

Healthcare Equity Glossary – Citizenship Status

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Acquired Citizenship: Citizenship at birth for children born in foreign countries whose parent(s) are U.S. citizen(s).

Age-Dependency Ratio: The ratio of economically dependent people (defined as under age 15 or over age 64) to economically productive people (ages 15-64) in a given population. Also known as the dependency ratio.

Alien: Any person who is not a United States citizen

Amnesty: A pardon, or legal forgiveness, granted for an offense such as entering a country illegally.

Anchor Babies: A child born in the United States to illegal immigrants or other non-citizens. The term "anchor" refers to the fact that the child's U.S. citizenship may provide a means for the rest of the family to stay in the United States or, more commonly, to return to the United States as immigrants after the child reaches adulthood.

Asylee: One of the six legal immigrant categories, an asylee is an alien either in the United States or applying to enter at a U.S. port of entry who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution, or because of a well-founded fear of persecution. If the alien does not have a nationality, the country of nationality is the last country in which she habitually resided. The persecution or fear thereof can be based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. After one year in the United States, asylees are admissible for [permanent resident](#) status. Although there is no limit on the number of people who may be granted asylum protection in any year, asylee admissions for permanent residence are limited to 10,000 per fiscal year.

Asylum: The protection that countries grant to refugees.

Asylum-seekers: People who file an application for asylum in a country other than their country of nationality. They remain asylum-seekers until their application is considered and decided, at which point they either become asylees or are excluded, usually on the basis that their asylum claims are fraudulent.

Baby Boom: A dramatic post-World War II increase in fertility and birth rates in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Between 1946 and 1964, 76 million American babies were born.

Birth Rate: The number of live births per 1,000 people in the population within a given year. Not to be confused with the growth rate.

Birthright Citizenship: See [anchor babies](#).

Brain Drain: The emigration of a large proportion of highly skilled and educated professionals, usually from a developing country to a developed country offering better social and economic opportunities.

Cancellation of Removal: Done at the discretion of an immigration judge, a cancellation of removal changes an alien's status from "deportable" to "lawfully admitted for permanent residence." Cancellation of removal may be applied for during a hearing before an immigration judge.

Carrying Capacity: The maximum population that a given area can sustain indefinitely, determined by the level of resource consumption and waste production that can be maintained without damaging functionality of the area's ecosystem.

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Census: A canvassing or survey of a given area's population, the purpose of which is to compile data on the demographics, economics, and social information pertaining to that population at that time. In the United States, a nationwide census is taken every ten years.

Citizenship: The rights and responsibilities that a person has as a result of being born or naturalized in a country.

Demography: The study of human populations, their sizes, compositions, distributions, densities, growth, and other characteristics. Also the study of change in these characteristics, and the causes and effects of such change.

Demographic Transition: A term describing the decline of birth and death rates. The decline of the mortality rate in a population generally precedes the decline of the birth rate, resulting in a transition period with high population growth.

Dependents: Immediate relatives of a migrant, usually defined as spouse and minor children. Dependents are usually admitted in the same immigration category as the principal migrant.

Dependency Ratio: The ratio of economically dependent people (defined as under 15 or over 64) to economically productive people (ages 15-64) in a given population. Also known as the age-dependency ratio.

Deportation: Formally removing an alien from the United States for violating the immigration laws. An immigration judge must find the alien removable and order deportation. Before April 1997, deportation and exclusion were separate procedures for removing an alien; the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 consolidated these two procedures.

Diplomats and Consular Personnel: People working in a foreign country, under a diplomatic permit, for their country's embassy or consulate. Also refers to citizens traveling abroad under diplomatic passports in order to work for their country's embassies or consulates.

Diversity Visa Program: *See lottery admissions.*

Domestic Migration: The process of moving within a given country, but across subdividing boundaries, with the intent of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence. In the United States, domestic migration generally refers to movement from one state to another.

Doubling Time: The number of years it takes for the population of a given area to double its present size, assuming the current population growth rate holds constant.

