

Polling the Environment that Surrounds Covid-19 and Social Justice

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Jul 28, 2020(Fox Hounds: <http://www.foxandhoundsdaily.com/>Delivered by Newstex) The Public Policy Institute of California is out with its regular 'Californians and the Environment' poll, but this time the environment measured were attitudes around the three headline grabbing issues of the last few months: effects of the coronavirus; social justice issues; and the economy. While you can delve into the entire poll here,[1] what caught my eye were the attitudes toward mask wearing and social justice at a time that justice and affirmative action measures will soon face voters. As California fights through a surge in Covid-19 cases and mounting deaths, the issues of masks has been reported as controversial and polarizing.

Yet, the new PPIC poll seems to indicate overwhelming support for mask wearing. Do the respondents answers jibe with reality? We've all seen pictures of California beaches populated with few people wearing masks. Take a walk in a neighborhood park and maybe half those in the park have donned a mask and kept their distance from fellow parkgoers. However, the PPIC poll shows that 86% of all adults and 90% of likely voters think people in public places near others should wear a mask always or most of the time. Perhaps, the difference between the statewide poll results and what many people experience in practice is that the poll question asked the respondents if they think people in public places 'should' wear masks. The easy and expected answer is that people should wear masks. Even President Trump who resisted for so long has recently donned a mask. So, yes, we all should, but do we? Maybe, a follow up question to dig deeper is: Do you wear a mask? Honest responses may not have been as high as the numbers in the poll. It's interesting to note that in the poll, young adults between the ages of 18-34, often accused of feeling invincible and ignoring mask mandates, responded strongly (83%) to the idea that masks should be worn. Mask wearing certainly should be supported by the 77% of adults (and 75% of likely voters) who expressed worry that they or someone in their family would become sick with the virus. Racism was considered a big problem in the U.S. by 60% of all adults and 61% of likely voters. When you add those poll respondents who claimed racism was somewhat of a problem, the figures bloomed to 85% and 84%, respectively. 96% of Democrats found racism as a big or somewhat of a problem; 63% of Republicans felt the same. Black Lives Matter received two-thirds support of likely voters. When a question asking if the justice system in the U.S. was biased against African Americans, 65% of likely voters agreed. The responses to questions on racism, Black Lives Matter, and the justice system could offer an early indicator how voters might react to a couple of statewide ballot questions. Proposition 16 to repeal affirmative action might be looked upon sympathetically by voters who endorsed the idea that racism is a problem. The bias in the justice system will be brought up by opponents of Proposition 20 which is intended to adjust past measures that turned a number of felonies into misdemeanors and fast-tracked the parole process for felons convicted of nonviolent crimes. Opponents argue that mass incarceration is a result of bias and racism and oppose making it easier to keep people in jail. As this poll indicates, it is quite a different 'environment' that California residents and voters will be dealing with this year. [1]: <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/crosstabs-time-trends-methodology-0720.pdf>

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