



Determining Your Priority Date for a Family-Based Green Card

A “priority date” is your place in line for getting a green card (or permanent resident card). Your priority date is based on your country of origin and preference category. Determined by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the priority dates are a way of establishing a waiting list for U.S. permanent residency in those categories where the number of applicants exceeds the annual permanent residency quotas set by law.

Family-Based Preference Categories

The family-based preferences for obtaining a green card are divided into five categories:

- *1st*: Unmarried sons and daughters (i.e., children over 21 years of age) of U.S. citizens
- *2A*: Spouses and children (i.e., unmarried children under 21 years of age) of lawful permanent residents
- *2B*: Unmarried sons and daughters (i.e., children over 21 years of age) of lawful permanent residents
- *3rd*: Married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens
- *4th*: Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens

Spouses and parents of U.S. citizens do not have category, because they are not subject to any quotas.

The Visa Bulletin

The Visa Bulletin summarizes the availability of immigrant numbers each month. Your family-based priority date is the date when your Form I-130 (Immigrant Petition for Alien Relative) was received by the USCIS. Below, is an example of a monthly Visa Bulletin.

Family-Based	All Other Countries	China (mainland born)	India	Mexico	Philippines
1 st	02/15/2006	02/15/2006	02/15/2006	12/15/1992	03/01/1997
2A	04/01/2010	04/01/2010	04/01/2010	01/01/2010	04/01/2010
2B	04/01/2005	04/01/2005	04/01/2005	06/22/1992	09/01/2002
3 rd	05/01/2002	05/01/2002	05/01/2002	10/22/1992	03/01/1995
4 th	12/01/2001	12/01/2001	12/01/2001	12/08/1995	04/01/1991

Each date indicates a backlog; if your priority date (date the I-130 was filed) is earlier than the date listed, you may apply for permanent residency.