

# Immigrants and Political Engagement

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➤ **A quarter of the nation's immigrants live in California.**

California is home to 10.7 million immigrants, or about a quarter of all foreign-born residents living in the country. In 2016, 27% of the state's population was not born in the United States. This marks a threefold increase since 1970, when 9% of California's population was foreign born, and is similar to the rate of increase in foreign-born residents nationwide (up from 5% in 1970 to 13% in 2016). Today, 50% of California's immigrants are naturalized US citizens.

➤ **Immigrants in California express less interest in politics than US-born residents ...**

In our surveys, we find that immigrants in California are less likely to have a great deal (17%) or a fair amount (23%) of interest in politics than US-born residents (30% great deal, 42% fair amount). Among immigrant respondents who have become naturalized US citizens, 83% are registered to vote, similar to the rate among US-born residents (86%). However, 54% of immigrants who became US citizens are considered likely voters, compared to 61% of US-born residents.

➤ **... but both groups are paying more attention to politics since the presidential election.**

Since Donald Trump's election, nearly half of the state's immigrants (49%) and US-born residents (52%) say they are paying more attention to politics. Among both groups, a third express more interest in local town hall meetings held by elected officials. However, overwhelming majorities of immigrants (90%) and US-born residents (80%) have not attended a political event, rally, or organized protest since the November election.

➤ **Naturalized citizens in California are more likely to be registered as Democrats.**

Among naturalized citizens in our surveys who are registered to vote, 56% are registered Democrats, 28% are independents, 14% are Republicans, and 2% are registered with other parties. Among the state's US-born registered voters, 43% are Democrats, 28% are Republicans, 24% are independents, and 5% are registered with other parties. But similar shares of California's immigrants and US-born residents identify as politically liberal (35% immigrant, 37% US-born), conservative (35% immigrant, 33% US-born), and moderate (30% each).

➤ **Immigrants are more likely than US-born residents to trust the federal government.**

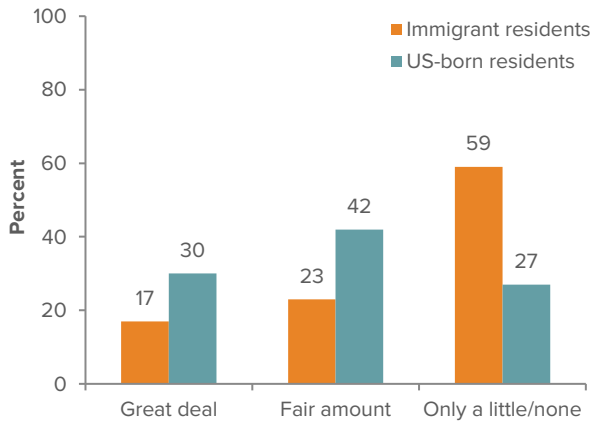
In California, nearly four in ten immigrants say they can trust the federal government to do what is right just about always (13%) or most of the time (26%), compared to fewer than a quarter of US-born residents (3% always, 20% most of the time). Notably, immigrants (74%) are far more likely than US-born residents (44%) to prefer a bigger government providing more services. However, majorities of both immigrants (57%) and US-born residents (64%) think the federal government wastes a lot of taxpayer money. And solid majorities of immigrants (60%) and US-born residents (75%) think the federal government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, with fewer (34% immigrant, 21% US-born) believing the federal government is run for the benefit of all people.

➤ **Immigrants have more favorable views on immigration than US-born residents.**

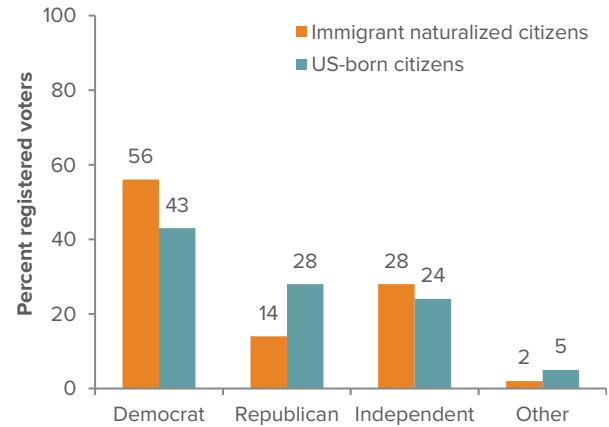
Nearly nine in ten immigrants in California say immigrants are a benefit to the state because of their hard work and job skills, while only 8% say they are a burden because they use public services (70% US-born say benefit, 26% US-born say burden). An overwhelming majority of immigrants (84%) also oppose building a wall along the entire border with Mexico, compared to a strong majority of US-born residents (67%). And most Californians favor the protections provided by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, with overwhelming majorities of both immigrants (88%) and US-born residents (78%) in favor of DACA protections for some undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children.



Interest in politics



Party registration



Opinions and political ideology of California’s immigrants

		Immigrant residents	US-born residents
Political ideology	Liberal	35%	37%
	Middle-of-the-road	30	30
	Conservative	35	33
Attention to politics since Donald Trump’s election (September 2017)	More attention	49	52
	Less attention	27	12
	Same amount of attention	20	35
Interest in town hall meetings since Donald Trump’s election (September 2017)	More interest	33	32
	Less interest	25	20
	Same amount of interest	35	46
Participation in political events since Donald Trump’s election (September 2017)	Yes	9	19
	No	90	80
Perception of how often you can trust the federal government (March 2017)	Just about always	13	3
	Most of the time	26	20
	Some of the time	52	67
	None of the time (volunteered)	4	9
Preference for role of government (May 2017)	Smaller government, fewer services	21	49
	Bigger government, more services	74	44
Perception of how much taxpayer money the federal government wastes (March 2017)	A lot	57	64
	Some	25	29
	Not very much	13	5
Perception of who the federal government is run for (March 2017)	A few big interests	60	75
	Benefit of all of the people	34	21
Perceptions of immigrants in California (September 2017)	Immigrants are a benefit	89	70
	Immigrants are a burden	8	26

Sources: Nine PPIC Statewide Surveys from January 2017 to January 2018, including 15,374 adults, 3,789 of whom were immigrant residents, unless otherwise noted; 2016 American Community Survey.

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