



PPIC
STATEWIDE
SURVEY

MARCH 2004

*Special Survey of Los Angeles
in collaboration with the
University of Southern
California*

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***Public
Policy
Institute of
California***

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is a private operating foundation established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute is dedicated to improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

PPIC's research agenda focuses on three program areas: population, economy, and governance and public finance. Studies within these programs are examining the underlying forces shaping California's future, cutting across a wide range of public policy concerns, including education, health care, immigration, income distribution, welfare, urban growth, and state and local finance.

PPIC was created because three concerned citizens – William R. Hewlett, Roger W. Heyns, and Arjay Miller – recognized the need for linking objective research to the realities of California public policy. Their goal was to help the state's leaders better understand the intricacies and implications of contemporary issues and make informed public policy decisions when confronted with challenges in the future. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

David W. Lyon is founding President and Chief Executive Officer of PPIC. Raymond L. Watson is Chairman of the Board of Directors.



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Preface

The Los Angeles County Survey—a collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the School of Planning, Policy, and Development at the University of Southern California—is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. The survey is supported by a grant from the California Community Foundation.

This is the second in an annual series of PPIC surveys of Los Angeles County. This series of large-scale, comprehensive public opinion surveys on social, economic, and political attitudes and policy preferences is designed to provide timely, relevant, and objective information on the county's overall adult population, geographic areas, and diverse racial/ethnic, economic, and social groups.

Los Angeles County is the most populous county in the nation with approximately 10 million residents. The county has grown by about 1 million residents in the past 10 years, including more new immigrants than any other region of the country except the New York City area. Today, the county's population is 47 percent Latino, 30 percent non-Latino white, 12 percent Asian, and 9 percent black—similar to the racial/ethnic profile that state demographers predict for California by 2040. Reflecting the size and diversity of the county, local government is large and complex, as are the problems of delivering local public services to its residents.

In this survey, we are especially interested in understanding the changing local conditions in the past decade and the challenges and opportunities created by the state government's current fiscal situation. Thus, we contrast residents' perceptions today with public opinion data collected in 1994—a year in which the state and county faced unprecedented economic, fiscal, social, and political challenges. We also analyze residents' attitudes toward the state's current budget deficit, including its perceived impact on local services, and spending and tax preferences.

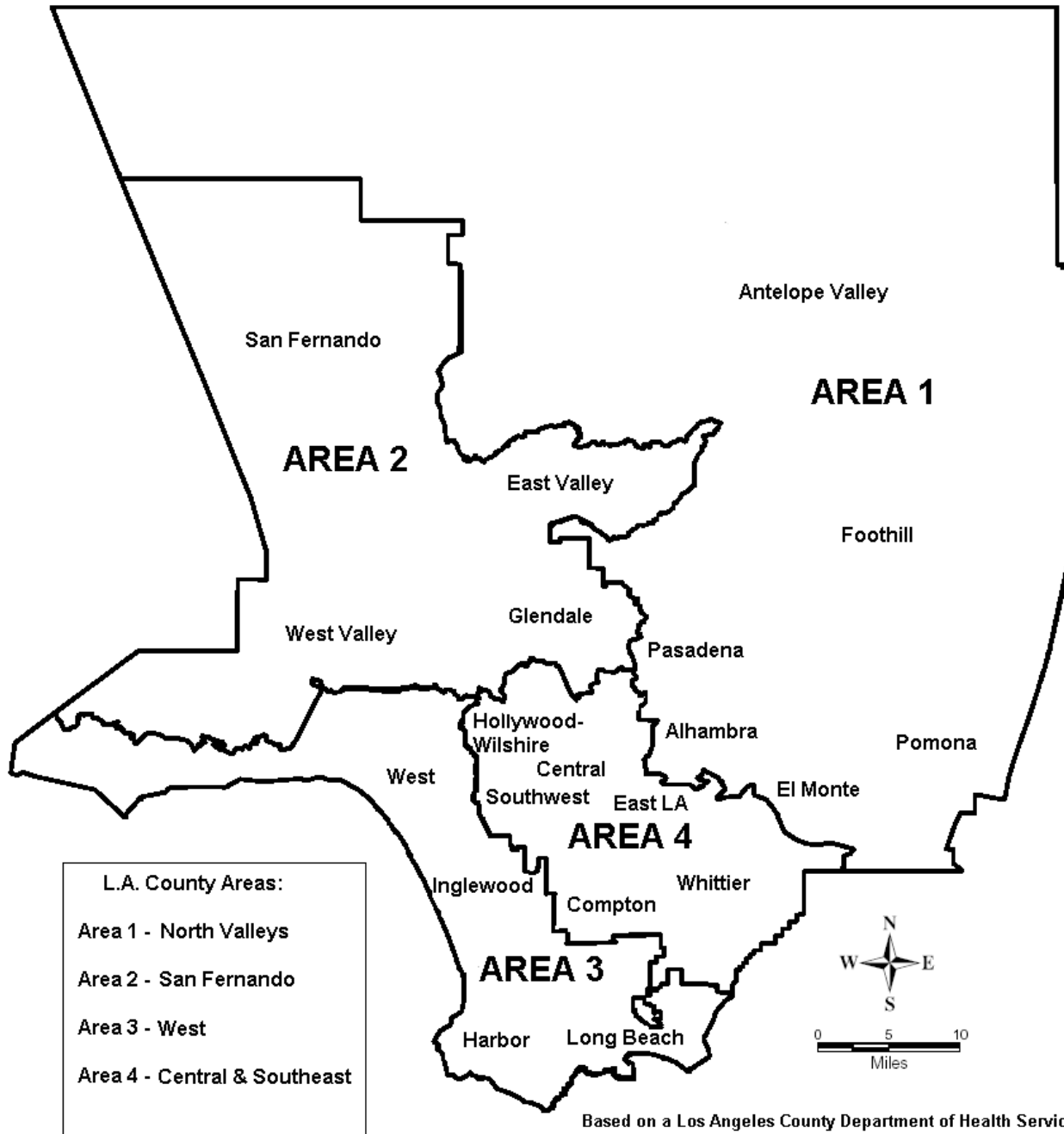
Public opinion data are critical to informing discussions on key issues and stimulating public debate. The overall intent of this PPIC special survey series on Los Angeles County is to help guide the decisions of local, state, and federal policymakers and the actions of public, nonprofit, and public-private partnerships.

This current survey of 2,002 adult residents includes questions from earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys and a *Los Angeles Times* poll in June 1994 for comparisons. We also consider racial/ethnic, income, and political differences. The following issues are explored in this survey:

- **Changing Local Conditions**—How do residents rate the county today, and are they optimistic about the future? How do they rate the quality of life in their local communities, and what are the most important problems facing local communities? How satisfied are residents with their local services, and what are their transportation priorities? How do residents perceive the local economic outlook?
- **State's Fiscal Conditions**—How serious a problem is the current multibillion dollar gap between state spending and state revenues? Do residents prefer to deal with the state budget deficit through spending cuts or tax increases, and what do they think of the governor's budget plans? How concerned are they about the impacts of the state's deficit on the delivery of local services? Are residents willing to increase their state and local taxes to maintain funding for local public services?
- **Local and State Governance Issues**—How do residents rate the performance of state officials and local government? Do they view immigrants as having a positive effect, and do they support access of illegal immigrants to public health care? How much are they concerned about health care costs, and do they support efforts to extend health care coverage? What about proposed ballot measures that seek to raise taxes to pay for mental health services, increase property taxes for school funding, reform the workers' compensation system, and protect state funding for local governments?

Copies of this report may be ordered by e-mail (order@ppic.org) or phone (415-291-4400). Copies of this and earlier reports are posted on the publications page of the PPIC web site (www.ppic.org). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org.

Los Angeles County



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Press Release

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SPECIAL SURVEY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY: A HOUSE DIVIDED RACIAL, POLITICAL GROUPS HAVE DIFFERENT TAKE ON PRESENT, FUTURE Residents Also Conflicted Over Immigration, Fiscal and Economic Policy Issues

SAN FRANCISCO, California, March 17, 2004 — The mood of Los Angeles County residents may be more upbeat than it was a decade ago, but how they feel about quality of life, the future course of the county, and government services and policies depends a lot on who they are and where they stand politically, according to a new survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

Today, the number of residents who believe LA County is headed in the right direction is nearly double (45%) what it was 10 years ago (24%). But that upswing masks deep differences in attitudes between racial and ethnic groups and among political parties. “We find such contradictory views about quality of life and preferences on public policies and government priorities that it’s almost as though some residents of this one region are living in parallel universes,” says PPIC Statewide Survey Director Mark Baldassare.

Differences along racial and ethnic lines, particularly for blacks, are striking. With the exception of blacks, attitudes toward day-to-day life seem to be generally positive: 86 percent of whites, 85 percent of Asians, and 80 percent of Latinos say they are satisfied with the community they live in, but one-third of blacks (33%) are dissatisfied. Looking ahead, a majority of Asians (52%) and Latinos (50%) think the county is headed in the right direction, but whites (43%) and blacks (36%) are less optimistic.

Blacks also have a different take on the most important problems facing the county. Over the past decade, concern with crime as the biggest problem dropped from 34 to 14 percent, top concern with gangs dropped from 31 to 13 percent, and top concern with drugs dropped from 12 to 5 percent. Despite this general decline, 24 percent of blacks now say gangs are the county’s most important problem, 21 percent name crime, and 13 percent name drugs. Further, and probably related to these perceptions, blacks (52%) are much less likely than whites (72%), Asians (66%), or Latinos (65%) to give police protection high marks.

