In Their Own Words

Breaking Barriers: The Impact of DACA and TPS on the Social Mobility of Dreamers.

THEDREAM.US

TheDream.US 2024
Alumni Survey Report
June 2024

In partnership with

GOLDEN DOOR SCHOLARS

Mission

TheDream.US

TheDream.US is the nation's largest college and career success program for undocumented immigrant students, having provided more than 10,000 college scholarships to Dreamers attending over 80 partner colleges in 21 states and Washington, D.C. We believe everyone, regardless of where they were born, should have equitable access to a college education, a meaningful career, and opportunities to contribute to the communities they call home.

Golden Door Scholars

Golden Door Scholars exists to permanently disrupt intergenerational poverty and increase diversity in the workforce by setting undocumented students up for high-earning, sustainable careers in STEM, Nursing, and Business. We believe everyone deserves the opportunity for higher education and economic mobility. Immigration status shouldn't determine opportunity. Tenacity and hard work should. With the Golden Door Scholarship, undocumented students invest in their education and define their futures.

2024 Alumni Survey Report

This year's report is the second collaboration between TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars. With a 40% increase in survey participants since the inaugural **2022 Report**, this report provides insight on the post-graduate trajectories of over 2,000 TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni nationwide.

Whether assessed through these statistics and data or the individual stories of our Alumni, this report amplifies the larger significance of a college degree and work authorization on the social mobility of Dreamers.

Our first insights on the growing group of fully undocumented college graduates without work authorization remind us why it is essential to keep advocating for federal and state policy changes. Providing opportunities and supports for Dreamers to more fully participate and contribute to this nation is an urgent call to action. This is especially pressing given the ongoing toll of the legal challenges to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which as our Survey data reflects has had repercussions for those barred from applying to the program in recent years.

The stories and journeys of the Alumni in the report you are about to read, are a testament to their resilience, achievements, and commitment to giving back to their families, communities, and this country they call home.

4,000+

TheDream.US and Golden Door Alumni have graduated from colleges and universities nationwide

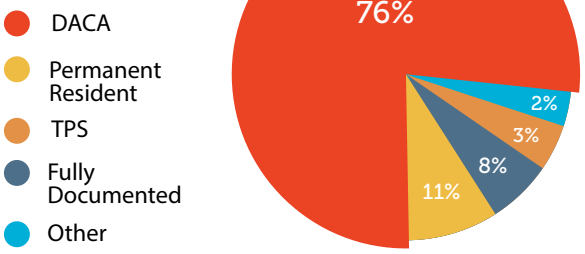
Over 2,000 Alumni graduating from 137 colleges and universities in 29 states and Washington D.C. participated in the 2024 Alumni Survey.

Meet this year's survey participants.

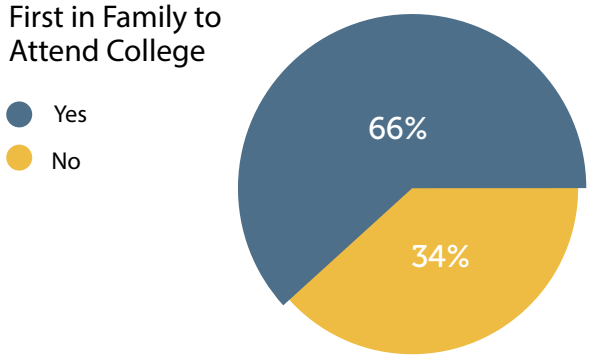
Current Median Age: 26
Median Age of Arrival to the U.S.: 4

Our Alumni have been living in this country for 20 years and consider the U.S. their home.

