



# Californians & Their Government

Mark Baldassare Dean Bonner Rachel Lawler Deja Thomas

## CONTENTS

Press Release	3
State Issues	6
National Issues	13
Regional Map	20
Methodology	21
Questionnaire and Results	23

*Supported with funding from the Arjay and Frances F. Miller Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the PPIC Donor Circle*



**PPIC**

PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

The PPIC Statewide Survey provides a voice for the public and likely voters—informing policymakers, encouraging discussion, and raising awareness on critical issues of the day.

© 2021 Public Policy Institute of California

The Public Policy Institute of California is dedicated to informing and improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

PPIC is a public charity. It does not take or support positions on any ballot measures or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

Short sections of text, not to exceed three paragraphs, may be quoted without written permission provided that full attribution is given to the source.

Research publications reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of our funders or of the staff, officers, advisory councils, or board of directors of the Public Policy Institute of California.

## CONTACT

Steven Bliss 415-291-4412  
Abby Cook 415-291-4436

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Para ver este comunicado de prensa en español, por favor visite nuestra página de internet:  
[www.ppic.org/press-release/](http://www.ppic.org/press-release/)

## PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

# Majority Approve of Newsom's Job Performance and His Handling of COVID-19 Pandemic

**MORE NOW SAY THEY WOULD GET A VACCINE, BUT COVID-19 RACIAL DISPARITIES PERSIST; MOST SUPPORT A WAY FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS TO STAY**

SAN FRANCISCO, February 2, 2021—As Governor Gavin Newsom enters his third year in office, a majority approve of his performance and his handling of the coronavirus outbreak. Californians are now more likely than they were last fall to say they will get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available. However, there are racial disparities in willingness to get the vaccine and concerns about getting COVID-19. In the context of federal policy, there is bipartisan support for creating a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the country legally. These are among the key findings of a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

A majority (54% adults, 52% likely voters) approve of how Newsom is handling his job. Last January, before the pandemic, 51 percent of adults and 49 percent of likely voters approved. Peak approval was last May (65% adults, 64% likely voters). Views of Newsom's performance are split along party lines, with Democrats (71%) far more likely to approve than independents (46%) and Republicans (16%).

"A majority approve of the job that Gavin Newsom is doing as governor, while opinions about him remain deeply divided between Democratic and Republican voters," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

Californians say COVID-19 is the top issue for state leaders to work on this year, with 43 percent of adults and 47 percent of likely voters naming the coronavirus as the most important issue for the governor and state legislature to tackle. Relatively small shares identify other top issues: jobs and the economy (13% adults, 12% likely voters), homelessness (5% adults, 6% likely voters), housing costs and availability (4% adults, 4% likely voters), and immigration (4% adults, 3% likely voters).

A majority of adults (53%) and half of likely voters (50%) approve of how Newsom is handling the coronavirus outbreak. But the state gets low marks on distribution of the vaccine: 7 percent say the state is doing an excellent job and 29 percent say a good job, while a majority say it is doing a fair (31%) or poor (26%) job.

"More than four in ten say that COVID is the most important issue for the governor and legislature in 2021, and a majority of Californians approve of the governor's handling of COVID," Baldassare said. "About one in three give the state excellent or good grades for the vaccine distribution."

## More Now Say They Would Get a Vaccine, but COVID-19 Racial Disparities Persist

Two-thirds of Californians say they would definitely (43%) or probably (25%) get the vaccine when it is available to them, an increase from last October (26% definitely, 31% probably). One in four say they will probably not (11%) or definitely not (13%) get the vaccine, a decrease from October (20% probably not, 20% definitely not).

The shares saying they will either definitely or probably get the vaccine vary across racial/ethnic groups. Forty percent of African Americans say they will definitely or probably get the vaccine (up from 29% in October), while two-thirds or more say this among Asian Americans (80%, up from 70%), Latinos (74%, up from 54%), and whites (66%, up slightly from 62%).

Most Californians (58%) say the worst of the coronavirus is behind us nationally, while slightly more than a third (37%) say the worst is yet to come—similar to September (51% worst behind us, 42% worst yet to come). Still, most Californians are very concerned (25%) or somewhat concerned (35%) that they will get the coronavirus and need hospitalization—similar to September (28% very, 33% somewhat) and May (24% very, 34% somewhat). Latinos (35%) and African Americans (32%) are more likely than Asian Americans (21%) and whites (17%) to be very concerned about getting COVID-19 and requiring hospitalization. Across regions, Los Angeles residents (30%) are the most likely to be very concerned (26% Orange/San Diego, 24% Inland Empire, 20% Central Valley, 20% San Francisco Bay Area).

“Compared with the fall, more Californians now say that they would definitely or probably take the COVID vaccine. But large racial disparities are still evident in both the willingness to take the COVID vaccine and the fear of COVID illness,” Baldassare said.

## One in Three Say California Is in a Serious Economic Recession

Overwhelming majorities (72% adults, 73% likely voters) say the state is in an economic recession, and about one-third (32% adults, 35% likely voters) of Californians believe the state is in a serious recession. Similar shares said the state was in a serious recession last September (31% adults, 34% likely voters) and May (34% adults, 38% likely voters). Across regions, Inland Empire residents (40%) are the most likely to say the state is in a serious recession (34% Los Angeles, 30% Orange/San Diego, 30% San Francisco Bay Area, 27% Central Valley). Among racial/ethnic groups, whites (38%) and African Americans (36%) are more likely to say this is a serious recession than Latinos (27%) and Asian Americans (23%).

Asked to assess their personal finances amid the current downturn, more than four in ten say they are in excellent (10%) or good (35%) financial shape, while a majority report being in fair (37%) or poor (16%) financial shape. But there is a huge divide across income groups. Those with annual household incomes of \$80,000 or more are far more likely to report being in excellent (23%) or good (50%) financial shape than those with incomes from \$40,000 to under \$80,000 (7% excellent, 40% good) and those with incomes under \$40,000 (3% excellent, 18% good).

“Seven in ten Californians say that the state is currently in an economic recession, while personal finances vary sharply across lower-, middle-, and higher-income groups,” Baldassare said.

## Strong Majorities Approve of Biden and His Handling of the Pandemic

President Joe Biden begins his term with high levels of approval in California—though there are stark partisan differences. Strong majorities (70% adults, 65% likely voters) approve of how Biden is handling his job as president, with Democrats (89%) far more likely to approve than independents (65%) and Republicans (24%). Californians’ approval of Biden is higher than the national approval level (54%) reported in a Monmouth University survey fielded from January 21–24.

Asked about how President Biden is handling the coronavirus outbreak, an overwhelming share of Californians (71% adults, 70% likely voters) approve.

“Two in three approve of the job that Joe Biden is doing as president overall, while seven in ten approve of his handling of COVID,” Baldassare said.

## Support for Giving Undocumented Immigrants a Way to Legally Remain in the US Cuts across Party Lines

Since 2017, an overwhelming majority of Californians have said that immigrants are a benefit to California. Today, 78 percent say this, a dramatic increase from the first time this question was asked in 1998 (46%). On his first day in office, President Biden announced a 100-day moratorium on deportations (the moratorium was halted by a federal judge). Asked how to handle undocumented immigrants in the US, an overwhelming majority of Californians (87% adults, 85% likely voters) say there should be a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the country legally, similar to the share since PPIC started asking this question in 2016. A solid majority across partisan lines hold this view: 96 percent of Democrats, 87 percent of independents, and 67 percent of Republicans.

“Overwhelming majorities of Californians support a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the country legally in a rare example of policy agreement between Democrats and Republicans,” Baldassare said.

