

Question 17 - Survey Feedback

"Do you go to Town Meeting?" and "Do you vote?" should be two separate questions, as was obvious this voting season.
A bit confusing with too many options
A bit too wordy, but still effective.
A good idea. I think that you will be surprised at what townspeople really think. Town meeting is not necessarily an accurate indicator of the opinion of the electorate, because it is attended mainly by a vocal group that is sometimes the minority opinion.
A good survey, thanks to those that spent time putting it together. We really do appreciate the time, energy, and hard work of our local volunteers even when we do not agree with their position.
a good way to get the view of many that do not go to meetings
A lot of questions ask the same thing differently. Ask the question once, and infer the rest.
A missing question: "Do you feel that the town cares about Joe Average and his wallet, except for what they can take?" Or, maybe more diplomatically put, "Do you feel that your views are adequately heard or represented at town meetings?" Answer: No. Thanks for the survey.
A needed opportunity for understanding what the citizens want.
A survey is a good idea. I think there should be more of them. Look at the social networks that arise among the young people. We can use a lot more of that. I didn't even know about this website until I got the flyer in the mail.
Actually, it was pretty good.
Allow more multiple choices rather than restrict answers to a single choice.
Although there were a few questions regarding yes / no for voting, this survey appears to be very skewed towards the override. There needs to be more questions towards the "no" (i.e., reasons why) versus the taker having to write it in reasons. As with all things in Harvard, I don't expect what I've written to be considered. If it's not what the Selectmen want to hear, it goes in file 13. And has been a bit of "yellow journalism" in your paper, which makes the results of this survey suspect. What is the truth? I'd say that the Selectmen can't handle it and your paper won't fully print it.
An anonymous survey would not ask for your voter ID, address, and area of town in which you live...
appears to be incorrect assumption that you need the \$448 to keep level services. override choices do not include only one override questions never asked how I voted in past. I have voted for overrides, but not last year or this year. Town officials need to understand fiscal responsibility and need vs want
As a governmental system we have to be careful of using referendums/polls to make all decisions by majority vote. The elected officials have a job to do and one is to protect the rights of the minority.
Ask for suggestions in other funding avenues.
Ask how people get their information about the town budget and if they could suggest a more effective way to get information to them.
bad survey.. biased in favor of over-ride
Can I get a copy of the questions I just answered before I submit?
Damn good idea!
Do not ask for st. address.
double negative questions are always confusing.
duration in town might be described into more groups 5, 7, 10, 15, 20; 25, 30+
Every one has to tighten their belt now and I think the town and schools have to as well. I feel the school are very top heavy with administration. Lets try to function with more thought and care.
excellent
excellent
Excellent - both in terms of content and presentation. Surveys should occur regularly. Public meetings are useful and should be supplemented with quantifiable information from the entire electorate.
excellent way to obtain feedback
excellent, nice graphics, good choices,

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Fabulous idea. Do it more for more topics. Perhaps ask how we learn about town issues. Word of mouth? The Harvard Press?
Fine.
For the information you were seeking, the questions were appropriate.
format and structure worked well
Given the level of thoughtfulness and true deliberation that goes on at current town meetings, such meetings could be replaced by a more detailed version of this survey together with necessary issue background.
Good idea to collect some data like this. Surveys however are never perfect and can yield unclear results. Use them as one indicator, report back the results to us exactly as they come out, but then decision makers should use their judgement to decide what to do about it -- while exposing to us how they made those decisions, especially if different from what the results suggest.
Good Idea!
Good idea.
Good idea. Keep it up.
Good idea--may be helpful. See how the results run.
Good job constructing this survey: the questions did not seem to 'lead' the responder to any particular response.
Good job!
Good job.
Good questions - intelligently phrased
Good survey. Thanks!
good tool to gage the feelings of the voters before election.
Great approach to getting ideas spoken in private. Why so much cancer here? Loss of center/Common social contacts and activities. Inconsiderate after school Library takeover by middle and Brom students is appalling, espacially if you helped fund it.
great idea
great idea
Great idea! Let's do it more often on all the various things that come up so that we can be less victimized by the managers. Or should I say help the managers with their decisions?
Great idea! Thanks for "listening".
