

# 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 #2232

Release Date: **Thursday, April 19, 2007**

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**50% VIEW THE STATE AS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO LIVE. TWO IN THREE STRONGLY IDENTIFY AS CALIFORNIAN. MOST DON'T THINK OF CALIFORNIA AS A NATION-STATE. VOTERS GENERALLY UPBEAT ABOUT STATE'S ECONOMY AND OWN FINANCES.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

In a statewide survey completed in late March, *The Field Poll* updated its periodic measures about how residents view California as a place to live and the state of our economy. The findings include the following:

- Half (50%) describe California as one of the best places to live. This is similar to the results obtained when this question was last posted in 2002 and 2003.
- While greater than two in three residents strongly identify themselves as Californians, most residents (59%) do not think of California as a nation-state, but like any other large U.S. state.
- Voters are much more upbeat about the state's economy than they were two years ago. More voters now describe the state as being in economic good times (42%) than bad times (31%), a reversal from how residents described the state in 2005, when twice as many felt the state was in bad times.
- Voters are generally positive when asked about their own financial well-being, with more saying they are better off (41%) than worse off (28%) financially than they were a year ago. When asked about the coming year, most (55%) expect no change, while among those who see change ahead, many more expect to be better off (34%) than worse off (9%).

**California as a place to live**

Residents continue to rate California highly as a place to live. One half (50%) believe the state as one of the best places to live and another 29% describe it as nice but not outstanding. This compares to one in six (16%) who feel it is about average and 4% who say California is a poor place to live.

Residents' current appraisal of the state as a place to live is generally on par with periodic *Field Poll* ratings on this topic since 1994. However, these assessments contrast with a much more enthusiastic view about the state registered between the period 1967 and 1985, when between 70% and 78% described the state as one of the best places to live.

**Table 1**  
**How California is rated as a place to live**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>One of the best places to live</u></b>	<b><u>Nice, but not outstanding</u></b>	<b><u>About average</u></b>	<b><u>Poor place</u></b>
2007 (March)	50%	29	16	4
2003	47%	32	14	7
2002	49%	33	12	5
2001	40%	29	20	10
2000	54%	25	17	4
1997*	46%	29	18	6
1994	44%	28	18	8
1992	33%	29	22	15
1991*	51%	25	17	6
1989*	58%	27	11	3
1985*	78%	14	6	2
1981*	70%	20	9	2
1977*	75%	13	9	2
1967*	73%	15	10	2

\* Surveys conducted among all adults, not just registered voters.

Differences between the sum of each year's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.

**Differences by region, age and income**

Residents of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area are more positive in their assessments of California as a place to live than those living in other parts of the state. In the Bay Area two out of three (67%) consider California one of the best places to live. This compares to somewhat smaller proportions, ranging from 41% to 47%, of the residents in Southern California and the Central Valley who say this.

Older voters and those with higher annual household incomes tend to give the state higher ratings than others.

**Table 2**  
**How California is rated as a place to live – by region and demographic subgroups**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>One of the best places to live</b>	<b>Nice, but not outstanding</b>	<b>About an average place</b>	<b>Poor place</b>
Statewide	50%	29	16	4
<b><u>Region</u></b>				
Los Angeles County	47%	28	19	7
Orange/San Diego	46%	34	17	5
Other Southern California	43%	36	14	8
Central Valley	41%	29	25	4
San Francisco Bay Area	67%	23	9	*
Other Northern California	55%	28	12	*
<b><u>Age</u></b>				
18-29	45%	31	17	6
30-39	43%	34	17	5
40-49	48%	32	16	4
50-64	51%	28	16	4
65 or older	60%	21	15	4
<b><u>Household income</u></b>				
Less than \$20,000	44%	28	20	6
\$20,000-\$40,000	46%	26	24	3
\$40,000-\$80,000	48%	35	14	3
\$80,000 or more	55%	29	11	5
<b><u>Race/ethnicity</u></b>				
White non-Hispanic	52%	28	15	5
Latino	45%	33	18	3
African-American/Asian	45%	33	20	2

\* Small sample size.

(Differences between the sum of each row's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.)

### **Identification with California**

Greater than two in three voters (68%) identify themselves very strongly as a Californian. This view spans all regions of the state, and all age and ethnic groups.

