

# THE CALIFORNIA POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN STATEWIDE SURVEY OF  
PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 BY MERVIN D. FIELD.

234 Front Street  
San Francisco 94111  
(415) 392-5763

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BRADLEY'S NARROW LOSS ATTRIBUTABLE TO SUCCESS OF REPUBLICANS IN GETTING PARTY MEMBERS TO VOTE ABSENTEE, PRESENCE OF PROP. 15 ON BALLOT, LOW TURNOUT OF MINORITY GROUPS, AS WELL AS WHITE RACISM.

by Mervin D. Field  
Director, The California Poll

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A late pre-election shift by some white voters to Republican George Deukmejian was an important factor in his "upset" victory over Democrat Tom Bradley in last November's gubernatorial election. Part of this white voter shift may have been attributable to racial bias working against Bradley because he is black. However, there were other important elements in the campaign which contributed to Bradley's narrow defeat. They were: an organized and unusually heavy GOP absentee vote, the presence of a handgun initiative (Prop. 15) on the ballot and a lower than usual turnout of minority group voters.

It was the combined effect of all these elements which allowed Deukmejian to come from behind and defeat Bradley. If any one of these four events had not occurred, Bradley would still have had enough of a margin to win.

These conclusions come from an extensive review of pre-election survey data, Election Day exit polls and official election returns.

### Unusually heavy one-sided absentee vote

More people who physically went to the polls on November 2 voted for Bradley than Deukmejian. That is, Bradley defeated Deukmejian at voting precincts throughout the state on November 2. However, Deukmejian had already won an "earlier election" among more than one-half million absentee voters by such a large margin that it offset Bradley's precinct plurality.

Historically, Republican candidates receive a larger share of the absentee vote than do Democrats. But, the traditional edge GOP candidates usually receive ballooned to an extraordinarily large and decisive margin for Deukmejian last November.

The following table shows a comparison of the precinct and absentee votes cast in the 1982 General Election for Governor and how the absentee vote gave Deukmejian the edge he needed to win the Governorship.

Votes Cast for Governor in the 1982 General Election

	<u>November 2 Precinct Vote</u>		<u>Absentee Vote*</u>		<u>Total Vote</u>	
		%		%		%
Deukmejian	3,579,138	(48.6)	301,876	(59.6)	3,881,014	(49.3)
Bradley	3,598,567	(48.8)	189,102	(37.4)	3,787,669	(48.1)
Others	192,762	( 2.6)	15,253	( 3.0)	208,015	( 2.6)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,370,467</b>		<b>506,231</b>		<b>7,876,698</b>	

The size of the absentee vote last November was not only much larger than previous gubernatorial elections, it also represented a larger proportion of those who voted. As the table below shows, Deukmejian's plurality of 112,774 votes among absentee voters was many times larger than the margins achieved by other recent GOP gubernatorial candidates.

Absentee Voting in Recent Gubernatorial Elections

	<u>1982</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1974</u>
Absentee votes cast in Governor's race	506,231*	304,000**	214,127
Absentee vote as a proportion of total vote for Governor	6.4%	4.5%	3.4%
Absentee votes cast for GOP gubernatorial candidate	301,876*	146,200**	116,158
Absentee vote plurality for GOP gubernatorial candidate	112,774*	6,100**	23,767

\*Source: County Registrars' absentee vote count for 56 counties. Two counties estimated (Butte and Nevada) where absentee vote totals in the Governor's race were either incomplete or not reported separately.

\*\*Estimates made for 8 counties where absentee vote totals in the Governor's race were not reported separately.

Why absentee vote was so large

The large absentee vote in the 1982 General Election came about primarily as a result of an effective organized campaign to get Republicans to vote by mail. Recent changes in California election laws allow any registered voter to vote absentee without having to state a reason such as an anticipated absence from the state or illness. During last year's campaign, more than 2 million registered Republicans

received written material which urged them to vote absentee. Each GOP registrant was supplied a postage-paid request card which only required the person's signature. Signed cards were returned to Republican campaign offices and then forwarded to the voter's county election officers. Absentee ballots were then sent to those GOP voters making this request.

