

Californians agree: Don't build in wildfire-prone areas

June 19 2019



A man helps friends recover after the 2007 Witch Fire in San Diego County destroyed their home. Californians agree that new homes should not be built in wildfire-prone areas, according to a new Berkeley IGS Poll. Credit: FEMA
Photo by Andrea Booher via Wikimedia Commons

Almost three-quarters of California voters think limits should be

imposed on new housing developments in high-risk wildfire areas, according to a new Berkeley IGS Poll.

The survey showed that 74 percent of voters thought building in risky areas, often called the wildland-urban interface, was a bad idea. Twenty-five percent said there should be no restrictions.

Opinions were strong across the state. Almost 80 percent of voters in Los Angeles County thought new, high-risk development should be limited, while 74 percent of San Diego-area voters and 77 percent of San Francisco Bay Area residents agreed.

Even in the conservative, rural areas of Northern California and the Central Valley, roughly two-thirds of voters agreed there should be limits on new buildings.

The [poll](#) comes after a series of destructive wildfires in California destroyed thousands of homes, killed more than 100 people and burned millions of acres across the state. Estimates suggest California's 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons cost \$21.5 billion.

"Support is bipartisan and includes large majorities of voters across all major regions in the state," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the Berkeley IGS Poll, which is affiliated with UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies.

The poll, however, did not define areas where new development might be limited, which could change how voters feel about the issue.

A recent study by the state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection estimates that nearly a quarter of Californians live in areas that could be considered high-risk for wildfires, including several areas in suburban Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

The poll also asked Californian's opinions about the housing crisis, but found no clear consensus on the issue.

Thirty-four percent of those surveyed thought offering subsidies for low- or middle-income homebuyers was a solution, while 24 percent agreed building new housing along transit lines in urban areas was a good idea.

Just 17 percent thought increasing the scope of rent control would help. Twenty-four percent said none of those ideas were good ways to make housing more affordable.

Just a bare majority—51 percent—said the state government "should assume a bigger role and require local communities to build more [housing](#)." Forty-seven percent said the issue should remain in local hands.

The survey queried 4,435 registered voters in English and Spanish via email from June 4 to 10. The poll's margin of error was 2.5 percentage points.

Provided by University of California - Berkeley

Citation: Californians agree: Don't build in wildfire-prone areas (2019, June 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-californians-dont-wildfire-prone-areas.html>

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