

# 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](mailto:fieldpoll@field.com)  
[www.field.com/fieldpollonline](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline)

COPYRIGHT 2010 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION.

Release #2344

## VOTERS RATE THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DIFFERENT CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES.

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

For almost a year Republican gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman and GOP U.S. Senate candidate Carly Fiorina have campaigned against their prospective Democratic rivals, Jerry Brown and Barbara Boxer, in this year's general election. While the top priority of the heavily advertised Whitman and Fiorina primary election campaigns was to defeat their GOP rivals in the Republican primary, they also directed considerable negative fire at their expected Democratic general election opponents.

Neither Brown nor Boxer faced any real opposition within their party primaries for governor and U.S. Senate. Yet, they and their surrogates have taken frequent shots at Whitman and Fiorina.

In this survey, *The Field Poll* presented voters with a list of twenty-eight attributes that could characterize one or more of the candidates. Each was posed in either general positive or negative terms, but none of the characteristics were specifically attributed to any of the candidates.

The basic question was framed this way: *"I am going to read some characteristics or attributes of candidates who could run for high political office in California. For each please tell me whether it makes you more likely to support that candidate with this characteristic, less likely or whether it makes no difference to you?"*

The overall variance between the items that causes voters to be more likely rather than less likely to support a candidate was calculated. The results were then sorted between candidate attributes that had a net positive effect on voters and those that had a net negative effect.

Release Date: **Sunday, July 11, 2010**

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to revocation if publication or broadcast takes place before release date or if contents are divulged to persons outside of subscriber staff prior to release time.  
(ISSN 0195-4520)

### **Attributes that have a net positive effect on general election voters**

The data shown in Table 1 list those candidate attributes that have a net positive effect on voters. The items are ranked on the size of the gap between the proportions of voters saying each would make them more rather than less likely to vote for a candidate with this characteristic.

The item that produces the largest positive difference (+32) is the candidate attribute, “*has experience working with legislative leaders.*” While the characteristic producing the second largest positive difference (+31) is quite different, “*has many years of experience in the business world.*”

Other items tested where significantly larger proportions of voters say the attribute makes them more rather than less likely to support a candidate are:

- *holds progressive views on the issues (+21)*
- *holds moderate views on the issues (+15)*
- *is pro-choice on the issue of abortion (+11)*
- *has many years of experience in politics (+10)*
- *is a woman (+7)*
- *supports the nation’s new health care law (+6)*
- *supports Arizona’s new anti-illegal immigration law (+6)*
- *holds conservative views on the issues (+6)*

For three other items the differences between the proportions saying this characteristic makes them more rather than less likely to support the candidate produces a very small net positive effect – *is a man (+2)*, *is a Democrat (+2)* and *is opposed by labor unions (+1)*.

**Table 1**  
**Candidate characteristics that have a net POSITIVE effect on voters**  
**when considering candidates running for high public office**  
**(among likely voters)**

	<b>More likely</b>	<b>Less likely</b>	<b>No difference*</b>	<b>Net positive effect</b>
Has experience working with legislative leaders	42%	10	48	<b>(+32)</b>
Has many years of experience in the business world	41%	10	49	<b>(+31)</b>
Holds progressive views on the issues	41%	20	39	<b>(+21)</b>
Holds moderate views on the issues	35%	20	45	<b>(+15)</b>
Is pro-choice on the issue of abortion	38%	27	35	<b>(+11)</b>
Has many years experience in politics	29%	19	52	<b>(+10)</b>
Is a woman	8%	1	91	<b>(+7)</b>
Supports the nation's new health care law	43%	37	20	<b>(+6)</b>
Supports Arizona's new anti-immigration law	42%	36	22	<b>(+6)</b>
Holds conservative views on the issues	36%	30	34	<b>(+6)</b>
Is a Democrat	35%	33	32	<b>(+2)</b>
Is a man	4%	2	94	<b>(+2)</b>
Is opposed by labor unions	29%	28	43	<b>(+1)</b>

\* Includes those with no opinion.

### **Candidate attributes that have a net negative effect on all voters**

Table 2 reports the characteristics that have a net negative effect on voters (i.e., the gap between the proportions of voters who say it makes them less rather than more likely to support the candidate).

