



**PPIC
STATEWIDE
SURVEY**

APRIL 2004

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

.....

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**Public
Policy
Institute of
California**

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

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

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

David W. Lyon is founding President and Chief Executive Officer of PPIC. Raymond L. Watson is Chairman of the Board of Directors.



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Preface

The Central Valley Survey – an ongoing collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center – is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey.

This is the fifth PPIC survey of the Central Valley. The first was conducted in October 1999 (published in a survey report in November 1999); the second was conducted in February 2001 (published in a survey report in March 2001); and the third and fourth were conducted and published in survey reports in April 2002 and April 2003. The purpose of this survey series is to provide comprehensive, advocacy-free information on the opinions and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents. The Central Valley has been of considerable interest to researchers and state and national leaders for some time because of its increasingly significant role in the social, economic, and political life of California.

The Central Valley – the inland area of California stretching 400 miles from Bakersfield to Redding – is home to 5.7 million residents and has been one of the fastest growing areas of the state. By the year 2025, the Central Valley is expected to see its population increase to 9.3 million people. Because the region is the agricultural center of the state – and because agriculture is one of the state’s leading industries – the urbanization of farmland in the Central Valley is of great concern to state policymakers. The impact of growth on the water supply, air quality, surface transportation, education facilities, housing affordability, economic conditions, and the perceived quality of life is a major concern today throughout the region. Since the Central Valley is a large geographic region that is socially, politically, and economically diverse, the public’s experiences with population growth vary considerably across population subgroups and parts of the Central Valley, and so do residents’ awareness of regional problems and preferences for policy solutions.

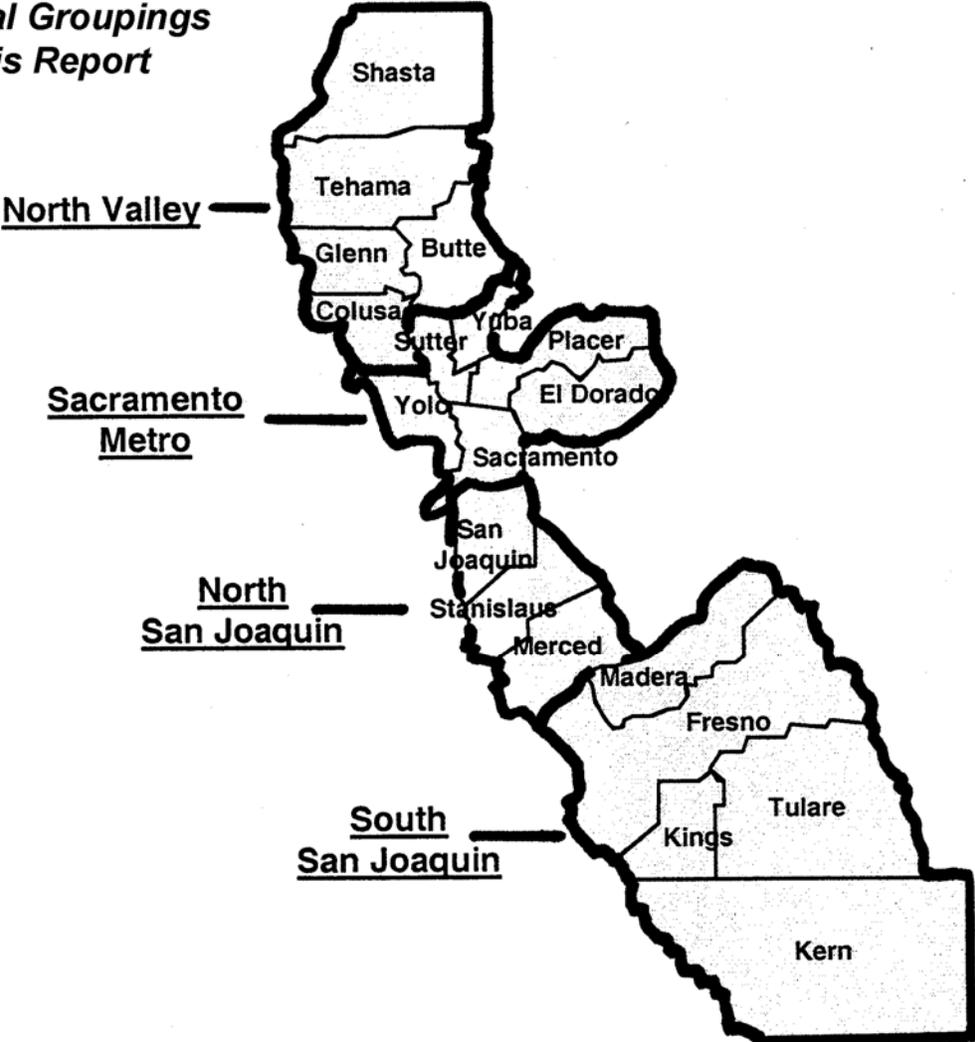
This survey of 2,005 adult residents includes some of the “tracking” questions from the 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003 surveys in order to measure changes in key political, social, and economic indicators. We are particularly interested in examining trends over time since the 1999 benchmark survey. The survey also includes questions from PPIC Statewide Surveys, providing comparisons with other major regions of California and the state as a whole. The following issues are explored in this edition of the survey:

- Local, regional, and Central Valley issues, including each resident’s satisfaction with his or her community and trends in the quality of life of that community, ratings of local public services, satisfaction with conditions and perceptions of problems in each resident’s area of the Central Valley, the most important problem facing the Central Valley, perceptions of the current direction of the Central Valley, and degree of optimism about the future of the Central Valley.
- Governance and policy preferences, including local government ratings, public education facilities, transportation projects, water supply and quality, air quality regulations, and planning for the future.
- Economic, social, and political trends, including ratings of the Central Valley economy, perceptions of economic recession occurring in each resident’s area of the Central Valley, perceptions of household finances, concerns about employment security, the frequency of use of computers and the Internet, religious beliefs and values, political interests and involvement, and political beliefs and values.
- Trends in attitudes over time and across four different subregions of the Central Valley (i.e., North Valley, Sacramento Metro, North San Joaquin, and South San Joaquin); between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites; and across demographic and political groups.

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

The Central Valley

*Subregional Groupings
Used in This Report*



Contents

Preface	i
Press Release	v
Local, Regional, and Central Valley Issues	1
Governance and Policy Preferences	7
Economic, Social, and Political Trends	13
Survey Methodology	19
Survey Questions and Results	21
Survey Advisory Committee	27

Press Release

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

SPECIAL SURVEY OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!

Despite Grim View of Regional Problems, Central Valley Residents Like Where They Live

SAN FRANCISCO, California, April 29, 2004 — Amid booming population growth – and the severe problems it can bring – Central Valley residents genuinely like their local communities and are optimistic about the area's future, according to a survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), in collaboration with the Great Valley Center. This upbeat attitude creates quite a paradox, considering that many residents also voice serious and growing concern about vital regional issues such as air pollution, school quality, affordable housing, lack of job opportunities, and traffic congestion.

A full three-fourths (75%) of Valley residents say their local community or city is a good or excellent place to live. “The enthusiasm residents have for their communities is striking because so many (71%) perceive that their local area has grown rapidly over the past five years,” says PPIC Statewide Survey Director Mark Baldassare. “Bursts of growth and development tend to arouse negative feelings among people who live in an area, so it's quite remarkable that most Valley residents believe life has either improved or stayed the same, but not grown worse.” In fact, over half (53%) of residents believe that things in the Central Valley are headed in the right direction, while less than a third (32%) say things are moving in the wrong direction. Moreover, a plurality of residents (42%) believe the Central Valley will be a better place to live in the future, outnumbering those who believe it will be a worse place (27%).

When turning to the state's biggest trouble spot – the economy – Central Valley denizens may have a gloomier outlook than in the past, but even on this issue, there appears to be some optimism in some parts of the region. Today, 38 percent of all residents rate the local economy as good or excellent, down from 55 percent in 1999. However, in the Sacramento Metro area, positive economic ratings have risen in the past year – from 39 percent to 45 percent. “That's particularly surprising for Sacramento, given the recent and expected state government layoffs,” says Baldassare. Similarly, residents in the South San Joaquin area also give the economy slightly higher marks today than they did a year ago (33% to 37%).

The Devil's in the Details – Bright Outlook Dims on Closer Inspection

Underlying the overall optimism, however, are distinctly negative feelings toward many of the region's public services and facilities – and a belief that local problems are growing worse. Since 1999, concern over traffic congestion has nearly doubled from 23 percent to 44 percent. Air pollution – viewed as the Valley's most important issue – is now considered a big problem by 45 percent of the population, up from 28 percent in 1999. Furthermore, residents express increasing dissatisfaction with the lack of affordable housing: Positive ratings have fallen from 37 percent to 19 percent since 1999.

