

Characteristics of Diversity Legal Permanent Residents: 2004

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Hundreds of thousands of immigrants become legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States every year. Approximately 50,000 of these are diversity LPRs who were granted LPR status through a diversity lottery. This Office of Immigration Statistics *Fact Sheet* provides definitions for terms related to LPRs and descriptive characteristics of persons who became diversity 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.

DIVERSITY LPRs

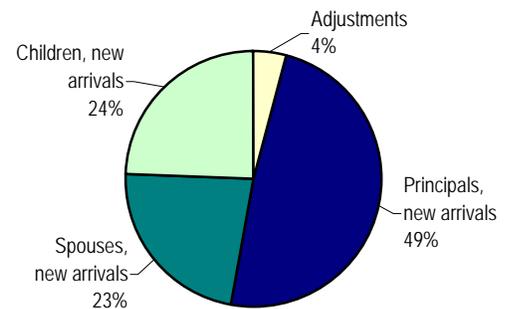
The term “diversity LPRs” refers to LPR principals and their dependents whose legal permanent resident status is based on selection from a diversity lottery. Nearly all diversity LPRs are new arrivals and the remainder have adjusted their status after living in the United States (see Figure 1). The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program was established under the Immigration

Act of 1990, enacted in 1994, and made 55,000 immigrant visas available each year to nationals from countries with fewer than 50,000 LPR admissions during the preceding five years (this limit includes family-preference and employment-based LPRs and immediate relatives of U.S. citizens). Since 1999, 5,000 of those visas have been allocated for use if needed under NACARA (Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act), making the current diversity limit 50,000 plus unused NACARA visas. In addition, countries are divided into six geographic regions, where regions with lower rates of migration to the United States receive more visas.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible for participation in the Diversity Lottery Program, either the applicant or his/her spouse must be a native of a country that is eligible to participate. It is also possible to qualify if a parent was born in a qualifying country. In addition, the applicant must have a high school diploma or equivalent (defined as successful completion of a 12-year course of elementary and secondary education), or have two years of work experience in the preceding five years in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience.

Figure 1.
Percent Distribution of Diversity LPRs by Class of Admission: 2004



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

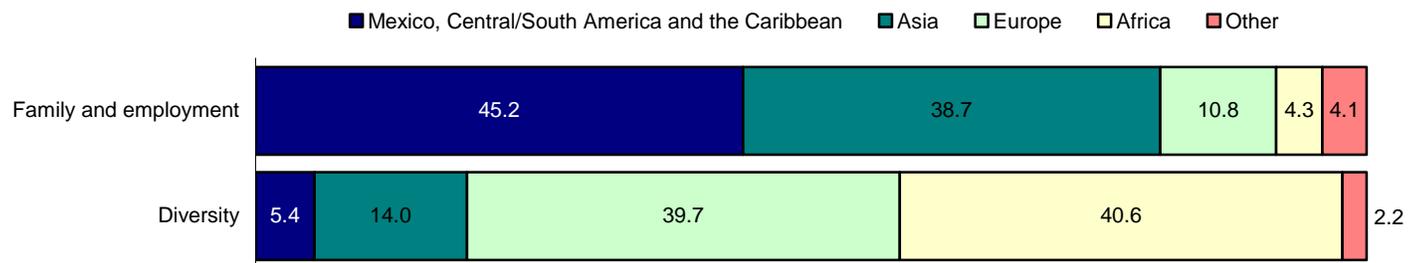


Homeland Security

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Figure 2.

Percent Distribution of Family and Employment LPRs Compared to Diversity LPRs by Region of Origin: Fiscal Year 2004



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS), Legal Immigrant Data, FY2004

APPLICATION PROCESS

In order to obtain LPR status as diversity immigrants, applicants must submit an Electronic Diversity Visa Entry Form via the Department of State website. Entries must include names, dates and places of birth, and digital photographs of the applicant, spouse, and unmarried children under the age of 21 (including natural, adopted, and step-children). This is the case even if the spouse or child does not currently reside with the applicant and/or will not immigrate with them.

Millions of foreign nationals apply for the diversity visa program each year. Approximately 85,000 of these applicants are chosen by a computer-generated random lottery drawing. The diversity lottery ends when the total number of diversity visas has been issued or the fiscal year ends. No single independent country may receive more than 7 percent of the total diversity visas. Winners are permitted to bring their spouse and unmarried children under age 21 with them.

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIVES

Table 1 compares the demographic characteristics of all persons who became LPRs during 2004 to those of diversity LPRs. Diversity LPRs are slightly younger than all LPRs. In addition, a larger proportion of diversity LPRs are male and single than all LPRs. Because the diversity lottery program offers visas to nationals of countries with low rates of immigration to the United States, the countries of birth of diversity immigrants are vastly different from those of the majority of LPRs. The top ten countries of origin for diversity immigrants listed in Table 1 accounted for

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of All LPRs and Diversity LPRs: Fiscal Year 2004

Age	All LPRs		Diversity LPRs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	946,142	100.0	50,084	100.0
0 to 14 years.....	137,741	14.6	9,505	19.0
15 to 24 years.....	164,347	17.4	9,921	19.8
25 to 34 years.....	268,327	28.4	17,228	34.4
35 to 44 years.....	183,655	19.4	8,628	17.2
45 to 54 years.....	94,884	10.0	3,687	7.4
55 to 64 years.....	53,866	5.7	952	1.9
65 years and over.....	43,282	4.6	163	0.3
Unknown.....	40	--	--	--
Sex				
Male.....	430,662	45.5	27,396	54.7
Female.....	515,314	54.5	22,686	45.3
Unknown.....	166	--	2	--
Marital status				
Single.....	346,185	36.6	24,145	48.2
Married.....	561,886	59.4	25,031	50.0
Other.....	35,770	3.8	858	1.7
Unknown.....	2,301	0.2	50	0.1
Country of birth				
Ethiopia.....	8,237	0.9	4,517	9.0
Ukraine.....	13,655	1.4	2,975	5.9
Nigeria.....	9,374	1.0	2,959	5.9
Poland.....	14,250	1.5	2,850	5.7
Kenya.....	5,323	0.6	2,730	5.5
Bulgaria.....	4,194	0.4	2,342	4.7
Morocco.....	4,128	0.4	2,251	4.5
Albania.....	3,834	0.4	2,075	4.1
Nepal.....	2,842	0.3	1,875	3.7
Bangladesh.....	8,061	0.9	1,756	3.5
Other.....	872,244	92.2	23,754	47.4

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

53 percent of all diversity LPRs, compared to only 8 percent of all LPRs. Figure 2 compares the regions of origin of diversity LPRs to those of family-sponsored and employment-based LPRs for 2004. The majority of diversity LPRs were from Europe and Africa, while most family-sponsored and employment-based

LPRs originated in Asia and Central/South America (including Mexico).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Office of Immigration Statistics web site at: www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics.