



University of Southern California

Citizen Gain: The Economic Benefits of Naturalization for Immigrants and the Economy

While citizenship creates the opportunity to participate more fully in our democracy, there is also an often overlooked economic benefit: naturalized immigrants are likely to see a boost in their family incomes that can benefit their children, their communities and the nation.

Why the gain?

Naturalized immigrants differ in educational levels, language ability, and a number of other factors. But research suggests that there is an independent effect of citizenship: with citizenship comes more U.S.-specific investments in job preparation, better matching between employers and employees, and an enhanced ability to shift between jobs.

What's the gain?

Using the most recent date from the U.S. Census and Office of Immigration Statistics, *Citizen Gain* estimates:

- an average **8-11% boost** in individual earnings with citizenship, rising with more time as a citizen
- the potential for a **\$21 to \$45 billion** increase in the cumulative earnings of immigrants over 10 years, depending on how aggressively naturalization is pursued and the extent of occupational mobility or job shifting that results, and
- an even **larger impact on GDP** taking into account the secondary effects of higher incomes on spending and demand.

How to gain?

With this much at stake, how insure that the hurdles to acquiring citizenship do not become obstacles?

Barrier	Gateway	Examples of Innovation
Naturalization Fees	Microloan Programs	Casa de Maryland and CitiBank, ICIRR and the State of Illinois
English Language Skills	English Language Learning Courses from various institutions	National Immigration Forum's Bethlehem Project (on-the-job English courses)
Lack of knowledge of process/eligibility	Coordinating across federal Agencies and local jurisdictions to promote naturalization	U.S. Conference of Mayor's "New Americans" Initiative

Encouraging naturalization is not just the right thing to do; it is an economic imperative in a nation still working to emerge from the shadow of recession. With the children of immigrants now totaling nearly one quarter of our overall youth population, it's an investment in their future and the future of America.

Earned Income Returns to Naturalization Over Time