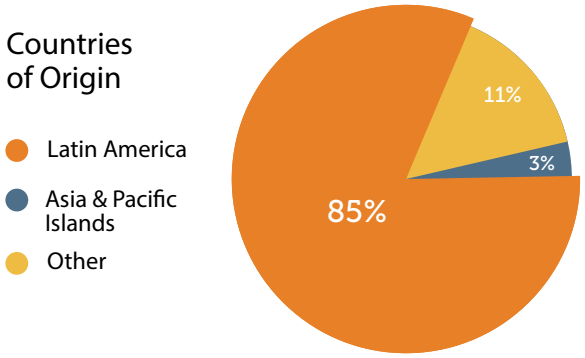
Immigration Status



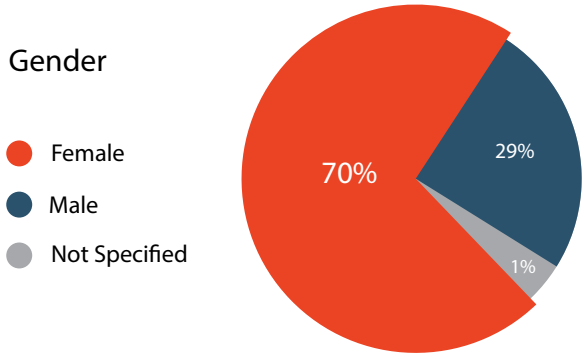
First in Family to Attend College



Countries of Origin



Gender



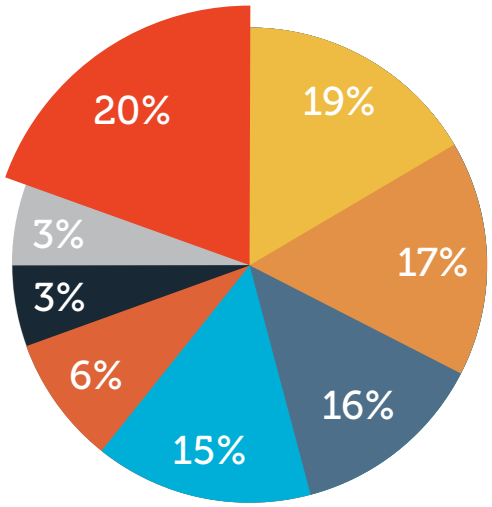
Note: The 2024 Alumni Survey was administered online in February-April, 2024. Data for median age of arrival to the U.S. and countries of origin were available for TheDream.US Alumni Survey participants only.

Dreamers are a vital part of the American workforce, filling critical job shortages across the country

91% of TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni are working and almost all (90%) are working full-time.

Over half of working Alumni are in the fields of Business, Health and Medicine, and Education.

- Business
- Health & Medicine
- Education
- Science, Math & Technology
- Public & Social Services
- Trade & Personal Services
- Arts, Entertainment, and Sports
- Media and Social Sciences



Our Alumni are among the almost 600,000 DACA recipients collectively earning nearly $27.9 billion, paying $9.4 billion in taxes annually and contributing nearly $2.1 billion to Social Security and Medicare each year.

Life has taught me many things, one of them being don't take any opportunity for granted and make the most of it. I have learned to be a risk-taker and find inspiration in the students I teach. I aim for the best and let others know that I can achieve my dreams.

Cecilia Yanes

George Mason University (Spring 2022, Elementary Education) Elementary School Teacher at Fairfax County Public Schools

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Our Alumni are growing their careers as seasoned professionals

1 in 4 TheDeam.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni have now been in the workforce for 5+ years. They are essential talent and emerging leaders in Fortune 500 companies, healthcare, education, and as entrepreneurs strengthening America's economy.

1 in 3 have 1 or more direct reports

1 in 2 are in lower to upper level managerial roles

TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni work at companies including

American Airlines, Apple, moderna, Northwell Health, Bank of America, FedEx, J.P.Morgan, Google, Microsoft, State Farm, Walmart

Other companies include: Accenture, Charles Schwab, Cigna Healthcare, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG LLP, Labcorp, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Asurion, AT&T, PwC, ScribeAmerica, Summit Health, Target, Wells Fargo

"For almost 10 years, I have been pursuing my dream career of being a registered nurse. I have worked as a nurse at a pediatric nursing home, pediatric ICU, PACU, and even COVID ICU. Now I work as a Family Nurse Practitioner at a women's urology clinic. I love taking care of our vulnerable population and it's thanks to my degree and the love and support from my family and friends that I can continue to live my dream!"

