

# *Features of Attracting Highly Skilled Migrants: a Comparative Analysis of the United States and the United Kingdom*

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**Abstract**— Countries are realizing the billion-dollar question regarding innovation and productivity is highly skilled migrants, fuelling the global race for the best in show. The United States and the United Kingdom have been among the top destinations for skilled migrants due to their strong economy world-class research institutions and job opportunities. The paper will be a comparative analysis and literature review of the variables that are attractive to highly skilled migrants in these countries, considering migration trends, policy environments, and economies and outcomes. This refers to using data on human mobility to determine driving forces in migration decisions of where they choose to live, such as economic opportunities, quality of life, and the policy incentives in that location. The research shows that both countries have been effective in attracting highly skilled migrants, although they face continuing obstacles—including visa constraints, credential recognition and integration challenges. The overall conclusion of the study is that the U.S. and the UK's attractiveness to global talent can be enhanced through an appropriate mix of targeted migration policies, effective integration and policy coherence. Overcoming these challenges will enable both countries to maximize the economic and social contributions of skilled migrants, facilitating ongoing

growth and innovation in an ever-competitive global environment.

**Keywords**— *Economic Impact, Global Talent, Highly Skilled Migrants, Labor Market Integration, Migration Policies, Skilled Migration, United Kingdom, United States.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

More and more of the world's population is getting educated, and therefore, more and more educated professionals are moving out of their home countries. Referred to as the "global race for talent," this phenomenon has heightened competition among countries to woo and keep highly skilled migrants. They play an important role in their host nations: the enhancement of productivity and accelerated technological development, especially in developing and emerging markets [1, 2].

Immigrants with a high skill level have been targeted for the USA and UK since they have had strong economies, developed infrastructure, and wide-ranging native-friendly migration policies. However, the two countries face questions about their ability to stay competitive as the demand for skilled labour rises. This

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research looks into the policies, trends, and economic impacts that would make the U.S. and the UK attractive choice destinations for high-quality migrants. By comparing states, this paper identifies lessons and implications for how skilled migration fuels sustained growth and innovation in a modern economy.

#### *A. Background and Rationale*

The phenomenon of migration is a policy issue of growing importance in developing countries, and adjustments to policies so they reflect changing global conditions in the labour market have been needed. Talent mobility is a critical driver of economic development in the 21st century, with countries turning to skilled migrants to plug labour shortages, stimulate innovation, and increase productivity. Recently Z. A. Kadirova & Gazieva [3] stated that migration processes can be divided into academic, business, professional and talent migration, depending on their nature and purpose. As countries position themselves as net importers or exporters of human capital, they engage in a wider competition for the same, rife with global friction in the context of skilled migration [2, 4].

The U.S. and the UK, as global drivers of technology, healthcare, and education, influence skilled migration patterns through economic, social, and political policy. Both countries have introduced targeted migration programs targeting top talent. The U.S., for instance, created the H-1B visa program in 1990 to address STEM shortages, while the UK launched the Global Talent Visa in 2020 to attract leaders in academia, science, and technology. Despite all these measures, issues like visa caps, credential recognition, and post-immigration integration continue. These are critical issues that must be addressed in order to establish appropriate public policies that maximize the benefits of skilled migration.

#### *B. Research Problem*

Despite the success of the U.S. and the UK in attracting highly skilled migrants, there is now greater competition for global talent than ever before. Other nations, including Canada, Australia, and Germany, are also pursuing aggressive policies to recruit skilled workers. This begs two important questions: What makes the U.S. and the UK attractive for high-performing migrants? How do their policies stack up in relation to effectiveness and inclusivity? What are the biggest frustrations they face with existing skilled migrants, and how can these be overcome? This study tries to answer these queries by doing a comparative analysis of the U.S. and the UK. It focuses in particular on trends in highly skilled migration, effects on labour markets, and policy responses in both destination and source countries. The study aims to help enhance their competitiveness in the market for global talent by identifying their strengths and weaknesses with regard to their approaches.

#### *C. Objectives of the Study*

- i. To examine the tendencies and outlines of highly skilled migration to the U.S. and the UK.
- ii. To compare the strategies and visa programs executed by both countries to attract skilled migrants.
- iii. To assess the economic and social impacts of highly skilled migration on the labour markets of the U.S. and the UK.
- iv. To identify encounters and blockades faced by highly skilled migrants in both countries.
- v. To provide policy endorsements for improving the attraction and retention of skilled migrants.

#### *D. Significance of the Study*

The main purpose of the study is to provide a systematic reading of the apparent attraction of part of the phenomena about the reasons generating distinct responses from the US and UK policy systems to the attraction of skilled migrants. This study holds significant value for policymakers, academics, and stakeholders involved in migration and labour market planning. By comparing the U.S. and the UK, the study highlights best practices and lessons learned, which can inform policy decisions in other countries. Additionally, the findings contribute to the academic literature on skilled migration, offering new insights into the factors that influence migration decisions and outcomes.

