

OCTOBER 2008

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

CALIFORNIA

# Californians & their government

in collaboration with  
The James Irvine Foundation

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**PPIC**

PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

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# ABOUT THE SURVEY

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The PPIC Statewide Survey provides policymakers, the media, and the general public with objective, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, opinions, and public policy preferences of California residents. Inaugurated in April 1998, this is the 91<sup>st</sup> PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database that includes the responses of more than 194,000 Californians. This survey is the 32<sup>nd</sup> in the *Californians and Their Government* series, which periodically examines the social, economic, and political trends that influence public policy preferences and ballot choices. The series is currently supported with funding from The James Irvine Foundation.

This survey seeks to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussion about state and national issues and the November general election. The context for this survey includes the final weeks of the 2008 presidential campaign, a national financial crisis and state economic downturn, a growing deficit in the current year's state budget, and active campaigning on 12 state propositions on the November ballot. Analyzing likely voter responses, we examine issues in the general election, including trends in the presidential race and in three of the state propositions. The survey also examines Californians' opinions of state and national issues, including their overall outlook on the state and its economic conditions, evaluations of state and federal elected officials, and overall trust in the federal government. We also analyze perceptions and preferences regarding the California budget and the initiative process, and at the national level, the major parties, the election process, and the Electoral College.

This report presents the responses of 2,004 California adult residents, including 1,186 likely voters, on these specific topics:

- The November election, including candidate preference in the presidential election; satisfaction with the choice of candidates; the role of debates in voting decisions; perceptions of top campaign issues and satisfaction with candidate attention to important issues; rankings of candidates on handling specific policy issues; and attention to news about the presidential candidates. This survey also measures support for and perceived importance of Proposition 4 (parental notification of a minor child's abortion), Proposition 8 (eliminating same-sex couples' right to marry), and support for Proposition 11 (redistricting reform), including whether a citizens' redistricting commission would lead to more representative state legislators.
- State and national issues, including perceptions of the current direction of the state, future economic outlook, whether the state is currently in a recession, and whether the federal government's actions in responding to the financial crisis will help California; approval ratings of Governor Schwarzenegger, the California Legislature, President Bush, Congress, and level of trust in the federal government; perceptions of the state budget situation and preferred solutions for reducing the state budget gap; attitudes toward the citizens' initiative process and support for initiative reforms; rankings of the major political parties in managing the federal government and in bringing about changes the country needs; confidence in the election process; and attitudes toward the Electoral College system.
- The extent to which Californians—based on their political party affiliation, region of residence, race /ethnicity, and other demographics—may differ with regard to perceptions, attitudes, and preferences involving the November election ballot and state and national issues.
- Copies of this report may be ordered online ([www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)) or by phone (415-291-4400). For questions about the survey, please contact [survey@ppic.org](mailto:survey@ppic.org). View our searchable PPIC Statewide Survey database online at <http://www.ppic.org/main/survAdvancedSearch.asp>.



# PRESS RELEASE

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<http://www.ppic.org/main/pressreleaseindex.asp>

## **PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT Same-Sex Marriage Ban Losing – Measures to Restrict Abortion for Minors, Reform Redistricting Fail to Reach 50 Percent**

OBAMA'S LEAD OVER MCCAIN GROWS TO 23 POINTS  
AS VOTERS' FEARS ABOUT ECONOMY DEEPEN

SAN FRANCISCO, California, October 22, 2008 — Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that would end same-sex marriage in California, is losing among likely voters, 52 percent to 44 percent, according to a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) with funding from The James Irvine Foundation. With two weeks to go before Election Day, support also remains below the 50 percent threshold for two other closely watched initiatives, Proposition 4, which would require a parent to be notified before a minor can have an abortion, and Proposition 11, which would give a commission of voters the authority to draw legislative districts.

In the presidential campaign, the Democratic ticket of Senators Barack Obama and Joe Biden has increased its lead over Republican contenders Senator John McCain and Governor Sarah Palin to 23 points (56% to 33%), a 13-point gain in the last month. Independent voters, women, Latinos, and younger voters support Obama-Biden by a wide margin. Party loyalty remains high, with Democratic voters' support of the Democratic ticket (89%) increasing by 5 points in the last month. A strong majority of Republican likely voters (75%) back their party's nominees, but that support has dropped 8 points since last month.

"A big turnout for the top-of-the-ticket presidential race could have a significant impact on the rest of the ballot, from the propositions to legislative races," says Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

Enthusiasm for their choice of presidential candidates is high among Democratic likely voters, with 74 percent saying they are satisfied. Independents are divided (51% dissatisfied, 48% satisfied). Satisfaction with the candidates has declined sharply among Republicans, from 67 percent last month to 44 percent today.

### **CONCERN ABOUT THE ECONOMY TRUMPS ALL OTHER ISSUES**

Enthusiasm for the candidates doesn't necessarily mean that likely voters are satisfied with the campaigns: Over half (56%) are dissatisfied with the amount of time devoted to issues most important to them. And what they want to hear most about is the economy. Fifty-five percent of likely voters see it as the top issue, a 21-point increase since August. Health care, immigration, and the war in Iraq are the next most frequently named issues, with just 6 percent of likely voters mentioning any of them. On the question of which candidate would do a better job handling the economy, 59 percent prefer Obama and 30 percent choose McCain.

The leaders Californians choose on November 4 will face an electorate deeply pessimistic about the future of the state and nation and distrustful of government. Just 20 percent of likely voters think the state is headed in the right direction, a decline of 21 points since September 2007. Nearly eight in 10 think the state is in a serious (39%), moderate (30%), or mild (9%) recession. And in the midst of a global financial crisis, the \$700 billion

economic bailout plan has failed to allay voters' fears about the future of their own state. Just four in 10 (37%) say the federal government's actions will help the California economy.

"The task all our elected officials face is to restore confidence in government," Baldassare says. "Californians are desperate for change, eager for new leadership, and very low on confidence."

### **MORE REPUBLICANS BACK PROPOSITION 8, MORE INDEPENDENTS OPPOSE IT**

The gap between likely voters in favor and opposed to Proposition 8 (44% yes, 52% no) has narrowed since September (41% yes, 55% no) and August (40% yes, 54% no). Compared to last month, more Republicans (70% today, 62% September) would vote yes on the measure, which would eliminate the right for same-sex couples to marry that the state Supreme Court granted in May. Opposition is 4 points lower among Democrats (67% today, 71% September), but 5 points higher among independents (58% today, 53% September).

At least half of men, women, Latinos, and whites oppose Proposition 8. Regionally, majorities of likely voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (67%) and Los Angeles (55%) are opposed. But majorities in the Central Valley (54%) and in the "Other Southern California" region that includes Orange, San Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties (52%) favor the measure.

On the more general question of how they feel about allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry in California, likely voters are divided, 47 percent in favor and 49 percent opposed. These attitudes are largely unchanged since 2005.

In an indication of how strong voters' motivations are to cast their ballots on this measure, supporters of Proposition 8 are far more likely (69%) than opponents (49%) to say the results are very important.

### **VOTERS CLOSELY DIVIDED ON PROPOSITION 4**

Likely voters are divided on Proposition 4 (46% yes, 44% no, 10% don't know), a constitutional amendment that would prohibit a girl under 18 years old to have an abortion until 48 hours after a parent or guardian is notified. Support for the measure has failed to reach a majority for the third month (48% yes in September, 47% yes in August). Voters defeated similar measures in 2005 (47% yes, 53% no) and 2006 (46% yes, 54% no).

Likely voters are strongly divided along party lines on Proposition 4, with Republicans in favor (61% to 28%) and Democrats opposed (35% to 54%). Half of independents are opposed (51% to 43%). Regionally, a majority of Bay Area likely voters (56%) are opposed, while about half of those in Los Angeles (52%), the Central Valley (52%), and the "Other Southern California" region (51%) are in favor.

### **MANY STILL UNDECIDED ABOUT PROPOSITION 11**

Most likely voters across regions say state legislators would more effectively represent their districts if an independent commission of citizens drew the district lines — which is what Proposition 11 would do. But when it comes to casting their votes, many likely voters are skeptical of the measure. Their views on Proposition 11 are similar (41% yes, 34% no) to those expressed in September (38% yes, 33% no), and 25 percent are still undecided. Support for Proposition 11 is highest among Republicans (45%) and has increased the most among independents (39% today, 29% September). Support has increased somewhat among Democrats since August (38% today, 36% September, 31% August), but they are still divided (38% yes, 37% no). Among demographic groups, support for Proposition 11 is higher among men (47%) than women (35%). Opposition is higher among Latinos (44%) than whites (31%).

