

## NATURALIZATION TRENDS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USCIS civics test has become more difficult to pass, proposed citizenship filing fees will increase by up to 80% and denial rates for naturalization more than doubled between May 2024 and May 2026. The policies are part of the Trump administration's efforts to [restrict immigration](#).<sup>1</sup> Trump officials are making U.S. citizenship harder to acquire and easier to revoke, which may discourage people from applying to become citizens.

### HIGHER NATURALIZATION APPLICATION FEES

The Trump administration has proposed significantly higher fees for individuals seeking naturalization. Under a [proposed rule](#) published in June 2026, the fee to apply online for naturalization will increase by 75%, from \$710 to \$1,280, and by 80%, from \$760 to \$1,330, for a paper filing.<sup>2</sup> The proposed rule raises the filing fee for Form N-336, which requests a hearing on a decision in a naturalization proceeding, by 78% to 83%, depending on whether the filing is online or on paper.

**Table 1**  
**Current and Proposed Fees for Naturalization**

| Immigration Benefit                                                                                   | Current Fee | Proposed Fee | Percent Change |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| Form N-336 Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization (paper filing)                       | \$830       | \$1,475      | 78%            |
| Form N-336 Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization (online filing)                      | \$780       | \$1,425      | 83%            |
| Form N-400 Application for Naturalization (paper filing)                                              | \$760       | \$1,330      | 75%            |
| Form N-400 Application for Naturalization (online filing)                                             | \$710       | \$1,280      | 80%            |
| Form N-400 Application for Naturalization (aliens with household income below 400 percent of the FPG) | \$380       | N/A          | N/A            |

Source: Naturalization Application Fee Adjustments, USCIS, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Federal Register, June 23, 2026.

<sup>1</sup> The policy brief is expanded from Stuart Anderson, "Trump Immigration Policies Make It Harder To Get And Keep Citizenship," *Forbes*, July 29, 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Naturalization Application Fee Adjustments, USCIS, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Federal Register, June 23, 2026.

*Naturalization Trends*

**Table 2**  
**N-400 Naturalization Form Denial Rates and Processing Times 2024 to 2026**

| Year | Month     | Forms Received | Approvals | Denials | Pending | Pending Over 6 Months | Average Processing Time | Denial Rate | Total Processed |
|------|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 2024 | January   | 78,895         | 67,730    | 6,854   | 422,033 | 93,179                | 6.6                     | 9.2%        | 74,584          |
| 2024 | February  | 81,332         | 68,971    | 6,663   | 426,255 | 90,043                | 6.3                     | 8.8%        | 75,634          |
| 2024 | March     | 123,151        | 76,755    | 6,475   | 465,561 | 86,296                | 6.1                     | 7.8%        | 83,230          |
| 2024 | April     | 79,844         | 72,534    | 7,003   | 466,275 | 82,116                | 6.0                     | 8.8%        | 79,537          |
| 2024 | May       | 83,506         | 76,411    | 6,906   | 466,291 | 77,968                | 5.6                     | 8.3%        | 83,317          |
| 2024 | June      | 74,586         | 69,705    | 5,664   | 465,136 | 76,207                | 5.6                     | 7.5%        | 75,369          |
| 2024 | July      | 92,498         | 67,437    | 6,305   | 483,611 | 75,545                | 5.9                     | 8.6%        | 73,742          |
| 2024 | August    | 95,254         | 64,790    | 6,435   | 507,844 | 79,736                | 6.2                     | 9.0%        | 71,225          |
| 2024 | September | 88,501         | 73,159    | 5,646   | 517,125 | 96,571                | 6.2                     | 7.2%        | 78,805          |
| 2024 | October   | 81,118         | 72,681    | 6,087   | 521,418 | 101,964               | 6.0                     | 7.7%        | 78,768          |
| 2024 | November  | 85,640         | 66,293    | 5,441   | 533,709 | 111,709               | 6.1                     | 7.6%        | 71,734          |
| 2024 | December  | 74,910         | 66,998    | 5,815   | 535,601 | 119,145               | 6.1                     | 8.0%        | 72,813          |
| 2025 | January   | 87,174         | 74,957    | 6,914   | 540,820 | 127,193               | 6.4                     | 8.4%        | 81,871          |
| 2025 | February  | 79,442         | 76,002    | 7,847   | 531,595 | 129,981               | 6.4                     | 9.4%        | 83,849          |
| 2025 | March     | 96,982         | 83,989    | 8,034   | 538,903 | 128,946               | 6.4                     | 8.7%        | 92,023          |
| 2025 | April     | 93,866         | 88,488    | 8,604   | 535,141 | 118,459               | 6.4                     | 8.9%        | 97,092          |
| 2025 | May       | 84,238         | 82,102    | 7,488   | 530,238 | 118,829               | 6.1                     | 8.4%        | 89,590          |
| 2025 | June      | 80,259         | 70,704    | 7,105   | 532,310 | 112,551               | 6.5                     | 9.1%        | 77,809          |
| 2025 | July      | 80,119         | 72,334    | 7,743   | 532,052 | 110,789               | 6.4                     | 9.7%        | 80,077          |
| 2025 | August    | 76,056         | 71,866    | 7,057   | 528,842 | 113,954               | 6.4                     | 8.9%        | 78,923          |
| 2025 | September | 87,903         | 71,181    | 7,198   | 537,769 | 118,313               | 6.7                     | 9.2%        | 78,379          |
| 2025 | October   | 169,159        | 58,692    | 6,852   | 641,468 | 130,810               | 6.7                     | 10.5%       | 65,544          |
| 2025 | November  | 41,478         | 48,691    | 6,173   | 627,819 | 146,852               | 6.7                     | 11.3%       | 54,864          |
| 2025 | December  | 42,569         | 42,512    | 5,168   | 622,664 | 168,881               | 6.8                     | 10.8%       | 47,680          |
| 2026 | January   | 46,385         | 32,862    | 4,970   | 630,860 | 198,235               | 7.8                     | 13.1%       | 37,832          |
| 2026 | February  | 44,508         | 23,626    | 4,462   | 647,193 | 234,728               | 7.9                     | 15.9%       | 28,088          |
| 2026 | March     | 49,630         | 26,868    | 5,424   | 663,951 | 282,227               | 8.6                     | 16.8%       | 32,292          |
| 2026 | April     | 47,630         | 22,560    | 5,009   | 683,960 | 419,201               | 9.5                     | 18.2%       | 27,569          |
| 2026 | May       | 49,534         | 17,038    | 3,757   | 712,572 | 441,362               | 10.1                    | 18.1%       | 20,795          |

