



**PPIC
STATEWIDE
SURVEY**

JUNE 2006

**Special Survey
of the Central Valley**
in collaboration with the
Great Valley Center

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**Public
Policy
Institute of
California**

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is a private operating foundation established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute is dedicated to improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

PPIC's research agenda focuses on three program areas: population, economy, and governance and public finance. Studies within these programs are examining the underlying forces shaping California's future, cutting across a wide range of public policy concerns, including education, health care, immigration, income distribution, welfare, urban growth, and state and local finance.

PPIC was created because three concerned citizens – William R. Hewlett, Roger W. Heyns, and Arjay Miller – recognized the need for linking objective research to the realities of California public policy. Their goal was to help the state's leaders better understand the intricacies and implications of contemporary issues and make informed public policy decisions when confronted with challenges in the future. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

David W. Lyon is founding President and Chief Executive Officer of PPIC. Thomas C. Sutton is Chair of the Board of Directors.

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Preface

The Central Valley Survey – an ongoing collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center – is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. This is the sixth PPIC survey of the Central Valley. The first was published in November 1999, the second in March 2001, and the third, fourth, and fifth in April 2002, April 2003, and April 2004. The purpose of this survey series is to provide comprehensive, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, attitudes, and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents. This survey received funding from the Great Valley Center, with support from the Councils of Governments in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare counties.

The Central Valley – the inland area of California stretching 400 miles from Bakersfield to Redding – is home to 6.6 million residents and has been one of the fastest growing areas of the state. By the year 2025, the Central Valley is expected to see its population increase to 9.3 million people. The Central Valley has been of considerable interest to researchers and state and national leaders because of its significant role in the social, economic, and political life of California. The region is the agricultural center of the state and recent land use trends, such as the urbanization of farmland, are of great concern to state and local policymakers. The impacts of population growth on the water supply, air quality, surface transportation, education facilities, housing affordability, economic conditions, and the perceived quality of life are major concerns today throughout the region. Since the Central Valley is a large geographic region that is socially, politically, and economically diverse, the public’s experiences with population growth vary considerably across population subgroups and parts of the Central Valley, as do residents’ awareness of regional problems and preferences for policy solutions.

This survey of 2,002 adult residents includes some of the “tracking” questions from the 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 surveys in order to measure changes in key political, social, and economic indicators. The survey also includes questions from PPIC Statewide Surveys, providing comparisons with the state as a whole. The following issues are explored in this edition of the survey:

- Local, regional, and Central Valley issues, including residents’ satisfaction with their communities, ratings of local public services, perceptions of problems in residents’ local areas, the most important problem facing the Central Valley, perceptions of the current direction of the Central Valley, and degree of optimism about the future of the Central Valley.
- Governance, planning, and policy preferences, including local government ratings, sources of regional problems, planning for the future, housing and community development options, infrastructure and transportation priorities, and voters’ support for state bonds and local transportation sales tax increases.
- Economic, environmental, and social attitudes, including consumer confidence and ratings of the Central Valley economy, perceptions of air quality and its health effects on residents, public support for environmental protection programs, trends in the frequency of use of computers and the Internet, ratings of local preschools, attention to local and Central Valley news, and sources of Central Valley news.
- Trends in attitudes over time and across four different subregions of the Central Valley (i.e., North Valley, Sacramento Metro, North San Joaquin, and South San Joaquin); between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites; and across demographic and political groups.

Copies of this report may be ordered by phone (415-291-4400). This report and the November 1999, March 2001, April 2002, April 2003, and April 2004 reports are posted on the PPIC web site (www.ppic.org). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org.

The Central Valley



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Press Release

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

SPECIAL SURVEY OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY

BAD AIR DAYS! AIR QUALITY, TRAFFIC, OTHER GROWING PAINS HIT FAST-CHANGING CENTRAL VALLEY

**Yet... Residents Still Like Where They Live; Stark Intra-Region Differences Emerge;
Technology Twist: Latino-White Digital Divide Grows**

SAN FRANCISCO, California, June 27, 2006 — Air pollution, and its perceived health threats, is one of many growing pains afflicting California's Central Valley, according to a survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), in collaboration with the Great Valley Center. Yet, despite the growth – and increasingly negative views of air quality, traffic, and other conditions – residents in the Valley continue to like their communities and are relatively upbeat about the region's future.

“The Central Valley is going through an amazing transformation,” says PPIC survey director Mark Baldassare. “Residents are definitely feeling the stresses of growth but, at the same time, seem to believe they are part of something big, forward-moving, and promising.”

On the stress side is angst about air pollution and its consequences. Since 1999, the number of residents who say air pollution is a big problem in their area has jumped 17 points (28% to 45%). In a ranking of the most important issues facing the region, pollution and air pollution (14%) top crime (12%), population growth (10%), the economy (9%), immigration (7%), and flooding (7%). But perhaps the most troubling manifestation is how much the proportion of residents who cite asthma or respiratory problems for themselves or a family member has grown in the past three years – from 37 to 49 percent. Moreover, the South San Joaquin Valley has been much harder hit than other areas: A majority of its residents (58%) cite asthma or respiratory problems, and nearly half (48%) believe air pollution poses a very serious health threat to themselves and their families.

Residents are also increasingly grim about other growth-related strains: More than twice as many say traffic congestion is a big problem in their area today than did in 1999 (48% to 23%). Moreover, the percentage who rate their local streets and roads as excellent or good has plunged 18 points to 40 percent. Far more people see the loss of farm and agricultural lands as a big problem today than did in 1999 (42% to 23%). And since 2001, the belief that finding affordable housing is a big problem has nearly doubled, from 26 to 51 percent. Residents' perspective on the big picture has also been affected: The share that believes the region is going in the right direction has fallen from 63 percent in 1999 to 50 percent today.

Yet, despite the upheavals of change and accompanying anxieties, there's still no place like home. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of Central Valley residents rate their community as an excellent or good place to live – the exact proportion as in 1999. When asked if their quality of life has gotten better or worse over the past five years, more say it's gotten better than worse (28% to 22%), and nearly half (48%) say it has stayed the same. “In times of such pervasive change you'd expect to see larger numbers reacting more negatively,” says Baldassare. “Instead, residents seem to be acknowledging both the good and the bad – and are cautiously optimistic.” One reason for optimism may be how much the region's economic confidence has been restored: Almost half (48%) of residents rate the economy as excellent or good – a major improvement over 2003 and 2004 ratings (35% and 38%, respectively).

One Central Valley – Four Different Worlds?

An important caution: Valley-wide numbers can be deceiving. Attitudes vary significantly across different parts of the Central Valley – enough to make responding to growth a tough proposition for policymakers. “What’s happening is not simply about collective change, but about the emergence of increasingly distinct locales with very different problems and priorities,” says Baldassare.

Consider some key, and conflicting, intra-Valley views:

- South San Joaquin residents (48%) are much more likely than North Valley (16%), Sacramento Metro (25%), or North San Joaquin (33%) residents to say air pollution is a very serious health threat to themselves and their families.
- In Sacramento Metro, 65 percent of residents say traffic congestion is a big problem, while only one-quarter (25%) of North Valley residents agree.
- When it comes to transportation priorities, 42 percent of North Valley residents say local streets and roads should be the top priority, compared to just 22 percent of those in Sacramento Metro. Conversely, Sacramento Metro residents are more likely (38%) than those in the North Valley (22%) or South San Joaquin (23%) to favor public transit.
- The lack of well-paying jobs is seen as a big problem by only 28 percent of Sacramento Metro residents – but it causes a good deal of concern in the North Valley (55%), North San Joaquin Valley (52%), and South San Joaquin Valley (48%).
- Lack of affordable housing is a big problem for majorities of residents in the North San Joaquin (59%), Sacramento Metro (55%), and North Valley (51%) but less so for residents of the South San Joaquin Valley (43%).
- Almost twice as many North San Joaquin residents as North Valley residents consider population growth and development to be a big problem (43% to 22%).

Nevertheless, Residents Agree on Key Policy Issues, Local Government

Surprisingly, despite the diversity of attitudes, Central Valley residents across sub-regions line up on many key policy issues and hold similar views of local government. For example, most residents give their city government excellent/good (39%) or fair ratings (41%), while very few rate them as poor (14%). Strong majorities of residents also rate their parks (69%), police protection (64%), and public schools (56%) as excellent or good. While the numbers vary somewhat among sub-regions, majorities in all parts of the Valley have positive views of these services.

There is also agreement about the sources of the Central Valley’s problems. Most residents believe misguided government spending (64%), too much growth in the wrong places (54%), and lack of regional planning (50%) are key sources of trouble. When asked specifically about planning for growth, two-thirds (66%) agree that new housing should be built in developed areas to preserve open space, and a strong majority (57%) say it should be built near existing jobs to reduce traffic and congestion.

