Support for Progressive Reforms: Evidence from California’s 1911 Referenda

The Progressive era has long attracted scholarly interest because of the number and range of reforms approved during this period, especially in the states. Direct democratic institutions, such as the initiative, referendum, and recall, were established on a widespread basis in the 1900s and 1910s, empowering citizens to vote directly on legislation and remove officials before the end of their term. The early twentieth century also witnessed a surge of municipal home-rule measures and the introduction of the first county home-rule provision. Labor reforms in the form of maximum-hours, minimum-wages, and workers’-compensation policies were also enacted on a regular basis. Moreover, states strengthened processes for regulating railroads and other corporations, and enough of them provided for women’s suffrage and prohibited the sale and manufacture of alcohol to induce the federal government eventually to pass constitutional amendments enfranchising women and prohibiting alcohol. The appearance of so many important reforms during the Progressive era has prompted scholars to undertake investigations of who were the main supporters of these changes and how strong group support for them was; some scholars treated Progressivism as a coherent movement whereas others challenged this view.

We assess support for Progressive reforms by examining county-level election results from state-wide ballot measures. For many years,
inquiries into support for Progressive reforms focused on the backgrounds of the officials who pushed for them or scrutinized election returns to identify the voters responsible for electing the officials. In recent years, scholars have begun to study election returns from ballot measures where voters passed judgment directly on Progressive-era policies. The intent of these studies is to produce more accurate conclusions about support for various policies than is possible from looking at the behavior of public officials and activists at a time prior to the era of public-opinion surveys. In this article, we analyze election results for several of the constitutional amendments submitted to voters in an October 1911 special election in California. Other studies have confined themselves to just one or two, often relating certain reforms exclusively to alcohol prohibition.¹

The 1911 California election is among the most important elections in the Progressive era, ranking alongside those in 1912 Ohio, Colorado, and Oregon and 1914 Oregon that also featured a striking number of referenda. Legislators crafted the amendments on the 1911 California ballot as part of a package of Progressive reforms endorsed by recently elected Governor Hiram Johnson. We focus on six of the twenty-three amendments proposed: (1)

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allowing counties to craft their own governing charters; (2) granting women the right to vote; (3) providing for the initiative and referendum; (4) permitting citizens to recall public officials, including judges; (5) authorizing creation of a workers’-compensation system; and (6) strengthening and extending the regulatory power of a railroad commission. Voters approved all six amendments, but by varying margins. The women’s suffrage amendment barely passed, supported by only 50.7 percent of voters. The other five passed easily, with a range of support, from 63.2 percent for county home rule to 76.8 percent for the power to recall public officials.²

The purpose herein is to explain this variation in county-level support for these amendments by considering the influence of rural/urban residence, wealth, native/foreign birth of residents, literacy rates, and religious denominations. We find little uniformity in group support for these reforms. Counties where Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists were prevalent generally registered strong support for most reforms. Otherwise, groups did not display much consensus. Urban counties showed greater support than did rural counties for multiple reforms, but the situation reversed regarding women’s suffrage. Additionally, counties with greater wealth, a higher proportion of immigrants, and several religious denominations championed certain reforms but not others. The level and basis of support for women’s suffrage diverged in a particularly notable fashion from patterns of support for other measures.

2 Regarding other notable state elections in this era, a state constitutional convention of 1912 in Ohio submitted forty-two constitutional changes to voters—among them amendments adopting the initiative and referendum and direct primaries, establishing municipal home rule, authorizing a workers’-compensation system, requiring an eight-hour day on public-works projects, providing for women’s suffrage, and abolishing capital punishment. Voters approved all but the last two. The 1912 Colorado ballot included thirty-two measures initiated by either citizens or legislators—among them, recall of elected officials, an eight-hour day for miners and smelters, an eight-hour day for women, mothers’ pensions, municipal home rule, alcohol prohibition, and regulation of public-service corporations, the first five of which listed herein were approved. That same year, voters in Oregon passed judgment on thirty-seven ballot measures, some of them generated by legislators but most by citizen-initiated petitions—among them, adoption of women’s suffrage, establishment of an eight-hour day for public workers, abolition of the death penalty, adoption of a progressive income tax, and a move to a unicameral legislature, only the first two of which listed herein were approved. The Oregon election of 1914 also featured twenty-nine significant ballot propositions, including measures prohibiting alcohol, abolishing the death penalty, mandating an eight-hour day for all workers, abolishing the senate, and adopting proportional representation for elections to the legislature; only the first two listed herein were approved.
LITERATURE REVIEW  Research on Progressivism has generally centered on two related questions: First, who supported Progressive reforms? Second, did the Progressive movement draw coherent support from a consistent set of groups or did various reforms attract support from different sets of groups? Scholars are divided in their answers to both questions.

