

DACA at Four: Participation in the Deferred Action Program and Impacts on Recipients

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Executive Summary

As the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program marked its fourth anniversary in August 2016, the Obama administration initiative has become an enduring one, providing a two-year reprieve from deportation and eligibility for work authorization to hundreds of thousands of young unauthorized immigrants.¹ With the Supreme Court declining in June 2016 to lift a nationwide injunction blocking a deferred action program for unauthorized immigrant parents, DACA remains the only large-scale initiative that affirmatively offers relief from deportation to unauthorized immigrants.

As of March 31, 2016, the most recent date for which DACA application data had been publicly released, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) had accepted applications from approximately 820,000 individuals, approving 728,285 of them.

Drawing upon a unique methodology that assigns legal status to the foreign born in U.S. Census Bureau population surveys and permits analysis of key sociodemographic characteristics, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) has provided estimates of the populations potentially eligible for deferred action since 2012, comparing those estimates against USCIS data to provide a picture of which populations are eligible for—and applying for—deportation relief. This issue brief provides the most current estimates of the populations immediately and potentially eligible in the future for DACA. It also presents trends in DACA application rates nationwide and by state, as well as by country of birth; discusses recent policy developments; and examines the impacts that DACA has had on its recipients.

MPI analysis of application rates suggests that while a majority of eligible individuals have applied for the program, a substantial number have yet to do so.

Using the most current, 2014 Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data and aging forward those who since have reached the minimum age required to apply for DACA, MPI estimates that 1.3 million unauthorized young adults ages 15 and older were immediately eligible for DACA in 2016. Included in this number of people who met all DACA eligibility criteria, including high school completion or current school enrollment, were about 250,000 youth who had aged into eligibility since the launch of the program—and who by 2016 represented approximately 19 percent of the immediately eligible population.

Taking the 1.3 million as the denominator, 63 percent of the immediately eligible population had applied for DACA as of March 2016. An additional 398,000 unauthorized immigrants ages 15 or older met all criteria *except* high school graduation or current school enrollment in 2014, although some may have become eligible by enrolling in a qualifying adult education program. Including this group raises the potentially eligible population from 1.3 million to

1.7 million—as a result lowering the initial application rate to 48 percent.

The evolving characteristics of the eligible population—in particular age and school enrollment—make it difficult to model DACA eligibility with precision, and the exact number of potentially eligible individuals enrolling in adult education programs is unknown. What is clear, however, is that the vast majority of those who received an initial two-year DACA grant have applied for renewal. By March 2016, MPI estimates that 581,000 DACA recipients had been in the program long enough to apply for renewal, and 539,000 of them—93 percent—had done so.² These near-universal rates of renewal suggest the program is providing valuable benefits to enrollees.

I. Estimates of DACA-Eligible Populations

To produce the most current estimates of potential DACA recipients, MPI employed a two-stage process:

- using MPI’s unique assignments of unauthorized status to noncitizens in the most recent dataset available, the U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), and³

- aging forward the population, so that unauthorized youth who were ages 13 or 14 at the time of the 2014 ACS and are now two years older are counted as eligible—given that the minimum age to apply for the DACA program is 15.⁴ This represents the first time that the eligible population has been aged forward to make the estimates comparable to the most recent USCIS application data.

Three subgroups within the potentially eligible population were estimated, based on their current and prospective eligibility for DACA enrollment (see Table 1).

- **Immediately eligible unauthorized youth.** MPI estimates that 1.3 million unauthorized immigrants were immediately eligible for DACA in 2016, as they met the age, age-at-arrival, and educational requirements. This total includes about 250,000 children who had aged in to the program since it was implemented in 2012.
- **Youth who do not meet the DACA educational criteria.** MPI estimates that an additional 398,000 unauthorized youth who met the DACA age, age-at-entry, and entry-date requirements do not appear to have met its educational criteria. These are high school dropouts who did not report current school enroll-

Table 1. Populations Potentially Eligible for DACA as of 2016

Immediately Eligible (ages 15 and older)	Eligible But for Education (ages 15 and older)	Eligible in the Future (under age 15)	Total Potentially Eligible
1,307,000	398,000	228,000	1,932,000

Notes: The *immediately eligible* population includes unauthorized youth who met all DACA eligibility requirements that could be modeled, including age, age-at-entry, continuous U.S. residence, and high school attainment or school enrollment. The *eligible but for education* population includes unauthorized youth who met all but the educational requirements. The *eligible in the future* population includes unauthorized children who met age-at-entry and continuous residence requirements but were too young to apply; virtually all were enrolled in school.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau pooled data from the 2010-14 American Community Survey (ACS) with legal status assignments by James D. Bachmeier and Colin Hammar of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University.

ment in the 2014 ACS. They could qualify for DACA if they enrolled in an adult education program that leads to a high school diploma, General Educational Diploma (GED), or equivalent. (It is difficult to determine how many DACA participants have taken advantage of these alternate routes to enrollment because the ACS data do not report enrollment in adult education programs.) This group is a particularly important population for future outreach efforts, as enrollment in a qualifying adult education program would make them eligible for DACA.

- **Children who will become eligible for DACA in the future.** MPI estimates that 228,000 children ages 7-14 could become eligible for DACA when they reach age 15. The vast majority of these children likely would remain enrolled in school at that age, and thus would be eligible to apply—making them also a key target for outreach.

II. Recent Policy Developments

Several DACA-relevant developments occurred during the last year, including the fact that the earliest group of enrollees became eligible to renew DACA for a second time. Also prominent: Election-tied uncertainty surrounding the future of the program; Supreme Court action in the challenge brought by Texas and 25 other states against the Obama administration's 2014 proposal to expand DACA and create the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program; and a controversy over three-year work authorization documents issued in error.

- **Second-time DACA renewals.** Starting in April 2016, the first of more than 500,000 young unauthorized immigrants who obtained DACA in 2012 and who renewed DACA in 2014 began submitting renewal applications for the second time.⁵ Although USCIS has

not made an announcement regarding second-time DACA renewals, it is expected that the agency soon will issue new guidance regarding the DACA application, Form I-821D, given that the current form expired on June 30, 2016.⁶

- **DACA and the 2016 election.** The program was created by President Obama via executive action and Congress has not codified DACA into law. A future administration therefore has discretion to continue, suspend, or modify it. In January 2017 the next president will take office. Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton has pledged to preserve DACA if elected, while Republican nominee Donald Trump has promised to terminate the program.⁷ The two major-party candidates' views on DACA represent just one of the areas in which their immigration policy agendas are widely divergent.
- **Legal order blocking DAPA and expanded DACA.** In November 2014, President Obama announced a sweeping set of executive actions on immigration; its centerpiece was the DAPA program,⁸ which MPI estimates would have provided deportation relief to as many as 3.7 million unauthorized immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.⁹ In his executive actions, the president also sought to expand the DACA program by removing the maximum age for applicants and adjusting forward the date of entry requirement from June 15, 2007 to January 1, 2010. MPI estimates those changes could have made an additional 290,000 unauthorized immigrants eligible for DACA.¹⁰ Also, the period of reprieve from deportation and eligibility for work authorization for DACA would have increased from two to three years.

Texas and 25 other states quickly challenged the DAPA program and DACA expansion in federal court in

Brownsville, Texas.¹¹ In February 2015, the initiatives were enjoined by U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas Andrew S. Hanen, and the national injunction was twice affirmed by the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.¹² The Supreme Court in April 2016 heard the administration appeal of the case, *U.S. v. Texas*, and in June issued a 4-4 split decision, leaving the lower court ruling—and injunction—in place.¹³

The litigation did not affect the original DACA program, which remains in force.¹⁴ However, some deferred-action opponents have suggested they may challenge the DACA program in court based on claims similar to those raised in *U.S. v. Texas*.¹⁵ It is unknown what the results of such a lawsuit would be, though a prior legal challenge to the original DACA program failed, and DACA has become an established initiative benefitting hundreds of thousands of people—developments that may, in court, strengthen the arguments for its continuation.¹⁶

- **Controversy over Issuance of Three-Year Work Authorization Documents.** The federal court injunction on DAPA and expanded DACA also barred issuance of three-year deferred action and work authorization proposed under the November 2014 executive actions. However, approximately 108,000 three-year employment authorization documents had been approved and sent out before the February 2015 district court injunction, and another 2,600 were issued in error after the court order, drawing sharp rebuke from Judge Hanen.¹⁷ To fix the mistake, USCIS mailed two-year documents to those who had received three-year documents after the injunction, and required them to return the three-year documents.¹⁸ In some cases, the

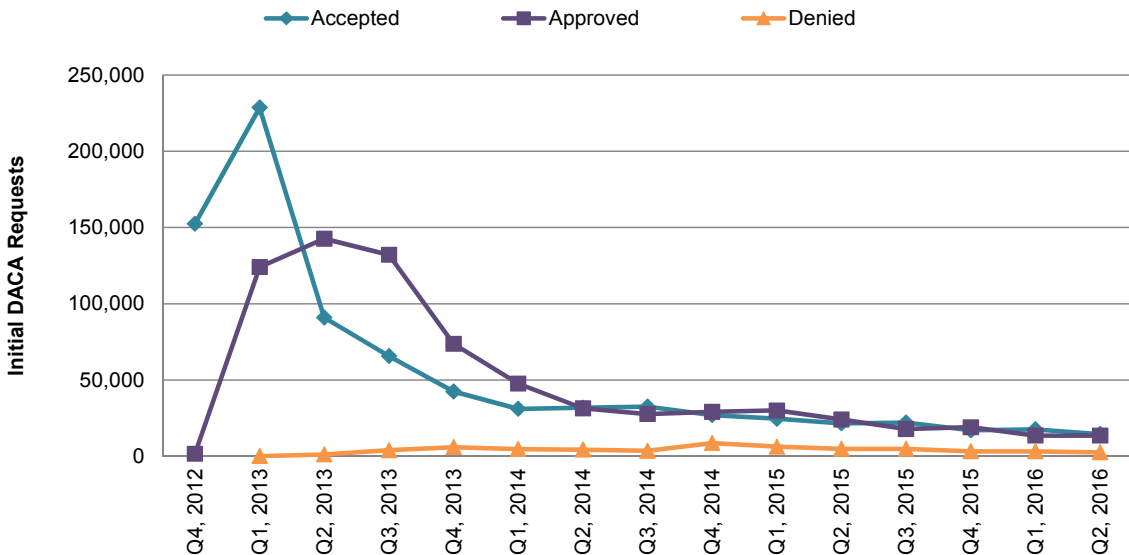
agency followed up with phone calls and home visits.¹⁹ As of July 2015, 99 percent of the 2,600 improperly issued three-year documents had been returned, and USCIS terminated DACA for the 1 percent (22 individuals) who failed to return their documents.²⁰

More recently, Judge Hanen in May ordered the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to submit a list of DACA beneficiaries who had received three-year work authorization documents prior to the injunction and lived in the 26 states that are plaintiffs in *U.S. v. Texas*.²¹ He requested “all personal identifiers and locators including names, addresses, ‘A’ file numbers and all available contact information, together with the date the three-year renewal or approval was granted.”²² Hanen stated that his intention was to keep the information under seal, but that “on a showing of good cause” he would be willing to release the list or a portion of it to state authorities. DOJ appealed the order to the Fifth Circuit; Judge Hanen then temporarily suspended his order until August 30, 2016.²³ Should DOJ ultimately be forced to produce this list, DACA beneficiaries could face a variety of risks associated with being identified as unauthorized to state officials or to the public.

