



PPIC
STATEWIDE
SURVEY
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**Special Survey
of the Central Valley**
in collaboration with the
Great Valley Center

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Policy
Institute of
California**

The Public Policy Institute of California is an independent, nonpartisan research organization established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute is dedicated to raising public awareness of issues and giving elected representatives and other public officials in California a more informed basis for developing policies and programs.

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Preface

The Central Valley Survey — a collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center — is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. This survey was co-sponsored by the Great Valley Center with support from KVIE-TV in Sacramento.

The purpose of the survey is to provide the first comprehensive, advocacy-free study of the attitudes and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents. The Central Valley has been a subject of great interest to researchers and state and national leaders for some time because of its increasing role in the social, economic, and political life of California.

The Central Valley — the inland area of California stretching 400 miles from Bakersfield to Redding — is home to 5 million residents and is one of the fastest growing areas of the state. Latinos now account for one-fourth of the Central Valley population, and growth in the Latino population is expected to accelerate over the next few decades. Because the region is the agricultural center of the state — and because agriculture is the state’s leading industry — the urbanization of farmland in the Central Valley is of great concern to policymakers. Since neither of the major political parties has a large voter registration advantage in this region, the Central Valley is considered one of the most critical "swing regions" in the state, consisting of independent-minded voters who can have a tremendous effect on statewide elections.

This survey of 2,016 adult residents provides “benchmark” questions for measuring changes in key indicators over time and includes comparisons with other major regions of California and with the state as a whole. We explored the following issues:

- Variations in the social, economic, and political attitudes and policy preferences across four different regions of the Central Valley (i.e., North Valley, Sacramento Metro, North San Joaquin, and South San Joaquin), between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites, between newcomers and life-long residents, and across the socioeconomic spectrum.
- Local ratings, including evaluations of the community, local public services, and city and county government.
- Regional perceptions, including appraisals of regional problems, satisfaction with key amenities and opportunities, and observations on traffic congestion.
- Central Valley issues, including thoughts about specific problems, the regional economy, living in the Central Valley, population growth, water, and policies for improving quality of life in the Central Valley.
- Political and social trends, including civic and religious involvement, political profile, sources of political information, and use of computers and the internet.

Copies of this report may be ordered with [this form](#) or by phone (415-291-4400).

The Central Valley

Regional Groupings Used in This Report



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Press Release

CENTRAL VALLEY RESIDENTS EXPRESS SATISFACTION WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE, AMBIVALENCE ABOUT THE FUTURE Growth-Related Issues Create Uncertainty, Conflict

SAN FRANCISCO, California, November 17, 1999 — In contrast to the perceptions of many outsiders, residents of the Central Valley are content with life in the state's heartland, with over half believing that the region is the best place to live in California today. However, a new survey just released by the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center also reveals profound uncertainty about the future of the region, driven largely by conflicting views about the costs and benefits of growth.

The large-scale public opinion survey of the 18-county Central Valley region found that three in four residents rate their community as an excellent or good place to live. Fifty-five percent rate the economy in the region excellent (9%) or good (46%). Most residents are "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with the availability of public colleges and universities (48% and 38%), outdoor leisure activities (43% and 39%), and affordable housing (37% and 43%). Solid majorities say the quality of local public services they receive is excellent or good, including police protection (69%), parks and other recreational facilities (68%), public libraries (60%), public schools (59%), and local freeways, streets, and roads (58%).

"Interestingly, many quality of life measures in the Central Valley today are as good *or better* than those in coastal urban regions of the state," said PPIC Statewide Survey Director Mark Baldassare. "The one big exception is that people in the Central Valley are not as satisfied as residents in Los Angeles or the San Francisco Bay Area with job opportunities in their region."

Growth, Associated Issues Are Key Concerns

Although they are feeling good right now, Central Valley residents admit to having qualms about tomorrow. They are evenly divided when asked if the Central Valley will be a better place or a worse place in the future (37% to 33%), with only about one in four residents saying it will stay the same.

Much of the uncertainty about what the future holds for the Central Valley appears to stem from a common perception the region is growing at a tremendous rate. Seventy-seven percent believe that the population of the region has been growing rapidly in recent years, and 74 percent think that the population will continue to increase rapidly in the next decade.

When residents were asked to name the most important public policy issue facing the Central Valley today, a group of five growth-related issues took precedence. Nearly half of those surveyed said that water (13%), the environment and pollution (10%), population growth and development (8%), loss of farmlands and agriculture (8%), and traffic and transportation (6%) are the biggest problems.

Given the expectations and concerns about rapid growth, residents support a variety of policies — some of them contradictory — for improving the region's quality of life over the next 10 years. When residents rated eight policy options, protecting agricultural lands (52%) and preserving wetlands (49%) were identified as "extremely effective" policies by half of those surveyed. However, only one-third said that restricting development to existing suburban and urban areas would be "extremely effective." Eighty-

one percent also said they would support expanding the state's reservoir system to help the Valley meet future water needs.

“There is a real challenge here for local leaders,” said Carol Whiteside, President of the Great Valley Center. “At the same time residents express support for policy prescriptions that would protect the natural environment and preserve farmlands, they want more water storage systems and are lukewarm about limiting development. Some tough choices lie ahead for Central Valley communities.”

Region Defies Labels, Lacks Common Vision

While many observers view the Central Valley as a bastion of conservative politics, in reality the region is less easy to label. Compared to all Californians, Central Valley residents are a little more likely to identify themselves as conservative (35% to 41%). However, relatively few Valley residents consider themselves to be “very” conservative (13%). The majority (58%) identify themselves as middle-of-the-road to somewhat conservative in their politics.

There are also significant regional differences *within* the Central Valley on many key issues, most notably among residents of the North Valley and people who live in the Sacramento Metro area. For example, North Valley residents are less likely to describe themselves as liberal, while fewer Sacramento Metro residents say they are conservative. North Valley residents are less likely to rate the economy as excellent or good (37%), while Sacramento Metro residents are the most positive (74%). Paradoxically, North Valley residents are also the most likely (59%), and Sacramento Metro residents the least likely (47%), to agree with the statement, “The Central Valley is the best place to live in California today.”

The views of Latinos — who represent a large and growing segment of the Valley's population — also differ sharply from non-Hispanic whites in a number of key areas. Latinos (24%) were less than half as likely as non-Hispanic whites (53%) to name a growth-related problem as the most important policy issue facing the region. By contrast, Latinos were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to name crime and gangs (12% to 7%), jobs (9% to 4%), and schools (8% to 4%) as the top issues. While most Central Valley residents believe that the new University of California campus at Merced is important to the future economy and quality of life in the region, Latinos are far more likely (75%) than non-Hispanic whites (46%) to rate it as “very important.”

