

UC Berkeley

IGS Poll

Title

Californians support state policies aimed at transitioning to renewable energy sources

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6gg6v3vp>

Author

DiCamillo, Mark

Publication Date

2023-11-02



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

Release #2023-21

Thursday, November 2, 2023

Californians support state policies aimed at transitioning to renewable energy sources.

by Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*

A large majority of California voters (60%) supports the state's climate change policies aimed at increasing its use of renewal energy sources and reducing its reliance on oil and carbon-based sources. The latest *Berkeley IGS Poll* finds that most voters either say the current pace at which California is implementing its climate change policies is about right (23%) or feel it is not moving fast enough (37%).

In addition, a nearly two-to-one majority (52% to 27%) also gives thumbs up to the construction of offshore wind turbines visible from the shore along the California coast.

However, views about the state's climate policies are highly partisan. Most Democrats (53%) believe the state is not moving fast enough in implementing these policies while another 27% say it is moving at about the right pace. By contrast, two in three Republicans (67%) maintain that state policies on climate change are moving too fast. In addition, by a four-to-one margin (63% to 16%) Democrats back the construction of offshore wind turbines along the California coast, while Republicans stand opposed 53% to 31%.

Younger voters are more supportive of increasing the pace in which the state is transitioning to renewable energy sources than older voters, whose views about this are more divided.

Most Californians (56%) also say they would be comfortable were wind turbines constructed near the communities where they live. An even larger majority (69%) would be comfortable were a field of solar panels constructed near their community. However, voters are more divided when asked about the construction of long-distance power transmission lines near to where they live, with 42% saying they'd be comfortable with that, while 39% would not.

In addition, the poll finds that 17% of the state's registered voters say they've installed solar panels on their homes.

The poll conducted October 24-30 among 6,342 registered voters statewide in English and Spanish.

Commented IGS co-director Eric Schickler, "The state's voters largely back its climate change initiatives, although the partisan differences evident in many other policy areas are also present when it comes to the shift to renewable energy."

Voters support California’s climate change policies

Six in ten voters (60%) either supports the current pace at which California is implementing its climate change policies (23%) or feels it is not moving fast enough (37%). These policies are aimed at increasing its use of renewal energy sources and reducing its reliance on oil and carbon-based sources. Just 29% feel the state is moving too fast in its implementation of these policies and 11% have no opinion.

Voter views about this are highly partisan. Most Democrats (53%) believe the state is not moving fast enough in implementing these policies, 26% say it is moving at about the right pace, while just 10% think it is moving too fast. By contrast, 67% of Republicans maintain that state policies on climate change are moving too fast, compared to 11% who think it is moving at the right pace and only 10% believe it is not moving fast enough.

Younger voters are more likely than the older voters to feel California is not moving fast enough in implementing its climate change policies. For example, more than twice as many voters ages 18-29 say the state’s climate change policies are not being implemented fast enough as feel they are moving too fast. Among voters ages 50 or older, on the other hand, as many think the state is moving too fast as feel it is not moving fast enough.

Voters in the San Francisco Bay Area are more likely to feel the state is not moving fast enough in implementing its climate change policies than voters elsewhere. Voters living in the North Coast and Sierras region are more likely than voters elsewhere to believe the state is moving too fast in implementing its climate change policies.

Table 1
Views about the pace of California’s climate change policies aimed at increasing the use of renewal energy sources and reducing reliance on oil and carbon-based sources (among California registered voters)

	Not moving fast enough %	Moving at right pace %	Moving too fast %	No opinion %
Total registered voters	37	23	29	11
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrat	53	27	10	10
Republican	10	11	67	12
No Party Preference/others	33	26	27	14
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	45	19	18	18
30-39	41	21	23	15
40-49	36	23	31	10
50-64	31	24	34	11
65 or older	34	25	34	7
<u>Region</u>				
Los Angeles County	39	25	25	11
San Diego County	35	26	27	12
Orange County	34	18	32	16
Inland Empire	33	21	35	11
Central Coast	37	23	30	10
Central Valley	32	18	38	12
San Francisco Bay Area	44	26	19	11
North Coast/Sierras	29	15	48	8

Support for constructing offshore wind turbines along the California coast

By a nearly two-to-one margin (52% to 27%) the state's registered voters support the construction of offshore wind turbines visible from the shore along the California coast.

Support for constructing wind turbines along the coast is broad-based and includes majorities or pluralities of voters across all age segments and all regions of the state.

Yet, partisan differences are also present on this question as well, with Democrats backing their construction greater than four to one (63% to 16%), while Republicans are opposed 53% to 31%.

