

What do Asian American Voters in California Want?

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The growing political weight of the Asian American community has emerged as a popular narrative characterizing successive presidential and midterm elections in the United States. In several [pivotal states](#) on the electoral map, Asian American voters are increasingly crucial actors with the demographic heft to swing close elections. As one Asian American congresswoman [said](#) about the community, “We’ve gone from the margins to the margin of victory.”

The demographic reshaping of the electorate is grist for compelling political analysis. Yet a narrow focus on the political clout of the community and its political behavior can sometimes obscure a more fundamental question: what are the policy priorities and preferences of this emerging demographic? Put another way, what exactly do Asian American voters want from their government?

In recent years, close observers have mounted several attempts to answer this question. There is a well-regarded body of scholarship, drawn from [public opinion data](#), that shines a light on the policy priorities of this burgeoning community. “What makes Asian American

voters tick?” has also been the subject of growing [media attention](#), especially as the community’s general tilt toward the Democratic Party can no longer be taken for granted. Some [evidence](#) suggests that the partisan inclinations of Asian Americans have been diversifying. In addition, in the wake of a worrying rise in hate crimes targeting people of Asian origin following the coronavirus pandemic, civil society organizations have devoted [greater attention](#) to ensuring Asian Americans voices are heard in the corridors of power.

This article is a modest attempt to add to this growing body of work. It is the second in a series of articles exploring the political and social preferences of Asian Americans in California. The [popular narrative](#) of an Asian American electoral coming of age, while perhaps newly prominent in the national theater of politics, has a long history in the state of California, where today Asian American/Pacific Islanders make up nearly 16 percent of the state’s overall population.

This article, as with the others in the [series](#), draws on a new online survey of 1,000 California-based Asian Americans conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for



International Peace in partnership with the data and analytics firm YouGov. The sample includes respondents from twenty-one Asian ethnic origin groups but excludes Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. Due to its narrow political focus, the analyses reported here draw on a subsample of 927 respondents who are U.S. citizens. Specifically, this article explores the policy preferences of California's Asian Americans on the eve of the 2022 midterm elections. It looks at policy attitudes through four prisms: prominent issues of contemporary relevance; key ballot initiatives scheduled for 2022 and 2024; the technology sector; and higher education.

The [first article](#) in this series explored the political preferences of the community on the eve of the midterm elections. Future articles will explore other topics of relevance to the California Asian American community, such as identity and discrimination, foreign policy, and civic and political engagement.

SURVEY DESIGN

The data analyzed here are based on an original online survey of 927 California-based Asian American citizens. The survey was designed by scholars at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and conducted by polling firm YouGov between September 9 and September 26, 2022. The overall sample contains 1,000 respondents, but this article focuses on the subset of U.S. citizens in the sample since its primary objective is to shed light on policy preferences ahead of the 2022 midterm election.

YouGov recruited respondents from its [proprietary panel](#) of nearly 2 million U.S. residents. Only adult respondents (ages eighteen and above) who are full-time residents of California and who belong to one of twenty-one Asian national origin groups were eligible to participate in the survey.¹ These twenty-one ethnic subgroups account for 97.4 percent of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population in California, according to [2020 U.S. Census data](#).² The YouGov survey did not include respondents who principally

identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The survey was fielded in English (see next section for additional discussion).

YouGov employs a sophisticated sample-matching procedure to ensure that the respondent pool, to the greatest extent possible, is representative of the Asian American community in California, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 [American Community Survey](#) as a target sample frame. All the analyses in this study employ sampling weights to ensure representativeness. The overall margin of error for the U.S. citizen subsample is +/- 3 percent. This margin of error is calculated at the 95 percent confidence interval.

The survey instrument contains an extensive range of questions organized across six modules: basic demographics, identity and discrimination, politics, policy preferences, foreign policy, and civic and political life. Respondents were allowed to skip questions except for important demographic questions that determined the nature of other survey items.

Strengths and Limitations

As [related research](#) has shown, surveys of Asian Americans have to contend with several thorny methodological challenges. While their numbers have increased, Asian Americans are still a distinct minority—even in California—making it difficult to recruit sufficiently large samples for survey estimation.

One of the [major benefits](#) of working with an extensive survey panel, such as the one maintained by YouGov, is that it provides access to large sample sizes that allow researchers to make reliable estimates about even relatively small populations of interest. However, online panels have a significant drawback: most online survey panels are conducted in English; only [around seven in ten eligible Asian-origin voters](#) report that they only speak English at home or speak the language “very well.”

Therefore, the results of this survey cannot mechanically be extrapolated to the Asian American community in

California at large. For instance, this survey’s sample includes a larger share of U.S. citizens than California’s Asian American population [as a whole](#). Rather, it is best to treat these survey findings as representative of the views of English-proficient Californians of Asian origin.

Despite this caveat, this survey serves as an important barometer given that, in the years to come, the characteristics of the Asian American population will increasingly resemble those of the sample studied here.

KEY POLICY ISSUES

The [first article](#) in this series on the social attitudes and political preferences of Asian Americans in California highlighted kitchen-table issues as front-and-center in the minds of many respondents as the midterm election season approaches. When asked which issue is the most important to them as they prepare to cast their ballot in November, inflation and the economy/jobs were the most popular responses, each named by 17 percent of survey participants (see figure 1).

Eleven percent of respondents reported healthcare as their most important issue, followed by 9 percent each identifying environment/climate change, crime and public safety, and abortion/reproductive health. Six percent of respondents each selected gun control and economic inequality, 4 percent highlighted education, and 3 percent each identified racism/racial discrimination, national security, and immigration. Only 2 percent selected voting rights as their topmost concern, and a mere 1 percent pointed to U.S. foreign policy toward Asia.

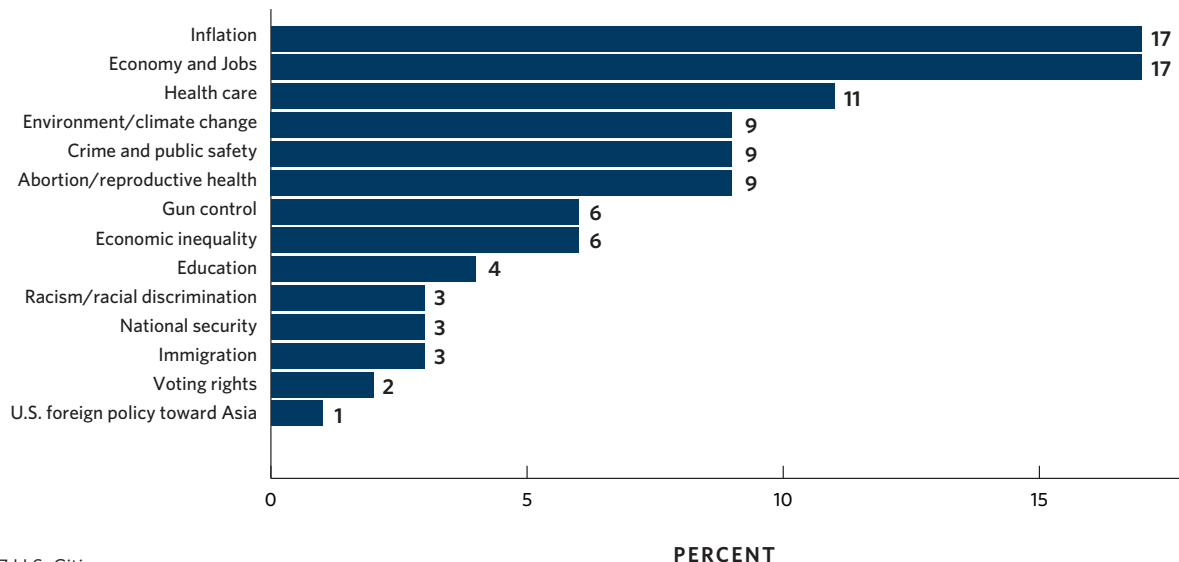
The survey then asked specific follow-up questions on four policy issues that have special salience in the context of recent policy debates in California: gun regulation, immigration, police funding, and caste.

Gun Regulation

While California has some of the [toughest gun laws](#) in the country, extant evidence suggests that public concern about guns and gun violence remains high, with a large majority of residents preferring more—not

Figure 1. Top Issues in the 2022 Election

Which of the following is the most important issue for you personally?



N=927 U.S. Citizens



less—regulation. A [July 2022](#) poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) found that 73 percent of adult respondents believe that gun laws should be made stricter still.

The Carnegie survey polled Asian Americans along similar lines. California requires individuals who wish to purchase a handgun to obtain a [Firearm Safety Certificate](#). The survey probed whether respondents agree or disagree with a license or permit requirement for *ongoing* possession of a firearm, as opposed to only new purchases.

An overwhelming majority of respondents—a whopping 83 percent—indicated that they agreed with the need for stricter requirements (see figure 2). The intensity of respondents’ preferences is also striking: 57 percent reported that they “strongly” agreed, and 26 percent “somewhat” agreed. Only 8 percent of respondents “somewhat” or “strongly” disagreed, and 9 percent were unsure of their stance.

Immigration

California has a reputation for being a [magnet for immigrants](#) from all over the world and, generally speaking, polling suggests that Californians are supportive of more progressive immigration policies. A [May 2022](#) PPIC survey found that 8 in 10 California-based respondents favored the protections offered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects undocumented children from deportation. Similarly, 8 in 10 respondents were in favor of providing a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they met certain requirements (such as background checks).

The Carnegie survey asked respondents if they agree or disagree with allowing state and local governments in California to maintain the ability to make their own policies to protect the legal rights of undocumented migrants, independent of federal government action. A clear majority, 55 percent, of Asian American

Figure 2. Gun Regulation

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: While a Firearm Safety Certificate is required for new purchases of firearms in California, a license or permit should also be required for ongoing possession of a firearm.

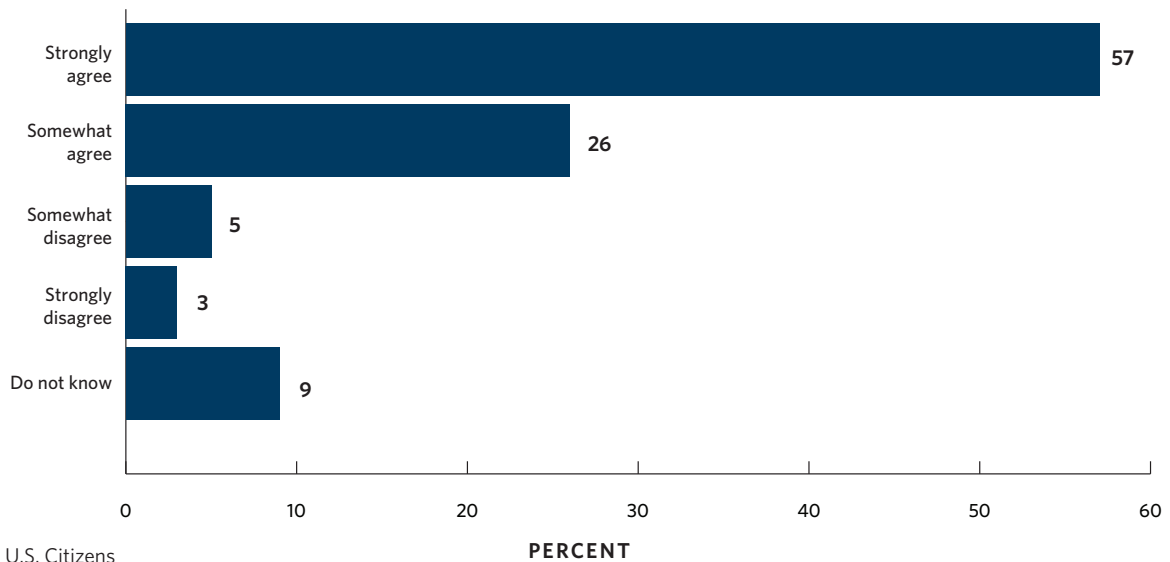


Figure 3. Undocumented Immigration

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: State and local governments in California should make their own policies, separate from the federal government, to protect the legal rights of undocumented immigrants in California.

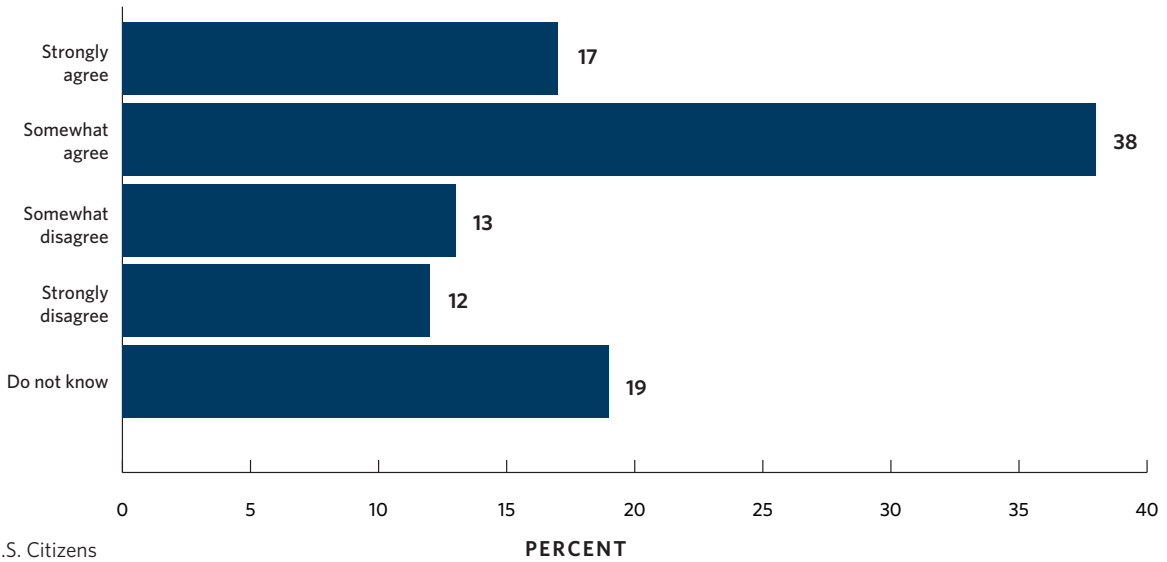
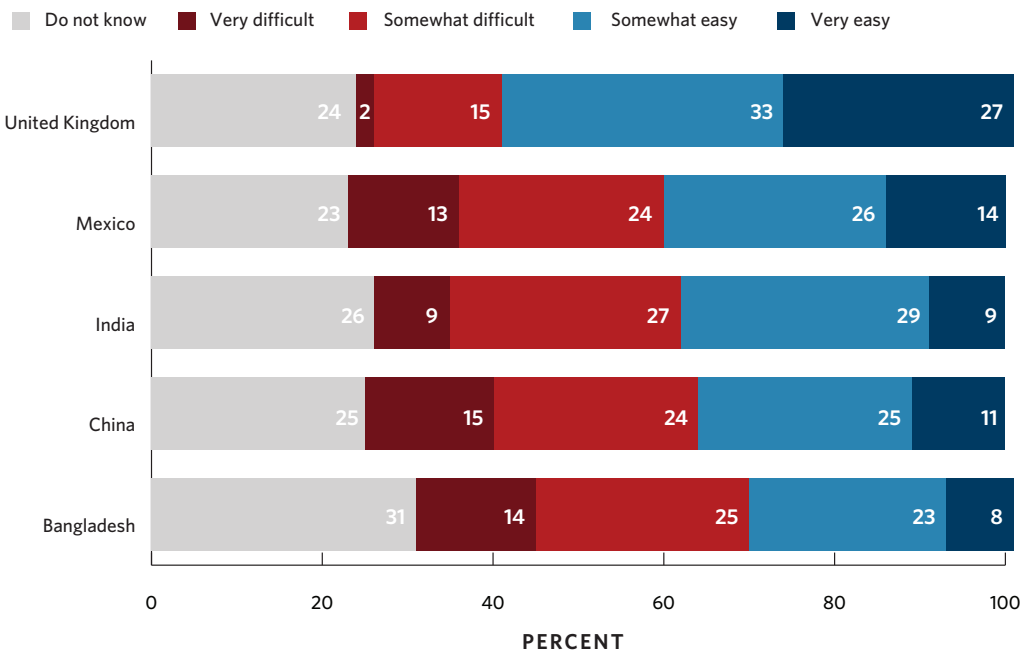


Figure 4. Ease of Immigration

How easy should it be to immigrate from these countries?



respondents agreed with the proposition (see figure 3). Twenty-five percent disagreed, and another 19 percent did not have an opinion.

It is possible that respondents might hold different views toward different categories of immigrants. For instance, they might be more inclined to favor greater immigration from Asian countries but less inclined to accept immigration from other sending countries. To probe this possibility, the survey asked respondents how easy it should be for individuals to immigrate to the United States from a list of selected countries. The list of countries included Bangladesh, China, India, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. The results are contained in Figure 4.

The data run counter to expectation. The most striking data point is that 60 percent of respondents reported that it should be easy for individuals from the United Kingdom to immigrate to the United States. This is markedly higher than the share who believed it should be easy for people to immigrate from Bangladesh (31

percent), China (36 percent), India (38 percent), or Mexico (40 percent). One might expect Asian Americans to be more favorably disposed to immigrants from their own communities; however, this was not the case. An important caveat to this finding is that a large share of respondents answered “do not know” to this series of questions—anywhere from 23 to 31 percent, depending on the country in question.

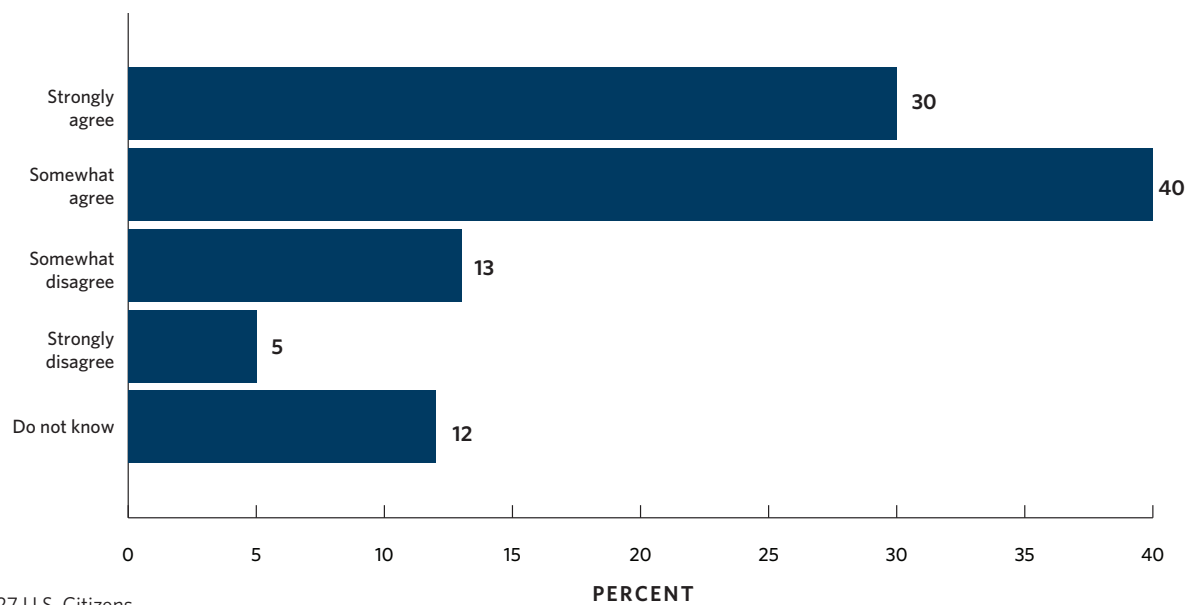
Police Funding

Given the [spike](#) in U.S. crime rates and, more specifically, the rise in [hate crimes](#) targeting Asian Americans, the salience of crime, policing, and public safety issues has increased among Asian Americans, according to existing survey data.

The [2022 Asian American Voter Survey \(AAVS\)](#) found that crime is likely to be influential in shaping Asian Americans’ voting choices this November. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents rated crime either “extremely important” or “very important”

Figure 5. Police Resources

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: California should devote greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime.



in determining their vote, a rating that only lags the issues of healthcare and economy/jobs. The same survey highlighted that 73 percent of respondents nationwide worried about experiencing a hate crime, harassment, or discrimination at least some of the time.

The survey asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with California devoting greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime. A strong majority—70 percent—of respondents agreed, reflecting an overarching concern with public safety (see figure 5). Just 18 percent of respondents disagreed, and 12 percent did not express an opinion.

Recent [media reports](#) have suggested that the Republican Party has aggressively courted Asian American voters by painting Democrats as weak on law and order issues. Traditionally, Asian Americans in the United States have voted decisively for the Democratic Party, although there is considerable variation by ethnic

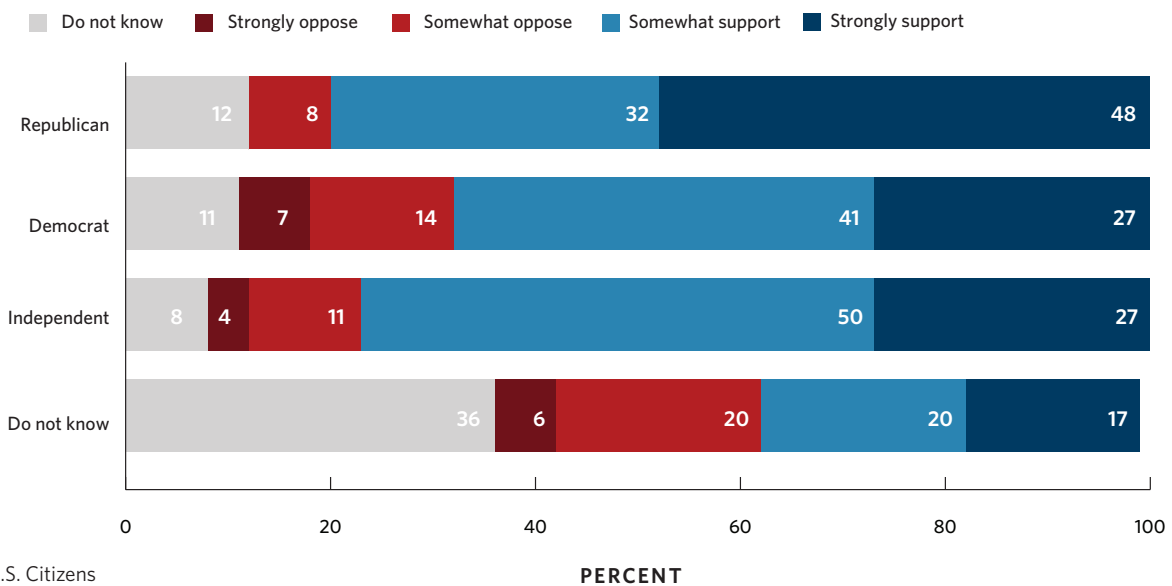
subgroup. [Some analysts](#) have suggested crime could be an issue the Republicans might use to induce defections from the Democratic Party.