One enduring debate concerning the main proponents of Progressive reforms is particularly acute regarding California. Mowry concluded that California Progressivism was “an upper middle-class movement, at least in its leadership,” whereas Rogin and Shover maintained that Progressive reforms in California initially galvanized middle-class voters but ended up drawing more support from lower-income voters in later years. Other scholars—among them, Wyman in his study of Wisconsin—found that middle-class voters elsewhere routinely opposed Progressive candidates throughout the period, often espousing divergent views about whether Progressivism drew support primarily from urban or rural areas. Mowry’s argument that “in its origins [support for Progressive reforms] was an urban rather than a rural movement” is the dominant interpretation, though other scholars, including Rogin and Shover, warn that “urban” interpretations of the Progressive movement tend to overlook the rural basis of Progressive strength.” The role of other demographic groups tends to gain more agreement. Native-born persons and Protestants, for example, generally seem to have backed Progressive reforms, whereas immigrants and Catholics opposed them.3

Regarding the question of whether Progressivism was a coherent movement that drew uniform support from various groups,

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3 The middle- and upper-class basis of support is noted in Mowry, California Progressives, 89; Rogin and Shover, Political Change in California, 46–48. Rogin and Shover, who analyzed voter support for California Governor Johnson in his initial 1910 campaign and 1914 re-election bid, concluded that middle-class voters fueled Johnson’s initial election but opposed his re-election after passage and implementation of a comprehensive package of Progressive reforms in the 1911 legislative session. For middle-class opposition to Progressivism, see Wyman, “Middle-Class Voters and Progressive Reform”; for urban support, Mowry, California Progressives, 89; Alonzo L. Hamby, “Progressivism: A Century of Change and Rebirth,” in Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (eds.), Progressivism and the New Democracy (Amherst, 1999), 44; for questions about the degree of urban support, Rogin and Shover, Political Change in California, 39; Wyman, “Middle-Class Voters and Progressive Reform,” 503; for the role of Catholicism and Protestantism and native birth and foreign birth, Rogin and Shover, Political Change in California, 53; Howard W. Allen and Jerome Clubb, “Progressive Reform and the Political System,” Pacific Northwest Quarterly, LXV (1974), 137–138.
contemporaneous chroniclers and advocates of Progressivism certainly thought that they were leading a movement of overriding purpose and popularity. Witness Benjamin Parke De Witt’s 1915 book, The Progressive Movement: A Non-partisan, Comprehensive Discussion of Current Tendencies in American Politics (New York, 1915), which depicted Progressives as united by a commitment to making governing institutions more responsive to public opinion, extending government control over corporations, and empowering public officials to relieve the social and economic distress of the citizenry. To be sure, Progressive reforms targeted a range of specific interests, whether railroads, businesses generally, or party bosses and machines. Nevertheless, De Witt contended that Progressivism was a coherent movement held together by a general desire to limit special interests and empower the people, either directly through legislation or indirectly through officials who would be more accountable to voters, overcoming industry resistance to worker-protection measures and limiting the political clout of corporations.4

Others would later challenge this understanding by reconsidering the degree to which Progressive reforms emanated from a unitary movement. According to them, activists and organizations often acted independently of each other, particularly the women’s suffrage groups that began organizing well before the push for direct democracy and other reforms gained momentum in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Groups supporting several other policies during this era also seemed to work alone and to draw from different constituencies. For instance, some good-government groups advocated almost exclusively for direct democracy and other reforms gained momentum in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Groups supporting several other policies during this era also seemed to work alone and to draw from different constituencies. For instance, some good-government groups advocated almost exclusively for direct democracy, with an eye to overcoming legislative and, in some cases, judicial resistance to policies, but with little concern for other issues. Meanwhile, labor groups focused on securing measures such as workers’ compensation, whereas other groups were intent on extending the right of home rule (see below).5

4 De Witt, Progressive Movement.
THE CALIFORNIA SPECIAL ELECTION OF OCTOBER 1911  The measures that appeared on the October 1911 California ballot were part of what has been called “the most sweeping revision of the California Constitution in the twentieth century.” Each of the twenty-three state constitutional amendments had the support of newly installed Governor Johnson and sought to increase the responsiveness and accountability of governing officials and/or overcome the influence of the Southern Pacific Railroad, among other interests. The Southern Pacific, which had a history of rent-protecting activities, was able to block not only direct regulation of the railroad industry but also various political and labor reforms. Dubbed “the octopus” in Norris’ 1901 novel for its far-reaching “tentacles” affecting almost all aspects of California economic and political life, the Southern Pacific became the primary target of California Progressives. The Lincoln–Roosevelt League, which formed in 1907 to coordinate Progressive efforts to overcome the Southern Pacific’s influence, spearheaded an attempt to elect state legislators willing to take on the railroad. In the 1909 legislative session, the League had some success in securing passage of several modest bills, including a direct-primary law. However, the Southern Pacific and its legislative allies were able to thwart several other reforms that year, leading Progressives to redouble their efforts to elect sympathetic candidates in the 1910 legislative and gubernatorial election, with an eye to achieving more success in the 1911 session. 6

Johnson’s victory in the 1910 gubernatorial election was the catalyst for consideration of numerous Progressive reforms in this 1911 legislative session. Johnson’s 1911 inaugural address showed his commitment to a variety of immediate institutional and policy changes. The legislature was able to enact a few reforms without voter approval, when they did not require a change to the state constitution, such as a modification of the direct primary law and an adoption of the Australian (secret) ballot. The legislature also enacted some worker-protection measures by statute, including an eight-hour

workday for women. Other changes had to be framed as constitutional amendments and therefore submitted for voter approval.\textsuperscript{7}

Several amendments were dedicated to refashioning governmental and electoral institutions by strengthening the role of the public in governance or by moving decision making closer to the people. One amendment approved by the 1911 legislature for submission to voters provided for the initiative and referendum, a core component of Johnson’s campaign platform. Another amendment, which proved more controversial because it applied to judges as well as other officials, permitted voters to trigger a recall election and remove public officials before expiration of their term. The legislature also crafted an amendment allowing counties to develop their own charters. Municipalities already had home-rule powers of this kind in California and several other states, but for the first time, voters in the United States considered granting home-rule powers to counties.\textsuperscript{8}

