



BLOG POST · SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

Abortion Rights Are Number One for Californians this November

Mark Baldassare

This blog post from Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO, will be published at 9:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday, September 14, 2022, to accompany the release of PPIC's new statewide survey. The information in this post—like the survey itself—is embargoed for 9:00 p.m. PT on September 14. Once the post is live, it will be available online at <https://www.ppic.org/blog/abortion-rights-are-number-one-for-californians-this-november/>.

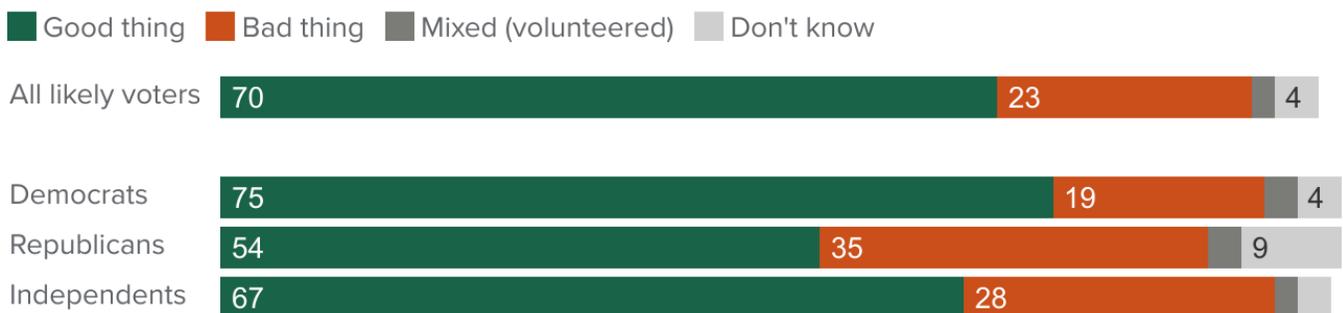
The [September PPIC Statewide Survey](#) finds most California likely voters looking favorably upon deciding abortion policy through a ballot initiative—and November’s Proposition 1 has strong support in the early going. And since the Prop 1 outcome is currently more important to those on the yes side, abortion rights supporters are a group to watch in the midterms. But as voters become policy deciders this fall, their elected officials should take heed of the fact that abortion attitudes are more nuanced than might be expected, even in a solidly pro-choice state.

How did we get here? On [June 24](#), the US Supreme Court overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, ending the federal constitutional right to an abortion. In a clear rebuke of this action, 70% of California likely voters voiced disapproval of the Supreme Court’s decision in our [July survey](#). Californians’ negative reaction is consistent with their strong, long-held opposition to overturning *Roe v. Wade* that we have found in 10 PPIC surveys between [August 2005](#) and [April 2022](#).

In the wake of the unpopular Supreme Court ruling, the California Legislature crafted a state constitutional amendment on abortion rights for the November ballot. A majority yes vote on [Prop 1](#) would prohibit the state from denying or interfering with an individual’s reproductive freedom, including the right to choose an abortion and contraceptives.

What do likely voters think about the state’s action? Seventy percent say it is mostly a “good thing” (23% “bad thing”) to have a legislative constitutional amendment on the November ballot so that voters can decide on abortion rights at the state level. At a time of deep partisan divisions, it is noteworthy that majorities across political parties (75% Democrats, 54% Republicans, 67% independents) say this is a good thing for voters to decide. This widely held belief is consistent with [past PPIC surveys](#) that find most California likely voters saying the initiative process is a good thing. Today, majorities across the state’s regions and age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups say it is a good thing to have a legislative constitutional amendment related to abortion rights on the ballot this fall.

An overwhelming majority of likely voters say it is a good thing to have a legislative constitutional amendment on abortion rights



SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, September 2022. Survey was fielded from September 2–11, 2022 (n=1,705 adults, n=1,060 likely voters).

FROM: PPIC Blog, September 2022.

After hearing the ballot title and label for Prop 1, 69% of likely voters say that they would vote yes (25% no) on this legislative constitutional amendment. Overwhelming majorities of Democrats (86%), 67% of independents, and 33% of Republicans would vote yes on this measure. Likely voters’ current level of support for Prop 1 is consistent with their level of opposition to overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Today, majorities across regions and age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups would vote yes on Prop 1.

