

# [***California Gets 150,000 New Citizens***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BWD-FDY1-DY68-1007-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** The Golden State has added more than 500,000 naturalized citizens since the 2021 fiscal year as it continues to combat illegal immigration.

**Body**

California saw 154,900 new citizens become naturalized in fiscal year 2023, bringing the state's total of naturalized citizens to more than 500,000 over the past three years.

An approximate total of 878,500 individuals became citizens this past fiscal year, with naturalization ceremonies in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 composing 24 percent of all naturalizations over the past decade, according to data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

They can all vote for president for the first time this November—and experts told *Newsweek* what these numbers mean for the state and the nation overall.

California was the [*only state to surpass six digits*](https://www.newsweek.com/california-gen-z-millennials-migrants-burden-survey-1872848?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in terms of new naturalized citizens, far outpacing Texas (99,900), Florida (94,100), New York (92,800) and New Jersey (39,000).

The top 10 cities or boroughs that experienced the biggest uptick in naturalized citizens were Brooklyn (19,400), Miami (15,800), Houston (15,700), the Bronx (13,000) and Los Angeles (9,300).

Individuals from Mexico became citizens at the largest rates, accounting for 111,500 people. India came in second at 59,100 individuals, followed by the Philippines (44,800), Dominican Republic (35,200) and Cuba (33,200).

Stephen Goggin, assistant political science professor at San Diego State University, told *Newsweek* via phone that immigration in the state draws less attention than it might in other states due to residents' familiarity with the southern border and the issue of people settling in California being "always salient."

Democrats and [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) take their partisan cues on the issue, he added, and even those liberals who may disagree with President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) on his administration's handling of the U.S.-Mexico border may be hesitant to criticize to avoid regurgitating GOP talking points.

"Part of the reason is many parts of the nation are just in recent years experiencing a large rise in immigration, whereas in California it has been a huge part of the state's history throughout its history—and a huge part of the ***politics***, where it has been an issue since the 1990s," [*University of California*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/university-california?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) San Diego political science Professor Thad Kousser told *Newsweek* via phone.

Cost of living remains the biggest issue for many Californians due to their familiarity with immigration-related issues, he added, which plays a role as a driver of the marginal increase of domestic migration. Issues like housing also play a role.

"Each party is emphasizing policies on immigration," Kousser said. "They're just moving in erratically different directions. We live in these two different worlds in ***politics*** and policy in California on either side of the political divide. One party sees a crisis at the border."

**California's migration flows**

The 154,900 new Californians represent a smaller number of naturalized citizens compared to previous years. In fiscal years 2021 and 2022, the state welcomed 172,000 and 182,000 individuals, respectively, bringing the three-year total to 508,900.

In 2022, a total of 726,000 naturalized citizens—some 75 percent of the total across the country—resided in 10 states, according to [*data*](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023_0818_plcy_naturalizations_fy2022.pdf) from the [*Department of Homeland Security*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/department-of-homeland-security?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) (DHS). California's naturalization rate that year represented about 19 percent of the U.S. total.

As of January 2024, the state is home to 10.4 million legal immigrants representing about 23 percent of the national foreign-born population, according to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

The California Budget and Policy Center has pegged that number even higher, at more than 11 million immigrants in 2023 making up 28 percent of the state's population.

A total of 6.1 million immigrants were employed in California from 2021 to 2023, according to the center, translating to about one in three total statewide workers.

The most recent PPIC data from 2022 found that 27 percent of the state's population is foreign-born—the highest of any state and more than double the percentage of the rest of the states (12 percent)—and 46 percent of California children have at least one immigrant parent.

The Golden State continues to see a population boom as it simultaneously attempts to [*thwart rising levels of illegal immigration*](https://www.newsweek.com/haiti-migrants-california-florida-1891702?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Earlier this month, the Biden administration announced that California would receive $45 million to be allocated towards [*migrant-related programs*](https://www.newsweek.com/california-migrant-benefits-are-changing-soon-official-warns-1887925?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) statewide, as part of an 18 percent federal cut ($780 million to $300 million this year) in funding provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

San Diego, which has experienced higher-than-normal levels of illegal entries, was provided with an additional $10 million. Local officials say the city remains an "epicenter" for illegal activity.

"The recent allocation of $19 million in federal dollars will not solve the crisis, as the money will not be used to protect the border but only allow for more concierge service to get migrants to their destinations across the United States," San Diego Supervisor Jim Desmond said in a statement provided to *Newsweek*. "We have laws set in place, but currently, the federal government is not upholding them."

California Governor [*Gavin Newsom*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/gavin-newsom?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) has rejected the notion that "sanctuary city" status is to blame for rising numbers.

"Let's be clear: President Biden is doing all he can to fund border security and humanitarian efforts while [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) are choosing border chaos for political gain," Newsom said in a statement.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2383949/naturalization-ceremony.jpg)

**Graphic**

Naturalization Ceremony

Mario Tama/Getty Images

U.S. Navy Electrician's Mate Third Class (EM3) Kuo Zhen (R), originally from China, and other military service members say the Pledge of Allegiance at a special naturalization ceremony at Long Beach City Hall on November 9, 2023 in Long Beach, California. California leads the nation in naturalized citizens by a wide margin.

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