It is, of course, essential to look beyond the particular dates and periods within a certain time frame to help discern trends and their overall structural significance. It will be demonstrated that the two countries represent two distinct approaches to the attraction of highly skilled migrants. From a practical perspective, the study addresses critical issues such as visa restrictions, credential recognition, and integration barriers, which hinder the full potential of skilled migrants. By proposing solutions to these challenges, the study aims to enhance the economic and social contributions of highly skilled migrants, ultimately benefiting both host countries and the migrants themselves.

#### *E. Literature Review*

Current works have essentially covered the discrepant immigration policies that deviate in terms of the proportion of highly skilled migrants. Despite this relative overlap, a reasonable illustration of the similar pattern in attracting HCIs is demonstrated through the use of European colonialism as a method for understanding the different types of ethnic communities in the main developed countries. In doing so, a characteristic array of attractions that countries viewed as attractive is exhibited: namely, first language, income level, insufficient labour in certain sectors, low immigrant welfare dependency, and a large amount of individual social capital. Likewise, distinctions between qualifications that may amount to Eastern and Western

HCIs are constructed. Correspondingly, what is comprehensive is the wide array of studies that support 'self-selection', either of which occurs through educational attainment and occupation, as a result of environmental circumstances, or through further economic, social, and political means, and the narrow interests studies find in the aspiration of some HCIs in wishing to settle permanently overseas. A few additional studies have also focused their analysis on migrants to certain areas while drawing attention to the reasons for immigrants to be able to utilize their class privileges and the options available before and after migration [5].

#### *1) Historical Context of Migration Policies*

Migrant admission policy is not primarily the instrument that influences the number and characteristics of immigrants that states receive. Migrant admission policies and the characteristics of migrants that states receive are preconditions for the functioning of other policy areas such as family reunification, multicultural policies, labour market regulations, or social security provisions for immigrants [6, 7]. Despite the large role played by immigration in the population structure of various countries, very little systematic cross-national research exists on the composition of migrant flows. One reason may be that policy debates have centred on very specific groups of migrants such as economic migrants or deceived asylum applicants, with the result that crude distinctions have substituted the systematic study of migrant admission policies. In this paper, I want to focus on highly skilled migrants in the United States and the United Kingdom and analyze the details of international migrant admission policies. Especially, I am especially interested in how highly skilled migrants are classified and what different admission schemes allow highly skilled migrants to enter both countries. I want to address this puzzle by answering my research question: Why do so many highly skilled migrants migrate to the United Kingdom and what are the policy and institutional features of both countries that highly skilled migrants are attracted?

Migration has been a fundamental aspect of human history, evolving from early human movements driven by resource scarcity to modern-day economic, educational, and professional migration. Theories of migration help explain its drivers and impacts, providing a foundation for understanding the dynamics of highly skilled migration.

##### *a) Classical Theories of Migration*

**Ravenstein's Laws of Migration (1885):** Introduced push and pull factors such as economic opportunities and social conditions but do not fully account for modern skilled migration complexities.

**Neoclassical Theory:** Suggests migration arises due to remuneration differences, with labour moving on or after low-wage to high-wage economies. However, it supervises non-economic aspects like quality of life and career progression.

##### *b) Modern Perspectives on Migration*

**Human Capital Theory:** Migration is determined by individuals looking for better revenues on education and skills, specifically appropriate for highly skilled migrants prioritizing career growth.

**New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM):** Highlights household choices in migration, bearing in mind risk diversification and income growth, making it suitable for sympathetic family-based migration.

**Network and Institutional Theories:** Emphasize how social networks and migration rules outline migration tendencies, particularly through diaspora networks as well as regulatory frameworks.

##### *c) Evolution of Skilled Migration Policies*

Migration plans have undergone substantial changes over time, adapting to economic requirements and demographic swings. Migration policies have undertaken noteworthy deviations over time, adapting to economic requirements as well as demographic shifts:

**Pre-20th Century:** Migration is located mainly unregulated, with open borders smoothing labour movement.

**Post-World War II:** Industrialization directed labour deficiencies in developed countries, instigating the primer of guest worker programs.

**Late 20th Century:** A modification towards skilled migration strategies appeared, emphasizing talent procurement in knowledge-based economies.

**21st Century:** Globalization as well as digital transformation have increased the race for high-skilled migrants, leading to policies like the U.S. H-1B visa as well as the UK's Global Talent Visa.

Without getting into a lot of history, one can say that there has been a massive shift in this area from unregulated migration (before the 20th century) to targeted migration policies (in the 21st century) where countries are realizing the worth of attracting skilled migrants. The changes in policies like the U.S. H-1B visa and the UK's Global Talent Visa exemplify this change, with the need for migration frameworks to match economic priorities.

##### *d) Highly Skilled Migration to the United States*

Most of the highly educated foreign workers who come to the U.S. do so because they run away from terrible conditions at home and the threat of torture and persecution from authorities because of their sex, religious beliefs, political views, or the fact that they belong to the LGBT community. They may also have moved to the United States for educational and employment reasons. Additionally, migrants feel negatively about the restrictions and the lack of educational and employment opportunities for their children in their home countries. They are repelled by tough immigration laws, corrupt governments, and political instability [8-10].

The least attractive pull factor in the U.S. is negative national conditions and fewer pull factors for students compared to other countries. This is because, in comparison with other countries of residence, national conditions in the United States, such as transportation issues, travel expenses, cultural environment, and language barriers, are less favourable for foreign students. The existence of higher education in the United States and the wide range of specializations are quite interesting to them, which offers many scholarships for attending college. Being one of the biggest world economic powers, the higher salaries employers can pay and living standards are relatively low compared to some European and Asian countries [11, 12].

#### *e) Trends in Highly Educated Migrants*

Migrant feminization corresponds to the differences in trends in the migration of women with high and low human capital specifications. Trends in the migration of highly educated migrants in the US and the United Kingdom differ. Migration of highly educated women from the West dramatically increased after the late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly due to the fact that work is the stated reason. The migration of managerial, but not professional occupations, rises for women. Educational qualification accounts for a significant amount of the gender difference. The differences confirm the importance of considering migration by gender and educational characteristics [1].

Highly skilled migrant men and women may or may not always migrate for the same reasons. There is also some evidence that operations managers - jobs held predominantly by women - do not respond to the incentives of the brain drain. The employment decisions of high human capital women and men have many possible causes, including resistance to gender norms, dissatisfaction with lack of opportunity for high-skilled work and use of ability, greater access to migrant networks, and traditional family decisions about who is to migrate and who is to care for children [1, 13].

The United States hosts the largest number of migrants globally, with international migrants comprising approximately 14% of its population. The number of highly educated migrants has grown significantly compared to the local population:

- **1990–2000:** 87% increase in highly educated migrants vs. 38% among natives
- **2000–2010:** 57% increase in highly educated migrants vs. 26% among natives
- **2010–2018:** 38% increase in highly educated migrants vs. 24% among natives

In 2023, 36% of the U.S. population over 25 had a higher education degree, compared to 35% of migrants. However, challenges such as visa restrictions, credential recognition, and integration barriers persist, limiting the full potential of skilled migrants.

#### *f) Educational Attainment and Labor Market Integration*

In both countries, graduates of prestigious universities actively pursue careers in banking, investment, and law – as representatives of the most popular professions in the world of business and financial centres. At the same time, in the United States, practitioners of these professions appear in the most diverse sectors of the economy; in the UK, the situation is largely determined by the traditions of British society, customs, and established class distinctions. Different approaches here are determined, because of the complex administrative, organizational, and institutional processes of higher education. Many countries are distinguished by the national characteristics of the functioning of university communities and students that have taken shape for centuries, traditions, and corporate universities, which largely determine the effectiveness of professional socialization and the process of building the identity of alumni from institutions. The reputation of elite universities is reinforced. As a result, highly skilled young people, alumni of distinguished educational institutions, feel more comfortable in the educational systems of their respective countries [14, 15].

Among naturalized citizens in the U.S.:

- 40% hold a bachelor's degree or higher
- 22.1% hold a bachelor's degree
- 17.1% hold a master's or doctorate

Migrant education levels vary significantly by region, with South and Central Asia contributing the highest share of highly educated migrants, while lower educational levels are observed among Mexican and Central American migrants.

#### *g) Sectoral Distribution and Economic Impact*

The sectoral distribution of immigrants indicated that immigrant presence represented a large or diminished fraction of workers in different sectors of the economy. Numerous countries have a sector-specific immigration system for high-skilled workers [1].

Highly educated migrants predominantly contribute to:

- **Information Technology (IT):** 4.2 foreign specialists per 10 local personnel
- **Education:** 10:3 migrant-to-native ratio among teachers
- **Healthcare:** 10:2.5 migrant-to-native ratio among doctors and engineers

Migrant labour plays a key role in filling skill gaps, enhancing productivity, and expanding economic output. Notably, migrants account for:

- 18% of healthcare jobs
- 37% of doctors in New Jersey

- 35% of doctors in Florida
- 33% of doctors in New York

By 2034, the U.S. is expected to face a shortage of 124,000 doctors, further highlighting the importance of skilled migrants in the healthcare sector.

#### *h) H-1B Visa and Skilled Immigration*

The H-1B program in the US is a temporary work visa that allows employers to hire highly educated foreigners. This program is widely used by the government to recruit temporary workers. The H-1B program is designed to attract and retain highly educated workers who are not American citizens. People who work in this category are specialists in the field of computer and information technology. They do not qualify workers in the US labour market due to the high rates of unemployment in these areas of knowledge. The H-1B visa allows you to legally live and work in the US and is a temporary visa that is issued for a period of up to three years. Given that the visa can be renewed for a period of up to six years, many of these highly skilled foreigners who want to declare permanent residence apply accordingly. However, the number of issued visas is always limited annually, 65,000 for foreign workers and an additional 20,000 for foreigners with master's degrees from US educational institutions [16].

The H-1B visa program remains a critical pathway for skilled migration, particularly in IT and STEM fields:

- 75% of H-1B visa holders work in IT
- 34% hold a bachelor's degree, 22% a master's degree, and 8% a doctorate
- 72% of H-1B visa holders originate from India

However, the visa cap of 85,000 per year remains a limiting factor, restricting potential economic contributions from skilled migrants.