Source: USCIS "FY22 Appropriations Reporting Requirement - Application Processing Data" for months in 2024, 2025 and 2026; National Foundation for American Policy (additional calculations). Average processing time in months.

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*Naturalization Trends*

The proposed rule also ends hardship waivers and reduced fees for low-income applicants. DHS and USCIS claim ending the waivers should be welcome because it will benefit USCIS, even though fewer people will be able to afford the filing fees to become citizens: “DHS anticipates this proposed rule would produce a qualitative benefit for USCIS by substantially reducing resources that would have been expended on adjudicating and processing fee waiver and reduced fee requests.”<sup>3</sup>

## A NEW CIVICS TEST

In 2025, USCIS introduced a new [civics test](#). Individuals filing Form N-400 on or after October 20, 2025, would need to answer correctly 12 of (up to) 20 questions from an increased pool of 128 questions, compared to 6 of 10 questions from a pool of 100 questions under the prior test.

## DENIAL RATES HAVE DOUBLED

The denial rates for naturalization have more than doubled under Trump. According to a National Foundation for American Policy analysis, the denial rate for Form N-400 increased from 8.3% to 18.1% between May 2024 and May 2026. The denial rate for naturalization rose from 9.2% in September 2025 to 13.1% by January 2026 and reached 18.2% in April 2026.<sup>4</sup> (See Table 2 for additional data for the past three years.)

**Table 3**  
**N-400 Naturalization Form Denial Rates: May 2024 to May 2026**

| N-400 Naturalization Form | Denial Rate |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| May 2024                  | 8.3%        |
| May 2026                  | 18.1%       |

Source: USCIS “FY22 Appropriations Reporting Requirement - Application Processing Data” for months in 2024 and 2026; National Foundation for American Policy.

Whether higher denial rates for naturalization are linked to the new civics test for applicants filing on or after October 20 is not known, given the lag time between filing an application and scheduling the test is typically several months. Individuals who fail a civics test can schedule a second attempt, usually in 60 to 90 days. A successful retest would not be recorded as a denial.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> USCIS “FY22 Appropriations Reporting Requirement - Application Processing Data” for months in 2024, 2025 and 2026, additional NFAP calculations.

## **SLOW PROCESSING AND A LARGER BACKLOG**

USCIS is processing far fewer naturalization applications each month under the Trump administration than in the Biden years. The number of naturalization applications processed fell by 75% (from 83,317 to 20,795) between May 2024 and May 2026, according to an NFAP analysis. (See Table 2.)