## MORE KEY FINDINGS:

- **Candidate debates influential for less than half of voters**—Page 9  
 With likely voters paying close attention to the news about the presidential campaigns, 48 percent say the televised debates did not help them much (39%) or at all (9%) in making their decisions, while 46 percent say the debates helped them some (29%) or a lot (17%).
- **Governor, legislature approval ratings up slightly**—Page 18  
 Despite a record-setting budget impasse, the approval ratings of both Governor Schwarzenegger (47%) and the state legislature (22%) rise among likely voters.
- **In wake of bailout, ratings for Bush, Congress hit new lows**—Page 18  
 The president's approval rating drops to 20 percent, and Congress' rating hits 18 percent among likely voters.
- **Likely voters have little trust in Washington**—Page 19  
 Just one in five say they trust the federal government to do what is right nearly always or most of the time, and three in four think Washington wastes a lot of taxpayer money.
- **State budget worries linger**—Page 20  
 With a gap between revenues and expenses developing in the current budget, a strong majority of voters (80%) see the situation as serious, with 44 percent preferring to fill the gap with a mix of spending cuts and tax increases, and 37 percent preferring a plan that relies mostly on spending cuts.
- **Initiative reforms get strong backing**—Page 21  
 As they prepare to vote on a ballot that includes 10 citizen initiatives, just 9 percent of likely voters are very satisfied with the way the initiative process is working in California, while 55 percent are somewhat satisfied with it. Majorities favor proposals to reform the process.
- **Confidence in voting system is shaky**—Page 23  
 Only about half (51%) of likely voters have a great deal or a lot of confidence in the nation's voting system.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

This survey is the 32nd in the *Californians and Their Government* series and is supported with funding from The James Irvine Foundation. It seeks to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussion on state and national issues and the November general election. This is the 91st PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database that includes the responses of more than 194,000 Californians. Findings are based on a telephone survey of 2,004 California adult residents interviewed from October 12–19, 2008. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is  $\pm 2\%$  and for the 1,186 likely voters is  $\pm 3\%$ . For more information on methodology, see page 25.

Mark Baldassare is president and CEO of PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998.

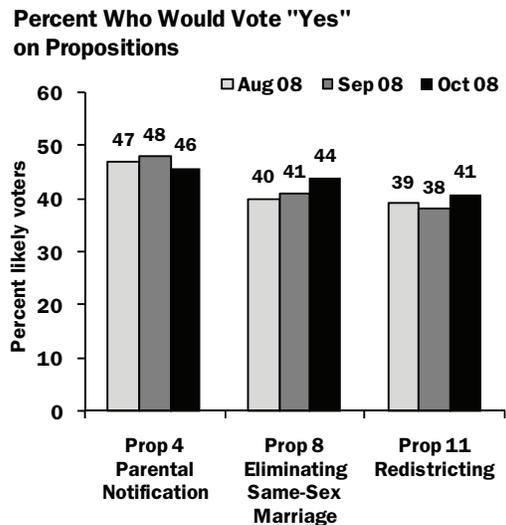
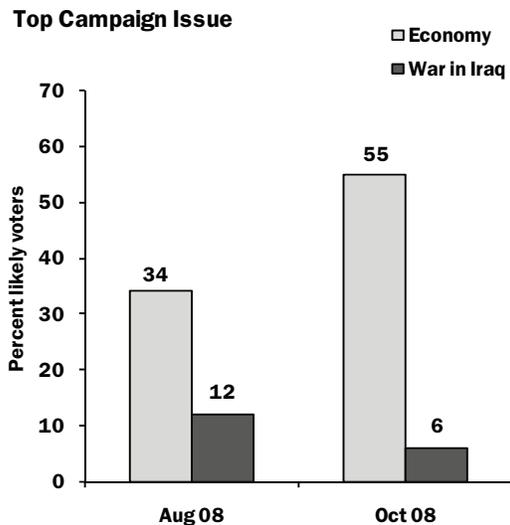
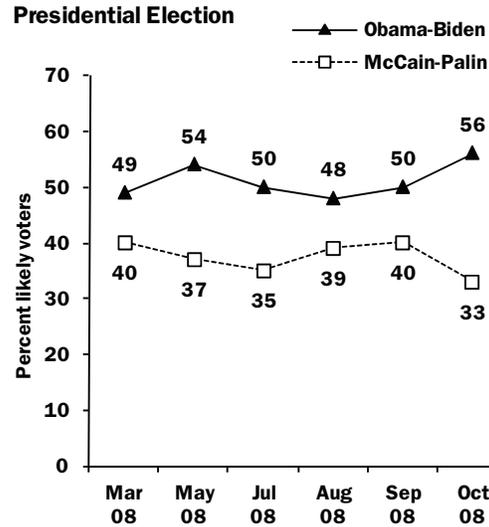
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# NOVEMBER 2008 ELECTION

## KEY FINDINGS

- In the presidential election, Barack Obama's lead over John McCain has grown to 23 points since last month among likely voters in California. Independent voters, women, Latinos, San Francisco Bay Area, and younger voters support Obama over McCain by wide margins. Three in four Democrats are satisfied with their choices of candidates, while about half of Republicans and independents are dissatisfied. (pages 8, 9)
- An increasing proportion of likely voters name the economy as their top campaign issue, and a majority are not satisfied with the amount of attention candidates are spending on important issues. Likely voters favor Obama over McCain when it comes to handling the economy, the situation in Iraq, and health care. They remain divided about who could better handle immigration. (pages 10, 11)
- Likely voters' support for Proposition 4 (parental notification of a minor's abortion) continues to fall below 50 percent. Supporters are more likely than others to say the outcome is very important to them. (page 12)
- Similarly, likely voters' support for Proposition 8 (eliminating same-sex marriage) is below 50 percent, and again, "yes" voters are more likely than "no" voters to say the outcome is very important to them. (page 13)
- Many likely voters are still unsure about Proposition 11 (redistricting) and support continues to fall short of a majority. About half think independent redistricting would lead to state legislators who more effectively represent their districts. (page 14)



## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

As the presidential campaign heads into the final two weeks, likely voters in California continue to support the Obama-Biden ticket. Support for the Democratic ticket has grown since last month and likely voters currently prefer Obama-Biden over McCain-Palin by a 23-point margin (56% to 33%). The Democrats' lead has increased 13 points since our September survey, which was conducted after the nominating conventions and before any of the four debates. Nationwide, the Obama-Biden ticket has improved its position since September among registered voters, according to several national surveys. Still, registered voters in California prefer Obama-Biden by a wider margin than registered voters nationwide.

Party loyalty among California's likely voters remains high, with Democratic voters supporting Obama-Biden (89%, up 5 points since September) and Republicans supporting McCain-Palin (75%, down 8 points since September). Among independents, support for McCain dropped 10 points since September (35% to 25%), while the percentage that is undecided increased 12 points (8% to 20%). Obama enjoys the most support among likely voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (72%), followed by Los Angeles (61%) and the Central Valley (49%), while those in the Other Southern California region support McCain (47%).

Today, 62 percent of women and 50 percent of men support Obama-Biden. Support for McCain-Palin has declined among both women and men (6 points each) since the September survey, which was conducted after McCain's selection of Palin as his running mate. Among Latinos today, Obama-Biden lead McCain-Palin by a four-to-one margin (73% to 18%); the Democratic advantage among Latinos has increased sharply since September (57% Obama, 30% McCain) and is similar to August (71% Obama, 16%, McCain). The Obama-Biden ticket leads the McCain-Palin ticket across all age, education, and income groups. Among self-described evangelical Christians, 56 percent support McCain.

