



Californians & Education

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News Release

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PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

More Than Eight in Ten Say Children Are Falling Behind Academically During the Pandemic

MOST APPROVE OF NEWSOM'S HANDLING OF K–12 EDUCATION; A SOLID MAJORITY ARE CONCERNED PUBLIC SCHOOLS WON'T BE FULLY OPEN THIS FALL

SAN FRANCISCO, April 28, 2021—One year after the state's schools halted in-person learning due to COVID-19, more than eight in ten Californians think children are falling behind academically during the pandemic. Most Californians approve of how Governor Newsom is handling the state's K–12 public education system, though six in ten are concerned that California's K–12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall. These are among the key findings of a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

(Note: As a companion piece to the new survey, PPIC is publishing a blog post by president and CEO Mark Baldassare, "Reading the Tea Leaves on the Governor's Recall.")

Overwhelming majorities of Californians (86% adults; 83% public school parents) say children are falling behind academically during the pandemic. Among all adults, 64 percent say children are falling behind a lot, and 22 percent say they are falling behind a little. Among public school parents, 60 percent say a lot, and 23 percent say a little. Across racial/ethnic groups, more than eight in ten say children are falling behind during the pandemic (whites: 66% a lot, 22% a little; Asian Americans: 64% a lot, 21% a little; Latinos: 62% a lot, 23% a little; African Americans: 55% a lot, 30% a little).

Californians are similarly concerned that students in lower-income areas and English language learners are especially likely to fall behind academically. Eight in ten are either very (42% adults, 42% public school parents) or somewhat (42% adults, 45% public school parents) concerned that students in lower-income areas have been more likely to fall behind. Across racial/ethnic groups, 50 percent of Asian Americans, 49 percent of African Americans, 46 percent of Latinos, and 35 percent of whites are very concerned. Similar shares of Californians are very (32% adults, 35% public school parents) or somewhat (48% adults, 45% public school parents) concerned that English language learners have been more likely to fall behind academically. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (37%), Latinos (37%), and Asian Americans (35%) are more likely than whites (26%) to be very concerned.

"Californians overwhelmingly believe that children have fallen behind academically during the pandemic and that students in lower-income areas and English language learners have been most at risk," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

Most Approve of the Governor's Handling of K–12 Education

Majorities of Californians (57% adults, 64% public school parents) approve of how Governor Newsom is handling the state's public K–12 system. The governor's K–12 approval rating was higher last April,

early in the pandemic (73% adults, 78% public school parents), but it was similar in April 2019 (53% adults, 68% public school parents). Views of the governor's handling of K–12 education break along party lines, with 79 percent of Democrats, 52 percent of independents, and 22 percent of Republicans approving. Approval of Governor Newsom's handling of school reopenings (56% adults, 58% public school parents) is similar to his overall K–12 approval. Across partisan groups, 76 percent of Democrats, 54 percent of independents, and 24 percent of Republicans approve.

"Majorities of Californians approve of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the state's K–12 public schools and school reopening, while they remain deeply divided along party lines," Baldassare said.

Most Want Schools At Least Partially Opened Now and Are Concerned Schools Will Not Fully Open This Fall

Amid continued public deliberation over reopening California's K–12 schools, majorities say that schools should be at least partially opened now. Among all adults, 53 percent say schools should be partially opened and 28 percent say they should be fully opened. Among public school parents, 48 percent say schools should be partially opened and 27 percent say they should be fully opened.

Looking ahead to fall 2021, solid majorities of Californians are concerned that K–12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction. Six in ten adults say they are concerned (24% very, 37% somewhat), as do two in three public school parents (25% very concerned, 41% somewhat concerned). At least two in ten across racial/ethnic groups say they are very concerned that schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall (25% Asian Americans, 25% Latinos, 24% whites, 21% African Americans).

"Most Californians and public school parents want the state's K–12 public schools to be at least partially opened today, and six in ten are concerned that schools will not be fully open this fall," Baldassare said.

Strong Majorities Approve of Their District's Handling of School Closures

Asked about the way their local school district has been handling school closures, 65 percent of adults and 72 percent of public school parents approve. However, far more public school parents (92%) approved in April 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic. Today, majorities across regions (74% Los Angeles, 68% Inland Empire, 66% San Francisco Bay Area, 60% Central Valley, 54% Orange/San Diego) approve of how their school district has been handling school closures, as do majorities across racial/ethnic and other demographic groups.

A solid majority of public school parents say they are either very (15%) or somewhat (48%) satisfied with their ability to provide a productive environment for distance learning during school closures. A similar share is very (19%) or somewhat (42%) satisfied with the instruction and activities provided by their youngest child's school.

"Two in three Californians approve of their school district's handling of school closures, and most public school parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the distance learning that has taken place," Baldassare said.

Overwhelming Majorities Favor Year-End Testing, Despite Mixed Views on Accuracy

With the end of the school year approaching, three in four (75% adults, 76% public school parents) favor conducting year-end state testing to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning. About one in four (23% adults, 23% public school parents) oppose year-end testing this spring. Nationally, half of public school parents favor year-end testing, according to a National PTA survey conducted in February

public school parents favor year-end testing, according to a National PTA survey conducted in February 2021. Across racial/ethnic groups in California, strong majorities favor year-end testing: 83 percent of Latinos, 70 percent of Asian Americans, 70 percent of whites, and 68 percent of African Americans.

However, Californians have mixed views on the accuracy of standardized tests. A majority say they are very (10% adults, 13% public school parents) or somewhat (43% adults, 44% public school parents) confident that standardized tests accurately measure a student's progress and abilities. But more than four in ten say they are either not too confident (31% adults, 31% public school parents) or not at all confident (14% adults, 11% public school parents). Fewer than two in ten across racial/ethnic groups are very confident about test accuracy (18% African Americans, 15% Latinos, 9% Asian Americans, 7% whites).

"Three in four Californians favor conducting year-end state testing this spring to measure the pandemic's impact on learning, although only about half have confidence in their accuracy," Baldassare said.

Most Give Their Local Schools Good Grades, but a Growing Share Would Opt for Private School

Asked to give their local public schools a letter grade, 41 percent of adults and 50 percent of public school parents would give an A or B (adults: 9% A, 32% B; public school parents: 6% A, 44% B).

Responses among all adults were similar in April 2020 (11% A, 34% B), but public school parents were somewhat more likely to give an A a year ago (14% A, 39% B). Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (29%) are least likely to give an A or a B (43% Latinos, 42% Asian Americans, 42% whites).

Forty-two percent of parents say they would send their youngest child to a private school if cost and location were not at issue. This compares with 31 percent who would choose traditional public schools, 14 percent charter schools, and 13 percent religious schools. The share that would opt for private school has increased somewhat in recent years (35% 2019, 31% 2018).

"Californians' grades for their local public schools are similar to before the pandemic, but more parents are saying they would send their child to a private school if cost and location were not an issue," Baldassare said.

Most Say School Funding Is Inadequate; Majorities Would Vote Yes on School Construction Bonds

About half of Californians (49% adults, 53% likely voters, 51% public school parents) say that the current level of state funding for their local public schools is not adequate. Similar shares held this view in April 2020 (50% adults, 55% likely voters, 55% public school parents). Across partisan groups, Democrats (60%) are much more likely than independents (45%) and Republicans (34%) to say state funding for local public schools is inadequate.

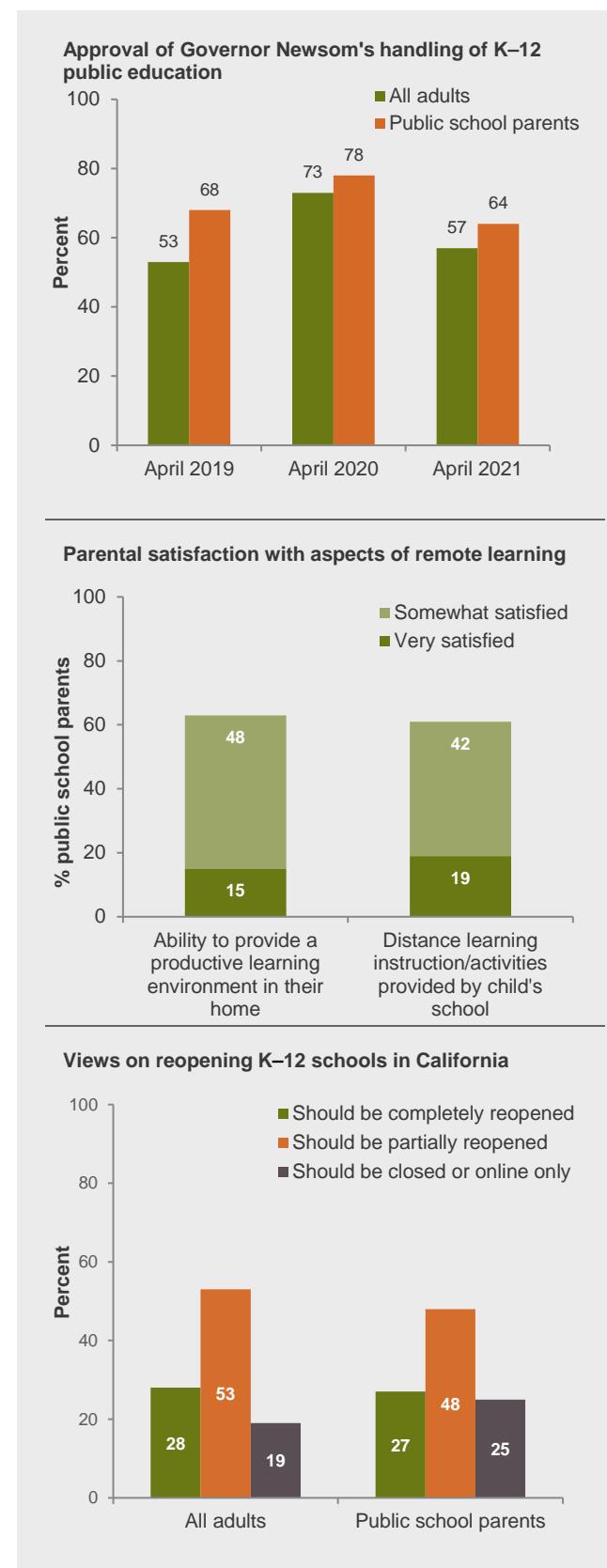
Asked how they would vote on a state bond measure for school construction, majorities of adults (59%), likely voters (55%), and public school parents (74%) say they would vote yes. Democrats (73%) are far more likely than independents (52%) and Republicans (34%) to hold this view. Asked about a local bond measure for school construction, majorities of adults (58%), likely voters (52%), and public school parents (73%) would vote yes. Democrats (68%) are much more likely than independents (50%) and Republicans (35%) to say they would vote yes.

"About half of Californians say that the level of state funding for their local schools is inadequate, and majorities would vote yes on state and local school construction bonds," Baldassare said.

Perceptions and Attitudes

Key Findings

- Fifty-seven percent of Californians approve of Governor Newsom's handling of K–12 public education. A majority (54%) of adults say the K–12 education system is going in the right direction, although 44% say the quality of education has gotten worse in the past few years. (*page 7*)
- Overwhelming majorities of adults and public school parents say children are falling behind academically during the pandemic. Majorities of public school parents are satisfied with their ability to provide a productive learning environment and with the distance learning activities provided by their child's school. (*page 8*)
- About half of adults (53%) and public school parents (48%) say schools should be partially reopened; most adults (61%) and public school parents (66%) are concerned that public schools won't be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall. (*page 9*)
- About eight in ten adults and public school parents are concerned that students in lower-income areas and students who are English language learners have been more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic. (*page 10*)
- Forty-one percent of adults and 50 percent of public school parents give their local public schools a positive grade of A or B. Majorities say their local public schools are doing an excellent or good job of preparing students for college (62%) and for jobs and the workforce (54%). (*page 11*)
- Sixty-one percent of adults and 59 percent of public school parents think teacher salaries are too low. Strong majorities say schools in lower-income areas should pay teachers higher salaries and offer them additional training and professional development. (*page 12*)



Approval of State Elected Officials and Policy Direction

Fifty-seven percent of adults and 64 percent of public school parents approve of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the state's kindergarten-through-12th-grade (K–12) public education system. The governor's K–12 approval ratings were higher in the early weeks of the pandemic (April 2020: 73% adults, 78% public school parents) and similar two years ago (April 2019: 53% adults, 68% public school parents). Today, partisans are sharply divided (79% of Democrats, 52% of independents, and 22% of Republicans approve). Across regions, K–12 approval ratings are highest in Los Angeles (64%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (62%). Approval ratings for the governor's handling of school reopenings (56% adults, 58% public school parents) is similar to his overall K–12 approval rating.

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?"

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
All adults		57%	41%	3%
Likely voters		58	40	1
Party	Democrats	79	19	2
	Republicans	22	78	–
	Independents	52	42	6
Region	Central Valley	46	50	4
	Inland Empire	52	45	3
	Los Angeles	64	35	1
	Orange/San Diego	55	42	2
	San Francisco Bay Area	62	35	3

Amid controversy over school reopenings, majorities of Californians say the state's K–12 public education system is going in the right direction (54% adults, 61% public school parents). California adults were more likely to say the state's K–12 public education system is going in the right direction last April (62% adults, 69% public school parents) and less likely to say so in April 2019 (46% adults, 59% public school parents). Today, Democrats (70%) are far more likely than independents (50%) and Republicans (26%) to say that the state's K–12 system is going in the right direction. Across regions, majorities in Los Angeles (60%), the San Francisco Bay Area (54%), and Orange/San Diego (53%) say it is going in the right direction (49% Inland Empire, 48% Central Valley). Across racial/ethnic groups, about six in ten Latinos (63%), African Americans (60%), and Asian Americans (57%)—compared to 43 percent of whites—say it is going in the right direction. Half or more across age and income groups say it is going in the right direction.

"Thinking about the kindergarten through 12th grade public education system overall in California today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?"

	All adults	Party			Likely voters	Public school parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind		
Right direction	54%	70%	26%	50%	53%	61%
Wrong direction	43	27	73	46	45	37
Don't know	3	3	–	4	2	2

Thirty-three percent of Californians say the quality of education in the state's K–12 public schools today is a big problem (54% somewhat). Forty-four percent say the quality of education in the state's K–12 public schools has gotten worse over the past few years (42% stayed the same, 12% improved). About a third (34%) name COVID-19 as the top issue facing the state's schools today.

COVID-19 and K-12 Schools

One year after California's schools closed to in-person learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a solid majority of parents say that school closures have been a big problem (20%) or somewhat of a problem (41%) for them. Last April, 52 percent of parents said school closures were a problem (21% big, 31% somewhat). Today, majorities across all regions and demographic groups say school closures have been a problem for them.

As more schools begin to reopen for in-person instruction, a slim majority of Californians (52%) think the state has done more than enough (9%) or just enough (43% adults), while 46 percent think the state has not done enough to assist local school districts in reopening. Similar shares of public school parents (58%) think the state has done more than enough (10%) or just enough (48%) to assist local schools (41% not enough).

Strong majorities of adults (65%), and public school parents (72%) approve of the way their school district has been handling school closures. However, far more public school parents (92%) approved last April, when school closures had just begun. Today, Democrats (81%) are much more likely than independents (64%) and Republicans (42%) to approve. Majorities across regions approve of the way their local district has been handling school closures, as do majorities across racial/ethnic and other demographic groups.

"Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that your local school district has been handling school closures because of the coronavirus outbreak?"

	All adults	Region					Public school parents
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Approve	65%	60%	68%	74%	54%	66%	72%
Disapprove	32	37	31	25	42	31	27
Don't know	3	3	2	1	4	3	–

A solid majority of public school parents are satisfied with their ability to provide a productive learning environment during school closures (15% very satisfied, 48% somewhat satisfied). A majority are also satisfied with the instruction and activities provided by their youngest child's school (19% very satisfied, 42% somewhat satisfied). Majorities across demographic groups say they are at least somewhat satisfied with both of these elements of distance learning.

In the context of relatively few saying they are "very" satisfied with distance learning during the pandemic, we find that an overwhelming majority of adults (86%) and public school parents (83%) think children are falling behind academically during the pandemic. Most think children are falling behind a lot (64% adults, 60% public school parents), rather than a little (22% adults, 23% public school parents). Republicans (79%) are much more likely than independents (67%) and Democrats (59%) to hold this view. Majorities among racial/ethnic groups, as well as across gender, age, education, and income groups think children are falling behind a lot during the pandemic.

