

September 17, 2019

Restrictive Immigration Policies Threaten U.S. AI Sector

Changes are needed to fill critical workforce needs

Washington, DC -- As the artificial intelligence field becomes more developed globally, restrictive immigration policies threaten America's ability to recruit and retain foreign AI talent, according to a report released today by a new think tank, the [Center for Security and Emerging Technology \(CSET\)](#).

The report, "[Immigration Policy and the U.S. AI Sector: A Preliminary Assessment](#)," describes the U.S. immigration system as it relates to AI talent, identifies features of the system that are undermining the U.S. AI advantage, and proposes reforms to keep the United States competitive in AI.

The report's key findings include:

- Foreign-born talent fills a critical AI talent gap in the United States that is likely to persist and possibly grow over time.
- U.S. immigration policy is making the AI sector less competitive for talent.
- Most of the fundamental problems have existed for years or decades, but recent policy changes have made the situation materially worse.
- Beyond any individual law or policy, a general climate of uncertainty, complexity, and restriction is discouraging foreign AI talent from coming to or staying in the United States.
- Immigration-related measures against illicit technology transfer, such as visa restrictions and screening measures, are causing serious harm. Congress and the relevant agencies should thoroughly review these measures.
- Current immigration law favors large companies and restricts labor mobility, harming AI workers, startups, and entrepreneurs.

The report's authors recommend:

- Building new immigration pathways for AI students, workers, and entrepreneurs.

- Fixing regulatory and administrative policies that make it harder to recruit and retain AI talent.
- Reviewing and revising existing measures against illicit technology transfer.

[“Immigration Policy and the U.S. AI Sector”](#) is available online and will be discussed at the upcoming [Kalaris Intelligence Conference](#), which is being co-hosted this year by CSET and Georgetown University’s Center for Security Studies.

Established in January 2019 at Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, CSET studies the security impacts of emerging technologies, supports academic work in security and technology studies, and delivers nonpartisan analysis to the policy community. CSET aims to prepare a generation of policymakers, analysts and diplomats to address the challenges and opportunities of emerging technologies. During its first two years, CSET is focusing on the effects of progress in artificial intelligence and advanced computing.