National Foundation for American Policy

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Contact: Stuart Anderson, 703-351-5042, press@nfap.com

New Research: Top Technology Companies Receive Most New H-1B Petitions in FY 2025

Amazon, Meta Platforms, Microsoft and Google, the Largest Investors in AI, Have the Most Approved H-1B Petitions

Arlington, Va. – Amazon had the most H-1B petitions for initial employment approved in FY 2025, with 4,644, followed by Meta Platforms (1,555), Microsoft (1,394) and Google (1,050), according to a National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) analysis of USCIS data. This is the first time these four large U.S. technology companies have held the top four spots for approvals of new H-1B petitions. The companies are hiring talent to complement the $380 billion spent on AI and related capital expenditures in 2025. The latest data indicate a shift has occurred: Only three Indian-based companies in FY 2025 were among the top 25 employers with approved H-1B petitions for initial employment. In FY 2025, the top seven Indian-based companies had only 4,573 H-1B petitions approved for initial employment, a 70% drop from FY 2015 and 37% fewer than in FY 2024. H-1B petitions for initial employment are primarily for new employment, which, for companies, are cases counted against the H-1B annual limit of 65,000, with an exemption of 20,000 for individuals with master's degrees or higher from a U.S. university. The NFAP analysis is based on data from the USCIS H-1B Employer Data Hub. The National Foundation for American Policy is a nonpartisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia.

The study "H-1B Petitions and Denial Rates in FY 2025," can be found at https://nfap.com/.

H-1B visas are important because they typically represent the only practical way for a high-skilled foreign national, including an international student, to work long term in the United States, build a career and have the opportunity to become a permanent resident and U.S. citizen. The pool from which employers select highly skilled professionals with recent advanced degrees in key technical fields is composed largely of foreign nationals. At U.S. universities, international students account for 71% of the full-time graduate students in computer and information sciences and 73% of the full-time graduate students in electrical and computer engineering. Without H-1B status, a foreign national would likely need to leave the United States and work in China, India, Canada or elsewhere. Approximately 700,000 people live and work in the U.S. in H-1B status, according to an NFAP analysis.

Analysts note the primary drawback of the H-1B visa category is not the distribution among companies, as some argue, but the low annual limit of 85,000, which equals 0.05% of the U.S. labor force and has been exhausted every year for more than two decades (since FY 2004). As a result, H-1B registrations are selected by lottery. In FY 2025, approximately 442,000 unique beneficiaries were entered in the H-1B registration process, indicating that USCIS rejected more than 300,000 H-1B beneficiaries due to the 85,000 annual limit.

Restrictive policies toward high-skilled immigration in Donald Trump's first term have influenced second-term policies and could lead to higher denial rates and other problems for employers. The Trump administration has imposed a $100,000 fee on the entry of new H-1B visa holders from outside the United States. In Trump's first term, his administration also used 212(f) authority to

block the entry of H-1B visa holders during the Covid-19 pandemic. An NFAP economic analysis found the action did not create more employment opportunities for U.S. workers. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services released guidance confirming that the $100,000 fee would be levied on new H-1B visa holders coming into the country and would not apply when people change from one visa category to another without leaving the U.S., such as moving from F-1 student status to H-1B status.

The administration has also placed on its regulatory agenda rules similar to those judges blocked in Trump's first term. These include upcoming rules to change (and likely significantly raise) prevailing wage requirements for H-1B visa holders and employment-based immigrants, and restrict who qualifies for an H-1B visa. A proposed rule published in September 2025, like a rule in the first term, would disadvantage international students in the H-1B lottery selection.

The findings in this National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) analysis include:

- A significant number of employers use H-1B visas. While well-known companies garner the most attention, 28,277 different employers in the United States were approved to hire at least one new H-1B visa holder in FY 2025, primarily because an H-1B petition or visa is usually the only way to hire a high-skilled foreign national in America. Sixty-one percent of employers were approved for a single H-1B petition, and 95% were approved for ten or fewer new H-1B petitions in FY 2025. Over half of new H-1B petitions went to employers with 15 or fewer approvals for H-1B petitions for initial employment, and 72% went to employers with 100 or fewer approvals.

- A total of 68,167 H-1B petitions were approved for individuals to change to a new employer. That large a number calls into question allegations that H-1B visa holders are "indentured servants." Counting individuals approved for H-1B petitions for initial employment, more than one-third, or 37%, of H-1B professionals who started working for a new company or organization in FY 2025 transferred from another employer.

- The denial rate for H-1B petitions for initial employment rose to 2.8% in FY 2025 from 2.5% in FY 2024. That was lower than the 3.5% rate in FY 2023 but above the 2.2% rate in FY 2022. There were 114,806 approvals for initial employment in FY 2025, which include new and concurrent employment (when an H-1B visa holder works for a second employer concurrently). The denial rate for H-1B petitions for initial employment reached 24% in FY 2018 during Donald Trump's first term, due to restrictive policies that were later struck down in court, leading to a settlement.

- The denial rate for H-1B petitions for "continuing" employment (primarily for existing employees) was 1.9% in FY 2025, almost identical to the denial rate of 1.8% in FY 2024, and lower than the 2.4% rate in FY 2023. These rates are far below the 12% denial rate in FY 2018 and FY 2019 during the first Trump administration. There were 291,542 approvals for H-1B petitions for continuing employment in FY 2025. H-1B petitions for continuing employment include an extension of stay with the same employer, an amended petition (such as for a change in location or job responsibilities) with the same employer and a change of employer.

- The average annual salary for an H-1B visa holder in computer-related occupations in FY 2024 was $136,000, and the median salary was $125,000, according to USCIS statistics, which is at odds with the charge by some that H-1B professionals represent "cheap labor."

- In FY 2024, 63% of approved H-1B beneficiaries earned a master's degree or higher, according to USCIS. The education levels indicate that H-1B visa holders represent highly skilled professionals.

- In addition to paying the required wages, legal and government fees to file an initial H-1B petition and an extension could cost employers up to $34,900 over a number of years, and as high as $50,000, once including the additional cost of sponsoring an employee for permanent residence, according to an NFAP analysis.

- Absent significant changes in government policies, high denial rates are unusual since employers would be unlikely to apply for H-1B petitions for individuals who do not qualify, given the time and expense. During Donald Trump's first term, restrictive policy changes increased the denial rate for H-1B petitions for initial employment to 24% in FY 2018, 21% in FY 2019 and 13% in FY 2020 before a legal settlement in 2020 lowered denial rates below pre-Trump levels.

- The unemployment rate for computer and mathematical occupations dropped from 3.4% to 3.0% between August 2024 and August 2025, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate for architecture and engineering occupations fell from 1.7% to 1.4% between August 2024 and August 2025.

- In FY 2025, Amazon had the most approved H-1B petitions for continuing employment, with 14,532, followed by TCS (5,293), Microsoft (4,863), Meta Platforms (4,740), Apple (4,610) and Google (4,509). These numbers do not represent individual employees since an H-1B visa holder may be approved multiple times for continuing employment during the same year if they change locations. Adding up initial and continuing employment for employers similarly creates a distorted picture.

- Employers in California (21,559), Texas (12,613), New York (11,436), New Jersey (7,729) and Virginia (7,579) had the most approvals for H-1B petitions for initial employment in FY 2025. New York, with 7,811, was the city with the most approved H-1B petitions for initial employment in FY 2025, followed by Arlington, VA (4,836), Chicago (2,923), San Jose (2,383), Santa Clara (2,286) and San Francisco (2,222). The top industry type for approved new H-1B petitions in FY 2025 was professional, scientific and technical services, followed by educational services, manufacturing, information, healthcare and social assistance and finance and insurance.

- Data and economics indicate it is a mistake to assume a fixed number of jobs and that foreign-born scientists and engineers prevent U.S. engineers and computer specialists from gaining jobs. The number of U.S.-born workers employed in computer science and mathematical occupations increased by over 2.7 million, or 141%, between 2003 and 2024, according to a National Foundation for American Policy analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

- Employment in computer and mathematical occupations in the United States, including the foreign-born, increased by 166% between 2003 and 2024, illustrating that there is not a fixed number of jobs and employment in the technology sector surged while many foreign-born scientists and engineers immigrated. The number of U.S.-born workers employed in all STEM-related occupations (including computer and mathematical occupations) increased by over 3 million, or 50%, between 2003 and 2024.

- In a May 2020 National Foundation for American Policy study, economist Madeline Zavodny concluded, "H-1B visa holders do not adversely affect U.S. workers. On the contrary, the evidence points to the presence of H-1B visa holders being associated with lower unemployment rates and faster earnings growth among college graduates, including recent college graduates."

- Restrictions on H-1B visas likely drive jobs and innovation outside of the United States. "[A]ny policies that are motivated by concerns about the loss of native jobs should consider

that policies aimed at reducing immigration have the unintended consequence of encouraging firms to offshore jobs abroad," concluded a study by Britta Glennon, an assistant professor at the Wharton School of Business at UPENN. "When U.S. firms are denied H-1Bs, they go abroad, setting up new foreign affiliates and hiring talent there instead of in the U.S.," said Glennon. "For the most global multinational companies, this is at almost a 1:1 rate. The results demonstrate an important unintended consequence of immigration restrictions: the movement of jobs and talent abroad, with major implications for U.S. competitiveness."

- Economist Giovanni Peri and coauthors found the low annual H-1B limit prevents employers from creating hundreds of thousands of jobs for U.S. workers by discouraging company investment and other means.

Policies toward high-skilled foreign nationals in America remain more restrictive than those of other countries that the United States competes with for talent. The Trump administration is making U.S. immigration policies more restrictive by implementing measures that officials proposed or enacted during Donald Trump's first term. The policies could lead to fewer international students attending U.S. universities and more companies sending work and resources outside the United States.

About the National Foundation for American Policy
Established in 2003, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia focusing on trade, immigration and related issues. The Advisory Board members include Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Ohio University economist Richard Vedder, Cornell Law School professor Stephen W. Yale-Loehr and former INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. Over the past 24 months, NFAP's research has been written about in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other major media outlets. The organization's reports can be found at www.nfap.com. X.com: **@NFAPResearch**

1550 Wilson Blvd., Suite 700, Arlington, VA 22209
phone: (703) 351-5042 fax: (703) 351-9292 www.nfap.com