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Abstract

The November 2002 election in California had the lowest voter turnout and the largest number of third-party gubernatorial candidate votes in the state's history. In the governor's selection on November 5th, Democratic incumbent Gray Davis defeated Republican challenger Bill Simon by a 5-point margin. This paper summarizes the pre-election surveys that were conducted by our three polling organizations prior to the 2002 general election in California—the Field Poll, the Los Angeles Times Poll, and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Survey. We focus our analysis on the political and economic context of this election, insights from a special survey on public attitudes toward the campaign that was conducted up to the day before the election, the methodologies used in the pre-election surveys to overcome the challenges in this political environment, and a comparison of pre-election survey results to the Los Angeles Times exit poll. Taking into account variations in methods, low voter turnout, third-party voting, and voters' ambivalence toward the major party candidates, the pre-election surveys in the 2002 California governor's selection were consistent over time and across polling organizations, and reasonably accurate in predicting the election results.

Polling in the Governor's Race in California

Mark Baldassare, Mark DiCamillo, and Susan Pinkus

The 2002 governor's race in California can best be described as "the season of voter discontent." Political reformers in the Golden State — and the national pundits who argue that something is wrong with the campaigns and elections in the nation's largest state — turned out to be the most prescient observers of last year's statewide elections. The view that the state's voting process is off-track is bolstered by these facts: Major party candidates for governors spent a record — setting \$100 million campaigning in 2002, and yet there was a record — low voter turnout in both the primary and general elections.

If the trends in the 2002 election continue, California voters may be headed for the endangered species list. Twenty years ago, seven in 10 registered voters and half of the eligible adults voted in the 1982 governor's race. This past November, about half of the registered voters and about one in three eligible adults cast their absentee ballots or showed up at the polls on Election Day. California gained 10 million new residents in the past two decades, but more people voted in 1982 than in 2002. National trends offer no excuses for the state's poor voting performance: California finished close to the bottom of the heap in a fall 50-state comparison of election turnout.

In November 2002, California voters re-elected Democrat Gray Davis to a second term, as he defeated Republican Bill Simon by a 47 to 42 percent margin. Davis' vote total of 3.53 million was 1.33 million less than he received in 1998. Low voter turnout, minor-party voting, and voters skipping over the top of the ticket traced to a fairly close election, given the 10-point voter registration edge the Democrat should have over the

Republicans, and recent trends in elections for Governor and President. The voters' negative reactions to the major party candidates and their political campaigns were significant factors underlying the 2002 vote. The recent California governor's race raises a number of important issues about the current challenges of polling in state elections.

In this paper, we summarize the methodologies and results of the public opinion surveys conducted by our three polling organizations prior to the 2002 general election in California—the Field Poll, the Los Angeles Times Poll, and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Survey. We focus most of our attention on the results of the late pre-election surveys released by each of our organizations in October. We also use the findings from a PPIC Statewide Survey funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, conducted in the final days leading up to the November 5th election and released after the elections, to examine public attitudes toward the campaign practices in this election. Lastly, the Los Angeles Times exit poll provides a benchmark for us to compare the results of the pre-election surveys to a random sample of voters who went to the polls.

We begin by describing the context of this election season. We draw upon the pre-election surveys that were conducted in the months leading up to the election, as a way of demonstrating an important trait of the 2002 Governor's race—the consistently negative nature of public opinion on election-related issues that was evident both over time and across research organizations. We then contrast the survey methods that were used by the three research organizations. Finally, we compare the pre-election survey results with the Los Angeles Times exit poll and actual voting in the governor's race.

The 2002 Context (Mark Baldassare)

An important backdrop to the 2002 governor's race is that the overall mood in the state's voters had turned sour. During the 1998 and 2000 elections, we typically found that optimists outnumbered pessimists by at least a two-to-one margin, when we asked questions about the overall direction of the state or California economic conditions. But in the months leading up to the 2002 general election, many likely voters reported that the state was headed in the wrong direction in the PPIC Statewide Surveys (August: 53%; September: 43%, October: 50%) and the Los Angeles Times Polls (September: 52%; October: 53%). The majority of likely voters said the state was in bad economic times in the PPIC Statewide Surveys (August: 53%; September: 50%; October: 53%) and the Field Poll (September: 56%). Six in 10 likely voters (62%) stated that California as a whole was in an economic recession in a Los Angeles Times Poll in September.

Table 1 About Here

Throughout the fall election, the incumbent Democratic governor — who had won by 20 points and 1.6 million votes four years earlier — had low job approval ratings. A majority of likely voters said that they disapproved of Gray Davis' overall performance as governor in the PPIC Statewide Surveys (August: 52%, September: 52%, October: 52%), and comparable disapproval ratings were also found in the Los Angeles Times Polls (September: 48%; October: 51%) and the Field Poll (July 49%; September: 49%). By contrast, the approval ratings for President George W. Bush — who lost in California by 13 points and 1.3 million votes in 2000 — were consistently in positive territory. While the president's sky-high approval ratings after September 11th had declined by the middle of 2002, the majority of likely voters approved of the performance of Bush

as president in the PPIC Statewide Surveys (August: 62%; September: 62%, October: 58%), the Los Angeles Times Poll (September: 54%), and the Field Poll (July 63%; September: 57%).

