

MARIN COUNTY FREE LIBRARY BOND FEASIBILITY SURVEY
Topline Report
(With Trended Results)
March 2008

The Marin County Free Library (MCFL) commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a tracking survey of Marin County voters residing within the MCFL service areas to assess the feasibility of passing a library bond measure to fund the improvement of public library facilities; survey the tax rates at which voters will support the measure; prioritize potential projects to be funded based on voter reception; and test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments on potential voter support.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Overall, 800 voters in the MCFL service areas completed the survey, representing a total universe of approximately 71,934 likely November 2008 voters. To investigate whether potential voter support for the measure differed by tax zones, the sample of 800 voters was divided across the following regions:

- Zone 1 (n = 275): Unincorporated Western and Northwestern Marin County (including Fairfax)
- Zone 2 North (n = 275): Novato
- Zone 2 Central/South (n = 150): Civic Center and Marin City
- Zone 3 (n = 100): Corte Madera

The study parameters resulted in a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent at the overall level (5.9 percent for the Zone 1 sample of 275; 5.9 percent for the Zone 2 North voter sample of 275; 8.0 percent for the Zone 2 Central/South voter sample of 150; and 9.8 percent for the Zone 3 voter sample of 100). Interviews were conducted from February 25 through February 28, 2008, and the average interview time was approximately 12 minutes.

Once collected, the sample of voters was compared with the registered voter population in the MCFL service areas of Marin County to examine possible differences between the demographics of the sample of respondents and the actual universe. The data were weighted to correct differences, and the results presented are representative of the voter characteristics of these areas in terms of gender, age, and political party type. Specifically, the sample was weighted by the population distribution of the four regions mentioned above, the respondent age, respondent gender, the political party type, and the household party type.

QUESTIONNAIRE METHODOLOGY

To avoid the problem of systematic position bias, where the order in which a series of questions is asked systematically influences the answers, several questions in the survey were randomized such that the respondents were not consistently asked the questions in the same order. The series of items in Questions 1, 4, 5, and 6 were randomized to avoid such position bias. Further, Questions 5 and 6 were rotated so that the sample was balanced in whether they first heard arguments in favor of or opposed to the ballot measure.

51 voters in the City of Corte Madera were specifically asked Question 6F, since it dealt with an issue that was relevant to the voters in that city.

MEAN SCORES AND ROUNDING

In addition to the percentage breakdown of responses to each question, results for the questions relating to the issues of importance (Q1), the rate of the tax increase (Q3), the features of the measure (Q4), and the arguments (Q5 and Q6) include a mean score. For example, to derive respondents' overall perception of the importance of a given issue (Q1), a number value is first assigned to each response category (in this case, "Very Important" = +2, "Somewhat Important" = +1, and "Not at all Important" = 0). The individual answer of each respondent is then assigned the corresponding number – from 2 to 0 in this example. Finally, all respondents' answers are averaged to produce a final score that reflects overall importance. The resulting mean score makes the interpretation of the data considerably easier. Responses of "Don't Know" (DK/NA) were not included in the calculations of the means for any questions.

Conventional rounding rules apply to the percentages shown in this report, .5 or above is rounded up to the next number, and .4 or below is rounded down to the previous number. As a result, the percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

1. Next, I'd like to ask you about a number of community issues facing Marin County residents. For each issue, please tell me if it is very important, somewhat important, or not at all important to you personally.

	Survey Year	Mean Score	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	DK/NA
1A. Improving public transportation, including the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit, or SMART	2008	1.3	55%	23%	21%	1%
	2007	1.3	50%	28%	20%	3%
1B. Maintaining County parks and open space	2008	1.7	69%	28%	3%	0%
	2007	1.6	66%	30%	4%	1%
1C. Improving and expanding library facilities	2008	1.3	36%	53%	10%	1%
	2007	1.3	38%	51%	11%	1%
1D. Preventing local tax increases	2008	1.2	37%	43%	18%	2%
	2007	1.1	33%	44%	21%	3%
1E. Maintaining fire protection services	2008	1.8	82%	16%	2%	0%
	2007	1.8	79%	20%	1%	0%
1F. Maintaining County hospital services	2008	1.7	72%	24%	4%	1%
	2007	1.6	68%	27%	4%	1%

Computation of Mean Scores: "Very Important" = +2, "Somewhat Important" = +1, and "Not at all Important" = 0

2. Later this year, voters in Marin County may be asked to vote on some local ballot measures. Let me read you a summary of one of the proposals.