"Do you think children are falling behind academically during the pandemic? If yes, do you think children are falling behind a lot or only a little?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Yes, a lot	64%	55%	64%	62%	66%	60%
Yes, a little	22	30	21	23	22	23
No	13	14	14	15	11	17
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	–

COVID-19 and K–12 School Reopening

A majority of adults (53%) and nearly half of public school parents (48%) say schools in California should be partially reopened; about three in ten say they should be fully reopened (28% adults, 27% public school parents). Fewer say schools should remain closed or online only (19% adults, 25% public school parents). Majorities of Democrats (64%) and independents (53%) say schools should be partially reopened, while 56 percent of Republicans say they should be completely reopened. About half or more across regions and demographic groups say schools should be partially reopened.

Consistent with the share who say that schools should be partially reopened, a plurality of adults (43%) and public school parents (41%) think schools in their community are reopening at about the right pace. About half of Democrats and independents say schools are reopening at the right pace, while about six in ten Republicans say the pace is not quick enough. Across regions, the share saying the pace is about right ranges from 48 percent in Los Angeles to 38 percent in the San Francisco Bay Area. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (49%) are most likely to hold this view (45% Latinos, 43% Asian Americans, 41% whites). Half or fewer across gender, age, education, and income groups say the pace of reopening is about right.

“In general, do you think the pace of reopening of schools in your community is happening too quickly, not quickly enough, or at about the right pace?”

		Too quickly	Not quickly enough	About the right pace	Don't know
All adults		20%	35%	43%	1%
Public school parents		21	37	41	–
Party	Democrats	25	22	52	1
	Republicans	11	62	26	–
	Independents	13	37	48	1
Region	Central Valley	18	40	42	1
	Inland Empire	22	33	45	–
	Los Angeles	19	32	48	1
	Orange/San Diego	24	33	41	2
	San Francisco Bay Area	22	38	38	2

Despite many schools now offering at least part-time in-person instruction, six in ten adults (24% very concerned, 37% somewhat concerned) and two in three public school parents (25% very concerned, 41% somewhat concerned) are concerned that K–12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall. Republicans (38%) are much more likely than independents (25%) and Democrats (17%) to be very concerned. At least two in ten across regions are very concerned (28% Inland Empire, 25% San Francisco Bay Area, 24% Los Angeles, 23% Central Valley, 20% Orange/San Diego). Similarly, at least two in ten across racial/ethnic groups and across gender, income, and homeownership groups are very concerned. The shares holding this view increase as age rises and decrease as education levels rise.

“How concerned are you that California’s K–12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall?”

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	24%	21%	25%	25%	24%	25%
Somewhat concerned	37	41	32	40	37	41
Not too concerned	27	24	32	26	25	23
Not at all concerned	11	12	11	9	13	10
Don't know	1	2	–	–	1	–

Lower-Income Students and English Language Learners

Worries about students in lower-income areas being more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic are widespread, with more than eight in ten adults (42% very, 42% somewhat) and public school parents (42% very, 45% somewhat) expressing concern. Across racial/ethnic groups, more than four in ten Asian Americans (50%), African Americans (49%), and Latinos (46%) and 35 percent of whites say they are very concerned. Across regions, more than four in ten in the San Francisco Bay Area (47%), Los Angeles (46%), and the Inland Empire (45%) say they are very concerned (39% Orange/San Diego, 34% Central Valley). Democrats (50%) and independents (45%) are much more likely than Republicans (30%) to say they are very concerned. Four in ten or more across income groups say they are very concerned about the higher likelihood of students in lower-income areas falling behind academically during the pandemic.

"How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have been more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	42%	49%	50%	46%	35%	42%
Somewhat concerned	42	33	35	42	47	45
Not too concerned	10	13	12	9	10	10
Not at all concerned	4	1	3	3	6	3
Don't know	1	3	–	–	1	–

Levels of concern about English language learners are similar. Eighty percent of adults (32% very, 48% somewhat) and public school parents (35% very, 45% somewhat) say they are concerned that students who are English language learners have been more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (37%), Latinos (37%), and Asian Americans (35%) more often than whites (26%) hold this view. Across regions, Inland Empire (36%), San Francisco Bay Area (36%), and Los Angeles (33%) residents are most likely to be very concerned (27% Orange/San Diego, 25% Central Valley). Democrats (38%) and independents (32%) are more likely than Republicans (23%) to say this. At least three in ten across age groups and levels of income and education are very concerned that English language learners have been more likely to fall behind during the pandemic.

About nine in ten adults and public school parents think that improving academic outcomes for English language learners is important for California's future. Across racial/ethnic groups, more than four in ten Latinos (53%), Asian Americans (48%), and African Americans (46%) and 37 percent of whites say this is very important. Democrats (52%) and independents (49%) are much more likely than Republicans (33%) to say this. More than four in ten across age, education, gender, and income groups hold this view.

"How important is improving student outcomes for English language learners for California's future economic well-being and quality of life?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Very important	45%	46%	48%	53%	37%	44%
Somewhat important	42	38	43	40	44	46
Not too important	9	11	6	5	13	7
Not at all important	3	2	3	1	5	2
Don't know	1	3	–	–	1	–

Local Public Schools

When asked about the quality of their local public schools, 41 percent of adults and 50 percent of public school parents give a grade of A or B. Responses for adults were similar last April (45% A or B) and in April 2019 (38% A or B). Public school parents are somewhat less likely to award an A this year (6%) than in 2020 (14%). Today, African Americans (29%) are less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to give local schools an A or B. Across regions, San Francisco Bay Area (49%) and Orange/San Diego residents (47%) are most likely to give an A or B. Positive views about local schools increase with rising income.

Democrats (47%) and independents (43%) are more likely than Republicans (32%) to give an A or B.

“Overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today? If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F?”

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
A	9%	6%	10%	11%	8%	6%
B	32	23	32	32	34	44
C	39	43	38	41	37	32
D	12	19	13	10	11	12
F	6	4	5	5	7	6
Don't know	2	5	2	1	3	—

When asked how their local public schools are doing in preparing students for college, six in ten adults (7% excellent, 55% good) and seven in ten public school parents (7% excellent, 64% good) give positive ratings. Responses for adults were similar last April (9% excellent, 55% good) and somewhat lower in April 2019 (7% excellent, 48% good). Today, African Americans (54%) are the least likely across racial/ethnic groups to have positive views. When asked how their public schools are doing in preparing students for jobs and the workforce, a majority of adults (6% excellent, 48% good) and more than six in ten public school parents (5% excellent, 59% good) express positive opinions. Responses for adults were similar last April (7% excellent, 50% good) and somewhat less positive in April 2019 (5% excellent, 43% good). Today, about half or more across racial/ethnic groups give excellent or good ratings.

“Are your local public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in...?”

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents	
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites		
Preparing students for college	Excellent	7%	4%	7%	9%	8%	7%
	Good	55	50	51	58	54	64
	Not so good	29	35	30	28	28	23
	Poor	6	6	9	4	7	5
	Don't know	3	5	3	1	4	—
Preparing students for jobs and the workforce	Excellent	6	5	4	9	5	5
	Good	48	42	47	51	48	59
	Not so good	36	39	35	35	35	28
	Poor	7	10	11	4	8	8
	Don't know	3	5	3	1	4	1

About four in ten (42%) parents would send their youngest child to private school if cost and location were not at issue—this share has increased over time (35% 2019, 31% 2018). About three in ten (31%) would choose traditional public schools, 14 percent would choose charter schools, and 13 percent would choose religious schools.

School Teachers

About six in ten Californians (61%) and public school parents (59%) say salaries for teachers in their communities are too low, while about three in ten (29% adults, 29% public school parents) say teacher salaries are just right, and far fewer say they are too high (7% adults, 11% public school parents). These shares were similar when we asked this question in 2019 and 2020. Today, Democrats (75%) are much more likely than independents (57%) and Republicans (44%) to say teacher salaries are too low. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (76%) are most likely to say teacher salaries are too low, compared to fewer Latinos (62%), Asian Americans (61%), and whites (59%). Regionally, solid majorities of Californians in the San Francisco Bay Area (68%), Los Angeles (66%), and Orange/San Diego (62%) say teacher salaries are too low; smaller majorities in the Inland Empire (55%) and Central Valley (54%) hold this view.