There has also been a decline in confidence – sometimes dramatic – in the region's public services and infrastructure: The percentage of residents who give high ratings to their local streets and roads has dropped 14 points, from 58 percent to 44 percent, in the past five years. Positive school ratings have declined from 59 percent to 54 percent since 1999.

Happy? Depends on Who... and Where

Adding to the mixed picture, distinct differences emerge along racial and ethnic lines. For example, Latinos (59%) are much less likely than whites (83%) to rate their community as good or excellent. The disparities extend to many public services as well. Whites (72%) give much higher ratings to local police protection and parks and recreational facilities than Latinos do (58% police protection, 56% parks). Furthermore, only one-quarter (25%) of Latinos say they are very satisfied with the availability of colleges and universities in the region, compared to over one-third (37%) of all residents. “The divide between Latinos and whites on these issues likely comes from persisting social and economic differences,” says Baldassare. “Satisfaction with higher education and recreational facilities tends to increase among residents who own their own homes, and have higher incomes and more education.”

One of the greatest and perhaps most troubling differences is the growing disparity in computer and Internet use between whites and Latinos. In 1999, the gap between frequent Latino and white Internet users was 19 points (21% Latinos, 40% whites); today it has climbed to 34 points (25% Latinos, 59% whites). Frequent Internet use among all Valley residents has risen from 37 percent to 50 percent since 1999. In another comparison, the rate of computer ownership among Latinos remains virtually the same as it was five years ago (34%), while the number of all Central Valley homes that have a computer has risen from 55 percent to 62 percent since 1999.

The Central Valley’s regions also diverge sharply from each other on a number of issues. On the whole, there is greater community satisfaction in the north than in the south: North Valley (84%) and Sacramento Metro (81%), compared to North San Joaquin (71%) and South San Joaquin (70%). However, optimism about the future of the region is greater in the far south than the far north: Only 33 percent of North Valley residents say the Valley will be a better place to live in the future, compared to 47 percent of South San Joaquin residents. But what about specific quality of life issues? Northern residents are far less likely to say air pollution is a big problem (17% North Valley to 62% South San Joaquin), and many more residents of Sacramento Metro (63%) are troubled by traffic congestion than are residents of the less urban North Valley (29%), North San Joaquin (49%), and South San Joaquin (27%).

Religion and Politics?

Central Valley residents are more likely than Californians as a whole to say religion is a very important part of their lives (53% to 45%). But within the region, differences surface along ethnic and political lines. For example, 56 percent of Latinos say they attended a religious service in the past week, compared to just 38 percent of whites. Furthermore, 62 percent of Latinos say that religion is personally very important to them, while fewer than half of whites (48%) say the same. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to attend religious services (50% to 39%), and to say that religion plays an important role in their lives (60% to 49%). Nearly half of the Valley’s Republican Christians (47%) consider themselves to be “born-again” or evangelical Christians.

As has been the case over time, Central Valley residents continue to lean toward the conservative side of the political spectrum – but with a few twists. A plurality (42%) consider themselves to be conservative, while 29 percent each say they are either liberal or moderate. On fundamental issues such as big versus small government, the numbers track ideological bents: Forty-three percent favor smaller government with fewer services, while 48 percent favor larger government with more services – as many moderates agree with liberals on this issue. While Latinos tend to favor bigger government, they may not be weighing in as much: Only 46 percent say they have a great or fair amount of interest in politics, compared to 75 percent of whites.

More Key Findings

- **Schools Rule** (page 8)

Out of a list of infrastructure projects, residents pick schools (49%) as the top priority, far more than the next most popular choice – surface transportation (18%). Moreover, 51 percent of likely voters say they would support an increase in their property taxes to provide more funds for local schools.

- ***Agriculture Prevails*** (page 10)

More residents (38%) think the top priority of future water policy should be farms and agriculture, as opposed to homes and residents (30%).

- ***Get Me Out of Traffic!*** (page 9)

A majority (64%) of the relatively conservative Central Valley population would be willing to increase their local sales tax to pay for transportation projects. Generally, streets and roads (25%) and freeways and highways (23%) take priority over light rail (15%) or bus systems (12%).

- ***The Air They Breathe*** (page 11)

Sixty-eight percent of residents would support tougher federal standards on air pollution... but the number falls to 44 percent if those regulations would hurt local economies.

About the Survey

The Central Valley Survey – an ongoing collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center – is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. The purpose of this survey is to provide a comprehensive, advocacy-free study of the political, social, and economic attitudes and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents. Previous PPIC surveys of the Central Valley were conducted in 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003. Findings of the current survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,005 adult residents in the 19-county Central Valley region, interviewed between April 12 and April 20, 2004. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. For more information on methodology, see page 19.

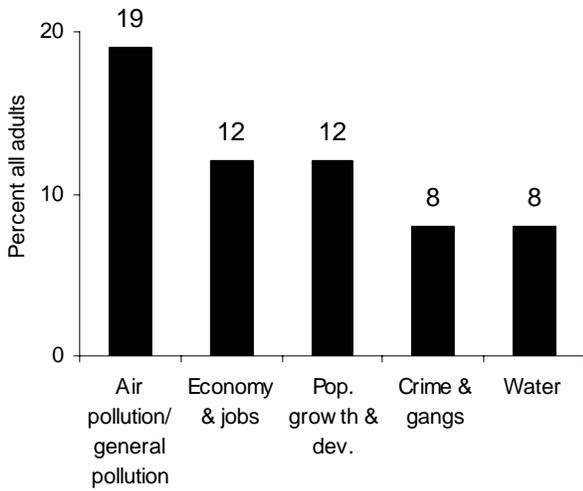
Mark Baldassare is research director at PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998. His most recent book, *A California State of Mind: The Conflicted Voter in a Changing World*, is available at www.ppic.org.

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

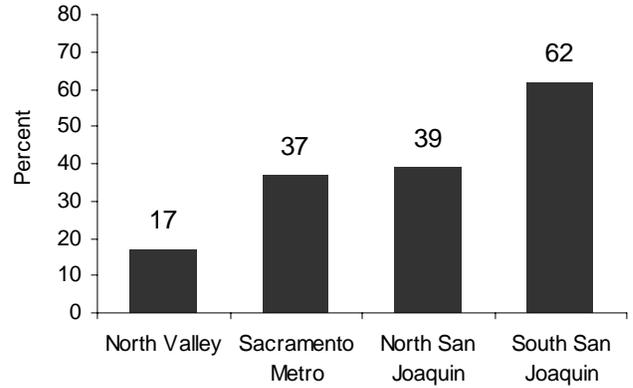
This report will appear on PPIC's website (www.ppic.org) on April 29.

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What is the most important issue facing the Central Valley today?

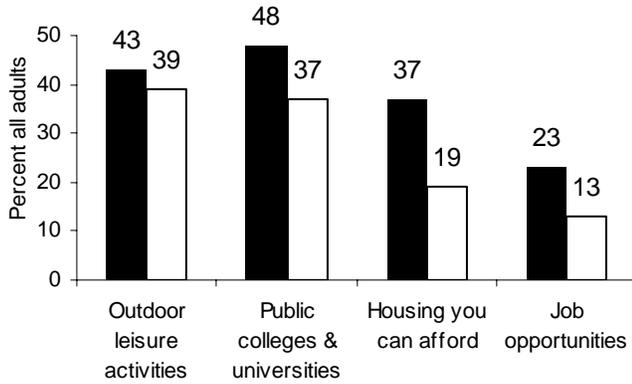


Percent saying air pollution is a "big problem" in their part of the Central Valley



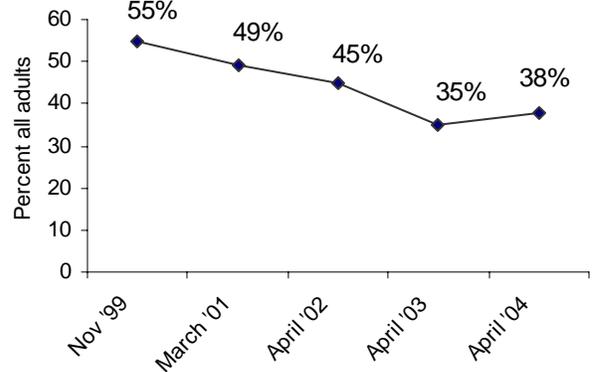
Percent who are "very satisfied" with _____ in their part of the Central Valley

■ 1999 □ 2004

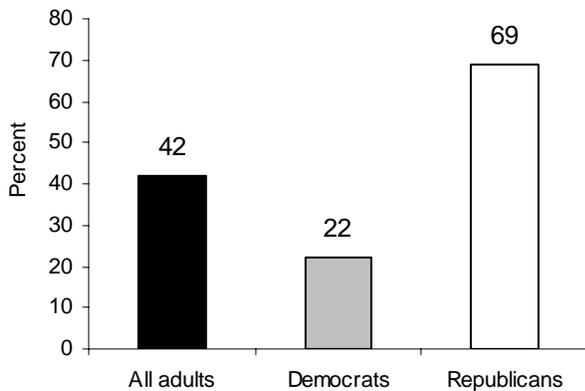


How would you rate the economy in the Central Valley?

