

**PPIC Statewide Survey:  
Californians and Their Government**

*Mark Baldassare*  
*Senior Fellow and Survey Director*

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*Table of Contents*

<b>California 2000 Election</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>California Policy Issues</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Political Trends</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Social and Economic Trends</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Survey Methodology</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Survey Questions and Results</b>	<b>29</b>

**Public  
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**Public Policy Institute of California**

500 Washington Street, Suite 800 • San Francisco, California 94111

Telephone: (415) 291-4400 • Fax: (415) 291-4401

[info@ppic.org](mailto:info@ppic.org) • [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)

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## Preface

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California is in the midst of historic changes that will profoundly affect its future. To understand these changes and how they influence voters' choices at the ballot box, PPIC is conducting a series of comprehensive statewide surveys on the theme of "Californians and Their Government." This is the first of the series, which will continue up to the November 2000 election. The purpose of the PPIC Statewide Survey is to develop an in-depth profile of the social, economic, and political forces affecting California elections and public policy preferences. The surveys are intended to provide the public, the media, and policymakers with relevant, non-partisan, and advocacy-free information on the following:

- What Californians know about government at all levels, how they rate elected officials and public services, and what government actions they prefer.
- The public's interest in civic affairs and politics, their current and preferred information sources, their attention to state political news, and their ratings of the media.
- How growing regions and groups—such as the Central Valley, suburban regions, Latinos, and independent voters—affect the state's elections and policy debates.
- The political attitudes and perceptions that are tied to "voter distrust" of government and the social, economic, and political factors that explain low voter turnout in state elections.
- The role of political, social, and economic attitudes in public support for citizens' initiatives and government reform proposals.

*Copies of this report may be ordered by calling (800) 232-5343 [mainland U.S.] or (415) 291-4415 [Canada, Hawaii, overseas].*



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## **LATINO VOTERS KEY TO PRESIDENTIAL VICTORY IN STATE They Favor Democrat Gore, But Support Is Not Solid**

SAN FRANCISCO, California, September 9, 1999 — With Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George Bush locked in a virtual dead heat six months before the California Primary, Latinos are emerging as a pivotal voting group in the state, according to a new survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Looking forward to the open primary, likely voters are evenly divided between Democrat Gore and Republican Bush (27% each), with no other candidate receiving double-digit support. In a PPIC survey last December, Gore led Bush by a 10-point margin (31% to 21%). Gore's support among Latinos has dropped 11 points (from 50% to 39%), while Bush has picked up four points (from 16% to 20%). Bush leads Gore (49% to 44%) in a head-to-head general election match up. While Latino voters favor Gore over Bush by twenty points (57% to 37%), the margin is not as great as it has been for Democrats in recent statewide elections.

“Clearly, one of the factors driving Bush's success in the state is that he is making a respectable showing among Latinos,” said PPIC Statewide Survey Director Mark Baldassare. “Latino votes will be crucial to both parties in the 2000 elections — they are one of the fastest growing voter groups and in many ways reflect where the state is headed politically.”

Interestingly, the generally positive attitude Californians have about President Clinton and his policies has not translated into a ground swell of support for his chosen successor. Although 55 percent of Californians say Clinton is doing an excellent or good job in office, they make a clear distinction between their feelings for Clinton personally and his policies. This distinction correlates directly with their support for Gore. Of the 34 percent of likely voters who say they like Clinton and his policies, Gore receives 82 percent support. However, among the 24 percent of likely voters who say they dislike Clinton but like his policies, support for Gore and Bush is almost evenly divided (45% to 44%). “It does appear that support for Gore in California is affected by voters who dislike the President personally, even if they support his positions on the issues,” said Baldassare.

### **The Conflicted California Voter**

California voters express solid support for the “definition of marriage” initiative, which states that only a marriage between a man and a woman is recognized by the state. The initiative has already qualified for the March 2000 ballot and receives support from 63 percent of likely voters — results that are virtually unchanged since December. Despite their strong feelings about the initiative, voters are deeply divided when it comes to other issues involving gay and lesbian rights. Thirty-four percent say they believe that the government has done “too little” to protect the rights of gays and lesbians, 30 percent “the right amount,” and 30 percent “too much.” A slim majority (51%) say they think companies should be required to provide insurance and other benefits for domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees, while 43 percent say they should not.

Although only 15 percent of likely voters have “a lot of confidence” that their local school district officials are spending money wisely (and 47 percent have “not much confidence”), three in four voters (76%) support an initiative expected to qualify for the March ballot that would change the majority needed to pass local school bonds from two-thirds to a simple majority vote. Californians appear to distinguish between local bonds and local taxes: A PPIC Statewide Survey in May 1998 found that a majority (56% to 38%) were opposed to allowing local school districts to raise local taxes with a simple majority rather than a two-thirds vote.

The conflicted voter surfaces again in the matter of taxes more generally. On the one hand, Californians feel that taxes, especially federal taxes, are much too high. About two-thirds complain that their federal income taxes are much or somewhat too high, which is considerably more than the number saying that state and local sales taxes (53%), state income taxes (49%), or local property taxes (43%) are too high. On the other hand, they favor President Clinton’s smaller tax cut over the larger tax cut proposed by the Republican Congress (69% to 28%). Of those who say that their federal income taxes are much too high, 57 percent favor the smaller tax cut plan over the larger one (39%).

One thing Californians are not conflicted about is the need for campaign finance reform. By a three-to-one margin, voters support a not-yet-qualified initiative that would limit campaign spending and contributions in California elections. A feeling that campaign fundraising has had a negative effect on the political system drives voter support for this initiative. Sixty-six percent say that campaign contributions are having a bad effect on the public policy decisions made by elected officials in Sacramento. Sixty-seven percent of voters also say that campaign spending by candidates in California statewide elections is too high — with 44 percent saying “much too high.”

### **The Apathetic Public**

Among all Californians, the number following political news “very closely” is 12 percent. Even among California voters, state politics and elections are not getting much attention — only 19 percent of likely voters say they are following news stories about California politics and elections “very closely.” The number of Californians who report a high level of interest in government and public affairs more broadly has also dropped sharply since last year. Today, 28 percent say they follow government and public affairs “most of the time,” compared to 37 percent last December. The number reporting that they infrequently or never follow public affairs has risen to 30 percent, an increase of 10 points since December.

While political interest is uniformly low, a high level of interest in public affairs is more common among non-Hispanic whites than Latinos (33% to 18%). Interest in public affairs also increases with age: 14 percent of those 18 to 34 express a high level of interest, compared to 29 percent of those 35 to 54 years old and 46 percent of those 55 and older. Independents (27%) are less likely than Democrats (30%) and Republicans (37%) to follow government and public affairs issues “most of the time.” Central Valley residents are the least likely to pay attention to public affairs at least some of the time (65%), while San Francisco Bay Area residents are the most likely (77%). “Policymakers and political candidates have their work cut out for them. The groups that will determine the outcome of next year’s primary and general elections — Latinos, independent voters, and Central Valley residents — are really tuned out right now,” said Baldassare.

Television continues to be the main source of political information for Californians. Forty-five percent name television and 30 percent newspapers when asked where they get most of their information about politics. The dominance of television over newspapers is increasing and is most pronounced among Latinos (63% to 19%), younger adults ages 18-34 (51% to 22%), and adults with household incomes under \$40,000 (55% to 23%).

### **The Digital Divide**

While television dominates, computers and the Internet represent a growing source of information and knowledge for many Californians. The state leads the nation in computer use — many Californians use a computer at home, work, or school (74%), use the Internet, World Wide Web, or e-mail (60%), or have personal computers in their homes (63%). However, there are profound differences in rates of use between ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the state. Latinos are less likely to use computers (62%), use the Internet (39%), or have a personal computer at home (40%). Computer use increases dramatically with household income (59% for those under \$40,000 compared to 94% for those \$80,000 and over).

A large number of Californians say they use the Internet to look for information for their job (45%), get news about current events or politics (43%), or purchase goods or services (30%). Here again, Latinos and those with lower incomes lag behind. Interestingly, independent voters are more likely to use the Internet to gather information about current events or politics than Republicans or Democrats (51% to 47% to 42%).

