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From Undocumented to DACAmented: Impacts of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program

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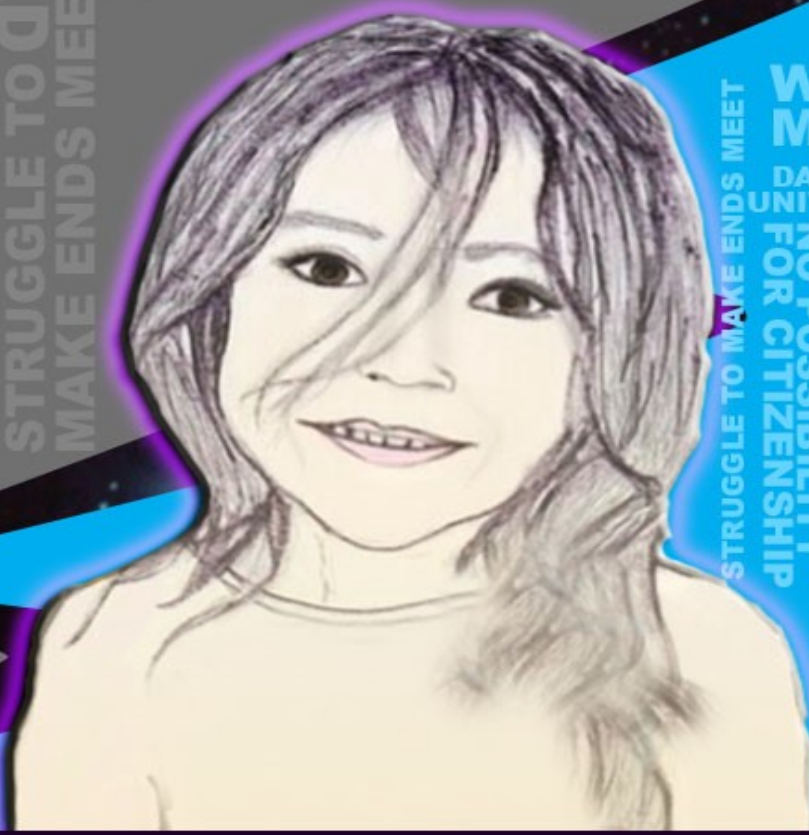
Patler, Caitlin
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UNDOCUMENTED

LOW WAGE JOBS
 NO POSSIBILITY FOR
 CITIZENSHIP
 FEAR OF DEPORTATION
 WHAT ABOUT MY FAMILY?
 NO EQUAL ACCESS
 STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET
 END OF ROAD
 LIVING IN FEAR



ACCESS TO DRIVERS LICENSE AND GOVERNMENT ISSUED ID
 LOW WAGE JOBS
 WHAT ABOUT MY FAMILY?
 DACA IS NOT PERMANENT
 UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE
 STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET
 NO POSSIBILITY FOR CITIZENSHIP
 FEAR OF DEPORTATION
 ACCESS TO FINANCIAL AID
 DACA DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH

DACAMENTED

FROM UNDOCUMENTED TO DACAMENTED

Impacts of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program

Three Years Following its Announcement

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Jorge A. Cabrera, M.A.²

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	8
Demographic Profile	11
Applying for DACA: Challenges and Assistance	13
Educational Outcomes	15
Employment and Socioeconomic Outcomes	20
Health and Healthcare Access	24
Mixed-Status Families	27
In Their Own Words: Changes since DACA	28
Policy Recommendations	31
Methodological Appendix	33
Endnotes and References	34

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Executive Summary

Anounced by the Obama administration in June 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program offers eligible undocumented youth and young adults a reprieve from deportation and temporary work authorization.⁴ An estimated 1.7 million young immigrants are eligible for this program.⁵ DACA is administered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which began accepting applications in August 2012. DACA requires individuals to re-apply every two years and is revocable at any time.⁶ Importantly, DACA is not a formal legal status, nor does it offer a path to permanent residency or citizenship.

This study assesses DACA's impacts on the educational and socioeconomic trajectories and health and wellbeing of young adults in Southern California. We compare individuals who received deferred action from deportation and subsequent work authorization through the DACA program with similarly situated undocumented youth who do not have DACA status.

In total, we surveyed 502 young adults, including 452 DACA recipients, and 50 undocumented youth who had not received DACA. Our survey took place two years after DACA's initiation, with the goal of exploring the longer-term impacts of the program.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Findings from this study indicate that DACA recipients have experienced some educational and economic gains.⁷ However, they still tend to work in low-paying jobs, and report difficulty paying bills and accessing health insurance. In addition, both DACA recipients and non-recipients report increased worry about the deportation of undocumented family members. Our findings suggest that existing policies related to health, education, employment, and immigration may not go far enough in meeting the needs of immigrant youth.

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

- Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents identified as female and 43% identified as male. The average respondent was 24 years old. Over 97% of respondents identified as Latina/o.
- Respondents overwhelmingly come from disadvantaged backgrounds: a full 93% were eligible for free or reduced lunch while in elementary, middle and/or high school.

- More than half of respondents are from households in which neither parent had completed high school. Twenty-five percent of respondents had a parent with a high school degree only and only 10% of parents have a college degree of some kind.
- Ninety-six percent of respondents have immediate family members in the United States.
- Respondents are overwhelmingly from mixed-status families in which members of the same immediate family have different immigration statuses: 70% of respondents have U.S. citizen family members, 44% have Lawful Permanent Resident family members, 53% have DACAmented⁸ family members, 23% have family member(s) with some other type of visa, and 77% have undocumented family members.

APPLYING FOR DACA

- Ninety percent of applicants (n=452) had been approved for DACA and 10% (n=50) had either not applied, were still awaiting a response, or had been rejected.
- Of DACA recipients, the average length of time since initial approval was just under 1.5 years (531 days).
- More than a third of recipients (37%) reported difficulties paying DACA's application fees (\$465 total). Respondents who are currently financially insecure (measured by whether they were unable to pay bills at some point in the last year) are much more likely to report difficulty paying for the application than those who were not financially insecure (49% vs. 26%). Women are more likely than men to report difficulty paying for the application (41% vs. 32%).
- Nearly half (47%) of applicants reported that it was difficult or stressful to gather the documents necessary to apply for DACA. The older the respondent, the more likely they were to report difficulty or stress gathering the necessary documents.
- One in five DACA recipients reported feeling hesitant or unsafe applying for DACA due to worry about revealing their status to the government. The older the respondent, the more likely they were to report feeling unsafe submitting their docu-

- DACA recipients sought help from various sources when preparing and submitting their applications. Over half (56%) had a lawyer review their application. One in three sought advice or assistance with their application from family or friends, 41% looked to the USCIS website for help and 16% turned to Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites.
- Nearly two-thirds of DACA recipients (65%) got advice or assistance on their applications from a community-based organization.

EDUCATION

- More than half of the respondents (57%) had only a high school degree. Nineteen percent had earned an Associate's degree only, and 16% had earned a Bachelor's degree (B.A.) or post-graduate degree.
- The average respondent knew he/she was undocumented by the age of 11, 71% knew by the age of fourteen, and 99% knew by the time they were eighteen years old.
- Fifty-one percent of respondents reported hiding their status from teachers or school personnel during high school, and 54% reported hiding their status from peers.
- Only about 3 of every 5 individuals (58%) knew about California's instate tuition law, A.B. 540⁹ during high school. The numbers are even lower for low-income students: only half of these students knew about A.B. 540 during high school, as opposed to 64% of non-low-income students.
- Students were much more likely to know about the California Dream Act, which provides access to some sources of financial aid to undocumented college students:¹⁰ of those who finished high school after the bills' 2011 passage, 76% were aware of this program.
- While in high school, only three-fifths of respondents (60%) believed it would be possible to attend college, given their legal status. Respondents who did not know about A.B. 540 or the California Dream Act were much less likely to believe there were possibilities to go to college.

- Eighty-seven percent of DACA survey respondents had enrolled in some type of higher education since finishing high school, yet 75% of current students reported difficulty paying for school. Nearly half of the current students in the sample (48%) reported having had to take time off from school apart from breaks and summer vacations.
- Nearly four-fifths of DACA recipients (78%) reported that DACA made it easier to pay for school. Three-quarters of current students said DACA made it easier to attend school and to stay in school.

EMPLOYMENT & SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

- More than four of five survey respondents (82%) reported having a job at the time of the survey. This number was higher for those with DACA than those without it (84% vs. 68%).
- Regardless of DACA status, the vast majority of respondents work in low-wage jobs, with the most common jobs being restaurant work (22% - primarily in fast food), and retail jobs (16%). Only 10% work in professional jobs (such as teachers and accountants). Only 5% of all respondents are members of a labor union.
- The median hourly wage for the sample was \$10.00 per hour.³¹ DACA recipients earned higher wages, reporting average hourly earnings of \$11.47 (vs. \$9.53 for non-recipients). A quarter of the sample reported earning \$9.00 per hour or less.
- Despite high rates of employment, respondents struggled to get by. Nearly half of the sample reported difficulty paying for utilities in the past year, and 44% reported that their income does not cover their monthly expenses.

