



Leading Well



Californians' Beliefs About Health Survey
Key Findings and Policy Options



The hallmarks of the 21st century are diversity, growth and rapid change. Gauging the public's beliefs about health and quality of life can assist state and local governments in crafting meaningful public policy responses as California's future unfolds.



The sixth report in a series from the
CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT



Living Well

How can the health of Californians be improved? To answer this question, the California Center for Health Improvement (CCHI) surveyed adult Californians about their views on several major health issues — issues related to their communities, crime, healthcare, jobs and education.

This is the sixth in a series of reports based on surveys conducted for CCHI and funded by a grant to CCHI from The California Wellness Foundation, as part of its Health Improvement Initiative. The survey provides concrete information from Californians about:

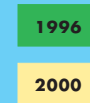
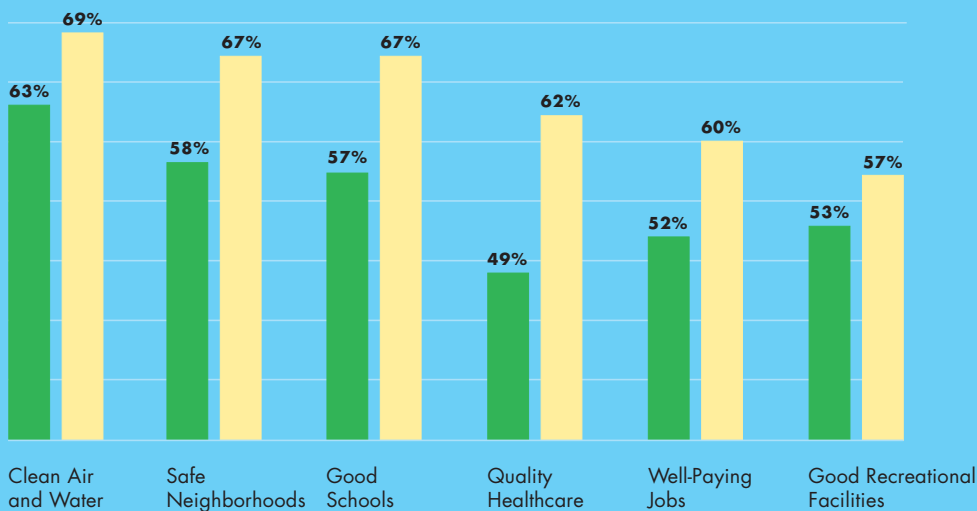
- Priority health areas for government action
- Resources needed to address community health problems
- Programs and strategies that work and don't work to improve health.

What did we learn? One major finding suggests that Californians may think differently about health than policy-makers — or, at least, they may think differently than the ways policies are made. Specifically, just as people's health problems may be treated on a disease-by-disease basis, so too, governmental health programs are often categorically funded. But Californians realize that overall health is impacted by non-health factors, and their awareness of the importance of these external factors is increasing.

What Creates Health? Californians' Changing Views about Health

How much does each factor contribute to the overall health status of people in your community — a good deal, a small amount, or no effect?

Percent who say "A Good Deal"



Source: Getting Involved Survey (January 1996) and Californians' Beliefs About Health Survey (August 2000). California Center for Health Improvement and The Field Institute.

Californians clearly understand that the best way to "build" health in the long run is to safeguard communities and the environment, create jobs and economic opportunities, improve schools and promote healthier lifestyles, and assure access to quality medical services. The potential to improve individual and community health arises from Californians' beliefs that better lifestyle choices and life circumstances enable healthy communities.

The survey findings suggest an important new policy agenda for health. How will government respond? How will Californians prepare for and finance their future?

As the 2001–2002 session of the California Legislature convenes and Governor Gray Davis begins the second half of his term, the state has available tremendous resources from the tobacco settlement and other sources to begin addressing some of the public's concerns. The key findings presented here are intended to stimulate thoughtful dialogue and to inform policy-making as California legislators, local decision-makers, educators and the public consider public policy issues that influence the health and well-being of the people of California.

What Californians Think...



About Their Communities & Environment

Californians share a common vision of what aspects of their communities need major improvement. Across the state, these shared beliefs often spark new solutions and energize collective efforts to improve communities. Among Californians:

- 53 percent rate their community as fair or poor as a place to get a good job.
- 43 percent say their community is fair or poor as a place that promotes the overall health and well-being of its residents.
- 35 percent feel their community is a fair or poor place to raise a family.
- 45 percent rate their community as fair or poor in providing adequate childcare options for working families.
- 57 percent consider urban sprawl a problem where they live and 63 percent expect it to become a problem in the next five years.
- 73 percent say traffic congestion is a problem now and 84 percent feel it will be a problem in five years.

About Their Safety

Most Californians feel their neighborhoods are safe places now, but they worry about the future. In the 1996 CCHI survey, *Getting Involved*, Californians ranked neighborhood safety and job opportunities as their leading concerns. Today, two in three Californians believe neighborhood safety contributes to overall health yet:

- 38 percent rate their community as fair or poor as a place to feel safe and free of crime; one in five expect their communities to be less safe in five years.
- One in five Californians who had dealings with legal authorities during the last year say they were treated unfairly. Ethnic minorities, young adults and Los Angeles County residents were more likely to report this.

About Their Jobs

A majority of Californians from all economic levels foresee the income gap between the poor and those well off as increasing over the next five years. This is significant because recent research suggests that the magnitude of income inequality is a critical factor associated with the poor health of low-income populations.

- Seven in ten workers say their jobs make good or excellent use of their abilities and skills but 27 percent feel otherwise.

Californians Call for Government Action

	ADULTS	REGISTERED VOTERS	RACE/ETHNICITY	EDUCATION	HOUSEHOLD INCOME
To Improve Quality of Life					
Expand public transit (V/SE)	82%	79%	AA, L	<HS	—
Encourage the development of jobs and employment opportunities near existing housing (V/SE)	82%	80%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K
Encourage the development of housing, retail stores and work places near major transit stops (V/SE)	75%	72%	L	<HS	<\$15K
Restrict development in order to preserve wetlands, rivers and environmentally sensitive areas (V/SE)	74%	73%	L, W	CG	>\$75K
Establish growth boundaries around cities beyond which new development would not be permitted (V/SE)	65%	64%	L, W, AO	—	\$40K+

V/SE = VERY/SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
 VE = VERY EFFECTIVE
 V/SI = VERY/SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
 VI = VERY IMPORTANT
 MI = MAJOR IMPACT

AA = AFRICAN AMERICAN
 L = LATINO
 W = WHITE NON-HISPANIC
 AO = ASIAN/OTHER

<HS = LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
 HSG = HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
 CG = COLLEGE GRADUATE



- Two population groups, African Americans and adults with less education, are more likely than others to say their current job makes only fair or poor use of their skills and abilities.
- Nearly one in three employed Californians feel they are working more hours than they would like; those with annual incomes above \$40,000 are more likely to feel this way.
- 13 percent of Californians who work part-time do so because they cannot find full-time work or for other reasons beyond their control.

About Their Schools

Californians see the need for more involvement and investment in education. This finding demonstrates strong support for the Governor’s initiatives to improve schools. Californians also see a need to broaden these initiatives to include school-based health promotion and disease and injury prevention.

- Seven in ten parents view health classes and physical education as very important elements of their children’s education, as compared to less than half of parents who see music and art classes as very important.
- 73 percent of Californians consider more after-school and early childhood education programs as having a major impact on reducing youth violence in and around schools — favoring such educational approaches far above more punitive measures, such as incarceration of youths.

- 73 percent of Latinos favor more police on school grounds and 72 percent favor more metal detectors and cameras in schools as ways to reduce youth violence in schools compared to about 49 percent of surveyed adults favoring these approaches.
- 61 percent of Californians want to invest in school-based health programs to improve children’s decision-making about drugs and alcohol.
- 69 percent of Californians feel structured after-school activities are effective in helping to reduce teen pregnancy.

About Their Healthcare

Overall, Californians are satisfied with their healthcare — but not entirely so. Growing consumerism and having choices can be powerful forces in promoting health plan and provider accountability and improving service delivery and patient satisfaction.

- More than seven of ten insured Californians are satisfied with major aspects of their healthcare (e.g., essential needs met, good overall delivery of care, providers being responsive, having access to preventive care education and service coordination) — but less than half are “very satisfied.”
- 20 percent of Californians with a “personal doctor” are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their healthcare provider’s delivery of preventive health services, such as health screening, counseling and education.

	MOST SUPPORTIVE				
	ADULTS	REGISTERED VOTERS	RACE/ETHNICITY	EDUCATION	HOUSEHOLD INCOME
To “Step Up” Prevention					
Expand Medicare coverage to include prescription drug coverage (VI)	79%	78%	AA, L	HSG or less	<\$15K
Assure alcohol and other drug treatment programs are available for those who need help (VI)	71%	68%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K
Provide public with more information comparing the safety and quality of care provided by different hospitals, health plans and health care providers (VI)	69%	66%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K
To Invest in Children & Youths					
Reduce class size to improve children’s education * (VI)	80%	78%	AA	HSG	\$15-40K
Provide more after-school and early childhood education programs to teach kids to get along with others and help them succeed in school (MI)	73%	71%	AA, L	<HS	\$25K or less
Provide more job-training and work experience programs for young people (VE)	64%	61%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K

* Of parents with children <18 years old.



- Among those dissatisfied with their healthcare provider, three percent felt this way because the provider has trouble dealing with people of their race, ethnic group or culture. Racial/ethnic minorities as a group are seven times more likely to cite this as a problem.
- 32 percent say they don't have anyone they can call their "personal doctor". Of those who have a personal doctor, the main factors they use to choose a doctor are experience and training (70 percent), followed by the proximity of the doctor's office (66 percent).
- A doctor's gender, age or race/ethnicity are named less often as selection factors. Latinos are two times more likely and Asians and others three times more likely than Whites to cite the doctor's race or ethnicity as a factor in selecting a doctor.
- 40 percent of adults and 38 percent of adults with insurance use alternative treatments or providers (chiropractors, massage therapists, herbal therapies and acupuncture); 54 percent expect to use these alternative medical treatments in the next five years, with anticipated use much higher among women, Latinos and Asian/Other groups, and the non-insured.

About Their Lifestyles

Californians see themselves as active participants in their own healthcare, and they know what steps they can take to keep healthy. Broader public policies emphasizing prevention are essential since 50 percent of all premature deaths are potentially preventable by adopting healthier lifestyles, while only 10 percent of such deaths can be avoided through improved access to medical care.

- 83 percent to 89 percent of Californians recognize the importance of changing their own behaviors to maintain and protect their own health — for example, by not smoking, not using drugs, driving safely and practicing safe sex.
- California adults recognize that eating the right foods and exercising (84 percent); not abusing alcohol (83 percent); and getting immunized against infectious diseases (86 percent) are important steps in keeping healthy.
- 58 percent of Californians actively seek out information about medical care needs; about half of those with a "personal doctor" feel their doctor tells them "everything they need to know" about their health options.
- 32 percent of Californians identify discouraging illegal drug use as the top priority health risk for state and local governments to address.

	MOST SUPPORTIVE				
	ADULTS	REGISTERED VOTERS	RACE/ETHNICITY	EDUCATION	HOUSEHOLD INCOME
To Invest in Children & Youths, continued					
Provide more school-based programs aimed at helping young people expand their decision-making and personal judgment skills (VE)	61%	58%	L	<HS	<\$15K
Provide more structured after-school programs offering students adult guidance and opportunities for recreation, education or community service (VE)	61%	58%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K
Develop more adult mentoring programs for youths (VE)	59%	56%	AA, L	<HS	<\$15K
To Address Specific Problems					
Provide more community-based family support services for families most at risk of alcohol and drug use (V/SE)	89%	87%	AA, L	HSG or less	\$25K or less
Provide additional research funds to identify and address differences in health among different racial and ethnic populations (V/SI)	81%	78%	AA, L	HSG or less	\$25K or less

Source: Californians' Beliefs About Health Survey — August 2000. California Center for Health Improvement and The Field Institute.



"On the eve of a new millennium, we still face daunting challenges. We will not hold onto our claim as the Golden State unless we forge new ways to grow our economy, ensure public safety, maintain a clean environment, improve health care for all Californians, contain urban sprawl..."

Governor Gray Davis Inaugural Address, January 4, 1999

About the Survey

The California Center for Health Improvement (CCHI) commissioned a statewide health survey designed to better understand the opinions of Californians about a range of health-related problems in their lives and communities, as well as the policies and programs they support to prevent these problems. That survey is the basis of this report. The survey was conducted by The Field Institute, a non-partisan, non-profit research organization devoted to the study of public opinion and behavior in California.

A telephone survey of 1,612 California adults age 18 or older was conducted from August 7-31, 2000, using random digit dialing and a computer-assisted telephone interview system. The August 2000 interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.6 points at a 95 percent confidence interval. Additional interviews were conducted among African Americans and Asians in California to increase the accuracy of survey estimates. The resulting representative survey included 846 White Non-Hispanic, 400 Latino, 158 African American, and 185 Asian/Other adults. For this data subset, the sampling error by race/ethnic population is: White Non-Hispanic (+/- 3.5 percent), Latino (+/- 5.0 percent), African American (+/- 8.2 percent), and Asian/Other (+/- 7.6 percent).



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About CCHI

The California Center for Health Improvement is a prevention-focused, non-profit, non-partisan health policy and consulting center, serving the public by framing ideas and research for action. Our diversified services support public policy innovation by decision-makers. Since 1995, CCHI has been recognized nationally and in California as an authority on health improvement and prevention-focused practices.

For more information on this survey, as well as prior surveys that assess the views of Californians on health-related issues, visit CCHI's Web site at www.cchi.org. In addition, for a database of policy ideas that work to improve health and information on ways to implement policy change, visit our new policy Web site, www.healthpolicycoach.org.

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