Infrastructure Bond A Hit; Standing Ovation for Region’s Preschools

Disagreement all but evaporates on the subject of the \$37 billion package of bond measures slated for this November’s ballot: Three-fourths (75%) of adults and 69 percent of likely voters say they would vote yes on the package if the election were held today, including large majorities of Democrats (78%), independents (76%), and Republicans (66%). And the failure earlier this month of Proposition 82, which would have created a public preschool program, may not be of much concern to Central Valley residents: 61 percent rate the quality of preschools in their area as excellent or good, 57 percent say the availability of preschool is excellent or good, and nearly half (48%) say preschool affordability is excellent or good. Even higher numbers of Latinos give preschool positive ratings (quality 70%, availability 65%, affordability 63%). “This is quite remarkable and raises some interesting questions because Latinos are one of the groups policymakers and educators have traditionally believed are underserved by preschool programs,” says Baldassare.

Digital Divide Widens Between Latinos, Whites

However, when it comes to computer and Internet use, Latinos severely lag behind whites in the Central Valley – and the digital divide appears to be growing. Today, there is a 37-point difference between the proportion of Latinos (55%) and whites (18%) who say they never use a computer; in 2001, there was a 27-point gap (53% to 26%). Currently, two-thirds (66%) of whites say they often use a computer at home, work, or school, compared to less than one-quarter (24%) of Latinos. The disparity in Internet and worldwide web use is even wider: The percentage of Latinos (64%) who never access the Internet or use email is nearly triple that of whites (23%). This 41-point difference is much larger than the 31-point difference that existed in 2001.

“When it comes to both computers and the Internet, usage among whites has grown over the past five years, while among Latinos it’s dropped or stayed the same,” says Baldassare. “This is a particularly important disparity for state leaders to consider because computer literacy will be a major requirement of California’s future job market.” Given their low usage rates, it’s not surprising that two-thirds (66%) of Central Valley Latinos say they do not have any type of personal computer in their homes, compared to less than a quarter (23%) of whites.

More Key Findings

- **Latinos More Upbeat** — Page 6
Latinos are considerably more likely (48%) to say the Central Valley will be a better place to live in the future than residents generally (38%).
- **Tax Impasse** — Page 12
Although a majority (61%) of likely voters say they would vote to raise the local sales tax for transportation projects, the number still doesn’t meet the state’s two-thirds requirement.
- **Shielding the Environment** — Page 15
Large majorities of residents favor protecting wetlands even if it means less commercial and recreational development (73%), restricting the development of housing on flood-prone land even if it means less available housing (67%), restricting urban development on farmland even if it means less available housing (65%), and creating more marine reserves off the California coast (57%).
- **Power of Television** — Page 18
Forty-five percent of residents get their news and information on the Central Valley from television – followed by newspapers (31%) and trailed distantly by radio (8%) and the Internet (6%).

About the Survey

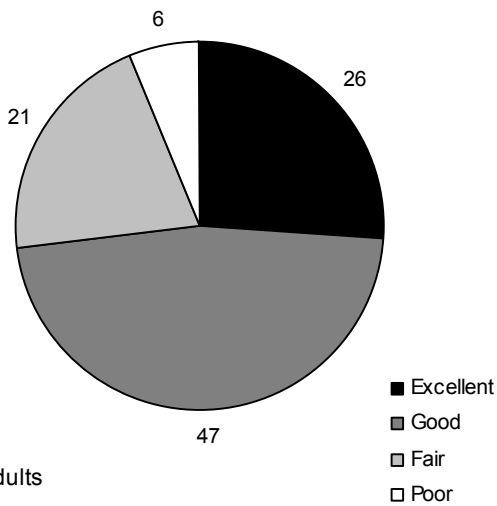
The Central Valley Survey is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey and an ongoing collaborative effort of PPIC and the Great Valley Center. It is the sixth survey in a series intended to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussions about issues related to the Central Valley. Findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,002 adult residents in the 19-county Central Valley region interviewed between May 3 and May 11, 2006. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. For more information on methodology, see page 19.

Mark Baldassare is research director at 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.

PPIC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public policy through objective, nonpartisan research on the economic, social, and political issues that affect Californians. The institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

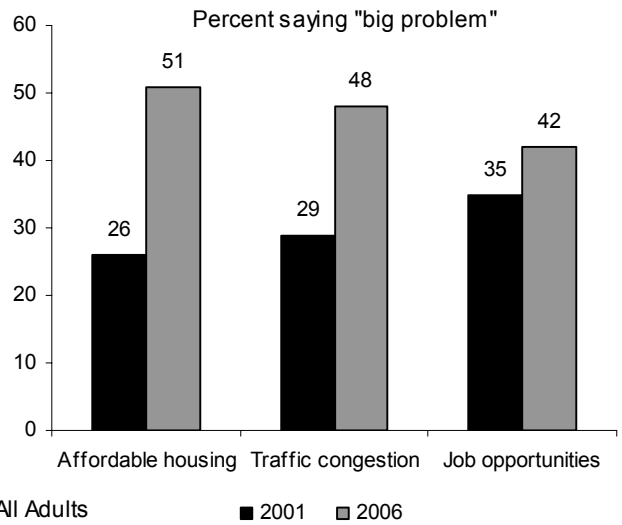
This report will appear on PPIC’s website (www.ppic.org) on June 27.

How Would You Rate Your City or Community as a Place to Live?



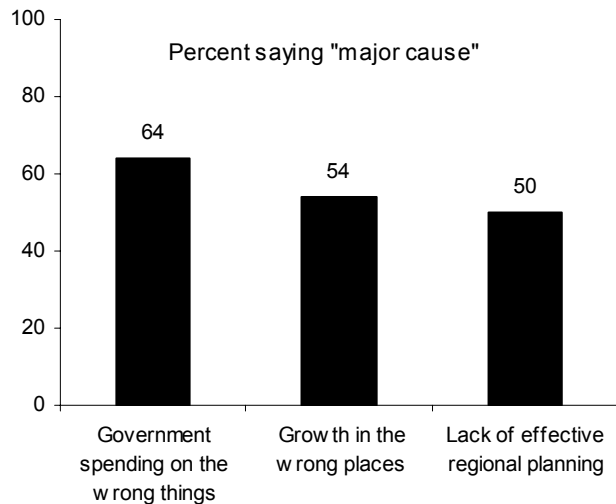
All Adults

Rating Regional Problems



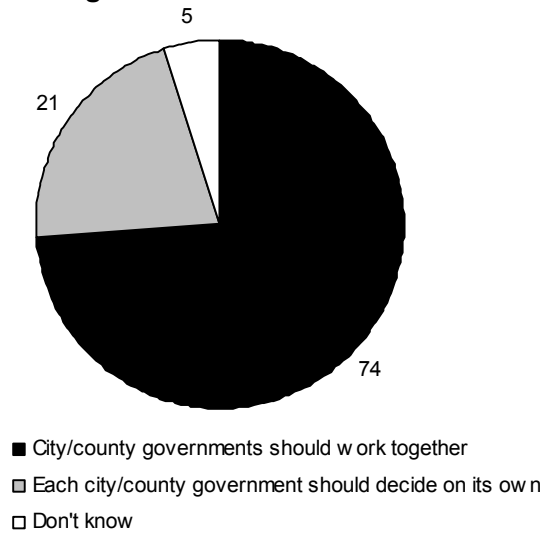
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Causes of Problems in the Central Valley



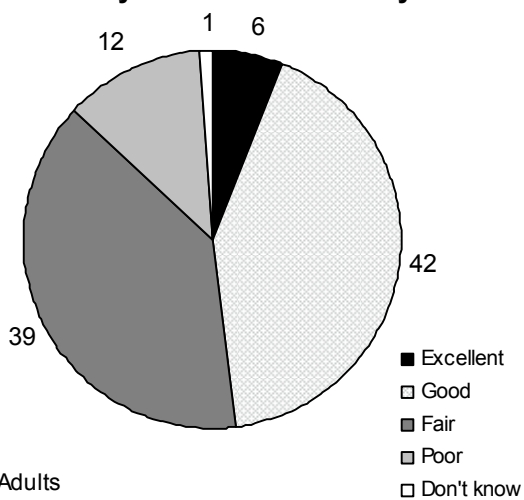
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Determining Land Use and Growth Policies



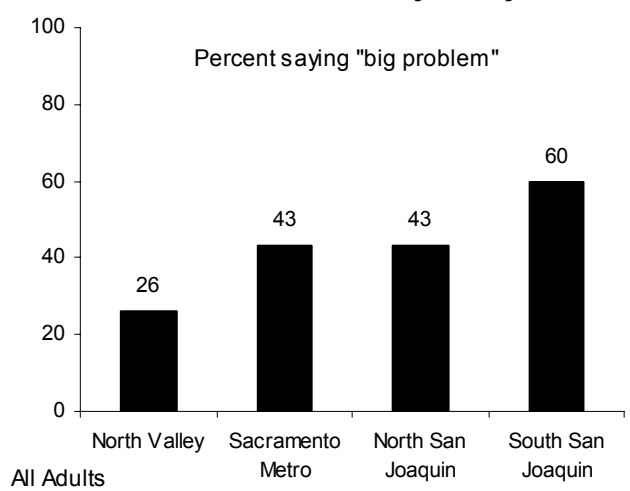
All Adults

How Would You Rate the Economy in the Central Valley?