Great idea, I'd be willing to answer a survey about 2x as long as this one to give more detailed feedback.
Great idea. This is a wonderful way to seek fine-grained input from the community as a whole.
Great job, thank you.
Great survey. Great instrument. This is a good medium to communicate to the town leadership. Please keep it
Great!!!!
Hardly confidential when requesting identifying info.
I am glad it was short and I hope the results are useful to someone.
I am glad you are asking the questions. Maybe asking more about what people's priorities are, and exactly what they would be willing to pay more for would be helpful.
I am so glad that someone is asking the voters for their opinions on these questions!
I am undecided about the 2nd and 3rd tier overrides not because of lack of information, but because I want to wait and see how our leaders communicate the needs as they see them. I did vote for all of those amounts at ATM and the polls.
I appreciate all the work that has gone into this survey.
I appreciate having a chance to have my voice heard, rather than stifled as in the town meeting. Binding surveys might be more effective than the town meeting as presently conducted.
I appreciate the chance to participate in this. It's a step toward being a good deal more creative in how we do and structure things here.
I appreciate the second chance on this issue. My wife attended the town meeting on Sunday, but business and family issues prevented us from getting to vote.

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<p>I believe the wording of the survey mailing is intentionally unfair. I do not condider 86 votes to be " such a narrow margin ".</p>
<p>I disagree with this survey as it influences the eventual size of an override or whether there should be one or not. The override was voted down so leave it alone and stop pushing it.</p>
<p>I dislike the tracking of individual voter with a voter ID, address, etc.</p>
<p>I don't think this is necessary. Run the town on what you have just like we run our homes.</p>
<p>I find the survey will be helpful if there is actually something that comes of it and it isn't simply an act of futility</p>
<p>I found the survey potentially misleading in that it assumed that we should follow the mistaken practice of dividing the world into existing services and new services and that we should only have the choice of a tiered or menu vote rather than lool for cost savings accross the budget and revenue opportunities such as moving some budget items to CPC, state funding, grants etc.</p>
<p>I have filled out only enough information to get a copy of the survey and have answered none of the questions. While using the Voter ID may be considered a good way to validate the uniqueness of responses, there is a reasonable expectation that the information provided can be directly linked to an individual. As a Selectman, I must remain open to making decisions based upon input from other town officials and members of the community in general. To me, it is important that we collectively work toward a goal of meeting the needs of all Harvard residents in the most efficient manner possible. My personal answers to the questions are not important when considering the matters at hand. As such, I will keep my answers private.</p>
<p>I hope that this survey helps our new board members and am happy to see them all keep their word about getting information from the public.</p>
<p>I like the fact that this survey sticks to a single topic and explores it, rather than attempting to ask a lot of questions that do not pertain to the override/budget situation. Thanks for adding the controls (voter id, etc). Fraud and self-selection of respondents is a concern; please be sure to explain this in the final report. I can help with the margin of error calculations.</p>
<p>I like the idea of feedback</p>
<p>I like the survey. Thanks for putting it together. I love the town and really appreciate all the work the volunteers do to make it run.</p>
<p>I like the way the survey is open ended. I felt there were places for me to comment exactly where I wanted to comment. Thank you for presenting a thoughtful survey.</p>
<p>I notice you didn't ask anything about whether people felt that they, individually, could afford the higher taxes that an override would generate. I would have thought that an obvious question.</p>
<p>I plan to move out of Harvard in 3-4 years when my youngest graduates. If Harvard's tax rate keeps rising, Harvard will be too expensive for us to reside. We would look to move to Devens. I wonder how many folks like me will look to relocate to Devens (or out of Harvard) resulting in folks with families moving into Harvard and resulting in greater demand for school investments. It appears to me that Harvard is in a nasty situation that will eventually be resolved by lower quality schools if an alternative solution is not found. I say this because Harvard will need annual overrides to maintain a high quality school unless we can find an alternative solution.</p>

