



*United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs*

VISA BULLETIN

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Washington, D.C.

IMMIGRANT NUMBERS FOR DECEMBER 2015

A. STATUTORY NUMBERS

This bulletin summarizes the availability of immigrant numbers during December for: "Application Final Action Dates" (consistent with prior Visa Bulletins) and "Dates for Filing Applications," indicating when immigrant visa applicants should be notified to assemble and submit required documentation to the National Visa Center.

Unless otherwise indicated on the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov/visabulletininfo, individuals seeking to file applications for adjustment of status with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in the Department of Homeland Security must use the "Application Final Action Dates" charts below for determining when they can file such applications. When USCIS determines that there are more immigrant visas available for the fiscal year than there are known applicants for such visas, USCIS will state on its website that applicants may instead use the "Dates for Filing Visa Applications" charts in this Bulletin. Applicants for adjustment of status may refer to USCIS for additional information by visiting www.uscis.gov/visabulletininfo.

1. Procedures for determining dates. Consular officers are required to report to the Department of State documentarily qualified applicants for numerically limited visas; USCIS reports applicants for adjustment of status. Allocations in the charts below were made, to the extent possible, in chronological order of reported priority dates, for demand received by November 9th. If not all demand could be satisfied, the category or foreign state in which demand was excessive was deemed oversubscribed. The cut-off date for an oversubscribed category is the priority date of the first applicant who could not be reached within the numerical limits. If it becomes necessary during the monthly allocation process to retrogress a cut-off date, supplemental requests for numbers will be honored only if the priority date falls within the new cut-off date announced in this bulletin. If at any time an annual limit were reached, it would be necessary to immediately make the preference category "unavailable", and no further requests for numbers would be honored.

2. Section 201 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) sets an annual minimum family-sponsored preference limit of 226,000. The worldwide level for annual employment-based preference immigrants is at least 140,000. Section 202 prescribes that the per-country limit for preference immigrants is set at 7% of the total annual family-sponsored and employment-based preference limits, i.e., 25,620. The dependent area limit is set at 2%, or 7,320.

3. INA Section 203(e) provides that family-sponsored and employment-based preference visas be issued to eligible immigrants in the order in which a petition in behalf of each has been filed. Section 203(d) provides that spouses and children of preference immigrants are entitled to the same status, and the same order of consideration, if accompanying or following to join the principal. The visa prorating provisions of Section 202(e) apply to allocations for a foreign state or dependent area when visa demand exceeds the per-country limit. These provisions apply at present to the following oversubscribed chargeability areas: CHINA-mainland born, INDIA, MEXICO, and PHILIPPINES.

4. Section 203(a) of the INA prescribes preference classes for allotment of Family-sponsored immigrant visas as follows:

FAMILY-SPONSORED PREFERENCES

First: (F1) Unmarried Sons and Daughters of U.S. Citizens: 23,400 plus any numbers not required for fourth preference.

Second: Spouses and Children, and Unmarried Sons and Daughters of Permanent Residents: 114,200, plus the number (if any) by which the worldwide family preference level exceeds 226,000, plus any unused first preference numbers:

A. (F2A) Spouses and Children of Permanent Residents: 77% of the overall second preference limitation, of which 75% are exempt from the per-country limit;

B. (F2B) Unmarried Sons and Daughters (21 years of age or older) of Permanent Residents: 23% of the overall second preference limitation.

Third: (F3) Married Sons and Daughters of U.S. Citizens: 23,400, plus any numbers not required by first and second preferences.

Fourth: (F4) Brothers and Sisters of Adult U.S. Citizens: 65,000, plus any numbers not required by first three preferences.

A. APPLICATION FINAL ACTION DATES FOR FAMILY-SPONSORED PREFERENCE CASES

On the chart below, the listing of a date for any class indicates that the class is oversubscribed (see paragraph 1); "C" means current, i.e., numbers are authorized for issuance to all qualified applicants; and "U" means unauthorized, i.e., numbers are not authorized for issuance. (NOTE: Numbers are authorized for issuance only for applicants whose priority date is **earlier** than the cut-off date listed below.)

