Impact of Political Allegiance on H-1B Visa Acceptances to the US: An analysis of the relationship between UNGA voting alignment and H-1B visa acceptances to the United States

Eleanor Nayden

Princeton High School

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000806

Received: 07 November 2025; Accepted: 14 November 2025; Published: 24 November 2025

ABSTRACT

Despite the critical role of H-1B visas in fostering innovation and economic growth in the United States (US), little is known about the relationship between political alignment with the US and H-1B visa approvals. We explore countries' voting alignment in the United Nations (UN) and H-1B visa outcomes. We identify a significant relationship between political alignment and visa access. Countries can assess how geopolitics affects talent mobility, while US policymakers can evaluate whether immigration decisions reflect strategic economic priorities. We offer new insights into the intersection of geopolitical diplomacy and economic migration for more transparent, equitable, and growth-oriented policy. Our findings suggest that although the H-1B visa system is utilized to meet labor demands, it is also a diplomatic instrument. The most notable results are seen in the Middle East Region. As voting alignment with the US becomes increasingly positive, the region receives more visas, suggesting a correlation between voting alignment and visa approvals.

Keywords: H-1B visas, UNGA voting alignment, Political alignment, High-skilled migration

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Debdeep Sen for providing the technological resources that enabled the use of STATA. A special thank you to my mentor throughout the entire research paper, Louis Maiden at Harvard University, for his invaluable mentorship throughout the entire research process. Thank you to Katelyn Wagner, Adam Rothschild, James Smirk, Jennifer Smolyn, Jacqueline Katz, Mark Eastburn, Insu Yi, and the entire Princeton High School Research Program for their continued support, guidance, and resources

INTRODUCTION

The H-1B visa program serves as a cornerstone of the United States' recruitment of foreign high-skilled workers, enabling jobs that demand sustained innovation to be filled domestically and globally. Further, H-1B workers complement US workers, fill employment gaps in many science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations, and expand job opportunities for all (Peri, Shih, and Sparber 2015). Established by the Immigration Act of 1990, the H-1B visa program encourages US employers to hire foreign professionals with specialized skills in fields like technology, engineering, and medicine. With the standard H-1B visa cap set at 85,000 per fiscal year and employers maintaining high demand for foreign workers, the H-1B visa has become one of the most competitive and politically contentious aspects of the US immigration system, especially post-dot.com boom. H-1B workers help fill employment gaps while complementing US workers, promote regional entrepreneurship, and support firm growth and long-term economic performance(Mahajan, Morales, Shih, Chen, Brinatti, 2025). To provide further context on the H-1B visa system, only 65,000 visas are awarded, with an additional 20,000 allotted to workers with an advanced degree in the US. H-1B is for non-immigrant specialized workers. The typical duration of the visa is 3 years, but can be extended to 6. Visa acceptances are granted in a lottery process due to the sheer quantity of applicants.

While debates over the H-1B program remain politically charged, both within and across party lines, research consistently shows that these high-skilled worker visas reduce unemployment, foster innovation, and support

firm growth (Doran, Gelber, Isen, 2016). Additionally, H-1B visa acceptance rates have seen an upward trend in recent years, with 2022 being the lowest denial rate (2%) since 2009. As H-1B visas become more prevalent in the American economy, it is critical to understand how the US issues these visas, who receives them, and what factors influence their acceptance rates.

This paper is the first of its kind to link international political alignment, measured through UN voting patterns, to US high-skilled migrant policy. There is empirical research on the relationship between H-1B visas and STEM fields. For one, Bound, J., Khanna, G., & Morales, N. (2017) found that the H-1B-driven tech boom accounted for 10–25% of aggregate productivity growth in the 1990s, and to further highlight the exemplary effect of foreign STEM workers, the workers are directly linked to growth — a 30–50% growth in aggregate productivity was seen during the period [fact sheet]. Additionally, a one percentage point increase in the foreign STEM share of a city's total employment increased wages of native college-educated labor by about 7–8%, and productivity, as measured by TFP, by 4–5%.

In addition to this intriguing correlation, research has continually linked productivity, innovation, and growth to immigrants, specifically highly skilled workers. Kerr & Mandorff (2019) found that startups that win H-1B lotteries grow faster and raise more funding, showcasing that immigration access is key to firm success in early stages. Further, firms that win H-1Bs in the lottery grow 35% faster and are 50% more likely to survive long-term. This is significant as the average length of existence for technology firms is 8-10 years, significantly lower than in other industries. High-skilled workers are needed to help prevent disintegrating firms from failing and to allow them to grow and prosper, specifically in the STEM industries. In terms of H-1B visa recipients increasing regional entrepreneurship, Tareque, I.S., Guzman, J., & Wang, D. (2024) found that doubling the immigrant population in a metropolitan statistical area would lead to a 6% increase in entrepreneurship within 3 years. In contrast, the arrival of unskilled immigrants (H-2B visas) does not increase regional entrepreneurship. H-1B visa policy can be viewed not solely as a visa policy, but also as an economic growth policy. This sentiment is reflected in the American Immigration Council, which cited that an increase in H-1B visas could create an estimated 1.3 million new jobs and add approximately $158 billion to the United States' gross domestic product by 2045. Despite nativist sentiment concerning the topic, the H-1B visa policy is not solely an immigrant issue, but one of economic importance as well.

Although literature on the subject of H-1B visas exists, minimal research has examined the intersection of H-1B visas and international political dynamics. Our study investigates how H-1B visa outcomes may be influenced by political allegiance, specifically as expressed through voting alignment in the United Nations. The UN provides a universal platform for observing political alignment, with UN decisions reflecting the positions of a comprehensive set of member states. By analyzing voting patterns in the United States, we explore whether geopolitical alignment correlates with access to high-skilled migration opportunities. The question that will explicitly be answered is how political alignment impacts H-1B visa acceptances to the United States. We hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between a country's voting alignment with the US in the United Nations and the number of H-1B visas its high-skilled workers receive. While the H-1B program is often framed as a merit-based solution to labor shortages, this relationship implies that the US may also use visa policy as a diplomatic tool to reward political alignment. The implications are both domestic and international. The results of this study will showcase the extent to which the H-1B system is entirely merit-based or a geopolitical bargaining chip. If the H-1B visa process is not wholly merit-based, then countries that possess highly skilled talent may be put at a disadvantage for not following US policy decisions. Notably, between 2021 and 2024, the majority of H-1B visa applicants entered the professional services industry, with 32,796 from India and 59,591 from China. The majority of those selected hold Master's degrees, with some also holding bachelor's degrees. Selected Chinese applicants ranged from 15.48% in 2021 to 11.34% in 2022, to 9.9% in 2023, and then 14.87% in 2024. This is particularly significant, as the current Trump administration has publicly discussed the possibility of reducing the number of Chinese H-1B applicants selected, without specifying whether the potential gap would be filled. Additionally, it is noteworthy that between 1997 and 2019, voting members of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with greater alignment were awarded more H-1B visas. These findings and more will be discussed further in the results section.