#### *i) Highly Skilled Migration to the United Kingdom*

The United Kingdom has a long history of being a host for all kinds of migrants. It has also been a long-time destination for international students to come and get high-quality education. The purpose of this paper is to note more contemporary developments, which have seen the United Kingdom consciously making attempts to attract highly skilled migrants away from their real or perceived competitors, and in terms of being destinations, these have clearly been the United States. Using a varied and mainly targeted approach, the United Kingdom has been successful and can boast the fastest rate of growth of employment in categories requiring high levels of cognitive skills. Only Australia is in a similar second position, yet neither has managed to lessen the United States' commanding share of global high-skill employment [17, 18].

#### *j) Trends and Educational Attainment*

While the majority of immigrant college graduates in both the United States and the United Kingdom have a

college degree from their country of birth, there are several notable differences in the trends, characteristics, and earnings between college graduates who completed their degrees in their home countries and college graduates who completed part or all of their degrees while living abroad [19, 20]. While the experiences of immigrants in the United Kingdom are somewhat different. Nearly half of all foreign-born college graduates in the United Kingdom completed part or all of their education while living abroad. More foreign-born college graduates in the United Kingdom have a bachelor's as their highest degree compared to foreign-born college graduates in the United States; the opposite is true at the master's degree level. While a non-trivial one-third of all immigrant college graduates in the United Kingdom completed their highest degree in the UK pre-arrival, this is higher for those with African origins.

The UK hosts approximately 10 million migrants, comprising 16% of the population. Among them:

- 38% of EU-born migrants hold higher education degrees
- 44% of non-EU migrants hold higher education degrees
- 34% of UK natives hold higher education degrees

Notably, a significant proportion of highly skilled migrants come from India, Pakistan, and Nigeria. Post-Brexit, the UK has faced challenges in attracting EU talent but has seen an increase in non-EU skilled migration.

#### *k) Sectoral Distribution and Economic Contributions*

Half of the non-European countries receive 10,000 or more high-skilled migrants annually, a remarkable though differing level of success when their modest populations are taken into account. These countries may, in search of the global skills they need, benefit both directly from the work of the migrants employed, and indirectly through the benefits of the pool of people resident or transient on which their enterprises can draw, and by their contribution to creative cultural and scientific communities [21].

Key industries employing skilled migrants in the UK include:

**Healthcare:** 62% of skilled worker visas granted in 2023

**Information Technology (ICT):** 87% of skilled workers are highly educated

**Education:** 48% of university engineering and technology faculty are foreigners

**Finance and Insurance:** 93% of skilled workers are highly educated

Migrants also play a crucial role in entrepreneurship and innovation:

- 39% of the UK's fastest-growing startups have at least one migrant founder
- 40% of Nobel Prize laureates in the UK are migrants
- 1 in 7 UK companies is founded by a migrant

#### *l) Skilled Worker Visas and Policy Changes*

As the role of the state in managing these visas has been delegated to firms and educational institutions, the treatment of skilled foreign workers has also become an important aspect of national law [16]. Migration policies have a longer policy history in the United States than in the United Kingdom. In the legislation that remained in effect until the recent administration, a limit on native visas in the US labour market was accompanied by a backlog of potentially skilled foreign workers. In the United Kingdom, the cap on skilled migrant workers is less clearly drawn, and of the visas issued per year, there is a split every month, which has led to a policy innovation almost every month in the areas that the policy is meant to protect. The net migration figures in the United Kingdom are seen to be more important than the wage gap between skilled and low-skilled foreign workers in the domestic labour force.

The UK has multiple visa programs for skilled migration:

- i. **Skilled Worker Visa:** Employment-based migration
- ii. **Global Talent Visa:** For leaders in academia, science, and technology
- iii. **Innovator Visa:** For entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas
- iv. **High Potential Individual Visa:** For graduates of top universities

Post-pandemic, skilled worker visas have increased from 137,000 in 2019 to 241,000 in 2022. However, restrictions on international student migration could impact the future talent pipeline.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a comparative analysis of the policies and strategies used by the United States and the United Kingdom to attract highly skilled migrants. The research is based on a literature review, drawing data from government reports, academic research, policy briefs, and relevant legislative documents.

To assess the policy frameworks of both countries, key legislative and regulatory measures have been examined. For the United States, the study reviews the USCIS (2022) Immigration and Nationality Act: U.S. immigration law and policy, which governs employment-based immigration, student and work visas, lawful permanent residency, and specialized immigration categories. Ward and Batalova [22] in their

research discussed that in the new legislative proposals addressing temporary visa suspensions as well as their potential impression on labour market dynamic forces are also included. For the United Kingdom, the investigation emphasises the Points-Based Immigration System, which controls skilled worker visas, shortage professions lists, and criteria for reimbursement Office [23].

Apart from government policies, previously Skeldon [24] investigates the same concept as the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry associations, and private sector stakeholders in supporting and advocating in favour of highly skilled migrants. These actors determine immigration policy and offer critical services, including legal assistance, job placement, and integration services.