## Most Consider Climate Change a Major Threat

Solid majorities of Californians (60% adults, 65% likely voters) say climate change is a major threat to the well-being of the US; perceptions were similar in January 2017 (65% adults, 60% likely voters). Views are split along partisan lines (85% Democrats, 60% independents, 22% Republicans). Residents of Los Angeles (65%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (65%) are more likely than those in Orange/San Diego (58%), the Inland Empire (54%), and the Central Valley (53%) to say climate change is a major threat. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups hold this view (67% Asian Americans, 64% Latinos, 59% whites, 55% African Americans).

“Six in ten Californians consider climate change a major threat to the well-being of the United States, and this perception is shared across racial and ethnic groups,” Baldassare said.

## Majorities Are Concerned about Health Care Costs and Do Not Want Obamacare Overturned

A strong majority of Californians are either very (29%) or somewhat (37%) worried about being able to afford the cost of their health care over the next few years. This is similar to levels of concern (28% very, 38% somewhat) in May 2020, during the early days of the pandemic. Across income groups, majorities are very or somewhat worried (35% very, 41% somewhat for annual household incomes under \$40,000; 28% very, 37% somewhat for incomes \$40,000 to under \$80,000; 22% very, 32% somewhat for incomes \$80,000 or more).

Last November, the US Supreme Court heard a case challenging the 2010 Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. One in three Californians (30% adults, 31% likely voters) want the Supreme Court to overturn Obamacare, while solid majorities (61% adults, 64% likely voters) do not want it overturned. Most Republicans (62%) want Obamacare overturned, while most Democrats (79%) and independents (63%) want the law upheld.

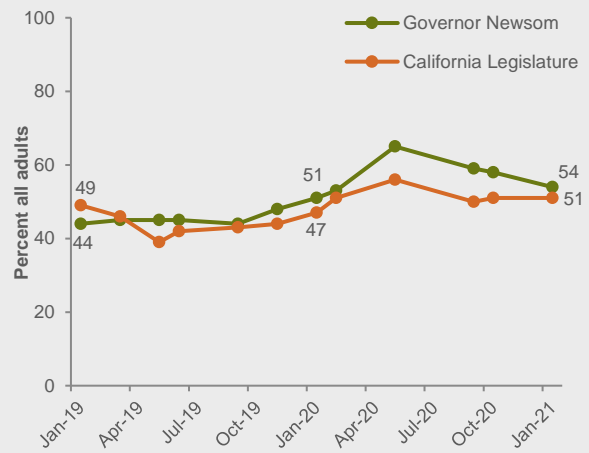
“Solid majorities are worried about their health care costs and do not want the US Supreme Court to overturn Obamacare,” Baldassare said.

# State Issues

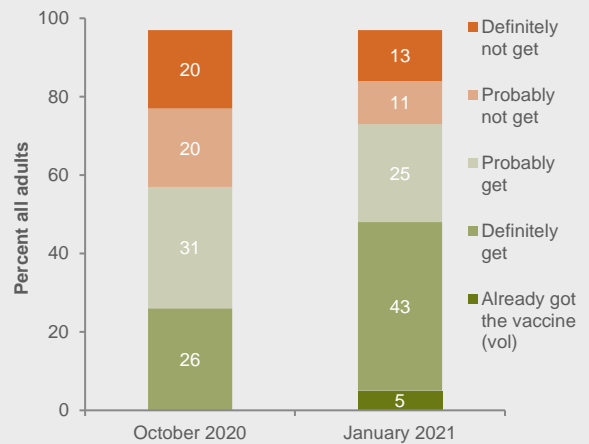
## Key Findings

- Fifty-four percent of Californians approve of Governor Newsom’s job performance. Fifty-one percent approve of the state legislature. *(page 7)*
- COVID-19 is most frequently named as the top issue for the governor and legislature to work on in 2021. Sixty-two percent of Californians are optimistic that Governor Newsom and the state legislature will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year. *(page 8)*
- Half of Californians say the state is generally headed in the right direction. About seven in ten say the state is in an economic recession. *(page 9)*
- Six in ten adults are very (25%) or somewhat (35%) concerned about getting the coronavirus and being hospitalized. Fifty-eight percent say the worst of COVID is behind us; 37 percent think the worst is yet to come. Two in three say they will definitely (43%) or probably (25%) get the COVID vaccine. Thirty-six percent say the state is doing an excellent (7%) or good (29%) job distributing the vaccine. *(page 10)*
- Forty-five percent of adults rate their personal finances as excellent (10%) or good (35%). Four in ten are very (23%) or somewhat (18%) concerned about losing their job in the next year. *(page 11)*
- Thirty-eight percent of adults say the state budget situation is a big problem today. After hearing a brief summary, 69 percent of Californians favor the governor’s budget plan (22% oppose), and 67 percent favor the proposal to provide \$2 billion in immediate funding for the reopening of elementary schools for in-person instruction (29% oppose). *(page 12)*

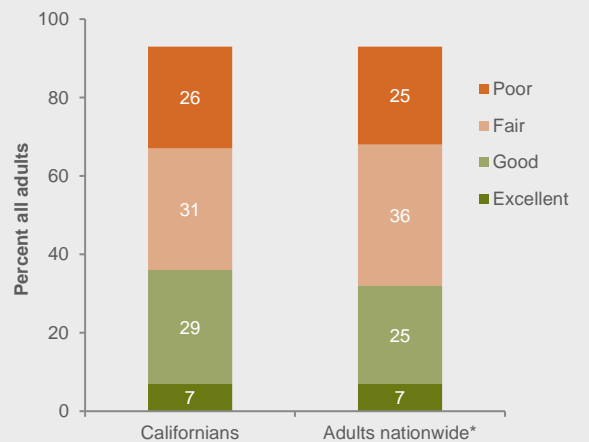
Approval ratings of state elected officials



Plans to get vaccinated against COVID-19



Views on the state government’s handling of COVID-19 vaccine distribution



\*January 2021, Kaiser Family Foundation poll

## Approval Ratings of State Elected Officials

As Gavin Newsom begins his third year in office, 54 percent of adults and 52 percent of likely voters say they approve of the way he is handling his job as governor. Last January, before the coronavirus crisis, 51 percent of adults and 49 percent of likely voters said they approved of Governor Newsom. Today, an overwhelming majority of Democrats (71%) approve of the governor, compared to 46 percent of independents and 16 percent of Republicans. Majorities approve in the San Francisco Bay Area (61%), Los Angeles (59%), and Orange/San Diego (53%), compared to fewer than half in the Inland Empire (48%) and the Central Valley (45%). Majorities of Latinos (66%), African Americans (57%), and Asian Americans (51%) approve, compared to 47 percent of whites. Asked about the governor’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak, 53 percent of adults and 50 percent of likely voters say they approve.

### “Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Gavin Newsom is handling his job as governor of California?”

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
All adults		54%	36%	10%
Likely voters		52	43	5
Party	Democrats	71	19	10
	Republicans	16	82	2
	Independents	46	46	8
Region	Central Valley	45	41	14
	Inland Empire	48	41	11
	Los Angeles	59	33	8
	Orange/San Diego	53	36	11
	San Francisco Bay Area	61	35	4

As the 2021–22 legislative session begins, 51 percent of adults and 46 percent of likely voters approve of the way the California Legislature is handling its job. Californians’ approval of the state legislature was similar last January (47% adults, 45% likely voters). Today, a solid majority of Democrats (63%) approve, compared to 38 percent of independents and 20 percent of Republicans. A majority of residents in Los Angeles (56%) approve, as do about half in the Inland Empire (50%), the San Francisco Bay Area (50%), and Orange/San Diego (49%), and 46 percent in the Central Valley. A majority of Latinos (65%) approve of the state legislature, compared to about half of Asian Americans (50%) and African Americans (49%), and 42 percent of whites.

