

F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification

Fiscal Year 2008-2018 Approvals

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U.S. Citizenship and
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Office of Policy and Strategy
Research and Evaluation Division

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an overview of F-1 students obtaining another nonimmigrant status between fiscal years 2008 and 2018. International students make up a significant percentage of students in U.S. schools, especially in colleges and universities. Three nonimmigrant classifications are available to individuals whose primary purpose is to come to the United States to study, but the focus of this report is F-1 academic students.¹

With some exceptions,² F-1 students may qualify to obtain another nonimmigrant status. The most commonly sought nonimmigrant status by international students is the H-1B nonimmigrant worker visa classification for specialty occupations. Each year, many F-1 students obtain H-1B status after completing their full time study (often times after completing Optional Practical Training³). F-1 students may also qualify to obtain an employment-based nonimmigrant status other than H-1B, but the volume of such requests is extremely small in comparison to H-1B.

F-1 students may also qualify to obtain other nonimmigrant classifications unrelated to employment, most commonly based on being a dependent (spouse or child) of the principal nonimmigrant who is seeking to change status. Nearly half (45.7 percent) of these status changes are for F-1 students changing to H-4 status (as a dependent of the H-1B principal), and 25 percent changing from F-1 to F-2 status (as a dependent of the F-1 principal). However, the overall volume of non-employment-based status changes is also very small when measured against H-1B.

¹ The other two student classifications are M-1 for vocational or nonacademic students, and J-1 for exchange visitors.

² See <https://www.uscis.gov/visit-United-States/change-my-nonimmigrant-status-category/change-my-nonimmigrant-status>

³ H-1B and other employment-based visa categories described in this report include F-1 students on whose behalf an employer filed, and received approval for, an employment-based nonimmigrant petition and who concurrently changed status within the United States based on such approval or who were to subsequently obtain nonimmigrant status through consular processing outside the United States. Therefore, use of the terms “status change,” “changing status,” and similar terms in this report encompasses both such scenarios, as well as instances where an alien applies for a non-employment based status on his or her own behalf. Not all beneficiaries of approved nonimmigrant worker petitions in the latter scenario were eventually issued the visa through consular processing and entered the United States as a nonimmigrant worker.

MAJOR FINDINGS

This report is solely based on US Citizenship and Immigration Services administrative data for approved petitions.⁴ The overall approval count of F-1 students seeking a different nonimmigrant status increased by 60 percent over the 11-year period, from slightly under 35,000 in FY 2008 to 56,000 in FY 2018 (Table 1 and Figure 1). About 84 percent in this 11-year period were beneficiaries of H-1B visa classification, whereas about 6 percent were beneficiaries of other employment-based petitions, and 10 percent obtained non-employment-based status. The total number of F-1 students approved for H-1B visa classification approvals rose by 73 percent from FY 2008 to FY 2018, or from slightly under 29,000 in FY 2008 to almost 50,000 in FY 2018 (Figure 2). Over the years, the share of H-1B approvals fluctuated from 79 percent in FY 2010 to 89 percent in FY 2018. The share of other employment-based visa classifications ranged from 4.4 percent in FY 2011 to 7.8 percent in FY 2017, and 5.1 percent in FY 2018. The share of non-employment-based visa classifications declined from 15.4 percent in FY 2010 to 5.8 percent in FY 2018.

Figure 3 shows the share of F-1 students in total H-1B new employment approvals.⁵ This share increased from 30 percent in FY 2008 to nearly 60 percent in FY 2018.

⁴ This report does not count F-1 students who sought and were approved to extend their F-1 status.

⁵ New employment is generally selected on the petition when the intended beneficiary is to begin employment with an employer in a different nonimmigrant classification than the intended beneficiary currently holds, or in a new nonimmigrant classification if the intended beneficiary is outside the United States and does not hold a nonimmigrant classification.

F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification

Table 1: F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification: Fiscal Year 2008-2018 Approvals by Classification

 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services		Count of F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification: Fiscal Year 2008-2018 Approvals											
NONIMMIGRANT CLASSIFICATION	DESCRIPTION	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
H1B	SPECIALTY OCCUPATIONS	28,794	29,722	20,727	28,906	31,823	30,558	30,337	29,947	38,217	33,343	49,894	352,268
OTHER EMPLOYMENT-BASED													
O1B	EXTRAORDINARY ALIEN IN ARTS	296	360	379	395	534	735	666	593	830	1,057	857	6,702
R1	RELIGIOUS OCCUPATION	367	378	480	505	490	547	553	557	634	689	583	5,783
E2	TREATY INVESTOR	568	349	234	203	246	288	316	302	297	225	290	3,318
O1A	EXTRAORDINARY ALIEN - NON-ARTS	140	90	30	34	49	82	117	220	425	428	428	2,043
TN1	NAFTA PRINCIPAL (CANADA)	148	92	59	48	80	83	151	170	221	190	115	1,357
O1	ALIEN W/EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY	101	74	D	D	28	92	52	135	172	173	271	1,115
P1A	ALIEN WITH ATHLETIC EVENT	103	76	87	91	88	98	116	99	101	101	91	1,051
H3	ALIEN TRAINEE	274	100	38	36	68	78	69	52	59	43	33	850
TN2	NAFTA PRINCIPAL (MEXICO)	110	69	33	46	47	81	75	86	97	76	56	776
L1A	MANAGER OR EXECUTIVE	63	52	35	36	35	41	40	40	52	34	22	450
E3	AUSTRALIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT	45	19	13	12	10	22	25	28	20	21	13	228
E1	TREATY TRADER	62	27	D	D	14	18	21	20	17	14	16	224
O2	ACCOMPANYING ALIEN TO O1	10	D	D	D	10	22	10	19	42	35	30	204
P3	UNIQUE PGM ARTIST/ENTERTAINER	21	19	21	D	D	19	11	19	12	16	13	163
P1	ATHLETE OR ENTERTAINER	16	16	11	17	11	13	D	D	D	11	19	135
L1B	SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE ALIEN	38	D	D	D	D	D	D	11	13	D	D	111
P15	SUPPORT PERSON OF P-1	D	D	D	D	D	10	D	10	D	13	12	87
Q1	INTL CULTURAL XCHG VISITORS	D	D	D	-	D	D	D	D	19	10	11	76
H2B	TEMPORARY NON-AG WORKER	13	D	D	10	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	65
H1C	NURSE RELIEF	23	19	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61
P1B	ALIEN WITH ENTERTAINMENT GROUP	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	11	D	42
CW1	PRINCIPAL TRANSITIONAL WORKERS	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	27
P2	EXCHANGE ARTIST/ENTERTAINER	-	-	-	D	-	D	-	D	-	D	D	D
H2A	TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKER	D	D	D	-	-	-	-	D	-	-	-	D
H3B	SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAINING	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
SUBTOTAL		2,418	1,773	1,480	1,482	1,738	2,252	2,265	2,401	3,041	3,159	2,880	24,889
ALL OTHER NONIMMIGRANT CLASS													
H4	SPOUSE OR CHLD OF H1,H2,H3 OR H2R	1,425	1,627	1,543	1,468	1,642	1,425	1,299	1,747	2,996	2,234	1,901	19,307
F2	SPOUSE/CHILD OF F-1	809	961	1,020	958	999	853	854	709	1,577	1,071	731	10,542
B2	TEMPORARY VISITOR FOR PLEASURE	424	433	412	349	390	328	182	167	332	219	134	3,370
J1	EXCHANGE VISITOR - OTHERS	387	440	479	375	349	219	178	157	171	116	48	2,919
E2	TREATY INVESTOR/SPOUSE/CHILD	205	171	131	109	144	134	134	120	117	78	91	1,434
M1	STUDENT - VOCATIONAL/NON-ACAD.	170	172	171	155	188	129	81	65	148	79	34	1,392
L2	SPOUSE/CHILD OF L-1	87	84	85	74	84	92	110	99	155	121	86	1,077
R2	SPOUSE/CHILD OF R-1	38	23	48	35	47	34	44	40	40	67	42	458
B1	TEMPORARY VISITOR FOR BUSINESS	53	39	43	33	60	31	30	31	55	35	29	439
J2	SPOUSE/CHILD OF J-1	33	39	57	53	49	28	30	20	35	41	24	409
O3	SPOUSE/CHILD OF O-1, O-2	17	43	22	17	21	40	34	27	46	37	58	362
TD	NAFTA DEPENDENT	D	19	D	15	11	18	D	D	12	D	D	115
E1	TREATY TRADER/SPOUSE/CHILD	D	14	D	D	D	D	D	10	D	D	D	74
G4	OFFICER/EMPLOYEE INTL. ORG.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	26	18	D	66
P4	SPOUSE/CHILD OF P-1, P-2, P-3	D	D	D	D	D	10	D	D	D	10	D	64
I	FOREIGN PRESS	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	12	D	D	63
E3	AUSTRALIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT/SPOUSE/CHILD	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	32
A1	AMBASSADOR, DIPLOMAT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	D	21
A2	OTHER DIPLOMATIC OFFICIALS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	18
G1	PRINCIPAL REP. FOREIGN GOVT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	17
M2	SPOUSE/CHILD OF M-1	D	D	D	D	D	-	-	-	D	D	D	D
B1D	NI - MISSIONARIES	-	D	-	-	D	-	-	-	D	D	-	D
CW2	DEPENDENT OF CW1	-	-	-	-	-	D	-	D	-	-	-	D
J15	EXCHANGE VISITOR - STUDENT	-	-	-	D	-	-	-	D	-	D	D	D
E3D	SPOUSE OR CHILD OF E3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D
G2	OTHER REP FOREIGN GOVT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	-	-	D
E2C	CNMI INVESTOR	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	-	-	-	-	D
G3	REP NON-RECOGNIZED FOREIGN GOV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D
K3	SPOUSE OF USC	-	-	-	D	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D
N8	PARENT OF SPEC IMMIGRANT CHILD	-	-	-	-	-	D	-	-	-	-	-	D
O2	ACCOMPANYING ALIEN TO O1	-	D	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D
U3	CHILD OF U1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	-	-	D
SUBTOTAL		3,681	4,083	4,035	3,658	4,004	3,363	2,999	3,236	5,764	4,169	3,226	42,218
GRAND TOTAL		34,893	35,578	26,242	34,046	37,565	36,173	35,601	35,584	47,022	40,671	56,000	419,375

Figure 1: F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification: Fiscal Year 2008-2018 Approvals

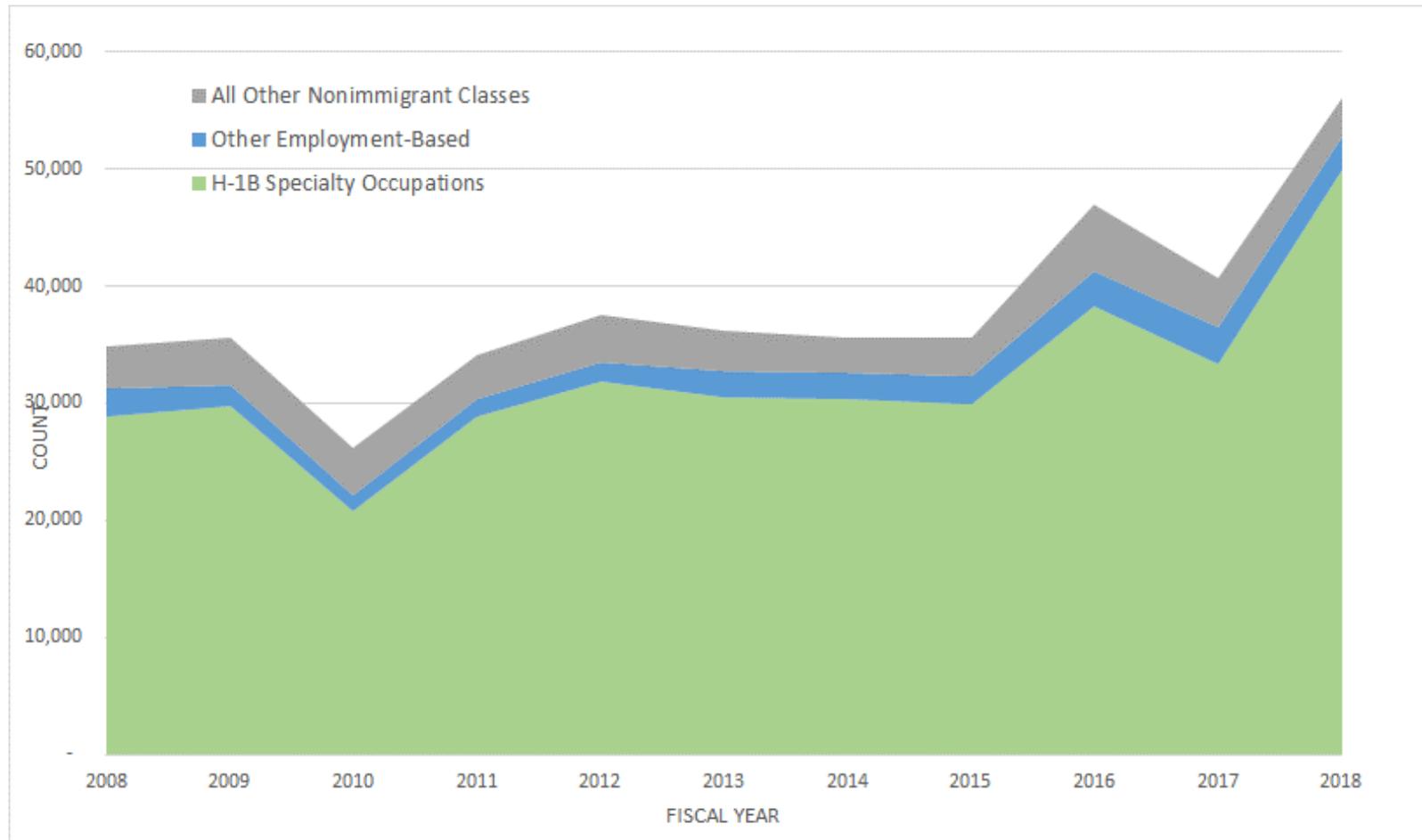


Figure 2: F-1 Students Obtaining Another Nonimmigrant Classification: H-1B Count vs. Overall Count

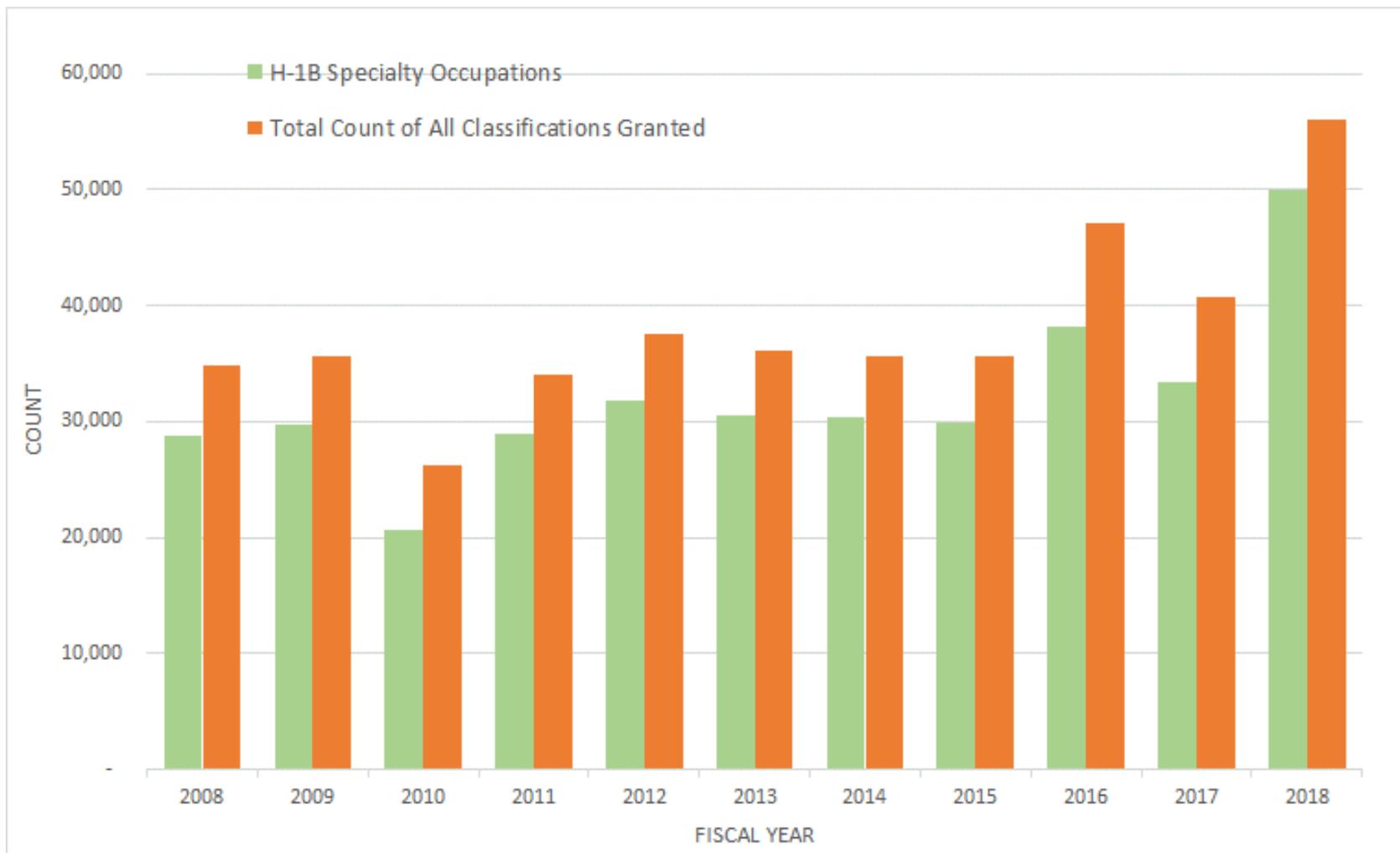


Figure 3: F-1 Students as Share of Total H-1B New Employment Approvals