“Quality-of-life issues like neighborhood satisfaction and personal safety are the stuff of daily experience; they are vital in shaping attitudes toward the community,” says Baldassare. “Civic leaders need to consider what is so different about the experience of African Americans that it makes their outlook distinctively more negative.”

And Then There’s Politics ... Partisan Divisions Rival Racial/Ethnic Differences

The perceptions and opinions of LA County’s Republicans, Democrats, and independents are more divergent than the racial and ethnic differences. Baldassare observes that “In LA County, we’re seeing the same kind of growing political polarization that is making the state even more difficult to govern.”

There are stark partisan differences in approval ratings for Governor Schwarzenegger and in dealing with state debt. Republicans (80%) give the governor much higher approval ratings than Democrats (45%) or independents (53%). Although Democrats (78%), Republicans (76%), and independents (73%) strongly agree that the state budget deficit is a big problem, they part company when asked how best to deal with it. Pluralities of Democrats (42%) and independents (44%) support a mixture of spending cuts and tax increases, compared to just one-third (33%) of Republicans, who prefer using mostly spending cuts (44%). Republicans also approve of the governor’s plan to take local property tax money and use it to lower the state deficit, nearly two to one over Democrats (64% to 33%).

Conflicting views about how to reduce the deficit mirror differences about cutting public services. Far more Democrats than Republicans or independents say they are very concerned about cuts to K-12 education (Democrats 76%, independents 57%, Republicans 43%), health and human services (Democrats 74%, independents 53%, Republicans 36%), and government services such as parks, police, and transportation (Democrats 63%, independents 48%, Republicans 29%).

Tension over Taxes

Despite these partisan differences on cutting services, most of LA County's likely voters are willing to raise state taxes to maintain current funding levels for K-12 education (56%), health and human services (48%), and local government services (50%). Once again, however, a partisan divide prevails: Majorities of Democrats support tax increases for the three areas (K-12 education 66%, health and human services 56%, local government services 54%), while majorities of Republicans oppose them (K-12 education 52%, health and human services 62%, local government services 56%).

“Although taxes generally top the list of contentious issues between Republicans and Democrats, the divide on K-12 education, where there is usually more voter consensus, is surprising,” says Baldassare. For example, there is acute disagreement over a proposal that would reform Proposition 13 tax limits and increase taxes on commercial and residential properties that produce income in order to fund K-12 education and to establish universal preschool programs: Republicans are strongly opposed (57%) and Democrats are strongly in favor (64%) of this proposal. There is similar disagreement on the local level, where majorities of Democrats (70%) and independents (69%), but less than half of Republicans (49%), would vote yes if a local school district bond appeared on the November ballot.

Despite all the partisan contention over taxes, there are points of agreement. Majorities of Democrats (79%), independents (74%), and Republicans (55%) support raising the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians. Even greater majorities support raising so-called “sin” taxes on alcohol and cigarettes in order to fund county health services (Democrats 81%, independents 72%, Republicans 67%). Moreover, there is majority opposition to increasing the vehicle license fee among all parties (Republicans 79%, independents 68%, Democrats 66%).

Attitudes Toward Immigrants Split; Political, Racial/Ethnic Differences Emerge Again

Other issues also create division. While a majority of residents (55%) believe immigrants are good for the region because of their hard work and job skills, illegal immigration continues to trouble LA County. A 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll found that 52 percent of residents thought the amount of illegal immigration into LA County was a major problem; today, 47 percent say the same. Baldassare notes that negative views toward illegal immigration and positive ones toward immigrants are not contradictory. “Many residents distinguish between immigrants, as people, and illegal immigration. They see immigrants as contributing to the community, while illegal immigration is associated with a variety of costs and problems.”

Again, the general consensus masks a polarization of Republicans and Democrats: In perfect contrast, 58 percent of Democrats say immigrants are a benefit and 58 percent of Republicans say they are a burden. A split also occurs along racial and ethnic lines, with Latinos (70%) and Asians (68%) being far more likely than blacks (38%) or whites (44%) to see immigrants as a benefit. Despite these varied opinions, a strong majority (61%) of all county residents believe undocumented immigrants and their children should have access to public health care, including majorities of every racial and ethnic group (whites 51%, blacks 52%, Asians 55%, Latinos 74%).

It's All in the Packaging: Support for Workers' Comp Reform Depends on Question

On another divisive issue – workers' compensation reform – voters' response may hinge on how the debate is framed. Two in three LA County voters (67%) favor reducing employer costs for workers' compensation – however, that support drops to 42 percent if it means reducing benefits to employees injured at work. Here again, voters diverge along party lines: Most Republicans (74%) favor lowering employer costs even if it means fewer

benefits for injured employees (59%), while Democrats support for lowering employer costs (59%) diminishes to 33 percent if it means fewer benefits. “If this issue appears on next November’s ballot, the victors may be the ones who control the spin,” says Baldassare.

More Key Findings

- ***Repeal of SB2 Health Coverage Law Unpopular*** (page 16)

Majorities of Democrats (70%), independents (65%), and Republicans (54%) are opposed to current efforts to repeal state law SB2, which requires large and medium-sized employers to buy health insurance coverage for their employees.

- ***Support for Mental Health*** (page 17)

A strong majority (68%) of likely voters say they approve a 1 percent tax increase on income over \$1 million to fund mental health services.

- ***State vs. Local*** (page 18)

Sixty-six percent of likely voters support requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature and voter approval before any reduction in local government revenue occurs – however, this support drops to 53 percent when it means less revenue for *state* services.

About the Survey

This survey of Los Angeles County — a collaborative effort of PPIC and the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California — is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey, supported in part through a grant from the California Community Foundation. This is the second in an annual series of PPIC surveys of Los Angeles County. Findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,002 Los Angeles County adult residents interviewed between February 27 and March 9, 2004. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. For more information on survey methodology, see page 19.

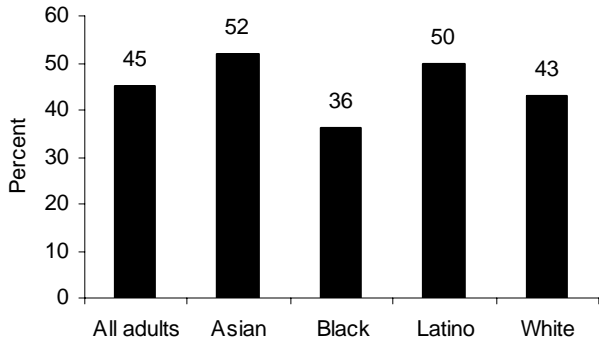
Mark Baldassare is research director at PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998. His most recent book, *A California State of Mind: The Conflicted Voter in a Changing World*, is available at www.ppic.org.

PPIC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public policy through objective, nonpartisan research on the economic, social, and political issues that affect Californians. The institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

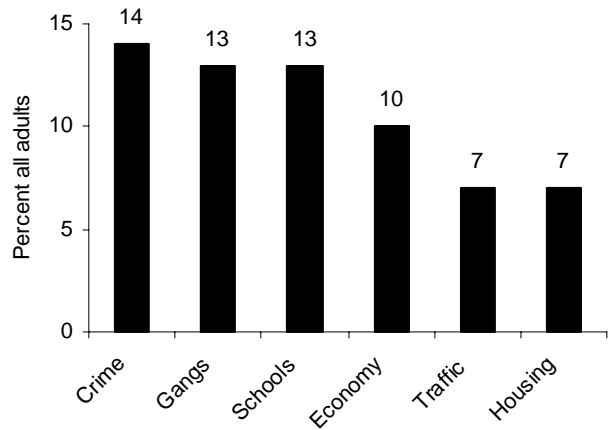
This report will appear on PPIC’s website (www.ppic.org) on March 17.

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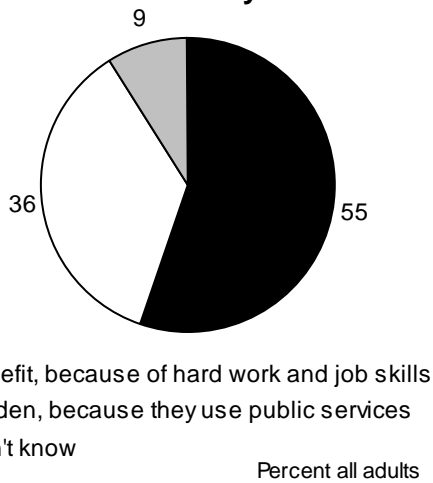
Do you think things in L.A. County are going in the right direction or are they on the wrong track? (Percent "right direction")



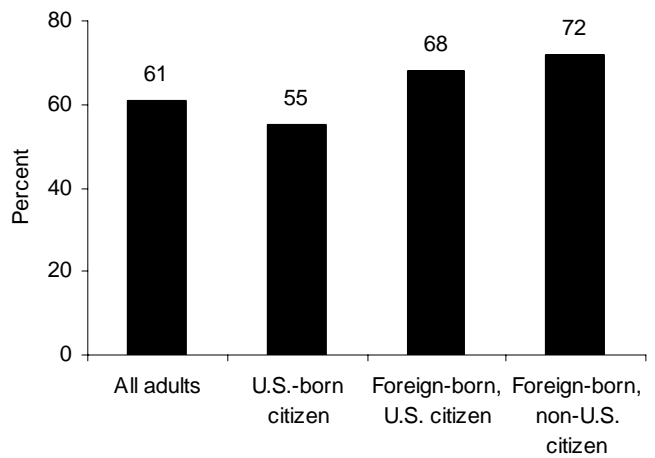
Most important problem facing L.A. County communities today



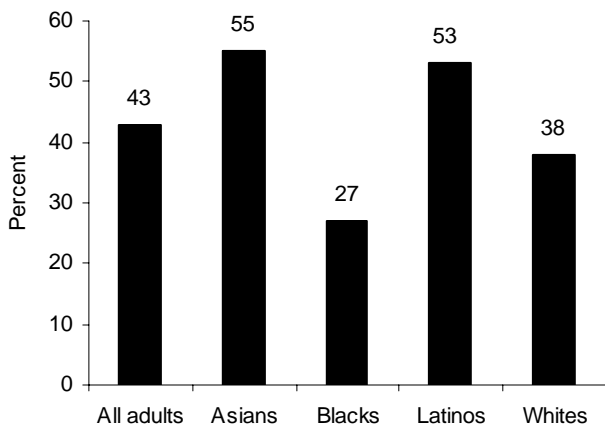
Immigrants today: Benefit or burden to L.A. County?