Table 2 About Here

Californians were not all that impressed with the candidate choices in the 2002 governor's race. The majority of likely voters in the PPIC Statewide Surveys in August (54%), September (55%), October (57%), and November (62%) said that they were not satisfied with their choices in the gubernatorial election. Importantly, the majority of Democrats, Republicans, and independent voters were not satisfied with the candidate choices. As for the impressions of the specific candidates, a majority of likely voters gave both Simon and Davis unfavorable ratings in Los Angeles Times Polls (Davis=51%, Simon=51% in September; Davis=56%, Simon=58% in October), the Field Poll (Davis=52%, Simon=50% in September), and the PPIC Statewide Survey (Davis=60%, Simon=54% in November). According to the Los Angeles Times Poll in October, 56 percent of likely voters said they were planning to vote for their candidate for governor "mostly because he is the best of a bad lot." Similarly, the Field Polls indicated that many of Simon's supporters were voting against Davis rather than a vote for Simon (September: 63%; October: 67%), and a substantial amount of support for Davis came from voting against Simon rather than voting for the governor (September: 37%; October: 32%). A September PPIC Statewide Survey perhaps best summed up the voters' opinions about the upcoming fall matchup: when asked to think about the governor's election, 55 percent reported that they were less enthusiastic about voting than usual.

Significantly, more than half of Democrats (57%), Republicans (52%) and independent voters (60%) were less enthusiastic than usual about voting in the 2002 governor's race.

Table 3 About Here

Californians may have been turned off to the gubernatorial candidates, but they were not tuned out to the campaign news and political commercials. Among the likely voters, we found attention to the 2002 gubernatorial race higher than it was at any time in the 1998 governor's race. In the October PPIC Statewide Survey, 75 percent were very closely or fairly closely following the news about candidates in the election, a similar percentage as in August (74%) and September (80%). In October 1998, 67 percent reported closely following the election news. While nine in 10 likely voters could identify California issues that they wanted to hear the gubernatorial candidates talk about during the election, two in three likely voters said they were not satisfied with the amount of attention the candidates were paying to the issues of most importance to themselves (August PPIC Statewide Survey: 64%; September PPIC Statewide Survey: 66%).

Voter awareness of political commercials was higher than at any time in the 1998 California elections, and increased over the course of the gubernatorial campaign. Eighty-one percent of voters say they have seen television advertising by the candidates for governor (in the past month) in the November PPIC Statewide Survey, compared to 68 percent in August, 72 percent in September, and 79 percent in October. The Los Angeles Times Poll in September found that 85 percent of likely voters had seen commercials by Simon or Davis or both candidates. By contrast, the PPIC Statewide Survey in October 1998 found 64 percent had seen television advertising by the candidates for governor.

Table 4 About Here

While awareness of political commercials was relatively high, few voters said that the television advertisements had made a positive impression. In the PPIC Statewide Surveys in October and November, only about one in 10 likely voters described the Davis and Simon commercials as “very helpful” in deciding which candidate to vote for. Similarly, the Los Angeles Times Poll in September found that many voters said the campaign commercials left them with less favorable impressions of both Davis (36%) and Simon (47%). In the PPIC Statewide Survey in the final week of the governor’s race, 58 percent said Davis and Simon should not be critical of one another because their campaigns had gotten too negative. Indeed, negative campaigning by Simon and Davis resulted in more negative impressions of those who were on the attack as well as those who were being attacked. For instance, 51 percent of the likely voters said that the Davis claim that Simon had engaged in fraudulent business practices had left them with a more negative impression of Davis. Moreover, 42 percent of the likely voters said that the Simon claim that Davis makes policy based on the interests of campaign contributors had left them with a more negative impression of Simon.

In closing, the context of this election contributed to a defining characteristic of the 2002 governor’s race in California: a large number of likely voters in pre-election saying they would not vote for the major party candidates or were undecided in this race. For instance, in the PPIC Statewide Surveys, large numbers of likely voters were undecided (August 18%; September 17%; October 17%; November 14%). The final Field Poll found one in four voters casting votes for minor party candidates (8%), deciding not to vote in the governor’s race (3%), or undecided (14%). The Los Angeles Times Polls indicated that two in 10 likely voters would vote for minor party candidates (September

7%; October 11%) or were undecided (September 13%; October 8%). The large numbers of likely voters who were undecided, supporting minor party candidates, and saying they would not vote in the governor's race made it challenging to predict the outcome of the 2002 election through pre-election surveys, despite the fact that Davis consistently held a significant lead of between 7 to 11 points in all of the PPIC Statewide Surveys, the Field Polls, and the Los Angeles Times poll taken before the November 5th election.