Household Economic Situation

- Nearly 8 of every 10 respondents reported having to contribute to monthly household expenses. While 65% of DACA recipients reported that their household's overall economic situation had improved since receiving DACA, over a third reported no improvements.

Individual Economic Situation

- DACA recipients reported the following improvements since receiving DACA:
 - ◇ 66% went from unemployed to employed after receiving DACA
 - ◇ 79% got what they considered to be a “better job”
 - ◇ 68% worked better hours
 - ◇ 64% earned higher salary
 - ◇ 41% got a job that provided health or other benefits
 - ◇ 77% reported that they are now able to more consistently cover bills
 - ◇ 78% are better able to contribute to monthly household expenses
- DACA recipients are much more likely than non-recipients to have a drivers’ license, a bank account, and/or credit card(s).

HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Only 43% of the total sample reported having health insurance (44% of DACA recipients and 31% of non-recipients).
- Over 37% of the sample reported delaying necessary medical care during the last 12 months.
- DACA recipients are generally less likely to report indicators of stress in the past thirty days due to their legal status. For example, only 14% of DACA recipients reported that their legal status caused them to feel stress, nervousness or anxiety in the past thirty days, compared to 36% of non-recipients. DACA recipients were also less likely to report feeling sadness, embarrassment or shame than non-recipients.
- DACA recipients are four times less likely to report worry about being arrested or deported than non-recipients (9% vs. 40%).
- Regardless of DACA status, in the past thirty days, respondents worried about equally about *family members* being arrested or deported (52% of DACA recipients and 56% of non-recipients). Their fears appear substantiated: indeed, about half of respondents know someone personally who has been deported. Of individuals who knew someone who had been deported, more than half reported that a family member had been deported.

Introduction

BACKGROUND

The U.S. is home to approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants,¹¹ including nearly 5 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 30.¹² California is home to roughly 2.6 million undocumented immigrants, making it one of the largest immigrant communities in the nation.¹³ Existing research on undocumented youth and young adults shows that this population faces severe barriers to higher education and good jobs, and that precarious immigration status can negatively impact youths' health and wellbeing.¹⁴

An estimated 65,000 undocumented youth graduate from U.S. high schools each year, yet only approximately 5 to 10 percent are able to enroll in college.¹⁵ Those who are able to access higher education often do so via state laws that allow undocumented youth to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities (such as California's A.B. 540). These state laws, however, may be insufficient in preventing undocumented students from severe disadvantage along their educational paths.¹⁶ For example, many undocumented youth end up working in low-wage jobs that are wrought with health and safety, wage and hour, and other labor law violations.¹⁷

There are also long-term health implications of living without legal status. Sociologists Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy J. Abrego argue that the "ever-present *fear* of enforcement" negatively impacts undocumented immigrants and their communities,¹⁸ which could have consequences for their mental health.¹⁹ In a study of undocumented youth in California, the Dream Resource Center at the UCLA Labor Center found that undocumented youth report regular experiences of stigmatization, depression and anxiety, yet also face significant barriers to accessing mental health resources.²⁰ Compounding their predicament, undocumented youth face barriers to accessing quality health care.²¹ Young immigrants with DACA status do not qualify for the Affordable Care Act (ACA or ObamaCare) or Federal Medicaid, though efforts are underway in California to expand access to healthcare for undocumented immigrants.²²

In summary, a broad field of academic research has documented the educational, economic, and health penalties of long-term legal precariousness. Such conclusions beg the question of what, if anything, will *change* for undocumented young people if their legal status changes?

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS

In June 2012, President Obama announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for eligible undocumented youth. Under this program, eligible youth can apply for a two-year reprieve from deportation that includes work authorization (which is revocable at any time and does not include a path to citizenship). Figure 1 shows DACA's eligibility criteria. As of March 31, 2015, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has received 748,789 initial applications for DACA, with 212,088 (28%) coming from California.²³ The vast majority of applicants are from Mexico and Central and South America. Thousands of applications were filed with help from community organizations serving undocumented youth, including Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA).



Figure 1. DACA Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for deferred action under the DACA program, you must:

- ✓ Have come to the United States before your sixteenth birthday.
- ✓ Have lived continuously in the U.S. since either June 15, 2007 (if you are applying for DACA under the pre-expansion guidelines) or January 1, 2010 (if you apply under expanded DACA). NOTE: USCIS is not yet accepting applications from people who do not qualify under the pre-expansion guidelines but who may qualify under expanded DACA.
- ✓ Have been present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012, and on every day since August 15, 2012.
- ✓ Not have a lawful immigration status on June 15, 2012. To meet this requirement, (1) you must have entered the U.S. without papers before June 15, 2012, or, if you entered lawfully, your lawful immigration status must have expired before June 15, 2012; and (2) you must not have a lawful immigration status at the time of your application.
- ✓ Be at least 15 years old. If you are currently in deportation proceedings, have a voluntary departure order, or have a deportation order, and are not in immigration detention, you may request DACA even if you are not yet 15 years old.
- ✓ Have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, be an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or U.S. armed forces, or "be in school" on the date that you submit your DACA application.
- ✓ Have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor offense or three or more misdemeanor offenses.
- ✓ Not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

THE STUDY: ASSESSING THE EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC TRAJECTORIES, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND HEALTH STATUS OF DACA APPLICANTS

This study assesses the impacts of immigrant legal status on the educational and socioeconomic trajectories, community involvement, healthcare access, and health and well-being of 502 undocumented young adults in Southern California before and after receiving deferred action (and work authorization) through the (DACA) program. The goal of the study was to survey individuals approximately two-to-three years after the rollout of the program.

Respondents were selected from a pool of individuals who attended one or more workshops about the DACA application process, hosted by immigrants' rights organizations in Southern California between 2012-2014. Technical information regarding sampling and recruitment can be found in the methodological appendix at the conclusion of this report.

We analyze the following questions, comparing DACA recipients with those do not have DACA:

LOGISTICS OF APPLYING FOR DACA

- How did applicants get information about DACA? What factors did they consider before applying?
- Did applicants or their families find the application process difficult or unsafe?
- What resources did individuals access during the application process?

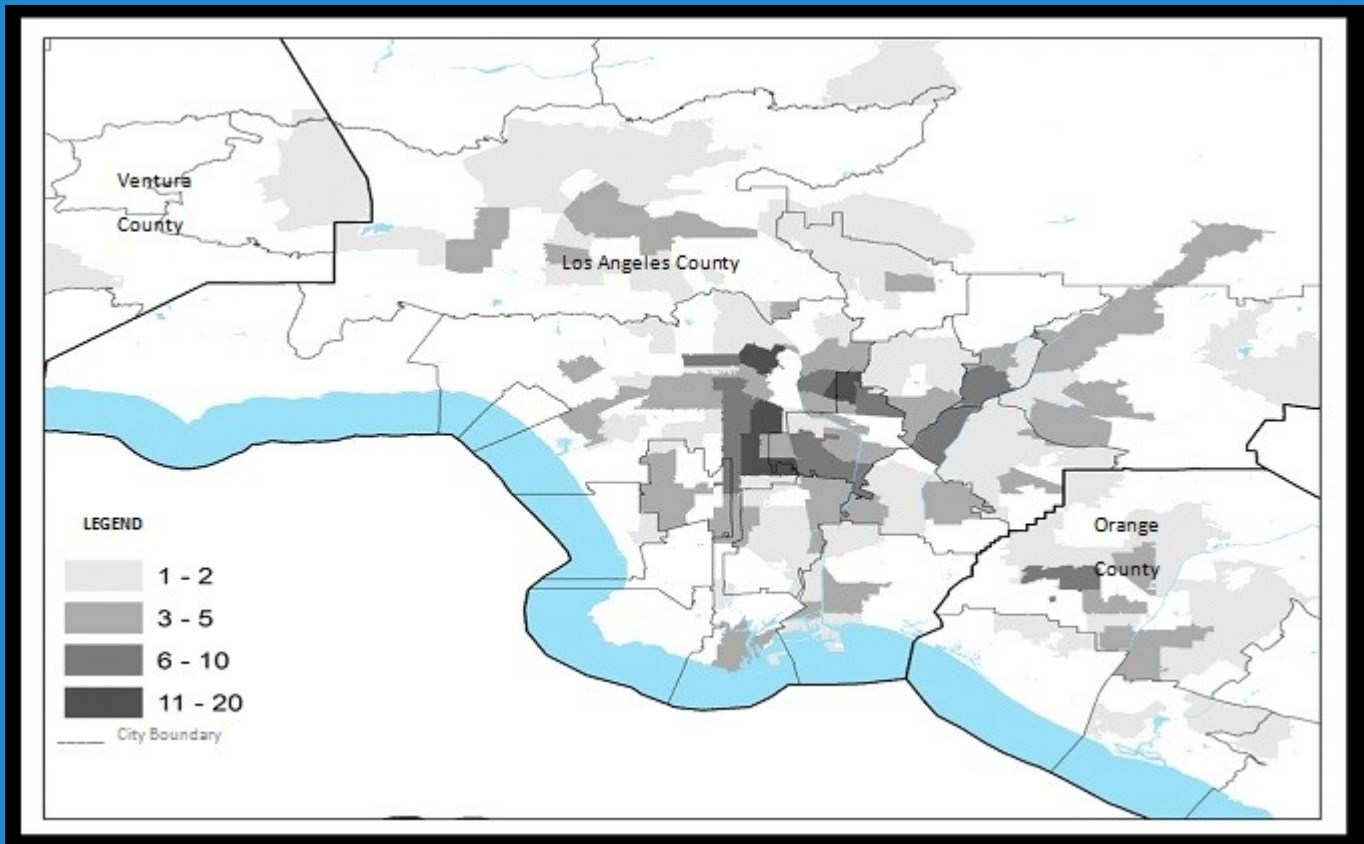
EDUCATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS & HEALTH

