



# Californians & the Environment

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*Supported with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation*



**PPIC**

PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

The PPIC Statewide Survey provides a voice for the public and likely voters—informing policymakers, encouraging discussion, and raising awareness on critical issues of the day.

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## News Release

EMBARGOED: Do not publish or broadcast until 9:00 p.m. PT on Wednesday, July 28, 2021.

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### PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Water Supply and Drought Are Now Californians' Top Environmental Concern

**NEWSOM, BIDEN HAVE MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR THEIR HANDLING OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES; MAJORITIES ACROSS PARTY LINES APPROVE OF PRIORITIZING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 28, 2021—When asked to name the most important environmental issue facing the state today, Californians are most likely to mention water supply and drought—a shift from a year ago. About six in ten Californians approve of Governor Newsom's handling of environmental issues, and a similar share approve of President Biden on the environment. Overwhelming majorities of Californians—including majorities across partisan groups—believe that developing alternative energy sources should be prioritized over expanded use of oil, coal, and natural gas in the nation's energy supply. These are among the key findings of a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

(Note: As a companion piece to the new survey, PPIC is publishing a blog post by president and CEO Mark Baldassare, "What's Wrong with the Recall?")

One in four Californians (25% adults, 26% likely voters) say that water supply and drought is the most important environmental issue facing the state. Smaller shares named wildfires (17% adults, 18% likely voters), climate change (13% adults, 16% likely voters), and air pollution and vehicle emissions (6% adults, 5% likely voters). Last July, fewer Californians—10% adults, 11% likely voters—pointed to water supply and drought as the top environmental issue facing the state; instead, climate change was most likely to be named as most important.

"Water and the drought has jumped to the top of the list when Californians are asked to name the most important environmental issue facing the state today," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

### Most Are Very Concerned about the Impact of Climate Change on Droughts and Wildfires

Strong majorities (68% adults, 70% likely voters) believe the effects of climate change have already started. One in ten or fewer (8% adults, 10% likely voters) believe the effects of climate change will never happen. Views are divided along partisan lines, with 82 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of independents saying the effects of climate change are already underway, compared to 44 percent of Republicans. Across racial/ethnic groups, solid majorities say the effects have already begun (69% Latinos, 67% whites, 66% Asian Americans, 60% African Americans). In a March Gallup national survey, 59 percent of American adults said the effects of climate change are already happening.

Overwhelming majorities believe that climate change is a factor in the environmental challenges now facing the state: 80 percent say that climate change has contributed to the current drought, and 78

percent say that climate change has contributed to California's recent wildfires. Overwhelming majorities across regions and across demographic groups hold these views.

Many Californians are concerned about the future effects of climate change. Six in ten are very concerned about climate change causing both droughts and wildfires that are more severe (63% each), and about half (52%) are very concerned about more-severe heat waves. One in four (25%) are very concerned about increased sea-level rise due to climate change.

"Most Californians believe that the effects of climate change have already begun and that it is contributing to the current drought and wildfires," Baldassare said. "Six in ten are very concerned about more-severe droughts and wildfires as a result of climate change."

## A Near-Record Share Say the Water Supply Is a Big Problem in Their Part of the State

Solid majorities (63% adults, 69% likely voters) say the supply of water is a big problem in their part of California. This includes majorities across regions (70% San Francisco Bay Area, 67% Central Valley, 60% Los Angeles, 59% Inland Empire, 57% Orange/San Diego) and across age, education, gender, income, partisan, and racial/ethnic groups. The share of adults saying that water supply is a big problem has increased by 25 points since July 2020 (38% to 63%) and is near the record high of 70 percent (September 2015).

State and local officials have asked residents to reduce water use in light of the current drought. Asked about their own household's efforts to reduce water use, 41 percent of Californians say they have done a lot, 39 percent say they have done a little, and 20 percent say they have not taken steps to reduce use. About four in ten across regions say they are doing a lot (43% Los Angeles, 41% San Francisco Bay Area, 40% Central Valley, 40% Inland Empire, 38% Orange/San Diego).

"Majorities across the state's major regions say that the water supply is a big problem in their part of California, while about four in ten residents say their households have recently done a lot to reduce water use in response to the current drought," Baldassare said.

## Majorities See the Threat of Wildfires as a Big Problem

More than half of Californians (55% adults, 57% likely voters) say the threat of wildfires is a big problem in their part of the state. Across regions, about half or more say it is a big problem (60% San Francisco Bay Area, 56% Inland Empire, 54% Los Angeles, 52% Orange/San Diego, 48% Central Valley).

Asked about the government's readiness to respond to wildfires in their part of the state, one in three Californians have a great deal of confidence (33%), while about half have only some confidence (52%). Fourteen percent have hardly any confidence in the government's readiness. Democrats (37%) are somewhat more likely than independents (28%) and Republicans (25%) to have a great deal of confidence. The share of residents with a great deal of confidence varies somewhat by region (38% Los Angeles, 37% Inland Empire, 36% Orange/San Diego, 31% Central Valley, 20% San Francisco Bay Area).

"A majority of Californians say that the threat of wildfires is a big problem in their part of California, while one in three residents have a great deal of confidence in government's readiness to respond to wildfires where they live," Baldassare said.

## Majorities Approve of How Newsom and Biden Are Handling Environmental Issues

About six in ten Californians (59% adults, 59% likely voters) approve of Governor Newsom's handling of environmental issues. One year ago, the governor's approval on the environment was higher (69%

adults, 67% likely voters). Today, views on the governor's handling of environmental issues are split along partisan lines, with 84 percent of Democrats, 53 percent of independents, and 18 percent of Republicans approving. Across racial/ethnic groups, strong majorities of African Americans (70%), Latinos (68%), and Asian Americans (67%) approve, compared to 47 percent of whites.

President Biden also gets high marks on the environment, with 61 percent of California adults and 61 percent of likely voters expressing approval. As with Newsom, views are divided along partisan lines, with 89 percent of Democrats, 52 percent of independents, and 19 percent of Republicans approving. Majorities of African Americans (73%), Asian Americans (72%), Latinos (66%), and whites (52%) approve.

Californians have more trust in the state government than in the federal government on environmental issues. Nearly half (48% adults, 49% likely voters) say they can trust the state government to handle environmental issues just about always or most of the time. Only a third of adults (33%) and a quarter of likely voters (24%) trust the federal government just about always or most of the time on the environment.

"Six in ten Californians approve of the way that Governor Newsom is handling environmental issues," Baldassare said. "President Biden has similarly positive reviews, while more express trust in the state than the federal government on environmental issues."

## Majorities across Party Lines Favor Prioritizing the Development of Alternative Energy Sources

When it comes to the nation's energy supply, an overwhelming majority of Californians (80%) think that developing alternative energy sources—such as wind, solar, and hydrogen—should be prioritized over expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas. Majority support for prioritizing alternative sources of energy carries across partisan lines, with 93 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of independents, and 56 percent of Republicans in favor. Overwhelming majorities across racial/ethnic groups approve of prioritizing alternative sources of energy (87% Latinos, 83% Asian Americans, 76% whites, 73% African Americans).

"Majorities across partisan groups say that developing alternative energy sources is a more important priority than expanding exploration of oil, coal, and natural gas," Baldassare said.

## Most Oppose New Offshore Drilling and Fracking—and Eight in Ten Favor Coastal Wind Power and Wave Energy

An overwhelming majority of Californians (72%) oppose more oil drilling off the California coast. Partisans are divided, with 87 percent of Democrats and 70 percent of independents opposed and 55 percent of Republicans in support. Opposition is somewhat higher in the state's coastal regions (78% north and central coast, 74% south coast) than in its inland areas (64%).

A solid majority of Californians (63%) are opposed to the expansion of hydraulic fracturing—or "fracking"—for oil and natural gas. Views break along partisan lines: 79 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of independents oppose fracking, while 56 percent of Republicans support it.

In May, Governor Newsom announced an agreement with federal partners to open up west coast waters for offshore wind power development. An overwhelming majority of Californians (81%) are in favor of offshore wind power and wave energy projects, with support crossing partisan lines (88% Democrats, 83% independents, 75% Republicans).

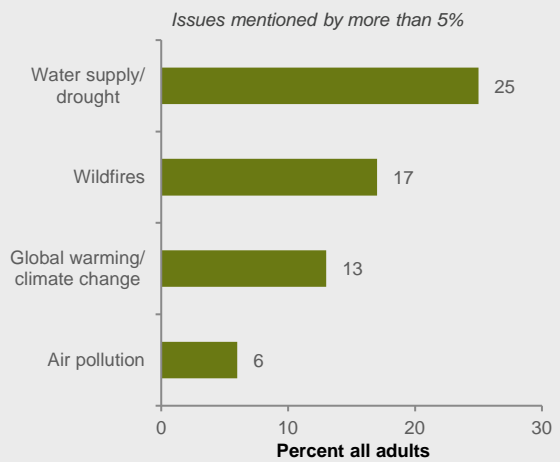
"Californians express strong opposition to more oil drilling off the coast and the expansion of fracking, while there is overwhelming partisan agreement in favor of the development of wind power and wave energy projects off the coast," Baldassare said.