In this study, we applied regression models to the merged dataset to analyze the relationship between UN voting data and H-1B visa acceptances. All analyses were conducted through STATA, utilizing a combination

of data analysis, fixed-effects regressions, and graphs to examine trends in H-1B visa approvals in relation to the United Nations voting alignment with the US. The independent variable is countries' voting alignment with the US in the UN General Assembly, represented as a continuous correlation value. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of H-1B visas issued annually to high-skilled workers of each country. Due to the right-skewed distribution of H-1B visa totals, a log transformation was applied to maintain variance and facilitate the alteration of coefficients in percentage terms, thereby improving data analysis efficiency. The main analytical approach involves a series of high-dimensional fixed effects regressions, isolating country and year effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics and global temporal shocks. Models also include categorical variables to examine heterogeneity across political blocs (e.g., NATO members), world regions (e.g., Southeast Asia, Middle East), and US presidential administrations (Bush, Obama, Trump). Additional codes examine patterns using lagged correlations and year-over-year changes in political alignment. Graphic representations include line plots, dot charts, and bin-scatter plots to display regression outputs and explore patterns over time. Throughout the analysis, the emphasis remains on identifying statistical associations rather than making causal claims. While the findings suggest a correlation between political alignment and H-1B admissions, it is challenging to distinguish between inference and causality.

This study is the foundation for future work on the intersection between diplomacy, international voting patterns, and domestic economic implications. Most importantly, this paper will show that to promote a favorable economic environment for native and migrant workers, it would be essential to reconsider the H-1B visa program from a diplomatic bargaining chip to an integral part of the American labor economy. While this study finds strong correlations, it does not establish causation, introducing a limitation to our results but offering opportunities for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite immigration being a contentious issue, there is agreement about the preferred characteristics of accepted immigrants. Both highly skilled and low-skilled natives prefer highly skilled immigrants over low-skilled immigrants, most likely because low-skilled immigrants impose a substantial net burden on public finance, whereas highly skilled immigrants are net contributors in terms of taxes (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). While there is high demand for highly skilled immigrants and, consequently, H-1B visas, acceptance rates remain incredibly low. The annual limit on new H-1B petitions makes the category the most restrictive visa in the US immigration system. Further, in the 2025 fiscal year, employers filed at least 423,028 eligible H-1B registrations. Still, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) could only allow 85,000 new foreign nationals to obtain H-1B status under the annual limit, an approval rate of 20% (Bin and Omosun 2025). Nevertheless, highly skilled workers contribute significantly to economic growth on both the micro and macro scales. For every H-1B worker, 1.83 jobs for native-born Americans are created (CompeteAmerica, Partnership for a New American Economy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2015). More specifically, in STEM industries, a 1% increase in the share of foreign-born STEM workers in total employment increased wages of native-born college-educated workers (STEM and non-STEM) by 4 to 6% (CompeteAmerica, Partnership for a New American Economy, US Chamber of Commerce). Proving the link between innovation and highly skilled labor, H-1B recipients account for 24% of workers in occupations closely tied to innovation (Pekkala Kerr, Kerr, & Lincoln, 2015), and higher admission levels have been found to increase invention rates primarily through the direct contributions of immigrant inventors (Kerr & Lincoln, 2008). This reality additionally displays why the H-1B visa program and the visa system as a whole need to be based entirely on merit. Innovation and economic growth cannot be maximized if an integral component of their vitality is absent.

The importance of the H-1B visa extends globally, as foreign aid and foreign direct investment (FDI) have been used as diplomatic tools frequently. (Alesina and Dollar 2000). Political alignment creates incentives for leading countries to encourage economically or politically dependent states to maintain their voting alignment to advance their broader agendas. More precisely, in relation to the UNGA, US aid buys voting compliance in the Assembly (Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele 2006). When repeating the analysis for other G7 donors, no comparable patterns emerge. This underscores the relationship between economically or politically dependent countries and high-income nations, as highlighted in the UNGA. This begs the question: if aid is dependent on alignment, would awardment of visas also be dependent on alignment? Migration has been empirically used as

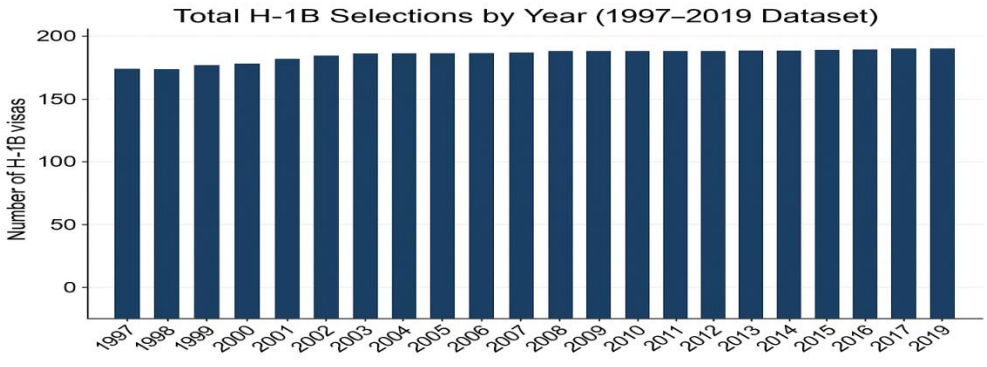
a foreign policy tool. Within the context of refugee crises, Tanzania has made exaggerated public appeals to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other actors as a way of securing resources (Whitaker 2002), and Turkey leveraged their control over refugee flows to secure aid, visa access, and political concessions from the EU (Adamson & Tsourapas 2019). There is minimal research on immigration and foreign policy influences. There is a need to identify immigration policy not only as domestic labor policy but as part of a state's broader foreign economic strategy. Suggesting that the H-1B visa policy may likewise reflect foreign policy priorities, this study bridges the gap between the politically influenced economy and immigration policy by investigating the extent to which geopolitics impacts highly skilled labor visas.

DESCRIPTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes two main datasets that, when merged, provide comprehensive coverage of US high-skilled visa applications over both the short and long terms. The merged dataset is a combination of United Nations General Assembly voting data and H-1B data. The UNGA dataset consists of two key variables: the country name and its voting correlation to the US. The time range for the voting data spans 1946 to March 2025. Each row in the dataset represents one country within one year, and each individual country's variable ID does not appear twice in a year. Although limitations exist, considering that many countries were not UN members in 1946, the number of voting parties has increased over time. Additionally, voting in the UN as a General Assembly member offers you the choice to abstain, which skews the true correlation, as it isn't a binary decision of "yes" or "no". Countries that choose to abstain can distort the alignment variable, as they may reflect neutrality rather than opposition or support.

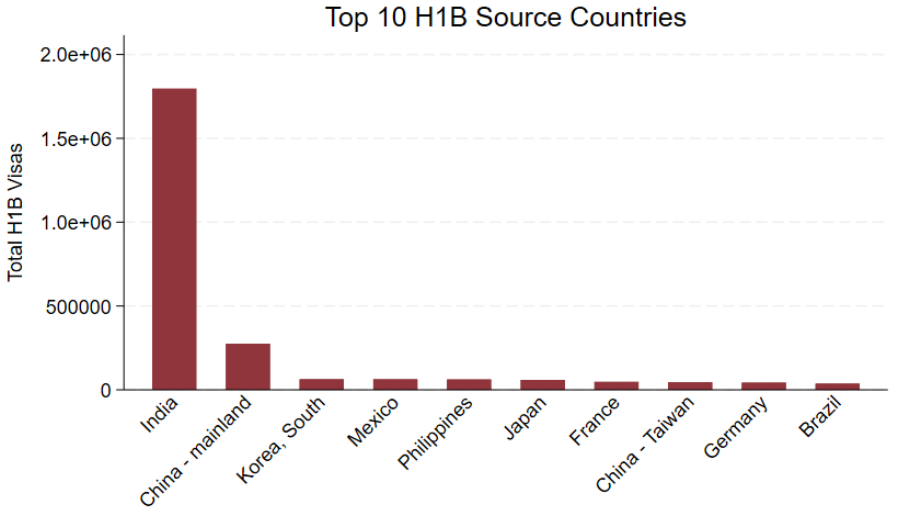
The second dataset details H-1B applications between 2021 and 2024, and contains both approved and denied applications, allowing a holistic review of trends and political influences on the entire applicant pool. It was obtained through a lawsuit initiated by Bloomberg in order to determine the wage arbitrage within the visa system, specifically observing whether the larger firms had an advantage. The dataset was made public. The dataset's details are at the individual level, enabling causal identification to focus on the relationship between UNGA voting and H-1B visa acceptances. Each row represents an applicant, detailing the applicant's country, employer, job title, industry, wage, location, approval status, date filed, etc. This dataset detailed 1,395,264 applications. The limitations of the data include no final work outcome beyond approval, and several columns of data are missing, in particular, the class and salary. Additionally, there is limited demographic detail as the majority of selected H-1B visa applicants are from China or India. The H-1B data between 1997 and 2019 were obtained from the USCIS public archives. Each row represents an individual visa application. We isolated the H-1B visas in particular, and the variables are similar to the 2021-2024 dataset, detailing country of origin, employer, occupation, approval status, etc. The data has 4,321 observations. The limitations within the data consist of missing variables for the beginning years and the need to merge the set with the UN voting set. Ideally, the dataset would also include in-depth applicant characteristics such as work experience, average wage, or lobbying activities by employers. While these are not available in the visa records, they may be partially addressed through merging with external sources or using proxies.

1997-2019

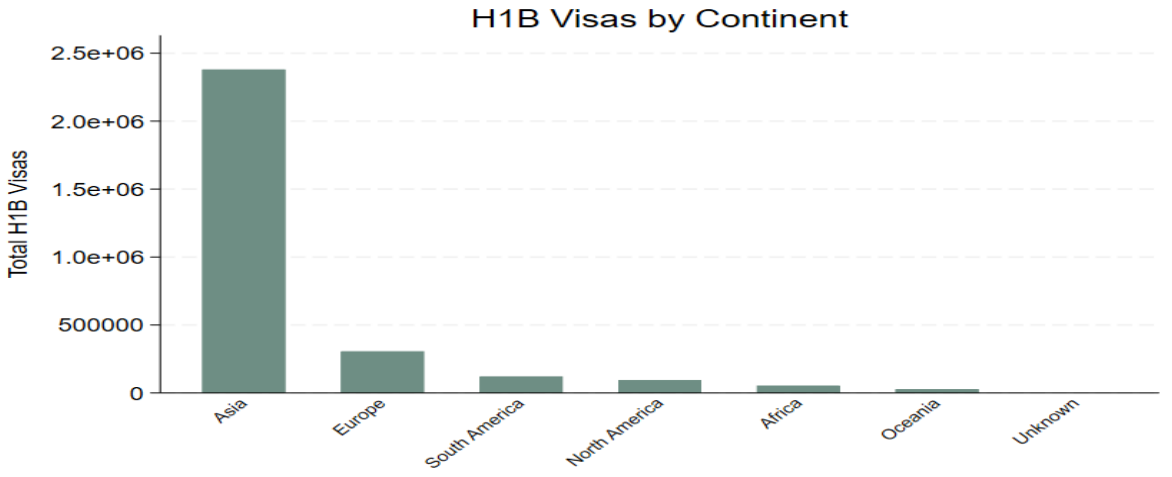


ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

This bar graph details the number of H-1B visa applications between 1997-2019. The number of applicants has increased from 1997 (72,652) to 2019 (186,374).

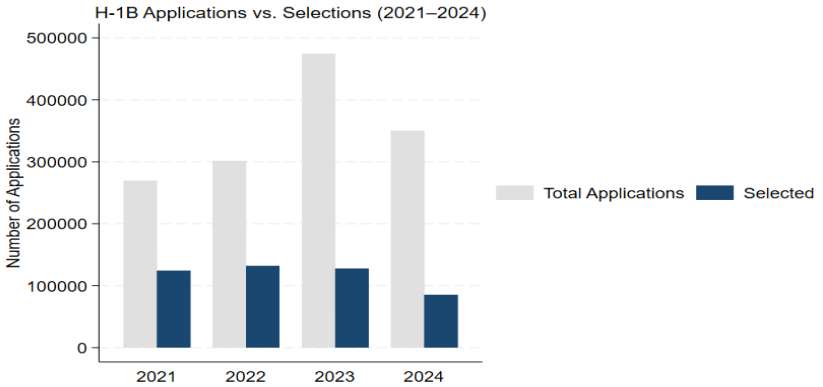


This bar graph shows the number of H-1B visa applications by country from 1997-2019. The majority of applications originate from India (1,795,999) and China(274,474).