III. DACA at the Four-Year Mark

As DACA reaches the four-year mark, examining eligible population participation is key to assessing program reach and identifying populations that could enroll in the future. Using MPI Census-based estimates of the DACA-eligible populations and administrative data published by USCIS, it is possible to calculate application rates nationally, by state of residence, and by country of birth for top groups. USCIS data can also be used to estimate the rate at which DACA participants seek

Figure 1. Initial DACA Application Acceptance and Adjudication, 2012-16



Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports, www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-i-821d-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.

to renew deferred action before their initial grants expire.

A. National Application Rates

Between August 15, 2012 and March 31, 2016, USCIS accepted 819,512 initial DACA applications.²⁴ Of these, 728,285 (89 percent) were approved, 57,268 (7 percent) were denied, and another 33,959 (4 percent) were pending as of March 31, 2016.²⁵ The number of individuals who submitted initial DACA requests peaked at more than 200,000 in the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2013, four to five months after the program was announced, then fell gradually to a stable low level below 50,000 quarterly starting in the last quarter of FY 2013 (see Figure 1).

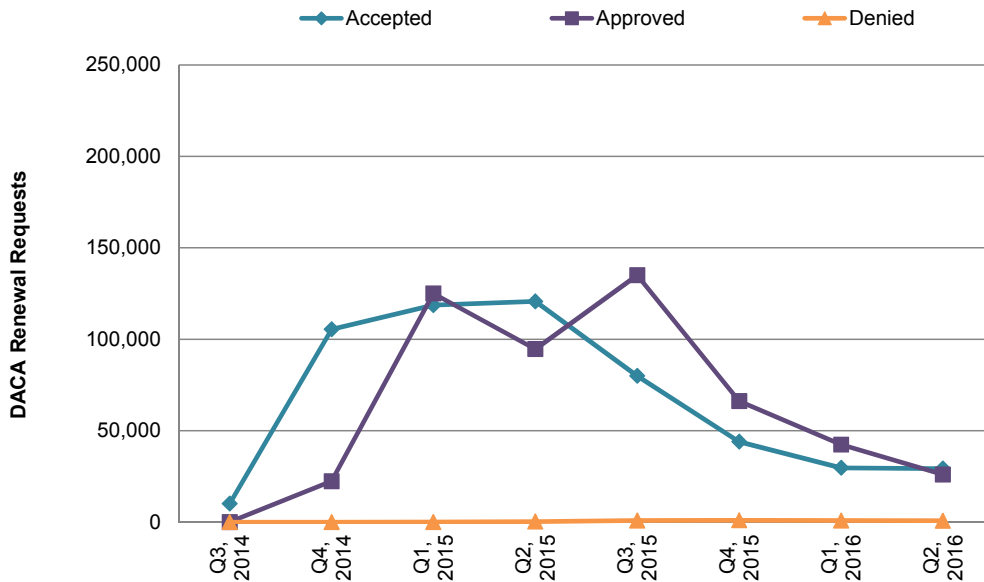
Comparing initial application data from USCIS with the MPI estimates of DACA-eligible populations enables generation of DACA application rates overall and by national origin and state of residence. Two rates are offered here: one for the immediately eligible population (meeting all modeled criteria) and one that also includes those who meet all requirements

but for education. Nationwide in 2016, MPI estimates that 63 percent of immediately eligible unauthorized youth—820,000 out of the 1.3 million pool of those immediately eligible—had applied for DACA. Using a second estimate that includes those who are eligible but for education, the potentially DACA-eligible population rises to 1.7 million—and the nationwide application rate falls to as low as 48 percent. An unknown number of potentially eligible individuals may have enrolled in qualifying adult education programs. Enrollment in these programs is not recorded in the ACS data employed in the analysis, making it difficult to precisely estimate the application rate.²⁶

B. National Renewal Rates

DACA renewal is available to enrollees who 1) have continuously resided in the United States since submitting their most recent DACA request that was approved; 2) do not have a disqualifying criminal conviction or pose a threat to public safety or national security; and 3) have not departed the United States without a grant of advance parole since August 15, 2012.²⁷ USCIS accepted 539,008

Figure 2. DACA Renewal Application Acceptance and Adjudication, 2014-16



Source: USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports.

renewal applications between June 2014 and March 2016.²⁸ Of these, 511,119 (95 percent) were approved, 3,980 (1 percent) were denied, and 23,909 were pending.²⁹ Renewal requests reached a high during the third quarter of FY 2014 through the second quarter of FY 2015 (see Figure 2)—or about two years after the peak in initial applications shown in Figure 1. USCIS has cautioned DACA enrollees to submit their renewal applications 120-150 days before their current grant expires to allow the agency adequate time to adjudicate cases and to avoid a lapse in deferred action and work authorization.³⁰

USCIS data also allow MPI to provide a rough estimate of the rates at which DACA recipients renewed their applications. As of March 2016, 581,000 DACA participants had been in the program long enough to apply for renewal, and 539,000 of them (93 percent) had done so.³¹ The renewal application rate in March 2016 was approximately 10 percentage points higher than in March 2015: 83 percent.³²

Although USCIS had approved more than a half million DACA renewals as of March 31, 2016, the process has not been free from complication. Some DACA applicants failed to file within

the suggested 120- to 150-day window before expiration of the initial status; in other instances, applicants met the deadline but USCIS failed to adjudicate the applications on time, and their deferred action and work authorization lapsed.³³ As of April 2015, for example, more than 11,000 DACA enrollees who applied within the deadline for renewal were not approved until after their original DACA validity had expired, and as a result experienced a temporary loss of their benefits; and 54,000 DACA beneficiaries who did not apply for renewal in time experienced a similar temporary loss of coverage.³⁴ The number of renewal applications pending with USCIS—which can indicate case backlogs—had fallen to 24,000 in March 2016, from a peak of 111,000 in March 2015, reflecting a decline in the number of renewal applications and possibly faster adjudication of cases.

