

State Poll

The Public Loss Of Confidence

By Mervin D. Field

On the 197th anniversary of this country's birth of independence, the California public's confidence in many of our society's basic institutions appears to be less than strong.

In a survey completed in May of this year, a representative cross-section of 541 California adults was asked to express what degree of confidence it had in a range of basic institutions, ranging from the medical profession, to Congress, universities, organized religion, manufacturing companies, and so on. In all, a list of nineteen entities was tested.

"Research scientists," law enforcement agencies, such as the "local police department" and the FBI score relatively high, as does the medical profession. Relatively low levels of public confidence are found for food companies, for manufacturing corporations, for financial institutions, and for organized labor.

The public expresses marked lack of confidence in the public school system, in organized religion and in the Presidency.

For this survey, a representative cross-section of 541 adults was asked this question: "Now, I would like to find out how you feel about some of our governmental, business, and social institutions. For each group listed on this card, I'd like you to tell me how much confidence you, personally, have in it."

Here are the results:

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE — ALL ADULTS STATEWIDE

	A lot of cnfcd. prcnt	Some cnfcd. prcnt	Not much cnfcd. prcnt	No opin. prcnt
Research scientists	58	34	5	3
Local police department	51	40	7	2
The medical profession	43	44	13	0
The F.B.I.	43	40	13	4
Consumer protection groups and organizations	37	42	14	7
The President of the United States	34	34	31	1
Public utilities (such as gas, electricity, telephone)	33	48	17	2
The Supreme Court	31	45	21	3
Congress	30	53	15	2
Environmental protection groups and organizations	30	48	17	5
The news media (such as newspapers, television news, and news-magazines)	27	55	18	2
Universities and colleges	25	62	11	2
Organized religions and churches	24	46	28	2
Public school system	23	51	25	1
Financial institutions (banks, insurance companies)	22	51	25	2
Organized labor	13	50	34	3
The State Legislature	12	67	16	5
Manufacturing corporations	9	55	30	6
Food companies	9	52	35	4

*Less than one-half of one percent.

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