Daily Labor Report

# H-1B Visa Workers Are Fed Up and Abandoning American Tech Jobs

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## Summary by Bloomberg AI AI Generated

- Yash Sharma, a 36-year-old Google software engineer from India, plans to move to the UK next month due to the constant rule changes around visas for highly skilled immigrants in the US.
- The Trump administration's reshaping of visa rules has effectively dismantled an immigration system that helped make America a destination for the world's best engineers and researchers, and some US companies are giving up on the idea that anything will change soon.
- The uncertainly and unpredictability of the US immigration system is changing assumptions about the future of the US economy and forcing businesses to plan for a world in which they may not be able to bring top talent to work in their US headquarters.

Yash Sharma decided last month that he's had enough of the US. The 36-year-old Google software engineer from India says halfway through Donald Trump's second term, the constant rule changes around visas for highly skilled immigrants, the unknowns they create and the slim odds of him becoming a citizen have all become too much.

Sharma, who has had an H-1B visa for six years, says it's become hard to focus at work. And while he loves his life in San Francisco and working at the epicenter of tech and AI, he feels like he's run out of options to gain permanent residency and build a life here.

The US feels like a "golden prison," Sharma said. He plans to move to the UK next month, even though he doesn't have a job there, because he was offered a visa with a clear path to staying in the country for the long term.



Yash Sharma in San Francisco.
Photographer: Manuel Orbegozo/Bloomberg

This month's midterm elections delivered a rebuke of Trump's immigration crackdown, helping Democrats win control of Congress and prompting the president to acknowledge that his administration may have been "too tough" in deporting people who had jobs.

But less acknowledged has been the administration's reshaping of visa rules that for years have channeled graduates and highly skilled employees into the workforce. The newly empowered opposition won't have an easy time reversing Trump's rule changes, which have effectively dismantled an immigration system that helped make America a destination for the world's best engineers and researchers. Just this week, the Labor Department proposed tighter rules for companies seeking to sponsor foreign workers for permanent residency.

Some of the biggest US companies are giving up on the idea anything will change soon. International Business Machines Corp. is ending US visa sponsorships for most jobs in its largest division, leaving affected employees to transfer outside the US or plan on leaving the company by year-end. Payments company Flywire Corp. is weighing whether to put more hiring and development work overseas, while Microsoft Corp., Adobe Inc. and a handful of IT outsourcing firms have been barred from a key green-card sponsorship program as federal officials probe their practices.

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The Trump administration says workers and employers have abused the immigration system for years, moving it away from its origins as a way to get highly specialized talent into the country on a temporary basis into a sprawling behemoth that's resulted in lower pay for Americans.

Research into the question of how immigrants affect wages has shown mixed results. But a recently released study by a Harvard University economist who served on Trump's Council of Economic Advisers found skilled immigration leads to lower pay for college-educated US workers, particularly in scientific fields.

Trump's appointment this month of Stephen Miller as chief of staff gives the longtime advocate of reducing all forms of immigration greater authority, while investigations into employers' green-card sponsorships, announced last month by Vice President JD Vance, have added to the pressure.

"It's a quiet dismantling of employment-based immigration," said Angelo Paparelli, an immigration attorney and partner at Vialto Law.



Stephen Miller
Photographer: Shawn Thew/EPA/Getty Images

There's a growing sense that the friction and unpredictability are the new normal for the US immigration system. That's changing assumptions about the future of the US economy and forcing businesses to plan for a world in which they may not be able to bring top talent to work in their US headquarters.

“Economies of scale are tricky things. It’s a bit like a reputation: it can take years to build and no time to utterly destroy it,” said Scott Corley, executive director of Compete America, a coalition of major US technology and high-skilled professional employers.

