



What Is Citizenship?

Citizenship is membership in a governed community. This membership comes with a set of privileges, freedoms, and duties, which varies according to the nation's form of government.

A person may acquire citizenship in different ways:

- “By blood” if born to parents who are already citizens of a nation
- “By soil” if born within the legal borders of a nation
- Through naturalization
- Through naturalization of parents

A citizen is a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a specific nation and is entitled to its government's protection. A **subject** is a citizen ruled by a sovereign authority, such as a monarch, and is required to show loyalty to both the ruling authority and the nation.

Ultimately, the quality of citizenship depends on the balance between what a government does for the people and what it expects of them in return.

United States Citizenship

Under most forms of government, citizens are obligated to obey the law, pay taxes, and serve in the armed forces; the government is obligated to provide physical safety, public services, and protection of property. In the United States, the government must protect other rights and freedoms as well:

- Right to vote
- Right to a fair trial
- Right to bear arms
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of the press

Naturalization is the legal process by which an **alien**, or foreign-born person, becomes a citizen.

The Declaration of Independence is a unique contract between citizens and government: “. . . Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the *consent of the governed*. . . .”

In a sense, a citizen’s duties are built into these rights and freedoms. The right to a free trial, for example, obligates U.S. citizens to serve on juries. The right to vote obligates them to be informed about important issues and the candidates’ positions. Because the government rules with the consent of the citizens, Americans must understand and exercise their constitutional rights—or risk losing them.



In the United States, serving on a jury when called is a civic duty; it is also one way that the right to a free trial is protected.

Permanent Residence

U.S. citizens live in an open society where it is safe to think out loud. We freely express our opinions, exchange ideas, and even disagree in public. But in some nations, people are not allowed to do so.

Modern communications such as electronic mail and global broadcasting have advanced the spread of American popular culture. Through advertising, music, and movies shown worldwide, as well as humanitarian outreach efforts and international trade, people in most countries no longer have to depend on



Many people who immigrate to the United States do so for political and religious freedom.

their government for information about the world beyond their own borders. Now they can find out for themselves about what it is like to live in the United States.

People **emigrate**, or leave their own countries to settle elsewhere, for various reasons including fear of persecution, the desire to be reunited with family, and the opportunity to better themselves economically. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, under the direction of the Department of Homeland Security, issues **immigrant visas** to qualified **foreign nationals**, or aliens, who wish to become lawful permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States.

As an LPR, an immigrant enjoys certain rights, including the right to

- Stay in the United States indefinitely.
- Have a job.
- Sponsor certain family members for immigration.

An LPR must pay taxes but may not vote. Only citizens have that right. Many people who choose to become U.S. citizens want to fully participate in American society, elect government leaders, and have a voice in domestic and foreign policies.

An **immigrant visa** is an identification card that allows a nonnative person to stay in the United States permanently.

OMB No. 1615-0021; Expires 09/30/08

**I-485, Application to Register
Permanent Residence or Adjust Status**

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

START HERE - Please type or print in black ink.

Part 1. Information about you.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Family Name | | Given Name | Middle Name |
| Address- C/O | | | |
| Street Number and Name | | Apt. # | |
| City | | | |
| State | | Zip Code | |
| Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) | Country of Birth: | | |
| U.S. Social Security # | | A # (if any) | |
| Date of Last Arrival (mm/dd/yyyy) | I-94 # | | |
| Current USCIS Status | Expires on (mm/dd/yyyy) | | |

Part 2. Application type. (Check one.)

I am applying for an adjustment to permanent resident status because:

- an immigrant petition giving me an immediately available immigrant visa number has been approved. (Attach a copy of the approval notice, or a relative, special immigrant juvenile or special immigrant military visa petition filed with this application that will give you an immediately available visa number, if approved.)
- my spouse or parent applied for adjustment of status or was granted lawful permanent residence in an immigrant visa category that allows derivative status for spouses and children.
- I entered as a K-1 fiancé(e) of a United States citizen whom I married within 90 days of entry, or I am the K-2 child of such a fiancé(e). (Attach a copy of the fiancé(e) petition approval notice and the marriage certificate).
- I was granted asylum or derivative asylum status as the spouse or child of a person granted asylum and am eligible for adjustment.
- I am a native or citizen of Cuba admitted or paroled into the United States after January 1, 1959, and thereafter have been physically present in the United States for at least one year.
- I am the husband, wife or minor unmarried child of a Cuban described above in (e) and I am residing with that person, and was admitted or paroled into the United States after January 1, 1959, and thereafter have been physically present in the United States for at least one year.
- I have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 1972.
- Other basis of eligibility. Explain (for example, I was admitted as a refugee, my status has not been terminated, and I have been physically present in the U.S. for one year after admission). If additional space is needed, use a separate piece of paper.

