

# DEFERRED ACTION FOR UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANT PARENTS

Analysis of DAPA's Potential Effects  
on Families and Children



By Randy Capps, Heather Koball, James D. Bachmeier,  
Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, Jie Zong, and Julia Gelatt



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## Executive Summary

In November 2014, the Obama administration announced the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program, which would protect from deportation and provide eligibility for work authorization to as many as 3.6 million unauthorized immigrants, according to Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates. Unauthorized immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents (LPRs) would qualify for deferred action for three years if they meet certain other requirements. DAPA has a design similar to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which since its launch in 2012 has provided relief to approximately 700,000 unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children.

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*This research report describes the population of 3.6 million unauthorized immigrant parents potentially eligible for DAPA.*

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The Supreme Court in April 2016 is expected to hear argument in the administration's appeal of a lower court order blocking implementation of DAPA and a related DACA expansion. The justices' decision in the case, which began when Texas and 25 other states challenged the president's authority to create the DAPA program and expand DACA, is expected in June 2016. Should the high court permit the DAPA program to go forward, it will be important for federal, state, and local officials; immigration service providers; and others to have accurate data about the potentially eligible population.

This research report describes the population of 3.6 million unauthorized immigrant parents potentially eligible for DAPA and the likely impacts of the program on potential recipients and their children, most of whom are U.S. born.<sup>1</sup> The report builds on previous research by MPI and the Urban Institute describing the population of children with unauthorized immigrant parents, and the effects of parental unauthorized status on these children. It also draws on innovative MPI assignments of unauthorized status to noncitizens using 2009-13 U.S. Census Bureau data, finding that 3.3 million parents with minor children (under age 18) living with them would potentially be eligible for DAPA, with another 340,000 parents of adult children also eligible. When including those potentially eligible under the original 2012 DACA program and the proposed DACA expansion, MPI estimates that as many as 5 million unauthorized immigrants could potentially benefit from the Obama administration's deferred action programs.

Beyond describing the potentially DAPA-eligible population, the report focuses on their current family incomes and potential income gains if they are granted work permits. Among the main findings:

- **More than 10 million people live in households with at least one potentially DAPA-eligible adult.** An estimated 2.3 million other adults and 4.3 million children under 18 reside in households with the 3.3 million potentially DAPA-eligible parents of minor children, and DAPA would have an effect on their lives as well. Together with 340,000 DAPA-eligible parents of adult children, the affected population would be 10.2 million. A strong body of evidence demonstrates that growing up with unauthorized immigrant parents harms the well-being and development of children due to increased family stress, fear of deportation, poor work conditions, reduced income, inferior housing, and reluctance to access community supports for children. DAPA could alleviate some of these harms.

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<sup>1</sup> The data employed for this report do not include information on criminal convictions, prior immigration violations, or continuous residence in the United States, and so these qualifications could not be modeled in the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of eligibility for the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program. As a result the population ultimately eligible for DAPA could be slightly smaller than the 3.6 million estimate.



- **Minor children in potential DAPA households are predominantly U.S.-born citizens.** An estimated 85 percent of children under age 18 living with a potential DAPA parent are U.S. citizens. Another 3 percent are LPRs, and the rest are unauthorized immigrant children who have citizen or LPR siblings. The MPI analysis does not include children ages 18 and older with potentially DAPA-eligible parents, as they could not be linked to their parents in the data.
- **The potentially DAPA eligible are well settled with strong U.S. roots.** Sixty-nine percent have lived in the United States ten years or more, and 25 percent at least 20 years.
- **Potential DAPA families are poorer than other U.S. families with minor children.** Despite similar labor force participation, the potentially DAPA eligible earn less annually than LPRs: about \$10,000 on average less for men and \$8,000 less for women. As a result, potential DAPA families have lower incomes: \$31,000 versus \$43,000 for all families with immigrant parents and \$47,000 for families with U.S.-born parents. The poverty rate for these DAPA families is 36 percent, compared with 22 percent for all immigrant families, and 14 percent for families with U.S.-born parents.
- **Providing work authorization for these unauthorized immigrant parents would raise family incomes.** Controlling for age, educational attainment, English proficiency, parental status, duration of U.S. residence, and other measureable factors, potentially DAPA-eligible men earn an average of \$5,000 less annually than comparable LPR men—representing a 16 percent income gap. Among women, those potentially eligible for DAPA earn \$1,000 (or 7 percent) less than comparable LPR women. When the earnings gains of both men and women are included, the average DAPA family could expect to see a \$3,000 (10 percent) income gain if the parents obtained work authorization and earned the same as LPR parents with comparable characteristics. As a result, 6 percent fewer DAPA families would be living in poverty.
- **Providing work authorization would have little impact on labor force participation.** DAPA-eligible men are more likely than LPR men to be in the labor force (95 percent versus 86 percent), while DAPA-eligible women are *less* likely to be in the labor force (52 percent versus 63 percent). These differences narrow considerably when controlling for age, education, length of U.S. residence, and other characteristics—suggesting that providing work authorization would have very little impact on labor force participation in DAPA families.
- **Deferring deportation would protect children and families from potentially substantial economic harm.** Even though most of the potentially DAPA eligible are not an enforcement priority under current federal policy, the fear of deportation is ever present in these families. In addition, a small number of the potentially eligible could be deported, depending on how strictly the government adheres to the priorities. Fathers are most at risk, given that 91 percent of deportees in recent years have been men. The loss of a father's earnings could have a substantial impact on the family: a 73 percent, or \$24,000, reduction in income—similar to income drops documented in field research studies of families experiencing deportation. If the father were deported, the average DAPA family would go from near-poor (with an income at about 135 percent of the federal poverty level) to deep poverty (with an income at about 50 percent of that level). In the long term, however, mothers might increase their labor force participation and earnings, offsetting some of the fall in income.

If the Supreme Court permits DAPA to go forward, the program has the potential to improve the incomes and living standards for many unauthorized immigrant families through protection from deportation and eligibility for work authorization.



## I. Introduction

In November 2014, President Obama announced a series of executive actions touching upon a number of facets of the U.S. immigration system.<sup>2</sup> The most controversial of these actions was a new program called Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). Under DAPA, unauthorized immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents (LPRs) would qualify for three years of deferred action—protection from deportation as well as eligibility for work permits—provided they meet other eligibility criteria.<sup>3</sup>

DAPA is similar to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which the Obama administration launched in 2012 for unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children and who meet certain educational and other criteria.<sup>4</sup> As of September 2015, approximately 700,000 of the 1.2 million unauthorized youth that the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates were immediately eligible to apply for the program had been approved.<sup>5</sup>

The DAPA program could potentially reach a much larger population, which MPI estimates at as many as 3.6 million unauthorized immigrants (see Methods appendix for more details). MPI estimates that the DAPA and DACA (current and expanded) programs together could protect from deportation as many as 5

2 Department of Homeland Security (DHS), “Fixing Our Broken Immigration System through Executive Action – Key Facts,” last updated November 20, 2015, [www.dhs.gov/immigration-action](http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-action).

3 To qualify for DAPA, an unauthorized immigrant would be required to (1) have a son or daughter who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (LPR); (2) have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 2010; (3) be physically present in the United States during November 2014 and at the time of filing a DAPA application; and (4) not be a priority for enforcement under the DHS guidelines issued in November 2014—i.e., not having engaged or been suspected of terrorism; convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor or three misdemeanors; or been reapprehended at the border or issued a final deportation order since January 2014. See Memorandum from Jeh Charles Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, to Leon Rodriguez, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Thomas S. Winkowski, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children and with Respect to Certain Individuals Who Are the Parents of U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents,” November 20, 2014, [www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14\\_1120\\_memo\\_deferred\\_action\\_1.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_deferred_action_1.pdf); Memorandum from Jeh Charles Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, to Thomas S. Winkowski, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Leon Rodriguez, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; and Alan D. Bersin, Acting Assistance Secretary for Policy, “Policies for the Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Undocumented Immigrants,” November 20, 2014, [www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14\\_1120\\_memo\\_prosecutorial\\_discretion\\_0.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_prosecutorial_discretion_0.pdf).

4 To qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, as announced in 2012, an unauthorized immigrant must be (1) age 15 or older; (2) have been under the age of 31 as of June 2012; (3) have come to the United States before age 16; (4) have continuously resided in the United States since June 2007; (5) have been physically present in the United States in June 2012, and at the time of application; (6) be enrolled in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or be an honorably discharged veteran; and (7) not have been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors; or otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),” updated January 4, 2016, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca).

5 MPI estimates an additional 400,000 unauthorized immigrants could be potentially eligible for DACA if they enroll in an adult education program that leads to the equivalent of a high school diploma, and that at the program’s launch in 2012 there were 420,000 individuals who were too young to apply but could once they reach age 15 if they stay in school or obtain a high school degree or equivalent. For detailed estimates of the population potentially eligible for DACA, see MPI Data Hub, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Profile: United States,” accessed February 20, 2016, [www.migrationpolicy.org/content/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profile-united-states](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/content/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profile-united-states). For the latest available data on DACA applications and approvals, see USCIS, “Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2015 (September 30),” December 4, 2015, [www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/I821\\_daca\\_performancedata\\_fy2015\\_qtr4.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/I821_daca_performancedata_fy2015_qtr4.pdf).



million people, or nearly half of the nation's estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

The executive action announcements, especially DAPA and the DACA expansion, drew swift objections, with some members of Congress and others charging the Obama administration was granting executive amnesty.<sup>7</sup> The governors of 26 states filed a lawsuit in federal court in Texas challenging the president's authority to create the deferred action programs as well as the process employed to do so. In February 2015, a U.S. district judge in Texas temporarily enjoined implementation of the DAPA program and the DACA expansions, finding the 26 states had the standing to challenge the administration and had demonstrated likelihood to prevail on the merits.<sup>8</sup> The federal government appealed, and a Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel upheld the injunction. In January 2016, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.<sup>9</sup> The high court's decision, which will prove pivotal for the survival of the DAPA program and the DACA expansion, is expected in June 2016.