**“If the November 4th presidential election were being held today, would you vote for the Democratic ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, or the Republican ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>		<b>Obama-Biden</b>	<b>McCain-Palin</b>	<b>Someone else</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>All Likely Voters</b>		56%	33%	2%	9%
<b>Party</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	89	7	1	3
	<b>Republican</b>	14	75	2	9
	<b>Independent</b>	53	25	2	20
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	50	37	3	10
	<b>Women</b>	62	30	1	7
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	73	18	1	8
	<b>Whites</b>	49	39	2	10
<b>Region</b>	<b>Central Valley</b>	49	41	2	8
	<b>San Francisco Bay Area</b>	72	19	2	7
	<b>Los Angeles</b>	61	29	1	9
	<b>Other Southern California</b>	42	47	2	9
<b>Age</b>	<b>18–34</b>	65	23	1	11
	<b>35–54</b>	58	32	2	8
	<b>55 and older</b>	48	40	3	9
<b>Household Income</b>	<b>Under \$40,000</b>	59	27	2	12
	<b>\$40,000 to \$79,999</b>	58	32	2	8
	<b>\$80,000 or more</b>	55	36	2	7

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (CONTINUED)**

With a shift in candidate preferences since September, has there been a shift in satisfaction with the choice of candidates? Fifty-six percent of likely voters are satisfied with their choice of candidates, an 8-point decrease since September, but 8 points higher than our August survey. The largest shift across parties is among Republicans, with 44 percent satisfied today compared to 67 percent last month. Satisfaction among Democrats (74%) and independents (48%) is similar to last month.

Today, 64 percent of Latinos are satisfied with their choice of candidates; this finding was the same in September (64%). Satisfaction among whites has declined (63% in September, 52% today). There was also a decrease among women (68% September, 61% today) and among men (60% September, 52% today). Despite the decrease in satisfaction among likely voters, at least half across regional, age, education, and income groups are satisfied with their choice of candidates.

**“In general, would you say you are satisfied or not satisfied with your choices of candidates in the election for U.S. president on November 4th?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>	All Likely Voters	Party			Latinos
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Satisfied</b>	56%	74%	44%	48%	64%
<b>Not satisfied</b>	42	25	53	51	34
<b>Don't know</b>	2	1	3	1	2

Interest in the presidential election remains high, with 54 percent of California likely voters saying they are very closely following news about the presidential candidates. As for the candidate debates, 17 percent of likely voters say the debates have helped them a lot in making their decision, while 29 percent say the debates have helped some. Four in 10 say likely voters say debates have not helped much (39%) and about one in 10 volunteer that they had decided before the debates (3%) or that debates have not helped at all (9%). Findings today are similar to those from October 2000 and October 2004.

Democrats (55%) and independents (47%) are more likely than Republicans (39%) to say the debates are at least some help in deciding who to vote for. Latinos (66%) are much more likely than whites (40%), and women (50%) more likely than men (41%), to say that debates are at least some help. At least four in 10 across regional, age, education, and income groups say the debates are at least some help in deciding who to vote for in the presidential election.

**“The Democratic and Republican candidates are having a series of debates. Some people learn about the debates from news reports as well as seeing or hearing about them. So far, have the debates helped you a lot, some, or not much in deciding who to vote for in the presidential election?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>	All Likely Voters	Party			Latinos
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>A lot</b>	17%	23%	13%	13%	34%
<b>Some</b>	29	32	26	34	32
<b>Not much</b>	39	34	44	41	27
<b>Not at all (volunteered)</b>	9	6	11	9	5
<b>Haven't seen or heard/read about debates (volunteered)</b>	2	1	2	2	1
<b>Decided before debates (volunteered)</b>	3	4	4	1	1
<b>Don't know</b>	1	–	–	–	–

## ISSUES AND CANDIDATE RANKINGS

Among the state’s likely voters, the economy (55%) is by far the one issue they would most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about between now and the November 4 election. Considerably fewer mention health care (6%), immigration (6%), or the war in Iraq (6%). Since August the percentage of likely voters naming the economy has increased 21 points (34% August, 55% today). In October 2004, the economy was also the top issue among likely voters; however, far fewer named this issue in 2004 (27%), and more named the war in Iraq (16%) and health care (10%).

Today, the economy is the top issue across parties. Among Republicans, the next highest priority is immigration, while Democrats’ and independents’ next priorities are health care and the war in Iraq. Since August, Republicans’ mention of energy supply has declined from 11 percent to 2 percent, while Democrats’ mention of the war in Iraq has declined from 16 percent to 7 percent. The economy is mentioned as the top issue by at least half of likely voters across regions, by men and women, by Latinos and whites, and across all other demographic groups.

**“Which one issue would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about between now and the November 4th election?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i> Top four issues mentioned	All Likely Voters	Party			Latinos
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Economy</b>	55%	61%	53%	57%	53%
<b>Health care, health costs</b>	6	8	4	5	6
<b>Immigration, illegal immigration</b>	6	5	8	3	13
<b>War in Iraq</b>	6	7	4	8	5

What about the amount of attention the presidential candidates are spending on the issues most important to likely voters? More than half of California likely voters are dissatisfied (56%), while 41 percent are satisfied. This level of dissatisfaction was similar in December 2007, when the question was asked in regard to the primary candidates’ attention to issues. Today, Democrats (49%) are more likely than Republicans (36%) and independents (40%) to be satisfied.

Across regions, likely voters in Los Angeles (63%) are the most likely to be dissatisfied with the amount of attention presidential candidates are spending on the issues most important to them, followed by those in the Other Southern California region (59%), the Central Valley (51%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (50%). Among racial/ethnic groups, white likely voters (59%) are dissatisfied, while Latino likely voters tend to be satisfied (53% satisfied, 47% dissatisfied). Both men (60%) and women (53%) are dissatisfied with the amount of attention spent on important issues, and at least half across education and income groups say the same. Among those naming the economy as the most important issue, 54 percent are dissatisfied with the amount of attention the candidates are spending on important issues.

**“Would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the amount of attention that the candidates for president are spending on the issues most important to you?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>	All Likely Voters	Party			Those naming economy as top issue
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Satisfied</b>	41%	49%	36%	40%	44%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	56	48	62	58	54
<b>Don’t know</b>	3	3	2	2	2

**ISSUES AND CANDIDATE RANKINGS (CONTINUED)**

According to likely voters, which presidential candidate would do a better job of handling some of the top issues? Barack Obama leads John McCain by wide margins both on health care (59% to 27%) and the economy (59% to 30%). He leads by a narrower margin on the situation in Iraq (51% to 41%). On immigration, voters are divided (40% Obama, 37% McCain) and many are undecided (20%).

The biggest change since last month is an increased proportion of likely voters saying that Obama would do a better job on the economy (53% September, 59% October) and declining percentages of likely voters favoring McCain on this issue (37% September, 30% October). In September, Obama led McCain on health care and the economy; likely voters were more divided on the situation in Iraq and immigration.

On handling the jobs and the economy, 86 percent of Democratic voters and 62 percent of independents prefer Obama; 64 percent of Republicans back McCain and 22 percent favor Obama. Ninety-three percent of Obama-Biden supporters prefer Obama on the economy, while 78 percent of McCain-Palin supporters prefer McCain on this issue.

When it comes to handling the situation in Iraq, 82 percent of Republican likely voters believe McCain is the top candidate for the job; 78 percent of Democrats and 51 percent of independents prefer Obama. Ninety-one percent of McCain-Palin supporters prefer McCain on this issue, and 84 percent of Obama-Biden supporters prefer Obama.

On the issue of immigration, two in three Republicans (68%) and 40 percent of independents favor McCain, while two in three Democrats (67%) and 37 percent of independents favor Obama. Many voters across parties are undecided on this issue (18% Democrats, 17% Republicans, 21% independents).

When it comes to handling health care, 85 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of independents favor Obama, while 61 percent of Republicans prefer McCain. Twenty-two percent of Republicans say Obama would do a better job on health care, while 8 percent of Democratic voters name McCain.

**“Regardless of your choice for president, which of these candidates would do the better job on...?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>		All Likely Voters	Party			Latinos
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...jobs and the economy</i>	John McCain	30%	8%	64%	24%	18%
	Barack Obama	59	86	22	62	73
	Other	2	1	2	2	2
	Don't know	9	5	12	12	7
<i>...the situation in Iraq</i>	John McCain	41	15	82	37	29
	Barack Obama	51	78	13	51	63
	Other	1	1	1	2	2
	Don't know	7	6	4	10	6
<i>...immigration</i>	John McCain	37	14	68	40	21
	Barack Obama	40	67	11	37	61
	Other	3	1	4	2	2
	Don't know	20	18	17	21	16
<i>...health care</i>	John McCain	27	8	61	18	20
	Barack Obama	59	85	22	67	68
	Other	2	1	2	1	2
	Don't know	12	6	15	14	10

**PROPOSITION 4: PARENTAL NOTIFICATION**

Likely voters are divided on Proposition 4 (46% yes, 44% no, 10% don't know), an initiative constitutional amendment that would prohibit the termination of a minor's abortion until 48 hours after notification of the minor's parent or guardian. Support has continued to fall short of a majority (47% August; 48% September; 46% today) and the margin of support has declined slightly since last month. In 2005 and 2006, voters defeated similar measures (2005: 47% yes, 53% no; 2006: 46% yes, 54% no).

