



H-1B Visa Program

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The [H-1B visa](#) program has recently garnered significant attention amidst political debates, with prominent figures, including **Elon Musk**, have voiced **support for its continuation**, emphasizing its role in addressing the **US's STEM talent shortages**.

What is the H-1B Visa Program?

- **About:** The H-1B is a [non-immigrant visa](#) which allows US-based companies to **hire and employ foreign workers** for specialty jobs like [science, technology, engineering, mathematics \(STEM\), and IT](#) (High skills and at least a bachelor's degree)
 - It was introduced in **1990** to help US employers address **skill shortages** when qualified US workers are unavailable.
 - A **nonimmigrant visa** allows **temporary entry to the US** for purposes like **tourism, business, work, study**, or medical treatment.
- **Visa Duration:** An H-1B visa can be issued for a maximum of **six years**. After this period, the visa holder must either **leave the US** for at least 12 months before reapplying for another H-1B visa or apply for **permanent residence (a [Green Card](#))**.
- **Annual Cap and Exemptions:** Currently, there is a regular annual cap of **65,000 new H-1B visas** each fiscal year.
 - An additional **20,000 visas** are available for applicants who hold a **master's degree or higher** from a US university.
 - Petitions for H-1B visa holders seeking **continued employment** and those seeking **employment at higher education institutions, affiliated nonprofits, or government research organizations** are eligible for cap exemption.
- **Dominance of Indians:** People born in India are the **largest beneficiaries** accounting for more than **70%** of all approved H-1B petitions annually **since 2015**.
 - People born in **China rank second**, consistently making up **12-13%** of petitions since 2018.

How many H-1B petitions are being approved? For whom?

CHART 1: NUMBER OF H-1B PETITIONS APPROVED BY USCIS (2003-23)



CHART 2: BIRTH COUNTRY OF SUCCESSFUL PETITIONERS

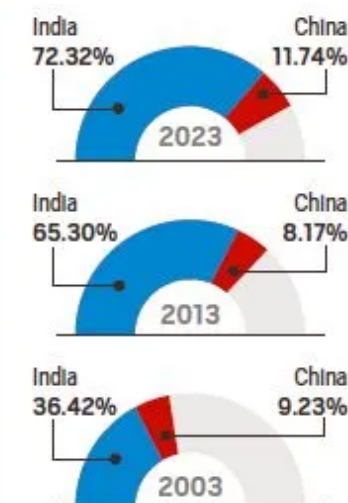
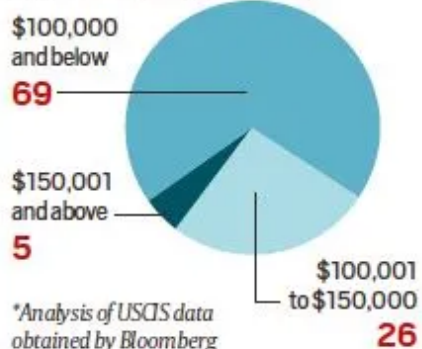


CHART 3: %AGE OF INDIA-BORN BENEFICIARIES (FY 2023)



Source: US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Department of Homeland Security

■ 65% of H-1B petitions approved in 2023 were for "Computer Related" occupations.

■ Consequently, the biggest employers onboarding foreign professionals under the program included the largest tech corporations in the US (and world), including the top four Indian IT majors with a US presence in the US — Infosys, TCS, HCL, and Wipro.

TABLE: BENEFICIARIES BY EMPLOYER (FY 24)

Employer (petitioner)	H-1B beneficiaries (approved numbers)	Share (%) in top 10
Amazon.com	9,265	17.3
Infosys	8,140	15.2
Cognizant	6,321	11.8
Google	5,364	10.0
TCS	5,274	9.8
Meta platforms	4,844	9.0
Microsoft	4,725	8.8
Apple	3,873	7.2
Hcl america	2,953	5.5
IBM	2,906	5.4
TOTAL	53,665	100.0

Other US Nonimmigrant Visa Categories

Visa Category	Purpose of Travel
O	Foreign national with extraordinary ability in Sciences, Arts, Education, Business or Athletics
H-2A	Temporary agricultural worker
H-2B	Temporary worker performing other services or labor of a temporary or seasonal nature
B-2	Tourism , vacation, pleasure visitor
V	Nonimmigrant Visa for Spouse and Children of a Lawful Permanent Resident

Note: China and India dominate the STEM fields worldwide.

- According to data presented by the **Centre for Security and Emerging Technology (CSET)**, a US based think tank, in 2020, **China (3.57 million)** and **India (2.55 million)** led the world in **STEM graduates**, far surpassing the **US (820,000)**.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/h-1b-visa-program>

