

PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Their Government

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January 2001

**Public
Policy
Institute
of
California**

Preface

California is in the midst of tremendous growth and historic changes that will profoundly affect its future. To understand these changes and how they influence voters' choices at the ballot box, PPIC is conducting an ongoing series of comprehensive statewide surveys focusing on the theme of "Californians and Their Government."

The first surveys in this series were conducted during the 1998 election cycle, beginning in April 1998 and concluding in January 1999. A second set of surveys was conducted during the 2000 election cycle, beginning in September 1999 and concluding in October 2000. Several of the surveys were special editions, focusing on particular regions and themes (November 1999 on the Central Valley, June 2000 on the environment, and July 2000 on San Diego County). The surveys have now generated a database that includes the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of over 32,000 Californians throughout the state.

This report presents the results of the sixteenth of these statewide surveys. The current survey is the first in a new series that will continue through the 2002 election cycle.

The objective of the PPIC Statewide Survey is to provide policymakers, the media, and the general public with relevant, non-partisan, advocacy-free information on a wide range of issues:

- Californians' overall impressions and concerns about the economy, population growth, governance, and quality of life and about key issues such as education, welfare, and immigration.
- How Californians relate to their government—their perceptions about how government works and what it does, the role it plays in their lives, how well it performs in delivering services, how involved people are in government and politics, the extent to which they trust their political leaders to do what is right, and the place they prefer government to have in their lives.
- The public's interest in civic affairs and politics, their current and preferred information sources, their attention to state political news, and their ratings of their political leaders.
- How growing regions and groups—such as the Central Valley, suburban regions, Latinos, and independent voters—affect the state's elections and policy debates.
- The role of political, social, and economic attitudes in public support for citizens' initiatives and government reform proposals.

Copies of earlier survey reports or additional copies of this report may be ordered by e-mail (order@ppic.org) or phone (415-291-4400). The reports are also posted on the publications page of the PPIC web site (www.ppic.org).

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Press Release

ELECTRICITY ISSUE REGISTERS WITH CALIFORNIANS Most Believe Crisis Will Harm Economy; Consumer Confidence Falters, But Some Optimism Remains

SAN FRANCISCO, California, January 18, 2001 — Energy woes in the Golden State have captured the attention of state residents and surged to the top of their list of concerns, according to a new survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). And although they are divided about solutions, Californians overwhelmingly believe that the problem will cause significant damage to the state's economy over the next few years.

Eighty-four percent of Californians say they are closely following news reports about the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California, a sharp increase from the 60 percent who said they were following news about the electricity situation in October 2000. And for the first time in two years, education issues are not dominating the policy spotlight in California: When asked to name the number one issue that the governor and state legislature should work on this year, Californians are now as likely to name electricity prices and deregulation (25%) — an issue that has not registered as a concern in previous surveys — as public schools and education (26%). No other issue was mentioned by more than 4 percent of residents.

Residents are not just tuned in to the state's power problem — they take it very seriously: 92 percent say they view the electricity market in California as a problem, with 74% calling it a "big problem." And 82 percent of Californians believe that this issue will damage the state's economy in the next few years, with 56 percent saying it will hurt the economy "a great deal."

"Californians are deeply worried about the implications of this crisis for the state economy and their own pocketbooks," said PPIC Statewide Survey Director Mark Baldassare. "Right now, they are still holding out hope, but their optimism — as well as the political fortunes of state leaders — may suffer if they fail to see some action soon."

Governor Davis continues to receive high overall ratings, despite the fact that a majority of residents disapprove of his handling of the state's electricity problem. Sixty-three percent of Californians say they approve of Davis' performance as governor, even though 62 percent disapprove of his efforts to ease the electricity crisis. These ratings appear to mirror the divide between residents' general optimism on one hand and their increasing concern about economic prospects on the other. Although 62 percent say that the state is headed in the right direction — up from 59 percent in October — the number of Californians who express optimism about the economy has dropped precipitously. Today, only half (51%) of state residents say they think economic good times will continue in the next year, compared to 72 percent in August. The vast majority of residents who now express concern about the economy and their personal finances also view the state's electricity quandary as a big problem and disapprove of the governor's handling of the issue.

Overall, Californians blame deregulation (47%) and electric companies (25%) rather than consumers (10%) or the current governor and legislature (9%) for the electricity situation facing the state. They are divided about possible solutions to the problem, with 37 percent advocating re-regulation of the industry, 32 percent the construction of more power plants, and 20 percent conservation efforts. Only 1 percent of Californians see raising electricity prices as a preferred solution to the crisis.

Interestingly, Los Angeles County residents (42%) are the most likely to support re-regulation and Latinos (32%) are most likely to prefer conservation.

Schools Remain on Public's Radar

Heightened anxiety about electricity has not diminished interest in California's public education system — it remains a top issue for most Californians. While the majority of residents (52%) continue to see public school quality as a “big problem,” a growing number believe that schools are improving. Indeed, 31 percent say that the quality of California's K-12 schools have improved over the past two years — compared to 22 percent in January 2000 — while 39 percent believe the quality has stayed the same and 22 percent think it has gotten worse.

Surprisingly, the growing satisfaction with California's public schools does not appear to benefit Governor Davis, who continues to devote considerable effort to education policy: Support for his handling of the state's K-12 education system has dropped over the past year. Currently, 45 percent of Californians say they approve of the governor's education-related efforts, while 32 percent disapprove. In January 2000, 51 percent approved of his handling of public education and 28 percent disapproved.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of recent reforms, Californians say that reducing class sizes (43%) has made more difference in improving the quality of education than increasing per pupil spending (17%) or student testing (13%). Nevertheless, the majority of residents think that all three policy efforts undertaken by the state in recent years have made at least a moderate difference in improving schools.

Election Fallout

Despite the controversy surrounding George W. Bush's election — and the strong support that Al Gore received in the Golden State — 54 percent of Californians believe Bush will be a strong and capable president. However, 50 percent also believe the country will be divided in the coming four years, making it hard for the new president to accomplish a great deal. Expectations about Bush's performance in office correlate closely with how people voted: Almost all Bush voters (94%) feel he will make a strong and capable president, compared to only 24 percent of Gore voters. Seventy-five percent of Bush voters think the country will unite behind him while 73 percent of Gore voters think it will not.

The recent national election captured the attention of state residents. Sixty percent of Californians say that they “very closely” followed news reports about the election and 40 percent report having gone online to get news and information about the race. The lingering effects of the traumatic election are evident in public attitudes about the Electoral College and voting technology. Sixty-four percent of Californians say they would support eliminating the Electoral College and moving to a system of direct elections. Not surprisingly, Democrats (75%) are far more supportive of the idea than are Republicans (41%). Fifty-one percent of state residents say they would prefer to use state funds to upgrade technology at local polling places rather than continuing to use paper ballots.

Not Even a Mouse ...

Despite high expectations for e-commerce during the holiday season, Californians only slightly increased their online Christmas shopping this year. Twenty-four percent reported going online to purchase gifts during the holidays this year, compared to 20 percent one year ago. Twenty-six percent say they expect to purchase something over the Internet in the coming year, compared to 23 percent last January. San Francisco Bay area residents, non-Hispanic whites, and those with incomes over \$80,000 were much more likely than Central Valley residents, Latinos, and those with incomes under \$40,000 to make Internet purchases during the holidays.

Other Key Findings

- ***Influence of Special Interests on Initiative Process*** (page 4)
Nine in ten Californians believe that the initiative process in California is controlled “a lot” (52%) or “somewhat” (40%) by special interests. A smaller majority (60%) also believes that state government is controlled by a few big interests.
- ***Online Signature Gathering*** (page 5)
A majority of residents (61%) say they would oppose a new law allowing signature gathering for initiatives over the Internet.
- ***Initiative Reform*** (pages 4-6)
Most Californians favor increasing public disclosure of initiative campaign finances (78%). They also support creating, for proposed initiatives, systems of review that seek to address problems with ballot language (77%) and raise constitutional or legal questions (88%) before initiatives are placed on the ballot.
- ***Other Ratings of the Governor*** (page 14)
Majorities approve of Governor Davis’ handling of crime (54%) and budget (53%) issues. However, Californians are evenly split in their approval (41%) and disapproval (39%) of his efforts on transportation and traffic congestion issues. And more Californians disapprove of his handling of HMO reform and health care than approve (39% to 35%).
- ***Trust in Government*** (pages 17-20)
Despite the fact that less than half of Californians trust their state government to do what is right always (7%) or most of the time (39%), they express more faith in state officials than in the federal government when it comes to fiscal management and problem solving.

