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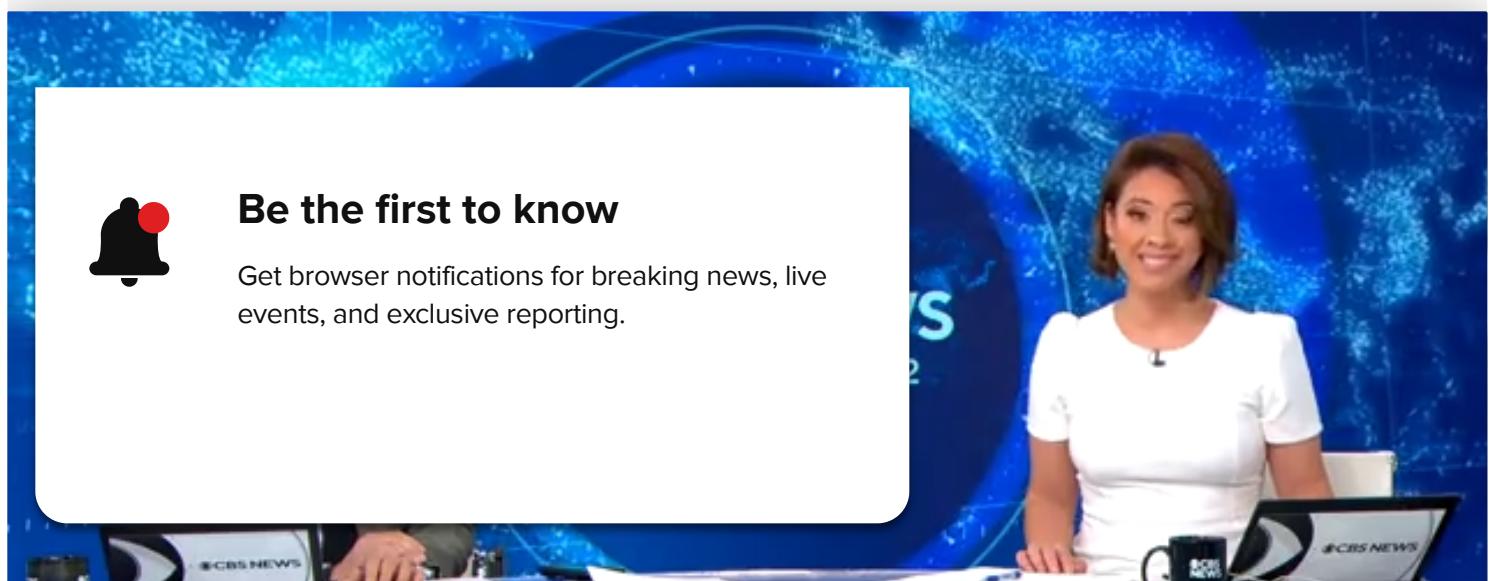
Nearly 1 million immigrants became U.S. citizens in past year, the 3rd highest tally on record

BY CAMILO MONTOYA-GALVEZ
DECEMBER 7, 2022 / 9:15 AM / CBS NEWS



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A screenshot of a CBS News broadcast. At the top left is a video thumbnail showing a person. To its right is a red 'LIVE' button. Below the video is the CBS News logo. To the right of the logo is the main headline: 'NEARLY 1M IMMIGRANTS BECAME U.S. CITIZENS IN 2022'. Underneath the headline is the subtext 'THIRD HIGHEST ANNUAL TALLY OF NATURALIZED CITIZENS ON RECORD'. At the bottom of the banner, it says 'cbsnews.com' and 'CBS MORNINGS: STREAMING WEEKDAYS @ 8AM ET'.

Washington – Nearly a million immigrant adults were naturalized as American citizens in fiscal year 2022, the third-highest annual tally recorded in U.S. history, according to a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [report](#) published on Wednesday.