<u>Family-Sponsored</u>	All Charge-ability Areas Except Those Listed	CHINA-mainland born	INDIA	MEXICO	PHILIPPINES
F1	01APR08	01APR08	01APR08	08DEC94	01JAN03
F2A	15JUN14	15JUN14	15JUN14	08MAY14	15JUN14
F2B	01MAR09	01MAR09	01MAR09	08SEP95	01DEC04
F3	01JUL04	01JUL04	01JUL04	08JUL94	22OCT93
F4	22MAR03	22MAR03	22MAR03	01APR97	01JUL92

*NOTE: For December, F2A numbers EXEMPT from per-country limit are authorized for issuance to applicants from all countries with priority dates earlier than 08MAY14. F2A numbers SUBJECT to per-country limit are authorized for issuance to applicants chargeable to all countries EXCEPT MEXICO with priority dates beginning 08MAY14 and earlier than 15JUN14. (All F2A numbers provided for MEXICO are exempt from the per-country limit; there are no F2A numbers for MEXICO subject to per-country limit.)

B. DATES FOR FILING FAMILY-SPONSORED VISA APPLICATIONS

The chart below reflects dates for filing visa applications within a timeframe justifying immediate action in the application process. Applicants for immigrant visas who have a priority date earlier than the cut-off date in the chart below may assemble and submit required documents to the Department of State's National Visa Center, following receipt of notification from the National Visa Center containing detailed instructions. The cut-off date for an oversubscribed category is the priority date of the first applicant who cannot submit documentation to the National Visa Center for an immigrant visa. If a category is designated "current," all applicants in the relevant category may file applications, regardless of priority date.

The "C" listing indicates that the category is current, and that applications may be filed regardless of the applicant's priority date. The listing of a date for any category indicates that only applicants with a priority date which is **earlier** than the listed date may file their application.

Visit www.uscis.gov/visabulletininfo for information on whether USCIS has determined that this chart can be used (in lieu of the chart in paragraph 4.A.) this month for filing applications for adjustment of status with USCIS.

Family-Sponsored	All Chargeability Areas Except Those Listed	CHINA-mainland born	INDIA	MEXICO	PHILIPPINES
F1	01MAY09	01MAY09	01MAY09	01APR95	01SEP05
F2A	01MAR15	01MAR15	01MAR15	01MAR15	01MAR15
F2B	01JUL10	01JUL10	01JUL10	01APR96	01MAY05
F3	01APR05	01APR05	01APR05	01MAY95	01AUG95
F4	01FEB04	01FEB04	01FEB04	01JUN98	01JAN93

5. Section 203(b) of the INA prescribes preference classes for allotment of Employment-based immigrant visas as follows:

EMPLOYMENT-BASED PREFERENCES

First: Priority Workers: 28.6% of the worldwide employment-based preference level, plus any numbers not required for fourth and fifth preferences.

Second: Members of the Professions Holding Advanced Degrees or Persons of Exceptional Ability: 28.6% of the worldwide employment-based preference level, plus any numbers not required by first preference.

Third: Skilled Workers, Professionals, and Other Workers: 28.6% of the worldwide level, plus any numbers not required by first and second preferences, not more than 10,000 of which to "*Other Workers".

Fourth: Certain Special Immigrants: 7.1% of the worldwide level.

Fifth: Employment Creation: 7.1% of the worldwide level, not less than 3,000 of which reserved for investors in a targeted rural or high-unemployment area, and 3,000 set aside for investors in regional centers by Sec. 610 of Pub. L. 102-395.

A. APPLICATION FINAL ACTION DATES FOR EMPLOYMENT-BASED PREFERENCE CASES

On the chart below, the listing of a date for any class indicates that the class is oversubscribed (see paragraph 1); "C" means current, i.e., numbers are authorized for issuance to all qualified applicants; and "U" means unauthorized, i.e., numbers are not authorized for issuance. (NOTE: Numbers are authorized for issuance only for applicants whose priority date is **earlier** than the cut-off date listed below.)

<u>Employment- Based</u>	All Charge- ability Areas Except Those Listed	CHINA- mainland born	INDIA	MEXICO	PHILIPPINES
1st	C	C	C	C	C
2nd	C	01FEB12	01JUN07	C	C
3rd	01SEP15	15APR12	22APR04	01SEP15	01AUG07
Other Workers	01SEP15	01AUG06	22APR04	01SEP15	01AUG07
4th	C	C	C	C	C
Certain Religious Workers	C	C	C	C	C
5th Non-Regional Center (C5 and T5)	C	15DEC13	C	C	C
5th Regional Center (I5 and R5)	C	15DEC13	C	C	C

*Employment Third Preference Other Workers Category: Section 203(e) of the Nicaraguan and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) passed by Congress in November 1997, as amended by Section 1(e) of Pub. L. 105-139, provides that once the Employment Third Preference Other Worker (EW) cut-off date has reached the priority date of the latest EW petition approved prior to November 19, 1997, the 10,000 EW numbers available for a fiscal year are to be reduced by up to 5,000 annually beginning in the following fiscal year. This reduction is to be made for as long as necessary to offset adjustments under the NACARA program. Since the EW cut-off date reached November 19, 1997 during Fiscal Year 2001, the reduction in the EW annual limit to 5,000 began in Fiscal Year 2002.

