

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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VOTER RATINGS OF SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE STATE LEGISLATURE EQUAL HISTORIC LOWS.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Voter appraisals of the job Arnold Schwarzenegger is doing as California's Governor have sunk to a new low. Just 23% of voters now approve of his performance as the state's chief executive, while 71% disapprove.

This is the poorest assessment that voters have ever given Schwarzenegger and is statistically equivalent to the all-time record low job appraisal that voters gave to Democrat Gray Davis shortly before he was recalled from office in 2003.

Today's survey also shows that Californians' opinions of the state legislature remain in a deep trough. At present 13% of voters approve and 78% disapprove of its performance, matching the all-time low appraisal given to state lawmakers last October.

Schwarzenegger's job ratings hit a personal low

Since January 2004 *The Field Poll* has made twenty-six separate measurements asking voters for their assessment of Governor Schwarzenegger's job performance. The trend line reveals a number of major swings up and down.

Voters initially gave him very positive reviews throughout his first year in office. Opinions changed in 2005 and by June of that year more voters had an unfavorable opinion of the Governor as viewed him positively. His image rebounded during his 2006 re-election year and continued to improve through 2007. However, beginning in May 2008 assessments again became unfavorable, and have continued to trend in a downward direction ever since. At present, just 23% approve of the job Schwarzenegger is doing while 71% disapprove, the poorest appraisal he has received during his tenure.

Table 1
Trend of Arnold Schwarzenegger's overall job performance as governor
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2010	23%	71	6
January 2010	27%	64	9
October 2009	27%	65	8
Late-April 2009	33%	55	12
March 2009	38%	54	8
September 2008	38%	52	10
July 2008	40%	46	14
May 2008	41%	48	11
December 2007	60%	31	9
October 2007	56%	32	12
August 2007	57%	31	12
March 2007	60%	29	11
September 2006	48%	37	15
July 2006	49%	40	11
May 2006	41%	46	13
April 2006	39%	47	14
February 2006	40%	49	11
October 2005	37%	56	7
August 2005	36%	52	12
June 2005	37%	53	10
February 2005	55%	35	10
September 2004	65%	22	13
August 2004	65%	22	13
May 2004	65%	23	12
February 2004	56%	26	18
January 2004	52%	27	21

Sub-group analysis

No matter the voter subgroup is examined – party registration, region, gender, age, race/ethnicity – all show large majorities disapproving of the job Schwarzenegger is doing.

Table 2
**Voter appraisal of the job performance of Arnold Schwarzenegger as
 governor across subgroups of the registered voter population**

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Total	23%	71	6
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	21%	76	3
Republicans	28%	65	7
Non-partisans/others	21%	68	11
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	18%	78	4
Other Southern California	22%	71	7
Central Valley	27%	69	4
San Francisco Bay Area	27%	62	11
Other Northern California*	26%	74	**
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	27%	69	4
Female	20%	73	7
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 39	23%	72	5
40 – 64	22%	72	6
65 or older	26%	66	8
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	27%	66	7
Latino	19%	77	4
Black/Asian/other	17%	79	4

* Small sample base.

** Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Comparison with previous governors

Schwarzenegger's current dismal job rating is now statistically equivalent to the lowest appraisal ever given a sitting California governor over the more than fifty years of *Field Poll* measurements on gubernatorial performance.

Voters' record low appraisal was given to Democrat Gray Davis shortly before he was recalled as governor in 2003. At that time 22% approved and 70% disapproved of Davis' performance. Schwarzenegger's current 23% positive vs. 71% negative rating is now virtually identical to that assessment.

Table 3
Comparing Governor Schwarzenegger's lowest and highest approval ratings with his six immediate predecessors

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
<u>Schwarzenegger (R)</u>			
Lowest – March 2010	23%	71	6
Highest – September and August 2004	65%	22	13
<u>Davis (D)</u>			
Lowest – August 2003	22%	70	8
Highest – February 2000	62%	20	18
<u>Wilson (R)</u>			
Lowest – September 1992	33%	63	4
Highest – February 1991	52%	27	21
<u>Deukmejian (R)</u>			
Lowest – August 1990	53%	45	2
Highest – August 1985	73%	24	3
<u>J. Brown (D)</u>			
Lowest – April 1980	38%	61	1
Highest – March 1976	69%	25	6
<u>Reagan (R)</u>			
Lowest – August 1971	46%	52	2
Highest – February 1969	60%	33	7
<u>P. Brown (D)</u>			
Lowest – October 1961	35%	50	15
Highest – June 1959	51%	22	27

Note: For measures conducted prior to 1994, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which was converted to the current two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes.

(D) denotes Democrat, (R) denotes Republican

Voter appraisals of the state legislature match its historic low

The current survey finds voter appraisals of the job the state legislature at a record low, equaling the mark previously set last October. Then and now, just 13% of voters approved of its performance, while 78% disapproved.

Table 4
Trend of voter appraisals of the job the state legislature is doing
(among registered voters)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
March 2010	13%	78	9
January 2010	16%	72	12
October 2009	13%	78	9
April 2009	14%	74	12
March 2009	18%	72	10
September 2008	15%	73	12
July 2008	27%	57	16
May 2008	30%	57	13
December 2007	39%	42	19
October 2007	38%	40	22
August 2007	33%	51	16
March 2007	42%	40	18
September 2006	34%	46	20
May 2006	26%	51	23
April 2006	28%	56	16
February 2006	31%	48	21
2005 (average)	28%	55	17
2004 (average)	28%	53	19
2003 (average)	25%	59	16
2002 (average)	40%	40	20
2001 (average)	43%	37	20
2000 (average)	48%	25	27
1999 (average)	45%	28	27
1998 (average)	45%	33	22
1997 (average)	38%	40	22
1996 (average)	41%	49	10
1995 (average)	34%	59	7
1993 (average)	28%	64	8
1992 (average)	32%	64	4
1990 (average)	45%	48	7
1988 (average)	57%	36	7
1983 (average)	43%	49	8

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 were conducted among all adults. In addition, response scales from these surveys were converted from their original five-point scale to the current two-point approve/disapprove scales for comparative purposes.

Sub-group findings

The state legislature is viewed very negatively by voters across party lines. The same holds true for voters in all major regions of the state, all age and gender subgroups and across all ethnic voter populations.

Table 5			
Voter appraisal of the job performance of the state legislature across subgroups of the registered voter population			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Total	13%	78	9
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	14%	77	9
Republicans	8%	86	6
Non-partisans/others	18%	71	11
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	14%	80	6
Other Southern California	12%	80	8
Central Valley	13%	78	9
San Francisco Bay Area	13%	74	13
Other Northern California*	19%	64	17
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	16%	78	6
Female	11%	78	11
<u>Age</u>			
18 – 39	24%	65	11
40 – 64	5%	88	7
65 or older	13%	77	10
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	12%	81	7
Latino	21%	65	14
Black/Asian/other	11%	85	4

* Small sample base.

Information About This Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed March 9-15, 2010 among a random sample of 503 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish with live interviewers working from Field Research's central location telephone interviewing facility.

Up to eight attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. Interviewing was completed either on a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey approximately 17% of all interviews were completed through a cell phone contact. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample was weighted to align it to its proper statewide proportions by party registration, region, and other demographic characteristics of the registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall sample is +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other sources of error.

Questions Asked

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as Governor of California?

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the California state legislature is doing its job?