About the Survey

The purpose of the PPIC Statewide Survey is to develop an in-depth profile of the social, economic, and political forces affecting California elections and public policy preferences. PPIC will conduct large-scale public opinion surveys on a regular basis leading up to the 2002 election cycle. Findings of the current survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,011 California adult residents interviewed from January 2 to January 8, 2001. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for the 1,593 registered voters is +/- 2.5%. For additional information on survey methodology, see page 29.

[Dr. Mark Baldassare](#) is a senior fellow and program director at PPIC. He is founder and director of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has conducted since 1998. For over two decades, he has directed surveys for the University of California, Irvine, and major state news organizations.

Press Release

Dr. Baldassare is the author of numerous books, including *California in the New Millennium: The Changing Social and Political Landscape* (University of California Press, 2000).

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

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Post-Election Issues

New Presidency

Despite the controversy surrounding George W. Bush's election—and the strong support that Al Gore received in the Golden State—54 percent of Californians believe Bush will be a strong and capable president. However, 50 percent also believe the country will be divided in the coming four years. These sentiments are consistent with those expressed in a national survey by Reuters/NBC News/Zogby in December 2000, which found that 58 percent of Americans expect Bush to be a strong president and 50 percent predict a divided country.

There are strong partisan differences: 86 percent of Republicans believe Bush will be a good president, as opposed to just 31 percent of Democrats and 48 percent of voters outside of the major parties. Democrats and Republicans also differ on whether the country will be united behind Bush: Only 26 percent of Democrats say the country will be united, compared to 69 percent of Republicans. Despite Latinos' high level of Democratic registration, their opinions of Bush are closer to the opinions of Californians overall than to those of registered Democrats. However, Latinos are not as approving of Bush as are non-Hispanic whites (49% to 58%).

Expectations about Bush's performance in office correlate with how people voted: Almost all Bush voters (94%) feel he will make a strong and capable president, compared to only 24 percent of Gore voters. Seventy-five percent of Bush voters think the country will unite behind their man while 73 percent of Gore voters think it will not.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"Do you agree or disagree that George W. Bush will be a strong and capable President?"</i>						
Agree	54%	31%	86%	48%	55%	49%
Disagree	36	59	8	41	32	40
Don't know	10	10	6	11	13	11
<i>"Which one of these two statements comes closer to your point of view: (a) the country will be able to unite behind George W. Bush, who will be able to accomplish a lot in the next four years; (b) the country will be divided, and it will be hard for George W. Bush to accomplish a lot in the next four years."</i>						
Country will be united	44%	26%	69%	40%	46%	41%
Country will be divided	50	68	25	55	47	53
Don't know	6	6	6	5	7	6

New U.S. Congress

Can Congress overcome one of the closest partisan splits in American history and get things done? Fifty-eight percent of Californians believe it can. That is much higher than the 44 percent who believe a united country will enable Bush to accomplish his goals.

Once again, party and presidential vote correlate with people's opinions on the issue: Democrats (51%) and Gore voters (47%) are less likely than Republicans (71%) and Bush voters (72%) to think Congress will be able to get things done over the next two years. Latinos (61%) fall between—again, despite their high level of registration as Democrats.

"In the newly-elected Congress, the U.S. Senate is evenly split between Republicans and Democrats, and there is a nearly an even split in the U.S. House of Representatives. Do you think the political parties in Congress will be able to work together and get things done, or that they won't be able to get things done?"

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
Will get things done	58%	51%	71%	48%	59%	61%
Won't get things done	36	44	23	47	33	34
Don't know	6	5	6	5	8	5

Electoral College

Californians (64%) support eliminating the Electoral College as strongly as Americans as a whole (63% in an ABC/*Washington Post* survey in December 2000). In California, 75 percent of Democrats and 70 percent of independents support the change, while only 41 percent of Republicans support it and 53 percent oppose the change. Latinos in California are strongly committed to this reform: 76 percent favor switching to a popular vote, compared to 59 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

After an election in which President-elect Bush garnered the electoral vote, while the popular vote went to Gore, it is not surprising that Bush voters in California oppose a direct popular vote by 19 points (57% to 38%), while Gore voters support it by 61 points (78% to 17%).

"For future presidential elections, would you support or oppose changing to a system in which the president is elected by direct popular vote instead of by the Electoral College?"

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
Support	64%	75%	41%	70%	75%	76%
Oppose	30	19	53	25	18	19
Don't know	6	6	6	5	7	5

Voting Technology

Details of the recount process in Florida prompted claims that punch-card voting systems should be replaced. However, the evident lack of problems in California may explain why there is limited support here for making changes. By only a 51 percent majority, Californians seem to think it would be worthwhile to use state funds for new voting technology throughout the state, perhaps even for systems as advanced as touch screens. Just as with the other issues surrounding the 2000 election, there are partisan differences on this issue, but they are more modest: 55 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of independents would like to upgrade voting technology, compared to 43 percent of Republicans. Gore voters (61%) are more likely than Bush voters (40%) to support new voting technology, but there are no differences in support between those who voted in the November 2000 election and those who did not. Technology upgrades are most popular among frequent Internet users (59%) and least popular among those who do not use computers at all (37%).

Californians are much more skeptical of Internet voting. Only 35 percent favor the idea, while 61 percent are opposed. Partisan differences are also much weaker on this question. Support for Internet voting is low among Democrats (36%), Republicans (27%), and voters outside the major parties (39%), just as it is weak among Gore (36%) and Bush (28%) voters. Among Internet users, fewer than half (44%) support the idea of Internet voting, compared to just 19 percent of those who do not use computers at all.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"In California, would you prefer to use state funds for new voting technology at local polling places—such as touch-screen voting systems—or would you prefer that local polling places continue to use paper ballots?"</i>						
Technology upgrades at local polling places	51%	55%	43%	53%	56%	52%
Continue to use paper ballots	42	39	48	43	37	43
Don't know	7	6	9	4	7	5
<i>"In California, would you prefer that the state allow absentee voting over the Internet or would you prefer that absentee voting continue to take place only with paper ballots sent through the mail?"</i>						
Allow absentee voting over the Internet	35%	36%	27%	39%	44%	38%
Continue to use paper absentee ballots	61	59	67	59	53	59
Don't know	4	5	6	2	3	3

Citizen’s Initiatives: Influence of Special Interests

Californians have told us in previous surveys that they like the initiative process and that they believe voters making choices at the ballot box are more likely than the governor and legislature to solve the state’s problems. Nevertheless, they do have concerns about the process—one of which is the control of special interests. Nine in ten believe that the initiative process is controlled at least to some degree by special interests, and 52 percent believe those interests wield a lot of control. This view is pervasive across political groups and major regions of the state. However, non-Hispanic whites (56%) are more likely than Latinos (43%) to say that special interests have a lot of control over the initiative process.

Consistent with this belief, 78 percent of Californians would support a proposal for increasing public disclosure of the financial backers of signature gathering for initiatives and initiative campaigns. At least three in four voters in all political groups support increasing public disclosure, and there are no variations in support for disclosure across regions. Non-Hispanic whites (83%) are even more supportive than Latinos (68%) of this reform.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"Overall, how much would you say that the initiative process in California today is controlled by special interests – a lot, some, or not at all?"</i>						
A lot	52%	55%	57%	52%	35%	43%
Some	40	40	36	40	51	48
Not at all	3	2	2	3	5	4
Don't know	5	3	5	5	9	5
<i>"Would you favor or oppose increasing the public disclosure of the financial backers of signature gathering for initiatives and initiative campaigns?"</i>						
Favor	78%	78%	83%	76%	66%	68%
Oppose	14	15	11	16	20	21
Don't know	8	7	6	8	14	11

Initiative Reforms: Signature Gathering

Also consistent with the belief that the initiative process is controlled by special interests, 60 percent of Californians would favor a new law requiring that volunteers gather signatures; only 29 percent are opposed. Support for banning paid signature gatherers is consistently strong across political groups, and also among Latinos and non-Hispanic whites (64% and 60%, respectively). Solid majorities in all regions of the state also support this requirement.