All Adults

How Much of a Problem is Air Pollution in the Central Valley Today?



All Adults

Local, Regional, and Central Valley Perceptions

Local Community Perceptions

Central Valley residents are overwhelmingly happy with the quality of life in their communities. Three in four (73%) rate their city or community as an excellent or good place to live—a highly positive rating found consistently across our six annual Central Valley surveys. While ratings are mostly positive, they do vary by subregion and population group—satisfaction is higher in northern than in southern regions of the Central Valley and among whites (78%) than among Latinos (65%). Satisfaction also increases with age, education, income, and home ownership, and is greater among those living in rural areas or suburbs than among those living in cities or towns.

Three in four Central Valley residents (74%) say their local communities have been growing rapidly in the past five years, a finding similar to PPIC’s 2004 survey (71% growing rapidly). Residents in the southern regions are most likely to say their communities are undergoing rapid growth.

“Overall, how would you rate your city or community as a place to live?”

	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Excellent/Good	73%	75%	76%	77%	75%	73%
Fair	21	20	20	18	19	21
Poor	6	5	4	4	5	6
Don't know	0	0	0	1	1	0

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent /Good	73%	82%	82%	69%	65%	65%
Fair	21	15	13	27	27	30
Poor	6	3	5	4	8	5

What is the perception of change over the last five years? About three in 10 residents believe their communities have become better places to live; nearly half say things are unchanged. Latinos (35%) are more positive than whites (26%). North Valley residents are the most likely to say that their communities are the same. Negative perceptions of change increase with length of residence in the Central Valley.

“Overall, in the past five years, would you say the quality of life in your city or community has gotten better or gotten worse or has it stayed about the same?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Better	28%	22%	28%	29%	29%	35%
Worse	22	18	21	22	22	15
Same	48	58	48	47	46	48
Don't know	2	2	3	2	3	2

Local Public Services

Despite high levels of contentment, residents’ satisfaction with local public services is mixed. A majority rate their local parks, police protection, and public schools as excellent or good, but only four in 10 are satisfied with local streets and roads. Satisfaction with local roads declined four points since 2004 and has fallen by 12 points since 2002. Satisfaction with local police protection has also dropped over time, while ratings of parks and schools have remained about the same.

<i>Percentage rating service excellent or good in their part of the Central Valley</i>	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Local parks and other public recreational facilities	68%	65%	68%	71%	67%	69%
Local police protection	69	-	72	71	67	64
Local public schools	59	58	58	56	54	56
Local streets and roads	58*	58*	52	49	44	40

*In the 1999 and 2001 Central Valley Surveys, “freeways” were included in this list.

Public service ratings vary by subregion. Ratings of local police protection and public schools are lower in the North Valley than elsewhere, while ratings of local parks are lowest in the southern regions. Fewer than half in any subregion rate their local streets and roads as excellent or good, with satisfaction lowest in the North Valley.

Ratings of police protection have declined in all subregions since 1999, and the drop is greatest in the South San Joaquin Valley (71% to 63%). In the same time period, ratings of parks have risen 6 points in the North Valley (69% to 75%) and dropped four points in the North San Joaquin Valley (66% to 62%), while they are unchanged in the other regions.

As for public schools, ratings have declined since 1999 in the North Valley (66% to 52%) and the South San Joaquin Valley region (63% to 56%), but they are unchanged elsewhere.

Ratings of local streets and roads have decreased markedly in all regions since 2002, dropping 23 points in the North Valley (53% to 30%), 15 points in the Sacramento Metro area (58% to 43%), 8 points in the North San Joaquin Valley (49% to 41%), and 12 points in the South San Joaquin Valley (50% to 38%).

Local public service ratings also vary across racial and ethnic groups. Whites are more positive than Latinos about local parks and public recreation (72% to 65%) and police protection (66% to 61%), but more negative than Latinos about schools (55% to 60%) and local streets and roads (36% to 48%).

<i>Percentage rating service excellent or good in their part of the Central Valley</i>	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Local parks and other public recreational facilities	69%	75%	78%	62%	62%	65%
Local police protection	64	56	66	62	63	61
Local public schools	56	52	57	55	56	60
Local streets and roads	40	30	43	41	38	48

Regional Problems: Air Pollution, Land Use, Growth

Land use and environmental issues are of concern to Central Valley residents, with more than four in 10 describing air pollution and the loss of farms and agriculture lands as big problems in their regions. Thirty-six percent also call population growth and development a big problem.

Concern over these issues has grown markedly since 1999, rising 17 points for air pollution (28% to 45%), 19 points for farm and agricultural land loss (23% to 42%), and 15 points for population growth and development (21% to 36%). In the past two years, the proportion perceiving the loss of agricultural lands and the rising population as a big problem has risen four points each; perceptions of air pollution as a big local problem have remained the same.

<i>Percentage saying it is a "big problem" in their part of the Central Valley</i>	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Air pollution	28%	26%	35%	41%	45%	45%
Loss of farms and agriculture lands	23	34	38	40	38	42
Population growth and development	21	26	29	31	32	36

There are significant differences between subregions in the perception of problems. Concern about air pollution is greatest in the South San Joaquin Valley, while concern about population growth is greatest in the North San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Metro area. North San Joaquin Valley residents are more likely than others to say the loss of farm lands is a big problem.

All three issues are more likely to be seen as big local problems among longer-term residents and those with higher education. In addition, whites are more likely than Latinos to see these issues as big problems.

"For each one, please tell me if you think this is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in your part of the Central Valley."

		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Air pollution	Big problem	45%	19%	36%	46%	59%	40%
	Somewhat of a problem	32	28	41	33	25	36
	Not a problem	22	52	22	21	15	23
	Don't know	1	1	1	0	1	1
The loss of farms and agricultural lands	Big problem	42	32	41	50	39	34
	Somewhat of a problem	29	32	31	24	28	27
	Not a problem	25	29	23	21	28	32
	Don't know	4	7	5	5	5	7
Population growth and development	Big problem	36	22	39	43	31	27
	Somewhat of a problem	35	42	37	29	36	36
	Not a problem	28	35	23	26	32	34
	Don't know	1	1	1	2	1	3

Regional Problems: Housing, Jobs, Traffic

Economic and development-related issues are also significant concerns, with about half of Central Valley residents saying that the lack of affordable housing (51%) and traffic congestion (48%) are big problems in their area; the lack of well-paying jobs is cited as a big problem by 42 percent.

Concern over the availability of affordable housing has increased the most over time, climbing 13 points since 2003 and nearly doubling since we first asked about it in 2001. The percentage citing traffic congestion as a big problem has risen 25 points since 1999; in the past two years, it has risen 4 points. Concern about job opportunities, meanwhile, has not changed much over the past four years, though it has increased 7 points since 2001.

<i>Percentage saying it is a “big problem” in their part of the Central Valley</i>	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
The availability of affordable housing	-	26%	30%	38%	-	51%
Traffic congestion on freeways and major roads	23	29	33	41	44	48
Lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs	-	35	42	45	-	42

Topics of concern vary by subregion. Traffic congestion is more likely to be called a big problem in the Sacramento Metro area and the North San Joaquin Valley than elsewhere. Affordable housing is less of a concern in the South San Joaquin Valley than elsewhere, while well-paying jobs are of greater concern in the North Valley and the North San Joaquin Valley than in other subregions.

Concerns also vary across demographic groups. Traffic congestion is seen as a bigger problem among older residents, longer-term residents, and whites, while lack of job opportunities is of greater concern to younger residents, less educated residents, and Latinos. Younger residents and longer-term residents are most likely to call affordable housing a big problem in their part of the Central Valley.

“For each one, please tell me if you think this is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in your part of the Central Valley.”

		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>The availability of affordable housing</i>	Big problem	51%	51%	55%	59%	43%	48%
	Somewhat of a problem	32	30	33	26	35	30
	Not a problem	15	16	11	13	20	20
	Don't know	2	3	1	2	2	2
<i>Traffic congestion on freeways and major roads</i>	Big problem	48	25	65	54	31	34
	Somewhat of a problem	31	35	26	30	36	37
	Not a problem	20	40	9	14	32	28
	Don't know	1	0	0	2	1	1
<i>Lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs</i>	Big problem	42	55	28	52	48	56
	Somewhat of a problem	36	32	38	35	35	31
	Not a problem	18	9	29	10	14	12
	Don't know	4	4	5	3	3	1

Most Important Issue

What is the most important issue facing the Central Valley as a whole? Residents place pollution at the top of the list (14%)—followed by crime, population growth and development, and the economy, each mentioned by about one in 10. Other frequently-named issues include flooding and levees (7%), immigration (7%), and traffic (6%).

Despite its top spot, mention of pollution has actually declined since PPIC’s 2004 survey (19% to 14%). In contrast, concern about flooding and levees has risen into the top five issues. In 1999, the proportions naming pollution (10%), jobs (5%), and immigration (2%) as the Central Valley’s most important issue were lower than they are today.

Again, differences emerge across subregions. Pollution is significantly more likely to be named the top issue by residents in the South San Joaquin Valley (22%) than elsewhere, while flooding is considered a more important problem in the Sacramento Metro area (14%) than in other subregions. North Valley residents place more emphasis on water quality and availability issues (10%) than do others. Growth and development is less of an issue in the South San Joaquin Valley (5%) than in other subregions, while residents of the South San Joaquin Valley are relatively more concerned about immigration (10%) than elsewhere. Also, traffic is more likely to be named the most important issue in the Sacramento Metro area (9%) and the North San Joaquin Valley (8%) than elsewhere.

While pollution is at or near the top of the list of important issues facing the Central Valley in all demographic groups, Latinos are more likely than whites to mention crime (19% to 8%) and economic issues (14% to 6%). Whites are more likely than Latinos to name growth (14% to 3%). Concern about growth and development increases with length of residence.

“What do you think is the most important issue facing the Central Valley today?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Air pollution, pollution in general	14%	5%	11%	9%	22%	11%
Crime, gangs, drugs	12	13	8	14	13	19
Population growth, development, sprawl	10	12	13	15	5	3
Economy, jobs, unemployment	9	11	5	10	11	14
Flooding, levees	7	5	14	6	1	3
Immigration	7	7	4	6	10	4
Traffic, transportation, congestion	6	5	9	8	1	3
Gasoline prices	5	6	5	6	5	6
Water quality, availability	5	10	4	2	7	2
Other answers	13	19	13	13	13	11
Don't Know	12	7	14	11	12	24

Central Valley Outlook

Today, half of Central Valley residents say that things are headed in the right direction, while 37 percent say they are headed in the wrong direction. The percentage saying “right direction” has slipped since 1999, and pessimism is on the rise. Still, Central Valley residents are more positive about their region than Californians as a whole were about the state overall in PPIC’s May 2006 survey (35% right direction, 57% wrong direction).

Views of the direction of the Central Valley are fairly consistent across subregions, but there is some demographic variation. Latinos are more upbeat than whites (58% to 47%), and younger residents more optimistic than older ones. The perception that things are going in the wrong direction increases with length of residence in the area.

“Do you think that things in the Central Valley are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”

	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Right direction	63%	59%	55%	58%	53%	50%
Wrong direction	29	32	34	31	32	37
Don't know	8	9	11	11	15	13

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Right direction	50%	45%	50%	49%	52%	58%
Wrong direction	37	40	36	41	36	32
Don't know	13	15	14	10	12	10

What about the future? More residents think that the Central Valley will be a better rather than a worse place to live (38% to 32%). One in four adults expects to see no change. Since 2004, however, the proportion with positive expectations is down four points (42% to 38%), and the percentage with negative expectations is up five points (27% to 32%). Residents’ current outlook is nearly identical to what it was in 1999 (37% better place, 33% worse place). Residents are somewhat more optimistic in the South San Joaquin Valley and North San Joaquin Valley than elsewhere. Latinos are more optimistic than whites (48% to 33%). Younger people, those with less education and income, and newer residents are also more likely to be optimistic about the future.

“In the future, do you think that the Central Valley will be a better place to live than it is now, or a worse place to live than it is now, or that there will be no change?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Better place	38%	36%	34%	39%	41%	48%
Worse place	32	35	35	33	28	20
No change	25	23	26	22	26	27
Don't know	5	6	5	6	5	5

Governance, Planning, and Policy Preferences

Local Government Ratings

In ratings that are unchanged from seven years ago, four in 10 Central Valley residents say that their city governments are doing an excellent or good job in solving problems in their local area. The current responses indicate a modest decline from the 2003 survey, when 44 percent gave their city governments a positive rating on that issue. Residents in the Sacramento Metro area are somewhat more likely than others to rate their city governments as excellent or good in solving problems. Relatively few in any region say their city governments are doing a poor job in local problem solving.

Thirty-five percent of residents say their county governments do an excellent or good job in solving county problems, while nearly half say they do a fair job. The proportion of Central Valley residents who rate their county governments as excellent or good is similar to 2004 but has declined from earlier years. The responses are very similar across the subregions of the Central Valley. Once again, relatively few give their county governments a poor rating for local problem solving.

The public's ratings of city government tend to improve with income and education, while ratings of county government tend to decline with income and education. Latinos and whites give similar ratings to city government (40% to 41%), while Latinos give more generous ratings than whites to county government (44% to 33%). There are no large differences in city or county government ratings across political groups.

<i>Overall, how would you rate the performance of your...</i>		1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
<i>City government in solving problems in your local area</i>	Excellent/Good	39%	40%	42%	44%	40%	39%
	Fair	38	38	37	38	39	41
	Poor	15	14	13	14	14	14
	Don't know/Don't live in city	8	8	8	4	7	6
<i>County government in solving problems in your county</i>	Excellent/Good	41	42	44	39	36	35
	Fair	42	40	40	43	42	47
	Poor	13	13	11	14	15	14
	Don't know	4	5	5	4	7	4

<i>Overall, how would you rate the performance of your...</i>		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>City government in solving problems in your local area</i>	Excellent/Good	39%	35%	43%	39%	37%	40%
	Fair	41	40	39	41	44	44
	Poor	14	14	14	15	13	10
	Don't know/Don't live in city	6	11	4	5	6	6
<i>County government in solving problems in your county</i>	Excellent/Good	35	35	36	36	34	44
	Fair	47	46	47	45	48	42
	Poor	14	16	13	15	13	9
	Don't know	4	3	4	4	5	5

Source of Regional Problems

When residents were asked to rate three potential contributors to problems in their area of the Central Valley, about two in three adults say “government spending money on the wrong things” (64%). About half name “too much growth in the wrong places” (54%), and “lack of effective regional planning” (50%) as major causes of problems in their part of the Central Valley.

Residents today are more likely than five years ago to identify these three issues—government spending money on the wrong things (64% to 58%), too much growth in the wrong places (54% to 46%) and a lack of effective regional planning (50% to 47%)—as major contributors to problems. At least six in 10 residents in all four subregions agree that government spending money on the wrong things is a major cause of problems in their area of the Central Valley. There are also many residents in all regions who see lack of effective regional planning and too much growth in the wrong places as major problem contributors. Residents in the North Valley are less likely than others to identify too much growth in the wrong places as a cause of problems. Residents of the Sacramento Metro area are more likely than those in the adjacent North Valley and North San Joaquin Valley to identify lack of effective regional planning as a major cause.

At least half of residents across age, education, income, racial/ethnic, gender, and political groups agree that too much growth in the wrong places is a major cause of problems in their area of the Central Valley. Identification of government spending money on the wrong things as a major source of problems tends to decline with age, education, homeownership, and income. Moreover, Latinos are more likely than whites, and Democrats more likely than Republicans to say that government spending money on the wrong things is a major cause of problems. Belief that a lack of effective regional planning is a major contributor to local problems increases with education, homeownership and income, and is higher among Democrats than Republicans. Many residents in all groups view lack of effective regional planning and government spending on the wrong things as major causes of problems.

		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>Government spending money on the wrong things</i>	Major cause of problems	64%	65%	63%	67%	61%	67%
	Minor cause of problems	29	28	29	26	29	23
	Not a cause of problems (volunteered)	3	3	3	3	3	4
	Don't know	4	4	5	4	7	6
<i>Too much growth in the wrong places</i>	Major cause of problems	54	45	57	56	53	53
	Minor cause of problems	37	42	36	35	37	34
	Not a cause of problems (volunteered)	6	10	4	5	6	8
	Don't know	3	3	3	4	4	5
<i>A lack of effective regional planning</i>	Major cause of problems	50	44	54	46	50	48
	Minor cause of problems	38	44	37	39	38	36
	Not a cause of problems (volunteered)	4	4	3	4	4	6
	Don't know	8	8	6	11	8	10

Planning for the Future

When asked who should handle growth and development policy, more than six in 10 Central Valley residents would prefer their local governments. There is a slight preference for county government over city government, and a strong preference for either of these over state or federal government. The level of preference for county government is consistent with survey findings in 2002 and 2004. Compared to those surveys, fewer today are mentioning state government (26% in 2002, 28% in 2004, 22% today) and more are mentioning city government (23% in 2002, 22% in 2004, 29% today) as their preference.

Across the Central Valley’s subregions, most prefer local governments on this issue. Pluralities in the Sacramento Metro area and North Valley think that county government should be responsible for deciding growth policy, while both North and South San Joaquin Valley residents are about as likely to mention city government as county government. A preference for county government handling issues of growth and development tends to increase with education, homeownership, and income. Republicans and Democrats both have a preference for county government over city government in handling growth issues. Whites are more likely than Latinos to name county government as the responsible entity (42% to 20%).