While our survey cannot conclusively determine whether crime is emerging as a wedge issue, the data do suggest that support for stronger police action is greater among respondents who identify with the Republican Party (see figure 6).

Eighty percent of respondents who identified with the Republican Party “strongly” or “somewhat” also supported California devoting greater resources to support police efforts to curb crime, compared to 68 percent of self-reported Democrats. Somewhat telling is the fact that 77 percent of respondents who identified as independents were also supportive of greater funding for police forces. This could provide a boost to California Republicans if they succeed in convincing unaffiliated voters that they would manage matters of public safety better than their Democratic peers.

Figure 6. Police Resources, by Party Identification

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: California should devote greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime.





Caste

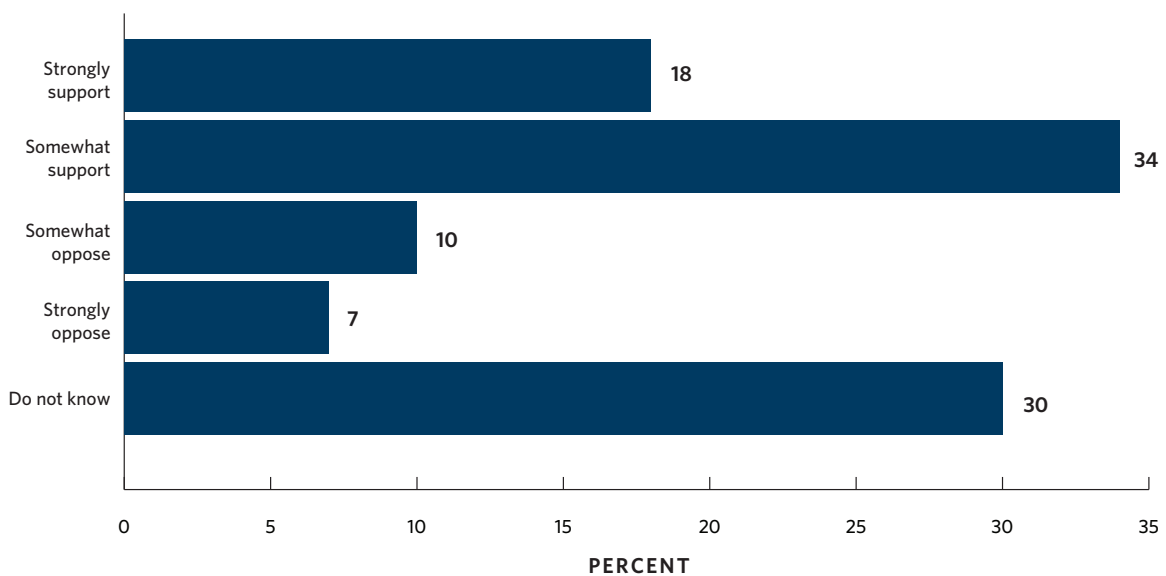
Of late, caste identity has become a renewed topic of conversation in the United States, with much of the debate centering around recent actions in the state of California. In 2016, a heated controversy [erupted](#) over the teaching of caste in middle school textbooks used across the state. In 2020, California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a [lawsuit](#) against U.S.-based technology company Cisco Systems. This came after an employee from one of India’s historically marginalized castes (known as Dalits) alleged that some of his upper caste Indian American colleagues discriminated against him because of his caste identity. The Hindu American Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy organization, responded by [countersuing](#) the government agency in federal court, saying its actions erroneously tied Hindu religious beliefs to the practice of caste discrimination. This countersuit

came on the heels of another California-centric caste controversy—California State University’s January 2022 [announcement](#) adding caste as a protected category in its antidiscrimination policy. Some pro-Hindu groups have denounced the university’s move as unfairly singling out people of the Hindu faith.

The investigation of attitudes and beliefs toward caste merits its own survey. But the Carnegie survey simply asked all respondents, irrespective of their ethnic heritage, whether they supported or opposed California State University’s decision. A slim majority—52 percent—of respondents supported Cal State’s move to add caste as a protected category (see figure 7). Eighteen percent “strongly” supported the measure, and another 34 percent “somewhat” supported the measure. Opposition was muted: just 17 percent either “somewhat” or “strongly” opposed the measure. Somewhat unsurprisingly, given that the salience of caste

Figure 7. Protection Against Caste Discrimination

In January 2020, California State University announced it added caste as a protected category in its system-wide anti-discrimination policy. Do you support or oppose Cal State’s decision?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

is primarily confined to the South Asian community, nearly one in three respondents (30 percent) did not express a view.

On this question, the data suggest there is some variation by ethnic origin. Filipino and respondents from other, smaller ethnic subgroups were the most supportive (56 percent) of expanding antidiscrimination policies to include caste, while Koreans were the least (43 percent). Notably, Indian respondents were quite supportive, with 55 percent in favor. However, there is some nuance: only 17 percent of Indian respondents “strongly” supported the move (one of the smallest shares among ethnic groups) and 17 “strongly” opposed it (the largest of any ethnicity). Indian respondents were also the least likely to respond indifferently, with just 6 percent answering “don’t know,” compared to 35 percent of Chinese respondents.

BALLOT INITIATIVES

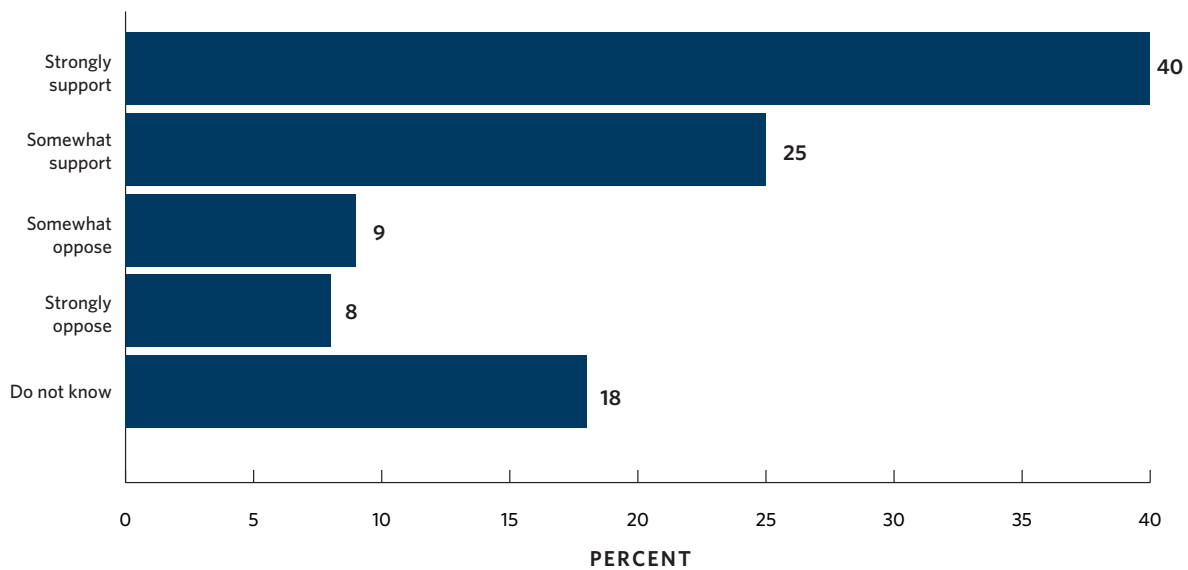
Abortion/Reproductive Health

In May 2022, a draft majority opinion of the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling was [leaked](#) to the media. The draft opinion indicated that a majority of justices on the apex court had judged that the U.S. Constitution does not confer a right to abortion. The court’s [final opinion](#), which was issued on June 24, 2022, confirmed the substance of the draft.