This report builds on previous research by the Urban Institute and MPI describing the population of children with unauthorized immigrant parents, and the effects of parental unauthorized status on these children. It describes unauthorized immigrants who are potentially eligible for DAPA, their current family income, and how those income levels could be affected by the gain of work authorization or the deportation of a parent. It also explores some of the negative effects of parental unauthorized status on children, and how DAPA might help overcome them. As noted by the National Academy of Sciences, which convened top experts and researchers to study the integration of immigrants and their children:

*Policies designed to block the integration of undocumented immigrants or individuals with a temporary status can have the unintended effect of halting or hindering the integration of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents in mixed-status families. Laws are often designed to apply to individuals, but their effects ripple through households, families, and communities, with measurable long-term negative impacts on children who are lawful U.S. citizens.*<sup>10</sup>

The research in the report distinguishes between the populations eligible for DAPA and DACA, as the two programs have different criteria eligibility criteria. Using an innovative methodology to assign legal status to noncitizens in Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data, MPI previously estimated that 5 million of the estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States would be potentially eligible for either DAPA or DACA as outlined in the Obama administration's June 2012 and November 2014 announcements. Of these 5 million:

- 6 The November 2014 executive actions also included an expansion of DACA eligibility to otherwise eligible unauthorized immigrant youth over age 30, and those who could show continuous U.S. residence since January 1, 2010. See Johnson, "Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion." MPI has estimated that an additional 280,000 individuals could potentially qualify for DACA based on these expansions; see MPI Data Hub, "Original DACA + 2014 DACA Expansion Estimates for U.S. and 40 States," accessed February 18, 2016, [www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/DACAEstimates-Ranges\\_State%20Table-2009-2013-FINAL.xlsx](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/DACAEstimates-Ranges_State%20Table-2009-2013-FINAL.xlsx).
- 7 For example, in opening a U.S. House Judiciary Committee hearing, Chairman Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) stated, "President Obama has just announced one of the biggest constitutional power grabs ever by a president. He has declared unilaterally that—by his own estimation—almost five million unlawful immigrants will be free from the legal consequences of their lawless actions." See U.S. House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee, "Hearing: President Obama's Executive Overreach on Immigration," 113th Cong., 2nd sess., December 2, 2014, [http://judiciary.house.gov/index.cfm/hearings?Id=A8F500A6-F7DA-4BCD-8C6E-DA48841B8C13&Statement\\_id=BB206E1D-7F71-43FB-9EF0-71691E66E153](http://judiciary.house.gov/index.cfm/hearings?Id=A8F500A6-F7DA-4BCD-8C6E-DA48841B8C13&Statement_id=BB206E1D-7F71-43FB-9EF0-71691E66E153).
- 8 Memorandum opinion and order by U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas Andrew Hanen in *Texas v. United States*, February 16, 2015, [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1668197-hanen-opinion.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1668197-hanen-opinion.html).
- 9 Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals opinion in *Texas v. United States*, November 9, 2015, [www.scotusblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/15-40238-CV0.pdf](http://www.scotusblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/15-40238-CV0.pdf); Adam Liptak and Michael D. Shear, "Supreme Court to Hear Challenge to Obama Immigration Actions," *New York Times*, January 19, 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/us/politics/supreme-court-to-hear-challenge-to-obama-immigration-actions.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/us/politics/supreme-court-to-hear-challenge-to-obama-immigration-actions.html).
- 10 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee on Population, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*, eds. Mary C. Waters and Marisa Gerstein Pineau (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015), 7-8, [www.nap.edu/catalog/21746/the-integration-of-immigrants-into-american-society](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21746/the-integration-of-immigrants-into-american-society).



- 1.2 million were immediately eligible for DACA under the program's original 2012 rules.<sup>11</sup>
- 280,000 more could potentially become eligible for DACA under the proposed 2014 expansions.
- 3.6 million adults not already eligible for DACA could potentially become eligible for DAPA.<sup>12</sup>

The report focuses on the last group of 3.6 million unauthorized immigrants, particularly the subset of 3.3 million who are parents of minor U.S.-citizen or LPR children. Most of the indicators in the analysis rely on household-level data from the ACS, and only the parents of minor children can be linked with children and other household members using these data. The Methods section in the Appendix provides more detail on how both groups of potential DAPA recipients were identified.

## II. A Profile of the Population Eligible for DAPA

### A. Number of People Living in Potentially DAPA-Eligible Households

More than 10 million people live in households that include potentially DAPA-eligible parents. Beyond the recipients themselves, DAPA would benefit many adults and children who are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants, because unauthorized immigrant households often contain people of various immigration statuses. All household members would benefit from the higher family incomes and reduced anxiety about deportation described later in the report. During the 2009-13 period, 9.9 million people lived in households with minor children that included at least one person potentially eligible for DAPA, including 4.3 million minor children (ages 17 and younger) and 5.6 million adults (3.3 million potentially DAPA-eligible parents and 2.3 million other adults).<sup>13</sup>

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*More than 10 million people live in households that include  
potentially DAPA-eligible parents.*

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Eighty-five percent, or 3.7 million, of the minor children were U.S. citizens—mostly by birth, but in rare cases by naturalization (see Figure 1). An estimated 500,000 additional children (12 percent) were themselves unauthorized, and 140,000 (3 percent) were legally present—mostly LPRs but including some children with temporary visas; these noncitizen children were typically older siblings of U.S.-born citizens.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, 4.4 million adults (78 percent) in these potential DAPA households were unauthorized; 720,000 (13 percent) were legal noncitizens, and 480,000 (9 percent) were U.S. citizens. Thus, the children in DAPA households were mostly citizens, while the adults were mostly unauthorized (and generally

11 An additional 400,000 people could potentially become eligible for DACA if they enrolled in a qualifying adult education program, and another 420,000 may become eligible when they reach age 15. See MPI Data Hub, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Profile: United States."

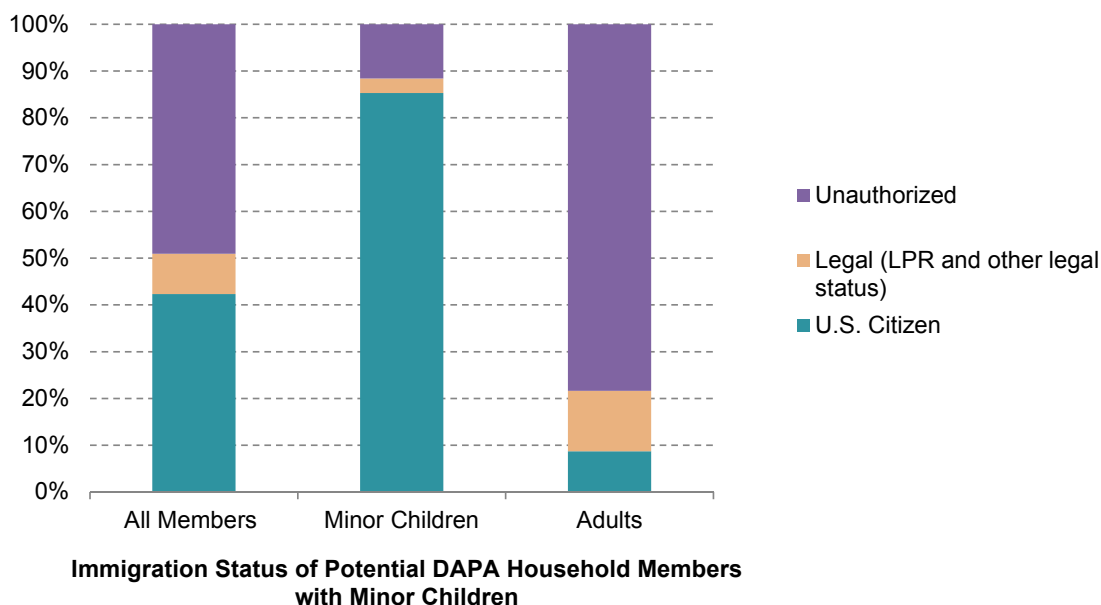
12 For detailed estimates of the DACA- and DAPA-eligible population for the United States and 41 states, see MPI, "State-Level Estimates on DACA & DAPA Populations by Country-Region of Origin," accessed February 18, 2016, [www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/DACA-DAPA-2013State%20Estimates-Spreadsheet-FINAL.xlsx](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/DACA-DAPA-2013State%20Estimates-Spreadsheet-FINAL.xlsx).

13 Five years of American Community Survey (ACS) data were pooled to increase the precision of the estimates.

14 For an analysis by the citizenship and immigration status of children in unauthorized immigrant families, and by child age, see Randy Capps, Michael Fix, and Jie Zong, *A Profile of U.S. Children with Unauthorized Immigrant Parents* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-us-children-unauthorized-immigrant-parents](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-us-children-unauthorized-immigrant-parents).

potentially eligible for DAPA).<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 1. Immigration Status of Children (ages 17 and under) and All Adults in Potential DAPA Households with Minor Children, (%), 2009-13**



Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), 2009-13 pooled, and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) by James Bachmeier of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University.

An additional 340,000 unauthorized immigrant parents of adult children ages 18 and older were potentially eligible for DAPA, but could not be identified individually or linked to their children and other household members in the data (See Methods section in the Appendix on how the number in this group was estimated). When the 340,000 parents of adult children are added to the 9.9 million people living in households with parents of minor children, the total population potentially affected by DAPA rises to 10.2 million.

## B. States of Residence

The potentially DAPA-eligible population is heavily concentrated in a handful of states, just like the overall unauthorized population. During the 2009-13 period, more than 1.1 million of those potentially eligible for DAPA (30 percent of the U.S. total) resided in California, followed by 560,000 (15 percent) in Texas; 230,000 (6 percent) in New York; and more than 100,000 each (between 3 and 5 percent) in Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, and North Carolina (see Table 1).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Of the 2.3 million other unauthorized adults living in a potential DAPA household, MPI estimates that approximately 190,000 could potentially qualify for the DACA program. Of these 190,000 adults, 130,000 potentially would qualify for both DACA and DAPA (and were not included in the estimate of 3.6 million who would qualify only for DAPA), while 60,000 potentially qualify only for DACA. Of the 500,000 unauthorized immigrant children ages 17 and under in these households, 100,000 were immediately eligible for DACA.

<sup>16</sup> More data on the state and county distribution of the populations potentially eligible for deferred action can be found on MPI's website. See MPI Data Hub, "Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles," accessed February 12, 2016, [www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/us-immigration-policy-program-data-hub/unauthorized-immigrant-population-profiles](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/us-immigration-policy-program-data-hub/unauthorized-immigrant-population-profiles).