“Which level of government do you think should be most responsible for growth and development policy in your part of the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
County government	34%	45%	39%	32%	29%	20%
City government	29	18	28	30	32	31
State government	22	28	22	21	22	24
Federal government	6	5	5	7	8	12
Other (volunteered)	3	2	2	3	3	2
Don't know	6	2	4	7	6	11

About three in four residents think that city and county governments should collaborate on land use and growth policies while only about one in five believes that city and county governments should decide land use and growth policy individually. At least seven in 10 residents in all four subregions agree that city and county governments should work together, and there are no differences across political party, racial/ethnic and most demographic groups. In the 2002 and 2004 surveys, 69 percent of residents said that city and county governments should work together on growth policies.

“Which of the following statements is closer to your view: city and county governments in your region should get together and agree on land use and growth policy; or each city and county government in your region should decide land use and growth policy on its own?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
City and county governments should get together	74%	79%	76%	71%	73%	73%
City and county governments should decide on their own	21	16	21	24	21	22
Don't know	5	5	3	5	6	5

Housing and Community Development

Local governments and private developers face important choices regarding land development amid the Central Valley’s rapid population growth. As they make these decisions, it is important to take into consideration the preferences of voters and consumers. In this survey, we repeat two questions from the 2003 survey that asked about tradeoffs in housing and community development.

A strong majority of Central Valley residents (66%) supports the idea that new housing should be built in already developed areas so as to conserve land and open space, as opposed to building new housing in undeveloped areas to provide more suburban style communities. The current preference is similar to the 2003 survey (68% in already developed, 26% undeveloped areas). At least six in 10 adults in all subregions have a preference for building new housing in already developed areas, with residents in the Sacramento Metro area and North San Joaquin Valley more likely than others to favor this option. Support for new housing in developed areas tends to increase with education, home ownership, and income, and is higher among whites than Latinos (71% to 58%). There are not large differences between Republicans and Democrats on this issue—both strongly prefer to build homes in developed areas.

“Which of the following comes closest to your views? We should mainly focus on building new housing in already-developed areas to conserve land and preserve open space; or we should mainly focus on building new housing in undeveloped areas to provide more suburban-style communities.”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Already-developed areas	66%	61%	69%	69%	61%	58%
Undeveloped areas	28	27	25	26	33	38
Other (volunteered)	2	3	2	2	2	1
Don't know	4	9	4	3	4	3

Nearly six in 10 residents also say new housing should be built near existing jobs to reduce traffic from long commutes, while one in three prefers to have new housing in outer areas where land is less expensive to provide more affordable housing. These views are similar to 2003 results, when 59 percent preferred building housing near existing jobs. Today, Sacramento Metro area and North San Joaquin Valley residents are somewhat more likely than others to choose housing near jobs, and majorities hold this preference across subregions, political parties and most demographic groups. The preference for building new housing near existing jobs tends to increase with age, education, home ownership, and income, is higher among whites than Latinos (62% to 49%), but varies little across political parties.

“Which of the following comes closest to your views? We should mainly focus on building new housing near existing jobs in order to reduce the traffic from lengthy commutes; or we should mainly focus on building new housing in outer areas where the land is less expensive in order to provide the most affordable housing.”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Near existing jobs	57%	54%	62%	59%	53%	49%
In outer areas	34	37	29	33	38	45
Other (volunteered)	3	3	4	2	2	1
Don't know	6	6	5	6	7	5

Infrastructure Priorities

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in January outlined a 10-year, \$222 billion plan to invest in infrastructure, and the California legislature has reached an agreement to place bond measures on the November ballot to provide additional money for public works projects such as surface transportation, education facilities, and water systems and flood controls. When offered a choice of three types of infrastructure projects, nearly half of Central Valley residents say that education facilities are their top priority, three in 10 mention water systems and flood controls, and two in 10 name surface transportation.

In our 2003 survey, a more expansive list of public works projects also elicited school facilities as the top choice. PPIC Statewide Surveys in recent years have indicated that Californians as a whole are most likely to name education facilities as their priority for additional funding for public works projects.

While the top priority for additional public funding is school facilities, residents in the Sacramento Metro area are more likely than those in other regions to say that water systems and flood controls are their priority. Naming school facilities as the top priority declines with age, education, home ownership, and income, although it is the top priority across nearly all demographic categories. As for political differences, Republicans are closely divided between water and schools projects (37% to 34%) while Democrats strongly favor schools over water projects (52% to 29%).

“Which of the following do you think should have the top priority for additional public funding in the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Education facilities	47%	51%	42%	47%	50%	51%
Water systems and flood control	30	30	36	27	25	27
Surface transportation	20	15	20	20	21	18
Other (volunteered)	1	2	1	3	1	0
Don't know	2	2	1	3	3	4

The legislature has approved a package of infrastructure bond measures for the November ballot. The four bond measures would provide about \$37 billion for infrastructure projects including surface transportation, education facilities, water system and flood controls, and affordable housing. Central Valley residents overwhelmingly support this bond package—which would be paid through the state’s general fund with no new taxes. Solid majorities of adults and likely voters support these measures. While Democrats and independents express more support than Republicans, solid majorities across political parties and regions, ages, income and education groups say they would vote yes if the measure were on the ballot today. The findings are consistent with PPIC Statewide Surveys this year indicating strong support for additional infrastructure funding.

“If an election were held today, would you vote yes or no on state bonds of about \$37 billion for infrastructure projects ... to be paid through the state’s general fund with no new taxes?”*

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	75%	78%	66%	76%	69%
No	18	15	29	18	25
Don't know	7	7	5	6	6

* For complete question wording, see question 30 in the survey questionnaire, page 22.

Transportation Priorities

Central Valley residents are divided on the question of their top priorities for surface transportation projects. About equal numbers mention local streets and roads, freeways and highways, and public buses and transit systems. A lack of consensus on transportation projects was also apparent in the Central Valley survey in 2004, and also earlier this year in PPIC Statewide Surveys of all Californians.

Similarly, about three in 10 residents across subregions mention freeways and highways as their top priority, but there are also important differences in transportation priorities across the subregions. In the North Valley and South San Joaquin Valley, about four in 10 residents say their top priority is local streets and roads. In the Sacramento Metro area, nearly four in 10 residents say that public bus and transit systems are the top priority, while fewer mention local streets and roads than residents in any of the other subregions. There is roughly equal preference for freeways and highways, public bus and transit systems, and local streets and roads in the North San Joaquin Valley—mirroring the overall regional trend. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to favor public transit, however, no type of transportation project receives majority support within any political party.

“Which of the following types of surface transportation projects do you think should have top priority for additional public funding in the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Local streets and roads	31%	42%	22%	30%	37%	34%
Freeways and highways	29	28	31	30	27	27
Public bus and transit systems	29	22	38	29	23	23
Carpool lanes	7	2	7	8	8	11
Other (volunteered)	1	2	1	1	2	1
Don't know	3	4	1	2	3	4

Given overwhelming support for \$37 billion in state infrastructure bonds, is there similar enthusiasm for increasing local sales taxes by one-half cent to pay for local transportation projects? The level of support for such a tax increase (60% adults; 61% likely voters) falls just below the two-thirds vote or supermajority needed to pass such a measure—a trend also present in the 2003 and 2004 surveys. Today, there are strong partisan differences on this proposal, with seven in 10 Democrats, six in 10 independents, and only half of Republicans saying they would vote to raise their local sales tax for transportation projects. There is majority support for a local transportation sales tax measure across subregions, and a similar six in 10 support level across age, education, income, and racial/ethnic groups.

“What if there was a measure on your county ballot to increase the local sales tax for local transportation projects by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	60%	70%	53%	61%	61%
No	36	27	44	36	36
Don't know	4	3	3	3	3

Economic, Environmental, and Social Attitudes

Economic Confidence

After several years of faltering economic confidence, residents are now as positive about the Central Valley’s economy as they were in the 2001 survey. Forty-eight percent say the region’s economy is excellent or good—an increase of 10 points since 2004 and 13 points since 2003. Four in 10 rate the regional economy as fair, and just 12 percent say that it is doing poorly.

“How would you rate the economy in the Central Valley?”

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Excellent/Good	49%	45%	35%	38%	48%
Fair	37	41	49	44	39
Poor	13	12	15	15	12
Don't know	1	2	1	3	1

However, economic ratings vary dramatically across the Central Valley’s subregions and population groups. Ratings of excellent or good are much more common among residents of the Sacramento Metro area (59%) than among residents of the South San Joaquin Valley (45%), North San Joaquin Valley (38%), and the North Valley (37%). Latinos (39%) are considerably less positive than whites (54%) about the Central Valley’s economy. Across political groups, Republicans (60%) are much more likely than independents (45%) and Democrats (42%) to rate the economy as excellent or good. Positive ratings of the economy increase with age, education, home ownership, and income. Among residents with annual household income of \$80,000 or more, 62 percent rate the economy as excellent or good.

