



Choices for Youth

Voters Support Youth Violence Prevention

THE GOAL

The goal of Choices for Youth: A Public Education Campaign to Prevent Violence Against Youth is to increase support for effective programs to prevent violence against youth. A substantial and growing body of research shows that a variety of approaches work to prevent violence, strengthen families and help youth to develop into safe and healthy adults. This survey was conducted to assess levels of public support for these programs.

VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUTH IS A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM IN CALIFORNIA.

- Homicide is the leading cause of death in California for youth ages 15 to 19.
- Youth ages 12 to 17 are nearly three times more likely than adults to be victims of serious violent crimes.
- In a single year in California, nearly 6,000 young people are hospitalized for some form of violent injury including assault, child abuse, domestic violence and rape.

Data Source: 1998 Hospitalized Injury Surveillance System, California Department of Health Services; America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (1999).

KEY FINDINGS

This survey shows that California voters:

- Are highly concerned about violence involving youth;
- Understand the long-term effects violence can have on today's youth;
- Strongly support increasing funding for efforts to prevent youth violence; and
- Believe that one of the best ways to keep youth safe is to provide more structured activities outside school hours.

METHODOLOGY

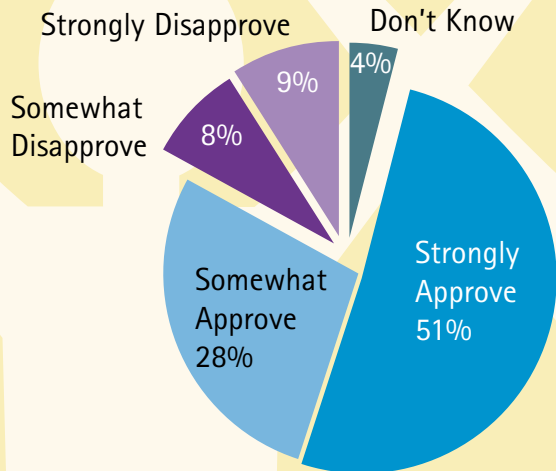
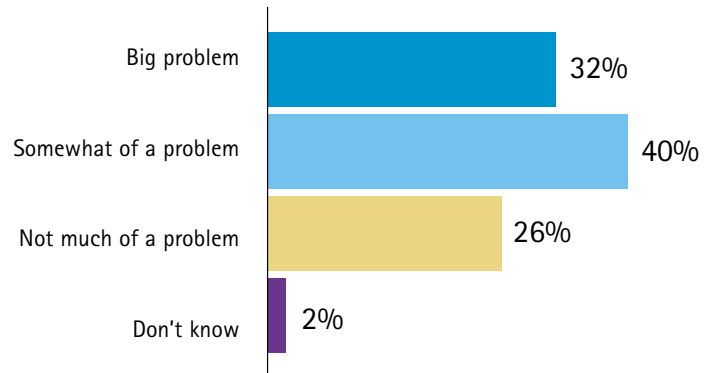
This fact sheet describes the results of a statewide telephone survey of 800 registered California voters conducted by Baldassare Associates for Choices for Youth, February 22-27, 2001. The margin of error is +/- 3.5% for the total sample. The sampling error for subgroups, such as regions or political parties, will be larger. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, according to the respondent's preference. 27% of the sample is from Los Angeles county, 26% from other Southern California counties, 22% from the San Francisco Bay Area, and 25% from other California counties.



HIGHLIGHTS

Nearly three in four California voters believe that violence involving youth is a problem in their communities, including one third who say it is a "big" problem. Voters in Los Angeles county are especially likely to see violence involving youth as a big problem (44%).

"Would you say that violence involving youth is a big problem, somewhat of a problem or not much of a problem in your city or community?"



