

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of United States Department of State Data

Trends related to visa applications made by Pakistani citizens to the United States



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IMMIGRANT VISAS:

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E-visa applications remained consistently low.

NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS:

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2021

H-visa applications fluctuated over the years, with the highest in 2001 (5,555) and the lowest in 2020 (704).

5,555

2001

704

2020



PRESS RELEASE

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of United States Department of State

*248% surge, from 2021 to 2022, in United States visa applications from Pakistan – **United States Department of State***

Islamabad, September 21, 2023

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of United States Department of State Visa Statistics is a comprehensive examination conducted by Gallup Pakistan that delves into the data and trends related to visa applications made by Pakistani citizens to the United States over a significant period of time. This analysis seeks to provide valuable insights into the patterns, fluctuations, and potential driving factors behind these visa applications.

What is this report about?

The analysis draws its data from the United States Department of State, which serves as a reliable and official source for tracking visa applications and related statistics. The United States Department of State data can be accessed [HERE](#)

What does this report entail?

It covers a substantial timeframe, starting from 1998 and extending up to 2022. One of the primary focuses of this analysis is to assess the overall volume of visa applications made by Pakistanis to the United States. This includes a detailed examination of the numerical figures, highlighting both high and low points over the years.

The analysis also considers major events that may have influenced visa application trends. Through data visualization and statistical analysis, the report interprets the numbers and trends. It attempts to provide insights into the reasons behind fluctuations in visa applications, whether they are driven by economic factors, changes in international relations, educational pursuits, or other motivations.



Key Findings:

Total Visa Applications:

- Applications increased in the past decade compared to the previous one, with a notable 248% surge in 2022.
- The highest applications occurred in 2000, reaching 88,791.

Immigrant Visas:

- K-visa applications spiked between 2003 and 2010.
- E-visa applications remained consistently low.

Non-Immigrant Visas:

- B-1/B-2 visas had the most applications, with a dip in 2021 followed by a rebound to 58,152 in 2022.
- F1 visa applications showed a rising trend, reaching 3,540 in 2022.
- H-visa applications fluctuated over the years, with the highest in 2001 (5,555) and the lowest in 2020 (704).
- A-category visa applications increased from 2008 to 2020, surpassing H-visa applications during this period.



Introduction

In an era characterized by global mobility and interconnectedness, the United States has continued to be a coveted destination for individuals seeking opportunities, education, family reunification, or simply a chance to explore a diverse and dynamic society. This report delves into the multifaceted landscape of visa applications from Pakistan to the United States, with a particular focus on tracking the evolving trends in visa issuance for various categories over the past two decades. It explores the various types of visas available to Pakistanis, the evolving trends in application patterns, and the underlying motivations and challenges faced by applicants as they navigate the complex process of obtaining a US visa.

The United States offers a spectrum of visa categories designed to cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of Pakistani residents. These visa types encompass both non-immigrant and immigrant visas, serving as the conduits for temporary visits, long-term stays, and, in some cases, permanent residency or citizenship. Whether it be for education, employment, family reunification, tourism, or specialized purposes such as cultural exchanges, there exists a visa pathway designed to facilitate travel and stay in the US. These visa categories include, but are not limited to, B-1/B-2 (tourist/business visas), F-1 (student visa), H-1B (employment visa), and immigrant visas for family-sponsored or employment-based categories.

This report seeks to dissect the temporal trends in visa issuance for each of these categories, offering a nuanced understanding of how the landscape of US visa applications from Pakistan has evolved over the past two decades. By scrutinizing the historical data and delving into the factors influencing visa issuance, this analysis aims to uncover patterns, shifts, and insights that can shed light on the complex dynamics of international migration and bilateral relations between the United States and Pakistan.

Furthermore, this report recognizes the significance of this analysis in informing policymakers, diplomats, and stakeholders on both sides of the spectrum. Understanding the changing patterns of US visa applications from Pakistan is not only essential for applicants and their families but also holds broader implications for diplomatic relations, economic collaboration, and social integration. In an era marked by globalization and mobility, this report endeavors to add to the comprehensive and data-driven exploration of US visa applications from Pakistan.