To improve library facilities, enhancing free access for all residents to learning and enrichment through:

- Upgrading computer technology;
- Updating library facilities to be accessible to people with disabilities;
- Creating dedicated space for seniors and educational programs for children and teens;
- Improving energy efficiency
and
- Increasing space for 40 percent more books, CDs and DVDs;

Shall the Marin County Free Library be authorized to issue \$136 million dollars in bonds with independent citizen expenditure oversight?

If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely [yes/no] or probably [yes/no]?

	2008	2007*
Definitely Yes	33%	33%
Probably Yes	27%	29%
Probably No	12%	14%
Definitely No	19%	17%
DK/NA	10%	8%

* Different ballot question wording in 2007 survey

3. Right now, the exact amount of a property tax increase to repay the bonds has not been decided.

If you heard that the annual property tax increase for a household in Marin County would be _____ per \$100,000 dollars in assessed value to fund the public library improvements, would you vote yes or no on this ballot measure? Is that definitely [yes/no] or probably [yes/no]?

	Mean Scores	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably No	Definitely No	DK/NA
3A. 19 dollars a year	0.3	31%	26%	12%	26%	6%
3B. 17 dollars a year	0.3	35%	24%	12%	24%	5%
3C. 15 dollars a year	0.5	41%	20%	11%	22%	5%
3D. 13 dollars a year	0.6	47%	18%	10%	21%	4%

Computation of Mean Scores: "Definitely Yes" = +2, "Probably Yes" = +1, "Probably No" = -1, and "Definitely No" = -2.

4. Now, let’s talk about the types of projects that might be funded by the proposed ballot measure. As I read to you each project that might be funded, please tell me if it would make you more or less likely to vote for the measure.

The proposed bond measure will raise funds for: _____. Would you be more or less likely to vote for the measure given this information? Would that be much [more/less] likely or somewhat [more/less] likely to vote for the measure?

	Survey Year	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	DK/NA
4A. Creating dedicated space for educational programs for children and teens	2008	0.8	37%	33%	10%	8%	11%	1%
	2007	0.9	40%	33%	7%	7%	11%	1%
4B. Creating dedicated space for senior programs, such as local author visits and lifelong learning classes	2008	0.6	27%	35%	14%	11%	11%	1%
	2007	0.7	36%	32%	8%	10%	10%	2%
4C. Creating dedicated space for tutoring, homework help, and quiet reading	2008	0.5	29%	31%	13%	13%	13%	1%
	2007	0.7	36%	32%	8%	11%	13%	1%
4D. Housing a 40 percent increase in the library collection, including books, CDs and DVDs	2008	0.6	30%	34%	12%	10%	10%	3%
	2007	0.8	39%	30%	7%	9%	12%	3%
4E. Upgrading technology, computers and other library equipment to ensure that they are flexible enough to change with the times	2008	0.9	35%	38%	10%	7%	8%	1%
	2007	0.9	41%	36%	8%	5%	10%	1%
4F. Updating the library facilities to be accessible to people with disabilities	2008	0.8	33%	36%	12%	9%	9%	2%
	2007	0.9	45%	28%	11%	6%	10%	1%

Computation of Mean Scores:

“Much More Likely” = +2, “Somewhat More Likely” = +1, “No Effect” = 0, “Somewhat Less Likely” = -1, and “Much Less Likely” = -2.

[ROTATE Q5 AND Q6.]

5. Voters will hear arguments from supporters in favor of the proposed ballot measure we have been discussing. As I read each of the arguments in favor of the measure, please tell me if you would be more likely to vote “yes” on the measure, given the argument.

Supporters of the measure say: _____ [INSERT RANDOMLY SELECTED ITEM FROM THE LIST BELOW]. Does hearing this argument make you much more likely or somewhat more likely to vote “yes” on the measure--or does it have no effect?

	Survey Year	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
5A. This measure is critical to our libraries’ mission to provide information and computer access to County residents who do not have access at home or at work.	2008	0.9	26%	38%	35%	1%
	2007	1.1	35%	38%	26%	1%
5B. All the money raised by this measure will be used for facility improvements. Not a penny will go toward administrative salaries.	2008	1.1	42%	27%	30%	1%
	2007	1.1	41%	30%	28%	1%
5C. This measure will pay for improvements to all the branches of the Marin County Free Library.	2008	1.0	33%	31%	34%	1%
	2007	1.1	39%	32%	27%	1%
5D. Low income residents of our County rely on our public libraries for vital educational and job training information, as well as computer and Internet access.	2008	1.0	36%	31%	32%	1%
	2007*	1.2	41%	33%	24%	1%
5E. With state budget cuts to our local schools, our students will be more reliant on County library resources.	2008	1.0	34%	31%	33%	2%
5F. This measure costs less than \$7 dollars per month for an average household.	2008	0.9	27%	30%	41%	2%

*Slightly different wording in 2007 survey.

