

# **Los Angeles Today and Tomorrow**

## **Results of the Los Angeles 2000 Community Survey**

Sandra H. Berry

*40 Years*  
1948-1988

**RAND**

The research described in this report was prepared for the Los Angeles 2000 Committee with a grant from the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation.

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October 1988

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## **PREFACE**

This report documents the results of a survey conducted for the Los Angeles 2000 Committee, established in December 1985 by Mayor Tom Bradley to prepare, present, and build a broad base of support for a strategic plan to address the problems and opportunities Los Angeles faces now and into the 21st century. The Committee asked The RAND Corporation to conduct a survey of people in the Los Angeles region to find out how they view those problems and opportunities. Using computer-assisted telephone interviewing techniques, the RAND Survey Research Group surveyed a random sample of 1,230 residents of the larger Los Angeles region between April 2 and May 1, 1988. Comparisons with Census data and other statistics on Los Angeles indicate that this sample is generally representative of the region's residents. Consequently, the results should be useful to state and local policymakers, as well as to the Committee, in planning for the region's future.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people at RAND and on the Los Angeles 2000 Committee contributed to this report. Jane Pisano, President of the Los Angeles 2000 Committee, and Alan Kreditor, Dean of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Southern California, provided valuable advice on the design of the sample and the survey instrument. Jan Acton, Elizabeth Rolph, and Neal Thomas, all of RAND, also contributed to the design of the survey sample and the questionnaire. Deborah Hensler provided valuable comments on the questionnaire design. Gene Grigsby, of The Planning Group, and Hope Tschopik, of the Los Angeles 2000 Committee, also provided comments on the questionnaire.

Lucienne Aeroesty, of Focus LA, and Julie Brown, of RAND, recruited participants for preliminary group discussions and arranged the group meetings. Julie also assisted with questionnaire design and production. The Survey Research Group ably carried out the survey data collection. The sample was purchased from Survey Sampling Incorporated. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish by Raquel Cadena-Muñoz, of Ballesteros and Associates.

Programming was done by Carol Edwards and Mary Layne, and Allan Abrahamse provided statistical advice for the data analysis.

The report was improved by comments from the members of the Los Angeles 2000 Committee and the Committee staff, including Steven Okino, Jane Pisano, and Hope Tschopik. Gene Grigsby also provided helpful comments. Many RAND staff members attended and commented on a briefing that preceded the drafting of the report. Kevin McCarthy and Peter Morrison, of RAND, reviewed earlier drafts of the report and provided very valuable advice on its content and form.

Joyce Peterson ably and patiently reshaped the draft report through several revisions. Mary Vaiana provided valuable assistance with the preparation of the briefing. Janet DeLand edited and helped design the report. Harriet Kofalk typed its many revisions.

David Lyon, the Director of RAND's Domestic Research Division, provided valuable advice and moral support throughout.

Of course, the author is solely responsible for any deficiencies or errors.





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## **I. OVERVIEW**

How do the people of greater Los Angeles feel about the quality of their lives? What do they see as the region's most serious problems? How do they rate the way the region is handling those problems? And what do they think can and should be done? The answers to these questions are grist for any strategic planning expected to shape the future of Los Angeles. The survey we describe in this report was undertaken to provide those answers.

### **THE CHALLENGE FOR PLANNING**

Between 1970 and 1988, the Los Angeles region registered a 36 percent increase in population. With 2,600 more residents coming than going every week, the metropolitan region now has a population of 13.6 million. It is the nation's second largest consolidated metropolitan area, after New York City.

With this growth, Los Angeles has prospered and has become more diverse—culturally, ethnically, and economically. Along the way, it has outgrown its image as the balmy environs of Hollywood and has become a world center of the arts, culture, business, and commerce. Because of this, the metropolitan area has taken its place in a multinational, multiethnic, and multicontinental network.

Given this transformation, it is not surprising that existing regional problems have gotten worse and new ones have emerged. The growth rate alone not only strains the regional infrastructure but creates a range of problems and pressures for residents. The sheer size of the region ensures that those problems will be massive and complex, challenging both residents and leaders to seek politically viable solutions. This challenge calls for thoughtful study of life in the Los Angeles region, a long-range planning perspective, and a creative, comprehensive strategy for shaping the region's future.

To address this challenge, Mayor Tom Bradley established the Los Angeles 2000 Committee in 1985 and charged it with preparing a strategic plan for Los Angeles, articulating that plan, and building a broad base of support for its program.

The Committee asked The RAND Corporation to conduct a survey of Los Angeles area residents to find out how they view life in the area and what they expect for the future. The results of that survey are presented in this report.

### **WHAT THE SURVEY IS INTENDED TO ACCOMPLISH**

This survey will serve several key purposes of the Los Angeles 2000 Committee. First, it will help the Committee develop a strategic plan that reflects the actual, rather than supposed, concerns of different groups of Los Angeles area residents and that is likely to have broad support.

Second, comparison of the strategic plan with survey results will show where the plan matches community concerns and where it has moved ahead of them—as a strategic plan should, in some respects—making widespread support more difficult to obtain.

Third, the results will indicate how much or how little consensus about different problems the Committee can expect among different groups, and how to tailor strategies for solving those problems.

Finally, the survey results may provide the evidence of public support that regional leaders will need to act on the Committee's plans.

Our interest in conducting the survey reflects RAND's long-standing commitment to inform public debate on important issues. In this case, we hope to identify and clarify what most concerns the people of the Los Angeles region so that the debate over its future can operate on facts, rather than impressions. We have made no attempt to explore the political implications of the responses to this survey. Rather, we have concentrated on identifying interesting, important questions that planners and policymakers need to have answered. Those questions will require careful analysis. This survey should help to lay the groundwork for that analysis and the planning that will result from it.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

In making plans for the region's future, leaders will find general agreement about some things:

- Most of the area's residents think that life in Los Angeles is good, but many fear that the future will not be so rosy.
- People generally agree that quality of life depends most on controlling crime, protecting the environment, and providing good schools.
- Most people also support measures to make life better, for example, regulating growth and raising some kinds of taxes.

Despite this general agreement, there are important differences in the levels of concern expressed by different groups about area problems and about what they value most in their communities. The differences strongly follow racial, ethnic, and economic class lines:

- Affluent whites, for example, voice more concern about traffic congestion than blacks, Hispanics, and Asians do.
- Lower-income minorities call for crime control and favor rapid growth more than others do.
- Some issues particularly concern special constituencies—for example, families with children put more stress on supporting public schools, and young people worry more about environmental quality.

Planners who are concerned with achieving a consensus and building broad support may find these differences troubling. However, from that perspective, the survey's most important finding is that **when asked to indicate their priorities (by dividing a hypothetical \$100 to make improvements in the problem areas), the survey respondents ranked them rather consistently, despite racial, ethnic, and economic differences.** If people do indeed put their money where their priorities are, these responses define the planning issues and offer a base of support for a responsive agenda.

**ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT**

Section II describes how we conducted the survey and selected the sample, discusses how well the respondents represent the population of the region, and lists the topics covered in the survey. Section III presents the results of the survey in some detail. Finally, Section IV presents our conclusions.

## II. THE SURVEY: WHO RESPONDED AND WHAT WE ASKED THEM

We undertook the survey to find out what the people of the Los Angeles region think about the quality of life now and how they believe it will change in the future.<sup>1</sup> The Los Angeles area is incredibly diverse on many dimensions. Accordingly, we designed a survey that would tell us how people of all ages, racial and ethnic groups, economic and educational levels, and geographic areas feel about living there. Our survey methods, which are standard for this type of survey, and the makeup of our sample are described briefly below.

### GENERATING THE SAMPLE

We conducted the survey using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. The questionnaire we developed contained questions intended to explore residents' opinions about various aspects of life in Los Angeles and questions about their backgrounds.

We used a random-digit-dialing sample, that is, the telephone numbers were generated randomly in proportion to all the active telephone numbers in the larger Los Angeles area. This method avoids the bias inherent in using a sample that includes only listed telephone numbers. Although 94 percent of the area's households have telephones, 45 to 50 percent of the numbers are unlisted.<sup>2</sup> That is such a significant percentage of the population that no survey would be representative if all those households were excluded.

The survey was conducted between April 2 and May 1, 1988, and the responses to some of our questions may reflect the events of that time, in particular, the fact that the Los Angeles police were making widely publicized "gang sweeps," arresting members of frequently violent, drug-involved gangs. It was also tax time; many people had been preparing or had just finished filing their federal and state tax returns.

We called households primarily in the evenings and on weekends, when household members were most likely to be at home. Rather than simply interviewing the person who answered the phone, we asked for the member of the household 18 years of age or older who had the most recent birthday.<sup>3</sup> This "random selection" of respondents, within households, produces a more representative sample of the general population's diversity than we would get by including only those who

---

<sup>1</sup>The larger Los Angeles region includes all of Los Angeles County, northern Orange County, and eastern San Bernardino and Riverside counties. We surveyed the larger region, rather than just the city of Los Angeles, because the city's problems—e.g., traffic, environment, and planning for growth—are regional in scope, as are the potential solutions.

<sup>2</sup>Los Angeles has the second highest percentage of unlisted telephone numbers of any city in the nation, as reported by Survey Sampling, Inc., based on data provided by Field Research Corporation, 1986.

