

2017 San Joaquin Valley Survey - Results on Water

1 in 5 Adults in Valley Say Access to Clean Drinking Water is a Problem

In our new survey of the San Joaquin Valley, 21 percent of adults say that access to clean drinking water is a problem “sometimes” or “always.” The survey was conducted in late March just before Governor Jerry Brown declared the emergency drought status for the state over, but left in place the order for Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties. Portions of these counties will continue to receive emergency drinking water because wells that tap into groundwater have run dry.

Among registered voters, Democrats and Independents were more likely than Republicans to identify access to drinking water as a problem. Twenty-five percent of Democrats and 18 percent of Independents said it was a problem at least “sometimes,” while only 9 percent of Republicans indicated it is a problem.

Latino respondents were the most likely racial and ethnic group to say that it is a problem (25 percent), followed by whites (18 percent), and non-white, non-Latinos, which includes blacks and Asians (16 percent).

The results varied significantly according to whether the respondent was a Trump supporter or not. Only 10 percent of Trump supporters identified access to clean drinking water as a problem, while 26 percent of non-Trump supporters did.

Table 1: Reliable Access to Clean Drinking Water is a Problem

	All (%)	Trump Supporter		Party Registration			Race/Ethnicity		
		Yes	No	Dem	Rep	Ind.	White	Latino	Other
Never	78	89	73	74	90	81	81	75	84
Sometimes	16	6	21	18	6	13	12	20	13
Always	5	4	5	7	3	5	6	5	3
Don't Know	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0

Note: Trump supporter is respondent that indicated that he/she voted for Donald Trump or would have voted for Donald Trump if she/he had voted in the election. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Many in Valley Are Concerned about an Adequate Water Supply in the Future

The survey results also show that many in the Valley are concerned about the region having an adequate water supply in the future. Seventy-five percent of respondents said that they are either “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about the future water supply. This high level of concern was reported even after respondents were reminded that a significant amount of rainfall had occurred in the past year.

The high level of concern is relatively similar among different respondent characteristics. Trump supporters were just as likely to be concerned about the future water supply for the region as non-Trump supporters. Overall, 75 percent of both groups expressed concern about the water supply, with a slightly higher percentage of Trump supporters indicating that they are “very concerned” (39 percent).

For registered voters, 76 percent of Democrats and 74 percent of Independents are very or somewhat concerned about the region’s water supply, while 66 percent of Republicans said they were concerned. In terms of intensity, Independents appear to be the most concerned, as 46 percent of them said they are very concerned about the water supply.

Again, among different racial and ethnic groups, the overall level of concern is similar, although there is some variation in the intensity of concern. Non-white, non-Latinos expressed the highest level of concern at 79 percent. Seventy-seven percent of whites indicated some concern for the water supply, with 45 percent indicating that they are “very concerned.” Seventy-two percent of Latinos said that they were at least somewhat concerned about the water supply.

Table 2: Concern about an Adequate Water Supply in the Future

	All (%)	Trump Supporter		Party Registration			Race/Ethnicity		
		Yes	No	Dem	Rep	Ind.	White	Latino	Other
Very Concerned	37	39	36	31	36	46	45	32	35
Somewhat Concerned	38	36	39	45	30	38	32	40	44
Not at All Concerned	24	25	24	23	34	15	23	26	22
Don’t Know	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0

Note: Trump supporter is respondent that indicated that he/she voted for Donald Trump or would have voted for Donald Trump if she/he had voted in the election. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Water is Top Issue for San Joaquin Valley

Given the problems for some with access to clean drinking water and the high level of concern about the future water supply, it is not that surprising that water is the top issue for the San Joaquin Valley. Thirty-one percent of adults identified water as the most important problem facing the region. The economy and jobs were the second most important problem at 19 percent, followed by crime and drugs at 16 percent, and immigration at 6 percent. The environment, including air quality, pollution, and global warming, came in fifth at 5 percent.

