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PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

CALIFORNIA

Californians & higher education

in collaboration with
The William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation

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PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

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PRESS RELEASE

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PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION **Californians Satisfied With Quality But Worried About Costs** **At State's Colleges, Universities**

A DECADE AFTER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BAN, MORE THAN HALF OF RESIDENTS SAY
DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS IS VERY IMPORTANT

SAN FRANCISCO, California, November 12, 2008—Californians give the state's higher education systems high marks for quality but see college costs and a lack of government funding as top issues, according to a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

At a time when the state's economic crisis is deepening and the financial fortunes of many families have worsened, Californians see higher education as important to the futures of their own children and to the state. They are concerned that college is affordable neither for their own families nor for others.

Most parents of children ages 18 and younger (71%) say that students have to borrow too much money to go to college, and most are very or somewhat worried (72%) about their own ability to afford a college education for their youngest child. A majority of Californians (59%) and residents across regional and demographic groups say that qualified students from low-income families have less opportunity than others to get a college education. And there is evidence that this is a source of concern: Although voters banned higher education affirmative action programs a decade ago, majorities of residents today say it is very important that public colleges and universities have student bodies that are racially diverse (55%) and economically diverse (57%).

Yet residents have little faith in their leaders' ability to meet the challenges ahead. Just 12 percent have a great deal of confidence in the state government's ability to plan for the future of the state's higher education system.

"Californians' belief in the importance of higher education is strong, and their regard for the state's educational system is high—but their trust in state leadership is low," says Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

CALIFORNIANS PLACE HIGH VALUE ON COLLEGE

In a national survey conducted by Public Agenda and the National Center for Policy and Higher Education last year, 50 percent of Americans said a college education was necessary for success, while 49 percent said there are many ways to succeed without going to college. By comparison, 68 percent of Californians in the PPIC survey say college is necessary and just 30 percent say there are many other ways to succeed. Latinos (84%) place a particularly high value on college. They are more likely than Asians (69%), blacks (63%), or whites (57%) to view a college education as essential. And in a PPIC Statewide Survey on K–12 education in April, Latinos (61%) were far more likely than Asians (31%), blacks (30%), or whites (21%) to consider college preparation the most important goal of K–12 schools.

Nearly all Californians across regional, political, and demographic groups say that higher education is very or somewhat important to the state's future economic vitality and quality of life. Latinos (80%) and blacks (74%) are the most likely to say it is very important.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES, CSU, UC GET GOOD GRADES

In sharp contrast to their opinions of the K–12 system, Californians have a high regard for the state’s public colleges and universities. Only a few Californians (18%) consider the quality of higher education in the state a big problem, the same percentage as in PPIC’s first survey on higher education in October 2007. By comparison, in an April PPIC survey on public schools, more than half of the state’s residents (53%) said the quality of K–12 education was a big problem.

Californians give high grades to all three branches of the higher education system: community college (51% good, 15% excellent), California State University (52% good, 10% excellent), University of California (50% good, 15% excellent).

COLLEGE COSTS TOP LIST OF CONCERNS

With an economic crisis affecting family finances, the availability of student loans, and state funding for public higher education, college costs are on the minds of Californians. An overwhelming majority (84%) say affordability is somewhat of a problem (32%) or a big problem (52%).

Californians (35%) mention cost more than any other issue as the most important one facing higher education. Cost is the primary concern among all political, regional, and demographic groups. While this level of concern is the same as PPIC found in last year’s survey on higher education, a larger percentage today cite a lack of government funding (19% vs. 14% in 2007) as the most important issue.

What is the role of government policy in making college affordable? Even though most Californians believe that students have to borrow too much money to pay for college, 72 percent say that Congress should increase the money available for loans.

Most Californians favor proposals that would make higher education more affordable. Asked about specific alternatives, overwhelming majorities favor expanding work-study opportunities (88%), increasing money for scholarships (83%), and establishing a sliding scale for tuition and fees (70%).

When it comes to saving for their children’s college education, 57 percent of parents say they haven’t saved as much as they should have, 30 percent say they are on track, and only 9 percent say they are ahead. Latino parents (63%) are much more likely than white parents (50%) to say they are behind in saving for their children’s college education.

In addition, a significant percentage of parents say they lack information about financial aid. Half (49%) say they do not have enough information, with Latinos (61%) and parents with household incomes of less than \$40,000 (63%) much more likely to say so.

DIFFERENCES EMERGE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, DIVERSITY

While a majority of Californians believe that there is a disparity in educational opportunity and that student diversity on the state’s campuses is important, there are significant differences among demographic and political groups on these issues. Majorities of blacks (59%) and Latinos (53%) say racial and ethnic minorities have less opportunity to get a college education; Asians (43%) and whites (32%) are less likely to agree. Democrats (53%) are much more likely than independents (42%) and twice as likely as Republicans (25%) to say that ethnic minorities have less access to a college education.

On the issue of diversity, blacks (72%) and Latinos (67%) are much more likely than Asians (49%) and whites (47%) to say that a racially diverse student body is very important. These differences are less pronounced when it comes to the issue of economic diversity: 67 percent of Latinos, 61 percent of blacks, 51 percent of whites, and 46 percent of Asians agree that economic diversity is very important. However, Democrats (66%) and independents (59%) are far more likely than Republicans (39%) to consider economic diversity very important.

CALIFORNIANS WORRIED ABOUT CUTS BUT BALK AT TAX HIKES

With the state facing a multibillion-dollar budget gap, the governor is proposing both spending cuts and tax hikes. In a May PPIC survey, Californians were asked about the tough choices necessary to balance the budget. When it came to the area of spending they most wanted to protect from budget cuts, a strong majority of residents (61%) favored K–12 education, followed by health and human services (17%), and then higher education (12%).

Today, most Californians (83%) are concerned that the budget crisis will lead to significant cuts in funding for higher education, and more than half (54%) say spending for public colleges and universities should be a high or very high priority. Yet more than half (52%) are unwilling to pay higher taxes or to increase student fees (62%) in order to avoid such cuts. However, about half (53%) favor spending more state government money to avoid increasing tuition and fees—even if it means less money for other state programs.

STATE LEADERS GET POOR GRADES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Californians express low levels of trust in the way their elected officials are handling higher education. While 40 percent approve of Governor Schwarzenegger's overall performance—the same percentage as last month—just 27 percent approve of his handling of higher education. Since October 2007, the governor's overall approval rating has dropped by 11 points and by 7 points for his handling of higher education.

The legislature has fared worse. It gets an approval rating of just 24 percent for overall job performance (down 9 points since October 2007) and 23 percent approval for its handling of higher education (down 6 points).

MORE KEY FINDINGS:

- **Californians take pop quiz on higher education**—Page 11
Residents are largely unaware of how funding is divided among public colleges and universities. Just 29 percent correctly name the community college system as being most dependent on state funding, and 27 percent correctly choose the University of California as the least dependent. However, 45 percent correctly name the community colleges as the branch with the most diverse student population.
- **Despite cost concerns, most say the price is right for community college tuition**—Page 19
When told that community college tuition is \$20 per unit, a majority (57%) of residents say this is the right amount, while 23 percent say it is too high and 9 percent say it is too low.
- **A look into the future: Most see shortage of educated workers**—Page 21
Two in three residents (67%) think that in 20 years the economy will need more college-educated workers than the state can produce.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This is the second PPIC Statewide Survey to focus on higher education. It is part of a series of surveys on education, environment, and population issues funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This survey seeks to inform policymakers, encourage discussion, and raise public awareness about issues affecting higher education. This is the 92nd PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database that includes the responses of more than 196,000 Californians. Findings are based on a telephone survey of 2,503 California adult residents interviewed in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Vietnamese, and Korean. They were reached by landline or cell phone throughout the state. Interviews were conducted from October 20 to November 3, 2008. The sampling error for the total sample is $\pm 2\%$ and larger for subgroups. For more information on methodology, see page 25.