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<p>I sense that you have an agenda in this survey -- an agenda to persuade the town officials to offer yet another override. I hope that the survey results make the town officials decide against an override, because constant overrides are a bad idea. Every time the town passes an override, the officials think they can get away with another one. They get too comfortable with the status quo and don't really examine the budget or produce a zero-based budget. They only give lip service to the idea of a zero-based budget, make a half-hearted attempt at it, then throw up their hands and ask for another override. It is time that the town develop a truly zero-based budget. Also, some of the questions on the survey seemed to me to be leading questions that make unwarranted assumptions -- for instance, the one that asked whether a no-override budget would result in reduced services. That question is irrelevant, so I answered "don't know" because it seems to me that it missed the point entirely -- of course a no-override budget will reduce services, but are they services we can live without? Are they services we really needed in the first place? Are they services we can afford, or are there perfectly good alternatives available to everyone who actually needs them (if anyone) at (probably) less cost through the private sector than through the public one? THOSE are the important questions.</p>
<p>I thank the press for conducting this survey &amp; allowing us a way to have our opinions heard.</p>
<p>I think it is a good idea and should be done by town official on a regular basis.</p>
<p>I think it is a good idea, maybe it will make more townspeople get out and vote when they are suppose to. But still, it shouldn't effect the outcome of the failed override.</p>
<p>I think it would help to ask the demographic info first before you move into the budget questions and some of the questions could have been worded better.</p>
<p>I think the idea is great. Kudos to all involved in the planning and the decision to do this.</p>
<p>I think this has been long overdue. The budgets and those who make them need to know many people are fed up - many good people have lef the town. Many other people left the town as soon as their children were out of school. Parents need to support the system rather than use it, abuse it, and move on.</p>
<p>I think this survey appeared focused on ascertaining what amount of override would pass instead of trying to understand why it failed. If someone said they wouldn't pass an override ever, why is that? fixed income, no new taxes stance, poor economy affected household, uncertain about future, don't trust school/town officials, want to make a point, etc</p>
<p>I think this survey was a great idea and hope that it is successful. Kudos to The Harvard Pres and the League of Women Voters for taking this step. The only suggestion I have is to not ask for e-mail addresses twice for those wishing to receive a copy of the survey results. Good luck!!</p>
<p>I think this survey was well thought out - complete and fair.</p>
<p>I think this was a great idea. You should have a question of the week especially regarding school issues. People are afraid to say anything and you would give them a voice protected.</p>
<p>I thought the survey was quite reasonable.</p>
<p>I used to go to town meetings but got annoyed when the moderator would not count my dissenting vote(along with a few others). The artical would pass "unanimously" when in fact there were "no" votes. I believe that some voters vote yes at town meeting on spending issues and no at the polls because they do not want to appear uncooperative in front of peers.</p>
<p>I was impressed with the caliber of this survey. It carefully reflects and asks sufficient questions as well as giving us an opportunity to make comments. Thank you for focusing on the issues of the fiscal structure of this Town.</p>
<p>I wish you had asked some questions about what I value (schools, conservation land, public works) so that decisions can be made in light of why people stay and what would "tip them" to leave.</p>
<p>I would have asked, "If you voted no at the Town Election - why?"</p>
<p>I would have liked to see a question that separated the possible answers about being involved in town meeting and in voting for articles after town meeting. I may not attend town meeting but watch town meeting from home and then vote later. I think a follow up asking if the respondent attended town meetings and then a question if they voted later would have been helpful.</p>
<p>I WOULD HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE USED IN A VERY LIMITED WAY. SURVEYS ARE VERY FLAWED AT BEST</p>
<p>I would like to thank those who put so much time and energy into preparing this survey.</p>

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i would never have guessed what outcome you're looking for. right. care to buy a well-used bridge in brooklyn?
I'm not sure the questions other than the override itself are totally relevant.
interesting. Thank you for doing it.
is is a good and balanced survey
It appears well constructed.
It is an opportunity to express an opinion, and I hope it will give the town valuable information as to how these override proposals might be affecting some of the less affluent members of the community.
It is nice to be heard without all eyes on you!
It may have helped to just highlight or outline what the items were on the override, to refresh memories.
It was good, but don't combine questions (attend town meetings AND vote)
It's a fair survey and should be a help to town committees.
Its a step in the right direction to get a consensus view form the twon at large, Thnaks for doing it.
It's basically OK.
