



Experiences with Homelessness in the Sacramento Region



SACRAMENTO
STATE

COMMUNITY BRIEF | AUGUST 2022

"I cannot go to the store, take my kids to the park, or even just be able to drive somewhere without seeing numerous homeless people."

- Sacramento County resident

"The town I live in has gotten worse, the streets, storefronts of businesses both commercial and small are dirty. Trash is everywhere, and thefts have risen.."

- Yolo County resident

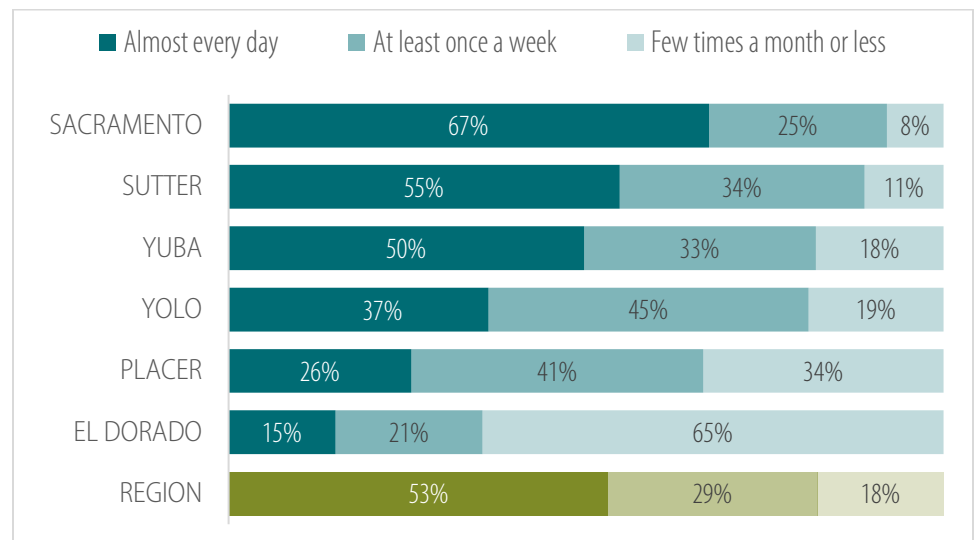
"Homeless people make me feel unsafe and uncomfortable. My encounters have never been positive. Seeing the garbage, drug use, and obvious mental instability on a daily basis is emotionally draining."

- Sacramento County resident

The **Institute for Social Research at Sacramento State** surveyed 1,948 residents across the Sacramento Region (El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties) to better understand residents' awareness and experiences related to the issue of homelessness. This poll was conducted in May 2022 to align with the annual Point-in-Time counts implemented in each county. In Sacramento County, a **total of 9,278 individuals were counted**, with 72 percent being unsheltered (i.e., living outside, in a tent, or a motor vehicle). Sacramento County is the region's largest population center and represents the majority of unhoused people counted this year.

Homelessness is highly visible across the region. Over half of the region's residents have seen encampments, and other indications of individuals experiencing homelessness, on an almost daily basis in the past six months. The visibility of homelessness varies by county, with Sacramento having the highest visibility (67% reported seeing signs almost daily) and El Dorado residents reporting the lowest visibility (15% reported almost daily sightings).

Figure 1 | Frequency of Seeing Signs of Homelessness in the Past 6-Months



The increased visibility of homelessness has most likely contributed to 3-out-of-4 residents reporting that the issue of homelessness has gotten worse in their county. For residents of Sacramento County, 86 percent think homelessness has gotten worse. For all other counties except El Dorado, at least 60 percent of residents report that homelessness has gotten worse in their county.

"The cost of living in CA is high, I sometimes worry about the potential of homelessness for my family and I if we were to become unemployed."

- Sacramento County resident

"I moved from Sacramento to Placer because of the crime and homelessness. I would consider moving if my particular area got worse."