Most likely voters say they will vote yes on Prop 1

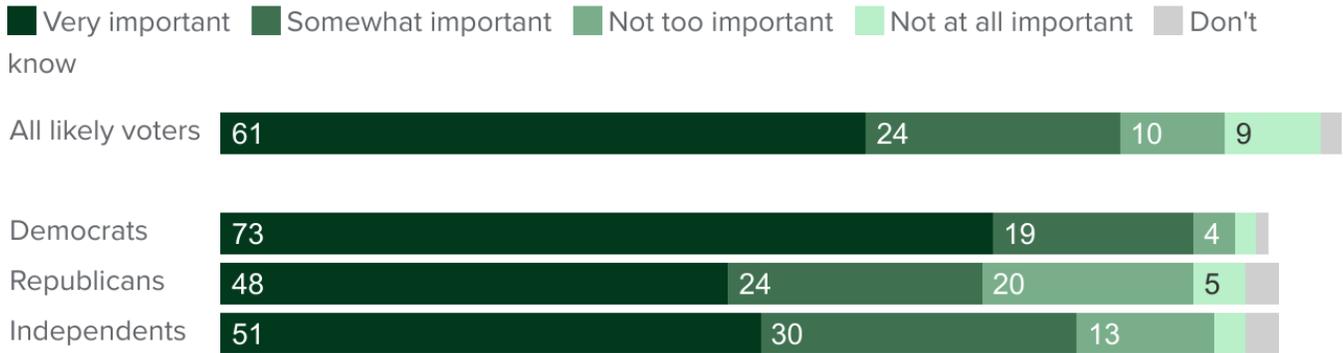


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More than eight in ten likely voters say that the outcome of the vote on Prop 1 is important to them (61% very, 24% somewhat). Democrats (73%) are far more likely than Republicans (48%) and independents (51%) to view this outcome as “very important” to them. Notably, those who would vote yes on Prop 1 say the outcome is very important (67%) to them—much more often than those who would vote no (49%). Majorities say that the Prop 1 outcome is very important to them across regions, and nearly half or more across age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups hold this view. Clearly, abortion rights is a salient election issue to some likely voters more than others, meaning that Prop 1 could have an impact on voter turnout in ways that might benefit pro-choice candidates. For example, voters’ perceptions of the importance of this measure may have repercussions on local House races that will help to determine the party in control of Congress.

A majority of likely voters say the outcome of the vote on Prop 1 is very important to them



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Notably, in spite of support for Prop 1, many likely voters express conditional support for access to abortion. That is, while three in four say that abortion should be legal, 42% say it should be legal in all cases while 33% say it should be legal in most cases (16% say it should be illegal in most cases; 7% say it should be illegal in all cases).

A majority of Democrats (57%) and those who would vote yes on Prop 1 (54%) say that abortion should be legal in all cases. But many Democrats (32%) and independents (34%)—as well as many who would vote yes on Prop 1 (38%)—say that abortion should be legal in most cases. Fewer than half across regions, with the exception of the San Francisco Bay Area (64%), and across age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups say that abortion should be legal in all cases—even while most in all these groups say abortion should be legal.

These findings suggest that support for Prop 1 could erode if voters believe that it would make abortion legal in all cases. And policymakers could face a political backlash if they interpret the vote for Prop 1 as support for making abortion legal in all cases.

California voters will decide the fate of Prop 1 in the wake of Kansas voters' recent defeat (59% no) of a legislative constitutional amendment to restrict abortion. A few other states also have ballot measures on abortion policies in November. With nearly 20 million registered voters and a storied history of ballot initiatives, California will be a national bellwether in the post-*Roe v. Wade* era.

Once again, Californians are sending a message that “hybrid democracy”—in this instance, a blending of a legislative action with a ballot initiative—is a good thing. In hyper-partisan times, we find surprising agreement among Californians of different political stripes about having voters weigh in on important issues. But California voters need more tools if they are being asked to make informed choices. They also need more ways to engage in civil, constructive dialogue about the pros and cons of ballot measures. Citizens' initiative commissions, town halls, and televised debates would be valuable additions to advertisements from ballot campaigns. All this may sound like a tall order, but with so many consequential issues confronting the state, more investments are needed to help voters decide on the future of California.