



# California's Exclusive Electorate

Who Votes and Why It Matters

March 2016

Mark Baldassare

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With grant funding from The James Irvine Foundation and research support from Dean Bonner, David Kordus, and Lunna Lopes



**PPIC**

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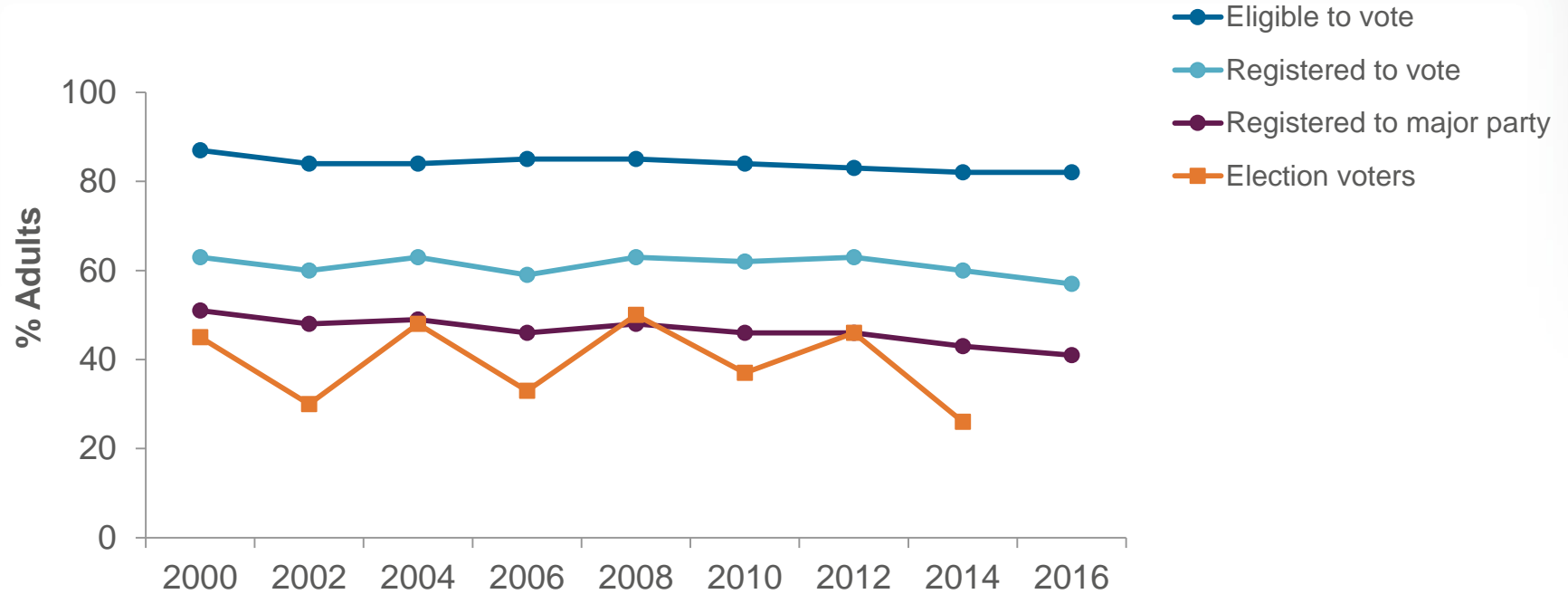
# California's citizens make critical policy decisions at the ballot box

- California's electorate does not reflect the state's diversity, attitudes, or preferences
- This trend has persisted for at least 10 years
  - Earlier PPIC work found similar patterns
- Economic and political inequality is a powerful theme this presidential election year
  - Many important national, state, and local decisions

# Our data come from a variety of sources

- Voter registration and election statistics from the Secretary of State (October 2000 to January 2016)
- Demographic and economic trends from the U.S. Census and California Department of Finance
- Profiles and public opinion from the 2015 PPIC Statewide Surveys
  - Includes 11,936 adults and 7 monthly surveys

