

# 65% Of Top AI Companies Have Immigrant Founders

**F** [forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2023/07/09/65-of-top-ai-companies-have-immigrant-founders/](https://forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2023/07/09/65-of-top-ai-companies-have-immigrant-founders/)

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The Databricks logo seen displayed on a smartphone screen. New research shows immigrants fuel ... More

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New research shows immigrants fuel artificial intelligence in America by founding many of the country's top AI companies. Analysts say welcoming immigration policies would advance U.S. leadership in AI and other technology fields.

"Immigrants have founded or cofounded nearly two-thirds (65% or 28 of 43) of the top AI companies in the United States," according to a new National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) analysis. "Seventy-seven percent of the leading U.S.-based AI companies were founded or cofounded by immigrants or the children of immigrants."

The research, which I authored, was conducted 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." A July 2022 NFAP study found immigrant entrepreneurs started more than half of U.S. billion-dollar companies and included several AI companies.

The Final Report of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, released in 2021, recommended America “Win the global talent competition” by enacting immigration reforms. Those reforms included creating a startup visa and significantly expanding the number of high-skilled temporary visas and employment-based green cards. “Human capital advantages are particularly significant in the field of AI, where demand for talent far exceeds supply,” according to the commission’s chair and vice chair Eric Schmidt and Robert Work. “Highly skilled immigrants accelerate American innovation, improve entrepreneurship and create jobs.”

Considerable diversity exists among immigrant entrepreneurs in top AI companies, with founders born in 21 countries. Indian immigrants founded ten of the top U.S.-based AI companies in the research, while 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 a top U.S. AI company.

OpenAI is an excellent example of U.S.-born and foreign-born talent working together to create a cutting-edge company. OpenAI has two founders born in the United States (Sam Altman and Greg Brockman) and others born in Canada (Ilya Sutskever), South Africa (Elon Musk) and Poland (Wojciech Zaremba). The company has 375 employees and is valued at \$29 billion. It is best known for the chatbot ChatGPT, which Microsoft has integrated into the Bing search engine.

“Large language models and other forms of generative AI are still at an early stage, making it difficult to predict with great confidence the exact productivity effects they will have,” according to Martin Neil Baily, Erik Brynjolfsson and Anton Korinek in a Brookings Institution report, though they believe the impact will be quite positive.

The AI-focused businesses founded by immigrants involve a variety of products and services. Pachama uses AI and satellite data to estimate carbon stored in forests. Immigrants Diego Saez Gil and Tomas Aftalion, born in Argentina, founded the company in 2018.

Databricks provides analytics and data storage and has 5,000 employees. The company has three U.S.-born founders and immigrant founders from Iran (Ali Ghodsi and Arsalan Tavakoli-Shiraji), Romania (Ion Stoica and Matei Zaharia) and China (Reynold Xin).

Ashutosh Garg, born in India, has accomplished a rare feat among entrepreneur—founding two companies valued at over \$1 billion, Eightfold.ai and Bloomreach. Eightfold.ai, a talent management and acquisition platform, has 500 employees. Garg cofounded Eightfold.ai with fellow Indian immigrant Varun Kacholia.

Other top immigrant-founded AI companies use artificial intelligence for sales (Clari), farming (FarmWorks), construction (Canvas), drug discovery (Insitro) and medical diagnostics (Viz.ai).

Baily, Brynjolfsson and Korinek write, “We expect that generative AI will have tremendous positive productivity effects, both by increasing the level of productivity and accelerating future productivity growth.”

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