In the 12-month period that ended Sept. 30, 967,400 adults swore the oath of allegiance at naturalization ceremonies across the country, the USCIS figures show. When taking into account cases of children who derived citizenship from their U.S.-citizen parents and other naturalization cases, a total of 1,023,200 immigrants became U.S. citizens in fiscal year 2022.

The number of adult immigrants who became U.S. citizens was only greater in 1996 and 2008, when 1,040,991 and 1,046,539 adults were naturalized, respectively, historical [government statistics](#) show.

Most naturalized citizens gain citizenship after living in the U.S. as permanent residents for three or five years, depending how they secured legal residency. Those who serve in the

n process. Applicants are also speak English, and understand U.S.



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the Dominican Republic, according to the USCIS data.

nship can vote in federal y members to come to the U.S. birth of immigrants who became , India, the Philippines, Cuba and

The 14-year high in naturalizations comes a year after President Biden directed federal agencies to promote naturalizations by eliminating bureaucratic barriers in the citizenship process, speeding up case adjudications and developing a government-wide strategy to encourage eligible immigrants to become citizens.

Citing that directive, USCIS scrapped a Trump administration revision to the naturalization civics questions that critics said made it harder for immigrants to pass the test, which is a requirement for most citizenship applicants. The agency also expanded remote video interviews for naturalization cases.

In an interview with CBS News, USCIS Director Ur Jaddou said the agency has launched public awareness and information campaigns to make the naturalization process more accessible, and streamlined citizenship cases for U.S. service members. In March 2021, USCIS held the first remote video military naturalization ceremony.

"It is good for the nation for people to fully become part of this nation, join it in the fullest way that they can," Jaddou said this week. "That has been a priority since the beginning of this administration and we're going to continue the focus on ensuring that people who wish to become Americans, can be."

Jaddou said the campaign to boost naturalizations among eligible immigrants had to be balanced with an extensive workload at USCIS, including an ongoing effort to reduce a massive backlog of unresolved applications that has crippled the agency's ability to process many petitions promptly.

As of June 30, USCIS was overseeing more than 8.7 million immigration cases, ranging from green card applications to asylum requests and work permit petitions, according to government statistics. The number of pending citizenship cases stood at 666,473, a 20%



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Newly naturalized citizens take the oath of allegiance during a naturalization ceremony at President George Washington's Mount Vernon estate on Sept. 23, 2022, in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

KEVIN DIETSCH / GETTY IMAGES

In its fiscal year 2022 progress report, USCIS noted it processed a record high 275,111 employment-based green cards alongside the State Department, which reviews overseas visa requests. It also implemented a rule to provide relief to immigrants affected by the work permit delays by extending the period of automatic work authorization extensions for those applying for a renewal.

Beyond the case backlogs, USCIS has also recently struggled to shore up its finances. The

se at the outset of the COVID-19
applications and the suspension of
as able to avert mass furloughs, it
h 2021.



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departing the agency and contracts with support staff terminated.

The Trump administration also faced a "very precarious moment" at the start of its coffers, some employees

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Through millions of dollars allocated by Congress over the past year, Jaddou said USCIS has been able to stabilize the agency's fiscal footing, stage a hiring surge of immigration adjudicators and reduce backlogs for some programs.

"The good news is we've recovered from that experience. Our financial situation is in a much more solid location," Jaddou said.

But Jaddou said USCIS will need additional funding from Congress to further reduce the agency's multimillion backlog of cases and to administer a growing number of humanitarian programs, some of which do not collect application fees.

Over the past year, USCIS has been tasked with processing various applications from the tens of thousands of Afghans and Ukrainians who have been resettled in the U.S. The agency's other humanitarian missions include screening some asylum-seekers along the U.S.-Mexico border and reviewing requests from immigrants applying for Temporary Protected Status programs, which have grown under Mr. Biden.

In fiscal year 2023, USCIS is expected to issue a rule to raise application fees for certain programs, allow more immigrants to pay extra fees to have their cases reviewed more expeditiously and make additional applications online-based, as opposed to the paper and mail model the agency has relied on for decades, according to Jaddou and Wednesday's report.

Immigration

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