Although they give the Central Valley high marks as a place to live, most residents do not appear to identify strongly with the region as a whole. If they were traveling outside the area and were asked where they lived, only one in five would say they were from the Central Valley, while two in three would name their city or community. People in the southern areas of the Central Valley were more likely than people in other regions to identify the Central Valley as their home.

“This survey points to the incredible geographic and social diversity of the area we call the Central Valley,” said Baldassare. “While it is difficult to identify a common regional vision, there are many common challenges that could have profound effects on the state as a whole. State policymakers need to pay close attention to what is happening here — the region is poised to play an increasingly vital role in California's social, political, and economic way of life.”

About the Survey

The Central Valley Survey — a collaborative effort of the Public Policy Institute of California and the Great Valley Center — is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. The purpose of this survey is to provide the first comprehensive, advocacy-free study of the political, social, and economic attitudes and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents.

Findings are based on a telephone survey of 2,016 California adult residents in the 18-county Central Valley region, interviewed from October 18 to October 24, 1999. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. For additional information on survey methodology, see page 21.

Dr. Mark Baldassare is a senior fellow at PPIC. He is founder and director of the Orange County Annual Survey which he has conducted at UC Irvine since 1982. For over two decades, he has conducted surveys for major news organizations, including the Orange County Edition of the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Orange County Register*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, KCAL-TV, and KRON-TV. Dr. Baldassare is the author of a forthcoming book on the changing social and political landscape of California (expected in April 2000).

PPIC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to objective, nonpartisan research on economic, social, and political issues that affect the lives of Californians. The Institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett.

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Local Ratings

Community Perceptions

For most Central Valley residents, life is a small town or rural experience. Although most Sacramento Metro residents describe themselves as living in a large city or suburb (61%), two in three residents in the other three regions say they live in small cities or towns or rural areas. Latinos are a little more likely than non-Hispanic whites (71% to 65%) to say they live in a small city or town or rural area and less likely to say they live in a suburb (7% to 14%).

Central Valley residents are overwhelmingly content with their communities. Three in four rate their community as excellent (26%) or good (47%), one in five say it is fair, and only 6 percent say it is poor. Although people in all regions give their communities mostly positive ratings, Sacramento Metro residents are the most likely (31%) to say their community is excellent. Latinos (19%) are less likely than non-Hispanic whites (28%) to give the place where they live an excellent rating, but most in each group give positive evaluations.

Lifelong residents of the Central Valley and those who have moved there in the past five years give equally positive ratings of their communities.

"Which of the following best describes the place where you now live?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Large city	21%	3%	34%	14%	21%	22%
Suburb	12	5	27	6	6	7
Small city or town	48	58	27	63	52	59
Rural area, other*	19	34	12	17	21	12

*1 percent gave other responses.

"Overall, how would you rate your community as a place to live?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent	26%	26%	31%	24%	22%	19%
Good	47	48	49	46	46	45
Fair	21	22	17	22	25	26
Poor	6	4	3	8	7	10

Local Public Services

The ratings that Central Valley residents give local public services are consistent with the favorable ratings they give their communities. More than two-thirds say their local police protection and parks and other recreational facilities are excellent or good. Six in 10 are similarly positive about their local public libraries, their public schools, and local freeways, streets, and roads.

Across all regions, residents are more likely to rate services as good than as excellent. For example, fewer than one in four give excellent ratings to their parks and recreation facilities (23%) and police (21%), and about one in six give excellent ratings to public schools (16%). Nevertheless, the generally favorable reaction is borne out by the low percentage who give “poor” ratings to any of the local public services, including police (7%), parks and recreation (8%), public libraries (8%), public schools (9%), and local roads (10%).

Compared with ratings in California as a whole (in the PPIC Statewide Survey), the excellent or good ratings that Central Valley residents give to local police and parks are on a par with California averages. Ratings of local roads and public schools are even better than for California as a whole. There are no comparable statewide figures on ratings of local public libraries.

Ratings of local public services do vary across regions. In the Sacramento Metro region, local parks receive more excellent or good ratings (76%) and local public schools get less positive ratings (54%) than elsewhere. The North Valley gives local public libraries (48%) and local police (62%) lower ratings but local roads more positive evaluations than other regions do.

Looking at evaluations across different demographic groups, the survey found that Latinos and non-Hispanic whites rate local public services similarly. People who have lived in the Central Valley for less than five years are less likely than longer-term residents to give good or excellent ratings to public schools (51% to 62%) and public libraries (51% to 64%). There are more excellent and good ratings of police protection from residents in households earning \$80,000 or more (79%) than from those having incomes under \$40,000 (65%).

"How would you rate some of the public services you receive in your local area?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>Police protection</i>						
Excellent	21%	17%	22%	19%	22%	23%
Good	48	45	49	47	49	46
Fair	22	26	20	22	21	23
Poor	7	9	6	9	6	7
Don't know	2	3	3	3	2	1
<i>Parks and other public recreational facilities</i>						
Excellent	23%	21%	30%	23%	18%	23%
Good	45	48	46	43	43	43
Fair	22	22	18	24	25	23
Poor	8	7	5	7	12	10
Don't know	2	2	1	3	2	1
<i>Local public libraries</i>						
Excellent	15%	8%	14%	17%	18%	16%
Good	45	40	46	42	47	49
Fair	21	22	23	20	21	18
Poor	8	17	7	10	6	8
Don't know	11	13	10	11	8	9
<i>Local public schools</i>						
Excellent	16%	15%	16%	13%	20%	18%
Good	43	51	38	45	43	41
Fair	23	24	24	23	21	25
Poor	9	6	10	9	8	10
Don't know	9	4	12	10	8	6
<i>Local freeways, streets, and roads</i>						
Excellent	12%	12%	10%	11%	13%	17%
Good	46	52	48	46	42	41
Fair	32	23	32	33	34	30
Poor	10	13	9	10	11	12
Don't know	0	0	1	0	0	0

Local Government

The good feelings Central Valley residents have about their communities and local public services aren't reflected in their opinions about their local governments. Only four in 10 say their city government is doing an excellent (5%) or good (34%) job of solving city or community problems. A similar four in 10 rate it as fair, and one in six say its performance is poor. Across regions, Sacramento Metro residents are the least likely (11%) to give government poor ratings. Across ethnic groups, Latinos are more likely (50%) than non-Hispanic whites (36%) to give their city governments either excellent or good grades.

