

The Visa Lottery

The visa lottery gives away 55,000 green cards (and a path to citizenship) annually to winners selected by a randomized computer drawing.¹

- Natives of any country that has sent fewer than 50,000 immigrants to the United States in the previous five years are eligible; they need only have the equivalent of a high school education or two years of work experience.²
- There are no limits to how many people can enter. Between roughly 5 million and 25 million people apply every year.³
- There is no cost to apply for the lottery. Winners selected by a computerized random drawing pay an application fee of \$330 for the visa and a path to U.S. citizenship.⁴
- Individuals already in the United States on non-immigrant visas are eligible; aliens residing in the U.S. illegally are not eligible.

The visa lottery is a new form of national origins-based discrimination in U.S. immigration policy.

- Eligibility for the lottery is determined by the place of one's birth.
- The lottery was conceived by Irish American lawmakers as a way to grant green cards to illegal aliens from Ireland.⁵

Each lottery winner creates a new potential chain of migration.

- Lottery winners can immediately sponsor their spouse and minor children for green cards through the family preference categories.
- Once they become U.S. citizens, they can sponsor their parents, adult children, and adult siblings for green cards in a potentially never-ending chain.

¹ State Department. Diversity Visa Instructions. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/diversity-visa-program-entry/diversity-visa-instructions.html>

² State Department. "If you are qualifying with work experience, you must have two years of experience in the last five years, in an occupation which, by U.S. Department of Labor definitions, requires at least two years of training or experience that is designated as Job Zone 4 or 5, classified in a Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP) rating of 7.0 or higher." <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/diversity-visa-program-entry/diversity-visa-if-you-are-selected/diversity-visa-confirm-your-qualifications.html>

³ State Department. Diversity Visa Program Statistics. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/diversity-visa-program-entry/diversity-visa-program-statistics.html>

⁴ State Department. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fees/fees-visa-services.html#perm>

⁵ Michael E. Miller, "Diversity visa lottery, criticized after New York terrorist attack, was invented to help the Irish," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/05/02/straight-up-pork-barrel-politics-how-the-green-card-lottery-was-invented-to-help-the-irish/> (accessed Dec. 6, 2023)