# Voter eligibility is high, but participation lags

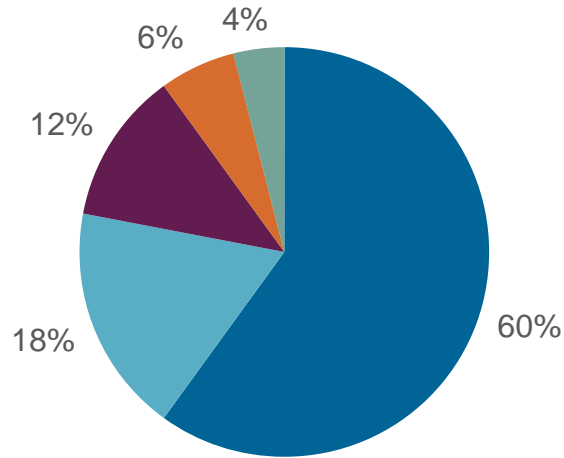


# Political participation has not kept up with population growth

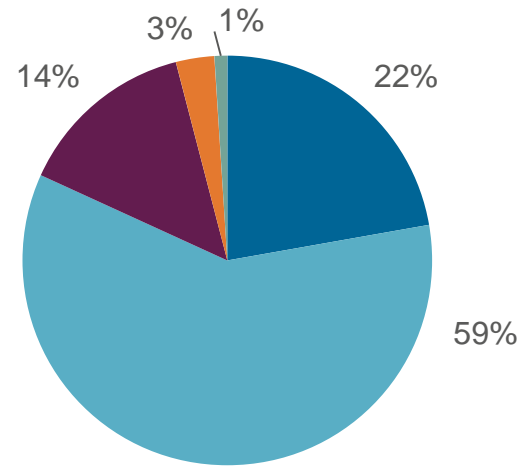
	Millions	
	2000	2016
Adults 18+	24.8	30.1
Eligible to vote	21.5	24.6
Registered to vote	15.7	17.3
Registered to major party	12.6	12.2
Election voters	11.1	—