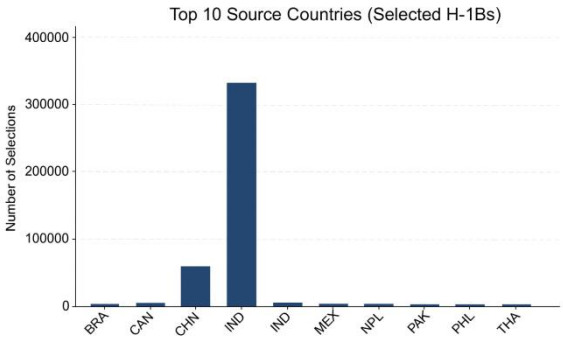
This bar graph details the number of H-1B visa applications between 1997-2019 by continent. The majority of applications stem from Asia (2,379,704), with India and China accounting for the largest share of applicants.

2021-2024



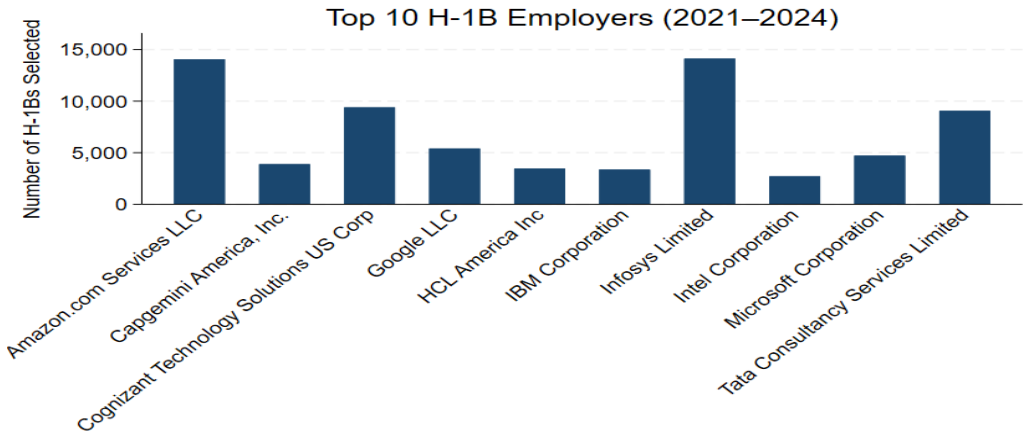
This bar graph showcases the total application amount, and then the selected number of H-1B visa applicants. There has been a consistent cap on the number of applicants selected (65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption).)

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

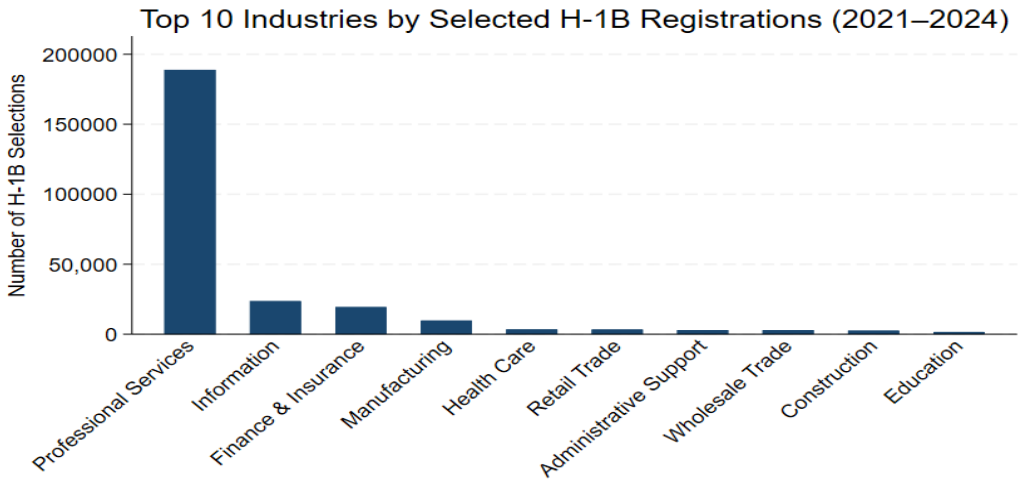


countr~h	h1b_re~d
IND	327961
CHN	59591
TWN	5040
KOR	4813
CAN	4678
MEX	4224
NPL	3728
PAK	3643
PHL	3470
BRA	3213

This bar graph details the countries for which the largest number of H-1B workers applied. Asia is the continent from which most migrants originate, but the 327,961 applicants are from India.



This bar graph details the employers for which the largest number of H-1B workers were selected. Infosys Limited is recruiting 14,124, followed by Amazon employing 14,059, and then Cognizant Technology Solutions



US Corp hiring 9,397.

This bar graph details the industries for which the largest number of H-1B workers apply. Despite Tech industries being a disproportionately large sector for high-skilled foreign workers to enter, Professional Services makes up the largest share of the industry in which H-1B workers participate, accounting for 188,876.

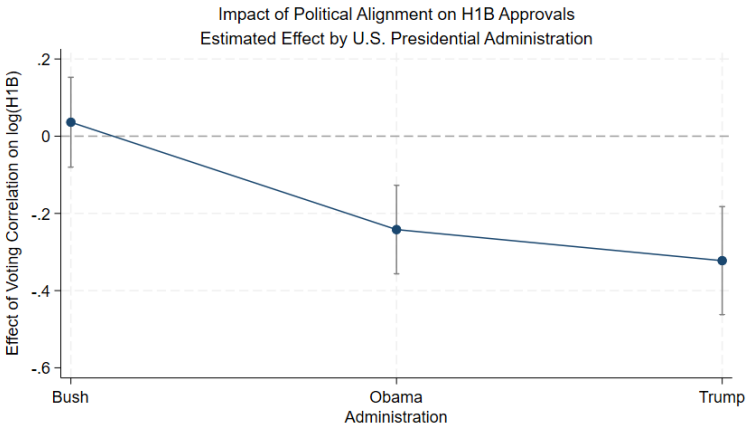
To determine whether political allegiance affects H-1B visa applicants, three datasets were used. All data is quantitative, as this paper utilizes empirical data. Two of the three datasets detailed H-1B visa applicants on the individual level, and the differentiating factor between the two datasets was time, as one was composed of applications, both selected and denied, from 1997-2019, and sourced from U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. The other H-1B dataset, which comprised both selected and denied applicants from 2021-

2024, is from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services and was obtained by Bloomberg via a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security under the Freedom of Information Act. The third dataset details voting data related to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its regular, special, and emergency special sessions from 1946 until July 2025. It is derived from the UN Digital Library voting records, providing information on Member States' votes related to resolutions adopted through a recorded vote. The dataset comprises 914,624 entries, with each row representing the vote of one country's state on a specific voting matter. The dataset was manipulated to become two columns: country name and the correlation in voting, similar to the United States. We then merged the datasets by initiating a one-to-one merge, ensuring that each country-year observation contained both voting alignment data and visa approval counts. To prepare the variables for aggregation and regression, we completed several manipulations. Separating H-1B visa data by rejected and accepted (selected) applicants to isolate those a part of the H-1B visa system. Further, creating count variables, such as assigning H-1B_record a value of 1, enables the summing of variables. Next, we took the NAICS industry codes from employers, truncated them to the first two digits ("naics2"), and assigned human-readable names like "Finance & Insurance" or "Information" to aggregate by industry sector. To classify which worksite state is either Democrat (blue) or Republican (red), we utilized the results of the 2020 election, prompting the comparison of whether more visas go to companies in politically red or blue states. To easily indicate the education level of H-1B selected and rejected applicants, we converted the letters representing ben_education_code to text labels like "Master's," "Bachelor's," or "Doctorate" for simple interpretation. To then determine whether regional alliances are more significant to Member States than alliances with the US, we classified countries by geographical regions, such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, etc. Further, we coded a "nato_member" variable set to one if the country is a NATO member, zero otherwise, in order to understand in binary terms NATO vs. non-NATO comparison models. With this in mind, we then employed the "correlation variable" (UN voting similarity with the US), splitting it into low, medium, and high bins to quantify the visa–alignment relationship for different countries at various political closeness levels.

We proceeded to run various regressions to explore associations between political alignment and H-1B visa allocations. We first ran OLS regressions on the H-1B correlation and then on the logged variable to provide a base understanding of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. To specifically isolate the true relationship between voting correlation and H-1B acceptances, we utilized high-dimensional fixed effects regressions to control for variables such as year, continent, and country. To test the effect of correlations dependent on other factors, we implemented interaction models to determine whether political alignment matters more/less for NATO members, if the alignment effect changes based on which President is in power and their political party, and whether regional alliances influence alignment more than an alliance with the US.

RESULTS

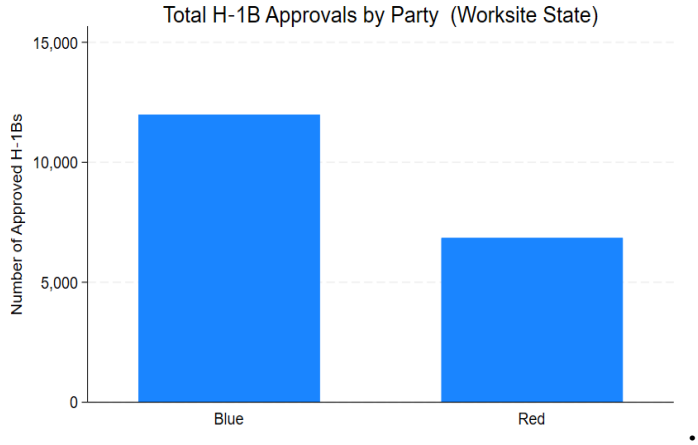
The Presidential Effect on Visa Policy



Between 1997 and 2019, visa issuances fluctuated, but generally followed a consistent upward trend. During Bill Clinton's presidency, the late 1990s tech boom was manifesting, requiring highly skilled workers specialized in STEM, which explains the steady increase to about 150,000 issuances, until the sharp decline, most likely attributed to the terrorist attack on 9/11. Visa issuances were relatively stable during George W. Bush's administration. However, at the beginning of Barack Obama's term, H-1B visa issuances fell dramatically, likely due to the global decrease in demand for foreign workers following the 2008 financial crisis. Throughout the following two Obama terms and Donald Trump's first term, visa issuances have increased rapidly, reflecting the growing dependency and innovation, as well as technology. This surprisingly suggests that despite strong anti-immigrant rhetoric, employer demand and economic reliance on foreign talent remained strong, potentially mitigating the full impact of administrative restrictions.

Partisan Geography: H-1B Approvals by State and Party Alignment

Typical Democratic-voting ("blue") states consistently receive more H-1B approvals than Republican ("red") states. This is primarily driven by economic geography. The cities that have the highest concentration of H-1B visas include Dallas, New York, San Francisco, and San Jose. These cities are primarily located in blue states that include major tech and finance hubs. There is a significant demand for high-skilled labor. This analysis suggests that although policy is set at the federal level, the local political climate and industry presence significantly shape visa allocation patterns.



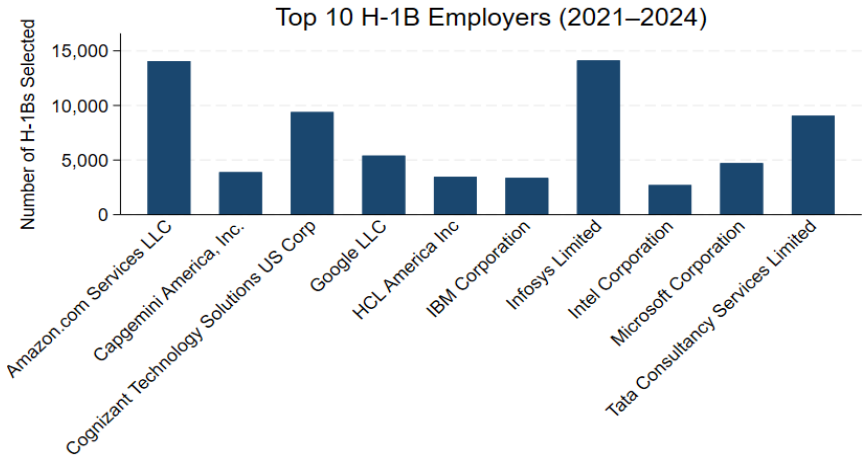
Economic Gatekeepers: Top Employers and Industries

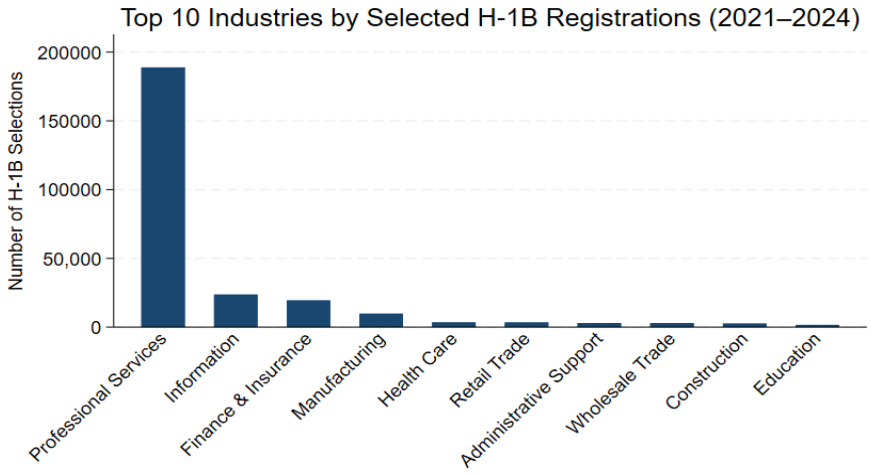
An industry-level breakdown shows that H-1B sponsorships are heavily concentrated in the professional services industry, followed by information technology, finance, and healthcare. These patterns highlight the sector-specific dependence on high-skilled visas. The findings additionally reinforce that the H-1B policy, while debated in political terms, is profoundly influential in economic needs, specifically in industries that rely on specialized technical or analytical skills.

Companies need to sponsor foreign workers so that they can obtain an H-1B Visa. This sponsorship is highly concentrated among a small number of firms. The top 10 employers of H-1B recipients, led by Infosys,

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

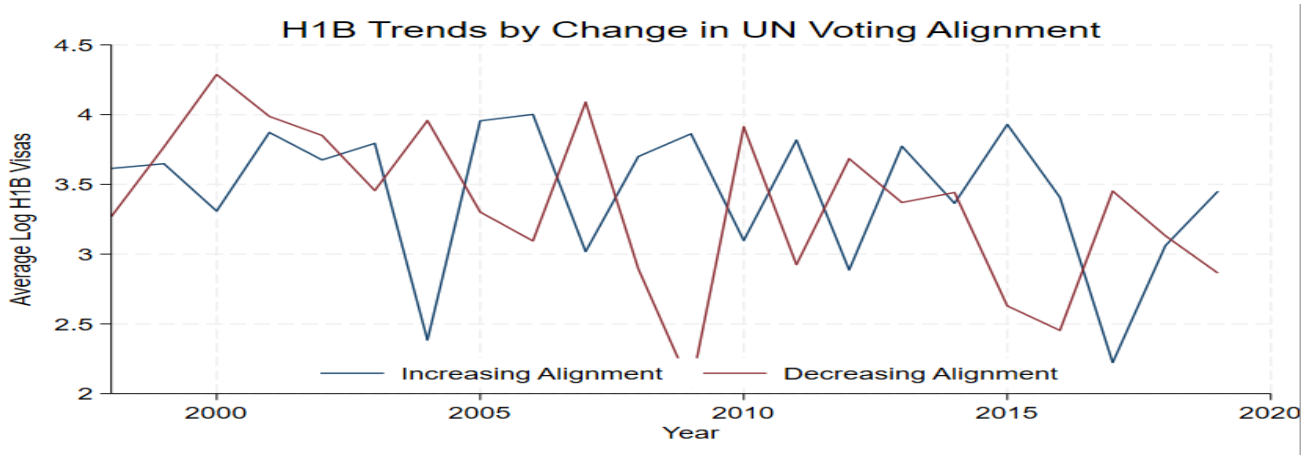
Amazon, Cognizant, and Google, account for the majority share of all H-1B registrations from 2021 to 2024. Similar to the industry trend, these firms primarily correspond to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for tech and consulting, indicating that demand for international workers is heavily skewed toward a few companies in the talent economy.





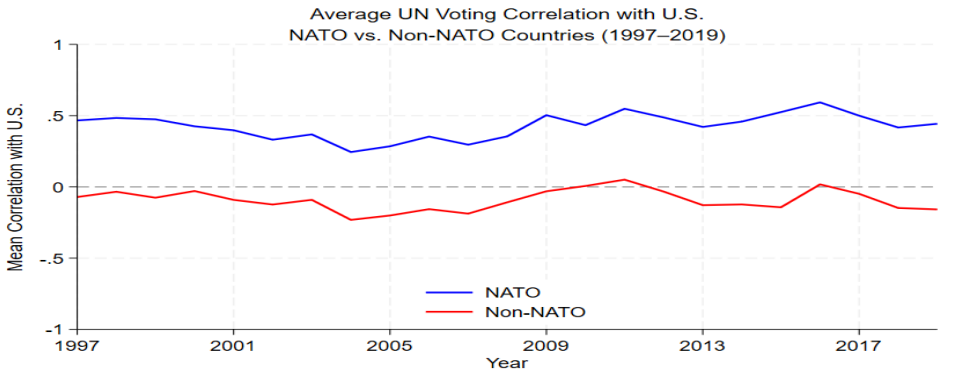
Shifts in Visa Allocation and Voting Realignment

When examining UN voting alignment, we find a clear relationship between changes in a country's alignment with the US and H-1B visa acceptances. Countries that align more closely with the US's voting patterns see a rise in H-1B approvals, whereas those that align less closely see stagnation or a decline in visa numbers. This proves that H-1B allocations are not solely determined by economic debate but are influenced by changes in foreign policy alignment. This further supports the notion that the high-skilled visa system isn't entirely merit-based and should be revised to reflect the labor economy's needs.



Diverging Patterns: NATO vs. Non-NATO Countries (1997–2019)

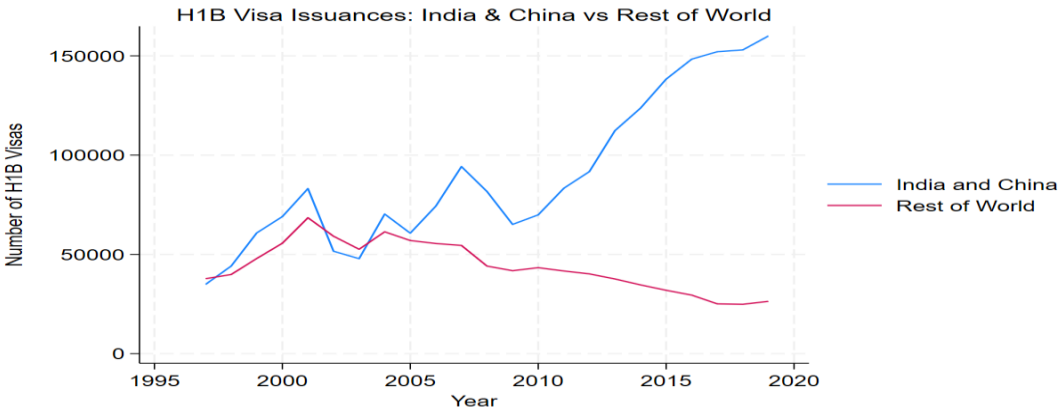
To provide context to the visa allocation system by general alliance, we compare voting alignment with the US for both NATO and non-NATO countries between 1997 and 2019. The most notable outcome is that NATO countries show stable positive alignment to US voting, typically averaging around +0.4 to +0.5. , with a slight dip in 2017, which is comparable to the dip in non-NATO countries, most likely attributed to Trump-era diplomatic shifts. Non-NATO countries mostly exhibit a correlation of 0 to slightly negative, providing minimal alignment. This suggests that there is a general divergence from US positions. NATO countries, on average, receive more H-1B visa acceptances, and they tend to vote more similarly to the US than non-NATO countries. This trend can be attributed to several factors, most notably that workers from non-NATO countries often don't meet the strict eligibility requirements of the H-1B visa program.



Countries by Correlation

There is a clear relationship between political alignment with the United States and the volume of H-1B visas received from 1997 to 2019. Countries are grouped into low, medium, and high alignment variables, and the average number of H-1B visas issued (log-transformed) is tracked over time. The data highlights a consistent trend: countries with high political alignment typically receive significantly more H-1B visas than medium- or low-alignment countries. This disparity becomes increasingly apparent after 2000, and this trend is further exacerbated after 2015, when countries with high alignment experience a sharp increase in visa approvals. In contrast, countries with low alignment have relatively stable H-1B visa acceptances throughout the period. These findings suggest a strong positive correlation between geopolitical alignment and foreign labor policy, implying that diplomatic agendas may influence visa allocation outcomes, either directly through policy or indirectly via employer behavior and diplomatic favorability.

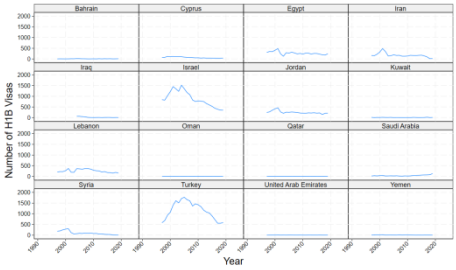
China and India

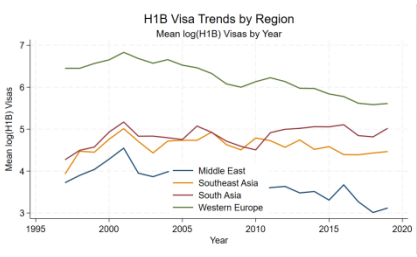


Between 1995 and 2019, India and China's share of H-1B visas has steadily grown. By 2019, China and India's issuances had reached over 150,000, while the rest of the world had steadily declined to around 50,000. This is particularly relevant, given the recent updates to the H-1B visa system under President Trump's policies. This steep divergence can most likely be attributed to the industries to which H-1B workers are being recruited. Professional services, IT, and STEM occupations dominate the share of jobs where workers are

hired. India and China prioritize STEM education, resulting in a system that is heavily concentrated within two nationalities.

Middle East





.

log_h1b	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P>|t|	[95% conf.	interval]
correlation	-.0487781	.0520734	-0.94	0.349	-.1508703	.0533141
corr_mid_east	.6360256	.2359684	2.70	0.007	.1733994	1.098652
_cons	3.530579	.00774	456.15	0.000	3.515404	3.545753

Post-regression evidence proves that political alignment with the United States significantly influences H-1B visa allocations for Middle Eastern countries. Figures 1 and 2 show that the Middle East, on average, receives fewer H-1B visas compared to other regions such as South Asia and Western Europe. Moreover, Figure 3 illustrates that Middle Eastern countries consistently demonstrate significantly low voting alignment with the United States in the UNGA. Though, when controlling for country and year fixed effects, the interaction between alignment and Middle Eastern region status is both positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.636$, $p = 0.007$). This result suggests that increased political alignment with the US is associated with a substantial rise in H-1B visa approvals within the region. The effect is distinct from trends observed in other regions, indicating that US visa policy may be more responsive to political alignment in the Middle East than in other regions. This is especially significant due to the differing ideologies the region holds from the US's politics.

DISCUSSION

Previous literature primarily addresses the United States' H-1B visa program's influence on innovation and its ability to mitigate labor shortages (Kerr & Lincoln, 2010; Peri et al., 2015). However, there is no study addressing the relationship between political allegiance, measured by UNGA voting alignment with the US, and H-1B acceptances. Our study is the first to quantify this trend, providing new evidence that the H-1B system, while mainly labor-driven, may also serve as a diplomatic tactic. Immigrant workers contribute significantly to the American economy, and it would be incredibly concerning if the program that recruited high-skilled, specialized workers weren't simply being used to meet labor demands, but rather as a political bargaining chip to influence voting on a global scale via the UNGA. With this in mind, our study aims to quantify the relationship between political allegiance and H-1B visa acceptances to the United States. Our findings reveal several interesting relationships, ultimately suggesting that the H-1B system primarily functions to meet labor demand, although it is occasionally used for political leverage. Our findings highlight that H-1B approvals are predominantly for Indian and Chinese workers in the technology and professional service industries. This creates a moderate imbalance in the demographic of professionals working in the industry, as well as in the distribution of H-1B approvals across sectors. This inequity can further exacerbate the concerns of whether the H-1B labor system truly meets labor demands. If the majority of recruited professionals identify with one or two countries of birth, and the two industries that receive the largest share of H-1B visas are the same, is the labor system's need truly being met? This question provides context for future research whose aim would be to build on our correlations concerning the relationship between political alignment and H-1B acceptances to the US and to determine a stronger causal link. To further account for bias within the system, it's vital to examine two relationships: the correlation between geographical regions' voting patterns and their H-1B approvals, as well as the influence of the U.S. political environment on acceptance

and voting correlation.

Our research found that the most relevant statistically significant relationship is the correlation between the Middle East's voting patterns and H-1B acceptances. The Middle East is a region that traditionally differs from the United States in ideology and culture. In recent history, the US has been involved in various conflicts in the Middle East. Despite a complicated relationship, a clear correlation exists between the Middle East region's collective voting in favor of the United States during UNGA voting periods and the subsequent issuance of visas. Although the region's share of visas is not as large as China's or India's share, there remains a correlation (P value: .006), indicating that the US is not solely using the H-1B visa program to meet labor demands.

Political circumstances within the United States provide insight into which politically aligned states visa holders work in and the effect the President has on the correlation between voting and acceptance. A significant number of H-1B recipients work in "blue" or Democratic-voting states in Presidential elections, rather than in "red" or Republican-voting states. Beyond the stances each party has on immigration, this fact can most likely be explained by the technology-driven "hotspot" areas are located in Democratic voting states (i.e., California, New York, etc.) Most surprisingly, the correlation between Presidents in power and correlation between political allegiance and visa acceptances is negative, meaning Presidents aren't directly impacting the visa system, indicating the H-1B visa is being utilized to meet labor demands. This fact remains for President Trump's first term, but future research will examine the effects of his current policy changes to the H-1B system and the implications for the economy.

LIMITATIONS

The most significant limitation in determining the relationship between political allegiance and H-1B visa acceptances was the confidential nature of individual applications of visa applicants from 1997 to 2019. Despite attempting several avenues to uncover this variable, we were unsuccessful. This presents an opportunity for future work. Future research can obtain confidential data on individual H-1B visa applications to strengthen the causal link between political allegiance and H-1B acceptances in the US.

Implications and Future Research

Immigrants are integral to the general US economic growth, as well as the growth of US firms. Between 1990 and 2010, highly skilled labor workers and their spouses contributed $86 billion annually to the US economy (fwd.us 2025), while driving 30%-50% productivity growth (Peri, Shih, and Sparber 2015). The H-1B visa system serves not only as a tool for meeting labor demands but also as a means to encourage countries to align with the US in the UNGA. This implies that a system that significantly impacts domestic and firm growth is not leveraged to its full potential. If the H-1B system continues to be utilized in these ways, our economic growth will become increasingly limited. Furthermore, both US industries and high-skilled immigrants are negatively impacted. Professional services, as in "IT" and tech industries, obtain the most H-1B issuances, but that doesn't imply that other sectors (health care, education, or finance, for example) are receiving the amount of H-1Bs that they need. Further work should investigate the contributions of H-1B workers in different industries to determine if the H-1B visa recipient's impact isn't specific to high-tech firms. Furthermore, no existing research quantifies the relationship between high-skilled visa acceptances and political allegiance. Given the recent changes to the H-1B system by the current administration, future research may explore the influence of President Trump's policies on trends such as voting correlations, industry and state-level worker distributions, etc. In essence, there are several inequities within the H-1B visa system, and the system needs to be corrected for misuse in order to maximize economic growth and meet labor demands, specifically for industries that are in need of high-skilled labor.

REFERENCES

1. Alesina, A., & Dollar, D. (2000). Who gives foreign aid to whom and why? Journal of Economic Growth, 5(1), 33–63. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1009874203400
2. BloombergGraphics. (2024). GitHub - BloombergGraphics/2024-h1b-immigration-data: US H-1B visa

lottery and petition data FY 2021–FY 2024. GitHub. https://github.com/BloombergGraphics/2024-h1b-immigration-data
3. Bound, J., Khanna, G., & Morales, N. (2017). Understanding the economic impact of the H-1B program on the U.S. https://doi.org/10.3386/w23153
4. Dag, U. N. (2024, September 12). United Nations General Assembly voting data. United Nations Digital Library System. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4060887
5. Doran, K., Gelber, A., & Isen, A. (2014). The effect of high-skilled immigration on patenting and employment: Evidence from H-1B visa lotteries. SSRN Electronic Journal. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2523241
6. Dreher, A., Nunnenkamp, P., & Thiele, R. (2008). Does US aid buy UN General Assembly votes? A disaggregated analysis. Public Choice, 136(1–2), 139–164. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-008-9286-x
7. Hainmueller, J., & Hiscox, M. J. (2010). Attitudes toward highly skilled and low-skilled immigration: Evidence from a survey experiment. American Political Science Review, 104(1), 61–84. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055409990372
8. H-1B employer data hub | USCIS. (n.d.). USCIS. https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/h-1b-employer-data-hub
9. Hunt, J. (2015). Are immigrants the most skilled US computer and engineering workers? Journal of Labor Economics, 33(S1), S39–S77. https://doi.org/10.1086/678974
10. Kapička, M., Kydland, F., & Zarazaga, C. (2019). Exploring the role of limited commitment constraints in Argentina's "missing capital." RePEc: Research Papers in Economics. https://doi.org/10.3386/w26359
11. Kerr, W. R., & Lincoln, W. F. (2010). The supply side of innovation: H-1B visa reforms and U.S. ethnic invention. Journal of Labor Economics, 28(3), 473–508. https://doi.org/10.1086/651934
12. Kfir, I. (2018). Organized criminal-terrorist groups in the Sahel: How counterterrorism and counterinsurgency approaches ignore the roots of the problem. International Studies Perspectives, 19(4), 344–359. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky003
13. Mahajan, P., Morales, N., Shih, K., Chen, M., & Brinatti, A. (2024). The impact of immigration on firms and workers: Insights from the H-1B lottery. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4790785
14. Moriarty, A. (2024, March 14). Immigration benefits all Americans and strengthens the economy. FWD.us. https://www.fwd.us/news/americans-and-immigration/
15. Peri, G., Shih, K., & Sparber, C. (2015). STEM workers, H-1B visas, and productivity in US cities. Journal of Labor Economics, 33(S1), S225–S255. https://doi.org/10.1086/679061
16. Tareque, I. S., Guzman, J., & Wang, D. (2024). High-skilled immigration enhances regional entrepreneurship. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 121(37). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2402001121
17. The H-1B visa program and its impact on the U.S. economy. (n.d.). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/h-1b_visa_program_and_its_impact_on_the_u.s._economy_1025.pdf
18. Understanding and improving the H-1B visa program. (2015, April). New American Economy. https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Briefing-Book-on-Understanding-and-Improving-H-1B-Visas-4-24-2015.pdf
19. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. (2024). Nonimmigrant visa issuances by visa class and by nationality: FY1997–2024 (NIV detail table) [Data set]. U.S. Department of State. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/nonimmigrant-visa-statistics.html
20. Whitaker, B. E. (2002). Refugees in Western Tanzania: The distribution of burdens and benefits among local hosts. Journal of Refugee Studies, 15(4), 339–358. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/15.4.339