<sup>3</sup>The specific question asked was: "In order to complete the survey, I need to speak with the household resident who is 18 years of age or older and had the most recent birthday. This means the one who had the last birthday, not just the youngest adult. Would that be you or someone else?"

answered the phones, since that population would be biased toward women and those who are not employed outside their homes.

Of the contacts made with private residences, 54 percent resulted in completed interviews, for a total sample of 1,230 respondents.<sup>4</sup> Although this response rate is lower than the average for surveys nationwide, it compares favorably with response rates for other telephone surveys conducted in the Los Angeles area.<sup>5</sup> The lower rates in this area probably reflect the same attitudes that explain the prevalence of answering machines and unlisted numbers: People in Los Angeles want to screen or block unknown and unexpected callers.

## THE MAKEUP OF THE SAMPLE

As intended, our survey methods produced a sample diverse enough to capture the spectrum of attitudes and opinions among area residents. The 1,230 respondents ranged in age from 18 to 95, with a median age of 38. Forty-four percent were men, 56 percent women. Fifty-three percent were married at the time of the survey; 40 percent had children younger than 17; and the median household size was three. Figure 1 shows this diversity in terms of race/ethnicity, income, age, work status, education, and political affiliation.

Because racial/ethnic diversity is a major issue the survey intended to address, whites, Hispanics, blacks, and Asians were compared on selected dimensions. These comparisons, shown in Fig. 2, indicate that minorities (especially Hispanics) are more likely than whites to have lower incomes and more persons per household and are less likely to own their homes.<sup>6</sup>

Before developing the questionnaire, we held informal group discussions with residents of different regional areas. These discussions indicated that problems and concerns might differ from area to area. To obtain some insight into these differences, we needed to compare the characteristics of area samples. Although the survey selected telephone numbers randomly across the region, it was possible to divide the sample into subareas for the purposes of analyzing the data.

There are seven major subareas, which follow major geographic boundaries and reflect the racial/ethnic distribution of populations (see Fig. 3): (1) northern Orange County, (2) eastern Riverside and San Bernardino counties, (3) the Westside of Los Angeles, (4) the San Fernando Valley, (5) northern Los Angeles County, (6) the Central area, and (7) eastern Los Angeles County.<sup>7</sup>

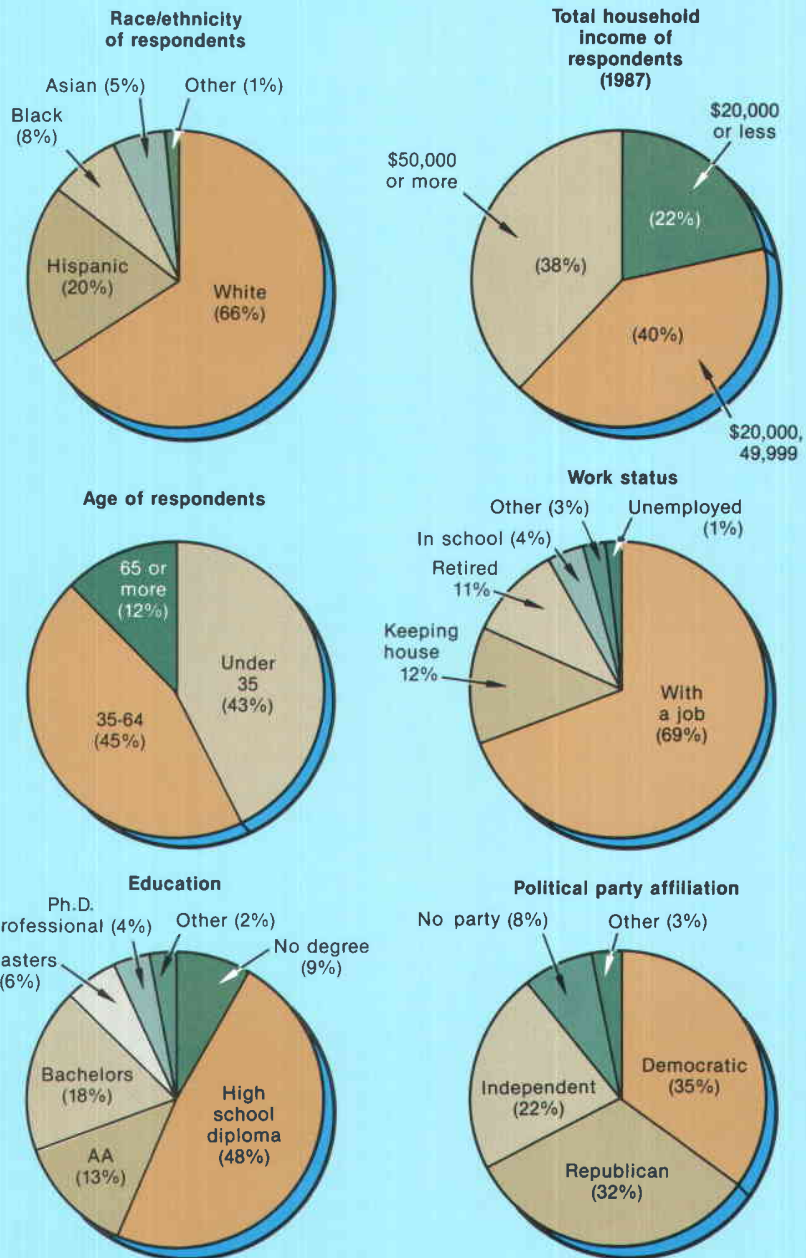
Table 1 shows each subarea's racial/ethnic composition and sample size. The composition of the Central Los Angeles area contrasts sharply with that of the other subareas. In the Central area, whites are in the minority, and blacks and Hispanics represent the main population groups.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, not all 1,230 respondents provided useful answers to all questions. However, in general, the nonresponse rate for particular items was less than 2 percent.

<sup>5</sup>For example, the comparable rate was 38 percent in the 1988 Southern California Social Survey of 1,100 individuals, conducted by UCLA.

<sup>6</sup>Race and ethnicity were measured in two survey items. We first asked race and then asked whether the respondent, regardless of race, was of Hispanic background. We combined the information into one variable for the sake of simplicity, since most Hispanics reported that as their race and declined to select any other race category.

<sup>7</sup>Since our sample design sought to capture the diversity of people's views, not to represent defined political jurisdictions, our subarea division is necessarily a compromise. We sought to distinguish recognized geographic differences within the region. However, we also wanted to balance sample size across areas so that the results would be meaningful.



**Fig. 1—Demographic, economic, and political characteristics of the sample**

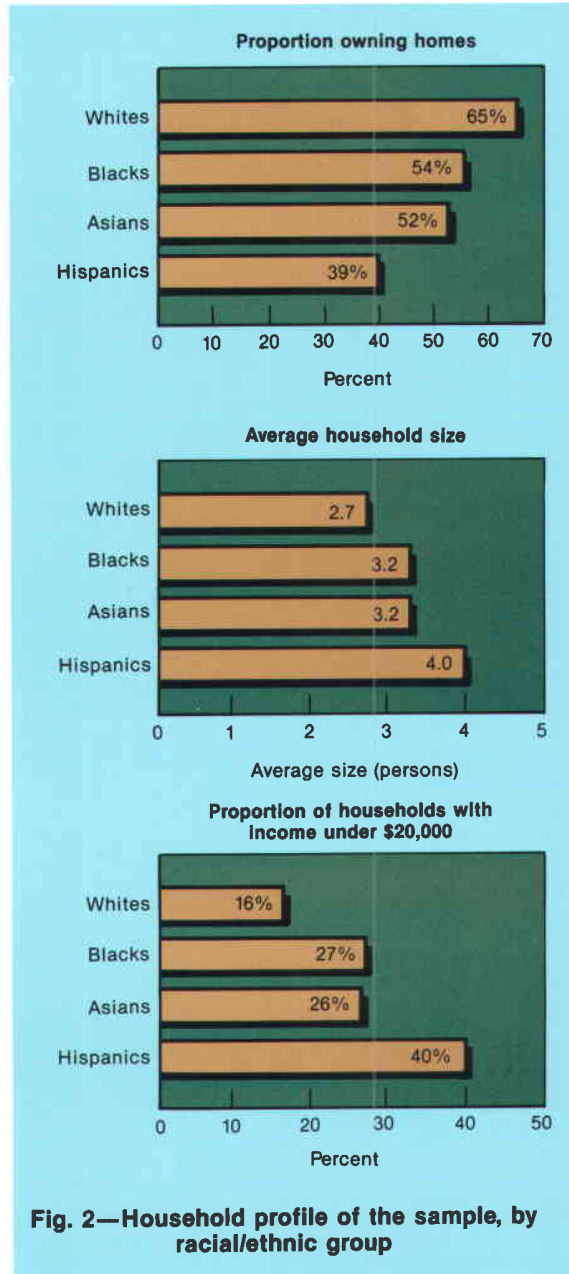


## HOW WELL DOES THE SAMPLE REPRESENT THE AREA'S POPULATIONS?

If, despite our efforts, the sample is not reasonably representative, the results will not help, and could hinder, planning efforts. However, at present, it is difficult to say how representative the sample is. The 1980 Census provides the most comprehensive basis for comparison, but it is now quite dated, and much has changed demographically in the region. Other surveys that might afford accurate comparisons have their own serious drawbacks: Many of them cover different geographic areas, define key variables differently, or use different sample groups (for example, heads of households, rather than randomly selected respondents over 18 years of age).