Pre-election Survey Methodology (Mark Di Camillo)

We will now describe the survey methodologies used by The Field Poll, Los Angeles Times Poll, and the PPIC Statewide Survey. We begin this comparison by highlighting the fact that each polling organization used similar methods in its 2002 pre-election surveys: That is, each poll was conducted by telephone, used a random digit dial methodology, the interviews were in English or Spanish, and completed the surveys during the final four weeks leading up to the November 2002 election. After the data was collected, each of the polling organizations weighted their samples and used screening methods to select large numbers of likely voters — between 818 and 1,025 respondents — for further analysis. In looking at this process, public opinion researchers also have an opportunity to examine the variations in methods used by these three polling organizations to deal with many of the practical obstacles associated with polling California voters prior to the 2002 gubernatorial election, such as effort to reach respondents, the weighting of survey samples, and the selection of likely voters.

One of the first challenges that all pollsters must confront when attempting to conduct pre-election surveys in California by telephone is the unusually large proportion

of residents who choose not to list their home telephone number in current telephone directories. According to the estimates of Survey Sampling Incorporated, of the nation's 100 largest Standard Metropolitan Areas the top 11 unlisted telephone markets are all located in California. In these 11 markets, which include all of the state's largest metropolitan areas, the average proportion of households that are not currently listed in local telephone directories is 68 percent, more than double the national average. This tends to preclude the possibility of conducting reliable pre-election surveys using registered voter lists, since the proportion of voters systematically excluded from such lists would be large. This is the main reason why each of the three major public polls in California conducted their telephone interviews using a random digit dial sampling methodology, since it avoids altogether the problem of unlisted telephone numbers.

Table 5 About Here

Another characteristic of the California voting population is that a substantial proportion of the state's registered voters do not speak English, with Spanish by far the language most frequently spoken by these non-English speaking voters. In addition, these voters are more likely to vote Democratic, thus, not conducting telephone interviewing in Spanish would tend to under-represent the Democratic vote. As a result, each of the three polls translated their pre-election questionnaires into Spanish and offered all respondents the option of conducting the survey in either English or Spanish.

Each of the polling organizations carried out its data collection by means of computer-assisted telephone interviewing. Because both The Field Poll and the Times Poll have their own data collection and processing facilities and staff, they conducted all interviewing and data processing internally. Because PPIC does not have its own

telephone interviewing facilities, the data collection was subcontracted, and then the data analysis was conducted internally. For its October 2002 survey, PPIC contracted the telephone interviewing with Discovery Research Group, while the interviewing for its November 2002 survey was completed by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Incorporated.

Each of the three polling organizations made repeated attempts to reach a person within each household identified from its RDD samples. The Field Poll and PPIC made up to 6 attempts (original call and five callbacks) to each household, while the Times Poll made 4 to 5 attempts to identify households. When encountering answering machines, each of the three polling organizations did not leave a message on an answering machine. This is because a respondent first had to be randomly selected from all those living within the household before the interview could proceed and, therefore, messages could not be left for anyone individual within the household.

When encountering households with call blocking (which occurs when the telephone number of the calling party is not detected by the telephone equipment of the call recipient), The Field Poll implemented a special callback procedure to attempt to include these households into its sample. This procedure involved calling back these households from telephones not a part of its main phone bank or switchboard, using a separate in-house phone which displayed to the caller that the call originated from Field Research Corporation, enabling it to go through unblocked. The PPIC Statewide Survey and the Los Angeles Times Poll did not follow upon blocked telephone numbers.

Once a household spokesperson was reached, PPIC and the Los Angeles Times Poll used the "most recent birthday" respondent selection procedure for choosing which adult in the household to attempt an interview. This procedure instructs the interviewer

to attempt to interview the adult in the household who has had the most recent birthday. The Field Poll used a different method of selecting who to interview, the “youngest male, oldest female” respondent selection procedure. That procedure directs interviewer to first attempt an interview with the youngest male adult, and if this respondent was not available or no male adults resided there, the oldest female adult was selected.

The Field Poll nor the Los Angeles Times Poll do not use predictive dialers (i.e. computer-assisted telephone dialing) when placing their calls from their in-house telephone interviewing facilities. The October PPIC Statewide Survey conducted by Discovery Research Group also did not use predictive dialers, while the November PPIC Statewide Survey conducted by Schulman, Ronca and Bucuvalas did so in following the procedures they employ with national surveys.

Table 6 About Here

Another of the challenges facing pre-election pollsters in California is the relatively low proportion of adults in the overall population who are registered to vote. In 2002, just 60 percent of California adults were registered to vote, lower than the levels found in most other states. This is due primarily to two factors. First, according to U.S. Census estimates 16 percent of the adults in California are non-citizens and are therefore ineligible to register. Secondly, of the adults who are citizens, just 71 percent are currently registered to vote according to the California Secretary of State. The Field Poll and PPIC included two questions to identify citizenship, first asking country of birth and asking each respondent not born in the U.S. whether they were a U.S. citizen. The L.A. Times Poll asked respondents the U.S. citizenship question with a single direct question.

When asked whether a respondent was registered to vote, both the Field Poll and the Times Poll counted as registered voters only those persons reporting that they were registered to vote at their current address (excluding those registered from a prior address), while PPIC did not include this distinction in its voter registration question.

Table 7 About Here

An important characteristic of California's 2002 gubernatorial election was the extent to which the campaign and choice of candidates at the top of the ticket was seen as unappealing to the voting public. This was one of the reasons why voter turnout fell to a record low in the November 2002 election. Out of 15.3 million registered voters in California, just 7.7 million voted, and fewer than 7.5 million actually cast ballots in the gubernatorial contest. This meant that fewer than half (49%) of all registered voters ultimately voted for governor, putting a premium on each poll's ability to winnow down its sample to identify voters it considered most likely to vote in the governor's race.

The Field Poll asked a series of screening questions to adults who stated that they were registered to vote at their current address: (1) whether or not a voter had already voted by means of absentee ballot; (2) if not already voted, certainty of voting; (3) if not already voted, past voting history, with an allowance for first-time voters. In addition, it included a category in its gubernatorial preference question allowing likely voters who did not intend to cast a ballot in the governor's race to be coded separately. Coupled with the poll's voter registration questions, the net effect of these screening questions was to reduce the sample from a total of 1,696 adults initially contacted to a sample of 818 likely voters, or 48 percent of all adults.

To ascertain likely voters in its samples, PPIC followed a procedure based on political science research. They established different thresholds above which registered voters were considered likely voters, focusing on the length of residency at their current address. For short-term residents to be considered likely voters, the level of education and interest in politics had to reach higher thresholds than for long-term residents to be considered likely voters. PPIC included the following five variables in its determination of likely voters: (1) interest in politics; (2) past voting history; (3) attention to the current gubernatorial campaign; (4) length of residency at their current address; (5) level of education. This method produced a likely voters sample of 1,000 likely voters from among the 2,007 adults interviewed in PPIC's October survey (49%), and a sample of 1,025 likely voters from among the 2,106 adults interviewed in November survey (50%).

To identify its likely voters, The Times Poll established as its threshold the pre-election estimate of the percentage of registered voters expected to vote in the November 2002 election released by the California Secretary of State. Responses of registered voters to a series of five questions were used to score respondents. These included: (1) voting method — early absentee vs. precinct; (2) certainty of voting; (3) voting intentions; (4) interest in voting; (5) past voting history, with a provision for first-time voters. This method produced a sample of 879 likely voters derived from the L.A. Times Poll original sample of 1,895 interviews, or 46 percent of the adults it originally interviewed.

Table 8 About Here

The placement and wording of the gubernatorial preference question in the survey was handled differently by each of the three polling organizations. The Field Poll asked the gubernatorial preference question as its first question after the administration of its

voter registration and likelihood of voting screening questions. For PPIC, the gubernatorial choice question was the first question asked in the entire survey. The L.A. Times Poll asked the gubernatorial preference question after the administration of its voter registration questions. There were also subtle differences in the way each poll worded its gubernatorial preference question. The Field Poll read the names, party affiliations and the official ballot titles (exactly as they appear on the ballot) of the two major party candidates, and read a third specified alternative “or a candidate from one of the minor parties.” If a minor party preference was given, a follow-up question was asked reading the names, party affiliations and official ballot titles of the four minor party candidates in random order. Undecided voters were not asked any follow-up “how do you lean” type question. PPIC read the names and party affiliations of 5 of the 6 candidates in random order, including whose party accounted for at least 1 percent of the state’s registered voters, followed by a sixth specified alternative “or someone else.” PPIC also did not ask a “how do you lean” question of undecided voters. The L.A. Times Poll read the names and party affiliations of all six candidates in random order, and then followed the preference question with a “how do you lean” type question among undecided voters.

Table 9 About Here

The procedures used by each poll to fine tune or weight their respective sample estimates also varied. The Field Poll applied weights to its sample of registered voters. These weights attempted to bring its registered voters sample into conformity with The Field Poll’s internal estimates (updated annually) of the characteristics of California’s registered voter population by age, sex, region of state, and party registration. It also

allocated the likely voters sample to the California Secretary of State's estimate of the share of absentee and precinct votersexpected for that election. PPIC applied weights to the overall sample of adults interviewed, bringing the sample into conformity with the 2000 U.S. Census -established estimates of California's adults by age, sex and region, and chosen not to weight the voters sample by party registration because the survey samples were comparable to the party registration figures offered by the California Secretary of State and its internal polling database. The L.A. Times Poll applied weights to its adult sample based on census -established estimates of the California adult population for age, sex, race, region, and education, and also to its registered voters sample using the official party registration estimates of the California Secretary of State.

Table 10 About Here

These comparisons demonstrate that each of three polling organizations, while using a very similar survey approach and obtaining similar results, differed in many respects with regard to the manner in which each sought to overcome the many practical obstacles associated with pre -election polling in the 2002 gubernatorial election.