In the aftermath of the leak, the California Senate and State Assembly voted to refer a constitutional amendment protecting reproductive freedom to the November 2022 ballot for popular consideration. The amendment, on the ballot as [Proposition 1](#), would insert new language into the state constitution preventing state interference with or denial of one’s right to reproductive

Figure 8. Proposition 1

On the 2022 California state ballot, there is a proposition to amend the California constitution to prevent the state from interfering with or denying one’s right to reproductive freedom, including abortion and contraceptives. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

freedom, including abortions and contraceptives. The measure will appear on the November ballot and requires popular consent to take effect.

The survey asked respondents whether they support or oppose this constitutional amendment. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of all respondents reported that they support the measure, with just 17 percent opposing (see figure 8). Eighteen percent expressed no opinion either way. The survey also demonstrated that the level of support was noticeably higher among women (70 percent) than men (60 percent), though sizable majorities of both expressed support. Young respondents, between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine, were the most supportive, and their support was uniquely intense: 51 percent of the youngest respondents “strongly” supported the amendment (compared to 37 percent of those aged thirty to forty-nine and 38 percent

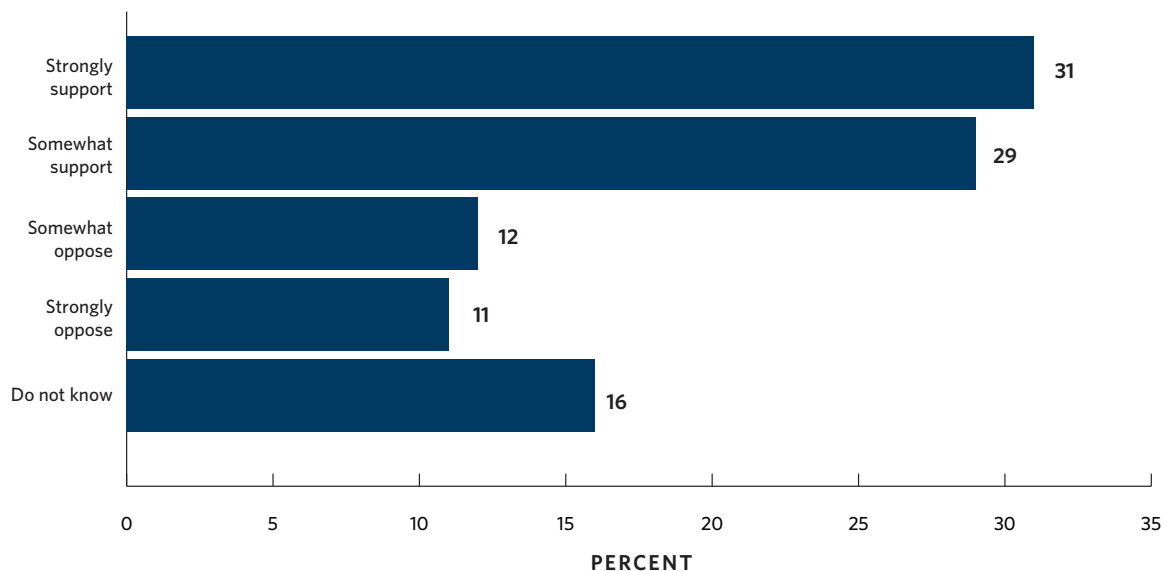
of the oldest respondents). Upper-income respondents, individuals with a college education, and those living in households with children below the age of 18 were also the most supportive.

Climate Change/Environment

Whereas Proposition 1 is a constitutional amendment referred to the citizens by the legislature, the November ballot also includes several citizen-initiated ballot measures that—if enacted—would amend state law. Among these citizen-led initiatives is [Proposition 30](#), a measure that would increase the tax on personal incomes above \$2 million by 1.75 percent to fund the Clean Cars and Clean Air Trust Fund. This fund, in turn, would raise public investment in zero-emission vehicles, charging stations, and wildfire suppression and prevention.

Figure 9. Proposition 30

On the 2022 California state ballot, there is a proposition to increase California’s income tax for personal income above \$2 million by 1.75% and use the revenue to subsidize zero-emission vehicles, charging stations, and wildfire suppression/prevention. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

The survey asked respondents whether they intend to support or oppose Proposition 30. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they intend to support the measure when they cast their ballots this November (see figure 9). Twenty-three percent intended to oppose, and 16 percent expressed no opinion. Respondents in the youngest age category (those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine) offered the strongest endorsement of the proposition, with 65 percent expressing support. This contrasts with 60 percent of respondents aged twenty to forty-nine and 59 percent of those in the oldest age bracket (above fifty years old).

Minimum Wage

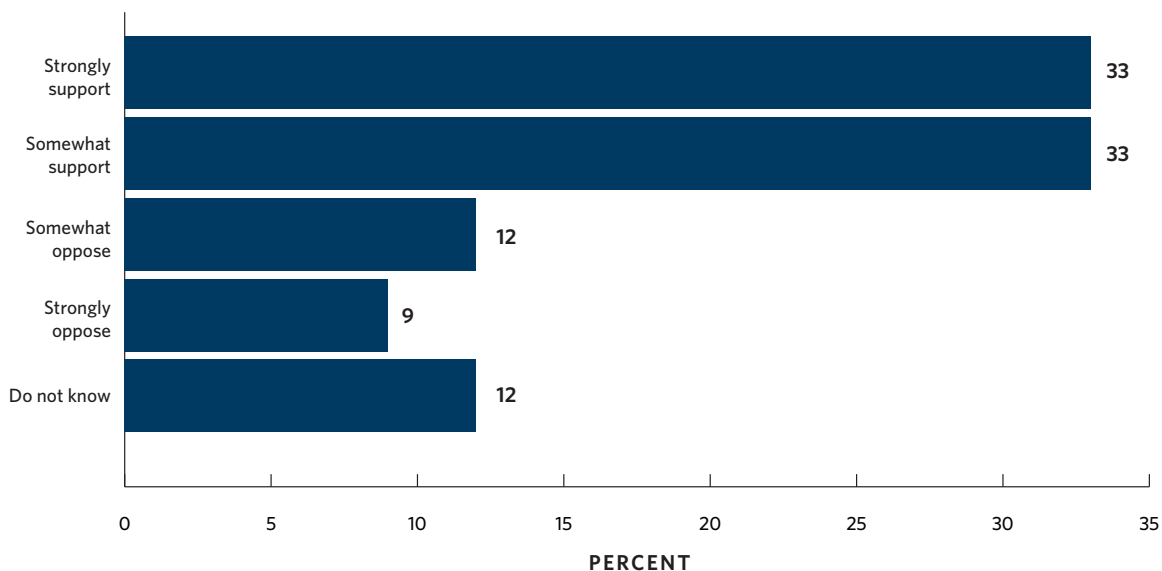
Finally, the survey asked about a popular initiative that will show up on California’s 2024 ballot. In 2016, the

California legislature passed a bill raising the state’s minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In November 2024, California voters will vote on a [popular initiative](#) (known as the California \$18 Minimum Wage Initiative) that, if passed, will increase the minimum wage to \$18 by 2025 and adjust it further each subsequent year in accordance with inflation.

In response to a question inquiring about their support for this initiative, 66 percent of respondents expressed support (split evenly between those who “somewhat” or “strongly” supported the measure) (see figure 10). Twelve percent “somewhat” opposed the proposition while 9 percent “strongly” opposed it, and twelve percent were unsure. Interestingly, there was little variation on this question by respondents’ income bracket or education level.

