

# U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents: 2021

IRENE GIBSON

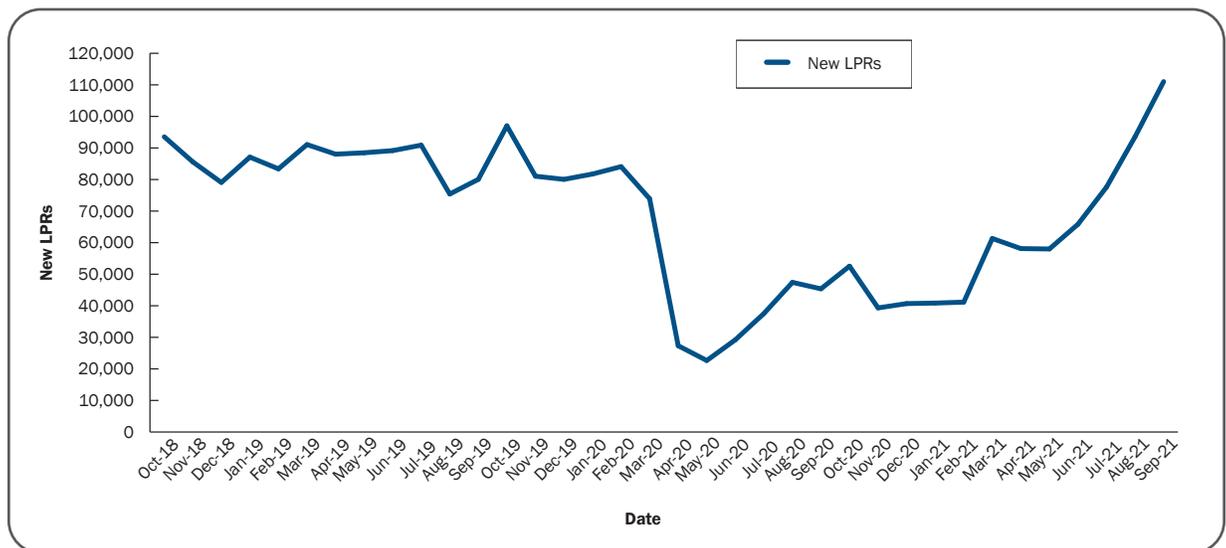
Immigration law defines a lawful permanent resident (LPR) or “green card” recipient as a foreign national who has been granted “the status of having been lawfully accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States as an immigrant in accordance with the immigration laws, such status not having changed.”<sup>1</sup> LPRs may live and work permanently anywhere in the United States, own property, and attend schools, colleges, and universities. They may also join the Armed Forces or apply to become U.S. citizens if they meet certain additional eligibility requirements. The 2021 *Lawful Permanent Residents Annual Flow Report*, authored by the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), presents information obtained from LPR applications on the number and characteristics of persons who became LPRs in the United States during Fiscal Year 2021.<sup>2,3</sup>

## SUMMARY

About 740 thousand persons became LPRs in 2021, the second-lowest level since 2003. The majority of these new LPRs (69 percent) were already present in the United States when they were granted lawful permanent resident status. About 61 percent were granted LPR status based on a family relationship with a U.S. citizen or current LPR. The leading countries of birth of new LPRs were Mexico, India, and People’s Republic of China (China). In 2021, there was a 5 percent increase in grants of LPR status compared to 2020, but grants were 28 percent lower than the 2011-2020 average.

Figure 1.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Month: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

<sup>1</sup> 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(20).

<sup>2</sup> In this report, “years” refer to fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30.

<sup>3</sup> The 2021 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* and other OIS reports contain additional context. Not all numbers reported are contained in this report’s tables.



**Homeland Security**

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Largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LPR flows in 2021 were not representative of typical trends. Travel restrictions and processing slowdowns generally resulted in fewer inflows, while foreign-born residents within the United States also confronted [immigration status-specific COVID-19 vulnerabilities](#).<sup>4</sup> Notably, due to inflow limitations, in 2021 LPR employment-based preference limits exceeded family-based preference limits for the first time since the implementation of modern limits in 1992.

## THE LAWFUL IMMIGRATION PROCESS

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides various bases for obtaining LPR status. These bases include (but are not limited to) sponsorship by a close family member who is a U.S. citizen or LPR, sponsorship by an employer, making investments that create a certain number of U.S. jobs, being from countries with relatively low levels of immigration to the United States, and holding refugee or asylee status for at least 1 year. Each person seeking LPR status is subject to a background check as part of the adjudication of their benefit request.

### New Arrivals versus Adjustments of Status

Two paths to LPR status are available, depending on whether a foreign national applies for an immigrant visa abroad or seeks LPR status from within the United States. Foreign nationals who live abroad may apply for an immigrant visa at a U.S. Department of State (DOS) consular office after receiving an approved petition or application. Once issued an immigrant visa by DOS, the foreign national may seek admission to the United States and become an LPR when admitted at a port of entry. This report refers to these LPRs as *new arrivals*. Foreign nationals who are already present in the United States may file a Form I-485, *Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status*, with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These applicants may apply for authorization to accept employment and travel authorization while their Form I-485 is pending. If their applications are approved, they are generally granted LPR status at the time of approval.<sup>5</sup> This report refers to these LPRs as *adjustments of status*.

### Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens

The largest category of new LPRs consists of U.S. citizens' immediate relatives, defined as spouses, unmarried children under age 21, parents of U.S. citizens who are age 21 and over, and certain widows or widowers of U.S. citizens.<sup>6</sup> Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens are not subject to numerical limits and typically account for over 40 percent of new LPRs annually.

### Preference Immigration

The term *preference* is used in immigration law to designate numerically limited family and employment priority categories for LPR status. The INA specifies the worldwide level of preference

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see Gibson, Irene, Marc R. Rosenblum, Bryan Baker, and Alexander Eastman, May 2021. "COVID-19 Vulnerability by Immigration Status," DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/research\\_reports/research\\_paper\\_covid-19\\_vulnerability\\_by\\_immigration\\_status\\_may\\_2021.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/research_reports/research_paper_covid-19_vulnerability_by_immigration_status_may_2021.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Upon approval, certain classes of admission, such as refugees and asylees, receive credit for additional time in LPR status prior to approval, affecting when they are eligible to naturalize.

<sup>6</sup> The term *children* includes orphans adopted abroad or coming to the United States to be adopted.

immigration in these two groupings. (See **APPENDIX** for details on the calculation of these limits for 2021.)

*Family-sponsored preferences* consist of four categories of relatives:

- First preference (F-1), a U.S. citizen's unmarried sons and daughters (age 21 years or older) and their children;
- Second preference, an LPR's spouse and children (F-2A), or an LPR's unmarried sons and daughters (age 21 years or older) and their children (F-2B);
- Third preference (F-3), a U.S. citizen's married sons and daughters and their spouses and children; and
- Fourth preference (F-4), siblings of a U.S. citizen (if the citizen is age 21 years or older) and their spouses and children.