# Perceptions and Attitudes

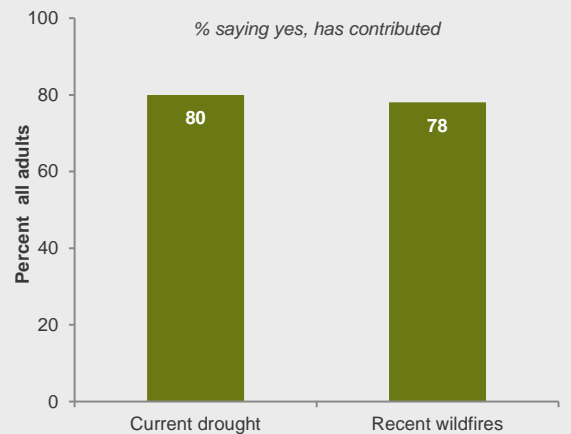
## Key Findings

- About six in ten Californians approve of Governor Newsom’s handling of environmental issues. Fifty-three percent approve of the state legislature’s handling of environmental issues. *(page 7)*
- About six in ten Californians approve of President Biden’s handling of environmental issues. Thirty-five percent approve of the way that the US Congress is handling environmental issues. Fewer trust the federal government than the state government when it comes to handling environmental issues. *(page 8)*
- Californians are most likely to say that the state’s top environmental issue today is water supply and drought. Sixty-three percent say that the supply of water is a big problem in their region. Four in ten say they have done a lot to reduce water use in response to the drought. *(page 9)*
- Fifty-five percent of Californians say the threat of wildfires is a big problem in their part of the state. An overwhelming majority say climate change has contributed to the state’s recent wildfires. Most Californians have at least some confidence in the government’s readiness to respond to the wildfires. *(page 10)*
- About half say that beach pollution and six in ten say that marine debris are big problems along the state’s coast. Sixty-four percent say the conditions of oceans and beaches are very important to California’s future economy and quality of life. *(page 11)*
- Thirty-five percent of Californians say air pollution is a big problem in their part of the state. Fifty-seven percent say air pollution is a more serious threat in lower-income areas. *(page 12)*

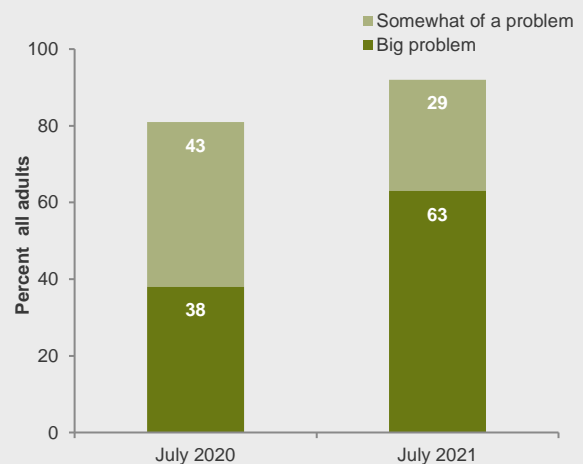
**Most important environmental issue**



**Climate change contribution to drought and wildfires**



**Seriousness of water supply problem**



## Approval of State Elected Officials

Governor Newsom has received consistently positive approval ratings for his overall job performance and handling of specific issues as he faces a recall election. Currently, about six in ten Californians approve of his handling of environmental issues (59% adults, 59% likely voters). The governor’s approval was higher last July (69% adults, 67% likely voters). Today, more than eight in ten Democrats (84%), about half of independents (53%), and 18 percent of Republicans approve. Majorities across age, education, gender, and income groups approve. Majorities of African Americans (70%), Latinos (68%), and Asian Americans (67%), and 47 percent of whites approve. Majorities in Los Angeles (66%), the San Francisco Bay Area (66%), the Inland Empire (56%), and Orange/San Diego (55%)—and 45 percent in the Central Valley—approve of Newsom’s handling of environmental issues.

A majority of Californians (53% adults, 53% likely voters) approve of the way the California Legislature is handling environmental issues. Approval was slightly higher last July (62% adults, 61% likely voters). Today, most Democrats (79%) and 44 percent of independents approve, compared to 16 percent of Republicans. Majorities of residents in Los Angeles (61%), the San Francisco Bay Area (58%), and the Inland Empire (52%) approve, compared to fewer in Orange/San Diego (45%) and the Central Valley (43%). Across racial/ethnic groups, majorities of Latinos (64%), Asian Americans (58%), and African Americans (56%)—and 42 percent of whites—approve of the legislature’s handling environmental issues.

### “Do you approve or disapprove of...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
the way that Governor Newsom is handling environmental issues in California	Approve	59%	84%	18%	53%	59%
	Disapprove	39	14	82	46	40
	Don't know	2	1	–	1	1
the way that the California Legislature is handling environmental issues in California	Approve	53	79	16	44	53
	Disapprove	45	19	83	55	45
	Don't know	2	2	1	2	2

How much do Californians trust the state government when it comes to handling environmental issues? About half of adults (48%) and likely voters (49%) say that they can trust the state government just about always or most of the time. A strong majority of Democrats (67%) and four in ten independents (41%)—compared to 21 percent of Republicans—express this high level of trust in state government when it comes to handling environmental issues. Majorities of Asian Americans (58%), Latinos (54%), and African Americans (52%)—and 39 percent of whites—have this same high level of trust in state government. Majorities of residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (57%) and Los Angeles (53%)—compared to fewer than half in other regions (47% Inland Empire, 46% Orange/San Diego, 35% Central Valley)—say they always or mostly trust the state government to do what is right on environmental issues.

### “How much of the time can you trust the state government to do what is right when it comes to handling environmental issues in California?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Just about always	7%	10%	2%	3%	6%
Most of the time	41	57	19	38	43
Only some of the time	51	32	78	59	50
Don't know	1	1	–	–	–

## Approval of Federal Elected Officials

President Joe Biden receives high marks for his handling of environmental issues in his first year in office. Californians give the president significantly higher approval ratings (61% adults, 61% likely voters) for handling environmental issues than they did a year ago, when President Trump was in office (24% adults, 29% likely voters). Today, 89 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of independents, compared to 19 percent of Republicans, approve of how the president is handling environmental issues. Majorities across regions as well as across age, education, gender, and income groups approve of the way that President Biden is handling environmental issues. Strong majorities of African Americans (73%), Asian Americans (72%), and Latinos (66%)—and 52 percent of whites—approve of his handling of environmental issues.

Approval ratings are much lower when Californians are asked about the way that the US Congress is handling environmental issues (35% adults, 28% likely voters). Approval ratings were somewhat lower last July (20% adults, 20% likely voters). Today, 45 percent of Democrats, 26 percent of independents, and 12 percent of Republicans say they approve of how Congress is handling environmental issues. Four in ten or fewer across regions approve (40% Los Angeles, 38% San Francisco Bay Area, 33% Inland Empire, 32% Central Valley, 30% Orange/San Diego). Across racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans (46%), Latinos (46%), and African Americans (36%) are much more likely than whites (23%) to approve.

### Do you approve or disapprove of...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
the way that President Biden is handling environmental issues in the United States	Approve	61%	89%	19%	52%	61%
	Disapprove	35	9	78	43	37
	Don't know	4	2	3	5	2
the way that the US Congress is handling environmental issues in the United States	Approve	35	45	12	26	28
	Disapprove	62	53	84	72	70
	Don't know	3	2	4	2	1

Californians’ trust in the federal government to handle environmental issues is much lower than their trust in the state government. Thirty-three percent of adults and 24 percent of likely voters say that they can trust the federal government just about always or most of the time (state government: 48% adults, 49% likely voters). Twenty-nine percent of Democrats—compared to 25 percent of Republicans and 22 percent of independents—express this high level of trust in the federal government to do what is right on environmental issues. Fewer than four in ten across regions have this high level of trust in the federal government (37% Inland Empire, 34% Orange/San Diego, 32% San Francisco Bay Area, 31% Central Valley, 31% Los Angeles). This high level of trust in the federal government varies significantly across racial/ethnic groups (51% Latinos, 37% Asian Americans, 29% African Americans, 18% whites).

