

# Naturalization

## The Process of Becoming a U.S. Citizen

Naturalization is the process that grants U.S. citizenship to lawful permanent residents (LPRs) who fulfill requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act. LPRs, or “green card” holders, are non-citizens who are permanently authorized to live and work in the United States. Naturalization is a voluntary act for LPRs. As of 2019, an estimated 9.2 million LPRs residing in the United States are potentially eligible to naturalize. In FY2019, 843,593 persons naturalized.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS



Be an LPR and have resided continuously in the United States for at least five years, or three years if married to a U.S. citizen\*



Have been physically present for at least half that time



Be at least 18 years old\*\*



Demonstrate good moral character



Read, write, and speak basic English



Understand the history, principles, and form of the U.S. government (civics)

\*There are certain exceptions, including for members of the military.

\*\*Children under age 18 who are LPRs residing in the United States may acquire derivative citizenship upon a parent's naturalization.

### APPLICATION PROCESS



1 File an **Application for Naturalization**, Form N-400, with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and pay a \$640 filing fee and \$85 biometrics fee. Applicants from low-income households may qualify for a fee waiver or reduced filing fee. Fees are not required for military applicants; applicants age 75 and up do not need to pay the biometric fee.



2 Attend a **biometrics appointment** to record fingerprints, photograph, and signature. (Required for all applicants, including those age 75 and older).



3 Complete an **interview** with a USCIS officer:
 

- Answer questions about application and background.
- Take English language and civics tests. (These requirements may be waived or modified for certain applicants based on age, length of U.S. residence, and disability).



4 **USCIS issues a decision** on the Form N-400: it may be granted, continued (if more information is needed or tests need to be re-taken, for example), or denied (if the applicant is not eligible for naturalization).



5 Those whose Form N-400 is approved must take the **Oath of Allegiance** during a naturalization ceremony.

*I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.*



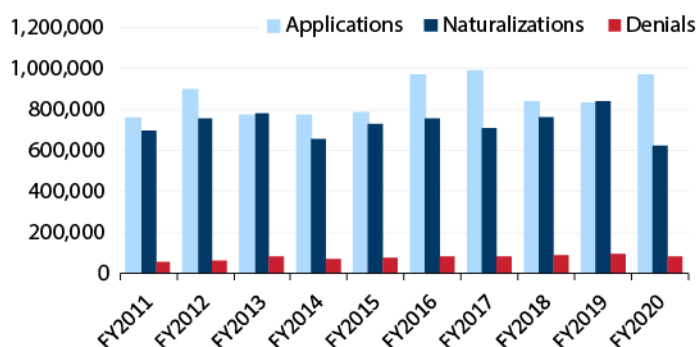
After the ceremony, USCIS issues a **Certificate of Naturalization**.



Upon becoming a U.S. citizen, individuals may apply for a U.S. passport, register to vote, serve on a jury, obtain citizenship for their children under age 18, apply for federal jobs, become an elected official, apply for federal grants and scholarships, and obtain certain government benefits. U.S. citizens may also sponsor a broader range of family members living abroad for legal permanent residence than LPRs.

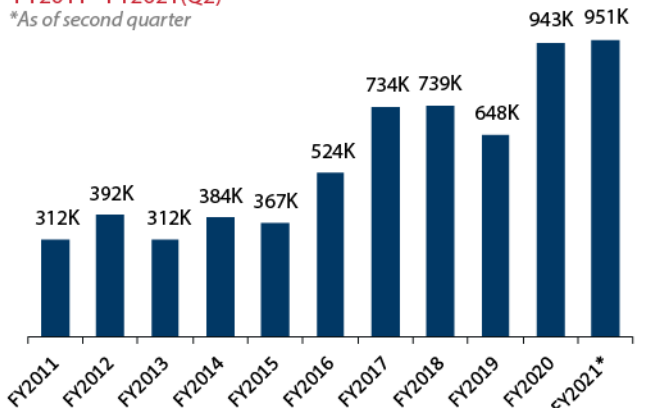
### NATURALIZATION DATA

**NATURALIZATIONS, APPLICATIONS, AND DENIALS**  
FY2011 - FY2020



**NATURALIZATION APPLICATIONS PENDING WITH USCIS**  
FY2011 - FY2021(Q2)

\*As of second quarter



Sources: Bryan Baker, Estimates of the Lawful Permanent Resident Population in the United States and the Subpopulation Eligible to Naturalize: 2015-2019, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), 2019. DHS, 2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Table 19; USCIS N-400 Performance Data, multiple years, through FY2021 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

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