

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

Field Research Corporation

601 California Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

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EARLY VOTER INCLINATION TO REELECT FEINSTEIN LESS ENTHUSIASTIC THAN USUAL.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Only a small four-point plurality of California voters is currently disposed to reelect Democrat Dianne Feinstein to another term in the U.S. Senate. This is considerably smaller than the nineteen to twenty-nine point pluralities supporting each of her previous reelection bids in *Field Polls* conducted in the year prior to each election.

Despite this less than enthusiastic level of reelection support, Feinstein still continues to receive favorable job performance ratings from this state's voters.

When asked their current party preferences in next year's election for U.S. House of Representatives, voters prefer Democrats to Republicans by a wide fourteen-point margin. However, given the significant remapping of the state's Congressional district lines and the fact that the June 2012 elections will be an open primary, there will be more than the usual number of unknowns in play next year in trying to assess the partisan composition of California's House delegation.

These results from the latest *Field Poll* that surveyed 950 registered voters in California June 3-13.

Early voter inclination to reelect Feinstein less enthusiastic than usual

When a cross-section of this state's voters are asked whether they are disposed to reelect Feinstein to another term in the U.S. Senate next year, 43% are inclined, but nearly as many (39%) are not inclined.

Feinstein was first elected to the Senate in 1992 in a special election to complete the final two years of Republican Pete Wilson's term after he was elected governor in 1990. Feinstein won subsequent reelection contests in 1994, 2000 and 2006. In each year prior to the scheduled election *The Field Poll* measured voters inclination to reelect her to another term. In each instance, voters' desire to reelect her was very strong, as pluralities ranging from nineteen to twenty-nine points expressed support for her reelection. However, in each of two *Field Poll* surveys conducted this year, the plurality favoring her reelection is just four points.

Table 1
Voter inclination to re-elect Dianne Feinstein to the U.S. Senate
one year before her reelection year
(among registered voters)

	Inclined	Not inclined	No opinion
<u>Total registered voters</u>			
June 2011	43%	39	18
March 2011	46%	42	12
<u>Previous re-election bids (1 yr. prior)</u>			
June 2005	56%	37	7
March 1999	59%	37	5
June 1993	58%	29	13

Inclination to support Feinstein across voter subgroups

The current division of voter inclination to reelect Feinstein by party provides clues as to why her overall vote plurality is so narrow. While Democrats are inclined to reelect Feinstein by a 66% to 19% margin, this is offset by a similar one-sided Republican vote – 70% to 15% - against her reelection. In addition, voters who are non-partisan or are affiliated with a minor party are evenly split in their preferences – 38% are inclined to reelect, 37% are not, and a large 25% are undecided.

Voters in California's two largest metropolitan regions – Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area – heavily favor Feinstein's reelection to another term. However, by varying margins, more voters residing in each of the state's four other major regions are disinclined than inclined to support her reelection.

Female voters are slightly more inclined to support Feinstein's reelection than men. Feinstein has an eight-point plurality – 45% to 37% – in her favor among women voters. Men are evenly split, 42% inclined to reelect and 41% not inclined.

White non-Hispanic voters provide a small two-point edge for Feinstein. Her greatest support comes from the state's ethnic voter population.

Voters who have completed some post-graduate work are also more inclined to back Feinstein than those with fewer years of formal education.

Table 2
Voter inclination to reelect Dianne Feinstein to the U.S. Senate
June 2011 by subgroup
(among California registered voters)

	Inclined	Not inclined	No opinion
Total registered	43%	39	18
<u>Party registration</u>			
(.44) Democrats	66%	19	15
(.31) Republicans	15%	70	15
(.25) Non-partisans/others	38%	37	25
<u>Region</u>			
(.26) Los Angeles County	46%	32	22
(.18) Orange/San Diego	34%	47	19
(.14) Other Southern California	34%	48	18
(.17) Central Valley	41%	46	13
(.20) San Francisco Bay Area	58%	27	15
(.05) Other Northern California*	39%	43	18
<u>Gender</u>			
(.47) Male	42%	41	17
(.53) Female	45%	37	18
<u>Age</u>			
(.20) 18 – 29	38%	32	30
(.13) 30 – 39	37%	40	23
(.19) 40 – 49	45%	43	12
(.27) 50 – 64	45%	40	15
(.21) 65 or older	48%	39	13
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
(.67) White non-Hispanic	43%	41	16
(.21) Latino	44%	37	19
(.05) African-American*	60%	17	13
(.07) Asian-American/other*	39%	32	29
<u>Education</u>			
(.23) High school graduate or less	42%	42	16
(.27) Some college/trade school	39%	41	20
(.23) College graduate	39%	42	19
(.25) Post-graduate work	54%	32	14

* Small sample base.

Feinstein's job rating remains more positive than negative

Despite the narrow plurality of voters who are disposed to reelect her next year, Feinstein's job rating is quite favorable – 46% approving and 31% disapproving – with 23% having no opinion.

This rating is about what it has been for the last three years, as found by *The Field Poll* in its periodic surveys. In the ten-year period between 1998 and 2008, Feinstein received favorable job marks that ranged in percentage terms from five-to-three to two-to-one.

Voters' partisan affiliation is directly related to how they appraise Feinstein's performance in the Senate. Democrats approve 65% to 11% and Republicans disapprove 63% to 22%. Non-partisans approve 43% to 29%.

Table 3
Trend of Dianne Feinstein's job performance ratings as U.S. Senator
(among California registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
June 2011	46%	31	23
March 2011	48%	33	19
September 2010	46%	37	17
October 2009	46%	35	19
May 2008	48%	32	20
2007 (Average)	54%	30	16
2006 (Average)	51%	31	18
2005 (Average)	52%	27	21
2004 (Average)	54%	26	20
2003 (Average)	52%	32	16
2002 (Average)	49%	26	25
2001 (Average)	57%	27	16
2000 (Average)	57%	27	16
1999 (Average)	51%	28	21
1998 (Average)	56%	27	17
1997 (Average)	47%	35	18
1996 (Average)	46%	36	18
1995 (Average)	50%	40	10
1994 (Average)	47%	39	14
1993 (Average)	47%	32	21
Party (June 2011)			
Democrats	65%	11	24
Republicans	22%	63	15
Non-partisans/others	43%	29	28

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. In addition, surveys prior to 1997 also were conducted among all California adults.

Congressional races outlook

Currently, California has 53 members in the 435-seat House of Representatives and of this number 34 are Democrats and 19 are Republicans.

The 2010 Census revealed that California, by just keeping pace with national population growth trends, would neither gain nor lose seats in the 2012 and subsequent elections in this decade. This development broke a pattern in evidence since 1920 in which population increases resulted in the state gaining one or more Congressional seats following each Census.

Next year's elections for House of Representative will be significantly different in two other ways.

First, the state's Congressional district lines will have been redrawn to reflect the shifts in the state's population occurring at the district level. As a result, some incumbents can find themselves in entirely different districts in respect to geography, partisan divisions and even their own residence.

Secondly, due to the passage of recent voter-backed initiatives, the June 2012 elections will be an "open primary." Instead of the leading vote getters from each of two parties advancing to the general election, the top two finishers move on regardless of party affiliation.

In advance of upcoming Congressional elections, *The Field Poll* typically measures the inclinations of voters to support either the Republican or Democrat candidate in their district. While these generic vote measures cannot predict the outcomes in district-level elections, they do provide clues as to the relative strength statewide of the two major parties in the upcoming elections.

Results from the current survey show that by a fourteen-point margin (43% to 29%), voters statewide are more inclined to support Democratic than Republican candidates in next year's House races. This fourteen-point Democratic candidate advantage statewide is about at the mid-range of the statewide Congressional votes cast in the last five elections. In these elections Democratic candidates have outpolled Republican candidates for Congress by margins of between seven to twenty-eight percentage points.

However, given the significant remapping of the state's Congressional district lines and the fact that the June 2012 elections will be an open primary, there will be more than the usual number of unknowns in play next year in trying to gauge in advance the partisan composition of California's House delegation.

Table 4
If the election for U.S. House of Representatives were held today
, which party's candidate would you prefer?
(among California registered voters)

	Democratic candidate	Republican candidate	Democratic candidate plurality
June 2011	43%	29	+14
<u>Actual statewide major party vote</u>			
November 2010	55.1%	44.9	+10.2
November 2008	63.9%	36.1	+27.8
November 2006	58.7%	41.3	+17.4
November 2004	55.3%	44.6	+10.7
November 2002	53.6%	46.4	+7.2
<u>Party registration (June 2011)</u>			
Democrats	72%	7	+65
Republicans	4%	68	- 64
Non-partisans/others	39%	22	+17

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed June 3-13, 2011 among a random sample of 950 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the questions in this release were asked of a random subsample of 478 voters.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall sample of 950 registered voters have a sampling error of +/- 3.3 percentage points, while findings based on the subsample of 478 voters have a sampling error of +/- 4.6 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error.

There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

The Field Poll was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The *Poll* receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

Questions Asked

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

(ASKED OF ALL VOTERS)

Dianne Feinstein's term in the U.S. Senate ends in 2012. If Feinstein runs for re-election, would you be inclined or not inclined to re-elect Feinstein to the U.S. Senate?

Thinking about next year's election for House of Representatives in your district... For whom will you likely vote in the election for House of Representatives – the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate or a candidate from one of the minor parties?