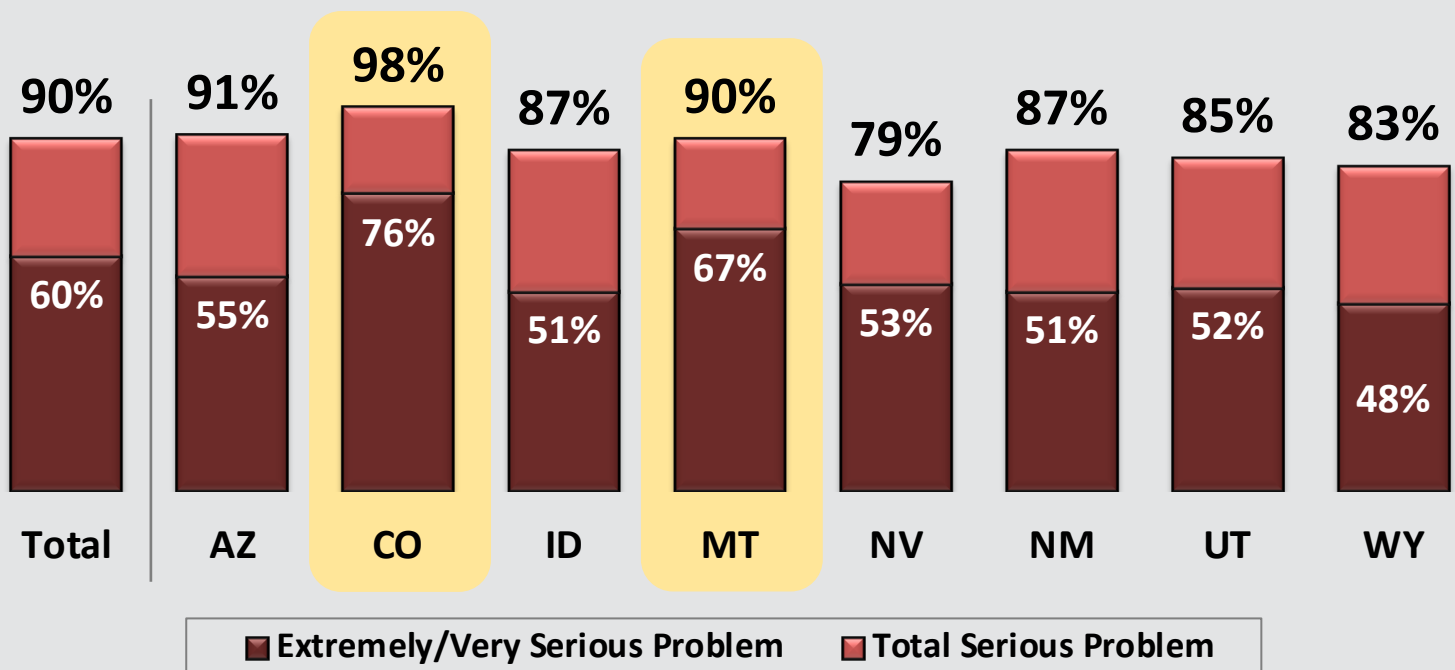


Wildfires in the West

Western voters increasingly view wildfires as a serious problem affecting their state, with more attributing the problem to changes in the climate and drought, rather than to forest management or other policies. Still, vast majorities embrace increasing efforts to reduce the potential for catastrophic fires, including ones that affect homeowners in fire-prone areas.

Nine-in-ten Westerners view wildfires as a serious problem in their state, up significantly in the last five years alone. Today, 90 percent of Western voters characterize “uncontrollable wildfires that threaten homes and property” as a serious problem in their state, with three-in-five (60 percent) describing this as an extremely or very serious problem. That is up significantly since 2016 when 77 percent viewed wildfires as a serious problem (up 13 points). As the following graph depicts, virtually all Coloradans and the vast majority in every single Western state now describe wildfires as a serious problem.

Seriousness of Uncontrollable Wildfires



More than seven-in-ten Westerners believe wildfires are more of a problem than they were ten years ago. Fully 71 percent characterize wildfires as “more of a problem” than they were ten years ago, with one-in-four (25 percent) saying it about the same, and a mere 3 percent viewing them as less of a problem today.