Most Californians (61%) are opposed to using the Internet for signature gathering. Only one in three would like to see this initiative reform. Strong majorities across political groups and regions of the state are opposed to signature gathering for initiatives over the Internet. However, opposition is stronger among Latinos (64%) than among non-Hispanic whites (55%). Interestingly, six in 10 California residents who use the Internet are opposed to a new law allowing signature gathering for initiatives over the Internet.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"Would you favor or oppose a new law requiring that volunteers gather signatures to qualify initiatives, and banning the use of paid signature gatherers?"</i>						
Favor	60%	61%	59%	62%	61%	64%
Oppose	29	29	29	32	25	27
Don't know	11	10	12	6	14	9
<i>"Would you favor or oppose a new law allowing signature gathering for initiatives over the Internet?"</i>						
Favor	33%	35%	26%	34%	43%	40%
Oppose	61	59	69	61	48	54
Don't know	6	6	5	5	9	6

Initiative Reforms: Ballot Wording and Legality

Californians overwhelmingly approve of reforms to improve the quality of the initiatives that are placed on the ballot. In previous PPIC Statewide Surveys, voters expressed frustration with confusing ballot language and with initiatives that passed and were then overturned by the courts. Perhaps reflecting that frustration, there is strong support for a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives to avoid language problems (77%) and legal problems (88%). Support for these two reforms is strong across political parties, among both Latinos and non-Hispanic whites, and across regions of the state.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"Would you favor or oppose having a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives to try to avoid drafting errors and problems with ballot language?"</i>						
Favor	77%	80%	75%	78%	75%	78%
Oppose	15	13	14	17	15	16
Don't know	8	7	11	5	10	6
<i>"Would you favor or oppose having a review of proposed initiatives so that voters know if there are any legal or constitutional problems before they vote?"</i>						
Favor	88%	90%	88%	91%	85%	89%
Oppose	9	8	8	8	10	8
Don't know	3	2	4	1	5	3

California Policy Issues

Most Important Issue for 2001

For the first time in the Davis Administration, public schools are not dominating the policy spotlight. When asked to name the number one issue that the governor and state legislature should work on in 2001, Californians are equally likely to name schools (26%) and electricity prices (25%). All other issues are mentioned by fewer than 5 percent, including 4 percent each for the budget and taxes, jobs and the economy, immigration, environment and growth, and health care and 3 percent for crime.

In the past two years, no topic other than public schools was mentioned by more than one in 10 people: In 1999, 36 percent and in 2000, 28 percent of Californians were most likely to say that schools were the most important issue for the governor and legislature to tackle. In the current survey, we find that although the public continues to focus on schools, they are now equally concerned about electricity and even less concerned than before about a range of other issues.

All major regions of the state rate public schools and electricity prices as the top two issues. However, electricity prices edge ahead of schools in the Central Valley (26% to 22%) and the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles (30% to 25%), while schools are mentioned more often than electricity prices in Los Angeles (30% to 21%) and the two issues are virtually tied in the San Francisco Bay area (26% to 25%).

Non-Hispanic whites are more concerned about electricity prices than about public schools (30% to 26%), while Latinos name schools more often than electricity prices (26% to 14%) as their top issue. Latinos are also more likely than non-Hispanic whites to list other issues as important—immigration (8%), jobs (7%), and crime (6%).

"Which one issue facing California today do you think is most important for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2001?"

	<u>All Adults</u>		
	1999	2000	2001
Public Schools	36%	28%	26%
Electricity prices, deregulation	0	0	25%
Budget and taxes	6	6	4
Jobs, the economy	5	5	4
Immigration, illegal immigration	5	8	4
Environment, land use, and growth	3	5	4
Health care, HMO reform	3	5	4
Crime, gangs	7	7	3
Transportation and traffic congestion	2	3	2
Poverty, homelessness	5	4	2
Other issues	10	12	10
Don't know	18	17	12

Public Schools: Trends over Time

Most Californians continue to believe that the quality of education in the state's public schools is a significant problem, but more residents than last year are encouraged that progress is being made in tackling this issue. Last year at this time, 53 percent of the state's residents said that quality was a "big problem." This year, 52 percent thought so. Despite this lack of change, 31 percent now believe that the quality of education has improved in the past few years, up from 22 percent a year ago. Moreover, the percentage who think schools have gotten worse has declined from 39 percent a year ago to 22 percent, and 39 percent believe the schools have stayed the same, up slightly from 34 percent a year ago.

Parents of public school children still view the quality of education as a big problem, but this crucial constituency is much more likely to believe that schools are improving (42%) rather than getting worse (20%), while 36 percent see the schools as staying about the same.

Regional perceptions of educational quality vary considerably. Los Angeles residents (58%) are the most likely to say that the quality of K-12 education is a big problem, compared to about half of those elsewhere. San Francisco Bay area residents are the most likely to believe that schools are getting better (35%); in other regions, about three in 10 say there has been improvement in the past two years.

Latinos are much more positive than non-Hispanic whites about the quality of education: Fewer say it is a big problem (45% to 54%), and a much higher percentage think that the schools are improving (40% to 27%).

	<u>All Adults</u>		
	May 98	Jan 00	Jan 01
<i>How much of a problem is the quality of education in K-12 public schools in California today?</i>			
Big problem	46%	53%	52%
Somewhat of a problem	33	30	32
Not much of a problem	14	13	10
Don't know	7	4	6
<i>In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?</i>			
Improved	–	22%	31%
Stayed the same	–	34	39
Gotten worse	–	39	22
Don't know	–	5	8

Impacts of School Policies

When asked to rate the effectiveness of education reforms, Californians give reduced class sizes (43%) much higher marks than increased per-pupil spending (17%) or student testing (13%). Nevertheless, the majority of Californians think that all three policy efforts undertaken by the state in recent years have made at least a moderate difference in improving schools.

Parents of public school children give even higher marks to class-size reductions (51%), and they also give slightly higher marks to increased per-pupil spending (21%) and student testing (19%).

There are no significant regional differences in perceptions of school policies to improve quality. Although Latinos (44%) and non-Hispanic whites (43%) are equally likely to believe that reduced class sizes have made a big difference, Latinos are more likely to think that increased per pupil spending (21% to 15%) and student test scores (21% to 9%) have made a big difference in improving the quality of education.

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<i>Do you think that reducing class sizes in the lower grades of elementary school has made a big difference, moderate difference, or no difference in improving the quality of education?</i>						
Big difference	43%	41%	46%	41%	45%	44%
Moderate difference	39	43	36	40	37	39
No difference	11	11	10	13	11	12
Don't know	7	5	8	6	7	5
<i>Do you think that increasing per pupil spending by the state government has made a big difference, a moderate difference or no difference in improving the quality of education?</i>						
Big difference	17%	16%	18%	16%	18%	21%
Moderate difference	50	52	51	50	47	56
No difference	24	24	20	26	25	18
Don't know	9	8	11	8	10	5
<i>Do you think that the use of student test scores to rank schools and reward their performance has made a big difference, a moderate difference, or no difference in improving the quality of education?</i>						
Big difference	13%	13%	13%	16%	13%	21%
Moderate difference	45	45	46	44	46	51
No difference	33	36	30	31	33	22
Don't know	9	6	11	9	8	6

Electricity: Seriousness of the Problem

Whether or not the state’s leaders and media are willing to call it a “crisis” yet, Californians overwhelmingly (74%) view the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in their state today as a “big problem.” Regionally, Los Angeles residents are less likely (two in three) than residents in other regions (three in four) to see the state’s electricity situation as a major problem. There are no differences across political groups or income categories. However, there are ethnic and age differences: Non-Hispanic whites (76%) are more likely than Latinos (66%), and residents who are 55 and older (81%) are more likely than those who are 35 to 54 (77%) or under 35 years of age (66%), to see the state’s electricity situation as a big problem today.