“How would you rate the economy in the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent/Good	48%	37%	59%	38%	45%	39%
Fair	39	50	32	47	39	46
Poor	12	12	7	15	15	14
Don't know	1	1	2	0	1	1

Central Valley residents are also positive about their personal finances. Thirty-six percent say they are better off than they were a year ago, about half say their financial situation is about the same as then, and just 15 percent say they are worse off. Again, there are differences across sub-regions and population groups. North San Joaquin Valley residents are more likely than others to say they are better off. Positive perceptions of personal finances increase with education, home ownership, and income but declines with age. When asked about the future, 44 percent of adults say they will be about the same next year as now, 42 percent think they will be better off and only 11 percent say they will be worse off.

Air Quality and Health

Central Valley residents have become progressively more concerned with air pollution since the 2001 survey. Today, more than eight in 10 residents believe air pollution is at least somewhat of a problem. Nearly half describe the air pollution in the Central Valley as a big problem, reflecting a 16-point increase since 2001 (31% to 47%). However, current perceptions vary sharply by geographic region. Sixty percent of residents in the South San Joaquin Valley say air pollution is a big problem in the Central Valley, compared to 26 percent in the North Valley, and 43 percent each in the Sacramento Metro area and North San Joaquin Valley. Women are more likely than men (51% to 44%), and whites are more likely than Latinos (51% to 40%), to say air pollution in the Central Valley is a big problem. The perception of pollution as a problem increases with education and income.

“How much of a problem is air pollution in the Central Valley today?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Big problem	47%	26%	43%	43%	60%	40%
Somewhat of a problem	37	36	43	39	29	40
Not a problem	15	36	14	17	10	19
Don't know	1	2	0	1	1	1

Central Valley residents are also concerned about how poor air quality affects their health and well being: 70 percent believe that air pollution is at least a somewhat serious threat to themselves and their immediate family, up from 63 percent in April 2003. Again, the perception differs across regions and demographic groups. Seventy-seven percent of South San Joaquin Valley residents believe air pollution is at least a somewhat serious health threat, with 48 percent saying it is very serious. Residents of the North Valley are the least likely to share this concern. Latinos are more likely than whites (41% to 31%) and women are more likely than men (40% to 28%) to say the health threat from air pollution is very serious. Among residents who believe the health threat is very serious, 70 percent say they either suffer from or have a family member who suffers from asthma or other respiratory problems. Over the last three years, the proportion of residents citing asthma or respiratory problems is on the rise (37% to 49%). Today, people in the South San Joaquin Valley (58%) report a higher incidence of these problems than residents of the North Valley (45%), Sacramento Metro area (44%), and North San Joaquin Valley (44%).

“How serious a health threat is air pollution in the Central Valley to you and your immediate family?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very serious	34%	16%	25%	33%	48%	41%
Somewhat serious	36	30	42	40	29	35
Not too serious	29	53	32	26	22	23
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1

Environmental Protection

Central Valley residents are clearly concerned about their environment, naming air pollution and pollution in general as the most important issue facing the Central Valley today. What actions are they willing to take and what sacrifices are they willing to make to protect the environment?

Seven in 10 residents and likely voters favor protecting wetlands, rivers, and other environmentally sensitive areas, even if this means there will be less commercial and recreational development. Support for this is high across regions and demographic groups. More Democrats (82%) and independents (81%) than Republicans (63%) support this action, and support for it increases with education.

Two in three residents and 57 percent of likely voters favor restricting housing development on land with major risk of flooding, even if this means less housing supply. Support for this policy is high across regions and political groups and increases with education and income. Whites (73%) are more likely than Latinos (57%), and homeowners (72%) are more likely than renters (62%), to favor this action.

Restricting urban development to protect farms and agricultural lands—even if it results in less housing—is favored by 65 percent of residents and 71 percent of likely voters. Support for this restriction is similar across regions but slightly higher in the Sacramento Metro area (68%) than elsewhere. Whites (70%) are more likely than Latinos (56%) to favor this action, and support also increases with income, education, and years of residence in the Central Valley.

How do attitudes towards these “inland” issues compare with preferences for “coastal” protection? Central Valley residents were asked if they favored creating more marine reserves off the coast, even if this means some areas will be off limits to commercial and recreational fishing. Nearly six in 10 adults and likely voters in the Central Valley (57% each) favor this action, and there is majority support for it in all subregions. Most Democrats (68%) and independents (63%) support creating more marine reserves, but Republicans are divided (47% favor, 47% oppose). Women (62%) are more likely than men (53%) to favor the creation of more marine reserves, and support is similar across income groups. In California as a whole, seven in 10 supported this coastal protection policy in our February survey.

“For each one, please tell me if you favor or oppose taking such action. How about...”

		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>Protecting the wetlands and rivers, and other environmentally-sensitive areas, even if this means there will be less commercial and recreational development?</i>	Favor	73%	67%	77%	73%	69%	69%
	Oppose	23	29	18	24	26	25
	Don't know	4	4	5	3	5	6
<i>Restricting the development of housing on land that has a significant risk of flooding, even if this means there will be less housing available?</i>	Favor	67	73	71	68	61	57
	Oppose	30	25	27	29	35	39
	Don't know	3	2	2	3	4	4
<i>Restricting urban development on farms and agricultural lands, even if this means there will be less housing available?</i>	Favor	65	63	68	64	63	56
	Oppose	30	34	27	31	32	37
	Don't know	5	3	5	5	5	7
<i>Creating more marine reserves off the California coast, even if this means that some ocean areas will be off-limits to commercial and recreational fishing?</i>	Favor	57	58	60	59	54	54
	Oppose	36	34	34	35	38	38
	Don't know	7	8	6	6	8	8

Preschool Ratings

On the June primary ballot, Californians voted on an initiative to create a public preschool program for all four-year olds, paid for by a tax on the wealthy. In that context, Central Valley residents were asked to rate the quality, availability, and affordability of preschools in their community. About six in 10 rate the quality (61%) and availability (57%) of their community preschools as excellent or good, but fewer than half (48%) rate affordability that highly. In general, less than one-third of residents in any demographic or political group rate the quality, availability, or affordability of preschools as not so good or poor. Many also say they don't know or are unsure about preschool conditions.

About six in 10 adults across regions, and strong majorities across demographic groups, rate the quality of local preschools as excellent or good. There are demographic differences, with Latinos more likely than whites (70% to 57%), and parents more likely than those without children (67% to 53%), to rate the quality as excellent or good. However, whites (30%) and those without children (34%) are more likely than Latinos (12%) and parents (15%) to say they don't know. Lack of knowledge about quality of preschools also increases with age, education, and income.

Six in 10 residents (57%) rate the availability of preschools as excellent or good. However, ratings differ across regions and groups that also appear to vary in knowledge of preschools. Sacramento Metro area adults are somewhat less likely than others to give high ratings to preschool availability, and they are more likely than others to be uncertain on this issue. Latinos (65%) and parents (60%) are more likely than whites and those without children (53% each) to rate availability as excellent or good. Once again, whites and those without children are more likely to say they don't know about this issue. As age, education, and income increase, more residents say they are unsure about this issue.

Fewer residents (48%) rate the affordability of preschool as excellent or good. Residents of the South San Joaquin Valley are more likely than others to rate affordability highly, and they are also the least likely to be unsure about this issue. There are also some partisan differences: Independents (33%) and Democrats (30%) are more likely than Republicans (22%) to rate affordability as not so good or poor. Parents (30%) are also more likely than those without children (24%) to rate affordability as not so good or poor. The percentage saying they are unsure increases with age, education, and income.

“For each of the following, please tell me if would rate it as excellent, good, not so good, or poor. How about...”

		All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
			North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>The quality of preschool in your city or community?</i>	Excellent/Good	61%	62%	59%	60%	63%	70%
	Not so good	12	9	10	14	13	16
	Poor	4	3	2	4	5	2
	Don't know	23	26	29	22	19	12
<i>The availability of preschool in your city or community?</i>	Excellent/Good	57	58	52	57	60	65
	Not so good	17	16	16	17	17	20
	Poor	7	5	6	7	7	5
	Don't know	19	21	26	19	16	10
<i>The affordability of preschool in your city or community?</i>	Excellent/Good	48	43	41	49	55	63
	Not so good	18	18	19	17	18	20
	Poor	9	8	11	9	7	4
	Don't know	25	31	29	25	20	13

Computers and the Internet

Reported computer use is prevalent in the Central Valley today and has not changed in the past two years. As in 2004, nearly three in four residents say that they use computers often (54%) or sometimes (18%) at home, work, or school. However, frequent use is five points higher today than it was in 1999. Today, residents in the Sacramento Metro area (64%) are more likely than those in North Valley (53%), North San Joaquin Valley (51%), and South San Joaquin Valley (44%) to say they use computers often.

As in the past, older residents use computers less often than younger and middle-aged residents (under 35=72%; 35 to 54=80%; 55 and older=60%). The most striking differences in computer use are among racial/ethnic groups and across education and income-levels. While 82 percent of whites use computers often or sometimes, 55 percent of Latinos do not use a computer at all. Moreover, computer use increases dramatically with education and income. Over nine in 10 college graduates (93%) and those making \$80,000 or more (94%) use computers at least sometimes. Nearly half of those with high school educations or who make under \$40,000 (49% each) do not use computers at all.

