



BLOG POST · NOVEMBER 8, 2023

How Are Californians Viewing the 2024 Elections?

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This blog post from Mark Baldassare, Statewide Survey Director and Miller Chair in Public Policy, will be published at 9:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 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 November 8. Once the post is live, it will be available online at <https://www.ppic.org/blog/how-are-californians-viewing-the-2024-elections/>.

Election season is heating up in California and across the nation. What is the current mood of the California electorate? And how would they vote on key ballot items if the election were held today? The PPIC Statewide Survey has been tracking top-of-the-ticket races and potential ballot initiatives for several months now, and trends are emerging as candidates and election issues come into focus. The [November PPIC survey](#) offers new insights as activity ramps up for the 2024 election.

Right now, the mood is generally gloomy, with a majority of likely voters holding negative perceptions of the state of the state. Sixty percent are expecting bad economic times during the next 12 months and 52% think that things are going in the wrong direction in California. Still, about half say they approve of Governor Newsom (54%) and the Democratic-controlled state legislature (49%) when it comes to the number one issue on voters' minds this year—jobs and the economy.

Why these conflicting reports? Perhaps personal circumstances play a role. Seven in ten likely voters are satisfied (18% very, 58% somewhat) with their household's finances and perceive their own financial situation as about the same (54%) or better (16%) than a year ago. Also, elected officials' approval ratings reflect partisan polarization in a deep blue state ([47% Democrat, 24% Republican](#)). Taken together, all of these views set the election context.

Here is the latest read on key 2024 races and potential ballot initiatives:

March senate primary. About half of likely voters are naming Democratic congressmembers Adam Schiff (21%), Katie Porter (18%), or Barbara Lee (9%) as their preferences in the top-two US senate primary. All Republican candidates have less support. (New Democratic senator Laphonza Butler and late-entry Republican Steve Garvey were not on the survey's candidate list and had few mentions.) Schiff and Porter are the top two choices among Democrats and independents, liberals and moderates, men and women, Latinos and whites, and in every major region except for the San Francisco Bay Area. Schiff and Porter were also the leading vote getters in the [September PPIC survey](#) (20% Schiff, 15% Porter) and the [July PPIC survey](#) (16% Schiff, 19% Porter). After the March senate primary it is likely that two Democrats will move forward, as in the last two senate primaries (2016: Kamala Harris and Loretta Sanchez; 2018: Dianne Feinstein and Kevin de León), but this time without a candidate who has been on a statewide general election ballot. So far, there is no clear favorite in the November 2024 election.

Three Democratic candidates lead in the US Senate primary race

Top 3 candidates



SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, November 2023. Survey was fielded from October 3-19, 2023 (n=2,250 adults, n=1,395 likely voters).

NOTES: Among likely voters only.

FROM: PPIC Blog, November 2023.

Republican presidential primary. California Republicans will be voting in the Super Tuesday presidential primary on March 5. The party rules dictate that a majority vote would give the winner all of the state’s delegates, and former president Donald Trump is now supported by 53% of Republican likely voters. Trump’s closest competitors in a crowded field are far behind—including Florida governor Ron DeSantis at 12% and former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley at 9%. (Former vice president Mike Pence at 6% has dropped out of the race.) Trump’s support has been remarkably steady in PPIC surveys (50% June, 50% July, 48% September, 53% November) amidst a flurry of criminal indictments and court appearances. It is noteworthy that just 5% of Republicans either name “someone else” (4%) or don’t know who they would vote for (1%). Most Republicans want a rematch between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in 2024.

Over half of Republican likely voters would vote for Donald Trump if the Republican presidential primary were held today

Top 3 candidates



SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, November 2023. Survey was fielded from October 3-19, 2023 (n=2,250 adults, n=1,395 likely voters).

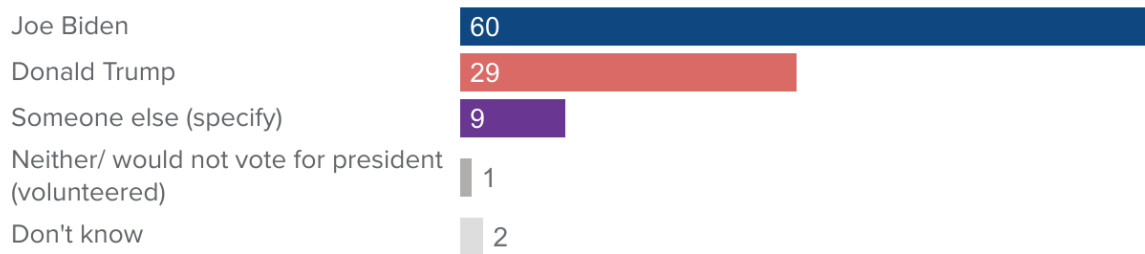
NOTES: Among Republican likely voters only.

FROM: PPIC Blog, November 2023.

Presidential election. California likely voters would choose Joe Biden over Donald Trump by a 31-point margin (60% to 29%) if the November 2024 election were held today. This margin of support was similar in the [June PPIC survey](#) (58% Biden, 25% Trump), the [July PPIC survey](#) (57% Biden, 31% Trump), and the [September PPIC survey](#) (57% Biden, 26% Trump). These findings are consistent with the margin of victory for the Democratic candidate in the [2020 California election](#)

(63.5% Biden, 34.3% Trump). Today, Biden leads Trump in all the state’s major regions and across demographic and racial/ethnic groups. A highly polarized electorate is evident in the huge partisan divide in presidential preferences (89% of Democrats for Biden; 79% of Republicans for Trump; 55% of independents for Biden and 23% for Trump). But there is also some appetite for a third choice: 9% say they would vote for “someone else” for president, with this sentiment for change varying across parties (4% Democrat, 9% Republican, 18% independent) and state regions (5% San Francisco Bay Area, 8% Los Angeles, 9% Orange/San Diego, 13% Central Valley, 14% Inland Empire). One of next year’s big unknowns: in a lopsided top-of-the-ticket race in California, will the coattail effect help to flip House seats in a closely divided Congress?

Joe Biden leads Donald Trump by a wide margin in the presidential race



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State propositions. Californians’ economic well-being is front and center on two citizen’s initiatives headed for the November ballot. First, a strong majority of likely voters (67%) favor an increase in the current minimum wage—from \$15 an hour to \$16 in 2024, with \$1 raises each year until it reaches \$18. Six in ten or more across demographic groups and regions are in favor while partisans are deeply divided (86% Democrats, 36% Republicans, 64% independents). Second, a majority of likely voters (55%) favor a policy that would expand local government’s authority to enact rent control on residential property. The share of those who favor an expansion of local rent control varies sharply between renters and homeowners (76% to 47%) and partisans (70% Democrats, 32% Republicans, 52% independents), and differs across regions (59% each San Francisco, Los Angeles, Inland Empire; 54% Central Valley, 48% Orange/San Diego). Majority support for these two ballot initiatives offers a window into the political consequences of workers’ wages, rising prices, and high housing costs in California.

A major political wildcard next year? Voter engagement and its effects on turnout. Today, far fewer likely voters are “very closely” watching the news about presidential candidates than they were four years ago (40% [November 2019](#); 25% November 2023). Is this a sign of voter fatigue with a race that includes two presidential candidates who faced off four years ago?

Of course, a major surprise could alter next year’s election dynamics, as COVID did in 2020 and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* did in 2022. As California voters are tasked with making big

decisions for the state and nation in 2024, PPIC Statewide Surveys will be asking about key issues, events, and ballot choices throughout this election season.