Proposition 4 divides Democrats (54% no) and Republicans (61% yes) along party lines, while independents are more opposed than in favor (43% yes, 51% no). Similarly, a majority of likely voters who consider themselves to be politically liberal are opposed (62%), while self-described conservatives are in favor (63%), and moderates are divided (48% yes, 42% no). Since last month, support has declined slightly among parents (51% to 46% today), Latinos (54% to 50%), and whites (48% to 44%). Across regions, likely voters in the San Francisco Bay Area are opposed (56%), while about half in Los Angeles (52%), the Central Valley (52%), and the Other Southern California region (51%) are in favor.

**“Proposition 4 is called the ‘Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor’s Pregnancy Initiative Constitutional Amendment...’  
If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 4?”\***

<i>Likely voters only</i>		Yes	No	Don't know
<b>All Likely Voters</b>		46%	44%	10%
<b>Party</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	35	54	11
	<b>Republican</b>	61	28	11
	<b>Independent</b>	43	51	6
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	48	43	9
	<b>Women</b>	44	45	11
<b>Parents of children under 18</b>	<b>Yes</b>	46	45	9
	<b>No</b>	46	43	11
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	50	42	8
	<b>Whites</b>	44	45	11

\*For complete text of proposition question, see p. 29.

Eight in 10 likely voters say the outcome of Proposition 4 is important (48% very, 32% somewhat), but “yes” voters (55%) are more likely than “no” voters (44%) to call it very important. Attitudes were nearly identical last month. While likely voters are divided on Proposition 4, 69 percent of likely voters believe the government should not interfere with a women’s access to abortion, including 78 percent of Democrats, 50 percent of Republicans, 52 percent of “yes” voters, and 86 percent of “no” voters.

**“How important to you is the outcome of the vote on Proposition 4—is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?”**

<i>Likely voters only</i>	<b>All Likely Voters</b>	<b>Party</b>			<b>Vote on Proposition 4</b>	
		<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Very important</b>	48%	48%	53%	41%	55%	44%
<b>Somewhat important</b>	32	35	27	38	31	35
<b>Not too important</b>	13	11	13	14	11	15
<b>Not at all important</b>	4	3	5	5	3	5
<b>Don't know</b>	3	3	2	2	–	1

## PROPOSITION 8: SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

A majority of likely voters remain opposed to Proposition 8 (44% yes, 52% no), an initiative constitutional amendment that would eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry, granted by the California Supreme Court in May. The margins were greater in September (41% yes, 55% no) and August (40% yes, 54% no). Compared to last month, opposition is 4 points lower among Democrats (71% September, 67% today), and 5 points higher among independents (53% September, 58% today) while Republican support has grown (62% September, 70% today). Men, women, Latinos, and whites are all more likely to oppose than support Proposition 8. Likely voters who have never been married are strongly opposed (72%), while those who are married are divided (49% yes, 47% no). A strong majority in the San Francisco Bay Area oppose Proposition 8 (67%), and those in Los Angeles are also opposed (55%), while a majority are in favor in the Central Valley (54%) and the Other Southern California region (52%).

When it comes to the general idea of allowing gay and lesbian couples to be legally married in California, likely voters are divided (47% favor, 49% oppose). These attitudes are largely unchanged since August (47% favor, 47% oppose) and have been similar since 2005 (2007: 46% favor, 48% oppose; 2006: 47% favor, 46% oppose; 2005: 46% favor, 46% oppose). Likely voters were more likely to oppose than favor same-sex marriage in earlier years (2004: 43% favor, 51% oppose; 2000: 38% favor, 55% oppose).

### “Proposition 8 is called the ‘Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry Initiative Constitutional Amendment...’ If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 8?”\*

<i>Likely voters only</i>		Yes	No	Don't know
<b>All Likely Voters</b>		44%	52%	4%
<b>Party</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	29	67	4
	<b>Republican</b>	70	26	4
	<b>Independent</b>	39	58	3
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	45	51	4
	<b>Women</b>	43	52	5
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	43	53	4
	<b>Whites</b>	44	52	4

\*For complete text of proposition question, see p. 29.

Eighty-three percent of likely voters say the outcome of Proposition 8 is important, and 57 percent call it very important. “Yes” voters (69%) are far more likely than “no” voters (49%) to say the outcome is very important. The proportion saying the outcome of the vote is very important has increased over time (48% August, 54% September, 57% today); however, this has occurred more among “yes” voters (57% August, 62% September, 69% today) than among “no” voters (44% August, 51% September, 49% today).

### “How important to you is the outcome of the vote on Proposition 8—is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?”

<i>Likely voters only</i>	<b>All Likely Voters</b>	<b>Party</b>			<b>Vote on Proposition 8</b>	
		<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Very important</b>	57%	56%	66%	47%	69%	49%
<b>Somewhat important</b>	26	28	21	25	20	32
<b>Not too important</b>	10	10	9	16	7	13
<b>Not at all important</b>	5	4	3	10	3	6
<b>Don't know</b>	2	2	1	2	1	–

**PROPOSITION 11: REDISTRICTING**

Proposition 11 is an initiative constitutional amendment that would take the authority to draw state district boundaries from elected officials and give it to a commission of registered voters. Today, support for Proposition 11 among likely voters (41%) is similar to September (38%), but many are still undecided (25%). In 2005, voters soundly defeated a proposition that would have given redistricting authority to a panel of three retired judges (40% yes, 60% no).

Republican likely voters (45%) are the most in favor of Proposition 11 and their support is identical to last month (45%), while support has increased the most among independents since last month (29% September, 39% today). Although support has increased somewhat among Democrats since August (31% August, 36% September, 38% today), they remain divided (38% yes, 37% no). Across parties, at least one in four likely voters are undecided. Although likely voters across regions are more likely to vote yes than no on Proposition 11, support does not reach 50 percent in any region. Support is higher among men than women; opposition is higher among Latinos than whites.

**“Proposition 11 is called the ‘Redistricting Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute...’  
If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 11? ”\***

<i>Likely voters only</i>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>All Likely Voters</b>		41%	34%	25%
<b>Party</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	38	37	25
	<b>Republican</b>	45	30	25
	<b>Independent</b>	39	33	28
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	47	31	22
	<b>Women</b>	35	36	29
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	39	44	17
	<b>Whites</b>	43	31	26

*\*For complete text of proposition question, see p. 30.*

While about six in 10 likely voters are undecided or would vote no on Proposition 11, a majority (52%) agree that the state would have legislators who more effectively represent their districts than they do today if district lines were redrawn by an independent commission of citizens. While only 28 percent disagree with this view, it is notable that one in five are uncertain about the outcome of this reform. In August, 56 percent said independent redistricting would lead to more effective legislators. A vast majority of “yes” voters (81%) today believe independent redistricting would lead to more effective legislators, compared to 34 percent of “no” voters. At least half of voters across regions believe independent redistricting would be effective. Among both those who approve and those who disapprove of the state legislature’s job performance, pluralities believe redistricting reform would be effective.