# Voters do not represent state's racial diversity

## Likely Voters

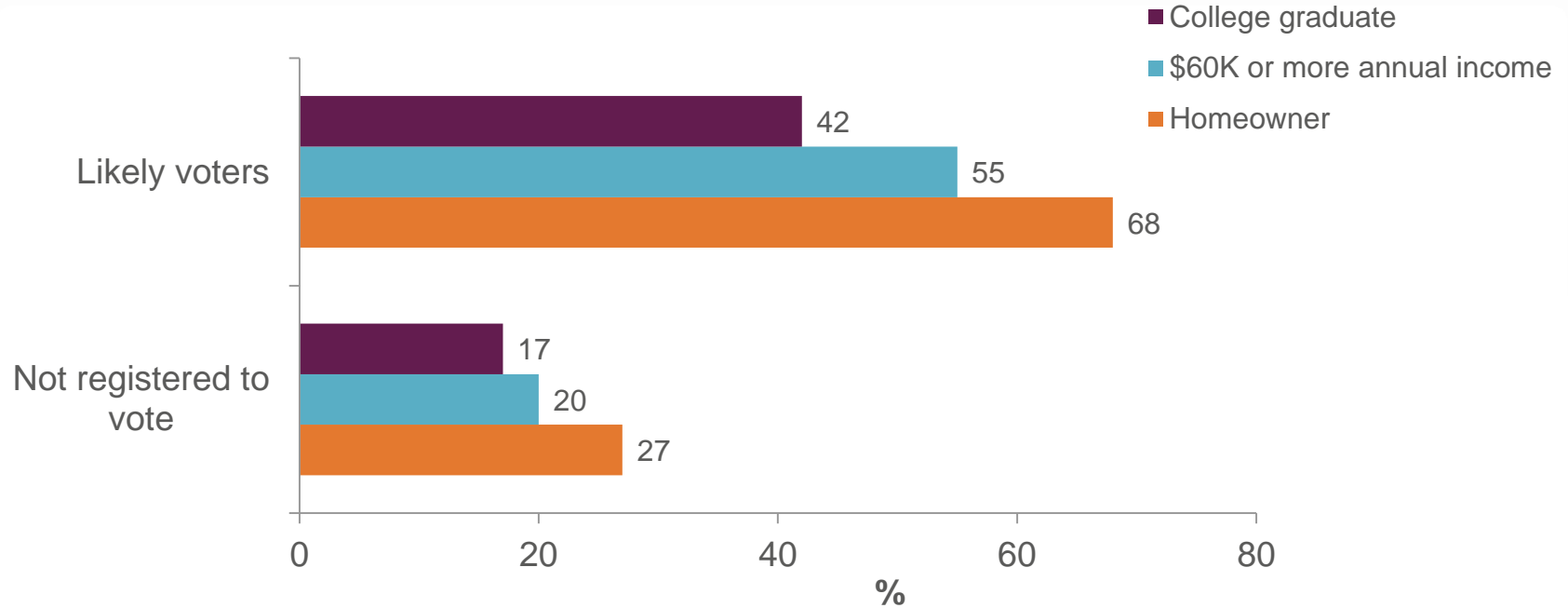


## Not Registered to Vote



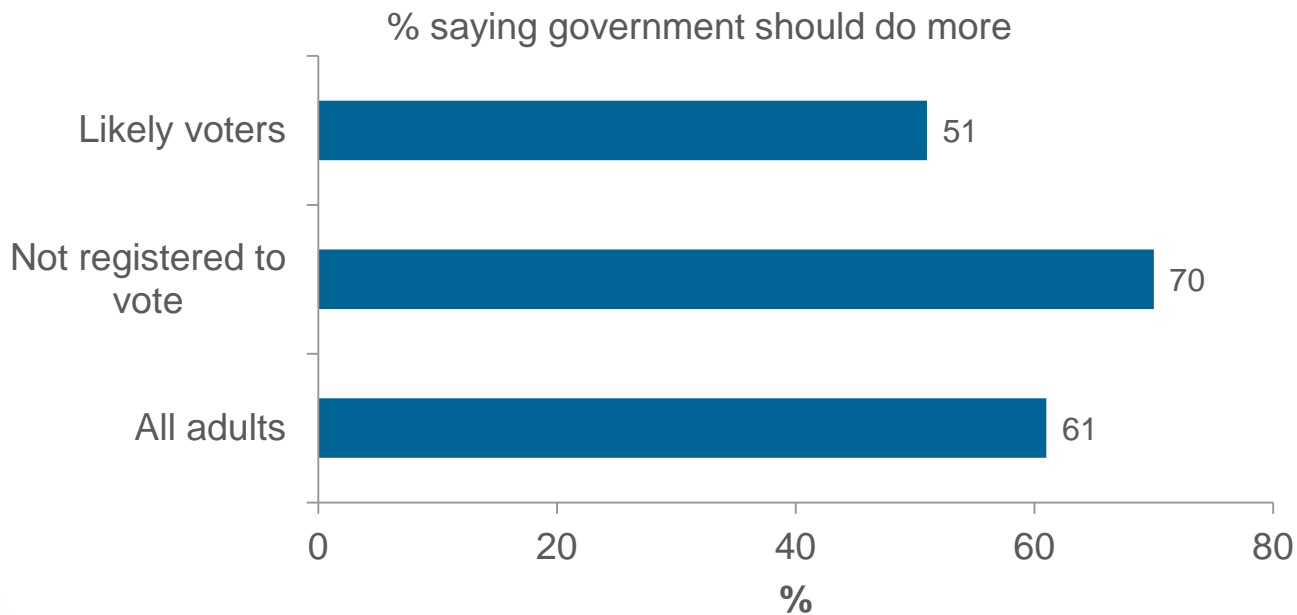
- White
- Latino
- Asian
- Black
- Other

# Likely voters tend to be more affluent



# Significant gaps between likely voters and nonvoters on addressing income inequality . . .

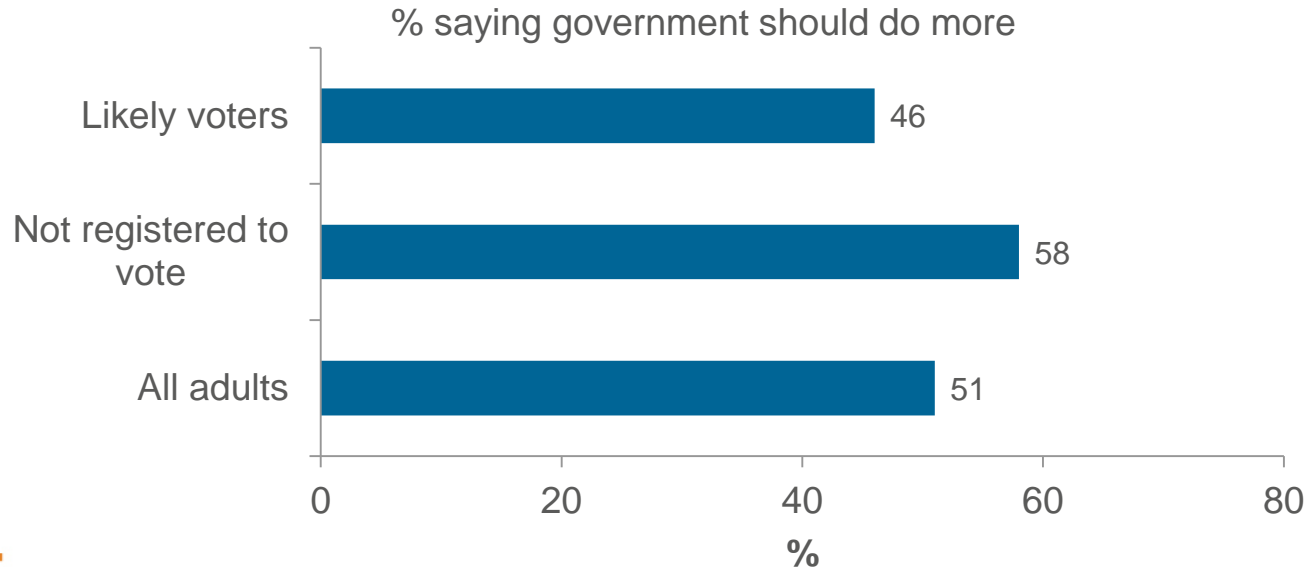
“Should the government do more to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in this country, or is this something the government should not be doing?”





