

Poll: California's drought heavy on the mind

By David Siders
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California's punishing drought has taken a firm grip on the electorate's conscience, with more than 3 in 4 voters describing the state's water shortage as extremely serious, according to a new poll.

The Field Poll, released Tuesday, follows months of mandatory water restrictions, public relations campaigns and media focus on the drought.

Sacramento

Seventy-six percent of registered voters describe the drought as "extremely serious," an uptick from earlier this year, according to the poll. Eighteen percent of voters say the drought is "somewhat serious."

"This is the highest degree of concern about state water shortages that we've ever seen," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the poll. "Last year there was concern, but you add another year to a dry year, and concerns have just continued to rise."

He said, "The public is getting the message, and also starting to feel the effects of it on their own lives."

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Mark DiCamillo, director of the poll

Majorities of voters say residential and agricultural water users are both doing their part to help the state get through the drought, but they hold a dimmer view of business and commercial water users. Just 38 percent of voters say those water users are doing their part, compared to 47 percent who say they aren't.

Nearly 6 in 10 voters – 58 percent – say they have been affected "somewhat" or a "great deal" by the drought, but its impact has been hardest felt in the Central Valley. There, 70 percent of voters report the drought impacting them somewhat or a great deal.

Yet Central Valley voters are least likely to call for homeowners to replace lawns and turf with drought-tolerant landscaping, according to the poll.

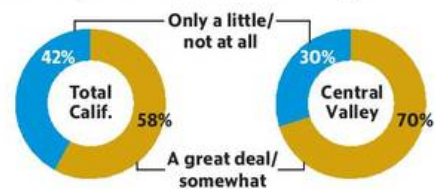
Fifty-five percent of voters statewide say it is "very important" for homeowners to change their landscapes, compared to 44 percent of voters in the Central Valley.

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Field Poll: The drought

Central Valley residents feel the effects of the drought more than the rest of the state.

Q: How much have you and your family been affected by the state's current water shortage?



Note: The poll was conducted via land line and cellphone, from Sept. 17-Oct. 4, in English and Spanish, of 498 California registered voters. The results carry a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Source: Field Poll

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