

ALERT

The People's Voice

Poll Shows Voter Attitudes About Living in California

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE 2023

CalChamber's 9th Annual Survey of California Voter Attitudes

California voters have grown more anxious and pessimistic about

living in

California than a year ago, according to findings from the California Chamber of Commerce Poll, *The People's Voice, 2023*.

A strong majority (57%) say California is heading down the wrong track, flipping their views from a year ago, where a majority said the state was headed in the right direction.

Key Factors

Voters peg inflation and the economy as key factors in worsening attitudes. Asked if rising prices caused them or their families to adjust spending habits, 83% said they had, nearly half (47%) by "a lot."

More than two of three voters reported that their households' finances and current economic situation is worse than a year ago — nearly one-quarter said "much worse."

Looking ahead, voters are pessimistic: 58% say the economy will be worse off a year from now. When asked this same question a year ago, a majority believed the economy would be better off. From a personal perspective, a slight majority (51%) of voters believe it "unlikely" that their own economic situation will "improve over the next year."

Over a longer time frame, a plurality (39%) of voters think that five years in the future, California will be a worse place to live compared to today, 12 percentage points higher than those who believed California would be a better place.

Voter pessimism extends to their

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New Assembly Committee Will Focus on Retail Theft Solutions



A new select committee has been formed in the California Assembly to identify

policy solutions for retail theft.

The Select Committee on Retail Theft will be chaired by Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur (D-Hollywood) and is comprised of bipartisan members from across the state. The committee, which will work through the 2024 legislative session, will provide a forum to engage impacted stakeholders, including large retailers, small businesses, criminal justice reform advocates, law enforcement, and representatives of workers and the public.

"We appreciate Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Assemblymember Zbur for providing leadership on this important issue for California businesses and consumers," said California Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jennifer Barrera.

Rise in Retail Theft

Retail theft — which encompasses shoplifting, commercial burglary, and commercial robbery — has seen an alarming rise in California, most notably, but not exclusively, in the Bay Area, the Central Valley, and Los Angeles County.

Currently, Los Angeles County has

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Coalition Reviews Crime, Retail Theft Issues



Crime and retail theft were key topics earlier this week

when the Big City Chambers Coalition (BCCC) met to discuss key issues affecting California's business community.

The BCCC unites and amplifies the advocacy efforts of the chambers of commerce in California's 13 largest cities.

BCCC members heard from California Retailers Association President and CEO Rachel Michelin on the association's work to reduce organized retail theft.

Michelin provided updates on how the

association is working to curb retail theft in conjunction with the Newsom administration, district attorneys and sheriffs across the state, and the Legislature.

Michelin also discussed ways the BCCC and its memberships can be active in discussions to address an issue that is top of mind in every community in California. Michelin also previewed the recently announced Assembly Select Committee on Retail Theft.

In addition, Loren Kaye, president of the California Foundation for Commerce and Education, reviewed findings from the recently released annual CalChamber

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Inside

More Public Affairs

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Labor Law Corner

Considerations for Back-to-Back Pregnancy, Family Leaves



Matthew J. Roberts
Associate General
Counsel, Labor and
Employment

My employee of five years gave birth and would like to use California Family Rights Act (CFRA) child bonding time immediately following her pregnancy disability leave (PDL). Can I deny the leave because the employee will not have met the CFRA hours worked requirement at the time due to her time on PDL?

California's multiple leaves of absence, which vary depending on the circumstances, often create complex leaves of absence issues.

A pregnant employee may be eligible to use pregnancy disability leave (PDL) before and after the birth of her child if she has a disability related to the pregnancy. Separately, an employee may have a separate leave available to bond with their child once the child is born. Each leave has its own allotment and eligibility rules.

Pregnancy Disability Leave

All employers with five or more employees are covered by PDL but must provide this leave only to eligible California employees.

Any California employee may be eligible for PDL and may receive up to four months of job-protected leave; however, they must be disabled by their pregnancy.

This means that employers provide this leave only if it is backed by a medical certification that establishes both the disability related to the employee's preg-

nant condition or birth of their child, and the duration of the disability.

An employee's entitlement to PDL depends upon that certification; in other words, employees do not get to take PDL just because they want to.

PDL/Child Bonding Interaction

California also provides a right to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for an eligible employee who is the parent of a newborn child, or who has adopted or is fostering a child. This is known as child bonding leave under the California Family Rights Act (CFRA).