- Placer County resident

"I see homeless people often. But I can't afford to move. Also, we need to help homeless people."

- Sutter County resident

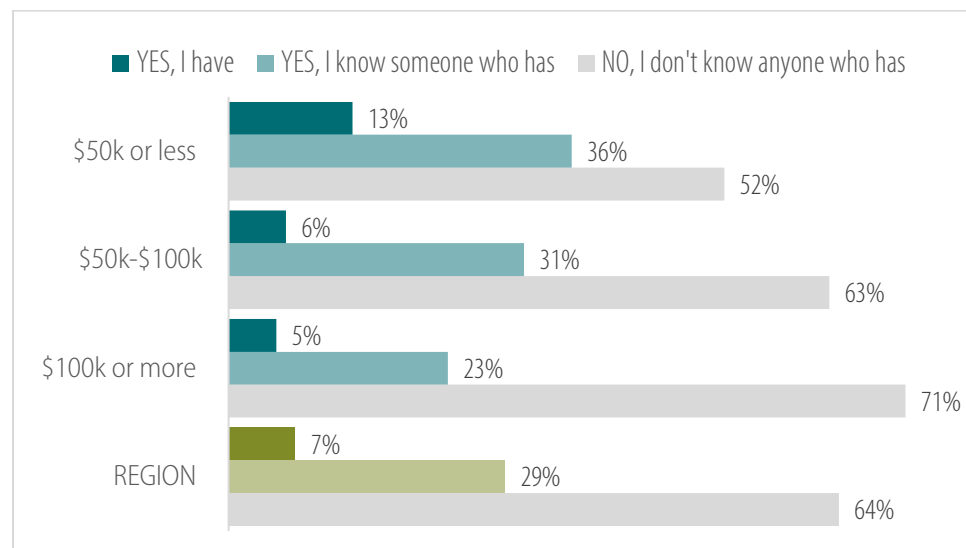
"My rent increased 33% last month. Cost of rentals is running many locals out of the area. It just keeps getting worse!"

- El Dorado County resident

Many of the region's residents have had a personal experience with homelessness or housing insecurity.

Across the region, seven percent of the respondents report that they have personally been homeless or experienced housing insecurity, while 29 percent reported that they have known someone who has experienced homelessness. However, almost half (49%) of respondents with a household income of \$50,000 or less have either been homeless or known someone who has been, compared to 37 percent of those with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

Figure 2 | Personal Experiences with Homelessness by Household Income Levels



Housing affordability causes more residents in the region to consider moving to a different neighborhood or city, compared to the issue of homelessness.

A quarter (24%) of residents in the region have seriously considered moving to a different neighborhood or city to find affordable housing and another 20 percent have considered it, but not seriously. This is compared to the 14 percent of residents seriously considering moving because of the issue of homelessness, with an additional 19 percent considering moving but not seriously. Of those residents who have seriously considered moving (for either reason), over half (55%) considered moving out of state.

About half of the region's residents report some awareness of how homelessness is being addressed locally.

Only 10 percent of residents in the region report knowing "a lot" about what their local governments and organizations are doing to address homelessness and another 43 percent report knowing "just some."

More residents prioritize providing services to unsheltered individuals vs. clearing of encampments.

Three out of five residents in the region (or 60%) prefer local authorities prioritize providing services to

"The city has not effectively provided solutions for those affected by homelessness. The resources spent on clearing encampments seem to be wasted when people move down a block and back every few weeks"

- Sacramento County resident

"It bothers me that we do nothing to help house our homeless people"

- El Dorado County resident

"Some days I feel like the safety around me is questionable [because of homelessness] although I feel politics doesn't allow for real change."

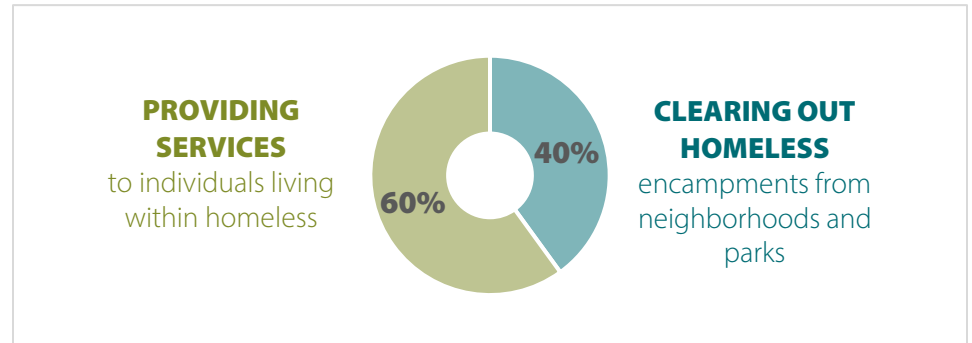
- Sacramento County resident

"The homeless seem to have more rights and privileges than me as a taxpayer. The homeless are given many opportunities for help however they choose not to want to contribute to society, so therefore everyone else must pay for it"

- Sacramento County resident

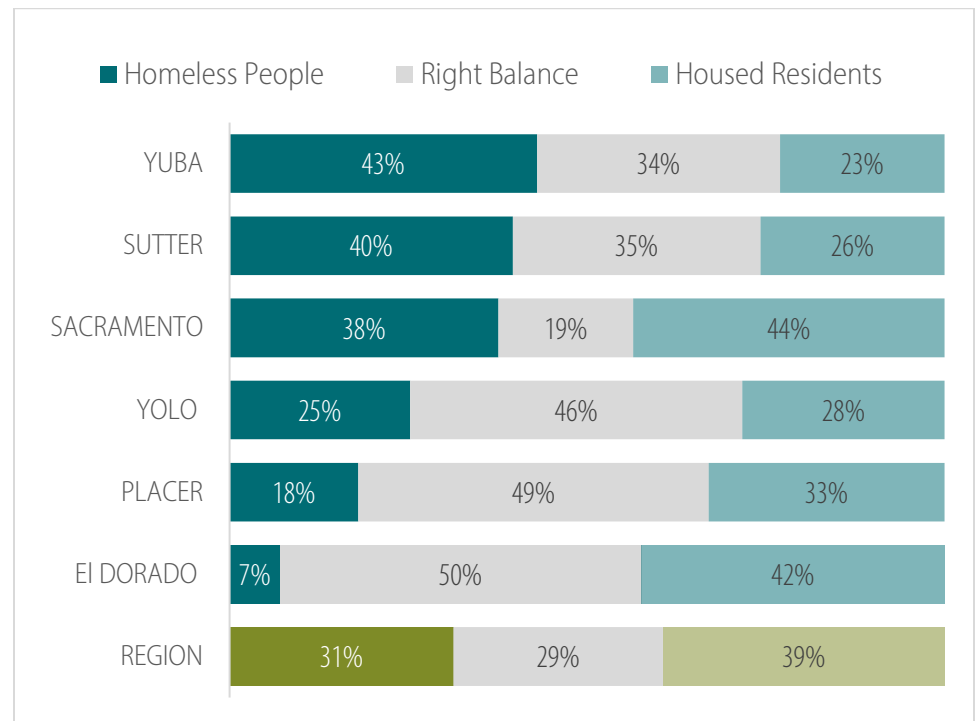
individuals living within homeless encampments over the clearing out homeless encampments from neighborhoods and parks.

Figure 3 | Residents' Priorities for Local Authorities in Addressing Homelessness



Residents have varied opinions on if their counties are prioritizing the homeless population vs. housed residents. Throughout the region a larger percent of residents (39%) believe that their county is prioritizing the rights of housed residents at the expense of people experiencing homelessness, compared to 31 percent who feel that their county is prioritizing the rights of people experiencing homelessness at the expense of housed residents. Twenty-nine percent reported that their county had struck the right balance between both groups. However, people's perceptions vary greatly based upon their county, political ideology, and household income levels.

