

Shrey Agarwal

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Role Profile for CalMatters, California News Organization (Journalist Role)

Part 1 - Individual/Organization Profile

Organization background

- Name: CalMatters (originally styled “CALmatters”)
- Type: Nonprofit, nonpartisan 501(c) (3) digital news organization, no print edition, no paywall or subscription fee
- Founded: July 18, 2015 (celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2025); headquartered in Sacramento, with reporters based across the state
- Funding model: Individual members and major donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors/advertisers; discloses its supporters and financial statements publicly
- Notable structure: Merged with The Markup, a national tech-accountability newsroom, in 2024, adding technology-policy coverage to its portfolio

Prominent issues covered

CalMatters brands itself around explaining “how California’s state Capitol works and why it matters,” so its coverage is organized primarily by policy beat rather than general-interest news:

- State government & politics (the Capitol, the Legislature, the Governor’s office, elections)
- Housing & homelessness
- Criminal justice (policing, incarceration, courts)
- Education (K–12 and higher ed, including the state’s 116 community colleges)
- Health care
- Economy & the state budget
- Environment & climate
- Immigration
- Technology policy (via The Markup)

Number of active digital subscriptions / readers

CalMatters has no print circulation and no paid subscription; all content is free. The closest equivalents to “subscriptions” are

- WhatMatters, its flagship weekday newsletter: roughly 241,000 subscribers
- CalMatters.org: averages about 1.3 million direct visitors/readers per month

- Syndication reach: distributed freely to 300+ media partner outlets statewide, reaching an estimated 1 in 10 Californians (~3.9 million people) who encounter its journalism without visiting CalMatters.org directly
- Smaller topic newsletters: e.g., a weekly column from veteran writer Dan Walters reaches about 21,000 subscribers

Identifying constituents (target audience)

Which regions of the state have the highest concentrations of CalMatters' target audience?

- Sacramento region: home to CalMatters' headquarters and to its original "core" audience: state lawmakers, legislative staff, lobbyists, and agency officials who follow Capitol news closely
- Greater Los Angeles: the state's largest population center and, by PPIC voter data, home to roughly 30% of the state's Democratic voters and 24% of independents, which is the single largest pool of potential readers
- San Francisco Bay Area: a second major concentration, reflecting the region's high share of politically engaged, tech-savvy, and philanthropically minded residents who overlap heavily with nonprofit-journalism donor bases
- Statewide reach: CalMatters' explicit mission is to inform "all Californians," and its 300+ partner network gives it readers in nearly every one of the state's ~500 cities, so its audience is broader than a single region even though engagement concentrates most heavily in the three areas above

Part 2 - Constituent Profile

Because CalMatters' mission is to serve "all Californians" rather than a single legislative district, this section profiles California statewide, the group CalMatters is actually trying to reach while keeping in mind that day-to-day readership skews toward Sacramento, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area (see above).

Economics

- Prominent industries: technology (Silicon Valley is the leading global hub for venture-capital funding and home to dozens of the world's top AI companies), entertainment (Los Angeles/Hollywood), agriculture (the Central Valley is a top U.S. agricultural exporter), health care (the state's fastest-growing sector by GDP share), tourism, and international trade
- Unemployment rate: about 5.5% (late 2025), above the national average
- Income levels: median household income of roughly \$99,000, about 20–25% higher than the national median
- Poverty rate: about 12% by the official measure

Demographics

- Population: approximately 39.5 million, the most populous U.S. state, home to roughly 1 in 9 Americans
- Population breakdown by race/ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino 40.2%, White 33.8%, Asian 15.3%, Black/African American 5.2%
- Median age: about 37.6 years

Urban/rural breakdown

- Roughly 94–95% of Californians live in urban/metropolitan areas; only about 5–6% live in rural counties, concentrated mainly in the state's northern and eastern regions

Politics

- Partisan voter registration (April 2026): Democratic 44.9%, Republican 25.0%, No Party Preference 22.8%, Other 7.3%, out of about 23.1 million registered voters (≈85% of eligible adults)
- Statewide presidential vote share:
 - 2020 — Biden 63.5% / Trump 34.3%
 - 2016 — Clinton 61.7% / Trump 31.6%
 - 2012 — Obama 60.2% / Romney 37.1%
- No Republican has won a statewide race in California since 2006

Three specific issues important to constituents

Per a May 2026 PPIC statewide survey asking Californians what the governor and legislature should prioritize in 2026:

- Cost of living, inflation, jobs & the economy named by 44% as the single most important issue
- Housing costs and availability: 14%
- Dissatisfaction with government/elected officials and the state budget & taxes (9% and 7%, respectively), both well ahead of remaining issues

Constituents' general positions

- Economic: Californians are currently anxious about affordability; most call housing costs a “big problem” in their part of the state, and most feel less comfortable making a major purchase than six months ago. Views on taxes are mixed: pluralities want lower personal taxes and fewer state services, but majorities also support raising taxes on large corporations and very high earners specifically to close the state’s budget gap.
- Social: The state’s registration and voting history reflect a durable Democratic lean (a roughly 20-point registration advantage and no statewide Republican win since 2006), though there is real regional variation; the Bay Area and Los Angeles lean furthest left, while the Central Valley and parts of Orange/San Diego counties are comparatively more conservative.
- Environmental: California has a long record of supporting ambitious climate and clean-energy policy (vehicle-emissions standards, renewable-energy mandates), but in current polling, environment/climate ranks low as a top-of-mind “most important issue” (1–2%) compared with affordability, suggesting it remains a background value rather than an immediate voting priority for most residents right now.

Sources

- CalMatters, “About Us,” “Become an Advertiser or Sponsor,” and “2025 Impact Report” pages (calmatters.org)
- Public Policy Institute of California, “California Voter and Party Profiles” and “PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Their Government,” May 2026
- California Secretary of State, 60-Day Report of Registration, April 2026
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2020–2024), via california-demographics.com and statedemographics.com
- Wikipedia, “Economy of California” and 2020/2016/2012 U.S. presidential election results in California