



Ten DACA Myths, Legends, Misconceptions & Untruths

1. DACA is a pathway to citizenship: people should file the papers to adjust their legal status and get in line.
2. DACA beneficiaries don't pay taxes but get free college, Obamacare and other federal benefits.
3. DACA allows immigrants brought to the US as children to stay indefinitely.
4. DACA beneficiaries cost more than they contribute and repealing DACA will benefit taxpayers.
5. DACA beneficiaries are not all young, oppressed and unfamiliar with their country of origin
6. DACA incentivized an increase in illegal immigration into the US.
7. DACA beneficiaries are taking jobs from US citizens
8. DACA repeal would save lives and protect communities from criminals.
9. DACA beneficiaries are not all valedictorians, well-meaning, high achievers.
10. Supporting DACA means you support non-citizens over citizens.

1: *DACA is a pathway to citizenship: people should file the papers to adjust their legal status and get in line.*

The *Deferred* Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is exactly what its name states: “deferred action” against being deported. It only gives its beneficiaries a *temporary* reprieve from deportation and its requirements are very narrow and specific. It allows beneficiary’s to stay lawfully in the country, grants them work permits, allows them to go to school legally and allows them to obtain driver's licenses. That’s it: the policy stops there. DACA is neither a path to become a US citizen or a legal permanent resident, immunity or amnesty. In fact, it only allows Dreamers an opportunity to stay in the US for two years, when upon the beneficiary has to apply for renewal (at a cost of \$495). President Obama described the program as "a temporary stopgap measure" and President Trump called it “never more than parole, a bureaucratic delay”. As for “adjusting” a person’s immigration status, the ability to do so depends on many factors including the country of origin, age, economic status, mental capacity, marital status, etc.

2: *DACA beneficiaries don't pay taxes but get free college, Obamacare and other federal benefits.*

Contrary to many false narratives, qualifying for DACA doesn’t make a recipient eligible for any other federal benefit. Indeed, employers deduct payroll taxes from DACA beneficiaries’ paychecks and it is estimated that they, and their households, pay a combined \$8.8 billion in federal, state and local taxes annually thereby increasing tax revenues at all levels of government. DACA beneficiaries are not eligible for any federal means-tested welfare: cash assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, healthcare tax credits or anything else.

DACA opened the doorway for undocumented immigrants to enroll in college but confers absolutely no rights on beneficiaries as it relates to paying for college. In fact, DACA beneficiaries still cannot get any federal financial aid for college, including federal student loans, grants and scholarships (although they can now apply for private loans). As for college acceptance and tuition costs, public and private college handle DACA students differently: in many states universities are prohibit undocumented students from attending college as residents and from getting state financial aid...in a few, they are offered in-state tuition or state-sponsored aid. Some private institutions only accept DACA beneficiaries as international students (often having to pay thousands of dollars more than domestic out-of-state students).

While some types of immigrants living in the US have health insurance through the Affordable Care Act, under DACA, Dreamers are not eligible. DACA beneficiaries cannot obtain any type of federal benefit or social program or even apply for Medicaid or Obamacare...but they still have to sign up for selective service if they are male between the ages of 18 and 25 (and that service does no contribute to gaining citizenship).

3: *DACA allows immigrants brought to the US as children to stay indefinitely.*

US immigration laws have not evolved to keep up with the globalization of the world and, in fact, over the last few decades, the penalties for being in the US illegally have increased. Today, a person who remains in the US for more than a year after they're 18th birthday begins accruing "unlawful presence" and, depending on length of the overstay, they may be deported and prevented from returning to the US for up to ten years.

4: *DACA beneficiaries cost more than they contribute and repealing DACA will benefit taxpayers.*

DACA beneficiaries contribute much more to "the system" over their lifetime than they cost, regardless of their education level. They pay billions of dollars in taxes, get no social program benefits in return and are a self-sustaining group that greatly contributes to society. DACA beneficiary households control an aggregate \$25 billion in annual spending power. About 15% are homeowners who pay \$600 million in annual mortgage payments; other pay a whopping \$2.3 billion in rent each year. Some 60% own a car, two-thirds have a credit card and half have a bank account. Nearly 60% of DACA beneficiaries have entered the US workforce.

With regard to contributing to government coffers, it is estimated that the typical DACA beneficiary is in a net positive position of between \$60,000 and \$300,000 depending upon the education level achieved. Ergo, repealing DACA would amount to a net opportunity cost of billions of dollars to government and lost Social Security and Medicare tax revenue alone of \$40 billion over a decade. With respect to the overall economic impact of deporting DACA beneficiaries, it is estimated to be nearly \$300 billion over a decade.