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

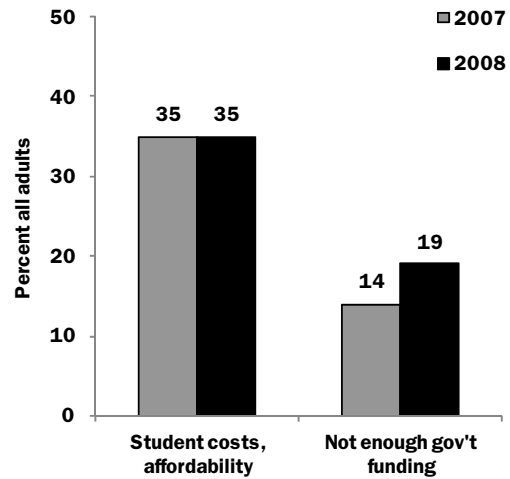
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PERCEPTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

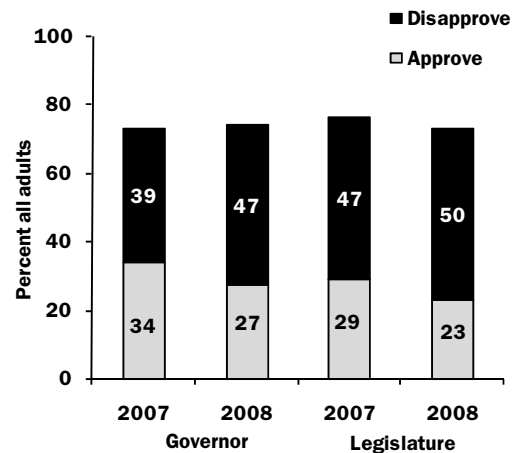
KEY FINDINGS

- Californians continue to say the most important issue in higher education is its cost, but growing proportions are noting a lack of government funding. While most rate overall affordability as a big problem, far fewer say the quality of education is a big problem in California's public colleges and universities. (pages 8, 9)
- Compared to a year ago, relatively small and declining proportions of Californians approve of the way the governor and legislature are handling the state's public colleges and universities, consistent with trends of lower approval for their job performances overall. (page 10)
- Solid majorities across all regional, demographic, and political groups continue to give excellent or good ratings to the state's three higher education systems. (pages 11, 12)
- Californians say that a racially and economically diverse student body in public colleges and universities is very important to them. There is agreement across racial/ethnic, demographic, regional, and political groups that this is at least somewhat important. (page 13)
- Most Californians also believe that college is necessary to be successful and that many qualified people don't have the opportunity to go to college. Latinos are much more likely than whites to express these opinions. (page 14)
- Most Californians say that college prices are going up at a faster rate compared to other prices. (page 14)

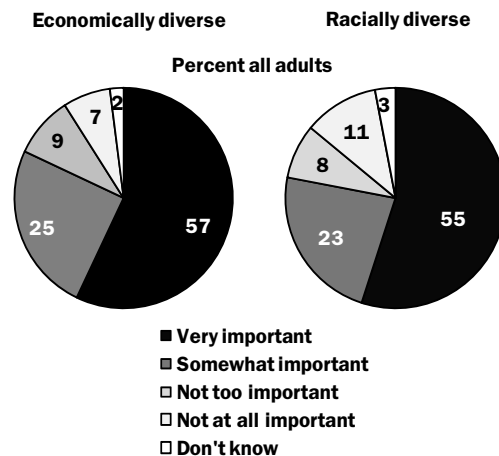
Most Important Issue in Higher Education



Approval Ratings of State Elected Officials on Higher Education in California



Importance for Public Colleges and Universities to Have a Student Body That Is...



MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

Californians (35%) name student costs and affordability as the most important issue currently facing the state’s public colleges and universities. A lack of government funding (19%) ranks second among their concerns. The percentage calling student costs the top issue is unchanged from our October 2007 survey on higher education, while mention of government funding has risen 5 points. Fewer than 5 percent today name administrative costs (4%), financial aid (4%), immigrants (4%), or overall quality of education (3%) as the most important issue now facing California’s public colleges and universities.

Student cost is the top issue across all political, regional, and demographic groups. Across parties, Democrats (38%) are the most likely to call cost the top issue, followed by independents (36%) and Republicans (33%). Democrats (25%) are also more likely than independents (18%) and Republicans (14%) to mention lack of government funding. Residents in the Central Valley (40%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (38%) are somewhat more likely than those in Los Angeles (34%), the Inland Empire (31%), and Orange/San Diego counties (29%) to name student cost as the most important issue in higher education today.

Blacks (43%) are more likely than whites (36%), Asians (35%), and Latinos (31%) to mention student cost as the top issue. This issue is also considered more important by those who attended college than by those with a high school education. Mention of government funding as the top issue increases with higher education and income. Adults who attended a California public college or university (41%) are more likely than those who did not (31%) to name student costs as the top issue in higher education today.

“What do you think is the most important issue facing California’s public colleges and universities today?”

<i>Top two issues mentioned</i>		Student costs, affordability, tuition, fees	Not enough government funding
All Adults		35%	19%
Likely Voters		37	21
Party	Democrat	38	25
	Republican	33	14
	Independent	36	18
Race/Ethnicity	Asians	35	18
	Blacks	43	20
	Latinos	31	17
	Whites	36	21
Age	18–34	34	18
	35–54	36	20
	55 or older	34	18
Income	Under \$40,000	33	17
	\$40,000 to \$79,999	38	17
	\$80,000 or more	36	23
Education	High school or less	30	15
	Some college	42	17
	College graduate	35	24
Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger		33	21

OVERALL CONDITIONS

An overwhelming proportion of Californians today (84%) say the overall affordability of public colleges and universities in the state is at least somewhat of a problem (52% big problem, 32% somewhat of a problem). This view is similar to last year's (53% big problem, 31% somewhat of a problem). Large majorities in all political, regional, and demographic groups see overall affordability as at least somewhat of a problem, but Democrats (57%) and independents (51%) are more likely than Republicans (45%) to call it a big problem. Blacks (71%) are far more likely than Latinos (56%), whites (50%), and Asians (37%) to say affordability is a big problem. Californians with some college education (60%) or with a high school education only (55%) are much more likely than college graduates (45%) to say overall affordability is a big problem.

“How about the overall affordability of education for students in California's public colleges and universities today?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	52%	37%	71%	56%	50%	51%
Somewhat of a problem	32	47	15	29	33	33
Not much of a problem	13	11	12	12	14	12
Don't know	3	5	2	3	3	4

Similar to last year, far fewer Californians (54%) perceive the quality of higher education in the state as a big (18%) or somewhat (36%) of a problem. The percentage calling higher education quality a big problem (18%) sharply contrasts with the percentage calling K–12 quality a big problem (53%), as found in our April survey on K–12 education in California. Independents (48%) are much more likely than Democrats (38%) and Republicans (37%) to say quality is not really a problem. Again, blacks (31%) are much more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to call quality a big problem. Concerns about quality are greater among those with a high school education or some college education than among college graduates.

“How about the overall quality of education in California's public colleges and universities today?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	18%	17%	31%	19%	15%	16%
Somewhat of a problem	36	40	30	39	34	36
Not much of a problem	40	36	33	36	44	41
Don't know	6	7	6	6	7	7

Most Californians believe that the higher education system is in need of major (40%) or minor (43%) changes, findings that are similar to last year's (39% major, 45% minor). Today, 12 percent say the system is fine the way it is. Democrats (41%) are more likely than Republicans (35%) and independents (33%) to think major changes are needed. More than half of Latinos (55%) and 48 percent of blacks say that major changes are needed, compared to far fewer whites (31%) and Asians (24%). Women (44%) are more likely than men (35%) to call for major changes to the higher education system.

APPROVAL RATINGS OF STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Forty percent of all adults approve of the way that Governor Schwarzenegger is handling his job overall. While these overall approval ratings are similar to last month's, these ratings have dropped 11 points among all adults from October 2007. When asked about the governor's handling of the state's public college and university system, approval ratings are lower (27%). Approval of his performance on this issue has decreased 7 points since October 2007. Among likely voters today, 45 percent approve of his job performance overall, while only 28 percent approve of his handling of higher education.

More than half of Republicans (54%) approve of the governor's job performance overall, 58 percent of Democrats disapprove, and independents are split (44% approve, 42% disapprove). Far fewer Republicans (37%), independents (30%), and Democrats (20%) approve of the way the governor is handling higher education and 22 percent or more are unsure. Blacks (74%) and Latinos (62%) are considerably more disapproving of the way the governor is handling higher education than are Asians (37%) and whites (36%).