Pre-Election Surveys and the Exit Poll (Susan Pinkus)

California was one of the only states that had an exit poll in 2002. This allows us to provide some insights into pre -election polling in California by comparing the results of the Field Poll, the PPIC Statewide Survey, and the Los Angeles Times Poll to the Los Angeles Times exit poll. In general, all three polling organizations did reasonably well in their predictions about the 2002 Governor's race. While our final published polls were all higher than the five -point margin of Davis over Simon on November 5th, all of our

polls had Davis ahead and within the margin of error. Moreover, the timing of the surveys seemed to be an important factor. We can see that the dates of the surveys show that the closer one got to the election, the closer the poll results came to the actual vote. Considering the low turnout in this election, and the large numbers of voters eschewing the major party candidates, the consistency and accuracy across the surveys is impressive.

It is interesting to note, that while our organizations arrive at likely voters slightly different from each other, ultimately, we all had similar findings. The PPIC Statewide Survey had Democratic incumbent Gray Davis leading his Republican opponent Bill Simon by 10 points (with field dates of Oct. 7 - 15), the Los Angeles Times Poll had Davis up by 9 points (with field dates of Oct. 22 - 27), and the Field Poll had Davis leading by 7 points (with field dates of Oct. 25 - 30). However, PPIC conducted another pre-election poll right up to the night of the election -- November 4th, which was not made public at that time — and that poll showed the Democratic incumbent Gray Davis beating his Republican rival Bill Simon by 5 points (40% - 35% and 12% for third party candidates).

Table 11 About Here

Of course, voter turnout is crucial in determining who is most likely to vote and which candidate will be elected. Conventional wisdom is that in a low turnout, Republican turnout more than Democrats and conversely in a high turnout, there is a larger Democratic electorate. The Democratic and Republican strategists, and the California's Secretary of State, knew that the turnout would be low. No one realized in advance how low it would be. The turnout was the lowest ever recorded in California's history — at around 50 percent of registered voters. However, at the time, the gubernatorial election in 1998 was the all-time lowest turnout at 54 percent of registered

voters. Publicly, the California Secretary of State's office gave 54 percent as their predicted turnout for the 2002 election.

As mentioned earlier, with a lower turnout, more Republicans come out to vote and that is what happened in California's gubernatorial election in 2002. The 50 percent turnout was a factor in making this a close election. Davis beat his opponent by 5 points—47% to 42% and 11% for third party candidates. According to the Secretary of State—35 percent of voters in California are registered Republicans and in the 2002 election their share of the electorate was 40 percent, according to the L.A. Times' exit poll.

The minority electorate—Latinos and African-Americans—were surprisingly low, compared to their share in pre-election polls. For example, in the LA Times pre-election poll, 17 percent of likely voters were Latinos and 7 percent were black. In the Field Poll, 16 percent of likely voters were Latino and 6 percent African-American—and in the PPIC survey, 13 percent were Latinos and 8 percent were black. According to the Times exit poll, 10 percent of the electorate was Latino and 4 percent were African-American. The minority voters overwhelmingly went for the Democrat (65% of Latinos and 79% of African-Americans, and 54% of Asian-Americans voted for Davis). The low turnout among minority voters boosted the white vote back up to what their share of the electorate was in earlier elections when they were the preponderance of voters, thereby causing a close election. For example, in 1994, 81 percent of the electorate was white and they voted 61 percent for the Republican incumbent Pete Wilson. In the 2002 election, 76 percent of the electorate was white and although they didn't vote overwhelmingly for the Republican Simon, they still voted marginally for Simon (at

46%, while Davis was supported by 43% of whites). Nearly half of the 2002 white voters were Republican, while 71 percent each of black and Latin voters were Democrats.

Tables 12, 13, and 14 About Here

We provide some other data in tables showing you a few selected demographic subgroups and how they voted in the governor's race according to the Los Angeles Times exit poll, compared to the likely voters in the pre-election polls of each of the polling organizations. The results in these tables demonstrate that accurately predicting the preferences of specific subgroups of likely voters in pre-election polls is no easy task.

Tables 15, 16, 17, and 18 About Here

The low turnout was not surprising given the fact that neither candidate -- the incumbent Gray Davis nor his opponent Bill Simon -- were liked by majorities of voters. Because of the negative tone of the campaign, and the fact that many voters felt they had no reason for really voting for a major party candidate, more voters in the 2002 election either stayed home or supported a third party candidate. Eleven percent of all voters endorsed a third party candidate, including 23 percent of declined-to-state or independent voters, 15 percent of self-described liberals and 14 percent who live in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is the most votes that third party candidates have received in a statewide election. In California, the record was previously held by the 1978 governor's selection between Jerry Brown and Eville Younger, when 7% voted for third party candidates.