B. DATES FOR FILING OF EMPLOYMENT-BASED VISA APPLICATIONS

The chart below reflects dates for filing visa applications within a timeframe justifying immediate action in the application process. Applicants for immigrant visas who have a priority date earlier than the cut-off date in the chart may assemble and submit required documents to the Department of State’s National Visa Center, following receipt of notification from the National Visa Center containing detailed instructions. The cut-off date for an oversubscribed category is the priority date of the first applicant who cannot submit documentation to the National Visa Center for an immigrant visa. If a category is designated “current,” all applicants in the relevant category may file, regardless of priority date.

The “C” listing indicates that the category is current, and that applications may be filed regardless of the applicant’s priority date. The listing of a date for any category indicates that only applicants with a priority date which is **earlier** than the listed date may file their application.

Visit www.uscis.gov/visabulletininfo for information on whether USCIS has determined that this chart can be used (in lieu of the chart in paragraph 5.A.) this month for filing applications for adjustment of status with USCIS.

Employment-Based	All Chargeability Areas Except Those Listed	CHINA - mainland born	INDIA	MEXICO	PHILIPPINES
1st	C	C	C	C	C
2nd	C	01JAN13	01JUL09	C	C
3rd	01SEP15	01OCT13	01JUL05	01SEP15	01JAN10
Other Workers	01SEP15	01JAN07	01JUL05	01SEP15	01JAN10
4th	C	C	C	C	C
Certain Religious Workers	C	C	C	C	C
5 th Non-Regional Center (C5 and T5)	C	01MAY15	C	C	C
5 th Regional Center (I5 and R5)	C	01MAY15	C	C	C

6. The Department of State has a recorded message with the cut-off date information for Final Application Action which can be heard at: (202) 485-7699. This recording is updated on or about the tenth of each month with information on cut-off dates for the following month.

B. DIVERSITY IMMIGRANT (DV) CATEGORY FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

Section 203(c) of the INA provides up to 55,000 immigrant visas each fiscal year to permit additional immigration opportunities for persons from countries with low admissions during the previous five years. The NACARA stipulates that beginning with DV-99, and for as long as necessary, up to 5,000 of the 55,000 annually-allocated diversity visas will be made available for use under the NACARA program. **This resulted in reduction of the DV-2016 annual limit to 50,000.** DV visas are divided among six geographic regions. No one country can receive more than seven percent of the available diversity visas in any one year.

For December, immigrant numbers in the DV category are available to qualified DV-2016 applicants chargeable to all regions/eligible countries as follows. When an allocation cut-off number is shown, visas are available only for applicants with DV regional lottery rank numbers BELOW the specified allocation cut-off number:

Region	All DV Chargeability Areas Except Those Listed Separately		
AFRICA	14,500	Except: Egypt	13,000
		Ethiopia	12,200
ASIA	3,600	Except: Nepal	2,550
EUROPE	14,000		
NORTH AMERICA (BAHAMAS)	3		
OCEANIA	525		
SOUTH AMERICA, and the CARIBBEAN	625		

Entitlement to immigrant status in the DV category lasts only through the end of the fiscal (visa) year for which the applicant is selected in the lottery. The year of entitlement for all applicants registered for the DV-2016 program ends as of September 30, 2016. DV visas may not be issued to DV-2016 applicants after that date. Similarly, spouses and children accompanying or following to join DV-2016 principals are only entitled to derivative DV status until September 30, 2016. DV visa availability through the very end of FY-2016 cannot be taken for granted. Numbers could be exhausted prior to September 30.