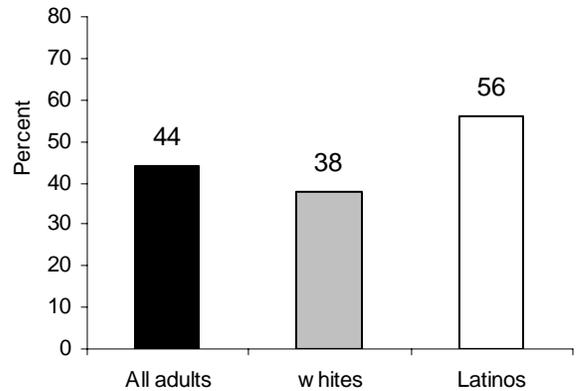
◆ % excellent/good



Percent of residents who describe themselves as politically conservative



Percent saying they have attended religious services in the last seven days



Local, Regional, and Central Valley Issues

Local Community Ratings

Most Central Valley residents believe that life is good in their local communities. Three in four rate their city or community as an excellent or good place to live—a high degree of satisfaction that has persisted virtually unchanged across our five annual Central Valley surveys. However, there are differences across subregions and population groups. Satisfaction with the local community is somewhat higher in northern than in southern regions of the Central Valley and among whites (83%) than among Latinos (59%). Community satisfaction increases with age, education, income, and homeownership.

Population growth has apparently not had much adverse effect on residents' perceptions of local life. Seventy-one percent say their local communities have been growing rapidly in the past five years; this perception is most common among North San Joaquin (75%) and Sacramento Metro (74%) residents. Even with this growth, one in three residents say that their local communities have become better places to live in the past five years, and nearly half say that their communities have stayed about the same. Twenty-one percent of residents who have lived in the Central Valley for twenty years or more think that the region has become a worse place to live over the past five years, compared to 12 percent of those who have arrived in the region during the past five years.

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

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent / Good	75%	84%	81%	71%	70%	59%
Fair	19	12	15	24	22	33
Poor	5	4	3	4	8	8
Don't know	1	0	1	1	0	0

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Better	31%	24%	32%	34%	31%	32%
Worse	17	15	19	19	16	17
Same	48	56	46	42	50	48
Don't know	4	5	3	5	3	3

Local Public Service Ratings

Residents' satisfaction with local public services might be expected to change in light of perceived rapid population growth and several years of tight state and local government budgets. However, evidence from the Central Valley is mixed. Over the course of the five annual surveys, two in three residents have continued to rate local police and local parks and recreation as excellent or good. Local public schools and local streets and roads have not fared as well: Excellent or good ratings of local public schools have declined by 5 points since 1999 (59% to 54%). Ratings of local streets and roads have dropped by 14 points since 1999 (58% to 44%) and 8 points since 2002 (52% to 44%).

The public's positive ratings of local police protection are fairly even across the Central Valley. However, the ratings of local parks and public recreation decline as one moves from north to south. Local public schools get the lowest positive ratings from North San Joaquin residents. Fewer than half across all subregions rate their local streets and roads as excellent or good.

The declines in local public service ratings have also varied across subregions. For the local public schools, the largest declines in positive ratings since 1999 are among North San Joaquin (58% to 46%) and South San Joaquin (63% to 57%) residents. For local streets and roads, positive ratings have decreased since 2002 from 59 percent to 44 percent in the North Valley, from 56 percent to 48 percent in Sacramento Metro, from 49 percent to 45 percent in North San Joaquin, and from 50 percent to 41 percent in South San Joaquin.

There are also noteworthy differences in local public service ratings across social and economic groups. For instance, whites are more likely than Latinos to give positive ratings to local police protection (72% to 58%) and local parks and public recreation (72% to 56%). Also, the longer residents have lived in the Central Valley, the lower the "excellent/good" rating of local streets and roads is likely to be (fewer than 5 years, 54%; 5 to 19 years, 49%; 20 or more years, 39%). Ratings of local public schools are similar across age, education, income, and racial/ethnic groups and among households with (56%) or without (52%) children at home.

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

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

<i>Percentage rating service excellent or good in their part of the Central Valley</i>	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Local police protection	67%	66%	68%	67%	66%	58%
Local parks and other public recreational facilities	67	74	73	64	60	56
Local public schools	54	63	52	46	57	54
Local streets and roads	44	44	48	45	41	44

Regional Problems

As in the previous four surveys, we asked Central Valley residents about how big a problem four conditions were in their parts of the region. More than four in 10 residents see air pollution and traffic congestion on freeways and major roads as big problems in their regions. Thirty-eight percent of residents identify the loss of farms and agriculture and 32 percent mentioned population growth and development as big problems in their parts of the Central Valley.

The perception of these conditions as big problems has increased steadily over the past five years. Since the 1999 survey, concern has increased by 21 points for traffic congestion (23% to 44%), by 17 points for air pollution (28% to 45%), by 15 points for farm and agricultural land loss (23% to 38%), and by 11 points for population growth and development (21% to 32%). However, for the latter two problems, responses have changed very little over the past few years.

Ratings differ across the valley's subregions. Residents' ratings of air pollution as a big problem increase sharply moving from north to south in the valley. Sacramento Metro residents are much more likely than residents elsewhere in the valley to say that traffic congestion is a big problem. Public concern about population growth and development and the loss of farms and agricultural lands are much more pronounced in the central subregions (i.e., Sacramento Metro, North San Joaquin) than at the northern and southern ends of the valley.

Which subregions have seen the largest shifts in perceptions of problems since 1999? The proportion of residents rating air pollution as a big problem has grown by 34 percentage points in the South San Joaquin area (28% to 62%), while the proportion rating traffic congestion as a big problem has increased by 28 points in the North San Joaquin region (21% to 49%) and by 20 points in the Sacramento Metro area (43% to 63%). Perceptions of farmland loss and population growth and development increased in all subregions.

The public's perception of these four regional issues as big problems tends to increase with age, education, income, and years living in the Central Valley and is higher among whites than Latinos.

<i>Percentage seeing _____ as a big problem in their part of the Central Valley</i>	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004
Air pollution	28%	26%	35%	41%	45%
Traffic congestion on freeways and major roads	23	29	33	41	44
Loss of farms and agricultural lands	23	34	38	40	38
Population growth and development	21	26	29	31	32

<i>Percentage seeing _____ as a big problem</i>	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Air pollution	45%	17%	37%	39%	62%	43%
Traffic congestion on freeways and major roads	44	29	63	49	27	35
Loss of farms and agricultural lands	38	27	40	45	36	29
Population growth and development	32	26	41	35	22	20

Regional Satisfaction

Turning from problems to amenities, we asked Central Valley residents how satisfied they are with the availability of outdoor leisure activities, public colleges and universities, affordable housing, and job opportunities in their region of the valley. All in all, they are less satisfied than they were in the 1999 survey. Today, fewer than four in 10 residents say they are very satisfied with the availability of leisure activities and higher education, and fewer than two in 10 residents are very satisfied with housing and employment options. Satisfaction with affordable housing experienced the most dramatic drop—an 18-point decline in residents who say they are very satisfied (37% to 19%). There has been an 11-point decline in those who are very satisfied with the availability of public colleges and universities (48% to 37%), a 10-point drop in the percentage of those very satisfied with available job opportunities (23% to 13%), but only a 4-point decline in the percentage of residents who are very satisfied with outdoor recreation (43% to 39%). Since 1999, the percentages of residents who are not satisfied with housing (18% to 41%), jobs (31% to 37%), and higher education (10% to 15%) have grown. Dissatisfaction with outdoor leisure activities is unchanged (16%).

Across the valley, North Valley residents give the highest ratings to their outdoor leisure activities and South San Joaquin residents are the most satisfied with affordable housing. The percentage of residents who are very satisfied with outdoor leisure activities is lowest among North San Joaquin residents.

As for the significant subregional changes since the 1999 survey, North San Joaquin has seen a decline in the percentages of residents who are very satisfied with outdoor leisure (37% to 24%), public colleges and universities (48% to 34%), and affordable housing (36% to 15%). In the Sacramento Metro area, there has been a sharp drop in the proportions who are very satisfied with the availability of higher education (53% to 40%), affordable housing (31% to 13%) and employment opportunities (36% to 15%).

There are also significant differences in levels of satisfaction across demographic groups. Latinos are less likely than whites to say they are very satisfied with the availability of outdoor leisure activities (24% to 47%) and public colleges and universities (25% to 43%). Satisfaction with these two domains tends to increase with age, education, income, and homeownership. There are few differences across racial/ethnic or demographic groups in satisfaction with affordable housing and job opportunities.

<i>Percentage saying they are <u>very</u> satisfied with the _____ in their part of the Central Valley</i>	1999	2004
Availability of outdoor leisure activities	43%	39%
Availability of public colleges and universities	48	37
Availability of affordable housing	37	19
Job opportunities	23	13

<i>Percentage saying they are <u>very</u> satisfied with the _____ in their part of the Central Valley</i>	All Adults	<u>Subregion</u>				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Availability of outdoor leisure activities	39%	64%	48%	24%	33%	24%
Availability of public colleges and universities	37	40	40	34	33	25
Availability of affordable housing	19	18	13	15	28	19
Job opportunities	13	11	15	9	15	14

Most Important Issue

Nineteen percent of Central Valley residents identify air pollution or pollution in general as the most important issue confronting the Central Valley as a whole. The next most frequently mentioned issues on the public’s list of top concerns are jobs and the economy (12%), population growth and development (12%), water availability and quality (8%), crime and gangs (8%), and traffic (6%).

The percentages of valley residents identifying air pollution or pollution in general as the top issue have increased dramatically over this survey series: Ten percent of residents mentioned air pollution and other types of pollution as the top issue facing the region in the 1999 survey, 9 percent in the 2001 survey, 14 percent in the 2002 survey, 16 percent in the 2003 survey, and 19 percent in the current survey.

Perceptions of the most important issues in the Central Valley vary greatly across the four subregions. For example, South San Joaquin residents are much more likely to name air pollution and other types of pollution as the most important issue. In contrast, North Valley residents are very focused on water issues, while residents of other subregions do not tend to see water availability and quality as the top issue. Population growth and development is the most frequently cited issue among Sacramento Metro and North San Joaquin residents, while this issue is noted by far fewer residents at the northern and southern ends of the valley. Traffic congestion registers a substantial level of concern in the Sacramento Metro area, while few elsewhere mention it as the most important issue. There is relative consensus on only one issue across regions—the issue of jobs and the economy.

Where are the largest changes in perceptions occurring over time? The most notable trend is in mentions of air pollution and pollution in general in South San Joaquin: Nine percent in 1999; 13 percent in 2001, 19 percent in 2002, 28 percent in 2003, and 32 percent in the current survey.

Air pollution and pollution are at or near the top of the list of important issues across racial/ethnic groups and age, education, and income categories. Latinos are nearly three times more likely than whites to indicate that crime and gangs are the most important issue facing the Central Valley (14% to 5%). Latinos are also far less likely to report that population growth and development is the most important issue facing the Central Valley today (5% to 15%).

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Air pollution, pollution in general	19%	5%	12%	14%	32%	17%
Jobs, unemployment, economy	12	15	10	12	13	15
Population growth; development; sprawl	12	10	18	15	5	5
Water availability and quality	8	26	8	5	6	2
Crime, gangs	8	5	7	8	9	14
Traffic, transportation	6	2	10	5	2	4
Education, schools	3	3	4	3	3	3
Housing costs, housing availability	3	4	4	6	1	1
Drugs	2	0	0	3	2	3
Other	12	11	11	13	11	9
Don't know	15	19	16	16	16	27

Overall Mood

Despite concern about problems confronting the Central Valley and their particular region within it, residents are relatively upbeat about current trends and the future. They are more likely to say that things in the valley are going in the right than in the wrong direction (53% to 32%). Although there has been a downtrend in “right direction” responses, “wrong direction” responses have been fairly steady over the past five surveys. In general, Central Valley residents are more positive about the direction of their region than Californians were about the direction of the state in the February 2004 PPIC Statewide Survey (35% right direction, 51% wrong direction).

The percentages saying the valley is going in the right direction vary across subregions, but the percentages saying the valley is going in the wrong direction are similar. Latinos are more likely than whites (58% to 50%) to see things going in the right direction. Perceptions that things are going right do not vary significantly across education and income groups. However, younger residents are more likely than older people to say that things are going in the right direction (under age 35, 58%; ages 35 to 54, 52%; age 55 and older, 48%). “Right direction” responses are also more common among recent than among longer-term Central Valley residents (fewer than 5 years, 60%; 5 to 20 years, 56%; 20 or more years, 49%)

More residents think that the Central Valley will be a better place than a worse place to live in the future (42% to 27%), and the gap is larger than it was in the 1999 survey (37% to 33%). Latinos are more optimistic than whites (50% to 39%); and across the subregions, South San Joaquin residents are the most optimistic.

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

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Right direction	53%	48%	50%	58%	54%	58%
Wrong direction	32	32	34	32	30	28
Don't know	15	20	16	10	16	14

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Better place	42%	33%	38%	44%	47%	50%
Worse place	27	33	33	30	19	16
No change	24	25	24	21	25	27
Don't know	7	9	5	5	9	7

Governance and Policy Preferences

Local Government Ratings

Four in 10 Central Valley residents say that their city government is doing an excellent or good job in solving problems in their local area. These ratings of city government remain virtually the same as they were five years ago and are also similar to the excellent or good ratings cities reported in more recent surveys. Sacramento Metro residents are somewhat more positive toward their city governments than are residents of other Central Valley subregions: In the Sacramento area, 45 percent of residents say that their city government is doing an excellent or good job in solving local problems, compared to a low of 36 percent who give their city governments similar ratings in the North San Joaquin Valley.

When residents are asked to rate the performance of their county government, 36 percent say their county government is doing an excellent or good job in solving county problems. The percentage of Central Valley residents rating their county government as excellent or good is down slightly from 1999 (41%). Overall, county governments receive somewhat lower positive ratings today than city governments and lower ratings than in previous surveys.

There are only marginal differences in residents' evaluations of their city and county governments across political party, age, household income, and length of residence.

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

<i>Overall, how would you rate the performance of your...</i>	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos	
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin		
<i>City government in solving problems in your local area</i>	Excellent / Good	40%	37%	45%	36%	39%	37%
	Fair	39	46	35	44	38	46
	Poor	14	14	13	12	17	12
	Don't know / don't live in city	7	3	7	8	6	5
<i>County government in solving problems in your county</i>	Excellent / Good	36%	34%	39%	32%	35%	35%
	Fair	42	41	40	47	42	45
	Poor	15	21	13	15	16	12
	Don't know	7	4	8	6	7	8

School Facilities

Presented with a list of various infrastructure projects, half of Central Valley residents (49%) highlight school facilities as the top priority for public funding. By comparison, just 18 percent choose surface transportation projects and 16 percent choose water systems as the top priority for public funding; fewer mention sewer systems (5%) and airports (2%). Residents’ priorities today are nearly the same as they were last year when we asked about priorities for 2025. As was also the case last year, prioritization of school facilities declines sharply with age, although it remains the top ranked infrastructure priority in all age groups.

“Which infrastructure projects do you think should have top priority for public funding in the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
School facilities	49%	53%	48%	49%	51%	50%
Surface transportation	18	12	24	17	13	12
Water systems	16	15	13	15	20	15
Sewer systems	5	8	3	7	4	6
Airports	2	0	1	1	3	3
Something else	3	3	4	4	2	2
Don't know	7	9	7	7	7	12

In line with their strong support for school facilities, 56 percent of residents, and 51 percent of the region’s likely voters, say they would vote yes if there were a measure on their local ballot to increase property taxes in order to provide more funds for local schools. However, likely voter support falls short of the 55 percent supermajority needed to pass local tax increases for schools. Although there is majority support for local school tax measures across the Central Valley, Democrats (63%) and independents (56%) are more likely than Republicans (43%) to support tax increases.

The University of California campus at Merced is currently one of the largest public higher education facility projects in the state of California. Central Valley residents appear to be enthusiastic about this project. Eight in 10 residents think the new campus is very (46%) or somewhat (35%) important to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley. Latinos (63%) and San Joaquin Valley residents are more likely than others to consider the construction of the new campus *very* important. Residents with and without children at home are nearly equally likely to view the new UC campus as very important.