Another set of amendments focused on improving the powers of the state railroad commission. In rewriting the California Constitution in 1879, delegates to a state constitutional convention created a railroad commission comprised of three members to regulate railroad rates. For various reasons, including the determined opposition of the railroads, the commission had been unable to promulgate and enforce regulations in an effective manner. The 1911 legislature tried to remedy the problem by adopting a railroad regulation statute and placing a package of three constitutional amendments on the ballot. One of these amendments, a focus of our study, enhanced the regulatory power of the railroad commission by requiring railroads to secure the commission’s approval for rate increases and declaring that most such rate determinations were not reviewable by courts. A second amendment altered the structure and composition of the commission, and a third broadened the reach of the commission to encompass the regulation of public utilities besides

\textsuperscript{7} Franklin Hichborn, \textit{Story of the Session of the California Legislature of 1911} (San Francisco, 1911); Spencer C. Olin, Jr., \textit{California’s Prodigal Sons: Hiram Johnson and the Progressives, 1911–1917} (Berkeley, 1968), 34–35.

\textsuperscript{8} For the initiative and referendum amendment, see Thomas Goebel, \textit{A Government by the People: Direct Democracy in America, 1890–1940} (Chapel Hill, 2002), 85–90; for the recall amendment and controversy about whether recall should be applied to judges, Tom Sitton, \textit{John Randolph Haynes: California Progressive} (Stanford, 1992), 92–93; John M. Allswang, \textit{The Initiative and Referendum in California, 1898–1998} (Stanford, 2000), 17; for the county home-rule amendment, E. J. Miller, “A New Departure in County Government: California’s Experiment with Home Rule.” \textit{American Political Science Review}, VII (1913), 413.
the railroads. Another amendment authorized the legislature to establish a mandatory workers’-compensation system. Labor unions and other groups had long sought to hold employers liable for workplace injuries. The legitimacy of workers’-compensation programs was unclear, however, in part because judges in other states, such as New York, held that such measures violated state constitutional provisions. The California legislature in 1911 sought to entrench a workers’-compensation program in the state constitution, thereby insulating it from state-court invalidation.9

A final amendment of note extended suffrage to women. Four states had granted women full voting rights in the late nineteenth century—Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho. However, California voters’ rejection of women’s suffrage in 1896 marked the start of a fourteen-year period when no other states approved it, until Washington eventually did so in 1910. Emboldened by this recent success, the California legislature presented another women’s-suffrage amendment to voters in 1911. Governor Johnson agreed to support it, but he did not mention it in his inaugural address and was noted to have “remained silent about women’s suffrage throughout the campaign.”10

At the October 10, 1911, election, voters approved all but one of the twenty-three amendments on the ballot. The one amendment that voters rejected, 51.5 percent to 48.5 percent, would have adjusted an existing constitutional ban on railroads’ ability to give free railway passes to public officials. Some voters saw it as reducing special-interest influence, but the majority construed it as facilitating such influence. The existing constitutional provision disallowed free passes for all public officials except railroad commissioners. The proposed amendment would have dispensed free passes not only to more commission officials to facilitate railroad investigations but also to peace officers to facilitate criminal pursuit. Supporters such as the Sacramento Bee viewed these changes as beneficial by “saving a large present expense to the state” and forcing the railroads to bear part of the cost of

regulation and crime fighting. Some detractors, however, expressed concern that granting additional free passes would render the affected officials susceptible to the influence of the railroads. Other opponents, such as the Los Angeles City Club, rejected the amendment because they were in favor of free passes to either railroad commission workers or peace officers but not to both groups.¹¹

**DATA AND METHODS** Of the twenty-three proposed amendments placed on the ballot, we examine the six that are considered most closely aligned with the Progressive movement in order of appearance

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¹¹ For the official description of the amendment and the supporting arguments made available to voters, see Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the State of California, with Legislative Reasons for and against Adoption Thereof, 1911, 17, available at https://repository.uchastings.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=ca_ballot_props; for the positive recommendation of the Sacramento Bee, with emphasis on cost savings, “Synopsis of Constitutional Amendments,” California Outlook, 30 Sept. 1911, 18; for the reasoning of the Los Angeles City Club, “Los Angeles City Club on Constitutional Amendments,” ibid., 7 Oct. 1911, 15; “While we believe it to be entirely proper that the transportation companies of the State should furnish free transportation to members, officers, and employees of the State Railroad Commission, we do not believe that peace officers should be made recipients of free transportation,” and that this policy “would be unwise, and would very probably lead to evil results”; for the post-election analysis of a commentator who lamented that voters had “bumped our own noses to spite our faces” out of a concern about “buying favor with free transportation,” thus missing the chance of “saving the state quite a sum of money and harming no one as the favor would be to the state and not to the commissioners” or peace officers, Arthur J. Pillsbury, “Table Talk,” ibid., 11 Nov. 1911, 6.
on the ballot: home rule (Senate Amendment No. 5), women’s suffrage (Senate Amendment No. 8), initiative and referendum (I&R) (Senate Amendment No. 22), recall (Senate Amendment No. 23), worker’s compensation (Senate Amendment No. 32), and the railroad commission (Senate Amendment No. 47). As reported in Table 1, the turnout for this election was roughly one-quarter of the men aged twenty-one and older, and more than half the votes cast in the previous year’s gubernatorial election. Voter turnout was highest on the women’s-suffrage amendment, at just under 27 percent of all males at least twenty-one years of age; it ranged from slightly more than 25 percent (the recall amendment) to slightly under 23 percent (the home-rule amendment) for the other five amendments of interest.12

Although each of these amendments passed, they did so with varying margins of support, ranging from a low of 50.7 percent for suffrage to a high of 76.8 percent for recall. Due to distributional asymmetries in county population size, the average level of support across the counties differs somewhat from the overall state returns, but the county mean levels are almost identical to the county median levels, as shown in Table 2.