It's fantastic that you're doing this. Democracy only works if voters, and their elected officials, are well-informed.
more citizen-based surverys would help, but online/email does not access many of the long-time residence, thereby weithging the input to the more well off and younger participants
My main concern is that the older population, many of which do not have computers, will not particpate in this survey. I do realize they can come to the office and get a hand ballot. I would suggest that the survey be a part of the paper which would then give them an opportunity to participate without going to your office for a hard copy.
My perspective is clearly stated above. From that perspective, too many of these questions were based on the assumption that overrides were going to happen, as if they were inevitable.
nicely done
Nicely done!
Nicely done.
Not that confidential when you request identifying info.
One question was not answered because there was no option other than "yes" or "no." There needs to be a third alternative.
Overall I thought the survey was good, perhaps a better or more time spent on describing where our taxpayer dollars go by percentage of overall budget, i.e, schools, services, maintenance, etc
Perhaps a question or two about concerns that people have with the lack of cutbacks or cost savings that departments plan to make such as reducing the number of days that the library is open, if needed, or combining the high school's library with the town's library which would save staff and materials or lowering the heat in town
Perhaps another survey (?) to elicit town recommendations for generating future revenue and or budget savings.
Please publish the questions in the Harvard Press in advance for more accurate expression of opinion when actually taken.
Post people's opinions in your survey results. I would like to hear other folks' commentary and even responses from gov't officials. Thanks
Pretty good survey and using surveymonkey is a great idea. My only criticism is that I could have used more information about the pros and cons of tiered vs. menu approaches to an override vote. I'm sure there are passionate arguments favoring one side or the other; it would have been helpful to see them. Also, you asked for my email address twice.
Pretty good!
Property taxes are a great concern considering the cost of everything else today, -- food, fuel, etc.
Question 5 was somewhat confusing to answer - not clear what the distinct answers to "all" and "some" really
Questions use "town official vernacular" and the average voter will have to work hard to answer the questions accurately and responsibly. Future surveys should allow voters to respond to issues or line items rather than budget numbers that do not translate directly to issues or line items.
reasonably survey, on some of the button selection there should be a 'other' with fill in remark area

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Seems good. Not sure what the purpose is and I'm not sure why you need a street address when you have an ID number that is, obviously linked to a name and mailing address.
Seems like a fairly well-done survey - hope it yields some consensus
Seniors in this town represent over 1000 residents. We are not getting raises and we do not want to be forced to leave town because of taxes. ALL sectors of the community should be considered not just one.
-should ask why budget doesn't consider needs if that what you check, don't know if it's because a person wants more services or less taxes. -no choice for single override -assumes need \$448 K override for level service - wrong. -no one faces consequences of bad decisions during the year.
Should have had this for a lot of the questions that have come up in the past. If we had, then we would not have been stuck with so many overrides.
Some folks don't have computers and you should have included a tearout in the last issue to complete and drop off/mail.
Some of the questions were confusing . . . like in question 5
Some of the questions were the opposite of the question right before it and could cause mixed results - This may generate poor data.
Some questions without a best answer
Someone should check the spelling/grammar before it is published
Survey has 2 questions that are asked twice
Survey seems well constructed for the most part. However, the results could be skewed because some people don't own computers and, if they do not, they must get the survey to the newspaper office, which may discourage them. Therefore, I suspect the survey will have a younger resident bias, which means it will probably have a pro-override bias. You should have asked survey respondents how old they are; you then could have determined if your respondents represent the average age of residents (age being the most important factor, typically, in whether one is for or against overrides).
survey was well done...
Surveys are difficult..don't let the questions skew or limit the possible answers to your questions.
Survey's are too simplistic, and this one like others, doesn't serve to educate the respondents. Town officials need to provide education about how the town works -- even old timers don't know. One resident whose family has the with the longest history in town was quoted in the paper clearly misunderstanding which part of the budget is in the override and which not. Shame on the Finance Committee -- they have an opportunity to do greater service and don't.
Surveys like this could and should serve to expand ideas on what residents in Harvard want. We need to break out of the paradigm set up in the 1970s that led people to leave metropolitan areas and live in rural settings like Harvard. Our elected and FINCOM leaders are forced to react to circumstances and there's no one issuing new ideas to lead Harvard toward a vision of the future. I think these surveys could help others think more toward the future.