The naturalization backlog has grown significantly even though fewer people are applying for naturalization. Between January and May 2026, USCIS received an average of approximately 47,500 N-400 forms, compared to about 89,350 for January to May 2024, a drop of nearly half. However, the number of N-400 forms pending for over six months has more than doubled from 198,235 to 441,362 between January and May 2026.

USCIS has defended the changes to naturalization, including employing “neighborhood” investigations. “Naturalization is a privilege, and the new test reinforces the integrity of the naturalization process by ensuring that new citizens understand the rights and responsibilities that come with this privilege,” according to a December 2025 press release. “Pursuant to long-neglected statutory authority, USCIS also restored the practice of conducting neighborhood investigations of potential new citizens. The purpose of a neighborhood investigation is to verify aliens’ eligibility for naturalization by reviewing their residency, moral character, loyalty to the U.S. Constitution, and commitment to the nation’s well-being.”<sup>5</sup>

## **A PUSH ON DENATURALIZATION**

In June 2025, a [memo](#) listed “prioritizing denaturalization” as one of the Department of Justice’s top five priorities. “The Department of Justice may institute civil proceedings to revoke a person’s United States citizenship if an individual either ‘illegally procured’ naturalization or procured naturalization by ‘concealment of a material fact or by willful misrepresentation,’” according to the Justice Department memo.

According to the [New York Times](#), the administration’s guidance issued to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices asked them to “supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalization cases per month” in FY 2026. That would represent a significant increase. TRAC [reports](#), “While historically the federal government brought an average of less than 1 denaturalization civil lawsuit per month (or just 0.6), at least 15 denaturalization complaints were filed in May 2026.”

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/making-america-safe-again-us-citizenship-and-immigration-services-end-of-year-review-demonstrates>.

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### *Naturalization Trends*

Attorneys note that people with criminal convictions face the greatest risk of denaturalization. “If you get convicted of a crime after you have naturalized, and the facts supporting the indictment or charges go back before you naturalized, that would be grounds to denaturalize the person for either failure to maintain good moral character within the relevant five-year period or for not truthfully answering the question on the N-400 on whether you committed a crime for which you were not charged or arrested,” said immigration attorney Cyrus Mehta.<sup>6</sup>

The Trump administration has not attempted to strip citizenship in employment-based immigration cases. “I still have not seen the Trump administration try to denaturalize citizens for what they may perceive as irregularities in the labor certification process such as not conducting a good faith test of the labor market or where the business necessity justification may not have been present,” said Mehta. “This is because the government has a heavy burden. In *Maslenjak v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the federal government cannot strip a naturalized citizen of their U.S. citizenship for making a false statement unless the lie directly influenced the procurement of that citizenship.”<sup>7</sup>

“A targeted campaign to strip people of citizenship threatens to erode public confidence in the stability of their citizenship status,” [according to](#) the American Immigration Lawyers Association. “By casting doubt on the finality of naturalization, the Administration discourages eligible individuals from pursuing the process and dissuades citizens from fully engaging in civic life. Over time, this erosion of trust will weaken democratic participation and democracy.”

## **CONCLUSION**

Attorneys and advocates for immigrants remain concerned about the impact of the administration’s naturalization and denaturalization policies. “Recent proposed and finalized policy changes to the naturalization process add significant hurdles for lawful permanent residents seeking to fully embrace America by obtaining U.S. citizenship,” said Jennie Murray, president and CEO of the National Immigration Forum, in a statement. “Concerningly, they are seeking to raise application fees and introduce mechanisms that could enable discretionary denials of citizenship, potentially undermining the fairness, transparency and integrity of the naturalization system. Implementing these changes will likely result in fewer applications, longer processing times and further delays for applicants.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stuart Anderson, “Trump Immigration Policies Make It Harder To Get And Keep Citizenship,” *Forbes*, July 29, 2026.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN POLICY

Established in 2003, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia, focusing on trade, immigration and related issues. Advisory Board members include Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Cornell Law School professor Stephen W. Yale-Loehr, Ohio University economist Richard Vedder and former INS Commissioner James Ziglar. Over the past 24 months, NFAP's research has been written about in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other major media outlets. The organization's reports can be found at [www.nfap.com](http://www.nfap.com). X.com: [@NFAPResearch](https://twitter.com/NFAPResearch) Bluesky: [@NFAPResearch.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/NFAPResearch.bsky.social)