### **About the Survey**

The purpose of the PPIC Statewide Survey is to develop an in-depth profile of the social, economic, and political forces affecting California elections and public policy preferences. PPIC will conduct large-scale public opinion surveys on a regular basis leading up to the November 2000 election.

Findings are based on a telephone survey of 2,013 California adult residents interviewed from August 26 to September 3, 1999. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for the 1,585 voters is +/- 2.5% and for the 989 likely voters is +/- 3.5%. For additional information on survey methodology, see page 27.

Dr. Mark Baldassare is a senior fellow at PPIC. He is founder and director of the Orange County Annual Survey at UC Irvine. For over two decades, he has conducted surveys for major news organizations, including the Orange County Edition of the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Orange County Register*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, KCAL-TV, and KRON-TV. Dr. Baldassare is the author of a forthcoming book on the changing social and political landscape of California (expected in February 2000).

PPIC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to objective, nonpartisan research on economic, social, and political issues that affect the lives of Californians. The Institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett.

This report will appear on PPIC's Web site ([www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)) on September 9.

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## California 2000 Election

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### Presidential Primary

With the California Primary just six months away, many of the presidential candidates are focusing considerable time and energy on winning the Golden State's first-ever open presidential primary. Right now, the voters most likely to go to the polls are evenly divided between Texas Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore (27% each). Although none of the other candidates now have double-digit support, about one in six voters is still undecided.

Within parties, about half of the Republican voters currently support Bush and half of the Democratic voters support Gore, giving them commanding leads over the other presidential hopefuls. No clear favorites emerge among the independent voters, and many of them are undecided. (Their votes will not count in the party delegate selection but could have a key role in determining who wins the open primary.)

In the Democratic strongholds of the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County, Gore leads Bush (30% to 24%). Bush leads Gore in the Republican-leaning rest of Southern California (31% to 22%) and in the "swing voter" region of the Central Valley (33% to 22%), which is about evenly split between Democrats and Republicans. Latinos favor Gore over Bush by a two-to-one margin (39% to 20%), while non-Hispanic whites give Bush a smaller lead over Gore (30% to 23%). Men prefer Bush over Gore (30% to 22%) about as much as women prefer Gore over Bush (31% to 24%). Gore has more support among Democratic women (56%) than Democratic men (43%); this difference reflects the fact that Bradley has more support among men (18%) than among women (8%). Bush has virtually even support among male (49%) and female (48%) Republicans.

When we last asked about the open presidential primary in December 1998, Gore led Bush by a 10-point margin (31% to 21%) with 19 percent undecided. Since that survey, Bush's support grew among Republicans (40% to 49%), while Gore's support dropped among Latinos (50% to 39%).

"If the Presidential Primary were held today, who would you vote for?"

Likely Voters (September)	
George W. Bush	27%
Al Gore	27
Elizabeth Dole	8
Bill Bradley	7
John McCain	4
Patrick Buchanan	3
Steve Forbes	3
Dan Quayle	2
Gary Bauer	1
Someone else	4
Don't know	14

"If the Presidential Primary were held today, who would you vote for?"

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>George W. Bush</b>	9%	49%	17%	33%	24%	24%	31%	20%
<b>Al Gore</b>	50	5	21	22	30	30	22	39
<b>Elizabeth Dole</b>	5	10	12	8	8	7	7	7
<b>Bill Bradley</b>	12	3	6	4	11	9	7	4
<b>John McCain</b>	3	6	3	7	3	1	5	1
<b>Patrick Buchanan</b>	0	6	1	2	2	4	3	1
<b>Steve Forbes</b>	1	5	2	3	1	3	5	1
<b>Dan Quayle</b>	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1
<b>Gary Bauer</b>	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	1
<b>Someone else</b>	3	2	12	3	4	4	4	5
<b>Don't know</b>	15	11	24	15	16	15	12	20

## Leading Presidential Candidates

Despite the Democrats' landslide victory in California last fall, neither Gore nor Bradley—the two Democratic front-runners—gets majority support when they are in head-to-head general election match-ups against Republican front-runner Bush. Bush receives strong support in two key regions for Republicans—the Central Valley and the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles—and he is making a respectable showing among Latino and independent voters.

California voters now have a slight preference for Bush over Gore (49% to 44%) if they were the presidential candidates in November 2000. In our December 1998 survey, 47 percent supported Bush and 45 percent favored Gore. Both candidates continue to have strong support within their parties. Among the independents, half support Gore while four in 10 favor Bush. Gore is strongly favored in the San Francisco Bay Area, while the candidates have roughly equal support in Los Angeles. The rest of Southern California and the Central Valley strongly support Bush. Gore leads Bush among Latinos (57% to 37%) but not by the overwhelming margins they have given Democrats in recent elections, while Bush has a similarly large lead over Gore among non-Hispanic whites (54% to 39%). Bush leads Gore among men (53% to 40%), while Gore leads Bush among women (48% to 44%). Among Democrats only, men and women give Gore equal support (77% each). Similarly, among Republicans only, men (88%) and women (84%) give Bush about equal support.

Bush holds an even larger lead over Bradley (51% to 38%) if these were the two candidates in the November 2000 election. While both candidates have strong support in their parties, Bush is chosen over Bradley by nearly half of the independents. Voters favor Bush over Bradley in the Central Valley (61% to 31%), Los Angeles (51% to 38%), and the rest of Southern California (58% to 31%). Bradley leads Bush only in the San Francisco Bay Area (52% to 37%). Non-Hispanic whites favor Bush over Bradley (54% to 37%). Latinos give Bush (46%) a slight edge over Bradley (40%).

"If these were the candidates in the Presidential Election in November 2000, who would you vote for?"

Likely Voters (September)	
George W. Bush	49%
Al Gore	44
Don't know	7
George W. Bush	51%
Bill Bradley	38
Don't know	11

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
George W. Bush	15%	86%	38%	58%	39%	45%	55%	37%
Al Gore	77	9	50	37	55	48	36	57
Don't know	8	5	12	5	6	7	9	6
George W. Bush	21%	84%	47%	61%	37%	51%	58%	46%
Bill Bradley	69	9	35	31	52	38	31	40
Don't know	11	7	18	8	11	11	11	14

### The Clinton Effect

Voters' ambivalent feelings about President Bill Clinton correlate in interesting ways with their support for Bush or Gore in the 2000 presidential election. Voters today are as likely to say they like Clinton and his policies (34%) as to say they dislike Clinton and his policies (36%). Twenty-four percent say they like Clinton's policies but dislike Clinton. Hardly anyone (3%) says they like Clinton but dislike his policies. Altogether, six in 10 voters say they dislike Clinton, but six in 10 also say they like his policies. These perceptions of Clinton are strongly related to party registration but, more important, large numbers in all groups say they like Clinton's policies but dislike him.

Voters' attitudes toward Clinton may go a long way in explaining the closeness of the race between the party front-runners to date. Most Californians have positive attitudes toward Clinton's policies, but this is giving Gore's presidential bid only a limited boost at this time. Of the one in three voters who like Clinton and like his policies, the choice is overwhelmingly for Gore (82% to 13%). However, the one in four voters who say they like Clinton's policies but dislike Clinton are evenly divided between Bush (44%) and Gore (45%), while among the one in three voters who dislike Clinton and dislike his policies, the choice is overwhelmingly for Bush (87% to 7%).

Californians are positive but not glowing about how the Democratic team that rode into the White House with the theme "It's the economy, stupid" has affected the state's economy. Altogether, 60 percent of voters give the Clinton Administration at least some credit for the good economy in

California today. However, only one in four give the White House “a lot” of credit for what most perceive as boom times in the Golden State. Again, this attitude varies by party but, more important, fewer than half in any group give the Clinton Administration “a lot” of credit for the state’s good economy. The breakdown of support for Bush and Gore indicates that Gore is not helped a lot by California’s good economic times. Gore leads Bush by a large margin among voters who give the Clinton Administration “a lot” of credit (74% to 21%) but by a narrower margin among those who give his administration only “some” credit (58% to 34%). Bush is highly favored among the four in 10 who give the White House either “very little” or “no” credit for the good economy in California (82% to 11%).