Table 2
Voter views about the construction of offshore wind turbines
visible from shore along the California coast
(among California registered voters)

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
	%	%	%
Total registered voters	52	27	21
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrat	63	16	21
Republican	31	53	16
No Party Preference/others	52	26	22
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	54	17	29
30-39	56	20	24
40-49	48	30	22
50-64	49	32	19
65 or older	54	35	11
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	52	25	23
San Diego County	54	29	17
Orange County	49	32	19
Inland Empire	51	29	20
Central Coast	49	33	18
Central Valley	50	29	21
San Francisco Bay Area	58	23	19
North Coast/Sierras	52	40	8

Most voters would be comfortable with wind turbines or a field of solar panels being constructed near their community, but fewer say this about long distance power lines

A 56% majority of the state's voters also say they would be comfortable were wind turbines constructed near the communities where they live, while 32% would not. An even larger majority (69%) would be comfortable were a field of solar panels constructed near their community.

On the other hand, voters are more divided when asked about long-distance power transmission lines, with 42% saying they would be comfortable were such power lines built near to where they live, while 39% would not.

Women and black voters are less likely than other voters to say they'd be comfortable with the building of long-distance power lines near their communities.

Table 3
How comfortable voters say they would be if each of the following
energy-related structures were built near their community
(among California registered voters)

	Wind turbines %	A field of solar panels %	A long-distance power transmission line %
Comfortable	<u>56</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>42</u>
Very comfortable	28	40	16
Somewhat comfortable	28	28	26
Uncomfortable	<u>32</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>39</u>
Somewhat uncomfortable	15	11	22
Very uncomfortable	17	10	17
No opinion	<u>12</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>19</u>

17% of the state's voters say they've installed solar panels on their homes

The poll also probed the extent to which voters report having installed solar panels on their homes. This was done by first identifying whether or not voters own their homes, and then asking those who did whether or not they had installed solar panels on the roofs of their homes.

According to the poll about half of the state's registered voters (51%) are homeowners, of whom one in three (17%) say they had installed solar panels on their homes.

Residential solar panel installation is greatest among higher income households, where homeownership rates are also the highest. For example, the poll finds that eight in ten (79%) of the voters living in households with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more own their homes, with 37% of these voters having solar panels on their roofs. About two in three voters reporting household incomes of \$100,000-\$199,999 are homeowners (67%), with 25% having rooftop solar panels installed. Installation of solar panels on the homes of voters with annual household income levels of less than \$60,000 is considerably lower, as far fewer of these families own their own homes.

While GOP voters are far less supportive of the state's transitioning to other alternative forms of energy, the rate at which Republican homeowners have installed solar panels on their home is comparable to that of Democratic homeowners, with about one in three of the homeowners in each group reporting that they have done so.

	Not a homeowner	Home- owner	Have solar panels installed
	%	%	%
Total statewide	49	51	17
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrat	53	47	16
Republican	36	64	21
No Party Preference/others	54	46	16
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	60	40	9
San Diego County	46	54	25
Orange County	50	50	18
Inland Empire	43	57	19
Central Coast	48	52	19
Central Valley	45	55	20
San Francisco Bay Area	47	53	19
North Coast/Sierras	28	72	26
<u>Household income</u>			
Less than \$20,000	83	17	3
\$20,000-\$39,999	68	32	7
\$40,000-\$59,999	67	33	8
\$60,000-\$99,999	50	50	12
\$100,000-\$199,999	33	67	25
\$200,000 or more	21	79	37

When California homeowners who have not installed solar panels on their roofs were asked why they had not done so, installation costs are by far the common reason cited (37%). Another 15% of homeowners said that they had other priorities that were more important, while 13% didn't believe installing them would reduce their electric bills all that much.

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 October 25-30, 2023 among 6,342 California registered voters. Funding for the poll was provided in part by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The poll was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. 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 California registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in the state and were derived from information contained on the official voter registration rolls. The sample was stratified by age and gender to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents.

To protect the anonymity of 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, after the completion of data collection, post-stratification weights were applied to the survey data file align the sample of registered voters to population characteristics of the registered voters statewide and within major regions of the state.

The sampling error associated with the survey results 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 statewide are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Question wording

Which of the following represents your opinion of California's policies aimed at combating climate change by increasing the use of renewable energy sources, like solar and wind power, and reducing reliance on oil and carbon-based energy sources: (1) It is moving too fast in implementing these policies, (2) It is moving at about right pace in implementing these policies, (3) It is not moving fast enough in implementing these policies?

Do you support or oppose the construction of offshore wind turbines visible from shore along the California coast?

How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be if each of the following were built near your community: (1) Wind turbines, (2) A field of solar panels, (3) A long-distance power transmission line? (ORDER RANDOMIZED)

IF HOMEOWNER: Do you currently have solar panels on the roof of your home? **IF NO:** Which of the following is the main reason why you haven't installed solar panels on your roof?

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 listing of reports issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, go to <https://www.igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.