Ratings for county government are fairly similar, with four in 10 people saying that their county government is doing an excellent (3%) or good (38%) job in solving county problems. Four in 10 rate their county government as fair, and one in eight say it is doing a poor job. There are no major differences across regions. Once again, Latinos (49%) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (37%) to give their county governments good or higher ratings.

There are no comparable statewide figures for the ratings of local government, since these questions have yet to be asked in the PPIC Statewide Survey. However, in the 1999 Orange County Annual Survey, Orange County residents were more likely than Central Valley residents to give their city government excellent or good ratings (50%) but rated their county government about the same, with 40 percent considering it excellent or good.

"How would you rate the performance of your city government in solving problems in your city or community?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent	5%	4%	5%	6%	6%	8%
Good	34	32	37	33	32	42
Fair	38	39	39	35	39	33
Poor	15	18	11	17	16	13
Don't know, don't live in a city	8	7	8	9	7	4

"How would you rate the performance of county government in solving problems in your county?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	7%
Good	38	33	39	37	38	42
Fair	42	44	41	41	41	39
Poor	13	16	12	11	13	9
Don't know	4	3	5	7	4	3

Regional Perceptions

Regional Problems

Although they are highly satisfied with their local communities, Central Valley residents readily admit to having problems in their regions. When asked how much of a problem certain things are in their region, residents rated the following as "big" or "some" problem: crime and gangs (70%), air pollution (69%), traffic congestion (59%), growth and development (56%), and the loss of agriculture and farmlands (51%). However, the perception of severity changes somewhat if we consider the percentage of residents that see an issue as a "big" problem: About one-in-four rate air pollution (28%), traffic congestion (23%), the loss of farmlands and agriculture (23%), and growth and development (21%) as "big problems." Fewer say that crime and gangs (18%) and racial and ethnic tensions (8%) are big problems in their regions.

In comparison with results of the PPIC Statewide Survey, traffic congestion and growth and development are rated as less serious problems in the Central Valley than in the Los Angeles region or San Francisco Bay area. There are no state comparisons available on perceptions of crime and gangs, air pollution, racial and ethnic tensions, or the loss of farmlands as problems.

The regions of the Central Valley differ in their perceptions of regional problems. A much higher percentage of Sacramento Metro residents give "big problem" ratings to traffic congestion (44%), air pollution (34%), and growth and development (31%). In the South San Joaquin area, crime and gangs are perceived as a big problem (23%). The loss of farmlands is most often viewed as at least somewhat of a problem in the North San Joaquin area (60%). North Valley residents are the most likely to say that air pollution (42%), traffic congestion (49%), loss of farmlands (53%), and growth and development (56%) are "not a problem" for their region.

Problem perceptions also differ somewhat among ethnic groups. Latinos are less likely than non-Hispanic whites to see traffic congestion (16% to 25%), growth (12% to 24%), air pollution (18% to 30%), and the loss of farmlands (18% to 26%) as big problems, while views are similar across these groups on crime and gangs and racial and ethnic tensions.

Length of residence contributes to different perceptions, as well. People who have lived in the Central Valley less than five years are less likely than people who have lived there all of their lives to see loss of farmlands as a big problem (17% to 24%, respectively). Newcomers to the Central Valley are also more likely than lifelong residents to say that crime and gangs (43% to 26%), growth and development (52% to 43%), traffic congestion (51% to 40%), and racial and ethnic tensions (58% to 43%) are not problems in their regions.

Those with higher household incomes and higher educational levels are more likely than others to say that traffic congestion, growth and development, air pollution, and loss of farmlands are currently big problems in their regions. Those with lower incomes are more likely to say that crime and gangs are a big problem.

Regional Perceptions

"In your region, how much of a problem is _____ ?
Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>Air pollution*</i>						
Big problem	28%	25%	34%	23%	28%	18%
Some problem	41	33	47	46	37	36
Not a problem	30	42	19	30	35	45
Don't know	1	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Traffic congestion</i>						
Big problem	23%	9%	44%	21%	11%	16%
Some problem	36	41	38	39	31	28
Not a problem	41	49	18	40	57	55
Don't know	0	1	0	0	1	1
<i>Loss of farms and agriculture</i>						
Big problem	23%	12%	22%	28%	24%	18%
Some problem	28	29	28	32	27	23
Not a problem	41	53	41	32	43	52
Don't know	8	6	9	8	6	7
<i>Population growth, urban development</i>						
Big problem	21%	9%	31%	20%	16%	12%
Some problem	35	33	37	37	32	27
Not a problem	43	56	31	41	51	60
Don't know	1	2	1	2	1	1
<i>Crime and gangs</i>						
Big problem	18%	13%	13%	18%	23%	22%
Some problem	52	55	53	55	50	44
Not a problem	29	32	32	26	27	34
Don't know	1	0	2	1	0	0
<i>Racial/ethnic tensions</i>						
Big problem	8%	9%	5%	7%	10%	10%
Some problem	41	39	39	44	42	36
Not a problem	49	50	53	48	46	52
Don't know	2	2	3	1	2	2

* Respondents were asked to rate air pollution aside from the impact of recent fires.

Regional Satisfaction

The survey asked Central Valley residents how they feel about public colleges and universities, outdoor leisure activities, housing they can afford, and job opportunities in their regions. Earlier, the PPIC Statewide Survey showed that Central Valley residents are more satisfied with the affordability of housing and less satisfied with job opportunities than those living in the Los Angeles region or San Francisco Bay area. In this survey, we found that, in general, Central Valley residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the availability of housing they can afford (80%) and job opportunities (64%) in their region.

More than four in 10 residents of the Central Valley say they are very satisfied with the public colleges and universities (48%) and outdoor leisure activities (43%) available in their region, one in three gives high praise to the housing that they can afford (37%), while only one-quarter are very satisfied with the job opportunities available in their region.

Once again, there are considerable regional differences. Sacramento Metro residents are the most highly pleased with the availability of job opportunities (39%) and public colleges and universities (55%). Those living in the North Valley region (47%) and the Sacramento Metro area (53%) are the most pleased with the outdoor leisure activities available to them. South San Joaquin residents are the most likely to say they are very satisfied with the supply of housing they can afford (45%). Only 6 percent of North Valley residents are very happy about the job market in their region, and 52 percent are “not satisfied” with the employment prospects.

Latinos and non-Hispanic whites are about equally satisfied with job opportunities, affordable housing, and outdoor leisure activities. However, Latinos are less likely than non-Hispanic whites to say they are very satisfied with the availability of public colleges and universities in their region (39% to 51%).