To obtain the most accurate basis for comparison, we consulted three sources:

- UCLA's 1988 Southern California Social Survey, which covers Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange counties.<sup>8</sup>
- The 1986 Current Population Survey (CPS), as compiled for all of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.<sup>9</sup>
- The 1980 Census counts for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties.<sup>10</sup>



**Fig. 2—Household profile of the sample, by racial/ethnic group**

<sup>8</sup>Personal communication from Valerie Dull, Ph.D., Institute for Social Science Research, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

<sup>9</sup>Reported by Fabian Linden in "The Second Biggest Apple: Los Angeles," *American Demographics*, June 1987.

<sup>10</sup>Compiled by Survey Sampling, Inc., in 1988 for this study.



Fig. 3—L.A. 2000 sample areas

For each characteristic of interest, we compared our sample with the most recent source that included the item to be compared, collected in a similar way. For example, the 1988 Southern California Social Survey did not report an age distribution, and the 1986 CPS reported age only for the "householder" (or head of household). The 1980 Census provided an age breakdown for the adult population that most closely resembles our sample, so we used the Census figures to compare with our survey.

In most respects, our sample mirrors the area population, within acceptable limits. It is representative of males and

**Table 1**  
**Differences across sample areas**

	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Asian	Percent Hispanic	Number of Cases
Westside	72	7	11	9	195
San Fernando Valley	77	2	4	17	157
Eastern Los Angeles County	66	6	7	29	274
Central Los Angeles	21	26	4	46	187
Northern Los Angeles County	78	2	—	16	55
Riverside and San Bernardino Counties	75	5	2	17	146
Orange County	84	3	3	10	216

females, of racial and ethnic groups, and of age groups.<sup>11</sup> Our respondents are also reasonably representative in terms of work status, marital status, number of persons in the household, and percentage of households with children under age 18.

However, the sample appears to be composed of somewhat better educated and wealthier people than the general population. For example, the 1986 CPS indicates that 36 percent of households have incomes under \$20,000, and 21 percent have incomes over \$50,000. For our sample, the corresponding figures are 23 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

These income differences are difficult to interpret. They may have resulted from our random selection method for respondents, which resulted in a larger proportion of 18- to 34-year-olds than is typical of surveys that query heads of household. The older half of that group could well have received more schooling than previous generations have, which could explain the higher education levels. The income differences may also reflect different questions that were asked or the effects of uninformed guesses: The younger people in the sample, who are less likely to be heads of household, may not be privy to the details of household income.

Despite these differences, we believe the survey results provide a generally representative picture. The sample includes a substantial number of people who report low income, and we specifically focused on their responses to find out how they view life in Los Angeles. It also includes approximately representative proportions of blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, and, more important, adequate numbers of each group to report on the views of these groups.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, we find that homeownership, which is also an indicator of household financial level, is fairly consistent with other survey sources. Of our respondents, 58 percent owned their homes—only about 5 percent more than were estimated in the 1986 CPS for all of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

## WHAT THE SURVEY ASKED AND WHY

The survey covered a wide range of concerns. We asked questions on the following topics:

- General feelings about life in Los Angeles
- Community characteristics people value
- Handling of local problems
- Growth and its consequences
- Planning and regulation
- Willingness to raise taxes
- Public spending priorities
- Background characteristics of respondents

The topics covered in these categories were derived from two sources: (1) the general interests of the Los Angeles 2000 Committee, as indicated in draft reports, and

<sup>11</sup>It is important to note that the racial/ethnic mix of our sample represents the mix in the region in *the spring of 1988*. Because the Los Angeles 2000 Committee's mission is strategic planning for the future, it will be necessary to consider demographic predictions which indicate that the proportion of minorities in the region will be much higher in the future.

<sup>12</sup>The sample contains 805 whites, 95 blacks, 64 Asians, 237 Hispanics, and 15 people of mixed or other race. Fourteen respondents did not identify their race. Asian and Hispanic nationalities are combined to ensure adequate numbers for analysis.

(2) concerns that surfaced in preliminary discussions we held with residents across the region.

We conducted six such discussions, with groups on the Westside, in the San Fernando Valley, and the downtown Los Angeles area and groups that were homogeneous with respect to income level and race/ethnicity. Participants in the groups were unknown to each other and were not connected with the Los Angeles 2000 Committee. The groups talked about their views of life in the Los Angeles region, about what they had observed of recent history, and about their beliefs and concerns about the future. Their concerns and issues are reflected not only in the questions, but also, to a remarkable extent, in the sample's general responses.

### III. WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT LIFE IN LOS ANGELES

Most people in Los Angeles find the quality of life in the area good. Nevertheless, they are keenly aware of the area's problems and dissatisfied with the way those problems are being handled.<sup>1</sup>

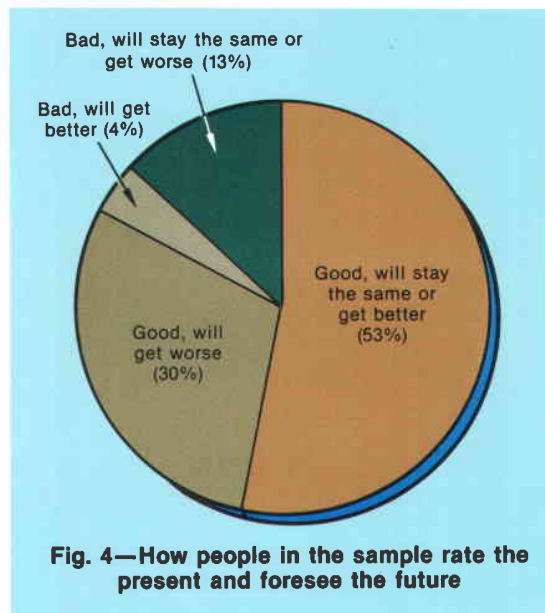
#### QUALITY OF LIFE

To gauge quality of life, our survey first asked: "Thinking about the overall quality of life in the Los Angeles region, for you personally, would you say it is very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?" **Eighty-two percent of the respondents rated their quality of life as good** (55 percent rated it "somewhat good," and 28 percent rated it "very good"). This is not an unusual response to such a question asked in this way—during good economic times.<sup>2</sup>

**Differences in responses seem to reflect intergroup differences in general economic level.** Asians and whites rated quality of life highest: 92 percent and 85

percent, respectively, found it somewhat good or very good. Blacks and Hispanics rated it lower: 77 percent and 75 percent, respectively, rated quality of life good. Predictably, people with lower incomes gave quality of life lower ratings than higher-income people did.

**Although the great majority of our sample rated life in Los Angeles in 1988 as good, hopes for the future were more restrained.** As shown in Fig. 4, just over half said they believe their quality of life is good and will either stay that way or improve. A small percentage (4 percent) see things as bad now but likely to get better. However, 43 percent are less optimistic about the future, and



<sup>1</sup>Survey responses were analyzed using frequency distributions, cross tabulations, and multiple-regression procedures. We used regression analysis to study responses to questions about community characteristics, handling of problems, taxes, and spending priorities, since this technique allows us to identify the effect that one characteristic (e.g., being black) has on responses, independent of all other characteristics (e.g., income level or place of residence).

<sup>2</sup>A similar question has been asked annually of San Francisco residents. The proportion of "good" responses has ranged from 59 percent in 1980, when economic times were not good, to 81 percent in 1988, when the economy was in much better shape. (Responses reported in the 1980-1988 editions of *The Bay Area Poll* published by the Bay Area Council, Inc.)

13 percent are decidedly pessimistic (things are bad now, will not get better, and may get worse).

Future ratings also differed by racial/ethnic group, but in the opposite direction. Whereas only 55 percent of whites think things will stay the same or will improve over the next decade and a half, minorities are more optimistic: 61 percent of the Hispanics, 69 percent of the Asians, and 79 percent of the blacks in our sample said that they believe times will stay the same or will get better (Fig. 5). Younger people were also generally more optimistic about the future than older people.

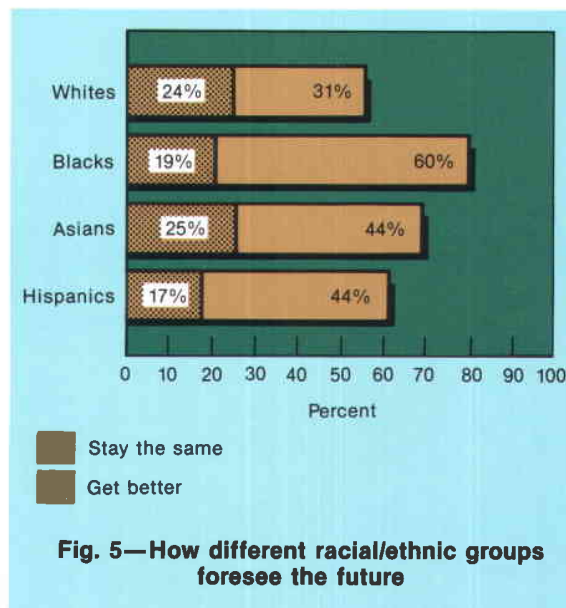
### DESIRED COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

What else besides economic circumstances contributes to people's feelings about quality of life? We attempted to answer that question by asking our respondents what they wanted most in their neighborhoods. We defined the neighborhood as the place where the respondent lives and the area around it, including the area in which he or she shops locally. We asked respondents to rate the importance of neighborhood characteristics from 1 (not at all important) to 10 (most important). Figure 6 shows the average scores for these characteristics; all of the scores were higher than 5.