C. DACA Application and Renewal Rates by State

In this section, MPI updates its state-level estimates of the DACA-eligible population from 2013 to 2016 and, using USCIS administrative data, estimates current and renewal rates by

Table 2. Estimates of Immediately and Potentially Eligible DACA Youth and Estimated Application Rates as of March 2016, for 20 States with the Largest Eligible Populations

	Immediately Eligible	Immediately Eligible and Eligible But for Education	Applications Accepted by USCIS	Application Rate Using Immediately Eligible Denominator (%)	Application Rate Using Immediately Eligible and Eligible But for Education Denominator (%)
U.S. Total	1,307,000	1,705,000	820,000	63	48
California	379,000	499,000	231,000	61	46
Texas	177,000	234,000	134,000	76	57
New York	76,000	97,000	43,000	56	44
Florida	72,000	92,000	35,000	48	38
Illinois	68,000	86,000	44,000	64	51
New Jersey	53,000	64,000	23,000	43	36
Georgia	47,000	65,000	27,000	57	42
North Carolina	41,000	58,000	29,000	71	50
Arizona	35,000	46,000	30,000	86	65
Virginia	30,000	36,000	13,000	42	35
Washington	27,000	37,000	19,000	69	51
Maryland	24,000	30,000	10,000	43	35
Colorado	23,000	29,000	18,000	80	63
Massachusetts	19,000	21,000	8,000	42	38
Nevada	16,000	22,000	13,000	83	61
Pennsylvania	15,000	19,000	6,000	38	31
Oregon	15,000	20,000	12,000	79	58
Tennessee	14,000	20,000	9,000	65	45
Connecticut	11,000	14,000	5,000	43	36
Utah	11,000	15,000	10,000	90	71

Notes: The *immediately eligible* population includes unauthorized youth who met all DACA eligibility requirements that could be modeled. The *eligible but for education* population includes unauthorized youth who met all but the educational requirements (i.e., a high school diploma or current school enrollment). Disqualifying criminal convictions and potential threats to national security or public safety could not be modeled, leading to potential overestimation of eligible populations. Totals may not add up due to rounding. Percentages are calculated on unrounded numbers and may not match those calculated based on the rounded numbers.

Sources: MPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2010-14 ACS data, with legal status assignments by Bachmeier, Hammar, and Van Hook; USCIS, "Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," multiple quarterly reports.

state. The 1.7 million potential DACA recipients were geographically concentrated: 29 percent (500,000) lived in California, and another 14 percent (230,000) lived in Texas (see Table 2). New York, Florida, and Illinois each had about 5 percent of the potentially eligible population. Taken together these five states accounted for

59 percent of the eligible population in 2016 and similar shares of initial and renewal DACA applications through March 2016.

The states with the highest application rates—Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon, and Texas—are all Western states with a predomi-

Table 3. DACA Participants Eligible to File for Renewal and Filing for Renewal as of March 2016, for 20 States with Largest Populations Eligible to File

State of Residence	Eligible to File for Renewal	Renewal Requests Accepted by USCIS	Renewal Request Rate (%)
U.S. Total	580,859	539,008	93
California	169,875	156,329	92
Texas	92,766	86,359	93
Illinois	32,043	29,361	92
New York	29,763	26,608	89
Florida	23,196	21,418	92
Arizona	20,968	19,682	94
North Carolina	20,827	19,690	95
Georgia	18,150	17,216	95
New Jersey	16,303	14,977	92
Washington	12,909	12,104	94
Nevada	9,746	9,249	95
Virginia	9,063	8,449	93
Oregon	8,526	8,104	95
Maryland	7,264	6,808	94
Indiana	7,238	6,869	95
Utah	7,224	6,777	94
Tennessee	5,954	5,695	96
Massachusetts	5,796	5,161	89
Wisconsin	5,610	5,236	93

Source: MPI analysis of administrative data from USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports.

nantly Mexican-born DACA-eligible population. In these six states, the estimated 2016 application rate for the immediately eligible population exceeded 75 percent, and the rate was 55 percent or higher when the population eligible but for education was included. By contrast, in a number of Eastern states—Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, and Florida—the application rate was below 50 percent for immediately eligible youth and less than 40 percent when the population eligible but for education was added. These states have more diverse unauthorized populations, and Mexican-born and Central American-born youth are in the minority. Unauthorized youth from Mexico and Central America, along with Peru, have the highest application rates by national origin, as will be discussed in the next section.

Using USCIS quarterly data, MPI has also estimated the DACA renewal request rate by state.³⁵ Renewal rates were high across the board—above 90 percent—in all ten states with the

largest DACA populations, although rates were slightly higher (94 percent or more) in Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Washington (see Table 3).

D. Application and Renewal Rates by Country of Origin

MPI has estimated the DACA-eligible population by country of origin as well as application and renewal rates. The top five countries of birth for the immediately eligible DACA population in 2016 were Mexico (822,000), Guatemala (55,000), El Salvador (41,000), South Korea (49,000), and Honduras (28,000). Youth born in Mexico accounted for 63 percent of the immediately eligible population in 2016, but 78 percent of initial applicants as of March 2016.