**Table 3**  
**How strongly do residents identify themselves as Californians**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Very</u></b> <b><u>strongly</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat</u></b> <b><u>strongly</u></b>	<b><u>Not</u></b> <b><u>strongly</u></b>
Statewide	68%	23	9
<b><u>Region</u></b>			
Los Angeles County	65%	25	10
Orange/San Diego	70%	21	8
Other Southern California	72%	19	9
Central Valley	69%	21	10
San Francisco Bay Area	69%	24	7
Other Northern California*	68%	25	7
<b><u>Age</u></b>			
18-29	66%	27	6
30-39	66%	24	10
40-49	70%	19	10
50-64	68%	24	8
65 or older	71%	19	9
<b><u>Race/ethnicity</u></b>			
White non-Hispanic	68%	22	9
Latino	73%	22	5
African-American/Asian	65%	23	12

\* Small sample size.

(Differences between the sum of each row's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.)

### **California as a nation-state?**

Because of the size and diversity of California's economy, many economists, politicians and others often compare the state to other countries of the world rather than to other U.S. states. In recent speeches and television appearances, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has even likened California to a nation-state.

However, when asked how they view the state, only about one in three voters (37%) thinks of California as a nation-state, while most (59%) think of it as being like any other large U.S. state.

Younger voters are more inclined than older voters to take a more expansive view, with 60% thinking of California more as a nation-state than like most other large states.

**Table 4**  
**Do you think of California as if it were its own nation-state**  
**or is it like any other large U.S. state**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>Like any other large state</b>	<b>Nation- state</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Statewide	59%	37	4
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	55%	39	6
Orange/San Diego	68%	30	2
Other Southern California	54%	41	5
Central Valley	66%	30	4
San Francisco Bay Area	57%	40	3
Other Northern California*	50%	46	4
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	37%	60	3
30-39	56%	39	5
40-49	67%	29	4
50-64	65%	33	2
65 or older	68%	26	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	63%	33	4
Latino	48%	47	5
African-American/Asian	58%	40	2

\* Small sample size.

**Views about California's economy**

One measure that has varied widely over the years is how residents perceive the condition of the state's economy.

Currently, 42% describe the state as being in good economic times, while 31% think California is in bad times. Another one in four (24%) hold a mixed view.

The last time *The Field Poll* measured this two years ago, residents had a much less optimistic view of the state's economy. At that time, just 24% believed that California was in good economic condition, while twice as many (49%) thought it was in bad times.

Californians' lowest appraisal of economic conditions was in 1992, when 91% described the state as being in bad times and just 2% said the state was in good economic times.

The best ratings of the state's economic health was found during the 1998-2001 period, when between 65% and 72% felt the state was in good economic times.

In the current poll, men and upper income Californians are more likely than others to believe the state is in good times.

**Table 5**  
**Perceived state of California's economy**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<u>Good times</u>	<u>In-between/mixed</u>	<u>Bad times</u>
2007 (March)	42%	24	31
2005	24%	21	49
2004	24%	22	53
2003	11%	12	75
2002	20%	21	56
2001	69%	7	22
2000	71%	10	13
1999	72%	14	11
1998	65%	16	15
1997	33%	23	42
1996	19%	20	57
1995	11%	16	72
1994	5%	14	81
1993	3%	6	91
1992	2%	4	93
1991	5%	8	85
1990	30%	20	47
1989	55%	18	24
1988	59%	19	21
1987	51%	24	22
1986	59%	22	15
1985	62%	16	19
1984	50%	25	22
1983	10%	11	77
1982	16%	23	60
1981	24%	19	54
1980	21%	21	56
1979	40%	17	41
1978	42%	26	26
<u>Gender (2007)</u>			
Male	51%	22	25
Female	33%	26	36
<u>Household income (2007)</u>			
Less than \$40,000	38%	27	30
\$40,000-\$79,999	36%	25	37
\$80,000 or more	50%	18	29

*(In this and in other succeeding tables, trend data prior to 1993 are based on all adults. Differences between 100% and the sum of each year's percentages equal the proportion with no opinion.)*

**Expectations of the economy for the coming year**

Almost half of the voting public (48%) do not foresee any significant change in the state's economy during the next twelve months. Among those who anticipate change, about as many (22%) believe things will get better as think conditions will worsen (27%).