1. Change in total Visa applications (1998-2022)

Graphical analysis of the total visa applications for United States Visas by Pakistanis reveals that average number of applications has increased in the past decade, compared to the decade prior. Looking at data 1998 onwards (Figure 1), the highest applications were received in the years 2000 (88,791), after which they saw a steep decline until the 2010s. The second highest point in application frequency was reached in 2016 (76,637) followed closely by 2022 (72,082). The average over the past 20 years, represented by the trendline, remained 47,566 applications.

The steep decline in 2020 and 2021 may be attributed to the travel restrictions and lockdowns that were imposed due to Covid-19. Other than this period, Pakistan's visa applications to the U.S. were lowest in 2003 (24,092), followed by 2004 (24,934).

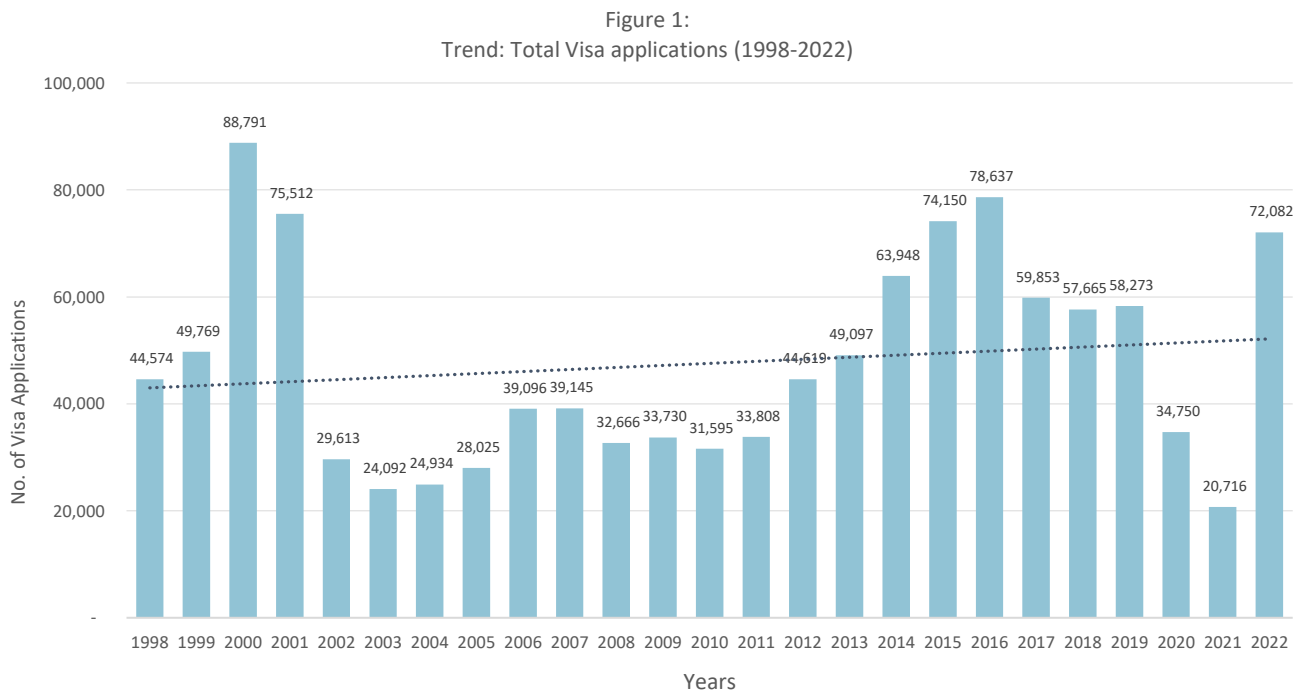


Figure 2 shows the same set of data grouped into three years averages, to better visualize the change in volume of applications over time. It shows that the overwhelming increase in applications in 2022 could be attributable, among other things, to those who could not travel in the 2019-2021 period due to Covid-19. The average applications decreased from 65,385 in 2015-2017 to 37,913 in 2019-2021. Once the pandemic restrictions were lifted, it would be plausible to assume that those who were intending to go to the U.S. for business or education purposes over the past three years, applied for visas at their earliest.