Application rates varied considerably by national origin. The application rate among the immediately eligible populations from Mexico,

Table 4. Estimates of Immediately and Potentially Eligible DACA Populations and Estimated Application Rates as of March 2016, for Ten Most Common Birth Countries of Eligible Population

Country of Birth	Immediately Eligible	Immediately Eligible and Eligible But for Education	Applications Accepted by USCIS	Application Rate Using Immediately Eligible Denominator (%)	Application Rate Using Immediately Eligible and Eligible But for Education Denominator (%)
Total All Countries	1,307,000	1,705,000	820,000	63	48
Mexico	822,000	1,136,000	634,000	77	56
Guatemala	55,000	93,000	22,000	40	24
El Salvador	41,000	54,000	31,000	77	58
South Korea	49,000	50,000	7,000	15	15
Honduras	28,000	38,000	20,000	73	54
China	25,000	27,000	0	0	0
Colombia	19,000	20,000	7,000	36	34
India	15,000	16,000	4,000	23	23
Philippines	18,000	19,000	5,000	27	26
Peru	15,000	15,000	9,000	64	61

Notes: Totals may not add up due to rounding. Percentages are calculated on unrounded numbers and may not match those calculated based on the rounded numbers.

Sources: MPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2010-14 ACS data, with legal status assignments by Bachmeier, Hammar, and Van Hook; USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports.

El Salvador, and Honduras exceeded 70 percent, compared to the 63 percent rate for all nationalities (see Table 4).³⁶ Application rates were generally very low for youth born in Asia, with China not even among the top 25 countries for which USCIS reported application data.

DACA renewal rates were generally high and exceeded 85 percent for all of the most common origin countries. Beneficiaries from El Salvador had the highest renewal rate (96 percent), followed by Honduras (94 percent), Guatemala (93 percent), and Mexico (93 percent) (see Table 5). The particularly high renewal rates for Central Americans and Mexicans may reflect heightened fear of enforcement among this population, as it comprised 91 percent of removals between FY 2003 and 2013.³⁷ Due to current levels of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, young Central Americans in particular could be less likely to risk deportation by not renewing DACA.

IV. Impacts of DACA on Participants

Although the DACA program does not provide a pathway to legal permanent residence nor confer legal status, an emerging literature based on some preliminary surveys suggests that its primary benefits—temporary protection from deportation and eligibility for work authorization—have increased economic and social opportunities for enrollees.³⁸

A. Employment Opportunities

According to results of some small-scale, early surveys, DACA grantees have experienced improved employment opportunities and earnings. In a 2015 United We Dream (UWD) survey of 1,750 DACA grantees, more than three-quarters

Table 5. DACA Participants Eligible to File for Renewal and Filing for Renewal as of March 2016, for Ten Most Common Birth Countries of Participants Eligible to Seek Renewal

Country of Origin	Eligible to File for Renewal	Renewal Requests Accepted by USCIS	Renewal Request Rate (%)
Total All Countries	580,859	539,008	93
Mexico	449,921	418,044	93
El Salvador	21,099	20,229	96
Guatemala	14,034	13,110	93
Honduras	13,839	12,965	94
South Korea	7,554	6,548	87
Peru	7,525	6,816	91
Brazil	6,016	5,210	87
Colombia	5,602	4,899	88
Ecuador	5,342	4,843	91
Argentina	3,579	3,202	89

Source: MPI analysis of administrative data from USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports.

stated they had obtained a new job after enrolling in DACA, and more than half reported obtaining a higher-paying job.³⁹ In a 2014 survey of 452 DACA recipients, the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) at the University of California in Los Angeles found that 66 percent “went from unemployed to employed after receiving DACA.”⁴⁰ And in a survey of 2,684 respondents by the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NUDRP), 59 percent of enrollees surveyed reported securing a new job since receiving DACA, 45 percent increased their earnings, and 21 percent had obtained an internship.⁴¹ These findings from early studies on DACA impacts provide evidence that DACA has helped young unauthorized immigrants better integrate into the U.S. economy and labor force in a short period of time.

The same studies indicate that DACA beneficiaries have access to better economic opportunities when compared to their unauthorized counterparts. In the IRLE survey, 84 percent of DACA enrollees reported having a job, versus 68 percent of those without deferred action.⁴² The survey also found that recipients earned on average 20 percent more than their non-DACA counterparts (\$11.47 hourly versus \$9.53), and that DACA recipients were more likely to have credit cards (48 percent compared to 37 percent) and bank accounts (90 percent versus 72 percent).⁴³ The findings

suggest that DACA has given participants access to greater financial tools and resources.

Deferred action also may enhance opportunities to gain access to licensed occupations. Since the DACA program began, several states have moved to open eligibility for professional licenses to qualified DACA grantees. In April 2016, Nebraska adopted a measure that opened at least 170 professions that require state licenses, such as in health care and education, to qualified DACA recipients.⁴⁴ New York in May approved a similar measure, enabling DACA grantees to apply for and receive teaching certification, medical-related licenses, and more than 50 other professional licenses in the state.⁴⁵

B. Educational Attainment

DACA protection has also opened educational opportunities for young unauthorized immigrants. In the national UWD survey, 30 percent of DACA recipients stated they had returned to school.⁴⁶ They also reported in the survey that deferred action allowed them to finance their education more easily through being able to work.⁴⁷ Moreover, the majority of IRLE survey respondents reported that since obtaining DACA, they found it easier to attend school (74 percent) and stay in school (70 percent).⁴⁸

