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## IGS Poll

### Title

Release #2022-15: While seven in ten Californians describe the state's water shortage as "extremely serious," just 40% say their lives have been directly affected thus far.

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### Author

DiCamillo, Mark

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Institute of Governmental Studies  
126 Moses Hall  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
Tel: 510-642-6835  
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

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***While seven in ten Californians describe the state's water shortage as "extremely serious," just 40% say their lives have been directly affected thus far.***

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*  
(c) 415-602-5594

Greater than seven in ten California voters (71%) describe the state's current water shortage as "extremely serious." Democrats, liberals, seniors 65 or older and voters living along the Central Coast or in the San Francisco Bay Area express the greatest concern.

Yet, just 40% of voters say that the water shortage has directly affected themselves or their families' lives. This is less than the 58% majority who said their lives were being affected during a previous state drought in 2015.

When asked whether they think residential water users, agricultural water users and business/commercial water users are each doing their part to help the state get through the drought, voters are most critical of the state's business/commercial users. About half (48%) of voters feel business/commercial water users are not doing their part while just 13% feel they are.

By comparison, about as many believe the state's agricultural water users (29%) are doing their part as feel they are not (28%). Slightly more (42%) think residential water users aren't doing their part to help the state get through the drought as feel they are (32%). However, in each case relatively large proportions have no opinion.

Large proportions of voters also think it's very important (40%) or somewhat important (32%) for homeowners to make permanent changes to their outdoor landscaping by removing lawns and turf and planting plants and scrubs that don't require much water. Democrats and liberals are much more likely than Republicans and conservatives to feel this is important.

“The results offer a mixed picture of how voters are experiencing the drought, with the vast majority identifying it as a major concern, yet most indicating it has so far not had a direct impact on their lives,” observed IGS co-director Eric Schickler.

**Seven in ten voters describe the state’s water shortage as “extremely serious”**

Seventy-one percent of the state’s registered voters describe the current California water shortage as “extremely serious,” while 23% term it “somewhat serious.” Just 4% do not believe the shortage is that serious.

Majorities across all voter subgroups consider the water shortage extremely serious, with the segments displaying the most concern being Democrats, liberals, seniors 65 or older and voters living along the Central Coast or the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Table 1**  
**Seriousness of the state’s water shortage (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Extremely serious</b>	<b>Somewhat serious</b>	<b>Not serious</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	69	24	5
San Diego County	68	24	6
Orange County	65	28	6
Inland Empire	67	28	3
Central Coast	79	18	1
Central Valley	73	23	3
San Francisco Bay Area	77	18	4
North Coast/Sierras	72	27	1
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	62	24	6
30-39	68	24	6
40-49	70	22	5
50-64	75	21	3
65 or older	77	20	2
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	70	23	5
Female	72	23	3
<u>Tenure</u>			
Homeowner	73	22	4
Renter/other	69	24	5
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	79	18	2
Republicans	59	33	7
No party preference/other	69	23	5
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	54	35	8
Somewhat conservative	63	30	6
Moderate	71	22	5
Somewhat liberal	79	19	2
Strongly liberal	81	17	1

*(Differences between the summary of each row’s percentages and 100% equal proportions with no opinion.)*

While the poll’s finding that 71% of voters consider the state’s current water shortage as extremely serious suggests a widespread consensus that a major problem exists, it is slightly less than the percentage of voters reporting this during an earlier statewide drought in 2015. At that time 76% of voters described the state’s water shortage as extremely serious.

**Table 2**  
**California voter views about the seriousness of the state’s water shortage now compared to past drought years (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Extremely serious</b> %	<b>Somewhat serious</b> %	<b>Not too serious</b> %	<b>No opinion</b> %
<b>August 2022</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
April 2016*	62	29	8	1
October 2015*	76	18	5	1
April 2014 *	60	28	10	2
March 1977*	51	36	9	4

*\* Previous measures from statewide surveys conducted by The Field Poll, as reported in release #2535, April 14, 2016, by Field Research Corporation.*

**Impact of the current water shortage on voters and their families**

Four in ten Californians (40%) say that the state’s current water shortage has affected themselves or their families either a great deal or somewhat, while 57% say it has impacted them only a little or not at all. However, when this similar question was asked of the state’s registered voters in October 2015 a 58% majority said the water shortage was affecting their own or their family’s lives a great deal or somewhat, while 42% said it was affecting them only a little or somewhat.\*

In the latest poll, homeowners, older voters, and voters in the Central Valley are somewhat more likely than others to report being impacted a great deal or somewhat by the water shortage.

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\* Results from an October 2015 statewide survey of California registered voters conducted by The Field Poll, as reported in release #2518, October 13, 2015 by Field Research Corporation.

