

National Foundation for American Policy

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New Research: Immigrants Started Nearly Two-Thirds of America's Top AI Companies; 70% of Graduate Students in AI-Related Fields Are International Students

Immigrant Talent Key To America's AI Leadership

Arlington, Va. – Immigrants have founded or cofounded nearly two-thirds (65% or 28 of 43) of the top AI companies in the United States, and 70% of full-time graduate students in fields related to artificial intelligence are international students, according to [new research](#) from the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP). Seventy-seven percent of the leading U.S.-based AI companies were founded or cofounded by immigrants or the children of immigrants. Forty-two percent (18 of 43) of the top U.S.-based AI companies had a founder who came to America as an international student.

The report, “AI and Immigrants,” can be found at <https://nfap.com/>.

“The research shows immigrant talent is crucial to America’s AI leadership,” said Stuart Anderson, the study’s author and NFAP’s executive director. Anderson was head of policy and counselor to the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in President George W. Bush’s administration. “Any U.S. effort to ensure America’s future in AI logically needs to include ways to make it easier for the foreign-born to start businesses in the United States and remain and work after being educated at U.S. universities. Many international students and immigrants have focused their studies in technical fields most relevant to artificial intelligence.”

NFAP conducted the research through interviews and gathering information on the 43 U.S. companies on *Forbes* [AI 50](#), a list of the top startup companies “developing the most promising business applications of artificial intelligence—companies with compelling visions and the resources and technical wherewithal to achieve them.”

Several AI companies were previously included in [NFAP’s study](#) (July 2022) on *Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Billion-Dollar Companies*. That research found immigrants have started more than half (319 of 582, or 55%) of America’s startup companies valued at \$1 billion or more (as of May 2022) that had yet to become publicly traded on the U.S. stock market and also identified at least 25 billion-dollar U.S.-based AI companies with at least one immigrant founder.

Foreign-born individuals play a crucial role in AI as researchers and experts consider retaining international students after graduation vital to America’s leadership in artificial intelligence. An NFAP analysis found 70% of full-time graduate students at U.S. universities in selected AI-related fields are international students. In computer and information sciences, the leading field of study for AI researchers, 71% of full-time graduate students at U.S. universities are international students.

Immigrant entrepreneurs in top AI companies were born in 21 different countries. Indian immigrants founded ten of the top U.S.-based AI companies. Immigrants from Israel and the United Kingdom were second with three, followed by Canada, China and France with two each. Immigrants from

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Taiwan, Syria, Poland and elsewhere founded or cofounded one of top U.S. AI companies.

The research notes artificial intelligence may be the most transformative technology of the 21st century and will likely lead to improvements for businesses, consumers and national defense. Given the central role of productivity growth in economic growth, the nations that best develop and integrate AI will likely be the most productive and do the most to improve their citizens' living standards.

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. Twitter: [@NFAPResearch](https://twitter.com/NFAPResearch)

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