The annual limit for family-sponsored preferences depends on the previous year's immigration levels and is set at a minimum of 226,000.

Immediate relatives and family-preference LPRs are collectively referred to as *family-based immigrants*. All family-based immigrants must be petitioned for by their U.S. citizen or LPR relative.<sup>7</sup> Generally, that relative must financially sponsor the immigrant.<sup>8</sup>

*Employment-based preferences* consist of five categories of workers (and their spouses and children):

- EB-1 priority workers (e.g., persons of extraordinary ability, outstanding professors and researchers, and certain multinational executives and managers);
- EB-2 professionals with advanced degrees or persons of exceptional ability;
- EB-3 skilled workers (e.g., those with at least 2 years of training or experience), professionals (those who hold baccalaureate degrees or a foreign equivalent degree), and unskilled workers (e.g., those with less than 2 years of training or experience);
- EB-4 "special" immigrants (e.g., ministers, religious workers, and employees of the U.S. Government abroad); and
- EB-5 immigrant investors.

The annual employment-based preference limit is equal to 140,000 plus any unused visas in the family-sponsored preference categories from the previous year. Notably, over half of family-sponsored preference visas were unused in 2020, resulting in the highest number of employment-based preference visas being available in 2021 since the implementation of modern limits in 1992, and the first time that the employment-based preference limit has exceeded the family-based preference limit.

Many EB-1 and EB-2, and all EB-3 immigrants must be sponsored by a U.S. employer. In addition, most EB-2 and EB-3 petitions first require that the Secretary of the Department of Labor certify that sufficient U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified, and

<sup>7</sup> In certain circumstances, the widow or widower of a U.S. citizen may file a self-petition; see 8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(2)(A)(i) and 8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(A)(ii).

<sup>8</sup> Financial sponsorship includes signing an affidavit of support agreeing to make reimbursement should the sponsored relative receive any means-tested public benefits while in LPR status and before they are credited with 40 quarters (approximately 10 years) of work.

available could not be found in the area of intended employment, and that the employment will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. However, some EB-1 and EB-2 employment-based immigrants may self-petition and are not subject to labor certification and job offer requirements. EB-5 immigrants must invest funds at amounts specified by regulation into a new commercial enterprise that will create at least ten full-time jobs for qualifying employees. In certain rural areas or areas with high unemployment, the required minimum investment amount is reduced.

Most EB-4 special immigrants file self-petitions, though some are the beneficiaries of petitions filed by employers. There are several categories of special immigrants eligible for EB-4 visas, some of largest categories being special immigrant juveniles,<sup>9</sup> certain ministers of religion and religious workers, and certain current and former employees of the U.S. Government abroad.<sup>10</sup>

Special immigrant visas (SIVs) were also particularly important in 2021 during the Afghan evacuation. Of the 82,015 Afghans evacuated during Operation Allies Welcome, 3,290 were SIV holders, and 36,821 were SIV applicants.<sup>11</sup> Even though SIVs are an EB-4 visa category, Afghan SIV applicants are not counted against the EB-4 cap. The numerical limitations of Afghan and Iraqi SIVs are established by separate statutes. Efforts to resettle these evacuees within the United States are ongoing.

In 2021, the limit on preference immigration was 488,288, which included 226,000 in the family-sponsored preference categories and 262,288 in the employment-based preference categories (see **APPENDIX**). Again, this is the first time the employment-based preference limit has exceeded the family-based preference limit since the implementation of the INA. The INA also specifies per-country limits equal to 7 percent of the combined total number of visas allotted to family- and employment-based preferences. Dependent areas of foreign states are limited to 2 percent of this combined total.<sup>12</sup> In 2021, these limits amounted to 34,180 preference immigrants from any single country and 9,766 preference immigrants from any single dependent area.

## Diversity Visas

The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is designed to allow immigration from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States, defined by the INA as countries with fewer than 50,000 foreign nationals granted LPR status within family- and employment-based categories during the preceding 5 years. In 2021, the diversity visa limit was 54,850.<sup>13</sup> The INA further limits

<sup>9</sup> Notably, special immigrant juvenile visa numbers have been oversubscribed for several years, in particular for Northern Triangle Countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) and Mexico.

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see USCIS website <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-fourth-preference-eb-4>.

<sup>11</sup> DHS, Department of Homeland Security Operation Allies Welcome Afghan Evacuee Report, December 2021.

<sup>12</sup> For more information regarding independent states, dependent areas, and visa allocations, see 9 Foreign Affairs Manual 503.2 at <https://fam.state.gov/FAM/09FAM/09FAM050302.html>.

<sup>13</sup> The INA establishes an overall diversity visa limit of 55,000 per year, which in the past has been reduced by 5,000 annually to offset Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) adjustments. In recent years, there have been many fewer new NACARA adjustments than numbers offset. By 2021, all earlier years' NACARA adjustments had been offset, leaving only the immediate prior year's NACARA adjustments remaining to be offset. At the time the diversity visa lottery was run, it was estimated that there would be about 150 NACARA adjustments that would apply to the diversity visa limit; thus the final limit was determined as 54,850.

the number of diversity visas per country to 7 percent of the worldwide total, or 3,840 in 2021, and limits the number of diversity visas across six broad world regions based on regional immigration levels during the preceding 5 years so that high admission regions are eligible for fewer diversity visas. Nationals of eligible countries must have either a high school degree (or equivalent) or qualifying work experience to apply to the diversity visa program. Eligible foreign nationals who apply for the diversity program are randomly selected based on the allocations described above. Foreign nationals who are selected may then apply for a diversity visa.

## Refugee and Asylee Adjustments of Status

The United States provides humanitarian protections to foreign nationals who have experienced past persecution or have a well-founded fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Foreign nationals who have experienced or may experience this type of harm may apply for protection from outside the United States as a refugee, along with their spouse and/or children. If the foreign national is physically present in the United States or is arriving at a port of entry, that individual may apply for this protection as an asylum applicant, along with their spouse and/or children.

As prescribed in the Refugee Act of 1980, the President, after consultation with Congress, establishes the number of foreign nationals who may be admitted to the United States as refugees each year. Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States has accepted more than 3.7 million refugees and asylees. The ceiling on refugee admissions was set between 70,000 and 85,000 each year from 2003 to 2016 but has varied in recent years. The ceiling was initially set at 110,000 in 2017 but was later reduced to 50,000 through a pair of Executive Orders.<sup>14</sup> The ceiling continued to decline over the next 3 years to 45,000 in 2018, 30,000 in 2019, and 18,000 in 2020. Though the 2021 ceiling was originally set at 15,000, in May 2021 the new Biden administration raised the ceiling to 62,500. Of the 82,015 Afghans evacuated during Operation Allies Welcome, 4,050 were refugee referrals.<sup>15</sup> There is no numerical limit on the number of people who may be granted asylum each year.