As with PDL, an employer is covered by the CFRA if it has five or more employees. Also like PDL, an employer must provide this time only to California employees — although there is a federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

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CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

More information at www.calchamber.com/events.

Labor and Employment

2024 Employment Law Updates.

CalChamber. January 5, 2024, January 9, 2024 (9 a.m.–12:30 p.m.) and (1 p.m.–4:30 p.m.), Online; January 11, 2024, Santa Clara; January 18, 2024, Costa Mesa; January 23, 2024, Online. (800) 331-8877.

International Trade

Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC). Smart City Expo World Congress. November 7–9, Barcelona, Spain. (704) 248-6875.

Cambodia Business Expo. Cambodian Chamber in California. November 9, Long Beach. normarikawa@gmail.com.

MEDICA CEO Program. Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). November 13–16, Düsseldorf. patricia.utterback@gobiz.ca.gov.

APEC CEO Summit 2023. National Center for APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation). November 15–16, San Francisco. (206) 441-9022.

2023 Cosmoprof Asia. GO-Biz. November 15–17, Hong Kong. (916) 447-7946.

Arab Health. GO-Biz. January 29–Febru-

ary 1, 2024. patricia.utterback@gobiz.ca.gov.

California Pavilion at the Singapore Airshow. GO-Biz. February 20–25, 2024, Singapore. (916) 447-7946. Journey to Panama. San Diego Diplomacy Council. April 1–5, 2024, Panama. (619) 291-8105.

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CalChamber Calendar

Water Committee:

December 7, San Francisco

ChamberPAC Advisory Committee:

December 7, San Francisco

Board of Directors:

December 7–8, San Francisco

International Trade Breakfast:

December 8, San Francisco

Annual Meeting:

December 8, San Francisco

ChamberPAC Legislative Roundtable:

December 8, San Francisco

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CalChamber Public Affairs Conference

Lively Exchanges Help Shed Light on Policy Challenges, Potential Solutions

A record crowd gathered in Laguna Niguel on October 24 and 25 for the annual CalChamber Public Affairs Conference. The packed day-and-a-half agenda still provided many opportunities for attendees to mingle and share observations about state and national politics.



Kicking off day one of the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference on October 24 are pollsters Robert Green (left), Pierrepont Consulting & Analytics LLC; and Adam Rosenblatt, Bold Decision. Here they field audience questions about the 9th annual CalChamber survey of California voter attitudes, the People's Voice.



Offering perspectives on the complexities of goods movement in California at the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference on October 24 are (from left) moderator Adam Regele, CalChamber vice president of advocacy and strategic partnerships; Assemblymember Juan Carrillo (D-Palmdale); Assemblymember Laurie Davies (R-Laguna Niguel); and Senator Anthony Portantino (D-Burbank). Panelists commented on topics such as supply chain issues, state and local requirements affecting the location of warehouses, the infrastructure and other challenges raised by the transition toward medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicles, and potential mitigation proposals.



The opening session on October 25 — day two of the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference — gives some of the large class of “freshman” legislators an opportunity to review their experiences. From left are session moderator Preston Young, CalChamber policy advocate; Senator Catherine Blakespear (D-Encinitas); and Assemblymembers Blanca Pacheco (D-Downey), Juan Alanis (R-Modesto), Rick Chavez Zhur (D-Hollywood) and Diane Dixon (R-Newport Beach). All agreed there was far too much legislation introduced in 2023.

Lively Exchanges at CalChamber Public Affairs Conference



Panelists at an afternoon session on artificial intelligence (AI) on October 25 at the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference are (from left) Assemblymember Avelino Valencia (D-Anaheim), Senator Steve Padilla (D-Chula Vista), Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda), Assemblymember Vince Fong (R-Bakersfield) and moderator Ronak Daylami, CalChamber policy advocate. The discussion covered the opportunities and risks of AI, the risks of overregulation, and role of the Legislature in this space, plus how to balance the need for guardrails to protect Californians and avoid the dangers of stifling innovation/economic growth.



Strategy and funding of ballot measure campaigns is the subject of a morning session on October 25 at the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference featuring (from left) moderator Marva Diaz, Marva Diaz Strategies/California Target Book; Jim DeBoo, DeBoo Strategic Affairs; Christy Wilson, Wilson Callahan Strategies; and Brandon Castillo, BCFS Public Affairs.