Figure 1, a map of the state, identifies counties by how many of the six measures failed to receive majority support. Twenty-one of the fifty-three counties failed to register majority support for at least one of the amendments; three counties failed to register majority support for two of the amendments—Colusa (home rule and compensation), San Bernardino (home rule and railroad), and Tuolomne (home rule and railroad). Only the I&R and recall amendments were supported by a majority in every county.13

As shown in Table 3, there is only weak correlation for percentage of county support across the amendments, except for a strong correlation between the two amendments receiving the

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12 Amendments were assigned numbers on the ballot based on the order in which they were considered in the Senate, which approved fourteen numbered amendments ranging from No. 2 (weights and measures) to No. 49 (public utilities), and in the Assembly, which approved nine amendments ranging from No. 2 (textbooks) to No. 50 (railroads). As described above, there were two similar railroad-commission amendments. Because county-level returns for these two measures are correlated at better than .9, to avoid double counting, we analyze only the first railroad amendment. Election returns for amendments come from Statement of the Vote of California (1911) and gubernatorial votes from Vote for State Officers of the State of California (1910). The number of males aged twenty-one and older is from the 1910 federal census.

13 As seen on the map, the three counties failing to register majority support for at least one of the amendments are separated from each other considerably.
greatest overall support, I&R and recall, and a moderately strong correlation between the I&R and workers’-compensation measures. The lack of consistently strong correlations of county-level support for key measures led Allswang to deem the evidence inconsistent with a unified movement behind Progressive reforms. He concluded that “the various issues that came to be seen as the elements of Progressivism were actually combined with some reluctance and some happenstance, and quite often represented different constituencies.” As he further wrote, “Among the voters, as among the progressives themselves, broad-based support of the whole gamut of reform issues was far from general.” Furthermore, although the Republican governor ran as a Progressive and endorsed the full set of amendments, there is almost no correlation between county-level support for him in the 1910 election and support for any of the amendments the following year.\(^\text{14}\)

Nonetheless, the possibility remains that certain subsets of the electorate voted consistently for (or against) Progressive reforms. Heterogeneous county populations might mask some of the underlying relationships. For example, urbanites could have consistently supported each of the measures, but residents of rural areas could have been driven more by religious denomination, wealth, or the presence of immigrants. Variation in these demographics across the large number of heavily rural counties could result in meager correlations at the county level across the state despite consistent support from the heavily populated urban counties, simply because the number of rural counties far exceeds the number of urban counties. Controlling for confounding factors might well reveal

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\(^{14}\) Allswang, \emph{Initiative and Referendum in California}, 5, 16, 18.
the urban/rural divide. We therefore utilize regression analysis to ascertain if common interests manifest themselves in demographic differences at the margin. Our initial interest is to determine which county characteristics were aligned with support for Progressive reforms overall.

Yet, regression analysis of Progressive support across the ballot poses some challenges. Whenever the potential dependent variable is in terms of percentage, care needs to be taken regarding its distribution. In our case, the twenty-five observations in the upper tail...
greater than 80 percent) suggest that if linearity is imposed, marginal effects might be overestimated in that range and predicted values can exceed 100 percent. To avoid these problems, we assume county support follows a logistic distribution. As such, we estimate variations of the following equation

\[
\ln\left(\frac{y_{i,t}}{100 - y_{i,t}}\right) = \alpha + x_i \beta + \mu_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{i,t},
\]

(1)

where \(y_{i,t}\) is the percentage support in county \(i\) for amendment \(t\); \(x_i\) is a vector of county characteristics; \(\mu_i\) is a county-specific effect; \(\delta_t\) is a fixed amendment effect; and \(\epsilon_{i,t}\) is an error term assumed to be normally distributed.

The estimated coefficients represent the effect of a one-unit change in \(x\) on the logistic of \(y\), whereas we are interested in \(\frac{\partial y}{\partial x}\), the effect on \(y\) itself. Due to the logistic transformation, the marginal effects on \(y\) are not constant; they depend on the value of \(x\). The average marginal effect across all observations can be estimated as \(\frac{\partial y}{\partial x} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{y_{i,t}}{100 - y_{i,t}} \beta / 100\). We report these estimated average marginal effects in the tables instead of the estimated logistic coefficients.

Note also that because the amendment referenda were all held at the same election, no time variation applies for the county characteristics. Therefore, a fixed county effect is not possible to estimate. Instead, we assume \(\mu_i \sim (0, \sigma^2_{\mu})\) is a random variable. However, we allow for a fixed amendment effect (\(\delta_t\)) to capture differences in the mean level of support across the amendments. Hence, the marginal effects
are interpreted as representing deviations from the average level of support that an amendment receives.

In assessing determinants of support for these ballot measures, we first consider the rural character of the counties. The literature provides conflicting conclusions about the degree of support for Progressive reforms in urban or rural areas. The dominant view is that city dwellers were the dominant force in the Progressive movement, though some have argued that certain Progressive reforms, such as railroad regulation, had strong appeal in rural areas. Still, our expectation is that counties with more urban residents were, on average, more supportive of the 1911 California ballot measures.