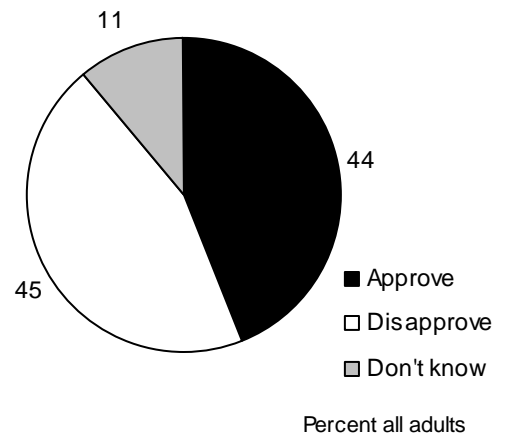
Percent who say that illegal immigrants and their children should have access to public health



Percent who rate their local public schools as excellent or good



Do you approve or disapprove of the governor's plan to use local government tax money to reduce the deficit?



Changing Local Conditions

County Perceptions

Los Angeles residents, generally, are more optimistic about life in their county than they were 10 years ago, but that optimism is not spread evenly across all groups. Overall, the percentage who say things are going in the right direction (45%) has nearly doubled since 1994, when 24 percent were positive about the direction, but 62 percent said things were seriously off on the wrong track.

However, perceptions vary by race/ethnicity, citizenship, and age. About half of Latinos and Asians think the county is headed in the right direction. In contrast, more than half of blacks think things are on the wrong track, and whites are about evenly divided on this question. Residents who are not U.S. citizens are more likely (52%) than U.S.-born adults (43%) to see the county headed in the right direction. Optimism is also higher among people under 35 (54% “right direction”) than among older adults (40% “right direction”).

“Do you think that things in Los Angeles County are generally going in the right direction or are they seriously off on the wrong track?”

	1994*	2004
Right direction	24%	45%
Wrong track	62	38
Don't know	14	17

*Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

2004 Survey	All Adults	Race / Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Right direction	45%	52%	36%	50%	43%
Wrong track	38	27	53	34	40
Don't know	17	21	11	16	17

Looking to the future, Los Angeles County residents are divided: Thirty-four percent expect the county to be a better place and 32 percent believe it will be a worse place to live. Latinos are the most optimistic and blacks are the least optimistic about the county’s future quality of life. Whites are the most likely to believe the county will become a worse place to live.

“In the future, do you think Los Angeles County will be a better place to live than it is now, a worse place to live than it is now, or there will be no change?”

2004 Survey	All Adults	Race / Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Better place	34%	35%	29%	37%	33%
Worse place	32	30	33	26	38
No change	27	31	28	31	23
Don't know	7	4	10	6	6

Local Community Ratings

Los Angeles County residents are more positive about their communities than they were a decade ago but, again, there are strong racial/ethnic differences. In 1994, 69 percent said they were satisfied with their community, compared to 80 percent today. Satisfaction is about equally high among Asians (85%), Latinos (80%), and whites (86%) but is markedly lower among blacks (62%). In fact, 33 percent of black residents are dissatisfied with their community.

“Would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied these days with the community in which you live?”

	1994*	2004
Satisfied	69%	80%
Dissatisfied	29	17
Don't know	2	3

*Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

2004 Survey	All Adults	Race/ Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Satisfied	80%	85%	62%	80%	86%
Dissatisfied	17	11	33	18	12
Don't know	3	4	5	2	2

The percentage of residents who believe their community’s quality of life has improved has doubled in the past decade; conversely, only half as many now think it is getting worse. As in 1994, however, a majority think their community’s quality of life is staying about the same. Once again, there are racial/ethnic differences. Latinos (28% to 16%) and whites (25% to 18%) are more likely to see things getting better rather than worse. Blacks are more likely to see them getting worse (27%) rather than better (18%).

“Would you say the quality of life in your community is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?”

	1994*	2004
Getting better	12%	25%
Getting worse	36	19
Staying about the same	50	53
Don't know	2	3

*Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

2004 Survey	All Adults	Race/ Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Getting better	25%	19%	18%	28%	25%
Getting worse	19	15	27	16	18
Staying about the same	53	62	53	52	54
Don't know	3	4	2	4	3

Local Community Problems

In the last decade, residents' perceptions of the most important problem facing their community have changed dramatically. In 1994, crime and gangs were cited considerably more than they are today and schools considerably less. Today, crime, gangs, schools, and the economy and jobs are rated about equally as top community problems.

Perceptions differ significantly across racial/ethnic groups and areas of the county. Blacks are more likely than others to see crime as the top community problem. Blacks and Latinos are much more concerned than Asians and whites about gangs. Traffic seems like a more important problem to Asians and whites than to blacks and Latinos. Across county regions, residents in the Central/Southeast are more likely (20%) than residents elsewhere to be concerned about gangs. Non-citizens (22%) also mention gangs more often than U.S.-born residents (11%). The percentage of respondents who mention traffic and growth as important local issues increases with education and household income.

“What's the most important problem facing your community today?” (Accepted up to two replies)*

	1994**	2004
Crime	34%	14%
Gangs	31	13
Education, schools	7	13
Economy, jobs, unemployment	16	10
Traffic	2	7
Housing, homelessness	5	7
Growth and development	3	6
Drugs	12	5
Graffiti	5	3

*Results do not add to 100 percent because first and second mentions are listed.

**Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

2004 Survey	All Adults	Race/ Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Crime	14%	16%	21%	12%	13%
Gangs	13	6	24	20	5
Education, schools	13	15	19	11	15
Economy, jobs, unemployment	10	5	11	9	11
Traffic	7	13	2	5	10
Housing, homelessness	7	10	9	6	8
Growth and development	6	5	4	3	10
Drugs	5	2	13	6	3
Graffiti	3	1	3	5	2

Local Public Service Ratings

Los Angeles County residents are generally positive about their local public services: Sixty-seven percent rate police protection excellent or good; 63 percent give high marks to the area’s public parks, beaches, and recreation; and 51 percent rate their local streets and roads excellent or good. Public schools, however, did not make the grade with a majority of residents: Only 43 percent rated them as excellent or good. Los Angeles residents gave similar ratings to these services in a 1998 PPIC Statewide Survey. (The *Los Angeles Times* poll in 1994 asked about local public services in a different fashion, so direct comparisons with residents’ evaluations of a decade ago are not available.)

<i>Percent rating local service as excellent or good</i>	1998*	2004
Police protection	68%	67%
Parks, beaches, and recreation	69	63
Streets and roads	49	51
Public schools	40	43

* Results are from the April 1998 PPIC Statewide Survey.

Ratings differ noticeably across the county’s geographic areas. Roads and schools are rated most highly by residents in the North Valleys, while recreation and police get their highest ratings from residents in the West. Residents of the San Fernando Valley give mixed ratings: Most rate their local parks and police as excellent or good, but fewer than half are positive about streets and public schools. Residents in Central/Southeast Los Angeles are more negative about all of their local services.

<i>2004 Survey Percent rating local service as excellent or good</i>	All Adults	<u>County Area</u>			
		North Valleys	San Fernando	West	Central / Southeast
Police protection	67%	70%	67%	74%	60%
Parks, beaches, and recreation	63	69	64	71	54
Streets and roads	51	60	48	54	46
Public schools	43	51	41	46	39

Racial/ethnic groups also have very different opinions about local services. Black residents give significantly lower ratings to all services: Fewer than half give positive ratings to their area’s streets and roads, parks, and schools, and a bare majority are satisfied with their local police. Among whites, satisfaction is markedly lower for schools than it is for other services. However, majorities of Asians and Latinos rate all their local services highly.

Local public service ratings also differ significantly across other demographic groups. Public schools get much higher ratings from those who have children at home (51% good or excellent) than those without children at home (37%). Excellent and good ratings of recreation, roads, and police protection all increase with age, education, homeownership, and household income.

2004 survey Percent rating local service as excellent or good	All Adults	Race/ Ethnicity			
		Asian	Black	Latino	White
Police protection	67%	66%	52%	65%	72%
Parks, beaches, and recreation	63	58	44	61	71
Streets and roads	51	57	40	56	51
Public schools	43	55	27	53	38

Local Transportation Priorities

What do county residents see as the top priority for spending public funds on transportation? Although freeways and highways are mentioned most, and 75 percent of residents continue driving to work alone, nearly half (49%) mention public transportation projects, including public buses, light rail and the subway system, as top priority projects.

