

ALL IN THE FAMILY: Preferences for Relatives Drive U.S. Immigration and Population Growth

**An NPG Forum Paper
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INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

In 2015 the United States set a record for the largest number of immigrants in its population. By the second quarter of this year, the size of the total immigrant population (legal and illegal) reached 42.1 million – an increase of 1.7 million in just one year. Immigrants are now 13.3 percent of the total population; that’s the largest share in 105 years. The growth in the immigrant population was slow from 2007 to 2011, but has accelerated noticeably since then, with average net growth of over one million per year¹. This surpasses the levels of both the early 20th century, which for a long time was the high water mark of immigration to the United States, and the 1990s (see Figure 1).

Unlike earlier time periods, when immigration ebbed and flowed in distinct waves, the last three decades are an accelerated continuation of an 80-year upward trend in annual immigration. Continuing high immigration has had a significant impact on U.S. population growth. Immigration, counting both new admissions and births to immigrant women, was responsible for three-fourths of the growth in our population this century². If current trends continue, immigration will add another 100 million people to the United States in the next 50 years. This paper will explore the primary component of U.S. immigration – family-based immigration – and recommend ways

to change the laws and regulations so as to help reverse the steep growth of recent decades.

The so-called Comprehensive Immigration Reform proposals endorsed by the Obama administration would result in an annual increase of more than one million immigrants per year, not counting the immediate surge in green cards due to the legalization of the initial 11 million illegal aliens. Based on our experience with past amnesties and immigration increases, such a policy change would greatly increase future family immigration well beyond the initial amnesty.

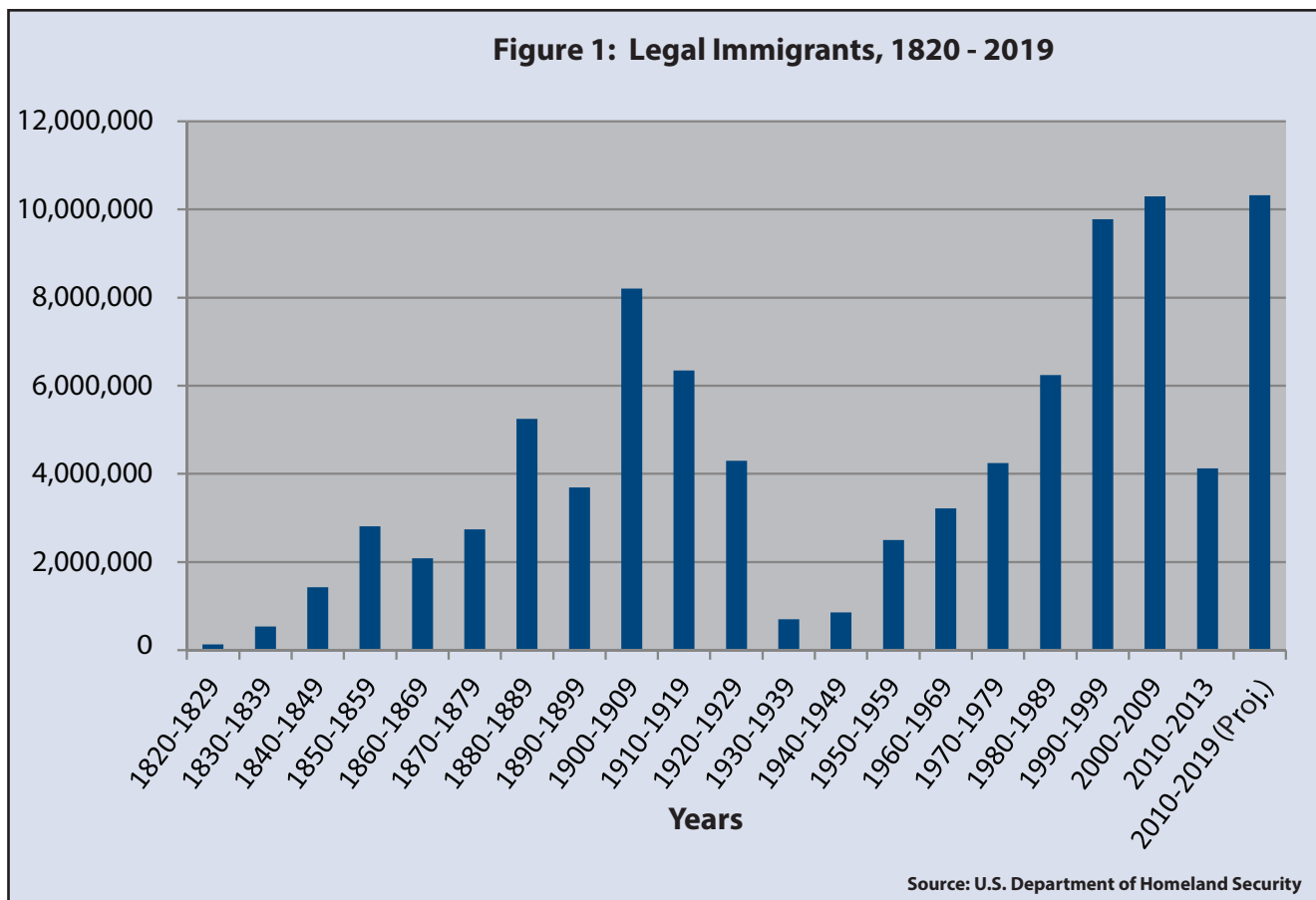
Instead, to accomplish immigration reduction that will lead to population stabilization, Congress must consider cuts and tighter regulation of the categories that are currently unlimited (Parents and Spouses) in addition to eliminating certain quota-limited family categories, as recommended by the Jordan Commission in 1995.