**"Which of these statements is closest to your view of President Bill Clinton?"**

Likely Voters (September)	
I like Clinton and I like his policies	34%
I like Clinton but I dislike his policies	3
I dislike Clinton but I like his policies	24
I dislike Clinton and I dislike his policies	36
Don't know	3

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
I like Clinton and I like his policies	58%	11%	31%	28%	39%	42%	28%	55%
I like Clinton but I dislike his policies	3	4	3	4	1	4	4	4
I dislike Clinton but I like his policies	26	19	35	26	29	22	21	24
I dislike Clinton and I dislike his policies	10	64	28	38	28	30	45	15
Don't know	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	2

**"How much credit do you think the Clinton administration deserves for California's economic conditions today: a lot, some, very little, or none?"**

Likely Voters (September)	
A lot	26%
Some	34
Very little	21
None	17
Don't know	2

"How much credit do you think the Clinton administration deserves for California's economic conditions today: a lot, some, very little, or none?"

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
A lot	41%	10%	25%	21%	22%	33%	24%	43%
Some	43	23	39	32	45	32	28	37
Very little	9	32	25	24	18	21	23	16
None	5	33	10	21	13	14	23	4
Don't know	2	2	1	2	2	0	2	0

### "Definition of Marriage" Initiative

Californians strongly favor the "definition of marriage" initiative requiring that only a marriage between a man and a woman be recognized in the state. However, the voters are divided on other issues that involve gay and lesbian rights.

Nearly two-thirds of the voters say they would vote yes on the "definition of marriage" initiative, which has already qualified for the March 2000 ballot. Nearly identical support for this measure (63%) was found in the PPIC Statewide Survey in December 1998. A bare majority of Democrats and independents favor this initiative, while Republicans overwhelmingly support it. San Francisco Bay Area voters are split on this initiative, while voters in the other major regions are strongly in favor of it. Latinos (69%) and non-Hispanic whites (63%) show similar support, as do men (66%) and women (60%).

Despite their strong feelings about an initiative that would ban gay and lesbian marriages in California, voters are divided when asked if the government has done too little (34%), too much (30%), or the right amount (30%) to protect the rights of gays and lesbians. Moreover, a slim majority say they favor requiring companies to provide health insurance and other benefits to domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees. Democrats and independents differ sharply from Republicans in their desire to extend efforts to protect gay and lesbian rights and require employers to provide benefits for domestic partners. Latinos and non-Hispanic whites tend to hold similar views on issues of gay and lesbian rights. San Francisco Bay Area residents (44%) are more likely than voters in other regions to want the government to do more about gay and lesbian rights. Women (55%) are more likely than men (46%) to favor benefits for domestic partners.

"On the March 2000 ballot, there will be a 'definition of marriage' initiative, which would provide that only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?"

Likely Voters (September)	
Yes	63%
No	34
Don't know	3

"On the March 2000 ballot, there will be a 'definition of marriage' initiative, which would provide that only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?"

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	50%	81%	51%	70%	49%	66%	71%	69%
No	47	16	44	27	46	31	27	29
Don't know	3	3	5	3	5	3	2	2

Likely Voters (September)	
<b>"Do you think the government has done too little, the right amount, or too much to protect the rights of gays and lesbians?"</b>	
Too little	34%
Right amount	30
Too much	30
Don't know	6
<b>"Do you think companies should or should not be required to provide health insurance and other benefits for domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees?"</b>	
Should	51%
Should not	43
Don't know	6

### Simple Majority Vote

Voters give strong support to an initiative that, if it qualifies for the March 2000 ballot, would change the requirement for passing local school bonds from two-thirds to a simple-majority vote. Three in four of the voters most likely to go to the polls say they would support this initiative. There is strong support for this initiative across parties, regions of the state, and racial and ethnic groups. Support is especially strong (81% to 17%) among voters with children in the public schools.

It is interesting that voters react differently to local bonds than to local taxes. In a PPIC Statewide Survey in May 1998, Californians opposed (56 percent to 38 percent) allowing local school districts to raise local taxes with a simple majority instead of a two-thirds vote. In a September 1998 survey, Californians opposed (58% to 38%) allowing local special taxes to pass with a simple majority instead of a two-thirds vote.

Support for making it easier to pass local school bonds is at least partly fuelled by the fact that two in three voters believe their local public schools do not get enough state funding. This perception is widely held in all political groups, regions of the state, and racial and ethnic groups. The current survey results are nearly identical to the 63 percent of voters who said there was "not enough" state funding for public schools in the PPIC Statewide Survey in September 1998. This perception is unchanged despite the fact that voters passed a state education bond measure last November and the Governor and State Legislature significantly increased spending for schools.

Although voters are currently willing to make it easier to pass local public school bonds, they have misgivings about the fiscal management of their local school districts. Only 15 percent have a lot of confidence that their local school district officials are spending money wisely; 47 percent haven't much confidence in officials' fiscal management. Confidence is low in all political groups, across regions of the state, and in various racial and ethnic groups. The distrust in local school officials is but one of many issues that could shift support as the pros and cons of the simple majority initiative are publicly debated. Another issue that voters have apparently not yet focused on is the possibility that easing local vote requirements could result in higher local taxes—an outcome that can turn many voters against a simple majority vote, according to the earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys.

**"The 'school facilities, bonds, majority vote' initiative would authorize school and community college districts and county education offices to issue bonds for construction and rehabilitation of school facilities if approved by a majority of applicable districts or county voters. Currently, a two-thirds vote is required. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?"**

Likely Voters (September)	
Yes	76%
No	20
Don't know	4

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	82%	68%	81%	75%	76%	75%	77%	83%
No	13	29	16	21	18	21	22	11
Don't know	5	3	3	4	6	4	1	6

**"Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?"**

Likely Voters (September)	
More than enough	10%
Just enough	21
Not enough	65
Don't know	4

"Do you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, or not much confidence that your local school district officials are spending money wisely?"

Likely Voters (September)	
A lot of confidence	15%
Some	34
Not much	47
Don't know	4

### Campaign Reform

Voters are highly enthusiastic about campaign reform. An initiative proposed by Ron Unz and Tony Miller—if it qualifies for the March 2000 ballot—would limit campaign spending and contributions in California elections. Voters support the initiative by a three-to-one margin (72% to 22%). The level of support is high across all political groups, regions, and racial and ethnic groups.

Many California voters today have negative views of campaign contributions and spending. Two-thirds of the voters believe that campaign contributions are having a bad effect on public policy decisions made by state-elected officials in Sacramento. That belief is consistent among Democrats (65%), Republicans (67%), and independent voters (70%). Two-thirds of voters also believe that campaign spending in statewide elections is too high, with nearly half saying that spending is much too high. Again, that belief is shared by Democrats (69%), Republicans (66%), and independent voters (66%).

"The 'election campaigns, contributions, and spending limits' initiative would expand campaign contribution and disclosure requirements. It would establish contribution limits from single sources, ban corporate contributions, limit fund raising periods, provide public financing for candidates and committees adopting spending limits, and require ballot pamphlets to list the top contributors for each ballot measure. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?"

Likely Voters (September)	
Yes	72%
No	22
Don't know	6

	Likely Voters (September)							
	Party			Region				Latino
	Dem	Rep	Other	Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	76%	68%	75%	73%	70%	70%	74%	65%
No	19	25	22	19	23	23	23	29
Don't know	5	7	3	8	7	7	3	6

"Do you think that campaign contributions are currently having a good effect or a bad effect on the public policy decisions made by state-elected officials in Sacramento, or are campaign contributions making no difference?"

Likely Voters (September)	
Good effect	8%
Bad effect	66
No difference	21
Don't know	5

"Do you think that campaign spending by candidates in California statewide elections, such as Governor or U.S. Senate, is currently much too high, somewhat too high, about right, or too low?"

Likely Voters (September)	
Much too high	44%
Somewhat too high	23
About right	25
Too low	2
Don't know	6

## Media Watch

Even the Californians who are most likely to vote are not paying a lot of attention to California politics and elections. This is the reality faced by the presidential candidates and the initiative proponents with only six months to go before the March 2000 primary.

Nineteen percent of voters say they are following news stories about California politics and elections very closely, while 56 percent are paying fairly close attention. Twenty-two percent say they are following such stories "not too closely" and 3 percent are just tuned out. Republicans (21%) and Democrats (18%) are only a little more likely than independents and other-party voters (14%) to say they follow these news stories very closely. This current level of attention resembles the attention we found among likely voters in the PPIC Statewide Survey in December 1998: Nineteen percent followed news stories about California politics and elections very closely, 59 percent followed them fairly closely, and 22 percent followed these stories either not too closely (19%) or not at all closely (3%).

Among the *general public*, attention to political news is much lower. About 12 percent of all Californians say they follow news about California politics and elections very closely, while 41 percent say they follow these kinds of news stories fairly closely. Almost half of Californians follow the news about state politics and elections either not too closely (36%) or not at all closely (11%).

"How closely have you been following the news stories about California politics and elections?"

(Likely Voters)	December
Very closely	19%
Fairly closely	56
Not too closely	22
Not at all closely	3
Don't know	0

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## California Policy Issues

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### Most Important Issue

Despite the flurry of legislation and increased funding for education this year, Californians still rank schools as by far the most important public policy issue facing the state. Thirty-one percent rank schools as the most important issue, while fewer than one in 10 mentions crime (8%), immigration (7%), guns and gun control (5%), or the economy, health care, poverty, or the environment (3% each). Fifteen percent are not sure about the top state issue. There is consensus across regions about the number one issue, although more people in the San Francisco Bay Area than elsewhere name schools. There are no differences by gender, age, income, race and ethnicity, or political groups. Both before and after the November 1998 election, one-third of Californians also named schools as the biggest state issue. It is interesting that in last fall's surveys guns and gun control were not even mentioned, while today they are among the leading concerns after schools.

"What do you think is the most important public policy issue facing California today?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Schools, education	31%	25%	41%	29%	28%	30%
Crime, gangs	8	6	7	11	7	13
Immigration, illegal immigration	7	5	4	8	10	7
Guns, gun control	5	5	4	6	5	2
Jobs, the economy	3	2	3	4	2	3
Poverty, the homeless, the poor, welfare	3	5	3	2	3	3
Health care, HMO reform	3	4	2	5	3	4
Environment, pollution	3	3	2	2	3	2
Taxes	2	3	2	2	2	2
Race relations, ethnic tensions	2	3	1	2	2	2
State budget	1	1	1	1	1	0
State and local finance	1	1	0	0	0	1
Traffic and transportation	1	1	4	1	0	1
Drugs	1	2	1	1	2	1
Government regulations	1	1	1	0	1	1
Growth, overpopulation	1	2	1	1	2	1
Housing costs/availability	1	1	3	0	0	0
State government, governor, legislature	1	1	1	1	2	1
Water	1	2	1	0	1	0
Sprawl	1	0	1	0	1	2
Other	8	11	6	5	10	5
Don't know	15	16	11	19	15	19

## Mood of the State

Californians remain very bullish on the state of their state. Sixty-one percent say that things are going in the right direction in California, while 34 percent think that things are going in the wrong direction and 5 percent are unsure. The positive sentiments today are a little higher than in the April (55%), May (56%), and September (57%) 1998 surveys and closer to responses in the October (62%), and December (63%) 1998 surveys. The mood is a bit more upbeat in the San Francisco Bay Area than in the Central Valley (64% to 58%), and among Latinos than among non-Hispanic whites (66% to 60%). Attitudes are uniformly positive across age, income, gender, and political groups.

The state's residents are also very optimistic about the California economy in the next year. Those who expect good times (72%) outnumber those who expect bad times (23%) by about three to one. The mood varies across the state's major regions, with those living in the San Francisco Bay Area the most (79%) and those living in the Central Valley the least (66%) optimistic. Men (78%) are more optimistic than women (67%). Latinos (66%) are less likely than non-Hispanic whites (76%) to expect good economic times in the next year. The latter difference is probably related to the fact that older and more affluent Californians have a more positive outlook on the state's economy in the next year and that non-Hispanic whites tend to have an older age profile and higher income levels than Latinos. Still, the vast majority in all age, income, and racial and ethnic groups are optimistic.

**"Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Right direction	61%	58%	64%	60%	60%	66%
Wrong direction	34	35	29	36	36	28
Don't know	5	7	7	4	4	6

**"Do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Good times	72%	66%	79%	71%	73%	66%
Bad times	23	29	14	24	23	28
Don't know	5	5	7	5	4	6

## Tax Burdens

On the subject of taxation, a majority of Californians think taxes are too high in almost every category the survey mentioned. Sixty-five percent complain that their federal income taxes are too high, considerably more than the number complaining that state and local sales taxes (53%) or state income taxes (49%) or local property taxes (43%) are too high. The federal income tax is more likely than the state and local taxes to be perceived as much too high. Even among homeowners, less than half say their local property taxes are much too high (25%) or somewhat too high (20%).

The public's attitudes toward state and federal income taxes are fairly uniform across regions of the state, while perceptions of local property taxes and state and local sales taxes are more negative in Los Angeles County. Latinos and non-Hispanic whites have fairly similar attitudes toward these state and federal taxes. There are small differences between Republicans and other voters on the state and local sales tax, the state income tax, and property taxes. However, Republicans (73%) are more likely than Democrats (59%) or independent voters (64%) to say that federal income taxes are too high; nearly half of Republicans (44%) say that federal income taxes are much too high.

The state's taxes that are related to automobile ownership and driving evoke a more negative response than other state and local taxes. Even after the recent fee reduction, 58 percent say that the state vehicle license fee is too high and 38 percent believe it is much too high. An even greater number (77%) say the state gasoline sales tax is too high, with more than half saying it is much too high (note: the question was intended to refer to the state tax and state sales tax that are charged to consumers at the point of sale, but some may have narrowly defined it as only the state sales tax that consumers pay on gasoline purchases). There are no differences between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites. San Francisco Bay Area residents are less likely than others to complain that the state taxes associated with automobile ownership and driving are much too high. However, the public's attitudes toward these two types of taxes are uniformly more negative across regions and groups when compared to other state and local taxes.

"Do you think that each of the following taxes is much too high, somewhat too high, about right, or too low?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Local property tax</b>						
Much too high	24%	20%	20%	30%	25%	29%
Somewhat too high	19	20	17	21	19	22
About right	42	47	44	35	44	36
Too low	2	1	3	1	2	1
Don't know	13	12	16	13	10	12
<b>State and local sales tax</b>						
Much too high	24%	21%	21%	28%	25%	25%
Somewhat too high	29	22	29	31	29	26
About right	46	55	48	38	45	45
Too low	1	1	1	2	0	2
Don't know	0	1	1	1	1	2
<b>State income tax</b>						
Much too high	24%	23%	22%	23%	28%	26%
Somewhat too high	25	24	24	30	22	28
About right	46	48	49	42	45	37
Too low	3	2	3	3	2	5
Don't know	2	3	2	2	3	4

"Do you think that each of the following taxes is much too high, somewhat too high, about right, or too low?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Federal income tax</b>						
Much too high	35%	36%	32%	37%	39%	32%
Somewhat too high	30	29	28	29	30	26
About right	31	31	36	31	27	35
Too low	2	2	2	2	2	4
Don't know	2	2	2	1	2	3
<b>State vehicle license fee *</b>						
Much too high	38%	45%	30%	37%	41%	33%
Somewhat too high	20	19	19	21	20	25
About right	38	34	45	36	36	38
Too low	2	1	3	3	1	2
Don't know	2	1	3	3	2	2
<b>State gasoline sales tax *</b>						
Much too high	59%	65%	53%	59%	59%	61%
Somewhat too high	18	17	13	19	20	22
About right	19	17	23	19	19	14
Too low	3	1	7	2	2	2
Don't know	1	0	4	1	0	1

\*split sample

## State and Local Fiscal Trust

Not only do most Californians believe their taxes are too high, the vast majority also believe that state and local governments waste at least some of each tax dollar paid. Thirty percent of all Californians believe that all or most of their tax dollars is wasted; more than half think that at least some is wasted. Only about 10 percent believe that state or local government wastes hardly any of their tax money. It is interesting to note that the public's confidence levels in state and local government are very similar, especially in light of current proposals to give more fiscal control to local governments.