To define highly skilled migrants, the study reflects individuals involved in high-tech and professional occupations, academia, and research. OECD (2020) in their report 'Talent Attractiveness: Keeping highly skilled migrants' addresses that highly skilled migration is progressively predictable as a driver of innovation as well as economic development. Research indicates that countries rank specialists through advanced proficiency due to their part in advancing technological innovation, knowledge transfer, as well as global competitiveness [25].

Furthermore, the study examines the broader economic and social factors influencing skilled migration. The appeal of destination countries is analyzed through criteria such as labour market demand, human capital development opportunities, material and non-material incentives, and long-term settlement prospects [26]. Dustmann [27] investigation shows that the availability of career growth, family support structures, and integration policies significantly affect a migrant's decision to relocate and remain in a host country.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *A. Comparative Analysis of the United States and the United Kingdom*

The US and the UK, as the top two immigrant-accepting countries, play a critical part in the recruitment of qualified foreign experts. This paper summarizes the main attractions of these two countries, including the official state strategies and preferences for the immigration of specific individuals. In the US, the main lever used to lure foreign specialists is the opportunity for graduates of American universities to work and live in the country. In the United Kingdom, a number of professional programs have been created specifically for graduates of UK educational institutions. Both countries maintain a demand for high-skilled work, as well as a tolerant attitude towards migrants attracted by tax benefits.

Highly skilled foreign specialists are necessary for further economic growth, international competitiveness, and the level of employment and wages for both indigenous people and immigrants. Graduates from different countries also contribute to the social and cultural diversity of society. If countries strive to attract migrants as a means of stimulating economic growth, it is necessary to study their migration policies, the conditions of their stay in the country, and measures to adapt to the new socio-economic environment. In addition, migrants should be ready to open up and integrate into host organizations.

### *B. Overview of Migration Policies*

Immigration policy regulates the entry, purpose, and duration of foreign citizens in a country, encompassing both migration and immigrant policies. It involves legislative, financial, and organizational measures aimed at four key objectives: admission, rights and status, expulsion conditions, and cooperation with origin countries.

Debates on immigration policies highlight increasing mobility restrictions and selective admission preferences, leading to concerns about exclusionary practices. However, both sending and receiving countries implement measures to manage migration's negative impacts. Finally, immigration policies replicate a balance between restrictive controls as well as economic or social incentives.

### *C. Labor Market Integration*

English-speaking, highly educated migrants tend to integrate quickly into labour markets in the U.S. and the U.K. thanks to effective mechanisms for matching jobs, recognition of qualifications, and markets that are reasonably open to skilled migrants. They also have strong socio-economic outcomes consistent with this trend [28]. These new migrants in the labour market are incredibly flexible, moving where the demand is. And because their skills are applicable in diverse sectors, they will be able to participate in and respond to economic changes in the long term.

### *D. Clarifying Policy Differences: The Impact on Migrants*

The US and UK policies for skilled migrants highlight these countries' different economic and demographic contexts. In contrast to the H-1B program in the U.S. – heavily skewed towards IT – the UK has a competition of its own where it has introduced diversity in the visa mechanism for attracting talent in multiple sectors. Nonetheless, both countries are likely to face issues like visa quotas and hurdles to include migrants in the workforce, which, under consideration, may limit their capacity to realize the full potential of this top-notch migration.

The following table outlines some of the differences in immigration policies and migrant demographics between the United States and the United Kingdom.

Although both countries record high talent attraction of educated migrants, the challenges and opportunities presented to skilled workers by their visa policies and integration strategies differ for each state.

TABLE 1 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: U.S. VS UK POLICIES

Comparative Analysis: U.S. vs. UK Policies		
Factor	United States	United Kingdom
Migrant Share in Population	14%	16%
Share of Highly Educated Migrants	35%	44% (non-EU)
Top Source Countries	India, China, Mexico	India, Pakistan, Nigeria
Major Employment Sectors	IT, Healthcare, Education	Healthcare, IT, Finance
Key Visa Programs	H-1B, EB-2, EB-1	Skilled Worker, Global Talent, Innovator
Contribution to GDP	17%	14%

### *E. Policy Impact on Migrants*

#### *a) Ease of Obtaining Visas*

- The United States runs on a lottery-based structure (H-1B) for skilled workers, replicating visa acquisition ambiguity. Permanent residency (Green Card) dispensation can take years, specifically for migrants from high-demand countries identical to India and China.
- The United Kingdom, in divergence, has a points-based classification that ranks skilled workers based on mandate. This system provides stronger pathways to gaining work visas as well as residency compared to the U.S. lottery system.

#### *b) Integration Success*

- In the United States, the route to permanent residency is lengthy, but migrants can take benefit through strong labour market prospects as well as immigrant communities. However, the deficiency of universal health care can be an encounter for some.
- The United Kingdom delivers clearer visa-to-residency pathways, as well as admittance to healthcare with NHS aids integration. Though, visa fees as well as strict income thresholds intended for family reunification could be barriers.

#### *c) Employment and Economic Contribution*

- Migrants in both countries contribute significantly to the economy, with the U.S. seeing a higher GDP contribution (17%) due to its larger economy and strong presence of migrant entrepreneurs in tech and healthcare.