Figure 10. The Living Wage Act, 2022

The California \$18 Minimum Wage Initiative proposes increasing the state minimum wage to \$18 per hour by 2026. This measure will be on the November 2024 state ballot. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

According to [one recent analysis](#), the technology sector accounts for roughly one-fifth of the economic value produced in California. A [March 2022 report](#) notes that 1.4 million Californians work in tech-related jobs, which is more than 50 percent higher than the next closest state, Texas.

However, these impressive facts and figures have not completely insulated the technology sector from backlash. A July 2021 essay in the [Atlantic](#) argues that inequality in California, driven in part by the dominance of the tech sector, is potentially laying the California Dream to rest. As the article notes, “Tech investors and innovators still strike gold in Silicon Valley. Alas, the economic prospects for the typical resident have dimmed.” The implication is that a small minority has enjoyed the fruits of California’s innovation economy while a broad swath of the public still struggles to achieve upward economic mobility. Such concerns have emerged at a time when popular Silicon Valley social

media companies, such as Meta and Google, are also coming under [increased scrutiny](#) for practices related to privacy, data consent, content moderation, and norms and standards.

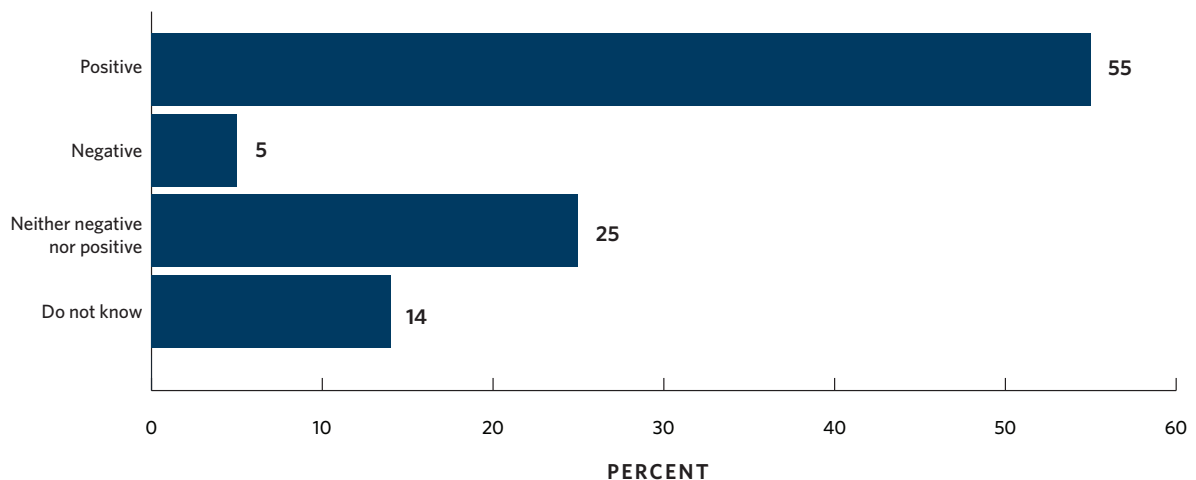
Given the importance of the technology sector to California’s economy and its outsize social impacts, the survey asked a series of questions gauging popular perceptions of the industry.

To begin, the survey asked respondents how they view the overall impact of the tech sector. The question reads as follows:

Some people say that the technology sector in California is a major job creator. Others say that new technologies, such as robotics or artificial intelligence, will destroy jobs. On balance, do you think the technology sector is a net positive or negative for the California economy?

Figure 11. Technology Sector Favorability

Some people say that the technology sector in California is a major job creator. Others say that new technologies, such as robotics or artificial intelligence, will destroy jobs. On balance, do you think the technology sector is a net positive or negative for the California economy?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

Fifty-five percent of respondents reported that the tech sector is a net positive for the California economy (see figure 11). Only 5 percent believed it is a net negative, and 25 percent stated it is neither a negative nor a positive. An additional 14 percent did not have an opinion.

Opinion on this question is sharply divided along class lines. Whereas 67 percent of respondents in the highest income bracket (those with an annual household income exceeding \$100,000) perceived California’s tech sector to be a net positive, just 41 percent of respondents in the lowest bracket (those with an annual household income below \$50,000) held the same opinion. Few respondents across the board reported the sector is a net negative; about 5 percent of low, middle, and high-income respondents felt this way. However, twice as many low-income respondents believed it to be neither negative nor positive compared to those in the high-income bracket.

The survey then asked respondents whether, if given the necessary training and education, they would be interested in working a job in California’s technology

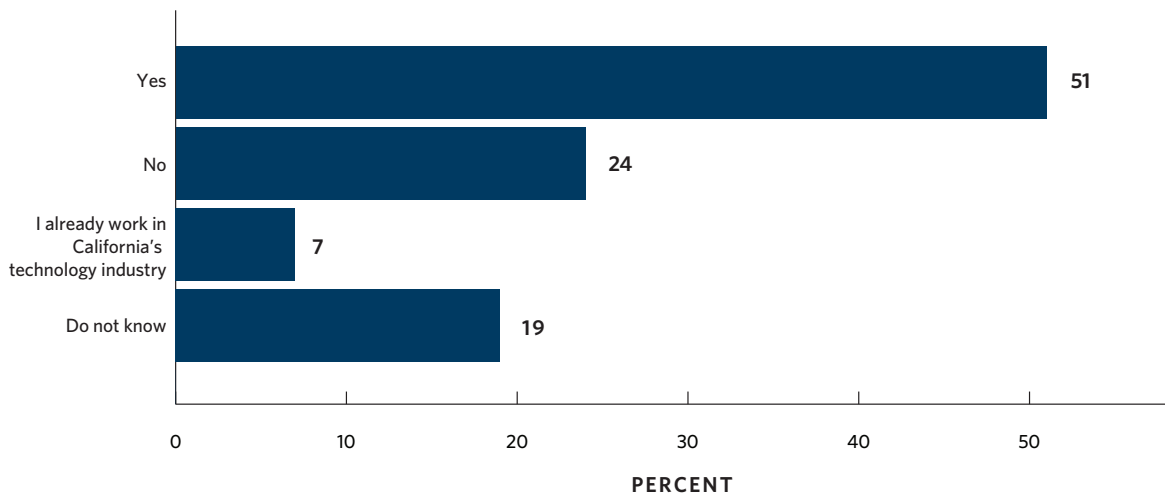
industry. The data suggest a narrow majority—51 percent—who indicated that they would indeed be interested in finding a job in the state’s tech sector (see figure 12). Seven percent of respondents indicated they *already* work in the tech sector, so the share of those positively disposed is presumably even higher. However, a significant proportion, nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of respondents, reported that they would not be interested in the tech sector, and 19 percent did not know where they stand on the question.

There is a considerable divide on this question according to respondents’ level of education. Fifty-six percent of respondents with at least a college education reported being interested in a technology sector job compared to 45 percent of non-college-educated respondents. Respondents with a college degree are also more likely to already be employed in the sector compared to respondents without such a degree (10 percent versus 3 percent).

Another way of gauging perceptions of the tech sector is to ask whether respondents would encourage a relative

Figure 12. Attractiveness of Technology Jobs

If given the necessary training and education, would you be interested in working a job in California’s technology industry?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.



to seek employment in the tech field. The survey asked respondents what type of entry-level job they would encourage their child or close family relative to pursue in the state of California. Respondents were asked to select from four options: public sector/government job, private sector technology job, private sector nontechnology job, or a nonprofit/public interest job. Respondents' opinions were highly mixed on this question (see figure 13).

A plurality of respondents (35 percent) reported that they would encourage their relative to pursue a private sector technology job. Twelve percent reported they would push their relative to pursue a private sector job, but one in a nontechnology domain. Twenty percent reported that they would advocate for a public sector/government job, and just five percent reported they would encourage a relative to seek a job in the nonprofit sector. Notably, nearly one in three respondents (29 percent) were unsure about what track they would recommend.

