

Tech Migration Report

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deel.

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Tech workers are in demand, and on the move

Countries have long used immigration as a way to attract in-demand talent. Heading into 2024, the most competitive talent on the planet works on and around software engineering, data, and product—which is the bread and butter of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. So, it comes as no surprise that professionals with technical and entrepreneurial skill sets are globally mobile (we'll refer to this category of workers as “skilled migrants” and “skilled workers” throughout this report).

The global workforce represented on Deel, a global HR & payroll company, spans hundreds of thousands of people in 120+ countries. In 2023, 27% of newly added, full-time employees using Deel's platform are expats, meaning their citizenship is different from the country where they're employed. That's up just slightly from 25% in 2022.

Here are the headlines from that data pool, as well as the incoming requests for immigration support across 30+ countries.

Who's hiring skilled migrants (*by workers hired abroad*)

Spain, Great Britain, and Canada top countries by expat count in 2023.

Where most skilled migrants are moving from (*by workers who are employed abroad*)

India, United States, and Great Britain top expat origin countries in 2023.

Visas requests

Skilled workers prioritize countries and visas that offer economic mobility, preferential tax treatment, better quality of life, and family/community reunification.

United States maintains allure for tech elite

Despite the toughest immigration barriers, domestic turmoil, and layoffs, the United States remains a coveted destination for entrepreneurs and tech executives.



See also: [Why Are Expat Employees Valuable for Your Global Team?](#)

Who's hiring skilled migrants?

In 2023, Spain, Great Britain (GB), and Canada topped the list of expat employer countries. Across Europe, software, product, and sales roles top job group lists. In Canada, where immigration standards are tighter and skilled workers often move from further away, technical roles make up all the top spots for skilled migrants.

Of skilled migrants based in Spain, 4 of 5 top worker countries of origin are part of the European Union (EU). (Italy, France, Germany, Poland) This is somewhat unsurprising, as workers from elsewhere in the EU don't require visas or immigration support to take advantage of Spain's rich culture and temperate climate.

Great Britain continues to attract talent from its English-speaking counterpart the United States, thanks to a rich startup ecosystem and economic synergies. And despite no longer being part of the European Union, it continues to draw talent from countries like France, Ireland, and Italy. India rounds out the skilled worker list most likely to work in Great Britain.

Lastly, Canada secured technical talent from countries like India, Ukraine, the United States, China, and France. In Canada—software engineers can make up to \$197k a year and product designers \$191k as a high—makes it an attractive option for premier technical talent looking to cross the pond to North America. Skilled migrants from the Ukraine looking to escape turbulent conditions created by the ongoing conflict are finding refuge in Canada, especially as competition for United States H1-B visas continues to rise.



Top skilled migrant employer countries by total worker count



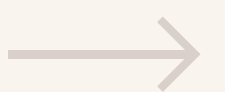
Where do most skilled migrants work?

Given their huge populations—1.4 billion and 330 million respectively—it should come as no surprise that India and the United States (US) top our countries of origin list, by total number of workers abroad. Great Britain follows in third ranking.

68% of India's population is considered working age ([between 15-65](#)), [making it the largest working age population in the world](#). Canada tops the list of India expat destination countries, as a high-paying and relatively friendly option for skilled migrants. Large pools of Indian expats also make reunification with networks commonplace in Canada. The United Arab Emirates—next on the destination countries list for Indian immigrants—offers more flexible immigration options for skilled workers, a much closer destination (<4 hour flights between Delhi and Dubai compared to >19 hours between Delhi and San Francisco), along with similarly large expat communities.

With a large population, and as the home to leading innovators like NVIDIA, OpenAI, and Google, the United States offers a massive worker pool with relevant experience that's attractive to employers across the globe. Operations make up the third most popular job group leaving the US; these people are likely being hired as specialists to help with international expansion efforts, and/or as a way to import best practices from US-based companies.

And Great Britain is seeing expats move to European neighbors that offer cheaper cost-of-living and temperate climates. Spain and Portugal have always been popular destinations for British expats and retirees, so it's no wonder they made the list of top destinations, along with Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada. It's important to note that as a Commonwealth country, Canada benefits from favorable immigration programs. For example, [workers under the age of 35 can move from Great Britain to Canada](#) and work for any employer for two years under a working holiday International Experience Canada permit.