### “How much of the time can you trust the federal government to do what is right when it comes to handling environmental issues in the United States?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Just about always	4%	4%	1%	3%	2%
Most of the time	29	25	24	19	22
Only some of the time	65	70	74	76	75
Never ( <i>volunteered</i> )	1	–	1	2	1
Don't know	2	1	1	1	1



## Water and Drought

When asked to name the most important environmental issue facing California today, adults (25%) and likely voters (26%) are most likely to mention water supply and drought, followed by wildfires (17% adults, 18% likely voters), global warming and climate change (13% adults, 16% likely voters), and air pollution and vehicle emissions (6% adults, 5% likely voters). A year ago, water supply and drought had fewer mentions as the most important environmental issue (10% adults, 11% likely voters). Today, the share naming water supply and drought as the top environmental issue varies across regions (30% San Francisco Bay Area, 29% Central Valley, 24% Los Angeles, 18% Inland Empire, 18% Orange/San Diego).

Eighty percent of Californians say that climate change has contributed to the current drought in the state. Majorities hold this view across partisan and demographic groups and regions.

As California once again faces a serious drought after another relatively dry winter, 63 percent of adults and 69 percent of likely voters say that the supply of water is a big problem in their part of California, while fewer than one in ten say it is not much of a problem. The share of adults saying that water supply is a big problem has increased by 25 points since last July (38% to 63%) and is now close to the record high in September 2015 (70%). Majorities across age, education, gender, income, partisan, and racial/ethnic groups and regions say that water supply is a big problem in their part of California.

**“Next, would you say that the supply of water is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem in your part of California?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Big problem	63%	67%	59%	60%	57%	70%	69%
Somewhat of a problem	29	25	33	31	35	25	25
Not much of a problem	8	9	8	9	8	5	6

State and local officials have called upon residents to reduce their water use this summer. When asked about the steps that they have taken to reduce water use recently in response to the current drought, 41 percent of adults say that they have done a lot, while 39 percent say that they have done a little, and 20 percent say that they have not taken steps to reduce use. Across regions, about four in ten residents say that they have been doing a lot to reduce water use recently. The share saying that they are doing a lot to reduce water use is similar across partisan groups (42% Democrats, 40% Republicans, 40% independents), increases with age (29% 18 to 34, 41% 35 to 54, 52% 55 and older), and declines with higher income and education. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (46%), African Americans (45%), and Asian Americans (44%) are somewhat more likely than whites (36%) to say they have been doing a lot to reduce water use. When asked if they think that the people in their part of California are doing enough to respond to the drought, 65 percent say they are not doing enough, and 30 percent say they are doing the right amount.

**“Would you say that you and your family have taken steps to reduce water use recently in response to the current drought? If yes, ask: Have you done a lot or a little to reduce water use?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Yes, done a lot	41%	40%	40%	43%	38%	41%	41%
Yes, done a little	39	41	32	37	31	49	41
No, have not taken steps	20	19	28	20	31	10	18

## Wildfires

Fifty-five percent of Californians say the threat of wildfires is a big problem in their part of the state. Majorities among partisan groups agree that the threat of wildfires is a big problem (60% Democrats, 53% independents, 52% Republicans). Women (60%) are more likely than men (50%) to say the threat of wildfires is a big problem. About half or more across racial/ethnic groups say this is a big problem (58% whites, 55% Asian Americans, 53% African Americans, 51% Latinos), as do about half or more across regions (60% San Francisco Bay Area, 56% Inland Empire, 54% Los Angeles, 52% Orange/San Diego, 48% Central Valley). Majorities across age groups say the threat of wildfires in their part of California is a big problem.

**“Next, how much of a problem is the threat of wildfires in your part of California? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Big problem	55%	48%	56%	54%	52%	60%	57%
Somewhat of a problem	30	31	32	29	32	28	28
Not much of a problem	15	21	11	17	15	12	15

Seven in ten Californians say the threat of wildfires in their part of the state is a very (34%) or somewhat serious (36%) threat to their personal and economic well-being. Similar shares of Democrats (36%) and Republicans (34%) say this is a very serious threat, compared to somewhat fewer independents (25%). One in four or more across demographic groups and across regions hold this view.

Relatedly, an overwhelming majority of Californians (78%) think climate change has contributed to California’s recent wildfires, while 22 percent say it has not contributed. Most Democrats (94%) and independents (73%) say climate change is a contributor, compared to 44 percent of Republicans. Overwhelming majorities across demographic groups and across regions share this view.

In terms of readiness to respond to wildfires in their part of the state, one in three Californians have a great deal (33%) and about half have only some (52%) confidence in the government. Democrats (37%) are somewhat more likely than independents (28%) and Republicans (25%) to have a great deal of confidence. Regionally, similar shares in Los Angeles (38%), the Inland Empire (37%), Orange/San Diego (36%), and the Central Valley (31%) express a great deal of confidence, compared to fewer in the San Francisco Bay Area (20%).

**“How much confidence do you have in the government in terms of its readiness to respond to wildfires in your part of California?”**

		A great deal	Only some	Hardly any
All adults		33%	52%	14%
Likely voters		31	52	17
Party	Democrats	37	53	9
	Republicans	25	51	24
	Independents	28	57	15
Region	Central Valley	31	51	17
	Inland Empire	37	51	11
	Los Angeles	38	47	14
	Orange/San Diego	36	48	16
	San Francisco Bay Area	20	67	13

## Ocean, Coast, and Marine Life

Almost half (48%) of adults say that ocean and beach pollution along the coast is a big problem today. A majority of Democrats (58%) say coastal pollution is a big problem, compared to fewer independents (45%) and Republicans (35%). Residents in Los Angeles (61%) are most likely to say ocean and beach pollution is a big problem, compared to fewer in other regions (51% Inland Empire, 48% San Francisco Bay Area, 39% Central Valley, 35% Orange/San Diego).

**“Do you think that ocean and beach pollution along the California coast is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in California today?”**

	All adults	Region			Race/Ethnicity			
		North and central coast	South coast	Inland	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Big problem	48%	49%	51%	45%	58%	44%	55%	44%
Somewhat of a problem	43	41	43	45	36	48	38	46
Not a problem	8	8	6	9	7	7	6	9
Don't know	1	2	–	1	–	1	–	1

*\* Here and in the rest of the report, “North and central coast” refers to the coastal counties northward from San Luis Obispo County to Del Norte County, including all of the San Francisco Bay Area counties. “South coast” includes coastal counties southward from Santa Barbara County.*

Sixty-one percent say plastics and marine debris are a big problem along the part of the state’s coast that is closest to them. Seven in ten Democrats say this, compared to 58 percent of independents and 47 percent of Republicans. Majorities across regions hold the view that plastics and marine debris are a big problem in the state, ranging from 72 percent in Los Angeles to 51 percent in the Central Valley.

By contrast, about two in ten Californians (18%) say limited access to the coast and beaches is a big problem for the part of the California coast that is closest to them. About two in ten or fewer across partisan groups say this is a big problem (22% independents, 18% Democrats, 16% Republicans). About two in ten in Los Angeles (22%), the Central Valley (20%), and the Inland Empire (19%) say access is a big problem, compared to fewer in Orange/San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area (13% each).

An overwhelming majority of Californians say the condition of oceans and beaches is very (64%) or somewhat important (31%) to the economy and quality of life for California’s future (4% not too important, 2% not at all important). Majorities say this across demographic groups and across regions.

**“Next, how important is the condition of oceans and beaches to the economy and quality of life for California’s future?”**

	All adults	Region			Race/Ethnicity			
		North and central coast	South coast	Inland	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very important	64%	62%	69%	58%	55%	60%	70%	61%
Somewhat important	31	33	27	35	32	33	27	33
Not too important	4	3	3	5	8	5	3	4
Not at all important	2	2	1	2	5	2	–	3

About three in four Californians are very (37%) or somewhat concerned (36%) about rising sea levels having an impact on flooding and beach erosion. Democrats (48%) are far more likely than independents (28%) and Republicans (19%) to say they are very concerned about rising sea levels. An overwhelming majority of Californians are very (49%) or somewhat (34%) concerned about ocean warming having an impact on marine and coastal life. Democrats (65%) are much more likely than independents (48%) and Republicans (22%) to be very concerned.

## Air Pollution

Thirty-five percent of Californians say air pollution is a big problem in their part of the state, while 46 percent say it is somewhat of a problem, and 19 percent say it is not much of a problem. Four in ten Democrats say air pollution is a big problem, compared to fewer Republicans and independents (27% each). Views vary across regions, with residents of Los Angeles (52%) most likely to say air pollution is a big problem, and residents of the San Francisco Bay Area (21%) least likely to say this. Among racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (46%) and Latinos (43%) are most likely to say air pollution is a big problem, compared to fewer Asian Americans (35%) and whites (27%). The share saying air pollution is a big problem decreases as educational attainment and income increases.

