



US Hits Record High in Student Visa Denials

Minh Nga
March 31, 2024

The U.S. rejected over 250,000 student visa requests last year, marking the highest denial rate in 20 years.

The rejection figure represented approximately 36% of all applications submitted last year.

A report by the Cato Institute, a U.S. public policy research organization, released on March 19, revealed that the total number of student visas, known as F-1 visas, issued last year exceeded 445,000, an increase of about 34,000 from the previous year.

However, at the same time, the number of visas denied also rose by 30,000 year-on-year.

The denial rate for student visas in 2023 was 36.3% of all applications, the highest since 2013.

Over the past decade, the rejection rate for student visas in the U.S. has more than doubled from 15% in 2014.

According to the Cato Institute, students from India faced the highest number of rejections, accounting for approximately 29%.

David J. Bier, associate director of immigration studies at The Cato Institute, said "The State Department does not separately delineate the reasons for student visa denials but nearly all nonimmigrant visa denials are for failing to prove "nonimmigrant intent" (that is, the desire not to move to the United States permanently)."

He stated that applicants must demonstrate strong connections to their homeland, compelling them to return once their visit's purpose concludes.

"The nonimmigrant intent subjective standard can be enforced in a variety of ways. Consular officers are supposed to only consider someone's "present intent" not considering how their intention might change if opportunities arise in the U.S. to stay legally. In practice, there is very little consistency in application," said Bier.

One of the requirements for applying for an F-1 visa is acceptance into a U.S. university.

The Cato Institute reports that on average, one student must pay \$30,000 annually for tuition and living expenses, which means that the U.S. turned down 253,355 students who would have likely paid roughly \$7.6 billion per year in tuition and living expenses.

Over four years that number rose to \$30.4 billion in lost economic benefits to the country.

The Cato Institute's report highlights the disparity in denial rates for F-1 visas compared to other temporary visas. Since 2021, the rejection rate for student visas has been nearly double that of all other visa types.

Recent statistics from the Institute of International Education (IIE) show that for the academic year 2022-2023, the U.S. hosted approximately one million international students from over 200 countries and territories, including 21,900 from Vietnam.

Of them, 55% are pursuing degrees in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Among Vietnamese students, 47.6% choose STEM fields, and about 25% opt for Business and Management majors.

Tuition fees at U.S. universities currently range from \$28,000 to \$46,000 per year, depending on whether the institution is public or private. International students are allowed to work part-time for no more than 20 hours per week.

Upon graduation, they can stay in the country for 12 months under the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program.

For several STEM fields, international students can extend their OPT for an additional 24 months, allowing them to remain in the country for up to 36 months in total.