Top skilled migrant countries of origin by total worker count



Visas requests

While Spain, Great Britain, and Canada employed the largest number of skilled workers in 2023, the United States was still the most coveted destination per incoming visa requests in the last year. Especially for highly skilled talent, such as entrepreneurs, C-suite and technical executives.

Across other countries, visas supporting preferential tax treatment and expedited pathways to citizenship were preferred. In the United Arab Emirates, where [~86% of the population is made up of expats](#), the Golden Visa, which offers ten-year residency and optimal tax treatment, reigns supreme.

Top reasons cited for workers seeking visas in 2023, per incoming requests:

- 1** New jobs
- 2** Pathways to citizenship
- 3** Preferential tax rates for skilled expats
- 4** Increase in quality of life
- 5** Reuniting with a partner

Top 10 visas from Deel Immigration in the last year by requested visa count*

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1 United States</p> <p>O-1 Extraordinary Visa</p> | <p>The US talent visa; for people at the top 10% of their field.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a US Work Visa for a Foreign Worker</p> | <p>6 Singapore</p> <p>Employment Pass</p> | <p>Visa for foreign professionals, managers and executives with a job offer in Singapore who meet the eligibility criteria. Salaries for successful candidates will be in the top 1/3 of local salaries, by age.</p> |
| <p>2 UAE</p> <p>Standard Work Permit & Golden Visa</p> | <p>Standard Work Permit—Employer-sponsored work visa that permits an expat to live and work as an employee in the UAE for two to three years.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a UAE Residence Visa in Six Steps</p> <p>Golden Visa—Long-term residence visa which enables foreign talents to live, work or study in the UAE while enjoying exclusive benefits.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a UAE Residence Visa in Six Steps</p> | <p>7 Spain</p> <p>Highly Qualified Worker Permit</p> | <p>Visa for highly-qualified workers to live and work anywhere in the country.</p> |
| <p>3 Netherlands</p> <p>Highly Skilled Migrant</p> | <p>Visa for employees who work for a recognized sponsor in the Netherlands on the basis of a work contract and fulfills specific age, salary and experience requirements. No college degree required.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a Work Visa in the Netherlands</p> | <p>8 Germany</p> <p>EU Blue Card</p> | <p>Allows skilled workers from outside the European Union to work in a specific member state. Eligible candidates must have a valid job offer with a salary that's 1.5 times above the country's average, and successful applicants can include their dependents and travel freely between EU countries.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a Residence Permit to Work in Germany</p> |
| <p>4 France</p> <p>EU Blue Card</p> | <p>Allows skilled workers from outside the European Union to work in a specific member state. Eligible candidates must have a valid job offer with a salary that's 1.5 times above the country's average, and successful applicants can include their dependents and travel freely between EU countries.</p> | <p>9 Canada</p> <p>Global Talent Stream</p> | <p>The Global Talent Stream (GTS), which is a part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), provides qualified workers with expedited access to unique, specialized and highly skilled temporary foreign workers.</p> <p>See also: How to Get a Work Visa and Permit in Canada</p> |
| <p>5 Great Britain</p> <p>Skilled Worker <i>[Formerly Tier 2 General Work]</i></p> | <p>Visa for eligible occupations in high demand in the country; applicants can stay in GB for up to 5 years to start. This path leads to permanent residency and citizenship and is much faster than some of the other jurisdictions.</p> | <p>10 Poland</p> <p>D1 Work Visa</p> | <p>A Type D national visa also allows recipients to travel in the territory of other Schengen countries for up to 90 days during a 180-day period. The Type D visa is not the same as a residence permit. The long-stay visa allows you to enter Poland with the purpose of work, studies, family reunion.</p> |

United States immigration spotlight

US visa requests in 2023

The global demand by skilled workers and founders to relocate to the US continues to rise. In 2023, employee requests for visas to relocate to the United States (US) skyrocketed 263% compared to the year prior, and similar requests by global founders who wanted to relocate to the US jumped 82%. EB-1A visas saw the biggest percentage increase in incoming requests, signaling that workers are looking for alternatives to the long-popular H1-B visas, which see continued competition.

Despite the toughest immigration barriers, domestic political strife, and persistent layoffs, the United States still remains the favorite global destination for top technical and entrepreneurial talent. This is thanks to a relatively stable economy, its reputation as a global innovation hub, huge talent pool, leading-edge technology universities, and access to immense fundraising opportunities:

The economy

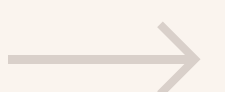
- Even with rising inflation and a turbulent tech scene in 2023, the US economy's annual inflation rate of **3.4%** still undercuts those of countries like **Great Britain**, which went well into the double digits in the same year.