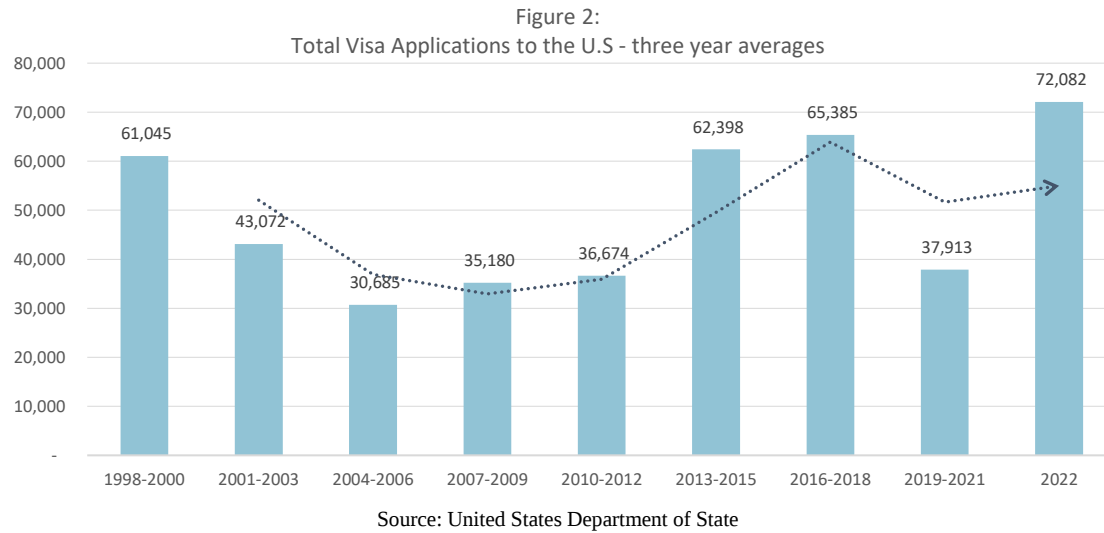
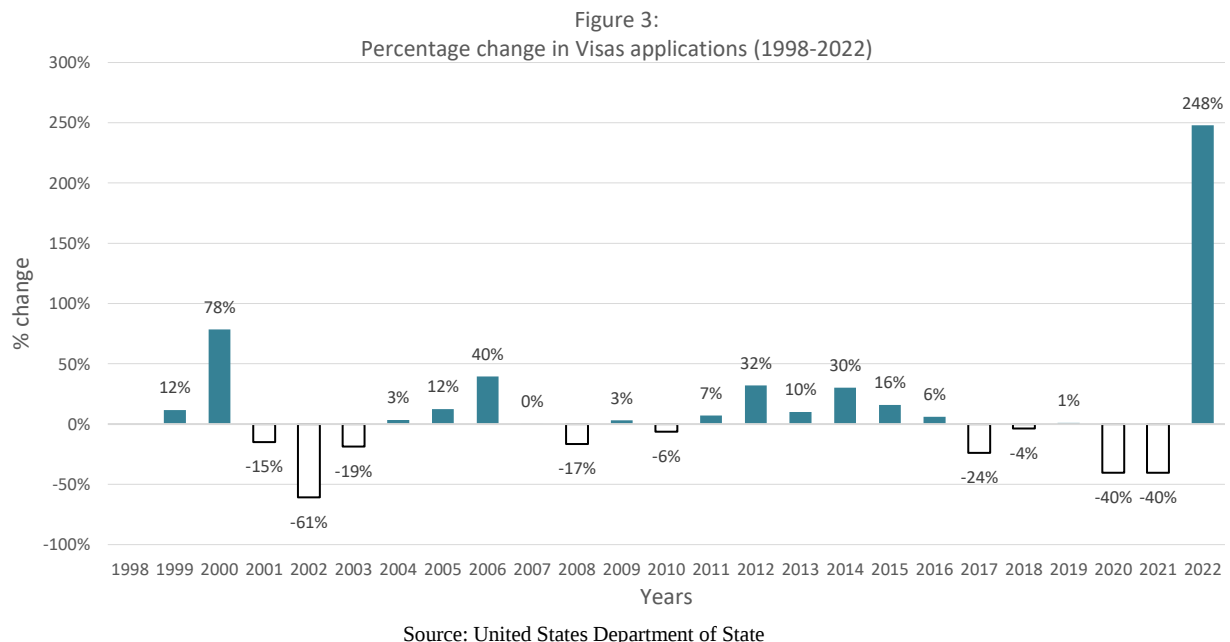