Moreover, eight in 10 Californians are convinced that the cost and limitations of the electricity market will harm the state’s economy in the next few years, and more than half (56%) think the harm will be significant. While most residents in every region of the state think the electricity situation could do a great deal of harm to the economy, those who live outside of Los Angeles worry the most about its adverse effects, and non-Hispanic whites (57%) are slightly more concerned than Latinos (51%). There are no differences in perceived economic consequences across political groups.

"How much of a problem is the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California today?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Big problem	74%	76%	78%	66%	78%	66%
Somewhat of a problem	18	18	16	24	16	26
Not much of a problem	7	6	6	9	5	8
Don't know	1	0	0	1	1	0

"In the next few years, do you think the issue of the cost, supply, and demand for electricity will hurt the California economy or not?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Yes, a great deal	56%	62%	58%	47%	61%	51%
Yes, somewhat	26	24	24	32	24	31
No	13	10	14	14	12	15
Don't know	5	4	4	7	3	3

Electricity Problems: Causes and Solutions

Where do Californians lay the blame for the current electricity problems in the state? Nearly half (47%) name the state legislature's deregulation of the state's electricity industry in August 1996 as the culprit. One in four blame the electric companies themselves, while about one in 10 see the current governor and legislature or California consumers as most responsible. There are no differences across political groups. Across the major regions of the state, about half of the residents view the utility deregulation law as the cause of the current problem. Non-Hispanic whites (54%) are more likely than Latinos (30%) to say that utility deregulation is to blame; Latinos are more likely to place the responsibility on the companies (35%) and consumers (16%).

When asked to choose their most preferred solution for the electricity situation, Californians are almost equally divided between re-regulation of the state's electricity industry (37%) and building more power plants (32%), while 20 percent would like to see more conservation efforts by consumers. Support for building more power plants is weakest in the urban coastal regions of Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area, and a preference for re-regulation is highest in Los Angeles. Re-regulation is more popular than building power plants with Democrats (42% to 29%) and with independents and "other party" voters (41% to 31%), while Republicans prefer building plants to re-regulation (40% to 31%). Non-Hispanic whites are more likely than Latinos to favor regulation (39% to 31%), while Latinos are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to favor increased conservation efforts as the solution (32% to 15%).

"Which of the following do you think is most to blame for the current electricity situation in California?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Deregulation of state's electricity industry	47%	47%	47%	45%	50%	30%
Electric companies	25	26	23	26	24	35
Current governor and legislature	9	11	8	8	10	10
California consumers	10	7	10	13	7	16
Other answers	4	4	5	3	4	3
Don't know	5	5	7	5	5	6

"Which of the following solutions for the current electricity situation in California do you most prefer?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Re-regulate state's electricity industry	37%	33%	35%	42%	37%	31%
Build more power plants	32	36	32	28	36	30
Encourage conservation	20	20	20	23	16	32
Raise electricity prices	1	2	2	0	1	1
Other answers	8	6	9	5	7	4
Don't know	2	3	2	2	3	2

News Attentiveness

An astounding 86 percent of Californians say they closely followed the news about the events surrounding the vote in the presidential election. Almost as many, 84 percent, are now closely following news about the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California today, a sharp increase from the 60 percent who said they were following news of the crisis in the October 2000 survey. There are no significant differences in interest across regions or among ethnic groups.

Fewer residents are closely following the news about President-elect Bush and plans for his new administration (71%), and far fewer are closely following the news stories about the governor and the state legislature (46%). Again, there is little regional or ethnic difference in attention to news about the state government.

"Tell me if you followed this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely ..."

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<i>News about the U.S. presidential election</i>						
Very closely	60%	60%	62%	60%	59%	55%
Fairly closely	26	24	27	25	27	25
Not too closely	10	11	7	11	10	15
Not at all closely	4	5	4	4	4	5
<i>News about the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California</i>						
Very closely	45%	46%	47%	40%	47%	49%
Fairly closely	39	42	41	39	38	32
Not too closely	13	10	10	17	13	16
Not at all closely	3	2	2	4	2	3
<i>News about President-elect George W. Bush and plans for his administration</i>						
Very closely	38%	38%	35%	38%	39%	34%
Fairly closely	33	35	33	33	35	31
Not too closely	20	20	24	20	18	25
Not at all closely	9	7	8	9	8	10
<i>News about the governor and state legislature</i>						
Very closely	13%	16%	11%	14%	12%	18%
Fairly closely	33	30	34	31	36	29
Not too closely	39	37	42	40	36	38
Not at all closely	15	17	13	15	16	15

California State Government

Job Performance Ratings for State Officials

Governor Gray Davis continues to enjoy high overall approval ratings from Californians, despite emerging public concern over electricity rates. Sixty-three percent say they approve of the way the governor is handling his job, while 24 percent disapprove and 13 percent are undecided. The governor's current approval ratings lie between those he received from the public in September 2000 (66%) and October 2000 (60%). Davis' overall ratings appear to benefit from the public's upbeat mood about the state of the state today. Two in three Californians say the state is headed in the right direction, and most who hold this positive view approve of the governor's job performance (74%).

Democrats (76%) give high marks to Davis. Republicans (47%) and other voters (61%) are also more likely to give him positive than negative ratings. Latinos (71%) are more enthusiastic about the governor's job performance than are non-Hispanic whites (59%). There are modest differences across regions of the state that reflect the patterns of party registration: San Francisco Bay area residents (69%) and Los Angeles residents (64%) give the governor higher marks than those living in the Central Valley (59%) and in the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles (58%).

The California legislature is also viewed in a positive light by most residents, although its ratings are somewhat lower than those of the governor's. Fifty-eight percent approve of the job the state legislature is doing, 27 percent disapprove, and 15 percent are undecided. When we last asked this question in September 2000, a similar 56 percent approved of the legislature's performance.

Approval ratings of the Democratic-controlled state legislature do vary by party registration: Democrats (68%) give higher marks than Republicans (48%) and other voters (51%) to the legislature. Latinos (64%) are more positive than non-Hispanic whites (55%), and San Francisco Bay area residents (64%) give higher approval ratings to the legislature than those living in Los Angeles (56%), the Central Valley (56%), and the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles (57%).

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Gray Davis is handling his job as governor of California?"</i>						
Approve	63%	76%	47%	61%	64%	71%
Disapprove	24	15	39	24	18	17
Don't know	13	9	14	15	18	11
<i>"Do you approve or disapprove of the job the California legislature is doing at this time?"</i>						
Approve	58%	68%	48%	51%	63%	64%
Disapprove	27	20	37	31	21	22
Don't know	15	12	15	18	16	14

Governor's Report Card

While Governor Davis has good overall ratings, the public gives him mixed grades in his midterm report card when they are asked to rank his performance in specific areas.

A majority of Californians like the job he is doing on the issues of crime and punishment (54%) and the state budget and taxes (53%). These approval ratings have changed very little from a year ago. However, fewer than half of the state's residents approve of the governor's handling of public schools (45%). On this issue, there has been a 6-point decline since last January. About as many approve as disapprove of the governor's performance in handling transportation (41% to 39%) and health care (35% to 39%) and, in both instances, the ratings have declined. Most Californians (62%) disapprove of the way Davis is handling the issue of electricity (note: this survey was concluded on the night of the State of the State address). In our September 2000 survey, 28 percent approved, 36 percent disapproved, and 36 percent had no opinion about Davis' handling of the electricity situation.

Many Californians are capable of holding overall positive feelings about the governor, while also expressing disappointment about his handling of important issues. Among the two in three who like the way the governor is handling his job overall, not everyone approves of the way he is handling the schools (59%), transportation (52%), health care (45%), and the electricity situation (33%).

However, it should be noted that most of the two in three Californians who disapprove of Davis' handling of the electricity problem blame the situation on deregulation (48%) and the electricity companies (23%), rather than placing the blame with the "current governor and legislature" (12%), thus providing a good example of why Davis has good overall ratings even though the ratings he receives on specific issues may be lower.