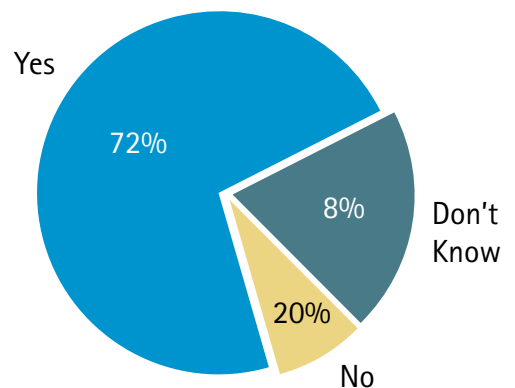
Nearly eight in ten voters want the state to increase its funding to local communities for these programs, with 51% saying they "strongly" approve. A majority in all demographic groups, including both Republicans and Democrats, and in all regions of California support increased state funding for violence prevention.

"Do you approve or disapprove of increasing the amount of funding the state provides to local communities for violence prevention programs?"

California's voters give Governor Gray Davis high marks for his support for prevention, with nearly three in four saying he did the right thing when he approved legislation last year allocating \$121 million to youth crime prevention programs. Strong majorities of both Democrats and Republicans approve of this funding effort

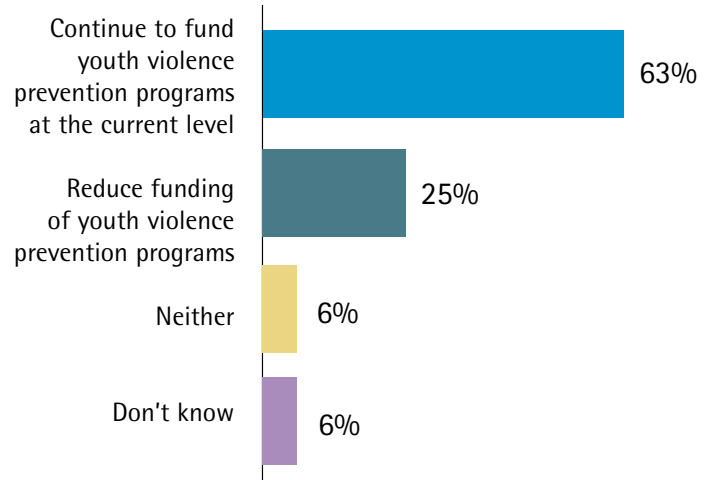
"Last year, Governor Gray Davis signed legislation giving \$242 million in state funds to help cities and counties fight crime. Half of the money goes to law enforcement and prosecution of criminals, while the other half goes to youth crime prevention programs.

Do you believe that Governor Davis did the right thing when he approved this legislation?"



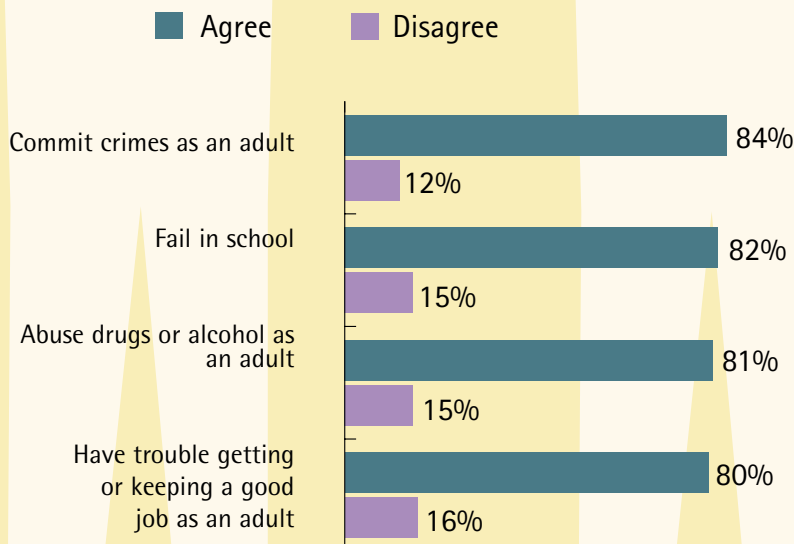
Voters want the state to maintain current funding for programs to prevent violence involving youth, despite the energy crisis. By more than a two to one margin, voters oppose any reduction of violence prevention funds.