**“If voting districts were redrawn by an independent commission of citizens, do you think California would generally have state legislators who more effectively represent their districts than legislators do today, or not?”**

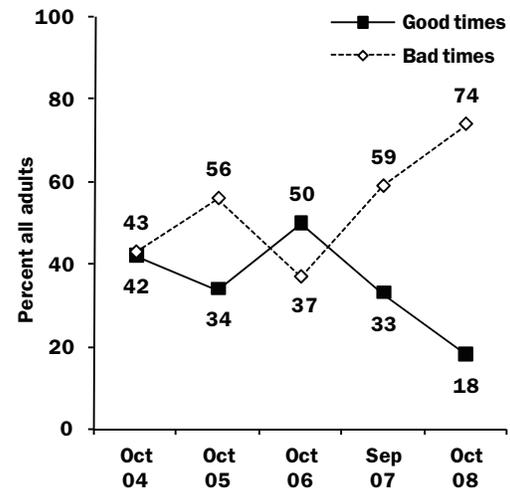
<i>Likely voters only</i>	<b>All Likely Voters</b>	<b>Party</b>			<b>Vote on Proposition 11</b>	
		<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Yes, would</b>	52%	49%	57%	51%	81%	34%
<b>No, would not</b>	28	30	25	28	12	54
<b>Don't know</b>	20	21	18	21	7	12

# STATE AND NATIONAL ISSUES

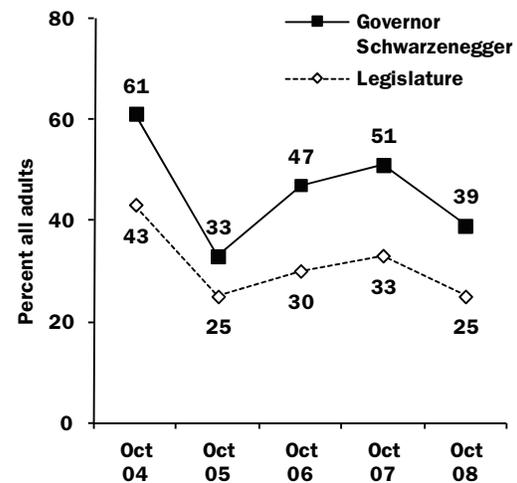
## KEY FINDINGS

- Large majorities of Californians have negative perceptions of the state's overall direction and its economy. Eight in 10 now believe the state is in an economic recession and nearly half think the federal government's efforts to boost the economy will not help the state. (pages 16, 17)
- Four in 10 Californians approve of the governor's job performance, while just one in four approve of the state legislature's. Job approval ratings of the president and Congress are at record lows, as is trust in the federal government. (pages 18, 19)
- Most Californians believe the state budget situation is a big problem; likely voters remain divided along party lines when asked how best to reduce the state's budget gap. (page 20)
- Majorities of residents and voters across parties believe the public policy decisions made by voters at the ballot box are probably better than those made by the governor and legislature, but large majorities express support for proposals to reform the citizens' initiative process. (page 21)
- Voters are divided along party lines when asked which of the two major parties can bring about the kind of changes the country needs and which is able to manage the federal government well. About half of Californians express a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the nation's election process, but seven in 10 would support electing the president by popular vote rather than through the Electoral College. (pages 22, 23)

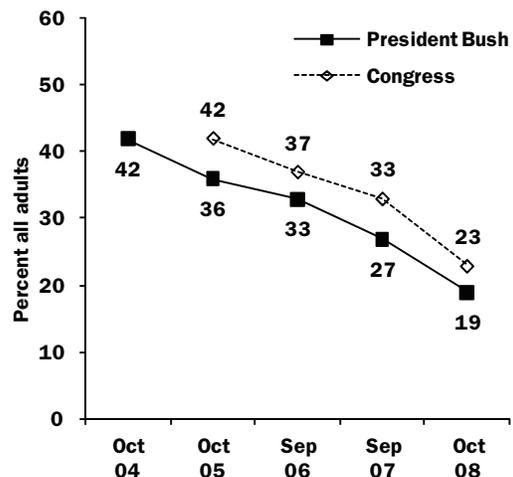
**Economic Outlook for California**



**Approval Ratings of State Elected Officials**



**Approval Ratings of Federal Elected Officials**



## OVERALL MOOD

With the November election less than two weeks away, an overwhelming majority of Californians (71%) remain pessimistic about the direction their state is headed. A mere one in five Californians today (20%) think that the state is going in the right direction—not only a record low, but also a drop of 21 points since September 2007. At least two in three across political parties believe the state is headed in the wrong direction. More than six in 10 in all regions are pessimistic about the state’s direction, with residents in Los Angeles the most negative (17% right direction, 76% wrong direction). San Francisco Bay Area residents are the most positive (25% right direction, 64% wrong direction).

Latinos are much more pessimistic (11% right direction) than are whites (23% right direction). College graduates and those with annual household incomes of more than \$80,000 (23% each) are somewhat more likely to say California is headed in the right direction than are those with a high school education only (15%) and household incomes of less than \$40,000 per year (16%). Men are somewhat more optimistic than women (22% vs. 17% right direction).

### “Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Right direction	20%	19%	23%	22%	20%
Wrong direction	71	70	66	69	70
Don't know	9	11	11	9	10

In the midst of a global financial crisis, how do Californians perceive the economic well-being of the state? They continue to express deep concern: Just 18 percent of Californians think financial conditions will be good in the coming year, a drop of 15 points from September 2007. Across parties, at least seven in 10 expect bad financial times ahead (77% Democrats, 74% independents, 71% Republicans). Whites (15% good, 77% bad) are somewhat more pessimistic than Latinos (23% good, 69% bad) about the state economy. Although more than seven in 10 in all education groups think the state will see bad times in the next year, those with a high school education or less (23%) are somewhat more likely than those with some college (16%) and college graduates (14%) to say that good times are ahead. The percentage of residents who think California is headed toward bad financial times increases with higher income. Homeowners and renters (17% each) hold similar views about bad economic conditions.

### “Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?”

	All Adults	Household Income			Latinos
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$79,999	\$80,000 or more	
Good times	18%	21%	16%	14%	23%
Bad times	74	70	78	79	69
Don't know	8	9	6	7	8

## THE ECONOMY

Amid a national economic slowdown, rising unemployment, and an increase in foreclosures, nearly eight in 10 Californians think the state is in a serious (39%), moderate (30%), or mild (10%) recession. Findings among likely voters are nearly identical (39% serious, 30% moderate, 9% mild recession). The perception that California is in a serious recession has increased 13 points since March and 5 points since August. Democrats (82%) are most likely to say the state is in a recession, while Republicans (25%) are most likely to say it is not. More than seven in 10 residents in all regions think a statewide recession is underway, with Los Angeles residents (44%) the most likely to call it a serious recession. Eight in 10 Latinos (82%) and whites (78%) think the state is experiencing an economic recession, but Latinos (48%) are much more likely than whites (35%) to say the economic downturn is serious. Women (46%) are much more inclined than men (33%) to say there is a serious recession, while men (20%) are more likely than women (13%) to say there is no recession. Residents from higher-income households are somewhat more likely than other income groups to say California is not in a recession.

**“Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not?  
(if yes: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)”**

	All Adults	Region				Latinos
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Yes, serious</b>	39%	39%	36%	44%	38%	48%
<b>Yes, moderate</b>	30	30	28	32	29	25
<b>Yes, mild</b>	10	11	10	7	10	9
<b>No</b>	17	16	23	14	17	15
<b>Don't know</b>	4	4	3	3	6	3

Even after the recent passage of a \$700 billion economic bailout plan by Congress, nearly half of Californians and likely voters (47% each) do not think the federal government's efforts to boost the national economy will benefit the state. Political groups are similar in their assessments, with 47 percent of Republicans, 46 percent of Democrats, and 45 percent of independents saying recent federal action will not benefit the state economy. However, perceptions vary by region. Fifty-four percent of Central Valley residents think the government's actions will not help California's economy, while fewer than half say the same in Los Angeles (47%), the Other Southern California region (46%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (41%). Latinos are divided on the effects of federal actions on the California economy (44% yes, 47% no), while whites are more likely to say they think such actions will not help the state (36% yes, 47% no). Residents in households earning more than \$80,000 (42%) or less than \$40,000 (40%) annually are more optimistic than middle-income residents (32%) about federal government efforts. About half of residents (52%) who think California is currently experiencing a serious recession say the federal government's actions will not help the state economy.

**“Do you think the federal government's actions in dealing with the current financial crisis will help the California economy, or not?”**

	All Adults	Region				Latinos
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Yes, will help</b>	39%	32%	45%	41%	38%	44%
<b>No, will not help</b>	47	54	41	47	46	47
<b>Don't know</b>	14	14	14	12	16	9

### APPROVAL RATINGS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Negative perceptions about California’s overall direction and economy are reflected in the current disapproval ratings of the governor (54%) and state legislature (63%). Compared to last month when a late state budget had not yet passed, job approval ratings of the governor are similar today (38% September, 39% today), while the state legislature’s is 4 points higher (21% September, 25% today). Among likely voters, both Governor Schwarzenegger (up 5 points) and the legislature (up 6 points) have seen an increase in approval. More than half of Republicans today (57%) approve of the way the governor is handling his job, six in 10 Democrats disapprove, and independents are split (46% approve, 46% disapprove). As for the legislature’s job performance, six in 10 Democrats and independents and seven in 10 Republicans disapprove. Latinos (18%) report a far lower level of approval for the governor than whites (52%), but Latinos are much more likely (33%) than whites (21%) to approve of the legislature.