**“Next, would you say that air pollution is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem in your part of California?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	
Big problem	35%	34%	44%	52%	23%	21%	31%
Somewhat of a problem	46	45	42	38	52	57	46
Not much of a problem	19	21	13	9	25	22	23

A majority of adults (57%) think that air pollution is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas in their part of California. Most Democrats (67%) and independents (56%) say this, compared to 32 percent of Republicans. Among racial/ethnic groups, majorities of Latinos (72%), African Americans (71%), and Asian Americans (62%) say air pollution is a serious health threat in lower-income areas, compared to fewer than half of whites (43%). Majorities across gender, education, and income groups say this. Seven in ten adults ages 18 to 34 (70%) and 60 percent of adults 35 to 54 say this is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas, compared to fewer adults ages 55 and older (43%).

**“Do you think that air pollution is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas than other areas in your part of California, or not?”**

	All adults	Income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Yes	57%	64%	56%	54%	71%	62%	72%	43%
No	41	33	43	46	29	38	26	56
Don't know	1	3	1	–	1	–	1	1

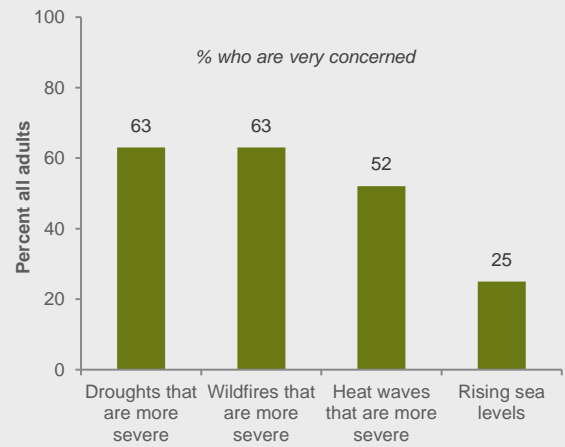
When asked how serious of a health threat air pollution is to them and their families, a strong majority of Californians say air pollution is a very (18%) or somewhat serious threat (47%). Democrats (22%) are more likely than independents (12%), and much more likely than Republicans (8%), to say air pollution is a very serious threat to them and their families. Latinos (27%) and African Americans (21%) are more likely to hold this view than are Asian Americans (14%) and whites (13%). The view that air pollution is a very serious threat decreases as income (29% under \$40,000, 16% \$40,000 to under \$80,000, 11% \$80,000 or more) and education (27% high school only, 15% some college, 10% college graduate) levels increase. The share holding this view varies across regions, ranging from three in ten in Los Angeles (30%), to 8 percent in Orange/San Diego (23% Inland Empire, 16% Central Valley, 9% San Francisco Bay Area).

# Policy Preferences

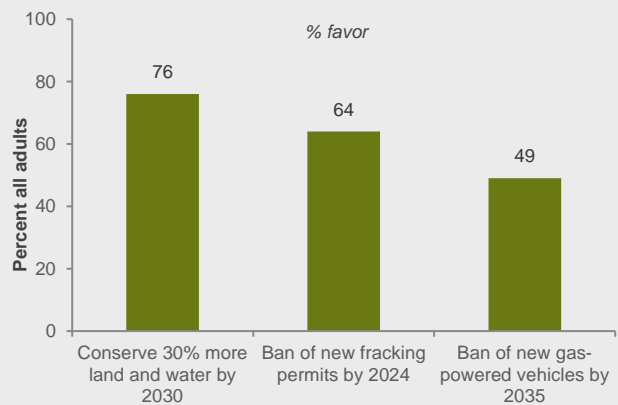
## Key Findings

- About two in three adults say the effects of climate change have already begun, and half say it is a very serious threat to California’s future. Climate change is a top concern for one in four adults. *(page 14)*
- Sixty-three percent of Californians are very concerned about more-severe droughts and wildfires as a result of climate change. About half say the same about heat waves, while one in four are very concerned about increased sea-level rise. *(page 15)*
- About half say the federal government is not doing enough to address climate change, and most support rejoining the Paris Agreement. Eight in ten think developing alternative energy sources is more important than expanding exploration for fossil fuels. *(page 16)*
- Two in three favor California making its own policies to address climate change. Solid majorities favor the governor’s plan to ban the issuance of new fracking permits as well as the goal to conserve 30% more state land and water by 2030. But Californians are divided on the executive order banning the sale of new gas-powered vehicles by 2035. *(page 17)*
- Forty-one percent of Californians expect state action to reduce climate change to lead to more jobs (25% fewer jobs). Fifty-seven percent of adults expect that state action would lead to higher gasoline prices (21% lower prices). *(page 18)*
- Seventy-two percent of adults oppose more oil drilling off the coast, and 63 percent oppose the expansion of fracking. Strong majorities favor the development of wind power, wave energy projects, and building desalination plants on California’s coast. *(page 19)*

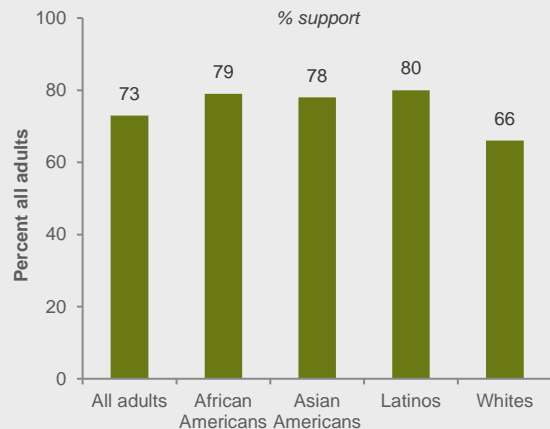
**Concern about possible effects of climate change**



**Support for California's climate change policies**



**Support for rejoining the Paris Agreement**



## General Perceptions of Climate Change

A strong majority of Californians believe the effects of climate change have already begun. One in four residents believe these effects will ultimately occur (5% within a few years, 9% within their lifetime, 9% will affect future generations), while fewer than one in ten say the effects will never happen. Findings were nearly identical last July, and majorities have said the effects have already begun since 2005. There is a split along party lines: 82 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of independents say the effects are under way, compared to 44 percent of Republicans. One in five Republicans say climate change effects will never occur. Solid majorities across regions and demographic groups say the effects have already begun. In a March Gallup national survey, 59 percent of American adults said the effects of climate change are already happening.

### “Which of the following statements reflects your view of when the effects of climate change will begin to happen?”

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely voters
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Already begun	68%	60%	66%	69%	67%	70%
Within a few years	5	4	2	9	3	3
Within your lifetime	9	14	9	8	9	9
Not within your lifetime, but will affect future generations	9	10	16	8	8	8
Will never happen	8	9	7	5	11	10
Don't know	1	2	–	–	1	1

Most Californians say climate change is a very serious (50%) or somewhat serious (33%) threat to the economy and quality of life for California’s future. Findings were similar last July. Today, Democrats (96%) and independents (82%) are much more likely than Republicans (54%) to say the threat is serious, and Democrats (68%) are by far the most likely to say it is very serious. More than three in four across regions and demographic groups say the threat of climate change is at least somewhat serious.

A majority of Californians (56%) say addressing global climate change is one of several concerns that are important to them personally, while one in four say it is a top concern (25%) and about one in five say it is not an important concern (19%). Democrats (57%) and independents (55%) are somewhat more likely than Republicans (46%) to say climate change is one of several important concerns. Notably, Democrats (38%) are by far most likely to call climate change a top concern, while Republicans (47%) are by far the most likely to say it is not an important concern. About half or more across regions and demographic groups say that global climate change is one of several important concerns. Younger Californians (35%) are more likely than older Californians (22% 35 to 54, 21% 55 and older) to say it is a top concern. In April, adults nationwide were more divided (31% top concern, 39% one of several important concerns, 30% not an important concern), according to the Pew Research Center.

### “Compared to other issues, would you say addressing global climate change is a top concern to me personally, one of several important concerns to me, or not an important concern to me?”

	All adults	Age			Race/Ethnicity			
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 and older	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
A top concern	25%	35%	22%	21%	27%	22%	29%	24%
One of several important concerns	56	53	60	54	55	62	64	48
Not an important concern	19	12	18	25	18	16	7	27

## Perceived Impact of Climate Change

Californians are concerned about the potential effects of climate change on the state’s future. Most are very or somewhat concerned about wildfires that are more severe (90%), droughts that are more severe (89%), heat waves that are more severe (83%), and increased sea-level rise (65%).

**“Now I am going to list a few of the possible impacts of climate change in the future in California, and I would like you to tell me whether you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about each one. How about ...?”**

<i>All adults</i>	Droughts that are more severe	Wildfires that are more severe	Heat waves that are more severe	Increased rising sea levels
Very concerned	63%	63%	52%	25%
Somewhat concerned	26	27	31	40
Not too concerned	7	7	11	24
Not at all concerned	3	3	5	10

A solid majority of Californians (63%) are very concerned about droughts that are more severe. Democrats and independents are far more likely than Republicans to be very concerned. Residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (68%) and Los Angeles (66%) are the most likely to be very concerned, followed by those in the Central Valley (63%), the Inland Empire (58%), and Orange/San Diego (56%). Majorities across demographic groups are very concerned.

A solid majority of Californians (63%) are also very concerned about wildfires that are more severe. Democrats are much more likely than independents and Republicans to be very concerned. Across regions, San Francisco Bay Area (71%) residents are most likely to be very concerned. While solid majorities across demographic groups are very concerned, women (69%) are more likely than men (58%) to say this.

About half of Californians (52%) are very concerned about heat waves that are more severe. A strong majority of Democrats hold this view, compared to fewer than half of independents and Republicans. Residents in Los Angeles (59%) are the most likely—and those in Orange/San Diego (45%) the least likely—to be very concerned. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos are the most likely to be very concerned, followed by African Americans, Asian Americans, and whites. The share who are very concerned decreases with rising age and income.

About one in four Californians are very concerned about increased sea-level rise (25%). Democrats are more than twice as likely as independents and Republicans to hold this view. Coastal residents (28%) are somewhat more likely than inland residents (20%) to be very concerned. One in three or fewer across demographic groups are very concerned, and the share who are very concerned decreases with rising income.

<i>Percent saying “very concerned”</i>		Droughts that are more severe	Wildfires that are more severe	Heat waves that are more severe	Increased rising sea levels
<i>All adults</i>		63%	63%	52%	25%
Likely voters		65	66	52	26
Party	Democrats	75	77	68	37
	Republicans	43	49	29	10
	Independents	63	60	45	17
Race/Ethnicity	African Americans	65	63	56	33
	Asian Americans	61	63	51	29
	Latinos	67	60	58	28
	Whites	61	65	48	21

## Federal Policies

The Biden administration has taken a decidedly different approach than the Trump administration when it comes to environmental policy. Most Californians (73%) support the new administration’s decision to rejoin the Paris Agreement—an international agreement that tries to address climate change. This includes solid majorities across regions and demographic groups; however, partisans are divided, with Democrats (95%) and independents (68%) far more likely than Republicans (35%) to be in favor.

Half of Californians (52%) think the federal government is not doing enough to address climate change (15% more than enough, 31% just enough). Most Democrats (70%) and half of independents (53%) hold this view, compared to one in three Republicans (32%). Notably, two in three Republicans say the government is doing more than enough (31%) or just enough (35%). More than four in ten across regions and demographic groups say not enough is being done.

When it comes to addressing America’s energy supply, an overwhelming majority of Californians (80%)—including majorities across parties—think that developing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen technology should be the more important priority; far fewer say expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas should be prioritized (18%). Overwhelming majorities across regions and demographic groups think that developing alternative energy sources should be the more important priority.

**“Right now, which one of the following do you think should be the more important priority for addressing America’s energy supply: developing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen technology or expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas?”**

	All adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Developing alternative energy sources	80%	93%	56%	78%	73%	83%	87%	76%
Expanding exploration and production	18	7	40	22	24	17	11	23
Don’t know	1	–	3	1	3	–	2	1

When asked about the economic impact of the Biden administration’s plan to rebuild the country’s infrastructure in ways that are aimed at reducing the effects of global climate change, a solid majority of Californians (61%) say it will help the US economy. About one in five Californians say it will hurt the economy, and an equal share say it will make no difference. An overwhelming share of Democrats say the proposal will help the economy, compared to far fewer independents and Republicans. Residents in Los Angeles (66%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (66%) are more likely than those elsewhere to hold this view. Whites are somewhat less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to say it will help the economy. Californians age 18 to 34, college graduates, and those in households making more than \$80,000 annually are more likely to hold this view than are older, less-educated, and lower-income Californians.

**“As you may know, the Biden administration has proposed a plan to rebuild the country’s infrastructure in ways that are aimed at reducing the effects of global climate change. Overall, do you think the policies in this proposal will help the US economy, hurt the US economy, or will it make no difference?”**

	All adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Help the economy	61%	84%	27%	58%	71%	69%	65%	54%
Hurt the economy	18	6	44	24	16	17	13	23
Make no difference	18	9	28	16	12	13	19	21
Don’t know	2	1	1	2	2	1	3	3



## California Policies

Seven in ten Californians think it is very (43%) or somewhat (28%) important that California remain a world leader on climate change policy. While state priorities are more closely aligned with those of the Biden administration than with those of the previous administration, California continues to set its own climate change goals and standards. Two in three adults (67%) and likely voters (67%) favor state action.

Overwhelming majorities favor AB 32, which requires California to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 (74% adults, 73% likely voters). Strong majorities also support SB 100, which requires 100 percent of the state’s electricity to come from renewable sources by 2045 (70% adults, 69% likely voters).

### “Do you favor or oppose...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
The state law that requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030	Favor	74%	94%	40%	71%	73%
	Oppose	23	5	56	28	26
	Don't know	3	1	4	1	1
The state law that requires 100 percent of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy sources by the year 2045	Favor	70	89	36	66	69
	Oppose	28	10	62	33	31
	Don't know	1	1	2	1	–

Governor Newsom has signed a number of executive orders and introduced several plans aimed at combatting climate change. An overwhelming majority of Californians—including majorities across parties—favor Newsom’s “30 by 30” executive order (76% adults, 76% likely voters), which sets a goal of conserving 30% of California’s land, inland water, and ocean areas by 2030. Strong majorities across regions and demographic groups favor this goal.

Solid majorities of adults and likely voters (64% each) favor the plan to ban the issuance of new fracking permits starting in 2024. There is a partisan divide: most Democrats and independents are in favor, while most Republicans are opposed. Majorities across regions and demographic groups favor this plan.

Californians are divided on the executive order banning the sale of new gas-powered vehicles by 2035 (adults: 49% favor, 49% oppose, likely voters: 48% favor, 51% oppose). Most Democrats are in favor while most Republicans and independents are opposed. Support varies across regions and demographic groups.

### “Do you favor or oppose Governor Newsom’s...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
Executive order that sets a goal of conserving 30% of California's land/inland waters and ocean areas by 2030	Favor	76%	93%	51%	71%	76%
	Oppose	20	5	47	26	22
	Don't know	4	2	3	3	2
Plan that would ban the issuance of new hydraulic fracturing—or “fracking”—permits in California starting in 2024	Favor	64	81	29	62	64
	Oppose	33	16	70	36	34
	Don't know	4	2	1	2	1
Executive order banning the sale of all new gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035	Favor	49	69	14	42	48
	Oppose	49	31	85	56	51
	Don't know	2	1	1	2	1

## Perceived Impact of California Policies

When asked about the economic effects of California’s climate change policies, a plurality of adults (41%) and likely voters (42%) say they would lead to more jobs for people around the state. About three in ten adults (31%) and likely voters (29%) say there would be no effect on the number of jobs. About one in four (25% adults, 27% likely voters) say policies would result in fewer jobs. Similar shares held these views last July. A majority of Democrats (59%)—and far fewer independents (37%) and Republicans (15%)—say state climate action would produce more jobs. Pluralities in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Inland Empire, and Los Angeles hold this view, while residents in the Central Valley and Orange/San Diego are divided. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans are most likely (53%) to say there would be more jobs, followed by Asian Americans (48%), Latinos (44%), and whites (34%). A plurality of adults across gender, education, and income groups hold this view. The shares holding this view decline as age rises.

How do Californians think the state’s climate change policies will affect gasoline prices at the pump? A majority of adults (57%) and likely voters (65%) think these policies would cause prices to increase. The remaining residents are divided over whether it would cause prices to decrease (21% adults, 17% likely voters) or have no effect on prices (19% adults, 17% likely voters). Last July, views were similar among adults, while likely voters were somewhat less likely to say prices would increase (57%, 23% decrease, 19% wouldn’t affect prices). Majorities across regions say prices would increase, as do half or more across partisan groups. Asian Americans (65%) and whites (64%) are much more likely than African Americans (45%) and Latinos (45%) think prices would increase. The share holding this view increases as age, education, and income levels rise.

**“Next, do you think that California doing things to reduce climate change in the future would cause...?”**

		Region						
		All adults	Central Valley	Inland Empire	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	San Francisco Bay Area	Likely voters
Jobs for people around the state	More jobs	41%	34%	42%	42%	31%	48%	42%
	Fewer jobs	25	32	29	20	34	17	27
	Wouldn't affect the number of jobs	31	28	29	36	32	31	29
	Don't know	3	7	–	1	2	3	2
Gasoline prices at the pump around the state	Increase	57	60	51	53	64	59	65
	Decrease	21	17	29	24	19	18	17
	Wouldn't affect prices	19	19	21	21	16	20	17
	Don't know	2	4	–	1	2	3	1

Majorities (55% adults, 52% likely voters) say they are not willing to pay more for electricity if it were generated by renewable sources (willing: 45% adults, 47% likely voters). Similar shares held this view in 2020. While a solid majority of Democrats (62%) are willing to pay more, 78 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of independents are not willing. About half or more across regions, as well as racial/ethnic and income groups, say they are not willing to pay more for renewably sourced electricity.