"Do you think salaries for teachers in your community are too high, too low, or just about right?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Too high	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	11%
Too low	61	76	61	62	59	59
Just about right	29	15	30	29	30	29
Don't know	3	2	3	2	4	2

A strong majority of Californians (65%) and an overwhelming majority of public school parents (74%) say local schools in lower-income areas should pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money. This compares to 33 percent of adults and 24 percent of public school parents who say lower-income schools should not pay higher salaries. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (81%) support paying higher salaries to teachers in low-income areas, followed by 65 percent of independents and 48 percent of Republicans. Majorities across demographic groups support this view.

About three in four Californians (74%) and eight in ten public school parents (81%) say that local schools in lower-income areas should provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money; 24 percent of adults and 18 percent of public school parents say local schools in lower-income areas should not provide additional training. Among partisan groups, 86 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of independents, and 58 percent of Republicans say lower-income schools should provide additional training and development to teachers. Strong majorities across regions and age groups say this. Among racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans are most likely to support additional training and professional development (81%), compared to 77 percent of both African Americans and Latinos and 68 percent of whites.

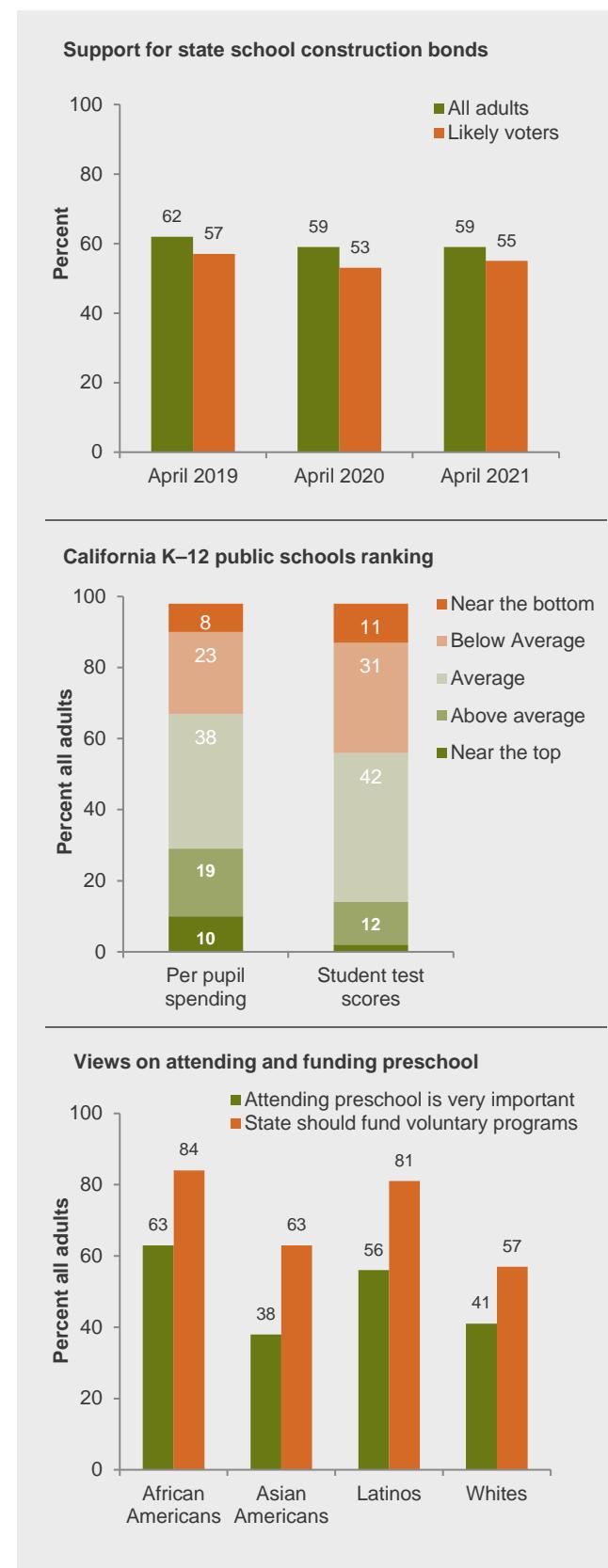
"Should local schools in lower-income areas...?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents	
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites		
Pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers	Yes	65%	74%	75%	66%	57%	74%
	No	33	23	23	32	41	24
	Don't know	2	3	2	1	3	1
Provide additional training and professional development to teachers	Yes	74	77	81	77	68	81
	No	24	20	18	21	29	18
	Don't know	2	3	1	1	3	1

Funding and Policy Preferences

Key Findings

- About three in ten adults think California ranks below average or near the bottom in per pupil spending compared to other states, and about half say that state funding for their local schools is inadequate. Fifty-five percent of likely voters support a state bond for school construction, 52 percent support a local bond, and 44 percent support a local school parcel tax. *(page 14)*
- About seven in ten Californians support the Local Control Funding Formula. Sixty-four percent think the LCFF will improve academic achievement among English language learners and lower-income students. *(page 15)*
- Sixty-eight percent of adults say the state should fund voluntary preschool, and 83 percent say that preschool affordability is a problem. Forty-seven percent say preschool is very important to K–12 success. *(page 16)*
- Majorities of adults say that it is extremely or very important to have a mix of students (55%) and teachers (56%) from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. *(page 17)*
- Three in four adults and public school parents favor conducting year-end state testing this spring to measure the pandemic’s impact on learning. Majorities of adults (53%) and public school parents (57%) are confident that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student’s progress and abilities. *(page 18)*
- Fifty-five percent of adults say it is very important that school curriculum include career technical or vocational education. Forty-five percent say their local public schools prepare someone for a well-paying job in today’s economy either very or somewhat well. *(page 19)*



Funding for Public Schools

About half of Californians (49%), likely voters (53%), and public school parents (51%) say that the current level of state funding for their local public schools is not adequate. Last April, 50 percent of adults, 55 percent of likely voters, and 55 percent of public school parents held this view. Today, Democrats (60%) are much more likely than independents (45%) and Republicans (34%) to hold this view. Similar shares across racial/ethnic groups say that the level of state funding for local schools is inadequate (50% Latinos, 49% Asian Americans, 47% African Americans, 46% whites).

California ranked 23rd out of the 50 states in expenditures for public K–12 education per student based on average daily attendance, according to the National Education Association's *Rankings and Estimates* report (2020). A plurality of adults (38%), likely voters (31%), and public school parents (46%) think California is average in per pupil spending compared to other states. Similar shares held this view last April (39% adults, 31% likely voters, 43% public school parents).

Today, 59 percent of adults, 55 percent of likely voters, and 74 percent of public school parents say they would vote yes on a state bond measure to pay for school construction projects. Similar shares of adults (59%), likely voters (53%), and public school parents (78%) said they would vote yes in April 2020.

Today, Democrats (73%) are far more likely to say they would vote yes than independents (52%) and Republicans (34%). About half or more across regions and demographic groups would vote yes.

By comparison, 58 percent of adults, 52 percent of likely voters, and 73 percent of public school parents say they would vote yes on a local bond measure to pay for school construction projects. Again, similar shares of adults (55%), likely voters (50%), and public school parents (74%) said they would vote yes last April. Democrats are much more likely than independents and Republicans to say they would vote yes. Majorities across regions would vote yes on a local bond measure (60% Los Angeles, 59% Orange/San Diego, 59% San Francisco Bay Area, 55% Central Valley, 54% Inland Empire). Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (71%) and African Americans (67%) are much more likely to say they would vote yes than Asian Americans (54%) and whites (47%). Half or more across age, education, income, and gender groups would vote yes. Local school bonds require a 55 percent majority vote to pass.

"If your local school district had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?"

	All adults	Party			Likely voters	Public school parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind		
Yes	58%	68%	35%	50%	52%	73%
No	40	30	64	46	47	26
Don't know	2	2	1	4	1	1

Forty-five percent of adults, 44 percent of likely voters, and 51 percent of public school parents would vote yes on a local ballot measure to increase local parcel taxes. Similar shares said they would vote yes last year (42% adults, 42% likely voters, 53% public school parents). Today, a majority of Democrats would vote yes, compared to fewer independents and Republicans. About half or fewer across regions and across education, gender, and racial/ethnic groups would vote yes. Renters (52%) are much more likely than homeowners (39%) to be in favor. Local parcel taxes require a two-thirds majority vote to pass.

"What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase local parcel taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools? Would you vote yes or no?"