**Table 6**  
**Expectations for the California economy**  
**over the next 12 months**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Will get better</u></b>	<b><u>Stay the same</u></b>	<b><u>Will get worse</u></b>
2007 (March)	22%	48	27
2005	22%	42	30
2004	44%	39	14
2003	30%	35	30
2002	36%	42	18
2001	14%	43	40
2000	21%	53	16
1999	24%	58	14
1998	29%	53	10
1997	37%	44	14
1996	38%	46	12
1995	32%	44	21
1994	38%	39	20
1993	38%	38	22
1992	22%	38	36
1991	22%	37	35
1990	10%	32	48
1989	15%	49	30
1988	18%	63	24
1987	24%	65	19
1986	36%	47	12
1985	42%	40	12
1984	50%	40	6
1983	58%	30	10
1982	35%	39	22
1981	32%	36	29

*(Differences between the sum of each row's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.)*

**Californians' personal financial well-being**

When asked to describe their current personal financial condition compared to what it was last year, about four in ten say they were better off (41%) and about three in ten feel they were worse off (28%). This is similar to findings obtained in 2004 and 2005, the last two times this was measured.

Men and voters with higher levels of household income are more likely than others to describe themselves as being better off than they were one year ago.

**Table 7**  
**Trend of Californians' personal financial well-being**  
**compared to one year ago**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>Better off</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>Worse off</b>
2007 (March)	41%	30	28
2005	41%	28	31
2004	41%	32	27
2003	38%	26	36
2002	35%	30	35
2001	47%	26	27
2000	54%	28	18
1999	49%	35	16
1998	54%	30	16
1997	42%	31	27
1996	38%	35	27
1995	34%	32	34
1994	37%	32	31
1993	29%	26	45
1992	26%	24	50
1991	25%	28	47
1990	42%	28	30
1989	46%	27	27
1988	50%	23	27
1987	49%	26	25
1986	52%	28	20
1985	54%	27	19
1984	55%	24	21
1981	33%	25	42
1979	30%	28	41
1978	41%	35	24
1977	34%	36	30
1976	28%	33	39
1974	28%	29	43
1973	39%	33	28
1971	29%	36	35
1970	34%	33	33
1966	37%	45	18
1961	40%	41	19
<b>Gender (2007)</b>			
Male	47%	29	24
Female	35%	31	32
<b>Household income (2007)</b>			
Less than \$40,000	35%	27	34
\$40,000-\$79,999	40%	29	32
\$80,000 or more	49%	28	24

*(Differences between the sum of each row's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.)*

**Economic expectations for the coming year**

Californians' own personal financial expectations for the coming year remain fairly stable, with 55% expecting no change in their financial situation next year. Among those who foresee some change, nearly four times as many think things will improve (34%) as feel their situation will worsen (9%).

**Table 8**  
**Personal financial expectations for next year**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b><u>Will be better off</u></b>	<b><u>No change</u></b>	<b><u>Will be worse off</u></b>
2007 (March)	34%	55	9
2005	35%	49	12
2004	38%	48	7
2003	36%	48	10
2002	41%	45	8
2001	32%	55	13
2000	44%	53	3
1999	41%	54	5
1998	46%	49	5
1997	40%	50	10
1996	35%	57	8
1995	34%	56	10
1994	40%	48	12
1993	37%	49	14
1992	29%	53	18
1991	30%	53	17
1990	38%	47	15
1989	38%	47	15
1988	40%	51	9
1987	47%	45	8
1986	52%	42	6
1985	50%	42	8
1984	51%	42	7
1981	35%	46	19
1979	25%	40	31
1978	37%	46	17
1977	35%	47	18
1976	37%	45	18
1974	33%	39	28
1973	41%	46	13
1971	37%	44	19
1970	34%	44	22
1966	43%	49	8
1961	48%	46	6

*(Differences between the sum of each row's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.)*

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,093 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. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, some of the questions in this report were asked of a random subsample of 570 registered voters.

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 of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample have a sampling error of +/- 4.4 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**

How would you rate California as a place to live? Would you say it is one of the best places to live, nice but not outstanding, about an average place to live or a poor place to live?

How strongly do you identify yourself as a Californian – very strongly, somewhat strongly, not too strongly or not at all strongly?

(ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLES)

Considering the size of California's population and its economy, do you tend to think of California as if it were its own nation-state, or is it like any other large U.S. state?

How would you generally describe economic conditions in California now? Would you say that economically, California is in good times or bad times right now?

What about the next 12 months or so? Do you expect economic conditions in California to get better, get worse or stay the same?

Would you say that you and your family are financially better off or worse off today than you were a year ago?

Looking ahead, do you think that a year from now you will be better off financially, worse off or just about the same as now?