

70% Indians in US green card line seeking permanent residency elsewhere: study

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America stands to lose anywhere from \$19.3 billion to \$54.26 billion due to green card backlog.

A new research paper on green card and Indian immigrants puts the potential economic loss to American organizations due to the green card backlog in the range of 19.3 and 54.26 billion dollars.

- 70 percent of green card backlog population is seriously contemplating emigrating to a more visa friendly country
- 30 percent of the green card backlog population in America has already applied for permanent residency in another country
- 9 percent of the participants have already obtained a permanent residency in a more visa-friendly country
- 93.4 percent of participants are very concerned about the estimated green card waiting time in the US.

These are just some of the findings of a report on Green Card and Indian immigrants in America. Titled “An indentured servant,” the report explores the impact of the green card waiting time on the life of a highly skilled Indian immigrant in the US.

Prepared by Pooja Vijaykumar and Christopher J. L. Cunningham, the report is now included in the University of Tennessee (UTC) Industrial and Organizational Psychology Translational Research.

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Vijaykumar, a researcher at the University of Limerick, Ireland and Cunningham a professor at University of Tennessee spoke to 1042 participants for the purpose of this study. Majority of the US participants have lived in America for more than ten years and are on an H-1B visa.

The report highlights not just the hardships of a group of immigrants caught in America's immigration system but also gives some staggering economic repercussions.

Based on these turnover intentions, the researchers estimate, the potential direct costs to American organizations due to the green card waiting time will be in the range of 19.3 to 54.26 billion dollars.

The report also highlights that the current waiting time for a green card is 151 years in the EB-2 (Advanced degree) category.

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Speaking to the American Bazaar from Ireland, Vijaykumar says, "We found the current delays in visa processing is causing financial burden, career roadblocks such as job insecurity, wage stagnation, lack of promotion opportunities, inability to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and is negatively impacting respondents' business and personal travel opportunities, even to return to family in India in case of emergencies."

"These issues are in turn causing health issues such as stress, fear of unknown, frustration and chronic health issues," she said. "The findings of this study are important because these issues may contribute to burnout, low performance, lack of innovation and organizational commitment in high skilled immigrants such engineers and doctors resulting in high turnover."

The report stresses that the emigration of skilled immigrants to other countries causes brain drain and loss of talent. The report also explains in detail the humungous sounding economic loss to US as a result of green card backlog.

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Currently, there are 306,400 working Indian immigrants in the US waiting for their green card; 70 percent of this population is 214,480 (CATO Institute, 2018), according to the report.

Noting the minimum median salary for H-1B workers of \$60,000 is set as a requirement per law (US Department of Labor, n. d., "Overview"), the report says, "We can also consider the median salary range for all occupations in which Indian immigrants are working to be \$60,000 – \$158,120."

"Without factoring in additional costs associated with replacement, retraining, and lost productivity, and using this range of median salaries, the potential one-year value lost if 214,480 of the present Indian immigrants in the US were to act on the intentions observed in this study and actually leave the US over its current immigration challenges would be between \$12,868,800,000 and \$33,913,577,600," it says.

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"The total direct replacement cost for these workers (estimated at 50-60 percent of an employee's annual salary) would potentially be in the range of \$6,434,400,000 to

\$20,348,146,560. Combined, the total direct turnover cost to organization in the US is estimated to be in the range \$19,303,200,000 – \$54,261,724,160.”

On why they think it was important to bring out the truth about the green card backlog to the Americans, Vijaykumar says, “We hope that the present findings may be useful to American policy makers and organizational leaders as further decisions are made regarding the American immigration system.”