The results of these efforts were to increase dramatically the number of absentee votes for Republican candidates and for conservative positions in the ballot proposition contests.

The huge number, the one-sidedness and the heavy GOP and conservative cast of the absentee vote were the primary causes of error in those election night projections that were based on interviews with voters as they were leaving their precinct polling places.

#### Proposition 15 hurt Bradley

The presence of a gun control initiative (Proposition 15) on the November ballot turned out to be another major factor contributing to Bradley's loss. Prop. 15 was rejected overwhelmingly by a 63% to 37% margin, a plurality of close to two million votes. Bradley's strong support of Prop. 15 created a conflict among many voters opposed to the measure who otherwise might have been inclined to support him in the Governor's race.

Despite the fact that there were other controversial ballot measures presented to voters last November, the Prop. 15 contest became the most heated. The opposition spent almost \$6 million (as against \$2 million spent by proponents) and was highly successful in motivating gun owners and other opponents of the measure to vote at the polls or to vote absentee.

For example, periodic statewide surveys taken by The California Poll have found that 35% of all registered voters in the state have a gun in their household. However, on Election Day November 2, the exit poll showed that 48% of all precinct voters said they possessed a gun in their household. When the proportion of gun-owning absentee voters is factored in, it is probable that more than half of all those voting in the 1982 general election had firearms in their households.

Public opinion polls over the years have shown the California general public to be strongly in favor of handgun control. After Proposition 15 qualified for the ballot, early polls found a majority of the prospective voting public supporting it. As the campaign progressed, The California Poll found voter opinion shifting dramatically against the measure. For example, early in October there was a plurality of six points in favor of Prop. 15. However, in a poll taken one week before the election the No side had moved ahead by eight points, and two days prior to the election another poll showed the No plurality had grown to 15 points. This tide against the measure continued with the final vote showing it defeated by 26 points.

The fact that Bradley strongly favored Prop. 15 was featured prominently by the opposition in its campaign material. Thus, to a fractional but still potent extent, the late developing voter tide against Prop. 15 also became a late developing trend against Bradley.

According to the exit poll, 60% of those voting No on Prop. 15 voted for Deukmejian and 37% voted for Bradley. Among those voting Yes on Prop. 15, 67% were Bradley supporters and 30% were Deukmejian supporters. Given the overwhelming rejection of Prop. 15 by the voters, it is clear that Bradley's position on this issue contributed to his defeat.

#### Drop in minority group voting

Estimates from a series of California Poll pre-election surveys suggested that minority group voters would account for 20% of all voters in the November election. Election Day exit poll and other data, however, indicate that the minority group voting level was closer to 15%.

It has been well documented that minority groups do not participate in the voting process anywhere near their overall population proportion. For example, while blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities represent almost 35% of the state's population, they represented about 20% of the vote in the November 1980 election and 16% in the 1982 June primary election.

In its pre-election surveys The California Poll used a systematic and objective screening process to include in its estimate-bases only those people who gave highly positive replies to a series of questions designed to classify a respondent as a likely voter.

In its final pre-election effort The California Poll found that 20% of those classified as likely voters were blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other minorities. This was 4 percentage points higher than the proportion of minority groups voting in the June 8 primary, but about equal to previous levels of minority voter participation in recent general elections.

There was no objective evidence available prior to the election to indicate that the combined minority group voting participation would be less than 20%. However, there was contrary evidence to suggest that blacks and other minority groups might be especially motivated to vote on November 2 (i.e., an opportunity to vote for a minority candidate for Governor and to vote for Democrats to whom minority groups historically have turned in bad economic times).

However, the estimates made from November 2 exit polls indicate that minority group voters combined represented a surprising low proportion--just 15%--of the total vote, as shown in the following table.