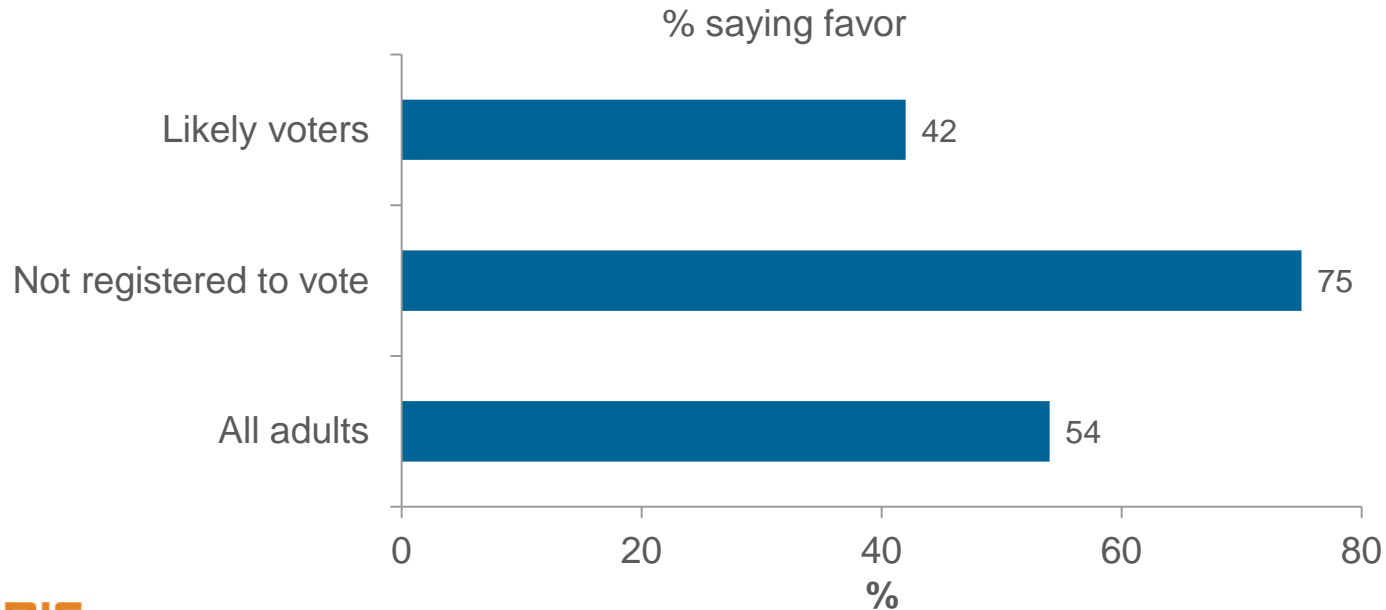
## ... the government's role ...

“Do you think that in California today all people have an equal opportunity to get ahead or that the government should do more to make sure that all Californians have an equal opportunity to get ahead?”