There was little variation among registered voters in identification of the most important problem. Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all said water is the most important problem facing the region, although the percentage was substantially higher for Republicans (49 percent). With the exception of Democrats, the order of priorities for Republicans and Independents was the same. For Democrats, crime and drugs was the second most important problem instead of the economy and jobs.

With regard to racial and ethnic groups, the priorities were the same for whites and non-white, non-Latinos. The most important problem for Latinos, however, was the economy and jobs instead of water. Latinos identified crime and drugs as the second most important problem.

Again, both Trump supporters and non-Trump supporters were on the same page regarding the region's priorities, although Trump supporters were more likely to identify water as the most important problem. Non-Trump supporters were also much more likely to identify crime and drugs as a problem than non-Trump supporters.

Table 3: Most Important Problem for Region (Top 5 Issues)

	All (%)	Trump Supporter		Party Registration			Race/Ethnicity		
		Yes	No	Dem	Rep	Ind.	White	Latino	Other
Water	31	46	24	24	49	31	52	15	35
Economy/Jobs	19	17	20	14	20	21	13	23	24
Crime/Drugs	16	8	19	17	11	16	9	20	16
Immigration	6	8	6	5	5	8	5	9	1
Environment	5	3	5	5	3	7	3	6	2

Note: Trump supporter is respondent that indicated that he/she voted for Donald Trump or would have voted for Donald Trump if she/he had voted in the election. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Methodology of Survey

The findings in this report are based on a survey of a random sample of adults from the San Joaquin Valley, which includes eight counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare. A total of 541 adults were interviewed in Spanish or English. Eighty percent of interviews were conducted in English, while 20 percent were conducted in Spanish, based on the respondent's preference. Sixty-two percent were interviewed on landlines and 38 percent were interviewed on cell phones. Interviews took on average 13.6 minutes to complete. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and Sunday evenings, from March 13-26, 2017. Up to 5 attempts were made to reach each randomly selected number on different days during the interview period. Dr. Annabella España translated the survey questions into Spanish.

The final sample was weighted by age, gender, education, and race/ethnicity to match the characteristics of the San Joaquin Valley adult population. The Institute used the U.S Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey population estimates to compare regional demographics to the characteristics of the survey sample in order to assure representativeness. The margin of error for the survey is ± 4.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the unweighted sample of 541 adults. That is, we are 95 percent confident the results will reflect the population's responses ± 4.2 percentage points, if all adults in the San Joaquin Valley were interviewed. There are other possible sources of error beyond sampling variability, such as question wording, question sequencing, and survey timing.

Additional information about our methodology is available upon request from Dr. Lisa Bryant at lbryant@mail.fresnostate.edu or 559.278.7612.

Questions Asked

How often is reliable access to clean drinking water a problem for you, is it never a problem, sometimes a problem or is it always a problem?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Always
- Don't know/Refuse to Answer

Over the past 5 years, California has been in a drought, but has received a significant amount of rainfall over the past year. How concerned are you about this region having an adequate water supply in the future?

- Very Concerned
- Somewhat Concerned
- Not at All Concerned
- Don't know (volunteer)

Thinking about the San Joaquin Valley in particular, what would you say is the most important problem facing our region today?

- Allow respondent to name ONE item.

About the Institute for Leadership and Public Policy

Under the College of Social Sciences, the new Institute for Leadership and Public Policy is dedicated to conducting policy-relevant research and offering student training and career development to inspire public leadership in the San Joaquin Valley. Financial support for the Institute has been provided by a generous gift from PG&E and Chevron.

For more information, contact Dr. Jeff Cummins at 559.278.6693, Co-Director of the Institute for Leadership and Public Policy; or Co-Director Dr. Annabella España-Nájera (Spanish-language media) at 559.278.3020; or Dr. Lisa Bryant, Survey Director, at 559.278.7612 or 559.512.0124.