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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 throughout California on important public policy issues facing the state and the nation on behalf of the University.

#### **Data collection**

The poll is administered online by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. 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 three 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 low cost of sampling voters through the email invitation method enables the Berkeley IGS Poll to efficiently retrieve very large samples of the California registered voter population, typically on the order of 6,000 - 8,000. These large sample sizes enable the statewide findings to be subdivided and reliably examined across eight major geographic regions of the state, as well as across a wide range of political and demographic subgroups of the state's registered voter population. Samples of this size also lend greater opportunities to align the sample to population characteristics of California registered voters at both the state and regional level.

### **Questionnaire development**

Berkeley IGS Poll director Mark DiCamillo takes the lead in developing each survey questionnaire, in consultation with the IGS co-directors. In addition, when developing questions on state election contests and major public policy issues facing California, he also consults with reporters and editors of the *Los Angeles Times*, which provides the poll with annual funding and support. In return the *Times* is granted the right of first release for all reports prepared for public release by the Berkeley IGS Poll at the conclusion of each survey.

University faculty members, other campus institutes, as well as non-profit centers, foundations and government agencies can also pay for the right to add questions to the poll to further their own research on public policy topics of their own choosing. Their proposed questions are also reviewed by the poll director to ensure that all questions included in each survey are worded in a balanced and unbiased manner.

Once the survey questionnaire has been finalized, it is translated into Spanish and both the English and Spanish language versions are then 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**

Samples of California registered voters with email addresses are provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc. (PDI) from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls. The voter rolls contain a wealth of publicly available information about the state's voters, such as their age, gender, county 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 voter population. In addition, because the poll is conducted using a registration-based sampling methodology, all survey participants are known to be registered voters, which is an advantage over polls that attempt to identify registered voters from survey testimony that may not always be accurately reported.

Because IGS has found that response rates to email invitation surveys vary in relation to a voter's age and gender, before drawing its samples the poll director instructs PDI to stratify their voter file into different age and gender-based segments, and to randomly select voters within each strata. Proportionately greater numbers of voters are selected 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 balance of respondents across all age and gender segments.

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

IGS sometimes augments its statewide sample with additional listings targeting voters who live within a particular geographic area of the state or within a specific demographic or political voter subgroup, such as among Central Valley voters, Blacks, or registered Republicans. When sample augmentations of targeted subgroups are included, weights are devised to adjust the oversampled segments back to their actual shares of the state's registered voter population during data processing.

### **Data processing**

Because each voter's voter registration records contain 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 then 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 listing are purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing.

Detailed tabulations are then prepared reporting the results to each survey question both statewide 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.

### **Weighting**

At the conclusion of data collection and processing, sample adjustment weights are applied to bring the survey sample into alignment with known demographic and geographic characteristics of the state's registered voter population. 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 estimates reported to IGS by PDI from their voter files, as well as from government sources, such as the California Secretary of State and the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, Voting Supplement for California. The variables typically included in the development of the weighting targets include age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, English language proficiency, geographic region of the state, urbanity of their residential area, party registration, voting participation in past elections, or combinations of these variables (e.g., age by gender, party

registration by region, race/ethnicity by education, etc.). In designing the weights, targets incorporate important interactions to help address problems of differential non-response.

### **Reporting**

Shortly after the completion of each survey, the poll director takes the lead in analyzing the survey results and preparing press release-style reports for public distribution. Each poll report is printed on Berkeley IGS Poll letterhead and posted on 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. Poll releases typically include 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**

After the conclusion of each study, the source data file and its supporting documentation are forwarded to UC Data, the University's main depository of social science research data, where they can be accessed by students, faculty, and others for scholarly review and secondary analysis.