

## Wait Times In Years for Family-Sponsored Immigrants

Why don't people wait to immigrate legally to the United States? The answer, of course, is that many people do (946,142 in 2004). However, wait times, which are based on State Department "cut-off" dates, are lengthy, since the family and employment-based immigration quotas set into law by Congress are well short of demand. After estimating the demand in a category, the State Department assigns a "cut-off" date that leads to processing only applications filed prior to that date. A U.S. citizen may sponsor a spouse, minor child (under 21) or parent without quota, but face annual limits for siblings (65,000 a year) and adult children, married (23,400) and unmarried (23,400). A permanent resident (green card holder) may sponsor a spouse or minor child (87,924) or adult child (26,266). Per-country limits for family-sponsored immigrants are generally set at 7% of the 226,000 annual limit for family preferences. The chart below, which will be updated regularly, represents NFAP's current estimates of likely wait times in family categories. However, for certain categories – unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens, siblings and married adult children of U.S. citizens from Mexico and Philippines – there has been no forward progress on the waiting lists during the past year, so wait times could be longer. Siblings of U.S. citizens can expect to wait 11 to 12 years from today before immigrating to America (22 years from the Philippines). Unmarried adult children can anticipate waiting 6 years, but 12 years if from Mexico and 14 years from the Philippines. A spouse or minor child of a legal resident (green card holder) from Mexico has a 7 year wait (a 4 year wait from other countries). A married child of a U.S. citizen must wait 7 years to immigrate (11 and 15 years, respectively, if from Mexico or the Philippines). It's a 9 year wait for unmarried adult children of legal residents (14 years if from Mexico).

	<b>China</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>All Other Countries</b>
<b>Unmarried Adult Children of U.S. Citizens (1<sup>st</sup> Preference) 23,400 a year</b>	6 year wait (Processing applications before April 2001)	6 year wait (Processing applications before April 2001)	12 year wait (Processing applications received before Aug. 1994)	14 year wait (Processing applications received before Aug. 1991)	6 year wait (Processing applications before April 2001)
<b>Spouses and Minor Children of Permanent Residents (2<sup>nd</sup> Preference – A) 87,934 a year*</b>	4 year wait (Processing applications before March 2002)	4 year wait (Processing applications before March 2002)	7 years wait (Processing applications received before June 1999)	4 year wait (Processing applications before March 2002)	4 year wait (Processing applications before March 2002)
<b>Unmarried Adult Children of Permanent Residents (2<sup>nd</sup> Preference - B) 26,266 a year</b>	9 year wait (Processing applications before July 1996)	9 year wait (Processing applications before July 1996)	14 year wait (Processing applications before February 1992)	9 year wait (Processing applications before July 1996)	9 year wait (Processing applications before July 1996)
<b>Married Adult Children of U.S. Citizens (3<sup>rd</sup> Preference) 23,400 a year</b>	7 year wait (Processing applications before July 1998)	7 year wait (Processing applications before July 1998)	11 year wait (Processing applications before January 1993)	15 year wait (Processing applications before July 1988)	7 year wait (Processing applications before July 1998)
<b>Siblings of U.S. Citizens (4<sup>th</sup> Preference) 65,000 a year</b>	11 year wait (Processing applications before January 1995)	12 year wait (Processing applications before June 1994)	12 year wait (Processing applications before August, 1993)	22 year wait (Processing applications before October 1983)	11 year wait (Processing applications before January 1995)

Source: U.S. Department of State Visa Bulletin, May 2006; National Foundation for American Policy. \*The spouses and minor and adult children of Permanent Residents category is 114,200 annually "plus the number (if any) by which the worldwide family preference level exceeds 226,000." 75% of spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents are exempt from the per-country limit.