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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.

Annual funding for the poll is provided to IGS in part by the *Los Angeles Times*, which serves as the poll's media partner when releasing survey results to the public. The poll also receives occasional *ad hoc* funding from University faculty and policy centers, and from foundations and non-profit organizations enabling them to poll on policy-related research topics of their own choosing.

Each poll is administered online by distributing email invitations through the Qualtrics platform to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Voters are selected using a registration-based sampling methodology derived from the voter registration rolls. This ensures that all respondents in the survey are registered to vote. Political Data, Inc. (PDI), a leading supplier of registration-based sample listings in California, draws each sample for IGS from their continuously updated data file of the state's registered voter population.

Because IGS has found that response rates to email invitation surveys vary in relation to a voter's age and gender, before drawing each sample, instructions are given to PDI to stratify the voter file into different age and gender-based strata and to then randomly sample voters within each stratum. Proportionately greater numbers of voters are randomly selected for the lower responding voter strata, while proportionately fewer listings are drawn for the higher

responding strata. This procedure enables the sample to retrieve a better balance of survey respondents across all age and gender segments.

To ensure representation of the state's large non-English-speaking Latino voter population, IGS also draws a random sample of non-English speakers from the statewide pool of voters who have requested Spanish language ballots when voting in prior elections. These voters are sent their email invitations in Spanish and given the opportunity to complete the survey in Spanish or English. In addition, from time-to-time IGS augments its sample with additional listings targeting voters who live within a particular geographic area of the state or within a specific demographic subgroup.

Email invitations are distributed to voters under University of California letterhead and are signed by IGS's co-directors, who serve as each poll's principal investigators. The invitation provides respondents with a short summary of the purposes of the poll, its sponsorship, how long the survey is likely to take and that their email address was obtained from publicly accessible voter registration records. A consent form is also appended, which respondents are required to complete before opening the link to the survey questionnaire which is hosted at the IGS website. The consent form explains that all responses to the survey will remain anonymous, and that their email address and all other personally identifiable information about them will be purged from the data file and replaced with a unique identification number after the survey has been completed. Respondents are also provided with the contact information of the principal investigators and the UC Berkeley Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects should they have any questions or concerns about the poll.

Up to three email invitations are sent to voters at different intervals during the data collection period, which typically extends over a one-week period. While participation is voluntary, to encourage participation voters are told that by responding to the survey they will automatically be entered into a drawing to win a gift card worth \$200. 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.

The low cost of sampling voters through the email invitation method enables the poll to efficiently retrieve very large samples of registered voters in each poll, typically on the order of 6,000-8,000. These large sample sizes enable the statewide findings to be subdivided across a wide range of political, geographic, and demographic subgroups of the registered voter population, and also lend greater stability to the post-stratification weights applied to the sample at the conclusion of the survey.

Because each respondent's voter registration record also contains important demographic information, such as their age, gender, county and city of residence, party registration, as well as their history of voting in past statewide elections, this information is merged into each respondent's survey record during the data processing phase. Demographic data in the merged file are then checked to ensure that information provided by responding voters in the survey is consistent with the demographic information about them that resides on their voter registration record. Where obvious inconsistencies are found, these cases are deleted from the data file.

All questions included onto the poll are reviewed by the poll director to ensure that they can be easily administered to a cross-section of the state's voters and that they are framed in a balanced and objective manner. Questions included in the poll that cover state policy or election topics for public release are developed in consultation with news editors from the *Los Angeles Times*.

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.

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 then iterated until the control totals for all dimensions are simultaneously satisfied, resulting in the production of a final single weighting assignment for each respondent.

Population distributions of the state's registered voters from which each survey's weighting targets are based are derived from estimates reported by PDI, as well as by the California Secretary of State and the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, Voting Supplement for California. The weighting targets include such variables as age, gender, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, educational attainment, region and urbanity of residence, party registration, and voting participation in past elections, or combinations of these variables. In designing the weights, the targets incorporate important interactions to help address problems relating to differential non-response.

Shortly after the completion of each survey, press releases derived from the poll's findings are published under Berkeley IGS Poll letterhead and posted on the IGS website, where they can be downloaded on eScholarship, the University's open-access publication platform. Each press release includes a summary page describing the survey's sponsorship, dates of data collection, sample sizes, sampling and data collection and weighting methods employed, as well as the exact wording and order in which the questions were asked to conform with the guidelines of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative.

Several months after the conclusion of each study, the source data file and supporting documentation from the poll are forwarded to UC Data, the University's main depository of social science research data, providing students, faculty, and others with access to each survey for scholarly review and secondary analysis.