

OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING US CITIZENSHIP

On average, refugees acquire citizenship faster than other categories of lawful permanent residents

However, there is still a 10% denial rate.



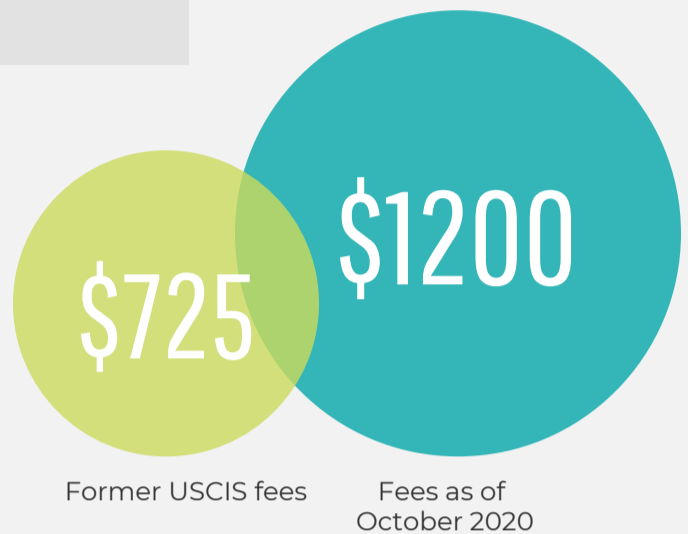
PROHIBITIVE COST

Obtaining US citizenship is expensive!

USCIS application fees were \$725 until October 2020, when they increased to \$1200 (though this cost does include biometrics i.e. running fingerprints/photos for background checks).

In addition to the application fee, applicants can expect to pay between \$500-\$2000 in lawyer fees

Some applicants have to apply multiple times, and end up paying these fees each time.



LONG PROCESSING TIMES



Naturalization requirements:

- 18 yo +
- Lawfully admitted for permanent residence
- Continuously reside in US past 5 yr (3 if married to US citizen)
- Remain physically present in US for at least half of past 5 yr
- Good moral character during statutory period
- Pass english and civics tests
- Understand and willing to take oath of allegiance
- Children <18 can be naturalized if parent has naturalized, but separate form (N-600) and application fee are required



THE TEST:

1. **English:** speaking, reading, writing
2. **Civics**

Exception to the English and Civics requirements for naturalization applicants who cannot meet the requirements because of a physical or developmental disability, or mental impairment

Must be completed by **licensed MD/DO or clinical psychologist**

Requirements:

1. Diagnosis of physical, developmental or mental impairment (or combo)
2. Impairments are medically determinable - **old age, poor memory, illiteracy do NOT qualify**
3. Impairment has lasted/will last 12+ months
4. Impairment not direct result of illegal drug use
5. Unable to meet requirement due to impairment

medical certification for disability exceptions

English test exceptions:

>50 yo age + US permanent resident 20 yrs

55+ yo age + US permanent resident 15 yrs

FORM N-648



New FORM N-648

- **When** did impairment begin
- Describe **severity** of each disability or impairment and basis of assessment
- Describe **how** each impairment affects specific functions of daily life, and how related to ability to learn civics/English
- Explain basis of assessment, including known **symptoms, tests, observations**
- Explain which disabilities will last >12 mo
- Clearly describe how each of applicant's disabilities/impairments affects his/her ability to demonstrate knowledge + understanding of English/civics
- Explain why you are certifying this form instead of regular treating MD (if applicable)

Common Grounds for Denial

- Info on N-648 inconsistent w/ other info in app
- Typos, improper pronouns
- Applicants previously applied and passed parts
- Applicant did not know name of doctor, diagnosis
- Inconsistency between employment and N-648
- Multiple forms with different diagnosis

SOURCE:

"Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions." USCIS, 30 Oct. 2020, www.uscis.gov/n-648.

Nemecek, J., JD. (2020, October). Overcoming Obstacles in Obtaining Citizenship. Lecture presented at North American Refugee Health Conference.