

*Crisis of Confidence: Leadership and Reform
in Los Angeles County*

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**Public
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Introduction

Thank you for inviting me to speak at Town Hall Los Angeles, and a special thank you to the distinguished group of panelists who are assembled here today. We are here today to talk about leadership and reform, and whether or not there is a crisis in confidence in Los Angeles County. For this topic, I turn to the Los Angeles County Survey series – a collaborative effort of the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California and the University of Southern California – which is supported by a three-year grant from the California Community Foundation. Public opinion data are critical to informing discussions on key issues and stimulating public debate, as we hope to do here today. The overall intent of this special survey series on Los Angeles County is to help guide the decisions of policymakers and the actions of public, nonprofit, and public-private partnerships charged with delivering local services and improving the quality of life of Los Angeles County residents.

Why Los Angeles County?

Why is PPIC, which focuses on statewide issues, involved in a specific study of Los Angeles County? Because it is the most populous county in the nation and, as Los Angeles County goes, so goes California. With approximately 10 million residents, it is home to about 30 percent of the state’s population. The county has grown by nearly 2 million residents over the past 20 years and is expected to keep on growing. Today, the county’s population is 45 percent Latino, 31 percent non-Latino white, 12 percent Asian, and 10 percent black – similar to the racial/ethnic profile that state demographers predict for California by 2040. Reflecting the size and diversity of the county, local government is large and complex, as are the problems of delivering local services to residents. In recent years, local governments in Los Angeles County have confronted difficult issues such as providing health care for the uninsured, reducing air pollution, improving low-performing schools, coping with racial/ethnic tensions involving police activities and, most recently, coming to terms with local efforts to secede from the city of Los Angeles. There are also housing, transportation, land use, and environmental issues relating to growth and development.

PPIC Statewide Survey of Los Angeles County

This benchmark survey of 2,000 adult residents conducted in March includes questions from earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys and *Los Angeles Times* polls. It also includes key indicators from our Statewide Survey that allow comparisons with other regions. Our large sample size also enables us to consider differences across racial/ethnic groups, age, income, four geographic areas within the county, and political differences within those areas.¹ The current survey explores the following issues: perceptions of county conditions; social and economic attitudes; and, at the

¹ See the appendix for a description of survey methodology and a county map showing the four geographic areas.

heart of our discussions here today, local governance involving county and city governments and the delivery of public services.

Most Important Issue

What do Los Angeles County residents identify as the most important issue facing their county today? Based on the percentage of responses, the top four issues are crime and gangs (26%), public schools and education (15%), jobs and the economy (9%), and traffic congestion and transportation (6%). Although crime and gangs are identified most often as the top issue across all geographic areas, concern is higher in the Central/Southeast area (31%) than elsewhere. Concern is also higher among Latinos (36%) than among blacks (25%) and whites (19%).

We find that crime and gangs also have a personal side in Los Angeles County: Three in four residents say they are very concerned (42%) or somewhat concerned (34%) that they or someone in their family will fall victim to a crime. Most Latinos (67%), Central/Southeast area residents (54%), renters (52%), foreign-born citizens (57%), non-citizens (70%), households with children under 18 (54%), and those with household incomes under \$40,000 (55%) say they are very concerned about crime victimization. Two in three residents are also very concerned (42%) or somewhat concerned (23%) about gangs and graffiti in their neighborhood.

“How concerned are you that you or someone in your family will be a victim of a crime?”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Very concerned | 42% | 40% | 38% | 34% | 54% |
| Somewhat concerned | 34 | 34 | 34 | 39 | 29 |
| Not very concerned | 17 | 19 | 21 | 20 | 11 |
| Not at all concerned | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 |

Perceptions of Problems in Local Areas

We also asked residents to evaluate a list of potential problems in their area of Los Angeles County. Not surprisingly, traffic congestion is considered a big problem by a solid majority of residents in all four regions. The availability of affordable housing is also a big problem for large proportions of residents in all areas. Crime, air pollution, and the lack of well-paying jobs also loom large, especially in the Central/Southeast area.

