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## ***Voters now much more critical of Governor Newsom's performance.***

*Fewer than half of voters initially say they would vote to endorse Newsom if a recall election is held later this year.*

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Californians are reevaluating their views of the job Gavin Newsom is doing as governor. The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* conducted online last week among over 10,000 registered voters finds just 46% approving of Newsom's performance as governor, while 48% disapprove, 31% of whom disapprove strongly. This represents a big shift in public sentiment from last year when large majorities approved of the job Newsom was doing.

Fueling the decline is the public's much more negative assessment of the way Newsom and state government are handling the pandemic. The latest poll finds fewer than one in three Californians (31%) rating Newsom as doing an excellent or good job in handling the pandemic overall, down from 49% last September. Also, just 22% offer a positive rating of the job he and state government are doing in overseeing the distribution of the coronavirus vaccines to the public. In addition, only about half (47%) have a great deal or some trust in the way the Governor and state government are setting the rules when issuing stay-at-home orders or setting guidelines for business to follow to slow the spread of the virus, with majorities describing them as inconsistent (62%), confusing (60%) and ineffective (53%).

When asked about the possibility of holding a special election later this year to recall the Governor, more voters (49%) feel it would be a bad thing for the state rather than a good thing (36%). And when asked how they would currently be disposed to vote if a recall election were held, while less than half (45%) say they would vote to retain the Governor, just 36% say they are now prepared to vote to remove Newsom from office. A relatively large proportion of voters (19%) are undecided.

Observed IGS Co-Director Eric Schickler, "These results should provide a strong warning to the Governor. If the recall election does go forward, the state's response to the pandemic needs to be seen as more successful for the Governor than it is now for him to be confident of the election outcome."

### **Big decline in appraisals of the job Newsom is doing as Governor**

The poll finds a major reappraisal in public appraisals of the job Newsom is doing as governor over the past four months. Last September a *Berkeley IGS Poll* found more voters approved than disapproved of the job Newsom was doing by a 64% to 36% margin. The latest poll finds voter views of the Governor's performance much more divided, with 46% approving and 48% disapproving. In addition, twice as many voters now report strongly disapproving Newsom (31%) as strongly approving (14%).

**Table 1**  
**Trend of voter opinions of Gavin Newsom's job performance**  
**as Governor (among California registered voters)**

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

\* Less than ½ of 1%

Voters also offer more negative than positive assessments of Newsom when asked to evaluate the Governor in four specific areas. For example, just 31% now feel Newsom is doing an excellent or good job in handling the coronavirus pandemic overall, while 22% offer an assessment of fair and 44% rate him as doing a poor or very poor job. These appraisals are nearly reversed from those he received in September, when 49% rated his overall performance on the pandemic as excellent or good and 28% rated him poorly.

Newsom and state government are rated even more negatively when asked about the job they are doing in overseeing the distribution of the coronavirus vaccines to the public. The latest poll finds just 22% of voters rating their performance in this area as excellent or good, while nearly twice as many (40%) feel it has been poor or very poor.

Voters have also become more critical of the Governor's handling of jobs and the economy in California. Fewer than one in four (23%) now rate Newsom as doing an excellent or good job in this area, while 45% rate his performance negatively. Last September just 31% rated Newsom poorly in managing the state's economy.

Voters offer similar largely negative assessments of the performance of Newsom and state government in trying to balance the safeguarding of public health with the interests of workers and the economy during the pandemic, with 27% grading them as doing an excellent or good job and 45% offering a negative assessment.

**Table 2**  
**Voter assessments of the job Governor Newsom and state government**  
**are doing in four specific areas**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Excellent/ good %	Fair %	Poor/ very poor %	No opinion %
<b><u>Handling the coronavirus pandemic in California</u></b>				
Late-January 2021	31	23	43	3
September 2020	49	19	28	4
<b><u>Overseeing the distribution of coronavirus vaccines to the public</u></b>				
Late January 2021	22	24	40	14
September 2020	na	na	na	na
<b><u>Handling jobs and the economy in the state</u></b>				
Late January 2021	23	23	45	9
September 2020	29	27	31	13
<b><u>Balancing public health with the interests of workers/the economy</u></b>				
Late-January 2021	27	22	45	6
September 2020	na	na	na	na

*na: Not asked in September 2020*

### **Initial voter sentiments about recalling Governor Newsom**

When voters are asked about the effort to hold a special election later this year to recall the Governor, more voters (49%) think that it would be bad thing for the state than think that it would be a good thing (36%). And if a recall election were held, while fewer than half of the electorate (45%) now says they would vote to retain the Governor, just 36% would vote to remove Newsom from office. A relatively large proportion (19%) is undecided.

While voter opinions about recalling the Governor divide sharply along partisan and ideological lines, Republicans and strong conservatives are currently more one-sided in their support of the recall than Democrats and strong liberals are in opposing it. Opinions about recalling Newsom are also closely aligned with voter preferences in the last presidential election. Voters who reported backing Joe Biden’s candidacy last year are opposing the recall 70% to 9%, while voting supporting Donald Trump’s re-election favor it 85% to 6%.