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

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	40%	34%	54%	44%	45%
	Disapprove	50	58	37	42	46
	Don't know	10	8	9	14	9
<i>...Governor Schwarzenegger is handling California's public college and university system?</i>	Approve	27	20	37	30	28
	Disapprove	47	58	29	42	44
	Don't know	26	22	34	28	28

Approval ratings of the California Legislature are even lower than the governor's. Just 24 percent of all adults approve of the legislature's overall performance and only 23 percent approve of the way it is handling the state's college and university system. Overall approval has decreased 9 points among all adults since October 2007. Approval of the legislature's performance on higher education has dropped 6 points among all adults since then. Likely voters (69%) are more disapproving of the legislature's job performance than residents overall (60%), but express similar views about its handling of higher education. Today, fewer than one in four across all parties approves of the legislature's overall performance or its handling of higher education. Blacks (63%) are much more likely to disapprove of the legislature's handling of higher education than are Latinos (52%), whites (49%), or Asians (37%). Approval decreases as age, education, and income rise.

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

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>...the California Legislature is handling its job?</i>	Approve	24%	24%	19%	21%	20%
	Disapprove	60	61	71	60	69
	Don't know	16	15	10	19	11
<i>...the California Legislature is handling California's public college and university system?</i>	Approve	23	23	20	23	20
	Disapprove	50	54	51	46	53
	Don't know	27	23	29	31	27

KNOWLEDGE OF INSTITUTIONS

Higher education makes up the third largest area of state spending, after K–12 education and health and human services. However, not all three branches of California’s higher education system rely equally on state funding. Most California residents are largely unaware of the funding differences. Just 29 percent of residents correctly name the California Community College (CCC) system over the California State University (CSU) system or the University of California (UC) system as the most dependent on state funding. A higher percentage, 42 percent, are unsure which branch relies the most on state funding. Of the three systems, the UC system depends the least on state government funding, receiving three-quarters of its financial support from other sources, such as federal funding and private donations. Twenty-seven percent of residents correctly name the UC system as the least dependent on state funds, while 45 percent are unsure. The CSU system receives most of its funding from the state, but it relies more on student fees and tuition than the CCC or UC systems. Sixteen percent of residents are aware that the CSU system are the most reliant on fees—27 percent name the UC system, and 40 percent are unsure.

A larger percentage of residents, 45 percent, correctly names the CCC system as having the most diverse student population. This system has not only the broadest racial/ethnic mix of students, but also the most economically diverse student population.

“Do you happen to know which branch...”

	...depends the most on state government funding for their budget?	...depends the least on state government funding for their budget?	...depends the most on student fees and tuition for their budget?	...has the most diverse student population?
California Community Colleges	29%	18%	17%	45%
California State Universities	18	10	16	10
University of California	11	27	27	11
Don't know	42	45	40	34

INSTITUTIONAL RATINGS

More than six in 10 residents give positive performance marks to all three branches of California’s higher education system: CCC (15% excellent, 51% good), CSU (10% excellent, 52% good), and UC (15% excellent, 50% good). Fewer than one in four say any of the branches are doing a not-so-good or poor job. Residents were similarly positive about the state’s higher education system in October 2007.

The CCC system receives excellent or good ratings from 66 percent of residents and from solid majorities across regional, racial/ethnic, income, education, and age groups. Two in three parents of children age 18 or younger (66%) say the system does an excellent or good job. Whites (71%) are the most likely to give community colleges high ratings, followed by Asians (67%), blacks (65%), and Latinos (61%). San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles residents (62% each) are somewhat less likely than those in the Central Valley (69%), Inland Empire (69%), Orange/San Diego (72%) counties to give them high marks.

“Overall, is the _____ doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?”

	California Community College system	California State University system	University of California system
Excellent	15%	10%	15%
Good	51	52	50
Not so good	19	21	18
Poor	4	3	4
Don't know	11	14	13

INSTITUTIONAL RATINGS (CONTINUED)

At least two in three across parties (66% Democrats, 66% independents, 74% Republicans) give community colleges high marks. Those with at least some college education are more likely to hold this view than those with a high school education, and positive ratings increase as income levels rise.

When it comes to the CSU system, 62 percent of residents, 66 percent of likely voters, and 62 percent of parents say it is doing an excellent or good job. Majorities of residents across regions and demographic groups agree with this assessment. However, whites (66%) are somewhat more likely than Asians (62%), blacks (60%), and Latinos (57%) to express this view. Inland Empire (66%), Orange/San Diego (65%), and Central Valley (63%) residents are the most likely to say the CSUs are doing an excellent or good job, followed by those in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area (59% each). Majorities of Democrats (66%), Republicans (62%), and independents (59%) hold this view. Positive ratings of the CSU system increase as income and education levels rise.

The UC system also receives high marks from residents (65%), likely voters (67%), and parents (64%). Again, majorities across demographic groups say the UC system is doing an excellent or good job, but blacks (53%) are less positive than Latinos (61%), whites (68%), or Asians (69%). Los Angeles (61%) and Central Valley (62%) residents are less likely than Orange/San Diego (67%), Inland Empire (69%), and San Francisco Bay Area (69%) residents to hold this view. Democrats (68%) and independents (67%) are more likely than Republicans (60%) to say the UC system is performing at an excellent or good level. Positive assessments increase sharply as education and income levels rise.

“Overall, is the _____ doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?”

<i>Percent saying excellent/good</i>		California Community College system	California State University system	University of California system
All Adults		66%	62%	65%
Likely Voters		71	66	67
Race/Ethnicity	Asians	67	62	69
	Blacks	65	60	53
	Latinos	61	57	61
	Whites	71	66	68
Region	Central Valley	69	63	62
	San Francisco Bay Area	62	59	69
	Los Angeles	62	59	61
	Orange/San Diego	72	65	67
	Inland Empire	69	66	69
Income	Under \$40,000	63	55	61
	\$40,000 to \$79,999	66	64	63
	\$80,000 or more	73	70	73
Education	High school or less	59	54	58
	Some college	72	63	61
	College graduate	71	70	74
Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger		66	62	64

ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

A majority of residents (55%) believe it is very important for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body. Another one in four (23%) say it is somewhat important, while just one in five (19%) consider it not too or not at all important. This issue is very important to 53 percent of likely voters and 56 percent of parents. In 1996, California voters passed Proposition 209, which barred public colleges and universities from considering race, ethnicity, or gender in the admissions process. Today, a decade after the voters banned affirmative action programs, majorities of residents in all demographic and political groups consider a racially diverse student body to be at least somewhat important. However, not everyone places equal levels of importance on racial diversity in student bodies.

Democrats (67%) and independents (56%) are far more likely than Republicans (37%) to say racial diversity is very important in public colleges and universities. Republicans (34%) are the most likely to call it not too or not at all important (18% independents, 10% Democrats). More than two in three blacks (72%) and Latinos (67%) call racial diversity very important, compared to fewer Asians (49%) and whites (47%). Diversity is considered more important by residents in Los Angeles (60%) than elsewhere (56% in the Central Valley, Inland Empire, and San Francisco Bay Area, 50% in Orange/San Diego counties). The perceived importance of a racially diverse student body declines as income and age increase.

“How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body—that is a mix of blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, and other minorities?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Education		
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
Very important	55%	49%	72%	67%	47%	59%	51%	54%
Somewhat important	23	33	18	15	28	19	27	26
Not too important	8	7	3	6	11	8	8	9
Not at all important	11	8	4	11	12	11	11	10
Don't know	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	1

A similar majority of residents (57%) also believe it is very important for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body. Twenty-five percent say it is somewhat important, while 16 percent say it is not too or not at all important. Majorities of likely voters (54%) and parents (59%) say it is very important for schools to have an economically diverse student body. Majorities across political and demographic groups call economic diversity at least somewhat important, but Democrats (66%) and independents (59%) are far more likely than Republicans (39%) to call it very important. Latinos (67%) and blacks (61%) are more likely than whites (51%) and Asians (46%) to consider economic diversity in public colleges and universities very important. This perception declines as income and age increase.

