

# 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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**FEWER RATE CALIFORNIA AS ONE OF  
THE BEST PLACES TO LIVE. BAY AREA  
RESIDENTS MUCH MORE UPBEAT THAN  
VOTERS ELSEWHERE.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

*The Field Poll* has been charting the perceptions that California residents have had of their state for over forty years and over this period has observed many changes.

For example, in 1967 about three in four residents (73%) described the state as “one of the best places to live.” This same general level of enthusiasm prevailed in subsequent measures conducted through the mid 1980’s.

However, Californians’ views of their state began to change in the late 1980’s and reached a low point in 1992 when just 33% considered the state “one of the best places to live.” Assessments improved modestly in the late 1990’s and into the current decade, with between 40% and 54% offering this description of California as a place to live.

Voters’ current appraisal of the state now falls at the low end of this range, with 41% saying the state is “one of the best places to live,” down nine percentage points from two years ago.

There are wide variations in opinions across the state’s major regions about living in California. Residents of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, for example, are much more likely than voters elsewhere to rate the state in very positive terms, with 61% maintaining that California is “one of the best places to live.” By comparison, half as many voters in the Central Valley (30%) or in areas of Southern California outside of Los Angeles, Orange or San Diego counties (30%) offer such a positive assessment.

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

	<b>One of the best places to live</b>	<b>Nice, but not outstanding</b>	<b>About average</b>	<b>Poor place</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>
2007	50%	29	16	4
2003	47%	32	14	7
2002	49%	33	12	5
2001	40%	29	20	10
2000	54%	25	17	4
1997	46%	29	18	6
1994	44%	28	18	8
1992	33%	29	22	15
1991	51%	25	17	6
1989	58%	27	11	3
1985	78%	14	6	2
1981	70%	20	9	2
1977	75%	13	9	2
1967	73%	15	10	2
<b>Region (March 2009)</b>				
Los Angeles County	37%	29	26	8
Orange/San Diego	42%	27	19	7
Other Southern California	30%	26	26	16
Central Valley	30%	25	26	15
San Francisco Bay Area	61%	18	15	3
Other Northern California*	47%	28	20	3

\* Small sample base.

Note: Surveys prior to 1992 conducted among all adults, not just registered voters. Differences between the sum of each year's percentages and 100% equal proportion with no opinion.

### **Continuing opposition to the idea of dividing California into two states**

Ever since California first became a state in the mid-nineteenth century, it has witnessed a steady increase in its population. In the mid-twentieth century it became the nation's largest state and it continues to grow.

While this growth has brought many benefits to its residents, it has also created some regional rivalries, particularly between those living in the Northern and Southern portions of the state.

In 1959 *The Field Poll* first began asking residents their opinions about splitting California into two states, North and South. This idea, however, was not very well received, with 75% disapproving and just 9% approving.

The proportion of residents who supported dividing the state in two increased somewhat in subsequent years and by 1993 had grown to 29%, although a still substantial 60% majority disapproved.

The current poll finds a smaller number of voters now in favor of dividing California into two states, North and South (19%), while those disapproving of this idea has climbed back to about its historical average at 71%.

There is somewhat more support for creating a North-South split among voters in the forty-eight Northern California counties (27%) than in the ten counties of Southern California (15%).

	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>
1993	60%	29	11
1992	67%	25	8
1981	72%	18	10
1969	62%	14	24
1965	73%	11	16
1959	75%	9	16
<u>Region (March 2009)</u>			
Southern California	76%	15	9
Northern California	62%	27	11

*Note: 2009 survey conducted among registered voters while prior measures conducted among all adults.*

In recent years an alternate proposal had been advanced. It calls for dividing California longitudinally to create two states, East and West.

When the poll tested this idea in the current survey, however, voters are not very supportive, with just 9% in favor and 82% opposed.

	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>Total (March 2009)</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>
<u>Region (March 2009)</u>			
Coastal counties	83%	8	9
Inland counties	80%	10	10

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 761 registered voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period February 20 and March 1, 2009. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues, some of the questions in this report were asked of a random subsample of voters.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. The overall sample was stratified so as to yield interviews with approximately equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans. After the completion of interviewing, the results were weighted to return this sample allocation of voters to the actual distribution of registered voters by party and by various other demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 761 registered voters is +/- 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results based on the random subsample have a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.5 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for subgroups of the overall sample.

### **Questions Asked**

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

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Over the years from time to time there has been some discussion about dividing California into two states. How would you personally feel about dividing California into two states, North and South? Would you approve or disapprove of this?

What if California were instead divided into two states, East and West? Would you approve or disapprove of this?