Figure 3 further breaks down the numbers of visa applications into percentage change. The steepest decline in applications, 61%, was observed in 2002. One factor that may be responsible for this decrease is the attack of September 11, 2001, which raised security measures in the US and made acquisition of a visa tougher. 2020 and 2021 saw the next steepest decline in visa application (40% each), a lot of which, as discussed earlier, can be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic.

By far the highest increase in visa applications was recorded in 2022, at 248%. Factors contributing to it may be related to the lifting of travel restrictions after the pandemic, or a general increase in people wishing to go from Pakistan to the U.S. A more in-dept analysis of changes in specific types of visas can show a more nuanced picture of the kinds of people wishing to move to the U.S., and their reason for travel. This can present interesting insights for policymakers and those interesting in exploring immigration patterns.



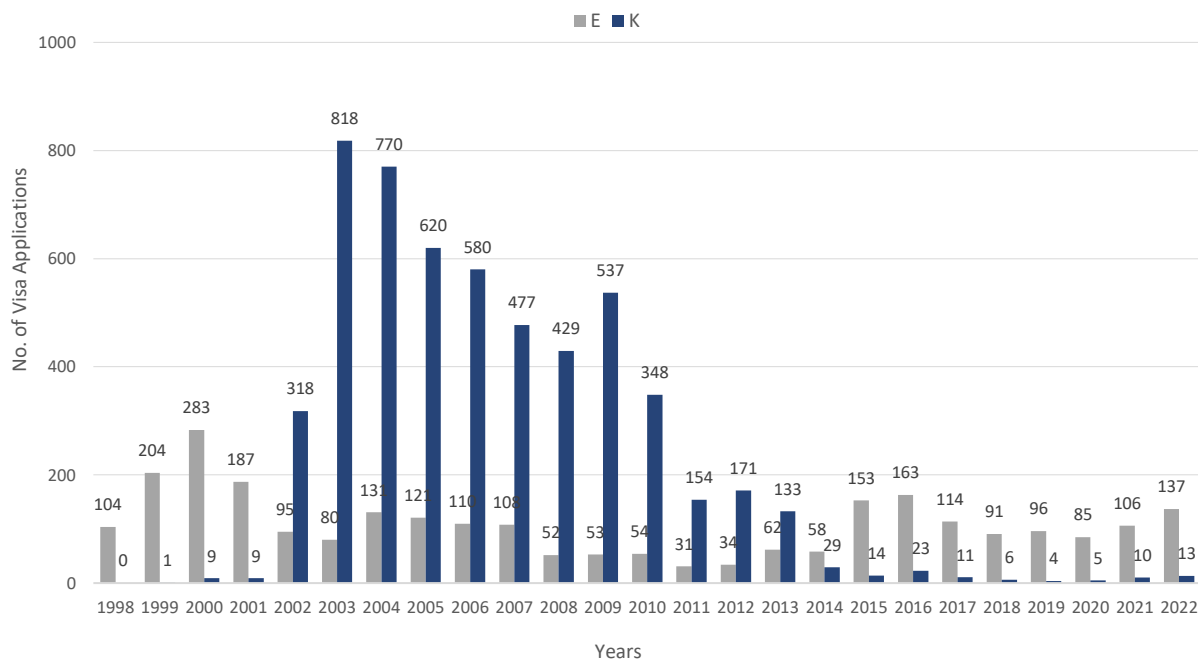
2. Change in total Visa applications (1998-2022) – by Visa type

a. Immigrant Visas

Visas to the US can be divided into two categories, immigrant and non-immigrant visas. The former is for those who intend to travel to live permanently in the United States, while the latter are for people who are visiting the U.S. temporarily for tourism, business, education, medical treatment, or petition-based employment. The type of visa required depends on your purpose of travel.