Grace Couch

Hunter College (Fall 2015, Nursing)
Family Nurse Practitioner at Northwell Health

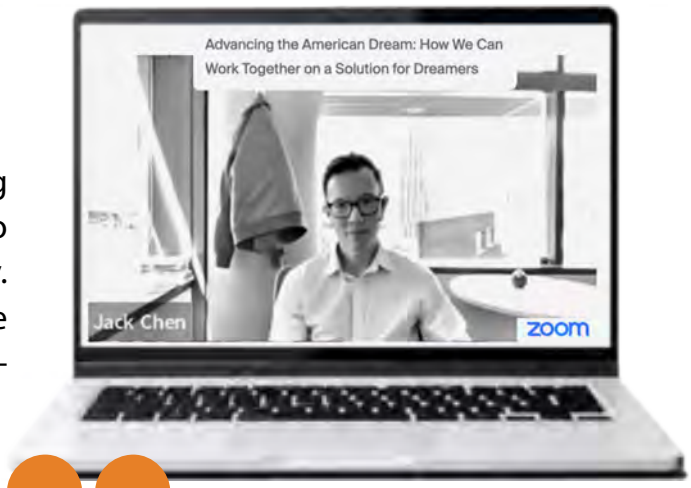
However, as DACA's fate hangs in the Fifth Circuit of Appeals, thousands of our Alumni and their employers are anxious about their futures

TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni are among nearly half a million employees that businesses, educational, and healthcare institutions stand to lose overnight should the DACA program end.

Losing work authorization is the biggest concern for Alumni in achieving their professional goals

Almost all Alumni felt some level of anxiety over the past year about their immigration status

During a recent conversation hosted by National Immigration Forum, Jack Chen, Associate General Counsel for U.S. Immigration at Microsoft said,



> For the folks who are in this situation, the No. 1 thing that they need to have is the constant ability to renew their DACA in the midst of all this uncertainty. For employers, the biggest challenge is going to be the uncertainty of making sure people have continuous work authorization.

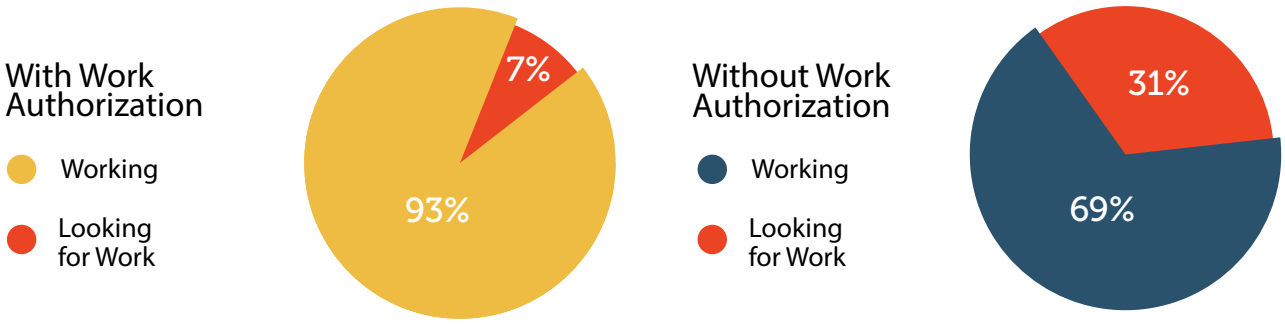
Source: Baptist News Global

It is estimated that $8 billion in business training and recruitment costs could be lost with the loss of DACA employees.

A post-DACA generation of Alumni face new challenges without work authorization

Since our 2022 Alumni Survey Report, the percentage of fully undocumented Alumni without work authorization almost tripled from 3% to 8%.

Although this group is a relatively small portion of the larger Alumni population, it is a rapidly growing one. Our early learnings from their post-graduation outcomes point to the continued toll of the challenges to DACA. Those without work authorization were less likely to be earning an income when compared to those with work authorization.



Fully undocumented Alumni are just as ready to put their degrees to work and need the opportunity to demonstrate their own potential as independent contractors, small business owners, and entrepreneurs. With the right supports, they will join the over 3 million immigrant entrepreneurs in this country.