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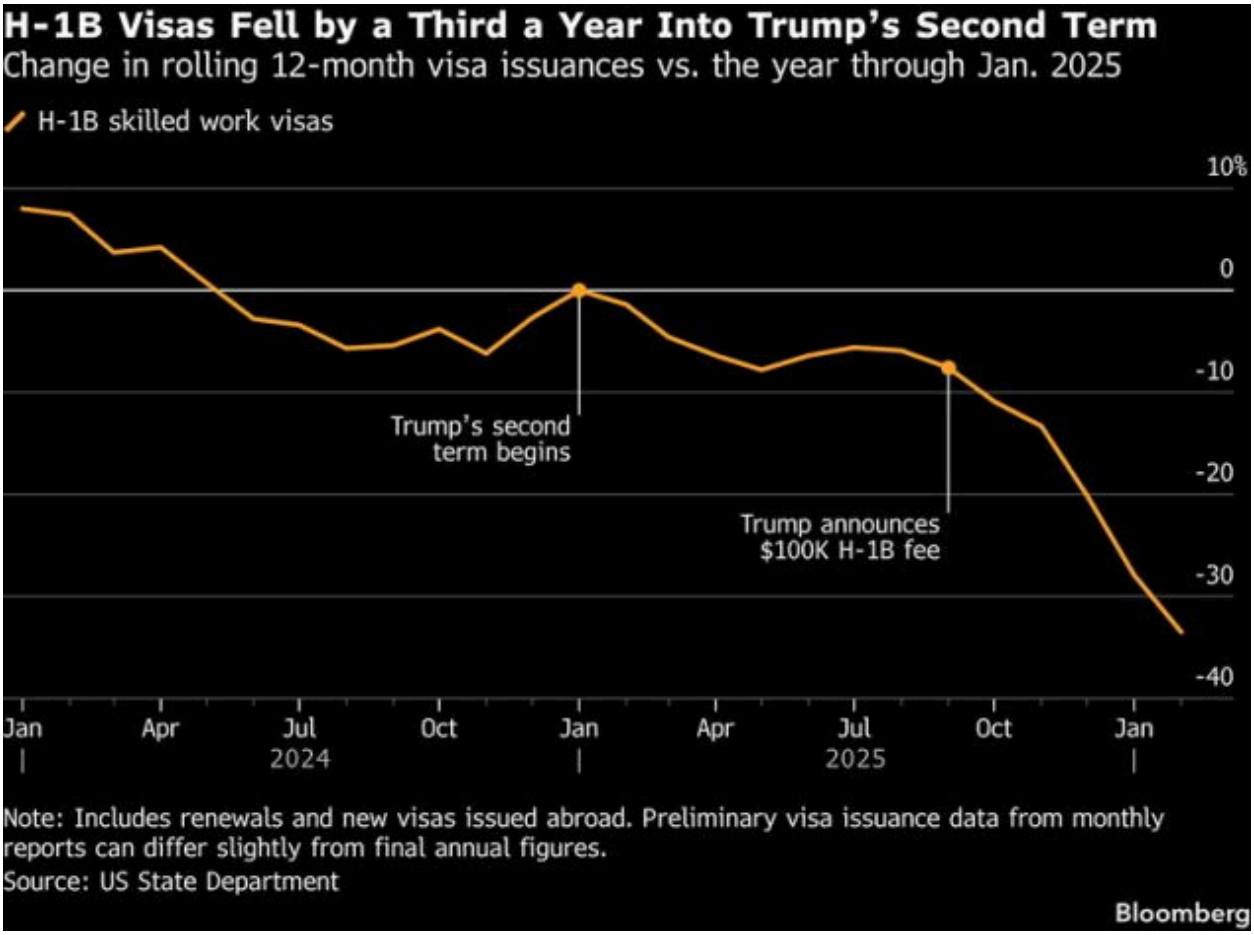
Sharma says he’s felt discouraged about the chances he’d ever be able to convert his temporary visa into permanent residency given a huge backlog for Indian nationals. He hasn’t left the country in a year and a half, concerned he might not be able to get back in. That’s meant missing out on family visits, work conferences and trips with friends.

**Global Talent**

He sought another path to permanent residency and more stability by applying for an “extraordinary ability” visa, given to people with standout talent in their field, but was rejected after months of waiting.

The uncertainly led Sharma to consider a life outside the US. He applied for a Global Talent visa from the UK and was approved, allowing him to move to the UK without a job and begin looking for work. He says the US election results haven’t dissuaded him from the plan.

“I’ve seen various administrations, and to me it’s clear that there will be no actual change to the law,” he said. And even if things returned to how they were before, the difficulty of getting permanent residency would still weigh on him. “That normal still sucks,” he said.




Trump's broad immigration crackdown started almost immediately after he took office. After campaigning on a pledge to end illegal immigration, the dragnet expanded to include narrowing paths for legal immigration, adding new regulations and steep fees.

By September last year, the popular H-1B visa program for high-skilled foreign workers became a focus, first with a presidential proclamation requiring a $100,000 payment for certain prospective job candidates outside the US. In August, despite a court order blocking that original payment, the administration moved to impose a separate $103,000 fee for new H-1B visa applications.

**Legal Challenges**

Many of Trump's policy changes are facing legal challenges, but the chaos and confusion are difficult for companies and workers to navigate.

Swapnil Deshpande, who works as a senior data analyst at a major US tech firm, said that the constant changes in immigration policy have made it hard to envision a stable future in the US. The Indian national arrived in 2018 to pursue a master's degree at Northeastern University and has been working in New York for almost six years.

Every day he wakes up feeling like it could be his last in the US. He said two years ago, he had somewhat of a plan of how his next five years would go. Maybe he would start a family, buy a home and establish a life here.

But in the last two years, that plan has become blurry.

“Me and my wife both wanted to get a house and start a journey, but now the next question for us is like, ‘What’s going to happen next month or next day? Where will we land? What is really there for us?’” he said. “Is the uncertainty, stress, unpredictability really worth it?”




US Vice President JD Vance speaks during a press conference about fraud and abuse of the H-1B visa program in Washington on Oct. 8.
Photographer: Alex Wroblewski/AFP/Getty Images

Employers are also rethinking how they hire some of the most highly sought-after foreign workers.

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IBM told employees this month that it would stop sponsoring foreign workers for most jobs in its consulting division, according to a document shared with managers that Bloomberg News reviewed.

For Boston-based Flywire, tighter immigration rules could make it harder to hire the engineers who build its payments technology systems.

The company, which handles billions of dollars in payments a month for colleges and other clients, said in a quarterly filing this month that it is considering “reallocating hiring and development activities to lower-cost jurisdictions where we already operate” to offset increases in H-1B visa costs. It warned that trouble recruiting and retaining specialists could slow its own product development, while fewer foreign students choosing American universities would mean less tuition money moving through its network.



The Trump administration has barred Microsoft from a key green-card sponsorship program. Photographer: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg

Data is beginning to show the impact of Trump’s limits. During the 2025 budget year, which included the last three full months of the Biden administration, the US issued about 260,000 fewer temporary, non-immigrant visas than the prior year, according to federal visa data analyzed by the Migration Policy Institute. International enrollment at US universities has declined, with an estimated 15% drop in new foreign students this fall, according to the Institute of International Education. Participation in Optional Practical Training, which gives international students temporary work authorization, dropped by 6% at the start of the 2026-27 academic year, marking the first decline in five years.

Chris Thomas, an immigration lawyer and partner at Holland & Hart in Denver, said his corporate clients are asking about the risks they face if they choose to hire foreigners. For many of them, the thinking is “we know we’re doing oversight right, we know we are compliant with the law, but the concern is if we get charged anyway,” he said.

He added that many clients fear that any perceived slip-up could prompt the government to ban them from work visa programs or launch criminal probes.

And over the long term, he said, some of his corporate clients are wondering if it's worth the hassle of trying to navigate an increasingly complex employer-based immigration landscape.

"Some are saying it's too much, it's time to start offshoring," Thomas said.

While legal challenges could limit the scope of Trump's restrictions, Thomas and others said that the perception that the administration is making the US less welcoming has already broken through.

"It creates this profound instability for the entire immigration ecosystem," said Kate Angustia, supervisory policy and practice counsel at the American Immigration Lawyers Association. "We are creating a brain drain."

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