Moreover, Davis' approval ratings on schools seem to suffer from the fact that a little over half of Californians rate the schools as a big problem, and few of these people approve of his performance in this area (33%). Likewise, three in four state residents rate the electricity situation as a big problem, and few in this group say they approve of the way that Davis is handling this issue (20%).

Most Democrats approve of the governor's handling of the budget and taxes (63%), crime (63%), and schools (55%), while less than half give him good grades for his handling of transportation (47%) and health care (39%) and a majority disapprove of his handling of the electricity situation (57%). Republicans are more approving of the way Davis has handled crime (43%) and the state budget and taxes (43%) than they are of the way he has dealt with public schools (33%) and transportation (32%). Only one in four Republicans approves of his handling of health care (24%), and two in three disapprove of the way he has handled the issue of electricity in the state (67%). Among the crucial group of voters outside of the major parties, a bare majority are favorably disposed toward the way the governor is handling crime, the budget, and taxes. Four in 10 approve of his handling of schools and transportation, only three in 10 like the way he has handled health care issues, and two in three disapprove of his handling of the electricity situation.

Davis enjoys stronger approval among Latinos than among non-Hispanic whites in ratings of the job he is doing with schools (59% to 39%), crime (64% to 50%), transportation (56% to 35%), and health care (49% to 29%). The two groups differ less in their approval of how the governor is handling the budget and taxes (56% to 52%) and the electricity situation (29% to 23%).

San Francisco Bay area residents are generally more positive in their specific evaluations of the governor's job performance, with the exception of his handling of transportation and traffic issues. A majority in all of the major regions disapprove of the way he is handling the electricity problem. Those living in the Southern California area outside of Los Angeles are the most negative (67%).

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Davis is handling ..."

	<i>Jan 00</i>	<i>Jan01</i>
<i>... crime and punishment?</i>		
Approve	55%	54%
Disapprove	24	27
Don't know	21	19
<i>... the state budget and taxes?</i>		
Approve	57%	53%
Disapprove	23	31
Don't know	20	16
<i>... the state's kindergarten through twelfth grade public education system?</i>		
Approve	51%	45%
Disapprove	28	32
Don't know	21	23
<i>... transportation and traffic congestion?</i>		
Approve	46%	41%
Disapprove	27	39
Don't know	27	20
<i>... HMO reform and health care?</i>		
Approve	48%	35%
Disapprove	26	39
Don't know	26	26
<i>... utility deregulation and the cost, supply, and demand for electricity?*</i>		
Approve	–	24%
Disapprove	–	62
Don't know	–	14

*Asked in September 2000 Statewide Survey: 28% approved, 36% disapproved, 36% didn't know.

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Davis is handling ..."

<u>January 2001</u>	All Adults	<u>Party Registration</u>			Not Registered to Vote	Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voter		
<i>... crime and punishment?</i>						
Approve	54%	63%	43%	50%	58%	64%
Disapprove	27	22	32	32	24	22
Don't know	19	15	25	18	18	14
<i>... the state budget and taxes?</i>						
Approve	53%	63%	43%	50%	51%	56%
Disapprove	31	24	42	34	29	30
Don't know	16	13	15	16	20	14
<i>... the state's K-12 public education system?</i>						
Approve	45%	55%	33%	41%	51%	59%
Disapprove	32	25	42	34	26	25
Don't know	23	20	25	25	23	16
<i>... transportation and traffic congestion?</i>						
Approve	41%	47%	32%	40%	49%	56%
Disapprove	39	36	46	40	33	32
Don't know	20	17	22	20	18	12
<i>... HMO reform and health care?</i>						
Approve	35%	39%	24%	29%	50%	49%
Disapprove	39	35	45	44	32	32
Don't know	26	26	31	27	18	19
<i>... utility deregulation and the cost, supply, and demand for electricity?</i>						
Approve	24%	28%	17%	24%	27%	29%
Disapprove	62	56	67	64	62	59
Don't know	14	16	16	12	11	12

Trust in State Government: Overall Leadership

Fewer than half of Californians (46%) trust their state government to do what is right just about always or most of the time, and slightly more than half (52%) say they trust the state government only some of the time or never. However, the public is considerably more likely to trust the state government (46%) than the federal government (34%) always or most of the time, and Californians are more likely to express trust in their state government today than they were in our statewide survey in December 1998 (46% to 37%).

Democrats (52%) are more likely than Republicans (40%) and voters outside the major parties (39%) to trust state government. Latinos (51%) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (44%) to say they can trust the state government always or most of the time. There are regional variations as well, reflecting partisan differences in perceptions of the Democratic-controlled state government: Los Angeles residents (48%) and San Francisco Bay area residents (49%) are more likely than those living in the Central Valley (41%) and the region of Southern California outside of Los Angeles (42%) to trust state government.

"How much of the time do you trust the government in [Washington/Sacramento] to do what is right?"

	<u>All Adults</u>	
	Washington (Oct 00)	Sacramento (Jan 01)
Just about always	4%	7%
Most of the time	30	39
Only some of the time	62	50
Never (<i>volunteered</i>)	4	2
Don't know	–	2

"How much of the time to you trust the government in Sacramento to do what is right?"

	All Adults	<u>Party Registration</u>				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
Just about always	7%	6%	5%	5%	12%	12%
Most of the time	39	46	35	34	37	39
Only some of the time	50	45	56	55	45	47
Never (<i>volunteered</i>)	2	1	3	5	2	1
Don't know	2	2	1	1	4	1

Trust in State Government: Fiscal Management

Ninety percent of the state's residents believe that the state government wastes at least some of their money. Nearly half (47%) believe that the state government wastes a lot of money. However, Californians are even more likely (58%) to say that the federal government wastes a lot of money. The number of residents saying that their state government wastes a lot of money has declined somewhat since our December 1998 survey (52% to 47%).

Republicans (57%) are more inclined to believe that the state government is wasting a lot of money than are Democrats (41%) or voters outside of the major parties (46%). Non-Hispanic whites (49%) are a little more likely than Latinos (43%) to perceive a lot of waste in state government spending. San Francisco Bay area residents (39%) are less likely than residents in other regions to believe that the state government wastes a lot of the money we pay in taxes.

"Do you think the people in [federal/state] government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?"

All Adults		
	Federal Government (Jan 00)	State Government (Jan 01)
Waste a lot	58%	47%
Waste some	35	43
Don't waste much	5	8
Don't know	2	2

"Do you think the people in state government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?"

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
Waste a lot	47%	41%	57%	46%	44%	43%
Waste some	43	48	36	44	42	43
Don't waste much	8	9	5	7	11	11
Don't know	2	2	2	3	3	3

Trust in State Government: The Role of Special Interests

By a two-to-one margin, Californians believe that their state government is run by a few big interests rather than for the benefit of all of the people. The percentage of Californians who say big interests run the government in Washington and in Sacramento is similar (64% to 60%), and Californians are about as likely today (60%) as they were in our statewide survey in December 1998 (64%) to say that their state government is pretty much run by a few big interests.

Democrats (59%) and Republicans (61%) are equally likely to say that state government is run by special interests, with voters outside of the major parties (68%) even more likely to say so. Non-Hispanic whites (62%) are more inclined than Latinos (55%) to believe that big interests are running the state government. Central Valley residents (66%) are the most likely to express this view, while San Francisco Bay area residents are the least likely (56%).

"Would you say that the [federal/state] government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all of the people?"

	<u>All Adults</u>	
	Federal Government (Oct 00)	State Government (Jan 01)
Few big interests	64%	60%
Benefit of all of the people	29	31
Don't know	7	9

"Would you say that the state government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?"

	All Adults	<u>Party Registration</u>				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
Few big interests	60%	59%	61%	68%	53%	55%
Benefit of all of the people	31	34	29	23	36	36
Don't know	9	7	10	9	11	9

Trust in State Government: Problem Solving

Almost two in three Californians (63%) have at least some confidence that the government in Sacramento can solve a problem when it decides to do so. However, very few state residents express a lot of confidence in their state government's ability to solve problems. A greater percentage of Californians have more confidence in the ability of their state government to solve problems (63%) than in the federal government's ability to do so (58%). However, a similar question asked in our December 1998 statewide survey found more confidence in the state government solving important problems than exists in this survey (69% to 63%)—perhaps reflecting some concerns about the emerging and complex issues surrounding electricity deregulation.

Democrats (69%) are more likely than Republicans (61%) and voters outside of the major parties (53%) to have at least some confidence in the problem-solving abilities of their state government. A similar percentage of Latinos (65%) and non-Hispanic whites (62%) express confidence in Sacramento. Residents in Los Angeles (65%) and the San Francisco Bay area (66%) are more likely than those in the Central Valley and in the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles (60% each) to think that the state government can solve a problem when it decides to do so.

"When the government in [Washington/Sacramento] decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem will actually be solved – a lot, some, just a little, or none at all?"

All Adults		
	Washington (Oct 00)	Sacramento (Jan 01)
A lot	9%	8%
Some	49	55
Just a little	31	26
None at all	10	9
Don't know	1	2

"When the government in Sacramento decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem will actually be solved – a lot, some, just a little, or none at all?"

	All Adults	Party Registration				
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	Latino
A lot	8%	9%	7%	4%	12%	12%
Some	55	60	54	49	51	53
Just a little	26	23	28	29	26	27
None at all	9	6	9	15	8	7
Don't know	2	2	2	3	3	1

Impact of State Government on Daily Life

Most of the state’s residents view the decisions made in Sacramento as highly relevant. Nearly eight in 10 Californians see the state government as having at least some influence on their daily lives, while four in 10 believe that Sacramento has a great deal of influence. The percentage of Californians who hold this view is comparable to the percentage in an earlier PPIC Statewide Survey who viewed the federal government as having at least some impact.

Republicans (44%) are more likely than Democrats (38%) and voters outside of the major parties (36%) to think that the state government has a big impact on their daily lives. Latinos (38%) and non-Hispanic whites (40%) are equally likely to say that Sacramento has a lot of influence. Central Valley residents (45%) are more inclined than Los Angeles or other Southern California residents (40% each) or San Francisco Bay area residents (36%) to believe that the actions of state government have a major impact on their daily lives.

"How much impact do you think the [federal/state] government has on your daily life – a lot, some, just a little, or no impact at all?"

	<u>All Adults</u>	
	Federal (Oct 00)	State (Jan 01)
A lot	43%	40%
Some	36	37
Just a little	16	17
No impact at all	4	5
Don't know	1	1

"How much impact do you think the state government has on your daily life— a lot, some, just a little, or no impact at all?"

	All Adults	<u>Party Registration</u>				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
A lot	40%	38%	44%	36%	40%	38%
Some	37	40	38	39	31	35
Just a little	17	16	14	19	20	19
No impact at all	5	5	4	6	6	6
Don't know	1	1	0	0	3	2

Social and Economic Trends

Overall Mood

The economic optimism consistently displayed by Californians experienced a major setback this month, amidst warnings of a national economic slowdown and increasing worries about the state's electricity situation. Today, only half of the state's residents say they expect good financial times for the state in the coming year. This presents a very different picture from four previous surveys since September 1999, when over seven out of 10 Californians expressed optimism about the state's financial future.

Economic confidence has dropped across all regions of the state, among all income groups, and among non-Hispanic whites and Latinos. In all regions, only about half of the residents expect good times for the state financially. Californians earning more than \$80,000 a year (57%) are somewhat more likely than those earning less than \$40,000 a year (47%) and those earning between \$40,000 and \$79,000 a year (51%) to predict good times financially in the coming year.

Despite this dramatic drop in optimism about the state's economic future, most Californians (62%) still say things in the state are going in the right direction. This perception of current conditions has experienced little variation since the PPIC Statewide Survey first asked this question in May 1998. Today, Central Valley residents (55%) are the least likely to think things in California are going in the right direction, compared to people in the San Francisco Bay area (64%), Los Angeles (64%), and the rest of the Southern California region (63%). Sixty-eight percent of Latinos think that things in the state are going in the right direction, compared to 58 percent of non-Hispanic whites. Those in the \$80,000 or more income group (71%) are more likely to have a positive outlook on the direction of the state than those in lower income categories (61%).

"Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?"

<u>All Adults</u>					
	Sep 99	Dec 99	Feb 00	Aug 00	Jan 01
Good times	72%	76%	78%	72%	51%
Bad times	23	19	15	21	38
Don't know	5	5	7	7	11

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

<u>All Adults</u>											
	May 98	Sep 98	Oct 98	Dec 98	Sep 99	Dec 99	Jan 00	Feb 00	Aug 00	Oct 00	Jan 01
Right direction	56%	57%	62%	63%	61%	62%	66%	65%	62%	59%	62%
Wrong direction	34	34	30	28	34	31	26	27	30	32	29
Don't know	10	9	8	9	5	7	8	8	8	9	9

Consumer Confidence

Consumer confidence has declined somewhat over the past four months. Today, 38 percent of Californians say they are better off financially than they were a year ago, and 40 percent expect they will be better off a year from now. Last September, 42 percent of Californians described themselves as financially better off than they were a year earlier, and 48 percent predicted better times ahead.

This decline is consistent across regions, although Central Valley residents are the least likely to think they are financially better off than a year ago (33%) and San Francisco Bay area residents are most likely to feel they are better off today (43%). Southern California residents are the most confident about their financial situations a year from now: Forty-three percent of residents living in Los Angeles and in the rest of Southern California expect to be better off next year, while fewer Central Valley residents (38%) and San Francisco Bay area residents (36%) are optimistic. Latinos are considerably more upbeat than non-Hispanic whites about their current finances (46% to 35%).

Californians with incomes of \$80,000 or more are the most likely to express the view that they are better off financially now than they were a year ago (52%) and to think that they will be better off a year from now than they are today (47%). However, this still represents a decline from last September, when 57 percent of Californians in this income category thought they were better off than the year before and 58 percent said they expected to be better off in the following year. Latinos are considerably more bullish about their future finances than non-Hispanic whites (50% to 37%).

"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	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Better off	38%	33%	43%	37%	38%	46%
Worse off	14	17	14	14	13	10
Same	48	50	43	49	49	44

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

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
Better off	40%	38%	36%	43%	43%	50%
Worse off	12	12	12	13	12	8
Same	43	47	47	38	41	39
Don't know	5	3	5	6	4	3

The Digital Divide

Californians' use of computers and the Internet remain the highest they have been since PPIC first began tracking these activities in September 1999. Today, 79 percent of Californians report using a computer at home, work, or school. Sixty-nine percent say they go online to access the Internet or to communicate through e-mail. The number of Californians using computers today has changed little over the past two surveys but has risen slightly since September 1999, when 74 percent of the state's residents reported using computers. Similarly, the number of Californians who go online (69%) has changed little since September 2000 but has gone up by nine points since September 1999 (60%).

Remarkably, several aspects of California's digital divide continue to shrink. Computer use by the state's Latinos has risen steadily since August 2000, while that of non-Hispanic whites has remained constant. An 8-point gap remains between the two groups, but this is much smaller than the 21-point gap that existed in February 2000. Internet use among Latinos has also risen since September 1999 but still remains much lower than that of non-Hispanic whites. Today, 56 percent of Latinos report going online, compared to 72 percent of non-Hispanic whites. Despite this gap, Internet use by Latinos is up 16 points from this time last year.

All Adults								
	Sept 99	Dec 99	Jan 00	Feb 00	Aug 00	Sept 00	Oct 00	Jan 01
"Do you ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school?"	74%	76%	78%	72%	76%	78%	78%	79%
"Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send or receive e-mail?"	60	61	64	60	66	68	68	69

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

	Sept 99	Dec 99	Jan 00	Feb 00	Aug 00	Sept 00	Oct 00	Jan 01
Latinos	62%	67%	61%	55%	66%	68%	70%	72%
Non-Hispanic whites	77	77	81	76	79	80	80	80

"Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send or receive e-mail?"