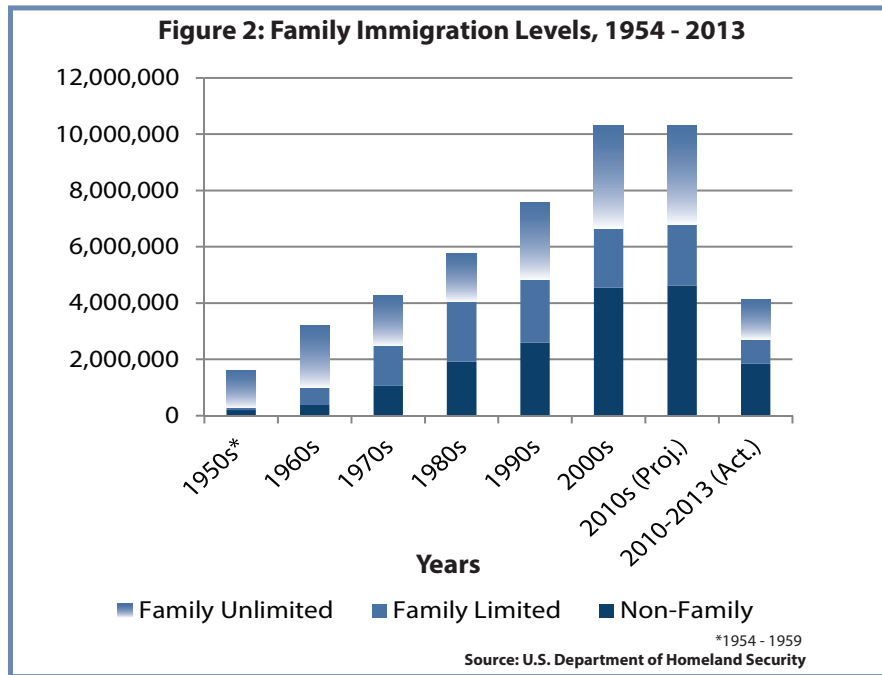
Some key findings:

- Since the 1970s, more than half of the legal immigrants admitted were in the family categories. In the last three decades, family immigration has accounted for more than 60 percent of total legal immigration. In 2013, family immigration’s share of total immigration was 66 percent (see Figure 2)³.
- Family-based immigration added more than

two million people in the 1970s, more than four million in the 1980s and 1990s, and in the last decade numbered more than 6.9 million people.

- Family-based immigration in the categories that are not limited by law (spouses, children and parents of U.S. citizens) jumped 76 percent from the 1990s to the 2000s and has remained at historically high proportions ever since. In contrast, the number entering in the quota-limited categories has remained relatively constant since the 1980s.
- Family immigration is mainly a result of previous immigration and operates entirely independently of economic need, humanitarian considerations, or foreign policy goals. In recent years it has not been affected by economic conditions or unemployment in the United States. It is affected only by how quickly the immigration service can process the applications.
- The admission of the parents of U.S. citizens has been the fastest growing category in recent years, rising from about 67,000 in 2000 to 120,000 today. Because there are no limits on admissions in this category, and because it opens up an opportunity for sponsorship of more family members, the parents category is one of the key components of chain migration. Before 1966, the admission of parents was subject to numerical limits.
- The number of immigrants admitted as spouses of U.S. citizens has also increased dramatically, from 196,000 in 2000 to 415,000 today. This category also can trigger chain migration, as the new spouses can qualify for citizenship and the right to sponsor their family members more quickly than other immigrants.
- U.S. immigration law reflects the tension between the political appeal of allowing immigrants to sponsor family members for relocation and the recognition that numerical limits are needed to minimize the population, fiscal and labor market effects. However, since the 1990s, admissions in the unlimited family





proposals, together with an amnesty for several million illegal aliens would have greatly increased future family immigration well beyond the initial legalization of current illegal residents.

- To accomplish immigration reduction that will lead to population stabilization, Congress must consider cuts and tighter regulation of the categories that are currently unlimited (Parents and Spouses) in addition to eliminating certain quota-limited family categories, as recommended by the Jordan Commission in 1995.

BACKGROUND

categories have outnumbered those in quota-limited categories.

- Over the last two years, the government has approved 23% more petitions in the quota-limited family categories than can be admitted under the caps set by law.
- The quota-limited family categories are chronically overbooked. The waiting list of people who have the qualifying family relationship now stands at about 4.3 million people, with the waits exceeding five years in most categories.
- The so-called Comprehensive Immigration Reform proposals endorsed by the Obama administration and a bipartisan group of lawmakers would have resulted in an annual increase of more than one million immigrants admitted per year, not counting an immediate surge in issuances of pre-immigrant visas to sponsored family members on the waiting list. These

Legal immigration has hovered around one million admissions per year for most of the last 20 years. But unlike previous periods in American history, when immigration tended to come in spurts or waves followed by periods of low immigration, legal immigration has been trending consistently upward since 1945. Average immigration has risen from about 250,000 in the 1950s to about one million today (see Figure 1).

The United States admits five types of immigrants: family, employment, humanitarian, diversity lottery, and amnesty. Family immigrants make up the largest share of legal immigration,

Figure 3: Categories of Family Immigration: Quotas and 2013 Admissions

Category	Number Allowed	2013 Admissions
Spouses of Citizens & Children	Unlimited	319,714
Parents of Citizens	Unlimited	119,746
Unmarried Sons & Daughters of Citizens (and children)	23,400*	24,358
Spouses and Children, Sons & Daughters of Green Card Holders	114,200*	99,115
Married Sons & Daughters of Citizens	23,400*	21,294
Siblings of Citizens	65,000*	65,536
Total		649,763

*plus unused numbers from other categories

by far. Since the 1970s, family immigration has accounted for more than half of total immigration, and since the 1980s it has accounted for more than 60 percent of total immigration (see Figure 2)⁴. In 2013, roughly 650,000 people were admitted in the family immigration categories (see Figure 2)⁵.

Family-based immigration has been an articulated priority in U.S. policy since immigration laws were first consolidated in the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. That law provided for nuclear family members of U.S. citizens and people from the Western Hemisphere to be admitted in unlimited numbers, while offering a limited number of slots for other applicants. In effect, chain migration was the established priority of U.S. immigration policy, and the open slots for those from Latin America created vast new family immigration chains.

In 1965, Congress ended unlimited Western Hemisphere immigration and re-organized the categories. It established new and increased quotas for visas to be issued in certain family (and skills) categories, and exempted certain other categories from the limits. This structure remains essentially the same today. Spouses of U.S. citizens, the spouses' children⁶, the children of U.S. citizens, the parents of U.S. citizens, and orphans adopted overseas by citizens are all admitted in unlimited numbers. The other quota categories, or "preferences," as they are known in immigration law, were established for other family members, as shown below.

FAMILY IMMIGRATION IS THE BULK OF TOTAL IMMIGRATION

Shortly after the 1965 Act, family immigration quickly expanded to comprise the largest share of immigration, accounting for 60-70 percent of total legal immigration on a fairly consistent basis. The quota categories have remained fairly constant since the 1980s, running in the low 200,000s since about 1979.

But the number admitted in the unlimited immediate family categories has exploded, from 223,000 in 1986 to an average of 480,000 for the last 10 years. Most of this growth has occurred in the 2000s. In 1986, unlimited immediate relative immigration was only about half of total family immigration; today, it is about 70 percent, and has caused the overall level of family immigration to more than double over that time.

There are several factors behind this rapid growth. First, the more immigrants we admit over time, the more people who will apply to sponsor family members such as their parents. News media accounts on family immigration often include anecdotes of people who claim to have set off a chain reaction of sponsorship that results in dozens of family members re-settling here over the years.