- How do undocumented young adults, with and without DACA, fare in terms of access to education, employment, healthcare, and community involvement?
- How do their life circumstances (educational access, socioeconomic status, day-to-day pressures, understandings of self and community) change after receiving deferred action and work authorization? What improves, what stays the same, and what new challenges do they face?
- How might DACA benefit recipients' households and families?

Demographic Profile

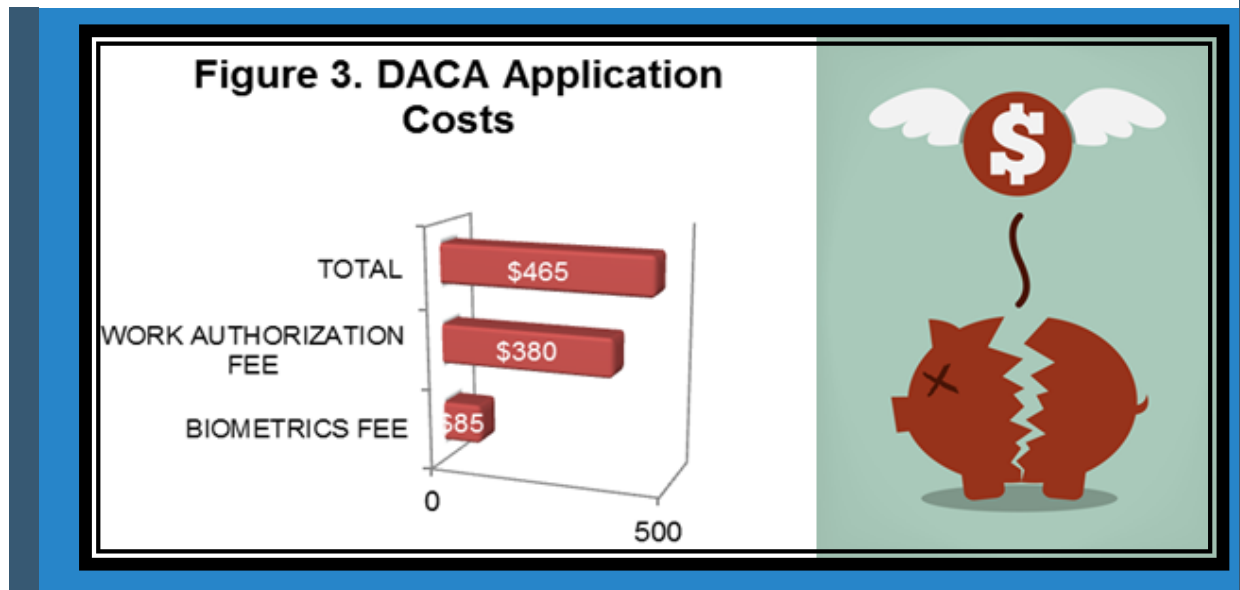
Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents identified as female and 43% identified as male. The average respondent was 24 years old, which may be slightly older than the average recipient nationally (survey respondents had to be at least 18 years old, but DACA applicants can be younger). Ninety percent of the sample is from Mexico, followed by 5% from Central American countries and 5% from other countries across the globe. Over 97% of respondents identified as Latina or Latino.

Figure 2. Where Survey Respondents Grew Up, by Zip Code



The average respondent came to the United States before her 6th birthday and has been in the United States for 18 years. Respondents grew up across the Southern California region, with most living in Los Angeles County, followed by Orange and Ventura counties (see Figure 2).

Respondents come from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds: a full 93% were eligible for free or reduced lunch while in elementary, middle and/or high school. Respondents also report relatively low levels of parental education: more than half of respondents (53%) are from households in which a father or mother had not completed high school, 25% percent of respondents had a parent with a high school degree only, and 11% had parents who had attended some college, but did not have a degree. Only 10% of parents had an Associate's, Bachelor's or graduate degree of some kind.



Applying for DACA comes with a price tag of \$465, including an \$85 fee for biometrics and \$380 for a work authorization document. More than a third of recipients (37%) reported having difficulties affording the cost of the application. However, some recipients had more trouble getting the funds together than others. Respondents who were currently financially insecure (measured by whether they had been unable to pay bills at some point in the last year) were much more likely to report difficulty paying for the application than those who were not financially insecure (49% vs. 26%). Members of undocumented student organizations were also more likely to report difficulty paying the application fees vs. non-members (44% vs. 32%). Finally, 41% of women had trouble paying for the application, compared to 32% of men.

The \$475 fee is due at each reapplication. Several respondents reported delaying reapplication because they could not afford the costs. In some cases, this delay resulted in the loss of wages due to expired work permits, further compounding financial insecurity.

Figure 1 described the eligibility requirements for DACA. To request DACA status, applicants must submit proof of: identification; current immigration status; arrival to the United States before the 16th birthday; presence in the United States on June 15, 2012 and continuous residency since June 15, 2007; and student status at the time of the request.²⁶ Nearly half (47%) of applicants reported that it was difficult or stressful to gather the documents necessary to apply for DACA. For example, some applicants may have to gather extensive documentation from their countries of origin, which can be time consuming and difficult. The older the respondent, the more likely they were to report difficulty or stress gathering the necessary documents.

Applying for DACA: Challenges & Assistance

WHO HAS DACA AND WHO DOESN'T?

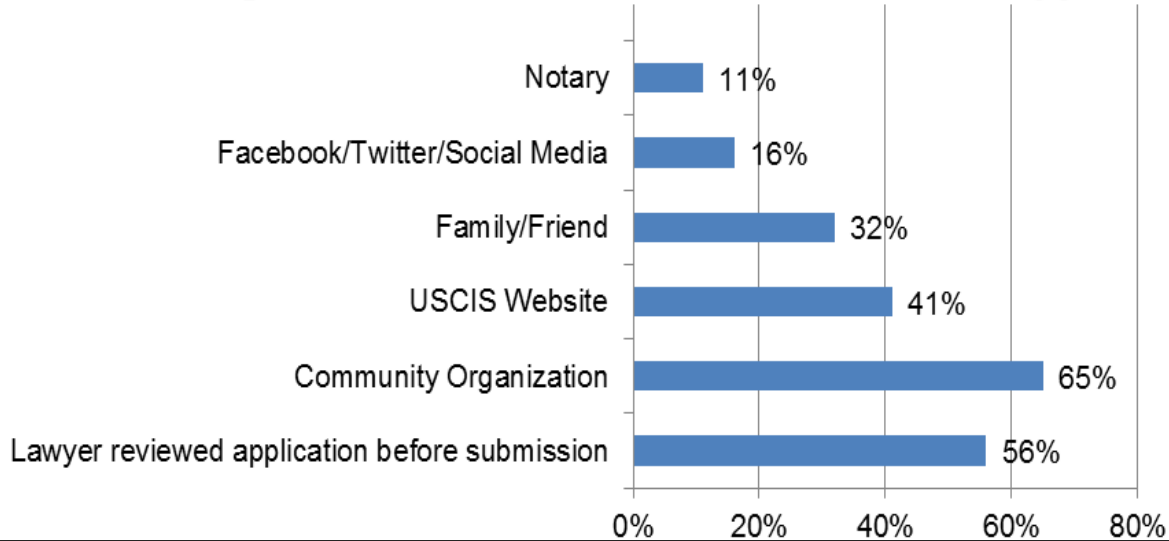
The goal of the survey was to assess DACA's impact two-to-three years into the program, allowing respondents time to make some of the changes the program aims to facilitate. The phone survey took place between November 2014 and January 2015, 27-29 months after the first DACA applications²⁵ were submitted in August 2012. Ninety percent of respondents (n=452) had been approved for DACA, while the remaining 10% (n=50) had either not applied, were still awaiting a response, or had been rejected. The average DACA recipient had been approved for DACA for just under a year and a half (531 days), as of the date of the interview.