When we compare our current survey results with Los Angeles County responses from two years ago, we find that nearly seven in 10 residents both then and

now consider traffic congestion a big problem in their area. However, concern has increased with regard to housing (+14%), jobs (+9%), and growth (+10%), and only air pollution is seen as less of a problem today than in 2001 (-9%).

| Percent seeing the issue as a big problem | 2001* | 2003 |
|--|-------|------|
| Traffic congestion on freeways and major roads | 69% | 67% |
| Availability of housing you can afford | 40 | 54 |
| Lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs | 31 | 40 |
| Population growth and development | 28 | 38 |
| Air pollution | 46 | 37 |

* Results for LA County residents from May 2001 PPIC Statewide Survey

Perceptions of regional problems also differ significantly across racial/ethnic groups. Higher percentages of blacks and Latinos than whites and Asians say that crime, air pollution, and the lack of well-paying jobs are big problems. Whites are more concerned than other groups about traffic congestion and less concerned, as are Asians, about affordable housing.

Race Relations

How are different racial and ethnic groups getting along in Los Angeles County these days? Although race relations may not register among the top issues in the county, a majority of residents say race relations are not so good (39%) or poor (14%). A higher percentage of blacks (65%) than of any other racial/ethnic group say race relations are poor or not so good. A higher percentage of non-citizens (61%) than foreign-born citizens (53%) and U.S.-born residents (52%) registered negative assessments of race relations.

“Overall, how would you rate race relations in Los Angeles County today?”

| | All Adults | Race/Ethnicity | | | |
|------------------|------------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Asian | Black | Latino | White |
| Excellent / Good | 44% | 52% | 35% | 39% | 48% |
| Not so good | 39 | 39 | 50 | 37 | 39 |
| Poor | 14 | 6 | 15 | 21 | 11 |
| Don't know | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 |

When asked which opinion was closer to theirs, 59 percent of adults say immigrants are a benefit to Los Angeles County because of their hard work and job skills, while 31 percent say immigrants are a burden because they use public services.

Latinos (81%) and Asians (63%) overwhelmingly view immigrants as a benefit, while whites (45%) and blacks (47%) are less convinced.

“Which of these two views comes closest to your own?”

| | All Adults | Race/Ethnicity | | | |
|---|------------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Asian | Black | Latino | White |
| Immigrants today are a benefit to LA County because of their hard work and job skills | 59% | 63% | 47% | 81% | 45% |
| Immigrants today are a burden to LA County because they use public services | 31 | 24 | 40 | 12 | 44 |
| Don't know | 10 | 13 | 13 | 7 | 11 |

Nonetheless, while most residents believe that immigrants benefit the county, more than half (52%) also believe that illegal immigration is a big problem. The perception that illegal immigration creates big problems for the county is much higher among U.S.-born residents (60%) than among foreign-born citizens (39%) and non-citizens (29%).

Public Concern about Health Care

Mirroring the results of recent national and state surveys, seven in 10 residents say they are very concerned (47%) or somewhat concerned (23%) about their ability to afford health care when a family member gets sick. A majority of Latinos (61%), blacks (54%), Central/Southeast area residents (56%), foreign-born citizens (56%), non-citizens (63%), and those with incomes under \$40,000 (59%), and only a high school education (58%) say they are very concerned about their ability to afford health care.

“How concerned are you about being able to afford health care when a family member gets sick?”

| | All Adults | Nativity & Citizenship | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | U.S. Native | Foreign-Born U.S. Citizen | Foreign-Born Non-Citizen |
| Very concerned | 47% | 41% | 56% | 63% |
| Somewhat concerned | 23 | 23 | 23 | 24 |
| Not too concerned | 14 | 17 | 10 | 7 |
| Not at all concerned | 16 | 19 | 11 | 6 |

Fifty-two percent of non-citizens report having no health care plan. Substantial percentages of Latinos (33%), residents under age 35 (28%), those with incomes under \$40,000 (30%), and those with only a high school education (30%) also report having no health care coverage.

Los Angeles County’s public hospitals and health clinics are not unknown to the public: Six in 10 residents report that they or a family member have either previously used (46%) or could see themselves using (13%) the county’s public health care system in the future. A majority in every geographic area report past or possible use of the county health care system. The Central/Southeast area (54%) has the highest percentage of consumers of the county health care system. A majority of blacks (64%), Latinos (59%), non-citizens (57%), those with incomes under \$40,000 (56%), those with children at home (53%), and adults under age 35 (52%) say they have used the county’s health care system. Most county residents believe that higher levels of government should have primary responsibility for funding county health care for uninsured residents: Six in 10 residents name either the federal government (31%) or the state government (30%). Two in three residents say it is very important for public-private partnerships to be involved in providing health care for the poor and uninsured in Los Angeles County.

The Local Governance System

The long list of perplexing issues facing Los Angeles County places high expectations on local government, especially because many residents lack the means to solve problems on their own. Los Angeles County’s 10 million residents are served by a myriad of governments: county government, 88 city governments, and more than 200 special districts provide education, transportation, water, sanitation, fire, and other services. Do residents see this abundance of governments as a good thing? They lean toward the view that the type of local governance they have serves them well.

When asked how responsive and efficient local governments are in meeting needs and delivering local services, 69 percent of county residents think that having all of these local governments is a good thing because it ensures that local needs are met. Only 23 percent of residents think that it is a bad thing because it is an inefficient way to provide local services.

“Residents of LA County are served by the county government, 88 city governments, and more than 200 special districts Which of the following comes closest to your views about local governments in Los Angeles County: Having this many local governments is a ...”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Good thing because it ensures that local services meet the needs of local residents | 69% | 73% | 67% | 68% | 68% |
| Bad thing because it is an inefficient way to provide local services | 23 | 21 | 27 | 24 | 22 |
| Don’t know | 8 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 10 |

Fifty-six percent of county residents say it is good to have so many local governments because county residents get a say in more local matters. Thirty-four percent say that it is a bad thing because figuring out which government is supposed to provide what service is too confusing. A majority of residents across most racial/ethnic, geographic, demographic, and political groups say having this many local governments is a good thing.

Local Governments and Problem Solving

Despite the general enthusiasm for multiple governments in the county, most residents give the county and their city governments relatively low ratings. Twenty-four percent say the Los Angeles County government is excellent or good at problem solving. Positive ratings for county government are similar across all areas. The county’s non-whites are more likely than the county’s whites to think that the county government is doing an excellent or good job.

“Overall, how would you rate the performance of county government in solving problems?”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Excellent / Good | 24% | 23% | 21% | 26% | 26% |
| Fair | 49 | 53 | 48 | 47 | 48 |
| Poor | 22 | 19 | 28 | 22 | 21 |
| Don't know | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 |

Los Angeles County residents are less critical of their city governments’ ability to solve problems. Overall, 39 percent of county residents say their city governments are doing an excellent or good job. However, residents of the city of Los Angeles are much more critical than others toward their city government: Only 25 percent think their city government is doing an excellent or good job. In contrast, 47 percent of residents in other cities think their cities are doing an excellent or good job. Opinions do not vary by race/ethnicity or demographic groups.

“Overall, how would you rate the performance of your city government in solving problems?”

| | All Adults | L.A. City | County Area | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Excellent / Good | 39% | 25% | 45% | 33% | 41% | 37% |
| Fair | 38 | 44 | 38 | 38 | 35 | 41 |
| Poor | 16 | 24 | 12 | 21 | 15 | 17 |
| Don't know / N.A. | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 5 |

Local Public Service Ratings

How do Los Angeles County residents feel about the public services provided by local governments? Today, six in 10 residents rate their police and parks and beaches as excellent or good, while about four in 10 give similarly positive ratings to their public schools and streets and roads. Compared to five years ago, fewer residents give excellent or good ratings for parks and police. There are also racial/ethnic differences in these ratings. Blacks give the lowest ratings to parks, public schools, and police protection.

| Percent rating local service as excellent or good | 1998* | 2003 |
|---|-------|------|
| Police protection | 68% | 62% |
| Parks, beaches, and recreation | 69 | 62 |
| Streets and roads | 49 | 46 |
| Public schools | 40 | 41 |

* Results for LA County residents from the May 2001 PPIC Statewide Survey

As a further indication of community issues with the police, 53 percent of residents believe that the practice of racial profiling is widespread in their part of the county. A higher percentage of blacks (79%) and Latinos (64%) than Asians (49%) and whites (39%) say racial profiling is widespread. Central/Southeast area residents (62%) are more likely than residents in other localities to believe that racial profiling is widespread in their area. Forty-three percent of county residents say they have personal knowledge of racial profiling, although most commonly among other people they know rather than through direct experience. Three in four blacks (74%) say they or someone they know has been a victim of racial profiling, compared to less than half of the residents in other racial/ethnic groups.