The first type of immigrant visa pertains to employment (E1 and E2). Preference groups for such visas are priority workers and professionals holding advanced degrees and persons of exceptional ability. Marriage-related U.S. visas include the K-1, which is awarded to fiancé(e) to marry U.S. citizen and live in U.S. (K-2 visas are for the children of K-1 applicants), and K-3, which is for the spouse of a U.S. citizen awaiting approval of an I-130 immigrant petition.

Figure 4:
Immigrant Visa Applications to the U.S. (1998-2022)



Source: United States Department of State

Data from the United States State Department shows applications for K-visas peaked suddenly between 2003 and 2010, declining to a negligible amount for the rest of the decade; they were the highest in 2003 (818) and lowest in 1998 (0). On the other hand, applications for the E-visa have been consistent but low throughout the two decades, reaching the highest number in 2000 (283) and lowest in 2011 (31).

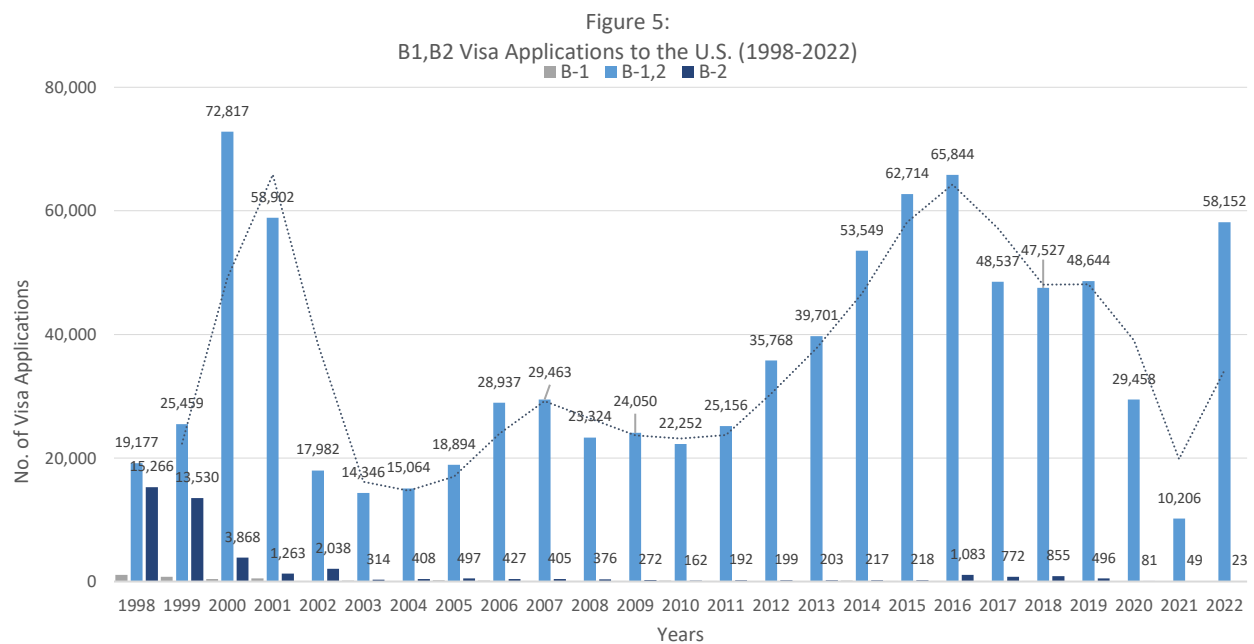
The spike in K-visas between the 2003-2010 time period is also interesting and worth exploring. Since this type of visa is related to spouses of U.S. citizens applying for a permanent residence, the sudden

increase might be a result of political tensions following September 11, 2011. Delving deeper into the data pertaining to this phenomenon is surely bound to reveal insightful information.

b. Non-Immigrant Visas

Nonimmigrant visas are for foreign nationals wishing to enter the United States on a temporary basis. The most common of these are the B-type visas.