Non-recipients were slightly older (25.2 years old vs. 24.1 years old). Respondents with children were slightly less likely to have applied (85% vs. 91%). Males were slightly less likely than females to have applied (86% vs. 93%). Members of undocumented student organizations were more likely to have applied than non-members (96% vs. 88%).

CHALLENGES & ASSISTANCE

Another goal of the survey was to assess the challenges and opportunities surrounding the logistics of applying for DACA. Specifically, we aimed to understand the barriers applicants faced, and the resources (community, legal, etc.) they accessed, when applying. We also sought to understand whether applicants and their families found it difficult to gather the necessary application documents and whether they felt safe sharing their information with the government.

Figure 4. Assistance or Advice with DACA Application



Many respondents sought help preparing and submitting their applications. As Figure 4 shows, over half (56%) had a lawyer review their application prior to submission. Another third sought advice or assistance with their application from family or friends. Forty-one percent looked to the USCIS website for help and 16% turned to Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites. Finally, nearly two-thirds (65%) got advice or assistance from a community-based organization. This may be a slightly higher frequency than the general population of DACA applicants, given that the first wave of respondents was recruited into the study through attendance at a DACA workshop put on or co-sponsored by Dream Team Los Angeles. These free workshops proved to be a critical resource for undocumented youth applying for DACA.

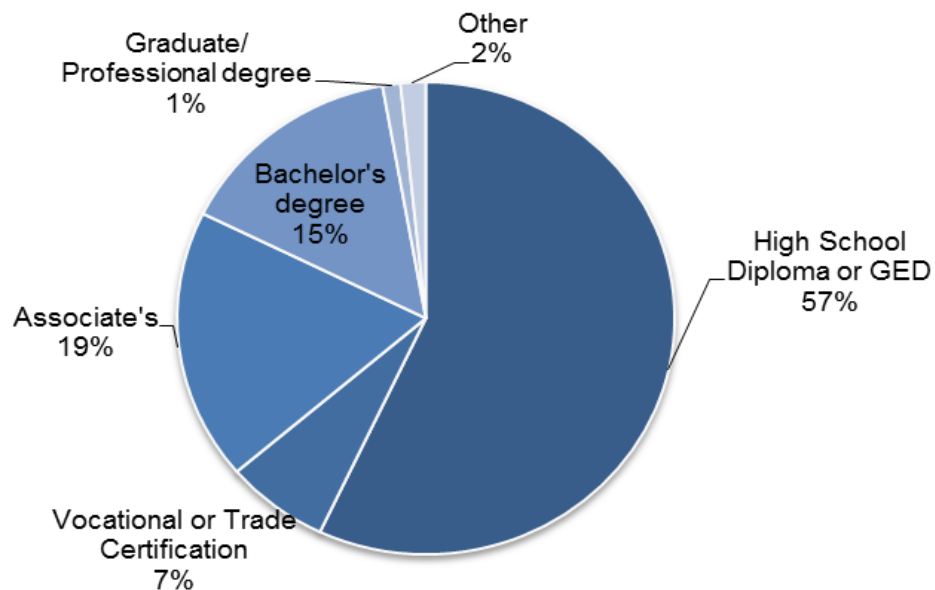
Undocumented immigrants and other vulnerable populations often live in fear of detection and may avoid law enforcement agencies and institutional participation as a safety measure.

A fifth of DACA applicants reported feeling unsafe submitting the necessary paperwork. The older the respondent, the more likely they were to report feeling unsafe submitting their documents.

Educational Outcomes

In order to be eligible for DACA, undocumented youth must have completed high school or a GED in the United States, or be currently enrolled in school. Eight respondents were still in high school at the time of the survey. Six had dropped out of high school and had not yet completed a GED. More than half of the respondents (57%) had only a high school degree. Of those who finished high school, 7% had gone on to earn a vocational or trade degree, 19% had earned an Associate's degree only, and 16% had earned a Bachelor's degree or more. Respondents who reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher were about one year older, on average, than respondents without a B.A. (24.9 years old vs. 23.9 years old).

Figure 5. Highest Degree Earned



Existing literature on the educational experiences of undocumented youth, based predominantly on the experiences of high-achieving college students, has often told the stories of undocumented youth who do not know about their status until they are teenagers preparing to apply for college. Respondents in the present study may represent a different set of experiences. In fact,

The average respondent knew she was undocumented by the time she was eleven years old, and 71% of the sample knew by the age of fourteen—in other words, before or around the start of high school. Ninety-nine percent of respondents knew by the time they were eighteen years old.

In 2001, the California governor signed Assembly Bill 540 into law, thereby allowing eligible undocumented students who to pay in-state tuition in public colleges and universities in the state of California. In 2011, Assembly Bills 130 and 131, collectively known as the California Dream Act, extended eligibility for certain types of financial aid to undocumented college students. However, existing studies have shown that many undocumented high school students are never told about these options during high school; in fact, many students say teachers and counselors do not know about the policy and sometimes incorrectly advise them that they cannot go to college.²⁷

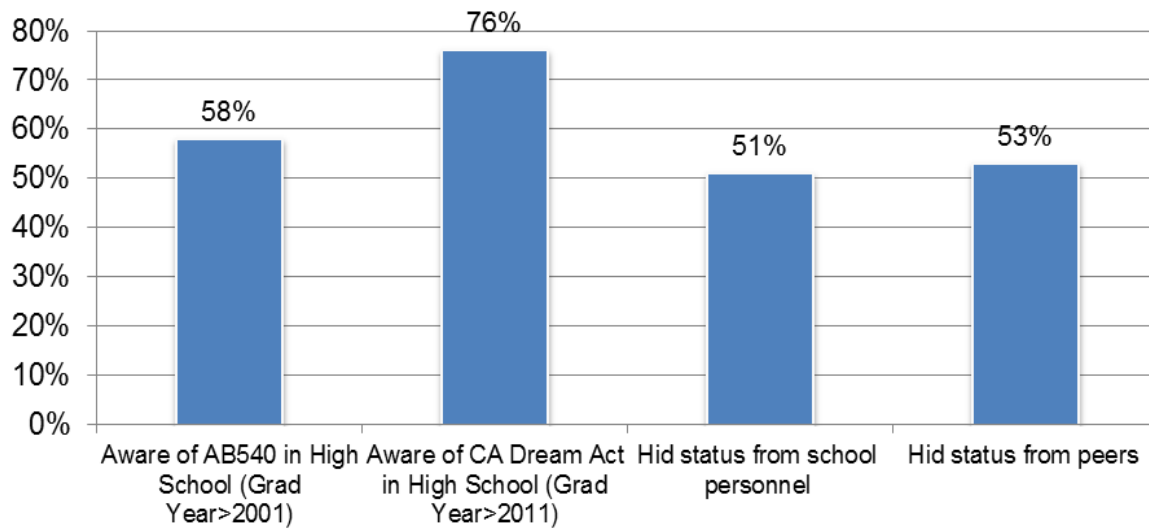
Figure 6 shows that of respondents who finished high school after 2001 (the year A.B. 540 became law), only about three-fifths (58%) knew about A.B. 540 during high school. The numbers are even lower for low-income students: only half of these students knew about A.B. 540 during high school, as opposed to 64% of non-low-income students. Students were much more likely to know about the California Dream Act: 76% of respondents who finished high school after the bills' 2011 passage were aware of this important program.

Research shows that many undocumented students feel that they have to hide their legal status from others, which can negatively impact their educational outcomes by constraining social network formation and access to academic resources for undocumented students.²⁸

Fifty-one percent of respondents reported hiding their status from teachers or school personnel during high school, and 54% reported hiding their status from peers

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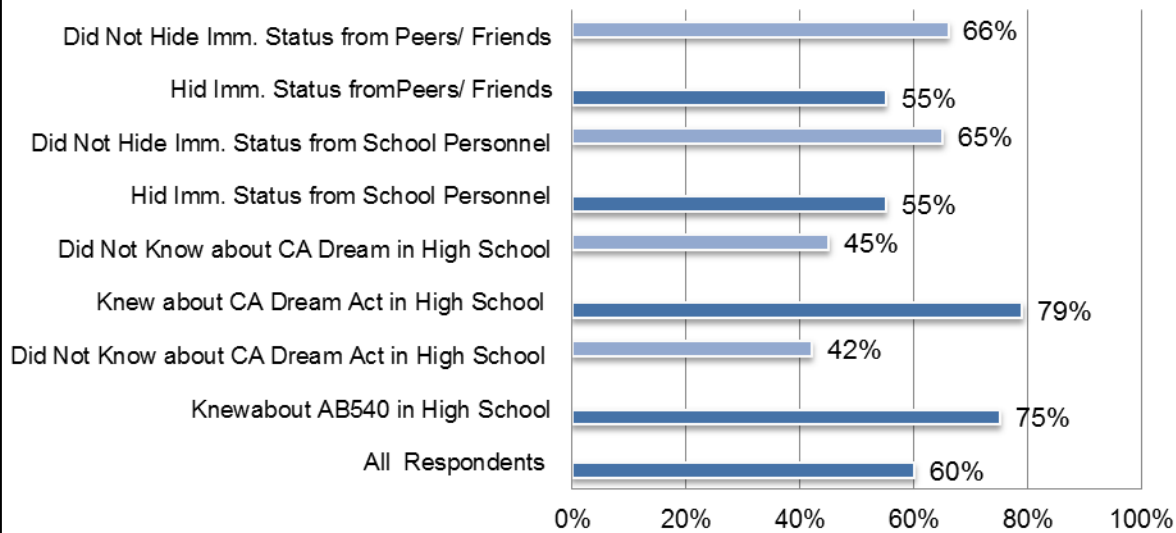
Figure 6. Legal Knowledge and Hiding Status in High School



While in high school, only three-fifths of respondents (60%) believed there was a possibility to go to college.