Racial and Ethnic Population and Voting  
Participation in 1982 General Election

	<u>Total population</u> %	<u>Adult population</u> %	<u>"Likely voters" pre-election polls</u> %	<u>Election turnout</u> %
White	66.6	70.6	80	85
Hispanic	19.2	16.1	9	6
Black	7.5	6.9	7	7
Other	6.9	6.4	4	2

The table below relates the 1982 gubernatorial vote distribution to data showing the vote preferences of white, Black, Hispanic and other minorities. As can be seen, Deukmejian's plurality of 838,560 votes among whites more than offsets Bradley's pluralities among minority groups--500,092 among blacks, 207,472 among Hispanics, and 37,651 among other minorities. Thus, Deukmejian wins overall by 93,345 votes.

1982 Gubernatorial Election  
Voting by Ethnic and Racial Groups

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Deukmejian</u>	<u>Bradley</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Plurality</u>
White (65.0%)	6,095,193	3,675,668	2,837,108	182,417	Deukmejian (838,560)
Black (7.0%)	551,369	22,606	522,698	6,065	Bradley (500,092)
Hispanic (6.0%)	472,602	125,240	332,712	14,650	Bradley (207,472)
Other Minori- ties (2.0%)	157,534	57,500	95,151	4,883	Bradley (37,651)
<b>Total Vote</b>	<b>7,876,698</b>	<b>3,881,014</b>	<b>3,787,669</b>	<b>208,015</b>	<b>Deukmejian (93,345)</b>

The table following is a simulation of the effect on the Governor's race of a possible election outcome where minority group voter turnout comprises 20% of the total electorate. This is the proportion found in the final 1982 pre-election polls relating to vote intentions and what was seen in the 1980 General Election.

What these data illustrate is that Bradley's loss was not so much the result of a low level of voting participation among blacks as it was a lower than expected turnout among Hispanics, Asians and other minority groups. For example, if Hispanics turned out at a level conforming to pre-election estimates, the incremental gain for Bradley would have been enough for him to win.

Minority Group Turnout Representing  
20% of the Total Vote (Simulation)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Deukmejian</u>	<u>Bradley</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Plurality</u>
Whites (80.0%)	6,695,193	3,675,668	2,837,108	182,417	Deukmejian (838,560)
Blacks ( 7.0%)	585,829	24,019	555,366	6,444	Bradley (531,347)
Hispanic (9.0%)	753,209	196,588	530,259	26,362	Bradley (333,671)
Other ( 4.0%)	334,760	122,187	202,195	10,378	Bradley ( 80,008)
Total vote	8,368,991	4,018,462	4,124,928	225,601	Bradley (106,466)

Late shift in vote preferences of whites

Pre-election polls revealed some movement toward Deukmejian among white voters as the campaign moved into its final stages.

For example, a late August survey found Bradley leading Deukmejian by one percentage point among whites (43% to 42%). In the poll's next measurement conducted in early October, the situation was reversed with Deukmejian registering a one percentage point lead over Bradley (46% to 45%). However, during the last week of the campaign California Polls showed Deukmejian's lead over Bradley averaging five percentage points among white voters (48% to 43%).

This late-developing movement toward Deukmejian apparently intensified during the last days of the campaign. Voter surveys taken on Election Day showed that Deukmejian outpolled Bradley among white voters by twelve percentage points (55% to 43%), a plurality of greater than 800,000 votes.

The late shift in the preferences of white voters, who as noted earlier comprised 85% of the electorate, was the final element which Deukmejian needed to overcome Bradley's overall pre-election lead.

The following table summarizes how the preferences of white voters shifted in Deukmejian's favor in the latter stages of the campaign.

Preferences of Whites in 1982 Governor's Race

	<u>Late August</u>	<u>Early October</u>	<u>Late October</u>	<u>Election outcome</u>
	%	%	%	%
Deukmejian	42	46	48	55
Bradley	43	45	43	43
Others	1	1	2	2
Undecided	14	7	7	-

### Racial bias in Governor's race

During the campaign, California Poll editors responded to numerous queries from political writers and other interested people as to whether poll measurements were accurately reflecting the widespread belief that overt or undisclosed racial biases would mitigate against Bradley, a black candidate.

Generally, these queries or comments were based on the belief that some whites who harbor racial prejudices would not disclose this in a poll interview. Instead, they might cite other non-racial reasons for their preference or actually lie in the interview, i.e., say they would vote for Bradley when in fact they would not.