I embraced entrepreneurship, learning to navigate both its challenges and successes, as a means to overcome the complexities of my undocumented status before having DACA and now as I pursue my Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. I envision a future where I harmoniously blend entrepreneurship and counseling to uplift and empower those around me.

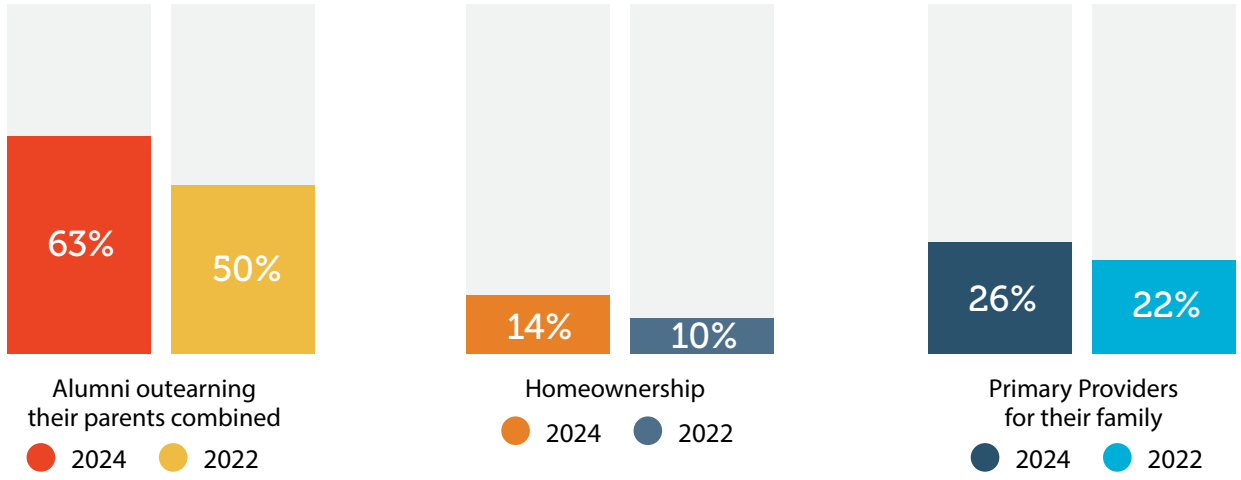
Nestor Vazquez

University of North Texas at Dallas
(Spring 2020, Psychology)
Entrepreneur and Mental Health Advocate

Regardless, with their college degree, Dreamers are breaking barriers and achieving social mobility

With several years of professional experience, TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars' Alumni are seeing steady gains in their quality of living and family lives over time.

Social mobility outcomes over the years



In my early teens, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, I knew that I wanted to work in the financial services industry. I understood then, that higher education would pave my way. Years later, I graduated from a prestigious economics program, now thriving as a consultant for global financial institutions. This is a testament to the power of education and dreams nurtured by resilience, supported by community, and fueled by relentless determination. There was no blueprint, so I created my own, leaving behind a framework for others to follow.

Leida Cisneros

Emory University
(Spring 2021, Economics and Latin American and Caribbean Studies)
Business Strategy Consultant at Deloitte

Reflections on more than a decade of DACA

There is no denying that education is a key driver of social mobility, economic advancement, and empowerment, particularly for underserved communities. Despite this, there is a long tradition of communities having to fight for access and inclusion. Landmark legal cases like Mendez v. Westminster in 1947, which challenged the segregation of Mexican-American students in California, and Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, which declared segregated schools unconstitutional, have paved the way for progress in dismantling institutional barriers.

At TheDream.US, we believe that everyone, regardless of where they were born, should have equitable access to a college education, a meaningful career, and opportunities to contribute to the communities they call home. And we view policies such as DACA and TPS as standing up for the civil rights tradition of integration, protection of the most vulnerable, and equitable access to education for all. The transformative impact of these policies, along with programs like TheDream.US and Golden Door Scholars, is not just evident in our data, but in the lives of our students, who are now pursuing their dreams and making a difference in their communities.

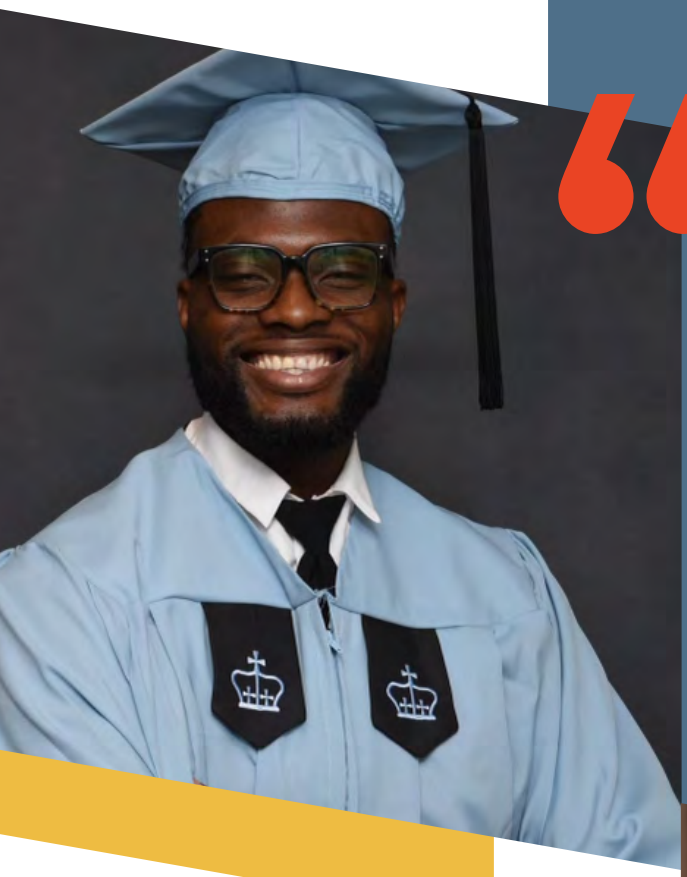
As we reflect on more than a decade since the inception of DACA in 2012 and the establishment of TheDream.US in 2014, these initiatives have been instrumental in unleashing the potential of first-generation immigration students. They have provided opportunities for temporary legal status and new avenues toward college and career success, showcasing the power of how education and public policy can help overcome systemic barriers. The resilience and determination of these Dreamers, in the face of such challenges, are truly inspiring.

However, despite these successes, uncertainty looms over the future of Dreamers with and without DACA. Reflect that 96% of Alumni reported feeling some level of anxiety about their immigration status this past year and of them, 53% reported increased feelings of anxiety in the past year.

As we celebrate the achievements of our programs and our Alumni, we are reminded of the moral imperative to ensure that all individuals, regardless of immigration status, have the opportunity to fulfill their potential and fully contribute to society. It is our duty, as advocates and supporters of civil rights and immigration reform, to stand up for these individuals and ensure they are not left behind.

Providing opportunities for Dreamers is not merely a policy issue; it is a moral test of our nation's commitment to equality, building on some of America's proudest civil rights and social justice legacies.

We must ask ourselves what kind of nation we want to be: one that empowers the best and brightest within its nation? Or one that squanders potential in favor of inaction? And if we chose the first, then we must continue our demand that elected leaders once and for all pass bipartisan legislation that ensures equal opportunities for all Dreamers to become full citizens and fully contribute to the nation they have long called home.



I am committed to applying my experience and leadership in higher education and the non-profit sector to advocate for change. At the same time, as I reflect on the barriers I continue to face as a DACA recipient in achieving my goals, I am frustrated by the continued uncertainty of my future. I am looking forward to moving on from surviving to thriving.

Azeez Alimi

Lehman College (Spring 2021, Social Work)
Columbia University (Spring 2024, Masters in Social Work) Community Liaison at KAVI | Kings Against Violence Initiative

For Program Inquiries:
Dr. Hyein Lee
Hyein.Lee@thedream.us

For Media Inquiries:
Gaby Pacheco
Gaby@thedream.us

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