Another challenge for pre-election polling in the 2002 election was the late deciders syndrome. This is the group that makes up their mind at the last minute -- either they focus on voting in the election later than others, or they truly can't decide who to vote for, or even deciding whether to vote or not in the upcoming election. In the pre-

election polls, there were large undecided voters considering the polls were in the last couple of weeks leading up to the election. In the LA Times poll, 8 percent were undecided and 2 percent said they wouldn't vote for governor (the Times leans the voters while the other two survey groups do not); in the Field poll, 14 percent remained undecided and 3 percent said they would not cast their ballot for governor; and in the earlier PPIC poll, 18 percent had not made up their mind and their later poll conducted during the last week of the election through November 4th had 13 percent undecided.

In the Times exit poll, 11 percent of Election Day voters decided on the day of the election who they would cast their ballot for, and among those voters 42 percent supported Davis, 37 percent endorsed Simon, and 21 percent voted for a third party candidate. Of the 7 percent whom made up their mind over the weekend before the election, 38 percent supported Davis and 43 percent endorsed Simon, while 19 percent went for a third party candidate. Clearly, this indicates the benefits of polling right up to Election Day, and the challenges faced in attempting to predict election outcomes on polling that is completed in the week prior to the election.

Conclusions

In conclusion, California elections now pose a number of serious challenges for pre-election surveys. This includes the standard difficulties in selecting a representative sample of adults, coupled with increasing numbers of non-English speaking residents, and low voter turnout rates. The past election posed additional challenges because of the voters' negative attitudes toward the major party candidates and their campaigns. The three polling organizations all begin with the assumption that a random-digit-dial telephone

samples with English or Spanish interviewing provide the appropriate methodology. They vary somewhat in how they attempt to reach households, ask the vote preference question, screen for registered voters, define likely voters, and adjust their survey samples through weighting procedures. Taking into account variations in methods, low voter turnout, third-party voting, and voters' ambivalence toward the major party candidates, the pre-election surveys in the 2002 California governor's selection were consistent over time and across polling organizations, and reasonably accurate in predicting the election results. The importance of exit polls as a tool for assessing the usefulness of methods to overcome the obstacles of pre-election polling is demonstrated by the ability to make comparisons between the pre-election survey samples and results and the exit polls.

Table 1

Overall Mood of Californians

“Do you think that things in California are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?” (PPIC -likely voters)

	August	September	October
Right direction	37%	48%	40%
Wrong direction	53	43	50
Don't know	10	9	10

“Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?” (PPIC -likely voters)

	August	September	October
Good times	35%	40%	35%
Bad times	53	50	53
Don't know	12	10	12

“How would you generally describe economic conditions in California now? Would you say that economically California is in good times or bad times right now?” (Field -voters)

	September
Good times	20
Bad times	56
In between	21
Don't know	3

“Do you think California's economy is in a recession or not?” (LA Times -likely voters)

	September
Yes	62%
No	34
Don't know	4

Source: PPIC Statewide Surveys, Field Poll, and Los Angeles Times Poll.

Table 2

Approval Ratings for the California Governor and the U.S. President

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Gray Davis is handling his job as governor of California?”

	PPIC (likely voters)		LA Times (likely voters)	
	August	September	October	October
Approve	43%	42%	42%	46%
Disapprove	52	52	52	51%
Don't know	5	6	6	3

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that George W. Bush is handling his job as president of the United States?”

	PPIC (likely voters)		Field (voters)	
	August	September	October	September
Approve	62%	62%	58%	57%
Disapprove	36	36	38	34
Don't know	2	2	8	9

Source: PPIC Statewide Survey, Field Poll, and Los Angeles Times Poll.

Table 3

Attitudes towards the 2002 California Governor's Race

“Would you say you are satisfied or not satisfied with the choices of candidates for governor on November 5th?” (PPIC -likely voters)

	August	September	October	November
Satisfied	38%	38%	38%	35%
Not satisfied	54	55	57	62
Don't know	8	7	5	3

“Thinking about the governor's selection that will be held this November, are you more enthusiastic about voting than usual, or less enthusiastic?” (PPIC -likely voters)

	September
More enthusiastic	27%
Less enthusiastic	55
Same (volunteered)	15
Don't know	3

“Are you planning to vote for your candidate for governor mostly because you like him and his policies, or mostly because he is the best of a bad lot?” (LATimes -likely voters)

	October
Like him and his policies	39%
Best of a bad lot	56
Don't know	5

Source: PPIC Statewide Survey, Los Angeles Times Poll.

Table 4

Voters' Attention to Election News and Campaign Advertising

"How closely do you follow the news about candidates for the 2002 governor's election?"

	August	September	October	November
Very/Fairly closely	74%	80%	75%	81%
Not Closely	26	20	25	19

"In the past month, have you seen any television advertisements by the candidates for governor?"

	August	September	October	November
Yes	68%	72%	79%	81%
No	32	28	21	19

Sofar, have the television advertisements you have seen been very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, or not at all helpful in deciding which candidate to vote for?"

	October	November
Very helpful	10%	9%
Somewhat helpful	19	18
Not too helpful	25	26
Not at all helpful	46	47

Source: PPIC Statewide Surveys, likely voters.