"As you may know, California is currently experiencing an energy crisis which may cost the state billions of dollars to resolve and may reduce the amount of state funding for other programs, including youth violence prevention. As they evaluate priorities for spending state funds this year, what should the legislature and the governor do? Should they..."



Voters are very concerned about the long-term effects of violence involving youth. Most believe that youth who have been involved in violence have an increased likelihood as an adult of being unemployed, committing crimes, or abusing drugs or alcohol. Most also believe that involvement in violence is likely to hurt a youth's performance in school.

*"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
A youth who has been involved in violence is more likely to"*

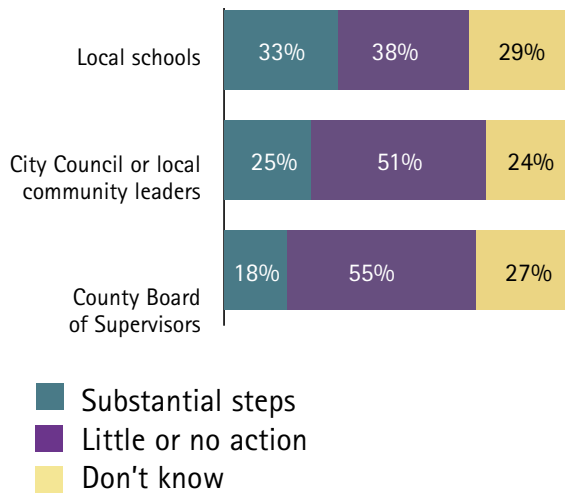
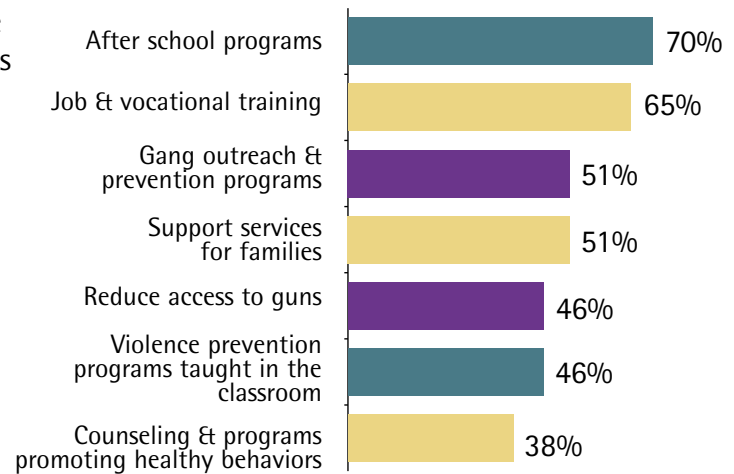


"You've got to give these kids choices of places to go. They're either going to go on the street corner, where it's dark, or they're going to go to the community center. If there's no community center... they're gonna go on that street corner." – San Jose mother

Voters believe programs that provide youth with structured, supervised activities during non-school hours are one of the most effective ways to prevent youth violence. The programs perceived as most effective are after-school programs such as tutoring, mentoring and organized sports and arts programs; and job and vocational training.

"In the past few years, the state has provided funding for different kinds of youth violence prevention programs. I am going to describe some of these programs, and I want you to tell me how effective you think each one is in reducing youth violence."

(Chart shows the percentage of respondents who gave this strategy a 6 or 7 on a range of 1 to 7, with 1 being not effective at all and 7 being extremely effective.)



Voters see few signs of local entities enacting substantial, effective solutions towards reducing violence involving youth. One in three voters think their schools have made a significant effort to reduce violence involving youth, one in four think their local city councils have taken substantial steps, and fewer than one in five think their county board of supervisors has made a significant effort.

"In the past year, do you feel that your [local entity] has taken substantial, effective steps to reduce youth violence, or taken little or no action that will make a substantial difference?"

Voters are divided on whether their communities have the resources needed to provide violence prevention programs, with many saying they don't know. Parents of teenagers (45%) and those who perceive violence involving youth to be a big problem in their communities (49%) are most likely to say their communities lack the resources to provide prevention programs.

"Do you feel that your local community has the resources it needs to provide youth violence prevention programs, or not?"