	All adults	Party			Likely voters	Public school parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind		
Yes	45%	59%	24%	39%	44%	51%
No	53	39	75	56	54	48
Don't know	3	2	1	5	2	1

Local Control Funding Formula

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) provides local school districts with increased spending flexibility and provides additional funding to districts with more English language learners and lower-income students. However, eight years after it was enacted, few Californians report knowing much about the policy; about one in five have heard a lot (3%) or a little (15%) about it. Familiarity among public school parents is only somewhat higher (6% have heard a lot, 22% a little). Three in ten or fewer have reported familiarity with this policy each year since we began asking this question in April 2014.

While most Californians report knowing nothing at all about the LCFF, after reading a brief description of the policy, about seven in ten Californians (68%) and public school parents (71%) favor it. Support was similar last April, in the early days of the pandemic (71% adults, 79% public school parents), and at least 65 percent have been in favor since we began asking about the policy in 2014. Today, overwhelming majorities of Democrats (82%) and about two in three independents (68%) favor the LCFF, compared to about half of Republicans (48%). Solid majorities across racial/ethnic groups support this policy, with Asian Americans and African Americans the most likely to be in favor. Younger Californians age 18 to 34 (73%) and college graduates (75%) are more likely than others to support the LCFF. Solid majorities across regions show support (72% Los Angeles, 70% San Francisco Bay Area, 69% Inland Empire, 67% Orange/San Diego, 61% Central Valley).

"The Local Control Funding Formula provides additional funding to school districts that have more English language learners and lower-income students and gives flexibility over how state funding is spent. In general, do you favor or oppose this policy?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Favor	68%	72%	75%	68%	64%	71%
Oppose	29	22	22	30	32	26
Don't know	3	6	2	2	4	3

Sixty-four percent of Californians think the LCFF will improve the academic achievement of English language learners and lower-income students, with most (43%) saying it will "somewhat" improve academic achievement. Public school parents hold similar views. Findings were similar last April, with 62 percent of Californians and 72 percent of public school parents saying student achievement would improve. Three in four Democrats (77%) and six in ten independents (63%) think it will improve, while half of Republicans think it will not improve (51%). Majorities across racial/ethnic groups and regions say academic performance will improve, with Asian Americans (77%) the most likely to say so.

"As the state implements the Local Control Funding Formula, do you think the academic achievement of English language learners and lower-income students will or will not improve? If improve ask: Do you think it will improve a lot or somewhat?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Improve a lot	8%	21%	6%	11%	4%	6%
Improve somewhat	43	33	55	44	38	47
Improve but not sure how much	13	8	16	10	16	11
Will not improve	32	31	21	32	37	34
Don't know	4	6	2	3	5	2

Early Childhood Education

In December, Governor Newsom released his *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids*, which includes the goal of universal preschool for all four-year-olds and income-eligible three-year-olds. When asked how important attending preschool is to a student's success in kindergarten through grade 12, nearly eight in ten Californians say it is very important (47%) or somewhat important (31%). A similar share of public school parents say it is important (52% very, 35% somewhat). Findings among Californians and public school parents were similar last April. More than two in three across parties say attending preschool is important (85% Democrats, 72% independents, 70% Republicans). More than seven in ten across regions and demographic groups say it is important. Notably, African Americans (63%) and Latinos (56%) are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to view preschool as very important (41% whites, 38% Asian Americans).

"How important is attending preschool to a student's success in kindergarten through grade 12?"

	All adults	Region					Public school parents
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Very important	47%	46%	43%	55%	37%	49%	52%
Somewhat important	31	27	33	28	39	28	35
Not too important	16	15	22	12	16	17	11
Not at all important	6	12	2	3	6	4	2
Don't know	1	-	-	1	1	2	-

Newsom's plan calls for transforming the early childhood education system through public investments, business contributions, philanthropy, and family fees. When asked if they think the state government should fund voluntary preschool programs for all four-year-olds in California, two in three Californians (68%) and eight in ten public school parents (82%) say the state should do so. Findings were similar last April (65%) and in April 2019 (63%). Today, there are differences across parties, with eight in ten Democrats (82%) and about six in ten independents (63%) in favor, compared to four in ten Republicans (41%). Across regions, six in ten or more support the state funding voluntary preschool for all four-year-olds. African Americans (84%) and Latinos (81%) are much more likely than Asian Americans (63%) and whites (57%) to support this plan. Support is higher among Californians age 18 to 34 (73%) and 35 to 54 (73%) than among those age 55 and older (58%).

"Do you think that the state government should or should not fund voluntary preschool programs for all four-year-olds in California?"

	All adults	Region					Public school parents
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Should	68%	63%	72%	74%	60%	70%	82%
Should not	30	35	27	25	37	28	17
Don't know	2	3	1	1	3	2	1

When asked about preschool education in California today, two in three Californians say quality is a big problem (17%) or somewhat of a problem (49%). Findings among public school parents are similar (20% big problem, 50% somewhat of a problem). When asked about the affordability of preschool education in California, more than eight in ten Californians (37% big problem, 46% somewhat of a problem) and public school parents say affordability is a problem (31% big problem, 56% somewhat of a problem).

Student and Teacher Diversity

The racial and economic segregation of local public schools is a continuing concern among educators and policymakers, given persistent disparities in student outcomes. These concerns have increased during the pandemic. Half of adults and public school parents (55% each) say it is extremely or very important that the public schools in their community have a mix of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. African Americans are by far the most likely—and whites are the least likely—to say a mix of students is extremely or very important. The share holding this view varies by party, with Democrats (71%) far more likely than independents (51%) and Republicans (27%) to say this. Across regions, fewer than half in the Central Valley (46%) say this is extremely or very important, while majorities elsewhere hold this view (52% Orange/San Diego, 57% San Francisco Bay Area, 59% Los Angeles, 60% Inland Empire). Californians age 18 to 34 (62%) are more likely than older Californians (55% 35 to 54, 50% 55 and older) to hold this view. More than half of Californians across education and income groups say a mix of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is extremely or very important to them.

“How important is it to you that the public schools in your community have a mix of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Extremely important	26%	43%	28%	31%	18%	24%
Very important	29	34	32	33	25	31
Somewhat important	23	16	24	17	29	28
Not so important	10	2	10	8	13	9
Not important at all	11	3	5	9	15	8
Don't know	1	1	—	2	1	—

When it comes to local public schools having a mix of teachers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, more than half of Californians (56%) and public school parents (57%) also say this is extremely or very important. African Americans are the most likely to say a mix of teachers is extremely or very important, while whites are the least likely to hold this view. Democrats (72%) are far more likely than independents (50%) and Republicans (29%) to say a mix of teachers is extremely or very important. Residents in Los Angeles (62%) and the Inland Empire (61%) are somewhat more likely than residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (53%), Orange/San Diego (49%), and the Central Valley (48%) to hold this view. Majorities across age, education, and income groups say it is extremely or very important for schools to have a mix of teachers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

“How important is it to you that the public schools in your community have a mix of teachers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Extremely important	28%	43%	28%	33%	20%	24%
Very important	28	30	34	32	23	33
Somewhat important	23	18	19	16	29	24
Not so important	11	3	14	11	12	9
Not important at all	10	3	5	8	15	9
Don't know	1	3	—	—	1	—

Testing and Student Achievement

Earlier this year, the US Department of Education announced that despite state requests for a blanket waiver due to the pandemic, standardized state tests will be required this year to measure student progress and learning. With the end of the school year approaching, about three in four Californians (75%) and public school parents (76%) are in favor of conducting year-end state testing this spring to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning, while about one in four adults (23%) and public school parents (23%) oppose testing this spring. Nationally, about half of public school parents strongly (23%) or somewhat (28%) favor testing, according to a National PTA year-end assessment survey conducted in February 2021. Strong majorities across racial/ethnic groups are in favor, including 83 percent of Latinos, 70 percent of Asian Americans, 70 percent of whites, and 68 percent of African Americans. Support increases with age, with 72 percent of adults age 18 to 34, 75 percent of adults age 35 to 54, and 78 percent of adults 55 and older in favor of testing in the spring. High school graduates (79%) and adults with some college education (77%) are somewhat more likely than college graduates (69%) to favor year-end state testing this spring to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning.