**“In order to help reduce climate change, would you be willing or not willing to pay more for electricity if it were generated by renewable sources like solar or wind energy?”**

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely voters
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Willing	45%	39%	49%	45%	43%	47%
Not willing	55	60	50	55	56	52
Don't know	1	1	1	–	1	1

## Energy and Coastal Policies

When asked about allowing more oil drilling off the California coast, 27 percent of adults are in favor, while 72 percent are opposed. Views were nearly identical last July (26% favor, 73% oppose). Partisans are divided on the issue: overwhelming majorities of Democrats (87%) and independents (70%) are opposed, while 55 percent of Republicans support more drilling. Solid majorities across regions are opposed, but opposition is stronger in coastal regions (75%) than in inland regions (64%). Strong majorities across age, gender, racial/ethnic, education, and income groups oppose more drilling.

**“How about allowing more oil drilling off the California coast? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?”**

	All adults	Region			Age		
		North and central coast	South coast	Inland	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 and older
Favor	27%	20%	26%	33%	21%	24%	34%
Oppose	72	78	74	64	79	73	65
Don't know	2	2	1	3	–	3	2

When asked about the expansion of hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” for oil and natural gas, 33 percent of Californians are in favor and 63 percent are opposed. Most Democrats (79%) and independents (67%) are opposed and 56 percent of Republicans are in favor. Regionally, opposition is highest in the San Francisco Bay Area (71%, 67% Inland Empire, 66% Los Angeles, 61% Orange/San Diego, 51% Central Valley); majorities in both coastal (66%) and inland (57%) regions are opposed. Solid majorities across age, gender, and racial/ethnic groups oppose more fracking; the shares holding this view increase as educational attainment rises (54% high school only, 66% some college education, 72% college graduate).

In May, Governor Newsom announced an historic agreement with federal partners to open west coast waters for offshore wind development. When asked about wind power and wave energy projects off the coast, an overwhelming majority of adults (81%) are in favor, while 15 percent are opposed. Views were similar last year (77% favor, 20% oppose). There is overwhelming partisan agreement on the issue (favor: 88% Democrats, 83% independents, 75% Republicans). Three in four or more across regions—as well as across age, gender, racial/ethnic, education, and income groups—favor this proposal.

**“How about allowing wind power and wave energy projects off the California coast? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?”**

	All adults	Region			Age		
		North and central coast	South coast	Inland	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 and older
Favor	81%	79%	84%	79%	88%	78%	80%
Oppose	15	16	14	17	12	17	16
Don't know	3	4	2	4	–	5	4

Californians are also in favor of building desalination plants on the coast (68% favor, 27% oppose). Views were nearly identical last July (66% favor, 28% oppose). Once again, overwhelming majorities across partisan groups are in favor (72% Democrats, 71% independents, 70% Republicans). Across regions, support is highest in Orange/San Diego (73%) and lowest in the Inland Empire (62%), and majorities of residents in both coastal (70%) and inland (63%) areas are in favor. Majorities across age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups are in favor, but support is higher among men (78%), Asian Americans and whites (72% each), adults age 55 and older (75%), college graduates (78%), and those with incomes of \$80,000 or more (76%).

# Regional Map



# Methodology

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California. Co-authors of this report include survey analysts Rachel Lawler and Deja Thomas, who were co-project managers for this survey, and associate survey director and research fellow Dean Bonner. The *Californians and the Environment* survey is supported with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation. The PPIC Statewide Survey invites input, comments, and suggestions from policy and public opinion experts and from its own advisory committee, but survey methods, questions, and content are determined solely by PPIC's survey team.

Findings in this report are based on a survey of 1,569 California adult residents. The median time to complete the survey was 21 minutes. Interviews were conducted from July 6–14, 2021.

The survey was conducted in English and Spanish by Ipsos, an international market and opinion research organization, using its online research panel KnowledgePanel. KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability-based sampling and include both those with internet access and those without. KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel. KnowledgePanel members are primarily recruited using address-based sampling (ABS) methodology, which improves population coverage, particularly for hard-to-reach populations such as young adults and minority groups. ABS-recruited Latinos are supplemented with a dual-frame random digit dialing (RDD) sampling methodology that targets telephone exchanges associated with areas with a higher concentration of Latinos to provide the capability to conduct representative online surveys with Latinos, including those who speak only Spanish. KnowledgePanel's recruitment was originally based on a national RDD frame and switched to the primarily ABS-based methodology in 2009. KnowledgePanel includes households with landlines and cell phones, including those with cellphones only and those without phones. ABS allows probability-based sampling of addresses from the US Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File (DSF). The DSF-based sampling frame used for address selection is enhanced with a series of refinements—such as the appendage of various ancillary data to each address from commercial and government data sources—to facilitate complex stratification plans. Taking advantage of such refinements, quarterly samples are selected using a stratified sampling methodology that aims to retain the representativeness of the panel. KnowledgePanel recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition.

To qualify for the survey, a panel member must be age 18 or older and reside in California. A total of 1,623 respondents completed the survey out of 2,964 panelists who were sampled, for a response rate of 55 percent. To ensure the highest data quality, we flagged respondents who sped through the survey, which we defined as completing the survey in one fourth of the overall median time (less than 5.2 minutes). We also flagged respondents if their self-reported age or gender did not match the data stored in their profile. A total of 54 cases were removed after this review process, resulting in 1,569 total qualified and valid cases.

Accent on Languages, Inc., translated new survey questions into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever.

Ipsos uses the US Census Bureau's 2015–2019 American Community Survey's (ACS) Public Use Microdata Series for California (with regional coding information from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series for California) to compare certain demographic characteristics of the survey sample—region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education—with the characteristics of California's adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the ACS figures. We also used voter registration data from the California Secretary of State to compare the party registration of registered voters in our sample to party registration statewide. The sample of Californians is first weighted using an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for any differences in the probability of

selecting various segments of the KnowledgePanel sample. This base weight is further adjusted using an iterative proportional fitting (raking) procedure that aligns sample demographics to population benchmarks from the 2015–2019 ACS data as well as party registration benchmarks from the California Secretary of State’s voter registration file.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is  $\pm 3.4$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted sample of 1,569 adults. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 3.4 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for unweighted subgroups is larger: for the 1,369 registered voters, the sampling error is  $\pm 3.5$  percent; for the 1,117 likely voters, it is  $\pm 3.9$  percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

We present results for five geographic regions, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, “Inland Empire” refers to Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and “Orange/San Diego” refers to Orange and San Diego Counties. Residents of other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these less populous areas are not large enough to report separately. Additionally, in several places, we refer to coastal and inland counties. Within coastal counties, the “north and central coast” region refers to the counties along the California coast from San Luis Obispo County northward to Del Norte County, including all of the San Francisco Bay Area counties. The “south coast” region includes Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties. All other counties are included in the “inland” region.

We present results for non-Hispanic whites, who account for 42 percent of the state’s adult population, and also for Latinos, who account for about a third of the state’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest-growing voter groups. We also present results for non-Hispanic Asian Americans, who make up about 15 percent of the state’s adult population, and non-Hispanic African Americans, who comprise about 6 percent. Results for other racial/ethnic groups—such as Native Americans—are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes are not large enough for separate analysis. Results for African American and Asian American likely voters are combined with those of other racial/ethnic groups because sample sizes for African American and Asian American likely voters are too small for separate analysis. We compare the opinions of those who report they are registered Democrats, registered Republicans, and decline-to-state or independent voters; the results for those who say they are registered to vote in other parties are not large enough for separate analysis. We also analyze the responses of likely voters—so designated per their responses to survey questions about voter registration, previous election participation, intentions to vote this year, attention to election news, and current interest in politics.

The percentages presented in the report tables and in the questionnaire may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to those in national surveys by Gallup and the Pew Research Center. Additional details about our methodology can be found at [www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/SurveyMethodology.pdf) and are available upon request through [surveys@ppic.org](mailto:surveys@ppic.org).