More of a Problem



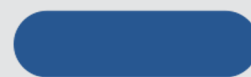
71%

About the Same



25%

Less of a Problem



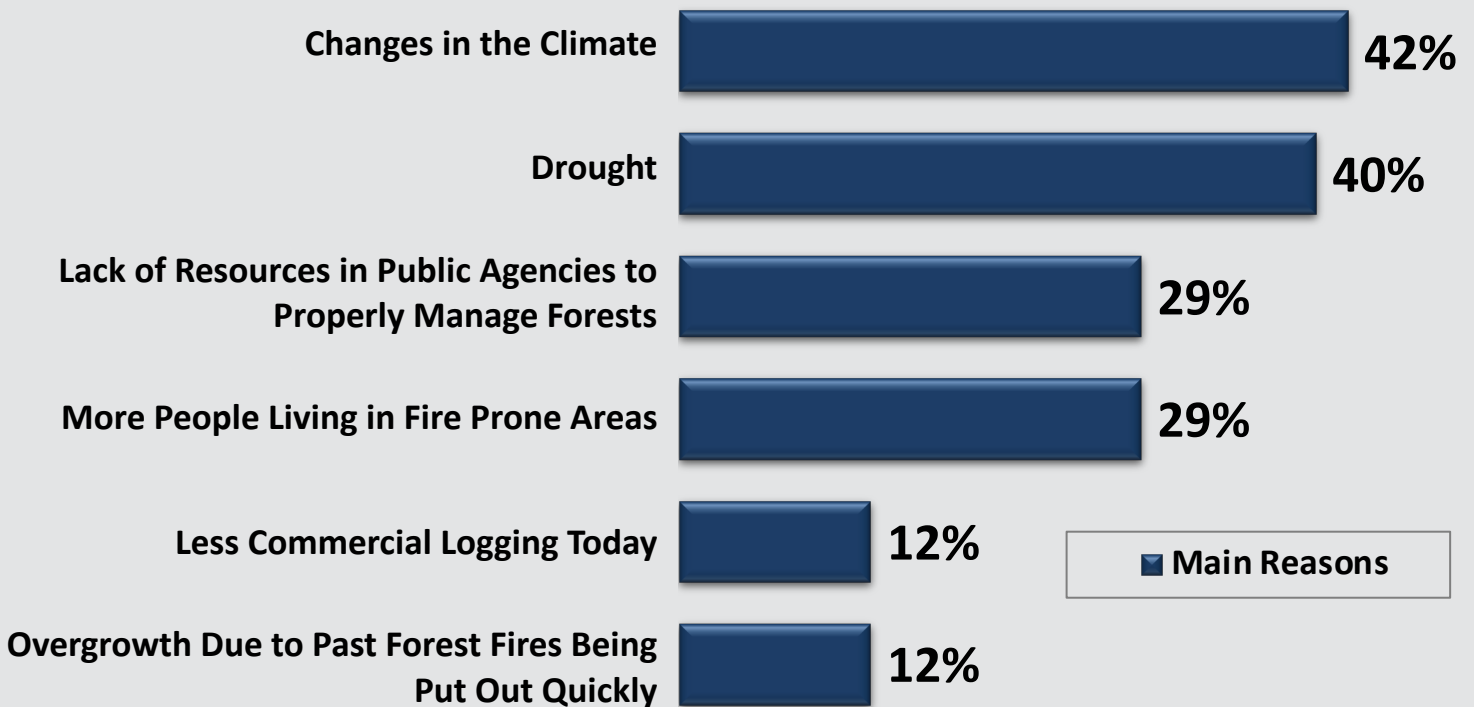
3%



Voters cite climate change and drought as the two biggest reasons for increased wildfires. Among those who believe that fires are more of a problem than a decade ago, voters are most likely to point to changes in the climate followed closely by drought as the greatest factors in fueling fires.



Reasons for Increased Wildfires



There are some notable distinctions in perceptions. Younger voters under age 35 are far more likely to point to a changing climate as the culprit (56 percent say it is one of the main reasons), dropping to 47 percent of 35–44 year old’s and just 35 percent of those 45 and older. Fully 67 percent of Biden voters but only 7 percent of those who voted for Trump attribute the increasing number of fires to changes in the climate. Trump voters are most likely to point to lack of resources for public agencies to properly manage forests (40 percent, compared to 24 percent of Biden voters).

There is strong support for a number of actions to reduce the risks of wildfires. As the following chart depicts, Western voters express overwhelming and intense support for combatting wildfires both through proactive management of fire-prone lands – including increasing the use of controlled burns – as well as requirements on homeowners and developers that would help reduce the impact of fires on structures.

Actions to Address Wildfire Risk