The characteristics rated "most important" by the most respondents were freedom from crime, good public schools, and clean air, followed by good car access. People put moderate value on parks, trees and greenery, mixed-income housing, and cultural activities. On average, people rated ethnic arts festivals, public transportation, and shops and restaurants least important.

These general ratings mask some important racial/ethnic differences. Comparatively speaking:

- Whites value trees and green areas more.
- Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics give higher ratings to ethnic arts festivals, the availability of public transportation, and ethnic and social diversity.
- Blacks and Hispanics (but not Asians) place greater value on the availability of mixed-income housing.



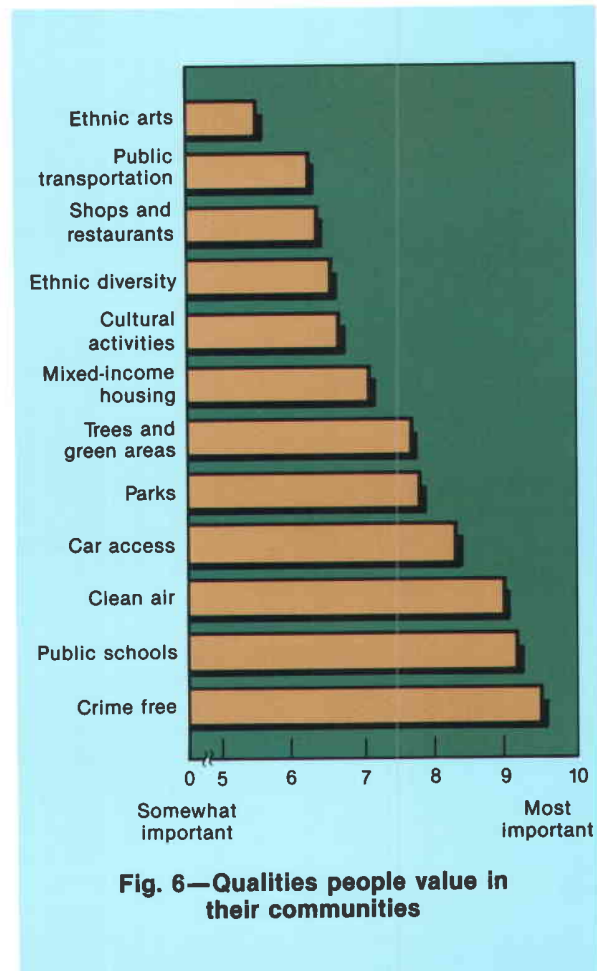


Groups defined in other ways also rate things differently:

- People under 35 and over 65 and people with longer-than-average commuting time think public transportation is more important than others do.
- People between 35 and 64 and those with longer commuting times put higher value on good access by car.
- People under 35 give higher rankings to parks and recreation areas and clean air and water.
- People in households that include children younger than 17 value good public schools more.

### THE BEST AND WORST OF LOS ANGELES

As we said, people tend to rate *general* quality of life high, especially in good economic times. However, surveys generally reveal that this global impression of well-being erodes as the questions focus on more specific aspects of life. When people are asked to reflect on day-to-day living, they typically identify things that enhance and things that degrade their quality of life. This happened when we asked our sample to describe the best and worst features of life in Los Angeles.



### The Best of Los Angeles

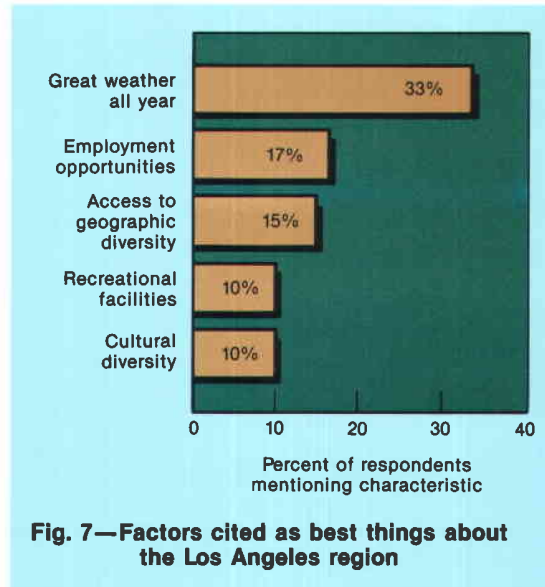
Everyone in the sample identified 54 individual “best” features, averaging two choices apiece. In analyzing the responses, we coded as many as three “best” features that an individual mentioned, counting them equally, regardless of their order. Counted this way, the best features are as shown in Fig. 7: weather, employment opportunities, geographic diversity (ocean, mountains, deserts), recreational facilities, and cultural diversity.

However, this general agreement fails to capture some racial/ethnic differences in ratings of these five “best” features. For example, as shown in Fig. 8, **although the largest percentages of whites, blacks, and Asians chose “great weather” as one of the best things about the area, whites were almost twice as likely to choose it as**

**blacks and Hispanics were.** Whites also placed greater value on geographic diversity than other groups did. In contrast, **Hispanics, blacks, and Asians cited employment opportunity more often than whites did.**

The 54 "best" features generally fall into five major categories:

- **Climate and geography**, including weather, geographic diversity, good air quality, and nearness of rustic living environments.
- **Community characteristics**, including cultural diversity, recreation facilities, entertainment, restaurants, and lifestyle.
- **Economic opportunities**, including employment, higher salaries, diversity of business, and educational opportunities.
- **Personal factors**, including a specific job, proximity to family or friends, and special interests that can be pursued in Los Angeles.
- **The kinds of people in the area**, including ethnic diversity, friendliness, tolerance, and good neighborhoods.



As Fig. 9 shows, the most frequently mentioned responses concern the climate and the environment, with combined community characteristics second, and economic factors third in importance.