In our December 1998 survey, a similar lack of trust in state government was displayed when only 37 percent of Californians said that you can trust the state government in Sacramento to do what is right "just about always" (4%) or "most of the time" (33%). However, in that same survey, 52 percent of Californians said that the people in state government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, 42 percent said they waste some it, and 5 percent said they don't waste very much of it. Perhaps the mention of "people" in state government evokes a more negative response when asking questions about confidence in the state government's spending of the taxpayers' money.

There are no differences between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites in the level of fiscal confidence in state and local government. Residents of the San Francisco Bay Area are less likely to say that their state and local governments waste all or most of their tax money, and more likely to

say they waste only some of it. Democrats are only a little more trusting than Republicans and independent voters of state and local governments' fiscal performance.

"How much of each tax dollar that you pay to your ... (local and state)... government is wasted: all of it , most of it, some of it, or hardly any of it?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Local government</b>						
All of it	5%	5%	3%	7%	5%	8%
Most of it	25	28	20	26	25	25
Some of it	56	53	61	54	56	52
Hardly any of it	10	10	11	8	11	9
Don't know	4	4	5	5	3	6
<b>State government</b>						
All of it	4%	3%	2%	6%	3%	6%
Most of it	25	30	20	24	26	24
Some of it	61	58	66	59	60	54
Hardly any of it	7	7	7	7	8	11
Don't know	3	2	5	4	3	5

### Federal Tax Cut

It is surprising that even though 65 percent of Californians complain that their federal income taxes are too high, they give little support to the big federal tax cuts proposed by the Congress. Only 28 percent of residents favor using the federal budget surplus to pay for a large tax cut of about \$800 billion over 10 years. In contrast, 69 percent support the smaller tax cut and more spending on Medicare, education, the environment, and other programs proposed by President Clinton.

Republicans (51% to 45%) narrowly favor the larger tax cut, while Democrats (83% to 15%) and independent voters (76% to 22%) strongly support the Clinton plan of a smaller tax cut and increased spending on programs. The more Democratic regions of Los Angeles (70%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (78%) are more likely than the Central Valley and the rest of the Southern California region (63% each) to express favor for the smaller tax cut. In all, the tax cut proposed by Congress has little support in any region or demographic group.

The smaller tax cut is strongly favored over the larger tax cut even among those who say that federal income taxes are much too high (57% to 39%) or somewhat too high (69% to 28%). More than 80 percent of those who think that federal income taxes are about right favor the smaller tax cut.

"Congress and Clinton are debating over the amount of money from the federal budget surplus to use for tax cuts. The congress wants a larger tax cut of about \$800 billion over 10 years, while Clinton wants a smaller tax cut and more spending on Medicare, education, the environment, and other programs. If you had to choose, which combination would you prefer?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
A larger tax cut and smaller increases in spending	28%	32%	18%	26%	34%	18%
A smaller tax cut and larger increases in spending	69	63	78	70	63	78
Other	1	1	1	0	1	0
Don't know	2	4	3	2	2	4

## Local Government Ratings

Most Californians seem satisfied with the way their local government is handling issues such as traffic, crime, schools, jobs, housing, parks and open space, and air and water quality. However, the performance ratings indicate room for improvement when the numbers of residents who are very satisfied and not satisfied are considered.

Residents are most likely to say they are *very* satisfied with the way their local governments are handling three issue: local parks and open space (37%), safety from neighborhood crime (30%), and local air and water quality (28%). They are most likely to say they are *not* satisfied with the way their local government is handling three other issues: the availability of affordable housing (40%), local traffic (38%), and local public schools (32%).

The less than stellar marks that local governments receive for their handling of local public schools correspond with other public concerns about schools that are expressed elsewhere in the current survey. Three in 10 Californians name schools as the number one issue facing the state, which is similar to the one in three residents who say they are not satisfied with the way their local government is handling their local public schools. Moreover, nearly half said they have "not much" confidence that their local school district officials are spending money wisely, while about two-thirds believe that the current level of state funding for their schools is "not enough."

It is interesting to note that traffic and housing both receive a fairly negative response at the local level, even though few Californians name either issue as the most pressing state problem. It is possible that many residents see traffic and housing as only local issues. Whatever the reasons, the findings indicate that the public's dissatisfaction with local traffic and housing cannot be discounted.

The public's dissatisfaction with local government's handling of local traffic and housing is especially evident in the San Francisco Bay Area. The performance ratings for local schools, parks and open space, and crime are most negative in Los Angeles County. The San Francisco Bay Area gives local government performance in handling local economic development the most positive ratings while the Central Valley gives it the least positive ratings.

"How satisfied are you with the way your local government is handling ... "

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Local traffic and transportation</b>						
Very satisfied	17%	16%	11%	19%	18%	22%
Somewhat satisfied	44	52	35	40	46	48
Not satisfied	38	31	53	40	35	29
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Safety from neighborhood crime</b>						
Very satisfied	30%	24%	30%	24%	34%	25%
Somewhat satisfied	44	50	50	43	41	43
Not satisfied	25	25	20	33	25	32
Don't know	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Availability of affordable housing *</b>						
Very satisfied	21%	28%	13%	20%	25%	23%
Somewhat satisfied	35	40	25	37	40	34
Not satisfied	40	24	59	37	33	41
Don't know	4	8	3	6	2	2
<b>Local air and water quality *</b>						
Very satisfied	28%	23%	30%	22%	32%	26%
Somewhat satisfied	50	51	51	54	44	57
Not satisfied	21	25	17	24	23	16
Don't know	1	1	2	0	1	1
<b>Local public schools</b>						
Very satisfied	18%	21%	16%	17%	21%	23%
Somewhat satisfied	44	44	44	38	44	46
Not satisfied	32	29	35	39	29	28
Don't know	6	6	5	6	6	3
<b>Local public parks and open space</b>						
Very satisfied	37%	37%	43%	31%	38%	35%
Somewhat satisfied	45	48	44	46	43	47
Not satisfied	18	14	12	22	18	17
Don't know	0	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Local jobs and economic development</b>						
Very satisfied	22%	16%	31%	18%	24%	17%
Somewhat satisfied	53	52	50	56	55	57
Not satisfied	23	29	16	24	20	24
Don't know	2	3	3	2	1	2

\* split sample

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## Political Trends

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### Knowledge of State Elected Officials

The low level of public knowledge about the state's elected officials is consistent with the considerable degree of political apathy and disinterest that we find among Californians. A month after Gray Davis won a landslide victory, only a little more than half could name the new Governor. The Governor's name recognition now stands at 64 percent; but still, only about half of Latinos (48%), those under 35 (45%), and those earning under \$40,000 (53%) can name the Governor.

Knowledge of those who hold other major state offices is much lower. Although the election of Cruz Bustamante was acclaimed an historic moment for Latinos, only 8 percent of Latinos (and 8 percent of Californians overall) could name the Lieutenant Governor. Only 5 percent of Latinos (and 4 percent of all Californians) could name the current Speaker of the State Assembly, Antonio Villaraigosa, whose high profile and powerful position have led to speculation that he will run for Mayor of Los Angeles. Cruz Bustamante has a higher name recognition (18%) in the Central Valley than in other regions (6%), but Antonio Villaraigosa is only slightly more likely to be named as the Speaker in his home base of Los Angeles County (5%) than elsewhere (3%). Only 1 percent can name the President Pro Tem of the State Senate, John Burton, one of the most powerful politicians in the state, and his recognition is only 3 percent in his home base, the San Francisco Bay Area.

Even among *likely voters*, 24 percent still could not recall the name of the Governor, and very few could name the Lieutenant Governor (12%), Speaker (6%), or Senate President Pro Tem (2%).

#### "Can you give me the name of the ..."

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>California Governor</b>						
Gray Davis	64%	67%	71%	60%	60%	48%
Other	6	5	6	4	6	6
Don't know	30	28	23	36	34	46
<b>California Lieutenant Governor</b>						
Cruz Bustamante	8%	18%	8%	6%	5%	8%
Other	2	3	3	2	2	1
Don't know	90	79	89	92	93	91
<b>Speaker of the State Assembly</b>						
Antonio Villaraigosa	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%
Other	3	3	3	2	3	3
Don't know	93	93	94	93	94	92
<b>President Pro Tem of the State Senate</b>						
John Burton	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%	0%
Other	1	2	2	1	1	2
Don't know	98	97	95	99	98	98

## Job Performance Ratings

Californians continue to give President Clinton high marks for his job performance, while Governor Davis appears to be enjoying an extended honeymoon in his first year in office. The public is much less generous in their evaluations of the U.S. Congress and California Legislature.