Satisfaction also varies by income, education, and length of time lived in the Central Valley. Residents with higher annual household incomes and higher educational levels are more likely than others to say they are very satisfied with the job opportunities, housing, outdoor activities, and public colleges and universities that their regions offer. Newcomers to the Central Valley are more likely than lifelong residents to say they are very satisfied with the availability of outdoor recreational activities (47% to 37%), but otherwise the two groups are similarly satisfied with their regions.

Regional Perceptions

"How do you feel about the _____ available in your region?
Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
<i>Public colleges and universities</i>						
Very satisfied	48%	49%	55%	48%	41%	39%
Somewhat satisfied	38	40	36	37	40	44
Not satisfied	10	9	5	10	15	13
Don't know	4	2	4	5	4	4
<i>Outdoor leisure activities</i>						
Very satisfied	43%	47%	53%	37%	38%	40%
Somewhat satisfied	39	37	35	41	41	38
Not satisfied	16	14	11	20	19	20
Don't know	2	2	1	2	2	2
<i>Housing that you can afford</i>						
Very satisfied	37%	28%	31%	36%	45%	36%
Somewhat satisfied	43	46	45	42	40	44
Not satisfied	18	21	21	19	14	20
Don't know	2	5	3	3	1	0
<i>Job opportunities</i>						
Very satisfied	23%	6%	39%	19%	19%	26%
Somewhat satisfied	41	39	44	39	41	43
Not satisfied	31	52	12	38	36	29
Don't know	5	3	5	4	4	2

Regional Commuting Trends

For most Central Valley residents, traffic congestion and commuting are not major issues. Over half of the employed residents surveyed say that traffic congestion when they travel to work is no problem. However, one in six say that traffic is a great problem, and one-third say it is somewhat of a problem.

The commuting experience varies significantly by region. Sacramento Metro residents are the most likely to say they have a great problem (26%) or somewhat of a problem (38%) with traffic congestion while traveling to and from work. By comparison, half of North San Joaquin residents, four in 10 of South San Joaquin residents, and three in 10 of North Valley residents have at least some problem with traffic congestion. Few in the North Valley (7%) or South San Joaquin (8%) regions have a great problem during their commutes.

There are no differences between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites in commuting perceptions. Nor are there variations in the experiences with traffic congestion on the way to and from work by household income, education level, or by length of residence in the Central Valley.

One in eight employed residents in the Central Valley say they commute to workplaces in the San Francisco Bay area (9%) or the Los Angeles region (3%). More employed residents in the North San Joaquin area (20%) commute to the two major coastal metropolitan regions than do in the Sacramento Metro (11%), South San Joaquin (10%), or North Valley areas (6%).

Latinos and non-Hispanic whites have similar rates of commuting outside of the Central Valley region. There are no major differences in long-distance commuting outside of the region by income group or educational levels. Newcomers who have lived in the Central Valley for less than five years are the most likely (20%) to say they travel to work in the coastal metropolitan regions.

"On a typical day, how much of a problem is traffic congestion when you travel to and from work?" (asked of those who are employed)

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Great problem	15%	7%	26%	17%	8%	13%
Some problem	32	22	38	33	30	34
No problem	53	71	36	50	62	53

"Do you commute to work in the California coastal metropolitan regions?" (asked of those who are employed)"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes	12%	6%	11%	20%	10%	16%
No	88	94	89	80	90	84

Central Valley Issues

Most Important Issue

When residents were asked to identify the most important issue facing the Central Valley, a group of five growth-related issues took precedence. Nearly half of those surveyed said that water (13%), the environment and pollution (10%), population growth (8%), loss of farmlands and agriculture (8%), and traffic and transportation (6%) are the biggest problems. Crime (8%), schools (6%), and jobs (5%) were named by about two in 10 residents. Ten percent named a variety of other issues. One in four were unable to cite any particular issue as being most important.

Perceptions about the importance of issues varied across regions. In the North Valley, water was identified as the top policy issue. In the Sacramento Metro region, higher percentages focused on the environment, growth, and traffic than in other regions. In the North San Joaquin region, concern was more evenly spread among issues than elsewhere, and there was the least focus on water as a big issue. In the South San Joaquin region, crime was mentioned more often than in other regions; however, this region was second only to the North Valley in concern over water.

Identification of issues also varied by ethnic group and length of residence. Latinos (24%) were less than half as likely as non-Hispanic whites (53%) to name the five growth-related issues mentioned above, much less frequently mentioning water (3% to 16%), growth (4% to 10%), and environment and pollution (5% to 12%). By contrast, Latinos were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to name crime (12% to 7%), jobs (9% to 4%), and schools (8% to 4%) as the top issues.

Those who say they have lived in the Central Valley all of their lives are most likely to mention the environment and pollution (13%), water (11%), crime and gangs (9%), growth (8%), and loss of farmlands (7%) as the top problems facing the Central Valley, while one in four have no opinion.

"What do you think is the most important public policy issue facing the Central Valley today?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Water	13%	22%	11%	7%	15%	3%
Environment, pollution	10	7	14	8	9	5
Population growth and development	8	6	14	10	4	4
Loss of farmlands, agriculture	8	4	9	9	8	6
Crime and gangs	8	6	7	7	11	12
Traffic and transportation	6	3	9	6	5	6
Schools	6	4	7	7	4	8
Jobs and economy	5	4	2	6	7	9
Immigration, illegal immigration	2	0	0	1	4	1
Other*	8	12	6	12	8	12
Don't know	26	32	21	27	25	34

* Includes several issues, each mentioned by one percent or fewer Central Valley residents.

Economic Conditions

A solid majority (55%) say the Central Valley economy is in excellent or good shape today, one-third rate it as fair, and less than 10 percent say it is doing poorly. These ratings vary across the four regions, with three in four saying the economy is excellent or good in the Sacramento Metro area, and half giving positive ratings in the North San Joaquin and South San Joaquin areas, compared to only 37 percent in the North Valley. There are no differences between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites.

In line with the positive assessments of the economy, most feel that the Central Valley is headed in the right direction rather than the wrong direction (63% to 29%) and that the quality of life in the Central Valley is going well rather than going badly (81% to 17%). These positive assessments are similar to evaluations of California as a whole in the PPIC Statewide Surveys.

