

## USCIS Response to Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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## Cap Count for H-2B Nonimmigrants

### The H-2B Program

The H-2B non-agricultural temporary worker program was created by Congress to allow U.S. employers to bring noncitizens to the United States to fill temporary non-agricultural jobs.

For more information about the H-2B program, see [H-2B Non-Agricultural Workers](#).

### What is the H-2B Cap?

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended, there is a statutory numerical limit, or “cap,” on the total number of noncitizens who may receive an H-2B visa, or otherwise be granted H-2B status, during a fiscal year. Currently, Congress has set the H-2B cap at 66,000 per fiscal year, with 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year (Oct. 1 - March 31) and 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1 – Sept. 30). Any unused numbers from the first half of the fiscal year will be available for employers seeking to hire H-2B workers during the second half of the fiscal year. Unused H-2B numbers from one fiscal year do not carry over into the next fiscal year.

### Reporting H-2B Fraud

Anyone (including American workers and H-2B workers who suspect they or others may be the victim of H-2B fraud or abuse) can send us tips, alleged violations, and other relevant information about potential fraud or abuse using our [online tip form](#).

### Workers Who Are Exempt from the H-2B Cap

Generally, workers in the United States in H-2B status who extend their stay, change employers, or change the terms and conditions of employment will not be subject to the cap. Similarly, H-2B workers who have previously been counted against the cap in the same fiscal year that the proposed employment begins will not be subject to the cap if the employer names them on the petition and indicates that they have already been counted. The spouse and children of H-2B workers classified as H-4 nonimmigrants also do not count against this cap.

Additionally, petitions for the following types of workers are exempt from the H-2B cap:

- Fish roe processors, fish roe technicians, or supervisors of fish roe processing;
- Workers performing labor or services in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands or Guam from Nov. 28, 2009, until Dec. 31, 2029.

Once the H-2B cap is reached, USCIS may only accept petitions for H-2B workers who are exempt or not subject to the H-2B cap.

## Fiscal Year 2021 H-2B Cap Count

On Feb. 12, 2021, the number of beneficiaries for whom USCIS received petitions surpassed the total number of remaining H-2B visas available for the H-2B cap for the second half of FY 2021. In accordance with regulations, we determined it was necessary to use a computer-generated selection process intended to ensure the fair and orderly allocation of H-2B visa cap numbers available, without exceeding the FY 2021 cap. On Feb. 17, we conducted the selection process to randomly select petitions from those received on Feb. 12. Upon completion of this random selection process, we assigned all selected petitions a receipt date and began premium processing services.

Feb. 12, 2021, was the final receipt date for new cap-subject H-2B worker petitions requesting an employment start date before Oct. 1, 2021. We will reject new cap-subject H-2B petitions received after Feb. 12 that request an employment start date before Oct. 1.

Cap Type	Cap Amount	Beneficiaries Approved	Beneficiaries Pending	Total Beneficiaries <sup>1</sup>	Date of Last Count
H-2B: First Half of FY 2021	33,000			On Nov. 16, USCIS reached the cap for the 1st half of FY 2021.	11/16/2020
H-2B: Second Half of FY 2021	33,000 <sup>2</sup>			On Feb. 12, USCIS reached the cap for the 2nd half of FY 2021.	02/12/2021

**Note:** The figures above are preliminary estimates and are only meant to give the public an approximate count of beneficiaries of H-2B visas who would be counted towards the INA cap for the fiscal year.

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the total number of beneficiaries of approved or pending petitions filed with USCIS that could potentially be counted towards the H-2B cap. This number will typically exceed the actual cap to allow for withdrawals, denials, and approvals for which no visa is issued.

<sup>2</sup> If the first half of the fiscal year cap of 33,000 H-2B visas is not reached during the first half of the fiscal year, USCIS will make those unused numbers available for use during the second half of the fiscal year.

Unused fiscal year cap-subject H-2B visas do not carry over to the following fiscal year

Last Reviewed/Updated: 02/24/2021