We also consider the influence of social class. Again, scholars are divided on whether support for the Progressive movement came primarily from middle- and upper-class persons (as the conventional view holds) or from lower-class persons. We investigate the role of social class in two ways. First, because income is not available at the county level, we rely on per-capita assessed valuation of property by county, with the expectation that wealthier counties were more supportive of these ballot measures. Second, we include illiteracy rates, with the expectation that counties with higher illiteracy rates were less supportive.

We also consider the role of immigration. Because the Progressive movement is generally understood to have enjoyed the backing of native-born people and to have been opposed by foreign-born people, we investigate whether counties with a higher proportion of foreign-born residents were less supportive of these ballot measures.

Regarding the influence of religion, the dominant view is that Protestants—particularly members of “socially active” denominations—were largely supportive of Progressive reforms, whereas Catholics were predominantly opposed. We include variables representing, separately, the percentage of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, and Catholics.

All county demographic data derive from the federal census of 1910 except for wealth and religion. Because county-level income data are not available for this time period, we proxy wealth in the county by the assessed value of property taken from *Fifty-ninth Annual Report of the California State Board of Agriculture* converted to per capita terms using the total number of residents enumerated in the general census. The census did not incorporate religious
affiliation until 1940, but local church officials occasionally issued separate censuses of all religious bodies. We utilize the 1906 version, which is the latest source of county-level religious data prior to the 1911 election. Bear in mind, however, that this data source is a census of organizations that reports membership, not a census of individuals. We therefore define our religion variables as the number for each denomination relative to the total sum from all the religions included in the census. Thus, this number represents the percentage of religious-affiliated persons who are of a particular denomination rather than as a percentage of the entire county population.  

**ESTIMATION RESULTS**

**Determinants of Overall Support**  
Column I of Table 4 reports marginal effects and associated $z$-values based on estimates of (1) by generalized least squares for random county effects, which also include (unreported) a series of dummy indicators for five of the amendments, leaving suffrage as the default, to capture the amendment fixed effect. We find that except for religion, none of the demographic variables was significantly correlated with county support for the Progressive amendments.  

Among Protestant denominations, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists in a county were significantly correlated with greater support for the amendments. For example, an increase in the Presbyterian population of one percentage point leads on average to a .70 percentage point increase in support for one of the amendments. Holding other factors constant, if Santa Barbara, which was 7 percent Presbyterian, were to have increased its Presbyterian concentration to be reflective of Merced, which was 10 percent Presbyterian, support for the Progressive measures would have been roughly two percentage points higher. Put another way, if every county were to have reduced its Presbyterian population by just one-and-one-half percent, support for Progressive reforms would have fallen by about one percentage point on average. A change this small would have had

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15 Alpine and Imperial counties had no forms returned and are not enumerated in this 1906 religious census. Nor are they included in the rest of our analysis.

16 We also note that except for the estimated coefficient on home rule, each of the other amendment indicators has an estimated coefficient that is positive and statistically significant, consistent with greater mean support compared to suffrage.
a limited effect on most amendments, but the women’s-suffrage amendment might have failed. Impacts would have been similar for changes to the Congregationalist population, or a decline of three percentage points in the Methodist population. The ecological fallacy prevents us from concluding that this effect is a direct result of Protestant voting preferences. Another possibility is that one segment of the population influenced the other—for example, that Catholic (or Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, etc.) voting preferences became more like Protestant voting preferences when such preferences were predominant.

An alternative specification to (1) that also relates county demographic levels to general support for Progressive reforms is to consider instead the average level of support across the amendments. We measure the total number of “yes” votes for all amendments in each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I. PANEL</th>
<th>II. WEIGHTED AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-5.62 (-0.90)</td>
<td>3.08 (0.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.023 (1.03)</td>
<td>0.019 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>0.0008 (0.58)</td>
<td>0.00067 (0.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.370 (-1.18)</td>
<td>-0.361 (-1.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>0.026 (0.27)</td>
<td>0.0167 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.091 (1.47)</td>
<td>0.091 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>0.262 (1.21)</td>
<td>0.264 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>0.336** (2.88)</td>
<td>0.323** (2.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>0.699** (3.35)</td>
<td>0.692** (3.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalist</td>
<td>0.621** (3.52)</td>
<td>0.600** (3.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples</td>
<td>-0.289 (-1.46)</td>
<td>-0.25 (-1.26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of observations | 336 | 56
Mean, dependent variable | 0.664 | 0.638
[Mean, untransformed] | [65.31] | [65.31]
Sum squared residual | 24.48 | 1.69
R² | | 0.27

*Significant at p ≤ .10.
**Significant at p ≤ .05.

NOTES Dependent variable is logistic transformation of county support for amendment in column I and logistic transformation of weighted average of county support for the six amendments in column II. Estimated marginal effect on untransformed county support. Column I reports z-ratios in parentheses, and column II reports t-ratios in parentheses, each derived from standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity. Column I includes county random effects and amendment fixed effects, with standard errors clustered at the county level.
county relative to the total number of votes cast. We then estimate the following model

\[
\ln \left( \frac{\bar{y}_i}{100 - \bar{y}_i} \right) = \alpha + x_i \beta + \epsilon_i, \tag{2}
\]

where \(\bar{y}_i\) is the weighted average in county \(i\) for support of the Progressive reforms (results are identical if we use the simple [unweighted] average, since the two measures are correlated at better than 0.99). The data range for \(\bar{y}_i\) is much narrower than in the panel; county averages range from a low of 55.2 percent in Amador to a high of only 73.4 percent in Plumas. Although it coincides with a linear distribution in this data range, for direct comparison to the panel specification we continue to use the logistic transformation as the dependent variable. Estimates based on robust standard errors are presented in column II.