Two in three Central Valley residents say they go online often (50%) or sometimes (16%) to access the Internet or to send and receive email. Although these figures are the same as in 2004, there has been a 13-point increase since 1999 in residents who say they go online often. Frequent online activity is higher among residents in the Sacramento Metro area (62%) than in the North Valley (49%), North San Joaquin Valley (46%), and South San Joaquin Valley (39%). There are major differences among racial/ethnic, education, and income groups. Seventy-seven percent of whites go online often or sometimes, compared to just 36 percent of Latinos. More than nine in 10 residents with college educations or who make more than \$80,000 go online, compared to less than half of those with high school educations or who make less than \$40,000.

Two in three residents report having a computer at home, and 64 percent of all adults say they use a home computer often (46%) or sometimes (18%). Although frequent home computer use is similar to the 2004 level, it is 11 points higher than in 1999. Sacramento Metro residents (56%) are more likely than North Valley (48%), North San Joaquin (43%), and South San Joaquin (37%) residents to say they often use a home computer. There are even more dramatic disparities in having/using a home computer between whites and Latinos (77% to 34%), college and high school educated residents (90% to 40%), wealthy and lower-income residents (90% to 42%), and homeowners and renters (75% to 47%). Furthermore, over half of Latinos (66%), those with only a high school education (60%), those making less than \$40,000 (58%), and renters (53%) say they do not have a computer at home.

		All Adults	Race/Ethnicity	
			Whites	Latinos
<i>Do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school? (if yes: Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?)</i>	Yes, often	54	66	24
	Yes, sometimes	18	16	21
	No	28	18	55
<i>Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or send or receive email? (if yes: Do you do this often or only sometimes?)</i>	Yes, often	50	61	22
	Yes, sometimes	16	16	14
	No/Don't use computers	34	23	64
<i>Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? This does not include game machines. (if yes: Do you use your home computer often, only sometimes, or never?)</i>	Yes, often	46	59	18
	Yes, sometimes	18	18	16
	No computer	36	23	66

Media Awareness

How “tuned in” are Central Valley residents? Three in four say they follow news about issues facing the Central Valley very closely (25%) or fairly closely (52%). Residents in the North San Joaquin Valley and the South San Joaquin Valley are slightly more likely than others to follow this news very closely. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (81%) are more likely than Latinos (68%) to pay at least some attention to such news; and attention increases with age, education, income, and years of residence in the Central Valley. In response to a separate question, seven in 10 residents say they follow news about their local governments very closely (23%) or fairly closely (48%), while about three in 10 say they do not follow this news too closely (23%) or at all (5%). The results for both the Central Valley news issues and local government news questions were nearly identical in the 2001 survey.

“How closely do you follow news about issues facing the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very closely	25%	19%	23%	28%	28%	27%
Fairly closely	52	52	53	53	50	41
Not too closely	19	24	21	15	18	26
Not at all closely	3	5	3	4	3	4
Don't know	1	0	0	0	1	2

Where do residents get their information about the Central Valley? Nearly half of residents say they get news from television (45%), while three in 10 say they get the most information from newspapers (31%). In contrast, likely voters are more apt to get their news from newspapers than television (41% to 32%). Residents of the South San Joaquin Valley are more likely than others to get this news from watching television. Latinos (70%) are twice as likely as whites (34%) to get the news from television. Younger, less educated, and lower-income residents are also more likely to get their Central Valley news from watching television, while older, college educated, and upper-income residents are more likely to get most of their information from newspapers.

“Do you get most of your information on what’s going on in the Central Valley today from newspapers, television, radio, magazines, talking to people, or the Internet?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Television	45%	34%	40%	44%	53%	70%
Newspapers	31	38	32	34	28	17
Radio	8	10	10	6	7	5
Internet	6	8	9	6	4	1
Talking to people	6	6	7	7	5	5
Magazines	1	2	0	1	0	1
Other (volunteered)	2	2	2	1	2	1
Don't know	1	0	0	1	1	0

Survey Methodology

The Central Valley Survey is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which is directed by Mark Baldassare, research director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance in research and writing from Jennifer Paluch, project manager for this survey, and survey research associates Dean Bonner, Lunna Lopes, and Sonja Petek. This survey was conducted with funding from the Great Valley Center. The survey benefited from consultation with Carol Whiteside and Richard Cummings, as well as conversations with other experts in the Central Valley region at PPIC and elsewhere; however, the survey methods, questions, and content of the report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare.

The findings of the survey are based on telephone interviews from May 3 to May 11, 2006, with 2,002 adult residents in the 19-county Central Valley region. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers, ensuring that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in the Central Valley were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to 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 and was conducted in English or Spanish, as needed.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of the Central Valley’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to U.S. 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 2,002 adults is +/- 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 the Central Valley were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups, such as subregions and voter groups, is larger. For the 993 likely voters it is +/- 3 percent. Sampling error is just 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.

Throughout this report, we refer to four geographic subregions in the Central Valley. “North Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Shasta, and Tehama counties. “Sacramento Metro” includes El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties. “North San Joaquin” includes Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties. “South San Joaquin” includes Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, and Tulare counties. Please note that these subregional definitions changed in 2003; in prior years, Sutter and Yuba counties were considered part of the North Valley, and El Dorado County was not designated as part of the Central Valley. In this report, all reported changes over time within subregions take account of the updated county classification.

We frequently compare the results for Latinos with those for non-Hispanic whites. Latinos account for about 30 percent of the Central Valley’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing groups in this region. The Asian and black samples are not large enough for separate statistical analysis.

In some cases, the current Central Valley Survey uses questions from the 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 PPIC Central Valley surveys or compares results to these surveys in order to highlight trends over time, and we use the 1998-2006 PPIC Statewide Surveys to compare opinions of Central Valley residents today with those of adult residents in the state as a whole.

**PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY:
SPECIAL SURVEY ON THE CENTRAL VALLEY
MAY 3 – 11, 2006
2,002 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS: ENGLISH AND SPANISH
MARGIN OF ERROR +/-2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE**

First, I would like to ask you some questions about where you live.

1. Which of the following best describes the city or community where you live—is it a large city, a suburb of a large city, a small city, a town, or a rural area?

[if large city: Would that be in the central part of the city?]

[if suburb: Would that be an older suburb or a newer suburb?]

- 15% large city, central part
- 11 large city, other part
- 8 suburb, older
- 5 suburb, newer
- 29 small city
- 20 town
- 11 rural area
- 1 don't know

2. Overall, how would you rate your city or community as a place to live? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 26% excellent
- 47 good
- 21 fair
- 6 poor

3. In the past five years, do you think the population of your city or community has been growing rapidly, growing slowly, staying about the same, or declining?

- 74% growing rapidly
- 14 growing slowly
- 9 staying about the same
- 1 declining
- 2 don't know

4. Overall, in the past five years, would you say the quality of life in your city or community has gotten better or gotten worse or has it stayed about the same?

- 28% gotten better
- 22 gotten worse
- 48 stayed about the same
- 2 don't know

5. Next, we are interested in your opinions about the broader geographic area you live in—the Central Valley—which is the inland area of California stretching from Bakersfield to Redding. What do you think is the most important issue facing the Central Valley today?

[code, don't read]

- 14% air pollution, pollution in general
- 12 crime, gangs, drugs
- 10 population growth, development, sprawl
- 9 economy, jobs, unemployment
- 7 flooding, levees
- 7 immigration
- 6 traffic, transportation, congestion
- 5 gasoline prices
- 5 water quality, availability
- 13 other (*volunteered*)
- 12 don't know

6. Do you think that things in the Central Valley are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

- 50% right direction
- 37 wrong direction
- 13 don't know

7. In general, how would you rate the economy in the Central Valley? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 6% excellent
- 42 good
- 39 fair
- 12 poor
- 1 don't know

8. And in the future, do you think that the Central Valley will be a better place to live than it is now, or a worse place to live than it is now, or that there will be no change?

- 38% better place
- 32 worse place
- 25 no change
- 5 don't know

Now I'd like to ask how you would rate some of the public services in your local area. For each one, please tell me if you think they are excellent, good, fair, or poor.

[rotate questions 9 to 12]

9. How about local parks and other public recreational facilities?

- 20% excellent
- 49 good
- 22 fair
- 7 poor
- 2 don't know

10. How about local streets and roads?

- 6% excellent
- 34 good
- 36 fair
- 24 poor

11. How about local police protection?

- 15% excellent
- 49 good
- 27 fair
- 8 poor
- 1 don't know

12. How about local public schools?

- 15% excellent
- 41 good
- 26 fair
- 11 poor
- 7 don't know

13. Overall, do you think your local government does or does not have adequate funding for public services, such as libraries, police, parks, roads, and schools?