C. Driver's Licenses and State-Issued ID

Another important advantage of participation in DACA is eligibility for driver's licenses and other state-issued IDs. Unauthorized immigrants do not qualify for driver's licenses in most U.S. states.⁴⁹ However, as recipients of deferred action and under a combination of the federal *Real ID Act of 2005* and individual state policies, DACA enrollees in all states are eligible to obtain a driver's license.⁵⁰ Legal challenges to that eligibility have not succeeded. Driver's licenses are important because they allow people to drive to work and school legally, and government-issued IDs are necessary for a wide range of tasks, from opening a bank account to enrolling in educational programs or accessing medical care. United We Dream reports that 91 percent of survey respondents had obtained a state-issued driver's license and/or state identification card since enrolling in DACA.⁵¹ In the IRLE survey, 96 percent reported having a driver's license, compared to 54 percent of unauthorized immigrants without DACA.⁵²

D. Eligibility for Advance Parole

DACA also has allowed some grantees to travel abroad, something that is not possible for most unauthorized immigrants. While DACA recipients are not automatically allowed to travel internationally, they are eligible to apply for advance parole, a travel document that allows a foreign national to depart the United States and re-enter lawfully. USCIS grants advance parole to DACA recipients on a case-by-case basis, and generally only if travel is for humanitarian, educational, or employment purposes. As of December 2015, 22,340 DACA recipients had been granted advance parole.⁵³ In some cases, DACA recipients who are eligible for a green card through sponsorship by a U.S.-citizen or legal permanent resident (LPR) relative or by an employer and who travel abroad with advance parole may apply for adjustment of status (to LPR, or green card holder) after they re-enter the country.⁵⁴ As of December 2015, 2,994 DACA recipients had been granted advance parole and subsequently approved for adjustment of status.⁵⁵

E. Social Integration

The benefits of DACA in terms of social integration and civil participation have also been probed in surveys. In the 2015 United We Dream study, DACA recipients said the program gave them a greater sense of integration and alleviated their fears. For example, 84 percent reported feeling more freedom, while 78 percent were less afraid of deportation and 72 percent reported feeling a greater sense of belonging.⁵⁶

In terms of civic participation, the IRLE survey found that 99 percent of respondents said they would become U.S. citizens if given the opportunity. This finding suggests that many DACA recipients are eager for fuller U.S. integration.⁵⁷

V. Conclusion

Since it began in 2012, the DACA program has provided relief from deportation and eligibility for work authorization to more than 728,000 young unauthorized immigrants, representing around half—if not more—of the eligible population. At its four-year mark, DACA is a large-scale program that has succeeded in attracting broad participation and providing life-altering benefits to many unauthorized youth—as evidenced by the fact that more than 90 percent of those eligible to apply for renewal have done so. However, almost half a million individuals who were already eligible for DACA had not applied as of March 31, 2016; and there were an additional 400,000 who could qualify if they enrolled in an adult education program.

With broader deferred action initiatives suspended, at least for the foreseeable future, the original DACA program remains the only avenue for unauthorized immigrants to affirmatively receive a reprieve from deportation and work authorization on a large scale. Outreach should logically focus in particular on the potentially eligible population that could benefit from DACA through enrollment in educational programs. Another opportunity exists in middle schools and high schools, where outreach efforts can tap into the population of unauthorized youth who will age into eligibility when they turn 15—as

about 250,000 youth already have done since the program’s inception.

At the four-year mark, amid an election season in which immigration has proven to be a central and defining issue, the future of the DACA program could well be determined before its next anniversary.

Appendix

Using USCIS data, MPI calculated DACA renewal rates by matching the number of initial DACA approvals to the number of renewals accepted for matching periods, following USCIS application guidelines (i.e., that participants should apply for renewal 150 to 120 days before their initial DACA eligibility expired).⁵⁸ USCIS had approved a total of 580,859 DACA applications as of June 30, 2014 (the end of the third quarter in fiscal year [FY] 2014), and the initial eligibility periods of all these participants had expired by June 30, 2016. These DACA participants

would have to submit their renewal application by March 2, 2016 (120 days before June 30) to avoid gaps in employment authorization and accumulation of unlawful presence in the absence of DACA protection.

USCIS publishes quarterly application data, and so initial approval dates and renewal filing dates cannot be exactly matched. The closest matching period for the initial approval period for the third quarter of FY 2014 is the second quarter of FY 2016 (two years minus 120 days). USCIS had accepted 539,008 renewal applications by the end of the second quarter in FY 2016 (i.e., by March 31, 2016). Dividing 580,859 by 539,008 yields a 93 percent renewal rate for DACA participants as of March 31 (see Table A-1). Due to the 29-day gap between the earliest expected date for renewal filings (March 2, 2016) and the data available in the most recent USCIS quarterly data (March 31, 2016), it is possible that more than 580,859 applications were eligible for renewal, and the actual renewal rate was slightly lower than 93 percent.

Table A-1. Total Number of Initial DACA Approvals and Renewal Requestors, August 2012 –March 2016

Period of Initial DACA Approval	Matching Period for Filing Renewals	Eligible to File for Renewal (Initial Approvals as of June 30, 2014)	Renewals Filed (Accepted by USCIS as of March 31, 2016)	Renewals Not Yet Filed (Initial Approvals minus Renewals Filed)	Renewal Request Rate (%)
September 1, 2012 – June 30, 2014	May 4, 2014 – March 2, 2016	580,859	539,008	41,851	93

Notes: Although USCIS started accepting DACA requests on August 15, 2012, it began approving them on September 1, 2012; thus, the first wave of renewal requests would have started in May 4, 2014, following USCIS guidelines. However, USCIS did not begin accepting renewal requests until June 5, 2014.

Sources: USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” data for August 2012 – June 2014 (fiscal year 2014, quarter 3), and data for May 2014 – March 2016 (fiscal year 2016, quarter 2), www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-i-821d-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.