Photos by Matt Lara

Entertaining the luncheon audience on October 25 at the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference are (from left) discussion moderator Rob Stutzman, Stutzman Public Affairs; journalist Mary Katherine Ham, podcast host and author; and Democratic Party strategist and memoirist Lis Smith. The lively discussion about Washington D.C. politics ranged from voter perceptions of the presidential candidates to House Republican issues and predictions for the 2024 elections.



Appearing at a CalChamber Public Affairs Conference session on October 25 to discuss the huge impact of California tribal communities on the state's economy are (from left) moderator Ben Golombek, CalChamber executive vice president and chief of staff for policy; Assemblymember Greg Wallis (R-Bermuda Dunes); Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis; Assemblymember James Ramos (D-Highland); and Senators Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh (R-Yucaipa) and Marie Alvarado-Gil (D-Jackson). Besides gaming, tribes have made investments in water, health care and education, among other areas.

See the October 27 *Alert* for photos of CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera moderating a conversation with Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and the "varsity" legislative panel.

People's Voice: Voter Beliefs about Their Future in California

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE 2023

CalChamber's 9th Annual Survey of California Voter Attitudes

The CalChamber Poll, *The People's Voice 2023*, found that California

voters have grown more anxious and pessimistic about living in California. Notably, a strong majority believe that American Dream "once held true but does not anymore."

Looking further afield, by a 3 to 1 margin, voters believe it is "easier to achieve the American Dream in a different state than in California."

This year, the *People's Voice* probed voter beliefs about their future in California.

Family Futures

More than 3 of 5 (62%) of Californians now say their "family would have a better future if we left California." Just two years ago, less than half of voters (48%) agreed with that sentiment.

Two-thirds of parents agree that "my children will have a better future if they left California."

Sixty-five percent of voters reported personally knowing someone who moved out of California because of either job loss or cost of living concerns.

Economic uncertainty contributes mightily to these concerns. Nine out of 10 voters agree that "earning enough income to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle is becoming almost impossible in my part of California."

Growing Exodus

California has suffered a growing exodus of residents over the past decade, with the state's population actually declining for the past three years.

Asked if in recent years they had "given any thought to moving out of California," 57% had given at least some consideration, while 26% reported that they'd given "serious consideration" to leaving the state. Not surprisingly, the reasons given were related to the bottom

line: 61% gave "high cost of living" and 10% cited "better opportunities for home ownership" as reasons for leaving.

Some officials and pundits have speculated that California's "de-growth" may be a blessing in disguise, given the housing shortage and overall affordability. Voters strongly disagree. By a nearly 3 to 1 margin, voters believe that people and businesses leaving the state has a very (27%) or somewhat (46%) negative impact on California.

Methodology

The CalChamber poll was conducted by Bold Decision and Pierrepont Consulting & Analytics with online interviews from October 2–8, 2023 with 1,002 online interviews of California likely 2024 general election voters. The margin of error for this study is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. This is the ninth year CalChamber has published *The People's Voice* survey.

Contact: [Loren Kaye](#)

People's Voice: Affordability, Crime Among Top Voter Concerns

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE 2023

CalChamber's 9th Annual Survey of California Voter Attitudes

The CalChamber poll, *The People's Voice 2023*, found that California

voters have grown more anxious and pessimistic about living in California. Voters believe their families would have a better future if they left California.

The problem is profound voter dissatisfaction, but what is to be done about it?

For starters, voters agree (65%) that "California has fostered an unfriendly business climate that discourages new high-quality jobs and opportunities." They overwhelmingly agree (89%) that "California needs to do more to attract and retain businesses in the state."

As to whether state leaders are on the job, voters have a dim view. A majority (54%) say Sacramento policies have "worsened" the condition of the state,"

while only 36% believe those policies have "improved the condition of the state."

Issues to Address

When asked about issues they wish elected officials were addressing, unsurprisingly voters cite making the state "more affordable for working Californians," "addressing the high cost of electricity," "reducing taxes," and "expanding the fresh water supply" as high priority issues, but ones they have not heard about from elected officials. Voters agree that Sacramento is addressing other high priority issues, such as homelessness, high housing costs, and wildfires.

Crime is an issue that voters care deeply about, and believe state officials are addressing somewhat, but see far more that needs to be done.