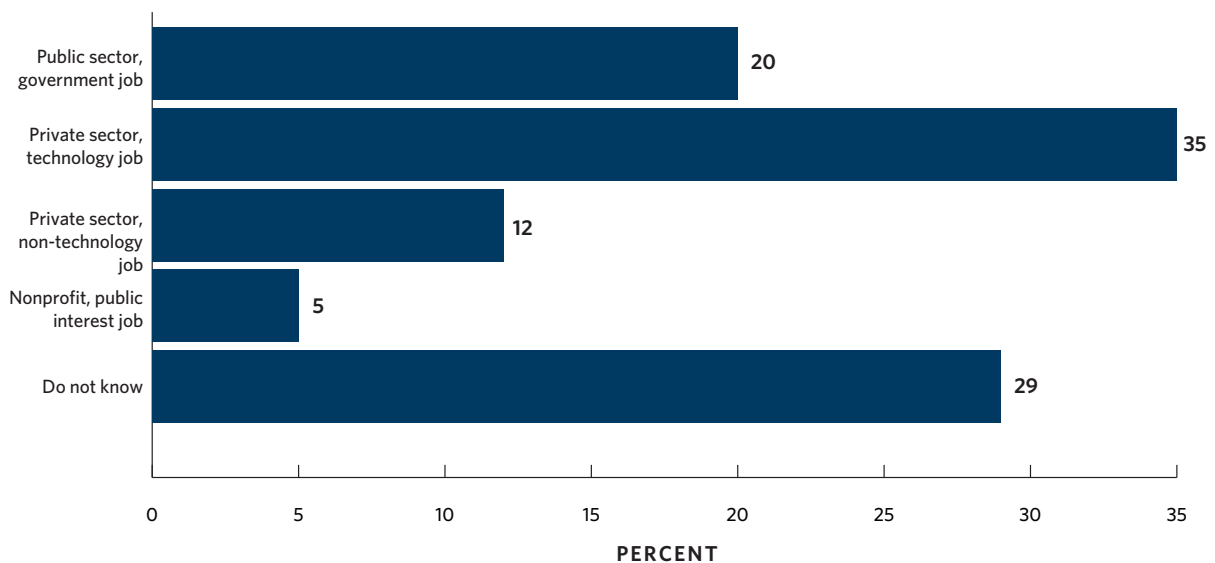
HIGHER EDUCATION

The final domestic policy area the survey probed was higher education. While only 4 percent of respondents indicated education is their foremost concern this midterm election season, other data sources have long established that education is a priority issue for Asian Americans across the United States. For instance, a 2021 [Pew analysis](#) noted that more than half of Asians ages twenty-five and older have at least a bachelor's degree, which compared very favorably to the similarly aged total U.S. population (33 percent). And there's been a [long-running debate](#) in the social sciences about whether Asian Americans' emphasis on academic excellence is the product of distinct cultural traits or socioeconomic fundamentals.

California has a well-established [higher education system](#) featuring some of the country's best public and private universities. However, for much of its history, California's higher education system has also been used as a [political](#)

Figure 13. Entry-Level Career Options

If your child or a very close family relative was looking for an entry-level job in California, which type of job would you be most likely to encourage them to pursue?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

[football](#) linked to myriad hot-button issues—from race to housing and access for in-state residents. As one *Los Angeles Times* columnist has [noted](#), “California’s public universities . . . have existed perilously at the center of political storms since [the] 1960s.”

The survey asked questions on three topics pertaining to the current state of higher education in California: affirmative action, higher education access, and educational quality.

Affirmative Action

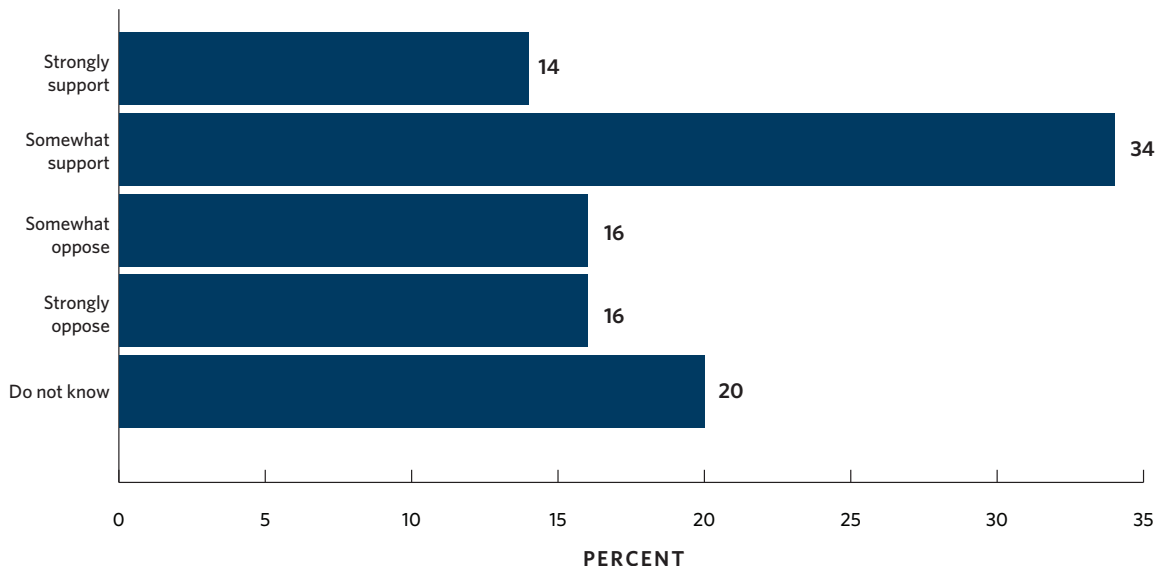
Affirmative action in higher education is a deeply contested issue among Asian Americans. A recent flashpoint is a [high-profile lawsuit](#) before the Supreme Court involving Harvard University. The suit alleges that Harvard discriminates against Asian Americans by enforcing an informal racial quota that artificially suppresses the number of Asian American students it admits to its undergraduate program. The plaintiffs in the case are a group of anonymous Asian American applicants who were denied admission to the school.

The case, and a similar one involving the University of North Carolina, has revealed significant divides among the Asian American population. While some Asian American groups have [defended](#) university policies that ensure broad racial diversity in its student body, others have [led the fight](#) to curb race-conscious admissions practices.

Existing public opinion data throws up a mixed picture. The [2022 AAVS](#) asked respondents whether they “favor or oppose affirmative action programs designed to help Black people, women, and other minorities get better access to higher education?” Overall, 69 percent of Asian American respondents reported that they favor such policies with 19 percent opposing and 11 percent unsure. Data from the 2020 AAVS showed similar levels of support. But, as an extensive literature shows, the wording of survey questions on affirmative action can have a dramatic impact on responses. The [2020 AAVS](#), for instance, also asked respondents whether they support a California ballot measure repealing an earlier proposition that prohibited considerations of race, color, sex, ethnicity, or national origin in higher

Figure 14. Affirmative Action

Do you support or oppose the consideration of race or ethnic identity as a factor in university admissions to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans)?



N=926 U.S. Citizens



education admissions—in essence, restoring affirmative action. In response to this question, 35 percent were in favor with 21 percent opposed and 36 percent undecided (an additional 7 percent responded “don’t know”).

The Carnegie survey considered the subject of affirmative action as well, asking respondents whether they support or oppose the consideration of race or ethnic identity as a factor in university admissions to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans). The data, once again, revealed a mixed picture (see figure 14). When framed in these terms, 48 percent either “strongly” or “somewhat” supported affirmative action. Thirty-two percent, in turn, either “strongly” or “somewhat” opposed the proposition. Twenty percent of respondents did not express an opinion either way.