**Table 1. Top 20 States with Largest Potentially DAPA-Eligible Populations and State Shares of the U.S. Eligible Population, (%), 2009-13**

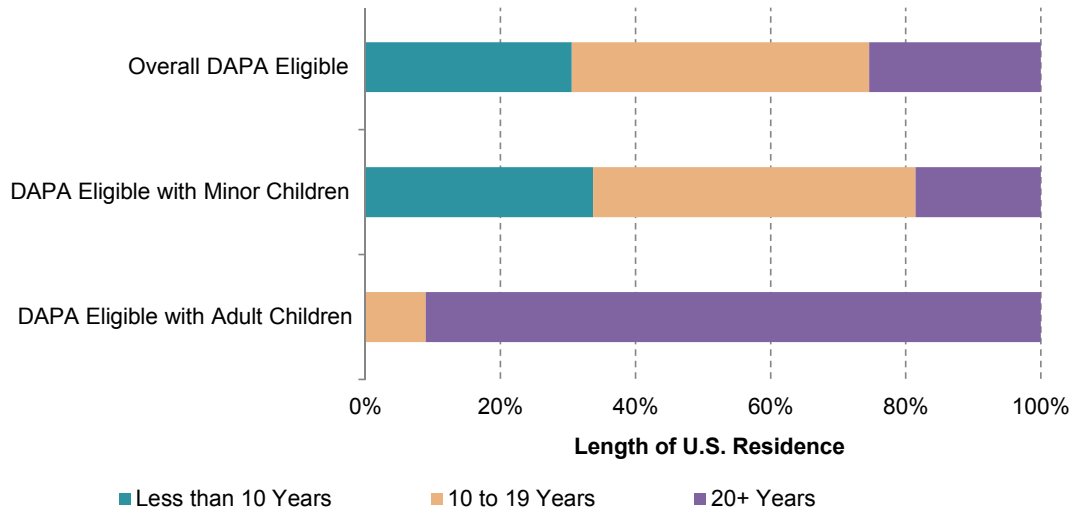
State	Population Potentially Eligible for DAPA	State Share of U.S. Potentially Eligible Population (%)
<b>United States</b>	<b>3,605,000</b>	<b>100</b>
California	1,087,000	30
Texas	559,000	15
New York	231,000	6
Illinois	183,000	5
Florida	150,000	4
New Jersey	133,000	4
Georgia	125,000	3
North Carolina	114,000	3
Arizona	97,000	3
Washington	74,000	2
Colorado	62,000	2
Virginia	61,000	2
Maryland	56,000	2
Nevada	48,000	1
Oregon	44,000	1
Massachusetts	42,000	1
Tennessee	36,000	1
Pennsylvania	32,000	1
Indiana	32,000	1
Utah	32,000	1

Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

### C. Length of U.S. Residence

Those potentially eligible for DAPA represent a well-settled population: more than two-thirds (69 percent) had lived in the United States for at least ten years as of the 2009-13 period (see Figure 2). Of the 3.3 million potential beneficiaries living with minor children, 19 percent had resided in the United States for at least 20 years, and 48 percent for 10-19 years. For the 340,000 with adult children, 91 percent had lived in the country for at least 20 years. The DACA and DAPA programs deliberately focus on long-settled immigrants with their length of residence requirements.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For instance, to qualify for DAPA unauthorized immigrants must have resided in the United States since January 1, 2010.

**Figure 2. Length of U.S. Residence of Potentially DAPA-Eligible Population, 2009-13**

Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

#### D. Demographic Characteristics

Unauthorized immigrants who may qualify for DAPA are slightly younger than other parents with minor children. Examining parents with minor children, 37 percent of those potentially eligible for DAPA were ages 25 to 34 during the 2009-13 period, compared with 26 percent of all immigrant parents and 28 percent of U.S.-born parents (see Table 2). Potential DAPA recipients—whether or not they lived with minor children—were less likely than these other groups of parents to be ages 45 or older. Young unauthorized parents are early in their career trajectories and work authorization could enhance their future employment prospects and earnings.

**Table 2. Age Distribution of Parents by Potential DAPA Eligibility and Nativity, (%), 2009-13**

Ages	Overall Potentially DAPA-Eligible Population	Potentially DAPA Eligible Parents with Minor Children	All Immigrant Parents with Minor Children	U.S.-Born Parents with Minor Children
18-24	4%	4%	3%	5%
25-34	33%	37%	26%	28%
35-44	41%	42%	43%	40%
45-54	18%	15%	24%	24%
55 and over	5%	2%	4%	4%

Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Similar to other parents in the United States, potentially DAPA-eligible parents are slightly more likely to be women than men. More than half (54 percent) of the 3.6 million potentially DAPA eligible identified in the data were mothers, compared to 54 percent of all foreign-born parents and 57 percent of U.S.-born parents. Potential DAPA fathers might be undercounted somewhat because fathers are less likely than mothers to live with their children, and those with minor children who did not live in the same household could not be identified.

The marriage rate for the potential DAPA population is similar to U.S.-born parents with minor children:



about three-quarters of both populations were married.<sup>18</sup> The marriage rate for parents in the overall immigrant population was slightly higher: 82 percent. Married families are likely to be more stable than unmarried families, and also more likely to have two workers, and thus higher incomes, as well as greater resources for child care and supervision.

### E. Human Capital

The potential DAPA population has distinct disadvantages when it comes to educational attainment and English proficiency. In the 2009-13 period, 57 percent of potentially DAPA-eligible parents with minor children had less than a high school education, and 35 percent had fewer than nine years of formal schooling. By comparison, just 18 percent of all immigrant parents with minor children and 1 percent of U.S.-born parents with minor children had fewer than nine years of schooling (see Table 3). Potential DAPA recipients were also much more likely than other parents to lack a college education, and mothers and fathers in the DAPA group had similar levels of educational attainment.

**Table 3. Educational Attainment of Potentially DAPA-Eligible Parents with Minor Children, All Immigrant Parents, and U.S.-Born Parents, (%), 2009-13**

Educational Attainment	Potentially DAPA-Eligible Parents with Minor Children	All Immigrant Parents with Minor Children	U.S.-Born Parents with Minor Children
0-8 grade	35	18	1
9-12 grade (no degree)	22	13	6
High School diploma/equivalent	22	22	24
Some college/associate's degree	10	19	35
Bachelor's and above	11	28	33

*Note:* This analysis was conducted for parents ages 18 and older. While educational attainment is generally calculated for adults ages 25 and older, only 4 percent of the potentially DAPA eligible, 3 percent of all immigrant parents, and 5 percent of U.S.-born parents were ages 18 to 24 (see Table 2). As a result, the inclusion of parents ages 18 to 24 is unlikely to influence the educational distribution very much.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Potential DAPA recipients with minor children are also less likely to be English proficient than other parents; in 2009-13, 80 percent were Limited English Proficient (LEP), defined as speaking English less than very well. By contrast, 54 percent of all immigrant parents were LEP. Mothers in the DAPA group were slightly more likely than fathers to be LEP: 82 percent versus 78 percent. U.S.-born parents are almost entirely fully proficient in English, as it is typically their first language.

Less-educated immigrant parents and those with limited English skills generally earn less than other parents, and their lower earnings increase poverty and other family hardship.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, less-educated and LEP parents may have more difficulty navigating schools and systems for child care, health care, and

<sup>18</sup> Married parents are defined as those who have a spouse present in the household. Single parents are defined as those who never married or were divorced, widowed, cohabiting, or married with the spouse absent from the household.

<sup>19</sup> Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller, "Earnings and Occupational Attainment: Immigrants and the Native Born" (discussion paper no. 2676, Institute for the Study of Labor, Bonn, Germany, March 2007), [ftp.iza.org/dp2676.pdf](http://iza.org/dp2676.pdf); Evelina Tainer, "English Language Proficiency and the Determination of Earnings among Foreign-Born Men," *The Journal of Human Resources* 23, no. 1 (1988): 108-22.

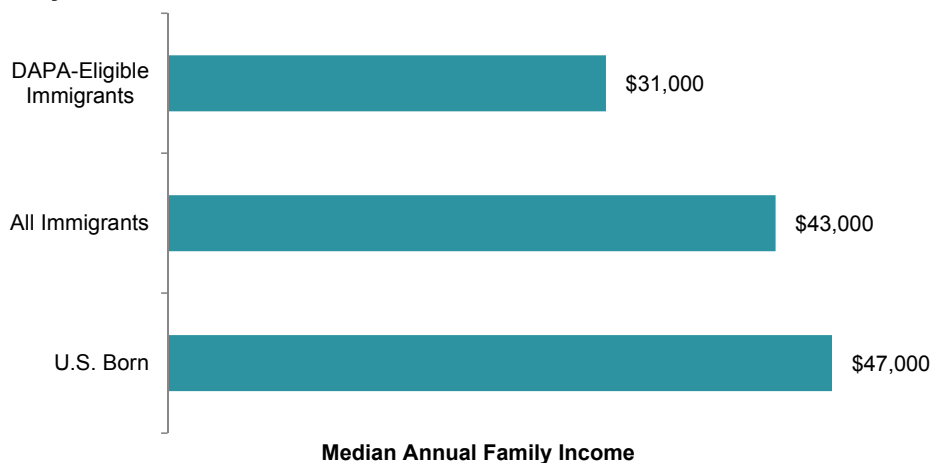


public benefits—further complicating their children’s well-being and development.<sup>20</sup> Children growing up with less-educated parents are more likely to leave school early and, as a result, they may obtain lower-paying jobs.<sup>21</sup>

## F. Income, Poverty, and Housing Conditions

Unauthorized status, low educational attainment, and limited English skills combine to drive down the earnings of those potentially eligible for DAPA. As a result, families with such parents have considerably lower incomes than other U.S. families with minor children. In 2009-13, families with at least one parent potentially eligible for DAPA had a median annual income of \$31,000, compared to \$43,000 for all families with at least one immigrant parent and \$47,000 for those with U.S.-born parents (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Median Annual Incomes of Families with Minor Children, by Parental DAPA Eligibility and Nativity, 2009-13**



*Note:* DAPA families include at least one parent potentially eligible for DAPA; immigrant families include at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Alongside lower incomes, families with potential DAPA recipients have higher poverty rates than other families with minor children. In the 2009-13 period, 36 percent of DAPA households had incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL), compared to 22 percent of all families with immigrant parents and 14 percent of those with U.S.-born parents (see Figure 4).