Ecological Footprint: The land and water required to support the living standards of a given population.

Emigration: The process of leaving one country to take up permanent or semi-permanent residence in another country. See also immigration.

Employer Sanctions: A provision of the Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986 which prohibits employers from hiring, recruiting, or referring for a fee aliens who they know are unauthorized to work in the United States. Violators of the law can face civil fines for violations or criminal penalties when there is a pattern of violations.

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Employment-based: One of the six legal immigrant categories, employment-based immigrants are workers, professionals, or investors admitted to the U.S. as immigrants on the basis of their productive abilities or sponsorship by a prospective employer.

Exclusion: Denial of an alien's entry into the United States, based on inadmissibility. Prior to April 1997, the decision to exclude an alien was made by an immigration judge after a hearing. Since April 1997, deciding whether or not to exclude an alien may take place in either an expedited removal process or in removal proceedings before an immigration judge.

Expedited Removal: The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 authorized the INS to remove certain inadmissible aliens from the United States without referring them to an immigration judge. These include aliens who enter or attempt to enter the United States without being admitted or paroled by an immigration officer at a port of entry, and aliens who have no entry documents, or used counterfeit, altered, or otherwise improper documents. The INS has the authority to order the removal of these aliens, except in the cases of those who claim legal status in the United States or who demonstrate a credible fear of persecution if returned to their home country.

Family-based: One of the six legal immigrant categories, family-based immigrants are 1) married or unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens, 2) spouses and unmarried children of legal immigrants, or 3) siblings of U.S. citizens.

Fertility Rate: The number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 - 44 (in some cases, aged 15 - 49) in a given year. Also known as the general fertility rate.

Finite Resources: Resources that are limited and irreplaceable, such as oil and coal. There is only a certain amount of these resources, and once used, they cannot be restored.

Foreign-born: People residing in the United States who were not citizens of the United States at birth. This includes legal and illegal immigrants, refugees, students, and temporary workers. *See also native.*

Foreign Students: People admitted by a country not their own, usually under a special permit or visa, for the specific purpose of pursuing a particular course of study in an accredited institution of the receiving country.

General Fertility Rate: The number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 - 44 (in some cases, aged 15 - 49) in a given year. Also known as the fertility rate. Not to be confused with the birth rate.

Growth Rate: The change in the number of people in a given population over a period of time, due to natural increase or decrease and net migration (both domestic and international). Growth rate, or the number of people added to or subtracted from a population, is expressed as a percentage of the population existing at the beginning of the time period.

Illegal Alien: A foreigner who has either entered a country illegally (e.g. without inspection or proper documents) or who has violated the terms of legal admission to the country (e.g. by overstaying the duration of a tourist or student visa).

Immediate Relatives: One of the six legal immigrant categories, immediate relatives are immigrants who are part of the nuclear family of a U.S. citizen. They include spouses, unmarried children under 21 years

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of age, and parents of U.S. citizens who are over 21 years of age. Unlike other immigration categories, there is no limit on the number of immediate relatives allowed to enter the U.S. each year.

Immigrant: Commonly, permanent resident aliens and those who have been naturalized as U.S. citizens are referred to as immigrants. However, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except those legally admitted specifically as nonimmigrants (such as foreign students). An illegal alien is not a permanent resident alien, but would be an immigrant under the INA's definition.

Immigration: The process of entering one country from another to take up permanent or semi-permanent residence. See also emigration.

Immigration Act of 1990: An act passed on November 29, 1990 that increased the quotas for legal immigration to the United States and revised the grounds for exclusion and deportation. This act also granted temporary protected status (TPS) to aliens from certain countries, revised nonimmigrant admission categories and established new ones, revised and extended the Visa Waiver Pilot Program, and revised naturalization requirements.

Immigration Categories: The majority of legal immigration into the United States is classified into six immigration categories - immediate relatives, family-based, employment-based, refugees, asylees, and lottery admissions. The different categories have different yearly quotas and admission requirements.

Immigration Judge: An attorney who is appointed by the Attorney General to act as a judge in the Executive Office for Immigration Review. These judges conduct specified classes of proceedings, including immigration hearings and removal proceedings.

Immigration and Nationality Act (INA): This Act of October 3, 1965 abolished national origin and race as criteria restricting for immigration to the United States, and replaced this national origins quota system with a first-come, first served basis, with preference for relatives of U.S. citizens and for people with special occupational skills needed in the U.S. It also established the category of immediate relatives as numerically unrestricted.

Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS): No longer in existence, the INS was until recently the bureau for all immigration-related matters. First formed under the Treasury Department, it was moved to the Department of Labor in 1913 and to the Department of Justice in 1940. In 2003, its functions were divided into several smaller bureaus, overseen by the Department of Homeland Security.

Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986: An Act passed November 6, 1986, its main purpose was to control and deter illegal immigration into the United States. It provides for legalization of illegal aliens who had been continuously present in the United States since 1982 or who had worked in agricultural labor, penalties for employers who knowingly hire aliens unauthorized to work in the United States, and increased enforcement at U.S. borders.

Immigration Rate: The number of immigrants arriving in a given country per 1,000 people already in that country in a given year.

In-migration: The process of entering a country or a subdivision of a country from another with the intent of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence. See also out-migration.

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Inadmissible: The status of an alien at a United States port of entry who does not meet the legal criteria for admission. The person may be placed in removal proceedings, or in some cases, may be allowed to withdraw his or her application for admission.

International Migration: The process of moving from one country to another with the intent of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence.

Intracompany Transferee: An alien who has been employed by an international firm or corporation for a year (or six months in some cases) in the last three years, and who seeks to enter the United States temporarily in order to continue working for the same employer or a subsidiary or affiliate of the original employer. He or she must be employed in a capacity that is primarily managerial or executive or involves specialized knowledge. The term also refers to the alien's spouse and minor unmarried children.

Labor Certification: A certification required before U.S. employers can hire an alien who would immigrate to the United States on the basis of his or her occupational skills. Also required before employers can hire nonimmigrant temporary workers for special services that no authorized worker in the United States can be found to provide. This certification is issued by the Department of Labor and is based on labor availability at the time and location where the applicant for immigration would like to work. The certificate also requires employers to attest that the alien will be compensated at the prevailing wage and the job has been open to U.S. workers.

Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR): Any person who is not a United States citizen or national, but who is permanently residing in the U.S. legally, as a lawfully recorded permanent immigrant. Also referred to as an immigrant, permanent resident, permanent resident alien, resident alien permit holder, and green card holder.

Legalized Aliens: The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 provided amnesty to certain illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants who have resided in the United States continuously since January 1, 1982, who are not excludable, and who entered the U.S. either illegally or as a temporary visitor whose visa expired before January 1, 1982, are eligible for these benefits. They also must demonstrate at least a minimal knowledge of the English language and of U.S. history and government. These illegal immigrants were legalized first as temporary residents, then as permanent residents.

Lottery Admissions: One of the six legal immigrant categories, lottery admissions are immigrants from countries considered underrepresented in the flow of immigrants to the U.S. The program distributes 55,000 visas each year by lottery. This program is also known as the diversity visa program.

Metropolitan Area: Commonly, an area with more than 100,000 residents is referred to as a metropolitan area. Typically, the area consists of an important city (50,000 or more residents) and bordering communities that are socially and economically integrated with the city.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): The U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines a MSA as a core area with at least 50,000 residents and bordering communities which are socially and economically integrated with the central city. Larger metropolitan areas are termed Primary MSAs, or PMSAs. Metropolitan areas made up of more than one PMSA and with with one million or more residents may be recognized as Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs). The county-based alternative for the New England states is known as New England County Metropolitan Areas (NECMAs).

