

Public Support in the United States for Government-Funded Attorneys in Immigration Court

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Policy Brief

The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) partnered with the survey firm Lucid to conduct a public opinion poll to explore attitudes toward government-funded attorneys for people in immigration court in the United States. The survey was fielded online in September 2019 and included 6,000 adults (18 years and older) living in the United States. The survey sample closely approximates the U.S. population in terms of demographics and political affiliation (although Latinx people were slightly underrepresented in the sample).¹ The survey asked respondents about the importance of access to attorneys and whether they supported or opposed government-funded legal representation for people in immigration court, among other questions.

Key findings

Ninety-three percent of people in the United States believe that access to attorneys for all people, including those in immigration court, is (somewhat or very) important. This belief is pervasive, held by:

- › 94 percent of likely voters;
- › 97 percent of people who self-identify as Democrats, 89 percent of those who self-identify as Republicans, and 91 percent of people who do not identify with either party; and
- › 98 percent of Clinton voters, 89 percent of Trump voters, and 95 percent of those who voted for third-party candidates (among those who voted in the 2016 presidential election).

Eighty-seven percent of people in the United States support government-funded attorneys for people in immigration court. This support is widespread, existing among:

- › 86 percent of likely voters;
- › 96 percent of people who self-identify as Democrats, 76 percent of those who self-identify as Republicans, and 87 percent among people who do not identify with either party; and
- › 97 percent of Clinton voters, 73 percent of Trump voters, and 91 percent of people who voted for third-party candidates (among those who voted in the 2016 presidential election).

Even among people who oppose immigration to the United States, the vast majority, more than 70 percent, support the government funding attorneys for people in immigration court.

¹ See the appendix available at <https://www.vera.org/publications/taking-the-pulse> to see how the characteristics of survey respondents compare to the U.S. population.