“How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body—that is, a mix of students from lower, middle, and upper-income backgrounds?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Education		
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
Very important	57%	46%	61%	67%	51%	61%	55%	54%
Somewhat important	25	39	25	19	28	22	29	27
Not too important	9	7	8	5	11	7	7	10
Not at all important	7	4	4	6	8	7	7	7
Don't know	2	4	2	3	2	3	2	2

SOCIETAL TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

More than two in three residents (68%) and parents (73%) believe a college education is necessary to be successful in today’s work world. Far fewer (30% residents, 24% parents) believe there are many ways to succeed in the work world without a college education. Findings were similar last year. Californians place more importance on college than do adults nationwide: A survey conducted last year by Public Agenda and the National Center for Policy and Higher Education found that 50 percent nationwide said college is necessary and 49 percent said there are many other ways to succeed.

In California, Latinos (84%) are far more likely than Asians (69%), blacks (63%), or whites (57%) to believe college is necessary for success in today’s work world. Similarly, our April survey on K–12 education found that Latinos (61%) were by far the most likely racial/ethnic group to consider college preparation the most important goal of California’s K–12 public schools (31% Asians, 30% blacks, 21% whites). Majorities in all political and demographic groups today believe that college is necessary to be successful, but this view declines as education and income levels rise, and is much lower among residents age 55 and older (57%) than residents age 18–34 (71%) or 35–54 (73%).

“Do you think that a college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today’s work world, or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today’s work world without a college education?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Education		
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
College is necessary	68%	69%	63%	84%	57%	76%	64%	62%
Other ways to succeed	30	27	33	15	40	22	34	35
Don’t know	2	4	4	1	3	2	2	3

More than two in three residents (68%) and parents (69%) believe many qualified people do not have the opportunity to go to college, while about three in 10 in each group think the vast majority of people who are qualified to go to college have the opportunity to do so. Findings were similar last year. Majorities in all political and demographic groups believe there are many people who are qualified, but lack the opportunity to go to college. Democrats (75%) and independents (66%) are more likely than Republicans (54%) to hold this view, and Latinos (81%) and blacks (80%) are far more likely than whites and Asians (60% each) to say the same. Of those who say the affordability of higher education is a big problem in California, 80 percent believe many qualified people lack the opportunity to go to college.

“Do you think that currently, the vast majority of people who are qualified to go to college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think there are many people who are qualified to go but don’t have the opportunity to do so?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Education		
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
Majority have the opportunity	29%	33%	18%	17%	37%	17%	27%	41%
Many people don’t have the opportunity	68	60	80	81	60	80	70	56
Don’t know	3	7	2	2	3	3	3	3

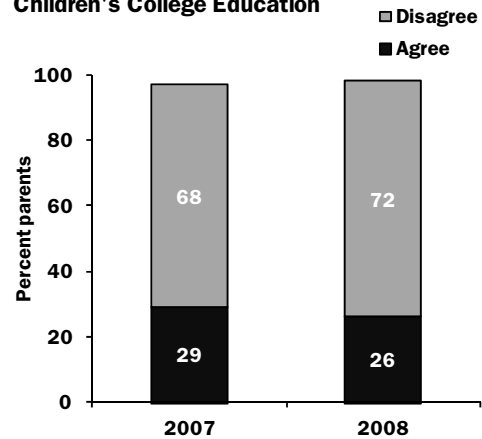
Not only do many residents believe the cost of college is a problem, but more than half of residents (55%) and parents (54%) think the price of college is rising faster than other prices. This view is shared by majorities across parties, regions, and demographic groups. Blacks (68%) are much more likely than whites (56%), Latinos (53%), and Asians (51%) to believe college costs are rising faster than other costs. All income groups have similar perceptions of rapidly rising costs.

ATTITUDES AND POLICY PREFERENCES

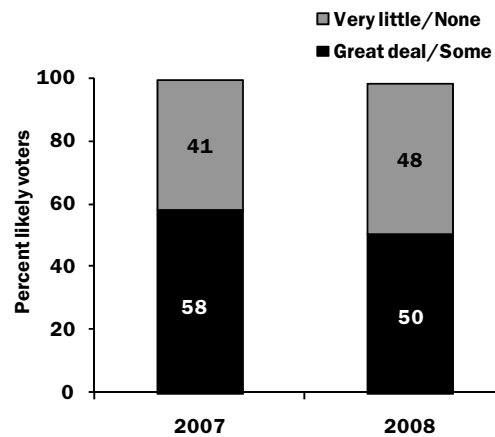
KEY FINDINGS

- An overwhelming majority of Californians believe that students have to borrow too much money to go to college; just one in four parents think that most families are doing a good job of saving for their children's college education. Many residents believe that lower-income students have less opportunity to go to college. Majorities of blacks and Latinos also think that racial and ethnic minorities have less opportunity than others to go to college. (pages 16, 17)
- Most Californians express support for a variety of state and federal government policies to make California's higher education system more affordable. While most are concerned that the state's current budget gap will lead to major cuts in higher education spending, most oppose paying higher taxes to maintain current higher education funding, and six in 10 oppose raising student fees to do so. (pages 18, 19, 20)
- An overwhelming majority say that higher education is very important for California's future. Two in three say the state economy will need a higher proportion of college-educated workers in 20 years, but large and growing proportions of California's likely voters have little or no confidence in the state's ability to plan for the future of higher education. (pages 21, 22)
- Nearly nine in 10 parents want their children at least to graduate from college, but many worry about being able to afford it. Latino parents are far more likely than white parents to worry about the cost of college and to cite a lack of adequate information about financial aid. (page 23)

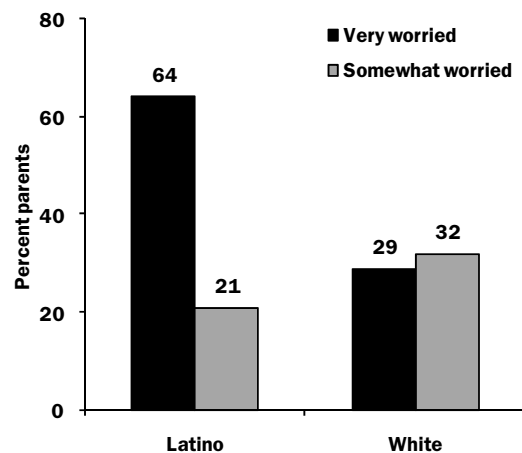
Parents Doing Good Job on Saving for Children's College Education



Confidence in State Government to Plan for Future of Higher Education



Parents' Concern About Affording a College Education for Their Children



STUDENT LOANS AND FAMILY SAVINGS

Echoing their view that student costs and inadequate government funding are the most important issues facing the state’s public colleges and universities today, three in four Californians (73%) and parents of children age 18 or younger (71%) agree that students have to borrow too much money for a college education. This perception was also widely held in October 2007 (74% Californians, 71% parents).

Strong majorities across racial/ethnic groups agree that students have to borrow too much money to pay for college, with blacks (83%) and whites (80%) most likely to hold this view. Across regions, at least two in three residents agree, with those in the Inland Empire (80%) most likely to hold this view, followed by those in the San Francisco Bay Area (77%), the Central Valley (73%), Orange/San Diego counties (74%) and Los Angeles (67%). Strong majorities of voters across parties hold this perspective, as do those across gender, age, education, and income groups.

“Students have to borrow too much money to pay for their college education.”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Agree	73%	69%	83%	65%	80%	71%
Disagree	23	24	14	32	16	25
Don't know	4	7	3	3	4	4

Are most families today putting away enough money send their children to college? Only one in four Californians (24%) and parents with children age 18 or younger (26%) think so, and more than seven in 10 disagree. Among parents, the belief that families do a good job of saving for their children’s education was similar in October 2007. Today, majorities across racial/ethnic groups also think most families are not doing a good job of saving for their children’s college education, with whites (85%) the most likely to hold this view. Across regions, at least two in three residents have this negative view; residents in the Central Valley (76%) are most negative. Men and women are similar in their perceptions. The belief that families are not doing a good job of saving increases as education and income levels increase.

