

Findings in Brief

- Almost twice as many adult Californians believe that there has been a negative rather than a positive change in the overall quality of life in this state in the past few years (44% believing quality of life has gotten worse and 24% better).
- However, the public's current quality of life appraisal is much less negative than it was in 1991. Then, 61% felt the quality of life in California had gotten worse and 13% said it had become better.
- Nevertheless, people in this state still give California a high rating as a place to live. Almost one-half (46%) say it is "one of the best places to live." Another 29% allow how it is "nice but not outstanding." While this appraisal is much less enthusiastic than it was during the 1960's, 70's and 80's, it represents an improvement over the relatively lukewarm appraisals offered by Californians in 1992.
- California continues to get its best ratings as a place to live from residents of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Six in ten (60%) Bay Area residents describe the state as one of the best places to live. Residents of the Central Coast (58%) and San Diego County (54%) also rate the state in somewhat higher terms than residents elsewhere.
- Those who tend to rate the state as one of the best places to live include proportionately more older Californians age sixty and over (57%), those with a college education (63%) and people with annual household income of \$80,000 or more (58%). White Anglos much more than blacks also describe the state in very favorable terms.
- Even though there has been a perceived decline in the quality of life within the state, almost three times as many residents (44% vs. 16%) think California is a better than worse place than most other states. And, when it is all said and done, three out of four (73%) Californians say they would not want to move out of the state to live in another place, while 25% would choose to move if they could.
- There is a strong tendency of people living here to believe that Californians are fundamentally different than people in other states — 51% seeing a significant difference, 16% seeing some similarities and some differences and 30% seeing no real differences.
- The characteristics in which Californians see themselves as being different than other states' residents are: trendy (73% say this applies more to Californians vs. 5% for other state residents); health-conscious (66% to 6%); enterprising (63% to 4%); money-oriented (62% to 3%); self-indulgent (58% to 4%); tolerant/open-minded (57% to 11%); fun-loving (55% to 6%); and arrogant (39% to 12%).
- Characteristics which Californians believe are more applicable to other state residents include these: family-oriented (39% to 11%), God-fearing (42% to 9%) and old-fashioned (69% to 3%).

More residents see a decline rather than an improvement in state's overall quality of life. But appraisals are better than six years ago

Almost twice as many adult Californians say that there has been a negative rather than a positive change in the overall quality of life in this state over the past few years. While 29% have not seen much change, 44% feel that things have gotten worse and 24% think things are becoming better.

However, the public's current appraisal is much less negative than was found in 1991. Then, the quality of life in California was seen as becoming worse by a large majority (61%) of residents. Those seeing no change accounted for 23%, while only 13% felt that things were becoming better.

Table 1
Overall quality of life in California during past few years

	Has become better	Not much change	Gotten worse	No opinion
1997	24%	29	44	3
1991	13%	23	61	3

No significant regional differences

The views that residents have on the changes in the quality of life in California during past few years does not differ much on a regional basis.

Table 2
Overall quality of life in California during the past few years — by region (1997)

	Better	Hasn't changed much	Worse	No opinion
<u>Statewide</u>	24%	29	44	3
L.A. County	21%	32	45	2
Orange County	26%	28	44	2
San Diego	23%	31	43	3
Inland Empire	26%	27	37	10
Central Coast	29%	36	34	1
Central Valley	25%	26	48	1
S.F. Bay Area	26%	24	47	3
North Coast/Sierra	21%	25	51	3

Compared to other states, California better

While Californians acknowledge a decline in the quality of life here, they still rate the living here as being better than in most other states.

By a 44% to 16% ratio residents believe the quality of life in California is better than worse than most other states, while 33% see no difference.

	1997	1994	1991
Better	44%	39%	50%
About the same	33	35	33
Worse	16	22	13
No opinion	7	4	4

Sentiment fairly uniform throughout the state

How Californians compare the quality of life in this state with life in other states does not vary much by where state residents live. In just one area — the Central Coast — do residents rate the state's quality of life significantly above the statewide average.

	Better	No difference	Worse	No opinion
<u>Statewide</u>	44%	33	16	7
L.A. County	40%	37	19	4
Orange County	44%	43	8	5
San Diego	44%	34	18	4
Inland	43%	33	16	7
Central Coast	57%	24	9	10
Central Valley	47%	29	16	8
S.F. Bay Area	47%	32	12	9
North Coast/Sierra	44%	25	25	6

California — still one of the best places to live

Taking everything into account, people in this state still give California a very high rating as a place to live. Almost one-half (46%) say it is "one of the best places to live." Another 29% allow how it is "nice but not outstanding," and 18% saying it is only about an average place to live. Just 6% say it is a poor place to live.

While this appraisal is much less enthusiastic than it was during the 1960's, '70's, and '80's, it represents an improvement over the relatively lukewarm appraisals offered by Californians in 1992.

Table 5
How California is rated as a place to live (1967-1997)

	One of best places to live	Nice but not outstanding	About an average place	Poor place to live
1997	46%	29	18	6
1994	41%	32	17	8
1992	30%	30	24	15
1991	51%	25	17	6
1989	58%	27	11	3
1985	78%	14	6	2
1981	70%	20	9	1
1977	75%	13	9	2
1967	73%	15	10	2

In this and succeeding tables the difference between the sum of the percentages and 100% equals the proportion with no opinion.

S. F. Bay Area residents have most favorable regard

As a place to live, California continues to get its best ratings from people living in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Six in ten (60%) S.F. Bay area residents say California is "one of the best places to live." A majority of Central Coast residents (58%) and San Diego residents (54%) also consider the state one of the best places to live.

Table 6
How California is rated as a place to live — by region (1997)

	One of best places to live	Nice but not outstanding	About an average place	Poor place to live
<u>Statewide</u>	46%	29	18	6
L.A. County	37%	35	19	8
Orange County	46%	30	18	2
San Diego	54%	29	13	4
Inland Empire	40%	35	17	7
Central Coast	58%	27	14	1
Central Valley	40%	25	23	11
S.F. Bay Area	60%	23	14	3
North Coast/Sierra	40%	16	25	14

Sub-group differences in attitude

Those who tend to rate the state as one of the best places to live include proportionately more residents sixty years of age and over (57%), those with a college education or more (63%), and people with an annual household income of \$80,000 or more (58%). White Anglos much more than blacks also give more favorable ratings to the state as a place to live.

Table 7

**How California is rated as a place to live
— by demographic subgroups (1997)**

	One of best places to live	Nice but not outstanding	About an average place	Poor place to live
Statewide	46%	29	18	6
<u>Age</u>				
18-24	35%	36	25	3
25-29	44%	37	12	7
30-39	45%	31	17	7
40-59	46%	31	13	7
50-59	48%	24	20	6
60 or older	57%	16	19	8
<u>Education</u>				
H.S. grad. or less	36%	32	22	9
Some college/ trade school	47%	28	18	6
College graduate	62%	25	10	3
Postgraduate	64%	21	11	4
<u>Household Income</u>				
Under \$20k	40%	30	22	7
\$20k to \$40k	45%	26	20	8
\$40k to \$60k	48%	26	17	8
\$60k to \$80k	46%	37	15	1
More than \$80k	58%	30	10	3
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White/Anglo	52%	26	16	6
Latino	38%	38	15	8
Black	28%	25	41	5
Asian/other	41%	28	24	8

Leave California?

When all is said and done, three out of four (73%) Californians, if they had a choice, would rather live in California than move out of state. Two out of three of those who would prefer to continue living here would stay in their same general area. The level of desire to stay in California and in the same local area is slightly higher now than it has been in recent years.

Table 8

Where Californians would prefer to live if they had the choice

	1997	1994	1991
<u>Stay in California</u>	<u>73%</u>	<u>66%</u>	<u>70%</u>
Same local area	54	47	45
Another part of California	19	19	25
<u>Move out of state</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>28</u>
Another state	20	28	24
Another country	5	5	4
Not sure	2	1	2

Are Californians different?

A majority of residents (51%) thinks that Californians are fundamentally different in important ways than people living in other states. One in three (30%) do not perceive that Californians are different at all. About one in six (16%) perceive some sameness and also some difference.

This distribution of attitudes is not much different than what was found in a comparable 1991 statewide survey.

Table 9

Are Californians basically the same as people living in other states or are Californians fundamentally different in some important ways?

	1997	1991
Different	51%	55%
Same in some, different in others	16	17
Same	30	25
No opinion	3	3

Where Californians are different

In the 1991 survey respondents were read a list of thirteen personality adjectives and asked whether they thought each better fits people living in California, people living elsewhere, or if there were no difference.

The results are summarized in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Self-perception of Californians compared to people living in other states*

	Description better fits people living in...		
	California	Other states	No difference
Trendy	73%	5	19
Health-conscious	66%	6	27
Enterprising	63%	4	30
Money-oriented	62%	3	34
Self-indulgent	58%	4	35
Tolerant/open-minded	57%	11	30
Fun-loving	55%	6	38
Arrogant	39%	12	45
Friendly	31%	26	40
Dishonest	23%	6	69
Family-oriented	11%	39	48
God-fearing	9%	42	45
Old-fashioned	3%	69	25

* Data from a 1991 Field Institute statewide survey sponsored by Time Magazine. The personality adjectives were not asked in the 1997 survey. However, given the similarity of 1991 and 1997 results in the overall measure of whether Californians are different, it is likely that views on the specific items have not changed much.

About The Field Institute

Background

The Field Institute is a non-partisan research organization supported by media, academic institutions, foundations and others for the purpose of conducting public opinion research on a variety of social, economic and political issues. The Institute undertakes regularly scheduled opinion and attitude surveys each year on a variety of topics as well as *ad hoc* studies in California, its primary area of focus. Revenue received by The Institute goes entirely toward covering the cost of its operations and in disseminating its reports. It is a not-for-profit organization.

The Institute's services are available to all sectors of the public. In addition to its own ongoing research programs, it accepts research contracts from public or private organizations but not from partisan interests. All data from Institute studies are archived for use by scholars, policy makers, and other persons or organizations. Archived data sets are available from more than 200 studies conducted by The Field Institute and *The Field Poll* since 1956.

Field Research Corporation Relationship

The Field Institute was established in 1976 with funds and support from Field Research Corporation. FRC has contributed to The Institute all of the operations of *The Field Poll*, including its data archive going back to 1947. FRC's staff of more than sixty-five full-time professional and operations people, together with its large corps of experienced interviewers and its extensive in-house computer capability, provides basic data gathering and data processing services for The Institute on a sub-contract basis.

The Institute's revenue comes from a variety of sources which fall into four main areas: media sponsors, academic sponsors, underwriters of *ad hoc* studies and mailing list subscribers.

Field Poll Media Sponsors

A number of leading California media properties (newspapers and television stations) contribute to the operations of The Field Institute as sponsors of *The Field Poll*. Each media property pays an annual fee commensurate with its circulation or audience size.

Academic Consortium

The Institute's Academic Consortium serves institutions of higher learning on an annual contract basis. The Institute provides Consortium members data files and codebooks of surveys undertaken by The Institute which are widely used for instruction and research. Current members include the nine campuses of the University of California system and the twenty-two campuses of the California State University system.

Underwriters of Ad Hoc Studies

Special *ad hoc* studies are frequently underwritten by sponsors from foundations, government and institutions. The

subjects for study are generally those in public policy areas where The Institute's demonstrated objectivity can contribute to a greater understanding of a problem.

Mailing List Subscribers

A variety of individuals and organizations pay an annual fee of \$250 to receive all copies of *The Field Poll* and *California Opinion Index* reports. This fee covers mailing and postage allowing for a portion of the proceeds to go into the Institute's operating fund.

The Field Poll

The Field Poll was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field and has operated continuously since that time. It is a unique, state-wide public opinion news feature service covering a wide range of political and social topics. Surveys are made at frequent intervals throughout the year. Continuing measures are made of voter support for leading political figures vying for major state and federal elected offices, job ratings of important political figures, and reactions to significant political events. Voter awareness, understanding and predispositions for major campaign issues and controversial ballot propositions are also tracked over time.

The Field Poll issues from forty to sixty reports per year. Each *Field Poll* release consists of three to ten double-spaced 8 1/2" x 11" pages of text and statistical data, plus a background sheet showing the details about the interviewing method, sample size, question wording, and other special technical data.

The California Opinion Index

The California Opinion Index regularly charts public attitudes on such issues as taxes and government spending, economic well-being, crime, immigration, education and the schools, political demography, the initiative process and other important state issues.

Each *California Opinion Index* report is printed in a four to eight page newsletter format.

Officers

Officers of The Field Institute are Mervin Field, Mark DiCamillo and Dr. E. Deborah Jay.

About this Survey

The findings in this report are based on a survey conducted May 9-18, 1997 among a representative statewide sample of 1,008 adult Californians. The survey was completed by telephone in either English or Spanish using random digit dialing methods. Percentages based on the total sample have a sampling error of $\pm 3.3\%$ at the 95% confidence level, while those based on sub-groups have a larger sampling tolerance.