Priorities differ across geographic regions and demographic groups. Public buses are favored most strongly by Central/Southeast area residents, while those in the West and North Valleys are most likely to support light rail. Buses are the top priority for blacks (23%) and Latinos (25%), while light rail is favored more by men (19%), whites (23%), and college graduates (24%).

Even though most residents commute alone in their automobiles, the Metro Rail is a big hit in Los Angeles County. Seventy-three percent of adults say the metro rail system has been a good thing for the county’s transportation system. Support for the system is high across geographic areas, racial/ethnic groups, and political and demographic categories.

There is solid support among all adults (60% to 32%) for the proposed \$9.95 billion state bond measure, which has qualified for the November ballot, to build the high-speed train linking Los Angeles to San Francisco. There is also majority support for the high-speed train among the county’s likely voters (52% to 40%). Both Democrats (56%) and Republicans (51%), as well as majorities in all demographic groups, say they would vote yes on the multibillion dollar bond measure to build the train system.

“What type of transportation project do you think should have the top priority for public funds in Los Angeles County?”

	All Adults	County Area			
		North Valleys	San Fernando	West	Central / Southeast
Freeways and highways	23%	27%	26%	21%	19%
Public bus system	19	17	16	18	23
Light rail	17	21	15	20	12
Local streets and roads	14	9	12	14	17
Subway system	13	10	13	14	13
Carpool lanes	7	8	8	5	7
Something else	4	4	5	4	2
Don't know	3	4	5	4	7

Economic Outlook

The economic outlook seems brighter to Los Angeles County residents than it did a decade ago. In 1994, 67 percent of residents believed their local economy was in a recession; today, that number has dropped to 45 percent. The steepest decline is in the percentage of residents who think their community is in a serious recession.

As for geographic differences, 52 percent of residents in the Central/Southeast area think their community is in a recession, compared to 44 percent in the West, 43 percent in the San Fernando Valley, and 38 percent in the North Valleys. Among racial/ethnic groups, 58 percent of blacks and 50 percent of Latinos believe their local area is in a recession, compared to 44 percent of Asians and 38 percent of whites.

“Do you think your community is in an economic recession or not?”
 (if yes: “Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?”)

	1994*	2004
Yes, serious recession	23%	12%
Yes, moderate recession	28	22
Yes, mild recession	16	11
No	26	47
Don't know	7	8

*Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

Although the perception of economic recession is lower than it was 10 years ago, the county’s economy receives relatively low ratings. Today, only 25 percent rate the county’s economy as excellent or good, virtually unchanged from 24 percent in the March 2003 PPIC Special Survey of Los Angeles County. In the current survey, 45 percent rate the county economy as fair and 28 percent as poor.

As in ratings of the local community’s economy, there are differences by geographic area and race/ethnicity. Residents in Central/Southeast Los Angeles are most likely to rate the county’s economy as poor, and those in the North Valleys are least likely to do so. Blacks (38%) and Latinos (30%) are more inclined than Asians (24%) and whites (22%) to believe the economy is in poor shape.

“In general, how would you rate the economy in Los Angeles County today?”

	All Adults	County Area			
		North Valleys	San Fernando	West	Central / Southeast
Excellent / Good	25%	29%	25%	25%	23%
Fair	45	45	48	43	43
Poor	28	23	25	30	32
Don't know	2	3	2	2	2

State's Fiscal Conditions

The State Budget Deficit

The passage of Propositions 57 and 58 on March 2nd did not change perceptions among Los Angeles County residents that the state's budget deficit is a big problem. Seven in 10 county residents believe that the state's multibillion dollar gap between state revenue and state spending is a big problem; seventy-one percent felt this way before the primary and 69 percent after the vote. An even higher percentage of likely voters rate the state's budget deficit as a big problem (81%). Large majorities of Democrats (78%), Republicans (76%), and independents (73%) think the state's deficit is a big problem. In January 2004, a similar 70 percent of Californians rated the state budget deficit as a big problem.

“As you may know, the state government has an annual budget of around \$100 billion and currently faces a multibillion dollar gap between state spending and state revenue. Do you think that this deficit is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Big problem	70%	78%	76%	73%	81%
Somewhat of a problem	22	17	21	21	16
Not a problem	4	3	2	4	2
Don't know	4	2	1	2	1

While most county residents (66%) and likely voters (71%) think that spending cuts should be included in dealing with the state's deficit, voters are divided along partisan lines about whether tax increases should also be part of the state's fiscal plans. Thirty percent of county residents think that the state should deal with its deficit mostly through spending cuts, and 36 percent think that the state should use a mixture of spending cuts and tax increases. A plurality of Republicans (44%) would prefer to deal with the state's deficit primarily through spending cuts, while pluralities of independents (44%) and Democrats (42%) would prefer a mixture of spending cuts and tax increases. Forty-one percent of likely voters favor a mix of spending cuts and tax increases, and 30 percent support a plan that includes mostly spending cuts. The percentage of county residents who prefer a mixture of spending cuts and tax increases did not change significantly following the March 2nd primary and the passage of Propositions 57 and 58.

“How would you prefer to deal with the state's deficit?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Mixture of spending cuts and tax increases	36%	42%	33%	44%	41%
Mostly through spending cuts	30	21	44	32	30
Okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit	11	10	9	9	7
Mostly through tax increases	10	14	3	8	11
Other answer	4	5	5	3	5
Don't know	9	8	6	4	6

Governor's Proposed Budget Plan

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's first state budget includes shifting \$1.3 billion in property tax money previously allocated to local governments to the state to reduce its budget deficit. Opinion among Los Angeles County residents is divided on this part of the governor's deficit plan: Forty-four percent approve of the use of these property tax monies, and 45 percent disapprove. Among the county's likely voters, 40 percent approve and 50 percent disapprove. However, there are strong partisan differences: Sixty-four percent of Republicans approve of the use of these property taxes in the governor's budget, while 57 percent of Democrats disapprove of this plan; independents are evenly divided (47% approve; 46% disapprove).

“Governor Schwarzenegger’s budget plan for the next fiscal year includes no new taxes, while it reduces the deficit through spending cuts in state programs and the use of \$1.3 billion in local government property tax money. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the governor’s plan to use local government tax money to reduce the deficit?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Approve	44%	33%	64%	47%	40%
Disapprove	45	57	25	46	50
Don't know	11	10	11	7	10

The governor's budget plan to reduce the state's deficit also includes no new taxes—45 percent of Los Angeles County residents and likely voters say this component of the plan is very important to them. Three in four say it is at least somewhat important. Only 20 percent of county residents say that it is not too important or not at all important that no new taxes are included in the plan, and 24 percent of likely voters in the county feel this way.

Fifty-five percent of Republicans say that it is very important to them that no new taxes are included in the governor's plan, and only 11 percent of Republicans think that it is not too important or not at all important. By contrast, 42 percent of Democrats and 36 percent of independents think that the no new taxes platform is very important, while 26 percent in each group thinks that it is not too important or doesn't matter at all. Fifty-three percent of conservatives, 42 percent of moderates, and 37 percent of liberals say it is very important to them that the upcoming budget includes no new taxes. The percentage of respondents who consider no new taxes an important issue increases with age and decreases with education.

“How important is it to you that the governor's budget plan for next year includes no new taxes?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Very important	45%	42%	55%	36%	45%
Somewhat important	32	31	32	36	30
Not too important	11	13	6	14	12
Not at all important	9	13	5	12	12
Don't know	3	1	2	2	1

State Fiscal Impacts on Local Services

While spending cuts may be part of the preferred solution in dealing with the state's budget deficit, Los Angeles County residents also recognize that this may have negative consequences on local services. Sixty-five percent of residents are very concerned that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in K-12 public education in the county, and 21 percent are somewhat concerned. Sixty percent of county residents are also very concerned—and 26 percent somewhat concerned—about severe cuts in funding for health and human services. Fifty percent of residents are very concerned about severe cuts in local government services such as parks and recreation, police and public safety, and roads and transportation, and another 37 percent are somewhat concerned about severe cuts in these areas.

Overall, likely voters hold similar views to all adults regarding the effects of the state budget deficit. However, consistently higher percentages of Democrats than Republicans are “very concerned” that there may be severe cuts in public services because of the state's budget deficit. Seventy-six percent of Democrats, compared to 43 percent of Republicans, are very concerned about the possibility of cuts in K-12 public education. Three in four Democrats (74%) are very concerned about the prospects of severe cuts in funding in health and human services, compared to fewer than four in 10 Republicans (36%). Sixty-three percent of Democrats, but only 29 percent of Republicans, are very concerned that the state's deficit will cause severe cuts in various local government services.

Use of specific local services heightens concerns about the impacts of the state budget deficit. For example, 74 percent of residents with a child in the public school system are very concerned that the state's deficit will cause severe cuts in K-12 public education. Similarly, 69 percent of adults who have used, or have had an immediate family member use, the public health care system are very concerned that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in health and human services.

“How concerned are you that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in _____ in Los Angeles County?”