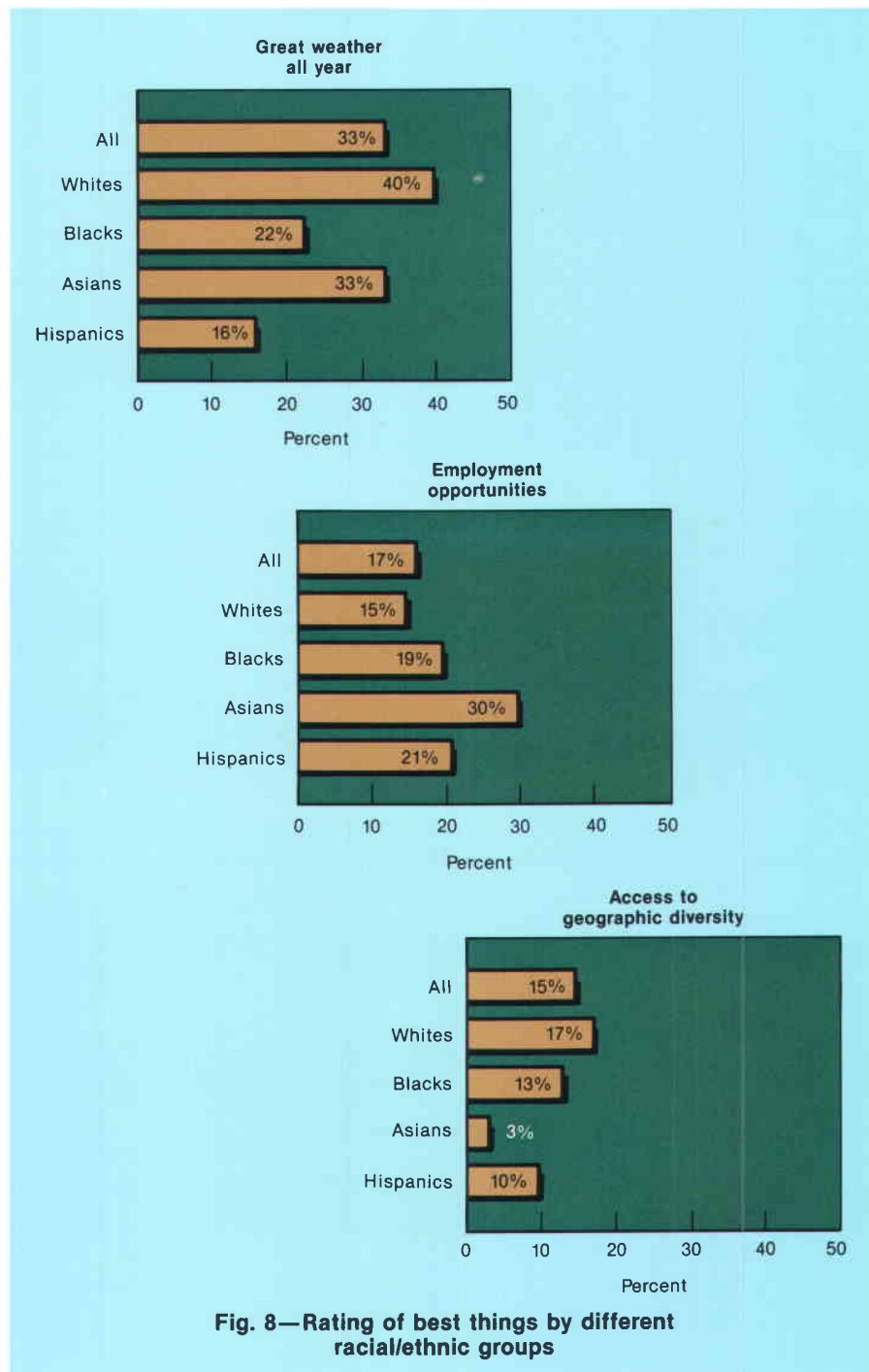
### The Worst of Los Angeles

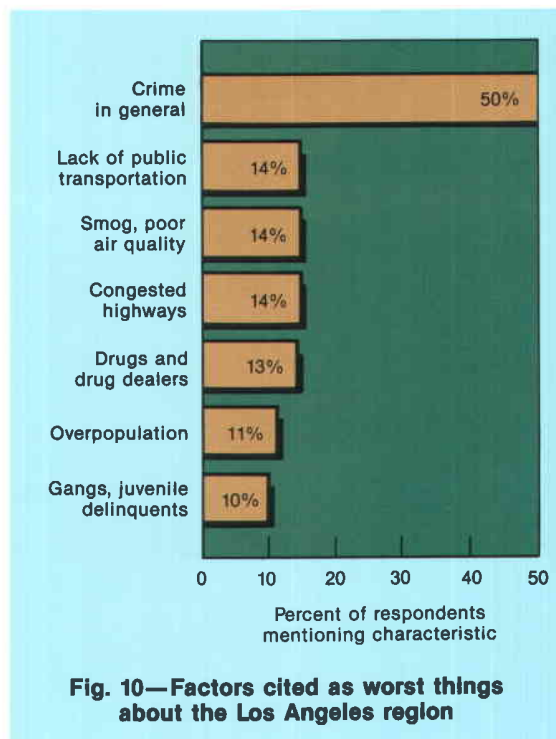
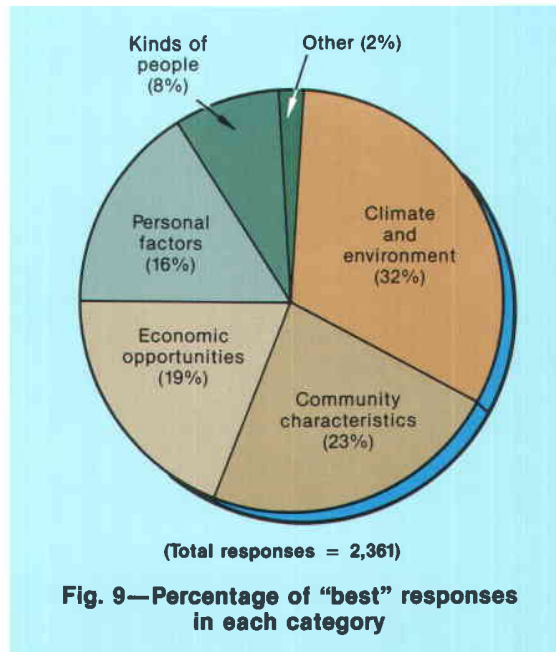
Our respondents identified 105 specific features they disliked about Los Angeles. Again, they averaged two items, and we coded a maximum of three. **Crime was mentioned more than anything else as the worst thing about Los Angeles** (see Fig. 10).

In the ratings of "worst" features, like those of "best" features, the emphasis varied across groups. **Almost 50 percent of whites pointed to crime as one of the area's major faults, but minorities were even more concerned. Two-thirds of blacks and Asians cited crime as a "worst" feature** (Fig. 11).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>These findings are consistent with results of a May 1988 Telephone Survey of Registered Voters in Los Angeles County, fielded by the Wirthlin Group for the Los Angeles County Transportation Committee. That survey reported that although virtually all groups saw crime as the most important regional issue, more concern was voiced by "women, senior citizens, Blacks, people with the lowest incomes, and those in Central and South L.A. and the Pomona Valley." (p. 26)







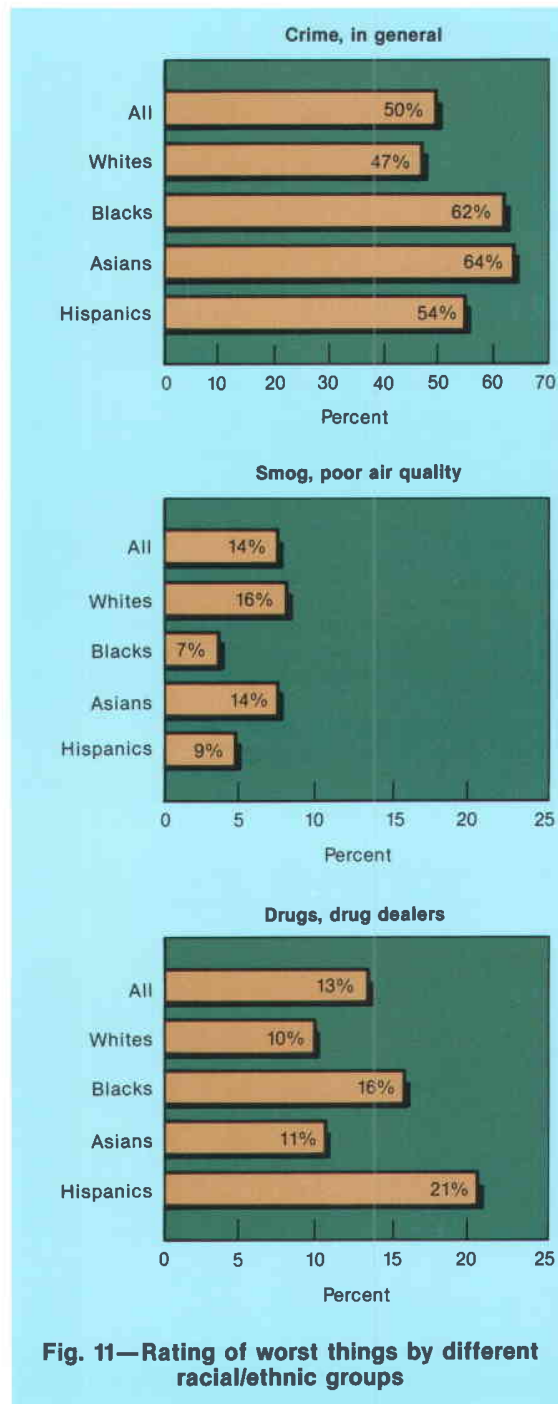
We classified the 105 responses into six major categories of concern:

- **Crime**, including gangs, drugs, lack of police protection, drive-by shootings, prostitution, crimes against children, and crime in general.
- **Transportation**, including traffic congestion and lack of public transportation.
- **Community characteristics**, including overpopulation, homelessness, “too many” foreigners, illegal aliens, and uncontrolled growth.
- **Environment**, including pollution, smog, air quality, water quality, and contaminated beaches.
- **Economic conditions**, including lack of jobs for minorities, women, and the disabled, and not enough jobs in general.
- **Housing**, including lack of affordable housing, high rents, and lack of low-income housing for the elderly and the poor.

The respondents mentioned elements in the crime category most often; transportation issues were second in frequency, followed by the environment. Economic and housing issues were mentioned least frequently, as shown in Fig. 12.

### HANDLING OF LOCAL PROBLEMS

Given what people see as the worst problems, how do they rate the way the region manages its problems? To find



out, we asked them whether problems were being handled "very well," "somewhat well," "somewhat badly," or "very badly," in these categories:<sup>4</sup>

- Transportation and traffic
- Air quality
- Quality of drinking water
- Cleanliness of oceans and beaches
- Crime control
- Sufficient housing for low-income people
- Social services, including services to the poor, homeless, and elderly, and child and health care
- Quality of the public schools

On the whole, as Fig. 13 indicates, respondents gave low marks to the handling of these problems. **Three-quarters of them felt that air quality, crime control, low-income housing, and traffic and transportation problems were being handled somewhat or very badly.** More than half also rated the handling of problems relating to water quality, ocean and beach conditions, social services, and public schools as very bad.

Again, these overall ratings mask interesting differences in the way racial/ethnic groups rate problem management. **Whites and blacks are more dissatisfied than Hispanics and Asians with problem management generally.** However, these differences themselves mask income differences within racial/ethnic groups.