Results are similar to the panel specification. Voters in counties with greater concentrations of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists showed more support for Progressive reforms on average than did voters in other counties. Urbanization, wealth, illiteracy, immigrants, Catholics, Baptists, and Disciples were not relevant factors. Coefficient estimates on the nonreligious demographic variables are neither individually nor jointly significant.

Support for Individual Amendments

Lack of significance suggests that several of the county demographics were not relevant factors in determining support for Progressive reforms. Yet, these factors may have played a significant role in determining support levels for certain amendments if not for others; particular groups may have had varying preferences for different Progressive reforms. For example, relying on the estimates presented in Table 4 would lead to the inference that counties with higher concentrations of foreign-born persons had only a weak and inconsequential relation to support or opposition to Progressive reforms. However, such areas may have registered strong opposition to certain amendments, such as women’s suffrage, while being indifferent to the others. Similarly, the significantly greater support for the amendments overall in counties with the highest percentages of Presbyterians,

17 The county with the highest overall average is Imperial at 77.6%, but as noted earlier, this county is not included in the regression due to missing religion data. The other dropped county (Alpine) has an average support level of 62.8%. The average for the state is 65.5%, and for the sample 65.3%.

18 The test statistic for joint significance is distributed as \(F(4, 45)=1.247, \ p\)-value 0.305.
Congregationalists, and Methodists may not have translated into support for each and every amendment. In other words, if the Progressive movement was not a cohesive movement, certain groups might have favored or opposed some of the amendments while other groups led the charge for other amendments. Progressivism may have been a patchwork rather than a consistent movement. To check, we next run regressions on each amendment separately. Specifically,

$$\ln \left( \frac{y_{i,t}}{100 - y_{i,t}} \right) = \alpha_t + x_i \beta_t + \epsilon_{i,t},$$  (3)

such that each amendment has its own set of estimates reported in Table 5, with $t$-statistics derived from White robust standard errors. Relatively consistent patterns emerge except for suffrage.

Regarding religious denomination, counties returned 0.62–0.88 greater support on each amendment for an increase of one percentage point in their concentration of Presbyterians, consistent with the estimates provided in Table 4 for pooled data. The exception is the railroad amendment, for which the marginal effect is much smaller and not statistically significant. Similarly, the Congregational population is positively associated with support for every amendment except one. For Congregationalism, however, the insignificant association applies to home rule. Counties with the most Methodists also showed significantly higher support for several amendments, excluding home rule and suffrage. Greater proportions of Baptists resulted in greater support for women’s suffrage. The presence of more Disciples resulted in lower support for every Progressive measure except women’s suffrage; this relationship was statistically significant for the recall amendment. Thus, Disciples appear to have acted differently from the other socially active Protestant religions. Counties with greater concentrations of Catholics were marginally more supportive of workers’ compensation but otherwise revealed no significant connection to Progressive reforms.

Illiteracy was never statistically significant, but a few other significant relationships emerge for individual amendments, in ways masked by the earlier analysis that grouped the amendments together. Counties with higher levels of foreign-born persons were less supportive of women’s suffrage, whereas wealthier counties showed greater support for strengthening the railroad commission. Urbanization had varying effects, ranging from significantly positive for home rule and workers’ compensation to significantly negative for suffrage.
Table 5  Separate Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HOME RULE</th>
<th>SUFORAGE</th>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
<th>RECALL</th>
<th>COMPENSATION</th>
<th>RAILROAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.31 (-0.31)</td>
<td>2.13 (0.23)</td>
<td>10.96 (1.26)</td>
<td>15.27** (2.04)</td>
<td>-4.56 (-0.47)</td>
<td>-1.80 (-0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.083** (2.03)</td>
<td>-0.090** (-3.47)</td>
<td>0.029 (0.96)</td>
<td>-0.016 (-0.53)</td>
<td>0.086** (2.38)</td>
<td>0.046 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>0.0015 (0.53)</td>
<td>-0.0004 (-1.16)</td>
<td>0.0004 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.0013 (0.67)</td>
<td>-0.0016 (-0.63)</td>
<td>0.0030* (1.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.815 (-1.49)</td>
<td>0.053 (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.285 (-0.69)</td>
<td>-0.304 (-0.79)</td>
<td>-0.319 (-0.71)</td>
<td>-0.546 (-1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>0.177 (1.04)</td>
<td>-0.304* (-1.79)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.048 (-0.31)</td>
<td>0.177 (1.13)</td>
<td>0.154 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.059 (0.60)</td>
<td>0.074 (0.92)</td>
<td>0.093 (1.01)</td>
<td>0.076 (0.97)</td>
<td>0.164* (1.90)</td>
<td>0.080 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>-0.027 (-0.07)</td>
<td>0.532* (2.00)</td>
<td>0.327 (1.15)</td>
<td>0.441 (1.59)</td>
<td>0.365 (1.06)</td>
<td>-0.067 (-0.212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>0.183 (0.82)</td>
<td>0.211 (1.28)</td>
<td>0.416** (2.28)</td>
<td>0.333** (2.23)</td>
<td>0.503** (3.23)</td>
<td>0.370* (1.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>0.682* (1.91)</td>
<td>0.778** (2.09)</td>
<td>0.878** (2.95)</td>
<td>0.852** (2.89)</td>
<td>0.624** (2.02)</td>
<td>0.381 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalist</td>
<td>0.130 (0.39)</td>
<td>0.840** (3.17)</td>
<td>0.702** (2.41)</td>
<td>0.968** (4.43)</td>
<td>0.663** (2.87)</td>
<td>0.422* (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples</td>
<td>-0.212 (-0.50)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.341 (-1.38)</td>
<td>-0.471** (-2.15)</td>
<td>-0.551 (-1.44)</td>
<td>-0.168 (-0.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Observations  56  56  56  56  56  56
Mean, dependent variable 0.274 0.278 1.087 1.183 0.600 0.564
[Mean, untransformed]  [56.65]  [56.78]  [74.45]  [76.17]  [64.27]  [63.52]
R^2 0.268 0.505 0.284 0.353 0.378 0.172
Adjusted R^2 0.105 0.395 0.125 0.209 0.240 0.013

*Significant at p ≤ .10.
**Significant at p ≤ .05.

