

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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### **CALIFORNIA VOTERS ABOUT EVENLY SPLIT IN THEIR IDENTIFICATION WITH THE OCCUPY PROTEST MOVEMENT, BUT A MAJORITY AGREES WITH THE UNDERLYING REASON FOR THE PROTESTS.**

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

In reacting to the Occupy movement that has erupted across California and in other parts of the country, voters here are about equally divided in their identification with the protest movement. A total of 46% of the voting public say they identify a lot or some with it, while 49% declare not much identification with the movement.

These two groups hold very different views about who is responsible for the nation's economic problems and which political party has a better chance of solving them. For example . . .

- By a greater than two to margin (52% to 24%) Occupy movement identifiers blame financial institutions and Wall Street more than the federal government for the country's current economic problems. By contrast, more than three times as many voters who do not identify with the movement (64% to 20%) think federal government rather than financial institutions and Wall Street is more to blame for the nation's current economic woes.
- More than three in four voters who identify with the Occupy movement (77%) believe that the previous administration of George W. Bush holds more responsibility for today's poor economic conditions, while just 12% blame the current Obama administration more. This contrasts with the views of voters who do not sympathize with the movement who blame the Obama administration more than the Bush administration 47% to 37%.

While voters are closely divided in their identification with the Occupy movement, a 58% to 32% majority say they agree with the underlying reason for the protests.

Voters were also asked whether they felt the country would have a better chance of solving its economic problems by electing more Democrats or more Republicans to Congress next year. Rather than choosing either party, about four in ten of both Occupy movement sympathizers and non-sympathizers say neither, believing it wouldn't make much difference which party gains strength in the 2012 elections.

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However, there are huge differences between the two camps among other voters think the party that wins power next year will make a difference to the economy. Among Occupy movement identifiers 53% think electing more Democrats would benefit the economy, while just 5% think electing more Republicans would do this. By contrast, voters who do not identify with the Occupy movement think electing more Republicans would do more for the economy than electing more Democrats 43% to 15%.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* completed November 14-27 among 1,000 Californians registered to vote.

### **Background**

For more than two months California and many other parts of the U.S. have experienced organized protest movements, first starting on Wall Street in New York City, and then spreading to other cities and college campuses. Protestors have used as their organizing slogan the word "Occupy" connected to the city or place where they have been demonstrating.

In this state, Occupy protests have emerged in Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, as well as on many college campuses. Unlike other protest movements of the past, the "Occupy" movement appears to be a spontaneous grass roots operation without clearly defined leaders. Protestors proclaim that the 1% of the people at the top of the income scale are unfairly exploiting the economy at the expense of the other 99%.

Occupy protestors have been camping in parks, downtown public areas, financial buildings and other places. Initially, local police and other authorities did not attempt to seriously restrict these encampments. However, in recent weeks thousands of protestors in different cities and university campuses have been arrested in confrontations with police as they have attempted to disperse the camps.

### **Who identifies with the Occupy protest movement?**

When asked to what extent they themselves identify with the Occupy protest movement, slightly less than half (46%) of California voters say they identify a lot (19%) or some (27%) with it. About half of all voters (49%) declare not much identification with the movement and 5% have no opinion.

There are wide partisan and ideological differences among voters with regard to the protest movement. For example, Democrats sympathize with the Occupy movement two to one, with 64% identifying with it a lot or some, versus 32% not much. Republicans hold completely different views about this, with 73% not identifying with the movement, while only 23% do.

Large majorities of conservatives of any shade – 77% among those who consider themselves strongly conservative and 66% of moderate conservatives – do not identify with the Occupy movement. Liberals, on the other hand, express a high degree of identification. Political moderates are about equally divided, with 49% identifying a lot or some with the movement and 47% who do not.

The state's ethnic voter populations are more sympathetic with the Occupy movement than white non-Hispanics. Half or more of African-Americans (75%), Latinos (50%) and Asian-Americans (50%) say they identify a lot or some with the Occupy movement. This compares to about four in ten (42%) of the state's white non-Hispanic voters who report identifying with it.

There are some variations in sentiment among voters by age, gender, household income, and region of the state, but these differences are not as large.

**Table 1**  
**Views about the Occupy protest movement**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Identify with it			
	A lot	Some	Not much	No opinion
<b>Total Statewide</b>	19%	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>5</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	28%	36	32	4
Republicans	9%	14	73	4
Non-partisan/others	17%	28	49	6
<u>Political ideology</u>				
Strongly conservative	4%	14	77	5
Moderately conservative	11%	14	66	9
Middle-of-the-road	18%	31	47	4
Moderately liberal	29%	35	35	1
Strongly liberal	46%	38	12	4
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	16%	26	53	5
Latino	24%	26	45	5
African-American*	35%	40	23	2
Asian-American/other	25%	25	47	3
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	14%	34	50	2
30-39	20%	24	50	6
40-49	16%	29	49	6
50-64	25%	27	43	5
65 or older	21%	22	53	4
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	22%	28	47	3
Female	17%	26	51	6
<u>Household income</u>				
Less than \$20,000	29%	25	41	5
\$20,000-\$59,999	21%	26	48	5
\$60,000-\$99,999	20%	28	49	3
\$100,000 or more	13%	33	50	4
<u>Region</u>				
Los Angeles County	24%	29	44	3
Other Southern California	18%	24	52	6
Central Valley	16%	26	55	3
San Francisco Bay Area	19%	29	49	3
Other Northern California*	16%	39	40	5

\* Small sample bases

**Most voters agree with the reason for the protests**

While voters are about evenly divided in their identification with the Occupy movement, there is greater consensus when Californians are asked whether they agree or disagree with the underlying reason for these protests, with 58% majority saying they agree with it, while 32% disagree.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Democrats and 62% of non-partisans agree with the reason for the protests, as do large majorities of liberals and moderates. They are joined by a plurality of moderate conservatives (42%). On the other hand, Republicans and strong conservatives disagree with the reason for the protests by margins of two and three to one.

Majorities of voters in virtually every gender, age, race/ethnicity, household income and region of the state agree with the underlying reason for the protests, with African-Americans (73% agreement) and voters under age 30 (69%) most in agreement.

<b>Table 2</b>			
<b>Do you agree or disagree with the reason behind the Occupy protest movement                      (among California registered voters)</b>			
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	74%	16	10
Republicans	31%	59	10
Not-partisan/others	62%	26	12
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	24%	66	10
Moderately conservative	42%	39	19
Middle-of-the-road	63%	27	10
Moderately liberal	75%	16	9
Strongly liberal	88%	6	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	54%	36	10
Latino	64%	24	12
African-American*	73%	18	9
Asian-American/other	56%	35	9
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	69%	20	11
30-39	58%	31	11
40-49	52%	32	16
50-64	60%	32	8
65 or older	51%	41	8
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	59%	35	6
Female	57%	29	14
<u>Household income</u>			
Less than \$20,000	61%	25	14
\$20,000-\$59,999	63%	29	8
\$60,000-\$99,999	59%	34	7
\$100,000 or more	56%	34	10
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	59%	28	13
Other Southern California	54%	35	11
Central Valley	56%	37	7
San Francisco Bay Area	62%	27	11
Other Northern California*	58%	32	10

\* Small sample bases

**Who is more responsible for the nation's current economic problems?**

*(1) Is the federal government or financial institutions/Wall Street more to blame?*

A plurality (45%) of Californians blame the federal government more than Wall Street and financial institutions (33%) for the country's current economic problems.

However, views about this differ sharply between Occupy movement sympathizers and those who don't. By a greater than two to one margin (52% to 24%) those who identify with the Occupy movement believe financial institutions and Wall Street are more to blame than the federal government for our current economic woes. By contrast, those who do not identify with the protestors believe that the federal government is more at fault greater than three to one (64% to 20%).

There are wide partisan differences about this. Democrats blame Wall Street more than they do the federal government nearly two to one (50% to 27%). By contrast, greater than seven out in ten Republicans (71%) blame the federal government and just 12% point the finger at Wall Street. The views of non-partisans reflect those of the overall public, with 43% saying the federal government is more to blame and 30% saying greater responsibility lies with financial institutions and Wall Street.

**Table 3**  
**Who's more to blame for the country's economic problems –**  
**the federal government or financial institutions/Wall Street?**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b><u>The federal government</u></b>	<b><u>Financial institutions/Wall Street</u></b>	<b><u>Both (vol.)</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
<b><u>Identification with Occupy protest movement</u></b>				
A lot/some	24%	52	21	3
Not much	64%	20	12	4
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>				
Democrats	28%	49	19	4
Republicans	72%	12	15	1
Not-partisan/others	44%	31	17	8

*(2) Is the Obama administration or the Bush administration more to blame?*

By a five to three margin (54% to 31%) Californians blame the previous Bush administration more than the present Obama government for the country's current economic problems.

Those who identify with the Occupy protest movement overwhelmingly point to the Bush administration (77%) as being more responsible for our current economic problems than the Obama administration (12%). By contrast, those who don't sympathize with the Occupy protestors are somewhat more inclined to fault the Obama administration rather than the Bush presidency 47% to 37%.

A ten to one majority of Democrats – 83% to 8% – blame the Bush administration more than Obama for the nation's economic woes. Non-partisans also place more of the responsibility for the economic hard times on the Bush administration (51%) than the Obama administration (32%). But, Republicans focus more of the blame on the current Obama administration for today's poor economic conditions by a greater than four to one margin (64% to 15%).

**Table 4**  
**Which administration is more to blame for the country's economic problems –**  
**the Obama administration or the Bush administration?**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<b><u>Bush</u></b> <b><u>administration</u></b>	<b><u>Obama</u></b> <b><u>administration</u></b>	<b><u>Both (vol.)</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Identification with</b> <b><u>Occupy protest movement</u></b>				
A lot/some	77%	12	4	7
Not much	37%	47	12	4
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>				
Democrats	83%	8	6	3
Republicans	16%	64	12	8
Not-partisan/others	51%	32	11	6

**Would electing more Democrats or more Republicans to Congress improve the nation's economic situation?**

Voters were also asked whether they felt the country would have a better chance of solving its economic problems by electing more Democrats or more Republicans to Congress in the 2012 elections.

Rather than choosing either party, the single largest group (40%) say neither, believing it wouldn't make much difference which party gains in strength next year. Among those who think there might be a positive effect, slightly more (31%) think electing more Democrats to Congress would be better for the economy than electing more Republicans (26%).

Both Occupy movement sympathizers and non-sympathizers – about four in ten – agree that it won't matter much to the economy which party gains strength in next year's Congressional election. However, there are huge differences between the two camps among other voters think the party that wins power next year will make a difference to the economy. Among Occupy movement sympathizers 52% think electing more Democrats would benefit the economy while just 5% think electing more Republicans would do this. By contrast, voters who do not identify with the Occupy movement think electing more Republicans would do more for the economy than electing more Democrats 43% to 15%.

<b>Table 5</b>				
<b>Will the country have a better chance of solving its economic problems if more Democrats or more Republicans were elected to Congress in 2012?                      (among California registered voters)</b>				
	<b><u>More Democrats</u></b>	<b><u>More Republicans</u></b>	<b><u>Not much difference</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Identification with</b>				
<b><u>Occupy protest movement</u></b>				
A lot/some	53%	5	40	2
Not much	15%	43	40	2
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>				
Democrats	57%	4	37	2
Republicans	4%	58	34	4
Not-partisan/others	22%	27	51	*

\* Less than 1/2 of 1%

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed November 14-27, 2011 among a random sample of 1,000 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the questions in this release were asked of a random subsample of 485 voters.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey 775 interviews were derived from landline sample listings and 225 from cell phone listings. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the sample of registered Republicans have a maximum sampling error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample have a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error.

There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The *Poll* has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The *Poll* receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

(ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE A)

If you had to choose, who do you blame more for the economic problems facing the country – financial institutions and Wall Street or the federal government?

Who do you blame more for this country's economic problems – the current Democratic administration under President Barack Obama or the previous Republican administration under President George W. Bush?

After next year's elections, do you think the country would have a better chance of solving its economic problems if more Democrats were elected to Congress, more Republicans were elected to Congress, or wouldn't it make much difference?

(ASKED OF THE OVERALL SAMPLE)

How much do you personally identify with the Occupy protest movement on Wall Street, in Oakland, Los Angeles and other cities – a lot, some or not much?

Would you say that you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly with the reason for these protests?