		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>K-12 public education</i>	Very concerned	65%	76%	43%	57%	62%
	Somewhat concerned	21	14	30	27	20
	Not very concerned	7	5	13	9	8
	Not at all concerned	6	4	13	5	8
	Don't know	1	1	1	2	2
<i>Funding for health and human services</i>	Very concerned	60%	74%	36%	53%	58%
	Somewhat concerned	26	19	37	31	27
	Not very concerned	8	4	15	12	9
	Not at all concerned	5	2	11	3	6
	Don't know	1	1	1	1	0
<i>Funding for local government services such as parks and recreation, police and public safety, and roads and transportation</i>	Very concerned	50%	63%	29%	48%	51%
	Somewhat concerned	37	29	48	38	36
	Not very concerned	7	4	12	9	7
	Not at all concerned	5	3	8	5	5
	Don't know	1	1	3	0	1

Willingness to Increase State Taxes

Many Los Angeles County residents appear to be willing to back up their concerns about cuts in local services by paying higher state taxes to maintain current funding. The public's support for raising their state taxes varies by the service they are seeking to maintain, differs sharply across party lines, and is considerably skewed by the current use and perceived utility of particular local public services.

Six in 10 residents (61%), and 56 percent of likely voters, say they would be willing to pay higher taxes for K-12 public education if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding in this area. A majority of Democrats (66%) say they would be willing to pay more money for public education, whereas a majority of Republicans (52%) say they would not. Seventy-one percent of county residents between ages 18 and 34 would pay higher taxes to maintain education funding, compared to half of those age 55 or older. Residents with children in their household are more likely to be willing to pay higher taxes for public schools than those without children (68% to 54%).

If the state said it needed more money to maintain current funding for health and human services, 50 percent of county residents say they would be willing to pay higher taxes and 44 percent say they would not. Likely voters are evenly divided (48% to 47%) on support for tax increases for these particular services. A majority of Democrats (56%) would support a tax increase for health and human services, while a majority of Republicans (62%) would not. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (57%) are the most likely to say they would pay higher taxes to fund health and human services, while whites are the least likely to favor it (46%). Fifty-seven percent of county residents who say they have used the public health care system or might use it would be willing to pay higher taxes to maintain these services, while a majority of those who have never used and do not think they will ever use county health care would not (53%).

County residents (49% to 46%) and likely voters (50% to 45%) are somewhat divided on the question of paying higher taxes to maintain funding for local government services such as parks, police, and transportation. On this issue, the partisan divide is again evident: Most Democrats (54%) are willing, while most Republicans (56%) are unwilling, to pay higher taxes to maintain local government services.

**“What if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for _____?
Would you be willing to pay higher state taxes for this purpose?”**

		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>K-12 public education</i>	Yes	61%	66%	44%	62%	56%
	No	35	31	52	33	40
	Don't know	4	3	4	5	4
<i>Health and human services provided by county government</i>	Yes	50%	56%	34%	52%	48%
	No	44	38	62	44	47
	Don't know	6	6	4	4	5
<i>Local government services such as parks and recreation, police and public safety, and roads and transportation</i>	Yes	49%	54%	39%	52%	50%
	No	46	41	56	43	45
	Don't know	5	5	5	5	5

State Tax and Fee Increases

State tax and fee increases could help reduce the state's multibillion dollar gap between spending and revenue. Among some of the proposals in circulation today, Los Angeles County residents overwhelmingly support raising the income tax of the wealthiest Californians; a slight majority favor raising the state portion of the sales tax; and there is strong opposition to increasing the vehicle license fee.

Seven in 10 county residents favor raising the top rate of the state income tax. A large majority of Democrats (79%) and a slimmer majority of Republicans (55%) support the proposal to increase taxes for the state's wealthiest residents. In all areas of the county, across racial/ethnic, age, and education groups around seven in 10 residents support the idea of raising tax rates for the most affluent Californians. While county residents with household incomes of \$80,000 or higher are somewhat less likely to favor the proposal than those with lower incomes, even in this group, a majority (67%) would support raising the top rate of the state income tax.

County residents are less enthusiastic about raising the state portion of the sales tax by one-half cent, but the proposal still garners majority support. Fifty-three percent of all adults, and 56 percent of likely voters, favor this proposal. A solid majority of Democrats (59%) favor raising the state portion of the sales tax, while Republicans are more evenly split (50% favor, 47% oppose). Majorities of residents in all age, income, education, and racial/ethnic groups support raising the state portion of the sales tax.

On the other hand, seven in 10 county residents (72%) oppose increasing the vehicle license fee to reduce the state's large gap between spending and revenue. Sixty-six percent of likely voters oppose, and 31 percent support, increasing the vehicle license fee. County residents across all political parties oppose raising the license fee; however, Republicans (79%) are more likely than Democrats (66%) to oppose an increase in this fee. Latinos (76%) and blacks (76%) are more likely than whites (67%) to say they oppose an increase in the vehicle license fee. Although higher-income residents are more likely than lower-income residents to say they favor increasing the fee, solid majorities in all demographic groups are opposed to this idea.

<i>Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</i>		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>Raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians</i>	Favor	71%	79%	55%	74%	71%
	Oppose	24	16	41	23	25
	Don't know	5	5	4	3	4
<i>Raising the state portion of the sales tax by one-half cent</i>	Favor	53%	59%	50%	53%	56%
	Oppose	44	38	47	44	42
	Don't know	3	3	3	3	2
<i>Increasing the vehicle license fee or so-called "car tax" to pay for local government services</i>	Favor	24%	30%	18%	29%	31%
	Oppose	72	66	79	68	66
	Don't know	4	4	3	3	3

Local Tax Increases

If there were a measure on the county ballot to increase the sales tax by one-half cent to fund police protection and public safety, it would receive close to the two-thirds majority support needed to pass a local sales tax measure (65% of all adults, 63% of likely voters). A solid majority of Democrats (69%), and a substantial percentage of Republicans (56%) would vote to increase the local sales tax for this purpose. Across the county, such a ballot measure would receive the highest support in the Central/Southeast area (70%) and somewhat lower support in the West (64%), the North Valleys (62%), and the San Fernando Valley (60%). Latinos (72%) are more likely than blacks (63%), whites (61%), or Asians (60%) to say they would vote yes on the sales tax measure for funding police and public safety.

If there were a measure on the county ballot to increase the sales tax for local transportation projects by one-half cent, it would fall shy of the two-thirds majority needed to pass a local tax hike (55% of all adults; 55% of likely voters). A majority of Democrats (61%) and independents (60%) say they would vote yes, while Republicans are split on increasing taxes for this purpose (49% yes, 47% no). Support for increasing the sales tax for local transportation projects does not vary significantly across geographic areas or racial/ethnic, age, education, or income groups.

“What if there were a measure on the county ballot to increase the local sales tax for _____ by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?”

		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>Police protection and public safety</i>	Yes	65%	69%	56%	62%	63%
	No	32	29	41	34	34
	Don't know	3	2	3	4	3
<i>Local transportation projects</i>	Yes	55%	61%	49%	60%	55%
	No	40	35	47	37	40
	Don't know	5	4	4	3	5

Seven in 10 county residents (69%), and 60 percent of likely voters, would vote yes if their local school district had a bond measure on the November ballot to pay for school construction projects. Local school bonds for construction projects require a 55 percent majority to pass. Seven in 10 Democrats (70%) and independents (69%) say they would vote yes, while Republicans (49% yes, 47% no) are evenly divided. Residents in the Central/Southeast area express the highest support for a local school bond measure (75%), although majorities in all areas of the county would vote yes. Residents with children at home are more likely than those with no children to say they would vote yes (79% to 60%).

“Suppose your local school district had a bond measure on the November 2004 ballot to pay for school construction projects. Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	69%	70%	49%	69%	60%
No	27	25	47	26	36
Don't know	4	5	4	5	4

Local and State Governance Issues

Government Ratings

When asked to rate the job performance of their state elected officials, the majority of Los Angeles County residents say they approve of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's overall performance in office. Across political party lines, Republicans are overwhelmingly positive in their evaluations of the GOP governor, and a majority of independents and a plurality of Democrats also think he's doing a good job. Among the county adults who are most likely to vote, positive ratings outnumber negative ratings by a two-to-one margin. Whites (64%) and Asians (59%) are more positive than blacks (43%) and Latinos (39%) about Governor Schwarzenegger. His approval ratings increase with age, education, and income.

By contrast, the California legislature receives more mixed reviews, with about as many approving as disapproving of the lawmakers' overall job performance. Likely voters are even more negative than all adults in their evaluations of the state legislature. Democrats and Republicans are similarly disapproving of the performance of the Democratic-controlled legislature. In contrast to the governor's approval scores, the legislature's disapproval ratings increase with age, education, income, and homeownership.

		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	51%	45%	80%	53%	56%
	Disapprove	33	36	10	32	28
	Don't know	16	19	10	15	16
<i>Do you approve or disapprove of the job the California legislature is doing at this time?</i>	Approve	40%	36%	39%	45%	35%
	Disapprove	42	49	49	40	52
	Don't know	18	15	12	15	13

Los Angeles County residents express more approval for their city governments than the county government when it comes to solving problems. However, excellent or good ratings fall short of a majority across all regions and groups for both levels of local government. A decade ago, the 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll showed that 51 percent of Los Angeles County residents rated their local governments as doing an excellent or good job in their communities.