"In general, how would you rate the economy in the Central Valley?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Excellent	9%	3%	16%	8%	7%	11%
Good	46	34	56	42	42	42
Fair	35	48	22	39	39	35
Poor	9	13	5	11	10	10
Don't know	1	2	1	0	2	2

Image

Over half of the residents are so happy with the way things are going in the Central Valley that they agree with the statement, "The Central Valley is the best place to live in California today." Sacramento Metro residents are evenly divided on whether or not the Central Valley is superior to the rest of California, while those in the North Valley express the most positive sentiments. Latinos (67%) are much more likely than non-Hispanic whites (48%) to say that the Central Valley is the best place to live in California. Those who have lived in the Central Valley all of their lives (60%) are the most likely to say they are living in the best place in California, while those who have moved to the Central Valley in the last five years (38%) are the least likely to agree with this statement.

"Do you agree or disagree with this statement:
The Central Valley is the best place to live in California today."

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Agree	52%	59%	47%	52%	53%	67%
Disagree	45	37	50	44	45	31
Don't know	3	4	3	4	2	2

Identity

Although most residents give the Central Valley high marks as a place to live, they are more inclined to identify their city or community, rather than the Central Valley, as their home. If they were traveling in the Los Angeles or San Francisco areas and were asked where they lived, only one in five would identify himself or herself as a Central Valley resident. Two in three say they would name their city or community. People in the North San Joaquin (29%) and South San Joaquin (26%) areas were more likely than people in other regions to identify the Central Valley as their home. Latinos (27%) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (20%) to say they are from the Central Valley, and non-Hispanic whites are more inclined than Latinos to identify with their city or community (68% to 58%).

"If you were in the San Francisco Bay area or Los Angeles and someone asked you where you live, would you give the name of your city or community, or the county or region you live in, or would you say that you are from the Central Valley?"

	All Adults	Region			Latino	
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin		South San Joaquin
City or community	66%	67%	73%	62%	62%	58%
County or region	11	15	12	7	10	12
Central valley	21	15	12	29	26	27
Other, don't know	2	3	3	2	2	3

The Future

While their assessments of today's conditions are generally positive, residents are evenly divided when asked if the Central Valley will be a better place or a worse place in the future (37% to 33%). Only about one in four say it will stay the same. However, there is an interesting North/South divide, with residents of the North San Joaquin (39%) and South San Joaquin (43%) areas more likely than residents in the North Valley and Sacramento Metro areas to say things will be better. Latinos (55%) are much more likely than non-Hispanic whites (30%) to say the Central Valley will be a better place. Whether the future will be better or worse, most residents (66%) see themselves living in the Central Valley five years from now. There are no major differences across regions or racial and ethnic groups, but those who have lived in the Central Valley all of their lives are much more likely to say they will be staying (63%) than those who have lived in the Central Valley for less than five years (51%).

"In the future, do you think that the Central Valley will be a better place to live than it is now, a worse place to live than it is now, or that there will be no change?"

	All Adults	Region			Latino	
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin		South San Joaquin
Better place	37%	30%	32%	39%	43%	55%
Worse place	33	34	41	36	25	14
No change	26	34	23	21	29	26
Don't know	4	2	4	4	3	5

Growth Perceptions

Most residents see rapid growth as a major fact of life in the Central Valley in the recent past and the foreseeable future. Three in four say that the population of the Central Valley has been growing rapidly in recent years and a similar proportion expect the population to grow rapidly in the next 10 years.

Although these perceptions and predictions are similar across all four regions, residents in the Sacramento Metro and North San Joaquin areas are the most likely to say that there has been rapid growth and that it will continue. Few in any region expect no growth or a population decline.

"In the past few years, do you think the population of the Central Valley has been growing rapidly, growing slowly, staying about the same, or declining?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Growing rapidly	77%	66%	83%	82%	74%	75%
Growing slowly	14	21	10	13	17	16
Staying about the same	1	2	1	0	1	1
Declining	5	8	3	3	6	7
Don't know	3	3	3	2	2	1

"In the next 10 years, do you think that the population in the Central Valley region will grow rapidly, grow slowly, stay about the same, or decline?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Grow rapidly	74%	63%	80%	81%	70%	70%
Grow slowly	15	21	11	13	18	17
Stay about the same	1	2	1	1	1	2
Declining	8	14	6	4	9	9
Don't know	2	0	2	1	2	2

Policy Options

Given the expectations for rapid growth, residents support a variety of policies for improving the future of the Central Valley. Residents were asked to rate eight policy prescriptions. Protecting agricultural lands (52%) and preserving wetlands (49%) were identified as "extremely effective" policies by the highest percentage of residents. These were followed in order by expanding public transit (46%), building a high-speed rail passenger system (43%), encouraging job centers near existing housing (41%), increasing freeways (37%), restricting development to existing urban and suburban areas (33%), and establishing growth boundaries (32%).

Support is strong across regions for protecting farmlands and preserving wetlands, but there are regional differences on other policies. For example, North Valley residents are less enthusiastic—and Sacramento Metro and North San Joaquin residents more enthusiastic—than others about public transit proposals. Latinos look more favorably than non-Hispanic whites on encouraging job centers (53% to 37%), building high-speed rail (54% to 40%), and increasing freeways (50% to 33%).

Central Valley and San Francisco Bay area residents show similar enthusiasm for protecting wetlands, increasing freeways, establishing growth boundaries, and restricting future development to urban and suburban areas, but Central Valley residents are less supportive of expanding public transit (46% to 61%), according to the Bay Area Council Poll. There are no comparisons available on protecting farmlands, encouraging job centers to develop near housing, or building a high-speed passenger train.

"We'd like to ask you about ways to improve the quality of life in the Central Valley over the next 10 years. How effective do you think the following activities would be on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents something that would be 'not at all effective' and 5 represents something that would be 'extremely effective'?"

% who rated an activity "extremely effective"—i.e., who gave an activity a 5 score

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Protecting farms and agricultural lands from urban development	52%	50%	51%	54%	53%	53%
Preserving wetlands, rivers, environmentally sensitive areas	49	49	53	50	46	50
Expanding bus, light rail, public transit systems	46	33	55	51	40	53
Building a high-speed passenger rail system from San Diego to San Francisco through the Central Valley	43	27	43	49	46	54
Encouraging job centers to develop near existing housing	41	37	44	44	39	53
Increasing freeway capacity	37	30	40	39	35	50
Restricting development to existing suburban and urban areas	33	28	33	34	33	30
Establishing growth boundaries for future development	32	25	34	35	32	30

Future Water Needs

Central Valley residents overwhelmingly favor expanding the state's system of reservoirs by capturing flood waters and storing them in off-stream reservoirs. This support is consistent with residents' concerns about water and their perceptions of future growth. However, it could well be at odds with the very high priority they also place on protecting wetlands, rivers, and other environmentally sensitive areas. There is strong consensus across regions and racial and ethnic groups for expanding the state's water system. A similar level of support was found in the Bay Area Council Poll.