Innovative talent pool

- With artificial intelligence ubiquitous and growing in 2023, leading startups in the space like OpenAI and Anthropic—along with their larger competitors Microsoft, Google, and NVIDIA—all call the United States home.
- As do **world's leading engineering universities**, like Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, UC Berkeley, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- US talent still far out earns their global counterparts, and across all Deel contracts, senior engineers can make up to \$208k USD annually, compared to \$197k USD in Canada, and \$110k USD in Great Britain.

Fundraising pool

- Even with VC funding for US companies down by 37% year over year, US startups still totaled **\$138 billion in 2023**. That's **over 43% of all funding allocated to startups globally during the year**.



Most processed visas by total number of visas processed through Deel Immigration

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 O-1A</p> <p>Individuals with extraordinary ability or achievement</p> <hr/> <p>Worker countries & roles most likely to apply for this visa Rank ordered by number of incoming requests</p> <p>INDIA NIGERIA CHINA</p> <p>C-SUITE EXECS (CEO, CTO, COO, CPO) VP OF ENGINEERING</p> <p>HEAD OF PRODUCT</p> <p>See also: O-1 US Visa Assessment</p> | <p>Visa for</p> <p>The US talent visa; for people in the top 10% of their field. The US talent visa.</p> <p>To qualify</p> <p>Meet 3 out of 8 “extraordinary ability” and/or “international recognition” criteria in science, art, education, business, or athletics.</p> <p>Criteria examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being featured in Forbes • Exceptionally high salary • International accolades • IP • Publishing an academic paper • Being invited to be a member of a prestigious organization <p>Duration</p> <p>Up to 3 years; can be extended in 1-3 year increments indefinitely.</p> |
| <p>2 EB-1A</p> <p>Employment-based immigration: 1st preference EB-1A</p> <hr/> <p>Worker countries & roles most likely to apply for this visa Rank ordered by number of incoming requests</p> <p>INDIA NIGERIA CHINA</p> <p>C-SUITE EXECS (CEO, CTO, COO, CPO) SOFTWARE ENGINEER</p> <p>PRINCIPAL PRODUCT MANAGER</p> | <p>Visa for</p> <p>“Genius” non-citizens qualify for the “Einstein Visa”</p> <p>To qualify</p> <p>Meet 3 out of 8 “extraordinary ability” criteria, before passing a final merits test wherein a United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agent determines whether you are, indeed, extraordinary.</p> <p>Criteria examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being featured in New York Times • Widely-used patent • Invitation to review manuscripts for an academic conference • International hackathon win • Prestigious organization invitation <p>Duration</p> <p>Indefinite, but benefits only kick in after approval and the green card has been filed, and or granted.</p> |
| <p>3 EB-2 NIW</p> <p>Employment-based immigration: 2nd preference EB-2 NIW</p> <hr/> <p>Worker countries & roles most likely to apply for this visa Rank ordered by number of incoming requests</p> <p>INDIA SPAIN FRANCE</p> <p>CEO VICE PRESIDENT GENERAL MANAGER CFO</p> <p>See also: What Is an EB-2 NIW Visa</p> | <p>Visa for</p> <p>High-skilled workers focused in an area of national interest.</p> <p>To qualify</p> <p>Hold an advanced degree or its equivalent, work in, or showcase “exceptional ability” in a trade of national interest.</p> <p>Areas of national interest examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI • Cancer research • Automation • Food tech <p>Duration</p> <p>Indefinite, but benefits only kick in after approval and the green card has been filed, and or granted.</p> |
| <p>4 H1-B</p> <p>Specialty occupations</p> <hr/> <p>Worker countries & roles most likely to apply for this visa Rank ordered by number of incoming requests</p> <p>CHINA INDIA FRANCE</p> <p>APPLICATIONS ENGINEER SOFTWARE ENGINEER</p> <p>ROBOTICS ENGINEER</p> <p>See also: The H-1B Visa: Everything You Need to Know</p> | <p>Visa for</p> <p>People with a university degree + a job offer related to that degree from a US company.</p> <p>Speciality occupations or exceptional merit examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work relating to Department of Defence (DoD) • Highly-skilled technically • Fashion models of distinguished merit <p>Duration</p> <p>Up to 3 years. Can be extended to 6 years, total.</p> |

The biggest mobility changes to be aware of this quarter

As countries adjust to more inbound immigration, and we're seeing visa approvals bottlenecked by delays and new rules, as well as application costs increases. Here are top changes to be aware of this quarter.

