

# Executive Summary

## Survey Results: Californians' Views on Climate Adaptation

Climate change is a major priority for the state of California, and preparation for the unavoidable consequences of climate change is a priority for Gov. Brown's administration. California state agencies, departments, commissions and councils have conducted numerous studies on the impacts of climate change and are poised to implement adaptation strategies and policies. Yet coastal managers throughout the state express concern about political will and public support for action, and note these to be barriers to successful implementation plans.<sup>1</sup> However, a recent Stanford University poll suggests that the public strongly supports adaptation action and that perceived barriers to progress may reflect a misunderstanding of the public's concerns.



### Method

The Stanford University Climate Adaptation California Poll was conducted March 7 to 18, 2013, by GfK Custom Research. This Internet survey is based on a representative probability sample of 440 adults, age 18 or older, living in California.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, Stanford conducted an identical national poll with a representative sample of 1,174 American adults. The survey assessed beliefs about climate change and gathered opinions about the impact of climate change, sea level rise and storms on communities, the economy and jobs. The survey also measured public support for specific coastal adaptation strategies and how to pay for them.

### Overarching findings

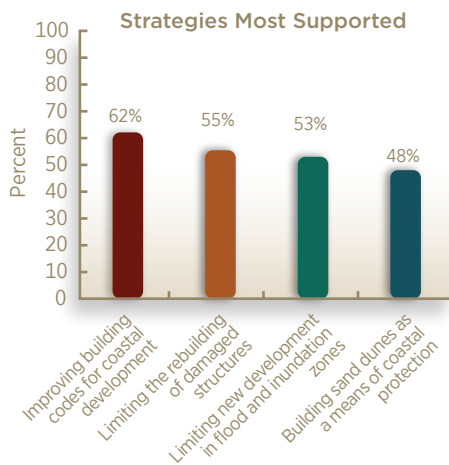
- The California public believes that:
  - Global warming has been happening (84%).
  - Global warming will cause sea levels to rise (76%).
  - Global warming will cause storms to be more damaging (71%).
  - Global warming-induced sea level rise will be a serious problem for the U.S. (79%).
  - Global warming-induced intensified storms will be bad for the U.S. (78%).



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- The California public overwhelmingly supports *preparing now* for the impacts of global warming (85%) rather than waiting (13%).
- The California public, more so than the general U.S. public, believes *state government* should take significant steps to lessen the consequences of sea level rise (59% of Californians vs. 53% of the national public).
- The California public, more so than the general public, believes that the government should pay for adaptation action (50% in California vs. 38% in the nation).
- Californians are *most* supportive of strategies that include:
  - Improving building codes for coastal development (62%)
  - Limiting the rebuilding of damaged structures (55%)
  - Limiting new development in flood and inundation zones (53%)
  - Building sand dunes as a means of coastal protection (48%)



- Californians are *least* supportive of adaptation strategies involving sand replenishment, sea walls and purchasing coastal property to induce retreat (favored by 30%, 32% and 33%, respectively).

- The California public, more so than the U.S. public, believes that adaptation action will have a *positive impact* on the state's economy (52% vs. 38% for the U.S.) and jobs (60% vs. 42% for the U.S.).

## Findings within population groups

The survey revealed significant differences in beliefs and opinions within certain populations.

### California Hispanic population

According to the survey, the California Hispanic population:

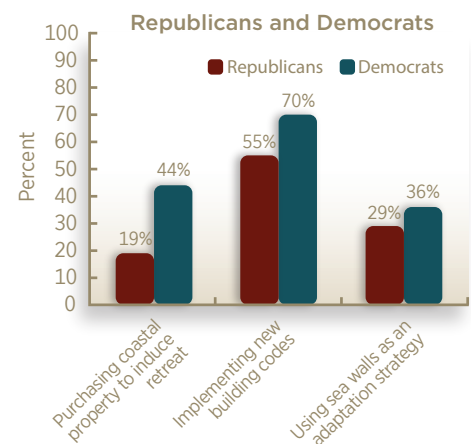
- Is *more supportive* (89%) of adaptation action than the non-Hispanic white population (80%)
- Believes *more strongly* that the government (64%) should pay for adaptation action in California than the non-Hispanic white population (40%)
- *Less strongly* favors using sand dunes (37%) and limiting new development (42%) than the non-Hispanic white population (53% and 59%, respectively)

### California Democrats and Republicans

The survey revealed that California Democrats:

- Are *more supportive* of adaptation action (97%) than Republicans (72%)
- Believe *more strongly* that the government should pay for adaptation action (56%) compared to their Republican counterparts (32%)
- Are generally more supportive of all coastal adaptation strategies

- Republicans are less supportive of purchasing coastal property to induce retreat (19% vs. 44% of Democrats).
- Both Republicans and Democrats are most supportive of implementing new building codes that will allow coastal property to be more resilient to coastal impacts of climate change (55% of Republicans vs. 70% of Democrats).
- Democrats are least supportive of using sea walls as an adaptation strategy (36% vs. 29% of Republicans).



## Conclusions

The California public strongly supports taking action now to prevent negative impacts of climate change. The public believes the state has a strong role to play in implementing adaptation action, and believes steps taken to implement adaptation will be beneficial for the economy. The public does not strongly support any one adaptation policy option identified in the survey, but in general supports restricting coastal development and strengthening development standards and building codes in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> See Finzi Hart et al. (2012). *Rising to the Challenge: Results of the 2011 Coastal California Adaptation Needs Assessment*. USCSG-TR-01-2012: <http://centerforcoastsolutions.org/content/rising-challenge-results-2011-california-coastal-adaptation-needs-assessment>.

<sup>2</sup> The data were weighted to account for California distributions of age, sex, race and ethnicity, education, household income, home ownership status, metropolitan area, the patterns of Spanish language usage and the pattern of Internet access among the California public.