I am already a permanent resident and am applying to have the date I was granted permanent residence adjusted to the date I originally arrived in the United States as a nonimmigrant or parolee, or as of May 2, 1964, whichever date is later, and: (Check one.)

- I am a native or citizen of Cuba and meet the description in (e) above.
- I am the husband, wife or minor unmarried child of a Cuban, and meet the description in (f) above.

Form I-485 (Rev. 07/30/07) Y

To apply for U.S. residency, an immigrant must complete the I-485 form, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, and submit many required supporting documents.

Naturalization

An applicant for citizenship must have a valid immigrant visa, must have fulfilled residency requirements, must be prepared to demonstrate an understanding of the English language, and must know the basics of the United States's history and how its government works.

After satisfying the examiner at the naturalization interview and passing the English and civics tests, an immigrant must take the oath of allegiance. The applicant swears to

- Support the Constitution and obey the laws of the United States.
- Renounce, or give up, any foreign allegiance.
- Bear arms for the armed forces of the United States or perform services for the United States government when required.

After taking the oath, the immigrant receives a certificate of naturalization, which is proof of U.S. citizenship. Then he or she may apply for a U.S. passport.

Becoming an official U.S. citizen is a long and difficult process requiring life-changing decisions and actions. Immigrants who do this know *why* they want to live in the United States and take nothing for granted. They may know more about U.S. government and history than people whose families have been citizens for generations.

World Citizenship

Nations are like stand-alone colored tiles, each with its own design. Each one has a beauty all its own, resulting from combinations of elements including ethnic customs, social values, language, religion, and legal systems. Together, nations form a complex pattern—a world mosaic.

Each person is not only a citizen of his or her nation, but also a citizen of the world. As such, we all have a responsibility to respect cultural diversity and the rights of other governments. For the sake of international security, we must understand



a nation's relationship to other nations, as well as its citizens' relationship to one another. Then we must cooperate for the good of all.

The United Nations and other international organizations track information about how countries care for their citizens. In a rich nation where the wealth is not concentrated in the hands of a few, citizens can expect to live a long and healthy life, get educated, exercise equal rights under the law, and access resources needed for a decent standard of living.

In poor countries, citizens tend to die younger due to malnutrition, preventable diseases, and civil war. The people have little access to good health care, safe drinking water, education, paved roads, electricity, and communication with the world beyond their villages.

Gross domestic product, or GDP, is the monetary value of all final goods (such as cars, clothing, and houses) and services (such as dog grooming, concert tickets, and doctor visits) produced within a country in a specific period of time. A large GDP per person generally indicates a high standard of living and better quality of life. Although GDP is considered the best measure of a nation's economic health, it doesn't accurately reflect the distribution of income among the country's population.

When we judge how other nations respect or violate values such as freedom, equality, justice, privacy, and human dignity, we must judge our own national character as well. How well do we deal with racism, sexism, and cultural bias inside and outside our borders? Being a good world citizen requires speaking out and taking action against violations of human rights.

Most democratic governments consider **suffrage** (the right to vote) a right of citizenship. Many think that participation in elections is a civic responsibility. Some think it is a duty and make voting **compulsory**, or required. Nonvoters may be penalized or fined. Do you think forcing citizens to vote will yield election results that reflect the will of the people?

Comparison of Nations in Terms of Economic Well-Being and Quality of Life

| Country | Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Person | Suffrage | Adult Literacy Rate | Internet Users | Life Expectancy From Birth | Infant Mortality Rate |
|---------------|---|--|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| United States | \$41,890 | Universal (men and women), 18 years of age | 99 percent | 630 of every 1,000 people | 78 years | 6 deaths out of 1,000 live births |
| Kuwait | \$26,321 | Adult males who have been naturalized for 30+ years—or have resided in Kuwait since before 1920—and their male descendants at age 21 | 93 percent | 276/1,000 | 77 years | 9/1,000 |
| Thailand | \$8,677 | Universal and compulsory, 18 years of age | 93 percent | 110/1,000 | 70 years | 18/1,000 |
| Guatemala | \$4,568 | Universal, 18 years of age (active-duty members of the armed forces may not vote and are restricted to barracks on election day) | 69 percent | 79/1,000 | 70 years | 32/1,000 |
| Nigeria | \$1,128 | Universal, 18 years of age | 69 percent | 38/1,000 | 47 years | 100/1,000 |

Source: Human Development Report 2007, United Nations. Based on data from 2005.