

DACA Recipients in Wisconsin

October 2023



INTRODUCTION



People have been traveling across continents for over 20,000 years. The concept of immigrating into another country wasn't introduced until the late 1700s, when Congress passed its first law stating who qualifies for U.S. citizenship. The decision to legally define a U.S. citizen gave lawmakers the authority to create policies around who is welcomed into the country and who is not, then establish consequences for violations. In most instances, immigration is attributed to circumstances in home countries that are beyond their control, including violence, war, displacement, and lack of access to food and jobs.

As immigration evolves in the 20th century, new policies have been introduced to provide a more equitable environment for immigrant children and families. For example, one of the **most impactful policies is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.** In the state of Wisconsin we have a growing population of DACA recipients.

Yet, some legislators in Wisconsin are making life harder for immigrant families in our communities. Fueled by fear, these decision makers uphold damaging narratives that are rooted in racism and xenophobia. For this reason, it is imperative that individuals in the community and policymakers support legislation that expands opportunities for immigrant communities and prioritizes the needs of immigrant families; especially in a state with a strong labor history and high migration population.



ABOUT DACA

What is DACA?

In 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was signed into law by President Obama, temporarily shielding some Dreamers (immigrant children brought to the U.S. before the age of 16) from deportation, but not establishing a path to citizenship. Instead, it was designed as a two-year renewable protection to live in the U.S. with temporary authorization to work.

Who is eligible for DACA?

DACA qualifications include undocumented immigrants who:¹



Came to the U.S. before their 16th birthday



Continuously reside in the U.S. from June 15, 2007 until the present



Enrolled in school or have graduated from high school or obtained a GED certificate



Have not been convicted of a felony

DEMOGRAPHICS



DACA recipients represent approximately 150 different birth countries.

United States

As of March 2023, 578,680 individuals across the U.S. are active DACA recipients. The countries of birth of the highest DACA recipients² currently are:



Wisconsin

As of March 2023, there are 5,790 DACA recipients out of about 10,000 individuals who are eligible for the DACA program.³



EDUCATION

The DACA program allows recipients to gain access to higher education, get better jobs, buy homes, and start businesses.

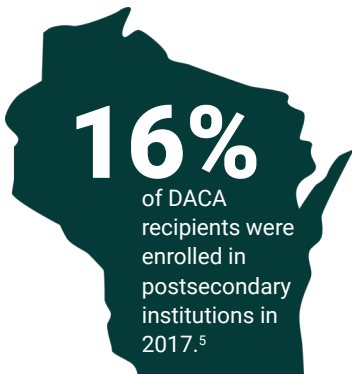
United States

In 2021, there were 409,000 undocumented students enrolled in higher education.

141,000

of these individuals are DACA recipients or DACA eligible. 19.3% of those students were enrolled in a graduate/professional program.⁴

Wisconsin



WORKFORCE



Over 80% of DACA recipients are employed and pay taxes across the United States; however, they cannot receive any of the federal benefits their taxes help pay for, like Social Security, college financial aid, or food stamps.

In 2020, according to the Center for American Progress, nationally:⁶


142,100	DACA recipients who were employed in food-related occupations (farms, grocery stores, distribution centers, restaurants, etc)
12,800	DACA recipients worked in the farming and agriculture industry
11,600	DACA recipients worked in the food manufacturing industry, processing these agricultural products
42,000	DACA recipients were frontline health care workers or worked in the health care industry
4,900	DACA recipients were teachers
900	DACA recipients w/valuable language & medical skills had enlisted in the military under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Pilot Program in 2016
4,000	DACA recipients working in Wisconsin as of 2021 ⁷



ECONOMIC IMPACT

DACA recipients from Wisconsin contribute to local, state, and federal taxes. Across the state, the taxes paid by DACA recipients go back into our local communities. Policymakers too often overlook the vital economic role and tax base that immigrants provide.

In 2021 DACA recipients living in Wisconsin contributed:



\$44.6M
federal taxes

\$30.7M
local & state taxes

Collectively, DACA recipients in Wisconsin yield \$223.9 million in spending power (the amount of money that a group or person is able to spend).⁸

Get Involved

The **Center for DREAMers** empowers DACAmented students to achieve their higher education goals in Wisconsin through access to culturally responsive legal representation, social services, and educational and career services.

Voces de la Frontera is a membership-based community organization led by low-wage workers, immigrants and youth whose mission is to protect and expand civil rights and workers' rights through leadership development, community organizing and empowerment.

Workers Justice Wisconsin empowers workers to stand up for their rights, and brings faith, labor and other community allies together.

Endnotes

- 1 "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, updated September 18, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>.
- 2 "Count of Active DACA Recipients By Month of Current DACA Expiration," as of March 31, 2023, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Active_DACA_Recipients_March_FY23_qtr2.pdf.
- 3 "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools," Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>.
- 4 "Undocumented Students in Higher Education," American Immigration Council, , updated August 2023, https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/07.23-Undocumented-Students_v3.pdf.
- 5 "A Profile of Current DACA Recipients by Education, Industry, and Occupation," Migration Policy Institute, November 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DACA-Recipients-Work-Education-Nov2017-FS-FINAL.pdf>.
- 6 "A Demographic Profile of DACA Recipients on the Frontlines of the Coronavirus Response," Center for American Progress, April 6, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/demographic-profile-daca-recipients-frontlines-coronavirus-response/>.
- 7 "MPI National and State Estimates of Employed Workers among Current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients (as of June 30, 2021)," Migration Policy Institute, <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.migrationpolicy.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fdatahub%2FDACA-MPIEstimates-Employment-June2021.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>
- 8 "The Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Fall 2021 Edition," Center for American Progress, November 24, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-demographic-and-economic-impacts-of-daca-recipients-fall-2021-edition/>.



Kids Forward is a statewide antiracist policy center that inspires action and advocates for children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity in Wisconsin. We envision a Wisconsin where every child thrives.