Congress gave family immigration a turbo boost in 1986 by passing an amnesty for about three million people who had been living in the country illegally, mostly from Mexico. This was the largest immigration amnesty ever in American history. By the early 1990s these former illegal aliens became eligible to sponsor their spouses and children, and eventually some earned citizenship and the right to apply for parents and siblings.

The immigration agency detected a spike in naturalization rates and numbers in the 1990s, which in turn increased the number of people who could sponsor family members. The higher naturalization rates have been attributed to a) the surge in immigration resulting from the 1986 amnesty and b) action by Congress intended to cut off certain welfare benefits to non-citizens.

It is worth noting that immigration numbers in recent years have not been noticeably affected by changes in America's economic situation or by other developments, unlike other times in our history. For example, immigration dropped off

sharply during the Great Depression and world wars in the 20th Century. Recent experience shows that immigration is no longer a phenomenon that will self-regulate according to economic cycles or unemployment rates; it is clearly a function of our admissions policies – the more people allowed to immigrate, the more who will do so, and the more who will sponsor their family members.

POLICIES PROMOTE “FAMILY RELOCATION”

Supporters of high immigration often describe the law and process as “family reunification,” evoking a sentimental image of the hardship of separation followed by a happy reunion. In truth, what often happens is really a process of “family relocation” to the United States that can start with one individual who comes as a spouse, student, guestworker, refugee, or illegal immigrant, and then eventually gains permanent status and the ability to sponsor other family members. U.S. policy is set up to allow this. The combination of mass immigration in multiple forms – family, employment, humanitarian and lottery – together with provisions for the later admission of more family members, the majority of which are unlimited in number, means that immigration constantly builds on itself, and is sometimes referred to as “chain migration.” This process occurs regardless of economic conditions and seemingly outside any consideration of the tremendous population, labor market, and fiscal consequences that this immigration imposes on American society.

The green card category with the largest number of visas issued each year is for spouses of U.S. citizens and their children. In 2013, about 248,000 immigrant spouses received green cards in this category, up from 196,000 in 2000. These individuals brought with them about 71,000 children. Others received green cards based on marriage to a permanent resident; along with their children, they numbered about 80,000 last year.

In principle, spousal immigration is uncontroversial. Except in cases of marriage fraud or exploitation, most Americans agree that a citizen should be able to marry someone from another country and bring the person here to live. This is common among members of the military, diplomatic service, and staff of multinational corporations. In addition, many foreigners who come here as students or workers end up marrying a U.S. citizen. Recent immigrants may sponsor a spouse from their home country.

But most people would be surprised to learn that only a small share of the immigrant spouses of U.S. citizens come from abroad. About two-thirds have already been living in the United States, either as legal temporary visitors or as illegal aliens⁷. Interestingly, most of the children of sponsored spouses are admitted from overseas, suggesting that the sponsored spouses originally came to the United States alone, and later applied for their children.

In contrast, most of the immigrants admitted in the other family categories (parents, sons & daughters and siblings) arrive from overseas.

The largest category of non-nuclear family immigration is parents of U.S. citizens. Admissions in this category, which are unlimited, have nearly doubled over the decade, from 67,000 in 2000 to about 120,000 in 2013. Figure 3 shows the admissions in the other categories in 2013.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY IMMIGRANTS

Family immigration is designed to serve the interests of the U.S. citizen and legal permanent resident sponsors, rather than the country’s economic or labor market needs. Nevertheless, the inflow of these immigrants has a significant labor market and demographic impact. Of the 650,000 family immigrants admitted in 2013, 68 percent (or 443,000) are between the age of 20 and 65⁸. Only a small share (7%) is age 65 or older.

If they are employed, most list their occupation to be in less skilled jobs such as services, sales, farming, construction or factory work.

About 260,000, or 40 percent, are in the child-bearing years of age 20-39.

DEMAND FOR RATIONED FAMILY GREEN CARDS FAR EXCEEDS THE LIMITS

While admissions in the unlimited immediate relative categories have climbed steadily since they were established, slowed only by the immigration agency's capacity to process the applications, growth in the quota categories has been effectively prevented by the statutory limits. The 1965 Act established a limit of 170,000 for family preference immigration, which was expanded to 226,000 (plus any unused numbers in the employment category) in 1990. In addition to the quotas, Congress has imposed some limits on the total number of admissions from each country, so that the immigration flow would not be dominated by applicants from one place.

