

Characteristics of Family-Sponsored Legal Permanent Residents: 2004

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October 2005

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants become legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States every year. More than half of them (66 percent in 2004) are family-sponsored, and are granted permanent status based on a relationship with a U.S. citizen or LPR. This Office of Immigration Statistics *Fact Sheet* provides definitions for terms related to LPRs and descriptive characteristics of persons who became family-sponsored LPRs in the United States during 2004.

The data presented in this fact sheet were derived from approved applications for LPR status that are maintained in the Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS) of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security.

DEFINING “LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENT”

A legal permanent resident (LPR) is a foreign national who has been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States. LPRs, more commonly known as “green card” recipients, are authorized to live and work permanently in the United States.

The immigration laws of the U.S. government give high priority for LPR status to immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. Preference categories with annual limits are used to designate other priority groups for LPR status. These include: 1) family-sponsored preferences – sponsored by certain family members, annual limit of 226,000 to 480,000; 2) employment-based preferences – sponsored by employers, annual limit of 140,000 plus unused family-sponsored preferences in the previous year; and 3) diversity – nationals of countries with low rates of immigration to the United States, annual limit of 50,000 in 2004. Other major categories of foreign nationals who may be eligible for LPR status include refugees and asylees.

FAMILY-SPONSORED LPRs

The term “family-sponsored LPRs” refers to LPR principals and their dependents whose legal permanent resident status was based on a family relationship between the principal and an LPR or U.S. citizen. This category includes immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and family preference LPRs and typically accounts

for the majority of the LPR flow in a given year (see Figure 1).

Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens

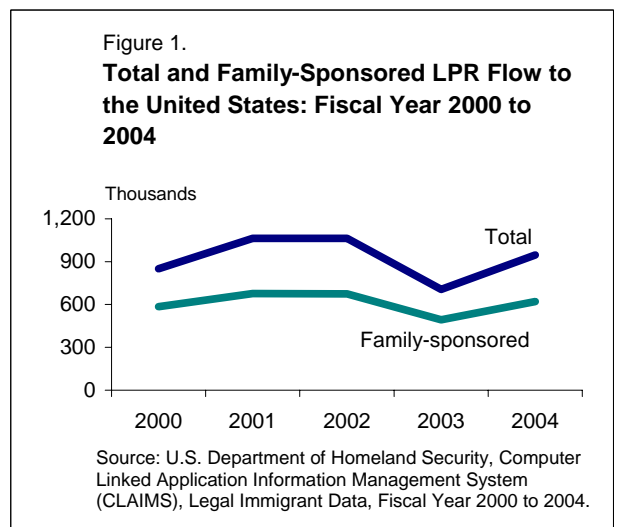
The spouses, parents, and unmarried children (under the age of 21) of U.S. citizens are classified as *immediate relatives*. This category is not subject to annual limits and typically makes up approximately 40 percent or more of the annual LPR flow. In 2004, immediate relatives of U.S. citizens accounted for 406,074 or 65 percent of the total 620,429 family-sponsored LPRs.

Family Preferences

An LPR who obtained a “green card” based on the sponsorship of a family member, but is not an immediate relative of a U.S. citizen, is defined as a *family-preference LPR*. Family preferences represented 214,355 or 35 percent of family-sponsored LPRs in 2004.

The family preference includes four categories:

- *First Preference: Unmarried Adult Children of U.S. Citizens.* Includes sons and daughters of U.S. citizens over 21 years of age and their children.
- *Second Preference: Spouses, Children, and Unmarried Adult Children of LPRs.* Includes spouses, minor children and unmarried adult children (over 21 years of age) of LPRs.