On a regional basis opposition to the recall is greatest among voters in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Los Angeles County. On the other hand, supporters outnumber opponents of the recall in Orange County and the Central Valley. In addition, more Black voters and older voters express opposition to recalling Newsom than do younger voters and whites.

<b>Table 3</b>			
<b>How Californians would vote if a special recall election of Governor Newsom were held today (among registered voters)</b>			
	<b>Yes, to recall</b>	<b>No, to keep</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>19</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrat	11	69	20
Republican	84	7	9
No party preference	32	40	28
All other parties	46	32	22
<u>Vote in 2020 Presidential election</u>			
Biden	9	70	21
Trump	85	6	9
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	86	8	6
Somewhat conservative	67	18	15
Moderate	32	43	25
Somewhat liberal	9	69	22
Strongly liberal	8	72	20
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	32	45	23
San Diego County	39	46	15
Orange County	45	39	16
Inland Empire	40	41	19
Other Southern California	38	42	20
Central Valley	42	38	20
San Francisco Bay Area	26	54	20
Other Northern California	39	45	16
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	39	45	16
Female	32	45	23
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	30	32	38
30-39	34	44	22
40-49	39	45	16
50-64	38	49	13
65 or older	36	51	13
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	42	45	13
Latino	28	43	29
Asian/Pacific Islander	31	41	28
Black	22	60	18

**Many are distrustful of how the Governor and the state are setting stay-at-home orders and guidelines for businesses to follow to slow the spread of the coronavirus**

Just 47% of Californians report having a great deal or some trust in the way Governor Newsom and state government are setting stay-at-home orders and guidelines for businesses to follow to slow the spread of the coronavirus, while 49% have little or no trust.

Trust in the Governor and state government in setting rules intended to slow the spread of the virus is greatest among Democrats (71%) and least among Republicans (10%). While a 57% majority of voters in the San Francisco Bay Area say they have trust in the Governor and the state in these areas, majorities in nearly all other regions are distrustful. Older voters and voters of color also report greater trust than do voters under 50 and whites.

**Table 4**  
**Trust in Governor Newsom and state government in setting stay-at-home orders and guidelines for businesses to follow to slow the spread of the coronavirus**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Great deal/ some %	Not much/ none at all %	No opinion %
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrat	71	26	3
Republican	10	88	2
No party preference	43	50	7
All other parties	33	61	6
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	48	48	4
San Diego County	46	51	3
Orange County	42	55	3
Inland Empire	45	52	3
Other Southern California	45	51	4
Central Valley	40	53	7
San Francisco Bay Area	57	39	4
Other Northern California	45	53	2
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	46	52	2
Female	49	46	5
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	39	51	10
30-39	44	51	5
40-49	44	53	3
50-64	52	46	2
65 or older	53	45	2
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	44	54	2
Latino	50	43	7
Asian/Pacific Islander	51	44	5
Black	60	35	5

**Descriptions that voters apply to the way rules and guidelines have been established during the pandemic**

Voters were presented with a list of ten descriptions, five positive and five negative, about how the Governor and state government are setting guidelines for the public and businesses to follow during the pandemic. The largest proportions of voters cite two negative descriptions, “inconsistent” (62%) and “confusing” (60%), as applying “a lot” or “some” to the way that these guidelines have been established. Two other positive descriptions, “necessary” (59%) and “science-based” (57%), are cited next most frequently.

A 53% majority also cites another negative description, “ineffective”, as applying “a lot” or “some” to the way that these rules and guidelines have been established, while about half also feel the terms “decisive” (50%) and “overly political” (48%) apply “a lot” or “some.”

In addition, greater than four in ten describe the terms “heavy handed” (46%) and “fair” (44%) as applying “a lot” or “some” to the way these rules have been set, while 40% feel they have been “well thought out.”

Table 5 below reports how voters responded to each of the ten descriptions offered during the survey.

	<b>Applies a lot/ some %</b>	<b>Applies a little/ not at all %</b>	<b>No opinion %</b>
Inconsistent	62	31	7
Confusing	60	32	8
Necessary	59	34	7
Science-based	57	36	7
Ineffective	53	39	8
Decisive	50	40	10
Overly political	48	41	11
Heavy handed	46	45	9
Fair	44	48	8
Well thought out	40	52	8

### **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 January 23-29, 2021 among 10,357 California registered voters.

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 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 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.

Detailed tabulations reporting the results to each question can be found at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.

### **Questions asked**

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

How would you rate the job Gavin Newsom is doing in handling the coronavirus pandemic in California?

How would you rate the job Gavin Newsom is doing in overseeing the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine to the California public?

How would you rate the job Gavin Newsom is doing in handling jobs and the economy in California?

How would you rate the job Governor Newsom is doing in setting the right balance between safeguarding the public health and looking out for the interests of California workers and the economy during the pandemic?

How much trust do you have in Gavin Newsom and state government when setting rules relating to public stay-at-home orders and establishing guidelines that businesses must follow to slow the spread of the coronavirus?

How much do you feel each of the following descriptions applies to the ways in which Governor Newsom and state government have established rules and guidelines for the public and businesses to follow during the pandemic? (SEE RELEASE FOR DESCRIPTIONS)

#### **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 complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.