An analysis of USCIS workload data reveals that over the most recent 24-month period, the agency has approved an average of 23% more

petitions from prospective immigrants in the quota-limited family categories than can be issued under the numerical limitations of the law. From July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015, USCIS approved 556,606 petitions in the quota-limited family categories, or more than 278,000 per year⁹. The annual limit for these family categories is 226,000.

THE CHAIN MIGRATION SNOWBALL: FIVE MILLION WAITING FOR GREEN CARDS

Those applicants who exceed the ceiling or per-country limits are placed on a waiting list. As of November 2014, there were 4.3 million people on the waiting list for family-based green cards to be processed at a U.S. embassy overseas. This does not include an unknown, but presumably smaller, number waiting to be processed in the United States.

As Figure 4 shows, the family waiting lists have grown 25 percent since 1994. They are now nearly 20 times larger than what the law allows in annual admissions. This is a strong indication of both the multiplier effect of chain migration and the tremendous worldwide demand for green cards. It also reveals a fundamental and chronic problem with our system – the current scheme of preferences and

Figure 4: Immigrant Visa Waiting List, 1994 and 2014

Category	1994	2014	% Change
F-1. Unmarried Sons & Daughters (21+) of Citizens	63,499	314,527	+395
F-2A. Spouses & Children of LPRs	1,047,496	257,355	-75
F-2B. Unmarried Sons & Daughters of LPRs	450,579	498,277	+11
F3. Married Sons & Daughters of Citizens	257,110	805,627	+213
F4. Brothers & Sisters of Adult Citizens	1,634,463	2,455,964	+50
Total	3,455,141	4,331,750	+25

Source: U.S. Department of State

quotas is hopelessly overbooked. Our family immigration program offers the opportunity of immigration to far more people than possibly can be accommodated within a reasonable time period under current numerical limits.

Advocates for mass immigration cite the existence of the waiting list as an argument for raising or eliminating the limits or creating loopholes. For example, in 2000, they convinced Congress to create a temporary visa for spouses on the waiting list, enabling them to enter years before their number comes up, rendering the numerical limit in that category almost meaningless. In September 2015 the Obama administration announced an executive action to allow an unknown number (expected to be tens of thousands of people at the very least) who are on the waiting list for family and employment green cards to obtain work permits in the United States months or even years before their number comes up for green card processing.

As of this writing, those who are entering as the spouses and children of green card holders have the shortest waits of all the quota family preference categories. Most of those entering today have waited about 16 months. The longest wait is in the category for siblings; applicants currently being admitted from most countries have waited more than 12 years, while those now entering from Mexico and the Philippines have waited 18 and 23 years respectively. The waits in other categories range from six to 22 years, depending on country of citizenship and category.

FRAUD SWELLS FAMILY IMMIGRATION NUMBERS

America could never have an immigration policy generous enough to satisfy the enormous world-wide demand for immigration. A recent

Gallup poll found that 138 million adults worldwide would like to move permanently to the United States if allowed¹⁰. Many people try to enter the United States illegally, and many try to obtain immigration benefits fraudulently. The family categories are especially susceptible to what immigration officials call “relationship fraud,” whereby people pretend to have a family relationship and try to substantiate it with fraudulent documents. For instance, someone might purchase a false birth certificate to establish ties to someone who qualifies for a green card or has legal status and then try to use it as the basis for a fraudulent immigrant petition or to piggyback onto a legitimate family green card application. It is also common for illegal aliens to try to launder their status by entering a marriage with a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Sometimes the U.S. sponsor is duped into believing the love is real, as is common in mail order bride scenarios. Sometimes the U.S. sponsor is a willing participant in the fraud in order to make money¹¹.

Immigration officials at the State Department and USCIS are trained to look out for fraud, but in practice have little time or incentive to investigate applicants. Both agencies are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of applications that are submitted and the paperwork that needs to be reviewed. Making matters worse, the leaders of both agencies have adopted a “customer service first” mentality that values swift processing over thorough review. According to whistle-blowing career USCIS staff, current agency leaders have imposed what they describe as a “get to yes” and “zero complaints” policy that puts applicant satisfaction above strict application of the law and fraud detection¹².

No one knows exactly how many fraudulent cases succeed, and DHS does not disclose how many it catches, but it is generally agreed that the

fraud rates are significant. A 2009 internal audit of a sample of randomly selected cases found that 25% of the pending applications reviewed were fraudulent¹³. This report found that many of the fraudulent cases involved sham marriages to U.S. citizens, with a disproportionate number involving visa overstays. According to another DHS report, little fraud is reported by adjudicators, even less is investigated, few denials are issued for fraud reasons, and few cases are referred for criminal prosecution by ICE¹⁴.

