

Note: The survey results can be found [here](#). As of November 2, 2017, the survey results have been updated to include breakdowns of urban and rural DACA recipients. For more information on the survey, please contact [Tom K. Wong](#).

Since it was first announced on June 15, 2012, the [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) (DACA) policy has provided temporary relief from deportation as well as work authorization to approximately [800,000 undocumented young people](#) across the country. As [research has consistently shown](#), DACA has not only improved the lives of undocumented young people and their families but has also positively affected the [economy more generally](#), which benefits all Americans.

From August 1, 2017 to August 20, 2017, Tom K. Wong of the University of California, San Diego; United We Dream (UWD); the National Immigration Law Center (NILC); and the Center for American Progress fielded a national survey to further analyze the economic, employment, educational, and societal experiences of DACA recipients. This is the largest study to date of DACA recipients with a sample size of 3,063 respondents in 46 states as well as the District of Columbia.

The data illustrate that DACA recipients continue to make positive and significant contributions to the economy, including earning higher wages, which translates into [higher tax revenue](#) and economic growth that benefits all Americans. In addition, DACA recipients are buying cars, purchasing their first homes, and even creating new businesses. The survey's results also show that at least 72 percent of the top 25 Fortune 500 companies employ DACA recipients. Moreover, 97 percent of respondents are currently employed or enrolled in school.

DACA's impact on employment

Work authorization is critical in helping DACA recipients participate more fully in the labor force. The data show that 91 percent of respondents are currently employed. Among respondents age 25 and older, employment jumps to 93 percent.

After receiving DACA, 69 percent of respondents reported moving to a job with better pay; 54 percent moved to a job that "better fits my education and training"; 54 percent moved to a job that "better fits my long-term career goals"; and 56 percent moved to a job with better working conditions.

We also see that 5 percent of respondents started their own business after receiving DACA. Among respondents 25 years and older, this climbs to 8 percent. As the 2016 survey noted, among the

American public as a whole, the rate of starting a business is 3.1 percent, meaning that DACA recipients are outpacing the general population in terms of business creation.

As one respondent stated, “I started a bookkeeping business which gives me the opportunity to help our Hispanic community be in compliance with tax law [...] If DACA ended, I will not be able to keep my small business and help my community.”

Another respondent stated, “Because of DACA, I opened a restaurant. We are contributing to the economic growth of our local community. We pay our fair share of taxes and hire employees [...] It will be hard to maintain my business if DACA ended. I depend on my [social security number] for a lot of my business, such as when getting licenses, permits, leases, and credit.”

DACA's impact on earnings

The data make clear that DACA is having a positive and significant effect on wages. The average hourly wage of respondents increased by 69 percent since receiving DACA, rising from \$10.29 per hour to \$17.46 per hour. Among respondents 25 years and older, the average hourly wage increased by 84 percent since receiving DACA.

The data also show that respondents' average annual earnings come out to \$36,232, and their median annual earnings total \$32,000. Among respondents 25 years and older, the figures are \$41,621 and \$37,595, respectively. These higher wages are not just important for recipients and their families but also for tax revenues and economic growth at the local, state, and federal levels.

Last year, we noted that further research is needed to parse out the short- and long-run wage effects of DACA as well as whether short-run gains represent a plateau in earnings or if more robust long-run wage effects may exist. This remains true. However, as DACA recipients are now further along in their careers, and as we continue to see growth in their earnings, it is likely there is even more room for recipients' wages to grow.

The immediate impact of wage increases is evident in 69 percent of survey respondents reporting that their increased earnings have “helped me become financially independent” and 71 percent reporting that their increased earnings have “helped my family financially.” Among respondents 25 years and older, these percentages rise to 73 percent and 74 percent, respectively.

DACA's impact on the economy

The purchasing power of DACA recipients continues to increase. In the 2017 study, nearly two-thirds of respondents, or 65 percent, reported purchasing their first car. The average cost paid was \$16,469. As we have noted previously, these large purchases matter in terms of state revenue, as most states collect a percentage of the purchase price in sales tax, along with additional [registration and title fees](#). The added revenue for states comes in addition to the [safety benefits](#) of having more licensed and insured drivers on the roads.

The data also show that 16 percent of respondents purchased their first home after receiving DACA. Among respondents 25 years and older, this percentage rises to 24 percent. The broader positive economic effects of home purchases include the [creation of jobs](#) and the infusion of [new spending](#) in local economies.

Additionally—and importantly—the data show that at least 72 percent of the top 25 Fortune 500 companies—including Walmart, Apple, General Motors, Amazon, JPMorgan Chase, Home Depot, and Wells Fargo, among others—employ DACA recipients. All told, these companies account for [\\$2.8 trillion in annual revenue](#).

DACA's impact on education

Overall, 45 percent of respondents are currently in school. Among those currently in school, 72 percent are pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher. The majors and specializations that respondents report include accounting, biochemistry, business administration, chemical engineering, civil engineering, computer science, early childhood education, economics, environmental science, history, law, mathematics, mechanical engineering, neuroscience, physics, psychology, and social work, to name a few.

When it comes to educational attainment, 36 percent of respondents 25 years and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. Importantly, among those who are currently in school, a robust 94 percent said that, because of DACA, "I pursued educational opportunities that I previously could not."

Conclusion

Our findings could not paint a clearer picture: DACA has been unreservedly good for the U.S. economy and for U.S. society more generally. Previous research has shown that DACA beneficiaries will contribute [\\$460.3 billion](#) to the U.S. gross domestic product over the next decade—economic growth that would be lost were DACA to be eliminated.

As our results show, the inclusion of these young people has contributed to more prosperous local, state and national economies; to safer and stronger communities through increased access to cars and home ownership; and to a more prepared and educated workforce for the future. Ending DACA now would be counterproductive at best and, at worst, cruel. At present, 800,000 lives—as well as the lives of their families and friends—hang in the balance. At a time when the continuing existence of DACA is facing its most serious threat ever, understanding the benefits of the program for recipients; their families and communities; and to the nation as a whole is all the more important.

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The authors thank all those who took the survey for their time and effort in helping to bring these stories to light.

Methodology

The questionnaire was administered to an online panel of DACA recipients recruited by the partner organizations. Several steps were taken to account for the known sources of bias that result from such online panels. To prevent ballot stuffing—one person submitting multiple responses—the authors did not offer an incentive to respondents for taking the questionnaire and used a state-of-the-art online survey platform that does not allow one IP address to submit multiple responses. To prevent spoiled ballots—meaning, people responding who are not undocumented—the authors used a unique validation test for undocumented status. Multiple questions were asked about each respondent's migratory history. These questions were asked at different parts of the questionnaire. When repeated, the questions were posed using different wording. If there was agreement in the answers such that there was consistency regarding the respondent's migratory history, the respondent was kept in the resulting pool of respondents. If not, the respondent was excluded. In order to recruit respondents outside of the networks of the partner organizations, Facebook ads were also used. Because there is no phone book of undocumented immigrants, and given the nature of online opt-in surveys, it is not possible to construct a valid margin of error.

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