# Questionnaire and Results

## CALIFORNIANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

July 6–14, 2021

1,569 California Adult Residents:  
English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR  $\pm 3.4\%$  AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE  
PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

1. **Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Newsom is handling environmental issues in California?**
  - 59% approve
  - 39 disapprove
  - 2 don't know
2. **Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Newsom is handling the issue of jobs and the economy?**
  - 57% approve
  - 41 disapprove
  - 2 don't know
3. **Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling environmental issues in California?**
  - 53% approve
  - 45 disapprove
  - 2 don't know
4. **How much of the time can you trust the state government to do what is right when it comes to handling environmental issues in California—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?**
  - 7% just about always
  - 41 most of the time
  - 51 only some of the time
  - 1 don't know
5. **Turning to economic conditions in California, do you think that during the next 12 months we will have good times financially or bad times?**
  - 54% good times
  - 44 bad times
  - 1 don't know
6. **Which of these statements comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right: [rotate] [1] Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy [or] [2] Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost?**
  - 37% stricter environmental laws and regulations in California cost too many jobs and hurt the economy
  - 62 stricter environmental laws and regulations in California are worth the cost
  - 2 don't know
7. **With which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree—[rotate] [1] protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth [or] [2] economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent?**
  - 66% protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth
  - 32 economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent
  - 1 don't know

**8. Next, what do you think is the most important environmental issue facing California today?**

*[open-ended, code]*

- 25% water supply, drought, reservoirs
- 17 loss of forests, forest fires, wildfires
- 13 global warming, climate change, greenhouse gases
- 6 air pollution, vehicle emissions, smog
- 5 pollution in general
- 4 landfills, garbage, sewage, waste, recycling
- 4 water pollution of ocean, rivers, lakes, streams, beach pollution
- 3 government regulation—too much, overregulation, politicians, environmentalists
- 2 energy, fossil fuels, solar, nuclear, wind, alternative
- 2 traffic congestion, transportation, transit
- 15 other (*specify*)
- 2 don't know

**9. Which level of government do you trust the most when it comes to handling environmental issues in California *[rotate]* [1] the federal government; [2] the state government; [or] [3] local government?**

- 18% federal government
- 43 state government
- 34 local government
- 3 none (*volunteered*)
- 2 don't know

**10. Next, would you say that the supply of water is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem in your part of California?**

- 63% big problem
- 29 somewhat of a problem
- 8 not much of a problem
- don't know

*[rotate questions 11 and 12]*

**11. Overall, do you think that the state and local governments are doing too much, the right amount, or not enough to respond to the current drought in California?**

- 4% too much
- 29 the right amount
- 65 not enough
- 1 don't know

**12. Overall, do you think that the people in your part of California are doing too much, the right amount, or not enough to respond to the current drought in California?**

- 4% too much
- 30 the right amount
- 65 not enough
- 1 don't know

**13. Do you think climate change has contributed to California's current drought or not?**

- 80% yes, has contributed
- 19 no, has not contributed
- 1 don't know

**14. Would you say that you and your family have taken steps to reduce water use recently in response to the current drought? (*if yes, ask: "Have you done a lot or a little to reduce water use?"*)**

- 41% yes, done a lot to reduce water use
- 39 yes, done a little to reduce water use
- 20 no, have not taken steps
- don't know

**15. Do you think that pollution of drinking water is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas than other areas in your part of California, or not?**

- 69% yes
- 30 no
- 1 don't know



**16. How serious a health threat is pollution of drinking water in your part of California to you and your immediate family—do you think it is a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious of a health threat?**

- 17% very serious
- 33 somewhat serious
- 49 not too serious
- 1 don't know

**17. Next, would you say that air pollution is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in your part of California?**

- 35% big problem
- 46 somewhat of a problem
- 19 not a problem
- don't know

**18. Do you think that air pollution is a more serious health threat in lower-income areas than other areas in your part of California, or not?**

- 57% yes
- 41 no
- 1 don't know

**19. How serious a health threat is air pollution in your part of California to you and your immediate family—do you think it is a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious of a health threat?**

- 18% very serious
- 47 somewhat serious
- 35 not too serious
- don't know

**20. Next, how much of a problem is the threat of wildfires in your part of California? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem?**

- 55% big problem
- 30 somewhat of a problem
- 15 not a problem
- don't know

**21. How serious is the threat of wildfires in your part of California to your personal and economic well-being—very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious?**

- 34% very serious
- 36 somewhat serious
- 30 not too serious
- don't know

**22. Do you think that climate change has contributed to California's recent wildfires or not?**

- 78% yes, has contributed
- 22 no, has not contributed
- 1 don't know

**23. How much confidence do you have in the government in terms of its readiness to respond to wildfires in your part of California? Do you have a great deal, only some, or hardly any confidence at all?**

- 33% a great deal
- 52 only some
- 14 hardly any
- don't know

**24. On another topic, which of the following statements reflects your view of when the effects of climate change will begin to happen—[rotate order] [1] they have already begun to happen; [2] they will start happening within a few years; [3] they will start happening within your lifetime; [4] they will not happen within your lifetime, but they will affect future generations; [or] [5] they will never happen?**

- 68% already begun
- 5 within a few years
- 9 within your lifetime
- 9 not within lifetime, but will affect future generations
- 8 will never happen
- 1 don't know

And thinking about issues and activities that some people care deeply about and others do not...

**25. Compared with other issues, would you say addressing global climate change is a top concern to me personally, one of several important concerns to me, or not an important concern to me?**

- 25% top concern to me personally
- 56 one of several important concerns to me
- 19 not an important concern to me
- don't know

**26. How serious of a threat is climate change to the economy and quality of life for California's future—do you think that it is a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious of a threat?**

- 50% very serious
- 33 somewhat serious
- 9 not too serious
- 7 not at all serious
- don't know

Now I am going to name a few of the possible impacts of climate change in the future in California, and I would like you to tell me whether you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about each one.

*[rotate questions 27 to 30]*

**27. How about increased rising sea levels? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about that as an impact of climate change in California's future?**

- 25% very concerned
- 40 somewhat concerned
- 24 not too concerned
- 10 not at all concerned
- don't know

**28. How about heat waves that are more severe? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about that as an impact of climate change in California's future?**

- 52% very concerned
- 31 somewhat concerned
- 11 not too concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- don't know

**29. How about droughts that are more severe? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about that as an impact of climate change in California?**

- 63% very concerned
- 26 somewhat concerned
- 7 not too concerned
- 3 not at all concerned
- don't know

**30. How about wildfires that are more severe? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about that as an impact of climate change in California's future?**

- 63% very concerned
- 27 somewhat concerned
- 7 not too concerned
- 3 not at all concerned
- don't know

**31. Next, to address climate change, do you favor or oppose the state law that requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030?**

- 74% favor
- 23 oppose
- 3 don't know

**32. Do you favor or oppose the state law that requires 100 percent of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy sources by the year 2045?**

- 70% favor
- 28 oppose
- 1 don't know

Next,

**33. How much, if anything, have you heard about the state government policy called "cap-and-trade" that sets limits on greenhouse gas emissions? Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all?**

- 9% a lot
- 38 a little
- 54 nothing at all
- don't know

**34. In the system called “cap-and-trade,” the California state government issues permits limiting the amount of greenhouse gases companies can put out. Companies that do not use all their permits can sell them to other companies. The idea is that many companies will find ways to put out less greenhouse gases, because that will be cheaper than buying permits. Do you favor or oppose the cap-and-trade system?**

- 66% favor
- 31 oppose
- 3 don't know

**35. Next, how important to you is it that some of the cap-and-trade revenues are spent on projects to improve environmental conditions in lower-income and disadvantaged communities—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?**

- 39% very important
- 39 somewhat important
- 12 not too important
- 8 not important at all
- 1 don't know

Next, government officials are discussing other ways to deal with climate change. Do you favor or oppose the following plans to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions...

*[rotate questions 36 to 38]*

**36. How about Governor Newsom’s executive order that sets a goal of conserving 30% of California’s land and inland waters, and 30% of California’s ocean areas by 2030? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

- 76% favor
- 20 oppose
- 4 don't know

**37. How about Governor Newsom’s executive order banning the sale of all new gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

- 49% favor
- 49 oppose
- 2 don't know

**38. How about Governor Newsom’s plan that would ban the issuance of new hydraulic fracturing—or “fracking”—permits in California starting in 2024? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

- 64% favor
- 33 oppose
- 4 don't know

Next,

**39. Do you favor or oppose the California state government making its own policies, separate from the federal government, to address the issue of climate change?**

- 67% favor
- 31 oppose
- 2 don't know

**40. When it comes to efforts to fight climate change, how important is it to you that California acts as a leader around the world—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?**

- 43% very important
- 28 somewhat important
- 15 not too important
- 13 not important at all
- 1 don't know

Next,

**41. Do you think that California doing things to reduce climate change in the future would cause there to be more jobs for people around the state, would cause there to be fewer jobs, or wouldn’t affect the number of jobs for people around the state?**

- 41% more jobs
- 25 fewer jobs
- 31 wouldn't affect the number of jobs
- 3 don't know

**42. Do you think that California doing things to reduce climate change in the future would cause gasoline prices at the pump around the state to increase, or to decrease, or wouldn't affect gasoline prices at the pump around the state?**

- 57% increase gasoline prices
- 21 decrease gasoline prices
- 19 wouldn't affect gasoline prices
- 2 don't know

**43. In order to help reduce climate change, would you be willing or not willing to pay more for electricity if it were generated by renewable sources like solar or wind energy?**

- 45% willing
- 55 not willing
- 1 don't know

On another topic,

**44. Do you think that ocean and beach pollution along the California coast is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in California today?**

- 48% big problem
- 43 somewhat of a problem
- 8 not a problem
- 1 don't know

Next, I am going to list some specific problems that some people say affect our ocean and marine life in California today. After each, please tell me whether you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in the part of the California coast that is closest to you.