C. THE DIVERSITY (DV) IMMIGRANT CATEGORY RANK CUT-OFFS WHICH WILL APPLY IN JANUARY

For January, immigrant numbers in the DV category are available to qualified DV-2016 applicants chargeable to all regions/eligible countries as follows. When an allocation cut-off number is shown, visas are available only for applicants with DV regional lottery rank numbers BELOW the specified allocation cut-off number:

Region	All DV Chargeability Areas Except Those Listed Separately		
AFRICA	15,500	Except: Ethiopia	13,800
ASIA	4,150	Except: Nepal	2,925
EUROPE	16,425		
NORTH AMERICA (BAHAMAS)	3		
OCEANIA	615		
SOUTH AMERICA, and the CARIBBEAN	650		

D. SCHEDULED EXPIRATION OF TWO EMPLOYMENT VISA CATEGORIES

Employment Fourth Preference Certain Religious Workers (SR): Pursuant to Section 132 of Public Law 114-53, the non-minister special immigrant program expires on December 11, 2015. No SR visas may be issued overseas, or final action taken on adjustment of status cases, after midnight December 10, 2015. Visas issued prior to this date will only be issued with a validity date of December 10, 2015, and all individuals seeking admission as a non-minister special immigrant must be admitted (repeat, admitted) into the U.S. no later than midnight December 10, 2015.

Employment Fifth Preference Categories (I5 and R5): Section 133 of Public Law 114-53 extended this immigrant investor pilot program through December 11, 2015. The I5 and R5 visas may be issued until close of business on December 11, 2015, and may be issued for the full validity period. No I5 or R5 visas may be issued overseas, or final action taken on adjustment of status cases, after December 11, 2015.

Congress is currently considering an extension of the SR, I5 and R5 visa categories, but there is no certainty when such legislative action may occur. If there is no legislative action extending one or both of these categories, those cut-off dates would immediately become "Unavailable" effective December 12, 2015.

E. VISA AVAILABILITY IN THE COMING MONTHS

FAMILY-sponsored categories (potential monthly movement)

Worldwide dates:

F1: Three to six weeks
F2A: Three to six weeks
F2B: Up to one month
F3: Two to four weeks
F4: Three or four weeks

EMPLOYMENT-based categories (potential monthly movement)

Employment First: Current

Employment Second:

Worldwide: Current

China: Forward movement of this date during FY-2015 has resulted in a dramatic increase in demand. Little, if any movement is likely during the coming months.

India: Up to eight months.

Employment Third:

Worldwide: The rapid forward movement during FY-2015 was expected to generate a significant amount of demand for numbers. If such demand fails to materialize in the near future it will be necessary to begin advancing this cut-off date.

China: Rapid forward movement. Such movement will result in increased demand which will require "corrective" action as early as April.

India: Up to three weeks.

Mexico: Will remain at the worldwide date.

Philippines: Four to six weeks.

Employment Fourth: Current

Employment Fifth: The category will remain "Current" for most countries.

China-mainland born: Slow forward movement.

The above projections for the Family and Employment categories indicate what is likely to happen on a monthly basis through March based on current applicant demand patterns. Readers should never assume that recent trends in cut-off date movements are guaranteed for the future, or that "corrective" action will not be required at some point in an effort to maintain number use within the applicable annual limits. The determination of the actual monthly cut-off dates is subject to fluctuations in applicant demand and a number of other variables.

F. NEW 9 FAM-e

On November 18, 2015, the legacy Volume 9 of the Foreign Affairs Manual (9 FAM) will be replaced by the 9 FAM-e. As of this date the 9 FAM-e will become the authoritative source for visa guidance.

The new 9 FAM-e represents the revision and reorganization of more than 4,000 pages of the legacy 9 FAM content that traditionally paralleled Volume 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations. While the new 9 FAM-e overhauls language and organization, it does not alter substance. Guidance is not changed, but rather is presented in an improved way. The former interpretive and procedural notes, along with appendices were merged. The new 9 FAM-e adopts a hierarchical structure that is both more logical and better suited to modern search technologies. The revised 9 FAM-e uses a new citation system that is similar to the citation system used in other volumes of the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook. The Department also developed crosswalk tables correlating old citations with new, so that users can match new sections with former locations in the legacy FAM and vice versa.

G. OBTAINING THE MONTHLY VISA BULLETIN

The Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs publishes the monthly Visa Bulletin on their website at www.travel.state.gov under the Visas section. Alternatively, visitors may access the Visa Bulletin directly by going to:

<http://www.travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/law-and-policy/bulletin.html>.

To be placed on the Department of State's E-mail subscription list for the "Visa Bulletin", please send an E-mail to the following E-mail address:

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and in the message body type:

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listserv@calist.state.gov

and in the message body type: **Signoff Visa-Bulletin**

The Department of State also has available a recorded message with visa cut-off dates which can be heard at: **(202) 485-7699**. The recording is normally updated on/about the 10th of each month with information on cut-off dates for the following month.

Readers may submit questions regarding Visa Bulletin related items by E-mail at the following address:

VISABULLETIN@STATE.GOV

(This address cannot be used to subscribe to the Visa Bulletin.)

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