“Most families today do a good job of saving for their children’s college education.”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Agree	24%	26%	21%	45%	10%	26%
Disagree	72	67	75	53	85	72
Don't know	4	7	4	2	5	2

Although many Californians agree that students must borrow too much money for college and that families are not doing a good job of saving, they are more divided on whether anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid. About half of Californians (52%) and parents of children 18 or younger (54%) agree that help is available to those who need it, with Latinos (64%) the most likely to hold this view, followed by Asians (56%), blacks (53%) and whites (44%). Agreement declines as income increases. Among residents with a high school diploma, 62 percent agree that aid is available to those who need it. Far fewer residents with a college degree (47%) or some college (46%) agree.

DISPARITIES IN COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES

When it comes to opportunities to receive a college education, six in 10 Californians (59%) and parents of children age 18 or younger (60%) think that qualified students from low-income families, regardless of ethnic background, have less opportunity than others. Three in 10 say they have the same opportunity. The perception of less college opportunity for low-income students is largely unchanged from last year.

Today, at least 56 percent across racial/ethnic groups think that qualified students from low-income families have less opportunity. This belief is held by majorities across regional and demographic groups. Democrats (69%) are much more likely than independents (58%) and Republicans (48%) to say that low-income students have less opportunity.

“Do you think qualified students from low-income families, regardless of their ethnic background, have less opportunity, more opportunity, or about the same opportunity as others to get a college education?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Less opportunity	59%	56%	58%	60%	58%	60%
More opportunity	10	14	11	8	10	10
About the same opportunity	28	24	29	31	28	28
Don't know	3	6	2	1	4	2

When asked about college opportunities for qualified students who are ethnic or racial minorities, fewer than half of Californians (42%) and parents of children age 18 or younger (46%) say minorities have less opportunity than others do. This perception is largely unchanged from October 2007.

The perception that ethnic or racial minorities have less opportunity is held by majorities of blacks (59%) and Latinos (53%), but by fewer than half of Asians (43%) and only one in three whites (32%). Regionally, a plurality of residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (50%) and Los Angeles (46%) think that racial or ethnic minorities have less opportunity, while a plurality of residents in the Central Valley (41%) say they have equal opportunity. Residents of the Inland Empire (38% about the same, 37% less opportunity) and Orange/San Diego counties (39% about the same, 40% less opportunity) are more divided. Women are more likely to say less opportunity (43%) than the same opportunity (35%), while men are more divided (40% about the same, 41% less opportunity). Across parties, Democrats (53%) are much more likely than independents (42%) and twice as likely as Republicans (25%) to say qualified students who are ethnic and racial minorities have less opportunity than others to get a college education. This belief declines as income increases.

“Do you think qualified students who are ethnic or racial minorities, such as blacks or Latinos, have less opportunity, more opportunity, or about the same opportunity as others to get a college education?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Less opportunity	42%	43%	59%	53%	32%	46%
More opportunity	16	11	4	11	20	15
About the same	38	41	32	30	43	34
Don't know	4	5	5	6	5	5

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Although most residents think students have to borrow too much for their college education, seven in 10 Californians (72%) and likely voters (69%) believe that Congress should increase the amount of funding available for higher education loans. Three in four parents of children 18 or younger (75%) agree. Democrats (79%) and independents (73%) are much more likely than Republicans (59%) to agree. At least two in three residents across regions agree with the need for increased federal funding for loans; residents of the San Francisco Bay Area (77%) are most likely to agree and residents in the Central Valley (66%) are least likely. At least two in three across racial/ethnic, gender, income, education, and age groups agree that Congress should increase funding for loans for students.

“Congress should increase the amount of funding for loans that students can borrow for their college education.”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Agree	72%	79%	59%	73%	69%
Disagree	24	18	36	24	27
Don't know	4	3	5	3	4

Consistent with the belief that cost and affordability is the top issue concerning higher education, most Californians favor several proposals that could make California higher education more affordable. Overwhelming majorities of Californians favor increasing work-study opportunities (88%), increasing funding for scholarships or grants (83%), and having a sliding scale for tuition and fee costs so that students pay according to their income status (70%). At least two in three likely voters favor these proposals. Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to favor these proposals, but majorities across all parties favor them. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos and blacks are most likely to favor them.

Compared to last year, Californians are similar in their support for increasing government funding for work-study opportunities (86% 2007, 88% today) and for scholarships or grants (83% 2007, 83% today).

“I am going to name several ways that the federal and state government can make California’s higher education system more affordable to students. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>How about increasing government funding available for work-study opportunities for students to earn money while in college?</i>	Favor	88%	93%	79%	90%	86%
	Oppose	10	5	18	9	13
	Don't know	2	2	3	1	1
<i>How about increasing government funding available for scholarships or grants for students?</i>	Favor	83	91	70	81	81
	Oppose	14	7	26	16	16
	Don't know	3	2	4	3	3
<i>How about having a sliding scale for tuition and fee costs, so that students pay according to their income status?</i>	Favor	70	76	56	70	66
	Oppose	26	21	40	26	30
	Don't know	4	3	4	4	4

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY (CONTINUED)

Californians are less supportive of spending more state government money to restrain tuition and fees at the expense of other state programs. Still, about half of Californians (53%) and likely voters (49%) favor this idea. A majority of parents of children age 18 or younger (55%) are also supportive. Last year, 57 percent of adults and 54 percent of likely voters were in favor.

Democrats (57%) and independents (52%) are much more likely than Republicans (42%) to favor more state money to keep down tuition and fee costs, even if it means less money for other state programs. About half of Californians across regions hold this view. Asians (67%) and Latinos (60%) are more likely than blacks (54%) or whites (46%) to favor this idea. Support for the idea decreases as income rises.

“How about spending more state government money to keep down tuition and fee costs, even if it means less money for other state programs?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	53%	57%	42%	52%	49%
Oppose	39	34	50	42	43
Don't know	8	9	8	6	8

When told that the cost of tuition at community colleges in California is \$20 per unit, a strong majority of residents (57%) and parents of children age 18 or younger (57%) say enrollment fees are about the right amount. About one in four say fees are too high and about one in 10 say they are too low. Whites (62%) are most likely to say that fees are about the right amount, followed by Asians (58%), Latinos (52%), and blacks (44%). Blacks (39%) and Latinos (31%) are much more likely than others to say fees are too high.

Republicans (66%) are much more likely than Democrats (56%) or independents (53%) to say that tuition is about the right amount. More than half of residents across regions say enrollment fees are the right amount; this view is most widely held in Orange/San Diego counties (62%) and least widely held in the San Francisco Bay Area (52%). The perception that fees are too high decreases with rising income.

“California community college enrollment fees are currently \$20 per unit, which is a decrease from \$26 per unit two years ago. Do you think that enrollment fees in the California Community College system are currently about the right amount, too high, or too low?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
About the right amount	57%	58%	44%	52%	62%	57%
Too high	23	20	39	31	17	24
Too low	9	11	8	8	10	10
Don't know	11	11	9	9	11	9

In a separate question, we asked Californians to estimate the enrollment fees of the community college system compared to enrollment fees in other states. Twenty-four percent say community college enrollment fees are higher here than in other states, 21 percent say they are about the same, and 19 percent give the correct answer, that they are lower than in other states—in fact, the lowest in the country. A plurality say they are not sure (36%). Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks (37%) are the most likely to say fees are comparatively higher, Asians (40%) are the most likely to say they are about the same. Whites (24%) are most likely to say tuition is lower than in other states.

STATE BUDGET AND REVENUES

The state’s higher education system has a current budget of about \$13.5 billion, which is the third-largest spending category in the overall budget. With the state currently running a \$10 billion budget deficit, 83 percent of residents are very (48%) or somewhat (35%) concerned that the deficit will cause significant spending cuts in higher education. Findings among likely voters are similar. Across parties, Democrats (57%) are most likely to say they are very concerned, followed by independents (47%), then Republicans (34%). Blacks (59%) and Latinos (56%) are somewhat more likely than Asians (46%) or whites (41%) to say they are very concerned. Half of parents with children 18 or younger are very concerned (50%).

“How concerned are you that the state’s budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in higher education?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Very concerned	48%	57%	34%	47%	46%
Somewhat concerned	35	32	39	35	36
Not too concerned	10	8	16	12	11
Not at all concerned	5	2	10	5	6
Don’t know	2	1	1	1	1

More than half of residents (54%) and likely voters (51%) say spending for California’s public colleges and universities should be a high or very high priority, considering the state’s current budget situation. Democrats (61%) and independents (60%) are far more likely than Republicans (36%) to say that higher education should be a high or very high priority in the current fiscal context. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (63%) are most likely to say that higher education should be a top priority; whites (48%) are least likely.

