

Field Poll: Broad concern about wealth gap, disagreement on minimum wage

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By David Siders

SACRAMENTO

A majority of Californians don't like the way income and wealth are distributed in the state, but they divide by political ideology and party affiliation and about how much government should do to reduce disparities between the wealthiest people and the rest of the population, according to a new Field Poll.

A majority of Democrats – 57 percent – say the state should raise the minimum wage more than it already is scheduled to go up, while 70 percent of Republicans say currently scheduled increases are adequate or already too much.

The poll's release comes a day after the minimum wage in California rose to \$9 an hour, and it offers rare insight into how immigrants in California view economic conditions here differently than Californians born in the United States. While adults born outside the United States are more likely than U.S.-born residents to be satisfied with the way income and wealth are distributed in California, they are far more likely to say government should do more to reduce the disparity that exists, including increasing the minimum wage.

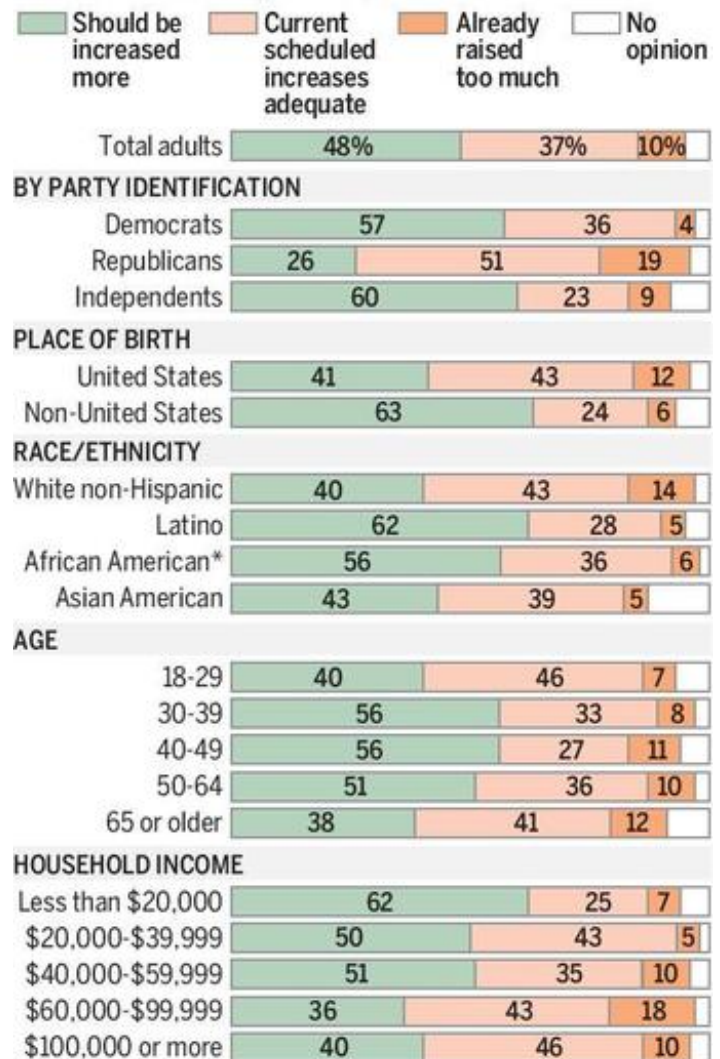
“Even though the U.S.-born residents see the problem more clearly ... they are more hesitant to have government do anything about it,” said Mark DiCamillo, director of the poll. “Politically, they're a more conservative population overall than the immigrant population.”

Overall, 54 percent of California adults say they are dissatisfied with the way income and wealth are distributed in the state, while 38 percent say they are satisfied, according to the poll. Nearly 60 percent of residents say the gap between wealthy Californians and the rest of the population is larger than in the past, and about two-thirds of adults say government should do “some” or “a lot” to reduce the gap.

Forty-eight percent of adults say the minimum wage should be increased more, while 37 percent say

FIELD POLL: MINIMUM WAGE

Californians are split over whether the state's minimum wage should be increased beyond the \$10 an hour scheduled for 2016.



*Small sample size

Note: The poll was conducted June 5-22, in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Korean, via land line and mobile phone, of 1,020 California adults. The results are subject to an error margin of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Source: Field Poll

The Sacramento Bee

current scheduled increases are adequate, according to the poll. Ten percent of California adults say the minimum wage already has been raised too much.

Legislation that raised the minimum wage to \$9 an hour passed last year and will raise the hourly minimum to \$10 in 2016. A California Assembly panel last week rejected a bill that would raise the state's minimum wage even higher.

Lisa Radoycis, a poll respondent from Rocklin, said the minimum wage is already more than enough and that government should concern itself with basic services, not disparities in wealth.

"I don't think it's a government thing," said Radoycis, a school librarian who described herself as conservative. "I don't think it's for them to do."

Tom Metry, a Republican from Fresno, disagreed. The retired math teacher said raising the minimum wage could help low earners improve their lives in a community where he said he knows many people who have to work two or more jobs.

"That's the only way we're going to level things out," Metry said. "It's got to be some type of fair equity."

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