"Do you favor or oppose schools conducting year-end state testing this spring (spring 2021) to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Favor	75%	68%	70%	83%	70%	76%
Oppose	23	29	27	15	27	23
Don't know	2	4	3	1	3	–

How confident are Californians when it comes to the accuracy of standardized testing as a measurement of student progress? Majorities of adults and public school parents say they are very (10% adults, 13% public school parents) or somewhat (43% adults, 44% public school parents) confident that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student's progress and abilities. Still, more than four in ten say they are not too (31% adults, 31% public school parents) or not at all (14% adults, 11% public school parents) confident in standardized tests. Views on standardized testing vary across racial/ethnic groups. Fewer than two in ten among racial/ethnic groups are very confident that they are an accurate indicator of student progress and abilities (18% African Americans, 15% Latinos, 9% Asian Americans, 7% whites). Across age groups, similar shares say they are very confident (9% 18 to 34, 12% 35 to 54, 10% 55 and older). High school graduates (16%) are somewhat more likely than those with some college education (7%) or college graduates (6%) to say they are very confident about the accuracy of standardized tests.

"How confident are you that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student's progress and abilities?"

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public school parents
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Very confident	10%	18%	9%	15%	7%	13%
Somewhat confident	43	27	38	49	41	44
Not too confident	31	34	39	24	33	31
Not at all confident	14	20	14	10	16	11
Don't know	2	1	1	2	3	1

College and Career Pathways

Most Californians and public school parents say it is very (55% adults, 53% public school parents) or somewhat (36% adults, 38% public school parents) important for their local public schools to include career technical or vocational education as part of the curriculum. Similar shares of adults (54% very important, 36% somewhat important) and public school parents (49% very important, 42% somewhat important) held this view in April 2020. Meanwhile, fewer than one in ten say this is not too (6% adults, 7% public school parents) or not at all (2% adults, 1% public school parents) important. Majorities across regions say this is very important (59% Inland Empire, 58% Orange/San Diego, 57% Los Angeles, 52% San Francisco Bay Area, 51% Central Valley). Women (60%) are more likely than men (50%), and adults 55 and older (63%) are more likely than younger adults (50% 18 to 34, 52% 35 to 54) to say this. Across racial and ethnic groups, majorities of African Americans (57%), Latinos (57%), and whites (55%), and half of Asian Americans, say the inclusion of career technical or vocational education is very important. Adults with some college education (62%) are more likely than adults with a high school education (51%) or college graduates (52%) to say this is very important.

"How important to you is it that your local public schools include career technical or vocational education as part of the curriculum?"

	All adults	Region					Public school parents
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Very important	55%	51%	59%	57%	58%	52%	53%
Somewhat important	36	37	38	32	34	39	38
Not too important	6	7	2	7	6	7	7
Not at all important	2	2	—	3	2	1	1
Don't know	1	3	—	—	1	2	—

Forty-five percent of Californians say their local public schools are doing very (7%) or somewhat (38%) well when it comes to how well they prepare someone for a well-paying job in today's economy. However, views among public school parents are more positive. A solid majority of public school parents say schools are doing at least somewhat well in preparing people for well-paying jobs (9% very, 52% somewhat). Among partisan groups, Democrats (49%) are the most likely to say schools are doing at least somewhat well, while fewer independents (35%) and Republicans (34%) say this. Across regions, about half or fewer say schools are doing at least somewhat well. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (58%) are the most likely to say schools are doing well, followed by Asian Americans (39%), whites (38%), and African Americans (36%).

"In general, how well do you think your local public schools prepare someone for a well-paying job in today's economy?"

	All adults	Region					Public school parents
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Very well	7%	5%	11%	8%	9%	4%	9%
Somewhat well	38	35	38	37	33	45	52
Not too well	41	44	40	37	45	39	29
Not at all well	12	14	8	17	12	10	10
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1	2	1

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. Survey analyst Rachel Lawler was project manager for this survey. Coauthors for this report also include associate survey director and research fellow Dean Bonner and survey analyst Deja Thomas. The annual Californians and Education survey is supported with funding from the Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation, the Sobrato Family Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. The PPIC Statewide Survey invites input, comments, and suggestions from policy and public opinion experts and from its own advisory committee, but survey methods, questions, and content are determined solely by PPIC's survey team.

Overall findings in this report are based on a survey of 1,602 California adult residents. The median time to complete the survey was 18.6 minutes. Interviews were conducted from April 1–14, 2021.

The survey was conducted by Ipsos, using its online KnowledgePanel, in English, Spanish, Chinese (simplified or traditional), 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. KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability-based sampling and include both those with internet access and those without. KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel. KnowledgePanel members are primarily recruited using address-based sampling (ABS) methodology, which improves population coverage, particularly for hard-to-reach populations such as young adults and minority groups. ABS-recruited Latinos are supplemented with a dual-frame random digit dialing (RDD) sampling methodology that targets telephone exchanges associated with areas with a higher concentration of Latinos to provide the capability to conduct representative online surveys with Latinos, including those who speak only Spanish. KnowledgePanel's recruitment was originally based on a national RDD frame and switched to the primarily ABS-based methodology in 2009. KnowledgePanel includes households with landlines and cell phones, including those with cellphones only and those without phones. ABS allows probability-based sampling of addresses from the US Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File (DSF). The DSF-based sampling frame used for address selection is enhanced with a series of refinements—such as the appendage of various ancillary data to each address from commercial and government data sources—to facilitate complex stratification plans. Taking advantage of such refinements, quarterly samples are selected using a stratified sampling methodology that aims to retain the representativeness of the panel. KnowledgePanel recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition.

To qualify for the survey, a panel member must be age 18 or older and reside in California. A total of 1,676 respondents completed the survey out of 2,976 panelists who were sampled, for a response rate of 58%. To ensure the highest data quality, we flagged respondents who sped through the survey, which we defined as completing the survey in one-fourth of the overall median time (less than 4.5 minutes). We also flagged respondents if their self-reported age or gender did not match the data stored in their profile. A total of 74 cases were removed after this review process, resulting in 1,602 total qualified and valid cases.

Accent on Languages, Inc., translated new survey questions into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Ipsos translated all survey questions into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Ipsos uses the US Census Bureau's 2015–2019 American Community Survey's (ACS) Public Use Microdata Series for California (with regional coding information from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series for California) to compare certain demographic characteristics of the survey sample—region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education—with the characteristics of California's adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the ACS figures. We also used voter registration data from the California Secretary of State to compare the party registration of registered voters in our

sample to party registration statewide. The sample of Californians is first weighted using an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for any differences in the probability of selecting various segments of the KnowledgePanel sample. This base weight is further adjusted using an iterative proportional fitting (raking) procedure that aligns sample demographics to population benchmarks from the 2015–2019 ACS data as well as party registration benchmarks from the California Secretary of State’s voter registration file.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is ± 3.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted sample of 1,602 adults. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 3.4 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for unweighted subgroups is larger: for the 1,390 registered voters, the sampling error is ± 3.6 percent; for the 1,104 likely voters, it is ± 4 percent; for the 397 parents of children 18 or under, it is ± 6.5 percent; for the 318 parents of school-aged children, it is ± 7.1 percent; for the 295 public school parents, it is ± 7.4 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.

We present results for five geographic regions, accounting 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 of other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these less populous areas are not large enough to report separately.

We present results for non-Hispanic whites, who account for 42 percent of the state’s adult population, and also for Latinos, who account for about a third of the state’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest-growing voter groups. We also present results for non-Hispanic Asian Americans, who make up about 15 percent of the state’s adult population, and non-Hispanic African Americans, who comprise about 6 percent. Results for other racial/ethnic groups—such as Native Americans—are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes are not large enough for separate analysis. Results for African American and Asian American likely voters are combined with those of other racial/ethnic groups because sample sizes for African American and Asian American likely voters are too small for separate analysis. We compare the opinions of those who report they are registered Democrats, registered Republicans, and no party preference or decline-to-state or independent voters; the results for those who say they are registered to vote in other parties are not large enough for separate analysis. We also analyze the responses of likely voters—so designated per their responses to survey questions about voter registration, previous election participation, intentions to vote this year, attention to election news, and current interest in politics.

The percentages presented in the report tables and in the questionnaire may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to those in the National PTA Year-End Assessment survey. Numerous questions were adapted from national surveys by Huffington Post/YouGov, Ipsos, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Pew Research Center, Phi Delta Kappa/Langer Research, and Quinnipiac University. Additional details about our methodology can be found at www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf and are available upon request through surveys@ppic.org.