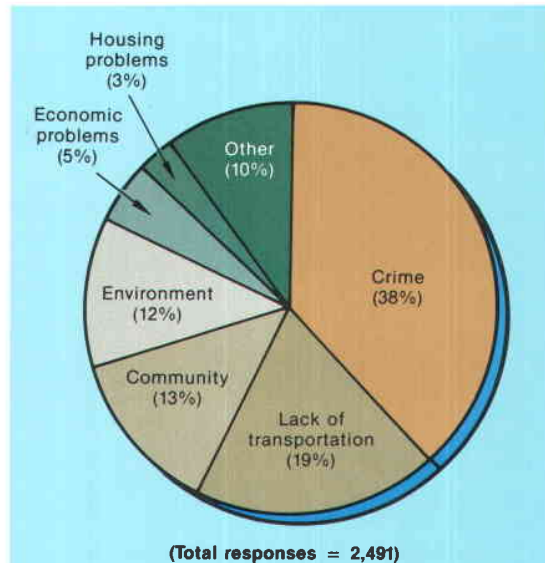


Fig. 12—Percentage of "worst" responses in each category

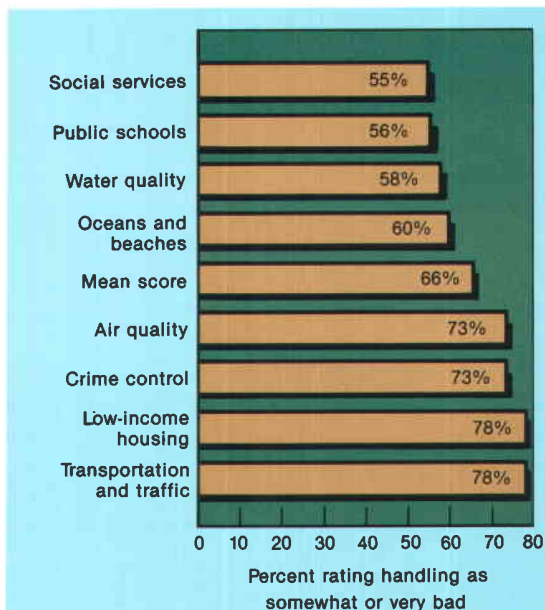


Fig. 13—How people rate the handling of different problems

<sup>4</sup>Of course, respondents are most familiar with the situation in their own locales, which probably influenced their ratings for the larger area.

Lower-income blacks and Hispanics tended to be less critical, but those with middle to upper incomes were even more critical than whites.

Here is how groups differed on each issue:

**Transportation and traffic.** The most negative ratings for management of transportation and traffic problems came from whites, Westside residents, upper-income households, people 18 to 34 years of age, homeowners, and workers with longer-than-average commutes. Minorities and people living in other parts of the region were less negative about the handling of transportation and traffic problems, and low-income respondents were much less negative.<sup>5</sup>

**Air quality.** Residents of Riverside and San Bernardino counties appeared to rate air-quality management lower than did residents elsewhere, although the difference is not statistically significant.<sup>6</sup>

**Water quality.** Whites and people under 35 years of age were much more likely to rate water-quality management poorly. Minorities, generally, and Hispanics, particularly, seemed less negative on this point.

**Oceans and beaches.** Asians and Hispanics were most positive about the management of oceans and beaches, while whites and blacks were more negative. Respondents in the Central area and in northern Los Angeles County, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange counties were significantly less negative about this problem than Westsiders were.

**Crime control.** Although crime control was rated poorly generally, blacks gave it the lowest ratings.

**Providing low-income housing.** Whites, blacks, and middle-income people were more negative than Asians, Hispanics, and other income groups about the handling of low-income housing.

**Social services.** The handling of social services had the least negative ratings; however, whites and blacks rated it lower than Asians and Hispanics did.

**Public schools.** More negative responses about school quality were received from people in the San Fernando Valley than from people in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Households with children were also more negative than childless households.

## GROWTH

It is impossible to talk about life in Los Angeles without talking about growth. To find out about how people perceive the region's growth, we asked this question: "The Los Angeles region has grown over the past 10 or 15 years in terms of population, industry, and land development. From what you've seen, would you say that the Los Angeles region has been growing very fast, somewhat fast, somewhat slowly, or very slowly?"

### How Fast People Think the Region Has Grown

**Almost all of our respondents agreed that the region has grown fast over the last 10 to 15 years, and a large majority think it has grown too fast. Seventy-five**

<sup>5</sup>The results of the Wirthlin Group's survey are consistent with several of our results regarding traffic and transportation. They found that "the more educated a respondent is, and/or the higher his income, the more likely he is to mention traffic as the south's most pressing problem." (p. 26)

<sup>6</sup>That is, the difference might have come about by chance.

percent called the region's growth "very fast," and 22 percent saw it as "somewhat fast." Seventy-eight percent divided about evenly in their views that growth was much too fast or somewhat too fast. Only 20 percent saw growth as about right, and only 2 percent thought it was too slow.

### How Respondents Would Like to See Los Angeles Grow

Most Los Angeles residents favor slower growth (Fig. 14). In every racial/ethnic group, more people said they would prefer slower growth or no growth to the same or faster growth (Fig. 15). However, the proportion of favor varies considerably across these groups. **Asians, Hispanics, and blacks voiced much stronger support for holding steady or for faster growth (Fig. 16).**

Not surprisingly, attitudes toward growth differed across the region. Most of the people in all the sample areas said they would like to see slower growth. However, as shown in Fig. 17, there was stronger sentiment in some areas than in others for growth at the same or a faster pace.

The survey also found other "paired opposites" with different attitudes toward growth: non-voters, renters, and people who came to Los Angeles at the age of 18 or older favored growth more than voters, homeowners, and natives or people who came to the area before they were 18.

### What People Expect of Slow-Growth Measures

The survey asked respondents whether they thought slow-growth measures would actually be effective. **Most of them said they believe Los Angeles will continue to grow, with or without strong efforts to stop or slow the speed of growth over the next 10 or 15 years.** However, about 40 percent believe growth will slow if

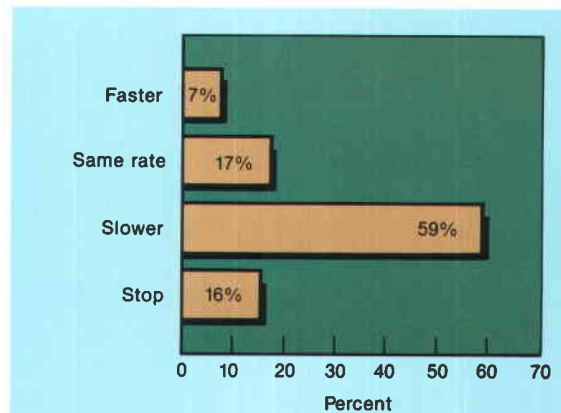


Fig. 14—How fast people think Los Angeles should grow over the next 10 or 15 years

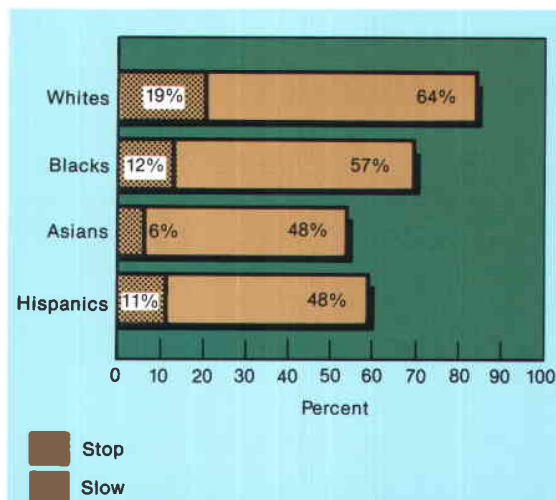
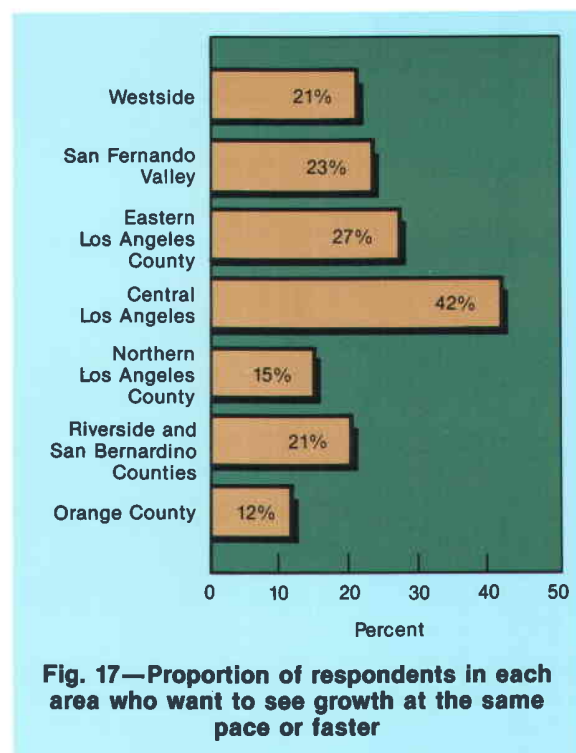
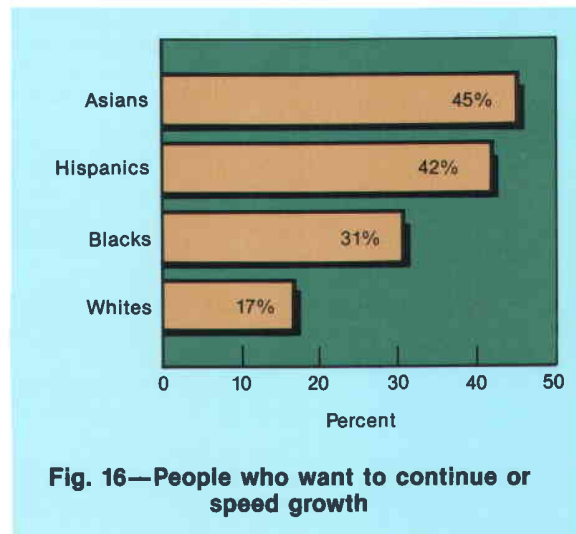
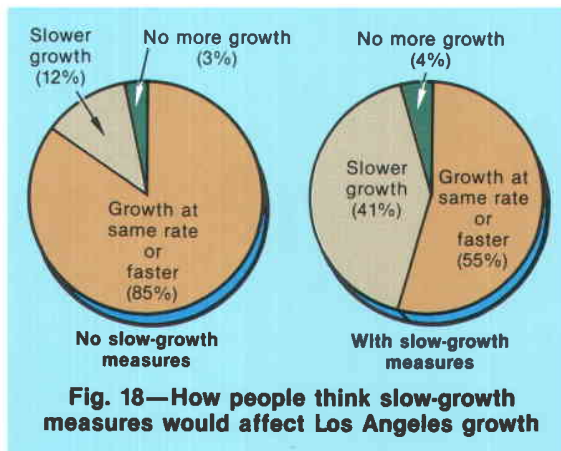


Fig. 15—People who want to slow or stop growth







slow-growth measures are adopted. As Fig. 18 indicates, only a tiny fraction expect growth to stop—with or without such measures.