A majority of voters say crime has increased in their area, a quarter report by "a lot." When it comes to the retail expe-

rience, 44% of voters say they have "felt the need to change when or where they shop" in the past year.

Voters' top criminal justice priorities are (1) reducing the fentanyl threat and punishing smugglers and dealers, (2) keeping violent offenders in prison for their entire sentence, and (3) replacing prosecutors who refuse to enforce the law.

Methodology

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Contact: [Loren Kaye](#)

People's Voice: Views on Property Tax, Health Care, Labor Law Reform

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE 2023

CalChamber's 9th Annual Survey of California Voter Attitudes

The CalChamber poll, *The People's Voice, 2023*, found that California voters have

grown more anxious and pessimistic about living in California. Moreover, a majority of voters polled say Sacramento policies have "worsened" the condition of the state.

Voters rate economic and cost-of-living issues at the top of their concerns, and wish elected officials spent more time addressing those issues.

Property Tax Reforms

The Proposition 13 property tax reforms remain strongly popular among voters, with 83% reporting a favorable view of the measure, and 44% "very favorable." Recently, the Legislature placed on next year's ballot a proposal to reduce the local vote requirement for property and sales tax increases for local public works projects from two-thirds to

55%. Voters disagreed with the proposal by a 41% to 37% margin.

Voters are disinclined to re-elect a legislator who messes with Proposition 13, with 59% saying they would be less likely to re-elect a legislator who voted to place on the ballot the measure that would reduce the local vote requirement for higher taxes.

Health Care

Single-payer health care has been resurrected as an issue in the Legislature. With this in mind, 87% of voters report that they are satisfied with their health insurance (asked of those with insurance), and 45% report that they are "very satisfied."

Among those with private health insurance, 78% respond that they would rather keep their private insurance, as opposed to switching to a government-run single-payer approach.

Labor Law Reform

On the ballot in November 2024 will be a measure to change how labor laws are enforced in California. It would require

Labor Code violations to be handled by independent state regulators, direct 100% of penalties be paid to employees and double penalties for employers who willfully violate labor laws.

Voters support this measure, also known as Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) reform, by a 62% to 16% margin.

Asked further what would be the better way to deal with Labor Code violations, nearly half (49%) of voters surveyed preferred independent state regulators, while 21% preferred trial attorneys.

Methodology

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Contact: Loren Kaye

State Voter Attitudes About Living in California

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views on the American Dream, which they have seen steadily slipping away over the years. By a 63% to 26% margin, voters believe that the American Dream "once held true but does not anymore" compared with "still holds true."

Five years ago, a plurality of California voters (49%) believed the American dream "still holds true," versus 44% who responded that "it once held true, but does not anymore."

Methodology

The CalChamber poll was conducted by Bold Decision and Pierrepont Consulting & Analytics with online interviews from October 2–8, 2023 with 1,002 online interviews of California likely 2024 general election voters. The margin of error for this study is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. This is the ninth year CalChamber has published *The People's Voice* survey.

Contact: Loren Kaye

PEOPLE'S VOICE, 2023

- Attitudes about Living in California
- Beliefs about Future in California
- Affordability, Crime
- Views on Key Issues

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New Assembly Committee Will Focus on Retail Theft Solutions

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the highest rate of commercial robbery, which is a violent crime defined as theft involving the threat or use of force. Commercial burglary has increased statewide, becoming the most common type of retail theft in recent years, and is at its highest rate since 2008.

In 2022, Kern, San Francisco, and Fresno experienced the highest rates of commercial burglary, and rates in Fresno, Alameda, and Orange counties were 50% higher than before the pandemic.

A recent CalChamber poll found that during the last year, 44% of voters have felt the need to change shopping habits because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable at a particular retail store or location.

In 2023, the Governor and Legislature, recognizing the gravity of this issue, awarded \$267 million to 55 cities and counties to increase arrests and prosecutions for organized retail crime. The funding, part of the Governor's Real

Public Safety Plan, was dispersed on October 1, 2023, to 34 police departments, seven sheriffs' departments, one probation department, and 13 district attorney offices to prevent and investigate cases of organized retail theft and arrest and prosecute more suspects. The Select Committee on Retail Theft will review and explore additional policy solutions to address the crisis.

"Californians have had enough of these smash-and-grab crimes and shameless shoplifting incidents," Rivas said. "They're appalling and affect everyone. The Assembly understands we must do more to address root causes, protect businesses owners and fight criminal activity. It's my expectation that the Retail Theft select committee will act with focus and urgency."

