FAMILY IMMIGRATION POLICY AND TRENDS: HOW THE U.S. COMPARES TO OTHER COUNTRIES

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Presenters

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It’s Relative: A Crosscountry Comparison of Family-Migration Policies and Flows

By Kate Hooper and Brian Salant


Data Tool: Modeling Potential U.S. Legal Immigration Cuts, by Category and Top Countries

Julia Gelatt is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, working with the U.S. Immigration Policy Program. Her work focuses on the legal immigration system, demographic trends, and the implications of local, state, and federal U.S. immigration policy.

Dr. Gelatt previously worked as a Research Associate at the Urban Institute, where her mixed-methods research focused on state policies toward immigrants; barriers to and facilitators of immigrant families’ access to public benefits and public prekindergarten programs; and identifying youth victims of human trafficking. She was a Research Assistant at MPI before graduate school.

Dr. Gelatt earned her PhD in sociology, with a specialization in demography, from Princeton University, where her work focused on the relationship between immigration status and children’s health and well-being. She earned a bachelor of the arts in sociology/anthropology from Carleton College.
Immigrants come to the United States in various ways:

- Green cards for lawful permanent residence (LPR status)
- Foreign students
- Temporary workers
- Without authorization -- illegal entry or overstay visa
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- Temporary workers
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## U.S. Family Trends and Policies

### Current permanent immigration system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family-based</th>
<th>Other categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. citizens may sponsor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Employment-based</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td><strong>Diversity visa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses</td>
<td><strong>Humanitarian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor, unmarried children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult children (capped)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings (capped)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Share of immigrants by category, FY 2016

- Family-sponsored: 68%
- Employment-based: 12%
- Humanitarian: 13%
- Diversity visa: 4%
- Other: 3%

1,183,505 people gained lawful permanent resident (LPR) status in 2016

### Numerical caps on family-sponsored visas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Annual Cap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY CHANNEL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Relatives of US Citizens</td>
<td>Spouses and minor children (under 21) of US citizens, and parents of US citizens who are 21 or older</td>
<td>No numerical limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Preference</td>
<td>Unmarried adult sons and daughters (21 and over) of US citizens</td>
<td>23,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A Preference</td>
<td>Spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents</td>
<td>114,200* shared between the 2A and 2B categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B Preference</td>
<td>Unmarried adult sons and daughters of lawful permanent residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Preference</td>
<td>Married adult sons and daughters of US citizens</td>
<td>23,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Preference</td>
<td>Siblings of US citizens who are 21 and older</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

804,793 people gained lawful permanent resident (LPR) status in 2016 through family-sponsored preferences.

# U.S. Family Trends and Policies

Backlogs, in years, for capped family-sponsored visas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
<th>All Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses and minor children of LPRs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried adult children of LPRs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult married children of U.S. citizens</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings of U.S. citizens</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposed cuts to U.S. permanent immigration system

**Family-based**

U.S. citizens may sponsor

- Parents
- Spouses
- Minor, unmarried children
- Adult children (capped)
- Siblings (capped)

LPRs may sponsor

- Spouses
- Minor, unmarried children
- Adult, unmarried children (capped)

**Other categories**

- Employment-based
- Diversity visa
- Humanitarian
MPI data tool showing the potential impact of proposed cuts

Kate Hooper is an Associate Policy Analyst with the Migration Policy Institute’s International Program, where her research areas include forced migration, refugee and immigrant integration policies, and economic migration.

Previously, Ms. Hooper interned with the Centre for Social Justice, where she provided research support on UK social policy and deprivation issues, and a political communications firm in Westminster, United Kingdom.

She holds a master’s degree with honors from the University of Chicago’s Committee on International Relations, and a bachelor of the arts degree in history from the University of Oxford. She also holds a certificate in international political economy from the London School of Economics.
What do we mean by family migration?

Family migration policies vary by country along three dimensions:

I. Who can sponsor a family migrant
   - U.S., Canada, Australia, UK apply one set of rules for citizens and permanent residents, and another for temporary migrants
   - Most EU Member States don't make this distinction

II. Which family members are eligible
   - All countries allow sponsoring of spouses/partners and children
   - Opportunities to sponsor other relatives vary by country

III. What status the relative receives
   - Temporary vs. Permanent residence
   - Some countries place restrictions on their ability to work
In France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden, between a third and half of all first residence permits were issued for "family reasons" between 2012 and 2016.

Family migration trends in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and the UK

Family-based migration is a much larger share of permanent migration in the United States, than Australia, Canada, or the UK

Sources:
- UK Home Office, “Immigration Statistics, October to December 2017;”
- DHS, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics—Table 7,” Years 2012 to 2015.
Including accompanying family

These data exclude family members arriving through other admissions streams (e.g. the spouse of an economic migrant)

- When they are reclassified as family migrants, family admissions becomes the biggest immigration stream in Canada and the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admissions Stream</th>
<th>Canada Original</th>
<th>Canada Adjusted</th>
<th>United Kingdom Original</th>
<th>United Kingdom Adjusted</th>
<th>United States* Original</th>
<th>United States* Adjusted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When adjusted for population size, Australia, Canada, and the United States admit family migrants at similar rates:

- 2.6, 2.0, and 2.1 admissions per 1,000 people, respectively.

But the United States admits far fewer economic migrants:

- The United States admits 0.5 economic migrants per 1,000 people, compared to Australia (5.5 admissions) and Canada (4.5 admissions).

When this includes dependent family members in other admissions categories, Canada admits family migrants at a higher rate than the US:

- 4.8 vs. 2.6 admissions per 1,000 people, respectively.
Demetrios G. Papademetriou is a Distinguished Transatlantic Fellow at MPI, which he co-founded and led as its President for the first 13 years and where he remains President Emeritus and on the Board of Trustees. He served until 2018 as the founding President of MPI Europe, a nonprofit, independent research institute in Brussels that aims to promote a better understanding of migration trends and effects within Europe.

He is the convener of the Transatlantic Council on Migration, which is composed of senior public figures, business leaders, and public intellectuals from Europe, the United States, and Canada. He convened the Regional Migration Study Group, that has proposed multi-stakeholder support for new regional and collaborative approaches to migration, competitiveness, and human-capital development for the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Central America. He co-founded Metropolis: An International Forum for Research and Policy on Migration and Cities (which he led as International Chair for the initiative’s first five years and is now International Chair Emeritus); and has served as Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Migration (2009-11); Chair of the Advisory Board of the Open Society Foundations’ International Migration Initiative (2010-15); Chair of the Migration Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; Director for Immigration Policy and Research at the U.S. Department of Labor and Chair of the Secretary of Labor's Immigration Policy Task Force; and Executive Editor of the International Migration Review.

Dr. Papademetriou holds a PhD in comparative public policy and international relations (1976) from the University of Maryland and has taught at the universities of Maryland, Duke, American, and New School for Social Research.
Q&A

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