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# Green Card and Citizenship Overview

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### Green Card Overview

A Green Card holder, or a Lawful Permanent Resident, is any person who is admitted to the U.S. to reside permanently. Green card holders enjoy substantially all the rights that a U.S. citizen has to live and work in the U.S. A Green Card may be obtained primarily through employment, investment, family petition, the Diversity Visa program, and a refugee/political asylum application. Other avenues for obtaining a Green Card include certain crime victims and informants and individuals with certain diplomatic status. Green Card holders are required to file income tax returns and report income to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the state tax agency in the state where they live. Male Green Card holders age 18 through 25 are required to register with the Selective Service. A Lawful Permanent Resident of the U.S. can travel freely outside of the U.S., but needs a passport from the country of citizenship. To reenter the U.S., a Lawful Permanent Resident needs to present the Green Card for readmission or a reentry permit for trips greater than one year but less than two years in duration. Note also that an absence from the U.S. that is ?too long? can trigger loss of a Green Card.

### Employment-Based Green Cards

A Green Card can be obtained through employment, with preference given to individuals with the most ability, education, and training. Each applicant must have an offer of permanent employment in the U.S., and the employer participates in the application.

For more information, click on [Employment-Based Green Card](#) on the left.

### Investment-Based Green Cards

A Green Card can be obtained through investment of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 in a new commercial enterprise in the U.S. that will benefit the U.S. economy, including producing at least ten full time jobs for workers unrelated to the applicant.

For more information, click on [Investment-Based Green Card](#) on the left.

## **Family-Based Green Cards**

A Green Card can be obtained through a petitioning family member who is a U.S. Citizen or Green Card holder (Lawful Permanent Resident). The petitioning family member must prove that he or she alone or in combination with co-sponsors and similar means can financially support the relative. A U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident can file a petition for a husband or wife or an unmarried son or daughter of any age. In addition, a U.S. Citizen can petition for a married son or daughter of any age, and a U.S. citizen who is at least 21 years old can petition for a brother, sister, or parent. Note that grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, in-laws and cousins cannot be petitioned for immigration.

For more information, click on Family-Based Green Card on the left.

## **Green Card Diversity Visa Program**

Each year, the State Department, through the Diversity Visa Program, makes 55,000 immigrant visas available through a lottery for applicants from countries with relatively low rates of immigration to the U.S. The list of countries can change each year.

For more information, click on Diversity Visa Program on the left.

## **Refugee/Political Asylum**

Refugees are individuals brought to the U.S. to protect them from harm in the country. Political asylum is protection granted to individuals already in the U.S. who have been persecuted their country or reasonably fear persecution. Refugees and individuals granted asylum may seek to adjust their status to become lawful permanent residents.

For more information, click on Refugee/Political Asylum on the left.

## **Other Ways to Obtain a Green Card**

There are a variety of other ways to obtain a Green Card, including certain crime victims and informants and individuals with certain diplomatic status.

For more information, click on Other Ways to Obtain a Green Card on the left.

## **Adjustment of Status**

Individuals who are physically present in the United States already are allowed to apply for an immigrant visa without leaving the United States through Adjustment of Status.

For more information, click on Adjustment of Status on the left.

## **Reentry Permit**

To reenter the U.S. after a trip abroad, any lawful permanent resident or a conditional resident must present an admission document. Absent a special immigrant visa or green card, a reentry permit is needed.

For more information, click on Reentry Permit on the left.

## **Citizenship and Naturalization Overview**

Naturalization is the process by which the U.S. confers Citizenship upon permanent residents who have fulfilled certain requirements. Citizens can vote in elections, run for office, and more easily bring family members to the U.S. and help them obtain citizenship. Applicants must have a good moral character, pass a civics and English test, and have lived in the U.S. for a certain period of time. Click on ?Citizenship? on the left for more information.

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