The INA requires refugees to apply for adjustment to LPR status 1 year after admission into the United States. Asylees are eligible to apply 1 year after they are granted asylum but are not required to do so. Refugee and asylee adjustments of status are not subject to numerical limits.<sup>16</sup>

## Other Admission Categories

Remaining admission categories are generally limited to foreign nationals admitted under special legislation, and admission or adjustment may be subject to numerical limits. In 2000, the

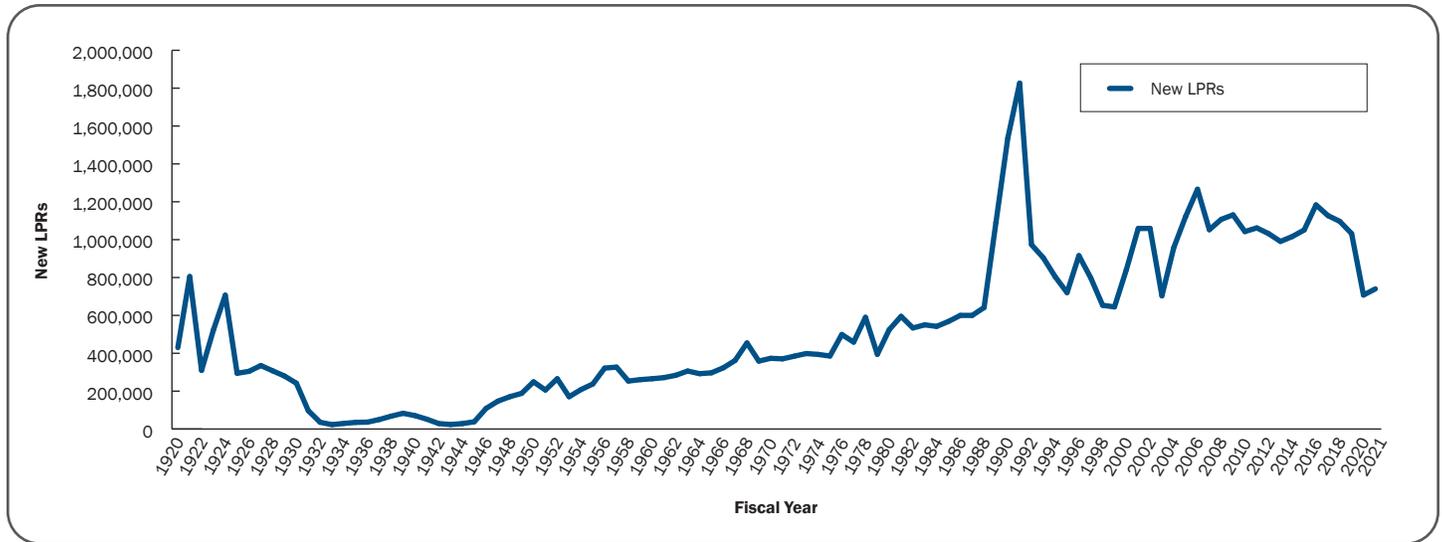
<sup>14</sup> Executive Orders 13769 and 13780, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States."

<sup>15</sup> DHS, Department of Homeland Security Operation Allies Welcome Afghan Evacuee Report, December 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Until 2005, an annual limit of 10,000 existed on the number of foreign nationals authorized to adjust status as asylees. The REAL ID Act removed that cap.

Figure 2.

New Lawful Permanent Residents: Fiscal Years 1920 to 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (including the Battered Immigrant Women Protection Act) created the T and U nonimmigrant statuses permitting qualifying victims of trafficking and certain other crimes to be admitted as nonimmigrants and then to petition for adjustment to LPR status. Certain foreign nationals admitted as parolees may adjust status from within the United States, and children born abroad to LPRs may enter as new arrival LPRs.

### Eligibility for Naturalization

Most LPRs who are at least 18 years of age are eligible to apply for citizenship after meeting certain requirements. These requirements generally include holding LPR status and residence in the United States for 5 years (or 3 years for those married to a U.S. citizen) and passing tests in English language and civics (unless an exemption or waiver applies for one or both tests). Typically, children in LPR status and under the age of 18 may automatically acquire citizenship through a U.S. citizen parent.

## TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

### Historical Trends and Characteristics

The annual LPR flow has exhibited a general upward trend from 1944, increasing from an average of 250,000 new LPRs per year during the 1950s to averaging over 1 million per year from 1989 (Figure 2). These increases are partly explained by changes in immigration law, including elimination in 1965 of the National Origins system<sup>17</sup> and an increase in the annual immigration ceiling in 1990. The spike in lawful immigration from 1989 to 1991 resulted from the legalization of 2.7 million unauthorized

<sup>17</sup> Under the National Origins system included in the original version of the INA passed in 1952, immigration limits were established on a per-country basis, with each country's quota set by a formula based on the national origins of the U.S. population in the 1920 census.

immigrants under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. The recent period (2016-2020) exhibited the longest continuous decrease of new LPRs since the 1940s (1940-1944).<sup>18</sup> In other words, LPR admissions had fallen for four consecutive years even before the global pandemic contributed to their falling to a 17-year low in 2020. In 2021, LPR numbers remained well below their average for the post-1990 period, but by August monthly numbers had rebounded to pre-COVID levels.

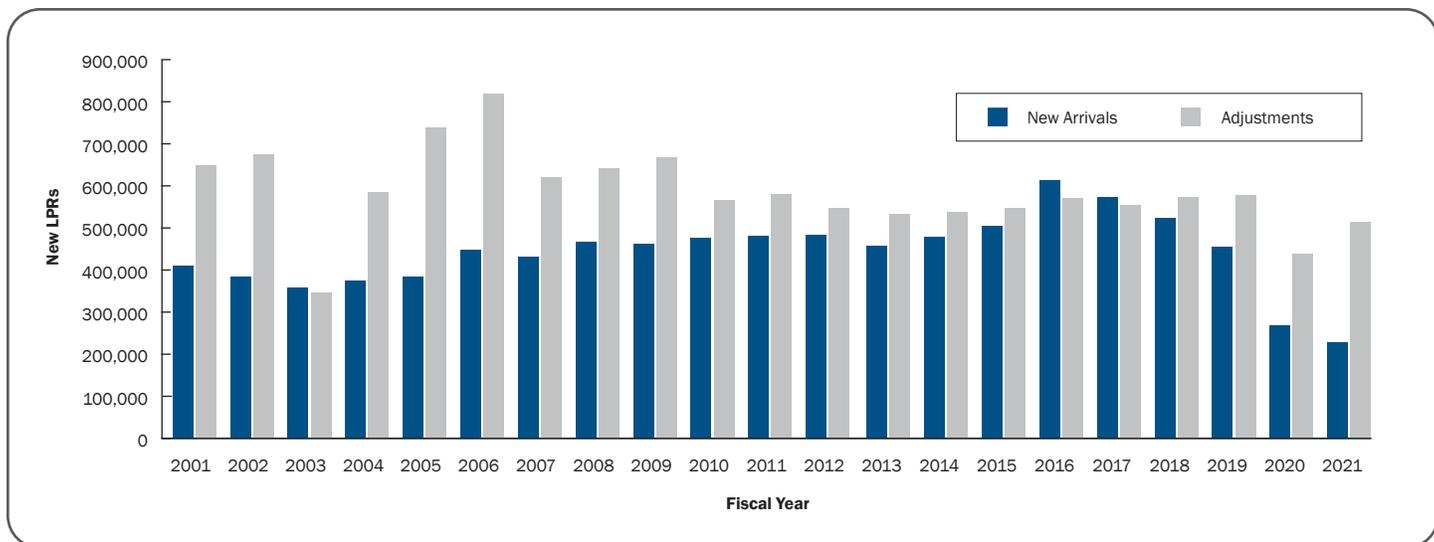
The United States has granted just under 10 million individuals LPR status in the past decade (2012-2021). Of these, 54 percent were already present in the United States in another status and 46 percent were new arrivals. Sixty-five percent received LPR status as family-sponsored immigrants and 15 percent under employment-based preferences. Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens consistently made up the largest subcategory of LPRs, comprising 46 percent of total LPRs. The largest shares of new LPRs in this period were born in Mexico (14.5 percent), China (6.8 percent), and India (6.6 percent).

The United States granted LPR status to 740,002 individuals in 2021, a 5 percent increase in grants of LPR status compared to 2020, but 28 percent lower than the 2011-2020 average. New LPR counts were at their second-lowest point in 17 years. Notably, these low numbers came almost entirely from family-sponsored immigrants, while the numbers of employment-based preference LPRs increased. This is largely due to the fact that many family-sponsored preference visas were unused during the pandemic due to embassy closures, and immigration law reallocates any unused family-sponsored preference visas in a fiscal year to employment-based preferences in the subsequent fiscal year. As a result, employment-based preference limits exceeded family-based

<sup>18</sup> This excludes the period of 1992-1996, during which the LPR flow was returning to normal levels after its historic 1991 peak.

Figure 3.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Type (Adjustments of Status and New Arrivals): Fiscal Years 2001 to 2021**



Note: Data depicted in this figure are updated from previous reports to correct for previous mis-categorization, where some adjustments were inaccurately marked as new arrivals. Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

preference limits in 2021 for the first time since the implementation of modern limits in 1992.

**Processing Times During COVID-19**

The most evident reason that admissions and adjustments were so low in 2021 was the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in travel restrictions, processing delays, and facility closures in 2020 that significantly impacted processing times in 2021. U.S. consulates and embassies around the world suspended routine visa services for varying lengths of time depending on location, which affected submission of forms DS-230 and DS-260 (see data section below). For example, as of September 2021 nearly half a million immigrant visa cases (491,405) were pending,<sup>19</sup> over five times the amount pending just before the pandemic in January 2020 (about 75,000).<sup>20</sup> Due to such backlogs and embassy closures, 122,288 family-sponsored preference visas were unused in 2020, resulting in 34 percent more visas being available in 2021 than were available on average in the previous decade, and the highest number of employment-based preference visas being available since the enactment of the INA.

Table 1.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Category of admission	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
New arrivals	453,718	44.0	268,153	37.9	227,206	30.7
Adjustments of status	578,047	56.0	439,209	62.1	512,796	69.3

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Type and Class of Admission<sup>21</sup>**

Since 2000, the majority of LPRs have typically been adjustments (about 57 percent on average), rather than new arrivals (Table 1, Figure 3).<sup>22</sup> Adjustments made up even higher percentages of LPRs in 2021; with the drop in new arrivals, adjustments accounted for 69 percent of the total, the highest proportion since 1991.

Family-sponsored immigrants (including immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and family-sponsored preference immigrants) represented 61 percent of total new LPRs in 2021 (Table 2, Figure 4). The largest share of family-sponsored immigrants were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (52 percent of total new LPRs in 2021). Spouses of U.S. citizens made up 34 percent of all new LPRs, parents made up 11 percent, and children (including adopted children) made up 7.2 percent.

Family-sponsored preference LPRs made up 8.9 percent of all new LPRs in 2021, down 8.3 percentage points from 2020. In terms of total count, family-sponsored preferences in 2021 were at the lowest level since 1966, and nearly half the level of 2020 (the second lowest number of family-sponsored preferences since 1975). The largest proportion of family preference LPRs was in the second preference class (spouses and children of LPRs) and made up 5.3 percent of new LPRs in 2021. The fourth preference class (siblings of U.S. citizens) accounted for 1.8 percent of new LPRs.

<sup>19</sup> Immigrant Visa Backlog Report – September 2021, Department of State. Web. 24 Feb 2022. <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/iv-backlog-report/IV-report-September-2021.pdf>

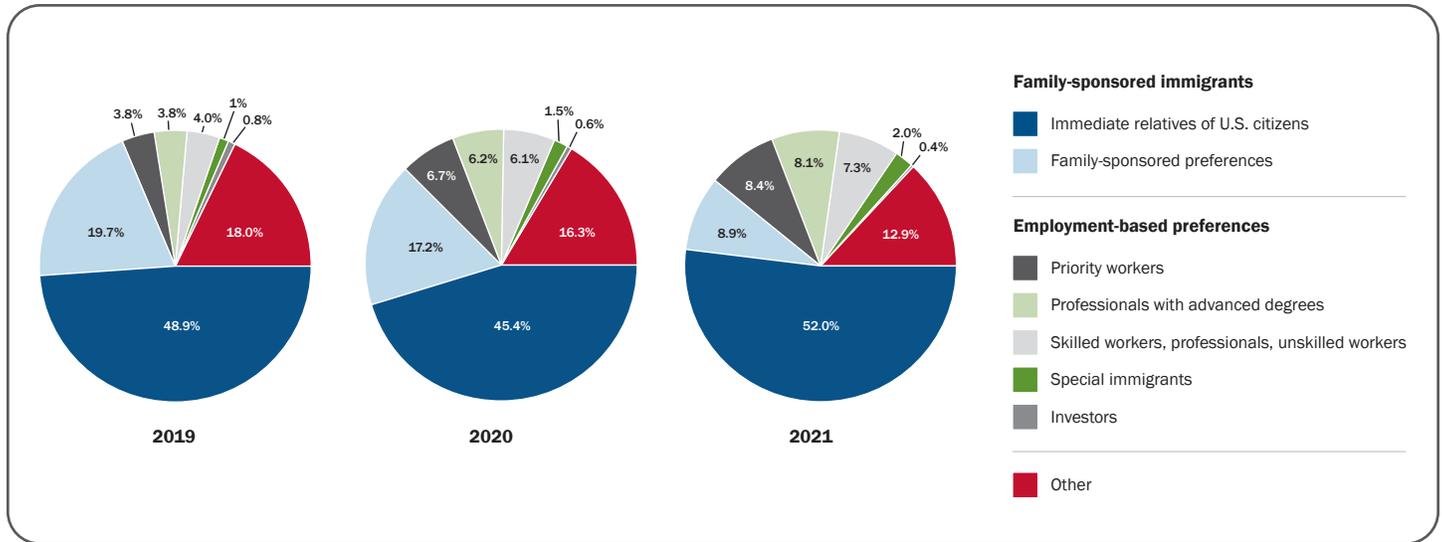
<sup>20</sup> Julie Shift, Consular Affairs Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services, Special Briefing March 1, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/briefing-with-consular-affairs-acting-deputy-assistant-secretary-for-visa-services-julie-m-stuff-on-the-current-status-of-immigrant-visa-processing-at-embassies-and-consulates/>.