“A new university campus is being built in the Central Valley. How important is the University of California at Merced to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very important	46%	37%	37%	53%	52%	63%
Somewhat important	35	38	39	32	33	26
Not important	14	14	19	12	12	7
Don't know	5	11	5	3	3	4

Transportation Projects

Asked to choose among surface transportation projects for the Central Valley, one in four residents thinks that local streets and roads should have the top priority for public spending. Nearly one in four give the top priority to freeways and highways, 15 percent to light rail systems, 12 percent to public buses, 12 percent to high-speed rail, and 6 percent to carpool lanes. Compared to last year’s survey, and in line with residents’ declining ratings of local streets and roads, residents today are somewhat more likely to identify local streets and roads (+ 6 percentage points) and freeways and highways (+ 5), and somewhat less likely to mention the public bus system (- 6), as the top priority for public funding.

There are significant differences in transportation priorities across the Central Valley. In the North Valley and South San Joaquin, three in 10 residents give top priority to local streets and roads, while local streets and roads are the top transportation project for only 18 percent of residents in the Sacramento Metro area. In Sacramento Metro, one in four say that the light rail system is the top priority, compared to only 7 percent of South San Joaquin residents. Twenty-two percent of Latinos and only 8 percent of whites in the Central Valley say public bus systems should be the top priority for public transportation funding.

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Local streets and roads	25%	35%	18%	23%	30%	27%
Freeways and highways	23	19	27	24	20	16
Light rail system	15	12	25	13	7	7
Public bus system	12	13	9	14	16	22
High-speed rail	12	10	12	11	13	9
Carpool lanes	6	4	4	7	6	8
Something else	2	4	1	1	1	1
Don't know	5	3	4	7	7	10

Public support for increasing the local transportation sales tax is near the two-thirds supermajority needed for passage: Sixty-four percent of residents, and 65 percent of likely voters, would vote yes if there were a county measure to increase their local sales tax by ½ cent for local transportation projects. A \$9.95 billion state bond measure to pay for the planning and construction of high-speed rail from Los Angeles to San Francisco through the Central Valley also receives majority support at this time: Fifty-five percent of residents, and 51 percent of likely voters, would vote yes if this measure were to appear on the state ballot.

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes	64%	66%	63%	70%	59%	65%
No	32	32	32	26	35	29
Don't know	4	2	5	4	6	6

Water Supply

Central Valley residents are evenly divided in their opinions about the adequacy of their water supply through the next 10 years: Forty-six percent think that the water supply in their part of the Central Valley will be adequate, while 44 percent think that it will be somewhat (25%) or very (19%) inadequate in meeting their needs. North Valley residents express the most confidence that the water supply in their part of the valley will be adequate (57%), while under half of all residents in other parts of the Central Valley say the supply will be sufficient. One in five Sacramento Metro and South San Joaquin residents say the water supply will be *very* inadequate. Latinos are somewhat more likely than whites to say that there will be enough water (53% to 44%). Length of residence in the Central Valley also influences perceptions of the future water supply: Fifty percent of residents who have lived in the Central Valley for 20 years or more think that the water supply will be inadequate, compared to only 35 percent of those who have lived in the Central Valley for fewer than five years.

“Do you think that the water supply available in your part of the Central Valley today will be adequate or inadequate to meet needs through the next 10 years?” (if yes: “Is that somewhat or very inadequate?”)

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Adequate	46%	57%	43%	45%	47%	53%
Somewhat inadequate	25	19	27	29	23	23
Very inadequate	19	12	21	17	20	10
Don't know	10	12	9	9	10	14

Many Central Valley residents are not that concerned about the quality of their water supply today: Forty-five percent say that water quality is not a problem in their part of the valley, 34 percent see it as somewhat of a problem, and only 19 percent consider it a big problem.

The public is divided when asked about the most important priority for water policy in planning for the Central Valley’s future. While about four in 10 residents say that farms and agriculture should be the top priority, more than half say that homes and residents (30%) and protecting the environment (21%) should be more important issues when it comes to water policy. This preference ordering is evident across all subregions. Latinos favor homes and residents over farms and agriculture (37% to 22%), while whites favor farms and agriculture over homes and residents (47% to 25%). Prioritizing the environment is more common among Democrats (21%) and independents (28%) than among Republicans (11%).

“Which of the following should be the most important priority for water policy in making plans for the future?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Farms and agriculture	38%	40%	39%	39%	37%	22%
Homes and residents	30	29	30	33	28	37
Protecting the environment	21	24	20	16	23	31
Other answer	5	5	5	5	4	2
Don't know	6	2	6	7	8	8

Air Quality Regulations

As noted in the previous chapter, air pollution tops the list of concerns of Central Valley residents. When asked which level of government should have primary responsibility for setting air quality standards in their part of the Central Valley, preferences are decidedly mixed: Twenty-nine percent of residents say the state government, 26 percent say the regional air resources board, 22 percent say local government, and 12 percent say the federal government. North Valley residents are more likely to favor giving the authority to local government (29%) or a regional board (30%), while Sacramento Metro residents lean toward the state government or a regional board (both 32%). In South San Joaquin—where residents are most likely to say that air pollution is a big problem—state government is favored over other levels of government when it comes to setting air quality standards. Whites are more likely than Latinos to say that state government (31% to 24%) and the regional air resources board (30% to 18%) should have primary responsibility for air quality standards. There are no significant differences across party or ideology.

“Which level of government do you think should have the primary responsibility for setting air quality standards in your part of the Central Valley? Should it be...”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
State government	29%	23%	32%	24%	30%	24%
Regional air resources board	26	30	32	25	20	18
Local government	22	29	18	25	22	23
Federal government	12	11	9	13	14	17
Other answer	2	2	2	2	3	0
Don't know	9	5	7	11	11	18

Two in three Central Valley residents would be willing to see the federal government set tougher standards on air pollution. Forty-four percent of residents would support these regulations even if the regulations hurt the economy in their part of the Central Valley, while 24 percent would support new regulations only if they did not harm the economy. One in four residents does not favor any increase in air pollution regulation. Public support for tougher air pollution standards is evident across subregions. With respect to race/ethnicity, 81 percent of Latinos would be willing to see tougher air pollution standards compared to 63 percent of whites; Latinos and whites (both 44%) are equally likely to support new regulations, even if the regulations hurt local economies. Most Democrats (54%) and independents (53%) favor tougher standards, even if they might prove detrimental to the economy, while a plurality of Republicans (43%) do not want any more federal regulations on air pollution.

**“Would you be willing to see the federal government set tougher standards on air pollution?”
(if yes: “Even if these regulations hurt the economy in your part of the Central Valley?”)**

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, even if regulations hurt economy	44%	47%	44%	41%	45%	44%
Yes, but not if regulations hurt economy	24	19	21	27	26	37
No	26	29	28	25	24	12
Don't know	6	5	7	7	5	7

Planning for Future Growth

Central Valley residents are more inclined to say that local authorities should handle growth and development policy in their part of the Central Valley. Fifty-nine percent say that either county or city government (37% and 22%, respectively) should bear most responsibility for growth and development policy (28 percent think the state government should be the most responsible policymaker, and 7 percent think it should be the federal government). Across each of the Central Valley’s subregions, most name local governments, with pluralities choosing county government as the most responsible party for growth policy. A somewhat higher percentage of Democrats than Republicans say state government should bear most responsibility in this policy area (31% to 25%), while a slightly higher percentage of Republicans than Democrats say county government should be most responsible (45% to 39%). Whites are more likely than Latinos to name county government as the responsible entity (42% to 27%). Residents who have lived at their current residence five years or more are more likely than those who have lived fewer years at their current residence to say that county government should be most responsible (40% to 33%).

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

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
County government	37%	42%	38%	33%	36%	27%
State government	28	24	30	24	29	28
City government	22	27	19	30	19	21
Federal government	7	4	5	6	9	11
Other answer	1	0	2	1	1	0
Don't know	5	3	6	6	6	13

While a majority of residents favor local control of growth policies, most also prefer regional cooperation among local governments. Seven in ten residents think city and county government should get together and agree on land use and growth policy, while only one in four residents say that each city and county government should decide land use and growth policy on its own. Majorities in all subregions think local governments should work together, although North Valley residents are the most likely to say that each city and county government should determine growth policies on its own (30%). Across political and demographic groups, most residents agree that local governments should work together.

“Which of the following statements is closer to your own view...”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
City and county government should get together and agree on land use and growth policy	69%	65%	70%	71%	68%	66%
Each city and county government should decide land use and growth policy on its own	25	30	25	24	25	23
Don't know	6	5	5	5	7	11

Economic, Social, and Political Trends

Economic Outlook

Residents' outlook on the Central Valley economy is somewhat gloomy: Only 38 percent rate the region's economic health as excellent or good. This is similar to the relatively pessimistic economic outlook we witnessed one year ago and is below residents' more positive ratings in 1999, 2001, and 2002. At the same time, ratings appear to be rebounding in the Sacramento Metro area—where 45 percent of residents now see the economy as excellent or good, up from 39 percent in 2003—and in South San Joaquin—where positive ratings have risen slightly from 33 percent in 2003 to 37 percent today. Economic assessments remain lower in the North Valley (29%) and North San Joaquin (30%). Latinos are considerably more negative in their economic outlook than whites (27% to 43%). Positive ratings of the Central Valley economy increase with age, education, income, and homeownership. Among residents with annual household incomes of \$80,000 or more, 53 percent give the economy positive ratings.

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

	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004
Excellent / Good	55%	49%	45%	35%	38%
Fair	35	37	41	49	44
Poor	9	13	12	15	15
Don't know	1	1	2	1	3

Nearly three in 10 residents (29%) believe that their part of the Central Valley is in a serious or moderate recession today. This is virtually the same as in 2003, when 30 percent said that their area of the Central Valley was in a serious or moderate recession. However, 54 percent today say that their local area is *not* in recession, up slightly from the 49 percent who offered this assessment in 2003. The outlook is brightest in the Sacramento Metro area, where 59 percent think that there is no recession, compared to 49 percent in the North Valley, 51 percent in North San Joaquin, and 51 percent in South San Joaquin. About half of Latinos (53%) see their area as being in at least a mild recession compared to 33 percent of whites. Positive views of the local economy increase with income, education, and homeownership.

“Thinking only about your part of the Central Valley, would you say that it is in an economic recession or not?” (if yes: “Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?”)

	All Adults	<u>Subregion</u>				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, serious recession	8%	9%	6%	8%	9%	9%
Yes, moderate recession	21	19	18	22	22	31
Yes, mild recession	10	12	10	9	10	13
No, not in recession	54	49	59	51	51	36
Don't know	7	11	7	10	8	11

Personal Finances

More than one in three Central Valley residents (37%) say they are better off financially today than they were a year ago, 14 percent say they are worse off, and nearly half (48%) say they are about the same. This is similar to April 2002, when 34 percent said they were better off than the previous year. Confidence is highest in South San Joaquin, where 42 percent feel they are better off today, compared to about one in three residents in the other subregions. Forty percent of Latinos and 36 percent of whites say they are financially better off today than they were a year ago.

“As far as your own situation, would you say that you and your family are financially better off, worse off, or just about the same as you were a year ago?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Better off	37%	33%	35%	34%	42%	40%
Worse off	14	14	15	15	13	12
About the same	48	53	49	50	44	47
Don't know	1	0	1	1	1	1

Many Central Valley residents continue to be concerned about employment loss in their immediate family: Twenty-eight percent say they are very or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family will lose their job in the next year. In 2002, 22 percent expressed similar concerns about layoffs. Today, Latinos (42%) are twice as likely as whites (21%) to worry about job loss. Residents making under \$40,000 (35%), those with high school or less education (33%), and non-citizens (58%) are more worried about unemployment than others. Fears about job loss are similar across all of the Central Valley’s subregions.

“Are you concerned that you or someone in your family will lose their job in the next year, or not?” (if yes: “Are you very concerned or somewhat concerned?)”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, very concerned	14%	16%	12%	15%	14%	21%
Yes, somewhat concerned	14	14	15	14	13	21
No, not concerned	70	68	71	68	71	55
Don't know	2	2	2	3	2	3

Nonetheless, about half of Central Valley residents (47%) believe that they will be in better financial shape a year from now than they are today. In 2002, 41 percent felt that they would be better off in the following year. Today, only 7 percent think they will be financially worse off next year, and 41 percent say they will be about the same. Residents in the North Valley (35%) are less inclined to think they will be better off next year than those in the Sacramento Metro area (47%), North San Joaquin (48%), and South San Joaquin (50%). Financial optimism is at its highest point among 18 to 34 year olds (59%), households with annual incomes of \$80,000 or more (58%), families with children at home (57%), Latinos (54%), and renters (54%).

Computers and the Internet

Computer use has risen in the past five years, with 56 percent of Central Valley residents today saying they frequently use a computer, up 7 points since 1999. Today, the 73 percent of Central Valley residents who at least occasionally use a computer is in line with the national average (75%: *Pew Research Center, March 2004*), and somewhat below the state average (78%: *PPIC Statewide Survey, January 2002*). Computer use is highest among Sacramento Metro residents, where 67 percent say they use a computer frequently at home, work, or school, and lowest in the South San Joaquin area, where fewer than half of residents (47%) frequently use a computer. Six in 10 North Valley residents (58%) and 52 percent in the North San Joaquin area use computers often. The digital divide between Central Valley Latinos and whites appears to be widening. Similar to 1999, 51 percent of Latinos report using a computer at least occasionally, but only 31 percent use one frequently. Meanwhile, among whites, frequent computer use has grown from 53 percent to 65 percent in the past five years, increasing the gap between Latinos and whites on frequent usage from 19 points in 1999 to 34 points today.

Internet use in the Central Valley has risen by 13 points, with half of residents now going on line frequently, up from 37 percent five years ago. Central Valley residents are now as likely to use the Internet (66%) as Americans nationally (68%: *Pew Research Center, March 2004*), although they remain somewhat less likely than all Californians to access the Internet at least sometimes (72%: *PPIC Statewide Survey, January 2002*). Across the Central Valley, Internet use is highest in the Sacramento Metro area, where 62 percent go on line frequently, and lowest in South San Joaquin (40%). Four in 10 Latinos use the Internet, including 25 percent who use it frequently—a slight increase from 21 percent in 1999. However, there has been a widening gap between Latinos and whites in frequent use of the Internet: In 1999, the digital divide on Internet usage was 19 points (21% to 40%); today its stands at 34 points (25% to 59%).

Nearly two in three Central Valley homes have a computer (62%), a significant increase from the 55 percent of homes owning a computer in 1999. In nearly half of Central Valley homes, the personal computer is used often (45%), an increase of 10 points in five years. Seven in 10 Sacramento Metro homes (72%) own computers, compared to 64 percent in the North Valley, 58 percent in the North San Joaquin Valley, and 54 percent in South San Joaquin. Computer ownership among Latinos is virtually the same today (34%) as it was in 1999 (35%).

		1999	2004
Do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school? (if yes: Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?)	Yes, often	49%	56%
	Yes, sometimes	21	17
	No	30	27
Do you ever go on line to access the Internet or worldwide web or send or receive email? (if yes: Do you do this often or only sometimes?)	Yes, often	37%	50%
	Yes, sometimes	17	16
	No / Don't use computers	46	34
Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? This does not include game machines. (if yes: Do you use your home computer often, only sometimes, or never?)	Yes, often	35%	45%
	Yes, sometimes	20	17
	No computer	45	38

Religious Beliefs and Values

Comparing the current survey to the February 2004 PPIC Statewide Survey, we find that Central Valley residents are more likely than Californians as a whole to say that religion is “very important” in their own lives (53% to 45%). Nearly half of Central Valley residents (44%) attended a religious service in the past week, similar to 43 percent nationwide (*Gallup Poll, November 2003*). Most Central Valley residents (57%) also say that they are very or somewhat involved with religious activities.

Three in four Central Valley residents describe themselves as Christians, including 42 percent who consider themselves Protestant and 32 percent who consider themselves Roman Catholic. Eight percent prefer another religion, and 14 percent do not adhere to any religious denomination. Nearly four in 10 Central Valley Christians (37%) consider themselves “born-again” or evangelical Christians. By comparison, Californians as a whole are more likely to say they have no religion (19%), and statewide Christians are somewhat less likely to consider themselves “born-again” or evangelical Christians (31%).

There are strong variations across the Central Valley. For instance, church attendance is higher in North San Joaquin (48%) and South San Joaquin (50%) than in the North Valley (32%) and Sacramento Metro area (38%). Similarly, six in 10 in the San Joaquin valleys are at least somewhat involved in religious activities, compared to about half in the North Valley and Sacramento Metro area.

There are also significant differences between Latinos and whites. Latinos are more regularly involved with religion, with 56 percent saying they attended a religious service in the past week, compared to 38 percent of whites. Sixty-three percent of Latinos say they are involved with religious organizations or activities, compared to 54 percent of whites. Sixty-two percent of Latinos say that religion is very important in their lives, compared to 48 percent of whites. Religious affiliation also varies significantly across these two groups: Seventy-three percent of Latinos are Roman Catholic, while 51 percent of whites are Protestant.