For all U.S. children, growing up in a low-income family has been associated with poor health outcomes (low birthweight and malnutrition), poor cognitive outcomes (developmental delays and learning disabilities), and poor performance in school.<sup>22</sup> Growing up in poverty could also lead to worse jobs and lower incomes in adulthood.<sup>23</sup> These factors associated with poverty are compounded by the effects of parental unauthorized status.

20 Barbara Schneider, Sylvia Martinez, and Ann Owens, “Barriers to Educational Opportunities for Hispanics in the United States,” in *Hispanics and the Future of America*, eds. Marta Tienda and Faith Mitchell (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2006), 179-224, [www.nap.edu/read/11539/chapter/7#223](http://www.nap.edu/read/11539/chapter/7#223); Maki Park and Margie McHugh, *Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs: Addressing Barriers of Literacy, Culture, and Systems Knowledge* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers).

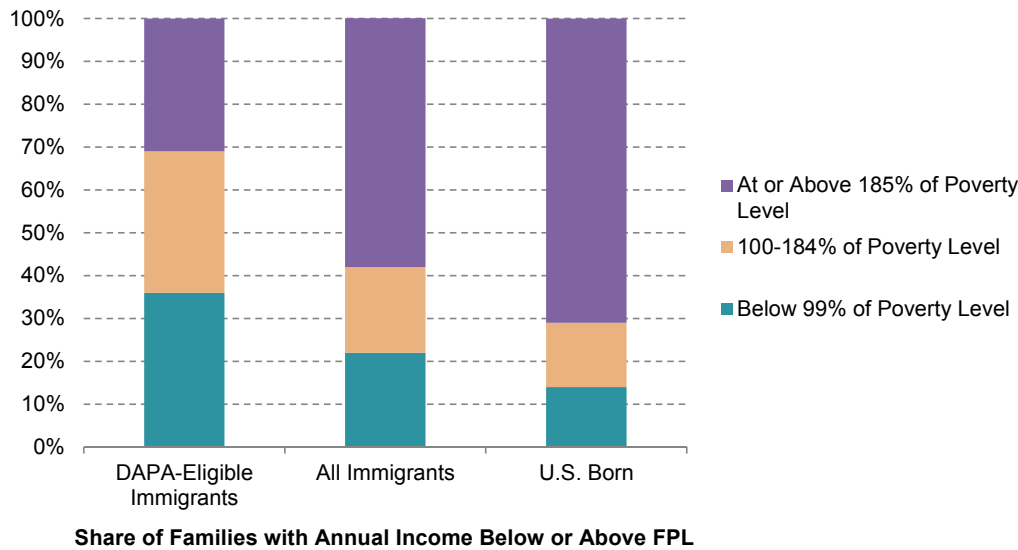
21 William H. Sewell, Robert M. Hauser, and Wendy C. Wolf, “Sex, Schooling, and Occupational Status,” *American Journal of Sociology* 86, no. 3 (1980): 551-83; David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser, *Opportunity and Change* (New York: Academy Press, 1978).

22 Vonnie C. McLoyd, “Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Development,” *American Psychologist* 53, no. 2 (1998): 185-204; Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg J. Duncan, “The Effects of Poverty on Children,” *Future of Children* 7, no. 2 (1997), 55-71.

23 Greg J. Duncan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, eds., *Consequences of Growing Up Poor* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997).



**Figure 4. Share of Families with Annual Incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and 185 Percent of FPL, by Parental DAPA Eligibility and Nativity, (%), 2009-13**



*Notes:* DAPA families include at least one parent potentially eligible for DAPA; immigrant families include at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The federal poverty level (FPL), calculated based on total family income before taxes (excluding capital gains and noncash benefits such as food stamps), was approximately \$24,000 for a family of four in 2013. The income threshold to qualify for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is 185 percent of FPL.

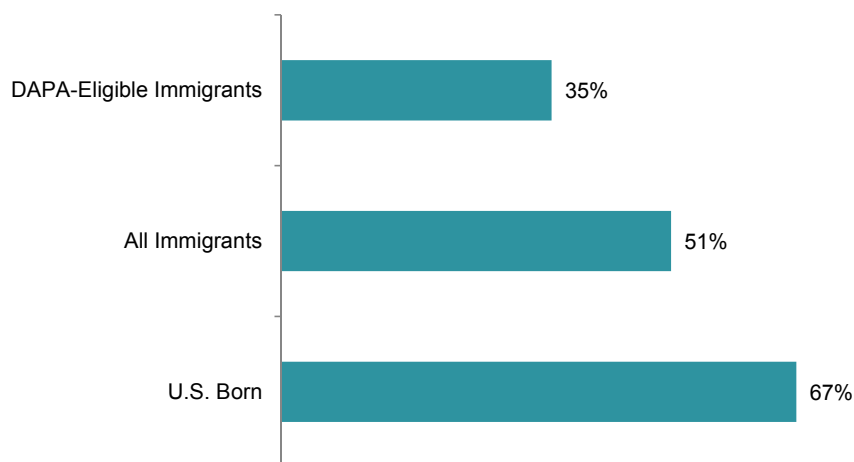
*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Lower income is also associated with lower homeownership for the potential DAPA population. During 2009-13, 35 percent of households with minor children headed by parents with potential DAPA eligibility lived in homes they owned, compared to 67 percent of those headed by U.S.-born parents and 51 percent of households headed by all immigrants (see Figure 5). Lack of homeownership may be associated with housing instability, as children living in rented homes move more often than those living in owned homes. Housing instability may affect children's academic and social outcomes by hindering effective parenting, increasing family stress, and disrupting social and emotional development.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Heather Sandstrom and Sandra Huerta, "The Negative Effects of Instability on Child Development: A Research Synthesis" (discussion paper no. 3, Low-Income Working Families, Urban Institute, September 2013), [www.urban.org/research/publication/negative-effects-instability-child-development-research-synthesis](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/negative-effects-instability-child-development-research-synthesis).



**Figure 5. Home Ownership for Households with Minor Children, by Parental Eligibility for DAPA Status and Nativity, (%), 2009-13**

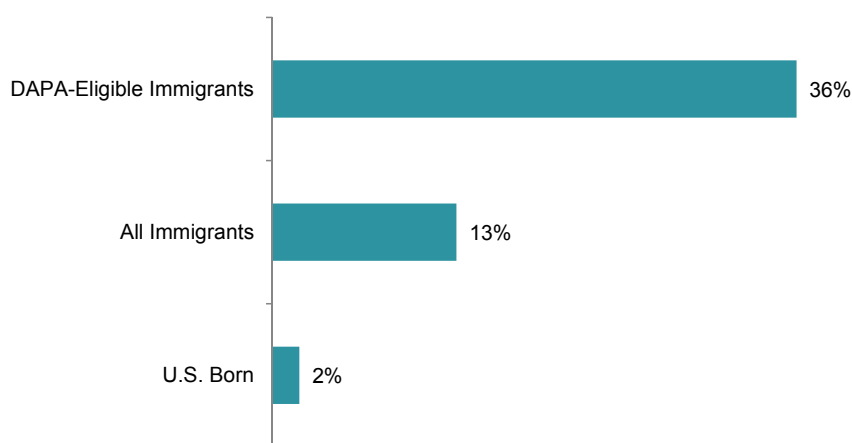


**Home Ownership for Households with Minor Children**

Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Households headed by adults potentially eligible for DAPA are much more likely to be crowded than other households with minor children, with crowding defined as more than one person per room. In the 2009-13 period, 36 percent of potential DAPA households were crowded, three times the rate for those headed by all immigrant parents (13 percent), and almost 20 times the rate for households headed by U.S.-born parents: 2 percent (see Figure 6). Crowded housing has been linked to a number of risk factors for children's health, well-being, and development.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 6. Crowded Households, with Minor Children, by Parental DAPA Eligibility and Nativity, (%), 2009-13**



**Share Living in Crowded Households with Minor Children**

Note: A household with more than one person per room is crowded.

Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

<sup>25</sup> John N. Edwards, Theodore D. Fuller, Santhath Sermsri, and Sairudee Vorakitphokaton, *Household Crowding and Its Consequences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); Gary W. Evans, Susan Saegert, and Rebecca Harris, "Residential Density and Psychological Health among Children in Low-Income Families," *Environment and Behavior* 33, no. 2 (2001): 165-80; Tama Leventhal and Sandra Newman, "Housing and Child Development," *Children and Youth Service* 32, no. 9 (2010): 1165-74.



### III. Potential Economic Benefits of Work Authorization for Families

DAPA would offer two main advantages for eligible unauthorized immigrants: protection from deportation and eligibility for work authorization. This section describes models estimating the potential economic benefits of parental work authorization for DAPA families with minor children. The models focus on two potential factors that could improve family income and lower poverty: greater parental labor force participation and increased earnings.

Numerous studies have analyzed the effects of immigration status changes on earnings and other labor market outcomes for unauthorized immigrants. Most of the research has focused on the population that legalized under the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* (IRCA), but more recent studies have also considered the impacts of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) on the Salvadoran population and the DACA program on unauthorized youth.<sup>26</sup> These studies suggest that unauthorized immigrants significantly increased their labor force participation and earnings after becoming permanent residents (in the case of IRCA) or receiving temporary work authorization (in the case of TPS and DACA).

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*DAPA would offer two main advantages for eligible unauthorized immigrants: protection from deportation and eligibility for work authorization.*

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Several studies have estimated wage gains from legalization using the Legalized Population Survey (LPS), a nationally representative sample of about 6,000 unauthorized immigrants who became permanent residents under the 1986 law.<sup>27</sup> In one study of IRCA beneficiaries, legalization resulted in an hourly wage increase of 8.4 percent for men and 13 percent for women by 1992, four years after the law's implementation.<sup>28</sup> In another study conducted over the same period, hourly wages increased by 9.3 and 21 percent for male and female IRCA beneficiaries, respectively.<sup>29</sup> A third study estimated the wage penalty for being unauthorized at 14 percent to 24 percent, depending on the number of years immigrants were in the labor market.<sup>30</sup> These studies of IRCA showed a broad range of wage gains from legalization, when controlling for other factors. In general these wage gains were substantial.