<sup>21</sup> In this report, *type of admission* distinguishes new arrivals (who receive admission to the United States at the same time as admission to LPR status) and adjustments of status (who are already within the United States). *Class of admission* refers to category of admission to LPR status rather than admission to the United States.

<sup>22</sup> Notably, this was not the case in 2003, 2016, and 2017, when there were more new arrivals than adjustments.

**Figure 4.**

**Class of Admission: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 2.**

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Major Class of Admission: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Category of admission	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
Family-sponsored immigrants	709,904	68.8	442,708	62.6	451,086	61.0
Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens	505,765	49.0	321,148	45.4	385,396	52.1
Spouses	304,334	29.5	195,718	27.7	251,825	34.0
Parents	140,128	13.6	88,051	12.4	80,515	10.9
Children*	61,303	5.9	37,379	5.3	53,056	7.2
Family-sponsored preferences	204,139	19.8	121,560	17.2	65,690	8.9
Unmarried sons/daughters of U.S. citizens	24,497	2.4	11,383	1.6	6,837	0.9
Spouses and children of lawful permanent residents	93,398	9.1	51,701	7.3	39,126	5.3
Married sons/daughters of U.S. citizens	25,213	2.4	13,930	2.0	6,625	0.9
Siblings of U.S. citizens	61,031	5.9	44,546	6.3	13,102	1.8
Employment-based preferences	139,457	13.5	148,959	21.1	193,338	26.1
Priority workers	39,471	3.8	47,388	6.7	61,451	8.3
Professionals with advanced degrees	39,505	3.8	43,666	6.2	59,834	8.1
Skilled workers, professionals, unskilled workers	41,787	4.1	43,218	6.1	54,099	7.3
Special immigrants	9,609	0.9	10,704	1.5	15,315	2.1
Investors	9,085	0.9	3,983	0.6	2,639	0.4
Diversity programs	43,463	4.2	25,028	3.5	15,145	2.0
Refugees and Asylees	106,911	10.4	63,875	9.0	56,397	7.6
Refugee adjustments	80,908	7.8	44,404	6.3	35,847	4.8
Asylee adjustments	26,003	2.5	19,471	2.8	20,550	2.8
Parolees	16	-	13	-	13	-
Other categories	32,014	3.1	26,779	3.8	24,023	3.2
Children born abroad to alien residents	60	-	30	-	75	-
Certain Iraqis and Afghans employed by U.S. Government and their spouses and children	8,081	0.8	9,727	1.4	8,303	1.1
Cancellation of removal	4,033	0.4	3,685	0.5	5,017	0.7
Subject to annual limit	3,585	0.3	3,420	0.5	4,735	0.6
Not subject to limit (NACARA† Section 203)	448	-	265	-	282	-
Victims of human trafficking	818	0.1	866	0.1	942	0.1
Victims of crimes and their spouses and children	18,442	1.8	11,937	1.7	9,257	1.3
Other‡	514	-	461	0.1	387	0.1

\* Includes adoptees.

† Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997.

‡ Primarily consists of those admitted or adjusted under special legislation.

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Employment-based preference LPRs constituted 26 percent of all new LPRs in 2021, the highest proportion in over a decade,<sup>23</sup> and up 5 percentage points from 2020. The largest share of employment preference LPRs were in the first preference class (priority workers), making up 8.3 percent of new LPRs in 2021. The second and third preference categories (professionals with advanced degrees and skilled workers, professionals, and unskilled workers) made up 8.1 percent and 7.3 percent of new LPRs, respectively.

Refugee adjustments accounted for 4.8 percent of new LPRs in 2021, and asylee adjustments accounted for 2.8 percent. With refugee admissions in 2021 at their lowest count since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 (when current categories were created) and likely their lowest level since World War II, 2021 also saw the lowest count of refugee adjustments of status since 2003.

Diversity immigrants accounted for 2.0 percent of all new LPRs in 2021, the first time that numbers have dropped below 20 thousand and the lowest proportion since the program was established. As the majority of diversity immigrants (90 percent in 2021) are typically new arrivals, COVID-related interruptions likely had a disproportionate impact on diversity admissions.

### Region and Country of Birth

The leading regions of birth of new LPRs in 2021 were Asia (40 percent) and North America (including the Caribbean and Central America) (33 percent) (Table 3). Together, Asia and North America have accounted for at least 70 percent of new LPRs each year since 2008.

In 2021, 15 percent of all foreign nationals granted LPR status were born in Mexico, over two-thirds of whom (68 percent) were adjustments (Tables 3 and 4, Figure 5). Mexico has been the leading source of new LPRs each year since 1978.

Next-leading countries of birth of new LPRs in 2021 were India (13 percent), China (6.7 percent), the Philippines (3.7 percent), and the Dominican Republic (3.3 percent). Among the top ten leading countries of birth for new LPRs,

<sup>23</sup> While the high proportion of employment-based preferences is undoubtedly in part due to the larger numbers of visas available (as already discussed above), in addition, employment-based preferences have historically been more likely to be adjustments (92 percent in 2021) than new arrivals. It is therefore possible that the larger numbers are additionally reflective of this historical trend, as adjustments are by definition less affected by COVID-related interruptions, consular processing delays, and travel restrictions.

**Table 3.**

### New Lawful Permanent Residents by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021 (ranked by 2021 country of birth)