“Do you believe the practice of racial profiling is widespread or not widespread in your part of Los Angeles County?”

| | All Adults | Race/Ethnicity | | | |
|----------------|------------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Asian | Black | Latino | White |
| Widespread | 53% | 49% | 79% | 64% | 39% |
| Not widespread | 39 | 45 | 17 | 29 | 51 |
| Don't know | 8 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 10 |

How does the state's fiscal situation affect concerns about local services: 92 percent of county residents say they are very concerned (71%) or somewhat concerned (21%) that the state budget deficit will cause severe cuts in areas such as city and county

government and local schools. This concern is shared across the county’s major areas and racial/ethnic groups.

County residents appear willing to raise certain new taxes to fund some local services in light of the state’s fiscal problems. For example, 64 percent of county residents favor new taxes on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes in order to fund county-level public health and medical emergency services. Half of county residents would support a broad-based measure that would raise the local sales tax to fund city-level police, parks, libraries, and other public services.

Responsiveness of Local Governments

Many county residents believe that their voices are not being heard in local policymaking. About half believe county government officials pay either very little (37%) or no attention (10%). Blacks are less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to believe that county government officials pay a lot or some attention to what the people want.

“When county government officials decide what policies to adopt, how much attention do you think they pay to what the people think?”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| A lot | 8% | 7% | 8% | 8% | 8% |
| Some | 44 | 45 | 40 | 51 | 40 |
| Very little | 37 | 37 | 39 | 34 | 39 |
| No attention | 10 | 9 | 12 | 6 | 10 |
| Don’t know | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |

County residents tend to rate their city governments as more responsive: Sixty-one percent say that when deciding on policies, city officials pay some attention or a lot of attention to what people think, while 35 percent believe they pay very little or no attention. In the city of Los Angeles, 52 percent say that city officials pay a lot or some attention; outside of Los Angeles, 65 percent think that their city officials pay a lot or some attention to what people think. San Fernando and Central/Southeast area residents are the most critical of their city officials, while residents in the North Valleys and the West are the most positive. Whites, homeowners, upper income, and highly educated residents are the most likely to see city government officials as responsive.

“When city government officials decide what policies to adopt, how much attention do you think they pay to what the people think?”

| | All Adults | LA City | County Area | | | |
|---------------------|------------|---------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| A lot | 16% | 10% | 20% | 11% | 20% | 13% |
| Some | 45 | 42 | 48 | 46 | 46 | 40 |
| Very little | 29 | 34 | 23 | 31 | 26 | 35 |
| No attention | 6 | 10 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| Don't know | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 |

Local Residents’ Involvement in Policymaking

Many residents are not engaged when it comes to the issues affecting their localities. About half of the county’s residents claim to have a great deal (16%) or fair amount (35%) of interest in local politics. About four in 10 residents indicate they have been involved in local volunteer work (41%) or attended a meeting on local or school affairs (37%) in the past 12 months. Despite this modest level of local involvement, many express interest in a system that would potentially allow residents a more active role in local policy.

We asked county residents about their opinions of the system of neighborhood councils that is currently being set up in the city of Los Angeles to strengthen the voice of community residents in the policymaking process. Although only 31 percent of residents in the city of Los Angeles and 23 percent of respondents living elsewhere in the county had previously heard of the councils, the response to the idea behind the councils is overwhelmingly positive: 90 percent think that neighborhood councils are a good idea. About nine in 10 residents in all geographic areas, racial/ethnic groups, and demographic and political categories favor the city of Los Angeles’ neighborhood council system. Ninety percent of those residents familiar with neighborhood councils consider them a good idea.

“A system of neighborhood councils is being established in the city of Los Angeles that is designed to strengthen the voice of community residents in city policymaking. In general, do you think that neighborhood councils are a good idea or a bad idea?”

| | All Adults | LA City | County Area | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Good idea | 90% | 89% | 89% | 88% | 89% | 92% |
| Bad idea | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| Don't know / Other | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 |

Consistent with their enthusiasm for neighborhood councils, 78 percent of Los Angeles County residents say they prefer to have local voters make most of the important decisions at the ballot box, and only 18 percent support leaving the decisions up to their local elected officials. Three in four residents across geographic areas, racial/ethnic groups, political groups, and demographic categories would prefer to have local voters decide the big issues in Los Angeles County.