Notes: Dependent variable is logistic transformation of county support for amendment. Estimated marginal effect on untransformed county support and t-ratios derived from standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity in parentheses.
Urban counties, however, showed no significant differences from rural counties in support for I&R, recall, or railroad regulation.

Patterns of support for the women’s-suffrage amendment were notably different from patterns of support for the other amendments. Women’s suffrage is the only amendment receiving less support from counties with more urban residents, and in a statistically significant fashion. Counties with more urban residents were more likely to be supportive of the other amendments or, in some cases, were not associated with support or opposition to them. Women’s suffrage is also the only amendment to receive reduced support from counties with the highest immigrant populations, and in a statistically significant fashion. Higher concentrations of Baptists related to significantly higher support for women’s suffrage in a way not seen with any other amendment.

The fact that a small set of county demographics utilized as explanatory variables explains roughly half of the variation in county support for the women’s-suffrage measure but only 17 percent for the railroad-commission measure suggests that different factors are at play. Estimates generated from equation (3) might also suffer from omitted variable bias if the errors across amendments are correlated. For example, views of Progressivism could have differed across local media with varying degrees of influence. A seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) estimation technique is often utilized to improve efficiency, but in the absence of variation in the explanatory variables, SUR estimates will be the same as ordinary least squares (OLS). Hence, we account for different underlying county support for Progressivism beyond the included demographic factors in an alternative fashion.

Despite the low correlation for county support across amendments reported in Table 3, a good predictor of county support for a given amendment is still the overall level of support on the other amendments, as shown by the scatterplots in Figure 2, in which each bivariate relationship is statistically significant except for suffrage. We therefore supplement specification (3) as

$$ln\left(\frac{y_{i,t}}{100-y_{i,t}}\right) = \alpha_t + x_i \beta_t + \bar{y}_{i,-t} \gamma_t + \epsilon_{i,t},$$

where $\bar{y}_{i,-t}$ represents the average level of support in the county for the other five amendments. Omitted variables that affect support
levels for Progressive amendments in general are captured by $\gamma_{i,-t}$, and the estimated $\beta_t$ now represent marginal impacts on amendment $t$ that differ from the other amendments. We caution against any causal inference associated with $\gamma$, as $\gamma_{i,-t}$ is likely to be endogenous to many of the same factors as $\gamma_{i,t}$. Estimates appear in Table 6.
Table 6  Separate Amendments Controlling for Support of Other Amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HOME RULE</th>
<th>SUFFRAGE</th>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
<th>RECALL</th>
<th>COMPENSATION</th>
<th>RAILROAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-58.87**</td>
<td>-13.228</td>
<td>-49.59**</td>
<td>-37.14**</td>
<td>-58.63**</td>
<td>-44.75**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.069**</td>
<td>-0.105**</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
<td>-0.49**</td>
<td>0.073**</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>0.0010</td>
<td>-0.0006</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>0.00069</td>
<td>-0.0027</td>
<td>0.0038**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.558</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.0990</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>-0.332*</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>-0.344</td>
<td>0.476*</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>-0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>-0.187</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>0.206*</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalist</td>
<td>-0.557</td>
<td>0.687**</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.389**</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>-0.234</td>
<td>-0.363</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for other</td>
<td>1.012**</td>
<td>0.286**</td>
<td>1.169**</td>
<td>1.032**</td>
<td>0.982**</td>
<td>0.790**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amendments</td>
<td>(5.64)</td>
<td>(2.01)</td>
<td>(13.53)</td>
<td>(9.13)</td>
<td>(6.53)</td>
<td>(5.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                        |           |          |           |        |              |          |
| Number of Observations | 56        | 56       | 53        | 56     | 56           | 56       |
| Mean, dependent variable | 0.274    | 0.278    | 1.087     | 1.183  | 0.600        | 0.564    |
| [Mean, untransformed]  | [56.65]   | [56.78]  | [74.45]   | [76.17] | [64.27]      | [63.32]  |
| R²                     | 0.556     | 0.544    | 0.881     | 0.791  | 0.688        | 0.420    |
| Adjusted R²            | 0.445     | 0.430    | 0.852     | 0.739  | 0.610        | 0.276    |

*Significant at $p \leq .10$.
**Significant at $p \leq .05$.