Region/country of birth	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>REGION</b>						
Total.....	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
Africa.....	111,194	10.8	76,649	10.8	66,211	8.9
Asia.....	364,761	35.4	272,597	38.5	295,306	39.9
Europe.....	87,597	8.5	68,994	9.8	61,521	8.3
North America.....	370,860	35.9	222,272	31.4	240,435	32.5
Caribbean.....	138,114	13.4	72,927	10.3	77,558	10.5
Central America.....	65,041	6.3	39,303	5.6	45,413	6.1
Other North America.....	167,705	16.3	110,042	15.6	117,464	15.9
Oceania.....	5,359	0.5	3,998	0.6	4,147	0.6
South America.....	90,850	8.8	62,219	8.8	71,371	9.6
Unknown.....	1,144	0.1	633	0.1	1,011	0.1
<b>COUNTRY</b>						
Total.....	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
Mexico.....	156,052	15.1	100,325	14.2	107,230	14.5
India.....	54,495	5.3	46,363	6.6	93,450	12.6
China, People's Republic... ..	62,248	6.0	41,483	5.9	49,847	6.7
Philippines.....	45,920	4.5	25,491	3.6	27,511	3.7
Dominican Republic.....	49,911	4.8	30,005	4.2	24,553	3.3
Cuba.....	41,641	4.0	16,367	2.3	23,077	3.1
El Salvador.....	27,656	2.7	17,907	2.5	18,668	2.5
Brazil.....	19,825	1.9	16,746	2.4	18,351	2.5
Vietnam.....	39,712	3.8	29,995	4.2	16,312	2.2
Colombia.....	19,841	1.9	11,989	1.7	15,293	2.1
Venezuela.....	15,720	1.5	12,136	1.7	14,412	1.9
Jamaica.....	21,689	2.1	12,826	1.8	13,357	1.8
Nigeria.....	15,888	1.5	12,398	1.8	13,100	1.8
Korea, South.....	18,479	1.8	16,244	2.3	12,351	1.7
Haiti.....	17,253	1.7	9,338	1.3	11,456	1.5
Honduras.....	15,901	1.5	8,277	1.2	10,116	1.4
Canada.....	11,388	1.1	9,526	1.3	9,978	1.3
Pakistan.....	13,921	1.3	10,474	1.5	9,691	1.3
Afghanistan.....	10,136	1.0	11,407	1.6	9,488	1.3
United Kingdom.....	11,337	1.1	9,655	1.4	9,229	1.2
All other countries.....	362,752	35.2	258,410	36.5	232,532	31.4

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 4.**

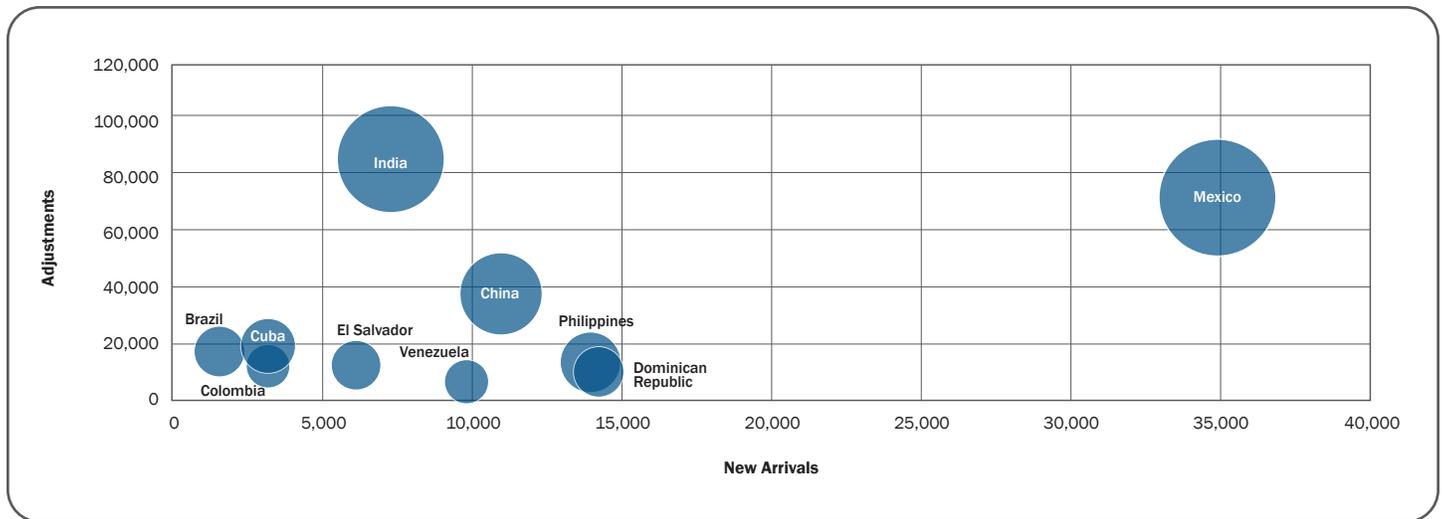
### Type of Admission of New Lawful Permanent Residents for Top Ten Countries of Birth: Fiscal Year 2021

Country of birth	Total	Adjustments		New Arrivals	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mexico.....	107,230	72,339	67.5	34,891	32.5
India.....	93,450	86,204	92.2	7,246	7.8
China, People's Republic.....	49,847	38,885	78.0	10,962	22.0
Philippines.....	27,511	13,580	49.4	13,931	50.6
Dominican Republic.....	24,553	10,433	42.5	14,120	57.5
Cuba.....	23,077	19,988	86.6	3,089	13.4
El Salvador.....	18,668	12,555	67.3	6,113	32.7
Brazil.....	18,351	16,752	91.3	1,599	8.7
Vietnam.....	16,312	6,555	40.2	9,757	59.8
Colombia.....	15,293	12,118	79.2	3,175	20.8

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Figure 5.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Type of Admission, Top Ten Countries of Birth: Fiscal Year 2021**



Note: Circle size is proportional to the number of LPRs.  
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

India-born LPRs had the lowest proportion who gained LPR status as new arrivals (7.8 percent), while Vietnam-born LPRs had the highest proportion (60 percent). Nine of the leading countries of birth in 2021 (each of the top ten excluding Brazil) were also the leading countries of birth of new LPRs from 2012 to 2021, together accounting for an average of 49 percent of new LPRs during this 10-year period.

**State and Metropolitan Area of Residence**

California was the state of residence of nearly one-fifth (18 percent) of foreign nationals granted LPR status in 2021, and nearly one-third (30 percent) of new LPRs residing in California were new arrivals (Tables 5 and 6). The next leading states of residence for new LPRs in 2021 were Florida (11 percent), Texas (11 percent), New York (10 percent), and New Jersey (5.1 percent). Of the top ten states of residence for new LPRs, Virginia had the highest proportion (37 percent) of new arrivals, while Washington had the lowest proportion (24 percent). While the six leading states of residence have been the same for new LPRs every year since 1971, the proportion of new LPRs residing in these six states has decreased from 82 percent in 1990 to 59 percent in 2021 as new LPRs have gradually become more likely to live in other parts of the country. In terms of new LPRs per capita in 2021, New Jersey had the highest number, while West Virginia had the

Table 5.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021 (ranked by 2021 state of residence)**

State of residence	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
California	193,093	18.7	138,996	19.6	135,181	18.3
Florida	118,140	11.5	65,799	9.3	83,227	11.2
Texas	107,955	10.5	74,565	10.5	78,873	10.7
New York	124,026	12.0	81,755	11.6	76,127	10.3
New Jersey	48,754	4.7	30,275	4.3	37,844	5.1
Illinois	37,958	3.7	27,377	3.9	26,228	3.5
Massachusetts	30,834	3.0	22,107	3.1	22,431	3.0
Washington	25,570	2.5	21,549	3.0	22,145	3.0
Virginia	24,784	2.4	18,183	2.6	20,428	2.8
Georgia	27,246	2.6	18,282	2.6	20,033	2.7
Other*	293,405	28.4	208,474	29.5	217,485	29.4

\*Includes unknown, U.S. territories, and Armed Forces posts.  
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 6.