Questionnaire and Results

CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

April 1–14, 2021

1,602 California Adult Residents:

English, Spanish, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Korean, Vietnamese

MARGIN OF ERROR ±3.4% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

- 1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?**

57%	approve
41	disapprove
3	don't know

- 1a. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Newsom is handling the reopening of schools in California?**

56%	approve
42	disapprove
2	don't know

- 2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?**

54%	approve
43	disapprove
3	don't know

- 3. Thinking about the kindergarten through 12th grade public education system overall in California today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?**

54%	right direction
43	wrong direction
3	don't know

Next,

- 4. What do you think is the most important issue facing California's K-to-12 public schools today?**

[open-ended, code]

34%	COVID-19, school closures/online learning/school reopenings
8	lack of funding
5	concerns about politics influencing education
4	concerns about curriculum
4	inequities
4	safety/security
3	concerns about standards/quality of education
3	large class sizes
3	quality of teachers
2	teachers unions
23	other (<i>specify</i>)
7	don't know

- 5. In your opinion, what is the most important goal of California's K-12 public schools?**

—*[rotate] (1) preparing students for college; (2) preparing students for the workforce; (3) teaching students the basics; (4) teaching students life skills; (or) (5) preparing students to be good citizens?*

26%	teaching students life skills
24	preparing students for college
20	teaching students the basics
12	preparing students for the workforce
12	preparing students to be good citizens
5	other (<i>specify</i>)
—	don't know

- 6. How much of a problem is the quality of education in California's K–12 public schools today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?**

33%	big problem
54	Somewhat of a problem
11	not much of a problem
2	don't know

- 7. Over the past few years, do you think the quality of education in California's K–12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?**

12%	improved
44	gotten worse
42	stayed the same
2	don't know

On another topic,

- 8. [parents of school-aged children only]** Regardless of how your child is currently attending school, what best describes the options that your youngest school-aged child has in attending school?

19%	in-person full-time
44	remotely or online full-time
35	a combination of in-person and remote learning
2	something else (specify)
—	don't know

- 9. [parents of school-aged children only] How is your youngest school-aged child currently attending school?**

13%	only in person, on their school campus
62	only remotely or online
22	part-time in person, part-time remotely or online
2	something else (specify)
—	don't know

- 10. [parents of school-aged children only]** Now, if your youngest school-aged child's school were to allow you to choose ANY of these ways for your child to attend school for the rest of this school year, which would you choose?

37%	only in person, on their school campus
36	only remotely or online
24	part-time in person, part-time remotely or online
3	something else (specify)
—	don't know

- 11. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that your local school district has been handling school closures because of the coronavirus outbreak?**

65%	approve
32	disapprove
3	don't know

- 11a. Do you think the state government has done more than enough, just enough, or not enough to assist local school districts in reopening schools for in-person instruction?**

9%	more than enough
43	just enough
46	not enough
2	don't know

- 12. [parents only]** How much of a problem for you and your family have local school closures been because of the coronavirus outbreak? Have they been a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

20%	big problem
41	somewhat of a problem
40	not much of a problem
—	don't know

- 13. [public school parents only] How satisfied have you been with your ability to provide a productive learning environment in your home during local school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic? Have you been very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied?**

15%	very satisfied
48	somewhat satisfied
29	not too satisfied
7	not at all satisfied
—	don't know

- 14. [public school parents only] Thinking about the entire time that your youngest school-aged child has spent in distance learning, how satisfied are you with the distance-learning instruction and activities provided by your youngest school-aged child's school? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied?**

19%	very satisfied
42	somewhat satisfied
26	not too satisfied
13	not at all satisfied
—	don't know

- 15. Do you think children are falling behind academically during the pandemic? (if yes ask: Do you think they are falling behind a lot or only a little?)**

86%	yes
64	yes, a lot
22	yes, a little
13	no
1	don't know

- 16. How concerned are you that California's K-12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction this fall?**

24%	very concerned
37	somewhat concerned
27	not too concerned
11	not at all concerned
1	don't know

Next, thinking about K-12 schools that are not currently open for any in-person instruction, how much consideration should be given to each of the following as these schools decide whether to reopen?

[rotate questions 17 to 20]

- 17. The risk to teachers and students of getting or spreading the coronavirus? Should this be given a lot of consideration, some consideration, not too much consideration, or no consideration at all?**

57%	a lot of consideration
29	some consideration
10	not too much consideration
3	no consideration at all
—	don't know

- 18. The possibility that students will fall behind academically without in-person instruction? Should this be given a lot of consideration, some consideration, not too much consideration, or no consideration at all?**

59%	a lot of consideration
32	some consideration
6	not too much consideration
2	no consideration at all
—	don't know

- 19. Parents not being able to work if their children are at home? Should this be given a lot of consideration, some consideration, not too much consideration, or no consideration at all?**

44%	a lot of consideration
42	some consideration
10	not too much consideration
3	no consideration at all
—	don't know

- 20. The possibility that students' emotional well-being will be negatively impacted if they don't attend school in person? Should this be given a lot of consideration, some consideration, not too much consideration, or no consideration at all?**

55%	a lot of consideration
36	some consideration
6	not too much consideration
3	no consideration at all
—	don't know

Next,

- 21. Which best describes what you think schools in California should be doing right now to deal with the coronavirus pandemic?**

[rotate order top to bottom]

28%	schools should be completely reopened
53	schools should be partially reopened
19	schools should be closed or online-only
—	don't know

- 22. In general, do you think the pace of reopening of schools in your community is happening: *[rotate order top to bottom]* too quickly, not quickly enough, or at about the right pace?**

20%	too quickly
35	not quickly enough
43	about right pace
1	don't know

Changing topics,

[rotate questions 23 and 24]

- 23. How concerned are you that California's K–12 public schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?**

43%	very concerned
40	somewhat concerned
10	not too concerned
6	not at all concerned
1	don't know

- 24. How concerned are you that California's K–12 public school students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college when they finish high school? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?**

43%	very concerned
39	somewhat concerned
11	not too concerned
6	not at all concerned
1	don't know

- 25. Next, how much, if anything, have you heard about students who are English language learners in California? Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all?**

17%	a lot
42	a little
40	nothing at all
—	don't know

- 26. How concerned are you about the issue of improving student outcomes for the English language learners in California today? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?**

21%	very concerned
48	somewhat concerned
22	not too concerned
8	not at all concerned
1	don't know

- 27. In thinking about priorities for the kindergarten-through-12th-grade public education system in California, do you think that efforts to improve student outcomes for English language learners should be a: *[rotate order top to bottom]* very high priority, high priority, medium priority, low priority, or very low priority?**

14%	very high priority
38	high priority
35	medium priority
9	low priority
4	very low priority
1	don't know

28. How important is improving student outcomes for English language learners for California's future economic well-being and quality of life? Is this very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

- | | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 45% | very important |
| 42 | somewhat important |
| 9 | not too important |
| 3 | not at all important |
| 1 | don't know |

29. If it means less funding for other school districts, do you think school districts that have more English language learners should or should not get more funding from the state?

- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 59% | should |
| 40 | should not |
| 2 | don't know |

[rotate questions 30 and 31]

30. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have been more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?

- | | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 42% | very concerned |
| 42 | somewhat concerned |
| 10 | not too concerned |
| 4 | not at all concerned |
| 1 | don't know |

31. How concerned are you that students who are English language learners have been more likely to fall behind academically during the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?

- | | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 32% | very concerned |
| 48 | somewhat concerned |
| 13 | not too concerned |
| 6 | not at all concerned |
| 1 | don't know |

[rotate questions 32 and 33]

Changing topics,

32. Where do you think California currently ranks in per pupil spending for K–12 public schools? Compared to other states, is California's spending near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- | | |
|-----|-----------------|
| 10% | near the top |
| 19 | above average |
| 38 | average |
| 23 | below average |
| 8 | near the bottom |
| 2 | don't know |

33. Where do you think California currently ranks in student test scores for K–12 public schools? Compared to other states, are California's student test scores near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- | | |
|----|-----------------|
| 2% | near the top |
| 12 | above average |
| 42 | average |
| 31 | below average |
| 11 | near the bottom |
| 2 | don't know |

34. Next, overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today? If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F? Think of grades A to F as a scale where A is the best and F is failing.

- | | |
|----|------------|
| 9% | A |
| 32 | B |
| 39 | C |
| 12 | D |
| 6 | F |
| 2 | don't know |

[rotate questions 35 and 36]

35. Are your local public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for college?

- | | |
|----|-------------|
| 7% | excellent |
| 55 | good |
| 29 | not so good |
| 6 | poor |
| 3 | don't know |

36. Are your local public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for jobs and the workforce?

6%	excellent
48	good
36	not so good
7	poor
3	don't know

On another topic,

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

10%	more than enough
38	just enough
49	not enough
3	don't know

38. If the state ballot had a bond measure to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?

59%	yes
39	no
2	don't know

[rotate questions 39 and 40]

39. If your local school district had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?

58%	yes
40	no
2	don't know

40. What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase local parcel taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools? Would you vote yes or no?