### “Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?”

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
All adults		51%	35%	14%
Likely voters		46	41	12
Party	Democrats	63	22	15
	Republicans	20	74	6
	Independents	38	45	16
Region	Central Valley	46	43	11
	Inland Empire	50	38	12
	Los Angeles	56	33	11
	Orange/San Diego	49	37	14
	San Francisco Bay Area	50	32	18

## Top Issues, Prospect of State Leaders Working Together in 2021

Asked to identify the most important issue for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2021, Californians are most likely to name COVID-19 (43% adults, 47% likely voters). Other issues that were mentioned by 4 percent or more of Californians include jobs and the economy (13% adults, 12% likely voters), homelessness (5% adults, 6% likely voters), housing costs and availability (4% adults, 4% likely voters), and immigration (4% adults, 3% likely voters). Last January, homelessness was the most frequently named top issue for the governor and legislature to work on (20% adults, 23% likely voters).

Across regions, COVID-19 is mentioned more frequently than any other issue. The share naming COVID-19 as the top issue varies by party (51% Democrats, 44% independents, 26% Republicans). Across racial/ethnic groups, COVID-19 is mentioned more often than any other issue, while jobs and the economy is named by 13 percent of Latinos, 12 percent of whites, 11 percent of Asian Americans, and 7 percent of African Americans. Jobs and the economy is mentioned most often in Orange/San Diego (18%) and least often in Los Angeles (9%).

### “Which one issue facing California today do you think is the most important for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2021?”

Top 5 issues named	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
COVID-19/coronavirus	43%	37%	45%	48%	39%	48%	47%
Jobs, economy	13	14	12	9	18	10	12
Homelessness	5	3	3	11	1	5	6
Housing costs, availability	4	3	1	2	9	4	4
Immigration, illegal immigration	4	6	3	4	4	4	3

About six in ten Californians (62% adults, 57% likely voters) think that Governor Newsom and the state legislature will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year. A similar 58 percent of adults and 58 percent of likely voters held this view last January—before the start of the pandemic. Today, solid majorities of Democrats (73%) and independents (64%) hold this optimistic view, compared to 27 percent of Republicans. Majorities across regions hold this view (68% Los Angeles, 61% San Francisco Bay Area, 60% Central Valley, 60% Inland Empire, 59% Orange/San Diego). Majorities across racial/ethnic groups (77% Latinos, 65% African Americans, 59% Asian Americans, 52% whites) expect that Governor Newsom and the state legislature will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in 2021. Majorities across demographic groups (age, educational attainment, gender, homeownership status, and income level) hold this view.

### “Do you think that Governor Newsom and the state legislature will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year, or not?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes, will be able to	62%	73%	27%	64%	57%
No, will not be able to	28	18	67	28	34
Don't know	10	9	6	8	9



## State of the State

Half of adults (51%) and 46 percent of likely voters say that things in California are generally going in the right direction. Last January, a similar 50 percent of adults and 49 percent of likely voters said the state was headed in the right direction. Today, a solid majority of Democrats (64%) say that things are going in the right direction, compared to 46 percent of independents and 12 percent of Republicans. Majorities in Los Angeles (56%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (53%), and more than four in ten in other regions (48% Inland Empire, 46% Central Valley, 46% Orange/San Diego), say that things are going in the right direction. Majorities of Latinos (63%) and Asian Americans (52%), and more than four in ten African Americans (47%) and whites (42%), say that things are going in the right direction.

**“Do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”**

		Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know
All adults		51%	44%	6%
Likely voters		46	49	5
Party	Democrats	64	29	7
	Republicans	12	84	4
	Independents	46	49	5
Region	Central Valley	46	49	5
	Inland Empire	48	45	6
	Los Angeles	56	38	6
	Orange/San Diego	46	46	9
	San Francisco Bay Area	53	44	3

About seven in ten Californians (72% adults, 73% likely voters) say that California is in an economic recession, with one in three believing the state is in a serious recession rather than a moderate or a mild recession. Similar shares felt California was in a serious recession last September (31% adults, 34% likely voters) and in May (34% adults, 38% likely voters). Today, Republicans (41%) are somewhat more likely than independents (34%) and Democrats (32%) to say that the state is in a serious recession. Across regions, Inland Empire residents (40%) are most likely and Central Valley residents (27%) are least likely to say that California is in a serious recession. Among racial/ethnic groups, whites (38%) and African Americans (36%) are more likely than Latinos (27%) and Asian Americans (23%) to say this is a serious recession. About three in ten across income groups (34% under \$40,000, 32% \$40,000 to under \$80,000, 29% \$80,000 or more) think the state is in a serious recession.

**“Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not? If yes: do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Yes, serious recession	32%	27%	40%	34%	30%	30%	35%
Yes, moderate recession	28	29	27	25	35	23	28
Yes, mild recession	10	11	10	11	8	9	8
Yes, don't know ( <i>volunteered</i> )	2	3	1	2	1	2	2
Not in a recession	23	22	19	22	22	27	22
Don't know	6	8	5	5	4	8	4

## Coronavirus and Vaccine

As the US continues to struggle with the coronavirus outbreak, many Californians (58%) say the worst is behind us, while about four in ten (37%) say the worst is yet to come. In September, 51 percent of Californians thought the worst was behind us and 42 percent believed the worst was yet to come. Today, about half or more across regions and demographic groups say the worst is behind us.

However, six in ten remain very (25%) or somewhat concerned (35%) that they will get the coronavirus and require hospitalization. Similar shares were concerned in September (28% very, 33% somewhat) and May (24% very, 34% somewhat). Those with household incomes under \$40,000 are far more likely than those with incomes of \$80,000 or more to be very concerned. African Americans and Latinos are more likely than Asian Americans and whites to be very concerned. Residents in Los Angeles (30%) are most likely to be very concerned (26% Orange/San Diego, 24% Inland Empire, 20% Central Valley, and 20% San Francisco Bay Area).

**“How concerned, if at all, are you that you will get the coronavirus and require hospitalization? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very concerned	25%	34%	23%	14%	32%	21%	35%	17%
Somewhat concerned	35	32	33	42	23	47	35	34
Not too concerned	20	17	22	23	12	20	13	25
Not at all concerned	18	15	21	18	32	10	13	22
Have already been hospitalized (vol)	2	1	1	3	–	–	3	2
Don't know	1	1	–	–	1	1	1	–

Thirty-six percent say the state is doing an excellent (7%) or good (29%) job distributing the vaccine, while about six in ten say it is doing a fair (31%) or poor (26%) job. Adults nationwide held similar views about vaccine distribution in their state in a recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey (7% excellent, 25% good, 36% fair, 25% poor).

While Californians are critical of the state’s vaccine distribution, the share saying they will get the vaccine has increased. Forty-three percent of Californians say they will definitely get the vaccine, up from 26% in October, and 25 percent say they will probably get the vaccine, down from 31 percent in October. One in four will either probably not (11%, down from 20%) or definitely not (13%, down from 20%) get the vaccine. African Americans remain the least likely to say they will definitely get the vaccine (26%, up from 21%); 38 percent of Latinos (up from 24%), 47 percent of Asian Americans (up from 31%), and 51 percent of whites (up from 28%) say they will definitely get the vaccine.

**“When it becomes available to you, will you definitely get the coronavirus vaccine, probably get it, probably not get it, or definitely not get it?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Definitely get the vaccine	43%	37%	40%	54%	26%	47%	38%	51%
Probably get the vaccine	25	33	24	19	14	33	36	15
Probably not get the vaccine	11	12	13	8	20	6	10	11
Definitely not get the vaccine	13	13	14	12	35	2	12	14
Already got the vaccine (volunteered)	5	3	8	7	4	8	2	7
Don't know	2	2	2	1	1	3	3	2

## Economic Conditions

As the pandemic continues to affect the state economy, fewer than half of Californians say they are in excellent (10%) or good (35%) financial shape; about half say they are in fair (37%) or poor (16%) shape. Findings were similar in September (11% excellent, 35% good, 37% fair, 17% poor) and May (9% excellent, 36% good, 37% fair, 18% poor).

There is a huge divide between higher-income and lower-income Californians: those making \$80,000 or more are far more likely than those making under \$40,000 to say they are in excellent or good financial shape. African Americans and Latinos are far less likely than Asian Americans and whites to say they are in excellent or good shape. Residents in the San Francisco Bay Area are much more likely to say they are in good or excellent shape (17% excellent, 43% good) than are those in Orange/San Diego (12% excellent, 27% good), the Central Valley (10% excellent, 34% good), Los Angeles (6% excellent, 33% good), and the Inland Empire (6% excellent, 27% good).

**“How would you rate your own personal financial situation? Would you say you are in excellent shape, good shape, only fair shape, or poor shape financially?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Excellent	10%	3%	7%	23%	10%	12%	5%	15%
Good	35	18	40	50	20	40	26	41
Fair	37	48	40	23	43	38	47	28
Poor	16	29	14	4	24	9	21	14
Don't know	1	1	–	–	2	–	1	1

When asked whether they are concerned that they or someone in their family will lose a job in the next year, four in ten Californians report being very (23%) or somewhat concerned (18%), and another five percent say they have already lost a job. Half of Californians say they are not concerned. Here, too, lower-income Californians differ greatly from upper-income earners. Nearly half of Californians with household incomes under \$40,000 are concerned about job loss, while just one in three of those in households with incomes greater than \$80,000 are concerned. African Americans and Latinos are much more likely than Asian Americans and whites to express concern about losing their jobs. Residents in the Inland Empire (28% very, 18% somewhat) are the most likely to express concern about job loss, followed by those in Los Angeles (28% very, 16% somewhat), Orange/San Diego (22% very, 22% somewhat), the San Francisco Bay Area (22% very, 17% somewhat), and the Central Valley (17% very, 21% somewhat). Concern about job loss decreases with increasing educational attainment and is higher among those with children in the house compared to those without.

**“And, are you concerned that you or someone in your family will lose their job in the next year, or not? If yes: are you very concerned or somewhat concerned?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Yes, very	23%	24%	23%	19%	31%	18%	27%	19%
Yes, somewhat	18	24	15	14	24	14	23	16
No	52	43	56	63	41	64	44	57
Lost job already (volunteered)	5	7	5	2	3	–	5	6
Don't know	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	2

## State Budget

In early January, Governor Newsom released his budget proposal, which includes \$165 billion in General Fund spending. The state fiscal situation has improved since last May, when there was an estimated \$54 billion budget deficit, but future deficits are projected. About four in ten Californians (38%) say the state budget situation in California is a big problem, with another four in ten (41%) saying it is somewhat of a problem. Findings were similar in May (46% big problem, 38% somewhat of a problem) and last January (42% big, 37% somewhat). Republicans (73%) are far more likely than independents (44%) and Democrats (24%) to say the budget is a big problem.

After hearing a summary of Governor Newsom’s budget proposal, a strong majority of Californians (69%) and likely voters (66%) are in favor. The plan—which also revises the existing budget—includes immediate funding for reopening elementary schools, COVID-19 vaccine distribution, and aid for low-income families and struggling small businesses. The proposal puts \$22 billion into the state’s various reserve funds, including \$15.6 billion in the state’s rainy day fund. Most Democrats (83%) and independents (69%) are in favor, compared to just one in three Republicans. Solid majorities across regions favor the budget plan; support is highest in Los Angeles (74%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (73%), followed by the Central Valley (70%), Orange/San Diego (65%), and the Inland Empire (61%). Majorities across demographic groups favor the proposal; support is higher among African Americans (81%), Latinos (81%), and Asian Americans (76%) than among whites (59%), and women (73%) are somewhat more supportive than men (66%).

**“In general, do you favor or oppose the governor’s budget plan?”\***

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	69%	83%	33%	69%	66%
Oppose	22	9	54	23	27
Don’t know/have not heard anything about the budget (volunteered)	9	8	13	8	8

\*For complete question text, see p. 24.

The state has struggled over when and how to open its K–12 public schools for in-person instruction. In his budget, the governor proposes \$2 billion to assist with reopening elementary schools. The governor’s proposal includes extra funding for school districts that agree to a timetable for reopening schools, a rigorous coronavirus testing regimen for both students and staff, and a strict health and safety plan that teacher and other employee unions would have to consent to. Two in three Californians and likely voters support this plan. While there is a partisan divide, majorities of Democrats and Republicans—as well as independents—support the plan. There is widespread support across the state’s regions and demographic groups, with more than six in ten across groups in favor.

**“As part of his budget, the governor proposes \$2 billion in immediate funding for reopening elementary schools for in-person instruction, starting in mid-February.... In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal?”\***

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	67%	69%	54%	64%	64%
Oppose	29	27	41	33	32
Don’t know	5	4	6	2	4

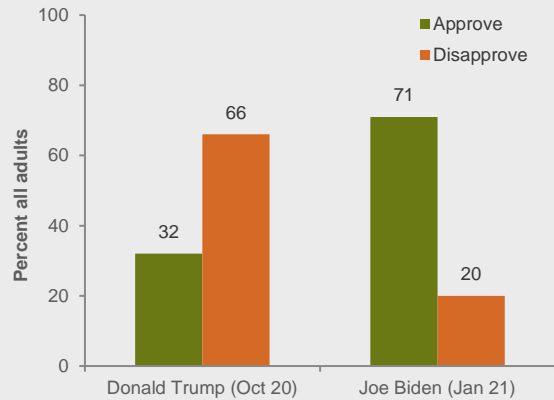
\*For complete question text, see p. 24.

# National Issues

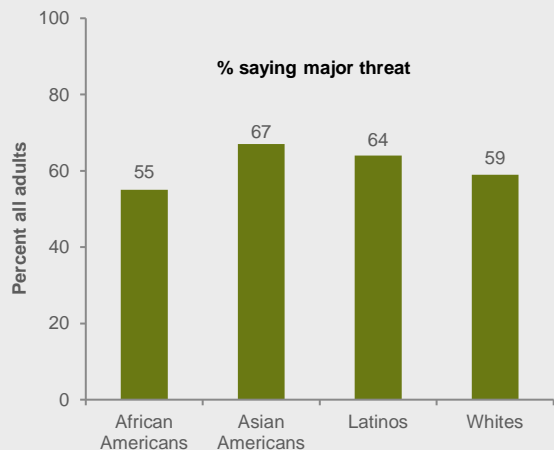
## Key Findings

- Seventy percent of California adults and 65 percent of likely voters approve of President Biden’s overall job performance; approval for his handling the coronavirus outbreak is similar. Forty-two percent of adults and 29 percent of likely voters approve of the US Congress. *(page 14)*
- About six in ten adults have a great deal (28%) or a good amount (30%) of confidence in President Biden to make the right decisions for the country’s future. Seven in ten adults think President Biden and Congress will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year. *(page 15)*
- About half (52%) of Californians think things in the US are going in the right direction (43% wrong direction). Forty-five percent of adults think the US will have good economic times in the next 12 months (49% bad times). *(page 16)*
- Six in ten adults think climate change is a major threat to the well-being of the US, and seven in ten support President Biden’s decision to rejoin the Paris climate agreement. *(page 17)*
- Seventy-eight percent of adults say immigrants are a benefit to California. Most Californians say there should be a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the US legally (87%) and favor the protections given by DACA (86%). *(page 18)*
- Two in three adults are very (29%) or somewhat (37%) worried about affording the cost of their health care over the next few years. A solid majority of adults (61%) do not want the Supreme Court to overturn the ACA (30% overturn). Three in four adults (75%) favor having a public option for insurance (18% oppose). *(page 19)*