Fifty-five percent say President Clinton is doing an excellent or good job in office, which is very similar to the ratings he received a year ago (58%) and at the time of our last survey, December 1998 (59%). The President's ratings are sharply different by party: Most Democrats (76%) and independent voters (55%), but few Republicans (24%), give him excellent or good ratings. The party differences correspond with higher job performance ratings in the San Francisco Bay Area (60%) and Los Angeles County (63%) than in the rest of Southern California (50%) or the Central Valley (43%). President Clinton gets much higher job performance ratings from Latinos (69%) than from non-Hispanic whites (47%).

Governor Davis' scores are almost as high as the President's, with 51 percent rating the Governor's performance as excellent or good. One important difference is that "poor" ratings are less common for the Governor than they are for the President (9% to 18%). The Governor's ratings also vary by party, but his ratings are not as sharply partisan as are the President's. Many Democrats (62%) and independent voters (48%), but fewer Republicans (36%), give Davis positive marks. However, his job ratings are uniformly positive across regions, given the excellent and good ratings in the San Francisco Bay Area (55%), Los Angeles County (52%), the rest of the Southern California region (47%), and the Central Valley (50%). As is the case with the President, the Governor gets a higher percentage of excellent or good ratings from Latinos (60%) than from non-Hispanic whites (48%).

In contrast, only 26 percent of Californians give the U.S. Congress good or excellent marks. This is even lower than the ratings Congress received in May (33%), October (39%), and December (33%) of last year during the investigations leading up to the Congressional impeachment and Senate trial. The Congressional ratings do not vary much by either party or region.

Thirty-two percent say the State Legislature is doing an excellent or good job. This is similar to the ratings in May (30%) and September (36%) of last year. In this case, the Democrats (34%) and independent voters (29%) give somewhat higher ratings than the Republicans (24%). However, there is little variation by region.

"How do you rate the job performance of ..."

(All Adults)	President Clinton	Governor Davis	U.S. Congress	California Legislature
Excellent	16%	10%	2%	2%
Good	39	41	24	30
Fair	27	34	48	48
Poor	18	9	21	13
Don't know	0	6	5	7

## Political Involvement

The number of Californians who report a high level of interest in government and public affairs has dropped sharply from last year. Today, 28 percent say they follow government and public affairs most of the time, compared to 36 percent in April 1998, 34 percent in May 1998, 39 percent in

September 1998 and 37 percent in December 1998. Because the most recent percentages represent a lower interest level than at any time in 1998, it is difficult to explain this finding as a seasonal effect.

Those saying they infrequently or never follow public affairs has risen to 30 percent, which represents an increase of 10 points since the December 1998 survey.

Although political interest is uniformly low, non-Hispanic whites (33%) are more likely than Latinos (18%) to have a high level of interest in public affairs. Only 14 percent of adults ages 18 to 34 follow public affairs most of the time, compared to 29 percent of those ages 35 to 54 and 46 percent of those 55 and older. Looking across income categories, 22 percent of those with household incomes under \$40,000 follow public affairs “most of the time,” compared to 30 percent of those earning between \$40,000 and \$79,999 and 35 percent of those with incomes of \$80,000 or more. Republicans (37%) are more likely to follow public affairs than Democrats (30%) or independents (27%), while very few of the adults who are not registered to vote (13%) are paying attention to government issues. San Francisco Bay Area residents (77%) are the most likely to say that they pay attention to public affairs at least some of the time, while Central Valley residents (65%) are the least likely to give their attention at least some of the time to government and public affairs.

**"Would you say that you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Most of the time	28%	25%	28%	28%	32%	18%
Some of the time	42	40	49	41	39	45
Only now and then	22	26	19	23	21	26
Hardly ever	6	7	4	6	5	8
Never	2	2	0	2	2	3
Don't know	0	0	0	0	1	0

### Sources of Political Information

Television continues to be the source of first choice for political information among Californians. When people are asked where they get most of their information about politics, television is named by 45 percent and newspapers by 30 percent. Other sources are mentioned much less frequently. These results indicate that dependence on television over newspapers for political news has increased since April 1998 (40% to 35%) and May 1998 (41% to 33%).

The dominance of television as the source for political news is evident in every region, although the gap between television and newspapers in major reliance for information is largest in the Central Valley (49% to 24%) and smallest in the San Francisco Bay Area (40% to 35%).

Latinos name television over newspapers by a more than three-to-one margin (63% to 19%), while non-Hispanic whites favor television over newspapers by a smaller percentage (39% to 34%). The dominance of television over newspapers is most evident for younger adults (ages 18 to 34 = 51% to 22%; ages 35 to 54 = 42% to 32%); ages 55 and older = 42% to 40%) and adults with lower

**Political Trends**

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household incomes (under \$40,000 = 55% to 23%; \$40,000 to \$79,999 = 39% to 34%; \$80,000 or more = 32% to 42%).

Democrats (44% to 34%), Republicans (40% to 32%), and independent voters (41% to 28%) all favor television over newspapers, while those who are not registered to vote are even more reliant on television than on newspapers (58% to 22%). Likely voters rely about equally on television and newspapers (38% to 36%) for their political information.

**"Do you get most of your information on what's going on in politics today from newspapers, television, radio, magazines, talking to people, or the internet?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Television	45%	49%	40%	47%	44%	63%
Newspapers	30	24	35	29	32	19
Radio	9	13	9	8	9	5
Talking to people	6	7	5	6	6	8
Internet	5	5	6	5	5	3
Magazines	2	1	2	3	2	1
Other	1	1	1	1	2	1
Don't know	2	0	2	1	0	0

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## Social and Economic Trends

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### Confidence in the Economy

The consumer-confidence beat goes on in California. Residents of the state remain as upbeat about their personal finances as they were last fall. Thirty-six percent of Californians report being better off financially than they were a year ago, 12 percent worse off, and 52 percent in about the same situation. In September 1998, a similar 33 percent said they were financially better off, 12 percent said they were worse off, and 54 percent said they were about the same as a year earlier. San Francisco residents are the least likely to say they are worse off today than they were a year ago. Latinos are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say their finances have improved (46% to 32%). Those earning under \$40,000 a year (28%) are less likely than those earning \$40,000 to \$79,999 (38%) or those earning \$80,000 or more (53%) to say their finances have gotten better in the past year.

Looking ahead a year, 44 percent think they will be better off, 6 percent worse off, and 48 percent in the same situation. In September 1998, a similar 40 percent said they would be financially better off next year, 7 percent said they would be worse off, and 51 percent said they would be in the same financial shape as then. Latinos are much more optimistic than non-Hispanic whites (56% to 39%) about their financial prospects for next year. There are no differences by region or income in optimism about personal finances next year.

**"Would you say that you and your family are financially better off or worse off or just about the same as you were a year ago?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Better off</b>	36%	35%	37%	34%	37%	46%
<b>Worse off</b>	12	15	7	13	13	11
<b>Same</b>	52	50	56	53	50	43

**"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?"**

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b>Better off</b>	44%	41%	42%	45%	45%	56%
<b>Worse off</b>	6	9	4	6	6	4
<b>Same</b>	48	48	51	47	47	36
<b>Don't know</b>	2	2	3	2	2	4

## The Digital Divide

The use of computers and the internet has important implications for political, social, and economic trends in California. Thus, in this survey we begin a periodic tracking of computer and internet use by asking general questions that offer some comparisons with national surveys.

Three in four Californians say they use a computer at home, at work, or at school. This rate of use is higher than the 68 percent of Americans who said in the Pew Research Center Survey in July 1999 that they used a computer on at least an occasional basis. Computer use is highest in the San Francisco Bay Area (80%) and lowest in the Central Valley (68%). Latinos (62%) are less likely than non-Hispanic whites (77%) to use a computer. Computer use decreases with age (82% for ages 18 to 54; 50% for ages 55 and older) and increases with household income (59% for under \$40,000; 85% for \$40,000 to \$79,999; 94% for \$80,000 or more) and education (50% for high school or less; 81% for some college or more) and varies by work status (45% for those not employed; 79% for those who work for themselves; 86% for those who work for someone else). Registered independent voters (82%) use computers more than Republicans (77%), Democrats (72%), or adults who are not registered to vote (66%).

