majority gives the Governor poor or very poor job marks for his handling of housing costs, while only 13% rate him positively. More voters also give the Governor negative than positive marks for the job he is doing in handling crime and criminal justice (42% to 24%).

On the other hand, Newsom is rated more positively than negatively for his handling of climate change, with 37% describing his performance in this area as excellent or good and just 24% rating him as doing a poor or very poor job.

Voters offer more mixed assessments of the Governor in his handling of a number of other major state issues, including health care, the threat of wildfires, education and the schools, jobs and the economy, and race relations. In each case, about a third of voters give Newsom positive marks of excellent or good, while roughly similar proportions offer a negative assessment.

<b>Table 6</b>				
<b>Voter assessments of the job Newsom is doing in handling other major issue facing the state -- Now vs. September 2020 (among California registered voters)</b>				
	<b>Excellent/ good %</b>	<b>Fair %</b>	<b>Poor/ very poor %</b>	<b>No opinion %</b>
<b><u>Climate change</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>
September 2020	34	24	24	18
<b><u>Health care</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>
September 2020	31	26	27	16
<b><u>The threat of wildfires</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>11</b>
September 2020	25	24	39	12
<b><u>Education and the schools</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>
September 2020	28	26	32	14
<b><u>Jobs and the economy</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>
September 2020	29	27	31	13
<b><u>Race relations</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>
September 2020	32	24	29	15
<b><u>Drought and managing the state's water resources</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>
September 2020	na	na	na	na
<b><u>Crime and criminal justice*</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>12</b>
September 2020	27	25	35	13
<b><u>Housing costs</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>
September 2020	12	25	46	17
<b><u>Homelessness</u></b>				
<b>Late April 2021</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>8</b>
September 2020	11	22	55	12

\* September 2020 wording for this item was "crime and public safety"

### **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. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The poll was administered online in English and Spanish April 29-May 5, 2021 among 10,289 California registered voters. To cover a broad range of issues and still minimize respondent fatigue the overall sample was divided into two random samples of 5,036 and 5,253 voters each when measuring the job performance of Governor Newsom in specific areas.

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 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 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 are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Findings from results based on each of the two random subsamples, as well as those based on the sample of registered Democrats, are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

### **Question wording**

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Gavin Newsom is handling his job as Governor of California?

A recall election will likely be held in California later this year asking voters whether they want to remove Governor Gavin Newsom from office. If the recall election of Governor Newsom were being held today, how would you vote -- YES to remove Newsom from office or NO to keep Newsom as Governor?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much interest do you have in the gubernatorial recall election, where "one" means you are not interested at all and "ten" means you are very interested. Choose any number between one and ten for your answer.

In the recall election, voters will first be asked to vote Yes or No on the question of whether to remove Governor Newsom from office. Then, a second question will ask voters who they would choose to replace Newsom as governor should he be recalled from office. Several prominent Republicans have

already announced their intention to run or are giving serious consideration to run as candidates for governor in the recall election. For each please indicate whether you would be inclined or not inclined to vote for that person to become governor should Newsom be removed from office. Please select as many or as few persons as you'd like as people you would be inclined to support. If you don't know enough about the candidate, select no opinion. (ORDERING OF CANDIDATES RANDOMIZED)

(ASKED OF REGISTERED DEMOCRATS) As a registered Democrat, which of the following two scenarios do you favor when voting on the second question on the recall election ballot regarding who should succeed Newsom as governor if Newsom is removed from office?

- (1) Have other prominent Democrats listed on that replacement election ballot to provide another way for a Democrat to remain as governor if Newsom is removed from office.
- (2) Not have other prominent Democrats run in the replacement election for governor to demonstrate party solidarity with Newsom and not undercut his campaign to defeat the recall

How would you rate the job Governor Newsom is doing in handling each of the following issues? NOTE: THE OVERALL SAMPLE WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO RANDOM SUBSAMPLES WHEN ASSESSING THE VARIOUS ISSUES POSED, AND ALSO RANDOMIZED THE ORDERING OF THE ISSUES.

ISSUES INCLUDED IN RANDOM SUBSAMPLE A: Homelessness, Health care, Housing costs, Climate change, Jobs and the economy, and The coronavirus pandemic in California.

ISSUES INCLUDED IN RANDOM SUBSAMPLE B: Overseeing the distribution of coronavirus vaccine to the California public, Setting guidelines for businesses and the public to follow during the coronavirus pandemic, Race relations, Education and the schools, Crime and criminal justice, The threat of wildfires, and Drought and managing the state's water resources.

#### **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 *Berkeley IGS Poll*, please visit the poll's website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.