Survey's like this, using SurveyMonkey, are a great idea. They have to be carefully prepared to not introduce any bias just be asking particular questions; and the users need to understand that, since the respondent sample is NOT RANDOMLY DRAWN, the results are NOT statistically valid. That said, they can be very useful in developing an understanding of Town sentiments.
Thank you as you have provided us a nice forum to provide feedback
Thank you for allowing a voice to be heard.
Thank you for doing this via email,very efficient.
Thank you for formulating this survey. It should be helpful. I cannot suggest any changes.
Thank you for giving a voice to the townsfolk ...
Thank you for putting this well-thought out survey together. Not all of us can get to Town Meeting and this is an excellent way to reach most of the people in town.
Thank you for the opportunity

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Thank you for the survey. It makes me feel as if someone is listening. I do not feel this way at the town meeting. I do feel as if I have some input when the issues are put to a vote.
Thank you for this important public service.
Thank you so much for taking the initiative on this! Such surveys should become a regular feature of town government, and our town officials should read the results very, very carefully.
Thank You!!
Thank You!!! I saw when the selectmen gave a person who wanted to do this a hard time. Our current board seems to be so insensitive. Thank you for doing this!
Thanks for doing this. We need options and not all can afford higher taxes EVERY year. Consider adding a question: Some of us who do not go to town meeting but watch it live, listen and ponder, at home.
Thanks for helping to provide feedback to town officials as they craft a new budget.
Thanks for offering this forum.
Thanks for the chance to vent.
Thanks for the survey. A great start.
The "whys" behind these answers would be interesting. If folks are against any override is it because they cannot afford it, don't trust the elected officials, school department, or what? I think that "trust" is a major issue this year.
THE LAST THING WE WANT IS ANOTHER SURVEY SITTING ON THE SHELF, BUT MAYBE THIS TIME THE SELECTMEN WILL REALIZE IT IS TIME TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT UNNECESSARY COSTS AND SERVICES. A LOT OF OUR LONG TIME RESIDENCE ARE BEING FORCED OUT - THE "SCHOOL GROUP" HAS TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS A LOT MORE TO THIS TOWN THAN THE SCHOOLS.
The override DID NOT PASS! So what are you doing; proposing more overrides.
The question about attending town meetings and voting should have been separated out ... I always vote but rarely attend town meetings. After working all week, who's got the energy to devote an entire Saturday to town debates??
The question you asked about whether we are involved with town meetings and vote in town elections should have been broken in two. I don't normally go to town meetings but I do vote in all town elections.
The survey is a great idea but I fear that you do not hear from those who do NOT support the override even though you have stressed confidentiality. I think some people do not support the override because they feel the town keeps asking for more and more money and there never will be enough. It will always use as much as it is given and not find ways to reduce.
The survey does not ask questions pertaining to seniors and their problems of staying in Harvard.
The survey might provide information for the boards but it also might not. The vote told the story.
The survey was a great idea. Question 18 was also asked at the very beginning (during the voter registration validation section).
The survey was fine, but I think open comments will be more informative than checked categories.
This appears to be an effort to push for another override. The Harvard Press should disclose the names of all individuals who prepared the survey.
This approach will give a skewed result--conservatives in town don't trust either the Press or the press (generally). And nay-sayers do not participate either at town meeting or in surveys--they just vote "no."
This is a good public forum as long as the results are shared. Publish, and keep publishing....
This is a great idea and can help shape policy because so much of the leadership live in a bubble of self-interest and local politics they lose sight of the big picture and long term effect of their short term focus.
This is a great idea!
This is a great idea. How interesting that it should come from the citizenry, via the Press and the League, not from the elected officials!!
This is a great idea. It is a difficult topic but I think you have done a nice job of keeping it as simple as possible which is key to driving a high response rate.
This is a service to the town.

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This is a very good idea.
This is an excellent venue to get proper feedback from everyone who is truly interested in maintaining quality services throughout the town. Harvard enjoys a fine reputation as a well run town with fine services and we should maintain that reputation as it directly affects home values and draws new residents.