Sixty percent of Californians say they have gone on line to access the internet or to send or receive e-mail. Once again, this is higher than the 49 percent of Americans who reported in the Pew Research Center Survey in July 1999 to have gone on line. Also once again, internet use is higher in the San Francisco Bay Area (68%) than in the Central Valley (56%) and Los Angeles County (55%). Latinos (39%) are less likely than non-Hispanic whites (65%) to use the internet. Internet use increases with household income (40% for under \$40,000; 72% for \$40,000 to \$79,999; 87% for \$80,000 or more) and education (33% for high school or less; 67% for some college or more) and decreases with age (68% for ages 18 to 54; 37% for ages 55 and older) and is much higher among the self-employed (67%) or those who work for someone else (69%) than those who are not employed (34%). Independent voters (68%) lead Republicans (63%) and Democrats (59%) in internet use, while internet use is much lower among adults who are not registered to vote (48%).

Sixty-three percent of Californians say they have a personal computer in their home, compared with 43 percent of Americans in a Pew Research Center Survey in December 1998. The San Francisco Bay Area (73%) leads all other regions in reporting a computer at home. Latinos (40%) are much less likely than non-Hispanic whites (69%) to say they have a computer at home. The likelihood of having a computer at home increases with income (43% for under \$40,000; 74% for \$40,000 to \$79,999; 90% for \$80,000 or more), increases with education (31% for high school or less; 71% for some college or more), is much lower in the oldest-age category (64% for ages 18 to 34; 72% for ages 35 to 54; 48% for ages 55 and older), and varies by work status (43% for those not employed; 69% for those working for someone; 72% for those working for themselves). Republicans (69%), independent voters (69%), and Democrats (62%) are more likely to have a computer at home than adults who are not registered to vote (50%).

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

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	74%	68%	80%	74%	76%	62%
No	26	32	20	26	24	38

"Do you ever go on line to access the internet or word wide web or to send or receive e-mail?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	60%	56%	68%	55%	62%	39%
No	14	12	12	19	14	23
Don't use computers	26	32	20	26	24	38

"Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home?  
These do not include game machines such as Nintendo or Sega"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes	63%	59%	73%	58%	65%	40%
No	37	41	27	42	35	60

## Use of the Internet

A large number of Californians say they use the internet to look for information for their job (45%), get news and information about current events, politics, and public affairs (43%), and purchase goods or services (30%). Internet use for these purposes appears to be higher in California than use reported for the nation in a Pew Research Center Survey in December 1998.

The San Francisco Bay Area leads all other regions in internet use for all of these purposes, while the Central Valley and Los Angeles have the lowest usage. Latinos lag behind non-Hispanic whites in using the internet for shopping (16% to 35%), news (28% to 47%), and work information (28% to 49%). Use of the internet for all three of these purposes is sharply higher for those with incomes of \$40,000 or more, for those with at least some college education, for those who are currently employed, and for those who are under 55 years of age.

Independent voters are more likely than Democrats or Republicans to use the internet to gather news (51% to 47% to 42%), for work information (55% to 46% to 44%), and for shopping (36% to 35% to 29%). Those adults who are not registered to vote are less likely than any of the registered voter groups to use the internet for news (33%), work information (36%), or shopping (21%).

"Do you ever go on-line to ..."

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<b><i>Purchase goods or services?</i></b>						
<b>Yes</b>	30%	25%	39%	28%	33%	16%
<b>No</b>	30	31	29	27	29	23
<b>No internet</b>	40	44	32	45	38	61
<b><i>Get news and information on current events, public issues, or politics?</i></b>						
<b>Yes</b>	43%	39%	49%	41%	47%	28%
<b>No</b>	17	17	18	15	15	11
<b>No internet</b>	40	44	33	44	38	61
<b><i>Look for information for your job?</i></b>						
<b>Yes</b>	45%	42%	54%	39%	48%	28%
<b>No</b>	15	14	14	16	14	11
<b>No internet</b>	40	44	32	45	38	61

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## Survey Methodology

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The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, with research assistance from Jonathan Cohen and Christopher Hoene. The findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,013 California adult residents interviewed from August 26 to September 3, 1999. 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 California were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to four times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing by using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California'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 2,013 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 California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. The sampling error for the 1,585 registered voters is +/- 2.5% and for the 989 likely voters is +/- 3.5%. 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 the report, we refer to four geographic regions. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “SF 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 the mostly suburban regions of Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. These four regions were chosen for analysis because they are the major population centers of the state, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population; moreover, the growth of the Central Valley and “Other Southern California” regions have given them increasing political significance.

We present specific results for Latinos because they account for about 24 percent of the state's adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing voter groups. For likely voters, the sample sizes for the African American and Asian subgroups are not large enough for separate statistical analysis. We contrast the opinions of Democrats and Republicans with “other” or “independent” registered voters. This third category includes those who are registered to vote as “decline to state” as well as a fewer number who say they are members of other political parties. For two questions on taxes and two on local government ratings, we used a split sample (i.e., half the sample were asked one question and half were asked the other question).

In some cases we compare PPIC Statewide Survey responses to responses recorded in national surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in 1998 and 1999 and Princeton Survey Research Associates in 1998. We adapted the tax questions asked by the Florida Annual Policy Survey in 1997. We used the earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys to analyze trends over time in California.

**PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT**  
**AUGUST 26 – SEPTEMBER 3**  
**2,013 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS; ENGLISH AND SPANISH**  
**MARGIN OF ERROR +/- 2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE**

*[Responses recorded for first 15 questions are from likely voters. All other responses are from all adults.]*

1. First, I have a few questions about elections. In March 2000, California will hold an open presidential primary. That means the voters will be able to vote for anyone they choose, regardless of the candidate's party. If the election were held today, who would you vote for? (*rotate names, then ask, "or someone else?"*)

27% George W. Bush, a Republican  
 27 Al Gore, a Democrat  
 8 Elizabeth Dole, a Republican  
 7 Bill Bradley, a Democrat  
 4 John McCain, a Republican  
 3 Patrick Buchanan, a Republican  
 3 Steve Forbes, a Republican  
 2 Dan Quayle, a Republican  
 ..1 Gary Bauer, a Republican  
 4 someone else (*specify*)  
 14 don't know

2. If these were the candidates in the presidential election in November 2000, who would you vote for? (*rotate*)

49% George W. Bush, a Republican  
 44 Al Gore, a Democrat  
 7 don't know

3. And if these were the candidates in the presidential election in November 2000, who would you vote for? (*rotate*)

51% George W. Bush, a Republican  
 38 Bill Bradley, a Democrat  
 11 don't know

4. Which of these statements is closest to your view of President Bill Clinton?

34% I like Clinton and I like his policies  
 3 I like Clinton but I dislike his policies  
 24 I dislike Clinton but I like his policies  
 36 I dislike Clinton and I dislike his policies  
 3 don't know

5. And how much credit do you think the Clinton administration deserves for California's economic conditions today: a lot, some, very little, or none?

26% a lot  
 34 some  
 21 very little  
 17 none  
 2 don't know

6. On another topic, there will be a number of state propositions on the March 2000 ballot. The "definition of marriage" initiative would provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?

63% yes  
 34 no  
 3 don't know

7. Do you think the government has done too little, the right amount, or too much to protect the rights of gays and lesbians?

34% too little  
 30 right amount  
 30 too much  
 6 don't know

8. Do you think companies should or should not be required to provide health insurance and other benefits for domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees?

51% should  
 43 should not  
 6 don't know

9. The "school facilities, bonds, majority vote" initiative would authorize school and community college districts and county education offices to issue bonds for construction and rehabilitation of school facilities if approved by a majority of applicable districts or county voters. Currently, a two-thirds vote is required. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?