	Sept 99	Dec 99	Jan 00	Feb 00	Aug 00	Sept 00	Oct 00	Jan 01
Latinos	39%	42%	40%	39%	50%	51%	56%	56%
Non-Hispanic whites	65	66	70	66	70	73	71	72

Internet Shopping

The purchase of Christmas and holiday gifts over the Internet has increased only slightly since January of last year, even though Internet use has increased. One in four Californians reported going online to purchase gifts during the most recent holiday season, compared to a similar one in five residents last year. Twenty-six percent of Californians expect to purchase something over the Internet this year, compared to 23 percent a year ago.

The San Francisco Bay area surpasses other regions when it comes to e-commerce. Thirty percent of the residents in that region report going online to purchase Christmas and holiday gifts over the past few months, compared to 23 percent of those living in Los Angeles, 23 percent of those in the Southern California region outside of Los Angeles, and 20 percent of those in the Central Valley. Thirty-three percent of the residents in the Bay Area expect to purchase something over the Internet in the coming year, compared to 24 percent of those in Los Angeles and the other areas of Southern California and 19 percent of the residents in the Central Valley.

Almost half of California's residents in the \$80,000 or more income category went online either often (21%) or sometimes (28%) to purchase holiday gifts. By comparison, only 11 percent of those in the \$40,000 or less income category and 16 percent of those in the \$40,000 to \$79,999 income group purchased gifts online at least sometimes. Only 15 percent of Latinos did their gift shopping online this year, compared to 27 percent of non-Hispanic whites. Residents under the age of 35 (29%) were three times as likely as those older than 55 (10%) to purchase gifts online.

Looking ahead to the coming year, Californians making more than \$80,000 a year (49%) are much more likely than those making between \$40,000 and \$79,999 a year (26%) and less than \$40,000 (14%) to expect to do at least some online shopping. Latinos (19%) are much less likely than non-Hispanic whites (27%) to expect to shop online in the coming year.

	Jan 00	Jan 01
<i>"In the past few months, did you buy any Christmas or holiday gifts over the Internet?"</i>		
Yes, often	5%	9%
Yes, sometimes	15	15
No	44	45
Don't use Internet	36	31
<i>"This year, how often do you expect to make purchases over the Internet?"</i>		
A lot	5%	7%
Some	18	19
Very little	21	23
Not at all	20	20
Don't use Internet	36	31

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	
<i>"In the past few months, did you buy any Christmas or holiday gifts over the Internet?"</i>						
Yes, a lot	9%	5%	12%	10%	8%	6%
Yes, some	15	15	18	13	15	9
No	45	45	44	43	46	41
Don't use Internet	31	35	26	34	31	44
<i>"This year, how often do you expect to make purchases over the Internet?"</i>						
A lot	7%	3%	10%	6%	6%	4%
Some	19	16	23	18	18	15
Very little	23	26	24	23	22	18
Not at all	20	20	17	19	22	19
Don't use Internet	31	35	26	34	32	44

Internet News Gathering

The Internet did receive a great deal of use during the dramatic presidential election this fall. Four in ten Californians reported going online at least sometime in the past few months to get news and information about the presidential election. Similar percentages of Democratic voters (40%), Republican voters (44%), and voters outside the major parties (41%) sought presidential election news online. Fewer unregistered Californians (29%) went online for such information. Three in ten Latinos compared to four in ten non-Hispanic whites went online for news about the presidential election.

Fewer residents (25%) went online to seek information about the state elections. Democrats (27%), Republicans (25%), and independents (29%) were similar in this regard. Latinos (21%) went online slightly less often than did non-Hispanic whites (24%) to gather news and information on California's elections.

Of the Californians who voted in the last election, 44% percent went online for news and information about the presidential election and 28% went online for news about state elections. True to form, younger voters used the Internet to find information and news about elections far more than did other voters this past year. Younger voters (60%) were more likely than voters between 35 and 54 years of age (48%) and voters over 55 (23%) to seek online news and information about the presidential election. Similarly, more voters between 18 and 34 (40%) than voters between 35 and 54 (29%) and voters over 55 (14%) went online for news about the California elections.

	All Adults	Party Registration				Latino
		Democrat	Republican	Other Voters	Not Registered to Vote	
<i>"In the past few months, did you go online to get news and information about the presidential election?"</i>						
Yes, often	20%	20%	23%	22%	11%	13%
Yes, sometimes	20	20	21	19	18	17
No	29	28	28	37	26	26
Don't use Internet	31	32	28	22	45	44
<i>"In the past few months, did you go online to get news and information about the elections in California?"</i>						
Yes, often	9%	10%	10%	11%	4%	8%
Yes, sometimes	16	17	15	18	12	13
No	44	41	47	49	39	35
Don't use Internet	31	32	28	22	45	44

Survey Methodology

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, with research assistance from Eric McGhee and Mina Yaroslavsky. The findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,011 California adult residents interviewed from January 2 to January 8, 2001. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers, ensuring that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in California were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to five times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing by using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish. Maria Tello translated the survey into Spanish.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California's adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the census and state figures. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any demographic differences.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,011 adults is +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. The sampling error for the 1,593 registered voters is +/- 2.5%. Sampling error is just one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

Throughout the report, we refer to four geographic regions. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “SF Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, and “Other Southern California” includes the mostly suburban regions of Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. These four regions were chosen for analysis because they are the major population centers of the state, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population; moreover, the growth of the Central Valley and “Other Southern California” regions have given them increasing political significance.

We present specific results for Latinos because they account for about 24 percent of the state's adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing voter groups. The sample sizes for the African American and Asian subgroups are not large enough for separate statistical analysis. We contrast the opinions of Democrats and Republicans with “other” or “independent” registered voters. This third category includes those who are registered to vote as “decline to state” as well as a fewer number who say they are members of other political parties.

In some cases, we compare PPIC Statewide Survey responses to responses recorded in national surveys conducted in November and December 2000 by ABC/*The Washington Post*, Reuters/NBC News/Zogby, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the Pew Center for the People and the Press. We used 1998, 1999, and 2000 PPIC Statewide Surveys to analyze trends over time in California.

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

JANUARY 2-8, 2001

2,011 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS; ENGLISH AND SPANISH

MARGIN OF ERROR +/- 2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

1. George W. Bush will be inaugurated as U.S. President on January 20th. Do you agree or disagree that George W. Bush will be a strong and capable president? (*if agree or disagree: Is that strongly or somewhat?*)

33% strongly agree
21 somewhat agree
12 strongly disagree
24 somewhat disagree
10 don't know

2. Which of these two statements comes closer to your point of view: (a) the country will be able to unite behind George W. Bush, who will be able to accomplish a lot in the next four years; (b) the country will be divided, and it will be hard for George W. Bush to accomplish a lot over the next four years?

44% country will be able to unite
50 country will be divided
6 don't know

3. In the newly elected Congress, the U.S. Senate is evenly split between Republicans and Democrats, and there is a nearly even split in the U.S. House of Representatives. Do you think the political parties in Congress will be able to work together and get things done, or won't they be able to get things done?

58% get things done
36 won't get things done
6 don't know

4. For future presidential elections, would you support or oppose changing to a system in which the president is elected by direct popular vote instead of by the Electoral College?

64% support
30 oppose
6 don't know

5. In California, would you prefer to use state funds for new voting technology at local polling places—such as touch-screen voting systems—or would you prefer that local polling places continue to use paper ballots?

51% technology upgrades at local polling place
42 continue to use paper ballots
7 don't know

6. In California, would you prefer that the state allow absentee voting over the Internet, or would you prefer that absentee voting continue to take place only with paper ballots sent through the mail?

35% allow absentee voting over the Internet
61 continue to use paper absentee ballots
4 don't know

7. Which one issue facing California today do you think is most important for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2001? (*code, don't read*)

26% schools, education
25 energy/electricity prices, electricity deregulation
4 health care, HMO reform
4 immigration, illegal immigration
4 jobs, the economy, unemployment
3 crime, gangs
3 environment, pollution
3 taxes, cutting taxes
2 housing costs, housing availability
2 poverty, the poor, the homeless, welfare
2 traffic and transportation
1 drugs
1 government regulations
1 growth, overpopulation
1 guns, gun control
1 race relations, racial and ethnic issues
1 state and local finance
1 state budget, spending surplus
1 state government, governor, legislature
0 campaign finance reform
0 water
2 other (*specify*)
12 don't know

8. Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

62% right direction
29 wrong direction
9 don't know

9. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?

