

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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CALIFORNIANS OPPOSE ISSUING DRIVER'S LICENSES TO UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS. DIVIDED ABOUT ISSUING THEM SPECIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES IDENTIFYING THEIR NOT HAVING LEGAL STATUS.

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

State residents are very much opposed (62% to 35%) to granting undocumented immigrants who do not have legal status in this country the right to obtain a California driver's license. However, opinions are more divided (49% to 48%) about a plan to issue a different kind of driver's license that would allow these immigrants to drive but would also identify them as not having legal status.

Opposition to the issuance of regular driver's licenses to undocumented workers crosses party lines. Almost nine in ten Republicans (86%) reject the idea, as do 62% of the state's non-partisans/others and 56% of Democrats. Although a sizeable proportion (45%) of adults who are not registered to vote strongly support issuing regular driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, a larger proportion (53%) opposes the idea. Among registered voters 68% are opposed, while 29% favor it.

There is a very large ethnic divide on this matter. Three out of four (75%) white non-Hispanics are opposed to the idea of issuing regular driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. On the other hand, Latinos are in favor two to one (64% to 32%). Californians of other racial and ethnic backgrounds oppose the idea 77% to 23%.

Table 1
Allow undocumented workers who do not have legal status
to obtain a driver's license in California
(among California adults)

	Favor strongly	Favor somewhat	Oppose somewhat	Oppose strongly	No opinion
Statewide	26%	9	14	48	3
<u>Registered voters</u> (total)	<u>15%</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>3</u>
Democrats	22%	17	16	40	5
Republicans	5%	8	15	71	1
Non-partisans/others**	15%	18	15	47	5
Not registered to vote	45%	2	12	41	1
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White non-Hispanic	14%	10	15	60	1
Latino	56%	8	9	23	4
All others	14%	9	25	52	*

* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

** Small sample base.

Issue a different kind of license?

Proposition 187, which was approved by voters in 1994, included a ban on illegal immigrants obtaining California drivers' licenses, which they had been able to do before the initiative's passage. Since then, the issue has fostered a growing public and legislative debate about repealing the ban. Former Governor Gray Davis was originally opposed to licensure but changed his position early in 2003, when he supported and signed a bill permitting illegal immigrants the right to obtain a driver's license.

During the 2003 recall election one of Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign promises was to get the legislature to undo the new licensure law, which he did after winning office. As a compromise, Schwarzenegger said that he would favor granting special driver's licenses to illegal immigrants if they were clearly marked as such.

When asked about this alternative, 49% favor it strongly or somewhat, while 48% are opposed. Among registered voters, the split is 50% in favor and 46% opposed.

Democrats favor the issuance of restricted driver's licenses by 57% to 38%. Republicans are narrowly opposed 50% to 47%, while non-partisans are against 55% to 42%.

There are no large differences across the state's different race and ethnic groups on this proposal, with each group evenly divided about granting a different kind of driver's license to undocumented immigrants.

Table 2
Issue undocumented immigrants a different kind of driver's license that would allow them to drive but would identify them as not having legal status (among California adults)

	Favor strongly	Favor somewhat	Oppose somewhat	Oppose strongly	No opinion
Statewide	26%	23	10	38	3
<u>Registered voters</u> (total)	<u>24%</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>4</u>
Democrats	26%	31	7	31	5
Republicans	22%	25	9	41	3
Non-partisans/others**	23%	19	13	42	3
Not registered to vote	29%	19	11	40	1
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White non-Hispanic	20%	29	10	37	4
Latino	35%	15	10	37	3
All others	31%	20	8	41	*

* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

** Small sample base.

Federal action

A new bill is currently making its way through U.S. Congress that would block California and other states from issuing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. When asked their opinions about this bill, a 59% majority of Californians endorse this Congressional action, while 38% are opposed.

Democrats narrowly support a federal ban 53% to 41%, while Republicans are overwhelmingly in favor, 78% to 19%. Non-partisans are also supportive 57% to 42%.

Latinos in this state narrowly oppose such a federal ban, 53% to 45%. This compares to greater than two to one support among white non-Hispanics and residents of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Table 3
**Opinion of congressional bill that effectively blocks states like California
 from providing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants
 (among California adults)**

	<u>Favor strongly</u>	<u>Favor somewhat</u>	<u>Oppose somewhat</u>	<u>Oppose strongly</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	37%	22	15	23	3
<u>Registered voters</u> (total)	<u>39%</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>5</u>
Democrats	31%	22	15	26	6
Republicans	55%	23	11	8	3
Non-partisans/others*	30%	27	22	20	1
Not registered to vote	33%	20	16	30	1
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>					
White non-Hispanic	40%	24	15	17	4
Latino	29%	16	15	38	2
All others	40%	31	14	12	3

* Small sample base..

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of Californians conducted in English and Spanish. Interviews were completed during the period February 8 – 17, 2005 among a representative sample of 506 California adults.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which includes all operating telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This permits access to all landline telephone numbers both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall adult sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.1 percentage points.

There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling, or sequencing or through undetected omission or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Currently, undocumented workers living in California are not allowed to obtain driver's licenses. There is a proposal in the state legislature to change this. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose allowing undocumented workers who do not have legal status, to obtain a driver's license in California? Do you (favor) (oppose) this strongly or somewhat?

Many undocumented workers in California need to drive in order to make a living and currently do so without a license. One suggestion that has been made to permit this is to issue them a different kind of driver's license that would allow them to drive, but would also identify them as not having legal status here. Do you favor or oppose this idea as a way to issue driver's licenses to undocumented workers in California? Do you (favor) (oppose) this strongly or somewhat?

A new bill currently in the U.S. Congress would effectively block states like California from providing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, by requiring all states to verify that applicants for driver's licenses are American citizens or living in the country legally. What is your opinion of this bill? Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose it?