The State Department has similar problems with fraud in every visa category. For instance, it had to suspend refugee admissions from East Africa in 2008 after a pilot DNA testing program revealed that as many as 80 percent of applicants in one refugee family admission program turned out not to be related. The program has since been re-started, but on a greatly reduced scale.

Anecdotal reports gleaned from news media accounts confirm that fraud is undoubtedly swelling the family immigration numbers, particularly the marriage-based categories. The latest sensational example of a marriage fraud scheme was uncovered by immigration enforcement investigators in Las Vegas and California. Two Australian citizens, Jason Shiao, age 65, and his daughter Lynn Leung, 43, were arrested and charged with arranging more than 70 fraudulent marriage-based immigration applications from 2006-2015, for which they collected between \$10,000 and \$50,000 each. The conspirators advertised in ethnic newspapers, staged fake wedding and honeymoon photos, and prepared fraudulent tax returns and leases to support the applications. A legitimate immigration attorney commenting on the case stated that such attempts are commonplace and that he is frequently asked to help prepare applications for sham marriages¹⁵.

“COMPREHENSIVE” IMMIGRATION REFORM PROPOSALS COULD BOOST LEGAL IMMIGRATION BY ONE MILLION ANNUALLY

Much of the recent immigration policy debate has centered on how to address illegal immigration and the question of amnesty for current illegal aliens. The last two presidents and their immigration agency heads all have promoted the idea of a mass amnesty as a necessary component of what is known as Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR). In 2013, the Senate passed a bill, popularly known as the Gang of Eight bill after the eight Senators who championed it, that would have implemented this plan, but the House of Representatives declined to consider it. The CIR proposals typically also have included plans to increase the family immigration quotas enough to admit all those on the family waiting list and try to meet total worldwide demand.

Most of the opposition to CIR/amnesty proposals has focused on the estimated fiscal costs of legalizing this population, the labor market distortions and wage depression that would result, and the discomfort most Americans have with rewarding those who have broken the law. Another lasting impact of CIR that has received less attention is the “echo” or “aftershock” increases in legal immigration that it would cause, as those who are legalized become permanent residents, sponsor their family members, and have children, further adding to the U.S. population. As mentioned above, the 1986 amnesty did have an effect on later immigration volume, particularly the unlimited immediate relative categories. After 1986, unlimited immediate relative immigration went from 50% of total family immigration to more than 70% today, and the absolute numbers increased from 250,000 to more than 400,000 today.

Because CIR remains on the agenda of many lawmakers and presidential candidates, it is worth examining what its impact on future family immigration and population growth might be. CIR proposals have typically included the following elements that would have the potential to increase immigration, and thus eventually future family immigration:

1. Immediate legalization of all illegal aliens (except those convicted of felonies) – totaling about 11 million people – and admission of any spouses and children abroad.
2. Green cards for all foreign students with graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. This could increase the number of green cards by about 150,000 each year.
3. Admit a large number of new guestworkers who can convert to green cards – the effects are impossible to predict, but it easily could be hundreds of thousands each year.
4. Admit all those currently on the green card waiting list over a five to eight year time period – this would increase annual family immigration by 625,000 per year for eight years, and then future family immigration thereafter.
5. Eliminate numerical limits on spouses and children of LPRs – this would increase admissions by an unknown number.
6. Increase admissions of employment-based immigrants and their families, stoking future chain migration.

These measures would result in an annual increase of at least one million immigrants per year, not counting the immediate surge in green cards due to the legalization of the initial 11 million illegal aliens. Of course, the population

impact is larger when the number of future births to these immigrant women is included.

USCIS would be unlikely to manage this vast increase in its workload without extensive rubber-stamping approval of applications. Currently, the agency processes about six million applications each year, and the process is backlogged to the point where the average time to process each form is three to nine months. Enactment of CIR would be sure to have an impact on all other immigration benefits processing, including employment immigration and the naturalization of new citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE FAMILY IMMIGRATION

The risk of destabilizing population growth, together with concerns about the effects of mass immigration on our labor markets and the fiscal costs of immigration, have led numerous lawmakers and bipartisan commissions to recommend making targeted cuts in the family immigration program. Public awareness of the population consequences of immigration is growing, particularly in the American southwest, where immigration is responsible for a large share of population growth, and where states are struggling with a severe shortage of water to sustain its growing population¹⁶.

