



**TO** Interested Parties

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FM3 Research

**RE:** Californian Views of Drought and Water Conservation

**DATE** July 15, 2022

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently surveyed 906 Californians<sup>i</sup> to assess views of water conservation policies. The results show that drought is a highly-salient issue, that water conservation is highly important to most Californians that believe government, big agricultural businesses, and industry bear the most responsibility for conserving water. In addition, a majority of respondents support reforming California's system of water rights to prioritize human health and safety and the environment, with agricultural as a secondary purpose.

Key findings include:

- **Drought ranks as highly as gas prices and inflation among Californians' concerns.** As shown in the table below, 84% of Californians say drought is an "extremely" or "very serious" issue. This is ranked just under inflation (88%) and alongside gasoline prices at 83%. Drought is more broadly shared as a concern than jobs and the economy (76%) and healthcare costs (75%).

**Figure 1: Californians' Top Issues**

*I'd like to read you some problems facing California that people have mentioned. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem in California.*

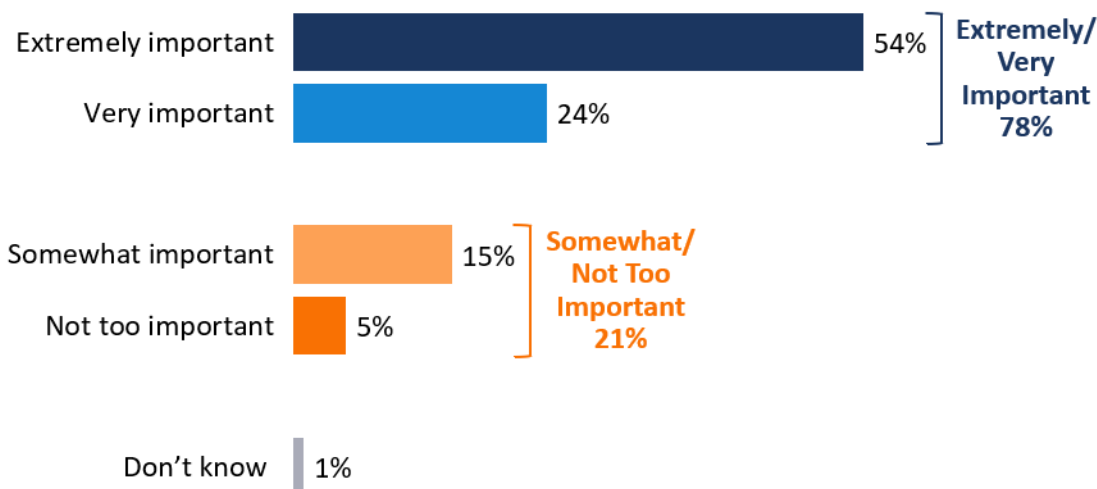
Issue	% Extremely/ Very Serious Problem
Homelessness	93%
The cost of housing and rent	90%
Inflation	88%
<b>Drought</b>	<b>84%</b>
The price of gasoline	83%
Jobs and the economy	76%
The cost of healthcare	75%

- Nearly four in five (78%) believe water conservation is important and most describe it as "extremely important."** Notably, this concern is held across the political spectrum with 92% of Democrats, 77% of independents, and 54% of Republicans saying it is at least "very important" for Californians to conserve water. This perception is also shared across the state, with 79% of LA County residents, 74% in counties surrounding Los Angeles, 82% in the Bay Area, 84% in San Diego County, 75% in Sacramento County and the far north, and 78% in the Central Valley and Central Coast labeling conservation as "very important."

This sense of importance is also shared across various demographic lines including gender (80% of women and 77% of men), age (80% of voters 18-49, 75% of voters 50-64, and 79% of voters 65 and older), and ethnicity (79% of white voters, 82% of Latino voters, 85% of Asian American voters, and 82% of all voters of color).