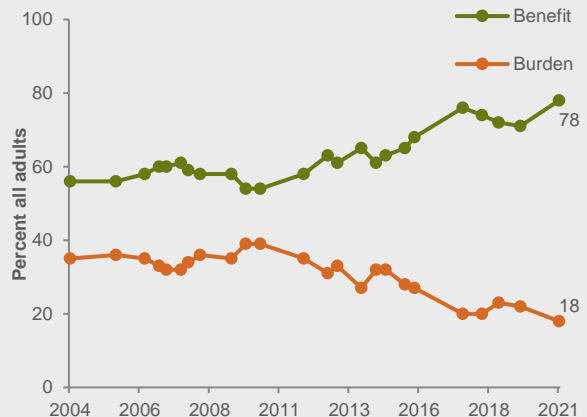
**Approval of the president's handling of the coronavirus outbreak**



**Views on threat of climate change to the US**



**Views on immigrants being a benefit or burden to California**



## Approval Ratings of Federal Elected Officials

Joe Biden begins his term as president with the approval of 70 percent of California adults and 65 percent of likely voters. There are stark partisan differences: 89 percent of Democrats, 65 percent of independents, and 24 percent of Republicans approve. Across regions, more than six in ten approve of President Biden. Across racial/ethnic groups, seven in ten or more African Americans (86%), Latinos (82%), and Asian Americans (71%) approve, and 59 percent of whites approve. Californians are more likely than adults nationwide to approve of President Biden, according a Monmouth University national survey from January 21–24 (54%). In a separate question, seven in ten Californians (71% adults, 70% likely voters) approve of the way that President Biden is handling the coronavirus outbreak.

**“Overall, from what you know so far, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Joe Biden is handling his job as president?”**

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
All adults		70%	24%	7%
Likely voters		65	31	4
Party	Democrats	89	7	4
	Republicans	24	68	7
	Independents	65	26	9
Region	Central Valley	63	32	5
	Inland Empire	63	27	10
	Los Angeles	74	19	7
	Orange/San Diego	71	23	6
	San Francisco Bay Area	71	21	8

Forty-two percent of Californians and 29 percent of likely voters approve of the way the US Congress is handling its job. Approval among all adults was similar last January (38% adults, 30% likely voters) and last October (36% adults, 26% likely voters). Today, Democrats (42%) are more likely than independents (31%) and Republicans (15%) to approve. Fewer than half across regions approve. Across racial/ethnic groups, a majority of Latinos (61%), four in ten Asian Americans (43%) and African Americans (41%), and one in four whites (27%) approve. According to a January 4–15 Gallup Poll, fewer adults nationwide approve of Congress (25% approve, 71% disapprove).

**“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the US Congress is handling its job?”**

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
All adults		42%	51%	7%
Likely voters		29	66	5
Party	Democrats	42	52	6
	Republicans	15	82	3
	Independents	31	64	4
Region	Central Valley	37	54	9
	Inland Empire	42	51	7
	Los Angeles	45	48	7
	Orange/San Diego	44	50	6
	San Francisco Bay Area	40	53	7

## New President

Six in ten adults and likely voters express a great deal (28% adults, 32% likely voters) or a good amount (30% adults, 25% likely voters) of confidence in President Biden’s ability to make the right decisions for the country’s future. Fewer had a great deal (15% adults, 19% likely voters) or a good amount (13% adults, 15% likely voters) of confidence in President Trump after he took office in January 2017. Today, Democrats are far more likely than independents and Republicans to say they have a great deal of confidence. Regionally, Los Angeles residents are the most likely to hold this view. Among racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (38%) are the most likely to have a great deal of confidence (30% Latinos, 29% whites, 24% Asian Americans). The shares who hold this view increase with age and range from 23 percent to 37 percent across genders and across education and income levels.

**“How much confidence do you have in President Biden to make the right decisions for the country’s future—a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some, or none at all?”**

		A great deal	A good amount	Just some	None at all	Don't know
All adults		28%	30%	20%	20%	2%
Likely voters		32	25	17	25	1
Party	Democrats	48	35	12	4	1
	Republicans	5	7	25	62	2
	Independents	18	34	23	23	2
Region	Central Valley	26	27	17	28	2
	Inland Empire	23	28	22	26	1
	Los Angeles	33	33	18	15	1
	Orange/San Diego	26	28	22	21	4
	San Francisco Bay Area	31	30	24	15	–

Democrats hold a majority in both houses of Congress, and 69 percent of adults and 64 percent of likely voters say President Biden and Congress will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year. Fewer Californians held this view one year ago (18% adults, 14% likely voters) and in January 2017 (50% adults, 55% likely voters) when President Trump took office. Solid majorities of Democrats and independents say the president and Congress will be able to work together, compared to fewer Republicans. Six in ten or more across regions and demographic groups say this.

**“Do you think that President Biden and the US Congress will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year, or not?”**

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes, will be able to	69%	79%	37%	64%	64%
No, will not be able to	26	17	59	32	32
Don't know	5	4	4	4	4

When asked about partisan control of the legislative and executive branches, Californians are evenly divided over whether it is a better situation to have the president’s party control Congress (31%), have one party control the White House and the other party control Congress (25%), or whether it doesn’t matter too much either way (33%). Views were similar in December 2015, when we last asked this question.

When it comes to whether the country will be able to unite behind President Biden, 51 percent of adults and 59 percent of likely voters say the nation will be divided and it will be hard for the president to accomplish a lot. Half or more across regions think it will be divided, with the exception of Los Angeles, where opinions are split (48% united, 47% divided). The shares saying the US will be divided vary across racial/ethnic groups (66% whites, 43% Asian Americans, 39% Latinos, 30% African Americans).

## State of the Nation

About half of adults (52%) and likely voters (46%) think things in the US are generally going in the right direction. Fewer held this view in October 2020 (33% adults, 25% likely voters) and in January 2017, when President Trump took office (36% adults, 37% likely voters). Today, a solid majority of Democrats say right direction, compared to fewer independents and Republicans. Majorities in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Central Valley hold this view, compared to fewer elsewhere. Among racial/ethnic groups, solid majorities of Latinos (64%) say right direction, compared to fewer Asian Americans (54%), whites (41%), and African Americans (40%). About half across genders and age groups hold this view. Sixty-one percent of those with only a high school education say this, compared to fewer than half with some college (45%) or college degrees (46%). The shares holding this view decline as income rises (60% under \$40,000, 48% \$40,000 to under \$80,000, 46% \$80,000 or more).