How would you rate the performance of ...		All Adults	L.A. City		County Area			
			Los Angeles	Not Los Angeles	North Valleys	San Fernando	West	Central / Southeast
<i>City government in solving problems in your city?</i>	Excellent / Good	39%	32%	44%	41%	37%	44%	37%
	Fair	36	41	33	36	40	35	35
	Poor	16	19	14	13	16	14	20
	Don't know / N.A.	9	8	9	10	7	7	8
<i>County government in solving problems in Los Angeles County?</i>	Excellent / Good	25%	22%	26%	27%	25%	22%	26%
	Fair	46	48	44	45	49	45	44
	Poor	21	19	21	21	20	22	20
	Don't know	8	11	9	7	6	11	10

Perceptions of Immigrants

How do Los Angeles County residents perceive the role of immigrants in their county today, particularly in light of a slowdown in economic growth and fiscal problems in state government? When asked which of two opinions is closest to their own view, a majority say that immigrants today are a benefit because of their economic contributions, and about one in three say they are a burden because they use public services. There are sharp distinctions by citizenship status, while likely voters are more evenly divided in their assessment of the role of immigrants. The perceived impact of immigrants continues to be a polarizing issue. Latinos (70%) and Asians (68%) are more likely than blacks (38%) and whites (44%) to think that immigrants today are a benefit to the county. Democrats (58%) are more likely to say that immigrants are a benefit, and Republicans (58%) are more likely to say that immigrants are a burden.

The same overall perceptions of immigrants, and the sharp differences of opinions across racial/ethnic and political groups, were also evident in our February 2004 PPIC Statewide Survey.

<i>Which of these two views is closest to your own ...</i>	All Adults	Citizenship			Likely Voters
		U.S.-born citizens	Foreign-born, U.S. citizens	Foreign-born, non-U.S. citizens	
Immigrants today are a benefit to L.A. County because of their hard work and job skills	55%	47%	62%	75%	48%
Immigrants today are a burden to L.A. County because they use public services	36	43	29	22	43
Don't know	9	10	9	3	9

A decade ago, the 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll asked about the effects of illegal immigration in the county. This was in the context of statewide economic and fiscal problems and Proposition 187, the citizens' initiative that sought to deny public services to illegal immigrants. Proposition 187 passed in November 1994 but was later invalidated by the courts. In 1994, about half of Los Angeles County residents said that illegal immigration into the county was a big problem, and seven in 10 residents thought that it was at least a moderate-sized problem. Today, a similar proportion of Los Angeles County residents describe illegal immigration as a big problem or at least a moderate-sized problem.

The public's perceptions of illegal immigration into Los Angeles County are also largely shaped by citizenship status, race/ethnicity, and partisanship. U.S.-born residents (52%) are more likely than foreign-born citizens (42%) and non-citizens (36%) to say that illegal immigration is a big problem. Likewise, blacks (60%) and whites (54%) are more likely than Asians (40%) and Latinos (36%) to call illegal immigration a big problem. Republicans (66%) are more likely than Democrats (44%) to hold this point of view.

“How big of a problem is the amount of illegal immigration into Los Angeles County?”

	1994*	2004
Major problem	52%	47%
Moderate-sized problem	19	26
Minor problem	14	12
Not a problem at all	11	13
Don't know	3	2

*Results are from a June 1994 *Los Angeles Times* poll.

Public Health Care System

While a plurality of Los Angeles County residents continue to believe that illegal immigration is a big problem, most are now opposed to denying access to public health care based on an immigrant’s status. Six in 10 county residents say that illegal immigrants and their children should have access to public health care. A majority of likely voters also support this policy. While there are variations by citizenship status, a solid majority of U.S.-born citizens support providing public health care to illegal immigrants and their children, and majorities in every racial/ethnic group also support this policy (whites 51%, blacks 52%, Asians 55%, and Latinos 74%). Fifty-three percent of Republicans think illegal immigrants and their children should be denied access to public health care, while a large majority of Democrats (69%) say that public health care should be provided to these immigrants and their children.

<i>Which of these two views is closest to your own ...</i>	All Adults	Citizenship			Likely Voters
		U.S.-born citizens	Foreign-born, U.S. citizens	Foreign-born, non-U.S. citizens	
Illegal immigrants and their children should have access to public health care	61%	55%	68%	72%	55%
Illegal immigrants and their children should be denied access to public health care	33	37	26	26	37
Don't know	6	8	6	2	8

A substantial percentage of adult residents (45%) say that they or an immediate family member has at one time used the public health care system in Los Angeles County. The use of public health care varies dramatically by citizenship status (U.S.-born 40%, foreign-born citizen 45%, non-citizen 60%) and race/ethnicity (whites 32%, Asians 34%, blacks 57%, Latinos 58%) and declines sharply with age, education, and income. All together, about six in 10 residents say that they or a family member either has used the public health care system or expects to do so in the future.

The importance of the public health care system in Los Angeles County translates into a willingness to raise local taxes to fund health services. Three in four adult residents would support a measure on the county ballot for new taxes on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes to fund such services. There is overwhelming support for raising new taxes for this purpose among likely voters (76%), Democrats (81%), and Republicans (67%) and across racial/ethnic and income groups as well as age, education, and income categories.

“What if there were a measure on the county ballot for new taxes on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes in order to fund county public health services? Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	76%	81%	67%	72%	76%
No	22	17	31	27	22
Don't know	2	2	2	1	2

Extending Health Care Coverage

One in five Los Angeles County adults say they are not covered by any form of private health insurance or by a government health plan. While nearly nine in 10 Asians, whites, and blacks say they have some form of health care coverage, about one in three Latino adults say they do not have any form of health coverage. Moreover, while more than eight in 10 adult citizens are covered by health insurance or a health plan, about four in 10 noncitizens say they currently have no health care coverage.

The public’s worries about health care today go beyond the issue of insurance coverage. Nearly two in three county adults say they are very concerned about being able to afford the necessary health care when a family member gets sick, and eight in 10 are at least somewhat concerned. Among likely voters, more than half say they are very concerned about the affordability of necessary health care. While concern varies by citizenship status and across racial/ethnic groups, majorities in all categories express at least some concern about this issue.

“How concerned are you about being able to afford necessary health care when a family member gets sick—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?”

	All Adults	Citizenship			Likely Voters
		U.S.-born citizens	Foreign-born, U.S. citizens	Foreign-born, non-U.S. citizens	
Very concerned	63%	58%	69%	79%	56%
Somewhat concerned	19	21	17	15	21
Not too concerned	8	11	6	3	11
Not at all concerned	8	10	8	3	11
Don't know	2	0	0	0	1

Last year, state law SB2 was passed by the legislature and signed by then-Governor Gray Davis. This state law requires large and medium-sized employers to buy health insurance coverage for their employees by specified dates (2006 and 2007, respectively). More recently, signatures have been gathered to place a referendum on the state ballot to repeal this law. Los Angeles County residents, as well as the county’s likely voters, strongly oppose efforts to repeal SB2—by a two-to-one margin. Democrats strongly oppose repealing SB2, while Republicans have more mixed views on this state referendum. Strong support for keeping SB2 is found in all age, education, income, citizenship status, and racial/ethnic groups.

“How about a referendum to repeal or remove state law SB2 that was passed last year requiring large employers to buy health insurance for their workers and families by 2006, and medium-size employers to buy health insurance for their workers and families by 2007? Would you vote yes to repeal or remove SB2 or no to keep SB2?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes, repeal / remove	30%	24%	40%	29%	30%
No, keep	64	70	54	65	63
Don't know	6	6	6	6	7

State Tax Increases for Mental Health Services

We noted earlier that there appears to be significant agreement on one issue involving state taxes: that the wealthiest Californians should pay higher taxes to fund state programs. How do voters respond to one of the citizens’ initiatives currently being proposed by a member of the state legislature which would impose a 1 percent additional tax on income over \$1 million and earmarking these new revenues specifically for mental health services? Currently this fiscal proposal enjoys solid public support: More than two in three adults and likely voters support the idea of raising taxes in this fashion, and a majority of both Democrats (76%) and Republicans (56%) support the proposal. Public support runs 60 percent or more in all racial/ethnic groups and across all age, education, and income categories.

“How about imposing an additional 1 percent tax on taxable income over \$1 million to provide dedicated funding for mental health services? Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	71%	76%	56%	70%	68%
No	25	20	40	24	28
Don't know	4	4	4	6	4

Property Tax Increases for Schools

There is also an effort under way to qualify a measure for the state ballot that would change some of the property tax limits that have been in place since California voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978. This citizens’ initiative calls for providing additional funding for kindergarten through 12th grade public education and establishing a voluntary universal preschool program with funds provided through additional taxes on commercial and residential property that produces income. Existing property tax limits would remain in effect for residential properties that do not produce income. While six in 10 adult residents approve of this measure, it leads by a narrower margin among likely voters (52% to 44%). There is a deep partisan divide on this issue, with Republicans strongly opposed (57%) and Democrats strongly in favor (64%) of this effort to reform the Proposition 13 tax limits. Public support declines with increasing age, income, and education. County residents with children at home (73%) are much more supportive of property tax increases that would go to the schools than are those with no children at home (55%). Support is lower among whites (52%) than among Latinos (77%), blacks (60%), and Asians (64%).

“How about providing additional funding for K-12 public education and establishing a voluntary universal preschool program with funds provided through additional taxes on commercial and residential property that produces income? Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	63%	64%	40%	63%	52%
No	33	31	57	32	44
Don't know	4	5	3	5	4

Workers' Compensation Reform

Another important policy issue that might appear on the November ballot in the form of a citizens' initiative is the reform of the state's workers' compensation system. While business interests have been calling for systemic reforms because of rising employer costs and their impacts on job creation, other groups have raised concerns about the impacts of these reforms on injured workers. The voters' response to workers' compensation reform may depend on how this policy debate is framed. Two in three likely voters say they favor policies that reduce employer costs for workers' compensation. However, there is substantial opposition to reducing employer costs if it means reducing the benefits for employees who are injured at work. While most Republicans continue to favor reducing employer costs, even if employee benefits are reduced, support from Democratic voters falls off sharply under this contingency.