**Table 3**  
**Impact of the state’s water shortage on voters and their families -August 2022**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	Great deal/ somewhat %	Only a little/ not at all %	No opinion %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	42	55	3
San Diego County	33	63	4
Orange County	27	70	3
Inland Empire	39	58	3
Central Coast	41	57	2
Central Valley	47	51	2
San Francisco Bay Area	42	56	2
North Coast/Sierras	45	49	4
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	29	66	5
30-39	31	65	4
40-49	42	56	2
50-64	46	51	3
65 or older	49	49	2
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	39	58	3
Female	42	55	3
<u>Tenure</u>			
Homeowner	46	52	2
Renter/other	34	62	4
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	40	58	2
Republicans	45	53	2
No party preference/other	37	58	2
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Strongly conservative	49	50	1
Somewhat conservative	44	54	2
Moderate	41	55	4
Somewhat liberal	39	58	3
Strongly liberal	32	65	3

**Are the state’s three major types of water users doing their part to conserve?**

Voters in the survey were also asked whether they believe residential water users, agricultural water users and business/commercial water users were each doing their part to help the state get through the current drought.

In this setting, voters appear to be most critical of the state’s business/commercial users. Statewide 48% of voters think business/commercial water users are not doing their part compared to 13% who feel they are. By contrast, when asked whether agricultural water users are doing their part about as many feel they are (29%) as feel they are not (28%). And, when asked about residential water users 42% of voters think they aren’t doing their part, while 32% feel they are.

**Table 4**  
**Perceptions of whether residential, agricultural, and business/commercial water users are doing their part to help the state get through the current drought (among California registered voters)**

	<b>Yes, doing their part</b> %	<b>Not doing their part</b> %	<b>No opinion</b> %
Residential water users	32	42	26
Agricultural water users	29	28	43
Business/commercial water users	13	48	39

An even larger proportion of voters (45%) has no opinion when asked if the state’s drought rules and water restrictions are being implemented fairly to each of the three major types of water users. Opinions are mixed among those who are able to answer, with 21% believing that current rules are unfair to residential water users and 17% believing they are unfair to agricultural users, while 3% say this in relation to business/commercial water users. Another 18% believe that the state’s drought rules are fair to all types of users.

**Voter views about making permanent changes to residential outdoor landscaping**

Large proportions of California voters think it’s very important (40%) or somewhat important (32%) for homeowners to make permanent changes to their outdoor landscaping by removing lawns and turf and planting plants and scrubs that don’t require much water. Just 21% who say this is not too or not at all important.

Majorities of voters in all regions of the state attach at least some importance to homeowners making this change.

However, there are significant partisan and ideological differences in views about this, with Democrats and liberals much more likely than Republicans and conservatives to say it is very important for homeowners to do this.

**Table 5**  
**How important is it for homeowners to make permanent changes to their outdoor landscaping by removing lawns and turf and planting plants and shrubs that don't require much water (among California registered voters)**

	Very important %	Somewhat important %	Not too/ not at important %	No opinion %
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>
<u>Region</u>				
Los Angeles County	42	31	18	9
San Diego County	38	37	20	5
Orange County	35	35	23	7
Inland Empire	36	32	25	7
Central Coast	50	28	20	2
Central Valley	34	30	28	8
San Francisco Bay Area	45	32	17	6
North Coast/Sierras	43	30	20	7
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	34	36	20	10
30-39	37	32	23	8
40-49	38	32	23	7
50-64	42	29	22	7
65 or older	46	31	19	4
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	37	32	25	6
Female	43	32	18	7
<u>Tenure</u>				
Homeowner	38	32	25	5
Renter/other	41	32	18	9
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	52	32	10	6
Republicans	19	30	44	7
No party preference/other	38	32	21	9
<u>Political ideology</u>				
Strongly conservative	21	21	48	10
Somewhat conservative	26	34	34	6
Moderate	36	34	21	9
Somewhat liberal	52	35	9	4
Strongly liberal	58	31	7	4

### **About the Survey**

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was administered online in English and Spanish August 9-15, 2022, among 9,254 California registered voters. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The *Berkeley IGS Poll* is administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. The latest poll also included an oversampling of registered voters in Los Angeles County, administered using the same methods, to enable the poll to examine specific issues of interest to voters in Los Angeles and to the *Times*. After the completion of data collection, the results were weighted to realign the Los Angeles County oversample to its actual share of the statewide registered voter population.

Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to receive further email invitations.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California and were derived from information contained on the voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample was stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the original voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. In addition, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample of registered voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's registered voters.

The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely because of sample stratification and the post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that findings based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.



### **Question wording**

In your opinion, how serious do you feel California's water shortage is?

How much have you and your family been affected by the current water shortage?

Do you think California's (residential water users) (agricultural water users) (business and commercial water users) are doing their part to reduce their water use to help the state get through the drought? (USER TYPES ASKED ONE AT A TIME IN RANDOM ORDER)

Do you believe California's drought rules and water restrictions are being implemented fairly to all three of the major types of water users or are they unfair to some types of users?

How important do you think it is for California homeowners to make permanent changes to their outdoor landscaping by removing lawns and turf and planting plants and shrubs that don't require much water?

#### **About the Institute of Governmental Studies**

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication, and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion and generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. The director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll* is Mark DiCamillo. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.