Committee Members

The 11 select committee members are:

- Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur

(D-Hollywood) – Committee Chair;

- Assemblymember Juan Alanis

(R-Merced & Stanislaus);

- Assemblymember David Alvarez

(D-San Diego);

- Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Alameda & San Francisco);

- Assemblymember Vince Fong

(R-Kern & Tulare);

- Assemblymember Matt Haney

(D-San Francisco);

- Assemblymember Kevin McCarty

(D-Sacramento);

- Assemblymember Liz Ortega

(D-Alameda);

- Assemblymember Blanca Pacheco

(D-Los Angeles & Orange);

- Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Orange);

- Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo

(D-Los Angeles).

CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

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Hannover Messe: California Pavilion.

GO-Biz. April 22–26, 2024, Hannover, Germany. patricia.utterback@gobiz.ca.gov.

Trade Winds – Europe. GO-Biz and U.S.

Commercial Service. May 13–15, 2024 Istanbul, Turkey. Optional: May 9–10, 2024, Denmark or Romania; May 16–17, 2024, Poland or Italy. Register interest. patricia.utterback@gobiz.ca.gov.

Farnborough International Air Show: California Pavilion. GO-Biz. July 18–22, 2024, Farnborough, United Kingdom. patricia.utterback@gobiz.ca.gov.

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Considerations for Back-to-Back Pregnancy, Family Leaves

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that also provides this time to eligible employees across the country subject to different eligibility requirements.

An employee is eligible for CFRA child bonding leave if they have worked for their current employer for at least 12 months and have actually worked 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding the need for leave.

This is where PDL and CFRA interactions become confusing, because in most cases an employee will take time on PDL before and after the birth. Time off, whether paid or unpaid, is not consid-

ered hours worked for the purposes of the 1,250 hours worked requirements under the CFRA.

CFRA regulations, however, contemplated this scenario and have a special rule for establishing eligibility in this circumstance. If an employee who takes PDL then wants to take CFRA leave for child bonding immediately after PDL, the 12-month period during which the employee must have worked 1,250 hours is that period immediately preceding the employee's first day of PDL, not the first day of the subsequent CFRA leave for child bonding.

So, in the case of this employee, they have worked five years for the employer and if they had worked 1,250 hours preceding the date they first went on PDL leave, then they would be eligible for CFRA child bonding leave and the employer could not deny the request.

Column based on questions asked by callers on the Labor Law Helpline, a service to California Chamber of Commerce preferred members and above. For expert explanations of labor laws and Cal/OSHA regulations, not legal counsel for specific situations, call (800) 348-2262 or submit your question at www.hrcalifornia.com.

Coalition Reviews Crime, Retail Theft Issues

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poll, *The People's Voice*, 2023, showing the mood of voters and the issues that are top of mind. Crime, safety and policing were big priorities for voters, according to the poll.

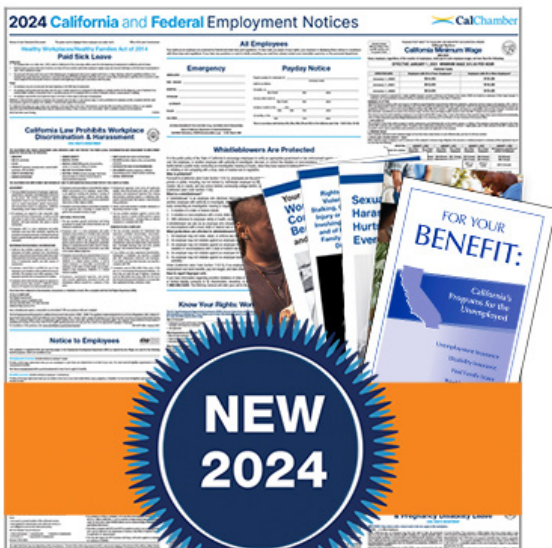
Key issues for voters included concerns about fentanyl, a desire for

violent offenders to serve their full sentences, a desire for more police presence in their communities, and the perception that the state's homelessness crisis is driving petty crime.

Finally, BCCC member Scott Miller, president/CEO of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, shared their organiza-

tion's new initiative — **Petty Crimes, Big Impact** — a public information campaign designed to highlight the impact of crime against businesses and galvanize their community's support for change.

Staff Contact: Nick Ortiz



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