

Guidance for Citizenship Communications with the Vietnamese Community

The New Americans Campaign conducted a nationally representative poll to study lawful permanent residents (LPRs) and measure their attitudes toward citizenship, identify what motivates them to naturalize, and determine the most effective messaging strategies. Here's what we found:

Vietnamese Lawful Permanent Residents

Vietnamese LPRs are deeply connected to the United States and fiercely loyal to this country. They have the most positive perception of the U.S. than any other AAPI community. All Vietnamese LPRs (100%) polled want to become U.S. citizens and 97% have no plans to move back to Vietnam. A plurality of Vietnamese LPRs (61%) already consider themselves to be American.

Vietnamese LPRs are older, poorer and less educated than other Asian American LPRs. Important demographic and socio-economic considerations include:

- 56% of Vietnamese LPRs are 51 or older, and 31% are between the ages of 40 and 50.
- Nearly all Vietnamese LPRs have had their green cards for more than five years.
- 48% of Vietnamese LPRs have less than a high school degree. 39% are high school graduates only. Only 11% have some college, technical school or higher education degree.
- Vietnamese LPRs earn the lowest compared to other AAPI communities. 80% earn less than \$25,000 per year before taxes.

How to Talk About the Naturalization Process

The most effective framing focuses on the following messaging points:

1. Naturalizing is easy.
2. Fee and language waivers are available.
3. There are many benefits to naturalizing.

There has not been a concerted effort to inform eligible LPRs about how to become U.S. citizens. In fact, 93% of Vietnamese LPRs say they have never received information about naturalization. Those who have received information cited that it was through word-of-mouth (from family/friends). While Vietnamese LPRs demonstrate an openness and willingness to become U.S. citizens, the lack of outreach has resulted in an information gap surrounding the naturalization process — one that would be easy to overcome. When talking about the naturalization process, it's important to consider the following:

- 65% are concerned that their English language skills are a barrier.
- 40% cite that they haven't had the time to start the naturalization process.

Best Vehicles to Reach the Vietnamese LPR Community

The wide variety of vehicles to reach people include TV, radio, print and digital media. The majority of Vietnamese surveyed said that television was their preferred medium to receive information.

Topline Message:

“Becoming a U.S. citizen is easy and opens the door to many new opportunities. Start the process to naturalize today so you can have access to all the privileges, protections and opportunities that come with being an American citizen ...”

Motivators for Naturalization

When conveying the topline message, keep in mind the following key motivators for naturalization:

1. Access to benefits.
2. Voting and running for office.
3. Travel/living outside of the U.S./traveling with a U.S. passport.
4. Bringing additional family to live in the U.S.
5. Increased job opportunities.
6. Protection from deportation.

These are the top six motivators for naturalization. For internal reference, 62% of citizenship-eligible Vietnamese LPRs indicated access to benefits as the most important benefit; 51% said voting and running for office; 34% said travel/living outside of the U.S./traveling with a U.S. passport; 24% said bringing additional family to live in the U.S.; 10% said increased job opportunities; and 9% said protection from deportation. Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one benefit as “most important.”

Sample Messages and Talking Points

These sample messages should be adapted for various uses, such as text-messaging campaigns, social media posts, flier language and public service announcements. Consider adapting the messaging for the different media you use to reach out to LPRs. Remember that your messages should always include a “call to action” that directs people to a workshop, information session, hotline/telephone number or website.

- “Did you know that you could be eligible to receive a fee waiver to help cover the cost of the citizenship application? Call [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] at [PHONE NUMBER] for more information.” [You could also link to a page on your website, if applicable.]
- “Don’t let the English language hold you back from becoming a citizen. We offer free courses to help you learn what you need to know for your citizenship application and exam.”
- “You live here, work here and pay taxes here, yet you still don’t have a say in who represents you or in the laws of this country. If you want the government to respect your values you must vote, and to vote you must be a citizen.”
- “U.S. citizens have access to more job opportunities and higher income. Become a citizen today so you can have more employment and financial opportunities.”
- “As a U.S. citizen you can petition the government to bring your family to live legally in the United States. Find out how by [INSERT A CALL TO ACTION].”
- “Once you become a U.S. citizen, you have something that no one can ever take away from you. You can travel freely, bring your family to the United States and live without any fear of being deported.”