Only 17 percent of the sample said they expected to see the growth rate they would like over the next 10 or 15 years if no slow-growth measures are adopted. However, 37 percent believe that introducing such measures will limit the growth rate to the level they would like.

### How People Believe the Benefits of Growth Are Distributed

Respondents believe that growth over the past 10 or 15 years has produced more jobs, but that they are jobs that require more education (Table 2). They also think growth has benefited Los Angeles area residents generally, but that it has benefited immigrants the most and long-term residents the least (Table 3).

### PLANNING AND REGULATION

Do people favor planning and regulation as cures for the high growth rate in the region? Because the topic of planning and regulation might be unfamiliar to some respondents, we introduced it by saying: "Some people think planning and regulation are good because they put elected officials in control of the process. Others think they are bad because people who own land should have the right to do what they want with their property." We then asked the respondents how much planning and regulation they felt was appropriate for:

**Table 2**  
How people associate growth with job opportunities

Education required for job	Percent saying growth has produced more jobs at that level
No high school diploma	41
High school diploma	58
College degree	87

- The use of land for single-family or multiple-family housing or for commercial and industrial use.
- Placement of housing in relation to jobs in order to reduce commuting and traffic congestion.
- Protection of the environment, including the quality of air and water.
- The size and appearance of buildings, including number of stories, how much parking is required, and the proportion of a building lot that can be built on.



- Traffic control, including the use of existing streets and highways and the construction of new ones.

The survey showed that **respondents overwhelmingly support planning and regulation**: 87 to 97 percent said they favor much or some regulation in all five categories, as shown in Fig. 19. Opposition to these measures was minimal. These results seconded the response to growth. While respondents expect growth, they want it to be planned and regulated.

### WILLINGNESS TO PAY

Los Angeles residents are quite vocal about the region's problems, but are they willing to pay for efforts to address these problems? We addressed this question by asking (1) what general methods respondents favor for raising revenues and (2) how *they* feel about paying more taxes to deal with regional problems.

#### Rating Methods of Raising Money

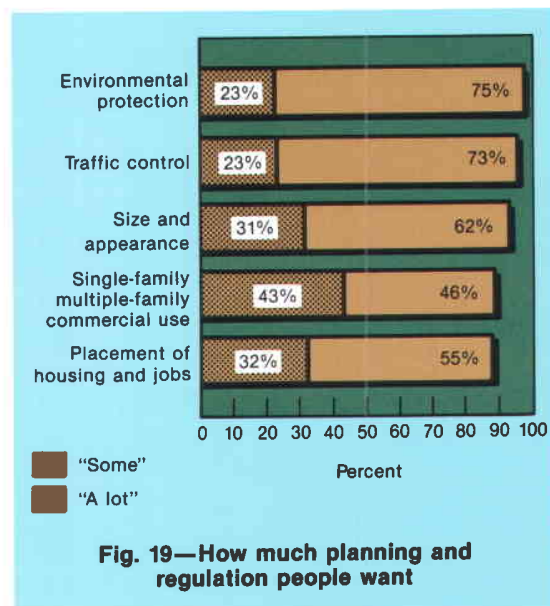
We asked respondents to rate the following modes of raising revenues (both general revenues and those for specific purposes):

##### General tax increases

- Across-the-board increases affecting general income taxes all individuals and households pay
- Income taxes businesses pay
- Sales taxes

**Table 3**  
How people think growth has benefited different groups

People who have:	Percent who have benefited very much
Lived in L.A. for 10 years or more	14
Moved to L.A. in the past 10 years from other parts of the U.S.	24
Moved to L.A. in the past 10 years from outside the U.S.	51



**Fig. 19—How much planning and regulation people want**

### Taxes for specific purposes

- Increases in gasoline taxes for improvements in transportation systems
- Increases in property taxes (through modifications to Proposition 13) for public education
- Taxes on the use of the airports or the Port of Los Angeles to finance improvements to these facilities
- Developer fees on new construction to pay for schools, streets, and sanitation services required to support their developments
- User fees to be paid by property owners for improvements that benefit their property, such as water and sewer systems

These measures elicited mixed responses (Fig. 20). Developer fees and airport user taxes were widely endorsed, and gas, business, and property-improvement taxes were favored by a majority of respondents. People split about evenly on sales taxes, and property and income taxes were unpopular (see Fig. 20). Not surprisingly, **people favored methods that would affect them the least**, such as business taxes and user fees, with the exception of gasoline taxes.

**Developer fees** were shown to be the **most popular method of raising revenues**. Although 87 percent of the sample favored such fees, responses differed by area. Residents of the San Fernando Valley and the Westside endorsed developer fees more than residents of the other areas did.

More than three-fourths of the respondents said they thought **user taxes on airports and the Port of Los Angeles** would be a good way of raising revenues. However, these taxes were significantly more popular with residents of the central, northern, and eastern Los Angeles County areas than with Westside residents. Younger and lower-income people and homeowners appeared to favor them less than other groups.

While 70 percent of the respondents favor **gas taxes to raise revenue for improvements to transportation systems**, there were some significant differences in response by race, income, and geographic area. Blacks and people with incomes under \$20,000 were significantly less likely to favor this method than upper-income

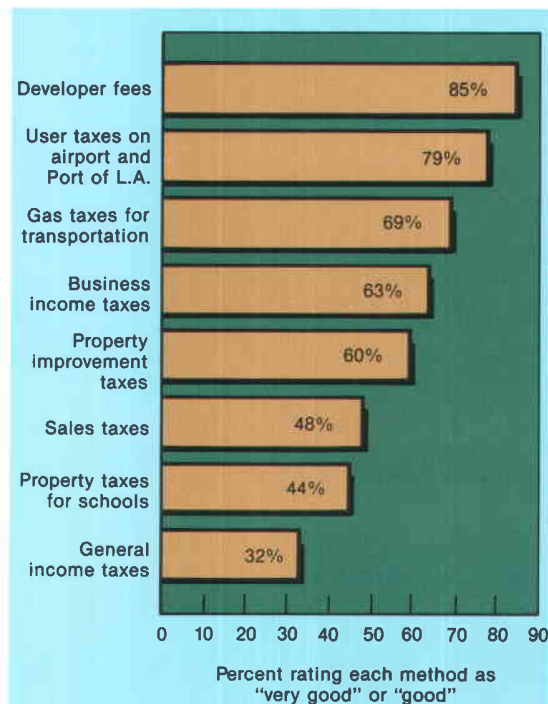


Fig. 20—How people rate different ways of raising revenues (all areas)

whites were. Northern Los Angeles County residents also favored it significantly less than Westside residents did.

People in the sample favored raising revenues through **business income taxes** by almost two to one. People under 35 and over 65 were the strongest supporters, along with lower- and middle-income respondents. Again, Westside residents appeared most supportive; Orange County residents were significantly less so.

While 60 percent of the sample favored **taxing property owners** to pay for improvements that would benefit their property, there were significant differences by race, geographic area, and homeownership. Hispanics and Asians indicated that they support it more than whites or blacks do, and Westside residents seemed more supportive of this kind of tax than residents of the other areas. Not surprisingly, homeowners were significantly less supportive than renters.

The survey showed that 48 percent of the sample favor **sales taxes**. Black, Asian, and Hispanic respondents appeared less enthusiastic than whites, and low- and middle-income respondents were less supportive than upper-income respondents. The youngest and oldest respondents were less favorable toward sales taxes than respondents between 35 and 65. These results are not surprising in view of the greater effect that sales taxes have on lower-income people.

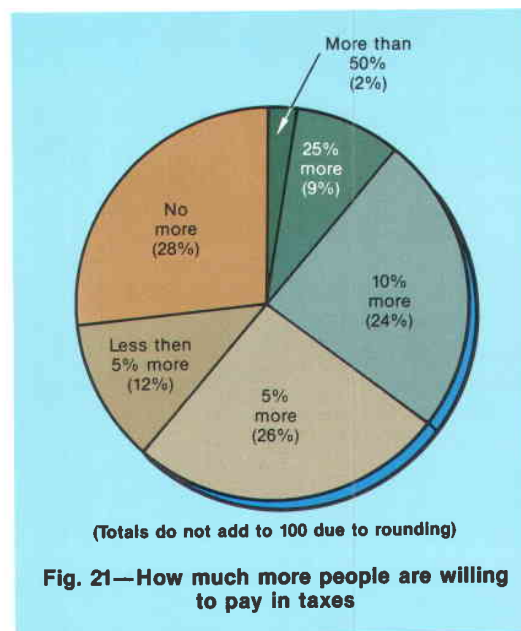
Just under half the sample indicated that they favor **property taxes to pay for improving the schools**. This method was rated significantly higher by people with incomes of less than \$20,000 and people under age 35 than by upper-income respondents between 35 and 65. Homeowners (to whom the property taxes would apply most directly) favored them significantly less than renters did.