*[rotate questions 45 and 46]*

**45. How about plastics and marine debris? Do you think this is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in the part of the California coast that is closest to you?**

- 61% big problem
- 32 somewhat of a problem
- 6 not a problem
- don't know

**46. How about limited public access to the coast and beaches? Is this a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem today?**

- 18% big problem
- 45 somewhat of a problem
- 36 not a problem
- 2 don't know

**47. Next, how important is the condition of oceans and beaches to the economy and quality of life for California's future? Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?**

- 64% very important
- 31 somewhat important
- 4 not too important
- 2 not at all important
- don't know

*[rotate questions 48 and 49]*

Next, thinking about the possible impact of climate change in California,

**48. How concerned are you about rising sea levels having an impact on flooding and beach erosion? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?**

- 37% very concerned
- 36 somewhat concerned
- 18 not too concerned
- 9 not at all concerned
- don't know

**49. How concerned are you about ocean warming having an impact on marine and coastal life? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?**

- 49% very concerned
- 34 somewhat concerned
- 11 not too concerned
- 6 not at all concerned
- don't know

Next, please say if you favor or oppose the following proposals.

*[rotate questions 50 to 53]*

**50. How about allowing more oil drilling off the California coast? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

27% favor  
72 oppose  
2 don't know

**51. How about allowing wind power and wave energy projects off the California coast? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

81% favor  
15 oppose  
3 don't know

**52. How about expanding hydraulic fracturing, sometimes called "fracking," for oil and natural gas?**

33% favor  
63 oppose  
4 don't know

**53. How about building desalination plants on the California coast? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?**

68% favor  
27 oppose  
5 don't know

On another topic,

**54. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that President Biden is handling environmental issues in the United States?**

61% approve  
35 disapprove  
4 don't know

**55. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the US Congress is handling environmental issues in the United States?**

35% approve  
62 disapprove  
3 don't know

**56. Do you support or oppose Joe Biden's decision to rejoin the Paris Agreement, which is the international agreement that tries to address climate change?**

73% support  
25 oppose  
2 don't know

**57. Do you think the federal government is doing more than enough, just enough, or not enough to address climate change?**

15% more than enough  
31 just enough  
52 not enough  
2 don't know

**58. How much of the time can you trust the federal government to do what is right when it comes to handling environmental issues in the United States—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?**

4% just about always  
29 most of the time  
65 only some of the time  
1 never (*volunteered*)  
2 don't know

**59. Right now, which one of the following do you think should be the more important priority for addressing America's energy supply: [rotate] [1] developing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen technology [or] [2] expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas?**

80% developing alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen technology  
18 expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas  
1 don't know

**60. As you may know, the Biden administration has proposed a plan to rebuild the country’s infrastructure in ways that are aimed at reducing the effects of global climate change. Overall, do you think the policies in this proposal will [rotate order] [1] help the US economy, [2] hurt the US economy, or will it make no difference for the US economy?**

- 61% help the US economy
- 18 hurt the US economy
- 18 make no difference
- 2 don’t know

Changing topics,

**61. As you may know, the 1973 Supreme Court case Roe v. Wade established a woman’s constitutional right to have an abortion. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn the Roe v. Wade decision, or not?**

- 21% yes, overturn Roe versus Wade
- 77 no, not overturn Roe versus Wade
- 2 don’t know

**62. Thinking about abortion policies around the country, which is your greater concern [rotate order] [1] that some states are making it too difficult for people to be able to get an abortion; [or] [2] that some states are making it too easy for people to get an abortion?**

- 61% some states are making it too difficult to get an abortion
- 36 some states are making it too easy to get an abortion
- 3 don’t know

On another topic,

**63. Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?**

- 31% strongly favor
- 33 somewhat favor
- 18 somewhat oppose
- 17 strongly oppose
- 1 don’t know

**64. Which of the following statements do you agree with more? [rotate] [1] The penalty for first-degree murder should be the death penalty; [or] [2] the penalty for first-degree murder should be life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole.**

- 43% the penalty for first-degree murder should be the death penalty
- 55 the penalty for first-degree murder should be life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole
- 2 don’t know

**65. The following is a statement about the death penalty in the US. Please choose the statement that comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right: [rotate] [1] there is some risk that an innocent person will be put to death [or] [2] there are adequate safeguards to ensure that no innocent person will be put to death.**

- 74% there is some risk that an innocent person will be put to death
- 25 there are adequate safeguards to ensure that no innocent person will be put to death
- 1 don’t know

Next,

**66. How big of a problem is racism in the US today? Is it a...**

- 55% big problem
- 29 somewhat of a problem
- 10 small problem
- 6 not a problem at all
- don’t know

**67. Thinking about your own experience, have you ever experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity? [If yes, ask: Would you say regularly or from time to time?]**

- 5% yes, regularly
- 35 yes, from time to time
- 60 no
- don’t know

**68. In general, do you think the criminal justice system in the United States is biased against African Americans, or do you think the criminal justice system treats people equally regardless of race?**

- 62% criminal justice system is biased against African Americans
- 36 criminal justice system treats people equally regardless of race
- 2 don't know

Thinking about the process of recalling elected officials in California...

**69. [likely voters only] At this time, how much would you say that you know about how the recall process works in California—a lot, some, very little, or nothing?**

- 16% a lot
- 45 some
- 30 very little
- 8 nothing
- don't know

And please tell me if you would support or oppose the following ideas to change the way the recall process works in California.

**70. [likely voters only] Currently, a statewide official can be recalled for any or no reason. Would you support or oppose changing this so that an elected official could only be recalled because of illegal or unethical activity?**

- 60% support
- 39 oppose
- 1 don't know

**71. [likely voters only] Currently, to qualify a recall for a statewide ballot, recall supporters need to gather enough signatures from registered voters to equal 12 percent of the total votes cast in the previous election for that office. For the recall election this fall, this number was about 1.5 million signatures. Would you support or oppose raising this requirement to 25 percent of the total votes cast in the previous election?**

- 55% support
- 43 oppose
- 2 don't know

**72. [likely voters only] Generally speaking, and regardless of how you feel about the upcoming election, do you think the recall election process in California needs major changes, minor changes, or is it basically fine the way it is?**

- 30% major changes
- 36 minor changes
- 32 basically fine the way it is
- 2 don't know

**73. [likely voters only] Generally speaking, and regardless of how you feel about the upcoming election, do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing that the California constitution provides a way to recall the state's elected officials, such as the governor?**

- 86% good thing
- 13 bad thing
- 1 don't know

**74. [likely voters only] It may turn out that the winner of the second part of the recall ballot gets under 50 percent of the vote. Would you support or oppose changing the law so that if no candidate got more than 50 percent of the vote, that there would be a runoff election between the top two candidates so that someone would get majority support?**

- 68% support
- 29 oppose
- 3 don't know

**75. [likely voters only] According to the state Department of Finance, the special election to recall Governor Newsom will cost an estimated \$215 million. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view—[rotate] [1] this election is a waste of money [or] [2] this election is worth the cost?**

- 69% waste of money
- 30 worth the cost
- don't know

**76. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?**

- 76% yes [ask q76a]
- 24 no [skip to q77b]

**76a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or are you registered as a decline-to-state or independent voter?**

- 47% Democrat [ask q77]
- 24 Republican [skip to q77a]
- 3 another party (specify) [skip to q78]
- 26 decline-to-state/independent [skip to q77b]

**77. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?**

- 55% strong
- 45 not very strong
- don't know

[skip to q78]

**77a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?**

- 58% strong
- 42 not very strong
- don't know

[skip to q78]

**77b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?**

- 30% Republican Party
- 63 Democratic Party
- 5 neither (volunteered)
- 1 don't know

**78. Next, would you consider yourself to be politically:**

[read list; rotate order top to bottom]

- 11% very liberal
- 20 somewhat liberal
- 42 middle-of-the-road
- 19 somewhat conservative
- 7 very conservative
- 1 don't know

**79. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics—a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?**

- 16% great deal
- 37 fair amount
- 34 only a little
- 14 none
- don't know

[d1–15 demographic questions]



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