North America

Canada

Canada raised the financial requirement for study permits, with applicants needing to prove they have \$20,635 thousand available to them from January 1, 2024. Amid changes in the immigration system, the country plans to limit visas, reduce student visas by 30% in 2024, and implement measures for tighter control and support for international students, while discontinuing the 18-month work permit extension for post-graduation.

United States

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services raised filing fees for various visas, introducing a tiered pricing system. Notable increases include O-1 and L-1 visas. H-1B visa has shifted to "beneficiary centric" lottery selection, limiting applicants to one selection per passport number, with the impact to be evaluated post-CAP season. Pricing changes particulars:

- O-1 visa <25 employees in the US: from \$460 to \$530
- O-1 visa >25 employees in the US: from \$460 to \$1,055
- L-1 visa <25 employees in the US: Was \$960 all in, now \$1,195 all in
- L-1 visa >25 employees in the US: Was \$960 all in, now \$1,885 all in

See also:



- [How to Get a Work Visa and Permit in Canada](#)
- [How to Get a US Work Visa for a Foreign Worker](#)

Europe, Middle East, Africa

Portugal

Portugal faces significant immigration delays due to a backlog of over 347,000 cases. AIMA, the new immigration department, aims to address this in 1-2 years. Changes to Golden Visa routes exclude real estate investments; options now include donation to arts, venture capital, or research activities. As the Non-Habitual Resident tax regime is retired, Portugal is less appealing for expats, but grandfathering rules may apply to cases initiated in 2023.

Germany

Germany is experiencing delays of 2-3 months in immigration processes due to migrant influx. New legislation in Dec '23 simplifies the change of employer category, notably reducing the approval period for blue card holders from 2 to 1 year. Family reunification is expanding for parents, and a faster path to permanent residency has been introduced for skilled workers and blue card holders. Working students gain increased work limits, and IT professionals with 2 years' experience and a salary >41,041.80 EUR p.a. can now obtain a skilled worker visa.

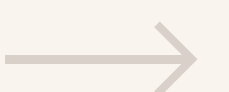
Spain

Spain is experiencing 1-3 month delays in immigration due to a Digital Nomad influx and local unemployment. The popular digital nomad visa faces growing demand, with Spain set to undergo immigration reform in 2024, simplifying authorizations and reducing residence permits. The salary threshold is increasing to €1,134, affecting financial requirements, such as the Digital Nomad Visa now requiring an annual salary of €31,752.



See also:

- [How to Get a Residence Permit to Work in Germany](#)



Netherlands

Dutch parliament trimmed 30% tax ruling for expats, reducing the exemption period to 20 months, followed by 20% for the next 20 months, and 10% for the final 20 months. New salary thresholds effective as of January 2024 include €5,331 for skilled migrants (30+), €3,909 for those under 30, €2,801 for reduced criterion, and €6,245 for European Blue Card holders.

Great Britain (GB)

GB raised the salary threshold for Skilled Workers by almost 50%, going from £26,200 to £38,700 from April 4, 2024. The minimum income for family visas will also increase to £38,700, aligning with the Skilled Worker route. The incremental rise, starting at £29,000 on April 11, aims to provide predictability for families, reaching £38,700 by early 2025.

Asia-Pacific

Japan

Japan has introduced a six-month digital nomad visa starting in late March. To qualify, digital nomads need an annual income of \$67,556.80 USD.



See also:

- [How to Get a Work Visa in the Netherlands](#)

About Deel Immigration

If you're interested in using Deel to fast-track your employee relocations, learn more about our [visa and immigration services](#), or [book a 30-minute chat with our team](#).

Methodology

Expatriate data

In 2023, Deel added tens of thousands of new Employee-of-Record contracts, of which 27% are located in a country different from citizenship. All countries represented have at least 100 global professionals in-country. Workers can be employer sponsored or self-sponsored.

Visas data

Aggregated from thousands of monthly support tickets and incoming visa inquiries to Deel immigration, which processed hundreds of visas across 35+ countries in 2023.



Deel products

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