51% good times
38 bad times
11 don't know

10. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Gray Davis is handling his job as governor of California?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 62% | approve |
| 24 | disapprove |
| 14 | don't know |
11. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling the state's kindergarten through twelfth grade public education system?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 45% | approve |
| 32 | disapprove |
| 23 | don't know |
12. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling crime and punishment issues?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 54% | approve |
| 27 | disapprove |
| 19 | don't know |
13. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling the issue of transportation and traffic congestion?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 41% | approve |
| 39 | disapprove |
| 20 | don't know |
14. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling the state budget and taxes?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 53% | approve |
| 31 | disapprove |
| 16 | don't know |
15. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling the issue of utility deregulation and the cost, supply, and demand for electricity?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 24% | approve |
| 62 | disapprove |
| 14 | don't know |
16. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the governor is handling HMO reform and health care issues?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 34% | approve |
| 39 | disapprove |
| 27 | don't know |
17. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the job the California legislature is doing at this time?
- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 58% | approve |
| 27 | disapprove |
| 15 | don't know |
18. People have different ideas about the state government in Sacramento. How much of the time do you trust the government in Sacramento to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?
- | | |
|----|---|
| 7% | always |
| 39 | most of the time |
| 50 | only some of the time |
| 2 | none of the time (<i>volunteered</i>) |
| 2 | don't know |
19. Do you think the people in state government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?
- | | |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 47% | a lot |
| 43 | some |
| 8 | don't waste very much |
| 2 | don't know |
20. Would you say the state government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all of the people?
- | | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 60% | few big interests |
| 31 | benefit of all of the people |
| 9 | don't know |
21. When the government in Sacramento decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem will actually be solved—a lot, some, just a little, or none at all?
- | | |
|----|---------------|
| 8% | a lot |
| 55 | some |
| 26 | just a little |
| 9 | none at all |
| 2 | don't know |
22. How much impact do you think the state government has on your daily life—a lot, some, just a little, or no impact at all?
- | | |
|-----|------------------|
| 40% | a lot |
| 38 | some |
| 17 | just a little |
| 5 | no impact at all |
| 1 | don't know |
23. How much of a problem is the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem or not much of a problem?
- | | |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 74% | big problem |
| 18 | somewhat of a problem |
| 7 | not much of a problem |
| 1 | don't know |

24. In the next few years, do you think the issue of the cost, supply, and demand for electricity will hurt the California economy or not? (*if yes: Do you think it will hurt the California economy a great deal or only somewhat?*)

56% yes, a great deal
 26 yes, only somewhat
 13 no
 5 don't know

25. Which of the following do you think is most to blame for the current electricity situation in California?

47% deregulation of the state's electricity industry
 9 the current governor and legislature
 25 the electric companies
 10 California consumers
 4 more than one answer, other (*specify*)
 5 don't know

26. Which of the following solutions for the current electricity situation in California do you most prefer?

37% re-regulate the state's electricity industry
 32 build more power plants
 1 raise electricity prices
 20 encourage consumers to conserve energy
 1 do nothing (*volunteered*)
 7 more than one answer, other (*specify*)
 2 don't know

27. How much of a problem is the quality of education in kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in California today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

52% big problem
 32 somewhat of a problem
 10 not much of a problem
 6 don't know

28. In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California's K through 12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

31% improved
 22 gotten worse
 39 stayed the same
 8 don't know

29. Do you think that the use of student test scores to rank schools and reward their performance has made a big difference, a moderate difference, or no difference in improving the quality of education?

13% big difference
 45 moderate difference
 33 no difference
 9 don't know

30. Do you think that reducing class sizes in the lower grades of elementary schools has made a big difference, moderate difference, or no difference in improving the quality of education?

43% big difference
 39 moderate difference
 11 no difference
 7 don't know

31. Do you think that increasing per pupil spending by the state government has made a big difference, a moderate difference, or no difference in improving the quality of education?

17% big difference
 50 moderate difference
 24 no difference
 9 don't know

On another topic, California uses the direct initiative process, which enables voters to bypass the legislature and have an issue put on the ballot as a state proposition for voter approval or rejection.

32. Overall, how much would you say that the initiative process in California today is controlled by special interests—a lot, some, or not at all?

52% a lot
 40 some
 3 not at all
 5 don't know

33. Would you favor or oppose increasing public disclosure of the financial backers of signature gathering for initiatives and initiative campaigns?

78% favor
 14 oppose
 8 don't know

34. Would you favor or oppose a new law requiring that volunteers gather signatures to qualify initiatives, and banning the use of paid signature gatherers?

60% favor
 29 oppose
 11 don't know

35. Would you favor or oppose a new law allowing signature gathering for initiatives over the Internet?

33% favor
61 oppose
6 don't know

36. Would you favor or oppose having a system of review and revision of proposed initiatives to try to avoid drafting errors and problems with ballot language?

77% favor
15 oppose
8 don't know

37. Would you favor or oppose having a review of proposed initiatives so that voters know if there are any legal or constitutional problems before they vote?

88% favor
9 oppose
3 don't know

I will read a list of some recent news stories covered by news organizations. As I read each one, tell me if you followed this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (*rotate questions 38-41*)

38. News about the U.S. presidential election.

60% very closely
26 fairly closely
10 not too closely
4 not at all closely

39. News about President-elect George W. Bush and plans for his administration.

38% very closely
33 fairly closely
20 not too closely
9 not at all closely

40. News about the governor and state legislature.

13% very closely
33 fairly closely
39 not too closely
15 not at all closely

41. News about the cost, supply, and demand for electricity in California.

45% very closely
39 fairly closely
13 not too closely
3 not at all closely

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

36% yes, Democrat (*skip to q. 44*)
28 yes, Republican (*skip to q. 44*)
4 yes, another party (*skip to q. 44*)
12 yes, independent
20 no, not registered (*skip to q. 45*)

43. (*Independents only*) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

37% Democratic
27 Republican
30 neither
6 don't know

44. (*Registered voters only; excludes those who did not vote*) Did you vote in the presidential election on November 7th? (*if yes: Did you vote for George W. Bush, for Al Gore, for Ralph Nader, or for someone else?*)

40% Bush
50 Gore
6 Nader
4 other

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

9% very liberal
23 somewhat liberal
30 middle-of-the-road
25 somewhat conservative
11 very conservative
2 don't know

46. How much interest would you say you have in politics—a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?

21% great deal
49 fair amount
26 only a little
4 none

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

56% always
21 nearly always
8 part of the time
4 seldom
11 never

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

38% better off
14 worse off
48 same

49. 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?

40% better off
12 worse off
43 same
5 don't know

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

61% yes, often
18 yes, sometimes
21 no (*skip to q. 56*)

51. Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send or receive e-mail? (*if yes: Do you do this often or only sometimes?*)

53% yes, often
16 yes, sometimes
10 no (*skip to q. 56*)
21 don't use computers (*skip to q. 56*)

52. In the past few months, did you buy Christmas or holiday gifts over the Internet? (*if yes: Did you do this often or only sometimes?*)

9% yes, often
15 yes, sometimes
45 no
31 don't use computers/Internet

53. This year, how often do you expect to make purchases over the Internet—a lot, some, very little, or not at all?

7% a lot
19 some
23 very little
20 not at all
31 don't use computers/Internet

54. In the past few months, did you go online to get news and information about the presidential election? (*if yes: Did you do this often or only sometimes?*)

20% yes, often
20 yes, sometimes
29 no
31 don't use computers/Internet

55. In the past few months, did you go online to get news and information about the elections in California? (*if yes: Did you do this often or only sometimes?*)

9% yes, often
16 yes, sometimes
44 no
31 don't use computers/Internet

[56-64. Demographic Questions]

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

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