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## **Survey Methods of the Berkeley IGS Poll**

The Berkeley IGS Poll is a regularly scheduled non-partisan survey of California public opinion conducted by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. 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. Each poll is conducted to assess public opinion on important public policy issues facing California on behalf of the University.

Each poll is funded by IGS. Since 2019 the poll has also received funding and support from the *Los Angeles Times*.

### **Data collection**

The poll is administered online by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of registered voters within the state of California. The invitation asks voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provides a link to the IGS website where the questionnaire is housed. The invitation is distributed under University of California letterhead and is signed by the Institute's co-directors, Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor G. Cristina Mora. It describes the broad purposes of the poll, its sponsorship, how long the survey is likely to take, and the fact that all email addresses were obtained from publicly accessible information contained on the state's voter rolls.

A consent form is also appended, which respondents are required to complete before opening the link to the survey questionnaire. The consent form explains that responses to the survey will remain anonymous and that all personally identifiable information

about them will be purged from the data file and replaced with a unique identification number during data processing. Respondents are also provided with the contact information of the IGS co-directors, as well as that of the UC Berkeley Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, should they have any questions or concerns about the poll.

To maximize survey participation, up to four email invitations are distributed to voters at different intervals during the data collection period. An opt-out link is provided at the bottom of each invitation for voters not wishing to receive future emails from IGS about the survey. While participation is voluntary, to encourage participation voters are also told that by responding to the survey they will be entered into a drawing to win a gift card worth \$200.

The relatively low cost of sampling voters through the email invitation method enables the Berkeley IGS Poll to efficiently retrieve very large samples of the registered voter population under examination, typically on the order of 4,000 - 6,000. The size of these samples enables the findings to be subdivided and reliably examined across major geographic regions, as well as across a wide range of political and demographic subgroups of the registered voter population. Samples of this size also lend greater opportunities to align the sample to population characteristics of the registered voters under study.

### **Questionnaire development**

The Berkeley IGS Poll director takes the lead in developing the survey questionnaire, working in consultation with the IGS co-directors, who serve as each study's principal investigators, and with reporters and editors of the *Los Angeles Times*. University faculty members, other campus institutes, as well as non-profit centers and foundations can pay to sponsor surveys or pay for the right to add questions to its polls to further their own research on public policy topics for separate publication.

Once a survey questionnaire has been finalized, the questionnaire and accompanying email invitations to respondents are forwarded to the University's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), which reviews all human subjects research on campus. Once approval from CPHS has been received the survey materials are translated into Spanish and both the English and Spanish language versions of the survey questionnaire are programmed onto the Qualtrics platform for online administration. Before launching the survey, the web-based programs are thoroughly tested on PC and mobile devices to review their appearance on the screens and to ensure that the survey's logic and randomizations are working properly.

### **Sampling**

The Berkeley IGS Poll employs a registration-based sampling approach through which a stratified random sampling of registered voters with email addresses from listings originating from the voter registration rolls, which is a public record. Sample listings are provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc. (PDI), a leading supplier of voter lists to the California research community. The voter rolls contain a wealth of publicly available information, such as voters' age, gender, county and political jurisdiction of residence, party registration and history of voting in past elections. This information is then merged into each respondent's survey record during data processing.

PDI's listings are regularly updated at the county level to ensure that the samples they provide to IGS are current and reflect the state's ever-changing registered voter population. In addition, because the poll is conducted using a registration-based sampling methodology, all survey participants are known to be registered voters.

In addition, because IGS has found that response rates to email invitation surveys can vary in relation to a voter's age, gender, or other demographic factors, before drawing its samples the poll director provides PDI with instructions for stratifying its overall voter listings into different strata and to then randomly select voters within each stratum. This is done so that proportionately greater numbers of registered voters can be drawn for the lower responding voter segments, while proportionately fewer listings

are drawn for the higher responding segments. This procedure enables the survey to retrieve a proper balance of respondents across each stratum.

To ensure a proper representation of the non-English-speaking Latino voter population, IGS also draws random samples of voters from the pool of voters who have requested Spanish language ballots from their County Registrars when voting in elections. These voters are sent their email invitations in Spanish and given the opportunity to complete the survey in either Spanish or English.

IGS sometimes augments its samples with additional listings targeting voters who live within a particular geographic area of the state or within a specific demographic or political voter subgroup. When sample augmentations of targeted subgroups are included, weights are devised to adjust the oversampled segments back to their actual shares of the registered voter population under examination during data processing.

### **Data processing**

Because each voter's voter registration record contains important demographic and voting participation information about them, this information is merged with each respondent's survey record during the data processing phase. Demographic data in the merged file are also checked against the testimony given by voters in the survey to ensure that the information provided by the respondent is consistent with the information that resides on their voter registration record. Where obvious inconsistencies are found, these cases are deleted from the data file.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from their voter record are purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing.

### **Weighting**

At the conclusion of data collection, sample adjustment weights are applied to bring the survey sample into alignment with known demographic and geographic characteristics of the registered voter population under examination. This is done using raking procedures, also referred to as sample balancing. Raking is an iterative process in which survey estimates are controlled to their marginal population distributions. The raking process can be thought of as a multidimensional poststratification procedure because the weights are post-stratified to one set (or dimension) of control totals, and these adjusted weights are post-stratified to another dimension. This process is iterated until the control totals for all dimensions are simultaneously satisfied, resulting in the production of a final single weighting assignment for each respondent.

Each survey's weighting targets are derived from population estimates reported to IGS by PDI from its voter files, and when appropriate, from government sources, such as the California Secretary of State, Registrars of Voters, or the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The variables typically included in the development of the weights include age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, English language proficiency, geographic region, urbanity of residence, party registration, voting participation in past elections, or combinations of these variables. In designing the weights, targets incorporate important interactions to help address problems of differential non-response.

### **Tabulation of the results**

Detailed tabulations are then prepared reporting the results to each survey question both in total and across a wide range of geographic, political, and demographic subgroups of the registered voter sample. These tabulations also display the unweighted and weighted sample sizes of each segment to permit the calculation of sampling error estimates for each of the subgroups.

When polling on election contests, additional tabulations are prepared filtering the survey results among voters considered most likely to vote in an upcoming election.

IGS typically defines likely voters from respondent testimony about their stated interest in or intention to vote in the upcoming election and their history of voting in recent past elections gathered from their voting record.

### **Reporting**

When completing its regularly scheduled statewide polls, the study director takes the lead in analyzing the survey results and summarizing its main findings in press release-style reports for public release. These press releases are then posted onto the Berkeley IGS Poll website at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>, where they can be downloaded via eScholarship, the University's open-access publication platform.

Each release typically includes a summary of the poll's main findings, accompanied by tables comparing the survey results across key population subgroups or to past measures on the same topic. A fact sheet is also appended providing details about how the poll was conducted, the dates of data collection, and the wording and order in which the questions being reported were asked to conform with the guidelines of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative.

### **Data archiving**

The source data file containing the results of each survey conducted by the Berkeley IGS Poll are now archived and made accessible to students, faculty, and others for scholarly review and secondary analysis through the University's Dataverse platform.