Would you vote yes or no?		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>How about reducing employer costs for workers' compensation by requiring employees to prove an injury took place at work, removing employer liability for previous job-related injuries, and establishing medical treatment guidelines?</i>	Yes	64%	59%	74%	69%	67%
	No	28	33	20	23	25
	Don't know	8	8	6	8	8
<i>How about reducing employer costs for workers' compensation even if it meant fewer benefits for employees who are injured at work?</i>	Yes	37%	33%	59%	35%	42%
	No	56	61	36	58	49
	Don't know	7	6	5	7	9

State and Local Fiscal Reform

Local officials throughout California face revenue cuts as the state government seeks ways to reduce the gap between spending and revenues. Some have proposed a citizens' initiative that would require voter approval for the state government to reduce local government revenues. Two in three likely voters support this proposal in concept. However, there is a sharp decline in support if local government funding guarantees come at the expense of funding for state programs. State and local tax reforms that call for local governments to keep more property tax funds in exchange for sending more sales tax and vehicle license fees to the state government also had a mixed response from Los Angeles County voters.

Would you vote yes or no?		All Adults	Party Registration			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>How about requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature and voter approval for any reduction of local government revenues?</i>	Yes	60%	62%	63%	61%	66%
	No	30	29	30	28	26
	Don't know	10	9	7	11	8
<i>How about requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature and voter approval for any reduction of local government revenues even if it meant less funding for state government services?</i>	Yes	48%	48%	54%	54%	53%
	No	41	43	34	38	36
	Don't know	11	9	12	8	11

Survey Methodology

The Los Angeles County Survey is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which is directed by Mark Baldassare, research director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance in research and writing from Jon Cohen, survey research manager, and Eliana Kaimowitz and Renatta DeFever, survey research associates. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California, with partial funding from the California Community Foundation. The survey methods, questions, and content of the report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare. However, the survey benefited from consultation with staff at the University of Southern California, the California Community Foundation, and other Los Angeles County institutions.

The findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,002 Los Angeles County adult residents interviewed between February 27 and March 9, 2004. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in Los Angeles County were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing by using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Each interview took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English or Spanish. We did not include Asian language interviews because the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that fewer than 1 percent of Los Angeles County adults speak any given Asian language and describe themselves as not speaking English at least “well.” Casa Hispana translated the survey into Spanish; and Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. conducted the telephone interviewing.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of Los Angeles County’s adult population and, accordingly, statistically weighted the survey sample.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,002 adults is +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in Los Angeles County were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. Where noted, we asked questions of half samples (approximately 1,000 respondents); for these questions, the sampling error is +/- 3 percentage points. 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 the results for non-Hispanic whites (referred to in the tables and text as “whites” for the sake of brevity), blacks/African Americans (“blacks”), Latinos, and Asians. We also contrast the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents. The “independents” category includes only those who are registered to vote as “decline to state.”

In some cases, we compare the PPIC Survey of Los Angeles County responses to responses recorded in a 1994 Los Angeles County survey conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*. We also used earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys to analyze trends over time in Los Angeles County and to compare public opinion in Los Angeles County to opinions in the other major regions of California and statewide.

In this report, we present results by county area, dividing Los Angeles County into four geographic areas. The four areas highlighted in the report and presented in the Los Angeles County map on page ii represent a consolidation of the county's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs). In November 1993, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved eight regional SPAs for the purposes of planning, service coordination, and information- and data-sharing by major county departments serving children and families. At that time, the county's departments of Children and Family Services, Mental Health, Health Services, Public Social Services, and Probation were instructed to begin implementing these common boundaries for planning activities; and noncounty entities were asked to adopt the same planning areas. Since then, the California Community Foundation, the United Way, and the California Wellness Foundation have also adopted the SPA boundaries to help organize and coordinate their planning. These areas, and how they relate to our county areas, are described below, including a partial list of the cities and communities included.

- North Valleys—includes Acton, Alhambra, Altadena, Arcadia, Azusa, Baldwin Park, Claremont, Covina, Diamond Bar, Duarte, El Monte, Glendora, Gorman, Hacienda-Rowland Heights, La Puente, La Verne, Lake Hughes, Lake Los Angeles, Lancaster, Littlerock, Llano, Monrovia, Monterey Park, Mt. Wilson, Palmdale, Pasadena, Pearblossom, Pomona, Rosemead, San Dimas, San Gabriel, San Marino, Santa Clarita, Sierra Madre, South Pasadena, Temple City, Valyermo, Walnut, and West Covina, as well as other cities and communities.
- San Fernando—includes Burbank, Calabasas, Canoga Park, Encino, Chatsworth, Glendale, La Canada, La Crescenta, Mid-San Fernando Valley, North Hills, North Hollywood, Northridge, Northwest San Fernando Valley, Pacoima, Reseda, San Fernando, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Sunland, Sylmar, Tarzana, Thousand Oaks, Tujunga, Van Nuys, Westlake Village, Winnetka, and Woodland Hills, as well as other cities and communities.
- West—includes beach cities, Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, Carson, Culver City, El Segundo, Gardena, Harbor City, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Long Beach, Malibu, Pacific Palisades, Palos Verdes, Playa del Rey, San Pedro, Santa Monica, Topanga Canyon, Torrance, Venice/Mar Vista, West Los Angeles, Westchester, and Wilmington, as well as other cities and communities.
- Central/Southeast—includes Artesia, Bell/Bell Garden/Cudahy, Bellflower, Boyle Heights, Central Los Angeles, Cerritos, Commerce, Compton, Crenshaw, Downey, East Los Angeles, Hawaiian Gardens, Hollywood, Huntington Park, La Habra, La Mirada, Lakewood, Lynwood, Maywood, Montebello, Northeast, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South Central, South Gate, University, West Compton, West Hollywood, West Wilshire, Whittier, and Wilshire, as well as other cities and communities.

In this survey report, North Valleys includes SPA 1 and SPA 3; San Fernando includes SPA 2; West includes SPA 5 and SPA 8; and Central/ Southeast includes SPA 4, SPA 6, and SPA 7. For additional information on the Los Angeles County SPAs, see the following page on the web site of United Way of Greater Los Angeles: http://www.unitedwayla.org/pages/rpts_resource/state_spas.html.

**PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: SPECIAL SURVEY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
 FEBRUARY 27—MARCH 9, 2004
 2,002 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS; ENGLISH AND SPANISH
 MARGIN OF ERROR +/- 2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE**

1. First, I would like to ask you some questions about where you live. Is the place you currently live a single-family detached home; an attached home such as a condo, duplex, or town home; an apartment; or another type of dwelling?

- 55% single-family detached home
- 13 attached home
- 28 apartment
- 4 other

2. All things considered, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied these days with the community in which you live?

- 80% satisfied
- 17 dissatisfied
- 3 don't know

3. Overall, would you say the quality of life in your community is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

- 25% getting better
- 19 getting worse
- 53 staying about the same
- 3 don't know

I'd like to ask how you would rate some of the public services in your local area.

[rotate questions 4 to 7]

4. How about local streets and roads? Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 8% excellent
- 43 good
- 32 fair
- 16 poor
- 1 don't know

5. How about local parks, beaches, and other public recreational facilities?

- 15% excellent
- 48 good
- 25 fair
- 7 poor
- 5 don't know

6. How about local police protection?

- 20% excellent
- 47 good
- 21 fair
- 8 poor
- 4 don't know

7. How about local public schools?

- 11% excellent
- 32 good
- 21 fair
- 16 poor
- 20 don't know

8. Overall, how would you rate the performance of city government in solving problems in your city—excellent, good, fair, or poor?

- 6% excellent
- 33 good
- 36 fair
- 16 poor
- 1 don't live in a city (*volunteered*)
- 8 don't know

9. What's the most important problem facing your community today? Is there another problem that is almost as important? *[Open-ended question, accepted two replies; both replies listed]*

- 14% crime
- 13 gangs
- 13 education, schools
- 10 economy, jobs, unemployment
- 7 traffic
- 7 housing, homelessness
- 6 growth and development
- 5 drugs
- 3 graffiti
- 8 there are no problems
- 11 don't know

10. Do you think that things in Los Angeles County are generally going in the right direction or are they seriously off on the wrong track?

- 45% right direction
- 38 wrong track
- 17 don't know

11. In general, how would you rate the economy in Los Angeles County today? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

2% excellent
23 good
45 fair
28 poor
2 don't know

12. Do you think your community is in an economic recession or not? (if yes: Do you think it is in a serious, a moderate, or a mild recession?)

12% yes, serious recession
22 yes, moderate recession
11 yes, mild recession
47 no
8 don't know

13. In the future, do you think that Los Angeles County will be a better place to live than it is now, a worse place to live than it is now, or there will be no change?

34% better place
32 worse place
27 no change
7 don't know

14. On another topic, how would you rate the performance of county government in solving problems in Los Angeles County—excellent, good, fair, or poor?

3% excellent
22 good
46 fair
21 poor
8 don't know

15. What type of transportation project do you think should have the top priority for public funds in Los Angeles County? [read rotated list, then ask "or something else?"]