Lastly, there is the human aspect of deporting DACA beneficiaries. More than 1.5 million Americans share a home with a DACA beneficiary and some 256,000 US-born, US citizen children have a parent who is a DACA beneficiary. Seventy percent of DACA beneficiaries have an immediate family member who is a US citizen; some 13% of DACA beneficiaries have a US citizen spouse, and 19% have a US citizen child. The repeal of DACA would cause some 8,500 beneficiaries to lose their job each day for more than 18 months. If DACA is repealed it will adversely impact millions of Americans directly and several times that indirectly.

5: *DACA beneficiaries are not all young, oppressed and unfamiliar with their country of origin.*

There are two things that all DACA beneficiaries have in common: they arrived in the US prior to turning 16 and they have lived here since 2007, ergo, most have spent the most of their lives in the US. Application into the DACA program was extended to all who entered the US before they turned age 16 and, in fact, some who were brought into the US were teenagers or "tweens" (ages 8-12). It is also true that as of December, 2019 the average age of a DACA beneficiary is nearly 26 and that 35% are now between the ages of 28 and 38. Also, it is true that there are nearly 150 countries of origin for DACA applicants; about 30 are primarily or largely English-speaking; and many of the countries are wealthy and/or advanced and accept all returned citizens. As such, it is likely that *some* of these Dreamers are fluent in both the language and cultural norms of their home countries. That being said, more than 90% of DACA beneficiaries arrived in the US from non-English speaking Latin American countries when they were just 7 years old and nearly 40% arrived before age 5. Understanding this, it is highly likely that most Dreamers are *not* fluent in either the language or cultural norms of their homeland and would be strangers-in-a-strange-land and traumatized by a deportation.

6: *DACA incentivized an increase in illegal immigration into the US.*

Statements like this clearly evidence a misunderstanding of DACA and who is eligible for deportation relief under the program as DACA only applies to immigrants who entered before their 16th birthdays and who have lived in the US continuously since at least June 15, 2007 — more than a dozen years ago: therefore, no person entering the US now can apply for DACA relief.

7: *DACA beneficiaries are taking jobs from US citizens.*

To begin, there is presently a *shortage* of qualified workers in the US, whether it be in the software, construction or trucking industry as all have hiring challenges. In fact, some six million jobs remain unfilled in the US, a record high (despite there being employed DACA beneficiaries). Ending DACA would only worsen our shortage of workers as 75% of DACA beneficiaries are employed. According to Silicon Valley “Dreamers are vital” and three-quarters of the top Fortune 500 firms employ them. Moreover, nearly 6% have launched businesses (many employing US citizens).

8: *DACA repeal would save lives and protect communities from criminals.*

This statement implies that DACA beneficiaries are criminals, or more predisposed to crime than US citizens and belies an understanding of DACA eligibility and the facts. DACA applicants must pass a background check, have lived in the US without committing a serious offense and, if arrested, may be deported without a conviction. Overall, unauthorized immigrants are involved in lower levels of criminality and less likely to be imprisoned than the typical US citizen.

The statistics on this issue are a little confusing however. A recent November, 2019 report indicates that nearly 80,000 of the country’s ~ 750,000 DACA beneficiaries were approved despite having at least one arrest prior to applying for the program. It is noteworthy to mention that the majority of the arrests were for non-violent acts such as driving and immigration-related offenses...and that an arrest or apprehension does not necessarily indicate a charging, conviction or jail time. The fact is that more than 90% of DACA beneficiaries have never been arrested and that fewer than 2,200 have lost their DACA permits due to criminal or public safety concerns (about 3/10^{ths} of 1 percent).

9: *DACA beneficiaries are not all valedictorians, well-meaning, high achievers.*

DACA beneficiaries are also better educated than the average immigrant as applicants must have at least a high school degree to enter the program. More than 95% of DACA beneficiaries are employed or enrolled in an educational program. More than half of DACA beneficiaries twenty-five or older, have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to just one-third of US citizens in the same age bracket. Some 62.2% of immigrants aged 16 and older were employed compared with 58.1% of native-born Americans and nearly 80% of DACA beneficiaries surveyed said they can make enough to support their family. There is simply no evidence to support the notion that DACA beneficiaries are any less likely to be well-meaning, high achievers than native-born Americans.

10: *Supporting DACA means you support non-citizens over citizens.*

This statement implies that Dreamers get more than anyone else or get preferential treatment that Americans do not get. This is simply not true as, they not only don’t qualify for the same opportunities, they literally have to pay for them. In fact, supporting DACA may also be the equivalent of inadvertently supporting “merit-based” immigration...because, as noted above, DACA beneficiaries are, as a group, high-achievers.