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Migrant: A person who moves within a country or who leaves his or her country of origin in order to seek permanent or semi-permanent residence in another country.

Migrant worker: A person who moves within a country or who leaves his or her country of origin in order to seek employment in another country.

Migration: The process of moving across a boundary in order to take up permanent or semi-permanent residence. Migration is categorized into international migration (from one country to another) and domestic migration (within one country, but across a subdividing boundary).

National: A synonym for citizen.

National Origins Quota System: A system of quotas for immigrants, established by the Immigration Act of 1924, which used national origin, race, and ancestry as basis for limiting immigration to the United States. Under this quota system, the number of immigrants from any particular country allowed into the United States each year was based on the number of immigrants from that country already residing in the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished this system of quotas.

Native: People residing in the United States who are United States citizens. Natives of the U.S. fall into three categories: people born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, people born in United States Insular Areas such as Puerto Rico or Guam, and people who were born abroad but have at least one parent who is a U.S. citizen.

Naturalized citizen: An immigrant who has been sworn in as a U.S. citizen.

Naturalization: The process of conferring citizenship upon a person after his or her birth, by any means.

Naturalization Application: The form used by a lawful permanent resident to apply for U.S. citizenship. The application used to be filed with the INS district office presiding over the applicant's place of residence; it is now filed with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Natural Increase (or Decrease): The number of births in a given population, minus the number of deaths in that population, within a given time period.

Negative Population Growth: When a population is decreasing. Negative population growth occurs when the number of births plus the number of immigrants into a population is less than the number of deaths plus the number of emigrants leaving that population, within a given time period.

Net Migration: The net effect of immigration and emigration on a population, expressed as either an increase or a decrease.

Net Migration Rate: The net effect of immigration and emigration on a population, expressed as an increase or decrease per 1,000 people in the population, in a given year.

Nonimmigrant: An alien who seeks temporary entry to the United States for a specific purpose. He or she must have a permanent residence abroad (for some classifications, this is not necessary) and qualify for the nonimmigrant classification sought. The classifications include: foreign government officials, visitors for business and for pleasure, aliens in transit through the United States, treaty traders and investors,

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foreign students, international representatives, temporary workers and trainees, representatives of foreign information media, exchange visitors, fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, intracompany transferees, religious workers, and some others. Most nonimmigrants can be accompanied by spouses and unmarried minor (or dependent) children.

Nuclear family: The spouses and children of a particular family.

Optimum population size: The size at which a population as a whole enjoys the highest standard of life.

Out-migration: The process of leaving a country or a subdivision of a country for another with the intent of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence.

Overpopulation: When an area's population has exceeded its carrying capacity. When an area is overpopulated, the level of resource consumption necessary to maintain the population will affect the capacity of the area to support future populations.

Permanent Resident: Any person who is not a United States citizen or national, but who is permanently residing in the U.S. legally, as a lawfully recorded permanent immigrant. Also referred to as a lawful permanent resident, immigrant, permanent resident alien, resident alien permit holder, and green card holder.

Population Density: The number of people per unit of land. For example, people per square mile.

Population Increase: A positive growth rate for a population, occurring when the number of births plus the number of immigrants entering the population is greater than the number of deaths plus the number of emigrants leaving the population. See also growth rate.

Population Momentum: The phenomenon whereby a population, even if it is below replacement-level fertility, will nonetheless continue to increase. This is due to the usual age distribution of a population, with many people in their child-bearing years and fewer older people.

Population Policy: Measures instituted by a government, either implicit or explicit, for the purpose of influencing population size, growth rate, distribution, or composition. The United States, unlike some other countries, has no population policy.

Population Projection: Computations of future population size, given certain assumptions about the rates of fertility, mortality, and migration. Demographers often issue low, medium, and high projections for the same population, varying the assumptions they make.

Population Stabilization: On a global level, population stabilization is replacement-level fertility, or when the number of births equals the number of deaths. On a local level, population stabilization occurs when the number of births plus the number of immigrants equals the number of deaths plus the number of emigrants.