The California Poll has observed the existence of racial bias in other contests where a candidate from a racial or ethnic minority group was running against a white candidate. For example, in the 1969 Los Angeles Mayoral run-off election, there was considerable pre-election evidence that racism was a strong factor in denying Tom Bradley a victory though his opponent, Sam Yorty, was not very well liked by a large portion of the voters.

There were also indications of a racial bias working against Wilson Riles, a successful black candidate for State School Superintendent in 1970. However, the highly negative image of the white incumbent, Max Rafferty, was large enough to offset the amount of existing racial bias.

Another example of probable racial or ethnic bias held by voters is seen in the confirmation vote of Associate Justice Cruz Reynoso in last year's election. Reynoso is an Hispanic whose name clearly reflects his heritage. On November 2 Reynoso received a lower confirmation vote than the two other recent Supreme Court appointees--Allen Broussard and Otto Kaus. None of the three Justices was widely known and it can be said that they were equally unknown. All three appointments were made by Governor Jerry Brown and the central issue in the confirmation vote campaign related to public feeling about the Governor's judicial appointments. (While Broussard is black and Kaus is foreign born, their racial and ethnic backgrounds were not widely known by the voters.)

Over the years public opinion researchers have found that respondents in surveys have become increasingly frank and honest in expressing their views on many personal and private matters. This has come about because subjects such as religion, racial bias, alcoholism, drug use, personal hygiene, medical history, and the like have lost much of the sensitivity they once held within the setting of a public opinion interview. One factor contributing to this is the greater reliance on telephone interviews as the means of gathering survey information. Telephone interviews have been shown to provide more anonymity to respondents than face-to-face interviews.

Despite these trends, California Poll editors had no hard evidence to refute the belief that there would still be a significant number of people who would say that they were going to vote for Bradley, but actually were in conflict about supporting a black candidate, and would eventually resolve this conflict by voting their bias.

measure of the degree of overt racism operating in the Governor's race.

Even granting it to be a correct measure, it primarily described a portion of the vote already supporting Deukmejian.

In examining some of the apparent effects of racial and ethnic bias operative in the 1982 Gubernatorial election, The California Poll has available these other sets of data:

1. The degree to which Deukmejian voters checked the answer "did not want to vote for a black candidate" as a reason for voting for Deukmejian in the November 2 exit poll of voters.
2. The degree to which Bradley voters checked the answer "did not want to vote for an Armenian candidate" as a reason for voting for Bradley on November 2. (Deukmejian is of Armenian heritage.)
3. The extent to which Bradley gained (or lost) pluralities from black voters, who traditionally vote Democratic, because he was black.

In the November 2 exit poll, 3.5% of Deukmejian voters in the setting of a relatively anonymous self-administered "secret" ballot stated that they did not want to vote for a black candidate as a reason for voting for Deukmejian. This percentage projected to the 3.9 million total votes received by Deukmejian equals about 136,000 votes.

However, the exit poll also found 0.6% of Bradley voters saying that they voted for him and not Deukmejian because they could not vote for an Armenian. This 0.6% projected to the 3.8 million total votes received by Bradley equals about 23,000 votes.

The foregoing suggests that the weight of the black and Armenian biases would result in Bradley losing about 113,000 votes to Deukmejian. While this may account for the negative effect of racial or ethnic group heritage, the reverse of the coin must also be examined; that is, to what extent was Bradley helped inordinately by black voters because he was black?

From the exit poll data and other analyses of the total vote for Governor approximately 551,000 votes were cast by black voters with Bradley receiving 94.8% of their votes. The average proportion of the black vote won by white Democratic candidates in five other statewide candidate races (U.S. Senate, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Controller, and Treasurer) was 91.8%. (March Fong Eu, who is of Asian descent, received 92.7% of the black vote in the Secretary of State's race.)

Thus it can be said that Bradley's "extra edge" plurality as a result of being black was about 3 percentage points among blacks or about 16,500 votes.

Combining these various elements the net measurable loss to Bradley because he was a black candidate appears to be about 96,500 votes, slightly larger than Deukmejian's overall winning plurality of 93,345 votes.