A more recent study examined the labor market effects of providing work authorization to immigrants

<sup>26</sup> Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which was first created in 1990, is a form of humanitarian relief granted to nationals of certain countries that have become embroiled in violent conflict or suffered a natural disaster. In 2014, an estimated 340,000 people held TPS, with the most common origin countries being El Salvador (212,000); Honduras (64,000); and Haiti (58,000). See Madeline Messick and Claire Bergeron, "Temporary Protected Status in the United States: A Grant of Humanitarian Relief that Is Less than Permanent," *Migration Information Source*, July 2, 2014, [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/temporary-protected-status-united-states-grant-humanitarian-relief-less-permanent](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/temporary-protected-status-united-states-grant-humanitarian-relief-less-permanent).

<sup>27</sup> Princeton University, "Legalized Population Survey, LPS Public Use File: The 1989 Legalized Population Survey (LPS1) and the 1992 Legalized Population Follow-Up Survey (LPS2)," accessed February 2, 2016, <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/LPS/LPSpage.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Francisco L. Rivera-Batiz, "Undocumented Workers in the Labor Market: An Analysis of the Earning of Legal and Illegal Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *Journal of Population Economics* vol. 12, no. 1 (1999): 91-116.

<sup>29</sup> Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes, Cynthia Bansak, and Stephen Raphael, "Gender Differences in the Labor Market: Impact of IRCA," *American Economy Review* vol. 97, no. 2 (2007): 412-16.

<sup>30</sup> Sherrie A. Kossoudji and Deborah A. Cobb-Clark, "Coming Out of the Shadows: Learning about Legal Status and Wages from the Legalized Population," *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2002): 598-628.



from El Salvador who likely qualified for TPS, using 2005 and 2006 ACS data.<sup>31</sup> The authors compared differences in labor force outcomes by educational attainment and gender. Their results suggest that qualifying for TPS increased weekly earnings by 13 percent for less-educated men (those with a high school diploma, its equivalent, or less education), and by 48 percent for more-educated women (those who attended some college or had a college degree). Less-educated women and more-educated men did not experience statistically significant changes in weekly earnings when qualifying for TPS, but were more likely to participate in the labor force. The finding that qualifying for TPS resulted in a significant earnings gain for less-educated men is highly relevant in the DAPA case, as 79 percent of the potentially eligible have a high school diploma or less education (see Table 3).

Recent national surveys of DACA recipients have analyzed the influence of work authorization on the labor outcomes for young unauthorized immigrants. In a 2013 Internet-based survey of about 2,700 DACA recipients, almost 60 percent had obtained a new job, and 45 percent had increased their earnings.<sup>32</sup> These labor market improvements were concentrated among college-educated DACA recipients: those with bachelor's degrees were more than 1.5 times more likely to obtain new jobs and increase their earnings relative to those who did not attend college. In another recent Internet-based survey of DACA recipients, 70 percent entered the labor market or obtained a new job.<sup>33</sup> Though neither of these surveys is as representative as the ACS data, both suggest that in general DACA recipients have experienced substantial labor market improvements.

### A. *Estimated Impacts of Work Authorization on Labor Force Participation*

MPI's ACS-based estimates allow comparison of the labor force participation and annual earnings of men and women potentially eligible for DAPA with LPRs. LPRs were chosen for comparison because they, like potential DAPA recipients, are noncitizens, and because one of the main differences between the two groups is the former's work authorization. Of the estimated 3.3 million DAPA adults with minor children who were of working age (18 to 64), 45 percent were men and 55 percent were women. As a first step, potentially DAPA-eligible adults were compared to all 9.6 million LPRs ages 18 to 64; in this group, which includes both parents and non-parents, half were men and half were women. In the 2009-13 period, potentially DAPA-eligible men were more likely to participate in the labor force than LPR men: 95 percent versus 86 percent (see Table 4). By contrast, women who might qualify for DAPA were less likely to be in the labor force: 52 percent versus 63 percent. Among those participating in the labor force, men potentially eligible for DAPA were slightly less likely to be unemployed than LPR men, while their female counterparts were slightly more likely to be unemployed than LPR women.

31 Because the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) does not ask respondents questions regarding TPS, authors categorized TPS beneficiaries as Salvadoran noncitizens who reported entering the United States in 1999 or 2000, using those who reported entering in 2002 or 2003 as the control group (as eligibility for TPS depended on period of U.S. entry). Additionally, the authors used Mexican noncitizens entering in the same periods to control for arrival-group differences. See Pia Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny, "The Impact of Temporary Protected Status on Immigrants' Labor Market Outcomes" (Working Paper 1415, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Dallas, Texas, December 2014), [www.dallasfed.org/assets/documents/research/papers/2014/wp1415.pdf](http://www.dallasfed.org/assets/documents/research/papers/2014/wp1415.pdf).

32 Roberto G. Gonzales and Angie M. Bautista-Chavez, *Two Years and Counting: Assessing the Growing Power of DACA* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, 2014), [www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/two-years-and-counting-assessing-growing-power-daca](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/two-years-and-counting-assessing-growing-power-daca).

33 Tom K. Wong and Carolina Valdivia, *In Their Own Words: A Nationwide Survey of Undocumented Millennials* (Washington, DC: United We Dream, 2014), <http://unitedwedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Undocumented-Millennials-Survey-Summary.pdf>.



**Table 4. Rates of Labor Force Participation, Employment, and Unemployment for Men and Women by Potential DAPA Eligibility and Legal Status, (%), 2009-13**

	Potentially DAPA-Eligible Immigrants		Legal Permanent Residents	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
In Labor Force	95%	52%	86%	63%
Employed	93%	85%	91%	88%
Unemployed	7%	15%	9%	12%
Not in Labor Force	5%	48%	14%	37%

*Notes:* Sample includes adults ages 18-64. Potentially DAPA-eligible immigrants include only those living with minor children (ages 17 and under) in the same household.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

Differences in labor force participation between potential DAPA recipients and LPR adults can be related to differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of the two groups—characteristics such as age, educational attainment, English proficiency, marital status, and parental status.<sup>34</sup> But these differences could also result from lack of work authorization among potentially DAPA-eligible parents or other, unmeasured characteristics such as discrimination.

After controlling for sociodemographic characteristics using decomposition analysis (see Methods section in Appendix for details), the differences in labor force participation between LPRs and potential DAPA adults are quite small: -2 percentage points for men and 4 percentage points for women. These small differences suggest that providing work authorization through DAPA would have a very modest effect on labor force participation.

## **B. Estimated Impacts of Work Authorization on Earnings**

Based on a similar decomposition methodology, obtaining work authorization would have a more significant potential effect on annual earnings for parents who might qualify for DAPA. During the 2009-13 period, potentially DAPA-eligible men earned \$30,000 on average annually, about \$10,000 less than LPR men (see Table 5).<sup>35</sup> In comparison, potential DAPA women earned an average of \$19,000 per year, or about \$8,000 less than LPR women. For both men and women, most of the differences in earnings were due to characteristics such as age, educational attainment, English proficiency, parental status, and marital status (\$5,000 for men and \$7,000 for women).<sup>36</sup> After controlling for these characteristics, the differences in income between LPRs and potential DAPA parents were \$5,000 for men and \$1,000 for women, representing differences of 16 percent and 7 percent in their respective mean earnings.

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*Obtaining work authorization would have a more significant potential effect on annual earnings for parents who might qualify for DAPA.*

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<sup>34</sup> The full set of characteristics modeled included: age, age-squared (as a proxy for work experience), duration of U.S. residence, English language proficiency, educational attainment, marital status, survey year, and state of residence. See Appendix for details.

<sup>35</sup> "Average annual earnings" here refers to mean earnings, as the decomposition models were specified based on mean, not median, earnings.

<sup>36</sup> The sociodemographic characteristics modeled here included: age, age-squared (as a proxy for work experience), duration of U.S. residence, English language proficiency, educational attainment, marital status, the presence of minor children in the household, survey year, state of residence, industry of employment, and full-time (versus part-time) employment.



The returns on earnings described in Table 5 can be interpreted as the potential earnings gain from work authorization. As in the labor force participation analysis, other factors that could not be measured in the ACS data could also affect earnings, for example discrimination. These estimated earnings gains are conservative, however, in that they are based on the assumption that DAPA recipients would not improve their educational attainment or English proficiency. It is possible that they would be eligible for a range of employment and training services under Title I of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), which Congress passed in 2014 to reauthorize most of the major federally funded and state-administered adult education and workforce programs. While adult education programs under Title II are generally available regardless of immigration status, eligibility for Title I programs is limited to individuals with work authorization.<sup>37</sup> If DAPA recipients upgraded their English and job skills through WIOA or other programs, the earnings gains associated with DAPA participation could be greater than those estimated here. However, it is unclear how many would seek to apply for WIOA instruction or other programs, even if eligible, and how many slots would be available to serve them. Moreover, the impact of upgrading skills and English proficiency would not be immediate, meaning such additional earnings gains would only take place in the long run.

**Table 5. Decomposition of Mean Annual Earning Differences between Potentially DAPA-Eligible and LPR Adults, by Gender, 2009-13**

Mean Earnings	Men	Women
LPR Adults	\$ 40,000	\$ 27,000
Potentially DAPA-Eligible Adults	\$ 30,000	\$ 19,000
Difference between Potentially DAPA-Eligible and LPR Adults	\$ 10,000	\$ 8,000
Due to Sociodemographic Characteristics	\$ 5,000	\$ 7,000
Due to Work Authorization and Other Unmeasured Factors	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,000
Percentage Difference between Potentially DAPA-Eligible Adults and LPR Adults	33%	44%
Due to Sociodemographic Characteristics	17%	37%
Due to Work Authorization and Other Unmeasured Characteristics	16%	7%

*Notes:* Sample includes adults ages 18-64. Potentially DAPA-eligible immigrants include only those living with minor children (ages 17 and under) in the same household. Sociodemographic characteristics include age, age-squared (as a proxy for work experience), duration of U.S. residence, English language proficiency, educational attainment, marital status, the presence of minor children in the household, survey year, state of residence, industry of employment, and full-time (versus part-time) employment. See Methods in Appendix for details of decomposition analysis.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

<sup>37</sup> Title I of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) includes workforce training programs for youth, adults, and dislocated workers, and is limited to individuals authorized to work in the United States. Title II authorizes services that build the literacy and basics skills of adults and is silent on immigration status, although some states bar unauthorized immigrants from these programs. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor released guidance clarifying that DACA recipients were eligible for services provided under Title I of the *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA), WIOA's predecessor, because they were authorized to work. Similar guidance has not been released regarding WIOA implementation, but most assume DAPA recipients would be similarly eligible for WIOA Title I services. See Letter from Portia Wu, Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor, to American Job Centers, State Workforce Agencies, State Workforce Administrators, State Workforce Liaisons, State and Local Workforce Board Chairs and Directors, and All WIA Grant Recipients, "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 02-14," July 14, 2014, [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_2-14.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_2-14.pdf). See also Margie McHugh and Madeleine Morawksi, *Immigrants and WIOA Services: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Native- and Foreign-Born Adults in the United States* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrants-and-wioa-services-comparison-sociodemographic-characteristics-native-and-foreign](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrants-and-wioa-services-comparison-sociodemographic-characteristics-native-and-foreign).



### C. Estimated Impacts of Work Authorization on Family Income and Poverty

The estimated earnings gains modeled in Table 5 were applied to the average family with at least one potentially DAPA-eligible parent. The median income for such families was \$31,000 in 2009-13. When the estimated average earnings gains due to work authorization of \$5,000 for men and \$1,000 for women are applied to the median family, annual income would increase by \$3,000, or about 10 percent.

The estimated earnings gains associated with parental work authorization also lower the poverty rate in potential DAPA families. The share of families with incomes below FPL declined by 6 percent and the share of those with incomes below 185 percent of FPL declined by a similar amount (see Table 6). Given that there were an estimated 1.8 million potentially DAPA-eligible families in 2009-13, a 6 percent reduction in the poverty rate would amount to about 100,000 fewer poor families nationally.<sup>38</sup> Thus, with DAPA and eligibility for work authorization, a substantial number of immigrant families could see their income rise above 185 percent of FPL, the threshold above which people no longer qualify for major federal benefit programs such as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).<sup>39</sup> More generally, rising income and falling poverty could reduce the demand for public benefits and social services in states and localities with large populations that could qualify for DAPA.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 6. Estimated Annual Income as Share of FPL for Potential DAPA Families by Work Authorization Status, (%), 2009-13**

Family Income	Share of Potentially DAPA-Eligible Families	
	Without Work Authorization	With Work Authorization
Below 99% of Poverty Level	36%	30%
100 -184% of Poverty Level	33%	33%
At or Above 185% of Poverty Level	31%	37%

*Note:* Potentially DAPA-eligible families are defined as those with at least one adult who could potentially qualify. The impact of work authorization on family income is based on the earnings gains for potentially DAPA-eligible men and women in Table 5. The poverty threshold for a family of four was \$24,000 in 2013. The income threshold to qualify for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is 185 percent of FPL, and the threshold to qualify for or for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps, is 130 percent of FPL.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

38 This estimate of 100,000 families with incomes rising above the federal poverty level (FPL) is based on the assumption that all eligible parents would participate in DAPA. If 68 percent of eligible parents were to apply (a rate similar to the DACA program after three years), then an estimated 68,000 families would see their incomes rise above FPL.

39 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), "Women, Infants and Children (WIC): WIC Eligibility Requirements," accessed February 10, 2016, [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-eligibility-requirements](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-eligibility-requirements); USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, "Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines," *Federal Register* vol. 80, no. 61 (2015): 17026-27, [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-03-31/pdf/2015-07358.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-03-31/pdf/2015-07358.pdf).

40 DAPA, like DACA, would not confer eligibility to unauthorized immigrants for the major means-tested public-benefit programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps), or Medicaid. U.S.-citizen and LPR children, however, are eligible for these programs provided they meet income-eligibility guidelines and other nonimmigration-status related criteria.



## IV. Current and Potential Harms to Children with Unauthorized Parents

The second major advantage that DAPA would confer for potential recipients and their families, beyond eligibility for work authorization, is a reprieve from deportation. Under current immigration enforcement policies, deportation of potentially DAPA-eligible parents is rare because those who would meet the eligibility requirements also fall outside the Obama administration's enforcement priorities.<sup>41</sup> Although these priorities allow immigration officers discretion regarding which individuals to pursue for removal, it is unlikely that many DAPA recipients would be pursued under current policy.

Further, mothers are far less likely to be deported than fathers, as 91 percent of deportees in recent years have been men.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) prosecutorial discretion guidelines emphasize that primary caregivers (generally mothers) and those who are pregnant or parenting young children are not a priority for deportation.<sup>43</sup> Thus it is highly unlikely that potentially DAPA-eligible mothers could be deported in significant numbers. As a result, the analysis here focuses on deportation of fathers.

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*The ACS data employed here suggest that potentially DAPA-eligible families are heavily dependent on the father's income.*

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### A. Impact of Deportation of Fathers on Family Income and Poverty

The literature on the impact of immigration enforcement on children has documented cases in which family income declined dramatically after parents were detained and deported. These cases generally involved deportation of a father and loss of his income. For example, in a study of 85 unauthorized families that experienced immigration enforcement over the 2006-09 period, the average family lost 70 percent of its income in the six months following the detention or deportation of a parent. Across the six study sites, average loss of income ranged from 40 percent to 90 percent.<sup>44</sup> In many cases, fathers had stable incomes and full-time jobs before they were detained or deported. In another study, unauthorized immigrant mothers reported little prior work experience and great difficulty finding employment or other sources of income after their spouses or partners were detained or deported.<sup>45</sup>

The ACS data employed here suggest that potentially DAPA-eligible families are heavily dependent on the father's income. For instance, 95 percent of such fathers were in the labor force versus 52 percent of mothers, and mean annual earnings were \$30,000 for fathers versus \$19,000 for mothers (see Tables 5

41 In November 2014, when President Obama announced the DAPA program, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson also issued a memorandum setting forth new civil immigration enforcement priorities, focusing on threats to national security, felons, individuals with significant or multiple misdemeanor convictions, and individuals entering the United States illegally or committing other civil immigration violations since January 2014. The same types of security, criminal, and immigration violations that would result in a parent being a priority for enforcement would also result in that parent being denied eligibility for DAPA. See Johnson, "Policies for Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Undocumented Immigrants."

42 Marc R. Rosenblum and Doris Meissner, *The Deportation Dilemma: Reconciling Tough and Humane Enforcement* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-dilemma-reconciling-tough-humane-enforcement](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-dilemma-reconciling-tough-humane-enforcement).

43 Johnson, "Policies for the Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Undocumented Immigrants."

44 Ajay Chaudry, Randy Capps, Juan Pedroza, Rosa Maria Castañeda, Robert Santos, and Molly M. Scott, *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2010), 28, [www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412020\\_FacingOurFuture\\_final.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412020_FacingOurFuture_final.pdf).

45 Heather Koball, Randy Capps, Sarah Hooker, Krista Perreira, Andrea Campetella, Juan Manuel Pedroza, William Monson, and Sandra Huerta, *Health and Social Service Needs of U.S.-Citizen Children with Detained or Deported Immigrant Parents* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute and Migration Policy Institute, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/health-and-social-service-needs-us-citizen-children-detained-or-deported-immigrant-parents](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/health-and-social-service-needs-us-citizen-children-detained-or-deported-immigrant-parents).



and 6). Seventy-one percent of DAPA-eligible families had both mothers and fathers present in the household. The most common scenario of concern for potentially DAPA-eligible families, then, is one in which the father is deported and the mother is left behind with less income to support the children.

In this report, the scenario of a father's deportation in the 2009-13 ACS data was modeled by subtracting his earnings from the income of the average potentially DAPA-eligible two-parent family. Under this scenario, median annual income fell from \$33,000 to \$9,000. This decline of \$24,000 represented 73 percent of median family income, in line with the estimates from the study of 85 families experiencing immigration enforcement described above.<sup>46</sup> For a two-parent family with a potentially DAPA-eligible father, this decline in income would move the family from 134 percent to 49 percent of the federal poverty level—in other words from near poverty, just above the threshold for food stamp eligibility, to deep poverty.<sup>47</sup> Thus, family income would suffer dramatically. In other studies, such dramatic drops in income following parental detention or deportation have been associated with housing instability, high levels of crowding, and negative impacts on children's health, development, and behavior.<sup>48</sup> Increases in hunger and milder forms of food insecurity were also documented.<sup>49</sup>

In the longer term, mothers might attempt to enter the labor force or improve their earnings after a father's deportation. Field research suggests that their labor market entry could be difficult, however. Many unauthorized mothers have little or no experience in the labor force, limited access to information about jobs, and weak social networks. Following detention or deportation of their spouse, some mothers experienced severe depression, social isolation, and difficulties managing financial tasks. Few mothers who did not work previously were able to find formal employment, though some found informal employment or volunteer work through community-based organizations.<sup>50</sup>

## **B. Psychological Impacts of Parental Deportation on Children and Other Family Members**

The literature also discusses psychological impacts on children when their parents are deported, though this research is in its infancy. The study of families affected by immigration enforcement during 2006-09 documented substantial changes in children's behavior—including crying, being afraid, and having difficulty sleeping and eating for more than half the study sample in the short term (within six months after parental arrest).<sup>51</sup> In a more recent study conducted during 2012-13, school staff reported that some students with detained or deported parents became disengaged from academics and long-term career goals and from social relationships with peers.<sup>52</sup> A 2013-15 survey of 91 U.S.-born Latino children quantified the psychological impacts of parental detention and deportation on these children. Compared with other children with unauthorized immigrant parents and children with LPR parents, those whose parents had been detained or deported exhibited more symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), more internalizing behaviors as reported by parents, more externalizing behaviors as reported by teachers, and reduced functioning as observed by clinicians.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the emerging literature suggests that parental deportation can have important psychological as well as economic consequences for children.

