

In First Year of New Program, Deportation Is Deferred for 400,000 Young Immigrants

By [Rebecca Kaplan](#)

August 15, 2013 | 7:09 p.m.

About 400,000 "Dreamers" have been allowed to stay in the United States in the year since the Obama administration began accepting applications for young illegal immigrants to defer deportation proceedings and receive work permits, according to data compiled by the Brookings Institution and released on the anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

The numbers show that out of more than a half-million applicants for deferred action, more than three-quarters were accepted and just 1 percent denied. The applications were concentrated in states that already have large immigrant communities, such as California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida. On the East Coast, the applications were from a more diverse set of countries while in the West, Midwest, and South the vast majority of applicants were from Mexico.

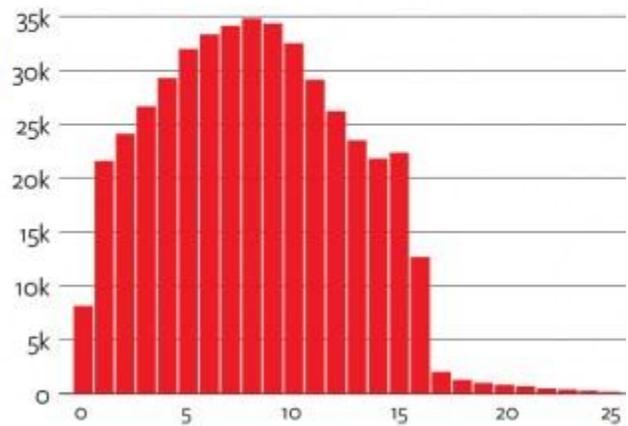
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Applications

Nearly three-fourths of all DACA applicants come from Mexico and more than two-thirds were ages ten or younger when they arrived in the United States.

Applications by country

	Total	Share
Mexico	348,579	74.9%
El Salvador	18,785	4.0
Honduras	12,463	2.7
Guatemala	11,672	2.5
South Korea	7,007	1.5
Peru	6,569	1.4
Brazil	5,550	1.2
Colombia	4,951	1.1
Ecuador	4,787	1.0
Philippines	3,296	0.7

Applications by age at entry



Source: Brookings Institution

"DACA has been an incredible success for our country," said Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chairman Ruben Hinojosa, D-Texas. "To date we have given 400,000 young immigrants the ability to continue to contribute to this country, the only country that most of these outstanding individuals have ever known."

The fate of these younger immigrants brought to the country illegally as children—the so-called Dreamers—is less precarious than many of the other 11 million people living in the U.S. without papers. Lawmakers have been quicker to agree that the Dreamers deserve special treatment, including an expedited path to citizenship.

Hinojosa and other supporters of immigration reform point to the DACA program, which began a year ago Thursday, as a sign of progress; some see it as an indication of what President Obama will do for other undocumented immigrants if Congress does not act.

"The overwhelming success of this program also gives me optimism that we can move beyond the political rhetoric on a broader immigration reform bill," Hinojosa said. "It is my great hope that when we return from recess, Congress can finally begin work on passing a broader immigration reform bill with an earned pathway to citizenship."

The Homeland Security Department has also pointed to their successful implementation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program as evidence that it is structurally prepared to deal with a major immigration overhaul.

But at least one lawmaker who backs comprehensive immigration reform, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., has pointed to the administration's program as a reason the House needs to act to address the entirety of the immigration system. The Senate passed a comprehensive reform package in June.

"I believe that this president will be tempted, if nothing happens in Congress, to issue an executive order as he did for the Dream Act kids a year ago, where he basically legalizes 11 million people by the sign of a pen," Rubio said during an interview with radio station WFLA earlier this week.

Brookings supplemented monthly U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data with a Freedom of Information Act request to DHS for more information about the size, demographics, geographic distribution, age, and year of arrival of applicants to the DACA program.

Based on estimates that 936,000 eligible immigrants were living in the U.S. when the program began, 59 percent have applied. The applicants come from 192 countries, although 96 percent are from the same 25 countries that have at least 1,000 applicants each. The vast majority of applicants, 75 percent, are from Mexico, with the next largest group, 4 percent, from El Salvador. At least 1 percent of applicants hailed from Honduras, Guatemala, South Korea, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador.

The study's authors say the trends among DACA applicants could preview the demographics of a large-scale legalization of undocumented immigrants. Experts speculated that aggressive coverage of the program by Spanish-language media could account for the high percentage of applicants from Spanish-speaking countries. By comparison, only 4 percent of applicants came from Asian countries, even though it is estimated that they represent 6 percent of eligible immigrants for the program.

Applicants for the program had to arrive in the U.S. before age 16 and reside here without legal status since June 15, 2007. The most frequent age of arrival was 8, though two-thirds came to the U.S. before they were 10 years old. There was a spike in immigration between 1998 and 2001, which represent the peak years of arrival for DACA applicants.

House members departed for the August recess with a handful of single-issue immigration bills and no timeline for when they might get a final vote. None of the existing bills addresses the vast majority of the population that came to the U.S. illegally as adults.

Yet another group of high-profile Republicans, including former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, came out Thursday in favor of a sequence of provisional legal status, legal permanent residency, and citizenship for immigrants.

Barbour and Rice, along with former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and former U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros—both Democrats—were the cochairs of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Immigration Task Force, which issued recommendations for immigration reform Thursday.

"I believe if there is a rigorous path to citizenship that does have rigorous requirements, I'm comfortable with it," Barbour said on a conference call with reporters.

The BPC recommendations broadly track with the legislation approved by the Senate, although task force members say they hope their suggestions will improve the bill. In particular, they called for more precise metrics to measure border security.

"The current Senate bill provides additional border assets, such as more border personnel and technology. However, it does not provide outcome-based border-security metrics that are trustworthy and verifiable, such as measuring the net inflow of illegal migrants or the percentage of individuals who overstay their visas," the report said. "We believe the United States should establish a scientifically valid set of measures that are audited by an independent commission and published periodically for public scrutiny."

It's unclear whether the recommendations will have that much effect on lawmakers who are home hearing from their constituents—some of whom don't want to extend citizenship to immigrants here illegally. The task force plans to publicize its recommendations at events throughout the country as well as through op-eds in local newspapers. Members also will be taking the report to meetings on Capitol Hill.

The decision to release the recommendations during the August recess was not meant to pressure lawmakers, but rather to put out a straightforward plan that "gets a bird's eye view of the major pillars of a balanced reform," said former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, a member of the BPC task force. "Hopefully that will help [the American people] engage and talk to their representatives."

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