Three items have the greatest negative effect on voters. They are:

- *hasn't voted in many past statewide elections (-50)*
- *does not have experience working with legislative leaders (-36)*
- *is over age 70 (-34)*

Eleven other items tested receive statistically larger proportions of voters saying the characteristic makes them less rather than more likely to support a candidate. These are:

- *is an incumbent running for re-election (-14)*
- *has never held political office before (-13)*
- *is wealthy (-13)*
- *opposes President Obama and his policies (-12)*
- *is a Republican (-10)*
- *is from the San Francisco Bay Area (-9)*
- *is supported by labor unions (-8)*
- *is pro-life on the issue of abortion (-7)*
- *opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law (-6)*
- *is from the Los Angeles area (-5)*

Two other items produce a very small net negative result – *supports President Obama and his policies (-3)* and *opposes the nation's new health care law (-1)*.

**Table 2**  
**Candidate characteristics that have a net NEGATIVE effect on voters**  
**when considering candidates running for high public office**  
**(among likely voters)**

	<b>More likely</b>	<b>Less likely</b>	<b>No difference*</b>	<b>Net negative effect</b>
Hasn't voted in many past statewide elections	4%	54	42	<b>(-50)</b>
Does not have experience working with legislative leaders	6%	42	52	<b>(-36)</b>
Is over age 70	3%	37	60	<b>(-34)</b>
Is an incumbent running for re-election	9%	23	68	<b>(-14)</b>
Has never held political office before	13%	26	61	<b>(-13)</b>
Is wealthy	3%	16	81	<b>(-13)</b>
Opposes President Obama and his policies	30%	42	28	<b>(-12)</b>
Is a Republican	26%	36	38	<b>(-10)</b>
Is from the San Francisco Bay Area	9%	18	73	<b>(-9)</b>
Is supported by labor unions	27%	35	38	<b>(-8)</b>
Is pro-life on the issue of abortion	30%	37	33	<b>(-7)</b>
Opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law	35%	41	24	<b>(-6)</b>
Is from the Los Angeles area	9%	14	77	<b>(-5)</b>
Supports President Obama and his policies	35%	38	27	<b>(-3)</b>
Opposes the nation's new health care law	38%	39	23	<b>(-1)</b>

\* Includes those with no opinion.

### **Positive and negative candidate attributes as rated by Brown supporters**

Larger proportions of the supporters of Brown in the upcoming gubernatorial election say the following items make them more rather than less likely to support a candidate with this characteristic:

- *supports the nation's new health care law (+72)*
- *is a Democrat (+67)*
- *supports President Obama and his policies (+56)*
- *has experience working with legislative leaders (+54)*
- *holds progressive views on the issues (+54)*
- *is pro-choice on the issue of abortion (+46)*
- *is supported by labor unions (+38)*
- *has many years of experience in politics (+30)*
- *opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law (+28)*
- *holds moderate views on the issues (+23)*
- *is from the San Francisco Bay Area (+10)*
- *is a woman (+6)*

By contrast, Brown supporters say these items make them less rather than more likely to support a candidate running for high political office:

- *hasn't voted in many past statewide elections (-66)*
- *opposes President Obama and his policies (-65)*
- *is a Republican (-64)*
- *opposes the nation's new health care law (-52)*
- *does not have experience working with legislative leaders (-52)*
- *supports Arizona's new anti-immigration law (-44)*
- *holds conservative views on the issues (-43)*
- *is pro-life on the issue of abortion (-43)*
- *is over the age of 70 (-36)*
- *has never held political office before (-32)*
- *is opposed by labor unions (-27)*
- *is wealthy (-18)*

For the following four items about as many Brown supporters say the attribute makes them more likely to support a candidate as less likely.

- *has many years of experience in the business world (+4)*
- *is a man (+2)*
- *is an incumbent running for re-election (+1)*
- *is from the Los Angeles area (0)*

### **Positive and negative candidate attributes as rated by Whitman supporters**

Whitman's supporters for governor report a far different set of attributes as making them more inclined rather than less inclined to support a candidate. These are:

- *has many years of experience in the business world (+61)*
- *holds conservative views on the issues (+51)*
- *supports Arizona's new anti-illegal immigration law (+49)*
- *is a Republican (+43)*
- *opposes the nation's new health care law (+43)*
- *opposes President Obama and his policies (+41)*
- *is opposed by labor unions (+30)*
- *is pro-life on the issue of abortion (+28)*
- *has experience working with legislative leaders (+20)*
- *holds moderate views on the issues (+6)*
- *is a woman (+5)*

On the other hand, Whitman supporters say these attributes make them less likely rather than more likely to support a candidate:

- *is a Democrat (-60)*
- *supports President Obama and his policies (-58)*
- *supports the nation's new health care law (-56)*
- *is supported by labor unions (-53)*
- *opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law (-41)*
- *hasn't voted in many past statewide elections (-37)*
- *is from the San Francisco Bay Area (-31)*
- *is over the age 70 (-30)*
- *is an incumbent running for re-election (-27)*
- *does not have experience working with legislative leaders (-22)*
- *is pro-choice on the issue of abortion (-17)*
- *holds progressive views on the issues (-13)*
- *is from the Los Angeles area (-10)*
- *has many years experience in politics (-9)*
- *is wealthy (-5)*

On two other items about as many Whitman supporters say the attribute makes them more likely as less likely to support a candidate. These are:

- *is a man (+3)*
- *has never held political office before (+3)*

### **Positive and negative candidate attributes among Boxer supporters**

Larger proportions of Boxer supporters for U.S. Senate say the following attributes make them more rather than less likely to support a candidate:

- *supports the nation's new health care law (+69)*
- *is a Democrat (+66)*
- *supports President Obama and his policies (+58)*
- *has experience working with legislative leaders (+55)*
- *holds progressive views on the issues" (+54)*
- *is pro-choice on the issue of abortion (+45)*
- *is supported by labor unions (+38)*
- *has many years experience in politics (+32)*
- *opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law (+28)*
- *holds moderate views on the issues (+20)*
- *is a woman (+12)*
- *is from the San Francisco Bay Area (+10)*
- *has many years of experience in the business world (+7)*
- *is from the Los Angeles area (+7)*
- *is an incumbent running for re-election (+5)*

Boxer supporters say the following items make them less likely rather than more likely to support a candidate:

- *opposes President Obama and his policies (-68)*
- *is a Republican (-67)*
- *hasn't voted in many past statewide elections (-62)*
- *does not have experience working with legislative leaders (-51)*
- *supports Arizona's new anti-illegal immigration law (-50)*
- *opposes the nation's new health care law (-49)*
- *holds conservative views on the issues (-42)*
- *is pro-life on the issue of abortion (-40)*
- *is over the age 70 (-39)*
- *has never held political office before (-35)*
- *is opposed by labor unions (-24)*
- *is wealthy (-21)*

One item – *is a man (+1)* – produces no real difference in responses among Boxer supporters.

### **Positive and negative candidate attributes among Fiorina supporters**

Fiorina supporters report that these other attributes as making them more likely rather than less likely to support a candidate:

- *supports Arizona's new anti-illegal immigration law (+66)*
- *holds conservative views on the issues (+61)*
- *has many years of experience in the business world (+57)*
- *opposes the nation's new health care law (+48)*
- *is a Republican (+46)*
- *opposes President Obama and his policies (+43)*
- *is opposed by labor unions (+30)*
- *is pro-life on the issue of abortion (+24)*
- *has experience working with legislative leaders (+10)*
- *has never held political office before (+8)*
- *holds moderate views on the issues (+6)*

Fiorina supporters also say the following other attributes make them less rather than more likely to support a candidate:

- *supports President Obama and his policies (-70)*
- *is a Democrat (-65)*
- *supports the nation's new health care law (-61)*
- *is supported by labor unions (-54)*
- *opposes Arizona's new anti-immigration law (-48)*
- *hasn't voted in many past statewide elections (-39)*
- *is an incumbent running for re-election (-32)*
- *is from the San Francisco Bay Area (-30)*
- *is over age 70 (-25)*
- *is pro-choice on the issue of abortion (-22)*
- *does not have experience working with legislative leaders (-17)*
- *has many years experience in politics (-17)*
- *holds progressive views on the issues (-16)*
- *is from the Los Angeles area (-15)*

Three items produce very small net positive or negative effects among Fiorina supporters. They are:

- *is a man (+4)*
- *is a woman (+1)*
- *is wealthy (-4)*

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed June 22 – July 5, 2010 among a representative sample of likely voters in California’s 2010 general election. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two random subsamples of either 357 and 365 likely voters when administering the candidate attribute items.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation’s central location telephone interviewing facilities. To enable the survey to more closely examine the preferences of California’s growing ethnic voter populations, the survey was conducted in six languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese.

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. Likely voters were identified after interviews were completed with a random sample of California registered voters. Samples were provided by Voter Contact Services, a leading provider of registered voter samples to the survey research industry.

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 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 likely voters sample is +/- 5.5 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. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. 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 sources of error.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field and 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 from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the raw data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

I am going to read some characteristics of candidates who could run for high level political office in California. For each please tell me whether it makes you more likely to support that candidate with this characteristic, less likely or whether it makes no difference to you. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Does this make you more likely to support this candidate, less likely or does it make no difference to you? (SEE REPORT FOR ITEMS READ)