

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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WHILE LESS THAN HALF OF CALIFORNIA VOTERS ARE INCLINED TO REELECT OBAMA, HE HOLDS DOUBLE-DIGIT LEADS WHEN PAIRED AGAINST ROMNEY OR GINGRICH.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Only 45% of California voters say they are inclined to have Barack Obama serve another term as President. But his reelection prospects improve greatly when he is paired against each of his two leading GOP challengers in general election match-ups. Obama now leads Mitt Romney by ten points (50% to 40%) and holds a more commanding twenty-point lead over former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (55% to 35%) in general election trial heats.

Obama's job ratings in this state remain lackluster, with 48% approving and 44% disapproving. However, these marks are somewhat better than what he is receiving nationally, where the average of his poll ratings are 44% approve and 51% disapprove.

In respect to how voters here think about the overall direction of the U.S., 70% believe the country is seriously off on the wrong track. This appraisal is virtually the same as Californians' assessments of the direction the country was heading during the last year of the George W. Bush administration.

These results come from a statewide survey among a representative sample of 1,000 California voters conducted November 15-27.

Fewer Californians initially say they're inclined to reelect Obama

Less than half of voters here (45%) now say they are inclined to support Obama for another term, while 44% are disinclined. This represents a decline in support for the President since September, when 49% said they were inclined to reelect him.

In addition, those disinclined to support Obama feel more strongly about their position than those who are inclined to have him remain in office.

Table 1
Inclination to reelect Barack Obama as President in 2012
(among California registered voters)

	Late November 2011	September 2011	June 2011	March 2011
<u>Inclined</u>	45%	49%	49%	49%
Very strongly	26	28	N/A	N/A
Somewhat strongly	16	17	N/A	N/A
Not strongly	3	4	N/A	N/A
<u>Not inclined</u>	44	44%	40%	40%
Not strongly	3	4	N/A	N/A
Somewhat strongly	8	7	N/A	N/A
Very strongly	33	33	N/A	N/A
No opinion	11	7	11	11

N/A Voters not asked about their intensity of feelings in June and March surveys.

Obama's reelection chances improve greatly once he is paired against his leading GOP rivals

Obama's prospects for reelection improve greatly when he is paired against each of his two leading GOP challengers in general election match-ups. In trial heats, Obama now leads Romney by ten points and holds a more commanding twenty-point lead over Gingrich.

Romney's somewhat stronger showing against Obama as compared to Gingrich is almost entirely due to the general election preferences of this state's non-partisan voters. Among these voters Romney and Obama are statistically tied (Romney 42% and Obama 41%). By contrast, Obama holds huge preference lead of 35 points among non-partisans when paired against Gingrich in the general election.

Table 2
2012 general election trial heats between Obama and selected GOP candidates
(among California registered voters)

	Total		Party Registration (Late November)		
	Late Nov.	Sept.	Democrats	Republicans	Non-partisans/ others
<u>Obama vs. Romney</u>					
Obama	50%	51%	80%	13%	41%
Romney	40	38	10	83	42
Undecided	10	11	10	4	17
<u>Obama vs. Gingrich</u>					
Obama	55%	N/A	82%	12%	60%
Gingrich	35		9	82	25
Undecided	10		9	6	15

N/A Not asked in September survey

Obama's job ratings remain lackluster overall

Obama's job ratings remain lackluster, with 48% of voters approving and 44% disapproving of his performance overall. This is a similar assessment to what was observed last September, but is lower than the ratings he received last spring and summer when 54% approved of his performance.

Democratic voters approve of Obama 72% to 20%, while Republicans have a completely opposite view of him – 80% disapproving and 14% approving. Among non-partisans and others, 48% approve and 41% disapprove.

Table 3

**Trend of Californians' views about the job Barack Obama is doing as President
(among California registered voters)**

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
Late November 2011	48%	44	8
September 2011	46%	44	10
June 2011	54%	37	9
March 2011	54%	37	9
September 2010	53%	41	6
July 2010	54%	39	7
March 2010	52%	37	11
January 2010	56%	34	10
October 2009	60%	31	9
March 2009	65%	21	14
<u>Party registration</u> (Late Nov. 2011)			
Democrats	72%	20	8
Republicans	14%	80	6
Non-partisan/other	48%	41	11

While still negative, slight improvement Obama's handling of the economy

During Obama's first year in office, Californians approved of his handling of the nation's economy by a nearly two to one margin. But throughout most of 2010 views about his stewardship of the economy declined to where about as many Californians said they disapproved as approved of Obama's performance in this regard. Voters became even more dispirited in September of this year, when a 54% majority disapproved of his economic performance and just 40% approved.

Today's report shows that while more voters disapprove (49%) than approve (45%) of the President's handling of the economy, this represents a slight improvement from his standing two months ago.

By a 70% to 21% margin Democrats give the President positive marks for his handling the economy. On the other hand, Republicans are overwhelmingly negative in their appraisals, 85% to

12%. More non-partisans also disapprove (55%) than approve (41%) of Obama's economic performance.