"Regarding ways to help the Central Valley meet its future water needs, do you favor or oppose expanding the state's system of reservoirs by capturing more flood waters and storing them in off-stream water storage areas?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Favor	81%	76%	78%	82%	84%	87%
Oppose	14	21	17	12	11	10
Don't know	5	3	5	6	5	3

New University of California Campus

Most Central Valley residents (87%) believe that the new University of California campus at Merced is important to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley, and half believe it is "very important." North San Joaquin and South San Joaquin residents are the most likely to say the new U.C. Campus will be "very important." Latinos (75%) are very much more likely than non-Hispanic whites (46%) to rate it as "very important." Few residents in any region or racial or ethnic group think the new U.C. campus is not important to the Central Valley.

"A new university campus will be built in the Central Valley. How important is the University of California at Merced to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very important	53%	46%	48%	61%	56%	75%
Somewhat important	34	37	38	29	34	20
Not important	10	14	10	8	8	4
Don't know	3	3	4	2	2	1

Political and Social Trends

Civic and Religious Life

How involved are Central Valley residents in activities other than work and home life? Many said they were involved in religious activities (58%), volunteer work (57%), or local and neighborhood issues (49%). In contrast, only 24 percent are involved in political activities. However, the proportion of those who are "very" involved is much lower: 25 percent in religious activity, 19 percent in volunteer work, 8 percent in neighborhood activities, and 3 percent in political activities. Compared to all Californians (in the PPIC Statewide Survey), Central Valley residents are a little more likely to be engaged in politics (24% to 17%) and local issues (49% to 41%) but not volunteer work (57% to 61%). There are no statewide comparisons available on religious activities.

Some regional and ethnic differences are observable. For example, Sacramento Metro residents are less likely to say they are very involved in religious activities. Latinos are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be involved in religious activities (65% to 56%) and less likely to be involved in volunteer work (48% to 60%).

Those who have lived in the Central Valley all of their lives are more likely than newcomers (i.e., resident less than five years) to be involved in religious activities (58% to 46%).

"Are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved in ..."

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Religious or spiritual activities						
Very involved	25%	25%	20%	29%	27%	20%
Somewhat involved	33	31	32	34	35	45
Not involved	42	44	48	37	38	35
Volunteer or charity work						
Very involved	19%	16%	21%	20%	19%	14%
Somewhat involved	38	42	40	35	37	34
Not involved	43	42	39	45	44	52
Local and neighborhood issues						
Very involved	8%	7%	8%	7%	8%	6%
Somewhat involved	41	41	42	43	40	40
Not involved	51	52	50	50	52	54
Political activities						
Very involved	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%
Somewhat involved	21	18	23	21	19	17
Not involved	76	79	74	77	78	81

Political Profile

Where are Central Valley residents on the political spectrum? Compared to all Californians (in the PPIC Statewide Survey), Central Valley residents are a little more likely to identify themselves as conservative (41% to 35%). However, relatively few Central Valley residents consider themselves to be “very” conservative. In fact, the largest group, 58 percent, is composed of those who say they are middle-of-the-road to somewhat conservative in their politics.

There are regional and ethnic differences across regions. Sacramento Metro residents (34%) are the least likely to describe themselves as at all conservative, while North Valley residents are the least likely to describe themselves as at all liberal (18%). Latinos are just as likely as non-Hispanic whites to describe themselves as conservatives (40% to 42%).

"Would you consider yourself to be politically very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle-of-the-road, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Very liberal	7%	4%	7%	7%	8%	9%
Somewhat liberal	19	14	24	17	17	22
Middle-of-the-road	30	35	34	29	27	24
Somewhat conservative	28	32	25	27	31	28
Very conservative	13	13	9	16	15	12
Don't Know	3	2	1	4	2	5

Sources of Political Information

Central Valley residents are like most Californians (in the most recent PPIC Statewide Survey) in saying that they get most of their political news from television rather than from newspapers. Sacramento Metro residents are evenly divided between television and newspapers as the major source of their political information, while television dominates in the other regions. The reliance on television over newspapers is greater among Latinos (63% to 19%) than among non-Hispanic whites (41% to 31%). The only education and income groups that rely on newspapers more than on television are college graduates (39% to 29%) and households with annual incomes of \$80,000 or more (38% to 26%).

"Do you get most of your information on what's going on in politics today from newspapers, television, radio, magazines, talking to people, or the internet?"

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Television	46%	55%	37%	51%	48%	63%
Newspapers	29	22	35	26	27	19
Radio	10	10	12	8	9	6
Talking to people	8	8	8	7	9	8
Internet	4	2	5	4	5	3
Magazines	2	2	2	3	2	1
Other	1	1	1	1	0	0

Computers and the Internet

Most Central Valley residents have had at least some experience with computers and the internet. Seven in 10 say they have used a computer at home, work, or school; 54 percent have gone on line to access the Internet or e-mail; and 55 percent have a personal computer at home. These numbers are slightly below the California averages in the most recent PPIC Statewide Survey.

Many Central Valley residents consider themselves *frequent* users of computers. Nearly half say they often use a computer at home, work, or school, while 37 percent say they often use a computer to access e-mail or the Internet, and 35 percent say they often use a personal computer at home.

Across regions, Sacramento Metro residents show the highest rates of computer use, computer ownership, and internet/e-mail use, with rates that are at least on a par with California averages. By contrast, North Valley residents are the least likely to have ever used computers, to have ever used e-mail or the internet, and to have computers in their homes.

There is strong evidence of a "digital divide" in the Central Valley. Latinos lag behind non-Hispanic whites in frequent use of computers at home, work, or school (34% to 53%), frequent use of the internet or e-mail (21% to 40%), and frequent use of a personal computer at home (18% to 40%). Most Latinos have not accessed the internet or e-mail (62%) and do not have a computer in their home (65%). College graduates are more likely than those with a high school education or less to often use a computer (73% to 25%), to often use the internet or e-mail (58% to 17%), and to often use a computer at home (54% to 17%). Across income groups, 61 percent of households with annual incomes under \$40,000 do not have a home computer, while 84 percent of households with incomes of \$80,000 or more do.

"Do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school?"
 (if yes: Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?)

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, often	49%	41%	57%	50%	44%	34%
Yes, sometimes	21	20	21	18	22	26
No	30	39	22	32	34	40

"Do you ever go on-line to access the internet or world wide web or to send or receive e-mail?"
 (if yes: Do you do this often or only sometimes?)

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, often	37%	29%	47%	35%	31%	21%
Yes, sometimes	17	18	18	17	17	17
No	16	14	13	16	18	22
Don't use computers	30	39	22	32	34	40

"Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops in your home?
 These do not include game machines such as Nintendo or Sega.
 (if yes: Do you use your home computer often or only sometimes?)

	All Adults	Region				Latino
		North Valley	Sacramento Metro	North San Joaquin	South San Joaquin	
Yes, often	35%	28%	41%	32%	34%	18%
Yes, sometimes	20	22	21	20	17	17
No	45	50	38	48	49	65

Survey Methodology

The Central Valley Survey is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which is directed by Mark Baldassare, senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, with research assistance from Jonathan Cohen and Christopher Hoene. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the Great Valley Center; however, the survey methodology and questions and the content of this report were solely determined by Mark Baldassare. The survey benefited from consultation with Hans Johnson and Michael Teitz at PPIC and Carol Whiteside at the Great Valley Center.

The findings of the survey are based on telephone interviews with 2,016 adult residents in the 18-county Central Valley region, interviewed from October 18 to October 24, 1999. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers, ensuring that both listed and unlisted telephone numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in the Central Valley were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to four times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing 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, as needed.

We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of the Central Valley’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to U.S. Census and state figures. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any demographic differences.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,016 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 the Central Valley were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. Sampling error is just 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.

Throughout this report, we refer to four geographic regions in the Central Valley. “North Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, and Yuba counties (12 percent of the Central Valley’s adult population). “Sacramento Metro” includes Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo counties (30 percent of the population). “North San Joaquin” includes Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties (22 percent of the population). “South San Joaquin” includes Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, and Tulare counties (36 percent of the population).

We contrast the results for Latinos with results for non-Hispanic whites. Latinos account for about 22 percent of the Central Valley’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing groups in this region. The sample sizes for the African American and Asian subgroups are not large enough for separate statistical analysis.

In some cases, the Central Valley Survey uses questions and the results of responses recorded in the PPIC Statewide Surveys conducted in 1998 and 1999, the Orange County Annual Surveys conducted by Mark Baldassare and Cheryl Katz for U.C. Irvine since 1982, the Bay Area Poll conducted by the Bay Area Council in 1998, and national surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in 1998 and 1999 and by the University of Virginia for the American Association of Retired Persons in 1996.

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: SPECIAL SURVEY OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY
OCTOBER 18 – 24, 1999
2,016 CENTRAL VALLEY ADULT RESIDENTS; ENGLISH AND SPANISH
MARGIN OF ERROR +/- 2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

I would like to begin by asking you some questions about you, your community, and the region you live in.

1. Which of the following best describes the place where you now live—a large city, a suburb, a small city or town, or a rural area?

21% large city
 12 suburb
 48 small city or town
 18 rural area
 1 other

2. Did you grow up in the community where you now live?

32% yes
 68 no

3. Overall, how would you rate your community as a place to live? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

26% excellent
 47 good
 21 fair
 6 poor

Now, I'd like to ask you how you would rate some of the public services you receive in your local area. (*rotate questions 4 to 8*)

4. Police protection. Would you say this is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

21% excellent
 48 good
 22 fair
 7 poor
 2 don't know

5. Parks and other public recreational facilities. Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

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

6. Local freeways, streets, and roads. Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

12% excellent
 46 good
 32 fair
 10 poor
 0 don't know

7. Local public schools. Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

16% excellent
 43 good
 23 fair
 9 poor
 9 don't know

8. Local public libraries. Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

15% excellent
 45 good
 21 fair
 8 poor
 11 don't know

9. How would you rate the performance of your city government in solving problems in your city or community—excellent, good, fair or poor?

5% excellent
 34 good
 38 fair
 15 poor
 4 don't live in a city
 4 don't know

10. How would you rate the performance of county government in solving problems in your county—excellent, good, fair, or poor?

3% excellent
 38 good
 42 fair
 13 poor
 4 don't know

Next, a few questions about the region you live in.

11. How much of a problem is traffic congestion in your region—is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

23% big problem
 36 somewhat of a problem
 41 not a problem

12. How much of a problem are population growth and urban development in your region—are they a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

21% big problem
 35 somewhat of a problem
 43 not a problem
 1 don't know

13. Aside from the impact of the recent forest fires and the tire fires, how much of a problem is air pollution in your region—a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

28% big problem
 41 somewhat of a problem
 30 not a problem
 1 don't know

14. How much of a problem are crime and gangs in your region—are they a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

18% big problem
 52 somewhat of a problem
 29 not a problem
 1 don't know

15. How much of a problem are racial and ethnic tensions in your region—are they a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

8% big problem
 41 somewhat of a problem
 49 not a problem
 2 don't know

16. How much of a problem is the loss of farms and agricultural land in your region—is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?

23% big problem
 28 somewhat of a problem
 41 not a problem
 8 don't know

17. How do you feel about the job opportunities that are available in your region—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

23% very satisfied
 41 somewhat satisfied
 31 not satisfied
 5 don't know

18. How do you feel about the availability of housing that you can afford in your region—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

37% very satisfied
 43 somewhat satisfied
 18 not satisfied
 2 don't know

19. How do you feel about the availability of public colleges and universities in your region—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

48% very satisfied
 38 somewhat satisfied
 10 not satisfied
 4 don't know

20. How do you feel about the availability of outdoor leisure activities in your region—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

43% very satisfied
 39 somewhat satisfied
 16 not satisfied
 2 don't know

Next, we are interested in your opinions about the broader geographic region you live in—the Central Valley—which is the inland area of California stretching from Bakersfield to Redding.

21. What do you think is the most important public policy issue facing the Central Valley today? (*code, don't read*)

13% water
 10 environment, pollution
 8 growth, overpopulation
 8 crime, gangs
 8 loss of farmlands, agriculture
 6 traffic and transportation
 6 schools, education
 5 jobs, the economy
 2 immigration, illegal immigration
 1 housing costs, housing availability
 1 sprawl
 1 poverty, the poor, the homeless, welfare
 1 drugs
 1 lack of values, morals, religion
 1 natural disasters
 2 other (*specify*)
 26 don't know

22. And do you think that things in the Central Valley are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

63% right direction
 29 wrong direction
 8 don't know

23. In general, how would you rate the economy in the Central Valley—is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?

9% excellent
 46 good
 35 fair
 9 poor
 1 don't know

24. Thinking about the quality of life in the Central Valley, how do you think things are going—very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

17% very well
 64 somewhat well
 15 somewhat badly
 2 very badly
 2 don't know

25. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The Central Valley is the best place to live in California today?

52% agree
 45 disagree
 3 don't know

26. And in the future, do you think that the Central Valley will be a better place to live than it is now, a worse place to live than it is now, or that there will be no change?

37% better place
 33 worse place
 26 no change
 4 don't know

27. Five years from now, do you see yourself living in the Central Valley or living somewhere else? (*if elsewhere: Is that inside or outside of California?*)

- 66% yes, living in the Central Valley
- 15 no, elsewhere in California
- 15 no, elsewhere outside of California
- 4 don't know

28. If you were in the San Francisco Bay area or Los Angeles and someone asked you where you live, would you give the name of your city or community, or the county or region you live in, or would you say that you are from the Central Valley?

- 66% city or community
- 11 county or region
- 21 Central Valley
- 2 other, don't know

29. In the past few years, do you think the population of the Central Valley has been growing rapidly, growing slowly, staying about the same, or declining?

- 77% growing rapidly
- 14 growing slowly
- 1 staying about the same
- 5 declining
- 3 don't know

30. And in the next 10 years, do you think that the population in the Central Valley region will grow rapidly, grow slowly, stay about the same, or decline?

- 74% grow rapidly
- 15 grow slowly
- 1 stay about the same
- 8 decline
- 2 don't know

Now, I'd like to ask you about ways to improve the quality of life in the Central Valley over the next 10 years. How effective do you think the following activities would be on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents something that would be "not at all effective" and 5 represents something that would be "extremely effective"? (*rotate questions 31-38*)

31. Restricting future development to existing suburban and urban areas rather than expanding into rural areas—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 7% (1) not at all effective
- 9 (2)
- 29 (3)
- 19 (4)
- 33 (5) extremely effective
- 3 don't know

32. Increasing freeway capacity—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 8% (1) not at all effective
- 10 (2)
- 23 (3)
- 21 (4)
- 37 (5) extremely effective
- 1 don't know

33. Establishing growth boundaries within which future development would be confined—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 7% (1) not at all effective
- 8 (2)
- 27 (3)
- 23 (4)
- 32 (5) extremely effective
- 3 don't know

34. Preserving wetlands, rivers, and other environmentally sensitive areas—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 6% (1) not at all effective
- 7 (2)
- 17 (3)
- 19 (4)
- 49 (5) extremely effective
- 2 don't know

35. Encouraging job centers to develop near existing housing to reduce commute times for workers—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 6% (1) not at all effective
- 8 (2)
- 21 (3)
- 22 (4)
- 41 (5) extremely effective
- 2 don't know

36. Expanding bus, light rail, and train public transit systems—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 6% (1) not at all effective
- 9 (2)
- 17 (3)
- 21 (4)
- 46 (5) extremely effective
- 1 don't know

37. Building a high-speed passenger rail system to run from San Diego to San Francisco through the Central Valley's major cities—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 12% (1) not at all effective
- 8 (2)
- 18 (3)
- 17 (4)
- 43 (5) extremely effective
- 2 don't know

38. Protecting farms and agricultural lands from urban development—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all effective and 5 being extremely effective?

- 5% (1) not at all effective
- 4 (2)
- 17 (3)
- 20 (4)
- 52 (5) extremely effective
- 2 don't know

39. Regarding ways to help the Central Valley meet its future water needs, do you favor or oppose expanding the state's system of reservoirs by capturing more flood waters and storing them in off-stream water storage areas?

81% favor
14 oppose
5 don't know

40. A new university campus will be built in the Central Valley. How important is the University of California at Merced to the future economy and quality of life in the Central Valley—very important, somewhat important, or not important?

53% very important
34 somewhat important
10 not important
3 don't know

41. On another topic, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain you are registered to vote? (*if yes:* Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or independent?)

32% yes, Democrat
30 yes, Republican
4 yes, other party
11 yes, independent
23 no, not registered

42. Would you consider yourself to be politically very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle-of-the-road, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?

7% very liberal
19 somewhat liberal
30 middle-of-the-road
28 somewhat conservative
13 very conservative
3 don't know

43. Would you say that you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly ever, or never?

43% most of the time
35 some of the time
15 only now and then
6 hardly ever
1 never

44. And do you get most of your information on what's going on in politics today from newspapers, television, radio, magazines, talking to people, or the internet?

29% newspapers
46 television
10 radio
2 magazines
8 talking to people
5 internet
0 other

On another topic, we are interested in learning about how people are spending their time these days. I am going to read to you a list of activities that people get involved in. For each one I'd like you to tell me whether you feel that you are very involved, somewhat involved, or not really involved in that activity these days. (*if necessary:* By involvement we mean how much time you spend on something, compared to other people.) (*rotate questions 45 to 48*)

45. Religious or spiritual activities, including time spent with religious organizations? Are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved?

25% very involved
33 somewhat involved
42 not involved

46. Political activities related to political parties, candidates, and election campaigns? Are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved?

3% very involved
21 somewhat involved
76 not involved

47. Working on local issues and neighborhood problems? Are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved?

8% very involved
41 somewhat involved
51 not involved

48. Volunteer or charity work for which you are not paid? Are you very involved, somewhat involved, or not involved?

19% very involved
38 somewhat involved
43 not involved

49. On another topic, do you yourself ever use a computer at home, at work, or at school? (*if yes:* Do you use a computer often or only sometimes?)

49% yes, often (ask q. 50)
21 yes, sometimes (ask q. 50)
30 no (skip to q.51)

50. Do you ever go on-line to access the internet or world wide web or to send or receive e-mail? (*if yes:* Do you do this often or only sometimes?)

37% yes, often
17 yes, sometimes
46 no

51. Do you have any type of personal computer, including laptops, in your home? These do not include game machines such as Nintendo or Sega. (*if yes:* Do you use your home computer often or only sometimes?)

35% yes, often
20 yes, sometimes
45 no

[Questions 52-63 are demographic questions. Three are of more general interest and are included below.]

54. How long have you lived in the Central Valley region?

- 44% less than five years
- 19 five years to less than 10 years
- 20 10 years to 20 years
- 17 more than 20 years

58. Do you commute to work in the California coastal metropolitan regions? (*if yes*: Is that in Los Angeles or the San Francisco Bay area?)

- 3% yes, Los Angeles
- 9 yes, San Francisco Bay area
- 88 no

59. On a typical day, how much of a problem is traffic congestion when you travel to and from work? Would you say it is no problem at all, somewhat of a problem, or a great problem?

- 53% no problem at all
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 15 a great problem

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