NOTES  Dependent variable is logistic transformation of county support for amendment. Estimation marginal effect on untransformed county support and $t$-ratios derived from standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity in parentheses.
As expected, we find county support for the other amendments to be positively related to support for the current amendment and statistically significant in all cases, including the women’s-suffrage amendment, albeit not as robustly. For the state as a whole, suffrage generated the weakest support among the analyzed amendments at only 50.7 percent, but as was reported in Table 2, the (unweighted) average across counties for suffrage support was much higher (57 percent), matching that of home rule. Controlling for the set of included demographics, an increase of one percentage point in support for the other amendments is associated with increased support for a specific amendment ranging from .29 (suffrage) to 1.17 (I&R) percentage points. The next smallest effect, on the railroad amendment, is almost three times as large as for suffrage. Including support for the other amendments only modestly increases the variation explained for county support of suffrage (from 50.4 percent to 54.4 percent), but it more than doubles the variation explained among most of the others (the exception being workers’ compensation, which jumps “only” from 37.8 percent to 68.8 percent).

Some of the demographic estimates reinforce previous findings from Table 5, but others offer new insights. For example, regarding women’s suffrage, the negative and significant marginal impact reported for the foreign-born variable and the positive and significant estimated coefficient for Baptists are expected, given that this amendment is the only one for which those variables had previously been found statistically significant. The new estimates confirm that counties with greater foreign-born populations supported expansion of the franchise to women less than they did the other amendments where nativity was not a contributing factor.19

The rural/urban divide is particularly instructive. We found previously that voters in urban areas were less supportive of women’s suffrage than were rural counties. As expected, we now confirm that urban counties supported this measure at a lower rate than they did the other measures. We also find urban counties were most supportive of home rule and workers’ compensation. Conversely, rural opposition was especially strong regarding the home-rule and workers’-compensation amendments. Furthermore, although urban counties were not significantly different from rural counties in supporting

19 The positive and significant impact of county wealth on support for the railroad amendment is also confirmed.
recall (Table 5), urbanites supported this measure (and women’s suffrage) less than they did the other Progressive measures. Finally, recall that higher concentrations of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists were associated with greater support for most amendments. Controlling for Progressivism’s underlying support reveals little deviation across the amendments in terms of how much more support occurred, with one exception. Increases in the Methodist concentration of a county increased support for workers’ compensation even more than it did for the other Progressive measures. In other words, the marginal impact of more Methodists on support for compensation reported in Table 5 was significantly greater than the marginal impact of this variable on the other measures. This finding is consistent with the notion that although Methodists had a generally favorable outlook on Progressive reforms, they were especially attracted to publicly supported workers’ compensation. An increase of one percentage point in the Methodist concentration is associated with a two-tenths higher support for workers’ compensation than for the other amendments on average. In contrast, Congregationalist counties supported women’s suffrage and recall at significantly greater levels than they did the other amendments, whereas Presbyterian counties supported each amendment at roughly equivalent levels. No individual measure generates significantly different support compared to the Presbyterian support norm (although women’s suffrage comes close).

Our study, the first to analyze county-level election returns for a wide range of Progressive reforms in a single election—the 1911 California election, widely viewed as the most important state election of the Progressive era—finds a general lack of consistency in county characteristics backing Progressive reforms. Thus, it lends support to the scholarly view of the Progressive movement as a blending of diverse interests. This standpoint is particularly evident when considering urban residents, who supported home rule and labor reform but opposed women’s suffrage. Other demographic traits are associated with support for one reform but not with any other reforms—namely, immigrant opposition to women’s suffrage, Baptist support for women’s suffrage, Catholic support for labor reform, and wealthier counties’ support for railroad regulation. In none of these instances do we find counties with more immigrants, Baptists, Catholics, or wealth associated with support or opposition to any other reforms.
The level and basis of voter support for women’s suffrage, which diverged in a particularly notable fashion from patterns of support for other reforms, illuminates the relationship between women’s suffrage and other movements during the Progressive era. Our study emphasizes divergence in the level and basis of support for women’s suffrage and other reforms, which is evident in the behavior of public officials. Governor Johnson, for one, offered only a tepid endorsement of women’s suffrage but campaigned openly for other measures. The distinctive nature of the women’s-suffrage measure is also evident in voters’ narrow approval of this amendment compared with the easy passage of the other amendments. Women’s suffrage drew support from different constituencies more than did the other reforms, especially evident in urban counties’ opposition to suffrage but support for several other reforms, as well as in the particular opposition to women’s suffrage in areas with many immigrants.

The prospect of women’s suffrage appears to have affected voters differently than did the other proposed reforms for various reasons. Voter turnout for this amendment exceeded that for all other measures, and the number of votes against it far out-paced the number of votes against any other amendment. Certain groups may have been motivated by objections to the morality or propriety of women’s suffrage, whereas other reforms did not generate opposition of this kind. Others may have calculated that extending suffrage to women would dilute the voting power of the current electorate, as is characteristic of any measure intended to expand suffrage. For whatever reason, voters viewed women’s suffrage in a different light from other reforms, even as they also perceived differences within the other reforms, in a way that poses challenges to claims of a uniform Progressive movement.20

In one important respect, however, our study highlights a previously unappreciated aspect of uniformity regarding the Progressive movement—the consistent endorsement for the full range of reforms from members of certain socially active Protestant denominations. Counties with higher percentages of Congregationalists, Presbyterians,

and Methodists championed all the reforms. Moreover, these relationships were statistically significant for all but one or two reforms. The consistency of these socially active Protestant denominations’ support for women’s suffrage, direct democracy, home rule, and business/labor regulation suggests the need to give renewed attention to the role of religion in explaining support for Progressive reforms. Although other studies have noted the importance of religion in guiding public officials and advocates during the Progressive era, our investigation of support for a broad range of Progressive reforms in California’s 1911 election highlights how religious denomination, more than any other factor, provided the most consistent support for Progressive causes. To the extent that Progressivism had a steadily supportive constituency, it drew from members of certain socially active Protestant churches.  