A majority of residents in households earning \$80,000 or more annually approve of the governor, while a majority in lower-income groups disapprove. Approval of the governor increases with higher age and education, while approval of the legislature decreases.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	39%	34%	57%	46%	47%
	Disapprove	54	61	37	46	48
	Don't know	7	5	6	8	5
<i>...the California Legislature is handling its job?</i>	Approve	25	29	19	26	22
	Disapprove	63	60	72	62	70
	Don't know	12	11	9	12	8

Despite efforts by the federal government to address the current financial and economic crisis, approval ratings of the president (19%) and Congress (23%) have reached record lows this month. Californians are less approving of the president than adults nationwide (24%), but are much more approving of Congress (12% adults nationwide), according to a recent CBS/*New York Times* poll. The president’s biggest drop in approval in the past month has been among California Republicans, where it has fallen by 14 points (59% to 45%); approval has held steady among Democrats and independents. Congressional approval, by contrast, has declined 12 points among Democrats and 9 points among independents since September, and has held steady among Republicans. Whites (24%) are much more likely than Latinos (14%) to approve of the president; Latinos (34%) are far more likely than whites (18%) to approve of Congress.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...that George W. Bush is handling his job as president of the United States?</i>	Approve	19%	5%	45%	16%	20%
	Disapprove	77	93	48	82	76
	Don't know	4	2	7	2	4
<i>...the U.S. Congress is handling its job?</i>	Approve	23	25	17	18	18
	Disapprove	71	70	79	77	78
	Don't know	6	5	4	5	4

## TRUST IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Californians express new low levels of trust in all three of our measures of confidence in the federal government. Today, just 22 percent of Californians and 20 percent of likely voters say they trust the federal government to do what is right just about always or most of the time. The perception that the federal government can be trusted at least most of the time has declined among Californians by 12 points since October 2000, by 24 points since its high in January 2002, and by 5 points since March.

Today, just one in four Republicans (24%) and two in 10 Democrats (20%) say they trust Washington at least most of the time, while even fewer independents (17%) say the same. At most, one in four residents across regions trust the federal government to do what is right at least most of the time; this positive perception decreases with increasing age and income and is similar among men and women. Latinos (29%) are more likely than whites (19%) to say they trust Washington at least most of the time.

### “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington today to do what is right?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Just about always	4%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Most of the time	18	16	22	14	18
Only some of the time	66	67	66	71	69
None of the time (volunteered)	11	11	9	11	11
Don't know	1	2	1	1	–

Moreover, 74 percent of Californians and 77 percent of likely voters think the federal government wastes a lot of taxpayer money. Large majorities of Republicans (80%), Democrats (73%), and independents (72%) hold this perception. Large majorities across regions think a lot of taxpayer money is wasted. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (72%) and whites (75%) express similarly negative opinions. The perception that the federal government wastes a lot of tax money has increased among Californians by 16 points since January 2000, by 20 points since January 2002, and by 11 points since last March.

### “Do you think the people in the federal government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
A lot	74%	73%	80%	72%	77%
Some	21	23	18	24	20
Don't waste very much	3	3	1	2	3
Don't know	2	1	1	2	–

Overwhelming proportions of Californians (74% all adults, 78% likely voters) today say the federal government is mostly run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, rather than being run for the benefit of all the people. Democrats (79%) and independents (79%) are more likely than Republicans (70%) to hold this view. Across regions, at least seven in 10 say the federal government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. Whites (78%) are more likely than Latinos (64%) to have this perception. This negative view of the federal government has increased among Californians by 10 points since October 2000, by 16 points since January 2002, and by 7 points since March 2008.

## STATE BUDGET

One month after the state legislature passed a budget that set a record for lateness, and in the wake of discussions of a growing gap between revenues and expenses this year, concern about the budget situation remains high. Seventy-four percent of Californians and 80 percent of likely voters say the state budget situation is a big problem. Concern about the budget is 4 points lower than last month (78% adults, 84% likely voters). Today across political groups, Republicans (81%) are the most likely to say the budget situation is a big problem, while independents are the least likely (73%). Across regions, residents in the Central Valley (84%) are the most likely to say the budget situation is a big problem. Large majorities across demographic groups say the state budget situation is a big problem, but whites (79%) are much more likely than Latinos (66%) to express this view, and concern increases with higher age, education, and income.

Among those who think the state is currently in an economic recession, an overwhelming 76 percent believe the budget situation is a big problem. Among those who do not think the state is in a recession, a strong majority (68%) also believe the budget situation is a big problem.

**“Do you think the state budget situation in California—that is, the balance between government spending and revenues—is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?”**

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Big problem</b>	74%	77%	81%	73%	80%
<b>Somewhat of a problem</b>	22	20	17	22	17
<b>Not a problem</b>	2	1	2	3	1
<b>Don't know</b>	2	2	–	2	2

How would Californians deal with the growing multibillion-dollar gap between spending and revenues that is already affecting the current state budget? They are divided between a plan for a mix of spending cuts and tax increases (38%) and a plan of mostly spending cuts (37%). Far fewer say they prefer tax increases alone (8%) or that it is okay for the state to borrow money and run a deficit (9%). Republicans (55%) are most likely to prefer spending cuts alone, while Democrats (46%) and independents (44%) prefer a mix of spending cuts and tax increases. Likely voters prefer a mix of spending cuts and tax increases (44%) over mostly spending cuts (37%).

**“How would you prefer to deal with the state's budget gap?”**

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Mostly through spending cuts</b>	37%	27%	55%	36%	37%
<b>Mostly through tax increases</b>	8	11	4	7	8
<b>Through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases</b>	38	46	31	44	44
<b>Okay to borrow money and run a budget deficit</b>	9	6	4	6	4
<b>Other</b>	2	2	2	3	2
<b>Don't know</b>	6	8	4	4	5

## CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND REFORMS

Voters will be making decisions on 10 citizens' initiatives among the 12 state propositions on the November 4 ballot. Reflecting their distrust in government and low approval ratings of elected officials, six in 10 residents (61%) and likely voters (60%) believe the decisions made by California voters at the ballot box are probably better than those made by the governor and state legislature. In the five times we have asked this question since 2000, majorities of Californians have expressed this view.

**“Overall, do you think public policy decisions made through the initiative process by California voters are probably better or probably worse than public policy decisions made by the governor and state legislature?”**

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
<b>Probably better</b>	61%	55%	64%	61%	60%
<b>Probably worse</b>	23	28	22	22	25
<b>Same (volunteered)</b>	4	5	4	4	5
<b>Don't know</b>	12	12	10	13	10

Despite this confidence, just 9 percent of residents and likely voters are very satisfied with the way the initiative process is working in California today. Half are somewhat satisfied (51% all adults, 55% likely voters), and about one in three are dissatisfied (33% all adults, 32% likely voters). Dissatisfaction with the initiative process is higher today than at any time this decade (October 2000, August 2004, August 2005: 26%; August 2006: 25%).

Overwhelming—and increasing—majorities of Californians favor three initiative reform proposals. Eight in 10 residents and likely voters (80% each) would favor including a period of time when the initiative sponsor and the legislature could meet to find a compromise solution, before initiatives go on the ballot. This proposal was supported by 75 percent of residents in October 2005 and October 2006. More than three in four residents (77%) and likely voters (84%) would favor increasing public disclosure of the funding sources of signature gathering and initiative campaigns. This proposal was supported by 74 percent of residents in 2005 and 75 percent in 2006. More than three in four residents (75%) and likely voters (78%) favor a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives so as to avoid legal issues and drafting errors. This was supported by 70 percent of residents in 2005 and 72 percent in 2006.

**“Reforms have been suggested to address issues that arise in the initiative process. Please say whether you would favor or oppose each of the following reform proposals. Would you favor or oppose...”**

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...having a period of time in which the initiative sponsor and the legislature could meet to see if there is a compromise solution before initiatives go to the ballot?</i>	<b>Favor</b>	80%	83%	75%	76%	80%
	<b>Oppose</b>	15	12	20	19	15
	<b>Don't know</b>	5	5	5	5	5
<i>...increasing public disclosure of funding sources for signature gathering and initiative campaigns?</i>	<b>Favor</b>	77	79	84	77	84
	<b>Oppose</b>	17	16	12	16	12
	<b>Don't know</b>	6	5	4	7	4
<i>...having a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives to try to avoid legal issues and drafting errors?</i>	<b>Favor</b>	75	76	75	76	78
	<b>Oppose</b>	16	15	17	18	15
	<b>Don't know</b>	9	9	8	6	7

**PARTY PERCEPTIONS**

As Californians prepare to elect the next president in a period of financial and economic turmoil, with widespread distrust of the federal government and historically low levels of approval for their elected officials, how do they feel overall about the two major political parties running government?

A plurality of Californians (48%) say the Democratic Party is better able to manage the federal government well, while 30 percent name the Republican Party, and 14 percent volunteer that neither party is. Likely voters are more likely to pick the Democratic Party (45%) on this question. Most Democrats and Republicans believe their own party is better able, while independents are much more likely to choose the Democratic Party (40%) over the Republican Party (27%). Latinos (64%) are far more likely than whites (36%) to prefer the Democratic Party. Californians today are somewhat more likely than in March 2006 (42% to 48% today) to say the Democratic Party can better manage the federal government well.

**“Which party do you think is better described by the phrase ‘is able to manage the federal government well?’”**

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Republican Party	30%	9%	67%	27%	32%
Democratic Party	48	77	9	40	45
Both (volunteered)	2	2	3	1	2
Neither (volunteered)	14	8	17	24	17
Don't know	6	4	4	8	4

More Californians name the Democratic Party (59%) than the Republican Party (24%) as the one that can bring about the changes the country needs. Findings are similar among likely voters. Residents today are 12 points more likely than in March 2006 to say the Democratic Party can bring about the kind of changes the country needs (59% to 47%).

Democrats and Republicans choose their respective political parties, while independents are three times as likely to name the Democratic Party (58%) as the Republican Party (19%). Among Obama supporters, 88 percent say the Democratic Party, while among McCain supporters 69 percent name the Republican Party. Moreover, six in 10 homeowners (58%) and renters (62%) believe it is the Democratic Party that can bring about the kind of changes the country needs.

**“Which party do you think is better described by the phrase ‘can bring about the kind of changes the country needs?’”**

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Republican Party	24%	6%	60%	19%	26%
Democratic Party	59	87	19	58	57
Both (volunteered)	3	2	4	3	4
Neither (volunteered)	9	3	15	16	10
Don't know	5	2	2	4	3

## VOTING AND ELECTION REFORMS

After controversy and concern about ballot and electoral irregularities in the 2000 and 2004 elections, how much confidence do Californians have today in the election process? Only about half of residents (47%) and likely voters (51%) say they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the voting system. Fifty-one percent of residents and 47 percent of likely voters say they have only some, very little, or no confidence. The level of those expressing a great deal or quite a lot of confidence is somewhat lower today (51%) among likely voters than it was before the 2004 presidential election (58%).

Confidence in the election process varies across political parties, with Republicans (58%) more likely than independents and Democrats (49% each) to say they have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in the national election process. Across regions, residents in the Other Southern California region (50%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (47%) are the most likely to express this level of confidence, followed by residents in Los Angeles (44%) and the Central Valley (41%). Latinos (41%) are much less likely than whites (50%) to say they have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in the voting system. Confidence in the country's election process increases with higher age, education, and income.

### “Overall, how much confidence do you have in the system in which votes are cast and counted in this country?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Great deal	24%	25%	30%	21%	24%
Quite a lot	23	24	28	28	27
Some	29	33	30	32	31
Very little	20	13	10	18	15
None (volunteered)	2	2	1	–	1
Don't know	2	3	1	1	2

As the most populous state in the nation, holding 55 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency, California has a large role in electing the next president. At the same time, presidential campaigns have recently focused on a handful of other, “battleground” states. How do Californians feel about changing to a system in which the president would be elected by direct popular vote instead of by the Electoral College? Today, 70 percent of residents and likely voters would support this change, while 21 percent of residents and 22 percent of likely voters would prefer that the Electoral College system continue. Democrats (76%) and independents (74%) are more likely to support a change to direct popular vote than Republicans, but 61 percent of Republicans would also support this change. Among likely voters, support for this change is 6 points higher than in October 2004 (64%).

### “For future presidential elections, would you support or oppose changing to a system in which the president is elected by direct popular vote, instead of by the Electoral College?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Support	70%	76%	61%	74%	70%
Oppose	21	15	30	20	22
Don't know	9	9	9	6	8

# REGIONAL MAP

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# METHODOLOGY

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The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with research support from Sonja Petek, project manager for this survey, and survey research associates Dean Bonner, Jennifer Paluch, and Nicole Fox. The *Californians and Their Government* series is currently supported with funding from The James Irvine Foundation. We benefit from discussions with PPIC staff, foundation staff, and other policy experts; however, the methods, questions, and content of this report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare and the survey staff.

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of 2,004 California adult residents interviewed from October 12–19, 2008. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All landline telephone exchanges in California were eligible. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called as many as six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 18 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish. Accent on Languages, Inc. translated the survey into Spanish with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Abt SRBI Inc. conducted the telephone interviewing.

We used recent U.S. Census and state data to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the census and state figures. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any demographic differences.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,004 adults is  $\pm 2$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,564 registered voters, it is  $\pm 2.5$  percent; for the 1,186 likely voters, it is  $\pm 3$  percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

We present results for four geographic regions, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, and “Other Southern California” includes Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. Residents from other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters. Sample sizes for these less populated areas are not large enough to report separately. We present specific results for Latinos because they account for about 30 percent of the state’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing voter groups. Sample sizes for African Americans and Asian Americans are not large enough for separate analysis. We compare the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents (those who are registered as “decline to state”). We also include the responses of “likely voters”— those who are most likely to vote in the state’s elections based on past voting, current interest, and voting intentions. We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to those in national surveys by ABC News/*Washington Post*, CBS News/*New York Times*, CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, and Gallup.



# QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

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## CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

October 12–19, 2008

2,004 California Adult Residents:  
English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR  $\pm 2\%$  AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

1. First, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?  
20% right direction  
71 wrong direction  
9 don't know
2. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?  
18% good times  
74 bad times  
8 don't know
3. Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not? (*if yes: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?*)  
39% yes, serious recession  
30 yes, moderate recession  
10 yes, mild recession  
17 no  
4 don't know
4. Do you think the federal government's actions in dealing with the current financial crisis will help the California economy, or not?  
39% yes, will help  
47 no, will not help  
14 don't know
5. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?  
78% yes [*ask q5a*]  
22 no [*skip to q6b*]
- 5a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?  
42% Democrat [*ask q6*]  
32 Republican [*skip to q6a*]  
5 another party (*specify*) [*skip to q7*]  
21 independent [*skip to q6b*]
6. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?  
67% strong  
30 not very strong  
3 don't know  
**[skip to q7]**
- 6a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?  
57% strong  
40 not very strong  
3 don't know  
**[skip to q7]**

6b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 19% Republican Party
- 51 Democratic Party
- 23 neither (*volunteered*)
- 7 don't know

**[delayed skip: if q5=no, skip to q23]**

**[responses recorded for questions 7 to 22 are for likely voters only]**

7. If the November 4th presidential election were being held today, would you vote for **[rotate names]** [1] the Democratic ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, **[or]** [2] the Republican ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin?

- 56% Barack Obama and Joe Biden
- 33 John McCain and Sarah Palin
- 2 someone else (*specify*)
- 9 don't know

8. In general, would you say you are satisfied or not satisfied with your choices of candidates in the election for U.S. president on November 4th?

- 56% satisfied
- 42 not satisfied
- 2 don't know

9. Next, which one issue would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about between now and the November 4th election?

**[code, don't read]**

- 55% economy, jobs
- 6 health care, health costs
- 6 immigration, illegal immigration
- 6 Iraq situation, war in Iraq
- 3 education, schools
- 3 federal budget, deficit spending, taxes
- 2 foreign policy
- 2 government reform
- 13 other
- 4 don't know

10. Would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the amount of attention that the candidates for president are spending on the issues most important to you?

- 41% satisfied
- 56 dissatisfied
- 3 don't know

Regardless of your choice for president, which of these candidates would do the better job on each of these issues—**[rotate names]** [1] John McCain **[or]** [2] Barack Obama? First,

**[rotate questions 11 to 14]**

11. Which candidate would do a better job on the situation in Iraq?

- 41% John McCain
- 51 Barack Obama
- 1 someone else (*specify*)
- 7 don't know

12. Which candidate would do a better job on jobs and the economy?

- 30% John McCain
- 59 Barack Obama
- 2 someone else (*specify*)
- 9 don't know

13. Which candidate would do a better job on health care?

- 27% John McCain
- 59 Barack Obama
- 2 someone else (*specify*)
- 12 don't know

14. Which candidate would do a better job on immigration?

- 37% John McCain
- 40 Barack Obama
- 3 someone else (*specify*)
- 20 don't know

15. The Democratic and Republican candidates are having a series of debates. Some people learn about the debates from news reports as well as seeing or hearing about them. So far, have the debates helped you a lot, some, or not much in deciding who to vote for in the presidential election?

