



**Department of Consumer Affairs  
Bureau of Automotive Repair**

## **2007 CONSUMER OPINION SURVEY**

### **FINAL SUMMARY REPORT**

**JULY, 2007**

**PREPARED BY**

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**FOR**





**2007 CONSUMER OPINION SURVEY  
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## Executive Highlights:

This Executive Highlights section describes the key results from both phases of the study. Phase 1 consisted of 1,000 completed interviews with a statewide representative sample of California consumers and results are considered accurate to within plus/minus 3.1%, nineteen times out of twenty. In Phase 2, at least 300 interviews were conducted with respondents from each of three underserved populations (Spanish-speaking, senior, and low-income). Differences between the statewide and the underserved populations are also discussed.

### *Overall Awareness and General Impressions*

Phase 1: The California Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) is not particularly well-known among California consumers: only 33% of all respondents said they had some knowledge about BAR and the services it provides. Respondents who were aware of BAR were fairly accurate in describing the main functions of BAR: the three most frequently mentioned were monitoring auto repair shops, protecting the consumer, and handling complaints/mediating problems.

- *Males claimed to be more knowledgeable about BAR than females, and households with three or more vehicles were more aware of BAR than those with fewer vehicles.*

Phase 2: Awareness among the three underserved populations was consistent with the statewide sample: about a third of Spanish-speaking (35%), senior (40%), and low-income (33%) respondents reported having at least some knowledge of BAR and its services. Seniors and statewide respondents who were aware of the BAR name were more likely to be able to describe BAR's main functions than their low-income and Spanish-speaking counterparts.

- *Half (51%) of Spanish-speaking and 34% of low-income respondents who claimed to be knowledgeable about BAR were unable to describe BAR's function and some (13% and 9%, respectively) mistakenly thought BAR fixed cars.*
- *Awareness was independent of the primary language spoken in the home among all Hispanic respondents (including those from both Phase 1 and Phase 2). However, Hispanics who claimed to be aware of BAR and speak primarily Spanish at home were significantly more likely to be unable to explain BAR's main role than Hispanics who speak English (either primarily or as equally as Spanish).*

### *Overall Effectiveness of BAR*

Phase 1: Among those willing to give evaluations, the majority (86%) felt that BAR was effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission.

BAR is perceived as being useful -- the majority of respondents felt it very important that BAR continue providing its services to California consumers. BAR also needs to continue to increase its efforts to communicate its services to the general public.

The three most important BAR services from a consumer viewpoint include:

- regulating automotive repair shops,
- providing consumer assistance, and
- offering financial assistance programs.

Any improvements in these areas should be reflected in improved ratings of the overall effectiveness of BAR.

Phase 2: The vast majority of those willing to rate BAR felt BAR was effective; however, Spanish speakers gave statistically higher ratings for overall effectiveness (94%) than the statewide sample (86%). Additionally, all three underserved populations (62% of Spanish-speaking, 41% of senior and 47% of low-income respondents) were significantly more likely than statewide respondents (34%) to feel BAR was “very” effective in terms of accomplishing its mission.

- *Hispanic respondents who speak Spanish at home (either primarily or equally with English) were significantly more likely to consider BAR to be “very” effective in terms of fulfilling its mission than Hispanics who only speak English.*
- *Seniors were significantly more likely than respondents in other groups to be undecided about BAR’s effectiveness.*

In terms of specific services, there is a definite consensus among the underserved and statewide populations that BAR should continue to process and handle complaints as well as regulate automotive repair shops. However, Spanish-speaking respondents found BAR’s communication services (that is, promoting its own services and providing news about the auto industry) to be significantly more valuable than senior, low-income and statewide respondents did. In terms of BAR’s financial assistance and license verification programs, Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were significantly more likely to find BAR’s consumer assistance programs useful than were senior and statewide respondents.

- *Further analyses among all Hispanic respondents by primary home language indicated that Hispanics who speak Spanish at home (either mainly or equally with English) were significantly more likely than Hispanics who speak only English to consider BAR’s financial assistance programs important.*

## Approval of Smog Check Program

Phase 1: The vast majority of respondents approve of California’s Smog Check Program.

- *Females, respondents with college degrees, and households with fewer than three vehicles were more likely to approve of the Smog Check Program than males, respondents with less education, and households with three or more vehicles.*

Those who approve of the Smog Check Program do so mainly for air quality, environmental, and pollution reduction reasons. The prime reasons for program disapproval included thinking the program is a money-grab, a burden on consumers, inefficient, and too expensive.

Phase 2: Significantly stronger support for the Smog Check Program was found among Spanish speakers (90% somewhat or strongly approved). That being said, the vast majority of all subgroups approved of the program: seniors (78%), low-income respondents (79%), and statewide respondents (80%).

- *Further analysis confirmed that Smog Check support was related to primary language spoken at home: Smog Check support was strongest among Spanish-speaking Hispanic respondents (both those who speak only Spanish or both languages equally) – about 20% higher than self-identified Hispanic respondents who speak only English at home.*

Statewide respondents who approved of the program were significantly more likely to say their Smog Check support was for air quality reasons, while Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were more likely to mention reducing pollution. Therefore, it will be important that BAR target its message for different populations.

In general, reasons for disapproval were comparable across respondent groups, although Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were significantly more likely than seniors and statewide respondents to attribute their displeasure to Smog Check's cost and expense.

### Smog Check Failure

Phase 1: Ten percent (10%) of respondent households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years.

- *Households with three or more vehicles, those with older vehicles, and Asian/Pacific Islanders and African-Americans were more likely to have failed a Smog Check within the past two years.*

Efforts could be increased to inform consumers about financial assistance: only 29% of respondents who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check were told about a financial assistance program.

Phase 2: A very small yet similar percentage (ranging from 6% to 10%) of underserved households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years.

In terms of learning about BAR's financial assistance program, fewer than half of those who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check (regardless of subgroup) had received information about the program at a Smog Check station.

### Smog Check Station Problem

Phase 1: Nine percent (9%) of all respondents experienced a problem with a Smog Check station.

- *Households with three or more vehicles were more likely to have experienced a problem with a Smog Check station than those with fewer vehicles.*

When asked to describe the general nature of the problem, answers included cost issues or being overcharged, customer service issues (such as rudeness, being unhelpful), experiencing fraud and unethical practices, having their vehicle fail the test, inconsistency (vehicle passed at one station but not another), being told to buy unneeded parts or services, among others.

The majority (62%) of respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station dealt with it by going to another Smog Check station. A smaller percentage (36%) returned to the station and confronted them with the problem. The overwhelming majority (99%) did NOT think to call a consumer protection agency or to file a complaint with BAR.

- *Lack of awareness, inconvenience, cynicism, and the nature of the problem were the main reasons why those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station did not contact BAR about the problem.*

In the end, however, the majority (61%) were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.

Phase 2: Problems with Smog Check stations were just as likely to be reported by underserved respondents as by consumers statewide. The types of problems respondents in each group experienced and the way they dealt with them were similar in nature. Respondents from all subgroups either returned to the shop to discuss the issue or went to another Smog Check station, but they did not think to turn to BAR for help.

Discontentment with the way Smog Check station problems or complaints were handled was universal: the majority of senior (61%), low-income (67%), Spanish-speaking (78%) and statewide respondents (61%) were dissatisfied.

### *Auto Repair Shops*

Phase 1: Having qualified mechanics or technicians was the most important consideration for respondents when choosing an auto repair shop and the convenience of its location was the least important.

Phase 2: Although the degree of importance varied within each subgroup, the order was generally the same:

1. having qualified mechanics or technicians.
2. licensing of shop – *more important to Spanish speakers (89% rated it “very” important) than to statewide respondents (77%).*
3. convenience of business hours – *more valuable to Spanish speakers (76%) than to statewide (62%) and senior (53%) respondents.*
4. convenience of location – *rated higher by low-income (67%) and Spanish-speaking (73%) respondents than those statewide (56%).*

### *Vehicle Repairs*

Phase 1: Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondent households experienced vehicle repairs in the last year.

- *Younger respondents, those in households with more people and vehicles, and upper-income respondents experienced more vehicle repairs in the last year than their counterparts.*

The most frequent type of vehicle repairs by far involved brakes, followed by auto body repairs. The least frequent type of repair was to the steering.

Phase 2: Vehicle repairs were most common in Spanish-speaking (69%) and statewide (68%) households, significantly more than in low-income households (58%). Seniors were least likely to have gone to an auto repair shop (45%) – significantly less likely than the other three groups.

Across all four subgroups, the most frequent type of vehicle repairs involved brakes, although it was much less of an issue among seniors.

## Overall Evaluation of Auto Repair Experience

Phase 1: The majority of respondents who took their vehicles to an auto repair shop had a positive experience – 80% rated the overall experience as “good” or “excellent”. Excellent experiences were described as those that focused on quality, reliability, timeliness, value for the money and courtesy. Poor experiences lacked these qualities.

Phase 2: The likelihood of having a positive experience at the auto repair shop was similar among the underserved respondents: 79% of Spanish speakers, 90% of seniors, and 77% of low-income respondents. However, significantly more seniors (52%) described their experience as “excellent” than their low-income (32%) and Spanish-speaking (23%) counterparts.

## Problems with Auto Repair Shops

Phase 1: Nine percent (9%) of all respondents personally experienced a problem with a repair shop within the past year. The main problem involved repairs that were not properly performed.

- *Problems with an auto repair shop were related to ethnicity, the size of the household, the number of vehicles in the household, and region.*

In contrast to the top two responses of how respondents dealt with problems with Smog Check stations, the majority (71%) of respondents who experienced a problem with a repair shop dealt with it by returning to the shop and confronting them with the problem and a smaller percentage (38%) went to another shop to have the problem repaired. Once again the overwhelming majority (96%) did NOT file a complaint with BAR.

The majority (61%) of those who experienced a problem with a repair shop were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.

Phase 2: Repair shop problems were reported more often by statewide respondents (9%) than by senior (4%) and Spanish-speaking (4%) respondents. Seven percent of low-income respondents reported a problem, although not statistically different from the other groups.

- *In terms of how underserved respondents dealt with the problem and their level of satisfaction with how it was handled, the number of respondents in each subgroup was so small that further analysis was not warranted.*

## Contact with BAR

Phase 1: Only 3% of all respondents contacted BAR within the past year, indicating that many California consumers who could benefit from BAR’s services are not using them.

The BAR website ([www.smogcheck.ca.gov](http://www.smogcheck.ca.gov)) was rated positively by at least 65% of the respondents who accessed it, but so few actually used it that results should be treated with caution.

Phase 2: The small proportion of respondents who contacted BAR was consistent among Spanish-speaking (2%), senior (1%), low-income (3%), and statewide (3%) respondents.

- *There were too few respondents in any of the underserved populations to conduct further comparisons about website evaluations.*

### *Likelihood to Consult BAR in Future*

Phase 1: The majority of all respondents (over 60%) said they will likely contact BAR in the future, now that they know more about it and the services it offers.

Phase 2: Overall, Spanish-speakers will be the most likely to contact BAR, followed by those who reside in low-income households, both of whom will be significantly more likely than seniors or consumers statewide.

### *Preferred Communication Strategies*

Phase 1: The top two preferred outreach tools for communicating BAR consumer information with respondents were a **toll-free consumer information center** and a **website**. The challenge is that only 3% of all respondents surveyed actually used these channels to contact BAR in the past year. In other words, there is a disconnect between what people say and what they did.

The effectiveness of communication outreach tools was dependent on certain demographic features. BAR could potentially use these differences in developing materials to target specific groups of consumers.

Phase 2: A **toll-free consumer information center** was the preferred way for BAR to provide consumer information among all “underserved” groups as well as among statewide respondents. With the exception of seniors, the majority of respondent groups also considered BAR’s **website** as an effective way for BAR to communicate with consumers. Given the nature of these two communication strategies, it can be concluded that consumers will look for a toll-free telephone number or a website when they need information.

In terms of educating consumers with unsolicited information about the programs and services BAR offers, **brochures** in dealerships, repair shops, and Smog Check premises as well as informational pieces on public access local **cable TV** were common preferences, although the effectiveness of each strategy varied by respondent group.

- *To get information in front of consumers before they need it, Spanish speakers also favored radio spots about BAR and its services (in Spanish, of course).*
- *To better inform the public, seniors and low-income respondents believed newspaper articles and a newsletter should be a part of BAR’s communication strategy.*

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

Phase 1: The most frequently-mentioned suggestion for improvement was for BAR to advertise more and gain visibility.

Phase 2: The recurring suggestion for improvement was for BAR to promote its programs and services more in order to increase awareness among consumers.

## **Background and Project Description**

In an effort to improve and make changes to its outreach efforts to California consumers, the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) of the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) was interested in surveying a representative sample of California residents. The DCA issued a Request for Quotes (RFQ) from State-Certified Small Business firms with public opinion survey expertise to develop and administer a consumer telephone survey to measure levels of awareness of BAR's existence and services (such as resolving consumer complaints and providing financial assistance for vehicles that fail a Smog Check) and to identify the types of automotive repair and smog problems experienced by consumers. In addition, BAR wanted to identify how best to communicate the availability of its services to the general population as well as how best to target outreach strategies for three "underserved" segments of the population – those with low incomes (current federal poverty guidelines identify a family unit consisting of four persons and earning \$20,000 or less as low-income<sup>1</sup>), Spanish-speakers, and seniors.

Aurora Research Group was awarded the contract to design and implement the study. A two-phase project was recommended and completed – Phase 1 consisted of conducting 1,000 telephone interviews with a statewide, representative sample of California residents (adult vehicle owners and drivers). Phase 2 involved completing up to a total of 300 interviews with targeted samples of three specific underserved populations, as defined in conjunction with DCA: seniors (aged 65 years and older), low-income households (less than \$20,000 annual income), and Spanish speakers.<sup>2</sup> Interviews in both phases were conducted in English and in Spanish with experienced bilingual telephone interviewers.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The broad survey objectives were outlined above. More specific objectives were to:

- Measure consumer awareness of the Bureau of Automotive Repair's (BAR) existence,
- Measure levels of awareness of the different programs and services provided by BAR,
- Assess levels of approval of the Smog Check program,
- Assess current contact with BAR,
- Identify reasons for not using BAR services,
- Assess the importance of continuing to provide specific services,
- Identify the types of consumer automotive repair and smog problems experienced,
- Determine how consumers handle repair problems with Smog Check stations and Automotive Repair Dealers,
- Compare levels of awareness among consumers who are aware of BAR services and those who are not, using demographic variables,
- Determine similarities and differences among "served" versus "underserved" populations using statistical analyses,
- Identify ways BAR could effectively communicate with the public,
- Describe suggestions for improvement,

<sup>1</sup> 2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines. Federal Register, Vol. 71, No. 15, January 24, 2006, pp.3848-3849: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/06poverty.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the subpopulation of Spanish speakers is not the same as the subpopulation of residents who self-identify their ethnic background as Hispanic or Latino – the latter is comprised of many individuals who speak only English.

- Create profiles of three underserved California consumers, and
- Gather vehicle and demographic information.

## **SAMPLING DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Phase 1:**

The sampling design for the baseline statewide (Phase 1) component involved conducting 1,000 random-digit-dialed (RDD) telephone surveys with a random sample of California adult households, proportionally representative of the state's population in general. The margin of error for this phase of the study was plus or minus 3.1%, at the 95% confidence level. In other words, we are 95% sure that the true population parameters lie within plus or minus 3.1% of the sample statistics. [As an example, if a response category to a question is chosen by 50% of respondents, we are 95% sure that the true population parameters lie between 46.9% and 53.1% (50.0% plus or minus 3.1%).]

It is known in survey research that certain groups can be more difficult to reach than others. For example, elderly females are the easiest group of respondents to interview. In order to avoid potentially unbalanced samples and thus ensure that the respondents were representative of the entire population of households, parameters were set with respect to geographic region, gender, and age<sup>3</sup> in order to accurately represent the state. Parameters set for geographic region were based on proportions derived from 2005 estimates calculated from the 2000 U.S. Census:<sup>4</sup>

#### **SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA – 16%**

Alameda County, Contra Costa County, Marin County, San Francisco County, San Mateo County, and Santa Clara County.

#### **CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA – 11%**

Calaveras County, Fresno County, Inyo County, Kern County, Kings County, Madera County, Mariposa County, Merced County, Mono County, San Benito County, San Joaquin County, Stanislaus County, Tulare County, and Tuolumne County.

#### **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA – 12%**

Alpine County, Amador County, Butte County, Colusa County, Del Norte County, El Dorado County, Glenn County, Humboldt County, Lake County, Lassen County, Mendocino County, Modoc County, Napa County, Nevada County, Placer County, Plumas County, Sacramento County, Shasta County, Sierra County, Siskiyou County, Solano County, Sonoma County, Sutter County, Tehama County, Trinity County, Yolo County, and Yuba County.

#### **LOS ANGELES AREA – 46%**

Los Angeles County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County, and Orange County.

#### **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA – 9%**

Imperial County and San Diego County.

#### **CENTRAL COAST AREA – 6%**

Monterey County, San Luis Obispo County, Santa Barbara County, Santa Cruz County, and Ventura County.

<sup>3</sup> Quotas were set for the 65 years and older age group to ensure they did not exceed 10.5% (according to the 2005 American Community Survey estimates based on 2000 Census.)

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2005 estimates from the 2000 U.S. Census. Reference: [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?\\_bm=yand-geo\\_id=04000US06and-\\_box\\_head\\_nbr=GCT-PH1and-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_Uand-format=ST-2](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=yand-geo_id=04000US06and-_box_head_nbr=GCT-PH1and-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_Uand-format=ST-2) Total number of households in California: 12,214,549.

**COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHICS WITH U.S. CENSUS DATA FOR CALIFORNIA**

Table 1 compares the actual demographics obtained in the Phase 1 statewide baseline survey with the proportions (where directly comparable) for California obtained from 2005 and 2006 estimates based on 2000 U.S. Census data. In general, the proportions obtained in Phase 1 interviewing were not substantially different than statewide census proportions. It can be seen that gender was very similar and for geographic location, the study proportions were exactly the same as Census statistics. Ten percent (10%) of the study sample was 65 years of age or older, compared with 10.5% for the entire state. Even ethnic background (which in the Census is categorized as “race”), for which no parameters were set, was not far off - for example, 65% of respondents in the current study self-identified as Caucasian versus 61% for the state as a whole (those who self-identified as only “white”); and 5% in the current study who self-identified as African-American versus 6% for the entire state.

**We are therefore reasonably confident that the results contained in Phase 1 of the current report are representative of the entire state of California, and can therefore be generalized to the population as a whole.** There was no need to post-weight the results, a statistical technique that is used to minimize differences between the sample and the population. In other words, the current results should reflect the general population of California in terms of gender, geographic location, age and ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Comparison of Phase 1 Sample to U.S. Census Data**

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

*Gender*<sup>6</sup>

|        | SAMPLE | U.S. CENSUS for CALIFORNIA |
|--------|--------|----------------------------|
| Male   | 48%    | 50%                        |
| Female | 52%    | 50%                        |

*Geographic Location*

|                          | SAMPLE | U.S. CENSUS |
|--------------------------|--------|-------------|
| San Francisco Bay Area   | 16%    | 16%         |
| Central California Area  | 11%    | 11%         |
| Northern California Area | 12%    | 12%         |
| Los Angeles Area         | 46%    | 46%         |
| Southern California Area | 9%     | 9%          |
| Central Coast Area       | 6%     | 6%          |

<sup>5</sup> Results from the statewide sample for the income and education questions cannot be compared with the U.S. Census figures because the question wording and response categories are different.

<sup>6</sup> 2005 American Community Survey Data Profile Highlights:  
[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=Searchandgeo\\_id=and\\_geoContext=and\\_street=and\\_county=and\\_cit yTown=and\\_state=04000US06and\\_zip=and\\_lang=enand\\_sse=onandpctxt=fphandpgsl=010](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Searchandgeo_id=and_geoContext=and_street=and_county=and_cit yTown=and_state=04000US06and_zip=and_lang=enand_sse=onandpctxt=fphandpgsl=010)

**Age**

|                    | SAMPLE | U.S. CENSUS for CALIFORNIA |
|--------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| 65 years and older | 10%    | 10.5%                      |

**Ethnic Background<sup>7</sup>**

|                        | SAMPLE | U.S. CENSUS |
|------------------------|--------|-------------|
| Caucasian              | 65%    | 61%         |
| African-American       | 5%     | 6%          |
| Hispanic               | 22%    | --          |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 6%     | 12%         |
| Other                  | 2%     | --          |
| Hispanic (of any race) | --     | 35%         |

A computer-generated random-digit-dialing (RDD) sample was used, proportional to the population by ZIP code in each county. Potential respondents were screened for age (adults 18 years old or older). All calls were conducted using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) technology between the dates of April 5 and May 22, 2007. The average interview lasted a little longer than thirteen minutes. Ninety-two percent (92%) of Phase 1 interviews were conducted in English, and 8% in Spanish.

**Phase 2:**

Phase 2 consisted of conducting “oversamples” of additional telephone surveys with targeted RDD and listed samples so as to achieve a total of 300 interviews within each of the three previously agreed-upon underserved populations: low-income residents (annual household income of less than \$20,000), seniors (65 years of age and older), and Spanish-speaking residents (interviews were only conducted in Spanish with this group). In other words, after Phase 1 was completed, it was determined how many additional interviews would need to be completed within each of the three underserved groups in order to reach a total of at least 300 interviews per group. Specific samples were then selected (such as high-density Hispanic census blocks or specific ZIP codes with a high incidence of low-income residents, for example)

<sup>7</sup> Note that the comparison with U.S. Census data should be treated with caution as the two questions were different (ethnic background is not necessarily the same as race). In 2000 the Census question changed, and allowed for multiple responses and therefore percentages exceed 100%. The percentages quoted here come from the table that specified: “one race”. (2005 American Community Survey Data Profile Highlights: ([http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=Searchandgeo\\_id=and\\_geoContext=and\\_street=and\\_county=and\\_cityTown=and\\_state=04000US06and\\_zip=and\\_lang=enand\\_sse=onandpctxt=fphandpgsl=010](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Searchandgeo_id=and_geoContext=and_street=and_county=and_cityTown=and_state=04000US06and_zip=and_lang=enand_sse=onandpctxt=fphandpgsl=010)) In the U.S. Census, the proportion specifying Hispanic or Latino was asked independently – i.e. “of any race” and therefore is not directly comparable to the ethnic background question asked in the current survey, where respondents were asked to choose a single category that best reflected their ethnic background.

in order to better target the subpopulations of interest, and additional interviews were conducted, using the same questionnaire as in Phase 1.<sup>8</sup>

For the Spanish-speaking subgroup, a total of 300 interviews were completed. For the low-income group, a total of 301 interviews were conducted and 359 interviews were completed with seniors. Table 2 indicates the margins of error affiliated with each subpopulation sample.

**Table 2: Sample Margins of Error**

|  | Sample Subpopulations  |
|--|--|
| Sampling Error<br>(95% confidence level) | For 300 sample size, plus/minus 5.7%<br>For 301 sample size, plus/minus 5.7%<br>For 359 sample size, plus/minus 5.2% |

Similar to Phase 1, potential respondents were screened for age (adults eighteen years old or older). All calls were conducted using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) technology between the dates of May 24 and June 18, 2007. Once again, the average interview lasted approximately sixteen minutes.<sup>9</sup>

## QUESTIONNAIRE

In consultation with BAR, Aurora Research Group designed a questionnaire to meet the discussed objectives and information requirements. The final questionnaire consisted of 90 questions, most of which were asked in a closed-ended format, but up to eleven questions (depending on skip patterns) were asked as open-ended. A copy of the questionnaire will be included in the statistical binder. The main issues addressed in the questionnaire included:

- levels of approval of the Smog Check Program,
- incidence of Smog Check vehicle failure and auto repairs,
- awareness of financial assistance program,
- incidence of problems with Smog Check stations and auto repair shops,
- nature of problems with Smog Check stations and auto repair shops,
- actions taken,
- incidence of contacting BAR to resolve problems,
- reasons for not contacting BAR,
- levels of awareness of BAR,
- ratings of effectiveness of BAR,
- likelihood to contact BAR in the future,
- preferred communication strategies, and
- suggestions for improvement.

A series of demographic questions were also asked, as well as the number of vehicles and age of the vehicles in each household. Verbatim responses to the open-ended questions were captured

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of statistical analyses, each subgroup was analyzed independently because some respondents belonged to more than one subgroup: all three subgroups: twenty-five individuals; Spanish and low-income: ninety-four individuals; Spanish and seniors: fifteen individuals; and low-income and seniors: eighty-five individuals.

<sup>9</sup> The longer survey length was due to the Spanish-language interviewing.

and later categorized for quantitative analyses. Transcripts of all the verbatim responses will be provided with the final report. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish.

### **METHODS OF ANALYSIS**

Responses were analyzed using univariate, bi-variate, and multivariate statistical techniques. The type of analysis depended upon the kind of variable analyzed and the hypotheses that were generated through an examination of the initial results. Unless otherwise noted, frequency percentages cited in this document represent *adjusted* frequencies, meaning that percentages have been adjusted to account for any non-responses (refusals to answer) or non-qualified responses (questions not answered due to answers to previous questions). In the current report, there were some interesting results that emerged with respect to the (volunteered) percentages of “undecided/don’t know” responses, and we have noted these results. However, in order to conduct some of the more advanced statistical techniques, such as multiple regressions, undecided respondents were necessarily eliminated from the analysis due to underlying requirements.

Researchers are interested in assessing whether or not the differences in observed percentages between certain groups of individuals are due to chance, or if they represent real differences among the subpopulations. Differences were identified by running statistical analyses and are discussed in the report. Statistical significance within crosstabulation tables was calculated using chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics. Tests of proportion were used to identify differences in responses between questions or groups of respondents. The level of significance was generally set to a p value of .01. Most demographic questions were included the statistical analyses that determined if responses to questions differed by demographic characteristics.<sup>10</sup> Where appropriate, multiple regression analysis was used to determine key factors contributing to overall ratings.

#### ***Caveat:***

The sole purpose of this report is to provide a collection, categorization and summary of public opinion survey data. Aurora Research Group intends to neither endorse nor criticize the state of California, the Department of Consumer Affairs, and the Bureau of Automotive Repair; or their policies, products, or staff. The Client (Department of Consumer Affairs) shall be solely responsible for any modifications, revisions, or further disclosure/distribution of this report.

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<sup>10</sup> The statewide, Phase 1 baseline demographic crosstabulation analyses were based on 1,000 interviews and necessarily excluded the oversamples of the underserved populations in order to be representative of the state as a whole.

## Survey Results

This report is divided into two sections – all Phase 1 statewide results will be presented first. This will help the reader to understand California consumer opinions in general. Phase 2 results, based on the three underserved populations, will be presented in the second section of this report, and will highlight specific contrasts with the statewide results.

The Phase 1 survey results are organized and presented as follows: the basic descriptive results for each question are first presented. Whenever open-ended questions were asked, responses were captured and later categorized for quantitative analysis. Descriptions of the categorizations along with examples of verbatim comments are presented. (The complete transcripts of all comments will be included in the results binders.) Finally, any statistically significant group differences due to demographic characteristics (age, income, ethnicity, gender, the number of people living in a household, the number of vehicles in the household, the age of the vehicle driven most often by the respondent, education and geographic region<sup>11</sup>) are presented. In other words, up to nine separate crosstabulations will have been conducted for specific questions. Unless otherwise specified, the reported results exclude responses of “undecided” as well as refusals.

The order of topics presented in the report was chosen as the most logical in terms of meeting the information requirement objectives of the study and does not necessarily conform to the order of the questions within the survey.

## Phase 1: Statewide Results

### OVERALL AWARENESS AND GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF CALIFORNIA’S BUREAU OF AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR

#### Overall Awareness

- ❖ **1 *The California Bureau of Automotive Repair is not particularly well-known among California consumers: only a third of all respondents said they had some knowledge about BAR and the services it provides.***

Awareness of the Bureau of Automotive Repair among California consumers was measured by asking how knowledgeable respondents were about BAR and the services it provides, using a three-point scale. The question appeared about mid-way into the interview. As can be seen in Figure 1, the majority of respondents (67%) were “not at all” knowledgeable about the California Bureau of Automotive Repair or BAR and the services it provides. Twenty-eight (28%) said they were “somewhat” knowledgeable, and a further 5% were “very” knowledgeable; indicating a combined total of only 33% of all respondents who claimed some knowledge about BAR and its services.

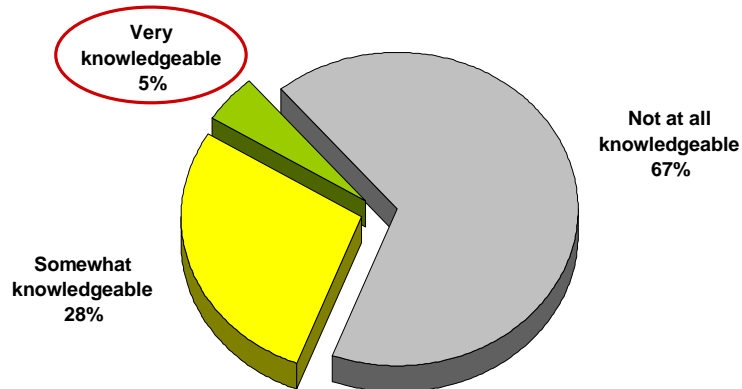
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<sup>11</sup> The reader is referred to the demographic characteristics section near the end of this report to see how the demographics were categorized.

Figure 1

**How Knowledgeable Are You About BAR and the Services it Provides?**

(Among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



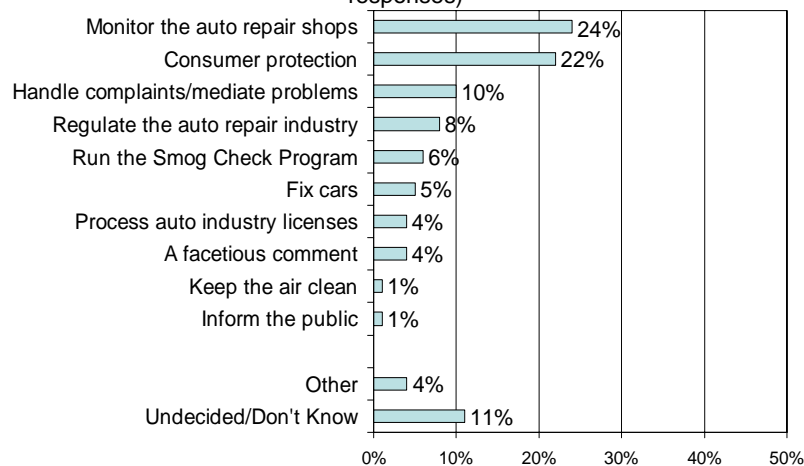
- ❖ 2 Respondents aware of BAR were fairly accurate in describing the main functions of BAR: the three most frequently mentioned functions were to monitor auto repair shops, protect the consumer, and to handle complaints/mediate problems.

Those respondents who said they were “somewhat” or “very” knowledgeable about BAR were then asked to describe what they thought was the main function of BAR. All responses were captured and later categorized for a more quantitative assessment. Figure 2 shows the results of this categorization.

Figure 2

**What would you say is the MAIN function of BAR?**

(among those claiming some knowledge about BAR, including undecided responses)



First, it can be seen that a fair number of respondents (11%), who, although they claimed to have some knowledge of BAR, were unable to describe its main function. There were also many respondents who named multiple BAR functions, but their responses were only classified once. Figure 2 indicates that nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents who were aware of BAR felt that its main role is to monitor the auto repair shops. A few<sup>12</sup> representative comments included:

- *"From what I know, the monitoring of the license of repair shops and monitoring their complaints and rules and regulations.*
- *I thought it was to oversee the repair shops and to make sure vehicles on the road are inspected.*
- *Look over repair shops and make sure they are licensed.*
- *Make sure that auto repair shops are clean and do things by the book.*
- *My understanding is that they monitor the auto repair businesses to make sure the business is reputable and honest and not trying to do unnecessary repairs.*
- *Spot checks on auto shops to make sure they are honest.*
- *The only thing that I know is that they oversee the repair shops.*
- *They're supposed to watch over the repair shops to make sure they do things fairly and equitably.*
- *They are supposed to keep track of the workmanship and mechanics at shops. They take vehicles in the shops to see if they are honest.*
- *They monitor and issue the credentials or licenses to the automotive facilities.*
- *They oversee repair shops and smog shops and they are the guys who bust them when they get out of line and I actually used them about ten years ago, and they were not very nice to the guy that they busted.*
- *To keep an eye out for dysfunctional auto repair shops and keep them honest.*
- *To make sure that you don't get ripped off at a repair place. If you have a legitimate gripe that is not satisfied, you can call and report it."*

Another 22% felt the main role of BAR is to protect consumers. A few examples included:

- *"Actually their biggest thing is that they make sure that consumers are getting what they pay for and they arbitrate any problems between automotive repair shops and the consumer.*
- *For the protection of the consumers who are not very aware of the repair of vehicles.*
- *Help the consumers know they are dealing with a quality repair shop.*
- *It is there to protect people. It needs to advertise more make public more aware it's there.*
- *Making sure people don't get ripped off.*
- *Probably to protect the consumers from when the repair shops cheat you.*
- *They are a governing body to protect the consumer in respect to that industry.*
- *To keep the consumers from getting abused.*
- *To protect the consumer against unethical practices of repair shops.*
- *To protect the consumer and guarantee a minimum quality of automotive service. They license the business to stop people from getting ripped off.*
- *To try to make sure that consumers get a fair shake on their repair work and to know in advance how much it's going to cost so that when you go get your car you are not shocked about your bill and the original estimate."*

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<sup>12</sup> The reader is referred to the results binder for complete transcripts of all comments.

A further 10% of respondents who said they were aware of BAR felt their main function is to handle complaints and mediate problems. A few of these comments included:

- "Handle customer complaints and check up on Smog Check stations.
- They if you have a problem you can call them up with regards to the repair company.
- To assist in complaints against repair shops.
- To take complaints and deal with the complaints of the consumers. To act as a mediator between the consumer and the repair shops.
- When you do have a problem they are the only place you can go and they steer you in the right direction."

❖ **3 Males claimed to be more knowledgeable about BAR than females, and households with three or more vehicles were more aware of BAR than those with fewer vehicles.**

Ratings of how knowledgeable respondents were about BAR were dichotomized ("somewhat" or "very" knowledgeable versus "not at all knowledgeable") and nine different chi-square analyses were run to determine if there were any distinguishing demographic characteristics that could define awareness of BAR. Results indicated that, for the most part, perceived levels of knowledge of BAR were independent of ethnicity, education, income, geographic location, the number of people living in the household, or age. In other words, Caucasians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, African-Americans, and Hispanics; poorly educated as well as well-educated; low-income as well as upper-income; Southern California, Northern California, as well as Central California areas; households with few people as well as households with many; and young as well as old respondents were equally knowledgeable (or not) about BAR.

Only two demographic features showed significant differences: gender and the number of vehicles in the household. Significantly more males (40%) than females (25%) claimed to have some knowledge of BAR. Households with three or more vehicles were significantly more knowledgeable about BAR (39%) than those with one or two vehicles (29%).

