

Air pollution just a regional problem for many

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If you live in the Central Valley, Los Angeles, or the Inland Empire east of LA, air pollution is a big deal.

Elsewhere, though, it's a bit of a yawner.

Two-thirds of Californians (64 percent) say air pollution is a big problem (25 percent) or somewhat of one (39 percent) in the region where they live, while 35 percent say it is not a problem, according to a new statewide survey by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California.

Adults in Los Angeles (35 percent), the Central Valley (32 percent), and the Inland Empire (30 percent) are much more likely than those in Orange/San Diego Counties (17 percent) and the San Francisco Bay Area (16 percent) to say that regional air pollution is a big problem, according to the PPIC survey, taken in mid-July.

Across racial and ethnic groups, Hispanics (37 percent) and blacks (33 percent) are much more likely than Asians (20 percent) and whites (18 percent) to say air pollution is a big problem.

About half of Californians (49 percent) say air pollution in their region is a serious health threat to them and their immediate family (18 percent very serious, 31 percent somewhat serious).

Forty-one percent of adults say that they or someone in their immediate family suffers from asthma or other respiratory problems. Blacks are most likely to say this (54 percent), followed by Hispanics (43 percent), whites (39 percent), and Asians (32 percent).

Is air pollution a more serious health threat in lower-income areas than others in their region? Californians are divided in their responses to this question (47 percent yes, 46 percent no).

Asked what policies they would support to reduce regional air pollution, majorities are willing to see tougher air pollution standards on the following:

- New passenger vehicles (65 percent)
- Diesel engine vehicles (71 percent)
- Commercial and industrial activities (70 percent)
- Agriculture and farm activities (54 percent)

Methodology

The PPIC Statewide Survey was conducted with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. It is the 12th annual survey on the environment. Findings are based on a survey of 2,500 adult residents reached by landline and cell phones throughout the state. Interviews took place from July 10-24. They were conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Korean, and Vietnamese, according to respondents' preferences.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is ± 2.9 percent for all adults. For the 1,668 registered voters, it is ± 3.2 percent, and for the 1,131 likely voters, it is ± 3.6 percent.

DIVIDED ON "FRACKING"

Most Californians (54 percent) have heard at least a little about hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," which is used to extract oil and natural gas from underground rock formations (23 percent have heard a lot, 31 percent a little, 46 percent nothing at all). Fracking for oil extraction is occurring in the state, and there is debate about expanding and regulating it. Residents who have heard about fracking are divided about using it in California (42 percent favor, 46 percent oppose, 12 percent don't know).

On other energy policy issues, just 31 percent of Californians favor building more nuclear power plants at this time—near the record low (30 percent) of last July. Majorities across regions are opposed.

Residents are divided on the question of allowing more oil drilling off California's coast: 48 percent are in favor, 48 percent are opposed. Across regions, 56 percent of residents living along the state's northern

coast are opposed to more drilling, while south coast residents are divided (47 percent favor, 50 percent opposed) and inland residents are in favor (58 percent).

A large majority of residents (78 percent) favor increasing federal funding to develop wind, solar, and hydrogen technology. Californians show similar support (77 percent) for the state policy requiring one-third of electricity to come from renewable energy sources by the year 2020. But support drops to 44 percent on this question if the policy means higher electricity bills.

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