

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 #2162

Release Date: **Tuesday, June 28, 2005**

**GREATER THAN TWO TO ONE
MAJORITY BELIEVE STATE IS
SERIOUSLY OFF ON WRONG
TRACK.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

One of the more sensitive measures of how residents feel about conditions here in California relates to their responses to the question of whether the state is going in the right direction or is seriously off on the wrong track.

During the last seventeen years the proportion of Californians believing that the state was going in the right direction reached its nadir in 1992, when just 7% felt this way. The most optimistic assessment occurred in 2000, when 58% felt the state was heading in the right direction.

Currently, *The Field Poll* finds that 28% believe the state is going in the right direction, while 59% think it is seriously off on the wrong track. This greater than two to one negative assessment is down considerably from a 40% right track/51% wrong track reading obtained four months ago and is approaching the degree of pessimism observed two years ago during the midst of the state's historic recall election.

Table 1
Trend of the overall direction California is heading
(among all adults)

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
June 2005	28%	59	13
February 2005	40%	51	9
2004 (average)	36%	52	12
2003 (average)	19%	71	10
2002 (average)*	37%	52	11
2001 (average)	40%	52	8
2000 (average)*	58%	35	7
1999 (average)	52%	34	14
1998 (average)	53%	33	14
1997 (average)	34%	54	12
1996 (average)	39%	49	12
1995 (average)	32%	57	11
1994 (average)	21%	70	9
1993 (average)	15%	78	7
1992 (average)	7%	90	3
1989 (average)	50%	42	8
1988 (average)	52%	43	5

* Indicates survey conducted among registered voters only.

How subgroups divide

The demographic subgroups of the population who are the most pessimistic about the direction the state is heading include women, Democrats, non-partisans, older residents, Latinos, and those with household incomes of less than \$40,000.

In addition, there is a direct correlation between the public's view of the direction of the state and their assessment of the job Arnold Schwarzenegger is doing as Governor. Among the 31% of residents who approve of the Governor's performance, there is considerable optimism about the direction of the state, with 64% believing it is moving in the right direction vs. 26% who see it going in the wrong direction. However, among the majority (58%) who disapprove of the Governor's performance in office, 78% believe the state is seriously off on the wrong track and just 12% say things are heading in the right direction.

Table 2			
Direction California is heading by subgroup			
	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total adults	28%	59	13
<u>Region</u>			
Southern California	27%	60	13
Northern California	28%	58	14
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	32%	55	13
Female	24%	64	12
<u>Voter registration</u>			
Total registered	<u>28%</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>12</u>
Democrats	18%	71	11
Republicans	46%	41	13
Non-partisans/others	21%	67	12
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 39	30%	55	15
40 – 49	31%	59	10
50 or older	23%	64	13
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	27%	57	16
Latino	24%	67	9
Other	30%	55	15
<u>Household income</u>			
Less than \$40,000	21%	70	9
\$40,000 – \$79,000	34%	50	16
\$80,000 or more	34%	52	14
<u>Schwarzenegger job rating</u>			
Approve	64%	26	10
Disapprove	12%	78	10

Reasons for believing state is on the wrong track

When the 59% who think the state is on the wrong track are asked why they hold this opinion, about half point to the state's elected officials as a reason for their pessimism.

More than one in four (28%) volunteer reasons that can be summarized as "the Governor is taking the wrong positions, oppose his positions." Another 23% say that the "state elected officials, the legislature are not doing a good job."

Also ranking high (21%) in volunteered comments is the belief that "schools are performing poorly."

Survey respondents voice many other negative comments as reasons why they feel the state is on the wrong track. These comments, which total 63% in the aggregate, include the following: "not enough jobs, economy is not good, wages are low" (9%), "state government is in debt, too much borrowing" (7%), "high cost of living" (7%), "immigration, borders not under control" (6%), "too much crime, violence" (5%), "taxes are too high, not fair" (5%) "housing costs are out of control" (4%) "too much government regulation, driving jobs out of state" (4%), "racism/anti-immigrant attitudes spreading" (3%), "problems with health care system, costs" (3%), "too much corruption, greed" (2%).

Numerous other reasons were offered, each of which amounted to less than 2% each.

Table 3
Volunteered reasons for believing California
is seriously off on the wrong track
(among those feeling state is on wrong track)

Oppose the direction the Governor is taking	28%
State's elected officials aren't doing a good job	23
Schools are performing poorly	21
Not enough jobs/economy isn't good/wages are low	9
State government is in debt/too much borrowing	7
High cost of living	7
Immigration, borders not under control	6
Too much crime, violence	5
Taxes are too high, not fair	5
Housing costs are out of control	4
Too much government regulation, driving jobs out-of-state	4
Racism/anti-immigrant attitudes spreading	3
Problems with health care system, costs	3
Too much corruption, greed	2
Other mentions (less than 2% each)	8
No answer	4

(Adds to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

Reasons for believing the state is moving in the right direction

Among the 28% who take the position that California is heading in the right direction, almost three in ten (29%) volunteer the view that the "economy is growing, more jobs, business conditions improving" as the reason they feel this way.

A little more than one in four of these adults (27%) say the "Governor is changing things, doing a good job." Another 20% say that "state finances are improving, the state deficit is shrinking."

One in ten (9%) cite "the quality of life is good here." Another 7% offer that "there is less crime, feel safer," while another 2% say "home values are going up."

There were a number of other reasons representing 12% in the aggregate that voiced in support of the belief that the state is moving in the right direction, although each was cited by less than 2%.

Table 4
Volunteered reasons for believing California
is heading in the right direction
(among those feeling state is moving in the right direction)

Economy is growing, more jobs, business conditions improving	29%
Governor is changing things, doing a good job	27
State's finances are improving, deficit is shrinking	20
Quality of life is good here	9
There's less crime, feel safer	7
Home values are going up	2
Other mentions (less than 2% each)	12
No answer	10

(Adds to more than 100% due to multiple mentions)

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Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 463 California adults conducted by telephone June 13-19, 2005 in English and Spanish.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating landline telephone exchanges within all areas codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This method gives each phone listing an equal chance of being selected and permits access to all landline telephone numbers statewide, both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points.

Questions Asked

Thinking about the state overall, do you think things in California are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

(IF RIGHT DIRECTION) Why do you believe California is moving in the right direction? (**PROBE:** Any other reasons?)

(IF WRONG TRACK) Why do you believe California is seriously off on the wrong track? (**PROBE:** Any other reasons?)