Endnotes

- 1 To be eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, individuals must be at least 15 years old; have arrived in the United States before the age of 16; have been under the age of 31, present in the United States, and continuously resident in the United States for five years as of June 15, 2012; and meet certain education and public-safety and security requirements. The DACA grant is valid for two years and can be renewed every two years. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),” last updated July 27, 2016, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca.
- 2 See the appendix for a detailed description of how the DACA renewal rate was calculated.
- 3 It should be noted that criminal convictions and disqualifying security or public-safety factors cannot be modeled in the data, and as a result, these estimates possibly overestimate eligible populations. For a more detailed description of the methodology, see Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Jennifer Van Hook, and James D. Bachmeier, *A Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Health Coverage Profile of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/demographic-socioeconomic-and-health-coverage-profile-unauthorized-immigrants-united-states.
- 4 To capture the size of the population that has aged into DACA eligibility since the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), which is the most recent ACS available, MPI examined the number of 13- and 14-year-olds who would reach age 15 in 2016, as 15 is the minimum age for DACA eligibility. To account for ongoing school enrollment, which is a requirement to apply for DACA, MPI estimated the share of students likely to drop out of school, using historical dropout data by race and ethnicity. About 150,000 youth ages 13-14 in the 2014 ACS were aged forward to ages 15-16 as of 2016, and included in eligible populations; of these 120,000 were aged into the immediately eligible population while 30,000 were aged into the eligible but for education group, assuming that the latter group dropped out before completing high school. Another 100,000 had previously aged in between 2012 and 2014.
- 5 As of August 3, 2016, when this issue brief was written, approximately 126,000 DACA recipients were eligible to apply for a second renewal, based on the number of initial DACA approvals as of December 31, 2012. See USCIS, “Data Set: Form I-821D Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” multiple quarterly reports, www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-i-821d-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.
- 6 More than 50,000 participants became eligible to file second renewals between June 30, 2016, and August 3, 2016. This group of participants may choose to file using the expired Form I-821D or may choose to wait to file for renewal until the updated version of the application is released. See USCIS, “Consideration for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, USCIS Form I-821D,” accessed May 25, 2016, www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-821d.pdf.
- 7 Hillary Clinton campaign, “Immigration Reform,” accessed July 29, 2016, www.hillaryclinton.com/issues/immigration-reform/; Alexandra Jaffe, “Donald Trump: Undocumented Immigrants ‘Have to Go,’” NBC News, August 16, 2015, www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/donald-trump-undocumented-immigrants-have-go-n410501.
- 8 To qualify for the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program, an unauthorized immigrant would be required to (1) have a son or daughter who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (LPR); (2) have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 2010; (3) be physically present in the United States during November 2014 and at the time of filing a DAPA application; and (4) not be a priority for enforcement under Department of Homeland Security (DHS) guidelines issued in November 2014—i.e., not having engaged or been suspected of terrorism; convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three misdemeanors; or been reapprehended at the border or issued a final deportation order since January 2014. See Memorandum from Jeh Charles Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, to Leon Rodriguez, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Thomas S. Winkowski, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children and with Respect to Certain Individuals Who Are the Parents of U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents,” November 20, 2014, www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_deferred_action_1.pdf; Memorandum from Jeh Charles Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, to Thomas S. Winkowski, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Leon Rodriguez, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration

- Services; and Alan D. Bersin, Acting Assistance Secretary for Policy, “Policies for the Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Undocumented Immigrants,” November 20, 2014, www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_prosecutorial_discretion_0.pdf.
- 9 Migration Policy Institute (MPI), “MPI: As Many as 3.7 Million Unauthorized Immigrants Could Get Relief from Deportation under Anticipated New Deferred Action Program,” (press release, November 19, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/news/mpi-many-37-million-unauthorized-immigrants-could-get-relief-deportation-under-anticipated-new.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Within hours of the announcement on November 20, 2014, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio filed a legal challenge (*Arpaio v. Obama*), arguing that the programs constituted a breach of the executive powers of the president, violated the *Administrative Procedures Act* (which requires issuance of regulations and an open rulemaking process) and would cause a severe economic burden to the states. The lawsuit was later dismissed.
- 12 The judge presiding in the case, U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of Texas Andrew S. Hanen, issued the injunction on the basis that the executive actions violated the *Administrative Procedure Act* (APA). The law requires all agencies to follow minimal guidelines for rulemaking including policies, laws, procedures, and/or practice requirements.
- 13 Supreme Court tie votes do not set legal precedent. The case returns to the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and from there will be sent back to Judge Hanen for a full hearing on the merits.
- 14 USCIS, “Executive Actions on Immigration,” accessed August 6, 2016, www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction.
- 15 Josh Gerstein and Seung Min Kim, “Supreme Court impasse on immigration threatens ‘Dreamers,’ too,” Politico, June 23, 2016, www.politico.com/story/2016/06/immigration-supreme-court-dream-act-224735.
- 16 A federal lawsuit brought by a group of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in 2012 was dismissed for lack of standing in 2015. See Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in *Crane v. Johnson*, April 7, 2015, www.ca5.uscourts.gov/opinions/pub/14/14-10049-CV0.pdf.
- 17 The 2,600 documents include 2,100 that were mistakenly issued after the court order and 500 that were issued before the court order, returned to USCIS as undeliverable and then remailed to updated addresses after the court order. See USCIS, “DACA Recipients Who Received 3-Year Work Permit Post-Injunction: Quick Facts,” September 18, 2015, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/daca-recipients-who-received-3-year-work-permit-post-injunction-quick-facts
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Brownsville Division, “Memorandum Opinion and Order, *State of Texas et al. v. United States*,” May 19, 2016, www.scotusblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Judge-Hanen-ethics-ruling-5-19-16.pdf.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 USCIS, “Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2016 (March 31).”
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Because of data limitations, the MPI method for estimating the eligible population cannot account for individuals disqualified as a result of criminal convictions or who are considered public-safety or national-security threats. No credible estimates of the share of unauthorized immigrants with such convictions exist. The MPI estimates are based on reported U.S. residence since 2007, but DACA eligibility rules require *continuous* residence since that time, and continuous residence cannot be modeled in the ACS data. Because the model does not account for these two factors, DACA-eligible populations might be slightly overestimated and application rates underestimated.
- 27 USCIS, “Renew Your DACA,” last updated June 15, 2015, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/renew-your-daca.