In 1995, the Jordan Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late member of Congress and civil rights leader Barbara Jordan, included in its comprehensive package of recommendations a proposal to streamline the family immigration categories¹⁷. The Commission proposed to eliminate two family quota categories – adult sons and daughters of citizens and siblings of citizens (and their respective families) – and to reduce total quota admissions correspondingly.

The Clinton administration initially backed this idea, but subsequently dropped its support after intense lobbying from immigrant advocacy groups, especially those groups representing Asian immigrants, according to news media reports at the time. When Congressional lawmakers drafted a bill to implement the Commission's recommendations, these family immigration reduction provisions were originally included, but later dropped as Republicans decided to focus on illegal immigration.

The comprehensive proposal negotiated in 2007 by President George Bush, Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator Jon Kyl also would have eliminated these same categories, but only after admitting all those on the waiting list. The Gang of Eight bill took a similar approach.

While the failure of the Gang of Eight bill indicates that the prospects for so-called "comprehensive" plans enacting huge increases in legal immigration and guest workers are slim for the foreseeable future, efforts to reduce legal immigration also face an uphill battle. The most likely target for cuts is the visa lottery, which currently brings in about 45,000 randomly-selected applicants from around the world, and which creates new chains of family migration from parts of the world that had not previously sent many immigrants, such as Ukraine, Bangladesh, and Ghana. Such proposals have advanced out of House committees, but no further, and most recently only in exchange for increases in other legal categories.

Besides the visa lottery, standalone bills have been introduced to cut certain family immigration categories. One example is the Nuclear Family Priority Act of 2015, which would eliminate the two lowest priority family categories (married sons and daughters of citizens and siblings of citizens)¹⁸. If passed, such a measure would

achieve the first reduction in legal immigration since the 1940s. It would reduce annual legal immigration by about 88,000 people per year, and reduce the overseas waiting list by two-thirds. Such a change would also help diminish future immigration demand by severing one of the key links in "chain migration," as new citizens would no longer be able to sponsor siblings who are not part of their nuclear family, or grown sons and daughters with their families.

But even if such a proposal were to pass, it would not be enough to achieve population stabilization. The two categories proposed for elimination represent about 40 percent of family preference immigration, but only about 12 percent of total family immigration.

To further lower immigration, lawmakers must look at bringing back the numerical limits on the category for parents of U.S. citizens, which every decade adds one million older people to an already aging U.S. population. After the spouse category, this is the second largest class of admission, and it has been one of the fastest growing. As noted earlier, admissions in this category have nearly doubled since 2000, from 67,000 in 2000 to 120,000 in 2013. Establishing an annual limit at about half of current levels to, say, 60,000 per year, would not only reduce annual volume, but together with the elimination of adult sons and daughters, would also dramatically slow down the chain migration process.

Together, these changes could reduce family immigration by 20 percent, or 150,000 per year, slowing population growth by about 1.5 million persons over a decade, not including any future offspring of these immigrants.

These cuts could be politically difficult to attain. The sponsors of the millions of people on the waiting list will be upset if their

family members cannot join them. For one thing, they have paid hundreds of dollars in application fees, although USCIS has a reserve fund substantial enough to refund about 50 percent to the applicants. But the ever-lengthening wait for quota visas is an indication that the system has been highly dysfunctional for many years. While many will claim that it is unfair to take away these applicants' opportunity of a green card, it is arguably even more unfair to continue to offer immigration benefits to people who literally may die waiting to realize them, not to mention the fundamental unfairness of imposing continued immigration-driven population growth on the American people.

REDUCTIONS TO OTHER CATEGORIES

Significant as they are, these cuts alone are not enough to restore immigration admissions to more traditional levels and to minimize the population growth and labor market distortion that they cause. The following measures would also help shrink family immigration:

1. Reduce illegal immigration – continued high illegal immigration stokes family immigration in several ways. First, an unknown but significant number of illegal immigrants is able to acquire legal status each year through marriage or other ways to launder status (such as cancellation of removal, temporary protected status, or political asylum). Moreover, the presence of a large illegal alien population creates pressure on lawmakers to provide such relief. A recent study found that Congress has legalized hundreds of thousands of people through such measures in recent years¹⁹. Any increase in green cards will play out in increased family immigration down the line.
2. Reduce opportunities for fraud in the marriage visa categories (and all immigration categories).

As discussed, visas for spouses of U.S. citizens and their children are the largest single line item in the annual immigration tally, numbering 320,000 in 2013. An estimated 25 percent of the cases are fraudulent, yet officials can only investigate and prosecute a handful. If even just half of the fraudulent issuances could be prevented through more robust screening and anti-fraud efforts, that would be a significant number, potentially on the order of 40,000 fewer green cards per year²⁰.

3. Lawmakers should consider dis-allowing certain categories of immigrants to sponsor relatives at all. For example, if Congress were to enact an amnesty, even a limited one, the beneficiaries need not be entitled to bring in family members. Similar rules could be added for immigrants who become permanent residents after temporary protected status, cancellation of removal, or other amnesty programs.
4. Reductions in other legal immigration categories will reduce the pool of people in the United States who are likely to sponsor relatives for family relocation. This includes employment-based green cards, humanitarian programs, student visas, and guestworker programs.



1. Steven A. Camarota, *Immigrant Population Hits Record 42.1 Million in Second Quarter of 2015*, Center for Immigration Studies, August, 2015, <http://cis.org/Immigrant-Population-Hits-Record-Second-Quarter-2015>.
2. Steven A. Camarota, "Census: Population Up 27 Million in Just 10 Years," Center for Immigration Studies, December, 2010, <http://cis.org/2010CensusPopulation>.
3. All figures on immigration admissions since 1996 are from the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics and can be accessed at <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/>. Statistics on years prior to 1996 were obtained through a special request to this Office.
4. Drawn from DHS statistics, these figures do not include the roughly three million immigrants legalized in the 1986 amnesty.
5. It is important to note that annual family admissions numbers, particularly in the highest priority unlimited categories, are susceptible to processing slowdowns at US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the agency that is responsible for adjudicating most of the cases. Beginning in 2012, USCIS shifted resources away from processing family immigrants in order to process applicants for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created through executive action to issue work permits to illegal aliens who arrived as children. See Neil Munro, "Obama Keeps Americans in Exile But Welcomes Illegals," *The Daily Caller*, March 27, 2015, <http://dailycaller.com/2015/03/27/obama-keeps-americans-in-exile-but-welcome-illegals/>.
6. In immigration law, the term "child" refers to offspring who are under 21. Offspring who are older than 21 are referred to as "sons" or "daughters".
7. The Department of Homeland Security currently does not publish information on the status from which an individual is able to adjust to permanent residency. Therefore, it is impossible to determine just how many spousal applicants converted from legal or illegal status.
8. 2013 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, Table 9, <http://www.dhs.gov/publication/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-lawful-permanent-residents>.
9. USCIS workload data is disclosed on its website at <http://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/data-set-form-i-130-petition-alien-relative>.
10. Jon Clifton, "More Than 100 Million Worldwide Dream of Life in the U.S.," March 21, 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/161435/100-million-worldwide-dream-life.aspx>.
11. For more on immigration marriage fraud, see David Seminara, *Hello I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name: Inside the Green Card Marriage Phenomenon*, Center for Immigration Studies, November, 2008, <http://cis.org/marriagefraud>.
12. Jessica M. Vaughan, "Mayorkas to USCIS Staff: Just Say Yes, Or Else!," Center for Immigration Studies Blog, October 20, 2010, <http://cis.org/vaughan/just-say-yes>.
13. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, National Security and Records Verification Directorate, Fraud Detection and National Security Division, "Marriage-Based Benefit Fraud Assessment Draft Final Report," July, 2009.
14. Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security, *Review of the USCIS Benefit Fraud Referral Process*, OIG-08-09, April, 2008, <http://www.aila.org/content/default.aspx?docid=25895>.
15. Matt Hamilton, Cindy Chang, and Corina Knoll, "Fake weddings and a honeymoon in Vegas: Father and daughter arrested in Chinese visa fraud schemes," *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-phony-marriage-chinese-immigration-fraud-arrests-20150909-story.html>.
16. Kathleene Parker, *Population, Immigration and the Drying of the American Southwest*, Center for Immigration Studies, November, 2010, <http://cis.org/southwest-water-population-growth>.
17. U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, *Legal Immigration: Setting Priorities*, 1995 Executive Summary, <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/exesum95.html>.
18. See <https://www.numbersusa.com/news/rep-hice-offers-bill-end-chain-migration>.
19. Donald M. Kerwin, "More than IRCA: US Legalization Programs and the Current Policy Debate," Migration Policy Institute, December, 2010, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-historical.pdf>.
20. For specific recommendations to reduce immigration marriage fraud, see Seminara at <http://www.cis.org/marriagefraud>.

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