

The Failure of Proposition 16: A Post-Election Analysis

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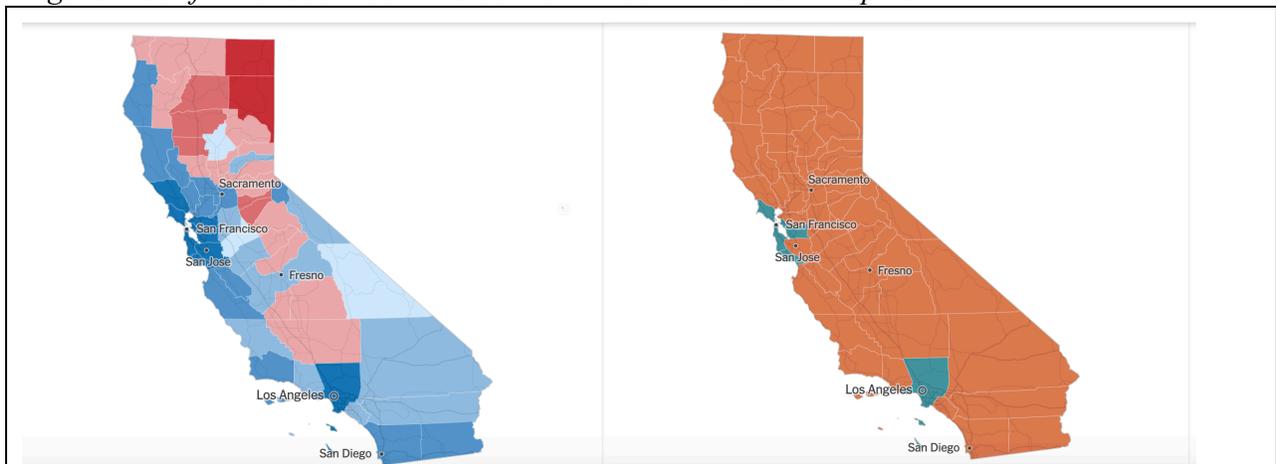
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Many Biden Voters Voted No on Prop 16

California voters overwhelmingly voted for Joe Biden, 64% to 34%.¹ But most voters also voted against Proposition 16, that sought to bring back the use of race, ethnicity, and gender in public university admissions, government hiring, and government contracting. Roughly 57% voted no on Prop 16; 43% voted yes.

The screenshots (Figure 1) show the contrast between Biden votes and Yes votes, by California counties.

Figure 1 California Counties' Presidential Vote and Votes on Prop 16²



Source: *New York Times*, “California Election Results: President, Results by County;” *New York Times*, “California Proposal 16 Election Results: Repeal Ban on Affirmative Action, Results by County,”

The map on the left shows the counties with a majority of Biden votes in blue and Trump votes in red. Darker shades of blue and red mean a larger percentage per county. The map on the right shows the Yes on 16 counties in aqua and the No on 16 in orange.

¹ As of November 28, 2020.

² *New York Times*, “California Election Results: President, Results by County,” Last updated 11/28/20. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/results-california.html>. *New York Times*, “California Proposal 16 Election Results: Repeal Ban on Affirmative Action, Results by County,” Last updated 11/28/20. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/results-california-proposition-16-repeal-ban-on-affirmative-action.html>.

My calculations found that the total Yes vote made up 65% of the Biden vote.³ This means that 35% of Biden voters voted No on Prop 16. Distributed across the counties, this accounts for the overwhelming number of counties “turning orange.”

The results by county are staggering. **There are NO counties where the Yes vote exceeded the Biden vote.**⁴

Only 6 California counties voted Yes on Prop 16: San Francisco, Marin, Alameda, Santa Cruz, San Mateo and LA County (See Table 1 below.). Roughly one in four of Biden voters in San Francisco and Alameda counties voted No on Prop 16 (25% and 26%, respectively).

Table 1 Counties with the Largest Percentage of Yes on Prop 16, Their Biden Votes, and the Percentage of the Biden Voters Voting No on 16.

County	% Yes	% Biden	% of Biden Vote Voting No ⁵
San Francisco	64%	85%	25%
Alameda	59%	80%	26%
Marin	56%	82%	32%
San Mateo	51%	78%	34%
Santa Cruz	51%	79%	35%
Los Angeles	51%	71%	28%

Even in LA County, a majority-minority county and the largest of the counties (with a population of 10 million), 71% voted for Biden while 51% voted for Prop 16, resulting in a vote loss of over 28%. But what about blank ballots on propositions?

Additional statistical analyses in my report⁶ showed the following:

- There was *no correlation* between proportion of Hispanics and votes for or against Prop 16.
- Counties with greater percentages of blacks also had more support for Prop 16, but the statistical association was small.
- Counties with proportionately more whites had more No on 16 votes.
- There was a moderate relationship between larger percentages of Asian residents and support for Prop 16. (Many Asians were active on both sides of the Prop 16 movement.)
- The most robust relationship was between a county’s percentage of college graduates and Yes on 16, not race.