While less than half of respondents endorsed affirmative action in higher education, there was a striking degree of variation by respondent ethnicity. Sixty-three percent of Indian respondents supported the idea that race and ethnicity should be used as a factor in university

admissions, but only 39 percent of Chinese respondents felt the same way. Filipino (56 percent), Vietnamese (54 percent), Japanese (47 percent), and Korean (43 percent) respondents fall between these two extremes, as do respondents from other, smaller ethnic subgroups (48 percent).

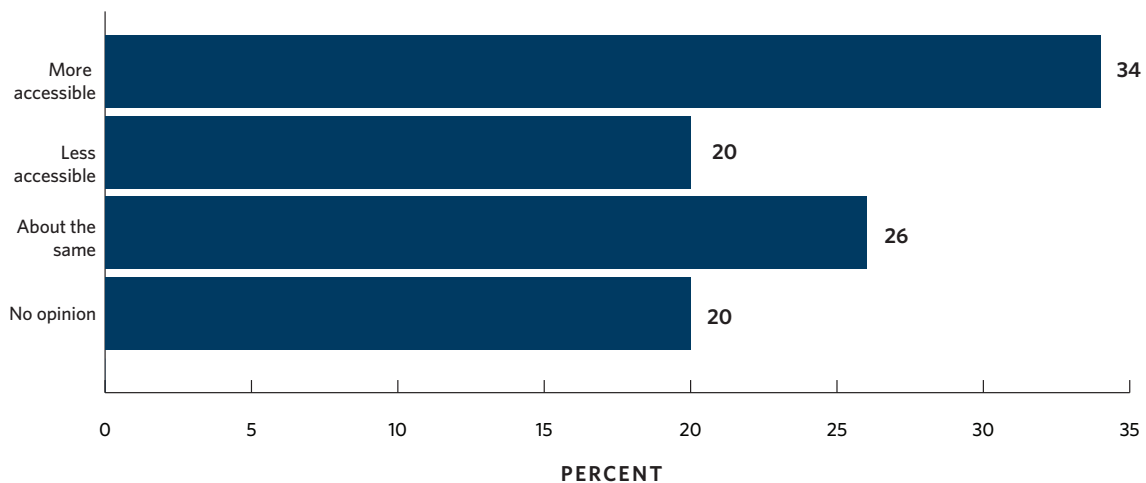
Access and Quality

With regards to access to higher education, the survey asked respondents: how accessible is the California higher education system (defined as the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) for ordinary Californians compared to other states?

Respondents were very divided on this question (see figure 15). One-third of respondents (34 percent) reported that the California higher education system is more accessible to ordinary residents than in other states. Twenty percent thought the California system is less accessible, 26 percent felt it is about the same, and 20 percent expressed no opinion.

Figure 15. Access to Higher Education

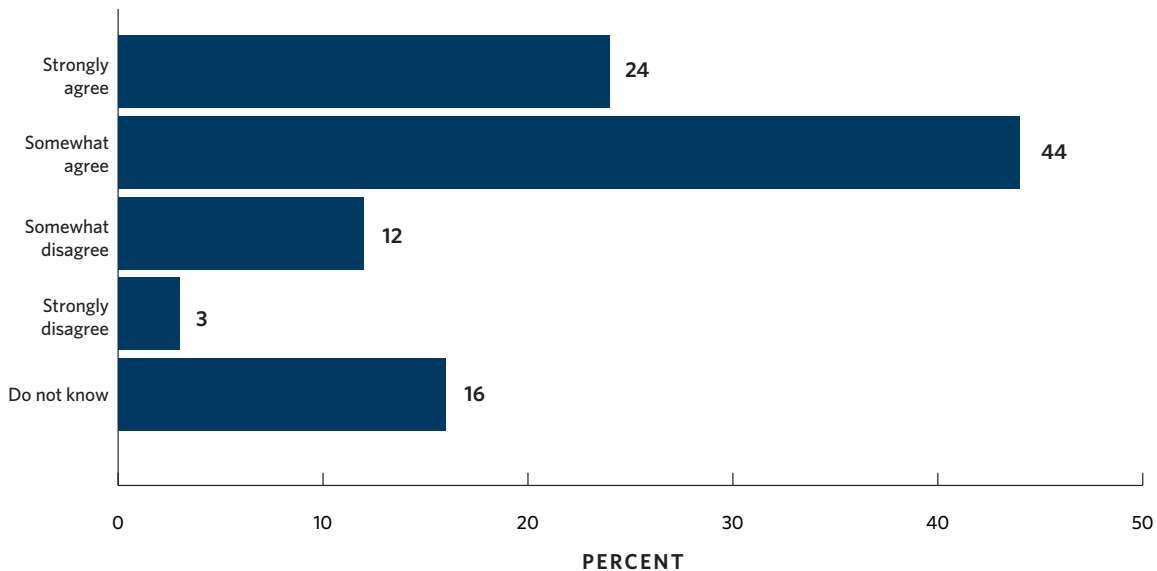
Do you think the California higher education system (the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) is accessible to ordinary Californians when compared to the situation in other states?



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Figure 16. Quality of Higher Education

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: the California higher education system (the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) provides students with the skills they need to succeed in their professional careers.



N=927 U.S. Citizens

Note: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

On the question of quality, respondents were more bullish on the state of higher education (see figure 16). The survey asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that California’s system of higher education provides students with the skills they need to succeed in professional careers. Sixty-eight percent either “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed with the proposition. Only 15 percent disagreed with the notion, and another 16 percent did not express an opinion.

CONCLUSION

On a range of hot-button policy issues being debated across California and, indeed, across the country, English-proficient Asian Americans in the Golden State maintain progressive stances on most—but not all—policy matters.

Regarding guns and immigration, respondents were in favor of greater gun control and greater flexibility for state and local accommodation of undocumented immigrants. Interestingly, respondents did not uniformly believe that immigrating to the United States should be easier for people from Asian countries; more respondents reported that immigrating should be easier for people originating from Mexico and the United Kingdom than from selected countries in Asia.

When it comes to the decision of the Cal State system to add caste as a protected category under its antidiscrimination policy, a slim majority supported the move (albeit with a sizable share of respondents who did not know). In regard to upcoming ballot initiatives on abortion/reproductive health, environment/climate change, and the minimum wage, large majorities were in favor of policies backed by many in the Democratic and/or liberal establishment.

The one issue on which the Asian American population in California diverges from their traditionally liberal leanings is that of public safety. Asked whether they supported increasing resources for law enforcement, Asian American respondents did not appear to be aligned with the idea of “defunding the police” that is popular among several progressive Democrats. On the contrary, they appeared supportive of providing law enforcement with greater funding to curb crime. The issue of law and order, though an outlier, could emerge as an issue that could drive more Asian Americans toward the Republican Party in the coming elections.

One issue that is especially relevant for Californians is the technology sector, given its sheer economic size. Most respondents viewed the sector favorably and maintained an interest in working in it or recommending that others seek employment in the tech field. However, there is evidence that socioeconomic status shaped respondents’ views—higher-income, better-educated respondents appeared more positively disposed.

Finally, on the subject of higher education, respondents held differing opinions about the accessibility of California’s public higher education system. In contrast, they were much more positive when it comes to the quality of skills the system imparts on students who pass through its halls. On affirmative action, a contentious issue nationally, Asian American respondents were sharply divided. Slightly less than half of all respondents favored a system of affirmative action to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans), and one-third were opposed. Respondents greatly differed based on their ethnic origin, suggesting an even more nuanced picture than the headline numbers suggest.

Issues related to ethnic identity, racial unity, and discrimination are complex subjects within the Asian American community, in California as in the nation. These topics will be the focus of the next article in this series.

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NOTES

- 1 The included ethnic subgroups are as follows: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Mongolian, Nepali, Pakistani, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese.
- 2 This percentage was calculated from population numbers from the 2020 America Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figures source: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