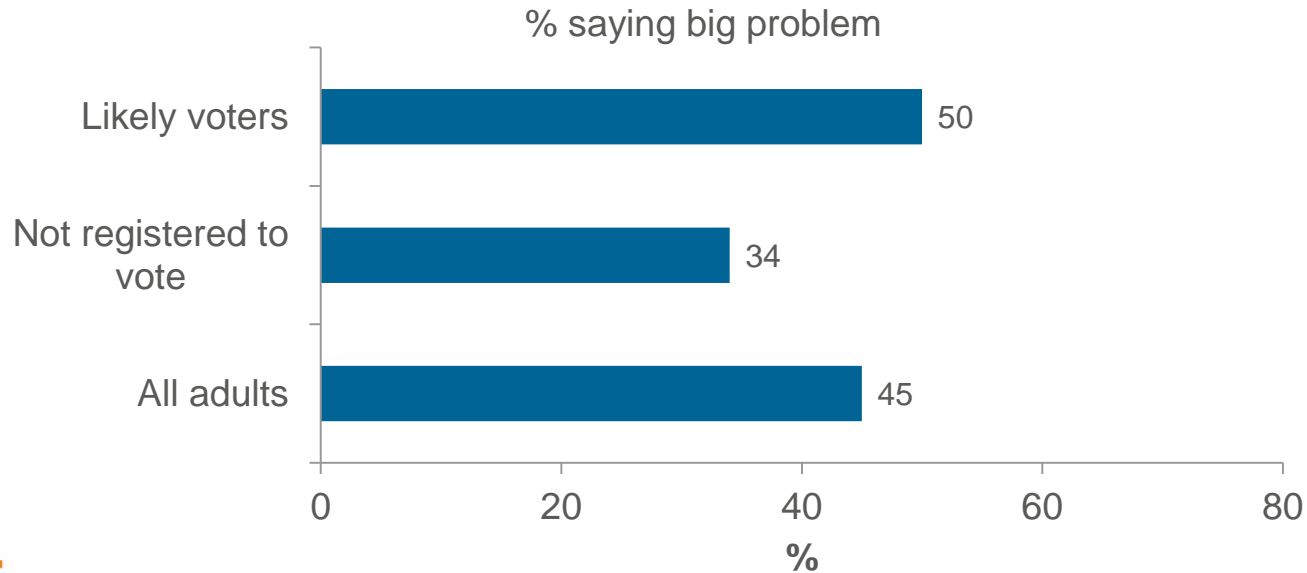
## ... health care ...

“Do you favor or oppose providing health care coverage for undocumented immigrants in California?”



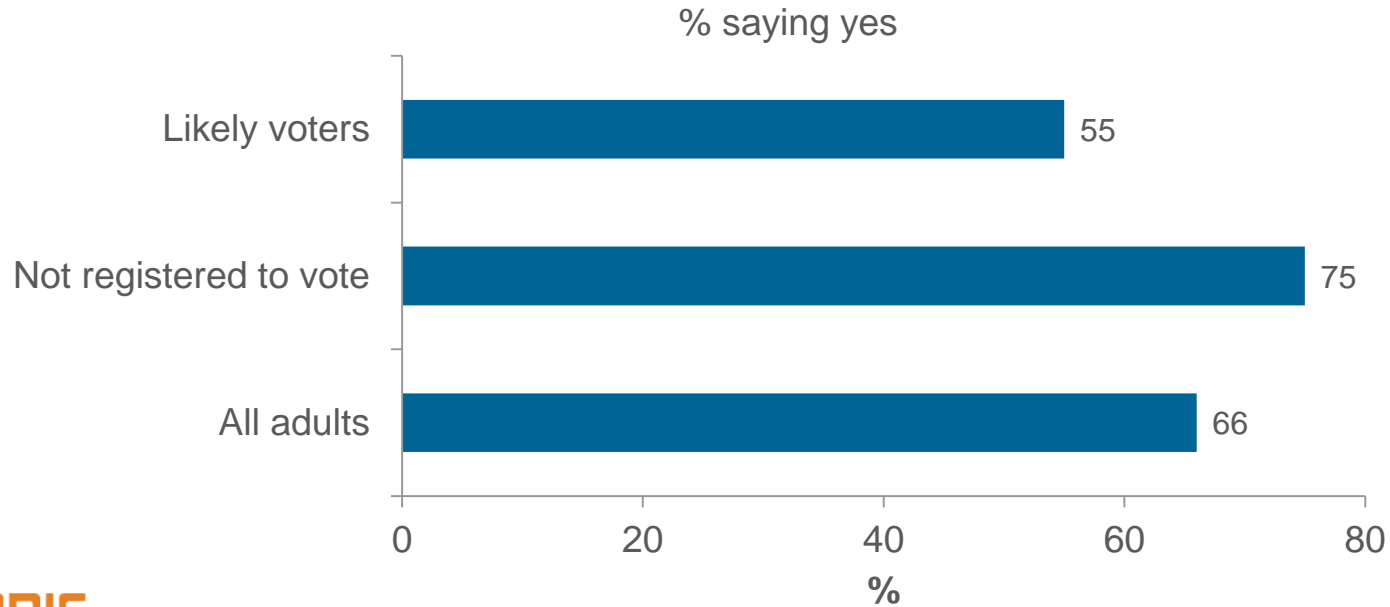
## ... government spending ...