<sup>46</sup> Chaudry, Capps, Pedroza, Castañeda, Santos, and Scott, *Facing Our Future*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> The income threshold for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps) eligibility is 130 percent of FPL. See USDA, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," updated November 25, 2015, [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility#Income](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility#Income).

<sup>48</sup> Chaudry, Capps, Pedroza, Castañeda, Santos, and Scott, *Facing Our Future*, 29-31; Kalina Brabeck and Qingwen Xu, "The Impact of Detention and Deportation on Latino Immigrant Children and Families: A Quantitative Exploration," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* vol. 32, no. 3 (2010): 341-61, [www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/humanrights/pdf/the\\_impact\\_of\\_detention\\_and\\_immigration\\_and\\_families.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/humanrights/pdf/the_impact_of_detention_and_immigration_and_families.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Chaudry, Capps, Pedroza, Castañeda, Santos, and Scott, *Facing Our Future*, 31-33.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; Koball et al., *Health and Social Service Needs of U.S.-Citizen Children*.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>52</sup> Koball et al., *Health and Social Service Needs of U.S.-Citizen Children with Detained or Deported Immigrant Parents*.

<sup>53</sup> Lisseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, J. Hwang Koo, and Judy London, "Trauma and Psychological Distress in Latino Citizen Children Following Parental Detention and Deportation" (under review).



### C. *Impacts of Unauthorized Parental Status More Generally on Children*

Even in the absence of parental deportation, unauthorized parental status may negatively affect child development and well-being. There is a strong body of evidence demonstrating that growing up with unauthorized immigrant parents harms the well-being and development of children due to increased family stress, fear of deportation, poor work conditions, reduced income, inferior housing, and reluctance to access community supports for children. Studies show unauthorized immigrants disproportionately work in low-skilled, low-paying occupations.<sup>54</sup> Unauthorized immigrant parents are more susceptible than other parents to workplace abuses, including wage theft, subminimum wages, retaliation for organizing efforts, and bars to compensation for workplace injuries.<sup>55</sup> Stressful work conditions, in turn, are linked to parental stress and authoritarian parenting, which can stunt the social and emotional development of children.<sup>56</sup>

Unauthorized immigrant parents also fear deportation, which can heighten family stress and anxiety. In a recent nationally representative survey, 36 percent of unauthorized immigrants reported that they “personally know someone who was detained or deported by the federal government for immigration reasons in the last 12 months.”<sup>57</sup> Sharing these fears, children become anxious that they could be separated from their parents.<sup>58</sup>

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*Even in the absence of parental deportation,  
unauthorized parental status may negatively affect child  
development and well-being.*

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Fear of detection and deportation can lead unauthorized immigrant parents to avoid accessing health care and public benefits for their children, even though most children with unauthorized parents are U.S. citizens and generally eligible for these benefits.<sup>59</sup> A 2014 study documented that families with unauthorized immigrant parents are also less likely than legal immigrant families to access a broad range of educational and workforce programs for which they are eligible such as subsidized child care, Head Start, preschool, job training, and unemployment benefits.<sup>60</sup>

Taken together, the effects of parental unauthorized status have implications for child health and development from infancy to adulthood. Children with unauthorized immigrant parents score poorly on tests of cognitive skills—that is, skills for learning—as early as age 3.<sup>61</sup> Older children demonstrate higher levels of internalizing behavioral problems such as being sad or withdrawn and externalizing

54 Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, *Share of Unauthorized Immigrant Workers in Production, Construction Jobs Falls Since 2007* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2015), [www.pewhispanic.org/2015/03/26/share-of-unauthorized-immigrant-workers-in-production-construction-jobs-falls-since-2007](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/03/26/share-of-unauthorized-immigrant-workers-in-production-construction-jobs-falls-since-2007).

55 Annette Bernhardt, Michael Spiller, and David Polson, “All Work and No Pay: Violations of Employment and Labor Laws in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City,” *Social Forces* 91, no. 3 (2013): 725-46; Hirokazu Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens: Undocumented Parents and Their Young Children* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

56 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.

57 Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *Latino Support for Democrats Falls, but Democratic Advantage Remains* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2014), [www.pewhispanic.org/2014/10/29/latino-support-for-democrats-falls-but-democratic-advantage-remains](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/10/29/latino-support-for-democrats-falls-but-democratic-advantage-remains).

58 For interviews of family members in unauthorized immigrant families, see Joanna Dreby, “The Burden of Deportation on Children in Mexican Immigrant Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74, no. 4 (2012): 829-45.

59 Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes, Thitima Puttitanun, and Ana P. Martinez-Donate, “How Do Tougher Immigration Measures Affect Unauthorized Immigrants?” *Demography* vol. 50, no. 3 (2013): 1067-91; Marc L. Berk and Claudia L. Schur, “The Effect of Fear on Access to Care Among Undocumented Latino Immigrants,” *Journal of Immigrant Health* 3, no. 3 (2001): 151-56.

60 Kalina M. Brabeck, Erin Sibley, Patricia Taubin, and Angela Murcia, “The Influence of Immigrant Parent Legal Status on U.S.-Born Children’s Academic Abilities: The Moderating Effects of Social Service Use,” *Applied Developmental Science* (December 2015): 1-13.

61 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.



behavioral problems such as showing aggression toward others, compared to their counterparts with legal immigrant parents.<sup>62</sup> Among children ages 7 to 10 in one U.S. metropolitan area, those with unauthorized immigrant parents scored significantly lower on math, reading, composition, and spelling tests than those with legal immigrant parents.<sup>63</sup> Finally, among Mexican American young adults in Los Angeles, those who grew up with unauthorized immigrant parents completed on average 1.25 fewer years of schooling than those with parents who entered the country legally or legalized after their arrival.<sup>64</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Until the legal challenges are resolved, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program remains suspended. If implemented, the program has the potential to improve the lives of up to 3.6 million parents, as well as 6.6 million children and other adults living in their households. The program could potentially reach an estimated 86 percent of all children living with unauthorized immigrant parents.<sup>65</sup>

The actual impact of DAPA could likely be somewhat smaller than the estimates provided in this report. The analyses here are based on the entire potentially eligible population, as best it could be estimated using Census Bureau data, though possibly disqualifying criminal convictions could not be modeled. As with any public program, the scope of DAPA's impact would be greatly affected by the actual participation of the eligible population.

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*The program could potentially reach an estimated 86 percent of all children living with unauthorized immigrant parents.*

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If the current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program is a guide, not all eligible individuals would apply for the DAPA program. Using the most recent data available from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Migration Policy Institute estimates that 68 percent of the 1.2 million people immediately eligible to apply for DACA at the time of the program's launch in 2012 had done so as of September 2015, and 60 percent of those who were eligible were approved—with a significant number still pending.<sup>66</sup> If two-thirds of the potentially DAPA-eligible population were to apply, about 2.5 million unauthorized immigrant parents living in households with 6-7 million people in total would receive protection from deportation and eligibility for work authorization.

As described in this report, DAPA would offer two major advantages for potentially eligible parents and their families. The first is eligibility for work authorization. As a result of being able to work legally,

62 Nancy S. Landale, Jessica Halliday Hardie, R.S. Oropesa, and Marianne M. Hillemeier, "Behavioral Functioning among Mexican-Origin Children: Does Parental Legal Status Matter?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 56, no. 1 (2015): 2-18.

63 Brabeck, Sibley, Taubin, and Murcia, "The Influence of Immigrant Parent Legal Status on U.S.-Born Children's Academic Abilities."

64 Frank Bean, Mark A. Leach, Susan K. Brown, James D. Bachmeier, and John R. Hipp, "The Educational Legacy of Unauthorized Migration: Comparisons Across U.S.-Immigrant Groups in How Parents' Status Affects Their Offspring," *International Migration Review* 45, no. 2 (2011): 348-85.

65 Capps, Fix, and Zong, *A Profile of U.S. Children with Unauthorized Immigrant Parents*.

66 Including the estimated 400,000 unauthorized youth who met all DACA qualifications except education in 2012—and who could qualify if they enrolled in an adult education program—raises the total potentially DACA-eligible population to 1.6 million and lowers the application rate to 50 percent and the approval rate to 45 percent. See USCIS, "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals;" MPI Data Hub, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Profile: United States."



potential DAPA recipients could experience a significant gain of about 10 percent in their family incomes. As experienced by earlier populations gaining work authorization via the DACA, Temporary Protected Status, and 1986 legalizations enacted under the *Immigration Reform and Control Act*, income gains for DAPA recipients would likely be widespread, with potentially substantial economic benefits for children. The second advantage that DAPA recipients would gain is protection from deportation. Deportation of the father, while likely to be a rare occurrence among the potentially DAPA eligible in light of current enforcement priorities, could result in a dramatic drop in income. Psychological gains for parents and children would be more common, though difficult to quantify, as the anxiety around possible arrest, detention, and deportation is lifted for families participating in DAPA.

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*As a result of being able to work legally, potential DAPA recipients could experience a significant gain of about 10 percent in their family incomes.*

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If the Supreme Court allows it to go forward, the DAPA program has the potential to substantially improve the incomes and living and well-being standards for a sizeable number of unauthorized immigrant families, whose children are overwhelmingly U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents.

For more research on deferred action programs, please visit:  
[www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/dream-actdeferred-action](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/dream-actdeferred-action)



## Appendix: Methods

This research draws on innovative assignments of unauthorized status to noncitizens using U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data; five years of data, for 2009-13, were pooled to increase the precision of the estimates. James Bachmeier at Temple University, in consultation with Jennifer Van Hook at The Pennsylvania State University and with input from researchers at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), developed techniques to link the ACS data to the Census Bureau's 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

The ACS includes substantial information about the foreign born, including their U.S. citizenship, birth country, year of U.S. arrival, age, and other sociodemographic characteristics. The ACS does not, however, record the immigration status of noncitizens. The SIPP, a smaller nationally representative survey conducted by the Census Bureau, collects similar information as well as self-reported legal immigration status. The researchers linked noncitizens in the ACS and SIPP by their sociodemographic characteristics. Using a statistical technique known as multiple imputation, the researchers assigned unauthorized status to immigrants in the ACS who had characteristics similar to immigrants who did not report a legal immigration status in the SIPP.<sup>67</sup>

### A. *Estimating the Number of Potentially DAPA-Eligible Individuals*

To qualify for DAPA, unauthorized immigrants must be parents of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents (LPRs), who can be either minor children (under age 18) or adult children (ages 18 and older). MPI estimates the pool of 3.6 million unauthorized immigrants potentially eligible for DAPA includes:

- 3.3 million unauthorized immigrants who are parents of minor U.S.-citizen or LPR children (91 percent of total potentially eligible population). This group was identified using ACS data on unauthorized immigrant parents living in a household with at least one U.S.-citizen or LPR child age 17 or younger.
- 340,000 who are parents of adult U.S.-citizen children (9 percent of total).