Figure 4 | Residents' Perceptions about their Counties' Prioritization of Rights



"The city, county and state are not doing anything to help these people get back on their feet. It is a shame that our government allows this to happen and, often, makes it worse."

- Sacramento County resident

"[The cause of homelessness] is not one thing - it's a combination but boils down to lack of basic care and opportunity (mental, physical, and economical) from community and government."

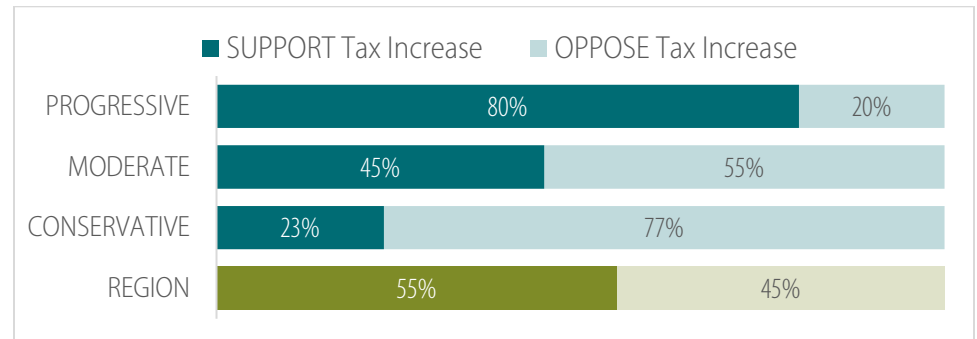
- Placer County resident

"It annoys me that we have all the homeless, but are not fixing the housing price or rent price issue. A person used to be able to afford to provide for their family and themselves. It has become too hard for people, most are one life emergency away from homelessness."

- Yolo County resident

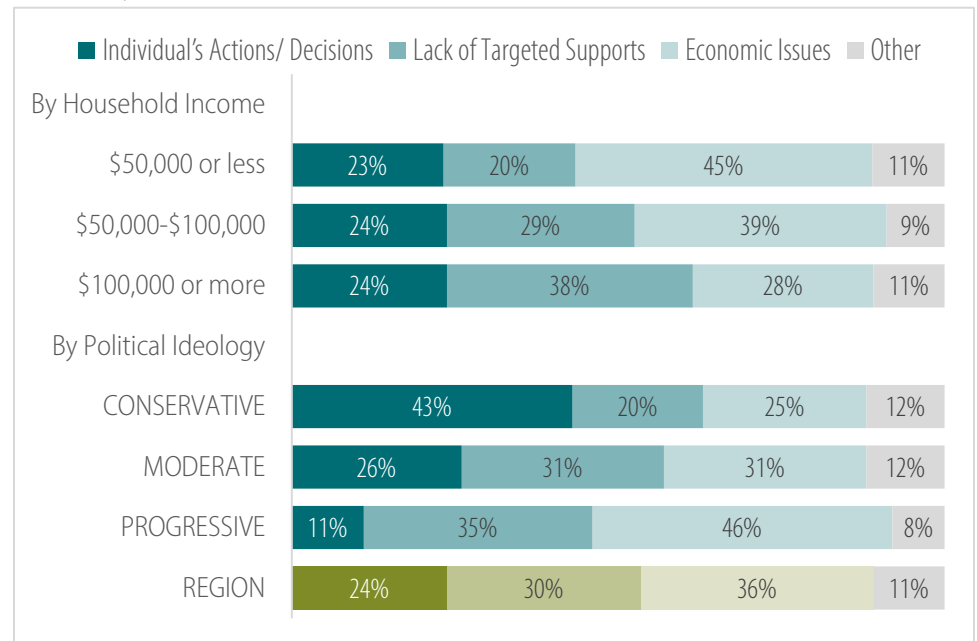
A majority of residents would support a tax increase to help individuals experiencing homelessness. Across the region, 18 percent of respondents would "strongly" support a tax increase to create permanent city and county initiatives to reduce the homeless population and an additional 37 percent would "somewhat" support an increase. More than half of the respondents within each of the counties (with the exception of Yuba) reported that they would support such an increase.