**“Do you think things in the United States are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”**

		Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know
All adults		52%	43%	6%
Likely voters		46	50	4
Party	Democrats	64	31	5
	Republicans	24	71	5
	Independents	43	53	4
Region	Central Valley	52	45	3
	Inland Empire	42	50	8
	Los Angeles	58	38	4
	Orange/San Diego	49	45	6
	San Francisco Bay Area	52	41	7

Californians are divided on whether the US will have good (45%) or bad (49%) economic times over the next year. The share predicting good times has increased since September 2020 (35% good times, 58% bad times). A slim majority of Democrats expect good times, compared to fewer independents and Republicans. Residents across the state’s regions are divided on whether the US will have good or bad times. A solid majority of Latinos (62%) predict good times, while a majority of whites (60%) and Asian Americans (57%) expect bad times; African Americans are divided (49% good times, 45% bad times). Expectations of good times are similar across age groups and decrease as education and income rise.

**“Turning to economic conditions, do you think that during the next 12 months the United States will have good times financially or bad times?”**

		Good times	Bad times	Don't know
All adults		45%	49%	6%
Likely voters		40	55	5
Party	Democrats	51	44	6
	Republicans	21	73	6
	Independents	38	58	4
Region	Central Valley	45	50	5
	Inland Empire	44	49	7
	Los Angeles	49	46	6
	Orange/San Diego	46	49	5
	San Francisco Bay Area	43	50	7

Four in ten adults say they trust the federal government to do what is right just about always (7%) or most of the time (33%); six in ten say it can be trusted some (49%) or none (9%) of the time. One in four adults trusted the federal government just about always (5%) or most of the time (19%) in January 2020.



## Climate Change

A solid majority of adults (60%) and likely voters (65%) believe that climate change is a major threat to the well-being of the United States. Similar shares held this view in January 2017 (65% adults, 60% likely voters). An overwhelming majority of Democrats say climate change is a major threat, compared to six in ten independents and about two in ten Republicans. Regionally, residents in Los Angeles (65%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (65%) are more likely than residents in Orange/San Diego (58%), the Inland Empire (54%), and the Central Valley (53%) to say it is a major threat. Among racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans (67%) are most likely to hold this view (64% Latinos, 59% whites, 55% African Americans). Women (66%) are more likely than men (55%) to say climate change is a major threat. About six in ten across age and income groups view it as a major threat.

**“Next, do you think that climate change is a major threat, a minor threat or not a threat to the well-being of the United States?”**

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Major threat	60%	85%	22%	60%	65%
Minor threat	21	10	39	24	20
Not a threat	16	4	39	15	15
Don't know	3	1	1	1	1

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive order to have the United States rejoin the Paris climate agreement. Seven in ten adults and likely voters support the decision to rejoin the accord, with Democrats far more likely than independents and Republicans to support the decision. Solid majorities across regions as well as across genders and racial/ethnic, age, education, and income groups support the president’s decision for the US to rejoin the Paris Agreement.

**“Do you support or oppose Joe Biden's decision to rejoin the Paris Agreement, which is the international agreement that tries to address climate change?”**

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Support	71%	93%	27%	69%	70%
Oppose	23	4	71	25	27
Don't know	6	3	2	6	3

Forty-eight percent of adults and 56 percent of likely voters say the federal government is not doing enough to address climate change, while about four in ten think it is doing just enough (30% adults, 23% likely voters) or more than enough (15% adults, 17% likely voters). Similar shares of adults (53% not doing enough, 27% just enough, 13% more than enough) and likely voters (54% not doing enough, 25% just enough, 17% more than enough) held these views in July 2013. Today, majorities of Democrats (70%) and independents (56%) think the federal government is not doing enough, compared to 27 percent of Republicans. Across regions, about half in the Inland Empire (52%), Los Angeles (50%), Orange/San Diego (49%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (48%) say the federal government is not doing enough, compared to fewer in the Central Valley (38%). Among racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (58%) are the most likely to hold this view, followed by Asian Americans (54%), whites (54%), and Latinos (39%). Women (50%) and men (47%) are equally likely to say the federal government is not doing enough to address climate change. The share holding this view decreases as age rises (56% 18 to 34, 45% 35 to 54, 44% 55 and older), and increases as education (36% high school only, 55% some college education, 57% college graduate) and income (42% under \$40,000, 51% \$40,000 to under \$80,000, 56% \$80,000 or more) levels rise.

## Immigration Policy

An overwhelming majority of Californians (78%) continue to see immigrants as a benefit to California because of their hard work and job skills. Since 2017, at least seven in ten Californians have held positive views of the impact of immigrants, a share that has grown since we first asked this question in 1998, when a plurality of Californians (46%) viewed immigrants positively. Today, Democrats (90%) and independents (77%) are far more likely to view immigrants positively, while Republicans (49%) are more likely to view immigrants as a burden to California because they use public services.

Overwhelming majorities across regions and demographic groups view immigrants as a benefit to California.

On his first day as president, Joe Biden announced a 100-day moratorium on deportations; a federal judge has halted that order. When asked how to handle undocumented immigrants in the United States, 87 percent of Californians say there should be a way for immigrants to stay in the US legally, if certain requirements are met. The share holding this view has remained similar since we began asking this question in 2016. Strong majorities of partisans agree on this issue today, with more than eight in ten Democrats (96%) and independents (87%) and 67 percent of Republicans saying undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay. Eight in ten or more across regions and demographic groups hold this view.

**“Which comes closer to your view about how to handle undocumented immigrants who are living in the US? There should be a way for them to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met, or they should not be allowed to stay in this country legally?”**

	All adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
A way for them to stay legally	87%	96%	67%	87%	84%	88%	94%	85%
Should not be allowed to stay	10	2	31	12	10	10	4	14
Don't know	2	2	3	1	6	2	2	1

President Biden has also proposed preserving the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which offers temporary protection from deportation and a work permit to undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children if they pass a background check. When asked if they favor or oppose protections given by the program, more than eight in ten Californians (86%) say they are in favor. In September 2017, shortly after President Trump announced his plans to end DACA, 78 percent of Californians supported the program. Today, majorities across partisan groups favor the program, though Democrats (93%) and independents (83%) are much more likely than Republicans (68%) to hold this view. Eight in ten or more across regions and demographic groups say they are in favor of DACA.

**“Thinking about undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children, do you favor or oppose the protections given by “DACA”—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—which includes protection from deportation and a work permit, if they pass a background check?”**

	All adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Favor	86%	93%	68%	83%	82%	86%	93%	83%
Oppose	11	4	29	13	11	11	5	14
Don't know	3	3	3	4	6	3	2	3

## Health Care Policy

When it comes to the affordability of health care, two in three Californians are very (29%) or somewhat worried (37%) about being able to afford the cost of their health care over the next few years. In May 2020, earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic, a similar share expressed concern (28% very, 38% worried). Majorities across income groups say they are worried, with those in lower income groups more likely to say they are very worried. Across other demographic groups and regions, majorities have expressed concern for the cost of their health care over the next few years, with African Americans (38%) most likely to say they are very worried.

**“What do you think about being able to afford the cost of your health care, including the cost of insurance and your out-of-pocket expenses, over the next few years? Is this something that you are very worried about, somewhat worried, not so worried, or not worried at all?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very worried	29%	35%	28%	22%	38%	25%	34%	23%
Somewhat worried	37	41	37	32	27	35	42	36
Not so worried	17	11	18	23	14	27	11	18
Not worried at all	17	12	16	23	19	13	12	22
Don't know	1	1	1	–	2	–	1	1

In November 2020, the Supreme Court heard a case brought by Republican attorneys general challenging the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare. When asked about overturning the law, three in ten Californians (30%) said that they would want to see it overturned and 61 percent said they would not. There is sharp disagreement on this issue among partisans, with a solid majority of Republicans (62%) saying the ACA should be overturned while 79 percent of Democrats and 63 percent of independents say it should not be overturned. Majorities across age, income, and racial/ethnic groups, and across regions say the Supreme Court should not overturn Obamacare.

