



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

TO Interested Parties

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FM3 Research

RE: California Voter Views of Water Quality and Supply Issues

DATE July 8, 2026

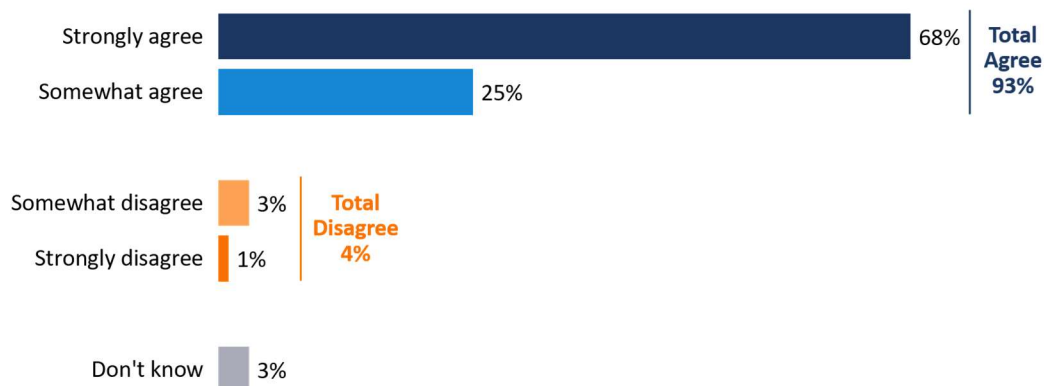
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of California votersⁱ to better-understand their views of water quality and supply issues facing the state. **The study found that overwhelming shares of voters see safe and reliable water supplies as critical to achieving some of California’s most important goals, including building more housing and supporting agricultural and manufacturing economies.** Seven in ten also support the state investing more in improving water systems, preparing for drought and flooding, and helping to keep water rates affordable – and bipartisan majorities are more likely to support a gubernatorial candidate who makes this a priority.

Key findings include:

- **An overwhelming share of Californians agree that safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California’s goals.** Given the statement below, naming goals for our communities, the economy, the environment and public health, fully 93% agree, and more than two-thirds (68%) “strongly agree.”

Figure 1: Importance of Safe and Reliable Water Supplies to Addressing California Goals

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California’s goals for our communities, the economy, the environment, and public health?”



- **Three-quarters are more likely to support a gubernatorial candidate who makes long-term water supply reliability and affordability a high priority – a view that cuts across party lines.** Seventy-seven percent of California’s likely November 2026 voters say they would be “more likely to support” a candidate who makes water a priority. This includes 83% of Democrats, 77% of independents, and 67% of Republicans. Notably, just 3% of California voters are less likely to back a candidate who makes water a high priority.
- **Broad shares see safe and reliable water supplies as important for agriculture, housing construction, manufacturing and climate change response.** As shown in Figure 2, more than four in five voters see safe and reliable water supplies as a major factor supporting agriculture, and broad majorities say the same of the ability to build more housing.

Figure 2: Importance of Water for Aspects of Life

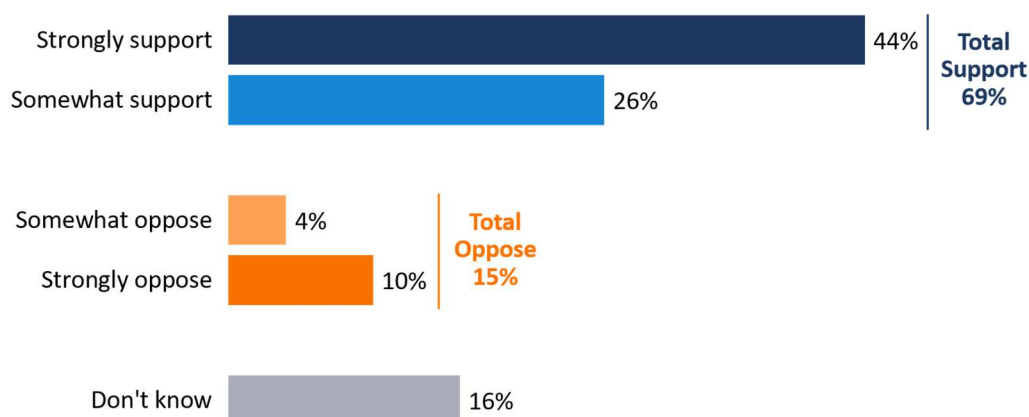
Next, please consider the following aspects of life in California. For each one, please indicate whether having safe and reliable water supplies is a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in contributing to that aspect of life.

Aspect of Life	% Major Factor
Supporting agriculture	81%
The ability to build more housing	60%
Supporting the manufacturing economy	53%
Preparing for climate change	53%

- **Nearly seven in ten support the state investing in improving water systems, preparing for drought and flooding, and helping keep water rates affordable.** Figure 3 shows that 69% support this proposal, and more than two in five (44%) “strongly support” it. Just 15% oppose the idea. Notably, more than four in five Democrats (83%), nearly two-thirds of independents (63%), and a majority of Republicans (52%) back the idea.

Figure 3: Support for State Investment in Water

Currently, California's local water agencies and their customers pay most of the cost of maintaining and upgrading water infrastructure. Would you support or oppose the state providing additional funding to improve water systems, prepare for drought and flooding, and help keep water rates affordable?



- **Overwhelming shares agree that the water system must be upgraded.** Figure 4 below shows that more than four in five voters agree that the water system must be upgraded to address new challenges – and that more specifically, the state must streamline approval to advance critical infrastructure.

Figure 4: Views of Water System Upgrades

Statement	Total Agree	Total Disagree
California's water system must be upgraded to address new challenges such as droughts, floods and changing climate conditions.	88%	5%
California needs to accelerate the construction of water infrastructure to prepare for droughts, floods and changing climate conditions.	87%	8%
California must streamline water project approval to advance critical infrastructure more efficiently.	81%	10%

- **Voters see the need to modernize water infrastructure to protect drinking water and upgrading the state's distribution system.** Figure 5 on the next page shows the shares who see "great need" or "some need" to invest in specifics related to the state's water infrastructure. More than four in five see the need to invest in protecting drinking water and in upgrading the system of levees, canals, pumps and pipes that deliver water to the entire state.

Figure 5: Perceived Need for Funding

Please consider this list of water infrastructure investments. For each one, please indicate if you think California has a great need, some need, a little need, or no real need to invest additional funding in that type of infrastructure.

Priority	Great/Some Need
Modernizing water infrastructure to protect clean drinking water	88%
Upgrading California’s water distribution system of levees, canals, pumps and pipes that deliver water to the entire state	84%

In sum, California voters see ensuring the state’s water quality and supply as critical to their quality of life and goals for the state – including its economy, climate, and needed housing construction. **They broadly support the state investing in improving water systems, and are more likely to vote for a gubernatorial candidate who makes water a high priority.** Voters also see a strong need to invest in upgrading the state’s water infrastructure, especially when it comes to drinking water quality and supply through water delivery infrastructure.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From June 6-11, 2026, FM3 completed 623 online and telephone interviews with likely November 2026 voters in California. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% 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%.