



BISC Defending Direct Democracy Research Toplines (2024)

Target campaign states: AZ, CA, CO, FL, ME, MI, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, OH, OR, + WA
Panel size was 6,090 voters

Key Takeaways

ON BALLOT MEASURE EFFECTIVITY

A majority of voters in BISC's 14 target campaign states value ballot measures as an effective method for citizens to initiate action when their elected officials do not act.

- In general, most voters agree that ballot measures serve as a good way to allow citizens to take action when their elected officials will not (average: 74 out of 100). Voters over the age of 45 (and particularly those over 65), Democrats, likely 2024 voters, White voters, and women drive agreement with this statement, while API and Latinx voters across these states are slightly less likely to agree (69 and 64, respectively).
- Agreement has been relatively consistent over the past few years among both registered and likely 2024 voters across these 14 states, but both groups have experienced a slight jump since the beginning of the year. Half of registered voters in these states (53%) and 3 in 5 likely 2024 voters (60%) strongly agree with this statement, answering 80 or above.
- Colorado (87), Mississippi (81), Florida (77), and Oregon (76) voters are the most likely out of the states overall to agree with this statement, while California (68), Maine (68), Montana (67), and Nebraska (66) are the least likely to agree.

Voters strongly believe that ballot initiatives are a good way to make your voice heard.

- In an initial look at this question, voters are more likely to agree that ballot initiatives are a good way to make your voice heard (71 points) and are less likely to say that ballot initiatives circumvent elected officials (25 points). About half of voters across surveyed states (49%) strongly believe that ballot initiatives allow citizens to take action when their elected officials do not (80-100 points), compared to just 5% who feel the same way about ballot initiatives circumventing elected officials.
- On a state-by-state basis, most of BISC's target states agree with this overall pattern. The exception is Nevada, where voters allocate their points evenly across both options, 50/50.

Voters generally disagree with the idea that state legislatures should have the power to limit, block, or reverse voter-passed ballot measures.

- When asked if they believe their state legislature should be allowed to limit, block, or reverse ballot measures that were passed by voters at the polls in the first place, the average voter tends to disagree (average 23 out of 100). Black voters, younger voters, and Latinx voters are more likely to agree with the statement, while white, women, and older voters tend to agree the least.
- Agreement with this statement has been consistently low over the past few years but has increased by about 5 points since April of 2021. Regardless, 61% of registered voters and 67% of likely 2024 voters strongly disagree with this, answering below 20 out of 100.
- Voters who are most likely to agree that state legislatures should have this ability live in Nevada (43), Mississippi (40), and Nebraska (31). All other states fall between averages of 14 and 23, with Oregon voters at the bottom of the list.

ON BALLOT MEASURE TAMPERING

Voters are generally unlikely to vote for local legislators who work to make ballot initiatives harder to use, with particularly strong opposition among likely 2024 voters and those over the age of 45.

- The average voter says they are not likely to vote for their local legislator in November if they were working to make the ballot initiative harder for citizens to use (average: 28 out of 100).
- After a rise in likelihood throughout 2022 and a period of inactivity on this question, averages have dropped and now mirror averages from July 2022. More than half of registered (54%) and likely 2024 (58%) voters say they are not likely at all to vote for this type of candidate (answering below 20 out of 100), but it's important to note that about 1 in 10 says they are highly likely to vote for this type of candidate (80-100) and another 2 in 5 falls somewhere in the middle (20-79 out of 100).
- This type of behavior bothers Nevada voters the least (41), although they are still unlikely to vote for this type of candidate. Montana (21), Michigan (21), and Maine (20) voters are the least likely to vote for this type of candidate.

Since 2018, voters have strongly rejected the idea of state legislators overturning approved ballot measures.

- Overall, voters are more likely to believe that state legislators should support the will of the people when it comes to ballot measures that voters approve at the polls, with the average voter allocating just 20 points towards saying these legislators should use their own discretion to overturn these measures where they think is appropriate. This has been consistent since 2018.
- 3 in 5 voters (59%) strongly believe that legislators should respect voters' decisions on ballot measures, allocating 80 or more points to this answer option. This is compared to just 3% of voters who feel the same way about legislators using their own discretion to overturn these measures. About one-third of voters (34-36%) sits somewhere in the middle of the scale (20-79 points).
- Individually, all of the BISC target states follow this overarching pattern. However, Nevada voters are the most likely to say legislators should use discretion to overturn measures (31 points), allocating just 57 points to saying legislators should support the will of the people, while states like Oregon (84), Colorado (83), and Mississippi (82) allocate nearly 30 more points to this answer option in comparison.

Voters are open to a “ballot initiative bill of rights” protecting the will of the people and the initiative process.

- Overall, voters are more likely to support a “ballot initiative bill of rights” in their state more than they are to oppose it, but support is lukewarm (average allocation: 58 points). The positive news is that support for this has gained an advantage; after being virtually split throughout 2020 and 2021, voters began to allocate more points towards supporting this type of legislation in 2022.
- Oregon (64), Mississippi (62), and Maine (61) voters are the most likely to support this type of legislation, while Nebraska (49) and Missouri (48) voters are still split down the middle on average.
- About one-third of voters (29-33%) sit in the indecision zone (40-59 points), indicating voter outreach and education are needed.

Voters have a moderate level of concern about legislatures limiting, blocking, or reversing voter-passed ballot measures, with the highest concern among Black voters.

- Voters are moderately concerned about their legislature limiting, blocking, or reversing ballot measures that were passed by voters at the polls (average: 61 out of 100). Black voters are the most concerned about this (65), while Republicans and API voters are the least concerned (57 and 54, respectively).
- This concern steadily climbed throughout 2021 and 2022, but after being prioritized in the question queue following a brief hiatus, concern dropped somewhat after peaking in 2022 slightly above 64. There's a wider range of opinions among voters overall, but about 2 in 5 registered (37%) and likely 2024 (40%) voters are very concerned, answering 80 or above.
- Mississippi voters are the most concerned about this (73), followed by Arizonans (70). Washington (58), Missouri (57), and Nebraska (53) voters are the least concerned.

(BISC research is provided in partnership with Trendency - a research platform that convenes online panels of registered voters on behalf of BISC.)

BISC's Approach to Research

BISC's mission is to strengthen democracy by implementing a national progressive strategy for ballot measures rooted in building state-based power. We center the following principles when approaching our research program:

1. We conduct comprehensive research that includes quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
2. We collect data that gives us insight to a snapshot in time (like most traditional polling and focus groups) and we collect longitudinal data to give us insight over time through our Trendency panels.
3. We conduct research in the multi-modal ways that people access data, including text messaging, social media and online methodologies for gauging opinions.
4. We conduct research that allows for more complexity and nuance, utilizing scale - seeing participants as multi-dimensional, rather than binary beings.
5. We conduct research that helps us disrupt “monolith” narratives and strategies for BIPOC, immigrant and youth communities, to understand in more depth what is

important to these traditionally underrepresented people -- the people we center in our long-term, movement-building work.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Adam Snipes, BISC's Director of Strategic Partnerships at adam@ballot.org.