Recent immigrants are more likely than US-born Californians to be college graduates.
Educational attainment among newly arrived adult immigrants has increased markedly since 1990. In 2017, 52% of working-age immigrants (age 25–64) who had lived in the US for five years or less had bachelor’s or graduate degrees, up 30 percentage points from 22% in 1990. In contrast, the share of college graduates among US-born Californians was 37% in 2017, up 10 points from 27% in 1990. Among newly arrived, working-age immigrants, only 17% had not graduated from high school in 2017, compared with nearly half (47%) in 1990.

Most recent immigrants are from Asia—and most Asian immigrants are college educated.
In 2017, 55% of newly arrived immigrants were from Asia, almost twice the share from Latin America (29%). The majority (56%) of Asian immigrant adults have at least a bachelor’s degree. Immigrants from India are the fastest-growing and best-educated group in California: the working-age immigrant population from India has increased six-fold since 1990, and 80% of these immigrants have college degrees.

California increasingly depends on immigrants to meet demand for highly educated workers ...
Immigrants make up about 30% of California workers with at least a bachelor’s degree, up from 20% in 1990. Highly educated immigrants work in every major industry in the state and are especially well-represented in the technology and health sectors. A majority (62%) of college graduates in electronics and product manufacturing are immigrants, as are about half of workers in software publishing (45%) and computer systems design (49%). Immigrants make up 59% of college graduates in skilled nursing facilities.

... but the state economy continues to rely on immigrants with little formal education.
In 2017, 32% of working-age immigrants in California had not graduated from high school, compared to 7% of US-born Californians. An additional 20% of immigrants in California finished high school but did not attend college, similar to US-born residents (21%). Immigrants make up a large share of workers in industries that require little formal education, including agricultural production and the hospitality industry.

Strong educational progress occurs across generations.
In California and the nation as a whole, the children of immigrants tend to be much better educated than their parents. Seven in ten (70%) first-generation immigrants age 60–69 have graduated from high school, compared to 94% of second-generation Californians age 30–39. Educational attainment among second-generation Californians is similar to that of other US-born residents whose parents were not immigrants.

Most Californians are concerned about the impact of immigration enforcement on students.
Three-quarters of Californians (76%) are concerned that increased federal immigration enforcement will affect undocumented college and university students—including those covered by the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) policy. The level of concern is particularly high among those born outside the country (81%). In addition, six in ten Californians (61%) are concerned about the impact of enforcement on K–12 students in their local public schools. A majority (57%) support their local school district designating itself a “sanctuary safe zone.”
Recent immigrants are more likely than other Californians to have bachelor’s and graduate degrees

Note: Recent immigrants are those who arrived within the last five years.

The share of immigrants among California workers with college degrees has grown

Sources: 2017 American Community Survey; decennial censuses, employed workers.
Note: The figure shows employed California residents with at least a bachelor’s degree.

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