**Figure 2: Importance of Water Conservation**

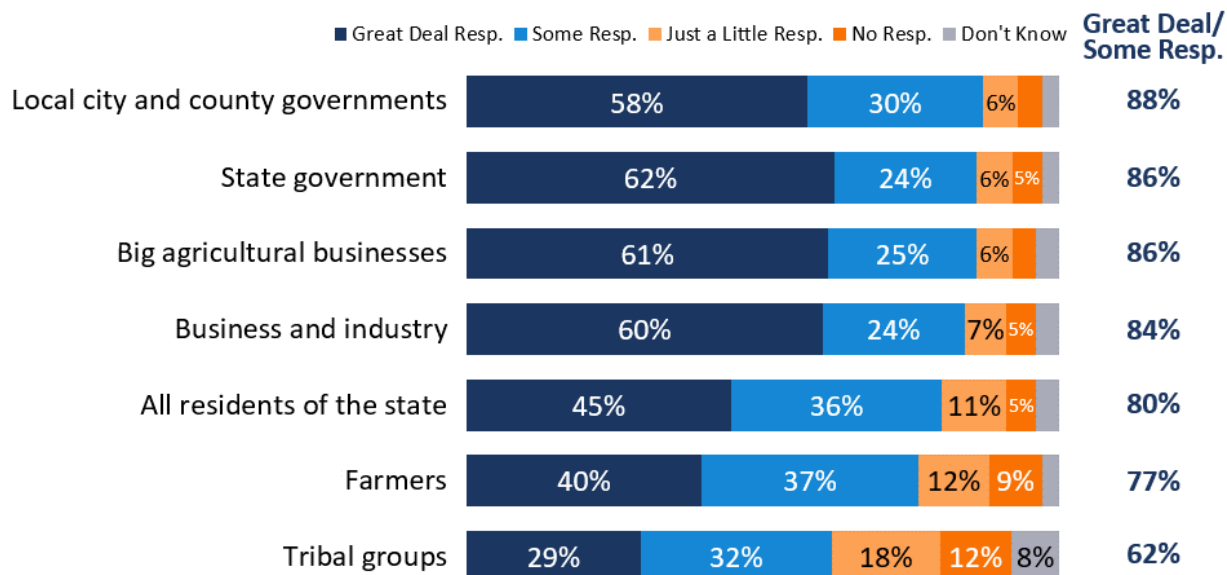
*Generally speaking, how important is it that Californians conserve water: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?*



- Voters see government, big agricultural businesses, and industry as especially responsible for conserving water.** As shown in Figure 3 on the next page, more than 86% believe that government at the local, county, and state level holds a "great deal" or "some" responsibility for conserving water. Big agricultural businesses, State government, and industry are seen as having a great deal of responsibility to conserve water by more than three in five voters and at least "some responsibility" by four in five.

**Figure 3: Responsibility for Conserving Water**

*I'm going to read you a list of groups of people or organizations who might share some responsibility for conserving water in California. Please tell me whether you think they should have a great deal of responsibility, some responsibility, just a little responsibility, or no responsibility for conserving water.*

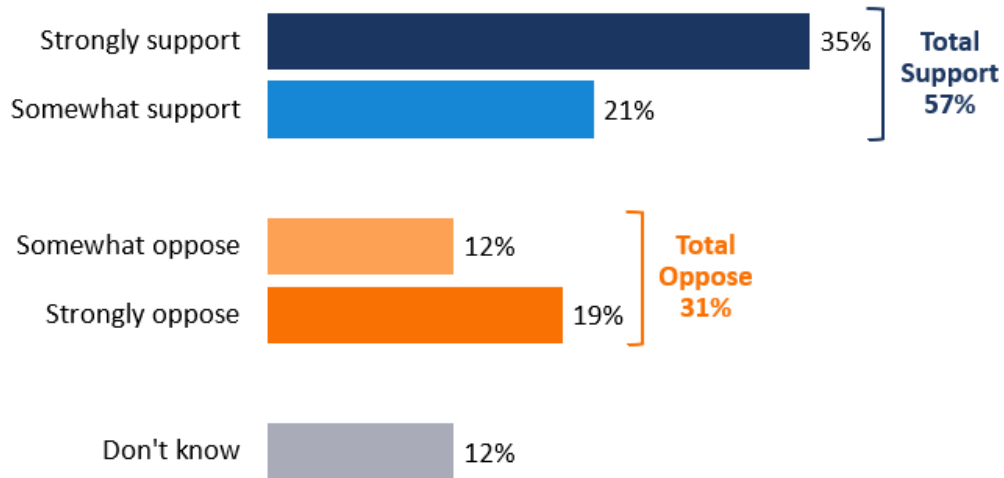


- Nearly three in five respondents support reforming water rights to prioritize human health and safety and the environment over agriculture.** As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, by a 26-point margin (57% support to 31% oppose), Californians support shifting these water rights priorities. Support cuts across many major demographic groups, including:

- 74% of Democrats and 54% of independents;
- 58% of LA County residents, 54% in nearby counties, 68% in the Bay Area, 52% in San Diego County, 47% in Sacramento and the far north, and 48% in the Central Valley and Central Coast;
- 61% of women and 52% of men;
- 65% of voters age 18-49, 43% of voters 50-64, and 51% of voters 65 and older; and
- 52% of white voters, 71% Latino voters, 72% of Asian American voters, 67% of all voters of color.

**Figure 4: Support for Reforming Water Rights**

*Would you support or oppose reforming California's system of water rights to prioritize human health and safety and the environment, with agriculture as a secondary purpose?*



In sum, drought is a serious issue for most Californians -- as important of an issue as inflation and gas prices. Very broad majorities see it as important conserve water: they hold government, big ag, and industry responsible for doing so. **To that end, a majority of Californians would also support reforming water rights to prioritize human health and safety and the environment.**

<sup>i</sup> **Methodology:** From June 15-29, 2022, FM3 completed 906 online and telephone (landline and wireless) interviews with likely November 2022 voters in California. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.