Computation of Mean Scores: “Much More Likely” = +2, “Somewhat More Likely” = +1, “No Effect” = 0.

6. Voters will hear arguments from opponents against the proposed ballot measure we have been discussing. As I read each of the arguments against the measure, please tell me if you would be more likely to vote “no” on the measure given that argument.

Opponents of the measure say: _____ (INSERT RANDOMLY SELECTED ITEM FROM THE LIST BELOW). Does hearing this argument make you much more likely or somewhat more likely to vote “no” on the measure--or does it have no effect?

	Survey Year	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
6A. Taxes are already too high in the County.	2008	0.6	21%	19%	59%	1%
	2007	0.7	26%	20%	53%	1%
6B. There are far more pressing priorities in the County needing our tax dollars than library facilities, including fire protection, preserving open space, and the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit.	2008	0.7	20%	27%	50%	3%
	2007*	0.8	28%	27%	44%	1%
6C. It is unclear where each library will be built and how the money will be spent. Why should we support raising taxes for something so vague?	2008	0.8	25%	27%	46%	2%
	2007	0.8	26%	26%	46%	2%
6D. What if this measure turns out to be like another College of Marin in which they run out of money, even after raising our taxes?	2008	0.8	24%	24%	48%	4%
	2007	0.8	25%	23%	48%	5%
6E. We still have not seen the full effects of the mortgage industry troubles on our property values. It is a really bad idea to raise property taxes right now.	2008	0.8	27%	21%	51%	2%
6F. There are far more pressing priorities in Corte Madera needing our tax dollars than library facilities, such as police services.**	2008	0.6	17%	26%	56%	0%

* Slightly different wording in 2007 survey.
 ** Asked to Corte Madera voters only (n=51)

Computation of Mean Scores: “Much More Likely” = +2, “Somewhat More Likely” = +1, “No Effect” = 0.

7. Now that you have heard more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it again.

To improve library facilities, enhancing free access for all residents to learning and enrichment through:

- Upgrading computer technology;
- Updating library facilities to be accessible to people with disabilities;
- Creating dedicated space for seniors and educational programs for children and teens;
- Improving energy efficiency
and
- Increasing space for 40 percent more books, CDs and DVDs;

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If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely [yes/no] or probably [yes/no]?

	2008	2007*
Definitely Yes	31%	33%
Probably Yes	26%	26%
Probably No	13%	13%
Definitely No	23%	23%
DK/NA/Refused	6%	6%

* Slightly different ballot question wording in 2007 survey

8. Next, I'd like you to think about how the economy has changed since last spring, and how this may have affected your household finances. Do you think that your household is financially better off, about the same, or worse off today than you were, compared to last spring?

Better	8%
About the same	50%
Worse	41%
DK/NA	1%

Demographic Questions

A. To begin, how many years have you lived in Marin County?

One to Five years	10%
Six to Ten years	12%
Eleven to Fifteen years	10%
More than Fifteen years	68%
DK/NA	0%

B. How many school-aged children live in your household?

None	68%
One	14%
Two	13%
Three or more	3%
DK/NA	1%

C. Do you own or rent your home?

Own	81%
Rent	18%
DK/NA	1%

D. For statistical purposes only, what was the total income of your household before taxes in 2007?

\$40,000 or under	10%
\$40,001- \$60,000	8%
\$60,001- \$80,000	10%
\$80,001- \$100,000	8%
\$100,001 - \$120,000	9%
\$120,001 - \$140,000	6%
\$140,001 - \$160,000	4%
\$160,001 - \$180,000	2%
\$180,001 - \$200,000	3%
\$200,001 or more	9%
DK/NA	32%

E. Gender:

Male	47%
Female	53%

INFORMATION FROM VOTER FILE

F. Age:

18 to 29 years	8%
30 to 39 years	10%
40 to 49 years	21%
50 to 64 years	38%
65 years and older	23%

G. Party:

Democrat	54%
Republican	23%
Other	6%
DTS	18%

H. Household Party Type:

Democrat (1)	27%
Democrat (2+)	17%
Republican (1)	8%
Republican (2+)	9%
Other (1)	14%
Other (2+)	4%
Democrat & Other	7%
Republican & Other	10%
Democrat & Republican	3%
Democrat, Republican & Other	1%

I. Voting History:

	Poll	Mail	No
Primary 2000	44%	12%	44%
General 2000	55%	19%	26%
Primary 2002	28%	21%	51%
General 2002	41%	26%	32%
Recall 2003	46%	31%	23%
Primary 2004	38%	28%	34%
General 2004	46%	47%	7%
Primary 2006	28%	35%	37%
General 2006	37%	51%	12%