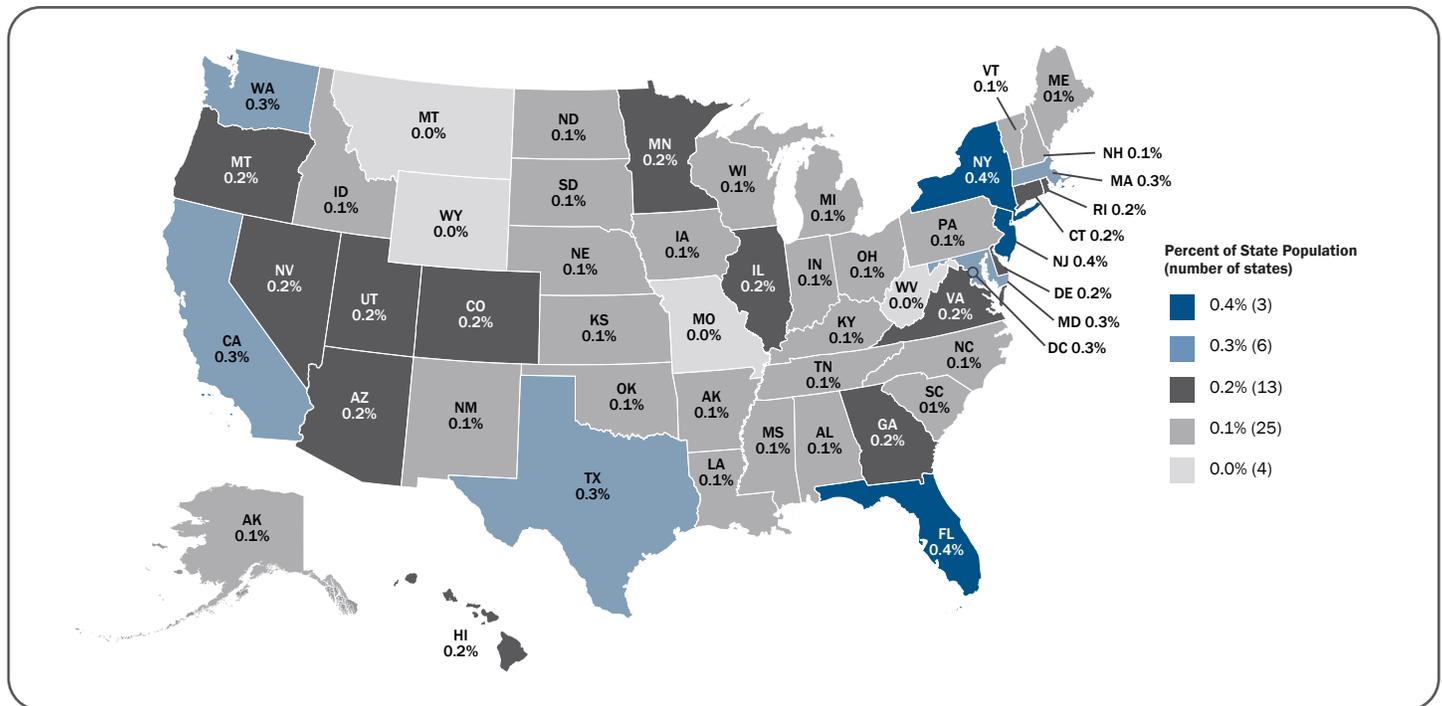
**Type of Admission of New Lawful Permanent Residents for Top Ten States of Residence: Fiscal Year 2021**

State of residence	Total	Adjustments		New Arrivals	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
California	135,181	95,162	70.4	40,019	29.6
Florida	83,227	61,943	74.4	21,284	25.6
Georgia	20,033	13,861	69.2	6,172	30.8
Illinois	26,228	17,715	67.5	8,513	32.5
Massachusetts	22,431	15,397	68.6	7,034	31.4
New Jersey	37,844	27,229	72.0	10,615	28.0
New York	76,127	47,183	62.0	28,944	38.0
Texas	78,873	55,897	70.9	22,976	29.1
Virginia	20,428	12,832	62.8	7,596	37.2
Washington	22,145	16,782	75.8	5,363	24.2

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Figure 6.

New Lawful Permanent Residents as a Percent of State Population: Fiscal Year 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

lowest (Figure 6).<sup>24</sup> However, the proportion of new LPRs per state fluctuate significantly from year to year; in 2020 Massachusetts had the fewest new LPRs per capita of any state, and in 2021 it had the fifth highest new LPRs per capita.<sup>25</sup>

The leading metropolitan area of residence for new LPRs in 2021 was New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (14 percent) (Table 7). Other prominent metropolitan areas of residence included Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, which each host nearly 7 percent of new LPRs. These three areas have been the top areas of residence each of the past 10 years.

**Age, Sex, and Marital Status**

New LPRs have historically been younger than the native-born population of the United States. In 2021, the median age for new LPRs was 34 years (30 for new arrivals and 35 for

Table 7.

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021 (ranked by 2021 metropolitan area of residence)**

Metropolitan area of residence	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,096,611	100.0	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	155,187	15.0	99,746	14.1	101,708	13.7
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	75,859	7.4	51,429	7.3	50,960	6.9
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	73,040	7.1	39,318	5.6	49,288	6.7
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	33,964	3.3	24,693	3.5	27,636	3.7
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	40,137	3.9	26,861	3.8	26,146	3.5
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	32,984	3.2	22,462	3.2	25,710	3.5
San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	32,787	3.2	27,376	3.9	24,670	3.3
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	34,881	3.4	25,043	3.5	23,988	3.2
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	19,850	1.9	17,347	2.5	18,185	2.5
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	24,717	2.4	17,695	2.5	18,147	2.5
Other	508,359	49.3	355,392	50.2	373,564	50.5

Notes: Metropolitan areas defined based on the 2020 update of Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) definitions. Numbers from previous years may differ from previously published figures. Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

<sup>24</sup> State populations sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. December 2021. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021 (NST-EST2021-POP). Web. 24 February 2022. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-total.html>

<sup>25</sup> State populations sourced from U.S. Census Bureau (see footnote 24 for detailed source information).

adjustments), compared to 38 for the whole U.S. population (Table 8).<sup>26</sup> Specifically, the median age of LPR females was 34 compared to 39 for the whole U.S. female population, and the median age of LPR males was 34 compared to 37 for the whole U.S. male population.

A higher proportion of new LPRs in 2021 were female (55 percent) than the whole U.S. population (51 percent) (Table 9).<sup>27</sup> About 67 percent of all new LPRs in 2021 were married (Table 10). Over three-quarters (78 percent) of new LPRs at least 18 years old were married, compared with half (52 percent) of all U.S. adults in the same age group (Table 10).<sup>28</sup> Within this adult group, a higher proportion of new LPR females (78 percent) were married than males (77 percent). In 2021, a higher proportion of adult adjustments were married (78 percent) than new arrivals (76 percent).