However, these frequencies changed drastically depending on whether respondents knew about A.B. 540, the California Dream Act, and whether they felt like they needed to hide their status during high school. As Figure 7 shows, students who knew about A.B. 540 and the California Dream Act during high school were much more likely to think they could go on to college. Those who reported feeling the need to hide their status from school personnel or peers during high school were much *less* likely to think college was a possibility.

Figure 7. Frequency of Belief that College was Possible, by Legal Knowledge & Hiding Status During High School



COLLEGE AND POSTSECONDARY EXPERIENCES

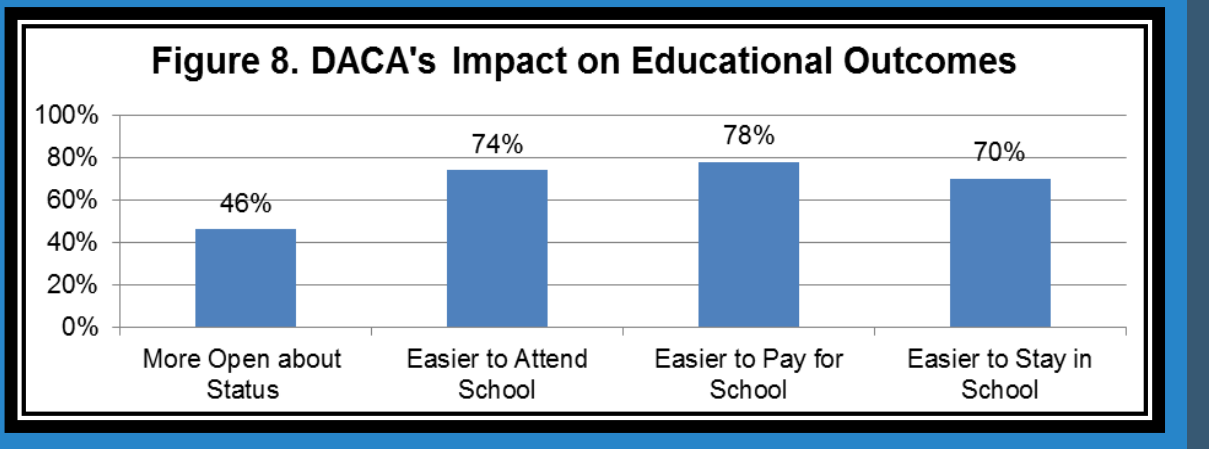
Though many undocumented students have made their way into college, the road to graduation is wrought with challenges.²⁹

Nearly 87% of DACA survey respondents had attended some type of higher education since finishing high school, yet 75% of current students reported difficulty paying for school.

Students with DACA were slightly less likely to report difficulties paying for school (69% vs. 83% of those without DACA), though these numbers are not statistically significant in bivariate analysis.

Nearly half of the current students in the sample (48%) reported having had to take time off school, besides breaks and summer vacations. Students with DACA were no less likely to report stopping out of school than students without DACA.

HOW HAS DACA CHANGED THINGS FOR STUDENTS?



Despite challenges to attending higher education, as Figure 8 demonstrates, DACA recipients were generally optimistic about the impacts of the program on their lives. Around half of respondents (46%) reported that they felt more willing to share their status with teachers and friends since receiving DACA.

“ [Since having DACA] I feel safer and I don’t have to hide as much. ”

Nearly four-fifths of DACA recipients (78%) reported that DACA made it easier to pay for school.

“ [What has changed most for me since having DACA is] having financial aid. Even with work, and even if I pay off my school loan, it would be rough for me to afford school [without DACA.] ”

Three-quarters of current students said DACA made it easier to attend and stay in school.

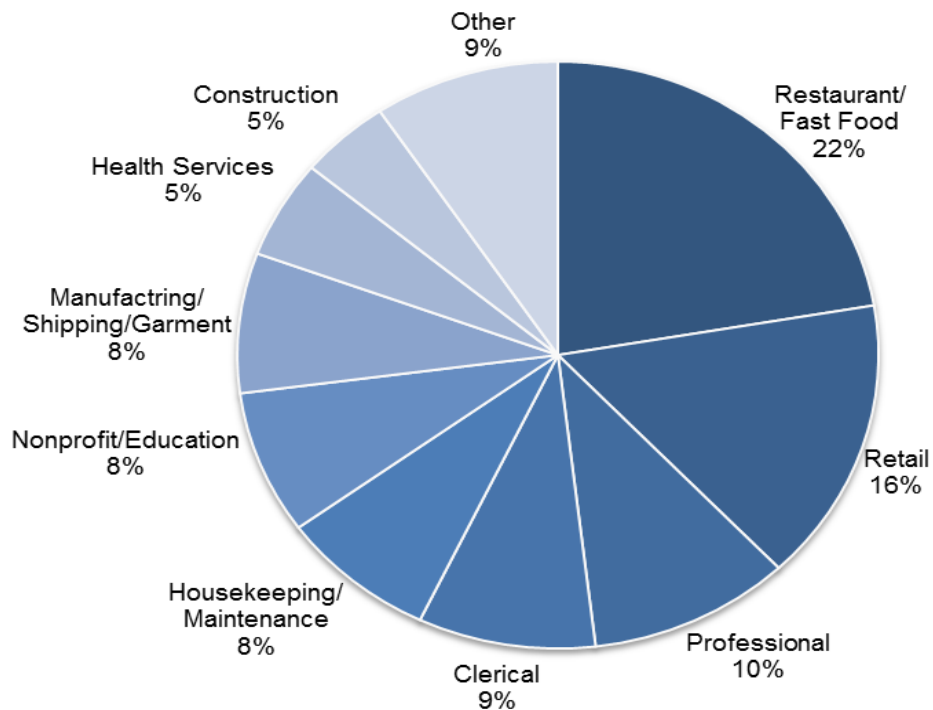
“ I was able to finish school and be able to continue my career. Also I can help my family while doing that. ”

“ I think [DACA has] mostly benefited me in school because I have been able to get a BOG [Board of Governors] fee waiver and other types of financial aid. ”

Employment and Socioeconomic Outcomes

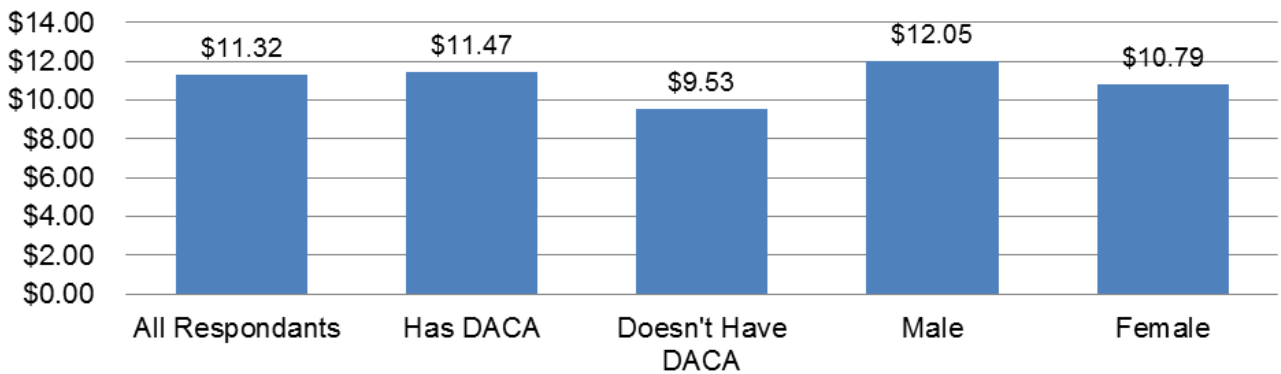
Across the nation and state, undocumented immigrant adults are employed at higher rates than native-born workers.³⁰ More than four of every five survey respondents (82%) reported have a job at the time of the survey. This number was much higher for those with DACA than those without (84% vs. 68%). Respondents with DACA were also more likely to report having a job where they file taxes (66% vs. only 49% of respondents without DACA). Only 5% of the total sample was a member of a labor union.