Half of Californians (52%) say they would be unwilling to pay higher taxes just to maintain current funding for public colleges and universities, while 44 percent say they would be willing. Likely voters are similar (45% yes, 51% no). Among residents who say they are very concerned about spending cuts, 53 percent are willing to pay higher taxes to maintain current funding levels and 43 percent are not. Residents are even less willing to increase enrollment fees just to maintain current funding levels (32% yes, 62% no). Findings among likely voters are somewhat similar (36% yes, 59% no). As education rises, willingness to pay higher taxes and increase fees rises.

“What if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for public colleges and universities. Would you be willing to...”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
...pay higher taxes for this purpose, or not?	Yes	44%	56%	29%	45%
	No	52	40	67	51
	Don’t know	4	4	4	4
...increase student fees for this purpose, or not?	Yes	32	35	36	36
	No	62	60	58	59
	Don’t know	6	5	6	4

HIGHER EDUCATION AND CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

Nearly all Californians across regional, political, and demographic groups say that higher education in California is very or somewhat important to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years. Findings are similar to last year's, when 96 percent of residents and likely voters said it was at least somewhat important. Today, more than seven in 10 say it is very important (72%). Across parties, Democrats (79%) are more likely than independents (71%) and far more likely than Republicans (56%) to say the state's higher education system is very important for the future. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (80%) and blacks (74%) are most likely to say it is very important to the state's future.

"In general, how important is California's higher education system to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years?"

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very important	72%	60%	74%	80%	68%	71%
Somewhat important	23	34	18	15	27	24
Not too important	2	3	5	2	2	2
Not at all important	1	–	3	1	1	1
Don't know	2	3	–	2	2	2

Two in three residents (67%) and likely voters (67%) believe that if current trends continue, the state's economy will need a higher percentage of college-educated workers in 20 years. About one in five residents and likely voters say about the same percentage will be needed and fewer than 10 percent say that a lower percentage will be needed. These findings are similar to last year's. Majorities in all regional, political, and demographic groups recognize the need for a higher percentage of college-educated workers, with Democrats (74%) more likely than independents (66%) and Republicans (58%) to say so. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (76%) are the most likely to say a higher percentage will be needed, while Asians (54%) are least likely to agree.

"In thinking ahead 20 years, if current trends continue, do you think California's economy will need a higher percentage, lower percentage, or about the same percentage of college-educated workers as today?"

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Higher percentage	67%	54%	62%	76%	64%	67%
Lower percentage	8	14	20	6	7	7
About the same percentage	20	24	11	15	25	22
Don't know	5	8	7	3	4	4

Current projections indicate there will not be enough college-educated Californians to meet the demand for them in coming years. We also asked residents if they think the state will have enough college-educated residents to fill the demand for jobs and skills in 20 years. Nearly half of residents (47%) and 50 percent of likely voters think the state will not have enough, while three in 10 say there will be just enough to meet demand. Pluralities across regional, political, and demographic groups foresee a shortage of college-educated workers; blacks (58%) are much more likely than Asians (48%), Latinos (47%), and whites (46%) to agree.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND CALIFORNIA’S FUTURE (CONTINUED)

The belief that there will not be enough college-educated residents increases with higher income and education. Among those who think the state will need a higher percentage of college-educated workers, 54 percent do not think there will be enough.

In light of these perceptions about the future California economy, how do residents feel about the state government spending more public funds to increase the capacity of California’s public colleges and universities? Eighty-five percent of residents and 83 percent of likely voters say it is at least somewhat important, with more than four in 10 saying it is very important. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (61%) and blacks (51%) are more likely than Asians (40%) and whites (37%) to say it is very important. Democrats (52%) are more likely than independents (45%) and Republicans (31%) to say it is very important. Strong majorities across regional, political, and demographic groups say spending more to increase capacity in public colleges and universities is at least somewhat important.

“In thinking ahead 20 years, how important do you think it is for the state government to be spending more public funds to increase capacity in public colleges and universities?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very important	46%	40%	51%	61%	37%	42%
Somewhat important	39	46	37	30	43	41
Not too important	8	7	4	4	11	9
Not at all important	4	1	7	2	5	5
Don't know	3	6	1	3	4	3

As for confidence in the state government’s ability to plan for the future of California’s higher education system, just 12 percent of residents say they have a great deal of confidence. Forty percent say they have only some, and 45 percent say they have very little (33%) or none (12%). Findings are similar among likely voters. The public’s confidence in the state government’s ability to plan for the future is somewhat lower today than it was a year ago. Republicans (50%) and independents (51%) express lower levels of confidence than Democrats (41%). Among racial/ethnic groups, whites (48%), Latinos (47%), and blacks (43%), are far more likely to say they have very little or no confidence in the state government’s ability, compared to 27 percent of Asians who say so.

“How much confidence do you have in the state government’s ability to plan for the future of California’s higher education system?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
A great deal	12%	10%	25%	18%	7%	9%
Only some	40	56	30	33	42	41
Very little	33	24	28	38	33	34
None	12	3	15	9	15	14
Don't know	3	7	2	2	3	2

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND CONCERNS

California parents of children age 18 or younger express high hopes for their children's educational futures. Nearly nine in 10 parents would like their youngest child to be a college graduate (41%) or to complete a postgraduate education (46%). Parents' hopes for their children are largely unchanged since last year (43% college graduate, 46% graduate degree after college). At least eight in 10 parents across political and demographic groups hope their youngest child will at least graduate from college; however, white parents are far more likely than Latino parents (57% to 31%) to hope their child will obtain a graduate degree. (Sample sizes for blacks and Asians parents are too small for analysis on parent-only questions.) Hopes for a graduate degree increase as parents' education and income rise.

Although parents' hopes for their child's education are high, so too are their levels of concern about helping their child afford a college education. Seventy-two percent of parents are very (46%) or at least somewhat worried (26%) about being able to afford a college education for their child. Findings today are similar to last year's. Latinos are far more likely than whites to say they are very worried (64% to 29%). The percentage of parents who are very worried declines sharply as age, education, and income rise.

“How worried are you about being able to afford a college education for your youngest child?”

Asked only of parents with children age 18 or younger	Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger	Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Less than \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Latinos	Whites
Very worried	46%	71%	49%	24%	64%	29%
Somewhat worried	26	21	23	33	21	32
Not too worried	15	3	15	25	8	24
Not at all worried	12	5	13	18	7	15
Don't know	1	–	–	–	–	–