**General income taxes were the least popular way of raising funds overall.** Moreover, racial and income differences were less important than geographic differences in the responses to this method. Westside residents favored it more than people in all the other areas.

#### Respondents' Willingness to Increase Their Own Taxes

Nearly three-quarters of the sample said they were willing to pay more taxes to address the region's problems. Only 11 percent were *very* unwilling to do so. We asked those who are willing how much more they would pay. The combined results are shown in Fig. 21.

It is not surprising that some groups are more willing than others to pay higher taxes. However, we were surprised at some of the groups that said they were willing to shoulder a higher tax burden. In general, blacks, Hispanics, parents, lower-



#### IV. WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE FROM THE SURVEY?

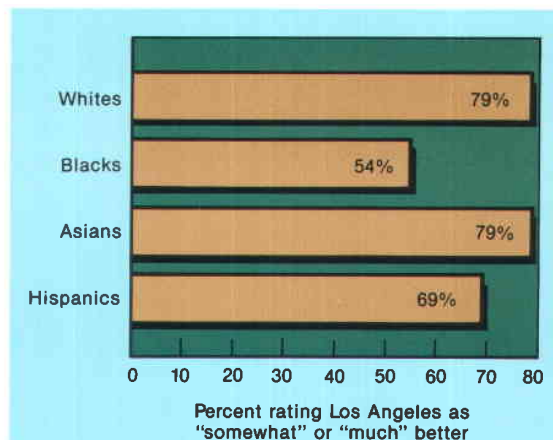
The Los Angeles region is large, demographically diverse, and growing fast. These characteristics have produced strains and problems that people recognize and worry about. The residents are willing to enact regulations and shoulder taxes to address these problems, and we were impressed with the intensity of their concern and their basic commitment to the region. People want to preserve what is good about living in Los Angeles, and they believe the problems can be corrected.

##### WHY DO PEOPLE RATE THE QUALITY OF LIFE SO HIGH?

First, the people of the Los Angeles region recognize that they live in an important city marked by wealth, economic prominence, attractive lifestyles, and cultural and artistic distinction. Ninety-eight percent rank Los Angeles as a city of wealth and economic importance—over two-thirds rate it as one of the top five cities in the world in economic importance. Ninety-seven percent rank it as an important city in terms of lifestyle and culture, and just under half rate it as one of the top five cities on those dimensions.

Second, as Fig. 24 shows, the residents believe Los Angeles offers better job opportunities than other parts of the country. Seventy-four percent rate opportunities in the Los Angeles region as somewhat or much better than in the rest of the nation. Further, people see these opportunities as generally open to everyone who makes an effort to succeed. As Fig. 25 indicates, 75 percent of the respondents feel that Los Angeles is a place where anyone who is willing to work hard can make a good living. Only 23 percent think a person needs money or connections to earn a good living in Los Angeles.

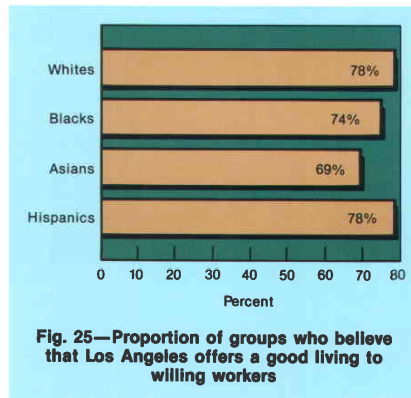
Finally, Los Angeles is a place where many people live by choice (rather than by accident of birth). Fifty-one percent of the people in our sample were attracted to the region as adults. They live here because they have deliberately chosen to.



**Fig. 24—How different groups compare job opportunities in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States**

### RESIDENTS AGREE ON MANY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Despite the diversity of the region's residents, there is a broad consensus about what is important, how well or badly problems are being handled, how they might be solved, and the priorities that should be placed on solving them.



Area residents value the good weather; proximity to beaches, mountains, and desert; and the cultural and recreational diversity of Los Angeles. They value the economic opportunities open to all. These are powerful reasons for feeling good about life in Los Angeles.

Area residents also agree broadly about what they want their communities to offer: freedom from crime, good public schools, clean air, and good access by car.

They recognize and worry about the region's problems. They see crime as the major problem, followed by transportation and air quality. They also agree that these problems are not being handled well.

Nearly everyone agrees that the Los Angeles region has experienced rapid growth over the past 10 or 15 years. Most of the residents believe it has grown too fast, and most of them would like to see growth slow down or stop. However, whites are much more negative about rapid growth than other racial/ethnic groups are.<sup>1</sup>

People expect that growth will continue at the same rate or will accelerate unless a determined effort is made to stop or slow it. They support planning and regulation as means of controlling growth and development in the region, including planning for land use, environmental protection, and transportation. However, even with slow-growth measures, most people think growth will continue at the same or a faster pace. Only about one-third of them think that slow-growth measures will be effective.

The desire to slow growth does not mean that people are unaware of the benefits of growth. A substantial majority say that growth has been good for area residents, particularly for people who came here in the past 10 or 15 years. They also believe that growth has created jobs, especially for people who have more education.

People are willing to consider methods of raising revenues to deal with area problems. Taxes on businesses, user taxes, developer fees, and taxes on property owners to pay for neighborhood improvements are favored over more broadly based approaches to raising revenues, such as increases in general income taxes and

<sup>1</sup>A 1987 *Los Angeles Times* survey found even stronger sentiment for growth among minorities than we did. According to Kevin Roderick ("L.A. Splits Down Ethnic Line on Issues," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1987), a large majority of blacks and Latinos want faster growth.



property taxes. Gasoline taxes are the exception: two-thirds of our survey respondents favor them.

Although they implicitly prefer taxes paid by others, 72 percent of our respondents said they would be willing to pay more taxes if that would help correct the region's problems. One-third of them would be willing to have their own taxes increased by 5 percent or less, one-fourth would be willing to have a 10 percent increase, and 11 percent would be willing to have an increase of 25 percent or more.

*Saying* one is willing to increase taxes, of course, is not the same as *voting* for tax increases, or voting for politicians who would propose to increase taxes. In a survey of this kind, people often want to appear more civic-minded than they really are. On the other hand, the process of thinking about the problems of the Los Angeles region and how they might be solved may have caused people to consider tax increases favorably as one way of solving them, along with planning, regulation, legislation, and efforts by the private sector.

When asked to set priorities for solving problems, our respondents allocated an imaginary \$100 fairly consistently across six spending categories we listed. The most generous share was allocated to crime control, followed by public education, social services, transportation, environment, and finally, recreational services.

#### WHERE RESIDENTS OF THE REGION DISAGREE

Despite broad consensus on major issues, various groups differ on other points. Whites and upper-income people are more inclined to rate the weather and the geographic diversity of Los Angeles as its best features. Minorities are more inclined to emphasize the economic opportunities, and, unlike whites, a substantial fraction of them favor continued growth.

Whites are more concerned with traffic as a major problem and would be more inclined to devote resources to improving the traffic situation. They are also already wealthier than minorities and are less impressed with the economic opportunities in Los Angeles. These two differences probably explain why whites are also more negative about continued rapid growth.

Blacks, on the other hand, are least concerned with traffic and would dedicate resources to other problem areas, particularly crime control. Minorities, in general, are more interested than whites in ethnic arts festivals, cultural activities, ethnic and social diversity, living in communities with mixed-income housing, and public transportation.

Looking ahead, it is possible that environmental issues will intensify, reflecting the concerns of younger people, who give higher scores than others do to parks and recreation areas and clean air and water. Young people are also more negative about how air and water quality are currently being handled and would dedicate more resources to solving problems of the environment.

We do not believe these areas of disagreement would be particularly troublesome for efforts to address regional problems. Hardly anyone would disagree that the problems exist—different groups simply assign varying importance to different issues. For purposes of political action, these differences should be taken into account in allocating resources.

Planners should also take into account the fact that the racial/ethnic mix of Los Angeles is going to change, perhaps radically, during the next decade. If the racial/ethnic differences that we found persist, the emphasis given some problems

and solutions will also have to shift. Planners will have to recognize this, or they will not be able to obtain an adequate base of support for new policies and programs.

Although their emphases differ, Los Angeles' various groups generally agree on what is good and what is bad about life in the area. They also agree on the need for planning and regulation to control growth and build a better future. Moreover, they say they are willing to pay the price of addressing Los Angeles' problems.

These points of agreement are, in some sense, a challenge to policymakers and community leaders. The message from this survey is that the majority of the people of Los Angeles are concerned about the possibility that the quality of life will deteriorate in the next decade. They want—and would support—changes in the way the region's problems are handled, and they are calling for better planning and regulation. In essence, their responses define the agenda for the region's leaders and offer a base of support for action.





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