Figure 9. Current/Most Recent Occupation



As Figure 9 shows, an overwhelming majority of respondents (73%) indicated working in blue-collar jobs such as food service and other restaurant work (22%), retail (16%), clerical (9%), maintenance or housekeeping (8%), manufacturing/shipping (8%), health services (5%), and construction (5%). Only 18% of respondents reported working white-collar jobs - professional careers (10%) and education or non-profit jobs (8%). Though this sample is quite young (only 24 years old, on average), these data indicate that DACA may not translate into upward mobility in the labor market.

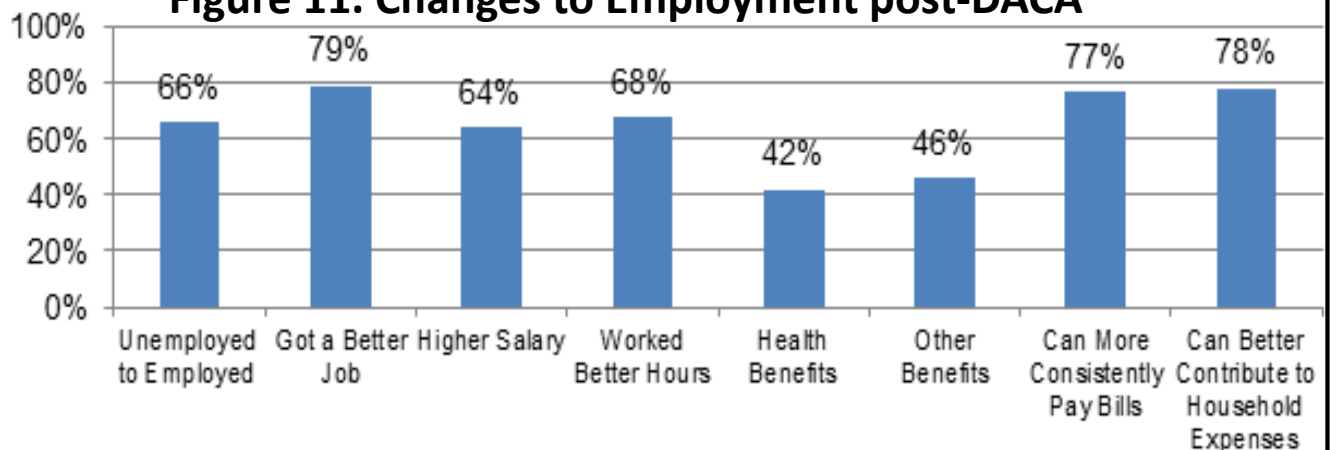
Figure 10. Hourly Earnings Based on Hours Worked per Week



A quarter of the sample reported earning \$9.00 per hour (the state minimum wage) or less. The median hourly wage was \$10.00 per hour. DACA recipients earned higher average hourly earnings of (\$11.47 vs. \$9.53 for non-recipients). Females, on average, earned \$1.26 less per hour than males (\$10.79 vs. \$12.05 per hour).

How has DACA impacted recipients' personal economic situations? Figure 11 shows that over 66% of recipients reported going from unemployed to employed after receiving DACA. A full 79% of recipients reported getting what they considered to be a "better job." Sixty-four percent reported earning a higher salary, and 68% reported working better hours. Other respondents reported that DACA allowed them to get jobs that provided health benefits (41%) or other types of benefits like vacation or paid sick days (46%). Finally, over three-quarters of DACA recipients reported that they are now able to more consistently cover bills and are better able to contribute to monthly household expenses. Those who reported having difficulty covering monthly expenses were much less likely to say that DACA had helped them more consistently cover bills or contribute to household expenses.

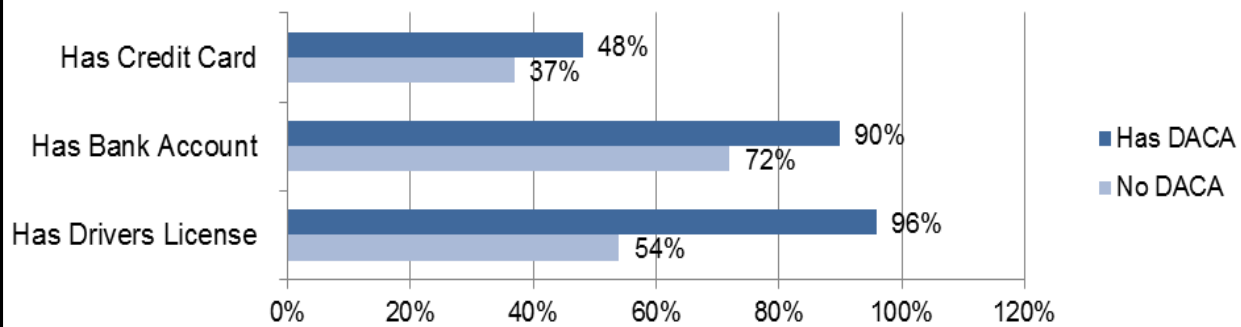
Figure 11. Changes to Employment post-DACA



ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Undocumented legal status is often characterized by a lack of government-issued identification and/or lack of access to formal financial institutions. Survey respondents were asked about their access to identity documents and financial institutions. As shown in Figure 12, DACA recipients were much more likely to have a drivers' license or government issued identification document. They were also more likely to have a bank account and to use credit cards.

Figure 12. Access to Documents and Financial Institutions



Despite high rates of employment and increases in documentation and banking, respondents struggled to get by.

Nearly half (46%) of the sample reported difficulty paying utility bills in the past year, and 44% reported that their income does not cover their monthly expenses.

Regardless of whether they had DACA or not, nearly 8 of every 10 respondents reported having to contribute to monthly household expenses. While 65% of DACA recipients reported that their household's overall economic situation had improved since receiving DACA, over a third reported that it had stayed the same. However, low-income respondents were more likely to state that DACA had improved their household economic picture: 81% of low-income respondents reported improvements while only 18% reported that things stayed the same.

The biggest change since having DACA is...

The biggest change since having DACA is...

The biggest change since having DACA is...

“ I have more job opportunities and opportunities to advance in [my] career. ”

“ It's easier to get around. Having an ID that is from California, like a driver's license, makes everything easier. ”

“ I am able to work at places I wasn't able to before. I can apply to places I could not apply to before, like to become a social worker. ”

Health and Healthcare Access

Existing research on undocumented youths' access to healthcare in California paints a sobering picture: 69% of undocumented youth do not have access to health insurance and 53% have not received medical attention in over a year. Yet 71% report a need to see a doctor and 58% report resorting to the internet as an alternative to seeing a healthcare provider.³²

In the present study, 43% of the total sample reported having health insurance (44% of DACA recipients and 31% of non-recipients). Over 37% reported delaying necessary medical care during the last 12 months. Respondents with DACA were twice as likely to delay care than non-recipients (39% vs. 20%), likely due to the fact that even with DACA status, undocumented immigrants are still excluded from the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Figure 13a. Overall Health: DACA Recipients

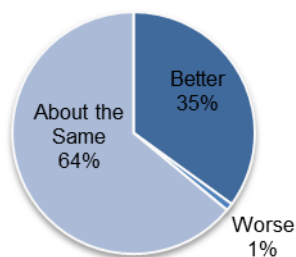
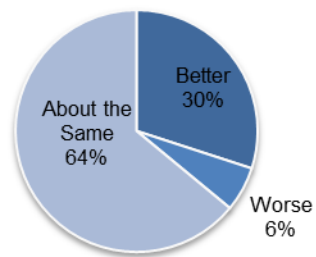


Figure 13b. Overall Health: Non-Recipients



Respondents were asked to rate their overall health, compared to before receiving DACA (in the case of DACA recipients), or compared to one year ago (for non-recipients). Overall, 64% of DACA recipients and non-recipients reported that their overall health was “about the same.” However, DACA recipients were slightly more likely to rate their overall physical health as “Excellent” or “good” compared to non-recipients.

Figure 14a. Current Physical Health: DACA Recipients

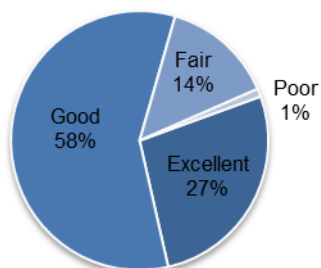
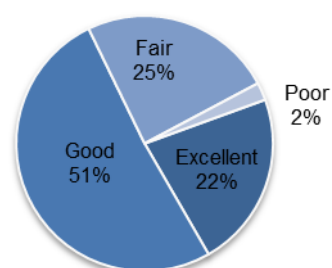


Figure 14b. Current Physical Health: Non-Recipients



STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH

Compared to others their age, DACA recipients and non-recipients were about equally likely to report “excellent” or “good” mental health. However, as Figures 15a and 15b demonstrate, DACA recipients are generally less likely to report indicators of stress in the past thirty days due to their legal status. For example, only 14% of DACA recipients reported that their legal status caused them to feel stress, nervousness or anxiety in the past thirty days, compared to 36% of non-recipients. DACA recipients were also far less likely to report feeling sadness, embarrassment or shame, or worry about discovery than non-recipients. Non-recipients were more than four times more likely to report worry about being arrested or deported (9% vs. 40%).