³ Biden Vote: 11,082,293; Yes Vote: 7,199,354, as of 11/28/2020.

⁴ See Table 2 for percentage of votes for Biden, yes on Prop 16, and the estimated percentage of Biden votes that also voted no.

⁵ Percentage of Biden voters voting No on Prop 16 = (Biden votes minus Yes votes)/100. Assumes all yes votes were also Biden votes, as of 11/28/2020.

⁶ Trendlines, scatter plots, and explanations can be found in my report, “Race, Ethnicity, and California Prop 16,” for the Center for Equal Opportunity, November 11, 2020.

<https://www.ceousa.org/attachments/article/1380/California%20Proposition%2016.pdf>.

- Moreover, the statistical relationship between percentage of Asians in a county and Yes on 16 votes disappears when controlling for college degree.

In short, it's the percentage of voters with a college degree that predicts the Yes vote. Even so, there was a significant number of Biden voters with college degrees who voted No on 16.

Proponents of Prop 16 insist that many voters did not understand what the proposition would bring forth. With better endorsements, advertising, donations, media coverage, and outreach, more California voters would favor using race, ethnicity, and gender in college admissions, government jobs, and government contracts.

Yet the county-level data highlight how racial preference issues are pushed by elites but rejected by the people, even in an overwhelming liberal, majority-minority state like California.

Americans on the whole strongly believe in judging individuals as individuals, not just as members of racial/ethnic groups. Over the past few years, many national and local polls have shown that Americans really dislike preferences based on race. Americans favor merit-based admissions, jobs, and contracts, although they favor other affirmative action measures such as targeted outreach and improving K-12 education. Californians decisively rejected race-based government policies, despite overwhelming support for Biden. These results will hopefully inform the Supreme Court as it faces issues of racial preferences and anti-Asian admissions at Harvard and other elite universities.

Appendix

Table 2, All California Counties: Vote for Biden, Vote for Prop 16, and Percentage of Biden Voters Voting No

County	% Biden	% Yes	% Biden Vote Voting No	County	% Biden	% Yes	% Biden Vote Voting No
San Francisco	85.3%	63.8%	25.2%	Orange	53.5%	34.7%	35.1%
Marin	82.3%	55.7%	32.3%	Riverside	53.0%	34.9%	34.2%
Alameda	80.2%	59.0%	26.4%	Fresno	52.9%	33.4%	36.9%
Santa Cruz	78.9%	51.2%	35.1%	Butte	49.4%	29.8%	39.7%
San Mateo	77.9%	51.4%	34.0%	Stanislaus	49.3%	30.7%	37.7%
Contra Costa	76.6%	47.3%	38.3%	Inyo	48.9%	30.6%	37.4%
Sonoma	74.5%	47.6%	36.1%	Trinity	45.6%	24.3%	46.7%
Santa Clara	72.7%	47.3%	34.9%	Placer	45.5%	26.6%	41.5%
Los Angeles	71.0%	51.0%	28.2%	Tulare	45.0%	28.1%	37.6%
Yolo	69.5%	45.1%	35.1%	El Dorado	44.4%	23.4%	47.3%
Monterey	69.5%	44.8%	35.5%	Kern	43.6%	27.9%	36.0%

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Napa	69.1%	38.1%	44.9%	Madera	43.1%	25.4%	41.1%
Mendocino	66.4%	43.5%	34.5%	Kings	42.6%	26.2%	38.5%
Humboldt	65.2%	41.4%	36.5%	Siskiyou	40.9%	24.8%	39.4%
Santa Barbara	64.9%	42.7%	34.2%	Del Norte	40.8%	24.0%	41.2%
Alpine	64.3%	47.8%	25.7%	Sutter	40.7%	24.2%	40.5%
Solano	64.0%	42.7%	33.3%	Colusa	40.7%	23.7%	41.8%
Lake	62.3%	38.1%	38.8%	Plumas	40.5%	21.9%	45.9%
Sacramento	61.4%	39.6%	35.5%	Mariposa	39.8%	23.2%	41.7%
Imperial	61.3%	42.2%	31.2%	Tuolumne	39.4%	21.1%	46.4%
San Benito	61.1%	37.3%	39.0%	Sierra	37.8%	24.2%	36.0%
San Diego	60.2%	39.9%	33.7%	Yuba	37.8%	22.7%	39.9%
Mono	59.6%	33.2%	44.3%	Calaveras	36.8%	19.9%	45.9%
Ventura	59.5%	38.0%	36.1%	Amador	36.6%	18.7%	48.9%
Nevada	56.2%	34.8%	38.1%	Glenn	35.3%	19.8%	43.9%
San Joaquin	56.0%	35.3%	37.0%	Shasta	32.4%	17.2%	46.9%
San Luis Obispo	55.3%	32.7%	40.9%	Tehama	31.0%	16.2%	47.7%
San Bernardino	54.2%	36.0%	33.6%	Modoc	26.5%	15.3%	42.3%
Merced	54.1%	32.8%	39.4%	Lassen	23.5%	12.2%	48.1%