“Which of the following is closest to your views about how big issues in LA County should be decided ...”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Local elected officials should make most of the decisions | 18% | 20% | 19% | 17% | 18% |
| Local voters should make most of the decisions at the ballot box | 78 | 78 | 76 | 79 | 78 |
| Don't know / Other | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 |

Reforming Local Government

On the heels of the ballot-box defeat last fall for those who would like to see the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood separated from the city of Los Angeles and become new cities, the focus has shifted to other proposals to reform city government and local service delivery.

One proposed reform is the adoption of a “borough” system for the city of Los Angeles. This system would transfer some of the authority from the mayor and city council to elected officials in smaller districts called boroughs. In the city of Los Angeles, 68 percent of residents favor this idea. In the rest of the county, 63 percent of residents think it would be a good idea. Converting the city of Los Angeles into a system of boroughs gets strong support (72%) in the San Fernando area.

“Some people have proposed a new political system for the city of Los Angeles that would transfer some authority from the mayor and city council to elected officials in smaller districts that would be called ‘boroughs.’ In general, is this a ...”

| | All Adults | LA City | County Area | | | |
|--------------------|------------|---------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Good idea | 65% | 68% | 55% | 72% | 61% | 69% |
| Bad idea | 20 | 18 | 28 | 15 | 23 | 17 |
| Don't know / Other | 15 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 16 | 14 |

Another proposed reform is to divide the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) into smaller, independent school districts. Overall, 55 percent of county

residents favor this proposal. Support for splitting up the LAUSD is highest in the San Fernando area (63%), while opposition is strongest among the lower-income, less-educated, and non-white residents of the county.

“Some people say that the Los Angeles Unified School District should be divided into smaller, independent school districts. Do you favor or oppose splitting up the Los Angeles Unified School District?”

| | All Adults | LA City | County Area | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Favor | 55% | 50% | 60% | 63% | 54% | 47% |
| Oppose | 30 | 34 | 22 | 28 | 32 | 36 |
| Don't know / Other | 15 | 16 | 18 | 9 | 14 | 17 |

While a high percentage of county residents support increasing local authority, they also believe that a regional framework is very important for governing Los Angeles County. Asked whether local governments in the county should work together and have a common regional plan or work independently and each have its own plan, nearly eight in 10 county residents (78%) say that local governments should work together. Preference for regional planning is high in all areas.

Overall Outlook

Finally, it is important to note that only one in four county residents rate current economic conditions as good, and people are divided in their overall outlook: Forty percent say that Los Angeles County is headed in the right direction, and 43 percent believe that it is headed in the wrong direction. As for the future, residents again express mixed feelings: 32 percent think the county will be a better place to live, 32 percent think it will be a worse place to live, and 31 percent think it will be about the same as now.

“Do you think that things in Los Angeles County are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”

| | All Adults | County Area | | | |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------------------|
| | | North Valleys | San Fernando | West | Central / Southeast |
| Right direction | 40% | 41% | 37% | 42% | 41% |
| Wrong direction | 43 | 40 | 49 | 42 | 42 |
| Don't know | 17 | 19 | 14 | 16 | 17 |

Conclusions

In closing, the first Los Angeles County survey in our series finds that a host of problems are besetting Los Angeles County residents today, including crime, traffic, access to health care, race relations, air pollution, and underperforming schools. With the public's ratings of local public services declining and state funding for local governments coming up short, Los Angeles residents are expressing a lack of confidence in local governments. The public is clear about what they want: Building on a government system that already provides for much local representation, residents want even more of a voice at the local level, hoping this will provide a local government that is more responsive, efficient, and effective, and one that they can hold accountable for improving what they perceive to be deteriorating conditions. Thus, the public supports neighborhood councils, a borough system for the city of Los Angeles and splitting up the LAUSD into smaller, independent school districts. At the same time, Los Angeles County residents clearly recognize that a regional perspective is needed as well as more local powers.

This crisis of confidence thus provides a unique opportunity for leadership and reform. Los Angeles County could serve as a role model for local governance for the state and nation, lending support to the opinion of the one-third of the public who believe that Los Angeles County will be a better place to live in the future. Let's hope they are right, and let's see what we can do to make their predictions come true. Thank you.