Figure 15a. Current Mental Health: DACA Recipients

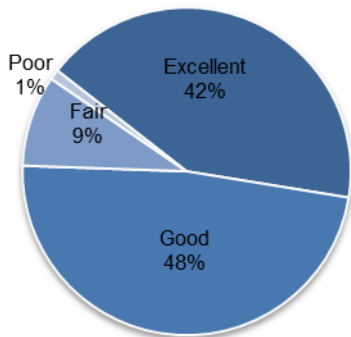


Figure 15b. Current Mental Health: Non-Recipients

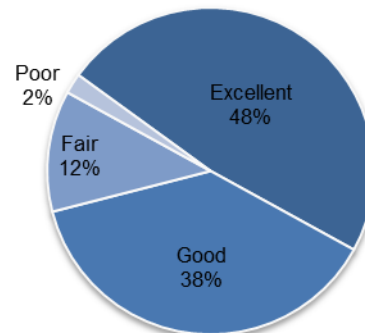
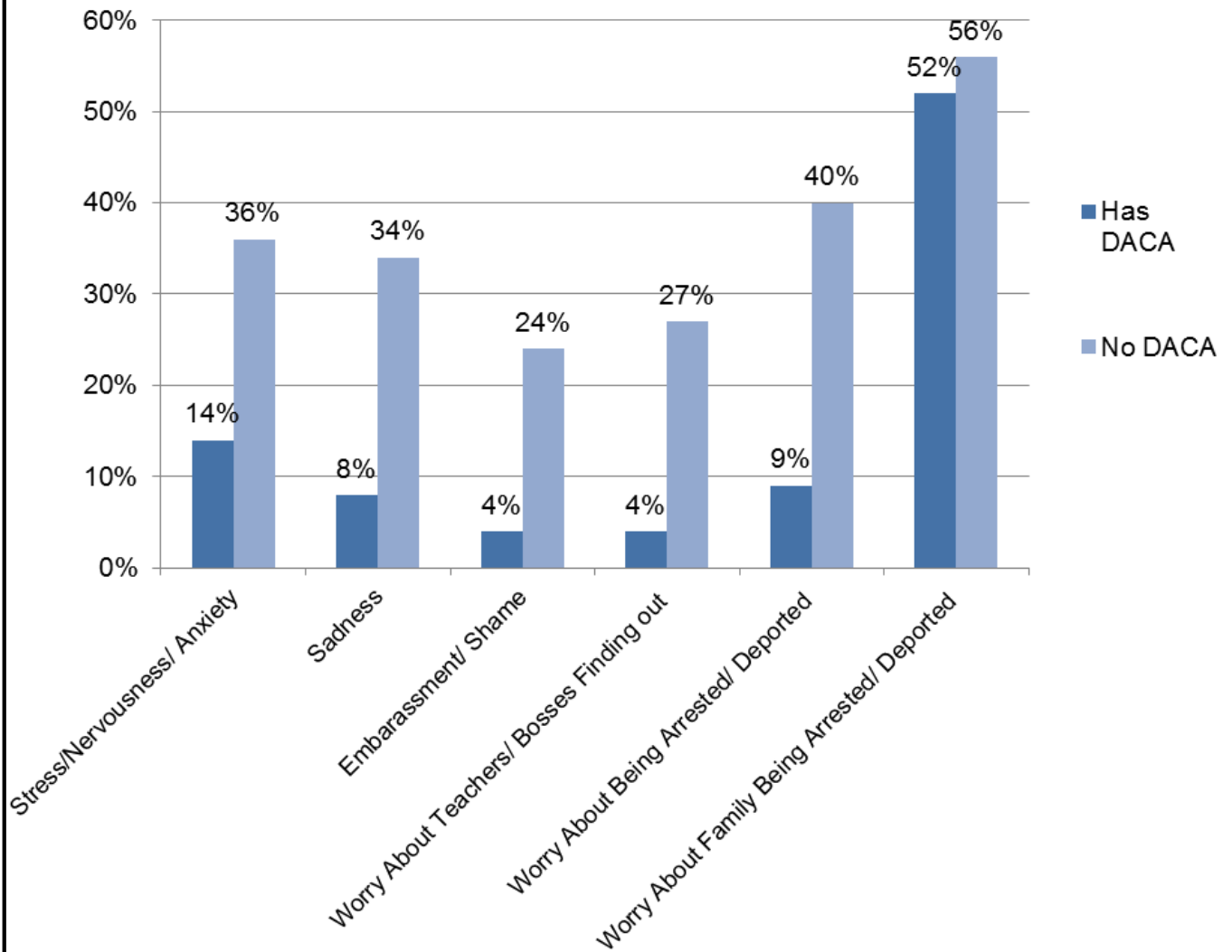


Figure 16. Stress Caused by Immigration Status in the Past 30 Days

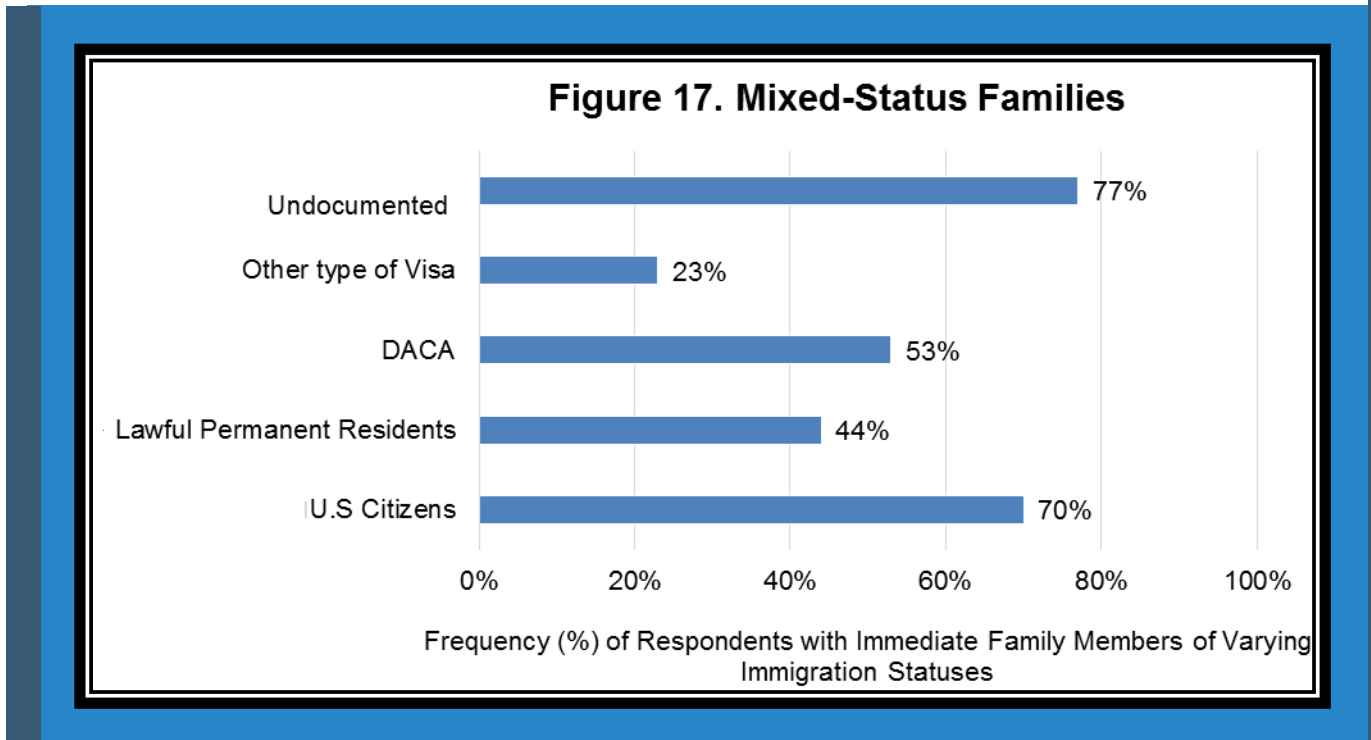


Regardless of DACA status, in the past thirty days, respondents worried about equally about family members being arrested or deported. Their fears appear substantiated: indeed, about half of respondents know someone personally who has been deported. More than half of those individuals reported that a family member had been deported.

Mixed Status Families

Ninety-six percent of DACA recipients reported having family members in the United States. On average, respondents have 5 immediate family members (parents, siblings, children or spouses/partners) and 8 extended family members (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews) currently living in the United States.

DACA respondents report coming from mixed-status families in which members of the same immediate family have different immigration statuses. As Figure 17 shows, 70% of respondents have at least one U.S. citizen family member, 44% have Lawful Permanent Resident family members, 53% have DACAmented family members, 23% have family member(s) with some other type of visa, and 77% have undocumented family members.