- 17% a lot
- 29 some
- 39 not much
- 9 not at all (*volunteered*)
- 2 haven't seen, or heard, or read about debates (*volunteered*)
- 3 made up my mind before debates (*volunteered*)
- 1 don't know

16. How closely are you following news about candidates for the 2008 presidential election?

- 54% very closely
- 37 fairly closely
- 7 not too closely
- 2 not at all closely

Changing topics,

**[rotate blocks: 17, 18; 19, 20; 21, 22]**

17. Proposition 4 is called the "Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy Initiative Constitutional Amendment." It changes the California Constitution, prohibiting abortion for unemancipated minor until 48 hours after physician notifies minor's parent, legal guardian, or in limited cases, substitute adult relative. It provides an exception for medical emergency or parental waiver. Fiscal impact is potential unknown net state costs of several million dollars annually for health and social services programs, court administration, and state health agency administration combined. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 4?

- 46% yes
- 44 no
- 10 don't know

18. How important to you is the outcome of the vote on Proposition 4—is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

- 48% very important
- 32 somewhat important
- 13 not too important
- 4 not at all important
- 3 don't know

19. Proposition 8 is called the "Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry Initiative Constitutional Amendment." It changes the California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry. It provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Fiscal impact over the next few years includes potential revenue loss, mainly sales taxes, totaling in the several tens of millions of dollars, to state and local governments. In the long run, it will likely have little fiscal impact on state and local governments. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 8?

- 44% yes
- 52 no
- 4 don't know

20. How important to you is the outcome of the vote on Proposition 8—is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

- 57% very important
- 26 somewhat important
- 10 not too important
- 5 not at all important
- 2 don't know

21. Proposition 11 is called the “Redistricting Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.” It changes authority for establishing state office boundaries from elected representatives to a commission. It establishes a multilevel process to select commissioners from the registered voter pool. The commission will be comprised of Democrats, Republicans, and representatives of neither party. Fiscal impact is potential increase in state redistricting costs once every ten years due to two entities performing redistricting. Any increase in costs probably would not be significant. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 11?

- 41% yes
- 34 no
- 25 don't know

22. If voting districts were redrawn by an independent commission of citizens, do you think California would generally have state legislators who more effectively represent their districts than legislators do today, or not?

- 52% yes, would
- 28 no, would not
- 20 don't know

23. Changing topics, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?

- 39% approve
- 54 disapprove
- 7 don't know

24. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?

- 25% approve
- 63 disapprove
- 12 don't know

25. On another topic, do you think the state budget situation in California—that is, the balance between government spending and revenues—is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?

- 74% big problem
- 22 somewhat of a problem
- 2 not a problem
- 2 don't know

26. As you may know, last month the governor and legislature passed a state budget of about 100 billion dollars for the current fiscal year. The state now faces a multibillion-dollar gap between spending and revenues in this budget. How would you prefer to deal with the state's budget gap—mostly through spending cuts, mostly through tax increases, through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases, or do you think that it is okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit?

- 37% mostly through spending cuts
- 8 mostly through tax increases
- 38 through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases
- 9 okay to borrow money and run a budget deficit
- 2 other (*specify*)
- 6 don't know

27. Next, how much confidence do you have in the state government's ability to plan for the state's future and growth?

- 10% a great deal
- 40 only some
- 31 very little
- 17 none at all
- 2 don't know

28. I am going to ask you about a term that not everyone will have heard of. Have you heard about “infrastructure?” (if yes: do you know a lot or a little about the term “infrastructure?”)

- 34% yes, a lot
- 31 yes, a little
- 4 yes, don't know how much (volunteered)
- 30 no
- 1 don't know

28a. As you may know, the term “infrastructure” refers to a variety of public works projects. In general, how important is the condition of the roads and infrastructure to the quality of life and economic vitality in your region?

- 67% very important
- 27 somewhat important
- 4 not important
- 2 don't know

29. Overall, do you think local government does or does not have adequate funding for the roads, school facilities, and other infrastructure projects that are needed to prepare for future growth in your part of California?

- 39% does have adequate funding
- 55 does not have adequate funding
- 6 don't know

30. How much would you like to be involved in discussions about the issues in planning for the future in your part of California?

- 32% a lot
- 39 only some
- 15 very little
- 12 not at all
- 2 don't know

Changing topics, California uses the direct initiative process, which enables voters to bypass the legislature and have issues put on the ballot as state propositions for voter approval or rejection.

31. Overall, do you think public policy decisions made through the initiative process by California voters are probably better or probably worse than public policy decisions made by the governor and state legislature?

- 61% probably better
- 23 probably worse
- 4 same (volunteered)
- 12 don't know

32. Generally speaking, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied with the way the initiative process is working in California today?

- 9% very satisfied
- 51 somewhat satisfied
- 33 not satisfied
- 7 don't know

Reforms have been suggested to address issues that arise in the initiative process. Please say whether you would favor or oppose each of the following reform proposals.

**[rotate questions 33 to 35]**

33. Would you favor or oppose increasing public disclosure of funding sources for signature gathering and initiative campaigns?

- 77% favor
- 17 oppose
- 6 don't know

34. Would you favor or oppose having a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives to try to avoid legal issues and drafting errors?

- 75% favor
- 16 oppose
- 9 don't know

35. Would you favor or oppose having a period of time in which the initiative sponsor and the legislature could meet to see if there is a compromise solution before initiatives go to the ballot?

- 80% favor
- 15 oppose
- 5 don't know

36. Changing topics, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that George W. Bush is handling his job as president of the United States?

- 19% approve
- 77 disapprove
- 4 don't know

37. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is handling its job?

- 23% approve
- 71 disapprove
- 6 don't know

38. People have different ideas about the government in Washington. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington today to do what is right?

- 4% just about always
- 18 most of the time
- 66 only some of the time
- 11 none of the time (*volunteered*)
- 1 don't know

39. Would you say the federal government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all of the people?

- 74% a few big interests
- 20 benefit of all of the people
- 6 don't know

40. Do you think the people in the federal government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

- 74% a lot
- 21 some
- 3 don't waste very much
- 2 don't know

Now, I'm going to read you some phrases. Please tell me if you think each one better describes the Republican Party and its leaders or the Democratic Party and its leaders. First, which party do you think is better described by the phrase...

**[rotate questions 41 and 42]**

41. Is able to manage the federal government well. (Which party does this best describe?)

- 30% Republican Party
- 48 Democratic Party
- 2 both (*volunteered*)
- 14 neither (*volunteered*)
- 6 don't know

How about...

42. Can bring about the kind of changes the country needs. (Which party does this best describe?)

- 24% Republican Party
- 59 Democratic Party
- 3 both (*volunteered*)
- 9 neither (*volunteered*)
- 5 don't know

On another topic,

**[rotate questions 43 and 44]**

43. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view, even if neither is exactly right. **[rotate]** [1] The government should pass more laws that restrict the availability of abortion; **[or]** [2] the government should not interfere with a woman's access to abortion.

- 32% government should pass more laws
- 64 government should not interfere
- 4 don't know

Next,

44. Do you favor or oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to be legally married?

- 44% favor
- 50 oppose
- 6 don't know

45. Next, would you consider yourself to be politically: **[read list, rotate order top to bottom]**

- 12% very liberal
- 21 somewhat liberal
- 30 middle-of-the-road
- 22 somewhat conservative
- 12 very conservative
- 3 don't know

46. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?

- 29% great deal
- 40 fair amount
- 26 only a little
- 5 none

47. Overall, how much confidence do you have in the system in which votes are cast and counted in this country?

- 24% great deal
- 23 quite a lot
- 29 some
- 20 very little
- 2 none (*volunteered*)
- 2 don't know

48. For future presidential elections, would you support or oppose changing to a system in which the president is elected by direct popular vote, instead of by the Electoral College?

- 70% would support change to popular vote
- 21 would oppose change to popular vote
- 9 don't know

**[d1-d15: demographic questions]**



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