The second group cannot be directly estimated using the ACS household sample, because children ages 18 and older generally have left the household and therefore cannot be reliably linked to their parents. Estimating the number of parents with U.S.-citizen children ages 18 and older required several steps:

- 2009-13 ACS data were used to produce an estimate of the number of unauthorized immigrants who entered the United States between 1980-95 who could potentially have had children born during those years, and who did not otherwise qualify for the DAPA program (i.e., did not have minor U.S.-citizen children or LPR children living with them).<sup>68</sup>
- To determine the probability that unauthorized immigrants had children born in the United States during 1980-95, the research used data on the number of Mexican and Central American

<sup>67</sup> Jennifer Van Hook, James D. Bachmeier, Donna L. Coffman, and Ofer Harel, "Can We Spin Straw Into Gold? An Evaluation of Immigrant Legal Status Imputation Approaches," *Demography* 52, no. 1 (2015): 329-54; MPI Data Hub, "Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles."

<sup>68</sup> 1980 was selected as the initial year for this analysis because the unauthorized population prior to then was very small; 1995 was selected as the last year because any child born after 1995 would still be under age 18 and therefore would appear in the analysis of DAPA-eligible households with minor children. To avoid double counting, unauthorized immigrants already determined potentially eligible for DAPA due to minor U.S.-citizen or LPR children in the household were excluded, as were those potentially eligible for DACA.



noncitizens who had children of various ages in the 1990 Census.<sup>69</sup>

- The probability of unauthorized immigrants entering the United States during 1980-95 and having a child was multiplied in the 2009-13 ACS data to obtain an estimate of how many unauthorized immigrants have children ages 18 and older.<sup>70</sup>

## **B. Estimating the Potential Impact of Work Authorization on Labor Force Participation, Earnings, and Income**

The potential impact of work authorization on the labor force participation and earnings of DAPA-eligible adults was modeled using Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition, a well-established method used in analyses of labor market inequality.<sup>71</sup> The method partitions observed differences in labor market outcomes between two groups into two components. The first component represents the share of the difference in earnings due to sociodemographic characteristics such as age, educational attainment, and work experience. The second component represents the share of the difference in earnings due to labor market returns—i.e., the share of the difference that *is not* associated with characteristics measured in the data. In the language of regression, the second component represents the share of the difference due to group-level differences in coefficients.<sup>72</sup> In the language of policy, the difference in earnings due to labor market returns has been interpreted as discrimination,<sup>73</sup> or in the case of immigrants, their legal status.<sup>74</sup>

For this research, decomposition models analyzing differences in labor force participation and earnings between DAPA-eligible adults and LPRs were conducted separately for men and women.<sup>75</sup> Differences in rates of labor force participation were decomposed using linear probability models of participating in the workforce (whether employed or unemployed) versus not participating. Labor force participation models included controls for the following characteristics: age, age-squared (as a proxy for work experience), duration of U.S. residence, English language proficiency, educational attainment, marital status, the presence of minor children in the household, survey year, and state of residence. Differences in earnings were decomposed using ordinary least-squares regression models of individual annual earned income, using controls for the same characteristics plus industry of employment and full-time (versus part-time) employment.

The decomposition models found little difference in labor force participation between potentially DAPA-eligible adults and LPRs after controlling for measurable characteristics. LPR men were 9 percent less likely to participate in the labor force than potential DAPA men, while LPR women were 11 percent more

69 This analysis uses Mexican and Central American noncitizens as a proxy for unauthorized immigrants in the 1990 Census data because the authors could not assign unauthorized status in that survey; in 1990, virtually all unauthorized immigrants had origins in Mexico or Central America. The authors chose the 1990 Census as the midpoint between 1980 and 1995; the shares of Mexican and Central American noncitizens having children were similar in the 2000 Census.

70 This analysis was conducted separately for men and women, by country of birth, parental age, and year of U.S. arrival.

71 Ronald L. Oaxaca, "Male-Female Wage Differentials in Urban Labor Markets," *International Economic Review*, vol. 14 (1973): 693-709; Alan S. Blinder, "Wage Discrimination: Reduced Form and Structural Estimates," *The Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1973): 436-55.

72 Researchers have expanded the original Blinder-Oaxaca method to address sample variance, among other measures of accuracy. See, for example, Ronald L. Oaxaca and Michael R. Ransom, "Calculation of Approximate Variances for Wage Decomposition Differentials," *Journal of Economic and Social Measurement* vol. 24 (1998): 55-61; Ben Jann, "The Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition for Linear Regression," *The Stata Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2008): 453-79. For a discussion on alternative Blinder-Oaxaca methods, see Todd E. Elder, John H. Goddeeris, and Steven J. Haider, "Unexplained Gaps and Oaxaca-Blinder Decompositions," *Labour Economics*, vol. 17 (2010): 284-90.

73 David Neumark, "Employers' Discriminatory Behavior and the Estimation of Wage Discrimination," *The Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1998): 279-95; Cordelia W. Reimers, "Labor Market Discrimination Against Hispanic and Black Men," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 65, no. 4 (1983): 570-79.

74 Rivera-Batiz, "Undocumented Workers in the Labor Market."

75 The 2009-13 ACS sample employed in the decomposition analysis included adults ages 18-64. The potentially DAPA eligible included only those living with minor children (ages 17 and under) in the same household, while LPRs included all adults ages 18-64. For additional detail in the methodology used to impute unauthorized status, see Van Hook, Bachmeier, Coffman, and Harel, "Can We Spin Straw Into Gold?," MPI Data Hub, "Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles."



likely to participate (see Table A-1). These small gaps were mostly explained by the sociodemographic characteristics of men and women, leaving very small differences (2 percent for men and 4 percent for women) explained by returns, i.e., due to work authorization and other unmeasured characteristics.

**Table A-1. Decomposition of Labor Force Participation Differences between Potentially DAPA-Eligible and LPR Men and Women, (%), 2009-13**

Labor Force Participation	Men	Women
LPR Adults	86%	63%
Potentially DAPA-Eligible Adults	95%	52%
Percentage Point Difference between Potentially DAPA-Eligible and LPR Adults	-9%	11%
Due to Sociodemographic Characteristics	-7%	7%
Due to Work Authorization and Other, Unmeasured Characteristics	-2%	4%

*Notes:* Sample includes adults ages 18-64. Potentially DAPA-eligible immigrants include only those living with minor children (ages 17 and under) in the same household. Sociodemographic characteristics include age-squared (as a proxy for work experience), duration of U.S. residence, English language proficiency, educational attainment, marital status, the presence of minor children in the household, survey year, and state of residence.

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau 2009-13 ACS, pooled, and 2008 SIPP by Bachmeier and Van Hook.

The models did, however, find significant differences in earnings (\$5,000 for men and \$1,000 for women), which were interpreted as the potential earnings gains associated with providing work authorization to DAPA-eligible adults. For example, mean annual earnings for potentially DAPA-eligible men were estimated at \$30,000 per year, and at \$40,000 for LPR men (see Table 5). The decomposition model attributed half of the \$10,000 earnings difference between DAPA-eligible men and LPR men to the latter's more favorable labor market characteristics (e.g., older age, higher educational attainment, and greater English language proficiency). The model attributed the other half of the difference (\$5,000) to factors that could not be measured in the ACS data, i.e., to higher returns in the labor market for LPRs than DAPA-eligible men with the same characteristics. Once these characteristics were controlled in the model, the main difference between LPR and DAPA-eligible men was the fact that potentially DAPA-eligible men lacked work authorization. Thus, if potentially DAPA-eligible men were to obtain work authorization, they would be able to translate their human capital and other relevant characteristics into earnings at the same rate as LPR men, thereby improving their earnings by \$5,000 annually on average. In past research, Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition was similarly used to estimate how much of the difference in wages between legal and unauthorized Mexican immigrants was due to observed characteristics, and how much was due to work authorization in the four years following the legalization programs in the 1986 *Immigration Reform and Control Act* (IRCA).<sup>76</sup>

To estimate the impact of these earnings gains on potentially DAPA-eligible families' income and poverty, the research team estimated median family income and the ratio of family income to the federal poverty level in the 2009-13 ACS data. Then \$5,000 in earnings gains for DAPA-eligible men and \$1,000 in earnings gains for DAPA-eligible women were added to total income for all potentially DAPA-eligible families.<sup>77</sup> After adding the earnings gains to all families, median family income and the ratio of family income to the poverty level were recalculated.

<sup>76</sup> Rivera-Batiz, "Undocumented Workers in the Labor Market."

<sup>77</sup> The earned-income gains of \$5,000 for men and \$1,000 for women were only added for adults potentially eligible for DAPA, not for other adults in the family.



## About the Authors



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Dr. Capps, a demographer, has published widely on immigrant integration at the state and local level, including profiles of immigrant populations in Arkansas, Connecticut, and Maryland, as well as Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Louisville, KY, and Napa County, CA. He also has examined the impact of the detention and deportation of immigrant parents on children.

Prior to joining MPI, Dr. Capps was a researcher in the Immigration Studies Program at the Urban Institute (1993-96, and 2000-08).

He received his PhD in sociology from the University of Texas in 1999 and his master of public affairs degree, also from the University of Texas, in 1992.



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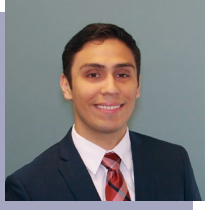
Dr. Koball is co-principal investigator for a project funded by the Russell Sage Foundation that examines the relationship of state policies and the material hardship of children of immigrants. She recently completed a project for the Department of Health and Human Services focused on children of immigrant parents who are detained or deported. She completed a USDA-funded study of the effects of variation in state policies on immigrants' participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). She has also led several studies that examine immigrant integration, using a range of nationally representative surveys.



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