DACA targets a particular group of immigrants: young people who have spent most of their childhood and/or adolescence in the United States and are pursuing or have pursued high school education or higher. However, this program does not provide any legal benefits to DACA recipients' families. Yet these results show that DACAmented young adults do not exist in isolation but are members of families, households, and communities. As such, policy solutions that address these realities will likely do more to address inequality than piece-meal solutions targeting select groups.

In their own words, **DACA** recipients told us:

“ Because of DACA I have been able to access opportunities that I would not have otherwise been able to get. These opportunities were available prior to DACA, but I was not able to take part in them because of the fact that I am undocumented. ”

“ [With DACA I feel] PEACE. I breathe better. I have hope, and I know I exist. I feel like I belong and other people know I exist. ”

“ DACA helped with safety and allowed me to have transportation. It helped me find a job. I know that I have access to what most people have so that I have the same opportunity to peruse a life that the average American has. ”

“ Nothing has changed. Everything is the same. ”

“ [This is] the first time [I'm] seeing a government agency accept or recognize [me] in the country, even when I considered myself an American. ”

“ Nothing really changes, just getting ID. ”

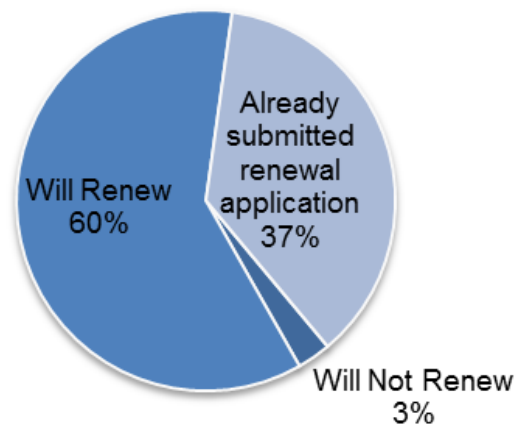
“ All stayed the same for me. ”

“ Work for a company instead of agencies, and now I can get into the profession I want and also get paid for it. ”

“ I have less money now because I have to pay for DACA. ”

Respondents were eager to extend their DACA status: only 13 people (3%) reported that they are not planning to apply for program renewal. Another 37% had already become eligible to reapply and had done so. Though DACA recipients are generally optimistic about the opportunities available through the DACA program, they aspire for fuller inclusion. Indeed, 99% of the sample reported that they would become U.S. citizens if given the opportunity.

Figure 19. Recipients' Plans to Renew DACA Status



Though DACA recipients are generally optimistic about the opportunities available through the DACA program, they aspire for fuller inclusion. Indeed, 99% of the sample reported that they would become U.S. citizens if given the opportunity.

Policy Recommendations

Data from this study suggest that DACA recipients have experienced some educational and economic gains. However, they still tend to work in low-wage jobs, and have trouble paying bills and accessing health insurance. In addition, regardless of DACA status, respondents continue to worry about undocumented family members whose socioeconomic position and fear of immigration law enforcement remain unchanged. Our findings suggest that existing policies related to health, education, employment, and immigration may not go far enough in meeting the needs of immigrant youth. Given the results, we make the following policy and program recommendations.

EDUCATION

State policies like A.B. 540 (in-state tuition) and the California Dream Act (A.B. 130 and A.B. 131—access to some financial aid) offer aspiring college graduates greater access to colleges and universities. Yet many respondents were unaware of these policies during high school, which is correlated with a decrease in the belief that going to college is possible, given the challenges associated with legal status. Our findings suggest that additional resources should be dedicated to providing outreach to educators and immigrant communities about these state policies. Particular support should be channeled to organizations serving undocumented youth, which are important sources of support and information for current and aspiring students.

Tuition equity policies provide an important opportunity for undocumented immigrants who dream of attending college. However, more can be done to make college more affordable, reduce stop-out rates, and increase the likelihood of degree completion. Policy makers should continue to create, implement and enforce policies that ensure equal access to higher education, and in particular, to public and private sources of financial aid.

EMPLOYMENT

Although DACA appears to lead to incremental economic gains such as higher pay, better work schedules, and limited fringe benefits, respondents with DACA still find themselves in low-paying jobs and struggling to make ends meet. These findings suggest that policymakers should work to improve immigrant workers' access to jobs that pay living wages and offer healthcare and other benefits.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Some DACAmented youth report improved individual mental and physical wellbeing, and increased access to healthcare. However, regardless of DACA status, the majority of respondents remain uninsured. Policymakers should work to increase affordable access to healthcare and mental health services for all, regardless of citizenship status. For example, policymakers should work to extend access to the Affordable Care Act to all people, regardless of documentation status.

In California, DACA recipients are eligible for MediCal if income-eligible, and may have access to employer-provided healthcare coverage. Given that most respondents lack health insurance, yet may qualify for state-sponsored programs, we recommend that the state dedicate additional resources for outreach to undocumented communities about the availability of these programs.

IMMIGRATION

Protect and expand DACA and Enact Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA)

DACA has allowed recipients some educational and economic mobility, as well as greater peace of mind. The DACA program should be protected, and the Expanded DACA program implemented, until more permanent solutions are in place.

DACA recipients come from mixed-immigration-status families and continue to worry regularly about the deportation of family members. The Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program would extend temporary deferred action and work authorization to adult parents of U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident children.³³ Currently, DAPA is on hold following a court order from a District Court in Texas. Our findings highlight the need for DAPA's immediate implementation as a short-term solution for mixed-status families that parallels efforts to obtain a long-term solution for regularizing the status of undocumented families.

Access to Citizenship and Rights

DACA and DAPA do not provide access to citizenship or legal permanent residency, yet 99% of respondents report a desire to become a U.S. citizen if given the opportunity. Seventy percent of respondents have U.S. citizen family members, 44% have Lawful Permanent Resident family members, 53% have DACAmented family members, and 23% have family member(s) with some other type of visa. Our findings underscore the need for federal legislation that offers equal access to citizenship for all immigrants living in the United States, prioritizes family unity and reunification, steers away from militarization of the border, and ensures equal access for future generations of immigrants making the journey to the United States.

Methodological Appendix



2014-2015 DACA Survey: Technical Report

Social Science Research Center, California State University, Fullerton

INTRODUCTION

UCLA contracted with the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at California State University, Fullerton to administer a survey to a sample of 500 undocumented individuals who attended DACA workshops run by community organizations and who agreed to be contacted. The survey was also administered to people who were referred by those who had attended the workshops. SSRC staff conducted 502 telephone interviews between October 24, 2014 and February 7, 2015 with individuals who had attended these workshops or those who had been referred to participate in the survey by these individuals.

The survey instrument for the study was created by researchers at UCLA and contained items from several standard survey tools including: the American Community Survey, American Psychological Association Stress in America Survey, California Young Adult Study, Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles study, National Political Survey, and the Twenty-First Century Americanism Study. Many other questions were original questions designed to test the impact of DACA on educational, employment, health and other outcomes.

The survey was programmed using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software. Respondents were asked approximately 50 questions. The length of the time required to complete each telephone interview ranged from 17 to 79 minutes, with a mean of 32 minutes.

SAMPLE SELECTION & TECHNICAL APPROACH

The population of consists of 1,102 individuals who attended a community organization-sponsored workshop on DACA in Los Angeles between August 2012 and September 2014. This sample was supplemented using a snowball sampling strategy in which individuals who completed the survey or were ineligible themselves referred any eligible members of their household to complete the survey as well. A total of 154 additional records were obtained this way, for an overall sample size of 1,157.

In order to participate in the survey, respondents were required to be 18 years of age or older, to be able to complete the survey in English, and to have either applied for or considered applying for DACA.

The SSRC implements Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) through WinCATI® software to facilitate the control of the sample, track scheduled call-backs, and monitor progress regarding the completion of sample design quotas. An average of 8.07 calls were required per completed survey.

DATA COLLECTION OUTCOMES

The SSRC calculates survey response rates using the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate Calculation Method 3 (RR3) and the Cooperation Rate Method 1 (COOP1). The Response Rate for the sample was 66.8% and the Cooperation Rate was 90.8%. In all, completed surveys comprised 43.4% ($n = 502$) of all records attempted ($N = 1,157$).

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- ¹ Caitlin Patler, Ph.D. is a University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at UC Irvine. She will be an Assistant Professor of Sociology at UC Davis commencing Fall 2016.
- ² Jorge Cabrera, M.A. is a faculty member at California State University Dominguez Hills, where he teaches Labor Studies. He is also the director of the Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (SoCalCOSH).
- ³ Founded in 2009, Dream Team Los Angeles aims to create a safe space in which undocumented immigrants and allies empower themselves through activism and telling of shared histories. Through these experiences, individuals develop as effective advocates for their own rights and those of the larger immigrant community.
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- ⁷ This overall finding is consistent with other research on the impacts of the DACA program. See, for example: Gonzales, R. G., V. Terriquez, S.P. Rusczyk. (2014). Becoming DACAmended: Assessing the Short-Term Benefits of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(14), 1852-1872.
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