Personal involvement in religious activities is higher among Republicans (65%) than Democrats (54%). Similarly, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to attend religious services (50% to 39%) and to say that religion is very important in their lives (60% to 49%). Nearly half of Republican Christians (47%) say they are born-again, compared to 33 percent of Democratic Christians.

“Did you yourself happen to attend church or synagogue or a place of religious worship in the last seven days, or not?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes	44%	32%	38%	48%	50%	56%
No	56	68	62	52	50	44

“How involved are you in religious or spiritual activities, including time spent with religious organizations?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very involved	21%	17%	19%	22%	24%	17%
Somewhat involved	36	33	32	40	39	46
Not involved	42	50	49	37	37	36
Don't know	1	0	0	1	0	1

Political Interests and Involvement

Central Valley residents report a high level of interest in government and public affairs, with 77 percent saying they follow what’s going on most (45%) or some (32%) of the time. In our 1999 survey, a similar 78 percent said they followed government and public affairs most (43%) or some (35%) of the time. Sixty-six percent of residents say they have a great deal or fair amount of interest in politics, comparable to the 68 percent of Californians who gave this response in our February 2004 PPIC Statewide Survey.

Political interest is somewhat higher in the North Valley and Sacramento Metro area than in the San Joaquin Valley subregions. However, proximity to the state capitol does not appear to make a difference in terms of having a great deal or fair amount of interest in politics: Sacramento Metro residents (69%) have a somewhat similar level of interest as those in the North San Joaquin (64%) and South San Joaquin (62%) subregions and are actually less interested in politics than those living in the North Valley (76%).

Latinos express considerably less interest in politics, with only 46 percent saying they have a great deal or fair amount of interest in politics, compared to 75 percent of whites. Also, 60 percent of Latinos say they follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most or some of the time, compared to 85 percent of whites. Moreover, following statewide trends, only 48 percent of Latinos report that they are registered to vote, compared to 86 percent of whites.

Central Valley Republicans are more likely than Democrats to have a great deal or a fair amount of interest in politics (83% to 75%) and to follow government and public affairs most of the time (61% to 51%). Political interest is also higher among older, more educated, and more affluent residents.

“Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly ever, or never?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Most of the time	45%	51%	49%	42%	43%	25%
Some of the time	32	34	32	32	33	35
Only now and then	14	7	12	19	15	29
Hardly ever	5	5	5	5	5	6
Never	2	2	1	2	4	5
Don’t know	2	1	1	0	0	0

“Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Latinos
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Great deal	23%	28%	24%	22%	21%	14%
Fair amount	43	48	45	42	41	32
Only a little	24	14	23	27	26	36
None	9	8	7	8	11	17
Don’t know	1	2	1	1	1	1

Political Beliefs and Values

The political profile of Central Valley residents is holding steady over time, with three in 10 residents calling themselves politically liberal (29%) or moderate (29%) and four in 10 (42%) describing themselves as conservative. This profile has remained about the same since our first Central Valley survey in 1999. Compared to the state as a whole, Central Valley residents lean slightly more to the conservative side of the political spectrum: Statewide, 35 percent of Californians describe themselves as politically conservative and 34 percent say they are liberal (*PPIC Statewide Survey, February 2004*).

Across subregions, residents are as likely to be liberal as conservative in the North Valley (36% each) and Sacramento Metro area (32% to 38%), whereas they are much more likely to be conservative than liberal in the subregions of North San Joaquin (41% to 27%) and South San Joaquin (49% to 24%). Forty-two percent of Central Valley Democrats describe themselves as liberal, and 69 percent of Republicans describe themselves as conservative. Overall, there are only marginal differences in how Latinos and whites describe their political orientations.

Asked their preference for the size of government, residents chose a larger government with more services by a narrow 6-point margin (48% to 43%). Bigger government is more popular among Latinos than among whites (77% to 34%), and favored by more Democrats than Republicans (55% to 21%). Across the subregions, smaller government is the favorite in the north, and bigger government is preferred in the south.

“Would you consider yourself to be politically...”

	1999	2002	2003	2004
Liberal	26%	25%	25%	29%
Moderate	31	32	31	29
Conservative	43	43	44	42

	All Adults	Subregion				Party Registration	
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	Dem	Rep
Liberal	29%	36%	32%	27%	24%	42%	10%
Moderate	29	28	30	32	27	36	21
Conservative	42	36	38	41	49	22	69

“If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government with fewer services or a bigger government providing more services?”

	All Adults	Subregion				Party Registration	
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	Dem	Rep
Smaller government, fewer services	43%	55%	48%	38%	38%	32%	71%
Bigger government, more services	48	38	43	53	52	55	21
Don't know	9	7	9	9	10	13	8

Survey Methodology

The Central Valley Survey is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which is directed by Mark Baldassare, research director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance in research and writing from Jon Cohen, survey research manager, and Eliana Kaimowitz and Renatta DeFever, survey research associates. This project was conducted in collaboration with the Great Valley Center. The survey benefited from consultation with Carol Whiteside and Richard Cummings at the Great Valley Center, as well as conversations with other experts in the Central Valley region; however, Mark Baldassare made all final decisions about survey methodology, questions, and the content of this report.

The findings of the survey are based on telephone interviews from April 12 to April 20, 2004, with 2,005 adult residents in the 19-county Central Valley region. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers, ensuring that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in the Central Valley were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 19 minutes to complete and was conducted in English or Spanish, as needed.

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

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,005 adults is +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in the Central Valley were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. Sampling error is just one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

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

We frequently compare the results for Latinos with those for non-Hispanic whites. Latinos account for about 26 percent of the Central Valley’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing groups in this region. The Asian and black samples are not large enough for separate statistical analysis.

In some cases, the current Central Valley Survey uses questions from the 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003 PPIC Central Valley surveys or compares results to these surveys in order to highlight trends over time, and we use the 1998-2004 PPIC Statewide Surveys to compare opinions of Central Valley residents today with those of adult residents in the state as a whole and residents of the state’s other major regions. We also compare opinions in the Central Valley to those reported in national surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and the Gallup Poll.

PPIC STATEWIDE: SPECIAL SURVEY ON THE CENTRAL VALLEY
APRIL 12—APRIL 20, 2004
2,005 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS; ENGLISH AND SPANISH
MARGIN OF ERROR +/- 2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

1. Which of the following best describes the city or community where you live—is it a large city, a suburb of a large city, a small city or town, or a rural area?
(if large city: Do you live in the central part of the city?)
(if suburb: Would that be an older or newer suburb?)
 - 11% large city, central part
 - 10 large city, other part
 - 8 suburb, older
 - 5 suburb, newer
 - 35 small city
 - 16 town
 - 14 rural area
 - 1 don't know

2. Overall, how would you rate your city or community as a place to live? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?
 - 31% excellent
 - 44 good
 - 19 fair
 - 5 poor
 - 1 don't know

3. In the past five years, do you think the population of your city or community has been growing rapidly, growing slowly, staying about the same, or declining?
 - 71% growing rapidly
 - 16 growing slowly
 - 8 staying about the same
 - 1 declining
 - 4 don't know

4. Overall, in the past five years, would you say the quality of life in your city or community has gotten better or gotten worse or has it stayed about the same?
 - 31% better
 - 17 worse
 - 48 same
 - 4 don't know

5. Next, we are interested in your opinions about the broader geographic area you live in—the Central Valley—which is the inland area of California stretching from Bakersfield to Redding. What do you think is the most important issue facing the Central Valley today? *[Open-ended question]*
 - 19% air pollution, pollution in general
 - 12 jobs, unemployment, economy
 - 12 population growth and development
 - 8 water availability and quality
 - 8 crime, gangs
 - 6 traffic, transportation
 - 3 education, schools
 - 3 housing costs and availability
 - 2 drugs
 - 12 other
 - 15 don't know

6. Do you think that things in the Central Valley are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?
 - 53% right direction
 - 32 wrong direction
 - 15 don't know

7. In general, how would you rate the economy in the Central Valley? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?
 - 4% excellent
 - 34 good
 - 44 fair
 - 15 poor
 - 3 don't know

8. Thinking about only your part of the Central Valley, would you say that it is in an economic recession or not? *(if yes: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)*
 - 8% yes, serious recession
 - 21 yes, moderate recession
 - 10 yes, mild recession
 - 54 no
 - 7 don't know

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

42% better place
27 worse place
24 no change
7 don't know

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

[rotate questions 10 to 13]

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

18% excellent
49 good
23 fair
8 poor
2 don't know

11. How about local streets and roads?

7% excellent
37 good
35 fair
19 poor
2 don't know

12. How about local police protection?

17% excellent
50 good
21 fair
9 poor
3 don't know

13. How about local public schools?

14% excellent
40 good
26 fair
11 poor
9 don't know

[rotate questions 14 and 15]

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

5% excellent
35 good
39 fair
14 poor
2 not a city (volunteered)
5 don't know

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

3% excellent
33 good
42 fair
15 poor
7 don't know

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

[rotate questions 16 to 19]

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

44% big problem
33 somewhat of a problem
22 not a problem
1 don't know

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

38% big problem
30 somewhat of a problem
27 not a problem
5 don't know

18. How about air pollution?

45% big problem
31 somewhat of a problem
23 not a problem
1 don't know

19. How about population growth and development?

32% big problem
32 somewhat of a problem
35 not a problem
1 don't know

For each of the following, please tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied.