Notably, females and males showed different characteristics in 2021 across the class of admission, country of birth, and other categories described above. In terms of class of admission, a larger proportion of females were family-sponsored immigrants (65 percent of females) than males (56 percent of males), whereas males were proportionally more likely to be employment-based immigrants (30 percent of males) than females (23 percent of females). Class of admission distribution differences between sexes in 2021 are generally the same when aggregating new LPRs over the past decade, though notably in the past decade there has only been 3.4 percent fewer females in the employment-based category than males, whereas in 2021 alone there was a 6.6 percent difference. The share of males and females who were refugee and asylee adjustments and diversity immigrants was similar (both within two percentage points of each other). In addition, in 2021, females and males did not share the top five countries of birth, though they were similar. Mexico, India, China, the Philippines, and Dominican Republic were the most common countries of birth for new LPR females, while India, Mexico, China, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic were the most common countries of birth for new LPR males. The top five most common countries of birth for each sex remained the same in 2021 as there were when

**Table 8.**

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Age: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Age	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
0 to 17 years.....	177,102	17.2	117,860	16.7	105,181	14.2
18 to 24 years.....	116,780	11.3	74,907	10.6	74,431	10.1
25 to 34 years.....	252,986	24.5	177,079	25.0	201,241	27.2
35 to 44 years.....	204,152	19.8	153,114	21.6	184,329	24.9
45 to 54 years.....	142,144	13.8	98,066	13.9	98,112	13.3
55 to 64 years.....	83,164	8.1	52,991	7.5	47,790	6.5
65 and over.....	55,437	5.4	33,344	4.7	28,917	3.9
Unknown.....	NA	-	1	-	1	-
Median age (years).....	33	NA	34	NA	34	NA

NA Not applicable.  
 - Figure rounds to 0.0.  
 Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 9.**

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Sex: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Sex	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
Male.....	469,710	45.5	326,414	46.1	336,452	45.5
Female.....	561,903	54.5	380,786	53.8	403,479	54.5
Unknown.....	152	-	162	-	71	-

- Figure rounds to 0.0.  
 Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 10.**

**New Lawful Permanent Residents by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Marital status	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	1,031,765	100.0	707,362	100.0	740,002	100.0
Single.....	339,227	32.9	230,043	32.5	206,000	27.8
Married.....	628,330	60.9	435,758	61.6	493,500	66.7
Other*.....	53,332	5.2	33,182	4.7	30,048	4.1
Unknown.....	10,876	1.1	8,379	1.2	10,454	1.4

\* Includes persons who are widowed, divorced, or separated.  
 Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

aggregating new LPRs over the past decade.<sup>29</sup> Males and females shared the two most common regions of birth, top three states of residence, and top metropolitan area of residence (see aggregate previous sections).

**DATA**

This report uses data from the USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS) and Electronic Immigration System (ELIS). CLAIMS maintains information for applicants present in the United States from USCIS' Form I-485, *Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status*. ELIS uses a combination of data sources for information on applicants living abroad: (1) biographical and demographic information from DOS's Form DS-230, *Application for Immigrant Visa and*

<sup>26</sup> U.S. population defined as only those within the 50 states and District of Columbia. U.S. Census Bureau/MDAT. 2022. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2021. Web. 25 February 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The order of these countries within sexes differs, however, with Mexico being the top country of residence for both females and males when aggregating the past 10 years.

Alien Registration, or Form DS-260, *Electronic Application for Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration*; and (2) data on the date of entry, port of entry, and updated class of admission (if there is any change from the originally approved class of admission) collected by Customs and Border Protection at a port of entry. Since 2019, ELIS has also maintained information on family-sponsored applicants present in the United States from USCIS' Form I-485.

The size and demographic composition of new LPR cohorts are affected by many factors including changes to immigration law and procedure, variation in application volume, and other factors related to application processing. For these reasons, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions about the propensity to immigrate from the data presented in this report.

## APPENDIX

### Preference Immigration Limits<sup>30</sup>

Section 201 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) defines a complex set of rules determining worldwide limits on the number of family- and employment-based visas. Section 202 of the INA describes per-country limits based on the worldwide total.

#### Family-sponsored Preference Limit

The annual limit for family-sponsored preference immigration is calculated as 480,000 people minus the number of foreign nationals who were issued visas or who adjusted to Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status in the previous year as (1) immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, (2) children born subsequent to the issuance of a visa to an accompanying parent, (3) children born abroad to LPRs on temporary trips abroad, and (4) certain categories of foreign nationals paroled into the United States in the second preceding year, and plus (5) unused visas in the employment-preference classes in the preceding year.

The family-sponsored preference limit may not fall below a minimum of 226,000 in any year. Because the calculated limit (based on visa usage during the prior year) for family-sponsored preference classes in 2021 was below 226,000, the family-sponsored preferences limit was set at 226,000 (Table A1).

### Employment-based Preference Limit

The annual limit for employment-based preference immigration is equal to 140,000 plus unused numbers in the family-sponsored preference classes in the previous year. With 122,288 unused numbers in the family-sponsored preference classes in 2020, the 2021 employment-based preference limit was 262,288. The limit is 28.6 percent of this total for each of the first three employment-preference classes and 7.1 percent for each of the last two preference classes. In 2021, these limits were 75,014 and 18,623, respectively.

#### Per Country and Dependent Area Limits

A limit of 7 percent of the combined total visa limits for family-sponsored and employment-based preference classes is set for independent countries, and a limit of 2 percent is set for dependent areas. The 2021 per country limit for independent foreign states was 34,180 (7 percent of 488,288; the sum of the 2021 employment-based and family-based preference limits), and the limit for dependencies was 9,766 (2 percent of 488,288).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Office of Immigration Statistics webpage at <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics>.

**Table A1:**

**Annual Limits for Preference and Diversity Immigrants: Fiscal Year 2021**

Preference/description	Limit
Family-sponsored preferences	226,000
First: Unmarried sons and daughters of U.S. citizens and their children	23,400*
Second: Spouses, children, and unmarried sons and daughters of permanent resident aliens	114,200†
Third: Married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens	23,400†
Fourth: Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens (at least 21 years of age)	65,000‡
Employment-based preferences	262,288
First: Priority workers	75,014‡
Second: Professionals with advanced degrees or aliens of exceptional ability	75,014†
Third: Skilled workers, professionals, and needed unskilled workers	75,014†
Fourth: Certain special immigrants	18,623
Fifth: Employment creation ("investors")	18,623
Diversity	54,850

\* Plus unused family fourth preference visas.

† Plus unused higher preference visas.

‡ Plus unused employment fourth and fifth preference visas.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

<sup>30</sup> The DOS Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for determining these limits. See the monthly Visa Bulletin for more information on the limits: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-bulletin/2021/visa-bulletin-for-september-2021.html>.