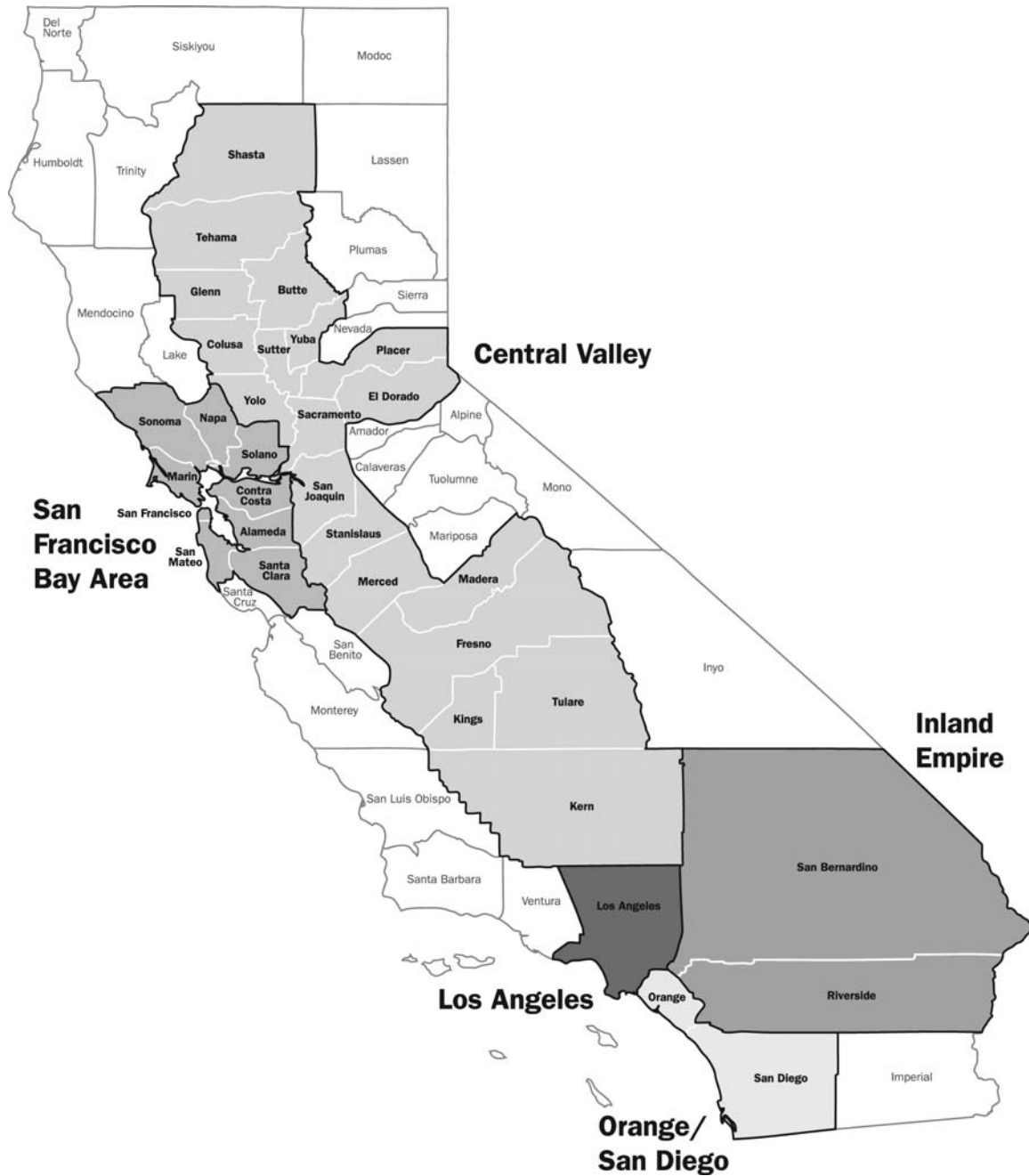
When it comes to the progress parents have made in saving for their child's college education, 57 percent of parents say they are behind, 30 percent say they are just where they should be, and only nine percent say they are ahead. Latino parents (63%) are much more likely than white parents (50%) to say they are behind in their savings. As income rises, parents are less likely to say they are behind in their savings progress.

How do parents feel about the amount of information they have regarding financial aid for their child's college education? Half of parents (49%) say they do not have enough information, 32 percent say they have just enough, and only 15 percent say they have more than enough. Across income groups, parents with a household income of less than \$40,000 (63%) are much more likely than others to say they do not have enough information about financial aid for their child's college education. Latino parents (61%) are far more likely than white parents (38%) to say they do not have enough information. The perception of insufficient information decreases as income and educational levels increase.

“Do you feel like you have more than enough, just enough, or not enough information about financial aid for your child's college education?”

Asked only of parents with children age 18 or younger	Parents of Children Age 18 or Younger	Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Less than \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Latinos	Whites
More than enough	15%	8%	16%	19%	10%	19%
Just enough	32	26	30	39	27	37
Not enough	49	63	49	37	61	38
Not at all worried	4	3	5	5	2	6

REGIONAL MAP



METHODOLOGY

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with research support from Jennifer Paluch, project manager for this survey, and survey research associates Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Nicole Fox. This survey was conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as part of a three-year grant on K–12 and higher education, environment, and population issues. We benefited from discussions with PPIC staff, foundation staff, and other policy experts; however, the methods, questions, and content of this report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare and the survey staff.

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of 2,503 California adult residents, including 2,253 interviewed on landline telephones and 250 interviewed on cell phones. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days from October 20 to November 3, 2008. Interviews took an average of 20 minutes to complete.

Landline interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All landline telephone exchanges in California were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender.

Cell phone interviews were included in this survey to account for the growing number of Californians who use them. These interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of cell phone numbers. All cell phone numbers with California area codes were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as eight times to increase the likelihood of reaching an eligible respondent. Once a cell phone user was reached, it was verified that this person was age 18 or older, a resident of California, and in a safe place to continue the survey (e.g., not driving). Cell phone respondents were offered a small reimbursement for their time to help defray the potential cost of the call. Cell phone interviews were conducted with adults who have cell phone service only and with those who have both a cell phone and landline service in the household.

Landline and cell phone interviewing was conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Vietnamese, and Korean, according to respondents’ preferences. We chose these languages because Spanish is the dominant language among non-English speaking adults in California, followed in prevalence by the three Asian languages. Accent on Languages, Inc. translated the survey into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Abt SRBI Inc. translated the survey into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, and conducted all interviewing.

With assistance from Abt SRBI, we used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the census and state figures. Abt SRBI used data from the 2006 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) for the Pacific Census Division and from the January–July 2007 NHIS, both to estimate landline and cell phone service in California and to compare it against landline and cell phone service reported in the survey. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any differences in demographics and telephone service.

The sampling error for the total of 2,503 adults is ± 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 2,016 registered

voters, it is ± 2.2 percent; for the 1,526 likely voters, it is ± 2.5 percent, for the 1,026 parents of children 18 or under it is ± 3 percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

Throughout the report, we refer to five geographic regions that account for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, “Inland Empire” refers to Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and “Orange/San Diego” refers to Orange and San Diego Counties. Residents from other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these less populated areas are not large enough to report separately in tables and text.

We present specific results for respondents in four self-identified racial/ethnic groups: Asian, black, Latino, and non-Hispanic white. We also compare the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents (i.e., registered as “decline to state”). We also analyze the responses of likely voters—those who are the most likely to participate in the state’s elections. We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys and to those conducted by Public Agenda and the California Higher Education Policy Center (“Public Agenda/CHEPC”), and by Public Agenda and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (“Public Agenda/National Center”).

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

CALIFORNIANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

October 20–November 3, 2008

2,503 California Adult Residents:

English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese

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

1. First, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?
23% right direction
66 wrong direction
11 don't know
2. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?
20% good times
71 bad times
9 don't know
3. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?
81% yes [ask q3a]
19 no [skip to q4b]
- 3a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?
43% Democrat [ask q4]
34 Republican [skip to q4a]
3 another party (specify) [skip to q5]
20 independent [skip to q4b]
4. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?
66% strong
30 not very strong
4 don't know
[skip to q5]
- 4a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?
58% strong
38 not very strong
4 don't know
[skip to q5]
- 4b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?
21% Republican Party
50 Democratic Party
19 neither (volunteered)
10 don't know
5. Changing topics, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?
40% approve
50 disapprove
10 don't know
6. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Schwarzenegger is handling California's public college and university system?
27% approve
47 disapprove
26 don't know
7. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?
24% approve
60 disapprove
16 don't know

8. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling California’s public college and university system?

- 23% approve
- 50 disapprove
- 27 don’t know

9. Next, what do you think is the most important issue facing California’s public colleges and universities today?

[code, don’t read]

- 35% student costs, affordability, tuition, fees
- 19 not enough government funding
- 4 administrative costs, salaries, waste
- 4 financial aid
- 4 immigrants
- 3 overall quality of education
- 2 campus safety
- 2 teachers, teaching/instruction
- 13 other
- 14 don’t know

Next, I’m going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California’s higher education system today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem.

[rotate questions 10 and 11]

10. How about the overall quality of education in California’s public colleges and universities today?

- 18% big problem
- 36 somewhat of a problem
- 40 not much of a problem
- 6 don’t know

11. How about the overall affordability of education for students in California’s public colleges and universities today?

- 52% big problem
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 13 not much of a problem
- 3 don’t know

12. Overall, do you think the higher education system in California—including public colleges and universities—is in need of major changes, minor changes, or that it is basically fine the way it is?

- 40% major changes
- 43 minor changes
- 12 fine the way it is
- 5 don’t know

As you may know, California’s higher education system has three branches—the California Community College system, the California State University system, and the University of California system.