- 42% does have adequate funding
- 51 does not have adequate funding
- 7 don't know

[rotate questions 14 and 15]

14. Overall, how would you rate the performance of your city government in solving problems in your local area—excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 5% excellent
- 34 good
- 41 fair
- 14 poor
- 3 do not live in a city (*volunteered*)
- 3 don't know

15. Overall, how would you rate the performance of county government in solving problems in your county—excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 3% excellent
- 32 good
- 47 fair
- 14 poor
- 4 don't know

I am now going to read you a list of problems other people have told us about. For each one, please tell me if you think this is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in your part of the Central Valley.

[rotate questions 16 to 21]

16. How about the loss of farms and agricultural lands?

- 42% big problem
- 29 somewhat of a problem
- 25 not a problem
- 4 don't know

17. How about air pollution?

- 45% big problem
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 22 not a problem
- 1 don't know

18. How about population growth and development?

- 36% big problem
- 35 somewhat of a problem
- 28 not a problem
- 1 don't know

19. How about traffic congestion on freeways and major roads?

- 48% big problem
- 31 somewhat of a problem
- 20 not a problem
- 1 don't know

20. How about the lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs?

- 42% big problem
- 36 somewhat of a problem
- 18 not a problem
- 4 don't know

21. How about the availability of affordable housing?

- 51% big problem
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 15 not a problem
- 2 don't know

Next, I am going to read what some people say are causes of problems in the Central Valley. For each one, tell me if you think it is a major cause or a minor cause of problems in your part of the Central Valley.

[rotate questions 22 to 24]

22. What about too much growth in the wrong places?

- 54% major cause
- 37 minor cause
- 6 not a cause
- 3 don't know

23. What about government spending money on the wrong things?

- 64% major cause
- 29 minor cause
- 3 not a cause
- 4 don't know

24. What about a lack of effective regional planning?

- 50% major cause
- 38 minor cause
- 4 not a cause
- 8 don't know

25. And which level of government do you think should be most responsible for growth and development policy in your part of the Central Valley?

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

- 34% county government
- 29 city government
- 22 state government
- 6 federal government
- 2 other (*specify*)
- 1 all (*volunteered*)
- 6 don't know

26. Which of the following statements is closer to your view? **[rotate]** [1] city and county governments in your region should get together and agree on land use and growth policy; **[or]** [2] each city and county government in your region should decide land use and growth policy on its own.

- 74% city and county governments should get together
- 21 each city and county government should decide on its own
- 5 don't know

There are many different ideas about how to prepare for the future and the changes that are expected to take place in your part of the Central Valley. For the next set of questions, please tell me which of the following statements comes closest to your views.

[rotate questions 27 and 28]

27. Which of the following comes closest to your views?

[rotate] [1] We should mainly focus on building new housing in already developed areas to conserve land and preserve open space; **[or]** [2] We should mainly focus on building new housing in undeveloped areas to provide more suburban-style communities.

- 66% already developed areas
- 28 undeveloped areas
- 2 other answer (*specify*)
- 4 don't know

28. Which of the following comes closest to your views?

[rotate] [1] We should mainly focus on building new housing near existing jobs in order to reduce the traffic from lengthy commutes; **[or]** [2] We should mainly focus on building new housing in outer areas where the land is less expensive in order to provide the most affordable housing.

- 57% near existing jobs
- 34 in outer areas
- 3 other answer (*specify*)
- 6 don't know

29. Next, you may know the term “infrastructure” refers to a variety of public works projects. Which of the following do you think should have the top priority for additional public funding in the Central Valley—**[rotate]** surface transportation, education facilities, or water systems and flood control?

- 47% education facilities
- 30 water systems and flood control
- 20 surface transportation
- 1 other answer (*specify*)
- 2 don't know

30. If an election were held today, would you vote yes or no on state bonds of about \$37 billion for infrastructure projects such as education facilities, surface transportation, water systems and flood control, and affordable housing, to be paid through the state’s general fund with no new taxes?

- 75% yes
- 18 no
- 7 don't know

31. Which of the following types of surface transportation projects do you think should have top priority for additional public funding in the Central Valley—**[rotate]** freeways and highways, public bus and transit systems, carpool lanes, **[or]** local streets and roads?

- 31% local streets and roads
- 29 freeways and highways
- 29 public bus and transit systems
- 7 carpool lanes
- 1 other (*specify*)
- 3 don't know

32. What if there was a measure on your county ballot to increase the local sales tax for local transportation projects by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?

- 60% yes
- 36 no
- 4 don't know

33. On another topic, how much of a problem is air pollution in the Central Valley today—is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

- 47% big problem
- 37 somewhat of a problem
- 15 not a problem
- 1 don't know

34. Overall, how serious a health threat is air pollution in the Central Valley to you and your immediate family—do you think it is a very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious a health threat?

- 34% very serious
- 36 somewhat serious
- 29 not too serious
- 1 don't know

35. Do you or does anyone in your immediate family suffer from asthma or other respiratory problems?

[if yes: Would that be you or someone in your family?]

- 11% yes, respondent
- 26 yes, someone in immediate family
- 12 yes, both
- 51 no

Next, I am going to list some policies that some people have proposed. For each one, please tell me if you favor or oppose taking such action.

[rotate questions 36 to 39]

36. How about restricting urban development on farms and agricultural lands, even if this means there will be less housing available?

- 65% favor
- 30 oppose
- 5 don't know

37. How about protecting the wetlands and rivers, and other environmentally sensitive areas, even if this means there will be less commercial and recreational development?

- 73% favor
- 23 oppose
- 4 don't know

38. How about restricting the development of housing on land that has a significant risk of flooding, even if this means there will be less housing available?

- 67% favor
- 30 oppose
- 3 don't know

39. How about creating more marine reserves off the California coast, even if this means that some ocean areas will be off-limits to commercial and recreational fishing?

- 57% favor
- 36 oppose
- 7 don't know

Now I would like you to rate the preschools in your city or community today. For each of the following, please tell me if would rate it as excellent, good, not so good, or poor. First, how about

[rotate questions 40 to 42]

40. The availability of preschool in your city or community?

- 12% excellent
- 45 good
- 17 not so good
- 7 poor
- 19 don't know

41. The affordability of preschool in your city or community?

- 10% excellent
- 38 good
- 18 not so good
- 9 poor
- 25 don't know

42. The quality of preschool in your city or community?

- 14% excellent
- 47 good
- 12 not so good
- 4 poor
- 23 don't know

43. How concerned are you that children in lower-income areas may not be able to go to preschool—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, not at all concerned?

- 43% very concerned
- 32 somewhat concerned
- 13 not too concerned
- 10 not at all concerned
- 2 don't know

44. Next, how closely do you follow news about your local government—very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

- 23% very closely
- 48 fairly closely
- 23 not too closely
- 5 not at all closely
- 1 don't know

45. And how closely do you follow news about issues facing the Central Valley—very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

- 25% very closely
- 52 fairly closely
- 19 not too closely
- 3 not at all closely
- 1 don't know

46. And do you get most of your information on what's going on in the Central Valley today from newspapers, television, radio, magazines, talking to people, or the Internet?

- 45% television
- 31 newspapers
- 8 radio
- 6 Internet
- 6 talking to people
- 1 magazines
- 2 other (*specify*)
- 1 don't know

47. Do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school?

[if yes: Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?]

- 54% yes, often [ask q.48]
- 18 yes, sometimes [ask q.48]
- 28 no [skip to q.49]

48. Do you ever go on line to access the Internet or World Wide Web or send or receive email?

[if yes: Do you do this often, or only sometimes?]

- 50% yes, often
- 16 yes, sometimes
- 34 no/don't use a computer

49. Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? These do not include game machines.

[if yes: Do you use your home computer often, only sometimes, or never?]

- 46% yes, often
- 18 yes, sometimes
- 36 no computer/never use

50. On another topic, as far as your own situation, would you say that you and your family are financially better off, worse off, or just about the same as you were a year ago?

- 36% better off
- 15 worse off
- 48 about the same
- 1 don't know

51. Do you think that a year from now you and your family will be financially better off or worse off or just about the same as now?

- 42% better off
- 11 worse off
- 44 about the same
- 3 don't know

52. Next, generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics—a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?

- 23% great deal
- 37 fair amount
- 28 only a little
- 11 none
- 1 don't know

53a. Some people are registered to vote and others are not.
Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote?

72%	yes	<i>[ask q.54a]</i>
27	no	<i>[skip to q.55a]</i>
1	don't know	

54a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?

38%	Democratic Party	<i>[skip to q. 56]</i>
42	Republican Party	<i>[skip to q. 56]</i>
16	independent	<i>[ask q.55a]</i>
4	other (<i>specify</i>)	<i>[skip to q. 56]</i>

55a. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

21%	Republican Party
35	Democratic Party
26	neither (<i>volunteered</i>)
18	don't know

56. On another topic, would you consider yourself to be politically...

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

7%	very liberal
16	somewhat liberal
33	middle-of-the-road
28	somewhat conservative
12	very conservative
4	don't know

[D1-D12: demographic questions]

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