## Overall Effectiveness of BAR

❖ **4 Among those willing to give evaluations, the majority (86%) felt that BAR was effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission.**

All respondents (and not just those who had some knowledge about BAR) were then read the following statement:

*"Let me tell you a little about the Bureau of Automotive Repair or BAR. BAR regulates auto repair businesses to assure they operate in a lawful manner. It handles and operates California's Smog Check Program. In addition, BAR provides financial assistance to qualified consumers to repair or retire vehicles that fail a Smog Check test."*

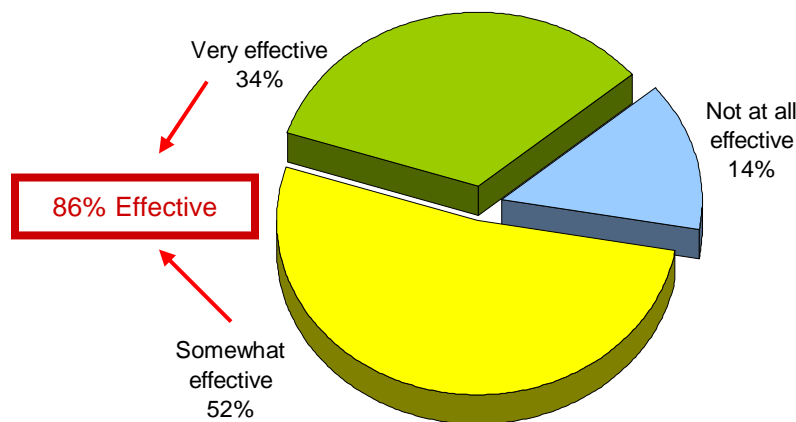
Everyone was then asked how effective they thought BAR has been overall in terms of fulfilling its mission.<sup>13</sup> More than one quarter of respondents (27%) did not answer the question – they were undecided or did not know. Typically in attitudinal telephone survey interviews, when respondents are presented with rating scales, the percent who are placed in the “undecided/don’t know” category (an option that is not presented as part of the question, but rather volunteered by the respondent) is fewer than 10%. When this percentage exceeds 10% it warrants further discussion – sometimes it means that the wording of a particular question was ambiguous or unclear and sometimes it is related to personal experience (or the lack thereof). In the current survey, it was hypothesized that the high percentage of “undecided/don’t know” responses to this question was due to the latter - a lack of personal awareness or knowledge about BAR. Further analyses of these respondents indicated that they were more likely to consider themselves to be “not at all” knowledgeable (79%) about BAR than to be “somewhat” (20%) or “very” knowledgeable (1%). In other words, the majority of those who felt they were not knowledgeable about BAR and its services did not feel comfortable in assessing its effectiveness.

That being said, however, the remainder and majority of respondents (whether they were aware of BAR or not), did evaluate BAR after hearing the description of its mandate. The “undecided” responses were removed from the analysis and the percentages were recalculated. Results of ratings of the overall effectiveness of BAR are shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that over half (52%) of these respondents felt that BAR has been “somewhat” effective in fulfilling its mission and a further 34% said it has been “very” effective -- a combined majority (86%) of positive evaluations.

**Figure 3**

**Rating of BAR’s Effectiveness  
 in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**

(Among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



<sup>13</sup> The actual question read: “Based on what I have just told you, would you say BAR has been not at all effective, somewhat effective, or very effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission?”

- ❖ **5** *There were no demographic features that distinguished those who felt BAR was effective in fulfilling its mission from those who did not.*

Ratings of the effectiveness of BAR were dichotomized and a series of chi-square analyses were run to determine if any demographic features distinguished those who felt BAR was effective from those who did not. No significant features emerged from these analyses – not gender, ethnicity, education, income, geographic region, the number of people living in the household, age, nor the number of vehicles in the household were distinguishing features.

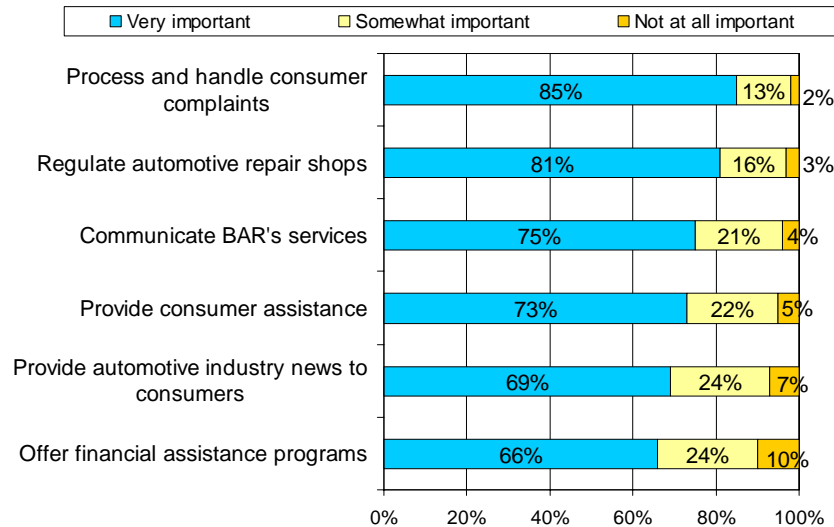
### Importance of Specific Services

- ❖ **6** *BAR is perceived as being useful – the majority of respondents felt it very important that BAR continue providing its services to California consumers. BAR also needs to continue to increase its efforts to communicate its services to the general public.*

Respondents were next read a (randomized) list of six services currently offered by BAR and were asked to rate the extent to which it is important that BAR continue to provide them to California consumers. Results are shown in the next chart. It can be seen that the most important service for BAR to continue offering to consumers is to process and handle consumer complaints – 85% of respondents rated this as a “very” important service. This was followed by regulating automotive repair shops (81%). **Efforts involving the communication of BAR’s services should continue, as 75% of respondents felt this was “very” important. (Given that only a third of all respondents were aware of BAR, this is certainly an area that could be improved.)** Nearly three-quarters (73%) felt it was very important to continue to provide consumer assistance. Sixty-nine percent (69%) felt it important to provide automotive industry news and 66% said it was very important to continue offering financial assistance programs.

Figure 4

How Important is it that BAR Continue to...  
 (among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



❖ **7 The three most important BAR services from a consumer viewpoint include:**

- **regulating automotive repair shops,**
- **providing consumer assistance, and**
- **offering financial assistance programs.**

**Any improvements in these areas should be reflected in improved ratings of the overall effectiveness of BAR.**

There is a way of analyzing which services could be considered the **most important** to California consumers, and that is by ranking ratings of the importance of continuing to provide specific services according to how they relate to respondents' overall evaluations of the effectiveness of BAR. In this instance, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was run.<sup>14</sup> Results indicated that those respondents who held more positive impressions of the overall effectiveness of BAR were also likely to say it was more important to continue to regulate automotive repair shops, to provide consumer assistance such as auto repair dealer license verification, and to offer financial assistance programs to repair and retire high polluting vehicles. Similarly, those with negative overall evaluations of the effectiveness of BAR were also more negative in their evaluations of the importance of continuing to provide these three services. In other words, the results of this analysis indicate that any improvements in these

<sup>14</sup> This statistical analysis requires evaluative responses to the overall effectiveness question as well as to the importance of every service, and necessarily excludes from the analysis any respondents who answered "undecided/don't know" to any question. Results are therefore based on a smaller subset of the population interviewed (i.e. 681 respondents) and might be treated with some caution.

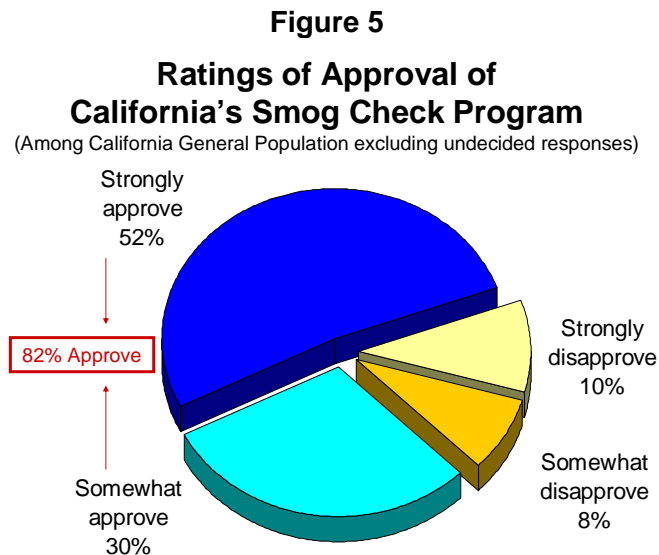
services should also result in increases in ratings of the overall effectiveness of BAR.

**CONSUMER AUTOMOTIVE EXPERIENCE**

**Approval of Smog Check Program**

- ❖ **8 The vast majority of respondents approve of California’s Smog Check Program.**

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether they approve or disapprove of California’s Smog Check Program. It can be seen in Figure 5 that the vast majority said they approved, with 30% saying they “somewhat” approve and a further 52% saying they “strongly” approve, for a combined total of 82%. Only 18% of all respondents disapproved: 8% “somewhat” and 10% “strongly” disapproved of the Smog Check Program.



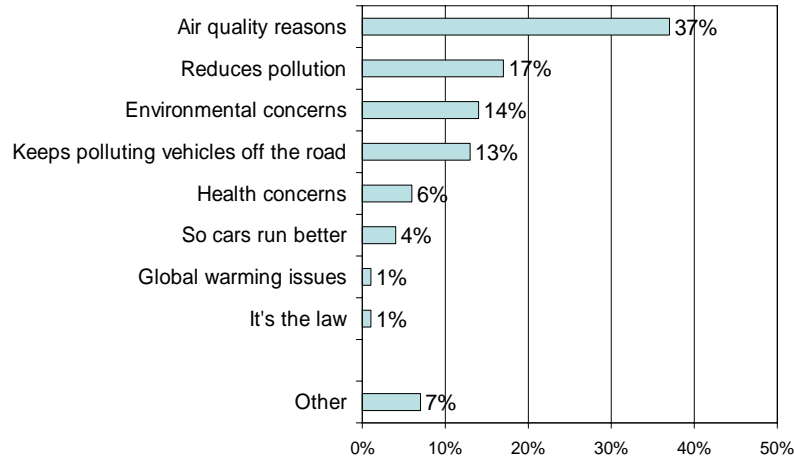
- ❖ **9 Those who approve of the Smog Check Program do so mainly for air quality, environmental, and pollution reduction reasons.**

Respondents who “somewhat” or “strongly” approved of the Smog Check Program were asked to describe the main reason for their approval. All responses were recorded and later categorized for analysis purposes. Results, presented in Figure 6, indicate that the plurality of these respondents approve of Smog Check for air quality (37%), environmental (14%), and pollution reduction (17%) reasons. Keeping vehicles off the road, health concerns and global warming issues were also mentioned.

Figure 6

Please tell me the MAIN reason why you  
APPROVE of Smog Check?

(excluding undecided responses)



A few<sup>15</sup> representative comments of those who cited air quality reasons for their approval included:

- "Air quality is positively affected.
- Air quality, the program is helping.
- Because I don't think we should have smoggy air.
- Because I think it is important to keep our air clean.
- Because it cleans the air and I don't see as many cars on the road mechanically unable to drive.
- Because of too much smog and it helps to control the contaminated air.
- Considering the location that we live in the air quality is pretty bad and I think it's important we maintain the appropriate levels.
- Good way to force people to keep their car in good condition to protect the air quality.
- I have lived long enough to see the change in the air quality.
- It has made a dramatic increase in clean air.
- It keeps the emission quality high for cars, so older cars that produce emissions, the owners have to fix them or get rid of them. It improves the air quality.
- The air is clear. I grew up here and now I can see the mountains.
- We do need to check vehicles for emission for the air quality.
- Well, I came here 50 years ago from New England. Los Angeles was very smoggy, San Diego was somewhat smoggy and the air quality has improved. It is not getting worse as the number of cars and vehicles increases."

Some comments from those who cited environmental concerns included:

- "Anything to help the environment at this point.
- Because we don't need to be polluting the Earth any more than we already do.
- For environmental reasons we need to control our smog.
- Good for the environment. Because we are using too much fuel.

<sup>15</sup> The reader is again referred to the results binder for complete transcripts of all comments.

- "I guess because I believe that California is progressive in its thought about those sorts of things. About the environment and greenness and the old footprint.
- I think it's environmentally prudent to cut down on vehicle emissions.
- It's just practical and simple and good for the environment.
- To keep our environment a little more livable friendly, a cleaner environment.
- We only have one earth; we have to have it clean!"

Continuing along similar lines, a few examples from those who approved of Smog Check for pollution reduction purposes included:

- "I am concerned about the ozone layer. It cuts down on pollution.
- I think to keep our smog in check and try to reduce pollution.
- It cuts down on the pollution.
- It helps reduce pollution.
- Less pollution is better.
- Well I think there has to be some policies of dealing with pollution."

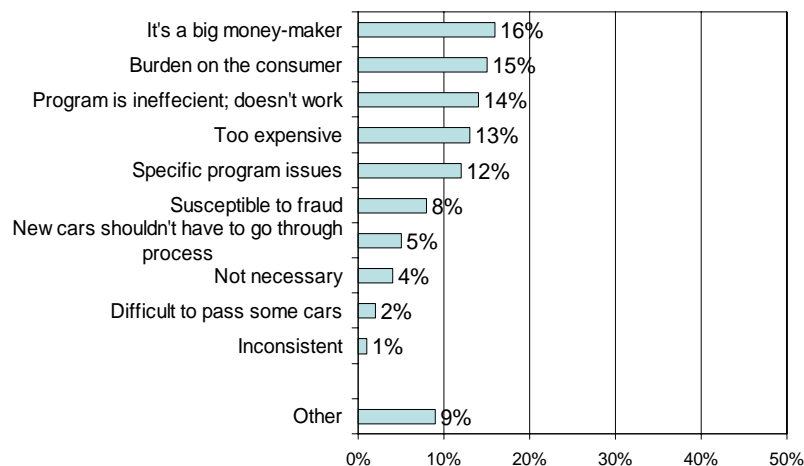
❖ **10 The prime reasons for disapproval of the Smog Check Program included thinking the program is a money-grab, a burden on consumers, inefficient, and too expensive.**

The 18% of all respondents who "somewhat" or "strongly" disapproved of the Smog Check Program were also asked to explain their rating. Results are presented in Figure 7. It can be seen that the program is viewed as being a money-maker by 16% of these respondents, 15% felt it to be a burden on consumers, 14% think it is inefficient and doesn't work, and another 13% disapprove because the program is too expensive. All the other reasons for disapproval can also be seen in the chart.

**Figure 7**

Please tell me the MAIN reason why you DISAPPROVE of Smog Check?

(excluding undecided responses)



Some of the comments by those who felt Smog Check is just a money-maker for the government included:

- *"Because I don't think it makes a difference and it's just a money making thing for the state.*
- *Half of the time they just look at your car, and what good are they doing? Just collecting your money.*
- *I think it's more of money making deal and I don't understand why the smog test is so expensive.*
- *It's just a way to make money. They could make better smog devices, but they build what they can get by with instead of building what is needed.*
- *It is an obvious way to make extra money for the state. We are consumers and have to pay too much for gas."*

A few comments by those who disapproved because of the burden on the consumer included:

- *"Because I hate to smog my car. It's the time, the money, and you have to do it every other year. It's an inconvenience.*
- *(Smog Checks) are unduly burdensome on the consumer.*
- *Possibly because you have to take them to so many different places to get checked. It can be something so minor, but they won't tell you and they send you to another place. Then they tell you it's something more wrong than it really was.*
- *I think that it is too much of a hassle to go through the whole smog process especially if it fails."*

Among those who disapproved of Smog Check because the program is inefficient or doesn't work, some of the comments included:

- *"Because I don't believe that it is working. I don't believe that it is worth the trouble. I think it is a scam for the government to make money.*
- *I don't think it works.*
- *It's hard to tell if it's working and it seems like such a procedure to spend extra money every two years.*
- *I know some people who do illegal stuff in order to pass the Smog Check test and they do pass, so the Smog Check is not really working."*

❖ **11 Females, respondents with college degrees, and households with fewer than three vehicles were more likely to approve of the Smog Check Program than males, respondents with less education, and households with three or more vehicles.**

A series of chi-square analyses were run to determine if there were any demographic features that distinguished those who approved of the Smog Check Program from those who did not. Results indicated that gender, education, and the number of vehicles in the household showed significant differences. More females (88%) than males (77%) approved of the Smog Check Program. Those with college degrees or higher were more approving (87%) than those without college degrees (77%). Finally, those with one or two vehicles in the household were more approving (86%) than those with three or more vehicles (76%). All other demographic features (age, income, ethnicity, geographic location, the number of people living in the household, and the age of the vehicle most frequently driven by the respondent) were not significant.

## Smog Check Failure

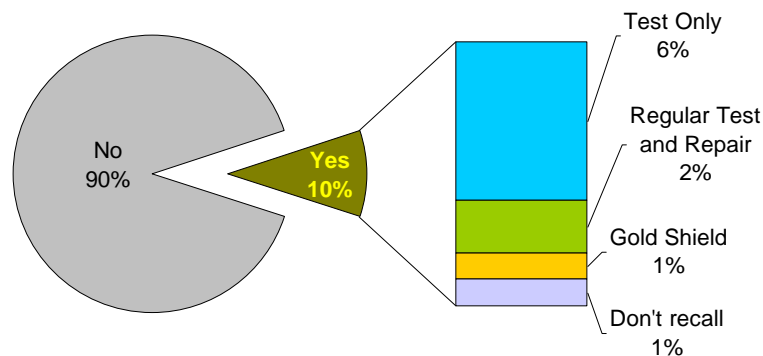
- ❖ **12 Ten percent (10%) of respondent households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years.**

Respondents were next asked if any of the vehicles in their household had failed a Smog Check within the last two years, and if so, what type of Smog Check station they went to. Results, shown in the next pie chart, indicate that only 10% of all respondents had a vehicle fail a Smog Check. Of these, the majority had visited a Test Only station.

**Figure 8**

### Have Any Vehicles in your Household Failed a Smog Check within the last Two years?

(among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **13 Households with three or more vehicles, those with older vehicles, and Asian/Pacific Islanders and African-Americans were more likely to have failed a Smog Check within the past two years.**

Chi-square analyses were run to determine if there were any demographic features that distinguished those who failed a Smog Check in the past two years from those who did not. Results indicated that households with three or more vehicles were more likely to have failed a Smog Check (13%) than those with only one or two (8%). Asian/Pacific Islander (22%) and African-American (16%) respondents were more likely to have failed a Smog Check than Hispanic (10%) or Caucasian (8%) respondents. Finally, the vehicles most frequently driven by respondents that were ten years of age and older were more likely to fail (17%) than those six to ten years (10%), or less than six years of age (7%). No other significant demographic features emerged.

- ❖ **14 Efforts could be increased to inform consumers about financial assistance: only 29% of respondents who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check were told about a financial assistance program.**

Respondents who failed a Smog Check were asked if anyone at the station told them about a program that offers consumers up to \$500 in repair assistance or \$1,000 to retire their car. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these respondents said “no”, and 29% said “yes.” Further analyses indicated that whether or not respondents were told about a financial assistance program was independent of any demographic features (gender, income, ethnicity, or education).

## Smog Check Station Problem

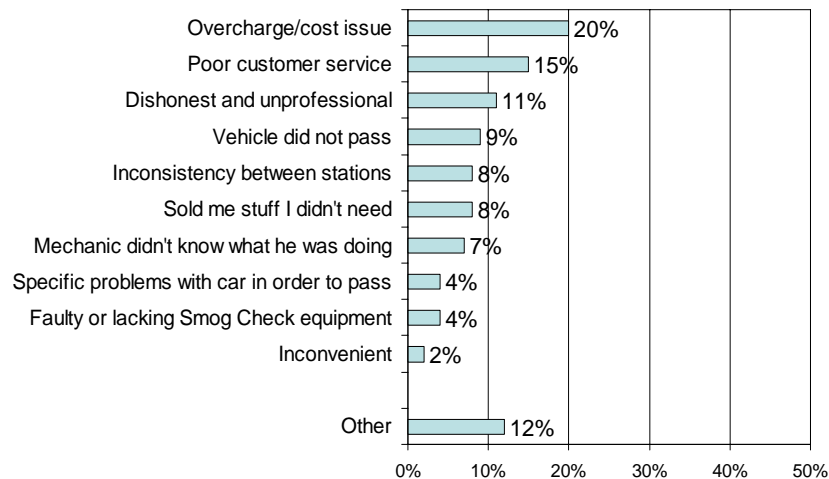
- ❖ **15** *Nine percent (9%) of all respondents experienced a problem with a Smog Check station.*

All respondents, regardless of whether or not they had failed a Smog Check within the last two years, were asked if they had personally experienced a problem with a Smog Check station. Results indicated that 9% of all respondents had a problem. When asked to describe the general nature of the problem, answers included cost issues or being overcharged, customer service issues (such as rudeness, being unhelpful), experiencing fraud and unethical practices, having their vehicle fail the test, inconsistency (vehicle passed at one station but not another), being told to buy unneeded parts or services, etc. The next chart indicates the frequency of the types of problems experienced.

**Figure 9**

### What was the general nature of the problem with the Smog Check station?

(among the 9% who experienced a problem, excluding undecided responses)



A sample<sup>16</sup> of a few of the descriptions of problems included:

- *“Well, my catalytic converter was out and I went to get it fixed and it cost me \$500 to get it replaced. And then I had to bring back to the state and they rechecked it again, and they charged me some \$30. I had three separate charges.*

<sup>16</sup> The reader is referred to the results binder for a complete list of all the problem descriptions.

- "The problem wanted to charge me \$90 for the Smog Check only. I took it to another place, the car has 95,000 and the car passed well; it only cost \$60.
- The Smog Check station overcharged for the work, and still ended up sending her to a State station.
- They were not very helpful, they were dismissive and almost condescending and they were not very helpful.
- We took a car in for a Smog Check and they failed it. They stuck this prong like thing into the receptor in the car and it failed the car. We took it to another Smog Check station and it passed without any repairs.
- You can slide them a few extra dollars to pass it along and give it a pass check mark instead of failure.
- They told me that I needed a catalytic converter for my vehicle so I took it to a friend who told me that there was nothing wrong with it, so I took it back a few days later and it passed.
- They didn't know what they were doing, I brought the car back ten minutes later and it passed after it had failed but it was straight from the dealer.
- The valve body would not let it pass the smog test, and the Smog Check station could not fix it.
- The reason it failed wasn't even close. They put the wrong weight down, and that's why it failed. It was a kid that said it failed - he didn't even try to do his job.
- Some stations are less than totally professional.
- My car had failed. I had to go to a Test Only and it passed. The first test was faulty and so I had to pay twice.
- Incompetence of the station giving me erroneous information. Telling me the computer was not functioning. It gave a wrong reading when on a Cadillac you are supposed to do something else and it cost me a lot of money.
- Each station we brought our car to told us something different about what was wrong with the vehicle. Only when we brought it to the dealership repair shop was it actually fixed for a cost of over \$1,000."

❖ **16 Households with three or more vehicles were more likely to have experienced a problem with a Smog Check station than those with fewer vehicles.**

The only significant demographic feature to emerge from nine crosstabulations was the number of vehicles in the household: those with three or more vehicles were significantly more likely to have had a problem with a Smog Check station (14%) than those with one or two vehicles (6%). Gender, age, income, education, ethnicity, geographic region, etc. did not distinguish those who experienced a problem from those who did not.

❖ **17 The majority (62%) of respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station dealt with it by going to another Smog Check station. A smaller percentage (36%) returned to the station and confronted them with the problem. The overwhelming majority (99%) did NOT think to call a consumer protection agency or to file a complaint with BAR.**

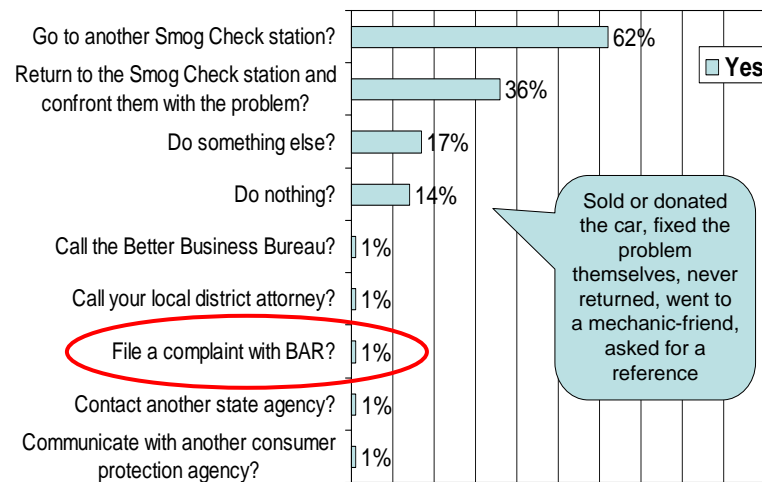
The 9% of respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station were read a list of nine possible actions they could have taken to resolve the problem, and were asked whether or not they did each of them. The percentages of respondents who said "yes" to each action are presented in

Figure 10.<sup>17</sup> It can be seen that the majority (62%) of respondents handled their problem by going to another Smog Check station. Thirty-six percent (36%) of respondents returned to the station and confronted them with the problem. Seventeen percent (17%) of these respondents said they did something else, and when asked what that was, responses ranged from complaining to other people, donating the car, selling the car, going to a mechanic friend, to fixing the problem themselves. Some respondents (14%) said they did nothing. **Only one respondent (1%) filed a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair**, one respondent called the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and one also called the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). In other words, consumers were more likely to deal with the problem themselves than to contact a consumer protection agency for assistance.

**Figure 10**

**What did you do?\***

(among those who experienced a problem with a SMOG station, excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

❖ **18 Lack of awareness, inconvenience, cynicism, and the nature of the problem were the main reasons why those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station did not contact BAR about the problem.**

Respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station and who did not file a complaint with BAR (all but one person of the 9%) were asked to explain “the main reason why you chose NOT to contact or file a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair.” The open-ended responses were categorized. The largest percentage (28%) of these particular respondents did not know about it, another 26% said they thought it would be a waste of time and not worth it, 15% said it was too time consuming, inconvenient or they were too lazy, 14% said there was no need – it

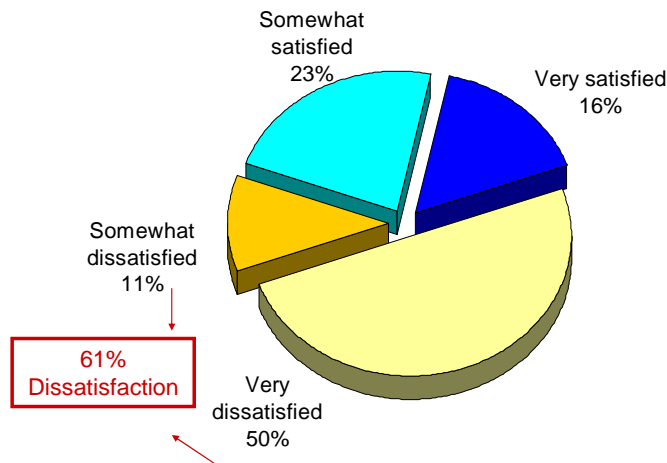
<sup>17</sup> Each question was asked of everyone – therefore each individual bar is out of 100%, and not the entire chart.

was an honest mistake and they fixed it, 3% said they had no proof, and the remaining 15% of responses consisted of various other reasons.

❖ **19 The majority (61%) of those who experienced a problem were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.**

Finally, respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station were asked how satisfied they were with how their complaint or problem was dealt with, using a four-point scale. Results, presented in Figure 11, indicate that half (50%) of these respondents were “very” dissatisfied and a further 11% were “somewhat” dissatisfied -- a combined total of 61% dissatisfaction. Twenty-three (23%) of these respondents were “somewhat” satisfied and only 17% were “very” satisfied with how their problem was handled.

**Figure 11**  
**Satisfaction with how problem was dealt with**  
 (Among respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, excluding undecided responses)



❖ **20 There were no demographic features that distinguished those who were dissatisfied with how their problem was dealt with from those who were satisfied.**

Satisfaction with how respondents’ problems with Smog Check stations were resolved was independent of all demographic features. Crosstabulations with the nine demographic characteristics were not significant. In other words, males were as likely as females to be satisfied (and dissatisfied), had lower as well as upper incomes respondents, were better educated as well as less-well educated respondents, etc.

## Auto Repair Shops

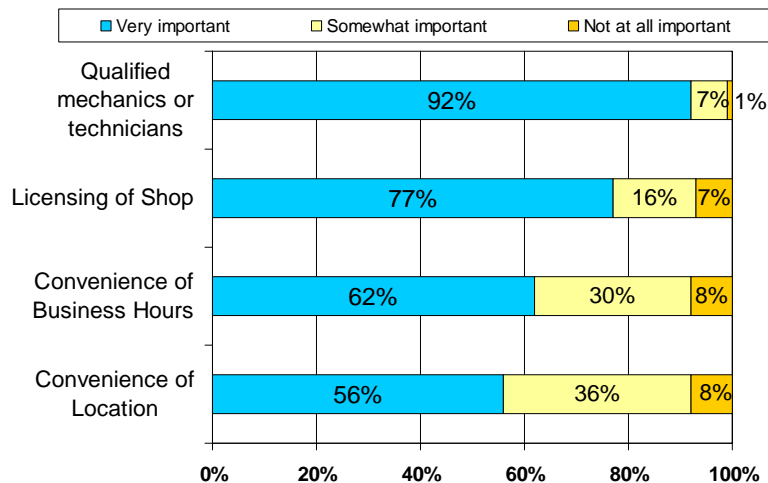
- ❖ **21 Having qualified mechanics or technicians is the most important consideration for respondents when choosing an auto repair shop and the convenience of its location is the least important.**

Next, the interview turned to a discussion about auto repair shops, and began by asking all respondents about the importance of different considerations when deciding where to take their vehicles for repair. Results are presented in Figure 12. It can be seen that, without question, having qualified mechanics or technicians was the most important consideration -- the vast majority of respondents (92%) felt it was a “very” important factor in choosing a repair shop. This was followed by the licensing of the auto repair shop, with 77% of all respondents rating this factor “very” important. Next came convenience – 62% of all respondents felt that the convenience of business hours was a “very” important consideration, and lastly, the convenience of the location was rated “very” important by 56% of all respondents.

**Figure 12**

### In Choosing a Repair Shop, How Important is...

(among California General Population excluding undecided responses)

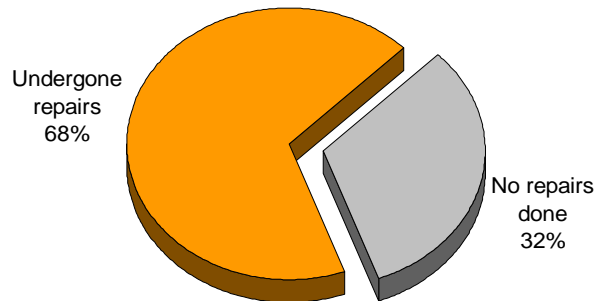


## Vehicle Repairs

- ❖ **22 Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondent households experienced vehicle repairs in the last year.**

Respondents were next asked if any of the vehicles in their household had undergone repairs in the last twelve months. It can be seen in Figure 13 that 68% of all respondents experienced vehicle repairs of some kind last year.

**Figure 13**  
**Percentage of Households That Have Experienced**  
**Vehicle Repairs in Last 12 Months**  
(among California General Population)



- ❖ **23 Younger respondents, those in households with more people and vehicles, and upper-income respondents experienced more vehicle repairs in the last year than their counterparts.**

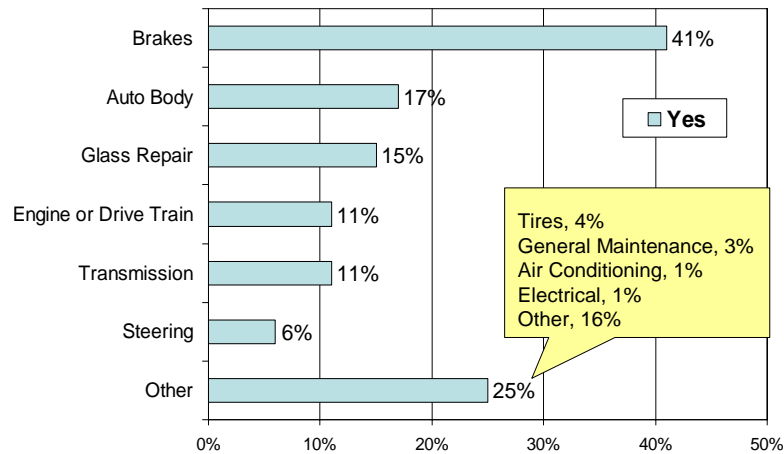
The results of chi-square analyses with demographic characteristics revealed four significant distinguishing features:

- respondents younger than fifty-five years of age were significantly more likely to have experienced vehicle repairs (74%) than those fifty-five years of age and older (58%),
  - those who lived in households with three or more people experienced more repairs (74%) than couples (64%) or those living alone (52%),
  - those who owned three or more vehicles had significantly more repairs done (78%) than those with two vehicles (65%) or one vehicle (56%), and
  - those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more experienced more repairs (76%) than those in households earning \$35,000 to \$75,000 (67%) or than those in households earning less than \$35,000 (61%).
- ❖ **24 The most frequent type of vehicle repairs by far involved brakes, followed by auto body repairs. The least frequent type of repair was to the steering.**

A list of potential areas for repair was then read to all respondents and they were asked whether or not any of the vehicles in their household had undergone repairs for each specific area. Results, presented in Figure 14, indicate that the most frequent vehicle repair was to the brakes – 41% of all respondents had their vehicles' brakes repaired last year. This was followed by auto body repairs (17%), glass repairs (15%), engine or drive train repairs (11%), transmission repairs (11%), and repairs to steering (6%).

Figure 14\*

In Last 12 Months, Have Any Vehicles in your Household undergone Repairs for...  
 (among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

## Overall Evaluation of Auto Repair Experience

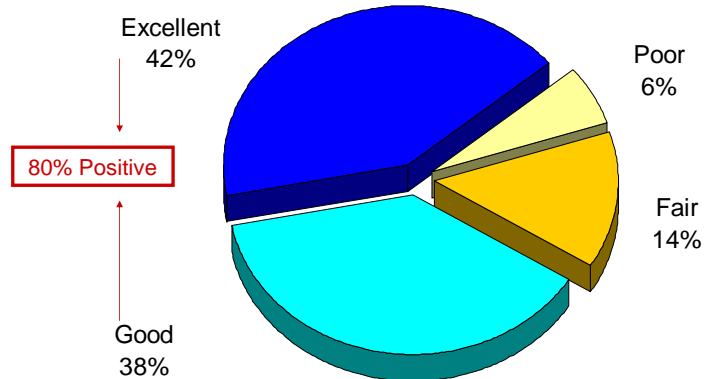
- ❖ **25** *The majority of respondents who took their vehicles to an auto repair shop had a positive experience – 80% rated the overall experience as “good” or “excellent.” Excellent experiences were those that focused on quality, reliability, timeliness, value for the money and courtesy. Poor experiences lacked these qualities.*

Respondents whose vehicles underwent some sort of repair were asked to rate their overall experience with the auto repair shop as poor, fair, good, or excellent. Three percent (3%) of these respondents volunteered that they did the repairs themselves. They were eliminated from subsequent analysis and the percentages were recalculated. Results, shown in Figure 15, indicate that 38% of these respondents rated their overall experience as “good” and a further 42% rated it as “excellent”, indicating that 80% were positive in their evaluations. Fourteen percent (14%) rated their experience as “fair” and 6% felt it was “poor.”