[rotate questions 13 to 15]

13. Overall, is the California Community College system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?

- 15% excellent
- 51 good
- 19 not so good
- 4 poor
- 11 don’t know

14. Overall, is the California State University system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?

- 10% excellent
- 52 good
- 21 not so good
- 3 poor
- 14 don’t know

15. Overall, is the University of California system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?

- 15% excellent
- 50 good
- 18 not so good
- 4 poor
- 13 don’t know

Next, thinking about the California Community College system, California State University system, and University of California system...

[rotate questions 16 to 19]

16. Do you happen to know which branch depends the most on state government funding for their budget?

- 29% California Community Colleges
- 18 California State Universities
- 11 University of California
- 42 don't know

17. Do you happen to know which branch depends the least on state government funding for their budget?

- 18% California Community Colleges
- 10 California State Universities
- 27 University of California
- 45 don't know

18. Do you happen to know which branch depends the most on student fees and tuition for their budget?

- 17% California Community Colleges
- 16 California State Universities
- 27 University of California
- 40 don't know

19. Do you happen to know which branch has the most diverse student population?

- 45% California Community Colleges
- 10 California State Universities
- 11 University of California
- 34 don't know

In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? First,

[rotate questions 20 and 21]

20. Additional state funding would lead to major improvements in California's higher education system.

- 68% agree
- 26 disagree
- 6 don't know

Next,

21. Better use of existing state funds would lead to major improvements in California's higher education system.

- 81% agree
- 13 disagree
- 6 don't know

22. To significantly improve California's higher education system, which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

[rotate 1 and 2] (1) We need to use existing state funds more wisely, **[or]** (2) We need to increase the amount of state funding, **[or]** (3) We need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding.

- 37% use funds more wisely
- 9 increase state funding
- 50 use funds more wisely and increase funding
- 4 don't know

[rotate questions 23 to 25]

23. Do you think that a college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today's work world, or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college education?

- 68% college is necessary
- 30 many ways to succeed without a college education
- 2 don't know

24. Next, compared to other things, are college prices going up at a faster rate, are college prices going up at a slower rate, or are they going up at the same rate?

- 55% faster rate
- 8 slower rate
- 24 same rate
- 13 don't know

25. Do you think that currently, the vast majority of people who are qualified to go to college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think there are many people who are qualified to go but don't have the opportunity to do so?

- 29% majority have the opportunity
- 68 many people don't have the opportunity
- 3 don't know

Next, please say if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

[rotate questions 26 to 29]

26. Almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid.

- 52% agree
- 42 disagree
- 6 don't know

27. Students have to borrow too much money to pay for their college education.

- 73% agree
- 23 disagree
- 4 don't know

28. Most families today do a good job of saving for their children's college education.

- 24% agree
- 72 disagree
- 4 don't know

29. Congress should increase the amount of funding for loans that students can borrow for their college education.

- 72% agree
- 24 disagree
- 4 don't know

Next,

[rotate questions 30 and 31]

30. How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body—that is, a mix of blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, and other minorities?

- 55% very important
- 23 somewhat important
- 8 not too important
- 11 not at all important
- 3 don't know

31. How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body—that is a mix of students from lower, middle, and upper-income backgrounds?

- 57% very important
- 25 somewhat important
- 9 not too important
- 7 not at all important
- 2 don't know

Next, please tell me if you think the following groups of people have less opportunity, more opportunity, or about the same opportunity as others to get a college education.

[rotate questions 32 and 33]

32. Do you think qualified students from low-income families, regardless of their ethnic background, have [rotate] [1] less opportunity, [2] more opportunity, [or] about the same opportunity as others to get a college education?

- 59% less opportunity
- 10 more opportunity
- 28 about the same
- 3 don't know

33. Do you think qualified students who are ethnic or racial minorities, such as blacks or Latinos, have [rotate] [1] less opportunity, [2] more opportunity, [or] about the same opportunity as others to get a college education?

- 42% less opportunity
- 16 more opportunity
- 38 about the same
- 4 don't know

I am going to read you several ways that the federal and state government can make California's higher education system more affordable to students. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

[rotate questions 34 to 37]

34. How about increasing government funding available for work-study opportunities for students to earn money while in college?

- 88% favor
- 10 oppose
- 2 don't know

35. How about increasing government funding available for scholarships or grants for students?

- 83% favor
- 14 oppose
- 3 don't know

36. How about spending more state government money to keep down tuition and fee costs, even if it means less money for other state programs?

53% favor
39 oppose
8 don't know

37. How about having a sliding scale for tuition and fee costs, so that students pay according to their income status?

70% favor
26 oppose
4 don't know

Next, California community college enrollment fees are currently \$20 per unit, which is a decrease from \$26 per unit two years ago.

[rotate questions 38 and 39]

38. Do you think that enrollment fees in the California Community College system are currently about the right amount, too high, or too low?

57% about the right amount
23 too high
9 too low
11 don't know

39. Do you think that enrollment fees in the California Community College system are currently about the same as, higher than, or lower than enrollment fees in other states?

21% about the same
24 higher
19 lower
36 don't know

Changing topics,

As you may know, the state government has an annual budget of around \$100 billion dollars and currently faces a multibillion dollar gap between spending and revenues.

40. How concerned are you that the state's budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in higher education?

48% very concerned
35 somewhat concerned
10 not too concerned
5 not at all concerned
2 don't know

41. Given the state's current budget situation, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being a very low priority and 5 being a very high priority, what priority should be given to spending for California's public colleges and universities?

3% very low priority
8 low priority
33 medium priority
28 high priority
26 very high priority
2 don't know

Next, what if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for public colleges and universities.

[rotate questions 42 and 43]

42. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes for this purpose, or not?

44% yes
52 no
4 don't know

43. Would you be willing to increase student fees for this purpose, or not?

32% yes
62 no
6 don't know

44. Next, in general, how important is California's higher education system to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years?

72% very important
23 somewhat important
2 not too important
1 not at all important
2 don't know

45. In thinking ahead 20 years, if current trends continue, do you think California's economy will need **[rotate 1 and 2]** (1) a higher percentage, (2) a lower percentage, **[or]** about the same percentage of college educated workers as today?

- 67% higher percentage
- 8 lower percentage
- 20 about the same percentage
- 5 don't know

46. In thinking ahead 20 years, if current trends continue, do you think California will have **[rotate 1 and 2]** (1) more than enough, (2) not enough, **[or]** just enough college educated residents needed for the jobs and skills likely to be in demand?

- 16% more than enough
- 47 not enough
- 30 just enough
- 7 don't know

47. In thinking ahead 20 years, how important do you think it is for the state government to be spending more public funds to increase capacity in public colleges and universities?

- 46% very important
- 39 somewhat important
- 8 not too important
- 4 not at all important
- 3 don't know

48. How much confidence do you have in the state government's ability to plan for the future of California's higher education system?

- 12% a great deal
- 40 only some
- 33 very little
- 12 none
- 3 don't know

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

- 33% great deal
- 39 fair amount
- 24 only a little
- 4 none

50. Would you consider yourself to be politically:

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

- 11% very liberal
- 20 somewhat liberal
- 29 middle-of-the-road
- 24 somewhat conservative
- 13 very conservative
- 3 don't know

[d1-d4b: demographic questions]

[questions d4c to d4f asked only of parents of children age 18 or younger]

d4c. What do you hope will be the highest grade level that your youngest child will achieve: some high school, high school graduate, some college, college graduate, or a graduate degree after college?

- 1% some high school
- 6 high school graduate
- 4 some college
- 41 college graduate
- 46 a graduate degree after college
- 2 don't know

d4d. How worried are you about being able to afford a college education for your youngest child?

46% very worried
 26 somewhat worried
 15 not too worried
 12 not at all worried
 1 don't know

d4e. How do you feel about the progress, if any, that you have made so far in saving to help pay for your child's college education—do you feel you are ahead, behind, or just about where you should be at this point?

9% ahead
 57 behind
 30 just about where you should be
 4 haven't started yet/will not be saving (*volunteered*)

d4f. Do you feel like you have more than enough, just enough, or not enough information about financial aid for your child's college education?

15% more than enough
 32 just enough
 49 not enough
 4 don't know

[d5-d17: demographic questions]

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