



The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

FACT SHEET: IMMIGRATION MATTERS TO THE AAPI COMMUNITY

The Obama Administration recognizes that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are part of the fabric of hardworking, talented people who enrich the economy, diversity, and cultural landscape of the United States. Generations of immigrants, including many from Asia and the Pacific Islands, have helped make America the engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope around the world.

DEMOGRAPHICS

AAPIs are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States. According to the U.S. Census, the Asian American population in the United States [grew 46% from 2000 to 2010](#), faster than any other major racial or ethnic community nationwide. There are now over [20 million](#) Asian Americans and [1.5 million](#) Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders living in the United States, and [nearly 2 in 3 AAPIs](#) are foreign-born. By 2060, the number of AAPIs in the United States is expected to [double, reaching more than 47 million](#).

- **AAPIs naturalize at among the highest rates of those who choose to become American citizens.** In 2014, individuals from Asian countries made up more than [35% of newly naturalized citizens](#). Those from India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and China ranked among the [top five](#) nationalities to apply for and become U.S. citizens. However, there are [more than 1.4 million](#) AAPIs living in the country who are potentially eligible to naturalize.
- **The United States has a long-tradition of welcoming refugees, including many from Asian countries.** The U.S. has welcomed over 3 million refugees since 1975. [Between 2008 and 2013 refugees from Burma and Bhutan](#) constituted the largest numbers arriving from an Asian country.

ADMINISTRATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Improving Our Immigration System

America's immigration system is broken. Too many individuals live in the shadows or are stuck in the backlogs of our outdated immigration system. That is why the Administration has taken action to reform as much as of our broken immigration system as it can—and why it continues to urge Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform, which has drawn strong support from business, labor, faith, and law enforcement leaders as well as the majority of the American people.

On June 15, 2012, the Obama Administration announced that the Department of Homeland Security would establish Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which allows certain young people who are undocumented to seek temporary deferral of removal action on a case-by-case basis. DACA has changed the lives of tens of thousands of Asian and Pacific Islanders, giving them the opportunity to contribute more fully to the United States.

In 2014, President Obama announced a [series of commonsense steps](#) consistent with our laws to improve accountability in our immigration system, strengthen national security and our economy, and build upon our past efforts to enforce immigration laws. According to the [Council of Economic Advisors](#), these actions, if fully implemented, would boost our economic output by up to \$250 billion and raise average annual wages for U.S.-born workers by 0.4 percent, or \$220 in today's dollars, over the next ten years.

As a part of these actions, the Secretary of Homeland Security has implemented new enforcement priorities, focusing the Department's limited resources on individuals who pose the greatest risk to public safety, national security, and border security.

Additionally, the President established the White House [Task Force on New Americans](#), a government-wide effort tasked with better integrating immigrants and refugees into American communities. On April 14, 2015, the Task Force submitted a [Strategic Action Plan](#) to the President. In December 2015, the Task Force provided a [one-year progress report](#) to the President, outlining their achievements and next steps for 2016. Two highlights of these efforts include the [Building Welcoming Communities Campaign](#), which helps give local communities the tools to engage in local immigrant and refugee integration efforts to build inclusive communities, and the "[Stand Stronger](#)" [Citizenship Awareness Campaign](#), which creates awareness regarding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) also released a series of tools for naturalization preparation, including an [interactive online civics practice test](#) and [English and Citizenship Preparation class locator](#).

Furthermore, through new regulations and policies, the Administration is investing in efforts to modernize the legal immigration system for families, employers, students, entrepreneurs, and workers. The Department of Homeland Security has issued regulations that help [spouses of high-skilled workers](#) contribute to their families and our economy, and allow [students](#) to pursue on-the-job training more closely linked to their education. As a part of the efforts to streamline the legal immigration system, the White House released a [report](#) announcing further steps the Administration would be taking, including the announcement that the Department of Homeland Security would introduce a policy that would allow certain family members of Filipino World War II veterans to request to be reunited with their family members while they wait for their immigrant visas to become available. Beginning June 8, 2016, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will allow certain Filipino World War II veteran family members who are beneficiaries of approved family-based immigrant visa petitions an [opportunity](#) to seek a discretionary grant of parole on a case-by-case basis, so that they may come to the United States as they wait for their immigrant visa to become available.

REFUGEES

Between 2008 and 2013, the United States resettled [100,000 Burmese refugees and 70,000 Bhutanese refugees](#). The Administration is committed to maintaining a robust refugee admissions program – a longstanding and important component of America's overall effort in support of vulnerable people around the world. Recognizing the growing number of vulnerable individuals fleeing conflict, President Obama directed his Administration to scale up refugee resettlement efforts. In FY 2016, the United States will resettle 85,000 refugees and plans to further increase the number it expects to resettle to 100,000 in FY 2017. We can provide a safe haven for those fleeing persecution, while also ensuring the safety and security of the United States, and our Administration continues to do so.

RESOURCES

For more information on the Administration's efforts to improve our immigration system, visit [The White House](#) website.

To learn more about how the federal government assists refugees, visit the [Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement](#), [Department of Homeland Security](#), and [Department of State](#) websites.

To learn more about the Initiative, visit the [White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, housed within the Department of Education](#). To learn more about the Initiative's immigration priorities, or get more engaged in our work, contact WhiteHouseAAPI@ed.gov.