- 28 USCIS, “Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2016 (March 31).”
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 USCIS, “Renew Your DACA.”
- 31 Ibid. See Appendix for a detailed description of how the DACA renewal rate was calculated.
- 32 Angelo Mathay and Margie McHugh, *DACA at the Three-Year Mark: High Pace of Renewals, But Processing Difficulties Evident* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2015), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/daca-three-year-mark-high-pace-renewals-processing-difficulties-evident.
- 33 The consequences of a gap in DACA coverage can include ineligibility to work, expiration of a social security number, and accrual of unlawful presence under U.S. immigration law (which can later trigger bars to becoming a permanent resident).
- 34 A reporter for BuzzFeed was the first to obtain USCIS data on the number of DACA recipients whose status and work permits had expired despite filing for renewal on time. See David Noriega, “Thousands of Dreamers Are Losing Their Work Permits,” BuzzFeed News, April 22, 2015, www.buzzfeed.com/davidnoriega/thousands-shielded-from-deportation-losing-work-permits?utm_term=.goVZo8L6La#hbp03QXAX9.
- 35 See the Appendix for a detailed description of how the DACA renewal rate was calculated.
- 36 Due to relatively low educational attainment, Mexican nationals represented 67 percent of the broader potentially eligible population that includes youth without a high school education. Their application rate among the potentially eligible population (56 percent) was also considerably higher than the comparable rate for all nationalities (48 percent).
- 37 Marc R. Rosenblum and Kristen McCabe, *Deportation and Discretion: Reviewing the Record and Options for Change* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), 3, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change.
- 38 This set of surveys can provide insight into segments of the DACA population but do not constitute representative samples of DACA recipients as a whole. Because the surveys were administered online, or to those who attended DACA workshops, or through social networks, better-educated DACA recipients may be over-represented in the results.
- 39 Zenén Jaimes Pérez, *A Portrait of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients* (Washington, DC: United We Dream, 2015), <http://unitedwedream.org/research/report-portrait-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-recipients/>.
- 40 Caitlin Patler and Jorge A. Cabrera, *From Undocumented to DACAmented, Impacts of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program Three Years Following its Announcement* (Los Angeles: Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), www.chicano.ucla.edu/files/Patler_DACA_Report_061515.pdf.
- 41 Roberto G. Gonzalez and Angie M. Bautista-Chavez, *Two Years and Counting: Assessing the Growing Power of DACA* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, 2014), <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/two-years-and-counting-assessing-growing-power-daca>.
- 42 Patler and Cabrera, *From Undocumented to DACAmented*.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Don Walton and Zach Pluhacek, “Senators override Ricketts’ veto on young immigrant licensure bill,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, April 20, 2016, http://journalstar.com/legislature/senators-override-ricketts-veto-on-young-immigrant-licensure-bill/article_a2d6d276-cde0-5d26-a893-dd472c55dc44.html.
- 45 Joseph Spector, “Despite opposition, NY to let undocumented workers teach,” *The Journal News*, May 17, 2016, www.lohud.com/story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2016/05/17/despite-opposition-ny-let-undocumented-workers-teach/84498380/?utm_content=bufferc2a69&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer.
- 46 Jaimes Pérez, *A Portrait of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients*.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Patler and Cabrera, *From Undocumented to DACAmented*.
- 49 National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), “States Offering Drivers’ Licenses to Immigrants,” August 8, 2015, www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/states-offering-driver-s-licenses-to-immigrants.aspx.

- 50 National Immigration Law Center (NILC), “Access to Driver’s Licenses for Immigrant Youth Granted DACA,” updated May 31, 2015, www.nilc.org/issues/drivers-licenses/daca-and-drivers-licenses/; USCIS, “Frequently Asked Questions,” updated June 15, 2015, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions.
- 51 Jaimes Pérez, *A Portrait of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients*.
- 52 Patler and Cabrera, *From Undocumented to DACAmented*.
- 53 Letter from Leon Rodriguez, Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley, June 29, 2016, www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2016-06-29%20USCIS%20to%20CEG%20-%20DACA%20Advance%20Parole%20Program.pdf.
- 54 Under U.S. immigration law, individuals must have been lawfully admitted or paroled into the country to adjust to permanent resident status from within the United States. Individuals who entered without inspection are thus ineligible for adjustment of status, and if they are otherwise eligible for an immigrant visa, must first depart the country and be lawfully admitted or paroled in order to be eligible to adjust status. DACA recipients who have been granted advance parole thus may be eligible to apply for permanent resident status from within the United States once they have traveled abroad and then been paroled back into the country. See *Immigration and Nationality Act*, Section 245(a), codified at 8 U.S. Code § 1255.
- 55 Letter from USCIS Director Rodriguez to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Grassley.
- 56 Jaimes Pérez, *A Portrait of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)*.
- 57 Patler and Cabrera, *From Undocumented to DACAmented*.
- 58 USCIS, “Renew Your DACA.”

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