- In the UK, the finance sector also plays a key role, and the post-Brexit shift has increased reliance on non-EU migrants for skilled labour, particularly in healthcare.

By understanding these policy differences, migrants can better navigate their options and governments can refine their strategies to attract and retain skilled workers.

#### *F. Economic Impact and Policy Considerations*

The economic impact section could be expanded to include how post-pandemic policies have shifted migration trends in both countries. The impact of high-skilled migration in the UK and US can also be considered from an economic development perspective. Positivist research findings often conclude that high-skilled migrants opt to live and work in areas where productivity is high and, as such, are unlikely to 'redistribute the brain drain,' alleviating the less developed and rural regions. From a policy perspective, such areas may be more inclined to implement policies to support and attract 'new' migrants. Such policies range from police protection for communities thought to be used by migrants to developing community organizations that, among other things, provide information about the locality and specific advice aimed at helping migrants remain in the area and utilize their potential [21].

Post-pandemic migration policies have played a crucial role in shaping these trends. In the UK, the introduction of a points-based immigration system has prioritized high-skilled migrants, leading to a concentration of talent in urban areas with established industries and research hubs. Similarly, in the US, changes to visa policies and work permit regulations have influenced migration patterns, particularly in STEM fields. The tightening of restrictions on international student migration has raised concerns about long-term talent shortages in key industries.

In the UK, evidence to date is weighted primarily in favour of those migrants who are mobile and have above-average education and income. Although much less research has been carried out with highly skilled migrants, the concentrations of skilled migration in particular areas have driven the setting of many policy responses. Such targeted areas include business start-up incentives, help to provide language classes for others, and more diverse and targeted employment services. Clearly, where skilled migrants actually opt to live and where they initially settle has significant implications for policy considerations. To date, knowledge about the location of highly skilled migrants is known through enterprise, workplace surveys, research findings from education research and so on. The development of work spatial geography at the borough level that is standardized across borders would allow the comparison of that knowledge illustrated in relatively more detail and across countries.

Highly skilled migration drives:

**Innovation:** 23% of U.S. patents are from migrant inventors

**Entrepreneurship:** 80% more businesses founded by migrants

**Labour productivity growth:** 1% increase in skilled migration raises productivity by 0.4-0.5%

**GDP expansion:** \$7 billion projected increase in U.S. GDP over the next decade

However, restrictive policies—such as limiting international student migration—could lead to a talent shortage in key industries. To sustain economic growth and innovation, both the U.S. and the UK must adopt forward-looking policies that prioritize skilled migration. Addressing regional disparities in high-skilled migration could further enhance economic benefits by ensuring that talent is distributed more evenly, benefiting both metropolitan hubs and less developed regions.

#### *G. Factors Influencing Highly Skilled Migrants' Decisions*

Highly skilled migrants are a diverse group, making relocation decisions based on various factors, including income, family circumstances, professional opportunities, and personal connections. Partners and dependents also influence these choices, considering job prospects, living conditions, and overall attractiveness of destination countries [6].

Key determinants include socio-demographics, qualifications, career progression, prior visits, and familiarity with the destination. Non-financial aspects like job satisfaction, work-life balance, and cultural experiences also play a role. Wage differentials, corporate governance, and startup opportunities further shape decisions, highlighting the complexity of skilled migration choices.

##### *1) Quality of Life and Work-Life Balance*

Quality of life and work-life balance are key factors in international mobility, beyond financial incentives. Highly skilled migrants seek good urban environments, secure jobs, shorter work hours, quality schools, healthcare, reputable universities for their children, and well-designed housing [29], [30], [31].

The U.K.'s lack of leisure facilities is a disadvantage, while opportunities for permanent settlement attract migrants. Dual-career partnerships complicate relocation, as spousal employment is a major concern. The U.K. competes for talent not just through financial incentives but by attracting high-tech firms that value both professional and recreational opportunities. Balancing work and family life remains crucial in securing global talent.

##### *2) Education and Skills Recognition*

The U.S. and U.K. have similar qualification recognition mechanisms, emphasizing equality and minimal restrictions for skilled migrants. Both countries streamline recognition for professions facing shortages,



reducing costs and effort for applicants. The U.S. faces pressing shortages in medical and social care, prioritizing employment-based recognition. While policies are largely alike, the U.K. requires qualification renewal every three years for shortage occupations, whereas, in the U.S., recognition remains valid for any vacancy [32].

#### *a) Educational and Career Development*

The assessment of high-skilled migrants is based on their education and the labour market's recognition of their qualifications. Receiving countries value these migrants for their educational advantage, which contributes to economic growth. Governments subsidize higher education to increase the number of specialists, fostering economic, social, and scientific development [1], [33].

#### *3) Economic Opportunities*

Migration's impact on host populations is widely debated, with both positive and negative effects. While concerns exist, skilled migration generally benefits better-educated workers, raising real wages [34].

Highly skilled migrants contribute positively to production, pay more taxes, and use fewer social benefits. Their presence in the labour market tends to increase wages for similarly educated domestic workers, making them valuable to receiving countries seeking economic growth and innovation.