Port of Entry: A location through which aliens may enter the United States. Any location in the United States or its territories can be designated a port of entry. All immigration service offices are also considered ports, since they are locations of entry for aliens changing to immigrant status.

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Rate of Natural Increase or Decrease: The rate at which a population is increasing or decreasing. Given by the number of births in a given population, minus the number of deaths in that population, expressed as a percentage of the original population.

Refugee: One of the six legal immigrant categories, refugees are aliens who are unable to remain in their country of origin due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees are subject to ceilings by geographic area set annually by the President in consultation with Congress. They are eligible for lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the United States. Refugees differ from asylees in that people outside the United States apply for refugee status, but people already in the United States apply for asylee status.

Refugee Authorized Admissions: The maximum number of refugees allowed to enter the United States in a given fiscal year. As stipulated by the Refugee Act of 1980, the President determines the annual figure after consultations with Congress.

Remittances: Money earned or acquired by immigrants that is sent back to their country of origin. For some developing countries, remittances can form a sizeable chunk of their economy.

Removal: The expulsion of an alien from the United States, based on grounds of either inadmissibility or deportability.

Replacement-level Fertility: A birth rate that equals the level of mortality in a given population, where parents produce exactly enough children to replace themselves.

Resident Alien: Any person who is not a United States citizen or national, but who is residing in the U.S. legally. Resident aliens are categorized into permanent residents, conditional residents, and returning residents.

Safe Haven: Temporary refuge given to migrants who have left their countries of origin because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. This refuge is extended until the migrant can return to his or her country safely or, if necessary, until he or she can find a permanent refuge. In U.S. immigration law, this is termed Temporary Protected Status.

Special Agricultural Workers (SAW): Aliens who had been employed in perishable agricultural products for at least 90 days a year for the three years preceding 1986 were granted eligibility for temporary and then permanent resident status by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Sponsor: A person who brings an immigrant to the United States by petitioning for him or her. Also, a person who completes Form I-864, or the Affidavit of Support.

Sprawl: Dispersed development, typically located outside of compact populations. Characterized by significant land consumption, low population densities in comparison with older communities, automobile dependence by the residents, and fragmented open space.

Sustainability: Meeting the resource needs of the present population without damaging the functionality of the area's ecosystem or its ability to meet the resource needs of future populations.

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Temporary Protected Status (TPS): The legislative basis for granting safe haven in the United States. The Immigration Act of 1990 allows the Attorney General to designate nationals of a particular country as eligible for TPS, if conditions in that country are found to be a danger to personal safety. TPS is granted for six to 18 months initially and may be extended, depending on the situation. Aliens in TPS status receive work permits and are immune from removal proceedings, regardless of whether they legally entered the country.

Temporary Worker: An alien admitted to the United States to work for a temporary period of time.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR): The average number of children that a woman would give birth to in her lifetime, if she conformed exactly to the age-specific fertility rates every year of her childbearing years. This number is also known as "the number of children women are having today."

Tourists: People who do not permanently reside in the country of arrival, and who are in that country under a tourist visa, for purposes of recreation, visits to friends or relatives, health or medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage.

Trafficking: The process of illegally recruiting, coercing, or moving a migrant or prohibited substances across national or state borders. Traffickers are the people who transport migrants and/or drugs and who profit economically or otherwise from their relocation.

Visa Waiver Program: A program established by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, allowing citizens of certain countries on a reciprocal basis who wish to enter the United States under the nonimmigrant classes of visitors to do so without a visa, provided their stay does not exceed 90 days.

Voluntary Departure: The departure of an alien from the United States without an order of removal. This departure may or may not be preceded by a hearing in front of an immigration judge. Voluntary departure concedes removability, but does not bar the alien from seeking entry to the U.S. at a port of entry at any time

Zero Population Growth: A growth rate of zero, at which the number of births plus the number of immigrants exactly equal the number of deaths plus the number of emigrants.