23% freeways and highways
19 the public bus system
17 light rail
14 local streets and roads
13 the subway system
7 carpool lanes
4 something else (specify)
3 don't know

16. Overall, do you think that the Metro Rail System has been a good thing or a bad thing for the Los Angeles transportation system, or has it made no difference?

73% good thing
4 bad thing
16 no difference
7 don't know

17. The November 2004 state ballot may include a 9.95 billion dollar bond measure that would fund the planning and construction of a high-speed train in California, linking Los Angeles to San Francisco via the Central Valley. If the election were today, would you vote yes or no?

60% yes
32 no
8 don't know

[rotate questions 18 and 19]

18. What if there was a measure on the county ballot to increase the local sales tax for local transportation projects by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?

55% yes
40 no
5 don't know

19. What if there was a measure on the county ballot to increase the local sales tax for police protection and public safety by one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no?

65% yes
32 no
3 don't know

20. Changing topics, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?

51% approve
33 disapprove
16 don't know

21. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the job the California legislature is doing at this time?

40% approve
42 disapprove
18 don't know

22. On another topic, as you may know, the state government has an annual budget of around 100 billion dollars and currently faces a multibillion dollar gap between state spending and state revenue. Do you think that this deficit is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for the people of California today?

70% big problem
22 somewhat of a problem
4 not a problem
4 don't know

23. How would you prefer to deal with the state's deficit—mostly through spending cuts; mostly through tax increases; through a mix of spending cuts and tax increases; *or* do you think that it is okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit?

- 36% mixture of spending cuts and tax increases
- 30 mostly through spending cuts
- 11 okay for the state to borrow money and run a budget deficit
- 10 mostly through tax increases
- 4 other answer (*specify*)
- 9 don't know

24. Governor Schwarzenegger's budget plan for the next fiscal year includes no new taxes, while it reduces the deficit through spending cuts in state programs and the use of 1.3 billion dollars in local government property tax money. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the governor's plan to use local government tax money to reduce the deficit?

- 44% approve
- 45 disapprove
- 11 don't know

25. How important is it to you that the governor's budget plan for next year includes no new taxes—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

- 45% very important
- 32 somewhat important
- 11 not too important
- 9 not at all important
- 3 don't know

[rotate questions 26 to 28]

26. How concerned are you that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in K-12 public education in Los Angeles County—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?

- 65% very concerned
- 21 somewhat concerned
- 7 not very concerned
- 6 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

27. How concerned are you that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in funding for local government services such as parks and recreation, police and public safety, and roads and transportation in Los Angeles County—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?

- 50% very concerned
- 37 somewhat concerned
- 7 not very concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

28. How concerned are you that the state's budget deficit will cause severe cuts in funding for health and human services in Los Angeles County—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?

- 60% very concerned
- 26 somewhat concerned
- 8 not very concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

[rotate questions 29 to 31]

29. What if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for K-12 public education? Would you be willing to pay higher state taxes for this purpose?

- 61% yes
- 35 no
- 4 don't know

30. What if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for local government services such as parks and recreation, police and public safety, and roads and transportation? Would you be willing to pay higher state taxes for this purpose?

- 49% yes
- 46 no
- 5 don't know

31. What if the state said it needed more money just to maintain current funding for health and human services provided by county government? Would you be willing to pay higher state taxes for this purpose?

- 50% yes
- 44 no
- 6 don't know

Tax and fee increases could be used to help reduce the state's large gap between spending and revenue. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

[rotate questions 32 to 34]

32. How about raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians? (Do you favor or oppose this proposal?)

- 71% favor
- 24 oppose
- 5 don't know

33. How about raising the state portion of the sales tax by one-half cent? (Do you favor or oppose this proposal?)

- 53% favor
- 44 oppose
- 3 don't know

34. How about increasing the vehicle license fee or so-called “car tax” to pay for local government services? (Do you favor or oppose this proposal?)

24% favor
72 oppose
4 don't know

Several fiscal, tax, and economic policy proposals may appear on the November 2004 ballot. For each of the following, please say whether you would vote yes or no if the election were today.

[rotate questions 35 to 40]

35. How about providing additional funding for K-12 public education and establishing a voluntary universal preschool program with funds provided through additional taxes on commercial and residential property that produces income? Would you vote yes or no?

63% yes
33 no
4 don't know

36. How about imposing an additional 1 percent tax on taxable income over 1 million dollars to provide dedicated funding for mental health services? Would you vote yes or no?

71% yes
25 no
4 don't know

37a. [half sample] How about requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature and voter approval for any reduction of local government revenues? Would you vote yes or no?

60% yes
30 no
10 don't know

37b. [half sample] How about requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature and voter approval for any reduction of local government revenues even if it meant less funding for state government services? Would you vote yes or no?

48% yes
41 no
11 don't know

38. [half sample] How about allowing local governments to keep more property tax money in exchange for sending more sales tax and vehicle license fee revenue to the state government? Would you vote yes or no?

36% yes
52 no
12 don't know

39. [half sample] How about a referendum to repeal or remove state law SB2 that was passed last year requiring large employers to buy health insurance for their workers and families by 2006, and medium-size employers to buy health insurance for their workers and families by 2007? Would you vote yes to repeal or remove SB2 or no to keep SB2?

30% yes, to repeal / remove
64 no, to keep
6 don't know

40a. [half sample] How about reducing employer costs for workers' compensation by requiring employees to prove an injury took place at work, removing employer liability for previous job-related injuries, and establishing medical treatment guidelines? Would you vote yes or no?

64% yes
28 no
8 don't know

40b. [half sample] How about reducing employer costs for workers' compensation even if it meant fewer benefits for employees who are injured at work? Would you vote yes or no?

37% yes
56 no
7 don't know

41. Suppose your local school district had a bond measure on the November 2004 ballot to pay for school construction projects. Would you vote yes or no?

69% yes
27 no
4 don't know

42. What if there were a measure on the county ballot for new taxes on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes in order to fund county public health services? Would you vote yes or no?

76% yes
22 no
2 don't know

43. Which of these two views is closest to your own—
[rotate] Immigrants today are a benefit to Los Angeles County because of their hard work and job skills; or immigrants today are a burden to Los Angeles County because they use public services.

55% benefit
36 burden
9 don't know

44. And how big a problem is the amount of illegal immigration into Los Angeles County—is it a major problem, a moderate-sized problem, minor problem, or not a problem at all?
- 47% major problem
 - 26 moderate-sized problem
 - 12 minor problem
 - 13 not a problem at all
 - 2 don't know
45. And which of these two views is closest to your own—*[rotate]* Illegal immigrants and their children should have access to public health care; *or* illegal immigrants and their children should be denied access to public health care?
- 61% illegal immigrants should have access to public health care
 - 33 illegal immigrants should be denied access to public health care
 - 6 don't know
46. On another topic, are you, yourself, now covered by any form of health insurance or health plan?
- [read if necessary: A health plan includes any private insurance plan through your employer or a plan that you purchased yourself, as well as a government program like Medicare, Medicaid, or Medi-Cal.]*
- 80% yes
 - 20 no
47. Have you or anyone in your immediate family ever used a Los Angeles County public hospital or the public health care system in Los Angeles County? *[if no: Do you think you will ever use the public health care system in Los Angeles County?]*
- 45% yes
 - 14 no, will use
 - 28 no, will never use
 - 11 no, don't know
 - 2 don't know
48. And how concerned are you about being able to afford necessary health care when a family member gets sick—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?
- 63% very concerned
 - 19 somewhat concerned
 - 8 not too concerned
 - 8 not at all concerned
 - 2 don't know
49. On another topic, 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
 - 38 fair amount
 - 23 only a little
 - 8 none
 - 2 don't know
50. Some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote?
- 73% yes *[ask q.51]*
 - 27 no *[skip to q.53]*
51. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?
- 53% Democrat *[ask q.52b]*
 - 27 Republican *[ask q.52c]*
 - 3 another party *(specify) [skip to q.53]*
 - 17 independent *[ask q.52a]*
- 52a. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?
- 26% Republican party *[skip to q.53]*
 - 42 Democratic party *[skip to q.53]*
 - 27 neither *(volunteered) [skip to q.53]*
 - 5 don't know *[skip to q.53]*
- 52b. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?
- 54% strong *[skip to q.53]*
 - 44 not very strong *[skip to q.53]*
 - 1 don't know *[skip to q.53]*
- 52c. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?
- 50% strong *[ask q.53]*
 - 48 not very strong *[ask q.53]*
 - 2 don't know *[ask q.53]*
53. On another topic, would you consider yourself to be politically very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle-of-the-road, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?
- 11% very liberal
 - 23 somewhat liberal
 - 28 middle-of-the-road
 - 23 somewhat conservative
 - 12 very conservative
 - 3 don't know

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

- 42% always
- 23 nearly always
- 10 part of the time
- 4 seldom
- 21 never

[55-58: demographic questions]

59. (if employed) How do you usually commute to work—drive alone, carpool, public bus or transit, or some other means?

- 75% drive alone
- 12 carpool
- 7 public bus or transit
- 3 some other means (*specify*)
- 3 work at home (*volunteered*)

60. (if employed) Overall, how satisfied are you with your commute to work? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

- 41% very satisfied
- 31 somewhat satisfied
- 14 somewhat dissatisfied
- 12 very dissatisfied
- 2 don't know

[61-66: demographic questions]

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