Table 5

Issue #1: Sampling/Interviewing Procedures

Field Poll

- Interviews conducted by telephone using purchased RDD samples (Survey Sampling Inc.)
- English and Spanish interviewing
- Calls made from in-house central location facilities using CATI

Los Angeles Times Poll

- Interviews conducted by telephone using purchased RDD samples (Scientific Telephone Samples)
- English and Spanish interviewing
- Calls made from in-house central location facilities using CATI

PPIC Statewide Survey

- Interviews conducted by telephone using purchased RDD samples (Survey Sampling Inc.)
- English and Spanish interviewing
- Calls made by outside field houses using CATI

Table 6

Issue #2: Reaching People and Respondent Selection

Field Poll

- 6 call attempts to identified households
- No message left on answering machine
- Youngest male/oldest female respondent selection procedure
- Predictive dialers not used
- Callback to households with call blocking using non-switchboard phones, which display the originating phone number

Los Angeles Times Poll

- 4-5 call attempts to identified households
- No message left on answering machine
- Most recent birthday respondent selection procedure
- Predictive dialers not used

PPIC Statewide Survey

- 6 call attempts to identified households
- No message left on answering machine
- Most recent birthday respondent selection procedure
- Predictive dialers not used in the October survey but used in the November survey

Table 7

Issue#3: Identifying Adult Citizens Who Are Registered to Vote

Field Poll

- Country of birth
- If non-U.S., citizenship
- If citizen, voter registration status
- Only those registered at their current address are counted as registered voters

Los Angeles Times Poll

- Citizenship
- If citizen, voter registration status
- Only those registered at their current address are counted as registered voters

PPIC Statewide Survey

- Country of birth
- If non-U.S., citizenship
- Voter registration status

Table 8

Issue #4: Identifying Likely Voters

Field Poll

- Likely voters identified using the following questions:
 - Early (absentee) voters
 - If have not voted, certainty of voting
 - If have not voted, past voting history, with provision for first-time voters
- 44% of adults interviewed were “likely voters” (n=818)
- Preference question included category for those not intending to vote for Governor

Los Angeles Times Poll

- Likely voters identified using the following questions:
 - Early (absentee) voters
 - Certainty of voting
 - Intent to vote
 - Interest in voting
 - Past voting history, with provision for first-time voters
- 46% of adults interviewed were “likely voters” (n=879)

PPIC Statewide Survey

- Likely voters identified using the following questions:
 - Political interest
 - Past voting history
 - Attention to campaign
 - Education
 - Length of current residency
- 50% of adults interviewed were “likely voters” (n=1,000) in October
- 49% of adults interviewed were “likely voters” (n=1,025) in November

Table 9

Issue #5: Placement and Wording of Voting Preference Question

Field Poll

- 1st question after registration and likely voters screening questions
- Names, parties and the official ballot titles of two major party candidates and “a candidate from one of the minor parties.” If minor party preference, names, parties and official ballot titles of the 4 minor party candidates asked in random order
- Leaning question not asked of undecided voters

Los Angeles Times Poll

- 1st question after registration questions
- Names and parties of all 6 candidates asked in rotated (random) order
- Leaning question was asked of undecided voters

PPIC Statewide Survey

- 1st question in entire survey
- Names and parties of 5 of the 6 candidates asked in random order, including parties with at least 1% of the state’s registered voters
- Leaning question not asked of undecided voters

Table 10

Issue #6: Post - Survey Weighting Procedures

Field Poll

- Registered voters weighted to Field Poll estimates of California's registered voter population
- Weighting variables:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Region
 - Party registration
 - Absentee vs. precinct voting

Los Angeles Times Poll

- Adults weighted to census estimates of California adults. Registered voters weighted to official party registration estimates of the California Secretary of State
- Weighting variables:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Race
 - Region
 - Education
 - Party registration

PPIC Statewide Survey

- Adults weighted to census estimates of California adults. Weighting of registered voters was considered but not used since sample was comparable to official party registration estimates of the California Secretary of State
- Weighting variables:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Region

Table 11

Pre-Election Surveys and the 2002 California Governor's Election

	PPIC Oct. 7	Times -15 Oct. 22	Field -27 Oct. 25	PPIC -30 Oct. 28	Actual -Nov. 4 Nov. 5
G. Davis	41%	45%	41%	40%	47%
W. Simon	31	36	34	35	42
Other	11	11	8	12	11
Don't know	17	8	17	13	--

Table12

ShareoftheElectorateonSelectedDemographics:
L.A.TimesPoll (October22 -27) ComparedtoL.A.TimesExitPoll

	L.A.Time sPoll LikelyVoters	L.A.Times ExitPoll		%Difference Pre-ElecttoExit
Democrats	45%	46%		-1
Independents	11	10	+1	
Republicans	38	40		-2
Otherparties	6	4	+2	
Liberals	34	35		-1
Mid-of-road	30	30		--
Conservatives	36	35		+1
Men	52	49		+3
Women	48	51		-3
Whites	66	76		-10
Blacks	7	4		+3
Latinos	17	10		+7
Asians/Other	10	10		--