Figure 15

## Ratings of Overall Experience with Auto Repair Shop

(Among Households in which Vehicles Underwent Repairs  
 in the California General Population excluding undecided responses and those  
 who did the repairs themselves)



Respondents were then asked in an open-ended format to describe the main reason they rated their overall experience as they did. Most of the descriptions of excellent experiences reflect commonly understood customer service expectations for any service industry – quality, reliability, timeliness, courtesy, and value for the money. A sample<sup>18</sup> of a few from respondents who rated their experience as “**excellent**” included:

- “Because he was licensed, knew what he was doing, and did an overall good job.
- Because I have found a good mechanic and I trust him.
- Because I’ve always had good experiences at the shop.
- Because they’ll take our cars anytime, drive us to or from, and even loan us equipment sometimes. They have all the test equipment so we are not just going by what they say.
- Because he’s cheap, he’s available all hours, and everybody uses him because he doesn’t screw anybody over. He can diagnose what’s wrong with your car, and he does it quickly.
- Because they are friendly, knowledgeable, and clean, which is very important to me. They get the vehicle in and out quickly unless they find another problem. And then they let me know before they fix it.
- Because they are professionals and have a lot of experience and they know what they are doing.
- Because they checked everything I asked them to check and they did not charge me one penny to check the whole car.
- Because they were very detailed in what I needed and the reason why and I was very satisfied.
- Because we thought we needed a brake job, and we just needed brake fluid. He only charged \$5 and told us it was fine. He is known to be honest.
- “Excellent service clean, manager and service people were very truthful.

<sup>18</sup> The reader is referred to the results binder for a complete list of all the problem descriptions.

- *Getting the job done right and getting the job done according to the price and getting the job done on time.*
- *Having qualified mechanics. When I leave I know I never have to come back again.*
- *I've gone there for 25 years and they've always done an outstanding job.*
- *It was convenient and they did a good job and the price was right.*
- *Just no hassles, it was so quick it was unbelievable.*
- *Looked after the vehicle properly, completed on time. Nicely cleaned out the inside of the car as well, just generally did good service with good contact and good phone calls.*
- *Mainly because most of the time the actual repair technician tells me what's wrong, shows me the part the needs to be replaced, gives me a valid estimate, and then repairs my car quickly.*
- *Service number one, also the fact that they gave me the true picture of what was wrong with the car. They didn't try to sell me any extended services. They were very nice, and I'd go back to them, naturally.*
- *The person working on my car has told me everything he's doing, why he's doing it, and even shows me the parts he's replaced. Good relationship with him. Good customer service.*
- *The work was on time and done to quality and they did what they said they would do.*
- *They don't take a long time, complimentary car wash, have coffee shop, and lounge area with complimentary coffee and treats. They have a courtesy shuttle to take you home.*
- *They were true to their word, they fixed it on time, it was ready when it they said it would be ready.*
- *We worry about our car and they have excellent service. And they keep track of our maintenance for us, so they tell us when to bring the car in.*
- *Well they were fast, and the repair worked. I haven't had other problems."*

In contrast, descriptions of "**poor**" repair experiences reflected directly opposite sentiments. A few examples included:

- *"I was quoted price on repair work, after going back it kept getting bigger. I was quoted \$1,400 and it ended up being \$2,400.*
- *Because of the inability, and lack of skill of the people that do the repair. They are not qualified repair people.*
- *It was poor service. Customer service from a place I had gone for years. The location was purchased by another company and there was new management and the customer service and the quality of the mechanical service was poor.*
- *Not qualified people said they were qualified. It was worse when I got it back. They created more damage.*
- *The way the information was related to me, the dealer did not communicate to me that the electrical components were not covered by the warranty.*
- *They did not do the job right; I had to take it back.*
- *They told me they fixed everything in my car and they didn't and they wouldn't fix it when I told them it was still not working.*
- *They tried to sell me a bunch of stuff I didn't need. I did not go back.*
- *Very poor follow-up. Lengthy repair. Took eleven days for just a few items to be repaired.*
- *Took the car in for a lighting repair and then it was \$1,200 later...they added things such as struts all for brakes and other things. And they never fixed the original problem.*
- *They used a defective part and it took several times to get it resolved."*

❖ **26 Evaluations of the overall experience with auto repair shops were independent of demographic features.**

The series of chi-square analyses involving the demographic characteristics revealed no significant group differences. Respondents from the Northern California area as well as the Southern California area rated their overall experience similarly, as did males and females, younger respondents and older respondents, lower-income households and upper-income households, etc.

**Problems with Auto Repair Shops**

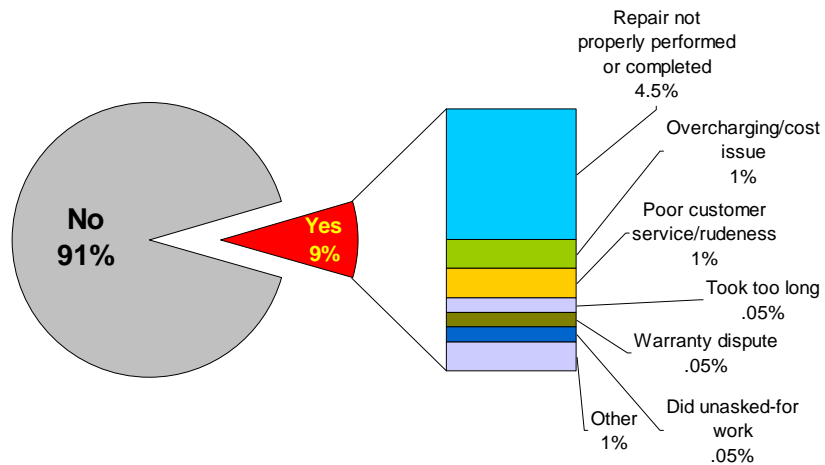
❖ **27 Nine percent (9%) of all respondents personally experienced a problem with a repair shop within the past year. The main problem involved repairs that were not properly performed.**

All respondents were asked if they had personally experienced a **problem with a repair shop** within the past twelve months. Nine percent (9%) said they had, and these respondents were asked to describe the general nature of the problem. Responses were categorized and results are presented in the next figure. The most common complaint was that the repairs were not properly performed or completed, often necessitating repeat visits. Other problems included overcharging/cost issues; poor customer service and outright rudeness; repairs that took too long; warranty disputes; or the shop did unasked-for and unnecessary work.

**Figure 16**

**Have You Personally Experienced a Problem with a Repair Shop within the Past Twelve Months?**

(among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



A few representative comments describing **repairs not being properly performed** included:

- "Actually it was a couple of times. One was when I went to change the oil, and right after it was changed it was leaking. The other one was the radio antenna broke and they tried to fix it, it was a mess, it was a bad fit, actually.
- Gear shift put on backwards.
- I had to bring the motor back three times and they were supposed to know what they were doing. It seems anybody can get a license very easily and then not have to know anything.
- Repeated unsuccessful attempts to get the same problem fixed. It was a problem getting the brake light to come on and over a span of about three years the people there just couldn't seem to get it fixed.
- The mechanic broke a part and tried to glue it back on.
- Transmission repair. Car was in worse shape when I got it back."

❖ **28 Problems with an auto repair shop were related to ethnicity, the size of the household, the number of vehicles in the household, and region.**

Crosstabulations by demographic features indicated four distinguishing features:

- respondents who were not Caucasian were significantly more likely to have experienced a problem with a repair shop (12%) than were Caucasians (8%),
- those who lived in households with two people experienced more problems with repair shops (15%) than those living in households with three or more (11%) or those living alone (8%),
- those who owned three or more vehicles experienced significantly more problems with repair shops (13%) than those with two vehicles (9%) or one vehicle (5%), and
- those living in the Los Angeles area experienced more problems (13%) than those living in other geographic areas of California (7%).

❖ **29 In contrast to how respondents dealt with problems with Smog Check stations, the majority (71%) of respondents who experienced a problem with a repair shop dealt with it by returning to the shop and confronting them with the problem and a smaller percentage (38%) went to another shop to have the problem repaired. Once again the overwhelming majority (96%) did NOT file a complaint with BAR.**

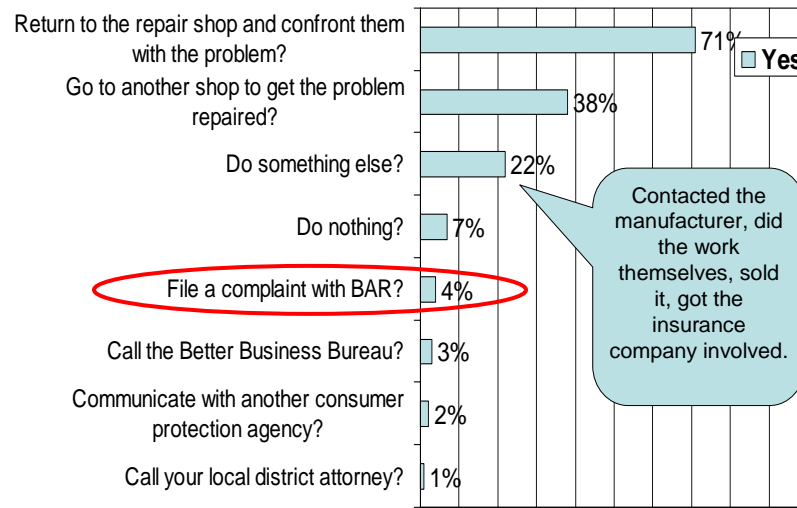
The 9% of respondents who experienced a problem with a **repair shop** were read a list of possible actions they could have taken to resolve the problem and were asked if they did any of them. Percentages are shown in Figure 17. It can be seen that the majority (71%) of respondents handled their problem by returning to the repair shop and confronting them with the problem. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of respondents went to another repair shop to have the problem repaired. [This was exactly the reverse of what respondents did when they experienced a problem with a Smog Check station – it will be recalled that the majority in that situation went to another Smog Check station and a smaller number returned to the station and confronted them with the problem.] Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents who experienced a problem with a repair shop said they did something else – some contacted the manufacturer, others fixed

the problem themselves, and a couple sold the car. Seven percent (7%) did nothing. Only 4% filed a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair, 3% called the Better Business Bureau, and 2% called another consumer protection agency.

**Figure 17**

**What did you do?\***

(among those who experienced a problem with a repair shop, excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

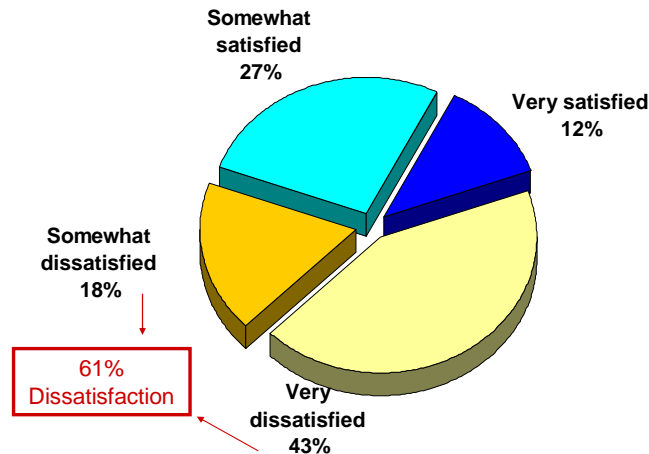
A few of the reasons as to why the vast majority of respondents who experienced problems with repair shops did not file a complaint with BAR included:

- "Because I thought it would be a waste of time.
- Because I work 15 hours a day. I have no time to deal with it.
- Because it's kind of a run around. You got to fill out this and that, and wait for this and that.
- Because it was very minor, and not clearly an issue and I felt that it was partially my fault as well as their's. I choose a local part, and that may have been a bad decision.
- Because of time. I just didn't want to deal with anything. I just wanted to get it done and over with.
- Because the dealer said they would fix it.
- I do not like getting into a lot of problems.
- I don't believe I will get any action from the bureaucrats.
- I don't have the time to get to these various agencies as I am too busy.
- I was not aware that it existed.
- I was so upset about the whole experience, that it never really dawned on me to notify anybody. I actually didn't know that the consumer had that right, which was ignorance on my part."

❖ **30 The majority (61%) of those who experienced a problem with a repair shop were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.**

Respondents who experienced a problem with a repair shop were asked how satisfied they were with how their complaint or problem was dealt with. Results are shown in Figure 18, and indicate that 61% of these respondents were dissatisfied. This is the same percentage of respondents who were dissatisfied when they experienced a problem with a Smog Check station; however, they were not the same respondents: only 2% of all respondents who were interviewed experienced both a problem with a Smog Check station and a problem with a repair shop.

**Figure 18**  
**Satisfaction With How Problem Was Handled**  
 (Among the 9% of respondents who experienced a problem with a repair shop, excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **31 Satisfaction with how the repair shop problem was resolved was independent of demographic features.**

The series of chi-square analyses involving the demographic characteristics revealed no significant group differences. Respondents from the Northern California area as well as Southern California area rated their satisfaction similarly, as did males and females, younger respondents and older respondents, lower-income households and upper-income households, etc.

### **CONTACT WITH BAR**

- ❖ **32 Only 3% of all respondents contacted BAR within the past year, indicating that many California consumers who could benefit from BAR's services are not using them.**

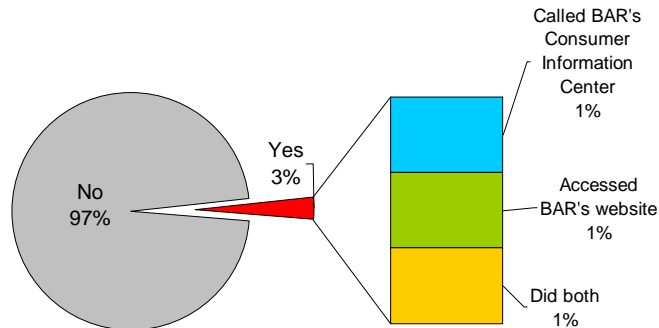
All respondents, regardless of whether or not they experienced any Smog Check station or vehicle repair problems, were asked if they had personally called BAR's toll-free Consumer Information Center or accessed its website within the past twelve months. Results are presented in Figure 19. It can be seen that only

3% of all respondents (or twenty-five individuals) contacted BAR within the past year: 1% called the toll-free line, 1% accessed the website, and 1% did both.

Figure 19

**Have you personally contacted BAR within the past 12 months?**

(among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



**Website Evaluation**

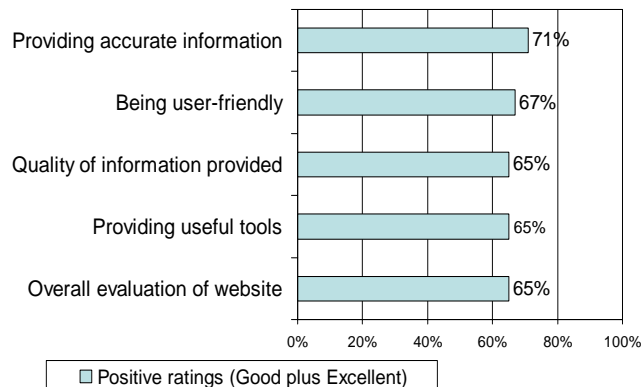
- ❖ **33** *The BAR website was rated positively by at least 65% of the respondents who accessed it, but so few actually used it that results should be treated with caution.*

The 2% of respondents (or eighteen individuals) who accessed the BAR website were asked to evaluate it on a number of dimensions. The percentage of positive evaluations (ratings of “good” or “excellent”) are presented in Figure 20, but results should be treated with caution as they are based on such a small number of respondents. It can be seen that all aspects were rated positively by 65% or more of these respondents.

Figure 20

**Positive Evaluations of BAR Website**

(among the 2% who accessed the website this year, excluding undecided responses)



**LIKELIHOOD TO CONSULT BAR IN FUTURE**

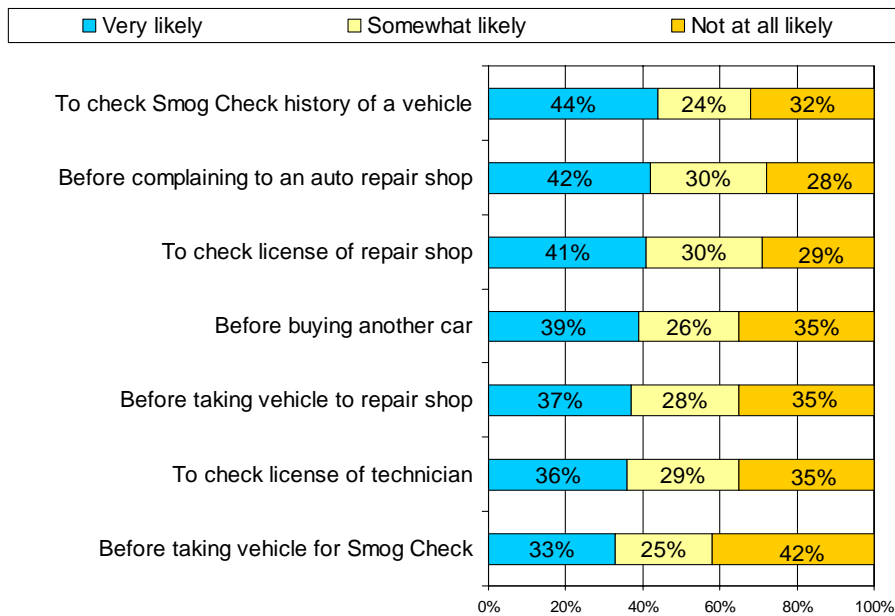
- ❖ **34 The majority of all respondents said they will likely contact BAR in the future, now that they know more about it and the services it offers.**

Near the end of the interview, all respondents were asked how likely they would be to contact the Bureau of Automotive Repair in the future,<sup>19</sup> using a four-point scale. Results are presented in Figure 21. The majority of respondents will be “somewhat” or “very” likely to contact BAR in the future – before complaining to an auto repair shop (72%), to check the license of a repair shop (71%), to check the Smog Check history of a vehicle (68%), before buying another car (65%), before taking their vehicle to a repair shop (65%), to check the license of a technician (65%), and before taking their vehicle for a Smog Check (58%). **Because two-thirds of respondents had not heard about BAR before completing the interview, it is clear that improved communication with the general population about BAR’s services will likely result in more consumers contacting BAR for information and help.**

**Figure 21**

**Likelihood to Consult BAR...**

(among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



<sup>19</sup> The exact wording of the question was: “Now that you know some of the services and information BAR provides, please tell me how likely you will be to consult BAR in the future, either by calling the call center or by accessing their website [READ LIST] Would you be not at all likely, somewhat likely, or very likely?”

## **PREFERRED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

- ❖ **35** *The top two preferred outreach tools for communicating BAR consumer information with respondents were a toll-free consumer information center and a website. The challenge is that only 3% of all respondents surveyed actually used these channels to contact BAR in the past year. In other words, there is a disconnect between what people say and what they did.*

All respondents were asked:

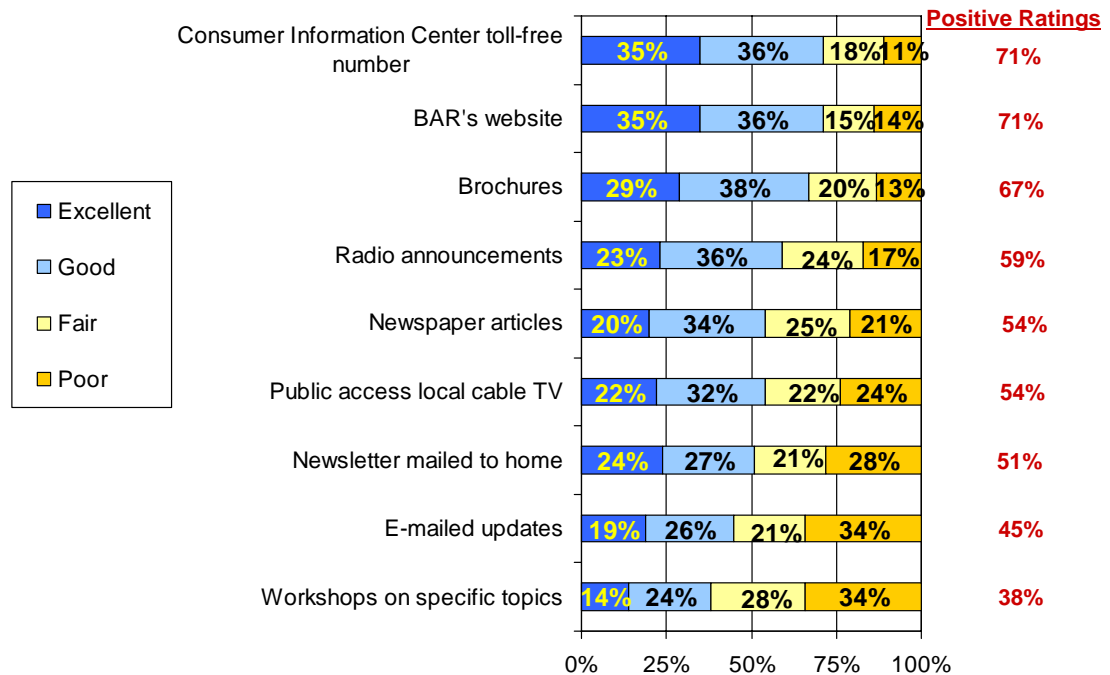
*“BAR is interested in improving its future public outreach and communication efforts. I am going to read you a list of possible outreach tools and I’d like you to rate each one in terms of how effective it would be for you personally. First, would ... be a poor, fair, good, or excellent means of communicating consumer information with you?”*

A list of possible communication channels was then read to them. Results, shown in Figure 22, indicate that respondents felt the most effective communication channels were a toll-free consumer information center and a website (71% rated these as “good” or “excellent” means of communicating with them). Other effective tools included brochures (67%) and the media. Just over half (51%) felt a newsletter mailed to their home would be effective and fewer than half (45%) would like to receive e-mail updates. The least effective outreach tool was judged to be workshops on specific topics (38%).

The challenge for BAR is that it already offers a toll-free Consumer Information Center as well as a website, but the vast majority of respondents we interviewed did not use these sources of information. Adding further to the challenge is that the majority of respondents were favorably impressed with the services BAR provides, once they learned about them. It is possible that increased use of the media – using radio, television, and newspapers – to inform consumers about what BAR does could increase general awareness and spur consumers to access the toll-free number and website for more information.

Figure 22

Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Tools  
 for Communicating Consumer Information  
 (among California General Population excluding undecided responses)



❖ **36 The effectiveness of communication outreach tools was dependent on certain demographic features. BAR could potentially use these differences in developing materials to target specific groups of consumers.**

Ratings of the effectiveness of communication channels were dichotomized (“poor” plus “fair” versus “good” plus “excellent”) and a series of chi-square analyses was run, using the demographic characteristics to see if different communication channels would be more effective for certain groups of respondents. Results indicated a few significant differences: [Interesting or unexpected findings are indicated in **bold**.]

– Toll-Free Consumer Information Center:

- 1) **females were significantly more likely to rate the toll-free consumer center as effective (74%) than were males (68%),**
- 2) those with less than a college degree felt it more effective (77%) than those with a college degree or higher (65%),
- 3) non-Caucasians were more favorable (79%) than Caucasians (67%), and

- 4) those earning less than \$75,000 annually felt the toll-free center was more effective (75%) than those earning more than \$75,000 a year.
- BAR's website:
  - 1) younger respondents (under fifty-five years) were significantly more likely to rate accessing the BAR website as an effective way of communicating information (78%) than were older (fifty-five years of age and older) respondents (58%),
  - 2) households with three or more people rated it more effective (76%) than those with one or two (65%), and
  - 3) **those living in Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay and Southern California areas rated the website as more effective (74%) than those living in Central California, Central Coast, or Northern California (62%) areas.**
- Brochures in dealerships, repair shops, Smog Check stations:
  - 1) **younger respondents (under fifty-five years) were significantly more likely to rate brochures as an effective way of communicating information (70%) than were older (fifty-five years of age and older) respondents (60%),**
  - 2) those with less than a college degree felt brochures would be more effective (73%) than those with a college degree or more (61%),
  - 3) **Hispanics rated brochures as more effective (83%) than African-Americans (70%) than did Asian/Pacific Islanders and Caucasians (62%), and**
  - 4) those with incomes less than \$75,000 rated brochures as more effective (74%) than those with incomes greater than \$75,000 (61%).
- Radio announcements:
  - 1) females were more likely to rate radio announcements as an effective communication tool (63%) than were males (55%),
  - 2) younger respondents (eighteen to thirty-four years) liked radio (71%) more than thirty-six to fifty-four year olds (60%), who preferred it more than those fifty-five years of age or older (49%),
  - 3) **those living in San Francisco Bay, Los Angeles and Central California areas rated radio as more effective (63%) than those in Northern California, Southern California, and the Central Coast (46%) areas,**
  - 4) those living in households with three or more people rated radio as more effective (63%) than those with two people (56%), or those who lived alone (45%), and
  - 5) **Hispanics were more likely to rate radio as an effective outreach tool (73%) than were Asian/Pacific Islanders and African-Americans (64%), or Caucasians (53%).**

- Newspaper articles:
  - 1) females were significantly more likely to rate newspaper articles as effective (58%) than were males (51%), and
  - 2) **Hispanics and African-Americans were more likely to rate newspaper articles as effective (66%) than were Asian/Pacific Islanders (57%) or Caucasians (50%).**
- Information pieces on public access local cable TV:
  - 1) younger respondents (eighteen to thirty-four years) rated local cable TV as more effective (64%) than older (thirty-five years and older) respondents (52%),
  - 2) less educated respondents rated TV as more effective (64%) than those with a college degree or higher (43%),
  - 3) **those living in the Los Angeles area rated TV as more effective (61%) than those in Southern California area (58%), Central California area (53%), San Francisco Bay area (49%), Northern California area (43%), or the Central Coast area (36%),**
  - 4) Hispanics were more likely to rate cable TV as effective (76%) than were African-Americans (57%), or Caucasians (49%), or Asian/Pacific Islanders (46%), and
  - 5) households with incomes less than \$75,000 a year rated TV as more effective (63%) than those earning more than \$75,000 a year (46%).
- Newsletter mailed to the home:
  - 1) **respondents aged 18 to 34 were more likely to rate newsletter mailed to the home as effective (59%) than were those aged 35 to 54 years (51%), or those 55 years and older (46%),**
  - 2) those with a high school education rated newsletters as more effective (65%) than those with some college (56%), or a college degree or higher (40%),
  - 3) **Hispanics rated newsletters as more effective (70%) than all other ethnic groups combined (45%),**
  - 4) those living in Central California area preferred newsletters (62%) more than those living in the Los Angeles area (54%), Southern California area (52%), the San Francisco Bay area (48%), Northern California area (43%), or the Central Coast area (29%),
  - 5) those living in households with three or more people rated newsletters as more effective (56%) than those living alone or with one other person (44%), and
  - 6) those with household incomes of less than \$35,000 were more likely to rate newsletters as effective (65%) than were those

earning between \$35,000 to 74,000 (56%), or over \$75,000 (41%).

- E-mailed updates:

- 1) respondents aged eighteen to thirty-four were more likely to rate e-mailed updates as effective (54%) than were those aged thirty-five to fifty-four years (46%), or those fifty-five years and older (38%),
- 2) those with a high school education rated e-mail updates as more effective (52%) than those with some college (46%), or a college degree or higher (40%),**
- 3) Hispanics rated e-mail updates as more effective (61%) than African-Americans (55%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (52%), or Caucasians (38%), and
- 4) those living in households with three or more people rated updates as more effective (51%) than those living alone or with one other person (37%).

- Workshops on specific topics:

- 1) respondents aged eighteen to thirty-four were more likely to rate workshops on specific topics as an effective communication tool (47%) than were those aged thirty-five to fifty-five years (38%), or those fifty-five years and older (33%),
- 2) those with a high school education rated workshops as more effective (51%) than those with some college (46%), or a college degree or higher (26%),**
- 3) those living in the Los Angeles area and Southern California area rated workshops as more effective (42%) than those living in Central California area (38%), San Francisco Bay area (34%), Northern California area (32%), or the Central Coast area (20%),
- 4) Hispanics rated workshops as more effective (62%) than African-Americans (48%), Caucasians (30%), or Asian/Pacific Islanders (25%), and
- 5) households with incomes less than \$75,000 a year rated workshops as more effective (48%) than those earning more than \$75,000 a year (29%).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ❖ **37 The most frequently-mentioned suggestion for improvement was for BAR to advertise more and gain visibility.**

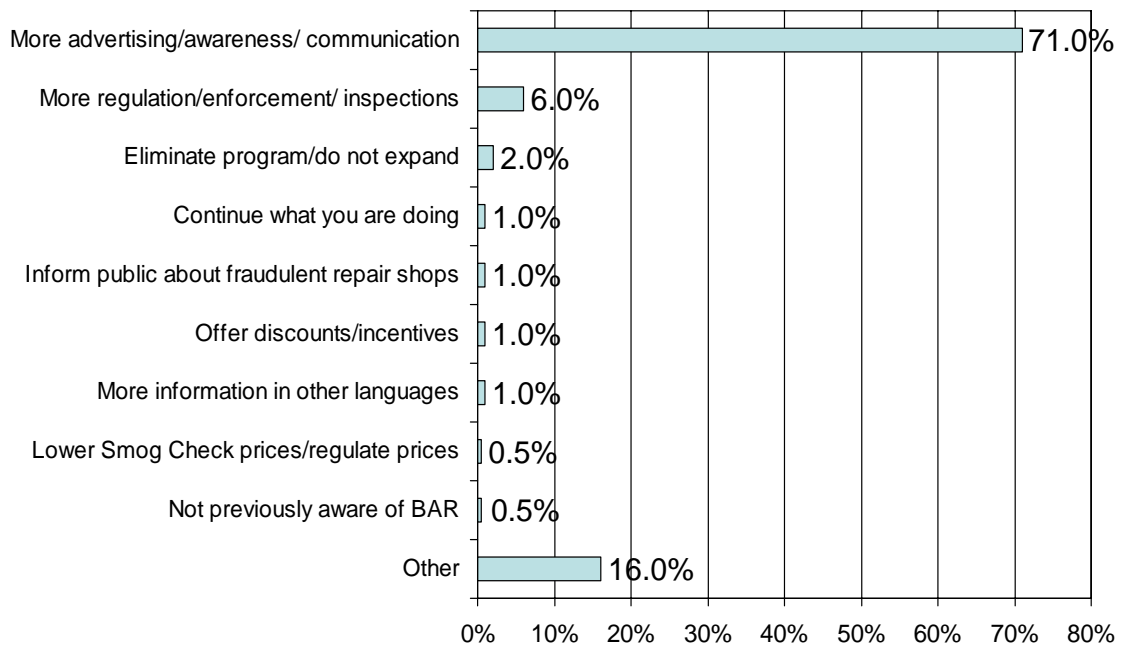
Finally, all respondents were asked what one suggestion they could make that would help BAR serve them, the consumer, better. All responses were entered, and later categorized. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of all respondents could offer

no suggestions. They were subsequently deleted and percentages were recalculated. Suggestions from the remaining respondents are categorized in Figure 23. It can be seen that more advertising and better publicity led the list of suggestions, with 71% of these respondents saying this is the one main area for improvement. In other words, the suggestions tended not to focus on ways of improving current BAR services, but rather, on **improving consumer awareness** of its existing services. In one sense, this is positive, in that respondents were impressed with the services and information offered by BAR, especially once they were informed about BAR. On the other hand, increasing awareness of BAR's services in the minds of California consumers is no easy task, particularly in these current times of information-overload.

Figure 23

## What ONE suggestion could you make that would help BAR serve you, the consumer, better?

(among the 63% who offered suggestions, excluding undecided responses)



Some of the suggestions for increasing BAR's visibility were more practical – such as providing a brochure about BAR along with each vehicle purchase, or at the Department of Motor Vehicles, with the AAA, or in grocery stores. Besides using the main media of television, radio, and newspapers, many respondents also suggested advertising in community newspapers and on billboards. A few mentioned having the BAR toll-free number posted in all repair shops. Some examples of comments having to do with advertising and improved visibility of BAR's services included:

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- "Ad campaign in the paper, to let us know it's out there.
- Advertise functions and abilities more.
- Advertise to the public so lots of people can access them.
- Advertising and communication through newspaper that the service exists, is out there.
- All the ways possible not everyone has a computer but all other ways are the best to communicate with the public.
- Be informative, get the message out, use more creative ways to get the message out. When you buy a used car or a new car, you should get a BAR brochure, so you know what you are dealing with.
- Better information on how to file complaints with them.
- Certainly communicating its existence would be the best thing for people who don't know about it.
- Communication and awareness should be available at the DMV, registration renewal, mechanic shops and insurance firms.
- Creating awareness of them. Cable ads, brochures in dealerships, and newsletter mailed to the house. They need to get in the consumer's face.
- Do more advertising and make the consumer more aware as I never knew about them. Like maybe billboards and advertising on buses.
- Get on TV, and do their announcements.
- Get the word out about BAR. Before you called I did not know about BAR.
- Give examples of how it would help other people and communicating this through the tools we just discussed.
- Having the information in the DMV, since they are the ones to let you know about your Smog Check.
- I don't see too much commercials or advertisements on TV. A lot of people probably don't know about. They need more advertisement on TV and newspapers.
- I think an information pamphlet would be excellent at the purchase of a new or used vehicle. When you fill the paperwork out for a new vehicle or to transfer a used vehicle a pamphlet could be part of the package.
- I think that the paperwork received from the Smog Check company should have the BAR number listed on it with a statement saying that if they are dissatisfied in anyway with any portion of the Smog Check program that they should contact BAR at that number.
- I wish I knew more about them. If they were in the news or something, I could know more about them.
- If they have news flash alerts, on TV or e-mail that would be eye catching! Something high profile that would catch my eye. I have kids and not much time to review a lot of information.
- Important to know about all their services not just the Smog Check. Notify of all their services, and change the web site name, it is misleading. So it would give you the idea it is about consumer service about cars.
- Just get the information out there in the various ways that were previously stated. Even this phone call helped, because I never knew this agency existed until now.
- Make sure that other public agencies know about them, so if someone calls a different agency they will be referred to BAR. I did and never heard of BAR.
- Make us more aware of what they have to offer in terms of Newspaper articles and Network TV not public access.
- People need to know what it is, maybe they need a bigger budget for marketing like on 740am, traffic updates sponsored by BAR."

Although the next frequently-mentioned suggestion was offered by substantially fewer respondents (6%), it should not be ignored as the types of comments that appeared previously in the survey having to do with dissatisfaction with Smog Check stations and/or repair shops dealt with this aspect: more regulation, better enforcement of existing regulations and increased inspections.

- “Basically to stand up or do what they say they are going to do. If BAR says they are going to remove heavily polluting vehicles off the road, remove them.
- Continue to regulate the auto shops.
- Give a good service, make sure that service places are honest and don't add things to the list of things that are wrong for money. You ask for one thing then they tell you something else is wrong too. I would like if the places were honest.
- Have the ones that screw up working on your car in the newspaper or on television.
- Have more license inspectors inspecting these places, such auto repair and Smog Check.
- Have some sort of large certification to get around these small shady businesses that slide by on everything.
- Get out of the chair and send a car to the shop and they will know how the people are being cheated.
- I suppose that the area that I'm most concerned about is the licensing and repairs shops and keeping track of who's doing the correct procedures for the job.
- Keeping the standards that they have and monitoring the people who do the Smog Checks.
- Stay consistent on the oversight of the repair shops. Spot inspections would be excellent.”

### PHASE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 3 below indicates the respondent demographics from the sample of 1,000 telephone interviews completed in Phase 1 with adult California residents. The Phase 1 characteristics are considered generally representative of the household population of the entire state of California. Most of these demographic questions were included in the statistical crosstabulation analyses that determined if responses to certain questions differed by demographic characteristics.<sup>20</sup> Important statistically significant differences have been discussed in the current report.

**Table 3: Phase 1 Respondent Demographics**

| SURVEY LANGUAGE | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| English         | 919          | 92%                        |
| Spanish         | 81           | 8%                         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

<sup>20</sup> The statewide (Phase 1) baseline demographic crosstabulation analyses were based on 1,000 interviews and necessarily excluded the oversamples of the underserved populations in order to be representative of the state as a whole. Demographic characteristics may have been grouped differently (i.e. fewer and collapsed categories), depending on the specific analysis.

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| GENDER       | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Female       | 481          | 48%                        |
| Male         | 519          | 52%                        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| GEOGRAPHIC REGION        | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Northern California area | 120          | 12%                        |
| San Francisco Bay area   | 160          | 16%                        |
| Central California area  | 113          | 11%                        |
| Los Angeles area         | 453          | 46%                        |
| Central Coast area       | 62           | 6%                         |
| Southern California area | 92           | 9%                         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| INTERNET ACCESS                   | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| No                                | 177          | 18%                        |
| Yes                               | 813          | 81%                        |
| <i>Non-Response</i> <sup>21</sup> | 10           | 1%                         |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Live alone                  | 141          | 14%                        |
| Two members                 | 297          | 30%                        |
| Three members               | 195          | 19%                        |
| Four members                | 187          | 19%                        |
| Five or more members        | 171          | 17%                        |
| <i>Non-response</i>         | 9            | 1%                         |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

<sup>21</sup> The non-response category includes those who were undecided or refused to answer the question.

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| EDUCATION               | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Less than high school   | 57           | 6%                         |
| High school graduate    | 192          | 19%                        |
| Some college            | 250          | 25%                        |
| Trade/Vocational school | 24           | 2%                         |
| College degree          | 288          | 29%                        |
| Post-college degree     | 173          | 17%                        |
| <i>Non-Response</i>     | 16           | 2%                         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| AGE          | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| 18 – 24      | 43           | 4%                         |
| 25 – 34      | 138          | 14%                        |
| 35 – 44      | 217          | 22%                        |
| 45 – 54      | 260          | 26%                        |
| 55 – 64      | 238          | 24%                        |
| 65 and older | 104          | 10%                        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| ETHNICITY              | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| African-American       | 51           | 5%                         |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 54           | 5%                         |
| Caucasian              | 634          | 63%                        |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 211          | 21%                        |
| Other                  | 22           | 2%                         |
| <i>Non-Response</i>    | 28           | 3%                         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

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| LANGUAGE MOST OFTEN SPOKEN AT HOME | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| English                            | 834          | 83%                        |
| Spanish                            | 87           | 9%                         |
| English and Spanish equally        | 40           | 4%                         |
| Other                              | 31           | 3%                         |
| <i>Non-Response</i>                | 8            | 1%                         |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| LANGUAGE MOST OFTEN SPOKEN AT HOME BY HISPANIC/LATINO RESPONDENTS | FREQUENCY  | PERCENT OF HISPANIC/LATINO RESPONDENTS |
|---|------------|--|
| English   | 93         | 44%                                    |
| Spanish   | 85         | 40%                                    |
| English and Spanish equally                                       | 33         | 16%                                    |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>211</b> | <b>100%</b>                            |

| HOUSEHOLD ANNUAL INCOME | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Under \$10,000          | 24           | 2%                         |
| \$10,000 - \$14,999     | 38           | 4%                         |
| \$15,000 - \$19,999     | 33           | 3%                         |
| \$20,000 - \$34,999     | 107          | 11%                        |
| \$35,000 - \$49,999     | 127          | 13%                        |
| \$50,000 - \$74,999     | 155          | 15%                        |
| \$75,000 - \$99,999     | 119          | 12%                        |
| \$100,000 or more       | 249          | 25%                        |
| <i>Non-Response</i>     | 148          | 15%                        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| NUMBER OF VEHICLES IN HOUSEHOLD | FREQUENCY    | PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| One                             | 201          | 20%                        |
| Two                             | 408          | 41%                        |
| Three                           | 216          | 22%                        |
| Four                            | 103          | 10%                        |
| Five                            | 39           | 4%                         |
| Six                             | 9            | 1%                         |
| Seven or more                   | 18           | 2%                         |
| <i>Non-response</i>             | 6            | 1%                         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1,000</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

| AGE OF VEHICLES IN HOUSEHOLD (# OF RESPONDENTS)            | MEDIAN <sup>22</sup> | RANGE        |
|--|----------------------|--------------|
| First vehicle - most frequently driven by respondent (988) | 5 years              | 0 – 41 years |
| Second vehicle (789)                                       | 6 years              | 0 – 76 years |
| Third vehicle (385)  | 9 years              | 0 – 78 years |
| Fourth vehicle (167)                                       | 12 years             | 0 – 84 years |
| Fifth vehicle (65)   | 17 years             | 0 – 87 years |
| Sixth vehicle (28)   | 16.5 years           | 0 – 89 years |
| Seventh vehicle (18)                                       | 15 years             | 0 – 58 years |

### **PHASE 1: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A baseline telephone consumer opinion survey was conducted with a sample of 1,000 adult California residents, representative of the State of California as a whole. Results are considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.1%, nineteen times out of twenty. Conclusions presented here are based on results from the group of respondents as a whole. Demographic differences can be read in the main body of the report.

In general, results indicate that the California Bureau of Automotive Repair is not well-known among California vehicle owners and drivers. Only 33% of all respondents had some knowledge

<sup>22</sup> Due to the wide range of responses, the median age of vehicles is a better measure of central tendency than the mean. The median is the value above and below which half the cases fall, the 50th percentile. The median is a measure of central tendency not sensitive to outlying values -- unlike the mean, which can be affected by a few extremely high or low values.

of BAR and the services it provides. However, among those willing to give evaluations, the majority (86%) felt that BAR was effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission. [It is interesting that the plurality of these respondents did not mention administering the Smog Check program as a main function.]

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR could increase its efforts to publicize what it does in order to increase its visibility among the California public in general.

The most important BAR services (from a consumer viewpoint) include:

1. regulating automotive repair shops,
  2. providing consumer assistance, and
  3. offering financial assistance programs.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** Improvements in any of these areas should result in improved ratings of the overall effectiveness of BAR.

Ten percent (10%) of respondent households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years. Only 29% of these were told about BAR's financial assistance program.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** Efforts could be increased to inform consumers about the financial assistance options BAR offers.

Nine percent (9%) experienced a problem with a Smog Check station. The most common problem involved cost issues or being overcharged, followed by customer service issues, and unethical practices. The majority who experienced a problem (62%) dealt with it by going to another Smog Check station.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** Increased monitoring and inspection of Smog Check stations could focus on exposing overcharging, inconsistencies between stations, as well as unethical, or fraudulent activity.

When choosing an auto repair shop, the most important factor for consumers is having qualified mechanics or technicians. Sixty-eight (68%) of respondent households experienced vehicle repairs in the last year, mostly involving repairs to brakes, followed by auto body repairs. The majority (80%) had a positive experience with their repair shop. Nine percent (9%) personally experienced a problem with an auto repair shop, the main one being repairs that were not properly performed.

Only 3% of all respondents contacted BAR (either by calling the consumer information toll-free center or by accessing the website), indicating that many California consumers who could benefit from BAR's services are not using them. When asked why they did not contact BAR when they experienced a problem with either a Smog Check station or a repair shop, the most common response was that they did not know about it.

In terms of outreach tools and communication strategies the top two most effective channels were calling a toll-free information center and accessing the website. The challenge is that only 3% of all respondents actually used these channels to contact BAR, indicating a disconnect between what people say and what they did.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR should continue offering its toll-free Consumer Information Center and developing its website, but it should also not ignore the more

conventional media in its outreach efforts. In addition, communication preferences varied by demographic characteristics, and these differences can be used by BAR to help fine-tune and target particular groups with specific tools.

Over 60% of all respondents said they would be likely to contact BAR in the future, now that they know more about it and the services it offers. Although not intended as such, the act of participating in the survey appeared to have been a learning experience for many of these respondents.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR could increase its efforts to publicize its services (and possibly interventions) to encourage California residents to make better use of its services.

Respondents suggested that BAR could serve them better by **advertising its services more to gain better visibility**. They could also increase their regulation, better enforce existing regulations and increase inspections.

## Phase 2 Results: Three Underserved Populations

Phase 2 involved completing “oversamples” of additional telephone interviews with targeted samples of three specific underserved populations, as defined in conjunction with DCA and BAR: seniors (aged 65 years and older), low-income households (less than \$20,000 annual income), and Spanish speakers.<sup>23</sup> For the Spanish-speaking subgroup, a total of 300 interviews were completed. For the low-income group, a total of 301 interviews were completed and 359 interviews were completed with seniors. Results for each subgroup are first described, followed by comparisons with Phase 1 statewide findings.

### OVERALL AWARENESS AND GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF CALIFORNIA’S BUREAU OF AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR

#### Overall Awareness

##### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

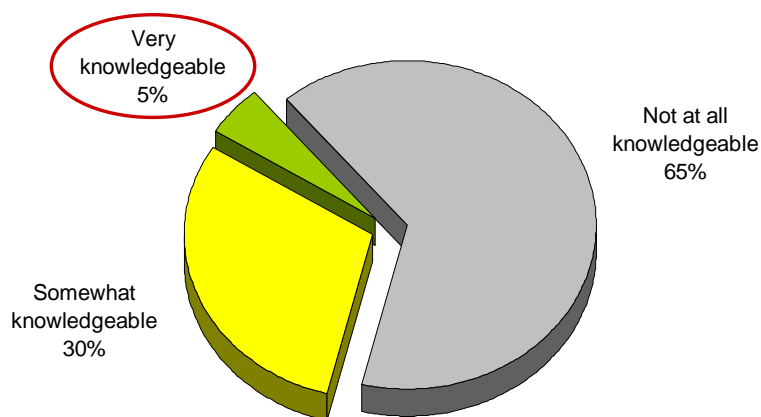
- ❖ **38** *The majority of Spanish-speaking respondents did not know about BAR or its services: 30% said they were “somewhat” knowledgeable and a further 5% were “very” knowledgeable.*

It can be seen in Figure 24 that 65% of Spanish-speaking respondents were “not at all” knowledgeable about BAR and the services it provides. Only 5% reported being “very” knowledgeable and the remaining 30% felt “somewhat” knowledgeable about BAR.

**Figure 24**

#### **Spanish Speakers: How Knowledgeable Are You About BAR and the Services it Provides?**

(excluding undecided responses)



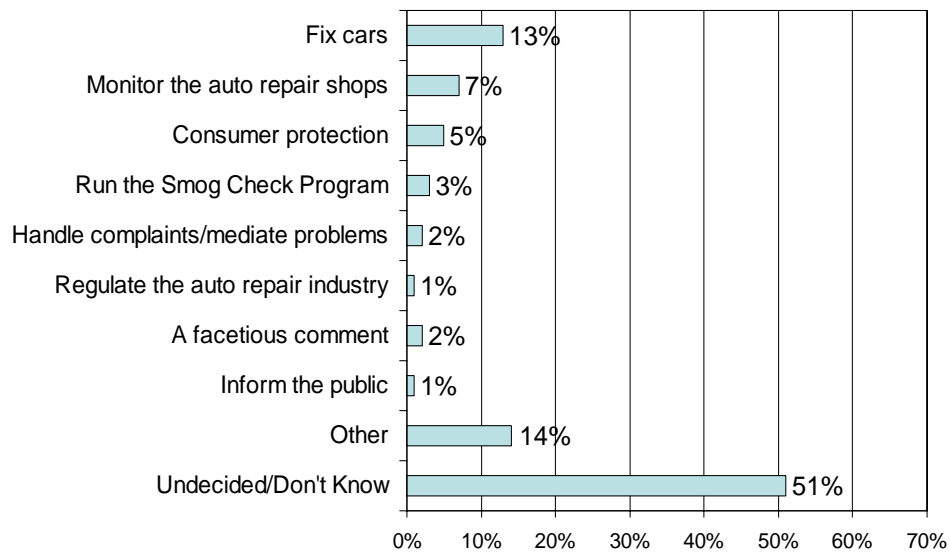
<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that the subpopulation of Spanish speakers is not the same as the subpopulation of residents who self-identify their ethnic background as Hispanic or Latino – the latter is comprised of many individuals who speak only English (in fact, fully one quarter in our sample). After discussions with DCA and BAR staff, it was decided that for the purposes of the current study, choosing respondents who only wanted to be interviewed in Spanish would offer a better representation of an underserved population.

- ❖ **39 In general, Spanish-speaking respondents who were aware of the BAR name did not understand BAR’s function: 51% were unsure and 13% mistakenly thought BAR’s main function was to fix cars.**

Those respondents who said they were “somewhat” or “very” knowledgeable about BAR were then asked to describe what the main function of BAR is, in their opinion. Verbatim responses were captured and categorized for a more quantitative assessment. Figure 25 shows the results of this categorization. First, it can be seen that half (51%) Spanish-speaking respondents who claimed to have some knowledge of BAR were unable to describe its main function. Additionally, 13% said BAR’s main function was to fix cars.

The most common accurate description (given by 7% of Spanish-speaking respondents who were aware of BAR) involved BAR’s responsibility to monitor the auto repair shops, followed by its role to protect the consumer (5%), run the Smog Check Program (3%), and to handle complaints and mediate problems (2%).

**Figure 25**  
**Spanish Speakers: What would you say is the MAIN function of BAR?**  
 (among those claiming some knowledge about BAR, including undecided responses)



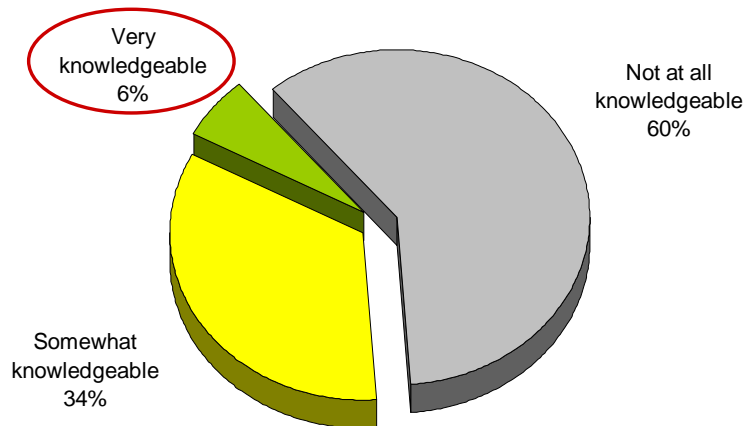
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **40 Forty percent (40%) of senior respondents considered themselves familiar with BAR. Of these, 6% said they were “very” knowledgeable.**

Awareness of BAR among senior respondents is shown in Figure 26. Forty percent considered themselves either “somewhat” (34%) or “very” (6%) knowledgeable about BAR. The majority (60%), however, were “not at all” knowledgeable about the Bureau of Automotive Repair or its services.

Figure 26

**Seniors: How Knowledgeable Are You About  
BAR and the Services it Provides?**  
(excluding undecided responses)



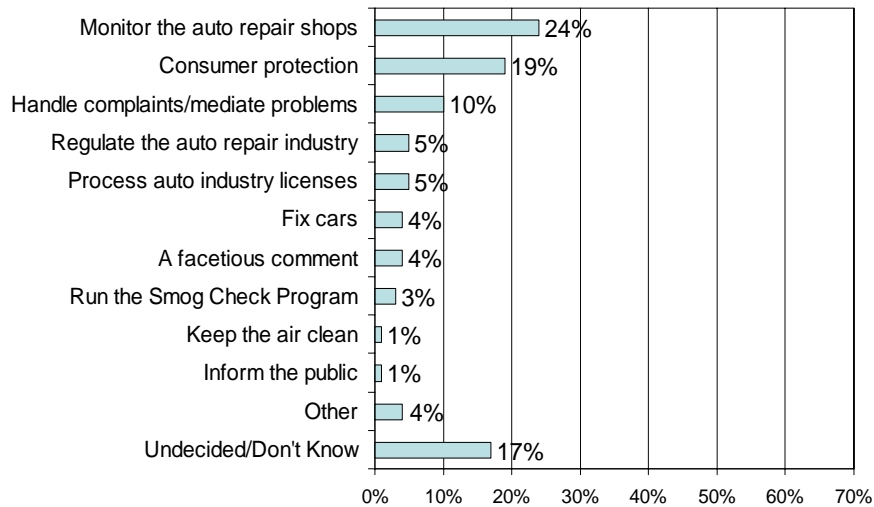
- ❖ **41** *In general, senior respondents who were aware of BAR's name were able to articulate BAR's role fairly accurately, describing it as an agency that monitors the auto repair shops, protects the consumer, and handles complaints and mediates problems.*

Senior respondents who were at least "somewhat" knowledgeable about BAR were asked to describe its main function. Verbatim responses were captured and categorized for a more quantitative assessment and the results are shown in Figure 27.

In general, senior respondents described BAR's function fairly accurately. They considered BAR's role to be: monitoring the auto repair shops (24%), protecting the consumer (19%), and handling complaints and mediating problems (10%). There was, however, a group of senior respondents (17%), who claimed to have some knowledge of BAR but were unable to describe its main function.

**Figure 27**

**Seniors: What would you say is the MAIN function of BAR?**  
 (among those claiming some knowledge about BAR, including undecided responses)



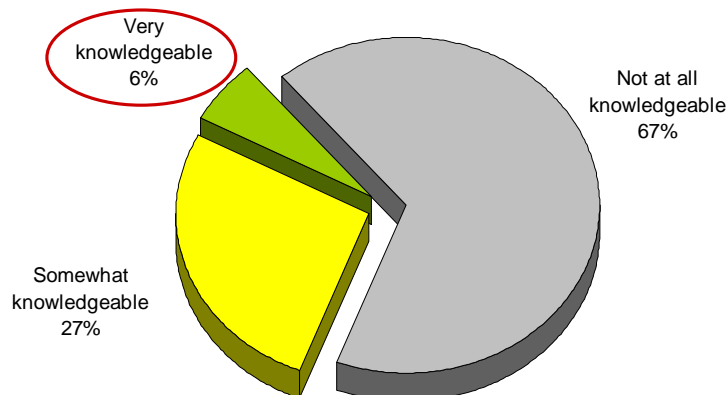
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **42 A combined total of thirty-three percent (33%) of low-income respondents felt informed about BAR and its services.**

Among low-income respondents, 67% said they had no knowledge about BAR or its services, as shown in Figure 28. Twenty-seven percent felt “somewhat” knowledgeable and a further 6% said they were “very” knowledgeable.

**Figure 28**

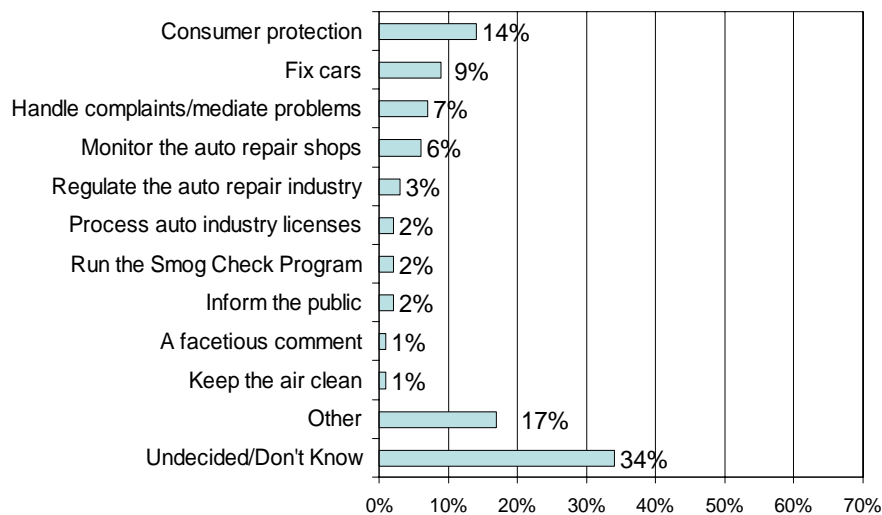
**Low-Income: How Knowledgeable Are You About BAR and the Services it Provides?**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **43 Although some low-income respondents who were aware of BAR knew that its purpose is to protect consumers (14%), handle complaints (7%), and monitor auto repair shops (6%), a third (34%) were unable to describe BAR’s function and 9% thought BAR actually repairs vehicles.**

Again, respondents who were at least “somewhat” knowledgeable about BAR were asked to describe its main function. Figure 29 shows the categorization of the verbatim responses captured by this open-ended question among respondents whose annual household incomes were less than \$20,000. Some low-income respondents who were aware of BAR knew that its purpose is to protect consumers (14%), handle complaints (7%), and monitor auto repair shops (6%). However, about a third (34%) could not explain BAR’s main function. A further 9% erroneously thought BAR’s role was to repair vehicles.

**Figure 29**  
**Low-Income: What would you say is the MAIN function of BAR?**  
 (among those claiming some knowledge about BAR, including undecided responses)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

In order to understand the underserved populations better, this section compares the levels of awareness of the Bureau of Automotive Repair by subgroup, that is, the Spanish-speaking, senior, low-income, and statewide samples of respondents (Phase 1). Where applicable, statistically significant differences are discussed.

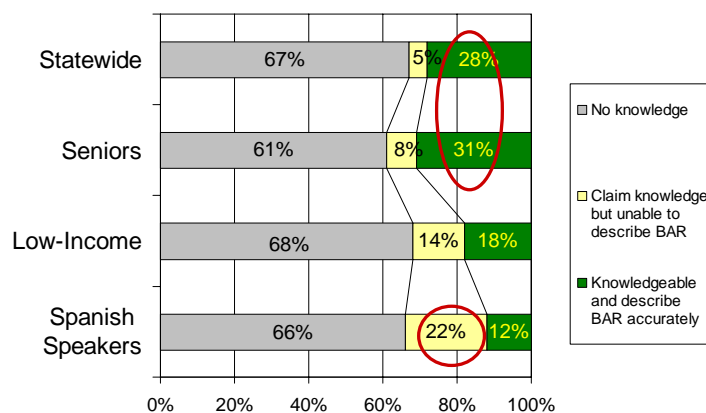
- ❖ **44 Awareness was consistently low among all groups: about a third of each group reported having at least some knowledge of BAR and about 5% said they were “very” knowledgeable about BAR and its services. However, seniors and consumers statewide were more likely to be able to describe BAR’s main functions than low-income and Spanish-speaking respondents.**

Awareness among each of the underserved populations as well as the statewide results was compared and the results are shown in Figure 30. First of all, knowledge about BAR was low among all groups, with 61% of seniors, 66% of Spanish speakers, 68% of low-income, and 67% of statewide respondents saying they were “not at all” familiar with BAR. However, seniors (31%) and statewide respondents (28%) knew more about BAR than their low-income (18%) and Spanish-speaking counterparts (12%) as they claimed knowledge and gave accurate descriptions of BAR’s main function. Spanish speakers were more likely than respondents of other subgroups to have claimed knowledge but then be unable to describe BAR’s role (either by giving an undecided or inaccurate response).

**Figure 30**

**Overall Awareness of BAR**

“How knowledgeable are you about BAR and its services?”  
 And if knowledgeable, “What is BAR’s main function?”



- ❖ **45** *Hispanics who were aware of BAR and able to describe its main function accurately were more likely to speak English at home (either primarily or equally with Spanish) than to speak Spanish only. However, the proportion of Hispanic respondents who claimed to have no knowledge about BAR was the same (about two-thirds) regardless of in-home language.*

We elected to conduct further analyses in order to explore possible differences between language and ethnicity. In this case, we included all those respondents (from both Phase 1 and Phase 2) who identified their racial or ethnic background as Hispanic and grouped them into three categories according to the dominant language in the home (question 821):<sup>24</sup> those who speak mostly English at home, those who speak mostly Spanish, and those who speak English and Spanish equally.

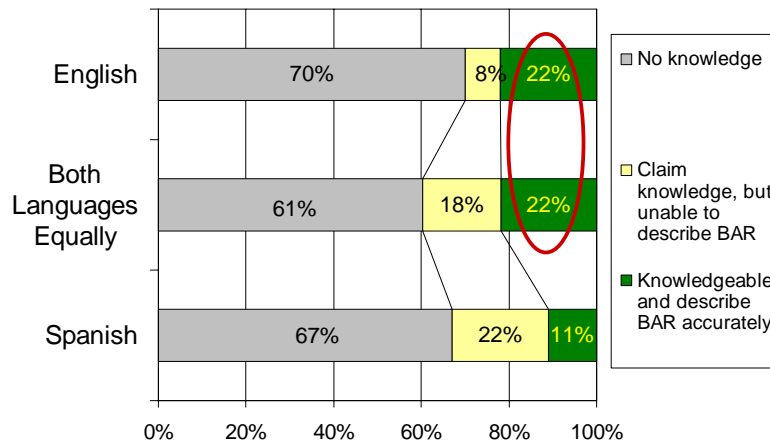
<sup>24</sup> The question reads: “And what language is most often spoken in your home?”

In terms of awareness, we conducted a test of proportions and found that Hispanics who speak English (either primarily or bilingually with Spanish) were twice as likely to accurately describe BAR and its main function (both 22%) than Hispanics who primarily speak Spanish at home (11%). However, the proportion of Hispanics who said they had no knowledge about BAR or its services was the same regardless of the language they speak at home – about two-thirds. Results are shown in the next chart.

**Figure 31**

### Hispanics by Language: Overall Awareness of BAR

“How knowledgeable are you about BAR and its services?”  
 And if knowledgeable, “What is BAR’s main function?”



## Overall Effectiveness of BAR

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

- ❖ **46 Among Spanish speakers willing to evaluate BAR, the vast majority (94%) felt that BAR was effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission.**

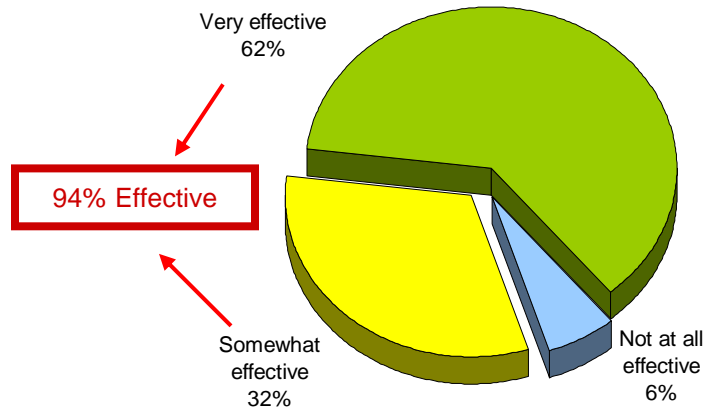
All respondents were read a brief statement about BAR and its services.<sup>25</sup> Then they were asked: “Based on what I have just told you, would you say BAR has been not at all effective, somewhat effective, or very effective overall in terms of fulfilling its mission?” Almost one fifth of Spanish-speaking respondents (19%) said they did not know. These “undecided” responses were removed from the analysis and the percentages were recalculated. It can be seen in Figure 32 that 62% of these Spanish-speaking respondents felt that BAR has been “very” effective. Combining this result with the 32%

<sup>25</sup> The statement read as follows: “Let me tell you a little about the Bureau of Automotive Repair or BAR. BAR regulates auto repair businesses to assure they operate in a lawful manner. It handles and operates California’s Smog Check Program. In addition, BAR provides financial assistance to qualified consumers to repair or retire vehicles that fail a Smog Check test.”

who said it has been “somewhat” effective indicates that the vast majority (94%) gave positive evaluations.

**Figure 32**

**Spanish Speakers: Rating of BAR’s Effectiveness in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



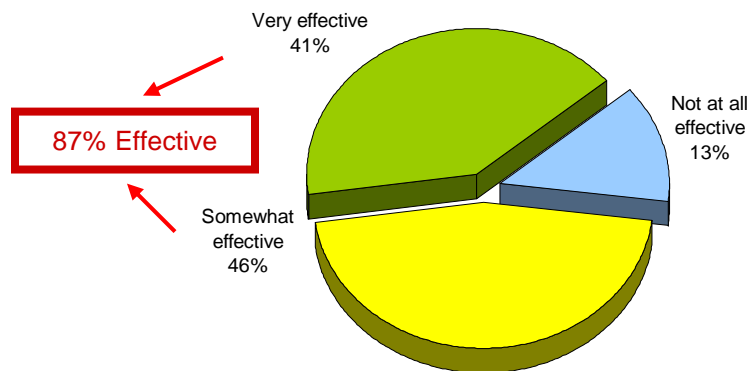
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **47 Eighty-seven percent (87%) of seniors surveyed felt BAR was effective in terms of accomplishing its mission.**

About a third of senior respondents (33%) could not answer and volunteered a “don’t know” response. These responses were again removed from the analysis, the percentages were recalculated, and the results are shown in the next chart. Among the senior respondents willing to evaluate BAR, nearly half (46%) felt that BAR has been “somewhat” effective and 41% felt it had been “very” effective for a total of 87% who gave positive ratings. Thirteen percent felt BAR was “not at all” effective in accomplishing its mission.

**Figure 33**

**Seniors: Rating of BAR’s Effectiveness in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



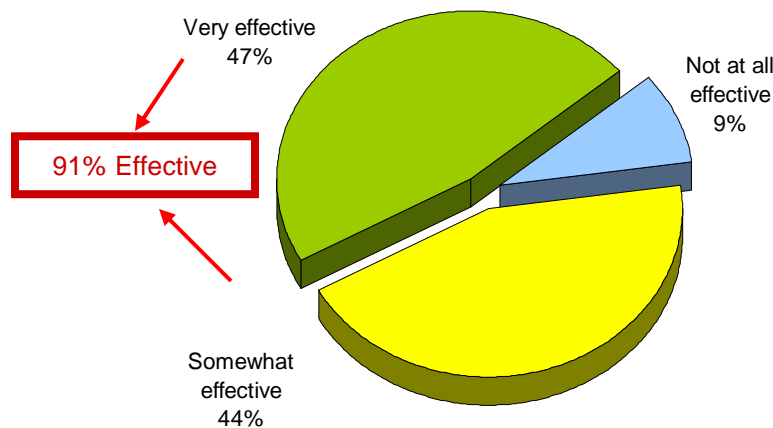
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **48 BAR has been effective in terms of fulfilling its overall mission, according to 91% of the low-income respondents.**

When asked to rate the effectiveness of BAR overall, 22% of low-income respondents were undecided. After removing these undecided responses from the analysis, the percentages were recalculated. Among the low-income respondents who evaluated BAR, about half (47%) felt that BAR has been “very” effective and slightly fewer (44%) felt it had been “somewhat” effective as shown in the next figure. In other words, 91% gave positive ratings, and only 9% held a negative opinion of “not at all” effective.

**Figure 34**

**Low-Income: Rating of BAR’s Effectiveness in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**  
 (excluding undecided responses)

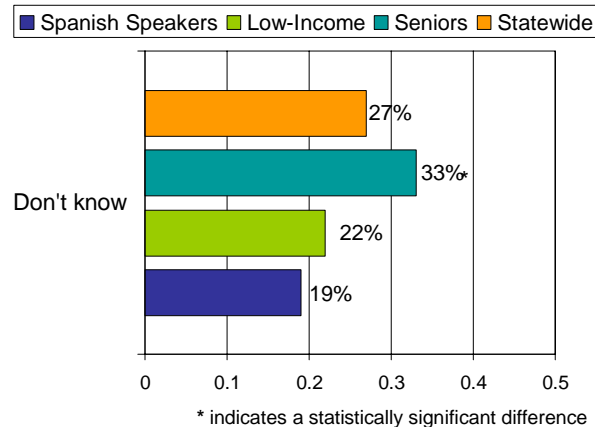


**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **49 Seniors were significantly more likely than respondents in other groups to be undecided about BAR’s effectiveness in terms of fulfilling its mission.**

Generally, undecided responses are excluded from the analyses of survey results because they are generally not considered to be valid responses. However, percentages above 10% often warrant a further look. When respondents were asked to assess the effectiveness of BAR based on a brief description, the proportion of undecided responses ranged from a low of 19% among Spanish speakers to a high of 33% among seniors as shown in Figure 35. Further analyses indicated that, in fact, senior respondents were significantly more likely than low-income, Spanish-speaking and statewide respondents to be unable to answer this particular question and instead volunteered a “don’t know” response.

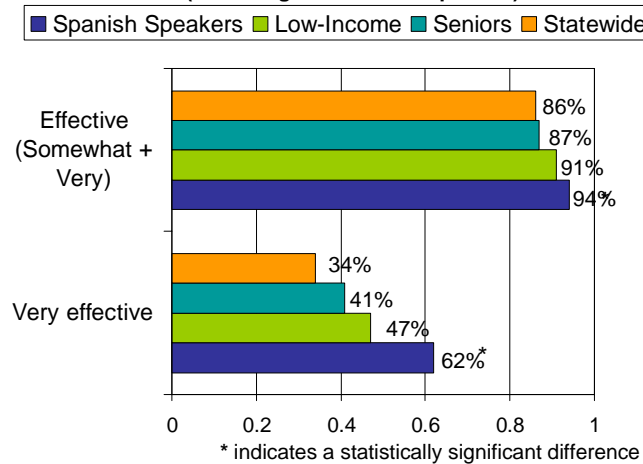
**Figure 35**  
**Undecided Response: Rating BAR's Effectiveness in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**



- ❖ **50** *The vast majority of those willing to rate BAR felt BAR was effective, although Spanish speakers gave statistically higher ratings for overall effectiveness (94%) than the statewide sample (86%). Additionally, all three “underserved” populations were significantly more likely than consumers statewide to feel BAR was “very” effective in terms of accomplishing its mission.*

Effectiveness ratings among each of the underserved populations as well as the statewide results were compared and the statistically significant differences are shown in Figure 36. First of all, the vast majority of all groups considered BAR to be effective; although Spanish speakers gave statistically higher positive ratings than statewide respondents (94% vs. 86% said BAR was at least “somewhat” effective). Second, focusing solely on the “very” effective ratings, Spanish speakers were again more positive than their counterparts among the other groups: the 62% of Spanish speakers who said BAR was “very” effective in fulfilling its mission was significantly higher than the 47% of low-income and 41% of senior respondents who felt the same. All three subpopulations were significantly more likely to give the top rating than the 34% of statewide respondents.

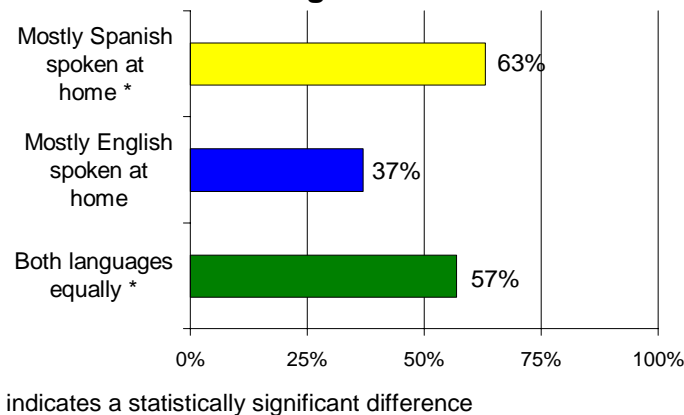
**Figure 36**  
**Rating of BAR's Effectiveness**  
**in terms of Fulfilling its Mission**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **51 Hispanic respondents who speak Spanish at home (either primarily or equally with English) were significantly more likely to consider BAR to be “very” effective in terms of fulfilling its mission than Hispanics who only speak English.**

Among the larger group of Hispanics, results show that those who primarily speak Spanish (63%) and those who speak both languages equally (57%) at home were significantly more likely to rate BAR as “very” effective than those who speak primarily English (37%). Results are shown in Figure 37.

**Figure 37**  
**Hispanics by Language:**  
**Ratings of “Very” Effective in Terms of**  
**Fulfilling its Mission**



## Importance of Specific Services

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

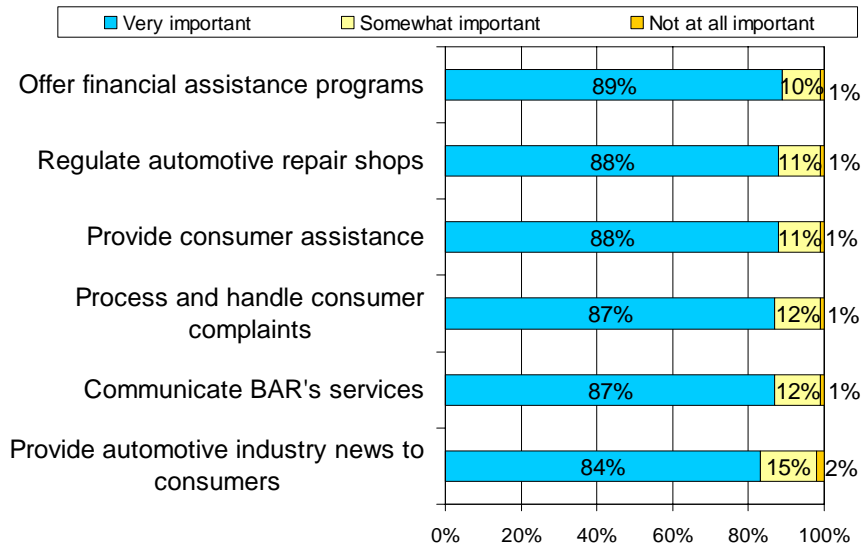
- ❖ **52 At least 84% of Spanish speakers felt all of BAR's services were important, with the most essential service being BAR's financial assistance programs (89%).**

When asked to rate the importance of BAR continuing to offer specific services, at least 84% of the Spanish speakers surveyed considered each of the six services as “very” important. The highest ratings were given for offering financial assistance programs (89%). Other important services included regulating automotive repair shops and providing customer service, such as license verification (both 88%). According to Spanish-speaking respondents, the least important service involved providing news about the automotive industry, although the vast majority still felt it was “very” important (84%). Results are shown in Figure 38.

**Figure 38**

### Spanish Speakers: How Important Is it that BAR Continue to...

(among Spanish-Speaking Population excluding undecided responses)



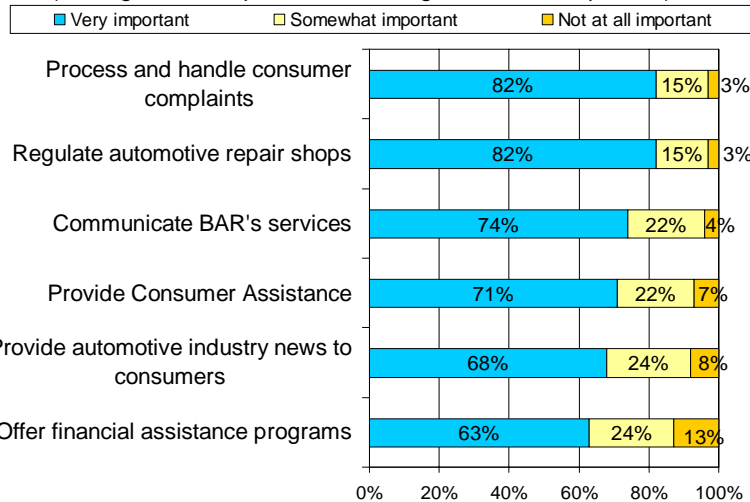
### Senior Respondents

- ❖ **53 Among senior respondents, processing and handling consumer complaints and regulating automotive repair shops were the top two services BAR offers, with 82% rating them as “very” important.**

Results of the importance ratings of the six BAR services among senior respondents are shown in Figure 39. The top two services, rated as “very” important by 82% of this group, were processing and handling complaints and regulating automotive repair shops. Offering financial assistance programs was rated the lowest (63%).

**Figure 39**  
**Seniors: How Important is it that**  
**BAR Continue to...**

(Among Senior Population excluding undecided responses)

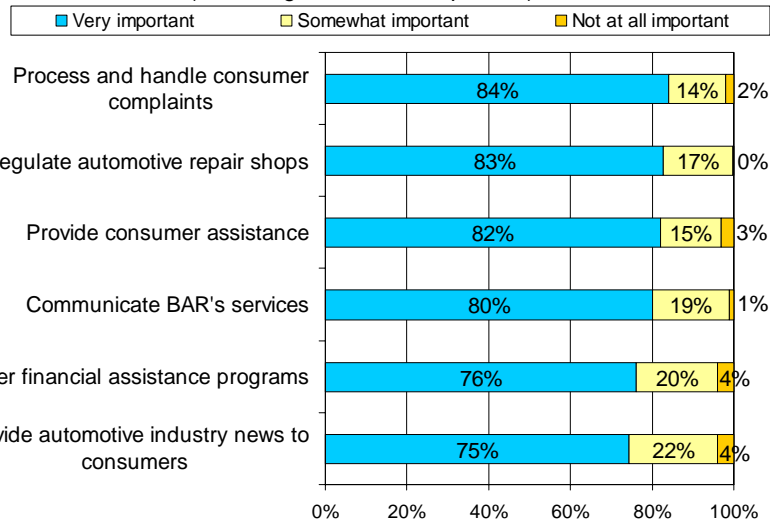


**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **54 Although at least 75% of low-income respondents felt each service was valuable, processing and handling consumer complaints received the highest ratings – 84% said it was “very” important that BAR continue to offer this service.**

Results indicated that at least 75% of low-income respondents felt that each of the six services that BAR offers was “very” important. The top-rated service was processing and handling complaints (84% said it was “very important”) and the lowest-rated service involved providing automotive industry news to California consumers (75%). Results of all six services are shown in the next chart.

**Figure 40**  
**Low-Income: How Important is it that**  
**BAR Continue to...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



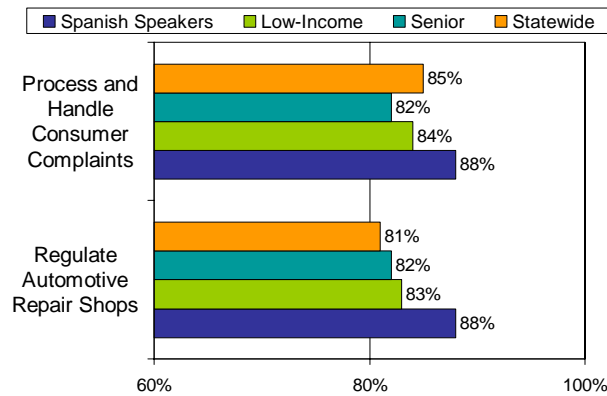
**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **55** *There is a definite consensus among the “underserved” and statewide populations that BAR should continue to process and handle complaints as well as regulate automotive repair shops.*

Given such high percentages of combined “somewhat” and “very” important ratings, comparison analyses focused only on the “very” important ratings. As shown in the next chart, the vast majority (at least 81%) of Spanish-speaking, low-income, senior, and statewide respondents alike gave the top rating for BAR in terms of processing and handling consumer complaints as well as regulating automotive repair shops. The minor variances were not found to be statistically significant.

**Figure 41**

**It is “Very” Important that BAR Continue to...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)

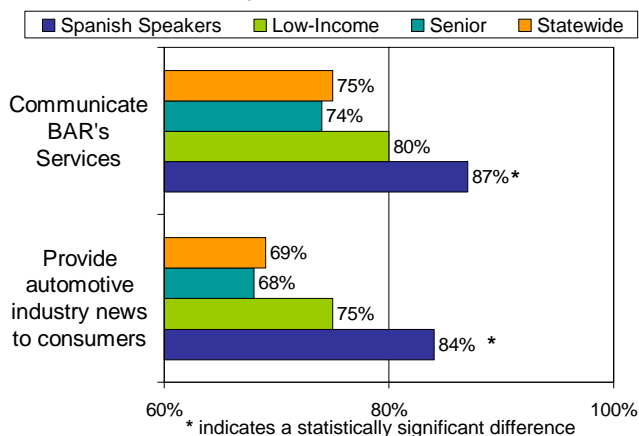


- ❖ **56** *More than two thirds of each group rated BAR’s services involving communication (that is, promoting its own services and providing news about the auto industry) as “very” important. However, Spanish-speaking respondents found these two services to be significantly more valuable than senior, low-income and statewide respondents.*

Ratings of the importance of the two services discussed in the survey that are related to communication are presented in Figure 42 - that is, communicating BAR’s services and providing California consumers with news about the auto industry. Again, at least two thirds (68%) of each group found these two services to be “very” important; however, the Spanish speakers were significantly more likely to give the top rating (of “very” important) than seniors, low-income respondents or consumers statewide.

**Figure 42**

**It is “Very” Important that BAR Continue to...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



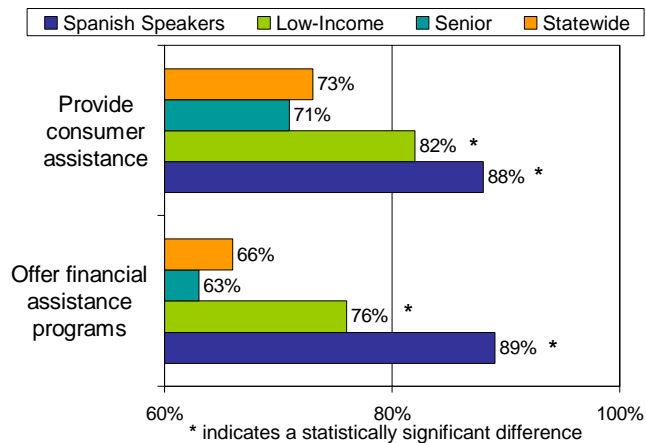
- ❖ **57 In terms of BAR’s consumer assistance programs, Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were significantly more likely to find BAR’s financial assistance and license verification programs useful than were senior and statewide respondents.**

Figure 43 compares the “very” important ratings of continuing to provide consumer assistance, such as auto repair dealer license verification and offering financial assistance. Results indicated that Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents gave significantly higher ratings than senior and statewide respondents for these two services in terms of being “very” important for BAR to continue providing.

**Figure 43**

**It is “Very” Important that BAR Continue to...**

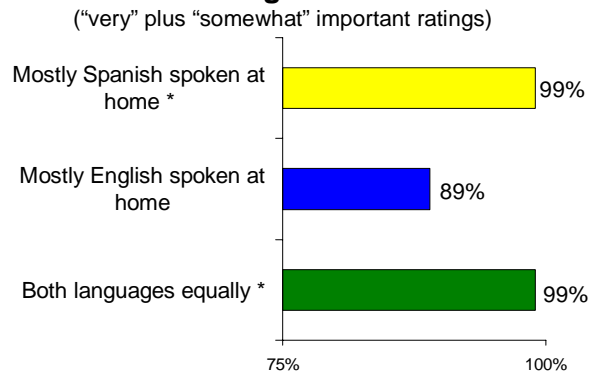
(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **58 Among all Hispanic respondents, those who speak Spanish at home (either mainly or equally with English) were significantly more likely than those who speak only English to consider BAR’s financial assistance programs important.**

Further analyses were run on all six of the BAR services discussed in the survey. For five of the six services, the importance of continuing the various programs and services were independent of the primary language spoken at home. However, results indicated that, among the larger group of Hispanics, those who primarily speak Spanish at home (99%) and those who speak both languages equally (99%) at home were significantly more likely to believe that BAR should continue to offer its financial assistance programs to consumers than those who speak English most often (89%). Results are shown in Figure 44.

**Figure 44**  
**Hispanics by Language:**  
**Importance of Offering Financial Assistance Programs**



\* indicates a statistically significant difference

**CONSUMER AUTOMOTIVE EXPERIENCE**

**Approval of Smog Check Program**

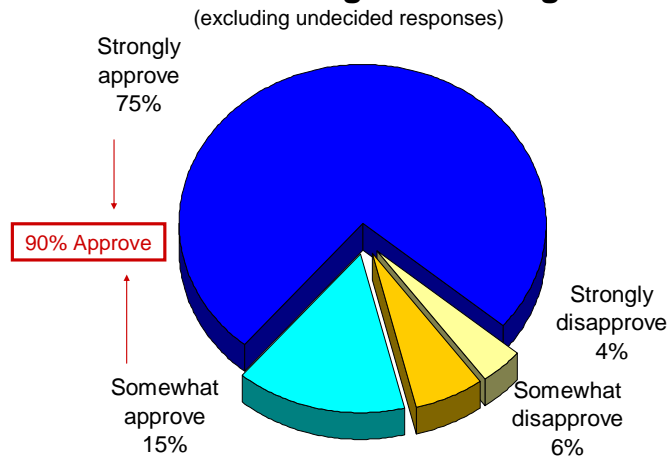
**Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **59** *Ninety percent (90%) of Spanish speakers support California’s Smog Check Program, with 75% saying they “strongly” approve of it.*

Using a four-point scale that ranged from “strongly” disapprove to “strongly” approve, respondents were asked to rate their level of support for California’s Smog Check Program. As shown in Figure 45, the vast majority of respondents (90%) who conducted the survey in Spanish favored the Smog Check Program, with 75% saying they “strongly” approved. Only 10% disapproved, either “somewhat” or “strongly”.

**Figure 45**

**Spanish Speakers: Ratings of Approval of California’s Smog Check Program**



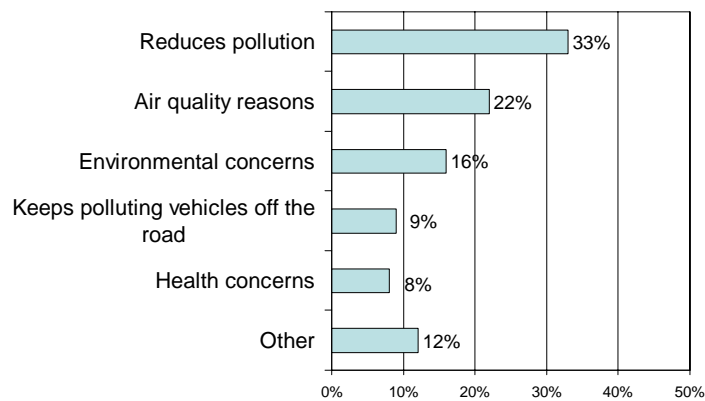
- ❖ **60 Reducing pollution (33%) was the most common reason that has generated Smog Check support among Spanish-speaking respondents, followed by air quality (22%) and environmental (16%) reasons.**

Those who approved of the Smog Check Program were asked to identify the main reason for their support. Verbatim comments were captured and categorized for a more quantitative analysis. Results among Spanish-speaking respondents are shown in the next figure. Reducing pollution was the most frequently-mentioned explanation, mentioned by a third (33%) of those who support Smog Check. Twenty-two percent gave other air quality reasons and 16% said they supported the program for environmental concerns. Eight percent mentioned health concerns.

**Figure 46**

**Spanish Speakers: Please tell me the MAIN reason why you APPROVE of Smog Check?**

(excluding undecided responses)

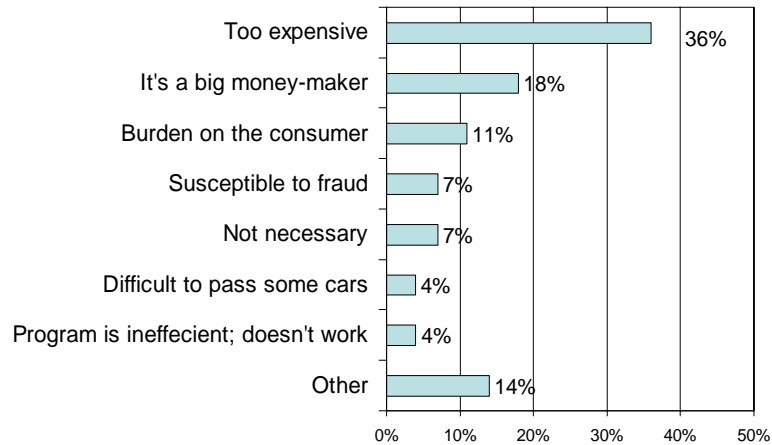


- ❖ **61 Among the Spanish speakers who disapproved of the program, the main complaint dealt with the financial aspect of Smog Check: it was too expensive (36%) or simply considered to be a way for the state to make money (18%).**

Similarly, those who disapproved of Smog Check were asked to identify the main reason they dislike the program. Cost issues were most prevalent, with 36% saying it was too expensive, and 18% believing it was just a revenue generator for the state. Eleven percent felt it placed too much of a burden on the consumer.

**Figure 47**

Spanish Speakers: Please tell me the MAIN reason why you DISAPPROVE of Smog Check?  
 (excluding undecided responses)



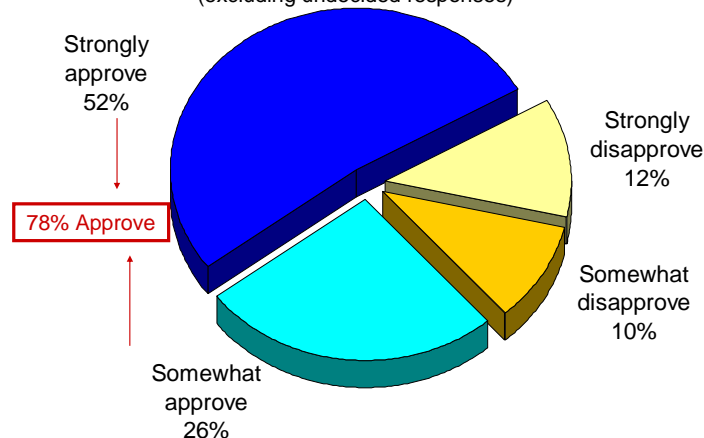
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **62 California's Smog Check Program is supported by 78% of senior respondents, with over half (52%) "strongly" approving of it.**

Among seniors, 52% "strongly" approved and 26% "somewhat" approved California's Smog Check Program for a total of 78% support. On the other hand, 10% "somewhat" disapproved and slightly more (12%) "strongly" disapproved of the program. Results are shown in Figure 48.

**Figure 48**

**Seniors: Ratings of Approval of California's Smog Check Program**  
 (excluding undecided responses)

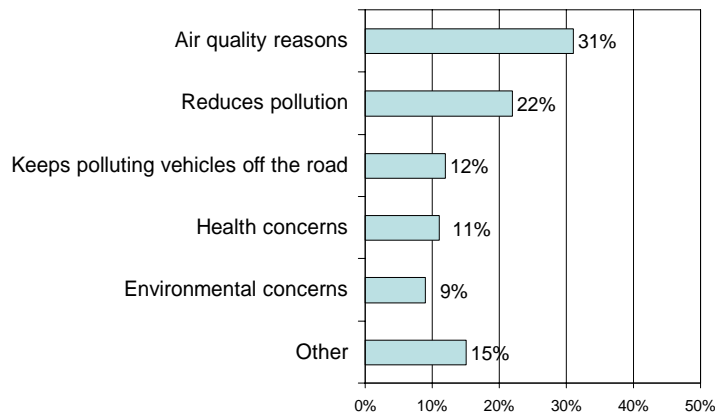


- ❖ **63** *When asked why they favor the Smog Check Program, senior respondents referenced air quality reasons (31%) and pollution reduction (22%).*

Seniors who approved of the Smog Check Program were asked to identify the main reason for their support. Their verbatim comments were captured and categorized for further analysis. As shown in the next figure, 31% of senior respondents support the program for air quality reasons and an additional 22% said it was to help reduce pollution. Eleven percent cited health concerns, and 9% mentioned the environment.

**Figure 49**

**Seniors: Please tell me the MAIN reason why you APPROVE of Smog Check?**  
 (excluding undecided responses)

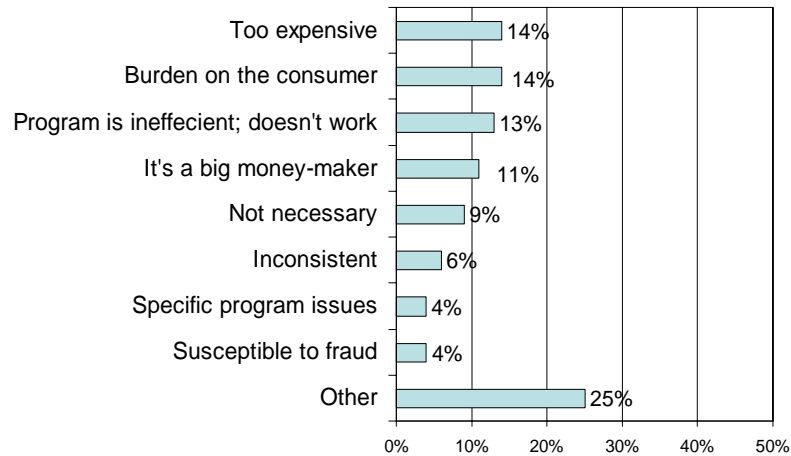


- ❖ **64** *Among seniors who disapprove of Smog Check, reasons for disliking the program focused on how the program impacts the consumer (cost and burden) as well as how it operates (lack of efficiency, need, and consistency).*

Seniors who disapproved of the Smog Check Program were asked to identify the main reason for their disapproval. Explanations varied. Some senior respondents said the program was too expensive (14%), simply a way for the state to make money (11%) and burdensome (14%). Others felt the program was inefficient (13%), unnecessary (9%), and inconsistent (6%). Results are shown in the next chart.

**Figure 50**

Seniors: Please tell me the MAIN reason why you DISAPPROVE of Smog Check?  
 (excluding undecided responses)



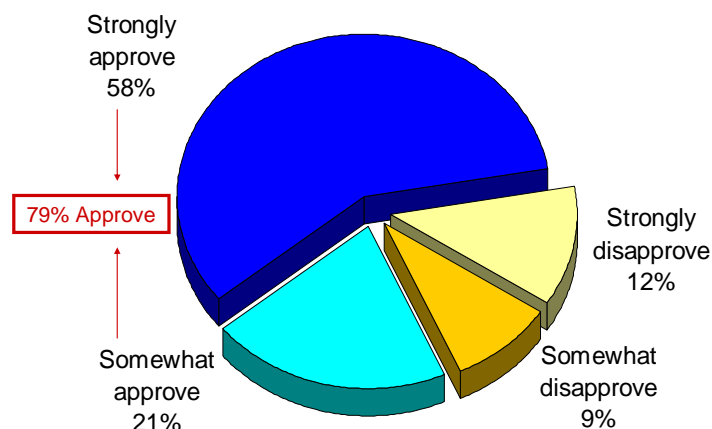
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **65 Among low-income respondents, more than half (58%) “strongly” approved of California’s Smog Check Program and a further 21% “somewhat” approved, for a total of 79% support.**

When asked whether or not they support the current Smog Check Program that operates in California, 79% of low-income respondents either “strongly” (58%) or “somewhat” (21%) approved of it. Twelve percent strongly disapproved and slightly fewer (9%) disapproved “somewhat.” Results are shown in Figure 51.

**Figure 51**

**Low-Income: Ratings of Approval of California’s Smog Check Program**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



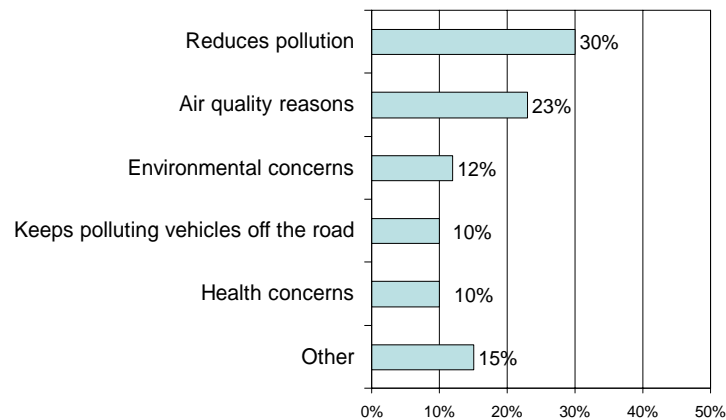
- ❖ **66 Low-income respondents who support California's Smog Check Program do so mainly to reduce pollution (30%) and to improve air quality (23%) as well as for environmental concerns (12%).**

After affirming their support for California's Smog Check Program, low-income respondents were asked to explain why they approve of the program. Results of the categorized verbatim comments are shown in Figure 52. Thirty percent said because it reduces pollution and slightly fewer (23%) mentioned air quality reasons. Twelve percent approved of the program because of environmental concerns, while 10% said it was because of health reasons.

**Figure 52**

**Low-Income: Please tell me the MAIN reason why you APPROVE of Smog Check?**

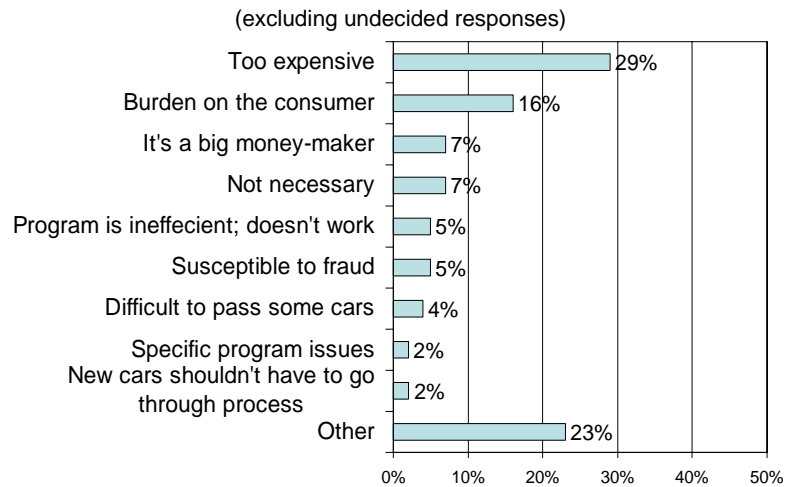
(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **67 Among low-income respondents who do not support California's Smog Check Program, the main reasons for disaccord included cost (29%) and burden on the consumer (16%).**

When asked why they did not support the program, low-income respondents attributed their discontent to the cost and expense of Smog Check, the top reason given for disapproval. Other reasons included the burden it creates for the consumer (16%), the lack of need (7%), and the perception that it is just a revenue generator for the state (7%). These and other reasons given are shown in the following chart.

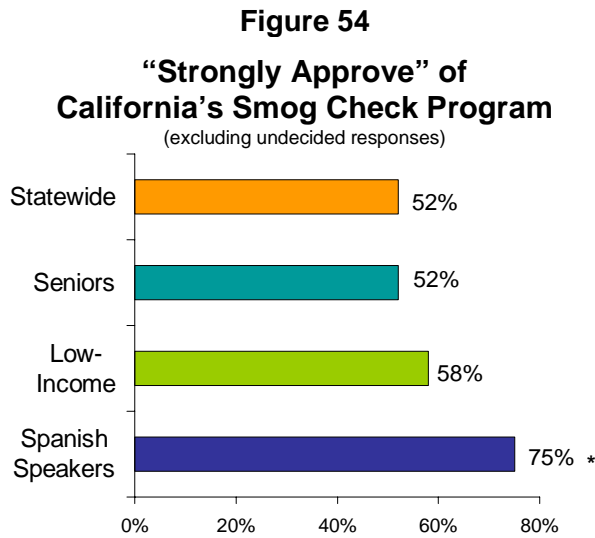
**Figure 53**  
Low-Income: Please tell me the MAIN reason  
why you DISAPPROVE of Smog Check?



#### **Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **68** *The vast majority of all groups supported California's Smog Check Program and at least half of each subpopulation "strongly" approved; however, Spanish-speaking respondents were significantly more likely to support it than those in other groups.*

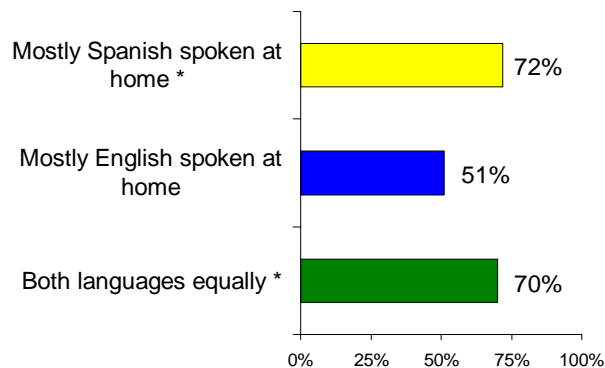
As previously noted, the vast majority of respondents in all groups said they approved (somewhat or strongly) of the Smog Check Program; therefore, we took a closer look at just those who "strongly" approved. Results are shown in Figure 54. It can be seen that, with the exception of the Spanish-speaking respondents, just over half (52% of statewide and senior respondents and 58% of low-income respondents) "strongly" approved of the program. Those who were interviewed in Spanish were significantly more likely to "strongly" approve, with 75% giving the top rating.



- ❖ **69 Smog Check support was strongest among Spanish-speaking Hispanic respondents (both those who speak only Spanish or both languages equally) – about 20% higher than Hispanic respondents who speak only English at home.**

Results of additional analyses indicated that, among all Hispanics surveyed, those who primarily speak Spanish (72%) and those who speak English and Spanish equally (70%) at home were significantly more likely to “strongly” approve of California’s Smog Check Program than those who speak predominantly English at home (51%). Results are shown in Figure 55.

**Figure 55**  
**Hispanics by Language:**  
**“Strongly” Support Smog Check Program**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



\* indicates a statistically significant difference

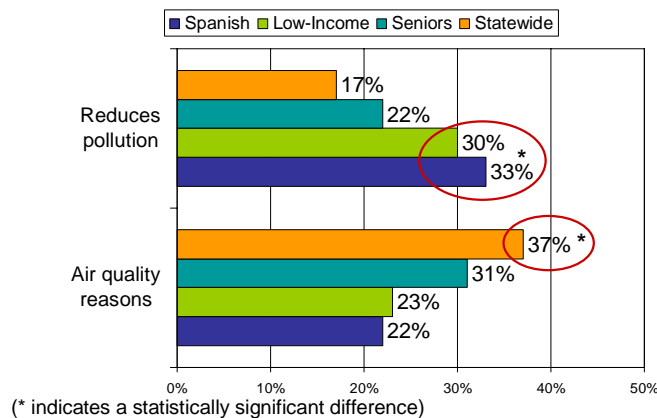
- ❖ **70** When asked to explain their main reason for approving of the Smog Check Program, statewide respondents were significantly more likely to say their support was for air quality reasons, while Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were more likely to mention reducing pollution. This variation in how respondents expressed themselves should be an importance consideration for BAR in forming its future marketing messages to target different audiences.

Responses among respondents who “somewhat” or “strongly” approved of the Smog Check Program were compared by subgroup and the results are presented in the next figure. Concerns for air quality were the most universal reason mentioned, however, low-income and Spanish-speaking respondents were significantly more likely to say their support was to help reduce pollution. On the other hand, statewide respondents were significantly more likely than Spanish speakers and low-income respondents to support the program for air quality reasons.<sup>26</sup> This is an interesting finding – while all respondents have a common goal (clean air), they tend to express themselves differently. This detail should be taken into consideration when BAR forms its future marketing messages: use different words for different target markets. This concept could be explored further using qualitative research, such as focus groups, to understand how to best articulate BAR’s message in order to achieve the highest impact among the various underserved populations.

**Figure 56**

**MAIN Reasons for APPROVING of Smog Check**

(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **71** Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents who disapprove of the program were significantly more likely than seniors and

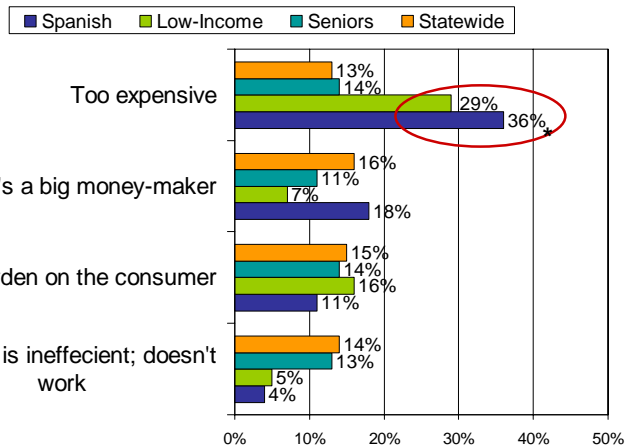
<sup>26</sup> The proportion of senior respondents who gave air quality reasons was not found to be significantly different from the responses of the other groups.

**statewide respondents to attribute their displeasure to Smog Check's cost.**

The ratings of those who “somewhat” or “strongly” disapproved of the Smog Check Program were also compared. Results are presented in Figure 57. It can be seen that Spanish-speakers and low-income respondents were significantly more likely (36% and 29%, respectively) than senior and statewide respondents (14%, and 13%, respectively) to consider the program to be too expensive. The other differences among respondent groups were not found to be statistically significant.

**Figure 57**

Please tell me the MAIN reason why you DISAPPROVE of Smog Check?  
 (excluding undecided responses)



(\* indicates a statistically significant difference)

## Smog Check Failure

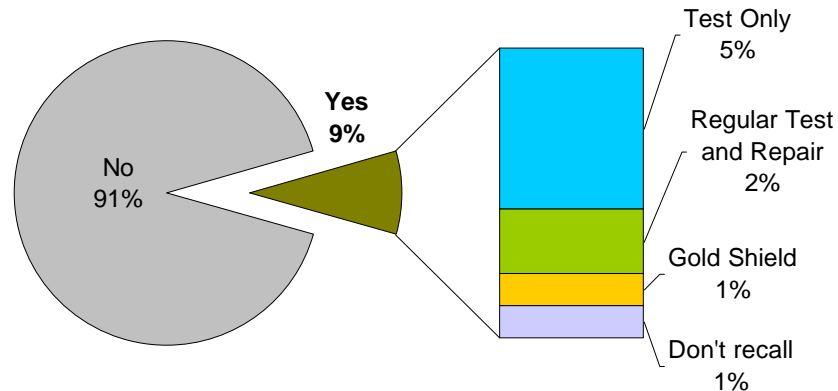
### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

- ❖ **72** *Nine percent of Spanish-speaking respondent households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the past two years.*

When asked if any of the vehicles in their household had failed a Smog Check within the last two years, 9% of Spanish speakers surveyed affirmed that one had, while the vast majority (91%) said no.

As a follow-up question, those who responded “yes” were asked to recall the type of Smog Check station they visited. As shown in the next chart, more than half had gone to a Test Only station.

**Figure 58**  
**Spanish Speakers: Have Any Vehicles in your Household Failed a Smog Check within the last Two years?**  
(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **73 Forty-one percent (41%) of Spanish-speaking households in which a vehicle failed a Smog Check were told about a financial assistance program.**

Respondents who failed a Smog Check were asked if anyone at the station told them about a program that offers consumers up to \$500 in repair assistance or \$1,000 to retire their car. Forty-one percent (41%) of these Spanish-speaking respondents said “yes”, and the remaining 59% said “no.”

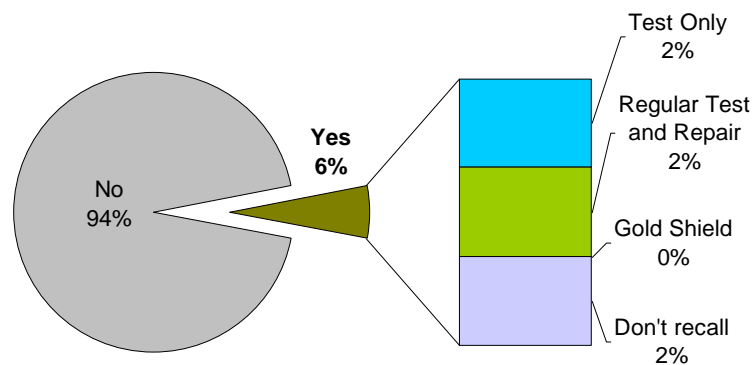
### **Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **74 Six percent of senior households experienced a vehicle failing a Smog Check in the last two years.**

When seniors were asked whether or not a vehicle in their household had failed a Smog Check within the last two years, the vast majority said no. Six percent recalled a vehicle not passing the Smog Check test. For some, it was at a Test Only station, others had gone to a regular Test and Repair station, and some did not recall the station type.

Figure 59

Seniors: Have Any Vehicles in your Household Failed a Smog Check within the last Two years?  
(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **75** *Twenty-four percent (24%) of senior respondent households who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check were told about a financial assistance program.*

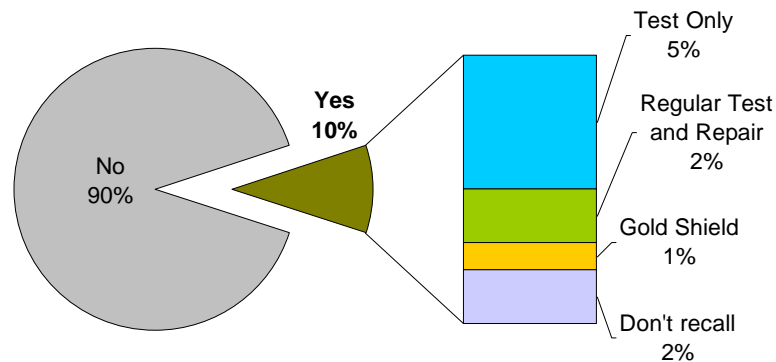
When those who failed a Smog Check were asked if anyone at the station told them a financial assistance program was available to repair or retire their car, 76% said “no” and 24% said “yes.”

### Low-Income Respondents

- ❖ **76** *Among low-income households, 10% recalled having a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the past two years.*

When asked if any vehicles in the household had not passed a Smog Check in the last two years 10% said yes, while the other 90% did not have a vehicle fail a Smog Check. Among those who had, the majority said it happened at a Test Only station, as shown in the next figure.

**Figure 60**  
**Low-Income: Have Any Vehicles in your Household Failed a Smog Check within the last Two years?**  
(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **77** *Thirty-nine percent (39%) of low-income respondents who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check recalled receiving information about a financial assistance program.*

When asked if anyone at the station told them about a program that offers consumers financial assistance to repair or retire their car, 39% said “yes.” The majority said they did not receive that information.

#### **Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **78** *A very small yet similar percentage (ranging from 6% to 10%) of households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years across all groups.*

Comparing the results previously discussed, no more than 10% of any subgroup had a vehicle fail a Smog Check. The differences were not found to be statistically significant. In other words, statewide respondents (9%) were just as likely as senior (6%), Spanish-speaking (10%), and low-income (10%) households to have had a vehicle fail a Smog Check in the specified time frame.

- ❖ **79** *Improvements could be made in the promotion of BAR’s financial assistance program: fewer than half of those who had a vehicle fail a Smog Check (regardless of subgroup) had been told about a financial assistance program.*

No statistically significant differences were found by subgroup among respondents whose vehicle failed a Smog Check in terms of having been told about a program that offers consumers up to \$500 in repair assistance or \$1,000 to retire their car.

## Smog Check Station Problem

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

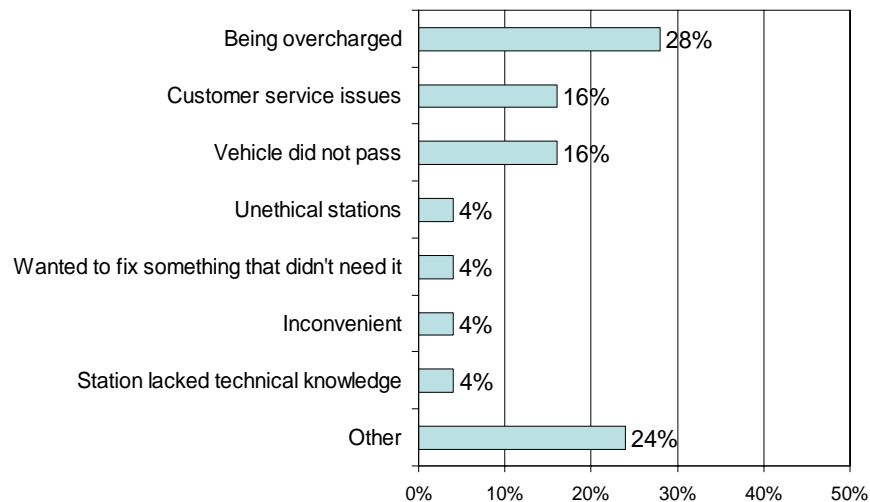
- ❖ **80** *Eight percent of Spanish-speaking respondents (8%) experienced a problem with a Smog Check station. The majority had trouble with overcharging, poor customer service, and having their vehicle not pass the test.*

All respondents, regardless of the results of Smog Check testing, were asked if they had personally experienced a problem with a Smog Check station. Among Spanish speakers, 8% had a problem, which equates to twenty-five individuals. The top three types of problems involved overcharging (or cost issues), poor customer service issues (such as fraud, rudeness, being unhelpful), and having their vehicle fail the test. These and the other issues mentioned are shown in Figure 61.

**Figure 61**

### Spanish Speakers: What was the general nature of the problem with the Smog Check station?

(among those who experienced a problem, excluding undecided responses)

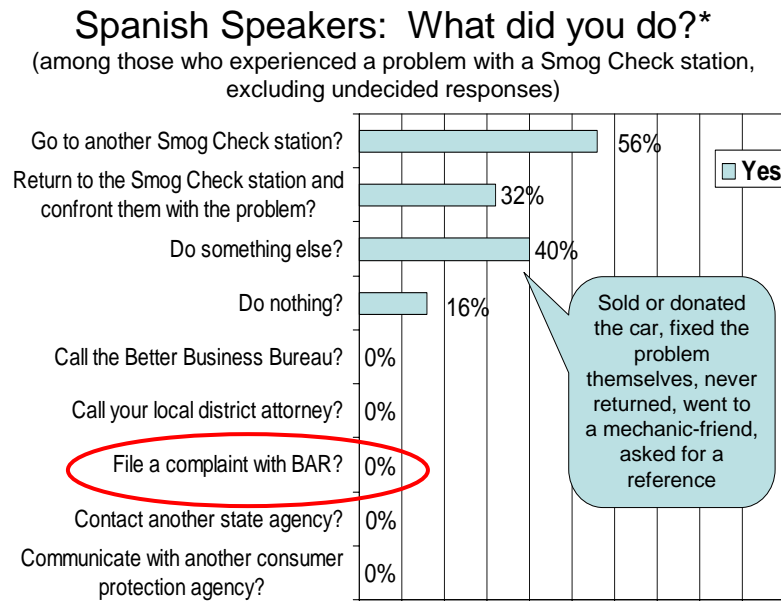


- ❖ **81** *Among the Spanish-speaking respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, only a third (32%) returned to the station in question to address the issue, while over half (56%) decided to simply go to another Smog Check station. Not a single Spanish-speaking respondent called a consumer protection agency or filed a complaint with BAR.*

The 8% (or twenty-five Spanish-speaking respondents) who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station were read a list of nine possible ways to settle the issue, and were asked whether or not they did each of them. The percentages of respondents who said “yes” to each action are

presented in Figure 62.<sup>27</sup> It can be seen that about half (56%) of these respondents handled their problem by going to another Smog Check station. Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents returned to the station and confronted them with the problem. Some respondents (16%) said they did nothing. However, not one of these Spanish speakers filed a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair.

**Figure 62**



- ❖ **82 A third of Spanish-speakers who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station said they did not contact BAR because they were unaware of the resource. A similar proportion felt BAR’s process was too time consuming.**

When asked why they did not contact or file a complaint with BAR, 32% of Spanish speakers who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station (eight individuals) did not know about it, another 32% said it was too time consuming, inconvenient or they were too lazy. Twenty-four percent (24% or six respondents) gave other reasons that were unable to be categorized.

- ❖ **83 Seventy-eight percent (78%) of those who experienced a problem were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.**

Finally, respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station were asked how satisfied they were with the way their complaint or problem was dealt with, using a four-point scale. Results, presented in Figure 63, indicate that over half (56%) of these 25 Spanish-speaking respondents were “very”

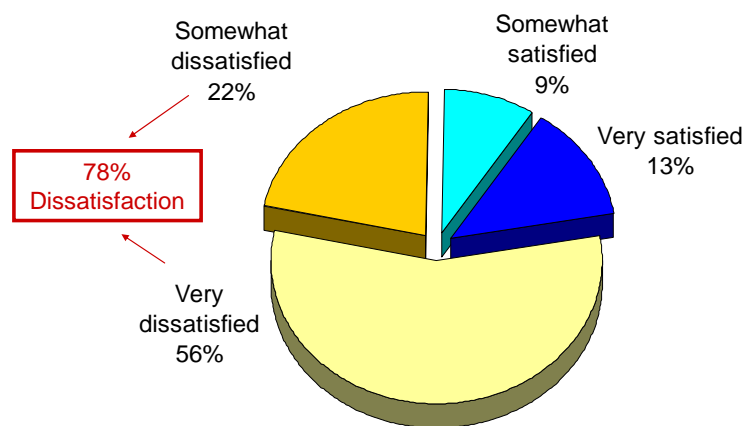
<sup>27</sup> Each question was asked of everyone – therefore each individual bar is out of 100%, and the sum of the nine options will not total 100%.

dissatisfied and a further 22% were “somewhat” dissatisfied -- a combined total of 78% dissatisfaction. Nine percent (9%) of these respondents were “somewhat” satisfied and 13% were “very” satisfied with how their problem was handled.

**Figure 63**

**Spanish Speakers: Satisfaction with how problem was dealt with**

(Among those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, excluding undecided responses)



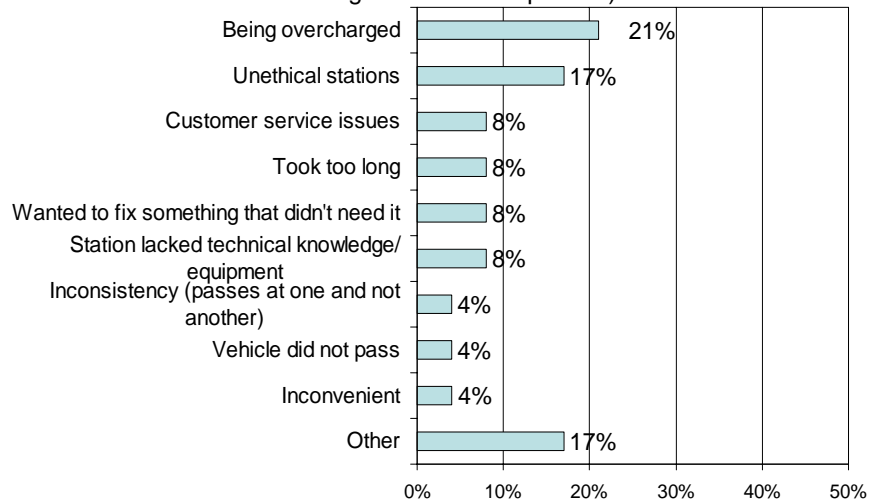
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **84** *Seven percent of all senior respondents experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, the nature of which was most commonly described as experiencing dishonest and unprofessional business practices, including overcharging and cost issues.*

Among senior respondents, 7% (or 24 seniors) said they had experienced a problem with a Smog Check station. When asked to describe its general nature, answers involved cost issues or being overcharged, experiencing unethical practices, among other issues as shown in the following chart.

**Figure 64**  
**Seniors: What was the general nature of the problem with the Smog Check station?**

(among those who experienced a problem, excluding undecided responses)



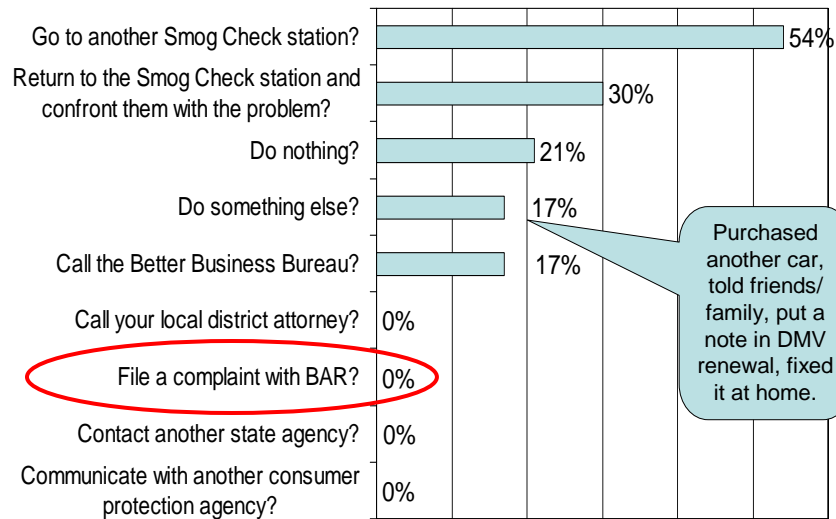
- ❖ **85** *Half (54%) of senior respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station handled the matter by going to another Smog Check Station and a smaller group (30%) went back to the station and confronted the issue. However, none of these senior respondents contacted BAR regarding their issue.*

After hearing a list of nine possible actions they could have taken to resolve the problem with the Smog Check station, they were asked whether or not they did each of them. The percentages of respondents who said “yes” to each action are presented in Figure 65. It can be seen that the most common reaction among these 24 seniors was to go to another Smog Check station (54%). However, 30% returned to the station and confronted them with the problem and 17% contacted the Better Business Bureau. Some respondents (21%) said they did nothing. **Not one senior respondent filed a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair.**

Figure 65

Seniors: What did you do?\*

(among those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

- ❖ **86 Over half of seniors who experienced a Smog Check station problem felt BAR's process was too time consuming (43%) or not worth the effort (14%).**

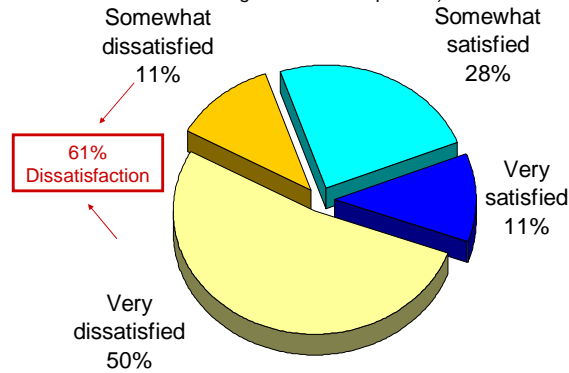
When asked why they did not file a complaint with BAR, the most frequent response among senior respondents was that the process was too time consuming, inconvenient or they were too lazy (43%). Nineteen percent said they did not know about it and 14% felt it was a waste of time or not worth it. Other reasons included the lack of need (9%), lack of proof (4%), among others (9%).

- ❖ **87 The majority (61%) of seniors who experienced a problem were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.**

Senior respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station (twenty-four individuals) were asked to rate their satisfaction with how their complaint or problem was handled. Results, presented in Figure 66, indicate that half (50%) were "very" dissatisfied and a further 11% were "somewhat" dissatisfied -- a combined total of 61% dissatisfaction. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of these respondents were "somewhat" satisfied and only 11% were "very" satisfied with how their problem was handled.

**Figure 66**  
**Seniors: Satisfaction with how problem was dealt with**

(Among those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, excluding undecided responses)



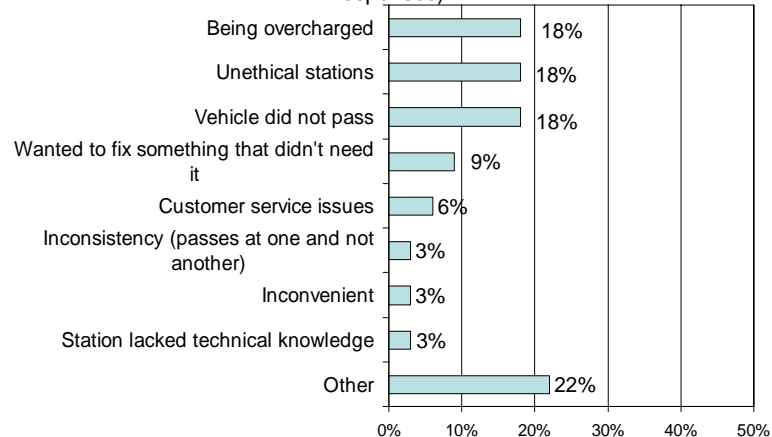
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **88** Although the vast majority of low-income respondents recalled positive encounters with a Smog Check station, 11% had experienced a problem, often describing it as overcharging (or cost issue), lack of ethics, or not having passed the Smog Check.

When asked whether or not they had failed a Smog Check within the last two years, the vast majority (89%) said no; however, 11% of low-income respondents said they had (34 respondents). The types of problems were cost-related or an issue of being overcharged (18%), unethical practices (18%), and their vehicle failed the test (18%). The next chart (Figure 67) indicates the frequency (3% = one respondent) of the types of problems experienced.

**Figure 67**  
**Low-Income: What was the general nature of the problem with the SMOG station?**

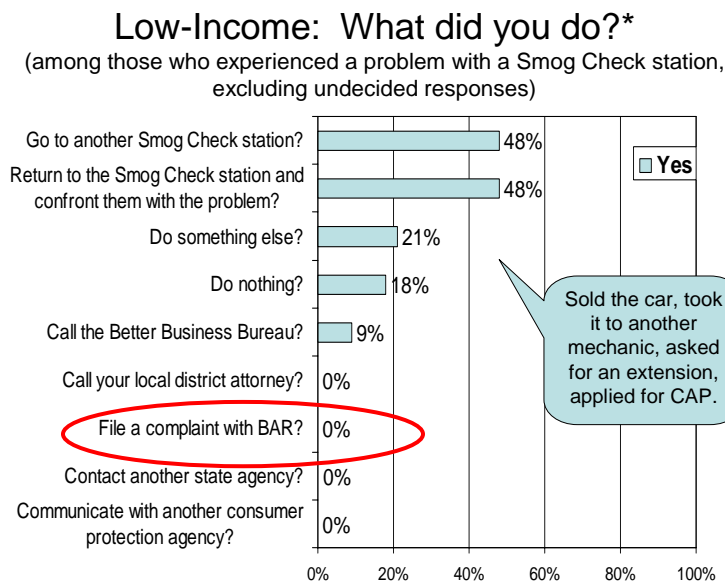
(among those respondents who experienced a problem, excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **89 In dealing with the problem at a Smog Check station, low-income respondents were just as likely to go to another Smog Check station (48%) as they were to return to the same station and confront them with the problem (48%). Three individuals called the Better Business Bureau; however, none contacted BAR.**

In terms of resolving Smog Check station problems, the percentages of low-income respondents who said “yes” to each action are presented in Figure 68. It can be seen that nearly half (48%) handled their problem by going to another Smog Check station, while a similar proportion (48%) returned to the same station to confront them with the issue. Eighteen percent (18%) of these respondents said they did nothing. Twenty-one percent (21%) said they did something else, and when asked what that was, responses ranged from selling the car, going to a non-Smog mechanic friend, to asking for an extension. **None of the low-income respondents filed a complaint with the Bureau of Automotive Repair** and 9% (3 respondents) called the Better Business Bureau.

**Figure 68**



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

- ❖ **90 Lack of awareness was the most common reason why low-income respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station did not contact BAR about the problem.**

The main reason low-income respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station did not file a complaint with BAR was because they did not know about it (38%). Other reasons included that they thought it would be a waste of time and not worth it (15%), or that it was too time consuming inconvenient or they were too lazy (18%). Nine percent (9%) said there was no need – it was an honest mistake and they fixed it, and the remaining 21% of responses consisted of various other reasons.

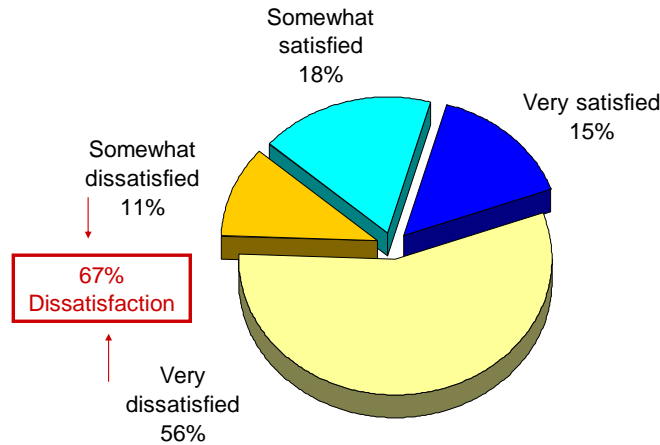
- ❖ **91 The majority (67%) of low-income respondents who experienced a Smog Check station problem were generally dissatisfied with how their complaint or problem was handled.**

Finally, respondents who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station were asked how satisfied they were with how their complaint or problem was handled. Results, presented in Figure 69, indicate that there was a total of 67% dissatisfaction, with over half (56%) of these respondents “very” dissatisfied and a further 11% “somewhat” dissatisfied. The remaining respondents were “somewhat” (18%) or “very” (15%) satisfied with how their problem was handled.

**Figure 69**

**Low-Income: Satisfaction with how problem was dealt with**

(Among those who experienced a problem with a Smog Check station, excluding undecided responses)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **92 Problems with Smog Check stations were just as likely to be reported by one group of respondents as by another and the types of problems respondents in each group experienced were similar in nature.**
- ❖ **93 Respondents from all subgroups also dealt with their Smog Check station problems similarly: they returned to the shop to discuss the issue or went to another Smog Check station, but they did not think to turn to BAR for help. Overall, the majority were dissatisfied with the resolution.**

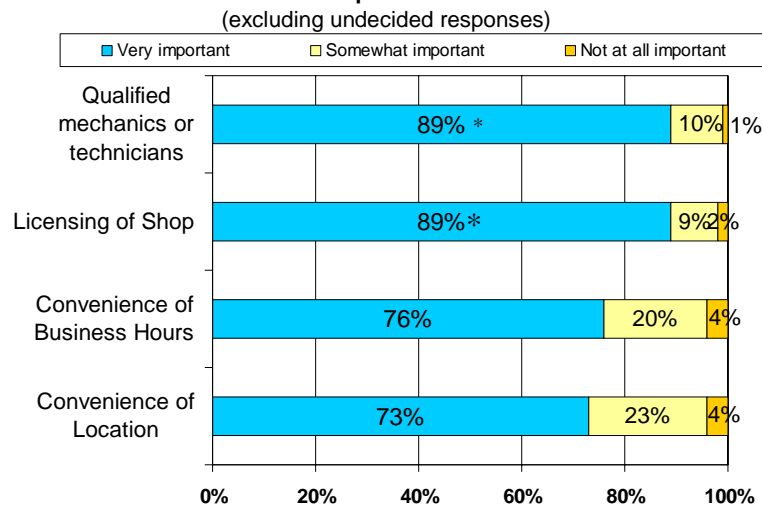
**Auto Repair Shops**

**Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **94 The licensing of repair shops and having qualified mechanics were significantly more important to Spanish-speaking respondents than the convenience of a shop’s business hours or its location.**

Results comparing the importance of the four different factors for choosing an auto repair shop are shown in Figure 70. Because the vast majority of Spanish speakers rated each aspect as important (“very” plus “somewhat”), the analysis focused on just the top ratings of “very” important. It can be seen that the top two important characteristics are the licensing of the shop and having qualified mechanics, rated “very” important by 89% of those who conducted the interview in Spanish. The other two factors, the convenience of the business hours and the convenience of the location, were significantly less valuable, but still important (76% and 73%, respectively).

**Figure 70**  
**Spanish Speakers: In Choosing a Repair Shop,**  
**How Important is...**



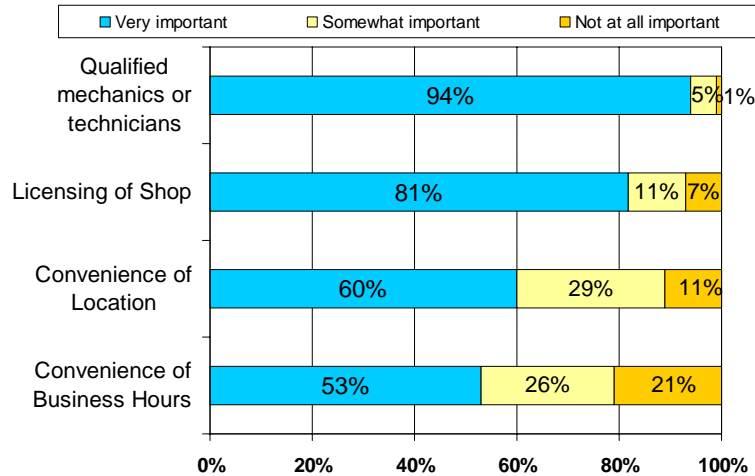
(\* indicates a statistically significant difference)

**Senior Respondents**

❖ **95 Seniors cared most about a mechanic’s qualifications in terms of evaluating repair shops.**

All four aspects received “very” important ratings by at least half of the seniors surveyed. However, having qualified mechanics and technicians was rated the highest (94%) and received significantly more “very” important ratings than any of the other three factors evaluated. Licensing of the shop was considered to be “very” important among 81% of seniors surveyed, a figure that is significantly higher than that given for convenience either of location (60%) or of business hours (53%). Results are shown in the next chart.

**Figure 71**  
**Seniors: In Choosing a Repair Shop,**  
**How Important is...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



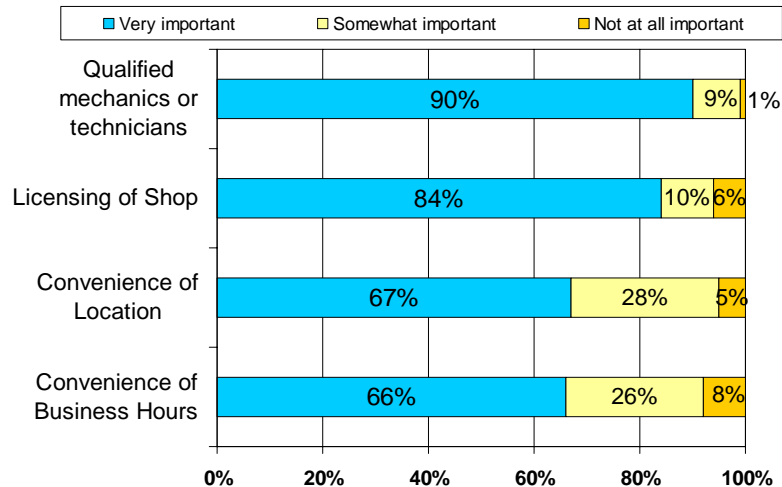
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **96 Low-income respondents felt that having qualified mechanics and technicians was the most important aspect in choosing a repair shop, with 90% rating it “very” important.**

The number one rated aspect in choosing a repair shop among low-income respondents was having qualified mechanics and technicians (90% rated it “very” important), followed by the licensing of the shop (84%).<sup>28</sup> Although a majority of low-income respondents felt the convenience of the location (67%) and the convenience of the hours of operation (66%) were “very” important, the proportions were significantly lower than those given for the other two factors.

<sup>28</sup> The difference between the percentage of low-income respondents who rated having qualified technicians and having a licensed shop as “very” important was approaching significance and might be so if the sample sizes were larger.

**Figure 72**  
**Low-Income: In Choosing a Repair Shop,**  
**How Important is...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **97 Having qualified mechanics or technicians was the number one consideration when choosing an auto repair shop regardless of subgroup. The importance of the other issues generally fell in the same order: licensing of shop, convenience of business hours, and convenience of location; however, the degree of importance varied significantly by respondent group.**

In terms of what is important in selecting an auto repair shop, results of the “very” important ratings were compared among each of the four subgroups. As shown in Figure 73, all respondent groups agreed that having qualified mechanics or technicians was the most important consideration, with at least 89% feeling it was “very” important. This was followed by the licensing of the auto repair shop in each of the four groups, although **Spanish speakers** were significantly more likely than the general statewide sample to rate this aspect as “very” important (89% vs. 77%).

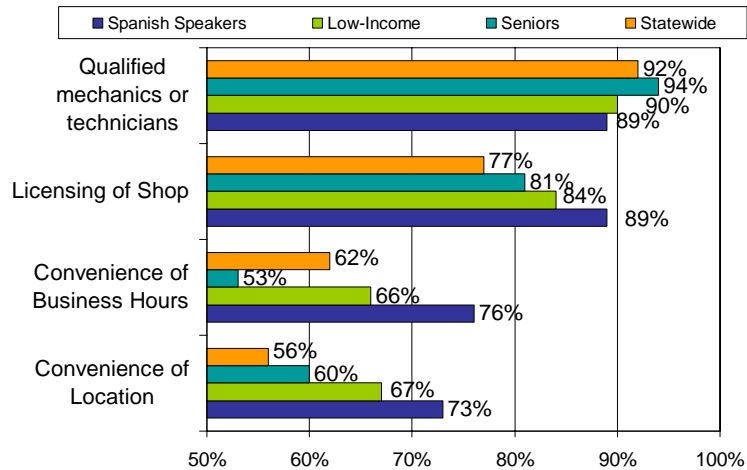
When trying to select an auto repair shop, convenience was significantly less important regardless of subgroup. More specifically, the convenience of business hours was a “very” important consideration for 76% of **Spanish speakers**, and significantly less valuable to statewide (62%) and senior (53%) respondents.

Lastly, the convenience of the location was rated “very” important by 67% of **low-income** respondents and 73% of **Spanish-speaking** respondents, which were significantly higher than the 56% of the statewide respondents who gave the same rating.

**Figure 73**

**In Choosing a Repair Shop, How Important is...**

("Very" important ratings, excluding undecided responses)



**Vehicle Repairs**

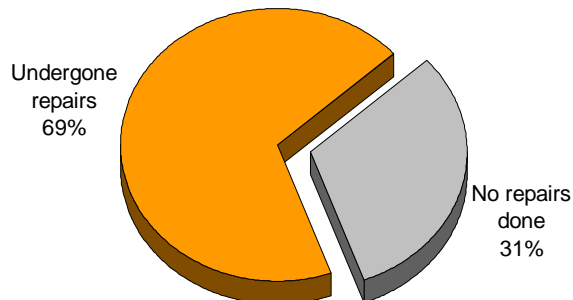
**Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **98** *Almost 70% of Spanish-speaking respondents had taken their vehicle in for some sort of repair in the last year. The most frequent type of repair involved the brakes, reported by 48%.*

When asked if any of the vehicles in their household had undergone repairs in the last twelve months, 69% of those surveyed in Spanish experienced vehicle repairs of some kind last year.

**Figure 74**

**Spanish Speakers: Households That Have Experienced Vehicle Repairs in the Last Year**



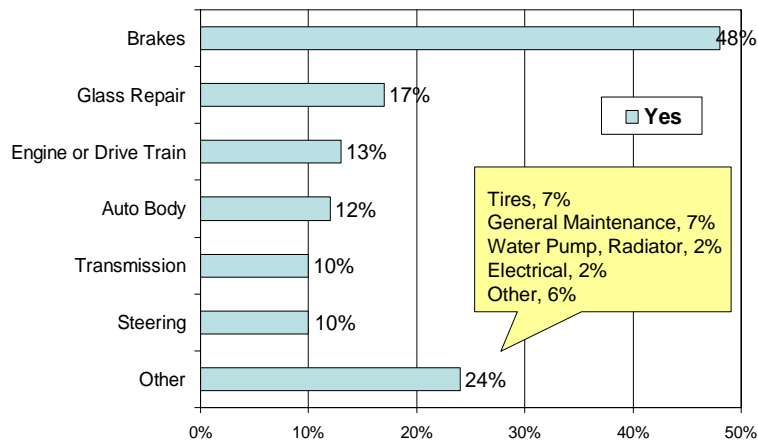
A list of six types of repairs was read and respondents were asked whether or not any of the vehicles in their household had undergone that type of repair in the last twelve months. The most frequent vehicle repair among those

surveyed in Spanish involved the brakes – 48% of Spanish-speaking respondents went to a repair shop to have work done on their vehicle’s brakes. This was followed by glass repairs (17%), engine or drive train repairs (13%), auto body repairs (12%), transmission repairs (10%), and repairs to the steering (10%).

**Figure 75\***

**Spanish Speakers: Have Any Vehicles in your Household undergone Repairs for...**

(excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

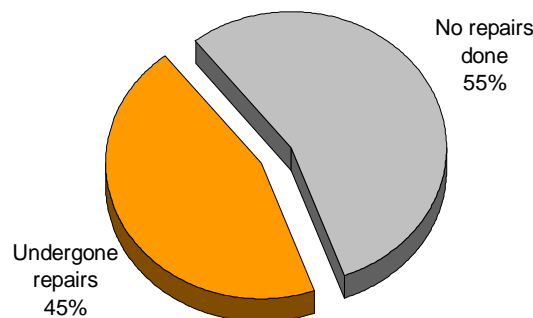
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **99** *Fewer than half of the seniors surveyed (45%) had a vehicle repaired in the last year.*

Among senior respondents, 45% said that a vehicle in their household had undergone repairs in the last twelve months.

**Figure 76**

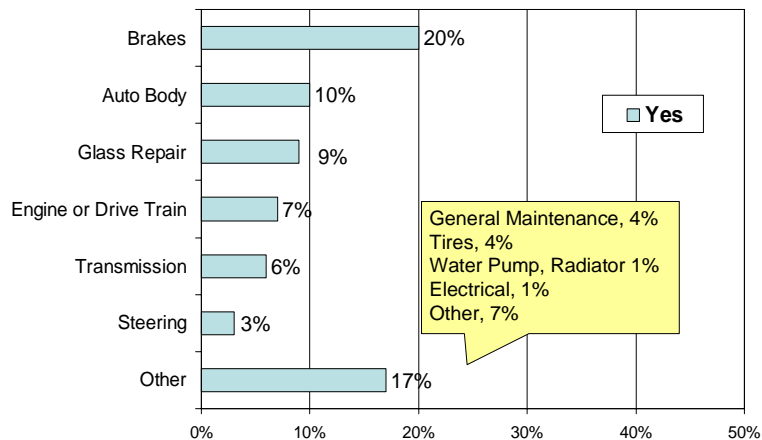
**Seniors: Households That Have Experienced Vehicle Repairs in the Last Year**



The most frequent kind of repair involved the brakes, mentioned by 20% of seniors whose vehicles had undergone repairs. About 10% mentioned auto body repairs (10%) and glass repairs (8%). Other repairs performed included those in the area of the engine or drive train (7%), transmission (6%), and steering (3%).

**Figure 77\***

**Seniors: Have Any Vehicles in your Household undergone Repairs for...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



\* responses are not mutually exclusive

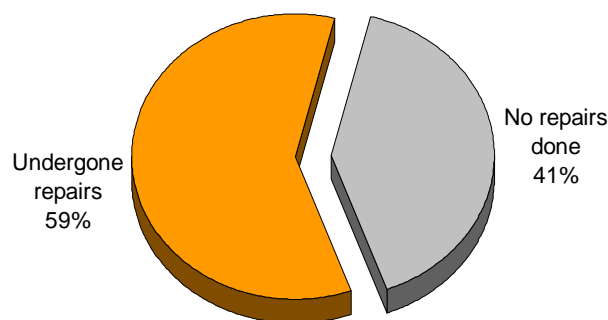
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **100** *Fifty-nine percent (59%) of low-income respondents took a vehicle to a shop for repairs in the last year.*

Among low-income respondents, 59% had a vehicle undergo repairs in the last year.

**Figure 78**

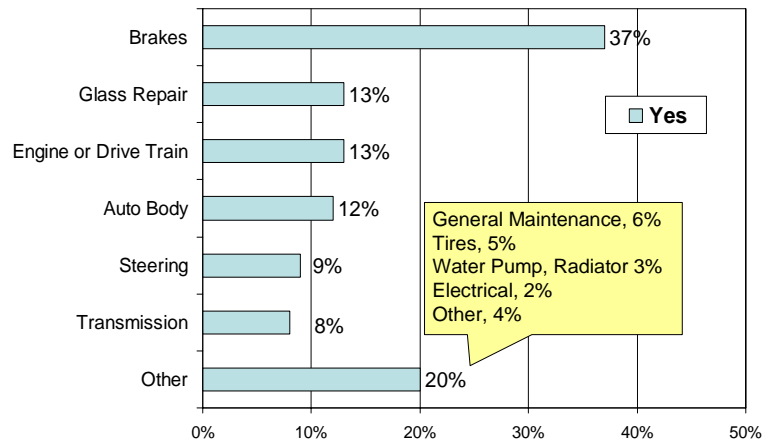
**Low-Income: Households That Have Experienced Vehicle Repairs in the Last Year**



The most frequent repair among low-income respondents was in the area of the vehicle's brakes, mentioned by 37%. Other types of repairs involved glass repairs (13%), engine or drive train repairs (13%), auto body repairs (12%), transmission repairs (8%), and repairs to steering (9%).

**Figure 79\***

**Low-Income: Have Any Vehicles in your Household undergone Repairs for...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



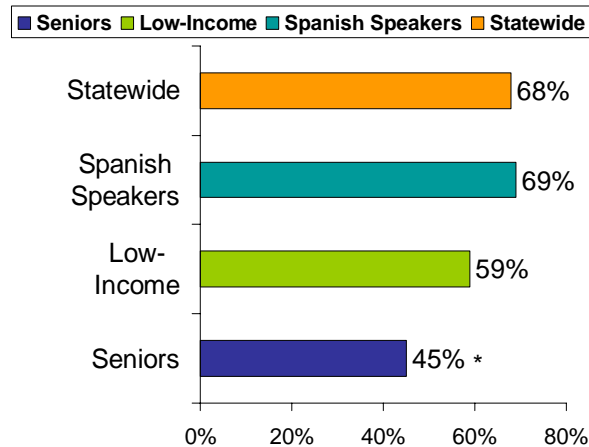
\* responses are not mutually exclusive

**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **101 Vehicle repairs were most common in Spanish-speaking and statewide households (69% and 68%, respectively), significantly more than in low-income households (58%). However, senior households were least likely to report having gone to an auto repair shop (45%) – significantly less than the other three groups.**

Further analyses compared the incidence rate of respondents who had a household vehicle repaired in the last twelve months. It can be seen in Figure 80 that 68% of statewide respondents and 69% of Spanish-speaking respondents experienced vehicle repairs of some kind last year, significantly more than the 59% of low-income household respondents. Yet, all three groups were significantly more likely to report having a vehicle repaired than the 45% of senior respondents.

**Figure 80**  
Percentage of Households That Have Experienced Vehicle Repairs in Last Year  
(excluding undecided responses)

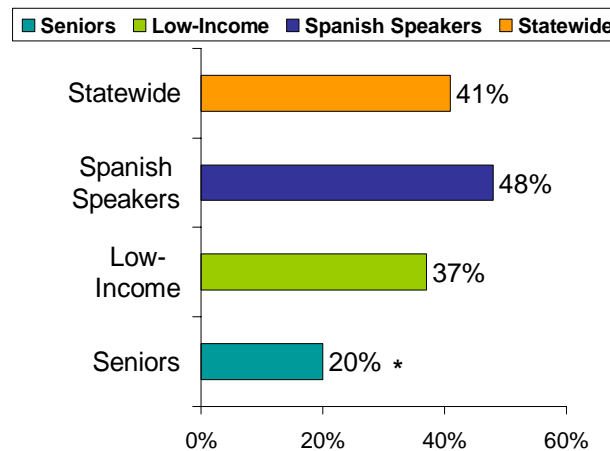


There were no differences found in the percentage of households that had experienced vehicle repairs by language spoken at home among Hispanics. In other words, Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Hispanics were just as likely (or not) to have taken a vehicle to a shop for repairs.

❖ **102 Across all four subgroups, the most frequent type of vehicle repairs by far involved brakes, although it was much less of an issue among seniors.**

Results of further tests of proportion indicated that, regardless of respondent group, the most common vehicle repair was performed on the vehicle's brakes. Further analyses examined the proportion of respondents in each subgroup who reported having their brakes repaired among those who had reported any type of vehicle repair in that group. Results indicate that seniors (20%) were significantly less likely to have reported brake repairs than those of other groups: statewide (41%), Spanish-speaking (48%), and low-income (37%) respondents.

**Figure 81**  
Percentage of Households That Experienced  
Brake Repairs in Last Year  
(excluding undecided responses)



(\* indicates a statistically significant difference)

No statistically significant differences were found by subgroup in terms of the proportions of other types of repairs that were reported.

## Overall Evaluation of Auto Repair Experience

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

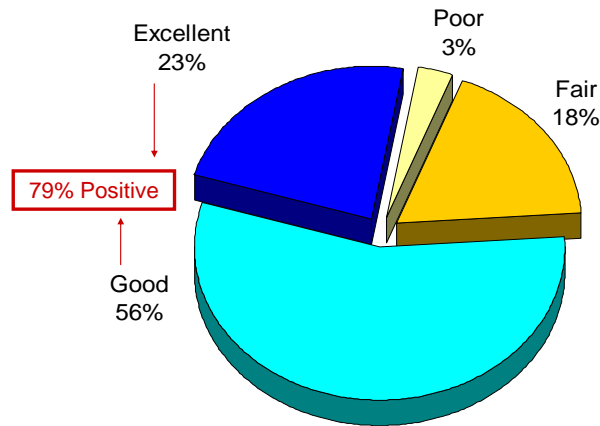
- ❖ **103** *The majority of Spanish-speaking respondents had a positive experience with the auto repair shop: over half (56%) gave “good” ratings and a further 23% characterized the overall experience as “excellent.”*

Respondents whose vehicles underwent some sort of repair were asked to rate their overall experience with the auto repair shop using a four-point scale. Five percent (5%) of these respondents volunteered that they did the repairs themselves – they were excluded and the percentages were recalculated. Results, shown in Figure 82 indicate that 56% of these respondents rated their overall experience as “good” and a further 23% rated it as “excellent”, indicating that 79% held positive opinions. Eighteen percent (18%) rated their experience as “fair” and 3% felt it was “poor.”

Figure 82

### Spanish Speakers: Ratings of Overall Experience with Auto Repair Shop

(Among Households in which Vehicles Underwent Repairs excluding undecided responses and those who did the repairs themselves)



### Senior Respondents

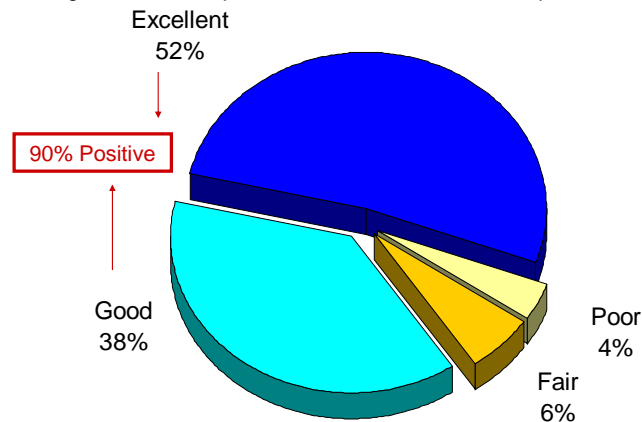
- ❖ 104 Among seniors who took a vehicle for repair, the vast majority (90%) gave favorable ratings for their overall experience with the repair shop.

Nearly all senior respondents were pleased with their overall experience, with about half (52%) saying it was “excellent” and a further 38% rating it as “good” for a total of 90% rating it positively. Ten percent (10%) had a negative experience, rating it “poor” (4%) or “fair” (6%).

Figure 83

### Seniors: Ratings of Overall Experience with Auto Repair Shop

(Among Households in which Vehicles Underwent Repairs excluding undecided responses and those who did the repairs themselves)



**Low-Income Respondents**

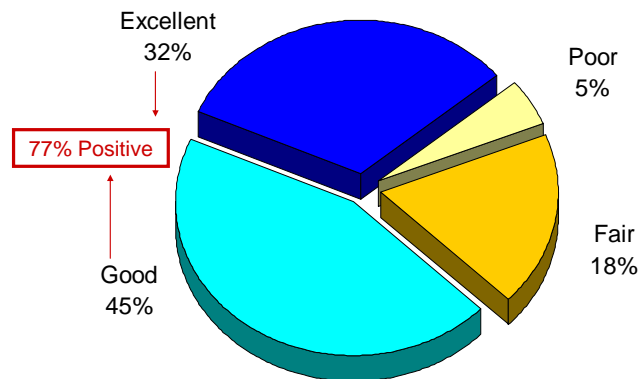
- ❖ **105** Among low-income respondents who went to an auto repair shop in order to have a vehicle repaired last year, 77% gave favorable ratings for their overall experience.

When asked to rate their overall experience with the shop that repaired their vehicle, slightly fewer than half (45%) of low-income respondents said they had a “good” experience and 32% described it as “excellent.” Only 5% had a “poor” experience, while 18% said it was “fair.”<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 84**

**Low-Income: Ratings of Overall Experience with Auto Repair Shop**

(Among Households in which Vehicles Underwent Repairs excluding undecided responses and those who did the repairs themselves)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

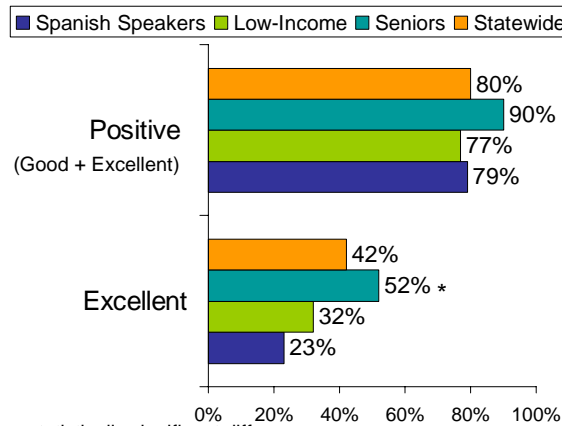
- ❖ **106** Overall, the vast majority of respondents (regardless of subgroup) who took a vehicle to an auto repair shop had a positive encounter, although seniors were significantly more likely to describe their experience as “excellent” than their low-income and Spanish-speaking counterparts.

The following chart compares the combined positive (good plus excellent) ratings as well as just the “excellent” ratings for all four groups of respondents. First of all, results indicate that positive ratings range from a high of 90% among seniors to a low of 77% of low-income respondents; however, these differences were not found to be statistically significant. Further analysis of (only) the “excellent” ratings shows that seniors were most likely to rate their experience as “excellent” (52%), a significantly higher proportion than the 32% of low-income respondents or the 23% of Spanish speakers.

<sup>29</sup> These results are based on those who took their vehicles to an auto repair shop and do not include the 3% who volunteered that they performed the repairs themselves.

**Figure 85**  
**Ratings of Overall Experience**  
**with Auto Repair Shop**

(Among Households in which Vehicles Underwent Repairs  
 excluding undecided responses and those who did the repairs themselves)



\* Indicates a statistically significant difference

## Problems with Auto Repair Shops

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

- ❖ **107** *A small percentage (4%) of Spanish-speaking respondents reported having a problem with a repair shop during the last twelve months.*

All respondents were asked if they had personally experienced a problem with a repair shop within the past twelve months. Four percent (4%) of Spanish speakers said they had – a total of thirteen respondents. When asked to describe the general nature of the problem, the most common complaint was that the repairs were not properly performed or completed (five respondents), often necessitating repeat visits. Other problems included overcharging/cost issues (four respondents); repairs that took too long (one person); and the shop did unasked-for and unnecessary work (two respondents), among other issues (one person).

- ❖ **108** *Spanish-speaking respondents who encountered a problem with a repair shop were just as likely to return to the shop and confront them with the problem as they were to go to another shop to have the problem repaired.*

The 4% of respondents who experienced a problem with a **repair shop** were read a list of possible actions they could have taken to resolve the problem and were asked if they did any of them. **Of the thirteen Spanish-speaking respondents** with auto repair shop problems, eight handled their problem by returning to the repair shop and confronting them with the problem and the same number (eight respondents) went to another repair shop to have the problem repaired. (Further analysis showed that five of these respondents did both: went back to the original shop and also to another place.) One person called a consumer protection agency, while two respondents did nothing.

- ❖ **109 However, no Spanish-speaking respondents contacted BAR about their auto repair shop problem, which was often attributed to a lack of awareness.**

When asked if they had contacted BAR about the issue with the auto repair shop, all thirteen Spanish-speaking respondents with auto repair shop problems said no. When asked why, seven respondents were unaware, saying “because I didn’t know how to contact them or that they existed.” Three people felt it was too time consuming: “I don’t have time to do that. Waste more money doing it.” Two others did not feel they needed it and one was unsure.

- ❖ **110 All but two of the Spanish-speaking respondents who experienced auto repair shop problems were “very” dissatisfied with the way the problem was handled.**

Of the thirteen Spanish-speaking respondents with auto repair shop problems, eleven said they were “very” dissatisfied with how the problem had been handled. One person was “somewhat” dissatisfied and one person was “somewhat” satisfied. Nobody claimed to be “very” satisfied with the resolution.

### Senior Respondents

- ❖ **111 Four percent of seniors surveyed had a repair shop problem during the last 12 months.**

Among the senior respondents, 4% said they had experienced a problem with an auto shop where they had taken their vehicle to be repaired— a total of fifteen respondents. The most common problems included repairs not being properly performed or completed (four respondents), overcharging/cost issues (three respondents); and the performance of unrequested work (three respondents).

- ❖ **112 Seniors who encountered a problem with a repair shop either returned to the shop and confronted them with the problem or went to another shop to have the problem repaired.**

**Of the fifteen senior respondents** with auto repair shop problems, eight handled their problem by returning to the repair shop and confronting them with the problem and nine respondents went to another repair shop to have the problem repaired. (Further analysis showed that five of these respondents did both: went back to the original shop and also to another place.) One person called the Better Business Bureau, while two respondents did nothing.

- ❖ **113 Among these seniors, not one had reached out to BAR about their auto repair shop problem. They said they didn’t know about it, didn’t need to, or felt it was a waste of time.**

When asked if they had contacted BAR about the issue with the auto repair shop, all fifteen senior respondents with auto repair shop problems said no. When asked why, five respondents were unaware, saying “because I didn’t think about them.” Four people felt it was not worth it: “It’s useless.” “Because of my age and my health, I just let it go.” Five others did not feel they needed it: “problem was taken care of right away.” and “The dealership took care of the problem.”

- ❖ **114** *About half of the senior respondents who experienced auto repair shop problems were satisfied with the way the problem was handled while the other half was dissatisfied.*

Of the fifteen senior respondents with auto repair shop problems who rated their satisfaction, four were unsure, six were dissatisfied with how the problem had been handled and five were satisfied with the resolution.

### Low-Income Respondents

- ❖ **115** *Seven percent of low-income respondents reported having a problem with a repair shop during the last year, most often involving improper repairs or overcharging.*

Seven percent (or twenty-one low-income respondents) experienced a problem with a repair shop last year. The problems involved repairs not being performed properly (ten respondents). Other problems included overcharging/cost issues (five respondents); repairs that took too long (one person); and the shop did unasked-for and unnecessary work (one person) and four people gave other reasons.

- ❖ **116** *Low-income respondents either returned to the shop and confronted them with the problem or went to another shop to have the problem repaired.*

Among the 7% of low-income respondents who experienced a problem with a **repair shop**, twelve respondents handled their problem by returning to the repair shop and confronting them with the problem and nine respondents went to another repair shop to have the problem repaired. (Further analysis indicated that five of these respondents did both: went back to the original shop and also to another place.) One person called a consumer protection agency, and four people did something else. Five consumers did nothing.

- ❖ **117** *None of the low-income respondents contacted BAR about their auto repair shop problem, which was commonly attributed to a lack of awareness, time, or desire.*

None of the low-income respondents had contacted BAR about their auto repair shop problem. When asked why, seven respondents were unaware: “I didn’t know I had the right to do anything.” “I didn’t know about them.” Three people felt it was not worth it: “This is a small town and if I complain then, in the future, they will not serve me.” while two said they “hadn’t had time.” Two said they did not have proof. Three others did not need it, two gave other reasons, and two were unsure.

- ❖ **118** *The majority of the low-income respondents with auto repair shop problems were dissatisfied with how the problem was resolved.*

Of the twenty-one low-income respondents with auto repair shop problems, twelve said they were “very” dissatisfied with how the problem had been handled and five were “somewhat” dissatisfied. The remaining four people were “somewhat” satisfied and nobody said they were “very” satisfied with the resolution.

**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **119 Statewide respondents (9%) were significantly more likely to have reported a problem with a repair shop within the past year than senior (4%) and Spanish-speaking (4%) respondents.**

Additional analyses compared the percentages of those who had personally experienced a **problem with a repair shop** within the past twelve months among the four subgroups. The 9% of statewide respondents was significantly higher than the 4% of senior respondents and the 4% of Spanish speakers who gave similar responses. (The 7% of low-income respondents who experienced a repair shop problem was not statistically different from the proportion of the other groups.)

In terms of how respondents dealt with the problem and their level of satisfaction with how it was handled, the number of respondents in each subgroup was so small that further analysis was not warranted.

**CONTACT WITH BAR**

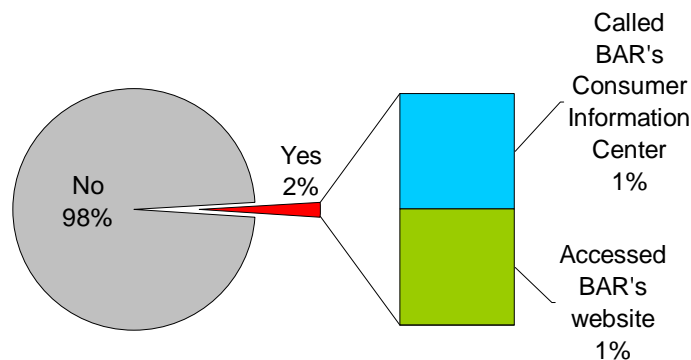
**Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **120 Among Spanish-speaking respondents, 2% recalled using BAR's website or contacting its Consumer Information Center.**

All respondents were asked if they had personally called BAR's toll-free Consumer Information Center or accessed its website within the past twelve months. Results among Spanish speakers are presented in Figure 86. It can be seen that very few – only 2% or six individuals – contacted BAR within the past year, half of whom called the toll-free line and half accessed the website.

**Figure 86**

**Spanish Speakers: Have you personally contacted BAR within the past year?**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



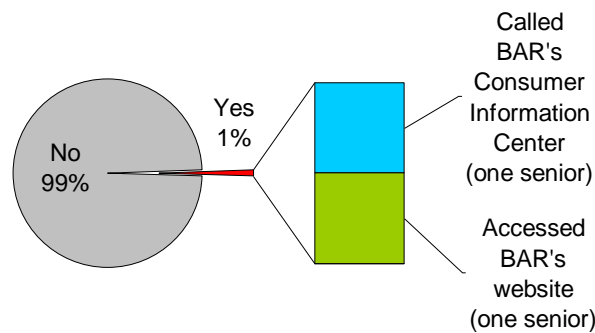
**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **121** *One percent of senior respondents contacted BAR via its website or its Consumer Information Center.*

As shown in Figure 87, 1% (or two seniors) contacted BAR within the past year: one person called the toll-free line and the other accessed BAR's website.

**Figure 87**

**Seniors: Have you personally contacted BAR within the past year?**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



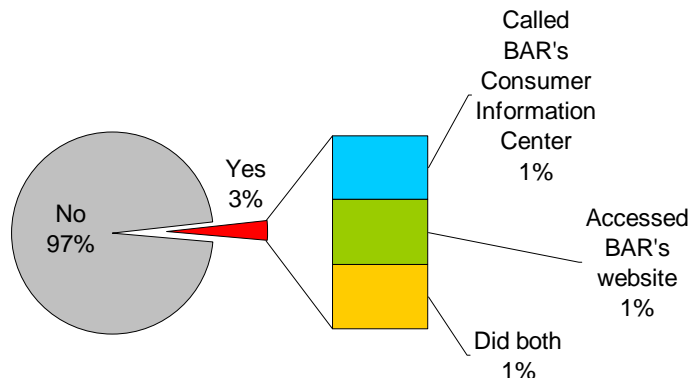
**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **122** *Most low-income respondents had also not contacted BAR, with 3% saying they had accessed its website or contacted its Consumer Information Center.*

When asked about contacting BAR in the last year, 3% (or seven low-income respondents) said they had. As shown in Figure 88, 1% called BAR's Consumer Information Center, 1% accessed its website, and 1% did both.

**Figure 88**

**Low-Income: Have you personally contacted BAR within the past year?**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



### Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons

- ❖ **123** *The small proportion of respondents who contacted BAR was consistent among Spanish-speaking, senior, low-income, and statewide respondents.*

## Website Evaluation

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

- ❖ **124** *Both Spanish-speaking respondents who had accessed BAR's website held favorable opinions of it overall and in terms of its usability and usefulness as well as for the quality and accuracy of information provided.*

Among the six Spanish-speaking respondents who contacted BAR, only two had visited the website. They both gave the site "excellent" overall ratings and rated it positively for being user friendly, providing useful tools and accurate information, as well as for the quality of information provided.

### Senior Respondents

- ❖ **125** *The sole senior who visited [www.smogcheck.ca.gov](http://www.smogcheck.ca.gov) gave it "good" ratings in all aspects discussed.*

Only one senior surveyed had visited BAR's website: [www.smogcheck.ca.gov](http://www.smogcheck.ca.gov). This individual gave it a "good" rating in terms of being user friendly, providing useful tools and accurate information, as well as for the quality of information provided and the website overall.

### Low-Income Respondents

- ❖ **126** *Four of the five low-income respondents who had visited the website rated it positively overall.*

Among low-income respondents, five respondents visited BAR's website; four respondents rated it "good" or "excellent" overall, while only one low-income individual felt it was "poor."

More specifically, two low-income respondents felt it was user-friendly (three gave negative ratings); three felt the tools it provided were useful (two gave negative ratings) and the quality of information provided was good or excellent (two gave negative ratings). Only one low-income respondent gave a positive rating for the accuracy of the information provided; three said it was "fair" and one gave a "poor" rating.

### Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons

There were too few respondents in any of the subpopulations to conduct further comparisons about website evaluations.

## LIKELIHOOD TO CONSULT BAR IN FUTURE

### Spanish-Speaking Respondents

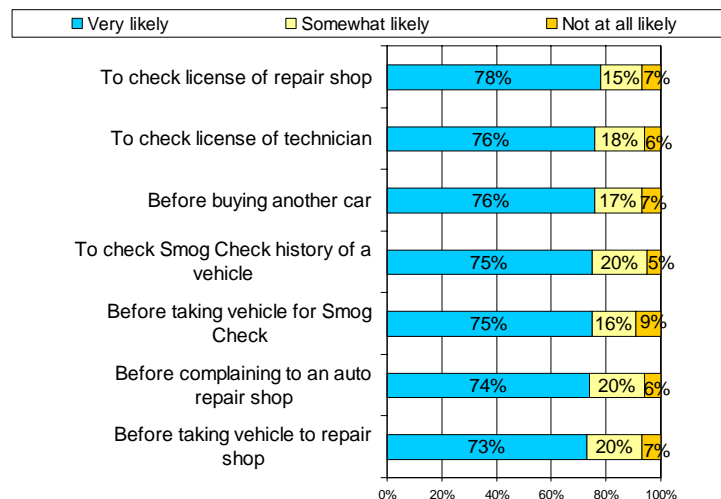
- ❖ **127 Overall, about 75% of Spanish-speaking respondents will be “very” likely to contact BAR for a variety of reasons, ranging from checking the license of a repair shop or a technician to verifying the Smog Check history of a vehicle.**

Respondents were read seven scenarios and asked how likely they would be to contact the Bureau of Automotive Repair in the future, using a four-point scale.<sup>30</sup> Results are presented in Figure 89. The majority of Spanish-speaking respondents will be “very” likely to contact BAR in the future – to check the license of a repair shop (78%), to check the license of a technician (76%), to check the Smog Check history of a vehicle (75%), before buying another car (76%), before complaining to an auto repair shop (74%), before taking their vehicle to a repair shop (73%), and before taking their vehicle for a Smog Check (75%).

**Figure 89**

### Spanish Speakers: Likelihood to Consult BAR...

(excluding undecided responses)



### Senior Respondents

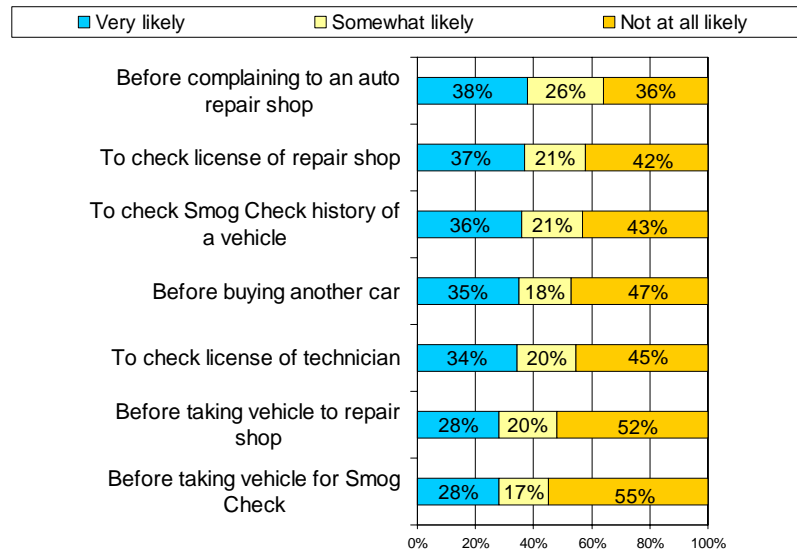
- ❖ **128 Seniors will be most likely to consult BAR before complaining to an auto repair shop and least likely to do so before taking their vehicle to be repaired or for a Smog Check.**

Results from the senior respondents are presented in Figure 90. The majority will be “somewhat” or “very” likely to contact BAR in the future before complaining to an auto repair shop (64%). Slightly more than half said they will

<sup>30</sup> The exact wording of the question was: “Now that you know some of the services and information BAR provides, please tell me how likely you will be to consult BAR in the future, either by calling the call center or by accessing their website [READ LIST] Would you be not at all likely, somewhat likely, or very likely?”

be likely to contact BAR to check a shop's license (58%), the Smog Check history of a vehicle (57%), the license of a technician (55%), or before buying another car (53%). Seniors would be least likely to contact BAR before taking a vehicle to be repaired (48%) or for a Smog Check (45%).

**Figure 90**  
**Seniors: Likelihood to Consult BAR...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)

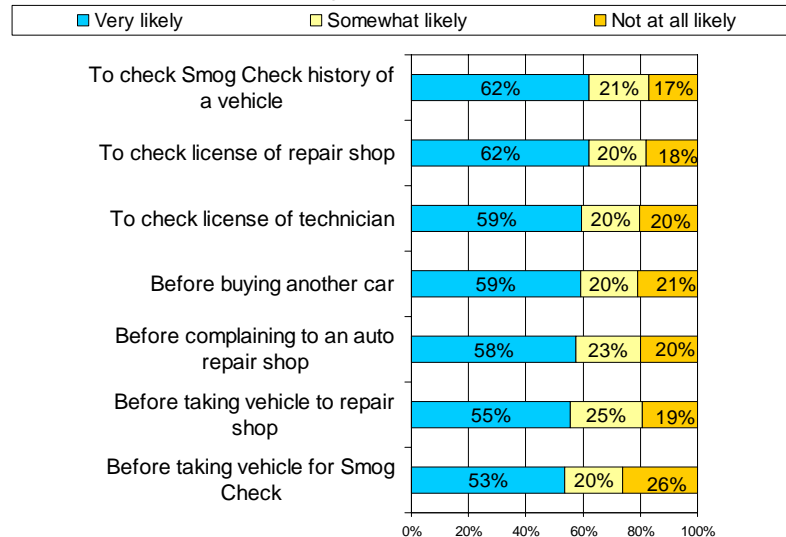


**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **129** *The majority of low-income respondents said they will be likely to contact BAR in the future now that they know more about who BAR is and what it does.*

Low-income group results are presented in Figure 91. Slightly more than half said they will be “very” likely to contact BAR to check a shop's license (62%), the Smog history of a vehicle (62%), the license of a technician (59%), before buying another car (59%), and before complaining to an auto repair shop (58%). Low-income respondents would be least likely to contact BAR before taking a vehicle to be repaired (55%) or for a Smog Check (53%).

**Figure 91**  
**Low-Income: Likelihood to Consult BAR...**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



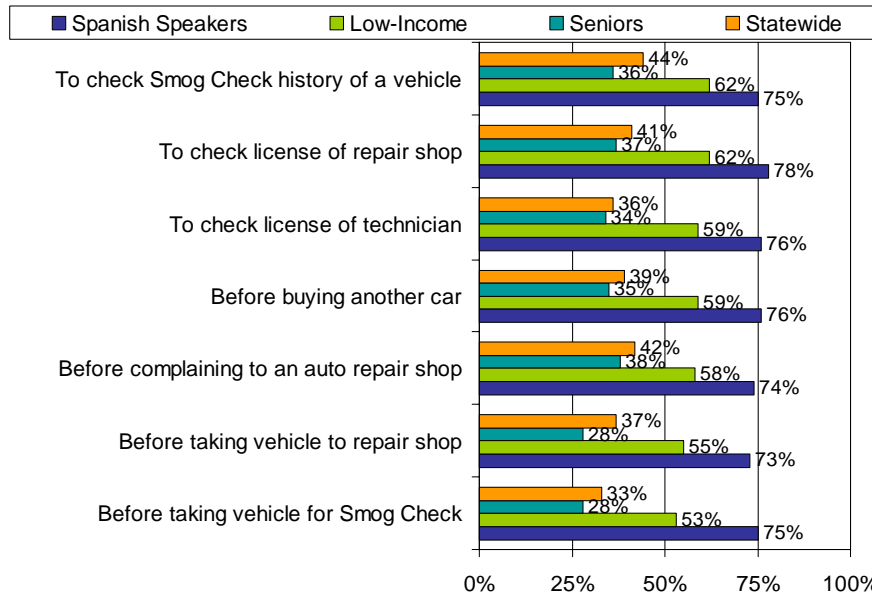
**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **130 Overall, Spanish-speakers will be the most likely to contact BAR, followed by those who reside in low-income households, both of whom will be significantly more likely than seniors or consumers statewide.**

We compared the “very” likely ratings of the seven likelihood scenarios among the four groups and results are presented in Figure 92. It can be seen that the highest levels of likelihood were found among Spanish-speaking respondents, with at least 73% saying they will be “very” likely to contact BAR in the future. These figures were significantly higher than the proportions among all other three groups. The next group that showed a high probability of contacting BAR after finding out more about it was the low-income respondents – at least half of this group said they would be “very” likely to contact BAR in the future. These results, while significantly lower than those of Spanish-speaking respondents, are significantly higher than the likelihood percentages of senior and statewide respondents. Going back to what was presented earlier, because approximately two-thirds of all groups of respondents had not heard about BAR before completing the interview, it is clear that **improved communication about BAR’s services will likely result in more consumers contacting BAR for information and help, especially among the Spanish-speaking and low-income populations.**

Figure 92

“Very” Likely to Consult BAR...  
 (excluding undecided responses)



Further analyses compared the “very” likely ratings by language spoken at home among Hispanics. Results reinforced the previously discussed finding. In other words, Hispanics that speak Spanish will be more likely to contact BAR than Hispanics that speak only English.

**PREFERRED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

**Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **131** *About 70% of Spanish-speaking respondents considered each strategy to be an effective way for BAR to communicate with them; however, 93% thought BAR would have its greatest impact by providing a toll-free consumer information center. In other words, Spanish-speaking respondents want to be able to call someone to get the information when they need it.*

All respondents were read a list of possible outreach tools and asked to rate each one in terms of how effective it would be for them personally. Results, shown in Figure 93, indicate that Spanish-speaking respondents felt the most effective communication channel was a toll-free consumer information center, with 93% rating it as “good” or “excellent” means of communicating with them.

- ❖ **132** *In terms of providing consumers with unsolicited information, Spanish-speakers felt BAR would have the most success by using brochures, local cable TV, and radio.*

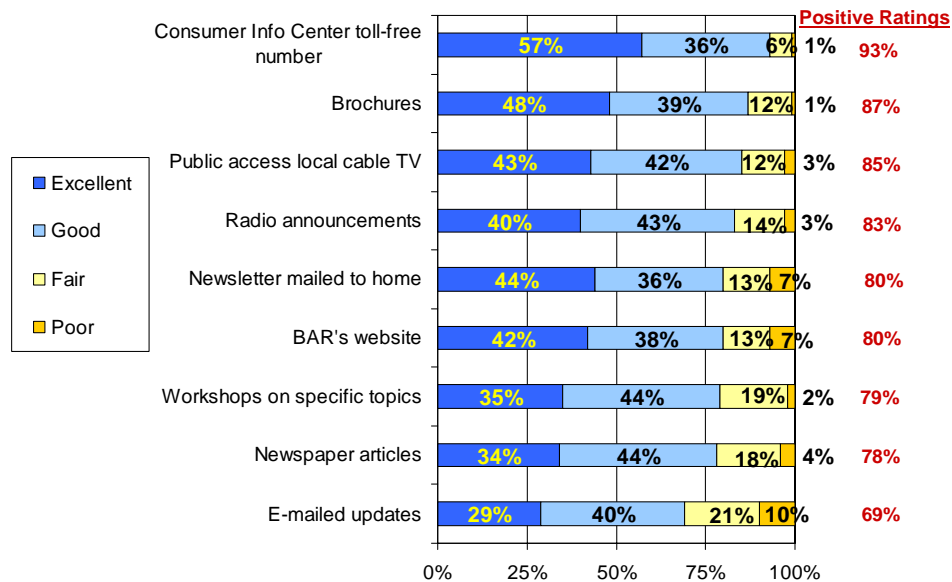
Other effective communication tools that BAR could use to reach and inform Spanish-speaking consumers included brochures (87% rated it as “good” or

“excellent”), local cable TV (85%), and radio (83%). About 80% felt a website or newsletters mailed to the home would be effective and slightly fewer would like to have workshops or newspaper articles. The least effective outreach tool, according to Spanish-speaking respondents, would be e-mailed updates (69%).

