

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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Release #2231

Release Date: **Tuesday, April 17, 2007**

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**CALIFORNIANS FEELING STING OF GAS PRICE INCREASES. MANY FORCED TO CUT BACK SPENDING IN OTHER AREAS. OIL COMPANIES GET MOST OF THE BLAME.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Californians are feeling the sting of the recent spike in gasoline prices beyond the \$3 per gallon threshold, and many report cutting back spending in other areas.

Residents with household incomes of less than \$40,000 a year to be forced to reduce spending in other areas and are more likely than others to view the price run-up as a serious matter.

When Californians are asked who is to blame for the price hikes, two in three (65%) place a lot of the blame on the oil companies. This is a larger proportion than felt this way in 2005 (58%), after prices spiked above the \$2 per gallon level in the summer of that year.

About half of the state's voters (46%) also fault the Bush Administration's policies a lot for the run-up in gas prices. Another 37% place a lot of the blame on foreign countries producing the oil and 29% fault Americans who drive vehicles using a lot of gasoline.

These are the main findings from the latest *Field Poll* of California voters about gasoline prices completed late last month.

**Seriousness of the gasoline price increase**

The large majority of California voters – 70% – see the recent gasoline price increases as a very serious (35%) or somewhat serious (35%) matter. This compares to just 29% who say the price increases are not serious.

People at the lower end of the income scale and younger Californians under age 40 are more likely than others to describe the increase as very serious.

The current findings are similar to those found in the summer of 2005 when gas prices last took a big jump.

	<b><u>Very serious</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat serious</u></b>	<b><u>Not serious</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>
August 2005	32%	39	28	1
<b><u>Household income</u> (2007)</b>				
Less than \$40,000	54%	27	17	2
\$40,000 - \$80,000	36%	41	23	*
More than \$80,000	24%	36	40	*
<b><u>Region</u> (2007)</b>				
Southern California	39%	35	26	*
Northern California	30%	36	33	1
<b><u>Age</u> (2007)</b>				
18 – 39	41%	29	29	1
40 – 64	35%	39	26	*
65 or older	22%	37	38	3

\* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

**Many forced to make cutbacks in other areas**

Nearly half (44%) report that because of the recent run-up in gas prices, they've had to cut back in other areas of spending, such as food, clothing or dining out.

Those making less than \$40,000 report this to a much larger extent than those with higher incomes. In addition, disproportionately more people in the 18-39 age group and those living in Southern California report being affected by the price increases.

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**Table 2**  
**Have the recent gasoline price increases caused you to cut back  
other areas of spending, such as food, clothing or dining out?**  
**(among registered voters)**

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	<b><u>Yes, have cut back</u></b>	<b><u>No, have not</u></b>
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56</b>
August 2005	40%	60
<u>Household income</u> (2007)		
Less than \$40,000	62%	38
\$40,000 - \$80,000	50%	50
More than \$80,000	30%	70
<u>Region</u> (2007)		
Southern California	48%	52
Northern California	38%	62
<u>Age</u> (2007)		
18 – 39	52%	48
40 – 64	43%	57
65 or older	30%	70

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### **Who is to blame?**

Two in three Californians (65%) attribute a lot of the blame for higher gas prices to the oil companies. This is greater than the 58% who faulted the oil companies during the last spike in gasoline prices two years ago.

Large segments of the public (46%) also cast a lot of blame on the Bush Administration for the increase, while another 37% feel oil producing countries are the cause.

A smaller proportion (29%) places a lot of the blame on Americans who drive vehicles that use a lot of gasoline.

**Table 3**  
**How much do you blame each group for the recent**  
**increases in the price of gasoline?**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<u><b>A</b></u> <u><b>lot</b></u>	<u><b>Some</b></u>	<u><b>A</b></u> <u><b>little</b></u>	<u><b>No</b></u> <u><b>opinion</b></u>
<u>Oil companies</u>				
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>
August 2005	58%	25	13	4
<u>Bush administration</u>				
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>
August 2005	47%	22	24	7
<u>Foreign countries that produce oil</u>				
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>
August 2005	41%	35	19	5
<u>Americans who drive vehicles that use a lot of gasoline</u>				
<b>March 2007</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>
August 2005	31%	28	33	8

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 570 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish March 20-31, 2007. Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* stratifies the sample by region and age to insure that the poll includes adequate representations of voters across each major region of the state and across different age categories. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on sample size. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from findings based on the overall sample are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures are implemented, as well as other factors.

### **Questions Asked**

The price of gasoline has been increasing in California in recent months. How serious a problem does the recent increase in gasoline prices create for you and your household – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

Have the recent increases in gasoline prices caused you and your family to cut back on other areas of spending, such as food, clothing or dining out?

How much do you blame each of the following for the recent increases in gasoline prices in the U.S.? How much do you blame (ITEM) – a lot, some or only a little? (SEE RELEASE FOR CATEGORIES READ) (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER)