

# THE FUTURE OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION



## A CALIFORNIA 100 ISSUE ROADMAP FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

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California is often thought of as an immigrant-rich state, and for good reasons. Over one-quarter of the state's population is foreign born, one-third of the workforce is immigrant, and nearly half of California's children have at least one immigrant parent. Yet California's world is changing—the foreign-born share of the population has been on the decline for the past several years and has been shrinking for much longer in places like Los Angeles and San Francisco. California now has the most settled immigrant population in the nation, as measured by years spent in the United States. Because of these immigrant population shifts—fewer inflows from abroad, the growth of the second generation, and the more settled nature of the foreign born—important tasks in the decades ahead center on encouraging the successful integration of immigrants and ensuring that there will be enough future immigration to continue fueling California's prosperity.

Immigrant integration can be defined by immigrants' economic mobility, civic participation, and how open the receiving society is to them, or their “warmth of welcome.” But California's immigrant integration agenda stands at a crossroads. After decades of being a primary immigrant destination, the state's share of foreign-born residents is on the decline. California has earned a well-deserved reputation for shifting to more welcoming policies in the last two decades, but integration challenges remain, and common-ground issues like high housing prices and soaring economic inequality are increasingly prompting immigrants to choose other states.

### FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

What will these changes mean for current and future generations of Californians, and how can we make sure that California's future in immigrant integration remains innovative, resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and equitable?

In April 2022, the California 100 Initiative released a policy and future scenarios report on immigrant integration, developed by researchers at the USC Equity Research Institute. The team conducted extensive primary and secondary research, and spoke with a wide array of experts in the public and private sectors to examine possible scenarios and policy options for future-focused action.

“California can't take immigrants for granted,” said **Manuel Pastor, professor of sociology and American studies & ethnicity at the University of Southern California and Director of the Equity Research Institute.** “We must match our welcoming rhetoric with actionable policies and genuine opportunities. At stake is not just our reputation as an immigrant-rich state; what also hangs in the balance is our ability to sustain the California Dream for generations to come.”



## FUTURE SCENARIOS

Other key takeaways from the California 100 report include a consideration of policy options that improve immigrant integration under **four future scenarios** that center around two critical dimensions: whether California provides a warm or hostile context of reception, and whether immigration flows to California are high or low.

In a context where California provides a warm context of reception, the scenarios range from a future where immigrants of all skills and backgrounds are drawn to an affordable California, where they contribute extensively to, and benefit from, the growing economy to a future where immigrants leave the state, or avoid it altogether, because of unaffordable housing and low-wage jobs. In a context where California has a hostile context of reception, the scenarios range from a future where immigrants continue to come to California seeking job opportunities but are exploited for their labor, to a future where immigrants largely avoid California, the economy stagnates, and nativism spreads to become politically dominant.

Whatever the scenario, the research commissioned by California 100 indicates that we should refrain from “doing nothing” as a default or fall-back option. In order for California to perform better under these various scenarios, the state will need to investigate, deliberate over, and enact innovative solutions that advance **resilience** (such as such as enabling individuals, families, and communities recover from hardship and trauma), **inclusion** (building trust and meaningful, respectful, and ongoing engagement in a collaborative manner among stakeholders and communities), **sustainability** (including paying attention to the needs of climate refugees), and **equity** (with well-resourced policies that are designed to repair the damage from past and ongoing inequities).



Artist rendering of future scenarios in immigrant integration  
Source: California 100

## THE CALIFORNIA 100 ROADMAP

The California 100 report on policies and future scenarios is the first step in a multi-stage process that is designed to inspire and engage Californians—from a variety of sectors and all walks of life—to build a stronger future for current and future generations. In the summer of 2022, our expert and intergenerational Commission will conduct a series of listening sessions throughout the state, to solicit feedback on the ideas generated by our research and to generate additional big and bold ideas for consideration by public and private agencies, as well as by everyday Californians. We will also be generating insights from our policy innovation projects throughout the state that cover a variety of topics, and our deep engagement on questions of science and technology as they relate to a variety of issues, including immigrant integration.

In early 2023, we will take these various policy ideas and scenarios, and engage in a process of deliberative democracy featuring a representative cross-section of California residents. The goal of this deliberative exercise is to understand the conditions under which Californians from various walks of life can come to agreement on the long-term challenges facing the state and, importantly, the kind of bold and visionary solutions we need to put the state on a stronger trajectory for the next century.

California 100 will also be engaging intentionally with young Californians, who have the most to gain or lose in the coming century. Our team members will engage young people throughout the state, including in high school and college settings, and will organize a statewide youth summit that will produce a manifesto for the future of California.

Finally, in Winter and Spring 2023, our intergenerational Commission will draft a vision and strategy document for the future of California, based on briefing materials that build on insights from the various streams of work. California 100 will then launch a culminating event in early summer 2023 that serves as the formal launch of the vision and strategy document and, importantly, also brings together leaders and partners from our various streams of work and prior engagement.

Our culminating event in the summer of 2023 will:

1. Showcase the pressing need for California to prioritize long-term futures,
2. Build an ambitious yet achievable vision and strategy that are grounded in rigorous research and community engagement, and
3. Inspire others to do the same, providing tools that a variety of partners (including policymakers, government agency officials, business leaders, activists, researchers, and next-gen leaders from various sectors) can use to build their own aspirational visions and strategies for California's long-term success.

## **ABOUT CALIFORNIA 100**

The California 100 Initiative envisions a future that is innovative, sustainable, and equitable for all. Our mission is to strengthen California's ability to collectively solve problems and shape our long-term future over the next 100 years. California 100 is organized around 15 policy domains and driven by interrelated stages of work: research, policy innovation and engagement with Californians. California 100's work is guided by an expert and intergenerational Commission. Through various projects and activities, California 100 seeks to move California towards an aspirational vision—changing policies and practices, attitudes and mind-sets, to inspire a more vibrant future.

California 100 staff members compiled this roadmap document, drawing on research in two publications—a Policies and Future Scenarios Report and a Facts-Origins-Trends Report—by authors from the USC Equity Research Institute. The two immigrant integration-related publications are part of California 100's larger research stream of work, built in partnership with 20 research institutions across the state.

California 100 sponsored grants for data-driven and future-oriented research focused on understanding today and planning for tomorrow. This research, anchored in California 100's 15 core policy domains, forms the foundation for the initiative's subsequent work by considering how California has gotten to where it is and by exploring scenarios and policy alternatives for what California can become over the next 100 years.

The California 100 Initiative is incubated through the University of California and Stanford.

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### **READ MORE**

To learn more about the future of immigrant integration in California, visit the California 100 website at [California100.org](https://California100.org), where you will find our detailed reports on the topic, and more information about our research partners.