This is awesome! Thank you for getting the communities voice out to the people
This is not a confidential survey as you ask for my address. I don't mind but you are not being thruthfull
This survey is a good idea. However, at times its questions were slanted in such a way that it favored those who want an override. Please get the word out. The citizens of Harvard clearly voted that they do not want an override. Do not keep coming back with additional attempts at watered down overrides.
This survey is clearly biased by easy of response. Seniors are less likely to have computers, and many are unable to pick up the survey. All surveys should be MAILED WITH A POSTAGE PAID RETURN ENVELOPE.
This survey is poorly designed. Why ask multiple times for my email address and repeat requests for other information?
This survey seems to be focused on the needs of one segment of the population, i.e., families with school age children many of whom move into town while they have school age children and then leave. If you truly want to have more resources for the schools it might help to have a more diversified population which includes young (or even older) singles and retaining seniors. Both of these groups would pay taxes and have far less cost to the Town than households with school age children Fifteen households without children would add \$100K plus to the tax base without adding to the school burden. Alternatively keeping 12 senior households (rather than have them sell their homes to families with 2 school age children) would reduce the school population be one class (24 children).
This survey seems to confirm that the budget process as it now exists is valid. The committee add amounts to last year's amounts without giving any consideration to performance, outputs, stakeholders, processes, etc. Until the budget process and the way the town's departments are run is reformed, I will continue to vote no on any request for an override.
This survey seems to presume an override is necessary. What part of "no override" don't you understand?
This type of survey should perhaps be done more often, so town officials have a more current sense of the difficulties we have with these enormous tax increases.
This was easy to use. Thank you.
To me the survey appears both pertinent and fairly draw. My thanks to all who took the time and effort to prepare it.
Too many questions about demographics...if we are a Harvard voter then that is enough information to compile results. These questions could be used for more meaningful questions like providing a more detailed menu of all the potential override topics. Also some redundant questions - you ask for our address / town location twice and email address twice.
Trust is key to any override. I must trust the people on the three boards and the process by which they develop the budget. Simply adding to last year's budget to create this year's budget is a process that leads companies to bankruptcy. It is likely to do the same to towns. Question 3 and item 18 are essentially the same. You might have structured the questions about overrides along the four options Tim Bragan outlined at last week's meeting.
Useful -- and presumably informative to those preparing next budget proposals.
Very good idea. I trust you will keep everything completley confidential (honor thy taxpayer as you honor the Special Ed student!!)
Very good. Wish I had the answers to our financial problems.
We should not be asked to give our street address.
We think this survey is a very responsible service to the budgeting process.
Well designed survey to answer budget questions. Do one on Devens issue.
Well done!

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Well done. Thanks for your interest in gathering opinions from the community as many people are reluctant to stand up at ATM and say what they really are thinking. By the way you asked for my email address on the first page!
well structured format.
Well-constructed; nothing to criticize.
Were all of its preparers of one mind or does it just seem that way?
Why should residents go poor for the sake of "town spending." "No Override" was voted on. What doesn't Harvard understand when a NO is voted. Every Override has passed since Prop 2 1/2 began. Enough is
Would like input to be anonymous without the penalty of it be segregated into different set of results.
Would like to add Devens disposition questions to the survey. I am sure the selectmen need this input
would like to know more about the specific items on the proposed budget and the consequences (short and long term) of not getting the funding for those things
Would the Press be amenable to setting up a town government bulletin board-, google group-, chat room- sort of thing to allow for town-wide cyber discussion and communication?
Yes or No survey questions should not have two parts. The question asking about whether we were active in town elections AND town meetings, well, I vote for all elections but never go to the town meetings, so already, my answer is skewed.
You asked if the town had adequately considered my needs when drafting the budget. It might help to define "needs." I am assuming you mean my financial needs.
You must find a way to include seniors who do not have home PCs or Internet access.
You should have separated the question Do you regularly attend Town Meeting and do you regularly vote in the town elections. I don't attend town meeting because of its length and I have kids to watch but I always vote in the elections.
Your survey is designed to support overrides. Many older citizens do not have easy access to the internet The survey does not support mac safari 1.1 Seems you should be interested in finding out why people passed overrides in the past and what should have been done differently to allow their defeat.