45%	yes
53	no
3	don't know

[rotate questions 41 and 42]

41. Do you think the current level of resources for lower-income students in your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

9%	more than enough
37	just enough
51	not enough
3	don't know

42. Do you think the current level of resources for English language learners in your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

13%	more than enough
48	just enough
36	not enough
3	don't know

Following is a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about teachers in California's K-12 public schools today. Please answer if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem.

[rotate questions 43 and 44]

43. How about teacher quality?

28%	big problem
52	somewhat of a problem
17	not really a problem
2	don't know

44. How about a shortage of teachers?

42%	big problem
42	somewhat of a problem
14	not really a problem
3	don't know

Next,

45. Do you think salaries for teachers in your community are too high, too low, or just about right?

7%	too high
61	too low
29	just about right
3	don't know

[rotate questions 46 and 47]

46. Should local schools in lower-income areas pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

65% yes
33 no
2 don't know

47. Should local schools in lower-income areas provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

74% yes
24 no
2 don't know

On another topic,

48. How much, if anything, have you heard about the Local Control Funding Formula, a policy enacted in recent years that changes the way K–12 public school districts are funded in California? Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

3% a lot
15 a little
81 nothing at all
1 don't know

49. The Local Control Funding Formula provides additional funding to school districts that have more [rotate] [English language learners] [and] [lower-income students] and gives local school districts more flexibility over how state funding is spent. In general, do you favor or oppose this policy?

68% favor
29 oppose
3 don't know

50. As the state implements the Local Control Funding Formula, do you think the academic achievement of [rotate in same order as question 49] [English language learners] [and] [lower-income students] will or will not improve? (if improve, ask: Do you think it will improve a lot or somewhat?)

64% improve
8 improve a lot
43 improve somewhat
13 improve but not sure how much (volunteered)
32 will NOT improve
4 don't know

51. On another topic, do you think that the state government should or should not fund voluntary preschool programs for all four-year-olds in California?

68% should
30 should not
2 don't know

52. How important is attending preschool to a student's success in kindergarten through grade 12—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

47% very important
31 somewhat important
16 not too important
6 not at all important
1 don't know

[rotate questions 53 and 54]

53. How much of a problem is the quality of preschool education in California today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

17% big problem
49 somewhat of a problem
30 not much of a problem
4 don't know

- 54. How much of a problem is the affordability of preschool education in California today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?**

37%	big problem
46	somewhat of a problem
14	not much of a problem
3	don't know

[rotate questions 55 and 56]

- 55. How concerned are you that children in lower-income areas are less likely than other children to be ready for kindergarten? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?**

26%	very concerned
44	somewhat concerned
22	not too concerned
7	not at all concerned
1	don't know

- 56. How concerned are you that students who speak English as a second language are less likely than other children to be ready for kindergarten? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this issue?**

21%	very concerned
44	somewhat concerned
24	not too concerned
10	not at all concerned
1	don't know

Changing topics,

- 57. How important to you is it that your local public schools include career technical or vocational education as part of the curriculum—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

55%	very important
36	somewhat important
6	not too important
2	not at all important
1	don't know

- 58. In general, how well do you think your local public schools prepare someone for a well-paying job in today's economy? Does it prepare someone very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not at all well?**

7%	very well
38	somewhat well
41	not too well
12	not at all well
2	don't know

On another topic,

- 59. [parents only] Thinking about four school types. [rotate] One is [1] traditional public schools. Another is [2] charter schools, which are publicly funded but run outside of the public school system. The third is [3] religious or parochial schools. And the fourth is [4] private schools. Imagine you could send your youngest child to any one of these four kinds of schools and cost and location were not an issue. All things equal, which would you pick?**

31%	public school
14	charter school
13	religious school
42	private school
—	other
1	don't know

- 60. [parents only] Next, what do you hope will be the highest grade level that your youngest child will achieve: some high school; high school graduate; two-year community college graduate or career technical training; four-year college graduate; or a graduate degree after college?**

5%	some high school
6	high school graduate
10	two-year community college graduate or career technical training
37	four-year college graduate
41	a graduate degree after college
1	don't know

- 61. [parents only] How worried are you about being able to afford a college education for your youngest child? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?**

35%	very worried
43	somewhat worried
16	not too worried
6	not at all worried
1	don't know

On another topic,

- 62. Do you favor or oppose schools conducting year-end state testing this spring (spring 2021) to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning?**

75%	favor
23	oppose
2	don't know

- 63. How confident are you that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student's progress and abilities—very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?**

10%	very confident
43	somewhat confident
31	not too confident
14	not at all confident
2	don't know

Changing topics,

[rotate questions 64 and 65]

- 64. How important is it to you that the public schools in your community have a mix of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds—is this extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not so important, or not important at all?**

26%	extremely important
29	very important
23	somewhat important
10	not so important
11	not important at all
1	don't know

- 65. How important is it to you that the public schools in your community have a mix of teachers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds—is this extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not so important, or not important at all?**

28%	extremely important
28	very important
23	somewhat important
11	not so important
10	not important at all
1	don't know

Next,

- 66. How big of a problem is racism in the US today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all?**

58%	big problem
26	somewhat of a problem
9	small problem
6	not a problem at all
–	don't know

- 67. Thinking about your own experience, have you ever experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity? [if yes ask: Would you say regularly or from time to time?]**

37%	yes
4	yes, regularly
29	yes, from time to time
4	yes, don't know (volunteered)
63%	no
–	don't know

- 68. In general, do you think the criminal justice system in the United States is biased against African Americans, or do you think the criminal justice system treats people equally regardless of race?**

62%	criminal justice system is biased against African Americans
37	criminal justice system treats people equally regardless of race
2	don't know

69. From what you've read and heard, how do you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement?

[rotate order top to bottom]

- 31% strongly support
- 33 somewhat support
- 14 somewhat oppose
- 20 strongly oppose
- 2 don't know

70. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Newsom is handling the issue of jobs and the economy?

- 56% approve
- 41 disapprove
- 4 don't know

70a. Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?

- 54% good times
- 44 bad times
- 2 don't know

Next,

71. How much, if at all, has your life been disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak? Would you say a lot, some, just a little, or not at all?

- 31% a lot
- 41 some
- 22 just a little
- 6 not at all
- don't know

[rotate questions 72 and 73]

72. How worried, if at all, are you that you or someone in your family will get sick from the coronavirus? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?

- 27% very worried
- 35 somewhat worried
- 27 not too worried
- 10 not at all worried
- don't know

73. How worried, if at all, are you that the coronavirus will have a negative impact on the personal finances of you and your family? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?

- 20% very worried
- 33 somewhat worried
- 31 not too worried
- 15 not at all worried
- don't know

73a. After the COVID-19 vaccine becomes available to you, when, if at all, do you plan to get it?

- 26% as soon as it's available
- 6 a few weeks after it's available
- 9 a few months after it's available
- 7 a year or more after it's available
- 12 I won't get the vaccine
- 39 I already had the vaccine
- don't know

74. Do you feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a negative impact on your mental health, or not? [if yes ask: Was that a major impact or a minor impact?]

- 44% yes
- 15 yes, *major impact*
- 26 yes, *minor impact*
- 3 yes, don't know
- 55 no
- don't know

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

- 87% yes [ask q75a]
- 13 no [skip to q76b]

75a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or are you registered as a decline-to-state or independent voter?

- 49% Democrat [ask q76]
- 25 Republican [ask q76a]
- 3 another party (*specify*) [skip to q77]
- 23 Decline-to-state/independent [skip to q76b]

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

- 56% strong
44 not very strong
– don't know

[skip to q77]

76a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- 54% strong
46 not very strong
– don't know

[skip to q77]

76b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 37% Republican Party
60 Democratic Party
3 neither (*volunteered*)
1 don't know

77. Would you consider yourself to be politically:

[rotate order top to bottom]

- 11% very liberal
21 somewhat liberal
40 middle-of-the-road
19 somewhat conservative
9 very conservative
– don't know

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

- 21% great deal
40 fair amount
29 only a little
10 none
– don't know

[d1-d15 demographic questions]

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