Homeland Security

Office of Immigration Statistics
Management Directorate

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of All LPRs and Family-Sponsored LPRs: Fiscal Year 2004

Characteristic	All LPRs		Family-sponsored LPRs					
			Total		Immediate relatives		Family preference	
Age	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	946,142	100.0	620,429	100.0	406,074	100.0	214,355	100.0
0 to 14 years	137,741	14.6	88,992	14.3	43,025	10.6	45,967	21.4
15 to 24 years	164,347	17.4	119,921	19.3	70,251	17.3	49,670	23.2
25 to 34 years	268,327	28.4	169,034	27.2	130,534	32.1	38,500	18.0
35 to 44 years	183,655	19.4	98,061	15.8	59,906	14.8	38,155	17.8
45 to 54 years	94,884	10.0	61,609	9.9	32,752	8.1	28,857	13.5
55 to 64 years	53,866	5.7	44,245	7.1	33,264	8.2	10,981	5.1
65 years and over	43,282	4.6	38,535	6.2	36,320	8.9	2,215	1.0
Unknown	40	--	32	--	22	--	10	--
Sex								
Male	430,662	45.5	261,003	42.1	162,057	39.9	98,946	46.2
Female	515,314	54.5	359,425	57.9	244,016	60.1	115,409	53.8
Unknown	166	--	1	--	1	--	--	--
Marital Status								
Single	346,185	36.6	212,133	34.2	82,180	20.2	129,953	60.6
Married	561,886	59.4	381,988	61.6	302,850	74.6	79,138	36.9
Other	35,770	3.8	25,876	4.2	20,765	5.1	5,111	2.4
Unknown	2,301	0.2	432	0.1	279	0.1	153	0.1
Country of Birth								
Mexico	175,364	18.5	162,181	26.1	99,718	24.6	62,463	29.1
Philippines	57,827	6.1	42,114	6.8	24,708	6.1	17,406	8.1
China	51,156	5.4	34,605	5.6	20,947	5.2	13,658	6.4
India	70,116	7.4	30,249	4.9	16,942	4.2	13,307	6.2
Dominican Republic	30,492	3.2	30,186	4.9	12,087	3.0	18,099	8.4
Vietnam	31,514	3.3	25,228	4.1	10,338	2.5	14,890	6.9
Colombia	18,678	2.0	15,956	2.6	12,945	3.2	3,011	1.4
Jamaica	14,414	1.5	13,707	2.2	8,496	2.1	5,211	2.4
Korea	19,678	2.1	10,995	1.8	8,536	2.1	2,459	1.1
Peru	11,781	1.2	9,417	1.5	7,062	1.7	2,355	1.1
Other	465,122	49.2	245,791	39.6	184,295	45.4	61,496	28.7

-- Figure rounds to 0.0. Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS), Legal Immigrant Data, Fiscal Year 2000 to 2004.

- *Third Preference: Married Sons and Daughters of U.S. Citizens.* Includes married sons and daughters (regardless of age) of U.S. citizens and their spouses and children.
- *Fourth Preference: Brothers and Sisters.* Includes brothers and sisters (and their spouses and children) of U.S. citizens aged 21 and over.

APPLICATION PROCESS

In order to obtain LPR status as an immediate relative of a U.S. citizen or family preference, a Petition for Alien Relative (Form I-130) must first be approved by USCIS. This form must be submitted by an LPR or U.S. citizen. Sponsors must be able to prove that they can support their relatives at 125 percent above the federal poverty guidelines. U.S. citizens may sponsor their spouses, unmarried and married children, siblings and parents.

LPRs may only sponsor spouses and unmarried children.

When an immigrant visa number becomes available from the Department of State, the family-sponsored relative may immigrate or apply for adjustment of status if in the United States. Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens must follow the procedures outlined above but do not need to wait for an immigrant visa number to become available before applying for an immigrant visa or adjustment of status.

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIVES

Table 1 compares the demographic characteristics of all persons who became LPRs during 2004 to those of family-sponsored LPRs. Persons younger than 25 years of age made up a larger proportion of family-preference LPRs (45 percent) than of immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (28 percent). Three out of five

family-preference LPRs were single compared to one out of five immediate relatives (partially due to higher numbers of children). A larger proportion of family-preference LPRs were from Mexico (29 percent) compared to all LPRs (18 percent). In 2004, there were almost twice as many immediate relative LPRs as family-preference LPRs, however, larger proportions of LPRs from the Dominican Republic (18,099) and Vietnam (14,890) were family sponsored. In addition, almost all LPRs from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica were family-sponsored LPRs, compared to less than half of all LPRs from India.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Office of Immigration Statistics web page at uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics.

(Edited November 2005)