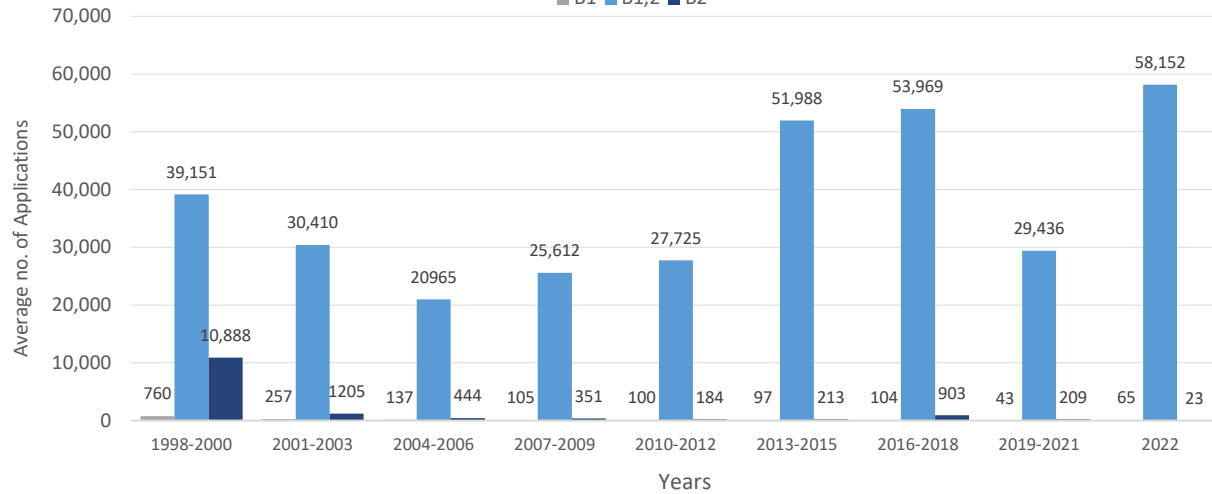
The B1 visa and B2 visa are temporary, non-immigrant, multiple-entry visas that allow the holder to travel to the United States for either business or tourism purposes. The B1 is for people who need to travel to the U.S. for business-related work such as attending a work conference, business consultations, settling an estate, etc. A B1 visa is specifically for business-related activities and does not permit formal employment or long-term work in the U.S. The B2 (tourist) is for tourism, vacation, or visiting friends and family. It also covers certain medical treatments and participation in social events or contests. In most cases, a B1/B2 visa is issued together, allowing the holder to travel for both business and pleasure.



Source: United States Department of State

Among the B-category is U.S. visas, the combined B-1,2 has by far the most commonly applied for, with the highest number of applications coming in 2000 (72,817) and the lowest in 2021 (10,206), possibly owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, since the number climbed up to 58,152 in 2022. The applications for B-1 and B-2 individually were almost negligible through the last two decades, with 1998 (15,266) and 1999 (13,530) being the only exceptions for B-2 applications.