[rotate questions 20 to 23]

20. How do you feel about the job opportunities that are available in your part of the Central Valley—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

13% very satisfied
44 somewhat satisfied
37 not satisfied
6 don't know

21. How do you feel about the availability of housing that you can afford in your part of the Central Valley—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

19% very satisfied
37 somewhat satisfied
41 not satisfied
3 don't know

22. How do you feel about the availability of public colleges and universities in your part of the Central Valley—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

37% very satisfied
43 somewhat satisfied
15 not satisfied
5 don't know

23. How do you feel about the availability of outdoor leisure activities in your part of the Central Valley—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

39% very satisfied
42 somewhat satisfied
16 not satisfied
3 don't know

24. And which of these two views is closest to your own—
[rotate] Immigrants today are a benefit to your part of the Central Valley because of their hard work and job skills, *or* immigrants today are a burden to your part of the Central Valley because they use public services.

60% benefit
28 burden
12 don't know

25. And how much of a problem is illegal immigration into your part of the Central Valley—is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

25% big problem
31 somewhat of a problem
38 not a problem
6 don't know

26. On another topic, how serious a health threat is air pollution in your part of the Central Valley to you and your immediate family—do you think that it is a very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious health threat?

29% very serious
37 somewhat serious
32 not too serious
2 don't know

27. Which level of government do you think should have the primary responsibility for setting air quality standards in your part of the Central Valley? Should it be ...

[read rotated list]

29% the state government
26 a regional air resources board
22 the local government
12 the federal government
2 other answer (*specify*)
9 don't know

28. Would you be willing to see the federal government set tougher standards on air pollution?
(*if yes: Would this be true even if these regulations hurt the economy in your part of the Central Valley?*)

44% yes, even if regulations hurt the economy
24 yes, but not if regulations hurt the economy
26 no
6 don't know

29a. *[half sample]* On another topic, do you think that the water supply available in your part of the Central Valley today will be adequate or inadequate to meet needs through the next 10 years? (*if inadequate: Is that somewhat inadequate or very inadequate?*)

46% adequate
25 somewhat inadequate
19 very inadequate
10 don't know

29b. *[half sample]* On another topic, do you think that the quality of the water supply in your part of the Central Valley today is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

19% big problem
34 somewhat of a problem
45 not a problem
2 don't know

30a. *[half sample]* There is a limited amount of water supply available in the Central Valley. Which of the following do you think should be the most important priority for water policy in making plans for the valley's future: *[rotate]* providing water for farms and agricultural uses, providing water for homes and residents, or protecting the environment?

38% farms and agriculture
30 homes and residents
21 protecting the environment
5 other (*specify*)
6 don't know

30b. [half sample] What do you think about farmers selling water they now receive for agricultural uses in order to provide the water for new housing and residents? Is this a good idea or a bad idea?

26% good idea
59 bad idea
15 don't know

31. Next, you may know that the term "infrastructure" refers to a variety of public works projects. Which infrastructure projects do you think should have top priority for public funding in the Central Valley? [read rotated list, then ask "or something else?"]

49% school facilities
18 surface transportation
16 water systems
5 sewer systems
2 airports
3 something else (specify)
7 don't know

32a. [half sample] A new university campus is being built in the Central Valley. How important is the University of California at Merced to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley—is it very important, somewhat important, or not important?

46% very important
35 somewhat important
14 not important
5 don't know

32b. [half sample] What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase property taxes in order to provide more funds for the local schools? Would you vote yes or no?

56% yes
40 no
4 don't know

33. Which of the following types of surface transportation projects do you think should have top priority for public funding in the Central Valley? [read rotated list, then ask "or something else?"]

25% local streets and roads
23 freeways and highways
15 light rail system
12 public bus system
12 high-speed rail
6 carpool lanes
2 something else (specify)
5 don't know

34a. [half sample] The November 2004 state ballot may include a 9.95 billion dollar bond measure that would fund the planning and construction of a high-speed train in California, linking Los Angeles to San Francisco via the Central Valley. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no?

55% yes
38 no
7 don't know

34b. [half sample] What if there was a measure on your county ballot to increase the local sales tax for local transportation projects by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?

64% yes
32 no
4 don't know

35. On another topic, which level of government do you think should be most responsible for growth and development policy in your part of the Central Valley? [read rotated list]

37% county government
28 state government
22 city government
7 federal government
1 other (specify)
5 don't know

36. Which of the following statements is closer to your view: [rotate] City and county governments in your region should get together and agree on land use and growth policy, or each city and county government in your region should decide land use and growth policy on its own.

69% local governments should get together
25 local governments decide on their own
6 don't know

37a. [half sample] Overall, when thinking about candidates for local offices, what are you most interested in learning about the candidates—is it their ...

[read rotated list]

40% stand on the issues
19 experience
17 character
11 intelligence
5 party platform
4 something else (volunteered)
4 don't know

37b. *[half sample]* Changing subjects, how important do you think it is to have a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the purpose of bringing together city and county governments, businesses, and citizens' groups to work together on issues facing the Central Valley—is it very important, somewhat important, or not important?

55% very important
32 somewhat important
10 not important
3 don't know

[rotate questions 38 and 39]

38. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?

62% approve
25 disapprove
13 don't know

39. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president of the United States?

52% approve
41 disapprove
7 don't know

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

23% great deal
43 fair amount
24 only a little
9 none
1 don't know

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

45% most of the time
32 some of the time
14 only now and then
5 hardly ever
2 never
2 don't know

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

74% yes *[ask q43]*
26 no *[skip to q44a]*

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

40% Democrat *[ask q44b]*
42 Republican *[ask q44c]*
4 another party *[specify] [skip to q45]*
14 independent *[ask q44a]*

44a. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

25% Republican party
37 Democratic party
25 neither *(volunteered)*
13 don't know

[skip to q45]

44b. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

48% strong
49 not very strong
3 don't know

[skip to q45]

44c. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

62% strong
36 not very strong
2 don't know

[ask q45]

45. If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government with fewer services or a bigger government providing more services?

43% smaller government, fewer services
48 bigger government, more services
9 don't know

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

47% always
20 nearly always
9 part of the time
4 seldom
19 never
1 don't know

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

(“don't knows” coded as missing)

9% very liberal
20 somewhat liberal
29 middle-of-the-road
27 somewhat conservative
15 very conservative

48. Do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school? (if yes: Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?)

56% yes, often [ask q49]
17 yes, sometimes [ask q49]
27 no [skip to q50]

49. Do you ever go on line to access the Internet or worldwide web or send or receive email? (if yes: Do you do this often or only sometimes?)

50% yes, often
16 yes, sometimes
34 no

50. Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? These do not include game machines. (if yes: Do you use your home computer often, only sometimes, or never?)

45% yes, often
17 yes, sometimes
38 no computer/ never use

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

37% better off
14 worse off
48 about the same
1 don't know

52. 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?

47% better off
7 worse off
41 about the same
5 don't know

53. And are you concerned that you or someone in your family will lose their job in the next year, or not? (if yes: Are you very concerned or somewhat concerned?)

14% yes, very concerned
14 yes, somewhat concerned
70 no, not concerned
2 don't know

54. On another topic, how involved are you in religious or spiritual activities—including time spent with religious organizations—are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved?

21% very involved
36 somewhat involved
42 not involved
1 don't know

55. And what is your religious preference—Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, or an orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?

42% Protestant [include Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Christ, etc.]
32 Roman Catholic
1 Jewish [skip to q56]
2 Mormon [include Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints]
1 Orthodox Church [Greek or Russian]
8 other religion (specify)
14 no religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic (volunteered) [skip to q56]

55a. Would you describe yourself as a "born again" or evangelical Christian, or not?

37% yes, would
58 no, would not
5 don't know

56. How important would you say religion is in your own life? Would you say it is very important, fairly important, or not important?

53% very important
28 fairly important
18 not important
1 don't know

57. Did you yourself happen to attend church or synagogue or a place of religious worship in the last seven days, or not?

44% yes
56 no

[58-70: demographic questions]

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