Appendix:

I. Survey Methodology

II. Map of LA County

Survey Methodology

The Los Angeles County 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 Jon Cohen, survey research manager, and Dorie Apollonio and Eliana Kaimowitz, survey research associates. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California, with partial funding from the California Community Foundation. The survey methods, questions, and content of the report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare. However, the survey benefited from consultation with staff at the University of Southern California, the California Community Foundation, and other Los Angeles County institutions.

The findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,000 Los Angeles County adult residents interviewed between March 6 and March 18, 2003. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in Los Angeles County 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 by using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 19 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish. We did not include Asian language interviews because the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that fewer than 1 percent of Los Angeles County adults speak any given Asian language and describe themselves as not speaking English at least “well.” Casa Hispana translated the survey into Spanish; and Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. conducted the telephone interviewing.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of Los Angeles County’s adult population and, accordingly, statistically weighted the survey sample.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,000 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 Los Angeles County were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. On occasion, and where noted, we asked questions of half samples (approximately 1,000 respondents). In addition, certain questions were split into FORM 1 and FORM 2 questionnaires, and all respondents were asked either FORM 1 or FORM 2 questions. For both the half samples and the FORM-splits, the sampling error is +/- 3 percentage points. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

We present the results for non-Hispanic whites (referred to in the tables and text as “whites” for the sake of brevity), blacks/African Americans (“blacks”), Latinos, and Asians. We also contrast the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents. The “independents” category includes only those who are registered to vote as “decline to state.”

In some cases, we compare the PPIC Survey of Los Angeles County responses to responses recorded in national surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and to Los Angeles County and City surveys conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*. We used earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys to analyze trends over time in Los Angeles County and to compare public opinion in Los Angeles County to opinions in the other major regions of California.

In this report, we present results by county area, dividing Los Angeles County into four geographic areas that include approximately equal numbers of residents. The four areas highlighted in the report and presented in the Los Angeles County map on page ii represent a consolidation of the county’s eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs). In November 1993, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved eight regional SPAs for the purposes of planning, service coordination, and information- and data-sharing by major county departments serving children and families. At that time, the county’s departments of Children and Family Services, Mental Health, Health Services, Public Social Services, and Probation were instructed to begin implementing these common boundaries for planning activities; and non-county entities were asked to adopt the same planning areas. Since then, the California Community Foundation, the United Way, and the California Wellness Foundation have also adopted the SPA boundaries to help organize and coordinate their planning. These areas, and how they relate to our county areas, are described below, including a partial list of the cities and communities included:

North Valleys – includes Acton, Alhambra, Altadena, Arcadia, Azusa, Baldwin Park, Claremont, Covina, Diamond Bar, Duarte, El Monte, Glendora, Gorman, Hacienda-Rowland Heights, La Puente, La Verne, Lake Hughes, Lake Los Angeles, Lancaster, Littlerock, Llano, Monrovia, Monterey Park, Mt. Wilson, Palmdale, Pasadena, Pearblossom, Pomona, Rosemead, San Dimas, San Gabriel, San Marino, Santa Clarita, Sierra Madre, South Pasadena, Temple City, Valyermo, Walnut, and West Covina, as well as other cities and communities.

San Fernando – includes Burbank, Calabasas, Canoga Park, Encino, Chatsworth, Glendale, La Canada, La Crescenta, Mid-San Fernando Valley, North Hills, North Hollywood, Northridge, Northwest San Fernando Valley, Pacoima, Reseda, San Fernando, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Sunland, Sylmar, Tarzana, Thousand Oaks, Tujunga, Van Nuys, Westlake Village, Winnetka, and Woodland Hills, as well as other cities and communities.