Figure 6:
B1,B2 Visa Applications - 3 year averages

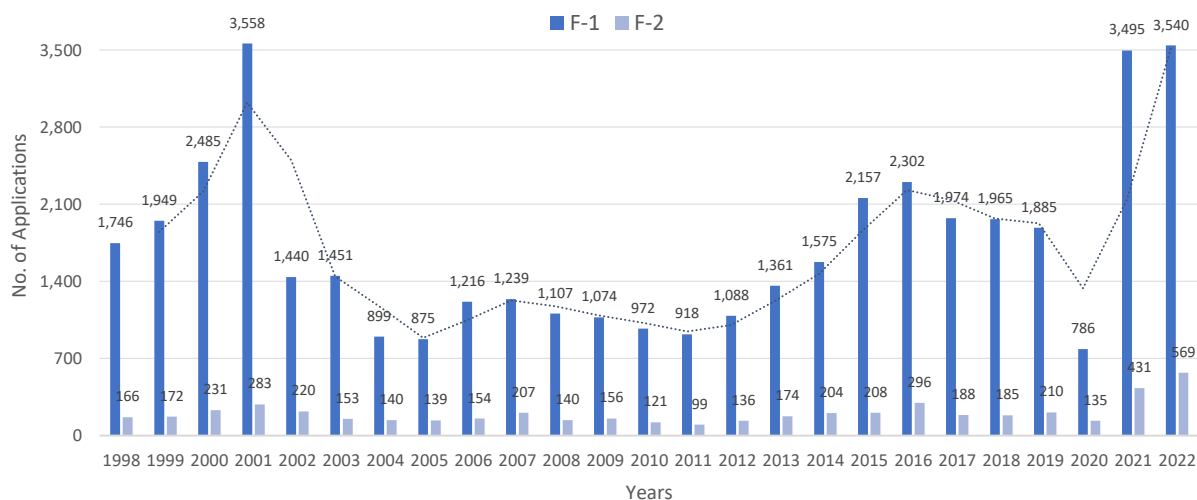


Source: United States Department of State

Analyzing B-visa applications through a trend of three-year averages shows that the combined category peaked from 2013-2015 (51,988) and 2016-2018 (53,969). The sudden drop in applications for B1,2 visas in 2019-2020 (29,436) can once again be largely attributed to Covid-19. Computing averages visualizes more clearly the potential effect of the pandemic on the large increase of applications in 2022 (58,152).

Another prevalent type of visa for the U.S. is the F-visa. F1 and F2 are generally known as Student Visas (F1 is for international students while F2 is for the immediate family of F1 Student Visa holders).

Figure 7:
F1,F2 Visa Applications to the U.S. (1998-2022)



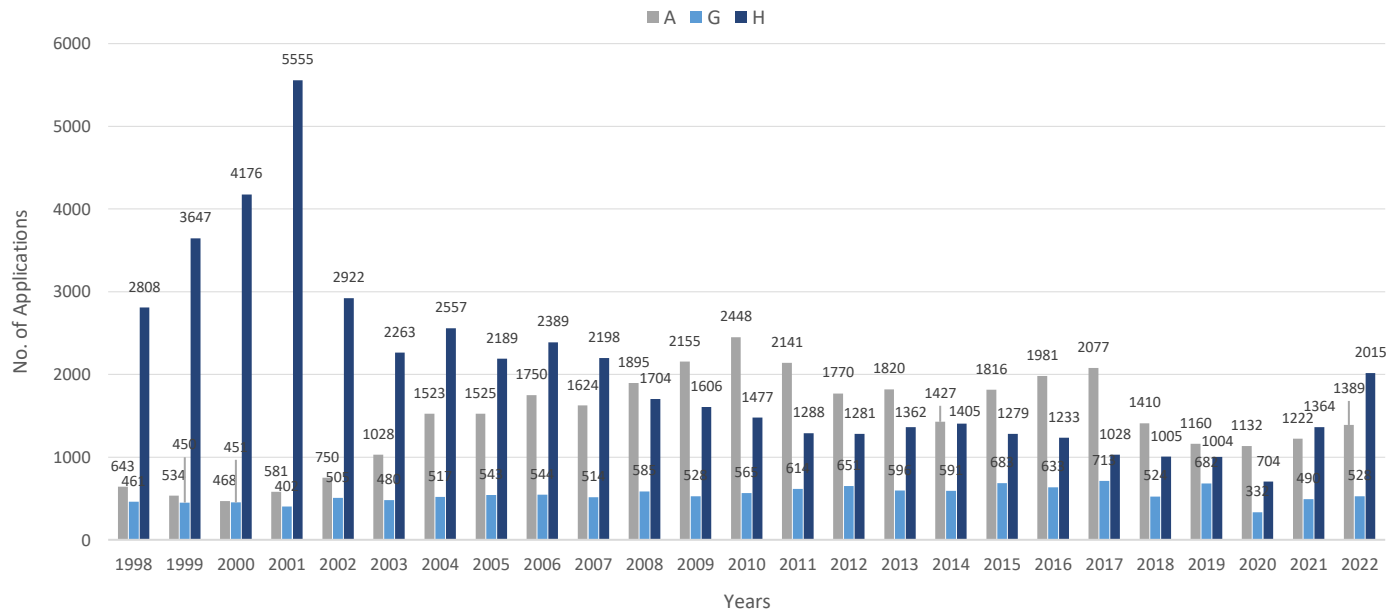
Source: United States Department of State