“Do you think the state budget situation in California, that is, the balance between government spending and revenues, is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?”



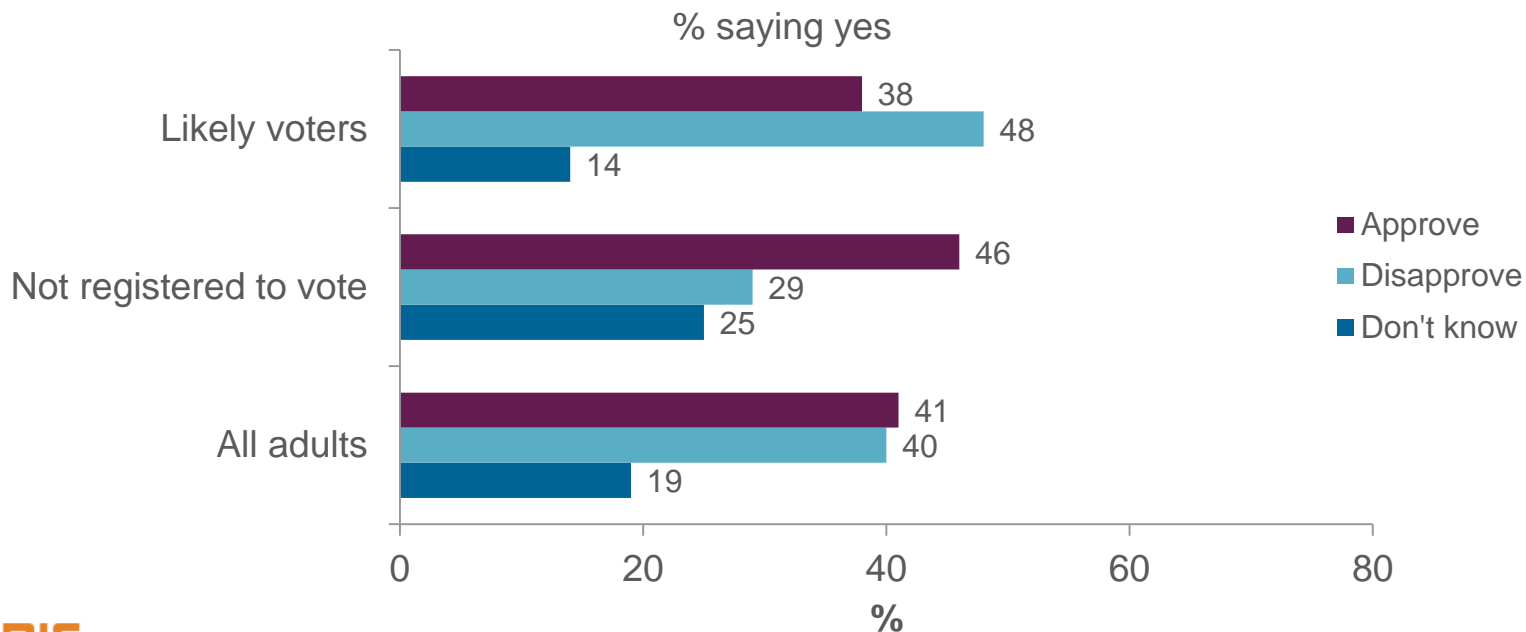
## ... and education funding

“If the state had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?”



# Nonvoters are more approving of elected officials than likely voters

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?”



# An important election is ahead

- California's electorate does not reflect the growth or diversity of its population
- Initiative process does not express different preferences of voters and nonvoters
- Changes to electoral processes will bring in new voters, but economic and political forces will limit their impact
- Broader solutions include
  - Building trust in government, providing civics education, increasing economic mobility, initiating citizenship drives, changing federal immigration policy

# Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

[survey@ppic.org](mailto:survey@ppic.org)

Thank you for your interest in this work.

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