**“As you may know, in November the Supreme Court heard a case brought by Republican attorneys general challenging the 2010 Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn the 2010 health care law, or not?”**

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes, overturn	30%	15%	62%	30%	31%
No, do not overturn	61	79	28	63	64
Don't know	9	6	10	7	6

When asked how they feel about a government-administered health plan, sometimes called a public option, three in four Californians (75% adults, 73% likely voters) are in favor. Support for a government-administered health plan was similar among adults (72%) the last time this question was asked, in November 2019, but it was somewhat lower among likely voters (65%). Today, overwhelming majorities of Democrats (87%) and independents (76%) are in favor of a government-administered health plan, compared to 41 percent of Republicans. Strong majorities across regions as well as across age, income, and racial/ethnic groups are in favor of a public health care option.

# 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. Co-authors of this report include survey analyst Rachel Lawler, project manager for this survey, and associate survey director and research fellow Dean Bonner, and survey analyst Deja Thomas. The Californians and Their Government series is supported with funding from the Arjay and Frances F. Miller Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the PPIC Donor Circle. 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.

Findings in this report are based on a survey of 1,703 California adult residents, including 1,261 interviewed on cell phones and 442 interviewed on landline telephones. The sample included 436 respondents reached by calling back respondents who had previously completed an interview in PPIC Statewide Surveys in the last six months. Interviews took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights from January 21–31, 2021.

Cell phone interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of cell phone numbers. All cell phone numbers with California area codes were eligible for selection. After a cell phone user was reached, it was verified that this person was age 18 or older, a resident of California, and in a safe place to continue the survey (e.g., not driving). Cell phone respondents were offered a small reimbursement to help defray the cost of the call. Cell phone interviews were conducted with adults who have cell phone service only and with those who have both cell phone and landline service in the household.

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

For both cell phones and landlines, telephone numbers were called as many as eight times. When no contact with an individual was made, calls to a number were limited to six. Also, to increase our ability to interview Asian American adults, we made up to three additional calls to phone numbers estimated by Survey Sampling International as likely to be associated with Asian American individuals.

Live landline and cell phone interviews were conducted by Abt Associates in English and Spanish, according to respondents' preferences. Accent on Languages, Inc., translated new survey questions into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever.

Abt Associates 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. To estimate landline and cell phone service in California, Abt Associates used 2019 state-level estimates released by the National Center for Health Statistics—which used data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the ACS. The estimates for California were then compared against landline and cell phone service reported in this survey. 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 landline and cell phone samples were then integrated using a frame integration weight, while sample balancing adjusted for differences across regional, age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, telephone service, and party registration groups.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is  $\pm 3.3$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted sample of 1,703 adults. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 3.3 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for unweighted subgroups is larger: for the 1,412 registered voters, the sampling error is  $\pm 3.6$  percent; for the 1,126 likely voters, it is  $\pm 4.2$  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 41 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 16 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 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, 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 national surveys by ABC/Washington Post, Gallup, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Monmouth University. Additional details about our methodology can be found at [www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf) and are available upon request through [surveys@ppic.org](mailto:surveys@ppic.org).

# Questionnaire and Results

## CALIFORNIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

January 21–31, 2021  
1,703 California Adult Residents  
English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR  $\pm 3.3\%$  AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE  
PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

**1. First, which one issue facing California today do you think is the most important for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2021?**

*[code, don't read]*

- 43% COVID-19, coronavirus
- 13 jobs, economy
- 5 homelessness
- 4 housing costs, availability
- 4 immigration, illegal immigration
- 3 education, schools, teachers
- 3 government in general, problems with elected officials, political parties
- 3 health care, health insurance
- 3 state budget, deficit, state spending
- 3 environment, pollution, global warming
- 11 other (*specify*)
- 5 don't know

**2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Gavin Newsom is handling his job as governor of California?**

- 54% approve
- 36 disapprove
- 10 don't know

**3. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the coronavirus outbreak?**

- 53% approve
- 41 disapprove
- 6 don't know

**4. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?**

- 51% approve
- 35 disapprove
- 14 don't know

**5. Do you think that Governor Newsom and the state legislature will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year, or not?**

- 62% yes, will be able to work together
- 28 no, will not be able to work together
- 10 don't know

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

- 51% right direction
- 44 wrong direction
- 6 don't know

**7. Would you say that California is in an economic recession, or not? (If yes, ask: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)**

- 72% yes
  - 32 yes, serious recession
  - 28 yes, moderate recession
  - 10 yes, mild recession
  - 2 yes, don't know
- 23 no, not in an economic recession
- 6 don't know

Next,

- 8. How would you rate your own personal financial situation? Would you say you are in excellent shape, good shape, only fair shape, or poor shape financially?**

10% excellent  
35 good  
37 only fair  
16 poor  
1 don't know

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

41% yes  
23 yes, very  
18 yes, somewhat  
52 no  
5 have lost job already (*volunteered*)  
2 don't know

On another topic,

- 10. Do you think the state budget situation in California—that is, the balance between government spending and revenues—is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?**

38% big problem  
41 somewhat of a problem  
12 not a problem  
9 don't know

- 11. Governor Newsom recently proposed a budget plan for the next fiscal year that includes \$165 billion in General Fund spending. The governor's proposal—which also revises the existing budget—includes immediate funding for reopening elementary schools, COVID-19 vaccine distribution, and aid for low-income families and struggling small businesses. The proposed plan puts \$22 billion into the state's various reserve funds, including \$15.6 billion in the state's rainy day fund. In general, do you favor or oppose the governor's budget plan?**

69% favor  
22 oppose  
4 haven't heard anything about the budget (*volunteered*)  
5 don't know

- 12. As part of his budget, the governor proposes \$2 billion in immediate funding for reopening elementary schools for in-person instruction, starting in mid-February. School districts would receive extra funding if they agree to a timetable for reopening schools, a rigorous regimen of testing both students and staff for the coronavirus, and a strict health and safety plan that teachers and employee unions would have to consent to. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

67% favor  
29 oppose  
5 don't know

On another topic,

- 13. Overall, from what you know so far, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Joe Biden is handling his job as president?**

70% approve  
24 disapprove  
7 don't know

- 14. Overall, from what you know so far, do you approve or disapprove of the way that President Biden is handling the coronavirus outbreak?**

71% approve  
20 disapprove  
9 don't know



**15. How much confidence do you have in President Biden to make the right decisions for the country’s future—a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some, or none at all?**

- 28% great deal of confidence
- 30 a good amount
- 20 just some
- 20 none at all
- 2 don’t know

**16. Which of these two statements comes closer to your point of view: [rotate] [1] the country will be able to unite behind Joe Biden, who will be able to accomplish a lot in the next four years; [or] [2] the country will be divided, and it will be hard for Joe Biden to accomplish a lot over the next four years?**

- 44% country will be able to unite
- 51 country will be divided
- 5 don’t know

**17. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the US Congress is handling its job?**

- 42% approve
- 51 disapprove
- 7 don’t know

**18. Do you think that President Biden and the US Congress will be able to work together and accomplish a lot in the next year, or not?**

- 69% yes, will be able to work together
- 26 no, will not be able to work together
- 5 don’t know

**18a. Generally, what’s the better situation: that a president’s political party also has a controlling majority in Congress, or that one party controls the White House while the other party controls the Congress, or don’t you think it matters too much one way or the other?**

- 31% president’s party controls Congress
- 25 one party controls each
- 33 don’t think it matters too much
- 10 don’t know

Next,

**19. Do you think things in the United States are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?**

- 52% right direction
- 43 wrong direction
- 6 don’t know

**20. Turning to economic conditions, do you think that during the next 12 months the United States will have good times financially or bad times?**