### *H. Challenges and Opportunities in Attracting Highly Skilled Migrants*

The U.S. and U.K. attract highly skilled immigrants due to their liberal immigration policies and strong economies but face challenges in regulating inflows. Increased border scrutiny has led to visa delays, discouraging prospective migrants.

Both nations seek to fill labour shortages quickly with minimal government intervention, aiming to attract top talent not only for immediate job needs but also to counter declining birth rates and drive technological advancements in critical fields. Their leadership recognizes the competitive advantage of securing the best global talent, reinforcing the idea that attracting top-tier migrants benefits their long-term economic and strategic goals.

#### *1) Policy Coherence and Coordination*

In both the U.K. and the U.S., multiple government agencies oversee policies to attract and retain highly skilled migrants, leading to coordination challenges. The U.K. divides responsibilities across at least five ministries, likely due to rapid migration growth, while the U.S. splits oversight between federal and state agencies, creating policy inconsistencies and inefficiencies.

Effective policies require cooperation among policymakers, policy actors, and migrants. Policymakers often fail to clearly communicate migration goals, and international cooperation is complicated by diverse stakeholders with conflicting interests. Additionally,

better migrant engagement through communication and skill-building could improve integration, but such efforts are largely overlooked in current policies.

#### *2) Social Integration and Inclusion*

This article compares the U.S. and U.K. in attracting highly skilled migrants. The U.K.'s points-based system promotes interstate mobility, while the U.S. uses visas to attract talent, strengthening technology hubs. Asian migrants value multicultural learning, enhancing social integration. Future research should explore economic shifts from tech sector growth and land use changes due to immigration policies.

Highly skilled migrants typically earn high incomes, though some face precarious status. Encouraging them to settle in specific areas can boost local economies through increased consumption and housing demand. However, challenges remain in securing immigration status and reducing social integration costs. The study finds that while skilled migration expands labour and consumer markets, it also raises social uncertainty and risks displacement.

#### *3) Brain Drain Concerns*

Unskilled migration raises concerns for donor countries due to brain drain, as they invest in education while recipient nations benefit from skilled labour. This depletes the donor country's workforce and disrupts national development plans. While donor countries criticize recipient nations for "poaching" talent, recipient countries argue that migration is an economic choice best left to private negotiations. However, donor countries suffer from "brain drain" as they lose bright people. This study identifies knowledge gaps in the ability and qualification-based classification of migrants by highlighting complex factors such as education, occupation, and economic implications [35].

To address the Brain drain, the U.S. and U.K. have introduced strategies such as the H-1B visa, OPT program, Global Talent Visa, and Shortage Occupation List to retain skilled workers while enabling knowledge transfer. Bilateral agreements and knowledge-sharing partnerships further balance migration benefits.

In the EU, regulatory barriers in licensing still limit cross-border job mobility despite mutual qualification recognition efforts. Public safety concerns have reinforced these restrictions, preventing some skilled workers from working in other member states. Additionally, in the U.K., recent deportations of skilled migrants mainly affected postgraduate students and foreign workers violating immigration rules, rather than European professionals benefiting from exemptions.

#### *I. Best Practices*

Best practices for attracting highly skilled international labour fall into four categories:

**Qualification Confirmation** – Most countries conduct labour market tests to verify the need for highly skilled

migrants, ensuring they do not displace native workers or drive down wages.

**Demand Assessment** – Migration applications are evaluated based on sector needs. For example, physicians are in high demand due to their societal impact, whereas actors and performers must prove their professional achievements before entering the U.S. or U.K.

**Family Inclusion** – The U.S. allows a limited number of family members to accompany skilled migrants, while the U.K. offers broader family reunification options.

**Employment Monitoring** – In the U.S., contracts have expiration periods, and migrants must confirm their continued employment in the permitted profession. The U.K. allows frequent hiring of foreign workers but requires employers to prove the unavailability of local workers before rehiring. Subsidies for worker education aim to reduce reliance on foreign labour, but the costs and risks make such incentives less attractive [36], [37].

#### 1) *Innovative Policies in the United States*

The US economy relies on its high-tech sector, concentrated in a few coastal regions, driving demand for highly skilled workers. To address shortages, the government has repeatedly advocated for increasing H-1B visas, and in 1991, the TN visa was introduced for Canadian and Mexican professionals [38].

The US requires at least 270,000 IT workers, 100,000 engineers, and over 1.1 million non-IT professionals to maintain productivity. However, domestic tech graduate output is insufficient, making it harder for companies to meet human capital needs. While the US remains a top destination for global talent, recent years have seen a decline in skilled professionals choosing to work there.

#### 2) *Successful Strategies in the United Kingdom*

The UK has pursued higher education internationalization, expanding fee-based educational exports and publicly funded education for foreigners, educating around 300,000 international students annually. However, two-thirds must leave upon visa expiration [39], [40].

Recently, the government recognized the economic and public drawbacks of losing these graduates, viewing them as valuable taxpayer-funded investments. Their education at top universities, integration into British life, and earning potential made them desirable assets. This shift led to a surge in applications for UK master's and postgraduate programs. While universities welcomed this demand, graduates faced bureaucratic hurdles in securing long-term residency. Acknowledging their role in national interests, policymakers are now working to retain skilled graduates in the UK workforce.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The United States and the United Kingdom have elongated been preferred destinations for highly skilled migrants, attracted by strong economies, quality

infrastructure, and lenient migration policies. As the global talent race heats up, both countries will need to pivot to remain competitive. The findings aim to provide insights into the appeal of the U.S. and the UK as destinations for high-skilled individuals, offering information on the economic opportunities, quality of life, and opportunities in place that make these locations attractive to migrants. Yet, in spite of these strengths, both countries struggle with major challenges such as visa caps, credential recognition problems, and integration obstacles that limit the full potential of skilled migration.

#### A. *Key Findings and Contributions*

Analyzes the factors influencing high-skilled migrants' choice of destination, specifically in the United States and the United Kingdom for higher education as well as professional or scientific work. Using datasets of foreign alumni from 51 U.S. and 30 U.K. universities, the study estimates location probabilities. Findings highlight the significance of both source and host country characteristics. While key factors are similar for both destinations, their impact varies. Studying in the U.S. is more likely for younger individuals, those from federal countries, and those with a Russian legal system. Professional or scientific employment is more probable for younger individuals, Russian-speaking countries, high-income democracies, and EU/OECD members. The study provides insights into migration flows, emphasizing the role of education institutions and destination attributes.

#### B. *Policy Recommendations*

Both the U.S. and the UK must therefore implement forward-looking policies that focus on making their respective countries more desirable to global-skilled talent. Concrete recommendations include:

##### a) *Expanding Visa Quotas and Streamlining Application Processes*

- To draw in top talent from around the world, the United States should raise the quota on H-1B visas, especially for STEM experts, and implement a more flexible points-based system.
- By streamlining qualifying rules and providing more transparent avenues to permanent residency, the UK should improve its Global Talent Visa program.

##### b) *Improving Credential Recognition and Labor Market Access*

- Foreign degrees should be recognized more quickly in both nations, especially in fields with high demand like AI, engineering, and healthcare.
- To provide uniform procedures for evaluating foreign qualifications and work experience, governments should partner with professional associations.

*c) Enhancing Retention Through Integration and Inclusion Policies*

- The UK ought to enhance post-Brexit outreach initiatives to draw and retain non-EU talent, tackling cultural and professional integration obstacles.
- In order to guarantee that dependents of skilled migrants have access to work and educational opportunities, the United States should improve its family reunification rules.

*d) Addressing Socio-Economic Impacts and Mitigating Brain Drain*

- In order to mitigate the negative consequences of talent outflows, both countries should have policies in place that encourage partnerships for knowledge sharing with the home countries of migrants.
- Putting money into international talent networks can promote circular migration, in which highly skilled workers support the economies of both their home and host nations.

To remain global leaders in innovation and economic growth, it is crucial for the U.S. and the UK to provide for the diverse wants and needs of highly skilled migrants. That means supporting policies appropriate for different stages of migrants' careers, providing better coordination across government departments, and encouraging greater social inclusion. Deploying these strategies, both countries can not only capture but also keep the best and the brightest in the world and ensure continued success in a more competitive world economy.

Lastly, this study is relevant to the broader discourse on global talent mobility by offering relevant outputs for policymakers, academics, and stakeholders. Moreover, studies on the dynamics of skilled migration should also analyze the long-term consequences of outflows on the destination and origin countries, and how transnational networks influence migration decisions. By tackling these questions, countries around the world can implement global talent mobility appropriately and therefore derive the maximum benefit from migrating talent.

**2) Implications for Policy and Practice**

The U.S. and U.K. host a growing highly skilled migrant workforce, but attracting these workers is a complex process. This research enhances understanding of destination choice by highlighting the multidimensional nature of influencing factors. It underscores the importance of considering socio-demographic attributes and career stages, rather than viewing high-skilled migrants as a homogeneous group.

The study emphasizes the competition among advanced economies for global talent. To attract and retain top professionals, governments must maximize policy effectiveness and move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. Tailored initiatives are crucial to address the

diverse needs of skilled migrants. This is particularly relevant for the U.S. and U.K., which aim to remain attractive to global talent.

*3) Future Research Directions*

A broader comparison of short-stay highly skilled migrants across more countries is needed to assess whether an elite group shapes a "new citizenship." Examining salary percentiles and professional opportunities over time can reveal their impact on long-term labour integration. Including short-stay migrants who do not move abroad allows analysis of how national migration policies, labour market flexibility, social benefits, and homeland capital influence future migration decisions.

Highly skilled professionals are key transnational migrants, contributing to both skilled and semi-skilled migration and long-term brain drain. This study highlights key factors in recruitment and selection, including (1) competition among experienced professionals for specific labour cycles, (2) salary and workload incentives that allow the hiring of domestic labour at minimal cost, and (3) external capital inflows via remittances. While advancing the understanding of skilled migration, these findings do not capture the full complexity of migratory cycles.

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