**Figure 93**

**Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Strategies for Communicating Consumer Information**

(among Spanish-Speaking Population excluding undecided responses)



**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **133** According to the majority (72%) of seniors surveyed, a toll-free consumer information center would be the most effective way BAR could communicate consumer information to them, indicating, once again, that consumers want to have the information available when they need it.

Figure 94 shows that five of the nine communication channels were rated as “good” or “excellent” by at least 50% of the seniors surveyed, with a toll-free number for a consumer information center (73% said “good” or “excellent”) topping the list. In other words, seniors want to have the information available when they want or need it.

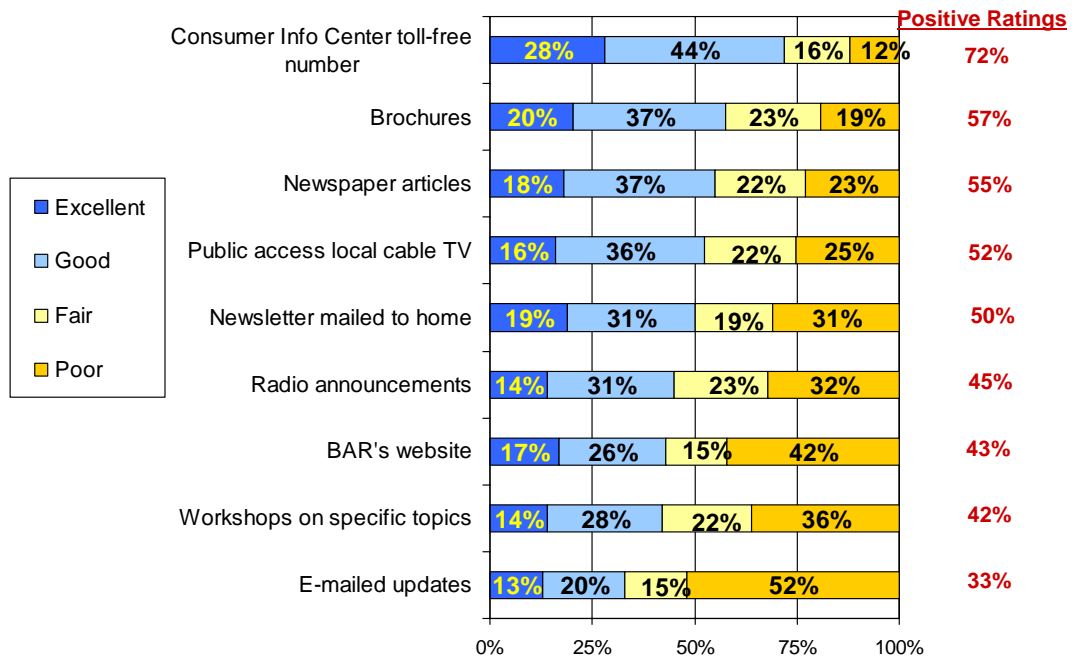
- ❖ **134** In terms getting BAR information in front of consumers before they need it, senior respondents thought the most effective tools would be having consumer information available in brochures, newspaper articles, newsletters mailed to the home, or on local cable TV.

The question then becomes how to make consumers aware of the types of programs and services that BAR has available. About 50% of seniors surveyed felt brochures, newsletters, and the media would be effective ways to spread the word

about BAR and its programs and services. E-mailed updates were considered to be the least effective way for BAR to communicate with consumers.

Figure 94

Seniors: Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Strategies for Communicating Consumer Information (excluding undecided responses)



**Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ 135 ***A toll-free consumer information center would also be the most effective way for BAR to communicate consumer information with low-income respondents, with 81% saying it would be a “good” or “excellent” way for BAR to inform consumers – although it would most likely be in a time of need.***

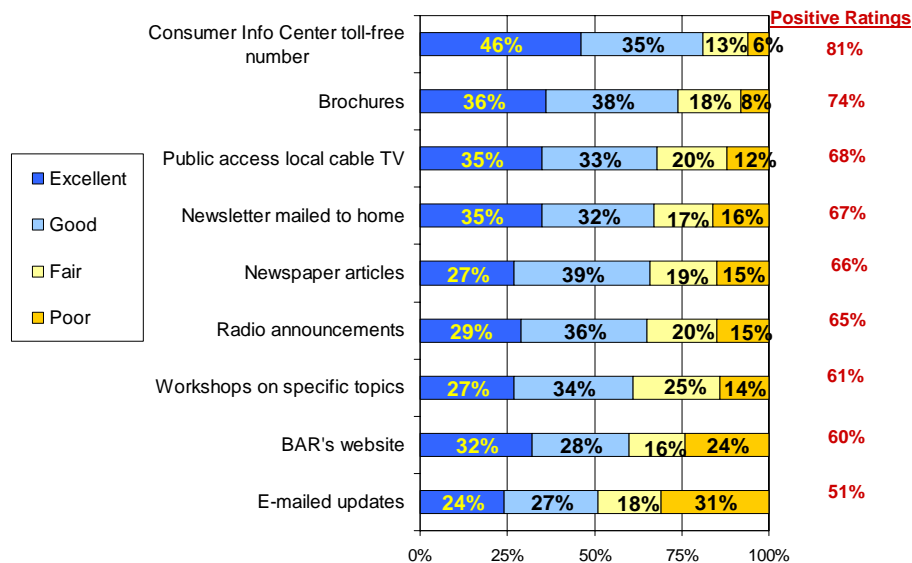
Figure 95 shows the effectiveness ratings for the nine communication channels among low-income respondents. The top-rated strategy was a toll-free consumer information center, with the majority of this group giving it “good” (46%) or “excellent” (35%) ratings.

- ❖ 136 ***In terms of the most effective way for BAR to inform consumers regardless of need, low-income respondents thought that having consumer information available in brochures, newspaper articles, newsletters mailed to the home, or on local cable TV would yield the most success.***

Again, the question becomes how to inform consumers of the types of programs and services that BAR offers so they know to contact BAR when the need arises. At least 50% of low-income respondents felt all the strategies would be

successful; however, strategies that topped the list among this group included brochures (74% rated it “good” or “excellent”), newsletters (67%), and the media (local access cable TV, 68%; newspaper, 66%; and radio, 65%) would be effective ways to let consumers know about BAR and its programs and services. Workshops and the high-tech options (that is, BAR’s website and e-mailed updates) were considered to be the least effective ways for BAR to communicate with consumers, with 61%, 60% and 51% giving positive ratings, respectively.

**Figure 95**  
**Low-Income: Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Strategies**  
**for Communicating Consumer Information**  
 (excluding undecided responses)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **137** *A toll-free consumer information center was the preferred way for BAR to provide consumer information among all “underserved” groups as well as among statewide respondents. With the exception of seniors, the majority of Spanish speakers and low-income respondents also considered BAR’s website as an effective way for BAR to communicate with consumers.*

The list of possible communication channels was separated into two types of strategies: having the information available when consumers need to become informed, and, secondly, providing consumers with unsolicited information about the available programs and services.

In terms of providing consumers with information when they need it, respondents (regardless of group) felt the most effective communication channel is a toll-free consumer information center. Additional analyses indicated that Spanish-speaking respondents (93%) were significantly more likely to consider it effective,

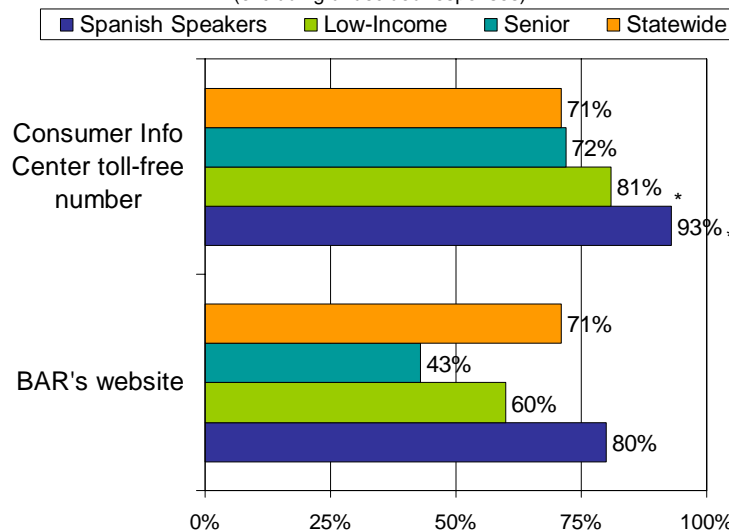
than low-income respondents (81%) who in turn were more likely than statewide (71%) and senior (72%) respondents.

The majority of low-income (60%), statewide (71%), and Spanish-speaking (80%) respondents considered BAR’s website a “good” or “excellent” way to provide consumer information. However, similar to the Consumer Information Center, this strategy requires consumer action – that is, to access the Internet.

**Figure 96**

**Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Strategies for Communicating Consumer Information**

(excluding undecided responses)



(\* indicates a statistically significant difference)

- ❖ **138** *In terms of providing consumers with unsolicited information about the programs and services BAR offers, brochures in dealerships, repair shops, and Smog Check premises as well as informational pieces on public access local cable TV were common preferences, although the effectiveness of each strategy varied by respondent group.*

Ratings of the effectiveness of communication channels were dichotomized (“poor” plus “fair” versus “good” plus “excellent”) and a series of chi-square analyses was run, using the demographic characteristics to see if different communication channels would be more effective for the “underserved” groups of respondents. Results, shown in Figure 97, indicated some significant differences:

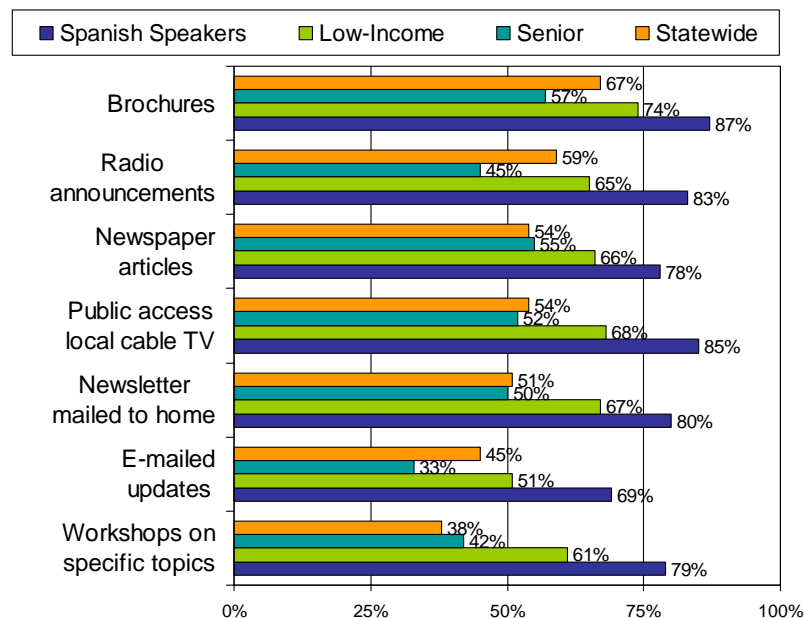
- **Spanish-speaking** respondents were significantly more likely to give positive ratings for all strategies mentioned than were the other “underserved” and statewide respondents. (This could indicate that

- Spanish speakers are really interested in receiving BAR information. Or it could be that they may view extreme responses as more sincere.<sup>31)</sup>
- Positive ratings of effectiveness for all strategies were usually lowest among **seniors**, and significantly lower than those of the other respondent groups for brochures, radio announcements, e-mailed updates.

Figure 97

### Effectiveness Ratings of Outreach Strategies for Communicating Consumer Information

(excluding undecided responses)



- ❖ **139** *Hispanics that speak Spanish at home (only or equally with English) gave significantly higher ratings for the effectiveness of newsletters, workshops, informational pieces on local cable TV, and a toll-free telephone number.*

Ratings of the effectiveness of communication channels among Hispanic respondents were analyzed by language spoken at home. Results, as shown in Figure 98, indicate that Hispanic respondents who speak Spanish at home (only Spanish or both Spanish and English equally) gave significantly higher ratings for the following four communication strategies in terms of effectiveness of:

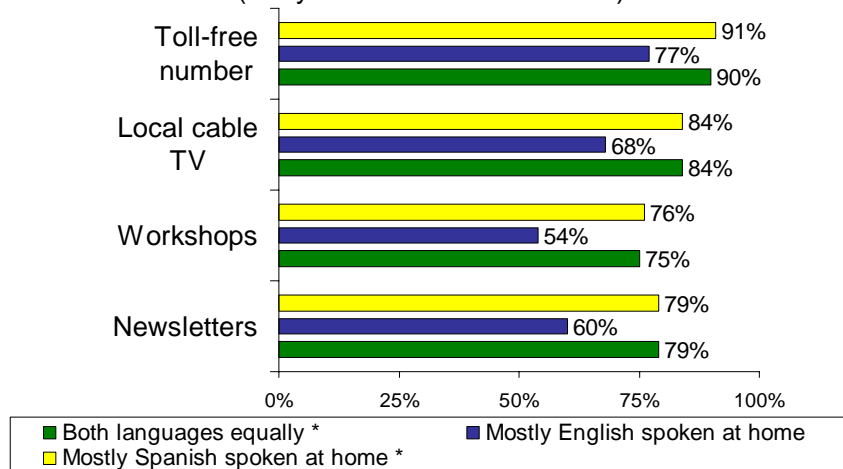
- **a newsletter** mailed to the home (only Spanish or Spanish/English equally, both 79% vs. English only, 60%).

<sup>31</sup> Hispanics and Blacks tend to use extreme response categories when presented with Likert scales (p. 101). Less educated and less acculturated Hispanics exhibit stronger preference for extreme responses (p. 102). Marin Gerard, Marin Barbara VanOss. "Potential problems in interpreting data." in Marin, G. and Marin, B. (Eds). Research with Hispanic Populations. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Vol. 23. 1991.

- **workshops** on specific topics (only Spanish, 76% and Spanish/English equally, 75% vs. English only, 54%).
- **information articles on public access local cable TV** (only Spanish and Spanish/English equally, both 84% vs. English only 68%).
- **a consumer information center toll-free telephone number** (only Spanish, 90% and Spanish/English equally, 91% vs. English only 77%).

There were no differences in the positive ratings by language spoken at home among Hispanics for the other communication strategies. In other words, Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Hispanics were just as likely to give positive (or negative) ratings for the effectiveness of BAR’s website, newspaper articles, e-mailed updates, radio announcements, and brochures in dealerships, repair shops, and Smog Check station premises.

**Figure 98**  
 Hispanics by Language:  
 Effective Ratings of Communication Channels  
 (“very” + “somewhat” effective)



\* indicates a statistically significant difference

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### **Spanish-Speaking Respondents**

- ❖ **140** *The main way Spanish speakers thought BAR could serve consumers better was to increase awareness among consumers: “give more information to the public regarding the services available through [BAR].”*

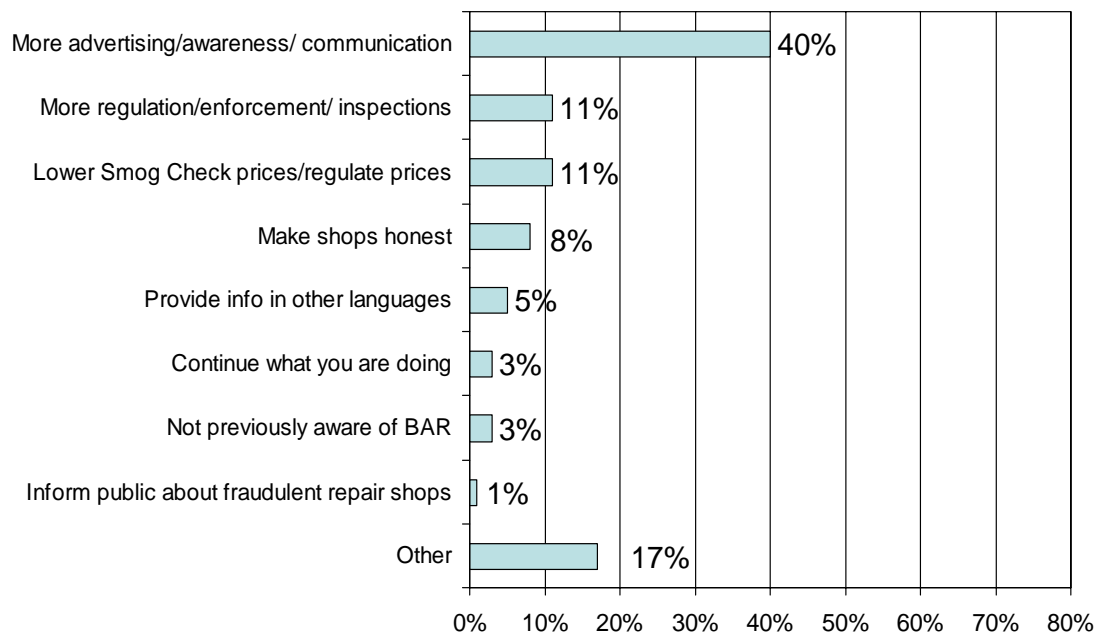
When asked for one suggestion that would help BAR serve consumers better, 60% of Spanish-speaking respondents did not volunteer any ideas and 5% were unsure. Removing these from further analyses, results showed that **40% want BAR to communicate more (comments have been translated into English):**

- “That the commercials on T.V. explain what they do and their guarantee.
- I would like to know how to contact this organization. How they can help us, etc.
- That they communicate with the public more.
- If they would put the BAR number on vehicle renewal registration so I’d have the number right there – accessible.
- That [BAR] give more info about them.”

Other suggestions included increasing regulation, lowering Smog Check prices, making shops be honest, and providing information in languages other than English.

**Figure 99**

**Spanish Speakers: What ONE suggestion could you make that would help BAR serve you, the consumer, better?**  
 (among the 40% of Spanish-speaking respondents who offered suggestions, excluding undecided responses)



**Senior Respondents**

- ❖ **141 BAR could serve seniors better by “simply continuing their advertising” and “making people more aware of BAR.”**

About half (52%) of seniors surveyed were unable to provide a suggestion to help BAR serve them better and 8% were unsure. These responses were excluded from further analysis and the percentages were recalculated. It can be seen in Figure 100 that **59% of seniors feel that BAR could serve them better by communicating more**, making statements like:

- “Make themselves known.
- Maybe a really good mailing that is informative.

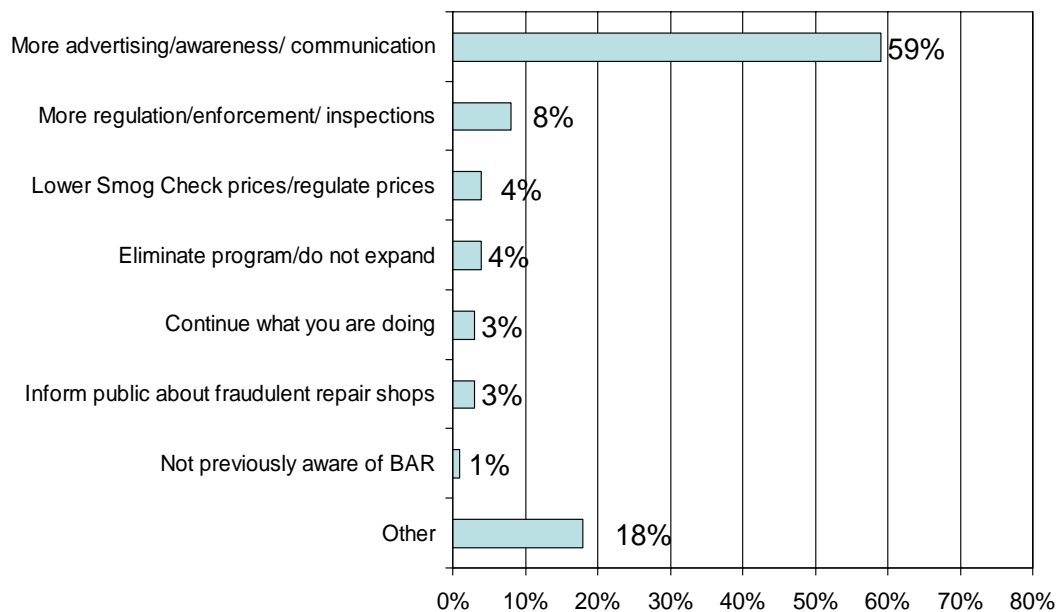
- "Getting more info out to the public in general.
- Use television more as most of us watch TV.
- I would say probably whatever printed word in the newspaper or brochures; articles in paper for specific situations, etc. Problems they caught because you might have a similar problem. They need to get the word out."

Other suggestions included increasing regulation, enforcement, and inspections; and lowering Smog Check prices.

**Figure 100**

### What ONE suggestion could you make that would help BAR serve you, the consumer, better?

(among the 48% of Senior respondents who offered suggestions, excluding undecided responses)



#### **Low-Income Respondents**

- ❖ **142** *Low-income respondents felt the best way BAR could serve them better is by "letting people know [BAR is] out there" to help "make people more aware."*

About half (54%) of low-income respondents had no suggestions and 8% were undecided about how BAR could serve them better. After excluding these responses from further analysis and recalculating the percentages, results indicated more awareness, better communication, and more advertising would be valuable, making statements like:

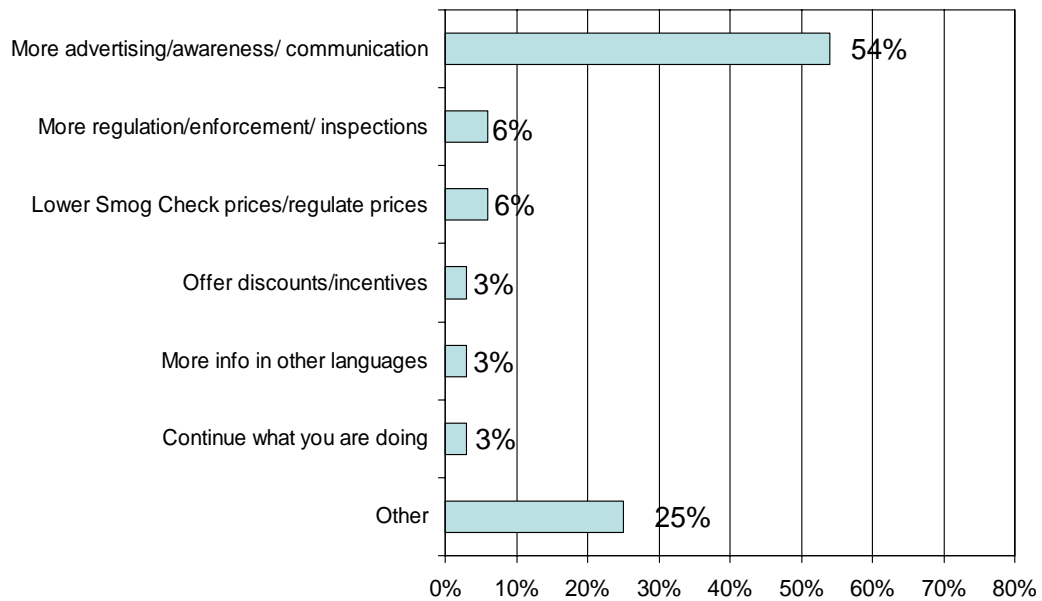
- "Continue to try to communicate to people the availability of their services.
- Bar needs to advertise MORE what they do.
- Maybe just to get the information out a little bit, if you don't know you wouldn't go look for it if you are new in California.
- They need to get the word out more, once I know about it, I would use it.
- I myself was not aware of such programs so more public information needs to get out to the consumer."

Other suggestions included increasing regulation, enforcement, and inspections; and lowering Smog Check prices among others.

**Figure 101**

**Low-Income: What ONE suggestion could you make that would help BAR serve you, the consumer, better?**

(among the 46% of Low-Income respondents who offered suggestions, excluding undecided responses)



**Differences Among Underserved Groups and Statewide Comparisons**

- ❖ **143** *The recurring suggestion for improvement was for BAR to promote its programs and services more in order to increase awareness among consumers.*

**PHASE 2: DEMOGRAPHICS**

Table 4 below indicates the respondent demographics from the Phase 2 interviews conducted with the three selected underserved populations [Spanish speakers (300 interviews); low-income households (301 interviews); and seniors (359 interviews)].

**Table 4: Phase 2 Demographics<sup>32</sup>**

| <b>SURVEY LANGUAGE</b> | <b>SPANISH SPEAKERS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>SENIORS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>LOW-INCOME<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| English                | --  | 89% (319)                              | 61% (182)                                 |
| Spanish                | 100% (300)                                      | 11% (40)                               | 39% (119)                                 |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100% (300)</b>                               | <b>100% (359)</b>                      | <b>100% (301)</b>                         |

| <b>GENDER</b> | <b>SPANISH SPEAKERS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>SENIORS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>LOW-INCOME<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| Female        | 30% (89)  | 52% (184)                              | 54% (162)                                 |
| Male          | 70% (211)                                       | 49% (175)                              | 46% (139)                                 |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100% (300)</b>                               | <b>100% (359)</b>                      | <b>100% (301)</b>                         |

| <b># OF HOUSEHOLD<br/>MEMBERS</b> | <b>SPANISH SPEAKERS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>SENIORS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>LOW-INCOME<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Live alone                        | 4% (13)   | 35% (124)                              | 28% (85)                                  |
| Two members                       | 16% (48)  | 46% (164)                              | 28% (84)                                  |
| Three members                     | 19% (57)  | 10% (35)                               | 17% (51)                                  |
| Four members                      | 26% (79)  | 5% (17)                                | 11% (32)                                  |
| Five plus members                 | 31% (94)  | 3% (9)                                 | 15% (46)                                  |
| <i>Non-response</i>               | 3% (9)  | 3% (10)                                | 1% (3)                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>100% (300)</b>                               | <b>100% (359)</b>                      | <b>100% (301)</b>                         |

| <b>INTERNET ACCESS</b> | <b>SPANISH SPEAKERS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>SENIORS<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> | <b>LOW-INCOME<br/>PERCENT (FREQUENCY)</b> |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| No                     | 58% (173)                                       | 55% (197)                              | 57% (172)                                 |
| Yes                    | 40% (121)                                       | 43% (154)                              | 42% (125)                                 |
| <i>Non-response</i>    | 2% (6)  | 2% (8)                                 | 1% (4)                                    |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100% (300)</b>                               | <b>100% (359)</b>                      | <b>100% (301)</b>                         |

<sup>32</sup> Note that totals will vary due to refusals and undecided responses.

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| # OF HOUSEHOLD VEHICLES | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| One                     | 19% (57)                             | 43% (156)                   | 42% (127)                      |
| Two                     | 37% (111)                            | 33% (117)                   | 34% (101)                      |
| Three                   | 28% (84)                             | 12% (44)                    | 15% (46)                       |
| Four                    | 9% (27)                              | 6% (23)                     | 4% (13)                        |
| Five or more            | 5% (14)                              | 3% (12)                     | 4% (14)                        |
| <i>Non-response</i>     | 2% (6)                               | 2% (7)                      | 1% (3)                         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100% (359)</b>           | <b>100% (301)</b>              |

| EDUCATION                            | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| High school or less                  | 75% (225)                            | 39% (140)                   | 59% (177)                      |
| Some college/trade/vocational school | 17% (51)                             | 27% (96)                    | 29% (86)                       |
| College degree                       | 3% (10)                              | 20% (72)                    | 8% (25)                        |
| Post-graduate degree                 | 1% (4)                               | 11% (40)                    | 2% (7)                         |
| <i>Non-response</i>                  | 3% (9)                               | 3% (11)                     | 2% (6)                         |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100% (359)</b>           | <b>100% (301)</b>              |

| AGE          | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 18-24        | 4% (11)                              | 0%                          | 7% (20)                        |
| 25-34        | 16% (49)                             | 0%                          | 9% (28)                        |
| 35-44        | 24% (73)                             | 0%                          | 10% (30)                       |
| 45-54        | 27% (81)                             | 0%                          | 16% (47)                       |
| 55-64        | 15% (46)                             | 0%                          | 22% (66)                       |
| 65 and older | 13% (40)                             | 100% (359)                  | 36% (110)                      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100% (359)</b>           | <b>100% (301)</b>              |

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| LANGUAGE MOST OFTEN SPOKEN IN HOME | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| English                            | 2% (5)                               | 84% (302)                   | 48% (143)                      |
| Spanish                            | 72% (215)                            | 8% (27)                     | 34% (103)                      |
| English/Spanish equally            | 25% (76)                             | 6% (21)                     | 16% (47)                       |
| Other                              | 0%                                   | <1% (1)                     | 1% (4)                         |
| <i>Non-response</i>                | 1% (4)                               | 2% (8)                      | 1% (4)                         |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100% (359)</b>           | <b>100% (301)</b>              |

| LANGUAGE SPOKEN MOST OFTEN IN HOME | HISPANIC / LATINO PERCENT (FREQUENCY) <sup>33</sup> |
|------------------------------------|---|
| English                            | 26% (122)   |
| Spanish                            | 52% (245)   |
| English and Spanish equally        | 22% (107)   |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>100% (474)</b>                                   |

| ETHNIC BACKGROUND      | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| African-American       | 0%                                   | 3% (12)                     | 3% (10)                        |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 0%                                   | 1% (5)                      | 2% (5)                         |
| Caucasian              | <1% (1)                              | 70% (252)                   | 35% (106)                      |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 98% (293)                            | 18% (66)                    | 57% (171)                      |
| Other                  | 0%                                   | 2% (8)                      | 2% (5)                         |
| <i>Non-response</i>    | 2% (6)                               | 5% (16)                     | 1% (4)                         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100% (359)</b>           | <b>100% (301)</b>              |

<sup>33</sup> Note that this table includes all Hispanic respondents (and not just Spanish speakers).

| ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 2004 | SPANISH SPEAKERS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | SENIORS PERCENT (FREQUENCY) | LOW-INCOME PERCENT (FREQUENCY) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Under \$10,000                  | 28% (85)                             | 6% (22)                     | 21% (63)                       |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999            | 24% (73)                             | 13% (47)                    | 37% (112)                      |
| \$15,000 to \$19,999            | 13% (39)                             | 11% (39)                    | 36% (107)                      |
| \$20,000 to \$34,999            | 10% (29)                             | 13% (46)                    | -.-                            |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999            | 6% (18)                              | 10% (36)                    | -.-                            |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999            | 1% (4)                               | 10% (36)                    | -.-                            |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999            | 0%                                   | 6% (32)                     | -.-                            |
| \$100,000 or more               | <1% (1)                              | 7% (57)                     | -.-                            |
| Non-response                    | 17% (51)                             | 24% (87)                    | 6% (19) <sup>34</sup>          |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>100% (300)</b>                    | <b>100 (359)</b>            |                                |

## **PHASE 2: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Awareness of BAR among underserved was low: about a third of Spanish-speaking (35%), senior (40%), and low-income (33%) respondents reported having at least some knowledge of BAR and its services. Seniors and statewide respondents who were aware of the BAR name were more likely to be able to describe BAR’s main functions than their low-income and Spanish-speaking counterparts, who were most likely to be unsure of BAR’s function.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** As BAR develops its public education campaign, it would be helpful to include a Spanish language component that disseminates information about what BAR does.

All respondents felt BAR should continue to process and handle complaints as well as regulate automotive repair shops. Spanish-speaking respondents found BAR’s communication services (that is, promoting its own services and providing news about the auto industry) to be significantly more valuable than senior, low-income and statewide respondents did. In terms of BAR’s financial assistance and license verification programs, Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were significantly more likely to find BAR’s consumer assistance programs useful than were senior and statewide respondents.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR could segment the market to target specific underserved populations with information about particular programs or services. For example, the low-income and Spanish-speaking respondents would be very interested in information about BAR’s financial assistance program.

The vast majority of all subgroups approved of the Smog Check Program; however, there was significantly stronger support among Spanish speakers. Statewide respondents who

<sup>34</sup> These respondents said their household earnings were less than \$20,000 when asked: “And finally, was your TOTAL household income before taxes for 2006 less than \$20,000 or \$20,000 or more?” However, they refused the follow-up question that requested further classification.

approved of the program were significantly more likely to say their Smog Check support was for air quality reasons, while Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were more likely to mention reducing pollution. In general, reasons for disapproval were comparable across respondents groups, although Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents were significantly more likely to attribute their displeasure to Smog Check's cost and expense.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** Tailoring the Smog Check message (by focusing on what is most important – air quality versus reducing pollution – as well as what is most troublesome – cost) to each underserved group could enhance its effectiveness.

A very small yet similar percentage (ranging from 6% to 10%) of underserved households had a vehicle fail a Smog Check within the last two years. Fewer than half (regardless of subgroup) had received information about BAR's financial assistance program at a Smog Check station.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR could increase its efforts to let consumers know about its financial assistance program, a program of particular interest to Spanish-speaking and low-income respondents.

Similar to consumers statewide, about 10% of the underserved respondents reported having a problem with Smog Check stations. The types of problems respondents in each group experienced and the way they dealt with them were also comparable. Discontentment with the way Smog Check station problems or complaints were handled was universal.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** Any increased activity in the areas of Smog Check station monitoring and inspections could address the problems that all consumers face.

When choosing a repair shop, having qualified mechanics or technicians is the most important factor among all respondent groups. Vehicle repairs were most common in Spanish-speaking households (69%), followed by those with low incomes (59%), and least common among seniors (45%). Brake repairs were the most common across all groups.

The majority (ranging from a high of 90% among seniors to a low of 77% of low-income respondents) of underserved respondents who took their vehicles to an auto repair shop had a positive experience. Repair shop problems were reported more often by statewide respondents (9%) than by senior (4%) and Spanish-speaking (4%) respondents.

In order to get the consumer information they need, underserved respondents would like to have a **toll-free telephone number**, although only a small proportion (fewer than 5%) of respondents actually contacted BAR – probably due to a lack of awareness. However, after learning more about BAR and its services, the majority of underserved respondents will be likely to contact BAR, especially Spanish-speakers and those who reside in low-income households.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** BAR should maintain its Consumer Information Center toll-free hotline, and ensure that bilingual Spanish/English representatives are available.

In terms of providing consumers with unsolicited information about its programs and services, two strategies that would reach the largest cross-section of consumers were **brochures** in dealerships, repair shops, and Smog Check station premises as well as informational pieces on public access local **cable TV**.

- **Recommendation:** To get consumer information in front of Spanish speakers before they need it, BAR should also develop radio spots (in Spanish, of course). To better inform seniors and low-income households, BAR could also incorporate newspaper articles and a newsletter in its communication strategy.

The recurring suggestion for improving the way BAR serves consumers was straightforward: promote BAR's programs and services in order to increase awareness among consumers.