76% yes  
 20 no  
 4 don't know

10. Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

10% more than enough  
 21 just enough  
 65 not enough  
 4 don't know

11. And do you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, or not much confidence that your local school district officials are spending money wisely?
- 15% a lot
  - 34 some
  - 47 not much
  - 4 don't know
12. The "election campaigns, contributions, and spending limits" initiative would expand campaign contribution and disclosure requirements. It would establish contribution limits from single sources of \$5,000 for statewide candidates, \$3,000 for other candidates, \$25,000 for political parties, and \$50,000 total per election. It would also ban corporate contributions, limit fund raising periods, provide public financing for candidates and committees adopting spending limits, and require ballot pamphlets to list the top contributors for each ballot measure. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this initiative?
- 72% yes
  - 22 no
  - 6 don't know
13. Do you think that campaign contributions are currently having a good effect or a bad effect on the public policy decisions made by state-elected officials in Sacramento, or are campaign contributions making no difference?
- 8% good effect
  - 66 bad effect
  - 21 no difference
  - 5 don't know
14. And do you think that campaign spending by candidates in California statewide elections, such as governor or U.S. Senate, is currently too high, about right, or too low? (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)
- 44% much too high
  - 23 somewhat too high
  - 25 about right
  - 2 too low
  - 6 don't know
15. On another topic, how closely have you been following the news stories about California politics and elections: very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?
- 19% very closely
  - 56 fairly closely
  - 22 not too closely
  - 3 not at all closely
16. Next, what do you think is the *most* important public policy issue facing California today? (*code don't read*)
- 31% schools, education
  - 8 crime, gangs
  - 7 immigration, illegal immigration
  - 5 guns, gun control
  - 3 jobs, the economy
  - 3 poverty, the poor, the homeless, welfare
  - 3 health care, HMO reform
  - 3 environment, pollution
  - 2 taxes
  - 2 race relations, ethnic tensions
  - 1 state budget
  - 1 state and local finance
  - 1 traffic and transportation
  - 1 drugs
  - 1 government regulations
  - 1 growth, overpopulation
  - 1 housing costs, housing availability
  - 1 state government, governor, legislature
  - 1 water
  - 1 sprawl
  - 8 other (*specify*)
  - 15 don't know
17. And do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?
- 61% right direction
  - 34 wrong direction
  - 5 don't know
18. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?
- 72% good times
  - 23 bad times
  - 5 don't know
19. On another topic, some people can't remember the names of state officeholders, while some people can remember them. Can you give me the name of the California governor? (*code don't read*)
- 64% Gray Davis
  - 6 other
  - 30 don't know
20. Can you give me the name of the California Lieutenant Governor? (*code don't read*)
- 8% Cruz Bustamante
  - 2 other
  - 90 don't know
21. Can you give me the name of the Speaker of the California State Assembly? (*code don't read*)
- 4% Antonio Villaraigosa
  - 3 other
  - 93 don't know

22. Can you give me the name of the President Pro Tem of the California State Senate? (*code don't read*)

1% John Burton  
1 other  
98 don't know

23. On another topic, how do you rate the job performance of President Bill Clinton at this time?

16% excellent  
39 good  
27 fair  
18 poor  
0 don't know

24. How do you rate the job performance of Governor Gray Davis at this time?

10% excellent  
41 good  
34 fair  
9 poor  
6 don't know

25. How do you rate the job performance of the legislative branch of the federal government, including the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, at this time?

2% excellent  
24 good  
48 fair  
21 poor  
5 don't know

26. How do you rate the job performance of the California legislature at this time, including the State Senate and Assembly?

2% excellent  
30 good  
48 fair  
13 poor  
7 don't know

On another topic, no one likes to pay taxes, but we usually object more to some kinds of taxes than others. From your personal standpoint, please tell me if you feel each of these taxes is too high, about right, or too low. (*rotate*)

27. How about your local property tax? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

24% much too high  
19 somewhat too high  
42 about right  
2 too low  
13 not applicable/don't know

28. How about your state and local sales tax? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

24% much too high  
29 somewhat too high  
46 about right  
1 too low  
0 don't know

29. How about your state income tax? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

24% much too high  
25 somewhat too high  
46 about right  
3 too low  
2 don't know

30. How about your federal income tax? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

35% much too high  
30 somewhat too high  
31 about right  
2 too low  
2 don't know

31a. [*split sample*] How about your state vehicle license fee? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

38% much too high  
20 somewhat too high  
38 about right  
2 too low  
2 don't know

31b. [*split sample*] How about your state gasoline sales tax? Would you say it is too high, about right, or too low (*if too high: is that much too high or somewhat too high?*)

59% much too high  
18 somewhat too high  
19 about right  
3 too low  
1 don't know

32. And what about your *local* government? How much of each tax dollar you pay to it is wasted: all of it, most of it, some of it, or hardly any of it?

5% all of it  
25 most of it  
56 some of it  
10 hardly any of it  
4 don't know

33. And what about your *state* government? How much of each tax dollar you pay to it is wasted: all of it, most of it, some of it, or hardly any of it?

- 4% all of it
- 25 most of it
- 61 some of it
- 7 hardly any of it
- 3 don't know

34. Congress and Clinton are debating over the amount of money from the *federal* budget surplus to use for tax cuts. The congress wants a larger tax cut of about 800 billion dollars over 10 years, while Clinton wants a smaller tax cut and more spending on Medicare, education, the environment, and other programs. If you had to choose, which combination would you prefer? (*rotate*)

- 28% a larger tax cut and smaller increases in spending for Medicare and other programs
- 69 a smaller tax cut and larger increases in spending for Medicare and other programs
- 1 other (volunteered)
- 2 don't know

On another topic, how satisfied are you with the way your local government is handling each of the following issues in your city or community? (*rotate*)

35. How about local traffic and transportation? Are you ...

- 17% very satisfied
- 44 somewhat satisfied
- 38 not satisfied
- 1 don't know

36. How about safety from neighborhood crime? Are you ...

- 30% very satisfied
- 44 somewhat satisfied
- 25 not satisfied
- 1 don't know

37a. [*split sample*] How about the availability of local housing that you can afford? Are you ...

- 21% very satisfied
- 35 somewhat satisfied
- 40 not satisfied
- 4 don't know

37b. [*split sample*] How about local air and water quality? Are you ...

- 28% very satisfied
- 50 somewhat satisfied
- 21 not satisfied
- 1 don't know

38. How about local public schools? Are you ...

- 18% very satisfied
- 44 somewhat satisfied
- 32 not satisfied
- 6 don't know

39. How about local public parks and open space? Are you ...

- 37% very satisfied
- 45 somewhat satisfied
- 18 not satisfied
- 0 don't know

40. How about local jobs and economic development? Are you ...

- 22% very satisfied
- 53 somewhat satisfied
- 23 not satisfied
- 2 don't know

41. On another topic, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain you are registered to vote? (*if yes: are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or Independent?*)

- 36% yes, Democrat
- 30 yes, Republican
- 14 yes, independent/other party
- 20 no, not registered

42. Would you consider yourself to be politically very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle-of-the-road, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?

- 8% very liberal
- 21 somewhat liberal
- 34 middle-of-the-road
- 25 somewhat conservative
- 10 very conservative
- 2 don't know

43. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics: a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?

- 14% great deal
- 47 fair amount
- 32 only a little
- 7 none
- 0 don't know

44. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

- 28% most of the time
- 42 some of the time
- 22 only now and then
- 6 hardly ever
- 2 never
- 0 don't know

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

45% television  
30 newspapers  
9 radio  
6 talking to people  
5 internet and on-line  
2 magazines  
1 other  
2 don't know

46. How often would you say you vote: always, nearly always, part of the time, seldom, or never?

48% always  
23 nearly always  
13 part of the time  
5 seldom  
11 never  
0 other/don't know

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

36% better off  
12 worse off  
52 same  
0 don't know

48. Looking ahead, 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?

44% better off  
6 worse off  
48 same  
2 don't know

49. On another topic, do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school?

74% yes  
26 no

50. Do you ever go on-line to access the internet or world wide web or to send or receive e-mail?

60% yes  
14 no  
26 not applicable/don't use computer

51. Do you ever go on-line to purchase goods or services?

30% yes  
30 no  
40 not applicable/don't use Internet

52. Do you ever go on-line to get news and information on current events, public issues, or politics?

43% yes  
17 no  
40 not applicable/don't use Internet

53. Do you ever go on-line to look for information for your work or job?

45% yes  
15 no  
40 not applicable/don't use Internet

54. Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? These do not include game machines such as Nintendo or Sega.

63% yes  
37 no

[55-63. Demographic questions]

## PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

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