

Californians' Concern about Climate Change Hazards

Luskin California Poll Policy Brief

Megan Mullin
Professor of Public Policy and Political Science
Faculty Director, Luskin Center for Innovation

October 10, 2025

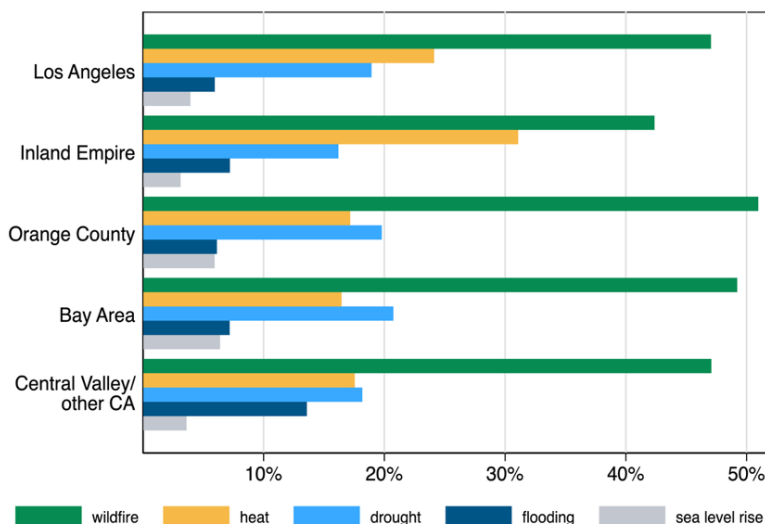
California is exposed to numerous hazards from climate change

Compared to the rest of the United States, California has unusually high exposure to climate change impacts.¹ Risks from heat, wildfire, drought, flooding, and sea level rise are all on the rise, contributing directly and indirectly to economic losses, social dislocation, illnesses and injuries, and premature death.

The nature and severity of hazards from California's changing climate vary widely across the state's diverse landscapes and communities. These hazards also vary in the attention they draw from the state's residents. Questions included on the 2025 Luskin Poll, a statewide survey from UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs, provide some insight into which hazards are of greatest concern to Californians and their expectations for government response. The survey of 2,419 adult Californians was conducted from March 25 to May 5, 2025 in English and Spanish.

Wildfire is the climate-driven hazard causing greatest concern to Californians

The survey asked Californians which of five hazards causes them the most concern. Wildfire is the clear leader, named by nearly half of survey respondents across all regions of the state. Notably, the survey was in the field soon after the devastation of the January 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires in Los Angeles. The recency of that event may have contributed to particularly high levels of wildfire concern.



Behind wildfire, heat and drought are the hazards of highest concern, each named by roughly two out of every ten survey respondents statewide. Heat exhibited some variation across regions, with residents of Los Angeles and the Inland Empire being most likely to name it as the hazard of highest concern. Flooding and sea level rise were each named by less than 10% of

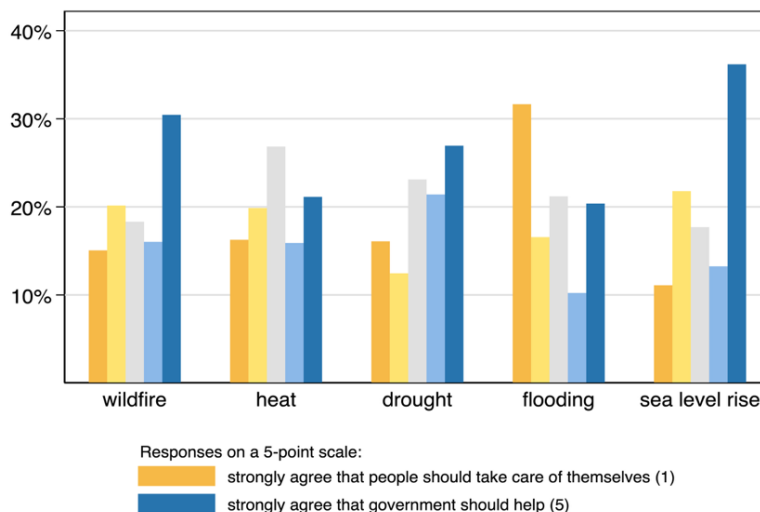
¹ Kalansky, J., Cayan, D., Barba, K., Walsh, L., Brouwer, K., & Boudreau, D. (2018). [California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment](#).

Californians. Residents of the Central Valley were most likely to express concern about flooding, while concern about sea level rise was highest in the Bay Area and Orange County.

Attitudes are mixed on responsibility for climate hazard preparation and response

After survey respondents named their hazard of highest concern, the survey asked them to record on a five-point scale whether they considered it the responsibility of government to help prepare and respond to the hazard, whether people should take care of themselves, or something in between.

Californians have wide-ranging perspectives about responsibility for preparation and response. Some people feel strongly that responsibility lies either with the government or with individuals, and others see responsibility as shared. The distribution of expectations for government involvement varies across hazard, with support for government involvement being especially high for sea level rise and especially low for flooding. These differences are partly but not fully attributable to the attitudinal predispositions of people who are concerned about different types of hazards.



Majorities support government action to reduce harm from climate impacts

The survey asked whether government should do more, less, or the same to help reduce harm from the respondent's hazard of greatest concern across three areas: regulations, general spending, and spending on programs targeted to those most vulnerable to the hazard.

Overall, about 60% of respondents supported more government action to reduce harm from climate impacts. This support varied across hazards, with only half of those who are most concerned about drought and heat supporting stronger government action to address the hazard. Across every hazard and every government action, less than 20% of respondents preferred government to do less.