Table 4
Trend of President Obama's job performance in handling the nation's economy
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late November 2011	45%	49	6
September 2011	40%	54	6
September 2010	48%	47	5
July 2010	47%	44	9
January 2010	44%	50	6
October 2009	60%	35	5
March 2009	61%	31	8
<u>Party registration</u> (<i>Late Nov. 2011</i>)			
Democrats	70%	21	9
Republicans	12%	85	3
Not-partisan/others	41%	55	4

Many voters don't think the outcome of the presidential election outcome will make a difference in improving the nation's economy

Nearly half of the voters in this state (43%) do not believe that reelecting either Obama or electing the eventual Republican nominee will do much to solve the country's economic problems. Among voters who feel otherwise, about as many (27%) think reelecting Obama will increase the chances of economic improvement, while 25% think the GOP nominee will do this.

Many Democrats are not overly optimistic that another term for Obama will solve the country's economic problems, with 41% saying the election outcome will not make much difference. However among Democrats who do see the election outcome as impacting the economy, by a 47% to 6% margin they think reelecting Obama will provide the nation with a better chance for economic improvement.

Republican voters are somewhat more optimistic that their standard bearer, if elected, can improve the state of the economy. Almost six in ten (59%) choose the GOP nominee as being better to bring about economic improvement, while just 3% think reelecting Obama will do this. But even here, 35% of Republican voters maintain that the economy will be unaffected by whomever gets elected President next year.

A majority of non-partisans (56%) are skeptical that the outcome of next year's presidential election will make a difference in improving the U.S. economy.

Table 5
**Will the country have a better chance of solving its economic problems
if Obama or the GOP nominee is elected president in 2012?**
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>GOP nominee</u>	<u>Not much difference</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Total statewide	27%	25	43	5
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	47%	6	41	6
Republicans	3%	59	35	3
Not-partisan/others	21%	19	56	4

Seven in Californians believe the country is seriously off on wrong track

One big factor weighing down voter assessments of the President is their view that the country remains seriously off on the wrong track.

Today, just 19% believe that the country is going in the right direction and nearly four times as many (70%) see the U.S. on the wrong track.

In 2008, during the last year of the Bush administration, 75% of Californians believed the country was seriously off on the wrong track. Californians' view improved markedly in 2009 after Obama took office, but the negative view has climbed back again to virtually where it was in 2008.

Table 6
Are things in the U.S. generally going in the right direction or
do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?
(among California registered voters)

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
Late November 2011	19%	70	11
September 2011	21%	68	11
March 2011	33%	56	11
September 2010	34%	55	11
July 2010	33%	53	14
January 2010	41%	49	10
October 2009	48%	41	11
March 2009	42%	47	11
2008 (average)	16%	75	9
2007 (average)	25%	65	10
2006 (average)	30%	60	10
2005 (average)	33%	59	8
2004 (average)	38%	53	9
2003 (average)	44%	50	6
2002 (average)	51%	37	12
December 2001	68%	27	5
September 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	43%	49	8
January 2001	55%	34	11
2000 (average)	63%	28	9
1999 (average)	54%	37	9
1998 (average)	57%	32	11
1997 (average)	44%	45	11
1996 (average)	34%	49	17
1995 (average)	33%	54	13
1994 (average)	41%	50	9
1993 (average)	27%	64	9
1992 (average)	14%	81	5
1991 (average)	14%	78	7
1990 (average)	30%	63	7
1989 (average)	49%	43	8
1988 (average)	42%	53	5
Party registration (Late Nov. 2011)			
Democrats	27%	56	17
Republicans	6%	89	5
Non-partisans/others	22%	72	6

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults.

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed November 15-27, 2011 among a random sample of 1,000 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues, some of the questions in this release were asked of a random subsample of either 485 or 515 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 overall registered voters sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings based on each of the random subsamples 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

Thinking about the country overall, do you think things in the U.S. are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?*

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

Barack Obama's term as President ends next year. Are you inclined or not inclined to vote to reelect Obama as President? (IF INCLINED OR NOT INCLINED) How strong is your desire (to reelect) (not to reelect) Obama – very strong, somewhat strong or not too strong?

Suppose that former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney became the Republican nominee and was running against Democrat Barack Obama in the general election for President. If the election were being held today and these were the candidates for whom would you vote for President – Republican Mitt Romney or Democrat Barack Obama?*

Suppose that former House Speaker Newt Gingrich became the Republican nominee and was running against Democrat Barack Obama in the general election for President. If the election were being held today and these were the candidates for whom would you vote for President – Republican Newt Gingrich or Democrat Barack Obama?*

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Obama is doing in handling the nation's economy?*

After next year's elections, do you think the country would have a better chance of solving its economic problems with Barack Obama as President, with the Republican party nominee as President, or wouldn't it make much difference?*

* asked of a random subsample of registered voters. All other questions asked of the total sample.