

Trends in Naturalization

During the First 6 Months of the Trump Administration

Introduction

Naturalization is the process by which a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) may become a citizen of the United States. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), more than 7.9 million foreign-born people have naturalized over the past decade. In this time, the data confirms that there are key factors that propel naturalization rates. While various factors contribute to these spikes, the most notable have been when fee naturalization increases are announced as well as leading up to or during election years. This data set analyzes data from the previous year under the Biden administration, as well as numbers from January 2025 under the second Trump term.

USCIS provides annual data on the characteristics of naturalized citizens and its fiscal year runs October 1 – September 30th. In fiscal year 2024...

818,500 foreign-born people were naturalized

TOP 5 Naturalized citizens came from nearly every part of the world. The top five countries of origin were **Mexico, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam**

AGE The median age of newly naturalized citizens was **42 years old**

TOP 10

Applicants for naturalization lived in every U.S. state. The top ten states were **California, Florida, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, and Washington**

+50%

Over half of all applicants lived in **California, Florida, and New York**

SEX

Newly naturalized citizens were more likely to be **female (55.1 percent)** than **male (44.9 percent)**

On September 17, 2025, USCIS announced “First Changes to Naturalization Test in Multi-Step Overhaul of American Citizenship Standards,” which includes changes to the civics test. The civics test is an oral exam, requiring that applicants demonstrate an understanding of American history, U.S. government, and civics by answering 20 questions from a list of 128 questions. In order to pass, the applicant must answer 12 questions correctly. Once the interview has been completed, USCIS will issue one of the following decisions on the Form N-400: granted, continued, or denied.

USCIS Data on Processing Naturalization Applications

USCIS provides monthly data on the processing of naturalization applications, including the number of naturalization applications received, the number approved, the number denied, and the number pending. An approved application means that the applicant has successfully completed the requirements for naturalization and will be granted U.S. citizenship. A denied application means that the applicant did not meet all of the eligibility requirements under the law. General grounds for denial include a failure to establish any of the following: “lawful admission for permanent residence, continuous residence, physical presence, 3 months of residence in state or service district, good moral character, attachment and favorable disposition to the good order and happiness of the United States, understanding of English (including reading, writing, and speaking), knowledge of U.S. history and government, lack of prosecution.”

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In the past, USCIS has also issued denials for public health-related concerns, criminality, threats to national security, likelihood of becoming a public charge, a lack of labor certification, fraud or misrepresentation, and prior removals and/or unlawful presence. Pending applications are awaiting decisions and will eventually be approved or denied.

USCIS provides data on the number of naturalization applications that have been pending for six months or more. This is a key measure of the naturalization backlog. USCIS also provides data on average processing times, more specifically, the average number of months it took for a naturalization application to be processed from receipt to completion.

Trends in Processing Naturalization Applications Under Trump

During the first six months of the second Trump administration...



During the last six months of the Biden administration...



In other words, there has been a **23.7 percent increase in the denial rate** when comparing the first six months of the second Trump administration to the last six months of the previous Biden administration.

Average processing times have also increased for naturalization applications in the first six months of the second Trump administration compared to the last six months of the previous Biden administration. In the first six months of the second Trump administration, the average processing time for naturalization applications was **6.4 months**. During the last six months of the Biden administration, the average processing time for naturalization applications was **6.1 months**. This trend is concerning because processing times for naturalization applications slowed significantly during the first Trump administration. More specifically, median processing times for naturalization applications climbed from **5.2 months in fiscal year 2016 to 7.9 months in fiscal year 2017**. It climbed even further to 9.7 months in fiscal year 2018 and then to 10 months in fiscal year 2019.

Conclusion

While we don't yet have data on the first full fiscal year under the new administration, in a short time it has become evident the trajectory that we can expect based on both the data in the first six months as well as the trends for USCIS processing times under Trump 1.0. The mainstream narrative on immigration has focused largely on criminality and those without lawful status; however, this data, as well as various administrative policy changes within USCIS, show the concerted effort to make the already difficult pathway toward achieving U.S. citizenship even more difficult to complete. In an effort to achieve a truly representative democracy, we must ensure accessibility to legal pathways that exist as a baseline and advocate to ensure they are economically and linguistically in reach for all eligible communities.