Figure 5 | Support for Increased Taxes to Address Homelessness



Respondents' perceptions about the primary cause of homelessness are related to their own income levels and political ideology. Overall, about a quarter of respondents (24%) attributed the primary cause of homelessness to "a person's individual actions and decisions." The lack of targeted supports for the homeless population, such as "lack of access to healthcare for mental and physical illness" (23%) and "lack of shelters and other housing options" (7%), had a similar proportion. Factors related to economic issues such as "lack of affordable housing" (19%) and "wages that aren't keeping

Figure 6 | Perceptions of Primary Causes of Homelessness



"I feel sad for the homeless that they don't have a home or suffer mental health problems but I still want a safe community."

- Yolo County resident

"Homeless politics is controlling city government and city and county law enforcement. Taxpayers are unable to protect their personal space, property and real property."

- Sacramento County resident

"I am just sick of being confronted with it - I am losing my compassion."

- Sacramento County resident

up with the cost of living" (17%) were also key issues. However, when looking at the household income levels of respondents, people with incomes less than \$50k were most likely to report "Economic Issues" (45%). When looking at perceptions of the causes of homelessness by political ideology, only 11 percent of progressive respondents attributed homelessness to "individuals' actions and decisions" compared to 43 percent of conservative respondents.

Like many regions in the state, the **Sacramento Region is grappling with the growing number of individuals who are unhoused and its implications on public space and safety.** Many residents encounter homeless encampments on a regular basis as they go about their day-to-day lives. The pervasiveness of homelessness has gone beyond an abstract policy concern that only impacts a small sector of the population. The threat of housing insecurity is felt broadly across the region. Housing costs continue to climb and increasingly residents have personal experiences with homelessness – by either not having a home themselves or knowing family and friends who are experiencing housing insecurity.

Addressing homelessness in the region remains a complex problem for local governments and organizations to address. While the impacts of the issue are highly visible, most residents are not aware of the efforts and strategies currently being implemented in their counties. Nonetheless, most residents prefer that local agencies provide services to individuals experiencing homelessness rather than simply clearing out their encampments from public view. The majority of residents similarly support a tax increase to help these individuals and families and reduce the unhoused population overall.

Homelessness is a significant issue for all residents in the region regardless of their current housing status. As a whole, residents expressed concern for neighborhood safety, impacts on property values and their quality of life, the well-being of unhoused community members, and frustrations with a perceived lack of government action to address the needs of the community. Public support for policies to support unhoused residents and the region's overall prioritization of providing services to those in need can inform future dialogues between community members, policy makers, and advocates.

The Sacramento Regional Panel is an ongoing research collaboration between the Institute for Social Research and Valley Vision. Survey data informs policymakers and stakeholders on key regional issues by providing on-the-ground public engagement data. The survey panel is made up of approximately 3,000 randomly selected households from Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado, Placer, Sutter, and Yuba counties. Read more about ISR's survey panels at www.csus.edu/isr. This brief on the Regional Experiences with Homelessness is the second in a series of three highlighting findings from a poll conducted in May 2022 about issues of community safety and well-being. The poll's margin of error is +/- 2.2%.



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Homelessness is highly visible across the region.

Table 1 | During the past six-months, how often have you seen encampments, vehicles that people are living in, and/or people who you believe are experiencing homelessness in your county?

Visibility of Homelessness	Almost everyday		At least once a week		A few times a month or less		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
EI DORADO	22	15%	30	21%	94	65%	146	100%
PLACER	77	26%	121	41%	101	34%	299	100%
SACRAMENTO	787	67%	292	25%	93	8%	1,172	100%
SUTTER	38	55%	24	34%	8	11%	70	100%
YOLO	62	37%	77	45%	31	19%	170	100%
YUBA	29	50%	19	33%	11	18%	59	100%
REGION	1,016	53%	563	29%	338	18%	1,917	100%

Results are significant at the $p = .000$ level.

Table 2 | Thinking about the last 12 months, do you think the issue of homelessness in your county has...

Trends in Homelessness	Gotten worse		Stayed about the same		Gotten better		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
EI DORADO	65	44%	75	52%	6	4%	146	100%
PLACER	207	70%	81	28%	6	2%	295	100%
SACRAMENTO	1,001	86%	151	13%	16	1%	1,169	100%
SUTTER	55	76%	15	20%	2	3%	72	100%
YOLO	103	61%	60	36%	6	3%	169	100%
YUBA	35	60%	22	37%	1	3%	59	100%
REGION	1,467	77%	405	21%	37	2%	1,909	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Cross tabulations were tested for statistical significance with chi-square tests of independence using SPSS Complex Samples. The results of testing are noted below each table when applicable. Note: In some tables, the total frequencies do not equal the sum of the individual variables (i.e., the total differs by a factor of one). This is due to the rounding of weighted data and does not represent an error in the calculations.

Many of the region's residents have had a personal experience with homelessness or housing insecurity.

Table 3 | In the past year, have you or someone you know experienced homelessness or housing insecurity? *(select all that apply)*

Personal Experience with Homelessness	SACRAMENTO County		ALL OTHER Counties		TOTAL REGION	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
YES, I have	100	8%	41	5%	141	7%
YES, I know someone who has	354	30%	202	27%	556	29%
NO, I don't know anyone who has	730	62%	499	67%	1,229	64%

Table 3a | [By Household Income] In the past year, have you or someone you know experienced homelessness or housing insecurity? *(select all that apply)*

Personal Experience with Homelessness	\$50,000 or less		\$50,000-\$100,000		\$100,000 or more	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
YES, I have	69	13%	32	6%	39	5%
YES, I know someone who has	192	36%	174	31%	190	23%
NO, I don't know anyone who has	276	52%	353	63%	600	71%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Housing affordability causes more residents in the region to consider moving to a different neighborhood or city, compared to the issue of homelessness.

Table 4 | Have you ever considered moving to a different neighborhood or city **to find affordable housing** for yourself or your family?

Considering moving to find affordable housing	SACRAMENTO County		ALL OTHER Counties		REGION	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
YES, seriously	307	27%	149	20%	456	24%
YES, but not seriously	238	21%	136	18%	374	20%
NO, have not considered it	606	53%	453	61%	1,058	56%
Total	1,151	100%	738	100%	1,889	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 4a | [By Household Income] Have you ever considered moving to a different neighborhood or city **to find affordable housing** for yourself or your family?

Considering moving to find affordable housing	INCOME \$50k or less		INCOME \$50k - \$100k		INCOME \$100k or more	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
YES, seriously	166	32%	124	23%	166	20%
YES, but not seriously	120	23%	119	22%	136	16%
NO, have not considered it	239	46%	294	55%	525	64%
Total	525	100%	537	100%	827	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 5 | Have you ever considered moving to a different neighborhood or city **because of the issue of homelessness?**

Considering moving due to the issue of homelessness	SACRAMENTO County		ALL OTHER Counties		REGION	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
YES, seriously	197	17%	71	10%	268	14%
YES, but not seriously	280	24%	84	12%	364	19%
NO, have not considered it	695	59%	575	79%	1,270	67%
Total	1,172	100%	730	100%	1,903	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 6 | Why is homelessness a consideration for relocation?

Please explain why the issue of homelessness made you consider moving.	REGION	
	#	%
Safety Concerns	279	57%
Health and Sanitation	138	28%
Troubling Behavior	124	25%
Bothered by visibility/situation	96	20%
No change/solution in sight	89	18%
Cost of Living	76	16%
Loss of Community Space	69	14%
Economics and Property	54	11%
Impact on Children	34	7%
Other	3	1%

Table 7 | If you have considered moving seriously [to find affordable housing or because of the issue of homelessness], where have you considered/thought about moving to?

Areas being seriously considered. (respondents can report more than one)	REGION	
	#	%
OUTSIDE California	200	55%
WITHIN California	128	35%
WHEREVER Housing is Affordable	41	11%
OTHER	46	12%

About half of the region's residents report some awareness of how homelessness is being addressed locally.

Table 8 | How much do you know about the work local governments and organizations are doing to address homelessness?

Awareness of what is being done to address homelessness	REGION	
	#	%
A lot	182	10%
Just some	817	43%
Very little	710	37%
Nothing at all	197	10%
Total	1,906	100%

Residents have varied opinions on if their counties are prioritizing people experiencing homelessness vs. housed residents.

Table 9 | As you think about the issue of homelessness, do you feel that your county has...

County's Response to Homelessness	Prioritized the rights of people experiencing homelessness at the expense of housed residents.		Struck the right balance between the rights of people experiencing homelessness and housed residents.		Prioritized the rights of housed residents at the expense of people experiencing homelessness.		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
EI DORADO	9	7%	61	50%	51	42%	120	100%
PLACER	45	18%	125	49%	82	33%	253	100%
SACRAMENTO	380	38%	191	19%	440	44%	1,011	100%
SUTTER	19	40%	17	35%	12	26%	48	100%
YOLO	34	25%	63	46%	38	28%	135	100%
YUBA	21	43%	17	34%	11	23%	49	100%
REGION	508	31%	474	29%	635	39%	1,617	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 9a | [By Political Ideology and Household Income] As you think about the issue of homelessness, do you feel that your county has...

County's Response to Homelessness	Prioritized the rights of people experiencing homelessness		Struck the right balance		Prioritized the rights of housed residents		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY								
Conservative	152	47%	92	28%	80	25%	324	100%
Moderate	234	37%	198	31%	205	32%	636	100%
Progressive	121	19%	182	28%	348	53%	651	100%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME								
\$50,000 or less	111	25%	115	26%	216	49%	442	100%
\$50,000-\$100,000	144	31%	157	34%	161	35%	462	100%
\$100,000 or more	253	35%	202	28%	258	36%	712	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level for ideology and the $p .05$ level for income.

More residents prioritize providing services to unsheltered individuals vs. the clearing of encampments.

Table 10 | Which of the following actions do you think should be given higher priority by local authorities when dealing with the issue of homelessness in your county?

Priority for Authorities	SACRAMENTO County		ALL OTHER Counties		REGION	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Clearing out homeless encampments from neighborhoods and parks.	453	40%	285	40%	738	40%
Providing services to individuals living within homeless encampments.	689	60%	432	60%	1,120	60%
Total	1,142	100%	717	100%	1,858	100%

A majority of residents would support a tax increase to help individuals experiencing homelessness.

Table 11 | Would you support or oppose a tax increase to create permanent city and county initiatives to help individuals experiencing homelessness and reduce the homeless population?

Tax Increase to Address Homelessness	REGION	
	#	%
Strongly SUPPORT	336	18%
Somewhat SUPPORT	685	37%
Somewhat OPPOSE	321	17%
Strongly OPPOSE	530	28%
Total	1,872	100%

Table 11a | [By Political Ideology] Support for an Increase in Taxes to Address Homelessness

Tax Increase to Address Homelessness	Strongly/ Somewhat SUPPORT tax increase		Somewhat/ Strongly OPPOSE tax increase		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
REGION	1,021	55%	851	45%	1,872	100%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY						
Conservative	85	23%	286	77%	371	100%
Moderate	344	45%	413	55%	757	100%
Progressive	586	80%	150	20%	736	100%

Results for ideology are significant at the $p = .000$ level.

People’s perceptions about the primary cause of homelessness are related to their own household income and political ideology.

Table 12 | Which of the following do you think is the **primary cause** of homelessness?

	SACRAMENTO County		ALL OTHER Counties		REGION	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
INDIVIDUAL’S ACTIONS/DECISIONS	268	23%	174	24%	442	24%
<i>A person's individual actions and decisions</i>	268	23%	174	24%	442	24%
LACK OF TARGETED SUPPORTS	304	27%	268	37%	572	30%
<i>Lack of access to healthcare for mental and physical illness</i>	214	19%	226	31%	440	23%
<i>Lack of shelters and other emergency housing options</i>	90	8%	42	6%	132	7%
ECONOMIC ISSUES	459	40%	210	28%	669	36%
<i>Wages that aren't keeping up with the cost of living</i>	209	18%	104	14%	313	17%
<i>Lack of affordable housing</i>	250	22%	106	14%	356	19%
OTHER	116	10%	84	11%	200	11%
Total	1,147	100%	735	100%	1,882	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 12a | [By Household Income and Political Ideology] Primary Cause of Homeless by Demographic Groups

Primary Cause of Homelessness	Individual’s Actions/ Decisions		Lack of Targeted Supports		Economic Issues		Other		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME										
\$50,000 or less	116	23%	103	20%	229	45%	58	11%	505	100%
\$50,000-\$100,000	130	24%	157	29%	212	39%	51	9%	550	100%
\$100,000 or more	195	24%	312	38%	228	28%	91	11%	827	100%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY										
Conservative	155	43%	73	20%	89	25%	44	12%	361	100%
Moderate	205	26%	243	31%	244	31%	94	12%	785	100%
Progressive	80	11%	253	35%	333	46%	61	8%	728	100%

Results are significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Survey Demographics

A total of 1,948 survey panelists responded to the survey. Survey responses are weighted to reflect the demographics of the region. The poll's margin of error is +/- 2.2%.

COUNTY of RESIDENCE	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
Sacramento	1,187	61%
Placer	309	16%
Yolo	170	9%
El Dorado	148	8%
Sutter	72	4%
Yuba	62	3%
Total	1,948	100%

AGE	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
18 to 24	176	9%
25 to 34	369	19%
35 to 44	341	18%
45 to 54	305	16%
55 to 64	329	17%
65 and over	428	22%
Total	1,948	100%

RACE & ETHNICITY	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
White	1148	59%
Hispanic	374	19%
Asian & Pacific Islander	270	14%
Black or African American	105	5%
Other	50	3%
Total	1,948	100%

GENDER	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
Male	852	44%
Female	1,096	56%
Total	1,948	100%

EDUCATION	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
Up to HS Diploma	485	25%
Some College	552	28%
Associate's Degree	217	11%
Bachelor's Degree +	693	36%
Total	1,948	100%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%
Less than \$15,000	125	6%
\$15,000-\$20,000	36	2%
\$20,000-\$25,000	62	3%
\$25,000-\$30,000	56	3%
\$30,000-\$40,000	132	7%
\$40,000-\$50,000	125	6%
\$50,000-\$75,000	305	16%
\$75,000-\$100,000	259	13%
\$100,000-\$150,000	393	20%
\$150,000-\$200,000	202	10%
\$200,000 or above	254	13%
Total	1,948	100%

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY	RESPONDENTS	
	#	%*
Very conservative	77	4%
Conservative	302	16%
Moderate	809	42%
Progressive	534	28%
Very progressive	219	11%
Total	1,940	100%
No response	8	-

* Only valid % shown.