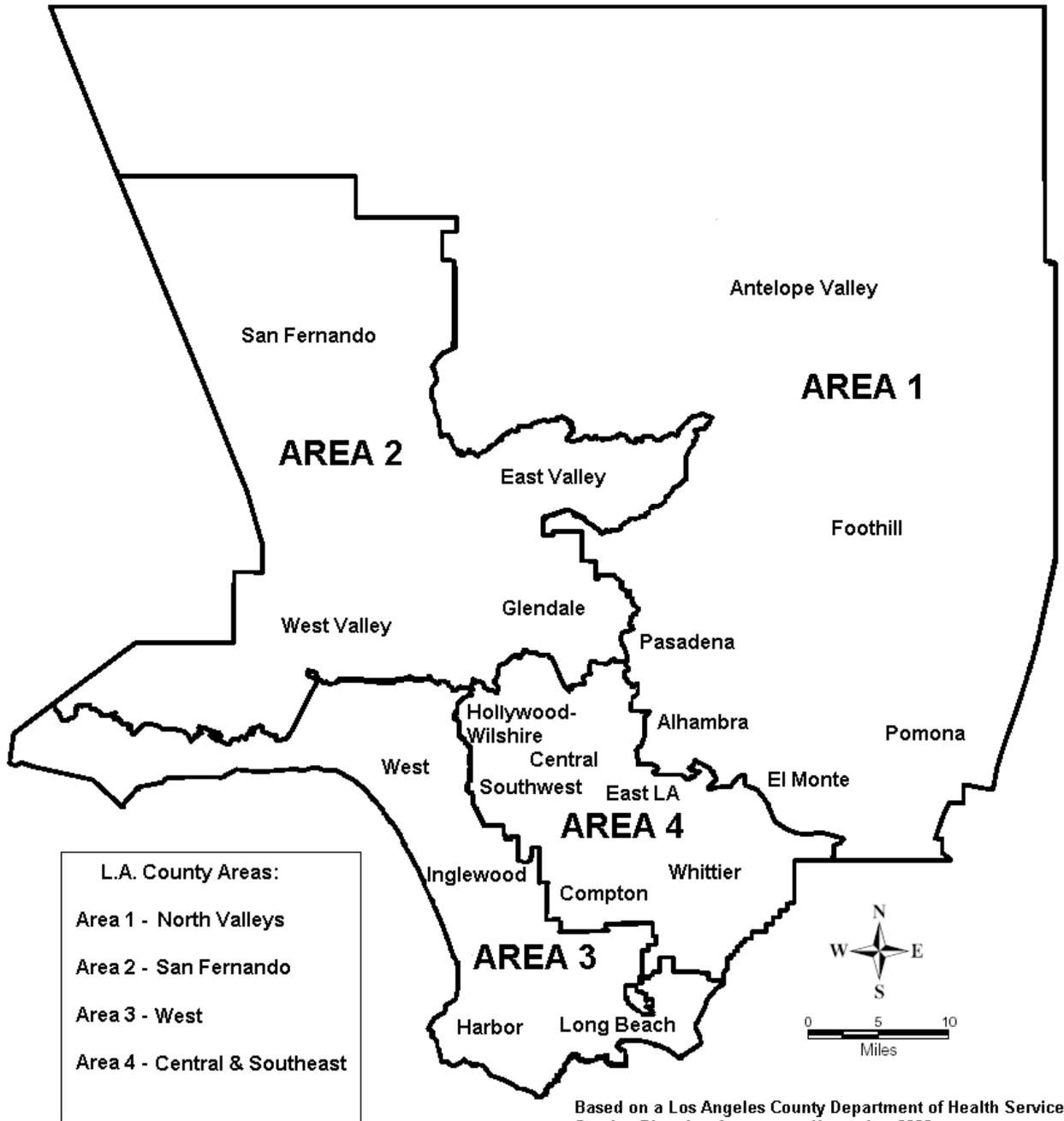
West – includes beach cities, Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, Carson, Culver City, El Segundo, Gardena, Harbor City, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Long Beach, Malibu, Pacific Palisades, Palos Verdes, Playa del Rey, San Pedro, Santa Monica, Topanga

Canyon, Torrance, Venice/Mar Vista, West Los Angeles, Westchester, and Wilmington, as well as other cities and communities.

Central/Southeast – includes Artesia, Bell/Bell Garden/Cudahy, Bellflower, Boyle Heights, Central Los Angeles, Cerritos, Commerce, Compton, Crenshaw, Downey, East Los Angeles, Hawaiian Gardens, Hollywood, Huntington Park, La Habra, La Mirada, Lakewood, Lynwood, Maywood, Montebello, Northeast, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South Central, South Gate, University, West Compton, West Hollywood, West Wilshire, Whittier, and Wilshire, as well as other cities and communities.

North Valleys includes SPA 1 and SPA 3; San Fernando includes SPA 2; West includes SPA 5 and SPA 8; and Central/ Southeast includes SPA 4, SPA 6, and SPA 7. For additional information on the Los Angeles County SPAs, see the following page on the web site of United Way of Greater Los Angeles:
http://www.unitedwayla.org/pages/rpts_resource/state_spas.html.

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