Data from the United States State Department shows that F1 visas are by far the most common among the F-visa category (Figure 7). It is interesting to note that while the total number of visa applications were

the lowest in 2021, applications for F-1 visa were the second highest at 3,495 – the highest number was recorded in 2022 (3,540); the trendline seems to be rising steeply since 2020. Students intending to move to the United States for education purposes could be a positive sign since once they return to Pakistan, it could lead to an overall more skilled workforce. However, this could also be a worrying sign if the students going to the United States intend to permanently stay there when they have completed their education. This could contribute to the problem of brain drain that is prevalent in many developing countries.

The next common visa categories are the A, G, and H visas. Within the A category, A-1 and A-2 are issued to government officials going to the U.S. on behalf of the government, while A-3 is for personal employees and attendants of those officials. G-1 to G-5 type visas are issued to members or employees of international organizations, going to the U.S. on official business. The H category is for skilled professional petitioned to go to the U.S. by their employers on a temporary basis. Categorizations within the H-visa are according to occupation and nature of work.

Figure 8:
A,G,H Visa Applications to the U.S. (1998-2022)



Source: United States Department of State

A combined tabulation of the three visa categories (Figure 8) reveals that from 1998 to 2007, H-visa applications were by far the more common of the three, signaling movement of employed personnel to the U.S; they were highest in 2001 (5,555) and lowest in 2020 (704). However, from 2008 up till 2020, A-category visa applications increased while as the former decreased (they were highest in 2010 at 2,448 and lowest in 2001 at 402 applications); this trend seems to be reversing in 2022 as H-visa applications once again outnumber those for the A-visa. Applications for the G-visa, on the other hand, have remained consistently under 1000 over the past two decades, implying that not too many members of international organizations are temporarily moving to the U.S. from Pakistan.



Discussion

In addition to the visa categories previously mentioned for the United States, there are several other avenues, such as the I visa designed for media professionals and journalists, and the M visa catering to technical and vocational students. However, applications for these visas have displayed a consistent trend of modest numbers over the past two decades.

Within the data provided by the United States Department of State primarily presents application figures for various visa categories, an insightful exploration into temporal patterns of the more prevalent visa types can serve as a preliminary step toward a broader study. Such an undertaking would seek to understand the motivations behind individuals' desires to embark on journeys to the U.S. and the multifaceted factors that underpin these aspirations.

It is undeniable that certain global events, such as the far-reaching impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, and the reverberations of the 2007 financial crisis, have left discernible imprints on visa application trends. These effects can be seen in categories associated with business activities or permanent immigration.

In addition to these global considerations, the internal dynamics of Pakistan, encompassing its political, social, and security landscape, can exert a profound influence on immigration decisions. The attraction of American academic institutions, renowned for their quality education, may draw students, yet the state of educational opportunities within Pakistan can also weigh significantly on their choices. Similarly, the pursuit of work visas by professionals can often be rooted in the challenges presented by the Pakistani job market.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the fluidity in the relationship between the two nations. Factors like the post-2011 war on terror, military disagreements, and evolving alliances have contributed to shifting sentiments over the years. Consequently, such fluctuations could potentially deter individuals from applying for U.S. visas, assuming their applications might face obstacles.

Deeper exploration into the rationales behind U.S. visa applications and an examination of the acceptance rates can unveil captivating insights into immigration patterns and prevailing attitudes. Moreover, investigating how many applicants for non-immigrant visas ultimately secure permanent residence in the U.S., as well as how many return to Pakistan once their objectives are fulfilled, would provide valuable perspectives.

For a more nuanced understanding, a granular analysis of the data, disaggregated by demographic categories such as gender, age, and occupation, promises to unearth the intricate facets of immigration and travel trends to the United States.



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