Table 13

Share of the Electorate on Selected Demographics:
Field Poll (October 25 - 30) Compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

	Field Poll Likely Voters	L.A. Times Exit Poll		% Difference Pre-Elect to Exit
Democrats	46%	46%		--
Independents	10	10		--
Republicans	41	40	+1	
Other parties	3	4		-1
Liberals	22	35		-13
Mid-of-road	41	30		+11
Conservatives	37	35		+2
Men	49	49		--
Women	51	51		--
Whites	73	76		-3
Blacks	6	4		+2
Latinos	16	10		+6
Asians / Others	5	10		-5

Table 14

Share of the Electorate on Selected Demographics:
 PPIC Statewide Surveys Compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

	----Likely Voters ----			% Difference Pre to Exit	
	PPIC 10/7-15	PPIC* 10/28 -11/4	L.A. Times Exit Poll	10/15	11/4
Democrats	46%	41%	46%	--	-5
Independents	13	13	10	+3	+3
Republicans	38	40	40	-2	--
Other parties	3	6	4	-1	+2
Liberals	33	32	35	-2	-3
Mid-of-road	29	29	30	-1	-1
Conservatives	38	39	35	+3	+4
Men	48	49	49	-1	--
Women	52	51	51	+1	--
Whites	73	75	76	-3	-1
Blacks	8	6	4	+4	+2
Latinos	13	12	10	+3	+2
Asians /Others	6	7	10	-4	-3

*This PPIC Statewide Survey on campaign practices was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, completed the day before the election and not made public until after the election.

Table 15

How Some Demographic Groups Voted in the November Election:
L.A. Times Poll (October 22 - 27) Compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

Vote	---Likely Voters ---			-----Exit Poll -----		
	Davis 45%	Simon 36%	Others 11%	Davis 47%	Simon 42%	Others 11%
Democrats	74	109		81	10	9
Independents*	45	20	22	35	33	32
Republicans	12	75		12	82	6
Liberals	76	81		74	10	16
Mid-of-road	46	28	15	52	37	11
Conservatives	15	72	5	15	78	7
Men	42	43	11	42	47	11
Women	49	29	9	52	37	11
Whites	36	44	12	43	46	11
Latinos	57	25	6	65	24	11

*Independents included decline -to-state and third parties
African-American and Asian sample sizes were too small to breakout

Table 16

How Some Demographic Groups Voted in the November Election:
Field Poll (October 25 - 30) Compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

Vote	---Likely Voters ----			-----Exit Poll -----		
	Davis 41%	Simon 34%	Others 8%	Davis 47%	Simon 42%	Others 11%
Democrats	72	94		81	10	9
Independents*	21	18	27	35	33	32
Republicans	12	6	9	12	82	6
Liberals	68	8	11	74	10	16
Mid-of-road	47	19	11	52	37	11
Conservatives	18	6	7	15	78	7
Men	36	39	11	42	47	11
Women	46	30	6	52	37	11
Whites	35	41	10	43	46	11
Latinos	53	16	4	65	24	11

*Independents included decline -to-state and third parties
African-American and Asians sample sizes were too small to breakout

Table 17

How Some Demographic Groups Voted in the November Election:
 PPIC Statewide Survey (October 7 - 15) compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

Vote	---Likely Voters ---			-----Exit Poll -----		
	Davis 41%	Simon 31%	Others 10%	Davis 47%	Simon 42%	Others 11%
Democrats	67	97		81	10	9
Independents*	38	21	21	35	33	32
Republicans	11	6	7	12	82	6
Liberals	63	10	12	74	10	16
Mid-of-road	47	22	7	52	37	11
Conservatives	18	5	7	15	78	7
Men	41	34	11	42	47	11
Women	42	29	9	52	37	11
Whites	34	36	11	43	46	11
Latinos	58	19	8	65	24	6

*Independents includes decline -to-state and third parties
 African-American and Asians sample sizes were too small to breakout

Table 18

How Some Demographic Groups Voted in the 2002 California's Governor's Race:
 PPIC Statewide Survey (October 28 - November 4) Compared to L.A. Times Exit Poll

Vote	---Likely Voters ---			-----Exit Poll -----		
	Davis 40%	Simon 35%	Others 12%	Davis 47%	Simon 42%	Others 11%
Democrats	70	71		81	10	9
Independents**	29	24	27	35	33	32
Republicans	12	6	96	12	82	6
Liberals	63	10	18	74	10	16
Mid-of-road	48	19	14	52	37	11
Conservatives	15	6	56	15	78	7
Men	37	3	9	42	47	11
Women	42	3	1	52	37	11
Whites	34	40	14	43	46	11
Latinos	55	18	7	65	24	11

*This PPIC Statewide Survey on campaign practices was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, completed the day before the election and not made public until after the election.

**Independents include decline-to-state and third parties

African-American and Asian sample sizes were too small to breakout

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