The U.S. immigration system offers several family-based green card categories, and the **IR6 Green Card** is one of the most valuable for spouses of U.S. citizens. Unlike conditional green cards (such as CR1), the IR6 category grants **permanent residency immediately** to spouses in marriages that are at least two years old.

If you are married to a U.S. citizen and your marriage meets this requirement, the IR6 Green Card may be the **simplest, most secure path to U.S. residency**.

This guide covers everything you need to know: how the IR6 works, its benefits, eligibility requirements, how it compares to other categories, and common FAQs.

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Quick Facts: IR6 Green Card

- **Category**: Immediate Relative (IR) Green Card
- **For**: Spouses of U.S. citizens with marriages lasting **2+ years** at approval
- **Validity**: 10 years (renewable)
- **Conditions**: None (permanent from day one)
- **Path to Citizenship**: Eligible in **3 years** (if still married to U.S. citizen)

- **Work & Travel**: Authorized immediately

What Is the IR6 Green Card?

The IR6 is a **family-based green card** under the *Immediate Relative (IR)* category. It is specifically designed for:

- Foreign-born **spouses of U.S. citizens**
- Where the marriage has lasted **at least two years** at the time of green card approval

This distinguishes it from the **CR1 (Conditional Resident)** green card, which applies to marriages of less than two years. With IR6, you receive a **10-year permanent green card** right away, without any conditions or additional requirements.

How Does the IR6 Process Work?

Here's how the process typically unfolds:

1. **Petition by U.S. Citizen Spouse**
    - File **Form I-130 (Petition for Alien Relative)** with USCIS.
2. **Choose the Application Path**

    - **Form I-485 (Adjustment of Status)** if you're already in the U.S.
    - **Form DS-260 (Consular Processing)** if you're outside the U.S.
3. **Submit Supporting Documents**
    - Marriage certificate, financial evidence, proof of bona fide marriage, etc.
4. **Attend Interview**
    - Both spouses may be asked to attend a USCIS or consular interview.
5. **Approval & Green Card Issuance**
    - If approved and the marriage is **2+ years old**, the spouse receives an IR6 green card.

Benefits of the IR6 Green Card

Holding an IR6 green card offers several advantages:

- **Permanent Residency** from the start (valid for 10 years)
- **Work Authorization** without needing a separate EAD (Employment Authorization Document)
- **Freedom to Travel** in and out of the U.S.
- **Eligibility for Citizenship** in 3 years if still married to a U.S. citizen (5 years otherwise)
- **Access to Public Benefits**, healthcare, and education opportunities
- **No Quota Limits** (immediate relatives are not subject to visa caps)

Who Is Eligible for IR6?

You may qualify for an IR6 green card if:

- You are **married to a U.S. citizen**
- Your marriage is **at least two years old** at the time of approval
- You are applying through either **adjustment of status** (inside U.S.) or **consular processing** (outside U.S.)

Pros and Cons of the IR6 Green Card

Pros	Cons
Permanent from day one (no conditions)	Processing times can be lengthy (months to years)
Renewable every 10 years	Requires strong proof of bona fide marriage
Grants work and travel rights	Renewal requires filing Form I-90
Pathway to citizenship in 3 years	Renewal costs and USCIS backlogs
No visa caps (unlimited visas available)	Must maintain residency to keep status

When Should You Opt for IR6?

The IR6 is the right choice when:

- Your marriage has lasted **2+ years** by the time of green card approval
- You want to **avoid conditional residency (CR1)**
- You are seeking a **long-term residency solution** with fewer restrictions
- You eventually plan to apply for **U.S. citizenship**

Validity and Renewal Process

- The IR6 green card is valid for **10 years**.
- To renew, file **Form I-90 (Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card)** about 6 months before expiration.
- Renewal does **not require proof of ongoing marriage** since IR6 is permanent from issuance.

IR6 Green Card vs. U.S. Citizenship

While the IR6 offers long-term residency, it differs from U.S. citizenship in key ways:

Feature	IR6 Green Card	U.S. Citizenship
Voting Rights	❌ No	✅ Yes
U.S. Passport	❌ No	✅ Yes
Deportation Protection	Limited	Full
Duration	Renewable every 10 years	Permanent
Eligibility	Pathway after 3 years (if married to U.S. citizen)	N/A

IR6 vs. IR1 Green Card

Both IR1 and IR6 apply to spouses of U.S. citizens married for more than 2 years. The distinction lies in **application type**:

Feature	IR1	IR6
Category	Immigrant Visa	Adjustment of Status / Immigrant Visa
Who Qualifies	Spouse of U.S. citizen (marriage 2+ years)	Same
Application Path	Consular Processing	Adjustment of Status (within U.S.) or consular
Conditions	None	None
Duration	10 years	10 years

In practice, the terms are often used interchangeably depending on whether the spouse is applying **inside** or **outside** the U.S.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I work immediately after getting IR6?

Yes. IR6 green card holders are authorized to work in the U.S. without a separate work permit.

What if my marriage is less than 2 years old?

You will receive a CR1 conditional green card, valid for 2 years. After that, you must file to remove conditions.

Do I need to remain married after receiving IR6?

For renewal, no. However, to apply for citizenship after 3 years, you must remain married to the U.S. citizen spouse.

Q4: Is there a cap or lottery for IR6 visas?

No. Immediate relatives are not subject to annual visa limits.

What documents are needed for IR6?

Marriage certificate, proof of U.S. citizenship of spouse, financial affidavits, photos, and proof of bona fide relationship.

Understanding Green Card and Citizenship Options in the U.S.

How to Prepare for Your USCIS Naturalization Interview: A Practical Guide

Need guidance with your IR6 application?

The IR6 Green Card is one of the most secure and straightforward paths for spouses of U.S. citizens. It eliminates conditional residency, grants immediate work rights, and provides a pathway to citizenship.

At Lunel Law, we help families navigate U.S. immigration with clarity and care.

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