- 45% good times
- 49 bad times
- 6 don’t know

**21. How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington today to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?**

- 7% just about always
- 33 most of the time
- 49 only some of the time
- 9 none of the time (*volunteered*)
- 2 don’t know

Changing topics,

**22. How concerned, if at all, are you that you will get the coronavirus and require hospitalization? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?**

- 25% very concerned
- 35 somewhat concerned
- 20 not too concerned
- 18 not at all concerned
- 2 have already been hospitalized due to coronavirus (*volunteered*)
- 1 don’t know

**23. Which comes closer to your view about where the US stands in the coronavirus outbreak: [rotate] [1] the worst is behind us [or] [2] the worst is yet to come?**

- 58% the worst is behind us
- 37 the worst is yet to come
- 6 don’t know

**24. When it becomes available to you, will you definitely get the coronavirus vaccine, probably get it, probably not get it, or definitely not get it?**

- 43% definitely get the vaccine
- 25 probably get the vaccine
- 11 probably not get the vaccine
- 13 definitely not get the vaccine
- 5 already got the vaccine (*volunteered*)
- 2 don't know

**24a. Overall, do you think the state government is doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job of distributing COVID-19 vaccines to people in California?**

- 7% excellent
- 29 good
- 31 fair
- 26 poor
- 7 don't know

**25. Next, do you think that climate change is a major threat, a minor threat, or not a threat to the well-being of the United States?**

- 60% major threat
- 21 minor threat
- 16 not a threat
- 3 don't know

**26. Do you support or oppose Joe Biden's decision to rejoin the Paris Agreement, which is the international agreement that tries to address climate change?**

- 71% support
- 23 oppose
- 6 don't know

**27. Do you think the federal government is doing more than enough, just enough, or not enough to address climate change?**

- 15% more than enough
- 30 just enough
- 48 not enough
- 7 don't know

Changing topics,

**28. Please indicate which statement comes closest to your own view—even if neither is exactly right. [rotate] [1] Immigrants today are a benefit to California because of their hard work and job skills [or] [2] Immigrants today are a burden to California because they use public services.**

- 78% immigrants are a benefit to California
- 18 immigrants are a burden to California
- 4 don't know

**29. Which comes closer to your view about how to handle undocumented immigrants who are living in the US: [rotate] [1] There should be a way for them to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met [or] [2] They should not be allowed to stay in this country legally?**

- 87% allowed to stay legally
- 10 not allowed to stay legally
- 2 don't know

**30. Thinking about undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children, do you favor or oppose the protections given by “DACA”—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—which includes protection from deportation and a work permit, if they pass a background check?**

- 86% favor
- 11 oppose
- 3 don't know

On another topic,

**31. What do you think about being able to afford the cost of your health care, including the cost of insurance and your out-of-pocket expenses, over the next few years? Is this something that you are very worried about, somewhat worried, not so worried, or not worried at all?**

- 29% very worried
- 37 somewhat worried
- 17 not so worried
- 17 not worried at all
- 1 don't know

**32. As you may know, in November the Supreme Court heard a case brought by Republican attorneys general challenging the 2010 Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn the 2010 health care law, or not?**

- 30% yes, overturn
- 61 no, do not want to see it overturned
- 9 don't know

**33. Do you favor or oppose having a government-administered health plan, sometimes called a public option, that would compete with private health insurance plans and be available to all Americans?**

- 75% favor
- 18 oppose
- 7 don't know

**34. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?**

- 75% yes [ask q34a]
- 25 no [skip to q35b]

**34a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or are you registered as a decline-to-state or independent voter?**

- 46% Democrat [ask q35]
- 24 Republican [skip q35a]
- 6 another party (specify) [skip to q36]
- 24 decline-to-state/independent [skip to 35b]

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

- 59% strong
- 39 not very strong
- 2 don't know

*[skip to q36]*

**35a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?**

- 63% strong
- 35 not very strong
- 3 don't know

*[skip to q36]*

**35b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?**

- 21% Republican Party
- 48 Democratic Party
- 22 neither (volunteered)
- 9 don't know

**36. Next, would you consider yourself to be politically:**

*[read list, rotate order top to bottom]*

- 15% very liberal
- 21 somewhat liberal
- 29 middle-of-the-road
- 19 somewhat conservative
- 13 very conservative
- 3 don't know

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

- 29% great deal
- 35 fair amount
- 28 only a little
- 7 none
- 1 don't know

*[d1-d15 demographic questions]*

PPIC STATEWIDE  
SURVEY ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

**Ruben Barrales**  
*Senior Vice President, External Relations*  
Wells Fargo

**Angela Glover Blackwell**  
*Founder in Residence*  
PolicyLink

**Mollyann Brodie**  
*Executive Vice President and  
Chief Operating Officer*  
Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

**Bruce E. Cain**  
*Director*  
Bill Lane Center for the American West  
Stanford University

**Jon Cohen**  
*Chief Research Officer*  
SurveyMonkey

**Joshua J. Dyck**  
*Co-Director*  
Center for Public Opinion  
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

**Lisa García Bedolla**  
*Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and  
Dean of the Graduate Division*  
University of California, Berkeley

**Russell Hancock**  
*President and CEO*  
Joint Venture Silicon Valley

**Sherry Bebitch Jeffe**  
*Professor*  
Sol Price School of Public Policy  
University of Southern California

**Robert Lapsley**  
*President*  
California Business Roundtable

**Carol S. Larson**  
*President Emeritus*  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

**Donna Lucas**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Lucas Public Affairs

**Sonja Petek**  
*Fiscal and Policy Analyst*  
California Legislative Analyst's Office

**Lisa Pitney**  
*Vice President of Government Relations*  
The Walt Disney Company

**Robert K. Ross, MD**  
*President and CEO*  
The California Endowment

**Jui Shrestha**  
*Survey Specialist Consultant*  
World Bank

**Most Reverend Jaime Soto**  
*Bishop of Sacramento*  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento

**Helen Iris Torres**  
*CEO*  
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality

**Carol Whiteside**  
*Principal*  
California Strategies

PPIC BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

**Steven A. Merksamer, Chair**

*Senior Partner*  
Nielsen Merksamer Parrinello  
Gross & Leoni LLP

**Mark Baldassare**

*President and CEO*  
Public Policy Institute of California

**María Blanco**

*Executive Director*  
University of California  
Immigrant Legal Services Center

**Louise Henry Bryson**

*Chair Emerita, Board of Trustees*  
J. Paul Getty Trust

**A. Marisa Chun**

*Partner*  
Crowell & Moring LLP

**Chet Hewitt**

*President and CEO*  
Sierra Health Foundation

**Phil Isenberg**

*Former Chair*  
Delta Stewardship Council

**Mas Masumoto**

*Author and Farmer*

**Leon E. Panetta**

*Chairman*  
The Panetta Institute for Public Policy

**Gerald L. Parsky**

*Chairman*  
Aurora Capital Group

**Kim Polese**

*Chairman*  
ClearStreet, Inc.

**Karen Skelton**

*Founder and President*  
Skelton Strategies

**Helen Iris Torres**

*CEO*  
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality

**Gaddi H. Vasquez**

*Retired Senior Vice President,*  
*Government Affairs*  
Edison International  
Southern California Edison



Public Policy Institute of California  
500 Washington Street, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
T: 415.291.4400  
F: 415.291.4401  
**PPIC.ORG**

PPIC Sacramento Center  
Senator Office Building  
1121 L Street, Suite 801  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
T: 916.440.1120  
F: 916.440.1121



**PPIC**

**PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA**