



Undocumented Asians in the United States

Demographics

- **There are approximately 1.7 million undocumented Asian immigrants in the United States.**
- **Of all Asian immigrants, 12.5% are estimated to be undocumented.**
- **Most undocumented Asians come from India, China, and the Philippines.**
- **Most undocumented Asians are working age, highly educated, and have lived in the U.S. for <10 years.**

Access to Health Care

Undocumented individuals in the United States are ineligible for both Medicaid and Medicare under the Affordable Care Act. While some states offer funds for state-specific healthcare programs, undocumented immigrants are generally limited to Emergency Medicaid, provided they meet all Medicaid requirements other than immigration status. Additional access to healthcare is often granted through employment or community health clinics.

While many undocumented immigrants struggle to access healthcare, Asian undocumented individuals have similar rates of health insurance coverage as U.S.-born Asians, and they have higher rates than Asian long-time permanent residents.

Why? Those who choose to migrate are often assumed to be in better health. In addition, most undocumented Asians live in the U.S. by overstaying tourist or educational temporary visas.

DACA and Mental Health

In 2012, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) offered temporary protection from deportation and work authorization for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children and lived in the country for an extended period. DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship or permanent resident status.

An estimated 25% of undocumented students and 17% of DACA-eligible students are Asian.

For Asians, DACA has been associated with lower levels of clinical depression compared to those without DACA. DACA is also linked to a lower likelihood of fearing deportation and a higher likelihood of experiencing or knowing someone who experienced an immigration enforcement raid compared to those without DACA.

Despite these protections, Asians are less likely to apply for DACA than Latinxs.

Notes: The most recent estimations of the undocumented Asian population were conducted in 2022 and 2023 by the Center for Migration Studies and the Pew Research Center. Calculations include limited Pacific Islander populations, which have been excluded from this Research Brief.

Sources

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